



Entering the Room. Spatial Metaphors as a Dialogue between Tarkovsky and Bergman*

Ruxandra BERINDE

University of Sheffield
School of Architecture
ruxandra.berinde@sheffield.ac.uk

Abstract. Gazing through phenomenological lenses, the paper will trace a possible dialogue between the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky (1932–1986) and the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman (1918–2007), established through the spatial metaphors in their films. Taking into account that the two of them never met, nor spoke directly, albeit contemporary and highly praising each other's works, this paper will list the fragments of indirect verbal interaction between the two, arguing that some of the gaps in their dialogue were filled through the communicative functions of spatial imagery in their films. Transgressing the factual absence of communication, these spatial metaphors, understood as visual phenomenology of lived space, position the two artists in a state of silent, yet crystalline dialogue, all the more profound in its silence and revelatory to the common nature of architectural and cinematic language.

Keywords: childhood home, doors, film image



Fig.1: Images 1-3: film stills from *Wild Strawberries* (Bergman, 1957), images 4-7: film stills from *The Mirror* (Tarkovsky, 1975).

* Research supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK.

1. Introduction: “standing at the door of a room”

The study of inhabited space concludes that “the phenomenology of architecture is founded on verbs rather than nouns. The approaching of the house, not the facade, the act of entering, not the door; the act of looking out of the window, not the window itself seem to trigger our strongest emotions” (Pallasmaa 1994, 19). In a visual way, if the noun *window* relates to basic architectural technicalities, the mental image created by the verb *looking out the window* is an intense fragment of cinematic expression, which portrays the *lived experience*. This aspect is relevant in bridging between architecture, cinema and phenomenology, making film a medium permeable to such ineffable concepts as lived space. Communicating experiential qualities of architecture, film operates with intensity in the territory of metaphors: the visual metaphor contains in itself not merely the image of space, but also a hypostasis of it in which perception is interwoven, mostly codified as mental associations, vague sensations or memories, in an instant act of poetic montage.

The term *poetic montage* belongs to the Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky, his films forming a strong testimony to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s idea that cinema is, more than anything, “a phenomenological art” (1962). The topic of spatial metaphors in Tarkovsky’s oeuvre is extended, covering both the visual imagery of his films and the (so far) understudied poetics behind the text of the screenplays. This paper will take into consideration one single such metaphor, relating back to Pallasmaa’s definition for the phenomenology of architecture: “the act of entering, not the door itself” (1994, 19).

An essential element in reading these images as spatial metaphors lies in their ability to perform the role of language: to communicate meaning. Therefore, the paper will build upon the space of his films’ reception, unfolding from a few words by Ingmar Bergman, a quotation that precludes most of the books written about Tarkovsky: “My first discovery of Tarkovsky’s film was like a miracle. Suddenly, I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me. It was a room I had always wanted to enter and where he was moving freely and fully at ease.”¹

2. Room as metaphor for the immaterial: “across thresholds into the room which they have risked their lives to reach”

Among the first questions arising upon reading Bergman’s frequently quoted words is: what is this room? In his autobiographical novel, *The Magic Lantern*,

¹ Fragment from an interview with Bergman: date N/A; source: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/IB_On_AT.html (accessed March 2012)

Bergman offers a more extended, more poetical version of this encounter: “All my life I have hammered on the doors of the rooms in which he moves so naturally. Only a few times have I managed to creep inside” (1989, 73). So then again, what is this room?

The mention of the word *room* next to Tarkovsky’s name would instantly make the connoisseur think about the destination of the journey in *Stalker* (1975), “the room in which, we are told, everybody’s most secret wish will be granted” (Tarkovsky 1987, 198). The film is the cinematic adaptation of the novel *Roadside Picnic* (1971) by the Strugatski brothers, and, aside from the many shifts in emphasis that make the science fiction narrative turn spiritually transformative, one important change that Tarkovsky brought to the screenplay was made upon the very nature of the destination. That which in the novel was a Golden Sphere became The Room. The inherent spatiality of this metamorphosis is of crucial importance to Tarkovsky’s phenomenological attitude. In *Roadside Picnic* the aim of the journey is an object, in *Stalker* it is a place; when the protagonists pause in front of the Golden Sphere, their gesture has temporal resonance, when they linger before crossing the threshold of The Room, their act is of spatial significance. Thus, as in Pallasmaa’s statement that “the act of entering, not the door, triggers our deepest emotions” (1994, 19), Tarkovsky succeeds in accentuating the existential crux of the film through spatial means. The threshold metaphorically condenses and deepens the various interior conflicts of the three characters: “they have been through a great deal, thought about themselves, reassessed themselves; and they haven’t the courage to step across the threshold into the room which they have risked their lives to reach. They have become conscious that at the tragic, deepest level of awareness they are imperfect” (Tarkovsky 1987, 198). Visually, the film intensifies the idea around the metaphysical function of the threshold: we never see the interior of The Room, instead, we have a view of the three men seen from inside of it, underlining that the essence of The Room lies in its interiority, in its potency to contain, to embrace. In the same time, the scene subtly hints to the fact that The Room is not a material place, but rather an interior space infused with sensorial and spiritual realities, in which one dwells inwardly, within the soul.

Having stuck to the Golden Sphere of the initial novel, such nuances would have been lost. An object, however magically empowered, is hardly attachable to matters of the soul, while the experience of being-in-place and inhabiting triggers such deep experiences that it seems a natural attitude to reverse this situatedness in almost naïve metaphors, such as “the rooms of the soul.” This opens the matter further to phenomenological enquiry, since “phenomenology seeks to describe the deep structures of intentional life beginning with the unreflective naivety, structures which give meaning, but are forgotten in that naivety” (Critchley 2002, 7). The naturally intuited spatiality in metaphoric language proves the ontological dimensions

of the act of dwelling; “the experience of a place or space is always a curious exchange; as I settle in a space, the space settles in me” (Pallasmaa 2009, 27).

The idea that being contained determines a reflected understanding of containing resembles Aristotle’s definition of place, if we equate “thing” to mental categories; “the place is the innermost motionless boundary of what it contains. The outer surface of the thing coincides with the inner surface of the place. Place is thought to be a kind of a surface, and, as it were a vessel, a container of the thing. Place is coincident with the thing, for boundaries are coincident with the bounded” (Casey 2000, 184).

In his diaries, Tarkovsky notices the coincidence of the “place” with the “thing” twice: once speaking of being contained, referring to an immersion of the self within its immaterial environment; the other time, about containing, moving inwardly to describe the creative process as ideas dwelling within the inner self.

The first is a quotation noted down from the writings of Saint Basil the Great, which is more or less a poetical continuation of Aristotle’s definition of place, “this is what one ought to be: like water. It knows no obstacles: it flows, a dam stops it, it breaks the dam and it flows again, it is rectangular in a rectangular vessel, round in a round one; water is stronger and more necessary than everything else” (1998).² The second moves into the territory of metaphors, space becoming a conceptual domain:

how does a project mature? It is obviously a most mysterious, almost imperceptible process. It carries on independently of ourselves, in the subconscious, crystallizing on the walls of the soul. It is the form of the soul that makes it unique, indeed only the soul decides the hidden gestation period of that image which cannot be perceived by the conscious gaze (1998).³

It is around this idea of conceiving an artistic creation that one might trace a first clear overlap between Tarkovsky’s and Bergman’s use of spatial metaphors, while also unveiling an answer to the question which opened this section. Bergman says, with an acute poetical sense that marries good humor: “a production stretches its tentacle roots a long way down through time and dreams. I like to imagine the roots as dwelling in the special room of the soul, where they lie maturing comfortably like mighty cheeses” (1989, 202).

^{2,3} Fragments from Tarkovsky, Andrei. 1998. *Dzienniki*, the Polish version of the Diaries, ed. and trans. by Seweryn Kuśmierczyk – exclusively retranslated in English by Jan at Nostalghia.com: <http://people.ualgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheDiaries/sacrifice.html>

3. Poetics of interior enclosures: “the speaking shadows turn without evasion towards my most secret room”

Bergman’s attitude towards this *room* as a distinct immaterial entity is constant. He mentions spatiality as a quality of memory in his recollections of childhood, when speaking of the family’s country house, “I went there the first month of my life and still dwell there in my memory” (1989, 52). These rooms of memory are mentally approachable, “today, if I am calm and just about to fall asleep, I can go from room to room and see every detail, know and feel it” (1989, 20). However, there is one precise interior space that is referred to as *secret* or *closed*, a space that throughout Bergman’s writings appears with constancy only in three distinct circumstances: emotions that underlie childhood recollections, his fascination toward the metaphysical depths of cinema and... Tarkovsky. The first two categories often merge temporally and aesthetically:

No form of art goes beyond ordinary consciousness as film does, straight to our emotions, deep into the twilight room of the soul. At the editing table, when I run the strip of film through, frame by frame, I still feel that dizzy sense of magic of my childhood: in the darkness of the wardrobe, I slowly wind on one frame after another, see the almost imperceptible changes, wind faster – a movement. The mute or speaking shadows turn without evasion towards my most secret room. (Bergman 1989, 74)

However, if in the self-reflective notes the *room* is referred to as *secret*, or *closed*, of an utterly inaccessible nature albeit contained within, the act of entering is alluded to only when mentioning the encounter with Tarkovsky’s work, such as the above-mentioned quotes. For instance, when remembering some episode, Bergman writes: “I found to my surprise that my senses did indeed register the external reality, but the impulses never reached as far as my emotions. They inhabited a closed room” (1989, 117). These lines were written some time before 1986, the events narrated had happened around 1933, and, with the gaze of the one looking back, Bergman adds:

Now that I have the key in my hand, I know that more than forty years were to go by before my emotions were released from that closed room where they had been imprisoned. I existed on the memory of feelings. I knew perfectly well how emotions should be reproduced, but the spontaneous expression of them was never spontaneous. There was always a micro-second between my intuitive experience and its emotional expression.” (1989, 118)

Simple math says that the chiasm of forty years would have ceased around 1973, and is not merely coincidental that Bergman first encountered Tarkovsky's work in 1971, an experience which he describes using exactly the same metaphors of entering the room: "I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me."⁴ Many years later, Bergman would still tell of how he came upon the film *Andrei Rublev* (Tarkovsky, 1966) and bribed the cameraman to stay afterhours to screen it: "At about 2:30 a.m. we came out of the screening room with gaunt eyes, completely moved, enthusiastic and shaken. I will never forget it. What was remarkable is that there were no Swedish subtitles. We didn't understand a word of the dialogue, but we were nonetheless overwhelmed" (Shargel 2007, 197). Members of his filming crew confessed that from that moment on, Bergman would watch *Andrei Rublev* before setting to work for every new film production (Alexander-Garret 2011, 54), sensations from this film appearing through his later writings.⁵

4. Notes for an incongruent conversation: "we didn't understand a word of the dialogue"

Having set the scene of convergence between Bergman's and Tarkovsky's understanding of interior spatiality, the divergence of exterior communication should also be listed, briefly mentioning the fragments of incongruent interaction between the two. Bergman was born in 1918, fourteen years older than Tarkovsky, then twenty-one years outliving the latter. Bergman directed his first film in 1934 (*Crisis*), Tarkovsky released his full-length feature film in 1962; the two would activate concomitantly for only twenty-four years. In 1964, two years after the release of Tarkovsky's award-winning first film *Ivan's Childhood*, Bergman, who was already an internationally accomplished figure, having been asked in an interview whether he had enjoyed any Russian films, would answer: "Very much, I think something very good will come from there soon. I don't know why, but I feel it. Have you seen *Ivan's Childhood*? There are extraordinary things in it" (Shargel 2007, 42). And Bergman's suppositions would prove right. Two years after this, *Andrei Rublev* (1966) was released, but its international distribution was delayed by Russian authorities, so Bergman would only come across it in 1971. The encounter with this film, as described above, would be overwhelming.

⁴ Fragment from the above-cited interview with Bergman: date N/A; source: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/IB_On_AT.html (accessed March 2012)

⁵ In a recurrent nightmare concerning professional anxieties, Bergman dreams that in the moment of uttermost conflict he finds relief taking off and flying, with arms as wings, passing above a large field ("it's bound to be Russia") – an image mirroring the beginning of *Andrei Rublev* (Bergman 1989, 174).

Tarkovsky found out about Bergman's appreciation only two years later. He had already been a great admirer of Bergman, his list of ten favorite films including three signed by the latter. Tarkovsky's diary sheds light upon their non-verbal and indirect dialogue that stretched over twelve years:⁶

Andrei Rublev is being shown in Sweden. Apparently Bergman called *Andrei Rublev* the best film he has ever seen. (17 June 1972, Moscow)

Someone says there is an interview somewhere with Bergman, who considers me the best contemporary director, even better than Fellini (?!!) I wonder if it can be true. It doesn't sound right. (7 January 1974, Moscow)

Bergman invited me a few times to stay with him in Sweden. I was told nothing about it verbally. (14 September 1975, Moscow)

Spoke to Sophia in Stockholm, last night. I asked her to pass on to Bergman the idea of a collaboration between the three of us: Bergman, Antonioni and myself. (13 May 1980, Rome)

Sophia telephoned yesterday from Stockholm. Bergman was very interested in our idea of working together on a film, only unfortunately he is completely booked up until 1983. He very much wants to meet me. Sophia says he has seen *Andrei Rublev* ten times. (16/17 May 1980, Rome)

Saw Bergman for the first time in person today. He had a meeting with young people at the Film Institute where he was presenting the documentary about the making of *Fanny and Alexander* and providing a running documentary. Then he answered the questions. He made an odd impression on me. Self-centered, cold, superficial, both toward the children and the audience. (15 September 1984, Stockholm)

The last entry is written when Tarkovsky was in the middle of preparations for *The Sacrifice* (*Offret*, 1986), shot in Gotland, the Swedish island where Bergman had been filming and living for over twenty years at that time. Even if all previous entries would presume a desire to interact once geographically close, Sven Nykvist, the cinematographer who worked with both of them, recalled that while Tarkovsky and Bergman were both in Stockholm, they would each cross the street to the other side when seeing the other, to avoid any meeting (Johnson 1994, 30). Moreover, after completion of the film, Tarkovsky would abruptly dismiss all assumptions that *The Sacrifice*, due to the fact that it physically inhabited Bergman's landscape, was a Bergmanesque work, while Bergman would publicly consider Tarkovsky's last work "a hopeless waste" (Shargel 2007, 197). This odd incongruence could be open to manifold interpretations, which, however pertinent, would still leave out the innermost realities of both men. While not pretending to

⁶ Following fragments extracted from *Time within Time: The Diaries* (1991).

solve queries of interpersonal failures, the paper will continue tracing reciprocal fusions in their use of spatial metaphors, through this arguing that, beyond the flaws and resilience of direct communication, the two artists have met on a far more profound level.

After having criticized Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice*, Bergman would add:

Anyway, I still think he is a wonderful human being. But let me tell you of the strange relationship I had with him. One day he was in Gotland. It would have taken me twenty minutes to go there, but I didn't go. I thought about it a number of times. Here is someone who meant so much to me, who influenced me decisively – perhaps more because of his attitude about life than as a film director. So why didn't I visit him when he was so close? I think it was the issue of language [...] we would have to communicate through an interpreter. But for the matters I wanted to discuss with him, I could not use an interpreter. It would have been impossible. Thus, we never met. I regret it now. (Shargel 2007, 198)

5. Theoretical interlude:

If there was this issue between them, Swedish and German vs. Russian and Italian, what was, then, that language in which Tarkovsky had managed to influence Bergman decisively, communicating even ineffable concepts such as attitude about life? Philosophers say that we are immersed in language as in an existential system which precludes any knowledge, its ontological function reflecting again the naturalness of inhabiting, of becoming immersed in place's phenomenological embrace. While Bergman considered that Tarkovsky "had invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream,"⁷ Walter Benjamin (1999) thought that architecture is made of dream images that protrude into the waking world and Henri Bergson (2004) would observe that cinema is the only art rightly equipped to depict such inner and imperceptible layers of the human mind as dreams and memories. All three assumptions might refer to one and the same communicative reality, which – in absence of a better term – might be called language beyond language.

There's another kind of language, another form of communication: by means of feeling and images. That is the contact which stops people being separated from each other, which brings down barriers. Will, feeling, emotion – these

⁷ Fragment from an interview with Bergman: date N/A; source: nostalgia.com (accessed March 2012)

remove obstacles from between people who otherwise stand on opposite sides of a mirror, on opposite sides of a door... (Tarkovsky 1987, 13)⁸

In this language, direct perception transgresses the sensorial and dwells as a reflection upon memories and dreams, and lived space becomes expressible in cinema:

As a communicative system, what is called the film experience uniquely opens up and exposes inhabited space of direct experience as a condition of singular embodiment and makes it accessible and visible to more than the single consciousness that lives it. Cinema thus transposes what would otherwise be the invisible, individual, and intra-subjective privacy of direct experience as it is embodied, into the visible, public and inter-subjective sociality of a language that not only refers to direct experience, but also uses direct experience as its mode of reference. (Sobchack 1991, 9)

Following the previous discussion about entering the room, now taking into account the direct experience of the door as is referred to, but also as a mode of reference, in the films of Bergman and Tarkovsky, the cinematic imagery around this basic architectural element unveils new layers of poetic meaning. As observed by Benjamin and Bergson, the act of opening a door and crossing the threshold is protruded by dream images translatable in cinema. As will be shortly described, the door is for both directors at times a mode of reference and trigger for unfolding the flow of dream and recollected images, while other times being referred to as a metaphor for approaching these interior rooms of memory. Paul Ricoeur would define “inhabited space as a paradigm for memory mechanisms. In memories, corporeal space is immediately linked with the surrounding space of the environment” (1992, 150).

In this regard, the most eloquent and picturesque example is, for both filmmakers, the childhood home, the place which holds the roots of the first “attitudes about life” (Shargel 2007, 198), and of the first spatial intuitions.

6. Approaching and depicting memories of the childhood home: “suppose I open it?”

“I can still roam through the landscape of my childhood and again experience lights, smells, people, rooms, moments, gestures, tones of voice and objects. These memories seldom have any particular meaning, but are like short or longer films

⁸ Fragment of a letter which Tarkovsky received from one of the admirers of *Zerkalo*, quoted in the introduction to *Sculpting in Time* (Tarkovsky 1987, 13).

with no point, shot at random” (Bergman 1987, 17), writes the Swedish director in a fragment which shows the synaesthetic intensity in perceiving and expressing these early experienced spaces. Such sensorial recollections are recurrent in his writings, and one of these raises a fairly intriguing question: “In the quietness of Grandmother’s home, my senses opened and decided to keep all this forever and ever. Where has everything gone? Have any of my children inherited the impressions of my senses? Can one inherit impressions of senses, experiences, insights?” (1987, 20).

Where has everything gone? Most psychologists and phenomenologists that study memory and its mechanisms would point towards the embodiment of memories, underlining the fact that the body is the center for storing impressions, and that only through reenacting the body’s situatedness would those memories be restored. However, this view is opposed, or rather completed, by those that say that “the body is indeed one of the things in which our true feelings are located, but it is not the only one... Least of all is the self limited to the body. A person literally projects or throws himself out of the body, anywhere at all” (Becker 1971, 32). “In other words, our inner existence (mind) is incredibly entangled with the exterior world, in the phenomenological world in which we live” (Schwartzenberg 2009, 60).

Bergman’s approach exemplifies both positions. On the one hand, he can often “go from room to room and see every detail, know and feel it” (Bergman 1987, 20) without a need to reenact the body’s emplacement; on the other hand, his first autobiographical film, *Wild Strawberries* (*Smultronstället*, 1957) was prompted by an actual encounter with the place, visiting his childhood house after many years of absence. In this case, the space itself turned into a metaphor that would further develop into the film image:

I went up to the house and took hold of the door knob of the kitchen door, which still had its colored glass pattern and a feeling ran quickly through me: suppose I open it? Supposing old Lalla, our old cook, is standing inside there, in her big apron, making porridge for breakfast, as she did so many times when I was little? Suppose I could suddenly walk into my childhood? Then it struck me: supposing I make a film of someone coming along, perfectly realistically, and suddenly opening a door and walking into his childhood? And then opening another door and walking into reality again?” (Bjorkman 1993, 131)

The film did not, in the end, keep the idea of opening the door as trigger of the transformation, from directly perceiving a materiality of loss into physically grasping the immaterial memory image. Perhaps, however sincere, the film image would have been thought of as too facile, since, as previously stated, describing the immaterial in terms of spatial metaphors is a natural, almost naïve attitude. Just as

Tarkovsky writes that memory has to be worked upon before it can become film (Tarkovsky 1987, 29). Instead, the house turns from its decaying present-day into the bright image of the protagonist's recollections, while piano music starts to play. Seemingly arbitrary, this association is in fact part of Bergman's innermost childhood landscape, as he reveals when discussing filmmaking in the opening of the book on *Wild Strawberries*,

my association with film goes back to the world of childhood. My grandmother had a very large old apartment in Uppsala. I used to sit under the dining-room table there, listening to the sunshine which came in through gigantic windows. The sunlight moved about and sounded in a very special way. One day, when winter was giving way to spring and I was five years old, a piano was being played in the next apartment. On the wall hung a large picture of Venice. As the sunlight moved across the picture, the water in the canal began to flow, the pigeons flew up from the square, people talked and gesticulated. Bells sounded from the picture itself. And the piano music also came from that remarkable picture of Venice." (Bergman 1993, 6)

The synaesthetic strength in such juxtapositions of senses as sounding sunlight and bells chiming from inside of a static picture phenomenologically describes the deeply-lived space. Moreover, the subjective association, replacing the physical opening of a door with a piano melody that opens an interior room through the spatiality that inheres in music, render truthfulness to the final film image. Due to its flexibility in moving from one sense to the other, film is the medium that captures such metaphoric inversions in the most subtle way and seems to answer Bergman's question: perhaps it is us, the viewers, that could inherit impressions of senses, experiences, insights...

Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* was one of Tarkovsky's favorite films and, although the narrative, the structure and the imagery essentially differ, Tarkovsky's own autobiographical film, *The Mirror* (*Zerkalo*, 1975) shares a similar metaphorical treatment in approaching the door of the childhood home. Unlike Bergman, Tarkovsky's images of this house unfolded solely from memories and photographs. This is because the house he was born in and had spent his first years of life perished long before he made the film, having been previously flooded when a dam was constructed closely, on the Volga. His sister recalls him having constant dreams of swimming through dark water, toward the house, while other dreams of it eventually generated the idea for this film:

I have a recurring dream which is amazingly regular. Each time it is almost identical, the house where I was born, with only the smallest changes. The only thing that varies is that the sun may be shining or it may be raining, winter or

summer. And now as I dream of the log walls blackened with age, and the door, ajar, leading from the porch into the darkness of the vestibule, I already know that I am only dreaming it, and the unbearable joy of returning to my birthplace is diluted by the expectation of waking. (Tarkovsky 1999, 303)

In a lecture for film students, Tarkovsky further confessed that it was precisely the spatial impossibility of crossing this house's threshold in dreams (as mentioned in Johnson 1994) that prompted the need to make this film, to rebuild the house in the same location where it once stood, and make it inhabitable within the film experience.

In the film sequences where the little boy approaches the house, he constantly stops at the door, aside from one scene, a poetic spatial metaphor that subtly associates memories (of having inhabited this house) with dreams (of its flooded decaying existence). The first drafts of the screenplay for *Zerkalo* contained an episode in which the young Andrei sinks in the waves of the river Volga, while his Mother washes laundry on the riverbank, and afterwards they swim together towards and within an underwater house. However, this dream image was then artistically transformed in film. Such as in the case of Bergman, an associative process of juxtaposing feelings gave rise to a stronger, more inclusive metaphor: after seeing the image of Mother washing laundry and Andrei swimming in the river, we see the little boy approaching the house and this time entering it, crossing the threshold and passing through rooms in which light-filled curtains float in the air, translucently veiling the view of the house, at times caressing and covering him in their bright vaporous texture, as he moves on in slow motion. The beautiful metaphor of floating veils speaks in a domestic tone of the flooded house, as well as of the layers of time gone by, the curtains bringing homely familiarity and taming the dramatic image of a sunken house and the even more dramatic image of oblivion.

Telling the story of his family and the failures of communication among them, *Zerkalo* was for Tarkovsky an attempt to say those things never being said, ask for forgiveness and seek some filial repentance. Speaking the very same language, which – indeed – needs no interpreter, Bergman would recount how one Sunday afternoon, years after both his parents (with whom he could never have a genuine dialogue) had died, was sitting in a church across the street from his childhood home, listening to Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, and, sinking in a reverie, he imagined going to the house and finding his parents spending the quiet hours of the afternoon in silence, his Mother reading, while he gently approaches her and filially kisses her forehead. "Now I'll make an attempt, this time it will be successful" (Bergman 1989, 282). The narrative fragment continues when, upon waking from this redemptive reverie to the physicality of the church filled with light and flowing sounds, in a fragment that seems to mirror in detail Tarkovsky's metaphoric image: "Bach's chorale was still moving like colorful floating veils in

my consciousness, flitting back and forth across thresholds and through opened doors. Joy” (Bergman 1989, 282).

7. Conclusions: “to glimpse with our sightless eyes”

It is the first mention of opened doors in Bergman’s reflective writings about his inner self. The doors to that room which had been closed in him for over forty years and which he had glimpsed when first watching *Andrei Rublev*... now opened into joy? It is surely not Tarkovsky’s film approach, nor his imagery that opened up these rooms, since Bergman confesses that Tarkovsky was for him a decisive influence more because of his attitude towards life than as a filmmaker. This attitude towards life of the Russian director is, paradoxically, best summarized by his attitude towards death: “There is no death,” he would constantly say in interviews: *Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema* (Baglivo, 1984), and reiterate in his films. In the context of absent direct dialogue, one might guess, then, that Bergman perceived beyond the visual metaphors of these film images and understood them in the same key in which Tarkovsky would conceive them: “an image is an impression of Truth, which God has allowed us to glimpse with our sightless eyes” (Tarkovsky 1987, 106). Bergman would declare himself to be an atheist, although many evidences in his oeuvre prove the opposite, and so does his admiration for Tarkovsky and his watching *Andrei Rublev* before setting to work (since *Rublev* deals with the position of the artist before people and before God, this ritual could almost be understood as prayer). Last, but not least, Bergman writes that “Bach’s piety heals our faithlessness” (1989, 281), and the story of listening to the *Christmas Oratorio* could have been one of these “healing” moments, when closed rooms are finally open.

It might not be too far from truth, then, to assume that for both Tarkovsky and Bergman, “the most secret room,” or that “in which everyone’s most secret wish is granted” are one and the same place, where man meets God, where silence speaks louder than language, where death does not exist, where there is light even in the night, where there is forgiveness, where memories and emotions reside and grow into thoughts, where images are born. It is the spiritual dwelling place experienced on some invisible layers by the child, which merges in perception with the childhood home and makes the latter linger in the memory as a nostalgia for Eden. Approaching it, people usually “haven’t the courage to step into the room which they have risked their lives to reach. They have become conscious that at the tragic, deepest level of awareness, they are imperfect” (Tarkovsky 1987, 198) and it takes an act of courage, indeed, to bow down and humbly cross its threshold. “Come and abide in us.”

It might also be true to say that, at least in the brightest images of their artistic creations, both Tarkovsky and Bergman have entered this room.

Works cited

- Alexander-Garrett, Layla. 2011. *Andrei Tarkovsky: a Photographic Chronicle of the Making of the Sacrifice*. London: Cygnnet Publishing.
- Baglivo, Donatella (dir.). 1984. *Tarkovskij, Andrej. Un Poeta nel Cinema*. [Andrei Tarkovsky: A Poet in the Cinema.] Documentary. Italy: CIAK
- Becker, Ernst. 1971. *The Birth and Death of Meaning: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1999. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Rolf Tiedemann. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Bergman, Ingmar. 1993. *Wild Strawberries*. London: Faber and Faber.
- . 1989. *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography*. Trans. Joan Tate. London: Penguin Books Ltd. [Originally published: 1988. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd.]
- Bergson, Henri. 2004. *Matter and Memory*. Trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer. Mineola, NY: Courier Dover Publications. [Originally published: 1912. London: G. Allen & Co.; New York: Macmillan.]
- Bjorkman, Stig et al. 1993. *Bergman on Bergman: Interviews with Ingmar Bergman*. Trans. Paul Britten Austin. Cambridge: Da Capo Press.
- Casey, Edward. 2000. *Remembering. A Phenomenological Study*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Critchley, Simon and Robert Bernasconi. 2002. *The Cambridge Companion to Levinas*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Vida and Graham Petrie. 1994. *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. 1999. *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974). Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 1962. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. Oxford: Routledge.
- Pallasmaa, Juhani. 1994. Identity, Intimacy and Domicile. Notes on the Phenomenology of Home. In *Arkkitehti - Finnish Architectural Review* issue 1. http://www.uiah.fi/opintoasiat/history2/e_ident.htm
- . 2009. Space, Place and Imagination. In *Spatial Recall*, ed. Marc Treib, 16-41. Oxford: Routledge.
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1992. *Memory, History, Forgetting*. Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Schwartzberg, Susan. 2009. Re-creating the Past: Notes on the Neurology of Memory. In *Spatial Recall: Memory in Architecture and Landscape*, ed. Marc Treib, 42-61. Oxford: Routledge.
- Shargel, Raphael, ed. 2007. *Ingmar Bergman: Interviews*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Sobchack, Vivian. 1991. *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Strugatski, Arkadi & Boris Strugatski. 2008. *Picnic la Marginea Drumului*. [Roadside Picnic.] Transl. by Valerian Stoicescu. Bucuresti: Paralela 45.

- Tarkovsky, Andrei. 1987. *Sculpting in Time*. Trans. Kitty Hunter Blair. London: The Bodley Head.
- . 1991. *Time within Time: the Diaries*. Trans. Kitty Hunter Blair. Calcutta: Seagull.
- . 1998. *Dzienniki*, The Diaries. [The Diaries.] Warszawa: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk.
- . 1999. *Collected Screenplays*. Trans. Natasha Synessios. London: Faber and Faber.

Web sources:

www.nostalghia.com - *An Andrei Tarkovsky information site*

http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/IB_On_AT.html (accessed March 2012),

<http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheDiaries/sacrifice.html> (accessed March 2012), exclusive translation in English from Dzienniki , the Polish version of the Diaries