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SPATIAL PERCEPTION AND IMAGINATION
THROUGH ANDREI TARKOVSKY’S NOSTALGHIA

A Thesis in
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by
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Taking the uncanny tone of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the “flesh of the world” as its point of departure, this thesis bridges film and architecture through a spatial exploration of Andrei Tarkovsky’s film Nostalghia. Based on a poetic depiction of five scenes from Nostalghia, this work considers how incorporating time into the production of space reveals that architecture is not an expression of the debates regarding spatial experience, but an agent of a spatial phenomenon capable of shaping and enhancing the lived experience.

In order to consider the relationship between filmic and architectonic space, the scenes are considered within the framework of three categories: (1) space subordinating time, (2) time subordinating space, and (3) space and time as equal factors. The first category depicts how collective and private spatial manifestations affect time through an analysis of the La Madonna del Parto and Domenico house scenes. The second category explains how time affects space through a comparison
of the camera eye (kino-eye) to the dissection of space (poché) through an analysis of the Hotel and Pool scenes. In addition, the last category considers how time and space are taken as having equal weight in the poetics of Nostalghia through a series of requiems that appear throughout the film.

Finally, this thesis addresses space within film as a portal for the expression of the imaginative constructs that underlie Merleau-Ponty’s work: a portal that touches upon the limits of the visible, the invisible, and the spaces in between. Recognizing the dichotomies present in contemporary phenomenological discourse, this thesis contributes to a deeper exploration of the imaginative constructs that precede and accompany architectural design without the constrictions of form but with time as an agent articulating the possibilities of space.
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Since its inception, film has shared a common ground with architecture: Space. Inherent in both art forms, space bridges these two disciplines and thus provides for a reciprocal investigation of spatial experience. It is perhaps with film that on an unconscious level at least the architectural emotional essence first enchants us. After all, it was through film that an avowedly rational and secular society allowed itself to encounter the other, the foreign, the fantastic, the erotic, or even that most duplicitous double “life itself.”¹

Through an approach in which the spatial depiction of Andrei Tarkovsky’s film Nostalghia is central, this thesis scrutinizes five scenes from the film

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in order to consider how time within the production of space structures a relationship in which film and architecture function as mirror images of each other. This work adds an uncanny tone to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the flesh of the world and reveals that architecture far from being a mere expression of the debates over the experience of space, constitutes an agent of this phenomenon.

Finally, this thesis addresses space within Nostalghia as a portal for the imaginative constructs underlying the spatial experience—a portal that touches upon the limits of the visible, the invisible, and the spaces in between. The thesis accentuates the dichotomies present in architectonic perceptual discourse and in doing so explores in detail the imaginaries that precede and accompany architectonic design.

The Uncanny Flesh of the World

In the context of the phenomenological discourse that emerged from France around the middle of the twentieth century, Merleau-Ponty
explored experience pertaining to space and perceptions of the world. His work in regard to perceptual phenomena finds its roots in the example of the handshake, in which touching one hand with the other reveals two dimensions of the body and supports a reversible relationship between “touching” and “tangible” that is no other but the essence of what he called “flesh.” With his last book, the unfinished *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty expanded his concept of the flesh of the world as a premise for being within the world we experience and perceive. The book enunciates the ambiguous status of our bodies as both subject and object by working to overcome the gap between subjectivity and objectivity.\(^2\) In his argument, via the term “chiasma,” the visible sets up an intimate relationship between us and the things that our gaze envelops. A wrap is unleashed by our eyes in the act of seeing

that makes an impossible “nakedness” of things within our vision. In fact, the concept of chiasma aligns us with a tactile disposition as we look, thus closing the distance between the observer and whatever is observed. In such a notion, “visibility” becomes a revelation that eschews the qualities with which we ordinarily invest the object rather than functioning as itself a quality of the perceived object per se (Fig. 3).

According to Merleau-Ponty, this problematic predisposition of people toward visible interrogation pulls us closer to the object in which we discover a tactile world. That is how the movement of a hand while touching ascertains the nature of texture, but only if that hand “while felt from within is also accessible from without.”

This integration of the touching and the touched is not far from what we experience through vision. Furthermore, visible and tangible, in Merleau-Ponty’s argument, are intertwined simply because through the body we

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both see and touch. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty advances an argument whereby the one who looks is also looked at becoming also part of the visible and tactile world. This reversibility of see and seen converges distance and proximity into one, making the body a means of communication and not an obstacle between our gaze and the object. In other words, the thickness of our bodies does not interfere with the world. Instead our bodies, in this sense of thickness, substantiveness, offer the only means through which to decipher the world. This final exploration of the flesh of the world first consolidates touch as a sense that extends sight and by doing so generates the visible world as objective, and second presages, from the example of the handshake, a leap from subjective to objective as a simultaneous condition of ourselves. However, the duplicitous chiasma cannot neglect the consideration of body and mind as two distinct yet complementary agents of the perceptual phenomenon.
In fact, this consideration is expressed in a compilation of notes collected from the series of lectures Merleau-Ponty gave at the Faculté de lettres in Lyon and the École normale supérieure in Paris in 1947 and 1948. This series of lectures investigates the work of French philosopher Nicolas Malebranche, who explored the relationship between the body and mind three centuries before it was theorized as inhering in the mystery of spatial phenomena.

The indefinable frontier of body and mind is an inconvenient riddle that shaped Merleau-Ponty’s view of phenomenology as an “unsatisfactory philosophy.”\(^4\) And, it is this frontier that turns the essence of Merleau-Ponty’s quest into something untamable and seemingly uncertain in the realm of philosophy but extremely attractive for imagining and understanding space in architecture. This frontier suggests the perception of space as a phenomenon intersected by architecture in

which a complex relationship between our surroundings and ourselves informs the ways a designer can shape a lived experience.

Based on my first attempts to comprehend the phenomenon of space through the work of Merleau-Ponty, I arrived at an incomplete understanding of perception as inhering in something indefinable very similar to the speculation of the uncanny. The idea of the uncanny captured attention during the development of psychology at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1906, in *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*, Ernst Jentsch wrote about a correlative relationship important to understanding the complex work of the mind in regard to perception by distinguishing the unfamiliar from the familiar. Drawing on *Heimlich-Unheimlich* [Homely-Unhomely], Jentsch expressed his contributions to the uncanny in terms of human responses to assimilating to the world. After Jentsch’s paper, Freud expanded this idea in 1919 by arguing that the uncanny must not be reduced just to the feeling of unfamiliarity or disorientation.
In *The Uncanny*, Freud offers a counterargument that departs from the *Heimlich* etymology in order to find a broader manifestation of the uncanny and a unifying essence. Important to this divergence from Jentsch’s approach is the position that Homely (*Heimlich*) and Unhomely (*Unheimlich*) are not opposite terms but instead two ideas inscribed within each other. Therefore, perception for me emerged as an unknown that requires architecture to act as a filter in terms of our relationship to the world and architecture as the representation of the odd taste of reality that art manifestations constantly address, such as in Merleau-Ponty’s work. In these terms, I take the uncanny as an adjectival basis for exploring how Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy stimulates the designers’ imagination in the production of space and architecture.

To understand how the uncanny functions within the silences of perception, it is important to consider three central points: (1) the ambivalent nature of the uncanny as two poles within the range of a concept, a duplicity inscribed within each other, (2) the distinction such
that divagating from the uncanny derives more from fantasy than from reality, and (3) the etymological roots of the uncanny. On this last point, Freud traces the historical trajectory of the uncanny, demonstrating how it has in essence been dormant through the ages. Hence, this retrospective path of the uncanny is not only concealed within language, but it is also manifested in various means of human expression, including film and architecture.

Having established, a correspondence between the uncanny and the perception of space, the present work instead of focusing on aversion to “occularcentricsm” ⁵ will consider time and space and multiple relationships in those areas. In particular, the focus is how time within the production of space exposes the interactions among subject, object, body and mind⁶ in terms of how they function in the relationship between film and architecture.

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Poetics of Space in Film

Film is an exquisite art form capable of uncovering the phenomenon of space from both sides of the screen. Film acts as a medium for relating Merleau-Ponty’s flesh of the world to the dualistic nature of the uncanny, which is also relevant to the elusiveness of spatial experience. When we look at the screen attentively, the screen also looks at us by extending the reach of our sight into a gaze. This reversed Lacanian gaze\(^7\) exalts all things hidden inside us. If we think we are exploring a film, it is the film that is exploring us. Similarly, for Merleau-Ponty, we are not just looking at the world; rather, the world is looking back at us by stimulating our core. This idea of sight as a back-and-forth concept will be applied through Nostalghia as a reversal process that mirrors the poetics of space in film and architecture.

\(^7\) Todd McGowan explains the role of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz as the object on the screen that holds our fantasies and desires, embodying the gaze. He states, “here the object looks back at us, and the film includes us in what it shows.” Todd McGowan, The Real Gaze: Film Theory After Lacan (New York: State University of New York, 2007), 164.
With roots in the word poetic, poïesis\(^8\) is the means of production and is the key to creating and apprehending space produced within film. Poïesis lies between the relationship of object and subject and the film and its audience through the screen by anchoring a relationship between world, image, and spectator. André Bazin compares the screen to “the little flashlight of the usher, moving like an uncertain comet across the night of our waking dream, the diffuse space without shape or frontiers that surrounds the screen.”\(^9\) He alludes to the filmic space in which we can encounter a reality depicted on the screen as previously recorded by the camera.

Dziga Vertov’s explorations of the kino-eye, or the camera eye, present some of the first experimentations in film and the first investigations into its production. Vertov’s concern is in the phenomenon whereby space is captured and reproduced through time. An interesting trick of inversions

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is what the films technique consists of: all that occurs in front of the camera is recorded through a long sequence of stills, a sequence of photographs. Then, what was filmed is later projected onto the screen, reproducing the veracity of a life far away from the spectator.

Vertov explored the manipulation of time through the form of montage (Fig. 4). His publications in KinoPravda include forceful statements about the nature of film—statements that constitute the beginning of film theory. The intriguing mechanisms of film relate a story marked by a strong difference from older narrative mediums, such as literature and theater. The following excerpt from KinoPrava in April 1922 (Fig. 5) defines film as a new platform for understanding space not as a spatial storyteller, but as a spatial builder, a poetic art of space.
“We do not object to cinema’s undermining of literature and the theater; we wholly approve of the use of cinema in every branch of knowledge, but we define these functions as accessory, as secondary offshoots of cinema.

The main and essential thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film.

We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye, for the exploration of the chaos of visual. The Kino-eye lives and moves in time and space; it gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye. The position of our bodies while observing or our perception of a certain number of features of a visual phenomenon in a given instant are by no means obligatory limitations for the camera which, since it is perfected, perceives more and better.”  

This compelling description of film as a new and more perfect way of capturing and informing sense impressions offers film as a continuous combination of space and time and as an uncanny tool for investigating

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our perceptions of the world. It is noteworthy here that time not only generates the essence of film, but that time is also captured by this new "prosthetic eye."\footnote{Nicholas Royle, \textit{The Uncanny} (New York: Routledge, 2003), 30.} What this filmic eye observes can be modified as desired and replayed as many times as we want (Fig. 6). If film implies an observation of a spatial phenomenon passing through time—a tool for recording factual, specific, and unique moments of reality—and if such moments can be reproduced instantaneously by plunging the audience into a virtual kind of reality, then film finds significance inside and outside the screen. Thus, time becomes tangible whenever we sense something significant beyond the events on the screen, such as in realizing that what we see in the frame is not limited to its visual depiction but is an indicator of something that expands out and beyond the frame. However, I agree with Tarkovsky when he states that though "film is visible and four dimensional, by no means can every shot in a film aspire
to be an image of the world; just as often, a shot merely describes some specific aspect.”¹² Film simply presents observations of perceived objects and spaces.

In Sculpting Time, Tarkovsky sees the filmmaker as a craftsman who details the aspects of reality that seem to be indefinable. The filmmaker acts as an interpreter who voices a communal dissatisfaction by working on a medium that establishes agreement through the image. The internal battle of the filmmaker, he states, is replaced by something that speaks for itself, himself, and the rest of the selves—an object that pacifies or intensifies internal battles.

Nevertheless, a filmmaker must grant that once a film is watched, it becomes separate from its author and takes on a life of its own, a life filtered and modified by the observer. Thus, the film becomes something beyond its illusory existence. In this process, a person invariably prefers

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one thing to another by selecting and seeking within the context of personal experience. And, as everyone has his/her own particular inclinations, we all adapt what we see in a film in the context of our lives, hedging a wide range of aphorisms. Therefore, the spatial experience in film, as in architecture, allows for complicated and contradictory interpretations: each person tends to consider the world to be the product of their own interpretation.

Through the following chapters, some interpretations of the spatial experiences generated by Nostalghia frame a mirroring poetics of space in film and architecture. The five scenes selected from this film generate insights in regard to perceptions of space and the relationship of such perception to architectural design.
Commissioned by the Italian TV network RAI, Nostalghia, Tarkovsky’s only film shot outside Russia, was conceived as an extension of Tempo di Viaggio, his previous film on which he collaborated with Italian cinematographer Tonino Guerra. In 1979, three years after Tempo di Viaggio, Tarkovsky explored an idea for a screenplay entitled “The End of the World,” in which a man, believing in an imminent apocalypse, imprisoned his family for 40 years. Eventually, found by the authorities, his family is taken to safety. But as this occurs, the son asks “Papa, is this the end of the world?” This idea was incorporated into Nostalghia in relation to Domenico’s character while Tarkovsky was pondering the reason for the protagonist’s journey to Italy. In 1980, the project was

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13 Ностальгия is the Cyrillic script for the word nostalgia.
ready to be filmed in Tuscany, but it was only in 1983 that it was finished
and then shown for the first time at the Cannes film festival that same
year (Fig. 7).

**Alternate Title:** Nostalghia (Italian title). **Production Company:** OperaFilm.
RAI (Rome)/Sovin Film (Moscow). **Producer:** Francesco Casati. **Director:**
Andrei Tarkovsky. **Screenplay:** Andrei Tarkovsky & Tonino Guerra. **Director
of Photography:** Giuseppe Lanci. **Editor:** Erminia Marani, Amedeo Salfa.
**Music:** Verdi: Requiem “Requiem eternam”; Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
Choral; Russian and Chinese folk music. **Art Director:** Andrea Crisanti.
**Assistant Directors:** Norman Mozzato, Larissa Tarkovskaya. **Sound:** Remo
Ugolini. **Cast:** Oleg Yankovsky (Andrei Gorchakov), Domiziana Giordano
(Eugenia), Erland Josephson (Domenico), Patrizia Terreno (Maria,
Gorchakov’s wife), Laura De Marchi (woman with towel), Delia Boccardo
(Domenico’s wife), Milena Vukotic (municipal employee), Alberto
Canepa (peasant), Raffaele DiMario, Rate Furlan, Livio Galassi, Piero Vida,
Elena Magoia. **Shot:** Autumn 1982. **Running Time:** 126 mins. **First Screening:**
Cannes Film Festival, May 1983. **First Screening in the USSR:** April 1987.
**Awards:** Grand Prix de Création, Ecumenical Jury Prize, FIPRESCI Prize, Best
Director, Cannes Film Festival 1983.15

Straight from the title *Nostalghia* (Fig. 8), this film concerns itself with contrasts between foreignness and homeliness as each of these relate to the affliction of an “acute longing for familiar surroundings.” As Nariman Skakov explained based on Tarkovsky’s own statements, the film’s Italian and international title was modified from the customary *Nostalgia*, to *Nostalghia* adding an unsounded *h*, the function of which is to harden the preceding *g*, which is consequently pronounced not as [(i)] (as in Italian and in English) but as [gi:ja:]. The effect is that of an Italian word spoken with a Russian accent.

*Nostalghia* is undoubtedly a film by an *auteur*, and probably one of the most personal and political statements Tarkovsky ever made. For this reason, many researchers consider this film as a bibliographical map of

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17 Ibid., 311.
19 As in Tarkovsky’s most complete work critique is illustrated in Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue*. 

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Figure 8. Opening scene, Russian landscape and title of the film. Still from *Nostalghia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
the filmmaker in which he expresses the difficult feelings of exile through Domenico, Gorchakov, and Sosnovsky, who are taken as representing aspects of the filmmaker’s internal life.\(^{20}\)

In Elements of Cinema, Robert Bird subjects Tarkovsky’s complete works as a cinematic map tracing his life and artistic intentions to a thorough analysis. Bird highlights audience appreciation of this film as relating to “the peculiar heartache experienced by Russians when separated from their homeland”\(^{21}\) and more specifically Tarkovsky’s early experience of exile. In an interview, Tarkovsky defined this heartache further: “It is not only a feeling of homesickness. It is an illness because it robs mental strength, it takes away the ability to work and even the desire to live.

\(^{20}\)In an interview, Tarkovsky declared, “The protagonist virtually becomes my alter ego, embodying all my emotions, psychology and nature. He is a mirror image of me. I have never made a film which mirrors my own states of mind with so much violence, and liberates my inner world in such depth. When I saw the finished product I felt uneasy, as when one sees oneself in a mirror.” Tony Mitchell, “Andrei Tarkovsky and Nostalghia,” Film Criticism 8, no. 3, 1984, 5.

It is like a handicap, the absence of something, a part of oneself. I am
certain that it is a real illness of the Russian character.”\textsuperscript{22}

However, the images presented in \textit{Nostalghia} are emotional settings that
are unsuccessful in finding a rational explanation. They constitute the
seed of subjective interpretation guiding the viewer to reach a state of
intense yearning, not only for the past, but also for home and a “place of
belonging on a broader scale.”\textsuperscript{23} For this reason, this thesis refrains from
focusing on the historical and personal aspects of Tarkovsky’s work to
consider instead this homesickness as an intricate construction of space
and time in which places and characters represent the uncanny
perception of space reiterated in the scenes selected. The following
chapters consider the space created in \textit{Nostalghia}, experiencing it
beyond the exhaustive historical and ideological analysis to which this
film has already been subjected.

Michael Wynne-Ellis (Helsinki: Rankennustieto Oy, 2001), 67.
\textsuperscript{23} Sean Martin, \textit{Andrei Tarkovsky} (New York: Oldcastle Books, 2011), 175.
Plot

The protagonist, Andrei Gorchakov, is a Russian poet traveling in Italy to collect material on the Russian serf composer Pavel Sosnovsk, who, driven by the longing for home, had returned to serfdom and committed suicide. Gorchakov, along with his Italian interpreter, Eugenia, goes to a small church in Tuscany to see a painting by Piero della Francesca. However, once at the church, Gorchakov finds himself unable to enter. Back at their hotel, it becomes evident that Gorchakov’s behavior, both at the church and more generally, signals a loss of contact with the world while dreaming of his home in Russia. In the small town of Bagno Vignoni, they meet an eccentric hermit, the former mathematician Domenico, to whom Gorchakov becomes attached. And, subsequently, Gorchakov visits the hermit’s decaying abode.
In desperation, Domenico douses himself with gasoline and sets himself alight. And, he meets his death by this act of self-immolation. But before taking his final breath, Domenico orders Gorchakov to walk across St. Catherine’s thermal pool holding a lighted candle. This will, according to Domenico, save humanity.

After several attempts to fulfill the hermit’s dying wish, Gorchakov succeeds. But in the very act of completing his charge, Gorchakov dies of a heart attack. The film ends with a collage of images of Andrei sitting in front of his Russian home located within the ruins of an Italian cathedral.24

This film’s minimal plot maps the events and overall intention of the film, referencing a sense of the wanderer-outcast in Italy. The two characters with whom Gorchakov interacts in his journey make his inner conflict apparent. Eugenia, his interpreter, embodies the tension between Gorchakov’s beloved Russia and his experience of a place where he feels

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foreign, whereas Domenico, a disturbed man, synthetizes Gorchakov’s distaste for the world.

This film alludes to the painful feeling of longing in time-space that has already passed, an agonizing disease of the outcast and the homesick. It sets up a platform for exploring this uncanny experience that starts and ends with “the most extreme nostalgia or ‘homesickness,’ in other words, a compulsion to return to an inorganic state, a desire (perhaps unconscious) to die.” 25 In every aspect, whether mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, or sound, this film reinforces the idea of despair and longing through the immobility 26 of its characters. This static quality of the image establishes a steady connection between the gaze of the screen and the gaze of the audience. This intimate invitation to decipher the riddles of Nostalgia through the eyes of Gorchakov,

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Eugenia, and Domenico transforms the visible framed image into a medium that allows us to have an outer body experience that uncovers, in a way, the inner workings of the mind. In this way, the images mirror sensorial elements of the lived experience within the space that Gorchakov and Tarkovsky cannot occupy: the home that exists in memory.

In order to bridge film and architecture through the production of space, in the following chapters a dissection of Nostalghia will expose, based on a series of scenes, how time intertwines the reversed poetics of space for these two disciplines.\(^27\) This division or segmentation is structured based on five sequences of the film that portray architectural buildings. The first group of scenes are understood as representing sacred space and home, two spaces that are affected by our presence. These two spaces exemplify how the production of space aligns body and mind in a

\(^{27}\) While film adds time to the still image to show movement, architecture coordinates our movements by the disposition of static objects. In both disciplines, space and time play an inverted role in terms of subject-object.
particular fashion, suggesting insights for the design of abodes and sacred spaces. In the next group of scenes, the relationship between space and time is inverted, making time the element that impacts ideas of perception. This inversion discloses how the kino-eye (camera eye) enhances the dissection space or poché in the spatial perception, thus instructing the production of space for architectural design. Leading to the concluding chapter of this thesis, the last selection of scenes constitutes requiems of space and time. The spaces in Gorchakov’s mind summarize the spatial bridge between film and architecture as a synecdoche of Nostalghia. Finally, the concluding insights offered by Nostalghia contribute to the investigation of spatial phenomena and propose some future directions in the poetics of architectonic space in the sphere of architectural design.
Structure

*Space Touched by Our Presence*

In the *La Madonna del Parto* scene, Gorchakov and his interpreter reach an open foggy land. They have traveled to see Piero della Francesca’s fresco in Italy, but only Eugenia enters the basilica where it is displayed. She wanders around inside the basilica and observes a pregnancy ritual. Although Gorchakov remains outside the building, we observe him on the screen through one of his requiems. In this scene, body and mind are the elements that direct the experience of this sacred space and thus portray how Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy adds new dimensions to architectural design.

In contrast, the scene inside Domenico’s house shows this sad man living in a deserted and crumbling house. Drifting toward a paranoid madness, he is obsessed with the demoralization of the world that will eventually drive humanity to destruction.
In this scene, Gorchakov and Domenico both experience a certain detachment and loneliness: That is, whereas Gorchakov is isolated by his nostalgic condition, Domenico is isolated by his mental disturbance. Yet, the characters mirror and complement each other. The architecture in this particular scene becomes a collection of ruins, corresponding to the slow decay of Gorchakov’s spirit. The home, in this case, does not offer a place sheltering nostalgia. Instead, it has become a cemetery of memories.

*Time Dissecting Space*

In the hotel scene, the camera stays in the middle of the frame perpendicular to the space. Eugenia and Gorchakov are not facing each other, and the perspective exaggerates the layers of shadow and light that distance him from Italy. This particular scene works exactly as a perspective-section in architectural representation, advocating the notion of poché. The borders of the space are only boundaries that separate the inner space from the
outer space. What is important here is the pull of our gaze that goes directly to the depth of the screen and thus allows us to participate in the filmic spatial experience.

In contrast, in the pool scene, the camera moves slowly at a human pace perpendicular to the pool wall and at a parapet height evoking a hand swipe over the stone wall. Gorchakov’s thoughts respond to the bathing Italians whom we cannot see but hear. A thick fog hides the people who surround him; yet, he does not make any contact with them. By the end of the film, when he returns to the pool with a candle, the shots are long and framed in the same way to show the effort entailed in moving from one side to the other as Gorchakov moves closer to his death. The kino-eye is not static in this scene. And, thus, we experience the space through movement.

*Synecdoche Derived from Space and Time*

The beginning, the end, and the requiems that appear abruptly edited in various parts of the film, comprise the last group of scenes analyzed in
this thesis. These sequences expose the thoughts of Gorchakov in a compilation of continuous middle-range shots, sometimes in black and white and sometimes in sepia. The use of these colors is reserved solely for memories and dreams with the single exception of the shot of Domenico’s son asking if it is the end of the world. This colored shot suggests that apocalypse is not merely a dream or fantasy but also an internal state that affects our spatial condition as arising from a sense of dissatisfaction with the world. In the film’s final scene, in which Gorchakov perishes from this disease, the image of this little boy is repeated but this time in black and white reinforcing the idea of apocalypse as a metonym for nostalgia. This selection of scenes summarizes how Nostalghia contributes to the investigation of Merleau-Ponty’s unfinished work.
PART TWO
Body and Mind Within the Experience of Space

I who see have my own depth also, being backed up by this same visible which I see and which, I know very well, closes in behind me. The thickness of the body, far from rivaling that of the world, is on the contrary the sole means I have to go into the heart of the things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh.28

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Being implicitly indicates the location of our bodies and our minds in relation to space. The ways in which our vision alters what is presented to it do not modify the observed space or objects. Merleau-Ponty exemplifies this recognition in the visual sense by pointing out the exclusion of our own movements as modifying agents of the outside

worlds static quality. Our spatial perception, although beginning with our eyes as a tool to both receive and inspect our environment, is not reduced to capturing images from the retina. Instead, our spatial perception is the bodily experience that defines our position or location in space and the dynamics derived from such experience. The notion that we each rotate on our own axis can be understood as arising from the accumulation of various visual angles merging together to represent our entire understanding of space, such as a series of photographs that together generate a spatial dynamic between body and space. Thus, our movements when we walk, although altering how we see what is before our eyes, do not alter the static preconception of what is observed. In contrast, our rational condition does alter static preconception, such that what is observed may navigate within the spaces of the mind. For example, even though we are moving inside a room, that place is not transformed in any sense except within the places that we are experiencing at that moment in our minds. The room is more or less
dark because we contrast it with some other room fixed in our memories that we occupied some time ago. Dreamed, remembered, or imagined, all those spaces are behind our eyes and yet are no less detailed than those in front of them. I am in my living room or in the coffee shop, and my body is anchored there. Yet, I am also in that moment in that old house of my childhood. I am in both places at once, positioned (bodily-being) and located (mind-being). Thus, these two types of being align with each other.

Nevertheless, to align position and location in space requires setting parameters from the objects around us with our external reception of our own bodies. We convene our perceptions of the world and thus our own perceptions, as we are part of the world.

Therefor, when I am looking at a window, my mind is set on it out of my body. I am now as if I were looking reflectively at my body, absorbing the

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space that I have established, which is an intrinsic distance from the object and myself. And, this “distance is what distinguishes this loose and approximate grip from the complete grip which is proximity.”

Embodying the objects that are outside of us not only defines proximity, but it also suggests an external gaze that defines us as individual elements inherent within the space. Similar to the duplicity of our body and the image reflected in a mirror, we see with an inverted gaze that sees from the inside out and from the outside in simultaneously. These ideas of exteriority and proximity coincide to suggest ways to analyze the process of externalization in space and its implications in the first two scenes analyzed in Nostalghia.

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Figure 10. The columns, the woman and the gaze portraying the qualities of collective space. Collage of 12 stills from La Madonna del Parto scene, Nostalghia. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
La Madonna del Parto: The Collective Emptiness

The screen, as a faithful mirror, not only of conflicts emotional and tragic, but equally of conflicts psychological and optically spatial, must be an appropriate battleground for the skirmishes of both these optical-by-view, but profoundly psychological-by-meaning, spatial tendencies on the part of the spectator.  

Sergei Eisenstein

There is a sense of uneasiness in the La Madonna del Parto scene. An army of identical columns holds this place together as an everlasting chain that suggests depth on the screen (Fig. 10). These columns build up horizontal connections by linking us to any point of that space. These vertical objects coordinate the displacement of Eugenia through the space and assemble a disorienting allusion to the chapel’s spatiality approximating us to her own exploration of the space as we do our own.

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Light steers our position inside the screen, and as the scene is edited, the camera shifts views; light retains a reference to the apse where Piero della Francesca’s fresco is located. In this painting (Fig. 11), the Madonna, immersed in a cloud, rests her hand on her pregnant belly and looks down to avoid our gaze. The focus of the image is her face, which acts as a spatial portal that links the chapel to the outside scene where Gorchakov is longing for his home. Gorchakov is brought onto the screen with a subtle invisible trick of time fold. Editing links the framed images through time so that the camera jumps around into various spaces in this scene, presenting them to the viewer as taking place simultaneously.

James Macgillivray explores the use of the crypt of San Pietro by reconstructing the movements of Eugenia and the points at which the

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33 A description of the painting: “The Madonna holds her hand over the opening in her dress that was originally painted a vivid blue that we can only imagine today. [...] The pose is typical of Piero’s style, as is the form of the baldachin from which the Madonna reveals her beauty to the world. [...] the two angels are drawn using the same cartoon and are chromatically symmetrical as well [...] crossing the spectator’s gaze are not her eyes, which are delicately lowered upon her Son’s destiny: rather it is the angels who present us with the miracle in progress.” *Art Classics, Piero della Francesca* (New York: Rizzoli, 2006), 100.
camera was placed to film her. His research on San Pietro sketches out an architectonic blueprint with spatial coordinates that reveal the chapel’s architecture and how the long shots of Nostalghia, recreating an illusory architecture, are proof of how film and architecture differ in regard to spatial experience. The inverted position of the fresco in relation to the proportion of the chapel alters our filmic appreciation and challenges our reading of that space, as we try to compose, as Macgillivray claims, the architecture of the original chapel (Figs. 12 and 13).

However, through the screen, San Pietro is not just a Euclidean construction. Instead, it is also a space that exhibits something sensed throughout this entire scene. This space produces an emotional reaction that transcends its Cartesian reading for an introspective service. Tarkovsky addresses this constant concern with the use of “an apparent incongruity within the cinematic image, provoking our imagination and
providing us a conviction of the event.” The function of the objects’ disposition within the screen juxtaposes the inside and the outside of the screen through experience, pulling us to enter a moving image the effect of which depends on our consciousness of the world it seeks to embody. Tarkovsky’s awareness of the relationship between a film and its audience is referred to in his definition of the poetic image as the facet of the world he wants to portray:

If the world is inscrutable, then the image will be so too. It is a kind of equation, signifying the correlation between truth and the human consciousness, bound as the latter is by Euclidean space. We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe, but the poetic image is able to express that totality.

This scene does not contrast the experience of space in architecture and film, but describes the same investigation in both disciplines. Through the generation of mirrored images of Eugenia that play with the inside-out of the screen, we become participants in this same spatial experience

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35 Ibid., 106.
In this regard, *Nostalghia’s* architectural inaccuracy allows a deep exploration of the ways in which space can transgress form (Fig. 14).

Through the gaze of the screen, the ritual is performed within the confines of subjectivity, yet a sense of spatial uncertainty shelters a collectiveness that objectifies the spatial experience. This objectification excludes any differentiation between the self and the other by placing the women, like the columns, as repeated elements that coordinate not depth but an inner disposition in regard to that space.

The body and mind dualism, as expressed by Merleau-Ponty, adds an unsolvable element to the experience of space. In this case, the bodies on the screen are separate entities, which, however, are all aligned according to one state of mind. In contrast, Eugenia in her lack of faith, feels intimidated in this chapel. She awkwardly tries to kneel and, unable to do so, instead questions faith in conversing with the priest (Fig. 15).
In this scene, the painting of the virgin works as a portal to Gorchakov’s Russian dacha, the space he is experiencing in his mind as he waits for Eugenia outside the basilica. Tarkovsky explains why Gorchakov refuses to look at the fresco, stating that the space and the painting represent the reason for his nostalgia. Although La Madonna’s face reminds him of his wife’s, his unbearable nostalgia stops him from entering this space; but in order to express this idea, a requiem of his Russian home is shown in this scene. This spatial pocket that creates the painting is revealed to us when Eugenia looks at the face of the virgin in the painting, and we can hear the sound of a lighter, a spark (Fig. 16). Gorchakov, now visible on the screen, leads us to this requiem when a feather falls on his head, reminding us of the fallen feathers of the birds used in the ritual for pregnancy. According to Robert Bird, the space of this scene belongs to the idea of the shrine, one of the three recurrent spaces in Tarkovsky’s work.
In this type of space, this Russian filmmaker obsessively expresses his understanding of sacredness and his personal religious beliefs. However, within the scope of the spatial exploration of this thesis, the sacredness of this space works through its ability to generate a collectiveness by aligning body and mind in a spatial experience. To better explain this, it is with the repetition of the vertical references that body and mind work together to provide us with an overall idea of the space. As the camera explores that space, an infinite number of women could appear and then perform there; they could even come and go as they please from the screen, although the columns would remain, holding the space together and ensnaring us in its depths as we experience it. This sacred space evokes the emptiness that arises from a

Figure 16. Space pocket comformed by four stills showing the scene sequence: Eugenias face, The virgins face, Gorchakov’s face. Nostalghia. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.

36 Robert Bird classified the space in Tarkovsky’s films into nature, home, and shrine or cathedral. This classification alludes not only to the architectural typology preferred for the filmmaker but a particular tension or flow with the gaze of the spectator and the fluidity of time. See in Robert Bird, Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 52–69.
room all have left such that a mute collective echo reverberates that thus belongs to none and to all at the same time.

This space, produced through the filmic eye, projects a spatial extension that extracts an understanding of collectiveness. It lacks any permanent presence so that it is impossible for someone to claim it individually. Instead, this space allows us to connect our minds to something more than our bodily recognition. This means that the space relapses to a previous state when our bodies, projected in Eugenia, no longer interact within that space, which, therefore, remains empty.

Overall, the *La Madonna del Parto* scene explores the production of sacred spaces (as collective spaces) and in doing so suggests an uncanny and disorienting repetition of architectonic elements with which body and mind are aligned within that spatial experience.
Given that a filmmaker’s primary reason for producing space may be to present a specific view of the world, likewise, producing space for an architect can be understood as a way to shape our perceptions of the world. In either case, providing the film/architecture succeeds in stimulating the imagination, the audience, through vision, is an active protagonist in this process of seeing and re-seeing. And, it is in the face of such stimulation that other senses play an important role in the spatial experience.

**Domenico’s House: Impregnated Space**

For our house is our corner of the world [...]. It is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. The house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.37

Gaston Bachelard

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Following the idea of shaping perception, our appreciation of Domenico’s home is similar to our appreciation of a haunted house. In terms of what we understand as uncanny, the haunted house “provides an especially favored site for disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by contrast with the terror of invasion by alien spirits.” 38 If the haunted house neglects abandonment and emptiness of space, then home constitutes an uncanny inhabited enclosure within which something intrinsic is present. Our experience of this “mad” man’s home relies on architecture to capture an essence based on which Domenico built a space wrecked by fear and despair that holds an “undecipherable truth of dreadfulness that cannot be grasped or understood.” 39

Home, in terms of the space contained within such tangible architectural forms as a wall or a ceiling, is a space that we transform and claim. Home embodies a sort of externalization of our interiority, a resulting impregnation of our essence in this space. Abstracting this notion implies that the elements that modify space, regardless of their physical qualities, are permeable to a claiming and integral process of the individuals who inhabit it as a dynamic derived through time. Considering this idea in architectural design opens the door to a different way of understanding such a private space—not only by incorporating movement as a claiming process performed on a daily basis but more importantly by re-incorporating the notion of decay within domestic architecture as a result of such a process. The uncanny flavor of what Merleau-Ponty takes as the body and mind riddled in the experience of space suggests that the architectonic conceptualization of home must produce a space that serves not only as a private shelter of
“souls” but also as a double skin that mutates through time like a vestige of our daily existence. In this scene, Gorchakov visits Domenico’s decrepit house in Bagno Vignoni. The scene begins with a shot of Eugenia asking the hermit to speak with Gorchakov, who stands a few meters from them. Domenico is not interested in the Russian poet, this foreigner, and refuses. However, under Gorchakov’s insistence, Eugenia persists in the request. Eugenia walks back and forth, from Domenico to Gorchakov, and the camera follows her from right to left and then from left to right. She finally decides to leave, and Gorchakov, left alone, approaches Domenico by himself. They talk in front of the façade of this building while Domenico peddles on a static bike (Fig. 17). Then, the screen shows an image of an inside door (Fig. 18). Gorchakov appears on the screen approaching that door; we are behind him, close to his shoulder. We hear lightening and falling rain as the background sounds (Fig. 19). He opens the wooden door and sees a room.
In this now black-and-white shot, the camera follows the floor of that room scaling down into a diorama. This artificial landscape reminds us of the Russian and the Italian landscapes, which appear oddly similar in the film (Fig. 20). The camera continues floating above this diorama that prolongs itself with the outside of a window, merging inside and outside as if the drama Domenico is experiencing is expanding into the wider world. Invited in by the hermit, a former mathematician, Gorchakov walks through the dwelling and observes what that place represents: a man expressing his dissatisfaction with the world he is living in. Suddenly, Gorchakov appears in a corner where he is shown looking at his own reflection in an old mirror. The camera zooms in on this thoughtful expression while the corner slowly disappears. Now, as he moves parallel to the wall, he sees objects on a shelf. While music plays in the background, a dramatic editing technique is used so that he appears from frame to frame as if he is lapsing within time. As Gorchakov explores the ruined house, he remembers Domenico’s tragedy (Fig. 21).

Figure 20. View of a room to the outside, merging landscapes, Nostalghia. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.

Figure 21. Gorchakov understands what this space embodies: nostalgia, Domenico’s inner self. Two stills showing: (Up) Gorchakov standing in a corner of Domenico’s house, (Down) Gorchakov’s face Close-up, Nostalghia. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
They both walk around the house and share a conversation in which Domenico reveals details about his past, his present, and his inability to save the people he loves from the ugliness of the world. Inside the ruined place, Domenico, moving according to habit, passes through a doorframe from which a broken door is hanging precariously.

This space, wrecked by fear and despair, manifests an uncanny silence strongly present in the film—a silence that Derrida expressly includes in his notion of language. This space expresses through the moving image how these two men share the privacy of their sadness. They are sheltered in this decaying space of nostalgia. Inside this shell, their interiority and all the things that define them are protected (Fig. 22).

In this house, we see Gorchakov against a wall in profile as he looks at the floor. In the mirror behind him, we see Domenico through the reflection while the two men talk. We see the two men merge within the

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screen as they look at the floor. This merging within the screen suggests once again the interiority of the nostalgic condition. The objective nature of homesickness as a spatial struggle is somehow stressed by the these two characters experiences. Their respective stories quite different on the surface are really quite similar. As two examples of a more general situation, they are linked as the analogy with the diorama shows; i.e., that as an internal situation affects our interaction with the world, a personal problem scales up to one that is general in nature (Fig. 23).

The distance between current time and space, i.e., homesickness, is reiterated by the mirroring image of these two sick men. The picture of Gorchakov, oppressed and overwhelmed in the corner of Domenico’s house, presents what Mladen Dolar eloquently states about the mirror in his writing about the uncanny:

The mirror in the most elementary way already implies the split between the imaginary and the real: One can only have access to imaginary reality, to the world one can recognize oneself in and familiarize oneself with, on the condition of the loss, the “falling out,” of the subject a. It is

Lacan’s double in these scenes reminds us of how the uncanny veils reality with the hidden desires of the observer. We can silently hear how the eyes of Gorchakov in the mirror echo his loss and his double relation with Domenico, with the musician, with the filmmaker himself, and with us. What seems most uncanny about this moment is the continuing ricochet of nostalgia (Fig. 24).

At the end of this scene, when Gorchakov hugs Domenico and takes a taxi to return to his hotel, we observe Gorchakov imagining Domenico’s tragedy, or perhaps Domenico himself remembering the day he lost his family. It is definitively a situation referring to thought. Shot in black and white again, the family is liberated by the police after seven years of
incarceration while we navigate within the space of the screen, the minds of the characters, the mind of the filmmaker, and our minds simultaneously in a period that lasts just a few seconds.

At the beginning of the film, Gorchakov follows Eugenia and they climb to the Basilica apparently to see the painting, yet she is the only one who enters the place. Following La Madonna del Parto scene, at the hotel, she questions his contradictory behavior: Why after traveling hundreds of miles to see the painting does he refuse to do so? According to James Macgillivray, the reason for Gorchakov’s exclusion from the scene exemplifies best the double agency that mirrors the film’s mise en abyme. 42 This figure reflects Andei Tarkovsky’s internal state within Gorchakov’s.

Nevertheless, with a broader understanding, this mise en abyme, along with the many dichotomies found in Nostalghia reiterates the single

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intention of this film: to portray the unhealthy state of being in one place/state and longing for another. They encompass a wider understanding of our spatial condition.

In Sculpting in Time, Tarkovsky writes about this “mad man” who expresses, in a more effective fashion, the internal struggle that Gorchakov maintains in silence. It is precisely in this scene where we enter that space of distaste that we can explore the troubled minds of these two characters:

The character of Domenico, at first sight irrelevant, has a particular bearing on the hero’s state of mind. This frightened, defenseless man finds in himself the strength and nobility of the spirit of life. [...] In the eyes of normal people he simply appears mad, but Gorchakov responds to his idea—born of deep suffering—of individual responsibility for all that is going on in the world, of each being guilty before everyone for everything.  

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And, it is by the construction of this particular space where he supports his intention of achieving in this sequence a degree of “authenticity and truthfulness that will leave the audience convinced that within the walls of that set there live human souls.” Domenico’s home appears a fragile construction that shelters him from the hostility of the world. Worn out by time, this ruined house evokes epiphanies of Domenico’s memories for Gorchakov and portrays, for us, how architecture constitutes a space that recalls people who are forever remembered through the inanimate objects they have left behind.

Most of the scenes in Nostalghia present numerous dichotomies, e.g., male and female, past and present reality, Russia and Italy, sanity and madness, life and death, inside and outside. These dichotomies clash constantly in the search for reconciliation through mirrored characters. In this particular case, as Gorchakov explores the house, he leans against a wall near a mirror and looks in the direction of another person, and then

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44 Ibid., 138.
from that same direction another Gorchakov is presented. Here, Gorchakov is shown in two incompatible spaces at once, and as Johnson and Petrie describe this doubling shot, “the logic of normal time and space is ignored in favour of a higher, transcendent inner reality.” However, this internal investigation through the false version of the mirror image achieves an uncanny status that adds a sense of loss to its original version. Similarly, considering home as a mirror image of our inner selves takes from us and impregnates the space with some of our essence.

This idea of home as a claimed space derives from the spatial investigation of this scene. Home as a claimed space induces the designer to enhance this process of impregnation, which is a presence born within time, a coat that makes visible what is invisible. \[45\]

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The extension of our bodies via their own reflections instructs us in regard to how the spatial elements configuring our displacement meet tangible and intangible. There is no clearer reference to a wall than our distorted shadowed bodies that lie on it and cast the rhythm of movement.

In designing a space under these parameters of home, we should consider first how people move within that space, how they will use it in their daily lives, and how light references that movement. Second, we should consider the relationship of this sheltered space to its surroundings. And, finally, time manifested within that space should be revealed through its architectural design incorporating decay as an intrinsic characteristic of impregnation.
Inclusion and Exclusion of Poché

I am the kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you, whom I’ve created today, in an extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by me in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details, I’ve managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room.  

Dziga Vertov

Film reflects realities and supposes imaginative spaces. The screen is both explicit and implicit, and the performance of all elements inside the frame, articulated in sequences by static periods of pause, determine our spatial experience by the camera’s movement. Film carries within itself an ephemeral character closely linked to movement and its dynamics in

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which we recognize the construction of the fourth wall;\textsuperscript{47} it manages to build virtual space by incorporating time. Therefore, space and time are the primary structuring principles of a film. They compose this “dynamic medium and art form: a medium and an art form of movement.”\textsuperscript{48}

Similarly, architecture’s imaginaries are not that different from the dynamics of the kino-eye that takes from the visible to propose the invisible. This construction of space through the camera is a blurry play of inside and outside, up an down, or any Cartesian spatial reading projected in each frame and pasted under the logic of editing. And, it is in the intersection of the existing worlds within and outside the frame where the kino-eye prolongs fragments of space in order to circumscribe a totality. With visual explorations of space pasted together and smoothed by movement, film’s kino-eye is an artifact of visual recollection. It builds up space through time and draws us into this

\textsuperscript{47} “The Spatial Boundary between Actors and Audience in Theater.” In Elizabeth Bell, \textit{Theories of Performance}, (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 203.

\textsuperscript{48} Scott McQuire, “The Cathedral of Fictions,” in \textit{The Cinematic Imaginary after Film}, ed. Shaw Jeffrey et al. (Boston: MIT Press, 2003), 134.
double-sided boundary inside and outside the screen in order to initiate our “outer body experiences”\textsuperscript{49} and stimulate our minds.

This poetics of film through the kino-eye is similar to conceiving space in architecture. It gathers sensations given by proportion, light, materials, and all the tools that provide an adjective for the experience of space. In those spaces conceived in the designer’s mind, there is a constant process of extrapolation from the spatial representations to the architectonic materializations. Mirroring the kino-eye to the poché as dissecting tools that delineate an uncanny dark space exalts the play between filled and empty, a wall defining in and out, a roof defining up and down to an extension of tangible defining intangible, the visible delineating the invisible.

Through the following group of scenes in \textit{Nostalghia}, the poetics of filmic space will be analyzed in order to inscribe film as a platform

capable of forming a bridge between the idea of the uncanny and the perception of space through time. This close time–space relationship in film allows not only for depth to be created by movement, but also for access to film’s fictional dimension: the fourth wall. It is precisely in relation to this imaginary wall that I will explore a spatial connection between the fictions of film given by the kino-eye and the imaginaries of architecture through the spatial dissections of poché.

The Hotel: The Static Kino-eye

Art is a meta-language, with the help of which people try to communicate with one another; to impart information about themselves and assimilate the experience of others.50

Andrei Tarkovsky

Upon their return from visiting La Madonna del Parto, Gorchakov and Eugenia wait in the dark lobby of a hotel. Not only are they not facing each other, but they are also separated by a hallway bathed in light.

In the finishing point of this perspective, there is a statue. This decorative element in the background pulls our gaze into the screen. As the woman walks toward us, a spatial inversion occurs. The invisible lines of our vision are replaced by the statue. What is closer to us is less defined and what is farther is made clearer by the bright light. This apparently static image overlaps spaces in front of each other as transparent layers of space similar to the layers that Merleau-Ponty refers to in his explanation of proximity; a sum of layers between the object-observed and the subject-observer as static slices of space reveal its depth only through movement. This hotel corridor works as a spatial pocket marked by the thick black lines of poché and the in-between space mediating what is hidden from the screen. In this shot, the kino-eye divides the worlds of Gorchakov and Eugenia, such that they cannot ever be fully integrated.
Figure 25. Reading the space through the works of Poché/Static Kino eye. Collage based on a still from Nostalghia by Author, 2013.
“What are you reading?” Gorchakov asks, unexpectedly.

“Tarkovsky … Poems by Arseny Tarkovsky.” Eugenia looks a little taken aback, as though caught red-handed.

“In Russian?”

“No, it’s a translation … A pretty good one …”

“Chuck them out.”

“What for? … Actually, the person who translated them, he’s an amazing poet, in his own right …” she says, as though trying to justify herself.

“Poetry can’t be translated … Art in general is untranslatable …”

“I can agree with you about poetry … but music? Music, for example?” Gorchakov sings a Russian song.

“What’s that?” asks Eugenia, not comprehending.

“It’s a Russian song.”

“Right … but how would we ever have known Tolstoy, Pushkin. How could we even begin to understand Russia,” Eugenia says testily, “if …” Gorchakov interrupts her: “But you don’t understand Russia at all.”

“And Dante, Petrarch, Macchiavelli? So Russians don’t know Italy!”

“Of course not,” Gorchakov agrees, wearily. “How could we, poor devils?”

“Then what should we do, do you think, to know each other better?”

“Abolish borders.”

“Which borders?”

“National borders …”

(Tarkovsky 1999: 475–76)  

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In their discussion of the Russian poem that Eugenia is reading in Italian, Gorchakov states that translating is a vain attempt to understand the feelings originally expressed in another language. Then, while we hear the sound of running water in the background, he continues by saying that the borders between the states should be abolished in order to bring cultures closer together (Fig. 26). As Eugenia continues reading the poems, Gorchakov insists that artworks belong to their original language and that translations disfigure the art’s essence and message. Art belongs to the “place” that created it and must be anchored “there,” making the book of poems in this scene an important reference to the idea of displacement just as Piero della Francesca’s painting is a portal of space within time.

In this scene, the idea of translation refers to a space that mediates within frontiers, a nostalgic utopia that dilutes spatial boundaries and thus allows spatial movement. Reinforcing this idea, a cut of a brief sepia shot of his wife drinking from a wine glass is shown.
The three faces presented in this scene collapse the borders between the object of Gorchakov’s nostalgia and his present.\textsuperscript{52} These shots along with those in which the book of poems appears bring together disparate times through space (Fig. 27).

Although this conversation is charged with Tarkovsky’s personal political views, it continues with Eugenia wondering about the life of Sosnovsky, whether music is the universally understood, and a story about a maid who burned her master’s house down. This dialogue expresses how arts, including music, could bring people closer through the sharing of feelings and how the dichotomies of nostalgia, or the frustration that inheres in translation, can be appeased through experiences of the arts.

This scene highlights the bipolarity of the film through an explicit dialogue that emphasizes the struggle in the relationship of Eugenia and Gorchakov. Her job as a translator constitutes the impossible fusion of

\textsuperscript{52} “Gorchakov can mentally collapse the borders between the object of his nostalgia and his present.” See Zoran Samardzija, “1+1=1: Impossible Translations in Andrey Tarkovsky’s Nostalghia,” in Literature film quarterly 32, no. 4 (2004), (accessed September 14, 2013), 302.
their two worlds because, consumed in his nostalgia, Gorchakov cannot simply trade one space for another without losing the essence of his “real home.” This rejection of a spatial equivalent eliminates the possibility of fusing his past and his present and renounces any possibility of a smooth transition to a future.

Gilles Deleuze’s rejection of the simplistic bipolarity of continuity-discontinuity and reality-representation is exemplified through the development of this scene. The keeper of the hotel appears and asks them for their documents before they can take their rooms. Gorchakov reaches into his pocket, and we hear the sound of keys. Eugenia asks if the keys are to their last hotel room, and he replies that they are the keys to his house in Russia. He then approaches the camera looking at us directly, and we hear the sound of water again. Another cut to the sepia

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shot of his wife is shown again, only this time she is shown smiling and looking at the camera, almost as if she were looking back at Gorchakov. Then, she turns away and the camera is not fixed at one point but rather moves from left to right following her gaze. It offers a sweeping view of his dacha and his children playing with the dog in the gray landscape in his mind (Fig. 28). This image reminds us of the diorama at Domenico’s house while Eugenia and the woman at the hotel talk in the background.\

When Gorchakov walks toward us, he looks at us, and suddenly his wife, smiling, appears on the screen. These jumps within frames capture the complex interaction of image and world through time, Deleuze’s definition of time-image. Moreover, time and image are glued together in this sequence through space. The visual tension of the character’s respective gazes on the screen with ours expands the space behind and

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54 The editing of this scene exemplifies Gilles Deleuze’s approach to Tarkovsky’s poetics. In the two Cinema volumes Deleuze rigorously dissects the cinematic image and provides avenues of interpretation for continuities, discontinuities, and even “false continuities” within and between takes.
in front of the screen as a unified space of real and virtual experience. In terms of the description of the first part of this scene, let us consider the filmmaker as a spatial builder who imprints time on the framed image by dictating how the film is edited. Then, it is possible to consider that the architect imprints time on the static mass as a means of editing in architecture. The appearance of a wall, a roof, or a mass is edited through movement within time. Those lapses from one frame to the other, as gluing seconds, are transitional spaces for architecture.

Continuing in this scene, we are in Gorchakov’s bedroom (Fig. 29). The window does not show any view but a wall, and the bathroom door next to it shows only a mirror. All the elements of this room are aligned parallel to the screen, pushed in a boundary line. During the long take of the scene, time seems to slow down and nothing seems to happen except the comfort of sleep and the sound of rain. Trotting out of the bathroom, a German shepherd appears and lies down by the side of the bed, close to Gorchakov, who is now dreaming. The dog is a figure that
mediates between the spaces of Gorchakov’s mind and body. However, what is most interesting here is how this figure links Gorchakov and Domenico in a spatial nostalgia. In his dream, now a black-and-white shot, Eugenia and his wife hug each other, wishing to reconcile his past and his present (Fig. 30). Eugenia is shown as crying and then as on top of him. The bed shifts position, and his wife lies pregnant under dim light in a profile shot. She looks at the camera, and calls his name. As the lighting changes, the image fades, and she now appears to be levitating on a floating bed (Fig.31). We hear a knock at the door, and he is awoken by Eugenia calling him. There are various explanations for the tension and representation of these two women: pregnancy, maternity, home, land, and sexual tension. But all the ideological connotations that came after the film overlook this films techniques in regard to building the spaces holding Tarkovsky’s intentions and, moreover,

touching on the spectator’s reactions. This film’s concentrates on its affective function in terms of poetics relating to the audience through an individual experience. We must look at Nostalghia, then, “as into a mirror, in which we will see ourselves.”

It is the disposition of the space, his wife, and the sweep of the camera that fuse his dream to the actual room, allowing us to navigate deep within his dreams and his feelings, which are entangled with our own.

Two specific spatial characteristics dominate the scene that encircles Gorchakov within a space of despair. First, it is mainly a dark space where he hides, as he is unable to relate to Eugenia, Italy, or his beloved Russia. Second, the borders of the frame enclose the image and make it ambiguous, thus creating a disorienting construction of spaces fixed by time. In order to apprehend the process of producing space in film, it is important to know that the ability to evoke is limited to the capacity of

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interpretation, which is, in turn, confined to sensations that cannot be quite transcribed to the medium of words or rationality (Fig. 32).

This interpretative limit leaves the perception of space short of full understanding. The experience is only fully understood through the experience, which would result from a mastery in film beyond the skills of any filmmaker. The relationship between a film and its audience is out of the hands of the artist and can produce several meanings that are always debatable and are not constricted to a version of truth but an understanding of our (the audiences) own ideas, senses, and emotions.

Lacan’s work on the gaze, referred to in 1970s film theory, includes the cinematic debates of the audience’s role in film. And, as such, it proposed an interesting understanding of the effects of film on audiences. In this formulation, the gaze of the screen considers the audience as we are driven to look at the screen. This fantastical idea of film’s relationship with reality expands over the provocative allusions of
the uncanny. These allusions, under the idea of poché, delineate invisible and visible and bound dark and light within space. This boundary is similar to the body–mind dichotomy in which these two concepts do not exist without each other, yet their respective limits make them opposing factors. In architecture, light and darkness cannot be mere accidents of the dispositions of mass. Light and darkness are causes of our comprehension of space and of ourselves, deriving the tangible and intangible, respectively, inside a spectrum that the designer can always reformulate. In the present chapter, it is clear that in terms of understanding spatial experience film’s scope relies on the mechanisms of its poetics. This scope mediates between Merleau-Ponty’s premise in which we are the subjects and objects of the space in addition to our participation both from outside and inside the screen.
Furthermore, if a filmmaker sculpts time, as he adds movement to the captured shots, an architect likewise sculpts space. In other words, if time in film allows the coherence and flow of the framed image to unfold the spatial experience, our movement within the static then architectonic elements shape our lived experience.

Therefore, the phenomenon of perception is affected by architecture because the compilation of inert masses in space marks up and down and in and out not as constrictions, but as clues of position and location within space through time. Neglecting sight does not bring out the senses to the architectonic discourse of experience. It is only by understanding time as an integral part of space that we can give vision a primordial role in the spatial phenomenon: an unfolding relationship between mind and body that transcends form. Time and space, then, interact in reversed terms in film and in architecture when they mirror themselves through this concept of the flesh of the world.
The Pool: The Moving Kino-eye

There is a vision, touch, when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part, or when suddenly it finds itself surrounded by them, or when between it and them, and through their commerce, is formed a Visibility, a Tangible in itself, [...]. It is this Visibility, this generality of the Sensible in itself, this anonymity innate to Myself that we have previously called flesh, and one knows there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it.\(^5^8\)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

After Gorchakov wakes up from his dream at the hotel in Bagno Vignoni, he goes to St. Catherine’s pool where he meets Domenico for the first time. In this scene, Gorchakov walks around the pool, and as he does so he hears the bathers ridicule the disturbed man and also refer to Gorchakov’s research on the musician. Juhani Pallasmaa describes Sosnovski’s life in more detail, adding an insightful remark on its resemblance to Gorchakov’s journey:

In the late 18th century, his proprietor, who had noted the musical talent of this serf, had sent Sosnovski to study music in Italy. Sosnovski studied composition as a student of Giambatista Artini at the Conservatory of Bologna, and stayed nine years in Italy achieving some fame as a composer. Driven by the Russian longing for home, the composer decided to return to serfdom, but hangs himself upon his return.59

It is the unexpected similarity between Gorchakov and Domenico that is stressed in this scene. Here, Gorchakov not only feels connected to Domenico, who is suffering from an inverse nostalgia, but shares with him a certain lack of conformity with the outside world. As a foreigner in his own country, Domenico is in anguish in regard to the end of humanity; he does not long for a past time but fears a future one. Although he is Italian, Domenico represents atonement for Gorchakov, as he is the only one attuned to the feeling of nostalgia. This disturbed old man is the familiar element in a place of unfamiliarity, and he and Gorchakov function as a duet expressing an uncanny state of mind.

Both characters are part of the complex and strange world that unifies the film: Russia and Italy, past and present, madness and sanity, faithlessness and redemption. Gorchakov and Domenico compose the core structure of nostalgia, a couple defined by an alienated relationship with the world (Fig. 33). Such a tense relationship in Nostalghia is no different from the voids or unanswered questions of the experience of space, a subjective and intimate echo repeated incessantly in regard to Gorchakov, Domenico, Sosnovsky, Tarkovsky, and ourselves. 

In this scene, we can appreciate how the film’s sense of dislocation plays with a communication that progresses from words to actions and an intangible notion of time. It is noticeable that from this scene until the end of the film Gorchakov becomes ever more distant from Eugenia. Their scarce dialogues turn into monologues and finally into silence.

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60 Gorchakov becomes exiled after investigating Pavel Sosnovsky’s life outside Russia who even after returning home he committed suicide. Sosnovsky’s story serves as a mirror in which Gorchakov can better perceive his own nostalgia.
Gorchakov tells Eugenia that he lost track of time at the pool, yet the complete journey of this film is also vague in time, it could be days, months, or even years. As we watch, we get lost within the long shots that eradicate time as a derivation of consequences so that it functions instead as a conquest of causes. Time is now measured by spaces. And, similar to the cloudy condition of the *La Madonna del Parto* painting, in this scene Gorchakov, Eugenia, and Domenico are positioned by the limits of the pool. Their displacement on the screen reveals the space. Meanwhile, the people bathing are just ghostly voices narrating the story of the “mad man.”

First, we see Domenico walking toward us with his dog at his side, the same dog present in the Russian requiems. Gorchakov follows, curious. Eugenia is talking in the background with the bathers about Sosnovsky. The camera slides to the left as soon as Domenico turns the corner of the pool. He passes over Eugenia, and the camera now follows him and we observe the people bathing through his eyes.
We hear his thoughts; he is judging them. The camera is positioned low by the wall surrounding the square pool. The fog renders the people invisible. In this shot, we see inside Domenico’s body, hearing his thoughts, walking at his pace. Then, the camera stops and we can see Domenico in front of us as we abandon his body. Later, our view is set from inside the pool, the camera is on the water’s surface, and we only see the heads of the people bathing. The use of the camera in this long shot holds our gaze, revealing the space Gorchakov is circling. We attentively follow the unfolding facades that constitute the limits of the pool in this scene. The white foggy curtain behind Gorchakov puts him in front of the screen, and now as part of the audience he escapes the constrictions of space. Andrew Bird recognizes the spatial discontinuities in Nostalghia as part of a continuous hermetic allegorical narrative.  

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61 Robert Bird, “Gazing into Time: Tarkovsky and Post-Modern Cinema Aesthetics” (paper read at the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Toronto, Ontario, 2003).
An obtrusive long take accompanied by a discontinuous soundtrack decentralizes the narrative for an active interpretation of the viewer. In this example, we put together a space that has been cut and divided by the kino-eye, which pulls us into the process of generating a spatial unity. By the end of this scene, when the camera shows Gorchakov again, he seems to be out of the screen passing over Eugenia (Fig. 34).

Similarly, in architectural design, the architect imagines and draws a tridimensional space by putting together the separated views of each side enclosing the space. What is most visually interesting in this scene is that the particular use of the camera pulls us in and out of the screen as it pulls Gorchakov, Eugenia, and Domenico in and out, too.

This scene uses movement to play with the experience of space, with the pool itself, a mystic white curtain in the middle of the screen, functioning as the space of reflections, where thoughts are placed, adding again an uncanny tone to the spatial experience (Figs. 35–37). This scene leaves architectural forms as a background painting that provides clues for our

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Figure 34. Three stills: Gorchakov intrigued by Domenico walks in front of Eugenia at the pool. This sequence shows how they do not belong to the same space creating depth to the screen, *Nostalgia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
Figure 35. Four stills: A sequence around the Pool (first façade), *Nostalghia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.

Figure 36. Three stills: A sequence around the Pool (second façade), *Nostalghia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.

Figure 37. Five stills: A sequence around the Pool (third façade), *Nostalghia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
movements within the space. Near the end of the film, Gorchakov finds himself closer to Domenico than to any other person in Italy (Fig. 38). He arrives at the pool, now drained for cleaning. A woman places various objects on top of a wall: a bottle, a broken doll, and an old lamp. Gorchakov swallows a pill and attempts to cross the empty pool while holding a lighted candle, as he believes this supposedly mad man wishes him to do as a proof of faith. However, the wind blows the flame out halfway across, and Gorchakov starts again, only for the same thing to happen again. On his third attempt, he finally reaches the other side and places the lighted candle on a ledge at the far end of the pool. This single nine-minute shot explains Gorchakov’s understanding of Domenico through their struggle for redemption.

Andrei Tarkovsky describes the role of Domenico in Nostalgia saying that “Gorchakov becomes attached to Domenico because he feels a deep need to protect him from the public opinion of the well-fed, contented, blind majority for whom he is simply a grotesque lunatic. Even so, Gorchakov is not able to save Domenico from the role he has implacably assigned himself—without asking life to let the cup pass him by.” Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time: Reflections on Cinema, trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (London: Bloody Head, 1986), 206.
Figure 38. The moving kino-eye. A sequence at the Pool, Gorchakov crossing with a lighted candle before his death, four stills from Nostalghia. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
Space Locked Within Time

_Nostalghia_ brings to the study of Merleau-Ponty a synecdoche of the lived experience, a part that reflects the totality and a totality explained through a part. This synecdoche aligns the whole and the part as two entities that explain each other, describing a subjective experience that explains all experiences represented through one. This amalgam might not mean an indubitable truth for phenomenology but incorporates insights derived by time that can shape the experience of space through architectural design.

Time is bonded to space in film: they are inseparable agencies that build film’s unique dimension. The precise but wide spatial spectrum that film provides incorporates time such that architecture can reach out for a particular spatial exploration. Experiencing time through the screen is always a process that takes place in our present. However, some films
highlight another type of time. Either past, present, or future, time is meant to impact the film beyond our experience by setting a mark on the narrative as a linking element of the story. Boris Eikhenbaum describes film’s magnificent power in this regard as belonging to a distinct narrative temporality: “as if, after reading a novel, you have dreamt it.”

It is a temporality that condenses the poetics of film and thereby creates a play of time that describes ways of seeing the world.

Tarkovsky thought time could be measured by actions, but actions as results and not as causes. This way of measuring time is embedded in our memories, and yet what our minds experience as a memory of actions, imagined or performed, proposes something so complex that its explorations are vast and uncertain. Of Nostalghia in particular, he stated,

I have always been interested in a person’s inner world, and for me it was far more natural to make a journey into the psychology that

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63 B. M. Eikhenbaum, Literatura: teoriia, kritika, polemika (Leningrad, 1927), 297.
In the scenes described in the present chapter, the quality of the image creates an atmosphere of unreality that marks Gorchakov’s dreams as an even more surreal space operating wholly in the mind and reinforcing the ambiguity between the real world and the dream world, the real world and the spirit world. However, this reinforcement is performed on the basis of an improvising logic that comes from memories.

The spaces in Gorchakov’s mind allude to an incompatibility between space and time. They are shown through a series of displacement shots in which we observe multiple Gorchakov’s jumping into diverse times and spaces. More importantly, in these scenes, it is the gaze of the observer that jumps from different perspectives, as we (the audience) are informed of the hero’s attitude to life, into the literary and cultural traditions that are the foundation of his spiritual world.

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65 Ibid., 30.
not only one but all; a subjective and objective gaze at the same time from within and outside the screen. Therefore, all intersections of Nostalghia’s dichotomies are evident, and ironically they do not divide elements. Instead, the dichotomies, connect them.

This chapter highlights the relevance of Nostalghia as a spatial discourse. This film’s poetics undermines the uniformity of space and time. As the impossible staticity of Gorchakov’s spatio-temporal state catalyzes the leaps of space and time, not as a non-linear construction but rather as a circular one. The following scenes are the synecdoche of this film. They are requiems that transport the audience to the space of Gorchakov’s mind, capturing a syntactic pattern of time that explains the film while expressing the essence of Nostalghia through independent parts that allow the audience to relate to what is on the screen.
The Space in Gorchakov’s Mind

Through Nostalghia, the beginning, end, and requiems that appear in almost every part of this segmentation are continuous middle-range shots in black and white that hold together a continuous narrative. Gorchakov’s thoughts appear abruptly throughout the film, contrasting the pale fading color palette of the Italian space (Fig. 39). The transitions between memories, dreams, and reality in Nostalghia are mixed together as a collage of images and sounds. Paradoxically, the cuts in sepia and those in black and white are used as linking elements throughout the film. We can observe through the following collage image that the events are freed from a linear narrative logic fusing diverse spatial dimensions into a singular experience (Figs. 40–41). Most of the images comprising the requiems have diffused edges and blurred colors, which creates a sense of unreality in regard to the background, thus evoking a hypnotic visual state that connects us to the character in the scene.
Figure 40. Collage. This 97-stills-collage maintains the original sequence of \textit{Nostalghia}, pointing out through the quality of the images how the requiems are an important element of continuity/discontinuity, synecdoche, and narrative as the means to construct space and time combinations, \textit{Nostalghia}. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
Figure 41. Narrative of *Nostlaghia*. Collage by Author, 2013.
The opening scene is a hazy monochromatic shot showing four women and their dog descending a hill. There is a large tree and a horse in the foreground, and the distant countryside vanishes into a rolling fog. The camera advances imperceptibly but continuously from the beginning of the scene. On the soundtrack, possibly diegetic, we hear a woman singing. Meanwhile, the film credits scroll up, superimposed on the scene. The women and the dog, upon reaching the area in front of a hut, stop moving. Verdi’s Messa da Requiem fades in, overlapping for a brief moment with the woman singing. Once the foreground tree has disappeared, the scene freezes, the credits continue until the title appears, and then the scene fades to black. This tranquil reflection of Gorchakov’s homeland functions as a preamble to the protagonist’s journey through a foreign land with an audible transition to the second scene. This black-and-white Russian landscape is contrasted with the Italian countryside shot in color as we hear a car approaching.
This transition between the two scenes evinces the struggle of spatial and temporal longing in Gorchakov’s faltering sense of identity. His alienation and confused state of mind is made clear when he asks Eugenia, with a heavy Russian accent, “parle Italiano por favore.” But his thoughts are expressed in Russian. The contrast of interiority and exteriority in the film relies on contrasting images but also on the contrasting sounds of the two languages inasmuch as the former corresponds to communication with others and the latter to thoughts.\(^6\)

Another example of the use of sounds that function to distinguish between interiority and exteriority can be found in the abrupt requiem that cuts into the close-up of La Madonna’s face (Fig. 42). In this example, the sound of birds flying inside the basilica is heard throughout the requiem. The images of feathers falling into the candles are linked with this dream both in terms of vision and of sound.

Figure 42. Spaces of body and mind through the sequence of requiem at La Madonna del Parto scene, *La Madonna del Parto* Portal to his dacha, four stills from *Nostalghia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
He looks at us, and then a large feather falls on his head. He bends, picks up the feather from the ground, and then looks at his dacha. The camera shifts from right to left, as we look at the dacha he has pointed out to us. We have no choice but to look at it. We can see an angel entering the house. The camera now zooms out, as he loses his grip on that dream. We are suddenly in the Italian hotel, sitting behind him. Eugenia’s voice is somewhere outside of the screen as she questions him. He looks at us, and his response is silence.

The repetitive use of facial close-ups in Nostalghia, and particularly in incorporating a requiem into the scene, inculcates an unbreakable gaze between the film and the audience. That is, the characters seem to be “here” (inside the screen) and “there” (outside the screen) as the film progresses. Nevertheless, this characteristic in Nostalghia also makes us aware of the space that is not pointed out by the camera but is part of the space of the scene, the left and right hidden by the edges of the screen.
Figure 43. The simultaneous spaces of Gorchakov. Final scene, The Russian landscape inside the Cister Abbey still from *Nostalgia*. Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983.
In the final shot of Nostalghia, the Russian house is brought inside the Italian cathedral—an idea that is metaphorical in nature. This closing sequence is a close-up of Gorchakov sitting with his dog in front of his beloved dacha (Fig. 43). As the camera slowly pulls out, this landscape is confined within the Italian architecture. Gorchakov dies trapped in Italy with his home always on his mind. This constructed image has literal significance and meaning through the division of spaces that Gorchakov inhabits and where his long and exhausting struggle takes place. Perhaps, on the contrary, this constructed place of Tuscan hills and Russian countryside come together indissolubly. They merge as Gorchakov dies embracing these two sites as his own and closing the spatial division.

Although Tarkovsky did not attempt to incorporate other art forms into his films, it seems impossible to ignore the similitudes in the spatial rendering of some of his scenes with paintings. In some examples, space is shown as a frontal perspective with a single vanishing point such that the scene is flattened into a two-dimensional image, a painting. See, Juhani Pallasmaa, The Architecture of Image: Existential Space in Cinema, trans. Michael Wynne-Ellis (Helsinki: Rankennustieto Oy, 2001), 75.
In this scene, Gorchakov has merely reflected on his concerns about the world’s imperfections whereas Domenico has already committed suicide as a form of protest. Gorchakov’s death vindicates his lack of constancy, revealing how deeply he has felt the separation from his country: 68

Italy comes into Gorchakov’s consciousness at the moment of his tragic conflict with reality (not merely with the conditions of life, but with life itself, which never satisfies the claims made on it by the individual) and stretches out above him in magnificent ruins which seem to rise up out of nothing. These fragments of a civilisation at once universal and alien, are like an epitaph to the futility of human endeavour, a sign that mankind has taken a path that can only lead to destruction. Gorchakov dies unable to overcome his own spiritual crisis, to put right this time which—evidently for him too—is out of joint.69

This overwhelming finale follows the scene in which Gorchakov crosses St. Catherine’s pool with the lighted candle. After the last image of Gorchakov’s hands with the candle, Verdi is heard again on the

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69 Ibid., 216.
soundtrack. A man comes running across the pool, while the woman who has been cleaning the pool looks on. A black-and-white shot of Domenico’s son and then a black-and-white shot of the dacha with Gorchakov and his dog lying on the grass. We understand that he is dead.70

This architectural skeleton imposes an overwhelming architecture as the camera explores its picturesque aisles with breathtaking perspectives. The both too-literal and too-ambiguous finale achieves an impossible reunion between the dead protagonist and his Russian homeland through the Italian landscape. The following quote provides an eloquent description of the sequence, bringing together various themes of the film’s discourse:

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70 In the early planning stages of the film, the protagonist (Gorchakov) is a writer who pursues architecture as a hobby and dies from a terrorist’s bullet not meant for him. Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 157.
The use of black and white in the shot links it to the nostalgic images that haunt Gorchakov. It suggests that the unification of the contradictory spaces has occurred belatedly. The logic of his nostalgia has consumed itself. No unification has truly occurred because the past, in death, has consumed everything. There no longer is a future. And yet, the fact that Italy and Russia occupy the same space in the shot, even if it is only imaginary, imparts a Utopian element to the image. The image, in its failure, invites the viewer to ponder the limits of the possible and seek the methods to transcend those limits.71

The camera pulls back to reveal that the house stands inside the ruined abbey. Gorchakov is clearly out of scale as the camera zooms out. The pond and the Italian architecture that encloses this image correspond to each other in the form of an eye. This image frozen in time shows the uncanny as a labyrinth of the mind;72 it is nothing but the inside view to the outside of Gorchakov. This façade’s opening holds Gorchakov and the Russian landscape alongside each other with the reflection of the

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pond acting as an eye that not only breaches inside and outside in architectural space but also inside and outside the experience of space. Throughout the film, the black-and-white spaces in Gorchakov’s mind show a constant link between the space in which his body is submerged and all those spaces formed in his mind. As we follow the film, the mechanisms differentiating the space in Gorchakov’s mind from the Italian setting where his body is confined are set to position us in a void of space and time. We are accompanying Gorchakov to that place. We, too, are inside his mind. And, we are also inside the screen. But we cannot ever be sure of when we are. Now, time is not a reverted factor in the construction of space but a frozen intertwined dimension within space. In the spaces of Gorchakov’s mind, time is always present, and we are fully immersed in those instants. Experiencing the time of the mind can only be a current action. We can be placed in a memory, a dream, or just an imaginary thought and our
answer to the question of where is certain. We are inside his mind, and our movement within those spaces inhere in an exploration of collages gathered in static time. In this case, not only the change of colors to black-and-white images transports us into Gorchakov’s mind, the objects that are present outside his body and inside his mind bound the two simultaneous spaces. Gorchakov’s recollection of those wishes or memories (past or future) is a constant rejection of his lived experience. The Italian space that holds his body only means he experiences an unbearable numbness in regard to the world.

All the scenes that evoke dreams, longing, and wishes are uncanny pieces because they veil reality and also because they act as tricks.\(^73\)

They possess a deceiving power because they project the desire of the observer so that he can endure his journey. Through Gorchakov’s eyes, the audience is tricked and disoriented, forced to understand these shots

by understanding their own nostalgia. The mind’s spaces also recall the oneiric uncanny as a vault of dreams and desires that mirrors our own personal ones.

Linked to memories, dreams follow both the familiar and the unfamiliar by making their particular coherence a narrative tool that structures this film. Experiencing a dream on the screen not only triggers an outer-body experience but also transports us to someone else’s mind.

Therefore, in these particular scenes, the reversed gaze reinforces the intricate notion of the flesh of the world by adding the works of the uncanny. Just like Gorchakov, we are in a space that does not hold our bodies (the screen) but does sharpen our awareness of the body and mind dichotomy in the spatial experience.

Moreover, the dreams in Nostalghia constitute a tool of subjectivity in which improbability is achieved by distorting the conventional image of everyday life through people and objects in abnormal circumstances.

This uncanny sensation of dreams in this film presents the assumed
distortions of reality once it has been filtered by people, hinting that experiencing the world indeed has the double and simultaneous notion of subjective-objective just like the flesh of the world.

Perhaps, Tarkovsky, Merleau-Ponty, and most of the writers mentioned in the present study, agree on some unanswered questions of the exploration of space, yet ideally those questions could reveal a strategy for enhancing a more active intervention of architecture in the spatial phenomenon.
PART THREE
Silences In-between

Understanding the spatial phenomenon through *Nostalghia* allows us to explore Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in which vision turns into a gaze that grips a visible world and with which the other’s gaze is discovered. *Nostalghia* complements Merleau-Ponty’s unfinished work incorporating time into the investigation of the spatial experience.

Through the exploration of this film, this thesis brings together the flesh of the world and the uncanny to the production of space—a poetics of space that bridges film and architecture. This work seeks within the filmic relationship of time and space to bring insights that could reflect on architectural space.

In film, the production of space is supported on its narrative or all the elements that link the moving image in a coherent message. *Nostalghia* masters a coherency in its narrative through an editing strategy that
pastes the parts smoothly together as a whole while allowing each scene to work independently to reaffirm the same repetitive idea: homesickness. Nostalghia is full of mirror images such that a recurrent theme is the duality of the spatial suspension of the homesick, which is evidenced not only by the use of duality but by the incorporation of the audience into the spatial experience. This nostalgic feeling mirrors our own experiences to the experience of others in the search of a universal understanding of the spatial experience.

I agree with Tarkovsky when he affirms that the feeling or emotion unchained from every person while watching a film is the linking action that breaks down the bias of subjectivity. Every one of us “feels” a film. This feeling is a unifying action that holds Merleau-Ponty’s objectivity within subjectivity in the experience of space.
It is conclusive that we all experience space even if the possible convergence of perceptions remains an open issue. Therefore, film presents perception as a “horizontal” experience in which we are already immersed before even trying to describe it not as a “vertical” observation of our body within the space when reaching for an objective as a distant understanding of phenomenology. As we address space in relation to our bodies, the objects within and our relationships with them will invert that vertical understanding of perception of space to a horizontal pursuit of Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy.

The present study acknowledges that film produces space in a way that is similar to the workings of the mind. It processes memories or desires with the reproduction or production of space. Simultaneously, this inner spatial condition is affected by the exteriority of the body through the senses, as the mind is also aware of the surroundings of the body and its confinements. Thus, it is important to note that poetics of space in Nostalghia is a deliberate and intrinsic component sought by Tarkovsky.
who saw poetry as the true language of film not thinking of it as a genre but as an awareness of the world and a particular way of relating to reality. Therefore, if a filmmaker distinguishes between the lines of poetics of space, the designer is likewise capable of reaching beyond the limitations of coherent logic to convey the deep complexity of the impalpable connections hidden in the experience of space. The intersection of architecture with spatial phenomena emerges from explorations of our surrounding reality but also the reality within ourselves. As for architecture, its elements inversely provide a certain cohesiveness in time that indicates our movement in space and reflects the passage of time, thus providing a testimony of our interactions with the world.
This important concern for architecture adds to phenomenology a participation in the uncanny. Through the analysis of some important scenes in Nostalghia, architectural manifestations are liberated from the constrictions of form and guided instead by the effects of its displacement. This thesis holds us together in a filmic and subjective way that simply unifies all experiences. This un-exclusive subjectivity permits objectivity not as a totalitarian truth but as an acknowledgment of diverse viewpoints that help us to understand how we experience the world. This work draws on films accepted fictional nature and explores the production of space in architecture through the imaginative notions that bring up time. And, finally, it considers the stimulation of the mind with the bodily interaction in space through architecture.
Overall, then, this thesis presents a wide range of possible combinations that build up assumptions about subjectivity and objectivity, shaping and guiding the spatial experience through design, which is the designer’s constant interest.

The Spaces In-between

After putting together the ideas that bridge film and architecture within *Nostalghia*, this thesis concludes by proposing how the insights of the spatial scrutiny of this film inform design. This work, which derives from phenomenology and lands in film, suggests a new way to pursue architectural design—one that considers different explorations of space. First, aligning body and mind through architecture not only enhances the production of space but the role of vision in spatial perception. In the case of home and that of collective space (sacred space) the repetition of
elements, particularly for the collective space; the manipulation of movement by the use of light and the relationship of inside and outside reach out to the potential of the uncanny within architecture. Orienting and disorienting the diverse dichotomies presented in this film, as Nostalgia certainly does, a future direction for design is to encourage the audience to become more active in participating in the spatial phenomenon.

In regard to the hotel scenes and the pool scenes, the kino-eye suggests a more conscious effect in the production of space in architecture within the scope of dissecting and joining. And, it is clear that the possible effects of the dispositions of the elements within the space allow for a better integration or disintegration of the space by the play of light, darkness, and proportion. It explores the boundaries of inside and outside and also the patterns of movement within space.
Using the uncanny eye of the camera as an overlapping composition of space also enhances the role of vision in the perception of space by incorporating a sense of unreality capable of stimulating the work of the mind in the lived experience.

The final group of scenes, the requiems, formulate the narrative of this film by tightly weaving the ideas of Nostalghia. These spaces of the mind express architecture as an art that can fulfill both the practical needs of our bodies and the needs of our “souls,” providing a shelter for both the body and the mind. However, Nostalghia adds a new consideration of the production of space in architecture, one that arises from the repeated imagery of uninhabitable run-down buildings.

These buildings do not offer protection from the outside world, weakening the boundary between inside and outside. As noted in the chapter about Domenico’s house, the ruin reincorporates decay into the notion of home, rooting spatial impregnation through time.
This decadent house steers Domenico’s movements, as mere habitats, as he passes through practically nonexistent doors. It is his recognition and habituation to this space that create it as an architectural place of shelter. These fragile and incomplete buildings relate outside and inside through an in-between space and also past and future through the present action.

In the final scene of Nostalghia, the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey of San Galeano mediate Gorchakov’s displacement. They enclose the landscape of his desire and permit the passage of time. As the shot zooms out and snow starts to fall, the effects of nature permeate inside with outside.

The deformed buildings in Nostalghia are flawed representations of a doomed ideal, a cure for the homesick. Once outside the place of longing, the person cannot return to that space ever again because it is a
spatial return to a time buried in the past. In the film, Sosnovsky’s suicide responds to nothing other than the discovery of an incurable nostalgia, just as Domenico’s and Gorchakov’s deaths do. Dilapidated architecture, as a shelter, is a space claimed by the dead, as the uncanny shows, or spaces that bury us alive and trap us within a frozen time (Fig. 47). Architecture must guard these ideas not as an intervention of the phenomenon of space but the phenomenon of time. It cannot become obsessed with the stimulation of the senses in the experience of space but must only consider how architecture stimulates time within the spatial experience. It is not a task for the present moment but a breach of past and future through the present within the designer’s imagination.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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