

Supervisor's Report on Evgeniya Konoreva's Diploma Thesis:

“Reflections of the Deleuzian ‘Time-Image’ in the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky and of Alain Resnais”

Ms. Evgeniya Konoreva essays to illuminate key features of the concept of the ‘Time-Image’ innovated by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze while concomitantly using that notion to throw valuable light on selected films directed by Alain Resnais (1922-) and by Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-86). The ninety-three page (28,100+ word) diploma text contains the following component parts: “Introduction”, “1. Gilles Deleuze and the concept of the ‘time-image’”, “1.1. Reconceptualizing art”, “1.2. Film as an event”, “1.3. The ‘time-image’”, “2. Andrei Tarkovsky”, “2.1 *Stalker*”, “2.2 *Nostalghia*”, “2.3 *The Sacrifice*”, “3. Alain Resnais”, “3.1 *Night and Fog*”, “3.2 *Last Year at Marienbad*”, “3.3 *Hiroshima mon amour*”, “Conclusion”, “Bibliography” and a “Summary – shrnuti”.

As for the prose style, the thesis overall is well-produced, though there a few stylistic, orthographical or typographical glitches. Here are some examples as textual supports of this claim:

- 1) ‘in not’ from a quote on page 4 should be ‘is not’ with his delicate (3),
- 2) ‘churched’ (36) should be ‘church’,
- 3) ‘intervened’ (36) should be ‘intervene’ or even better would be a new lexical choice such as ‘intersects’

It is a measure of how solid the English is though that one cannot adduce too many more than the abovementioned.

As for the content effects of the piece I should adduce the following mentions from the candidate’s thesis to show the sorts of standards to which she attains: “The chief purpose of this project is to reconsider the role of the cinematic image within the frames of the representational mode of postmodern audiovisual culture. The development of film studies since the end of the Second World War has been receiving increasing interest by academic circles in cinematographic studies; moreover, the history of film studies has undergone several major transformations, which actually conditioned the emergence of the interdisciplinary and indeed multifunctional theoretical and critical approach” (2). **i** Could the candidate give a concrete example or two of the aforementioned development in intercultural studies internationally?

Further, Ms. Konoreva notes, “The *Cinema* volumes [by Deleuze] are valuable for this project because they both theorize cinema itself and deliver a much more profound and abstract message [...] to find a new place for philosophy and perception in the age of spiritual fragmentation and alienation” (3). Evgeniya continues, “In the introduction to the Russian translation of the *Cinema* volumes, Oleg Aronson analyzes Deleuzian philosophy and compares cinematography with the Nietzschean “will to power”:

a place where philosophy which is striving for meanings, disintegrates; where the blurry images not yet fixed in the description, not yet loaded with any values, appear on the surface.¹
(3-4)

ii I would ask the candidate again to give a simple example or two in film culture that would offer textual evidence for the foregoing linkage to Nietzsche’s ‘will-to-power’?

Ms. Konoreva also asserts, “In its very impulse to articulate the real, cinematography thus becomes too an accumulator of our sensations. Cinema’s constructive function gains a particular importance in such kinds of reality, because what we need [are ways of] suggesting an alternative world; rearranging the whole set of virtual (possible) variants of this world in order to achieve the true meaning.” (13)

iii This dense and difficult observation about the present state and potentiality of cinema could be unpacked a bit more by Evgeniya; would the candidate please do so?

To home in on one of her two target directors, Evgeniya writes: “The greatest enigma of Tarkovsky’s art is to make the viewer feel the ebb and flow of time in the film” (25), which is the special

¹ Место, где растворяется философия, взыскующая смысла, где выходят на поверхность смутные образы, еще не закрепленные в изображении, не обладающие никакой ценностью. Олег Аронсон. «Язык времени». Жиль Делез, *Кино*. Перевел Б. Скуратов (Москва: Ad Marginem. 2004) 20. Trans. my own.

strong suit of film overall for Tarkovsky. viz., its quality as a temporal art. And as for Tarkovsky's film, *Stalker* (1979). Ms. Konoreva makes the heady claim that "what Tarkovsky wants to show us is the extraordinary opportunities of the spiritual world. Inner spirituality can be enriched through the exploration of the world. The Writer and the Professor discover the hidden potentials of the Zone in their own consciousness. They found the wonders and hope for which they have been searching. However, the development of Stalker himself can be regarded as a story of spiritual degradation for Tarkovsky himself when he says that

Stalker in its form of expression approaches tragedy. It is true that in tragedy the hero has to die but I said 'approaches' because this is not a tragedy caused by death but by the complete destruction of a 'certain inner world'. This is after all a different thing than tragedy. There exists, however, the concept of catharsis, cleansing through suffering, cleansing which is possible only in art... yes, perhaps also in life but always in the spiritual sphere. Thus if we are talking of *Stalker* as a tragedy of a certain individual, we are referring here to the destruction of the inner world of the title character. It would be hard to say if he reaches a new spiritual level, it would be more appropriate to say this about Writer or Professor.²

What Tarkovsky stresses here is Stalker's personal failure to persist in his belief; his mission is to guide people towards the 'becoming', but he was not potent enough to fight human ignorance and mercantilism any longer. Stalker surrendered himself to a sense of apathy and despair too soon" (27-8). iv) Here though I ask for concrete evidence of this position, for it seems that the exact reverse could be argued with equal force, namely, that the Writer and the Scientist neither experience nor get what Stalker has to offer them (e.g. 'the wonders' etc.), and that Stalker's breakdown is only a momentary thing and that he was forced into his situation of resignation; the notion here would be that people such as Writer and Scientist cannot imagine that such a figure as Stalker could even exist (witness their putative claims about Stalker's cynical reasoning to explain the motivating factors and purposes for his vocation as Writer and Scientist approach the room), and that what Tarkovsky is engaged in here is a kind of ironical provocation or at best a dialecticization of his true aesthetic intentions; all of this from a director we must remember who opposed the very idea of "interpretations" of his filmic work. In sum, Tarkovsky simply does not seem to go far enough here in his own self-critique, whether he is aware of this or not is another question.

Late in the thesis, Evgeniya writes to recap:

an attempt to involve Deleuze's philosophical concepts, such as 'becoming', 'any-space-whatever' and others, enabled the project to see beyond the conventional categories of cinematography. Interpreting films on the basis of Deleuze's philosophy means the integration of the most unexpected but highly inspiring concepts into the process of understanding film culture. (85)

And last not least, Ms. Konoreva announces

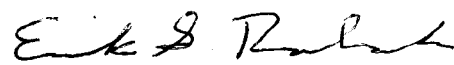
the films of Resnais and of Tarkovsky assessed in this project explore the philosophical questions that are of crucial import for the late Gilles Deleuze [...] These are as follows: the concept of postwar subjectivity, the disappearance of the centralized ego, and the emergence of fragmentary, often marginalized characters; the ideas of sanity and of self-sacrifice, of potential energies and of the development of energy in the process of 'becoming'; the vanishing of the sensory-motor states, which is a conventional narrative mode, and its replacement by what we have already adduced from Deleuze as "pure optical and sound situations", which is often reflected in the broken linearity of the narrative; and last not least, the metamorphoses of time and of memory in the world of "universal schizophrenia" (Deleuze, *Time-Image*, 172). (86)

v) Here I would ask the candidate to elaborate on to what precisely does this notion of 'universal schizophrenia' in Deleuze's book on the *Time-Image* refer? vi) One last question: is there any political program or conscience in Deleuze's theory of film or in the films discussed in the thesis by Resnais or by Tarkovsky: if so, what would such a program/conscience be as either a diagnosis/prognosis on either the diegetic/narrative or extra-diegetic/formal plane of any of the chosen films for analysis or vis-à-vis Deleuze's philosophical criticism?

² Andrey Tarkovsky, Interview "Intervista a Tarkovskij" with Luisa Capo in *Scena*, trans. Marian Jurewicz. "Achab" No. 4: 1980 (3), 119-127, 2008, <<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalgia.com/TheTopics/Stalker/at scena.html>>.

Pre oral exam mark: výborná-

Erik Sherman Roraback, D.Phil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erik S. Roraback', written in a cursive style.

11 May 2008