

# Mkhitar Sebastaci Educational Complex

## High school

Grade 11

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Research paper

Experimental films and their importance to the world

## CHAPTER I

The beginning and the definition of experimental films

What is experimental film, and what does it generally try to present to us? What does it mean

In the short definition of another [source](#)

**An experimental film is a project that bucks the trends of conventional cinema and pushes the medium of film in unexplored ways. The spectrum of experimental films is extremely broad; this genre encompasses a great many types of projects of varying lengths, styles, and goals.**

**There are experimental feature films, though more experimental projects have shorter runtimes. This is due in part to many experimental**

**films being made for low budgets and/or the fact that the majority of experimental films are never intended for mainstream appeal or traditional distribution.**

In a sense, experimental filmmaking is not more of a simple one-sided genre but a movement to push out of regular boundaries and limits in which society holds a standard. But the experimental genre isn't simply a revolutionary concept that can really change things in society. The main importance is its niches and its slight avant-gardism. This style is also important because it is expressed with its beginning nature, which is a dadaistic beginning. The first director, Hans Richter, to have made his writings transcribed upon film to express his dadaistic ideology, as one of the first to have pioneered a crucial part of the genre.

But before we explore Dadaism, the arthouse, and the deep philosophical concepts such as the absurd, we must first understand what film is and what makes this genre earn its title.

Film is a medium which uses the visual arts and technologies to create an image that moves which can have a narrative which is optional due to the genre which is the other integral part of film but most importantly its cinematography it's the lighting, framing, camera movement, and angles etc. what plays nicely into the cinema of film and what generally gives films its main difference from theatre and what makes it stand out is the editing and montaging is the process of assembling shots into a coherent sequence, influencing pacing and emotional impact.

There are no clear definitions for experimental films as its only defining word's meaning is to experiment. This generally makes a very weird line between other genres that usually get mixed up with experimental films, like avant-garde or

arthouse, but that does mean that arthouse or avant-garde film cannot be experimental

Any film can be experimental, but it needs to do as the names suggest, it has to be innovative and forever changing even in its stagnant form as a film it must be more than stories or images it has to live beyond the screen it has to have the very great effect of art.

That's the main thing that stays throughout all films because all other parts of the film are optional, like storytelling or sound design

But what the genre of experimental film is so interesting to me and compelling is due the fact that it challenges specifically those limitations or set boundaries that film needs for a classic story in experimental film there is no true need for narrative sound nor even editing nothing inherently needs to make sense or have the viewer as a main priority it doesn't want to be easy nor explainable but instead its main priority is to experience it and have a cathartic experience or maybe it cause an existential crisis, its effects aren't about guarantees the whole genre insists the idea of being against classical genres such as romance, western, dramas and etc. it acts as an anti genre one which does not necessarily need to be defined nor understood by simple means but that doesn't once again in any way mean that there isn't simplicity in the films the first three main directors that follow these "rules" are the following

Maya Deren



Maya Deren was a pioneering Ukrainian-born American filmmaker, choreographer, poet, and theorist, widely regarded as a foundational figure in avant-garde cinema. Her innovative approach to film, blending surrealism, dancing, and psychological depth, redefined the possibilities of cinematic expression her general approach to film

Her films were in black and white and usually would last from 13 -14 to 20 minutes  
she was a short film director

One of her most popular works [\*\*Meshes of the Afternoon\*\*](#) is a very haunting and beautiful film

The plot put into simple terms is as following

A woman played by Deren herself returns home and gradually falls into this dreamlike state where she begins to see this dream which she has fallen into a dream world like alice in the wonderland and following similarly to the plot of the children's book she encounters a series of symbolic experiences in which she sees

A hooded figure with a mirror for a face.

A knife placed on a loaf of bread.

A key that turns into a knife.

A telephone that is off the hook.

A record player that keeps spinning

All of these symbols gradually add open the theme she is trying to get at which is the general struggle for agency in a confining and repetition life we will find it to be a lot more of a common trope in other films to incorporate this same “story” concept or idea but this time in this version of this story format this specific film adheres to the feminine side of the struggle.

The film avoids spoken dialogue and instead uses visual symbolism and editing in a very strict manner to keep its integrity as one of the first of experimental films to be done by a woman and she one of the earliest feminist experimental films and a cornerstone of American avant-garde cinema; she uses a lot of techniques like jump cuts and slow motion to represent the protagonist's mental state like distress, anxiety and confusion which beautifully express her concept in life's absurdity and its impossibly hard questions to answer such the very underlying notion of the film being death or the ineffable

*Mashes of the Afternoon* is often seen not as a story to be solved like all films in the genre, the whole psychological and poetic experience that invites purely personal interpretation even though an explanation can be found if one digs deeply following the Alice in Wonderland theme with the deep rabbit hole. But this theme i'm using the children's fairy tale is just for me to explain the plot in a more fun and simplistic way of putting it in understandable terms

But if it were possible to have the most objective view of her works nature the main interpretations and idea would be

Subjective reality and dream logic

Dissociation and fragmented identity

Feminine subjectivity and domestic space

Cycle of psychological trauma

Most experimental artists in the film spectrum love to try and express dreams, identity, and psychology

All very loose and very existent and impossible to explain or attain or interpret in an objective matter the whole point is to adhere to only oneself understanding in a solipsistic mindset to be able to build an image to help others understand your specific image.

My personal and absolute favourite film of hers is the very eye of the night

The whole entirety of the film is set in a space where there are white figures dancing under one of the most beautiful soundtracks I've heard in a film. The whole film feels like a more surreal version of Henri Matisse's Dance of Life, but more as though it seems to be the dance of the galaxy for Deren, and it also reminds me of the painting that Matisse did of Icarus. Maya Deren feels like the black and white version of Henri Matisse in my mind.



Now moving on to another pioneer of the genre

Stan Brakhage 1933–2003



Stan Brakhage was another pioneering American experimental filmmaker who was widely respected and was regarded as one of the most influential figures in 20th-century avant-garde cinema. Over a prolific career spanning five decades, Brakhage created a diverse body of work that explored themes of perception, consciousness, and the human experience through innovative visual techniques very similar to deren and in general all main filmmakers of the experimental genre now the main difference between Brakhage and Deren is that he does not use actors

bodies or anything even human related but what dances for him is colors animal parts or anything he finds to tinker with to do his bidding in his art

Art, I say, because he would draw with paint on the very film tape to create his abstract and surreal images. This is just one of the ways and techniques he uses to make his film

In-camera editing is the second one with this; he shoots the film and edits it simultaneously, which allows his films to have a far more organic and immediate creation process, which is the very soul of what experimental film is.

Multiple exposure is the third. Its explanation is below

Ordinarily, a camera's light sensitivity during exposure is constant over time, like in a one-second exposure, where the camera responds evenly throughout that second. In multiple exposures, however, sensitivity varies, rising and falling, such as in a double exposure, where two partial exposures combine into one.

A classic example is a double exposure without flash, where two dim exposures are layered to form one complete image. Other techniques, like "flash and blur", mix a brief flash (modeled by a Dirac delta) with continuous ambient light (modeled by a rectangular window). Even if the camera's sensitivity never drops to zero, combining a Dirac comb (multiple flashes) with a rectangular exposure window is still considered a multiple exposure.

The main film and the most popular one is [Dog Star Man](#)

This film complies with one of the anti-rules of experimental filmmaking, and from the beginning to the end, there is not a single sound in this film nor a soundtrack giving us, the viewer, to do what we do best, which is to view the film in its whole capacity

Now, the second time we see it complying with the rules is with the plot, *Dog Star Man* follows a bearded man climbing a snow-covered mountain with an axe, seemingly in search of something transcendent. The journey is not a literal one but one with metaphorical and visionary concepts and again being a very strong film in ineffability as once it is up to us as the viewer to find our view of Brakhage's vision but if we try to explain it. The man is often interpreted as a mythic character or Promethean figure possibly even Brakhage himself delivering the Promethean flame to us or his own struggle with life's absurdity. There is no denial that themes always turn either mildly or insanely philosophical in all experimental films and this film's "plot" is juxtaposed with cosmic imagery, biological processes, dreams, and hallucinations of the presumably the man with the axe at times it even feels like it's the first person view of the man with the axe.

Brakhage himself described the film to be the "cosmological epic of a man"—a meditation on birth, death, nature, the universe, and consciousness. It is as philosophical as visual poetry as it gets.

My personal favourite of his is [Moth Light](#) a short film of his which has a straightforward story which at first watch will be pretty hard to notice no matter how keen of an eye you have because the fact is that it is very messy, abstract and completely intangible aesthetic and form. There is a very clear reason to it and that reason is the fact that that's what Brakhage thought the moth would see in his style. This 3-minute short film is about a moth's point of view of living. That doesn't delve

deep into the complexity of animal life or how we affected it nor our relationship with it it's an incredibly simple array of beautiful put together colors and moth pieces all which fun fact would keep coming to his working space because we keep his light on and all the moths would just appear the next day and the idea instantly occurred to him one day when saw all the dead moths.

The film still incorporates all the themes he likes to talk about but this time instead of it be the cosmological epic of man its the epic of the moth what if the moth also had that same absurdity to life this film likes to also change the boundaries of storytelling the a story can be told in the most literal and most simplest way which is make you live it which is to make you experience the life of a moth and that's what makes stan Brakhage to me a pioneer of film is because he teaches us the viewer about vision, sight and the fundamentals of what it means to live cinema.



Hans Richter 1843-1916



Now we have finally gotten the end of the first chapter and we also began with this specific director. I am going on a bit of a far stretch because his main ideas were abstractionism and dadaism which both were insanely experimental at time well of course their movements which I think could be captured perfectly by film and which he did Hans Richter's *Rhythmus 21* (1921) stands as a landmark in the evolution of cinema not as a vehicle for narrative or realism as we have established is norma in experimental filmmaking. Still, as an art form capable of expressing rhythm, abstraction, and movement in pure visual terms once again the viewer gets a very specific request from the director which is for the audience to believe shape incentivized worlds to be real and that the limitations of no music and it being only black and white only adds to its ideology. Created at the height of Europe's post-World War I avant-garde ferment, the film broke with cinematic tradition and embraced a new visual language for the time. Through its minimalist geometry and tightly controlled motion, *Rhythmus 21* articulates a vision of film as "visual music," embodying the Dadaist and Constructivist belief that rhythm, form, and structure could carry meaning independently of story or symbol because that very rhythm is desire, drive and endless spiral; all stories are rhythmic. Synesthesia is a word I would use to describe what visual music is like to reference a classic Disney film like *Ratatouille* where the shapes appear to their respective flavours, which play this role where the food or the world in general has its specific shape pattern,

Richter, originally a painter aligned with the Dada movement in Zurich, conceived of *Rhythmus 21* as a logical extension of the abstract visual experiments. Richter's contribution to art was to transpose those ideals into time-based media. Rather than a static canvas, he used the screen as a dynamic space, where shapes could evolve, transform, and respond to one another in a temporal flow.

The film itself is silent and rendered entirely in black and white. Its visual vocabulary is spare: squares and rectangles glide, expand, contract, and overlap against a white or black ground. These forms appear not to represent anything from the outside world but instead move according to a carefully composed rhythm in his world. Richter referred to this as a “score for the eye,” likening the movement of visual elements to musical phrases, sometimes staccato and jarring, at other times fluid and harmonious. In this way, *Rhythmus 21* becomes a study in visual tempo, spatial tension, and kinetic harmony.

“In its precision. There is no chaos here, only measured progression and transformation, as though the very fabric of visual order were being stitched together in real time”.



## CHAPTER II

Documentary-style films

Jonas Mekas



Jonas Mekas (1922–2019) was a Lithuanian-American filmmaker, poet, and one of the most influential figures in avant-garde and experimental cinema. Often referred to as the “godfather of American avant-garde film,” Mekas was known for his deeply personal, diary-like style of filmmaking and his tireless advocacy for independent, experimental, and underground cinema. This style of filmmaking in general is the first of the video diary format. This format is a very exceptional form of filmmaking for its intense personal intimacy you get with the director we get to directly see everything about him, his thoughts, the mundane parts the boring turned beautiful because in his philosophy everything is fleeting moment like a flower that's about to wilt away this is very similar to Fyodor Dostoevsky's ideologies.

He generally really liked to quote lots of poets, writers, even philosophers. His most renowned work is

*Walden (Diaries, Notes, and Sketches)* — Synopsis and Analysis

Jonas Mekas's *Walden* 1969 is a landmark in experimental cinema and a foundational work in the diary film genre. Running three hours and divided into six reels, the film compiles footage Mekas shot between 1964 and 1968, primarily in New York City. It documents fleeting moments in the filmmaker's daily life—encounters with friends, time in nature, celebrations, artistic gatherings—assembled in a way that resists traditional storytelling, opting instead for a poetic, improvisational structure that mimics memory and lived experience.

### Synopsis

*Walden* begins without a formal narrative as it is with all of the experimental artists of the time. Instead, it opens onto everyday events and personal moments that he has,

often filmed with a handheld Bolex camera. There is no central character in the conventional sense, similarly to Maya Deren's use of people in film; the camera itself becomes the protagonist, roving through life as Jonas Mekas sees it as though he is the protagonist of the film. We witness moments from the New York avant garde art scene visits with artists such as Andy Warhol, Allen Ginsberg, and Stan Brakhage as well as quieter scenes of city parks, snowy streets, and summer picnics.

Each of the six reels carries its tone and focus, ranging from joyous gatherings to meditative solo walks, as he also liked to mention a lot of Buddhist literature so these meditative walks meant a lot in the film, they also could count as a major character. The film's narration, provided by Mekas himself, is sparse but deeply personal and from the depths of his warm yet visceral love to the narration. He offers reflections, observations, and recollections, sometimes commenting on the footage as it plays: "I don't know what I'm doing anymore," he says, "but I'm just filming." to him there wasn't ever a strict need to make a special and thought out vision he simply loved film.

While there is no chronological or dramatic arc, *Walden* builds its power through repetition, rhythm, and cumulative emotional resonance, like we see with Richter. The film gradually reveals a portrait of a man in exile. Mekas fled Lithuania during World War I, finding home and meaning through fleeting moments of beauty, intimacy, and community.

At its core, *Walden* is about the act of seeing in retrospect to Stan Brakhage but instead of the colors of life being important and images but the importance of people moments of life of how the camera can capture not just images, but a personal way of being in the world being an individual making choices committing actions in the moment. Mekas's filming style is spontaneous and raw, marked by quick cuts, which is a very recurring motif for a lot of these filmmakers, camera shakes, overexposures, and imperfections, which he liked the most because they added the most character and these aesthetic choices are not accidents but intentional rejections of commercial polish they were giving life to it like we were genuinely in someone's dream or mind or even soul. They also reflect his belief that cinema should serve as a direct extension of the filmmaker's soul, much like a diary or a poem or a diary poem in his case.

The film's title references Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, suggesting a spiritual kinship. Like Thoreau, Mekas is interested in simplicity, observation, and the richness of ordinary life because he believes that he's found the very answer to Thoreau's question or mission in the book. His *Walden* is not about a retreat to the woods but a retreat inward, a quiet resistance to the pace and noise of modern life through attention to the personal, the quiet, the unnoticed, because that's where the meaning of life is in Mekas.

*Mekas's exile experience* is subtly present throughout. Though never the main subject, a sense of longing and transience lingers beneath the joy. The film often focuses on moments of gathering weddings, parties, art events as if to reclaim the sense of family and homeland he lost. Yet it's not nostalgic. Instead, it affirms the present, the "now," as a place of meaning. His motto, voiced in the narration, becomes:

"I make home wherever I am."

*Mekas's community* is also integral to *Walden*. The film becomes an artistic time capsule of 1960s New York. Alongside his family, Mekas documents a vibrant network of countercultural figures. He captures not their public personas, but their private sides—laughing, eating, resting. In doing so, he subtly resists the mythology of the artist-genius and instead emphasizes the beauty of collective experience.

*Walden* is not a film to be "watched" in the conventional sense, but lived for these films that i talk about are all existential even if they do not seem like it they aren't simply put the answer to life's absurdity and anguish but the very question to why must be that way only they are the fact that we can make new worlds its the fact that we can experiment. It is less about narrative than mood, less about spectacle than reflection. It is a meditation on the beauty of the everyday, filtered through the lens of a man who had lost much and found meaning in the fleeting. By documenting his life, Jonas Mekas also invites us to look more closely at our own—to find poetry in the chaos, light in the mundane, and fragments of paradise in the passing hours.

My personal favorite film of his is

As I Was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty

This film relates to me in a personal way because of my love of Nietzsche and desire to always reminisce on life

This film is a long, meandering, intimate meditation on family, friendship, joy, and the elusive beauty found in the passing of time. It is not only a film about memory, but a film that enacts the very process of remembering—repetitive, non-linear, fragmented, yet overflowing with affection and meaning. Very similar to *Walden*, but the main difference is that not only is this film his magnum opus, it is also the very monumental collection of Compiled home movies. This film is an attempt by the director to reconstruct his life through various home movies filmed over a period of about 30 years. Events shown in the film are things such as birthdays and picnics, as well as more landmark personal events such as the first steps of his children. Throughout the film, Mekas offers his own commentary and insight on what the viewer is seeing. This film is a love letter to life and to humanity, it is his undying

devotion to beauty and how we must simply protect and view, but to honor it the best we can.



Jean painleve 1902-1989



Jean Painlevé (1902–1989) was a singular figure in the history of cinema a French filmmaker, scientist, and avant-garde thinker whose work defied the traditional boundaries between science and art this was his mark which was incredibly hard to find at the time this is what made him experimental in his own way by deciding that art and science are not too far from each other. He was best known for his pioneering underwater and scientific short films. Painlevé created a body of work that fused meticulous biological observation with a poetic, often surrealist sensibility, this being his approach. Across a career that spanned over five decades, like Mekas from the 1920s to the 1970s he produced more than 200 films, many of them focused on the secret lives of marine animals such as seahorses, sea urchins, jellyfish, and octopuses.

Educated in biology at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France, Painlevé was deeply rooted in scientific training. However, he quickly became disillusioned with the rigid formalism of academic science and decided that instead that he must transition to cinema as a way to communicate scientific wonder to a broader audience. His films were grounded in empirical research, often based on close observation through microscopes or underwater cameras, but they were equally influenced by his involvement with the avant-garde cultural circles of interwar Paris. Painlevé was associated with surrealists like André Breton and Louis Aragon, though he ultimately distanced himself from their dogma, and was inspired by the broader artistic currents of Dada, modernism, and the absurd, all of which built the experimental aspect to his art.

What distinguished Painlevé's films from conventional scientific cinema was his refusal to treat nature as a cold, ruthless and mechanistic system. Instead, he emphasized the strangeness, sensuality, and even humor of natural phenomena. In works like *The Seahorse* (1934), *The Octopus* (1928), and *Sea Urchins* (1954), he used close-ups, slow motion, and lyrical narration to highlight the otherworldly behaviors of his subjects. These films were not only educational but also emotionally and philosophically engaging, presenting marine creatures as complex, even mysterious beings with their own alien beauty. One again, he brings about with new possibilities, a new logic, a surreal experience to the rigidness of formal sciences, which only reward academic research, even my research work is inspired by how he handles marine life I'm not here writing this research paper in the format of an academic but i try to humanize it give it life i want you to see my world which are these films which are these artists it's not about the functioning and systematic world it's about the ones we can discover if we change the positions of our soul.

Painlevé also broke ground technologically. He was among the first to experiment with underwater cinematography and designed his waterproof camera housings to film marine life in situ. His scientific interests ranged widely, encompassing embryology, marine biology, and even animal behavior, and he often worked closely with researchers to ensure accuracy. Yet, his tone was never didactic. His voiceover narrations were frequently ironic, whimsical, or existential, inviting viewers to reflect on their place in the natural order. He has been a great influence on technology filmmaking, especially the documentary style of filmmaking and marine life as a whole.

Despite his substantial contributions to both science communication and experimental film, Painlevé remained something of a marginal figure during much of his lifetime, partly because his work resisted categorization, which until now is a struggle for most of what experimental filmmaking is. However, his influence has grown significantly in recent decades. Filmmakers such as Werner Herzog, David Attenborough, Agnès Varda, and the Quay Brothers have cited Painlevé as a foundational inspiration. In 2000, a retrospective exhibition titled *Science Is Fiction: The Films of Jean Painlevé* helped reintroduce his work to new audiences, accompanied by a soundtrack from the indie band Yo La Tengo, which added a contemporary musical resonance to his already hypnotic visuals.

Painlevé's legacy lies in his insistence that science and art are not opposites but partners in the pursuit of understanding and wonder. He once remarked, "Science is fiction," capturing his belief that all observation is filtered through imagination and cultural framing. His films continue to enchant because they invite us to look again at the natural world not with detachment and systemization, but with curiosity, empathy, and a sense of shared mystery, most importantly soul.

## ***The Seahorse***

Jean Painlevé's 1934 short film *The Seahorse L'Hippocampe* stands as one of the earliest and most poetic examples of scientific cinema. At just over 15 minutes long, it captures the strange and tender world of the hippocampus, or seahorse, using underwater cinematography that was groundbreaking for its time. More than a biological documentary, the film is a meditation on form, reproduction, and the limits of human perception. This time we are not told to see life by shapes, colors or people but this time we are told to view life through life, one that is completely alien to us and not really that recognizable. Painlevé blends precise observation with a whimsical, surreal sensibility that pushes the boundaries of how science can be represented in film.

The film begins with a close-up of the seahorse, its curled tail and long snout floating delicately in the water, framed against an undulating background of aquatic plants. The cinematography, shot in Painlevé's specially designed aquarium tanks, presents the creature with an intimacy and strangeness that aligns with surrealist aesthetics. Painlevé wants again this intimacy is achieved in film by experimenting by finding new things to explore from the most simplest things like movement and color to gradually moving on the complex relationship between people and between nature. The seahorse appears both alien and oddly familiar, its body upright like a person, its movements slow and dreamlike. Accompanied by a lyrical, almost mischievous narration, the film introduces the seahorse not as a specimen to be dissected but as a subject to be observed with wonder. This narration is much different from Mekas's due to the fact that Painlevé's life as a scientist for him closeness can be only through this

dissection this complete and entire interference with its nature as to challenge it to showing itself fully to him it his how connects.

What most fascinated Painlevé and what remains most famous about the film is the seahorse's unique reproductive process. In a reversal of typical biological roles, it is the male who becomes pregnant and gives birth. He is the first to discover this very revolutionary concept that gender is a very loose concept and that it's not supposed to be only in the way the whole ocean is about that freedom that's an ironic thing due to the fact that ocean is beneath our very feet descended and trapped its citizens in the thick air limiting them from coming up and breathing our lighter air. Painlevé captures the entire reproductive cycle, courtship dances, the transfer of eggs from the female into the male's brood pouch, the swelling of the pouch as the embryos develop, and the dramatic moment when dozens of tiny seahorses are born, expelled into the water in what looks almost like a mystical rite. This scene is not only biologically super rare, but it's also visually mesmerizing. The baby seahorses, tiny replicas of their parents, seem to spiral into life.

Throughout the film, Painlevé maintains a tone that is at once serious and playful. His narration, delivered in a dryly ironic voice, reflects his belief that science is not devoid of emotion or imagination. He avoids the pomp of scientific authority and instead treats his subject with both reverence and amusement, like he is playing with it like a god observing its creations; he has for the subject not mere scientific and professional curiosity. This tone aligns with his lifelong ethos: that science and art are not incompatible, and that wonder is a legitimate response to natural phenomena.

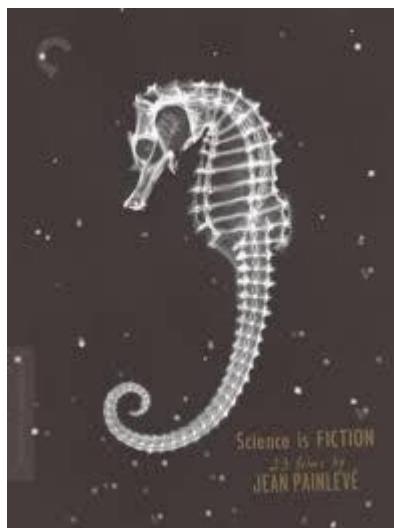
The film's surreal quality also reflects the influence of the artistic movements Painlevé was connected to in 1930s France. Although he rejected formal

membership in the Surrealist group, he shared their desire to reveal the uncanny within the everyday. Painlevé's use of close-ups, dreamlike pacing, and anthropomorphic suggestion of the seahorse standing upright, the birth scene resembling human labor, aligns the film with works by surrealists like Luis Buñuel or Man Ray. But where those artists often delved into violence or eroticism, Painlevé found his surrealism in the quiet strangeness of biology itself.

*The Seahorse* was ahead of its time. Painlevé and his team had to innovate underwater cinematographic equipment that could capture detail without harming the animals or disturbing their behavior. His filming was not voyeuristic or exploitative; it was meditative, attentive, and deeply respectful. This ethical stance toward non-human life is part of what makes *The Seahorse* feel modern even today.

In retrospect, *The Seahorse* can be seen as a foundational moment in the history of both nature documentaries and experimental cinema. It paved the way for later filmmakers such as David Attenborough or Werner Herzog to blend scientific inquiry with aesthetic and philosophical exploration. It also marked one of the first times that marine life was portrayed not merely as biological data but as cinematic poetry, which usually goes hand in hand with experimental cinema.

Ultimately, Jean Painlevé's *The Seahorse* invites us to reconsider our relationship with the natural world. It asks us to slow down, to observe with care, and to find beauty not just in the exotic but in the quietly miraculous details of life. The film remains a testament to Painlevé's radical vision: that the microscope and the camera, the laboratory and the cinema, can all serve the same goal to see the world more clearly, and more tenderly.



## CHAPTER III

Narrative esoteric cultural experimentals

Luis Buñuel 1900–1983



was a Spanish filmmaker and one of the most important and influential figures in the history of world cinema. Renowned for his provocative, surreal, and often subversive films, Buñuel's work spans several decades and national cinemas from early French avant-garde to Mexican commercial cinema to internationally acclaimed co-productions with Spain and France. His films frequently challenge conventional morality, religion, bourgeois hypocrisy, and the structures of power, all while

experimenting with narrative form, dream logic, and dark humor. As previously mentioned, when talking about Painleve, this is a change of pace because this specific director now challenges not only the views of simple things such as shapes, colors, animals, or people's life spans. But the government, the bourgeoisie, the evils of moral corruption and esotericism, and the kabbalah.

*The Exterminating Angel* 1962 is one of the most unsettling and intellectually potent works in the history of surrealist cinema. At once darkly humorous and disturbingly prophetic, the film offers a penetrating critique of the social and psychological structures that govern modern life. The whole film's premise is about the rudeness and indecency becoming so forced into society that most things and actions that used to be normal are blocked barriers that nearly seem magical. In this masterwork, Buñuel abandons linear logic and realism to create a parable that exposes the fragility of civilization and the absurdity of social rituals and general mad and fascist rules in human interaction, put as bluntly as possible.

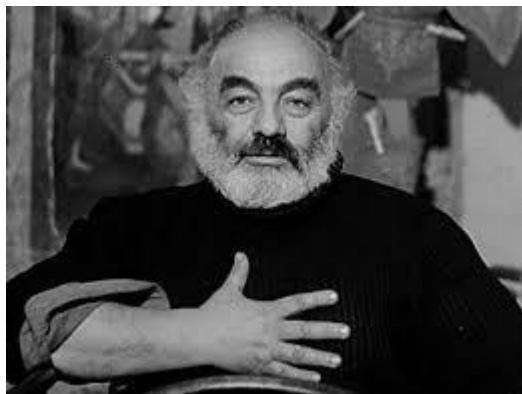
The film's premise is deceptively simple. After a formal dinner party in a lavish upper-class mansion where the very expensive smell you could feel punching your nose, where the very exquisite clothes put to shame the ones you probably have in your closets, but then very suddenly, the guests find themselves unable to leave the drawing room. There are no locked doors or physical barriers. Nothing visibly prevents them from stepping outside. Yet, some invisible force or perhaps the breakdown of will, reason, or routine keeps them confined. Over several days, as food and water run out and social niceties give way to desperation, the guests slowly devolve into helplessness, hysteria, and even violence. Their refined manners and carefully cultivated civility crumble, revealing the primal anxieties and contradictions beneath the polished surface.

Luis Buñuel portrays the concept that one cannot change a nature that does no real harm we cannot improve on everything and anything at the same type that etiquette must stand to be only a moral concept not one that adheres to formality and social status in the end of the film the esoteric ritual is the one to destroy the bourgeoisie barrier of confinement with this Buñuel wants us the viewer to see the importance of not only the culture of older times that their also lies infinite wisdom in the very religions and cultures we forget and replace with lavishness.

# CHAPTER IV

Our culture meshes with experimental filmmaking and the conclusion

Sergei Parajanov (1924-1990)



Sergei Parajanov was a visionary Soviet-Armenian filmmaker, artist, and collageist. He was celebrated for his groundbreaking contributions to the world of cinema, specifically for incorporating his love for collages into his films. He was born in Tbilisi, Georgia, to Armenian parents. Parajanov studied at the prestigious VGIK film school in Moscow under the mentorship of renowned directors like Oleksandr Dovzhenko.

The film he filled with collage-inspired art is the one that I believe will conclude all the experimental artists I covered in this research paper. That film is the very world-renowned *Color of Pomegranates*, like the other films, this film is nearly once again just a visual poem that captures the spirit of the Armenian poet Sayat-Nova. Instead of using linear storytelling, Parajanov tells Sayat-Nova's life through a series of stylized tableaux rich with cultural symbolism in which he masterfully embeds his collage skills into the whole religious imagery and folk rituals, turning the film aesthetic and atmospheric masterpiece. Each scene feels like a moving painting, deeply influenced by Armenian miniature art and Orthodox iconography.

Divided into symbolic chapters—Childhood, Youth, Monastic Life, and Death—the film offers an emotional and spiritual map of the poet's inner world. Rather than showing what happened in Sayat-Nova's life, it expresses how it felt. Through haunting visuals and a minimal soundscape of chants and folk music, the film evokes themes of love, faith, suffering, and artistic devotion.

Censored in the Soviet Union for its religious content and experimental form, *The Color of Pomegranates* later gained international acclaim for its originality. It remains a masterpiece of visual storytelling, a film that asks to be felt rather than understood, and that elevates cinema to the realm of pure poetic expression.

## CONCLUSIVE THOUGHTS

In conclusion, he can integrate all the themes that the other experimental filmmakers had. The poetic video diary format of Jonas Mekas is like the documentation of Sayat Nova's life. The masterful ability to choreograph people's movements, like Maya Deren, the use of varied colors and interesting visuals like Stan Brakhage.

Why the experimental film genre is the topic that I find most interesting is because it holds so much to it, yet to be uncovered, it is to be forever researched, nearly like a very complex scientific study, just as Jean Painleve says that both art and science are fictions that can go together this topic can endlessly provide for that's the whole shtick to idea of this genre it isn't just a regular extension of film it's an innate and separate experience as it's in all forms of art but in film it has a much more of bigger role in our then we seem to know I really believe that this genre is what will change everything in today's modern depiction of every political philosophical and global issue at hand because experimental films are worlds to be found out which will teach us even more about our own.

## Sources

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[Meshes of the Afternoon](#) page 3

[Dog Star Man](#) & [moth light](#) page 8

[Maya Deren](#)

[Stan Brakhage](#)

[Hans Richter](#)

[Jonas Mekas](#)

[Jean Painleve](#)

[Luis Bunuel](#)