Article

On the Topics and Style of Soviet Animated Films

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a survey of Soviet animation and analyses the thematic and stylistic course of its development. Soviet animated film emerged and materialised in synch with the fluctuations of the region's political climate and was directly shaped by it. A number of trends and currents of Soviet animation also pertain to other Eastern European countries. After all, Eastern Europe constituted an integrated cultural space that functioned as a single market for the films produced across it by filmmakers who interacted in a professional regional network of film education, events, festivals, publications etc.

Initially experimental, post-revolutionary Russian animation soon fell under the sway of the Socialist Realist discourse, along with the rest of Soviet art, and quickly crystallised as a didactic genre for children. Disney's paradigm became its major source of inspiration both in terms of visual style and thematic scope, despite the fact that Soviet Union was regarded as the ideological opposite of the Western way of life and mindset. The Soviet animation industry was spread across different studios and republics that adopted slightly varied production practices and tolerated different degrees of artistic freedom. Studios in the smaller republics, such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in particular, stood out for making films that were more ideologically complicated than those produced in Moscow.

INTRODUCTION

Soviet animated film took shape alongside, and was directly affected by, the specific political developments of the region. While the focus of this article is on animated film in Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, and in Soviet Union as it gradually broadened its geographical span, the same trajectories and trends can be observed in other Eastern European (i.e. Eastern Bloc) countries. For, as Dina Iordanova has said,

> Between 1945 and 1989 ... the development of these countries was ... dictated by Soviet policies in the spheres of economics and culture. [---] Whatever happened in the Soviet Union, directly influenced the cultural climate in the countries of the Eastern Bloc, and often events in the USSR were replicated in the Eastern Bloc (such as the 'Thaw' that followed the demystification of the cult of Stalin's personality in the late 1950s or the stagnation of the Brezhnev period). (Iordanova 2003: 20–21)

At the same time it is also true that the cultural elite of the satellite states often enjoyed a higher degree of artistic freedom, compared to their peers in the Soviet Union. This becomes especially evident in the choice of subject matter and topics, as well as the extent to which the animation artists abided (or rejected) the tenets of Socialist Realism. In addition, the entire Soviet Union cannot be measured with the same yardstick, because animated films were produced in a number of different studios and in various Soviet Socialist Republics, where the local circumstances affected both the industrial practices and regulated the proverbial length of the leash. The smaller republics in particular, such as the Baltics, stood out for work that was sometimes much more ideologically complicated than the films produced in Moscow, reflecting either intentional political digression or the recklessness of their authors.

When speaking about censorship in the Soviet Union, it is important to avoid the simplified confrontation between the artist and the state – the filmmaking community included both loyal servants of the Party and rebels against the regime.

So far, studies on Eastern European, and especially Soviet, animated film have focused mainly on history and animation techniques (Bendazzi 2015; Pontieri 2012; MacFadyen 2005; Асенин 1986); on renowned authors (Hames 2008; Капков 2007; Kitson 2005); and, to a much lesser degree, on critiques of ideology and totalitarianism (Moritz 1997) or feminist discourses (Fadina 2016; Пироженко 2004a, 2004b; Kononenko 2011). In addition, several prominent Soviet animation artists have published autobiographical texts explaining their methods and practices (Ходатаев 1936; Брумберг 1979; Иванов-Вано 1950, 1962; Норштейн 1988; Хржановский 1983).

This article attempts to map the development of Soviet animated film, highlighting some of its characteristic features, especially in terms of topics and visual style. Since the Soviet art scene was strongly impacted by the political climate, the political shifts provide a basis for this analysis. The discussion is structured into sections based on historical periods and the developments in the field of animation are considered in juxtaposition with transformations in the socio-political sphere. Obviously the scope of the article is rather ambitious, especially when it comes its temporal and geographical dimension, which is why the following pages are only able to scratch the surface of this broad and multifaceted set of issues; and I fully acknowledge the pressing need for further in-depth studies. Nevertheless, I hope that this survey will not only contribute to a fuller understanding of how the topics and style of Soviet animated film were constructed and developed, but will also improve our understanding of the past and the people of this era.

THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

Lucanus Cervus, arguably the earliest surviving Russian animated short, was made by Ladislas Starevich in 1910. Born in Moscow to a family with Polish roots, Starevich produced several animated films in Tsarist Russian until he emigrated to France after the October Revolution in 1917 and continued his career as animation artist in emigration.

After the Revolution, the Russian cultural and art scene was exceptionally innovative and extremely receptive to new ideas. The Russian animated films of the day were first and foremost inspired by modernist thought, propaganda posters and caricatures. Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Alexander Dovzhenko and Dziga Vertov were the filmmakers whose practices, as well as political and artistic visions, shaped the early years of Soviet filmmaking. Vertov was also the author of the earliest surviving Soviet animated film, *Soviet Toys* (*Советские игрушки*, Russia, 1924). **(Figure 1)** Laura Pontieri has aptly pointed out that 'most of the early Soviet animated films came out of political manifestos and satirical vignettes; they were primarily caricatures and propaganda works addressed to an adult audience' (Pontieri 2012: 6). Ivan Ivanov-Vano, one of the great figures of early Soviet animation, also confirms that satire, political posters and pamphlets were of utmost importance for nascent Soviet animation (Иванов-Вано 1950: 18).

The post-revolutionary period was also characterised by the implementation of state control and domination over film production. State censorship has a long history in the Soviet Union and can be traced back to the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire. However, in 1922 the Soviet authorities set up Glavlit (Главное управление по охране государственных тайн в печати; Главлит), a new body for censorship and the protection of state secrets, which, together with its sub-institutions, operated until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

THE STALINIST ERA

After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin rose to the leadership of the Soviet Union and his dictatorship lasted until his death in 1953.

Senka the African (*Сенька-африканец*, Russia, 1927), the first Soviet animated film for children, was a collaborative effort including Yuri Merkulov, Danil Cherkes and Ivan Ivanov-Vano. The film is based on a story by Korney Chukovsky, one of the most popular Soviet children's poets. A vivid depiction of a child's fantasy world, *Senka the African* became an immediate success and was instantly followed by two other screen adaptations of Chukovsky's poems – *Big Cockroach* (*Тараканище*, Russia) and *Moidodir* (*Мойдодыр*, Russia; both in 1927).

1929 saw the release of Mikhail Tsekhanovsky's *Mail* (*Почта*, Russia), an animated adaptation of Samuil Marshak's Soviet poem, which tells the story of a letter addressed to the writer Boris Zhitkov **(Figure 2 and 3)**. The letter follows the writer around the world and finally reaches him when he returns to Leningrad. *Mail* sports a highly modern visual and musical form shaped by the post-revolutionary avant-garde mode of expression. Originally made as a silent short, *Mail* became one of the first Soviet sound animations when a soundtrack was added in 1930.

In the late 1920s the Soviet animation filmmakers began to invent characters that would continue to appear in a number of films, thus producing the first animated 'series', featuring, among many others, such legendary characters as Tip-Top, Bratishkin and Buzilka.

The Soviet animated films of the 1920s were mostly entertaining but always included a 'political or social message' (Pontieri 2012: 18). In Soviet Russia, animated film functioned primarily as an ideological tool for shaping the mentality and behaviour of the masses. For instance, *Samoyed Boy* (*Самоедский мальчик*, Russia, 1928, directed by Nikolai Khodatayev, Olga Khodatayeva, Valentina Brumberg and Zinaida Brumberg) is a good illustration of how this ideological education through

animation worked. In the film, a Samoyed boy comes to Leningrad to go to school and as a result of his studies realises how backward the mindset and worldview of his native Nenets people are. The film openly ridicules the beliefs of this group of indigenous people. Birgit Beumers aptly observes that '[t]he boy is a model Soviet citizen: He gives up his family to become part of a larger Soviet family' (Beumers 2007: 156). *Samoyed Boy* provides the first animated appearance of the 'Soviet man', a comrade who has rejected his background and past. The film is perhaps especially significant because in the late 1920s the creation of the 'New Soviet Citizen' typically involved images of children. In fact, '[t]he Soviet state placed children's affairs at the heart of its political legitimacy, emphasising that children were treated with greater care than they were anywhere else in the world' (Kelly 2007: 1).

The first Soviet puppet film, Aleksandr Ptushko's *The New Gulliver* (*Новый Гулливер*, Russia), was released in 1935. More precisely, it is a full-length feature film combined with puppet animation. *The New Gulliver* is a re-telling of Jonathan Swift's famous *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). The Soviet version features Petya, a young Pioneer, a Soviet 'Gulliver' who has landed on Lilliput Island that is suffering under capitalist inequality and exploitation.

Importantly, the fairy-tale films, which would later garner extreme popularity and even become the 'trademark' of the Soviet animation industry, did not emerge until the mid-1930s when *Fairytale about Tsar Durandai* (*Сказка о царе Дурандае*, Russia, 1934), the first Soviet animated film based on a classical fairytale, was made by Valentina Brumberg, Zinaida Brumberg and Ivan Ivanov-Vano. During the early Soviet period, fairy tales and folklore were generally considered as atavistic remnants of feudalism. For instance, Maxim Gorki vehemently called for the purification of the literary language and 'expunging [of] all regionalism, earthiness, and folkisms from Soviet prose' (Fadina 2016: 65).

Visual form and style

Both the content and the form of Stalinist animation were strongly impacted by the change of course that took place in Soviet culture after Andrei Zhdanov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, prescribed Socialist Realism as the official canon of the Soviet art at the 1934 Soviet Writers' Congress. The decision left no room for modernist experiments with form and designated children as the primary target audience for animation. This is also evident in the name given to the state animated film studio established in June 1936 – Soyuzdetfilm ('det' refers to *дети* – 'children'). Even if the particle 'det' was dropped when the studio became Soyuzmultfilm in August 1937, the target audience remained the same, and until the early 1960s, Soviet animation focused exclusively on children (Bendazzi 2015: 175).

The centralisation of the Soviet animation industry under Soyuzmultfilm put an abrupt end to the previous era of experimentation and stylistic exploration. An important figure to consider in this turn of events is Walt Disney, who also aimed most of his films at children. Starting in the mid-1930s, several Soviet animation filmmakers and high officials made no secret of their admiration of Disney, who had by then established himself as one of the major animation producers in the world. The Soviets strove to emulate both the style and the quality of his works on their home turf.[1] In 1933, the delegates to the first All-Union Conference of Soviet Comedy demanded: 'Give us a Soviet Mickey Mouse!' (Pontieri 2012: 38) The First International Film Festival in Moscow screened some of Disney's animated films in 1935 that were warmly received by the public. From then on, American productions had a great impact on the themes and style of Soviet animated films (Pontieri 2012: 38).

According to Giannalberto Bendazzi, Stalin also took great pleasure in the Disney films sent to the Moscow International

1 Author's interview with Andrei Khrzhanovsky (17 April 2015).

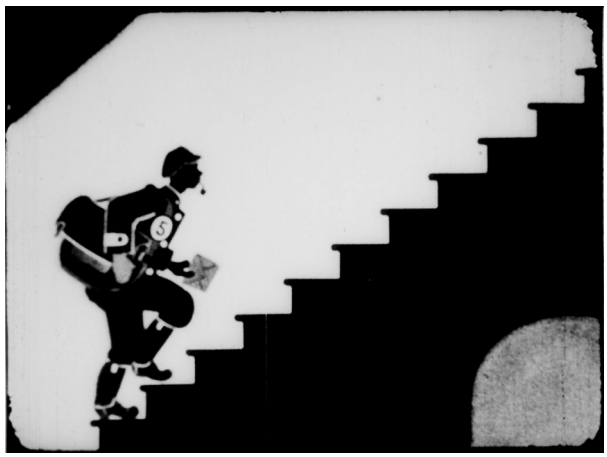

FIGURE 1. The earliest surviving Soviet animated film *Soviet Toys* (*Советские игрушки*, Russia, 1924) was made by the famous film innovator Dziga Vertov.

FIGURE 2 and 3. One of the first Soviet animated films with sound was *Mail* (*Почта*, Russia, 1929) by Mikhail Tsekhanovsky. It also became the first Soviet animated film to be widely exhibited in cinemas (Fadina 2016: 72).

Film Festival, enjoying them in the privacy of his own cinema in Kremlin. After watching them, Stalin even announced that this is what Soviet animation should look like (Bendazzi 2015: 175). The film critic Anatoly Volkov suggests that, while Stalin's approval was not the only force behind the wide appreciation and emulation of Disney's style in Soviet animation, the cinema directors were well aware of the Leader's sympathy, especially for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (USA, 1937) and *Bambi* (USA, 1942) (cited in Pontieri 2012: 47).

Sergei Eisenstein, one of the most prominent Soviet filmmakers of the time, is also known to have been an enthusiastic supporter of Disney. Having met him in person in Hollywood in 1930, Eisenstein became one of Disney's most important advocates in Soviet Union. While Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart in their book, *How to Read Donald Duck* (Dorfman, Mattelart 1992), observe that after World War II Disney became the tool and emblem of American imperialism, Eisenstein considered his early work to be profoundly communist in nature. In Eisenstein's words, 'Disney's films are a revolt against partitioning and legislating, against spiritual stagnation and greyness. But the revolt is lyrical. The revolt is a daydream' (quoted in Roberts 2007: 48).

Although a certain striving for realism in the narrative structure, which characterises Disney's productions, strikes at some of the central cores of the Socialist Realist paradigm, the attempts of the Soviet animation industry to emulate Disney's style and quality were largely unsuccessful for several reasons. For example, cel animation (celluloid sheets system), which became the industry norm in the 1930s (Bendazzi 2015: 40; Furniss 2007: 19–20), was invented, developed and patented in the USA and the Soviet analogue was technically of much poorer quality. In Ivanov-Vano's words, '[t]he American cel sheets used at the end of the 1930s were of a good transparent quality that could allow for the juxtaposition of a few layers, while the Soviet cels had a slight grey or yellow tinge that would cause a considerable darkening of the drawing when more than three layers were used at the same time' (quoted in Pontieri 2012: 30–40). Thus, the limited number of layers in cel animation clearly set limits on the complexity of Soviet animation. Moreover, the practice and development of the Soviet animation industry came to a halt during World War II, while the production of American animation continued to thrive.

However, some distinctly Disney-esque features, such as round shapes and plastic movement, became part of the toolbox of the Soviet animators. In addition to form, Soviet animation also imitated Disney's fairy tale narratives and cheerful stories, and following Disney's example, began to draw on Russian national folklore and classical literature (Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Krylov): 'Animators turned to national cultures, adapting classical texts, producing fairy tales, and utilising the figurative and plastic suggestions of popular traditions' (Bendazzi 2015: 175).

With the emergence of the Disney style, fairy tales regained their popularity (as well as a positive image) and became an increasingly important narrative source for Soviet animation. But generally, the aims of the pre-World War II Soviet animation can be summarised in Laura Pontieri's words – 'the mythification of the past, exaltation of the present, and apotheosis of a brilliant future' (Pontieri 2012: 42).

In contrast to the 1920s and the better part of the 1930s, when the authorities strove to forget the past almost completely (with some exceptions, few and far between, such as the aforementioned *Fairytale about Tsar Durandai*), the 1940s saw a significant return of parts of the past, namely in the form of traditional Russian tales and national fairy tales, which resulted in animated films like *Little Tower* (*Теремок*, Russia, 1945, directed by Pyotr Nosov and Olga Khodatayeva), *Fairy Tale about a Soldier* (*Сказка о солдате*, Russia, 1948, Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg) and *Geese-Swans* (*Гуси-лебеди*, Russia, 1949, Ivan Ivanov-Vano and Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaya) (Fadina 2016: 78).

In addition to the animated versions of fairy tales, *byliny* songs and children's stories, the Soviet animation industry also produced didactic films with 'stock' characters from fairy tales, such as the cunning fox, the big bad wolf, the strong yet simple bear etc. Examples of these films include *The Fox and the Wolf* (*Лиса и волк*, Russia, 1937, directed by Sarra Mokil), *Cockerel – Golden Comb* (*Петушок – Золотой гребешок*, Russia, 1955, Pyotr Nosov and Dmitri Anpilov) and *Kolobok* (*Колобок*, Russia, 1956, Roman Davydov).

During World War II, the Soviet film industry saw a severe decline as '[c]inema in general was not a priority for the state, and the evacuated studios were not producing many films' (Fadina 2016: 74).

After the end of the war, the animation industry recovered and continued to find inspiration in the world of fairy tales and folklore, spicing the traditional narratives with ideological or didactic messages. For instance, Ivanov-Vano's *Stranger's Voice* (*Чужой голос*, Russia, 1949) was produced as a part of a campaign against jazz music (and Western lifestyles in general).[2] In the film, a Soviet bird returns home from its trip abroad and performs a concert. When it starts to sing a jazzy tune that it learned overseas, the Soviet birds whistle in derision and expel the jazz singer from the forest.

Folklore and fairy tales provided narrative material not only in Soviet Union but across the entire Eastern Bloc, including in post-war Czechoslovakia where Jiří Trnka produced a series of animated films based on folkloric sources, such as *The Czech Years* (*Špalíček*, Czechoslovakia, 1947), *The Emperor's Nightingale* (*Císařův slavík*, Czechoslovakia, 1949) and *Prince Bayaya* (*Bajaja*, Czechoslovakia, 1950). Adaptation of fairy tales and folklore provided filmmakers with a safety net, while anything too personal could easily have caused problems in the tense political atmosphere of the post-war era. Indeed, as Antonín J. Liehm has noted, '[i]t was much harder for the watchdogs to penetrate the land of fairy tales, folk stories and poetic visions' (quoted in Hames 2008: 24).

Trnka's contribution to the development of Eastern European animated film cannot be overestimated, as his mastery of puppet animation raised the profile of this technique considerably, making it visible as a solid alternative to cel animation and the Disney style.

In addition to his native Czechoslovakia, Trnka also managed to establish a school of puppet animation in the German Democratic Republic (Bendazzi 2015: 236). Established in 1955, the DEFA Studio für Trickfilme was the largest animation studio in the GDR, producing about 2,000 films between 1955 and 1989. Despite this astonishing volume the DEFA productions were typically conservative and primarily aimed at children. According to Ulrich Wegenast, a diligent adherence to the conventions of Socialist Realism meant that the '[p]uppets and cartoon characters in DEFA's films could not be too aloof. They had to be as natural as possible so as not to be associated with the negative "*Formenhascherei*" (meaning, straining after formal effects)' (quoted in Bendazzi 2015: 236).

As already suggested, post-war Soviet animation followed in the steps of the Disney universe. For instance, Leonid Amalrik and Vladimir Polkovnikov's *The Little Grey Neck* (*Серая Шейка*, Russia, 1948), with its plastic movements and round shapes, emulates the Disney canon with great precision. By comparison, Ivanov-Vano's *The Humpbacked Horse* (*Конёк-Горбунок*, Russia, 1947; remake 1975), while clearly influenced by Disney, attempts to combine the features of this style with folkloric forms and pieces of vernacular art (woodcuts, pottery, handicraft). In terms of content, the film also draws on folklore tradition – it is based on Pyotr Yershov's poem of the same name that, in turn, makes use of various classical fairy tales. It is interesting to note that many Soviet animated films also had to struggle with censorship, just like Yershov's poem had been censored upon

2 It is important to note that Disney has of course been admired and copied all over the world, not only in the Soviet Union, because the Disney Studio has been so productive and successful for so many decades.

its publishing in 1834, and even banned for over two decades due to the mortal sin of making the Tsar appear foolish. Ivanov-Vano continued to mix folkloric and historical elements in his subsequent films, such as *The Lefthander* (*Левша*, Russia, 1964), *How One Man Fed Two Generals* (*Как один мужик двух генералов прокормил*, Russia, 1965) and *Go There, Don't Know Where* (*Поди туда, не знаю куда*, Russia, 1966).

Mikhail Tsekhanovsky and Vera Tsekhanovskaya's *The Wild Swans* (*Дикие лебеди*, Russia, 1962) is interesting for its synthesis of the classical 'spatial' Disney-style animation and flat backgrounds that imitate the illustrations in old books. While a certain sense of disharmony arises from this mixing of styles, the result comes across as modern and innovative for its time. *The Wild Swans*, with its combination of the three-dimensional world of film and two-dimensional prints, showcases fascinating stylistic explorations.

Although a conventional post-war Soviet animation in several respects, Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg's *Big Troubles* (*Большие неприятности*, Russia, 1961) rejects the Disney style decisively **(Figure 4)**. While the design of the film attempts to imitate children's drawings and evoke a 'child-like' style, it was not aimed at children – it was the first post-war Soviet animated film that primarily targeted adult audiences. Thus, *Big Troubles* marks the waning of Disney's influence on Soviet animation, which on the stylistic-aesthetic level had not wavered until the Thaw of the 1960s (Fadina 2016: 77).

THE KHRUSHCHEV THAW

After Stalin's death in 1953 Nikita Khrushchev took office as the head of the Soviet Union. His tenure resulted in the so-called 'Khruschev Thaw' that 'from a cultural viewpoint ... was characterised by a certain degree of liberation in all spheres of Soviet life and culture' (Fadina 2016: 83). For the animated film industry, one of the most significant consequences of this shift in power was the emerging 'policy of decentralisation and balanced ethnic representation', which led to the establishment of new animation studios in Estonia (Tallinn), Ukraine (Kiev), Armenia (Yerevan) and Georgia (Tbilisi) (Bendazzi 2015: 140). Despite setting up new production centres, Soyuzmultfilm in Moscow retained its significance as the largest and most important animation studio in Soviet Union.

The rapid proliferation of television after World War II was accompanied by an increasing demand for animation production. And this in turn gave rise to a certain shift towards a simplified, 'limited' style of animation. Limited animation or the 'modernist style' (Amidi 2006: 18) is characterised by the reduced movement of characters, as well as by an emphasis on uncomplicated forms and colour schemes; it prioritises design, colour, line and composition. The United Productions of America (UPA, established in 1944) was the first studio to apply limited animation extensively, but the filmmakers of the Zagreb school, such as Dušan Vukotič, Vatroslav Mimica, Vlado Kristl and many others, are also known for preferring this style. **(Figure 5)** In contrast to the UPA and the Zagreb school, which utilised limited animation in order to introduce a sense of modernity and the flair of the times to their works, the Soviet Union was mainly drawn to the functionality of this technology. Round shapes and the plastic movement of the previously dominant Disney approach were replaced by simpler and more cartoonish designs that, in a certain sense, signalled a return to the roots of Soviet animation – to the post-revolutionary cartoons and propaganda posters. Limited animation was considerably easier to create than the Disney style and it significantly reduced the need for resources in the animation industry, thereby leading to increased production volumes. In addition, the rejection of Disney's naturalistic style has in part been ascribed to the escalation of the Cold War (Fadina 2016: 82).

More similar to caricature and poster art than to the Disney approach, the limited animation often highlighted the contemporary living environment and social

FIGURE 4. Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg's *Big Troubles* (*Большие неприятности*, Russia, 1961) was the first post-war Soviet animated film that moved away from the much-admired and copied Disney approach.

FIGURE 5. Dušan Vukotić's *Ersatz* (*Surogat*, Yugoslavia, 1961) is a classic example of the 'limited' style of animation. Produced at Zagreb Film, it became the first non-US animated film to win an Oscar in 1962.

relations. In addition to fairy tale universes and nature, Soviet animation began to represent contemporary cityscapes and typical characters of the period, e.g. Fyodor Khitruk's *The Story of a Crime* (*История одного преступления*, Russia, 1962) that is clearly set in modern-day Moscow. Limited animation also attracted adult audiences who had been virtually excluded as a target group for quite a while. Since the rise of limited animation in Eastern Europe coincided with the Thaw, several films of the period (and beyond) stand out for their cautious critiques of Soviet society and especially its bureaucratic apparatus. For instance, Valentina and Zinaida Brumberg's *Big Troubles* tackles social issues such as alcoholism, scorn of work and the Soviet youth counterculture movement known as *stilyagi* (*стиляги*). Khrituk's *The Man in the Frame* (*Человек в рамке*, Russia, 1966) subtly denounces bureaucracy and implicitly the Soviet *nomenklatura* as well. Khrzhanovsky's *Glass Harmonica* (*Стеклянная гармоника*, Russia, 1968) introduces an entirely new theme of philosophical existentialism to Soviet animated film, questioning Soviet social ethics by means of both content and form **(Figure 6)**. The object of Khrzhanovsky's critique is no longer the narrow-minded bureaucrat, but the society that represses artists and their freedom of thought – here, the parallel with Soviet society is especially explicit. The content and form of *Glass Harmonica* are strikingly unique and this created a whole new set of problems, including for its author – the film became a victim of censorship and was 'shelved', while the author was unexpectedly enlisted and spent the following two years serving in the Soviet Army.[3]

3 As the Cold War gained momentum, animated film became one of its battlefields, highlighting the opposition between capitalist and communist ideology. An interesting example of the differences in Western and Soviet approaches in terms of ideology can be observed in the screen adaptations of Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894). While Disney's feature-length adaptation of *The Jungle Book* from 1967 is a rather jolly enterprise, featuring the merry inhabitants of the jungle singing and dancing to jazzy tunes, Soyuzmultfilm's 1973 version, also a feature-length animation, but titled *Adventures of Mowgli* (*Маугли*, Russia), concentrated mainly on the class struggle.

The animation industry in the Baltic republics

While all three Baltic countries had taken their first steps in animation before World II when they were independent, the post-war (re-)emergence of the animation industry had almost no connection with the earlier decades since the war had severed all continuities. The first Soviet Estonian animated film was Elbert Tuganov's *Little Peter's Dream* (*Peetrikese unenägu*, Estonia, 1958), based on *Palle alene i Verden*, a 1942 story by Danish writer Jens Sigsgaard. In 1957, Tuganov became the founder of the puppet animation department at the Tallinn Film Studio (later Tallinnfilm). Subsequently, the department became the Nukufilm studio. In 1971, Rein Raamat, who had assisted Tuganov in the production of *Little Peter's Dream*, set up Tallinnfilm's hand-drawn animation department, which in time became the Eesti Joonisfilm studio. Nukufilm and Eesti Joonisfilm were Soviet Estonia's leading animation studios, and both continue to define the field of Estonian animation today.

Joonisfilm and Nukufilm were controlled by Goskino (Государственный комитет по кинематографии СССР; Госкино), which approved their production plans as well as signed off on the completed films. Silvia Kiik, a long-time employee of Tallinnfilm, has described the peculiarities of the studios' struggles with Moscow on several occasions. According to her, 'the censorship (Goskino) officials could sometimes be incredibly paranoid: back in 1975, the sight of a mechanic using a wrench that had been randomly coloured red in Avo Paistik's film *Trifle* caused a scandal at the film's approval screening' (Kiik 2006 I: 104–105). And, 'in 1978, a red vacuum cleaner in Paistik's film *Vacuum Cleaner* resulted in the film being shelved for nine years' (Kiik 2006 II: 92) **(Figure 7)**. Mari Laaniste adds that in the case of Priit Pärn's *Time Out* (*Aeg maha*, Estonia, 1984), Goskino officials demanded that 'two of the characters who were originally dressed as stereotypical Russian construction workers be redrawn as circus clowns' (Laaniste 2008: 54). Ironically,

FIGURE 6. Andrei Khrzhanovsky's *Glass Harmonica* (*Стеклянная гармоника*, Russia, 1968) is a characteristic example of how diminished political constraints and aesthetic diversification influenced Soviet animation. Its distinctly surrealist content and form (Ülo Sooster [1924–1970], an Estonian surrealist artist, participated in its production) features hybrid humans and animals, as well as elongated metaphorical perspectives. At the time of its release the pictorial language of *Glass Harmonica* came across as extremely innovative and modern, and such a film could not have been made either before or after the liberating breezes of Khrushchev's Thaw.

FIGURE 7. Avo Paistik's *Vacuum Cleaner* (*Tolmuimeja*, Estonia, 1978) was banned and 'shelved' for nine years, most probably because the censor thought that the red vacuum cleaner was a criticism of 'red' ideology.

in doing so, the censor herself passed judgment on the Soviet work ethic.

Estonian animated films, especially those made under Raamat at Joonisfilm, stood out for being, to a great extent, 'artistic' productions targeted at adult audiences (see, e.g., Trossek 2008: 34).

The first Soviet Latvian animated films, the puppet animations *Ki-ke-ri-gū!* (Latvia, 1965) and *Pygmalions* (Latvia, 1967), were made by Arnolds Burovs. In Bendazzi's words,

> *Pygmalions* explored themes such as creation, the artist's relations to his work and difference between abstract beauty and life. *Pygmalions* provoked an ambiguous reaction – it was criticised in Latvia for not following the conventions of Socialist Realism, but Moscow officials showed it to non-Soviet guests to prove that modernism existed in the USSR. (Bendazzi 2015: 315)

Puppet animation, as well as cut-out animation, became Latvia's 'trademark' – Burovs, who also worked in a puppet theatre, alone used this technique in forty films. The films typically drew on folkloric sources.

Soviet Lithuania produced its first animated film in 1966 – *The Wolf and the Tailor* (*Vilkas ir siuvėjas*, Lithuania) by Zenonas Tarakevičius. Tarakevičius was later employed by Soyuzmultfilm, which shows that, in addition to ideas, people also moved between different studios. However, Lithuanian animated film never quite took off and in comparison to their live-action narrative and documentary films, the production of animated films remained marginal. Despite this, the Lithuanian studio managed to complete some politically intriguing works, for example, *Initiative* (*Iniciatyva*, Lithuania, 1970), a film by Antanas Janauskas, that has been seen as a commentary on the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (Bendazzi 2015: 317)

In contrast to Estonia and Latvia, where puppet animation dominated animated film production, Lithuania almost lacks any traditions of puppet animation. Lithuanian animation tended to be drawn and the majority of Lithuanian animators had backgrounds in caricature, architecture or design.

Within the context of Soviet Union, the Baltic republics enjoyed a special status – they were collectively known as the 'Soviet West' – and, despite censorship, this offered to Baltic animation artists a slightly greater degree of creative autonomy. As Andreas Trossek has observed, Goskino also acknowledged this privileged state of affairs, which was called the 'Special Baltic Order[4]' (Trossek 2008: 35).

It appears that the Soviet cinema *nomenklatura* accepted the concept of the Baltic republics as the 'Soviet West'. Indeed, many of the animated films produced there, especially by Joonisfilm, flaunt relatively bold experiments that corresponded to contemporary Western art movements and music. Furthermore, the thematic horizon was also broader compared to the animation production in the rest of the Soviet Union. In Richard Mole's words, '[w]riters, artists, filmmakers and scholars in all three republics were given greater freedom to assert national values and express national sentiment, although they were still restricted by the outer limits of the Soviet nationality policy' (Mole 2012: 63–64).

BREZHNEV AND STAGNATION

When Khrushchev was removed from office, Leonid Brezhnev, a much more conservative leader took over. During his long term in office, which became known as the Stagnation Era, the screws of censorship were tightened again. However, aside from the fact that people were no longer shot for not painting or writing about the supreme leader as he wanted,

4 More correctly, the Baltic *Landesstaat*. This alludes to the historical arrangements in the territories of today's Estonia and Latvia where the Baltic German nobility retained its political power and Protestantism (German cultural domination) was allowed.

> this censorship was concerned with the text more than with the aesthetics. This allowed artists, animation artists included, considerably more freedom than they had had for the last two decades. (Bendazzi 2015: 77)

After Brezhnev's ascent to power in 1964, the Soviet animation industry continued to produce films for children, as well as to keep a safe distance from politically uncomfortable and/or contemporary subjects. The field was dominated by poetical-lyrical fairy tales. A number of long-running animated series emerged, skyrocketing in popularity on TV screens across the entire Eastern Bloc. Characters like Cheburashka, Gena the Crocodile, Winnie the Pooh, Karlsson-on-the Roof, and, of course, the Rabbit and the Wolf became the greatest animated stars of the small screen. *Just You Wait!* (*Ну, погоди!*, Russia, 1969–1993), an animated series by Vyacheslav Kotyonochkin, was particularly well-received, not least because it featured well-known pop songs that ensured the continued popularity of the series and made it Soyuzmultfilm's longest-running animation.

In Czechoslovakia, the Mole (Krtek), Pat & Mat, and Maxipes Fík earned comparable fame in local animated series, while in GDR, the legendary Little Sandman (Unser Sandmännchen) began his screen adventures.

Since most of these characters were introduced to their audiences and earned their enduring affection on the small screen, it is also important to note the increasing role played by television in the era's audiovisual culture in general and animation in particular. Starting in the late 1970s, the development of television brought about a significant change in the patterns of media (including animation) consumption. Audiences were now able to watch animated films in the privacy of their homes as well as in the cinemas. As in the West, television became the prevailing, and an incredibly influential, media outlet. By the mid-1980s more than 90% of the households in the Eastern Bloc owned TV sets (Stites 1992: 189). Animated films became a staple of everyday programming, which increased their popularity as well as production volumes. For instance, in Russia, 'a prime showcase for animations was a children's programme called *Spokoinoi nochi, malyshi* (*Good Night, Little Ones*), which immediately preceded the evening news' (Kononenko 2011: 275). This was proof of the high prestige and importance accorded the animated medium in the televisual context. As to the production volumes, children had the privilege of enjoying as many as 30 to 40 hours of new animation each year (Bendazzi 2016: 194).

In addition to quantitative upsurge, Eastern European animation also experienced artistic growth starting in the 1960s (Bendazzi 2015: 236). In addition to Disney, Soviet animation filmmakers also received significant impulses from various contemporary Western art movements, such as Pop Art, and in particular George Dunning's 1968 animated film *Yellow Submarine* (UK/USA). According to Trossek, a number of Soviet pop-psychedelic animations emerged as a result of the latter – *Puzzle Box* (*Шкатулка с секретом*, Russia, 1976) by Valeri Ugarov, *Contact* (*Контакт*, Russia, 1978) by Vladimir Tarasov and, definitely most famously, *The Mystery of the Third Planet* (*Тайна третьей планеты*, Russia, 1981) by Roman Kachanov (Trossek 2011: 118).

The poetical lyricism of Eastern European animated films from the Stagnation Era adopted strangely pessimistic undertones, suggested by a certain sense of desolation and lack of happy endings. In fact, a number of commentators (Wells 1998; Bendazzi 2015; Ajanović 2004) have argued that pessimism is one of the defining features of Eastern European animation. According to Midhat Ajanović, 'humoristic pessimism', with the 'plain man' as its central character, is an important – and transnational – tradition of Central European culture in general, and animation in particular, defining many successful films made in the various 'Middle European' countries between 1950 and 1980 (Ajanović 2004).

This approach is perhaps especially evident in the caricaturised animated films of the Zagreb school that often feature pessimistic protagonist(s), various deadlocks and oppressive environments (labyrinths, dead ends). Pessimism also dominated in the authorial stance, as proven by the downcast choice of topics (and music) and lack of happy endings. Bendazzi has characterised the entire Polish animated cinema of the 1960s as 'a poetry of pessimism' (Bendazzi 2015: 242), while Priit Pärn confessed in an interview, 'I'm a practicing pessimist' (Kirt 1984).

This overtly pessimistic attitude can be seen as a reaction to the official optimism of the Soviet society, which lived in the constant hope of a soon-to-arrive bright communist future: 'This pessimism reflects a unique historical-political situation. In the mid-1960s, the artists and intellectuals reacted to the bureaucratic state, and emphasized a hopeless individual and social reality' (Bendazzi 2015: 242).

The positive effects of a planned economy

The planned economy of the communist era, along with the state-funded film industry, liberated filmmakers from the problems related to raising money for their productions. This allowed them to concentrate on the actual creative act, no matter how complicated or expensive its formal expression. As already indicated, censorship during the Stagnation Era tended to target the text (meaning the screenplay of an animated film) and the audiovisual form was largely under the control of the studio and the author. According to Bendazzi, '[w]hen political customs relaxed and stylistic research was allowed, the state-funding system revealed unexpected good qualities. In different ways from nation to nation, the State became a patron of auteur animation' (Bendazzi 2015: 236).

Hence, starting in Brezhnev's era, Eastern European animated film paradoxically became a safe haven for auteur techniques, as the state funding provided the means for trying out and experimenting with a wide range of different ideas and techniques. Even though censorship and ideological control over the film industry certainly remained significant, the financial freedom facilitated invention and the use of innovative auteur techniques. The multitude of the latter undoubtedly became another prominent feature of Eastern European animation. Since the system established by the state in a way promoted formal diversity, no single animation technique or style became dominant. The Soviet system of film education also supported auteur animation and technical heterogeneity, since the central All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (Всесоюзный государственный институт кинематографии, VGIK) was a truly vibrant hotbed of talents from all over the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. The VGIK's animation curriculum was designed to train unique directors well-versed in both narrative and (audio)visual form: 'The teaching practices soon drifted toward auteur cinema, because the graduates were also supposed to acquire the tools of the animator's and designer's profession' (Bendazzi 2015: 306).

Eastern European animation artists worked in traditional (hand-drawn, puppet and cut-out animation) as well as in various lesser-known techniques (sand and clay animation, direct or drawn-on-film animation etc.). It was also common to mix and combine several different techniques.

Animation, the collective consciousness and identity: Between the past and present

Film is 'a social document' (Haynes 2003: 181). In a sense, Eastern European animated film can be regarded as a self-portrait of the society, a reflection of the collective consciousness. The more intense ideological pressure on the culture, the more relevant animated film becomes as a document of the age. Soviet censorship was set up to guarantee the 'correct' content of cultural production and its brutal nature was frequently manifested most vividly in the form of authorial comments and references. Animated films can be considered to

be a reflection of an era, not unlike the fairy tales that used to convey a sense of what was important and necessary to be passed down to future generations in ancient times. Animated films yield to both historical-political and socio-cultural analysis. Indeed, over the past few decades, animated films have increasingly assumed a social role, which was previously reserved for fairy tales – as agents of cultural memory, national consciousness and identity. Fadina suggests that animated adaptation in particular functions 'as a recycling of (a) national memory and (b) national identity and (c) gender identity' (Fadina 2016: 125).

Animated films give us a chance to explore and describe society in a broader sense. In his *Semiotics of Cinema*, Yuri Lotman suggests that

> [a] film is part of the ideological struggles, culture and art of its era ... related to numerous aspects of life lying outside the text of the film, thus giving rise to an entire series of meanings which are often more important to a historian or a contemporary than strictly aesthetic problems might be (Lotman 1976: 42).

When animated films are analysed as social documents, what is excluded, as much as what is included becomes relevant. From this point of view, it is significant to note that Soviet animation almost never dealt with religious topics unlike Soviet live-action narrative cinema, as exemplified by the works of Andrei Tarkovsky, most importantly in his *Andrei Rublev* (*Андрей Рублёв*, Russia, 1966). Even if priests are depicted in some animated films, they function as antiquated symbols of the reactionary past, along with tsars and queens. It could be argued that religious topics and symbols – traditionally central and extremely visible in Slavic societies – were indeed completely taboo in Soviet animated film. And therefore, Yuri Norstein and Ivan Ivanov-Vano's *The Battle at Kerzhenets* (*Сеча при Керженце*, Russia, 1971), with a design that relies heavily on elements of Russian iconic art, is all the more noteworthy.

In 1979, Yuri Norstein completed his *Tale of Tales* (*Сказка сказок*, Russia), a film that has been regarded as the best animated film of all time by film critics (Pikkov 2010: 191). Based on memories, it portrays some of the topics most significant for the 20th-century Eastern European collective subconscious – World War II, childhood and coming of age, home and homesickness, anonymous urbanisation etc. The *Tale of Tales* offers a unique insight into the inner world of the author and the society surrounding him. It is a highly symbolic and multi-layered work, linking the past with the present, and dreams with reality. In a sense, the *Tale of Tales* could represent the entire Eastern European animation tradition. Typically of many Eastern European animated films, it struggled with censorship and escaped the fate of being 'shelved' due only to a lucky coincidence (Bendazzi 2015: 283).

While the aforementioned examples highlight the importance of memory and past traditions, a trend moving in the opposite temporal direction – towards the present – can also be traced. Namely, starting in the late 1960s, the previous explorations of folkloric and vernacular topics were gradually replaced by investigations of the authorial self through reflections of contemporary society. Several Eastern European animated films of the period offer unique insights into the totalitarian society and its accepted models of behaviour. For instance, in the 1960s, Jiří Trnka, who began his career with fairy tale films, became increasingly fascinated with the world surrounding him, then and there. One of his boldest films of the period is *The Hand* (*Ruka*, Czechoslovakia, 1965), a stop-motion puppet animation portraying the relationship between the artist and the patronising authority, with the latter terrorising the former – a struggle all too familiar to many artists of the time **(Figure 8)**. Indeed, *The Hand* turned out to be too anti-state – it became Trnka's final film and 'threw him into official disfavour' (Moritz 1997: 38–39). Paul Wells has characterised it as 'a vision of inhibited

process and misrepresentative outcomes; a triumph of resistance' (Wells 1998: 88).

The sometimes rather hazardous interest of animation artists in portraying their immediate realities became increasingly more prominent between the late 1970s and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The characteristic examples of this trend include Priit Pärn's *Exercises in Preparation for Independent Life* (*Harjutusi iseseisvaks eluks*, Estonia, 1980) and *The Triangle* (*Kolmnurk*, Estonia, 1982). Among other things, Pärn's films illustrate a significant trait of Soviet animation, which is particularly noticeable in films dealing with contemporary realities – namely, the diminishing reliance on verbal language. As David MacFadyen observes, Soviet cartoons frequently 'have tiny screenplays, and often no text whatsoever. They are visually, more than verbally, active' (MacFadyen 2005: 16). The waning of the verbal is doubtlessly related to the specific conditions of the totalitarian society. Since a word usually has a more concrete meaning than a visual image, the author, by excluding the former, could rely on the safety net of ambiguity and thus minimise the risk of being censored.

As animated films became increasingly reflective of the surrounding realities and environment, they also became sources of citation, mostly in music, jokes and one-liners. While still oriented towards young audiences, animations, even those featuring characters initially targeting children, began to gain wide popularity among adults. For instance, Gena the Crocodile and Cheburashka quickly rose to the status of popular cult figures far beyond the animated medium, and their fame seems to be unfaded. For example, the figure of Gena the Crocodile has been reproduced on a postage stamp (Fadina 2016: 69) and Cheburashka's picture graced the official uniforms of the Olympic Team of the Russian Federation in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010. Cheburashka also became the official logo and mascot of Soyuzmultfilm.

Doubtlessly, *Just You Wait!* owes at least part of its enduring popularity to the fact that it offered comic entertainment as well as significant insights into the society and social relations. Anna Gareeva has aptly argued that '*Nu, pogodi!* reflects and comments on contemporary Soviet society. It allows one a unique insight into the way of life of the Soviet people, from their streets, dress, to popular culture. The most popular cartoon series, it left the audiences with a feeling nationalism, community, the 'Soviet spirit' (Gareeva 2013: 1). **(Figure 9 and 10)**

GORBACHEV'S PERESTROIKA AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION

Perestroika and glasnost initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 led to thematic diversification in animated film and lifted the taboo from showing Soviet society and its flaws for what they were, at least to a certain extent. Self-reflexivity and social critique became the dominant keywords and many productions of the period scrutinised social topics. In Trossek's words, 'the cultural sphere was suddenly given a green light for moderate social criticism, which, in the Soviet Union, had previously been confined to "dissident discourse"' (Trossek 2011: 120).

One of the most famous 'animated reflections' of the period was undoubtedly Priit Pärn's *The Luncheon on Grass* (*Eine murul*, Estonia, 1987), a film that explores the questions of artistic freedom, bureaucracy and struggles of everyday life under Soviet conditions. Another pertinent example is *The Door* (*Дверь*, Russia, 1986) by Nina Shorina that similarly ponders the mundane problems of the little men and women. Robert Sahakyants's *The Wind* (*Քամի*, Armenia, 1988) and *The Button* (*Սեղմակոճակ*, Armenia, 1989) offer extremely bold critiques of the regime. The final film of this upsurge of reflexive animations was Riho Unt's *House of Culture* (*Kultuurimaja*, Estonia, 1988) about the desire to move towards Western ideals in the Soviet society and their utterly illusionary nature. *House of Culture* also introduces a completely new period of animation production in Eastern Europe – one based on the rules of market economy.

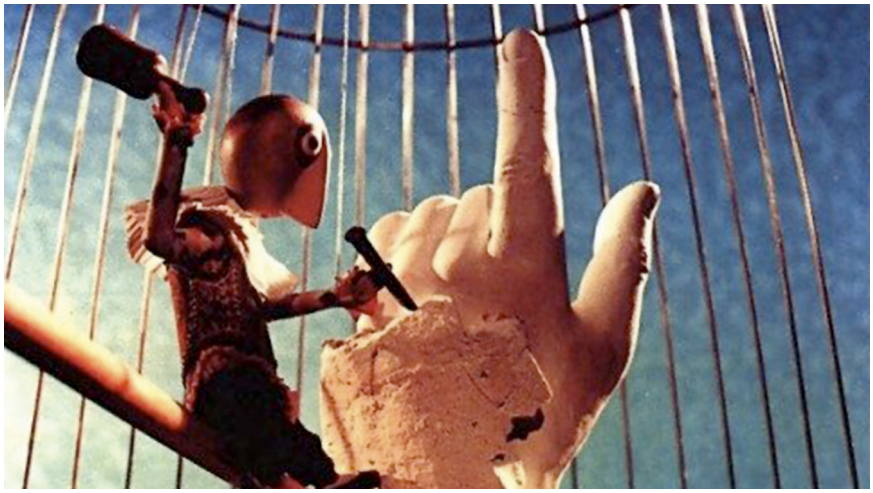

FIGURE 8. Jiří Trnka's *Hand* (*Ruka*, Czechoslovakia, 1965) has been seen to be a critique of the totalitarian state.

Moreover, it is of symbolic significance that Unt's film was awarded the *grand prix* at the First All-Union Animated Film Festival that took place in Kiev, Ukraine in 1989.

1989 was a year of cataclysmic changes throughout Eastern Europe; and the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 marked the beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet 'empire'. This date also marks the end of Soviet political and cultural domination over its Eastern European 'satellites'. However, the economic crisis and instability of the 1990s had a devastating effect on the animation industries of the former Eastern Bloc countries. Several seasoned animation artists were forced to end their careers or emigrate to the West; numerous studios were dismantled because the governments stopped supporting them and the rest of the industry became a site for Western out-sourcing instead of original film production. The film industry was hit by a great depression (Fadina 2016: 93). Only the advent of digital technologies in the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s paved the way for recovery and significant (global) growth for the animation industry.

The image of woman in Soviet animated film

The majority of Soviet animated films represent a world dominated by men, with far fewer female characters, who were typically passive. Despite the official rhetoric of gender equality the women in Eastern European animation have almost always been subservient to men and utterly stereotypical, i.e., defined by male values, irrespective of the sex of the director and writer of a particular film (Fadina 2016: 261–264). A good example is Dziga Vertov's 1924 *Soviet Toys*, the earliest surviving Soviet animated film, where the only female character is a bimbo dancing to the tune of her man. Or take Dušan Vukotić's *Ersatz* (*Surogat*, Yugoslavia, 1961), one of the most famous films of the Zagreb school, where the role of the woman is limited to providing company to the man. Natalie Kononenko has rightly noted that Soviet animation 'not only criticised capitalism, but also depicted women as sexless and self-sacrificing, and urged cooperation, neighbourliness, and nonviolence' (Kononenko 2011: 272). Furthermore, she adds, that '[a]lthough the Communist Party had originally promised to liberate women and to make them the strong and equal partners of men, by the time that most Soviet cartoons were created, independent women were no longer desired' (ibid.). In the same vein, Nadezda Fadina argues that 'in Russian academic thought feminism has been almost non-existent throughout the Soviet period' (Fadina 2016: 136).

As observed by Giannalberto Bendazzi (2015: 307), it was only in the wake of perestroika in the latter half of the 1980s, with Natalia Dabizha, Ekaterina Obraztsova and Natalia Orlova entering the stage of Soviet animation, that a feminist approach started to gain some traction. Notably, Lydia Surikova's *How Ivan the Fine Young Man Was Rescuing the Tsar's Daughter* (*Как Иван-молодец царску дочку спасал*, Russia, 1989) introduces an atypical female character to the Soviet animation – one that actively initiates events. In Fadina's opinion, this was one of 'the truly feminist animated films' (Fadina 2016: 165). However, a comparison of Surikova's film with Pärn's 1982 *The Triangle* suggests that unconventional female characters can also be found in pre-perestroika animations. Furthermore, *The Triangle* once again demonstrates that the Baltic states enjoyed more artistic freedom than the rest of the Soviet Union.

Similarly to female characters on the screen, female animation artists were also a minority: 'State socialism maintained elaborate policies designed to secure gender equality. However, this did not significantly change the situation of women in filmmaking. They were traditionally marginalised and had fewer chances to become directors' (Iordanova 2003: 119).

CONCLUSION

For decades, the development of Soviet animation was defined by the tendency to emulate Disney's 'round' style, his choice of topics and techniques, as well as by the

FIGURE 9 and 10. The animated series *Just You Wait!* (*Ну, погоди!*, Russia, 1969–1993) provides unique insights into the socialist society and its social relations.

habit of targeting the productions to young audiences (Bendazzi 1994: 177). Yet equally strong was the desire to emphasise the fact that Soviet culture stood in stark opposition to Western standards and the Western way of life. In addition to making animation serve the construction and production of the Soviet identity, Soviet authorities also used animated film as an ideological instrument (e.g., the anti-jazz campaign in *Stranger's Voice* or the class struggle in *Adventures of Mowgli*). The cultural landscape, including animated film, was one of the battlegrounds of the Cold War.

Although Khrushchev's Thaw witnessed numerous releases of animated films for adult audiences, Soviet animation in general remained a children's genre, a didactic form drawing heavily on folkloric sources. Notably, the early Soviet discourse had rejected fairy tales as a legitimate thematic pool, condemning them as vestiges of feudalism. It was not until the mid-1930s that fairy tales were ideologically rehabilitated and became the major providers of content for the Soviet animated film industry.

Initially centralised in Moscow, the Soviet animation industry began to spread to the other republics upon the onset of the Thaw, which also coincided with the gradual increase in the variety of different auteur techniques. Despite the ideological controls, Eastern European animated film became an oasis for the innovative methods that blossomed due to the strong state support for filmmaking. This created favourable conditions for the emergence of a formally diverse field of animation where no single technique or style achieved a dominant position.

The Soviet domination of Eastern Europe after World War II had mixed effects. On the one hand, the state-supported industry was able to produce high-level artistic animations without the pressing need to focus on their commercial success. On the other, the state also controlled and censored almost every step of filmmaking, severely curtailing the creative freedom of the animation artists.

Animation has a rich tradition of debating, commenting and reflecting on the political and socio-cultural situation of society. Since animated film is also a vehicle for cultural memory, collective consciousness and identity, Soviet animations provide unique insights into a totalitarian society and its modes of behaviour, some of which this article strove to highlight.

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