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Vse Luchshe Detiam: All the Best to the Children, Soviet Ideology in Children's Fairy Tale Cartoons

Matthew Boyd '00
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Research Honors Project

***Vse Luchshe Detiam: All the Best to the Children* Soviet Ideology in Children's Fairy Tale Cartoons**

Matthew Boyd

***Marina Balina**

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Children's media in any form seems always to have something of an instructional bent. Myself raised on such American standards as Sesame Street and The Electric Company and countless animated entertainments, I couldn't help but notice that someone was always trying to tell me something. There is always a message, always some ideological point being taught. I was attracted to the idea that I could explore how children in the most ideologically engineered society ever to have existed experienced such things, what they were being taught when they sat down to watch TV.

The slogans being used, *Deti nashi budushie* (The Children are our Future) and the inspiration for the title of this paper, *Vse Luchshe Detiam* (All the Best to the Children) suggested that media for children, especially film, could not possibly have been purely innocent. Such slogans, in a society that was so geared toward the creation of the utopian future, overtly state that those ideas being presented to children, those representatives of the glorious Soviet future, were the best that Soviet philosophy could instill in the youth of the USSR.

I have chosen as a focus the analysis of fairy tale cartoons in the Soviet Union and have attempted to establish the specific ideological use of five films spanning 1947-1979. For the analysis of these cartoons as ideological tools I have established a theoretical apparatus. This apparatus is based upon a thorough definition of ideology as it applies to these films taken from Terry Eagleton's book *Ideology*. I have adopted Vladimir Propp's theoretical apparatus on the classification of fairytales from his book *Morphology of the Folktale*. To aid both in interpreting the history of the 1920s to 1970s Soviet Union and in interpreting the ideological meaning behind the cartoons being analyzed, I have adopted the

binary model of Russian history of Lotman and Uspenskii. To provide context for the development of the ideologies being expressed in these films, I have researched an extensive history of the period as it applies to the development of art.

The Fairy Tale Model

Vladimir Propp states in his "Morphology of the Folktale that "...a tale (skazka) may be termed any development proceeding from villainy... through intermediary functions to marriage, or to other functions employed as denouement. Terminal functions are at times a reward, a gain, or in general the liquidation of misfortune, an escape from pursuit, etc." (92)

Propp identifies the functions composing a tale collectively as spheres, and these functions can either be carried out by their corresponding character or one character can carry out the actions attributed to several spheres. He identifies these spheres and their attributed actions as 1) the sphere of action of the villain, composed of villainy, struggle with the hero, and pursuit, 2) the sphere of action of the donor, composed of the preparation for the transmission of a magical agent and provision of the hero with a magical agent, 3) the sphere of action of the helper, composed of transportation of the hero, liquidation of misfortune or lack, rescue from pursuit, the solution of difficult tasks, and transfiguration of the hero, 4) the sphere of action of a princess (sought after person) and her father, composed of the assignment of difficult tasks, branding, exposure (recognition), punishment of a second villain, and marriage, 5) the sphere of action of the dispatcher, composed of dispatching, 6) sphere of action of the hero, composed of departure on a search, reaction to demands of the donor, and wedding, 7) sphere of action of the false hero, also departure on a search and wedding. (80) Propp also notes that characters can fulfill the functions of each sphere of influence against their will or unbeknownst to them.

The villain appears twice in a tale, first encountered accidentally, and the second time sought out. The magical helper is introduced as a gift. The dispatcher, the hero, the

false hero and the princess are all introduced in the initial situation. (84)

Binary Oppositions and their Importance in Interpreting Russian History

In the discussion of events and analysis of films that is to follow, it will be important to understand the model of binary oppositions posited by Lotman and Uspenskii in their article "Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture to the end of the Eighteenth Century" for the interpretation of Russian culture and history.

Lotman and Uspenskii assert that Russia, contrary to the West, has not historically been in possession of a "neutral" idea. They provide as an example of this the variations extant in the European and the Russian conceptions of Catholicism. In the Western model, the Catholic afterlife is divided three ways: heaven, purgatory, and hell. Earthly behavior can be said to correspond to each of these divisions, being either sinful, holy, or neutral. The Russian conception was divided dually between heaven and hell with no provision for a purgatory. Earthly behavior, correspondent with the religious model, was then only diabolical or divine. There was no neutral. As a result of this lack of a normative neutral sphere, new developments in culture or thought were not perceived as continuations of what had come before, but the result of an absolute eschatological change (31)

Lotman and Uspenskii claim that this stark division of positive and negative values and the historical process of each new development negating the movement that came before it over time can lead to a regeneration of archaic forms. It is for this reason that Russia has been characterized as either progressive or reactionary, but never as conservative.(33)

In this system of constant negation of the preceding system, which itself was the

result of the negation of certain aspects of the system that preceded it, earlier forms of behavior could be preserved in the new system as a legitimate form of antibehavior.

Returning to the example of Russia's conversion to Orthodoxy, Lotman and Uspenskii cite the transformation of pagan beliefs, once examples of positive behavior, into examples of negative behavior. In this way, the old systems of thought and behavior are maintained in the consciousness intact, albeit in a negative form.(40)

Historically, the most important opposition when considering change in Russia has been that between "old" and "new", with each "new" movement given a sort of intrinsic legitimacy as opposed to the "old". However, since there is not a neutral area from which to build new movements, the "new" tends to incorporate the "old", occasionally even regenerating it by recreating distorted ideas from the past. Hence, the cultural memory of Russia is rife with binary functions that are capable of lying dormant until activated by some new movement, regenerating, albeit in a distorted form, movements of the past(43)

Ideology

Central to the task of determining the extent and purpose of ideological influence in children's fairytale cartoons in the Soviet Union is a functional definition of the term "ideology." I have based my determination of this definition and its function on theoretical work by Terry Eagleton in his book Ideology. Due to the proliferation of meanings attributed to this term, Eagleton has discerned six different types of ideologies and defined them. From among these six definitions I have chosen the ideological model which I believe drove the apparatus of Soviet literary culture in the task of creating and maintaining an ideologically cohesive Soviet society.

Eagleton considers ideologies to be typically action-oriented beliefs, unique in that they are simultaneously elaborate theoretical systems of thought and systems that can dictate and explain the passage of the minute events of everyday life. It must have built within it some way to link the theoretical aspect of daily life with the immediate demands of existence, combining analytical descriptions of society with moral commitment(48)

Eagleton suggests religion as a model to aid understanding ideology. Functioning in much the same way as religion, the application of ideologies creates in each *individual* a sense that their individual lives and actions are taking on or are a part of a greater, *definite* meaning.(50) In each there is the implied authority to validate one's existence and dispel question. According to Eagleton's study, prescriptions for the proper mode of carrying out both trivial and large-scale activities abound within both religious and ideological systems in the forms of ritual or decree. The doctrines and rituals embodying the corpus of the religious or ideological system explain the standards or ideals that the system demands be

met by its faithful adherents and how and why the adherents, as individuals, fail to meet those standards while suggesting behavior that would allow them to improve themselves and more closely emulate the ideal. Nikolai Berdyaev, in his book, *The Sources and Sense of Russian Communism*, stated the following in relation to the ideology of Russian communism:

"Communism is not like a social system, but like a religion, fanatic and hostile to all other faiths [...] it pretends to answer the religious inquiries of the human soul, to give the meaning of life.

Communism is all-inclusive, it encompasses all life[...] (129)"

Eagleton suggests that, since ideology is obviously a synthesized system of thought existing independently of reality, insofar as reality came first and contained the circumstances making it necessary to compose an explanation and set of prescriptions for the proper existence, it is always likely to give a distorted view of the reality it attempts to frame, one that almost unfailingly represents the interests of the particular group that has crafted it.

According to Eagleton, ideology does not only work from the top down, that is, vertically from the point of view of the group it represents down to a population upon which it is merely being imposed, but displays a degree of reciprocity in its function. After all, no dominant power could maintain its place in society if its subjects were unwilling to, at least in part, adopt the ideology. Therefore, the ideologies must not only express social interests, but also leave room for their rationalization. Eagleton finds support for his argument in the work of J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis in defining rationalization as a psychoanalytic term, a "procedure whereby the subject attempts to present an explanation that is either logically consistent or ethically acceptable for attitudes, ideas, feelings, etc., whose true motives are

not perceived." (51) As this definition demonstrates, classes oppressed by an ideology are able to rationalize their rulers on practical merits. Ideology is never entirely ideological, it is often practical.

An ideology must be able to provoke some legitimization from the populace, often through the "universalization" of the doctrines, the ability to make it appear as if the official ideology is the only rational, universally valid thought system. To do this, ideologies must be "naturalized", that is, be made to seem self-evident so that they appeal to the common sense of the society to which they apply. By aligning the official line with the daily and immediate material need and moral doctrine of the largely non-politicized common populace, ideology can become synonymous with a society's common sense to the extent that it does not interfere with it in any significant way. Before successfully altering a people's worldview, an ideology must be able to take the credit for the immediate, daily well-being of that people.

The first definition of the term ideology Eagleton offers has a meaning close to the concept of culture. Under this definition, it can be considered as "the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life." (28) This definition does not actually denote a deliberate system for the manipulation of society and the focus of its values, and is therefore benign and of little use to this study. Soviet ideology manifested in the arts was not devised solely to provide a ready catalog of the Russian culture. It was devised with the active purpose of molding ideal Soviet citizens in mind. It did not reflect the production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life, but instead invented and introduced them to the public, installing a new culture that was ideologically Soviet by nature.

Focusing in more sharply, Eagleton offers a second definition, this being the ideas

and beliefs that symbolize the conditions and life experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class. This definition also does not denote any measurable level of human intervention. In fact, Eagleton describes it as being closer to the concept of worldview than to an active system of thought. Once again, the element of a *deliberate* manipulation of worldview has not been met. Further, according to this definition ideology represents a socially significant group or class. In Soviet Russia the ideology was deliberately controlled by and representative of the views of the Party, the self-proclaimed representative of the proletariat. Both of these groups were by number socially insignificant, making up only five percent of the total population.

Closer to the active connotations I am using in my study, Eagleton offers a third definition. Under this classification, ideology is a system which promotes and legitimates the interests of significant social groups in the face of opposing interests. Under this definition these interests must have some relevance to sustaining or challenging a whole political form of life. Here, ideology exists in a field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole. Under this definition, ideology tends to be extremely action-oriented. Being that ideology under this definition signifies a struggle between opposing social powers, the use of ideological discourse tends to be more persuasive and rhetorical and less concerned with matters of truth. The ideology promoted in Soviet Fairy-tale cartoons is representative of the *only* social power, the Party. There were no opposing social powers against which to pit Soviet ideological discourse in the totalitarian state of the Soviet Union. The Party had the first and final say in all matters. Though the ideology was action-oriented with its eye toward building socialism, it was unopposed and so does not fit this definition.

The fourth definition put forth is one in which ideology is focused on the promotion and legitimization of the interests and activities of a dominant social power. Such dominant ideologies unify a society in ways convenient for rulers, as they secure the complicity of subordinated classes and groups. Though it is true that Socialist Realist ideology was in part aimed at legitimization of the Party's regime based on the imminent achievement of the glorious future, the ideology did not stop at legitimizing its aims by securing complicity. Doing this alone would signify a lack of desire to change society. It would signify instead only the desire to remain inoffensively in power. This was not the goal of the Party nor was it the goal of Socialist Realism.

The fifth definition depicts ideology as a system of ideas and beliefs that help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically through the distortion of facts. This reflects very truthfully the method of Socialist Realism, the heart of Soviet ideological culture. Socialist Realism did not depict reality as it was, but reality according to official Party version of history, a depiction which demanded absolute faith in the correctness of Party dictates in achieving a Communist society. Finally, Eagleton's sixth definition of ideology can be described as a system similar to the previous two definitions in that it emphasizes false beliefs or deception but arises from material society as a whole as opposed to a specific class or group. This definition is inapplicable in the Soviet ideological context. It has more relevance to thought systems such as Marx's Dialectical Materialism, in which material culture, not a government, itself determines the culture and ideology that is propagated.

For the purposes of this study, the fifth definition is the one that will be referenced when speaking of ideology in the Soviet context and its practical manifestation, the method

of Socialist Realism.

Socialist Realism

The literary environment that characterized the years from the revolution until the first plenary session of the Organizing Committee of the Writers' Union in 1932 and the beginning of the second five-year plan (1928-1932) was one fraught with a broad exercise of literary freedom and experimentation of style. This experimentation was accompanied by heated political debates as to the proper form and purpose literature should eventually take in the new Russia after the revolution. The progression of political debate surrounding literature in this period needs to be established in order to understand how the official stance of the Party on the issue of literature progressed from the one best described as a stance of benevolent protection and supervision to the 1932 reversal of that stance and the onset of strict literary control according to the only official method of Soviet literature, Socialist Realism.

In 1920 writers from the literary group *Kuznitsa*, "the Smithy" formed the All-Union Association, VAPP, later renamed RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers). The institution of Lenin's New Economic Policy¹ and its effect of postponing communism to the indefinite future in favor of a more stable and recovered Soviet economy after a financially devastating revolutionary experience created a break of RAPP into two

¹The New Economic Policy, or NEP, was a temporary retreat on the road to socialism instituted by Lenin after the revolution in 1921 that allowed a certain measure of independent small industry and private enterprise. The government temporarily stopped its practice of requisitioning produce from the farmers and introduced a tax in kind. This decidedly capitalist activity was designed as a compromise to help the war-devastated nation regain its footing and introduce material incentives for the entrepreneurial rebuilding

factions. One faction, **October** (*Oktiabr*), was composed of writer-members of the Young Communist League who contended that the **Smithy** faction of RAPP was “retarding the development of young writers” and being insufficiently supportive of the Party program (Terras 362). This Young Communist faction of the original RAPP wanted to break completely with the romantic and lyrical styles esteemed by the older **Smithy** poets. Their selection of literature from before the revolution consisted of what was termed “Critical Realism”- works that were not outright critical of society, nor revolutionary in their content, but which nonetheless did present the shortcomings of society. This form of literature was perceived to have been an embryonic form of Socialist Realism. **October's** immediate goal was to establish literature that was based on and capable of inspiring the labors of the working class after the revolution as Soviet Russia was constructed from the ruins of Imperial Russia. Their goal was to use literature based in the proletariat as a tool to create a change in society.

Another group of writers active in this period was not so homogeneous or tightly bound. This group, dubbed **Fellow Travelers** (*poputchiki*) by Trotsky, consisted of Soviet writers of a non-proletarian or perhaps non-revolutionary background who were accepting of the ideals of the revolution and supportive of the socialist order (Webster 409). The term was not always without derogatory insinuation, and so its application was often political.

Included under this umbrella term at various times were: **the Serapion Brotherhood**²,

of industry. (Riasanovsky 489)

² in Russian *Serapionovy brat'ya*. Named after E.T.A. Hoffman's hermit Serapion, this group of post-revolutionary writers were dedicated to free fantasy and humaneness. They gathered out of a mutual belief in the individual freedom of the creative act, to belles lettres, and to one another as brothers. The writers included into this group are Konstantin Fedin, Il'ya Gruzdev, Vsevolod Ivanov, Veniamin Kaverin, Lev Lunts, Nikolai Nikitin, Vladimir Pozner, Mikhail Slonimsky, Nikolai Tikhonov and Mikhail Zoshchenko. Included into this group also were four “Serapion Maidens” (Terras2 398).

Constructivists³, **Imagists**⁴ and other unaffiliated authors. RAPP critics even insisted that writers of the groups **Pereval**⁵ and **LEF** be included under this heading, though most were card-carrying communists. This group of writers, **Fellow Travelers** (*poputchiki*) was allowed to keep working mainly because Trotsky had very little faith in the quality of proletarian writing.

The debates surrounding this question of “proletarian hegemony” (Terras 362) over literature led to open debate in the Press Section of the Central Committee. Trotsky's statement on literature, in his 1925 article “Literature and Revolution,” encouraging a view of tolerance for the non-proletarian fellow-travelers of post-revolutionary literature sums up the official response from the Party at the time to the battling factions:

³ In Russian *Literaturnyi Tsentri Konstruktivistov*. This group's ideas were mainly applied by the **Futurists** who gathered around the literary journal *Lef*. The leading poet of the **Futurist** movement was Vladimir Mayakovsky. The main **Constructivist** theorist, K. L. Zelinsky, developed a principle whose main idea was that as the modern world became ever more complex it became increasingly difficult to grasp its meaning. In this philosophy, it is the artist's job to reduce this complexity to simple formulas and present them to the masses in an intelligible and provocative way. Zelinsky also developed the “local method”, in which every level of a work had a pointed function in the final meaning. This school reached its zenith in *Novyi Lef* (1927-30). This manifestation of **Constructivism** believed that the socialist present and future belonged to reportage, the documentary, and the newsreel- all art dealing with real life directly (Terras2 90).

⁴ Avant-garde literary group headed by poet and theoretician, Vadim Shershenevich lasting from 191-1927. The **Imagists** sought to replace the **Futurists**, charging that the **Futurists** were concerned primarily with content over form and that the **Futurists** had become a conservative group supportive of the government, while the **Imagists** claimed to have retained their independence and revolutionary spirit. The core idea of **Imagism** was that the image contained in each word was the essence of poetry. In practice, **Imagist** poets experimented with rhythm and rhyme, the use of unusual shocking imagery, the creation of a new syntax, the development of a new prosodic system called “the chain of images” and relied heavily upon the long “lyrical poema” as a favorite genre (Terras2 199).

⁵ In English Mountain pass or divide. **Pereval** was literary group composed in large measure of members of either the Communist Party or of the Komsomol. These artists were professed Marxists and believed that artists fill orders supplied to them by their class. They trusted in the artist's ability to intuit the truth inherent in life. They maintained the objectivity of art (Terras2 336).

"Art must make its own way and by its own means. The Marxian methods are not the same as the artistic. The party leads the proletariat but not the historic processes of history. [...]The domain of art is not one in which the party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly (Trotsky qtd. Simmons 7)"

According to Simmons' account of the period, coincident with the final defeat of Stalin's political opposition within the Central Committee and the beginning of the first Five-year Plan in 1928, the Party passed a resolution which called for publishing houses to adhere to a prescribed set of standards dictating the types of material to be selected for publication and the suggested topics on which writers should be encouraged to write. It was here that the participants in the literary debates finally received the official response they had been seeking throughout the short history of post-revolutionary literature. The Central Committee, at its summer 1928 Conference on Agitation and Propaganda put the weight of its endorsement behind RAPP. As Stalin and the Party were still not able to fully take control of the literary scene due to more pressing economic concerns, however, literary experimentation continued, as did debate between such literary groups as RAPP, LEF, the Constructivists, Pereval and groups of Fellow Travelers. More than this, despite the Party's first efforts to dictate the form and content of literature, private publishers continued to publish and the instances of official censorship were still remarkably low.

Though RAPP was the literary group officially credited by the Party, its methods and theory were still conceived of and produced independent of official decree. Its activity was a threat to Party power because the writers themselves were taking it upon themselves to conceive of the direction and ideological bent literature was to take and therefore

determining the direction society was moving in. It was apparent to Stalin that, in order to gain full control over literary production in Soviet Russia, independent theorizing on the matter would have to end. In a special five-man Commission of the Politburo of the Central Committee on 23 April 1932 upon which Stalin himself sat, a resolution was passed abolishing all proletarian organizations in literature. The resolution demanded the creation of a single artistic method, discrediting RAPP's method of "Dialectical Materialism" and securing totalitarian influence over literature as the second Five-year Plan began. Once the authority of the Union of Soviet writers was established, no one could publish without being a member of the Union.

The purported first reference to the official Soviet artistic method, Socialist Realism, appeared after this special five-man commission (Terras1 429). This statement was made by editor of *Izvestiya* Ivan Gronskey, the man chosen by the special committee to chair the Organizing Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers. Chief of the Literary Division of the Party Central Committee Valery Kirpotin was appointed Organizing Committee Secretary. It was the task of these two men so close to Central Committee Power to institute a single Soviet artistic method that would eliminate the dangerous amount of discussion among proletarian writing circles on the definition of a truly socialist art and secure absolute authority over all literary production (Terras1 429). The statement Gronskey produced on the method and purpose of the new official artistic method was the following:

"The basic demand that we make on writers is write the truth, portray truthfully our reality that is in itself dialectic. Therefore the basic method of Soviet literature is the method of Socialist Realism."

-Ivan Gronskey, editor of *Izvestiya*, May 20, 1932 (Terras1 429)

The statement produced by the First All-Union Writer's Congress in 1934 to define the new template for literature in the Soviet Union as published in **Literaturnaia Gazeta** 3, September 1934 was:

"Socialist Realism, being the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, demands from the artist the truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. At the same time, truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction of reality must be combined with the task of ideologically remolding the working people in the spirit of socialism (Terras1 430)."

It is clear that in this definition the Party had its own ideas already set as to what "truthfulness" was supposed to mean, framed loosely on what scant Marxist or Leninist statements on the subject as existed. Engels had commented in a letter that "Realism... implies, besides truth of detail, the truth in reproduction of typical characters under typical circumstances." According to Soviet interpretation of Marxism, "typical" signified the behavior of classes more than individuals as they would move logically toward communism (Terras1 430). The justification for this seizure of control over literature the Party found in Lenin's statement in his 1905 article "Party Organization and Party Literature" that literature should not only reflect reality but also help change it. This statement, long forgotten until the creation of the official method of Soviet art and probably only originally in reference to political writing, was interpreted to mean that all literature should be a vehicle for party ideology.

Maksim Gorky was appointed Head of the Union of Soviet writers and proclaimed the

father of Socialist Realism because his works were said to show the revolutionary struggle for Socialism, the Party's leadership in that struggle, hatred of exploitation and promotion of the spirit of collectivism, all tenets that would later become the essence of SR (Terras1 429).

It was his work that was chosen from among the body of literature existing before the revolution that was said to embody the necessary tenets of Socialist realist art: **partiinnost'**, or "party-mindedness", **ideinnost'**, being inspired by correct ideas and **klassivost'**, a correct historical understanding of the events presented from a class-struggle-based interpretation of history (Terras2 521). This quote from "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" embodies the Marxist idea behind **klassivost'**:

"The social revolution of the 19th century cannot draw its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself, before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required world-historical recollections in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the 19th century must let the dead bury their dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase (Marx qtd. Robin 69)."

Gorky's contribution to the definition of Socialist Realism was the concept of **narodnost'**. This concept, essentially the key Stalin needed to assume absolute authority over art deals with the accessibility of literature to the masses of Soviet citizens. Gorky, concerned with an absolute expression of truth through realism, broke down the concept of realism to its roots. He took the step to equate folk-literature with the purest, most natural form of realism. His reasoning amounted to equating myth with realism: "Myth is invention. To invent means to extract from the sum of a given reality its cardinal idea and embody it in

imagery."(Gorky qtd. Robin 52) Gorky asserted that the link between popular culture and literary culture laid in folklore, tales, myths and oral forms. The uneducated, for the most part illiterate classes of workers and peasants were the ones who originated and propagated these folk literary forms. Therefore, in Gorky's estimation, the "simple" man, the man not corrupted by education, was essentially closer to the true apprehension of reality than any other class. Applying this idea, the idea that the "simple" man has a more substantial lease on truth and clearer view of reality than the bourgeoisie, Gorky stated the following:

"The more the ruling class split up, the smaller did its heroes become. There came a time when the "simpletons" of folklore, turning into Sancho Panza, Simplicissimus, Eulenspiegel, grew cleverer than the feudal lords, acquired boldness to ridicule their masters, and without a doubt contributed to the growth of that state of feeling which, in the first half of the sixteenth century, found its expression in the ideas of the "Taborites" and the peasant wars against the knights (Gorky qtd Robin 52)."

As a model for the heroes of the Soviet artistic method, Socialist Realism, Gorky recommended Ivan the Simple, the hero of the folk-tales who also became the hero of the earliest Soviet fairytale cartoon and one of the subjects of this study, Vasilissa the wise, and Hercules, the Greek mythical hero of work. It is Gorky's addition of **narodnost'** to the necessary tenets of Socialist Realism that made the fairytale the ideal form of ideologically charged literature for children. Its reliance on formula was right in line with his statement in a 1933 letter that "a Bolshevik is important not because of his faults but because of his virtues. His faults have their roots in the past that he is tirelessly destroying; his virtues are in the present, in the work of building the future (Gorky qtd. Robin 61)." According to the idea of **narodnost'**, the purest Bolshevik is a "simple man." A Bolshevik depicted in

Socialist Realism will always win the day and side with the "right" ideas set by the Party.

The simple hero of Socialist Realism's present faults are of no importance. As long as he is politically dedicated Bolshevik, he cannot fail. It was the reliance on specifically Russian characters and folk-ways that opened the door for a later turn in the 1940s and 50s from socialism to nationalism.

Gorky's addition of **narodnost'** to the equation and his belief in a very traditional Russian lease on truth opened the door for Stalin to step in and make his declaration on the topic. "Socialist in content, national in form." was Stalin's slogan on the method of Socialist Realism, and it was proven by the multitude of old nationalist heroes depicted in supposedly socialist texts, heroes such as Aleksandr Nevsky, Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible. Though these heroes were certainly not socialist, their mythic proportions did serve to create far-reaching lines of legitimacy stretching far into the past for the Party regime. The association of the Party with these larger-than-life heroes, these heroes already acknowledged as legitimate aspects of the Russian past and tyrants by nature, aided the rewriting of history, giving roots to the revolution and the party that extended deeply into a well dug-in and entirely non-ideological mythical pantheon of easily recognizable characters. The transparency of these references as being metaphors for Stalin's rule was unmistakable. Every act of the Party after these associations were made took on some metaphorical meaning, lending a flavor of dogmatic fanaticism, of religion, to Socialist Realist depictions of reality (Clark 136). Further, the employment of bards of distinctive pedigree from outlying states served to reinforce the rewriting of history by invoking the implied legitimacy of the distinctive genealogy of these bards as they used their talents to glorify the great Soviet state.

In the final analysis, Socialist Realism is art based on the perceived realities of Soviet life in the Marxist-Leninist view of history that not only reproduces detail faithfully, but also has a view of where it is going- toward a communist future. Soviet writers, whom Stalin dubbed engineers of human souls, were to actively change reality through their depiction of it and bring humanity to communism through adherence to **narodnost'**, the appeal to and recognition of the truth inherent in the life of the common (Russian) man, **ideinost'**, being inspired by correct ideas, **klassivost'**, the correct depiction of history, and, most importantly, **partiinost'**, the adherence to Party line. In the paradigm of Socialist Realism, artistic value was based solely on its ideological effectiveness and, above all other things, how the Party viewed it (Terras 430).

"For Soviet literature there is no more important, no higher purpose or undertaking than that ordained by the Bolshevik party."

-J. Stalin, Novyi Mir #12 1949 (Stalin qtd. Simmons 5)

Children's literature and Socialist Realism:

"Fairytale has become reality"

Literature specifically for children first began to attract interest in Russia in the 18th century. Most children's literature was imported from other countries and translated into Russian. The main form of children's literature imported was exemplified by those stories promoting a moral message. One example is the translation of Hubner's **104 Holy Stories from the Old and New Testament for the Edification of the Young** (Terras 83). Those stories selected for translation from other languages were not for mere entertainment value, but were **overtly** instructional. It is not hard, then, keeping in mind this early and constant trend to instruct, to follow the early practice of selecting and translating children's literature with a moral message to the Soviet policy of placing a special priority on the creation of its own morally charged literature for children. February 6, 1924 the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party decreed to undertake measures to create a Soviet children's literature. The decree stated:

"It is necessary to create literature for children under the thorough control and leadership of the party in order to strengthen in children's literature the elements of class-orientation, internationalization, and education through labor (Cherniavskaia 41)"

The use of fairy tales in Soviet children's literature began as a much-contested point. In 1920 Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, was put in charge of all libraries. It was she who put together the first list of books that should be eliminated from libraries for failure to

adhere to the current pedagogical demands. Most of these were children's stories, specifically fairy tales. Her rationale for attacking fairy tales first and foremost is manifest in her statement:

"They [fairy tales -MB] poison the yet unformed consciousness of a child and bring superstition and mysticism into the picture to distort the materialist view of the world." (Krupskaia in Dobrenko 175)

According to the diaries of children's author Chukovsky, "Krupskaia's attacks on the fairy tale form lasted until the '30s: "[...] Even in 1928 sharp criticism against fairy tales was found in the press, saying that they promote a "petty and sentimental ideology (Chukovsky 445)." In 1929 a group of parents from the Kremlin Kindergarten passed a resolution in which they stated, "In the time of sharp class struggle, fairy tales should not be a part of children's education, since they promote values alien to the new revolutionary culture: they promote fantasy, and not life in the real revolutionary world (Chukovsky 446)" In 1931 Krupskaia published an article entitled "Children's Books: a Mighty Weapon in the Struggle for the Socialist Upbringing of our Children," in which she stressed that children should be informed about class struggle and the revolutionary history of Russia (Cherniavskaia 41). Fairy tales did not return to children's literature until the 1930s, after the acceptance of Gorky's concept of *narodnost'* as one of the defining characteristics of SR, effectively reversing Krupskaia's "materialist" approach to children's literature (Dobrenko 175)

In the 1920s and 1930s many reputable poets and authors became involved with children's writing, among them D. Kharmis, O. Vvedensky, and V. Mayakovsky.

Periodicals for children began appearing as early as 1924, some, for example **The Pioneer** (*Pioner*), in publication until the recent fall of Russian communism (Terras2 83).

To attest to the tendency of children's literature of this period to adhere strictly to all aspects of the Party line, including the more vicious ones, Mayakovsky wrote several poems for children in the '30s depicting in starkly dualistic terms what was "good" and what was "bad" under the Soviet depiction of reality. Among his works were "What is good, and What is bad" and "Fairy Tale about Petya, a Fat child, and Sima, a Skinny One." Petya was a "bad" bourgeois child and a glutton, as well as stupid and cruel. Sima was a proletarian, smart, kind, and frugal. It was one example of contemporary writers adapting the fairytale form to Socialist Realism before the form was adapted for use in cartoons (Terras2 83).

Children of the post-WWII era Soviet Union were the first generations to grow up entirely after the revolution, entirely after the enormous patriotic effort of the World Wars. The fairytale form was used to instill in children the values necessary to be proper citizens of Soviet society without requiring them to actually come to the conclusions themselves. Utilizing the **dogma** of Socialist realism, children absorbed the values of Soviet society on a subconscious, unthinking level, on the level not of dreams in the sense of decided upon goals, but on the level of dreams that come to one involuntarily in sleep.

The folk forms encouraged by Gorky permeated daily life. Though certainly not limited to the realm of children's literature, the image of the *bogatyr*, the hero of Russian folk epics, was constantly proffered upon children. The heroic acts of the new Soviet "supermen", the new *bogatyria*, those workers glorified for their mundane industrial or agricultural deeds in mythic terms, were described metaphorically using mystical language (Clark 135). The slogan of the thirties, "Fairytale has become Reality", was proof positive

of this. This children's song from that era demonstrates the extent to which reality and myth became blurred in the education of the young generation of Soviet citizens:

Ever Higher

We were born that fairytale might become reality.

To conquer the vastness of space

Reason gave us steel wings for arms,

And in the place of a heart they gave us a fiery motor.

Ever higher and higher and higher

We urge on our bird's flight,

And in every propeller there breathes

Peace for our borders (Clark 138)

For children of the Soviet Union after World War II, there was neither a science nor a philosophy attributed to Socialism. There was only dogma and myth. The dogmatic, fanatic nature of Socialist Realism and its application to the teaching of children effectively negated the individual. Children were raised as adherents to the ideological "religion" of Socialism. Daily life was so closely intertwined with wondrous deeds and mythical metaphor that any visions Socialist Realism had of being scientific were completely negated. The upshot, however, was that children, though not necessarily socialists, were raised as adherents to the current regime. The fairy tale structure used was easy to understand and, being well established in the cultural memory, required no explanation. This, more than any other reason, is why fairytales were used to educate children to their

proper roles in society.

Socialist Realism and Film

The idea behind Socialist Realism, the creation of an observable manifestation of the Soviet regime-dictated ideal reality, found its clearest and most powerful expression in film. It was a genre that reached a vast slice of the population both through its sensational nature and its accessibility. During the revolution and shortly after, the use of film for agitation purposes served not only to expose the peasantry to the ideals and propaganda of the new regime, but also associated the infant Soviet government in the minds of the people with the cutting edge of technologically miraculous achievements. Because film was a relatively new art form loved by the urban lower classes and that few, especially few peasants, had seen before, the Party was automatically lent credence by its inferred mastery over technological marvels. Film gave the Party respectability in its constant and fierce competition with the West. Soviet mastery of film was meant to prove that the Soviet regime was able to produce the same miracles as the West, the difference being in the Soviet use of the "proper" ideology. Such things as film were not commonplace under the Tsars, and their proliferation under the new Soviet regime seemed to be evidence of a true moving forward and a harbinger of greater things to come.

In 1896, upon seeing his first film in France, the man who would later be dubbed the father of Socialist Realism, Maksim Gorky, was quoted as saying: "Without fear of exaggeration, a wide use can be predicted for this invention [cinema] because of its tremendous novelty... The thirst for such strange, fantastic sensations as it gives will grow ever greater, and we will be increasingly less able and less willing to grasp the everyday

impressions of ordinary life (Gorky qtd. Youngblood 1)."

Twenty-two years later in 1918, Gorky's thought was echoed in Red policy when the Movie Subsection was organized with the Extramural Education Department of the Commissariat of Education (Narkompros) and was aimed primarily at the *political* education of adults. This subsection was headed by no less important a personage than Lenin's wife, Krupskaya (Kenez 31). Though at the time of its organization the Movie Subsection was in possession of only one projector and a few newsreels dating from the time of the provisional government, a paltry collection of material hardly worthy of comprising an entire subsection, its very existence with Krupskaya at its head belied the significance of film to the Soviets in two ways: in a Socialist Realist interpretation, even though the Party was unable to actualize a Movie Subsection, in order to gain power over society and how the government was viewed, the existence of such a subsection *in theory* or *on paper* was necessary. Dmitry and Vladimir Shlapentokh in their book Soviet Cinematography have asserted that the art of Socialist Realism was not one that imitated life, but one that was designed to be imitated by life (22). It was an art that was to create the image of Soviet life for the Soviet people in lieu of the people's own experiences, which were often not as rosy. Such an approach to the formation of the correct *image* of Soviet reality was being carried out long before an actual Socialist Realist art was officially defined in the very act of organizing the Party bureaucracy. It was not so important on the foundational level that the Party did not actually have the capability of using the ultra-modern art of film, but it *was* important that the Party *appeared* to have that capability. In another interpretation, film was important due to the fact that in 1920, only 2 out of 5 adults were literate. Film, owing to its growing popularity and visual nature, was capable of

becoming a means for indoctrinating the public with Party propaganda. This could be accomplished either by directly conveying the propagandist message in the film or by using a popular film to bait an audience into hearing a propagandist message afterwards.

1918 also saw the establishment of the National Film Organization, ironically with the absence of a national film industry. This body incorporated both the Moscow Soviet and Narkompros, but acted autonomously (Kenez 31). This proliferation of authoritative organizations on film was to continue throughout the 1920s. The actual production of film continued to decline, however, following the April, 1918 establishment of a government monopoly over foreign trade that made materials for making films scarce due to the lack of imported materials. Unable to afford the financial burden of running the film industry by itself, however, the Party promised not to nationalize the film factories, while at the same time forbidding their sale. The Party was unable to afford running the film factories itself, but hoped that they would continue running for the sake of the beleaguered economy.

Most of the film studios and factories either did not continue running or moved south to the Crimea along with most of the talent to work under White rule. Left with little choice, on August 27, 1919 Sovnarkom, the Council of People's Commissars, made the attempt to eliminate private studios and film distributors (Kenez 33). Though the native film industry continued to ail and was practically nonexistent, at least 3 private studios continued to operate after the Party's industry takeover as late as 1922. It is apparent that the Soviet government was in more dire straits than the film industry it worried so much about.

The first efforts of the nationalized film industry were "agitki," agitational short films of wholly didactic content that were brought on agitational trains throughout the countryside. Sixty agitki were made between the summer of 1918 and the end of the Civil

War. These films filled several needs. On one level, they taught peasants about such important concepts as simple hygiene. On another level, this more important, agitki allowed some peasants to see their new leaders for the first time, making the leaders of the revolution more recognizable than the Tsar (Kenez 35).

In 1922 Sovnarkom established a new state cinema enterprise, Goskino, that would have a distribution monopoly. This action was taken because the 1919 nationalization of the film industry had been impossible to effect and 3 private studios were still in operation: Sevzapkino, Proletkino, and Rus. By the end of 1923 Goskino was bankrupt, unable to take control of the film industry (Youngblood 14). The failure of Goskino prompted the 1923 Mantsev Commission to study the problems of film production. The suggestion of the commission was to abolish Goskino. In the aftermath of Goskino's failure, Sovkino was organized. A joint-stock company, it was held by the Commissariat of Trade, the Commissariat of Enlightenment, the Leningrad and Moscow Soviets, and the Supreme Council of the National Economy. Sovkino stepped in to take over the distribution monopoly Goskino had been set up to command (Youngblood 16). Sovkino lowered ticket prices and eliminated taxes on the film industry, imported foreign hits and shifted the emphasis of the film industry to support big-budget Soviet entertainment films. The industry was set up to make money, and began to show more official tolerance for deviations from the official line until the film industry became healthier.

In March, 1928 the Party Conference on Cinema Affairs called for cinema to take part in socialist reconstruction, class warfare, and the cultural revolution. Speaking before the assembled filmmakers, Commissar of Enlightenment Lunacharsky recalled a conversation he had with Lenin in which he quoted Lenin as saying, "Among our people

you are known to be a patron of art, so you must remember that of all the arts for us cinema is the most important." (Lunacharsky qtd. Taylor) This brought an end to cultural pluralism and a renewed effort to create a totalitarian worldview on the big screen. In May of that year, film libraries were purged of foreign and domestic pictures which were said to be dedicated to the glorification of prostitution and debauchery and criminal activity. Interestingly enough, these were the movies most popular among the proletariat (Youngblood 31). A year earlier, in 1927, in response to the accusations that he was trying to abolish commercial filmmaking in his attacks on Sovkino, Soviet poet Mayakovsky was quoted as saying "Rubbish... we're merely saying that the masses who pay to see the films are not the upper stratum of NEP or the more or less well-to-do strata, but the many tens of millions of masses [...] And however much you try, however much profit you make from the public by catering to their tastes, you are doing something foul and nasty (Mayakovsky qtd. Youngblood, 46)"

The period of necessity that had forced the Party to permit the exhibition of foreign films had ended by the dawn of the first Five-Year Plan in 1928, and the totalitarian spirit of Socialist Realism began to show through as soon as the Party was financially powerful enough to enforce its ideology. Mayakovsky's words gave proof to the idea that, in the case of the Soviet Union, art was not to imitate life, life was to imitate art.

Under Stalinism in the 1930s movies were condemned for being of the "wrong" artistic style. The wrong artistic style was generally referred to as "formalism", having too high an intellectual content to be suitable for propaganda, and was characterized by objectivism, pessimism, distortion of historical truth, hidden Zionism, pacifism, abstract humanism, denigration of the Soviet people, and naturalism (Shlapentokh 28). Upon seeing

them in print, one wonders if these descriptors were not arrived at randomly. After all, if something is objective, can it be pessimistic? Can it distort historical truth? On the road of Stalinism to the brilliant future, why were the Jews singled out among all the other minorities to be associated with incorrect thought? The inherent prejudice, the dictatorial nature of Stalinism shone through in the '30s as the film policies of the '20s were swept aside and the order of the day was to promote Stalin's nationalism.

According to Kenez in his book, Cinema and Soviet Society, the films of the 30s fit three categories. These were 1) historical spectacles, 2) revolutionary stories, and 3) contemporary dramas, all designed to coincide with the new nationalism (161). In these films, Russians were shown to have always been handsome, heroic, and truthful, whereas enemies of the Russian people had always been cruel, ugly, and stupid. This didactic description of the past served to prime Russia and the new Soviet Union for the growing German threat.

As Stalin tightened his grip on all forms of expression, the nationalism being expressed in the art of Socialist Realism was transformed to be expressed as a national religion. Construction dramas were propagated, depicting Soviet workers as living and working in dismal conditions, but working toward a *spiritual goal* and a better future (Kenez 162). During World War II, films depicted great characters from the past to associate the iron-fisted rule of Stalin with the patriotic and historical heroes of the past. To be a patriot was to believe in Stalin unconditionally, to accept the dictates of the Party without question. After World War II, more than at any other time, the only "correct" form of art was the art that was to be *believed* in, that art which most expediently fulfilled the intents of the Party.

Socialist Realism and Animation

Soviet animation did not begin as a purely trivial form of children's entertainment. It was described early on in 1927 in the journal Kino as a "genre without attachments." (Volkov 111) In fact, instead of being a genre restricted almost entirely to children, in the Soviet Union the genre was first applied to a very adult topic. One of the first Soviet cartoons, Soviet Toys (*Sovietskie Igrushki*), produced in 1924, was not a children's movie at all, but an ideologically charged film on the topic of the taxation of private entrepreneurs in the Soviet Union during the time of the NEP (Lenin's New Economic Policy) which spanned the years 1921-1928. The highly ideological nature of such an early specimen of Soviet-era animation can lead one to the assumption that the Party had full control over this genre's production from the very beginning. This assumption, however, would be false. During the 1920s cartoon films were still produced on a semi-private basis. The production structure consisted of private studios sporadically producing massive amounts of material not characterized by a single predominant artistic style or ideological message. So "unattached", to use the wording of the aforementioned article in "Kino", was the genre of animation, that artists and politicians alike largely ignored it. This lack of both financial and artistic support was the cause of the early irregularities of production in animation in the Soviet Union. State support of animation was not given until the 1927 success of the first children's cartoons.

The warm reception of children's animation worked two ways to gain official support for the genre. For one, the Soviet film industry, along with most other aspects of the economy, was struggling in the 1920s, and anything that would guarantee its own

returns was given as much support as it needed to get on its feet. In his article “Animation” (Multiplikatsiia), Anatolii Volkov stated, “No one meddled in their [the animators-MB] “kitchen”, no one controlled, no one dictated, no one taught what or how to film[...] (Volkov 112).” The basic preconceptions about cinema that drew the Party to it in the first place can be said to be another basis upon which official support for animation was based. Children’s animation deals with an audience that is primarily concerned with absorbing information about their world from what they see. Children, having no information to begin with, form their impressions of reality quickly and non-critically. It is for this reason that the didactic folk form was chosen as the template for children’s animation (Zorin 55) If children were willing to watch cartoons it meant that they could absorb ideology through that genre in a much simpler form and much earlier than people would be able to through other forms of cinema. Still preoccupied with the economy, however, this idea was still only a vague notion not able to be immediately dealt with and so at that point individual artistic expression or ideological message was still unfettered by official dictate.

The environment of independent self-supporting studios and ideological self-determinism that existed in the 1920s was conducive to the development of a new trend in children's book graphics, one that was educational as opposed to merely entertaining. It is necessary to point out that, according to Volkov, for the purposes of the Party, educational was a term used in reference to political indoctrination. The new graphic style of Soviet Children’s literature was an omen of the developing style of Socialist realism, depicting figures from daily Soviet life such as Lenin or Young Pioneers or policemen in children’s books. It was intended to be instructional, not merely entertaining. The artist Mikhail Tsenakhavskii was the first to work in both the genre of children’s literature and in

animation, providing the first crucial link between the new instructional form of illustration and the burgeoning children's animation artistic form (Volkov 111).

At the end of the 1920s, despite hesitant official support, the artists of early Soviet animation still worked with the minimum of technology, still in small groups of artists in unconnected studios. Consequently, the success of the 1933 cartoon festival held in Moscow was overshadowed by the enormous psychological failure Soviet animation suffered with the 1933 release of Disney's first feature films in America. With the ever-present necessity to be as good as or better than its Western counterparts in any endeavor, the technologically inferior native cartoon industry was criticized for the improper depiction of reality. In comparison with Disney features, native-produced cartoons were not at the acme of expertise and technology. Soviet cartoons were not as perfect as they could have been. Having built its foundations on the mastery of technologies it had not the means to master, having already begun to build its own justification on a bureaucratic system controlling a film industry that didn't actually exist, the Party could not afford to be shown up by the West it was in such furious opposition to. The proper depiction of reality entailed demonstrating Soviet technological superiority, demonstrating proof of the illusion that the glorious Soviet future had undoubtedly arrived. The Party had already equated itself with the technological advances of film itself, and the exposure of the shortcomings of the Soviet film industry in relation to the films of Disney produced a bizarre result. Socialist Realism required that life imitate art (Shlapentokh 22), that the people see a life depicted in art that was not actualized under the Soviet government. Being shown up by the West in the field of cartoon production, therefore, was not allowable. It revealed that the Soviet way of life was not the most perfect. As a result

of the embarrassment the film industry suffered at being outdone by Disney, the entire cartoon industry as it had existed until that point was accused of distorting reality. By denouncing the entire animation industry, the Party was able to continue to say that Soviet life was the highest form of life. Its functionaries in charge of making cartoons had only failed to capture and demonstrate that simple truth.

It was only following the perceived 1933 disgrace of Soviet animation that Party officials began to take an active role in controlling its production. Aware of the fact that they were behind in the development of animation, the entire industry was made to conform to the ideal of mass production, abandoning the independent studio approach in an attempt to create a system of production on par with the system implemented by Disney. The Soviets attacked animation with the slogan **Daesh' sovietskovo Mickey Mausa-** translated as “Let’s have a Soviet Mickey Mouse.” In order to act in line with the ideals of mass production individual artistic whimsy gave way to dictated timelines and regular product. To demonstrate the importance of keeping up with the West in even this seemingly trivial matter, a “spy,” Victor Smirnoff, was sent to America to work in the American animation studios to learn the “assembly line” style of animation pioneered by Disney and Fleisher.

The adherence to the new “assembly-line” approach that Smirnoff brought back from the U.S. and instituted required a substantial amount of centralized control. It was thus the desire to keep up with the Western standard in animation that allowed the state to step in and assume control of all animation. In 1936 **Soyuzmul'tfil'm** was created, uniting **all** artists working in animation under the authority of one organization. The forced collectivization of the artists working in the genre, the largest forced collectivization to occur in Europe (Volkov 117), deprived Soviet animation of much of its individual flavor,

but ensured that each cartoon produced would fit one specific formula.

At the heart of the formula for the new cartoons was a didactic depiction of the conflict between a main character who had committed a negative act against the collective and that character's repentance and apology for his/her mistakes. This formulaic approach has much in common with fairy tales as they are described by Vladimir Propp in his book Morphology of the Folktale. Propp states, "morphologically, a tale (*skazka*) may be termed any development proceeding from villainy [...] or lack [...] through intermediary functions to marriage [...] or to other functions employed as denouement."⁽⁹²⁾ Within such a formulaic framework the hero of a fairy tale, and consequently the main protagonist of a Soviet cartoon, will always act as the story demands. Characters within a formulaic story have no free will- any act they undertake is necessarily channeled through the didactic formula of the tale, always producing a result that is ideologically correct. The outcome, therefore, always carries an ideological message. The formulaic nature of fairy tales ensures that even in situations in which such stories are mass-produced, the didactic message will remain the same in nearly all cases. The fusion of fairy tales with animation for children was the simplest and most logical step the Party could have taken when they decided upon the mass-production model of animation for children.

Case Studies

With a background now established we can begin with the analysis of the individual case studies and illustrate with specific examples how the genre of children's fairy tale animation was used for ideological ends within the specific framework of Soviet Society and history.

Case Study: The Little Hump-backed Horse (Konek Gorbunok) 1947

Category: Old Russian fairy tale adapted for ideological purposes

The Little Humpbacked Horse, produced in 1947, was the first Soviet fairy tale cartoon. Its year of release was marked by the final breakdown of relations between the Soviet Union and the former allied powers, as Russian Communist expansion unified the Eastern Bloc countries with communist regimes friendly to and coordinated by the Soviet Union. The following year the Marshall Plan was enacted, and the Soviet Union's refusal to be involved created a convenient rallying point around which Western Bloc countries could unite. This being so, the line was drawn, with Eastern Europe united under the umbrella of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) and Western Europe loosely rallied around loyalties associated with the Marshall Plan, loyalties sealed in 1949 with the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Riasanovsky 2536).

The artistic environment fostered by Stalin during and after the war reflected the expansionist activity occurring on the part of the Soviet Union in those times. This environment was, to say the least, friendly to nationalism, specifically Russian nationalism.

The 1930s reemergence of fairy tales in children's literature after their long exile to the Siberia of politically deviant literary forms by Nadezhda Krupskaya in the 1920s was a

testament to this nationalist bent. Originally banned from libraries for promoting mysticism and superstition, Fairy tales and folk forms were resuscitated by Gorky in the 1930s by appealing almost directly to those same "mystic" and "superstitious" properties with his formulation of the concept of *narodnost'*.⁶ The hero of **The Little Humpbacked Horse** is Ivan the Simple, a traditional Russian folk hero suggested specifically by Gorky as a suitable template character for use in the development of Socialist Realism.

The story of **The Little Humpbacked Horse** is an adaptation of an old Russian fairy tale. The hero, Ivan, is the youngest of three brothers and is referred to directly as a fool (*durak*). As the tale begins the three brothers are standing watch to catch a vandal that has been ruining their crops. The two lazy older brothers try to put one over on the hard-working simpleton Ivan and send him to watch another part of the field so they can sleep. While dutifully keeping watch, Ivan discovers that it is no vandal sabotaging their harvest, but a magical horse that has been flying down from the sky to trample the fields each night. Ivan takes the animal by surprise and captures it. In exchange for his freedom, the enchanted horse rewards Ivan with three gifts- two horses of incomparable beauty and one little horse with two humps on its back. Ivan is instructed to sell the two great horses, but not the humpbacked one, as he is to be Ivan's friend and companion. Ivan stables the two great horses for the night and goes to sleep. In the morning Ivan, singing a song about how wonderful it is to work in the fields in the morning, goes to tend to the horses, but finds they have been stolen by his two older brothers. The little horse comes at Ivan's cries and

⁶ Maxim Gorky's contribution to the formation of Socialist Realism was his formulation of *narodnost'*. He believed that the link between popular culture and literary culture laid in folklore, tales, myths, and oral forms. (Robin 52)

"Myth is invention. To invent means to extract from the sum of a given reality its cardinal idea and embody it in imagery... That's how we got realism (Gorky qtd. Robin 52)."

promises to help him find the horses.

Ivan and the little horse take to the air, flying over the forest. On the way, Ivan finds a glowing firebird feather and decides to keep it, despite the admonitions of the little horse that it will only bring him misfortune. Ivan and the little horse arrive at the market just as the Tsar is arriving. They find the two older brothers trying to sell the horses for themselves, but when the Tsar takes interest in purchasing them Ivan steps forward as the seller and accepts the Tsar's generous payment. This whole transaction takes place under the greedy eye of the Tsar's groom, who wants all the riches Ivan is getting for himself. The groom proves unworthy of even his own position, however, as he is unable to control the horses. The Tsar is then forced to hire Ivan to tend to the horses, who subdues them with a folk dance.

At the stables, the jealous groom spies on Ivan to see how he, a simpleton, manages to take care of all his duties so effortlessly. He does not discover that the little horse is helping Ivan, but does see that Ivan has a firebird feather. While Ivan is sleeps the groom steals the feather and brings it to the Tsar. The greedy Tsar, believing that Ivan is holding out on him, decrees that Ivan shall bring him a firebird or be executed. The little horse aids Ivan in this first trial, and Ivan manages to fulfil the decree. Foiled in his first attempt to do away with Ivan, the groom searches for another way. Overhearing a group of workers telling fairy tales about a woman of incomparable beauty living beyond the sea, the groom decides to bring this story to the Tsar, leading him to believe that Ivan knows where this girl lives. The Tsar then charges Ivan with a second impossible task- to bring this incomparably beautiful girl to the to him or be executed. Ivan is again saved by the little horse, who makes the fantasy girl a reality. The girl, however, refuses to marry the ugly, toothless Tsar

until he undergoes a ridiculous series of baths in boiling milk, boiling water, and frozen water to restore his youth. Sensing the obvious danger, the Tsar calls on Ivan to be his test subject to undergo the magical treatment first. The little horse assures Ivan that no harm will come to him, but is overheard by the groom, who, finally seeing a way to do away with Ivan, ties the little horse up in a bag.

Ivan tries to call the little horse for help before he is forced to jump into the boiling milk, but the horse does not come. Resigning himself to his fate, Ivan heads toward the cauldrons, to the chagrin of a visibly worried princess. When all seems lost, the horse frees himself from the sack, kicks the groom out a high tower window, and enchants the three cauldrons. Ivan dives into the baths and emerges transformed into a handsome prince. Seeing Ivan's miraculous transformation, the greedy Tsar jumps into the boiling pot, thinking that he, too, will be transformed, but does not surface. The princess marries Ivan and the story ends happily.

The necessary elements exist to call this a fairy tale. Ivan goes on a quest to find his horses that leads to an unexpected series of events that leave him irrevocably transformed. The magically themed number three arises constantly. There are three brothers. Ivan must undergo three trials. The condition of a temporary death and recovery is symbolized in Ivan's transformation in the cauldrons. The forces of nature and magic aid the hero and will not let him fail.

This film shows a connection between being a simple and hardworking person and having an intrinsically morally right character. An early example of the use of fairy tales to disperse Soviet values, and it is perhaps for this reason that it exhibits some characteristics we may not expect. The emphasis in this story is placed on the good of an individual in

opposition to a majority that is shown to be bad. This would seem to contradict the Soviet idea that the individual should subordinate himself to the majority, to "the people."

However, it is not Ivan's individuality that is important, but his ability to triumph despite his simple-mindedness over those who would exploit him. Repeatedly, characters who are shown to be cleverer than Ivan are unable to succeed in their attempts to deceive him. At the beginning of the cartoon Ivan's brothers try to take advantage of his naive and hard-working nature ordering him to watch the field while they rest. Ivan is rewarded for his hard-working nature when he meets the magical horse. The groom tries three times to destroy Ivan to improve his own image in the eyes of the Tsar and fails on each occasion because of Ivan's connection to magic forces. The Tsar tries to benefit from Ivan's risk of his own life when he jumps into the cauldron of boiling milk and is boiled to death. In this way, the majority of characters in this story are simply different manifestations of Ivan's binary opposite. All are lazy and demanding and would take for themselves the fruit of another's labors. Ivan, however, simply works and asks nothing for himself and is the only character to be rewarded. The small assertion of the value of the individual in this cartoon does nothing to counter the larger goal of producing a *belief* in the abstract notion of a moral truth associated with simple folk. The fact that he is shown to be most definitely *Russian* while at the same time simple and intrinsically "right" serves to promote the nationalist attitudes rampant in Russia at this time.

A very strong example of Ivan's simple Russian nature being equated with an inexplicable higher knowledge is his capture of the firebird. Ivan is instructed by the little horse to put cereal soaked in wine in a clearing to lure the firebird. After the firebird has eaten, Ivan entrances it by doing a folk dance that mimics the firebird's own movements.

The firebird is unable to distinguish Ivan from another of its own kind, and so comes near enough for Ivan to capture it. It is Ivan's Russian folk knowledge, the knowledge of a natural, simple man, not formal learning, that puts him in close enough contact with the forces of magic and nature to succeed in his impossible tasks. This knowledge makes him almost indistinguishable from the forces of nature and magic. The fact that he is able to embody the traits of the firebird is not so much a hint at the intrinsic ability of Russians to come into contact with fundamental and magical truths as a shout. The firebird bears a very strong resemblance to the coat of arms of Tsarist Russia.

Thus, looked at as a work influenced by nationalism, one can find further explanation for Ivan's individuality. Ivan willingly watches the fields while his brothers sleep. Given the enormous damage done to Russian crops by the German troops as they retreated, sleeping when one knows that one's field is going to be damaged is nothing short of treason (Riasanovsky 542). Given this as a possible historically contextual influence, it can be demonstrated that Ivan is something of a patriot, a role that is well suited for nationalist ideology. If Ivan, the simple Russian patriot, cannot fail and cannot be sabotaged, then a message is being sent about the Russian people. The child viewer is being taught to admire the simple Russian character and believe in the superiority of the simple Russian people. This would apply to the children of all the countries of the Eastern Bloc where Russian Communist influence was extending in the late 1940s, as this cartoon was shown widely throughout the newly annexed states.

Case Study: Petia and Little Red Riding Hood (Petia i Krasnaia Shapochka)

Category: Soviet Fairy Tale

Petia and Little Red Riding Hood was released in 1958, the year of the truncated sixth Five-year Plan and the beginning of the impromptu Seven-year Plan set to run from 1959 to 1967 (Riasanovksy 605). It is classified as a Soviet fairy because it blatantly incorporates elements of Soviet reality into the fantastic framework of a traditional fairytale⁷. This is the definition that was arrived at as a result of discussions between my advisor, Professor Marina Balina, and myself. In this case the story fits the definition of a Soviet Fairy tale by inserting characters from everyday Soviet life into the already-existing and familiar tale Little Red Riding Hood.

The film begins with young pioneer Petia kicking a matchbox down the street and generally loafing about, not being of much good to anyone. He spots a flyer posted on a fence advertising the showing of the cartoon Little Red Riding Hood, only to discover that the show is already starting. He rushes to the box office, but the show has already been sold out. Feeling left out, Petia tries to sneak a peak at what is happening inside the theater through a crack in the wall of the building, only to have the boards he is leaning against mysteriously swing open. Unable to resist the temptation, Petia crawls inside and the section of the wall swings shut behind him. He stumbles through the dark behind the movie screen, trips, and falls magically into the movie. Once inside the film, he hides behind some trees and watches as Little Red Riding hood comes down the path. The story begins to unfold as it should, as Little Red Riding Hood encounters the wolf on her way to her grandmother's house in the woods. As she, in her naivete, politely tells the wolf where she

is going and where her grandmother's house is, Petia is wincing behind the bushes. Once the wolf has left, obviously up to no good, Petia rushes from his hiding place and stops Little Red Riding Hood, chastising her for her foolishness. He, coming from the real world, has knowledge of the events of the story, and with this knowledge he devises a plan to stop the wolf from devouring both Red Riding Hood and her grandmother. Petia sends Red Riding hood to find the hunters while he stalls the wolf and hides the grandmother. At the end of the film Petia has managed to keep everyone safe from harm while empowering them to fend for themselves against the wolf. The hunters catch the wolf and the films ends with Red Riding Hood praising Petia with the highest compliment she knows- as a true pioneer.

It will be easiest to address the issues of ideology in this film if the ideologically important aspects are scrutinized separately. Red Riding Hood is a representative of the old ways, of social conventions and rules of conduct that, in the Leninist-Marxist interpretation, put people at a severe disadvantage against those who would try to exploit them. Everything about her, from her use of archaic, pre-revolutionary expressions in her speech to her absolute naivete indicate that she is the archetypal peasant or proletarian who has not been properly educated in the Leninist-Marxist interpretation of history. As has already been established, one of the necessary features of the art of Socialist Realism was the "correct" depiction of history. Red Riding Hood offers a simplified picture of how a person can benefit from the proper education.

Red Riding Hood displays her trust and naivete at the very beginning of the film when she first encounters the wolf. The wolf appears to be ravenous and asks personal

⁷ This definition was arrived at through discussion between my advisor, Professor Marina Balina, and

questions of Red Riding Hood. Red Riding Hood, referring to the wolf in polite, pre-revolutionary fashion as "Mr. Gray Wolf (*Gospodin Serii Volk*)", trustingly replies that she is not supposed to talk to anyone in the woods, but she is going to go see her grandmother. Petia is outraged that Red Riding Hood has put herself in such blatant danger, and he runs up to her angrily. Red Riding Hood, now twice approached by aggressive strangers, still is unshaken, and politely begins a conversation with Petia. She refers to him as "Mr. Petia Ivanov (*Gospodin Petia Ivanov*)" and begins to tell him exactly where she is going. Petia cuts her off and asks her if she understands the implications of what she has just done. At this point in the story, Petia's special knowledge of the story begins to play an important role.

Petia's status as a pioneer in the film is a very important ideological theme. The state art form of Socialist Realism was one method employed to implement and reinforce a homogeneous engineered Soviet culture. Another device that was utilized to accomplish the same ends was mass participation in Party youth organizations. The hierarchy of these organizations was, from youngest to oldest, the Little Octobrists for young children, Pioneers for children aged 9 to 15, and the Union of Communist Youth, or Komsomol, for those aged 14 to 26. Often acting as subsidiary branches of the Party itself and imbued with some form of legitimate party authority, these youth organizations, while at the same time educating their members in Party thought and conduct, often worked in communities on educational or service campaigns (Riasanovsky 621). By virtue of his entering into the fairy tale realm, Petia's actions as a pioneer are elevated to the level of myth. This creates a metaphorical equation between Party workers and mythical heroes.

myself. It has been determined as a functional definition and is not a published theory.

Petia doesn't so much introduce himself to Red Riding Hood as immediately begin lecturing her. As a pioneer, he is "always prepared" to take action, and he has a plan to reverse the grim fate that awaits Red Riding hood and her grandmother. As a pioneer, educated with the proper ideological worldview, he has special knowledge of what the wolf has in store that ordinary people like Red Riding Hood are not in possession of. Petia asks Red Riding Hood if she has ever read the story "Little Red Riding Hood." She is confused and replies that she hasn't read it, she is herself Little Red Riding Hood. Petia tells her what the wolf is planning, makes it clear that they have to take action, and caps it all off by saying "*Chestnoe Pionirskoe*," translated as "Pioneer's word." Red Riding Hood doesn't understand the meaning of this phrase, and Petia clarifies by telling her that a Pioneer's word is "The most pure, powerful, honest word of honor" and that "pioneers are the most honest people."

Petia manages to alter the course of the story with his outburst. Red Riding Hood runs off into the woods to find the hunters who can stop the wolf, and Petia goes to aid the grandmother. Red Riding Hood's grandmother is waiting in the bed to be eaten when Petia arrives, and is reluctant to listen to Petia's urging to find a place to hide. The grandmother's comfort in waiting to be devoured is a metaphor to describe how people set in the old ways are blind to their fates and almost willingly feed themselves to exploiting "wolves." However, the power to educate and change the course of history that Petia is imbued with as a Pioneer, an agent of communist truth, is enough to coax Red Riding Hood's grandmother out of her historical rut of being eaten over and over again each time the story is told. Red Riding Hood's grandmother is hidden in a her wardrobe and Petia puts a decoy of dirty laundry in her bed. Once the wolf arrives, he is so greedy that he swallows the laundry bag

without noticing it isn't actually Red Riding Hood's Granny. Then he hides in the bed.

The use of this fairy tale to symbolize archaic ways and patterns is vividly highlighted when the exploiting wolf is pitted against the history-changing pioneer. This is the duel between the story's two binary opposites. Petia's confrontation with the wolf shows that, though it may be hard for those who are exploited to recognize their situation and change their course, it is even harder for the exploiters to conceive of a change in the historical pattern. Unable to see with the grandmother's glasses on, perhaps a metaphor for the role reversal the wolf is experiencing, he being suddenly at a disadvantage and blind to the change in the historical pattern, the wolf mistakes Petia for Little Red Riding Hood. The wolf waits for the traditional exchange, i.e. "What big eyes you have, etc...", but is disappointed when Petia begins making comments that are irrelevant to the pattern. After an uncomfortable silence, Petia remarks, "I hope your temperature's normal." The wolf is confused and tries to put the conversation back into its traditional track, asking Petia "Why don't you say 'what big ears you have?'" Petia replies, "Your ears are ears. No big deal." The wolf tries again, asking why Petia doesn't inquire as to why he has such big eyes. Petia tells him his eyes aren't that big. At this point, the wolf begins answering the questions himself, telling Petia that his eyes are in order to see him better. The wolf finally realizes that Petia is not Little Red Riding Hood, but too late. The hunters are already creeping about the house and the traditional victims have already been transformed through contact with Petia into people who can stand up for themselves in the face of exploitation. As the wolf chases Petia about the cabin, it is the grandmother, the most traditional victim, who trips the wolf and saves the day.

There are several fairy tale transformations occurring within the story. The first is

of Petia himself. Petia begins the story loafing about and being idle. Contrary to his “honest” Pioneer nature, he sneaks in the back way to see the cartoon. He remains this way until his magical induction into the fantasy world. Magical forces place him in a situation in which he needs to become responsible and take action, and he does so unhesitatingly. The grandmother undergoes a symbolic death and resurrection that symbolizes the empowerment of all the characters in the fantasy world. Through Petia's intervention, the grandmother is hidden away as the wolf eats her effigy. When she re-enters the action of the story, she, the traditionally weak and bed-ridden victim, does so with decisive action. It is only after she has returned to the action as a changed character that the hunters move in to subdue the wolf.

The ideological message implicit in *Petia i Krasnaia Shapochka* appears to be one that was necessary to reinforce the idea that Leninism-Marxism was still a valid method of interpreting the past and for moving forward toward communism. The year of this film's release, 1958, is referred to by one Russian scholar as the year of Khrushchev's zenith (Riasanovskiy 600). Stalin had died five years earlier in March of 1953, and Khrushchev had denounced him and his purges at a closed session of the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 (Riasanovskiy 599). It is not hard to imagine that the wolf in this scenario, while certainly a blatant reference to exploitative capitalists, is also a reference to Stalin. Petia's victory over the wolf serves to symbolize the continued correctness of Party ideology in spite of the weaknesses of Stalin's megalomaniacal personality. This is a tale designed to give a continued facade of normality to the Soviet way of life to children who were being raised in it. The children were refamiliarized with the already familiar institution of the pioneers, made to believe that they, the children, were capable of wielding the truth that could effect

mythical change.

Case Study: In the Teepee Burns a Fire (V Iarange Gorit Ogon') 1956

Category: Soviet Fairy Tale adapted from Foreign Tale

In The Teepee Burns a Fire, released in 1956, is a Soviet fairy tale adapted from a minority nationality's canon of stories in order to a) convey an ideological message in keeping with Soviet values and the parameters of the art form of Socialist Realism, and b) make a political statement about the status of the nationality being depicted. The governments of the lands associated both with the Russian Empire and the former Soviet Union presided over a country peopled by a staggering number of unique nationalities. Each government had to devise ways of maintaining unity within its territories. In the history of the perversion of Socialist Realism into an art form of lightly masked "Nationalist Realism" during the years leading up to the Second World War and throughout the era of Stalinism can be seen the attempts of the Soviet government to encompass minority cultures into the larger engineered Soviet culture while insinuating ultimate Russian superiority over those cultures. Granted "autonomy" by the Soviet government, minority nationalities in the USSR were still expected to fit within the Soviet-Marxist framework, as the attempt was continued to eradicate all religious movements and interpret every culture in terms of class struggle. (Riasanovsky 2576) The Eastern peoples were made to use the Cyrillic alphabet in place of the Latin for their native languages. The northern minorities, upon whom this film is focused, had a written language created for them based on Cyrillic. Not surprisingly, this story is also told in Russian.

This practice of invasion colonialism based on the nationalist assumption that

Russia was superior to all other countries was made to appear Marxist by stressing the progressive nature of the Russian proletariat and revolutionary movement, which was depicted as a benefit to all fortunate enough to be associated with it.(Riasanovsky2 576)

This practice can be understood to fit the binary model of Lotman and Uspenski by considering that the nationalities and minorities were required to conform to the single Russian standard. There could be no other belief than the belief in Russia and Russian communism.

This is the environment which characterized the release of **In the Teepee Burns a Fire**, the story of a family of northeastern Siberian Eskimos. The family consists of a mother and her young son and daughter. At the outset of the story the mother has to search for firewood so that her family can stay warm in the coming blizzard. She tries to enlist the help of her two children, but they, being too lazy to care about anything but entertaining themselves or sleeping, refuse to go with her. When she returns, she asks the children again if they won't go search for more firewood, as she was unable to find enough. The children, not wanting to be bothered, insist that there's enough wood and go about their entertainments- the daughter admiring her hair (the thing she cares most about) and the son generally lazing about. That night a blizzard rages outside the teepee, and it becomes clear that there won't be enough wood to maintain the fire. The blizzard- personified as a witch dressed in snowy cloaks riding a sledge pulled by wolves- has a hole burned in her cloak by an ember that escapes from the chimney of the dying fire. Angered, the blizzard waits outside the *iaranga* for the fire to finally extinguish and then bursts in to take vengeance for her ruined garment. As the mother tries to restart the fire, the blizzard turns her into a bird and spirits her away to her palace, leaving the children defenseless. Unwilling to simply

give up on their mother and unwilling also to give themselves up cravenly to the elements, the children take the necessary responsibility and embark on a quest to find the palace of the blizzard and rescue their mother. They are aided by representatives of nature, including their puppy, a reindeer calf estranged from its mother by the blizzard, a bird, and the sun. The sun provides two of his arrows to help the children in their quest.

In the course of the tale the children undergo three specific trials. In the first, the blizzard, upon learning that the children are coming for their mother, sends sleep to kill them. The children are lulled to sleep by this yawning entity's soothing rhymes, and seem doomed to freeze to death in the snow. However, the mother has seen the blizzard dispatch her minion to kill her children, so she sends a bird that is perched outside her window to them to sing a song they will recognize to wake them up. Awakened, the children must scale a sheer cliff wall. When the sister asks her brother what they are going to do, he pulls out his knife and says without hesitation that they will cut stairs. Nearly to the peak, the brother realizes that his rope is too short to reach the next ledge. The daughter cuts off her long hair to add to the rope and allow them to continue. The children face their second trial once they have already come in sight of the blizzard's palace. This time, seeing how the children are undaunted by the obstacles the elements pose and threatened by their industriousness and skill, the blizzard sends the arctic night to stop them. This time the boy looses one of the sun's arrows, summoning the sun's two brothers who destroy the night with their swords. The children's final trial comes when the blizzard attacks the children herself. The son looses the other of the sun's arrows and melts her, bringing about the start of spring and freeing his mother from the blizzard's captivity. In the teepee there forevermore burns a fire.

This cartoon easily fits the description of a fairy tale. The children are forced to go on a quest due to the tragic loss of their mother. This is the lack or misfortune that Vladimir Propp refers to as the instigating circumstance of a fairy tale (92). On the road to completing this quest they encounter help from the environment in the form of natural forces and magic. For example, the magic arrows the sun provides to the children and the wake-up call provided by the improbable bird. (Improbable because it appears to be some sort of forest bird in what is supposed to be the arctic circle. -MB) The children experience a symbolic death and resurrection at their encounter with the anthropomorphized sleep, after which they become more unhesitatingly industrious in their journey than before. With that, the symbolic death prerequisite of the fairy tale is out of the way. Further, their recovery of the object of their quest, their mother, results in a resolution of all their problems, including winter.

There are many ideological elements intertwined with the fairy tale elements that we may explore. Soviet values to be instilled in the young generation extolled in this tale include industriousness, preparedness, sacrifice of the self for the whole, translated into sacrifice of the desires of the self for "the people" (*narod*) in the context of Soviet social values, and the incorporation of elements of daily life into the fantastic story. As an example for children, the orphaned brother and sister exhibit the apogee of conduct which one should strive to imitate. They never once balk in the face of adversity, but instead take action whenever the situation demands it of them. If we looked at this story as a true fairy tale we would not technically be able consider the children's initial decision to enter into the quest to recover their mother as an instance exemplifying courageousness, being that such a decision in the fairy tale model follows logically from the initial loss or problem. However,

their perseverance in face of natural obstacles such as the icy cliff wall or the chasm before reaching the blizzard's palace and especially their preparedness for dealing with such situations, i.e. the boy's knife or expertise with bowhunting, are perfect examples for children to follow. The children are living examples of the Pioneer slogan "Be Prepared!" (*Bud' Gotov!*). This is perhaps, then, an instance of the intrusion of Soviet reality into the fairy tale world, allowing us to safely call this an example of Socialist Realist art.

The daughter's sacrifice of her hair, the thing she cared about most of all, for the sake of the greater good, can be equated with the ideal of placing the interests of the "people" above one's own interests.

The children also provide a negative example at the beginning of the film when they are too lazy to help their mother. The abduction of their mother by the blizzard is a direct result of their unwillingness to do their part in keeping the fire fueled. I interpret this as an exhortation to make sure that work is evenly distributed so that all may benefit, a visible example of why everyone should work together and not try to live at the expense of others.

Another example of Soviet daily life penetrating into the fantasy world of this story is the fact that the mother, hardworking and sacrificing of herself for the sake of her children, has no husband. Following the horrific losses suffered by the Soviet Union in World War II and during Stalin's purges, many families were left without male figures. By depicting the Eskimo mother as single, it was probably easily related to just ten years after the war and only three years after Stalin's death. It is also likely that the orphaning of the children at the beginning of the story is supposed to provide a familiar reference point for the viewer from which to draw a metaphor. The children's struggle for the reconstruction of their family, a struggle that can be expanded metaphorically in the context that this film is

about one of the Soviet Union's minorities. It is being insinuated that all peoples of the Soviet Union need to struggle to unite the minorities of the Union to reconstruct a fictional past unity between all the minorities and nationalities. This past unity is fictional because it never truly existed in the first place. This sort of thinking has a precedent in the binary model of Russian culture. Lotman and Uspenskii note that before Russia could be converted to Christian Orthodoxy, it was necessary to pit it against a pagan pantheon that hadn't actually up to that point existed. In this instance, people are being urged to return to a perceived mythical golden age of unity that is better than the current state of division.

Finally, as a story about minorities, this film says more about the Russian view of this minority than about the minority itself. One point of note is that the setting might not be "fantastic" to the minority who actually lives in that environment. It is made to appeal to Russians, who would find it exotic. The language spoken is Russian, not the native language of the Eskimos being depicted. It does not need to be overtly stated, but through its use the Russian language is being asserted as the naturally dominant and superior tongue. The great lengths the artists went to render the characters as Asian, going so far as to give the sleep monster Asiatic features, belies the importance of the viewer comprehending that this film is about a minority. Why? The heroes exhibit the ideal character traits of a Soviet man and woman. The heroes succeed by adhering to the values of Soviet culture. With this in mind, scenes depicting the children heroically conquering the elements take on a whole new meaning. Only through association with the values of the Russian Communist Party is the minority depicted as overcoming its obstacles. Much like American films such as *Pocahontas*, this depiction of the minority in association with the values of the ruling group subordinates it to the dominant power, as the minority is perceived as helpless without the

ideology provided by the dominant power. Further, the appearance generated by such a depiction creates the impression that the minority has a reason to be indebted to the dominant power. Once this message is recognized, it is not difficult to expand its meaning to apply to relationship between the Party and all minorities. Hence, while extolling the virtues of the ideal Soviet youth, the Pioneers, this film contains in its composition messages designed to gain a cooperative unity with the many minorities of the former Soviet Union.

Case Study: The Last Petal (Poslednii Lepestok), 1977

Category: Soviet Fairy Tale

The Last Petal was produced in 1977, well into the period of stagnation associated with Leonid Brezhnev's administration. This story is categorized as a Soviet fairy tale due to its use of a mixture of familiar fairy tale characteristics and the characteristics of everyday reality. However, the particular nature of the interaction of fantasy and reality in **The Last Petal** places it in opposition to other Soviet fairy tale cartoons reviewed in this paper. Whereas in other films Soviet life typically intrudes into the realm of fantasy, the reverse happens in **The Last Petal**. In **The Last Petal** the realm of daily Soviet life and the realm of fantasy are shown to be one and the same. Many aspects of daily life are represented in the cartoon, e.g. policemen, traffic, apartment buildings, right alongside magical characters and themes recognizable as specifically Russian. Mundanity is repeatedly transformed into fantasy, effectively toppling the barrier between world of fantasy and reality and supporting the old slogan "We are were born to make fantasy reality." (Clark 138)

This film is set in a typical large and, important to note, unidentified city in the present time (the late seventies). The actual location is never given away at any point during the story, leaving it open to the idea that the story could be taking place anywhere. It is the story of a little girl named Zhenia who, in the course of her play, unexpectedly encounters a magical garden in the middle of her otherwise average home city. In the garden she encounters an old woman living in a quaint little shack that gives her a magical flower capable of making her wishes come true. The little girl leaves the garden, but, realizing she doesn't know the way home, she returns to ask the old woman the way back to

her neighborhood. What she finds instead is a perfectly normal children's garden with a miniature shack standing where the old woman's shack had been previously. The scene had been totally transformed from the magical to the mundane. Faced with little other choice, Zhenia uses her first wish to get back home. From that point, she begins wishing recklessly for things that would give her instantaneous and selfish pleasure. Each of these wishes ends in disaster, prompting her to use another of her limited cache of seven wishes, a magic number, to reverse the damage she has done. Able to make and unmake only three unwise wishes, also a magic number, she is left with but a single wish which she realizes she must make carefully. She uses her final wish to heal a lame boy she has befriended, marking the first and only unselfish act she commits in the cartoon. The story ends happily as she and the boy play.

The first three wishes Zhenia makes are selfish, counter to the group-oriented spirit of altruism that children are supposed to cultivate within themselves to be proper citizens of the Soviet Union. Hence, each of these wishes fails miserably, threatening disaster, and in some instances real destruction. The first wish she makes is actually two wishes: the first part of the wish is that she be taken home. The second part is for doughnuts to replace ones she had lost earlier. She is so pleased with the magical flower that she puts the doughnuts on the windowsill and tries to retrieve a vase to put the flower in from atop a bookcase by building a makeshift tower of furniture absolutely unable to support her. As she climbs, she is distracted by birds who are making off with her doughnuts. Because of this, she drops the vase and falls to the ground. She is forced to use another wish to reconstruct her mother's vase before she is caught and punished. The fact that Zhenia probably knew she shouldn't have been climbing on the furniture when she decided to try to get the vase

implies that she was willfully acting disobediently in opposition to the established rules.

Though magic is frequently associated with the Party ideology in Soviet fairy tales, the fact that she had been disobedient for the sake of the flower, the primary manifestation of magic forces in this story, does not justify her disobedience. This can be interpreted to mean that there is only one correct form of behavior for one who wields the "magic" of Party ideology. One must not overlook the other lesson being delivered, that of the inherent dangers associated with a focus on personal gain and momentary pleasure. The doughnuts represent objects of fleeting selfish pleasure and are what provide the distraction that causes Zhenia to break the vase.

Zhenia's second wish is made to try to impress some boys playing in the courtyard outside her apartment building who are preparing for a trip to the North Pole. This wish ends in disaster for two reasons: 1) she is unprepared for the trip, and 2) her only motivation for going is to brag to the boys who wouldn't let her play with them. Nearly freezing to death in the Arctic Circle in her summer dress, Zhenia is again forced to use one of her wishes to take her back home. How is this latest debacle to be interpreted? Zhenia's lack of preparation for her trip to the North Pole is a blatant violation of the slogan of the Pioneers, "Be Prepared!" (*Bud' Gotov!*). Her motivation is divisive. She is trying to establish her own identity as *superior* in *opposition* to the majority. Considering the failure of her trip to the North Pole with this in mind clarifies another aspect to the "correct" utilization of magic. One is not granted success by magical forces if one is not acting for the good of the whole, the good of the "people." From this it can be inferred that the artists of this cartoon wanted children to learn the importance of working always for the benefit of the "people."

The third, and potentially most destructive wish of little Zhenia's magical tour de

force is her wish that all toys in the entire world belonged to her. As a result of this selfish and materialistic wish she is inundated, like a biblical plague, with a rain of toys from the heavens that threatens to bury her alive. When she tries to escape the increasing hail of playthings, they chase her to the rooftops. To save herself and the city from destruction, she must use another wish to make all the toys go back to where they came from. This is a manifestation of anti-materialist ideology. This episode provides a very simple example for children that shows how greed and materialism will lead to misfortune. One should not imagine the people who own things to be unimportant as Zhenia did, but should understand the need to distribute material equally across peoples.

Faced with the realization that she only has one more wish at her disposal, Zhenia reviews the options available to her. She thinks about wishing for ice cream, but realizes that that would not be ultimately fulfilling. She considers wishing for lemonade, but that, too, is passing. Such things do not make ultimately for a better future. As she considers what to expend her last wish on, she encounters a boy reading a book who hasn't moved from his bench all day. She begins to poke fun at the boy, calling him an old man and stealing his book. When she won't return the boy's book, the boy decides to leave, revealing that he can only walk with the aid of crutches. Zhenia feels bad and knows exactly what to use her wish for. She wishes that the boy were cured. Finally, one of her wishes goes right, and the film ends with the two playing happily. The final wish was one that displayed selflessness and concern for others in the greater group. Therefore, according to the values expressed in the ideology of Soviet communism, this was the correct sort of wish to make.

The ideological implications of equating magic with daily Soviet life are such that Soviet ideology itself is made to appear to be a sort of magic that can do wonderful things

in the world in which people live. As analysis of this cartoon has shown, the magic is demonstrated to have only one correct utilization, that being for the good of others, for the good of the group over the self. All attempts to use it end disastrously. Using it correctly, however, makes everyone happy.

Iurii Lotman and Boris Uspenskii provide the model for the rationale that might explain placing the formerly "scientific" ideology of the Party directly on par with magic. Their interpretation of Russian culture based on a model of binary oppositions shows how, in Russian culture, it is possible over time for systems of thought to come to embody their opposites⁸. This film was produced during Leonid Brezhnev's administration. Under Brezhnev's government there was a new emphasis placed on personal living standards and a consumer society arose that stood as an antithesis to the military/industrial and agricultural production foci of Stalin and Khrushchev's governments. Where Khrushchev, the previous leader, had negated Stalin's cult of personality, declaring himself the "new" cult of personality and negating Stalin's "Communism in One Country" only to fail at realizing his fantastic timeline for the accomplishment of world communism, Brezhnev stood in opposition to both world communism and active leadership. Brezhnev's administrative presence was marked by a decided lack of drive toward anything (Riasanovsky 254). The stagnation that stemmed from Brezhnev's leadership, spanning from 1964 to his death in 1982, was perhaps a response in the model of binary opposition to Khrushchev's wildly active campaigns to further the cause of world communism. It is possible to infer that, as a result of each successive leader's complete reversal of one or more of his predecessor's

⁸ "[...] [in Russian culture-MB] the dynamic process of historical change has a fundamentally different character: change occurs as a radical negation of the preceding state. The new does not arise out of a structurally "unused" reserve, but results from a transformation of the old, a process of turning it inside out.

policies, that the art form of Socialist Realism and even the very *idea* of Soviet reality had strayed from its original focus. As a result of this change in focus, a change in animated fairy tales could have occurred. Instead of following the previous trend of infusing the fantastic world with the ideology of Socialist Realism, thereby generating metaphors that could be applied to daily life, a new trend of depicting reality as one and the same thing as fantasy could have arisen. In this cartoon, daily life is imbued with fantastic elements, a subtle reversal of the previous trend. Though the art in this film is very abstract and cannot be said to genuinely make a realistic depiction of Soviet life compared to animation of earlier decades, testifying to a more relaxed artistic environment, this film, out of all those reviewed, makes the most faithful depiction of the basics of everyday life in the Soviet Union. It refers directly to the adventures of a little girl in a real city as opposed to being set in another, fantastic realm. This reversal can be said to stem from the problems of the stagnation. If daily life is merely *associated* with the wonders of a fantasy world that is still visibly fiction, as in older fairy tale cartoons, one might be able to continue toward that fantastic goal. However, in this film one's life is depicted as *being* that fiction. There doesn't seem to be any real incentive to continue acting to the benefit of anything. Daily life *becomes* myth as opposed to being elevated to the *level* of myth. So, on the surface, **The Last Petal** does promote the same ideology and values as earlier animated films, but its composition precludes any real motivation and can be said to contribute to the stagnation of the period.

Thus, repeated transformations can in fact lead to the *regeneration* of archaic forms." (33)

Case Study: The Flying Ship (Letuchii Korabl')

Category: Soviet Faketale

The Flying Ship, released in 1979, stands out among cartoons produced during the Soviet period because of the fact that it is a **faketale**. Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature defines fakelore as "imitation folklore (such as tales or songs) created to pass as genuinely traditional." (402) **The Flying Ship** fits this definition because it utilizes the form and many devices of a fairytale so as to appear genuine, but is in reality a total fabrication designed with a didactic purpose in mind. The reasons for choosing this particular format will be explored in the discussion of this cartoon's didactic message.

The plot of this story is as follows: A simple and good young chimney sweep working at the palace of the Tsar falls in love with the Tsar's daughter, a beautiful princess. The princess is betrothed to a fat, rich and greedy suitor chosen for her by her father but whom she has thus far refused to marry, insisting on marrying out of love and not for duty or for money. She falls in love with the chimney sweep, who promises to build her a flying ship to win her hand in marriage. The princess declares to the palace that she will marry only the one who builds her a flying ship, creating some confusion. The Tsar asks the suitor, who is also taken aback by the strange statement, if he will build the ship. The suitor replies that he will buy it. In this way the characters of the suitor and the chimney-sweep are pitted against one another. As the chimney sweep makes his way into the world on a journey to build the magical ship, the suitor is close behind awaiting his chance to reap the benefits of the chimney sweep's labor. Helped by many magical

creatures and devices, the chimney sweep succeeds in building the ship with little effort, only to have it stolen from him by the suitor, who throws the chimney-sweep in a lake. The suitor returns to the palace to take the hand of the princess and wrest the power from the hands of the Tsar, only to be thwarted finally by the chimney sweep, aided in his escape from the lake by natural and magical forces. Power is returned to the Tsar. The princess, transformed in her struggle against the rich suitor into a simple girl, leaves in the flying ship with the chimney sweep to start a new life that will fulfill all her dreams. The hero and heroine live “happily ever after,” having realized a “simple life.”

One can draw many strong parallels between this film and the fairytale form. The story is written to appear as though it is an old folk tale, set in the time of an old romanticized Rus, an unidentified time period long ago, in the “once upon a” time, if you will. It is peopled with typical fairy tale characters such as Tsars and princesses. The hero embarks upon a magical quest that takes him far away in order to achieve his goals. Magic and nature are present as very definite sources of moral and real authority, demonstrated by the fact that the laws of physics change for the benefit of the “good” character, the poor chimney sweep, but remain rigidly in place to ensure the demise of the “bad” character, the rich prince. Magic aids the chimney sweep in felling the tree and building the ship in almost no time at all, and magic comes to his aid again when he has been thrown in a lake to drown. The law of gravity remains rigidly in place, however, for the suitor, as can be seen when he falls to his death trying to catch the young couple as they fly away in the flying ship. The hero suffers a symbolic death and resurrection when he is thrown into the lake, satisfying another requirement of fairy tales. His return from death makes him courageous enough to save the princess and outwit the rich suitor and

endows him with power to transform others into people of a similar simple "goodness," as evidenced when he and the princess escape down the chimney. The princess enters the chimney dressed in regalia, but emerges from the fireplace dressed as a peasant, her regal clothes stripped away. He is aided by magical helpers, including animals and the magical tools he uses to build the ship. The princess acts as the dispatcher to the chimney sweep, who must go on a quest to win her from the villain.

The messages here are transparent. The "good" character is the simple working man, a character directly correlating to the image of the proletarian. He is driven by pure motives, a personal love, and is not concerned with riches. His quest to win the hand of the princess is aided by agents of both magic and nature. By being good and simple, he is in harmony with the natural order and the magical forces, which things we might associate with government authority. When one is good, one is rewarded- compliance with the established authority was an important value that the Soviet regime wanted to spread. Congress with Soviet powers transforms a person into someone who can save others, as is shown when the forces of magic and nature, the authority of the fantasy world, resurrect the chimney sweep from the dead. His return to the palace, stripped of naivete, portends a deliverance from evils, in this instance the evils of capitalism and exploitation that the rich suitor tries to visit upon everyone.

The princess is a girl raised in affluence who falls in love with a simple man. She sings a song about how her dreams would all come true if her love for the chimney sweep could only be realized. Though her dreams are very personal and therefore seemingly in opposition to the communist group-oriented mentality, the fact that she associates ultimate happiness and the fulfillment of dreams with her union with the ideal Soviet

man, a union which necessitates her leaving her life of affluence, makes her the ideal Soviet heroine. Her dreams equate the Soviet way of life with the realization of fantasy, an ever-present theme in Socialist Realism. In this faketale, it is interesting to note that the simple man does not turn out to be a prince or marry a princess in the end. Instead, the princess turns out to be a simple girl, and this is how happiness is realized. It is the princess who benefits by leaving her life of riches and lowers herself to the level of the chimney sweep. Through this reversal of the standard fairy tale ending the message is sent that it is better to be poor and hardworking than affluent.

The Tsar, a typical symbol of the old order of exploitation, is superficially depicted as being foppish and greedy, often so laden with riches he cannot properly stand. When one considers the more subtle aspects of this character in the story, however, it is revealed that the Tsar is at heart a simple and good man and a loving father. He sings that a large family and happiness for his daughter, simple things untainted by greed, are his only dreams. For a justification of how the Tsar can be depicted as ultimately good in a Soviet fairy tale, consider the powerful symbolism connecting the Tsar with Russia herself. The Tsar is indeed greedy, nearly to his own undoing, but it is not because of an inherent evil. He simply lacks the proper ideology to fend off the destruction he causes to himself and those he loves with his greed. In this analysis it is possible to see the nationalist symbolism. Russians are inherently good, they simply need to be shown the proper Soviet ways to realize the dreams they already hold within themselves.

The suitor is the evil, greedy capitalist. He dreams only of wealth and power. He envisions his marriage to the princess as an opportunity to exploit another, to be served by a wife. His desires are impure, tainted by greed. He tries to take the credit for the

work of others by exerting the power his wealth grants him, and so steals the magical ship from the naïve hero who willingly tells him the magic words to make it fly. Even when equipped with wealth and knowledge, he is still defeated. He is the antithesis of the simple Soviet man, the working hero, and so is not in harmony with the powers that be. He is the chimney sweep's binary opposite. Ideology requires that he is defeated.

Examples of Soviet reality are apparent in this faketale. Though the artists tried to create a tale that appeared archaic, the chimney-sweep's encounter with the Baba Yaga of Russian myth, the wise witch of the woods, has a distinctly present-day twist. Though Baba-Yaga is usually depicted as living alone in her chicken-leg house, in this case the chimney-sweep encounters an entire communal apartment full of Baba Yaga's, all of whom fall out in formation at the whistle of the leader to sing their song and give the chimney-sweep the magic words to make the ship fly. In Russian myth, the Baba Yaga was certainly a solitary character, and wouldn't have fallen into ranks like a troop of Pioneers. However, this is one interesting detail that made the story easy to relate to daily life.

Another important theme in this cartoon has to do with its subject matter. As was noted earlier, the Party was enamored with displays of technological know-how. Each new breakthrough was evidence that with the Soviets the utopian future had physically arrived. The mythical depiction of pilots in children's literature has been shown in the song "Ever Higher." These metaphors can be extended to apply to **The Flying Ship** if the flying ship is taken to be symbolic of air and space superiority. In order to continue to bolster the mythical reverence for Soviet technology, it was necessary to create a faketale that gave the impression that Soviet space technology had always been a thing of

envy that others tried to commandeer or take credit for. Already the first men in space were the Soviet cosmonauts, and by using an old folk form with ethnically Russian features to tell this story the appearance is created that the Russians, even in the time of myth, always ruled the air. The fact that this rule of the air is shown to be necessary to securing the utopian future reinforces the importance of air and space technology in the minds of the children in the audience and reiterates how important space technology remained in the minds of government officials.

An interpretation of the events of the time period may hold the key to explaining why such a pointed message was considered necessary in 1979. Soviet cosmonaut Iurii Gagarin had been the first man to fly into space in April, 1961. The U.S. Apollo 11 mission landed on the moon in July, 1969, and the Apollo program itself had already been cancelled in 1972. These events were at least a decade earlier than the date of this cartoon's production. The primary goal of U.S. and Soviet Space programs at the time was the development and implementation of new surveillance and communications satellites. Among those developed by the U.S. in that time period was the Seasat, operated for 100 days in 1978 using advanced imaging radar to map ocean currents and the ocean floor, the precursor to later U.S. navy satellites.(Britannica) With the first flight of the space shuttle coming in 1981, only 2 years after the release of **The Flying Ship**, it is possible to speculate also that the Soviets were anticipating this advance in space technology and trying to counter the negative psychological effects it would have with ideological messages at home before the craft ever made its debut.

Conclusion

Analysis of the films selected, consisting of an examination of their fairy tale characteristics and the historical and ideological relevance of those characteristics to their respective times of release has yielded the conclusion that fairy tales were uniquely suited for the dissemination of Soviet ideology to the all-important new generation of citizens and that the fairy tale form itself was willfully adapted to the film genre of animation to better accomplish this goal. Analysis has proven that each of the films herein examined contains both messages peculiar to the history of their period of release and to specific constant ideals contained within Soviet ideology. Their adherence and reinforcement of common slogans, their obvious commitment to being sure that children knew to "Be Prepared!" in the case of Petia or the Eskimo children, or that children be aware that Soviet reality is the fantasy reality, made each of these films tools of the Party in engineering the beliefs and worldview of a generation of truly Soviet citizens. Contrary to the goal the revolution had begun with, the Party had created for its children a religion, the dream of a communist future with communist values one could only *believe* in. In exchange for absolute control over children's beliefs and minds as they developed, the Party sacrificed its younger generation's actual political awareness. They had traded reality for the fairy tale.

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