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THE "DISCREET CHARM" OF SURREALISM IN EASTERN EUROPEAN ANIMATION: WHEN REPRESSION FOSTERS CREATIVITY

Dissertação apresentada à Universidade Católica Portuguesa para obtenção do grau de mestre em Estudos de Cultura

Por

Ekaterina Smirnova

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

Maio 2015

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is Surrealism in animation films created during the Soviet period of 1956 – 1989 in Russia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. These thirty-three years of the Soviet regime were characterized by the domination of censorship, a persecution of "formalism" and control over artistic expression. However, in these dark conditions the animation industry flourished and striking political films appeared. These films told personal stories and intimate secrets in a way that was not immediately recognizable, sometimes thought of as madness or simply overlooked by the censorship for the simple reason, that animation was thought of as an art for children that could not pose any danger. This dissertation aims at recognizing political revolt and subversion in the animation industry through an analysis of the ambivalent conditions of the Soviet repression system that simultaneously curbed and led to a rise in creativity. This gives rise to the main question: “Did censorship, under these specific conditions, foster artistic creativity in animation films?”

RESUMO

O foco deste trabalho é o surrealismo nos filmes de animação criados durante o período soviético de 1956 - 1989, na União Soviética, Polónia e Tchecoslováquia. Aqueles trinta e três anos do regime Soviético são caraterizados pelo domínio forte de censura, perseguição do assim chamado "formalismo" e pelo controlo da expressão artística. No entanto, nestas condições obscuras, a indústria de animação floresceu imenso o que resultou na criação de marcantes filmes políticos. Eles contaram histórias pessoais e segredos íntimos de uma forma que estes não eram imediatamente reconhecíveis pela censura, por vezes considerados como loucura ou simplesmente ignorados, pela simples razão, de que a animação foi pensada como uma arte para as crianças e que não poderia representar qualquer perigo.

Este trabalho visa reconhecer a revolta política e subversão na indústria da animação e menciona uma análise das condições ambivalentes do sistema soviético de repressão que levou a um aumento da criatividade nesta categoria de arte, representando uma questão central: "será que a censura, nestas condições específicas, fomentou a criatividade artística nos filmes de animação?"

DEDICATION:

To the enigmatic Portuguese puppet that inspired me to start this journey here in Lisbon and that initiated my Surrealist encounters

"Um pedaço de Alma que sai por uma Cicatriz"
(transl.: "A fraction of soul that crawls out of the scar")

Author: Helena Vaz, São Lourenço Puppet Company
From the collection of the Marionette Museum of Lisbon

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INTRODUCTION

> I have always liked to move in the periphery of Art, at the crossing of genres. I have enjoyed combining elements that were seemingly distant, if not entirely foreign, blurring the borders between adjacent areas, transplanting noble qualities to "lower" genres, in other words - quiet diversion.[1]
>
> Jan Lenica, Polish animation film director.

The quotation by Polish animation film director, Jan Lenica, is crucial for this work. It contains two important messages linked with my research theme: Surrealism and subversion in animation films of Eastern European artists of the second half of the twentieth century. I chose it because it showcases how a particular artist identified himself in a challenging period. "Quiet diversion" was a method chosen by many nonconformist artists who decided not to follow the dominant doctrine of "Socialist Realism" that was imposed by the Soviet regime in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Russia amongst others. When Lenica refers to "lower genres" he may be as well referring to the fact that animation was traditionally considered as a lower art for children. Also, that was one of the reasons why so many controversial animation films managed to surpass censorship, with the censors underestimating the value and potential of this artistic form as a subversive practice. Finally, this quotation suggests the Surrealist influence on the artist. Being on the periphery, combining distant elements – these are the characteristics common to Surrealism[2] as to other currents like Postcolonialism, Pop art among others. However, what makes this quote so important with regards to Surrealism is the idea of "diversion"[3]. It will be shown further in this work that Surrealism as an artistic current has always insisted upon a total refusal to admit categories of reality, be it psychic, social or natural reality (Richardson, Fijalkowski, 2001: 61). The idea of diversion meaning refusal to admit

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[1] GORZĄDEK, Ewa (2004), *"Jan Lenica,"* , http://culture.pl/en/artist/jan-lenica, accessed 12.06.2014

[2] *Surrealism* – artistic movement that was officially inaugurated in 1924 with the publication of the *Manifesto of Surrealism* by André Breton. The movement has never been formulated clearly and until today there is no clear definition. In the words of Michel Foucault who compared Surrealists with the German Romantics: "Romantics dreamt of the night being illuminated by the day, whereas for Breton, dreams were the 'unbreakable core of the night placed at the heart of the day'" (Bate, 2003: 254). This quotation highlights a characteristic that lies in the core of the movement – the idea of the liberation of the subconscious and the power of dreams. Influenced by the psychological theories and dream studies of Sigmund Freud, Surrealism brought an unexpected and irrational to the centre of attention. The organized Surrealist movement existed only until the onset of the World War II, but Surrealism has never truly disappeared from the art sphere and continued to reappear in various fields. Among its other characteristics one can name deep symbolism and disdain for conventional norms. These are the characteristics that had been welcomed by the animation film directors that are analysed further in this work.

[3] By diversion Lenica means the notion of "sabotage" here.

and sabotage the norms is something that has always been evident in Surrealism. And in the case of the Surrealist groups of Eastern Europe and especially those who belonged to the *Platform of Prague*[4] - it is quite evident from the manifestos that the group opposed itself to the State blaming it for the "deviation of Bolshevism into a police state" (Richardson; Fijalkowski, 2001: 62).

This work aims at bringing together the different contexts of three neighboring countries that constituted the Eastern Block during the Soviet period: Russia (USSR), Czechoslovakia and Poland. Its goal is to trace Surrealist influence in the works of Eastern European animation film directors and to showcase several animation films and their relation to Surrealism. I intend to describe the reasons why Surrealism was chosen to express the artistic ideas of the age, when the dominating art doctrine was Socialist realism. As the central methodology I am using text analysis and qualitative visual analysis of a selected number of films that demonstrate the different techniques that exist inside animation – clay, puppet, cut-out and graphic animation. It is necessary to mention that the selected works do not necessarily belong to the Surrealist movement or are made by artists who proclaimed themselves Surrealist. I argue that although just a few authors proclaimed to belong to the Surrealist movement, many works created in the second half of the twentieth century contain characteristics that are common to a Surrealist work of art. That was for a good reason: directors who worked under the Soviet regime created pieces which bordered the (i)logics of the absurd and closed in on Surrealism because it had a language that provided ample possibilities for the expression of thought and more importantly for the transmission of ideas to the outer world.

The main research question is how can one justify the assumption that repression and political censorship may foster artistic creativity. The work is based on the idea that creativity can also thrive in conditions of unease, melancholy and anxiety. This dissertation challenges the existing dogma that censorship is harmful to any work of art and argues that in certain contexts, as the ones developed below, creativity can appear as a counter-force, a reply to repression, meaning that this can be a powerful impulse for an artist.

The animation industry in the Soviet era existed in unique and rather ambivalent conditions. On the one hand: freedom of expression was limited. Artists were living in the world of hegemony of realist art, where "formalism" (attention to form, rather than real

[4] *Platform of Prague* – is a Surrealist group that appeared in the 1968 to take part in a series of events organized around the exhibition *The Pleasure principle.*

depiction) could easily be persecuted. Any art piece, before entering the public sphere, had to be analyzed by the censors. As a result, many works could not be shown and were shelved. There was constant pressure from the government. However, this period between the 1950s and 1989 was a time of an unbelievable rise of creativity in the animation sphere. Experimental art existed, and its existence was part of something that might be called subversive art practices, it existed against all odds. In order to hide their beliefs, artists used a very specific vocabulary: lots of metaphors and hidden symbolism can be found in their works. Jorge Luis Borges said, “censorship is the mother of metaphor." (Wells, 2008: 84) Indeed, censorship was "responsible" for an elaborate and subtle style of Soviet animated movies. Behind a simple child story, there existed multiple layers of other meanings.

The first, and certainly controversial, argument put forth by this dissertation is that censorship was “responsible” for the development of Surrealism in animation in these three countries. Although, only a few directors proclaimed themselves to belong to the Surrealist movement, its characteristics can be found in many works. And one of the reasons for that is that Surrealism offered something that was lacking in society: freedom, albeit only in the imagination. The fundamental principle of Surrealism is liberty. And as André Breton proclaimed in his manifesto: "Among all the many misfortunes to which we are heir, it is only fair to admit that we are allowed the greatest degree of freedom of thought. It is up to us not to misuse it" (Breton, 2007: 4). Paradoxically, the Soviet regime provided "space for an oppositional system" which was "possible because censors regarded animation as something for children" (Richardson, 2006: 122).

Throughout this dissertation, I shall attempt to show how the perception of the regime differed in each country and how this perception was represented in animation. I examine the historical period and the visual potential of animation movies as subversive practices and give an attempt to answer the question if it is reasonable to speak of animation as a language of subversion. This brings up the argument formulated by Noel Carroll as “medium specificity” – the idea that medium do best what their technical possibilities enable them to do. In this case, animation is ‘prone’ to be subversive by its very mimetic and anti-mimetic drive[5].

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[5] For further information please see Noel Carroll’s *Medium Specificity Arguments and the Self-Consciously Invented Arts: Film, Video and Photography.*

Particular attention is given to the puppet theatre and animation, and a brief overview of the history of marionette theatre in Europe follows suggesting that that puppets are objects of social anxiety and the dissertation brings up the issue of the importance that the puppets had for the Surrealist movement and their relation to the Freudian notion of the *Uncanny*.

The last chapter of this project looks at the work of representative directors and aims to analyze animation films from three different national contexts: Russia, Czechoslovakia and Poland and the development of the Surrealist movement in each of them. I outline the unique conditions of each country that led to a rise of animation film. Among some evident Surrealist pieces, like *Labyrinth* by Polish director Jan Lenica or *Dimensions of dialogue* by Czech Surrealist Jan Svankmajer, the work includes films that were never considered to be examples of Surrealism, but those that, from my point of view, have nonetheless Surrealist characteristics in them and are a manifestation of an inner protest.

A recurring question of this work is: “when is an animation film Surrealist?” or rather “what animation films can be looked through the prism of Surrealism?” Answering this came to be one of the main challenges because Surrealism is a complex and evasive object of study. No clear definition or defined characteristics can be applied to Surrealism. But there are certain approaches that one can take while analysing the object. One approach that is applicable to this work is suggested by David Bate in “Photography and Surrealism” who attempts to define Surrealism with its relation to photographic images. He proposes that:

> ‘Surreal’ should be described as a type of meaning, not a type of picture. The Surreal is, semiotically speaking a signifying effect, the confusion or a contradiction in conventional signifier-signified relations in representations and where a meaning is partially hidden, where the message appears ‘enigmatic’ regardless of how (or in what technological form) it has been produced” (Bate, 2003: 22)

In a similar way as David Bate singles out two characteristics that are crucial in defining Surrealism in photography, this approach can be justified to define Surrealism in animation. First and foremost, Bate connects us with the field of Semiotics and the disruption that is created between the standard relation of the “signifier” and “signified”[6]: “The surrealists typically created disjunctions between a

[6] To apply semiotic analysis to the object of my analysis would be to look at the ways how Surrealism shows itself in the animation films while interrupting the “rational” discourse and how mimetic signs are turned into

sign’s conventional signifiers and signifieds, exploiting the reader´s desire for closure by refusing it, or at least introducing a hesitation as to the texts’ “proper” meaning” (Bate, 2003: 25). Secondly, he reintroduces the concept of the “enigma” borrowed from the psychoanalytic theory as opposed to the “riddle” that Bate links with Jean Laplanche:

> “An enigma like a riddle is proposed to the subject by another subject. But the solution of a riddle in theory is completely in the conscious possession of the one who poses it, and thus it is entirely resolved by the answer. An enigma, on the contrary, can only be proposed by someone who does not master the answer, because his message is a compromise-formation in which his unconscious takes part” (Laplanche, 1999: 254).

What Bate derives from this definition is that “the author of the enigmatic message is not fully aware of the signification involved in the message they have sent” (Bate, 2003: 25). The “unconscious” comes in play – the uncontrolled subtext that can be inserted into the message of the image unintentionally. This brings closer the Freudian notion of *Unheimlich* or *Uncanny* that is explained further in this work. The message of a Surrealist work of art is not absolutely clear, it becomes opaque and enigmatic and no longer purely “mimetic”. The effect of enigma is attained through various techniques. For instance, through the use of collage and juxtaposition of various elements taken from different fields – this was a common principle used by Man Ray – as in the case of *Le Violon d´Ingres.* And similarly, the collage principle was used by animation film director, Jan Lenica, whose work is included to the analysis in the last chapter of this dissertation. Lenica combines distinct images taken from the newspaper cut outs, books or posters and rearranges them to create perplexing results in films that explore the questions of liberty and position of man in a totalitarian state. In this dissertation Surrealism is considered as a mode of “treating signs, rather than any particular type of sign” (Bate, 2003: 29) and thus I will be speaking not about Surrealist animation, but about animation as a particular means of expression that is close to Surrealism – means of expression of reality with the core principle of “messing up the signs” (Bate, 2003: 29).

Another characteristic of Surrealism that should be mentioned here with regards to the animation is the fusion of dream and life and the breaching of the distinctions that leads to the appearance of the “marvellous” – the Surrealist concept of beauty that goes beyond

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enigmatic and surreal ones. By “mimetic” we mean the illustrative representation of reality, reproduction of the referent as it appears in real life.

the standard notions. For Surrealists beauty is always "convulsive" revealing the contradictions repressed in the social: "The marvellous is the eruption of contradiction within the real" (Aragon, 1980: 217). The notion of marvellous is particularly evident, as it will be shown further in this dissertation, in the works of Czech animation film director Jan Švankmajer. And last but not least, a characteristic that distinguishes Surrealism and is particularly important for this work is its rebellious drive to disrupt the norms with the use of sexual references, irreverent sense of humour, morbid jokes and the presence of the absurd. Something that was particularly evident in the works of Luis Buñuel who found an antagonist in the bourgeoisie[7], whose hypocrisy enraged him: "In a world as badly made as ours, there is only one road – rebellion."[8] For the Eastern European animators antagonist force was found in the Communist state and their rebellion was aimed at the totalitarian government.

All the above mentioned characteristics will be analyzed in the last chapter of the dissertation. The analysis takes off in Czechoslovakia, where the Surrealist movement had strong grounds. Czech director Jan Švankmajer was one of the few, who openly proclaimed to belong to the Surrealist movement. His work *Dimensions of Dialogue* is an example of pure Surrealism. In the same chapter, I am defining the main characteristics of Surrealist animated movies and their connection to the experimental animation school. With that, an attempt to define the Surrealist vocabulary is given. The author works with the notion of "objects out of their usual context" - a principle invented by Surrealists and then used in many animated films. The concept of the revolt of the objects against the routine is widely used by animators all over the world and the case study shows that the Surrealist encounter of the "sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table" depicted by Comte de Lautréaumont is not surprising and is actually possible in animation.

I will attempt to look at the subject of this work through the prism of Culture Studies – a discipline that unites several fields allowing to have a more critical understanding of the problem. Culture studies will enable me to look at my research questions from the point of view of "interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that operates in the tension between its tendencies to embrace both a broad,

[7] Bourgeoisie particularly interested Buñuel because for him the good manners were the repression of the desire.

[8] RUSSEL, Dominique (2005), « Luis Buñuel », http://sensesofcinema.com/2005/great-directors/bunuel/#2, retrieved on 11 May 2015

anthropological and a more narrowly humanistic conception of culture" (Grossberg, Nelson, Treichler, 1992: 4). This is the characteristic given to Culture studies by Lawrence Grossberg when he formulates that this field of studies "remains a diverse and often contentious enterprise, encompassing different positions and trajectories in specific contexts, addressing many questions, drawing nourishment from multiple roots, and shaping itself within different institutions and locations" (Grossberg et al., 1992: 2). Grossberg concludes that Culture studies discipline is prone to remain "open to unexpected, unimagined, even uninvited possibilities" that no one can control (Grossberg et al., 1992: 2). This leads to several consequences. First of all, it means that Culture studies' methodology is ambiguous and multifaceted from its very beginning. Using it as a paradigm, permits to have a varied and provocative approach. Secondly, the methodology itself can be characterized, in the words of Grossberg, as a sort of "bricolage" (Ibid). I find the above mentioned characteristics especially relevant for studying Surrealism which, as I comment above, is evasive and enigmatic by its own nature and in need of a variety of approaches. However, to fall into complete relativism would be wrong. As open as the concept of Culture studies may seem, boundaries can be marked because, as Tony Bennett remarks, any analysis in the field of Culture studies is first of all an analysis of the relations of power and ones place within them because it can be defined as: "a term of convenience for a fairly dispersed array of theoretical and political positions which, however widely divergent they might be in other respects, share a commitment to examining cultural practices from the point of view of their intrication with, and within, relations of power" (Grossberg et al., 1992: 23). What makes this specifically important for my work is the provocative and up to the point definition of *power* that Culture studies paradigm offers: "rather than understanding power as an external intervention into the process of culture, the British school of Cultural studies argues that power is a struggle within and over meaning (Grossberg, 1997: 142). And Grossberg continues:

> "Power is real and operates at every level of our lives, located in the limited production and unequal distribution of capital, money, meanings, identities, desires, emotions and so forth. It shapes relations; structures differences; draws boundaries […] organizes the multiplicity of concrete practices and effects into identities, unities, hierarchies, and apparent necessities (which ideologies seek to predefine, by closure and naturalization, retroactively. […] A practice may have multiple and even contradictory effects not only within a single (e.g. ideological) register, but across a range of different registers as well. Thus a particular articulation can be both empowering and disempowering" (Grossberg, 1997: 231)

This is particularly important for my work where I am analyzing the effects of power institutions like censorship over the individuals. The argument that I would like to bring through is that censorship fostered creativity in the animation sphere - in a way, it empowered the artists and led to the appearance of alternative artistic discourses that opposed the official Soviet ideology.

Cinematic production will be analyzed as a cultural practice, meaning a signifying practice. Analysis of the meanings inscribed in the text of animation films will be looked at through the prism of Stuart´s Hall affirmation that text is never isolatable, that it is "always caught in the network of the chains of signification which over-print it, inscribing it into the currency of our discourses" (Hall, 1984: 2). The goal of my analysis will be eventually to contribute to the understanding of the problematics of artistic freedom: The issue of the relationship between art and politics will be taken into account - an important subject that had been developed by many scholars whose theories are major references for Culture Studies: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and Michel Foucault among others. I shall look at a particular example of a marginal group of artists who were able make a difference inside the hegemonic state and establish their own creative discourse within a panoptic society with constant surveillance.

STATE OF THE ART

This research includes works from various areas and is thus multidisciplinary, but it also brings together different theoretical approaches. It is framed by the larger issue of censorship and creativity, a theme too large for this study to bridge. Nonetheless, animation will be analyzed in the limited and already defined historical context from an interdisciplinary point of view and links will be drawn with cinema studies, aesthetics, cultural studies, social sciences, psychoanalysis and even the neurosciences. The theoretical basis of the research is constructed around the work of Sigmund Freud *The interpretation of dreams* and its relation to Surrealist manifestos by André Breton, Max Ernst among others. *The interpretation of dreams* is a fundamental book which influenced the development of Surrealism and which introduced the idea that the dream state could be more important than the reality. The Surrealists were influenced by Freudian notions and proclaimed:

> Every ‘normal’ person, and not just the artist, possesses an inexhaustible store of buried images within the unconscious. All that is required is courage and a liberating method (like écriture automatic), a voyage of discovery into the unconscious that will unearth found objects. [9]

We thus come to the question of representation of these buried images. Arguably, animation was one of the most convenient and accessible means of making these individual images visible to the public in times when any image production was restricted controlled and censored. Animation got closest to the state of uncontrolled and uninhibited dream. Gilles Deleuze argues that the brain is the screen referring to the juxtaposition of the material and mental (or perceptual) facts. Continuing this subject we come to the simple and obvious idea that the mind is an apparatus of cinematic production – an idea that was developed by neurobiologist António Damásio, drawing from the neurosciences and continuing Delueze´s concept:

> Movies are the closest external representation of the prevailing storytelling that goes on in our minds. What goes on within each shot, the different framing of a subject that the movement of the camera can accomplish, what goes in the transition of shots achieved by editing, and what goes on in the narrative constructed by a particular juxtaposition of shots is comparable, in some respects to what is going on in the mind, thanks to the machinery in charge of making visual and auditory images, and to devices such as the many levels of attention and working memory (Damasio, 2000: 188).

Damásio concludes that the greatest and oldest film studio is the human brain. In the case of Soviet film production the oppressive external conditions did not lead to the extinction of liberal thoughts, but on the contrary fueled dreams and artistic imagination and this imagination found its way out of the “oldest film studio” through animation. Thus, individual dream experiences became visible and were projected outside the human brain. If one is to consider animation as not a genre, but a technique, it becomes apparent that it has a lot in common with Surrealism in terms of the goals that both Surrealists and animators pursue. Sebastien Denis explains this in the following way: “Para além de ser uma técnica que permite à pintura animar-se para ganhar vida e extravasar o espaço da galeria, ou até ultrapassar a própria pintura, a animação foi também utilizada nas vanguardas com o objectivo de perverter o real” (Denis, 2010: 65)[10]. In other words, animation made it possible to escape reality – both for the film directors that used it as

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[9] ERNST, Max (2002), “What is surrealism”, Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, *Art in theory, an anthology of changing ideas*, UK: Blackwell publishing

[10] transl.: *Animation is not only a technical device that was used to bring life into a static painting, but it was also used from the beginning with an objective to pervert (transform) the reality.*

means of smuggling meanings and oppositional thoughts into their films and for the spectators who were able to leave the everyday reality and plunge into a dream state while watching the films. In the case of Eastern Europe, the dream was one of the only “spaces”, where critical thinking was allowed, and animation became a means of making individual dream experiences available for the public.

Secondly, it is necessary to explore the relation between power and art, creativity and subversion. For this reason, I resort to Michel Foucault’s *Il faut défendre la societé* and *Discipline and Punish* together with the works of Mary Deveraux *Protected space: politics, censorship and the arts* and Jacques Ranciere’s *Emancipated spectator*. Foucault’s work is essential for this study. I draw a link with the chapter dedicated to discipline and correct training in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault´s notion of “the examination” is taken into account as it has a direct relation with the institution of censorship. Foucault speaks of a ritualized mechanism of discipline that makes it possible to survey, classify, judge and eventually punish the objects of surveillance. It is thus that those perceived as objects are subjected, i.e. subdued, and subjects of power are in turn objectified:

> The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance. (Foucault, 1995: 184)

When analyzing censorship one has to look at it as a ritualized disciplinary mechanism: the goal of the censorship committee is to suppress any deviant behavior – all that does not abide by the established norm of Socialist Realism was subject to correction through the cutting out of scenes, suggesting new scenarios or prevention from distribution. Before any film can be shown it has to be “diagnosed” by the members of the committee. Directors are subjects to observations on various levels of film production – starting from approval of a scenario and ending with the final focus group pre-screening[11].

[11] To strengthen the argument it is necessary to present the formal and contextual data, however the archives containing the information and necessary documentation are not public and the data was collected for this

Foucault theory establishes a basis for understanding power relations and this is the basis that will be taken into consideration in this work. Foucault states that the body can be subject to power relations in various ways – through direct violence against the body or through other forms of control that take on organized and calculated character. When describing the ways in which the body can be studied Foucault states, "The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Foucault, 1995: 25).

Foucault's analysis focuses on the shift from the public executions or "spectacle of the scaffold" to the birth of the prison. This can be directly applied to the Soviet States: there was no public execution, everything happened "behind the curtain" – terror was not seen. During the Stalin era many went to sleep without undressing in the fear that at night they would be paid a visit, taken to interrogation and executed the same night. People could suddenly disappear and be sent to labour camps or murdered. The fear of being punished prevailed in the second half of the twentieth century and anticipation of punishment that was in fact less punitive with the death of Stalin continued to work independently exercising its power over individuals. Anne Applebaum in *Gulag* describes the system of executions and detentions and explains how the repressive apparatus flourished under Stalin´s regime that used the system to get rid of his enemies and to create a new class of obedient leaders, to terrorize soviet population and to fill in concentration camps. Applebaum writes how Stalin signed orders that were sent to the regional NKVD[12] with lists and quotas of people in each region of the USSR to be arrested. Regional NKVD in turn had to accomplish the plan by arresting the exact number of people and condemning them either to the "first category" punishment – death – or "second category" – imprisonment in labour concentration camps for a period from eight to ten years. Some of the academics, as Applebaum writes, mention that NKVD and Stalin attributed the highest numbers of people to be detained randomly according to the perception of the region that had the most of "public enemies" (Applebaum, 2003: 131). These purges were

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dissertation from the articles by Georgy Borodin who interviewed the animation film directors in Russia and was able to gather an extensive database from his interviews and letters from personal archives to which he gained access. For further reference please see BORODIN, Georgy (n.d.). "V borbe za malenkie mysli. Neadekvatnost censury", *Animaciya Podnevolnaya,* Retrieved September 28, 2014 from http://www.kinozapiski.ru/ru/article/sendvalues/431

[12] NKVD (*Narodny komissariat vnutrennikh del*) – secret police and law enforcement agency in the USSR, direct instrument of Joseph Stalin used against the enemies of the Party.

accepted by the people in the soviet apparatus prepared to do anything to climb the hierarchic ladder and quite often provincial subordinates willingly accomplished the plan and surpassed the targets. Often letters asking to add some more "public enemies" to the quota list were sent to which Stalin would reply: "I have increased the number of prisoners of the First Category in the region of Krasnoyarsk up to 6600 people" (Applebaum, 2003: 132). This irrational and bureaucratic system of the Stalin era provoked constant fear in the society that prevailed throughout the century. The feelings of anxiety and fear prevailed among the people and were part of everyday life. What characterized the system was that violence was not seen – there was no information about the labour camps and penalties. The prison existed elsewhere but its presence was maintained by the police state. In the second half of the twentieth century with the death of Stalin and the coming of *Thaw* many were able to return from the labour camps and with that the notion of prison was brought closer. Publication of Solzhenitsyn´s book *One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich* also contributed to this.

Thirdly, this is a dissertation about Cinema and Animation studies. A thorough review of Surrealism in relation to cinema is given in the book by Michael Richardson *Surrealism and cinema*. The book was published in 2006 and till this moment it is one of the most complete works dealing with the topic, explaining the origins of Surrealism in cinema. However, the book does not go into a detailed analysis of animation. It has two convincing chapters about two directors: Jan Svankmajer and Walerian Borowczyk. However, it lacks a description of the conditions that led to the appearance of Surrealism in the Soviet context. Another insightful work that partly compensates this is *Surrealism against the current* edited by Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski. It is an assembly of rare documents and manifestos from Eastern Europe that explore the relation between Communism and Surrealism. However, an insightful view of Surrealist characteristics in Russian animation is lacking. Dina Iordanova explains the dimensions and the ambivalent logic of communist censorship in *Cinema of other Europe*. Also, the political dimension of artistic life is present in *Politics, Art and Commitment in the East European Cinema* by David W. Paul, who explores the life of a famous Czech puppeteer Jiri Trnka:

> One of his most important accomplishments was to bring modernist art forms into film when 'formalism' was officially frowned upon in his country. Drawing from Surrealism and the Second World War theatre of Jiri Voscovec and Jan Werich, Trnka

> showed the way to cinematic innovation in the midst of the Stalin era (Paul, 1983: 254).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What the next chapters will try to test by looking at specific cases in point is a set of hypotheses, listed below:

I. Art may require the existence of an antagonistic force. This can motivate a creative impulse and can become a driving factor and a fuel to the creative impulse.

II. Negative mood is not necessarily a limitation of creativity. A feeling of uneasiness can be as much motivating as the feeling of sheer happiness. And this is a reminiscent motif in many works of Soviet artists. It is, in fact, symptomatic and was formulated by many. One of the best quotes that demonstrate this was taken from the book *Moscow to the end of the line* by Venedikt Yerofeyev. This book following a train journey of an alcoholic was, of course, banned from publishing but was nonetheless distributed in Samizdat. It includes a phrase that quite strongly demonstrates the feelings of the epoch: “Everything should take place slowly and incorrectly so that man doesn't get a chance to start feeling proud, so that man is sad and perplexed." (Yerofeyev, 1994: 14)

III. Absolute freedom is not a necessary condition for artistic freedom and censorship should not be regarded in a simplistic way. In conditions of restraints and lack of freedom, seeking a way out comes almost effortlessly. The described period of thirty three years taken into consideration in this work is a proof to that.

Finally, we come to the subject of censorship and finally its definition. Art’s debate with censorship is old and until today the predominant view of this phenomenon is that it is inhibiting of the artist’s creativity and damages the artist. The claim for artistic autonomy has always been made, most particularly by Romanticism, when all that restrained the imagination of the artist was severely criticized. However, the phenomenon of censorship should not be looked at in a limited way. There are different kinds of censorship: self-

censorship, aesthetic censorship[13] and political censorship that can manifest itself in preventive or punitive measures. This dissertation looks mainly at the impact of political censorship and of the system behind it. What interests me here is its manifestation in the second half of the twentieth century and the novelty of this dissertation is to claim that in a way political censorship fostered creativity. Censorship here in this work is looked as supervision, control of the information and ideas that are circulated among the people, within a society and the punitive and restrictive actions it upholds.

[13] For further understanding of the notion of aesthetic censorship please refer to SHUSTERMAN, Richard (1984), "Aesthetic Censorship: Censoring Art for Art's Sake", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 43 (2): 171-180

DESCRIPTION OF THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY IN EASTERN EUROPE

1.1 JUSTIFICATION OF THE CHOSEN PERIOD AND ANALYSIS OF THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY: THAWS AND FROSTS IN THE "ETERNAL" WINTER OF THE SOVIET UNION.

The dissertation focuses on a period of three decades between 1956 and 1989. It is important to understand that any generalizations are not favorable and it is advisable to look at these thirty-three years as a period marked by various historical events that influenced the metropolis (Russia) and its satellite countries where the Soviet regime was imposed in different ways. It would be wrong to address this time in a reductionist manner and look at it as a homogeneous period of Soviet oppression where censorship was controlling every stage of life. It was much more complex than that – a period of both vigorous control and unprecedented artistic freedom for the reasons that are described below.

It is not by chance that 1956 is taken as a starting year. Three years after Stalin's death his successor Nikita Khrushchev on an official gathering of the 20th Party Congress denounced Stalin in his speech "On the Personality Cult and its Consequences." Khrushchev addressed the terrible consequences that occurred as the result of Stalin's personality cult and for the first time addressed the topic of the repressions that are now known as Great Purges. These repressions killed millions and traumatized people in the Soviet Union. This statement starts the period also called the Khrushchev Thaw – a period of liberalization of the minds. For the first time after the Stalinist repressive epoch, the borders were lifted, and society started undergoing social and cultural transformations. Several international events were held in Moscow. One was the World Festival of Youth and Students that according to official information opened its doors to 34,000 people from 130 countries (Taubman, 2004: 91). The International Tchaikovsky competition was held in Moscow for the first time and to make this event even more politicized Khrushchev approved giving the first prize to Van Cliburn, an American pianist. Foreign films, music and books could once again published. What is more important previously banned Russian writers and composers like Dmitry Shostakovich, Mikhail Zoshchenko and Anna

Akhmatova, among others, were brought back to the public. This happened in the metropolis or the core of Soviet Union – Russia. Meanwhile in the neighboring Hungary and Poland this year was marked by two revolts in the autumn of 1956. The Soviet regime heavily suppressed both the revolt of the Poznan workers in Poland and the public uprising in Budapest. This led to a general pessimism in the Polish and Hungarian societies. Twelve years later similar events occurred in Czechoslovakia where with the coming of a liberally minded Alexander Dubček to power a series of reforms were made in an attempt to democratize the country. This time, it was called "Prague Spring" and the movement aimed to bring about the liberalization of the press, the decentralization of the economy and more importantly – less vigorous control over artistic expression and the given right of the people to criticize the government and express criticism – something that had never been allowed. Dubcek never intended to overthrow the Communist regime, he still favored the Czech Communist Party and was not against its predominant position, but he made an attempt to reduce the totalitarian aspects of the party. That did not go according to the plans of Soviet leaders who saw an obvious danger in this liberalization of minds and the spring ended with a military invasion.

The Prague spring planted a seed of change in Czech society. As a result, a Czech dissident movement was born. One of the most prominent figures in this movement was Vaclav Havel. In 1979, he described the process of becoming a dissident as something that could not be controlled: "We never decided to become dissidents. We have been transformed into them, without quite knowing how; sometimes we have ended up in prison without precisely knowing how" and he goes on to mention, "we simply went ahead and did certain things that we felt we ought to do, and that seemed to us decent to do, nothing more nor less." (Keane, 2000: 264). This is quite an interesting and symptomatic comment from a person who was the head of the dissident movement. We have here an interesting relation between authority and dissidents – objects to which power was applied. In his analysis of power Michel Foucault comments "power is exercised through networks" and that "power passes through individuals, it is not applied to them" (Foucault, 2004: 29). In this particular case Foucault's concepts can be applied: power transformed Havel and his fellow allies and made them into dissidents who in their own unique way were able to start transformative changes in the Czech society – thus after being struck by power in the words of Foucault , they appropriated power: "The individual is in fact a power effect, and

at the same time, and to the extent that he is a power effect, the individual is a relay: power passes through the individual it has constituted" (Foucault, 2004: 30).

If one were to characterize the society of the three mentioned countries in the above-described period, the first thing to comment would be the exceptionally high degree of involvement of people in the political sphere. In this period, every action or move could have a political resonance and everything "intentionally or unintentionally had a political context" (Hames, 2009: 85). When analyzing cultural artifacts, it is necessary to understand that the artistic sphere was engaged with politics on every level of production. It is quite evident that to call an art object political; does not mean it must necessarily be about politics. In the 1960s, any book or film could have a political resonance. This was especially true for works of art that surpassed the limits of Socialist realism – official doctrine of the specified period. Any work that bewildered the readers and went beyond the realm of realism had an explosive impact. This happened to such writers as Ionesco, who revolutionized literary circles. As Milan Kundera puts it, the "world was suffocating under art that was educational, moral, or political" (Hames, 2009: 76). Ionesco, on the other hand "returned autonomy to art and took the path of freedom and creativity" (Hames, 2009: 77). In other words, autonomous art itself took on a political function since it represented a dissent from official policy. By autonomous art I speak of art that is non-state funded and that opposes the established Socialist Realism aesthetic suggesting instead new experimental forms. Speaking of the cinema, Peter Hames in his excellent work *Czech and Slovak cinema. Theme and tradition* formulated this accurately: "The mere fact of adopting an absurdist - that is an incomprehensible and for this reason politically subversive approach was in itself a political act. It was anti-Marxist in the sense that it denied the simplified slogans and explanations promoted by communist orthodoxy" (Hames, 2009: 136). The same idea is developed by William Morritz in his paper presented at the conference in 1993 "Narrative strategies for resistance and protest in Eastern European animation". While analyzing *Home* – a film made by two Polish animators, Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczyk - he highlights three strategies that the film implements:

1. It sets up a complex non-linear structure that the viewer must decipher, which makes it hard for a censor to ban since no individual element is obviously against the rules, and the overall meaning is uncertain

2. It requires the viewer to question the norm that is a subversive fact in itself.

3. The theme of the movie is the plight of women – something that seemingly removes it from the political arena.

However as Morritz writes: "[…] the thinking viewer will recognize that the ills of the woman arise to a considerable extent from the thought control and repression of the totalitarian government" (Morritz, 1993: 39). Morritz mentions "the thinking viewer": the experimental animation provoked viewers to think, to question the norm and the state of things, to ask questions – something that was a subversive act in itself. Here a link can be made with Roland Barthes and his description of the essence of photography and its subversive power: "Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks" (Barthes, 2000: 38). It is interesting to note that Barthes gives photography an ability to speak for itself as an object – he doesn´t mention the creator behind it, but rather states that photography can think and thus is an independent object living separately from the subject who created it.

This is exactly what happened with many of the animation films that lost connection with their authors and started to circulate independently. This is especially noticeable in the case of puppet films – puppet is a powerful performative object. It can gain independence from its owner. As a metaphoric example, one can name the last work of Jiri Trnka *The Hand*. Released in 1965 it avoided censorship and was shown in cinemas. However, several years after the death of Trnka and the events of 1968 it was reviewed as inappropriate and containing hidden subversive messages dangerous for the minds of the people and became prohibited. This shall be further discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation.

The events and social conditions outlined previously help us understand better in what historical context the animation industry existed. It is interesting to note that in this troublesome period of oppression of thought and control over artistic freedom, the animation industry managed to survive and showed an unexpected rise in experimental works that existed contrary to the Socialist realism aesthetics. Animation was a shelter for

many artists willing to pursue their artistic goals. And one of the main reasons for that was that it was considered as an art form for children and thus in the minds of the censors deprived of subversive power. Animation was indeed a safe harbor overlooked by the governmental institutions.

Many authors report that with the fall of the Soviet regime, the animation industry met many problems and began its decline. This became especially evident in former satellite countries. Among many reasons for that decline experts highlight the post-1989 privatization of animation studios and subsequent withdrawal of government funding – these are widely considered as the most significant factors contributing to the decline of animated films just after the fall of the Soviet empire. Authors also include other factors that despite the fact that they may be situational, may prove relevant for distinct geographical and national contexts. Paul Coates mentions in his work *The red and the white. The cinema of people's Poland*, the Polish case, but the factors included here can also be relevant when speaking of other former Soviet states. He first speaks of a change in the general theme. With the removal of the communist regime, a common antagonist was no longer existent. And this is paramount for political animation. One of the creative impulses of the artists was to work against all odds, to be an opposing voice to the State. This was the driving factor and fuel to the creative impulse. Another reason for the decline was that with the opening of the borders, the Western animated films started invading the market. As a result, Coates says that there appeared a "fragmentation of the audience due to the importation of animated films from the West and new methods of distributing content" (Coates, 2005: 91). As a third reason, Coates names the development of another type of censorship – economic censorship that began pressuring artists and producers to ensure the financial success of the work of art. As strange as it may seem, in Soviet times artists were less dependent on the commercial success of their works. This approach is also developed by another author – Dina Iordanova – in her work *Cinema of other Europe*. Iordanova analyzes the film industry and the role that censorship played. Instead of taking the commonly shared idea that censorship prevented works of art from being made, she shares an opposite view and describes the situation in the following way: "Censorship was plagued by irony: rather than preventing films from being made, the Communist state would often commit production funds that could have easily been withheld, but then shelve a completed film" (Iordanova, 2003: 34). In other words, the animation industry received

lavish funding and was not dependent on the future success of the film: the commercial appeal of the film was disregarded. For example, in Russia artists from the famous Soyuzmultfilm studio were paid by the Academy of Film regardless of how well or how poorly their products did (though they were not, in fact, "sold"), they were free to pursue their artistic vision without giving a thought to finances. As a result, the animation industry was much more orientated towards a creation of unique art pieces, rather than mass products. Paradoxically, the Soviet regime provided “space for an oppositional system” which was “possible because censors regarded animation as something for children” (Richardson, 2006: 122).

It is important to understand that censorship was different in each of the countries that are being analyzed in this work. For instance, Hungary did not have a dedicated censorship body. Each scenario and film was to be analyzed by a specially created committee organized for each particular case. Poland had a particular body in charge of Media censorship, the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications and Public Performances. It was a powerful institution in charge of censorship and propaganda. In other countries, the studios had artistic commissions working under a close supervision of the Communist state. In Czechoslovakia a two-leveled censorship mechanism was in place: first scripts needed to be pre-approved by internal censors, a level where the rules were set out clearly and thus possible to circumvent; then the completed films were to be approved by a Party commission, a stage at which most problems occurred – people who constituted these commissions were often bureaucratic rats driven by personal motifs. All that did not prevent the system from functioning.

The Eastern European film industry was a closed system that was in a way self-sufficient and isolated from the rest of the world. Cultural and economic exchange was in the words of Iordanova “discouraged and interfered with”. Apart from this, there was a functioning system of exchange within the Eastern Block “brotherly” countries. Iordanova goes on to describe the film production and distribution system. She describes that each country had a government body in charge of film-making, a Ministry of Culture or film commissions. Film financing was fully centralized and was part of the government budget. That led to the fact that many directors were entirely unfamiliar with fundraising. There were no private film-studios – all were government owned and inside these studios there existed “units” – to a certain extent permanent teams of directors, cameramen, designers

etc. who shared common views and worked together most of the time. Each project upon completion would then be distributed by a nationally owned monopoly and would then be shown in the state-owned theatres and afterwards would be screened on national television. If the film received praise from the commission and state reviewers, it would then continue its life in neighboring countries and would get exposure in the friendly neighboring states. (Iordanova, 2003: 31-33).

The described situation was fully applicable to Russia, where a powerful Soyuzmultfilm animation studio was making wonders. According to the data[14], in the Soviet era alone it produced about 1500 films that have won various world awards. It was a State owned and State funded studio. Each year lavish funds were given to the animation industry that was considered to be important in the upbringing of the future generations. More importantly, many artists received funding no matter what results they gained. As a result, many directors could pursue their artistic goals and implement and experiment with the wildest ideas.. Experimenting was a key word – new techniques were invented in a field where dreams could be made into reality.

The animation industry was always a field of experiment. An example of the creative impulse in the field is provided by Ladislav Starevich – the first animation director famous for his work "Lukanos cerva". Created in the 1910, it told a story from the "afterlife" of insects. Starevich worked with bodies of dead insects, which he then brought to life using stop-motion techniques. In those days, the audience believed Starevich was training live insects as his works were amazingly credible. After the Revolution, Starevich had to flee the country – his subtle works were no longer needed in a country that denied the rights of magic and proclaimed realism its defining doctrine. However, his legacy stayed on.

Those who stayed, worked under pressure of the government, but animation provided them with shelter. Considered as an art form for children it was less examined by censors who did not believe children were capable of critical thinking. Consequently, many artists seeking to express their ideas turned to the animation industry. This led to an unexpected result: many films that had a seemingly simple and "childish" narrative were absolutely adult in their content. Beneath the simple narrative lay profound meaning.

[14] Number of films retrieved from the data list "Russian animation in facts and figures" at http://animator.ru/db/?ver=eng&p=show_studia&sid=16&sp=2. Consulted on September 25, 2014.

Censorship was truly a mother of metaphor, in the words of Jorge Luis Borges. (Wells, 2008: 84)

Artists were smugglers – they were "smuggling meaning into a creative text that would otherwise be prohibited by the law" (Wells, 1998: 31). All that could have made animation a serious platform for political subversion, if only the artists could unite in an underground experimental group. Further on, we will show that although no resistance was actually overt, animation became a powerful language of subversion. A subversion that became possible through the usage of Surrealist aesthetics. Openly or just using several traits of the style, Surrealism gave the necessary impulse for artistic creativity. There was an apparent increase in creativity in this specific sphere, fuelled by the desire to oppose the established order, to oppose censorship. Artists were looking to find ways to trick the censors into accepting subversive creations. This is why we would argue that censorship should not be considered only as an oppressive force that limits artistic creativity. In this work, it will also be regarded as a force that fostered a rise in creativity and provoked a creative impulse by denying the hegemonic order.

1.2 SOCIALIST REALISM MANIFESTING ITS AMBIVALENCE: SOCIALIST REALISM VS SURREALISM

One of the questions that will be addressed in this subchapter is how in the age of Socialist Realism and communist ideology was it possible to create experimental and Surrealist art. It is surprising that in the age of strict censorship and control from the government artists were still able to pursue their artistic visions. This is why we would look at the Socialist Realism aesthetics that were imposed in the cultural contexts of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia – countries where this style did not develop naturally, but was rather imposed over other styles and cultural traditions.

Socialist Realism, in a nutshell, can be characterized as a style aimed at glorifying the lives of the poor, working class and the communist ideology. It should not be confused with the movement of Social Realism whose objective was to turn to the subject of social concern. Socialist Realism originated in Soviet Russia and became a state policy as early as in 1934 when a close person to the Stalin´s circles, Andrey Zhdanov, gave a speech to the First Congress of Soviet writers. The goal of this speech was to promote Soviet culture and to establish official policy for art. For the first time national enemies were named

among artists on the official level. Art containing religious, erotic, abstract or Surrealist characteristics was publicly banned. Formal experiments, including internal dialogue, stream of consciousness, nonsense, free-form association, and cut-up were also disallowed. This was either because they were "decadent", unintelligible to the proletariat or went against revolutionary ideology. Soviet state named four defining features of the style:

1. Art should depict typical scenes of everyday life of the people;
2. Art should be realistic in the representational sense;
3. Art is supposed to be partisan and support the State and the Party;
4. Art should be proletarian; it is meant to depict the life of the working class and be readily perceived by this very same working class.

In addition, in terms of narrative – any piece of art had to have clearly defined villains and heroes – there was no place for ambivalence – a feature that was commonly used in film industries like Hollywood. A profound analysis of this art style was given by Lev Manovich, who defined it in the following way:

> Socialist realism wanted to show the future in the present by projecting the perfect world of future socialist society onto a visual reality familiar to the viewer – the streets, interiors and faces of Russia in the middle of the twentieth century – tired and underfed, scared and exhausted from fear, unkempt and gray. Socialist realism had to retain enough of then-everyday reality while showing how reality would look in the future when everybody´s body would be healthy and muscular, every street modern, every face transformed by the spirituality of communist ideology. This is how socialist realism differs from pure science fiction, which does not have to carry any feature of today´s reality into the future. In contrast, socialist realism had to superimpose the future on the present, projecting the communist ideal onto the very different reality familiar to viewers (Manovich, 2001: 203).

So was the movement that realistic? It is quite evident that in a way it was not a realist movement. Many authors deny it the right to be named Realist art and state that in its “varnishing of reality” it was closer to utopian art and romanticism. Other authors mention that Socialist Realism was never defined in a way like other movements, and that gave way to ambiguous interpretations. Leonid Heller suggests, “there was simply no standard or authoritative text on Party aesthetics and culture” (Heller, 1997: 53). An attempt was made to define it once and for all by Trotsky and Lunacharsky before the war. However, these authors went out of Party favor, and their works were removed from sale.

What happened then was that many Party leaders took on the role of explaining the essence of Socialist Realism according to their vision and their pragmatic goals. Their sayings were open to various manifestations. Heller recalls some of them: “We must love our motherland along with all the new that is taking root now in the Soviet Union, and display it, the motherland, in all its beauty ... in a bright, artistically attractive way” (Heller, 1997:54). That was how M. I. Kalinin, the nominal head of state of the Soviet Russia and close to Stalin, described the goal of art in Soviet Russia. In the same report Kalinin would then, however, on the next page go on to say: “Socialist realism should depict reality, the living reality, the unadorned” and then “But it should also use its works to advance the development of human thought” (Heller, 1997:59). No explanations followed telling how exactly to follow the rules and how to depict the beauty without adorning the grim reality of pre and post war era. As Heller explains: “The contradictoriness is telling: theoretical discourse was less directed by its own logic than by strategic considerations” (Heller, 1997: 59). So a clear paradox existed: with all the attempts of the party to regulate and dictate the rules of behavior, the limits of art were not clearly defined. That brought two outcomes: first and foremost, the prosecution of artists could happen on any grounds – without clear definitions, it was easy to condemn any object of art. At the same time, there existed the possibility to “smuggle meanings” – and this is what precisely happened in the animation sphere.

In this subchapter, I shall address the historical predisposition for Surrealism that existed in the three described countries, and look at the relation that this movement had with Communist ideology. It is quite evident that at first Surrealist forefathers were enchanted with Communism, and it seemed that they found in Communism what the movement needed – the desire to break free from bourgeois society.

Surrealism was from the beginning a movement grounded on an uncommon kind of poetic language. It seemed from the first manifestos that it was an experiment to blend “politics with ethics and philosophy” (Spiteri, LaCoss, 2003:19). Surrealists believed that a true work of art could be born from a method of thought liberation - “écriture automatique”. And they found the ideas of Communist ideology at first tremendously appealing: a new order that could be established through the liberation of people, equality and fraternity. That idea captivated them and together with their ideologue Breton they were impressed by communist ideology.

Breton was sure that political context was necessary for the development of the movement and as Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss write in “Surrealism, Politics and Culture” he saw the following future for the movement: “the logical solution laid in adherence to the communist party” (Spiteri, LaCoss, 2003: 34). This idea appeared when he read Trotsky´s biography of Lenin. During this period, Surrealism was welcomed in Eastern Europe. At the beginning of the 30s, the Surrealist movement was found in Czechoslovakia. In addition, the Czech newspaper *Communist Daily* praised the coming of Breton and Eluard on the occasion of the International Surrealist exhibition in 1935: “the two greatest poets of the modern-day France” (Spiteri, LaCoss, 2003: 34).

However, Breton liked the Marxist ideas and the ideas of equality of man, but he was not supportive of the part where Communism presupposed him “surrendering its autonomy to the outside authority” (Spiteri, LaCoss, 2003: 24). That contrasted with the ideas about the liberation of the mind. Other members were not enthusiastic about this. Luis Aragon in his letter to the French magazine Clarté wrote:

> If you find me antagonistic to the political spirit (…) it is because, as you cannot fail to see, I have always valued and continue to value the spirit of revolt far more highly than any politics (…). As for the Russian Revolution, you'll forgive me for shrugging my shoulders. Measured by the yardstick of ideas, it is nothing more than a trivial ministerial crisis. (Spiteri, LaCross, 2003:27)

The game of love with politics came to its logical end. However, a new page opened in 1960-1970 in Eastern European countries with the development of the Surrealist movement in animation movies. A movement that in the beginning regarded itself close to Communism was now seen in a wholly new way: as a means of personal liberation from the regime. Surrealism was now used by the artists to express an opinion and ideas, that if said openly would be immediately persecuted. Surrealism provided the artists with another type of myth rather than Communism and it is quite evident that Communism with all its attempts to promote Realism and attention to social class was in fact a political myth – with the sacralization of its leaders.

1.3 CENSORSHIP AND CREATIVITY

A common stereotype is that creativity and art can only exist in a positive atmosphere. However, the history of animation in Eastern Europe proves this wrong. So that only reinforces the fact, that the nature of creativity is still a mystery. It is yet unknown what environment is the most beneficial for creative input. In the case of Soviet censorship, it is evident that the system was often deprived of any logic and rationalism especially when we speak of the second half of the twentieth century – a period that was characterized as the Stagnation period of the Soviet empire[15]. Censorship was supposed to look after the ideological and moral content of the works, to make sure that the Socialist realism aesthetics were respected. However, what happened, in fact, was that decisions taken by the censors were dependent on subjective and sometimes career driven motivations of the editorial boards. The main characteristic of Soviet censorship was its inconsistency and unpredictability". As Borodin explains, in many cases it was quite impossible to predict the reaction of the censors. This is quite evident if one starts looking at the official censorship documents and memoirs of the artists. The amount of absurd and inexplicably stupid reactions was huge. Censorship often depended on subjective factors like mood of the censor committee, health issues of the main censor and even on external conditions, like what works were approved on the same day. Borodin explains that the censors were often outsmarted by the artists, and he quotes a famous animation director Khrzhanovsky: "They had an excellent sixth sense, but lacked the first five"[16]. This ironic comment demonstrates the attitude of the artists towards the censors. One of the main comments used to ban the work in cases when the censors could not formulate clearly their decision to ban the work was "uncontrollable subtext" (Rus: "неконтролируемый контекст"). Borodin says that in many cases censors could feel that something was wrong in the presented films, but could not read exactly what symbol or metaphor was hiding a controversial subtext, that led to their often irrational and absurd actions and often they missed the anti-Soviet context in the first place. One of the films that surprisingly passed

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[15] The informal term "Soviet Empire" is used by critics of the Soviet Union to describe the imperialist foreign policy that Russia implemented during the Cold War. Although the countries that were part of the Soviet Union were officially independent and had separate governments, their policies were strictly regulated and dictated by the Soviet Union. These countries were often called as "satellites".

[16] BORODIN, Georgiy (2005), "V borbe za malenkie mysli. Neadekvatnost censury", http://www.kinozapiski.ru/ru/article/sendvalues/431/, retrieved on September 30, 2015.

unnoticed by the censors was the film of Khrzhanovsky himself *Podi tuda – ne znau kuda (Eng. transl: Go there where I do not know where)* where the main character is a Tsar who is voiced by the great actor Georgy Vitsin. Vitsin fools around and gives orders in the exact intonation that was used by Josef Stalin – which does not go unnoticed by the majority of viewers who are familiar with the rhetoric.

This proves Iordanova's comment that censorship was plagued by irony. It was possible in the second half of the twentieth century with the death of Stalin and the speech made by Khrushiov to which the author refers before. With the coming of the Khrushiov *Thaw* satire was again brought back to the society, and it stayed there until the fall of the Soviet system. Although censorship continued to prevent, modify and shelve films it could not wholly prevent the authors from issuing and distributing their work at their own risk. Thus, the phenomenon of Samizdat – illegal distribution and copying existed. Censorship as the Soviet system was plagued and entered a period of stagnation and decline. In this atmosphere of decay and imminent fall of the Soviet system artists could survive and play with the rules of the game, and even though it brought upon them severe results (KGB visits were an often threat) art flourished against all odds. It brings up the idea that Richard Shusterman included in his work *Aesthetic Censorship: Censoring Art for Art's sake*: "Limiting rules, forms and conventions help promote great art even when such art sometimes consists in stretching them, wavering from them or even dramatically violating them" (Shusterman, 1984: 4).

SURREALISM IN ANIMATION: LANGUAGE OF SUBVERSION OR ESCAPISM?

2.1. THE DEFIANT CHARM OF THE UNDEFINED TERM OR THE ELUSIVENESS OF SURREALISM

> In my view, what is essential to Surrealism is a sort of rage. Against the existing state of things. A rage against life as it is[17]
>
> Georges Bataille

Many attempts have been made to define Surrealism and until today there is no clear definition of what it is exactly – artistic style or collective ideological movement. Plenty of subjective definitions exist and at the same time the word “surreal” has apparently entered into everyday life and is used freely to describe anything that seems bizarre or not obeying the rules of logic. However, when an object is being described as surreal it does not necessarily mean that it has to do with the Surrealist movement. No clear consensus exists today, and the majority of authors proclaim Surrealism to be beyond definition. The first person to try and define it was André Breton himself in his Surrealist manifesto published in 1924. It was heavily influenced by the Freudian analysis, to which André Breton was introduced while serving in a medical regiment in the First World War. The First Manifesto is considered to be the founding document where Breton establishes the basic vocabulary of Surrealism– “freedom”, “liberation of thought”, “reassertion of the right of imagination” – these are the main directions that Surrealism has to follow. Breton assumes that mankind suffers in the world of logic and rationalism and he suggests a way out through surrealism: “Among all the many misfortunes to which we are heir, it is only fair to admit that we are allowed the greatest degree of freedom of thought. It is up to us not to misuse it”. He goes on to voice the importance of dreams and Sigmund Freud and poses a central to Surrealism question: “Can’t the dream also be used in solving the fundamental questions of life?” Thus, the dream enters the realm of Surrealism as the possible source of inspiration and more importantly as a source for acknowledgement of fundamental

[17] This quote appears in the Interview of Georges Bataille with Madeleine Chapsal published for the first time in 1984 and then republished in RICHARDSON, Michael (1998), *Georges Bataille: Essential writings*, London: Sage publications, pp.220 -224

questions[18]. Breton was an authoritative figure. He attempted to become the leader of the movement that proclaimed freedom as an ultimate goal and his authoritarian actions were not always accepted by the other members of the movement. Traces of his authoritarian attitude are already evident in the First Manifesto. He wished to define Surrealism "once and for all" in his own words – the definitive mood of the speech is evident. Also, that was how Breton defined the movement:

> SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express — verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner — the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern, (Breton, 2007: 26)

Here Breton defines one of the leading methods used by the Surrealists – "psychic automatism". It was also called "écriture automatique" – "automatic writing" - method that was introduced by Freud at psychoanalytic sessions when his patients were allowed the liberty of free associations. This could be applied to any form of art – literature, painting, cinema, etc. It was a means of expressing the subconscious. The idea was to let the mind move randomly from association to association: in automatic drawing, for instance, the hand was allowed to move randomly across the paper. Attention was given to chance and accident. Such drawing was free from the rational control. In literature or cinema artists allowed their mind to skip between associations and to assemble distantly related or unrelated objects in a strange collage. Method of automatic writing is particularly important for this work, as further on the author would argue that animation was an ideal means of expression of this Surrealist principle. Clay that was widely used in animated films permitted to play with objects and forms – in the professional hands of acclaimed directors could become a powerful device for realization of the wildest dreams. In a way, animation permitted unlimited visual freedom and could thus be considered as an ideal method of transferring Surrealist ideas.

It is interesting to note that although Breton wanted to give a definite explanation to the term he later understood that it was not possible. He made an attempt to rewrite the definition and in 1934 he wrote a comment to his first definition, regretting that it only took into consideration idealist disposition: "I deceived myself advocating the use of an automatic thought as it not only removed from all control exercised by reason but also

[18] Retrieved from BRETON, André (2007), *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Michigan: Ann Arbor, pp 3-47.

disengaged from all aesthetic or moral considerations. It should at least have said conscious aesthetic or moral considerations" (Richardson, 2001: 203). So far Breton was not the only one to try and define the movement. However, the majority of definitions that exist are vague and ambiguous. Luis Aragon, for instance, compares Surrealism with the horizon that slips away before the walker: "For like a horizon it is a relation between the sensibility and what it will never attain". (Richardson, 2001: 243). Another definition that emphasizes the elusive nature of the movement was given by Maurice Blanchot in 1949: "No one belongs to the movement anymore, yet everyone feels they could have been part of it, Has Surrealism vanished? It is neither here nor there: it is everywhere. It is a phantom, a dazzling haunting" (Blanchot, 1995: 85). Between the attempt to give definitions of Surrealism and its elusive nature, there were other attempts to define the language of surrealism. Among such authors we could distinguish Octavio Paz, who proclaimed: "Surrealism is not poetry, but a poetics and even more, and more decisively, a doctrine, a vision of the world". Nicolas Calas attempted to define the language of Surrealism saying that it is a "language of negation, as the great refusal to accept the rules of a game in which the dice are loaded" (Richardson, 2005: 86). These are just a few examples of many other definitions that exist and that underline the oppositional side of Surrealism that seem to exist in continuing opposition to the whole world. These definitions make it easier to understand how attractive the Surrealist ideology could have been to the Eastern European artists in their attempts to counteract the official ideology. Its elusive nature, rage against life "as it is" and the pursuit of freedom through liberation of mind – these were the traits that could have made Surrealism an official ideology for any dissident movement of the second half of the twentieth century and that could easily comply with artistic world and become official language of resistance. Did it happen in reality? The following subchapter will be dedicated to establishing the boundaries of Surrealism as subversion method in relation to the object of investigation of this work – animation.

2.2 SURREALISM, CINEMA AND ANIMATION

The elusive nature of Surrealism makes it impossible to speak of "Surrealist art"; this is why in this work I avoid speaking of "Surrealist cinema" or "Surrealist animation." With no defined borders, one cannot classify what objects are Surrealist and which are not. Instead, we would be looking at traces and characteristics of Surrealism in the selected works. This issue was widely discussed in Michael Richardson´s work "Surrealism and cinema". Richardson wrote that there is no such thing as Surrealist art, but rather there exists "Surrealism in painting", "Surrealism in cinema" and etc. With no defined borders Surrealism can be described as "the will to discover that point at which opposing categories are no longer perceived contradictorily" (Richardson, 2005: 6). Surrealism is about exploring the links between. Surrealism cannot be fixed. It lies in the subtle relation between viewer and film object. What we are dealing with is, in fact, a "discreet charm" – an elusive and subtle object. The same difficulty appears with defining animation. Animation is a highly elusive subject to speak about as it constantly changes. This is the subject of Philip Kelly Denslow's article that invites us to look critically at some of the existent definitions of animation. For instance, Webster dictionary invites us to understand the subject through a very simplistic definition:

> 1. A motion picture made by photographing successive positions of inanimate objects (as puppets or mechanical parts). 2. Animated cartoon, a motion picture made from a series of drawings simulating motion by means of slight progressive changes.

This is a very limited definition. Do we have the right to call puppets inanimate objects? For many African tribes puppets possess and inexplicable power – they are souls of animals and gods of nature. And for Czech puppeteers the dolls were playing a role of separate independent actors who broke free from the puppeteers. Moreover, in the age of rapid changes in technology we cannot be sure what is animation and what is not – films in 3D that use computer-generated images to create various backgrounds or to multiply the crowd of people, virtual reality games – is it animation or not? We can go even further and call any film produced an animation. This is a provocative and too generalized view, but it has a reason to exist. It can be tempting to say that all film is a form of animation because it shows us "life through the use of dead matter by means of light, celluloid and machinery" (Richardson, 2005: 110). Here in this work, however I would look at

animation as a projection of dreams – dreams of certain artists who expressed themselves in clay, puppets and cut-out collages. It is exactly in this similarity with dream that the relation between Surrealism and animation is being analyzed in this dissertation. This similarity should be explored bearing in mind that any animation is part of cinema. To understand the relation it is necessary to address the connection between cinema and Surrealism and why Surrealists favored cinema as means of expression even though the movement was born as a literary movement.

For authors who try to understand this relationship various logical roads can be taken, and two are mentioned in this work. If one were to analyze the existing literature dedicated to Surrealism and cinema, he/she would first come across the famous text by Ado Kyrou "Le Surrealisme au Cinema" that provoked a number of responses. One of them was by a modern author, Linda Williams, who provided an insight into the topic in her book "Figures of desire". First approach formulated by Ado Kyrou can be called "macro approach." According to Kyrou: "Le cinéma est d'essence surréaliste" – cinema is by its essence Surrealist (Kyrou, 1953: 9). This book was written in the early fifties and is regarded as a response to André Bazin thesis that film is a realist medium. For Kyrou the question, however, lies not in debating whether this medium is realist or not, Kyrou analyzes the cinematic experience, in general. For him, it is not the film as such that is Surrealist, but it is cinema itself or the experience of seeing a film in a darkened hall. Kyrou named his book "Surrealism in the cinema" and that was symptomatic, as for him the significance is in the environment of the cinema. Kyrou demonstrates that apart from cinematic experience itself, many filmmakers in a conscious or unconscious manner use Surrealist principles – and this in return leads to certain difficulties in defining Surrealism in cinema. Kyrou's idea was accepted in various ways and further developed by other critics. One of his interpreters, Jean Goudal, developed the Surrealist aspect of cinematic experience. In his view in cinema, we become "nothing then two eyes riveted to ten square meters of white sheet" (Goudal, 1988: 354). Goudal called cinema an experience of "conscious hallucination" - experience that united conscious and unconscious at the same time. He compared it to the dream state. This in a certain way may explain the fact why Surrealists were fascinated with cinema. In a note written by Breton about cinema famous Surrealist goes on to explain that in a peculiar cinematic experience that he invented he found the essence of Surrealism: he used to walk into a cinema and then at the moment

when he got bored would go out and enter another room where another film was being projected. The result would be a peculiar collage of unrelated objects. It was similar to the dream state. Also, for a similar reason Goudal joined cinematic experience with a Surrealist experience. Although Surrealism originated as a literary movement, Breton and other Surrealists recognized vision as the most powerful of all the senses. For Breton "the eye exists in the savage state" (Breton, 1965: 1). This statement is far from true, but for Breton and Goudal it was true as for them the cinematic experience was turning an individual into nothing then two eyes in the words of Goudal, who believes that cinematic experience and dream are similar – as they are both specific languages of expression. Goudal states that our minds are limited while we are awake because we imagine the real and the possible. However, when we sleep we only see the possible – our minds are thus able to travel further. For him, cinematic experience could rival the dream state: "the darkness of the auditorium destroys the rivalry of real images that would contradict the ones on the screen". For him inside the cinema as in the dream we accept the state of things as they are. One event follows another, seeking justification in itself alone. Events follow each other with such rapidity that we barely have time to call to mind the logical commentary that would explain them (Goudal, 1988: 357). According to Goudal's vision "it is not easy to determine if the Surrealists situate a superior reality in the dream itself, or in a sort of union or adjustments, difficult to imagine, of the two states, dream and reality" (Goudal, 1988: 354).

Goudal defined three essential characteristics of the dream: the visual, the illogical, the pervasive (profound, rich penetrating) and compared each to the cinematic experience. Cinema is by all means a visual means of expression. It is illogical because it is not an organic language, but rather an artificially created language, and it is pervasive in the sense that a cinematic object establishes close bounds with the spectator. In the words of Linda Williams, who analyzed Goudal: "Image takes us out of our own reality and lures us into identification with the image on the screen that is much stronger then the identification produced in language" (Williams, 1981: 15). Williams went further and posed the following question: in what sense does Surrealism use the model of the dream in its film and theory practice? Once again, Williams does not speak of Surrealist art, but analyzes the models through which Surrealism can manifest itself. We have here an interesting situation. The power relations are flipped over. And other authors like Richardson, who

says that Surrealism was never a film movement, share this point of view. Richardson goes on to say that:

> In the analysis of film in the context of surrealism, we should not be asking whether a particular film or filmmaker is Surrealist. The principal question to be considered ought rather be: how does consideration of this particular film or filmmaker in relation to Surrealism help us illuminate either Surrealism or the film? (Richardson, 2005: 7)

This particular attitude will be later applied in the following chapter where several animation films are analyzed. This would be a vector and the question to answer.

To apply the above analysis to animation, it is necessary to take into consideration several things. First of all, animation is even closer to the dream state then the photographic cinema. It is closer not in the sense discussed by Kyrou, but in its content and as a device for overcoming the limits of realistic depiction. Animation is a powerful technique that allows realizing the most sophisticated ideas and addressing subjects that are inaccessible to the photographic cinema. In his interview with Joubert-Laurencin Russian animation film director Yuri Norshteyn gives a challenging insight into the issue. He is referring to animation as if it is more capable of realizing the goals of the cinema because it is freer and more autonomous in using the available material. He speaks of a certain superiority of animation: “Je crois que oui, le cinéma d’animation est plus à même de remplir la tâche du cinéma, parce qu’elle est plus libre, elle est plus autonome par rapport à la matière. C’est là qu’est sa supériorité” (Joubert-Laurencin, 1997: 322). He goes on to draw a link with the painting of Salvador Dali where the seashore is easily lifted like a piece of cloth, and one can see what lies beneath it. For Norshteyn, this is the metaphor of the cinematic powers of animation. Animation is a powerful device that doesn’t necessarily reject the reality, but rather is a form of expression of the reality in a symbolic way. So animation is a technique first of all. And coming back to the subject of this work - it is a technique so powerful and rich for transmitting the ideas that it was quite natural that it permitted the artists to smuggle meaning into text during the Soviet period. With a powerful excuse of being considered an art for children, it became a playground for adults deprived of the right to voice out their thoughts. Under the oppressive system, these artists day dreamed and found a way to sublimate their repressed creativity into unexpected images through the language of animation. The question that lies ahead is whether this means of expression became language of subversion or if it was just a shelter for those who sought to escape reality.

2.3 ANIMATION – SUBVERSION THROUGH EMANCIPATION?

The animation industry flourished in all the three countries that are being analyzed in this work. Whatever the answer to the previous question is, it can be argued that animation became a relatively free space for thought and agency. It was not free from the censorship measures and political violence and cannot be looked at independently of these conditions, but it existed in a liminal space with favorable economic conditions as described in the first chapter. Animation practices were carried out and films were either shelved immediately (but nonetheless created, finished and shown to a small number of censors), watched by a selected audience and then banned for some reason (one of the common reasons for censorship in Soviet times was for instance "uncontrollable implications" – when a film after being shown to a small number of people would then be condemned because it could motivate uncontrollable actions or thoughts) or could proceed to being shown in and outside the country where it was made and inside the Eastern block or more rarely at International animation festivals. A fourth outcome was possible when a director would flee the country to live in Western block as it happened with Polish director Jan Lenica, who immigrated to Germany where he continued to explore quite freely the notion of artistic liberty but always preserving his Surrealist stylistic. With the majority of works that contained critique of the established rules or nuances of anti-ideological character what happened was the first outcome, however there were works that surpassed the first stage and went on to be circulated for limited audience. These are the works that would interest the author in the first place and which we would consider as potentially containing the power of subversion.

One must be careful with the term subversion when applying it to the object of this study. As in order for an object to be subversive it should in a limited sense of speaking be able to undermine and destroy something. Animation itself never became a tool to be used to overthrow the Soviet system or to make a revolution in the esthetic tradition. No animated film has ever provoked revolution or a public uprising against the Soviet system. Animation cinema has always dwelt either in a space for children or in a marginal space beyond official discourse preserved from mass audience (a recent phenomenon of Pixar or Disney industries aimed at attracting mass adult audiences is just a recent consequence and is not taken into analysis for not belonging to the world of unorthodox and experimental

animation and not existent in the analyzed period). However it can be said that animation went so far as to preserve the modernist tradition in countries where the official ideology was against it and tried to suppress it with all its might. We can go that far as to say that it has not only preserved the old traditions but also generated new ones. Unorthodox animation is still alive and directors from Eastern Europe are among the most talented and brave in their experiments with new media and their expression of thought. However, it has not only taken the preservation function, but took on an educative role to transmit other than socialist realist ideas and to make the spectators think, thus turning them from being passive spectators into thinking ones and communicating political criticism in times when it was a highly dangerous thing to do. It is exactly in this role that we can draw a link with Jacques Rancière's "emancipated spectator". Rancière speaks about the role of art in shaping ideas and about the way, in which the spectator is made active. Rancière says that "The viewer needs to be aware of what she does not know, or otherwise has to be drawn into the work in order to become 'active'" (Rancière, 2009: 2-4). In the case of the analyzed animation it was the second case of "drawing in" of the audience with the help of symbolism and allusions, disruptions in the narrative – all that which puzzled the spectators, made them stop and think as in the majority of the cases the meaning of the work was not that obvious.

Rancière drawing from the ideas of Jacotot refers to an educational technique of accepting the role of a different kind of teacher – the ignorant schoolmaster. It is a kind of teacher who does not necessarily teach the pupils his knowledge, but makes them "venture into the forest of things and signs, to say what they have seen and what they think of what they have seen, to verify it and have it verified" (Rancière, 2009: 11). This way of learning involves a kind of interpretative act instead of an act of learning as such. Herselman Hattingh in his analysis of Rancière draws a relation between this way of transmitting the knowledge and political art. He interprets the work in a way that in order for an artist to convey a political message, s/he should become a teacher of that sort and to use an object through which the message will be transferred. Hattingh interprets Rancière in the following way, urging to look at the communication process, not just through the relation between artist and viewer, but taking into consideration an intermediary object:

> In the logic of emancipation, says Rancière, there is always a third thing that comes between the teacher's knowledge and the pupil's learning. There is a book or a text of

> some sort that belongs neither to the teacher nor to the student. This third element is alien to both and it undermines the possibility of a direct transmission of knowledge. So it is with the work of art**.** The meaning of the work belongs neither to the artist nor to the viewer, but needs to be interpreted. When the work becomes open to interpretation, it becomes part of the viewer's own story in which she is both actor and viewer, never passive, never a vessel waiting to be filled with knowledge. (Hatting, 2014) [19]

If we apply this to the analyzed sphere we could say that art should leave the spectator with questions, it should not give ready-made answers, but instead should make the spectator look for his proper answer, otherwise when it presents ready-made truths it can turn out to be political propaganda and not art. Rancière in his work introduces term emancipation:

> Emancipation starts from the principle of equality. It begins when we dismiss the opposition between looking and acting and understand that the distribution of the visible itself is part of the configuration of domination and subjection. It starts when we realize that looking is also an action that confirms or modifies that distribution, and that "interpreting the world" is already a means of transforming it (Rancière, 2004: 277).

According to this point of view, experimental animation has the right to be called subversive as it was aimed at transforming the viewer from a passive observer to an active. It had the potential to emancipate the spectator, make him/her "venture into the forest of signs". For that reason choice of Surrealism esthetic was a necessary device, it spoke to the deeper level of the spectator's mind and confronted the audience. At the same time it made it hard for the censor to ban a work of art "since no individual element is obviously against the rule and the overall meaning is uncertain, and requires the viewer to question the norm, which is subversive act in itself" (Pilling, 1997: 39). Thus the use of the term "subversive" is entirely justified and can be applied in the sense that Roland Barthes used when he spoke of photography's ability to be "pensive": "Photography is subversive not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is pensive, when it thinks" (Barthes, 2000: 38). It is thus necessary to think of an art object as an independent object – an intermediary between the artist and the viewer. An intermediary that has the power to act on its own. In order to illustrate this, the subject of Puppet animation will be taken into account in the next chapter. A Puppet is a perfect object for this – it is a common object to

[19] "Rancière on subversion" accesses at LibArts website on the September 10, 2014: http://www.libartslondon.co.uk/9854/ranciere-and-subversive-image/

be used in animation, and it is a peculiar performative object that was favored by the Surrealists.

2.4 PUPPETS – OBJECTS OF ANXIETY

This subchapter will examine the role that the puppet theatre and later on puppet animation played in the constitution of social life in European countries and to what extent this artistic form of expression was used as a means of subversion. Particular attention is drawn to three Eastern European countries – Poland, Russia and Czech Republic, in particular. However to demonstrate the scale of the importance of puppet various other contexts are taken into account. An overview of puppet animation is included here that would then be completed in the third chapter of this work with the analysis of three Czech authors who used the Surrealist principle to convey political messages. Puppet in this work is looked at through the prism of the Freudian notion of "Uncanny"[20]. Puppet is both familiar and strange; it provokes the spectators to accept its independence and regard it both separately and together with their puppeteers. Puppet is an ambivalent object: it can both delight and provoke extreme fear. It can be used as an object bearing pedagogic objectives or be used in frightening rituals.

Puppets were from the beginning part of social life and if we look at European history the most known puppet character, which played an important role in social life is Italian Pulcinella. This character originated in the seventeenth century Commedia dell'Arte. After gaining popularity in Italy he started his journey in other countries under completely different names. What is important to say is that in each country where Pulcinella travelled his performances acquired socially relevant context. The character had a sharp tongue and was used to transmit sarcastic and sharp comments about authority. That was one of the reasons, why he gained such popularity. In France, for instance, he is known as Polichinelle and later adopted to be called Guignol by his creator Laurent

[20] Freud published his work *Das Unheimliche* in 1919. In it he developed the term *Unheimliche* or "Uncanny" and explained the lingual origins of the German word and its opposition with "heimlisch" ("homely"). The term, according to Freud, should not be regarded as an opposite of homely, on the contrary the "Uncanny" is much more complex – it is a term, according to Freud, that signifies a sense of estrangement evoked by something very familiar – something both frightening and attractive, strange but in the same time intimate. He links his definitions with the one that Jentsch described when he spoke of the dolls and automata and the: "doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive and, controversially whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate". This observation is particularly examined in the work in relation to E.T.A. Hoffmann story *The Sand Man. (Freud, 2003: 135)*

Mourguet. In England, he became Punchinello or simply Punch and found himself a spouse - Judy. In Russian context the leading star of performances was wild Petroushka. And in Portugal he existed in the form of Dom Roberto. Now, all those characters belong to the glove puppet family - a popular form of street theatre. When one starts to analyze the performances, it becomes clear that they have a lot of things in common. Punch, Petroushka, Guignol are violent characters. They often beat up other characters or even kill them. And quite often it is the authority that gets beaten. However unlike in real life, in puppetry, a deadly blow on the head is often comical. And as Norman Klein remarks: "Handmade puppets dance easily between life and death" and Klein goes on to continue "animation is a cheerful dance of death" (Klein, 2011: 93). Puppet theatre is a space where the discourse over death and macabre humor about death is always present – a trait so common in Surrealism. Going back to Punch and his friends - themes of their popular performances were always linked with social issues that could attract audiences as they provided an alternative view of authority. As John McCormick writes about the Portuguese case: "Constant battering of the authority figures is typical of the Robertos, or glove-puppets, in Portugal and shows very clearly a symbolic revolt in which the audience can share" (McCormick, 1998: 185).

Some of the brightest examples can be found not only in Robertos and Western Europe, but further in the East. For instance, in countries with a history of foreign domination, there are particularly descriptive examples featuring an ambivalent brigand hero, who lives his life by plunder and burglary from the rich. This "Robin Hood" becomes the centre of resistance. This is the case of the Polish Robin Hood, Jánošík and the Bohemian version Karašeck (McCormick, 1998: 190). These characters were bandits who were transformed into attractive folk heroes during the performances. The purpose of these transformations was "to satisfy the psychological needs of the audience" (McCormick, 1998: 190). Quite understandably, the psychological needs were often linked with the dissatisfaction with the current authority. And thus accordingly was invented the suitable repertoire.

Piotr Bogatyriov in his essay about Czech puppet theatre and Russian folk theatre recalls two stories from the history of Czech puppet theatre that are in a way emblematic. These stories were passed from one generation of puppeteers to another as an example of courage and resistance to oppressive power. One tale is about a puppeteer who was

summoned to court and was accused of launching political attacks from the stage. This man went to court and brought his puppet, Kasparek, with him. When asked to explain himself, he merely said that he was innocent, and if anyone was to be accused, it was his puppet Kasparek. (Bell, 2001: 89). The second story that Bogatyriov recalls is about the famous Czech folk puppeteer Matěj Kopecký. It took place in the 19th century during the nationalist revival, when puppet theaters played a big role in the society as defenders of native language. Against orders, puppeteers continued to perform in Czech and not in German. So the story tells that when authorities tried to force Kopecký to perform in German, he replied: "that although he could speak German, his puppets did not know the language" (Bell, 2001: 90). Puppet theatre played not only a major role in the upholding of the Czech language, but also plaid the role of preserving the national culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> There were no Czech schools, there were no Czech theatres, no Czech university, no books published in Czech… It was the puppet theatre that carried on the tradition of the language and the national art, because the puppet theatres performed not just for children but for grown-up audiences as well. (Paul, 1983:45)

Much later puppet theatre became a force of resistance during the Nazi occupation. And later in the second half of the twentieth century marionettes made their way to the screens - what used to be a street theatre now became animation. Marionettes can become versatile tools in the hands of the puppeteers. And not only do they function as means of resistance, but there are known cases when their power is acknowledged for propaganda purposes. Such is the case of Petroushka in the beginning of the twentieth century. After the October Revolution the People's Commissariat developed a special program for the Puppet theatre. The theatre was to be used in propaganda purposes. A special program was outlined for Petroushka, who now took on the role of "The red Petroushka" representative of the communist regime. Petroushka's new image was spread in the press. "Sovetskoe iskusstvo" ("Soviet art") in 1925 published an article:

> The red Petroushka is no longer the old jester. The red Petroushka is the representative of the new life being born. He is a komsomol, a member of the Profsoyuz, a soviet diplomat, a soldier of the demobilized Red Army. The red Petroushka is the enemy of all that is dirty and dark. Petroushka is a real propagandist and agitator (Jurkowski, 1991: 190)

However, these performances never gained real popularity: without sarcasm Petroushka

became less attractive and soon his performances were discontinued.

So what is a puppet? And why does it have such a powerful potential for artistic expression? The first question is simple: basically, a puppet can be any object that gains life through the actions of a person. To answer the second question, it is necessary to address such authors as Gordon Craig and Heinrich von Kleist. These two intellectuals share a common view of attributing marionettes with great performative powers that can surpass the possibilities of the human actors. For Kleist marionette achieves perfection that no actor can achieve because it is deprived of consciousness, it has no will of its own. Its grace is of mechanic nature and is superior to the grace of human who is "spoiled" by the self-consciousness. Kleist's essay "On the Marionette theatre" is important as it sets up direction for the exploration of the relation between the human body and the machine. His ideas set trajectory for the modernist avant-garde theater and for the critical analysis of animation. Kleist's ideas are particularly important for the field of animation and to my dissertation as they establish directions for understanding the intricate relationship between the puppeteer (or in this case animation director) with the puppet. One of the questions that Kleist poses in the work is whether the puppeteer who controls the puppet's "dance" should be himself a dancer and how much he is involved in the process of the mechanical puppet dance: "I asked him if the thought the operator who controls these puppets should himself be a dancer or at least have some idea of beauty in the dance" (Kleist, 1972). The fictional character Mr. C responds to this question saying that in order to achieve perfection the operator should "transpose himself in the centre of gravity of the marionette. In other words, the operator dances" (Kleist, 1972)[21]. This shows the degree of involvement between the subject and object – that are involved in something that Kleist calls a dance. Without one there is no other, and we as spectators attend a peculiar ritual when inanimate transcends to animate, it is almost as if the soul of the puppeteer transitions to the body of the puppet:

> Animated puppets, as actor objects, have no character, indeed no life on their own, without the animator's involvement […] puppets do not exist except as inanimate objects beyond their animation on-screen. The spectator may oscillate between this

[21] KLEIST, Heinrich (1972), "On the Marionette Theatre", www.jstor.org/stable/1144768, accessed 30.09.2014

> awareness and a sublimation of it that allows her to perceive animated objects as living. The animator as puppet operator not only dances; he or she is able to give the puppets a semblance of Kleist's soul via the vitalism implicit in their animation (Buchan, 2001: 104).

So how can ony apply this to animation, where there are no strings attached to a puppet? To this an interesting answer is given by Susan Buchan who introduces the idea of Weihe and argues that:

> First, it seems obvious that in Kleist's set-up we can replace the "machinist" by the "animator" of an animation film, while the marionette is equivalent to the animated figure. But what about the strings of the marionette? For the puppeteer they are the technical device by which he controls marionette's movements; in puppet animation these "strings" are invisible, indeed non-existent. Their function is replaced by the technique of frame-by-frame animation". (Buchan, 2011: 104)

So in puppet animation "the dance" of the puppet is achieved with the technical framing with the use of the complex process involving "between twelve and twenty-four subtle changes of the puppet's position per second […] the puppet's dance on the screen is the result of careful manipulation in front of the camera over a period of time that is exponential in comparison to the brief moments we see the puppet on-screen" (Buchan 2011: 105).

In the same vent as Kleist , Edward Gordon Craig argues that the human body with a personality or a human psyche of its own tends to distort the formal purity of the aesthetic image. In his opinion actors in theatre can never attain the pure artistic representation, as they will always distort the result with their personality. Marionettes, on the other hand, are empty containers ready to be filled with meaning through the actions of a puppeteer. Annie Gilles, to explain this enters the realm of semiotics: "Marionettes are not like actors, who confer their own corporeal reality on the fictional characters they play. They are truly pretense, simulacra that are not what they evoke, but signs…. they are indicators of fiction…. they are no more than signifiers of humans. (Essif, 2001: 187). Once the performance begins, marionettes loose the connection with the puppeteer and start to act independently - they become signs that can have a relative freedom compared to the human actor. And this paradox explains the existence of the tales that Bogatyriov mentioned and the reasons why puppets were used as means of resistance: a puppet is never simply a lifeless object. Through performance it gains power and in a way independence. It is an object that brings psychological reassurance to the artist and a will

to speak up in times of repression of thought.

It is also an object that revolves around the Uncanny. The line between life and death blur in relation to a puppet – it is bot animate and inanimate, intimate and alien. This is what rendered puppets so attractive to Surrealists. Breton in the "Manifesto" while speaking of the notion of the marvelous raised the topic of "modern mannequins" – these notion is closely linked to Freud, for whom the Uncanny appears in relation to death and in evocations of traumatic scenes. For Freud the uncanniest objects are "wax-work figures, artificial dolls and automatons". These figures provoke a primordial confusion about the (in) animate and the (non) human and also recall an infantile anxiety about blindness, castration and death (Foster, 1993: 128). Freud used the uncanny to relate to an object that evolved around a familiar phenomenon (be it image, object, person or event) made strange by repression. Hal Foster links the theory to Surrealism in the following way:

> The return of the repressed renders the subject anxious and the phenomenon ambiguous, and this anxious ambiguity produces the primary effects of the uncanny: (1) an indistinction between the real and imagined which is the basic aim of Surrealism(2) a confusion between animate and the inanimate, as exemplified in wax figures, dolls, mannequins, and automatons, all crucial images in the Surrealist repertoire; and (3) a usurpation of the referent by the sign or of physical reality by psychic reality. (Foster, 1993: 7)

These three notions can easily be applied to puppet theatre and animation which rendered it a Surrealist action per-se.

CASE STUDY: FILM ANALYSIS

> The vice called Surrealism is the disordered and impassioned use of the image as a drug, or rather the uncontrolled provocation of the image for itself and for what it brings in the domain of representation by way of imperturbable metamorphosis: for each image, every time, forces you to reconsider the whole universe.
>
> Luis Aragon, 1928

3.1 NARRATIVE STRATEGIES

Once again this chapter starts with a quotation that is crucial for the following analysis. Two notions are important here: "uncontrolled provocation of the image for itself" and the idea of "metamorphosis". The first concept on a basic level can be linked to the previously described situation with the economic independence of the animation industry. As it is explained before, the whole system permitted many artists to create films that were later shelved and taken from the production system without being shown to the public. Images were created for the sake of images and artistic pursuits. As for metamorphosis – this was one of the main methods in the animation films, especially in clay animation and other films. Metamorphosis was a method widely used in experimental animation in general. It should be noted that the object of this analysis is experimental animation – an opposing category to orthodox animation. These are two widely distinguished categories. One of the best analyses of the subject is given in Paul Wells' "Understanding animation". He highlights the differences between these two categories and names opposing categories through which it is possible to define an animation film. From the whole list we would concentrate here on four opposing characteristics:

- Specific continuity – specific non-continuity.
- Unity of style – Multiple styles
- Absence of artist – presence of artist
- Narrative form – Interpretive form

These characteristics can be applied when analyzing any film and they are particularly interesting when applied to animation. It should be argued that in Soviet period there was a big number of films produced in experimental area and the presence of the

non-continuity, multiple styles and tendency towards interpretive for and presence of artist could were a common characteristic.

The First category which interests me here is *the continuity* or in other words narrative structure that is used in the development of the story. Disney films and majority of mass produced films all have a strict narrative sequence: there is an understandable and clear logic in the development of film. Everything – character, music, visual style usually abound to a strict imperative with a goal to develop a story with beginning and an end. Experimental animation, on the contrary, is not bound to any logic or rational outcome: any linear continuity is rejected; no obvious logic can be seen in the work. Using principles like "metamorphosis" animation directors can give freedom to thought. It is closer to "écriture automatique" – the major Surrealist principle of thought. This non-continuity is attained using narrative disruptions, juxtapositions, satirical transformations – which the author will demonstrate below in the case-study part. These are the common devices used in the Surrealist pieces of art.

The second category is the *style of the visual presentation*. Orthodox animation is always characterized by unity of style – meaning that the author chooses one style and follows the line: if orthodox animation is characterized by unity of style, experimental animation often combines and mixes different modes of animation. This has two specific goals: first, it facilitates the multiciplity of personal visions that an artist can incorporate in a film, and second, it challenges and re-works orthodox codes and conventions and creates new effects (Wells, 2004: 45). Puppet animation can be combined with cut-out animation and the result can be a strange collage of three-dimensional and one-dimensional world. A strange pastiche with various styles is a common thing in this kind of animation bringing it closer to the Surrealism in particular.

The third term is the *author's presence or absence*. Welles comments that the experimental animation if first of all a "largely personal, subjective, original response" to the reality. This is why analyzing experimental animation means analyzing the individual – the artist. Images are personal, fruit of the individual psyche that are extremely difficult to decode. And last but not least: experimental animation is not always about telling a logical story, it liberates the artist to "concentrate on the vocabulary s/he is using in itself without giving it a specific function or meaning" (Wells, 1998: 44). Thus the audiences need to interpret the works on terms dictated by the artist. In order for the above mentioned

techniques to be deployed there is a range of narrative strategies that animation has been using with success for creating unique modes of story-telling. According to Paul Wells it can create new modes of story-telling and often rejects the notion of a plot with a beginning, middle and end, in favor of symbolic or metaphoric effects. Wells collects key devices used in many animated films. A few are selected from Paul Wells to be presented here as these are the devices that, from my point of view, bring up the issue of Surrealism in animation:

Synecdoche - device by which the depiction of part of a figure or object represents the whole of the figure or object. Example to this will be given in the further analyzed film *The Hand*. It is a particularly useful device as it compresses all the meanings and draws attention to the qualities of the subject.

Metamorphosis - ability of an image to change into another completely different image. The ability to metamorphose images means that it is possible to create a fluid linkage of images through the process of animation itself. Metamorphosis also legitimizes the process of connecting apparently unrelated images, forging original relationships between lines, objects etc. (Wells, 1998: 69). Metamorphosis can resist logical developments and determine unpredictable linearities (both temporal and spatial). It is close to the principle of écriture automatique.

Symbol – a bearer of meaning that can occur beyond the artist's intention and be consciously or unconsciously deployed. Language of Soviet animation had to contain a big number of symbols in order for it to pass the censorship barrier. The language of animation worked as a system of images that confronted the social order and resisted the socialist realism.

Associative relations – this notion is close to the metamorphosis. It brings up together a series of unrelated images that are combined in a sort of a visual dialogue.

3.2 CZECHOSLOVAKIA: EXPLORING THE TOPICS OF ARTISTIC LIBERTY AND LACK OF COMMUNICATION

The Czech case will be presented in the puppet and clay animation. Czechoslovakia was chosen as an example for the case study for the reason that the country has a long history of puppet theatre that occupied a significant place in the social life of people: it carried on the tradition of national language and was the bearer of national identity. In times, when people had no access to education, wandering puppeteers took on the role of enlightening the society; they spread the news and preserved national culture in conditions of foreign occupation. Puppet theatre and then puppet animation became spheres where relative liberty was allowed.

For the case study works by Jan Švankmajer, Jiří Trnka and Jiří Barta were chosen. These three directors, at a time of hegemony of Soviet formalist art, nevertheless brought modernist views and used Surrealist aesthetics. They all worked with puppet animation and in a way continued the tradition of the wandering puppeteers: their films were educative and offered a critique of authority and social order. As a result, it is possible to say that Marionette Theatre got a second life in an epoch of mass media. It migrated to the TV screens.

The fact that their often provocative works could be distributed is astonishing. It means that the animation industry and puppet theatre provided a shelter for those who were deprived of artistic freedom and freedom of speech. It is interesting to note that puppets become powerful performative objects that dwell in their very own performative space. What distinguishes puppetry from other performing arts is “the association of the puppet – a lifeless object with the live, subjectively conditioned performing action of the puppeteer” (Kominz, 1990: 22). And “as a result of this association, a figure capable of existence, considered as a subject, comes into being, identical neither with the puppet nor with the player; it is something else, that receives in the spectator’s imagination its sole fulfillment and realization, because there it acts, enriched by its subjectivity” (Kavrakova-Lorenz, 1989: 231). The performative space of the puppet is an intricate fusion of illusion and reality, which relates directly with the Brechtian alienation effect. Puppet is exterior to the puppeteer and there exists a certain distance between the puppet and the donor of motion

and voice – distance which becomes more evident in the animation where all the movements of the puppeteers are dissolved and not seen with the use of technical framing.

3.2.2 JIŘÍ TRNKA

Czech artist Jiří Trnka was a famous puppeteer. He was the student of another prominent puppeteer – Josef Skupa, who created the emblematic puppet figures of *Spejbl and his son Hurvínek* – these two characters still exist in modern performances and back in the twentieth century played a major role in preserving Czech culture under the fascist invasion. Being a student of a famous artist, Trnka managed to create his unique visual style, which transcended any one medium. Trnka was puppet-maker and puppet-master, painter, graphic artist, sculptor, stage and costume designer. And this particular 'total vision', in the words of Peter Hames (Hames, 2009), gave his work its particular flavour and made him experiment in multiple styles. Trnka distinguished himself as an artist working in a minimalist manner. His puppets were always characterized by reserved expressions and almost static movements. Instead of changing the expressions on the faces of his actors he changed lighting and framing – that was a truly modernist thing to do in Trnka's time. He also managed to create a visual style that was far from realistic. Heavy with symbols and metaphors his works had a revolutionary impact:

> Trnka was a connecting link between different art forms therefore. His activities aided the cross-fertilisation of ideas within the Prague artistic society. One of his most important accomplishments was to bring modernist art forms into film when "formalism" was officially frowned upon in his country. Drawing from Surrealism and the pre-Second World War theatre of Jiri Voskovec and Jan Werich, Trnka showed the way to cinematic innovation in the midst of the Stalin era (Hames, 2009: 95)

This was quite an extraordinary thing to do – in Czechoslovakia after the Communist takeover modernist inclinations were not only discouraged, but also prosecuted and banned. Socialist realist principles were imposed in a country where literary and artistic style was not inclined towards realism. Nevertheless, Trnka managed to preserve Czech experimental traditions under severe conditions. As Hames recalls in his article, his films were often balancing on the verge of the permitted. For instance his film *The Merry Circus* (Cz.:*Vesely cirkus*, 1951), animated the images of the painter Frantisek Tichy, whose work

was branded ‘formalist’ in the same year. It is true that Trnka’s films frequently displeased the authorities, but it is also true that the animated film was difficult for the authorities to supervise. Trnka’s strong point was that he worked a lot with folktale and fairy tale, which permitted him to defend his interests. This was because the Czech being threatened many times with the takeover of their identity even in Soviet times were confident to save their identity and one way to do that was through the folklore.

It is also necessary to address the work *The Hand* (Cz: *Ruka*, 1965) within the scope of this dissertation. It was one of the first films to open the short Prague's Spring. It is curious that Trnka predicted his fate in it – the scenario ends with the burial of the artist. When Jiří Trnka died in November 1969 (at only 57 years of age), he had a State funeral with honours. Four months after that, his work was banned, and all copies confiscated by the police. As a result, the film was forbidden from screening for twenty years. Paradoxically enough during a short period before Trnka’s death the film was exhibited and allowed for screening.

Neither *The Hand,* nor other works were ever considered to belong to the Surrealist movement. However, they all contain elements that can be attached to Surrealism. In a discussion on the art of Trnka held in Seattle in 1980, animators reached a conclusion that Trnka’s contribution to animation is priceless. *The Hand’s* narrative line is logical and symbols are more readable. However, *The Hand* is an example of an experimental animation movie that uses Surrealist principles: Trnka uses a substantial number of symbols and metaphors to depict the reality. This film tells a story of an artist, whose life is interrupted by the appearance of a gloved hand, which destroys his works of art. This is a clear metaphor of a man, destroyed by the totalitarian regime.

The main character is a puppet – a character whose appearance is a mixture of a Harlequin and Pierrot. His costume is common to what Harlequin wears in Commedia Dell’Arte representations – bright and cheerful. His face though is more Pierrot style – static and sad. He is depicted at the beginning with style and grace – his movements are athletic and full of force. He is at home in his little world where he lives to create pots for the plant that he dreams one day will become a rose. Trnka accentuates the grace of the puppet – the notion that is developed by Heinrich von Kleist who explores this question in his work *On the Marionette Theatre*, in which he narrates a discussion with a dancer on the natural grace of puppets. Kleist praises the puppets: “Puppets are just what they should

be…lifeless, pure pendulums, governed only by the law of gravity" (Kleist, 1972). He goes on to develop the idea that grace and consciousness are opposing forces: "as thought grows dimmer and weaker, grace emerges more brilliantly and decisively." because "grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the god" (Kleist, 1972). Self-consciousness results in the fall from grace, it leaves human awkward. Coming back to Trnka's Harlequin, his grace passes away after the invasion of the gloved hand that disrupts his life. The hand enters Harlequin's home through the window and attempts to persuade the artist to work for the hand and produce objects that glorify it. It tries various means to make the artist work for him – bribing, propaganda through media among others. The puppet, however, refuses, and that brings on terrible consequences. Harlequin gets imprisoned and is forced to produce statues of the hand. After escaping the prison, the artist is no longer graceful in his movements, he can no longer create, fear has been planted in him and that deprives him of the grace. His fall from grace has been enforced on him.

Image 1 (2': 12)
***The Hand* (1965)**

Image 2 (13': 35)
***The Hand* (1965)**

The puppet in *The Hand* has a fixed melancholic face, his wide eyes inviting the viewer's empathy. His expression does not change . Thus he communicates to the viewer through a more theatrical manner, through movement, physicality, gesture and body language. This is one of the devices Trnka uses to tell the story. In stop motion animation with unorthodox tendencies, puppets are used more as performers rather than characters. To quote Paul Wells again, he talks about puppets being used in a more "sophisticated way to fulfill their capacity to mediate the 'consciousness' of the animator through their metaphoric role as neo-humans" (Wells, 1998: 46). To make the description even more illustrious, several screenshots of the film demonstrate how expressive the puppet becomes

in the hands of Trnka. *Image 1* occurs at the beginning of the film – this is the moment when the main character first meets his fate - the Hand - or rather seconds before the encounter. We hear banging on the door, which interrupts artist in the middle of his work. He approaches the door cautiously but with graceful and light movements – this can be seen in the picture – the gracefulness of his hand is emphasized by the author. It is the hand of the artist. Still not knowing what lies ahead of him he puts his ear to the door to listen in a gracious nod. By the end of the film (*Image 2*), this scene is echoed when once again the Hand visits the artist. We now see a different image: the artist is in panic. His gestures clearly demonstrate it – they are abrupt and rough. The drama of the moment is evident – there is no banging on the door and no signs of persecution, but the seed of panic was planted in the soul of the puppet. We note that no amendments were done to the facial expression except for minor touches. Trnka, like a true artist, can change the scene with just a few strokes: the room is darker; there is no feeling of a stream of sunshine as it happened in the beginning. As for the character the only difference is in darker circles around his eyes – it got accentuated by the director with a tiny slip of color beneath the eyes as if the character was crying or shows signs of fatigue. Hands are not even shown as opposed to the first scene. Camera is looking from another angle as if situated above the character. Spectators have a feeling of looking at the character from above as if he shrinks and became shorter.

As for the music and voice – these features are practically absent in the film. No words are spoken and music appears rarely – in the beginning to accentuate the positive atmosphere and by the end we hear a range of noises that emphasize the disturbing atmosphere and the imminent death. Peter Hames in his analysis comments that, although, voice remains an intrinsic aspect of most storytelling, its absence in the film makes it more challenging for the viewer: "the viewer is not easily fed a story, they are left to their own devices to decode the information presented and draw their own conclusions regarding the relationship between the put-upon artist and his dictator"[22]. (Hames, 2012). Hames goes on to comment that Trnka's work in its grace and precision has almost ballet-like aesthetic. We see an example of "less is more" approach that was taught to Trnka by his mentor – Josef Skupa.

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[22] Hames, Peter, *The hand that rocked the Kremlin: Jirí Trnka In BFI Film Forever.* (February 10, 2012). Retrieved September 23, 2014, from http://old.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/49844.

Speaking of the Surrealist value of the film – it would be wrong to call the film Surrealist. However, it contains Surrealist traits. Speaking on a general level, the film defines the tension between artist and authority. The main character tries to gain freedom of expression and is not permitted to pursue his aesthetic goals. The relationship between art and politics is something that was explored by the Surrealists. On a profound level, this work abounds in symbols and metaphors. The main symbols that are being used in the film are: hand in various representations and pot with the plant. The pot symbolizes the natural world of the main character as opposed to the artificial world of the gloved hand. Wells writes, "the hand operates as the physical mechanism for symbolic movement and gesture in its own right". The hand is a symbol of tyranny, power and authority.

The Hand brings artificial objects to the artist's world. Trnka clearly refers to the power of media and propaganda that is used by authority. Before exercising violence and imprisoning the puppet, the hand tries to influence the artist through media propaganda. The artist receives a TV set with telephone and newspaper. Once the TV set is switched on we see a number of symbols projected on the screen: a hand holding jewels, hand with the

Image 3 (3': 28)
***The Hand* (1965)**

Image 4 (7': 31)
***The Hand* (1965)**

Image 5 (7': 34)
***The Hand* (1965)**

scales of justice, hand holding the Olympic torch, gloved hand-in-the-waistcoat that reminds of paintings depicting Napoleon, a boxing glove, handshake, hand under X-ray, hands in various gestures – all these representations can be understood as symbols of power, discipline and trickery. The Harlequin at first remains indifferent to the projections on the screen – he nods in disapproval to all the images. One of the last images he sees is the projection of a shadow theatre – Trnka includes the projection of the hand shadow shaped in the form of a rabbit. To this, the puppet eventually reacts emotionally. He starts to fool around and tease the Hand (*Images 3-5*). This defines his future as it defined the

future of many authors who tried to laugh and use satire against the authority: Harlequin is captured by the hand that appears from an image in the newspaper and is put in jail. Humor is thus banned from the discourse as it was many times banned in the Soviet countries. The main character is then made to work for the Hand and create sculptured versions of the Hand-tyrant. Eventually, one of his creations transforms into means of breaking out of the prison. We see a metaphoric "empowerment" of the puppet who uses the Hand he created to escape. Traumatized artist is then unable to lead a normal life, he suffers a nervous break-down (*Image 6*), tries to block himself from the outer world and then dies by accident: one of his flower pots falls down from the cupboard he tries to close in a frenzy and kills him. The Hand then appears to proceed with a funeral of the artist: it embellishes the artist and puts him in a coffin *(Image 7)*. With this Trnka predicted his death that was soon to follow.

Image 6 (13': 55)
***The Hand* (1965)**

Image 7 (16': 25)
***The Hand* (1965)**

The Hand remains one of the most overt attacks on Stalinism to have been made in the 1960s. When Trnka died in 1969, the year after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, he was awarded a state funeral. But when a retrospective of his work was held a year later at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival, The Hand was omitted, and the film was banned. Nevertheless, The Hand became widely known outside of Czechoslovakia already in 1965 – it win the Grand Prix at Annecy, the "Cannes of animation" and entered US screenings with the help of Harry Belafonte in 1967. In Czechoslovakia, it returned only much later.

3.2.3. JAN ŠVANKMAJER

Any search for the Surrealist animation in Czech Republic ends with Jan Švankmajer, who is one of the only directors to have proclaimed to belong to the Surrealist movement. Svankmajer formulated his vision in the following way: "Surrealism is psychology, it is philosophy, it is a spiritual way, but not an aesthetic[23]. Švankmajer's example is yet another proof that Surrealism is all about liberating the mind and gaining freedom. The cinema of Švankmajer is gloomy, oppressive and deals with controversial subjects. The mood of his movies is dark and sometimes repulsive. He smartly plays with the images that come right of the unconscious. His works are a demonstration of principles of "écriture automatique". The work that is included here is *Dimensions of dialogue* (1983). It consists of three parts that deal with the subject of human communication. It is particularly interesting because it can be regarded as a metaphor for the communication process in the Czech society during the discussed historical period. It shows the artist's vision of what is human communication and his pessimistic view of human discourse, in general. The work for the author represents the dysfunctions of the Soviet regime and the chaos that surrounded everyday communication in turbulent political times. All three parts of the movie are done in the stop-motion technique. All three parts start in a harmonious way, but then occurs something that disrupts the flow of communication and leads to complete chaos and ultimately to the destruction of the heroes who are communicating. One of the episodes illustrates this perfectly: two clay heads are placed on a table, one in front of another. The two heads start to "speak". The act of speaking occurs when some object appears from the mouth of one head. The other head answers in the same way with a corresponding object. As long as the heads can match the objects they produce out of their mouths, the communication runs smoothly. While one

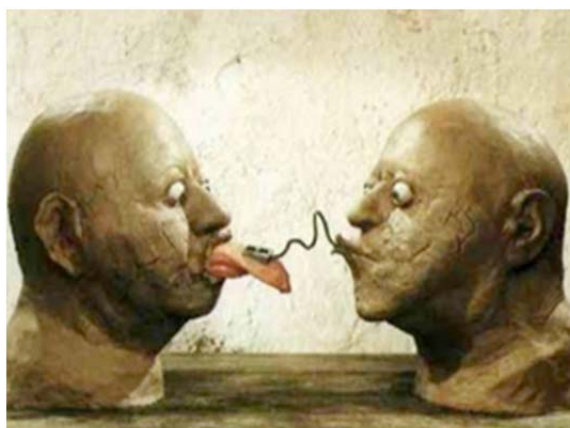

Image 8 (10': 18)
***Dimensions of dialogue* (1983)**

[23] Quotation retrieved from the interview with Jan Svankmajer: www.awn.com/mag/issue2.3/issue2.3pages/2.3jacksonsvankmajer.html consulted on the September 1, 2014

head spits a toothbrush, the other answers with a toothpaste – objects match and the heads continue their harmonious existence. But the chances of harmony are low. The heads enter the second stage of communication where instead of matching objects they create a series of dysfunctional Surreal "encounters" that lead to mutual destruction: the heads start exchanging objects that do not correspond: pencil sharpener shreds the bread; knife puts butter on a shoe. The whole situation becomes absurd and ends in complete chaos when both heads explode. This metaphor of human relation is visually striking – it draws our attention to the inability of harmonious communication in the Soviet Czechoslovakia. This chaotic communication can be applied to the way censors communicated with film directors – communication was plagued with irony and absurdities, as it shall be shown further on in the Russian film case study. Different approaches can be applied to the analysis of Švankmajer's film. Paul Wells, for instance, draws our attention to the representation of the body and the grotesque. In his view, Švankmajer dehumanizes the body and shows it as automata within the social context (Welles, 1998: 92).

The film ended up being banned by the Communist party for many reasons. Hames says that the film was considered as unacceptable for film production and although Švankmajer's characters were not engaging in any clear anti-communist rhetoric, or displaying sympathies towards Western ideals, the film was found to be intolerable and was used to show "others" within the party what was to be considered unacceptable for the public eye (Hames, Dark Alchemy 97). However, Švankmajer continued to follow his aesthetic principles and played an important role in the development of the Czech Surrealist school. Together with other members of the school he developed such themes as creativity, eroticism, dreams, fear and absurd humor. Surrealism provided shelter for rebels like Švankmajer, who formulated his vision in the following way: "To me, Surrealism is a certain rebellious stance on life and the world. Its contemporary stance is critically aimed at the current state of civilization"[24].

[24] Retrieved from an interview with Svankmajer published at www.scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2940&context=etd. Consulted on 28 December 2014/

3.2.4 JIŘÍ BARTA

Apart from Jan Švankmajer, there are other directors, who made Surrealist works in the field of puppet animation. One of them is Jiří Barta. He started working in the 1970s in the stop-animation technique. His films dwell on the verge of Surrealism, never really being examples of pure Surrealism. However, the style Barta uses and the themes he chooses are close to Surrealist ideas. His first major work was *The extinct world of gloves* (1982). Barta took gloves from different historical periods and made them act as principal characters of his work. The scenario is an attempt to tell the history of cinema. Film starts with the gloves participating in the silent cinema and then goes on to present a Surrealist excerpt from Buñuel. After a short piece inspired by Fellini we go on to see a political propaganda. And as Peter Hames writes, (Hames, 2009: 199) the film not only alludes to Leni Riefenstahl, but targets the style of film production in the socialist Eastern Europe. This film does what Apollinaire intended to do when he spoke in the prologue of his "drame Surrealiste". Barta manages to make inanimate objects speak - gloves occupy the centre place of the story, become main actors.

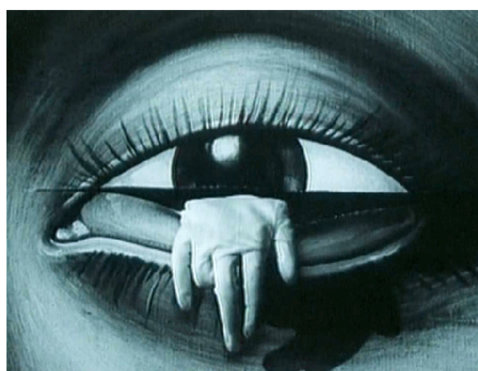

Image 9 (8': 19)
***The extinct world of gloves* (1982)**

Another work that has more to do with Surrealism in terms of its style is Barta's major film *The club of the discarded ones* (1989). Created right at the end of the Soviet era it predicted the coming of the new world and the changes that were about to arrive. It is a story about abandoned old mannequins who live together in an old house. They live a life of routine and boredom, until the moment that the new "younger" mannequins arrive and disrupt the common state of things. Barta described the film in one of his interviews in the following way:

> Of course, this is a metaphor for the Prague society we were living in. It was a society before the Velvet Revolution; it was a conformist system, and everything was very boring, everything was very empty, everything was very average and closed in boxes. So we decided to use manikins because they represented the world of robots. They are like something between puppets and actors, They are bizarre objects. (Hames, 2009: 200)

This is indeed a powerful allusion to the last years of the Communist era. And the choice to use mannequins is another reminder of Surrealism, as it was one the favored objects of the Surrealists. When looking at Barta's mannequins one gets reminded of De Chirico faceless dolls: although Barta's puppets have faces, they are lifeless, as if frozen in time. Then another link may be established with Raoul Ubac (for example his work *Mannequin dressed by Andre Masson*). And another much later Surrealist performance of Meret Oppenheim comes to mind. The event was called *Spring feast* (1959) and consisted of a banquet served on the body of the woman, which de facto was no more than a mannequin that served utilitarian purposes. When André Breton heard of this event, he asked Oppenheim to repeat this event at the 1959 International Exhibition on the theme *Eros*, but this time using mannequins of men and women.

Image 10 (13': 3)
The club of the discarded ones
(1989)

3.3. POLAND – DARK COLLAGES

3.3.1 JAN LENICA

Questions of artistic liberty and lack of proper communication were present in Czechoslovakia's neighbouring country – Poland. Here animation films were even darker in their atmosphere. To transmit the feelings from the oppressive regime, another type of animation was used - cut-out animation. It was close to collage and maintained the Surrealist aesthetic of Max Ernst who drew inspiration from the nineteenth century Victorian magazines. Using tore out images form the magazines he created outstanding collages. This collages dealt with Freudian theory of unconscious and with the notion of Uncanny. The collages depicted bourgeois interiors and an assembly of strange characters inside. It was an image of the unconscious mind. Ernst's most famous works are *Une semaine de bonté (1934)* and *La Femme 100 têtes (1929)*. When they were first shown to his fellow artists the effect was tremendous. Rosalind Krauss in *Optical unconscious* speaks about the effect that Ernst's collages made on the other members of the Surrealist group. She includes a letter from Breton:

> In fact Surrealism found what it had been looking for from the first in the 1920 collages [by Ernst], which introduced an entirely original scheme of visual structure yet at the same time corresponded exactly to the intentions of Lautreamont and Rimbaud in poetry. I well remember the day when I first set eyes on them: Tzara, Aragon, Soupault and myself all happened to be at Picabia's house at the very moment when these collages arrived from Cologne, and we were all filled immediately with unparalleled admiration. The external object had broken with its normal environment, and its component parts had, so to speak, emancipated themselves from it in such a way that they were now able to maintain entirely new relationships with other elements, escaping from the principle of reality but retaining all their importance on that plane (Krauss, 1996: 42)

Breton was fascinated by the work as for the first time he saw the visualisation of his own words from the manifesto – the presented work was truly an illustration to the idea of a chance encounter between distant objects. It was a 100% Surrealist work. First of all Ernst assembled the collages from the pictures from the old magazines he found on flea markets, book stores and market stalls along the Seine – this went along with the Surrealist practices of city wanderings. Then it went along with the Freudian notion of Uncanny – Ernst reassembled old familiar images into new order. The result was a sort of visual

archaeology. The same visual style can be found in works of Polish animator Jan Lenica. One of the bright examples is *Labyrinth* (1961). This Kafkaesque story is considered to be one of the best examples of political animation ever made. It is close to the Trnka's hand and also is a metaphor of a man, destroyed by the totalitarian regime.

Labyrinth tells a dramatic story of a symbolic Icarus who falls to a strange city where he is eventually destroyed. From the first shots the style of the film is reminiscent of Max Ernst's collages and can also be linked to other Surrealist works. Music is high-pitched and penetrating – which immediately creates a sense of disturbance.
In first shots we see a bird, flying in the sky. Then a close-up of that bird shows that it is, in fact, a man with mechanical wings, attached to its arms. The man brings to mind the picture by René Magritte - "Golconde": he is dressed in suit and tall hat. He flies into a what seems an abandoned city. But when we look closer we see that the city is full of strange inhabitants: skeleton of a dinosaur is parading, insects and half men-half birds roam its streets. Lenica creates a world of nightmares and dark symbols. His insects and monsters are a reminder of people that surround him in real life, his attitude towards them. The whole style of the movie was obviously inspired by Max Ernst collages. The aesthetics are the same. And the fascinating part is that Lenica literally animates the static pictures - it is a brilliant example of a cut-out animation. A series of gruesome events unfold before us: the main hero slaughters a crocodile monster that is carrying its prey - a young lady. But when the hero tries to court her, she refuses and with a kiss revives the dead beast.

Image 11 (4': 40)
***Labyrinth* (1961)**

Image 12
***Une semaine de bonté* (1934)**

The visual style can be compared to Max Ernst piece from *Une semaine de Bonté*[25]. The message behind this scene can be treated in various ways: in the course of the film the only "normal" living man in the city is the main character. All the other men are present either in the shape of a walrus, or as a crocodile man or as a head attached to a bird. This seems to be of no trouble to the women citizens, who are accepting this "otherness" and are willing to play the role of victim. This is quite symptomatic. The readiness with which the woman accepts and, what is more, struggles for becoming a victim is echoed in the Soviet society. This is echoed as well in the modern Russia – what is happening in the 2014 proves quite the same thing: it is illustrious how masses are reacting to the official government policy. Freedom of speech is once again persecuted with journalists being fired for publishing critical comments; new "old" laws are implemented that limit the right of people for social gatherings; in response to European sanctions implemented during the summer of 2014 and destined to limit the actions of Russian companies that are close to governmental milieu on the European market – the government passes a law to prohibit the free flow of European goods on the Russian market. This leads to severe consequences: prices rise dramatically, a range of products disappear from the market and with no goods to substitute the absence many families have difficulties in finding supplies to suit the needs of those dependant on the foreign European goods like gluten free products. The reaction of the general masses that follows may seem surprising – we see a rise in patriotism and support for the government. With comments like "we do not need Europe", "we will survive" people embrace the difficulties and thank the authorities for the new order. This is symptomatic – it shows how deeply the slave mentality can be rooted in the nation.

Turning back to Lenica's work let us look at the space where the gruesome events unfold. The city itself is an interesting space. Lenica is inspired by Art Nouveau: we see classical architecture with exquisite facades and decoration. In this city we see dragonflies and butterflies – symbols that were present in the Art Nouveau stylistic and that also fascinated the Surrealists. The city has an empty and abandoned feeling but in fact it is obvious that there is a surveillance system coordinated by a "mad scientist". The inhabitants of the city loose all the connection with nature – they are transformed into

[25] Image retrieved at http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/in-the-musee-dorsay/exhibitions-in-the-musee-dorsay/article/les-collages-de-max-ernst-20484.html,
Musée d'Orsay: Max Ernst, "Une semaine de bonté" — the Original Collages

robots or strange creatures by the scientist, who makes sure there are no signs of freedom. Lenica uses various symbols throughout the film. To show the oppression of thought and freedom he creates a subtle image of a bird that flies out of the statue by August Rodin *The Thinker* – but the creature has only few seconds to enjoy the freedom, as a hand then destroys it. Once again the symbol of the hand appears important. The same hand would then imprison the main character and enslave him to conduct a series of scientific experiments. This is both reminiscent of the Fascist exercises – the head of the hero is measured, examined and put to various tests. We get reminded of the past of Jan Lenica who survived the Second World War as an adolescent and who obviously was affected by the images of the war. And this work brings this historical context back. But not only does it speak of the war context, it is also clearly alluding to the Soviet oppression period – this work was created in 1961, five years after the Polish revolt in Poznan - as described in the previous chapter this was a period of oppression of thought and censorship, all that is evident in this work that demonstrates the feelings of the author towards the period. He creates a Surrealist metropolis. It has no fences or cages, but the citizens are controlled with the surveillance system that immediately oppresses any free willing action. Jan Lenica never proclaimed himself to belong to Surrealist movement however the film is a bright example of Surrealism– its visual style, its perplexing at times non-linear narrative, its abundance in symbols – all that indicates a clear Surrealist involvement.

This film survived the censorship and was projected in Krakow during the animation festival of 1963 where it won the main prize.

3.3.2 MIROSLAW KIJOWICZ

The theme of imprisonment was a recurrent theme in Polish animation. Another more obvious political piece was created by Miroslaw Kijowicz. The work *Klatki* (*Cages*, 1966) is an example of a politicized subversive film. It deals with the subject of creativity, loneliness an improbability of a dialogue between authority and artist. The film takes place in a cage, where we see a prisoner and a policeman outside the cage. The prisoner is given a special kit to play with – various geometric objects. He then completes various marvellous shapes that outrage the policeman who rapidly crashes them. With no more tools at hand, the prisoner starts to think and we see a series of words appear from his head – *cogito, Plato, Sartre*, *Klee* – a garden of thoughts is projected on the wall of the prison as the prisoner is shown with a happy smile on his face. However the policeman rapidly enters the cage to catch the thoughts of the man in a butterfly net (*Image 13*). The last thought that appears seems to be an innocent one – the prisoner thinks of Sinatra. However it is soon caught in the net with only “sin” left on the wall. This is a direct allusion to the fact that in the Eastern block all things from the USA were considered to be sinful and demoralizing. Western music was demoralizing the young generations and thought harmful. The prisoner is left alone in an empty cage. He then commits an attempt to run away and with a saw tries to break down the bars of the cage. His actions are soon interrupted. The policeman takes the saw away and locks the prisoner in handcuffs. What comes next is a Surrealist twist of plot – we get a close up of the policeman “outside” the cage bars. He is holding a saw and we see that he is emerged in thinking. But then the camera slides away and we see that the room of the policeman is also a cage followed by an infinite number of other cages each containing its own

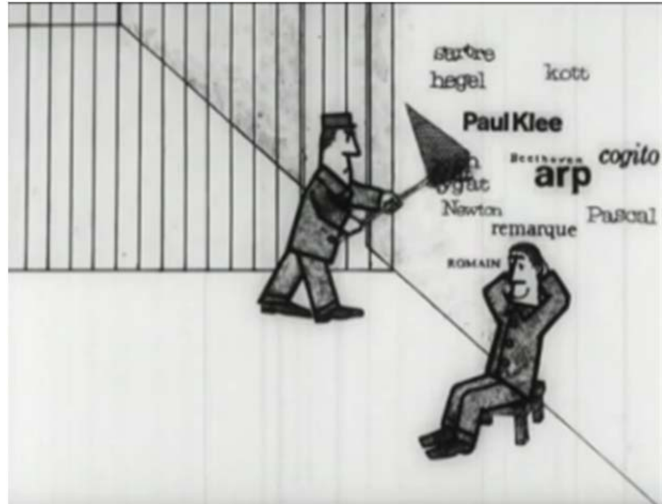

Image 13 (5’: 31)
***Cages* (1966)**

policeman. This concludes the film. And as Paul Coates writes in his analysis of the film this ending:

> Draws a logical conclusion from the way the prisoner's cage has been filmed throughout: the fourth-wall perspective has combined with the policeman periodic retreat behind the far set of bars to make it seem as if he is the one in the cage, literally 'behind bars'. Ironically, the prisoner – the man with imagination – is the freest in the whole series. (Coates, 2005:91).

This work was done in black and white; it offers simple decorations and lacks the exquisite decorations of the "Labyrinth". Its characters are drawn in a simplified way.

3.4 RUSSIA: THE DISCREET CHARM OF SURREALISM

We now turn our attention to Soviet Russia. Here it becomes more complicated to trace Surrealist characteristics in animation films, moreover the Surrealist movement never really entered the country as opposed to Czechoslovakia where there existed the previously described movement of the Platform of Prague. However, throughout the described period a number of works appeared that were close in their poetics to Surrealism. If we compare with Poland and Czechoslovakia, the atmosphere of Russian films was less grim and dark. In general films were more oriented towards child spectators. However beneath a relatively simple narrative there lay a whole level of metaphors. Russian films were lighter, less violent and more ironic and subtle in their poetics. To make a connection with Surrealism we would quote André Breton from his first manifest: "The mind that plunges into Surrealism relives with glowing excitement the best part of its childhood" and he goes on to depict the childhood as a period when: "everything nevertheless conspires to bring about the effective, risk-free possession of oneself" (Breton, First Manifesto). Childhood is thus considered to be the period deprived of the social concerns; it is a period of liberation where one is in tune with oneself and the unconscious fantasies.

3.4.1 YURY NORSHTEYN

Speaking of the unconscious fantasies and childhood memories, one gets reminded of the works of Yuri Norshteyn, the acclaimed Russian film director, who created innovative techniques and who is the author of a film that is considered to be one the best animation films in the world[26] - *Tale of Tales* (Rus. *Skazka Skazok*, 1979). This film is an example of a work that brings out childhood memories. Norshteyn himself presented the film in the following way: “This is to be a film about memory. Do you remember how long the days were when you were a child? Each day stood alone and we lived for that day – tomorrow would be there for tomorrow’s pleasures” (Kitson, 2005: 55). This film’s language is poetic and assembles folkloric images with childhood memories, free associations, and personal symbols. The result is astonishingly subtle and beautiful. It is a film that dwells in a liminal space between dream and reality – it skips between images that are blurry and impressionistic. The narrative is free flowing and non-linear and has an on-going tension between the conscious scenario and unconscious associations. As Mikhail Yampolsky describes: “this is not only a film about memory, the film itself is constructed like memory” (Yampolsky, 1987: 95). There are no clear links between events. What we see are associative relations – a peculiar narrative strategy that brings together previously unconnected or disconnected images to logical or surreal effect. In the case of Norshteyn we can see both – logical and surreal context. Paul Wells while describing the strategy comments that: “Often apparently impossible relationships are created through the fusion of contrary figures and forms, placing formerly disjunct or unrelated elements into new conjunctions” (Welles, 1998: 93). This goes according to the spirit of Surrealism and what Breton together with the other artists tried to implement and links the visual style of the film with Surrealism.

In *Tale of Tales* Norshteyn privileges the psychological and emotional and doesn´t use orthodox modes of storytelling. There is no clear plot or story line in the film. What we see is a gathering of images with an aesthetic close to Andrey Tarkovsky whose words explaining the particularity of the unorthodox approach and its effect on spectator can be recalled here:

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[26] In 1984, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences declared Yuri Norshteyn’s Tale of Tales (1979) to be the “best animated film of all time.” Four years earlier, the director from Moscow had been awarded the Grand Prix title at the annual World Festival of Animated Film in Zagreb (Kitson, 2005: 111)

> Through poetic connections feeling is heightened and the spectator is made more active. He becomes a participant in the process of discovering life, unsupported by ready-made deductions from the plot or ineluctable pointers by the author. He has at his disposal only what helps to penetrate to the deeper meaning of the complex phenomena presented in front of him. Complexities of thought and poetic visions of the world do not have to be thrust into the framework of the patently obvious. The usual logic, that of linear sequentiality, is uncomfortably like the proof of a geometry theorem. As a method it is incomparably less fruitful artistically than the possibilities opened up by associative thinking, which allows for an effective as well as a rational appraisal. (Tarkovsky, 1986:20)

Norshteyn and Tarkovsky both created works that “required the viewers to empathize as well as analyze” (Wells, 1998: 94). In his doctoral dissertation dedicated to the analysis of Tarkovsky’s films, Rui Brás addresses the same issue:

> A leitura das imagens dos filmes de Tarkovsky, associadas a planos longos e lentos e a uma carga simbólica complexa, exigem que o público seja mais do que um “examinador distraído”, como Walter Benjamin caracteriza o público do cinema em “A obra de arte na época da sua possibilidade de reprodução técnica”. Os filmes de Tarkovsky precisam de um público composto por pessoas capazes de “mergulhar” neles, de manter a concentração por oposição à receção na distração que caracteriza as massas (Benjamin, 2006b: 238-239). Por isso, a obra de Tarkovsky dificilmente poderia ser massificada em sociedades onde o cinema é percebido acima de tudo como entretenimento e a literacia visual é subalternizada (Bràs, 2014: 10).

Brás goes on to perephrase the thesis of Dominick LaCapra that is equally applicable to Tarkovsky, Norshteyn or other experimental animation films analyzed in this dissertation: “Todos os filmes merecem de ser pensados, mas os de Tarkovsky são especialmente destinados a que pensemos com eles” (Bràs, 2014: 10)[27].

Coming back to the issue of memory, it is worth mentioning that the images that Norshteyn uses are recollections of real events and phantasies. Director visualizes both personal impressions that have poetic significance for the author – like a ripe apple standing out in the white snow of a forest - and images that were inscribed in collective memory like the ones linked to the Second World War: phantom-like soldiers dance with their wives before dissolving from the screen reminding of the trauma that each family in Russia had suffered with the War. Images are taken from various periods of the author´s life – something that becomes evident when we see the different visual styles that the author uses. The visual style is not homogeneous and the recollections of events do not fall into logical narrative – an effect that reminds us of the way human memory works. The

[27] Rui Bràs goes on to quote the original phrase by LaCapra: “I propose that all texts are worth thinking *about*, but some texts are especially valuable to think *with*” (LaCapra, 1994: 24)

narrative of the Great War that occupied a major place in the discourse of Russian people just several decades after the War is mixed with personal images of an artist and his dreams: a minotaur plays hop-scotch with a girl, little wolf walks on two legs and comforts a baby child in his arms (motif inspired and transformed by the author from a popular song that mothers sing to their children before sleep). We have here “history and myth aligned in an eternal continuum” (Wells, 1998: 96). There is no protest in this film, the message is absolutely different. The message of the film according to William Moritz, a specialist in Eastern European animation, is to “urge the artists to accept the burden of keeping better times alive through art” (Morritz, 1997: 41). The images we find in the film are provocative, deal with problematic to Soviet Russia social issues – like the effects of war on the families and its afterglow. But the images are collected in such a way that it is difficult for the censorship to find obvious allusions. Non-linear plot line conceals the plot from the censorship institute. Intricate images created by Norshteyn are never simple, they are in the words of Isabel Gil “complex culture artefacts” (Gil, 2011: 24) and in these images (similar to the effect described by Rui Bràs with regards to the films of Tarkovsky) we see hidden allusions, dreams, memories – something that Deleuze calls "os fantasmas auditivos e visuais" (Deleuze, 2006: 17).

Image 14, Yarbusova Francesca and Norshteyn Yuri, study of the episode *Eternity* from the film *Tale of tales*, 2000 (Norshteyn, 2008: 322-323)

3.4.2 ALEKSANDER TATARSKY

Another example of a work that confronted censorship in Russia is the film *Last year's snow was falling* (Rus: *Padal proshologdniy sneg*, 1983) by Aleksander Tatarsky. Until this moment all the films included in the analysis were films with no words. In this work quite contrary the words are very important for the narrative with a main character that seems to never stop babbling. This film was made using the clay technique. It is a work filled with absurd humor, satire and its main narrative element is metamorphosis.

Tatarsky at the beginning had difficulties with the censors, as his scenario could not receive the necessary approval. The story of how it got approved is plagued by irony. Censors demanded that Tatarsky chose a more proletariat-style topic and suggested he made a movie about young people gathering metal garbage (a common educative measure used in Soviet Russia). Censors demanded that he chose a topic with clear educative moral for the young generations – something that could educate and raise responsible Communist members of the Party. However, Tatarsky at this moment of his life had already made a name in the film industry and was praised by the public who adored his satirical style and sense of humor. This public appraisal permitted him to feel more comfortable in arguing with the censors and to continue to defend his point of view. Tatarsky even resolved to a desperate measure – he used a trick to persuade the censors to let him film what he intended. On one of the last meetings he commented that he was ready to suggest a new scenario – something that went along with educative goals. He suggested to film an animated comedy about Lenin based on the texts of Mikhail Zoschenko – an author whose books were satirical and never spared anyone. Zoschenko was prohibited in the Soviet Union for a long time and the author has endured severe prosecution from Stalin. This topic was a taboo in the society and a mere threat that Tatarsky was going to film such a film (and he was capable to do it at those times, when the Soviet Union was reaching its end and when the system was showing weak points) frightened the censors. Immediately, the initial idea of Tatarsky´s *Last year snow was falling* got approved. The main argument against making an animated movie about Lenin was that Lenin was a figure of such importance and scale that his image could only be represented in stone and sculptures. Tatarsky recalls in his interview to Georgiy Borodin that he was told that drawing Lenin or making an animated clay movie was too unserious, as it didn't go along the potency of the

figure. This trick was similar to what other film directors used in the Soviet period. There was a method called

Image 15 (15’: 32)
***Last year snow was falling* (1983)**

Image 16 (14’: 6)
***Last year snow was falling* (1983)**

“dog method”. According to it in order for a film to get approved one had to include an obviously ridiculous and attention drawing vivid episode in the work. As a result, minor nuances went unnoticed. In this manner famous Russian director Leonid Gaidai created his movie “The Diamond arm” where he intentionally included a nuclear explosion towards the end of the film. The Goskino commission was horrified and requested that the explosion be removed. After resisting for a while Gaidai removed the explosion and the rest of the film was left almost untouched. As for the *Last year snow was falling* when the project was finally finished, Tatarsky still had to struggle with the film committee in order for the film not to be shelved. The main critique was linked to the fact that the film depicted typical Russian man as an idiot. As a result some of the scenes were rewritten, some of the dialogues recorded for the second time. The film narrative is, to a certain extent, linear: it has a beginning and an end, but in the middle what the spectators see is a completely absurdist and Surrealist series of events. The main character is a simple Russian man, he is a farmer of little education. The story evolves around Christmas time as the wife of the farmer sends him to the forest to cut a Christmas tree. This is where the magic begins. The man finds what turns out to be a magic house standing on chicken legs – a common attribute in Russian folklore. He enters the cabin and finds a magic wand that enables him to transform things around him. He gets so involved in the process that after changing everything around him, he begins to transform himself: suddenly he becomes a

cactus, horns grow on his head etc. Tatarsky with the use of clay gives freedom to his imagination; it is truly an example of "*écriture automatique"* with the use of metamorphosis as the main device. Metamorphosis is the creation of a fluid chain of images that legitimizes the connection of apparently unrelated objects. With the use of clay animation metamorphosis comes naturally and as spectators we are amazed at the easiness with which the character passes from one state into another. In the two illustrations provided here we can see initial and final stage of the character: he first start with growing various objects at his head and finishes by getting less and less human in the image where he is represented as a cactus shaving itself. This work has never been linked to Surrealist movement, however it could have been an illustration to the quotation by Luis Aragon included in the beginning of the chapter: with each metamorphosis of the main character we are forced to reconsider the "universe" of the film. This is the "uncontrolled provocation of the image for itself' (Aragon, 1980: 23) – with no logic and reason, we are put into the dream state.

TOWARDS A CONCLUSION

The study set out to explore two elusive subjects within a complex historical period in the twentieth century: Surrealism and experimental animation. The text has been constructed in such a way as to show the logic of the argumentation and the journey that has been undertaken in the investigation topic. The main objective of this work has been to make an attempt in disrupting the general discourse and to look at the phenomenon of censorship and political repression from another angle. It should be said that under no circumstances should my arguments be regarded as attempts to justify censorship or the persecution of artists in this historical period. It goes without saying that the animation industry suffered as much as the other artistic spheres and a lot of works have been ruthlessly cut, edited and remodeled just because it was considered that they contained an “uncontrollable subtext” or because the mood of the censor was spoiled by a recent change in the bureaucratic apparatus. A system that depends on such subjective and ridiculous issues cannot be approved in any way.

The research question was inspired by the romantic paradigm of artistic liberty. Creativity is a complex subject that cannot be understood in the oppositional categories of positive – negative. We are reminded about that in the modern world with the examples of China and Russia, where under controversial conditions and complicated political situations art continues to “give birth” to unique artists. It would be too easy to think that artists can live in a sphere of absolute freedom, where there is no political censorship. The economic sphere would still dictate its rules and even if we imagine an ideal world, there would always be the issue of self-censorship – that little voice inside the head, that can be as much of a ruthless critique as any outside person. If we look back to history, we can see how many artists suffered from remorse and dissatisfaction with their works. One of the keenest examples would be Nikolay Gogol, who destroyed his second chapter of the *Dead souls*. The antagonistic force can be located within the artist or externally – and it is this force that plays the major role in stimulating the creative impulse - be it the impulse of destruction or creation. If Gogol could live until the twentieth century his blunt move could have been turned into an act of performance.

I have deliberately included into this dissertation animation films created in three different contexts of Russia, Czechoslovakia and Poland to showcase the differences in the visual language of each country that originated from my point of view from the different perception of the Communist regime and the historic events which led to the existence of different discourses or in the words of Thomas Bauer "cultural manners of delivering of experience, knowledge and meanings"[28]. Both Czech and Polish animation can be characterized by a darker and more oppressive visual style of representation, while Russian animation is lighter in colors and in meanings. While in all three contexts absurd content and dark humor were quite usual, in works of Czech and Polish animators morbid sense of humor and topics related to death were more common. Polish animation was always more radical in its affirmations and more violent. Polish artists often depicted nightmarish scenes and the topic of man vs the machine: Lenica´s *Labyrinth* and other works confirm Polish animation's dark atmosphere and the influence of Nazi occupation and then the Soviet oppressive past. Czech animators mastered the art of puppet animation and this is for a good reason, as there puppet theatre went "far beyond the marginalized existence which, in many countries, is now the norm […] as late as 1958, there were ten professional puppet theatres and an estimated 2000 amateur ones" (Hames, 189). Puppet theatre was a sphere of resistance and experimentation. Russian animation in turn has always been characterized by a variety of visual styles. Animation in USSR was a real cultural phenomenon – the industry received lavish funding from the government and was not dependent on the future success of the film: the commercial appeal of the film was disregarded. Artists from the famous Soyuzmultfilm studio were paid by the Academy of Film regardless of how well or how poorly their products did (though they were not, in fact, "sold"), they were free to pursue their artistic vision without giving a thought to finances. Soviet animators were allowed to comment on subjects that were officially banned from the discourse, for instance, while rock music and hippy movement were not welcomed, Soviet animators created an animated Rock opera *The Bremen town musicians* (1969). On a more general level, it should be said that artists were also affected by Communist regime in different ways – some fled their countries and preferred to live abroad in exile – something that was more common in Poland, like in the cases of Jan

[28] BAUER, Thomas (2003), Cultural turn in media studies, retrieved on 18.05.2015 at http://www.thomasbauer.at/tab/media/pdf/vortraege/AthenArtikel_CulturalStudies.pdf

Lenica and Walerian Borowczyk. Other artists continued to stay in their hometowns as they could never imagine their lives abroad – this was the case of Russian film directors.

The idea behind this dissertation has been to showcase how in a time of lack of resources, general pessimism and repression of thought, a part or artistic society reacted to the system's inadequate blows. And this reaction led to a rise in creative output, to the invention of new techniques and the preservation of an unorthodox style adversarial to the Socialist realism aesthetic. Contrary to many expectations the artists continued to create and distribute their works – with the Samizdat invention and hidden typewriters many works had been distributed. This is how poems by banned authors like Joseph Brodsky gained a life of their own. These pieces had a "banned charm" about them which made them more popular. In the music sphere resourcefulness had no the limits – musicians who were able to bring the Western recordings to the USSR would then copy them at home on X-ray photographs – a phenomenon that got the name of "music on ribs" or "jazz on bones". Animation, however, provided metaphoric shelter for the reasons described in this work. It has been shown how provocative works could slip through the censors' grasp. *Labyrinth* by Jan Lenica was shown at the Krakow film festival, an event that caught the world's attention; *Hand* by Trnka circulated until the death of the author. In fact, Russian animation could outwit the bureaucracy of the censors with absurdist humor and special tricks.

So how can one characterize these and other impressive consequences? In the words of Richard Shusterman, was this a censoring of art for art's sake? Did rules and limitations promote greater art? Arguably, they did. When the system is close to collapsing and is at its downfall it permits the creation of spaces of artistic liberty – spaces where creativity flourishes, where norms and rules are violated and the desire to violate them is as natural as the desire to conform. This is in a way similar to the modern street art projects - graffiti and guerilla art in a specific marginal space of animation.

Another notion that has been important in this work is Surrealism– it has not been easy to define it in relation to the animation, it has turned out to be a challenging and impossible task. However, two links have been found in these works that relate Surrealism and experimental animation: their relation with dream and their potential as "language of negation". Animation is close to the dream for various reasons and among them the question of receiving the message comes alive – spectators of an animation film imagine

the possible more than the real. And as it was said about Surrealism, the same can be said about animation: it is a vision of the world more than anything else. It is a technique so powerful that permitted the artists to smuggle meanings. It has been argued that animation can be in fact considered as a Surrealist device per se. Its tendency to use the same tools, like automatic writing or metamorphosis, is obvious and render it close to the initial French-led movement. Clearly, the experimental animation of the chosen period has the right to be called "language of subversion" for the reason that it emancipates the spectator, educates him/her with its ability to be pensive, non-linear and highly difficult to decipher. Its language proved out to be a counter force to the official aesthetics. Returning to the words of Jan Lenica, animators chose the path of quite diversion – they confronted the regime at their own risk. The aforementioned subversion was only possible because the regime was slowly decaying. And with that an open question remains: was animation really a subversion method or was its creative impulse motivated by the decay of the political regime? To understand this, one has to analyse more carefully the transition that occurred in the Soviet countries: a transition from a Stalinist society where the creative class and the intelligentsia lived in constant fear of a State where censorship was plagued by irony and Stalin was being quoted in a satirical tone in cartoons, while Lenin was reduced to a clay figure.

Acknowledging the fact that this study has posed more questions than answers, it has nonetheless still, outlined some paths for future investigation. A further necessary step would be to work with the archives of the animation studios in the chosen countries. It can be useful to analyze the linguistic practices of censorship and the response from the artists. As a closing remark I would like to state that the subject of this work has once again become especially relevant concerning the artistic discourse in my home country – Russia. Several alarming events are taking place and a new discussion has been introduced to the public from above. Once again new forms of expression are being condemned in the media sphere and by religious figures. Modern art and liberal ideas are synonymous with swearing and are used as swear-words. Avantgard movements are presented in mass discourses as blasphemous and are prosecuted in court. The discussion over the notion of beauty and pure art has been recently manipulated by the Orthodox Church. A huge public debate surrounded the preparation of the new cultural policy document in 2014. Russian Minister of Culture along with other governmental figures issued controversial

publications in the media that proclaimed that any work of art that “advocates through theatre or animation otherness or perversion, or any other marginal subculture opposite to the traditionalist values of our society has to be prosecuted.” [29] Art, according to the official policy, must be positive and comply with traditionalist values. This resulted in several public processes against artists. In March 2015, for example, a theatrical play of a regional theatre in the major Russian city of Novosibirsk was banned and called blasphemous. The process was triggered by the Orthodox Church and received public and media attention to such extent that it ended with the sacking of the people involved in the production of the play and their prosecution. This happened despite the fact that the Russian Court did not find any motives or religious controversies in the play. The final decision to fire the director of the Novosibirsk theatre and the director of the play was taken by the Ministry of Culture, with the same rhetoric as the one used during the Soviet era. This is just one of the many cases of the public debates that are taking place in Russia and are reminiscent of the policies backing the official Socialist realism discourse. Questions of moral integrity and traditionalist values are being raised in the media, using the most obvious propaganda methods to influence public opinion. For this and other reasons beyond the scope of this study, this is an increasingly timely topic for a much needed discussion on artistic freedom.

[29] Retrieved from an interview with Russian Minister of culture V.Medinsky published in the Kommersant newspaper on the 15 April, 2014. http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2452622

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