Laughing with Antiquity in Soviet Animation

Hanna Paulouskaya[*]

> When people complain that life is hard, everything is still okay. When they begin to cry, things are challenging but manageable. However, when they start laughing, it means everything has gone truly wrong.
>
> (A Soviet joke from the late 1980s).

Although Soviet culture is not typically associated with laughter, laughter was, in fact, omnipresent in everyday life and communal experience. It served multiple social functions: officially approved satire reinforced dominant values and mocked behavior deemed harmful, thereby signaling the limits of permissible criticism.[1] At the same time, it could subvert that very image, offering an oblique form of dissent. Through humor, people expressed emotions that could not be voiced openly. They criticized the system indirectly, sometimes at significant personal risk. Joking also created solidarity, linking individuals through what Annie Gérin has described as a "community of laughters."[2]

1   Vorobyeva, "Soviet policy," 156.
2   Gérin, *Devastation and Laughter*, 137.

This article examines how communities of laughter were constructed in Soviet animated films through references to classical antiquity, and how ancient mythology functioned as a shared cultural code in comic and satirical narratives.

As to create such a community, a high level of implicit understanding was essential – an understanding that did not need to be spoken aloud. As Umberto Eco observed in reference to joke-telling: "What remains compulsory, to produce a comic effect, is the prohibition of spelling out the norm. It must be presupposed both by the utterer and by the audience. If the speaker spells it out, he is a fool or a jerk; if the audience does not know it, there is no comic effect."[3] This highlights a central methodological concern for anyone studying another culture: can we ever be sure that we are sufficiently informed and attuned to grasp the Aesopian (and often polyphonic) languages of laughter, allusions, and hidden meanings at play?

The very act of forming such communities inevitably implies exclusion: those who do not share the necessary cultural references are left outside, unable to participate in the comic effect. Nevertheless, even within these in-groups, individuals may become targets of laughter if they transgress norms or misread codes. Satire, in particular, operates within this tension: its objects are often part of the shared code, yet at the same time distanced and ridiculed by it.[4] This dynamic aligns with the classical "superiority theory" of laughter, articulated by Plato (*Phileb.* 48–50), Aristotle (*Nic. Eth.* 4.8, 1128a–b; *Rhet.* 2.2.12), and Quintilian (*Inst.* 6.3.7–8), which posits that humans derive pleasure from mocking others.

An important question from the perspective of Classical Reception Studies concerns the references used to construct jokes. Is classical heritage a system of signs shared widely enough to function as a comic code? Did it serve that purpose for Soviet citizens in the 1930s or 1960s and 1970s? Or did it merely provide a decorative backdrop for humorous situations, no more significant than any other setting? Did the Soviet context transform classical heritage into specifically "Soviet classics," endowing ancient ideas with new and distinct meanings? Furthermore, could these reinterpretations resonate beyond the Soviet context – becoming intelligible and meaningful to audiences in other cultures? If so, would their reach make them universal, or rather omni-local in Emily Greenwood's sense:[5] circulating across cultures while remaining anchored in particular local histories and reading communities?

---

3   Eco, "The Frames of Comic 'Freedom,'" 5–6.
4   Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875–1933), the first Soviet People's Commissar of Education, developed an entire theory of satire as a weapon and a tool; Gérin, *Devastation and Laughter,* 27–40.
5   Greenwood, "Afterword: Omni-Local Classical Receptions," 359–61.

This article addresses these questions through the lens of Soviet animated films, presenting a set of case studies and providing material for the questions above. Although animation was only one among many instruments of official satire – alongside printed journals and audiovisual productions, including full-length films and short satirical magazines[6] – it nonetheless played an important role in shaping public opinion. As a form of popular culture, it offers valuable insight into the cultural climate of the time and the mechanisms through which new modes of thinking were formed in the USSR.

Studying the Soviet case is particularly important given its profound influence during the Cold War, which continues to shape the cultural landscape of the former Soviet republics. At the same time, the role of ancient tradition in the USSR differed markedly from that in Western Europe (where classical education had a very different grounding in the school system), so conclusions drawn from Western contexts cannot be simply transferred to the Soviet context.[7]

As the successor of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union inherited its engagement with classical antiquity. In the 19th century, the classics – especially Latin and Ancient Greek – were taught extensively through the gymnasium system, yet this education remained accessible only to a narrow, elite segment of society.[8] Educational reforms aimed at combating illiteracy, introduced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and further expanded after the revolution, ultimately led to the removal of classical education from the core curriculum in October 1918.[9]

As a consequence, Soviet culture was shaped by both individuals with a pre-revolutionary classical education and those educated within the new Soviet system – a situation that persisted, to some extent, into the 1960s and 1970s, as people born before the revolution and trained under the old system remained professionally active, provided they had survived the political upheavals of the era. At the same time,

---

6   For an insightful analysis of Soviet satire, using the cinemagazine *Fitil* as a case study, see Vorobyeva, "Soviet policy."

7   For bibliographic references on classical reception in Soviet culture and the history of classics in the USSR, see Barker, *SPQR in the USSR*; Stead and Paulou-skaya, "Classics, Crisis and the Soviet Experiment."

8   In the Russian Empire, the gymnasium was introduced in 1802; by 1880 there were only 123 gymnasia in the European part of Russia, with 45,256 pupils, 52% of whom were nobles; Aleshintsev, *Istoriia*, 335–36. See also Read, *Culture and Power*, 8–9.

9   It was defined in the *Polozhenie o edinoi trudovoi shkole RSFSR* [Provision on the Unified Labor School of the RSFSR], issued as part of a decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (*Vserossiiskii Tsentralnyi Ispolnitelnyi Komitet Sovetov*) on 16 October 1918.

Soviet cultural production was primarily directed at an audience that, for the most part, lacked a classical education.

Another important issue concerns the varying attitudes toward classical antiquity across the different Soviet republics and ethnic cultures. Many of these cultures, existing in a colonial relationship with Russia, either had long-standing historical connections with antiquity (usually much longer than the imperial center itself)[10] or, conversely, little to no direct engagement with it. The attitudes toward classical antiquity in Georgia, Ukraine, or Lithuania, on the one hand, and in Yakutia or Kazakhstan, on the other, had very little in common, as these regions belonged to entirely different medieval and modern cultural histories, far removed from Eurocentric historical models.[11] They would indeed have had almost nothing in common were it not for colonization, Russification, and the unified educational system established first under the Russian Empire and later under the Soviet Union.[12] Still, diversity persisted, and animation became one of the many tools for unification and the imposition of Soviet culture. This makes the study of antiquity's place in Soviet animation all the more significant.

For this article, four films have been selected for analysis. They were produced in different Soviet republics – Georgia, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine – between the 1930s and the 1970s. The focus primarily lies on films that engage with ancient mythology, reworking it to serve the narrative's central ideas. The selection is intended to illustrate a range of genres and approaches to classical heritage rather than to provide a comprehensive overview of all Soviet animated films that reference antiquity humorously. The works chosen have received relatively little attention within the field of Classical Reception Studies.[13] All of them

10　The aspect of cultural superiority of some Russian colonies over the imperial center was highlighted in Thompson's *Imperial Knowledge*, 28–29.

11　For a general overview of the culture and history of these nations, see Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity*; Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity and Power*; Gogolev, *Proiskhozhdenie naroda sakha i ego traditsionnaia kul'tura*; Okladnikov, *Yakutia before its Incorporation into the Russian State*.

12　For more nuanced discussions of these processes, see Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multi-ethnic History*; Pavlenko, "Linguistic Russification in the Russian Empire"; Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934*.

13　For analyses of other animated films, see, e.g., But, "Prometheus in Russia: From Revolution to Dissidence"; Paulouskaya, "Soviet Argonauts: Sailing to the Coasts of Colchis in Soviet Film"; eadem, "Steht Herakles für den Westen? Oder: die griechisch-römische Antike im sowjetischen Animationsfilm"; Sulprizio, "Playing with Greek Mythology in Russian Animation."

operate on the borderline between parody and satire, using mythological material to expose or critique particular social problems.

MYTH RECAST: PARODY AND REFLECTION

Although Soviet cinema from its earliest years relied heavily on satire and parody, official discourse tended to distance film production from entertainment, framing ideological education as its primary purpose. This applied equally to Soviet animation, which during its formative decade (1926–1936) underwent a series of often contradictory transformations, marked by alternating periods of encouragement and prohibition.[14] At various times, genres such as fairy tale and fantasy, as well as techniques like anthropomorphism, were banned – to a certain extent, along with humor itself. The latter was officially "rehabilitated" in 1933, mainly in response to the growing popularity of Disney films in the USSR.[15] That same year, Pavel Bliakhin (1887–1961), chairman of the Central Association of Cinema and Photographic Workers, felt compelled to justify the use of humor in animation, declaring: "Animation must above all be funny. Let this not disappoint you, for laughter carries social functions."[16] For the artists, however, this statement appears to have been a long-awaited permission – one they eagerly used to explore the creative and expressive potential of humor and entertainment.

THE ARGONAUTS, DIR. LADO MUJIRI, 1936

It was precisely during this period that the first Soviet animated film engaging with classical antiquity appeared – a work the director himself described as a "cheerful, heroic comedy."[17] *The Argonauts*, directed by Lado Mujiri (1907–1953), a pioneer of Georgian animation, and produced at the Georgian Film Studio in 1936,[18] originally ran for about twenty minutes, but the versions currently available are approximately ten minutes long. The film draws loosely on the ancient myth, offering a distinctly Soviet

---

14   Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 14–17.

15   Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 103–108; Pontieri, *Soviet Animation*, 38–42.

16   "Мультиликация должна быть прежде всего смешной. Пусть это не разочаровывает. Ведь смех несет социальные функции," quoted in Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 96.

17   Mujiri, "'Argonavty': Rezhissёr-postanovshchik V. Mujiri," 3.

18   For more on this film, see Paulouskaya, "Soviet Argonauts: Sailing to the Coasts of Colchis in Soviet Film"; and Paulouskaya "Animated Greek Myths in the Soviet Union."

reinterpretation. The film's primary aim was to promote collectivization, the drainage of the Colchian swamps as a means of combating malaria, and the development of citrus farming[19] – issues that were highly topical at the time and extensively covered in the contemporary mass media.

Mujiri reimagines the quest for the Golden Fleece as a campaign against the local inhabitants of the swamps – frogs and mosquitoes. According to the film's narrative, the ancient Argonauts, who once undertook the mythical voyage, returned home in disgrace. In contrast, the new Soviet Argonauts, represented by Jason, set out to fulfil their mission.[20] Falling in love with Medea, Jason is tasked with defeating the enemies and obtaining the fleece, a goal he ultimately achieves.

By devoting much of its screen time to battle scenes with frogs and mosquitoes, the film evokes the ancient parody *Batrachomyomachia* – or, in this case, it might more aptly be termed *Batrachokonopomachia*. The medium of animation, particularly in the depiction of battle scenes, allows for dynamic bodily transformations: animals morph into weapons, generating a pronounced comic effect (figs. 1–2). Their movements are exaggerated and stylized humorously, further amplifying this impression.

While frogs and mosquitoes operate at the literal level of the narrative, they also serve as metaphors for the enemies of the Soviet cause – those opposing collectivization, the drainage of the valley, or, more broadly, Bolshevik power. As the director himself noted, they represent "the pre-revolutionary society of old Georgia."[21] Depriving the enemy of human form diminishes it, portraying it in a subordinate, defeated position. This strategy recalls colonial representational practices, in which indigenous populations are stripped of human qualities to legitimize domination.[22] Such imagery operates as a mechanism of exclusion and group formation, restricting access to the privileged collective.

Implicitly, the narrative suggests that by renouncing the vices and aligning themselves with the "correct" side of history – that of Bolshevik authority – the native inhabitants may regain their human form. This redeemed portion of society is personified by Medea, depicted as beautiful and as the object of Jason's love (fig. 3).

Produced in Georgia, the film draws on the national cultural memory of the ancient myth, freely reworking it until little of the original story remains. This playful adaptation highlights both the myth's popularity

19   Cf. the description of the topic choice in the director's son's memoirs: Mujiri, "Mogonebebi Šemok'medsa da Mamaze," 80.

20   Mujiri, "'Argonavty': Rezhissër-postanovshchik V. Mujiri," 3.

21   Ibid., 3.

22   Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth,* 42.

and its familiarity among contemporary audiences. Although the film promotes Bolshevik values, it simultaneously affirms Georgian national culture, presenting Georgia as the heir to ancient traditions and as the rightful guardian of the Golden Fleece – whatever the "fleece" may signify in the film's interpretation. Created as a black-and-white hand-drawn animation with artwork by the renowned Georgian painter Lado Gudiashvili (1896–1980), the film also promoted Georgian art and visual culture, bridging traditional and modern aesthetics.

The film was produced in the Georgian language and features numerous songs and musical motifs rooted in local folklore. In the Russian-language version, the soundtrack was not translated; instead, intertitles summarize the main phases of the story, and instrumental sequences replace the songs. The Georgian dialogues also include subtle jokes about Russian authority. For example, Jason, who metaphorically represents Soviet Russia, is called by Medea at one point "an enemy" and "a young, inexperienced man" (1:03–08). These lines were, unsurprisingly, omitted from the Russian version of the film. Thus, the myth provided a means of subtly resisting Bolshevik power while outwardly conforming to it.

This film was intended for both adult and child audiences, produced during the formative period of Soviet children's animation, which would soon become the primary – and eventually exclusive – target audience for animated production in the subsequent decades. From the mid-1960s, however, Soviet animation began to produce films for adult viewers once again.[23] With this shift, satirical animation re-emerged with considerable force, including works that engaged with Greek and Roman mythology. It was precisely during this period that animated films based on classical myths began appearing on Soviet screens in large numbers. The following paragraphs will examine two interpretations of myths from this era: one aimed primarily at an adult audience, and another designed for children or a crossover audience.

PYGMALION, DIR. BY ARNOLDS BUROVS, 1967

Pygmalion (1967), a 10-minute short directed by the Latvian animator Arnolds Burovs (1915–2006) , a puppeteer and pioneer of Latvian animation, at the Riga Film Studio, offers a highly intriguing reinterpretation of the classical myth.[24] In this version, the protagonist, fascinated by the famous *Venus de Milo*, decides to create his own idealized image of the

23   Pontieri, *Soviet Animation*, 1–2; Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 370.
24   More on other adaptations of the myth, see James, *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion*.

goddess and inevitably falls in love with it. However, instead of marble, he uses improvised materials: clock parts, doll fragments, springs, and metal rods. The Galatea he creates differs radically from the pristine white marble ideal, yet he admires her nonetheless. Echoing Ovid's account, Pygmalion dresses and adorns the statue (fig. 4):

> ornat quoque vestibus artus,
> dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo:
> aure leves bacae, redimicula pectore pendent (Ovid, *Met.* 10. 263–65).

> he drapes her in rich clothing and in gems:
> rings on her fingers, a rich necklace round
> her neck, pearl pendants on her graceful ears;
> and golden ornaments adorn her breast.[25]

As in the original myth, the sculptor marries his creation. In this adaptation, however, Galatea comes to life independently, without the intervention of the goddess Venus (4:33). In Soviet animation, references to divine figures were possible only in a satirical manner due to the state's atheistic ideology, which likely contributed to the long delay in adapting classical myths for the screen. This limitation is cleverly circumvented here: a clock mechanism embedded in the creature's chest animates her, giving her a robotic or quasi-living quality. The scene conveys the festive atmosphere of the wedding: champagne flows, the organ sounds, and the bride leaves her veil on a chair, signaling the completion of the ritual (5:52–5:55). It seems that although the film departs from the original text, the Latvian director nevertheless drew on it during production and deliberately wove references to the Latin source into the film, anticipating an audience that would recognize and appreciate this intertextual dialogue.

The next part of the film appears to diverge radically from the myth. The filmmaker introduces an absurd, inverted night world, which might be a dream (6:00–6:20). This device was widely used in 1920s Soviet cinema and animation to signal miraculous or extraordinary events.[26] The protagonist, clad in a nightshirt and holding a candle, wanders through the house. He encounters his beloved transformed into a monstrous figure with a hydra tail and Medusa-like head (fig. 5; 6:23–6:26), attempting to devour a man who looks exactly like him – a distant double. From afar, Pygmalion witnesses further grotesque

---

25   Translation by Brookes More.
26   Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 33.

Fig. 1–2. Frogs marching as an army and frogs depicted as tanks in *The Argonauts*, dir. Lado Mujiri, 1936 (03:07; 03:35).

Fig. 3. Medea and Jason walking with their donkey Koki in *The Argonauts*, dir. Lado Mujiri, 1936 (1:21).

Fig. 4. Pygmalion dressing Galatea in *Pygmalion*, dir. Arnolds Burovs, 1967 (4:13).

transformations. The creature traps his alter ego inside a cage-like chest (fig. 6; 7:19–7:27) and later manipulates him like a marionette, removing his head from his body (7:34–7:40). Ultimately, the protagonist observes multiple versions of himself moving slowly on all fours, resembling dogs, while his creature, now with beautiful hands and lips, lies peacefully at rest (7:54–8:16). Emerging from this nightmarish world, the sculptor falls asleep at the feet of the Venus statue, now seated in the contemplative pose reminiscent of Rodin's *Thinker* (fig. 7; 8:59–9:15).

None of this appears in Ovid's retelling, where, in the finale, Pygmalion and the statue are mentioned only in the context of sexual relations and offspring. However, the opening of the story may provide a source for such an interpretation, as the poet explicitly criticizes women:

> Quas quia Pygmalion aevum per crimen agentes
> viderat, offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti
> femineae natura dedit […] (Ovid, *Met*. 10. 243–45).

> Pygmalion saw these women waste their lives
> in wretched shame, and critical of faults
> which nature had so deeply planted through
> their female hearts […].[27]

It is precisely these faults (*vitiis*) of women that drive Pygmalion to celibacy and his disdain for ordinary women, ultimately leading him to fall in love with the statue. Ironically, Burovs transfers these same qualities to the creation itself – the figure that, in Ovid's version, remains subdued and subordinate. By portraying Pygmalion's wife as a monstrous, tyrannical figure who traps and humiliates him, Burovs appears at first to align himself with Ovid's misogynistic narrative. However, the director does the opposite: he endows the artificial being with power and agency, freeing her from Pygmalion's domination and thereby offering an open critique of Ovid's story.

The film's finale, in which Pygmalion falls asleep at the feet of the female *Thinker*, further shifts the focus from the woman's body to her intellect and inner life – dimensions that are absent from the Roman poem. However, this thinking woman remains a naked beauty reminiscent of the Venus de Milo, differing only in her changed posture.

According to the official interpretation presented in the film description, however, the work was intended to critique contemporary sculpture

---

27   Translation by Brookes More.

rather than classical art.[28] This reading might be plausible, given the contrasts depicted in the film: the Venus de Milo at the beginning, the "Venus of Rodin" in the finale, and Pygmalion's creation made from improvised materials. From this perspective, classical art remains safe and harmonious, eliciting neither nightmares nor madness, unlike the protagonist's experimental work.

However, Burovs' film itself, employing hybrid techniques that blend stop-motion animation with live-action, aligns more closely with contemporary arthouse experimental cinema than with traditional Soviet animation. Its visual language evokes the surrealist experiments of Jan Švankmajer (b. 1934) and the poetic absurdism of the Eastern European avant-garde.[29] Paradoxically, the film therefore becomes a work of art that embodies precisely the modernist qualities it was ostensibly intended to critique. The absence of dialogue, combined with slow, solemn classical music, reinforces a meditative atmosphere, allowing the audience to engage with the film's meaning in a reflective, personal way.

In this way, *Pygmalion* operates on multiple, interconnected levels. While ostensibly a critique of contemporary sculpture, the film simultaneously – perhaps more convincingly – celebrates and engages with the artistic tradition. It satirizes the vanity and preoccupation with women's beauty, while also critiquing the male gaze, which reduces women to mere objects of desire. This nuanced critique culminates in the finale, where the Thinker-like Venus reorients the audience's attention toward the figure's interior, intellectual, and contemplative dimensions.

For viewers familiar with Ovid's original myth, Burovs' film reveals additional layers of playful allusion and invites multiple readings. It can be approached as a (proto-)feminist critique of the Pygmalion story and of contemporary gender norms, as well as a reflection on artistic creation and the artist's control over his work. Unlike the other examples discussed in this chapter, its comic effect relies to a significant degree on the audience's ability to recognize the classical source and to compare it with its animated reworking. The fact that the film was produced in Latvia suggests that this profound engagement with the classical text may be linked to local traditions of schooling and literary culture shared by both its creators and its intended viewers.

28   Venzher and Reisner, "Pigmalion"; Kryzhanovsky, *Arnold Burovs*, [32].
29   See Johnson, *Jan Švankmajer*, passim.

ICARUS AND THE SAGES, DIR. FYODOR KHITRUK, 1976

The next film I will discuss is another short, 8 minutes long, aimed
at a crossover audience, created by one of the most renowned Soviet
animation directors, Fyodor Khitruk (1917–2012). Titled *Ikar i mudretsy*
[Icarus and the Sages], it was produced by the leading Soviet animation
studio, Soyuzmultfilm, in Moscow in 1976. The film's sketchy, almost
entirely black-and-white animation, punctuated by a few color scenes,
presents a version of the myth that is highly removed from the classical
narrative, focusing primarily on the familiar motif of flight and fall and
offering a reinterpretation of this central event. The story is presented
as narrated by a single storyteller, who also voices the characters' lines.

The film opens with a depiction of a mountain where a group of
elderly men in ancient Greek dresses rest – some playing chess, others
drinking tea, reading, or simply sleeping (fig. 10; 0:44–0:57). They
appear almost like immovable monuments, weighed down by their
own stillness. The narrator describes them as "ordinary people who
have found their place in life and devote themselves to philosophical
reflection" (0:44–1:00).

Meanwhile, a younger man attaches wings to his body and attempts
to fly from a nearby hill. Far from the familiar iconography of Icarus
as a youthful, athletic hero with grand, crafted wings, this small,
round-faced man with a short beard looks nothing like the mythic
archetype (fig. 9–10). His appearance and movements (0:58–1:04)
instead evoke another of Khitruk's creations: his enormously popular
Winnie-the-Pooh (Soyuzmultfilm, 1969–1972). In contrast with the
"ordinary people," the protagonist is labelled a *chudak* – an "eccentric"
or "odd fellow."

In his repeated attempts to fly, Icarus fails each time. His first
unsuccessful effort is commented on by one of the sages with a Latin
proverb: *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi* ("what is permitted to Jupiter
is not permitted to the ox"; 1:30), which the narrator then repeats in
Russian translation. The Latin phrase appears visually as a sentence
inside a comic-style speech bubble that soon turns into a stone monu-
ment and crashes down from the sky. Undeterred, the protagonist
continues his efforts, prompting the sages to invent ever-new maxims
in response to his audacity.

The film's dynamics are driven by this cycle: Icarus repeatedly
tries to fly, and each attempt is met with a new saying that descends
from above as a heavy, monumental stone bearing an inscription.
Finally, just as it seems the young man might at last rise into the
blue sky, he falls beneath the largest of these stones, a black-marble

obelisk inscribed with *bene qui stat non moveatur* ("he who stands well should not be moved"; 3:43–5:00). The sages hypocritically mourn his fall (fig. 11; 5:16), while the monument itself, now depicting Icarus in a proper, canonical manner, serves as a memorial to his daring.

In the director's original conception, the film was meant to end at this point, serving as a critique of a society petrified in its rigid, traditional knowledge. However, the final version includes an epilogue, which introduces a note of hope for the future – an addition that Khitruk later regretted, as he felt it weakened the film's overall impact and diluted its critical message.[30]

Life returns to normal, and schoolchildren are brought before the sages by their teachers to recite maxims aloud in a boring, repetitive manner. Among them, however, a new *chudak* stands out – this time with facial expressions reminiscent of Piglet from Khitruk's *Winnie--the-Pooh* series. Departing from his group, the boy notices feathers on the ground and fashions them into a pair of wings (6:42–7:35). The film concludes with an exuberant musical sequence as the boy runs up a high hill and is shown against the blue sky, just as he begins to take off. The finale suggests that even if one Icarus falls, others will always rise – challenging outdated ideas and striving toward the seemingly unattainable.

Icarus and the Sages functions as a satirical critique of the so-called wisdom of the older generation. The familiar conflict in the myth between father and son is reimagined as a tension between the rigid, conventional thinking and the courage to dream and act. Unlike in the original myth, where young Icarus evokes anxiety and reproach from his father, here he emerges as the central, sympathetic protagonist: his desires are portrayed as sincere and meaningful, and his childlike courage becomes a symbol of future triumph, effectively reversing the original moral of the myth.

The ancient sages, whom the film critiques, are depicted almost as stone-like figures – trapped in *otium* and detached from reality. By omitting Daedalus altogether, Khitruk subverts viewers' expectations and shifts the locus of authority from the individual father to society's collective guardians of tradition. Visually and thematically, the sages recall bureaucratic archetypes and the stifling social conformity portrayed in Khitruk's earlier *Chelovek v ramke* (Man in the Frame, 1966). In this way, the film critiques not only generational tensions but also the Brezhnev-era "stagnation" of the 1970s – marked by an ageing,

---

30   Khitruk, *Professiia animator*, 180–81.

Figs. 5–7. Transformations of Galatea in *Pygmalion*, dir. Arnolds Burovs, 1967 (6:22; 7:28; 9:16).

Figs. 8–9. Icarus depicted as a small, comical *chudak* in *Icarus and the Sages*, dir. Fyodor Khitruk, 1976 (0:43; 0:59).

Figs. 10–11. The sages as immovable, stony figures in the opening scene (fig. 10; 0:55) and mourning Icarus after his fall (fig. 11) in *Icarus and the Sages*, dir. Fyodor Khitruk, 1976.

self-protective bureaucracy, resistance to reform, and a pervasive sense of social inertia.[31]

At the same time, the film mocks the Latin-based model of canonical education embodied by the sages, presenting it as pompous, lifeless rhetoric and mere memorization techniques rather than living knowledge. By the 1960s, Latin had long disappeared from general Soviet schooling and been "de-pedestalized" as a bourgeois discipline, surviving mainly in specialized university courses and retaining only a faint aura of pre-revolutionary – or even medieval – culture. Although Stalin's 1940s reforms briefly revived Latin teaching in a small number of prestigious schools,[32] most Soviet students – especially in the humanities – encountered only a minimal set of memorized phrases. For this generation, "Latin" effectively meant a handful of maxims. Khitruk draws on this context: the sages speak solely in such formulaic sayings, which literally fall from the sky as heavy stone monuments.

More broadly, the episode can be read as a critique of the Soviet school system itself – one oriented toward the rote repetition of authorized formulas rather than encouraging students to ask questions and to dare to seek unknown, even forbidden, truths.

The film also playfully ridicules Ovid's story itself, emphasizing its long afterlife as a Latin text taught and memorized for centuries. This is underscored by the fact that detailed knowledge of the Icarus myth is unnecessary for the understanding of the film – especially since Daedalus, the ingenious father and maker of the wings, is absent from Khitruk's version. Rather than engaging with Ovid's Latin narrative, Khitruk draws on the most familiar, stereotypical kernel of the myth: a reckless young man who flies too high and falls, stripped of both his literary context and his paternal guide.

The narrative remains clear and accessible even to young children, despite the inclusion of phrases in a foreign and archaic language. By staging a stark contrast between the youthful Icarus and the ageing, authoritarian circle of sages, the film highlights the value of daring to be different and the courage of non-conformity – sentiments that resonated strongly with the more radical moods of younger audiences. At the same time, the film speaks directly to adults through its critique of ossified "guardians of tradition." By juxtaposing Icarus' naïve yet persistent attempts to defy imposed limits with the sages' rigid, self-authorizing maxims, Khitruk invites viewers to reflect not

---

31 Pontieri, *Fëdor Khitruk*, 108.

32 For bibliographic references on this initiative, see Paulouskaya, "Learning Myths in the Soviet School," 174–75.

only on personal choices and forms of self-expression, but also on who defines the rules of acceptable behavior – and how such authority can quietly harden into a mechanism of everyday oppression.

SATIRE AS A WEAPON: SOCIAL CORRECTION AND IDEOLOGICAL ALLEGORY

Moving beyond the elaborate reinterpretations of the ancient myth, classical antiquity was also employed in Soviet animation in a more straightforward, stereotypical manner. Satirical films exemplify this approach, often drawing on classical references to comment on contemporary social or ideological issues. Given the prolific nature of satire in Soviet animation, which began its substantial presence in the mid-1950s and was especially popular in the 1960s and 1970s,[33] the following will focus on a single film as an illustrative case of how classical motifs can function primarily as a reference point rather than as the subject of in-depth engagement.

SLAPDASH, DIR. VOLODYMYR HONCHAROV, 1977

Tiap-Lyap [Slapdash], directed by Volodymyr Honcharov (1940–2022), a prolific Ukrainian animator, and produced at the KyivNaukFilm studio, is a short 10-minute satirical film that addresses social vices, particularly attitudes towards work. Although not the most dominant theme, this subject remained a persistent feature of Soviet humorous productions from the 1960s through the 1980s, as Maria Vorobyeva convincingly demonstrates.[34] Contributing to this discourse, *Slapdash* presents a straightforward narrative built around a single recurring flaw – irresponsibility and carelessness in labor – and structures its story as a time-travel adventure.

The protagonist, a builder assigned by an engineer to build a new structure – in this case, a small beer kiosk, a notable detail given that alcohol abuse was an even more frequent target of satire[35] – completes the task hastily and incompetently, producing a structure that is crooked and on the verge of collapse (1:09). When the engineer confronts him, the builder flees and embarks on a comic journey through various historical epochs, moving from the contemporary period to the distant past.

---

33   Borodin, *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia*, 375–80; Pontieri, *Soviet Animation*, 65–69.

34   Vorobyeva, "Soviet policy," 159–64.

35   Ibid., 159–66.

He reappears in successive eras – helping to construct the Leaning Tower in Renaissance Italy, building a temple in antiquity, and setting a trap for mammoths in prehistoric times. However, in every age, his careless attitude persists: he looks for ways to do less work and sleep longer. Each time, he narrowly escapes execution for his dangerous workmanship, only to be carried further back in time. Nearly roasted alive by a prehistoric tribe, he is finally eaten by a dinosaur, which itself turns into a skeleton and crumbles to dust, leaving behind only a scrap of paper marked *brak* ("defective") amid a pile of bones. Awakening from this nightmare, he returns to the present, where he finds himself surrounded by fellow builders who collectively condemn his shoddy work. The film closes with a clear moral: the value of diligence and professional integrity.

The film is drawn in a sketch-like style, using a limited color palette that enhances its resemblance to a rough drawing. Most scenes lack a detailed background, presenting only the protagonist and his construction against a white backdrop. The light, brisk musical score adds tension and dynamism to the narrative. The film contains no spoken dialogue, relying instead on vocalizations and mimicked "languages" that alternately resemble Russian, Italian, or Greek. The only distinctly articulated and repeated word is *brak*, which underscores the central theme of poor-quality work.

This time-travel technique, used to illustrate the persistence of certain human vices across centuries and their rootedness in human nature, was a popular device in Soviet satirical animation. For instance, Vakhtang Bakhtadze, who already worked with Mujiri on *The Argonauts* and was the author of the classical mythology–inspired animated satire *Narcissus* (1964), employed a similar approach in his later work *O moda, moda!* [Oh, Fashion, Fashion!] from 1968. This film satirizes vanity and the excessive pursuit of beauty, showing that people's obsession with appearance and changing trends has remained constant throughout history. Greek and Roman antiquity also appears briefly in the film, though the director devotes much greater attention to other historical periods.

Examining *Slapdash*, it appears that the historical periods chosen for representation were selected for their recognizability, enabling the filmmakers to highlight distinct architectural styles and human appearances. Notably, Renaissance Italy is represented through an iconic structure – the Leaning Tower of Pisa. However, this strategy is not applied in the depiction of ancient Greece. Antiquity is presented more generically, as a land of temples, statues, and Olympic games, without reference to any specific or identifiable monument.

Speaking in a quasi-Greek language, a bearded architect presents a plan for a temple adorned with male and female caryatids, assigning the protagonist his task (fig. 12–13). In a solemn, elevated tone, he declaims a string of words that mimic ancient Greek. Although nonsensical, the speech is constructed from recognizable Greek-derived roots and morphemes; its rhythmic contour loosely recalls the dignified cadence of ancient verse, evoking the spirit rather than the exact metrics of classical hexameter (4:19–4:32). Together with the architect's oratorical delivery, this pseudo-language effectively conjures the atmosphere of an imagined ancient Greece.

Male and female sculptural figures are delivered to the protagonist, who must install them as supports for the temple. However, he pays little attention to how the pieces should be assembled, carelessly mixing male and female caryatids. His focus drifts from the construction itself to the sensuality of the statues' naked bodies (4:37–5:02). Actually, this presence of naked torsos, although very common for ancient culture, was exceptional for Soviet prudish culture. It was also a sign that the film was intended for an adult audience, as including such elements in a work primarily aimed at children would have been rather unlikely.

In this episode, the worker appears unusually cheerful and even exuberant: unlike in his other tasks, he takes evident pleasure in his work and shows no desire to rush. He dances with a female torso, gazing at it with admiration (fig. 14; 4:43–4:47), and then compares himself to the muscular body of a male caryatid, flexing his own arms in imitation and obvious delight. Nevertheless, his playful, self-indulgent attitude leads to error – the structure turns out uneven, and the misaligned caryatids fail to support the roof in a horizontal position (fig. 15; 5:05).

After finishing, we see that the female figure lacks her arms, resembling the familiar image of ancient statues preserved in museums – fragmentary and incomplete – and making a clear visual reference to the most famous among them, the Venus de Milo. It seems that the worker has constructed "ancient beauty" according to the aesthetic norms of his own time, accustomed as he is to the image of a handless Venus.

Further visual stereotypes of ancient Greece are also present: soldiers wearing characteristic helmets and shields escort the worker to his place of judgment (5:11–5:17). The architect delivers an accusatory speech, repeatedly using the invented word *brakodelos* – meaning "defect-maker" – before a mass of male figures who respond with enthusiastic shouts (5:25–5:31). The condemned builder is placed on what resembles an altar. At the same time, an executioner or priest
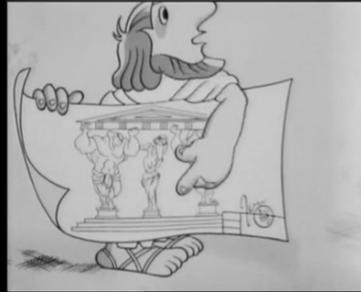
Figs. 12–13. The ancient Greek architect assigning a task to the protagonist in *Slapdash*, dir. Volodymyr Honcharov, 1977 (4:17; 4:27).

Figs. 14–15. Construction of the ancient temple and its completed form in *Slapdash*, dir. Volodymyr Honcharov, 1977 (4:50; 5:06).

invokes a deity with the exclamation "Σοφόκλε!" [Sophocles!] – most likely seeking divine permission to decide whether the culprit should live or die (5:37). The priest's gestures, reminiscent of Roman emperors during gladiatorial games, suggest this decision, as he raises or lowers his finger. The scene is accompanied by a harp-playing woman and a soldier sharpening his dagger. At the very moment the weapon is about to strike, the worker manages to escape, sprinting away together with a group of athletes running through a stadium, then along a road lined with statues and temples. Finally, he crashes into the figure of a Discobolus, which a sculptor is just completing – thus bringing the ancient Greek episode of the film to an end (5:57–5:59).

To sum up, the Greek references in this film are constructed almost entirely from familiar cultural stereotypes. Most center on beauty and artistic achievement – particularly architecture and sculpture – accompanied by motifs of nakedness and the idealized human body, which also evoke the culture of athletics. Additionally, themes such as democracy and the military evoke those periods when Greek city-states held significant influence in the Mediterranean world. The altar and the executioner allude to the Greek religion and ritual, while the invocation of Sophocles brings theater into the picture. Taken together, these elements form quite a long list of features typically associated with ancient Greece in popular imagination. Although none of the images are tied to specific historical figures or events, except for the iconic Venus de Milo, the film assembles a multifaceted – if thoroughly stereotypical in its Eurocentric and homogenizing form – image of antiquity.

In the context of the film's central theme – work and its results, particularly in architecture – antiquity and the Renaissance represent cultures that achieved unique and enduring accomplishments. Reinforced by the motif of sculpture, this emphasis evokes classical or canonical art: creations first produced by the ancients and later rediscovered during the Renaissance.

Against this backdrop, the Soviet group of co-workers who condemn the protagonist may evoke, however loosely, the idea of a Greek civic assembly: their gathering echoes the earlier depiction of an ancient Greek meeting, though not precisely. Rather than functioning as a democratic forum, the scene resembles a "circle of shame," with the crowd surrounding the main character and voicing their collective disdain. At the same time, the Soviet architect appears more as a bureaucrat than a creative figure, and neither he nor the other workers function as positive exemplars. They, too, become objects of satire, suggesting that their collective behavior represents persecution rather

than justice – an impression reinforced by its echoes of executions across different historical periods. From this perspective, the film recalls the Soviet hit *Afonia* (directed by Georgy Daneliya, 1975), in which the main character, publicly shamed by colleagues for misbehavior, alcoholism, and neglect of duties – all highly topical themes at the time, as Vorobyeva demonstrated – elicits strong audience sympathy. In both cases, the figures of the collective or "righteous" individuals appear far less vivid or appealing than the protagonist.

We may conclude that, as a humorous piece, *Slapdash* was designed to ridicule the negligent worker, shaming similar individuals and discouraging careless behavior. Laughter functions as a tool of social correction, symbolically excluding the flawed worker from the community of diligent professionals and reinforcing a standard of conscientious labor. At the same time, the film subtly criticizes Soviet oversight, exposing empty bureaucratic procedures and a lack of genuine motivation or appreciation for work. Symbolically, the building the worker was assigned to construct – and failed to complete correctly, a small beer stand – reflects the deeper, systemic problems faced by Soviet workers of the time: grand ideological promises clashing with trivial, poorly planned projects; shoddy workmanship; and everyday labor redirected toward minor, consumptive tasks rather than meaningful social needs. In miniature, the unfinished kiosk humorously embodies a system in which responsibility is loudly proclaimed, but the tools, resources, and conditions to realize it are consistently lacking.

CONCLUSIONS

The animated films discussed here were created across various Soviet republics and engage with classical mythology as a shared cultural foundation. Despite their regional diversity, it is challenging to identify significant differences in how they treat antiquity. This similarity can be explained by a common intellectual tradition rooted in European-style education, which continued to shape the creative imagination of Soviet artists long after the formal structures of classical learning had disappeared.

None of these films aims for a faithful retelling of ancient myths. Unlike other Soviet animations inspired by classical mythology – for instance, the cycle directed by Aleksandra Snezhko Blotskaia, whose primary goal is to narrate the myth – the works discussed here use myth as a flexible narrative framework for commenting on contemporary life. Each work employs satire to address specific social

flaws or cultural phenomena, yet often contains additional, more ambiguous layers of meaning that could be read as veiled commentary on the Soviet system itself. This polyphonic quality turns each film into a kind of palimpsest – open to multiple interpretations depending on the viewer's experience, knowledge, and sensibility.

For most of these works, no prior knowledge of classical mythology is required to follow the plot or grasp the central message. An exception may be *Pygmalion* by Arnolds Burovs, where deeper engagement with Ovid's text enriches the interpretive possibilities. The majority of Soviet satirical films were aimed at adult audiences, reflecting the genre's intellectual nature, while even the ostensibly children's films or films for crossover audiences depart from simple didacticism, inviting reflection on creativity, conformity, and personal freedom.

Visually, the hand-drawn films share a distinctive stylistic simplicity, with minimal detail and precise lines that focus attention on key ideas and emotions rather than elaborate depiction. This economy of form strengthens their allegorical and conceptual character, allowing the visual language to serve as a direct expression of the film's central idea.

Taken together, these animated reinterpretations of antiquity reveal how the classical past functioned not as a static cultural inheritance, but as a living and adaptable medium for exploring Soviet modernity – its contradictions, ideals, and subtle forms of resistance. Through humor, irony, and invention, the animators transformed myth into a mirror of their own time, rendering the ancient world a space for reflection, critique, and creative freedom.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Filmography

Argonavtebi / Kolkhida [The Argonauts / Colchis]. Director: Lado Mujiri. USSR 1936. Georgian State Film Industry. Available online: Georgian version available online at https://archive.gov.ge/en/lado-gudiashvili-125-1; Russian version available online at https://www.culture.ru/live/movies/19066/argonavty-kolkhida.

Ikar i mudretsy [Icarus and the Sages]. Director: Fyodor Khitruk. USSR 1976. Soyuzmultfilm. Available online on YouTube.

Pygmalion. Director: Arnolds Burovs. USSR 1967. Riga Film Studio. Available online at en.kinorium.com.

Tiap-Lyap [Slapdash]. Director Volodymyr Honcharov. USSR 1977. Kyiv-NaukFilm studio. Available online at https://youtu.be/fawd4DEPazo.

Literature

Akiner, Shirin. *The Formation of Kazakh Identity. From Tribe to Nation-state.* London: The Royal Institute for International Affairs, 1995.

Aleshintsev, Ivan. *Istoriia gimnazicheskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii (XVIII i XIX vek)* [The History of Gymnasium Education in Russia (18th and 19th Centuries)]. St Petersburg: izdanie O. Bogdanovoi, 1919.

Barker, Georgina. *SPQR in the USSR: Elena Shvarts's Classical Antiquity.* Cambridge: Legenda / Modern Humanities Research Association, 2021.

Borodin, Grigory. *Gosudarstvo i animatsiia (1926–1962)* [State and Animation (1926–1962)]. Moscow: Soyuzmultfilm, 2022.

But, Ekaterina. "Prometheus in Russia: From Revolution to Dissidence." *Classical Receptions Journal* 14, no. 4 (October 2022): 533–53.

Dave, Bhavna. *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity and Power.* London: Routledge, 2007.

Eco, Umberto. "The Frames of Comic 'Freedom.'" In *Carnival!*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok, 1–9. Berlin: Mouton, 1984.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921–1934.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Gérin, Annie. *Devastation and Laughter: Satire, Power, and Culture in the Early Soviet State, 1920s–1930s.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.

Gogolev, Anatolii. *Proiskhozhdenie naroda sakha i ego traditsionnaia kul'tura* [The Origin of the Sakha People and Their Traditional Culture]. Yakutsk: SVFU, 2018.

Greenwood, Emily. "Afterword: Omni-Local Classical Receptions." *Classical Receptions Journal* 5, no. 3 (2013): 354–61.

James, Paula. *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion on Screen: In Pursuit of the Perfect Woman.* London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Johnson, Keith Leslie. *Jan Švankmajer.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017.

Kappeler, Andreas. *The Russian Empire: A Multi-ethnic History.* London: Routledge, 2001.

Khitruk, Fëdor. *Professiia – animator* [Profession – Animator]. Moscow: Gayatri, 2007.

Kryzhanovsky, Boris. *Arnold Burovs.* Moscow: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR, Vsesoiuznoe-tvorcheskoe obiedinenie "Kinotsentr," 1990.

More, Brookes, trans. *Ovid: Metamorphoses.* Boston: Cornhill Publishing Co., 1922.

Mujiri, Jimshir. "Mogonebebi Šemok'medsa da Mamaze" [Memoirs about a Creator and a Father]. *Kino* 2 (1988): 76–93.

Mujiri, Lado. "'Argonavty': Rezhissër-postanovshchik V. Mujiri" ["The Argonauts": Film-director V. Mujiri]. *Zaria vostoka* 96 (24 April 1936): 3.

Okladnikov, Aleksei. *Yakutia before its Incorporation into the Russian State.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970.

Paulouskaya, Hanna. "Steht Herakles für den Westen? Oder: die griechisch-römische Antike im sowjetischen Animationsfilm." In *Verjüngte Antike: Griechisch-römischer Mythologie und Historie in zeitgenössischen Kinder- und Jugendmedien*, edited by Markus Janka and Michael Stierstorfer, 287–312. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017.

——. "Learning Myths in the Soviet School." In *Our Mythical Education: The Reception of Classical Myth Worldwide in Formal Education, 1900–2020*, edited by Lisa Maurice, 155–87. Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Wydział "Artes Liberales" Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2021.

——. "Soviet Argonauts: Sailing to the Coasts of Colchis in Soviet Film." In *Antiquity in Progress: Intermedial Presences of Ancient Mediterranean Cultures in the Modern World*, edited by Markus Stachon et al., 31–48. Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2025.

——. "Animated Greek Myths in the Soviet Union." In *Transcultural Influences in Soviet and Russian Animation, 1917–2020,* edited

by Sabina Amanbayeva and Olga Blackledge. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, forthcoming.

Pavlenko, Aneta. "Linguistic Russification in the Russian Empire." *Russian Linguistics: International Journal for the Study of Russian and other Slavic Languages* 35, no. 3 (2011): 331–50.

Pontieri, Laura. *Soviet Animation and the Thaw of the 1960s: Not Only for Children*. New Barnet: John Libbey Publishing Ltd, 2012.

———. *Fëdor Khitruk: A Look at Soviet Animation through the Work of One Master*. Oxford: Taylor and Francis Group, 2024.

Read, Christopher. *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia: The Intelligentsia and the Transition from Tsarism to Communism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990.

Stead, Henry, and Hanna Paulouskaya. "Classics, Crisis and the Soviet Experiment to 1939." In *Classicising Crisis: The Modern Age of Revolutions and the Greco-Roman Repertoire*, edited by Barbara Goff and Michael Simpson, 128–47. London: Routledge, 2021.

Sulprizio, Chiara. "Playing with Greek Mythology in Russian Animation." In *Playful Classics: Classical Reception as a Creative Process*, edited by Juliette Harrisson, Martin Lindner, and Luis Unceta Gómez, 231–44. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025.

Thompson, Ewa M. *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*. London: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Venzher, Natalia, and Georgii Reisner. "Pigmalion." In *Rossiiskaia animatsiia v bukvakh i figurakh* [Russian Animation in Letters and Figures], database available at www.animator.ru/db/.

Vorobyeva, Maria. "Soviet Policy in the Sphere of Humour and Comedy: The Case of Satirical Cinemagazine *Fitil*." *European Journal of Humour Research* 9, no. 1 (2021): 155–74.

ABSTRACT

Satirical and parodic animation – one of the prominent genres in Soviet film production – frequently drew on classical antiquity. Greek and Roman mythology provided not only narrative frameworks but also culturally familiar symbols through which animators could address social vices, ideological contradictions, and collective anxieties. This paper examines four case studies produced in Georgia, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine: one from 1936 and three from the late 1960s and 1970s. These films either adapt specific ancient myths or engage more broadly with the idea of ancient civilization, demonstrating the diverse strategies through which classical heritage was appropriated across different Soviet republics. Although antiquity itself is never the object of satire, the comic effect relies on a shared cultural repertoire, including the audience's general familiarity with mythological themes. By juxtaposing the 1936 production with films from the 1960s and 1970s, the study traces the shifting functions of classical material in Soviet animation and highlights the medium's capacity to negotiate contemporary concerns through humorous reworkings of the ancient past.

Smejanje z antiko v sovjetski animaciji

IZVLEČEK

Satira in parodija v animiranem filmu – ki je bil eden pomembnejših žanrov v sovjetski filmski produkciji – sta pogosto črpali iz klasične antike. Grška in rimska mitologija sta zagotavljali ne le pripovedne okvire, temveč tudi kulturno prepoznavne simbole, s katerimi so animatorji lahko obravnavali družbene slabosti, ideološka protislovja in kolektivne strahove. Članek obravnava štiri primere, posnete v Gruziji, Latviji, Rusiji in Ukrajini: enega iz leta 1936 in tri iz poznih 1960-ih in 1970-ih. Ti filmi bodisi prilagajajo določene antične mite bodisi se posvečajo širši ideji antične civilizacije, pri čemer prikazujejo raznolike strategije odnosa do klasičnega izročila v različnih sovjetskih republikah. Čeprav antika sama po sebi nikoli ni predmet satire, temelji komični učinek na skupnem kulturnem repertoarju ter na splošni prepoznavnosti mitoloških tem s strani občinstva. S primerjavo produkcije iz leta 1936 s filmi iz 60. in 70. let 20. stoletja razprava sledi spreminjajočim se funkcijam klasičnega izročila v sovjetski animaciji in poudarja zmožnost medija za obravnavo sodobnih vprašanj prek humornih predelav antične preteklosti.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: klasična recepcija, sovjetska animacija, satirični filmi, grška in rimska mitologija, parodija