Transcr(é)ation

The Atmospheric Poetics of Not Belonging
Three Adaptations by Andrei Khrzhanovsky
Poétique atmosphérique de non appartenance
Trois adaptations d'Andrei Khrzhanovsky

Polina Rybina

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Résumé de l'article

Le réalisateur russe de films d'animation Andrei Khrzhanovsky (né en 1939) a connu une carrière cinématographique très réussie pendant plus de cinquante ans (son animation a été évoquée dans les monographies et articles de Maureen Furness, Laura Pontieri, Maya Balakirsky Katz, Sergei Kapkov, entre autres). Khrzhanovsky utilise différentes techniques d'animation cellulosique (animation dessinée et découpée) et est célèbre pour l'adaptation de prose et de poésie classiques à travers des images trouvées – la correspondance, les journaux et les dessins des auteurs (Le Cycle Pouchkine, 1975—1987 ; Un chat et demi, 2002). Les images trouvées prennent souvent la forme de citations visuelles de l'art européen. Dans les films d'animation L'Harmonica de verre (1968), Un lion à barbe grise (1995, une adaptation du conte de Tonino Guerra) et Un long voyage (1997), Khrzhanovsky utilise des images de l'art italien pour créer des effets atmosphériques, qui positionnent un artiste comme « not belonging » (un étranger). Dans L'Harmonica de verre, des images de la Renaissance et de l'art surréaliste s'approprient l'anticonformisme politique de l'artiste : « belonging » renvoie aux récits dominants de l'idéologie parrainée par l'État, tandis que « not belonging » renvoie à différentes vérités alternatives d'un étranger. Dans Un lion à barbe grise, Khrzhanovsky adapte le conte de Tonino Guerra sur un cirque italien, et dans Un long voyage, il réutilise des images et des dessins du cinéma d'auteur (Federico Fellini) pour commenter d'autres questions du voyage artistique et de la liberté. Tout en effaçant l'importance du contexte politique à prendre dans son sens existentiel, Khrzhanovsky continue d'utiliser des effets atmosphériques pour dépeindre un artiste comme un étranger. Cet essai se penche sur différentes manipulations de la mise en scène et du mouvement, qui influencent les « sentiments atmosphériques » des personnages et du spectateur. En me concentrant sur quatre critères de « l'alphabet corporel ressenti » d'Hermann Schmitz, deux associés aux espaces (remplis ou vides, condensés ou non condensés) et les deux autres aux types de mouvement (centripète ou centrifuge ; calme ou excité), je m'intéresserai à la dynamique des effets atmosphériques dans l'animation de Khrzhanovsky qui positionne l'artiste comme non-appartenant.

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The Atmospheric Poetics of Not Belonging – Three Adaptations by Andrei Khrzhanovsky

POLINA RYBINA

Lomonosov Moscow State University

ABSTRACT

*A Russian animated film director Andrei Khrzhanovsky (b. 1939) has made a highly successful cinematic career spanning more than fifty years (his animation discussed in the monographs and articles of Maureen Furness, Laura Pontieri, Maya Balakirsky Katz, Sergei Kapkov, among others). Khrzhanovsky works in different cel animation techniques (drawn and cut-out animation) and is famous for the adaptation of classic prose and poetry through found images – the authors' correspondence, diaries and drawings (*The Pushkin Cycle*, 1975–1987;* A Cat and a Half*, 2002). Frequently, the found images take the form of visual quotations from European art. In the animated films* Glass Harmonica *(1968),* A Grey-Bearded Lion *(1995, an adaptation of Tonino Guerra's tale) and* Long Journey *(1997), Khrzhanovsky uses images of Italian art to shape atmospheric effects**, *which position an artist as "not belonging". In* Glass Harmonica *appropriated images of Renaissance and surrealist art help to elaborate on the artist's political nonconformism: "belonging" refers to the dominant narratives of state-sponsored ideology while "not belonging" (Mikhail Bakhtin's position outside; Alexei Yurchak's living 'vnye') – to different alternative truths of an outsider.*

In A Grey-Bearded Lion *Khrzhanovsky adapts Tonino Guerra's tale about an Italian circus, and in* Long Journey *repurposes auteur cinema images and drawings (Federico Fellini) to comment on other issues of the artistic journey and freedom. While erasing the significance of the political context in a more existential sense, Khrzhanovsky continues to use atmospheric effects to portray an artist as an outsider. This essay delves into different manipulations of the mise-en-scène and the movement, which influence the characters' and the viewer's "atmospheric feelings". Focusing on four criteria from Hermann Schmitz's "felt-bodily alphabet", two associated with spaces (filled or empty, condensed or non-condensed) and the other two – with types of movement (centripetal or centrifugal; quite or excited), I will look at the dynamics of atmospheric effects in Khrzhanovsky's animation that positions an artist as not belonging.*

Introduction

A Russian animated film director Andrei Khrzhanovsky has made a highly successful cinematic career spanning more than fifty years. He works in different cel animation techniques (drawn and cut-out animation) and is famous for the reworkings of classic prose and poetry through found images—the authors' correspondence, diaries and drawings. Focusing on Khrzhanovsky's creative dialogue with European art and—mainly—the images of Italy (*Glass Harmonica*, 1968*; A Grey-Bearded Lion*, 1995; and *Long Journey*, 1997), this essay elaborates on the director's atmospheric poetics, which helps position an artist as a maverick.

According to Maya Balakirsky Katz, "Andrei Khrzhanovsky and Yuri Norstein gave birth to a new genre in Soviet animation with the use of formalist narrative scripts, nonverbal soundtracks, and evocative musical scores[1]." Khrzhanovsky's loose, sometimes almost non-narrative structures seem more concerned with the viewers' emotional and intellectual response than the continuity of actions (this is also characteristic of Norstein's animation, according to Maureen Furness). The films challenge the viewer visually and insist on the free association of images, their recombination and reconstruction. Khrzhanovsky[2] is aware of his animation developing according to a general pattern when each next film elaborates on the motifs of the previous ones: images drift, recombine and associate with each other across film borders.

Through animation, Khrzhanovsky addresses the experience of constant change—ways of escaping fixity and control, achieving (at least) inner freedom. Animated films become metaphors for the non-linearity and unpredictability of human existence. *The Pushkin Cycle* (1975–1987) is a series of successive films devoted to episodes of the poet's creative life and biography (*A Wondrous*

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[1] Balakirsky Katz, Maya, *Drawing the Iron Curtain: Jews and the Golden Age of Soviet Animation*, New Brunswick, London: Rutgers University Press, 2016, p. 26.

[2] Andrei Khrzhanovsky is the author of essays on his own animation: Khrzhanovsky, Andrei, "Vernost` izbrannomu puti" [Faithfulness to the Chosen Path, In Russ]. *Mudrost' vymysla. Mastera mul'tiplikacii o sebe i svoyom iskusstve* [The Wisdom of Fiction. Animated Film Directors on Their Life and Work, In Russ], edited by Sergei Asenin, Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1983; Khrzhanovsky, Andrei, "Byvayut strannye sblizheniya" [History Does Repeat Itself Strangely, In Russ], Kinovedcheskie zapiski, n°42, 1999, pp. 165-174. The director also edited a volume devoted to scriptwriter Gennady Shpalikov (*Glass Harmonica*): *Segodnya vecherom my prishli k Shpalikovu. Vospominaniya, dnevniki, pis'ma, poslednij scenarij* [That Evening We Came to Shpalikov: Memoirs, Journals, Letters, the Last Script, In Russ], edited by Andrei Khrzhanovsky, Moscow: Ruthenia, 2018.

Morning[3], 1975; *I float to you on my remembrance*[4], 1977; *And we shall meet again*, 1980; *Autumn*, 1982; *Beloved time of mine*, 1987). The films grow out of one another, transforming not only the imagery of Pushkin's sketches and marginal drawings but also the director's previous usages of these drawings in earlier films, children's drawings on the topics of Pushkin's poetry (*A Wondrous Morning*), creating an animated universe with principal instability and mutability, protean potential where, according to Erwin Panofsky, "the very concept of stationary existence is completely abolished[5]." The same stylistic approach is evident in films animating the lives of Russian / Soviet cultural personae that "do not belong" because of different conflicts with the dominant narratives: poet Joseph Brodsky (*A Cat and a Half*, 2002; *A Room and a Half*, 2009), composer Dmitry Shostakovich, theatre director Vsevolod Meyerhold (*The Nose, Or the Conspiracy of Mavericks*, 2020), and artist Ülo Sooster (*Landscape with Juniper*, 1987*)*.

Thematically, Khrzhanovsky elaborates both on the early Romantic myths of creative independence (artists autonomous from the State, the establishment, the crowd and even from death—when the later films get a more existential turn), and on the situation of a Soviet artist. This situation can be interpreted with Alexei Yurchak's notion of living "vnye". Using Mikhail Bakhtin's term *vnyenakhodimost'* (*position outside*), Yurchak writes about the last Soviet generation and its specific way of interaction with the sphere of politics—interaction via invisibility, which led to freedom in everyday life and even artistic fulfilment. Yurchak delves into Soviet cultural psychology, which did not stop existing with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Khrzhanovsky, who started with more political statements (*Glass Harmonica*) and drifted towards existential declarations, shapes his characters according to a psycho-cultural principle of artistic not belonging, or living "vnye," which becomes a response particularly suited for creativity.

In terms of adaptation practices, the three films I will discuss are very different. *A Grey-Bearded Lion* is an adaptation proper, a reworking of Tonino Guerra's tale. *Glass Harmonica* and *Long Journey* should be more accurately described as appropriations building a nonlinear plot out of, as Kate Newell puts

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[3] The titles of animated films—quotations from Pushkin's poems—are given in translations by Irina Henderson and R.H. Morrison, Thomas B. Shaw, James Falen as published in: *The Complete Works of Alexander Pushkin: In 15 v*, Downham Market: Milner and Company Limited, 2002-2003.

[4] A line from the poem *From a Letter to Ya. N. Tolstoy* translated by the author of this essay.

[5] Panofsky, Erwin, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures," *Three Essays on Style*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995, p. 104.

it, "narrative moments, reference points and iconography[6]" of previous texts and not adapting a narrative entity of any literary predecessor. *Glass Harmonica* appropriates the images of classic paintings and their well-known traits (for instance, De Chirico compositions), and *Long Journey*—plots and images of Fellini's films and drawings[7]. What unites all transpositions is the atmospheric poetics of Khrzhanovsky who centres the three films on "atmospheric feelings" of / around a not belonging artist. As David MacFadyen reminds us in his book *Yellow Crocodiles and Blue Oranges: Russian Animated Film since World War II*, Soviet animated cinema is best analyzed through its shaping of a "sentient subject, wedged among objects[8]," the engagement of an intuiting body with the material world, emotional feelings about it, and the significance of "shared corporeal experience" (2005, p. 10) occurring between "the fleshly minimal units" (*Ibid*., p. 23-24) of society. His phenomenological approach unpacks numerous ways in which Soviet animation shapes meanings through physicality, feelings, and affectively charged spaces.

Among the adaptation scholars[9] who take atmospheres into account, I will name particularly David Richard (*Film Phenomenology and Adaptation*, 2021). Richard prefers the term "mood" (for him synonymous to *Stimmung*[10]), since he

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[6] Newell, Kate, *Expanding Adaptation Networks: From Illustration to Novelization*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 8.

[7] For more on different strategies of appropriations see: Sanders, Julie, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, New York, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

[8] MacFadyen, David, *Yellow Crocodiles and Blue Oranges: Russian Animated Film since World War II*, Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, p. 6.

[9] Adaptations, as Linda Hutcheon has classically demonstrated, represent "repetition with variation" (*A Theory of Adaptation*, London, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 4). Atmospheres, or moods emanated by texts, are varied while the texts morph into their new versions. Hutcheon touches upon atmospheres and moods, while discussing music that "evokes emotions" (*Ibid*., p. 11) in adaptations, or creates the contrast between events and their musical treatment: "the contrast between her death and that festive atmosphere actually makes her murder all the more chilling" (*Ibid*., p. 156).

[10] Rick Warner specifies: "Imperfectly translated as 'mood,' 'atmosphere,' and 'attunement' all at once, the German term *Stimmung*, as Robert Sinnerbrink explains, has to do with the disclosure of an aesthetic world infused with affective qualities that attune the spectator's engagement" (*The Rebirth of Suspense: Slowness and Atmosphere in Cinema*, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2024, p. 22). For a closer look at *Stimmungen*, atmospheres, and moods see: Thonhauser, Gerhard, "Beyond Mood and Atmosphere: A Conceptual History of the Term *Stimmung*," *Philosophia*, vol. 49, 2021, pp. 1247–1265. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11406-020-00290-7#citeas (accessed 7 January 2025).

relies upon Carl Plantinga's ideas of "art moods[11]" (among other sources) and suggests, for instance, a comprehensive reading of pervasive feelings in Michel Gondry's *Mood Indigo* (2013), pointing out such aspects in his approach to moods: "I am particularly interested in how films can more powerfully and comprehensively invite spectators into the experience of their characters by *expressing* existential feelings[12]." Placing the audience *in the mood* for the characters' existential feelings is one of the key aspects for Richard. He also elaborates on a powerful link between atmospheres, moods, and music (the music of Philip Glass creates a "sonic weather" in the films [*Ibid*., p. 88]): "One of the most fascinating functions of film music is its ability to create mood that helps shape the audience's interpretation of the narrative" (*Ibid*., p. 86). For Richard, moods pervade filmic atmospheres and are evoked in the spectators.

In the next part of the essay, I will focus on ways to enrich the adaptation studies' discussion of atmospheres by looking at key neo-phenomenological ideas on them. I will then move on to the poetics of the three animated adaptations / appropriations to show what in their structure and effects might be central if we want to understand the atmospheres that texts emanate. Although music is taken into account, my main focus is on *mise-en-scènes* and movements on the screen.

Moods / *Stimmungen* / Atmospheres: What to focus on While Analyzing Atmospheric Poetics?

The three most prominent figures of atmosphere research are the German philosophers Hermann Schmitz and Gernot Böhme, and an Italian scholar Tonino Griffero. Their ideas are generally looked back on when researchers of different media elaborate on moods, *Stimmungen* and atmospheres in connection to their specific fields, for instance, theatre[13] (Erika Fischer-Lichte) and cinema[14] (Steffen

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[11] Cognitivist theorist Carl Plantinga reminds us that films not only evoke moods in the audience but also express "art moods". An art mood is the film's "affective character or tone" ("Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema", *New Literary History*, vol. 43 [3], 2012, p. 461) that colours our overall experience of the work. Filmmakers create art moods through formal techniques such as lighting, cinematography, or music.

[12] Richard, David, *Film Phenomenology and Adaptation. Sensuous Elaboration*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021, p. 149.

[13] Fischer-Lichte, Erika, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, London, New York: Routledge, 2008.

[14] For more on atmospheres in films see: Sinnerbrink, Robert, "Stimmung: Exploring the Aesthetics of Mood," *Screen*, vol. 53 (2), 2012, pp. 148–63; Pollmann, Inga, *Cinematic Vitalism: Film Theory and the Question of Life*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018, pp. 163–205; Hven, Steffen, *Enacting the Worlds of Cinema*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022; Spadoni, Robert, "What Is

Hven, Julian Hanich, Rick Warner). According to Griffero, as a result of the so-called "affective turn," we are in need of such notions as moods and atmospheres because they better explain "the qualitative-emotional 'more' of our sensible experience[15]." In understanding this experience, we might prefer to focus either on people projecting their moods and states outwards, or on spaces condensing affective qualities that are later experienced by people. Or we might place the emphasis on interactions between persons and places, organisms and environments, which meet halfway: personal moods, being potentialities, are realized through certain outward moods – quasi-things in the world around us.

In the light of the new phenomenology, the mentioned philosophers focus on the felt body (*Leib*), which blurs the dichotomy between the inner and the outer. For Schmitz the human feelings are spatially extended and, in that sense — atmospheric. Griffero elaborates on Schmitz's point: "[A]tmospheres would be *Stimmungen*, or at least the spatial carriers of them understood as feelings covering a non-geometrical spatial extension (Schmitz 1969: 259)" (2019, p. 140). For Schmitz, environments are permeated by moods, quasi-things (*Halbdinge*), which are experienced by our feeling bodies.

Gernot Böhme replaces the focus from the affectively charged milieu to the in-between space, where environments and organisms interact. In this regard, he acknowledges the existence of both subjective factors (for instance, *Stimmungen* as emotional states) and objective factors as "spatially widespread felt reality (Böhme 2013: 157)" (*Ibid.*, p. 139). The emphasis is placed on the mediating force of the atmosphere as a phenomenon in-between environments and human feelings, especially aesthetic feelings (as Hven sums up Böhme's idea, "the atmosphere is what defines the way we feel about ourselves in an environment" [2022, p. 41]). To quote more from Hven on Böhme: "Atmospheres are […] simultaneously out there, we can be caught in an atmosphere, yet at the same time atmospheres are not things; their existence depends on a subject feeling them" (*Idem*).

Griffero also points out the simultaneity of the spatial and the subjective in the understanding of atmospheres: they can emanate from things and have to be

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Film Atmosphere?," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 37 (1), 2020, pp. 48–75; Bruno, Giuliana, *Atmospheres of Projection: Environmentality in Art and Screen Media*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022; Hanich, Julian, "A Plea for Mise en Esprit," *In Media Res*, 27 March, 2023. https://mediacommons.org/imr/content/plea-mise-en-esprit (accessed 8 January 2025); *The Oxford Handbook of Moving Image Atmospheres and Felt Environments*, Steffen Hven and Daniel Yacavone (dir.), New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2025.

[15] Griffero, Tonino, "In a Neo-phenomenological Mood: Stimmungen or Atmospheres?," Studi di estetica, anno XLVII, IV serie, 2/2019 Sensibilia, p. 121.

experienced and felt. Griffero seems to move from the term "atmosphere" to the notion of "mood". As he points out, the mood might be defined as "a felt-bodily condition which the outside world's also felt-bodily dimension resonates into" (2019, p. 121). But his idea of moods, like Böhme's atmosphere, belongs to the sphere of affective in-betweenness: *Stimmung* is both a personal state of mind and an ontological quality of the world. Griffero reminds us:

> *Stimmung* / mood could play again a central role within the cultural debate only if it is no longer understood as an expression of subjective inwardness but as a particular feeling poured out into our pericorporeal space and (quasi-thingly and felt-bodily) experienced by us (*Ibid.*, p. 126).

We interact with our own moods as quasi-things in the outside world.

When we analyze a certain mood, Griffero suggests looking back upon Schmitz's "felt-bodily alphabet" (*Ibid.*, p. 140) that brings forth certain qualities of *Stimmungen*. For the sake of my analysis, I will focus on four aspects of a certain mood / atmospheric feeling: its extension (filled or empty), its directionality (unilateral or all-round, irreversible or reversible in a centripetal or centrifugal way), its centering ("into a condensation sphere and / or an anchoring point"), and its quietness or commotion. For instance, Schmitz looks into the mood of "a true resigned sadness" and points out that it is filled, quiet, unilaterally depressing and "most entirely centred through a sphere of condensation," "not oriented in every direction" (*Idem*).

Moods and atmospheres are not new issues for film theories (Greg M. Smith, Carl Plantinga, Noël Carroll). However, as Hven points out, the ideas of "mood-cue approach" (Smith, 2003), "art moods" (Plantinga, 2012), and moods as a "cognitive bias" (Carroll, 2003) represent "the current dominant cognitivist-internalist comprehension of filmic moods" (2022, p. 42), which has to be revised with the ideas of atmospheres—organic and environmental interactions.

Hven emphasizes the importance of "atmospheric perception" in every act of film viewing, the importance of our attunement with / into the film environment. Films produce "mediated environments," into which different aspects of film poetics are embedded. While we are viewing a film, a resonance occurs between the film material and our felt bodies. We first experience and then comprehend the narrative, which is grounded in this first experiential stage, dependent upon our feeling of atmospheres. Hven introduces a term "atmospheric perception" for the "initial, pre-reflective apprehension of the affective charge of the cinematic diegesis" (*Ibid.*, p. 41) that happens before narrative comprehension.

To design an atmosphere, films use many expressive means, with Hven enumerating: "ambient soundscapes, music, colorations and filters, camera movements, *mise-en-scène*, costuming, makeup, camera framings, rhythmical editing" (*Idem*).

An atmospheric space is created through several stylistic techniques, while being dependent—in my analysis—on film *mise-en-scènes* and different types of movements on the screen, as well as sound. The *mise-en-scène* (setting, costumes, lightning, actors and their performances) shapes our experience of the film space and grounds it. All elements of the *mise-en-scène* are interconnected, but for the sake of my analysis I will focus on how filled or empty the frame is (Schmitz's extension of an atmospheric feeling) and how "centred" it is in terms of composition, how easily the viewer finds a visual "anchor" in the shot. In terms of movement, I will focus on the opposition of stillness (few movements) and mobility, as well as on the kinds of movements that permeate the shot: whether we witness centripetal or centrifugal movement, oriented in many directions or not.

How *Mise-en-scènes* and Movements Shape Atmospheric Effects in Khrzhanovsky's animation?

Atmospheric Geometry: *Glass Harmonica*

The plot of *Glass Harmonica* is built around a romantically tinged opposition between an artist and power (political and financial). This 20-minute film represents a cycle of dramatic repetitions: an artist creates a glass harmonica, which improves people around him, but is defeated by oppressive power—only to return again in a different incarnation and to continue his work of changing the world with his sublime melodies (the film music is by Alfred Schnittke). The *mise-en-scènes* of *Glass Harmonica* rework paintings of many European artists (Botticelli, Bosch, Raphael, Magritte, Arcimboldo, Dürer) to suit the visual narrative (production designers Ülo Sooster and Yuri Nolev-Sobolev). Classic art images become part of half-Dali / half-De Chirico inspired collages and function according to surrealist logic acquiring autonomy from their original contexts. The central conflict is dramatized through the opposition of Italian Renaissance and modernist images, the protagonist being Pinturicchio-esque and the antagonist inspired by Magritte's man in a black overcoat and a bowler hat.

How are the meanings of not belonging vs belonging, freedom vs confinement, artistic vs political shaped through the *mise-en-scène* and movements?

To streamline the analysis, I suggest breaking the film into four parts: the defeat of an artist by a man in black, the portrayal of the town's degradation, the incarnation of the artist, and the town's revival (in spite of the artist being sacrificed for it). From the start, *mise-en-scènes* are stylized through visual motifs: the centred-perspective compositions of streets and other townscapes help create a strong impression of depth and show the impersonal character of power which dominates the space. The distance that visually separates the foreground and the background acquires importance in the episodes when the artist is taken away by a powerful man in black. There is a dynamic relation between the foreground and the background with an emphasis on disappearance of any figure that loses its foreground position. The viewer gets used to the meaning of centred linear perspective as an oppression of any creativity and a demand to conform. When in the third part of the film the artist returns to save the town, he moves from the background to the foreground, redirecting our attention from disappearance to emergence (and giving the opposite feel to linear perspectives that stop emanating atmospheres of oppression and conformity).

The film also shapes its atmospheric effects varying stillness and motion. In the opening episode, immobile images are animated through montage and camera work. Track-in shots and pans add movement to the otherwise motionless spaces that seem empty and frozen. The space starts to transform when parts of the still objects acquire mobility: a cloud moves across the sky and casts a shadow on the musician's face, mechanisms in an automatic drum shift and start the beat. Even a partly animated space is less threatening and domineering. The dynamics between stillness and motion influences the way the main character (inspired by Pinturicchio's *Portrait of a Boy*, c. 1500) is positioned and introduced into the plot. His pensive face is first seen in the middle of a motionless crowd, town people silently witnessing the ruler arrest an old musician and destroy his instrument. What is significant for atmospheric effects is that the stillness of the image is broken by something appearing: the tension dissolves, the image acquires lightness and the viewer focuses on the moving object.

Another noticeable motion is produced by the sound of a glass harmonica. The sound becomes visible: it even helps to materialize a flower. First a light-red starlike object starts moving from the instrument to the crowd, and then, touched by a human hand, it turns into a flower. A single moving object breaking the

oppressive atmosphere is a device used consistently in the film, promoting the idea of not following the mainstream rule, the static behaviour of the crowd. The protagonist goes on to interrupt immobility with a gesture: he picks up the flower, demonstrating an intention to continue the artistic mission. The protagonist reappears later as a grown-up carrying a glass harmonica, the sound of which starts to transform ugliness into beauty.

Figure 1. A frame from Andrei Khrzhanovsky's *Glass Harmonica* (00:02:44)

Another motif of the film established in the first part is associated with the direction of movement—centripetal motion is used as an atmospheric threat. Centrality of the viewer's gaze is constructed by many geometrical forms in the frames. The dynamics between centripetal and centrifugal directions is vital for how tense atmospheres feel. When the crowd rushes to the central square to see the artist perform or attack the tower to take apart its interior, the tension is building up. However, the seemingly opposite centrifugal motions (the gesture of the ruler who scatters gold coins; the crowd leaving the tower) do not bring much release because they are linked to negative actions. Instead of release, they emanate the feeling of chaos that follows the threats of centripetal force. Oscillating between the threatening and the chaotic the viewers look forward to an alternative feeling, a gratifying way out.

The second part of the film postpones any feeling of release by using another technique of atmospheric tension—cluttering the *mise-en-scène* with many objects. The action is set in two equally surreal spaces: a bourgeois home, where works of art are turned into interior pieces, and a bizarre treasury where a character personifying avarice plunges into chests with gold coins. While chasing a single coin, the uncanny creatures turn into grotesque hippos and rhinoceros ready to take part in a crazy carnival organized by a man in black. All animal-like creatures rush once again to the town square, repeating the threatening centripetal motion in a grotesque manner. The protagonist is portrayed as someone distanced from this orgy, someone not belonging to this space and leaving the town. Through a series of empty frames, the viewers feel how his lonely figure emanates the atmosphere of serenity.

The change in *Stimmungen* occurs in the third part of the film when the town experiences resurrection. The starting point is a shot of twelve butterflies in a wooden frame, with one of them unexpectedly taking off. Others follow, and in the next shot, butterflies are seen heading towards the light from a small window in the upper part of the frame. Only one manages to fly out, and this has a significant effect: lots of windows of different shapes and sizes start opening to reveal unattractive town residents. The protagonist strikes the glass tubes of his harmonica, and ugly characters morph into beautiful creatures from the paintings of old masters (Parmigianino's *Madonna with the Long Neck*, c. 1535-1540; Dürer's male portraits). Morphing actualizes one of the previously used devices—the atmospheric effect of a single moving object among many inanimate ones. However, the elevated intonation of this episode is accompanied by comic effects. Digressing from the serious treatment of classic art, production designers appropriate familiar images in comic contexts. Parmigianino's Madonna stops looking at the Christ she is holding in her arms but looks up and out of the window, almost gazes at the viewer; the male portrait raises its hat to greet the imaginary onlooker. The images become more attractive and playful.

The liberating force of a centrifugal movement becomes evident when, resulting from the music, another classic image is animated: Boticelli's Primavera soars into the sky, scattering flowers onto the characters beneath. With many positive changes to the atmosphere of the town, movements towards a central point lose their oppressive vibe. When, after being scattered with flowers, lots of characters take off and fly after Boticelli's Primavera, their communal act is not centripetal: the characters have their own trajectories and move in diverse directions. The free floating of characters is interrupted by the appearance of Magritte's man in black. The rest of the film represents a cycle of repressions and

revivals: a recurrent motif being a hand that picks up the flower repeatedly and finally makes the black ruler disappear. In the closing episode, town residents head to the tower in the square not with destructive, but with constructive intentions (which erase the threat of their yet again centripetal movement).

Atmospheric appropriation of European art is supported by a utopian, idealistic message of the film important for the screenwriter Sergei Shpalikov: the belief in creativity, a poetic feeling able to transform ugliness into beauty. The film's target audience is supposed to appreciate both this message and the principles of construction that make images function anew.

An Aging Organism in an Atmospheric Environment: *A Grey-Bearded Lion*

In the 1990s, Khrzhanovsky is an experienced director with a recognizable style. He moves on to creative collaboration with Tonino Guerra and the reworkings of Italian cinema imagery. Guerra, a renowned scriptwriter who worked with Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Francesco Rosi, embodied for Khrzhanovsky the spirit of Italianicity and the complexity of cinematic narratives devoted to artistic mission, memory, and creativity (Antonioni's *La notte*, 1961; Fellini's *Amarcord*, 1973 and *E la nave va*, 1983). Not belonging to the Soviet mainstream in *Glass Harmonica* crystallizes into not belonging to any popular, mainstream, wide-spread forms of narrated experience in *A Grey-Bearded Lion* and *Long Journey*.

In Khrzhanovsky's 1990s films, the protagonists are fighting not with oppressive ideologies but against age, death, and oblivion. *A Grey-Bearded Lion* is an animated adaptation of Guerra's tale about a circus lion, Amedeo, who grows old and stops being of any value to the travelling circus. The voice-over belongs both to Guerra and to Khrzhanovsky: the Italian original (Guerra) is simultaneously translated into Russian (Khrzhanovsky). The tale is transformed into a very personal story, in which voices of the Italian scriptwriter, the Russian director, the music of Nino Rota, and Astor Piazzolla merge, providing the viewer with allusions to Fellini's *La strada* (1954).

Guerra's tale is three and a half pages long, and the 30-minute film restructures and expands the narrative. The tale centres on the final stage of Amedeo's life when the circus troupe falls apart, and he is set free by Signor Peretti. Most part of Guerra's text captures the process of disintegration, at the same time giving comic details about what happens to two ballerinas, two

jugglers, an acrobat, and a dwarf performer. The aging lion is the last member of the circus with whom Peretti parts, leaving him alone to die.

Structurally different from *Glass Harmonica*, *A Grey-Bearded Lion* reiterates several meaningful motifs. The artist (a circus lion) is accompanied by a "man in black," not a Magritte character but a circus director Signor Peretti who has the power to manage and control Amedeo. Fusing the image of a man in black from Pushkin's *Mozart and Salieri* with the name Amedeo (Mozart's middle name), Khrzhanovsky redirects his attention from politics to the sphere of an artist's crisis. The *mise-en-scènes* reproduce Khrzhanovsky's recognizable iconography: a flight in the sky denotes joy and spiritual revival; chasing after butterflies—inner transformation; a handful of coins / vitamins—"bribing" an artist. In the closing scene, the flock of sheep approaches Amedeo in the same way as the crowd floods the square in *Glass Harmonica* (same camera angle, same tempo).

The space of the film is less geometrically artificial. Naturalistic details contribute to the atmospheric effects emanated by the environment. Amedeo is extremely sensitive to the weather—sunshine, fog, wind, rain, or snow. The state of the atmosphere evokes the melancholy moods of *A Grey-Bearded Lion*, which, as Richard puts it, "invite spectators into the experience" (2021, p. 149) of the characters. At first the film creates a feeling of warmth, even heat: Amedeo is a star at the top of his performing skills, he rides a motorbike and jumps through the burning rings. Orange is established as the dominant colour of the circus lights, Amedeo's beard, and later—the Chinese masks. Circular movements around the ring shape the feeling of repetition, which is the source of energy and delight. Unlike Guerra's story, the film first focuses on success: Amedeo's popularity, circus tours around Italy (with recognizable cities and sights in Pisa and Venice), a world tour (China), and a romantic love with a lioness Lora (a play upon the name of Guerra's Russian-born wife Lora Guerra). However, the structure of the film makes the viewer realize that the scenes of success are not given in "real time"; they exist in retrospect, as complex flashbacks, after which the narration tends to return to the grey circus wagon in which travels old Amedeo. The fact that success is only a memory explains why even the brightest moment of all, Amedeo's memory of the time spent with the lioness, is a bizarre mixture of the memories from his childhood and his adult years (is the lioness a wife or a mother?).
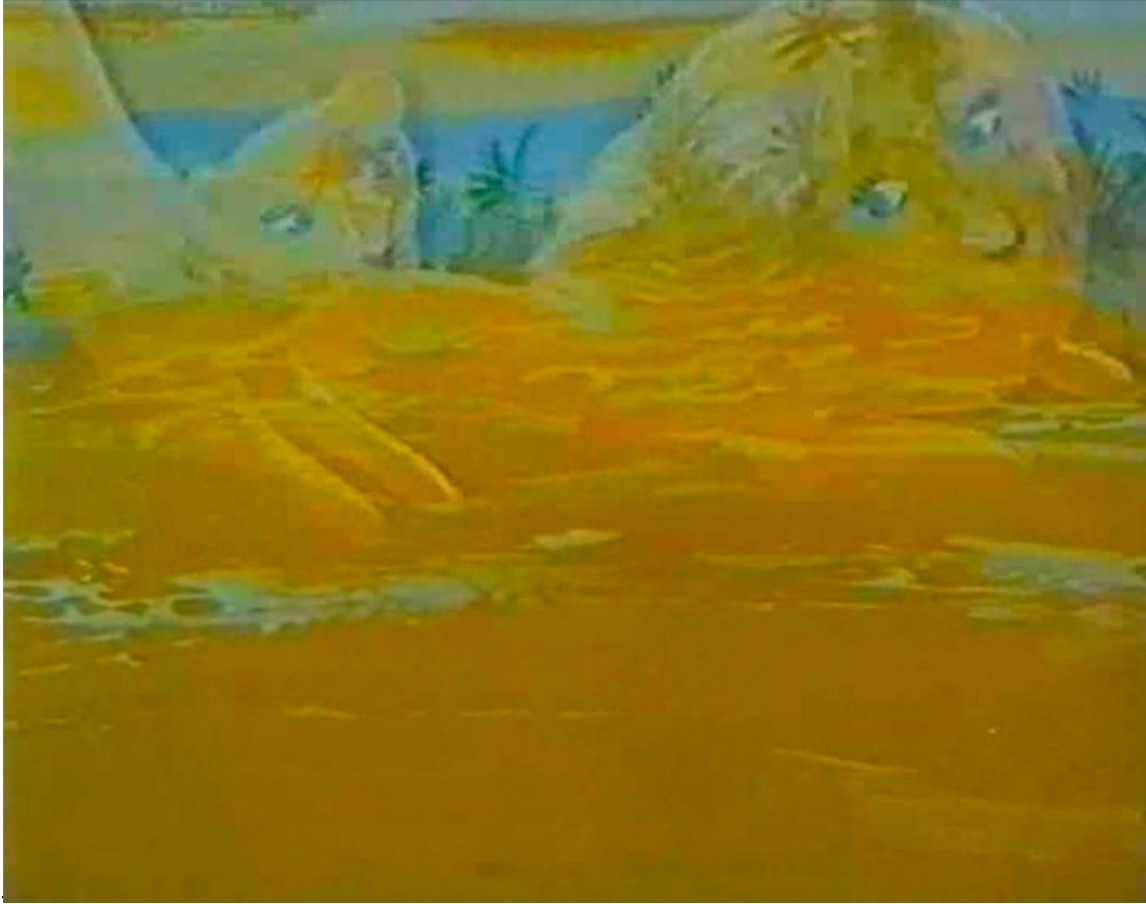
Figure 2. A frame from Andrei Khrzhanovsky's *A Grey-Bearded Lion* (00:08:47)

The "temperature" of the opening *mise-en-scènes* is gradually reduced. An aging artist is portrayed as not belonging to the circus, bustling crowds of audiences, and to his own fellow troupers. His main activity is contemplating the world around: changing seasons and views from the wagon window. Two main devices are used to suggest that Amedeo's life has become less full and joyful: the *mise-en-scènes* represent alternating bad weather conditions; the dominant movement is centrifugal. The camera pans along a landscape surrounded by the fog. Peretti's voice-over explains that from now on, Amedeo will be kept in a cage for children to look at before the performance. The cage appears in the centre of the frame, and children run off one by one when the bells chime for the show to start. Their movement away from the centre is supported by other centrifugal motions: leaves are blown off from the tree, a flock of birds soars into the sky—away from Amedeo. When the show starts, Amedeo, left alone outside, sees the fireworks (another centrifugal motion) and hears the music from the circus, but is no more part of the spectacle. The next stage of Amedeo's decay is represented through the rainy scenes. The warm orange lights of the circus wagon are opposed to the

greyish outside where the lion is caught by the rain. He is ushered inside by Peretti, and—with his intrusion—the interior of the wagon grows grey with only a dim orange light. The closing of the circus is performed as another change of season: the bright confetti fall from above and turn into snowflakes. Snow gradually covers everything, including Amedeo in his cage. To strike the final note, the troupers are shown posing for the camera and disappearing one by one (centrifugal motion yet again): the photograph is taken to capture the moment, which immediately becomes the melancholy past.

The "sonic weather" (Richard) of the film is shaped not only by the music of Rota and Piazzolla but also by Italian opera arias that Peretti sings in everyday situations, anticipating or experiencing important moments. The episode of Amedeo's first failure during the vanishing act is "predicted" by the famous piece from Cavaradossi's "E lucevan le stelle" (Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*): Peretti keeps singing "O dolci baci, o languide carezze". Later in the film, Piazzolla's music that marks the end of the circus co-exists with Piretti's drunken singing of "Ah, cielo! Si può, Si può morir" from *L'elisir d'amore*. The atmosphere of a world coming to an end (dramatic in Puccini and Donizetti, melancholic and sweet in Khrzhanovsky) captures the viewer and prompts her to feel.

The opposition between movements towards the centre and away from the centre is significant for our atmospheric perception of the last third of the film. Peretti goes to Romagna (just like Guerra, who lived in Pennabilli, a small town in the mountains in Emilia Romagna, since the 1990s) and, on the way to his new home, sets the lion free. Encouraged by Peretti, Amedeo slowly leaves the circus wagon, follows the ring master into the meadows, and is left alone in the "wilderness". The movement away from the familiar into the unfamiliar is made especially striking when Peretti leaves the old lion completely alone, walking away from him through the night landscape.

In the final episode, the film looks back upon the ending of the literary tale and stages the threatening approach of the sheep: Amedeo sees a huge flock moving slowly towards him. The oppressive motion is accompanied by the ringing of bells and monotonous bleating. Unlike Robert Bresson's donkey Balthazar (*Au hasard Balthazar*, 1966), who finds himself surrounded by sheep and dies among them, Amedeo experiences fear as an aging organism in an unwelcome environment. The old lion dies and through his blurred image reappears an orange body of a baby lion, sleeping peacefully, centre frame lulled by a voice-over of Peretti (singing another aria *sotto voce*).

In a Festive Atmosphere: Federico Fellini as a Not Belonging Artist

From the images of Italian circus, Khrzhanovsky moves on to animate a part of Fellini's creative output. *Long Journey* is a story of an imaginary final voyage taken by Federico Fellini with the characters of his films (*Amarcord*, 1973; *La strada*; *8 ½*, 1963; *E la nave va*, 1983: *Il Casanova di Federico Fellini*, 1976) and erotic drawings. The drawings now exist as *The Book of Dreams* (*Il libro dei sogni*, 2007), a collection of images and commentaries from Fellini's diary in which he used to record his nocturnal visions.

In *Long Journey*, Khrzhanovsky further elaborates on the atmospheric poetics of not belonging and the recurrent visual motifs that help position an artist as an outsider. The figure of power (a man in black) first inspired by Magritte and transformed into a tyrannical circus manager in *A Grey-Bearded Lion*, becomes Fellini's figure itself. As his own "man in black", tyrant and master, the director represents a victory over different forms of external control: in some scenes, he is holding a loudspeaker like Signor Peretti; in others, hiding his face like Magritte's man.

The story of a final voyage has a complex narrative structure. The character of Guerra retells his dream of Fellini who is engaged in his own dream activity: maestro either interacts with fictional beings (Gelsomina / Giulietta Masina), or paints them (grotesque women), or spatially co-exists with them (Casanova, Avvocato, and even Tsar Ivan the Terrible), or looks at something through a nautical spyglass. Sitting on the sofa in his Roman apartment, Guerra, the Italian voice-over of this film (translated again by Khrzhanovsky), encourages the viewers' atmospheric perception of the main event of this cartoon—the exuberant celebration of life at the brink of death.

The *mise-en-scène* is populated by numerous eccentrics—most of all—big comically threatening Fellini's women, whose massive breasts and enormous buttocks become self-standing characters. They dance, walk, seduce the male characters, or play with numerous penises that become characters in their own right. Fantasy borders on indecency, theatricality on acute sincerity, and a burlesque show about ridiculous sexuality ends up being a spiritual story of a true artist.
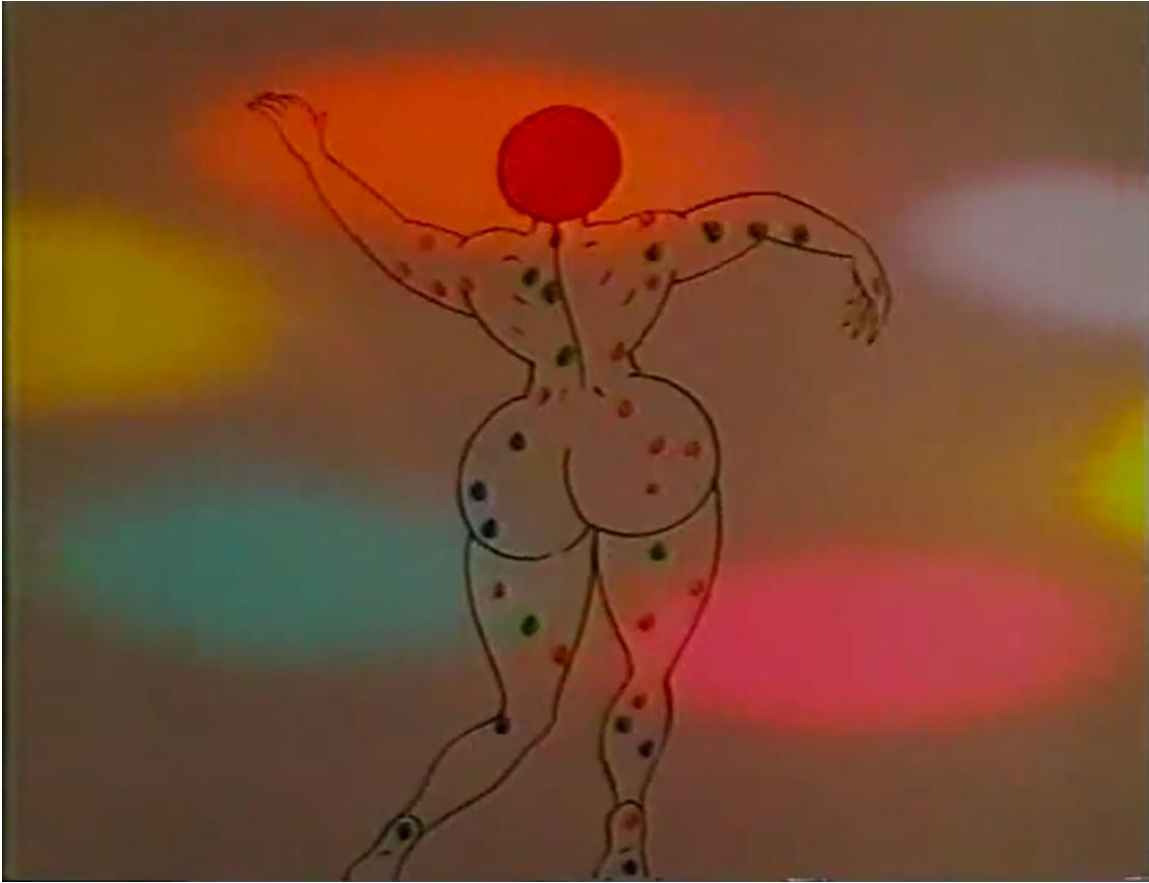
Figure 3. A frame from Andrei Khrzhanovsky's *Long Journey* (00:12:19)

Pan shots are the most frequently imitated camera movements that both reveal spaces or persons and represent a certain type of gaze—a free, disinterested glance of a flaneur taking in the impressions of life. The playfulness of many scenes is linked to the unpredictable mutability of animated images: the procession of nuns takes off from the ground after Gelsomina and lands on the deck; clothes are blown off from two women and turn into a peacock from *Amarcord*. "L'atmosfera è meravigliosa" ("The atmosphere is wonderful," 00:05:40), comments Guerra's voice-over, while enumerating the morning activities of the voyagers: some are bathing in the swimming pool, others are lying in the sun, careless and frivolous.

Two extraordinary parties take place in the film, one during the voyage and the other on an island where the characters arrive. The film evokes festive moods that are fluid, changing, and hard to grasp. During the day the voyagers relax, witness a comic wrestling match or look at another passing ship—Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin with Tsar Ivan the Terrible as its captain. The picturesque bright Italian crowd waves at the dark-grey and brown sailors of the battleship. The music theme of Potemkin is a song, "Dubinushka" (with acquired

revolutionary connotations), which fuses with Fellini's ship melody—Fred Astaire's "There may be trouble ahead". Rhythmically very different, the melodies, at least for a moment, leave the viewer in between two worlds, two sonic environments.

As night approaches, the atmosphere becomes more elevated: the ladies are getting ready for the evening reception, their grotesque bodies, half-clothed and half-naked are shown in front of the mirrors. Bringing to the forefront bold, comic and kitsch eroticism of Fellini's drawings, Khrzhanovsky pays tribute to a vast sensual tradition of Italian visual art and seems to reconstruct Soviet viewer's perception of freedom of "Western" or Italian cinema. Avvocato—the character from *Amarcord* and one of the narrators in *Long Journey*—warns the audience that this animated film contains content inappropriate for children and that he will alert the viewers to provocative scenes raising his hand.

The gala evening is a series of episodes that shape the varying *Stimmungen* of the environment. Music-hall dancing (cancan performers kicking their legs high) is interrupted by sentimental and serene moments when, for example, Gelsomina dances for Fellini who is lying on the sofa. The series of episodes catch the fluctuating rhythms of a party when guests are first full of enthusiasm but soon get tired, look for secluded places to be alone or with their loved ones (an old Pope on the dark deck; a mysterious nude dancing slowly; the shadows of Fellini and Giulietta in their cabin, seen through a ship window). The opposition of stillness and mobility in the adjacent frames creates the feeling of fluctuating moods, the changeable "weather" of the party.

Another meaningful opposition depends on how filled or empty the frames feel. For instance, the scenes of the party are intercut with shots of an empty cabin corridor, along which walks a blind old man with a cane. His environment quite literally contains nothing, just a long corridor and closed doors. The "cluttered" frames of the party are full of persons, objects, and—as a result—feelings, they are full of life and energy.

When the voyagers arrive at the island, they continue their exuberant party, but maestro does not get off the ship. He leaves the crowd and ventures onto his final journey. After Avvocato asks a question about why "grande maestro" did not join the characters on the island, the story intercuts to the frame of an empty cabin corridor. The blind man is not there, the doors are open, and the wind is blowing through the abandoned space. Fellini is portrayed as distanced from his lively and playful characters. Having brought them to the island, he has to leave. Interestingly, Fellini is the only artist among the three (the musician from

Glass Harmonica and Amedeo from *A Grey-Bearded Lion*) who does not leave alone. Giulietta / Gelsomina, depicted as both the wife of maestro and the star of his films, first stays with the other characters but finally joins Fellini who embraces her and lets her literally disappear inside his grey coat.

The image of a not belonging artist has evolved retaining a lot of recurrent motifs that shape Khrzhanovsky's oeuvre. The director's fondness for not belonging, a position outside, allows us to elaborate on the relationship between an artist and his surroundings, an artist and the material world, which brings our attention back to basic issues of how the feelings are felt, how they are shared, and how important they are for the environments we exist in.

Conclusion

This essay has looked into several aspects of Andrei Khrzhanovsky's atmospheric poetics, with an emphasis on *mise-en-scènes* and diverse kinds of motions on the screen. Shaping atmospheres of threat and chaos (*Glass Harmonica*), melancholy and longing (*A Grey-Bearded Lion*), and a festive eccentricity at the brink of death (*Long Journey*), the films position an artist as a not belonging outsider—both from political and existential points of view. *Glass Harmonica* structures the film environment by opposing geometrical shapes and centripetal / centrifugal motions in *mise-en-scènes*; *A Grey-Bearded Lion* shapes the atmospheric environment for the main character to suggest his acute sensitivity to temperature, humidity, and light. Apart from changing seasons, this story manipulates our sense of the "sonic weather"—music and the voice-overs of the cartoon focused on the experience of aging. *Long Journey* captures the festive moods, the fluctuating rhythms of celebratory events that prompt us to feel intensely together with others.

The research of atmospheres is a promising route to take for the adaptation studies because the idea of "repetition with variation" relies a lot on our pre-reflexive feelings of texts, our intuition that texts shape and emanate certain vibes. Although it is problematic to formalize the analysis of vibes, the essay purported to do exactly this—through close-reading of Andrei Khrzhanovsky's atmospheric poetics.

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Author's biobibliography

Dr Polina Rybina teaches at the Department of Discourse and Communication Studies, Faculty of Philology at Lomonosov Moscow State University; member of Association of Adaptation Studies (AAS). Her primary interests include film adaptation and the theory of the film narrative, as well as adaptation and narrativity in contemporary theatre. She is the author of articles on film adaptation and appropriation published in Russia, Canada, Italy, and France; several book chapters in *The History of Foreign Literature of the 20th century* (Moscow, 2014; 2018; 2019; 2024).