Canadian and Russian Animation on Northern Aboriginal Folklore

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ABSTRACT

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Aboriginal legends depict the relationships between humans and nature as deeply symbolic and intertwined. When adapted to films by non-Aboriginal filmmakers, these legends are often interpreted in ways which modify human-nature relationships experienced by Aboriginal peoples. I explore such modifications by looking at Canadian and Russian ethnographic animation based on Northern Aboriginal folklore of the two countries. In my thesis, I concentrate on the analysis of ethno-historical and cinematic traditions of Canada and Russia. I also explore the Canadian and Russian conventions of animated folktales and compare ethnographic animation produced by the National Film Board of Canada and Russian animation studio Soyuzmultfilm. The research findings and personal interviews with Canadian and Russian filmmakers contribute to the development of an essay film *The Raven*, which exemplifies my own creative take on the subject matter.

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Introduction

Many Northern Aboriginal legends[1] have been introduced to mainstream cultures over the last few decades. When travelling across cultures, these legends may go through various transformations during translation, interpretation, and representation before they reach their audience. Post-colonial debates about representation of Aboriginal folklore to "outside" cultures consider:

> that …the analysis of a [Aboriginal] text could be ethnocentric, because it often placed the text (or at least the interpretation of it) in the cultural context of the folklorist-researchers, not in the context of the group who communicated through it. (Sims and Stephens, 2005)

A Canadian short *The Owl Who Married a Goose* (Leaf, 1974) may exemplify such "ethnocentric" adaptations of Aboriginal folklore, in which a non-Aboriginal filmmaker appeals to a non-Aboriginal audience. The film's plot is based on an Inuit story that tells about the owl who chooses his wife from a different species. The owl lives happily with his wife while on land and soon sets off for the south in the company of a flock of geese. The trouble starts during their flight, when they land on a lake to rest. Unable to swim, the poor owl drowns and the story ends on this fatal note.

The film moves the audience. Leaf invites spectators to identify themselves with the owl in his happy marriage and then to grieve for his tragic death. Whereas, a non-Aboriginal spectator enjoys the film as a melodramatic and amusing artifact, in Inuit culture, the original legend serves a different purpose. Caroline Leaf admits[2] that for the Inuit, the primary lesson of the legend is about nature's law of everyone belonging to a particular niche of the universe structure. In this context, the owl represents a disruptor who neglects communal and cosmological imperatives and pays with his life for his ignorance. While working on her film in the Arctic, Leaf has learned that two fundamental concepts confront in the perception of the story. One concept, which is popular in the mainstream society, encourages a person to break

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[1] In the paper discourse, the term "Northern Aboriginal" refers to the indigenous people of the Canadian and Russian Arctic. I also imply that despite ethnic differences of Northern Aboriginal peoples(Inuit, Dene, Innu – in Canada; Yupik, Chukchi, Saami, Even, Yakut, and others – in Russia), their folklore is often perceived by general public as homogeneous, as characterizing the northern culture as opposed to the southern.

[2] Personal interview with C. Leaf, 2013.

with traditions, take risk, and explore new things. The other associates with the Inuit principles of keeping traditions, maintaining communal bonds, and respecting the laws of nature[3].

The differences in reading the legend exemplify metamorphoses that occur in Aboriginal legends when crossing cultural boundaries. These metamorphoses require a close observation of the reasons and forms that they take. I have chosen Canadian and Russian animation based on Northern Aboriginal folklore of the two countries to explore this phenomenon. In my research, I combine two strategies, theoretical and practical. The first is an analysis of historical and cinematic material of Canada and Russia in relation to their Northern Aboriginal nations. The second is a case study delivered in a form of an essay film featuring Canadian and Russian animation based on one Inuit legend.

The research trajectory has three major divisions. In CHAPTER 1, I introduce the Canadian and Russian perspectives on Northern native cultures and nature and investigate how they have been developed over the years. This chapter reviews the history of Canadian and Russian policies towards Northern peoples including studies on northern native folklore, and then analyzes how these policies become reflected in Canadian and Russian film. In CHAPTER 2, I focus my attention on ethnographic animation based on Northern Aboriginal folklore that was produced by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and Russian Animation Studio Soyuzmultfilm. In this context, the codes and conventions of animated folktales in the Canadian and Russian productions become a point of interest. The following is a comparative analysis of three film adaptations of Inuit and Siberian native legends[4] by Canadian, Russian, and Inuit filmmakers. Review of the new tendencies in cross-cultural cinema resumes the discussion on ethnographic animation. CHAPTER 3 describes the development of my own essay film *The Raven*, which examines the Canadian and Russian animated adaptations of one Inuit legend about the raven's colour. This chapter includes the film script *The Raven*, which incorporates theoretical findings of the research, information gathered during several meetings with Canadian

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[3] I use the word "nature" in the context of nature-culture dichotomy which is common in mainstream societies, although this binary pair may not necessarily perceived as such in Inuit culture. Marylin Strathern discusses this issue at a general level in her article "No nature, no culture: the Hagen case" (MacCormac&Strathern, 1980)

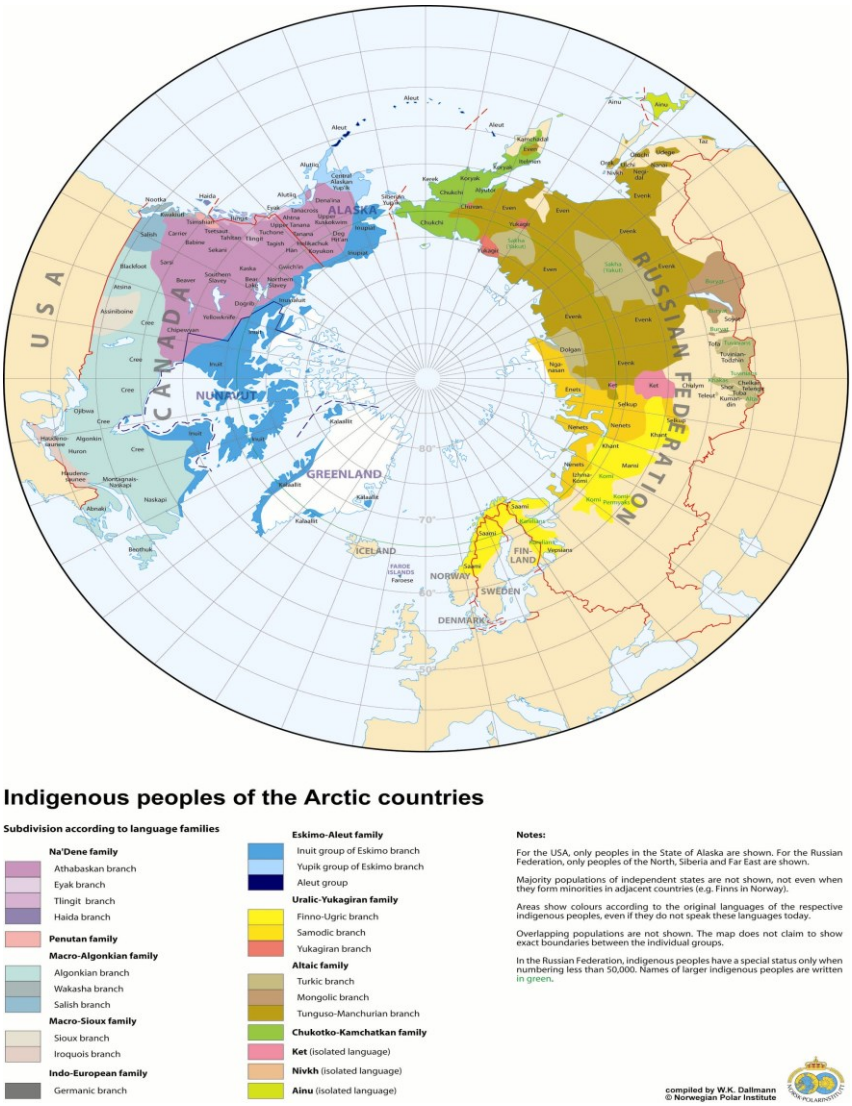
[4] As it is defined by the ICC (Inuit Circumpolar Council), "Inuit" means indigenous members of the Inuit homeland recognized by Inuit as being members of their people and shall include the Inupiat, Yupik(Alaska), Inuit, Inuvialuit (Canada), Kaiallit (Greenland) and Yupik (Russia)." In the US and Russia, Yupik people are also referred to as Eskimos, whereas in Canada, this term was replaced by Inuit.

and Russian filmmakers, and my personal vision of the raven's role as a cultural symbol of Northern peoples.

CHAPTER 1

NORTHERN CULTURES FROM CANADIAN AND RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVES

Neighbors of the Northern territories, Canada and Russia have been through different historical paths that prompted distinguishing patterns of the relationships with the Northern natives. Political and economic reasons, as well as the "exotic" allure of the Northern landscape inspire the interest of the two countries in Northern Aboriginal culture. Northern Aboriginal folklore is another area of interest for Canadian and Russian publics that is marked by multiple film adaptations of Inuit, Chukchi, Yakut and other Northern legends. In this chapter, I closely analyze the political and social history in the two countries with regard to the Northern nations (see figure below), the national cinematic traditions in the representation of the North, and the study of Northern native folklore.



1.1 Canadian and Russian Policies toward Northern Nations and their Land

The geographical, economic, political, and cultural specifics of Canada and Russia determine policies of these countries toward Northern nations and their land. The analytical category of space distinguishes the importance of the land as a "vital factor in the various social, political, and cultural processes" (Bassin, Ely, & Stockdale, 2010). This category of space helps in interpreting national histories that "direct attention away from the 'centers' of societies onto their peripheries, which are increasingly seen as sites of historical significance" (Bassin, Ely, & Stockdale, 2010). Warley, Ball, and Viau (1998) state that in Canadian history "the colonial encounter is experienced... as a contest over territory and resources." This situation allowed for European settlers to establish various relationships with the Canadian landscape. Some settlers developed the so-called "garrison mentality" with regard to the natural environment, while others strove to find their place within the new territory. Many became fascinated by the Canadian environment and depicted it in their writings and paintings[5]. These various perceptions of the Canadian landscape assert that "land and the natural environment...[are]... important symbolic concepts around which formulations of identity accumulate." (Warley, Ball, & Viau, 1998).

In Soviet history, according to this "spatial" discourse, the image of the land was infused with multiple meanings, which constructed a unified sense of nationhood. The historical meaning was inherited from pre-Soviet time when the Russian land was referred to as the "fatherland". New political and ethical meanings were constructed during the early Soviet period when the land was expropriated, nationalized, and treated as a collective possession. At the time, the Soviet country was more often referred to as the "motherland". In the later period of Soviet history marked by Khrushchev's reforms, the personal meanings associated with romantic, lyrical, and spiritual views of Russian nature came to the foreground. These various stages of the perception of the land corresponded to the country's political and social transformations.

The contact between Southern and Northern nations of the two countries was established in the 16-17th century when the fur trade with the Northern natives attracted southerners and

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5 Catharine Parr Traill, Susanna Moodie, Emily Carr and the Group of Seven.

marked the first step of colonization[6] of the Canadian and Russian North (Hicks, Hele, King, Diatchkova). These activities were followed by multiple expeditions to the Arctic that aimed for potential land development and control over the new territories. Later the Canadian and Russian North attracted many explorers and filmmakers, who celebrated the North and their native inhabitants in film. However, authorities of both countries adopted a patronizing position towards Northern Aboriginal peoples. Richard J. Diubaldo (1978) in his book *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* depicts the clash of these two tendencies of personal enthusiasm – on one hand - and state control – on the other - in the course of the life of Vilhjalmur Steffanson[7]. In his book , he includes "Recommendations of the Reindeer and Musk-ox Commission," in which Canadian authorities refer to the native groups as incompetent abusers of their natural resources, and, therefore, recommend to native hunters to follow the Commission's hunting regulations (Diubaldo, 1978).

At the time, similar to Canadian policies in the North, Soviet – Native Siberian interactions were marked by the rules imposed by Soviet authorities during collectivization. In her work *Gaining ground?: Evenkis, land, and reform in Southeastern Siberia* (1998), Gail A. Fondahl describes how Sovietization adversely affected the lives of native reindeer herders. While describing the process of collectivization in the Northern territories as damaging for indigenous people and their environment, she argues that despite the similarities in the indigenous and communist concepts of the collective tenure of land[8], they have essential differences, particularly in the way of treatment of nature and animals. Whereas Siberian natives identified themselves as equal to animals and plants in the chain of the natural universe, the Soviet power proclaimed a sense of superiority and control over the land and its resources.

In recent decades, post-colonial scholarship has interrogated with critical vigor the representation of indigenous relationships in the histories of settler-colonial states. Whereas Canadian scholarship re-examines dominant-subaltern injustice and strives to re-formulate the

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[6] Hicks uses the term "internal colonialism" to describe Canadian and Russian policies in the North. The concept emerged in the 1960s in political and social sciences and was broadly defined as "intra-national exploitation of distinct cultural groups" (Hicks, 2004).

[7] Led by Stefansson in 1913, the Canadian Arctic Expedition was the first major multinational, multidisciplinary, systematic study of the Arctic.

[8] "It was believed that the Indigenous people [who maintained elements of primitive communism] could skip the intervening stages of feudalism ...and proceed directly to an advanced socialist society"(Hele, 1991)

rights and status of the indigenous nations, Soviet and post-Soviet ethnographic and historical literature dwells on the complexity and reciprocal influences of the two groups overshadowing ethno-political controversies.

An example of the Canadian post-colonial discourse is an investigation of the history of Canadian-Inuit relationships and an "attempt to insert an Inuit perspective that is not often evident from secondary sources" (Bonesteel, 2006). The Inuit Relations Secretariat established in 2005 represents an Inuit political position that influences the policies of the federal government. Among the others, the most vital theme of recent debates is an issue of land tenure. The debates about land ownership facilitate the transformation of mainstream-indigenous relationships and are crucial for both northern Aboriginal and southern Aboriginal issues.

In Canadian anthropological studies, the problem of land tenure is widely addressed from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives. One such an example is Carole Blackburn's (2009) article about differentiating indigenous citizenship of the Nisga'a First Nation in BC. Although focused on Aboriginal group of British Columbia, this debate exemplifies concerns shared by Inuit communities as well. In particular, at the center of the debates described in the article are "rights that flow from [First Nations'] relationship to their land". According to Blackburn, in 1990, there was still a vision among the settlers and politicians of "the province as an empty and unencumbered space prior to the arrival of white civilization. They argued that lands might be set aside as reserves for First Nations but only as 'gifts' from the Crown and not in recognition of prior aboriginal ownership" (Blackburn, 2009, p. 68). Canadian studies concentrate on the confrontation between different interpretations of land ownership as a key point of the development of the relationship between dominant and subordinate nations of both southern and northern regions of Canada. As Jerry White (2005) points out,"The immediate policy context of the creation of the territory [of Nunavut] was an ongoing land-claim dispute between Inuit groups and the Canadian government." (p. 53)

In the Russian context, the issue of land tenure is not prioritized and the colonial aspect of Russian history is relatively diminished in academic discussions. Hele (1991) explains that, "Land claims may differ in the sense that First Nations in Canada have treaties with the Crown, whereas the Small Peoples of the Soviet north have none" (p. 268). Notably, for the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON), the issues of land boundaries were

not among the prior concerns at the early stage[9]. Only in 2001 at the 4th Congress of Small Indigenous Nations[10], after several years of RAIPON's membership in the Arctic Council (AC)[11], the land property rights were identified as “the burning issues of the day”(Diatchkova, 2001). With regard to political issues, “the status of associations such as RAIPON restrains them from political activity” (p. 224). The Russian government even suspended RAIPON's legal status and banned it from participation in the Arctic Council in 2012-2013 for its position against oil development on traditional lands. Another reason that the issues of land tenure and political statements are not articulated in Siberian debates as much as they are in the Canadian context is that Small Peoples of Siberia constitutes a minority in most areas of the Russian Arctic.

Consequently, the colonial aspect is not emphasized in the scholarship on Russian-Siberian relationships. Instead, the dialectical approach overshadows and influences Russian-Siberian studies (Anderson, Fondahl, Slezkine, Thompson, Yangirov). This dialectic approach considers the history of Russian settlers of the North and their relationships with the native neighbors as complex reciprocal interactions. There are some film scholars and historians (Brooks, Kokarev, Forsyth), who regard the political context and present national relationships as strictly subordinated by Soviet imperial domination. However, these interpretations seem to be biased by these scholars' anti-Soviet position. Slezkine's representation of Russian-Siberian history deliberately dismisses the post-colonial perspective in historiography regarding it as “wholly reduced to the 'gross political fact' of colonialism” (Slezkine, 1994).

Andrei Znamenski (1995) supports Slezkine's idea of inter-cultural influences and dynamic interactions between Russians and Northern nations. Znamenski also highlights Slezkine's intention to capture “the changing image of northern Siberian natives in the Russian mind (Znamenski, 1995). In his book *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small People of the North*,

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[9] In the RAIPON's first declaration, the leading tasks were related to providing the rights and interests of the people of the North on administration levels, to preservation and promotion of cultural distinctiveness, and to expansion of international relationships with peoples of other countries (Hele, 1991).

[10] Small indigenous nations also called Small peoples of Siberia comprised of “ethnic groups living on the territory of the traditional settlement of their ancestors...and numbering in Russia less than 50 000 peoples (each)” (Constitution of Russia, 1993).

[11] PAIPON was founded in 1990 and became a member of the AC in 1996 (Wallace, 2013).

Slezkine maintains that the Russian image of Siberian natives "[has] been shaped, modified, and circumscribed by real-life northerners, both Russian and non-Russian" (Slezkine, 1994). This concept finds its development in the article of Niobe Thompson (2003), entitled *The Native Settler: Contesting Local Identities on Russia's Resource Frontier*:

> [Northern settlers in Russia] are contesting the very meaning of local belonging and appropriating a very powerful element of native identity and distinction... Many settlers in Chukotka are intimately attached to the landscape they live in, drawing not only food but also emotional sustenance from their natural environment.

Canadian scholar and active promoter of the post-colonial and humanist directions in Siberian studies Aileen A. Espiritu criticizes the dialectical approach. She observes, "Slezkine moves away from the oft-used centre-periphery colonialism model and depicts a history that suggests a more fluid relationship between the Slavs, Russians, and Soviets, and the indigenous population of Siberia" (Espiritu, 2001). While acknowledging Slezkine's "strikingly different and refreshing" description of "the role that women played in the history of Siberia and its peoples", Espiritu confronts him by inquiring: "How new developments in historiography are assisting [indigenous northerners in Russia] to reclaim and reinvent their identities?" (Espiritu, 2001). In her own work, Espiritu supports the Siberian people in their contemporary struggles over land and sovereignty by criticizing the sovietization of Northern peoples and by emphasizing the damages caused by such policies.

Overall, ethno-historical scholarship reveals various tendencies in the evaluation of the relationships of Canadian and Russian states with Northern Aboriginal people of both countries. Despite the differences, both countries have exercised dominating and paternalist attitudes towards the northern natives. While shaped in disparate socio-ideological patterns, these relationships spill over and come to define the national cinemas of the two countries.

1.2 Nature and the North in Canadian and Russian Film

Canadian and Soviet film developed distinguishing vocabulary and conventions in their representation of nature and the North. For example, films with ethnographic content served different tasks and targeted alternative audiences in the two countries. Canadian film industry was growing as a commercial trend. In search for new themes to impress a spectator and increase

their profit, first Canadian producers turned to the North and depicted it as an "exotic", frozen land inhabited by amazing, courageous people. In his book, *Canadian National Cinema*, Christopher E. Gittings (2002) points to another aspect in the development of Canadian ethnographic film. He states that the national ethnographic cinema grew as a counterpoint to the Hollywood misrepresentation of Canada. Gittings suggests that Canadian filmmakers looked at the Northern landscape as a distinguishing Canadian feature and as a part of Canadian identity. Thus, films about the Arctic meant to entertain, educate, impose Canadian distinctiveness, and to consolidate the sense of nationhood in the dominant society.

Whereas Canadian film was established as a modern industrial and commercial trend, which served mainstream viewers, Soviet cinema after the October revolution became the most important tool of political propaganda targeting both central and regional audiences. Richard Taylor (1991) points out that: "All art...reflects the context in which it is produced: where that context is as highly politicized as it has consistently been in Russia, so the art too will inevitably be highly politicized." In the Soviet context, artists made films about Northern nations in an effort to incorporate them into the country's revolutionary process. In their films, they introduced and interpreted traditional cultures according to the new Soviet values and rules. In his article entitled "Soviet Cinema in the Twenties: National Alternatives" Yangirov regards the role of cinema as a political projector for national minorities and refers to the rural spectator as a primary target. The studio Kino-Sibir was one of such "political projectors" in the 1926-1929. It was "actively shooting both documentary and feature films [that were] devoted to the peoples of Siberia and the Far East" (Yangirov, 1991). While spreading socialist ideas to rural areas, filmmakers also strove to depict and promote ethnic features.

Canadian film *Back to God's Country* (David Hartford, 1919) and the Russian film *Aerograd* (Alexander Dovzhenko, 1935) represent these typical tendencies of the two countries. Determined by state-natives relationships and the development of national cinema, these films carry various connotations of the Northern landscape. In Canadian film the landscape fulfills "exotic and commercial" expectations and provides space for the protagonist's self-identification. In the Russian film, Siberian nature is infused with political and celebratory pathos which resonates with the Soviet modes and conventions.

Back to God's Country is a melodramatic story about a middle-class couple who take a

risky trip to the Arctic. While in the Arctic, in an attempt to save her sick husband, a young woman confronts hostile nature and a gang of ruthless settlers. As a result, she discovers her "national identity in relation to the landscape, wild animals, and the indigenous and immigrant people" (Armatage, 2003). Contrarily, *Aerograd,* which depicts the Soviet advance into Siberia for land development, demonstrates a "voyeuristic" and symbolic view of "unspoilt [Siberian] nature" (Grunes, 2007). The film tells a story of young developers from central region, who arrive to the rural village where they plan to build a 'dream' city. The Soviet people confront with their class enemy, who attempts to sabotage their work. The Northern landscape is a backdrop for all the actions and, at the same time, is a meditative and symbolic element. It "convey[s] the new Soviet beginning, the unvarnished Soviet future" as it is seen by the protagonist and his comrades (Grunes, 2007).

In the 1960s, new tendencies in Soviet politics infused new themes and qualities into Soviet film. The film language developed ways of expression of momentary, intimate, unspoken meanings and feelings. Landscape in film and animation helped to transmit these impulses. Russian animator Yuri Norstein, who gained his international reputation in the 1970s, demonstrates these new traits in his work.

Like many other Russian artists, Norstein embraces political and social changes of the Khrushchev era that replace the agitation and political activism of the previous years. His films operate at the individual level and explore complex, intimate relationships with the landscape that, for him and his generation, carries profound historical, philosophical, and emotional connotations. Clare Kitson (2005) elaborates on a special atmospheric quality of Norstein's films, "which has been cultivated since early childhood while playing outdoors and interacting with nature. This is not merely childhood memory but 'a national preoccupation'". She goes on saying that in Norstein's films "rain, fog and wind . . . dictate mood and act as punctuation in the structuring of the story". Norstein himself regards these natural elements as living characters (Kitson, 2005). While Kitson's monograph emphasizes the animator's internal world, David MacFadyen contextualizes Norstein's work within the political, philosophical and aesthetic conventions and also praises his films for "both affect and ecology" (MacFadyen, 2005).

Whereas the Russian animator draws from the "national preoccupation", his contemporary, Canadian filmmaker Frederic Back transforms his passion for nature into an

environmentalist political statement, which addresses global issues. Early in his career, Back became “concerned with people, animals and the environment and their interconnectedness”. In his work, he demonstrates his “commitment to nature” and expresses his frustration with “pollution and massive destruction of our planet's natural treasures” (Gagnier, 2009). As a typical European newcomer, he strives to establish his connection with the land and then extends his relationship with the nature to a broader scale. Olivier Cotte and Richard Gagnier regard him as a true representative of Quebec culture, who depicts Canadian landscape and propagates “awareness of ecology” (Cotte, 2006). In an interview with Cotte, Back emphasizes his opposition to the world which is “governed by money and the ideas of happiness at any price”. He states that in his animation (*The Man who Planted Trees,1987, The Mighty River, 1993*), he celebrates nature's beauty to make the audience aware of the dramatic changes and destruction it is undergoing (Cotte, 2006).

The review of the various modes of representation of the North and nature in Canadian and Russian film helps to better understand the history of relationships between dominant and subaltern nations of the two countries. With regard to these complex relationships, the material offered by studies of Northern Aboriginal folklore is another point of interest.

1.3 Northern Aboriginal Folklore in Canada and Russia

Folkloric studies complement Canadian and Soviet ethno-history and film studies and also reflect ideological influences on the relationships between the two countries and their Northern neighbors. In Canada, Inuit and French-Canadian folklore are the most notable folktale traditions that remarkably survived as oral literature until the 20th century. While referring to Murdock's *Ethnographic Bibliography of North America* (1961), Edwin S. Hall (1975) suggests that, in terms of folklore, the Inuit are the best-represented group among other American Aboriginals. However, Canadian folkloric studies did not gain importance and popularity until the second half of the 20th century (Dorson, 1973).

Likewise, folktales and legends of various nations became a point of interest for Canadian filmmakers only after the Second World War following the first serial publication of *Les Archives*

de folklore in 1946[12]. Although images of Northern Aboriginal peoples appeared in early Canadian feature films and documentaries[13], Inuit folklore became a source of inspiration for Canadian filmmakers only in the 1970s. At the time, the NFB produced a series of animated adaptations of Inuit legends directed and animated by C. Hoedeman and C. Leaf, which are included in the first volume of the film anthology about the North *Unikkausivut: Sharing Our Stories*. The title of the first volume of this compilation "Ethnographic films, the Flaherty influence / Tales & legends" links the animated legends to the early ethnographic films. However, these animated films signify a new wave in the representation of Northern Aboriginal culture by using its folklore as a source of exploration.

In the case of Soviet Russia, folklore of different origins including Siberia was shared between different regions and has always been an essential part of social life in all parts of Russia. It was naturally applied in animation since the beginning of cinema[14]. Folklore and stories about Small peoples of Siberia were adapted to film and served as an effective tool of Soviet propaganda. J. Zipes (2011) suggest that:

> Soviet culture was to be inspired by folk art and to represent the wisdom of the common people. Soviet art embracing the popular spirit presumably was accessible to the Soviet people of all walks of life and allowed the entire Soviet community to keep in touch with the popular spirit as the metaphysical source of communal strength. (p. 90)

The Soviet folkloric studies continued traditions inherited from the pre-Soviet period modifying them according to the new revolutionary context. Felix Oinas in his article "Folklore Activities in Russia" explains that new ideological traits changed the perception and treatment of folklore over the course of Soviet history. He suggests that "stricter concentration on social problems and ideology" dominated in folkloric studies in the 1930s. For example, "satirical stories about priests and medicine men [represented as enemies of the labor class] have been extensively

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12 One of the first films on Canadian Aboriginal folklore, *The Loon's Necklace* was directed and produced by F.R. Crawley in 1948.

13 *How to Build an Igloo (1949), Land of the Long Day* (1952), *Angotee: Story of an Eskimo Boy* (1953) by D. Wilkinson, the *Netsilik Eskimos* series (1960) produced by the NFB.

14 Soviet animators began to depict native Northerners in their work in the 1920s. One of the first animated films, *Samoyed Boy* (Khodataev and Brumberg, 1928), follows the life of a Nenets boy who is born in a rural Siberian village and gained his class-consciousness with the help of Soviet comrades and educators from the central region. In Soviet time, one of the early publications of Siberian native folklore was *Legends and Folktales of Nganasan* (1938).

collected and published" (Dorson, 1973).

Another distinguishing element of Russian oral traditions is the manifestation of living folklore. It means that folklore continues to be created and exchanges their traits between all groups of Soviet society. "Such works imitate the traditional folklore, making use of its motifs and poetical features, but employing contemporary life as their subject" (Dorson, 1973). Importantly, the creative relationship with folklore of different origins motivated Soviet filmmakers to freely appropriate and transform Aboriginal stories, including those of Siberia, while adjusting them to contemporary political and social tasks.

CHAPTER 2

CANADIAN AND RUSSIAN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANIMATION

2.1 Defining Ethnographic Animation

As discussed in CHAPTER 1, the relationships with Northern natives have been determined by the countries' national histories. Whereas Canadian encounter with Northern Aboriginal peoples associated with the explorers, traders, and missionaries, Russian history points to a wider scope of connections. Land development in Siberia and mass deportation to the North of different ethnic groups from Soviet republics took place during Stalin's reign. These events contributed to the process of integration of local Siberian mythology into the Soviet cultural paradigm. Native Siberian folklore was included in a multinational anthology of folktales originating from all areas of the former Soviet Union. Despite the different level of popularity of Northern native folklore in Canada and Russia, it remained more or less distant to the mainstream groups until the two national cinemas started to exploit it. Northern culture, nature and folklore attracted the attention of Canadian and Russian filmmakers and animators.

Paul Wells (2002) draws a direct connection between animation and oral tradition by using fairytales as an example. He suggests that "the fairytale tradition is in many cultures an oral tradition, and the published versions of such fairytales represent the folkloric and mythic pasts of many indigenous groups. Consequently, animation as another form of 'publication' helps to preserve and perpetuate these traditions further" (p. 63). Wells (2002) also ascribes to animation

the possibility of "recovering the real tradition and re-inserting the original tone, complexity and subversiveness of the fairytale" (p. 63).

Ethnographic animation, too, aims to "preserve and perpetuate" traditions of ethnic groups taking this task as a serious commitment. In many cases, Canadian and Russian animators working with Aboriginal material conduct a thorough research about these cultures. Russian animator Sergei Merinov "traveled all over Mordovia looking for the material he needed about costumes, customs and everyday life [for his characters. His film won an award for] Best-Make-up and Costumes. Merinov was then invited to show this film at the National Geographic Festival"[15].

In Wells' categorization, ethnographic films fit in the "paradigmatic genre" identified as the "kind of animation which *may* fulfil the anticipated codes and conventions of established paradigmatic styles and stories. This is largely drawn from other, principally literary or graphic narrative sources…" (Wells, 2002, p.70). The following section explores these codes and conventions using as a case study some of the Canadian and Russian animated adaptations of Aboriginal legends produced by famous animation studious of Canada and Russia, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and Soyzmultfilm.

2.2 The NFB Animation Department and Russian Studio Soyuzmultfilm

The National Film Board of Canada was founded in 1939 as a federal agency to produce and broadcast films about Canadians to Canadians, to "make Canada's various regions known to Canadians in other areas of the country" (St-Pierre, 2012). This was an attempt to resist American influence on Canadian culture and to re-formulate a unique Canadian identity. Several production departments of the NFB including the documentary and animation sections have produced films with Inuit content in support of this program. At the presentation of the three-volume compilation of films about the North, *Unikkausivut: Sharing Our Stories,* Government Film Commissioner and Chairperson of the NFB, Tom Perlmutter (2012), concluded that "over the life of its history, some seventy-two years now, the NFB has worked with Inuit communities

[15] Source: Russia Beyond the Headlines (http://rbth.com/articles/2009/12/17/171209_animation.html)

to tell their stories". Analyst and consultant for the NFB, Marc St-Pierre (2012), highlighted milestones in the history of this productive interaction:

> Up to the late 1960s, collaboration between filmmakers and Inuit appearing on screen was common practice, yet there were no Inuit per se on the production teams. Films were made by non-Inuit and represented their points of view. That situation began to change in the early 1970s. In 1971, the French Program's animation studio began working on a series of films on Inuit legends sponsored by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. During the first half of the decade, five animated films were completed: four by Co Hoedeman …and one by Caroline Leaf…for the first time in the history of the NFB, Inuit were directly contributing to the production process. They participated in developing the scripts, music, sound design, art direction and narration. The soundtracks were partially in Inuktitut. NFB animators handled making the films, but the contribution by Inuit was essential for interpreting the legends.

During the 1970s, when Canadian multiculturalism became an official policy, the northern communities were introduced to film, video and animation technology. New initiatives and co-productions allowed native voices to gain more presence. Mark St-Pierre (2012) reports that at the time:

> Inuit began to take their place behind the camera. The NFB, in collaboration with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Government of the Northwest Territories, organized a series of animated and documentary film training and production workshops for Inuit... in Cape Dorset, the Canadian Arctic's cultural hub.

In the 1980s, the NFB went through structural and ideological changes and many Native directors joined the Board to tell their stories. A resurgence of Inuit storytelling through new media was marked by an Inuit legendary feature *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (Kunuk, 2001) that was produced by the first Inuit production company *Isuma* founded in 1990. In 2006, the NFB and Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) in partnership with the Banff Centre, Aboriginal People Television Network (APTN), the National Screen Institute –Canada (NSI), Nunavut Film, and the Government of Nunavut established the Nunavut Animation Lab (NAL). In 2010, the NAL produced several films that were praised worldwide. One of them is *Lumaajuuq* by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, which was awarded Best Canadian Short Drama at imagineNATIVE 2010 and garnered many other prizes.

The Russian studio Soyuzmultfilm (Union Animation Film) was founded in Moscow in 1936 and consolidated former smaller animation agencies on a new unified platform replicating

the Disney studio structure that allowed for larger production and distribution. Since its beginning, the repertoire of this animation factory included adaptations of Northern legends among other animated folktales of different regions of the former Soviet Union. MacFadyen (2005) explains that "[F]olklore …was attractive to [Soviet] animators because of non-canonical themes and images….Folklore was certainly an art form of prestigious national provenance but was also deemed to be of eternal relevance and contemporaneity, since folktales known today are folktales told today" (p. 74). In the Soviet context, a folktale genre was as important as the political, satirical, or science-fiction, once the tale was perceived through the concept of class struggle.

Whereas the NFB productions aimed to represent the diversity of Canadian society, the Soviet animation was searching for a denominator for different cultural and ethnic groups living on the same territory. It resulted in different targeting strategies of the two major studios of Canada and Russia. If Canadian ethnographic films introduced and interpreted the Canadian North to the Canadian southerners and to the rest of the world, the Russian cross-cultural productions targeted both central and regional audiences of the former Soviet Union[16].

The integration of Siberian communities into production processes began at the early stages of Soviet cinema when film organizations such as KinoSibir (1929) were established. In terms of technical training, Soviet policies of free higher education for all nations made the animation profession accessible to people from all regions including Siberia. Additionally, Northern native folklore was considered as an equal part of Soviet folk tradition and was often adapted by filmmakers of various studios including Soyuzmultfilm.

The table below provides a list of the film adaptations of Northern Aboriginal folklore produced by the two studios, NFB and Soyuzmultfilm (Fig. 2). This list reflects the historical dynamics of cross-cultural interactions between mainstream groups and Northern natives of Canada and Russia.

[16] Apart from folkloric adaptations, an equally important task of the *Soyuzmultfilm* was the dubbing of films produced at various studios on to languages of national minorities (G. Borodin).

NFB	Soyuzmultfilm
1971 *The Owl and the Lemming: An Eskimo Legend*, Co Hoedeman **1973** Animation from Cape Dorset **1974** *The Owl Who Married a Goose,* Caroline Leaf **1975** *The Man and the Giant,* Co Hoedeman **1975** *Lumaaq*, Co Hoedeman **2002** *The Sniffing Bear*, Co Hoedeman **2003** *Islet,* Nicolas Brault **2010** Nunavut Animation Lab: *Lumaajuuq*, Alethea Arnaquq-Baril *I Am But a Little Woman,* Gyu Oh, *Qalupalik,* Ame Papatsie *The Bear Facts,* Jonathan Wright	**1946** *Schastlivaya Pesenka* **(***The Little Happy Song),* Mstislav Pashchenko **1951** *Smeloe Serdse* **(***The Brave Heart)*, Gennadi Filippov &Boris Dezhkin *Taiozhnaya Skazka (The Tundra Tale)*, Olga Khodataeva **1952** *Sarmiko,* Olga Khodataeva & Evgeni Raikovski **1956** *V Yarange Gorit Ogon* **(***The Fire is Burning in the Raw-Hide Tent)* Olga Khodataeva **1961** *Kto Samyi Silnyi* (*Who is the Strongest),*Vladimir Degtyariov **1963** *Doch Solnsa* (*The Daugter of the Sun),* Alexandra Snezhko-Blozckaya **1982** *Rybiya Upryazhka* (*The Fish Harness),* Stanislav Sokolov **1988** *Kele,* Michail Aldashin **2002** *Odnazhdy* (*Once upon a Time)*, Octyabrina Potapova

2.3 Conventions of Canadian and Russian Animated Folktales

Wells (2002) proposes that the paradigmatic genre employs "anticipated codes and conventions … [that are] largely drawn from oral traditions - natural precursor of animated folktale". What are these codes and conventions with regard to animated folktales of Canada and Russia? How do these processes reflect the countries' distinct social and political systems? In Canadian and Russian contexts these codes and conventions inevitably vary.

Canadian and Russian animation shared a common moment in their history when confronted Disney's domination and American cultural expansion. Disney's productions played a notable role in the adaptation of fairytales and influenced the rest of the world. Zipes (1994) admits that Disney was the first to establish an approach that:

> re-inscribes 'authorship' of fairytales and the way that they have been 'institutionalised'. Disney continued through animation the initial institutionalisation of fairytales " within the literary traditions of most Western cultures sanitising and expurgating much of the original 'adult' form in a spirit of preparing the tales for the child's nursery" and by doing so denying the actual oral tradition (p. 63).

Disney's contribution to the Soviet approach in animation was even more substantial. MacFadyen positions Disney's work as highly influential for shaping socialist realism in animation. He claims that "the skills needed to acquire a socialist oceanic feeling were sometimes learned from the prudish, big-hearted (and moderate!) aesthetics of Disney's studio" (MacFadyen, 2005).

However in the 1960s, Canada and Russia took their stands against Disney's conventions in storytelling. To confront influences of the American animation industry, the Canadian film agency turned to the country's multinational heritage while encouraging an individual approach and experimentation within the NFB animation department. When Hoedeman and Leaf joined the NFB in the 1970s, they naturally adopted this "spirit of experimentation" while working on their films including those based on Inuit legends. Whereas government-funded, 'auteur' animation flourished as a unique Canadian trend opposing Disney's aesthetics and technological model, the Soviet counter position to the American conventions occurred in a different dimension.

Since the establishment of the rules of socialist realism in 1932 and later by adopting Disney's technology, Soviet animation was closely monitored by the government and administration of Soyuzmultfilm, and widely discussed in the mass media (MacFadyen, 2005). Zipes also highlights the collective aspect in "the 'assigned mission' of Russian animators … to address children in didactic but entertaining fashion, to impart a strong sense of Russian nationalism…, to focus on the collective rather than the individual hero…"(Zipes, 2011).

While working in the conditions of a line production replicating the structure of Disney's studio, Russian animators developed an alternative and complex ideological impetus in the fairytale and folktale film adaptations. Zipes elaborates on a fairy-tale example:

> What is unusual about Russian… fairy-tale films is that the ideological tendencies of the fairy-tale narratives, while approved and sponsored by the state and party, undermined the hypocritical announcements and pronouncements of the state and party. To a certain extent, the fairy-tale films proposed that children (and adults) should take socialist principles earnestly and try to realize them in real existing socialist societies. In this regard, they run counter to the Disneyfied "American" production of fairy-tale films that create charming elitist celebrities and illusions merely for the sake of promulgating spectacles glorifying the grandeur of "good" capitalist behaviour. The Russian animated films, though artistically conventional and similar to the Disney-type films, can be considered somewhat of an alternative to them (Zipes, 2011).

There is also an interesting link between Disney's way of animating animal characters and a vision of interconnectedness between human and nature that is presented by Russian director and film scholar Sergei Eisenstein. In his book *Eisenstein on Disney,* Eisenstein (1986) notices that while animating natural characters, "Disney doesn't go into the roots...entertains, mocks and amuses...along the very surface of the phenomenon, without looking beneath to the origins..." (p. 23). Contrarily, Eisenstein is preoccupied with the evolutionary process of "The Animal Epos" (p. 48). He thoroughly analyzes this process and divides it into two streams. While associated with animism, the first represents a unity between a man and an animal that may be embodied in a simultaneous double existence/identity. Other possible forms of this unity are the concepts of a man being a descent from an animal, being able to mate with animals, and perceiving animals as helpers.

The second stream is characterized as a comparison of a man with an animal (the metaphoric series). The comparison may take the forms of personification/humanization of animal's characters, on the on hand, and animalization of a man, on the other. According to Eisenstein, the phenomenon of personification, in many ages, becomes the evidence of a lack of humaneness in a system of social government or philosophy. With regards to 'animalization of man', there is the reconstruction of the sensuous system of thought (incomprehensible to the conscious, logical mind, but clear to the sensuous thought) that works through likening instead of double identification. This reconstruction requires "a sensuous immersion in the likened subject

(e.g. the courage of a leopard, the craftiness of a fox, the dirtiness of a pig)" (Eisenstein, 1986). Eisenstein's concept of "The Animal Epos" can be traced in his own and other Soviet films and animated folktales.

The brief observation of the codes and conventions of animated folktales in the Canadian and Russian contexts leads to the question of how Northern Aboriginal legends become adopted by filmmakers of the two countries and how their animated versions are different from the Inuit adaptation.

2.4 Canadian, Russian, and Inuit Adaptations of Northern Aboriginal Legends

By using the Inuit animated adaptation *Lumaajuuq* (2010) by Arnaquq-Baril as a point of reference, I examine two films from the table above Canadian *Lumaaq* (1975) by Hoedeman and Russian *Daughter of the Sun* (1963) by Alexandra Snezhko-Blozckaya, in relation to the Inuit approach. *Lumaajuuq* and *Lumaaq* tell the same story of a boy who loses his sight with the help of his cruel mother and gains it back only to revenge her at last.

Hoedeman recalls[17] that since the time when he joined the NFB, he was attracted by Inuit art and aesthetics that sprung his initial interest to make several films using Inuit imagery. This attitude is radically opposite to what Eric Cheyfitz promotes, "Practical social power, not aesthetic originality or genius, is the category of understanding in Native art, [so that] for a Native community the beauty of expressive oral culture is synonymous with its practical social power" (Krupat, 2007).

In *Lumaaq,* Hoedeman uses original black and white prints made by an Inuit artist and adds a voice-over narration in Inuktitut. This strategy demonstrates an ethnographic approach in filmmaking that often incorporates/appropriates Aboriginal visual and aural material to simulate an "aboriginal" aura. As an "outside" artist, Hoedeman carefully constructs the characters' movement, mise-en-scenes and editing pattern in a style that is reminiscent, as he perceives it, of the original prints. Alternatively the Inuit version of the legend adaptation is colourful and

[17] Personal interview with C. Hoedeman, 2013.

narrated in English. Arnaquq-Baril emphasizes details and textures of the landscape, producing a mesmerizing feeling of the presence of natural spirits. She perceives and conveys the image of the Arctic as a vibrant space, infused with multiple meanings and characteristics.

The soundtrack in Hoedeman's film is narrated in Inuktitut without subtitles and creates a dynamic rhythm that punctuates the visual flow of the narrative. In contrast to Hoedeman's rhythmical articulation, the Inuit version unfolds in a slow paced tempo. The seemingly monotonous narration in English continues from the beginning to the end, and goes on after the film credits start to run on the screen. In the end of Hoedeman's film, the boy looking for revenge pushes his cruel mother in the water leaving her to drown. The story stops at this point inviting the viewer to come up with his own moral conclusion. Contrarily, the Inuit film concludes with the voice-over which pronounces the lesson about the necessity of breaking the cycle of revenge and proclaiming forgiveness. The Inuit adaptation clearly illustrates:

> An unhurried quality [typical] to… Aboriginal films. They are often slower paced than their western cinematic counterparts, reflecting the easy rhythms of oral tradition. Narrative unfolds at its own pace, its own time, like the cyclical changing of the seasons. Aboriginal filmmakers seem to understand this intuitively, patiently waiting to capture memorable moments on film. Their patience is a mark of respect for storytellers and stories. (Ryan, 2006)

The engagement of ancestral voices occurs in Arnaquq-Baril's film when a loon reveals to the boy a story of his mother's betrayal and how she made him blind. During this conversation, the voice-over seamlessly shifts between the three participants: the boy, the loon and the narrator giving an impression of an eternal moment. As Ryan (2006) continues:

> Aboriginal film narrative, like its oral counterpart, often disrupts the concept of linear historical time, unfolding instead in a kind of "mythic" time, where ancestral voices engage with those of future generations to inform current conversations and decision making. It is a multi-vocal approach to filmmaking in tune with oral tradition and affirming cultural continuity.

It comes out that the two versions of the legend differentiate in many aspects. This arguably points to the disengagement between Hoedeman and Arnaquq-Baril's approaches and perceptions of the legend.

To compares the Russian approach with the Inuit animation I choose *The Daughter of the Sun* as a typical example of the Soviet representation of native Siberian folklore in film. In *The*

Daughter of the Sun the natural and human characters function as inseparable entities. The main characters – hunter sets off to find the daughter of the sun trapped by a villain. On his way across the Siberian Tundra, he meets and interacts with various animals and spirits, who determine his actions that bring success at the end. The wind, the sun, and the spirits of the Tundra are fully developed characters. David G. Anderson (2000) personally observed this type of relationship between humans and nature during his fieldtrip to Siberia, which he described in his book *Identity and Ecology in Arctic Siberia: The Number One Reindeer Brigade*. He formulates the definition of "sentient ecology" to identify how Siberian Natives and settlers interact with "animals, spirits, and features, such as rivers, mountains, and large rocks, all of which respond to the actions of people" (Anderson, 2000). In the Russian film, the dramatic development and characterization of each character speaks to animism shared by Siberian natives and settlers.

At the same time, the development of the storyline inevitably shifts toward the dominant Soviet dichotomies of the good and bad, rich and poor, and determines the overall narrative logic of class ideology. For example, a shaman is interpreted as a symbol of a rich, greedy, and envious deceiver as opposed to the poor hunter, who is committed to serve his people, bring back the light and stop the endless polar night. Additionally, the personification of the natural elements evokes Disney's style that strongly influenced Soviet animation at the time. In the Inuit film however, there is no sign of anthropomorphic traits in the non-human characters. According to Norman Cohn, "Inuit legends are like riddles or poems, with a few key details but not much character development" (Evans, 2010). Arnaquq-Baril and Hoedeman's follow this rule and portray their characters in a subtle, "neutral" way. Finally, with regard to "unhurried quality", the dramatic development of *The Daughter of the Son* does not correspond to this Aboriginal concept. Instead, the story progresses according to a classical structure with typical cause-effect dynamics of the adventure genre. Overall, it can be argued that the Russian adaptation employing a Soviet ethnographic approach also misrepresents the Northern native 'spirit' when compared to Arnaquq-Baril's work.

On the one hand, the Inuit adaptation *Lumaajuuq* serves as a reference point that helps to examine the two ethnographic films based on the Northern Aboriginal legends. On the other hand, within a historical time frame, this film signifies the shift in technological conditions and

possibilities for the Inuit artists to preserve and transmit their oral traditions through the film medium.

2.5 Shifting Contexts for Ethnographic Animation

The principles of ethnographic representation have a long history and are recently undergoing a serious revision in the global context. In the beginning, Canadian and Russian ethnographic films based on Northern Aboriginal legends were produced by state-run studios. At the time when there were no Inuit animators, the appropriation of Aboriginal culture by mainstream producers was considered in Canada as a valid and justifiable gesture, which meant both to promote the Native legacy and reinforce the national cinema. The NFB encouraged the involvement of Inuit artists as contributors to visual imagery and did not hesitate to borrow traditional stories to produce ethnographic animation.

Russian filmmakers continue to use in their work Aboriginal folklore and ethnographic material available at museums and through personal contact with Northern natives and settlers. Filmmakers widely appropriate native oral traditions and freely manipulate and stylize Aboriginal imagery according to their personal vision and taste. In Canada and Russia, Northern Aboriginal legends have been modified to fit the mainstream conventions, to respond directors' creative impulses and to meet audience's expectation.

Nowadays, the Inuit film productions claim their place in film history. Inuit film adaptations of Inuit legends re-contextualize and give a new point of reference in examining ethnographic animation produced by non-Inuit filmmakers. From the Inuit perspective articulated by Dana Claxton, "mainstream media can never tell our stories. They can try, but in terms of really knowing the interior of a culture, it's got to be the people who speak for themselves" (Baitruschat, 2004). In this light, Canadian and Russian cross-cultural adaptations considered to be the milestones of their own time can be judged differently when evaluated across cultural borders. From the time the Inuit begin to represent themselves cinematically, discussions on cross-cultural film adaptation of Aboriginal material become a controversial topic. The issues of cultural appropriation and misrepresentation are the centre of critical examination within the field of cultural and communication studies (Baltruschat, Coombe, Lutz, Young). In Russia,

however, these issues are rarely acknowledged since Siberian population historically comprise more than 50% of Russians and other nations' settlers[18].

In the context of re-examination of films with ethnographic content, the Inuit films *Lumaajuuq* and *Atanarjuat* mark an emergence of a new trend referred to as "autoethnography". Described by Monica Siebert in her analysis of *Atanarjuat:*

> [the film is] a pursuit condemned to mimic the conventional representations of the indigenous familiar from settler popular culture and early ethnography. Because it emerges in response to the dominant culture's representations of the indigenous and consequently incorporates the colonizer's idiom, autoethnography is not an authentic form of self-representation; rather it provides the group with a point of entry into metropolitan literate culture. (Siebert, 2006)

According to Siebert, the outtakes at the end of the film, showcasing "an Inuit technological expertise that betrays the filmmakers; through embeddedness in contemporary settler life – black leather jackets, portable CD players, digital cameras, and all" can be attributed to the concept of "autoethnography" (Siebert, 2006). In *Lumaajuuq,* the "autoethnographic" position may be associated with the English voice-over narration.

Despite the issues rising with the emergence of Inuit cinema, a pioneering role of the NFB in the history of ethnographic animation remains important. The NFB has been engaged in production and promotion of Inuit films for many years, expanding the field of cross-cultural representation. Nowadays, the NFB participates in projects such as *Nunavut Animation Lab* that challenge practices of cultural appropriation of the past. Contrarily, the post-Soviet adaptations of native Siberian folklore continue following established traditions, although more regional studios are founded in the past years and more training programs in film and animation become available for the local artists. Despite these changes, more films on Siberian Aboriginal folklore are made by non-Aboriginal filmmakers every year continuing practices of cultural appropriation. Some of them are produced as part of the famous animated series *Pile of Gems*[19] based on regional folklore of various ethnic cultures living in Russia. In CHAPTER 3, one such

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[18] According to Anderson (2000), paradoxically, "the existing hunting and gathering society in the [tundra] region is primarily Russian".

[19] In 2003, the first film of this series was produced by studio Pilot, the leading independent film studio in Russia. The government-funded ongoing project tells folk tales of different peoples of Russia Federation. There are some 70 films produced out of 100, initially planned.

adaptation *About the Raven* by A. Alexeev (2004) is compared with the Canadian animated version of the same legend *The Owl and the Raven* by Hoedeman (1973). This comparison is the focus of my essay film *The Raven,* which I have developed as part of the research.

3. MAKING AN ESSAY FILM *THE RAVEN*

The objective of my essay film *The Raven* is to explore the motives and consequences of the peculiar story of the raven's colour. My film is structured as a multi-layered documentary that playfully bridges myth and reality, reveals controversy associated with the Canadian and Russian animated versions of the Inuit legend, and unifies differences of the three cultural perceptions of the myth.

3.1 Theme, Approach and Technique of *The Raven*

Making a film and analyzing a film are two experiences that merge into one in *The Raven.* The film focuses on representation of the Canadian and Russian cultural perspectives on nature and explores how they intersect with the third – the Inuit. Having animated two films on Aboriginal folklore[20], I have chosen animation as the vantage point of my film. *The Raven* looks at the two ethnographic animations directed by the Canadian and Russian filmmakers, who adapted one Inuit legend of how the raven became black[21]. The trajectory of my film leads to an exciting encounter with the two renowned animators and directors of these films, Hoedeman and Alexeev. My conversation with the filmmakers and the overall film discourse depict an intriguing relationship between the Canadian and Russian viewpoints on the raven's character within and beyond the legend. Two other animators Leaf and Natalia Ryss join the conversation.

I structured my film as a provocative dialogue between an animated character of a raven and the narrator, who together discover why the raven is black and what role it plays in Northern mythology. For this purpose, I recorded interviews with Hoedeman, Alexeev, Leaf, and Ryss, and blended them with the excerpts from their films *The Owl and The Raven* (Hoedeman, 1973), *About the Raven* (Alexeev, 2004), *The Owl Who Married a Goose* (Leaf, 1974), *The Magpie's*

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[20] *Wonder-Pysanka* (2005), *Legend Preface* (2007)

[21] This legend was recorded in both parts of the Arctic, Canadian and Russian.

Gossip (Ryss, 2007). In my film, the animated character of the Raven and narrator together guide the viewer through these excerpts accompanied by the filmmakers` commentaries. I juxtapose the excerpts so that they highlight differences between the Canadian and Russian approaches to the legend and reveal a controversy associated with their interpretations of the legends. Several questions surface in my interview with filmmakers to illustrate this controversy. What does the raven symbolize in Canadian and Russian cultures? What should the viewer learn from these films in regards to the Aboriginal concept of the human-nature relationship?

The visual approach and techniques of my film are a combination of the live footage, animated excerpts and my own animation. The live footage sequences include the winter landscape and my interview with the filmmakers. The excerpts from the Canadian and Russian animated films illustrate the core discussion about differences in the two interpretations of the legend. For my personal animation, I use the charcoal-drawn technique to portray the raven's character. There are two colour pallets, monochromatic and multi-colour, which represent the different media in the film diegesis. The black- and-white monochromatic pallet is reserved for a depiction of the winter landscape, interviews with the filmmakers, and my animation of the raven's character. A multi-colour pallet is used for the demonstration of the excerpts from the animations by Hoedeman , Alexeev, Leaf, and Ryss.

For the sound background, I have chosen a violin tune, which corresponds to the meditative mood of the panoramic shots of nature in the beginning of the film. The middle part is filled with dialogues accompanied by ambient sounds of nature such as birds, wind, and snow. At the end, a rap-song of the Raven's animated character is composed to make my own statement about the raven's significance in Northern mythology.

3.2 Film Script *THE RAVEN*

1. EXT. WILDERNESS – WINTER DAY (LIVE FOOTAGE) 1

The raven's black silhouette is gliding against the snow. The raven slows down, suspends for a moment, and speeds up again.

Several VOICEs overlapping each other tell various Inuit

legends about a raven.

FIRST VOICE
A raven and a seagull got into a fight over a piece of meat. The raven was on the Inuit side and the seagull, on the side of white man. They fought for days…

FIRST VOICE slowly fades out while overlapped by SECOND VOICE introducing another legend.

SECOND VOICE
A man and wife were quarreling… She went to an Angakok and said:"Change me to some other creature, anything but a woman." He turned her into a raven…

SECOND VOICE slowly fades out and THIRD VOICE begins telling the next story.

THIRD VOICE
Once there was a raven whose wife was killed by humans. Being very lustful, he needed a new wife right away. He happened upon a little sparrow whose husband had been killed by humans, too. "Oh my husband was so sweet," the sparrow said, "for he used to catch nice fat worms for me." Replied the raven: "I'll be your husband now."

THIRD VOICE slowly fades out and FOURTH VOICE overlaps telling yet another legend.

FOURTH VOICE
A raven once flew into the mouth of a whale. He flew and flew until he came to a small

house made of ribs and soft tissue…

The camera tracks the POV of the raven flying towards a house.

2. INT. ROOM – EVENING (ANIMATION) 2
(camera is in front of a window inside, looking outside)

RAVEN flies toward the window. He approaches and lands on the window sill.

FOURTH VOICE (contd.)
Living in the house he found a young woman tending a small gas lamp. Now this young woman was kind and gentle. She pitied the raven and invited him to stay as long

FOURTH VOICE (contd.)
as he liked on the condition that he must never touch the lamp. The raven agreed but he was intrigued about the lamp. He became curios. His curiosity grew stronger and stronger until finally he could take it no more. One day when the woman’s back was turned…

The window repeatedly opens and shuts with the wind. A lamp suspended from the ceiling starts to shake with the wind blown inside.

FOURTH VOICE (contd.)
… the raven flew over and pecked the lamp. Instantly the light went out and the young woman died.

The ceiling lamp drops down. The room turns black.

RAVEN enters the room through the open window while invisible in the darkness. Only his eyes spark.

RAVEN's silhouette slowly appears from the darkness.

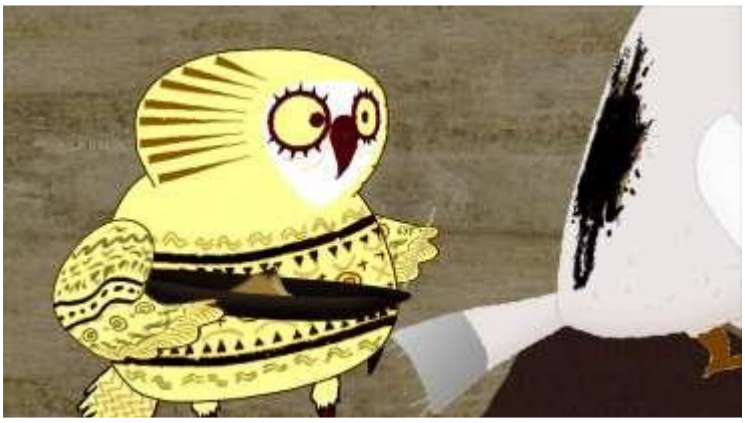
NARRATOR
Oh, there he is…
My dear Raven, why are you
black like the night?

RAVEN
Well, in Russia, the story
goes…

RAVEN pushes the button of a projector with his beak. The projector starts.

3. INT. ROOM - EVENING (ANIMATION, FILM EXCERPTS) 3

Animated excerpts from Russian film based on Northern native story about the Raven's colour appear on the screen. In this story the owl spills the soot on the raven when trying to paint his feathers.



About the Raven
A.Alexeev, Studio-Pilot, 2004

Commentaries of A. Alexeev accompany film sequences.

NARRATOR
So you and Owl became foes because of this unfortunate colouring?

RAVEN
Oh no, there many more reasons than that! Not only is Owl clumsy but also terribly stupid: imagine, he wanted to MARRY a goose! Ha-ha-ha

4. INT. ROOM - EVENING (ANIMATION, FILM EXCERPTS) 4

Animated excerpts and stills from the Canadian film The Owl Who Married a Goose appear on screen. In her commentaries that intertwine the visuals, C. Leaf confesses that she added a personality to the owl, adapting the Inuit legend to the southern audience's perspective.

The Owl Who Married a Goose
C. Leaf, NFB, 1974

N. Ryss (Russian filmmaker) joins the conversation to reflect on the animation tradition that uses personification of animals.

NARRATOR

Since we know these stories
from the southern
perspective,
I'm curious, how do the Inuit
tell the story of your
colour?

RAVEN
Here is the truest version
that I know…

5. INT. STUDIO - EVENING (ANIMATION, FILM EXCERPTS) 5

Animated excerpts from the Canadian film The Owl and the Raven appear on screen. Commentaries of film director and animator C. Hoedeman accompany the screening. The filmmaker tells about Inuit involvement in the production, although he states that his film also targets southerners.

The Owl and the Raven
C. Hoedeman, NFB, 1973

NARRATOR
In the two versions
of the story of your colour,
who is to blame for your
blackness, really? The two of
you play your roles
differently each time…

RAVEN
…Because the filmmakers'
perspectives on native

legends about birds are all mixed up! Just listen to this…

6. INT. STUDIO - EVENING (ANIMATION MIXED WITH PHOTOS) 6

In the conversation, filmmakers Alexeev, Hoedeman, Leaf, and Ryss comment on functions and lessons of the Inuit legends, raven's imagery, and the popular perception of the raven as a trickster.

The Magpie's Gossip
N.Ryss, Soyuzmultfilm, 2007

Animated excerpts from Ryss's film The Magpie's Gossip present Magpie's (another bird-trickster) viewpoint on people's lives and illustrate Ryss's commentary about the bird's trickery.

NARRATOR
It looks like you are more of a trickster too!

RAVEN
Don't you dare call me a trickster!

7. INT. ROOM - EVENING (ANIMATION) 7

RAVEN
Did you know, there isn't even a word for "trickster" in any native language?

NARRATOR
Really?

RAVEN
(in a slow rap tempo)
Natives know me.
They know how
I live in two worlds
The spiritual and human,
… spiritual and human
I shift shapes to become
A man or a woman
… a man… a woman…

RAVEN (contd.)
Your traits and behaviours
All this I can summon
… I can summon.
What I do for you people
Is rather uncommon
… very uncommon.
For those who know me
I am cunning and wise,
… cunning and wise
A hero, a legend,
A protector, a guide
… protector and guide.
I help humans to get past
their troubles and ails,
… troubles and ails.
I give air to your wings
And wind to your sails
… wind to your sails.

NARRATOR
Oh… That’s who you are!

RAVEN
Yes. Not a trickster at all.
Now if you’ll excuse me, it
is time to check on the
hunter, who the other day
looked for a place to camp
while hunting for seal.
I pointed to a place
under that mountain… where
other hunters camped.

RAVEN flies away toward the mountain and disappears over the horizon.

8. EXT. SNOW FIELD - EARLY MORNING (ANIMATON) 8

RAVEN is sitting on top of the man’s body laying down on the snow.

NARRATOR
Why is this hunter
breathless and still?

RAVEN
A boulder rolled down
the mountain and crushed him
last night. That’s what
happened to other hunters…

RAVEN starts picking the man’s eye.

RAVEN
I don’t know
why all these hunters…

RAVEN stops picking the man’s eye and turns his head to the camera.

RAVEN (contd.)
…and all of you believe
my silly stories…

The word THE END appears on screen. Film credits start rolling.

RAVEN (V.O)
(in a slow rap tempo)
Oh why are you people
so easy to please?
… easy to please
My tales and stories,
You believe them, I know

No matter how silly,
No matter how old
… they silly and old
but you believe them, I know
You do as I say
You listen with awe
… listen and do what I say
But I am just a bird
I fly and I caw.
… just fly and caaaaawwwwww……

*Preliminary permission for the use of the excerpts is obtained.
** Information is taken from the interview with the directors.

Conclusion

The relationship between humans and nature is the primary element of Northern Aboriginal cultures and their folklore. Aboriginal legends depict human-nature relationships as deeply symbiotic and intertwined. These relationships form a particular kind of cultural traditions and social knowledge which affects how people sense, experience and understand their lifeworld. When adapted to films by non-Aboriginal filmmakers, Aboriginal legends are often interpreted in ways which modify connections between human and non-human characters of legends. By looking at Canadian and Russian ethnographic animation based on Northern Aboriginal folklore of the two countries, I have traced some traits of the two cultural systems that lead to such modifications.

I have investigated ethno-historical and cinematic traditions of Canada and Russia and the perceptions of Northern peoples and nature by mainstream societies of these countries. I have also indicated similarities and differences in the two cultural approaches to the interpretation of Northern Aboriginal folklore. To exemplify my findings, I have compared the two film adaptations of the Inuit legend *Why the Raven Became Black?* And developed a film project *The Raven* based on this comparison. The project description and the script of *The Raven* are included. I took interviews with the Canadian and Russian filmmakers for my film and animated the raven's character.

Both theoretical and practical parts of this research-creation have examined the representation of nature in Canadian and Russian ethnographic film and, particularly, looked for

non-Aboriginal influences in the animated interpretations of Northern native mythology. MacDougall suggests, "[s]ince all [ethnographic] films are cultural artifacts, many can tell us as much about the societies that produce them as about those they purport to describe" (MacDougall, 1998). My findings support this statement and take it further. I propose that while formally referencing Northern native cultures, Canadian and Russian ethnographic films actually represent meanings and values originating in dominant societies of these countries. My research also implies that in order to interpret the original meanings and teachings of Aboriginal legends, one has to be able to abandon his/her own cultural conventions and to assimilate into the Aboriginal universe instead. This conclusion resonates with the contemporary trend of cultural studies that challenges superiority of the dominant cultural systems and values. Overall, the thesis promotes the necessity to re-examine cross-cultural adaptations in the ethnographic and cinematic frameworks which is especially important in the contemporary context of complex relationships between dominant and subaltern cultures.

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