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Andrey Khrzhanovsky's *A Cat and a Half* (2002) as a Palimpsest Beyond Conventions¹⁾

Introduction

The existence of hybrid films can be traced back to the very inception of the Seventh Art. The intertwining of different types of visual language, the interplay and entanglement of diverse means of expression and styles is certainly not a new phenomenon in the history of cinema. In recent decades, it has shown its full potential and shifted the focus of research to an ever more imperative discussion on the development of audiovisual works. Although the history of cinema is filled with various examples of the unification of live-action, documentary, and animation during the entire span of their existence, there has been a formulation of the characteristics that set them apart, of their specific aesthetics. That is, conventions have been established — those traditional ways of depiction in the cinematic arts that serve to determine genres and types. In this regard, every film that combines the representative codes (photographic, graphic, computer generated, etc.) and stylistic approaches typical of animation, documentaries, and live-action films can be viewed as a work of art beyond conventions.

Not long ago, research perspectives have increasingly tended to target a theoretical overview of hybrid films, which are becoming a significant part of today's cultural context and tend to be referred to as "animated documentaries". As Annabelle Roe points out, "Since the 1990s there has been something of a boom in animated documentaries."²⁾ This is also the time when an ever more significant critical spotlight is shone on the increasing spread of such films. The attempt to secure and comment on the discourse of animated

1) The text is written for the "Poets in Cinema" project, part of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science programme "Young Scientists and Postdoctoral Students".

2) Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 13.

documentaries is initially related to Bill Nichols' typology of documentaries and to placing animated documentaries within it.³⁾ It then passes through Paul Wells'⁴⁾ different approach to systematization until 2013's release of Annabelle Roe's fully focused research piece. Despite established skepticism towards animation as a suitable means of depicting and expressing documentary content, and the long history of integration of different styles, animated documentaries find their place as a unique form of the audiovisual arts.

The research in this text is aimed at an analysis of a piece difficult to pinpoint within traditional definitions and, to a large extent, which falls within the realm of animated documentaries. Andrey Khrzhanovsky's *A Cat and a Half* (2002) is a unique representation of the life and work of Joseph Brodsky, and allows for an examination of said work through the metaphor of a palimpsest beyond conventions. The choice of such a working comparison is dictated by its inherent potential for a twofold interpretation, extending the reading to two dynamically related research lenses relating not only to the content of the piece but to the specificities of its production. On the one hand, at the level of content, Joseph Brodsky's personality takes center stage in the film. This is, more than anything, to be interpreted as a journey into his inner world. Director Andrey Khrzhanovsky, who also co-wrote the film with Yuri Arabov, seems to gradually reveal each layer of those intricately personal aspects that form the stunning personality of the Nobel laureate; the same aspects which constitute the notion of the only possible "cat and a half"; aspects that build up the concept of freedom from conventional thinking and behavior. On the other hand, the efforts of the authors are not limited only to fully and extensively revealing the largest portion of those aspects that define the traits of temperament, the specificity of interests, the unique nature of a psychological profile, and which, in their aggregate, merge into a unified idea of individuality. Along with that process, they construct a new palimpsest, because the film consists of various means of expressions and styles, which build upon each other to define the outline of the extraordinarily broad spectrum of meanings.

In other words, the authors of the film peel back the layers to reveal the various aspects of the palimpsest Joseph Brodsky, while, at the same time, they build up the palimpsest *A Cat and a Half*. Both defy and go beyond conventions — the first is outside the usual and established thinking and behavior, while the second goes beyond the conventions of cinema, eschewing the typical portrayal of its subject and combining animation and documentary. Both palimpsests, of course, possess many levels of meaning, and stand out to such a degree that they are immersed in the meanings of nonconformity. This train of thought can differ depending on how we choose to consider and apply the metaphor of the palimpsest.

There exists a plethora of uses for the term "palimpsest". Likely best known of these is that of Gérard Genette — one of the most authoritative literary theorists of the 20th century. Thus, as an example, the aforementioned palimpsest Joseph Brodsky is to some extent reminiscent of the well-known "Proust palimpsest" as suggested by Gérard Genette.

3) See Sybil DelGaudio, 'If Truth Be Told, Can ,Toons Tell It? Documentary and Animation', *Film History*, vol. 9 (1997), pp. 189–199; Gunnar Strøm, 'The Animated Documentary', *Animation Journal*, vol. 11 (2003), pp. 46–63.

4) Paul Wells, 'The Beautiful Village and the True Village: A Consideration of Animation and the Documentary Aesthetic', in Paul Wells (ed.), *Art and Animation* (London: Academy Editions, 1997), pp. 40–45.

He notes that the writing of Marcel Proust is a palimpsest, that it contains meanings which can only be discerned within their collective whole.⁵⁾ What is more, Genette's *Palimpsests* unfolds the metaphor of the palimpsest as a text written over other text.⁶⁾ The classification of textuality proposed by Genette — where the terms hypotext (an anterior text) and hypertext (a text derived from the anterior text) have the relationship of bottom and top layer, respectively — offers a different possibility for interpretation. We can then consider the screenplay of *A Cat and a Half* to be the hypertext, whereas Brodsky's pieces would be the hypotext. Thus, the dynamics of these two units could be observed through the lens of hypertextuality.

This article, however, also considers the intermediality of cinema and literature and suggests that decisions that brought about the creation of *A Cat and a Half*, as presented to the audience, are dictated both by the nature of the literary source material and by that of the other materials. The manner in which the metaphor of the palimpsest is used allows us to regard the film in terms of its form and content concurrently.

Hybridization of types and genres, peculiarities of the structure

The authorial approach of Andrey Khrzhanovsky to the works of Joseph Brodsky turns out to be deeply related to the materials that form the basis of the film. Brodsky's autobiographical prose, his poetry, drawings, and photographs taken by his father, Alexander Ivanovich Brodsky, come to life in the film through the representation codes of animation, live-action dramatization and documentary footage, which commingle to such a degree that separating them becomes quite difficult. It is precisely this that leads us to view *A Cat and a Half* as a hybrid film. The research at hand resorts to the term "hybrid film" despite there being no single definition for it, as its applications vary in different film and media studies. Jay Telotte, for example, examines the historical development of hybridization of live-action and animation by focusing on American animation.⁷⁾ Frederick Litten pays close attention to examples of global cinema produced between the 1960s and 1980s and argues that to classify a film as a hybrid at least 10% of its running time must consist of live-action or animation sequences.⁸⁾ Paul Ward claims that animated films depicting something real are hybrid forms in which the line between fiction and nonfiction is incredibly blurry.⁹⁾ Annabelle Roe, on the other hand, treats hybridization mostly as a strategy of representation.¹⁰⁾ The general notion and suggestion of the film examined here, however, points us to the manner in which Nadezhda Marinchevska views hybrids in *An-*

5) See Gérard Genette, *Figures of literary discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

6) Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: literature in the second degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

7) Jay Telotte, *Animating Space: From Mickey to Wall-E* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2010).

8) Frederick Litten, 'A Mixed Picture: Drawn Animation/Live Action Hybrids Worldwide from the 1960s to the 1980s', 24 April 2011, <<http://litten.de/fulltext/mixedpix.pdf>>, [accessed 7 September 2020].

9) Paul Ward, 'Animating with Facts: The Performative Process of Documentary Animation in the ten mark (2010)', *animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2011), pp. 293–305.

10) Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 13.

imation Hybrids (Animatsionnite hibridi). To her, hybrids are not so much films that simply combine live-action, documentary and animation, but those “films in which the reciprocal penetration of different means of expression and styles is organic and cannot be divided into discernible segments.”¹¹⁾ The different types of visual languages in *A Cat and a Half* are interlaced to such an extent that separating them is practically impossible. The hybridization therein goes beyond a straightforward combination of different codes of representation.

The organic intertwining of the different means of expressions and techniques utilized in the film (contemporary shots of Saint Petersburg, computer graphics and animated drawings of Brodsky and Khrzhanovsky himself, the incorporation of a rich photography archive) predetermine the difficulties this work of art faces when attempting to fit within traditional definitions and typologies. So, for example, when commenting on Andrey Khrzhanovsky's films, Tatiana Shcherbina and Natalia Krivulya bring forth specifically the borderline position in Khrzhanovsky's works with regard to traditional notions of cinema. Shcherbina points out the complexity of attempting to pinpoint them within the common typological definitions and claims that they are unique:

It is most difficult for Andrey Khrzhanovsky to be placed within ‘structure types,’ since the genre he has created for his films is one of a kind. This is a combination of animation with documentary film, while the total sum of the parts feels like poetry, music, painting, reincarnated into a cinematic spectacle.¹²⁾

Natalia Krivulya's assertions are much in the same vein, the central thesis being that the cinematic works of Khrzhanovsky are a kind of journey into the realm of culture and history. In her text, she points out the differing nature of his pieces:

The majority of his films... do not correspond to the traditional notions we hold of animation, or documentaries, or even that of straight live-action filmmakers. These films are created at a crossing point of cinematic genres and types, at the crossroads of techniques. To speak of them is only possible by resorting to oblique and indirect definitions, because they are poetry, music, painting, and literature, all at the same time. Together they have found a new existence as cinematic imagery.¹³⁾

This characterization can be fully applied to *A Cat and a Half*, and sets the researcher's sight not only on the director's non-standard way of thinking with innate straying from canon, but also on a deeper look into the context of the author's entire body of work,

11) Nadezhda Marinchevska, *Animatsionnite hibridi* (Sofia: Titra, 2015), p. 9.

12) Tatyana Shcherbina, ‘Poltora kota’ Andrey Khrzhanovskogo, 2002, *Vestnik Yevropy*, <<https://magazines.gorky.media/vestnik/2002/6/poltora-kota-andreya-hrzhanovskogo.html>>, [accessed 6 June 2020]. This and all other referenced sources, which were originally written in Russian and Bulgarian, were translated into English for the purposes of this article by Vadim Banev, a lecturer at the Department of English, Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv.

13) Natalya Krivulya, ‘Udivitelnyye puteshestviya v prostranstve kul'tury, ili intellektualnyye igry Andrey Khrzhanovskogo’, *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski*, vol. 92–93 (2009), pp. 319–342.

which suggests that the advent of the film about Brodsky is no mere coincidence and has its antecedents.

With regard to the straying from canon, we could point out that when Khrzhanovsky creates, he does not strictly adhere to the usual approaches of filmmaking. It is precisely this borderline stance in his work that is highlighted in the texts by Krivulya and Shcherbina. Both researchers note that Khrzhanovsky's films occupy a position between types and genres. Speaking of traditional definitions and typologies, it is important to underscore that the classification of cinema and genre definitions differ from country to country. There is a lack of overlap between terminology used in research texts written in Romance and Slavic languages. In Russian film theory, there is a long-lived and well-established tradition of classifying cinema into four types — live-action, documentary, animation, and educational/popular science¹⁴⁾. This classification is done with accordance to the nature of the subject presented on screen, the method chosen to depict it, and even the level of authenticity in the piece. Although this separation is sometimes considered conditional, a number of theorists, historians, and critics use it for differentiation.¹⁵⁾ This separation of cinema into types is applied in teaching, studying, and also in practice. The genre definitions are, to a great degree, shaped by literature and theater.

This text utilizes working definitions of “type” and “genre” in accordance with Russian film theory accepting that live-action cinema, documentary films, and animation are types, while examining biographical films and literary film adaptations as genres. Animated documentary is thus a kind of hybrid of cinematic types rather than genres. Even though in most English texts these terms would fall under a generalized description of genre, this text chooses to operate with the aforementioned terminological apparatus in order to facilitate better comprehension, while it searches for the proper place of the discussed film within the stream of different definitions. The piece created by Khrzhanovsky constantly avoids a unified explanation. That is because *A Cat and a Half* has characteristics inherent to the types of cinema — animation, documentary, and live-action. It also resembles the genres of biopic and of film adaptation all at the same time without fitting snugly into any of the two.

Shifting the attention to the experience of the renowned director in animation, one can easily observe his deliberate choice of literary works and/or drawings by all kind of artists, as the fundamental components of his films. Among said pieces are the three short films about Alexander S. Pushkin — *I Fly to You Like a Memory* (1977), *With You I Am Again* (1980), and *Autumn* (1982) — which later grow to become a feature titled *My Favorite Season* (1987). Works about Pushkin represent an intriguing interpretation of his artistic legacy, made possible entirely through the means of animation by making his drawings and manuscripts come to life, while his stanzas take on a guise through the ever-present voice of an unseen narrator.

14) In Russian, the term is “nauchno-populyarnyy” which literally translated means “popular science”. This term refers to films of an educational nature created for public broadcast.

15) See e.g. Igor' Belen'kiy, *Istoriya kino. Kinos'yemki, kinopromyshlennost', kinoiskusstvo* (Moskva: Alpina publisher, 2019); Semen Freylikh, *Teoriya kino: ot Eyzenshteyna do Tarkovskogo* (Moskva: Akademicheskii proyekt, 2009); Natalya Agafonova, *Obshchaya teoriya kino i osnovy analiza filma* (Minsk: Tesey, 2008); Natalya Sokolova, *Istoriya i teoriya kino* (Tyumen': RITS TGAKI, 2007).

The nonconformist art of Estonian artist Ülo Ilmar Sooster calls on the non-canonical approach to the production of the film about his work and fate, *School of Fine Arts* (1990), which includes the two preceding pieces — *School of Fine Arts. Juniper Landscape* (1987) and *School of Fine Arts. The Return* (1990). Gunnar Strøm lists these pieces of Khrzhanovsky and Valeriy Ugarov as historical examples of animation with a documentary approach and highlights that, “Especially in *Landscape with Juniper* (1987) they have succeeded in integrating their animations in a traditional documentary setting.”¹⁶⁾ Even here, this early on, one can spot the striving on the director's part to create a meaningful story about artistic individuals through the language of their own art. The combination of paintings and drawings by Sooster with the documentary shots flows naturally and follows a gravitation towards surreal fantasies while establishing an animated documentary in the biographical genre.

Perhaps it is worth noting that outside of Khrzhanovsky's work, many contemporary films easily identified as animated documentaries also focus on the complex nature of the artist; on what the artist creates as well as on their personal fate. A multitude of those films are captivating stories about well-known filmmakers, providing various means of immersing into the mind of the artist. For example, Chris Landreth's Academy Award-winning short *Ryan* (2004), about Canadian animator Ryan Larkin, features digital animation and makes use of the popular motion capture technique. In an extraordinarily expressionist and artistic manner, Theodore Ushev's *Lipsett Diaries* (2010) presents and analyses the mind, story, and art of Arthur Lipsett. Marie-Josée Saint-Pierre's short films *McLaren's Negatives* (2006) and *Jutra* (2014) include mixed media and use different types of visual language to observe the creations and views of filmmakers Norman McLaren and Claude Jutra.

At first glance, the film *A Cat and a Half* calls back to the methods Khrzhanovsky utilizes in his prior attempts to the image of the artist and can easily be included in the broader context of films dealing with the individual's artistry by making use of different approaches and techniques to reveal the unique nature of the artist. What significantly sets the film apart from Khrzhanovsky's other works, and other films about Brodsky and the artist in general, is the idea that the film is a unique reflection of the author's own artistic foundation and, before all, of the autobiographical prose of Brodsky, which the piece is based on. In his essay, *The Sound of the Tide*, Brodsky himself confirms that an artist's true biography lies within their work, that the mere enumeration of facts and events from one's life is not capable of explaining the work of a given author.¹⁷⁾ It is precisely this approach that Andrey Khrzhanovsky goes for in *A Cat and a Half*. What stands out in that is not the informativeness of academic knowledge, not so much the dry fact, but, rather, the immersion in the monolithic art of the writer, which speaks volumes of his nature. In this respect, it is no coincidence that the film is subtitled *Sketches and motifs from the works of Joseph Brodsky* since the visual language of the piece is intricately related to and based upon the fundament of the script, pieced together from Brodsky's autobiographical essays, his poetry, and interviews. The choice to stay away from descriptive and explanatory pitfalls is in

16) Gunnar Strøm, ‘The Animated Documentary’, *Animation Journal*, vol. 11 (2003), pp. 46–63.

17) Joseph Brodsky, ‘The Sound of the Tide’, in *Less than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), p. 164.

unison with the genre specificity of Brodsky's autobiographical essays. Just as they manage to contain and combine the ostensibly incompatible traits of the essay and the autobiography, so does the film appear to be a reflection on Brodsky's artistic work, taking up a position on the boundary not only between types but also between genres. Reading *A Cat and a Half* as a biographical film is, to a significant degree, doomed to fail. It is easier to think of it as an interpretation of biography and art since it creates a new kind of knowledge of human life; of the other side of the phenomenon that is Joseph Brodsky, realized through the essence of his literary language and drawings.

It would be irrelevant to neglect the unique feeling of authenticity that stems forth from a general overview of the film. Still, selected quotes from Brodsky's essays represent his life, and the focus is on the author representing himself. The constantly crumbling narrative of Brodsky's prose, the nonlinear and seemingly unstructured storytelling are made real with the smooth flow of remembrances in the realm of memory. It is namely this process of remembering, of immersing oneself in the past, which ultimately shapes the future of an individual and becomes a leading structural principle in the compositional outline of this cinematic piece. The film's artistic workings are based on fragmentation, which flourish into an amazing kaleidoscope of various settings, themes, and motifs. Of interest in this aspect is the comparison that the film's art-director, Natalia Krivulya, uses to summarize the authorial style in Khrzhanovsky's films. Her words serve as an affirmation of the unifying thesis of this text with regard to interpreting the film as a palimpsest that holds a multitude of interpretational pathways and, at the same time, constantly avoids traditional definition of its nature:

The film becomes a sort of orchestra where individual images, themes, tunes, stanzas, texts, voices, are all combined to form something entirely new. That which can be called a cinematographic suite of pristine harmony and perfect synchronicity, where the plot pulls you along, every now and then peeking through to the surface, and then expanding, degrading into disparate themes; where a motif steps aside to be replaced by another. All of this forms a kind of layered artistic tissue which allows familiar images to take on different, more malleable shapes.¹⁸⁾

The multitude of episodes differing in terms of content in *A Cat and a Half* are related in the language of cinema through various techniques and come together in the combined notion of a journey through memory. By reproducing the divergence from a linear sequencing in the artist's prose, the film's authors turn to a cinematic recreation of memory as a source of knowledge and a better understanding. The reconstruction of the rich archive of photographs is one of the tools that serve as adequate and objective material of reinforcement for the sense of authenticity. This is also the source of the deep connection between memory and photography as a pathway to the past, but also of the sense that experience and memories can be just as important as facts and established knowledge, and can be used as a platform to represent and interpret. At the same time, the subjective na-

18) Natalya Krivulya, 'Udivitel'nyye puteshestviya v prostranstve kul'tury, ili intellektual'nyye igry Andrey Khrzhanovskogo', *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski*, vol. 92–93 (2009), pp. 319–342.

ture of animation, interspersed with documentary shots and purely fictional elements in the piece, makes the film hard to classify and reinforces its reading as a hybrid, belonging mostly to animated documentaries. In addition, animation appears as a kind of invitation for the imagination of each and every viewer who has to imagine the real subject. Involving the observer in an understanding of such films, which employ a collaboration of various visual languages, is significantly expanded when compared to conventional alternatives, "While the photographic image of a given character is a visual representation of it, the drawn image will always have to be compared and interpreted by each spectator."¹⁹⁾

Unlike *A Cat and a Half*, a large number of animated documentaries that focus on the theme of memory, of individual recollection and autobiography, are studying the individual's already missing and undocumented past; they examine in detail and interpret the processes involved in committing something to memory and failing to recall it. Films such as *Silence* (1998), *Passages* (2008), and *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) use the artistic tools geared at recreating the subjective nature of the mind and observe the relationships between the individual and history. Moreover, the advancements of technology offer an ever-greater arsenal for immersion into the personal history. Many pieces tackling the issue of memory today go beyond the medium of film. Virtual reality and interactivity greatly influence the way that a given recollection's fragmentary nature is presented. However, all of these examples, including *A cat and a Half*, show how memories represent not only the identity of a person, but also reveal quite a bit about his/her cultural and social context. Authenticity and being convinced in the veracity of what is observed step aside to make way for believing in what you are seeing. These films go beyond the conventional perception of documentaries and animation by incorporating both.

The heightened tension between the documentary and the animation within the nature of the film at hand, and the inability to pinpoint which of them takes precedence in the message of the film, fosters the varying opinions on the part of critics in their attempts to categorize it. Thus, for example, while researchers such as Tatiana Shcherbina and Natalia Krivulya point out the difficulty of slotting the film into the framework of certain definitions and resort to the use of phrases like "a cinematic spectacle" and "cinematographic suite," there is no lack of opinions firmly placing the film in the realm of documentary cinema. In her study of animation hybrids, Nadezhda Marinchevska points out that the recently popular designation of "animated documentary" is beginning to replace definitions for films more likely to be defined purely as documentaries. For *A Cat and a Half* she opts for a predominantly documentary reading:

Actually, the film, in spite of its intricate title and the author's professional background, can more easily be defined as a documentary. Yet, at a number of festivals, it is presented specifically as an animated documentary... Despite distinctly frivolous divergence from pure authenticity, Andrey Khrzhanovsky's film does possess the documentary spirit in its adherence to personality and time.²⁰⁾

19) Filipe Costa Luz, 'Animation Documentaries and Reality Cross-Boundaries', *International Journal of Film and Media Arts*, vol. 1 (2016), pp. 42–49.

20) Nadezhda Marinchevska, *Animatsionnite hibridi* (Sofia: Titra, 2015), p. 31.

In support of Marinchevska's claim stands the drastic change in the most recent examples of documentary filmmaking, which is constantly modifying its approaches to subjectivity. There has been a rise in the number of documentary films that explore the subjective nature of one's past and personal identity. This engagement is a complex task carried out through various strategies. The mimetic approaches are limited, narratives become more and more nonlinear and fragmented, and memory is signified not only through the usage of interviews, archives and photographs but also through some rather fictional enactments, flashbacks and flash-forwards in time.

However, the adherence to personality and time mentioned by Marinchevska does not negate the fact that the film is a unique adaptation of works of art by Joseph Brodsky that makes use of different kinds of depiction strategies. Naturally, in a much broader sense, every work of art is a kind of document since it is a codification of information relating to a certain historical and/or cultural context. The research at hand points out the differing and, to a point, contradictory opinions of the film not to confirm or disprove a given point of view; rather, this is to better call attention to the complexity of what Khrzhanovsky has created, and to highlight the ambivalence of the resounding message therein. Otherwise, there would be a practically insoluble clash of positions, such as those evident in the diametrically opposed statements of Bill Nichols and Trinh Minh-ha: "Every film is a documentary"²¹) and "There is no such thing as documentary..."²²). As foundation for *A Cat and a Half*, Andrey Khrzhanovsky makes use of drawings, prose, poetry and photos, and tailors them into a fragmentary, yet notionally unified, story of the unique individual that is Joseph Brodsky. The particular usage of those materials in the film reveal the director-animator's specific point of view and firmly drives reception to an understanding of the cinematic work as an authorial piece of profound aesthetic values.

Revealing individuality through the unity of visual and verbal codes

The structural layout of *A Cat and a Half* reflects the nature of its contents; it is defined by the authors' wish to establish not so much the apparent and visible outer layers of the key character, but rather his innermost nature. What makes Khrzhanovsky's approach so different is that he makes no attempt to produce another biopic, nor does he strive for faithful and honest adherence to an adaptation of the original literature. The focus does not rest upon proper continuity and chronological tracing of facts and events, nor on the evolution of Joseph Brodsky's artistic expression, but rather on the complex interrelationships of characteristics that establish a personality. The cinematic language avoids tracking goings-on at the expense of a peculiar reflection upon the character. The astounding unity between the form and content in the film, which complement and affect each other, leads to the thwarting of restrictions which Paul Wells mentions in *Writing Animated Documentary: A Theory of Practice* and is connected to the potential danger of observing the dram-

21) Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 1.

22) Trinh Min-ha, 'The Totalizing Quest of Meaning', in Michael Renov (ed.), *Theorizing Documentary* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 90.

aturgical foundation of the pieces solely through their facet of form. This unity includes the film at hand in a group of animated documentaries that obtain “increasing credibility for what the ‘form’ can uniquely achieve in relation to ‘content’.”²³⁾

An intricate intertwining and recreation of Brodsky's autobiographical essays can be discerned in the very essence of the cinematic piece; namely, *Less than One*, *Quay of the Incurables*, *A Guide to a Renamed City*, *In a Room and a Half*, and *Spoils of War*; also included are parts of the following poems: *In Italy*, *Winter Evening in Yalta*, and *Stanzas*, with the author's authentic voice as well as some interviews he has given. At the same time, viewers familiar with Brodsky's oeuvre can easily recognize key themes and imagery from his literary legacy. The unique translation of the written lines into shape-shifting images and allusions, clearly audible and indirect visual quotes, creates a multi-layered semantic picture but also highlights the key notions of the film — to represent Brodsky namely through his work. Selected here are those pieces of his prose bearing the marks of factors that are portentous with regard to his temperament, personality and interests, but also to Brodsky's refusal to merge with the majority, which would require a certain dose of indifference and aloofness.

The symbols used to establish the concept of the poet's individuality and his freedom, his self-exclusion from any and all attempts to fit within conventions, to think and live by the tired stereotypes and typical clichéd perceptions of the world, all of that is derived from his texts, taken on and translated into the language of the Seventh Art. It is important to point out that the factors that form the personality and define said personality's inherent nonconformity are, before all, of an aesthetic nature and, since they are such, they obtain a different kind of aesthetic presentation as part of a cinematic texture. In spite of the general lack of structure and absence of continuity in the storytelling, the following accents can be discerned — family, the birthplace (Saint Petersburg), music, the fleet, cinema, literature, socialist art. Organically imbued inside are some of the most emblematic themes of Brodsky's work, such as that of the river, water, and fish.

Joseph Brodsky's very image attains multidimensional volume in *A Cat and a Half* due to the collage of images that normally belong to disparate symbolic sets. Self-portraits, photographs, the mixed character of the child Brodsky (Sasha Ginzburg) delivered through animation and live-action shots as well as the animated “cat and a half” are unified into an alloy used to portray Brodsky. All of these images of the author are part of an interplay and foster a sense of his multifaceted nature. Within the whole multi-image mixture, the focus falls upon the depiction of the animated orange “cat and a half”. This animated image serves as a natural way to visualize the invisible because within it we can see a manifestation of the poet's inner nature, his peculiar temperament, and the ideas of freedom and the indifference towards power as a lucent display of dissidence. The high degree of abstraction in the notion of the author's alter ego as an emanation of autonomy and independence from conventions finds an expression through methods of animation, which depicts what live-action film cannot. One can clearly observe an approach to the use of animation highlighted by Paul Ward here: “Animation is the perfect way in which to com-

23) Paul Wells, ‘Writing Animated Documentary; a Theory of Practice’, *International Journal of Film and Media Arts*, vol. 1 (2016), pp. 6–18.

municate that there is more to our collective experience of things than meets the eye.”²⁴⁾ Actually, Paul Ward is by far not the only researcher who comments on the potentialities of animation as an access point to knowledge and visual expression of interpreting the world through the position of the presented subject. Annabelle Roe gathers and delivers, in a synthesized fashion, the comments of Michael Renov from *Animation: Documentary's Imaginary Signifier*, Paul Ward from *Documentary: The Margins of Reality*, and Paul Wells from *Understanding Animation* on this representative and suggestive effect of animation; comments in support of the claim that this is how one attains a document of abstract notions, which is something that the means of documentary cinema cannot achieve alone.²⁵⁾

Of extraordinary importance is also the general attitude that the filmmakers themselves have towards creating animated documentaries. It can be observed in Judith Kriger's book *Animated Realism: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Animated Documentary Genre*, which includes interviews with famous filmmakers who talk about their personal experience in crafting documentaries through different animation techniques. John Canemaker, Marie-Josée Saint-Pierre and Paul Fierlinger respond in a similar manner in their interviews with the researcher when prompted to speak of the relationship between the animated and the documentary origins in their films, of how the two forms mutually extend and highlight each other. For them, animation is that which gives them the ability to go beyond the conventional possibilities of live-action shots; to enter into the psychological and the emotional; to render their messages as an alluring focal point; to challenge the imaginations and mental faculties of their viewers, especially in cases of discussing the past or someone's ideas.²⁶⁾ It turns out that resorting to the animated image expands and makes more profound the grip on one's cognitive spectrum. Precisely this functionality of the animated tomcat can be found already in the beginning of the film, which serves as an introduction, to be sure, but also reveals why the definition of “cat and a half” is utilized for the entirety of the depiction of Brodsky. The narrator's voice in this sequence unites inherently different sources of information — it notifies of the origin of the alias, given to the poet by Anna Akhmatova, and underlines words spoken by the artist in an interview in which he says that cats are absolutely indifferent to politics, while the quote from *Quay of the Incurables* contributes to the notion of freedom expressed in entirely spontaneous happiness.

Let us also note that *A Cat and a Half* is not the only film that plays with the motif of the cat and zoomorphism. The cat as a symbol of freedom and independence, an alter ego for of the artist who steps outside of the stereotypes in society, is also a central figure in the Croatian film *A Cat is Always Female* (2019) by Martina Meštrović and Tanja Vujasinović. This film is dedicated to one of the most famous Croatian sculptors, Marija Ujević Galetović, and presents her life story and views. In this instance, the individual's artistic nature is captured through video footage and the animation of her most famous feminine sculptures. Akin to the film about Brodsky, this piece operates with the motif of the cat as

24) Paul Ward, *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* (New York: Wallflower, 2005), p. 91.

25) Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 107.

26) Judith Kriger, *Animated Realism: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Animated Documentary Genre* (London & New York: Elsevier / Focal Press, 2012).

a representation of the artist. Galetović's well-known sculptures, which combine the feline and the female figures, are animated and serve to replace the image of their creator. Both films deal with the subjects of individual freedom and personal memory as a source of knowledge about the main character and his or her time. The subject of freedom in the Croatian piece is introduced through the prism of feminism and through discussions on the marginalization of female artists (and women in general) and on one's right to choose. Unlike *A Cat and a Half*, though, this film is clearly defined as an animated documentary. It stands out with a first-person narrative, which Galetović specifically tailors to fit the film. The narrative of *A Cat is Always Female* is not as fragmentary as in *A Cat and a Half*. The authors of the film make use of artistic approaches in which the association of the visual code and spoken word is easily accessible. Animation imbues the words of the main character with a metaphoric quality, as in other typical examples of animated documentary, which shows the individual's artistry and their views, but through the format of interviews — *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy? An Animated Conversation with Noam Chomsky* (2013) by Michel Gondry, or *I Met the Walrus* (2007) by Josh Raskin.

Additionally, the image of Brodsky is not the only one subjected to zoomorphization in the film. The artist's parents are presented both through photography and through translating their images into cats. The source of such a strategy is encoded in Brodsky's autobiographical essay *In a Room and a Half*, where he relates the story of how he referred to his mother as Kisa, and how he and his father would often think of themselves as "Big cat" and "Little cat"²⁷ This is also not depicted in an explanatory language. Instead, it is expanded upon through indirect suggestion and artistic impact. The home and family from Brodsky's youth leave behind a resounding note in his writing and are uniquely interpreted in the film. Memory as a mechanism of moving parts with dynamically shifting imagery once again seems to emphasize aesthetic expression — memories hover around photos taken by the father, producing a kind of film reel, but also call on the images of the father's uniform and the mother's kimono as symbols from the past.

Quotes from *In a Room and a Half* and *Less than One* are interwoven in sequences that tell us about the special attachment the artist had to the Russian fleet. Here the authors of the film again leave behind the forms of direct renarration and illustration. The approach to applied materials, where images of cats are layered atop the images of sailors drawn by Brodsky, serves as a meta-commentary on the applied words, as a specific substitute for those intentionally abbreviated portions of the literary source that would be difficult to resolve visually. Thus, the image of the cat appears as a kind of key to Brodsky's view of the fleet and his attachment to it as an expression of some irrational and abstract ideal.

Among the central motifs in the film are those of a musical nature. They wrap around the whole length of the film and are part of the general perception that the formation of an individual's personality is related to art in a profound way. *Spoils of War* reaffirms music as an integral part of the forms of free initiative in the poet's immediate reality. This notion is taken on and developed in *A Cat and a Half*. So, Nemorino's aria *Una furtiva lacrima* from *L'Elisir d'Amore* by Donizetti becomes a central musical motif and often appears between

27) Joseph Brodsky, 'In a Room and a Half', in *Less than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), p. 486.

the micro-sequences, always tied to the character's memory of his family. The *La Cumparsita* tango, which Brodsky describes as one of the best contemporary pieces of music, can be heard among the film's presentation of the fleet, accompanying the dancing cat. Jazz music also holds the symbols of individualism for Brodsky's generation, and it is no coincidence that setting up one of the distinctive traits of nonconformity of the time is done through the language of animation. The context of the 1950s and 1960s, when, in socialist countries, jazz was stigmatized as a form of art and was branded as decadent and erosive to good values, is ironically placed within a sequence of a dancing centaur, cat, and devil. The poetry quotation here fits in the playful dynamic in an extremely organic manner and brings the sequence to a close. The episode about the individualism of the generation and jazz music, which is realized entirely through animated shots, ends with the cat reciting Brodsky's lines to a rather provocative-looking lady. The final two stanzas from *Winter Evening in Yalta* (1969) — "It's not that you're particularly fair / but rather that you're unrepeatable"²⁸⁾ — are taken out of the context of the poem and take on a new role and effect, fitting naturally into the cinematic piece.

In addition to music, other important trophies from World War II are Hollywood movies shown in Soviet cinemas. The idea of going to the cinema as an expression of free will and one of the means of self-exclusion for the generation of the 1950s is pointed out in the perception of films as a kind of lesson on individualism. In *Spoils of War*, Brodsky speaks of a number of films that have strongly affected him and his contemporaries, but *A Cat and a Half* introduces one exemplary piece which the artist believes to be tied to the process of De-Stalinization during the 1950s. This refers to the 1942 film *Tarzan's New York Adventure*, parts of which are incorporated into the fabric of Khrzhanovsky's film along with behind-the-scenes narration of Brodsky's essay. The focus is once again shifted to the animalistic codes of the piece, while the approach to this visual quotation also involves the technique of drawing a moving masking image on previously shot footage. Commenting on the zoomorphic code in Andrey Khrzhanovsky's film work, Lidiya Kuznetsova states: "Tarzan, a man who grew up with animals, acts and thinks like an animal, and is free from imposed stereotypes, thus attracting attention, proves to be a role model."²⁹⁾ This way, the film, and cinema in general, become an attractive focal point for deriving the notions of standing apart from the established way of thinking and behavior of the social stratum. More than that, *A Cat and a Half* broadens the notion of cinema as an expression of freedom on an entirely different level. All of the sequences in the film that unite documentary and animation with quotations from different live-action films are accompanied by the idea that Brodsky the Cat observes everything while he is sitting comfortably in a cinema.

A Cat and a Half depicts the poet's hometown and its significance as his "school". The writer himself states in *Less than One* that the majestic façades of the buildings in the city have granted him immense knowledge of history.³⁰⁾ The deviation from traditional notions of the role of the city and the meanings, which Brodsky layers on to the images of the

28) Joseph Brodsky, *Selected Poems* (New York, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 96.

29) Lidiya Kuznetsova, 'Zoomorfnyy kod v kinematografe Andrey Khrzhanovskogo', *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2013), pp. 61–67.

30) Joseph Brodsky, 'Less than One', in *Less than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), p. 5.

river and water, are firmly weaved into the film. Contemporary footage of the grand Saint Petersburg and the waters of the Neva, even the image of the city during the Midnight sun, are combined with a rather curious encounter placed in the Summer Garden. Following the narrator's introduction to a part of *In a Room and a Half*, which relates to the street where Brodsky and Pushkin lived, this meeting carries the notion of the garden as a source of inspiration. It is in modern-day shots of the Summer Garden that two animated self-portraits meet to engage in a brief conversation. This fictional sequence, in which the authors of the film present a conversing Brodsky and Pushkin, reminds the audience of Pushkin's well-known exaggerated self-portrait, included in Khrzhanovsky's trilogy about him. It also demonstrates that the Summer Garden has inspired Brodsky as well, and suggests the influence Pushkin has had on Brodsky's work.

As noted, the director often resorts to incorporating animated drawings and self-portraits of the characters in his films, and this shows his desire to reach the depths of their nature and to drive the viewers to do the same because "anything you do by hand defines you; it shows your personality."³¹ In this manner, the audience becomes entangled in a double challenge — to immerse themselves in the personal history of the subject but also to interpret the director's outlook on it, where the director's own individuality shines through. Brodsky's drawings reveal, to a large extent, his character, and their use throughout the film's foundation, along with other materials, strengthens and reaffirms the idea that the film establishes a profound view of the writer and his work.

During shots of modern-day Saint Petersburg, along with quotes from Brodsky's prose, the unseen narrator also includes a recording of the poet's voice, reciting the 1985 poem *In Italy*. Even though the film generally encapsulates the period from Brodsky's childhood and youth until he was forced to leave his country in 1972, the use of this specific quote, which shifts one's attention to the time of his exile, is the evidence of the longing for a return to one's homeland. The first stanza from the poet's piece dedicated to Venice enters into the film and brings forth the impression that the Italian city reminds the lyrical speaker of Saint Petersburg, often referred to as the "Venice of the North".

In addition to zoomorphism, the creators of *A Cat and a Half* also make use of anthropomorphism. This approach can be observed in the sequence taking place in young Brodsky's school. The visual quotation from Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film *October* is accompanied by the words spoken by Brodsky's cat, as if sharing a secret we already know — that the latter film is a mock-up at best, and was only created with propaganda in mind. Brodsky's ironic comment in *Less than One* that he was exposed to nonsense in school is delivered indirectly in the exchange between the pet and the child. The cat's words include pieces from *A Guide to a Renamed City*, which are combined with a similar moment from *Less than One* connected to the particular perception of the depiction of socialist realism in *Admission into the Komsomol*. The action takes place in the classroom and directs the attention to Brodsky's "other" lessons, specifically, lessons on self-exclusion, the refusal to accept or believe in art as propaganda for a given ideology. The image demonstrates the identification of the lie, the distraction, the characteristic differentiation of the individual

31) Paul Fierlinger, Interview with Judith Kriger, in Judith Kriger, *Animated Realism: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Animated Documentary Genre* (London & New York: Elsevier / Focal Press, 2012), p. 190.

at an early age. There is a suggestion that the individual may stand apart from the majority and, possibly for that very reason, the images of the other children are nothing but photographic stills as the shot is only brought to life by the moving figures of the boy and the cat. The opportunity to show the horrors of the time is not passed by in the dynamic moment of the boy running away following a menacing comment by Lenin on screen, who claims that he will “set the boy straight”. Yet another fictional element in the film quite originally portrays the idea that the atmosphere in Brodsky’s home country during the 1950s leaves a mark on the conscious mind. The quick succession of images of the running boy and Lenin’s monument, with a highlight on his stretched-out arm, delivers the message of Brodsky’s essay in an intriguing way; namely, that the image of Lenin “in some way haunts every Russian.”³²⁾ The sequence in the school and the child being chased away yet again demonstrates how Brodsky masters the art of alienation.

The dynamics of this sequence is harmonized by the music that follows and the dance of the animated ballerinas. It is paradoxical, then, that the figure of the beautiful woman is one of the reasons for the expulsion from class and for the pursuit in an attempt to “set the boy straight”, but it is also an image that soothes the senses and marks the end of the frightening experience. The sequence in the classroom shifts the focus to the reconsideration of socialist art not only through Eisenstein’s film, but also through the *Admission into the Komsomol* painting. The artistic method of socialist realism and the fervently proclaimed idea of educating young people in a strict morality and ethics are lowered in tone with irony by means of the boyhood fantasy about the young blonde in the painting. This sort of interpretation of the painting demonstrates the innate zigzagging of the imagination, which finds its own way of escaping the banality of everyday life. This scene features one of the three manifestations of the woman in the film — that of the naughty distraction. The female figure can be spotted throughout the whole film. First and foremost, she is an animated character and is portrayed in the nude as a naughty distraction in the sequences about the fleet and about jazz music. These representations of the female figure combine the excitement of the senses with the abstraction of an animated image. Conversely, the sculptures shown during the Summer Garden scenes and White Nights shots of Saint Petersburg highlight the woman’s grace and presence as a pleasurable visual stimulus, a carrier of harmony. At the same time, the film shows the figure of the mother as a symbol of vitality and care. This manifestation of the woman is accomplished not only through the various ways in which Brodsky’s mother is depicted but also through the visual emphasis on Da Vinci’s *The Madonna Litta*, which shows the Virgin Mary and the Christ child. All of these manifestations of the woman and the meanings accrued by that image can collectively be considered a code set in the formation of personality.

The artist’s ability to extract himself from the ideological framework of Soviet Russia and meaningful indifference towards the latter determine Brodsky’s expulsion. The ending of *A Cat and a Half* lends significant meaning to the departure and the emptiness of the world inhabited by the writer. There is a feeling of a long and irrevocable goodbye to family, town, and home. The striking combination of shots from the poet’s empty home with

32) Joseph Brodsky, ‘Less than One’, in *Less than One: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986), p. 5.

the sounds of *Una furtiva lacrima* and 1968's *Stanzas*, recited by the poet himself, deliver the suggestion of parting as a kind of rehearsal of death, of the decay of existence. The compositional framework of the film, beginning with Brodsky as a young boy, is tied up with his departure, marking the end of his known world, a world one may only revisit by means of the written and spoken word. It is possible that the ending is executed in this manner due to that very reason — absence is merely physical, while the word is that which assures the constant presence and survival of the artist.

Throughout the film, the journey along the lanes of memory with the unexpected time skips, space jumps, and thematic jolts is realized with a particular focus on animation as a means of presenting and interpreting both the character's subjective inner world as well as his own personal history, all building up to a broader historical and cultural context. Above all of these goals, successfully achieved in *A Cat and a Half*, rests the notion of animation being a worthy approach to the study of individuality. The creative approach of Khrzhanovsky leads to the inclusion of the film in the parameters of animated documentary, and, more precisely, an expression of such which Annabelle Roe connects to the remarkable ability to approach real but unseen things, the subjective and ephemeral nature of recalling the past, which, in the end, result in knowing the individual:

Animation, by nature of its construction and creation, can present a subjective intervention into the discourses of autobiography, memory and history. In this way, animation as a strategy for the re-presentation of personal history is a tool by which self-identity can be explored and understood.³³⁾

Animation is used exactly as such a tool in *A Cat and a Half*.

In addition to being the foundation for *A Cat and a Half*, Joseph Brodsky's artistic work also serves as the driving force for Andrey Khrzhanovsky's 2009 follow-up feature *A Room and a Half, or a Sentimental Journey to the Motherland*. Based predominantly on the *In a Room and a Half* essay and making use of many of the writer's poems, this film executes a mostly metaphoric return of the renowned writer and translator Joseph Brodsky to his hometown, precisely through the pathway of his memory and recollections. The title of this film cleverly evokes Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*. The associations between the two pieces of art are connected not only with the theme of travel, but also with an emphasis on the subjective nature of personal beliefs, and to the structural principles of joining otherwise separate sequences. Moreover, this novel serves as a kind of epilogue to *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, and thus alludes to a similar relationship between *A Cat and a Half* and *A Room and a Half*. The latter has won a number of prestigious awards and has brought world-wide renown to Andrey Khrzhanovsky, while a number of critics have studied its complex poetics.³⁴⁾ The film's unique prologue, where all the further lines of development stem from, is namely

33) Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 146.

34) See e.g. Nataliya Bedina, Ekaterina Egorova, Dariya Oderii, 'Poetika filma Andrey Khrzhanovskogo 'Poltory komnaty, ili Sentimentalnoe puteshestviye na Rodinu', *Kultura i tsivilizatsiya*, vol. 9, iss. 6A (2019), pp. 66–78; Irina Bibina, 'Biograficheskiy tekst v literature i kino: 'Poltory komnaty' I. Brodskogo i A. Khrzhanovskogo', *Izv. Sarat. un-ta. Nov. ser. Ser. Filologiya. Zhurnalistika*, vol. 17, iss. 4 (2017), pp. 465–468; Tatevik

Khrzhanovsky's *A Cat and a Half*. His short on Brodsky has also been recognized at international film festivals, but critical consideration of it is significantly lesser when compared to that of *A Room and a Half*.

Beyond the context of Andrey Khrzhanovsky's personal art, there are a number of documentaries and television programs about Joseph Brodsky, which highlight his views, his life and work. Many of them do include poetry, drawings, and photos by Brodsky and leave the confines of pure documentary filmmaking; especially Nikolai Iakimchuk's *Dream about Brodsky. Voices and Shadows* from 2019, which also resorts to the theme of an imagined return of the poet to Saint Petersburg. There are also short films based on his work, such as 2016's *Pilgrims*. Among the manifold film productions about the renowned Nobel laureate, Roman Liberov's comes close to the artistic structure of Khrzhanovsky's *A Cat and a Half* and *A Room and a Half*, but is instead entirely submerged into the specifics of animated documentaries. In 2010's *Joseph Brodsky. Conversation with Celestial*, Liberov bases the film materials on Brodsky interviews featured in Solomon Volkov's *Conversations with Joseph Brodsky* and *Joseph Brodsky. The Big Book Interviews* by Valentina Poluhina. Statements of the artist, his poetry, as well as numerous photographs of him, take on a new meaningful expression in this film.

Conclusion

The distinctly organic unification of seemingly incompatible techniques, means of expressions, and styles in *A Cat and a Half* develops in unison with the materials through which it unfolds. While there are other examples of graceful alternation between drawn and photographic imagery, what sets the film apart is determined by the fact that the piece rests at the boundary of types and genres, presenting the object of its deliberations through the lens of cultural heritage. The refusal of the authors to adhere to predetermined conventions of cinema fosters a reading of the piece as a palimpsest and an emanation of nonconformity in a twofold perspective. All of the outlined and discussed thematic accents of the film fit together to produce a deep insight into the inner world of the individual. The unity of image and word is defined by a keen understanding of Joseph Brodsky and his work, offering a profound interpretation of the person and of all the factors which determine autonomy. In the meantime, by expanding on many of the aspects of individuality, the authors of this film do not resort to a straight illustration of the facts from the writer's biography or a retelling of his works. Rather, they interpret the latter creating an original work which offers multiple semantic layers.

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SUMMARY

**Andrey Khrzhanovsky's *A Cat and a Half* (2002)
as a Palimpsest Beyond Conventions****Maria Panova**

This text examines Andrey Khrzhanovsky's 2002 film *A Cat and a Half*, dedicated to the renowned Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky, through the lens of a working metaphor of a palimpsest beyond conventions, which may be shifted both to the formal as well as the content-focused facet of the cinematic piece. Based on critical reception of Khrzhanovsky's filmography, the analysis puts forth the concept of the complex interplay of types and genres that makes up the film, of its specific structure; it reinforces the notion that combining the different techniques and strategies of representation applied in animation, documentaries, and traditional live-action films, as well as rejecting linearity and chronological order in the sequencing, is informed by the artistic work of Joseph Brodsky. The second part of the research focuses on the different themes and motifs in the film that produce the perception of individuality in the artist and the expression of his nonconformity. The film is analyzed as a keen interpretation of autobiographical prose, poetry, and drawings done by Brodsky, an interpretation that stands apart from strictly established adaptation conventions and traditional biopic outlines, but also produces an exceptional sense of authenticity and faithfulness. The discussion provides the understanding of the piece as an animated documentary. Special attention is paid to the functionality of the animation in the film as a means of expression and depiction of abstract notions and ideas. The research establishes the profound connections and unification in the organic melding of documentary materials, animation, live-action shots, and written/spoken sources upon which the film is based. A comment is made on the film's place both in Andrey Khrzhanovsky's work and against the backdrop of other pieces dedicated to Joseph Brodsky by pointing out those facets of the film which both relate it to, and set it apart from, the rest. The research overview leads to a reading of *A Cat and a Half* as a film that forms and expresses a uniquely original, artistic, and extremely valuable notion of the artist's personality and his works.

key words: animated documentaries, animation, poetry, prose, Joseph Brodsky

kľíčová slova: animovaný dokument, animace, poezie, próza, Josif Brodskij