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*The analysis of gender representations reproduced in popular  
full-length animated films based on Russian folklore tales*

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# Statement

I hereby declare that I wrote this thesis independently and that all the works used have been duly cited. This bachelor's thesis has not been used to attain any other title in the Czech Republic or abroad.

Prague, 23rd of June, 2023.

Polina Polyakova



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# **Abstract**

This paper aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the gender representations of characters in Russian full-length animated films belonging to the renowned “Three Bogatyr’s” franchise, produced by the studio “Melnitsa”. The research investigates the construction of male and female characters within these films, examining their psychological attributes and narrative roles. By scrutinizing the visual content of the animated series, spanning the years 2004 to 2021, the study reveals that the characters within the “Three Bogatyr’s” franchise adhere to traditional gender norms, albeit with some notable shifts towards a more egalitarian model of gender representations.

# **Keywords**

Gender Socialisation, Gender Representations, Visual Analysis, Animation.

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# 1. Introduction

The process of human socialization is a complicated and long-going process that spans an individual's entire lifespan (Giddens, 2001). However, it is during childhood the process of socialization takes place most intensely and is of higher importance. This is due to the profound impact that the impressions of the first years of a child's life have on shaping a child's character, personality, and overall integration into society. It is through the socialization process that children get essential knowledge of societal rules and norms (Giddens, 2001).

Socialization is carried out through the institutions of socialization, also known as "agents" (Berger&Luckmann, 1966). In the present era characterized by rapidly developing and widely available technologies, the media, specifically television, and the Internet, have emerged as the most effective and influential agents for disseminating certain ideas and knowledge because of the use of audiovisual mediums. Media, such as television and the Internet possess an unparalleled ability to transmit information in a manner that is captivating and easily retained by individuals (Henslin, 2015). Television has a wide repertoire of socialization tools - advertising, entertainment and educational programs, news, movies, and cartoons. It is cartoons that are most attractive to children (Henslin et al., 2015).

Cartoon characters are often portrayed as powerful and heroic, and these depictions profoundly influence children's socialization process, shaping their understanding of societal roles and norms, including gender-based expectations, within their respective communities. A cartoon is a "coming alive" fairy tale whose characters tell their own stories, weaving narratives that captivate young minds. Consequently, children often exhibit a tendency to learn and emulate the behaviors of their beloved cartoon characters, effectively integrating their traits into their own personalities (Berne, 1964).

Cartoons are a rich source of knowledge about the world and its multifaceted phenomena. Animated films instill within children the capacity to adopt an evaluative attitude toward the world. Furthermore, cartoons are instrumental in addressing the emotional needs of children. Through various applications, ranging from mere passive viewing to active participation in plotlines and the creation of their own stories, cartoons nurture the imagination of children.

However, it is important to note that not all modern cartoons necessarily convey the appropriate message. At an early age, children can lack the assessment of the actions of cartoon characters. Consequently, the pivotal roles played by parents, educators, and teachers in guiding children's media consumption can not be overstated. It is incumbent upon these influential figures to actively engage with children, providing them with the necessary guidance and explanations regarding the ramifications of specific actions depicted in cartoons. Hence, it becomes increasingly pertinent to critically analyze the imagery, messages, and norms propagated by popular animated films.

Media, including cartoons, not only serve as a conduit for knowledge and entertainment but also play a role in shaping perceptions of gender roles and expectations (Hust, et al., 2008). Each society has its unique set of expectations, norms, and roles associated with gender, and cartoons often reflect these cultural nuances. By analyzing the gendered portrayals within contemporary media, it is possible to gain valuable insights into the interplay between gendered depictions in media and societal perceptions of gender (Hust et al., 2008). By scrutinizing the gender representations in modern children's cinema, we can shed light on the underlying messages conveyed to young viewers. The study of gender representations in cartoons holds significance not only for academia but also for parents, educators, and society at large.

Within the realm of popular modern cartoons, I aim to delve into the dynamics of gender representations exhibited by characters. Specifically, I am interested in how cartoons present gender images to children and explore whether they predominantly adhere to the traditional model of gender representation or embrace the egalitarian model, showcasing a wider array of characteristics in male and female characters. Are male characters consistently portrayed as strong and assertive, while female characters have supportive, nurturing, and less influential roles? Alternatively, does it challenge these stereotypes and promote a more inclusive and diverse understanding of gender roles?

The paper examines the ways in which animated films, as a source of media, influence children's socialization, including their understanding of gender norms and stereotypes. This study explores gender representations of cartoon characters through the lens of the Russian animation full-length film series, "Three Bogatyrs", produced by the "Melnitsa" animation studio. This franchise is one of the most popular and long-running on the Russian market, and some of the films in the "Bogatyr series" have gained popularity outside of Russia.



The theoretical part of this research paper commences by presenting the key concepts and theories employed in the study, encompassing the notion of gender, socialization, and gender socialization from a sociological perspective. Furthermore, the study explores the roles of fairy tales and cartoons in socialization. Additionally, useful information for understanding the historical and cultural context in which the cartoons of the “Three Bogatyr’s” franchise is provided, encompassing the development of Russian, Soviet, and post-Soviet animation, as well as the evolution of women’s rights and status in Russian, USSR, and post-Soviet Russian society.

The methodological part of this paper articulates the research questions that underpin the study, along with the theories employed to investigate the issue of gender and its representations. Furthermore, it elucidates the visual method of research employed to analyze the gender representation portrayed by cartoon characters, outlining the specific categories in which the collected data were organized and analyzed. This part also acknowledges the assumptions, while reflecting upon the factors that may influence the analysis of visual materials and subsequently impact the interpretation of the data derived from the analysis.

The analytical part of this paper encompasses an examination of the gender representations depicted in all eleven films of the “Three Bogatyr’s” franchise produced by the studio “Melnitsa”. The findings obtained during the analysis are critically discussed, drawing connections and exploring patterns within the gender portrayals observed in the franchise.

Finally, the conclusion of this paper provides responses to the research questions formulated in the methodological part.

## 2. Theoretical Overview

### 2.1. Socialization Process From a Sociological Perspective

Socialization is one of the central concepts of various humanistic studies. The process of socialization is a fundamental aspect of human development that occurs throughout an individual's lifespan. In general, we can say that socialization is the set of social processes by which an individual acquires and assimilates social experiences - these are the cultural values, norms, and behaviors deemed appropriate within a particular society (Giddens, 2001). Giddens, in his textbook, refers to socialization as the primary method of transmitting cultural values from one generation to the next (Giddens, 2001).

The concept of socialization has been studied and developed by many scholars throughout history. However, the term “socialization” was first introduced by Emilé Durkheim, a French sociologist, in his book *The Rules of the Sociological Method* published in 1895. His work influenced many other scholars in the fields of sociology, psychology, and anthropology, such as Claude Levi-Strauss (French anthropologist who developed structuralist theory), George Herbert Mead (American philosopher and sociologist who developed the theory of symbolic interactionism), and Erving Goffman (Canadian sociologist who developed the theory of dramaturgy and who was inspired by Durkheim's ideas on socialization and the role of society in shaping individuals' cognitive development).

The process of socialization begins at birth and, according to the most famous psychologists and sociologists, continues throughout the whole life of an individual and is not limited to the stage of growing up (though with less intensity), with various social institutions playing a crucial role in shaping an individual's identity and sense of self (Berger&Luckmann, 1966). These social institutions, individuals, and groups of individuals that influence the process of socialization are called socialization institutions or social agencies (Giddens, 2001). These institutions influence the individual by suggesting rigid patterns of behavior that everyone must reproduce in practice to fit in the particular society. Socialization institutions serve as important agents of socialization, transmitting cultural values and norms from one generation to the next, and influencing the way individuals interact with and perceive their social environment.

The family is often the first and the most influential social institution in an individual's life. It is through the family that an individual learns their first lessons about basic social norms, values, and expectations (Giddens, 2001). Family members serve as role models for children and guide them into cultural traditions, language, and gender norms accepted in a particular society.

Schools also play a significant role in shaping an individual's identity and sense of self through the activities available and the educational system in place (Giddens, 2001). Schools provide formal education and training to children in a variety of subjects, preparing them for adult roles, norms, and responsibilities. Along with the educational system, peer groups are also an essential institution of socialization (Giddens, 2001). Through the opportunity for the individual to have interactions with people of the same age, status, and interests, this institution of socialization provides the child with training in the social skills, norms, and values that are important for the full functioning of the individual in society.

Other social institutions, such as religious organizations and the media, including television, cinematograph, and social media, also have an impact on an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors and shape their understanding of the world around them (Giddens, 2001). Mass media is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and promoting social norms and values.

As a result of the interaction of socialization institutions an individual begins to identify themselves in a certain way, in other words, the individual acquires a certain set of roles and stereotypes inherent in the surrounding society.

A person's social status, acquired in the process of socialization, consists of many factors. Some social statuses change over the course of a lifetime - this process is called social mobility (Giddens, 2001). For example, the mobility of social status related to age is the easiest one to change. Statuses associated with power and influence are much more difficult to change. Some statuses remain unchanged throughout life, such as the social status defined by one's gender. The assignment of certain social statuses leads to social differentiation in attitudes toward wealth and power (Durkheim, 1982).

## 2.2. Gender Socialization

Gender socialization is the process by which individuals learn and internalize societal norms and expectations acceptable for their gender in a particular society (Henslin,

2015). Gender socialization has a complex and ongoing nature and the various factors that contribute to an individual's sense of self and identity including family, peer groups, education, media, religion, and culture. Through exposure to all these factors individuals gain beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors inherent in their society (Bem, 1981).

Gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, both, or neither. In the process of human development, each stage is related to the previous one. In the same way, an understanding of self and identity is constructed by a variety of factors, including biology, socialization, and personal experience (Bussey&Bandura, 1999).

1) Biological factors, such as genetics and hormones, can play a role in the development of gender identity. For example, prenatal exposure to testosterone is thought to play a role in developing a male gender identity.

2) Socialization, which includes the ways in which individuals learn about gender roles and expectations, can also shape gender identity. This includes messages received from family, peers, media, and other socialization institutions. Children learn about gender roles from an early age through their interactions with others, as well as the toys, clothes, and activities that are deemed appropriate for their gender. Different cultures have different norms and expectations around gender roles and expressions, which can shape individuals' gender identities. For example, some cultures have more than two genders or allow for greater fluidity in gender expression.

3) An individual's personal experiences and sense of self can also play a role in the formation of gender identity. Some individuals may experience a disconnect between their assigned gender at birth and their internal sense of gender, leading them to identify as transgender or nonbinary.

Biological sex is often seen as a defining characteristic of an individual's gender, with most people identifying as either male or female based on their sex chromosomes and physical characteristics. However, it is important to recognize that biological sex is only a prerequisite for identifying oneself with a particular gender and that an individual's gender identity may not necessarily align with their biological sex. A person's gender status is related not only to biological sex but also to the perception of his or her gender, what it means for him or her to "be a woman or a man", and the individual's own perception of themselves and their place in society. More and more researchers are now concluding that gender stratification is culturally rather than biologically determined (West&Zimmerman, 2009).

The case of Agnes, described by the American anthropologist Harold Garfinkel, is an illustrative example (Garfinkel, 1967). Agnes is a trans woman who was assigned male at birth because she was born with male genitalia, so she was raised as a boy until the age of 18. Despite being biologically male, Agnes understands herself to be a woman and presents as a woman in her daily life. At the age of 18, she decided to resort to gender affirmation surgery and change her body regarding her self-identified gender, because she felt she was a woman, and as romantic partners, men seemed more attractive to her than women. However, after the surgery, Agnes faced a new problem - changing her biological sex through surgery did not help Agnes get a female social experience. Having biological traits and identifying herself as a woman was not enough to confirm her female social status.

During the process of gender socialization, it is common for individuals to experiment with different models of gender expression and can reject those that do not feel authentic or comfortable to them, as they try to understand and define their own identity (Wood, 2016). This may involve adopting behaviors and mannerisms that are traditionally associated with a particular gender, even if they do not align with the individual's biological sex. This allows individuals to explore their own identity and develop a sense of self that is genuine and meaningful to them. In other words, even though the child receives information about the ways of gender representation from representatives of different genders, the child tends to reproduce only those models that correspond to their own gender identity.

### 2.3. Role of Media in the Socialization Process

In today's society, new technologies and forms of socialization are emerging, replacing traditional sources of communication with media such as television, cinema, social networks, and advertising. These media serve as powerful sources of gender socialization, shaping children's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors from an early age (Henslin, 2015). Berne (1964) suggested that children naturally identify with fairy tale characters and may model their future behaviors on beloved characters, while Jenkins (2006) emphasized the significance of cartoons in shaping children's understanding of the world and their place in it.

Studies indicate that children spend a substantial amount of time watching cartoons, making these media highly salient in the process of child socialization. For instance,

children aged 2-5 spend 32 hours per week watching television, while those aged 6-11 spend 28 hours per week (Broyse&Bushman, 2010). As such, it is reasonable to assume that media, including cartoons, have a notable influence on child socialization processes. Through their exposure to gender representations of favorite characters, children develop an understanding of gender identity and become acculturated to their society's expectations of gender roles and norms (Aubrey&Harrison, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to consider the messages conveyed through media, as they contribute to children's expectations of gender roles and their future roles in society.

Research has shown that exposure to media can contribute to the formation of gender identity, socialization, and expectations, reinforcing traditional stereotypes and roles, or challenging them (Hust, et al., 2008). Television exposes children to a range of gendered characters and behaviors, shaping their understanding of what is appropriate and expected for their gender. Studies have indicated that male and female characters in children's programs are often presented in stereotypical ways, with females overrepresented in emotional and nurturing roles, and males in more aggressive and active roles (Thompson&Zerbinos, 1997).

On the other hand, television can also provide positive role models for children and adolescents, challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equity. Programs that feature strong, non-stereotypical female characters, as well as diversity and ethnic representation, can promote social justice values and lead to more tolerant attitudes towards differences.

## 2.4. Fairy Tales in the Process of Socialization

As the child's social space expands, the role of family influence gradually diminishes, and the number of sources of information about gender models steadily increases. A fairy tale is an outstanding tool in the process of socialization of children, as they are often used to convey cultural values and beliefs (Bettelheim, 2010).

Fairy tales often convey moral messages and teach children about right and wrong, good and evil. They can also reflect and reinforce cultural norms and values, such as the importance of family, respect for authority figures, and the value of work. Fairytales can help children learn about and manage their emotions by showing characters coping with difficult situations and emotions like sadness or anger (Bettelheim, 2010). Fairy tales can

also model positive social behaviors and teach children important social skills, like working in a team and resolving interpersonal conflict (Zipes, 2000).

Modern cartoon adaptations of fairy tales have become increasingly popular in recent years, with many studios and filmmakers putting their spin on well-known classic stories. These adaptations often update the tales for modern audiences, with new characters, settings, and themes that reflect contemporary issues and sensibilities. Fairy tales adaptations appeal to both children and adults, as they combine familiar stories with new and engaging elements of modern animation, and provide opportunities for critical reflection and discussion about traditional gender roles, societal norms, and cultural values (Beeler&Beeler, 2014). While some may argue that these modern adaptations dilute the value of the original stories and their cultural and historical significance, others view them as a way to make these tales relevant and more accessible to new generations of viewers (Zipes, 2006). Folk art, including *byliny*, has also been adapted into modern cinematography and animation.

## 2.5. Fairy Tales in the Russian-Speaking Culture

Fairy tales have a long history in the Russian community, dating back to the pre-Christian era when Slavic tribes used oral storytelling to pass down myths and legends from one generation to another. From time immemorial, fairy tales have been used to teach children respect for elders, friendship, respect for nature, loyalty to their beliefs, kindness, and patriotism. But myths and tales were popular not only among children but they were also told to adults.

Nonetheless, fairy tales became a significant part of Russian literature and science only in the 19th century, when a group of writers and intellectuals known as the "literary nationalists" focused on the importance of Russian folklore and traditional national culture (Kelly, 1998). They believed that Russian fairy tales were a valuable part of the national heritage. The most known collector of Russian fairy tales was Alexander Afanasyev, a Russian ethnographer and folklorist, who collected and published a great collection of nearly 600 fairy and folk tales (1855 - 1863).

During the Soviet era, fairy tales were used as a means of promoting socialist values among children. They aimed to promote communist and socialist values and principles within society and show characters who embodied socialist ideals, excluding ideologically unacceptable figures, such as thieves, for example (Oinas, 1975).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a renewed interest in traditional Russian culture and fairy tales (Beumers, 2009). Today, Russian fairy tales are an important part of Russian literature and culture, enjoyed by people of all ages. They are often used as a means of preserving and promoting traditional values and beliefs. Additionally, Russian fairy tales have been the subject of numerous academic studies and critical analyses. For instance, Russian folklore scholar Jack V. Haney writes in “An Introduction to the Russian Folktale” that the study of Russian fairy tales is essential to understanding and appreciating Russian culture, as they offer insights into the values, beliefs, and experiences of the Russian people (Haney, 2015).

## 2.6. Byliny in Russian-Speaking Culture

Perhaps the most prominent genre of ancient Russian tales are *byliny* - works of Russian folk poetry, talking about outstanding moments of national history (the word “*bylina*” originates from the word “*byl*”, which translates to English as “something that happened”), supplemented with magical, fantastic elements (Bailey&Ivanova, 1998). *Byliny* were passed down from generation to generation orally (by family or community members, or professional bards called tale-tellers (in Russian they are called *skaziteli*) and served as a means of preserving and passing down the history, traditions, values, and customs of the community and played a central role in the cultural transmission of national identity. In addition to their cultural and historical significance, *byliny* also had a strong moral and ethical component. They often depicted the struggle between good and evil and highlighted the virtues of bravery, honor, and loyalty. These themes and values were meant to guide and instruct listeners, helping them to navigate their own lives and make choices that were in line with their community’s values and traditions.

Fairy tales and *byliny*, forms of Russian oral folklore, have long served as a means of teaching children important values such as respect for elders, friendship, respect for nature, loyalty to their beliefs, kindness, and patriotism. *Byliny*, in particular, is a genre of Russian folk poetry that glorify the valiant military exploits of folk heroes known as bogatyrs (brave and strong warriors in the service of the prince of Kievan Rus), who embody positive personal qualities and serve as role models for their time - the mighty, wise, courageous man, head of the family and defender of the Motherland. Hyperbole is applied not only to the protagonist but also to the villain, exaggerating his misdeeds and often



depriving him of his human face (often evil in bylinas is personified by mythical creatures, such as in the "Dobrynya Nikitich and Gorynych the Dragon").

The term "*byliny*" was first introduced by I. Sakharov in the collection "Songs of the Russian People" in 1839, and before that, the term "bogatyrs tales" was used. According to the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedia, in the Russian tradition the word "bogatyrs" is first mentioned in 1585, and before that, the word "*hrabr*" (in Russian "храбр") was used to denote a strong and brave warrior.

The main characters of *byliny* are bogatyrs, mighty warriors defending their homeland from evil forces, monsters, or enemies surrounding the country. The bogatyrs are the embodiment of the ideal of an honest, devoted to his country and people, who are not afraid of either enemies or death. As a rule, bogatyrs fought their enemies alone, but they always win anyway. It is customary to distinguish between "older" and "younger" bogatyrs. Svyatogor, Volkh Vseslavich, Dunay, and Mikhail Potyk are considered to be the "older" heroes. In the process of the development of the bylina genre came new, "younger" heroes - Ilya Muromets, Dobrynya Nikitich, Alyosha Popovich, and others. Each bogatyr has its own individual and dominant character trait (for example, the cunning of Alyosha Popovich or the calmness and prudence of Dobrynya Nikitich).

The center of the epic world is Kievan Rus, to whose capital the bogatyrs go to serve Prince Vladimir, whom they protect from enemies. The informational field of Russian *byliny* includes information about the internal and external political problems of pre-Mongol Russia, placed in a military context.

*Byliny* are still a major element of Russian culture today, and they are performed and celebrated in many Russian-speaking communities. Researchers frequently study them as a valuable source of knowledge about the history and culture of Russian-speaking cultures, as well as insight into the values and beliefs of members of these communities. Texts of ancient bylinas adapted for children are included in the school literature program.

In the second half of the 19th century images of bogatyrs were used in both folk literature and official literature, as a means of shaping the folk consciousness. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the so-called "Russian style" emerged with V. Vasnetsov, M. Vrubel, and other great representatives. The visual image of the Russian bogatyr persisted throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was incorporated into Soviet discourse, which focused on the children's audience and traditionalist themes that supported an anti-Western ideology. This can be perfectly illustrated by the episode from the second part of the dialogue about Ilya Muromets – the failure of Churila Plenkovich, a French dandy, during their conflict

with Ilya Muromets, emphasized not only his escape from the bogatyr but also his refusal to enter the battle with Nightingale the Robber.

The emergence of a new wave of interest in epic stories about bogatyrs in the first years of the 21st century can be linked to the mass nationalism of the post-Soviet period when elites adapted to changes in mass sentiment and supported them (Verhovskij, 2007). This nationalism was reflected in mass culture, including the popular “Bogatyr series” produced by the studio Melnitsa, which combined popular Western cinematic elements with features of Russian mass culture, leading to the transformation of traditional images in a modern way.

## 2.7. Research Into Russian Animation: A Historical Overview of Animation in Soviet and Post-Soviet Reality

There are many definitions of the word "animation," but its main feature is to create the illusion of movement using any materials and means, as documented in the statutes of the International Animated Film Association, founded in 1960 in France.

*"In the modern sense, animation consists in creating the illusion of movement by shooting images in succession - frame by frame - using any materials and technical means."*<sup>1</sup>

In Russia, animation has a lengthy history, with some of the first examples reaching back to the late 1800s. The pioneer of Russian animation was Vladislav Starevich, a Moscow director with Lithuanian roots, who created the world's first three-dimensional film about a beetle deer fighting for a female - "Lucanus Cervus" from 1910. The director's goal was to create a documentary film about insects, for this purpose special models of insects were created and shot frame by frame. The results impressed Starevich with their naturalness, which encouraged him to create a new film in the same way. Since then Vladislav Starevich has been fascinated by the creation of animated puppet films. The technique developed by Starevich is still used by animation artists all over the world, and in the history of Russian animation, his technique has long been the only major discovery.

However, World War I and the Civil War, two revolutions, and political instability did not contribute to the development of animation filmmaking. Public interest in it revived only in the twenties. In 1924, the organization "Sovkino" was created, which received

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<sup>1</sup> Bendazzi G. (2001). Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation. Indiana University Press. P. 514

monopoly rights to import, produce and distribute animated films. This studio was engaged in the adaptation of the poetic works of S. Marshak and fairy tales by K. Chukovsky. The studio also made films about the life of people from other countries (for example, the famous work "China on Fire," created by I. Ivanov-Vano and V. Suteeva).

In 1929, director M. Tsekhanovsky created the first animated film with a synchronized soundtrack and visuals - it was an experimental graphic work, the script for which was the poem "Post" by S. Marshak. During this period, a strong influence of the constructivist style can be seen in the work of cartoonists.

In 1930 "Sovkino" was abolished, and after 1932 approved a new artistic method - socialist realism, cartoons are increasingly realistic. The animation begins to rapidly develop and was used to promote and nurture the "right" view of the world in Soviet children and adolescents. At this time, mostly fairy tales are screened (Kolobok (1936), The Tale of Tsar Durandai (1934), etc.).

In 1936 the Soyuzmultfilm studio was founded, and many artists switched to the cartoon style of Disney Studios. According to legend, Soyuzmultfilm was created by order of Stalin, who came to admire the style of Mickey Mouse in 1933 and demanded that a Soviet alternative be created immediately. The determining principles in the work of Soyuzmultfilm studio were: movement as the main expressive element of animation, the presence of a permanent character, and the counterpoint of sound and visual images (Asenin, 1974).

Basically, the so-called celluloid animation (or cel animation) was used - a drawing technique that used superimposed celluloid sheets that could be moved, thus creating a motion effect. When choosing plots, the Soviet animation stopped on fairy tales - for example, "Konek Gorbunok", shot by the fairy tale of P. Yershov, or "Moydodyr" on the eponymous work of K. Chukovsky. The content of the animated films was followed by Goskino - the animation had to be instructive and had to be created exclusively for "Soviet children". Animation became a perfect tool for the implementation and promotion of Soviet ideology and also became an instrument in the struggle against Western influence on the consciousness of the Soviet man. A vivid illustration of this can be the cartoon "Foreign Voice", created by director I. Ivanov-Vano in 1949. According to the plot of this cartoon, the Magpie arrives from abroad and decides to compete with the Nightingale in singing. The Magpie performs a jazz composition "Swing High", which is very unpopular with other birds who drive the singer from the scene and tell her to go "to where she brought this music from". These kinds of plots are found in many early studio films, and

animation was used by ideology as a tool to produce myths of "Western culture," "capitalists" and "bourgeois". Such undesirable cartoon characters, by plot, find themselves broken under the oppression of public opinion.

Stalin's death in 1953 was the starting point for political and cultural changes in society; a general liberalization of the cultural sphere of society is noticeable. There is a shift in animation from simple and soc-realistic literary adaptations to metaphorical and minimalist images, and the plots appeal to themes relevant to the changing Soviet society. The "Khrushchev Thaw" period began - N.G. Krivulja characterizes this process as related to the weakening of the censorship process on individual processes of artistic creativity (Krivulja, 2002). Individualism in creativity appears (albeit limited), because of which the emergence of individual cartoonists and authors becomes possible. Fyodor Khitruk, one of the most well-known Soviet animators of his time, was among them, having directed a number of successful animated movies, including "Story of a Crime" (1962) and "Winnie-the-Pooh" (1969). According to Smirnova (2015), whose works are renowned for their use of sarcasm and comedy to remark on the culture of Soviet society, Khitruk's films were among the first to break free from the confines of Soviet propaganda and explore more personal and creative issues. The main features of Fedor Khiryuk's animation are caricature and simplicity of the drawn images, monochrome backgrounds, and the prevailing technique - the technique of shifting (that is, the individual parts of the characters moved and fixed frame by frame, roughly speaking, each part of the character on the screen "lives its life").

It was in the sixties of the twentieth century that cartoonists came to realize that animation had a number of special advantages over classic cinema: there was a shift from animation as a means of "reflecting reality" to experimenting with the visual and artistic techniques and content of animated films. Animation is "growing up": cartoons are no longer addressed exclusively to children, and the categories of good and evil are no longer read as unambiguously as they were in Soviet animation before the "Thaw" period. In addition, the plots of animated films were enriched by the fantasy worlds invented by the authors, and not just taken from literary sources. Nevertheless, myths and fairy tales continued to be actively exploited by the ideological apparatus both in the 1960s and in subsequent periods.

In the 1970s, after Khrushchev resigned, Brezhnev tried to return Soviet society to the same framework as before the Thaw. The concept of "developed socialism" was born, and the harsh censorship that had been imposed on "undesirable" works of art returned.

Perhaps during this period, we can single out only one cartoonist whose works differed not only in style but also in the content of the works - Yuri Norshtein. His cartoon "Hedgehog in the Fog" (1975) is recognized as a masterpiece of Russian animation. His cartoons move from the visualization of history to the reproduction of experiences, emotions, and memories through the images of his characters. At the same time, an unambiguous interpretation of the images becomes impossible due to their complex psychological complexity. In addition to Norshtein, it is also worth mentioning A. Khrzhanovsky, who began his work in the late 1960s. His style is one of surrealism and anti-utopianism, denouncing the Soviet system. Among his works are a number of very famous cartoons - "Once Upon a Time There Was Koziavin" (1966), "The Glass Harmonica" (1968), and "The House That Jack Built" (1976).

The 1980s and perestroika were a freer time for creativity. There is a gradual rejection of the "Soviet" aesthetic and the transition to new aesthetics - there are new genres and themes, and the so-called "historical boom" begins. Studio "Soyuzmultfilm" is divided into five categories, and then back to the usual division into puppet and cartoon departments. New names appear in animation - for example, A. Tatarsky, who in 1988 founded the studio "Pilot" in Moscow. The director became famous for his plasticine animation, and his experiments in this technique immediately became hits - "Last Year's Snow Fallen" (1983), "Plasticine Crow", and "The Other Side of the Moon". Tatarsky also created the famous series "Koloboks are Investigating", made in the technique of rough graphics, which was used even by F. Khitruk. Also in the 1980s, there was a return to the technique of total animation - this method is very energy-consuming because it involves animating not only the foreground but also the background. This method was used in animation throughout the Perestroika period but was not a distinctive feature of any particular studio or director.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the popularity of political themes in art began to wane. The directors, each in their own way, tried to explain the changes taking place in society, parables, satirical political cartoons, and the adaptation of philosophical literary works that appeared in the animation of the 1990s. Despite the social crisis of the 90s, animation rapidly developed - new artists and private studios (for example, Pilot, which became the first non-state animation studio). However, in this period practically disappeared cartoons for children, appears and develops art-house animation, understandable by adults (for example, the animated film "Bolero" created in 1992 by I.

Maksimov, in which the Moscow director demonstrates the stagnation of modern society, which is not interested in anything other than itself).

In the early years, animation was institutionalized into a commercial and author (art-house). However, at that time animation was not yet a well-defined industry, although its demand gradually increased and the animation got on TV screens. The satirical program "Put Out the Light!" is created, the creators of which tried to make an analog of the cult program "Good Night, Babies" for adults. In 2003 the studio "Melnitsa" appeared, which in short became one of the largest in the Russian market. The studio created the first full-length Russian cartoon "Dwarf Nose", and a year later the "Melnitsa" studio bet on the franchise "Three Bogatyrs", which is a vivid example of a mythological narrative in which the concept of "Russian" is built with simple images, which are easily identified as "good-bad/good-evil". Also in the 2000s, its development received popular in the 1970s animation series - in 2001 O. Kuvaev creates a series of cartoons "Masyanya", and the studio "Petersburg" releases the first episodes of "Smeshariki". In 2009 begins the production of the cartoon series "Masha and Bear" which earned recognition not only in Russia but also in Europe. These and many other series, originating in the 2000s and 2010s, although thematically different, all have an important educational function. In addition to the new studios, the giant of the Soviet era, "Soyuzmultfilm", continues its work. Musicality, simplicity, colorfulness, and clowning become tools of the state in the formation of children's consciousness. The art-house author animation goes into the background and develops less actively than the commercial. In 2002, the first Russian Open Film Festival in Suzdal, which has become one of the largest centers of animation activity, allows viewers to get acquainted and appreciate both the works of commercial and author animation.

## 2.8. Topics and Styles of Russian Animated Fairy Tales

Aside from the aforementioned famous individual animators and animation studios, there have been a number of notable topics and styles that have emerged in Soviet and post-Soviet Russian animation over the years. For example, one of the most defining features of Soviet and post-Soviet animation is the use of traditional folklore and mythology, which has served as a popular source of inspiration for many animators. According to Bendazzi (2015), this interest in folklore and mythology corresponds to

broader cultural and aesthetic trends in Russia, where ancient myths and symbols have played an important part in building the national identity of Russian-speaking people.

Another prominent theme in Russian animation is the use of satire and sarcasm to make social and political commentary. This practice stretches back to the early Soviet era when animation was used as a propaganda tool to promote Communist Party values and ideals. Cartoonists, on the other hand, began to use satire and irony to disrupt government propaganda and explore more sophisticated and subtle subjects throughout time.

Eventually, Russian animation has had a tremendous impact on the worldwide animation industry, with several Russian animators and studios receiving international fame and appreciation. Many renowned animators, including Hayao Miyazaki and Nick Park, have recognized Yuri Norstein's "Hedgehog in the Fog" as an influence. Similarly, Fyodor Khitruk's films have received accolades for their international appeal and ageless comedy, and they remain popular with audiences worldwide. According to Bendazzi (2015), the influence of Russian animation on the worldwide animation industry is a monument to Russian artists' originality and inventiveness, who have made significant contributions to the art form throughout the years.

## 2.9. Fairy Tales and Byliny Adaptations in Modern Animated Films

During the Soviet era, byliny were turned into animated films that aimed to promote national identity and patriotism. These adaptations frequently included elements of socialist realism, which highlighted the value of hard effort and resistance to injustice (Stites, 1992). One of the notable examples of such an adaptation is "Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale Robber" (1951), directed by Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaya. This film tells the story of Ilya Muromets, a legendary warrior who battles against a band of thieves known as the Nightingale Robbers. The film was praised for its use of traditional Russian art and music, as well as its portrayal of Ilya as a symbol of strength and courage.

In modern Russian animated films, byliny continue to be a popular source of inspiration. One recent example is "The Last Warrior" (2017), directed by Dmitriy Dyachenko. This series follows the heroic prince Ivan Tsarevich as he battles various mythical creatures and evil forces, integrating elements from byliny and other Russian folktales with colorful animation and engaging storytelling. The film draws heavily on

Russian folklore and byliny, featuring characters such as Baba Yaga and Koschei the Deathless. Another recent adaptation is the animated series "Ivan Tsarevich and the Grey Wolf" (2011-2019), directed by Darina Schmidt and Konstantin Feoktistov. This series follows the adventures of Ivan Tsarevich, a heroic prince who battles against various mythical creatures and evil forces. The series incorporates elements of byliny and other Russian folktales.

Overall, byliny have remained a significant cultural touchstone in Russia, and their adaptations in both Soviet and modern animated films have helped to keep these traditional stories alive for new generations.

## 2.10. The Historical Overview of Women's Rights and the Status in Russia, USSR, and Post-Soviet Russian Society

Before the spread of Christianity in the 10th century, Russian society followed patriarchal laws, which made man the dominant figure in both the household and society. Women, on the other hand, were not given any autonomy; they were a labor force at the disposal of the head of the family (Shabanova, 2008). The spread of Christianity and its incorporation into the cultural life of Russian people in the 12-13th centuries resulted in a severe tightening of patriarchal regulations and a fall in the social status of women and the practice of their seclusion, as women began to be considered a sinful creature worthy of avoidance and isolation (Shabanova, 2008). A woman's sole way to leave the family circle and their house is to attend Sunday church services, which she can only do with the permission of her father or husband. The woman, in fact, belonged to her father's family, who passed her on to her husband's family. Up to the end of the 12th century, there was almost no mention of the princesses' personal names, they all were named after their father, husband, or, on rare occasions, brother. It was permitted to punish women physically - it was considered that a woman is "cleansed" when she's beaten, otherwise, she would fall into vice. There is a moral and ethical code of housekeeping that equalizes the status of women to men's belongings, called *Domostroy*.

Despite this, the princesses (wives of princes or guardians of minor heirs to the throne) could de-facto rule the feudal principalities, and some areas could be completely under their control. Despite this, the princesses were still required to obey their husbands. On the other hand, the woman was the sole proprietor of the family house, with complete



control over pantries, gardens, kitchen, and rearing children, and men rarely interfered in the affairs of the mistress of the house. De facto, the wives of merchants who had significant property rights due to their husbands' work and their virtual absence from home had the most privileges at the time (Pushkareva, 1997).

The first reforms were implemented during the reign of Peter I (Shabanova, 2008). In 1714, the Single Succession Law was passed, which for the first time gave a woman the right to inherit land if there were no sons in the family. However, in 1730 this law was changed to give women the right to divide property among themselves equally in the event that there were no male heirs in the family (Marrese, 2002). Female seclusion became illegal but remained popular among the nobility. There were special institutions created where young women resided, got an education, and prepared for marriage. While girls from poorer families were more open and married at an earlier age, the marriageable age among the nobility had increased (Pushkareva, 1997). Peter I. set a course for the development of Russian secularism, for which he ordered his courtiers to attend entertainment gatherings, or assemblies, with their wives and daughters (Gromova, 1997). The image of a lady interested in literature and art was becoming more popular at the end of the 18th century. The first professional women began to appear, who were able to earn a fair living and so enjoy relative freedom. These ladies were mostly governesses, actresses, and singers, some became writers or scientists.

During Catherine II the Great's reign, significant reforms were also implemented, with the goal of educating a new generation of noble girls with "holy morals". Closed educational institutes for girls were established for this reason, as were colleges for lower-class girls who gained education and, with state sponsorship, had the opportunity to marry into noble families (Gromova, 1997).

In 1812, the Women's Patriotic Society was established as the first Russian women's organization with a mission to provide care for the needy in society. Concurrently, the wives of the Decembrists arranged lectures and concerts in Siberian villages to help the less privileged (Pushkareva, 1997). However, Russian women faced significant obstacles in their struggle for equality due to their representation as men's companions. This romanticized image of women in the 19th century characterized them as being dominated by feelings and thoughts, leading to social resentment for women who challenged the societal norm (Pushkareva, 1997).

A turning point came in the early 1860s with the establishment of the Society of Women's Labor in St. Petersburg. Its objective was to improve the financial and legal

position of female workers while simultaneously providing employment opportunities. Following this effort, similar women's labor organizations arose in several major cities in Russia. Women's groups started special training programs and assisted women seeking higher education, pushing for women's rights and opportunities until 1881 when all such organizations were barred by the government, significantly impairing the operations of public associations (Pushkareva, 1997).

By the end of the 19th century, the trend of fictitious marriages grew among women, providing a way to escape parental care (Pushkareva, 1997). Activists at the time published articles intended to explain women's inequalities by pointing to historical causes, highlighting the impact of Orthodoxy and the spread of Byzantine literature (Pushkareva, 1997).

During Nicholas II's reign after 1895, numerous large women's political structures were created with the objective of uplifting women's legal status, facilitating employment opportunities, improving their access to legal procedures, and providing access to higher education (Pushkareva, 1997). The 1905 revolution brought forth a new wave of women's activism with a focus on achieving equal political and civil rights for women in comparison to men (Pushkareva, 1997). The Women's Equality Union was established and the first rally in favor of women's civic rights took place. A significant milestone was the First All-Russian Women's Congress in 1908, attended by more than 1,000 participants where discussions focused on consolidating women's organizations and creating a single all-women association (Pushkareva, 1997).

The First Congress was soon followed by the All-Russian Congress for the Fight Against Trafficking in Women in 1910 and the First Congress of Women's Education in 1913 (Pushkareva, 1997). Women's organizations planned to merge into a single all-Russian women's union and petitioned its registration in 1916, but the request was denied. Despite these difficulties, women were gradually making their way into previously male-dominated occupations such as letter carriers, while nurseries and kindergartens operated under women's direction. Workshops were also established to sew linen for the front and courses for nurses were introduced. In addition, free canteens and shelters for refugee women provided support in difficult times (Engel, 1988).

During the bourgeois-democratic revolution, women activists intensified their fight for their rights with the hope of securing equality. On March 19, 1917, around 40,000 women rallied outside the Provisional Government's palace in St. Petersburg, demanding suffrage rights for both genders, and the leader of the Council of Ministers acceded to their

demand (Pushkareva, 1997). The Constituent Assembly elections held soon after guaranteed universal suffrage "irrespective of sex." However, with the Bolsheviks' rise to power, all organizations, including women's organizations, were banned, marking the end of the women's civic movement era.

In 1917, the Bolsheviks aimed to establish complete gender equality under the law, issuing a decree with this objective (Engel, 1988). The 1918 Constitution of the RSFSR conferred numerous rights for women, including streamlined divorce proceedings and the right to choose abortion. During the 1920s, women made noteworthy contributions to the public sphere and infrastructure development. According to the Great Soviet Encyclopedia of 1970, about 51% of workers in the national economy and 48% of those employed in industry were women. Additionally, 58% of women had specialized higher education (Engel, 1988).

The political weight of women also increased significantly. In 1970, elected women constituted 30.5% of the total number of deputies of the USSR Supreme Soviet, rising to 45.8% in the 1971 local council's election. In contrast, in 2021, only slightly more than 16% of the State Duma deputies were women.

However, as women entered the workforce and public spheres, their existing social and cultural roles remained largely unchanged. The tight reproductive, marital, and family laws compounded the pressure on women to maintain their households while simultaneously pursuing their careers. The emphasis on traditionalism increased in the wake of World War II, with the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR releasing the July 8, 1944 decree that gave legally registered marriage dominance over children out of wedlock (Engel, 1988).

In the USSR, there was a significant shift from the notion of a free union to that of the family as the primary societal unit. Women were assigned the critical social role of responsible motherhood, while the importance of responsible fatherhood was almost entirely neglected. By the second half of the 20th century, the ideal woman was a working mother who also attended to her husband's and children's welfare. This image was evident in Soviet cinema, notably in the acclaimed film "Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears" (1979) or "Under Family Circumstances" (1978). The message conveyed by Soviet culture was straightforward: regardless of a woman's position or profession of choice, the family, home, husband, and kitchen were always of utmost importance, for which women should be willing to sacrifice everything. The father's role was to provide guidance and education, while the day-to-day care of the children was exclusively the mother's responsibility.

Moreover, the Soviet government's emphasis on collectivism often translated to individual needs and desires, including those of women, being subordinated to the needs of the state. This constraint on women's freedom and autonomy affected various aspects of their lives, including their reproductive choices and their capacity to express dissenting views.

In 1979, a group of activists created the almanac "Woman and Russia" to challenge the prevailing notion that women's rights in the USSR were unproblematic. However, they were arrested by the KGB (Pushkareva, 1997). The general liberalization of the Soviet regime in the 1980s gave rise to a new generation of feminist activists whose primary aim was to expose the ongoing suppression of women's rights in the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing social and economic reforms significantly impacted women's rights in Russia. Despite decades of progress in gender equality, women in Russia continue to face numerous challenges and issues. For instance, women remain underrepresented in positions of power and authority, while gender-based violence persists.

Over time, women in Russia experienced increasing participation in the labor sector, and many held prominent positions in politics and business. In 2000, a woman became Russia's deputy prime minister for the first time in history, and in 2012, the woman was selected as a regional governor. Despite this progress, gender-based discrimination, harassment, and lower wages persisted in the workplace (Efimova, 2013). Women are frequently excluded from leadership positions, and traditional attitudes continued to hinder progress.

In recent years, conservative and nationalist attitudes have emerged that aim to restrict women's rights and promote traditional gender roles and values. The government has adopted measures that restrict access to abortion, decriminalize domestic violence, and promote traditional gender norms and values.

Despite these challenges, women have played a crucial role in shaping Russia's social, cultural, and political landscape. From the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' early feminist movements to modern-day efforts for gender equality, Russian women have demonstrated resilience, determination, and a commitment to creating a better future. Nevertheless, the government's policies and societal attitudes towards women have had an impact on women's rights and status, and additional efforts are necessary to ensure gender equality in Russia.

## 3. Methodology and Research Questions

### 3.1. Research environment

Gender theory emerged in the 1970s, and its principles have been applied across various fields such as psychology, sociology, cultural studies, and political science. There are also independent gender studies. However, much less work addresses the study of gender issues in art. For this work, gender studies in the field of cinematography, and more specifically, in animation, are of interest. Hence, this study will examine gender representation in animation, specifically the "Three Bogatyr's" franchise by Melnitsa, which has remained one of the most successful and long-running Russian animated film series since 2004.

Speaking of works on the topic of gender representation, it is worth mentioning a large quantitative analysis of children's television, conducted in 24 countries around the world (Gotz et al., 2008). In the course of this analysis, between 100 and 200 hours of various children's programs broadcast on television in each country were recorded on average, both during the week and at weekends. A sample of 9,207 programs was analyzed (6375 or 69% of fictional shows, 1570 or 17% of non-fictional shows, and 678 or 7% of programs with mixed formats) with a special focus on the 14959 human characters. The study showed that female characters are more than twice as rare as male characters in children's TV programs and that in cartoons the percentage of female characters is even lower. Also, children's shows around the world tend to portray stereotypical gender roles and expectations (Gotz et al., 2008).

In the current study, visual materials of the "Three Bogatyr's" franchise of the "Melnitsa" animated film studio will be analyzed, which is currently the largest and most famous creator of full-length animated films in Russia. The cartoons of this franchise have become one of the highest-grossing films in Russia, they are often shown on television, as well as large-scale screenings in cinemas are organized. The film "Three Bogatyr's and the Heiress to the Throne" (2018) in 2019 received the prize for the best full-length film and also received the Icarus Film Award 2019. "Horse Julius and the Great Race" (2020) has also won several awards - the Best Animated Film Award at the Golden Eagle Awards, as well as the Best Animated Film Award at the Protagonist Awards in 2021. It could be said

that "Three Bogatyr" is the most successful and long-running Russian franchise, which has enjoyed audience interest since 2004 to this day.

However, despite the popularity of the "bogatyr series", very little research has been carried out on the topic of what messages are hidden in the images of the three bogatyr and their friends that the public has fallen in love with. Among Russian studies on the topic of gender representation, the works of Bayrieva (2019), Pavlovskaya and Shushanyan (2013) can be distinguished. Pavlovskaya and Shushanyan noted in their work that despite the stereotypical gender representations of the first three films of the franchise, with the advent of later films, a greater variety of gender representations appears, which is reflected in the behavior of the characters, and the language they use (Pavlovskaya&Shushanyan, 2013). Bayrieva in her work compares some selected cartoons by two animation film studios - "The Walt Disney Company" and "Melnitsa". Bayrieva notes that both "The Walt Disney Company " and "Melnitsa" cartoons do not show clearly traditional or androgynous gender models. However, Russian-produced cartoons are more focused on traditional gender roles, albeit adjusted to the masculinity of women and the feminization of men (Bayrieva, 2019).

Both of these works analyze some films of the "Three Bogatyr" franchise and come to the conclusion that gender stereotypes are reproduced and maintained in the images of the characters (both male and female), although there is some shift towards an egalitarian gender model.

## 3.2. Research Question

Based on the established role of fairy tales and their animated adaptations in children's socialization and gender identity development, this study aims to analyze the gender representations in contemporary Russian animation. The research will focus on both male and female characters, evaluating their depiction, and identifying any changes in gender roles portrayal in popular Russian cartoons which were inspired by folklore tales called *byliny*.

The primary research question of this study is to determine the depiction of gender roles in modern animated films by analyzing the specific gender qualities of male and female characters. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify any changes in these characteristics over time and to trace the trajectory of these developments.

By answering the research question, this study contributes to the literature on children's gender socialization through the means of popular visual culture by providing insights into contemporary Russian animation's role in shaping gender roles and identities. The research will employ qualitative content analysis to analyze gender representations in selected children's films and interpret the findings to generate a comprehensive understanding of the evolving gender roles in Russian animated media.

### 3.3. Research Method

Gender as a social construct is essential to understanding the cultural and societal dynamics in any given society. The concept encompasses the expectations, traits, and behaviors associated with being male or female in a specific culture.

West and Zimmerman's concept of 'doing gender' explains how individuals constantly perform and negotiate gender in everyday interactions, which is influenced by the social norms of their culture, as well as their personal experiences and identity (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

In this study, a structural constructivist approach proposed by Connell is utilized to investigate the gender structure of modern-day capitalist society (Connell, 1995). The approach views the gender system as not rigid but rather analogous to a musical composition where structure and agent overlap and influence one another. It further notes that the existence of a gender system necessitates a gender order, a hierarchical dynamic linking genders in both private and public spheres of life (Connell, 1995). Thus, the gender images of animated characters examined within this study are examined in the context of other social structures such as class, race, and sexuality.

For the practical part of this research, Marcus Banks' visual method as suggested in his work "Visual Methods in Sociological Research" is drawn upon as a framework. Banks emphasizes that context and interpretation are important factors in visual analysis and that visual analysis should consider social, cultural, and historical context as well as the image's use to communicate meaning and influence behavior, not being limited solely to formal aspects of the image such as composition and aesthetics (Banks, 2007). Banks also suggests considering a variety of approaches to visual analysis based on research questions and data analyzed, such as studying the way images are created and employed in everyday life and analyzing the relationship between images and the broader social and cultural contexts within which they exist (Banks, 2007). Banks' approach involves engaging with

real-life experiences relevant to the images encountered by individuals and considering the perspectives and experiences of the individuals who produce and consume images (Banks, 2007).

In my study, I use the instructions given by M. Banks in his work “Visual Methods in Sociological Research” on how to conduct a visual analysis. The visual analysis includes the following steps:

1. *Selecting the visual data.* This step involves the visual data that will be analyzed, such as images, videos, or other forms of visual media. The data should be selected based on the research question and the overall aim of the study. In the case of this particular study, the visual data are 11 full-length animated films of the "Three Bogatyrs" franchise created by the Russian animated film studio "Melnitsa" between 2004 and 2021.

2. *Familiarize oneself with the visual data.* Once the visual data has been selected, the researcher should spend time becoming familiar with it, looking at it from different angles, and noting initial observations and impressions. During the initial viewing of the films, lists of characters playing central roles in the cartoon plot were made, as well as brief content of the stories and its coding based on the narrative theory of the fairy tale by V. Propp. The information obtained at this stage of the study is provided in tables 2.1 to 2.11

3. *Defining the visual categories.* This step involves identifying the main themes or categories that emerge from the visual data. These categories should be relevant to the research question and should be described in a clear and detailed way. A list of masculine and feminine characteristics used in the study and their definitions will be provided below.

4. *Sorting the data.* The researcher should sort the visual data into the categories defined in step three. At this stage, all 11 films of the "Three Bogatyrs" franchise have been re-watched to collect information according to selected categories of gender representation of characters. The data collected during this phase of the study are provided in tables 3.1 to 3.11.

5. *Describing and interpreting the data.* This step involves providing detailed descriptions of the visual data and interpreting it in relation to the research question and overall aim of the study. The researcher should pay attention to the visual composition and context of the visual data. The results of this stage of the study are provided in the analytical part and the conclusion of the present work.



6. *Reflecting on the research process.* Finally, the researcher should take the time to reflect on the research process, considering what worked well and what could be improved for future studies.

Gillian Dyer's 1982 book "Advertising as Communication" offers a thorough overview of the role of advertising in modern society. Dyer explores how advertising connects with its audience and is structured as a means of communication. Dyer posits that humans use signs and symbols to represent their cultural background, group membership, and personal values in ways that are easily understood by others (Dyer, 1982). These signs and symbols can be seen in clothing, jewelry, tattoos, body modifications, facial expressions, gestures, body language, and written language, to name a few.

Dyer presents a checklist in her book for studying human signs and divides them into four categories (Dyer, 1982):

1. Representations of bodies, including age, gender, race, looks, etc.;
2. Representations in manners, including facial expressions, pose, and eye contact;
3. Representations of activity, including positional communication, body movement, and touches;
4. Props and settings.

While originally intended to analyze visual data provided by advertising, these categories can also assist in analyzing and interpreting data from full-length animated movies obtained in this study.

For the practical part of the research, the notation that Vladimir Propp used to encode narratives of magical fairytales will be used to provide a more convenient retelling of the plots of the cartoons. Propp's work on "The Narrative Functions of Fairy Tales" distinguishes the constant and variable elements of these tales. Constant elements are the actions that characters perform to develop the plot and the sequence of these actions, while variable elements include the number of actions, the way they are performed, motivational constructs, and character attributes. Propp's theory posits that magic fairy tales follow a uniform structure despite differences in how these actions are performed by whom. Thus, this work will not only include verbal retellings of the cartoon plots but also provide simplified formulations and codes of the cartoon plots in accordance with Propp's theory of fairy tale narratives.

### 3.4. The Categorization Used in the Research

To determine the appropriate categories for my study, I turned to earlier works discussing the topic of gender roles depicted in children's cartoons. I found the methodology of selecting gender categories used by D.E.England, L.Descartes, and M.A.Collier-Meek in their paper "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" (2011) to be the most accurate and appropriate. Drawing on the works of Do Rozario (2004), Dundes (2001), Durkin (1985a), Hoerner (1996), Klein et al. (2000), Leaper et al. (2002), Thompson and Zerbinos (1995), they stated a list of traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine characteristics and their operational definitions (England et al., 2011). In this study, I used the same behavioral codes of the gender characteristics of cartoon characters, applying them to the analysis of images of both male and female characters of the "Bogatyr series".

Masculine characteristics and their operational definitions used in the current study (England et al., 2011):

1. *Interest in women* - The studious expression when looking at a woman, the expression of an active romantic interest in a woman. This behavior was only implemented for male cartoon characters;

2. *Desire to explore* - The character urges to search for, investigate or explore the unknown;

3. *Physical strength* - Proof that the character has a strong physical effect on another character or object (such as hitting or moving heavy objects). Note: A mutually exclusive characteristic with athleticism, although the demonstration of physical strength includes some athleticism;

4. *Assertiveness with the hint of aggression* - Perseverance of a right or claim, the action of a declaration, or stating. Assertiveness was a firm, forthright endorsement of a viewpoint or an idea;

5. *Suppression of emotions* - In response to emotional distress (such as pleasure or emotional pain), the character remained indifferent, showed no emotion, or visibly minimized it;

6. *Athleticism* - Large jump, kick, and running which requires some athleticism;

7. *Intellect* - Engaging in intellectual activity or showing the use of thought. In the context of ancient Russia, the ability to read or write was also a manifestation of high intelligence;

8. *Instilling fear in enemies* - Causing someone to react with fear as a result of a sense of impending danger, including unintentionally inspiring fear;

9. *Bravery* - Leadership in dangerous situations, often involves rescue;

10. *Handsome* - Male character is described as physically attractive;

11. *Giving suggestion/advice* - Providing recommendations and instructions regardless of whether they were requested or beneficial;

12. *Leadership* - The character physically leads the group of other characters, directing them and giving orders. Dominant behavior, giving out instructions and orders was also included.

Feminine characteristics and their operational definitions used in the current study (England et al., 2011):

1. *Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance* - Changes in appearance made to improve it or attract attention. It is also used when the character examines and/or remarks on the look of another character;

2. *Physical weakness* - Failure to accomplish something that requires physical power;

3. *Expression of emotions* - Vivid demonstration of both positive and negative emotions. Expression of empathy was also included;

4. *Collapsing crying* - Character collapses crying in a statement of physical and/or mental helplessness;

5. *Insecurity* - Character is uncertain, cautious, insecure, and manifests it in behavior and/or speech;

6. *Nurturing, caring display of love* - Giving loving care and assistance to either animals or people. It required direct involvement and was frequently depicted as mothering;

7. *Helpful* - Character is useful when needed. It required direct involvement to give assistance to another character or animal;

8. *Troublesome* - Character causes troubles or is described by other characters as causing troubles which other characters have to solve;

9. *Fearful* - The character expresses a state of alarm or dread. It includes a fear about upcoming events or what the character thinks should happen;

10. *Shame* - The character expresses painful emotions caused by the consciousness of disgrace and/or guilt;

11. *Physical attractiveness* - The character is described as physically attractive, and beautiful;

12. *Need/asking for help (physical or emotional)* - The character clearly requires assistance and/or requests it directly and accepts it;

13. *Abuse victim* - The character suffers as a result of abuse or oppression. It includes emotional abuse as well as physical harm, even if the victimization was voluntary.

### 3.5. Sampling

My research involves the analysis of the animated films produced by the Russian animation studio “Melnitsa”, specifically focusing on their most popular franchise, “Three Bogatyrs”. The franchise features the exploits of three legendary heroes from ancient Russian epic tales - Alyosha Popovich, Ilia Muromets, and Dobrynya Nikitich. The plots of these tales, also known as *byliny*, are widely familiar to Russians since they are included in the middle school curriculum. I chose to research this franchise because it is the most popular and profitable Russian animated films with high critical acclaim and a large number of positive reviews from the audience (megacritic.ru, kinopoisk.ru). The table below (Table 1) outlines the data for each film in the series. It is worth noting that the actual number of viewers may be higher since many people choose to watch movies for free on pirate sites or download them using torrent services.

"Melnitsa" studio was founded in 1999 by A. Boyarsky and the STV film company. The studio's first animation project was the series "Adventures in the Emerald City," consisting of four episodes. In 2003, the studio released its first full-length animated film, "Dwarf Nose". The first cartoon in the “Bogatyr series” was created in 2004, which initially included only the first three films. However, the success of the first three films instigated great interest amongst the audience, leading the studio to continue producing a series of animated films featuring Russian bogatyrs. “Melnitsa” is also known for popular animated series such as “Luntik” and “Barboskins”, which were created at the request of RTR TV channel for the program "Goodnight, Babies". Additionally, the studio includes the Midi Cinema sound studio and has actively collaborated with Russia's largest computer

game publisher, 1C, which has produced many games based on the studio's projects. The game “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber” won first place in the category “Best Russian Adventure” at the annual Gameland Award in 2009.

The studio boasts a renowned director, K. Bronzit, a member of the Russian, French, and American Film Academy, who directed “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” and has also served as the art director and consultant of many other projects at the “Melnitsa” studio.

The first film, “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent”, was released in 2004, becoming the highest-grossing animated film in Russia shortly after its release. As a result, the creators decided to produce two more films based on folklore epic tales - “Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon” (2006) and “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber” (2007). After the success of the first three films, “Melnitsa” continued to produce more films in the franchise featuring the already-known characters of the previous parts in various adventures. These films are no longer based on references to magical folklore tales and are spin-offs with bogatyr and other characters. All the films take place in medieval times in the territory of Kievan Rus, during the reign of Vladimir the Red Sun (also known as the Prince of Kyiv). The only cross-cutting character in all the films of the franchise is Vladimir, the Prince of Kyiv.

In my diploma thesis, I intend to analyze all 11 films of the “Three Bogatyr” series produced by the “Melnitsa” animation studio released so far. I have access to all the films required for analysis through online streaming services such as Netflix, IVI, and Okko, for which I have a monthly subscription. I will obtain visual materials used in my work, such as screenshots of movie frames, by watching the movies or taking them from publicly available sources. The use of such materials for scientific and research purposes does not imply obtaining the permission of the copyright owners.

**Table 1. Rating of films of the "Three Bogatyr" franchise by “Melnitsa” studio.**

Source: kinopoisk.ru

Movie title	Premiere	Box office (in Russia, \$)	Audience (in Russia)	Ratings
Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent	2004	1 730 000	627.8 thousand	7.7/10

Dobrynya Nikitich and The Dragon	2006	3 620 000	1.4 million	7.5/10
Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber	2007	9 739 679	1.8 million	7.3/10
Three bogatyrs and Shamakhan queen (or How Not to Rescue)	2010	19 010 585	3.3 million	6.9/10
Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores	2012	31 505 876	4.1 million	5.7/10
Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course	2015	19 390 136	1.7 million	5.8/10
The Three Heroes and the Sea King	2016	14 134 274	3.7 million	5.6/10
Three Heroes and the Princess of Egypt	2017	14 442 503	3.8 million	5.7/10
Three Heroes and the Heir to the Throne	2018	9 343 827	2.8 million	6.7/10
Horse Julius and Big Horse Racing	2020	4 875 202	1.4 million	7.1/10
Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne	2021	5 524 463	1.6 million	7.3/10

### 3.6. Research Assumptions

Byliny are ancient poetic stories about heroic events and episodes of Russian history, which reflect elements of social life, history, culture, and ideals of the 10th to 16th centuries. In the same way, modern cinematography and animation are essential tools for the transmission and preservation of modern history, ideals, and values. Both the classic plots of the byliny and their modern adaptations provide important information about the

gender representations of their respective time and respond to current social demands. Despite the folklore nature of the plots of the “Three Bogatyrs” cartoons series, it also contains elements that have clear references to contemporary Western and Russian pop culture.

Thus, several assumptions can be put forward.

*Assumption 1.* The characters would follow the traditional gender model - their roles would be different and would be defined according to gender. Thus (with rare and minor exceptions), male characters would demonstrate exclusively masculine characteristics, and female characters would show exclusively feminine characteristics.

*Assumption 2.* The character would follow the traditional gender roles model, but, over time, gender representations would become more egalitarian, so as not to lose relevance to contemporary reality. It could be assumed that over time, under the influence of the so-called “Western format”, series’ female characters would begin to display more masculine characteristics and male characters more feminine ones.

Thus, the purpose of my research would be to reveal and highlight the ways in which gender roles and expectations are depicted in the “Three Bogatyrs” franchise. Furthermore, it is also in interest how gender stereotypes are portrayed and whether they are challenged or perpetuated in these cartoons. Through the analysis of the most popular Russian animated films franchise “Three Bogatyrs” created by the “Melnitsa” studio in the period of 2004-2021, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of how gender and other social issues are constructed and represented in modern media will emerge. leading to a more informed and nuanced discourse on these important topics.

### 3.7. Ethics and Self-Reflection

To conduct my initial viewing of the “Three Heroes” franchise, I utilized online services, such as Netflix, IVI, and Okko, through a monthly subscription. However, it is important to note that due to the sanctions imposed on Russia, it became impossible to maintain subscriptions to these services. Consequently, I accessed the visual materials for this study via the official “Three Bogatyrs” YouTube channel. This channel serves as a repository for all the cartoons in the Bogatyr series, as well as announcements and news related to the “Melnitsa” studio and the “Three Bogatyrs” franchise. All visual data incorporated into this study were either captured during the process of watching or sourced from publicly available sources. The utilization of such materials for scientific and

research purposes does not necessitate obtaining explicit permission from copyright holders.

In terms of self-reflection, it is crucial to acknowledge that being born and raised in Russia, I have been shaped by the particular societal mentality prevalent in the country. This includes the gender socialization processes that are inherent in Russian society. However, as I have matured and relocated to Europe, I have actively engaged in studying gender identity formation and related topics. Consequently, I possess a critical lens through which to analyze the gender representations presented in these films. By acknowledging my personal background and the diverse perspectives I have gained, I am better equipped to approach the analysis with objectivity and consider the potential influences that my upbringing may have had on my perceptions.



## 4. Analytical part

### 4.1. Representation of male characters in the “Three Bogatyrs” franchise

#### 4.1.1. Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent (2004)

The 2004 movie “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” features several male characters: bogatyr Alyosha Popovich, his uncle and babysitter Tikhon, Alyosha’s father Rostov Priest, the talking horse Julius, villain Tugarin the Serpent, retired bogatyr Svyatogor, Prince of Kyiv, Talking Oak, and his guards. The male characters have both major positive (Alyosha Popovich) and major negative (Tugarin the Serpent) roles.

All male characters display a wide range of traits and behaviors.

At the same time, the male characters demonstrate both stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics. Here it is worth noting that male characters show masculine characteristics predominantly, especially the main characters. Feminine characteristics are mostly demonstrated by the secondary characters - the caring and always-ready-to-help Tikhon, the fearful and emotional horse Julius and the Prince of Kyiv.

Overall, the male characters of “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” are portrayed as strong, assertive, and brave, with a tendency towards physical prowess and leadership. They also exhibit a desire to find and explore the unknown and to offer advice. However, there’s only one instance of a male character suppressing emotions, and non are described as handsome.

As mentioned above, some characteristics stereotypically considered to be feminine are not alien to the male characters in the film either: the most frequently demonstrated characteristics are fearfulness, emotionality, and a desire to be helpful. At the same time, some feminine characteristics were not displayed by the male characters at all: the tendency to pay attention to appearance, physical attractiveness, collapsing crying, and being the victim of abusive behavior.

#### 4.1.2. Dobrynya Nikitich and The Dragon (2006)

The film “Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon” portrays six male characters: Dobrynya Nikitich, the messenger Yelisey, the Prince of Kyiv, the merchant Kolyvan (who is the antagonist), Gorynych the Dragon, and the Crimean Khan Beket.

The male characters in the film exhibit masculine traits such as physical strength, bravery, athleticism, assertiveness, and a willingness to offer advice and/or suggestions. Less frequently demonstrated characteristics include an interest in women, the suppression of emotions, instilling of fear in enemies, a desire to explore the unknown, and physical leadership among other characters. Each masculine trait is demonstrated by male characters at least once.

The film's primary protagonist, Dobrynya Nikitich, exclusively displays stereotypically masculine characteristics, whereas other male characters occasionally display stereotypically feminine characteristics. For example, the messenger Yelisey is physically weak but dreams to become a bogatyr to demonstrate his love for his beloved woman; he also finds himself in trouble requiring Dobrynya's assistance. The Prince of Kyiv also exhibits physical and emotional helplessness and is seen crying his eyes out when he requires external assistance. Additionally, Khan Beket, portrayed as thin and short, fears Dobrynya Nikitich's strength, thus making him appear somewhat feminine. Stereotypically feminine traits such as physical attractiveness, the desire to help, or being an abuse victim are not demonstrated by male characters throughout the film.

#### 4.1.3. Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber (2007)

The third movie of the franchise, “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale Robber”, maintains the trends seen in the previous films. There are a total of eight male characters that play a significant role in the film's plot. These characters include Ilya Muromets, Nightingale the Robber, the Prince of Kyiv, his right-hand man Antip, Emperor Vasileus, the owner of an elephant from Constantinople, a slaver, and a merchant who acquires the bogatyr horse Burushka from Nightingale the Robber.

Similar to the previous installments, physical strength remains the dominant masculine characteristic displayed by the male characters. The bogatyr Dobrynya also exhibits a nurturing, caring love towards his horse and comrade Burushka, which is a stereotypically feminine characteristic. Notably, Dobrynya is the first hero in the franchise

to engage in domestic chores, having worked in the garden after being relieved of his duties as the Prince's bogatyr.

Secondary characters in the film exhibit a wider range of characteristics. They display both stereotypically masculine and feminine traits. Male characters demonstrate feminine characteristics such as vivid emotional expression, caring/nurturing displays of love, the need and/or asking for help, collapsing crying as a sign of emotional and/or physical weakness, fearfulness, insecurity, and helpfulness (in descending order of frequency). Conversely, male characters do not display characteristics such as paying attention to physical appearance, physical weakness, physical attractiveness, shame, or being a victim of abuse.

In conclusion, “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale Robber” follows the same trend as its predecessors in emphasizing physical strength as the dominant masculine characteristic while also depicting a range of characteristics in secondary male characters, including stereotypically feminine traits.

#### 4.1.4. Three Bogatyr and Shamakhan Queen (or How Not to Rescue) (2010)

The film “Three Bogatyr and the Shamakhan Queen” features eight male characters, including three bogatyr (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv, talking horse Julius, Shamakhan Queen's advisor the Raven, Alyosha Popovich's uncle Tikhon, and the Prince of Kyiv's right-hand man Antip.

Notably, this movie focuses prominently on the male characters' interest in women, a characteristic that was not as prominent in the previous three films. Nonetheless, the prevalence of physical strength as the dominant masculine trait remains unchanged. In this film, the three bogatyr play minor roles, while the Prince of Kyiv and the horse Julius take center stage, exhibiting an array of feminine characteristics such as emotionality, the need and/or asking for help, and fearfulness that renders them comical. The androgynous portrayal of these characters creates a potential stalemate, not just for them, but for the entire Kyivan Rus. This is where the three bogatyr, who demonstrate stereotypically masculine traits, intervene to assist the embattled ruler and his talkative equine companion.

The male characters in the film display stereotypically masculine traits much more frequently than feminine ones, and male handsomeness is never emphasized. Additionally,

male characters in the film never exhibit stereotypically feminine traits such as physical weakness, physical attractiveness, insecurity, or being a victim of abuse.

“Three Bogatyrs and the Shamakhan Queen” follows the trend of previous films in emphasizing physical strength as the primary masculine trait. Although this installment highlights male characters' interest in women, the prevalence of masculine traits remains unchanged, with occasional feminine characteristics in supporting characters.

#### 4.1.5. Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores (2012)

In the film “Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores”, there are nine male characters, including three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv, the horse Julius, Alyosha Popovich's uncle Tikhon, the merchant Kolyvan, Crimean Khan Beket, and the leader of the Papuans.

Dominant masculine characteristics depicted in the film include physical strength, leadership, courage, instilling fear in enemies, and athleticism. Help with advice and/or suggestions, a desire to find and explore the unknown, suppression of emotions, interest in women, and assertiveness were shown less frequently. The evaluation of male characters' handsomeness by other characters was not portrayed throughout the film.

Among the feminine characteristics displayed by male characters, the need and request for help were the most frequently depicted. Emotional expressions were less frequent, with only one scene featuring physical weakness, insecurity, and collapsing crying. The remainder of the feminine characteristics, including attention to appearance, fearfulness, caring/nurturing displays of love, physical attractiveness, desire to be helpful, shame, and being a victim of abuse, were not depicted by male characters at any point in the film.

#### 4.1.6. Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course (2015)

The film “Three Bogatyrs. The Horse Course” features a cast of 11 male characters, including three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv and his right hand Antip, the talking horse Julius, the talking Oak and his two guards (counting as one character), and the pirates Potanya and Usynya.

The male characters mostly exhibit masculine characteristics such as physical strength, athleticism, and leadership, followed by suppression of emotions, courage, and help with advice and/or suggestions. Interest in women and handsomeness were depicted

only once throughout the film. Notably, the male characters did not show a desire to find and explore the unknown.

However, the film demonstrates some stereotypical feminine characteristics by male characters, with displays of emotionality, the need and/or asking for help, and fearfulness almost as frequently as athleticism or leadership. Additionally, male characters showed physical weakness, collapsed crying, and demonstrated caring/nurturing displays of love, shame, and helpfulness, albeit less often. Notably, characteristics such as attention to appearance, physical attractiveness, insecurity, and being abused were not shown by male characters in the film.

“Three Bogatyr. The Horse Course” portrays a cast of male characters predominantly exhibiting traditional masculine traits, with occasional depictions of stereotypical femininity. This portrayal emphasizes physical strength and leadership as expected qualities of male heroes.

#### 4.1.7. Three Bogatyr and the Sea King (2016)

The male characters in “Three Bogatyr and the Sea King” portrayed comparatively fewer stereotypically gender-based characteristics than in previous films. The film featured a total of eight male characters, including three bogatyr (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv and his right-hand man Antip, the horse Julius, the Sea King, and his adviser fish Horace.

The male characters displayed each stereotypically masculine characteristic at least once, with physical strength remaining the dominant trait. The next most frequently demonstrated characteristics were bravery, help with advice and/or suggestions, leadership, athleticism, and interest in women. It is worth noting that, although the Sea King's interest in women (specifically, his desire to marry) served as the movie's plot initiator, this characteristic was portrayed 1.8 times less frequently than physical strength.

Stereotypically feminine characteristics were less frequently portrayed by male characters in the film. Emotionality, fearfulness, and the desire to be helpful were the most frequently depicted characteristics. Attention to appearance, a caring/nurturing display of love, insecurity, and being an abuse victim (as demonstrated by Julius, who was stolen and forcibly kept in the Sea King's castle by his servant Brungilde) were less common. Similar to previous films, the bogatyr primarily exhibited stereotypically masculine

characteristics, while secondary characters, such as the horse Julius and Prince of Kyiv, tended to portray more feminine traits.

“Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King” demonstrated less reliance on traditional gender norms than previous films, with male characters exhibiting both masculine and feminine characteristics with greater frequency.

#### 4.1.8. Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt (2017)

The film “Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt” features nine male characters, including the three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv and his adviser Antip, the talking horse Julius, Gorynych the Dragon, Grandfather Frost and his student Durilo.

As in previous films, the male characters (particularly the bogatyrs) primarily exhibit physical strength as the dominant stereotypically masculine characteristic. They occasionally demonstrate a desire to explore the unknown, leadership abilities, and athleticism. Bravery, giving advice and/or suggestions, assertiveness, suppression of emotions, and instilling fear in enemies are portrayed less frequently. Male characters also display stereotypically feminine characteristics, including physical weakness, fearfulness, helpfulness, attention to appearance, emotional expression, caring displays of affection, and asking for help.

Interest in women is not present in the film, nor are any male characters described as handsome. Moreover, several stereotypically feminine characteristics such as physical attractiveness, insecurity, collapsing crying, shame, and being an abuse victim are not depicted by male characters in the film.

“Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt” portrays male characters exhibiting predominantly masculine traits in keeping with traditional heroism portrayals. While stereotypically feminine characteristics are evident, male characters primarily display physical strength and adventure-seeking characteristics.

#### 4.1.9. Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne (2018)

The film “Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne” features 11 male characters, including the three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv, his right-hand man Antip, the court healer, the talking horse Julius, the

groom of the Prince's niece Yelisey, Emperor Vasilevs and his son Leonid, and the Nightingale the Robber.

The three most commonly exhibited masculine characteristics of male characters in the film are physical strength, athleticism, and giving advice and/or suggestions. Additional stereotypically masculine traits included bravery, a desire to find and explore the unknown, instilling fear in enemies, assertiveness and leadership, and emotional suppression. The male characters in the film did not express interest in women. Moreover, no male character is described as handsome by any other character.

Stereotypically feminine characteristics were less commonly expressed by male characters. For example, the expression of emotions was portrayed only five times, which is four times less frequently than physical strength, the most common masculine trait. Demonstrations of the need and/or asking for help, fearfulness, and physical weakness were even rarer. Caring/nurturing displays of love, the desire to be helpful, shame, and collapsing crying were each shown only once. Other stereotypically feminine characteristics like attention to appearance, physical attractiveness, insecurity, and being an abuse victim were not shown at all.

Male characters in “Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne” primarily exhibit masculine characteristics such as physical strength, athleticism, and leadership. Stereotypically feminine characteristics were less frequently portrayed, with the expression of emotions being the most common.

#### 4.1.10. Horse Julius and Big Horse Racing (2020)

The film “Horse Julius and the Big Horse Racing” features nine male characters, including the three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv and his adviser Antip, the talking horse Julius, Sultan Rashid, and his brother Sultan Arkhan.

The portrayal of male characters in the film emphasizes physical strength and athleticism as traditionally masculine traits. Leading masculine traits include giving advice or suggestions, leadership, and emotional suppression. Bravery, instilling fear in enemies, and a desire for exploration were demonstrated less frequently. One male character was described as handsome in the film.

Male characters also exhibit stereotypically feminine traits such as emotionality, the desire to be helpful, shame, collapsing crying, insecurity, and the caring and nurturing

display of love. Additionally, male characters occasionally exhibit fearfulness and the need for help, along with a typically masculine interest in women and assertiveness. Attention to appearance was portrayed by male characters only once in the film. However, male characters did not exhibit stereotypically feminine traits such as physical weakness, physical attractiveness, or being an abuse victim.

The portrayal of male characters in “Horse Julius and the Big Horse Racing” emphasizes traditional masculine traits such as physical strength and athleticism, while also displaying some stereotypically feminine characteristics such as emotionality and the need of help. However, male characters did not exhibit all stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as being physically attractive or experiencing abuse.

#### 4.1.11. Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne (2021)

The film “Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne” depicts seven male characters, including the three bogatyrs (Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynia Nikitich, and Ilya Muromets), the Prince of Kyiv and his adviser Antip, the talking horse Julius, and a foreign tourist exploring Kyivan Rus.

The film emphasizes stereotypically masculine characteristics, such as physical strength, athleticism, and leadership. Additionally, the desire to explore the unknown, instilling fear in enemies, giving advice and/or suggestions, and romantic interest in women are also portrayed. However, masculinity is not portrayed consistently, as less common masculine traits such as emotional suppression, bravery, assertiveness, and handsomeness are only shown briefly in the film.

There are situations where the male characters display some stereotypically feminine characteristics, albeit less frequently. Needing and/or requesting help is the most commonly demonstrated feminine trait. Moreover, caring/nurturing displays of love, emotional expression, insecurity, and crying are also portrayed. The desire to be helpful was shown only once. However, some stereotypically feminine characteristics like attention to appearance, physical weakness, physical attractiveness, shame, or abuse victimization are not portrayed by any male characters in the film.

“Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne” emphasizes stereotypically masculine characteristics. Feminine traits are also occasionally demonstrated by male characters, with the need for help being the most prominently portrayed.



## 4.2. Representation of female characters in the “Three Bogatyrs” franchise

### 4.2.1. Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent (2004)

In “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin Serpent”, only three female characters appear: Lyubava, the beloved of the protagonist Alyosha Popovich, her Granny, and Alyosha Popovich's mother, who appears briefly at the beginning of the movie. Due to the limited roles of these female characters, the range of characteristics they embody is also limited.

The female characters primarily exhibit stereotypically feminine characteristics, including caring/nurturing displays of love, a desire to be helpful, and emotional expressiveness. These traits are demonstrated frequently, while fearfulness and insecurity occur more rarely. Physical weakness, the need for help, physical attractiveness, shame, collapsing crying, and being a victim of abuse occur only once each throughout the film. The tendency to pay attention to appearance is not demonstrated by any of the female characters.

Although primarily feminine in their portrayal, the female characters do occasionally display stereotypically masculine characteristics. The most notable of these is giving advice and/or suggestions, with physical strength, bravery, and assertiveness also appearing in isolated cases. However, no female characters demonstrate other masculine traits such as interest in women, suppression of emotions, handsomeness, instilling fear in enemies, athleticism, a desire to find and explore the unknown, or leadership throughout the entirety of the film.

### 4.2.2. Dobrynya Nikitich and The Dragon (2006)

In the film “Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon”, only three characters are female: Zabava, the niece of the Prince of Kyiv, Baba Yaga, and Nastasya, the wife of the bogatyr Dobrynya Nikitich. Despite the film's plot revolving around Zabava and her kidnapping, the female characters play only secondary, supporting roles.

The female characters in the film predominantly demonstrate active emotional expressiveness, a tendency to pay attention to one's appearance, and a need and/or asking for help. The female characters' physical attractiveness is only described once, as well as insecurity, a desire to be helpful, and being an abuse victim occur only once each. Physical

weakness, nurturing/caring displays of love, fearfulness, shame, and collapsing crying are not demonstrated by any of the female characters throughout the film at all.

Assertiveness is the most commonly displayed masculine trait by the female characters, demonstrated frequently throughout the film. Additionally, female characters display physical strength twice and provide advice and/or suggestions once. However, female characters do not display other stereotypically masculine traits, including interest in women, emotional suppression, bravery, athleticism, desire to explore an unknown, or leadership, throughout the film.

#### 4.2.3. Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber (2007)

The film “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber” features three female characters: the chronicler Alyonushka, the elderly mother of Ilya Muromets, and a superstitious old woman from Constantinople. While Ilya’s mother and the Byzantine woman appear only in short scenes, Alyonushka is a secondary but constant character in the movie.

Female characters in the film are primarily portrayed as physically attractive, a character trait that aligns with feminine stereotypes. Other common feminine characteristics demonstrated include a desire to be helpful, emotional expressiveness, and caring/nurturing displays of love. The tendency to pay attention to appearance, physical weakness, fearfulness, the need for help, insecurity, and being an abuse victim are exhibited only once within the film. Other feminine characteristics, such as collapsing crying or shame, were not exhibited by any of the female characters.

Stereotypically masculine characteristics were demonstrated less frequently by the female characters, with giving suggestions or advice occurring only four times throughout the film. This is in contrast to the more commonly demonstrated feminine trait of physical attractiveness, which occurred twice as often. The next frequent display of stereotypically masculine characteristics was assertiveness and a desire for exploration of the unknown, with the display of bravery occurring once. Stereotypically masculine characteristics such as interest in women, physical strength, emotional suppression, instilling fear, athleticism, and leadership were not displayed by any of the female characters.

#### 4.2.4. Three Bogatyrs and Shamakhan Queen (or How Not to Rescue) (2010)

“Three Bogatyrs and the Shamakhan Queen” marks the first film in the franchise where a female character is named in the title. The film showcases five female characters: the Shamakhan Queen herself, and the bogatyrs’ wives Lyubava, Nastasya, and Alyonushka, as well as Lyubava’s Granny.

The female characters in the film predominantly display stereotypically feminine characteristics, most notably a desire to be useful, physical attractiveness, and emotional expressiveness. Displaying a caring attitude towards others, a need for assistance, attention to physical appearance, and crying are also demonstrated, but to a lesser extent. Shyness and insecurity are exhibited only once throughout the film, while physical weakness, shame, and being a victim of abuse are not demonstrated by any of the female characters.

Although very rare, female characters also showed stereotypically masculine characteristics - assertiveness, physical strength, assertiveness, and leadership. Other masculine characteristics, such as interest in women, suppression of emotions, bravery instilling fear in enemies, giving advice and suggestions, handsomeness, and a desire to find and/or explore the unknown, were not shown by female characters at any time throughout the film.

#### 4.2.5. Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores (2012)

The film "Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores" features five female characters, including bogatyrs’ wives Lyubava, Alyonushka, and Nastasya, alongside Lyubava’s Granny, and Baba Yaga, who assists the antagonist in their devious scheme.

Throughout the film, female characters predominantly exhibit stereotypical feminine characteristics such as a need and/or asking for assistance, a desire to be helpful, and emotional expressiveness. Traits such as attention to appearance, caring/nurturing displays of emotion, insecurity, and collapsing crying are demonstrated to a lesser extent. Fearfulness is exhibited only once by female characters, while other feminine characteristics, such as physical attractiveness, shame, and being a victim of abuse, are not demonstrated in the film.

The female characters also display stereotypically masculine characteristics, with assertiveness, physical strength, and giving advice or suggestions being demonstrated most

frequently. Leadership, which is a typically masculine trait as well, is only exhibited once by a female character.

#### 4.2.6. Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course (2015)

The number of female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs. The Horse Course” is limited to four secondary roles, namely the bogatyrs’ wives Lyubava, Nastasya, and Alyonushka, as well as the character Luladzha, who appears briefly.

The film pays little attention to female characters, with even typical feminine characteristics lacking sufficient development. The vivid expression of emotions, caring/nurturing displays of love, and a desire to be helpful are among the few feminine characteristics exhibited in the film. Fearfulness and insecurity are demonstrated less frequently, while physical weakness is only depicted once. The film does not showcase other feminine characteristics such as an emphasis on physical appearance, the need and/or asking for help, physical attractiveness, shame, collapsing crying, or being a victim of abuse.

Further, the film depicts female characters demonstrating assertiveness three times and taking up a leadership position once, which are typically masculine traits. Other masculine traits are not demonstrated by the female characters in the film.

#### 4.2.7. Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King (2016)

The film “Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King” features five female characters: the wives of the bogatyrs Lyubava, Nastasya, and Alyonushka, the Sea King's servant Brunhilda, and Sea King’s aunt Kikimora, who resides in the swamp.

Although the female characters demonstrate a wider range of characteristics in the film, they predominantly exhibit stereotypically feminine traits. Emotionality, the desire to be helpful, caring/nurturing displays of love, and attention to appearance are frequently displayed by the female characters. Additionally, they are described as physically attractive and exhibit characteristics such as insecurity, shame, and collapsing crying. Female characters need and/or ask for assistance twice and display physical weakness once, although none of them become victims of abuse or exhibit fearfulness.

Female characters demonstrate stereotypically masculine characteristics more often in this film than in previous ones. They take on leadership roles, show assertiveness, suppress emotions, exhibit bravery in perilous situations, and even inspire fear in their

opponents. Female characters exhibit isolated instances of physical strength and giving advice or suggestions. However, the film does not depict female characters exhibiting masculine traits such as an interest in women, handsomeness, or a desire to explore the unknown.

#### 4.2.8. Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt (2017)

Apart from the wives of the three bogatyrs - Lyubava, Nastasya, and Alyonushka - the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt” features only one additional female character - Princess Nefertiti, who appears in the climactic episodes of the film. This film is the second in a whole franchise in which a female character is mentioned in the title. However, all female characters occupy secondary, supporting roles and do not significantly influence the plot.

The female characters in the film exhibit stereotypically feminine characteristics more frequently, with the desire to be helpful being the most prevalent. Attention to appearance, vivid expression of emotions, and caring/nurturing displays of love are also demonstrated. Female characters ask for assistance or are subjected to abuse three times, and their physical attractiveness is mentioned by other characters only once, with fearfulness displayed once as well. Other feminine characteristics are not demonstrated by the female characters in the film.

Stereotypically masculine characteristics, such as assertiveness and physical strength, are also frequently exhibited by the female characters. The desire to explore the unknown and physical leadership are shown. Female characters give advice and/or suggestions twice and display bravery only once. However, traits such as an interest in women, suppression of emotions, handsomeness, and athleticism are not displayed by the female characters in the film.

#### 4.2.9. Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne (2018)

The third film in the franchise mentions a female character in its title, “Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne”, features only one female character named Zabava, the niece of the Prince of Kyiv.

Despite having only one female character, Zabava exhibits a broad range of characteristics, with a near-even proportion of stereotypically feminine and masculine traits, albeit with a slight preponderance towards femininity. The most frequently

demonstrated characteristics include the expression of emotions and a desire to be helpful, both of which are considered to be feminine traits. Zabava also exhibits caring/nurturing displays of love twice, along with stereotypically masculine characteristics such as assertiveness, athleticism, and the desire to find and explore the unknown.

Zabava exhibits a few singular characteristics, including physical weakness, the need and/or asking for help, once she's described as physically attractive, and once collapses crying. Additionally, she also displays stereotypically masculine traits such as physical strength, suppression of emotions, and bravery once. Other stereotypically gender-specific characteristics were not demonstrated by Zabava.

#### 4.2.10. Horse Julius and Big Horse Racing (2020)

The film "Horse Julius and the Big Horse Racing" features four female characters: the wives of the three bogatyrs - Lyubava, Nastasya, and Alyonushka, as well as Maga's mother, who appears in only one scene. Additionally, the mare known as the Star of the East, in which Horse Julius is in love, can be considered a female character.

In this movie of the franchise, female characters have minor roles and exhibit a limited number of characteristics, the vast majority of which are stereotypically feminine. The female characters are frequently described as physically attractive, with caring displays of love and the desire to be helpful being the next most prevalent traits. The female characters are shown to be insecure only once, with other stereotypically feminine characteristics not being demonstrated at all.

Female characters do not exhibit stereotypically masculine characteristics, except for one instance in which a female character displays her physical strength.

#### 4.2.11. Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne (2021)

The film "Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne" features three female characters: Baba Yaga, a girl seeking a remedy for hair split ends, and the girl Froся, who accidentally found the enchanted Prince of Kyiv turned into a horse.

The female characters in the film predominantly display stereotypically feminine characteristics, such as expressions of emotions, caring/nurturing displays of love, and helpfulness. The attention paid to appearance, collapsing crying, insecurity, and shame are also frequently shown. The female characters' need and/or asking for assistance is displayed once, and one female character is described as physically attractive.

The female characters in the film display stereotypically masculine characteristics less frequently. The most common of these is assertiveness, while physical strength and bravery are also exhibited. There are also instances where female characters instill fear in their enemies, offer advice and/or suggestions, and demonstrate their athleticism and leadership.

Other stereotypically gender-based characteristics are not demonstrated by the female characters in the film.

### 4.3. Discussion

During the analysis of the discussed Russian animated full-length films based on fairy tales (*byliny*), it was revealed that in all 11 films of the franchise, there are significantly more male characters than female ones. It is also noteworthy that anthropomorphic animals (for example, the talking horse Julius, the servant of the Shamakhan Queen Raven, etc.) are also voiced by male actors and, in most situations, demonstrate a masculine behavior model. The main characters of all films are men, while women are assigned secondary and episodic roles. If we consider the gender representation of negative characters, we can note that the representation of antagonists also corresponds to the general trend - there are more male antagonist characters than female ones.

The titles of the films are also dominated by an emphasis on male characters - only 3 movies mention female characters in their titles ("Three Bogatyrs and the Shamakhan Queen", "Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt", "Three Bogatyrs and the Heir to the Throne"), however, in none of these films female characters play a central role. It is the male characters that are the center of the plot of each film of the franchise (more specifically, three bogatyrs Alyosha Popovich, Dobrynya Nikitich and Ilya Muromets, Prince of Kyiv and the talking horse Julius). It is also noteworthy that the only character who appears in each film of the "Bogatyr series" is the Prince of Kyiv.

Male and female characters include representatives of all age groups as well as social statuses. However, male cartoon characters mostly occupy middle or high positions in society - rulers, bogatyrs, merchants, members of the clergy and the intellectual elite (for example, teachers of Leonid, Emperor Vasileus's son), advisers and clerks of the Prince, etc. Female characters mostly occupy inferior positions - engaged in peasant labor or housework. Thus, in the structure of society depicted in this series of full-length animated films, men are predominantly engaged in public activities and occupy more senior

positions than women, whose activities are limited to the private sphere. However, there are exceptions. For example, Tikhon is the uncle and mentor (more like a babysitter) of bogatyr Alyosha Popovich. Among the female characters are Alyonushka, who works as a chronicler, the Shamakhan Queen, who rules an entire kingdom, and Zabava, who has some influence and power because she is a relative (grandniece) of the Prince of Kyiv.

Here it is worth paying attention to how high-ranking characters relate to their power. Male ruler characters are actively interested in political activities, strengthening their state, and establishing domestic and foreign policy. The female ruler characters are not preoccupied with affairs of state - the Shamakhan Queen throws all her energy into finding the source of eternal youth and beauty, and Princess Nefertiti appears in “Three Bogatyr and the Princess of Egypt” as a minor character who has almost no influence on the development of the plot.

Military service acts as an ideal for the professional activities of positive male characters of the “Three Bogatyr” franchise. For example, in the cartoon “Three Bogatyr and the Heiress to the Throne”, Yelisey, who works as an accountant, hides this from his wife, friends, and mentor Dobrynya Nikitich because he is ashamed that he could not join the bogatyr service. When this becomes known to the bogatyr, they react with noticeable disappointment - “Yeah, that's not what I taught him...” says Dobrynya Nikitich

It is also repeatedly emphasized in the franchise films that if the bogatyr have dealt with all the robbers and enemies of the homeland, they are bored at home and take every opportunity to run away “to do the job” (as, for example, in “Three Bogatyr and the Sea King”, the bored bogatyr decided to go to China in search of the dragon, whose tooth should help them regain their former strength). The male characters describe housework as unworthy of a real man (“No way, Lyubava! Is it a bogatyr thing to do women’s housework?” or “It is not fitting for a Russian bogatyr to carry potatoes”). Moreover, even though the wives of bogatyr ask their husbands for help at home, they do not expect the bogatyr to actually help. This was the case, for example, in “Three Bogatyr on Distant Shores”, when Alyosha Popovich's clone, in response to his wife Lyubava’s request, started mopping the floors - “Oh, no, I was only joking... Are you sick, Alyoshenka?”

Women's care and assistance to men are taken for granted by male characters. Thus, in “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale Robber”, the Prince, upon learning that Alyonushka intends to go on a campaign with the hero and the Prince, replies that “A woman can always be useful during a campaign - to cook or do laundry...”, although Alyonushka is



pursuing her professional interest in this campaign (she plans to write a chronicle of the exploits of Russian heroes) and not a desire to serve men.

The female characters in the “Bogatyr series” films are characterized by their concern for family and home comfort. This is vividly demonstrated by the scene with the index stone in “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” - Lyubava tries to persuade Alyosha to go to the right, where the stone promises the hero marriage, but the bogatyr refuses. Then Lyubava shouts out: “Then I will marry someone else! And I will have five, no, not five, but ten children!” It is noteworthy that even the anthropomorphic octopus Brunnhilde in “Three Bogatyr and the Sea King”, who suffers from unrequited love for the Sea King, thinks about romantic relationships and creating a family. The exception is Ilya Muromets's wife, Alyonushka, who demonstrates an aspiration for professional fulfillment and independence. She even involves her husband in her work - the bogatyr helps Alyonushka retype her articles.

The male characters of the franchise demonstrate such spiritual values as patriotism, justice and honesty, courage, and the desire to use their supernatural power for the good of Motherland. Female characters, on the other hand, demonstrate caring, love, and a desire for family well-being. Female characters act as a companion, emotional support, and motivation to fight evil for the male protagonist. Despite the fact that starting in 2010 female characters begin to demonstrate "strong femininity" (the ability to stand up for themselves and protect their homes, a passion for martial arts, etc.), they do not demonstrate this in the presence of male characters, and their efforts are often not enough to solve the actual problem. This was the case, for example, in “Three Bogatyr and the Heiress to the Throne”, when Zabava engages in hand-to-hand combat with a crowd of armed guards of Emperor Vasileus, but her abilities are not enough, and the heroine is rescued by the timely appearance of the bogatyr.

The external appeal of a character depends largely on his positioning. Positive characters are described as "beautiful/handsome". At the same time, the attractiveness of male and female characters is due to different factors. Male characters' beauty is related to their physical strength, while bogatyr are the ideal of male attractiveness. The bogatyr stand out compared to other characters - they are taller than other characters, they have strongly developed muscles, and they are also described by such words as “eminent”, “broad-shouldered”, etc. The attractiveness of female characters is closely related to stereotypical ideas about female attractiveness - “pretty”, “a figure like a vine, the face like a berry” (meaning: curvy body and sweet face). Women are also more inclined to evaluate

their own appearance and the appearance of other characters, and in the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Shamakhan Queen” the female character's desire to gain an attractive appearance and youthfulness is the basis of the plot of the entire film.

It is also noteworthy that the more negative a character plays, the more he differs from the main characters externally (for example, the short and puny Nightingale the Robber or the short and fat merchant Kolyvan). The female antagonists are contrasted with the positive female characters both externally and internally - the villains are all old and unattractive women who have no family and who act in a typically “male” public sphere and are not involved in housekeeping and domestic work (a striking example is the Shamakhan Queen, who even has to hide her face under a niqab). In some cases, the male antagonist characters have outstanding abilities (for example, the Nightingale the Robber's strong whistle) or have magical assistants, but have no magical powers. The female antagonist characters possess magic, which they use exclusively to harm those around them (Baba Yaga can cast spells or the evil eye, summon an army of the Dark Force, and the Shamakhan Queen can hypnotize men to bend them to her will).

## 5. Conclusion

The analysis of 11 films of the "Three Bogatyrs" franchise produced by "Melnitsa" studio during the 2004-2021 period allows us to draw the following conclusions about the gender representation of the presented characters.

In most cases, both male and female characters demonstrate characteristics that correspond to the traditional gender role model - male characters are assigned the role related to protection and actions in the public sphere, and female characters - the expressive role of the keepers of the home and helpers of male characters. The key positive feature of the male characters is physical strength, and for the female characters, it is external attractiveness and care.

Male characters have a greater representation and their activities are more varied. Nevertheless, in later films of the "Bogatyr" franchise female characters are endowed with a wider range of values and personal characteristics, while the images of male characters remain practically unchanged. The main role of male characters is that of protectors, while the other characteristics (such as the role of a family man) recede into the background and appear only in brief scenes in order to create a comic effect.

Despite the trend of changes in the portrayal of female characters, they do not play a central role in the films, and their actions have almost no influence on the development of the plot, and in joint scenes with male characters female characters pass the role of the leader to the men.

We can conclude that characters in the "Three Bogatyrs" franchise produced by the animation studio "Melnitsa" from 2004 to 2021, in most cases, demonstrate only a limited range of traditional stereotypical "male" and "female" roles. Nevertheless, we can also observe positive changes in the representation of more diverse behavioral patterns of female characters, which suggests that in the future gender representations of the characters in children's media content will be more diverse and will no longer be so closely linked to the stereotypical representation of "male" and "female" models. At the same time, the gender model of representation of male characters remains unchanged.

As previously discussed in the theoretical part of this study, cinematography, including animation, serves as a reflection of societal processes and their dynamics within a specific context (Hust et al., 2008). Through their engagement with animated media and the emulation of beloved cartoon characters, children gain insights into societal norms and their own position within it (Jenkins, 2006). The media plays a significant role in shaping

children's gender identities either by conforming to established gender stereotypes or by challenging them (Hust et al., 2008).

It is important to acknowledge that the "Three Bogatyrs" franchise produced by the animation film studio "Melnitsa" does not exclusively adhere to traditional gender models. Instead, it incorporates elements of an androgynous gender model. The cartoons within the "Bogatyr series" illustrate a gradual yet perceptible feminization and emancipation of Russian society, as evident in the evolving depiction of characters. However, despite the positive transformations, it is predominantly observed that franchise cartoons tend to confine character portrayals to a narrow range of stereotypically feminine and masculine characteristics. Consequently, this perpetuates the formation of stereotypical gender constructs within children.

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# Appendix 1

Table 2.1



Movie		Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent (2004)	
Movie code		B W A a C ↑ R D Z R Б П Л ↓	
Movie plot		<p>Alyosha Popovich, a bogatyr of Rostov, and his uncle Tikhon try to protect their town from Tugarin the Serpent and his army, who demand tribute. Despite their failed plan, Alyosha vows to retrieve their gold. Along the journey, Tikhon is robbed by gypsies, getting a speaking horse named Julius. Alyosha is accompanied by his beloved Lyubava and her Granny, as well as a donkey named Moses. After numerous trials and tribulations, they reunite and defeat Tugarin, returning the gold to Rostov.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr, Lyubava's fiancé)		Lyubava (Alyosha's fiancé)	
Tikhon (Alyosha's uncle and babysitter)		Granny (Lyubava's grandmother)	



<p>Rostov Priest (Alyosha's father)</p>	 <p>Thank you, Lord, for sending Alyosha a plan for our salvation.</p>	<p>Priest's Wife (Alyosha's mother)</p>	 <p>Where are you, our dear son? Tikhon disappeared too...</p>
<p>Julius (the talking horse that Tikhon received from the gypsies)</p>			
<p>Tugarin the Serpent (the villain)</p>			
<p>Svyatogor (retired bogatyr)</p>			
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>			
<p>Talking Oak (the crook to whom the pointer stone leads)</p>	 <p>Two halves of a kingdom! Take a chance with Lady Luck.</p>		

<p>Livebearers (Oak's security guards and collectors)</p>			
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Table 2.2

Movie		Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon (2006)	
Movie code		e B W A a B C ↑ D Z R Б П ↓ Л	
Movie plot		<p>Zabava, the niece of the Prince of Kyiv, falls for messenger Yelisey and they plan to flee the town. The Prince assigns Yelisey the task of fetching tribute from Crimean Khan Beket with the help of bogatyr Dobrynya Nikitich. During Yelisey's absence, the Prince attempts to marry Zabava off, but she declines all candidates. To forgive the Prince's debt, Merchant Kolyvan offers to marry Zabava. Gorynych the Dragon assists Kolyvan in kidnapping Zabava and relocating her to Baba Yaga. Dobrynya and Yelisey learn of this and pursue Kolyvan. While tackling hindrances and defeating Baba Yaga's Dark Force army, Dobrynya and Yelisey apprehend Kolyvan and rescue Zabava. Together, they return to Kyiv, where Dobrynya convinces the Prince to approve Yelisey and Zabava's union.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Dobrynya (bogatyr)		Zabava (niece of the Prince of Kyiv, Yelisey's fiancé)	















<p>Yelisey (messenger, Zabava's fiancé)</p>		<p>Baba Yaga (witch who wields ancient magic)</p>	
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>		<p>Nastasya (Dobrynya's wife)</p>	
<p>Kolyvan (merchant, master gambler)</p>			
<p>Gorynych the Dragon (Dobrynya's friend)</p>			
<p>Khan Beket (Crimean Khan)</p>			

Table 2.3

Movie	Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber (2007)
Movie code	e B W A a B C ↑ D Z R Б K Б П J I ↓
Movie plot	<p>The Nightingale the Robber robbed peaceful villages but was caught by the bogatyr Ilya Muromets. The Prince of Kyiv released the bandit for 100 gold coins. Ilya, upon discovering the news, decided to resign. The Prince insisted on keeping Ilya's bogatyr horse Burushka in his stables. During the night, Nightingale the Robber went to steal gold from the Prince's treasury and ended up stealing Burushka too. The Prince sends Ilya in search of Burushka, hoping that he and the horse will return the stolen gold. The Prince also convinces Ilya to take him on the trip, and a young girl chronicler, Alyonushka, also joins them. They eventually end up in Constantinople where the Nightingale the Robber and the army of Emperor Vasileus try to capture Burushka. Burushka ate a sack of gold and began defecating gold coins, which made the emperor think the horse was magical and demanded it be caught. The story finishes with Ilya rescuing the Prince and Alyonushka, defeating the emperor's army, and recovering his horse and the Prince's treasure. Together, the heroes return to Kyiv where they are joyfully welcomed. Ilya and Alyonushka fall in love with each other.</p>

Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)		Alyonushka (young chronicler)	
Nightingale the Robber (the villain)		Ilya's mother	
Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)		The old lady (a superstitious resident of Constantinople)	
Vasileus (ruler of Constantinople)			


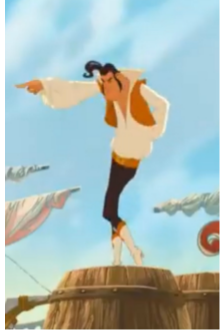














Elephant driver			
Slaver			
Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)			
Merchant in the port			

Table 2.4



Movie		Three Bogatyr and Shamakhan Queen (or How not to Rescue) (2010)	
Movie code		e Ъ b B w A C ↑ Б K R ↓ Б П Л	
Movie plot		<p>The Shamakhan Queen desires eternal youth and requires the tears of a thousand beautiful women. Her servant, the Raven, proposes that she marry the Prince of Kyiv and employ local beauties in their scheme. Utilizing magic, the Queen makes the Prince fall in love and he proposes during his visit to the Shamakhan Kingdom. Julius, the Prince's horse, overhears the Queen's deceitful plan and solicits the bogatyr's assistance. Unfortunately, the Queen deceives the bogatyr and imprisons them. She and the Prince travel to Kyiv, where they announce their upcoming wedding. The Shamakhan Queen demands a thousand beauties to gather at the Prince's palace to cry, collecting their tears in a jug. Despite the bogatyr's attempts to intervene, the Queen escapes with tears and grows a magical tree with it. However, consuming too many revitalizing apples turns her into a child. The Raven taking care of the Queen-child and bringing her to Kyiv.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Shamakhan Queen	





<p>Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Granny (Lyubava's grandmother)</p>	
<p>Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Alyonushka (young chronicler)</p>	
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>		<p>Lyubava (Alyosha's fiancé)</p>	
<p>Julius (the talking horse)</p>		<p>Nastasya (Dobrynya's wife)</p>	
<p>Raven (Shamakhan Queen's servant)</p>			
<p>Tikhon (Alyosha's uncle and babysitter)</p>			

<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
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Table 2.5










Movie		Three Bogatyr's on Distant Shores (2012)	
Movie code		Г G A a C ↑ D Γ Z R ↓ Б П Л	
Movie plot		<p>Kolyvan returns to Kyiv disguised as a merchant of Chinese souvenirs. Julius invites the disguised Kolyvan to the Prince so that the "foreign merchant" can tell the Prince how to apply Western traditions in Russia. Baba Yaga and Kolyvan deceive the bogatyr's and send them to a distant island, and they themselves seize power over Kyiv, declaring the Prince insane. So the wives of the bogatyr's do not notice that their husbands are missing, Baba Yaga sends them bogatyr's clones. Noticing the substitution, the wives of the bogatyr's, the Prince of Kyiv, and the others decide to stage a coup and defeat the deceivers. Although Kolyvan and Baba Yaga manage to escape, the film ends on a good note.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Baba Yaga (witch who wields ancient magic)	

<p>Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Alyonushka (young chronicler, Ilya Muromet's wife)</p>	
<p>Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Lyubava (Alyosha Popovich's wife)</p>	
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>		<p>Nastasya (Dobrynya Nikitich's wife)</p>	
<p>Julius (the talking horse)</p>		<p>Granny (Lyubava's grandmother)</p>	
<p>Tikhon (Alyosha Popovich's uncle)</p>			
<p>Kolyvan (merchant, master gambler)</p>			

Papuan leader			
Khan Beket (Crimean Khan)			

Table 2.6

Movie	Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course (2015)
Movie code	e B W Γ G A a B C ↑ Б K D Z ↓ Б П Л
Movie plot	<p>Julius and the Prince of Kyiv suspect the boyars of plotting against the Prince. The Prince and Julius need money to send a message to the bogatyrs to ask for help, so Julius takes his friend, camel Vasya, to the talking Oak to win some money for them. The Oak learns that there's no army and bogatyrs in Kyiv and together with his guards goes to the palace. Oak offers the Prince to play a game. The Prince agrees but loses the kingdom to Oak. The returning bogatyrs find out what has happened and try to get even, but they also lose all their possessions. The prince plans to build a new Kyiv. During the construction, with the help of Tikhon, the bogatyrs realize that Oak has cheated and played unfairly. The bogatyrs head back to Kyiv and meet the boyars. It turns out that they were not planning a palace coup, but were preparing a birthday present for the Prince - a large golden statue of the Prince on horseback. Tikhon suggests a plan - he will suggest Oak to play for the golden statue, inside which the bogatyrs must hide and jump out at the moment of the fight. The Trojan Horse tactic works successfully, Oak and his guards are defeated, and the bogatyrs get their possessions back. The film ends with the Prince's birthday greetings and his favorite song, "Antoshka."</p>

Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Alyonushka (young chronicler, Ilya Muromets' wife)	
Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)		Lyubava (Alyosha Popovich's wife)	
Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)		Nastasya (Dobrynya Nikitich's wife)	
Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)		Luladzha (Gypsy fortune-teller)	
Julius (the talking horse)			









<p>Talking Oak (the crook to whom the pointer stone leads)</p>			
<p>Livebearers (Oak's security guards)</p>			
<p>Tikhon (Alyosha Popovich's uncle)</p>			
<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
<p>Potanya (pirate commander)</p>			
<p>Usynya (pirate)</p>			



Table 2.7








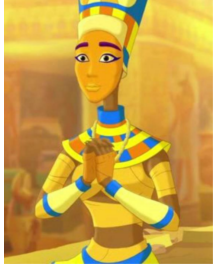

Movie	Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King (2016)
Movie code	e 6 b w A a B C D Γ Z R Б K II JI
Movie plot	<p>Six months have passed since the last adventure of the three bogatyrs. The bogatyrs are bored at home and suspect that they have lost all their bogatyr strength during their vacation. Gorynych the Dragon offers the bogatyrs to go to China to catch the dragon and take away his tooth, which will give them back their strength. The bogatyrs go to China. At this time Julius and the Prince find a book containing the location of the Sea King's treasure and decide to go in search of it. However, the Sea King's servant learns of the plundering of the treasure and kidnaps Julius to the seabed. Trying to escape, Julius tells the Sea King that there are many beauties in Kyiv that the King could marry. The irascible King submerges Kyiv underwater, and all the Kyiv women become mermaids. The wives of the bogatyrs swim to the Sea King to find out what is going on. The Sea King falls in love with Dobrynia's wife, Nastasia, and decides to marry her, killing Dobrynia and his friends. Julius discovers that the Sea King's servant Brunhilde is secretly in love with her ruler. As the bogatyrs fight with the sea creatures, Julius pours a love potion on the Sea King and Brunhilde (the potion was originally intended for Nastasya to make her fall in love with the King). The film ends with the wedding of</p>

		Brünnhilde and the Sea King, and Kyiv returns from underwater.	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Alyonushka (young chronicler, Ilya Muromets' wife)	
Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)		Lyubava (Alyosha Popovich's wife)	
Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)		Nastasya (Dobrynya Nikitich's wife)	
Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)		Brungilde (servant of the Sea King who is secretly in love with him)	
Julius (the talking horse)		Kikimora (the Sea King's aunt)	

<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
<p>Sea King (ruler of the Underwater Kingdom)</p>			
<p>Horace (servant of the Sea King)</p>			

Table 2.8

Movie	Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt (2017)
Movie code	б b A B C ↑ R Б K П R JI ↓
Movie plot	<p>Grandfather Frost divided the year into twelve months and divided the control of them among his disciples. However, his thirteenth pupil, Durilo, did not get a month, so he took offense and decided to upset the world balance. Durilo stole from Grandfather Frost a magic staff and sleigh and deceived three bogatyrs to Egypt, where their wives were kidnapped. At the entrance to the Egyptian pyramid, the bogatyrs separated - Durilo and Alyosha Popovich went inside, and Dobrynya Nikitich and Ilya Muromets remained outside, trapped in ice with a broken magic staff. Julius and the Prince of Kyiv also fly to Egypt for vacation and get into pyramids in search of treasure. To prevent catastrophe, Grandfather Frost sends the wives of bogatyrs to help them. Durilo tricks Alyosha and he helps Durilo set in motion an ancient mechanism that plunges the world into unbearable heat. Alyosha realizes that he has been deceived and tries to get the mechanism back, but the handle breaks. A fight ensues, in which the balance between heat and cold is restored. The heroes return to Kyiv, where they celebrate New Year's Eve. Grandfather Frost decides to give Durilo control over one day - February 29. The film ends on a happy note.</p>

Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Lyubava (Alyosha Popovich's wife)	
Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)		Nastasya (Dobrynya Nikitich's wife)	
Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)		Alyonushka (young chronicler, Ilya Muromets' wife)	
Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)		Nefertiti (Egypt princess)	
Julius (the talking horse)			












<p>Gorynych the Dragon</p>			
<p>Grandfather Frost</p>			
<p>Durilo (Grandfather Frost's student)</p>			
<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			

Table 2.9

Movie		Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne (2018)	
Movie code		e a B C ↑ B w x a C D Γ Z Б П Л ↓ R Л	
Movie plot		<p>Prince of Kyiv, after falling ill, appoints his niece Zabava, who resides in Constantinople with her husband Yelisey, as an heiress to the throne. The Prince requests three bogatyrs and Julius to bring her back to Kyiv. Meanwhile, the emperor of Constantinople plans to marry his son Leonid to Zabava and seize Russian lands after imprisoning Yelisey. Despite Vasileus's schemes, the bogatyrs manage to rescue Yelisey and foil the plot. Along with Nightingale the Robber, they return to Kyiv where Zabava discovers a needle in the Prince's sleeve, revealing his good health. The Prince rejoices upon realizing this.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Zabava (niece of the Prince of Kyiv, Yelisey's wife)	
Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)			

<p>Ilya Muromets (bogatyр)</p>			
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>			
<p>Julius (the talking horse)</p>			
<p>Vasileus (ruler of Constantinople)</p>			
<p>Leonid (Vasileus' son)</p>			













<p>Nightingale the Robber (the villain)</p>			
<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
<p>Yelisey (Vasileus' accountant, Zabava's husband)</p>			
<p>The Prince's healer</p>			



Table 2.10






Movie	Horse Julius and Big Horse Racing (2020)
Movie code	e б b ↑ Д Г Р Б П З Р О ↓
Movie plot	<p>Julius falls in love with the royal mare of Sultan Rashid. Julius turns to the Prince for help, so that he can pair Julius with the royal mare. The Prince refuses, but Julius does not intend to withdraw, so he kidnaps the Prince and takes him to the Sultan. Sultan Rashid decides to have a horse race, the winner gets a royal mare Star of the East and a huge gem. The bogatyrs also travel to the east in order to improve political relations. The heroes' paths intersect at the royal races. The Prince decides to help Julius win the race because the main prize is a huge sapphire, which the Prince can pay all his debts. However, it is revealed that Sultan Rashid stole the Star of the East from his brother, Sultan Arkhan. The Star of the East also has a lover, the horse Sadiq. Despite the fact that Julius won the race, he does not manage to win the heart of the royal mare and then he calls his rival to a duel, which is prevented by the Star of the East herself - with the blow of her hooves she knocks out Julius. The Prince, accompanied by the bogatyrs and sleeping Julius, return to Kyiv. The Prince intends to repay debts to his creditors, but it turns out that in his absence Antip has already made a deal with everyone. Julius, awakening, can not remember what happened and why he came to the palace. The prince says that they</p>

		were going fishing together.	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyр)		Lyubava (Alyosha Popovich's wife)	
Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyр)		Nastasya (Dobrynya Nikitich's wife)	
Ilya Muromets (bogatyр)		Alyonushka (young chronicler, Ilya Muromets' wife)	
Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)		Maga's mother	
Julius (the talking horse)			

<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
<p>Sultan Rashid</p>			
<p>Sultan Orkhan</p>			

Table 2.11

Movie		Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne (2021)	
Movie code		б b A a ↑ Д Г Р Б П ↓ X З P T	
Movie plot		<p>Horse Julius dreamt of being the Prince of Kyiv, and with the help of a magic flower, accidentally swapped bodies with the Prince. Julius then became involved in the urbanization of Kyiv and attempted to establish foreign policy, jeopardizing the entire country's security. Eventually, Kyiv was nearly captured by invaders. Meanwhile, the Prince found himself trapped in a horse's body and almost became sausage meat until being rescued by village girl Frosya. Upon returning to Kyiv, the Prince saw the dire situation and the disastrous results of Julius's ideas. Fortunately, the bogatyrs arrived just in time to reclaim their homeland from the invaders. Eventually, Prince and Julius swapped bodies back, and the Prince adopted Frosya as a token of gratitude for her kindness.</p>	
Male character	Picture of the character	Female character	Picture of the character
Alyosha Popovich (bogatyr)		Baba Yaga (with who wields ancient magic)	

<p>Dobrynya Nikitich (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Frosya (the orphan girl who helped the Prince)</p>	
<p>Ilya Muromets (bogatyr)</p>		<p>Uknkown girl (the young lady who came to Baba Yaga to ask for help with her hair)</p>	
<p>Prince of Kyiv (ruler of Rus)</p>			
<p>Julius (the talking horse)</p>			
<p>Antip (the right hand of the Prince of Kyiv)</p>			
<p>Foreign tourist</p>			

## Appendix 2

Table 3.1

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	2	0
Physical strength	19	1
Suppression of emotions	1	0
Bravery	7	1
Instilling fear	6	0
Giving suggestions/advices	7	3
Handsome	0	0
Assertiveness	9	1
Athleticism	5	0
Desire to explore	7	0
Leadership	8	0

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	0
Physical weakness	2	1
Expression of emotions	7	6
Fearful	9	3
Caring/nurturing display of love	3	9
Need/asking for help	2	1

Physical attractiveness	0	1
Insecurity	2	1
Helpful	5	8
Shame	1	1
Collapsing crying	0	1
Abuse victim	0	1

Table 3.2

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	4	0
Physical strength	10	2
Suppression of emotions	3	0
Bravery	8	0
Instilling fear	5	0
Giving suggestions/advices	6	1
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	6	3
Athleticism	8	0
Desire to explore	2	0
Leadership	3	0

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's	1	5



appearance		
Physical weakness	1	0
Expression of emotions	4	9
Fearful	1	0
Caring/nurturing display of love	3	0
Need/asking for help	6	3
Physical attractiveness	0	1
Insecurity	3	1
Helpful	0	1
Shame	1	0
Collapsing crying	3	0
Abuse victim	0	1

Table 3.3

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	5	0
Physical strength	20	0
Suppression of emotions	4	0
Bravery	4	1
Instilling fear	8	0
Giving suggestions/advices	6	4
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	7	3
Athleticism	7	0
Desire to explore	1	2
Leadership	3	0

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	1
Physical weakness	0	1
Expression of emotions	6	4
Fearful	2	1
Caring/nurturing display of love	4	2
Need/asking for help	3	1

Physical attractiveness	0	8
Insecurity	1	1
Helpful	1	5
Shame	0	0
Collapsing crying	2	0
Abuse victim	0	1

Table 3.4

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	10	0
Physical strength	14	3
Suppression of emotions	3	0
Bravery	7	0
Instilling fear	1	0
Giving suggestions/advices	8	0
Handsome	0	0
Assertiveness	6	7
Athleticism	6	3
Desire to explore	3	0
Leadership	4	1

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	1	5
Physical weakness	0	0
Expression of emotions	1	3
Fearful	2	1
Caring/nurturing display of love	2	6
Need/asking for help	6	6

Physical attractiveness	0	8
Insecurity	0	1
Helpful	2	10
Shame	2	0
Collapsing crying	1	7
Abuse victim	0	0

Table 3.5

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	1	0
Physical strength	29	2
Suppression of emotions	2	0
Bravery	7	0
Instilling fear	7	0
Giving suggestions/advices	3	2
Handsome	0	0
Assertiveness	1	3
Athleticism	6	0
Desire to explore	3	0
Leadership	10	1

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	3
Physical weakness	1	0
Expression of emotions	3	4
Fearful	0	1
Caring/nurturing display of love	0	3
Need/asking for help	7	9

Physical attractiveness	0	0
Insecurity	1	3
Helpful	0	5
Shame	0	0
Collapsing crying	1	2
Abuse victim	0	0

Table 3.6

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	1	0
Physical strength	23	0
Suppression of emotions	5	0
Bravery	5	0
Instilling fear	4	0
Giving suggestions/advices	5	0
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	3	3
Athleticism	10	0
Desire to explore	0	0
Leadership	8	1

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	0
Physical weakness	4	1
Expression of emotions	9	5
Fearful	7	3
Caring/nurturing display of love	3	5
Need/asking for help	9	0



Physical attractiveness	0	0
Insecurity	0	2
Helpful	2	5
Shame	3	0
Collapsing crying	4	0
Abuse victim	0	0

Table 3.7

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	5	0
Physical strength	9	1
Suppression of emotions	2	2
Bravery	8	2
Instilling fear	2	2
Giving suggestions/advices	8	1
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	3	2
Athleticism	5	3
Desire to explore	2	0
Leadership	6	4

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	2	3
Physical weakness	0	1
Expression of emotions	3	7
Fearful	3	0
Caring/nurturing display of love	1	4
Need/asking for help	3	2

Physical attractiveness	0	3
Insecurity	1	3
Helpful	3	6
Shame	0	3
Collapsing crying	0	3
Abuse victim	1	0

Table 3.8

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	0	0
Physical strength	19	3
Suppression of emotions	2	0
Bravery	3	1
Instilling fear	1	0
Giving suggestions/advices	3	2
Handsome	0	0
Assertiveness	3	4
Athleticism	5	0
Desire to explore	7	3
Leadership	7	3

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	1	4
Physical weakness	4	0
Expression of emotions	1	4
Fearful	3	1
Caring/nurturing display of love	1	4
Need/asking for help	1	3

Physical attractiveness	0	1
Insecurity	0	0
Helpful	3	8
Shame	0	0
Collapsing crying	0	0
Abuse victim	0	3

Table 3.9

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	0	0
Physical strength	20	1
Suppression of emotions	2	1
Bravery	8	1
Instilling fear	4	0
Giving suggestions/advices	10	0
Handsome	0	0
Assertiveness	3	2
Athleticism	14	2
Desire to explore	5	2
Leadership	3	0

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	0
Physical weakness	2	1
Expression of emotions	5	4
Fearful	2	0
Caring/nurturing display of love	1	2
Need/asking for help	4	1

Physical attractiveness	0	1
Insecurity	0	0
Helpful	1	3
Shame	1	0
Collapsing crying	1	1
Abuse victim	0	0

Table 3.10

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	7	0
Physical strength	13	1
Suppression of emotions	5	0
Bravery	4	0
Instilling fear	4	0
Giving suggestions/advices	6	0
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	7	0
Athleticism	11	0
Desire to explore	3	0
Leadership	6	0

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	1	0
Physical weakness	0	0
Expression of emotions	3	0
Fearful	7	0
Caring/nurturing display of love	2	4
Need/asking for help	7	0



Physical attractiveness	0	5
Insecurity	2	1
Helpful	3	3
Shame	3	0
Collapsing crying	2	0
Abuse victim	0	0

Table 3.11

Masculine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Interest in woman	2	0
Physical strength	10	2
Suppression of emotions	1	0
Bravery	1	2
Instilling fear	4	1
Giving suggestions/advices	3	1
Handsome	1	0
Assertiveness	1	3
Athleticism	7	1
Desire to explore	5	0
Leadership	6	1

Feminine characteristic	Times portrayed by male characters	Times portrayed by female characters
Tendency to pay attention to one's appearance	0	4
Physical weakness	0	0
Expression of emotions	2	6
Fearful	3	0
Caring/nurturing display of love	3	6
Need/asking for help	4	1

Physical attractiveness	0	1
Insecurity	2	2
Helpful	1	7
Shame	0	2
Collapsing crying	2	4
Abuse victim	0	0

## Appendix 3

**Table 1.** Rating of films of the “Three Bogatyrs” franchise by “Melnitsa: studio. Source: kinopoisk.ru;

**Table 2.1.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” (2004) animated film;

**Table 2.2.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon” (2006) animated film;

**Table 2.3.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber” (2007) animated film;

**Table 2.4.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs and Shamakhan Queen (or How not to Rescue)” (2010) animated film;

**Table 2.5.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores” (2012) animated film;

**Table 2.6.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course” (2015) animated film;

**Table 2.7.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King” (2016) animated film;

**Table 2.8.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt” (2017);

**Table 2.9.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne” (2018);

**Table 2.10.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Horse Julius and the Big Horse Racing” (2020);

**Table 2.11.** Plot synopsis, movie plot code, list of characters of “Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne” (2021)

**Table 3.1.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Alyosha Popovich and Tugarin the Serpent” (2004);

**Table 3.2.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Dobrynya Nikitich and the Dragon” (2006);

**Table 3.3.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Ilya Muromets and the Nightingale the Robber” (2007);

**Table 3.4.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs and Shamakhan Queen (or How not to Rescue)” (2010);

**Table 3.5.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs on Distant Shores” (2012);

**Table 3.6.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs. Horse Course” (2015);

**Table 3.7.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Sea King” (2016);

**Table 3.8.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Princess of Egypt” (2017);

**Table 3.9.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Heiress to the Throne” (2018);

**Table 3.10.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Horse Julius and the Big Horse Racing” (2020);

**Table 3.11.** Analysis of the gender characteristics of male and female characters in the film “Three Bogatyrs and the Horse on the Throne” (2021).