Hanna Paulouskaya, "Entry on: The Adventures of Aeneas the Cossack [Пригоди Козака Енея (Pryhody Kozaka Eneia)] by Nina Vasylenko", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska and Susan Deacy. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/855. Entry version as of October 30, 2026.

Nina Vasylenko

The Adventures of Aeneas the Cossack [Пригоди Козака Енея (Pryhody Kozaka Eneia)]

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (1969)

TAGS: Aeneas Aeolus Hades Juno Jupiter Latinus Neptune Sirens Tantalus Thanatos Trojan Horse Troy Turnus Venus Virgil





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	The Adventures of Aeneas the Cossack [Пригоди Козака Енея (Pryhody Kozaka Eneia)]
Studio/Production Company	Kyivnaukfilm
Country of the First Edition	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Country/countries of popularity	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Original Language	Ukranian, Russian (There are Ukrainian and Russian versions of the film. The Russian version includes songs in Ukrainian)
First Edition Date	1969
First Edition Details	*Пригоди Козака Енея* [The Adventures of Aeneas the Cossack]. Directed by Nina Vasylenko. Script by E. Dubenko, D. Franko. Composer Myroslav Skoryk. Kyiv: Kyivnaukfilm, 1969. 27 min 17 sec.
Running time	27 min 17 sec
Genre	Adaptations, Animated films, Hand-drawn animation (traditional animation)*, Humor, Myths, Short films
Target Audience	Crossover (Youth 6+)
Author of the Entry	Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Creators



Courtesy of the web-site kino-teatr.ru (accessed: October 1, 2019).

Nina Vasylenko , 1906 - 1999
(Director)

Nina Vasylenko (Ніна Василенко, Нина Василенко, Nina Vasilenko) was a Ukrainian animator, director and screenwriter. Vasylenko studied at the Moscow Polygraphic Institute (now Ivan Fedorov Moscow State University of Printing Arts). She worked at the Dovzhenko Film Studio in Kyiv and the first Ukrainian animation studio Kyivnaukfilm (now Ukranimafilm) in 1960–1975, producing animations for children.

Sources:

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Profile at kino-teatr.ru (accessed: October 1, 2019)

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Additional information

Summary

The film is an abridged version of *Aeneid* by Ivan Kotliarevsky (see here), fragments of which are read by a narrator. Although the animation exploits all the main themes, it omits many storylines of Virgil or Kotliarevsky. It starts with presenting the portrait of Ivan Kotliarevsky, dedicating the film to his anniversary. Then, we see a head of an ancient female statue, followed by a scene of three statues on the pedestals: Juno (in the style of Juno Barberini), Venus (a variant of the Venus de Milo with both hands and a vase) and Aeneas (made as a running putto-Cupid, holding an absent bow). The narrator presents the heroes: "Juno, the goddess of goddesses. Venus, the goddess of love. And this is Aeneas", and the sculptures change into live animated figures, dressed in clothes proper for illustrations to Ukrainian fairytales. Aeneas looks as a young Cossack boy. The goddesses start to quarrel over Aeneas, and the boy jumps from a cloud (the heavens) to earth.

Then the reading of the poem starts and we see Aeneas as a young fellow ("Aeneas was a lively fellow, / Lusty as any Cossack blade / In every kind of mischief mellow, / The staunchest tramp to ply his trade") going towards Troy drawn like a typical wooden settlement in the Zaporozhian Sich. The Trojan War is shortly presented as caused by a quarrel of the goddesses over Aeneas. There is the Trojan horse as its culmination and the destruction of Troy. Aeneas with his companions leaves the city.

Juno, wanting to destroy Aeneas, asks Aeolus to send winds. During the tempest, the Cossacks ask Neptune (depicted with a siren tale) to calm the sea promising to give him money. Venus runs to Zeus to ask for help. The problem is solved. The Cossacks are sailing farther drinking and feasting.

The next episode is the sirens' island. Attracted by beautiful singing, the Cossacks approach the land. There is a pretty woman there who seduces Aeneas. When they make love, she transforms into an old Baba-Yaga and throws Aeneas to the Hades-hell.

The hell is presented as a caricature drawing with black devils and flames. There, we see Eve caught on the hook with an apple, the thirsting Tantalus, punished leaders and atamans. At the end, Aeneas meets Thanatos, the death, depicted as a skeleton, and plays cards

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with him. Aeneas wins and runs away from hell, and is met by his friends.

The Cossacks sail to Latium presented like a south Ukrainian town and meet Latinus with his wife and young daughter. The newcomers bring gifts (a flying carpet, a magic table-cloth, and seven-league boots), and the daughter, although engaged in a relation with Turnus, fells in love with Aeneas. The war between Aeneas and Turnus starts and Aeneas wins. At the same time, there is a fight between Juno and Venus, and it is Jupiter who stops them.

The very last episode is about Aeneas sailing away with his young wife and companions.

Analysis

The film is based on a mock poem *Aeneid* by Ivan Kotliarevsky (1769-1838), one of the founding texts of Ukrainian literature. Being made in 1969, the animation honours the 200 anniversary of the author's birth.

The poem of Kotliarevsky depicts the main adventures of Virgil's Aeneas making the characters and plot similar to Ukrainian folk narration*. Rewriting the epic in low, folk style in Ukrainian language produced a comic effect. The topics mocked the most are food, alcohol, women, sexuality, as well as gentry and peasants divide. The main theme of the poem is Cossack culture.

Like in the Kotliarevsky's poem, the Cossacks are shown in a mocking way. They are drinking, eating, and singing most of the time. At the very first scene depicting Troy, we see a feast (with only men eating and women serving), and hear a folk song "Pour more, pour more, I will drink." Such representation of Ukrainian nation as drinking, eating and singing is quite common for Soviet and Russian cinema, and also in animation, as Natalie Kononenko concludes**. Presenting a nation in a traditional old-country form often serves to diminish it in comparison with other, more modern nations (usually Russian in the Soviet case). In the opinion of Kononenko, such portrayal of the Cossacks "do not offer models of competent Ukrainian adulthood to which children might aspire."*** I think that ironic representation of (fictional) national heroes has also its values and promotes creation of mass culture icons like the Gallic characters of René Goscinny (see here and here). Kotliarevsky uses a similar technique and his mocking

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poem became a basis for developing the Ukrainian identity. However, one of the important episodes of the poem is omitted in the movie – it is the prophecy of building Rome, which will rule over the world****.

As Zaporozhian Sich was annexed by Russia in 1775, the poem implies that Greeks who have destroyed Troy are Russians. In the animation, Greeks wear grey military uniforms with epaulets and Chinese looking peaked hats. Due to the fact that there was a Sino-Soviet border conflict during seven months in 1969, the most probable interpretation of the image of the enemy is that of the Chinese army.

Not only the Cossacks are Ukrainians, but all the gods and goddesses wear Ukrainian traditional clothes and hairstyles. They eat and drink excessively, especially Jupiter. The god is similar to an ataman or landowner by his posture and dress. In his first scene, we see a long queue of applicants standing before his palace, while he is eating in his chamber and does not care for obligations. The contradictions between gentry and peasants are emphasised in Kotliarevsky's and other Slavic mock *Aeneids*****, which exploit the difference between gods and humans for this purpose. In the animation, in addition to this, the conflict is emphasised in the war between Aeneas and Turnus, when the Cossack is called *голяк* ["a beggar"] and the Latin knight – "a tsar". Hence, the victory over Turnus represents victory over landowners, so important from Soviet perspective.

The animation, similar to the poem, contains many elements of folktales. These are the gifts brought to Latium or depiction of a siren as Baba Yaga. The image of the old witch appears in the poem while describing Sybil that sends Aeneas to Hades******. Vasilenko has combined the two images in one person.

The anti-female motif is also important for Kotliarevsky and is used extensively in the film. It is especially noticeable in the quarrels between Juno and Venus that often end in a fight. In the finale of the movie, Jupiter pulls the women by the hair to his palace. The last words of the film are said by Jupiter: "I will throw you out of the sky and as punishment, you'll be raising pigs." The woman characters are presented in traditional "female" roles: serving at the table, combing hair, or flirting. Although the film is a satire and we may consider these stereotypes as a problem to be shown, it was typical to present "passive, gentle, self-sacrificing femininity" in Soviet folktale animation*******.

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* See: Pushkina, Maria, "Entry on: *Aeneid. Travestied Inside Out into Little Russian language by I. Kotliarevsky* [Енеида. На малороссійскій языкъ перелиціованная И. Котляревскимъ] by Ivan Kotliarevsky", *Our Mythical Childhood Survey*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018. Link: omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/513; Paulouskaya, Hanna, "Vergil travestied into Ukrainian and Belarusian", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Supplement, 136: Peter Mack and John North, eds., *The Afterlife of Virgil*, 2017, 101–122.

** Kononenko, Natalie, "The Politics of Innocence: Soviet and Post-Soviet Animation on Folklore Topics", *The Journal of American Folklore* 124.494: 281–286.

*** Kononenko is analysing here the Dakhno series about the Cossacks, which was rooted in the Vasilenko's film and used the same technics. Kononenko, "The Politics of Innocence," 283.

**** Kotliarevsky, Ivan, "Eneida", in Eiusdem, *Повне зібряння творів* [Complete works], Kyiv: Vydavnitstvo AN URSR 1952, Book 3, 138–39.

***** Osipov, Nikolai, *Вергилиева Энеида, вывороченная наизнанку* [Virgil's Aeneid Travestied Inside Out], Parts 1–4, 2nd ed., Saint Petersburg 1801; Ravinsky, Vikenty, "Энеида на изнанку" [Aeneid Inside Out], *Mayak* 23 (1845): 30–39.

****** Kotlyarevsky, "Eneida," Book 3, 12.

******* Kononenko, "The Politics of Innocence," 277.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aeneas Aeolus Hades Juno Jupiter Latinus Neptune Sirens Tantalus Thanatos Trojan Horse Troy Turnus Venus Virgil
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant	Adventure Fairy tale references Gender Heritage Humour Intertextuality Journeys Nation Other literary figures, texts and writers Past Social class Tradition

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for Children and Youth Culture

Further Reading

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Addenda

Cameraman: Anatoly Havrylov

Art Director: Eduard Kirych (Kirich)

Manager: Ivan Mazepa

Animators:

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Volodymyr Pekar,

Zhan Taran,

Mark Draitsun,

Aleksandr Lavrov,

Nina Churylova,

Evgeny Syvokin (Sivokon),

Vladimir Dakhno,

M. Bryker (Briker),

Boris Khranevich,

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