Otari Dumbadze

The Rock of Sisyphus [Камень Сизифа (Kamen' Sizifa)]

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1980)

TAGS: Aphrodite Nike Sisyphus Thanatos Tyche Zeus





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

General information	
Title of the work	The Rock of Sisyphus [Камень Сизифа (Kamen' Sizifa)]
Studio/Production Company	Georgia Film
Country of the First Edition	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)
Country/countries of popularity	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Original Language	Georgian / Russian
First Edition Date	1980
First Edition Details	*Камень Сизифа* [The Rock of Sisyphus (Kamen' Sizifa)]. Directed by Otari Dumbadze. Script by A. Meipariani. Composer T. Bakuradze. Tbilisi: Georgia Film, 1980, 10 min.
Running time	10 min
Genre	Animated films, Cameraless animation films , Myths, Short films
Target Audience	Crossover (Youth 12+)
Author of the Entry	Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl
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Creators



Otari Dumbadze (Director)

Otari Dumbadze (Отари Думбадзе) was a Georgian animator and director. He worked as an animator from 1966. In 1980 he made his only animation as a director – *Камень сизифа* [The Stone of Sisyphus].

Sources:

Profile at animator.ru (accessed July 15, 2019)

Profile at imdb.com (accessed July 15, 2019)

Bio prepared by Hanna Paulouskaya, University of Warsaw, hannapa@al.uw.edu.pl

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Additional information

Summary

The film is made as a hand-drawn animation with colourful schematic pictures that smoothly flow into one another, changing colour patterns. It starts with a white dot on a blue and brown background that evolves into the figure of a man pushing a rock. During the entire film the man is rolling the rock or lets it fall.

In the first part of the film, we see the face of Zeus, and the narrator announces the verdict to Sisyphus:

“Not for wisdom, not for royalty, not for the care of his people, not for the foundation of Corinth and the Isthmian games, not for riches and insight, Sisyphus was condemned. But for contempt for the gods, for the transgression of the boundary of fate, for the captivity of death, he was condemned to roll this boulder into the top of the mountain, now and forever and ever.”

We see Sisyphus rolling the stone against different backgrounds of forces of nature (winds, storm), of rocks, and of war and dying Greek solders. However these images are interchanged by images of a flower, of sun, stars, or birds. After a scene of war we see three goddesses: a goddess with a laurel wreath (Nike), a goddess with a cornucopia (Tyche), and a goddess with a vase (probably Aphrodite). Sisyphus is pushing up the rock all the time, often merging with the rock.

At the end, we see the man sitting on the top of a mountain, his head down. The man is depicted to have another man inside – perhaps it symbolizes his spirit or mind (*animus*). He is thinking and remembering. At this point, Sisyphus stands up, looks away and pushes the rock down with his foot. The camera goes up. The man is pushing the rock up again, but now it is easy for him, he rolls it like a snowball. The waves of light emanate from the man.

Analysis

Dumbadze presents the famous myth of Sisyphus as a story of a man fighting with death and gods. He was punished for capturing death – Thanatos, as we know from ancient tradition (Theognis, 1.703). But the film emphasizes a revolutionary attitude of Sisyphus. It was his “contempt for the gods,” “the transgression of the boundary of fate,” “the captivity of death,” i.e., disobedience and acting against the gods

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that brought him the damnation. Thus Sisyphus is presented rather like Prometheus (see here) fighting with the gods, or like Heracles in interpretation of Aleksandra Snezhko-Blotskaia (*The Return from Olympus*, 1969), whose main goal was to be free from gods. Such understanding is most characteristic for the Soviet anti-religious ideology.

The Sisyphus of the film overcomes his tragedy after having reflected upon it. Such an interpretation is reminiscent of Camus' famous essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, when after acceptance of his situation Sisyphus gains "happiness." This idea may be confirmed by comparison between the three goddesses presented in the animation and the three types of the absurd man according to Camus: Aphrodite, Tyche and Nike would correspond to Don Juan, the actor and the conqueror. The comparison may seem far-fetched, but the schematic way of drawing in this film naturally evokes philosophical reflection.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Nike Sisyphus Thanatos Tyche Zeus
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Death Disobedience Freedom Gaining understanding Punishment Religious beliefs

Further Reading

Camus, Albert, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien, New-York: Vintage International, 2018 (1st ed. orig. 1942).

Information about the film in movie databases:

animator.ru (accessed July 15, 2019).

imdb.com (accessed July 15, 2017).

kinopoisk.ru (accessed July 15, 2019).

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Addenda

Language: Georgian / Russian

IMDB lists the Georgian version of the film (*Sizipes qva*). However, I had access only to the Russian version.

Cinematography:

V. Karosanidze

Artists:

M. Gabunia

Animators:

M. Gabunia, L. Narmanidze

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