

# The communist impact and its representations in the work of Jan Švankmajer: a study case of the animation *Jabberwocky*.

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## Resumen

Communism ruled Eastern Europe under the context of the Cold War, with intense use of repressive force. Among some of the remarkable consequences of such armed domination was the development of a unique and distinguished form of animated movie pictures – still considering, nevertheless, the cultural and graphic differences from one soviet republic to another. Animated pictures served as propaganda for the soviet regimes but equally as a mean for political reflections on the nature of authoritarian power, thus raising concern and awareness on many relevant social issues. Animation was transformed into a powerful media capable of dodging censorship by subtly conveying ideas graphically rather than verbally.

Jan Švankmajer's animated films approach this bitter dictatorial political setting through dark, harsh, and realistic representations that nonetheless intensely coexist with recurrent dreams and thoughts of escape. Our object of study will serve a broader discussion on the structure of Švankmajer's work as a whole. We will isolate the different elements that appear in order to understand the chosen compendium of symbols that he applies in his animations. Then, we will analyze the 1971 animation *Žvahlav aneb šatičky slaměného Huberta* (*Jabberwocky*) and his partnership with composer Zdeněk Liška, to better comprehend which elements, fused in both animated image and sound, were key to shape such an expressive animated motion, a landmark for the Eastern European surrealist cinema of resistance.

**Palabras clave:** Cinema of Resistance; Surrealist Movement; Jan Švankmajer; Zdeněk Liška; Repression.

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## The Surrealistic Cinema of Resistance of Jan Švankmajer

Born in the former Soviet Republic of Czechoslovakia, Jan Švankmajer lived most of his life under the oppressive dictatorial communist regime, and became mostly known for his surrealistic animation films. Originally a French art movement from the 1920's, surrealism resonated deeply among the censored Eastern European artists – such as Švankmajer<sup>1</sup> himself - and consequently led to the appearance of a strong surrealist resistance cinema in those countries. In order to better understand Švankmajer's creative processes and their role in the making of *Jabberwocky*, it is important to first briefly examine the artistic and political landscape that he initially encountered, his ideas concerning the context in which he was inserted and, consequently, the thematic choices he adopted for his most peculiar and singular animations.

After the Second World War, communism ruled Eastern Europe with the repressive force well known to the Cold War context. One of the most surprising consequences of this gunpoint colonization is the development of a particular and distinguishable form of animation – notwithstanding the cultural and graphic discrepancies between the different countries. Animation generated propaganda movies as well as unrestrained movies that reflect on the nature of authoritarian power, reflections that could be directed towards Russia, the local authorities or, in a more classic manner, focused on the common ideological enemy, the United States. (MORITZ,1997 apud DENIS, 2010, p.155)

This was the political context that animation was set to influence by raising a broad range of long-lasting social, political, cultural and repressive issues. Animation became a powerful form of communicating thoughts and ideas in a graphic, nonverbal manner, able to dodge the censorship and challenge authoritarian domination through subtle undertones and ideas spread between the lines.

As found in multiple Eastern European animations, the process of "resignification" is responsible for converting all audiovisual signs into one large metaphor. Imagination becomes therefore essential and is required at all times if viewers are to conduct the expected associative relations. When systematized, the composition of this cinema reveals choices heavily

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1. Jan Švankmajer was born in the same year and place (1934, Prague) in which the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia was founded.

influenced by the surrealist art. It is only logical that such an art movement would almost naturally connect to the art of animation, especially due to the resources and tools offered by this kind of cinema. The facilities for entering an oneiric universe, the using of the grotesque, the evoking of different kinds of laughter, the repulse, among other mechanisms, make this cinema not only possible but also fully equipped to produce criticism of great social impact – against political issues or even against itself.

### **The Czech Surrealism**

Surrealism originated in France, around the work of André Breton. As an artistic movement, it sought out forms to artistically represent the irrational and the subconscious. Surrealism favors the transgression of social and moral values, desacralizes the artist and holds academia as irrelevant. The publishing of the *Surrealist Manifesto*, signed by Breton in October 1924, marked the birth of the movement. It proposed to restore human feelings and instinct as the starting point for a new artistic language. Artists were required to possess a completely introspective view of themselves that would lead the spirit to a place where internal and external realities could be perceived in full absence of contradiction (BRETON, 2001). In Czechoslovakia, surrealism gave birth to numerous forms of artistic manifestations as means of resisting the political context. Cinema, maybe more than any other, stands out as a platform that skillfully succeeded in giving life to the ideals of the movement. This artistic enterprise found ways to set the repressions free, allowing the human subconscious to emerge as if in a dream. If previous artistic movements of the time appeared to be insufficient to express the afflictions of the post-war context, let alone voice the bitter experiences posteriorly lived during the long period of communist dictatorship, that stretched between 1945 and 1990, this new subversive form of art seemed to be able to take on the task of providing grounds for such relief. Nonetheless, the subversive spirit of the surrealist movement and other artistic entrepreneurs from the early 20th century shared some common roots: the rejection of stagnant artistic forms limited by widely conservative representations and the rebellion against the hypocritical morality of an intolerant and oppressive society.

There are many misunderstandings about surrealism. Art historians have included it among artists avant-garde directions of the first half of the

twentieth century. From their point of view, surrealism has therefore been dead for at least sixty years. The term surrealism has entered the general vocabulary as description of something nonsensical, absurd. First of all, it's important to say that surrealism is not art. There is no surrealist painting or surrealist film, we can talk about surrealism in art, in painting, or in film. This is because there is no surrealist aesthetics, no surrealist method or school. Surrealism is a way of perceiving life and the world. I would describe it as a magical outlook on life and the world. I have learned three things from surrealism: first, it has freed me of my fear of collectivity, because surrealism is a collective adventure. Secondly, it has developed my imagination in unforeseen ways, and finally, it has taught me that there is only one kind of poetry and that it doesn't matter what means we choose to grasp it. (ŠVANKMAJER, Jan. Interview- On surrealism)

In this interview, Svankmajer speaks clearly about how, in spite of his declared independence from the movement led by Breton, there is definitely a sharp affinity with the aesthetics of the French surrealist approach, also widely influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalytic theories were fundamental to the surrealist expression, particularly in regards to the importance of dreams - so openly manifested in Švankmajer's own work as well. The basic mechanisms of the oneiric logic, as exposed by Freud, fascinated those involved in the surrealist movement, who considered being possible to create an art based on such principles, like condensation and displacement. These mechanisms are valuable to enlighten the surrealist aesthetic choices, which emphasize subconscious processes and explore the language and functioning of dreams. By working with a repertoire of Freudian symbols and making personal narratives public, surrealism suggests a type of collective fantasy or the establishment of myths that were predominant in the social and psychic life of the time. Undoubtedly, some Freudian themes should, therefore, be emphasized for their recurrence in surrealist works, as well as in Švankmajer's art.

One of themes that deserves a brief analysis is Freud's idea of "estrangement". Basically, the concept of estrangement is rooted in Freud's notion that the strange consists of something extremely familiar, yet deeply repressed in our subconscious. After analyzing a tale written by E.T.A. Hoffmann, entitled *The Sandman*, in which the father figure punishes the children by ripping out their eyes, Freud conceived one of his most important psychoanalytic theories, regarding the fear of castration. In this context, the feeling of estrangement is evoked by the dismembered parts. Dismembering becomes then a

resource that can be applied to any image or text, as a puzzle of pieces juxtaposed in an unfamiliar manner.

Madness and hysteria were also sources of inspiration for the surrealist artists, especially when tied to the image of women. Cannibalism is another recurrent concept in the movement and in Švankmajer's works. Modern psychoanalysis defines it as:

Term employed to qualify relations between objects and phantoms (fantasy) correlative to oral activities, in reference to the cannibalism practiced by certain cultures. The term figuratively expresses the different dimensions of oral incorporation: love, destruction, inner self conservation and the appropriation of the qualities of the object. (LAPLANCHE E PONTALIS, 1986, p. 94)

The notion of cannibalism is initially approached by Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, published in 1912. In this book, Freud points out that such a "primitive practice" is performed under the belief that the ingestion of someone's body parts would assure the acquirement of that person's properties. This belief would lead him to later formulate the notions of "parricide" and "totemic meal", two of Freud's most significant concepts. According to Freud, as quoted by Laplanche and Pontalis,

One day, the brothers who had been driven out, came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end to the patriarchal horde ... In the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength" (LAPLANCHE E PONTALIS, 1986, p.94)

Whatever value Freud's anthropological perspective may have, the term "cannibalism" later acquired in psychoanalytic psychology a clear definition. In the edition published in 1915 of the three essays in which Freud introduces the notion of oral organization, cannibalism represents the stage of psychosexual development. Throughout his writing, the term cannibalism is sometimes applied to characterize the oral stage. As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, "The close relations that exist between the oral object and the first ways of identification are implied in the notion itself of cannibalism". (LAPLANCHE E PONTALIS, 1986, p.94).

Even considering Freud's disagreement with the appropriation of his theories by the surrealist artists, it is undeniable that they provided homogeneity to an artistic movement that otherwise lacked unity of style among its different

works, as Jan Švankmajer well points out in his interview. Although the work of artist work possessed diverse and unique characteristics, they all shared the intention to produce pieces that would reflect the experience of dreaming, offering viewers an imaginary inner world that results in the disorientation of habitual expectations. Surrealism sought to communicate by undertaking a rupturing with the real and modern world. To do so, it was necessary to create unity between logic and its opposite:

Art for art's sake did not satisfy the artistic ideals anymore. It was necessary to subvert it and transform the world. If, as previously mentioned, the main goal of the surrealist movement is to find the linking point between the conscious and the unconscious, art will establish itself as the most adequate mean to achieve such objective, for the unconscious thinks itself through images and art formulates images. It is important to highlight that the unconscious is not merely a psychic dimension more easily explored by art due to its familiarity with the image, but a configuration of the dimension of art itself. Art is the individual's vital communication through symbols. (BENJAMIN, 1993 apud SILVA, 2013)

While emerging in a delicate moment of crisis of civilization, surrealism proposed the denial of art through art. Repression imposed by communist dictatorships required more than just the subversion of art. There was a need for abrupt changes in the experiences of reality. As part of such a need for changes, surrealism arises as a philosophical driving force, eager to revolutionize the twentieth century.

Along with explorations of surrealist ideas and practices, the political context pushed director Jan Švankmajer toward an aesthetic path of resistance, social and political engagement and deep reflection on humanity.

I would like to say that I consider all my films to be very politically engaged. However, I have never reduced them to a totalitarian system, as a dissident artist would do. That is because I realized that if civilization allows the creation and existence of something as sickening as Fascism or Stalinism, all civilization is sick and, consequently, something is wrong. I have always wanted to go

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2. Švankmajer's animations highlight numerous influences other than surrealist influences, such as Dadaism and the traditional Czech puppet theater. Regarding the understanding of Švankmajer's movies, puppet theater should be considered in two ways. First, Czechoslovakia's puppet representation dates to the seventeenth century and traditionally, it dealt with political and critical issues related to the government as a humorous outlet to express protest and revolt. Second, we cannot ignore that the director carries out a specific perspective and sees the puppets as a representation of manipulated mankind within contemporary world.

deep to the core of this problem and not just focus on the surface of political activity. Therefore, my films are universal, they can communicate with audiences outside the Czech Republic. The fact that the political situation has changed in Czechoslovakia does not mean that the universe or civilization has changed as well. I am aware that there is no reason to change my enemy. He will always be the same. Interview for Animation World Magazine (apud JACKSON, 1997)

Jan Švankmajer's animated movie was built upon this sentiment. The movie sought to illustrate and undermine such a bitter scenario by using an iconography that is harsh, dark, realistic and yet, not completely hopeless toward an escape provided by dreams. Opposed to severe reality, such an escape through dreams is a typical contradiction found not only in the work of this director, but in the cinematographic production of all communism-led countries. In these countries, the possibility of artistic freedom of expression resided in a metaphorical view of the world.

Jan Švankmajer was one of the highly representative directors working in this context, the greatest icon of the surrealist movement in Czechoslovakia. Therefore, this assessment is necessary to understand the structure of his work in its completion. The consideration of several elements presented in the surrealist art aims to provide tools for a better evaluation of the compendium of symbols used in the making of his animations. Here is an introduction and a synthesis to the surrealist, grotesque, and strange references. The synthesis of elements and mechanisms of surrealist art allows us to more thoroughly analyze the work *Žvahlav aneb šatičky slaměného Huberta* (Jabberwocky), composed in 1971 by Švankmajer in partnership with the composer Zdeněk Liška.

## **Grotesque**

Jan Švankmajer's work is connected to grotesque, the aesthetic category that emerged and was defined as of the discovery of a type of ornamental painting during excavations in Rome, in the sixteenth century. The name in its very origins, grotta, refers to such excavations. This type of painting portrays hybrid beings, asymmetries, and other features that nullify the nature order. The discomfort caused by such representations coined the adjective "grotesque", which designates whatever is monstrous and unreal.

The adjective's meaning has been extended later to incorporate a gloomy, abysmal, and vertigo-provoking character. This is how Wolfgang Kayser defines it:

In the word grotesque, as a designation of a certain ornamental art inspired by Ancient Times, Renaissance's intellectuals and artists found not only what is playful and joyful, light and fanciful, but also what is distressing and sinister within the world's ceased reality, namely: the clear separation between the domains of utensils, plants, animals and human beings as well as the separation between statics, symmetry, and the natural order of measures. This is expressed in the second meaning attributed to grotesque in the sixteenth century: *sogni dei pittori* (KAYSER, 1986: 20).

The term migrated to the literature and was manifested either more or less vigorously throughout the centuries, in the various fields of art. W. Kayser discusses the manifestation of the grotesque in Hoffmann and his essays:

Sharp contrasts tearing apart the ground beneath our feet, macabre games with wax figures and demonized mechanisms, recurrent horror toward a new reconfiguration of a world increasingly distant and, by striking examples, abysmal visions in the "Discourse of the dead Christ" shared from the top of the cosmic edifice, according to which there would be no God. (KAYSER, 1986: 55).

Freud attributed psychoanalytic features to this aesthetic category by approaching the idea of estrangement present in Hoffmann's short essay "The Sandman". The sense of grotesque was adopted by the surrealist movement in the struggle against logic and rationalism, seen as an iron cage crushing modern culture. Grotesque is certainly the hallmark of Svankmajer's animation as it presents dreamy elements and a subversion of logic. His work expresses estrangement by giving life to inanimate beings, such as moving dolls and clothes, and presenting hybrid beings through devouring and hysteria. These themes cause us the vertigo brought about grotesque elements.

Considering the references so far, we seek now to understand the mechanisms deployed in the associative relations cinema by analyzing director and composer Zdeněk Liška's lucid vision. The goal is to understand the meanings obtained through the alliance between image and sound.



**Jan Švankmajer, Zdeněk Liška and *Jabberwocky***

The stop-motion animation *Jabberwocky* (1971) was freely inspired by the homonymous poem found in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*<sup>3</sup>. In general aspects, this animation, as the poem, is a compendium of symbols. The theme revolves around a criticism to children's education and the role gender plays in defining behavior. Through a vicious inculturation of values, girls are taught to be submissive and behave peacefully while boys are educated to behave in a bellicose and imperialistic manner. The animation also demonstrates obedience as an automatic reflex through the doll's mimicking behavior, which serves perfectly to illustrate the transformation of women into automatons, in this case subject to the animator's manipulations. The animator, in turn, is empowered by the opportunity to shape and fuse the form of the stop-motion genre itself, the ideas and messages he wishes to convey, and the way he chooses to convey them, all into one. Instead of means to an end, a fusion between means and end. By resorting to the frame by frame control of the image, he shows he is not only in control, frame by frame, of the dolls every movement, but like a puppeteer of emotions, he is also able of manipulating the viewer's feelings towards a great discomfort.

The animation is filled with images that, through the use of the grotesque, allude to subversion and the disruption of the habitual forms. These images intentionally interlink to a soundtrack that, due to its use of timbers and dissonances, sounds both delightful and sinister at the same time. Paradoxically, sound and image, together, resignify reality, as pieces of a puzzle yet to be assembled. The imagetic universe of this animation is constituted by objects of an ancient, noncontemporary mass culture, a world in which inanimate toys - products of this mass production - are gifted with life, as previously referred by S. Freud in his study "The Uncanny" (1919). The resources offered by the stop-motion technique had an impact on the director's particular aesthetic choices for this piece. Because of the stop-motion form, viewers are confronted with an unarticulated and staccata deconstruction of what usually presents itself to viewers as fluid and natural

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3. The book originally entitled *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* is the sequence to the famous *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (*Alice no Pais das Maravilhas*), of 1865.



it resurfaces, the melody is often reconfigured – modulated, transposed to a male vocal, incorporated into electroacoustic elements, etc. Due to this variety of forms in which it is exposed, the theme develops antagonistic functions: while it softens certain scenes, it also intensifies and incites other moments of climax, reinforcing the grotesque and our feelings of displacement. It is clear that Zdeněk Liška consciously seized every opportunity to work around the same theme. Still on the same topic, it is interesting to notice how the composer always chooses to execute the theme in a single vocal. The choice of executing the melodies with vocals, using them as wordless instruments, is not random and is recurrent in this composer's work. This is relevant considering that Liška was a pioneer in the use of vocals as a purely instrumental resource.

He was actually the first composer to use the human voice without words as an integral part of instrumental music," claimed choirmaster and colleague Pavel Kuhn, also in the 2000 documentary. "As he said himself, the voice adds a certain expressiveness and emotion to the instrumental play, making it more human. (biographical essay by David Herter, available at <http://fantasticliska.blogspot.com.br/2015/10/an-essay-by-david-herter.html>)

The soundtrack also offers melodies that fall between the beautiful and the sinister. Just by rearranging the main melody, what once sounded beautiful and familiar to the audience quickly becomes bizarre and uncanny. The soundtrack's main theme is developed almost in parallel with the visual concept of the animation. By constantly repeating the same melody but frequently adding new elements and variations to it, the music becomes intrinsically connected to the construction of this movie's ideas and meanings. Any form of dissociation between sound and image becomes, for that reason, impossible.

Unlike the classic narrative cinema in which the soundtrack is often transmitted in an unconscious manner, in *Jabberwocky* there is an opposite

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5. The added value occurs with the incorporation of the film music in an audiovisual work, since this (add) itself transcends the function of simply translating into sound what is already seen by the image (it goes beyond reinforcing a sign already transmitted visually). This added value provided by the film music includes some additional information. Michel Chion understands that in addition to the dramatic force, music has other functions, such as adding in the narrative signs that the image did not show, thus generating a new composition of meanings in counterpoint with the image, instead of simply reinforcing information already transmitted through image.

use of the music. In this case, the soundtrack was actually composed to be consciously heard and processed at the same time as the images progress, for it is the soundtrack's job to many times provide meaning for what the audience is watching, a meaning that the visual part of the animation alone cannot build. According to Michel Chion's added value theory<sup>5</sup> (1994, pg.16), any sound incorporated an image provides a specific meaning, what brings us to the conclusion that the sound can significantly alter the meaning of an artwork. In this piece, for, example, the recurrent use of silence gives the animation a great dramatic tone.

Another valuable concept to think about the contributions of Liska's soundtrack to this movie is Claudia Gorbman's concept of "inaudibility". In her view, this notion has many significant implications to cinema (1987). Music, as she understands, can contribute to turn enunciation into fiction, reducing the audience's awareness of the technological nature of the filmic discourse. It also helps spectators to become more involved, especially by making them feel that they are (unconsciously) listening to a track that the characters cannot hear, one that tells "++your" story and fantasy. If aware of this notion, a composer can then start creating music with the purpose of influencing the narrative actions without being on the forefront. The musical choices regarding techniques, tempos, timbers and styles to be applied in the composition are then defined by what dramatic role – not only the one here mentioned, but others as well - the music wants to play in the film.

Interestingly enough, as mentioned before, Jabberwocky's "audible" soundtrack stands against the conventional role that a soundtrack is expected to play. In this piece, the animation's sound both unveils and proposes new and unusual meanings to what the audience is looking at - objects that in fact already had their meanings and uses altered by Švankmajer's manipulation. The feeling of estrangement and uneasiness, and the reflections that the audience is expected to produce after experiencing these emotions is therefore a product of a conscious, well-thought-out plan - by both the composer and the director - to define what is being delivered to (and deconstructed for) the audience, not only visually, but musically as well. It is a sum, in essence, of audible sound elements with visual elements that lack fluidity. As Jan Švankmajer explains:

Most of my movie's soundtracks were written by Zdeněk Liška. We understood each other, since he was always against what is known as atmospheric soundtrack, that simply evokes feelings of extreme emotion, like the role of a violin playing a melody in American love scenes. Liška was a composer who had my complete trust. We would usually agree on the general aspects for the music so he could then write it freely. I do not recall ever asking him to rewrite something. He found rhythms in my pictures that not even I was aware were there, and intuitively originated others.<sup>6</sup> (KUBÁTOVÁ, Lucie. *Zvukové aspekty v krátkometrážní filmové tvorbě* Jana Švankmajera, 2013 p.78)

The audiovisual articulation in this surrealist animation - with a complex use of symbols that strike spectators in such a nonconventional manner - is therefore key to make evident the meaning of this piece.

### **Final Words**

Combined, the unveiling of a form of education that shapes us into automates, the mysterious repetitions, the surreal representations of objects and their functions, and the most bizarre - yet articulated - sounds and noises awaken in our imagination a feeling of repulse to the strange and grotesque. The odd reality of the objects proposed by the visual elements and the unusual behavior of the soundtrack ensure, together, the uncovering of a repressive and failed model of education.

About the relationship between L. Carroll's poem *Jabberwocky* (1871) with the homonymous animation by Jan Švankmajer, it is possible to notice a new interpretation from the part of the director. In a more simplistic level it would appear to be possible to affirm that the animation illustrates at certain moments ideas contained in the original poem. Nevertheless, a broader and deeper analysis clearly reveals the director's own - and different - goals,

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6. Interview given by Jan Švankmajer, provided to the researcher by email. The original work is in Czech: "K většině mých filmů /těch, ve kterých je hudba/ napsal hudbu Zdeněk Liška. Byl to geniální muzikant, který skládal hudbu přímo na stříhacím stole. Rozuměli jsme si spolu, proto, že ani on nebyl příznivcem tak zvané atmosférické hudby, která ždímá z diváků city ve vypjatých emotivních scénách /viz housle v milostných scénách amerických kýčů/. Liška měl v psaní hudby zcela moji důvěru. Dohodli jsme se rámcově na charakteru hudby a pak měl volnou ruku. Nepamatuji se, že bych ho nechal něco předělat. On nacházel v mých filmech rytmy, o kterých jsem ani nevěděl, které vznikaly intuitivně."

that go much beyond Carroll's proposal. Švankmajer seems more interested in exposing the darkness of the modern way of life and its consequences. The director also seems uninterested in bringing to his animation the visual aspects of the poem. On the other hand, there seems to be a strong connection between the poem and the animation in the manner in which the symbolic representations relate to the visual representations. In both cases the language is developed in close association with the perception and interaction we have with the world that surrounds us.

To express his own animosity against the stupidity and lack of humanity that he perceives as the product of bureaucracy in every form of totalitarian regime – in his case, the communist dictatorship –, his imagetic compositions bind the inanimate to the animated, provides life to what is not alive, resignifies objects and their functions, and transform the existence of the living ones into something infernal and grotesque. His appeal to conscious and unconscious mental processes gives audience the feeling that his film is walking around our psych, and actually transforms this work in a perfect tool to communicate - in a deep and exploratory manner - the essence of his criticism.

Islurface nonsense is like the "Radiance" of pure events, entities that never finish either happening or withdrawing. Pure events without mixture shine above the mixed bodies, above their embroiled actions and passions. They let an incorporeal rise to the surface like a mist over the earth, a pure "expressed" from the depths: not the sword, but the flash of the sword, a flash without a sword like the smile without a cat. (DELEUZE, Gilles. 1998, p.22)

Considering that every animation is a product of a collective effort, it is important to highlight once more the vital role of Zdeněk Liška to the making and the success of this piece. Švankmajer and Liška have worked alongside in many other projects, such as *Punch and Judy* (1966), *Et Cetera* (1966), *Historia Naturae (Suita)* (1967), *The Flat* (1968), *Don Juan* (1969), *The Ossuary* (1970), *Jabberwocky* (1971), *Leonardo's Diary* (1972) e *The Castle of Otranto* (1979).<sup>7</sup>

Many aspects of the manipulation of image and sound in *Jabberwocky* are worth our attention. Nonetheless, the most relevant aspect of their artistic

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7. The music of Z.Liška's for J. Švankmajer's animations *Historia Naturae (Suita)*, *The Flat* e *The Ossuary* was also used in the short animation films of the Quay Brothers, entitled *The Cabinet of Jan Švankmajer* (1984).

craft in this piece is the ability to constantly deconstruct, transmute and resignify visual and sound elements throughout film. Whether is Švankmajer's ability to provide new meanings and functions to existing objects and life to inanimate objects without any clear logic, or Liška's strategy of repeating, rearranging and reassigning the same theme to different scenes, each time with a different intention and result, the common ground to the contribution given by each one of them is undoubtedly the mutual use of transmutation as a mean to shift the meanings of what is usual and expected. They both successfully transform our expectations and provide new and uneasy meanings to what we expected to understand and feel.

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