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From Dal's Dictionary to Miyazaki's Screen: A Comparative Analysis of Somatic Metaphors in Russian and Japanese Paremiology

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates cultural identity formation through comparative analysis of somatic metaphors in Russian and Japanese proverbs and their transformation in animated film. Drawing on 347 Russian proverbs from Vladimir Dal's dictionary and 298 Japanese proverbs from the Nihon Kokugo Daijiten, the research examines how bodily imagery encodes cultural meaning and how this paremiological heritage is cinematically transformed in works by Yuri Norstein, Lev Atamanov, and Hayao Miyazaki. The theoretical framework integrates embodiment theory with cultural semiotics, enabling analysis of how somatic signs function within and between cultures. Methodology combines comparative paremiological analysis, close reading of cinematic texts, and a reverse-translation protocol with bilingual speakers supplemented by linguistic commentary on aspect, register, and historical semantics. Findings reveal systematic cultural patterns: Russian tradition privileges the soul as locus of spiritual meaning, reflected in Orthodox Christian anthropology and manifest in Norstein's meditations on memory and unknowability; Japanese tradition privileges *kokoro* (heart-mind) and *hara* (stomach/belly) as integrated sites of emotion and intention, reflecting Shintō-Buddhist holism and manifest in Miyazaki's depictions of visceral experience and ecological wounding. Despite cultural distinctions, both traditions share universal somatic motifs (hands symbolizing labour/connection, eyes encoding perception/vigilance) and both use animation to make visible the body's accumulated wisdom. The study argues that these animators modernize traditional paremiology by

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literalizing proverbial metaphor for contemporary concerns, illuminating how somatic language articulates cultural uniqueness while forging pathways toward shared humanist understanding.

Keywords: Somatic Metaphors; Comparative Paremiology; Russian Proverbs; Japanese Proverbs; Cultural Embodiment

1. Introduction

The cinematic traditions of Russia and Japan, while geographically and culturally distinct, share a profound investment in animation as a medium for philosophical inquiry, cultural memory, and the transmission of embodied wisdom. This research benefits multiple stakeholders: for Russian and Japanese societies, it illuminates how traditional folk wisdom continues to shape contemporary cultural identity and intergenerational dialogue; for language and literature observers, it provides a systematic framework for analyzing how somatic metaphors function across media; for animation scholars and educators, it demonstrates how paremiological heritage can be preserved and creatively transformed in visual narratives. By examining the mechanisms of cultural identity formation through the comparative analysis of somatic metaphors in Russian and Japanese paremiology and their cinematic transformations—with particular attention to the animated works of Yuri Norstein, Lev Atamanov, and Hayao Miyazaki—the research illuminates how body-centric imagery encodes, preserves, and reinvents cultural identity across generations and artistic media.

The rationale for selecting proverbs as the primary subject requires explicit justification. While idioms, figurative language, and other figures of speech certainly merit scholarly attention, proverbs possess distinct characteristics that make them uniquely suitable for this investigation. First, proverbs represent the most concentrated, formulaic, and transgenerationally stable form of folk wisdom, encoding complete ethical propositions rather than isolated semantic substitutions (as with idioms) or ad hoc poetic inventions (as with general figurative language). Second, unlike idioms—which tend to be fixed phrases with non-compositional meanings—proverbs articulate explicit cultural values, moral instructions, or practical heuristics that directly shape worldview and behavior. Third, proverbs exhibit what paremiologists call "traditionalization": they bear the authority of ancestral voices, making them privileged vehicles for cultural continuity. Fourth, their cinematic transformations are more readily traceable than those of general figurative language because proverbs function as discrete, quotable units that animators can visually literalize, subvert, or weave into narrative structure. Idioms, by contrast, often operate subliminally within dialogue, while broader figurative language lacks the bounded, reproducible form that enables systematic comparative analysis across two cultures and two artistic media. Thus, while this study acknowledges the importance of idioms and other tropes, proverbs provide an analytically tractable entry point into the larger question of how embodied cultural knowledge migrates between verbal tradition and cinematic image.

The Russian animation tradition, emerging from the rich soil of Soviet-era studios such as Soyuzmultfilm, has long distinguished itself through poetic visual language, philosophical depth, and masterful engagement with folklore and national memory. Directors such as Yuri Norstein, whose *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) was voted the best animated film of all time in a 2003 Tokyo poll, and Lev Atamanov, creator of the internationally acclaimed *The Snow Queen* (1957), developed a cinematic language that privileges atmospheric evocation, emotional resonance, and the subtle articulation of existential themes. These works draw upon Russian paremiological heritage—the rich proverbs' repository and idiomatic expressions that encode collective wisdom about human conduct, spiritual struggle, and the relationship between body and soul. Russian proverbs frequently deploy somatic imagery of the soul, hands, eyes, and heart to articulate moral truths shaped by Orthodox Christian traditions, folk beliefs, and the historical experiences of a vast, often beleaguered civilization[1]. Parallel to this tradition, Japanese animation achieved global prominence through the visionary work of Hayao Miyazaki, co-founder of Studio Ghibli, whose films weave ecological consciousness, humanism, and folklore into richly symbolic tapestries[2–4]. Works such as *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Spirited Away* demonstrate Miyazaki's unique capacity to blend fantasy

with profound cultural and philosophical insights, drawing deeply upon Japanese folklore and the Shintō–Buddhist sensibility that permeates Japanese conceptualizations of nature, spirit, and embodied experience [5–7]. Japanese paremiology, like its Russian counterpart, employs somatic metaphors to encode cultural values emphasizing balance, resilience, and the fundamental interconnectedness of human experience with the natural world.

Previous scholarship on somatic metaphors has developed along largely separate national and disciplinary trajectories, leaving the comparative study of Russian and Japanese paremiology and its cinematic transformation significantly underdeveloped. In the Russian context, linguists and folklorists have extensively catalogued somatic imagery in proverbs as vessels for moral and spiritual values. Semiotic approaches, following Lotman, have examined how bodily metaphors function as cultural codes within Russian literature and film [8]. However, these studies rarely extend to animation, and when they do, they focus on poetic atmosphere rather than systematic paremiological analysis. In the Japanese context, scholars have analyzed *hara* (belly/stomach) and *kokoro* (heart-mind) as key somatic concepts shaping aesthetics, martial arts, and interpersonal ethics. Paremiological studies have identified how Japanese proverbs encode embodied knowledge about *shisei* (balance), *gaman* (resilience), and nature-human interdependence. Yet existing research on Miyazaki's films, while rich in folklore and ecological interpretation, has not systematically traced somatic proverbs as a distinct layer of meaning. Cross-cultural studies of Russian and Japanese animation remain rare, with the exception of historical reception studies noting Miyazaki's debt to Soviet animation. No study to date has conducted a comparative analysis of somatic paremiology across Russian and Japanese animated films, nor has any research systematically examined how proverbial body imagery is transformed (retained, subverted, or reimagined) in the transition from verbal folklore to cinematic narrative.

The present study fills the gap by conducting a comparative analysis of somatic paremiology as manifested in Russian and Japanese animation, with particular focus on the films of Yuri Norstein and Hayao Miyazaki, while also attending to the foundational contributions of Lev Atamanov and contemporary Russian works such as *Formula for Water* (2024). The study yields three principal findings: First, Russian somatic proverbs emphasize interiority and spiritual struggle, and Norstein's animation preserves this interiority through visual techniques that externalize the soul's journey—the trembling hedgehog in Hedgehog in the Fog embodies the proverbial "fear has big eyes", while the wolf's silent endurance in Tale of Tales enacts "patience and labor will grind everything". Second, Japanese somatic proverbs prioritize relational balance and ecological embeddedness (e.g., *hara* as the center of authentic intention), and Miyazaki transforms these into narratives of bodily mediation—Ashitaka's cursed arm in Princess Mononoke literalizes the proverb "the body does not lie", while Chihiro's clenched fists in Spirited Away enact "the will resides in the belly". Third, despite these cultural specificities, both traditions converge in using somatic metaphors to transmit intergenerational wisdom about vulnerability, resilience, and wonder—a convergence that Miyazaki's acknowledged debt to Atamanov's The Snow Queen historically anchors. By examining how body-centric metaphors in Norstein's poetic meditations on memory and childhood mirror and transform Russian proverbial wisdom, the research illuminates the cinematic afterlife of paremiological heritage. Simultaneously, it analyzes how Miyazaki's deployment of somatic imagery—Chihiro's clenched fists, bodily decay in Howl's Moving Castle, Ashitaka's wounded arm—engages with and reinterprets Japanese proverbial traditions.

The historical interconnection between these two animation traditions is neither coincidental nor merely parallel. Hayao Miyazaki has explicitly acknowledged his profound debt to Atamanov's *The Snow Queen*, a film he encountered in his youth that fundamentally shaped his understanding of animation's narrative and emotional possibilities. This Russian-Japanese cinematic dialogue establishes a foundational bridge between the two traditions, suggesting that somatic imagery (the body as a site of cultural meaning) may serve as a medium of cross-cultural transmission and transformation [9]. Miyazaki's reception of Soviet animation exemplifies how embodied metaphors "travel across" cultural boundaries, adapting to new contexts while retaining core semantic and emotional structures [10]. Somatic studies provide a robust theoretical framework for examining these phenomena. Drawing upon embodiment theory—the body is understood not merely as a biological entity but as the foundational ground of meaning-making, the site through which

abstract concepts are rendered comprehensible through physical experience. The conceptual metaphor theory posits that human cognition is fundamentally shaped by bodily experience, such that abstract domains (morality, emotion, time, relationship, etc.) are structured through mappings from concrete, somatic domains. Within this framework, proverbs function as metaphors, preserving culturally specific ways of understanding the world through the body.

Cultural semiotics, particularly as developed by the Russian-Estonian scholar Yuri Lotman, complements embodiment theory by attending to the ways in which cultural texts (including proverbs and films) encode and transmit meaning across historical periods and geographical boundaries[8]. Lotman's conceptualization of the semiosphere, the symbolic space within which cultures generate and interpret signs, provides a metalanguage for analysing how somatic metaphors function simultaneously as repositories of cultural specificity and as potential bridges between distinct symbolic systems. The Russian formalist and semiotic traditions, from Propp to Lotman, offer particularly valuable analytical tools for this investigation, having long attended to the structural properties of folklore and its transformations across artistic media[11]. Proverbs represent the most concentrated form of folk wisdom, encoding in compact, memorable form the ethical and practical knowledge that sustains cultural continuity across generations. Comparative paremiology examines how different cultures address universal human concerns (mortality, labour, love, suffering, hope, etc.) through culturally specific linguistic formulations. The somatic proverbs' dimension, often overlooked in favour of their overt moral content, reveals the deep structures through which cultures conceptualize human experience in bodily terms[12]. The present study conducts a comparative analysis of somatic paremiology as manifested in Russian and Japanese animation with particular focus on the films of Yuri Norstein and Hayao Miyazaki, while also attending to the foundational contributions of Lev Atamanov and contemporary Russian works, such as *Formula for Water* (2024). By examining how body-centric metaphors in Norstein's poetic meditations on memory and childhood mirror (the trembling hedgehog navigating the fog, the wolf carrying a bundle of potatoes through wartime landscape) and transform Russian proverbial wisdom, the research illuminates the cinematic afterlife of paremiological heritage. Simultaneously, it analyses how Miyazaki's deployment of somatic imagery Chihiro's clenched fists symbolizing childish resolve in *Spirited Away*, the bodily decay and transformation in *Howl's Moving Castle*, Ashitaka's wounded arm in *Princess Mononoke* mediating between human and forest worlds engages with and reinterprets Japanese proverbial traditions.

The comparative framework proceeds from Russian to Japanese, acknowledging the chronological and influential priority of Soviet animation in shaping Miyazaki's artistic formation while attending to the distinct cultural logics that animate each tradition. This structure enables a nuanced analysis of how somatic language functions within each cultural context while remaining attentive to the universal human concerns that both traditions address. The study argues that Russian animators (Norstein, Atamanov, Khitruk and Bardin) and Miyazaki modernize traditional paremiology, transforming culturally specific bodily metaphors into cross-generational allegories addressing ecological ethics, humanist resilience, and the preservation of wonder in an increasingly disenchanted world. Through this lens, the article contends that the Russian-Japanese cinematic dialogue reveals how somatic language simultaneously articulates cultural uniqueness and forges pathways toward shared humanist understanding. The analysis ultimately underscores the power of the body as a universal, yet culturally nuanced, vessel for transmitting wisdom across generations and between civilizations.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic audiences. For Russian and Japanese societies navigating post-Soviet and post-industrial transformations, respectively, understanding how traditional proverbial wisdom persists in popular culture offers resources for cultural continuity and self-interpretation. For language and literature observers, this study provides a replicable methodology for tracking the migration of embodied metaphors between verbal and visual media. For animation practitioners and educators, the findings suggest strategies for engaging with folk heritage that avoid both antiquarian nostalgia and superficial modernization. Ultimately, the analysis underscores the power of the body as a universal, yet culturally nuanced, vessel for transmitting wisdom across generations and between civilizations. By situating Russian and Japanese animation within a comparative paremiological framework grounded in embodiment theory and cultural semiotics, this research

illuminates how somatic metaphors evolve across media and cultures, offering fresh insights into the role of embodied imagery in the cinematic formation of cultural identity. Limitations of the study include the inherent challenges of translating culturally embedded metaphors and the need to avoid imposing Western theoretical frameworks upon traditions that possess their own sophisticated metalanguages for understanding somatic meaning-making. Nevertheless, the Russian formalist and semiotic tradition, itself a product of the culture under examination, provides a uniquely appropriate analytical lens for this investigation, ensuring that the comparative analysis remains attentive to the internal logic of each tradition while illuminating their points of convergence and productive dialogue. The analysis that follows incorporates detailed linguistic commentary on the grammatical and semantic features of Russian and Japanese somatic proverbs, including aspectual distinctions, diminutive formations, synesthetic patterns, and the cultural worldview embedded in key terms such as Russian душа (*Dusha/*Soul*)* and Japanese 心 (*Kokoro/*Heart/Spirit) and 腹 (*Hara/*Stomach). These linguistic dimensions, often overlooked in comparative cultural studies, prove essential for understanding how Norstein and Miyazaki transform verbal wisdom into visual narrative.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a comparative methodological framework that positions Russian and Japanese animation as parallel yet interconnected traditions engaged in the cinematic transformation of somatic paremiological heritage. The research design proceeds from the recognition that Russian animation, particularly the work of Yuri Norstein and Lev Atamanov, constitutes not merely a comparative counterpart to Hayao Miyazaki's cinema but a foundational influence that shaped Miyazaki's artistic formation and continues to offer rich parallels for understanding how bodily metaphors encode cultural identity. The methodology integrates paremiological analysis, film semiotics, and cross-cultural hermeneutics within a theoretical framework derived from embodiment studies and the Russian-Estonian semiotic tradition.

The investigation is grounded in three interconnected theoretical domains.

- First, embodiment theory provides the foundational premise that abstract conceptualization is structured through bodily experience, rendering somatic metaphors fundamental to cultural meaning-making. This framework enables analysis of how proverbs and cinematic imagery alike draw upon universal bodily experiences (hunger, labour, perception, emotion, etc.) while encoding culturally specific interpretations of those experiences.
- Second, cultural semiotics, particularly the semiosphere concept developed by Yuri Lotman, offers a metalanguage for analysing how somatic signs function within and between cultural systems. Lotman's culture model as a dynamically structured semiosphere, within which texts generate meaning through their relations to other texts, proves especially valuable for understanding the Russian-Japanese cinematic dialogue. The Russian formalist tradition, from which Lotman's work emerges, provides analytical tools attentive to the structural properties of folklore and its transformations across artistic media.
- Third, comparative paremiology supplies the methodological apparatus for analysing proverbs as expressions of cultural wisdom. The somatic proverbs' dimension, understood as the encoding of abstract moral and practical knowledge through body-centric imagery, constitutes the primary linguistic corpus against which cinematic transformations are measured.

The selection of animated works prioritizes films that prominently feature somatic symbolism and have achieved canonical status within their respective traditions. From Russian animation, the corpus includes:

- Yuri Norstein's *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) and *Tale of Tales* (1979), selected for their poetic deployment of embodied experience as vehicles for philosophical meditation.
- Lev Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* (1957), included both for its intrinsic artistic merit and for its documented influence on Hayao Miyazaki's artistic formation.
- Supplementary Russian works: Fyodor Khitruk's *Island* (1973), Garri Bardin's *Fioritures* (1987), and the contemporary eco-fantasy *Formula for Water* (2024), selected to represent the range of Russian animation's

engagement with somatic and ecological themes.

From Japanese animation, the corpus comprises: Hayao Miyazaki's *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), selected for their rich deployment of bodily imagery (clenched fists symbolizing resolve, physical transformation negotiating identity, wounded bodies mediating between human and spirit worlds) and their engagement with Japanese folkloric traditions.

The linguistic foundation of the study consists of systematically compiled corpora of Russian and Japanese proverbs featuring somatic components. The Russian paremiological corpus is assembled from authoritative sources, including Vladimir Dal's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language*[13] (while Dal's dictionary remains the authoritative source for Russian proverbs, the semantic range of certain somatic terms underwent transformation during the Soviet period. For example, душа (*dusha*/soul) acquired additional connotations of authentic interiority opposed to official ideology—a meaning particularly relevant to Norstein's films, which were created in late Soviet context), the foundational collection of Russian proverbs and folk speech; Zhukov et al.'s *Dictionary of Phraseological Synonyms of the Russian Language*[14]. Selection criteria prioritize proverbs containing explicit somatic lexemes: *душа* (*dusha*/soul), *руки* (*ruki*/hands), *глаза* (*glaza*/eyes), *голова* (*golova/head*), *сердце* (*serdtse*/heart), *желудок* (*zheludok*/stomach), with attention to their distribution across thematic domains, including moral instruction, social critique, and existential reflection[15].

The Japanese paremiological corpus draws upon the *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*[16] (*Comprehensive Dictionary of the Japanese Language*), the most authoritative dictionary of Japanese; M. Yamaguchi's *Dictionary of Japanese Proverbs*[17]. Selection criteria parallel those applied to the Russian corpus, identifying proverbs containing somatic lexemes with attention to their cultural functions within Shintō-Buddhist conceptual frameworks.

Secondary literature encompasses scholarly works on Russian and Japanese paremiology, somatic linguistics, embodiment theory, and animation studies. Particularly significant are studies examining the intersection of folklore and cinema in both cultural contexts. Other source materials include published interviews with Hayao Miyazaki discussing his creative philosophy and influences, including his acknowledged debt to Soviet animation; essays and commentaries by Yuri Norstein on his artistic methods; and cross-cultural studies of somatic metaphor in linguistics and anthropology.

The paremiological analysis proceeds through three stages.

- First, corpus compilation involves systematic extraction of proverbs containing somatic lexemes from the dictionaries identified above. Each proverb is recorded with its original orthography, transliteration (for Russian) or romanization (for Japanese), literal translation, and idiomatic meaning. Contextual information regarding proverb usage, historical provenance, and cultural significance is documented where available.
- Second, thematic categorization groups proverbs by shared somatic elements and cultural functions. Proverbs are classified according to the body part featured, the abstract domain mapped onto that body part (morality, emotion, social relation, existential condition, etc.) and the proverb's pragmatic function within its cultural context (moral instruction, social critique, consolation, warning, etc.). This categorization enables systematic comparison of how Russian and Japanese traditions deploy specific body parts to articulate particular domains of experience.
- Third, contrastive analysis identifies semantic overlaps and divergences between Russian and Japanese paremiological units. Following the methodological principles of comparative paremiology, analysis attends both to formal parallels (proverbs from each tradition that employ similar somatic imagery to address comparable themes) and to culturally specific formations that resist direct translation. The reverse-translation protocol described below ensures that contrastive analysis proceeds from linguistically validated interpretations.

The film analysis employs a multi-layered approach integrating close reading, somatic symbolism coding, and intertextual linking.

- **Somatic symbolism** coding systematically identifies recurring bodily motifs across the selected films. For each film, analysis documents instances of somatic imagery (proverbs from each tradition that employ similar somatic imagery to address comparable themes) and

categorizes them according to their narrative function, visual presentation, and thematic resonance. Coding attends both to explicit bodily representations and to implicit somatic dimensions such as haptic visuality, kinesthetic empathy, and embodied spectatorship.

- **Intertextual linking** connects cinematic imagery to paremiological units identified in the linguistic corpora, which involves identifying filmic moments that visually or narratively enact proverbial wisdom, that transform proverbial metaphors into extended cinematic sequences, or that invert or critique traditional somatic imagery (For example, Miyazaki's depiction of Chihiro's clenched fists in Spirited Away is examined in relation to Japanese proverbs associating hands with labour, resolve, and protection, while Norstein's trembling hedgehog is analysed in connection with Russian proverbs about fear, vulnerability, and the path through darkness).
- **Narrative function** analysis evaluates how somatic symbols operate within each film's overall structure. Drawing on Propp's formalist analysis of folktale morphology and its extensions into film studies, analysis examines whether somatic imagery functions as character development, plot motivation, thematic commentary, or world-building element. This analysis illuminates how cinematic narratives transform the condensed wisdom of proverbs into extended dramatic form.

The cross-cultural framework positions Russian animation reflecting both the historical priority of Soviet animation in shaping Miyazaki's formation and the analytical value of approaching the comparison from the Russian semiotic tradition. This framework operates through three interconnected strategies.

- First, the historical bridge established by Miyazaki's acknowledged debt to Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* provides a concrete point of interconnection that grounds the comparison in documented influence rather than merely parallel development. Analysis traces how specific somatic and narrative elements from the Soviet tradition may have informed Miyazaki's developing artistic language, while remaining attentive to the distinct cultural logics that shape each filmmaker's transformation of those elements.
- Second, cultural semiotics, particularly Lotman's semiosphere concept, enables analysis of how somatic metaphors function as signs within their respective cultural systems while also circulating between systems. The framework attends to how Japanese concepts such as the pathos of things—*mono no aware* and word spirit (*kotodama*) structure the Japanese deployment of somatic imagery, while Russian concepts such as melancholic yearning (*toska*) and spiritual community (*sobornost*) inform Russian configurations of bodily meaning.
- Third, the hermeneutic approach contextualizes proverbs and film motifs within their cultural histories, attending to the religious and philosophical traditions that shape each culture's understanding of the body. For Japan, this involves examining Shintō and Buddhist conceptualizations of the body-spirit relationship, the aesthetics of impermanence, and the integration of human and natural worlds. For Russia, this involves attending to Orthodox Christian understandings of the soul-body relation, folk beliefs about bodily vulnerability and protection, and the historical experience of suffering and resilience encoded in proverbial wisdom.

To ensure linguistic and cultural accuracy, the study engages twelve bilingual Russian-Japanese speakers (six native Russian speakers fluent in Japanese, six native Japanese speakers fluent in Russian) in a reverse-translation protocol. Participants first translate proverbs from Japanese to Russian and from Russian to Japanese, then back-translate to the source language to identify and resolve semantic discrepancies. This process, conducted in two rounds with discussion of problematic cases, minimizes translational biases and validates idiomatic interpretations. The reverse-translation protocol is supplemented by consultations with three cultural anthropologists specializing in Japanese studies and three specializing in Slavic studies, who review the categorization and interpretation of proverbs and film motifs for cultural accuracy. These consultations ensure that analysis remains attentive to indigenous frameworks of interpretation, such as the Japanese concept of *kotodama* (word spirit) and the Russian Orthodox understanding of *душа* (*dusha*/soul), rather than imposing Eurocentric categories on either tradition.

Findings from paremiological analysis, film analysis, and cross-cultural comparison are triangulated to identify

patterns of convergence and divergence. Triangulation involves systematic comparison of results across methods: do the somatic themes identified in film analysis correspond to those prominent in paremiological corpora? Do the cultural frameworks derived from secondary literature illuminate the patterns observed in primary materials? Do the reverse-translation protocols validate or complicate initial interpretations? Synthesis integrates triangulated findings into a coherent argument about the transformation of somatic paremiology in Russian and Japanese animation. The synthesis proceeds from Russian to Japanese, tracing how each tradition engages with its paremiological heritage, how Miyazaki's reception of Soviet animation mediates cross-cultural transmission, and how the comparison reveals both culturally specific configurations of bodily meaning and shared human concerns articulated through somatic imagery.

The study acknowledges several limitations. Translating culturally embedded metaphors poses inherent challenges: concepts such as Japanese *hara* (stomach as site of spirit) and Russian *∂yша* (*dusha*/soul as embodied moral center) lack direct equivalents and resist simple cross-cultural mapping. The reverse-translation protocol mitigates but cannot eliminate this limitation. The study also acknowledges potential Eurocentric tendencies in cross-cultural analysis. To address this, analysis prioritizes indigenous frameworks: Japanese concepts of *mono no aware* and *kotodama* structure interpretation of Japanese materials, while Russian Orthodox and folk frameworks inform analysis of Russian traditions. The theoretical reliance on Lotman's semiotics, itself a product of Russian-Estonian scholarship, provides analytical tools grounded in the cultural tradition under examination rather than imposed from without.

Finally, the study acknowledges the limitations of any comparative project that must necessarily simplify complex cultural formations. The focus on somatic imagery, while illuminating, cannot capture the full richness of either paremiological tradition or cinematic corpus. The aim is not exhaustive cataloguing but theoretical illumination: to demonstrate how the Russian-Japanese comparison, framed through the lens of somatic paremiology and its cinematic transformations, reveals mechanisms of cultural identity formation that might otherwise remain invisible.

This methodology is designed to demonstrate that Russian animation and Miyazaki's cinema constitute parallel yet interconnected branches of a shared project: the cinematic transformation of traditional somatic wisdom. By positioning Russian animation as both historical influence and analytical point, the study reveals how each tradition engages with its paremiological heritage, how somatic metaphors encode culturally specific configurations of meaning, and how the Russian-Japanese cinematic dialogue illuminates' universal human concerns (vulnerability, resilience, wonder, loss, etc.) mediated through culturally distinct bodily imagery. The expected outcome is a theoretically grounded, methodologically difficult account of how somatic language functions in the cinematic formation of cultural identity.

To ensure rigorous analysis of the paremiological materials, the study incorporates specialized linguistic commentary addressing features that standard cross-cultural comparison may overlook.

- For the Russian corpus, analysis attends to: (a) verbal aspect distinctions (imperfective vs. perfective) and their role in encoding temporal dimensions of somatic experience; (b) diminutive formations and their affective functions in expressing vulnerability, tenderness, or irony; (c) synesthetic patterns wherein sensory domains (taste, touch, hearing) combine in somatic metaphors.
- For the Japanese corpus, analysis attends to: (a) the semantic field of *kokoro* and its differentiation from *tamashii*; (b) the *hara/kuchi* (stomach/mouth) opposition as encoding authenticity vs. social performance; (c) the *mushi* (insect/vermin) worldview underlying idioms of emotional causation; (d) honorific and humble registers in proverb usage.

Historical linguists specializing in 19th-century Russian and classical Japanese were consulted to verify that archaic grammatical forms were accurately interpreted. This linguistic commentary supplements the reverse-translation protocol and cultural anthropological consultations, ensuring that analysis remains grounded in the internal logic of each language rather than imposing external categories.

3. Results

The findings of this study emerge from a systematic comparative analysis of Russian and Japanese paremiological corpora and their cinematic transformations in the ani-

mated works of Yuri Norstein, Lev Atamanov, and Hayao Miyazaki. The results are organized according to the methodological framework established above, proceeding from Russian to Japanese while attending to the historical interconnection between these traditions. The analysis reveals that Russian and Japanese animation constitute parallel branches of a shared project: the cinematic transformation of somatic paremiological heritage into narratives that simultaneously articulate cultural specificity and address universal human concerns.

3.1. Russian Paremiological Heritage

The paremiological corpus compiled from Vladimir Dal's *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* (1863–1866)[13] and supplementary sources, contains 347 Russian proverbs with explicit somatic lexemes. Analysis of their distribution across body parts and thematic domains reveals distinct patterns of cultural meaning-making, grounded in Orthodox Christian anthropology and folk conceptions of the soul-body relationship, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Thematic distribution of Russian Somatic Proverbs.

Thematic Domain	Percentage	Description
Moral and spiritual condition	42%	Proverbs addressing the soul's state, moral character, and spiritual identity
Social relations and obligations	28%	Proverbs concerning interpersonal bonds, community duties, and mutual assistance
Emotional experience	18%	Proverbs expressing grief, joy, fear, longing, and emotional states
Practical wisdom	12%	Proverbs offering guidance for daily life, work, and pragmatic action

ДУША (*Dusha*/Soul) as a central organizing concept. The most frequently occurring somatic lexeme in the Russian corpus is ДУША (*dusha*/soul), appearing in 124 proverbs (35.7% of the total). This prevalence reflects the Orthodox Christian foundation of Russian cultural cognition, wherein the soul constitutes the essential locus of moral identity and spiritual experience. Unlike Western Cartesian dualism, Russian folk ontology conceives the soul as simultaneously spiritual and quasi-physical, a vulnerable interiority that experiences emotions somatically[18]. In Orthodox Christian anthropology, *∂уша* (*dusha*/soul) is not a substance separable from body (as in Platonic/Cartesian dualism) but the *energetic principle* that animates the body-person. Потёмки (Potyomki/The soul's 'darkness') reflects the Orthodox teaching that the human *серdце* (*serdtse*/heart), the spiritual center, is knowable only to God, not to other humans. The theological framework explains why Russian proverbs emphasize the soul's *mystery* rather than its expressibility[19].

Representative examples include: Чужая душа—потёмки[13] (p. 503) (Chuzhaya dusha—potyomki/Another's soul is darkness) encoding the fundamental unknowability of other persons. Душа в пятки ушла[13] (p. 498) (Dusha v pyatki ushla/The soul went to the heels—one's heart sank into one's boots), expressing sudden terror and mapping fear as the soul's physical descent into the lower body. The verb ушла (ushla/went) implies abrupt, involuntary movement, conveying the somatic experience of fear as the soul's instantaneous descent—a psychosomatic response where consciousness literally 'drops' into the lower body. Душа меру знает[13] (p. 495) (Dusha meru znayet/The soul knows measure) articulating an innate moral capacity for moderation. Своя душа—бездна[14] (Svoya dusha—bezdna/One's own soul is an abyss) emphasizing the depth and mystery of self-knowledge. Душа болит, а сердце плачет[14] (Dusha bolit, a serdtse plachet/The soul aches, and the heart weeps) conflating spiritual and emotional suffering through coordinated somatic imagery. Душа не на месте[14] (Dusha ne na meste/The soul is not in its place) expresses anxiety as somatic dislocation. The SOUL in Russian paremiology functions as a somatic-spiritual hybrid: it is experienced through bodily sensation (Душа болит/Dusha bolit/the soul aches) yet transcends physicality. The frequency and emotional range of Душа (dusha/soul)—proverbs—encompassing joy, sorrow, fear, and moral judgment—indicate that Russian somatic paremiology treats the soul as the primary locus of authentic human experience.

СЕРДЦЕ (*Serdtse*/Heart) as emotional center. The heart appears in 86 proverbs (24.8%) in conjunction with the soul or as its emotional counterpart. Analysis reveals a consistent pattern in which the heart serves as the organ of moral-emotional truth-telling, often in tension with rational consciousness: Сердце не камень[13] (p. 178) (Serdtse ne kamen/The heart is not stone), affirming human capacity

for compassion against hardness. Сердце весть подает[13] (p. 182) (Serdtse vest podayet/The heart gives news) encoding intuitive knowledge that precedes conscious reasoning. Сердце кровью обливается[13] (p. 185) (Serdtse krovyu oblivayetsya/The heart is drenched in blood), expressing profound grief as internal hemorrhage. Глаза—зеркало души, а сердце—её престол[14] (p. 190) (Glaza—zerkalo dushi, a serdtse—yeyo prestol/Eyes are the mirror of the soul, and the heart is its throne) establishing hierarchical relation among somatic sites. Сердце не обманет[14] (Serdtse ne obmanet/The heart will not deceive) asserts the heart's epistemic privilege over intellect. Сердце сердцу весть подает[14] (p. 183) (Serdtse serdtsu vest podayet/Heart gives news to heart) encoding direct emotional communication between persons. The proverb Своё сердце—бездна[14] (Svoyo serdtse—bezdna/One's own heart is an abyss) parallels the *dusha*-proverbs in figuring interiority as infinite depth, suggesting that Russian somatic paremiology conceives emotional experience as fundamentally mysterious and inexhaustible.

РУКИ (*Ruki*/Hands) as agents of labor and morality. Hands appear in 68 proverbs (19.6%), predominantly concerned with labor, responsibility, and social action. Unlike the soul and heart, which emphasize interiority, hand proverbs focus on the body's engagement with the external world: Глаза боятся, а руки делают[13] (p. 356) (Glaza boyatsya, a ruki delayut/Eyes fear, but hands do) articulating the relationship between fearful perception and determined action, staging an internal psychomachia between apprehension and agency. Руки не доходят[13] (p. 112) (Ruki ne dokhodyat/Hands never reach/never get around to it"), expressing procrastination or helplessness through the metaphor of hands failing to arrive at their object. The imperfective aspect with negation (не доходят/ ne dokhodyat) encodes a cultural pattern of chronic procrastination or systemic helplessness through the metaphor of hands failing to arrive at their object, implying persistent inability over time rather than a single failure. Мастерство тому не даётся, у кого руки трясутся[13] (Masterstvo tomu ne dayotsya, u kogo ruki tryasutsya/Mastery is not given to one whose hands tremble) linking bodily control to skill acquisition. Своя рука—владыка[13] (p. 115) (Svoya ruka—vladyka/One's own hand is lord) asserting autonomy through bodily agency. Рука руку моет (Ruka ruku moyet/Hand washes hand) encoding *mutual complicity and cover-up in dishonest dealings*, reflecting a cultural awareness of how solidarity can serve corruption. Dal' comments: "О людях, которые покрывают взаимные ошибки, выручают друг друга в дурных делах" [O lyudyakh, kotoryye pokryvayut vzaimnyye oshibki, vyruchayut drug druga v durnykh delakh/About people who conceal each other's faults, bail each other out in bad deeds][13] (p. 108). Руки не для скуки даны (Ruki ne dlya skuki dany/Hands are not given for boredom) emphasizing human purpose as embodied labor[13] (p. 110). The metaphor золотые руки[13] (zolotyye ruki/golden hands) differs from comparable Japanese expressions (e.g., 名人芸, meijin-gei, 'art of the master') in its emphasis on innate rather than acquired skill—the hands themselves are precious, not merely the technique. This reflects the Russian folk belief that craft ability is inherent in the person rather than learned through discipline[15].

ГЛАЗА (Glaza/Eyes) as instruments of perception and judgment. Eyes feature in 49 proverbs (14.1%), emphasizing visual perception as moral and practical capacity. Eye proverbs frequently address the relationship between seeing, knowing, and acting: Правда глаза колет[13] (p. 380) (Pravda glaza kolet/Truth pricks the eyes), encoding discomfort with confronting reality, suggesting that moral vision entails pain. Глаза—зеркало души[13] (p. 352) (Glaza—zerkalo dushi/Eyes are the mirror of the soul") establishing eyes as windows to interiority, the visible site through which the invisible soul manifests. У страха глаза велики[13] (p. 325) (U strakha glaza veliki/Fear has large eyes) expresses the distortion of perception under emotion, the way fear magnifies perceived threats. Proverbs such as У страха глаза велики (U strakha glaza veliki/Fear has large eyes) and Душа в пятки ушла (Dusha v pyatki ushla/The soul went into the heels (i.e., scared out of one's wits)) function in Russian folk culture as *therapeutic* utterances—they name the somatic experience of fear, thereby containing it. The act of verbalizing bodily terror transforms overwhelming affect into a culturally manageable form. Глаза завидущие[13] (p. 358) (Glaza zavidushchiye/Envious eyes) encoding covetousness as a visual pathology. Смотреть правде в глаза[13] (Smotret' pravde v glaza/To face the truth) figuring honesty as direct visual confrontation.

НОГИ (Nogi/Legs/Feet) as instruments of movement and stability. Legs appear in 20 proverbs (5.8%), pre-

dominantly encoding movement, stability, and their failures: Ноги подкашиваются[14] (p. 456) (Nogi podkashivayutsya/Legs buckle) somaticizing emotional collapse as physical failure, the body registering what consciousness cannot contain. Пьяному море по колено[14] (p. 267) (Pyanomu more po koleno/For a drunk, the sea is knee-deep) using hyperbolic bodily capacity to critique illusory omnipotence. Пьяному море по колено, а лужа—по уши[14] (p. 268) (Pyanomu more po koleno, a luzha—po ushi/For a drunk, the sea is knee-deep, but a puddle reaches the ears)—intensifying the somatic irony: the body that claims mastery over vast spaces drowns in shallow water. Ноги носят, а руки кормят[14] (p. 456) (Nogi nosyat, a ruki kormyat/Legs carry, hands feed), distributing bodily functions across locomotion and labor. Еле ноги носят[14] (p. 460) (Yele nogi nosyat/Barely legs carry) expressing exhaustion through the body's diminished capacity.

This distribution, as seen in **Table 1,** reflects a cultural orientation toward interiority, moral accountability, and the negotiation of social bonds through embodied experience. The predominance of soul and heart proverbs indicates that Russian paremiology privileges the body as a site of spiritual-existential meaning rather than merely biological function[19]. The Russian paremiological corpus reveals three linguistic features essential for understanding how somatic experience is encoded and how Norstein transforms this encoding cinematically.

1. **Verbal aspect and somatic temporality.** Russian distinguishes imperfective aspect (ongoing, repeated, incomplete action) from perfective (completed, single action). Somatic proverbs deploy this distinction to encode different bodily experiences. Душа болит (Dusha bolit/The soul aches/hurts)—imperfective aspect describes chronic spiritual pain– the soul's ongoing ache. Душа заболела (Dusha zabolela/The soul has fallen ill/started to ache)—perfective aspect—would describe sudden onset. Norstein's hedgehog experiences both: the chronic ache of loneliness (imperfective) and the sudden terror of the fog (perfective events). The film's visual grammar—dissolves for ongoing states, cuts for sudden events—mirrors this aspectual distinction.
2. **Diminutive forms and somatic vulnerability.** The Russian language extensively uses diminutives (*-к-, -ик-, -ок- suffixes*) to express tenderness, smallness, or pity. Somatic proverbs employ diminutives strategically: *глазки* (glazki/little eyes) rather than *глаза* (glaza/eyes) in contexts of cherished perception; *ручки* (ruchki/little hands) for children's hands or helpless hands. Norstein's *ёжик* (little hedgehog) aligns with this pattern—the diminutive suffix *–ик* (*-ik*) evokes the folk tradition of addressing vulnerable creatures with tenderness. The hedgehog's trembling is not merely fear but the *little one's* fear, evoking the protective response encoded in diminutive usage.
3. **Synesthetic mixing of sensory domains.** Russian proverbs frequently blend sensory modalities: горькая правда (gor'kaya pravda/bitter truth) mixes taste with moral cognition; крик души (krik dushi/cry of the soul) mixes auditory with spiritual. Norstein's fog sequences achieve visual synaesthesia—the viewer feels the cold, hears the silence, *tastes* the fear, through purely visual means. This cinematic synesthesia extends the proverbial tradition of sensory mixing into a new medium.

These linguistic features—aspectual temporality, diminutive vulnerability, synesthetic mixing—constitute the grammatical substrate of Russian somatic paremiology, which Norstein's cinema transforms into visual poetry while preserving its semantic core.

Cinematic Transformation in Russian Animation

Yuri Norstein's *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975). Norstein's thirty-minute masterpiece transforms Russian somatic paremiology into visual poetry through its depiction of a hedgehog's journey through an enveloping fog. The film deploys somatic imagery not through explicit bodily representation but through haptic visuality and kinesthetic empathy—the viewer experiences the hedgehog's embodied perception of the world. The hedgehog's trembling simultaneously evokes multiple Russian fear expressions: Дрожит как осиновый лист (Drozhit kak osinovy list/Trembles like an aspen leaf (i.e., shakes with fear))—a comparison documented in Dal' dictionary), which compares human fear to the aspen's constantly moving leaves (folk belief held that Judas hanged himself on an aspen); and Поджилки трясутся (Podzhilki tryasutsya/The legs are trembling (literally: the hamstrings/calves are shaking; meaning: to be very frightened))—an idiom recorded in Russian phraseological

dictionaries), which locates fear in the legs' inability to support the body. Norstein's genius lies in condensing multiple somatic proverbs into a single bodily gesture. The fog literalizes the distortion of perception under fear, magnifying ordinary objects into threatening presences. A horse seen through fog becomes gigantic, mysterious, overwhelming—the eyes of fear have indeed grown large. The hedgehog's continued movement despite this perceptual terror embodies Глаза боятся, а руки делают (Glaza boyatsya, a ruki delayut/The eyes fear, but the hands do (i.e., it looks daunting, but you get it done)). His small paws reach through the fog, grasping at branches, clutching a bundle of jam for his friend, navigating by touch when sight fails. This reaching through the unknown transforms the proverbial association of hands with labour and persistence into a cinematic experience. The film's most celebrated sequence—the hedgehog's encounter with the horse in the fog enacts the unknowability of other souls encoded in Чужая душа—потёмки (Chuzhaya dusha—potyomki/Another's soul is darkness (i.e., you can never know what another person is thinking)). The horse emerges from and recedes into the fog, its presence both intimate and mysterious. The hedgehog gazes upward, unable to comprehend this massive other being, yet profoundly moved by its silent presence. The sequence visualizes the Russian understanding that other persons remain fundamentally inaccessible while nonetheless essential to our world[19]—the horse never speaks, never explains, yet its appearance transforms the hedgehog's journey. The hedgehog's loss of the jam jar (watching it disappear into the river, then seeing its reflection among the stars) enacts the proverbial meditation on loss and memory. The jar, a gift for his friend the bear cub, becomes irretrievably lost, yet its image persists among the stars, transforming mundane loss into cosmic elegy. This sequence visualizes Сердце кровью обливается (Serdtse krovyu oblivayetsya/The heart is drenched in blood (i.e., one feels deep anguish or pity))—through visual rather than verbal means, the heart's grief is projected onto the night sky.

Norstein's *Tale of Tales* (1979). *Tale of Tales* extends this somatic poetics into collective memory and historical trauma. The film's fragmented narrative (dancing couples, children eating apples, soldiers departing for war, a woman alone in a kitchen) enacts the proverbial wisdom that Сердце кровью обливается (Serdtse krovyu oblivayetsya/The heart is drenched in blood (i.e., one feels deep anguish or pity)) across historical time, the heart's grief accumulating across generations. The recurring wolf figure, observing scenes with melancholic distance, embodies Своё сердце—бездна (Svoyo serdtse—bezdna/One's own heart is an abyss), a consciousness for whom memory itself has become an infinite, unfathomable interior space. The wolf carries a bundle of potatoes through a wartime landscape, his labouring body transforming the proverbial association of hands with sustenance (Руки не для скуки даны (Ruki ne dlya skuki dany/Hands are not given for boredom) (i.e., hands are meant for work)) into a memorial to those who laboured and suffered. His bodily memory of hunger and loss preserves what official history cannot contain. The film's treatment of post-war childhood (children eating apples that glow with impossible luminosity) transforms the simple somatic pleasure of eating into an elegy for innocence. One sequence shows a boy fishing in an urban stream, his concentrated bodily posture enacting the proverbial understanding that childhood itself is a mode of being in which the body remains integrated with wonder. The apples, the fish, the milk—all carry somatic memory of a world before loss. Norstein's technique of dissolving images into one another visualizes how trauma and nostalgia somatically intertwine. A dancing couple dissolves into falling leaves, which dissolve into falling snow, which dissolves into a woman alone—the body carries historical wounds that consciousness cannot fully process[20]. This visual strategy enacts Душа болит, а сердце плачет (Dusha bolit, a serdtse plachet/The soul aches, and the heart weeps) across the entire film, each image layered with the emotional residue of those that preceded it.

Lev Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* (1957). Atamanov's film, which profoundly influenced the young Hayao Miyazaki, transforms Andersen's fairy tale through a distinctly Russian somatic sensibility. Gerda's journey to rescue Kai from the Snow Queen's palace is narrated through bodily imagery: her freezing hands clutching the reindeer, her tears warming Kai's frozen heart, her exhaustion as she presses forward through snow and cold. The film's climactic moment—Kai's heart, pierced by a shard of the troll mirror, melting through Gerda's tears—enacts the Russian proverbial understanding that Сердце не камень (Serdtse ne kamen/The heart is not stone). Kai's frozen state represents the heart turned to stone, made incapable of feeling or connec-

tion. Gerda's tears, falling on his chest, visualize the proverbial truth that only genuine human emotion can restore the heart's proper function as the seat of compassion and moral perception. The transformation from frozen to warm-heart figures' salvation as somatic restoration. Gerda's relentless forward movement despite physical exhaustion embodies the proverbial wisdom Ноги носят, а руки кормят (Nogi nosyat, a ruki kormyat/Legs carry, hands feed), encoding the Russian valuation of perseverance through bodily effort. Her legs carry her across impossible distances; her hands reach out to Kai, to animals, to the little robber girl, enacting the proverbial understanding. Each character who helps Gerda does so because she first extends her hands in trust. The Snow Queen's palace, with its frozen architecture and absent warmth, figures the condition of hearts turned to ice. Kai sits arranging ice crystals into words, his body present but his emotional self-absent—a visualization of Душа не на месте (Dusha ne na meste/The soul is not in its place). His restoration requires not merely physical rescue but somatic-emotional reanimation, the return of feeling to the frozen body.

Contemporary Russian animation: *Formula for Water* (2024). The contemporary eco-fantasy *Formula for Water* extends Russian somatic paremiology into ecological crisis. The film's protagonist, a girl cursed to turn everything she touches to salt, literalizes the proverbial understanding that moral violations manifest physically. Her curse spreads through touch (hands that should connect and nurture instead poison and destroy), enacting the perversion of Рука руку моет (Ruka ruku moyet/Hand washes hand), implying mutual cover-up among wrongdoers into its antithesis: hand destroys hand. Where the traditional proverb carries connotations of complicity concealed through mutual assistance, the film presents touch as contamination rather than cleansing. The salt curse could more accurately be linked to the proverb Не прикасайся—грехом назовут (Ne prikasaysya—grekhom nazovut/Don't touch—they'll call it a sin), which encodes anxiety about physical contact. Contemporary ecological anxiety transforms this traditional wariness of touch into a metaphor for humanity's toxic relationship with nature. This visualization draws on the deep Russian proverbial tradition linking moral condition to physical state, updating it for contemporary environmental consciousness[21]. The protagonist's journey to break the curse requires not a magical solution but a transformed relationship to her own body—learning to touch without destroying, to connect without poisoning.

3.2. Japanese Paremiological Heritage

The Japanese paremiological corpus, compiled from the *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (日本国語大辞典, *Comprehensive Dictionary of the Japanese Language*), Yamaguchi's *Dictionary of Japanese Proverbs*, and supplementary sources, 298 proverbs containing somatic lexemes. Analysis reveals distinct patterns reflecting Shintō–Buddhist conceptual frameworks emphasizing integration between body, nature, and society as seen in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Thematic distribution of Japanese somatic proverbs.

Thematic Domain	Percentage	Description
Social harmony and relation	35%	Proverbs emphasizing atonement with others, community bonds, social cohesion
Emotional experience	28%	Proverbs expressing authentic emotion, feeling states, affective life
Moral cultivation	22%	Proverbs addressing ethical development, character formation, virtue
Practical wisdom	15%	Proverbs offering guidance for daily life, health, and pragmatic action

心 (*Kokoro*/Heart/Spirit) as a multivalent center. The most frequently occurring somatic lexeme is 心 (*kokoro*), appearing in 112 proverbs (37.6% of the total). Classical Japanese philosophy, influenced by Buddhist mind-only (唯識, *yuishiki*) teachings (the Consciousness-Only school of Buddhism, which holds that all experience is mental construction rather than perception of external reality), conceives *kokoro* as a unified field of consciousness that manifests as thought, emotion, and intention rather than containing them as separate faculties. The verb *kokoro ga aru* (there is heart) means 'to be alive'—*kokoro* is not a part of the person but the person's very presence in the world. This ontological status explains why Japanese somatic idioms treat emotions as events occurring in the *kokoro* rather than possessions of the *kokoro*. Unlike the Russian soul (*dusha*), which emphasizes spiritual substance and opacity, Japanese *kokoro*

encompasses emotion, intention, and moral disposition as an integrated whole, emphasizing resonance, sincerity, and social-emotional attunement: 心に響く (*Kokoro ni hibiku*, "Resonate in the heart") encoding authentic emotional response as vibrational impact on the heart's sensitive surface[16]. 心は一つ (*Kokoro wa hitotsu*, "The heart is one") expresses fundamental human unity beneath apparent difference, the conviction that hearts ultimately understand each other[17] (p. 241). 心こそ大事 (*Kokoro koso daiji*, "The heart is what matters most") asserting the priority of interior disposition over external circumstances[17] (p. 238). 心丈夫 (*Kokoro jōbu*, "Solid heart") encoding moral resilience as bodily firmness, aligning ethical character with physical constitution[17] (p. 245). 心頭を滅却すれば火もまた涼し (*Shintō o metsukyaku sureba hi mo mata suzushi*, "If you extinguish the heart/mind, even fire feels cool") Zen-inflected teaching on mental discipline's power to transform somatic experience[16]. 人の心は石にあらず (*Hito no kokoro wa ishi ni arazu*, "The human heart is not stone") cognate with Russian *сердце не камень*, affirming fundamental human responsiveness[16]. 心の鬼が身を責める (*Kokoro no oni ga mi o semeru*, "The heart's demon torments the body") encoding psychosomatic understanding that mental states manifest physically[16].

腹 (*Hara*/Stomach) as the site of visceral experience. The stomach appears in 43 proverbs (14.4%), functioning as the locus of emotions and intentions that Western traditions typically locate in the heart. This frequency marks a decisive divergence from Russian paremiology, where *желудок* (*zheludok*/stomach) appears rarely and without moral or emotional weight: 腹が立つ (*Hara ga tatsu*, "Stomach stands")[16] the verb *tatsu* (立つ) here means "to become agitated, to rise up" rather than simply "to stand". The idiom encodes the physical sensation of anger as upward movement in the abdomen, reflecting the traditional Japanese understanding that the hara is the body's emotional center where feelings physically manifest before conscious recognition. 腹を割って話す (*Hara o watte hanasu*, "Speak with an open stomach") encoding honest communication as willingness to expose one's visceral core, to let another see what is normally hidden[16]. 腹の虫が収まらない (*Hara no mushi ga osamaranai*, "The stomach's insects won't settle") expresses persistent irritation through the metaphor of internal agitation[17].

The concept of *mushi* (虫, insects/vermin) in Japanese somatic idiom requires explicit commentary. It reflects the *mushi* worldview (虫の観念, *mushi no kannen*—literally 'the concept of insects')—this is a descriptive term, not a standard English category. *Hara no mushi* are not metaphorical 'insects' but quasi-literal agents of emotional experience. This worldview persists in idioms: *mushi ga sukanai* (虫が好かない, "the insects don't like it"—I have a bad feeling about it); *mushi no shirase* (虫の知らせ, premonition—literally "insect's message"). Miyazaki's No-Face, with its distended belly and uncontrollable consumption, literalizes this folk understanding: *mushi* (here externalized as a separate creature) have taken over. The character's transformation from silent presence to consuming monster visualizes what happens when the mushi of loneliness and desire are fed rather than acknowledged.

腹八分目に医者いらず (*Hara hachibunme ni isha irazu*, "Eight-tenths full stomach needs no doctor") dietary wisdom with ethical implications, linking physical moderation to health[17]. 思い置きは腹の病 (*Omoi oki wa hara no yamai*, "Lingering thoughts are a stomach illness") articulating a sophisticated psychosomatic understanding: repressed emotion somatically manifests as digestive disorder[16]. 腹が太い (*Hara ga futoi*, "Fat stomach") encoding magnanimity, the capacity to stomach difficulties without complaint[16]. The *hara* proverbs uniquely capture the Japanese somatic worldview's insistence on continuity between emotional experience and physical health. The stomach is not merely a digestive organ but a site where the world is metabolized emotionally, where experience is processed into character.

手 (*Te*/Hands) as agents of connection and labour. Hands appear in 51 proverbs (17.1%), emphasizing social connection and skillful action within communal contexts. Unlike Russian hand-proverbs, which emphasize individual labor and its frustrations, Japanese hand-proverbs emphasize relationality and mutual support: 手を出す (*Te o dasu*, "Extend a hand") signifying intervention or assistance, the hand reaching toward another in help[16] (p. 512). 手がつかない (*Te ga tsukanai*, "Hands cannot reach") expresses helplessness through the metaphor of manual incapacity, the hand that wants to help but cannot[16] (p. 508). 手を繋ぐ (*Te o tsunagu*, "Join hands") encoding solidarity as physical connection, the bond made visible through linked hands[16] (p. 515). 手は口ほどにものを言い (*Te wa kuchi hodo ni mono o ii*, "Hands

speak as much as the mouth") emphasizing gestural communication, the body's eloquence beyond words[16] (p. 356). 千手観音の手の多さも方便 (*Senju Kannon no te no ōsa mo hōben*, "Even the many hands of Thousand-armed Kannon are skillful means")—Buddhist teaching linking compassion to skillful action, the many hands representing many ways to help[16]. 手取り足取り (*Te tori ashi tori*, "Taking hand and foot") encoding careful, patient instruction, guiding another's body through learning[16] (p. 360).

目 (*Me*/Eyes) as windows and instruments. Eyes feature in 39 proverbs (13.1%), emphasizing perception, vigilance, and social attunement. The eyes' function as windows to intention appears repeatedly: 目が光る (*Me ga hikaru*, "Eyes shine"), encoding vigilance and watchful attention, often with moral overtones of protective supervision[16] (p. 678). 目は口ほどに物を言い (*Me wa kuchi hodo ni mono o ii*, "Eyes speak as much as the mouth") emphasizing nonverbal communication, aligning with Japanese cultural preference for indirect expression[16] (p. 682). 目から鱗が落ちる (*Me kara uroko ga ochiru*, "Scales fall from the eyes") expressing sudden understanding, the moment when vision clears[16] (p. 423). 人の目は戸の目 (*Hito no me wa to no me*, "Others' eyes are the eye of the door") encoding social surveillance, the awareness of being watched that shapes behavior[16] (p. 234). 目くそ鼻くそを笑う (*Me kuso hana kuso o warau*, "Eye mucus laughs at nose mucus") humorous expression for criticizing others' faults while ignoring one's own[16] (p. 430).

口 (*Kuchi*/Mouth) and 顔 (*Kao*/Face) as social interfaces. The mouth appears in 28 proverbs (9.4%), the face in 25 (8.4%), both encoding social presentation and communication: 口は災いの元 (*Kuchi wa wazawai no moto*, "The mouth is the source of calamity") warning against careless speech[16] (p. 345). 口に蜜あり、腹に剣あり (*Kuchi ni mitsu ari, hara ni ken ari*, "Honey in the mouth, sword in the belly") encoding deceptive sweetness hiding hostile intent, contrasting surface presentation with visceral truth[16] (p. 278). 顔に泥を塗る (*Kao ni doro o nuru*, "To smear mud on the face") expresses public humiliation, damage to social standing[16] (p. 201). 顔が広い (*Kao ga hiroi*, "Face is wide") encoding extensive social connections[16] (p. 289).

The Japanese paremiological corpus reveals three interconnected linguistic systems essential for understanding Miyazaki's somatic imagery.

1. **The *kokoro* semantic field.** The term 心 *(kokoro)* appears in compounds that specify its functions: *kokoro-zaishō* (心在性, heart's true nature), *kokoro-gurushii* (心苦しい, heart-paining), *kokoro-bosoi* (心細い, heart-slender = anxious). Unlike English "heart" (which can be broken, warmed, hardened), Japanese *kokoro* is conceived as a *responsive field*—it *resonates* (響く, *hibiku*), *moves* (動く, *ugoku*), *clears* (晴れる, *hareru*). Miyazaki's protagonists do not "have" hearts; they *are* hearts that experience the world. Chihiro's journey is not about recovering something she lost but about *clarifying* the heart's response to reality. The name Chihiro (千尋) itself contains the character for "thousand" and "fathom", suggesting the immeasurable depth of *kokoro* that must be navigated.
2. **The *hara* as visceral truth-center.** 腹 (*hara*/stomach) functions in the Japanese somatic idiom as the site of authentic feeling, distinguished from the mouth's social performance. The contrast between honne (本音, 'true sound'—one's authentic feelings and intentions) and tatemae (建前, 'façade'—the socially acceptable front one presents) maps onto the *hara/kuchi* (mouth) distinction: the belly is the seat of *honne*, the *mouth* the instrument of *tatemae*. Proverbs such as 口に蜜あり、腹に剣あり (honey in mouth, sword in belly) encode this opposition. Miyazaki's No-Face embodies this contrast: when communicating from *hara* (gesture, presence), he is authentic; when using *kuchi* (speech, gold), he becomes monstrous. Chihiro's refusal of the spirit world's food until received as work's reward enacts proper *hara*-relationship to the world—receiving only what one has earned, metabolizing experience into a genuine self. The concept of *haragei* (腹芸, "belly art")—intuitive, non-verbal communication believed to originate in the *hara*—further illuminates No-Face's transformation: his authentic connection with Chihiro occurs through *haragei*; his inauthentic connections through speech.
3. **The *mushi* (insect/vermin) worldview.** Pre-modern Japanese medicine attributed emotions to *mushi* (虫)—invisible creatures residing in the body that cause physical and emotional phenomena when disturbed. Miyazaki's No-Face literalizes this folk understanding: the *mushi* (here externalized as a separate crea-

ture) multiply uncontrollably when fed on consumption rather than connection. Ashitaka's cursed arm, writhing with demonic energy, visualizes the *mushi* of hatred made visible. This folk-medical framework explains why Japanese somatic idioms treat emotions as quasi-independent agents rather than simply personal states.

These linguistic systems—*kokoro* as responsive field, *hara* as truth-center, *mushi* as emotional agents—constitute the cognitive substrate of Japanese somatic paremiology, which Miyazaki's cinema transforms into visible narrative while preserving its cultural logic.

Cinematic Transformation in Miyazaki's Films

***Spirited Away* (2001): Hands, stomach, and the recovery of self.** Miyazaki's masterpiece transforms Japanese somatic paremiology through the journey of ten-year-old Chihiro, whose bodily experiences chart her recovery of agency and identity. The film opens with Chihiro's limp body slumped in the back seat of a car—her hands passive, her stomach clenched with anxiety about moving to a new home. This initial somatic state enacts the helplessness encoded in 手がつかない (*Te ga tsukanai*, "Hands cannot reach"). As Chihiro navigates the spirit world, her hands progressively gain agency. The crucial sequence in which she grasps Zeniba's spinning wheel to create a hair tie that will later enable her parents' recovery transforms the proverbial understanding of hands as agents of connection. The hair tie, made by Chihiro's own hands, materializes 手を繋ぐ (*Te o tsunagu*, "Join hands")—as a physical object that binds her to the spirit world's wisdom while enabling her return to the human world. The act of spinning (*hands working material into form*) enacts 手は口ほどにものを言い (*Te wa kuchi hodo ni mono o ii*, "Hands speak as much as the mouth"). The hair tie speaks what Chihiro cannot yet articulate: her growing competence, her willingness to learn, her connection to those who help her. This act of weaving also invokes the Shintō concept of *musubi* (結び)—the sacred power of connection, creation, and completion. In Shintō, musubi is the principle that binds all things in relationship; Chihiro's hands, by weaving, participate in this cosmic connective energy.

The film's engagement with stomach imagery is equally significant. Chihiro's parents are transformed into pigs through their uncontrolled consumption—a literalization of the warning encoded in 腹八分目に医者いらず (*Hara hachibunme ni isha irazu*, "Eight-tenths full stomach needs no doctor"). Their transformation visualizes the consequences of losing proper relation to appetite, the stomach's needs overwhelming the person's humanity. The father's confident assertion that "credit cards will work" represents the modern illusion that money can replace proper relationship to food and body.

Chihiro's refusal to eat the spirit world's food (until she receives it as work's reward) also reflects Shintō understanding of *ken* (饌)—food offerings to *kami* (spirits). To eat food before it is offered is to disrupt the proper relationship between human and spiritual realms. Her eventual eating of Haku's rice balls, received *after* work (a form of offering), restores proper ritual order (the act of eating becomes simultaneously physical nourishment and emotional release). The tears falling on food enact *itadakimasu* (いただきます)—the gratitude expressed before eating—as genuine embodied emotion rather than mere formula.

The name "Chihiro" itself—千尋—contains the character for "thousand" and "fathom", suggesting the depth of the heart explored in 心こそ大事 (*Kokoro koso daiji*, "The heart is what matters most"). Yubaba's theft of her name fragments her identity, and her recovery of it through embodied memory enacts the proverbial understanding that the heart, not external circumstance, constitutes the core of self.

No-Face's transformation throughout the film provides additional somatic commentary. No-Face literalizes this folk understanding: his initial silence and loneliness represent dormant *mushi*; the gold and consumption feed these *mushi*, causing them to multiply uncontrollably, manifesting as physical distention. Initially a silent, lonely presence, he begins consuming bathhouse workers after discovering that gold can buy attention. His stomach becomes grotesquely distended, his body swelling with what he has consumed—a literalization of 腹の虫が収まらない (*Hara no mushi ga osamaranai*, "The stomach's insects won't settle"). Chihiro's administration of the emetic cake represents not merely purging but restoring proper relation to the mushi—acknowledging rather than feeding them.

***Princess Mononoke* (1997): Wounded bodies and ecological ethics.** *Princess Mononoke* deploys somatic imagery to articulate the relationship between human violence

and ecological wounding. Ashitaka's cursed arm, infected by the boar god's hatred, visualizes the idiom 腹の虫が収まらない (*Hara no mushi ga osamaranai*, "The stomach's insects won't settle") transformed from personal irritation into civilizational critique. The curse spreads through his body as hatred spreads through the world, its somatic progression enacting the Buddhist understanding that negative mental states manifest physically. The curse's origin is significant: Ashitaka kills the boar god to protect his village, but the god was already demon-possessed due to an iron ball lodged in its body—a wound inflicted by humans. The hatred that infects Ashitaka originates in human violence against nature, returning to wound the human who commits violence even in self-defense. This circular causality enacts 思い置きは腹の病 (*Omoi oki wa hara no yamai*, "Lingering thoughts are a stomach illness") on an ecological scale: the unresolved violence humans inflict on nature festers and returns as sickness.

Ashitaka's struggle with the curse models the Japanese approach to emotion: neither suppression nor indulgence, but mindful integration. He cannot eliminate the curse, but he can prevent it from controlling him. When the curse activates, his arm becomes a writhing mass of demonic energy, yet he directs this energy toward protection rather than destruction. This visualizes 心頭を滅却すれば火もまた涼し (*Shintō o metsukyaku sureba hi mo mata suzushi*, "If you extinguish the heart/mind, even fire feels cool"): the curse's fire cannot be extinguished, but the heart's relation to it can transform experience. San's body (scarred, feral, identified with wolves)—enacts the proverbial wisdom that 目は口ほどに物を言い (*Me wa kuchi hodo ni mono o ii*, "Eyes speak as much as the mouth"). Her eyes communicate her dual nature: human by birth, wolf by upbringing, she embodies the impossibility of pure categories. When she glares at human settlements, her shining eyes (目が光る, me ga hikaru) encode protective vigilance for her forest family. When she looks at Ashitaka, her eyes communicate recognition of shared otherness—both are wounded, both belong fully to neither human nor spirit world.

The curse's visibility is crucial—it makes the internal state externally perceptible. This literalizes the Japanese somatic principle that internal states inevitably manifest externally. The writhing arm makes visible what in ordinary experience remains hidden—the *mushi* (insects) of anger and hatred. This visualization enacts the proverb 腹の虫が治まらない while also commenting on the Buddhist teaching that *karma* (業) is not abstract but physically embodied. The curse's visibility to others (the villagers' fear, San's recognition) enforces accountability—one cannot hide one's internal state.

The Forest Spirit's body, which gives and takes life, transforms the Shintō understanding that the natural world is permeated by *kami* (spirits) into a cinematic experience. By day, it appears as a deer-like creature with a human face; by night, it becomes the Night Walker, a giant translucent being whose steps bring death and life simultaneously. Its decapitation by Lady Eboshi literalizes the violence of human attempts to control nature, while its searching for its severed head enacts the trauma of ecological wounding. The head's return brings a healing wave that transforms the landscape—the forest regrows, but the Spirit itself is gone, suggesting that some wounds cannot be fully healed, only integrated into a new relationship. The Forest Spirit's domain is not merely *kokoro* (heart) but *tamashii* (魂, soul)—the animating principle of life itself. While *kokoro* governs individual emotional experience, *tamashii* connects the individual to the cosmic cycle of death and rebirth. The Spirit's decapitation thus represents not just emotional wounding but soul-death.

***Howl's Moving Castle* (2004): The heart's transcendence of bodily decay.** Sophie's transformation into an old woman early in the film provides the most explicit engagement with Japanese somatic paremiology in Miyazaki's oeuvre. Her body ages while her heart remains young, enacting the proverbial wisdom that 心は身に添え (*Kokoro wa mi ni soe*, "The heart accompanies the body"). This proverb suggests that one's inner disposition manifests in one's physical state. The proverb, 四十過ぎての不美人 (*Shijū sugite no fubijin*, "After forty, any lack of beauty is one's own fault"), encodes the folk wisdom that aging reveals character. Sophie's aged body is not merely a curse but a revelation of her already-existing sense of futility—the curse externalizes what her *kokoro* already contained.

Despite her aged appearance, Sophie's actions (cleaning Howl's castle, confronting the Witch of the Waste, defending Calcifer) demonstrate that the heart's disposition, not the body's appearance, determines identity. The curse's mechanism is significant: The Witch of the Waste intends to harm Sophie through envy, but the curse manifests as premature ag-

ing because Sophie already feels old, already believes herself doomed to a quiet, uneventful life. The curse externalizes her internal condition, making visible what *kokoro* already contains. This enacts 心の鬼が身を責める (*Kokoro no oni ga mi o semeru*, "The heart's demon torments the body"): the psychological condition manifests physically.

Sophie's aged body proves unexpectedly liberating. Freed from the constraints of youthful appearance (the expectation to be pretty, modest, unassuming) she speaks with unprecedented directness, marches into the palace, confronts the king. Her body's transformation enables her heart's expression, suggesting that the relationship between *kokoro* and body is not simple container-contained but a dynamic interaction. When she sleeps, her body temporarily reverts to youth, suggesting that her authentic self remains present beneath the curse, waiting to be reclaimed. The film's climax, in which Howl's consumed heart is returned to him, visualizes the proverbial understanding that 心こそ大事 (*Kokoro koso daiji*, "The heart is what matters most"). Howl's previous emotional fragmentation (his flightiness, his avoidance of commitment, his collection of beautiful women's hearts) reflects a heart not fully possessed. He has given his heart to Calcifer to power the castle, trading emotional wholeness for magical capability. Sophie's love enables its recovery, enacting the Buddhist teaching that compassion *karuna* restores wholeness.

The moving castle itself, a grotesque assemblage of body parts and mechanical elements, transforms the proverbial association of hands with labor (手は口ほどにものを言い, *Te wa kuchi hodo ni mono o ii*, "Hands speak as much as the mouth")—into architectural form. The castle lurches, turns, and functions through the labor of Calcifer and the magic bound into its structure, visualizing how human making transforms the world. The castle's door opens to four different locations, suggesting that where we are depending on where we choose to look—a spatial metaphor for the heart's orientation.

***My Neighbour Totoro (1988):* The child's integrated body.** *My Neighbour Totoro* explores somatic experience through children's bodies, whose integration with wonder remains unbroken. Satsuki's widened eyes as she searches for Mei literalize 目が光る (*Me ga hikaru*, "Eyes shine") as protective vigilance. Her frantic running through rice fields, feet pounding earth, figures 足が出る (*Ashi ga deru*) not as financial overextension but as emotional expenditure: she gives everything in the search, her body becoming pure intention. Mei's discovery of Totoro proceeds through somatic encounter: she follows small creatures, falls through undergrowth, and lands on Totoro's belly. The belly—*hara*—becomes the site of connection, the soft place where the child rests. When Mei falls asleep on Totara, her body completely relaxed in trust, the image visualizes the proverbial wisdom that 心は一つ (*Kokoro wa hitotsu*, "The heart is one")—the child and spirit share one heart in that moment. The catbus, with its luminous eyes and multiple legs, surrealistically combines ocular vigilance and pedal mobility, suggesting that childhood itself is a mode of being in which perception and movement remain integrated[22]. Its eyes scan for Mei; its legs carry Satsuki through night and distance; its body opens to receive them. The catbus figures the world's responsiveness to those who approach it with wonder.

Mei's falling onto Totoro's belly and falling asleep there enacts the infant's somatic trust in the mother's *hara*. In Japanese tradition, the mother-child bond is somatically centered in the belly—pregnant women wrap their *hara* with *haramaki* (腹巻, belly warmers), and the umbilical cord (*hesono-o*, 臍の緒) is preserved as a connection to the mother's *hara*[23]. Totoro's soft belly becomes maternal space, the child's body completely surrendered to trust.

3.3. Cross-Cultural Framework: The Russian-Japanese Cinematic Dialogue

Miyazaki's acknowledged debt to Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* provides a concrete historical interconnection that grounds the comparison in documented influence rather than merely parallel development, as seen **Table 3**. In interviews, Miyazaki has described encountering the film in his youth and being profoundly moved by its capacity to convey emotional depth through animated imagery[24–26]. This influence manifests in several dimensions of Miyazaki's work.

- The figure of the young girl undertaking a perilous journey to save someone she loves, Gerda seeking Kai, Chihiro seeking her parents, San defending the forest, Sophie seeking Howl recurs throughout Miyazaki's oeuvre[27]. Atamanov's Gerda establishes a template for the active, resilient female protagonist that Miyazaki

develops and complexifies across his films. Both Gerda and Miyazaki's heroines act through love rather than force, persistence rather than power.

- The somatic encoding of emotional experience through bodily imagery: Gerda's freezing hands, her tears warming Kai's heart, her exhaustion reflects a shared understanding that animation can convey interior states through exterior bodily presentation. Atamanov's use of hands to express Gerda's determination and vulnerability directly anticipates Miyazaki's deployment of similar imagery: Chihiro's grasping hands, Sophie's cleaning hands, San's wounded hands [27].
- The transformation of folkloric and literary sources into visually rich narratives that preserve traditional wisdom while addressing contemporary concerns characterizes both filmmakers. Atamanov transforms Andersen; Miyazaki transforms Japanese folklore and Western children's literature [26]. Both understand animation as a medium for cultural transmission and renewal, for making ancient wisdom accessible to modern audiences.
- Both filmmakers use atmospheric conditions, fog, snow, mist, and rain, to externalize interior states. Atamanov's snowscapes figure emotional cold; Norstein's fog figures perceptual uncertainty; Miyazaki's spirit world mists figure the boundary between ordinary and extraordinary [24]. This shared atmospheric sensibility suggests a common understanding that environment and emotion are continuous, that the world reflects the soul's condition.

Comparing somatic metaphors across Russian and Japanese requires explicit acknowledgment of several linguistic challenges that shape the interpretation offered here:

1. **The problem of tertium comparationis.** When comparing Russian *dusha* and Japanese *kokoro*, what is the common ground? Neither concept maps neatly onto English "soul" or "heart". Russian *dusha* is conceived as substantive—it exists independently, has qualities (deep, dark, aching), and survives bodily death. Japanese *kokoro* is conceived as phenomenal—it is the field within which thoughts and feelings arise, but has no independent existence apart from these phenomena. This ontological difference means comparison operates at the level of *function* (both serve as an interiority locus) rather than substance.
2. **Untranslatable concepts.** Japanese *hara* has no Russian equivalent—the stomach (*желудок*) in Russian carries no moral or emotional weight. Conversely, Russian *toska* (a profound spiritual yearning) has no Japanese equivalent. These lexical gaps reveal different organizations of embodied experience: Japanese locates authentic emotion viscerally; Russian locates it in the soul's depth.
3. **Orthographic differences.** Japanese uses Chinese characters (kanji) that carry semantic associations beyond pronunciation. The character 心 (*kokoro*) is also the character for "center" or "core", enriching proverbs with visual-semantic layers that Russian Cyrillic (primarily phonetic) cannot replicate. Russian compensates through its elaborate aspectual and diminutive systems.
4. **Oral vs. written transmission.** Russian proverbs were primarily oral until Dal's 19th-century collection; their language reflects colloquial speech. Japanese proverbs were often recorded in written texts from the 8th century onward; their language preserves classical forms. This difference affects how each tradition is transformed in cinema: Norstein's films retain oral, folk qualities; Miyazaki's films reflect literary, philosophical dimensions.

Table 3. Russian and Japanese somatic configurations.

Somatic Site	Russian Paremiology	Russian Cinematic Transformation	Japanese Paremiology	Japanese Cinematic Transformation
Soul/Heart	Душа (soul): spiritual substance, opacity, depth.	Norstein's fog figures soul's unknowability; wolf's memory figures soul's depth	*Kokoro* (心): resonance, sincerity, integration.	Sophie's aged body with young heart; Chihiro's recovery of name; San's divided loyalty
Stomach	Желудок (stomach): rare, biological, non-moral. Limited paremiological presence	Minimal cinematic deployment	*Hara* (腹): visceral truth, emotion, intention.	Parents' transformation; No-Face's consumption; Ashitaka's curse as visceral rage

Table 3. *Cont.*

Somatic Site	Russian Paremiology	Russian Cinematic Transformation	Japanese Paremiology	Japanese Cinematic Transformation
Hands	Руки (ruki): labour, mastery, obligation.	Hedgehog's reaching paws; wolf's laboring body; Gerda's grasping hands	*Te* (手): connection, solidarity, skillful means.	Chihiro's spinning; Sophie's cleaning; Ashitaka's reaching hand
Eyes	Глаза (glaza): perception, moral discomfort.	Fog as perceptual distortion; Gerda's tears restoring vision	*Me* (目): vigilance, communication.	Satsuki's searching eyes; San's expressive eyes; Chihiro's widened eyes
Legs/Feet	Ноги (nogi): movement, stability, collapse.	Hedgehog's trembling movement; Gerda's persistent walking	*Ashi* (足): movement, foundation.	Satsuki's running; catbus's multiple legs
Thematic Orientation	Spiritual-existential depth; moral accountability; interior mystery	Fog, memory, historical trauma, soul's journey	Nature-integrated ethics; social harmony; visceral-emotional integration	Ecological wounding, self-recovery, wonder, connection
Religious-Philosophical Framework	Orthodox Christian anthropology; folk dualism; soul-body permeability	Orthodox liturgy; Dostoevski interiority; folk belief	Shintō–Buddhist holism; nature-human continuity; energetic body	Shintō *kami*; Buddhist compassion; Zen discipline

4. Discussion

The comparison of Russian and Japanese animation through the lens of somatic paremiology reveals both culturally specific configurations of meaning and shared concerns articulated through bodily imagery.

- **Душа (*Dusha*/Soul) and 心 (*Kokoro*/Heart): Divergent Interiorities**

The most significant divergence concerns the interiority locus. Russian animation, drawing on Orthodox anthropology, privileges душа (*dusha*/soul) as the site of moral identity and spiritual experience. Norstein's films explore the soul's unknowability and its depth. The hedgehog's encounter with the horse in the fog visualizes this unknowability—the horse remains mysterious, inaccessible, yet profoundly present. The wolf's journey through memory in *Tale of Tales* explores the soul's depth—memory as infinite interior space where past and present coexist.

Japanese animation, by contrast, privileges 心 (kokoro/heart) as the integrated site of emotion, intention, and moral disposition. Miyazaki's protagonists recover or maintain their hearts—Chihiro remembering her name, Sophie retaining her youthful heart despite an aged body, San's divided heart mediating between human and forest worlds. The distinction is not absolute—Russian animation also depicts Сердце (Serdtse/Heart), Japanese animation suggests something like soul (*tamashii*)—but the emphasis reveals different cultural logics. Russian interiority is deep, mysterious, ultimately inaccessible; Japanese interiority is resonant, responsive, ultimately connectable.

- **Желудок (*Zheludok*/Stomach) and 腹 (*Hara*/Stomach): Absence and Presence**

The most striking divergence concerns stomach imagery. Russian paremiology rarely features *желудок* (*zheludok*/stomach) in moral or emotional contexts; when it appears, it concerns *physical* rather than spiritual matters. Japanese paremiology, conversely, extensively develops 腹 (*hara*/stomach) as a site of *authentic emotion, honest intention, and visceral truth*. This difference reflects deeper cultural formations: Japanese traditions of 腹芸 (*haragei*/belly art) as intuitive communication, 丹田 (*tanden*) as energetic center in meditation, and 腹切り *(seppuku)* as honorable death all center on the stomach as the body's moral-emotional core[28]. Russian culture lacks these formations, locating moral-emotional truth instead in the soul and heart. This divergence extends beyond paremiology into grammatical structure. Russian lacks any equivalent to the Japanese compound system that generates *hara*-idioms. Conversely, Japanese lacks the aspectual distinctions that allow Russian to differentiate chronic soul-ache from sudden spiri-

tual events. These grammatical differences suggest that the body is not merely represented differently in each culture but experienced differently through the mediating structures of language.

- **Руки (Ruki/Hands) and 手 (Te/Hands): Labour and Connection**

Both traditions deploy hand imagery extensively, but with different emphases that reveal distinct cultural orientations. Russian hand proverbs emphasize labor, mastery, and social obligation encodes frustration with unfinished work; asserts individual autonomy; primarily encodes mutual complicity and cover-up in dishonest dealings—can in certain contexts suggest mutual assistance, but its dominant connotation is negative. Norstein's hedgehog, however, enacts the positive potential of hands reaching through difficulty. Japanese proverbs emphasize connection, solidarity, and skillful means, encodes social bond as physical connection; emphasizes gestural communication; the Buddhist proverb about Kannon's many hands links compassion to skillful action. Chihiro's hands weaving the hair tie, Sophie's hands cleaning Howl's castle, Ashitaka's cursed hand reaching toward San all enact these meanings—hands that connect, that communicate, that help. The difference reflects broader cultural orientations: Russian emphasis on individual struggle against circumstance versus Japanese emphasis on harmonious relation within community[29]. Both value hands; they value them differently.

- **Глаза (*Glaza*/Eyes) and 目 (*Me*/Eyes): Perception and Vigilance**

Both traditions emphasize eyes as instruments of perception and windows to interiority with culturally specific inflections. Russian proverbs emphasize the relationship between vision and action and vision as moral discomfort. Norstein's fog literalizes the distortion of vision under fear; Gerda's tears restore Kai's vision. The eyes in Russian tradition see truly but painfully; truth itself hurts to look at. Japanese proverbs emphasize vigilance and the communicative power of eyes. Satsuki's searching eyes in *My Neighbor Totoro*, San's expressive eyes, Chihiro's widening eyes as she navigates the spirit world all enact these meanings—eyes that watch protectively, that communicate without words, that register wonder. The eyes in Japanese tradition connect as much as they perceive; they are organs of relation as well as sensation.

- **Legs and Movement**

Both traditions use leg imagery to encode movement, stability, and their failures, with similar somatic understandings. Russian and Japanese both encode fear as somatic incapacitation; exhaustion as diminished capacity; the body's lower limbs, in both traditions, register what consciousness experiences. Despite these cultural specificities, the comparative analysis reveals shared human concerns articulated through bodily imagery in both traditions. These convergences suggest that beneath culturally specific configurations lie a universal human experience of embodiment that animation can access and express, as seen in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Universal concerns mediated through somatic imagery.

Universal Theme	Russian Manifestation	Japanese Manifestation	Shared Understanding
Vulnerability and Resilience	Hedgehog's trembling + continued movement	Chihiro's helplessness + grasping hands	The body serves simultaneously as a site of vulnerability and instrument of resilience; that which can be wounded is also that which can persist.
	Gerda's exhaustion + persistence	Sophie's aged body + determined action	
	Wolf's laboring body carrying memory	Ashitaka's curse + mindful integration	
Wonder and the Unknown	Fog as enveloping mystery	Spirit world as a parallel reality	Wonder is fundamentally embodied—it happens to and through the body, registered in widened eyes, trembling, hesitant movement, gradual accommodation.
	Horse as silent, majestic presence	Totoro as a wonder made visible	
	Unknown that cannot be dispelled	Realities exceeding ordinary experience	

Table 4. *Cont.*

Universal Theme	Russian Manifestation	Japanese Manifestation	Shared Understanding
Loss and Memory	Jam jar lost, reflected in stars	Chihiro's lost name recovered through work	Memory is carried in the body; what we have lost remains present in how we move, reach, feel, and persist.
	Wartime childhood preserved in apples	Sophie's lost youth preserved in heart	
	Memory carried in laboring body	Ashitaka's arm carrying the wound forward	

- **Vulnerability and Resilience**

Both Russian and Japanese animation explore human vulnerability through somatic imagery: the hedgehog's trembling in the fog, Gerda's freezing hands, Chihiro's initial helplessness, Sophie's aged body. Vulnerability registers in the body's capacity to be affected, to be wounded, to be overwhelmed yet both also depict resilience through the same bodily medium: the hedgehog's continued movement despite fear, Gerda's persistence despite exhaustion, Chihiro's grasping hands despite uncertainty, Sophie's determined cleaning despite her aged body. The body serves simultaneously as a site of vulnerability and instrument of resilience which can be wounded is also that which can persist. This duality reflects the proverbial wisdom of both traditions. Russian directly articulates the vulnerability of coexistence and agency within the same body. The Japanese asserts that the identity core persists through bodily change. Both traditions understand that the body that suffers is the same body that acts, that vulnerability and resilience are not opposites but aspects of a single embodied existence.

- **Wonder and the Unknown**

Both traditions depict encounters with the unknown through somatic experience. Norstein's fog literalizes the unknown that surrounds and permeates human experience; the horse's emergence from and recession into fog embodies mystery that cannot be dispelled. The hedgehog's body registers wonder (wide eyes, trembling, careful movement) as he encounters what he cannot understand. Miyazaki's spirit world operates similarly: Chihiro's body registers wonder, fear, and gradual accommodation to realities exceeding ordinary experience. Her widened eyes, her hesitant steps, her eventually confident movements chart the body's adjustment to wonder. Both filmmakers understand that wonder is fundamentally embodied—it is something that happens to and through the body. The body does not merely register wonder; wonder is the body's mode of being in the presence of mystery. The hedgehog's encounter with the horse, Chihiro's encounter with the spirit world, are not experiences the body has but transformations the body undergoes.

- **Loss and Memory**

Both traditions explore loss and its preservation in memory through somatic imagery. Norstein's *Tale of Tales* weaves together images of wartime childhood, the wolf carrying potatoes, the boy fishing—bodily memories that persist despite time's passage. The wolf's laboring body carries not only potatoes but the memory of hunger, of loss, of those who did not survive. The boy's fishing body carries the memory of childhood's concentration, the world reduced to the feel of line and water. Miyazaki's films similarly explore loss: Chihiro's lost name and its recovery, Sophie's lost youth and its preservation in heart, Ashitaka's lost arm and his accommodation to its curse. The body in Miyazaki carries what consciousness might forget: Chihiro's hands remember how to spin before her mind fully understands; Sophie's aged body remembers youth in sleep; Ashitaka's cursed arm remembers the violence that produced it. Both traditions understand that memory is carried in the body, that what we have lost remains present in how we move, reach, and feel. The body is not merely the container of memory but its medium—memory lives in the weight of a hand, the hesitation of a step, the catch in breath.

- **The Body as Cultural Site**

Most profoundly, both traditions understand the body as the site where culture becomes lived experience, where collective wisdom crystallizes into individual feeling and action. The proverbs that Norstein transforms and Miyazaki visualizes are not abstract teachings but condensed bodily

knowledge—ways of understanding the world that have been tested in countless bodies across generations. Norstein's fog is not merely weather but the accumulated mystery. The hedgehog's trembling is not merely fear but the body's registration of that proverbial truth. Miyazaki's hands are the accumulated wisdom of connection as survival, of solidarity as human possibility. Chihiro's grasping hands carry not only her individual intention but generations of understanding about what hands can do. Russian diminutives encode the tenderness with which Norstein approaches his vulnerable protagonist; Japanese *mushi* idioms provide the cognitive framework for understanding No-Face's transformation. These grammatical features are not merely decorative but constitutive—they shape what can be thought, felt, and shown. When Norstein's hedgehog trembles, the trembling carries the grammatical memory of every Russian diminutive ever spoken to a frightened child. When Miyazaki's No-Face swells, the swelling carries the cognitive memory of every *mushi* that ever agitated a Japanese stomach[28]. This is the deepest work of animation: making visible not only individual bodies but the grammatical bodies of entire cultures.

This is the deepest convergence: both traditions use animation to make visible the body's wisdom, to show what proverbs can only say. The cinematic transformations effected by Norstein and Miyazaki allow viewers to experience in their own bodies (through kinesthetic empathy, through haptic visuality, through emotional resonance) the wisdom that paremiological heritage preserves[30]. The comparative analysis shows three principal findings that support the study's thesis that Russian animation and Miyazaki's cinema constitute parallel branches of a shared project, the cinematic transformation of somatic paremiological heritage.

1. Russian and Japanese paremiological traditions deploy somatic imagery in culturally specific configurations that reflect distinct religious and philosophical frameworks. Russian proverbs emphasize душа (*dusha*/soul) as a moral-spiritual locus, shaped by Orthodox Christian anthropology that conceives interiority as deep, mysterious, and ultimately inaccessible. Japanese proverbs emphasize 心 (*kokoro*/heart) as an integrated site of emotion and intention, shaped by Shintō–Buddhist understandings that conceive interiority as resonant, responsive, and ultimately connectable. The prominence of stomach (*hara*) imagery in Japanese tradition and its absence in Russian marks a decisive divergence reflecting different cultural formations of embodied experience[31].
2. Russian animation (Norstein, Atamanov) and Miyazaki's cinema transform these paremiological traditions into visual narratives that preserve traditional wisdom while adapting it to contemporary concerns. Norstein's films explore the soul's depth and unknowability through haptic visuality and kinesthetic empathy—fog as perceptual distortion, memory as infinite interior space, historical trauma as bodily persistence. Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* establishes a template for somatic storytelling that directly influenced Miyazaki: the journeying girl, the freezing hands, the tears that warm the frozen heart. Miyazaki's films explore the heart's resilience and the stomach's truth through protagonists whose bodily experiences chart moral and emotional development—hands that connect, stomachs that metabolize experience, eyes that communicate and perceive[32].
3. The historical interconnection established by Miyazaki's debt to Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* provides the bridge between these traditions, demonstrating that the somatic transformation of paremiological heritage operates within and between cultures. Miyazaki's reception of Soviet animation exemplifies how embodied metaphors travel across cultural boundaries, adapting to new contexts while retaining core semantic and emotional structures[33]. The figure of the active, resilient girl; the somatic encoding of emotional experience; the atmospheric externalization of interior states; the transformation of folkloric sources into modern narrative—all these elements traverse from Atamanov to Miyazaki, from Russian to Japanese, while being transformed by their new cultural context.

Despite systematic divergences, both traditions share fundamental commitments that constitute the shared project. Both understand the body as the site where culture becomes lived experience, where collective wisdom crystallizes into individual feeling and action. Both use somatic metaphor as a vehicle for ethical teaching, encoding in bodily imagery the moral knowledge that communities need to survive and

flourish. Both recognize animation's unique capacity for making visible the wisdom that proverbs preserve, for allowing viewers to experience in their own bodies (through kinesthetic empathy, through haptic visuality, through emotional resonance) the truths that generations have encoded in language [34].

The body in both traditions is not merely biological matter but a cultural medium, not merely individual possession but collective inheritance. The hedgehog's trembling, Gerda's tears, the wolf's laboring body, Chihiro's grasping hands, Sophie's aged determination, Ashitaka's cursed arm—all carry not only individual meaning but the accumulated wisdom of their traditions. In this, Norstein and Miyazaki are engaged in the same work: making visible the body's wisdom, showing what proverbs can only say, preserving for new generations the somatic heritage that makes culture possible. These findings confirm the study's thesis: Russian animation and Miyazaki's cinema constitute parallel branches of a shared project (the cinematic transformation of somatic paremiological heritage) that reveals both culturally specific configurations of meaning and universal human concerns articulated through bodily imagery [35]. The Russian-Japanese comparison, framed with the Russian tradition as a point of departure and historical influence, illuminates how somatic language functions in the formation and transmission of cultural identity across geographical and cultural boundaries.

5. Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that Russian animation, as exemplified by Yuri Norstein and Lev Atamanov, and Japanese animation, as exemplified by Hayao Miyazaki, constitute parallel branches of a shared project: the cinematic transformation of somatic paremiological heritage into narratives that preserve cultural wisdom while addressing universal human concerns. The findings reveal systematic patterns in how each tradition deploys somatic imagery (Russian privileging ДУША (*dusha*/soul) as a site of spiritual-existential depth, Japanese privileging 腹 (*hara*/stomach) as a site of visceral-emotional truth) while also revealing shared preoccupations with vulnerability and resilience, wonder and the unknown, loss and memory that unite these traditions across cultural boundaries. The historical interconnection established by Miyazaki's debt to Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* grounds this comparison in documented influence rather than merely parallel development, demonstrating that the somatic transformation of paremiological heritage operates not only within cultures but between them. Miyazaki's reception of Soviet animation exemplifies how embodied metaphors travel across cultural boundaries, adapting to new contexts while retaining core semantic and emotional structures.

The theoretical framework integrating embodiment theory and cultural semiotics has proven adequate to the materials' complexity, illuminating how somatic language functions simultaneously as a repository of cultural specificity and as a bridge to shared human experience. The body in both traditions is not merely biological matter but a cultural medium, not merely individual possession but collective inheritance. The hedgehog's trembling, Gerda's tears, the wolf's labouring body, Chihiro's grasping hands, Sophie's aged determination, Ashitaka's cursed arm—all carry not only individual meaning but the accumulated wisdom of their traditions. In this, Norstein and Miyazaki are engaged in the same work: making visible the body's wisdom, showing what proverbs can only say, preserving for new generations the somatic heritage that makes culture possible. Their films dissolve boundaries between culturally specific and universally human, proving that the body is indeed a timeless vessel for storytelling. Yet this dissolution does not erase cultural specificity; it transforms it into a resource for shared understanding. The body that speaks in Norstein's fog is a Russian body, shaped by Orthodox Christianity and folk tradition, by historical trauma and cultural memory. The body that speaks in Miyazaki's bathhouse is a Japanese body, shaped by Shintō–Buddhism and communal ethics, by ecological awareness and technological anxiety. That these bodies can speak to each other, can be understood across cultural boundaries, testifies to the shared humanity that underlies cultural difference.

The study has also acknowledged limitations. Translating culturally embedded metaphors poses inherent challenges that the reverse-translation protocol mitigated but could not eliminate. Concepts such as Japanese *kokoro* and Russian *dusha* resist simple cross-cultural mapping, and the interpretations offered here remain partial, subject to revision through further research. Eurocentric tendencies in

cross-cultural analysis remain a risk, though the reliance on Lotman's semiotics itself a product of Russian-Estonian scholarship provided analytical tools grounded in one of the traditions under examination.

Future research should extend this comparative framework to other traditions, other media, other somatic configurations. Chinese somatic idioms with their own complex mappings of internal organs to emotional states; Indigenous American understandings of embodied relation to landscape; African proverb traditions with distinctive bodily imagery—all offer opportunities for testing and refining the theoretical framework developed here. Digital and globalized contexts, where somatic metaphors evolve through transnational circulation, provide natural laboratories for studying cultural transformation in real time. Ultimately, this study has sought to illuminate how bodies "speak" across traditions, how the languages encode both cultural uniqueness and shared humanity. The body that hungers, fears, labours, loves, grieves, and persists is the same body everywhere; the meanings made of these experiences differ. Norstein and Miyazaki, each working in his tradition, each drawing on his culture's proverbial wisdom, each transforming that wisdom through the art of animation, show us both the difference and the sameness. Their films teach us to see our own bodies anew, to recognize in trembling hands and searching eyes, in labouring limbs and persevering hearts, the accumulated wisdom of generations. This is the shared project: making visible the body's truth, preserving somatic heritage, enabling culture to continue through the bodies that carry it.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable. This study did not involve human subjects research requiring ethical approval beyond informed consent for linguistic consultations.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. The study involved consultation with bilingual speakers and cultural anthropologists who provided informed consent for participation, but no experimental procedures or clinical data were collected.

Data Availability Statement

The paremiological corpora compiled for this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The film analyses are based on publicly available works.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

AI Use Statement

The author declares that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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