



Čulík, J. (2018) In search of authenticity: Věra Chytilová's films from two eras. *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, 9(3), pp. 198-218.
(doi: [10.1080/2040350X.2018.1469197](https://doi.org/10.1080/2040350X.2018.1469197))

This is the author's final accepted version.

There may be differences between this version and the published version.
You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/161192/>

Deposited on: 05 June 2018

Enlighten – Research publications by members of the University of Glasgow
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk>

In search of authenticity: Věra Chytilová's films from two eras

The Czech New Wave filmmakers, including Chytilová, were undoubtedly influenced by the French *cinéma vérité* approach, yet the reasons why they had embraced the principles of authenticity and integrity were entirely their own, stemming as they did from their own local political and social experiences at that time. In the 1960s, Chytilová subverted ideology not only by concentrating on authenticity, but also by formal experimentation. This article will deal with the following research question: How did the political and cultural circumstances of the day in two different eras, in the liberal 1960s and in the post-invasion 1970s and 1980s, influence Věra Chytilová's working method as a film maker and her possibilities to express in her film work what she intended to say. In examining Chytilová's work in the political, social and cultural context of the times, the article will use standard structuralist methodology, assessing the meaning of Chytilová's filmatic texts, using the work of the Czech structuralist Jan Mukařovský as an inspiration (Mukařovský 1977).

Věra Chytilová (1929 – 2014) was the first woman ever who was allowed to study film direction at FAMU, the Film Academy in Prague.¹ She was one of the seven students, chosen out of a hundred applicants, who were admitted to the class of film director Otakar Vávra² and who formed the backbone of the Czech New Wave, an inventive and highly creative cinematographic movement, characteristic for the liberalising Czechoslovakia of the 1960s. All the other members of the Otakar Vávra class were men.

Chytilová was 28 when she was admitted for study at the Prague Film School in 1957. She says that one of the reasons she was accepted was that Vávra wanted to have at least some 'mature' students in his class. She started studying at FAMU when cultural and political liberalisation was slowly beginning in post-Stalinist Czechoslovakia, so her unorthodox, defiant and provocative attitude was not immediately punished.³

Before being admitted for study at FAMU, Chytilová made a number of false starts. She began studying architecture at university in Brno, when she gave that up, she worked as a technical draughtswoman and a laboratory assistant and then, in 1953-1957, in a number of auxiliary jobs at the Prague Barrandov Film Studios. These early experiences are extremely important for her development as an artist. Her early films are a reflection of the detachment and of the existential confusion of her younger years. However, through all the regimes that she experienced, she always

retained her fierce independence, demanding the right to make all decisions about her film making. This was not always easy or possible. In all periods of her life, her films were regarded as outrageous by some people, either because of her bold formal experimentation, or because of her social and political engagement.

Chytilová's films from the 1960s are full of energy and innovation. But at the onset of 'normalisation', in the wake of the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, Chytilová was prevented from making films for six years. When she was allowed to return to film making in the mid-1970s, it was under conditions of censorship and administrative harassment. How did the new situation impact on the style and the message of her films? This article will deal with Chytilová's contribution to world cinema in the 1960s, when she was able to work without commercial and ideological pressure, and with the transformation of Chytilová's approach to her work under the pressure of the normalisation era. How much of her original vision and philosophy was she able to retain in the changed atmosphere of the 1970s and 1980s?

With hindsight, it seems clear that Chytilová's working method, beliefs and philosophy were the results of her personal experiences of becoming an adult in the period of late Stalinism and early liberalisation of the second half of the 1950s. She was undoubtedly influenced as a filmmaker by the relatively free atmosphere at the Prague Film Academy during the time of her studies there.

The young filmmakers of the Czech New Wave were irritated by political propaganda and by an ideological approach which they saw all around them. In response to this, they set out to re-examine reality, regardless of any ideology. They respected that life is basically unknowable: 'We wanted to go into the streets, to film easily, but to film real life. But not to connect it. To retain mystery in what we filmed. Not to lead the viewer so that he would know everything. Not to say what we don't know. Not to make decisions. Not to offer solutions,' said Chytilová about their approach. Ivan Passer added: 'We were posing questions: What is reality? It was a search for a definition of very simple things. Because they were all deformed.'⁴

It was a unique feature of film making in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, that filmmakers were almost totally free from the commercial dictates of the market. As a result, a culture of elitism arose amongst Czech filmmakers of the 1960s. Filmmakers including Chytilová felt free to experiment with their medium. 'They warned me at the studios that I will break my neck [by making *Sedmikrásky/Daisies*],' said Chytilová. 'But I did want to break my neck.'⁵

The notion of elitism, in operation in Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 1960s must be explained. A society which was not governed by the commercial principle had come into being. Thus writers, artists and film makers were increasingly free to address society with their experimental works. At the same time, most of them, like Chytilová, were deeply interested in communicating with the public. And the public were interested in their work because in an atmosphere of authoritarianism, it took over the role of public political discourse.

A number of commentators see Chytilová as an early feminist.⁶ It is true that her powers of observation are broader and deeper than were the powers of observation of a standard male film maker of the time.⁷ She was trying to look at the world from the point of view of women, and allowed them to speak because she respected them as human beings. But she denied that she was a feminist.⁸ She said that she did not believe in feminism, but in individualism. 'I am an enemy of stupidity and simple-mindedness in both men and women,' she said many times.⁹

Chytilová sympathised with young women, and, unusually for her times, gave them space and analysed their attempts at interaction with the world around them. She did show that for many men, women are inferior beings, slabs of meat, sex objects. She showed that while men want sex, women want a fair hearing which they almost never get. Chytilová had many female protagonists in her films and her sympathy for their predicament remained unabated for her whole cinematic career. Nevertheless, she was quite brutal of showing the idiocy of both men and women.

Throughout her career as a film director, Chytilová was committed to morality, civic engagement and opposition to 'stupidity' (including that of the state). She was concerned with the relentless passage of time, repeatedly giving warnings that our time on this earth is limited and that we should not waste our lives on nonsense. The relentless passage of time is a theme that appears in most of her films, implicitly or explicitly.

Chytilová's working method

From the beginning of her career, Chytilová was praised for creating the genre of 'sociological film' in Czechoslovakia. Commentators have tried to define this genre as 'documentary film making with a strong interest in social issues'.¹⁰ In this, she was undoubtedly influenced by the techniques of 'cinéma vérité'. However, Chytilová's 'sociological' documentaries were carefully scripted and acted. Nevertheless, the script was only a point of departure. Chytilová was capable of totally

changing the direction of her films on the set.¹¹

The bulk of Chytilová's creative work was always done in the editing room. She specialised, in cooperation with her editors, in creating sophisticated collages, concentrating on hidden inter-relationships between motifs and the meaning of individual shots.

Jan Kučera sees Chytilová, along with some of the other Czech New Wave film makers, as part of the European avant-garde of the 1960s. In his view, these film makers were interested in the 'internal region of the world which cannot be grasped by the senses'. They created a specific film language in order to express the spiritual reality of human existence. While in the West these experiments ended in pessimism, in the filmmakers' distrust in human reason and freedom to act, Czech film makers were usually optimistic. 'It is true that the films made by the Czech New Wave filmmakers are often criticised for being incomprehensible or elitist, but people need to realise that these filmmakers were trying to solve new problems and were attempting to create an entirely new film language,'¹² says Kučera.

'I felt that there was no truth in film. I wanted to capture authenticity, arbitrariness of things, even to pretend immediacy. I wanted to create compositions so that they would look amateurish, accidentally recorded,' said Chytilová¹³ when she explained the protest of her generation of film makers against artificiality in film making: 'I want to conduct a dialogue with the viewer. I want to interfere with reality. I am interested in everything, in everyday things, in the *stinking* aspects of life.'

In 1994, Věra Chytilová summed up her views about what film can achieve and how it communicates in a theoretical article, published in *Acta academica*: 'Individual style enriches film by giving it additional meaning. External reality is only a conductor in film. It is the aim of film to enable an individual to make an impact on the outside world by its ability to unify reality by a subjective semantic gesture. The characteristic features of a film's semantic gesture depend on its aesthetic impact, whose two main aspects are deformation and organisation. It is the ultimate task of a work of art to renew the relationship between human beings and reality in such a way that a new, more adequate way of seeing is revealed on the basis of which a new order of human co-existence can be built.'¹⁴

Chytilová's artistic credo, quoted above, seems very close to the principles of Viktor Shklovsky's

ostranenie (defamiliarisation).¹⁵ As Frank Kessler explains,¹⁶ according to Shklovsky, ‘the things that surround us have grown so familiar that our perception of them is automatized and they have become “invisible”. In order to make object “unfamiliar”, the artist must gain some kind of understanding of the automatized way in which the object is usually perceived, so that the chosen devices can work against this.’ Jan Mukařovský, the Czech structuralist scholar, also argues¹⁷ that art communicates new insights by stylisation and defamiliarisation.

Chytilová was lucky that she emerged as a film maker on the Czechoslovak film scene more or less at the time when directors received free funding from the state while ideological pressure had eased. But she jealously guarded her independence even after the imposition of censorship in Czechoslovakia. After the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion, she refused an offer to go to the West because she feared she would lose her artistic freedom there.¹⁸ She pitied Miloš Forman who ‘was forced to film things in America which he did not understand’.¹⁹ Chytilová’s energetic fighting in order to retain her independence and creative freedom at all times, however, took a heavy toll on the director. ‘In the end, I saw in front of me a tired woman, whose life had been full of drastic conflicts,’ says critic Jan Foll about his encounter with Chytilová in 2005.²⁰

In the 1960s, Chytilová was able to subvert ideology and hypocrisy by experimenting both with new topics and form. . But how was her work influenced by administrative obstacles and by a changed social ethos in the 1970s and 1980s? Let us compare the two periods.

The 1960s:

Early ‘pseudo-documentaries’

Strop / Ceiling (1961) is Chytilová’s graduation film. It is based on her own confusion in the early years of adulthood. ‘It deals with a very personal theme,’ said Chytilová. ‘*Strop* is about that restlessness that resides in those human beings who know that they have got stuck half way in life and that the ceiling of their potential is higher than they thought.’²¹ ‘My theme was to show a person who realised that she was deluded, gradually realised what was important and came to a definitive decision to change everything.’²² Chytilová, however, felt that the public had failed to understand her film correctly. ‘In this sense, it is a failure for me.’²³

The film depicts an ordinary day of an ordinary girl who works as a model, takes part in a fashion show, wastes time in town, talks to students in a student refectory during lunchtime (Chytilová used both actors and non-actors for this scene), admits to them that she has left medical school, has an

encounter in the evening with her selfish boyfriend, who absolutely rejects the notion of having a child with her ('it is too expensive') and decides to leave him in order to take control of her own life. The film is a study of the situation of a young girl who is ogled by men,²⁴ has to fend off smutty talk, and lives in a selfish environment of incredibly superficial, sex driven men and women. Amidst all this adversity, the protagonist is passive and is silent through most of the scenes. This motif, eloquently summarised by the Latin saying *Dum tacent clamant: While they are silent, they shout*, appears in Chytilová's films many times and can probably be construed as an example of her 'feminism', although she would probably interpret it as instance of sympathy and understanding for a neglected and overlooked human being.²⁵ 'Marta is a victim of ever more disaffected silence. Her life is governed by alien words pronounced by men.'²⁶

Another typical feature of much of Chytilová's work is that the sound of the film is constructed quite independently of the images and interacts with them as a self-contained element, equal to, or even more important than the visuals.²⁷ There is much inner monologue and extremely inane, incidental conversation. Parts of it are non-diegetic comments, a series of comic reactions to what is seen on the screen, by an unknown older male voice (actor Jiří Sovák).

As is also the case in most films by Chytilová, music plays an important part. Chytilová systematically constructs the image of ordinary life in the streets of Prague in the early 1960s and uses pop songs from the period in order to enhance it. Chytilová has always paid considerable attention to her efforts to capture the atmosphere of the times in which her films take place. She does this usually with music.²⁸

The film is a hybrid of documentary and non-documentary features. The main character is played by an amateur Marta Kaňovská, a real model, who sometimes surprised Chytilová with her spontaneous contributions to the film: 'It would not have ever occurred to me that you can leave your boyfriend and yet not say a word to him that you are leaving.' As in all her 'documentaries', Chytilová is interested in constructing an image of casual, ordinary existence, but the film is actually quite heavily stylised.²⁹ Some of the scenes were filmed with a silent camera and the mosaic of sound and dialogue was created by Chytilová from additional material recorded elsewhere. Chytilová's brother Julian played the selfish boyfriend, but he was dubbed by someone else's voice.

The silence of a young girl is again the leitmotif in *Pytel blech / A Bagful of Fleas* (1962), another early 'pseudo-documentary' by Chytilová. Again, in this film, the soundtrack has a fully

independent existence entering as an equal semantic partner into a dialogue with the film's visuals. The message of the film is introduced in the soundtrack as early as during the introductory credits. Someone is trying to play the song 'Za rok se vrátím' ('I will be back in a year's time') with one finger on the piano. The song refers to the compulsory national service, done by young men in communist Czechoslovakia who have to leave their girlfriends behind. One of the main characters of the film, a young apprentice Jana, is hauled before a semi-Stalinist 'people's court' made up of the officials of the factory where she works and the dormitory where she sleeps. She is criticised for avoiding work, being recalcitrant and uncooperative. Like Marta in *Ceiling*, Jana is silent. It is beyond her dignity to share her personal problems with the idiotic officials. It transpires that her boyfriend was due to go to the army and she avoided work because she needed to say a proper good-bye to him. But why share this with idiots? The disdain of Chytilová's young heroines expressed towards the mostly male establishment which oppresses them is clearly detectable.

A Bagful of Fleas is another example of Chytilová's working method. It takes place in a dormitory of young female apprentices, textile workers. Although the film has a documentary feel, it was almost completely scripted by Chytilová and then acted by the girls.³⁰ 'There are highly stylised scenes, totally improvised scenes',³¹ scripted scenes. There are synchronous dialogues, inner monologues, non-diegetic dialogues. From its inception, the film is based on the inner monologues of a group of girls. It is a vivid portrait of their everyday life, their mentality, their ways of thinking. What was stunning was the fact that Chytilová simply let the girls speak.³² As in *Ceiling*, the soundtrack is mostly asynchronous, the girls' debates about boys, about love, about film, about clothes, about the Wild West, about sewing, about smoking, about religion often take place while the camera is looking somewhere else. In a remarkable sequence in which a lecturer is trying to teach the girls about Scandinavia, we hear the lecturer's voice for almost a whole minute, while the camera does not show his face. Instead, we see close ups of the girls' faces. Through its construction, the sequence convincingly demonstrates the girls' lack of interest in the lecture. As in *Ceiling*, music plays an important role, throughout, both period pop music and Stalinist 'construction' songs, greatly contributing to the atmosphere of the times.

Two women are in the centre of Chytilová's attention in her third pseudo-documentary, *O něčem jiném / Something Different* (1963). The inclusion of two female protagonists and a decision to compare and contrast their lives, coming to the conclusion that they are both unsatisfactory, was highly innovative, arousing interest abroad.³³ In this, her first feature film, Chytilová follows the difficult training of Czech gymnast Eva Bosáková until she wins a nationwide competition. The training sequences may seem overlong and far too technical, but they are intended to communicate

the extreme psychological and physical exertion needed in order to achieve sporting success. It is quite surprising how brutal Bosáková's trainer is towards her. At one point, he even slaps her. The extended sessions of sporting exertion are juxtaposed with observation of the life of a middle-class housewife who has a non-communicative husband and a spoiled five-year old son. While Bosáková's training progresses, the unsatisfied housewife strikes up a temporary relationship with a young lover, but he cares only about himself. When the housewife's husband confesses that he has a mistress and wants a divorce, the housewife makes a scene, blackmailing him using the argument of their son's wellbeing, so the family unit survives and continues its unsatisfactory existence. The same feeling of dissatisfaction envelops the gymnast Bosáková – she wins the nationwide competition – but so what? She is just an object. She is abused by her male trainers almost the same way as the housewife is abused by her husband and her lover. No real communication takes place. Chytilová is asking: Why don't people stop and think about their life? 'I wanted something, but I don't know what, now...' is a sentence the housewife repeats twice in the film.³⁴ Life is elsewhere, the film implies, and asks, but where?

Is *Something Different* a feminist film? 'Have I focused on women in this film?' asks Chytilová. 'I would not have said so. I am not interested in women and in women's problems. For me, all this is just a pretext for showing certain relationships. I am interested in how impossible it is for people to learn certain things. I am interested in the subjugation that women have created for themselves.'³⁵

Chytilová communicates her message in this film primarily through the techniques of *cinéma vérité*, yet again the film is stylised. 'When you film routine household events and then deform them by editing, you will create a feeling that life is unbearable, that it is a prison,' said Chytilová.³⁶ The transitions between the two narratives are often achieved through close-ups. Emphasis is again placed on the independence and authenticity of the soundtrack with many dialogues recorded while the camera is looking somewhere else. Jan Čuřík's cinematography oscillates between highly stylised and highly realistic scenes. Often, in order to emphasise the authenticity of the interaction between the sportswoman and her trainer and between the mother and her child, the film includes long scenes without any cuts.³⁷ Occasionally, images are emphasised by freeze-frames.

Critics have often commented on the hybrid nature of *Something Different*, pointing out that this is a film that uses both a documentary approach and that of making a feature film with actors. Chytilová defends herself: 'I really do not know where the borderline between a documentary and a feature film with actors is. You see, I do not know a single documentary which would not be at least partially constructed, staged. Surely truthfulness is not the result of a film making *method*, it is the

result of a film making *idea*.’³⁸

The film *Something Different* is disturbing because the two female protagonists operate in worlds which are far away from each other, yet they are both forced to deal with similar issues. Neither of the two protagonists manages to change her life in a meaningful way. The connection between their parallel lives is made by means of a ‘sophisticated network of original visual ideas and links in sound. The film is a complex image made up of the movement of helpless bodies and tormented souls. It asks the question “What is the point of this all?”’ Until *Something Different*, no one in Czechoslovakia had raised the direct existential question ‘What is the meaning of life?’ says Jiří Cieslar.³⁹ ‘This film tried to show that everything contains additional meaning. Even the most superficial life always contains something extra, points somewhere else. Both women always struggle with something else that is happening to them at the moment, with something of which they are not aware yet,’ says Chytilová.⁴⁰ The name of the film, *Something Different*, is bottomless – it continually goes beyond.⁴¹ Here Chytilová remains faithful to her conviction that films should express even what is inexpressible about life and should ask questions about its mystery.

Two experimental feature films: *Daisies* and *The Fruit of Paradise*

Automat svět / At the World Cafeteria (1965), Chytilová’s 22-minute contribution to *Perličky na dně / Pearls at the Deep*, a collection of five short films, made by directors of the Czech New Wave of short stories by writer Bohumil Hrabal (1914–1997), stands on the crossroads between Chytilová’s earlier work in the category of fictitiously constructed ‘documentaries’ and her experimental feature films of the 1960s. Towards the end of *At the World Cafeteria* the camera of Jaroslav Kučera becomes heavily stylised. Graphic artist Vladimír Boudník and a girl in her wedding dress walk through the countryside after nightfall, braving a storm, and the wind turns the girl’s wedding dress into fantastically contorted white shapes against the darkness of the night.

‘My husband Jaroslav Kučera had been a painter before he became a cameraman and he was deeply interested in the visual aspects of the film image,’ says Chytilová. ‘After *At the World Cafeteria* we realised that film should express what is inexpressible in any other way. Reality should be grasped in its completeness. We felt that film should stimulate the viewers visually, broadening their ability of perception. We wanted to find out whether it would be possible to communicate this. We did not know how far we could go, where the limits might be.’⁴²

Chytilová embarked on a new, daring and highly original stage of her career when she teamed up with Jaroslav Kučera and the script-writer Ester Krumbachová. Chytilová, Krumbachová and Kučera held brainstorming sessions: ‘We gave one another full freedom to speak while searching for the outer limit of the communicability of ideas,’ says Chytilová, continuing: ‘Krumbachová turned me away from being descriptive. For Ester, analysis was fundamental, she thought about the deeper meaning of each scene. She constantly highlighted the fact that each theme raises a number of questions even before you start writing. She knew that we needed to ask over and over again what the theme is about, what it is that interests us in the theme and what we want to discuss with the viewer. For instance, if a film shows a murder, is this about cruelty or is it about the ability to kill? We always thought we needed to plant a seed and we did not know yet what might arise from it.’⁴³

In Chytilová’s view, *Sedmikrásky / Daisies* (1966) ‘is about people’s ability to destroy things, which is the opposite of creativity, yet there is a certain creative attractiveness within destruction.’⁴⁴ ‘We wanted to make a film that is aesthetically pleasing and interesting, yet it is an image of destruction,’ she added.⁴⁵ All the nasty and revolting actions are subject to a strict aesthetic order and high stylisation, so that even what is disgusting becomes beautiful.⁴⁶ *Daisies* shows two young girls, Marie I and Marie II, who decide that the world is spoilt, so they themselves will also be spoilt and destructive. But the ‘destructive acts’ that the girls commit are fairly naive, innocent and infantile. The girls talk, behave and move like puppets.⁴⁷ They are schematic and identical.⁴⁸ There is an absence of meaning in their lives and their actions. The presence of boredom is almost palpable. They seem incapable of experiencing anything.⁴⁹ The film has aspects of a farce and is strongly influenced by slapstick comedy from the silent era. It is a successful symbiosis of playing games and of authenticity. Its aesthetics is based on inner tension between different types of stylisation. The naturalistic and the fantasy elements of the film are united by the characters of the two Maries. They epitomize a revolt against good manners, i.e. against the establishment.⁵⁰

Commentators have sometimes seen this film as a manifesto of feminist liberation.⁵¹ There is material in the film which seems to encourage this interpretation, in particular in the extended sequences when the two girls exploit and make fun of various aging men who are vainly trying to get them into bed. Again, there is male desire for sex, but no meaningful communication. If the world, represented by powerful, ageing men, is interested only with sex with them, it seems to be justified that the girls rebel against such a state of affairs by being ‘naughty’. But while the world dominated by men is evil, the girls are also acting, or pretend-acting like idiots. What is, for instance, their point in tolerating the company of the aging man whom they make fun of. Is their

somewhat childish obsession with food and the destruction of food an expression of their social helplessness, due to the general subjugation of women? In a true Švejkian tradition, this could still be interpreted as a protest.

Ester Krumbachová created the costumes and symbols in the film. It was Krumbachová who proposed that one of the girls should be associated with a wreath, the other one with a scarf. 'It was under Krumbachová's influence that I realised that everything in the film must have a second meaning, that each action must go beyond what is merely shown on the screen. Only such action should be included in film which also carries a second meaning, even though many people will not be able to identify it,' says Chytilová, pointing out that the idea of 'destruction' is present in everything, in every move of the camera.⁵²

The film is remarkable also due to the highly original and creative work of cinematographer Jaroslav Kučera, who introduced stunning techniques of tinting scenes in different colours⁵³ and a series of quick, kaleidoscopic sequences of close-ups which emphasise the materiality and colourfulness of various textures in an almost Švankmajeresque style. The girls' naughtiness is almost totally related to their obsession with food and with eating and drinking.⁵⁴ This, like Švankmajer's films, highlights the textures of food and also hints towards a criticism of mindless consumption. Kučera's contribution to the visual creativity of Chytilová's films was substantial. *Daisies* also has an extremely inventive soundtrack and is particularly notable for its ironic use of various pieces of classical music. Music is used with irony from the very beginning of the film, when during the introductory title sequence the viewer is 'mobilised into war' by the sound of a military bugle accompanied by a drum. Apart from being ironic, music turns provocative and destructive, in particular during the scenes of inane interaction with elderly men. Mozart's choral music is used ironically during one of the girl's telephone conversation with a suitor.

Structurally, *Daisies* is a collage in time and space.⁵⁵ Chytilová provocatively juxtaposes scenes, motifs and sounds which happened at different times and in different places, examining their inter-relationships in the process. The film is not linear, its structure depends on the complex inter-relationships of its constituent parts. Cinéma vérité techniques are still detectable, especially in the sequences featuring a woman working as a toilet attendants. These realistic scenes function as elements of poetry in the film. In *Daisies* as in many other of her films, Chytilová is obsessed with the worry of wasting time and again urgently raises the question about the meaning of life. The recurrent ticking of the clock in the soundtrack is a warning in this sense, as is the girl's inane comment: 'We are still young and have the whole of our lives ahead of us.'⁵⁶

Although *Daisies* is usually now regarded as part of the canon of classic European cinema, it was not always accepted. The Venice Film Festival refused to screen it.⁵⁷ In May 1967, Czech communist MP Pružinec lodged an official complaint against the film in the Czechoslovak parliament. He was outraged that food was being destroyed and wasted in the final scenes of the film.⁵⁸

Ovoce stromů rajských jíme / The Fruit of Paradise (1969) is perhaps the most experimental film that Chytilová ever made. It was a testimony to the remarkable levels of creative freedom Czech film makers had in 1968-1969, in the months that the Prague Spring was dying after the Warsaw Pact-led invasion of August 1968. The film was again the result of intensive brainstorming between Chytilová, Kučera and Krumbachová. It is highly innovative, especially due to the camera work by Jaroslav Kučera. It places very high demands on the viewer. Chytilová and Krumbachová were interested in evoking the range of meanings each individual scene of a film could communicate, as well as in the clusters of secondary meaning which can rise from the juxtaposition of different scenes. They clearly expected that the viewer should construct his or her meaning of this film.

The film opens with a highly stylized visual sequence showing the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. Also living in the Garden of Eden is Robert (the devil), who is trying to tempt them. He is a murderer who has killed six women. He is trying to murder Eva, but she eventually unmasks him and kills him. The film takes place at a country hotel and on a beach and is based on a series of encounters between Eva and Robert.⁵⁹

The script of the film, written by Krumbachová, is a parody of a thriller, but Chytilová's film gave the work a series of complex meanings, argues Jan Kučera.⁶⁰ The introduction and the conclusion of the film tell the viewer how to interpret it. A quotation from the Bible about original sin is sung in the introduction. This, coupled with the images of two naked people without any individual characteristics, a man and a woman, defines the film as an allegory, as a myth with an ethical message. Then the director slowly introduces a 'normal' world, with two characters, Josef and Eva and a relatively banal plot, which revolves around a crime. Again, as in her previous films, Chytilová combines realistic motifs with symbolic and metaphorical motifs. Some scenes start in an ordinary, 'real' world, yet they end up with what is, at first sight, an incomprehensible conclusion. In other scenes the order is reversed: they start with incomprehensible motifs which need to be deciphered, and end with an everyday banality. Both the principal characters, Eva and Robert, display incongruent, conflicting features. In Jan Kučera's view, the constant mixing of the realistic

12

characteristics of protagonists with their symbolic characteristics is reminiscent of *commedia dell'arte*, the impact of which is also based on an interplay of conflicting meanings.

Jaroslav Kučera's experimental photography emphasises the twin structure of the film. Realistically photographed scenes are juxtaposed to highly stylised images. Kučera uses wide-angle lenses which deform what is being filmed. In selected scenes, he disrupts the fluidity of movement by printing the frames of the film in the ratio of 3:1. This creates the impression of a 'stuttering', disrupted movement. The narrative sequences in the film are photographed in a naivist style. One characteristic feature of this is that there are never any shadows.⁶¹ Almost all of the film is shot in warm colours and they carry an important allegorical meaning. The warm colours also make the viewer feel comfortable. Important symbolic meaning is carried by the colours of red and white, so much so that they can be regarded as independent protagonists in the film, argues Jan Kučera. White has usually been interpreted as a symbol of innocence and ignorance, black as a symbol of danger and death, red as a symbol of knowledge and truth. According to Iveta Jusová and Dan Reyes, colour, just as all features which are associated with women, have long been regarded as suspect in Western culture. But Chytilová highlights both feminine concerns and colour, thus subverting Western poetics. *The Fruit of Paradise* includes moments 'when colour is unquestionably in charge' and watching the film becomes pure sensual experience.⁶²

Jan Kučera sees *The Fruit of Paradise* as a film opera, a unique work in Czech and world cinematography. The film has a remarkable music track, composed by Zdeněk Liška. His music includes stylised noises and incorporates chanted dialogues. Dialogues in the film consist of extremely short, simple, 'hollow' sentences. All the dialogues were re-recorded without making them synchronous with the image (we find this approach in many of Chytilová's previous films, but in *The Fruit of Paradise*, this is especially exaggerated). Thus the dialogues feel as though they are 'raw, dead, as voices from another world'.⁶³ In Kučera's view, in *The Fruit of Paradise*, Chytilová presents a narrative as a game. The film is an allegory about seeking truth and about the need for going beyond it. Jusová and Reyes argue that it is a feminist film, tracing the character development of Eva from a naive person, suffering under the condescending gaze of males, to a fully fledged, mature and independent personality.⁶⁴

The Fruit of Paradise was made in co-production with the Belgian production company Elisabeth Films and its international distribution at the beginning of the 1970s remained limited. The bosses of the Czechoslovak Communist Party made sure that the film's distribution in Czechoslovakia was also extremely limited.⁶⁵ The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1970, but it was

found basically incomprehensible.⁶⁶ The London *Times* characterised it as ‘a feeble Czechoslovak film with minimal meaning’.⁶⁷

Yet, despite such criticism, *The Fruit of Paradise* can be regarded as a culmination of her first creative period, due to its bold stylistic experimentation, achieved in cooperation with scriptwriter Ester Krumbachová and cinematographer and visual artist Jaroslav Kučera. In this film, Chytilová probed the very limits of the medium of film.

The 1970s and 1980s:

Defiant public spiritedness under the yoke of censorship in a consumerist era

The view of the judges at the Cannes Film Festival and of the London *Times* that Chytilová produced ‘feeble’, ‘incomprehensible’ experimental work was undoubtedly held by the new masters at the Prague Barrandov film studios, installed there not long after the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, which ended the Prague Spring. The leaders of the Soviet Union and their Czechoslovak collaborators were convinced that Czechoslovakia ‘almost left’ the East European communist bloc in the 1960s because of the treasonous activity of some tens of thousands of intellectuals. These, writers, journalists, academics and film makers, now needed to be purged and silenced. According to John Keane, ‘at least three quarters of a million citizens of the country lost their jobs or were demoted or were seriously discriminated against – rarely with a punch in the mouth, quite often over a cup of coffee or with a smile or a shrug of the shoulders, or a handshake from the perpetrators.’⁶⁸

Paradoxically, the first year after the Warsaw Pact invasion, from August 1968 until September 1969, was the freest period of film making ever. The managers of the Barrandov Film Studios knew that they were going to be removed, and so they allowed the production of even the most subversive films which would not have been previously permitted.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party complained that ‘Czechoslovak cinematography had fallen under the influence of Western ideological and philosophical examples, which are in conflict with Marxist-Leninist views of this sector’.⁶⁹ All the employees of the Barrandov Film Studios were screened in interviews in 1970-1971 and of the original 330 members of the Communist Party, 187 were expelled. The films of the Czech New Wave were banned, the production of a number of films

was stopped, many film directors became non-persons and some of them emigrated.⁷⁰ The Barrandov Film Studios were taken over by second raters and third raters who often did not have even basic qualifications, as the Czechoslovak Communist Party admitted itself.⁷¹

The post-invasion Czechoslovak regime did not require that its citizens should believe in anything, but it did require ritualistic subservience and obedience. The regime set out to neutralise communication through ideological gobbledygook. All works of art appearing in the public domain had to be either ideological, or vacuous.⁷² Experiments and 'pessimism' were discouraged. It is remarkable that under these circumstances Chytilová managed to make any films at all.

She was banned from feature film making for six years. She was not allowed to make another feature film, *Hra o jablko / The Apple Game*, until 1976.⁷³ When communist officials tried to suppress her work in the 1970s and 1980s, Chytilová made a point of personally haranguing them in their offices⁷⁴ and sometimes managed to persuade them to drop the ban.⁷⁵ For the remaining years of the communist regime Chytilová waged an unequal struggle for her films with communist officials.

During this period, Chytilová's filmmaking was marred by continuous censorship at all levels. It was out of the question for her to continue with stylistic and thematic experimentation. She was no longer able to work with Krumbachová.⁷⁶ In the 1970s, Chytilová divorced her second husband, the cinematographer Jaromír Kučera. The times of the brilliantly creative cooperation of Chytilová, Krumbachová and Kučera were over. The ideological and stylistic control was such that free experimentation with style and ideas was no longer possible. The only way she could proceed would be to include subversive, anti-ideological motifs in the narratives of her now visually more conventional films. She had to fight very hard for motifs in her narratives and invent ideologically acceptable explanations for them, to be accepted by the communist officials. Czech film critics greatly appreciate that she did not give up and that a voice of freedom and non-conformity was almost always heard in her films from the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, she was unable to further develop her style. From the stylistic point of view, she stagnated. Only occasionally was she now able to make inter-textual visual references to her previous achievements.

Yet, in *The Apple Game* Chytilová again managed to manifest her active civic attitude as a fighter for truth, equality of men and women, and for public morals. Only the introductory sequence of this film is visually stylised. It consists of images of apples in an orchard in the autumn. The close-ups of apples merge with the images of babies' heads emerging from their mothers' wombs during

childbirth. The sequence cross-references the primeval sin, the apples of Paradise and previous work by Chytilová. It is only in this sequence that Chytilová uses visual metaphors. The rest of the film is visually quite conventional.

The Apple Game is a satirical portrait of a philandering male chauvinist gynaecologist who becomes a symbol of the selfish, self-obsessed, immature and individualistic consumerism of the Czechoslovak 'normalisation' era of the 1970s and the 1980s. As in other works of the time,⁷⁷ the film shows Czech society as deeply class ridden and conservative: Anyone who is a male medical doctor is treated with reverence while nurses, who are all women, are treated with arrogance and condescension. This does not prevent the main character, Dr. Josef John, from making inappropriate sexual advances to female staff. Since it is impossible for a woman to have a reasonable relationship with any male (men use them only for sex, again, there is no proper communication and no understanding between the sexes), the only way that the women can defend themselves is to make fun of the ruling male chauvinists and to create havoc – this also seems to be an inter-textual reference to the past, this time to *Daisies*.

Panelstory (1979) is also evidence of Chytilová's shift to conscious civic engagement, within a conventional visual structure. Again, as perhaps a brief reference to the past, the introductory, spiky and brutally energetic title sequence of this film, is visually innovative. *Panelstory* is a collage of episodic narratives, some of them documentary, some of them acted. It takes place on a socialist housing estate which is only half finished and is still being built, although people have been living there for several years already. People are aggressive to each other. Women in relationships are hysterical. Men are brutal. Chytilová complains that people have lost their capacity for compassion.

Kalamita / Calamity (1981) concentrates on a young man who drops out of university amidst confusion about the purpose of his life, like Chytilová in her younger years, and becomes an engine driver on the railways in his home town in the mountains, in search of authenticity. The trouble is that he is trying to survive in an extremely self-obsessed, consumerist environment. In a metaphor at the end of the film, a train with the protagonists is stuck in a snowdrift and then covered by an avalanche. When the rail carriages are covered in darkness, this only intensifies the squabbling of the passengers on the train. Chytilová seems to be warning that with their extreme levels of self-obsession, people will be unable to tackle a major social crisis.

The issues of consumerism and selfishness are again tackled in *Faunovo velmi pozdní odpoledne /*

The Very Late Afternoon of a Faun, 1983), a portrait of an ageing bachelor, government official Karel, who is increasingly aware of the danger of death and of the futility of his existence, which he tries to mitigate by manically courting young girls. His often embarrassing affairs descend into a whirlwind of meaninglessness. With the help of cinematographer Jan Malíř Chytilová returns here to her stylised visual language, although there is really no progression beyond her experimentation of the 1960s. Karel's attempts to chat up girls are frequently juxtaposed with fast edited sequences of close-ups showing the patterns of decaying leaves of plants and trees in the autumn, thus emphasising the unstoppable process of aging. All this is firmly localised in the picturesque, old historical parts of Prague. The scenes of Prague are 'peculiarised' by Chytilová's idiosyncratic camera style: by fast-paced pans and zooms and sequences of very short scenes which are cut closely to one another.

Visually conventional *Kopytem sem, kopytem tam / Tainted Horseplay* (1987) has a very strong whiff of the final years of the stagnant regime of the post-1968 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia. The film highlights the characteristic features of the ending communist era, the strongest of which are hedonism and the feeling that money is no object – an attitude which seemed quite justified in a non-marked-based economy. Chytilová's characters have no future and no possibility ever to do anything meaningful. The film is systematically interrupted with footage broadcast by the communist regime's TV station, which of course the protagonists frequently watch. The grainy sequences shot from the screen of a TV set underline the omnipresence of the atmosphere of dull consumerism.⁷⁸ 'Is it possible in this corrupt jungle ever to do anything else but to fool around?' says Josef Málek, one of Chytilová's young protagonists. This of course serves him and his friends as a convenient excuse for constant, self-indulgent drinking parties and sexual promiscuity, which ends with a shocking realisation: some of the members of the sexually promiscuous group of young friends which Chytilová follows in this film become HIV positive – no wonder since everyone sleeps with everyone all the time, arguing 'We are young only once.' The film again concentrates on Chytilová's concern that we should not waste time in idle pursuits and we should spend our lives meaningfully. It is yet another manifestation of Chytilová's strong public spiritedness and civic responsibility.

Two exceptional 'semi-documentaries' were made by Chytilová in the 1980s, exceptional in the sense that they were not fully subjected to the censorship of the Prague communist authorities: they were made for the West. *Chytilová versus Forman* (1981) made for Belgian TV, is an extremely interesting portrait of two strong personalities. Chytilová with her small film crew pursues Miloš Forman while he lives and works in the United States. She attacks him repeatedly with questions,

interrogates him about his inter-cultural experiences as a Czech living in America and enquires about his working method and his theoretical thinking which should, she believes, underpin his films. Occasionally, the dialogue develops into fierce verbal conflict.⁷⁹ Chytilová speaks French, Forman answers in English, when the conflict becomes really personal, they switch into Czech. Forman refuses to discuss theory with Chytilová and avoids her philosophical questions. He refuses to say what for him is the purpose of life. All he eventually admits is: 'Happiness. To be free to pursue happiness is the ultimate happiness. Happiness is the road to happiness. I am enjoying telling stories.' He does not want to discuss theory 'because that is superficial. If I wanted to talk about it, I would not be making a film. I'm afraid to sound intelligent and smart and what about when the film is a piece of shit?' Then he admits that he makes films because 'I am fascinated by the ambiguity of things.' Here there seems to be common ground with Chytilová. Yet the cause of conflict is the fact that the working method of both directors is diametrically different. Chytilová dismisses Forman for having become just a cogwheel in a commercial cinematic world where he is happy just 'to tell stories, written by other people'. Forman counters: 'I cannot function as a writer in a country where I have not spent my childhood. I do not feel safe enough. I must rely on local writers. But I must present my own vision.' Visually, the film again uses a deliberately shaky hand-held camera with frequent fast pans and zooms, historical imagery of major cultural monuments in Czechoslovakia, footage from the Second World War and it again has a very strong soundtrack which relies on contemporary jazz and on classic compositions by major Czech composers, especially Janáček.

Chytilová's *Praha, neklidné srdce Evropy / Prague, the Restless Heart of Europe* (1984) is, undoubtedly, the culmination of her work done in the 'normalisation' period. It was made in the Prague-based Krátký film Studios, as a contribution to a series about European cities, broadcast by Italian television RAI.⁸⁰ The film is a stunning, restless collage, gradually documenting the history of Bohemia and Czechoslovakia as it imprinted itself on the historical buildings and historical locations in the Czech capital. The major landmarks in Prague, such as the Prague castle, Wenceslas Square, the mediaeval buildings of Charles University and various cathedrals function as points of stabilisation to which Chytilová refers over and over again, during her guided tour through Czech history. But the way Chytilová shows these buildings paradoxically destabilises them. The visual material is, again, highly subjectivised by Jan Malíř's restless camera: there are again frequent fast pans, zooms and even pixillation of images. Great emphasis is given to close-ups and a continuous interplay of patterns. As ever, an important role is played by music, both classical and modern, and the director creates startling connections between particular musical compositions and her visual images. For instance, images of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, are accompanied by the 11th century Czech hymn *Hospodine, pomiluj ny / God, have mercy on us*.

Changeability and the passage of time, the arrival and departure of different eras are constantly emphasised, as is our duty to ‘be aware of historical continuity’ and always to strive to achieve the highest moral standards. Chytilová’s exhortations are presented in a voiceover commentary which becomes akin to a chant and frequently consists of quotations from various Czech poems. The commentary is inspired by the major themes of Chytilová’s oeuvre: her obsession with the relentless passage of time and her questions about the meaning of life. Since we face death, we should give up trying to amass material goods and strive for the highest ideals in order to fulfil the civic responsibility to which we are bound by history.

Signs of censorship are evident: for instance, Chytilová was unable to show President T.G. Masaryk or any other politician from the interwar democratic era. Communism is represented by footage of the 1948 communist takeover, and then there is a fast forward to a 1980s ‘Spartakiáda’, a mass, North-Korean-like festival of physical exercise in which thousands of Czechoslovak citizens took place. Chytilová films this event unusually, by creating patterns.

The historical sequences are constantly interrupted with contemporary footage of Prague. Young girls repeatedly stare into the camera in close-up. However, a critical angle can be detected: it appears that the present time has nothing to offer in comparison with the momentous events of the past: contemporary times are represented only by the restless, speeded-up milling of crowds or cars driving on highways. The meaninglessness and aimlessness of the contemporary times is accented by the final sequences from the ‘Spartakiáda’ where the Czech nation has been transformed from a community of individuals into one giant ant-like crowd of automated beings. ‘True nothingness is not connected with our ageing, which we cannot stop, but with a life that has been wasted. That seems to be the motto of Věra Chytilová’s whole oeuvre,’ says Jiří Cieslar.⁸¹

Conclusion

Věra Chytilová perfected her style of filmmaking in the 1960s. Her aim was always to disrupt hypocrisy, ideology and convention by using original approaches. Like the other Czech New Wave Film makers, she was fully aware that life is unknowable. She retained elements of mystery and ambiguity in her work. Her films were hybrid: a documentary approach, based on *cinéma vérité* techniques, was combined with highly metaphorical, fantasy images into complex collages, where an important, subversive, role was often played by the soundtrack and music.

The comparison of films made by Věra Chytilová in the liberal 1960s and the films made in the ‘normalised’ 1970s and 1980s, after her period of enforced silence, has revealed the filmmaker’s remarkable resilience when faced with censorship and administrative obstacles in the Husák era. While in the 1960s, Chytilová defined her agenda and developed her creative techniques, and her work in that period culminated in two highly original and experimental films, in the ‘normalisation’ period she often gave up her experimental approach. But in a period, characterised by oppression, consumerism and political hypocrisy, she retained her moral integrity and a bold attitude of civic activism. While a moralising streak was present already in Chytilová’s early ‘pseudo-documentaries’ from the 1960s, the moralising tendency of her films became much stronger in the normalisation period. During this time, Chytilová seems to have become much more interested in communicating a clear social message through narrative rather than spending time on stylistic experimentation. Viewers did appreciate this: everyone was always aware how different Chytilová’s films were when compared to the mainstream output.

References:

ALISON 2010:

Alison, Frank: ‘Formal innovation and feminist freedom: Vera Chytilova’s *Daisies*’. *CineAction*, 01/2010, Issue 81, pp. 46–49.

BÍLEK 2010:

Bílek, Petr A. ‘K práci i oddechu: Znakový systém normalizační pop music’. In Bílek, Petr A.; Činátlová, Blanka, eds.: *Tesilová kavalérie: Popkulturní obrazy normalizace*. Příbram: Pistorius & Olšanská, 2010, pp. 57–75.

BIRD 2001:

Bird, Daniel, ‘Can We Live with the Truth? Věra Chytilová’s *Ovoce stromů rajských jíme*’. *Central Europe Review*, Vol 3, No 17, 14 May 2001, http://www.ce-review.org/01/17/kinoeye17_bird.html

BRACKE 2012:

Bracke, Kathleen, ‘Understanding defeat by means of Jan Patočka: A close examination of Věra Chytilová’s *Daisies*.’ *Film Matters*, 04/2012, volume III, issue 1, pp. 9–13.

BRDEČKOVÁ 2014:

Brdečková, Tereza, 'Homage: Vera Chytilova 1929-2014'. *Positif; Paris Iss.* 643, (Sep 2014): 70.

BUCHAR 2000:

Buchar, Robert, *Sametová kocovina*, 2000 (film). In book form: *Sametová kocovina*, Host, Brno, 2001.

CHYTILOVÁ 1994:

Chytilová, Věra, 'Specifika filmového jazyka aneb Co dělá film filmem'. In: *Acta academica. Bulletin pro teoretickou a vědeckou činnost*. Akademie múzických umění. Prague, 1994, pp. 48–49.

CHYTILOVÁ 2006:

Věra Chytilová mezi námi. Sborník textů k životnímu jubileu. Internetový reprint 2. 2. 2006. Camera obscura, Příbram and Nostalghia.cz. Česká Lípa, 2006. cameraobscura.wz.cz/chytilova.

CHYTILOVÁ 2009:

Chytilová, Věra, 'Verastory'. In Lukeš Jan, Lukešová Ivana (eds.), *Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové*. Dominik Centrum. Plzeň 2009. pp. 13–14, 21–23, 31–32, 39–41, 47–48, 53–55, 63–64, 73–74.

CIESLAR 2003:

Cieslar, Jiří, *Kočky na Atalantě*. Akademie múzických umění v Praze. Prague 2003.

ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980:

Činčerová-Sirotková, Alena, *Kus pravdy Věry Chytilové. Prvky filmové dokumentární metody v tvorně V.Ch.* A FAMU dissertation, 1980.

CLOUZOT 1968:

Clouzot, Claire, 'Daisies by Vera Chytilova'. *Film Quarterly*, University of California Press, vol. 21., No. 3 (spring 1968), pp. 35-37.

CONNOLLY 2000:

Connolly, Kate, 'Bohemian rhapsodist'. *Guardian*, 11th August 2000.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2000/aug/11/culture.features2>

ČULÍK 2012:

Čulík, Jan, *A Society in Distress: The Image of the Czech Republic in Contemporary Czech Feature Film*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2012.

ČULÍK 2013:

Čulík, Jan, 'The construction of reality in communist and post-communist Czech TV serials'. In: Culik, J. (ed.) *National Mythologies in Central European TV Series: How J.R. Won the Cold War*. Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, pp. 110–155.

ŘURKOVIČOVÁ 1989:

Řurkovičová, Euba, *Řtrihová skladba ako výrazový prostriedok v diele Věry Chytilovej dokumentovaná filmom 'Panelstory'*. A FAMU dissertation, 1989.

FILMOVÝ PŘEHLED-OVOCE:

<http://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/film/396826/ovoce-stromu-rajskych-jime>

FOLL 2009:

Foll, Jan, 'Rozšlapané taliře a převrácené stereotypy'. In Lukeš Jan, Lukešová Ivana (eds.), *Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové*. Dominik Centrum. Plzeň 2009. pp. 42–44.

HAMES 1979:

Hames, Peter, 'The Return of Vera Chytilova'. *Sight and Sound*, summer 1979, 48, 3. pp. 168–173.

HANÁKOVÁ 2007:

Hanáková, Petra, 'Głosy z innego świata. Przestrzeń feministyczna oraz intruzja męska w "Stokrotkach" i "Zabójstwo inż. Czarta"'. *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 2007, Issue 57–58, pp. 287–299.

HULÍK 2009:

Hulík, Štěpán, *Nástup normalizace ve Filmovém studiu Barrandov (1968–1973)*. Prague, 2009. A Charles University dissertation.

JUSOVÁ-REYES 2014:

Jusová, Iveta and Reyes, Dan, 'Věra Chytilová's *The Fruit of Paradise*: A Tale of a

Feminine Aesthetic, Dancing Color, and a Doll Who Kills the Devil'. *Camera Obscura*, 2014, issue 87, vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 65–91.

KEANE 1999:

Keane, John, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*. London, Bloomsbury 1999, p. 229.

KESSLER 2010:

Kessler, Frank, 'Ostranenie, Innovation and Media History'. In: Annie van den Oever (ed.) *Ostrannenie*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, pp. 61–79.

KRUMBACHOVÁ

'Ester Krumbachová'. Czech Television. <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/lide/ester-krumbachova/>

KUČERA ŠTĚPÁN 2009

Kučera, Štěpán, 'Netrpělivost srdce'. In Lukeš Jan, Lukešová Ivana (eds.), *Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové*. Dominik Centrum. Plzeň 2009, pp. 56–59.

KUČERA JAN 2016:

Kučera, Jan, *Poetika českého filmu*. Akademie múzických umění. Prague, 2016.

LIM 2001:

Lim, Bliss Cua, 'Dolls in fragments: "Daisies" as a feminist allegory'. *Camera Obscura*, 01/2001, vol. 16, issue 2, pp. 37–77.

LUKEŠ 2009:

Lukeš Jan, 'Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové'. In Lukeš Jan, Lukešová Ivana (eds.), *Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové*. Dominik Centrum. Plzeň 2009, pp. 65–69.

LUKEŠ AND LUKEŠOVÁ 2009:

Lukeš Jan, Lukešová Ivana (eds.), *Vzdor i soucit Věry Chytilové*. Dominik Centrum. Plzeň 2009.

MARTIN 1996:

Martin, Paul-Louis, 'Chytilova: Quelque chose d'autre'. *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 08/1966, issue 181, p. 64.

MERKLEINOVÁ 1981:

Merkleinová, Marta, *Ohlas cinéma vérité v českém hraném filmu*. A FAMU dissertation, 1981.

MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1977:

Mukařovský, Jan, *Structure, sign, and function: selected essays*. translated and edited by John Burbank and Peter Steiner. Yale University Press, 1977.

PARVULESCU 2006:

Parvulescu, Anca, "'So we will go bad": Cheekiness, laughter, film'. *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture and Media Studies*. 2006, vol. 2, issue 2–62, pp. 145–167.

PAVLÁSKOVÁ 1984:

Pavlásková, Irena, *Hledání a zobrazení pravdy v dokumentárních filmech některých žen – režisérek*. A FAMU dissertation, 1984.

PAWLIKOWSKI 1990:

Pawlikowski, Pawel, *Kids from Famu*. A BBC documentary. 1990.

PŘÁDNÁ 2009:

Přádná, Stanislava, 'Hledání pravdy v dokumentech Věry Chytilové'. In *Panorama filmové kritiky 2. Visegrádský horizont : sborník textů ke stejnojmenným cyklům 35. Letní filmové školy Uherské Hradiště*. Uherské Hradiště: Letní filmová škola Uherské Hradiště, 2009, pp. 47–54.

RIVETTE AND DELAHAYE 1968:

Delahaye, Michel; Rivette, Jacques, 'Entretien avec Vera Chytilova'. *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 02/1968, issue 198, p. 46.

SKÁLA 1999:

Skála, Jiří, *Sedmikrásky: Projevy abstraktnějšího vztahu ke skutečnosti a stylizovanějšího vyjádřování v čs. kinematografii 60. let*. A FAMU dissertation, 1999.

SHKLOVSKY 1965:

Shklovsky, Viktor. 'Art as Technique'. *Russian Formalist Criticism. Four Essays*.

trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion Reis: Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12.

ŠRAJER 2017:

Šraj, Martin, 'Filmy Věry Chytilové v zahraničních ohlasech aneb Fuckoffguysgoodday'. *Filmový přehled*, 22nd November 2017. <http://www.filmovyprehled.cz/cs/revue/detail/filmy-very-chytilove-v-zahranicnich-ohlasech-aneb-fuckoffguysgoodday?id=11830>

ZPRÁVA 1970:

Zpráva o situaci v čs. kinematografii, p. 3. NA, Praesidium of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, f. 02/1, VOL. 114, a.j. 187, 12th January 1970. Typewritten A4, 14 pp.

Notes:

- 1 (BRDEČKOVÁ 2014).
- 2 (PAWLIKOWSKI 1990), (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 21), (CIESLAR 2003: 484–485). - Pawel Pawlikowski's BBC documentary *Kids from FAMU* (1990) about the Czech film makers of the 1960s Czech New Wave contains substantial amount of information about these Czech film directors as well as interviews with them explaining their approach to film making.
- 3 (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 21–22) (CIESLAR 2003: 485).
- 4 (PAWLIKOWSKI 1990).
- 5 (PAWLIKOWSKI 1990). In the film, Chytilová says that when *Daisies* was screened in the USA, the Americans were stunned that such an experimental film could be made in a professional, state-owned film studio and shot on 35mm.
- 6 (LIM 2001, HANÁKOVÁ 2007); (ALISON 2010); (JUSOVÁ-REYES 2014).
- 7 Hanáková argues that Chytilová is a feminist because, in traditional films before hers, 'gender (in terms of tradition and essentialism) roles and positions remained intact. The masculine version of history was universal. In this context, Chytilová's and Krumbachová's films are separate works of art while the traditional analysis method becomes inadequate. The films address the issue of women's desire and pleasure, and woman plays the part of a causative subject.' (HANÁKOVÁ 2007).
- 8 In denying that she was a feminist, she apparently felt that 'feminists' fight for the rights of women at the expense of men, while she was interested in both women and men equally.
- 9 For this quote, see (CONNOLLY 2000).
- 10 (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1979: 7).
- 11 Her son, cameraman Štěpán Kučera, hated this: 'She has never written a detailed technical script, so she just improvises on the set and she does not know what she is doing. It is the people from her production team that suffer most, she is vulgar to them and I feel sorry for them. (...) I was always most upset when I was filming something and before I finished, she was impatiently turning my camera to something else, saying that something else was happening. She thus destroyed what I was doing and I did not have time to film the other thing that she wanted. And then she told me off that I failed to film anything at all. I was upset.' (KUČERA ŠTĚPÁN 2009, 58). - English translation of all quotations from Czech language and French language publications has been made by Jan Čulík.
- 12 (KUČERA JAN 2016: 209), not related to Jaroslav Kučera, Chytilová's husband.
- 13 (CIESLAR 2003: 490–491, 498).

-
- 14 (CHYTILOVÁ 1994).
- 15 (SHKLOVSKY 1965).
- 16 (KESSLER 2010).
- 17 (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1977).
- 18 (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 47–48).
- 19 Kate Connolly calls her ‘a self-confessed control freak’. According to the Czech media, says Connolly, Chytilová was ‘choleric, diabolically crazy, aggressive, ironic, sarcastic, inflexible and arrogant.’ (CONNOLLY 2000).
- 20 (FOLL 2009: 43).
- 21 (CIESLAR 2003: 483).
- 22 (CIESLAR 2003: 491).
- 23 Chytilová: ‘I wanted to uncover hidden relationships which lead to insecurity, I wanted to show how difficult it is to separate authentic things from inauthentic ones. It is the angle of vision that is decisive. *Ceiling* is a fairly schematic morality. I wanted to reveal the process of cognition which starts when one is still quite young.’ (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980: 20–21).
- 24 Early in the film, Marta poses for a series of fashion photographs. Peter Hames notes that the male gaze is unbearable and evidently is a major source of the heroine’s frustration: ‘Even the model’s subjective thoughts are spoken by a man.’ (HAMES 1979: 169)
- 25 Judging by the verdict of recent film makers, the situation in Czech society has not changed. A similar attitude of mute frustration of female protagonists can be found in the feature film *Děti noci / Night Owls* (2008), directed by Michaela Pavlátová.
- 26 (CIESLAR 2003: 479).
- 27 ‘Chytilová very quickly discovered the semantic importance of sound. She uses the authentically captured conversations of her characters as a counterpoint to the visuals.’ (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980: 25).
- 28 Chytilová used music from Radio Luxembourg for scenes in her apartment and Czech jazz.
- 29 Chytilová: ‘My films *Ceiling*, *A Bagful of Fleas* and *Something Different* are fictitious documents, made up of re-enacted material. But people featured in them never say what they do not believe in.’ (CIESLAR 2003: 490).
- 30 Chytilová: ‘*A Bagful of Fleas* is a fictitious document. We filmed the girls with a silent, quite noisy camera and recorded the sound separately. Apart from two scenes, everything had been scripted. I reconstructed situations which the girls inspired, but they had to agree with everything.’ (CIESLAR 2003: 501).
- 31 (PAVLÁSKOVÁ 1984: 7).
- 32 Cf. (MERKLEINOVÁ 1981: 24).
- 33 In their interview with Chytilová published in 1968, Jacques Rivette and Michael Delahaye were particularly taken with the two female protagonists and their stories in *Something Different* and the two heroines of *Daisies*. (RIVETTE AND DELAHAYE 1968).
- 34 (CIESLAR 2003: 480).
- 35 (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980: 46).
- 36 (CIESLAR 2003: 505).
- 37 (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980: 44).
- 38 (PAVLÁSKOVÁ 1984: 12).
- 39 (CIESLAR 2003: 481, 511).
- 40 (CIESLAR 2003: 513).
- 41 Chytilová toured northern France with *Something Different* and was fascinated that the French audiences kept discovering unexpected new meanings in her film. (CIESLAR 2003: 510).
- 42 (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 39).
- 43 (CIESLAR 2003: 511–512).
- 44 (CIESLAR 2003: 512).
- 45 (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 40).
- 46 (SKÁLA 1999: 21).
- 47 Jan Foll: ‘Chytilová’s characters in *Daisies* are not alive. They are lifeless figures from obscure cutouts.’ – ‘*Daisies* attacks not just mendacious socialism, but also consumerist capitalism, its smug managers and obscene tabloid media.’ (FOLL 2009: 42) – ‘Whereas the heroines of *Something Different* never meet, in *Daisies*, the two heroines are always together and never truly distinct,’ says Paul-Louis Martin (MARTIN 1966).
- 48 (SKÁLA 1999: 20).
- 49 Kathleen Bracke argues that in *Daisies*, Chytilová was influenced by philosophical writings by Jan Patočka and blamed the destructiveness of the two Maries on the oppression of the communist system which prevented the individual from finding a purpose in life. According to Patočka, she says, ‘life void of meaning is a destructive one’. (BRACKE 2012: 9-13).
- 50 (PARVULESCU 2006).
- 51 Bliss Cua Lim: ‘*Daisies* is a feminist allegory in which the doll metaphor is retooled as a celebration of female recalcitrance.’ (LIM 2001).
- 52 (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 40).

-
- 53 Red and pink signify an erotic charge, green and blue cynicism, black and white contact with the world. (SKÁLA 1999: 22–23).
- 54 Claire Clouzot points to the equation consumption = destruction. ‘Gluttony and devastation are linked.’ (CLOUZOT 1968: 36).
- 55 (ĎURKOVIČOVÁ 1989: 12).
- 56 (SKÁLA 1999: 29–31).
- 57 (ČINČEROVÁ-SIROTKOVÁ 1980: 9).
- 58 ‘This work has nothing in common with our Republic, with socialism and with the ideals of communism.’ (LUKEŠ 2009: 66).
- 59 For a more detailed discussion see for instance (HAMES 1979).
- 60 No relation to Chytilová’s husband Jaroslav Kučera.
- 61 (KUČERA 2016: 133–150).
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 (KUČERA 2016: 147).
- 64 (JUSOVÁ–REYES 2014).
- 65 (ŠRAJER 2017).
- 66 (FILMOVÝ PŘEHLED-OVOCE).
- 67 (ŠRAJER 2017).
- 68 (KEANE 1999).
- 69 (ZPRÁVA 1970)
- 70 Miloš Forman, Jan Němec, Vojtěch Jasný and Ivan Passer among others.
- 71 (HULÍK 2009).
- 72 Petr Bílek shows how under pressure from the authorities, the content of the lyrics of Czech popular music in the 1970s became ever more vacuous. (BÍLEK 2010).
- 73 It was not until she wrote a letter in 1975 to the Czechoslovak Communist Party leader Gustáv Husák, in which she complained that she was prevented from working as a film director that she was allowed to return to her work. But Chytilová was unable to make *The Apple Game* at the Barrandov Film Studios. She was only allowed to make it in Krátký film, the Short Film Studios. She was blackmailed into signing a document condemning the human rights manifesto Charter 77. She was told that if she did not sign it, *The Apple Game* would not be released into the cinemas. Critic Jan Lukeš approves of her decision, which apparently enabled her to make six more unorthodox feature films in the 1980s. (LUKEŠ 2009: 67).
- 74 Chytilová: ‘I played on the fact that each of these aging men had probably a wife at home whom he was afraid of, so I played a hysterical, uncontrollable woman whenever I came to their offices.’ (BUCHAR 2000).
- 75 In (CHYTILOVÁ 2009: 53–54) Chytilová provides a verbatim account of a tragicomic conversation she had with Comrade Müller, the head of the Culture Department of the CP Central Committee about why *The Apple Game* had been banned. To console her, Müller offered her his lunch.
- 76 From approximately 1972, Krumbachová was banned from ‘working in any way on the production of any feature film’. In 1983 Chytilová insisted that Krumbachová should help her with the writing of the script for *Faunovo příliš pozdní odpoledne / The Very Late Afternoon of a Faun*, but thereafter, Krumbachová was again banned until 1988. (KRUMBACHOVÁ).
- 77 Jaroslav Dietl’s TV series *Žena za pultem / A Woman Behind the counter* comes to mind, see (ČULÍK 2013).
- 78 In referring to the numbing, pernicious influence of television, Chytilová here anticipates Czech post-communist cinema, in which the media, including television, are always depicted as a force of evil and destruction. (ČULÍK 2012).
- 79 See also (PŘÁDNÁ 2009: 48).
- 80 For more information see (CHYTILOVÁ 2006: 39).
- 81 (CHYTILOVÁ 2006: 40).