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## Butterflies Do Not Live Here and On Shoes, Braid and Dummy

Production and Reception History of Two Czechoslovak Documentaries on the Holocaust

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**Abstract:** In 1958 and 1961, two documentaries on the Holocaust were released in Czechoslovakia: / by Miro Bernat and / by Drahoslav Holub. Both of these films employed drawings and paintings made by Jewish children imprisoned in Theresienstadt between 1941 and 1945. Apart from using the same material, the films share similarities in style, as both directors worked in the tradition stemming from interwar avant-garde practices of cinematic montage and experimented with elements of animation. However, within these similar coordinates, each chose a different approach to the material. Reception of the films was also starkly different. The former received a good deal of international attention and praise, the latter was barely noticed. From today's perspective, however, they are equally forgotten, missing from both Theresienstadt film studies and studies of Holocaust films. This article seeks to address this glaring oversight by examining the history of the films' production as well as the history of their reception by the public, press and official cultural establishment. At the same time, it explores the films' cultural-political significance in the context of Czechoslovakia in the late 1950s and early 1960s and considers the factors that led to the contrasting histories of reception. This analysis is based on original research at the Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, on contempo-



rary press critic and oral history sources, including two interviews with the survivors who participated on making of the films, Helga Hošková-Weissová and Anna Hyndráková, conducted by the author in 2019.

**Keywords:** Miro Bernat; Jiří Weil; Hana Volavková; Drahoslav Holub; Karel Reiner; William Bukový; Theresienstadt; ghetto; children's drawings; Czechoslovakia; Holocaust; documentary film; compilation film; animation; reception history.

## The Theresienstadt Collection and the Production of *Butterflies Do Not Live Here*

The central focus of both films discussed here is children's artwork from the Theresienstadt collection.<sup>1</sup> As an artifact, this collection has inspired countless works of art since its discovery in 1945.<sup>2</sup> At present, it is a world-renowned archive on the Holocaust, considered an invaluable and rare visual record of everyday life in the ghetto<sup>3</sup> and of the children's emotional and psychological states. Their drawings became a repository of memory, history, and trauma. In this first section of the article, I will focus primarily on the early popularization of the Theresienstadt collection, its curatorial and exhibition practices in the mid-1950s, and the ways these intertwined with the script-writing, production, and distribution of the film *Butterflies Do Not Live Here*.

Despite the cruel and harrowing conditions of the Nazi terror, Theresienstadt was a place where children and adults produced a large quantity of progressive art, including plays, cabarets, puppet theatre, radio programs, concerts, recitals, opera productions, and works of literature.<sup>4</sup> In part, this was because many Jewish artists, composers, scientists, and writers were among the prisoners. How-



Fig. 1: Hana Kalichová. *Fairy Tale Characters*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague

ever, as Helga Hošková-Weissová, a former child prisoner in Theresienstadt, pointed out, a heightened urge for self-expression through art was common even among prisoners who had no previous history of art-making.<sup>5</sup> The children's drawings and paintings were part of this vibrant cultural context and their creation was also directly connected to pre-war avant-garde art. The children deported to Theresienstadt drew pictures under the guidance of a fellow prisoner, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (1898–1944), a former Bauhaus student and one of the most outstanding artists from the interwar avant-garde. Her art classes, with elements of art therapy, were part of the improvised educational program organized in the extreme conditions of the ghetto. Brandeis employed some of the Bauhaus experimental methods to develop the children's creativity but at the same time strived to allow them freedom of expression as a way of coping with their dire experiences. Before her transport to Auschwitz, she hid two suitcases with 4,387 children's drawings, which she had collected during almost two years of teaching, in one of the children's dormitories.<sup>6</sup>

At the end of the war, the Nazis in Theresienstadt were burning documents and trying to conceal any

1 The analysis of the films is relevant also for the history of animated documentary on the Holocaust. As I argued in my paper at the 31<sup>st</sup> Society of Animation Studies conference (2019) titled "*Butterflies Do Not Live Here*. Documentary on the Holocaust at the Borders with Animation," Bernat's film represents, at least in the Czechoslovak context, the first gesture towards the possibility of animating archival material on Nazi crimes. Animated documentary on the Holocaust, initially a controversial format, became a widely used film form over the past twenty to thirty years.

2 For an account of some of the post-war musical compositions and theatre plays inspired by the drawings from Theresienstadt, see Hana Hříbková 2012: 59.

3 Ghetto Theresienstadt functioned as a concentration camp for Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and later also from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Slovakia. Forced labor started at the age of 14. For a detailed account of the camp's functioning see the seminal work of Hans Günther Adler (2017, originally published in German in 1955).

4 On theatre in Theresienstadt, see Eva Šormová 1973 and Lisa Peschel 2014; music production in Terezín was researched e.g. by Joža Karas 1985, Ulrike Migdal 1986, Heidi Tamar Hoffmann 1991, Lubomír Peduzzi 1999 and Milan Kuna 2000.

5 Conversation with Helga Hošková-Weissová on June 10th 2019.

6 On Friedl Dicker Brandeis's work see Elena Makarova's exhibition catalogue *From Bauhaus to Terezin: Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and her Pupils* (1990), Arno Pařík 1988 and 2009, Susan Goldman Rubin 2000 and Ann D. Dutlinger 2001.

evidence of the atrocities committed there.<sup>7</sup> The children's drawings were left behind as insignificant. As the art historian and the first postwar director of the Jewish Museum in Prague Hana Volavková<sup>8</sup> remembered: "In Terezín, only books, books and papers—remnants of the complex Terezín administration—were found. And drawings of child prisoners were scattered as spoilage amongst them. In these pictures hunger was portrayed as a cook, the war was an execution, delight was a fruit stand, an ideal was a hospital bed, and return was a sign, pointing to Prague." (Volavková 1966: 222) One of the former Theresienstadt youth educators, Willy Groag (1914-2001), brought the drawings to Prague, and Volavková requested them to be deposited in the archive of persecution at the Jewish Museum (Magda Veselská 2012: 172 and Jiří Weil 1959: 6). For a long time, they went unnoticed, until Jiří Weil, a Czech-Jewish writer and journalist, who worked at the Jewish Museum as a researcher, recognized their immense value and started curating the collection methodically.<sup>9</sup>

7 See Natascha Drubek (2016) for a detailed account of the several days long process of destroying all written evidence in the Terezín courtyards, including the RSHA (Reich Main Security Office) archive brought from Berlin to be burnt here.

8 Hana Volavková (1904-1985) studied history, art history and archaeology at the Charles University in Prague. For her Jewish origin she was expelled from her work as an art historian at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague in 1939. Since April 15th 1943, she was employed at the Jewish Museum in Prague as a curator in a small team working with liturgical objects, books and other archivalia gathered from the Jewish communities across the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In February 1945, she was deported to Theresienstadt. When the war ended, she was the only surviving member from her wartime work team. She became the director of the Museum in 1950. Among the most significant merits in her work as a museologist was the mounting of the memorial in Pinkas synagogue, the popularization of the Theresienstadt collection of children's drawings and her tending to the Jewish historical monuments. She was also prolific as an author of art-historical books and articles. See Veselská 2010: 5-39.

9 Jiří Weil (1900-1959) studied Slavic philology and comparative literature at the Charles University in Prague. Already at the university, he co-founded a communist youth organization and became a member of the party in 1925. As a translator and journalist, he strived to popularize Soviet literature (including the formalist literary theory), theatre and film, and to connect the Czechoslovak and the Soviet avant-garde movements. In 1920, he was the first to translate and publish Vladimir Mayakovsky's work in Czech. In 1933 he was invited to Moscow to work as a translator of Marxist literature for the publishing department



Fig. 2: Malvína Löwová. *Palestina*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

As Weil reflected, he could not fully comprehend the significance of the drawings until he was able to review them in the context of the poetry written in Theresienstadt. A collection of poems written by children in the ghetto was handed over to the Jewish Museum in 1952 by Anna Flachová, whose husband was an educator at the children's home L417 (Weil 1959: 6). Weil recalled:

Perhaps I would not understand their significance either if I did not come across other documents, the poems written by children in Theresienstadt, including the verses of Pavel Friedmann. An excerpt from Friedmann's poem "Motýli tady nežijí" ("Butterflies do not live here") also gave the title to [Bernat's] film later on (Ibid.).<sup>10</sup>

of the Comintern. During the political purges following the murder of Sergei Kirov, Weil was arrested, investigated and expelled from the party. He was sent to a re-education colony in Kyrgyzstan and then forced labor in Kazakhstan. In 1935, the Comintern allowed his return to Czechoslovakia. In his novel *Moskva-hranice* (Moscow to the Border, 1937), Weil gave an account of the Stalinist purges and trials, which was met with a disapproving campaign by the Czechoslovak communist critics. From 1943 he worked at the Jewish Museum. He escaped a transport to Theresienstadt by faking his own suicide in 1945 and spent the rest of the war in hiding. Two of his novels depicting the fate of the Jews during the Nazi occupation, *Život s hvězdou* (Life with a Star, 1949) and *Na střeše je Mendelsohn* (Mendelsohn is on the Roof, 1960) belong to his most acclaimed works. Weil was a member of the Czech avant-garde group *Devětsil*. For more on his role as a curator of the Theresienstadt collection of children's drawings see Hana Hříbková 2012, cf. Veselská (2012: 172).

10 In English translation, the collection of drawings and the book are known under the title *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, which is another verse from this poem by Friedmann. The English title *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* refers in most cases to the 1958 film.

Whereas the drawings were rich in colors and depicted, for the most part, imaginary characters and lands with an abundance of food and toys (Fig. 1-3), the children's poems rendered a much darker testimony to the hunger, violence and suffering in Theresienstadt. Weil's emphasis on the inseparability of the two components—drawings and poetry—became the key curatorial concept for the collection and also for the production of the film:

Only the contrast and, at the same time, unity gives strength to this rare document because through both poems and drawings, the children strived in the middle of terror and violence to preserve the most precious thing – their humanness" (Ibid.).

Weil initiated the first exhibition of the children's drawings and poetry in 1955 in Prague. It was prepared by the art historian Olga Herbenová, who had meticulously analyzed the children's drawings in terms of both form and content. Further exhibitions followed in many places abroad, starting with Paris (1956), Brno (1957) and Leipzig (1958).<sup>11</sup> The powerful response to the exhibitions inspired Weil, together with Volavková and Herbenová, to create a book and a film simultaneously.<sup>12</sup>

Examination of sources in the Archive of the Jewish Museum in Prague shows that Weil had already written the first version of the film script in 1957, under the working title *Children's Drawings from Theresienstadt*.<sup>13</sup> This version relied on extensive use of the drawings and poems, documentary photography and some limited acting. The narrator's commentary was rich in historical background, with information on the building of the fortress in honor

11 Weil 1959: 6 and Veselská 2012: 172-178. According to Veselská, after 1955, the drawings became the most frequently exhibited objects from the Jewish Museum's collections.

12 The first edition of the book *Children's Drawings and Poems. Terezín 1942-1945* was published in 1959 in four languages, Czech, English, German and French. See Hříbková 2012: 60.

13 Jiří Weil. *Nástin libreta krátkého filmu o "Dětské kresbě z Terezína"* (A Sketch of a Libretto for a Short Film on "Children's Drawings from Theresienstadt"), 1957. Archive of the Jewish Museum in Prague, archive collection *Jewish Museum in Prague, Documentation, A VII/13*.



Fig. 3: Ilonka Weissová. *The Land of Wellbeing*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

of the Empress Maria Theresa in 1780, Reinhard Heydrich's turning it into a ghetto in October 1942, the Wannsee Conference, and the excruciating living conditions in the ghetto. Weil also included a compelling section on the "Sounds of the Theresienstadt":

The clanging of shovels in the morning as men went to work, the creaking of funeral carts pulled by people, from ten o'clock on, the murmur in hungry lines for food ... grinding of prostheses at night, there were many invalids, and squeaking of hand lamps, the streets were not lit.

and the sounds that were missing there:

No bells were ringing in the ghetto, no clock chiming, no cocks, birds, dogs, cats or other animals. There was an unusual silence particularly around the clock tower (Ibid.).

Unfortunately, this poetic part was cut in the radically revised version of the script from July 1958. Weil's initial concept of the film was abandoned in favor of a less educational, less informative and more visually oriented and visceral film style. The second version of the script was authored by the prolific documentary filmmaker Miro Bernat (1910-1997), although developed in collaboration with Weil and Volavková.

## Miro Bernat's Poetic Documentarism

Bernat became interested in the material after reading Věra Kosinová's reportage on the children's drawings and also through his personal relations to some

of the victims who passed through Theresienstadt that he knew from his pre-war cultural life in Prague. The painter and poet Petr Kien (1919-1944), for example, had introduced Bernat to experimental photography before the war.<sup>14</sup>

Bernat's previous documentary films included a wide range of subjects, mostly in the genre of popular science, but his education and interests were very versatile. Over the forty years of his filmmaking career, he made more than eighty documentary films, largely focused on agricultural issues including beekeeping (*Včely budou žít/ Bees Will Live On*, 1951, shown at the 1953 Venice Biennale), soil erosion, forestry, large scale poultry farming, etc., but also subjects such as the Roma minority in Czechoslovakia (*Cesta dlouhá tisíc let/ A Thousand Year Long Journey*, 1961), research on human memory, portraits of visual artists and writers, herbaria, trains, causes of physical pain and many others.<sup>15</sup>

In his script for *Butterflies*, he listed four sources as his main inspiration: Weil's introduction to the exhibition of drawings, the diary of Helga Hošková-Weissová,<sup>16</sup> the children's drawings and poetry, and Věra Kosinová's text *Dětské kresby v Terezíně* (Children's Drawings in Theresienstadt).<sup>17</sup> His version of the script reduced the historical contextualization and the narrator's commentary significantly. The main role was given to the children's drawings and

poems. With only a few minor alterations, the text corresponds to the film's final shape.

In terms of Bill Nichols's seminal typology of modes of representation in documentary film (poetic, expository, participatory, observational, reflexive and performative), Bernat's revised concept relates the closest to the poetic mode. This mode is associated with the modernist avant-garde tradition, which, according to Nichols, relies on the historical world for its source material, but at the same time "stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge" (Nichols 2001: 103). Whereas Weil's original script juxtaposed lyric impressions with factual education about the centuries-long history of Theresienstadt/Terezín and the functioning of the ghetto,<sup>18</sup> Bernat's version narrowed the temporal focus and loosened the rhetorical element, thereby, characteristically for the poetic mode, "opening up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to the straightforward transfer of information" (ibid.). This shift may have come as an impulse from Bernat in order for him to integrate the subject with his poetic documentary film style, but his version of the script with its less articulated historical narrative also could have been more acceptable from the perspective of the producer, Krátký film (Short Film) studio, the production of which was consistently attuned to the state's ideological priorities.<sup>19</sup> In any case, the final shape of the film defies simple categorization in terms of genre. The contemporary cinematography periodicals characterized it using a variety of terms, such as "political", "ideological"<sup>20</sup> and "kulturfilm"<sup>21</sup>, displaying ambiguity in the understanding of the format. *Butterflies* also

14 Conversation with Eva Strusková on March 12th 2019. According to Strusková, Bernat's wife Mimi was half-Jewish but did not end up being deported. In the so-called mixed marriages, Jewish partners were protected until January 1945, which was also the case of Hana Volavková, deported to Terezín on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1945, and Jiří Weil (Hříbková 2012: 51-52).

15 For biographical information on Bernat see Antonín Navrátil 1964 and 1965, Martin Štoll 2009, and Jarmila Hurtoová 2012.

16 First published in Czech under the title *Deník 1938-1945: příběh dívky, která přežila holocaust* in 2012; English, German, French, Portuguese, Polish and Hungarian translation followed in 2013, Italian and Serbian in 2014, Chinese in 2015, Turkish 2017.

17 Miro Bernat. *Dětské kresby Terezín. /Pracovní název/ Motýli tady nežijí v ghettu. Scénář. (Children's Drawings from Terezín. /working title/ Butterflies do not live here in the Ghetto.)* Script. Krátký film: Prague, 1958. Archive of the Jewish Museum in Prague, archive collection *Jewish Museum in Prague*, Documentation, E9.

18 Weil's original intention to portray Theresienstadt/Terezín in a broader historical context including its foundation in 1780 was realized much later by Drahošlav Holub in his compilation documentary film *Zpráva o Terezíně / Report on Terezín* (1983).

19 On the relationship between the state and Krátký film in the 1950s, see Lucie Česálková 2015: 166-187.

20 "Ústřední půjčovna filmů." *Zpravodajství Ústřední správy Československého filmu* 3, Vol. 4. 1959: 8.

21 "Populárně vědecký a naučný film sněmoval." *Kino* 3, 1959: 35.

resonated with films framed as a form of evidence for the trials of Holocaust perpetrators, such as Drahoslav Holub's *Pohlednice pro kata / Postcard for the Hangman* (1963).<sup>22</sup> Primarily, though, the film represented an act of commemoration, which, in retrospect, to a remarkable degree avoided the impact of Cold War ideologies and their narratives.

Finally, the archival records at the Prague Jewish Museum show that since its release, the film and the collection of the children's drawings were often exhibited together. On several occasions, the film doubled as a form of publicity for the collection. For example, on 4 March 1960, the director of Volkshochschule Böblingen Sindelfingen requested the exhibit through the Czechoslovak Filmexport company after seeing the film at the festival in Oberhausen, asserting that, in his opinion, "other community colleges throughout West Germany would also be ready to show the images."<sup>23</sup> The exhibit was circulated under the same title as the film, *Butterflies Do Not Live Here*, a title that over time served as a label for many cultural and memorial events related to the children victims from Theresienstadt and their art.

All the above listed functions of the film—social, political, educational, cultural, judiciary and commemorative—affirm Nichols's tenet of documentary film as a "practice without boundaries."<sup>24</sup> However, as Brad Prager pointed out, Nichols's definition of documentary film as a form that "speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves" needs to be reconsidered "in [the somewhat atypical] case of the Holocaust ... because many of the people in-

involved, the social actors, are dead and cannot speak for themselves." (Prager 2015: 13) In most cases, these subjects are gone and the filmmaker speaks on their behalf. The existing cinematic approaches to this important aspect of documentary film on the Holocaust have not been sufficiently theorized. As I show further in this article, the authors of *Butterflies* as well as *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* have chosen an auto-antonymic or self-contradictory framing of this aspect, purporting that through the film, the children have spoken for themselves. This framing is embedded in the concepts of the films but, at least in case of *Butterflies*, it was also explicitly stated in various commentaries on the film's production.<sup>25</sup>

### *Butterflies Do Not Live Here: Film Synopsis and Reception*

The 14-minute film is an animated montage of the children's drawings, paintings and paper cutouts combined with post-war documentary footage of Theresienstadt. The soundtrack consists of original music, composed by Karel Reiner (1910-1979),<sup>26</sup> and voice-over in which the narrator's commentary alternates with recitations of excerpts from the children's poems and diaries. The film director Bernat

25 See for example Jiří Weil's address at the film's premiere cited below.

26 Karel Reiner was a Czech composer and pianist, born into a family of Josef Reiner, the cantor of the synagogue in Žatec (Western Bohemia). He studied law and musicology at the Charles University and musical composition privately with Alois Hába and Josef Suk. From 1934 to 1938, he cooperated with the Theatre of Emil František Burian. Having been informed about the cultural activities in Theresienstadt, Reiner prepared some musical materials to take with him before he was summoned to a transport on July 7th 1943. In Theresienstadt he became one of the leading figures of the musical life, and, of all the classical composers interned there, the only one to survive. He composed incidental music for the play *Esther*, dramatized by Burian and directed by Norbert Frýd. On September 28th 1944, Reiner was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, later to Landsberg and Dachau-Kaufering. Surviving a death march, he returned to Prague where he reunited with his wife Hana, also a survivor. He was a member of the communist party from 1948, but soon after the communist takeover in 1948 he started to be persecuted by the communists for formalism and left the party in 1968 (Šormová 1973: 57 and Kuna 2000: 56-60).

22 *Pohlednice pro kata / Postcard for the Hangman* (1963) presented testimonies against the Nazi criminal Stefan Rojko, the SS-Oberscharführer in Theresienstadt during the Second World War. Rojko was charged with murder of 194 Jewish prisoners and put on trial in Graz in 1963. He was sentenced to life in prison but then released in 1975 on parole. For an account of the medialization of the trial see <http://www.ghetto-theresienstadt.de/pages/r/rojkos.htm>.

23 The Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, collection titled *Jewish Museum in Prague 1945-1960*, No. 489, box 89.

24 Bill Nichols, foreword to Keith Barry Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski (1998: 12).



Fig. 4: Bedřich Hoffmann. *At the Railway Station*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

employed the best Czechoslovak actors of the time. Václav Voska was the narrator. Jiřina Jirásková, Olga Sluníčková, Luděk Munzar as well as child-actors read the literary excerpts.

The opening voice-over commentary sets the basic contours of the narrative:

Everything was planned out. Strange signs are still visible on the buildings, Block Q, L – Querstrasse, Langestrasse, numbers on houses, doors, even people had their numbers.

As the camera pans over the authentic drawings and paper cutouts of trains in the initial sequence (Fig. 4), the narrator continues:

And then there were children. They played and drew like all children do. These children were brought here by train and they looked forward to the train taking them back home again. Neither this one nor that one took them; it probably couldn't or wasn't allowed to. Yet with a box of crayons, with the buttons of watercolors, their former homes were coming to them.<sup>27</sup>

The artifacts as well as the role of visual art under these extreme circumstances are brought to the foreground (Fig. 5). At the same time, the narrator's commentary makes it clear that the key focus is on the children's psychology rather than the chronological historiographic method common in the post-war documentary film.

A montage of artworks follows, while a dynamic camera pans over them in vertical and horizontal directions, magnifying their details in close-ups. In

27 The film's literary script was published by Antonín Navrátil (1965: 33-36). [translation mine]



Fig. 5: *Still Life with Watercolor Paint Set*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

addition, the content is animated by the camera zooming in and out and changes of focus and light.<sup>28</sup> Simple animation tricks such as a series of fade-ins in which different parts of a drawing emerge gradually out of the blank page add to the impression of liveness and movement.

The selection of about 68 images in the film (sometimes only their fragments) can be divided into five groups of recurring motifs: first, brightly-colored pictures depicting domestic scenes, presented as the children's memories of their homes: playing in the backyard, dancing and flying kites on a meadow. The second group includes pictures of nature and animals, and third, fairy tale scenes and characters. (Fig. 6-8) These three groups also tangentially demonstrate Brandeis' pedagogical strategy during her art classes to divert the children's attention from gruesome reality. The fourth and fifth groups are of a more documentary nature: paintings that thematize the architecture and the interior of the ghetto, and finally, the most drastic subjects, children's drawings of funerals and executions, rendered in black and white pencil (Fig. 9).<sup>29</sup> On the whole, the first half of the film is more image-

28 The camera operator Pavel Hrdlička (1911-1994) collaborated also with e.g., Hermína Týrlová on one of the first Czechoslovak animated films *Ferda Mravenec / Ferdinand the Ant* (1943) and with Karel and Bořivoj Zeman on *Vánoční sen / The Christmas Dream* (1944). Starting in 1946, he worked at the Krátký film studio shooting mostly documentary films.

29 Cf. Nicholas Stargardt's grouping of the pictures from the Theresienstadt collection by type, based on his study of 600 artworks (1998: 161-167).





Fig. 6: Ilonka Weissová. *Landscape with a House and a Red Bike*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.



Fig. 7: *Butterflies*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague



Fig. 8: *Fairy Tale Motif*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

driven, with the narrator providing a commentary on the children's art. The latter half balances the use of the images and the authentic texts; here the pictures are selected in order to illustrate and correspond to the voice-over performance of the texts written by children in Theresienstadt.

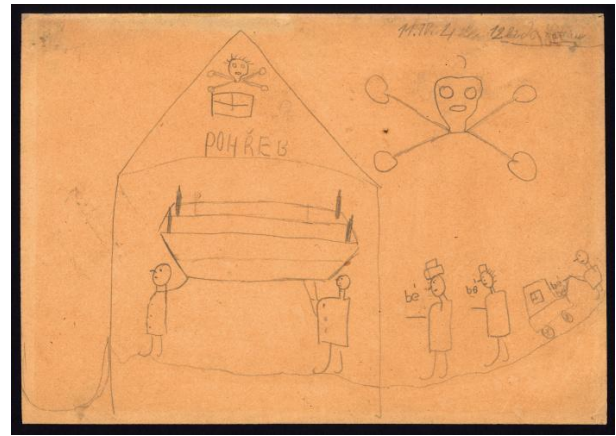


Fig. 9: Karel Sattler. *Life in the Ghetto (Funeral)*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum in Prague.

Throughout the film, the fast succession of images is rhythmically edited to Karel Reiner's music. The fast montage and dynamic camera movement along with Reiner's music, changes of light and voice-over commentary are the key agents that animate the drawings. The combined dynamic of these five elements compensates for the inherently static visual material and creates a specific effect where both a sense of movement and stasis are at once present on the screen.

In a short article from 1964, the film historian Antonín Navrátil addresses the relationship of the static and dynamic aspects. His article was perhaps the only attempt at a brief formal analysis from around the time of the film's production. Navrátil argues against the static quality of the drawings, emphasizing the director's focus on their inner dynamic:

Bernat does not conceive of the drawings of the Jewish children from Terezín as a static material, which needs to be shown, but rather as a dramatic expression. He reveals their inner conflict, concealed in the greyish ripped sheets of paper, in the faded crayon lines. ... The composition of the film brings the factual contents of the drawings and their emotional speech into meaningful connections, creating a new specific value (Navrátil 1964a: 149).

As Navrátil suggests, the drawings, paintings and paper cutouts are not just being *shown* in the film, but rather, are *animated* (in the original sense of the latin verb 'animare,' to give life to), interpreted and accentuated. Navrátil highlights Bernat's work with the psychological and emotional dynamic contained within the drawings and paintings. Apart from that,

we can find additional forms of dynamism. The film explores the material dimensions of the children's art: close-ups on the artworks reveal the movement conserved in every pencil line and brush stroke applied by a child's hand to the paper. Similarly, the choices of themes, such as dancing, flying kites and flickering butterflies add to the continual challenge to the spectators' perception of how stillness and movement confront each other on the screen.

### Reception of Reiner's Musical Score: Musical Composition as a Means of Animation and Self-Therapy

Reiner's music is an important agent in the animation process and a highly praised component of the film. In a review from 1960, the music critic Jiří Pilka considers the score to be emotionally rich and terse at the same time. This complexity, he believes, corresponds to the nature of the children's drawings (1960: 260). Reiner's biographer Milan Kuna points out the tight correlation between image and sound:

The composer alternates music of the whole orchestra with a solo piano. At times, he employs technological fine tuning at the sound studio. Moreover, all parts of the music are rhythmically in perfect accordance with the rapidly changing drawings, with their animation, even if the music and drawings often occur in an audiovisual counterpoint. Reiner's music is built on contrasts: it is based on simple folk rhymes, remade in various ways, from somber to optimistic tunes (Kuna 2008: 248).<sup>30</sup>

Other critics also praised Reiner's original music. Similarly to Kuna, Vladimír Bor underscored the use of the "crushing counterpoint" between the horrific images from the ghetto and Reiner's use of joyful children tunes. As Bor indicated, this contrast stemmed directly from the same stark confrontation embedded in the reality of the imprisoned children (Bor 1959, quoted in Kuna 2008: 249).

Reiner himself was a former prisoner in Theresienstadt, where he worked with children and

therefore had first-hand knowledge of their experience there. According to Kuna, "It was only through Reiner's work on the music for the film that he was finally able to close down this horrific era of Nazi occupation and concentration camps for himself, until then a burden he had not been able to escape" (2008: 248). The making of the film turned into a therapeutic process for survivors like Reiner.

### In the Constraints of Centralized Cultural Policy: The Terezín Narrative and Hard-line Critique

Despite the jarring contrast between the facts of Theresienstadt history and the children's delicate art works featured in the film, some of the Czechoslovak contemporary critics found the film insufficiently explicit. An anonymous critic from a Marxist-Stalinist journal *Tvorba*<sup>31</sup> wrote:

The drawings of children from Terezín should be a means of mobilization against fascism and war. However, their impact in the film is weakened by the inappropriate commentary. As if the author feared to call things by their name, he avoids the words Nazism and fascism.<sup>32</sup>

Paradoxically, that critic objected particularly to the poetic narrator's commentary, which was based on Weil's writing and stylistically close to the excerpts of texts written by children in Theresienstadt:

Instead of calling to combat against fascism and war ... [the narrator's commentary] emanates a heavy and sinister mysticism that will not encourage anyone (ibid.).

Such reproach from the hardliners corresponded to Czechoslovakia's official politics of the late 1950s; it was among the slowest in the Eastern Bloc to join the liberalization following Stalin's death in 1953. In

31 Between 1957 and 1962, *Tvorba* was a weekly cultural journal published by the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Its main agenda was fighting fascism and Nazism and promoting Soviet Union.

32 *Tvorba* 45: 1076.

30 Translation mine.

the framework of centralized cultural policy, the film was not deemed satisfactory, as it did not adhere to the official rhetoric dictated by the Soviet Union from the late 1940s till the mid-1950s, a rhetoric, which, absurdly, combined pronounced anti-fascism with virulent anti-Semitism. This political turn was the reason why testimonies about Theresienstadt, emerging in the immediate postwar years in the form of memoirs, essays and newspaper articles were completely silenced for almost a decade following the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948. The film *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* was part of a resurgence of narratives on the ghetto occurring in the late 1950s.

Lisa Peschel, a historian of cultural life in Theresienstadt, argues that although the Czechoslovak communist hardliners were still clinging to the principles of Stalin's reign, by the end of 1950s social change was underway in the cultural sphere. Narratives about Theresienstadt and the Holocaust started to re-emerge, first in form of prose: in 1958, two books by Arnošt Lustig, *Night and Hope* and *Diamonds of the Night*, were published and enthusiastically received. In the same year, Jan Otčenášek, a non-Jewish writer, published a hugely successful work of fiction, a romantic story set in Prague titled *Romeo, Juliet and the Darkness* (Peschel 2011). Simultaneously, the film *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* was produced by Weil, Volavková and Bernat, shortly preceding the famous Czechoslovak New Wave films on the Holocaust such as *Romeo, Julie a tma / Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (Jiří Weiss, 1959), *Démanty noci / Diamonds of the Night* (Jan Němec, 1964) and *Dita Saxová*<sup>33</sup> (Antonín Moskalyk, 1967), film versions of the above-mentioned literary accounts.<sup>34</sup>

According to the film historian Eva Strusková, not only the more liberal political tendencies in Czechoslovak culture enabled this wave of testimonies, but also the fact that sufficient time had elapsed, allowing people to process the war traumas.<sup>35</sup> She argues that similar timing can be observed in countries of Western Europe that were not inflicted with the Stalin-imposed post-war anti-Semitism like Czechoslovakia.<sup>36</sup> Canonic cinematic works on the Holocaust were released around the same time as *Butterflies: Alain Resnais' Nuit et Brouillard / Night and Fog* (1956), George Stevens' *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) and Andrew and Annelie Thorndikes' *Urlaub auf Sylt / Holiday on Sylt* (1957).

As Peschel (2011: 3) writes, Theresienstadt had a history of being mythologized as a "luxury ghetto," where "the Czech Jews had waited out the war in comfort while Czechs at home had lived through the terror of the Occupation and the Czech political prisoners had suffered in camps like Dachau, Buchenwald and Schwarzheide." Contrary to Peschel, Strusková doubts the extent to which this myth may have persisted among the general public in Czechoslovakia, where the ghetto had already been accurately portrayed in, for example, Alfréd Radok's film *Daleká cesta / The Long Journey* released in 1949, and the newsreel with footage from concentration camps shot by the liberation armies was also commonly projected. The ghetto was vastly misrepresented in the films that were shot there on the orders of the Nazi authorities, staging comfortable life for propagandist purposes, but those films, of which only fragments were found, were not available to the public in the post-war years.<sup>37</sup> In any case, the film *Butterflies Do Not Live*

33 Based on Arnošt Lustig's novella *Dita Saxová* published in 1962.

34 For a fuller account of Czechoslovak films on the subject of the Holocaust, cf. Charles H. Rosenzweig and David S. Wyman 1996: 185-186. Same as in many other sources, *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* is not included in their account, most likely because of the generally scarce records about the making of the film, its physical inaccessibility and almost no critical response.

35 For the purposes of this film-historically oriented article, I am leaving the theory of trauma aside. Seminal work in research on testimony and trauma was done e.g. by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Dori Laub in the late 1970s. Most recently, Victoria Grace Walden offers an interesting exploration of cinematic representations of the Holocaust in the context of memory studies, see Walden 2019.

36 Conversation with Eva Strusková on March 12th 2019.

37 On the target audiences of the footage shot in Theresienstadt between 1942 and 1945 see Natascha Drubek 2016. The

*Here* represented a significant contribution to the Theresienstadt narrative, revealing the extent of atrocities that actually took place there. The film's impact was especially powerful and compelling, as it presented a non-fictionalized account related to children victims. Moreover, it came out at a point of public receptiveness to narratives about the Czech Jews' wartime fate. In relation to the cultural climate of late 1950s Czechoslovakia, Peschel writes: "Finally, fifteen years after the end of the war, the actual conditions in the Terezín ghetto were being publicly acknowledged. In addition, not only were the Terezín artists being admired for their bravery; they were also being recognized as 'our people' – as fellow Czechs" (2011: 11). Furthermore, at around the same time, Hana Volavková succeeded in obtaining permission for the creation of a unique memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Bohemia and Moravia, one of the oldest monuments of this kind in Europe. The interior walls of the Pinkas synagogue were covered with handwritten names of more than 77,000 victims, a symbolic gravestone for "those who had no grave".<sup>38</sup> In connection to this monument, Weil wrote a prose poem *Žalozpěv za 77 297 obětí* (Lamentation for 77,297 Victims, 1958). The film *Butterflies* belonged to the forms of testimony that emerged at the end of the 1950s, which played an important role in exposing untold historical narratives and significantly contributed to public knowledge about the Holocaust, both in Czechoslovakia and abroad.

postwar use of this propaganda footage has been researched by Eva Strusková 2016.

38 The memorial in Pinkas synagogue became a model for other monuments around the world. It was designed and made in 1954–1959 by Václav Boštík (1913–2005) and Jiří John (1923–1972), both members of the art group UB12. The memorial was closed after the Soviet invasion in 1968 and remained inaccessible for almost thirty years. Renovations could only start when the communist regime collapsed and the memorial was reopened in 1996.

## The Children "Speak Up," the Press Grasps for Words

The film *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* elicited enormous acclaim: in 1959, it won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and over the following year it collected dozens of awards at film festivals including Karlovy Vary, Edinburgh, Bergamo, Chile, Venice, Florence, Mexico, Rome, Oberhausen, Montevideo, Sydney, Melbourne and Vancouver (Vlasta Jablonská 1979: 23). For the director Bernat, *Butterflies* became his most successful and internationally known work. Weil's original input was overshadowed by the credit given to Bernat. As with so many of Weil's literary works at the time, his key role in the production of the film fell into obscurity.

Many periodicals reported on the film's release and success. Czechoslovak newspapers stressed the film's accomplishments at international festivals. The *Večerní Praha* (Evening Prague) daily wrote of "a great victory of cinematography of a country from the peace camp," reinforcing the Cold War dichotomous rhetoric of the peace camp vs. the imperialist camp.<sup>39</sup> Local film journals mostly recounted the film's content without adding much context, opinion or analysis.<sup>40</sup>

By comparison, the German press emphasized the emotional impact of the film. The East-German *Neue Zeit* reported on "a film from Czechoslovakia, which has already gained the reputation of the most touching memorial."<sup>41</sup> *Der Filmspiegel* wrote of "the most devastating documentary at the [Cannes] festival."<sup>42</sup> Gert Kalow from the West German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* protested that the film had not received a prize at the Mannheim festival and listed it as "one of the greatest warning signs of our time."<sup>43</sup>

39 *Večerní Praha* 1959: 3.

40 See Oldřich Adamec 1959 and *Filmový přehled* 1959: 2.

41 *Neue Zeit* 1960: 4.

42 *Der Filmspiegel* 1959: 7.

43 Kalow lists *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* along with the French documentary *Vivre / Living* (Carlos Villardebo, 1959) and the Danish *Goya - los desastros de la Guerra* (dir. Søren Mølnon)

Very few journals and newspapers went beyond a superficial report, and even though reviews on short documentary films were (and generally still are) few, it was perhaps also the vastness of the tragedy which this film documented and the political sensitivity of the subject that caused the absence or even impossibility of a more in-depth response. Lenka Reinerová's review from 1960 expresses this reluctance:

It would be a mistake to try and describe individual elements of this film ... One has to see the film *Butterflies Do Not Live Here*. Nothing extraneous was added to its composition, nothing forcefully constructed. One drawing follows another, one song follows another song (Reinerová 1960: 51).

Bernat's reorientation of the film's concept toward an in-depth psychological and visual examination of the children's art, rendering the narrator's commentary only marginal, was appreciated as an approach coherent with the unrepresentable nature of the Holocaust.

## Documentary Film as a Reconstruction

When the film premiered at the Jewish Museum in Prague on January 1959, Jiří Weil wrote enthusiastically:

Only in the film directed by Bernat did the murdered Terezín children speak to the entire world community. Only then everyone heard their voices, everyone got to know their dreams, hopes, and their bitter end. Now the Terezín children will fight all over the whole world for peace, and against the resurrection of fascism. The fifteen thousand children did not die in vain (quoted in Hříbková 2012: 62, cf. Weil 1959: 6).<sup>44</sup>

as the most important documentary films released in 1958/1959 that the jury in Mannheim failed to award, instead favoring "scientific films," "artistically perfect gimmickry" and "socially critical films, but only those that end optimistically." In this article, Kalow calls for better structural support for documentary film and emphasizes the potential of its social impact (1959: 56).

<sup>44</sup> Already in his first version of the film script from 1957, Weil writes that out of the fifteen thousand children who passed

Weil's emotional and, from today's perspective, perhaps overly idealistic address testifies to the deeply reverent symbolism that charged the film's production and reception as well as to the authors' high expectations regarding its peace-making impact. It also reiterates the trope of "bringing the children back to life," which recurs in Bernat's film in multiple forms: the artworks are displayed, examined and animated as a material record of the children's memories, dreams, hopes and observations that enable their recreation in the film; the children's poems and diaries are staged through the voice-over of child-actors; and the camera re-enacts the children's gaze over the walls of the fortress into the surrounding landscape in one of the live footage sequences. In short, Bernat aimed at a comprehensive reconstruction of the children's psychological and emotional experience in Theresienstadt. This was echoed in the contemporary film critique: "We perceive the children's drawings, yet we can feel their lives behind them...." as Navrátil commented (1964b: 21). The concept of psychological/emotional reconstruction is continued by Drahoslav Holub in his film *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy*, as I discuss below.

Such a concept might seem problematic in the light of Nicholas Stargardt's Freudian analysis of the Theresienstadt collection. From a historian's point of view, Stargardt raised many questions regarding the possibilities of interpretation of the children's drawings:

through Theresienstadt, only a hundred survived. He reiterates these numbers also in his newspaper articles and the address on the occasion of the film's premiere. Many periodicals that wrote about *Butterflies* at the time restate the numbers, most likely taking them over from Weil. An article by the survivor Margita Kárná shows that the exact number of children imprisoned in Theresienstadt is difficult to calculate not only because of the incomplete records of prisoners coming from various countries, but also because of the problematic age limit (only those who have not reached their fifteenth birthday prior to the day they arrived to Theresienstadt were considered children), used for example by the historians Anita Franková and Ludmila Chládková (Kárná 1993: 7). For statistics regarding the prisoners and victims in Theresienstadt, cf. Lagus and Polák 2006 and a brief summary based on up-to-date historical research at the website <https://www.holocaust.cz/dejiny/ghetto-terezin/bilance/> (accessed September 16th 2019).

The problems of interpreting these children's art historically are made doubly difficult because we lack clear methodological precedents. ... Should we interpret their drawings as depicting real life or expressing their fantasies? Are apparently 'optimistic' pictures necessarily the work of happy children? Could they be a mask, an artificial routine or, even if genuinely entered into, none the less a defense against underlying emotions which have not surfaced in the picture? Do children paint the world around them or do they go on painting the same picture, taking it with them like an expressionist autobiography?" (1998: 197)

Stargardt's questions point to a crucial issue in compilation films that work with archival material: our inevitable gaps in knowledge caused by the process of isolating the material from its original context and reframing it in a new discourse.<sup>45</sup> In the case of the Theresienstadt drawings, we lack, for example, the knowledge of the children's motivations for drawing a particular subject. Was a given theme suggested by the art teacher? Or was it a spontaneous depiction of a happy/traumatic memory? In the film, the artworks acquire new meanings that arise primarily through editing. They are integrated into a new narrative through their juxtaposition with other images. At the same time, the voice-over commentary interacts with each individual image, further shifting its original field of reference.

In relation to compilation films, the film historian Lucie Česálková calls attention to the issue of authorship, which becomes more complex when the original and the hosting "texts" enter into a relationship. The problems of authorship in intermedia or compilation films can be innumerable. The film *Butterflies* represents an interesting case, as many of the children's artworks used in the film bear their author's signature (e.g. Fig. 1 and 3). However, in sync with the typical universalist approach of its time, individual authorship is not part of the film's narrative, which principally approaches the historical event as a collective fate, unlike many of the more recent documentary films on the Holocaust which tend to

focus on individual stories and testimonies, such as the animated *Silence* (Yadin and Bringas 1998), *Helga L-520* (Zvěřina 2011) and *Last Flight of Petr Ginz* (Dickson and Roberts 2012).

### *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy*

The film *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* (*O botičkách, copánku a dudlíku*, 1961)<sup>46</sup> was not the only production following and similar to *Butterflies do Not Live Here*. The Archives of the Jewish Museum document at least three other analogical productions: the 1961 Sven Kluwe's TV program by Bertelsmann-Fernsehproduktion in Munich, a filming of the children's drawings by an unnamed Italian TV crew in 1961<sup>47</sup> and the 1965 U.S. TV program *The Eternal Light "I Never Saw Another Butterfly"* directed by Martin Hoade and written by Virginia Mazer.<sup>48</sup>

*On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* was produced by Krátký film in cooperation with the State Jewish Museum, the Institute of History of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Union of Antifascist Fighters (Svaz protifašistických bojovníků). Drahoslav Holub was the director as well as the author of the script. The credits also list Erich Kulka and Ota Kraus as advisors, the authors of one of the first and today canonic documentary books on Auschwitz, *The Death Factory* (1946),<sup>49</sup> as well as the advisors Věra Foltýnová and Anna Hyndráková, all of them Holocaust survivors.

By the time of the film's production, Holub had established himself as a prolific filmmaker of highly tendentious and propagandist documentaries promoting the heroic deeds of the party, such as *Vítězný*

45 Cf. Sabine Hänsgen and Wolfgang Beilenhoff (2016) analyzing Mikhail Romm's compilation film *Obyknovennyi fashizm / Ordinary Fascism* (1965).

46 I am indebted to Martin Jelínek, a researcher, curator and archivist at the Jewish Museum in Prague, for drawing my attention to the existence of this film and for much help with the ensuing research.

47 The Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, collection titled *Jewish Museum in Prague 1945-1960*, 513/92.

48 The Archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague, collection titled *Jewish Museum in Prague 1945-1960*, 858.

49 First published in Prague in 1946 under the title *Továrna na smrt*, later translated into German, Hungarian, Russian, Estonian, Hebrew, Romanian, English and Greek.

lid / *The Triumph of People* (1949), *30 let KSČ / Thirty Years of the Czechoslovak Communist Party* (1951), *Přehlídka 9. května / The Parade of May 9th* (1956), and others. His acclaimed mid-length documentary essay *V srdci Evropy / In the Heart of Europe* (1968) on the history of Czechoslovakia was out of line with his otherwise consistent political profile. The film earned him not only the main prize at the Festival of Short Film in Karlovy Vary (March 1968) but also expulsion from the party and a ban on the film's distribution.<sup>50</sup> Holub's documentaries on Theresienstadt and the Second World War, such as *Exkurze / Excursion* (1966), *Zpráva o Terezíně / Report on Theresienstadt* (1983) and his unique series *Z tajných archivů 2. světové války / From the Secret Archives of WWII* (1971), are among his most valued films. Systematic work with archival materials was the staple feature of Holub's documentary film style. As he stated in an interview, for him, making a documentary film meant primarily "searching for documents, photographs and of course mainly archival materials..." (Jablonská 1984: 368). The first time he used archival footage was in 1945 in his debut film *Zlín za války / Zlín During the War*, which began his long-term interest in depicting history in the form of compilation film, i.e. reassembling archival material in a new narrative composition. Holub was well aware of, and amply utilized, the manipulative potential of this form in the service of the communist ideology. He produced over twenty compilation films out of his total of around two hundred films, which included popular features of various professions, popular science films, especially from the field of medicine, chemistry and physics, and films on art. Zlín was where he started his film career, at Baťa's studio, the cradle of numerous legendary animators such as Hermína Týrlová and Karel Zeman. This is

50 *In the Heart of Europe* was made during the Prague Spring and offered an objective perspective on the history of Czechoslovakia. As Martin Skyba writes: "After a long period of time, our history was explained in a language other than the stiff phrases of communist ideologues. Soon after the film was shelved only to reappear on TV screens in 1990." See Skyba 2006: 22-23. For Holub's biographical account see Martin Štoll 2009: 190-194.

perhaps why Holub tended to use techniques of animation in his documentary films: in addition to *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy*, where he integrated elements of animation into the montage aesthetics, there are also *Přístav v srdci Evropy / Harbor in the Heart of Europe* (1946),<sup>51</sup> *Říkali mu Black Jack / They Called Him Black Jack* (1981) and others.

The 13-minute *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* was the first part of a loose trilogy together with two other shorts, *Růže a kasemata / Roses and Casemates* (1962) and *Pohlednice pro kata / Postcard for the Hangman* (1963). A newspaper article from 1961 announced that the film was intended to be part of an exposition in the Czechoslovak section of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.<sup>52</sup> However, according to Edyta Chowaniec, an archivist of the Museum's audiovisual collection, the historical scripts of Czechoslovakia's expositions do not contain any record of its exhibition.<sup>53</sup>

In this film, various visual documents on the Holocaust, here specifically children's drawings from Theresienstadt, photographs from the Auschwitz Album<sup>54</sup> and wartime newspaper and documentary images, are combined in a chilling montage. Similar to *Butterflies Do Not Live Here*, the film is constructed on a number of highly polarized contrasts: most importantly, the form, a fairy tale narrated by a joyful and unsuspecting child, which contrasts with the content, the metaphoric account of transports to concentration camps and mass murders in gas chambers.

51 For the production history of this compilation film, including the identification of various archival footage used here and the authors of animated sequences, see Česálková 2014: 89-90.

52 "Proti revanšismu a neonacismu." *Kultura* 1961:2.

53 The Czechoslovak Ministry of Education sent a copy of the film to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in 1962, but it was only used for occasional screenings for individuals between 1962 and 1965.

54 An album of photographs discovered by a concentration camp survivor Lilly Jacob-Zelmanovic Meier. The album contains almost 200 photographs and it is the only surviving visual evidence of the process leading to mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This unique document was donated to Yad Vashem in 1983. All the photos can be viewed at [https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album\\_auschwitz/index.as](https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/index.as).



Fig. 10: The shoe motif montage in *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* (1961). Courtesy of Národní filmový archiv, Prague.

The title of the film announces the three-part narrative *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* in Czech and four other languages: Russian, German, French and English, suggesting the producers' expectations of a broad international audience. The subtitle "Drawings were made by children before their death in Auschwitz"<sup>55</sup> is somewhat misleading as the art used in the film comes from the Theresienstadt collection.<sup>56</sup> In the first part, a voice-over of a little girl tells the story of red shoes that will transport her into a land of magic, with lots of food, nice little houses and free ice cream. Her narration includes memories of parents, while still at home (active in the resistance movement), who "kept writing some cards, then quickly cleaned up and burnt something in the stove before a house search took place." A train trip follows, a crying grandfather "says strange things... but grandpa is old and he does not eat ice cream and does not know that it will be for free." Similar to Bernat's *Butterflies*, the opening part contains many images of drawings, paintings and paper cutouts that thematize domestic and fairy-tale scenes. The motif of shoes is employed in a double contrast: a close up on the red shoes in a child's paper cutout piece is juxtaposed with a magnified photograph of soldier's boots marching forward (Fig. 10).

55 Orig. "Kresby vytvořily děti před svou smrtí v Osvětimi."

56 Kindly clarified to me by Anna Hyndráková, who collaborated on the film as an advisor. Hyndráková survived deportations to Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Christianstadt and Görlitz concentration camps. After the war, she worked as the head of the photography archive at the Institute for History of Socialism for the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party; after 1989 she actively engaged in recording the memories of the Holocaust survivors and worked as an editor for the Jewish Museum.



Fig. 11: The shoes in a child's paper cutout are contrasted with documentary photography. *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* (1961). Courtesy of Národní filmový archiv, Prague.

In the next sequence, the red shoes from a paper cutout,<sup>57</sup> a means of transport into the land of magic, as the girl's voice-over tells us, contrast with photography close-ups on shoes of children crowded in lines and on train platforms waiting for a transport to a concentration camp (Fig. 11). Meanwhile, the girl's voice-over maintains her focus on the fairy tale narrative, which indicates at once a child's perspective on the events of the Holocaust and suggests the escape into an imaginary world as a coping mechanism.

In the second part, *On Braid*, the little girl's voice tells us about her excitement upon arrival when she learns that all the children are going to take a bath, but a nice lady comes along and advises her to not go, for her nice braid would have to be cut off. The girl is very disappointed, because she loves to bathe and covets the other children as she watches them pass by her through a narrow crevice in the wall. She then tells about the frequent visits to the doctor and getting a lot of shots, "which did not hurt as much," while photographic images of medical experiments on children flash by. At this point, Holub inserts a suggestive psychedelic sequence in which he uses fragments of the children's abstract paintings, out of focus and spinning in a dizzying motion on the screen, in order to evoke the physical effects of these medical experiments. The sequence simulates the children's feverishly distorted perception as a result of undergoing the experiments (Fig. 12). This

57 The origin of one drawing as well as two paper cutouts that feature red shoes in the film is unknown. According to Michaela Sidenberg, the curator of the Theresienstadt collection, these artifacts are not authentic and were most likely manufactured for the purposes of the film's narrative.





Fig. 12: A psychedelic sequence using a fragment of an abstract watercolor painting out of focus and in a spinning motion to simulate the dizzying effects of Mengele's medical experiments on children. Courtesy of Národní filmový archiv, Prague.

moment also shows how much further Holub went, compared to Bernat, in the semantic reframing of the children's art works. Whereas Bernat recontextualized the works through their new juxtapositions in his film narrative but retained and emphasized the inner dynamic of each drawing, Holub instrumentalized them and their fragments for the sake of his more self-contained storyline.

By the end of the second part, the narrator girl is also summoned for the bath and her braid gets cut off. "But that does not matter, the braid will grow back," says the girl's voice over the photographs of containers with the poisonous gas Zyklon B. Overall, the film's intense impact on the spectator is linked primarily to the child's voice-over. The girl's performance is both authentically childlike and emotionally measured. The name of this young voice actor is symbolically missing from the film's credits.

In the third section, *On Dummy*, the voice-over changes. A calm and tender woman's voice is saying her final goodbye to her baby son. The film concludes with agitated exclamations of male voices (fellow prisoners) seeking to hide and protect the child left behind by the mother. "We have a child here, can you hide him?" "Hide the child! Save the child!" is exclaimed at first in Czech and Slovak languages, then in German, Hungarian, French, Italian, English, and Russian. Unlike the multi-lingual credits introducing each section of the film inserted in

order to accommodate the intended international audience, here the selection of languages seems to be diegetically motivated, referencing the diverse nationalities of the prisoners gathered in the Nazi concentration camps. At the same time, Holub's emphasis on the variety of the victims' nationalities, paired with his careful avoidance of any reference to their Jewishness, is an important political framing compliant with the communist narrative of Second World War history, especially throughout the 1950s. Whereas Bernat's film includes children's drawings of people wearing the yellow Star of David on their garments and a concluding sequence with footage of the then newly created memorial in the Pinkas synagogue with the names of the Jewish victims inscribed on its interior walls, Holub diligently extracts any Jewish visual or verbal reference. Instead, he foregrounds the heroism and suffering of the communist anti-Nazi resistance movement (Fig. 13).

Compared to Bernat's narrative style, Holub's film shows and tells about many of the cruelties in a more explicit, gruesome manner. While *Butterflies* immerses the spectator in the children's drawings and paintings and their inner dynamic, *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* focuses on the contrast between the children's art/child narrator and the documentary photographic material, repeatedly exposing the spectator to their drastic irreconcilability. In terms of genre, Holub explores the borders between documentary, fairytale and newsreel, where the children's poetic and playful imagination is represented by the art and the girl's voice-over, and the war atrocities by photographic documentary material: Nazi orders printed in newspapers and on posters, images of marching soldiers, of communist resistance pamphlets and printing machines, long lists of (distinctly Czech) names of people sentenced to death, images of adults and children crowded on train station platforms and in concentration camp barracks, etc. (Fig. 13).

As in *Butterflies*, the camera, operated by Přemysl Prokop, moves across still images using vertical and horizontal panning, zoom in, dissolve and spinning, a technique used one year later also by

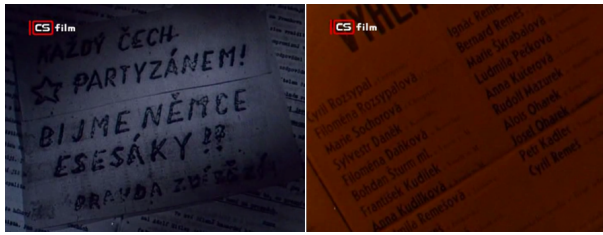


Fig. 13: Holub accentuates the Czechoslovak communist resistance by incorporating archival materials such as communist anti-Nazi pamphlets and lists of people persecuted by the Nazis containing only distinctly Czech names. Any reference to Jewish victims is avoided. Courtesy of Národní filmový archiv, Prague.

the French film artist Chris Marker in his influential science-fiction post-nuclear war featurette *La Jetée / The Jetty* (1962), constructed almost entirely from still photos. Comparably to Marker's film, *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* charts the territory between utopia (in this case, the land of magic) and the inescapable here-and-now (the Holocaust reality). Whereas the girl's fairy tale is to a certain extent exempted from the specificity of time and place, the documentary photographs bear an unequivocal mark of concrete historicity. As the film progresses, the surrender of the utopian narrative to historical reality manifests in the decreasing frequency of the children's artworks and gradual takeover by the jarring documentary photographs.

The musical score for *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* was composed by William Bukov $\acute{y}$ , born Br $\ddot{u}$ hl (1932-1968), a Slovak modernist composer of Jewish descent.<sup>58</sup> Compared to Reiner's approach, which included the use of joyful children's tunes to enhance the contrast, Bukov $\acute{y}$ 's score was consistent with the film's dramatic content: the brilliant macabre orchestral music with bass clarinet and violin in the foreground is occasionally interrupted by a military march. The overall sound is in vogue

58 Bukov $\acute{y}$  started composing music for commercial, animated and documentary films as early as 1956, including music for Břetislav Pojar's legendary animated series *Potkali se u Kolína / Come and Play, Sir!* (1965-1973) and *Lev a písnička / The Lion and the Song* (1959) awarded in Annecy. He wrote one of his most captivating musical scores for a psychological drama from a concentration camp *Boxer a smrt / The Boxer and Death* (Peter Solan, 1962). In the same year, Bukov $\acute{y}$  composed also the highly innovative phonosynthetic music for the ballet *Hiroshima* (1962). The promising career of this prolific young composer ended with his premature death at age thirty-six.

with the 1960s Czechoslovak film music style, to which Bukov $\acute{y}$  contributed significantly in his short but prolific career dedicated mostly to film music composition (Matzner and Pilka 2002: 333). Whereas Reiner's music was honored by many reviews, unfortunately no critical attention was paid to Bukov $\acute{y}$ 's score.

As the film director Bohumil Sobotka wrote, documentary film at the time went through a period of "renaissance of film sound," opening to musical experimentation which contributed to the general "orientation away from oral testimony in favor of inner monologue ... At the time, what people said was considered rather superficial and unimportant" (1964: 11). In both films, this tendency manifests not only through the prominent soundtracks but also the scripts' deflection from factual commentary and their focus on the children's voices/texts.

In contrast to the enormous success of *Butterflies*, and despite its artistic and documentary qualities, Holub's film was generally ignored by the critics. Only sparse documentation on its production and reception can be found. Sobotka, who collaborated with Holub on the film's conception, later wrote:

In this film, Holub approached a very dangerous subject and material. The drawings of children tortured and killed in a concentration camp were supposed to speak from the screen ... If Holub was ever harmed by the critics then it was primarily by the silence over this film. The local festivals equally unjustly ignored this film. (Ibid. 10)

One of the rare articles mentioning Holub's work came from the film critic Jan Hořejší. In "Film, the Crown Witness" (Korunní svědek film), Hořejší marked *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* as "one of the latest achievements of the Czechoslovak compilation film" and situated it in the context of documentary films such as *Padenie Berlina / The Fall of Berlin* (Yulii Raizman, Elizaveta Svilova, 1945) and later Annelie and Andrew Thorndikes' *Unternehmen Teutonenschwert / Operation Teutonic Sword* (1958). For Hořejší, this film form represented an "arsenal of truth and a weapon against all forgers of history" (Hořejší 1961: 3). At the same time, he emphasized, documentary film as a genre gained in significance and was considered a "crown witness," a crucial

medium in informing the public about the atrocities of war and preventing its recurrence. By 1961, the Thorndikes' documentary *Operation Teutonic Sword*, for example, had been seen by forty million spectators throughout Europe. The social impact and interest in documentary films were unprecedented (1961: 3).

The reasons for the lack of critical response to Holub's film continue to remain obscure. The research of the film's production history is hampered by the absence of the written documentation archive of the key production institution, Krátký film, which is believed to have perished during the studios' hasty privatization in the early 1990s. At this point, the following hypotheses can only be speculative: First, the fact that Holub's film came out as a variation on what was already done two years earlier by Bernat with such strong impact may partly justify the lack of critical response. Second, as Sobotka suggested, the politically "dangerous subject" contributed to its further avoidance in the media as well as at film festivals. Third, part of the professional community and the general public may have refrained from attending to Holub's work as they perceived him to be primarily a fervent propagandist. And, finally, the brutality of the film's content could have contributed to the weak spectatorial response. Further research may reveal more about the film's distribution history, although the minimum of available sources and the lack of knowledge about the film even among Holub's contemporaries suggest that the distribution was extremely limited.

## Conclusion: Children's Drawings as Instruments of Resistance and Compliance

From the perspective of documentary film history, the two films discussed here emerged in the prolific wave of postwar documentaries based on archival materials on Nazism. As Česálková points out:

The 1950s, with...the need to come to terms with the wartime past as a collective trauma renewed debates on

the relationship between history, media and memory... Cinematic revisions of the war events, in the tension between the original image and its retrospective reading, pointed to the possibilities of aesthetic and ethical transposition of images and thus indirectly emphasized the processual, incessantly mutating nature of memory. (2014: 87)

The documentary films *Butterflies Do Not Live Here* and *On Shoes, Braid and Dummy* demonstrate how very different approaches to Holocaust memory emerged in Czechoslovakia within the short time span between 1958 and 1961. The highly politicized field in which film-makers of documentaries on the Second World War found themselves in the 1950s and early 1960s was inconsistent enough to allow for works with radically different degrees of (in)dependence on state ideological pressures. In the format of the compilation film, Bernat and Holub approached the same corpus of archival material, the Theresienstadt collection of children's artworks. Under the heading of 'the fight for peace and against fascism', one of the few state-approved thematic directions when dealing with the wartime past, the collection of children's drawings was a rare possibility to publicly address the history of Theresienstadt and hence, indirectly, the Holocaust. In Holub's more compliant narrative focused on the Czechoslovak communist resistance, the "transposition of images" from the collection becomes ethically more problematic. The comparison of these two films demonstrates the complex interactions of past and present engrained in cinematic representations of the Holocaust.

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## Bio

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