

**MUNI**  
**ARTS**

# **Czech New Wave**

## **CZS36**

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## *Pearls of the deep*

1965

dir. Jiří Menzel, Jan Němec, Evald

Schorm, Věra Chytilová, Jaromil Jireš

Adapted from a collection of short stories by  
Bohumil Hrabal

Screenplay: Bohumil Hrabal, Jiří Menzel, Jan  
Němec, Evald Schorm, Věra Chytilová, Jaromil  
Jireš

Cinematographer: Jaroslav Kučera

Music: Jan Klusák a Jiří Šust

Staring: Ferdinand Krůta, Pavla Maršálková, Miloš  
Čtrnáctý, František Havel, Václav Žák, Ivan  
Vyskočil, Vladimír Boudník, Alžběta Laštovková,  
Ivan Vyskočil, Dana Valtová a další...



# *Pearls of the deep*: Background and questions

□ According to Czech critic and film historian Jan Lukeš, *Pearls of the deep* can be considered as an „unintended manifesto“ of Czech New Wave. The reason behind this characteristics lies in the fact that the impulse for making the movie came from Barrandov studios (creative group Šmída-Fikar) and not from the auteurs themselves.

**1. *Pearls of the deep* clearly demonstrate, that Czech New Wave cannot be reduced to one single aesthetics/worldview/storytelling. However – is there a single element, that unites these five vastly different stories?**

□ Bohumil Hrabal is a celebrated Czech author, who invented the word „pábitel“ (noun), “pábit“ (verb). This word applies to those individuals who have a specific take on life; they look for beauty in ordinary, everyday things and they like to talk about their life, experiences and encounters. They bend the reality according to their worldview.

**2. In the context of 1960s Czechoslovakia – is this a political or apolitical stance?**

3 zápatí prezentace

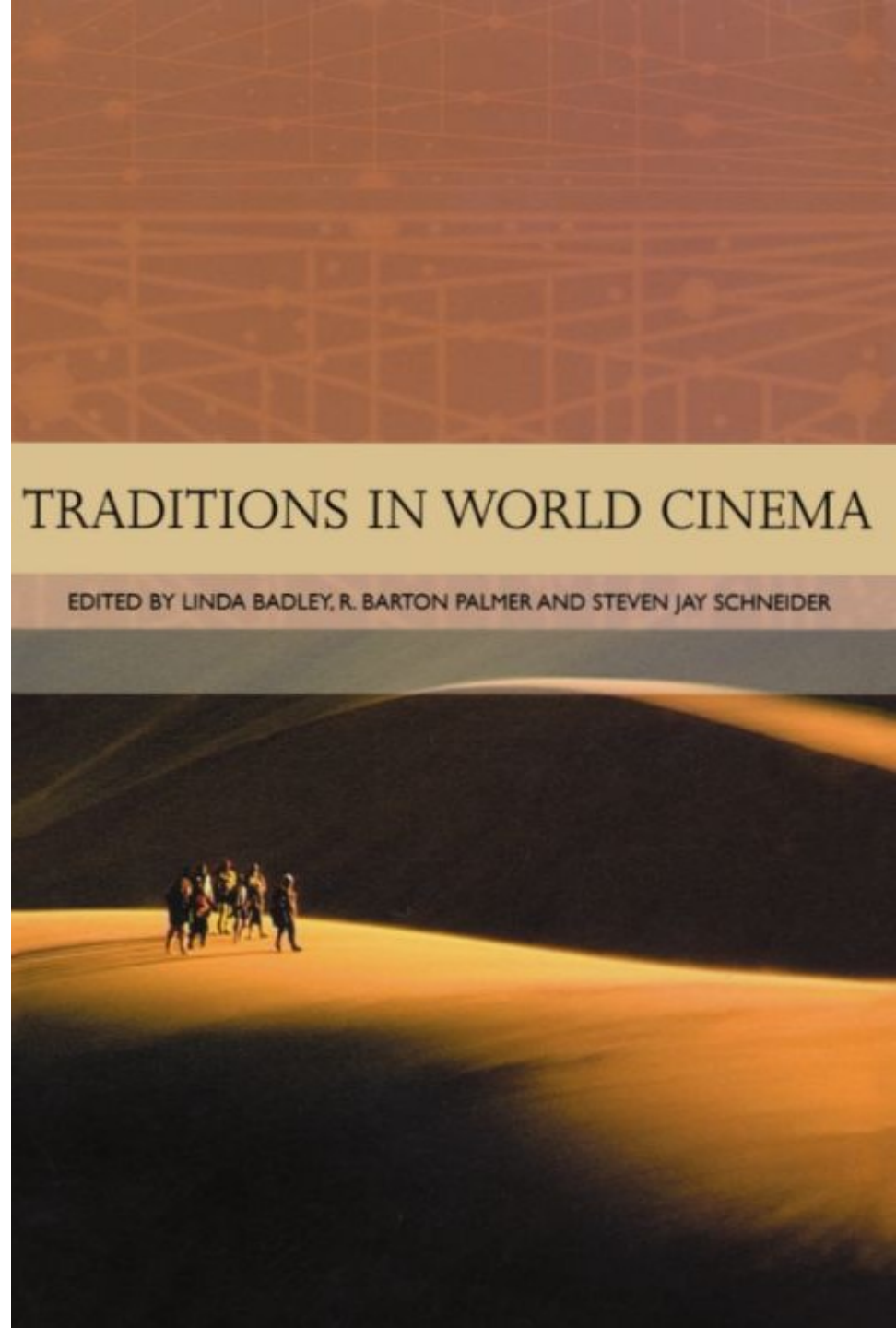
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## Reading L2

**HAMES, Peter**

### **The Czechoslovak New Wave. A revolution denied.**

In: Linda Bradley, Barton Palmer and Steven Jay Schneider (eds.). *Traditions in World Cinema*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006, pp. 67–94.



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„Czechoslovak Film Miracle“

X

„Some new wave films should be screened only as a form of punishment.“

„Golden Sixties“

X

„New Wave as a myth?“

„The absolute quality of Czech Cinema“

X

„A marketing triumph?“

# New Wave as both a break and a continuity in Czechoslovak cinema

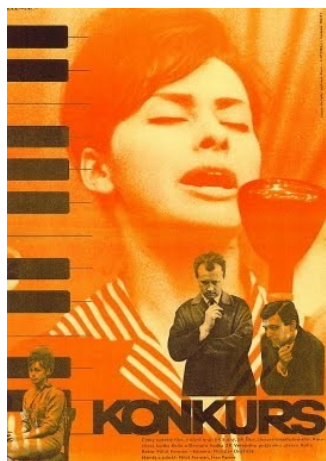
- **Czech (Czechoslovak) cinema was up to the 1960s a local cinema** and international success belonged only to a handful of individual titles (*Extase*, 1932; *Siréna*, 1946) X Czech New Wave as a national film school, clearly absorbing international influences as well as emanating from and evolving domestic cultural and cinematic traditions.
- It is not possible to reduce it on one single trait or perspective >> its **heterogeneity and plurality** is crucial, resulting in non-schematic films and a **truly auteur cinema**
- **Two innovations**
  1. Aesthetic – different films than those in previous periods (cinematography, lighting, casting, editing, production values)
  2. Cultural – signaling the changing status of cinema in society and culture (not as an entertainment, but as an art form)



# ... and the two main tendencies

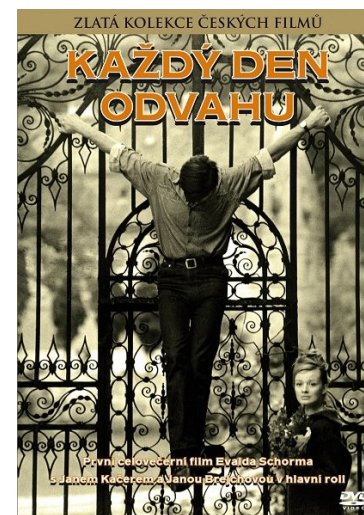
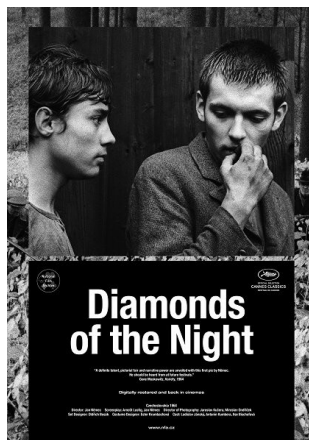
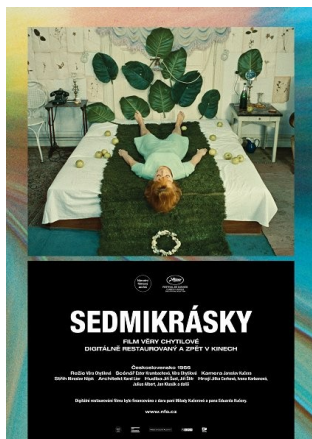
## 1. Objective and critical, inspired by cinema-verité

- Miloš Forman, Ivan Passer, Jaroslav Papoušek; up to the year 1966 also Věra Chytilová



## 2. Philosophical allegories with varying degrees of stylization

- Jan Němec, Evald Schorm, Věra Chytilová



# New Wave as seen by period film criticism

- Early in the 1960s we can see a lot of discussions around the issue of a modern Czechoslovak film >> it encourages new generation of filmmakers, as they seeked inspiration internationally
- **Modern VS Fashionable cinema**
  - **Czechoslovak modern film** can be inspired by european and world cinema, but not copying them mechanically >> it should encourage local artists **to seek their own expression**
  - On the other hand, **fashionable film just blindly follows trends** in french, italian or swedish cinema, but without their own ideas, unique perspective or creative solutions
  - >> truly modern Czechoslovak film thus should have it both ways: be progressive on the level of film form and also include its own perspective or idea embeded in the story/film, preferably truly Czech or even a communist one



# „Emotional“ or „Authentic“ Films

- This is how period film journalists labeled those local films, which aspired to truly modern works of film art.
- Around 1962: *Ceiling* (1961, dir. Věra Chytilová), *Slnko v sieti* (1962, dir. Štefan Uher), *A Convoy Leaving Paradise* (1962, dir. Zbyněk Brynych), *The Cry* (1963, dir. Jaromil Jireš)
- >> adopting the perspective of its main protagonists, representing their state of mind through voiceovers, monologues and improvised dialogues; also hidden camera or other stylistic devices, which communicated the characters' emotions
- In order to keep the continuity with traditions of local cinema, these films were not only compared to contemporary european titles, but also domestic ones (namely with 1950s films of Vojtěch Jasný or František Vlácil).

# „Emotional“ or „Authentic“ Films

- Some of these ambitious films met with rather harsh criticism. Their directors either gave up on filmmaking or they did not make another movie in Czechoslovakia.
- *Tak blízko u nebe* (1963, dir. Vladimír Brebera)
- *Letos v září* (1963, dir. František Daniel)
- *Pražské blues* (1963, dir. Georgis Sklenakis)
- *Bubny* (1964, dir. Ivo Novák)
- *Třiatřicet stříbrných křepelek* (1964, dir. Antonín Kachlík)
- částečně *Okurkový hrdina* (1963, dir. Čestmír Mlíkovský).



# „Film – truth“

- Czech equivalent of „cinema vérité“, but it does not have a strong tradition in Czechoslovak cinema
- It was used as a tool for a better definition of those aesthetic strategies, which Věra Chytilová used in her early films (*A Bag of Fleas*, *Another Way of Life*) or Miloš Forman (*Talent Competition/Konkurs*)
- It announces the term „new wave“, emerging around the mid1960s – at first it was necessary to tone down its associations with tensions between generations (as in French New Wave) and aesthetic radicalism

# „Czech (Czechoslovak) New Wave“

- According to film critics, authenticity became the key concept to be associated with Czech New Wave, mostly achieved through:
  1. Casting of non-professional and untrained actors
  2. Hidden camera and/or its simulation
  3. Introspection >> preference for those films, which go against classical storytelling and instead focus on the inner landscapes of the main protagonist(s) (emotions, state of minds, stream of consciousness, monologues)
- The circle of Czech New Wave gradually gets smaller – at first some 40 names fell under this category, later, in 1966, the group consisted of the core we associate with the label today