

Czech New Wave CZS36 + CMA018

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MUNI ARTS

Case for a Rookie Hangman

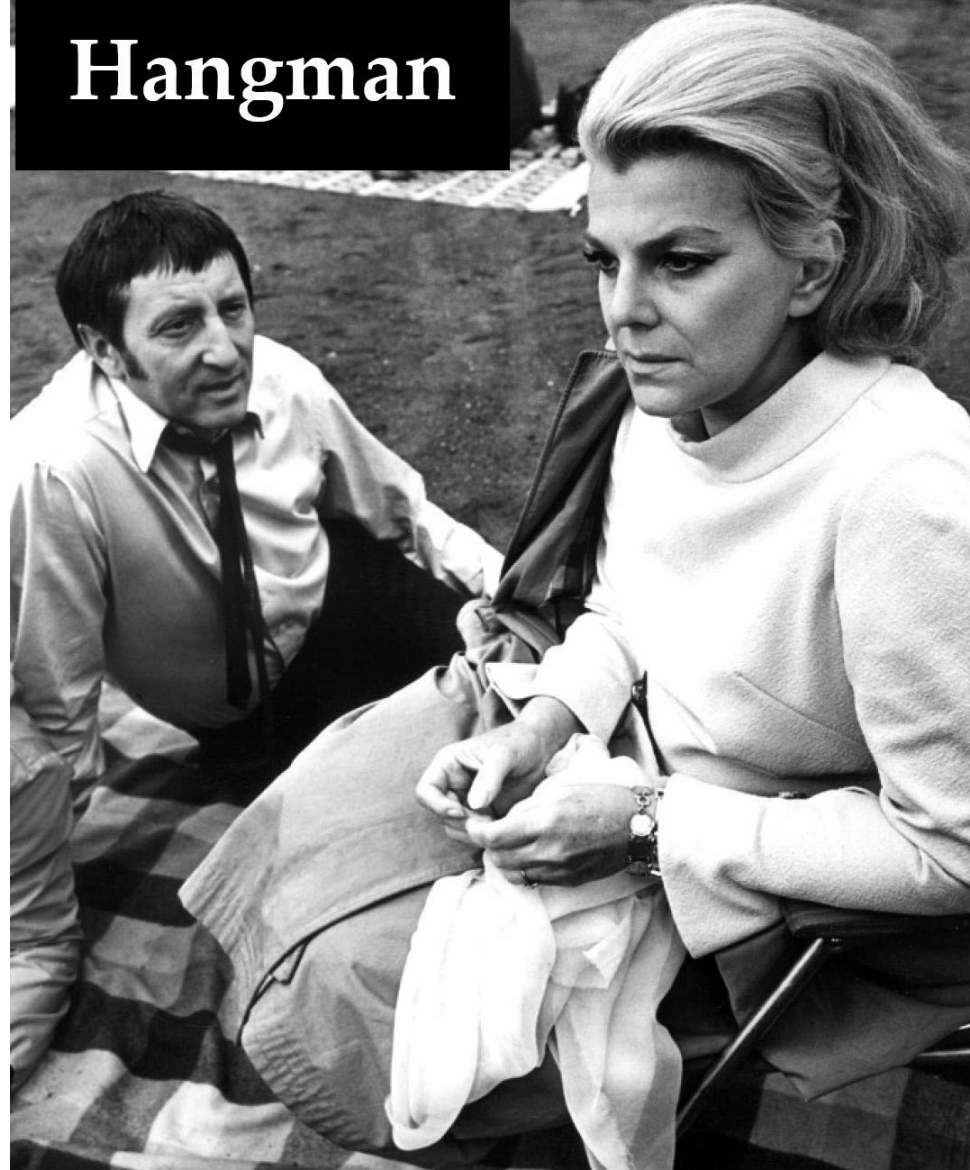
(1969, dir. Pavel Juráček)

Screenplay: loose adaptation of *Gulliver's travels* by Jonathan Swift – Pavel Juráček,

DOP: Jan Kališ, **Music:** Luboš Fišer,

Staring: Lubomír Kostelka, Pavel Landovský, Milena Zahrynowská, Klára Jerneková, Slávka Budínová, Věra Ferbasová, Miroslav Macháček and others

Case for a Rookie Hangman



Case for a Rookie Hangman

Background and Questions

- Pavel Juráček was a period celebrity among the new wave auteurs, especially because his published *Diaries* (4 volumes) provide us with an unprecedented insight into the movement.
- Despite making a mid-length feature *Joseph Killian* and a movie *Every Young Man* (consisting of two short stories), we consider *Case* as a prime example of his ambitions in direction. It was his screenwriting work that was cherished and valued by his contemporaries. He always specialized in creating fantastic genre stories infused with spectacular qualities and metaphorical imagery.
 1. What do you think this film is about? Try to either reconstruct the storyline or consider the film as a metaphor for...
 2. The *Case* is not only a fascinating film because of its storytelling, but also a movie full of lavish decor, costumes and visual design. Focus on these aspects: how do citizens of the various countries dress, eat, where they live and work and what does it tell us about them?
 3. Is it a typical or rather atypical film of the new wave – and why?

L12_Reading

ČECHOVÁ, Briana. Rookie Hangman as a Character in Need of Support – Pavel Juráček's Work, the Story of its Origin, Release and Echoes. In: Česálková, Lucie (ed.) *Czech Cinema Revisited: Politics, Aesthetics and Techniques*. Praha: NFA, 2017, pp. 59–86.



1968

so-called post January period or Prague Spring

- The fall of the president of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic Antonín Novotný – in January he was released from the position of a first deputy of the Communist Politbyro, in March he steps down as a president of the republic
- General **Ludvík Svoboda** – the new president, the first deputy of the Communist party is **Alexander Dubček** (a reformist)
- Previously taboo topics are now addressed and critically discussed in media / culture should not be limited by ideological requests / June 1968: censorship is officially banned.
- These reforms are not accepted by other countries of the Soviet bloc >> **21. 8. 1968**: the invasion of the armies of the Warsaw pact
- Moscow protocol (27. 8. 1969) – the organisations established during the reform process are cancelled / censorship reinstalled / the army and state police is strengthened / political representatives not willing to cooperate are removed
- April 1969: the party accepts Dubček's resignation and **Gustáv Husák** takes over the post >> turn away from various philosophies, ideas and artistic viewpoints coexisting in society and culture >> any alternative is being labelled as „ideologically alienating“

How cinema reacted to political situation

- Personal changes on top strategic positions, followed by the purge among regular employees
- September 23rd, 1969 **Jiří Purš** is the new head of the Czechoslovak State Film (instead of Alois Poledňák)
- October 1970 **Miloslav Fábera** is the new head of Barrandov Studios (FSB)
- 1. 12. 1969 – the head of dramaturgy at Barrandov studios is **Ludvík Toman** (instead of Břetislav Kunc) >> this position gains new powers, all CG leaders have to regularly consult their intentions and projects in development, since 1972 he has a strong voice in greenlighting or vetoing films
- New leadership cancels existing CGs and creates 7 dramaturgical units and reinstalls central Ideology and Artistic Council >> the production is again split from the project development, with central top down ideological control reinforced
- Censorship changes – after August 1968 the Office for Press and Information was created, with no film department, because (!) the censorship is strongly tied with cinematic structures

Transitional period

- Filmexport – till the end of 1968 the orientation on western capitalist markets persists / import of attractive film hits from non-socialist countries; after that relationships with Eastern bloc countries are „normalized“ (coproductions, import, export)
- May 1968: Alois Poledňák as a head of ČSF gives up some of his crucial powers (such as greenlighting films for distribution) – newly acquired by the head of FSB
- New CG of Pavel Juráček and Jaroslav Kučera is established, they made films such as *Fruits of Paradise*, *Larks on a String* and *Case for a Rookie Hangman*
- The number of debuts is on the rise again („second new wave“). In 1970 seven< directors finished their first feature films X later in the decade (1970s) the debuts are produced as a collection of short films (similar to *Pearls of the Deep*) + Zlín studios

Namely...

- Due to the development post January 1968 delayed projects are finally greenlighted for production (*The Borstal*, *The Joke*, *The End of a Priest*)
- Some of these films were never finalized despite their creators tried to save them as much as they could
- ***The Borstal*** (dir. Hynek Bočan) – till the end of the 1980s it existed only in a rough cut
- ***The Arch of Fools*** (dir. Ivan Balad'a) – there was an effort to present this film as a universal message about a society which missed its chance for a positive change. New Barrandov leadership identifies a negative image of Soviet Union >> this film was thus framed as a detergent example. The film existed in a final cut, but only rough sound edit + the reason for cancelling the CG Juráček–Kučera
- Collective debut ***Visits*** (dir. Vladimír Drha, Milan Jonáš and Otakar Fuka) with a topic of political inmates in the 1950s. Existing materials were probably destroyed (extreme case).