



# Teaching Experimental Film For The New A Levels

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# WJEC SPECIFICATION

- 1. *Daisies* (Chytilova, Czechoslovakia, 1965) 15**
- 2. *Saute ma ville* (Akerman, Belgium, 1968) 15**

## **a. Core study areas:**

Key elements of film form, meaning and response and contexts

## **b. Narrative**

## **c. Auteur**

# OCR SPECIFICATION

1. *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

Directed by Luis Buñuel. France. 15

2. *L'Age D'or* (1930).

Directed by Luis Buñuel. France. 15

How a movement (surrealist film) shares similar ideas about style, aesthetics, or political or social-cultural objectives; and agrees on methods of furthering these through approaches to film

narrative/style/genre

# *Daisies*

‘A philosophical documentary in  
the form of a farce’ Vera Chytilova

'There is no involvement, no conventional chronology, no psychological development.....no narration' Film Quarterly Spring 1968

Featuring two women:

Marie 1



# Marie 2



# Themes

- Time and death
- Feminism
- Nihilism
- Anti-war - Dada influence
- Conformity
- Film as art

# The Opening from 1.52 – 4.28



# Key Elements of Film Form

**Mise-en-scene:** 60s fashion juxtaposed with a former era – surreal and exaggerated: apple tree, make up. Innocence. Dolls.

**Cinematography:** long shots where the action unfolds – lack of alignment.

**Editing:** colour to black and white, filters, jump cuts, surreal match on action, long takes.

**Sound:** enhanced diegetic sounds, abrupt changes in music

**Performance:** self-aware/conscious – identity, youth

# Context

- Czech New Wave
- State approved script
- A 'morality play' design to criticise the morals of the protagonists (?)
- Initially banned for its depiction of 'food wastage'.
- Chytilova barred from working in film for 6 years 1969-1975

# The Second Date 24.10 – 25.57



Chytilova has argued that the social criticism would have greater effect if the comedy was accentuated, her intention was:

- 'to divert the spectator's attention from the psychology of the characters'
- 'to restrict his feeling of involvement and lead him to an understanding of the underlying idea or philosophy'.

# Vera Chytilova as an Auteur

- 3 previous films concerned with the position of women in society, in fashion (*Ceiling*), in the factory (*A Bagful of Fleas*), in gymnastics, and marriage (*Something Different*).
- ‘The desire to make unexpected combinations is a characteristic of most of her work. Also the communication of subjective female experience’.  
Peter Hames

# Collaboration – 3 important film-makers from the Czech New Wave

- 3 'authors', Chytilova, her husband cinematographer Jaroslav Kucera (abrupt colour shifts, jump cuts, rapid-edit photomontages) and Ester Krumbachova as designer.
- Creative freedom around 'fixed dialogue' – state approved screenplay and typical of the nationalised Czech film industry.

# The Bath 44.30 – 46.46



There is no proof you exist.

# Narrative

- Episodic – montage –musical structure
- Quest for meaning
- Excursions and discussions at home
- Inciting incident, climax and a resolution

# The Countryside 48.30 – 52.37



# Feminist reading

‘a latent feminist delight in the heroines’ ability to effect reversals in the patriarchal order. This study espouses a counter -reading of *Daisies* that corresponds neither to the director’s account nor to the censors’ ill-considered objections to the film.’

Lim

# Collage 53.42 – 55.13



# Subversive surrealism

*'Daisies's* surrealist motifs of montage and collage are epitomized in striking images of the heroines' bodies splintered and recomposed. These formal strategies suggest an appropriation of surrealist tenets — incongruity and surprise, the denial of mimetic representation, and the revelatory power of fragmentation—by a Czech feminist film-maker.'

Lim

# The Banquet 1.03.54- 1.07.04



# Social Criticism

Jitka Cerhova (Marie 1) interviewed in 2013;

‘The two of us were really tools of the critique of a society that didn’t advance, it didn’t evolve in any way. Vera also wanted to explore the idea of destruction.....shocking in a country where people waited in line for hours in front of grocery stores.’

# Response

- Lack of characterisation
- Fragmented narrative
- The behaviour of the two Maries – the impact of sound in particular – female more positive?
- The use of filters and black and white
- What has ‘gone bad’ the Maries or the society?
- ‘An existential story’ VC

# *Un Chien Andalou*

'A masterpiece from every aspect: it's certainty of direction, its brilliance of lighting, its perfect amalgam of visual and ideological associations, it's sustained dreamlike logic, its admirable confrontation between the subconscious and the rational'

Jean Vigo

The famous opening sequence  
from 1.04 once upon a time to 4.30



# Key Elements of Film Form

- 1. Mise-en-scene** - suburban Paris
- 2. Cinematography** - conventional use of shot types and camera movement
- 3. Editing** - continuity features used for symbolism or aesthetics, iris and slow motion
- 4. Performance** - indications of emotions/desires as motivating forces, but no characterisation

# Narrative

A story of frustration both for the protagonist (if there is such a thing) and the viewer.

Continuity treated with irony: inter titles and graphic matches used for aesthetics and symbolism, absurd use of match on action.

Episodic - subverts dominant story telling conventions of mainstream cinema

# Context

Surrealism: the expression of the unconscious mind

Freud's theory of personality: the ego, id and super ego

Film as art, as a creative medium

Film as shocking and subversive



# *L'Age D'or*

'the howls of protest that greeted *L'age D'or* were music to surrealist ears' Robert Short

- Still concerned with Freud
- More overtly political: influence of Marxism
- Blasphemous/ anti catholic
- Less absurd more satirical
- Documentary elements
- More meaningful title

# The Lovers 13.02 – 15.10



# Key Elements of Film Form

Mise-en-scene: Contradictory- primitive rocks and mud, formal, religious, patriarchal clothing

Cinematography: conventional

Sound: startling sounds of female passion juxtaposed with solemn hymnal style music

Editing: the unconscious mind/ association -cut away shot to the toilet and dissolve to bubbling mud as the toilet flushes and then a close up of his muddy face

Performance: example of absurd human behaviour – lust, violence, pomposity and an obsolete religion

# Bibliography

- 'The Czechoslovak New Wave', Peter Hames
- Senses of Cinema 'This Film's Going Bad: Collaborative Cutting in *Daisies*', Dylan Rainforth
- The New Yorker, DVD review of *Daisies*, Richard Brody
- *Camera Obscura* 47, Volume 16, 'Dolls in Fragments: *Daisies* as Feminist Allegory', Bliss Cua Lim
- Senses of Cinema Cinemateque Annotations on Film, *L'Age D'Or*
- Notes on *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age D'Or* with the BFI box set by Robert Short