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Czech New Wave **CZS36 + CMA018**

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Loves of a Blonde **(dir. Miloš Forman)** **1965**

Screenplay: Miloš Forman, Ivan Passer,
Jaroslav Papoušek

Cinematography: Miroslav Ondříček

Music: Evžen Illín

Starring: Hana Brejchová, Vladimír
Pucholt, Vladimír Menšík, Josef
Šebánek, Jan Vostrčil, Milada Ježková

**„The film starring Jana Brejchová's
sister“**

Milos Forman's
**Loves
of a
Blonde**



Loves of a Blonde

Background and questions

□ „It was a late night in Prague, I saw a young girl. She was dragging a heavy suitcase, but she didn't seem in a hurry, not asking anything from anyone and she clearly wasn't a prostitute. She seemed lost. And she clearly didn't mind. I was curious, so I started talking to her and persuaded her to go home with me.“

(Miloš FORMAN, 1994)

1. Starting from the title and from the story above, how does this film portray romance (and sexuality)? What are the ideals, what are the goals and obstacles of coupling in the early 1960s Czechoslovakia?
2. Since you know Forman's previous film *Black Peter*, what kind of emotions he is best in portraying and communicating? How do you think he achieves that?

Reading L3

In: *Camera Obscura: Feminism, culture and Media Studies*. 2009, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 77– 105.

KOVÁCS, András Bálint. *Screening Modernism. European Art Cinema, 1950–1980*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2007, pp. 322–329.

Betrayed Promises: Politics and Sexual Revolution in the Films of Márta Mészáros, Miloš Forman, and Dušan Makavejev

Constantin Parvulescu



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1960s as an era of a cultural renaissance

- Relatively stable and prosperous decade
- New impulses and experiments with form can be found not only in various national cinemas but in other artistic forms as well (nouveau roman, absurd theater, art informel) >> the effort to break with the stereotypes and the search for new conceptions and solutions
- A similar atmosphere to be found in the 1920s – an era full of optimism and faith in the possibility to realize the utopian visions + 1960s as a period full of technical and scientific progress, as well as the rise of a living standard X sceptical take on human being (his or her possibilities, desires and aims) and the idea of progress

Modern / Modernism / Avantgarde

„Modern“

- Meaning „new“, but also „actual“ >> older or previous forms are irrelevant.
- The cult of modernity ends with postmodernism in the 1970s
- Against the idea that art continually undergoes and aesthetic revolution, pushing it towards new aesthetic visions and forms

„Modernism“

- An artistic movement able to express the experiences and feelings of contemporary world.
- Key concepts are authenticity and actuality rather than difference or invention.

„Avantgarde“

- A gesture towards the future, “avant“ meaning forward.
- This is an artistic movement oriented towards futurity.

Modern film / Modernist cinema

□ In the 1920s, cinema couldn't yet innovate its own traditions, while in the 1960s the canon is already established

□ Is modernist cinema a break or a continuity with classical film?

Two opposing ideas:

1. The era of classical cinema is followed by the era of modernist cinema
2. Both modes of cinema coexist >> modernist cinema is perceived as a subversive form and as a contrast to classical cinema

□ Modern films are „semi-commercial“ – their success as works of art is not tied together with their commercial success

- Specialized distribution and exhibition circuits (festivals, film clubs, art cinemas)
- “By the second half of the 1950s, the art film in Europe was more than a theory, a prospect, or a critical category – it has become a strong institution backed by tax laws, professional associations, production and distribution networks, film festivals and prestigious magazines.” (KOVÁCS, p. 27)

Cinema pur (1920s) X Modernist cinema (1960s)





Storytelling and characters

- **Lack of psychological depth in characters** >> wider existential portraits of a generation/class rather than a tight story of one protagonist in a particular surrounding
- **Male figures** dominate
- **Accidents and improvisations** >> not only during the production, but accident is frequently used as a storytelling device
- **Open endings**, stories without conclusions and/or status quo reinstalled
- **Circular narratives** – in contrast to classical storytelling these ones are more descriptive. It provides us with insight into the problems the hero faces, but it lacks solutions.

In the second half of the 1950s...

- The peak of cinemagoing >> more than 35 films between the years 1954 and 1959 attracted more than two million viewers
 - Demographical reasons (audiences born after the war), economical reasons (not many households equipped with tv), distribution of films from Western Europe
- Local films – most successful are comedies with male stars from prewar years
 - **Satire** – helps to infuse lighthearted films with serious message, as it should address shortcomings of socialist society X should leave out political issues => impossible genre?
 - **Three Wishes** (1958, dir. Ján Kadar, Elmar Klos)
- Also psychological (intimate) dramas
 - **House at the Terminus** (1958, dir. Ján Kadar, Elmar Klos)
 - **September Nights** (1957, dir. Vojtěch Jasný)
 - **School for Fathers** (1957, dir. Ladislav Helge)
 - **Scars of the Past** (1957, dir. Václav Krška)



Direct address:
Speaking directly
to the audience

The Fist Festival of Czechoslovak Cinema in Banská Bystrica (BB), February 1959

- BB in the context of other cultural events, aiming to manifest the progress in this sphere and how tightly is culture directed by the Communist party
- The minister of culture and education František Kahuda harshly criticized the aforementioned films as prime examples of unwelcomed tendencies in socialist cinema
- „[...] main topics of our films [...] are still limited to Prague, to stories of private lives and of pessimistic nature, addressing issues of certain youth groups only. [...] Does healthy family still exist, are new apartments under construction, do we associate teenagers solely with gangsters, is alcoholism such an important part of life?“

The Consequences of BB

- **The proces of decentralization and gradual liberalization was defered for two years**
- Personal changes on top of Barrandov studios (BS) and Czechoslovak State Films (CSF)
- Stricter censorship >> in the future not only the story should be considered, but political profiles of its authors and casting as well
- Some directors were banned from filmmaking for two years; production Creative Group (CG) Feix-Daniel was cancelled
- CSF lost the right to greenlight films for distribution on its own in favor of the ministry of culture and education
- **BS willing to cooperate with next generation of filmmakers** (the older directors lost trust of the studio leadership)