

Daisies

(1966, Vera Chytilova, Czechoslovakia)

Component 2: Global Filmmaking Perspectives (AL)

Core Study Areas: Key Elements of Film Form Meaning & Response The Contexts of Film

Specialist Study Area: Auteur (AL) Narrative (AL)

Rationale for study

- *Daisies* is overtly experimental in its narrative structure, characterization and use of film form. Vera Chytilova has spoken extensively about the film and the focus on comedy and philosophy, calling it a 'philosophical farce'. Her style as an auteur can be linked directly to the Czech New Wave, feminism and the brutality of the contemporary communist regime. It is an important feminist film and a study in the teenage experience of existentialism that will be familiar to many students.

STARTING POINTS - Useful Sequences and timings/links

The opening four minutes
The fire in the apartment

CORE STUDY AREAS 1 - STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

Cinematography

- Static camera and extended longshots give an artificial feel and creates a distance between the viewer and the two Maries; this focuses attention away from any emotional connection with the characters and forces us to consider

the situation in terms of ideology, they are experimenting with identity and meaning and the lack of it in an existentialist way.

Mise-en-Scène

- Bikinis draw attention to voyeuristic, sexualized nature of that way that young women are viewed in this society, but this is at odds with the robotic/puppet style of their performances and the way they experiment with and control their own identities: Marie 2 decides to adopt the persona of a virgin and does this by placing the crown of daisies on her head.

Editing

- Use of black and white to depict realism: here the Maries are aimless and invisible as people. Colour/other filters are often used to show youthful vibrancy, where they take charge of their own representations and continuity editing features such as match on action are used in a surrealist way to create distance and engagement on a symbolic level.

Sound

- Creaking sounds to enhance the puppet like movements: women and people controlled by the communist regime. Music used sparingly, lute music creates nostalgia for more innocent times, the field of daisies and ironically suggests the innocence before Marie 2 eats the apple. But we have been told that it is all a deliberate construction/ fantasy, depicted also by the unrealistic apple tree.

CORE STUDY AREAS 2 - STARTING POINTS - Meaning & Response

Representations

- Young women are seen as both desirable and invisible, men as predatory and un-caring, the contemporary society as patriarchal, out-dated and middle-aged. The communist regime as brutal, hypocritical and hierarchical. There is no place for youthfulness in this society and this

is at odds with the rest of Europe at this time.

Aesthetics (i.e. the 'look and feel' of the film including Visual style, influences, auteur, motifs)

- The influence of surrealism in the use of editing, filters, mosaic effects and the juxtaposition of black and white with color. The use of youthful 1960s fashions, hairstyles and make-up clashing with austere, outdated locations.

CORE STUDY AREAS 3 - STARTING POINTS

Social

- The double standards for young women in this society and the impact, or lack of it, of feminism apparent in the behavior and conformity of the Maries in particular. Fear of Nuclear war.

Political

- The brutal, violent, patriarchal and oppressive communist regime and control of the film.

Industry

- The film was hated by the authorities and after the Soviet re-invasion in 1968, Chytilova was banned from working for 6 years.

SPECIALIST STUDY AREA: AUTEUR AND NARRATIVE - STARTING POINTS

- Using surrealism to subvert communist realism, also as a film-maker in the context of the Czechoslovak New Wave – see book by the same name by Peter Hames. As a subversive and feminist film-maker. Typical themes of time and death linked to philosophies of nihilism and existentialism.