

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders: Reawakening Czech Cultural Heritage Through the Psychoanalysis of New Wave Surrealism

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Abstract

By 1960, Freudian psychoanalysis was commonplace across Europe. Central to this were the concepts of the id, ego and superego – forces pertinent at both an individual and societal level. In an unhealthy subject, according to Freud, these three psychological components fall out of an ideal dynamic balance and must be restored by an intervening external agent. Freud's theories particularly influenced art – especially the surrealism of the Czech New Wave film movement, which sought to restore the ideal psychological balance by stimulating radical reorganisations of society. A prime example of this is Jaromil Jireš's film *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (1970), which aimed to rebalance the unstable Czech social dynamic by provoking the audience to reconnect with their historic cultural values and synthesise these with the goals of Communism. This article analyses three key sequences that exemplify this objective: the first illustrates how Valerie (surrogate for the ego) initially vacillates, but ultimately aligns herself with symbols of Czech heritage (representing the id). The second sequence shows Valerie's ill-fated appeasement strategy of completely aligning with the film's antagonist (superego). The final sequence is a culmination of these themes, posing possibilities for a new Czech future created by the now activated viewer.

Keywords: Freud and the Czech New Wave, Valerie and Her Week of Wonders, Jaromil Jireš and the Czech surrealist movement, Vitezslav Nezval adaptation, Film and psychoanalysis

Introduction: surrealism and maps of the mind

By 1960, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis was 'very familiar' (Frank, 2014: 14) to European society, with his central concept, the '[topography of the mind](#)' (Quinodoz, 2018: 73), becoming widely accepted. Here, Freud proposed that an individual's personality is a product of three continuously interrelating psychological agents – the [id](#), the [superego](#) and the [ego](#). The id, located in the inaccessible unconscious, is 'the primitive [...] basis of the psyche dominated by primary urges' (Appignanesi, 1999: 156). This is the source of all human instinctual desires relating to survival, including food, water and reproduction. The superego encompasses the psychological 'authority of surveillance' (Quinodoz, 2018: 74) representing an internalisation of 'the standards and prohibitions of our parents and society' (Kahn, 2002: 26), meaning the superego is structured around rules and socially acceptable actions. This is contrary to the id, which is primarily concerned with the immediate satisfaction of base needs. The opposition of these two psychological elements produces the final agent of the mind – the ego. This provides 'executive function [...] of mediating' (Kahn, 2002: 27) the impulsive wants of the id, and the stringent concerns of the superego. In other words, a healthy mind necessarily constructs a sustainable balance between these dynamic psychological forces, as the ego seeks to satisfy base drives within the framework of societal norms. However, when this mental stability is upset, Freud recommends [psychoanalytical therapy](#), in which both patient and therapist collaborate to restore the ideal balance (Appignanesi, 1999: 41).

Although the general population had, by the 1960s, become familiar with Freud, artists had been actively engaged with his concepts for nearly four decades. Surrealists sought to apply Freudian thinking to art. While the term may be used today to describe anything ‘slightly out of the ordinary’ (Richardson, 2006: 2), **surrealism** is specifically ‘a movement preoccupied with dreams and other imaginative products, and one that upholds the basic Freudian conception of a subjectivity divided against itself, haunted by the repressed impulses of a seething unconscious’ (Owen, 2011: 3). While much has been made of the Parisian surrealism produced under the leadership of André Breton, there has been less said about the equally prolific, and influential, Czech surrealist movements. Although surrealism remained a cornerstone of Czech art across the early twentieth century, the lack of widespread understanding of the underlying Freudian concepts meant that surrealism was confined to the **avant-garde**. However, with the increasing popularity of Freudian terms by the 1960s, mainstream audiences were both able and willing to appreciate surrealist art. This resurgence manifested itself in the films of the **Czech New Wave**. Jonathan Owen suggests that psychoanalysis provides a ‘vocabulary with which to discuss the aesthetics, concerns and discoveries of’ the Czech New Wave, and ‘help[s] to identify theoretically what [...] the New Wave filmmakers grasped intuitively’ (Owen, 2011: 6). Consequently, the surrealism of many Czech New Wave films have been analysed through a Freudian lens, including Josef Skvorecky’s reading of Jan Němec’s *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) (Skvorecky, 1971: 115–16), Alison Frank’s analysis of Jan Švankmajer’s New Wave films (Frank, 2014: 57–105) and the numerous Interpretations of *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (1970).

However, these readings, by authors such as Owen, Peter Hames, and contemporary reviews, only apply Freudian thinking at the level of the individual. Yet, in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) Freud expanded his psychoanalysis framework to a societal level (Sugarman, 2016: 129). Here, the id encompasses innate cultural and national desires. For example, in the Czech context, the societal id would be the source of the nation’s historical democratic impulses (Masaryk, 1974: xvii). The superego represents social norms deriving from institutions like the 1960s Czechoslovak Communist government. Consequently, the individual, the ego, mediates how historic cultural desires are enacted within acceptable societal bounds. Similar to when an individual’s psychic structures are out of equilibrium, this social dynamic can also fall out of balance, requiring an external agent (analogous to the role of the therapist) to work with individuals to restore the correct order. External agents can take many forms including, in Czechoslovakia, the surrealism of the Czech New Wave. Here, these films aimed to stimulate radical reorganisation of society through the application of Freudian ideas. With this in mind, this article will illustrate how the film *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (henceforth *Valerie*) is an exemplar of surrealist thought striving to rebalance a country whose social psychoanalytical topography had been pushed into instability. This will be achieved by first examining the Czech society at the time of the New Wave, and subsequently focusing on three specific sequences in the film that typify this surrealist goal. The scenes, through surrealist techniques, present objects as vessels of displaced (social) cathexis and thus best illustrate the film’s social commentary and political provocations.

Czechoslovakia on the couch: Freud, surrealism and the New Wave

On 23 September 1959, First Secretary Antonín Novotný of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) proclaimed the ‘victory of socialism in Czechoslovakia’ (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 583). However, beneath the veneer of success, the government was facing a national crisis. After the coup of 1948, the CPCz spent the 1950s consolidating its power while inadvertently alienating the Czech people socially, economically and politically. Numerous legislations were passed that ultimately undermined the previously enviable position of Czechoslovakia in Europe, including the introduction of media censorship, the mismanagement of national industry, and the instigation of a ‘state of [political] terror’ (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 548–84). From the

standpoint of the Surrealist filmmaker, who saw the world in terms of Freud, the social dynamic had come unbalanced; specifically, the actions of the CPCz were comparable to a superego that has overwhelmed both the functions of the ego (individual citizen) and id (national cultural heritage). Consequently, this disturbed social psyche manifested itself in rapidly growing popular discontent (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 593–94). In response, the CPCz introduced unprecedented liberalisation throughout the 1960s. For example, at the 12th Communist Congress (1962), an official enquiry was launched into the show-trials of the 1950s which saw the imprisonment of ‘thousands of people considered inconvenient by the regime’ (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 559). This marked a move from authoritarian practices towards the more democratic values the nation was founded upon (Chlup, 2020: 189). This trajectory increased exponentially, culminating with the promotion of Alexander Dubček as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia on 5 January 1968 – launching the Prague Spring: a period of unprecedented liberalisation. In less than a decade, the country witnessed its transformation from ‘a functioning [...] Neo-Stalinist state’ (Owen, 2011: 37), to ‘a more liberal form of socialism’ (Frank, 2014: 62), epitomised by the approval of The Party Action Plan in April of 1968. This legislation ‘promised to ensure legal security, civil liberties, liberalisation in culture, media and science’ and to implement ‘an economic reform based on combining the advantages of state ownership and market forces’ (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 600). Critically, Czech society had managed to synthesise historic cultural values, like ‘freedom and independence’ (Masaryk, 1974 16), with Communist ideals. In other words, this synthesis led to a successful social psychoanalytical re-balancing.

One key synthesising agent was the Czech New Wave. Prior to cultural liberalisation, the only government-sanctioned mode of art was Socialist Realism, characterised in film by ‘classical narrative[s] with an explicit ideological or class basis’ (Hames, 2009: 11). These films made clear the importance of the worker as the central pillar of Marxist-Leninist thought. Yet, by 1963, loosening censorship allowed contemporary graduates from the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) – including Věra Chytilová, Miloš Forman, Jiří Menzel and Jaromil Jireš – to create films that artistically and thematically explored previously taboo subjects. This emerged as the Czech New Wave, a disparate film movement comprised of two cinematic strands. Firstly, there were films that sought to expose the unreality of Czech life presented by **Socialist Realism**. The directors of these films used a ‘**cinéma-vérité style**’ (Frank, 2014: 66) to truthfully depict life under a totalitarian regime. The second strand rejected the mandatory simplicity of Socialist Realism with formal experimentation by adopting surrealism, ‘the dominant mode of the Czech avant-garde during the twentieth century’ (Owen, 2011: 2). This strand specifically draws upon Freudian methods to re-establish social dynamics by provoking the audience to imagine new forms of innovative social organisation.

However, despite the popularity of the reforms among all strata of Czech society, the nation’s success – in its move towards democracy – was viewed as a ‘creeping counter-revolution’ by other Warsaw Pact countries (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 603). These countries, therefore, thought it necessary to invade Czechoslovakia on the 20 August 1968 (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 609) to remove Dubček’s reformist government. What followed was an ‘age of immobility’ (Hames, 2009: 8); the newly installed Soviet-controlled government’s policy of **Normalisation** reinstated Stalinist practices of 1950s Czechoslovakia, such as censorship, which manifested in cinema as **The Big Ban**. A controlling social superego once again oversaw Czech society, and with it, the surrealist liberalism of the Czech New Wave came to an end.

Yet, the consolidation of Soviet power through Normalisation was neither immediate nor total. In fact, during the chaotic transfer of power, vestiges of New Wave radicalism slipped through the cracks of censorship. As such, a disparate minority of exceptional films that did not conform to the reintroduction of

Socialist Realism were produced. Despite being released two years after the most often cited end of the Czech New Wave (August 1968), one such film that ardently persevered in its artistic rebuttal of superego dominance was Jaromil Jireš's *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*. The film is based on Vítězslav Nezval's 1935 novel of the same name, written at the height of his surrealist period (between founding the Czech Surrealist Group in 1934 and embracing Socialist Realism in the late 1940s (Nezval, 2005: viii). *Valerie* began production in the summer of 1969, under the direction of Jireš and with the creative input of Ester Krumbachová – both of whom had prestigious careers during the Czech New Wave. The film was shot on location in Southern Moravia, in the towns of Slavonice and Dačice (*Czechoslovak Film*, 1969), to produce an 'ornately rendered [...] symbol-soaked gothic fairy-tale' (Krzywinska, 2003: 1). The narrative follows the titular thirteen-year-old heroine, who, with the help of her mysteriously magical earrings, attempts to avoid the machinations of voracious vampires and lecherous priests. Although Jireš employs dream logic and symbolism to obscure the film's radical message from the Soviet censors (Frank, 2014: 69), *Valerie* can be viewed as a 'psychological rehearsal' (Owen, 2011: 164). It uses surrealist techniques to provoke the audience to reconnect with historic cultural values (such as 'freedom' in the face of overbearing authority (Masaryk, 1974: xiv)) in a way that synthesises them with the ideals of Communism. The next sections focus on three sequences from *Valerie* that evidences the film's psychoanalytic agency in stimulating societal change.

When an apple isn't an apple: eating to the core of Czech cultural heritage

This first sequence sees Valerie (Jaroslava Schallerová) attending a lakeside meal organised by her grandmother (Helena Anýžová) in honour of the missionary Gracián's (Jan Klusák) visit. This scene exemplifies how the varying and often dialectic elements of *Valerie* act as analogies to Freud's topography of the mind: Valerie represents the ego, Gracián and her grandmother's actions are demonstrative of the superego, and symbols of Czech cultural heritage are emblematic of the id. Initially, Valerie is shown to be ambivalent towards the conflicting interests of the id and superego; however, she ultimately aligns with the latter.

The sequence begins with Jireš making the audience aware of two obvious and seemingly incongruous forces, with the first being the presence of the servants as representational figures. The sequence's establishing shot focuses entirely on these maids sitting among picturesque 'wild flowers' (Krzywinska, 2003: 1) while attending to the spit roasted meal they are about to serve. By immediately drawing the viewer's attention to these characters, Jireš establishes their significance as symbols – a common practice in surrealist works. Specifically, they symbolise the Czech cultural heritage of [Poetism](#).

Developed in the aftermath of the First World War by Karel Teige and Vítězslav Nezval, Poetism reacted to the brutality of the conflict by synthesising the quotidian 'pleasure of existence' (Frank, 2014: 61) with the rational objectives of 'Constructivism' (Sayer, 2013: 241). The resulting dialectic philosophy reconciled 'optimism, playfulness, humour, lyricism, sensuality, [and] imagination' (Volek, 1980: 156) with the pursuit of perfecting man through rational progress. As such, the foregrounding of the servants playfully laughing and eating around the fire without concern for societal rules or etiquette symbolises the lyrical and free-natured tenets of Poetism. The Poetist representation of the servants is therefore an expression of Czech cultural heritage – the societal id.

The second major force presented in this sequence is Valerie's grandmother and Gracián. Unlike the maids as symbols of Poetism, Jireš underscores the repressive authority of these two characters. For example, Valerie complies unquestioningly to her grandmother's demands while Gracián pompously tucks his napkin into his

shirt in a display of overt formality. Additionally, Gracián and Valerie's grandmother are seated at an ornately set table made surreal in its adjacency to the 'beautiful ponds of Southern Bohemia' (*Interview with Jaroslava Schallerová*, 2006). A core operation of surrealism is the 'juxtaposition of diverse objects in new locations' (Frank, 2014: 16). The power of this method stems from Freudian free association, a technique which triggers a spiralling chain of new and unexpected connotations that provoke the subject into reconsidering their habitualised perception of reality. Similarly, the sequence's contradiction of domestic objects located in an obviously undomesticated setting prompts the viewer to consciously re-evaluate the habitualised 'power of authority' (Hames, 2005: 203) and its unnatural position in 1970 Czech society. Thus, Jireš uses the scene and its characters to foreground the dynamics of contemporary Czech society. The maids in their Poetic freedom mimic the Czech id, and its desire for cultural heritage. While it is tempting to conclude that Gracián and Valerie's grandmother stand for religious and maternal authority respectively, this would be superficial and misleading. Instead, Jireš uses these characters as surrealist symbols of a domineering authority, figures of the widespread and amorphous Soviet superego.

Caught between these two forces is Valerie, as shown by the character's costumes. Whereas the servants are dressed entirely in white, Gracián and Valerie's grandmother are both in black attire. Valerie, in contrast, is dressed in grey, providing a visual mediation between these two forces. When Valerie plays on the swing, she reinforces this positioning by quite literally oscillating between the restrictive expectations of these authority figures and the utopian idyll of the maids. Consequently, through her costume and actions, Valerie attempts to function as the ego, to reconcile these disparate forces.

However, the sequence soon shows Valerie breaking this ambivalent position. To begin, Jireš forces the audience to focus on Valerie eating an apple as Gracián provides a monologue regarding his missionary work. Alison Frank suggests that physical items in surrealists works may acquire the status of a hybrid object when assuming a 'disruptive function [...] determined by the multiple layers of resonance that the objects acquire by means of their narrative, thematic and visual roles in the film' (Frank, 2014: 67). With this in mind, Jireš uses the apple as a hybrid object; shots of Valerie eating the apple visually interrupt the cohesion of Gracián's speech. Jireš thus exploits the physical presence of the apple to summon multiple meanings. For example, this imagery conjures biblical connotations of Eve disobediently eating the forbidden fruit (Krzywinska, 2003: 1). Yet, the pastoral setting and the playful manner in which the film presents this act puts it in a positive light, suggesting a purposeful reappropriation of this biblical theme. In effect, Jireš evokes Eve's defiance of God's authority as propitious, therefore suggesting to a contemporary Czech audience the virtue of defying oppressive Soviet authority. A further meaning is prompted by the re-emergence of Jan Hus's ideas in the liberalised 1960's Czech society. Of common knowledge to the Czech audience were the Adamites who, following the teachings of Hus, sought a return to Eden as a means of protesting the Catholic church (Herbermann *et al.*, 1907, vol. 1: 134). Therefore, the apple also works as a unique Czech symbol of defiance of authority. In short, the apple becomes a surrealist hybrid object by containing multiple representations of defiance. To add a Freudian lens, it becomes the physical manifestation of the Czech cultural id within the film.

The scene demonstrates how *Valerie* is constructed around Freud's social topographical model: the active dynamic between the forces of the id (Czech cultural heritage) through the presentations of the maidens and the multiplicity of the apple; the superego (Soviet authority) characterised by the authority figures Gracián and Valerie's grandmother; and the role of the ego (the consciously stimulated Czech viewer) with the positioning of Valerie. In addition, more than just describing the dynamic, this sequence also bolsters the position of Czech national heritage in the mind of the viewer, as Valerie ultimately eats the apple and rejects

Gracián and her grandmother. Accordingly, Jireš has made it clear that resistance is possible in the face of Soviet authority.

Vampires in the catacombs: appeasement is not a strategy

A later sequence sees Valerie trying to save the dying vampire Tchoř (Jiří Prýmek) by killing a chicken and feeding him the blood. Here, Jireš explores how a strategy of appeasement, in which the ego (Valerie) aligns herself completely with the superego (Tchoř), may be a valid option for the cultural survival of Czech society.

The scene opens with Valerie descending into a vast catacomb, earlier revealed to exist beneath her home, in order to save Tchoř, who she believes to be her father. This Gothic setting, brought directly over from Nezval's original novel, is of particular interest. Owen states these 'innumerable underground passageways, crypts, vaults and generally tortuous, enigmatic spaces' seen in the film reflect 'the secret, subterranean dimensions of the Freudian self' (Owen, 2011: 163). Valerie's descending the stairs in the opening shot therefore represents her actively entering the realm of the unconscious. If Jireš had intended to present a Freudian balanced and healthy unconscious, we would expect him to feature both the superego and the id (Kahn, 2002: 26–27). However, this is not the case. Instead, we find Tchoř (the ultimate figure of 'repressive [...] authority' (Hames, 2005: 203) as shown by his numerous shifting manifestations as a priest, a constable, a weasel and Valerie's father) dominating the scene. Effectively, Tchoř encompasses an over-extended superego that denies any space for the id in the unconscious. In the first sequence, we saw Jireš use natural imagery – such as the 'textures of landscape' (White, 2019) evoked by Jan Čuřík's cinematography – to symbolise the innate impulses of the Czech cultural heritage (the societal id). However, this is completely absent in the bleak catacombs, depicting the lack of Czech cultural heritage. The result is an unbalanced dynamic that mirrors the contemporary structure of 1970s Czech society under Soviet rule.

The sequence initially shows Valerie as successful in her attempt to save Tchoř, restoring social balance. This is portrayed implicitly through the medium-closeup framing of Tchoř lying down, with his body entering the screen from the upper right corner, mirroring shots of Valerie that have repeatedly occurred. Hence, Jireš transcribes an optimism onto Valerie's actions by visually symbolising Tchoř's transformation into Valerie, announcing his redemption. Additionally, Valerie's success becomes explicit after she feeds him the required chicken's blood, causing Tchoř to transfigure from 'Nosferatu' (Owen, 2011: 179) into a red-haired figure. This emphasis on a return to the anthropic evokes Dubček's promise of 'socialism with a human face' (Pánek *et al.* 2018: 596). Thus, at this point, the film is hopeful that Soviet control can be reformed, as the apparent redemption of the film's arch-antagonist suggests that Czech society can return to a pre-invasion level of liberalisation through the individual's engagement with the regime on its own terms.

However, this change is ephemeral. No sooner does Tchoř revert to his human state than he rapaciously attacks Valerie, forcing her to feign her death by swallowing one of her 'magic' pearl earrings (Owen, 2011: 169). Superficially, Jireš appears to proclaim the impossibility of returning to the emancipatory atmosphere of the 1960s. Yet, on closer inspection, it becomes clear that the actual purpose of the scene is to caution the viewer's illusory notion that they are capable of transforming the Soviet regime without synthesising it with their Czech cultural heritage. The sequence ending with an abrupt cut to images of Valerie swimming among a picturesque setting just before Tchoř can claim her body blatantly reminds the audience of the existence and importance of the id in the psychoanalytic construction of an idealised Czech society. Resultingly, this sequence is important in demonstrating the capacity of the superego to consume the ego if left unchecked, and its dangerous consequences.

Possibilities and provocations: a new Czech future

As seen, the first sequence analysed saw Valerie initially vacillating, but ultimately aligning herself with signs of Czech heritage. Conversely, the second sequence showed Valerie's ill-fated appeasement strategy of unequivocally aligning with the superego. The film's final scene, however, is one of possibilities and provocations. The sequence sees Valerie wander through a harlequinade forest where she re-encounters all of the film's characters in novel tableaux before finally finding her bed in a clearing and falling asleep.

Jireš has constructed this final sequence around two implicit messages. The first is that change is possible. Like the importance of the underground labyrinth that Valerie visits when trying to save Tchoř, the setting here is also significant. Forests hold a special place within the Czech national psyche. Preceding human settlement, the geography of the Czech Lands was characterised by 'impassable woods' (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 27) and large, ancient forests. However, these were gradually eroded by the development of farming by early humans, marking the 'separation of man from nature' (Pánek *et al.*, 2018: 40). As such, Valerie's return to the forest is a return to Czech pre-history. With this, Jireš positions the viewer to recognise the possibilities inherent in the future. Furthermore, as Tanya Krzywinska has highlighted, the transformation of the Czech Lands increased exponentiality with the industrialisation of 'the post-war period', leading to 'a decline in agriculture and its particular organisation of the landscape' fuelled by the Communist government's policies (Krzywinska, 2003: 1). Valerie's return to the untouched natural world of the forest propagates the idea that the Czech viewers are capable of returning to an epoch of pre-war democracy. Additionally, the Czech Surrealists, in their fascination with the magic and mystery of folk culture (Cheng and Richardson, 2016: 243), recognised the forest as a symbol of the id, a reservoir of uncivilised man's repressed bestial desires. Not only has Jireš used the forest setting to underline the message that change is possible, he also establishes the desirability of change by presenting one such possibility as the reclamation of the id in a free Czech society.

Furthermore, the possibility of change is further reinforced by the Fellini-like reintroduction of all the film's characters in unique combinations. Peter Hames has suggested this narrative choice is Jireš simply reconciling 'the visions as visions' (Hames, 2005: 207), implying a superficiality that precludes the figures possessing any symbolic meaning. However, a common theme throughout surrealism has been the focus on 'the multi-layered complexity of contemporary existence' (Frank, 2014: 66). This has led surrealists – in a process derived from the Freudian production of dreams – to imbue objects with significance, not because the object itself is important, but because it contains the nuclei of numerous associational connotations held within the unconscious (Frank, 2014: 14). Hence, by Jireš reintroducing characters in the film's finale, he avoids superficial ambiguity and instead represents condensed (Frank, 2014: 14) dream-like associations of meaning, therefore using this surrealist trope to invite the viewer to experience the extensive possibilities of change.

So, while the first of the two implicit messages is that change is possible, the second message is that the viewer is compelled to make such a change occur. This is first illustrated by the scene's lack of narrative conclusion. In fact, the scene actively negates the pastiche romantic happy ending the film provided previously. This return to 'the ambiguous' (Krzywinska, 2003: 1) denies the audience a therapeutic catharsis through a conventional narrative structure. Instead, the audience is left with cathexis: built up 'psychic energy' (Kahn, 2002: 40) generated by the emotional responses to the film (including a sense of 'horror'; Coburn, 2019: 19) that has not been dissipated by a satisfactory conclusion. According to Freud, it is cathexis that motivates human action, as the ego seeks satisfaction by securing the 'elimination of [...] internal

stimuli at their source' (Sugarman, 2016: 48). Jireš uses this final sequence by capitalising on the cathexis that has been generated in the viewer; by denying them any simple relief, the spectator is forced to find another way to satisfy these psychological urges. Hence, *Valerie* aims to provoke the audience into effecting tangible change in the real world. Having spent the entirety of the film being shown surrealist analogies reflecting the contemporary imbalance of Czech society, it is clear that the film hopes to create a psychically activated audience member that is now compelled to dispel these psychological forces by restabilising the currently repressed position of Czech cultural heritage within the Soviet-dominated society. The effectiveness of this call to action is expounded by Jireš's decision to place the film's credits at the opening of the film. This allows a surrealist 'synthesis [...] of dream and world' (Owen, 2011: 184); the film's final fade-to-black undermines a definitive ending and transitions the audience's waking where Valerie has slept.

Consequently, Valerie's walk through the forest inhabited by a barrage of characters beckoning her to join them serves multiple important functions. Firstly, the presence of the film's cast (who have previously been contextualised as comparable to the Freudian dynamics of Czech society) reminds the audience of the real-world stakes of the film. Secondly, the sequence imposes two crucial messages: not only is change possible, but that change can be achieved by the now activated Czech spectator. Jireš purposefully leaves the viewer unaligned with representatives of the id and the superego in order to provoke the viewer into finding their own way towards a new balanced Czech society. Just as the film's characters link hands in a display of utopic reunification, the viewer has been given the potential to reconcile the forces of the id and the superego, Czech heritage and the political establishment.

Conclusion: Valerie again in the twenty-first century

The previous sections have outlined one particular way of reading Jaromil Jireš's *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*. Specifically, they have demonstrated how the film is structured around the psychoanalytic model of the 'tripartite schema of id, ego and superego' (Sugarman, 2016: 105), refracted through the 'luxuriant multiplicity' (Owen, 2011: 173) of Czech New Wave surrealism. This lens therefore enables two levels of interpretation, with the first being at an individual level. Elements that evoke certain aspects of Czech cultural history – especially Jireš's continued use of 'the tradition[s] of Czech Poetism' (Hames, 2005: 201) – represent the id. The actions and behaviours of the film's antagonistic authority figures portray the role of the superego. Finally, Valerie herself acts as mediator between these two influential forces, making her a surrogate for the ego. Jireš, in a true surrealist spirit, applies these Freudian ideas in a revolutionary manner, hoping to provoke the belief in the viewer that change is both possible and achievable. This gives rise to the second level of interpretation. Now, at a societal level, Valerie (the ego) becomes a substitute for the Czech viewer caught between the film's authority figures of the Soviet regime (superego) and lyrical, pastoral imagery of a unique and historic Czech cultural heritage (id).

In Spring 1970, the Soviet regime introduced the 'Big Ban' in which eight film releases were banned and a further twelve were stopped mid-production (Skvorecky, 1971: 264). Although this did not directly affect *Valerie*, censors thought it necessary to limit the film's distribution (Brooke, 2008), therefore constraining its capacity to effect change on a mass audience. This does not detract from the fact that *Valerie* is fundamentally oppositional, as recognised by twenty-first century commentators (including Owen, Frank, and others referenced above) who have recently excavated this post-invasion cinematic seam. Yet, there exists a cohort of similar films, such as Věra Chytilová's 1970 *Fruits of Paradise*, that remain neglected and would benefit from a Freudian psychoanalysis. In doing so, it will reveal how these films, surrealist and

otherwise, can reawaken communities to their cultural heritage and trigger social transformation, overall providing a better understanding of the power of the cinematic medium.

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Glossary

Avant-garde: Art derived from experimentation in form and content that is often shocking or thought-provoking.

Cinéma-vérité: A mode of quasi-documentary filmmaking that employs the camera as a tool to reveal ‘truth’ or ‘truths’ hidden behind everyday life.

Czech New Wave: A disparate film movement sparked the liberalisation of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, concerned with exploring the truth of daily Soviet life or the formal capacities of the medium of film.

Ego: Emerging from the conflict of the id and the superego, the ego is the mediating psychological force that seeks to satisfy the desires of the id within the bounds of social acceptably demarcated by the superego.

Id: The part of one's psychology, located in the unconscious, home to all instinctual desires.

Normalisation: The official policy of the Czechoslovak government after the 1968 Soviet invasion that aimed to undo the country's prior decade of liberalisation.

Poetism: A Czech literary movement led by Karel Teige and Vítězslav Nezval after World War One that combined carnivalesque fun with the pursuit of rationally perfecting mankind.

Psychoanalytical therapy: The form of therapy pioneered by Freud where patient and therapist use discussions to reveal how past experiences may be affecting the patient's present behaviour with the ultimate goal of restoring a healthy psychology.

Socialist realism: the Soviet Union's official mode of filmmaking that sought to promote the Marxist ideology.

Superego: The part of one's mind formed by the internalisation of rules and acceptable behaviour as taught by one's parents and society at large.

Surrealism: An artistic movement emerging after the First World War that translated Freud's theories from the realm of medicine to the realm of aesthetics.

The Big Ban: The widespread banning of Czech New Wave films as part of Normalisation.

Topography of the mind: Freud's conceptualisation of the mind in which one's personality is the product of three dynamic psychological forces – the id, the superego and the ego.

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