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### **The Dialectics of Form. The Feature-length Films of Jan Švankmajer**

Czech surrealist Jan Švankmajer may be described as a *total artist*. His rich, hybrid art consists of works from various fields: painting, sculpture, puppetry, poetry, or theatre. He is most famous though for being a filmmaker. For the most part of his artistic career, he has directed short animations and films that combine live action and animation. This long-term period of Švankmajer's work may be described as coherent and consequent in terms of both film language and topics (including philosophy). As an awarded and acclaimed filmmaker, Švankmajer, however, wanted to go further in his creative work – he decided to engage himself only into making feature-length films, and to give up making shorter forms.

In my thesis, I try to have a complex look at the surrealist's film work, and to ask several questions which – as I noticed after exploring the literature on the subject – had never been asked by scholars. I am interested not only in reasons why Švankmajer as a filmmaker decided to change his medium from short film to feature-length film, but also how this decision influenced his creative work (both artistically and philosophically). I attempt to prove that thanks to directing longer films Švankmajer remains a consequent, self-conscious artist, at the same time developing various elements of his philosophy and anthropology that were presented also in his short films.

Excluding an introduction presenting other studies on Švankmajer, my main goals and the director's biography, this thesis consists of eight comprehensive chapters. The first one is a complex analysis of the surrealist's short films – I write mostly about their poetics and dominant themes or ideas in various contexts (autobiography, psychoanalysis, Czech culture and history, certain tendencies in art which interest Švankmajer). Next chapters are chronologically arranged case studies on Švankmajer's feature-length films: *Alice*, *Faust*, *Conspirators of Pleasure*, *Little Otik*, *Surviving Life*, and *Insects* (the last chapter, referring to the closure of the director's filmography, is also a symbolic ending of the thesis). I analyze Švankmajer's feature-length films, proving that they share many common elements with the director's short films (at the same time showing how these two kinds of film differ). In other words, I focus on the thematic and stylistic "dialogue" that occurs between the surrealist's short and feature-length films. One of the most important conclusions is that Švankmajer as a remarkable author creates a completely new type of avant-garde film.

**Key words:** Jan Švankmajer, surrealism, Czech film, film art, feature-length film, animation, psychoanalysis