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Annexation Effects: Cultural Appropriation and the Politics of Place in Czech-German Films,
1930-1945

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Abstract

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The dissertation maps various points of cultural transfer in Czech-German films of the 1930s and 1940s. Specifically, it examines the representation and performance of ethnicity and the layered connections between geographic space, national identity, and mass culture. My work illustrates that Nazi cinema's appropriation of Czech culture was informed and, more importantly, legitimated by the Austro-Hungarian legacy. This analysis provides a framework for understanding the German film industry's stake in the Czech lands and its people. The dissertation further demonstrates the peculiar position within the German cinematic imagination occupied by Prague and the Czech territories. At once "familiar" and "foreign," these cinematic spaces become settings for ethnic confrontation and for the negotiation of German identity.

Each chapter examines the intersection of German and Czech cinema from a different thematic or historical perspective. Chapter One deals with questions of authorship and transnationalism in films by Czech-German directors. Chapter Two looks at the staging of female bodies and the performance of ethnic masquerade by Czech actors in German films. Chapter Three explores the affinities between genre, geography, and concepts of Heimat in the context of German, Austrian, and "Bohemian" cinema. Chapter Four investigates the politics of place and identity in Czech-German multiple language version films (or MLVs) of the 1930s. Chapter Five examines the special role of "Prague" in the German cinematic imagination.

Chapter Six analyzes films produced in occupied Prague within the larger context of Third Reich cinema.

The study offers detailed analyses of various discourses relevant to German-Czech cultural transfer and appropriation in Third Reich cinema. It employs a broad base of resources including newspapers, film journals, unpublished correspondence, as well as films and advertising materials. My research combines close readings of films with background information (biographies, production notes, distribution and reception history, etc.) relevant for their cinematic and cultural contextualization. The dissertation integrates individual film analyses into larger discourses on popular film, genre, authorship, and national cinema. By addressing various sites of intercultural confrontation, the project contributes to the understanding of Third Reich cinema's national and transnational imagination.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Foreign Attractions: Czech Stars and Ethnic Masquerade	41
Chapter 2: Accented Voices from Central Europe: Gustav Machatý and Karel Lamač	112
Chapter 3: The Tropes of Bohemia: Ethnicity, Culture, and Space in Genre	176
Chapter 4: The Un-mixing of Bohemia: Hybridity and Heimat in Czech-German MLVs	227
Chapter 5: Prague’s Uncanny Places: Reflections of a Divided City	300
Chapter 6: (Re)Imagining German Bohemia: Prag-Film and Third Reich Cinema	354
Conclusion	407
Bibliography	418

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DEDICATION

for Anna and Antonín

Introduction

Of all the territories that were overrun by the Third Reich, Czechoslovakia occupies a special position.¹

-Johann Wolfgang Brügel, *Tschechen und Deutsche, 1939-1946*

Imagine the lobby of a hotel decorated in ornate art nouveau style. World famous German actor Hans Albers, wearing a fedora and long, dark coat, enters the room. He approaches the young Austrian actor O. W. Fischer. They have a discussion about the counterfeit bills that Albers has traced back to the Jakobi bookstore. From off-screen, a voice calls out “Cut!” Our view pans out to reveal Hans Steinhoff (infamous for his work on propaganda “masterpieces” such as *Hitlerjunge Quex* [Hitler Youth Quex, 1933], *Ohm Krüger* [Uncle Kruger, 1941]) in the director’s chair. Nearby, we also observe many other well-known figures from the German film industry, such as actors Grete Weiser and Theodor Loos, cinematographer Carl Hoffmann (*Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* [Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler, 1922]; *Von morgens bis mitternachts* [From Morn to Midnight, 1921]; *Faust* [1926]; *Morgenrot* [Dawn, 1933]), and set designer Julius von Borsody (*Berlin – Alexanderplatz* [1931], *13 Stühle* [Thirteen Chairs, 1938], *Eine Frau wie du* [A Woman like You, 1933]). It is March 1945—we are observing an episode from the final weeks of the “thousand-year” Nazi empire. However, this is not Berlin, nor is it Munich, nor even Vienna. The scene recreated here does not even take place on the territory of the German Third Reich proper. This is Prague, capital of the Nazi occupied Protektorat von Böhmen und Mähren (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia).

1 “Unter den Ländern, die vom Dritten Reich überrannt worden sind, nimmt die Tschechoslowakei eine besondere Stellung ein.” Brügel 9. Note: this is the very first line in the book.

Now taking a closer at the scene, we begin to notice a Czech technician holding the boom microphone, another one operating a camera, and yet another working the sound recording equipment. We are in the Barrandov studios at the southern edge of Prague, on the bluffs above the Vltava River. This is the set of the crime drama *Shiva und die Galgenblume* (Shiva and the Gallows Flower), a film produced by the German-owned Prag-Film AG. Like *Shiva*, the films made by this company featured German actors almost exclusively, but heavily utilized the labor of local Czech film production personnel, even occasionally putting a Czech in the director's chair. This particular film project was never completed. On the eve of Prague's liberation from the Nazis, production was halted and the German crew scattered in flight from the invading Red Army. Consequently, this episode of German film history has been mostly forgotten.²

Despite its obscurity, this film points to series of intriguing developments in the German cinematic tradition. It is remarkable precisely because of the high degree of Czech involvement behind the scenes and because of the location of its creation: Prague. Due to these underlying Czech factors, *Shiva and the Gallows Flower* cannot be defined strictly in terms of German national cinema. Nor can the film simply be characterized as Czech. It is a curious cinematic hybrid—the result of certain intercultural affinities made expedient by war conditions. These moments in the spring of 1945 are the culmination of decades of Czech-German cinematic coproduction. At the same time, they signal the final words in this long chapter of transnational cooperation—the end of the war marked a fundamental shift in the relationship between

² The exception is the 1993 documentary *Shiva und die Galgenblume. Der letzte Film des Dritten Reiches*. Film historian Michaela Krützen and film director Hans Georg Andres collaborated on this curious mixture of documentary and fictional film that combines original archival footage of the film *Shiva und die Galgenblume* with reconstructed scenes shot in the 1990s using contemporary actors and interviews with actors and technicians who were involved in the original 1945 production.

Germans and Czechs and their cinema cultures. The conditions that gave rise to *Shiva and the Gallows Flower* (and its failure) would never exist again.

A German-language film with German actors filmed in the Barrandov studios in Prague with the labor of local Czech film technicians—this film was not alone. Indeed, there had been twelve feature-length productions, multiple documentary and animated shorts released under the Prag-Film label prior to *Shiva and the Gallows Flower*. Had this film been completed, it would have been among the first fifteen color films in the history of German cinema. By 1945, Prag-Film and the studios it controlled were a major component of the Nazi film apparatus. Although it was the most visible, Prag-Film was not the only German company filming in Prague during World War II. In the 1940s Prague had grown into one of the most important centers of German cinema production and (after Berlin and Munich) the third largest filmmaking city within the German sphere of influence. During the last years of the war the creation of German cinema in Prague was an integral and indispensable component of the Reich film apparatus: about 25% of all films made by the Reich in these years were shot in the Prague studios or on location in and around the city. After the inception of the Protectorate, the Nazi administration immediately set its sights on Prague's Barrandov studios. Completed in 1933 as the flagship studios for the Czech A-B production company, Barrandov housed some of the most modern filmmaking facilities in all of Europe. Through a number of shady business deals, the Nazi film apparatus took acquisition of the Barrandov facilities and set about expanding and improving them. In addition to serving as the center for the Prag-Film company, the Barrandov studios were also rented out to Bavaria, Terra, Tobis, and Wien-Film production companies, all of which operated under the direct administration of the umbrella Reich apparatus Universal-Film (Ufi). These studios hosted some of the most recognized directors in the Reich, such as G. W. Pabst, Veit Harlan, Helmut

Käutner, Gerhard Lamprecht, and Leni Riefenstahl. They also gave rise to several of Nazi cinema's most famous, and infamous films, including *Jud Süß* (Jew Süß, 1940), *Diesel* (1942), *Carl Peters* (1941), *Paracelsus* (1943), *Grosse Freiheit Nr. 7* (1942), *Die Fledermaus* (1946), and *Tiefland* (Lowlands, 1954).

Just as history has obscured knowledge of *Shiva and the Gallows Flower*, film scholars have either overlooked or neglected the role of Prag-Film and similar operations. The following project aims to shed light on this phenomenon and specifically on the German-Czech interactions and how they shaped what we used to call simply "German cinema." I aim to expand our perspective on Third Reich film productions, to track out the camera, to pull back the focal perspective to reveal the events going on behind the scenes, to take in the broad cultural context that gave rise to these films. In considering the wartime film practices mentioned above, it is not merely the Prague location that is of significance. Even more compelling for investigation are the high degree of cultural exchange inherent in this transnational mode of film production and the political ramifications of such a relationship in the extremely charged political environments of the Third Reich and World War II. The scope of this project encompasses not just Prag-Film and the war years, but also the cultural and industrial mechanisms at work in Weimar Germany, which prepared and later resulted in the Reich's annexation of Czech film production.

The story of German film production in Prague and Czech lands does not begin with the Protectorate. The collaborations and co-productions between the Czech and German film industries date back to the very beginnings of cinema itself. Indeed, until Czechoslovakian independence in 1918 all films made in Prague can technically be thought of as part of Austrian, or rather Austro-Hungarian cinema. These industry ties persisted after World War I, when directors and actors from this region freely traversed the borders of Central Europe, participating

equally in Austrian, Czech, Hungarian, and German cinema. Even the arrival of sound cinema in the late 1920s did not bring an end to this network of transnational exchange, as might be expected or even assumed. A high level of creative and industrial exchange between German, Austrian, and Czech cinema continues throughout the 1930s and into the war period. German-language cinema did not maintain such a close relationship with any other foreign film industry, thus making the Czech situation special within German cinema at this time.

This dissertation follows from the premise that Czech cinema occupied a special position in its relationship with German cinema. The task is to analyze this relationship from various perspectives, in order to map out and define the characteristics that made it special and to illustrate how these conditions shaped the film culture of Central Europe between the wars that lasted until the end of World War II. The project has two objectives: to test the concept of “German National cinema” in a specific situation, and to explore the role “Czech themes” in films made under conditions of conquest and assimilation.

Theoretical Frameworks: National Imaginaries and Multi-ethnic Territories

A primary goal of this dissertation is to challenge the existing notions of national cinema for the period under consideration. National cinemas in Central Europe and the divisions among them are generally defined and described in accordance with the nationalist projects at work in the various nation-states and the heightened political animosities of the time. Indeed, on the surface, the film culture of Central Europe in the 1930s reflects a territory deeply divided along the lines of nation-state boundaries. After World War I, Central Europe was a political, economic, and cultural combat zone of competing and antagonistic national sentiments attempting to solidify their borders and strengthen the integrity of their local cultural traditions in opposition to those of

neighboring nations. If we look closer, however, we find a deep-rooted legacy of cultural exchange and ethnic mixing between “Germans” and “Czechs” working against the official politics of exclusion especially in the film culture of the 1930s and 40s. A deeper understanding of these points of connection not only challenges existing paradigms of national cinema, also opens up new ways of conceptualizing the cinematic practices of Central Europe, as transnational, intercultural, and multi-ethnic.

The perceived monumentality of German national cinema in this period makes the work of this dissertation all the more compelling, indeed more imperative. By illuminating the Czech involvement in Third Reich cinema, my research exposes cracks in the façade of national wholeness promoted by the films of the period. In doing so, my work builds on a growing body of research into the transnational aspects of Third Reich cinema and the various disconnects between film practice and Nazi ideology, what has been termed the “split consciousness” or “double life” of Third Reich society.³

As the leading volume to define the characteristics of German cinema in terms of nation, Sabine Hake’s *German National Cinema* is a primary point of reference for my project. This dissertation builds upon Hake’s definitions and complements her frameworks by considering the Czech aspects of German national cinema. Although her overview of Third Reich cinema includes various international aspects, she does not take into account the contribution of Czechs to German films or the relationship between Third Reich cinema and Czechoslovakia (and later the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia). Her chapter on the Third Reich period focuses on the restructuring of the industry after the Nazi takeover and provides a selective outline of filmic production with specific attention to stars, directors, and genres. She also examines the political

³ For an extensive exploration of these concepts from Hans Dieter Schäfer and Detlev Peukert, see Ascheid, 11-41.

instrumentalization of cinema during this period with regard to various oppositional concepts such as entertainment versus ideology or popular versus national. Perhaps more than any other, the period of the Third Reich most overtly fuses the concepts of “national” and “cinema”—not only was this film industry nationalized, it was also overtly instrumentalized for nationalist purposes. In her overview, Hake considers some of the ways that the occupation of France and Austria affected film production in those countries and altered the relationship between German cinema and these national industries (*German National Cinema* 66). The current study complements these observations by also considering the situation in occupied Bohemia and Moravia, which were no less important to Third Reich cinema. Indeed, in many ways Prague was becoming more important than Vienna for the Reich’s film production. Furthermore, the ethnic and territorial stakes in this region were much more complex than in Austria or France. This dissertation also build upon Hake’s consideration of the ways that various foreign actors and directors were able to “capitalise on their cultural or ethnic backgrounds” in the production of film in the Reich (*German National Cinema* 71). Although her examples include Hungarians (Géza von Bolváry), Russians (Viktor Tourjansky), and Austrians (Gustav Ucicky), the role of Czechs has yet to be explored.

My work is also informed by broader debates about the very definition of national cinema and its viability as a theoretical framework. Stephen Crofts has argued that every act of international co-production tends toward an “erasing of cultural specificity” (388). My research tests this assertion by exploring various points of intersection between German, Austrian, and Czech cinema with special attention to expressions of cultural specificity. Following Crofts’ lead, my work illuminates various ways that cultural specificities are obscured and even erased. At the same time, though, I illustrate various ways that films preserve a sense of cultural

specificity despite the intercultural nature of production. As I demonstrate, many of these co-productions craft a sense of cultural specificity in ways that have compelling ramifications for our understanding of these national cinemas. I further argue that the unique cultural specificities that come to light at these intersections of the national point to a larger, transnational sense of specificity characteristic to the territory of Central Europe.

Croft's understanding of national-cultural specificity is informed by Paul Willemen's groundbreaking work to outline alternative frameworks for thinking about national cinema. Willemen uses the concept of cultural specificity to describe patterns of cinematic production and reception that are related to yet distinct from both nationalism and definitions of national identity. Willemen explores the complexity of his notion of cultural specificity in his seminal essay "The National." On the one hand, he argues that, in terms of film studies, cultural specificity is primarily thought of as *national* specificity, which is a territorial-institutional matter that coincides with the boundaries of the nation-state, the terrain governed by the laws of a particular government. On the other hand, he maintains that nationalist discourse and national identity should be kept distinct from cultural specificity. Indeed, he posits that the construction of cultural specificity is an umbrella process that "encompasses and governs the articulation of both national identity and nationalistic discourses" (qtd. in Crofts 388). Willemen points out that scholarship often ignores the fact that the capital-intensive nature of film production requires a certain level of internationalism or transnationalism. This observation implores us to recognize the somewhat paradoxical situation whereby any cinema positively engaged in articulating national or cultural specificity is necessarily dependent to some extent on the multi-national cinema it would displace. Willemen's concept of "cultural specificity" is particularly useful as a way to get beyond thinking in restrictive categories of the national, which often break down

when conceptualizing Central European cinema from the first half of the 20th century. Furthermore, my work attempts to shed light on those multi-national aspects of Third Reich cinema that are often ignored in favor of emphasizing the nationalist project. Ironically, many scholars perpetuate the Nazi myth of wholeness by focusing exclusively on those films that overtly engage nationalist discourse in describing German cinema in this period.

Willemen concludes that the issue of national cinema is, therefore, primarily a question of address, and not a question of the filmmaker's citizenship, nor even a question of the production capital's country of origin. Using a similar approach, Andrew Higson makes the argument against the "limiting imagination of national cinema." He also advocates an understanding of national cinema that accounts for hybridity and the crossing of borders. The term Higson uses for such an understanding is "transnational." He points to two major incidences of border crossing, one at the level of production, such as international co-productions, another at the level of consumption, such as the distribution and reception of films across national borders, often in physically altered versions, due to dubbing, subtitling, and censorship. As a result of these factors, Higson argues that film studies requires greater consideration of cultural context and how it influences the audience's "reading." In order to better understand how national cinema functions in the generation of meaning within society, Higson asserts, we must move beyond an analysis that simply evaluates individual films or oeuvres as artistic products to a more complex examination of systems of circulation and cinematic audiences. He states, "to explore national cinema in these terms means laying a much greater stress on the point of consumption, and on the *use* of film (sounds, images, narratives, fantasies), than on the point of production" ("The Limiting Imagination" 65). Higson's framework is particularly useful for conceptualizing German-language versions made in Czechoslovakia as part of German national

cinema more broadly, since they adopt a mode of address aimed specifically at German sensibilities. In addition, his conception of the transnational informs my analyses of Czech directors and actors whose careers transverse national borders, thus implicating a certain level of hybridity in their film work.

Like Willemen, Higson attests the importance of the concept of national cinema at the level of state policy. Yet, employing the terminology of Benedict Anderson, Higson also emphasizes that the national “imagined community” is not limited by the geo-political space of the nation-state, but also includes individuals beyond the borders of the state, i.e., the “diasporic community.” This points to an inherent discrepancy between Willemen’s insistence that cultural specificity in terms of film studies is intrinsically linked to the geo-political terrain of the nation-state and Higson’s emphasis on the “transnational” quality of cinema. The main reason for this conflict results from Higson’s emphasis on the role of audience reception, which inevitably includes individuals outside the national borders who nevertheless identify themselves with the imagined community on some level. From this perspective, Willemen’s articulation of cultural specificity does not seem to provide any framework to account for identification with a particular cultural specificity that occurs outside beyond the terrain of the nation-state. This point is crucial for Higson, who consistently emphasizes that audiences should be defined in terms of transnational and local frameworks rather than simply national ones.

Willemen warns against “cross cultural” or “multi-cultural” approaches to national cinema, because they themselves suggest the existence of bounded cultural zones separated by impassable borders. He draws comparisons between approaches to cinema that engage in temporal periodization and those that assume geographical demarcation. Both of these approaches deemphasize diachronic continuity in favor of a synchronic analysis. Similarly,

Higson also warns against adopting a “multi-cultural” approach in analyzing cinema. Using the work of John Hill as an example, Higson warns that the championing of critical cinema, which promotes cultural difference, can lead to the same selectivity as more conservative interpretations (see “The Limiting Imagination” 72-4).⁴ The reason for apparent conflict between the critical frameworks presented by Higson and Willemsen has to do with focus. Whereas Higson seeks to understand National Cinema “from the inside,” Willemsen investigates a foreign cinema “from the outside.” My research attempts to balance these two approaches in order to fashion a comprehensive overview of the complex issues of nationalism and transnationalism in German, Austrian, and Czech cinema cultures of the 1930s and 40s.

At the center of my examination are the various projections and definitions of nation at work in the territories of Bohemia and Moravia during the interwar period. Since the early 19th century, an intellectual “re-awakening” was underway in the so-called “Czech lands” whose goal was to establish an official Czech culture drawing a clear distinction between it and Germanic culture. Culminating in the formation of the Czechoslovakian state, this modern Czech nationalism sought to fashion and promote its concept of Czech identity through the revival of folk history and mythology, utilizing the cinema as a primary vehicle in this project. Whereas the new Czechoslovakian state struggled to maintain its newly forged identity, much German and Austrian thinking viewed this land as historically Germanic. Consequently, German-language films from this period consistently imagined Bohemia and Moravia as part of the Heimat territory.

⁴ Higson charges Hill with neglecting domestic films that do not fit his argument, regardless of audience reception, and thereby weakening the support for homegrown British cinema.

A major part of my research maps out the notions of ethnicity and national belonging latent in German cinema of the 1930s and 40s by investigating the manner by which a uniquely Bohemian German identity is constructed. I address the process wherein German identity is set off from Czech identity as well as the prevailing tendency to eclipse all traces of Czech culture within the traditionally multi-ethnic lands of Bohemia and Moravia. At the same time, I also address instances of cultural overlap, in which the specificities of “German” and “Czech” culture are so intertwined that their ethnic determination is essentially neutralized, and yet certain specificities are often appropriated as a token of cultural identity by one side to the exclusion of the other group.

My investigation into the processes of ethno-national representation focuses on three areas of primary interest: namely, language, culture, and territory. To privilege these areas is not to codify them as characteristics that define a particular national or ethnic cinema. I do not consider aspects of “racial-typology” as a mode for distinguishing ethnic identity, except in cases in which it is overtly employed in specific filmic representations. My aim, rather, is to describe how these cinemas imagined their own identity in opposition to others, while highlighting the fissures that open up in such national-ethnic paradigms of exclusion.

With regard to the third category, that of the national, I am also concerned with the issues of space, place, and territory, and how they contribute to concepts of culture and identity. Two decades after the collapse of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire and the subsumption of Bohemia and Moravia into the Czechoslovakian state, this territory remained a battleground of cultural claims and setting for ethnic confrontation. The practical outcomes of the ethno-national contestation of Bohemian space in the 1930s and 1940s are well known: the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland as a result of the Munich agreement in October 1938, the subsequent invasion of

remaining Czech territory and institution of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia six months later, the liberation of Czechoslovakia by local partisans and the Red Army, the en masse expulsion of German populations from Czechoslovakia after the war, etc. Using these historical moments as points of reference, this dissertation is concerned with the mythologizing mechanisms at work in this place of culture, ethnic, linguistic, and national dispute. How did German cinema depict Bohemia and Bohemians? What role did these imagined places have in the processes of cultural annexation and political reterritorialization?

For Nazi Germany, of course, not only the conquest of the territory of Bohemia and Moravia was at stake, but also the bodies that inhabited this land. Although the process of annexation was not a campaign for “hearts and minds,” Nazi ideology was undoubtedly concerned with the blood and spirit of the Bohemian and Moravian people. Questions of racial and cultural identity were intricately bound together with the politics of this territory. What position do Bohemia and Moravia occupy within the landscape of the German Heimat? What place does land have in the Nazi ideology of *Blut und Boden*? Which plots of this “soil” belong and which do not? How does the “blood” flowing through the veins of Bohemians determine their position on the map of German ethnicity? How do the cultural expressions of German Bohemians differ from those of Czech-identifying Bohemians?

Cinema Cultures: Industrial Occupation and Personal Circulation

The Czechoslovak and Austrian film cultures of the 1930s developed almost in parallel. Most remarkable in this respect is the process by which both of these “minor” cinemas were annexed and assimilated into the Third Reich film apparatus on the eve of World War II. Whereas the dominant foreign influence on Austrian cinema (except, of course, Hollywood, which is the

dominant influence on all European and world cinemas) was from Germany, the Czechoslovak industry had to contend with economic and political-cultural “threats” from both Germany and Austria.

In 1930, violent street demonstrations in Prague railed in opposition to the intoning of the German language on the city’s cinema screens. Although the riots were defined as “anti-German,” the ire of the demonstrators was aimed against Austria as much as against Germany proper. In fact, the film that sparked the riots was an Austrian production, *Der unsterbliche Lump* (Immortal Vagabond, 1930). As recent scholarship has shown, the offending moment in the film featured a room of school children singing a patriotic Austrian ode in front of a map depicting the territory of Austria prior to 1918, when Bohemia and Prague were still administered by the Habsburgs in Vienna.⁵ Likewise, a recent international murder incident stoked the fires of discontent among Czech viewers. The German language simply served as an easily identifiable target against which a complex constellation of national-cultural fears could be focused and rallied.

Even though the desire to build a strong Czechoslovak national cinema was always a prime goal of the country’s film industry, the realities of the business never allowed Czech filmmakers to act in an entirely independent fashion without support from their “Big Brothers” to the south and northwest. Economic reality ran paradoxically counter to nationalist politics in the newly independent state: the Czech industry could only grow stronger (and therefore closer to some level of autonomy) by increasing financial ties with the German and Austrian industries. One of the prime vehicles that Czechoslovak cinema used to profit from these industries was the production of German language versions of Czech films. These versions not only secured

⁵ For the most extensive account of the complex issues surrounding the Prague riots, see Wingfield.

funding from German sources that could be used for their Czech language counterparts, they also had access to expansive markets in Germany and Austria. Furthermore, the Czech industry was dependent on German film technology, especially equipment for recording and reproducing sound.

The A-B company based in Prague, which owned and operated the Barrandov studios and was the leading producer of Czechoslovak films at the time, was economically dependent on the German industry in various ways throughout the 1930s. The most important business connections related to the use of sound recording equipment. Since the beginning of the decade the Czech company was compelled to pay large licensing fees for all films shot using equipment from the German conglomerate Tobis-Klangfilm.⁶ In October 1938, A-B sent a letter to Tobis-Klangfilm asking for these licensing fees to be lifted, because of the “altered circumstances in Czechoslovakia” (*geänderte Lage in der Tschechoslowakei*) in the wake of the Munich Agreement, which saw the so-called Sudetenland ceded to the German Reich.⁷ The letter outlines the dire situation in the country, where production is at a standstill and many film theaters threatened with permanent closure. In addition, the company indicates that it expects film attendance to decline sharply because the general population will not have as much dispensable income as a result of the modified political-economic situation. The letter closes with the lines: “The production of Czechoslovak [sound] cinema began in May, 1930. So, it has been eight years already, and Czechoslovak film production has paid some five million [Reichsmarks] in licensing fees during this time. We are convinced that no other country the size of

⁶ According to contract agreements from spring 1934, the licensing fee amounted to 35,000 RM per year for each film. See Letter from Tobis Klangfilm to AB-Aktien Film Fabriken, 24.4.1934. BARCH – R 109 I 320.

⁷ Letter from A-B akciové filmové továrny, Barrandov to Tobis, Tonbild Syndikat AG, Berlin. 18.10.1938. BARCH – R 109 I 322.

Czechoslovakia has paid anything close to this amount to you or will pay such amounts in the future. We have been loyal patrons (*treue Kunden*) of the German Reich's film technology industry (*reichsdeutsche Filmmaschinen-Industrie*) and wish to remain so."⁸ However self-interested this document may be, aiming as it does to eliminate licensing fees, it also points to the reality of the relationship between the Czech and German film industries. As the letter rightly points out, no country the size of Czechoslovakia provided the German industry with such a high level of business. Furthermore, Czech filmmakers and audiences had consistently been "loyal patrons" of the German film industry. Whatever anti-German sentiment was being expressed at an official level and among the general population, the Czechoslovak film industry was, as a matter of economic necessity, aligned with German companies throughout the 1930s.

In some cases, the German film industry took a more active role in Czechoslovakian cinema. The largest and most powerful German production company, Ufa, became directly involved in the production of Czech language films from 1933, when it established a local branch in Prague. This industry outpost was responsible for producing and distributing a total of fifteen Czech-language films between 1933 and 1940, when the Reich assumed control over all film business (both Czech and German) in Bohemia and Moravia. In a sense, the opening of Ufa's Prague office in the 1930s can be seen as an initial foray into the territory of Czechoslovak cinema, and one that would prepare its annexation under the so-called Protectorate. In addition to invading the Czech market, the Czechoslovakian branch of Ufa also provided an in-route for Czech talent into the German industry. For example bilingual actress Lída Baarová, who starred in the company's first Czech-language production *Okénko* (Little Window, 1933), came to the attention of German producers through her work on Ufa's Czech films and was quickly brought

⁸ See Letter from A-B akciové filmové továrny, Barrandov to Tobis, Tonbild Syndikat AG, Berlin. 18.10.1938. BARCH – R 109 I 322.

to Germany where she became a leading star of Third Reich cinema (until she was forced out of Germany and banned from work in German films in 1938 after her affair with Joseph Goebbels threatened to tarnish the image of the Nazi leadership). Likewise, Vladimír Slavinský, who directed four Czech-language features for Ufa, went on to be an important director of German films in the Prag-Film company (under the German pseudonym “Otto Pittermann”). Ufa’s engagement with Czech cinema marks an important, yet rarely noted point of connection between the German and Czechoslovak industries, a space of overlap between two national cinemas typically regarded in independently of one another.

The transnational relationship between the Czech film industry on the one hand and the German and Austrian industries on the other was anything but reciprocal. Czech filmmakers and production companies were always in a less powerful position than their Germanic counterparts and the channels of exchange typically moved in one direction (capital towards Czechoslovakia, and talent outwards from the country). This is perhaps the most significant distinguishing factor for differentiating the Czech-German situation from Germany’s relationship with other major European film industries (i.e., with France, Italy, and Britain) and even with Hollywood. In all of these other cases, German directors and actors took part in the production of foreign language films in the other countries. Just to cite a few prominent examples: Lilian Harvey and Adolf Wohlbrück were involved in several German-English and German-French MLVs before they left the German industry; Fritz Lang worked on French versions of *M* and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*; directors such as E. A. Dupont were working in on English-language versions since 1930 (such as *Atlantic*); during the Nazi period numerous German personnel took part in Italian

co-productions shot in Rome. When it comes to Czech-German cooperation, however, we find almost exclusively Czechs working on German films and not the reverse.⁹

The very few German or Austrian filmmakers working on Czechoslovak film productions can be grouped into two categories: those Jewish filmmakers who worked on “independent productions” in Czechoslovakia after 1933 when they were barred from German film production, and those directors involved in Czech-German MLV projects (most notably German-speaking Austrian Friedrich Feher). In the period after 1933 there is considerable overlap between these two categories. From 1933-38 Czechoslovakia together with Austria held the position of being at once a “safe haven” for Germans fleeing the Nazi dictatorship while still maintaining close relations with the German film industry.¹⁰

The development of Czechoslovak cinema in the 1930s and 1940s must be understood according to its own history, which is different from that of the larger political developments in Germany and Austria. In the German context, the Nazi takeover in 1933/34 is generally regarded as a watershed. For Austrian cinema, 1938 marks a similar pivotal moment when the industry came under the direct control of Nazi administration after the *Anschluss*. Later, both countries had to adjust to radical changes in conditions when they became physical targets for their war enemies, resulting in urban destruction and civilian death on a massive scale.

Although the nationalization and Aryanization of the German industry under the Nazis had very real effects on Czechoslovak film production and its relationship to German cinema, 1933/34 did not signal a watershed moment in the way films were made in the country. Most of

⁹ The most notable example of a German director working in Czechoslovakia was Karl Junghans, who shot his 1929 film *So ist das Leben/Takový je život* (Such is Life) in Prague when he could not secure the funding for the project in Germany.

¹⁰ For an extensive documentation of this phenomenon with particular attention to the conditions in Austria, see Loacker and Prucha.

the changes affected the patterns of export from Czechoslovakia to the Reich. Except for the activity of émigrés in the Czechoslovak industry (mostly working on German language versions), these years do not display any major shifts in the types of films being made. Although a few Czech-language films addressed the Nazi threat, Czechoslovak film culture was remarkably unchanged throughout most of the 1930s.

There are two major historical changes within the Czech context during this time: the annexation of the Sudetenland (October 1938) and the institution of the Protectorate (March 1939), both of which occurred prior to the official outbreak of the war. There were no major administrative or territorial changes in Czech lands after the start of World War II on September 1, 1939. In fact, we could say that the “war conditions” began a year earlier in the Czech lands when Nazi forces occupied first the Sudetenland and then the rest of Bohemia and Moravia, albeit without military confrontation. As a result of this “peaceful” takeover, the “Czech lands” remained relatively unscathed by the Nazi Blitzkrieg in comparison to most of the other German-occupied territories. These areas were not to see major military confrontation until the last few months of the war and even then they were not submitted to the mass destruction that ravaged most of their neighbors, including Austria and Germany itself. The other pivotal development in the cinema of the region came in 1942 with the creation of the Prag-Film company. Since it was spared the ravages of war by both Nazi forces and the Allies, Prague gradually assumed a major role in German film production during this period as “the preferred place for war-weary film professionals” (Hake, *German National Cinema* 67).

After the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, German hegemony over the Czech film industry (and all Czech-German cooperation) became nearly absolute. Co-production had always been an economic imperative, but now it was a political one. In the

1940s, Prague was on its way to becoming the new capital of German cinema and as the pace of production in the city increased, so did the need for local workers. Many Czech directors and actors voluntarily sought work in the German industry throughout the 1930s, but after the industry occupied Prague they and others were forced to participate in the production of German cinema. At the same time, the outward evidence of Czech labor was being erased (through the Germanification of Czech names) and the image of Bohemia and Prague were being appropriated and eclipsed.

Bohemians in Brandenburg: Czech Personnel and German Cinema

The ideological implications of labeling film production in Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s as “the Golden Age” of German cinema are still a source for ongoing debate. Large segments of the German population still look to this period as the pinnacle of the nation’s sound film achievements (usually focusing on the light entertainment features to the exclusion of the most offensive propaganda films). Meanwhile, in academic film studies and among the general population outside of Germany this era is denounced for its egregious anti-Semitism and hyper-nationalism. As much recent scholarship has sought to illustrate, even overtly apolitical productions from the period took part in promoting the Nazi ideological agenda.¹¹ Political presuppositions aside, however, one cannot deny that quantitatively this period represents a high point in German film history in many respects, especially when speaking of the innovative use of sound film. In terms, of the number of actual films produced per year, this era is second only to the Weimar Republic period (more typically thought of as German cinema’s “Golden Age,” at least by the academic and artistic establishment). Furthermore, the high level of foreign

¹¹ Of special note are: Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*; Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich*; and Hake, *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich*.

participation in German film production that was established in the Weimar period continued throughout the Nazi era. As the leading center of filmmaking in Europe at the time, the German industry attracted large numbers of filmmakers from all parts of the continent, indeed from all parts of the world (e.g., Italian actor Angelo Ferrari, Argentine-Spanish actress Imperio Argentina, actor Mohamed Husen from Dar es Salaam, in addition to the many well-known figures from Central and Eastern Europe). It is this last aspect that makes this period so interesting for the analysis at hand.

In many ways, Berlin can be thought of as a sort of “Hollywood of Europe” during the 1920s and 1930s. Since the Wilhelmine period, Berlin film studios had attracted foreign talent from Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, seeking to “make it big” in the industry. In many cases, Vienna served as an important transit point on the road to Berlin. Throughout the former territories of Austria-Hungary, aspiring filmmakers traditionally set their sights on Berlin and Vienna and established successful careers in German cinema. In the case of Hungary, notable personalities include Géza von Bolváry, Marika Rökk, Szöke Szakáll and Mihály Kertész. In some cases, the German-Austrian industry served as a springboard for launching a later career in Hollywood, most notably Kertész, who became an important contributor to American cinema under the name Michael Curtiz.¹² Many filmmakers from the Czech lands followed a similar path to German cinema. Some of the directors from Bohemia and Moravia such as G. W. Pabst and Edgar Ulmer bypassed Prague all together and began their careers in Vienna or Berlin. These figures are generally regarded exclusively as German or

¹² Szakáll also eventually moved on to a Hollywood career. However, whereas Kertész consciously left Central Europe in the mid-1920s to work for Warner Brothers, fellow Jew Szakáll left under the pressure of anti-Semitic policy in the wake of the Nazi coup in Germany.

Austrian directors with no regard for their geographical origins.¹³ In contrast to these German-speaking directors, those who spoke predominantly Czech such as Karel Lamač and Gustav Machatý typically launched their careers in Prague before moving on to German cinema. Several Bohemian and Moravian filmmakers (Lamač, Frič, Machatý, Baarová) balanced careers between the German/Austrian and Czechoslovak industries throughout the 1930s, whereas others (Anton, Pabst, Ulmer, Ondra) remained more or less fixed within the German-language film business or moved onward to Hollywood after leaving Bohemia.

Germany did not lose its special position at the top of the regional film economy after the Nazi takeover, nor after the start of World War II. Indeed, although the industry became off-limits to Jews and other “undesirables,” the German film machine centered in Berlin still functioned as a powerful magnet for film talent from throughout Europe. During the war years, many foreign film personnel found themselves working for German cinema under conditions akin to “forced labor” imposed by the occupying administration of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, a substantial number of non-Germans willingly decided to remain in the Nazified film industry or to pursue new employment here in this period. In the Czech context actors and directors such as Anny Ondra, Lída Baarová, Karel Lamač, and Karel Anton continued working in Nazi Germany until 1939 (in the case of Lamač and Baarová) and even later (in the case of the other two). This not only speaks to a certain level of complicity with the Nazi regime on the part of the Czechs, it also illustrates the facility with which certain national-ethnic Others (in this case Czechs) were integrated into Third Reich cinema. This relationship is particularly remarkable considering the racial antagonism against Slavs inherent in Nazi public rhetoric.

13 In addition to these German-speaking directors, this group also includes Bohemian-born actors such as Ernst Deutsch and Franz/František Lederer and scriptwriters such as Hans Janowitz and Franz Schulz. All of these figures were Jewish (like Ulmer) and all were born in Prague with the exception of Janowitz, who was born in Poděbrady/Podiebrad.

As opposed to German filmmakers, very few Czechs were able to establish a successful, high-profile career in Hollywood or in other foreign locations. To this day, the contributions of Czech emigrants to American and other national cinemas are largely forgotten.¹⁴ Tellingly, when specific Czech emigrant filmmakers are in fact remembered, they are often lumped together with fellow émigrés from Germany or Austria. Since they generally worked on German films before coming to Hollywood, most filmmakers from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and other former crown territories of the dual monarchy tend to be grouped under the “German” label. This of course includes filmmakers from Austria proper as well. Due to this labeling shorthand, scholarship often regards filmmakers of various national origins as simply “German” without any concern to their contributions to the national cinema culture of their home countries.¹⁵ The fact that many of these filmmakers had become well-known in Germany and Austria under Germanicized versions of their names facilitates the tendency to misread or overlook their ethno-national progeny.¹⁶

In addition to directors, this dissertation looks at the role of Czech actors who worked in German-language cinema, with particular focus on how national identities and cultural specificity were projected onto and expressed by these transnational bodies. Recent years have seen a swell in research on the interconnections between cinematic performance, gender, ethnicity, and categories of the national in Third Reich cinema.¹⁷ Particularly important for my

14 In addition to Lamač and Gustav Machatý, other Czechs who emigrated from their homeland and attempted with various degrees of success to continue careers abroad include Otto Kanturek, Otto Heller (who is responsible for the cinematography in Michael Powell’s infamous *Peeping Tom*), Jarmila Novotná, Jiří Voskovec (as George Voskovec), and Hugo Haas.

15 See for example, Horak. This consideration of “German exile cinema” includes the work of Czechs such as Carl Lamac [sic], Gustav Machaty [sic.], and cameraman Otto Kanturek together with several Hungarians.

16 For example, Karel Lamač typically appeared as “Carl Lamac” in the credits of his German films. Likewise, Mihály Kertész had been operating under the first name “Michael” since he first began working with the Austrian Sascha-Film company in the early 1920s.

17 In addition to Ascheid’s work discussed here, see Fox, Romani, and Koepnick 72-98.

research is Antje Ascheid's work on female stardom in the Third Reich. Her examination of three stars (Kristina Söderbaum, Lilian Harvey, Zarah Leander) and the different roles they played in the cinema and in Nazi society assumes a cultural studies approach that firmly grounds close readings of specific films and star performances within the context of filmic practices in the Third Reich and cinema's function in the culture at large. Ascheid's research provides a foundation for an analysis of gender representation and gender roles as they relate to performance and star persona. Her work on female stardom has useful applications for my own project, since the vast majority of Czech actors working in German cinema were women. I examine the reasons for this gender bias within the context of fantasies of imperialism and cultural conquest. Although Ascheid only touches on issues of national and ethnic identity, she establishes a framework for understanding star personas as a location for ambiguity and conflicting ideologies, highlighting the "split consciousness" of the Nazi public sphere (17).¹⁸ This concept of "split consciousness" is key to my interpretation of the way that Czech female actors played the dual role of "cultural insider" and "foreign Other" in German cinema.¹⁹ I examine the various ways that these bodies engage in various forms of ethnic and racial performance and how these performances point to a certain level of "split consciousness" in the way that the Third Reich at once rejected Czechs as "inferior Slavs," but simultaneously worked to integrate them into the cinema—a process that demanded various degrees of officially-sanctioned masquerade.

¹⁸ She borrows this term from Hans Dieter Schäfer, who coined the concept in his *Das gespaltene Bewußtsein*. She also cites the term "double life," which Detlev Peukert has used to describe how Germans carefully separated the ideological imperatives of Nazi ideology with daily leisure activities that embraced a certain level of cultural diversity. See Ascheid 19.

¹⁹ The national overtones of the "split consciousness" that Ascheid describes are left curiously underdeveloped given that the three actresses she considers were all of foreign origin to some extent (Söderbaum and Leander were Swedish, while Harvey was born in Great Britain to an English mother and German father.)

National Constructions: Cultural Practice and Ethnic Identity

Although the Austrian and Czech film cultures of the interwar years are similar in many aspects (particularly in their special relationship to German cinema), there are many significant distinctions. First and foremost was spoken language. Whereas the Austrian state after World War I comprised a more or less homogenous linguistic (German) space, Czechoslovakia was made up of no fewer than four main language groups (in order of population: Czech, German, Slovak, Ukrainian). Consequently, Czechoslovak film culture was much more complex in terms of the types of films it made and the ways that audiences interacted with cinematic products. One of the most common defining characteristics of a national cinema is language. Although notable exceptions exist (e.g., Canadian national cinema, which includes French-language films made for the Quebecois population, or Indian cinema, which includes Hindi, Bengalese, and numerous other languages), most conceptions of national cinema are characterized by a single spoken language, particularly in the European context.

The area within the borders of the new Czechoslovak state was a contested space of hybrid identities and competing cultural agendas. Although there was a large degree of multilingual diglossia and the state was officially committed to pluralism between all of its citizens regardless of ethnicity, the cultural and communicational divides between these language groups and ethnic identities cannot be ignored. The so-called “Czech lands” of Bohemia and Moravia were a space of (occasionally amiable, yet often violent) ethnic and cultural mixing for centuries. There is a rapidly growing body of scholarship on the various ways that ethnic

identities were constructed and navigated in these territories during the 19th and 20th centuries.²⁰ Using the city of Budějovice/Budweis as a case study, Jeremy King convincingly argues that until the mid-19th century most citizens of Bohemia mastered a functioning level of Czech-German diglossia and were more likely to identify themselves according to regional affiliations than by national or ethnic categories. It was only as a result of the Czech National Awakening in the first part of the century and the subsequent rise of German *völkisch* ideology as a reaction that strict ethno-national divisions began to solidify as each of these two imagined communities set themselves in opposition to each other.

As the population became increasingly divided along ethnic lines in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bohemia and Moravia became a space of linguistic confrontation and territorial competition. Regions became increasingly linked to a particular “national” culture by virtue of the language spoken by their inhabitants. Those population groups that spoke primarily German and generally professed some sense of “German” identity in the early 20th century were clustered primarily within the mountainous border regions of Czechoslovakia, in the territories that nationalist rhetoric subsumed under the label of “Sudetenland,” but they also maintained a strong presence in urban centers such as Prague, Brno, Ostrava, and Jihlava. Despite a tremendous decline in status and numbers since the mid-19th century, the German-speaking community still comprised about 7% of Prague’s overall population in 1910 (see Cohen 10).²¹ Industrial growth in Prague in the late 19th century drew large numbers of Czech-speaking migrants to the city, while at the same time linguistic and political reforms resulting from the Czech National Movement were providing ever more fertile territory for the public and official

20 The most important studies for this dissertation are Cohen and King. See also: Spector, Judson, and Zahra.

21 For a detailed analysis of demographic trends in Prague after 1861, see also Cohen 86-139.

usage of the Czech language itself.²² These linguistic divisions of territory strongly informed how German cinema imagined Bohemia and Moravia. Furthermore, the analysis of language in the cinema from this region must take into account these links between speech and place, particularly the historical importance of language in marking territory as part of the imagined national or ethnic body.

Despite the multi-lingual makeup of the country, the overwhelming majority of films made in Czechoslovakia featured Czech as the primary language. With the exception of the German films made as part of a Czech-German MLV project, only four feature length films were made with German as the primary spoken language, all aimed primarily at export markets (*Ein Mädels von der Reeperbahn* [People in the Storm, 1930], *Port Arthur* [1936], *Hoheit tanzt Walzer* [Her Highness Dances a Waltz, 1935], *Liebe in ¾-Takt* [a.k.a. *Der letzte Wiener Fiaker*, The Hackney Driver's Song, 1937]). Likewise, only a handful of films were made in Slovak (*Janošik* [1936] and the semi-documentary *Mizející svět* [Disappearing World, 1932]). The modernist experimental film *Marijka nevěrnice* (Marijka the Unfaithful, 1934), set in a village in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, is the only example of a film to feature spoken Ukrainian and Yiddish (together with Czech and Slovak). This latter example is noteworthy as the only example of a truly multilingual Czechoslovakian film from this period, that is, a film in which numerous spoken languages coexist and intermingle. Despite the multiethnic and multilingual character of the Czechoslovak state, the films made for screening within the country overwhelmingly spoke Czech.

22 For details on the migration of Czech speakers to Prague, see Cohen 69-75. For a summary of the shifting linguistic territories at this time, see Spector 70-85. Another excellent source on the Czech National Movement and its cultural implications is Sayer.

By contrast, Germany produced a number of well-known experiments in multilingual cinema in the early 1930s such as the French-German films *Kameradschaft* (Comradeship, 1931) and *Hallo Hallo! Hier spricht Berlin* (a.k.a. *Allo? Berlin? Ici Paris!*, Here's Berlin, 1932) and the ambitious anti-war film *Niemandsländ* (Hell on Earth, 1931), which featured dialogue in German, French, English, and Russian. Also, snippets of English dialogue are a consistent feature of German films even during the Third Reich (for example, in *Viktor und Viktoria* [Viktor and Viktoria, 1933], *Baby* [1932]). Furthermore, even spoken Russian, Polish, and Serbo-Croatian feature prominently in a number of films from the Third Reich, notably in films directed against the nationalities using these foreign languages. Neither Germany nor Austria, however, made any attempts in the first decade of sound film to depict cinematic worlds in which any level of Czech-German diglossia exists. There are practically no films from the period before 1945 in which the German and Czech languages inhabit the same onscreen space. Nearly without exception, all examples of such bilingual space occur in Czechoslovakian productions (such as in *C. a k. polní maršálek*, which I discuss in Chapter 4). Apart from a few token words sprinkled into the dialogue of the German film *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942) to signpost the “foreign” setting, all manifestations of the Czech language is patently absent from German cinema. This points to the special relationship that existed between Czech and German cultures at the time and suggests further exploration into the ways that German cinema imagined Otherness in Bohemia, if not through language. In most cases, as I demonstrate, this Bohemian Otherness is completely ignored in the process of imagining this territory as thoroughly German in nature.

Bohemia and Moravia held a special status within the Reich and within National Socialist policy (perhaps as a result of the ongoing, relatively peaceful coexistence over the past few

centuries). Czechs on the whole were regarded as culturally, even ethnically “closer” to Germans, leaving the larger part of the population more ready for “Germanification.” Czechs were far less demonized than their Polish, Russian, and Serbian Slavic cousins. Likewise, they were far less vilified than the (more or less Germanic) British.

In his seminal work on Nazi film and propaganda, *Deutschland Erwache!*, Erwin Leiser divides films with overt xenophobic themes into sub-generic categories according to race and analyzes them in the context the Nazi leadership’s political agenda during its twelve-year reign. For example, he discusses the infamous *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süß*, 1940) as part of a wave of anti-Semitic Nazi films that preceded the full-blown stages of the Holocaust. His reading of the film describes how its aim was to mentally and emotionally inculcate the acceptance of the Nazi anti-Jewish program among the German population, effectively manufacturing consent for the Holocaust. Likewise, he discusses how anti-British and anti-Russian films served to fuel anger against the German enemies in the initial stages of the war and in the years running up to it. Additionally, films such as *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*, 1941) and *Feinde* (*Enemies*, 1940) are presented within the framework of anti-Polish films that offered justification for the German invasion of Poland and anticipated the eastward expansion of the war. Conspicuously absent from his list of anti-foreigner films, however, are works that attack Czechs or engage with the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland and/or the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia at all.

In fact, there are no major studies that analyze the Nazi “anti-Czech” films. The reasons for this are simple: propagandistically oriented films addressing the “Czechoslovakian issue” comprise a very small body of films and are not as nearly as overtly racist or vitriolic in nature as those sub-genres mentioned above. Leiser only briefly considers *Leinen aus Irland* (*Linen from Ireland*) in his chapter on anti-Semitic films, while the anti-Czech film *Die goldene Stadt* (*The*

Golden City) is not mentioned at all. In the former, the anti-Jewish thrust overshadows the Bohemian setting of the action and the subtle anti-Czech subtext. Similarly, academic examinations of *The Golden City* tend to focus on the urban/rural conflict and the sexual morality of the female protagonist. Although most studies rightly frame this film within the Nazi ideology of *Blut und Boden* and comment on the Heimat-laden themes, very little time has been spent considering the implications of imagining Bohemia as part of the German Heimat.

This dissertation argues that the imagining of Czech lands as “Germanic” is a different phenomenon than the process in which a “foreign space” is transformed into a German-speaking space, on account of both the German-speaking actors and the intended German-speaking audiences. For example in such films such as *Die Dreigroschenoper* (The 3 Penny Opera, 1931) or *Uncle Kruger* it should be clear to the viewer that the spoken (or written) German is not intended to be in harmony with the linguistic space as defined by the filmic narrative, i.e., English or Boer speaking; and this inconsistency between language and narrative space does not disturb the common film viewer. However, for German-language films set in Czech lands, the distinction between what is imagined as “German” and “foreign” is more complex, leading to variant modes of reception.

The small number of anti-Czech films alone is highly suggestive about German cinematic fantasies of Bohemia and Moravia. To a great extent, this territory could be easily imagined as German diegetic space, where spoken German is a feature of everyday public life. German-language films from this period consistently imagine the Bohemia and Moravian countryside as unproblematically “German” in nature. The only major exception is Prague: if any Czech elements turn up at all in German-language films, they tend to be concentrated in and around the Bohemian capital city. In these films, Prague appears as an uncanny space of hybrid identities—

the city is an uneasy bastion of German culture, where foreign elements constantly threaten to impinge and destroy. As we shall see, nearly identical tropes are employed to imagine this foreign threat as supernatural, Czech, or Jewish. The small group of “Bohemian films” that depict Bohemia and Moravia cast an adoring gaze on this territory, its inhabitants, and its cultural practices that invokes many tropes of the *Heimatfilm* genre, while often depicting Prague as an ambivalent site of potential danger.

This dissertation illustrates how German films set in Bohemia and Moravia, which I label “Bohemian films,” imagine these territories as local sites of Germanness linked to a broader sense of pan-Germanic Heimat. Johannes von Moltke has described how the idea of Heimat developed as a “spatial concept that would mediate between the regional and the national” (*No Place Like Home* 9). Building on the research of Celia Applegate, he argues that “Heimat functioned as a galvanizing notion that reconciled a local world with the larger, more impersonal, national sphere” (9). Most of these “Bohemian films” take place prior to World War I, that is during the time when this land was to some extent “German” in that it was ruled by Austria. These pictures evoke a mythical past characterized by ethnic and cultural wholeness that is easily integrated with the project of Nazi expansionism as justified by the ideology of *Blut und Boden*.

There are several factors that facilitated the perpetuation of the “Germanic” image of the Czech lands. First, there was a strong presence of “German” cultural reference points in the region, from Mozart and Weber, to Adalbert Stifter and German-nationalist authors such as Karl Hans Strobl. Second, there was a high level of cultural mixing and overlap between German and Czech populations. Until the mid-19th century significant differences in cultural practices in these lands were typically understood in terms of regional factors rather than ethnic or national.²³

23 For an in-depth analysis of Czech-German mixing in Bohemia, see King.

Third, the natural landscape did not vary greatly from other parts of Austria and Germany. It is for these last two reasons especially that “Bohemian films” could be so easily subsumed to the great Austrian genres. This stands in stark contrast to the *Ungarnfilme*, which, as Réka Gulyás describes, profited from their depictions of the exotic Hungarian *puszta* and intonations of the distinctly non-Germanic *czárdás* music. This disparity can be explained by the fact that Hungarian elements had a strong presence in Viennese operetta, whereas Bohemia and Moravia were comparatively underrepresented in the musical genre. In a certain sense, there is a longer tradition of invoking images of “exotic” Hungary that fed into the *Ungarnfilm* genre, whereas Bohemia was never as clearly differentiated from Austria proper in terms of clearly identifiable signifiers of regional or cultural specificity.

Sabine Hake’s exploration of the topos “Vienna” in Third Reich cinema period provides the starting point for my analyses of “Prague films” and “Bohemian films” (see *Popular Cinema* 149-171). Her analysis of various “Vienna films” from this period establishes a useful discourse with which to describe how German cinema appropriated and instrumentalized regional versions of “Germanness” in spaces existing beyond the original territory of the Reich (pre-1938), in this case in Austria. My discussion of German “Bohemian films” (i.e., films set in Bohemia) describes how these cinematic fantasies employ similar tropes to imagine a regional variant of “Germanness” in the Czech lands. At the same time, many films made by Czech directors working in Austria and Germany notably display traits that Hake specifically describes as contributing to the “Vienna effect.” In this way, Czech filmmakers were instrumental in fashioning the Vienna myth that would become the hallmark of Austrian cinema and its most

recognizable characteristic worldwide.²⁴ Given the contribution of Czechs as well as other ethnic groups to these mythical and mythologizing images of Vienna (and Austria more generally), I believe that this particular mode of cinematic expression is not an effect of regional specificity but rather it derives from a transnational and extraterritorial sense of culture unique to Central Europe.

Transnational Frameworks: *Mitteleuropa* and the Austrian legacy

The broadly defined concept of “Austria” plays a central role in my research, particularly as a framework for understanding the film culture of Central Europe. My aim is to illuminate the factors that mark a unified regional cinema culture that transcends the borders of individual national cinemas. On a practical level, the Austrian film industry served as a crucial link between German and Czech national cinemas. Vienna typically figured as an important transit point between Prague and Berlin or Munich in the international circulation of film products and filmmakers. More importantly, because of its affinities to both Germany and the Czech lands, the idea of “Austria” served as a common meeting ground for these two cultures. Although Austrians shared a language with their German cousins to the north, their cultural and historical tradition was much closer to the people living in Czechoslovakia, particularly those who also spoke German. As a result of the high degree of cultural overlap, Czech cinema of the interwar period shared many outward characteristics with Austrian cinema. Given that a similar situation existed between Austrian and Hungarian cinema, “Austria” proves quite useful as a unifying

24 Thomas Elsaesser has written extensively about the second lives of this Vienna myth in Hollywood and elsewhere in world cinema, see “Das Lied ist aus” “Ethnicity, authenticity, and exile,” and “To be or not to be: Extra-territorial in Vienna-Berlin-Hollywood,” *Weimar Cinema and After* 361-382.

concept through which we can begin to think about and define the transnational Central European film culture of this time. Whereas my suggestion of a unified regional idiom that transgresses national and ethnic boundaries is novel to film studies, this approach is nothing new to cultural historians who study this area. In many ways the Austro-Hungarian Empire gave birth to the very notion of Central Europe, or *Mitteleuropa* as it was called in the 19th century.

German filmic images of Czech lands are typically subsumed within a larger realm of signifiers belonging to “Old Austria.” Visually and thematically, films set in Bohemia do not differ in any significant way from the films of this period set in rural Austria. All of Bohemia and Moravia appear to be equivalent to any other (less mountainous) region of Austria and Hungary. These territories are almost never conceived as distinct spaces independent of the myth of a greater “Austrian” identity. These local sites of Heimat were thus imagined as subsections of the broader Austrian variant of Germanness. On the big screen, any traces of significant cultural distinction between Austria proper and the Czech lands was ignored and filmic depictions of these lands are more or less indistinguishable from those of imaginary “Austria” (or, in the case of *Die verkaufte Braut*, from “Bavaria”). In most German films set in the Bohemian countryside, there is never any indication of conflict, or even contact, between Germanic and Czech folk. Indeed, there is no evidence at all, no clearly identifiable signifiers of distinctly Czech (i.e., Slavic) culture in the countryside at all.²⁵

²⁵ With the German-Slavic conflict at the center of its narrative tragedy, *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942) is the major exception to this general rule. In this case, the conflict is between the (Germanic) rural lifestyle and the decadent (Czech) life in the city. The absence of scenes of inter-ethnic tension in Bohemia stands in stark contrast to the large body of Third Reich films depicting the struggles of Germans in Slavic territory, such as *Heimkehr* (*Homecoming*, 1941), *Feinde* (*Enemies*, 1940), *Friesennot* (*Frisians in Distress*, 1939), and *Flüchtlinge* (*Fugitives*, 1933). The implications of this unique manifestation of Czech/German opposition are explored in depth in chapter six.

Quite often Austrian cinema is quietly subsumed under the label of German national cinema, whereby the regional and cultural specificities of films made in Austria are either ignored or presumed to be part of some unified sense of pan-Germanic film culture. Only recently is film scholarship beginning to seriously consider Austrian cinema as a sovereign formation in its own right.²⁶ Although “Austrian national cinema” was shaped in part by Czech filmmakers, these ethnically “other” figures are unproblematically subsumed under the “Austria” label much as (German-speaking) Austrians have been traditionally lumped into German National Cinema. In their recent bilingual book on Czech and Austrian cinema, Gernot Heiss and Ivan Klimeš acknowledge and attempt to illuminate the intersections and interconnections between the Austrian and Czech film industries of the 1930s rather than obscure them. The present research builds upon these trends to illuminate the various strands of intersection between Austrian and Czech cinema. On the one hand, my work highlights the Czech influences on certain aspects of German and Austrian cinema, thereby focusing on the national and regional specificity of Bohemia and Moravia that comprise a unique cultural idiom that is distinct from Austrian and German traditions. On the other hand, and more importantly, the present study calls for a more integrated understanding of filmic practices between these three regions, whereby a concept of Central European cinema might provide more useful than thinking along strict (and often artificial and arbitrary) national lines. In this sense, the present work plays a sort of double game: drawing attention to the specifically Czech elements of Austrian cinema, while also arguing that both of these national strands (together with parts of German cinema and other cinemas from the region) comprise what can be identified as a Central European cinema culture.

²⁶ The most comprehensive overviews include von Dassanowsky and Büttner/Dewald. For a structural overview of the Austrian industry in the 1930s, see Loacker, *Anschluss im 3/4-Takt*.

In his account of emigration to Hollywood in the 1930s Peter Krämer is careful to emphasize that this wave of filmmakers includes Germans *and* Austrians, as well as other ethnic representatives from Central and Eastern Europe. His account thus draws attention to the multiethnic and extraterritorial character of the “German” emigration to American cinema in the 1930s that nevertheless comprises a unified (film) cultural phenomenon. This perspective suggests a certain commonality shared across the borders of the Central European nation states as they existed after World War I. Scholars such as Thomas Elsaesser have argued that this transnational mode is an intrinsic feature of Austrian cinema: “The typical voice of Austrian cinema was always already an extraterritorial one—this characteristic only intensified on the path from Budapest to Vienna, from Vienna to Berlin, and from Berlin to Hollywood” (“Das Lied ist aus” 89). My work here suggests that this conception of “Austrian” cinema can in fact be used to indicate a certain “Central European” film culture. Functioning in a similar mode as the extinct Austro-Hungarian empire, the film culture in this region is comprised of a variety of local “national” cinemas that function with some level of autonomy, yet also share a high degree of cultural currency that facilitates transnational exchange within the larger geographic unit, defined here as “Central Europe.” Understood this way, the Central European transnational framework suggests a compelling counterpoint to what is often seen as a nationally obsessed German film culture.

New Views: Popular Films and International Identities

My research builds on and converses with recent works on German cinema that reassesses popular genres and seeks new ways to conceptualize the nation, transnationality, ethnicity, and identity. This dissertation contributes to a growing body of scholarship that turns away from

thinking of Third Reich cinema exclusively in terms of Nazi propaganda. During the first few decades of post-World War Two film studies, the majority of the Nazi era's production was categorically ignored or summarily dismissed as "escapist entertainment." It is only within the last 15 years that serious and systematic study of these popular, mass-produced genre films has been undertaken, thus opening up intriguing new perspectives on Nazi period and its cinema culture. The most important works in this area are: Eric Rentschler's *Ministry of Illusion* (1996), Linda Schulte-Sasse's *Entertaining the Third Reich* (1996), Lutz Koepnick's *The Dark Mirror* (2002), Sabine Hake's *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* (2002), and Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien's *Nazi Cinema as Enchantment* (2006). These authors have demonstrated that close readings of popular films from the Third Reich can reveal a great deal about German society of that time and the functioning of Nazi ideology.

As these authors have demonstrated, "Nazi cinema" was built on the foundations of the cinema that preceded it and demands to be thought of as part of the larger tradition of German cinema, rather than a radical break from it that stands in isolation from all that proceeded or followed it. Although the film culture of this period is doubtlessly marked by major shifts in ideological focus and paradigms of production, distribution, and reception, "Nazi cinema" also displays a high degree of continuity with Weimar cinema. Likewise, much recent scholarship has explored how film production in the Third Reich was heavily influenced by Hollywood.

In the introduction to *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich*, Hake addresses existing scholarship on Nazi cinema, particularly with regard to the ideology vs. entertainment split and establishes the need for a study of Third Reich cinema based on "filmic practices" that take into account the (unresolved) tensions between mass culture vs. modernity, international trends vs. national concerns, and market-driven economy vs. political dictatorship. The last section of the

introduction provides an extensive analysis of the concept of national cinema and the (often conflicting) concept of the popular. She calls for a notion of popular cinema as a negotiated space of compromise, where fantasy is a productive force, rather than passive, consumerist escapism. Her investigative framework builds on recent scholarship on genre theory that examines the complex relationships between popular genres and national cinemas.

Eric Rentschler framed his pioneering study as a personal “tour of Nazi cinema” that takes in the popular entertainment with the propaganda.²⁷ The following tour of films from this period follows a similar agenda, however, my excursion spends most of its time in areas not traversed by Rentschler and others, who spend their time visiting many of the most well-known sites of Third Reich cinema. Although I do spend time taking in several of the famous sights (e.g., *Die verkaufte Braut* [The Bartered Bride, 1932], *The Golden City*, *Der Student von Prag* [The Student of Prague, 1913]), for the most part my journey along the Bohemian leg of Nazi cinema maps out unfamiliar territory. Of all films from the Nazi period discussed here, only *The Golden City*, *Die verkaufte Braut* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1932), and *Ekstase* (*Ecstasy*, 1933) have been previously analyzed at length and with any significant level of academic scrutiny. However, none of them has been examined with specific attention to the ethnic/racial overtones inherent in these German-language films about Bohemia. By approaching them from this ethnic perspective, the present dissertation reads these films in the political-cultural context of 1930s/1940s Bohemia in a way that enriches our present understanding of them. For the most part, though, my research sheds light on many important, yet so far ignored films, which represent various levels of Czech-German cinematic intersection. By highlighting the special relationships between German, Austrian, and Czech cinemas, my research in these areas offers new perspectives on the

²⁷ Rentschler, *Ministry of Illusion*, 16.

issues of national versus popular, and national vs. international. My work contributes to our understanding of Third Reich cinema by exposing the “split consciousness” that film culture had in dealing with Czech otherness and by illustrating the ways that German films reflected the process of territorial and cultural imperialism that was taking place in Bohemia and Moravia in the 1930s and 1940s, in terms of the film industry and military forces. Furthermore, by highlighting various modes of transnational exchange, my work offers new ways for conceptualizing Third Reich cinema that do not rely exclusively on models of nationalism and propaganda.

The following chapters offer detailed analyses of various discourses relevant to German-Czech cultural transfer and appropriation in Third Reich cinema. It employs a broad base of resources including newspapers, film journals, unpublished correspondence, as well as films and advertising materials. My research combines close readings of films with background information (biographies, production notes, distribution and reception history, etc.) relevant for their cinematic and cultural contextualization. I integrate individual film analyses into larger discourses on popular film, genre, authorship, and national cinema. By addressing various sites of intercultural confrontation, the project contributes to the understanding of Third Reich cinema’s national and transnational imagination. Each chapter examines the intersection of German and Czech cinema from a different thematic or historical perspective. Chapter One looks at the staging of female bodies and the ethnic masquerades of Czech actors in German films. Chapter Two deals with questions of authorship and transnationalism in films by Czech-German directors. Chapter Three explores the affinities between genre, geography, and concepts of *Heimat* in the context of German, Austrian, and “Bohemian” cinema. Chapter Four investigates the politics of place and identity in Czech-German multiple language version films (or MLVs) of

the 1930s. Chapter Five examines the special role of “Prague” in the German cinematic imagination. Chapter Six analyzes films produced in occupied Prague within the larger context of Third Reich cinema. The conclusion seeks to synthesize these arguments and draw attention to the primary implications for our understanding of Third Reich cinema, Czech-German relations, and the concept of German national cinema more broadly.

Chapter 1

Foreign Attractions: Czech Stars and Ethnic Masquerade

It is . . . indisputable that the women represented in films influence the beauty ideal of the common masses. For this reason, the casting of film roles cannot receive enough attention. It is not only a matter of this or that woman appearing attractive in this or that movie. No, the right woman chosen according to her external appearance as well as to inner qualities and attributes may, after repeated and successful use, positively influence the general tastes and beauty ideal of a great number of men.

-Dr. Fritz Hippler, *Reichsfilmdramaturg*, 1942²⁸

This chapter explores the careers and films of the biggest Czech stars at work in the German film industry during the Nazi period. I examine these Czech-German actors with specific attention to issues of national representation and ethnic performance and to the multivalent identities that these actors embodied. On the one hand, I am interested in the symbolic function performed by these actors on the German screen, in the semiotic aspects of performance. In what way do these Czech actors function as national or ethnic signifiers? What nationalities do they (or, indeed, can they) represent? What is their perceived national, ethnic, or racial significance? What role does ethnic masquerade play? On the other hand, I consider the position of these foreign bodies within the racially charged environment of Nazi cinema and consider the implications for our understanding of National Socialist society in general. How can we account for these non-German, indeed “non-Aryan,” performers within a cinema that is notorious for its xenophobic and racist tendencies? What positions did Czech performer occupy in the Nazi cinematic

28 Qtd. in Ascheid 30.

apparatus? The first angle of approach examines how the actors perform the role of a “foreign” or exotic Other within German cinema; or alternatively, to what extent do the actors perform “German” identity. This aspect of my discussion is informed by current work on ethnic drag, masquerade, and passing. From the second angle, I consider the function of their performance within larger symbolic systems, both internal to the imaginary filmic world and also external to it, in the social and political realm. Here, the focus is on narrative constructions, on-screen character types, and the role of these exotic, often erotically charged, bodies in Third Reich cinema.

Film scholar Antje Ascheid claims that “the typical Nazi picture was always a star vehicle” (33). What, though, are the implications when the star was not an accepted member of the German body, according to National Socialist doctrine, but rather a foreigner? How can we describe the fantasy terrain that these vehicles enter in terms of the national or racial categories? Ascheid comments that the abundance of foreign actresses in a culture so obsessed with German identity and racial purity sheds light on the frictions between Nazi ideology and the demands of star appeal (40). My examination also seeks out these frictions, yet my consideration of Czech performers addresses much thornier issues related to race and nation than Ascheid’s study of Swedish and British imports (Kristina Söderbaum, Zarah Leander, and Lilian Harvey). By virtue of their Slavic background, the actresses considered in this chapter were situated outside the “Aryan” category of racial identity as imagined by National Socialism. Furthermore, some of these actresses exhibited distinctly “exotic” features (Lída Baarová in particular) that had a profound impact on how they (and the characters they played) were perceived. The analysis of how these racially “other” female bodies were imagined as erotic objects of desire (for both male

protagonists and spectators) sheds important light onto Third Reich cinema's fantasies of foreign conquest.

Before turning attention to specific actresses and their films, the first part of this chapter briefly outlines the issues of masquerade, drag, and passing. These concepts provide an entry point for the examination of the racialized aspects of performance that follows. In this section, I explore the Nazi project to unmask Jewish ethnic masquerade and how this played out in the cinema. This example not only provides a compelling illustration of the issues at stake in ethnic performance during this period, but also provides a curious contrast to the process of enforced masquerade imposed upon Czech actresses working in Nazi Germany. A key concept in this discussion is that of "universal performability," or the ability to enact any character or racial type. In the German racist tradition, this acting quality is unique to the superior German or Aryan actors and categorically denied to Jews. My work employs these frameworks as the foundation for an examination of the possibilities for ethnic performance available to Czech actors in German cinema and the limitations these actors encountered.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the two biggest Czech stars working in Germany in the 1930s: Anny Ondra and Lída Baarová.²⁹ In terms of film scholarship, there has thus far been no extensive analysis of any of these actresses with regard to their performance or

29 Note: This chapter consciously ignores the film career of Czech opera singer Jarmila Novotná. Although she had top billing in many of her film appearances, Novotná is not a typical "film star," but rather a famous opera singer, who acted in a number of films, most of which can be conceived of as vehicles tailored specifically to highlight her voice and her persona as a world-renowned diva. The characters she embodied on the screen were invariably singer-performers, whose primary narrative function was to provide an object of desire for the male protagonists. Almost like a siren, her voice generally the catalyst for igniting male desire, thus her film appearances were objects not so much of male visual pleasure, but *aural* pleasure. These films were generally low-budget productions without high artistic value or wide appeal. A notable exception in her otherwise unremarkable film career is as Marie in Max Ophüls's adaptation of the Smetana opera *Die verkaufte Braut* (*The Bartered Bride* 1932), which is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

their place in German film culture. Although Lída Baarová often turns up in studies of Nazi cinema, she is most commonly mentioned only in the context of her affair with Goebbels or as a co-star of such infamous propaganda films as *Verräter* (Traitors, 1936) and *Patrioten* (Patriots, 1937). Nowhere are any specific aspects of her performance examined in depth and only minimal attention is given to the implications of her Slavic background. Likewise, in terms of scholarship on German film, Anny Ondra is generally only mentioned in passing as the star of a given film. Karsten Witte, for example, analyzes several of her film, yet his concern remains on the level of narrative and film style and does not consider aspects of her performance.³⁰ Like most other scholars, Witte never raises issues related to Ondra's Czech background. Indeed, for reasons I will address below, Ondra is typically accepted as a "German" performer, who happens to have grown up in Prague. In Anglo-American writing, Ondra generally only surfaces as "Hitchcock's first blond" in connection with her performances in *The Manxman* (1929) and *Blackmail* (1929). Yet, few scholars are aware of the actress's extensive star career in other national cinemas (German, Czech, Austrian, and French) stretching back to the beginning of the 1920s. Regardless of the dearth of academic scholarship on them, both Baarová and Ondra remain popular star icons in the Czech Republic and Germany.³¹ In the Czech Republic, Baarová's memoirs have been reprinted multiple times since their original publication in 1991 and numerous journalistic biographies have been written about her. A popular biography of Anny Ondra and Max Schmeling originally published in German by Dorothea Friedrich has been translated into Czech. At the time of writing, the stage drama "Goebbels/Baarová" is enjoying an

30 See, for example, his readings of *Fräulein Hoffmanns Erzählungen* (54-55) and *Flitterwochen* (112-14).

31 See, for example, the recent *Reflex* 48 (2009), which features Baarová and Goebbels on the cover and contains the article "Prokletá krása Lídy Baarové" (The Cursed Beauty of Lída Baarová) by Stanislav Motl.

extended run at the *Divadlo komedie* in Prague.³² In addition, both actresses are recurring subjects for the country's leading magazines, where color images of the actresses occasionally adorn the covers. The current study, however, marks a first step towards more focused and theoretically rigorous scholarship on these two actresses.

In the last part of the chapter, the focus turns to four Czech actresses who began “star careers” in German cinema during the Nazi occupation of Prague from 1939 to 1945: Adina Mandlová, Hana Vítová, Zita Kabátová, and Nataša Gollová. These performers are today almost completely forgotten outside of the Czech Republic (where they remain perennial favorites of the nation's “classic” film era). These names are gradually gaining some attention abroad, though, as a result of the increasing interest in the film culture of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, in German and Anglo-American scholarship. Nevertheless, the majority of the writing on them has been done in Czech and tailored to the interests of local audiences. Lukáš Kašpar has provided a historical study of Czech film and filmmakers during the Protectorate in terms of propaganda, collaboration, and resistance, while Stanislav Motl published a more journalistic take on the personalities of Protectorate cinema and their (often tragic) fates. At the same time, the memoirs and biographies of actors, actresses, and directors from this period continue to line the shelves of Czech bookstores. Being intended for an exclusively Czech readership, the primary attention of each of these works is on the actors' performance in Czech-language features and their position as celebrities within Czech society during the occupation. As a rule, these books are more interested in the sensations and scandals surrounding the individual figures than they are in film analysis. For the most part, the German-language productions featuring prominent Czech actresses and actors are mentioned only as a side note. This is not entirely

32 The drama by Oliver Reese and Dušan D. Pařízek based on Goebbels's and Baarová's own accounts premiered in September 2009.

unjustified, since the limited involvement in German film pales in comparison with their work in Czech cinema, both in terms of quantity and quality. The German films are typically alluded to as little more than pieces of the historical baggage that weighed heavily on the post-war fate of these actors. Any discussion of these German films (or of any films for that matter) is consistently limited to basic production facts and brief plot summary. Unfortunately, the majority of existing Czech scholarship discussing these actors (most prominent being Lukáš Kašpar's recent study) does not offer much more detailed analysis than the mainstream journalistic works, often focusing on the actors' private lives and relating only the most general information about their films and specific performances. Consequently, even Czech scholarship has hitherto failed to provide any detailed analysis of the types of roles these actresses embodied and the position of these performances within the larger context of Nazi cinema and German film culture. These are gaps that the following analysis hopes to fill.

Of the actresses considered here, only Anny Ondra stands out as a truly "huge" star with a career in German cinema spanning several decades. Lída Baarová's career in the Reich was cut short just as it was beginning to take off when she was banned from German films in the fallout from her scandalous affair with Goebbels. Similarly, although the Reich film authorities were grooming a whole new generation of Czech "stars" from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in the 1940s, the capitulation of the Nazi regime brought an end to their careers before they could really even begin. However, despite their relative smallness of scale, the careers of these actresses can shed considerable light on the racial politics of Third Reich cinema, both on and beyond the screen. In this respect, my investigation treads a similar path to that of Hye Seung Chung in her groundbreaking study of cross-ethnic performance in the context of Korean-

American actor Philip Ahn. Like the actresses considered here, Ahn is also a relatively minor figure in the grand history of cinema, however, as Chung points out:

The value of Ahn's career [is] not measured by the size of his roles, the length of his screen time, or the extent of his stardom, but rather by its functionality as an indicator of what types of roles were allowed and disallowed for Asian American actors at given historical periods and how depictions of Asia in American film and television were transformed over the course of four decades. (xii)

In a similar spirit, the current study traces the types of characters that these Czech actresses were able to and permitted to perform and considers what the ramifications are for theorizing the racial landscapes and national fantasies of Third Reich cinema.

Female Attractions and Male Exclusions

My examination is restricted exclusively to women actors, and in this it is not unique. The female star has provided a key figure for academic analyses of acting and stardom in German films from the period. Writing of three major female film figures (Kristina Söderbaum, Lilian Harvey, and Zarah Leander), Ascheid declares, "Nazi cinema is the cinema of the female star actress" (4). Her assessment is in accordance with Friedemann Beyer's observation that male screen stars of Nazi cinema were not particularly strong or masculine. "In the films of the epoch," he claims, "women were much more important . . . They are the more interesting, more complex personalities next to whom the men often seem like mere shadows" (*Die Ufa-Stars* 38). In fact, Beyer's first book on Ufa film stars in the Third Reich announces already in its subtitle, "Women for Germany," that the only stars it is concerned with are the female ones—and indeed his overview all but completely ignores male actors. In addition to these studies, Jo Fox has also

published a major work describing the common types of female figures in German National Socialist cinema and Cinzia Romani has provided a collection of profiles for the Reich's leading female stars. Indeed, as my epigraph from *Reichsfilm dramaturg* Hippler demonstrates, the Nazi authorities themselves consciously focused on the key role of the female film performer for their strategies of social engineering and propaganda. Clearly the importance of women stars in Nazi cinema is not unique to the Czech-German context. Yet, what is the reason for the special position of female actors?

The primary reason for my own gender-specific focus is that Czech female actors played a significantly more prominent role in Third Reich cinema than their male counterparts. There are only very few examples of Czech male actors whose careers took them to the German or Austrian industry, and they tended to play just minor parts. The only cases in which a male Czech actor played the lead role in a German film were in Vlasta Burian's performances in the German versions of Czech (co-)produced MLVs.³³ Yet, Burian never appeared in a strictly German-language production, that is to say, in a film that did not also have a Czech-language counterpart. I also disregard Czech-German actor Rolf Wanka, who performed in both MLVs and strictly German-language films (often in the lead male role.) Although Wanka could speak Czech perfectly, he was born in Vienna and raised as a "German" in Bohemia from a young age. The record suggests that he preferred to identify himself as German/Austrian rather than Czech and there was nothing distinct about him apart from his language skills that would mark him as "foreign." By contrast, all of the actresses discussed here (like Burian) saw themselves as Czech (at least originally) and were generally seen as "non-German" by filmmakers and the public. The

33 *Der falsche Feldmarschall* (*The Royal and Imperial Field Marshal*, 1930), *Er und seine Schwester* (*He and His Sister*, 1931), *Unter Geschäftsaufsicht* a.k.a. *Wehe, wenn er losgelassen* (*Business Oversight* a.k.a. *Woe, He's on the Loose*, 1931), *Adjutant seiner Hoheit* (*His Highness' Adjutant*, 1934), and *Held einer Nacht* (*Hero for a Night*, 1935).

question remains: what exactly did German filmmakers and audiences see in these actresses that they did not in the men? Commenting on the general lackluster quality of Third Reich cinema's male characters compared to female, Rentschler states, "It was not so much the positive points of orientation [e.g., the male heroes] that energized Nazi films, but rather the non-German—that is to say, alien and outlandish—attractions" (*Ministry of Illusion* 159). It goes without saying that German cinema of this period was profoundly conservative in the way it imagined women (see Ascheid, Fox, et al.). The foreign status of the female bodies under consideration here, however, creates a mode of spectatorship that goes beyond mere sexual objectification and ideological subjugation to touch on issues of racial domination and national expansionism.

I suggest that the historical bias towards female actors in the Czech case has its roots in the gendered imperialistic fantasies of Nazism, whereby the foreign female body was analogous to conquered land. The German screen male's ability to romantically conquer the foreign female, or to borrow Rentschler's terms to subdue the "non-German . . . alien . . . attraction" (*Ministry of Illusion* 159) is not only a testament to his virility but also allegoric of the whole German *Volk's* superiority to other nations. In the vast majority of the examples cited below, Czech actresses appear as eroticized objects of desire that must be subdued and won over by the male protagonist, who is narratively defined as German. By contrast, the male foreign body is perceived as a challenge to German masculinity that must be eliminated or neutralized. It is for this reason, I propose, that no obviously "Czech" actors could ever perform the romantic lead opposite a German actress. Although such a liaison does not fall into the legal category of *Rassenschande* (racial defilement), which was reserved for relationships between Germans and Jews, it would have been unacceptable to the German cinematic imagination for a Slavic "Untermensch" to win over a German woman. In this context, it should be noted that Vlasta

Burian's comedies generally ended with him winning the respect of his peers, but not the love of a woman—the romantic storyline in these films was constrained to figures of the younger generation, while Burian tended to play characters like a quirky uncle or older brother. Furthermore, his stereotypical performance as a bumbling fool neutralized any perception of threat, sexual or otherwise. In short, there was no place for the male Czech body in Third Reich cinema, except as a source of humor, whereas the female Czech body played a crucial part in enacting fantasies of German virility.

Divided Identities and the Modalities of Masquerade

Explicit displays of desire for Czech actresses and the very fact that non-Aryan women appeared in Third Reich films at all point to a disconnect between official Nazi doctrine and cinema practice. As both Ascheid and Fox have demonstrated the array of roles played by (female) stars in Third Reich cinema is highly multifarious and a significant number of on-screen images of woman directly contradicted those ideals fostered by the party line. Ascheid argues that these filmic images can be read to reveal deeper insight into the Nazi system as a whole. “Owing to the particular dichotomies surrounding National Socialist stardom, the stars of fascism must be seen as containing the cultural incongruities of the period, or better, as the embodiments of particular societal conflicts and contradictions” (Ascheid 35). Whereas Ascheid endeavors to “reveal the underlying *instability* of National Socialism's homogeneous conception of femininity” (8), my analysis of Czech stars attempts to explore the latent ambiguities in Nazi Germany's conception of “Czechness” in relation to “Germanness.” By extension, my work exposes underlying instabilities in Third Reich's conceptions of identity, race, and nation more generally. In other

words, the current examination of Czech-German cross-cultural performance is intended as a specific case study symptomatic of larger phenomena at work in the films of the Nazi period.

In her discussion of the instability of identity in Nazi Germany, Ascheid describes the “split consciousness” of the public sphere and the “technique of doubling” that allowed Germans to “lead a ‘double life’” (17-19). She frames the dominant reality of Nazism as one of “fragmentation” and emphasizes “the Nazi state’s ideological dysfunctionality, its uncertainty and inconsistency,” as well as its “uneasy binarism . . . schizophrenic operations . . . [and] irreconcilable antagonisms” (19, 21, 41). Likewise, Rentschler, borrowing from Hans Dieter Schäfer and Detlev Peukert, talks of the “double life” led by many Germans, who toed the official line in public, while pursuing non-political pleasures in private, and describes Nazi Germany as a “site of a collective schizophrenia, a function of the gap between an official representative culture and an everyday popular culture that offered a variety of unpolitical, even illicit, diversions” (*Ministry of Illusion* 107). A large degree of diversity in cultural expression persisted in German cinema despite the ideological tenets of the Nazi rulers, because “audiences persistently continued to express their predilection for residual forms that did not conform to Nazi doctrine” (Ascheid 5). To a large degree the unruly even subversive performance style of Anny Ondra can be understood as a carry over from Weimar cinema that operated far removed from Nazi ideals of female behavior that persisted precisely on the basis of her currency as a star. Furthermore, the film industry’s instrumentalization of Czech stars in the 1940s was wrought with contradictions, whereby the superficial attempt to mask their identity by Germanizing their Slavic names co-existed with highlighting their foreign and exotic qualities.

In the following, I examine various modes of masquerade, including drag and passing, as they relate to the insecurity of identity inherent in Third Reich cinema. My discussion centers

around three primary factors that are involved in the construction and recognition of foreignness: (1) outward appearance and behavior (which involves the enacting of ethnically-specific traits in the form of drag or passing), (2) speech (i.e., the presence or lack of a foreign accent), (3) the actor's name (i.e., German versus Czech or international name). All of these factors played a role in the cases of masquerade considered here. Of course, learning to imitate behavior and speech patterns is the foundation of the acting profession itself. What is of interest here is what specific patterns come to be associated with race or ethnicity, either as something to be performed (to enact) or to be avoided (to mask). Makeup and costuming can also play a primary role in modifying the actor's appearance and thereby signifying performed race or ethnicity. Apart from skin color and other racially specific physical traits, spoken language is perhaps the most recognizable outward signifier of cultural difference and can be the most difficult aspect of mimicry for a performer to master. The easiest quality to mask, of course, is the name. The changing of a name is a sort of cognitive masking; it simply diverts the categorization of knowledge according to which judgments are made of the object under consideration. Enacting alterations in appearance in behavior is a matter of visual masquerade, whereas changing speech patterns involves a shift in audio cues.

Due to the lack of commonly reliable visual indicators of difference in the Czech-German context, sound—in the form of the spoken word—plays a far more crucial role than sight in the signification of racial and national identity in cinema. Prior to the introduction of sound film, most Czechs (and other “white” foreigners) could pass as Germans with relative ease. With sound, however, the accented speech of the foreign actor was easily recognizable. This had two significant consequences. Firstly, work in German-language cinema became more restricted, being generally available only to those whose German language skills were developed enough.

Secondly, even with actors who could speak German, their lingering Czech accent often rendered it implausible for them to easily “pass” as German characters. In the cases of such less linguistically talented actors, we generally find attempts to somehow incorporate obviously foreign accents into the filmic narrative.

A key thread running through my consideration of nationality and acting is the distinction between the conception of “ethnicity” as inherently biological as opposed to something that is culturally constructed, in other words, the difference between essence and performance. Due to the penchant for racial essentialism at the core of the state ideology, the cinema of Nazi Germany offers rich ground for exploring the relationship between these two elements. Nazi ideology imagined a natural harmony between the corporeal inner and outer, between being and appearance, essence and performance. Hippler alludes to this idea when he comments on the correlation between “external appearance” and the “inner qualities and attributes” of the female actor.

The binary relationship between outward performance and inner essence also plays a central role in feminist and gender theory in its exploration of the distinction between biological, sexual categories (male/female) and culturally defined gender performance (masculine/feminine). The following analysis thus enters into conversation with the frameworks elaborated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, particularly her analysis of gender as socially constructed mode of performance similar to masquerade.³⁴ Whereas Hippler accentuates the harmony between the (female) actor’s interior and exterior, Butler’s gender theory highlights the tension and disconnect between the two. The present work also seeks out such moments of disharmony between interior and exterior, between essence and performance. Yet, my concern

³⁴ See, for example, Butler 9-22.

here is not to unmask the constructed categories that constitute performances of German or Czech identity, nor to outline what such performative gestures are (as was the ostensible project of Nazi racial science). I am interested rather in exploring the various connections between performance and national/racial identity with regard to Czech actors in German (and Nazi) cinema. In what ways do these actors construct various foreign or “German” identities on screen? How is “foreignness” perceived and under what circumstances? In exploring these questions, my analysis borrows analytical frameworks and terminology from Katrin Sieg’s theories of ethnic drag and from the work that Amy Robinson has done on the phenomenon of passing. Both Sieg and Robinson extend the gender/performance theories developed by Butler and others to the realm of ethnicity and race. In other words, they examine various ways that ethnicity and race are a socially constructed mode of performance and the function of these masquerades within the society.

Much of the current scholarship on masquerade in the service of drag or passing analyzes it as a voluntary (if unconscious) act, either as an attempt by women to conceal phallic desire (Butler) or an attempt at political subversion (Sieg, Robinson, etc.). For Sieg, “masquerade . . . forms part of two different discourses whose ideological aims are at odds” (12). On the one hand is the Brechtian concept of *drag*, which aims to subvert, resist and transform the existing social order. On the other is the idea of *mimesis*, which serves to affirm and naturalize social hierarchies. Passing—a strategy of masquerade whereby a member of the non-dominant group adopts the mannerisms and appearance of the dominant group in order to “fit in”—operates within similar modalities of drag and mimesis. The act of passing also functions on two antithetical levels: the pass as a social strategy rests on the stability of the terms of difference (as defined by the dominant culture), whereas passing as a theatrical trope demonstrates precisely

the instability of these terms (see Sieg 18). According to Robinson, a successful pass constructs a “triangular theater of identity,” whereby the performance of the passer is simultaneously recognized as mimetic (by the duped observer) and drag (by the in-group witness) (724).

In Sieg’s framework, the *mimetic* mode of performance intends that the actor’s body be taken for the character portrayed. This stands in opposition to *drag*, in which the viewer is meant to recognize the performance as masquerade, to be “in on” the ruse. In terms of ethnic performance, mimesis demands the highest possible level of “biological correctness,” such that the performer’s body corresponds as close as possible to that of the imagined character.³⁵ In contrast, drag makes no attempt to hide the disconnect between actor’s body and stage character. Drag presupposes the audience’s awareness of the non-mimetic nature of the performance, that the act is in fact a masquerade. Indeed, the viewer’s knowledge of and complicity with the actor’s masquerade is a primary attraction in this type of performance.

A belief in the harmony between outward appearance and inner being lies at the very heart of Nazi racial theory, and the preoccupation with these issues can be traced in the century-long tradition of physiognomic thought in Germany.³⁶ Physiognomics, the “science” that attempted to identify character traits from facial features, came to its most pernicious fruition in National Socialism’s insistence on the connection between physical appearance and racial or spiritual health. On the basis of this racial ideology, Nazi scientists endeavored to read degeneracy on the faces of those it deemed inferior: criminals, the mentally ill, Jews, Roma, and hosts of other foreign ethnicities. At the same time, typically “Aryan” qualities were seen as indicators of the racial and spiritual superiority of the German *Volk*. Countless book and films

35 For more on the complex issues surrounding “biologically correct” casting, see Sieg 1-70.

36 For an extensive overview of the tradition of physiognomics in Germany and its relationship to National Socialist racial ideology, see Gray.

were produced as warnings of the Jewish propensity for masquerade, the attempt to hide their racial inferiority under a guise of “German” acceptability—in other words, there was an ongoing project to describe and denounce what was seen as the deceptive Jewish performance of Germanness. Thus, a primary trope of the Third Reich’s anti-Semitic films was the unmasking of the drag performance of the Jew, who attempts to pass as German. These films were in no way complicit with the type of masquerade and sought to provide the audience with knowledge for detecting acts of “biological *incorrectness*.”

From the point of view of Nazi racial thought, the disconnect between inside and outside enacted by Jewish masquerade is imagined as the opposition between the “authentic,” inner essence of ethnicity as defined by biology and the superficial, external signification of national/racial identity as created by behavior and performance. Indeed, as Amy Robinson comments, “seen through the lens of drag, the pass violates the fundamental tenets of mimesis by insisting on the untruth of the relation between inside and outside” (728). To borrow a phrase from Butler and recast it in terms of ethnicity rather than gender: Ethnic performance destabilizes the very distinctions between natural and artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer in which discourse about ethnicity almost always operates (see Butler *xxvii*). Yet, whereas Nazi doctrine condemned Jewish masquerade as inauthentic, disingenuous, and even dangerous to the national-racial body, as I demonstrate below Third Reich cinema consistently negotiated the grey area between inner being and outward performance and in some cases actively worked contrary to the official project of unmasking by enacting its own instances of racial masquerade. My exploration of Czech-German cross-ethnic performance thus seeks to illuminate instabilities in the structure of Third Reich cinema, thereby refining our understanding of its various ideological meanings.

However important it might be for conceptualizing trans-ethnic performance in certain contexts (e.g., African Americans in the USA), Robinson's paradigm of the "triangular theater of identity" is not directly applicable to the Czech performances under consideration here. The main reason for this is that the screen appearances of these Czech actors in Third Reich cinema were intended primarily for German audiences within the broader German social context. If these German performances were in fact witnessed by Czech spectators, this generally occurred within an altogether different social context, namely in Czechoslovakia. In this constellation, the dupe and the in-group witness do not view the performing subject simultaneously, but are separated both temporally and in terms of geographic and cultural space. Although Robinson's basic framework proves quite useful for conceptualizing the racial masquerades I describe below, my analysis demands a slight augmentation to her terminology. In many ways, we can understand the Third Reich filmmakers and Nazi authorities as supplanting the role of "in-group witness." Like the witness, they too recognize the cross-ethnic performances of Czech actresses as a form of drag, indeed it is they who are in fact conceiving and staging the entire masquerade. It is perhaps more useful to describe their position in the theater of identity as that of active "pass enablers" as opposed to passive witnesses.

Cross-Racial Performance and the Nazi Project of Unmasking

Robinson's paradigm is useful for conceptualizing Nazi exercises in detecting the Jew who attempts to pass as German. Within her "triangular theater of identity," the labeling of a performance as mimesis or drag is a direct factor of the spectator's own perception: the dupe sees mimesis, whereas the "witness" perceives drag. In this sense, the distinction between mimesis and drag is not inherent to the performance itself, but rather in conflicting perceptions of it.

When observing the pass, the dupe presumes mimesis and reads identity in the place of performance. Although the dupe is deceived by vision, Robinson maintains that “the eyes are the privileged vehicle of secret knowledge” that enable the “in-group clairvoyant” to recognize the pass as drag (719-20, 726). It is simply a matter of “seeing correctly” (my term), of adopting an informed viewing perspective to properly read the act. The unreliability of sight to properly recognize and read outward appearances posed a fundamental problem to Nazi racial ideology and its reliance on physiognomy. This fostered a culture infatuated with the detection of masquerade and the unmasking of dangerous impostors. In this environment, Nazi anti-Semitic films sought to educate and foster “informed and astute witnesses,” who were capable of recognizing an attempted pass as drag, even though they did not belong to the “in-group.”

It must be emphasized here that Robinson’s analysis relies primarily on the black/white racial dichotomy, in which skin color is the prime signifier. However, in the distinction between German/Slav and Aryan/Jew the “epidermal schema” (a term Robinson borrows from Frantz Fanon) is more or less absent. Here the essential indicators of racial difference lie primarily below the surface, in the blood and the soul, undetectable to the normal observing gaze. This further confounds the reliability of sight in detecting ethnic identity.

In Third Reich feature films, pass detection was infamously rehearsed in the unmasking of a diabolical, “assimilated” Jews intent on destroying German society in *Leinen aus Irland* (*Linen from Ireland*, 1939), and *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süß*, 1940). Sieg situates the latter film in the tradition of the Jew Farce (*Judenposse*) as a “lesson in detection,” because of the manner by which it instructs the viewer on the deceptive methods of the Jew who “passes” as a gentile (Sieg 41). Fritz Hippler’s notorious anti-Semitic propaganda film *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*, 1940) also operates firmly in the tradition of the Jew Farce in its physiognomics-informed

rehearsal of racial unmasking. The opening credits of this self-proclaimed “documentary” promise that the film will show Jews “as they really are, before they conceal themselves behind the mask of the civilized European” (Hornshoj-Moller and Culbert 56). A later sequence graphically illustrates the “Jewish masquerade” by presenting contrasting images of so-called Eastern Jews, first “naturally,” with stereotypically ethnic clothing and facial hair, then “masked” with cleanly shaved faces and Western business suits. The voice-over here provides the following interpretation:

Jews change their outward appearance when they leave their Polish haunts for the wider world. Hair, beard, skull cap, and caftan make the Eastern Jew recognizable to all. If he appears without his trademarks, only the sharp-eyed can recognize his racial origins. It is an intrinsic trait of the Jew that he always tries to hide his origin when he is among non-Jews. . . . Outwardly they try to imitate their hosts. People lacking in intuition let themselves be deceived by this mimicry and think of Jews as just the same as they are. Therein lies the dreadful danger. These assimilated Jews remain forever foreign bodies in the organism of their hosts, no matter how they seem to appear outwardly. (Hornshoj-Moller and Culbert 60-61)³⁷

The film thus warns against the deceptive potential of outward appearances and behaviors. The underlying premise is that the inner essence of a person remains unchanged despite any number

³⁷ A similar passage also appears in the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* program for *The Eternal Jew*: “The Jew has always known how to assimilate his external appearance to that of his host. Contrasted are the same Jewish types, first the Eastern Jew with his kaftan, beard, and sideburns, and then the clean-shaven, Western European Jew. This strikingly demonstrates how he has deceived the Aryan people. Under this mask he increased his influence more and more in Aryan nations and climbed to higher-ranking positions. But he could not change his inner being.” Qtd in Hornshoj-Moller and Culbert 47.

of surface alterations. Just because a Jew (or any foreigner) might be able to *appear* and *act* German or Aryan, they can never *be* German or Aryan. At the same time, the film also denies that this racial masquerade can be perfect in its deception and attempts to create “informed and astute witnesses” (to borrow Robinson’s terminology) that will not be duped by the biologically incorrect drag performance. Although the ruse may pass unnoticed by casual observer (or “dupe”), those who investigate with a suitably “sharp eye” are always able to see through the masquerade. Likewise, *Jew Süß* aimed to penetrate “surface appearances and promised to show the Jew’s ‘real face’” (Rentschler, *Ministry* 155). Nevertheless, the unreliability of sight in detecting Jewish was a persistent source of concern.

As Robinson describes, the successful pass is founded in the simulacrum of identity performance, a schema of racial difference based on what Sieg describes as the “impossibility of knowing ‘race’ by sight” (Sieg 18). Despite sight’s status as a primary tool of detection, Robinson declares that the rudimentary lesson of passing is that “the visible is never easily or simply a guarantor of truth” (719). In this context, *Linen from Ireland* and *Jew Süß* are notable for their reliance on aural clues in race detection. In both films, the aural aspect of the masquerade plays just as crucial a role as the visual and both demonstrate how the masquerading Jew not only adopts the outward appearance of the Western Aryan, but also his speech patterns. They make a clear contrast between the High German speech of the “impostors” (Kühn and Süß) and what is coded as the Yiddish dialect of non-assimilated Jews (with whom the “imposter” maintains close contact). This trope of Jewish speech is part of a long dramatic tradition. Sieg points out that High German speech is a prominent signifier of Nathan the Wise’s status as assimilated Jew in Lessing’s famous drama. She further demonstrated that a primary trope of the ethnic drag specific to the 19th century Jew Farces was the Jewish impostor’s

inability to wholly master proper German speech, eventually regressing back to the Yiddish dialect of his or her true being. The tradition of the Jew Farce, she argues, is founded on “aural cues to identitarian truth” (Sieg 50). Working securely in the Farce stage tradition, the speech of Jewish characters in Third Reich cinema is often highly affected and accentuated as part of the drag performance (i.e., a Jew masquerading as a gentile); in all of these cases, the act of masquerade draws attention to its own artificial nature.

Sieg’s analysis of the 19th century tradition of the Jew Farce illustrates the widely held belief that Jews are incapable of realizing the true depth of German character and therefore cannot act German characters. Jews lack not only the “biological correctness,” but also the appropriate psychological and spiritual make-up required to pass as German. This attitude has its roots in a long held belief in the uniqueness of the German character as something incomprehensible and inimitable by non-Germans. Historically, this prejudice has been used to rebut the attempts of Jews to adapt and assimilate to German culture. The main character of the Jew Farce is typically an assimilated Jew, who at first appears to have mastered the German language and behavior, yet is ultimately unmasked and mocked in the play’s end. Through its bitter comedy, the Jew Farce demonstrates the belief that Jews are fundamentally incapable of escaping their heritage and will never be able to fully assimilate into German culture. Their attempts to “act” German will remain forever an inferior drag performance. Although they might successfully pass as German for a while, the observant (non-Jewish) outsider, in this case the theater audience, will always succeed in seeing through the masquerade. Conversely, the conceit of what Sieg terms “universal performability,” that is, the ability to convincingly enact a mimetic performance of any character or racial type, remains a privilege of the German actor’s body.

In the film culture of Nazi Germany, the denial of performability for Jews rehearsed for decades in the Jew Farce became an instrument of political persecution that directly intervened in film practice. With almost no alteration this insistence on the uniqueness and inimitability of the German character find its echo in the official anti-Semitic discourse on film acting during the Nazi period. Written within months of the Nazi seizure of power, the *Film-Kurier* review of the Schubert bio-pic *Leise flehen meine Lieder* (*Lover Divine* a.k.a. *Unfinished Symphony*, 1933) proclaimed:

The Viennese actor Hans Jaray is not a personality. This shoddy melancholic (*Filzschuhmelancholiker*) shares no trace of Schubert's melancholy . . . He does not offer an image of Schubert behind which we can sense the Aryan-German blood of the composer. Jaray would be fitting as Jaköble from *Die fünf Frankfurter*, but Schubert is no offspring of Rothschild.³⁸

At the heart of this tirade lies the accusation of biologically incorrect casting: the Jewish Jaray is categorically denied universal performability—the (German) actor's ability to transcend his or her gender and racial coordinates. In the first years of the Hitler Regime, German society under Nazism experienced an onslaught of such anti-Semitic propaganda aimed to unmask and discredit Jewish performers and filmmakers as part of the campaign to de-Jewify the industry. In many cases, this unmasking involved revealing the actor's "true" Jewish name that lay hidden behind the stage pseudonym (see Wulf 255-283). Within a matter of years, Jews were categorically prohibited from appearing in German films. They were not even allowed to

38 r. "Leise flehen meine Lieder," *Film-Kurier* 15.212 (9 Sept. 1933): 2. Note: "Die fünf Frankfurter" [The Five Frankfurters] was a 1912 stage comedy depicting the Rothschild family by Vienna-born Carl Rössler (a.k.a. Franz Reißner). It was adapted for the cinema in 1922 under the direction of Erich Schönfelder, with Boris Michailow in the role of Jacob Rothschild [Jaköble].

perform “biologically correct” roles as Jews—these characters (such as in *Linen from Ireland* and *Jew Süß*) were reserved exclusively for German actors, who possessed the universal performability necessary to embody such diabolic figures. Of course, the acts of racial drag inherent in these performances raise interesting questions in the current context. However, I am not interested here in the ways that German actors performed racial masquerade, but rather in instances in which foreign actors performed German characters, or in which they acted out other forms of ethnic drag. Indeed as I demonstrate below, despite its self-declared mission to unmask Germany’s enemy impostors, the Nazi apparatus, as a “pass enabler” was actively engaged and deeply committed to the construction of racial “impostors” in the form of film actors and their on-screen performances.

As in other sectors of the Nazi workforce, there was a rationally regulated division of labor within the film industry, which also extended to the function of actors and stars. Fox describes how Nazi film authorities, under the supervision of Goebbels himself sought to systematically categorize all actors based on their typology (Fox 12-16). She comments that, whereas males were appraised based on their character, females were judged rather for their physical attributes, that is to say their outward appearance. These generic appraisals could be general such as “fashionable, sporty . . . naïve, dancer, serious” or “cheerful” or specific to certain character types such as “southern type, “farming girl” or “a mother and woman of the people” (Fox 15).³⁹ This framework of typologic profiling also included categories defined by racial stereotypes. According to Fox, German actress Anna Dammann was classified as appropriate for “Slavic” roles (see fig. 1). Given Dammann’s own Teutonic background, the

³⁹ See also Ascheid's discussion of Oskar Kalbus's 1935 film history, in which he describes female film types such as “the womanly type,” “the worldly lady,” “the sweet maiden,” and “the vamp.” (Ascheid 31)

assumption that lies at the root of this classification is that German stars are capable of mimicking the traits of non-German characters, in other words, that they are able to “pass” as foreign. Dammann did indeed appear in the role the Polish girl, Madlyn Sapierska, in *Die Reise nach Tilsit* (The Journey to Tilsit, 1939). This case provides evidence for Third Reich cinema’s institutional and systemic rationalization of performance based on physical typology. More importantly, we see that ethnic masquerade had an important practical function within this framework, whereby certain actors were earmarked to perform against their imagined “inner racial makeup.” In other words, despite the official awareness of the split between outer appearance and inner essence, the harmony of these two character traits (i.e., “biologically correct” casting) was not a fundamental precondition when it came to “German” actors.

Such a system of rationalized typification hints at the desire for a perfectly diversified body of stars capable of expressing the entire range of physical, emotional, intellectual, and



Figure 1. The “Slavic” type: Anna Dammann as Madlyn Sapierska in *Die Reise nach Tilsit* [Source: filmportal.de]

national qualities required by the Nazi film machine. Ideally, in terms of official Nazi doctrine, the body of German actors could be employed for nearly every role required. This resulted in many cases of “foreign drag” performances, whereby German actors filled the roles of ethnic others. For example, Paul Wegener’s Eastern facial features led him often to roles as Slavs or Asians, such as the Russian general Czernischeff in *Der grosse König* (The Great King, 1942).⁴⁰ Likewise, Willi Birgel and Ferdinand Marian were apt to perform “swarthy” types: Birgel performed the Mexican Alfredo Zubaran in *Barcarole* (1935), while Marian embodied Puerto Rican Don Pedro in *La Habanera* (1937) and infamously the dastardly Jew Oppenheimer in *Jew Süss*. The performance of Jews is, of course, a special case of ethnic drag within Nazi cinema that cannot be discussed at length here. However, it should be noted that in addition to the infamous Jewish drag performances of Marian and Werner Krauss in *Jew Süss*, ethnically “German” actors also embodied Jewish figures in *Linen from Ireland*, *Robert und Bertram* (1939), and *Die Rothschilds. Aktien auf Waterloo* (The Rothschilds, 1940). Furthermore, the German and Swedish performances of Czech characters in *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942) represent instances of ethnic drag that are particularly poignant in the context of the present dissertation.

All of the above examples hint at the imagined ideal of the German body’s universal performability that renders it capable of mimicking the widest range of human behaviors and emotions, even those of “foreign” races. In Sieg’s words, this conceit of universal performability believed in “the white body’s ability to transcend its gendered and racial coordinates” (32). Conversely, according to traditional German racial thinking, foreigners, Jews in particular,

40 Less successful examples of such foreign casting also exist, such as in the film *Port Arthur* (1936), where Karin Hardt is rather unconvincingly cast in the role of a young Japanese and Rene Deltgen is equally implausible as her Japanese brother.

lacked the necessary emotional and intellectual depth to effectively portray German characters.⁴¹ Throughout the German tradition of stage performance, the potential for proper mimesis was consistently and categorically denied when it came to Jewish actors (see Sieg 40-47). In the context of Nazi cinema, non-Jewish foreign actors were (like German actors) highly restricted in the types of roles they could perform, as determined by their physical appearance and linguistic abilities. Nevertheless, foreign stars were permitted to act outside of their own racial type and filmmakers often strove to accommodate and compensate for shortcomings in their performability, for example, when they retained a heavy foreign accent in their speech.

Ondra contra Baarová – Playful Universal Puppet versus Dangerous Exotic Object

The following section takes a closer look at the vast difference between the star personas of Anny Ondra and Lída Baarová. The German film careers of both actresses peak in the mid-1930s, during which time each played the lead in big budget Ufa productions. Between January and April 1935 the leading German film journal *Film-Kurier* published a series of brief articles entitled “Was sie auszeichnet – was ihnen fehlt,” (‘What characterizes them – what they are lacking’), which listed the supposedly defining characteristics for the most well-known German directors and actors.⁴² The inclusion of both Anny Ondra and Lída Baarová in the table of female

41 This sentiment is echoed in Richard Wagner's famous denunciation of Giacomo Meyerbeer in his 1850 essay “Judaism in Music” (“Das Judentum in der Musik”).

42 The series consisted of four parts over the course of several months, each one addressing a specific group of personalities: male actors, (male) directors, female actors, and finally foreign directors. (Except for the last installment, the listings were comprised exclusively of figures working in the German industry.) Each listing consisted of two columns, one summarizing what makes that individual distinct, and one suggesting what they lack. The series ran as follows: *Film-Kurier* 17.9 (11 Jan. 1935): 2 [male actors]; 17.16 (19 Jan. 1935): 7 [directors of German cinema]; 17.81 (5 Apr. 1935): 3 [female actors]; 17.96 (25 Apr. 1935): 12 [directors of world cinema]. Interestingly, the installment on “directors of world cinema” includes German émigrés

actors confirms their status among the “German” stars at that time.⁴³ Although both Ondra and Baarová were on some level integrated into the German star system at the same time, their careers are marked by significant differences. A primary factor differentiating them was the profound divergence in the ways they were perceived and utilized as foreigners within Nazi cinema.

With Ondra, issues of ethnic identity and nationality are more complex and less clear-cut than they are with the other Czech actresses discussed here. In many ways, the person of Anny Ondráková, her life’s trajectory, defies any sense of a dualistic split between German and Czech or German and “other.” She was born Anna Sophie Ondráková, in Tarnow in the Austrian province of Galicia (present day Poland) to an Austrian (i.e., German-speaking) father and Czech mother. The family moved to Prague when Anna was young and it was here that she began her career in the cinema in 1919, working with both Karel Lamač and Gustav Machatý. Until the mid-1930s, Ondra was a truly transnational star, not particularly bound to any one national cinema—in addition to appearing in German, Czech, and Austrian productions, she also made French and British films.

The Czechoslovakian actress adopted the more cosmopolitan sounding pseudonym “Anny” at the very beginning of her film career in 1919. Later, when her career went international in 1922, when she appeared in the Viennese production *Zigeunerliebe* (Gypsy Love) by Sascha Film, she altered her name further, dropping the nominal suffix commonly added to the last names of women in Czech. Consequently, it was as “Anny Ondra” that she became known around the world, playing top-billed roles in German, French, and English

Ernst Lubitsch and Josef von Sternberg, an indication of their official status within the Third Reich as “non-German” or unwanted individuals.

43 See “Was sie auszeichnet,” *Film-Kurier* 17.81 (5 Apr. 1935): 3.

films.⁴⁴ It was only in her native Czechoslovakia that the original, inflected “Ondráková” form persisted, and this remains the accepted version of her name here to this day. Anny was by no means unique in the adoption of an evocative stage name at the outset of her career. Like Ossi Oswald, Theda Bara, Fern Andra, and Pola Negri before her, Ondráková adopted a modified version of her name as a self-promotional strategy, to make herself sound modern, cosmopolitan, and sexy. This nominal masquerade was less an endeavor to hide her ethnic origins than it was an attempt to fashion a cosmopolitan professional image.

Many of the film characters Ondra performed were named Anny or something nearly equivalent (e.g., variations such as Anne Marie, Anita, Alice or similarly sounding English equivalents like Daisy, Mary, Lily etc.), leading to a general collapse between star persona and acted characters. Notably, she even enacted self-reflexive performances of “herself” as celebrity in a number of films. In *Die grosse Sehnsucht* (Grand Desire, 1930), together with other leading stars of the time—including Lil Dagover, Conrad Veidt, Luis Trenker, and Olga Tschechowa—she appears as herself, that is, in the role of an actress named “Anny Ondra” on a film set. In the self-reflexive *Es leuchten die Sterne* (The Stars are Shining, 1938), she has a cameo together with her celebrity husband, heavyweight boxing champion Max Schmeling; the couple belongs to a series of “real life” celebrities playing themselves that the main character encounters as she forges her own career in the German industry. In a further testament to their celebrity status, Ondra and Schmeling had performed thinly veiled versions of themselves a few years previously in the 1935 film *Knock-out. Ein junges Mädchen – ein junger Mann* (Knock Out). In this pseudo bio-pic, Ondra plays Marianne Plümke, a young rising actress who wins the heart of a boxer, played by Schmeling. Ondra was in the end very much a star, in the sense that her onscreen

⁴⁴ For the purposes of this study, I use the international version of her name, since the primary concern here is with her work outside of her Czech homeland.

persona often blended with her public image and vice versa. The figure of “Anny Ondra” represents a poignant synthesis of the two main modes of performance: the theatrical convention of embodying different characters and the social strategy of enacting one’s own (public) identity.

The first years of Ondra’s career are distinguished by an extreme versatility that allowed her to perform in multiple national contexts. Although she had worked in multiple European film industries in the 1920s (usually traveling together with partner Karel Lamač), the flexibility of her performance skills became most evident with the arrival of sound. Unlike other actors who became immediately restricted to their home industry due to their foreign language shortcomings, Ondra’s work in France, Austria, and Germany continued unaffected, just as it did in Czechoslovakia. Between 1930 and 1937, she successfully appeared in a number of Multiple Language Versions performing Czech, German, and/or French speaking parts. It was only in the British cinema that her heavy accent proved a hindrance. Although retaining the honor of being the leading lady in Alfred Hitchcock’s first talkie, *Blackmail* (1929), Ondra was never to appear in another English-language film.⁴⁵

As she became more rooted in Berlin during the 1930s, however, the international star status she had established the previous decade began to ebb. Giving preference to work in her new German home, she made her last French film in 1934 and even eventually disappeared from the cinema of her homeland. Aside from the three MLV projects for which she acted in the Czech version as well as in the German (*On a jeho sestru/Er und seine Schwester* [He and his Sister, 1931], *Polská krev/Polenblut* [Polish Blood, 1934], *Důvod k rozvodu/Der Scheidungsgrund* [Grounds for Divorce, 1937]), the only Czech-language film that Ondra acted

⁴⁵ Even here it was determined that her thick Central European accent was completely unfitting to the role of a London urbanite. Consequently, her voice was “masked” by actress Joan Barry, who spoke the lines off-camera while Anny simply mouthed the words.

in during the 1930s was *Kantor ideál* (The Ideal School-Master, 1932). In other words, Ondra had effectively made a complete transplant to the German industry by the mid-1930s. What's more, regardless of her Slavic origins, Ondra faced no great opposition from National Socialists with regard to acting in German cinema. Indeed, she was greatly admired by many in the Nazi leadership, often appearing publicly with both Hitler and Goebbels. One famous photograph shows her in the Goebbels family home listening to a radio broadcast of one of Max Schmeling's boxing matches (fig. 2). Eva Braun is purported to have recorded in her diary that Hitler once rejected a date with her in favor of treating Ondra to flowers and a meal.⁴⁶ The actress had become so integrated into German film culture by the 1930s that many writers of Nazi Cinema history do not even comment on her status as a foreigner.⁴⁷ In the end, Ondra willingly adopted



Figure 2. “German star” Anny Ondra at home with the Goebbels family. [Source: Granger.com]

46 Qtd. in Friedemann Beyer, 12.

the mask of Germanness and was in turn also readily accepted as a “German” star by both the general film public and by Nazi authorities alike.

A number of biographical and professional similarities invite comparison between Anny Ondra and Lilian Harvey.⁴⁸ Like Harvey, Ondra was born in a foreign land to a German-speaking father, had a career in German cinema dating to the early Weimar period, and was linguistically gifted enough to perform in many multiple-language versions (including French-German productions). Likewise, both had established themselves as stars of international renown long before the National Socialist consolidation of power and remained more like Weimar stars than Nazi heroines. Furthermore, both actresses tended to play unruly girl-figures in musical comedies, characters far removed from the National Socialist ideal of womanhood. Yet, there are also fundamental qualities that distinguish Ondra from Harvey. Although both had a penchant for roles as a naïve, almost pre-pubescent girl (reminiscent of Shirley Temple), Ondra’s onscreen performances tended to be more overtly sexualized than Harvey’s. Especially in the early part of her career, Ondra had a reputation for exposing her shapely legs in every film appearance. In many cases, this overt display of sexuality was used as a primary marketing strategy to promote Ondra’s films.

Even more defining than sexuality for her star image were her associations with physical humor and the generic traits of comedy and slapstick. Since the beginning, Ondra was widely known for the distinctness of her comedic performance style, which was inspired by American slapstick and was quite unique in German cinema. She garnered comparisons to Dorrit Weixler, the biggest female comedy star prior to 1920, and her successor Ossi Oswalda, Ernst Lubitsch’s

47 Jo Fox, for example, neglects to mention Ondra in her listing of foreign-born actresses working in the Reich. See Fox 16.

48 See Ascheid’s chapter on Harvey (98-154).

favorite slapstick actress in the early 1920s. In the *Film-Kurier* article “Was sie auszeichnet” cited above, Anny Ondra is credited as “European cinema’s only clown” (*die einzige Clown im europäischen Film*). Her exuberant performance style not only fascinated the general film-going public, but was also the object of ecstatic praise from critics and intellectuals. In a *Film-Kurier* review of one of Anny's last silent features, *Die Kaviarprinzessin* (*The Caviar Princess*, 1930, directed by Karel Lamač), film critic Lotte Eisner expressed great admiration for her unique acting presence, calling her a “wonderful clown of a woman, who is lucky enough to retain her charm throughout her various dislocations. Who could possibly imitate her?”⁴⁹ This comment bestows upon Ondra a profound air of uniqueness. We also find evidence illustrating the inverse of this claim, that Ondra possessed the ability to imitate anyone. Many writers her described her performances tended to relate her to puppets and mechanization, and even attributed non-human qualities to her. In reviews of her film, Ondra was often described in terminology that highlight the element of physical grotesque and evoke the sense of her “other worldliness” (*Kobold, Golem, Filmgöttin*) or “puppet-like” quality (*Marionettenkunst, Puppe*).⁵⁰ Renowned critic Rudolf Arnheim wrote of Ondra, comparing her to Buster Keaton:

49 “Herrliches Clowntum einer Frau, die das Glück hat, bei all ihren Verrenkungen immer bezaubernd zu wirken. Wer macht ihr das nach?” Lotte H. Eisner, “Anny Ondra – Lilian Harvey,” *Film-Kurier* 12.17 (18 Jan. 1930): 2.

50 Some examples: “Ein leichtes Koboldgeschöpf, tollt sie durch ihre Filme,” (“Kiki,” *Film-Kurier* 22.9 (28 Sept. 1932): 2 [written by Lotte Eisner]; “Sie hat nun einmal die große Begabung zum Grotesken, und was sie mimt und sagt, produziert Lachen im Parkett,” (“Baby,” *Film-Kurier* [24.12.1932]: 11); “Der Körperwitz der Ondra, ihre *Marionettenkunst*,” (“Die Tochter des Regiments” *Film-Kurier* [1.04.1933]: 2); “Frei nach Goethe kann man zu diesem blonden Schauspielerphänomen Anny Ondra sagen: ‘Hinter ihr im wesentlichen Scheine liegt, was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine.’ ... *schöne blonde Golem* ... so wie sich ihr Mann, der große Boxer, von Stufe zu Stufe mit dem Einsatz seiner ganzen Persönlichkeit emporkämpfte, so wäre es zu wünschen, daß auch diese Frau eines Tages den Ruhmestitel ‘Weltmeisterin des Humors’ uneingeschränkt erringen würde,” (“Fräulein Hoffmanns Erzählungen,” *Film-Kurier* [26.08.1933]: 2); “*Allheilmittel gegen Langeweile. Kobold der Fröhlichkeit und spitzigen Laune. Wirbelwind, der oralapostel, griesgrämmige Leute und Unken zum Tempel herausweht! Anny*

She too is a small art object amidst the weather-beaten remains of the comic-opera. She has something of Keaton's cold beauty and his acrobatic dancer's talent with his limbs. This unusual type of girl golem is a treasure which our industry does not know how to appreciate. A true film operetta style of international proportions could be built up around this woman." (44)

In a spirit shared by many other writers, Arnheim's praise of this "girl golem" highlights the superhuman, even supernatural, qualities of her performability.

Anny Ondra did in fact display a profound ability to adapt various forms of masquerade with natural ease. Commenting on her versatility from role to role, Lotte Eisner commented, "part of little Anny's charm is that she always seems naturally suited to her clothing; she never appears to be costumed, even when she is slightly satirizing a particular fashion. She can wear anything and carries an entire film."⁵¹ In this formulation, Ondra appears as a chameleon able to adopt any guise at all, an actress of universal performability—to frame it in the terminology of Sieg and Robinson, she was a woman so talented that her performance invites to be read as mimesis rather than drag. Indeed, Ondra's career is conspicuously marked by an astonishing variety of roles, many of which overtly thematized masquerade.

In the 1920s, she became famous in the role of a flirtatious "flapper" girl, who was often defined directly or indirectly as "American" (as in, for example, *Das Mädel aus USA* [The Girl

Ondra – Filmtortenbäckerin von hohem Können ... ein großes Naturtalent ... Filmgöttin," ("Das verliebte Hotel." *Film-Kurier* [20.12.1933]: 2). "Karl Lamac läßt sie [Ondra] immer so weit gewähren, als es gut ist -, keiner kennt diese einzige Lustspielkünstlerin so wie er." ("Die vertauschte Braut," *Film-Kurier* [18.04.1934]: 2); "ein Star [...], der ein *Kobold* ist." ("Klein Dorrit," *Film-Kurier* [1.09.1934]: 2.)

⁵¹ "Es ist der Zauber der kleinen Anny, daß sie stets wie hineingeboren wirkt in ihre Tracht, daß sie nie kostümiert aussieht, auch wenn sie eine Mode ein wenig persifliert: sie kann alles tragen und – trägt einen ganzen Film. Lotte H. Eisner, "Mamsell Nitouche," *Film-Kurier* 14:47 (24. Feb. 1932): 2.

from the USA, 1930]). Later, in the sound era, she displayed her ability to adopt a Bavarian or Austrian accent to harmonize with the filmic setting (e.g., *Flitterwochen* [Honeymoon, 1936]). Yet, even as the Czech actress became increasingly settled in the role of a German star, she retained a high degree of transnational potential, embodying Parisian women in *Donogoo Tonka* (1936), *Der Unwiderstehliche* (The Irresistible Man, 1937), and *Kiki* (1932); as well as a British girl in *Tochter des Regiments* (Daughter of the Regiment, 1933). In addition to her typically comedic characters, she also displayed a talent for serious roles such as the murderous Alice in *Blackmail* or the destitute Dorrit in an adaptation of Dickens's novel *Klein Dorrit* (Little Dorrit,



Figure 3. Anny Ondra demonstrates “universal performability” in a drag performance as a boy in *Der junge Graf* (1935). [Source: Screen capture from German VHS release.]

1934). In contrast to numerous roles as the poverty stricken poor girl (e.g., *Die vom Rummelplatz* [Fair People, 1930]), she often played the part of a rich heiress (e.g., *Baby* [1932] or *Narren im Schnee* [Fools in the Snow, 1938]). Indeed, in a “prince and the pauper” inspired double role, she performed both an heiress from a well off family and poor girl who are mistaken for each other in *Die vertauschte Braut* (The Switched Bride, 1934). In *Der junge Graf* (The Young Count,

1935) she appears in true drag as a female circus performer who masquerades as a young boy in a rich household (fig. 3).

Ultimately, Ondra was defined more by the versatility and mutability of her performance style than by strict categories of identity. In a sense, Ondra unequivocally and unproblematically assumed the conceit of universal performability generally reserved exclusively for the body of the (male) German actor. Although she tended to play a similar character type from role to role—a young, blond, energetic, and mischievous girl—she consistently played characters that transgressed established categories of gender, class, and nation.

In contrast to Ondra, who had established herself in Germany already in the late 1920s, Lída Baarová made her entrance to German cinema at a time of heightened “racial awareness”; her rising star coincided with the most intensive period of *Gleichschaltung* and *Entjudung* in the German film industry. She began work on her first German film (*Barcarole*) in late 1934, a year and a half after the formation of the Nazi Reichsfilmkammer (RFK) and just a few months after the ratification of the Reich Cinema Law (*Reichslichtspielgesetz*), which substantially increased the political influence of the RFK over German film production. At this time, German cinema was no longer open to the plethora of ethnicities that it was in during the Weimar period. Jews were being systematically expelled from the industry and the new atmosphere of open racial discrimination was far from welcoming towards other non-German ethnic groups. Although not as actively or systematically persecuted as Jews, non-German, particularly non-Aryan actors were consistent objects of scrutiny and even condemnation. Unlike Ondra, who was unproblematically accepted as a “German” actor, Baarová’s visible Slavic identity pushed her into the center of debates about foreigners in the German industry and had a significant effect on the types of roles she would play.

In January 1935 Luise Flaskamp, an activist working to reinstate Henny Porten in German cinema, wrote a letter to the President of the Reichskulturkammer (RKK) complaining about the preponderance of foreign actors on German screens: “Our German artists cannot get cinematic jobs and Ufa, the primary German film concern employs foreigners again and again. In the film *Barcarole*, a Hungarian [sic!] was employed and even before the film had its premiere, she was already contracted to make a second film” (qtd. in Fox 153).⁵² The “Hungarian” that Flaskamp refers to is in fact the Czech Baarová, who had her German debut playing the female lead in the Ufa production mentioned here.⁵³ The allusion to a “second film” is likely a reference to *Einer zuviel an Bord* (One too many on Board, 1935), in which Baarová again played a leading role.⁵⁴ Flaskamp’s confusion as to the actress’ ethnicity testifies to how little the general public in fact knew (or even cared) about the specificity of an actor’s racial background. More importantly, it hints at a leveling of all foreigners, at least those from Eastern Europe, into one lump category, in which little distinction is made between individual ethnicities. Indeed, we can presume that being Czech rather than Hungarian would have improved Flaskamp’s assessment of Baarová. Her statement “first work and bread for our German artists and then, when there is an emergency, call upon such foreigners” demonstrates that her issue is not with race as such but is rather motivated by economic concerns (Fox 153). At its heart, Flaskamp’s argument is akin to the clichéd claim that “those foreigners are stealing *our* jobs!” Furthermore, her reliance on

52 Original letter: BDC Henny Porten. RKK 2600 Box 0158. File 22. Flaskamp to Auer (RKK). 18 January 1935. See also: Flaskamp to Goebbels. 4 February 1938. (Reference info taken from Fox 21, note 84, and 208, notes 9-10.)

53 *Barcarole* premiered in Berlin on 4 March 1935

54 In actuality, Baarová’s second German-language film was *Ein Teufelskerl* (a.k.a. *Leutnant Bobby, der Teufelskerl* [A Devil of a Fellow, 1935), which was produced in pre-Anschluss Austria by the Mondial company and premiered in Germany one month after *One too many on Board*. Flaskamp’s reference to a “renewed” contract, however, appears to point to Baarová’s engagement for *One too many on Board*, which, like *Barcarole*, was produced by Ufa.

economic terminology conveys the attitude that the function of actors within National-Socialist society is comparable to that of any other worker. According to this model, the service of foreigners should only be called upon only after all qualified Germans have been employed yet there remains a demand for greater output.

Most arguments against foreigners overlooked such purely “economic” motivations to invoke issues of “biological correctness” and outright racist arguments. In September 1935, the *Film-Kurier* reprinted portions of an article entitled “Ausländer im deutschen Film” (“Foreigners in German Film”) that had originally appeared in the publication *Nationalsozialistische Partei-Korrespondenz* (NSK, Correspondence of the National Socialist Party).⁵⁵ The tract was penned by Curt Belling, one of the Party’s official spokesmen on film matters, who published a number of important works on political and racial issues related to film in the early years of the Third Reich.⁵⁶ Belling builds from the premise that from an “ethnic point of view” (*völkischer Standpunkt*) it is generally acceptable, indeed often desirable, for talented foreign (and, of course, non-Jewish) actors to appear in German film, as long as they perform appropriate “ethnic” roles. As a prime example of the specific need for foreigners in German films, Belling cites the film *Friesennot* (Frisians in Distress, 1939) in which Russian émigré actor Valéry Inkijinoff plays a Soviet commissioner of Asian heritage. According to Belling, Inkijinoff, who hailed from a Buryat family in Irkutsk, provides an indispensable element of authenticity to the

⁵⁵ Curt Belling, “Ausländer im deutschen Film,” *Film-Kurier* 17.208 (6 Sept. 1935): 1-2. The introduction to the article indicates that Belling’s original piece appeared in *NSK* 207 (5 Sept. 1935).

⁵⁶ Belling's works include such politically programmatic tracts as *Der Film in Dienste der Partei* (1937), *Der Film in Staat und Partei* (1936), *Der Film in der Hitlerjugend* (1937, co-authored with Alfred Schütze) and the article “Film und Nationalsozialismus” (1937). He was also co-author (with Carl Neumann and Hans-Walther Betz) of the notorious anti-Semitic publication *Film-“Kunst,” Film-Kohn, Film-Korruption: Ein Streifzug durch vier Film-Jahrzehnte* (1937).

character of Kommissar Tschernoff due to his own Asian background and physical appearance.⁵⁷ Yet, whereas the casting of non-German actors such as Inkijinoff to play the parts of (usually villainous) foreign characters is seen as an asset to Third Reich cinema's authenticity, Belling declares it entirely unacceptable for foreigners to be cast in the roles of ethnic Germans. Indeed, invoking the belief in the uniqueness of the German spirit, Belling suggests that foreigners are psychologically incapable of performing Germans: "To begin with, it is questionable whether a foreigner can even possess the inner alignment with the German mentality and psyche that appears to be essential for the creation of genuinely German films" ("Ausländer" 2).⁵⁸

Like Flaskamp, Belling also singled out Lída Baarová as the primary target of his attack. He writes:

Likewise incomprehensible is the engagement of the Czech actress Lyda [sic!] Baarová for the role of a Hamburg girl in the film *One too many on Board*. Completely foregoing for the moment a critical appraisal of the actress' performing abilities . . . the simple fact that a foreigner is permitted to embody a German girl in a German film is disconcerting. ("Ausländer" 2)⁵⁹

Although he does not deny Baarová's acting skills *per se*, he does contest her ability to convincingly embody a German character (see fig. 4). His argument relies on two fundamental assumptions: (1) spectators can easily recognize an actor as a "foreign" impostor; and (2) the

57 Even before leaving Russia, Inkijinoff had gained international attention as the lead Mongolian figure in Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Potomok Chingis-khana* (*Storm over Asia*, 1928).

58 "Es ist zunächst fraglich, ob ein Ausländer die innere Einstellung zur deutschen Mentalität und Psyche besitzt, die zur Schaffung urwüchsiger deutscher Filme notwendig erscheint." "Ausländer im deutschen Film," *Film-Kurier* 17:208 (6 Sept. 1935) 2.

59 It should be noted that Belling's piece was published within a week of the premiere of *One too many on Board* when the film was still fresh in the public consciousness. Thus, the choice of Baarová as an example likely had less to do with a particularly strong (perceived) egregiousness of this performance than with the simple coincidence of timing.

disconnect between the actor's body and the on-screen character is offensive to the viewing experience. To think of it in Robinson's terms, Belling seems to be describing an "estranging effect" upon the "in-group witness" from viewing a drag performance, whereby a "foreigner" attempts to pass as German. It should be noted that Belling makes no comment about the Czech actress' embodiment of an Italian woman in *Barcarole*. Thus, his concern with what can be thought of as "biologically incorrect" casting (my term) takes issue first and foremost with the specific misrepresentation of "German" identity, rather than misrepresentative casting in general.



Figure 4. Lída Baarová's cross-ethnic performance of "a girl from Hamburg," Gerda Hegert, in *Einer zuviel an Bord* (with Albrecht Schoenhals). [Source: filmportal.de]

Belling perceived Baarová not just as an imperfect impersonator, but also as a dangerous impostor. Beyond the simple "estranging effect" of witnessing a Czech playing a German on screen, he implies that such casting decisions are also a detriment to the ideal of the German body itself in that they project images that literally distort how that body is perceived: "We welcome the honorable participation of any foreign actors when it is acceptable within the context of the film work. But we refuse such participation with determination and without exception when it would alter the face of ethnic German (*völkisch-deutschen*) life in cinematic

form” (Belling, “Ausländer” 2). The biological metaphor here warns of a literal disfigurement to the German body itself, specifically to the face. The implication seems to be that his predominant factor for judging Baarová was her looks, her outward appearance. No matter how well Baarová might imitate German behavior and speech, her performance will always be recognizable as masquerade, or what Sieg would call ethnic drag, because of her “foreign” physical features. According to the Nazi understanding of physiognomics, of course, facial characteristics were inseparably linked to inner being. Thus, from Belling’s point of view, Baarová’s cross-racial performance suffers equally from her non-German physiognomy as from her biological (Czech) makeup. The danger is that those who are “duped” by this pass now have a “false image” of the German physiognomy.

Belling rejects Baarová’s performance in *One too many on Board* as a doomed enterprise, whose only effect can be the spreading of false ideas of the German body and the German mentality. He sees this act of drag as disingenuous both to outer appearances and to inner essence of the German character. Furthermore, he adds, the racial disconnect inherent in the performance is displeasing to the common film spectator, who demands “biologically correct” (my term) performances. According to him, even foreign audiences expect to see German life accurately depicted in the national cinema: “Spectators abroad demand German films that are *truly one-hundred percent German*, because they reflect the life and culture of our nation (*Volk*)” (Belling, “Ausländer” 2). In its overall tone and focus, this line of argument echoes the rejection of the Jew Jaray’s performance of Schubert in *Lover Divine* on the grounds that “Schubert is no offspring of Rothschild.” Likewise, Belling’s tract rehearses a similar mode of unmasking and discrediting “biologically incorrect” performances that threaten the integrity of the German racial ideal.

Yet, despite National Socialism's ostensibly xenophobic policy and such dogmatic treatises as Belling's, the performances of foreign actors—with the exception of Jews—never disappeared altogether from the Third Reich's screen. Nazi cinema was never totally "German" in terms of racial performance. Even Africans and Roma had their role to play in National Socialist film, although always in highly restricted and exploitative contexts, for example in the casting of Africans such as Louis Brody as servants in *Münchhausen (The Adventures of Baron Münchhausen)*, 1943) or in Leni Riefenstahl's notorious "borrowing" of Roma children from concentration camps to play Spanish peasants in *Tiefland (Lowlands)*, 1940-44/1954.⁶⁰ Of course, the status of stars like Baarová was radically different than these examples, in which clearly marked ethnic bodies served merely to add color to the background. Foreign stars not only remained a part of Nazi cinema, they ranked among its most visible performers. Like the foreigners Zarah Leander, Marika Röck, and Kristina Söderbaum, Baarová generally played the lead female role. Together with these actresses, Baarová was part of this "first generation" of foreign stars to begin a German film career under the auspices of the new National Socialist system. In many ways, this generation of new stars can be framed precisely in economic terms like those invoked by Flaskamp in her polemic against Baarová: "first work and bread for our German artists and then, when there is an emergency, call upon such foreigners" (see above). In fact, it was exactly this type of "emergency" that the film industry was facing when the Nazi policy of de-Jewification (*Entjudung*) and the subsequent mass emigration of filmmakers after 1934 decimated the talent pool in Germany. After the disappearance (whether forced or voluntary) of so many of German cinema's biggest stars, the industry was desperately searching for new faces to captivate its audiences—and these new faces included "foreign" faces as well.

⁶⁰ For more on Louis Brody's career in Third Reich, see the entry on him in Bock and Bergfelder 64-65.

Perhaps the most famous example is Swedish actress Zarah Leander, who was consciously brought to Babelsberg as an attempt to fill the void left by Marlene Dietrich for a mysterious, somewhat vampish female. Similarly, Baarová was incorporated into German cinema primarily for the seductive quality attributed to her “exotic” beauty. In some ways, these foreign actresses can be understood as “guest workers” that were brought to Third Reich cinema to perform a job that German actors could not. Yet, beyond just “replacing” other actresses, these performers also fulfilled a unique and paradoxical function of their own, by virtue of their very “foreignness”—that is, they re-infused the German cinema, which was ostensibly “cleansed” of foreigners, with a element of exotic attraction.

Contrary to Belling’s racially-charged objections, the film industry’s decision to cast Baarová as a “German girl” in *One too many on Board* (particularly since she was still far from mastering the language at that time) appears to be rooted in the presumption that the actress’ beauty and would outweigh any demands for “biological correctness” in the eyes of spectators. Indeed, we can even assume that many spectators saw her performance for the drag it was, but accepted it under the same pretext that they did the performance of foreign figures by German actors (e.g., Ferdinand Marian as a Puerto Rican). This example together with Baarová’s entire body of work in German shows Nazi cinema’s ambivalence towards the distinction between mimetic performance and ethnic masquerade, at least in certain cases, namely those involving beautiful Czech female stars. Curiously, Baarová never played what Nazi ideology would envision as strictly “biologically correct” roles in German cinema, in that she was never cast as a Czech woman. Nevertheless, most of her roles involved some level of “non-German” foreignness. The film industry not only devised ways to account for her foreign looks and accent within the filmic narrative, but they also sought to capitalize on Baarová’s exotic status. The film

industry's pragmatic approach to employing stars like Baarová was in stark contrast to the racial dogma of party ideologues like Belling.

For as much as the official Nazi policy condemned Jews taking advantage of racial masquerade and actively strove to unmask this practice, the film industry was even more ambivalent in its practices permitting and even actively fostering certain forms of racial masquerade when it was expedient. Ascheid claims of foreign actresses: "It seems that these actresses' exotic looks, charming accents, and worldly flair were precisely what distinguished them from the overdetermined imagery of the 'German woman,' which in turn enabled them to function as stars . . . capitalizing on actresses' foreign allure and exotic looks simply was the rule rather than the exception" (39-40). In addition to displaying a mysterious sense of beauty that provided the foundation of her acting career, Lída Baarová's physical appearance was also a prime indicator of her non-German ethnicity. With her typically "Slavic" features (almond-shaped eyes, high cheek bones, and dark hair) Baarová was more recognizably "foreign" in comparison to her fair-haired compatriot Anny Ondra. Furthermore, in addition to her non-Aryan racial makeup, Baarová was much more "exotic" in appearance than fairer foreign actresses like Rökk, Söderbaum, or Harvey.

Yet, the sound of Baarová's voice was just as significant an indicator of her status of foreigner as her visual appearance, if not more so. Whereas Belling saw the betrayal of the pass in Baarová's looks, more often than not it was her voice that was most problematic element of her performance. Unlike Ondra, who learned German from her father and capitalized on this linguistic facility in order to pass as German, Baarová faced tremendous difficulty in the effort to lose her Czech accent, despite years of intensive training. Newspapers and film journals made no attempt to obscure this fact, indeed, they often commented on her deficiencies in German

pronunciation as well as how she struggles to learn the language. The *Film-Kurier* review of *Ein Teufelskerl* (a.k.a. *Leutnant Bobby, der Teufelskerl*, *A Devil of a Fellow*, 1935), comments on the “language difficulties that Lida Baarova ... is still grappling with.”⁶¹ A few years later, the *Künstler-Biographien* volume dedicated to Baarová makes repeated comments about her intensive study of the German language. The biography claims that she did not begin to fully master German until she started acting on the stage, and notes the great strides she made from her role in *Patriots* to that in *Die Fledermaus* (1937), where, in the author’s opinion, she demonstrated that she had “perfected” her ability with the language. Clearly, her language hindrance was more problematic at the beginning of her German career and she was as a consequence often cast in the role of foreigner or as a character with some sort of foreign connections. Baarová played a range of exotic foreigners in her German films, including: the Italian Giacinte Zubaran in *Barcarole*, the French actress Jou-Jou in *Patriots*, the Russian girl Nina Kirileff in *Der Spieler* (*The Gambler*, 1938), and the Lithuanian-Polish princess Elisa in *Preussische Liebesgeschichte* (*A Prussian Love Story*, 1938). The roles as non-German characters provided an easy explanation for her accent, even if the sound of her speech patterns did not necessarily merge convincingly with the nationality performed (e.g., French or Italian).

Even when she was cast in “German” roles, ways were sought to account for her accent. This is in fact a significant detail of Baarová’s performance in *One too many on Board*, which is so subtle that Belling completely ignores it, likely because of his preoccupation with visual as opposed to aural signs of race. When she is first introduced in the film, Baarová’s character, Gerda Hegert, is described as an “Auslandsdeutsche” (roughly “German abroad,”) who only recently returned to Germany after living and working in Buenos Aires as a foreign

61 BeWe., “Ein Teufelskerl,” *Film-Kurier* 17.277 (27 Nov. 1935): 2.

correspondent.⁶² During the investigation into the mysterious death of a sea captain, Gerda testifies that she met the man when she was in Argentina. Except for this brief moment, Gerda's biographical background has no other function in the story. One could reasonably assume that the producers inserted this minor biographical detail about Argentina in the attempt to somehow narratively account for Baarová's accent in spoken German, thereby also perhaps implying a higher degree of "biological correctness" in the performance. In the final analysis, even this "German" girl is marked by a tinge of "foreignness," which somehow rationalizes any "exotic" traces recognized in her.⁶³

Baarová's primary asset as a Nazi cinema star was her physical appearance, which always took precedence over what would have been construed as her inner (Slavic) character. Most of the commentary from the period (and indeed most of the contemporary writing) on Baarová tends to highlight her exotic beauty over the emotional depth of her performances.⁶⁴ The *Film-Kurier* article "Was sie auszeichnet" from 1935 (mentioned above) presents Baarová's defining characteristic as "marble beauty," only to immediately qualify this compliment by implying that she also lacks human warmth or "blood circulation" (*Durchblutung*). The emphasis here is on external (visual) beauty, whereas her inner (biological) being is described as lacking vital energy. Many reviews of her early films, while complimentary of her good looks, were unforgiving in

62 The term "Auslandsdeutsche" has a history going back to the 19th century and covers not only German expatriates, but also people of presumed German ethnicity, who were born abroad. See Naranch 21-42.

63 This vary same narrative trope reemerges a decade later to account for the foreignness of Czech actress Hana Vítová in the film *Freunde* (Friends, 1944/45). See my discussion at the end of the current chapter.

64 Interestingly, Ascheid's brief mention of Baarová also focuses exclusively on the actress' appearance. She describes the actress's affair with Goebbels as evidence of the Nazi "double standard" in their official campaign against the decadent "glamorous aesthetic" of femininity (Ascheid 28).

their criticism of her (lack of) acting ability.⁶⁵ In many ways, her performances were perceived as being empty gestures, superficial masquerades lacking any sense of inner depth (be it racial or psychological). In its review of the film *Die Stunde der Versuchung* (The Hour of Temptation, 1936), one writer for the *Film-Kurier* comments: “Her acting, which is limited to exterior gestures, leaves one cold; her physiognomy seems incapable of reflecting inner excitement.”⁶⁶

The rhetoric here closely echoes the anti-Semitic dictum that “no soul or intellect emanates from [the Jew]” (Rentschler, *Ministry* 155).⁶⁷ This apprehension with regard to deceptive outward appearances relates to a more general mistrust of threatening powers lurking beneath the surface.

Baarová’s erotic feminine appeal served to intensify the disruptive potential that she already embodied by virtue of her status as foreigner. According to Laura Mulvey, classic narrative cinema imagines the female body as a pure visual spectacle and a potentially disruptive force. By all accounts, Third Reich cinema operated within this framework and exotic females like Baarová offered a doubly charged attraction. In most cases, the seductive desire that Baarová embodied on film can be read in both national and racial terms. More importantly, many of the women she played wield a seductive power over the male protagonists, threatening to lead them astray, distract them from their priorities, and set them on a destructive path. It is because of his obsession with her that the titular male character of *The Gambler* descends into the cycle of compulsive gambling that destroys his life. Her seductive potential is most threatening in *Traitors*, where she plays an innocently destructive girl, whose materialistic demands compel her

65 See for example, BeWe., “Einer zu viel an Bord,” *Film-Kurier* 17.256 (1 Nov. 1935): 2: “her acting abilities are not yet developed enough to convincingly harmonize with the other optical-acoustic events.”

66 S—k., “Die Stunde der Versuchung,” *Film-Kurier* 18.229 (30 Sept. 1936): 2.

67 Rentschler here is paraphrasing a formulation from a pamphlet co-authored by Curt Belling: Neumann, Carl; Curt Belling; Hans-Walther Betz. *Film-“Kunst,” Film-Kohn, Film-Korruption: Ein Streifzug durch vier Film-Jahrzehnte* (Berlin: Herman Scherping, 1937).

boyfriend to betray the fatherland. In most cases, the foreign characters that Baarová embodies are the objects of erotic desire for German protagonists. In *Barcarole*, the male German protagonist falls for the charms of an Italian lady (played by Baarová) and is subsequently killed by her jealous husband. Notably, the script of *The Gambler* diverges from the source novel by Dostoevsky by reimagining the British gentleman, who takes the young Russian girl (played by Baarová) into his care, as a German doctor. This transformation from Mr. Astley to doctor Tronka inserts a figure of identification for the German spectator to vicariously and safely triumph over the precarious foreign female. Of course, Baarová was famous as an object of male German desire in her off-screen life as well: first as the partner of Gustav Fröhlich, one of Third Reich cinema's leading heartthrobs, and later as the scandalous lover of Joseph Goebbels. In some ways, her life story took on many of the attributes of her onscreen characters as she came to be seen as an erotic, yet somewhat dangerous and untrustworthy foreign body.

In *A Prussian Love Story* Baarová plays a character, whose seductive beauty is problematic, even threatening, precisely because of her ethnic otherness. The film presents the doomed love affair between prince Wilhelm of Prussia (who would become Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany) and princess Elisabeth Radziwill, from the Lithuanian-Polish dynasty of Radziwill (fig. 5). The film's main conflict revolves around concerns of identity, particularly the question as to whether princess Elisa is "ebenbürtig" (roughly 'equally born'), in other words, of sufficiently noble status for marriage to the prince. Despite Wilhelm's love and his father's approval, some in the Prussian court have misgivings about the marriage, because they regard the Radziwill family as inferior stock, incapable of bearing acceptably royal offspring for the Prussian crown. To frame the constellation in Robinson's terms, the Prussian court ultimately views all members of the Radziwill family as "imposters," who are attempting to infiltrate the

German royal community, and this attempted “pass” is denounced by virtue of the court’s detailed knowledge of their background. In the end, the court compels the king to officially dissolve the engagement and Wilhelm is forced to find a more worthy bride, while Elisabeth retires into seclusion at Ruhberg palace in the foothills of the *Riesengebirge* mountains. The historical king Friedrich Wilhelm III tried to solve the issue by having prince August of Prussia adopt Elisa. But this was deemed an unsatisfactory solution since adoption does not change “the blood.” In historical context, the issue had much more to do with maintaining the blood purity of the nobility than with racial concerns. Although national allegiance and fears of miscegenation were also factors, on the whole, the Prussian court did not so much take issue with the Lithuanian-Polish lineage of the Radziwills, but rather the family’s insufficient aristocratic pedigree. In the film’s version of history, however, the issues of national identity and race are foregrounded.



Figure 5. Lída Baarová’s most “biologically correct” role as exotic object of desire, Polish princess Elisabeth Radziwill in *Preussische Liebesgeschichte*. [Source: filmportal.de]

In an early scene, Elisabeth walks with prince Wilhelm and reminisces about her childhood home in the *Riesengebirge*, the mountainous region, known as *Krkonoše* (in Czech)

and *Karkonosze* (in Polish), which forms the historical border between Bohemia and Lower Silesia. The territory, which had been in Prussian or Austrian hands for centuries, comprised a multi-ethnic mixture of German, Polish, and Czech influences. The specifically Polish nature of Elisabeth's identity is highlighted in a number of ways, for example, at multiple points, she speaks to her mother with the affectionate Slavic address "Mamuschka." Such flourishes work in concert with Baarová's own accent in spoken German to heighten the character's Slavic aura. In their palace near Berlin, the Radziwills host a piano recital of the young Polish patriot Frederic Chopin. In this scene, Baarová's character is then brought into indirect association with Polish nationalism when Elisa sings to Chopin's piano accompaniment. At a later point, fears are voiced that Wilhelm's marriage to Elisabeth would strengthen the Polish influence on Prussia.

Playing the part of the Polish countess Radziwill in *A Prussian Love Story*—i.e., performing a nationality with intimate linguistic, ethnic, and historical ties to the Czechs—could be understood as Baarová's most "biologically correct" performance in German cinema. Ultimately, this role hit a little bit too close to reality: the story of a high-ranking German official whose scandalous affair with a foreign woman threatened the respectability of the Prussian power apparatus bore obvious parallels to Goebbels's troublesome tryst with Baarová. The connection was made all the more inviting by the fact that the same Czech actress played the female object of desire in both cases. In fact, the fate of the character of Elisa eerily foreshadowed what would befall Baarová herself when Hitler personally intervened to end Goebbels's affair with this woman of "unsatisfactory" background and forced her to return to her homeland. It must be kept in mind, though, that Baarová's expulsion from Nazi cinema did not result from her ostensible racial otherness. The decisive issue was rather the actual relationship, which threatened the public image of Goebbels's family as an "ideal German family," and thus

posed a politically dangerous threat that had to be dealt with expeditiously in order to preserve the integrity of the Nazi leadership. In the end, the not so subtle parallels to the real life affair between Baarová and Goebbels led the Nazi authorities to prohibit the film, which would languish in the vault until having its official premiere in 1950 under the title *Liebeslegende* (Legend of Love). Baarová's ban on appearing in German films remained in force until the end of the war, despite numerous appeals on her part. From 1939 to 1945, she was only permitted to act in Czech or Italian films. After the Nazi capitulation, she was shunned by her own nation because of her role in the Nazi cinema apparatus. The remainder of her career played out exclusively in Italian features—condemned to the role of a permanent foreigner, rejected by both her home country and by her adopted homeland, where she strove to pass as German during one of the most inopportune historical moments imaginable.

Conquest and the Foreign Actress

By all accounts, 1939 marks a pivotal year with regard to the role of Czech actors in German cinema. At the same time that Baarová entered forced exile, Anny Ondra had all but ended her film career. The actress who had averaged three or four films per year in the early 1930s appeared in a mere two films during the war years—*Der Gasmann* (The Gas Man, 1941) and *Himmel, wir erben ein Schloss* (Heavens, We've Inherited a Chateau, 1943). For the period after 1939, there can be no real discussion of Czech "stars" within the German industry. Although a number of Czechs entered the German industry as "new stars" under the auspices of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, for various reasons none of them ever acquired the recognition among German audiences worthy of the "star" label.

Parallel to the Nazi military conquest of Europe and exploitation of its population for wartime industrial production, the German film industry also engaged in exploitative strategies to dominate film production across Europe and assimilate it into the Reich's production. In the early stages of the war, when the spread of the Swastika across the continent seemed unstoppable, Goebbels is purported to have expressed his imperialistic fantasies of Nazi film expansion with the declaration that "everything that smells of talent must be brought to Germany" (qtd. in Klaus 11: 8). The institution of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939 saw this fantasy realized in an active process to forcefully assimilate Czech filmmakers into the German apparatus. Prominent directors such as Martin Frič [Fritsch], Miroslav Cikán [Friedrich Zittau], and Vladimír Slavinský [Otto Pittermann] were engaged for German feature film production, as were a number of film technicians, such as sound engineer Antonín Rambousek and cinematographers Jan Stallich and Jan Roth.⁶⁸ Of course, the most visible of these "collaborators" were the Czech actors, and, as with Third Reich cinema more generally, female actresses were the most prominent foreign import. Although a number of Czech male actors appeared before the camera (usually in Prag-Film productions), they only played ornamental and minor roles, whereas the women generally embodied figures crucial to the plot development and in some cases garnered billing as lead female protagonist.⁶⁹ The German industry singled out four actresses that it attempted to integrate into its production as "stars":

68 With the exception of Slavinský, who worked on one feature for the Bavaria, *Die schwache Stunde* (The Hour of Weakness, 1943), Czech directors worked exclusively for productions of the Prag-Film company (which is discussed at length later in this dissertation).

69 The most notable male performers were Raoul Schránil (as Roland Schranil) and Bedřich Veverka [as Friedrich Walldorf, often erroneously cited as "Fritz Waldorff," for example by Kašpar. The only Czech actor to appear outside of Prag-Film was Vladimír Majer, who played the chief of the Soviet secret police in *GPU* (Karl Ritter, 1941/1942). Kašpar and www.csfd.cz also claim that Karel Hradilak acted in German films under the pseudonym "Karl (Carl) Stockmar," but I have not yet been able to find evidence of his performance in any German films.

Adina Mandlová, Nataša Gollová, Hana Vítová, and Zita Kabátová. Despite Ufi's persistent promotion of the so-called "newest stars of the German film" imported from the Protectorate, none of these Czech actresses achieved true star status among German audiences. These performers (together with Baarová) were *the* leading female stars of the Czech industry prior to the occupation of Bohemian and Moravia and into the 1940s and were thus primary targets for the Nazi appropriation of the Czech film industry and of the Czech population more generally. Much like Baarová before them, these performers spoke to a German desire for "exotic" female bodies and fantasies of foreign conquest—and this status profoundly informed the roles that they played and how their bodies were staged on the screen.

Perhaps the reasons why these actresses never achieved star status in the Reich have less to do with their acting ability or personality than with the fact that they were only involved in German film for a brief two-year window, which coincided with the last and darkest years of World War II. The process of assimilating female stars from the Bohemia and Moravia started off slowly at first—they did not begin to appear on the Reich's screens until mid-1943, a good three years after the inception of the Protectorate itself. The first German film to capitalize on the new Czech talent was *Ich vertraue dir meine Frau an* (I Entrust my Wife to You) with "Lil Adina" (Adina Mandlová), which opened in Munich in June 1943. A few months later, *Der zweite Schuss* (The Second Shot) with "Hanna Witt" (Hana Vítová) first played in Berlin (in September).⁷⁰ Prior to the release of these films, both actresses were to be seen in *Nachtfalter* (Moths) a German-dubbed version of the Czech film *Noční motýl*, which premiered in Berlin in June of the same year. Vítová later played the lead female protagonist in *Freunde* (*Friends*

⁷⁰ The Prag-Film production *The Second Shot* opened two months earlier in Prague before being imported into the Reich proper.

1944/45) opposite Ferdinand Marian and Attila Hörbiger.⁷¹ Of all performances by new Protectorate actresses only Vítová's in *Friends* and Mandlová's in *I Entrust My Wife to You* received top billing. Kabátová and Gollová only appeared in supporting roles. For the most part, these four actresses appeared exclusively in productions of the Prag-Film AG. Mandlová and Vítová alone were not limited to Prag-Film productions, appearing in films made by Terra-Filmkunst and Wien-Film respectively. Germany's capitulation in May 1945 and the collapse of the Protectorate abruptly halted the short-lived German careers of these actresses. In a tragic twist of fate, the post-war years also marked the end to their careers in the newly formed Czechoslovakia, where their engagements with the Nazi film industry and associations with occupying officials were seen as acts of collaboration.⁷²

In their memoirs, these actresses all insist that they were not interested in acting in German cinema but were coerced into doing so. Committed to paper with potential condemnation from their Czech public clearly in mind, these "confessions" should not be taken at face value. If an actress had in fact participated in Nazi cinema willingly, she would surely not openly admit this later, especially given the anti-Fascist and anti-German paranoia of the

71 The German censor originally banned *Friends* in November 1944 and consequently the film was never shown in the Third Reich. Under the title *Ehe in Gefahr* (Endangered Marriage) the film was released in Austria in August 1945, but did not premiere in (West) Germany until 1950, long after co-star Ferdinand Marian's work in film had abruptly ceased at the end of the war.

72 After the war, they all (together with Baarová) were tried and found guilty of collaboration, a stigma that more or less sounded the death knell for their careers in the Czechoslovak industry. After appearing in the 1949 classic *Pytláková schovanka aneb Slechetný milionář* (*The Poachers' Foster Daughter or Noble Millionaire*, 1949), Vítová would only return to the screen for a minor role in the Czechoslovak-German co-production *Das Haus in der Karpfengasse* (*The House in Carp Lane*, 1965), in which she also spoke her own German dialog (here in the context of speaking the Prague-Jewish dialect). Although Gollová and Kabátová had limited success re-igniting their careers in the 1960s after the initial post-war prohibition, Mandlová emigrated to Great Britain in 1947 and never appeared in Czech cinema again. Nevertheless, as time continued to march on and fading memories began to heal the scars of the war years, all of these actresses gradually regained favor among Czech audiences and have regained respected status within the collective cultural memory.

Communist leadership in post-war Czechoslovakia. Painting quite a different picture, a report from the office of the Reichsprotektor on 12 August 1943 claims that the local Czech actors have voiced their pride in the opportunity “to take part in the largest European film industry and to tap into the whole European market.”⁷³ Yet, this too cannot be taken as reliable evidence of their willing compliance with the Nazi program, since these actors likely felt compelled to make such open statements in order to avoid problems with the occupiers. It must be remembered that as in Germany, many Czech filmmakers and artists who did not support the Nazi authority were persecuted and even killed, several notable examples being novelist and film director Vladislav Vančura, painter and author Josef Čapek, and “singer of the nation” and film musician Karel Hašler.⁷⁴

Although the degree to which each individual actor was indeed compliant in fulfilling the job for which they were chosen is perhaps a crucial judicial concern for determining guilt and passing judgment, my focus is elsewhere. I am interested in the aspects of ethnic performance inherent in these acts of collaboration that the Nazi occupation maintained and how the process of assimilation of Czech actors was carried out and perceived from the German side. Undeniably, the Nazi occupiers actively pursued the engagement of Czech actors for German film production and utilized intimidation and terror (both real and imagined) to achieve their goals. Outright refusal to perform according to the desires of the Nazi authorities not only required a strong will of purpose, but was also likely spell the end of the actor’s career, their livelihood, and possibly

73 “. . . in der grössten europäischen Produktion mitzuwirken und auf den gesamten europäischen Markt gelangen zu können.” BARCH - NS 18 348, 185-187 [129-130]

74 Vančura was killed for his leftist activism in the wave of executions following the assassination of Heydrich in 1942. Čapek was captured by the Gestapo during the first months of the Protectorate and was interned in a number of concentration camps before succumbing to typhus in April 1945. After being denounced by fellow filmmaker Václav Binovec in 1941, Hašler was deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he froze to death.

their life. I am most interested in the possible reasons why these specific women were chosen, what types of roles they performed in Third Reich cinema, and ultimately what this tells us about the practices of racial representation and masquerade in German cinema of the Nazi period.

Although German cinema had always been a goal for filmmakers from Europe and even further abroad, the circumstances under which Czech actors came to work in Nazi cinema constitute a distinct case. The prominence of foreign actresses in the 1920s and 1930s can be understood as an illustration of German cinema's economically dominant position. As the "Hollywood of Europe," Berlin was the goal for talent from all over the continent, who desired fame and fortune in the film business. Yet, in contrast to Czechs who had worked in German (or Austrian) cinema in the preceding decades, the "new stars" from the Protectorate were more or less forced to work within the German film industry that, together with the German army, was in fact physically occupying the territory of Bohemia and Moravia. The conditions of Total War had thrown the Third Reich's economy into a critical state. Many members of the film industry found themselves being sent to the front or otherwise reallocated to aid the war effort, leaving behind gaps that the top executives struggled to fill. The need for new actors was in many ways analogous to the demand for new talent in the wake of the prohibitions and emigrations post-1934, but the situation after 1942 was much more severe. According to this model, the Czech actresses' bodies can be understood as little more than raw material to be implemented and exploited in the service of the occupying industry as part of the conditions of Total War. The coerced performance of Czech actresses in Nazi cinema during the war years lucidly demonstrates this national cinema's drive to subjugate and efficiently exploit Other nations (and nationalities), whereby the foreign territory is symbolically realized in the female body.

Furthermore, the assimilation of these actresses into Nazi cinema was an enterprise of compulsory and forced masquerade.

The Nazi industry's project of assimilation involved the attempt to pass off members of the Czech workforce as German. As a result all Czech filmmakers were forced to adopt Germanized pseudonyms to be used in the film credits and marketing materials. The act of renaming was particularly important for the female performers, whose Czech surnames were clear signifiers of non-German identity, because of the distinct –ová suffix. Yet, the Germanization of names went far beyond simply dropping this Slavic suffix. In some cases, the adopted German pseudonym displayed no common lineage with the performer's Czech name. In its August 1942 report on Czech actors working with Prag-Film, the Czech newspaper *Večerní Praha* claimed that these alterations in name were necessary "to make them understandable and pronounceable for film-goers in the Reich."⁷⁵ Yet, this is clearly not the whole picture. For Hana Vítová, it was in fact a simple case of dropping the Czech -ová and adopting the German spelling for her name to arrive at the pseudonym "Hanna Witt." However, other actresses were compelled to substantially alter their names, not only to make them more understandable to Germans, but to make them more German as such. For example, Nataša Gollová's first name should not require substantial alteration to make it easier to pronounce and could very easily be simply transcribed as "Natascha" according to accepted German spelling rules. Nevertheless, the actress was compelled to adopt the nickname of her grandmother and drop the Czech ending of her surname, thus appearing as "Ada Goll" when working in German cinema. The motivation here was clearly to displace a Slavic (specifically Russian) sounding name with an innocent, ethnically nondescript pet name fitting to this fair-haired, delicately featured female starlet, to mask explicit

75 ". . . aby byla zrozumitelná a vyslovitelná i pro návštěvníky říšských kin." "Čeští herci v Pragfilmu," *Večerní Praha* (25 Aug. 1942). Qtd. in Cibulka 175.

reference to her Slavic background in order to market her as “German.” Like Gollová, Zita Kabátová also looked to her grandmother to arrive at the utterly German-sounding moniker “Maria von Buchlow.” The compulsory adoption of a German screen name to effectively mask the actors’ Slavic background is primary evidence that Nazi cinema not only sought to integrate Czech performers but to seamlessly and inconspicuously assimilate them.

This process of renaming the “new stars” from the Protectorate differs fundamentally from the voluntary acts of name alteration undertaken by Ondra and Baarová when they began working in German cinema. Ondra transformed her name sound more cosmopolitan, not just for the German market, but for the international market as a whole. In the mid-1930’s Baarová was able to retain her Czech name when she began working in Germany, but simply dropped the diacritics over the “i” in her first name and over the final “a” to eliminate potential confusion among the German-speaking public.⁷⁶ The renaming of Czech actors during the war years was an altogether different enterprise, though—enforced from above and with the specific intention to deceive.⁷⁷ The goal of this renaming effort was not simply to make the names more pleasant to

76 Nevertheless, the German press continually had issues with the spelling of the actress’s name, often writing it as “Baar,” “Barova,” or “Baarowa,” while her first name sometimes appeared as “Lyda.” In fact, although it retains a Slavic connotation, the name Lída Baarová was itself a stage pseudonym adopted by the seventeen-year-old Ludmilla Babková at the behest of her producers, who urged by her to adopt a more star-like name when she first began acting in Czech cinema in 1931.

77 There is evidence testifying that Czech filmmakers were dissatisfied with the compulsory alteration of their names and openly complained of the procedure. Particularly in Gollová’s case, such an alteration was seen as completely unnecessary and even laughable by Czech filmmakers. See, for example, BARCH - NS 18: 348, 187/130, which reports: “mit der Änderung der tschechischen Namen ist man in tschechischen Kreisen nicht zufrieden.” In addition to the case of Gollová, the report also comments that the names Cikán and Blašek could easily have been simply transcribed in German as Zikan and Blaschek, rather than imposing the monikers “Zittau” and “Blaschke.” In her memoirs, Adina Mandlová describes in detail her dogged resistance to altering her name for work in Nazi cinema and the extensive arguments with Hippler and Goebbels before she finally relented and adopted the non-Slavic sounding pseudonym “Lil Adina” (Mandlová 108-110).

the German ear and tongue, but to eliminate all traces of Slavic identity from the names, thereby masking the Czech identity of the individuals. With this superficial alteration the administration strove to elide any trace of disconnect between official Nazi race policy and film practice. Third Reich cinema had effectively become an active “pass enabler,” striving to dupe the public into reading these bodies as “German.”

The main prerequisite for accepting Czech actors into the German filmic body was an acceptable command of the German language. In the first years of the Protectorate a number of Czech actors were compelled to take a language test to determine their potential compatibility within the Reich’s film industry (see Kašpar 179). In the end, it was determined that four of the Czech cinema’s biggest female stars at that time spoke German well enough to be integrated into the Reich’s cinema. Yet, although these actresses could speak German well enough to perform in German films the lingering accents in their speech remained a problematic signifier of “foreignness.” This had already been an issue with Baarová in the 1930s, but with the “new stars” from the Protectorate the need to satisfactorily accommodate and account for the foreign accent constituted a much more serious project. The above-mentioned report from the office of the Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia from 12 August 1943 deems it unacceptable for Czech actors to play “German” roles if they have noticeable accents and demands that such performers should be restricted to “foreign” roles that somehow account for their accents.⁷⁸ The schizophrenic approach, whereby the industry consciously strove to account for the foreignness of these actresses while simultaneously trying to pass them off as German (at least in name), is

78 “Ein grundsätzlicher Mangel wird der deutschen Produktion bezüglich des Einsatzes von tschechischen Filmschaffenden zum Vorwurf gemacht u. zw. der, dass die tschechischen Filmschauspieler, soweit sie bereits eingesetzt sind, die deutsche Sprache nicht genügend beherrschen, hier unbedingt immer als Deutsche eingesetzt werden. Es müssten für die tschechische Schauspieler Rollen gefunden werden, die ihnen gestatten, einen Akzent zu verwenden.” BARCH - NS 18:348, 186 [130]

indicative of the “irreconcilable antagonisms” that penetrated Third Reich society more generally and gave rise to what has been described as Nazi Germany’s “split consciousness” (see Ascheid 41, 17-19).

One of the strategies employed by German filmmakers to compensate for the Czech actresses’ accents was to cast them in peripheral, even ornamental roles that demanded minimum dialogue. This was, for example, the case of Hana Vítová’s character in *The Second Shot*, who only appears a handful of scenes and does little more than introduce a bit of erotic tension into the plot. In a report addressed to various propaganda ministers in Berlin, the office of the Reichsprotektor was critical of the superficial way that the Czech actress was utilized in her first appearance in German film. The report claims that “Witt’s role says nothing” and describes her part as purely “decorative” in nature.⁷⁹ Interestingly, the film is set in Bohemia, thereby increasing the potential to read the casting of Vítová in terms of “regional correctness” if not “biological correctness.” Yet, the physiognomy of the dark-haired Vítová combined with her accent did not completely harmonize with the prevailing image of Bohemia as a purely Germanic space. In the end, here character introduces an ambiguously “exotic” presence to the film that serves an erotic function, yet is unessential to the overall story—neither foreign *femme fatale* nor sexual conquest.

In her two German film appearances, Zita Kabátová played more substantial figures than Vítová in *The Second Shot*, which demanded deeper character development. Interestingly, she performed a typically dangerous “foreign” woman in one film, but masqueraded as a nice “German” girl in the other. In each case, her visual appearance was crafted to concur with the

79 BARCH - NS 18:348, 186 [130]. Note: The author of the report does compliment the scene in which Witt/Vítová sings, yet laments that the scene is more or less a unimaginative rehashing of a similar scene played by Vítová from the Czech film *Moths*.

character type. In *Fate on the Waves*, Kabátová plays the sultry woman from a sailor's past life that threatens to come between him and his budding love for the daughter of a fellow ship captain. Her dark features and “modern lady” attire contrast sharply with the blond hair and conservative attire of the young girl, who most commonly appears in a white sweater (fig. 6). The names of the characters also present a stark difference. The captain's daughter is called Marianne, whereas Kabátová's character goes by the name of Ira Corelli. It is unclear whether this is a pseudonym chosen to aid the character's singing career, or if she is meant to be of foreign origin. In any case, the name signifies “foreignness” and supports the interpretation of the character as the “other woman,” a dark specter that threatens to destroy the love affair. As is



Figure 6. Left: Maria von Buchlow (a.k.a. Zita Kabátová) as the sultry “other woman” Ira Corelli in *Schicksal am Strom* [Source: NFA]. Right: The good German daughter, Marianne (Karin Hardt, at left) in *Schicksal am Strom*. [Source: NFA]

the tendency with Czech actresses, the somewhat “foreign” nature of the on-screen character is directly linked with a disruptive, potentially destructing force. In *Happiness along the Way*, the character played by Kabátová is neither overtly labeled as “foreign” nor a threateningly disruptive force. The implication is that Kabátová's Czech accent was weak enough for her to be cast in a straightforward role of a “German” girl. In contrast to the dark, ethnically distinct figure

of Ira Corelli, in *Happiness along the Way* Kabátová appears with bleach blond hair, which immediately suggests Aryan qualities (fig. 7). This alteration to the her natural dark hair color, likely achieved with a wig, enhances the ethnic masquerade that fashions a typically Aryan image out of Slavic actress. Furthermore, the figure she plays, Dorle, a servant girl in a Prague inn, is a distinctly friendly and non-threatening presence, always smiling sympathetically and dedicated to helping the leading male protagonists. As a poignant example of ethnic masquerade, the alteration of Kabátová's hair color is a testament to the importance of visual signifiers in Third Reich cinema's construction of character and racial types.

Nataša Gollová, in addition to being naturally blond, possessed what could be described as typically "Aryan" features, making her particularly desirable for the part of a heroine in Nazi cinema. Yet, her only German performance was a minor role in the Prag-Film production *Come back to Me!* Appearing under the pseudonym Ada Goll, the Czech actress plays the part of a young girl residing in a resort town next to the Austrian Wörthersee (Lake Wörther). Her character is an essentially disruptive force, threatening to break up the marriage of the male



Figure 7. Zita Kabátová in drag as the blond "German" love interest in *Glück unterwegs*. [Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

protagonist. Yet, the problems arise rather from a fundamental misunderstanding of the wife's part than from the ill intentions of Gollová's essentially innocent character. It is presumably Gollová's Czech accent in German that led to her being cast in this more or less ornamental role and kept her from playing any other parts in German films—in terms of visual appearance, Gollová very much fit the bill of a good Aryan woman.

The Taming of Slavic Shrews

The most prominent example of German cinema capitalizing on a Czech actress's "German" appearance (to facilitate the ethnic masquerade) while simultaneously constructing her onscreen identity as "foreign" (to account for her accent) is seen in the first film to introduce a "new star" from the Protectorate: the Heinz Rühmann vehicle produced by Terra-Filmkunst *I Entrust My Wife to You*, which co-starred Adina Mandlová (under the pseudonym "Lil Adina"). Like Gollová, Mandlová's blond hair and delicate features allowed her to be read as "Aryan," yet she spoke German with such a noticeable accent that the producers had her written into the script in the role of a foreigner. Although this plot detail was likely added to explain Mandlová's accent, the characterization of this "foreign" figure adds an extra, subtle interpretive layer to our understanding of the finished film.

In *I Entrust My Wife to You*, Mandlová plays the role of Ellinor, the recent bride of Robert Deinhardt. Before leaving on a business trip, Robert entrusts his wife to an old school friend Peter (played by Rühmann), whom he randomly encounters at the train station. Immediately upon meeting his old friend's wife, Peter detects some element of foreignness in her and attributes this specifically to her speech, asking Robert "Where did you get your wife? She speaks so... I don't know, so..." ("Wo hast du deine Frau her? Sie spricht so.... ich weiß nicht,

so...”). To this Robert offhandedly replies, “Oh, a little souvenir from my great travels” (“Na, ein kleines Andenken an meine grosse Reise”). As he has already explained, he has been “everywhere, all over the place” (“überall, kreuz und quer”) since their time at school together. There is an obvious ambiguity as to the location of these travels and consequently Ellinor’s ethnic and national origins remain a mystery. She is simply “foreign,” non-German. In this way, the implicit German/Czech (or German/Slav) dichotomy is displaced by the more ambiguous German/foreigner split. Given her blond hair and fair features, one can easily presume that the average viewer would read Adina’s/Mandlová’s character as Nordic or Aryan. The name Ellinor would also support this interpretation suggesting perhaps Swedish or English origins, although it, too, is ultimately ambiguous in terms of providing a clue to specific national origin.

In concert with her ambiguously “foreign” background, Ellinor is characterized as an aggressive, threatening, potentially dangerous force. In her very first line she snaps, “I hate you” (“ich hasse dich”), to her husband and soon thereafter warns him that she is carrying a gun in her purse, to use in case she finds him being unfaithful. The gun can be understood metaphorically as the potentially destructive sexual force lurking beneath Ellinor’s pleasant exterior. In the attempt to maintain control over his wife and to prevent any infidelity on her part, Robert implores Peter to follow Ellinor, while he is away on a business trip (which, true to Ellinor’s suspicions, is a mere pretense for a secret tryst between Robert and his secretary). Peter’s charge is to keep Ellinor out of trouble, yet the outcome of his act of surveillance is to effectively overpower and domesticate this wild foreigner. After initially disarming Ellinor of the pistol he proceeds to monitor her behavior, following her with dogged dedication and striving to keep her out of trouble. Ellinor acts as an independent, carefree, even sexually transgressive woman. Yet, within the ideology of the film, this is merely a performance enacted as a defense mechanism, whereby

Ellinor asserts aggression and sexual openness as a compensation for the lack of love from her husband. (Midway through the film, Peter confesses that he sees through the masquerade when he tells Ellinor “You are playing a role that does suit you.” [“Sie spielen eine Rolle, die nicht zu Ihnen passt”]). In the end, Peter’s upstanding affection allows her to drop the masquerade of independence and assume the behavior and look that reflects her inner femininity. By the end of the film Ellinor is “tamed” and transformed into a domesticated (German) housewife. With no prompting, she prepares a cozy breakfast table for Peter and plants an affectionate kiss on his cheek after serving his coffee (fig. 8).



Figure 8. The “wild” Ellinor (Adina Mandlová) domesticated as a loving housewife in *Ich vertraue dir meine Frau an*. [Source: screen capture from German VHS release.]

Ultimately, the film demonstrates that Rühmann is the better male role model compared to Robert, who neglects his wife and sneaks off to have an illicit affair with his (dark haired) secretary, who clearly embodies the negative image of womanhood in the film. In contrast, Peter dedicates time to Ellinor and educates/trains her, creating the environment in which she can

display her true womanly instincts. Throughout the film, Peter is depicted as an ascetic bachelor, who commits all of his energy to his work of inventing appliances for bachelors. He even fails to take advantage of the overt sexual advances of his secretary, when he even notices them at all. The underlying message is clear: in order to produce respectable, sexually obedient (German) woman, the (German) male must himself treat her with respect and sexual restraint. Yet, the transformation of the “wild” woman into a good, domesticated lady that the film enacts also demonstrates the “foreign” girl being molded into a German woman—in other words, learning to “pass” as German, by adopting the suitable behavior patterns. This transformation is mirrored in the visual progression in Ellinor’s clothing, from a stylish “cosmopolitan” outfit, to nakedness (the point of transition), and finally the conservative attire of a domesticated housewife.

The resolution of *I Entrust My Wife to You* can be understood as a good demonstration of Ascheid’s assessment that “Nazi cinema generally privileged plot resolutions that placed the female protagonist in an ideologically ‘correct’ position (i.e., a wife, a mother or even a self-sacrificing tragic heroine)” (35). Of course, given the film’s explicit thematization of ethnicity, in addition to becoming ideologically “correct,” the female protagonist also finishes up in what can be thought of as a “nationally correct” position. This update of *The Taming of the Shrew* shares much with the Lilian Harvey/Willy Fritsch vehicle *Glückskinder* (*Lucky Kids*, 1936), in which the narrative “took an unruly woman off the streets and set her straight, offering a moral fable in the guise of upbeat entertainment” (Rentschler, *Ministry* 122). Eric Rentschler describes how *Lucky Kids* not only cultivated its main female protagonist, but also “brought home Lilian Harvey” by reintegrating her into the German industry after a lengthy sojourn abroad. He points out that the female protagonist’s “submission to a domestic order echoed a confirmed prodigal daughter’s reentry to the fatherland” (*Ministry* 122). In general the same can be said of *I Entrust*

My Wife to You, except that here the taming of this foreign shrew does not echo a return to the homeland, but the first attempt to assimilate the Slavic Mandlová into the ranks of German stars.

In contrast to the purely ornamental role in *The Second Shot*, Hana Vítová played the lead female protagonist in the Wien-Film production *Friends*. As with Mandlová in *I Entrust My Wife to You*, the Czech actress performs a character that is narratively marked as foreign, more specifically as an “Auslandsdeutsche” of a hybrid nationality. Vítová/Witt plays a woman named Alix, who resides in South America at the beginning of the story. Like Ellinor, Alix is an exotic object that one of the main characters “picks up” during his travels. Austrian pianist Guido Horvath meets her in Montevideo and takes her with him on his concert tour throughout the continent including stops in Buenos Aires, Bogota, Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro.⁸⁰ They are initially brought together by a mutual friend, who introduces Guido as a “Landsmann” (countryman) of Alix’s, thereby confirming Alix’s Austrian identity. When Guido inquires how long she has been in Montevideo, she responds “half of my life” (fig. 9). For a girl her age, this would imply that she moved to South America when she was still in her early teens, time enough to both learn the local Spanish language but likewise time enough to begin to lose her mother tongue. This brief exchange thus provides a narrative explanation for the foreign accent in her spoken German. At the same time, it establishes that although originally Austrian, Alix has essentially become “semi-foreign.”

Alix’s seemingly innocent exterior conceals a life-threatening secret. Like the foreigner Ellinor in *I Entrust My Wife to You*, this “foreign” woman also hides a gun in her purse, thus posing a potentially mortal danger to the male protagonists. In this film, though, the gun remains concealed in Alix’s purse, unseen by the onscreen characters. This invisible, dangerous part of

⁸⁰ Note: the names of the cities appear on a succession of Horvath's concert programs. Rio de Janeiro is erroneously written as “Rio de Janairo”



Figure 9. Hana Vítová (Hanna Witt) as the disruptive semi-foreigner Alix in *Freunde*. [Source: screen capture from DVD of German television recording.]

her identity reflects another hidden secret: her divided affection between Guido and his best friend, Gottfried. After her troubled affair with Guido in South America, Alix returns to Austria, where she by chance met Gottfried, with whom she is now engaged. Just as her body is divided between Austria and South America, her emotions are torn between these two men. The secret of her love for Guido not only holds the potential to crush Gottfried's fantasies of happiness, but to destroy the male bond between these two childhood friends forever. In the end, the threat of this "semi-foreign" woman from South America is neutralized when Guido and Gottfried reach an understanding, forgiving both Alix and each other. Now that Alix has been redeemed and situated into an ideologically as well as nationally "correct" position, repatriated to her homeland and willing to accept the role of nurturing and loving wife, the wedding plans for her and Gottfried can proceed without impediment. (It is also worth noting that she ultimately chooses the stable man with the Germanic name over his "artistic" and roaming friend, whose name

suggests Italian and Hungarian elements.) This redemptive conclusion stands in contrast the ending of *La Habanera* (1937), in which Zarah Leander played the role of a European émigré to the New World. Yet, whereas “*La Habanera*’s heroine goes astray and ends adrift, forever unreconciled,” (Rentschler, *Ministry* 145) Alix is reformed and reintegrated into the homeland, which echoes the project to Germanize the actress Vítová.⁸¹

Domesticating Anny Ondra

Anny Ondra was the only Czech actress to bridge the 1930s and the war years. Because she was already a long-established star in Germany, the conditions affecting her career in the 1940s were distinct from those of the “new stars” from the Protectorate. Nevertheless, we can mark a distinct and even radical shift in the types of onscreen characters she played, which sheds a slightly different light on the film culture of the war years. No longer playing the part of the anarchic sex-bomb with shapely legs, both of Ondra’s last two feature films *The Gasman* (1941) and *Heavens, We’ve Inherited a Chateau* (1943) in Nazi Germany depict her in an ideologically “correct” position from the very beginning of the film in the role of a faithful wife and practical mother. These overtly “domesticated” images are quite an aberration within Ondra’s overall film oeuvre, in which she usually played chaotic and impish young girls that typically exuded a transgressive air. The dissonance of these more tame images of Ondra with her earlier persona is directly noted in Ufa’s advertizing materials for the film, which prefaces its discussion of her role here as “a golden mother” (*eine goldige Mutter*) with the observation: “one might be quite taken aback, because she no longer appears as a vivacious prankster and female scallywag

81 In terms of the current discussion it is worth pointing out that Leander plays the “biologically correct” role of a Swedish woman, who is kept from her home by an unhappy marriage to a Puerto Rican (played as a drag performance by Ferdinand Marian).

[*weiblicher Lausub*] as we are accustomed to seeing her, but rather as a well-behaved young housewife.”⁸² The German construction “weiblicher Lausub” is particularly notable, because it juxtaposes the modifier “female” with a grammatically masculine noun that also contains the semantic element “boy” (“Bub”). The phrase thus not only suggests the unruly nature of Ondra’s earlier parts, but also hints at the transgression of gender roles inherent in the young woman’s usual (pre-1939) appearances as tomboy. This dramatic shift in Ondra’s onscreen image can perhaps be read as indication that, when confronted with the strict demands of the war effort, Third Reich cinema was simply no longer able to incorporate and contain this type of volatile performance style that was in many ways reminiscent of both American slapstick and the instable, “impostor” culture of the Weimar Republic.

By the 1940s Ondra had been transformed from a volatile figure of travesty into “the very image of the contemporary German woman.”⁸³ This shift oddly echoes Ellinor’s transition in *I Entrust my Wife to You*. Yet, whereas the foreign Ellinor needed to be tamed by the German man, Ondra already appears onscreen in the role of a domesticated housewife and it is in fact she who serves as a pillar of stability in the story. In *The Gasman*, Heinz Rühmann’s title character drifts into a decadent lifestyle after accidentally acquiring a large sum of money and is only “saved” by the loving dedication of his wife (Ondra). This basic constellation is unimaginatively rehashed a few years later in *Heavens, We’ve Inherited a Chateau*, in which a man becomes obsessed with capitalizing on the property he recently inherited to support his self-indulgent habits until his wife (Ondra) shows him the light. The Prag-Film marketing materials for the film

82 “Man wird vielleicht ein bißchen überrascht sein denn nunmehr tritt sie nicht als lebhafter Schabernack und weiblicher Lausub, wie wir sie gewohnt sind, in Erscheinung, sondern als braves junges Hausmütterchen.” Florian Kienzl, “Anny Ondra als Hausmütterchen,” *Bild- und Textinformation. Der Gasmann*, file 5046 (“Der Gasmann”), Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin.

83 “Verfilmte Romane,” *Feuilleton-Dienst der Prag-Film AG* 1 (31 Oct. 1942): 4. BA-FA, folder 7124 “Himmel, wir erben ein Schloß.”

describe Ondra's character thus: "She is energetic and hard-working. She tackles any problem that comes along and eventually steers her husband back onto the correct path, namely the path of work. She is no longer just the mistress of the chateau, but also a capable farmer."⁸⁴ These latter films not only place Ondra in an "ideologically correct" position, but also empower her with the moral strength to reform the men close to her and bring them into proper ideological alignment as well. There can perhaps be no greater affirmation of Ondra's status as a "German." Whereas the other Czech actresses consistently found themselves in the role of the seductive and troublesome exotic female, who either led German men to destruction or were successfully tamed by them, Ondra was able to transcend her "foreign" identity in order to embody the ideal of Nazi womanhood. This is a further development of Ondra's universal performability as well as a testament to the success of her German pass.

Despite these examples of "ideological correct" roles, there is no example of a Czech actor performing what Nazi doctrine would deem the "biologically correct" role of a Czech character in all of Third Reich cinema. In terms of the Reich's racial politics, Baarová's embodiment of a princess from the Lithuanian-Polish house of Radziwill in *Prussian Love Story* was the closest that any Czech performer came to playing such a part. In most cases, the characters played by Czech actresses were ascribed various degrees of "foreign" attributes and fulfilled the function of exotic object of desire and/or seductive danger. Whereas Baarová and the others were consistently restricted by the demands of "biological correctness" (particularly when they were required to play "German" characters), Anny Ondra stands out as an intriguing example of an actress who was openly recognized to possess the conceit of universal

84 "Sie ist tatkräftig und fleißig, sie packt an, wo immer es notwendig ist und führt endlich auch ihren Mann auf den rechten Weg zurück, nämlich auf den der Arbeit. Sie ist nicht mehr nur Schloßherrin, sondern auch tüchtige Landwirtin." ("Bilder Plaudern" *Feuilleton-Dienst der Prag-Film AG* 1 (31 Oct. 1942): 12. BA-FA, folder 7124 "Himmel, wir erben ein Schloß."

performability traditionally reserved for German actors alone. In this, she maintained a unique status not only among Czech actors, but also among foreigners in Nazi cinema on the whole.

Chapter 2

Accented Voices from Central Europe: Gustav Machatý and Karel Lamač

Individual nations built their national theaters and had their national literature. But today, all citizens, from all corners of the earth want the same art and the same entertainment: they want their film.

-Gustav Machatý⁸⁵

For directors, as with other groups of film professionals, the routes that linked Czech and German/Austrian cinema ran almost exclusively as one-way streets. Very few German or Austrian directors found themselves involved in Czechoslovak film production. Those that did generally came there to work on Czech-German MLV films or to take part in the so-called “independent productions” after they were barred from working in the Reich.⁸⁶ Thus, despite the production location, their creative efforts remained invested in German-language cinema—films in German aimed at German-speaking audiences—and contributed in no way to Czech cinema per se.⁸⁷ By contrast, nearly all of the best Czech directors of the 1920s-1940s spent some time working on German-language films intended for German audiences. Some of them, such as Karel Anton, were attracted to work in Germany for personal economic gain and career development. Others were more reluctant to work on German projects, doing so only under the

85 Gustav Machatý, “Des Filmes Größe und Not,” *Licht-Bild-Bühne* 28.18 (21 Jan. 1935): 4.

86 See Loacker and Prucha.

87 Of course, in economic terms, these films did bring much needed income to the Czech-based production companies. Furthermore, some of these films did play to German-speaking audiences in Czechoslovakia. Yet, these matters, particularly those related to multi-national spectatorship in Czechoslovakia, are beyond the scope of the current dissertation and must remain topics for another study.

circumstances of the Nazi Protectorate.⁸⁸ These directors included Miroslav Cikán and Martin Frič, neither of whom ever left their home country to work on a German-language film.⁸⁹ Also, even though Prague-German literary culture was blossoming (Kafka, Werfel, Kisch, Perutz, et al.), there are no German-Bohemia film directors, whose work is closely linked to the city or to Bohemia in general. The two most well known German-Bohemians, Georg Wilhelm Pabst and Edgar Ulmer, never worked within the Czechoslovak industry and never made a specifically “Bohemian-themed” film.⁹⁰ For this reason, film scholarship tends to quietly subsume these German-speaking Bohemians under the rubric of “German” (or with increasing frequency “Austrian”) directors.

Among all of the directors that operated at the intersection of German, Austrian, Czech, and/or Bohemian cinema, Karel Lamač (known in Germany as Carl Lamac) and Gustav Machatý (or Machaty in German) occupy a unique and important position. Both are “Czech directors” (in other words, Bohemians whose primary language was Czech and therefore are not generally considered as “Austrian”) who made significant contributions to German-language cinema and are important not only for understanding German and Austrian cinema in this period, but can also inform our conceptualization of the broader “Central European” cinema culture. Both Lamač and Machatý were highly interstitial figures, who navigated the gray area at the

88 The present chapter does not address those German directors who worked under duress for the Prag-Film AG during the occupation (eg. Slavinský, Cikán, Frič) as the conditions for their contributions to German cinema are radically different than those of the directors examined here. The works of these directors is addressed in the chapter on Prag-Film.

89 Besides his work on German versions of MLV projects, Frič’s only German language film of the 1930s was *Der Zinker* (The Squeaker, 1931), which he co-directed with Lamač in Prague.

90 Edgar Ulmer was born in Olomouc (Olmütz) in Moravia. So, in terms of strict geography, he was not “Bohemian,” but Moravian. But, here and elsewhere in this dissertation, I use “German-Bohemian” as a catchall term to describe all German-speakers, who originated from those “Czech lands” that fell within the borders of Czechoslovakia after 1919 (this excludes Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, but includes Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and (if we choose to make the distinction) the territories of the so-called Sudetenland.

intersection of various national cinemas throughout their careers. In many ways, their films fell between the cracks of the purportedly clearly demarcated film cultures and in some cases have remained there in relative obscurity for decades. These directors and their films inhabit a conceptual “no man’s land” of national cinema, which often confounds attempts to approach and conceptualize their body of work in a coherent way, particularly for those of us who are accustomed to thinking along national lines, or even within seemingly less restrictive ethnic categories.

Gustav Machatý and Karel Lamač were the two most internationally recognized Czech directors of the interwar period. Even a brief analysis of their careers reveals a conspicuous relationship between the Czech film industry and its counterparts in Austria and Germany. Both directors operated within a multiplicity of national contexts, which led them to them produce films in Italian (in the case of Machatý) and Dutch (in the case of Lamač) as well as in French and English (in both cases). However, their international (that is, non-Czech) careers were and continue to be most closely linked with German-language films. After a hugely influential period as one of the most outstanding pioneers of the nascent Czechoslovak national cinema in the 1920s, Lamač all but relocated to Germany during the sound era and the number of his German-language films far outnumbers that of his Czech productions. Although he did not enjoy the same high public profile in Germany that he had in his home country, he was a well-known figure in the industry. From the beginnings, Machatý’s energies were equally divided between Vienna and Prague resulting in a string of Czech-Austrian co-productions throughout the late 1920s. His first German-language sound film, *Ekstase* (*Ecstasy*, 1934), was his biggest worldwide success and remains the film for which he is most widely known. In other words, German-Austrian cinema plays important, if not the dominant role in defining the cinema of Lamač and Machatý. With

this in mind, we are compelled to ask certain questions: What exactly did “German cinema” mean to these the Czech filmmakers? What led them to create in this “foreign” national context? And, more importantly, what do they mean for our understanding of German cinema in the 1930s and beyond?

Both Lamač and Machatý created with distinctive authorial voices. The task at hand is to find ways describe these voices in a way that accurately accounts for the unique nuances in their films, which on the whole inhabit an interstitial space where categories of nation and ideas of home are fluid and instable. In a number of significant ways, their work can be conceived in terms of what Hamid Naficy, writing in another context, has outlined that concept of “accented cinema” which he describes as arising from an “interstitial” or “exilic” mode of production” (see *An Accented Cinema*). Naficy describes minor voices at work within a dominant cultural paradigm that is foreign to them, resulting in a recognizable accent—these are “exiled”, “diasporic,” or “postcolonial” voices, they are “homeless” yet still bear the accents of their homeland. Yet, the patterns of movement that marked the careers of Lamač and Machatý do not fall neatly into these categories of “exilic,” “diasporic,” or “postcolonial.” For the majority of their productive years, Lamač and Machatý were willing nomads, each of whom cultivated his own personal cosmopolitan style, while also maintaining loyalties to certain regional and national characters. Both directors consistently operate in the tension between regional specificity and extraterritorial generalities, which marks their films with a particular sense of “homelessness” similar to that found in Naficy’s “accented cinema.” As I argue, however, their accent is not the result of exilic conditions, but a distinctive feature of the Central European environment, as precipitated by the Habsburg Empire.

In the following, I explore various ways that we can understand and describe the accents that Lamač and Machatý brought to German cinema. I suggest that an awareness of these accents not only informs our conception of German cinema from the period, but also contributes to ongoing discussions about the relationships between national cinema and so-called exilic filmmaking. I begin with a brief overview of Machatý's and Lamač's relationship to German cinema and outline the basic characteristics that define their overall film style. Although I discuss the radical differences in the types of films they made, I also emphasize that both operated as outsiders at the margins of the dominant cinema and in the spaces between various national cinemas. I then analyze how their transnational filmmaking careers can be thought of in terms of the interstitial mode of production that Hamid Naficy has attributed to accented cinema. In this context, I suggest that the terms "nomadic" or "transient" are more accurate in describing their position as filmmakers than the labels "exilic," "diasporic," or "post-colonial" that Naficy outlines. In the remainder of the chapter, my focus turns to describing specific tropes in the films of Machatý and Lamač that constitute a distinct "accent" within German cinema. Finally, I conclude by relating this accent to the cosmopolitan ambitions of both directors and suggest that this particular mode of cosmopolitanism, which constantly operates within the volatile, interstitial spaces between the national and the regional, can be understood as a defining characteristic of Central European culture more generally, as a unique inheritance from the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Prague, Germany, and the World

Both Lamač and Machatý belong to the first generation of Czechoslovakian filmmakers, which was responsible for nurturing the nascent national cinema. Although primarily known for their

work as directors, both were highly versatile and contributed to film projects in a variety of other capacities, functioning for example as producer, actor, screenwriter, editor, or even set decorator. They both entered the film world in 1919, the first year of the independent Czechoslovak Republic and a time of intense productivity in the realm of cinema. That year, Lamač acted in no less than five films, two of which he directed. His directing debut, *Akord smrtí* (Chord of Death, 1919), which he co-directed with Jan S. Kolár, also featured the young Gustav Machatý in one of his first acting roles. Machatý is also credited as co-author (together with Lamač) of the screenplay for Lamač's second stab at directing, *Vzteklý ženich* (The Wrathful Husband, 1919). In addition to his five acting credits that year, Machatý also directed the film *Teddy by kouřil* (Teddy Would Like to Smoke, 1919). After this initial year of close collaboration, though, their paths would take radically different paths.

The quantity and quality of each director's contribution to German or Austrian film culture were widely divergent, as were their receptions among critics and popular audiences. Whereas Machatý's entire directorial output amounts to only eighteen films in a career spanning four decades, Lamač is credited with nearly seventy films in the 1930s alone, forty of which were made in the German-language. Machatý directed only three films in German, only two of which appeared in the 1930s.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Machatý's work enjoyed great respect among artistic and intellectual circles due to its high quality and technical innovation. Furthermore, his film *Ecstasy* caused headlines all over Europe and beyond due to its risqué subject and racy marketing materials depicting a nude or semi-nude Hedwig Kiesler. So, whereas Lamač maintained a reputation based on the sheer number of consistently popular films that he brought

91 His final German-language film *Suchkind 312* (Orphan Child 312) was made in 1955.

on the market every year, Machatý enthralled international audiences with a small number of remarkable works, which are still highly regarded by film historians today.

With the passage of time, Machatý has retained a much more respected status outside of the Czech Republic than his fellow countryman, particularly among film scholars. In fact, at least in terms of German/Austrian film studies, he persists as the most internationally recognized Czech director from the period and has appeared as the subject of numerous popular and academic works, including a recent volume of scholarship devoted exclusively to his films.⁹² In Czech scholarship, Machatý is consistently recognized as the nation's first true film artist. In addition, he maintains an international reputation due to the notoriety associated with *Ecstasy*, which has been released in various versions worldwide on VHS and DVD.⁹³ By contrast, although many of his films were beloved hits throughout the German-speaking world in the early 1930s, Lamač fell into nearly complete obscurity in the post-war period, being equally ignored by scholarship and by the general public.⁹⁴ Of course, Lamač's films continue to rank among the

92 Recent works of note include the volumes *Gustav Machatý: ein Regisseur zwischen Prag und Hollywood* (Christian Cargnelli, ed.) and *Ekstase* (Armin Loacker, ed.) together with Michal Bregant's chapter "Ekstase" in the Czech-Austrian collaboration *Obrazy časů: Český a rakouský film 30. let / Bilder der Zeit: Tschechischer und österreichischer Film der 30er Jahre* (Gernot Heiss and Ivan Klimeš, eds.). In addition, the first major German retrospective of Machatý's films in 2001 also spurred a number of biographical essays such as Olaf Möller, "Der Lust ergeben," *Film-Dienst* 16 (2001): 39-41.

93 VHS editions of *Ecstasy* include a 1997 release by Mandacy Records presenting the dubbed and edited US release from 1940; a 1990 release by Hen's Tooth Video and a release by Image Entertainment, both of which feature original German dialogue with English subtitles; and a PAL video from the Czech FilmExport company with the original Czech dubbed version. In 2002, Image Entertainment released a DVD with English subtitles. Two other DVD editions came onto the European market in 2009: one by Edition filmmuseum (with English subtitles with region-free formatting) and one by Edition Der Standard and Hoanzl working together with the filmarchiv Austria (without English subtitles). In addition, Machatý's *Erotikon* was released on DVD (with English intertitles and in region-free formatting) by the FilmExport company in the Czech Republic in the summer of 2007.

94 I make this general conclusion about his popularity among the general public based on the fact that none of Lamač's films have yet appeared on DVD and my own observation that these

most beloved national film classics to this day among the general public in the Czech Republic.⁹⁵ Furthermore, Lamač is often credited (and rightly so) as the “grandfather of Czech cinema,” because of his tremendous contributions to the new nation-state’s industry in the 1920s. Yet he has been all but completely forgotten in Germany, where his legacy is overshadowed by the musical comedy works from directors such as Reinhold Schünzel, Georg Jacoby, and Hans Zerlett (the latter of whom collaborated closely with Lamač throughout the 1930s). Likewise, he is rarely mentioned in German film scholarship and then only as a brief notation when one of his films is mentioned in passing. With the exception of a recent chapter dedicated to the film *Frasquita* and Karsten Witte’s readings of *Fräulein Hoffmanns Erzählung* (The Tales of Miss Hoffmann, 1933) and *Flitterwochen* (Honeymoon, 1936), Lamač’s works have never been the object of extensive inquiry or analysis.⁹⁶

The Artist versus the Showman

Whereas Machatý can be considered within the ranks of other artistic professionals of Austro-Hungarian origin such as G. W. Pabst, Fritz Lang, Billy Wilder, Michael Curtiz and others, Lamač occupies the other end of the artistic spectrum, as a producer of fast and simple entertainment. Machatý often spent years crafting his projects: working up film scripts, spending long periods of time with location shooting, and meticulously editing the final product to achieve the desired effect. In contrast, Lamač produced films on the cheap, in a rapid, factory-line style, working with minimal resources and shoestring budgets. Machatý was a technical and stylistic

films rarely appear on German television or on the screens of German cinemas that include “classic” films in their programs (e.g., the program cinemas Arsenal or Babylon in Berlin.)
 95 This is particularly true of the films he made with Vlasta Burian, which have all been released on DVD and are perennial favorites in the weekly broadcasts of classic films on the national TV station Česká televize.

96 See Buchschwenter and Szely; and Witte, *Lachende Erben* 54-56, 112-114.

innovator, who experimented with different formal elements and constantly tested the boundaries of filmic expression. His first sound feature, *Ze soboty na neděli* (From Saturday to Sunday, 1931), stands together with Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) and Robert Siodmak's *Abschied* (Farewell, 1930) as one of the most innovative and intriguing explorations of the new sound film medium emerge from Central Europe.⁹⁷ Likewise, the return in *Ecstasy* to a "silent film aesthetic" that relied on images to communicate the story while reducing dialogue to a bare minimum is reminiscent of Chaplin's films of the early 1930s. By contrast, Lamač's films appear much more superficial and "conservative," relying on (indeed imitating) well-worn generic conventions and filmic techniques. One biographer admits: "Lamač the film director was much more skilled at arranging action before the camera than at active artistic creation" (Bartošek 1). In general terms Machatý's work tends more towards the psychological complexities of "art cinema," whereas Lamač's films are inauspicious entertainment without grand aesthetic aspirations. No two directors could be further apart, or so it seems.

Due primarily to this discrepancy in the "artistic" value of their works, nearly all of Lamač's films from the 1930s and 1940s have been completely forgotten outside of the present day Czech Republic, whereas Machatý is remembered as an internationally relevant film artist with a particular significance for film history (both in the German/Austrian context and internationally).⁹⁸ Yet, it is precisely the popular nature of Lamač's work that makes it so important for current research into German cinema of the interwar period. As Sabine Hake has argued, the study of German film, particularly when addressing the Nazi era, requires "greater attention to the complicated relationship of popular cinema to high and low culture, as well as to

97 For a synopsis of the film's plot and comparisons with several early German sound productions, see Sannwald.

98 In addition to the German and Austrian texts cited above, see also Lucy Fischer's study of *Ecstasy* in the context of US censorship.

regional, national, and international culture in the context of institutional practices, aesthetic forms, and cultural traditions” (*Popular Cinema* 7). Indeed, the very “popular” nature of Lamač’s films situates them even closer to the everyday experience of the common people in a given society. It is easy, indeed even inviting, to dismiss Lamač as a mere “hack,” whose mass-produced and generally low-quality entertainment pictures offer little of interest to the film scholar. Eric Rentschler, for example, quietly disparages two Lamač features due to their “leadensome and clumsy dance numbers” and “unbearably strained levity” (*Ministry* 116) that paled in comparison to the “lightness and verve” of the German comedy tour de force *Glückskinder* (*Lucky Kids*, 1936) (*Ministry* 103). Yet, as recent work on Edgar Ulmer, the “King of the B’s,” has demonstrated, there is much to be learned from cheap, aesthetically-deficient pictures, if the questions are framed properly with regard to their meaning as cultural and historical products.⁹⁹

In this spirit, my analysis of Lamač takes a certain inspiration from contemporary re-examinations of Ulmer’s work. I do not attempt to equate Lamač’s aesthetic sensibilities or career path with those of Ulmer, however, I do argue that a proper analysis of Lamač’s career and filmic output offers a unique insight into German, Austrian, and Central European cinema culture in the first half of the 20th century due to the way that he adapted to multiple cultural and

⁹⁹ The recent boom in scholarship on Ulmer is indeed impressive. The major works include: Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *Edgar G. Ulmer: Essays on the King of the B's* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009); Bernd Herzogenrath, ed., *The Films of Edgar G. Ulmer* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009); Noah Isenberg, “Permanent Vacation: Home and Homelessness in the Life and Work of Edgar G. Ulmer,” *Caught by Politics*, Sabine Eckmann and Lutz Koepnick, editors (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 175-194; Isenberg “Perennial Detour: The Cinema of Edgar G. Ulmer and the Experience of Exile,” *Cinema Journal*, 43.2 (Winter 2004) 3-25; Gary D. Rhodes ed., *Edgar G. Ulmer: Detour on Poverty Row* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); as well as the catalogue published in conjunction with the Ulmer retrospective at the 1997 Edinburgh Film Festival *Retrospective* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Film Festival, 1997) (including articles from Lizzie Francke and John Belton). Isenberg also appears as a primary commentator in the highly informative documentary film about Ulmer’s life and films, *Edgar G. Ulmer: The Man Offscreen* (2004).

national contexts yet consistently maintained what I describe as a uniquely Central European voice.

Lamač is a particularly interesting figure because his cinematic mode of address and his overall approach to production was quite rare for the 1930s. In many ways, his “aesthetic” harks back to earlier eras of cinema history. Lamač was an obvious fan of American slapstick films and crime dramas, elements of which turn up in many of his films.¹⁰⁰ More interestingly, his style strongly recalls the so-called “cinema of attractions” that defined the first decade of the medium. This mode of cinema address emphasized showing rather than telling, focusing on visual delights as opposed to narrative development. Likewise, many of Lamač’s films lack a strong dramatic arc and play rather as a loosely associated string of episodes, gags, and musical numbers that rely on bodily performance and audio-visual spectacle. (In some sense, it is safe to say that many of his films are simply rehashings of the self same narrative elements simply presented with different “decoration,” that is different settings, actors, jokes, music, etc.) In this way, the films tend to resemble a variety show or cabaret performance as opposed to a complex story with psychologically well-defined characters. The resulting products therefore strike the modern spectator as fragmented, uneven, even confusing “messes”—unsuccessful hybrids of various narrative impulses and generic styles. For example, he inserts elements of the *Bergfilm* or “pilot film” genre (*The Tales of Miss Hoffmann*) or horror films (*Der junge Graf* [The Young Count], 1935) into his comedies; conversely, slapstick elements and verbal gags are a prominent feature of his otherwise serious crime films (e.g., *Der Doppelgänger* [The Double], 1934; and

100 Lamač’s fascination with the slapstick genre is evident from the very beginning of his career, particularly in his second film *Gilly poprve v Praze* (Gilly’s First Trip to Prague, 1919), for which he also supplied the scenario and in which he acted. The title character Gilly is, in fact, an overt imitation of Chaplin’s famous tramp character. This was also one of the first films to feature Anny Ondráková, who would later become famous for her highly physical, slapstick-inspired acting style.

Der Hund von Baskerville [*The Hound of the Baskervilles*], 1937). Furthermore, films such as *Eine Nacht in Paradies* (*A Night in Paradise*, 1932) feature lengthy non-diegetic sequences of stage performances—spectacular diversions that function completely independent of the filmic narrative (completely ignoring the main characters for several minutes). As Thomas Elsaesser has pointed out, though, this mode of cinema production has a tradition that goes back to the mid-1910s, when the full-length narrative film began to supplant the diverse short-subject “numbers program” that was the primary mode of exhibition until that point—in this context, such hybrid films can be read as the attempt to replicate the variety of the program in one film product, in other words they suggest that “the numbers principle has survived inside the continuous feature film” (“Early German Cinema” 33). Although this affinity with earlier modes of filmic address does not “apologize” for the general low production quality of Lamač’s films, it does offer a way to conceptualize his significance beyond the fact that he was very much a minor character in German cinema whose work is somewhat out of synch with the aesthetic norms of the times. (Indeed, being “out of synch” can be thought of as a defining characteristic of “accented cinema” more generally.) Elsaesser has identified a similar indebtedness to the numbers principle and non-narrative traditions in the cinema of comedy great Reinhold Schünzel, who was also a specialist in providing American-style entertainments to German audiences (see *Weimar Cinema* 302-4). Like Schünzel, Lamač was first and foremost a showman who strove to entertain and amuse, and in this he is more intimately tied to the origins of the cinematic medium than those directors with artistic and ideological aspirations. His filmic style is more indebted to the nickelodeon and carnival sideshow acts than to Max Reinhardt or Expressionism (as was the case with Machatý and Ulmer). The performance- and attraction-oriented style of Lamač’s films invites us to read them not as artistically complex texts with

deeper intellectual implications but as fascinating surfaces that are worth exploring for the things that they show and the experiential mode of cinema spectatorship that they enact.

The influences of slapstick and vaudeville manifest themselves in Lamač's use of simple visual effects to generate comedy and wonder. He commonly accentuated or complemented the performances of his actors with trick photography and sight gags that were relatively uncommon in the German comedies of the period, which relied primarily on verbal humor and situational misunderstandings. In the opening sequence of *Der falsche Feldmarschall* (the German version of *C. a k. polní maršálek* [The Imperial and Royal Field Marshal], 1930), the main protagonist (played in typical over-the-top fashion by Vlasta Burian) displays his rigid sense of military discipline by scolding his chambermaid for a missing button on her uniform. After she has left, he vents similar indignation at the wilted flowers on the windowsill, a pair of crumpled boots by the door, and a jumble of apples on the mantle. In response to his reprimands these inanimate objects spring to immediate attention, aligning themselves in a strict order just like soldiers in a military drill. The rendering of these visual tricks (likely achieved through the use of "invisible" wires) is reminiscent of the special effects of comedy theater and slapstick films. A similar gag is used in reverse in *Baby* (1932) when Anny Ondra dumps a glass of Scotch whisky into a potted cactus, which shakes from side to side before sagging forlornly under the effect of the alcohol. Later in the same scene, Anny herself gets drunk in a sequence of chaotic hilarity as she stumbles around the room. With the use of camera movement and prop gags, Lamač renders Anny's drunkenness visually for the film viewer. In point of view shots, the camera cants from side to side to simulate the instability of Anny's inebriated perception. In addition, the world of objects around her also becomes unstable, giving away to her teetering and rocking flexibly to and fro, such that the exterior world shown to the viewers serves as a projection of Anny's inner

drunkenness. For example, as she falls into a cushioned chair she grabs a standing lamp, which she sways back and forth while the chair itself rocks uncontrollably from side to side under her weight (fig. 10). Anny's performance of drunkenness clearly displays the influence of the body mimicry used by Chaplin and other slapstick stars. Furthermore, the humor of these various sight gags lies firmly in the slapstick tradition, which capitalizes on the distortion and abstraction of the physical world of objects and the body's interaction with it.



Figure 10. Special props create visual gags within Anny Ondra's drunken world in *Baby*. [Source: screen capture from German VHS release.]

In other instances, Lamač uses visual trickery to deliberately confound the physical limits of reality in the creation of wonderfully impossible spectacles. One example is the split-screen technique to present one actor playing two characters in one frame, such as in the finale of *Ich liebe alle Frauen* (*I Like all the Women*, 1935), in which Polish tenor Jan Kiepura sings a duet with himself. The film's narrative has Kiepura playing both renowned singer Jan Morena (an

obvious reiteration of Kiepura's off-screen persona) and simple greengrocer Edi Jaworski, who realizes his own singing aspirations when he is hired by Morena's impresario to fulfill the famous tenor's social engagements, due to his physical resemblance with Morena. When the two finally meet up, the audience is treated to a fantastic double recital that only cinema could realize convincingly (fig. 11). A more complex (if less convincing) visual sleight of hand is seen in *The Young Count*: during the opening of the carnival stage performance of "The Two Fellows," a father-daughter clown team (played by Anny Ondra and Paul Heidemann), Anny removes various body parts from a handbag and assembles them on stage.¹⁰¹ The final step involves taking the dismembered and talking head of her father from the bag and joining it to this "body," which immediately comes to life and initiates a song and dance number. Although this scene



Figure 11. Jan Kiepura sings a duet with himself by means of camera trickery in the climax of *I Like all the Women*. (Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.)

¹⁰¹ The English name of the duo displays a fascination with American models and can also be thought of as an expression of Lamač's transnational accent within German cinema.

depicts a sideshow act in a realistic setting with a sight gag typical to the genre, the trick itself would be “impossible” in a real live performance. This magical effect is created exclusively through the use of Méliès style trick editing: a wide shot of actor Paul Heidemann’s actual head speaking from “inside a sack” cuts to a close shot of Anny lifting a mannequin head and placing it on the assembled body. This is followed by a cut to another wide shot, in which Anny makes the final adjustments to the (mannequin) head, before the final cut to a medium shot of the actual Heidemann in the same position wearing the same clothes as the assemblage of part, creating the illusion that the inanimate body has come to life. Although the theme of this sequence is indebted to the sideshow and vaudeville traditions, the execution of the trick is a purely cinematic feat. Furthermore, by suggesting the fragmented nature of identity comprised of an assemblage of dismembered parts, this is a thoroughly modern gesture.

In the broadest terms, Karel Lamač was a showman in the tradition of P. T. Barnum, Carl Hagenbeck, Max Mack, and George Méliès. He has more in common with the fairground barker than with the novelist, the studio painter, or the architect. Although Lamač was intensely interested in the technical capabilities of the film medium (particularly when it came to producing visual gags or intensifying the sense of viewer amazement), his works do not display a high level of formal stylization or sophistication. For the most part, his work with the camera is straightforward and unobtrusive. Except for his penchant for sight gags and camera tricks, Lamač’s film technique is rarely technically outstanding (in terms of camera movement, framing, editing, etc.). His films are more about displaying the talent of his performers than showing off his own technical expertise behind the camera. He relies unabashedly on the distinctive presence of dancers, acrobats, opera singers, and comedians to carry the mood and maintain viewer interest. A majority of his films were little more than star-vehicles, most of them being tailored

to the extremely physical comedic performance style of Anny Ondra. Other films were showcases for the performances of famous singers such as the Polish Jan Kiepura (*I Like All the Women*), Hungarian Martha Eggerth (*Wo die Lerche singt* [Where the Lark Sings, 1936]; *Immer wenn ich glücklich bin* [Waltz Melodies, 1938]), and Czech opera diva Jarmila Novotná (*Frasquita*, 1934). Likewise, other films are best understood as vehicles for comedians such as Vlasta Burian (*The Imperial and Royal Field Marshal*; *Er und seine Schwester* [Meet the Sister, 1931]; *Wehe wenn er losgelassen* [Woe When He's on the Loose, 1932]) and Munich-native Karl Valentin, with whom Lamač collaborated on several short comedic film sketches. The Valentin films *Orchesterprobe* (The Orchestra Rehearsal, 1933), *Der verhexte Scheinwerfer* (The Jinxed Lamp, 1934), and *So ein Theater* (Such a Ruckus, 1934) were all directed by Lamač and produced by Ondra-Lamač-Film GmbH. A fourth film, *Im Schallplattenladen* (In the Record Store, 1934), was also produced by Lamač's company, but directed by Hans Zerlett. It is not difficult to see the similarities between Valentin's virtuoso humor and that of Vlasta Burian—both toyed extensively with the oddities of language and tended to play outsider figures that did not “fit in” to mainstream society (a typical slapstick trope). These comedians, like many of his stars had such a powerful presence that they could carry an entire film.

If any of Lamač's films are still remembered today, it is primarily due to the appeal of their lead performer—be it Ondra, Kiepura, Burian, or Valentin—rather than for Lamač's contribution as director and producer. In other words, although a number of these works retain a place within the general film memory, it is not under the label of “Lamač films,” but as “Burian films,” “Valentin films” etc. Among all those who consistently worked with Lamač, Anny Ondra stands clearly in the forefront as the most identifiable icon associated with Lamač's films. In fact, Ondra's star image unfailingly overshadowed Lamač's contribution to the films on which

they worked together. In period film reviews, critics perceived their collaborative productions first and foremost as “Anny-Ondra-Filme” and generally only made reference to Lamač as “Anny’s director.” To a great extent, Lamač was an “invisible director” whose input was eclipsed by the spectacle and star appeal of his performers.

The significance of Karel Lamač for European cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, however, goes well beyond his role as director. In addition to acting in a significant number of films, Lamač also wrote numerous screenplays and occasionally worked as editor. In addition, he appeared as an actor in numerous films under his own direction as well as that of others.¹⁰² Furthermore, he was also deeply involved in the technical and economical aspects of the film business: he invented and patented multiple innovations in film equipment. In 1926 he founded and partially designed the Na Kavalírce film studio in Prague. This was only the second studio to be built in Czechoslovakia and had a reputation as one of the most modern studios in Central Europe until it burned down in 1929.¹⁰³ A year later, he established his own production company in Berlin together with long-time companion Anny Ondra. The company, named appropriately enough Ondra-Lamač-Film GmbH, was a remarkably productive factory for light entertainment films, specializing in the showcasing of the various talents mentioned above. Lamač was a true renaissance man of the film world, who was resourceful in commanding multiple aspects of the cinematic apparatus. His position as director-producer-actor-writer-editor-inventor is reminiscent

102 The vast majority of his acting performances occurred in silent films prior to 1929. In the 1930s he channeled more energy into producing and only acted in a handful of roles before emigrating in 1939.

103 During their brief existence, the technically superior Na Kavalírce studios produced a number of films important to Czech as well as German/Austrian cinema history, including Machatý’s *Erotikon* (1929), German director Karl Junghans’s classic *So ist das Leben/Takový je život* (*Such is Life*, 1930), and Karel Anton’s *Tonka Šibenice* (*Toni of the Gallows*, 1930), which after post-synchronization in Paris became the first sound film made in Czechoslovakia.

of the “universal geniuses,” such as Oskar Messter, who were the pioneers of the film industry in its first decades.¹⁰⁴

Lamač’s authorial voice in German cinema can be most succinctly linked to the Berlin-based Ondra-Lamač-Film. The existence of the company spanned little more than half a decade from its founding in 1930 until 1936, when it eventually fell victim to Nazi measures to consolidate and centralize the film industry.¹⁰⁵ The company, which specialized in the production of German and French-language films (always as part of an MLV pair) for the European market, is noteworthy for the sheer number of films it churned out annually (three to four on average) and for its function as a node of transnational production. It appears that the company was more or less self-sufficient, able to cover the production costs for its films, yet typically entered into co-production agreements in order to facilitate international distribution. In essence, the company functioned as the primary production and distribution platform in Germany for Lamač’s directorial efforts, which more often than not featured performances by Ondra. With the exception of *Der Doppelgänger* (The Double, 1934), directed by E. W. Emo, all of the films produced by the company were made with Lamač himself sitting in the director’s chair.¹⁰⁶ These

104 See, for example, Elsaesser’s assessment of Messter in “Early German Cinema: A Second Life,” *A Second Life: German Cinema’s First Decades*, 16-18.

105 Unfortunately, little documentation has survived to tell about the business operations of Ondra-Lamač-Film GmbH. Most of the company’s correspondence appears to have not survived the war years. In my own research in the German and Czech archives, I have come across only a scant few documents related to the company. (It is possible that the holdings kept in Lamač’s estate contain such materials, but these documents have not yet become available for scholarly evaluation.) The primary source of information about the company comes to us through the films themselves and even here the record is sadly incomplete as many of the films are no longer to be found in archives. In this light, Lamač can be understood as „transient“ not only in the way his film career traversed Europe, but also in terms of how subsequently fleeting his films and reputation became in post-war Western Europe.

106 The director’s chair was shared on only one occasion: the 1931 adaptation of Edgar Wallace’s *Der Zinker* (*The Squeaker*) was co-directed by Lamač and fellow countryman Martin Frič.

factors offered him both the financial and creative freedom to produce films according to his own vision, even if this vision was guided more by the desire for popular acclaim and economic profits than by lofty artistic concerns. Ondra-Lamač-Film represents a prominent example of “independent” or “B-movie” production from this period.¹⁰⁷ In fact, for a period of three or four years Ondra-Lamač-Film marks one of the few “independent” voices in German cinema after Hitler’s rise to power. The company operated more or less autonomously from Ufa and the other “majors” (Bavaria, Terra, Tobis, et al.) that were eventually consolidated under the Nazi-controlled umbrella company Universum-Film (Ufi).

In contrast to Lamač’s “invisible” directorial style, Gustav Machatý’s “independent voice” is much more in line with the conception of the director as commanding artist-author-genius figure that dominates our image of 1920s German cinema (think Fritz Lang, F. W. Murnau, G. W. Pabst, etc.) and has maintained currency in European and World cinema ever since. For the most part, Machatý is the only Czech-speaking feature film director, whose work is recognized as being aesthetically comparable to other leading European art film directors of the period.¹⁰⁸ In stark contrast to Lamač’s slapdash spectacle products, Machatý’s films consistently bear evidence of his greater ambitions towards “high art” and technical innovation of the medium. Already in his first directorial credit of the 1920s, *Kreutzerova sonata* (The Kreutzer Sonata, 1927) Machatý made his initial mark as an extraordinary author-director. This film marks the first introduction of many themes and elements of visual language that the

107 The label of “B-movie” here is, of course, inaccurate in terms of historical reality, in which the term “B” was applied to the bottom half of a double feature. My use of the term speaks rather to the commonly understood usage of “B-movie” to describe a low-budget production that has no ambitions to the higher technical and artistic standards of the studio system’s larger projects.

108 This assessment does not, of course, take into account the experimental work in abstract and documentary film being done in this period by Otakar Vávra, Alexander Hackenschmied and other Czech avant-garde filmmakers.

director would consistently return to and developed over the course of his career: a woman caught between the love of two men, provocative engagements with sexuality, jealous obsession culminating in death, an emphasis on symbolic images to communicate the narrative, etc. With regard to visual representation and thematic material, Machatý's oeuvre is most stylistically akin to German cinema of the 1920s. The visual aesthetic of his films demonstrates a clear debt to the lighting and *mise en scène* of the so-called "Expressionist" tradition of Weimar cinema.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the recurring themes of sexuality, ill-fated rebellion, and tragic death are easily compatible with the Weimar cinema paradigm of paralysis and submission famously described by Siegfried Kracauer.¹¹⁰ In addition to taking inspiration from the German "Expressionist" aesthetic, his film style clearly exhibits influence by the Soviet school of montage¹¹¹ and his experimental approach to the filmic medium is closely linked to trends in the international avant-garde, particularly the work of Walter Ruttmann.¹¹² His films often arose from direct collaboration with leading Czech avant-garde writers and artists, such as leftist Surrealist poet Vítěslav Nezval (who assisted with the screenplay for *Erotikon* and *From Saturday to Sunday*; documentary, avant-garde, and independent film pioneer Alexander Hackenschmied (who designed the sets for *Erotikon*, and *From Saturday to Sunday*); and progressive jazz composer Jaroslav Ježek (who provided the music for *From Saturday to Sunday*). Although Machatý might

109 This has been commented on by a number of scholars, see for example, Leonardo Quaresima, " 'Nocturno': ein experimentelles Melodram," *Gustav Machaty, ein Regisseur*, 221-223.

110 See Kracauer, especially his commentaries on "street films" 113-28, Pabst and New Objectivity 165-80, and cross-section films 181-9.

111 This is most conspicuous in the final sequence of *Ecstasy*, which features a rhythmical juxtaposition of idealized, muscular bodies at work and fields of grain reminiscent of Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov.

112 For an overview of Machatý's connections to the Czech and international avant-garde, see Müller, "Bilder der Moderne," Pitassio "Der Hampelmann und der Schriftsetzer," Prümm "Selbstaflösung der Avantgarde," and Kothenschulte "Innovation in Konvention."

have been more interested in economic benefit than the generally socialist-inspired members of his creative circle, they shared a common investment in the international (and internationalizing) potential of modern art.

Machaty is best known today for *Ecstasy*, which is remarkable for its innovative use of sound, symbolism, and montage. *Ecstasy* relies almost entirely on images to convey the story and emotions; there is no extended dialogue in the entire film.¹¹³ Rather than a simply anachronistic reversion to silent cinema, Machaty's innovative yet sparse uses of sound in *Ecstasy* are in fact on par with Charles Chaplin's early quasi-silent sound film experiments *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936). It is far from the truth to claim that *Ecstasy* ignores sound wholesale—non-verbal sound is, in fact, a key factor in creating meaning and communicating emotion. For example, in the sequence leading up to the consummation of the illicit love affair, Eva plays the piano to let out her inner sexual frustration. Suddenly, she stops playing and restless non-diegetic music takes over signaling a shift in her emotion, as she resigns to venture into the dark to visit her potential lover's cabin. Simultaneously, we hear the diegetic sound of a gusty wind that reflects her inner emotional turmoil and enters into conversation with the rapid montage of statues, paintings, wind-blown curtains, and close-ups of Eva's determined yet troubled face. In another sequence, after Emil learns of his wife's infidelity he races his car on a collision course with an oncoming train, whose presence is made known entirely through the use of off-camera sound. After impact is eventually avoided, both car and train screech to a dramatic halt and a mechanical wheezing sound dominates the otherwise quiet soundtrack as the image alternates between pictures of Emil's heaving chest and the steam engine, thus

113 In the version presented in the Image DVD release, the character of Emil is almost entirely silent, having only three lines of spoken dialogue in the whole film: "Eva!" (repeated several times), "dich", and "ich denke auch."

establishing a link between intake and outtake of the recuperating motor to Emil's deep, labored breathing and destabilizing our sense of aural orientation. Later, Emil's suicide is signaled by a stark off-screen gunshot that suddenly interrupts the dance music in the room below. The film is littered with such examples that display the director's careful attention to and control of sound and its expressive potential. The complex interplay that Machatý creates between the image and the soundtrack, comprised of Giuseppe Becce's expressive score, diegetic music (in the dance scene and piano sequence), and noises (diegetic and non-diegetic) is highly unique in the early sound era and marks an intriguing development in Machatý's strategy towards an "international" film language.¹¹⁴

Ecstasy's indebtedness to the formal innovations of "Expressionism" and Soviet Montage as well as its experimentation with sound are testament to Machatý's ambition to mobilize the elements of cinema in the communication of inner emotions, intellectual ideas, and deep psychological states. By contrast, Lamač's films are marvelously superficial and aim for little more than simple entertainment in their presentation of bodies in motion, fantastic illusions, and catchy melodies. For the most part, these two speak in utterly different film languages. Nevertheless, from the perspective of (or rather to the ears of) German cinema, they share a highly similar accent. In other words, these two creative voices both operated within a mode of "accented cinema" that was a direct factor of their status as Czechs.

114 This use of music to reinforce and communicate emotion also foreshadows what would later become standard practice in the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, Veit Harlan, and others.

Film Production at the Margins

For Naficy, “accented style” arises from the conditions under which the films are made, what he calls “the interstitial mode of production.”¹¹⁵ In this framework, the “accent” has as much to do with the way films are created as it does with the way the finished films look (or even sound). For him, the accent arises more or less naturally from the mode of production itself. The resulting “accented cinema” is characterized by a specific mode of address that bears the unique stamp of the “cosmopolitan ‘homeless’ exiles” producing it (“Framing Exile” 4). The “homelessness” of these filmmakers is a factor of various modes of mobility that separate them from “home” (or “homeland”) and thereby establish them as “deterritorialized . . . partial, fragmented, and multiple subjects” (*Accented Cinema* 12-13). “Accented cinema” occupies a unique place, because it is “produced in the interstices of dominant culture industries and social formations” (“Framing Exile” 5). Due to their position in-between German, Austrian, Czech and other national cinemas, it is useful to think of Lamač and Machatý in such terms of “interstitiality.” Furthermore, their filmic output bears many of the distinctive characteristics that Naficy has identified as intrinsic to “accented cinema.” Indeed, this accented mode is a useful tool for linking these otherwise very different figures. As Naficy points out, “accented cinema” cannot be defined in terms of a unified style or generic schemas—it is rather a mode of address, a way of speaking, shared by filmmakers, who are united by their “liminal subjectivity and interstitial location in society and the film industry” (*Accented Cinema* 10). If we conceive of Lamač and Machatý in these terms, a number of commonalities in their film work become evident.

115 For the full description of the “interstitial mode of production” see Naficy “Between Rocks and Hard Places.”

The primary characteristic shared by the German films of these Czech directors and “accented cinema” is what Naficy describes as the “financial provisions under which it operates” (“Between Rocks” 134). He observes that interstitial filmmakers often have to invest in their own films and as a consequence they are generally made on a relatively low budget. Clearly, this is the primary mode in which Karel Lamač operated in Germany during the 1930s. Nearly all of his German-language directorial efforts were carried out under the auspices of Ondra-Lamač-Film. In other words, he funded most of his German films himself. Of course, since this was only a minor company, the production budgets were never high. Consequently, the films of Ondra-Lamač-Film are recognizable for their “cheap” quality that distinguishes them from the gloss of the big budget productions at Ufa and other major German companies. Machatý, by contrast, did not have his own company (at least not for any prolonged period) and neither was he affiliated with any particular studios. As a result, he was compelled to independently seek funding for each new project that he developed. For example, it took him several years after completing the script for *Ecstasy* to finally acquire the financial backing needed to begin filming. Under the prevailing modes of film production at that time, there was little support to be had for such economically impractical “artistic projects” as Machatý’s (e.g., a psychological film with almost no dialogue, in the year 1934, no less). As a result, for all of their high artistic quality, Machatý’s films are nevertheless marked by certain degrees of aesthetic shortcomings as a consequence of the financial constraints of their production. Of course, simply being made on a low budget is not entirely sufficient to constitute a film as “accented.” At the same time, it is undeniable that Lamač and Machatý were positioned at the margins of the dominant industries and a defining characteristic of this marginality was restricted access to the financial reserves that support the dominant industry. “The exilic mode of production encourages the development of an accented

and deterritorialized style that is driven by its own limitations, that is, its smallness, imperfection, amateurishness, and lack of cinematic gloss” (Naficy, “Between Rocks” 131). Since neither Lamač nor Machatý ever operated entirely within dominant German (or Austrian) film industry, their films were always marked by an “accent” of alterity that distinguishes their films from the mainstream national cinema on a very basic aesthetic level.

Although Lamač and Machatý may have been forced to sacrifice in the way of production values due to their marginal status in German cinema, what they gained in the bargain was a certain degree of autonomy. For Naficy, another major characteristic of accented or exilic cinema is that it is relatively autonomous. As he sees it, “this autonomy is derived fundamentally from its interstitiality within social and economic formations and its marginality within the dominant film and media industries” (Naficy, “Between Rocks” 129). It is precisely this autonomy that enabled Lamač and Machatý to operate beyond the constraints of the mainstream, thereby producing films that were not entirely compatible with the dominant film style and in some cases even directly challenged it. For Machatý in particular this allowed for a greater degree of formal experimentation and the opportunity to explore morally questionable issues. Consequently, *Ecstasy* remains noteworthy today not only from a technical perspective (e.g., its innovative use of sound, symbolic montage, etc.), but because of the challenge to the patriarchal status quo inherent in its progressive exploration of female pleasure.¹¹⁶ For Lamač, this autonomy afforded the opportunity to engage themes and genres that were not entirely compatible with the dominant industry. For example, his adaptations of Edgar Wallace (*The Double*) and Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*) belong to the very few

116 The transgression of patriarchal norms can be read not only as a factor of the story itself, but in the way the film coordinates the gaze and visually structures meaning. See Fischer’s feminist-psychoanalytical interpretation of the film and its impact.

examples of the discouraged crime/detective genre during the Nazi era.¹¹⁷ Due to its “minor” status, Ondra-Lamač-Film was not an immediate target of *Gleichschaltung* in the film industry, and therefore operated in somewhat independent gray zone for several years. Consequently, Lamač was able to continuing employing Jewish cameraman Otto Heller under the auspices of his German company until late 1935 despite the Reich’s strict anti-Jewish prohibition (Bartošek 7). The high degree of independence afforded to Lamač and Machatý as a factor of their marginal position is a defining contributor to the accented nature of their films in the context of German cinema.

Willing Nomads

As stated previously Naficy’s account of “accented cinema” is not entirely sufficient for describing the place of Lamač and Machatý in German cinema, since they do not fall neatly into any of the three primary categories of accented filmmakers he describes. His first category, “exilic,” relates primarily to individuals who are banished from their homelands due to a particular offense. Although this category becomes somewhat useful for analyzing the later careers of Lamač and Machatý, for the better part of their productive years in the film business, these directors did not live in a state of exile—quite to the contrary they returned freely and frequently to Prague throughout the 1920s and 1930s. It was only in the later 1930s and early 1940s that Lamač and Machatý became true exiles, settling in London and Hollywood respectively. Furthermore, in both cases, the period of forced exile all but spelled the end of their film careers, such that the term “exilic” is only applicable to a small handful of films from the end of their careers that are hardly representative of their overall oeuvre. After a decade in which

117 See Bergfelder, *International Adventures* 145-6 for commentary on the general Nazi antipathy for the crime/detective genre.

he made more than seventy films, Lamač directed a mere five films in exile during the 1940s before returning to Germany for his final production in the 1952. Likewise, after several non-credited directing jobs on Hollywood productions in 1937, Machatý directed only three films in the US between 1938 and 1945 before returning to Germany for his last film in 1955. Rather than giving them a voice, exile effectively spelled the end of their careers.

Likewise, Naficy's other categories, "diasporic" and "postcolonial ethnic," do not effectively define the interstitial spaces occupied by Lamač and Machatý. The primary distinction between "exilic" and "diasporic" is that the latter describes the situation of a large national or ethnic community rather than individuals. As a result, this type of cinema not only engages the filmmaker's relationship to the homeland but also the compatriot communities in the host country. Again, there is some resonance here to Lamač and Machatý, who were part of a larger Central European émigré community in the USA and Great Britain. Yet, as with "exilic," the term "diasporic" only proves useful in describing the later, relatively unproductive years of their careers. The "postcolonial ethnic" mode of filmmaking refers to an even further stage of attachment to the host country. These filmmakers explore and negotiate the politics of ethnic and racial identity in relation to the dominant culture. In some ways, this category seems most useful for conceptualizing the unique positions of Lamač and Machatý with regard to identity. These Czech-Bohemian directors arose from a distinctly hybrid and multinational context, in which they could be identified equally as "Czech," "Bohemian," as well as "Austrian," whereby the former term refers to an ethnic or linguistic allegiance, the central marks out geographical boundaries, and the last describes inclusion within a political entity. However, whereas the directors themselves share qualities of the "split," "hybridized," or "multiple" identity belonging to "postcolonial ethnic" filmmakers, they do not directly translate or engage with their unique

outsider status within their German films. In other words, neither Lamač nor Machatý produced a German-language film that in any way thematized the “Czech experience” in terms of a cultural confrontation—indeed with the possible exception of *Ecstasy* their German films are conspicuously devoid of Bohemian character and Czech figures. I shall return to the issue of hybrid identity at the end of this chapter as a tool for conceptualizing Lamač and Machatý as proponents of a distinctly Central European voice. For now, though, the specific qualities of this voice need to be explored and defined a bit more extensively.

The main hitch we encounter when attempting to apply Naficy’s categories of accented cinema to Lamač and Machatý lies in the relationship between space and motion. Although the movement across space, from one racial/ethnic/national context to another, is a prerequisite for establishing the conditions for accented or exilic cinema, this cinematic dialect, arises from conditions of relative fixity, at least according to Naficy’s descriptions. In other words, the accented cinema comes into being when the exiled-diasporic-postcolonial subject speaks from a situated position within the dominant, “foreign” culture. In the cases of both Lamač and Machatý, however, we are dealing with profoundly unfixed subjects, constantly in flux, wandering back and forth across national boundaries from one film industry to another. Their films do not fall nicely into chronologically ordered geographic phases, as is the case with other well known transnational transplants such as Fritz Lang or Ernst Lubitsch (whose careers were marked by a period of great productivity in Germany followed by a prolonged stint in Hollywood). With Lamač and Machatý, there is no neat division between a “Czech period” and a “German” or “Austrian” period—instead, both directors were in a state of constant motion between these countries (and others), working within various national contexts more or less simultaneously. Until they eventually emigrated from Central Europe, neither remained situated

in one environment long enough to establish a true sense of belonging. It is for this reason that Naficy's categories of "situated but universal" figures are insufficient here (*Accented Cinema* 10). The position of Lamač and Machatý is much more unstable, fluid, and fleeting. More fitting terms for their mode of cinema are "transient" or "nomadic."

The sub-title of the recent volume dedicated to Machatý—"A Film Director between Prague and Hollywood" (Ein Filmregisseur zwischen Prag und Hollywood)—positions him in an interstitial space between two national cinema contexts, thereby explicitly highlighting the transient nature of his career.¹¹⁸ Machatý was a cinematic nomad from his very first years in the industry. Hot on the heels of his enormous contributions to the fledgling Czechoslovak cinema in 1919,¹¹⁹ he departed for the USA in 1920 where he spent several years in Hollywood learning film craft at the sides of some of the most important filmmakers of the period, including Erich von Stroheim, Tod Browning, and D. W. Griffith.¹²⁰ Upon returning to Europe in 1924, he spent

118 Furthermore, in a small, yet significant move, the books publishers have in fact "internationalized" the director's name by omitting the diacritic over the "y," i.e., by printing Machaty as opposed to Machatý as the name reads in Czech. This may seem like a small alteration to outsiders, but it is a significant matter for Czechs (both in terms of orthography/pronunciation and national pride). Throughout the entire book, all Czech names and titles have been thus "Romanized" through the omission of Czech diacritics.

119 In addition to writing, directing, and acting in a number of features that year, he was also involved in production. Together with Karel Lamač, S. Innemann, and Jan S. Kolár, Machatý founded the company KLIM (whose name was based on their initials), which produced *Akord smrti* (1919), Karel Lamač's directorial debut. In addition, Machatý also had his own production company "Geemfilm" (after his own initials), under the auspices of which he made his directorial debut, *Teddy by kouřil* (Teddy Would Like to Smoke, 1919). Also at this time, Machatý supposedly "discovered" actress Anny Ondráková, having her cast in *Dáma s malou nožkou* (The Girl with the Small Foot, 1919), one of the first films that he wrote. Machatý also played one of the lead roles in this film.

120 See, Cargnelli, 12-14 and Loacker, *Ekstase*, 356-357 Just as with his subsequent time in Vienna, there is little concrete information about the specific projects he was involved with in Hollywood, since his name does not turn up in any film credits from that period. According to IMDb.com, Machatý worked as Erich von Stroheim's assistant for *Foolish Wives* (1922): <<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0532561/>> August 22, 2008. Also, a 1929 German article

several years in Vienna film studios acquiring more international filmmaking experience (yet again without being credited for work on any specific film). The filming for his 1927 “debut” film *The Kreutzer Sonata* (after nearly a decade absence from directing) was divided between studios and locations in Prague and the famous Schönbrunn studios in Vienna. In so doing, Machatý hoped to register his film as a Czech-Austrian co-production, but he was unsuccessful—despite the multinational conditions of production, *The Kreutzer Sonata* was denied domestic status in Austria and thus entered distribution as a Czechoslovakian film. The same strategy would prove fruitful with his next film, however. *Švejk v civilu* (*Schweik in Civilian Life*, 1927) entered distribution as a Czech-Austrian co-production, which is somewhat remarkable given the protagonist’s status as an emblem of Czech character and the generally Austria-critical attitude of the Schweik material. After a brief period of making “Czech-only” films, Machatý once again entered the interstitial space of Czech-Austrian co-production with *Ecstasy*, which was filmed in both Czechoslovakia and Austria with an international cast and made in three languages simultaneously (German, Czech, and French). Immediately following the success of *Ecstasy*, Machatý made his only “purely Austrian” film, *Nocturno* (1934), which was filmed entirely in Vienna under the production of the Austrian company Mawo-Film AG. Yet, even here the national categorization is not as clearly defined as it might seem at first. Mawo-Film was in fact little more than a fictive front—a joint business endeavor of the co-authors of the film script, Robert Wohlmuth and Machatý himself (the company name being an acronym of the partner’s last names). Under the auspices of this more or less non-existent company, *Nocturno* entered international distribution as an Austrian production, even though the

claims that Machatý assisted Tod Browning and Stuart Paton: “Ein neuer Mann” *Reichsfilmblatt* (18 May 1929), cited in Goergen 79.

film's financial backing in fact stemmed entirely from Czechoslovakian investment.¹²¹ After a provisional contract with Ufa to direct a German film with Lída Baarová fell through because Machatý was unable to provide documented evidence of his racial purity (see Loacker, *Ekstase* 366-7), he spent some time in Italy where he made the one-off local film *Ballerine* (1936), before moving on to Hollywood a year later. Machatý's career in the 1920s and 1930s followed a zigzag path of international travel and his most known films from this period occupy an interstitial space somewhere between Austrian and Czechoslovakian cinema.

Even though he maintained a fixed production company in Berlin throughout most of the 1930s, Karel Lamač was no less nomadic than Machatý—indeed his paths of travel far exceed Machatý's both in terms of range and frequency. A great number of the Ondra-Lamač company's films were international co-productions and/or MLVs, which saw the director shuttling between a multiplicity of filming locations around Europe, mostly in Austria, France, and throughout Germany, but also in Switzerland and Hungary. At the same time, Lamač was still making regular visits to Prague to direct or act in Czech films. If we also consider that Lamač directed on average over six films each year (compared to Machatý average of one film per year) the restless pace of his nomadic lifestyle is nearly impossible to fathom. One of the most evocative accounts of Lamač's transient mode of existence in the 1930s stems from his colleague and friend, Jan S. Kolár:¹²²

Like the forever-nomadic Ahasuerus, Lamač rides and flies from city to city across the whole of Europe. Hotels and sleeping wagons are his home [*domov*, the equivalent of the German "Heimat"] . . . In the metropolises of Europe he is well

121 See Armin Loacker, "Gustav Machatý in Österreich," *Ekstase*, 39.

122 The two were very close from the very beginning of their work in cinema. Lamač's first directorial effort credits Kolár as co-director.

known in the studios and artist cafes, just as in the patent offices and lawyers' offices. He orders a suit at a tailor shop in Berlin, pays off a debt to another tailor in Prague, and then at his hotel in Vienna receives a suit that he had tailored the previous year, but forgot to pick up—and now it is too tight for him. He has friends everywhere and everywhere creditors . . . He finishes one film and then dozes in a sleeping wagon over a script that he is under contract to film at the train's final stop—and he hasn't even had time to read the title yet . . .

Occasionally he gets the desire to act in a Czech film and begins to fast at the spa in Dolní Lipová in order to shed excess pounds so that he can once again charm his admirers. He smokes cigars and the whole world is his ashtray. (Qtd. in Bartošek 6)¹²³

In this passage, Kolár likens Lamač to the mythical Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, who is condemned to eternally meander across the globe, homeless. He is at home all over the world, but has no fixed living space. His lifestyle is characterized by constant motion and marked by a multiplicity of geographic locations. Any sense of national or regional orientation disintegrates from one film to the next as the “homeland” of Lamač's cinema becomes impossible to pin down. According to this picture, Lamač's true home is not a geographic space at all, but a compilation of interstitial “non-places”: hotels, trains, and film studios.¹²⁴

123 Originally in Václav Wasserman ed., *Karel Lamač, filmový režisér, herec a technik* (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1958) 11.

124 My use of the term “non-place” here is clearly inspired by the work of Marc Augé, although clearly his descriptions of “supermodernity” are not entirely applicable to the spaces that Lamač inhabited, although they share many similarities. See Augé, *Non-places*.

Transient Images

Thus far, I have considered how Lamač and Machatý operated within an “interstitial mode of production” and suggested the terms “transient” or “nomadic” to describe the specific character of this work mode. In the following section, I take a look at the filmic output of these two directors and attempt to identify some of the ways that their cinema is “accented.” In what ways does their homelessness translate to the big screen? How does it manifest itself? What does their accent sound like?

For Naficy, one of the most crucial aspects of accented cinema is its stance in opposition to the dominant cinema and cultural values. In his assessment, “exile filmmakers are multiply positioned to act critically and to make (un)popular films, thereby becoming minor . . . by ignoring or critiquing dominant cinema’s conventions and cultural values and by experimenting with new ones” (Naficy, “Between Rocks” 132). It must be kept in mind, of course, that Naficy deals exclusively with directors of the post-1960s generation who operate under substantially different conditions than the directors under consideration here. For one, substantial shifts in the modes of film production and distribution afforded these later directors a much higher degree of autonomy from the dominant industry than was available to Lamač or Machatý. Furthermore, in the wake of the various “New Waves” and other “New” movements that touched all parts of the globe in the 1960s and 1970s, Naficy’s generation of accented filmmakers have a much richer and more sophisticated film language to work with. Nevertheless, there are certain distinct characteristics that mark the cinemas of Lamač and Machatý that place them in opposition to the dominant cinema of their time.

As already discussed above, Machatý’s films consistently experimented with new cinematic conventions and challenged established cultural values. This is most conspicuous in

his silent-sound experiment *Ecstasy*. This film displays perhaps better than any of his other film the profound influence of the Soviet school of montage and other avant-garde techniques on Machatý cinematic style. While making use of minimal dialogue, Machatý focuses on the signifying power of everyday objects and juxtaposes images to create meaning and tell the story. The scene in which Eva finally realizes her long-sought sexual fulfillment with Adam creatively conveys her sense of ecstasy by presenting an assemblage of shots that completely disrupt the viewer's sense of spatial orientation. This scene (together with the film as a whole) can be read as a precocious attempt to escape the male-dominated mode of scopophilia that Laura Mulvey famously attributes to classical narrative cinema. *Ecstasy* not only portrays a woman's search for pleasure, but also experiments with the construction of a female viewing space by subverting the power of the "male" gaze typical of the dominant cinema and suggesting different ways of constructing and navigating cinematic space.¹²⁵ Of course, in most versions of the film, the instability created by female desire is overcome and male power is reinstated in the final sequence: after Eva has left the scene, Adam returns to his work at the railroad and we are presented with a triumphant "song of work" and a celebration of the muscular male body. Yet, even here, Machatý displays his avant-garde aspirations. The cinematography and rapid, rhythmical editing of this sequence are clearly influenced by the Soviet school of montage and German experimental filmmaker Walter Ruttmann. The film thus distinguishes itself from the dominant cinema by its high degree of formal experimentation, the type of which was relatively uncommon in German films and essentially unheard of after 1932.¹²⁶ Beyond that, the film's

125 For a more extensive analysis of Machatý unique technique, see Fischer's feminist interpretation of *Ecstasy*, particularly 132-4.

126 Besides Ruttmann, notable examples of experimentation in the area of montage are: *Kuhle Wampe* (1932), which was the result of a collaborative production team led by Bertolt Brecht, and *Takový je život* (a.k.a. *So ist das Leben* [Such is Life, 1930]), which German director Carl

frank depictions of female pleasure and challenges to bourgeois notions of marriage and sexual behavior were highly progressive and certainly did not jive with the extreme conservative turn in German cinema at the beginning of the 1930s. Indeed, its violation of accepted sexual morality led *Ecstasy* to be excluded from the dominant German cinema altogether, at least in its original form. Although the film premiered in Austria (in its German version), Czechoslovakia (in both Czech and German versions), and France (in French) in the early months of 1933, it was not allowed past Third Reich censors until January 1935 in a severely altered version titled *Symphonie der Liebe* (Symphony of Love).¹²⁷ Although perhaps less formally experimental, Machatý's next film *Nocturno*, which he made in a German version only, was equally provocative in its exploration of marital infidelity and existential melancholy. Like its predecessor, it too exists as a curious anomaly, "a will-o'-the-wisp [*Irrlicht*] in the Austrian cinema of the time" (Cargnelli, *Gustav Machatý* 282-3). The very fact that Machatý could even produce such German-language films in the conservative climate of 1933-35 is a testament to his status as an accented filmmaker, who operated at the margins of the dominant industry.

In contrast to Machatý's formal experimentation and provocative subjects, Lamač's accented style is observed most clearly in the genres that he worked with and by his general style, which bears hallmarks of the carnivalesque, satire, and cabaret. Although Lamač was first and foremost a director of humorous films, either in the form of light-hearted musicals and operettas or straight out comedies, his accent is most conspicuous in his contributions to the

Junghans directed in Prague, because he was able to receive sufficient funding in Germany, due to the non-commercial prospects of his experimental and socially critical vision. See also Kracauer 181-89, 196, 243-47.

127 Premiere dates: 20 January 1933 in Prague (Czech version); 18 February 1933 in Vienna; March 1933 in Paris; 8 January 1935 Berlin (as *Symphonie der Liebe*). See Cargnelli, *Gustav Machatý* 281-282 and *Ekstase*, Loacker 481. For background on the differences between *Symphonie der Liebe* and the other versions, see Garncarz "Ekstase ohne Ende" and Jung, "Am Ende überwiegt der falsche Mythos."

crime/detective genre, including adaptations of Edgar Wallace and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. These crime films—together with his adaptation of Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (*Klein Dorrit*, 1934) reveal a certain affinity for British themes—yet more importantly they operate in a genre that was highly marginal during the Nazi period. Commenting on the Reich's ideological hostility towards crime thrillers Tim Bergfelder notes that the genre was “an almost insignificant aspect of German film production after 1933” (*International Adventures* 146). A primary reason for this lies in a perceived threat to the integrity of the German nation. Indeed, Bergfelder singles out the crime film genre, and the Wallace adaptations in particular, as creating a unique space for German audiences to live out “transnational fantasies.” In the eyes of National Socialism, detective stories were antithetical to the nature of the German *Volksgemeinschaft* and was therefore comparable to what one Nazi academic described as “the invasion of an alien mentality.”¹²⁸ Lamač's 1937 adaptation of the Conan Doyle's novel *The Hound of the Baskervilles* stands out not only as one of the last German filmic treatments of the legendary Sherlock Holmes in the 1930s, but as one of the few examples of crime thrillers in German cinema after the Nazi consolidation of power altogether.¹²⁹ It should also be emphasized that Ondra-Lamač-Film GmbH produced all three of the Wallace-inspired sound films made in Germany between 1929 and 1934.¹³⁰ These were, in fact, the *only* sound Wallace films made in

128 Erich Theier, “Über den Detektivenroman,” *Der Kriminalroman II*, ed. Jochen Vogt (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag) 484-485, qtd. in Bergfelder, *International Adventures* 146.

129 Lamač had already toyed with cinematic depiction of the Sherlock Holmes character several years prior to this in the Czech-language satire *Lelíček ve službách Sherlocka Holmese* (*Lelíček in the Services of Sherlock Holmes*, 1932). In this extraterritorial fantasy, the famous detective (portrayed by director-actor Martin Frič) travels to Prague to enlist the help of Lelíček, played by Vlasta Burian, to solve a mystery.

130 Lamač directed two of these adaptations himself—*Der Zinker* (*The Squeaker*, 1931, co-directed with Martin Frič) and *Der Hexer*, (*The Ringer*, 1932)—whereas the last of the series, *Der Doppelgänger* (*The Double*, 1934), came under the direction of E.W. Emo This was, in fact,

Germany before the huge wave kicked off in the 1950s.¹³¹ Although these British-themed productions tended to be more “serious” in tone than his other films, they nevertheless contain many comedic elements and “developed the narrative balance between suspense and slapstick humour that would become so characteristic of the 1960s films” (Bergfelder, *International Adventures* 145). As the sole producer of Edgar Wallace films in the 1930s, Lamač holds a significant place as a pioneer of this transnational genre that would dominate German post-war cinema and it is his unique satirical accent that set the tone for these later serials.¹³²

The quasi-satirical interpretation of an otherwise “serious” genre (i.e., the crime film) is a typical characteristic of Lamač’s cinema. His films, particularly those of his creative pinnacle in the early 1930s, display a systematic irreverence for high culture and direct engagement with popular trends. In some ways, this approach can be understood as a somewhat tame emulation of Mikhail Bakhtin’s conception of the carnivalesque mode that subverts the dominant culture by means of humor and chaos. To a great extent, these films do not imagine themselves as hermetically self-contained stories, but as intertextual objects in conversation with other films and media forms. In this way, these films would seem more at home in a fairground tent or cabaret hall than a sumptuous cinema palace. In many ways, their mode of address can be understood as a holdover from cinematic forms that had all but ceased to exist in Germany in the

the only Ondra-Lamač-Film production for which Lamač is credited neither as director nor co-director.

131 For the purposes of this discussion, I am not considering the 1928/29 film *Der rote Kreis* (The Crimson Circle) directed by Friedrich Zelnik, because according to information I have seen, the film was originally shot silent and then post-dubbed in both German and English-language versions. The original film content, then, was made independent of the nationally weighted concerns itinerant to sound film production, particularly in its early years.

132 Furthermore, the actor Fritz Rasp, who would become inseparably associated with the later Wallace film, was first inducted to the genre in the Lamač adaptations from the 1930s, playing prominent roles in both *Der Zinker* (The Squeaker, 1931) and *Der Hexer*, (The Ringer, 1932).

wake of the reform movements and the increasing trend towards bourgeois respectability with *Autorenfilme*.

A number of Lamač's films contain overt, satirizing references to one of the era's most popular films, *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930). In one of the vaudeville numbers from *Fair People*, Anny Ondra appears in a Mickey Mouse costume performing with a "piano" played by two actors in the style of a pantomime horse. (Of course, this choice of costume is another significant intertextual gesture, in this case engaging American culture by invoking one of the most iconic representatives of popular world cinema.) As the melody of *The Blue Angel*'s most well-known song, "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss auf Liebe eingestellt," is briefly intoned, the piano raises one of its pant legs to reveal bare skin and a garter strap underneath, a gesture obviously alluding to the famous flirtatious pose of Marlene Dietrich's Lola Lola character. Lamač also references *The Blue Angel* in his other film from 1930, *The Imperial and Royal Field Marshal*, in the form of a traveling cabaret act called "Die blaue Maus" (The Blue Mouse) featuring the performers "Paula Garbo" and "Gustav Jannings." The name of the cabaret is an obvious comical allusion to von Sternberg's film and the male actor's name recalls the lead actor from the film (Emil Jannings). Although the female name has no direct reference to *The Blue Angel* (in which the lead female was played by Marlene Dietrich), this is obviously a tongue in cheek reference to fellow international sex diva Greta Garbo. Furthermore, the traveling troupe performs at the local hotel "Stern," which can be read as a nod to the director of *The Blue Angel*, Josef von Sternberg, where they present a humorous dance number with a female chorus line that seems to directly parody von Sternberg's film. Just as von Sternberg's film placed the schoolteacher Unrat on the cabaret stage for ridicule, Lamač uses *The Blue Angel* itself as material for his own cinematic satire revue.

Beyond these stylistic approaches (experimental form, marginal genres, carnivalesque mode of address, etc.) there are also specific thematic motifs that reflect Lamač's and Machatý's interstitial mode of production. Their accented idiom can be identified in the particular ways that both directors directly engage with themes of wandering and homelessness and consistently feature nomadic, transient figures. Many of Machatý's main characters are lost in a sort of existential search for meaning. Both *Ecstasy* and *Nocturno* feature "straying" women, who leave their husbands to seek happiness elsewhere, while the female lead in *Erotikon* leaves her father to pursue a lover in the big city. Thus liberated from their male caretakers, these women all become metaphorical orphans, lost girls in search of a place to fit in. This motif is later overtly thematized in *Suchkind 312* (Orphan Child 312, 1955): the title refers to the young girl Martina, who was separated from her biological mother at the end of the war, and now stands at the center of a complex custody battle between her foster parents, an orphanage, her biological mother, and multiple would-be mothers. In the process, Martina is shuttled between her rural "home" somewhere in the country, Hamburg, and Hannover, and at one point, she becomes a runaway, spending several days hiding out on board a cargo ship at harbor. In some cases, Machatý's wanderer is male, for example the main narrator of *The Kreutzer Sonata*, who lives in a state of perpetual travel, riding in trains and relating his tragic tale in seek of redemption. Perhaps the most notable homeless figure in Machatý's oeuvre appears in his quasi-autobiographical film *Jealousy*: Peter Urban, an emigrant from Prague who is "lost" in Hollywood.

In contrast to Machatý's existential "lost ones," Lamač displays a penchant for carnival performers, itinerant actors, and carefree vagabonds of all kinds. The motif of travelers runs throughout his work in the 1930s and is even evident in the film titles, for example *Die vom Rummelplatz* (Fair People, 1930) or *Die Landstreicher* (The Tramps, 1937). The former,

Lamač's first German-language sound film, revolves around a familial crisis within a nomadic entertainment troupe. It stars Anny Ondra as a sort of prodigal daughter, who initially denies her carnie background, but eventually realizes her place with her family, joining them on tour as the highlight of their show. In one of the film's musical numbers, one member of the troupe sings "Wir sind überall zu Haus..." (We're at Home all across the World), a self-reflexive piece about the transnational and transient existence of the entertainers:¹³³,

Mein guter Vater,
 mein lieber Vater,
 war ein geborener Eskimo,
 Und meine Mutter,
 Die liebe Mutter,
 war aus Italien gleich beim Po!
 Wir sprechen spanisch und auch französisch,
 englisch und deutsch und sogar chinesisch!

Refrain:

Wir sind überall zu Haus',
 überall ist unsere Heimat!
 Wir zieh'n in die Welt hinaus,
 überall sind wir zu Haus' - !
 Heute in Spanien,
 morgen in Rom!
 Ja! Wir sind überall zu Haus',
 überall ist uns're Heimat!

My good father,
 My beloved father,
 Was born an Eskimo,
 And my mother,
 My beloved mother,
 Was from Italy, right on the Po!
 We speak Spanish and French,
 English and German and even Chinese!

Refrain:

We are everywhere at home,
 Our homeland is everywhere!
 We travel out in the world,

133 Music by Jara Benes, words by Fritz Rotter.

We are at home everywhere!
 Today in Spain,
 Tomorrow in Rome!
 Yes! We are everywhere at home,
 Our homeland is everywhere!

The lyrics invoke the restless life of travel practices by those in the carnival profession, itinerant performers, which German succinctly labels “*fahrendes Volk*,” literally “traveling people.” Notably, the song also explicitly describes the deterritorialization of the very notion of “home” (*Heimat*) inherent in this mode of existence. “Home” is not fixed in any one space or geographical location; it is rather anywhere and everywhere that their travels take them—the whole world itself. This song can also be understood as a playful reflection of Lamač’s own career of homeless traveling that took him all over Europe and the family’s variety show as a mutation of Lamač’s own films.

Lamač’s films repeatedly enter interstitial spaces and even what could be described as “non-places,” similar to those described by Marc Augé. Often these are expressly constructed spaces of “false realities” and fantasy. For example, the opening shot of *A Night in Paradise*, depicts a seemingly standard modern bedroom. We quickly realize however that the “person” sleeping in the bed is in fact a dog and that the entire space is merely a display model in a furniture store. On one level, this sequence, which playfully elicits astonishment, reads as a self-reflexive comment about the power of the cinema to create fantasy illusions. Later, the same display model plays a key role in the story when the daughter of the night watchman (played by Anny Ondra) presents the space to a party of high society guests as her own luxury apartment. This ruse supplements the poor girl’s physical masquerade as an upper class lady and helps her impress the rich man that she loves. This later sequence is most remarkable, however, for how it draws attention to the power of surface appearances and the role of visual deception in the

creation of illusions. These qualities lie at the heart of the theatrical traditions of vaudeville and carnival sideshow acts that profoundly shaped the cinematic medium in its infancy—and it is precisely an infatuation with cinema’s potential to engineer such superficial attractions that consistently accents Lamač’s films.

Many of Lamač’s films take place within the theater milieu and feature lengthy reproductions of stage performances. As mentioned in discussions above, troupes of traveling performers play prominent roles in *The Young Count*, *The Imperial and Royal Field Marshal*, and *Fair People*. Additionally, the topos appears in *Meet the Sister*, *Kiki* (1932), *Baby*, *Knock-out*. *Ein junges Mädchen – ein junger Mann* (Knock Out, 1935), and *Ein Mädel vom Ballett* (A Girl from the Chorus, 1937). This last film is noteworthy for the plethora of fantasy performance spaces that it works in, from the Parisian stage to a rural German fairground—one segment even plays in a “house of horrors” (*Gruselkabinett*). A somewhat more sensational incarnation of the model apartment in *A Night in Paradise*, the house of horrors turns up again in Lamač’s British spy thriller *They Met in the Dark* (1943). In more general terms, *A Girl from the Chorus* is noteworthy for the lengthy sequences that delight in the cheap attractions of the fairground: carousels, swings, organ music, sideshow barkers, etc. The fairground topos is a notable carryover from the Weimar era that became extremely rare after 1933—making its prominent appearance in *A Girl from the Chorus* all the more remarkable. As Rentschler has commented “the fairground recurs throughout Weimar film as a privileged site of agitation, spectacle, and desire, a realm of motion and excitement, a proto-cinematic cult of distraction” (*Ministry* 62). The fairground had become so emblematic of Weimar culture that it became somewhat of a locus non grata and primary target of disdain in Nazi cinema. National Socialism’s misgivings about the heterogeneous and deterritorialized space of the fairground share a similar root with the

trepidation it harbored against the “foreign” influence of the detective genre. The infamous propaganda feature *Hitlerjunge Quex* (*Hitler Youth Quex*, 1933) directly confronted this staple of Weimar cinema, reimagining the fairground as a “realm of sex, peril, and dissolution, a province of impermanence and intoxication” (Rentschler, *Ministry* 62). Through the Nazi lens, the fairground was a space that needed to be overcome by the order and moral discipline of National Socialism. Although, *The Girl from the Chorus* does not (indeed, given the political climate, could not) utilize the full subversive carnivalesque potential of the fairground space and prefers instead to marvel in its surface attractions and comedic distractions, the very invocation of the topos can be understood as an articulation of Lamač’s “transient” accent in German cinema, situated somewhere in the interstitial realm between the margins and the mainstream.

Perhaps an even more directly suggestive symbol than the fairground for Machatý’s and (even more so) Lamač’s transient lifestyles, are the trains and railway stations that dominate Machatý’s films. The thematic invocation of the train is in fact one of the most easily recognizable stamps of Machatý’s authorial, accented voice. In terms of visual signification, images of trains, particularly locomotives, are firmly rooted in a modernist tradition that reveres this mechanical wonder as an archetypal symbol of progress (see Müller). A sequence at the beginning of *Erotikon* depicts a train racing towards the city as the camera records the passing landscape through the train window (fig. 12). The pictures and the sense of motion play as an homage to the opening of Walter Ruttmann’s *Berlin-Symphonie der Grossstadt* (*Berlin, Symphony of a Great City*, 1927), which portrays the passage of a train from the countryside to the heart of the big city. Like Ruttmann and other modernists, Machatý seems to marvel at the train as a symbol of modern civilization and rapid transportation. The railway was an prominent emblem of the cosmopolitan lifestyle of early 20th century: it brought together people of mixed

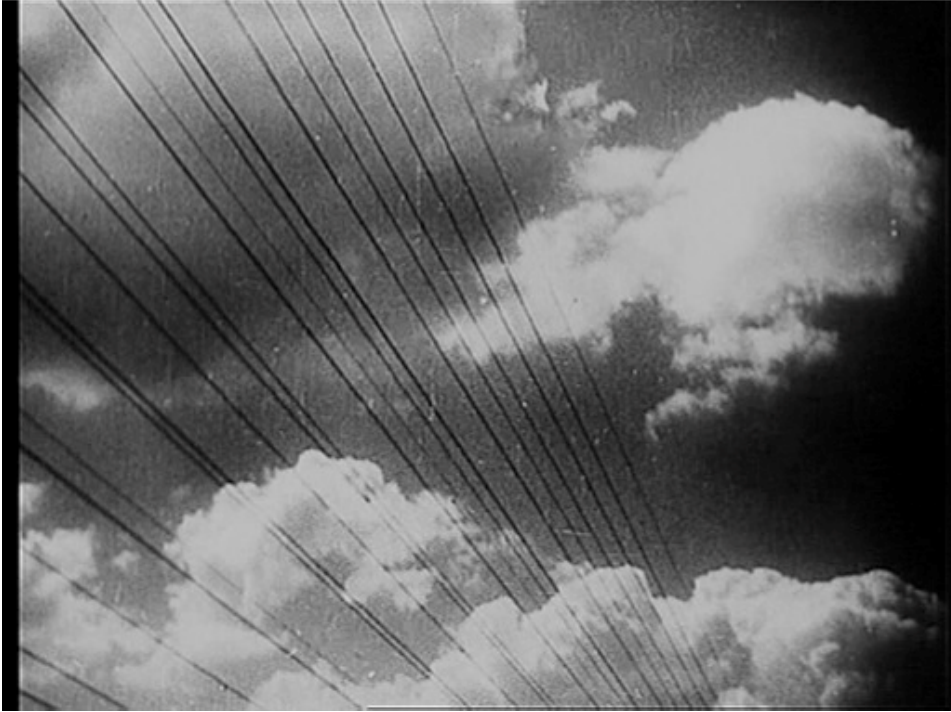


Figure 12. Machatý's homage to Ruttmann: power lines from the window of a train in *Erotikon*. [Screen capture of Czech DVD release.]

class and national backgrounds, broke down traditional concepts of space and time, and provided access to remote places that had been previously unknown or inaccessible.¹³⁴ On a more thematic level, however, trains evoke the concept of travel itself and contribute to the feeling of transience and homelessness that permeates Machatý's oeuvre.

For Machatý, the train and the railway station are interstitial spaces where people of different backgrounds and types encounter each other where varying energies intersect. With allegiance to Tolstoy's source novel *The Kreutzer Sonata*, Machatý's adaptation begins when passengers on train come to realize that they are sharing their compartment with a murderer, who

¹³⁴ In *Ecstasy*, the emblematic status of the train lends a significant historic subtext to the film. Carpathian Ruthenia was the most remote and least developed territory in Czechoslovakia during the interwar period. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the government in Prague undertook extensive measures to modernize Carpathian Ruthenia, to raise its economic standards, increase its infrastructure, and generally integrate it with the rest of the country. The railroad was a powerful symbol of this process of modernization.

then relates his tragic story to them. Similarly, the train brings the urban traveler George to the small town where he encounters the young Andrea (daughter of the station master) in the opening episode of *Erotikon*, a meeting that sets off a fateful chain of events ending in his death. George is not only a man from the city who disrupts life in the countryside as soon as he enters it (by seducing the station master's young daughter), but the English spelling of his name and the multiple exotic stickers on his suitcase also mark him as a "foreign" interloper in this rural space. In *Ecstasy*, the construction of the railroad itself brings an "outsider" into foreign territory, providing the setup for another fateful encounter: Adam is an engineer at work on a railroad project in the remote mountainous region where Eva's father has his estate. He is a harbinger of modernity in this rural setting. At the same time his presence here inserts an unexpected element into Eva's life, which fulfills her sexual desires, but also sets a tragedy in motion that ends with her husband's death and a life of solitude for her. Both as a communal space and a bridge across great distances, the railway serves as a powerful symbol for the erosion of the barriers between class, gender, and ethnic groups that modernity brought with it.

Machaty's trains and their stations function as loci of transit and transition. Pozdnysev, the main character of *The Kreutzer Sonata* spends his days riding the train and confessing the story of how he murdered his wife to random passengers in pursuit of forgiveness. The final narrative sequence of *Ecstasy* is set in a station, where Adam and Eva wait for a train that will take them off to their new life together. Yet, racked by guilt for her (former) husband's suicide, Eva slips away while Adam sleeps and boards another train alone. She departs from the station by herself to begin a new life elsewhere, somewhere away from her home. A parallel sequence in *Nocturno* shows Maria boarding a train with her lover—a powerful visual gesture of her decision

to completely abandon husband and child.¹³⁵ Later in the same film, the woman's husband, Karl, nearly commits suicide by walking in the path of an oncoming train, a scene that echoes Emil's aborted attempt to collide his car with a train in *Ecstasy*. Likewise the climactic scene of his 1955 film *Orphan Child 312* plays out on a bridge over train tracks, where the distraught Ursula attempts to throw herself in the path of an oncoming locomotive and is only narrowly prevented by her best friend. Furthermore, when we first encounter the orphan girl of the film's title, Martina, she is living in the care of a family that resides next to a railway crossing, where the foster father works as a signalman. Like the young Andrea in *Erotikon*, she is a "daughter of the railway," her home is a space of transit, a "non-place." The restless traveling of the trains echoes the homelessness of these girls, who become runaways and vacillate between the competing affections of various individuals. When Martina is taken from her foster family and ends up in an orphanage, one of her companions there speculates that Martina's real mother threw her from a train, thus explaining how she ended up in the care of the signalman's family. Indeed, her biological mother, Ursula, claims that the last place she saw Martina was at a train station: she left her daughter under the supervision of an unknown woman on the platform while she left for a few minutes. When she returned the train was gone and with it the woman and Martina. The railway is thus the entity that made Martina an orphan and directly symbolizes her subsequent homelessness. Machatý consistently employs trains and train stations in this way—as spaces of uncertainty, confrontation, and transition, spaces where momentous decisions are made and where fate is played out. The railway is not merely a symbol of the technical progress of

135 It is also worth noting that the seducing lover bears the conspicuously English, i.e., "foreign" name Gordon in contrast the Germanic names of the other characters. This character can be read as a refiguring of the foreign seducer-traveler George from *Erotikon*, who also travels by train.

modernity, but more importantly it stands for the transregional confrontations and destabilization of identity that modernity brings with it.

At the Intersection of the Local and the Global

Both Machatý's trains and Lamač's itinerant performers are emblematic of an extraterritorial and transnational tendency in modernity that finds its analogue in the cinematic medium itself. In its early decades, the cinema was revolutionary for the extreme ease with which it traveled across borders that had hitherto severely restricted the dissemination of culture. Indeed, both in terms of exhibition and mode of expression, cinema was in many ways "homeless": it traveled throughout an international network of temporary projection tents (generally as a circus attraction) and was more or less liberated from the regional limitations of spoken and written language due to its reliance on visual expression. Like the itinerant performers of the *Fair People* song "Wir sind überall zu Haus," early cinema spoke a multiplicity of languages and could easily navigate between them. By virtue of modern technological processes and commercial networks this industrial product had the potential to communicate with audiences all across the globe—the first cultural medium with a worldwide reach. Many filmmakers, particularly those of the avant-garde, envisioned this most advanced of media as the ideal tool for the creation of a truly "international language."

Each in their own way, Machatý and Lamač had their sights on global audiences from the very beginning of their work in film. It was this ambition that compelled them to traverse beyond the borders of their own national cinema in the first place—setting them on a path that would eventually lead to German cinema. In the 1920s and into the early 1930s, the film industry centered in Berlin stood as a sort of "Hollywood of Europe," drawing talent from across the

continent and reaching worldwide markets with its products. The German industry assumed a dominant position in the “Film Europe” movement, a transnational alliance of film companies that aimed to compete with Hollywood through the unification and concentration of their forces (see Thompson 72). Being the largest and arguably the most influential European film center of the interwar period, it is only natural that the German industry would be a primary target for Lamač’s and Machatý’s global ambitions.

In the mid-1920s Lamač promoted himself at home with the slogan “Rosteme do šíře, Lamač – Košíře,” which roughly translates (albeit losing the rhyme) as ‘we’re expanding, Lamač – Košíře’—with “Košíře” indicating the Prague district where Lamač’s film operation was based (Bartošek 1). As suggested by the Czech word “šíře” (breadth) in the slogan, the ambition was clearly expand *outwards*, rather than upwards—in other words, he did not aim to increase the scale of his domestic production, but to increase the regional scope of his film work. Already by the late 1920s, Lamač was involved in international co-productions that saw him traveling between Prague, Vienna, and Berlin. Whereas the arrival of sound film hampered the international marketability of individual films and solidified the borders between national film cultures, Lamač’s transnational influence only increased during this period. He was intensely involved in the production of Multiple Language Versions for the international market, directing not only Czech and German, but also a number of French versions. His work on MLVs continued until 1937, even though this mode of production had become passé in most areas of American and European cinema by 1933.¹³⁶ On the one hand, this can be understood as Lamač’s commitment to cinema as an international medium. On the other hand, it is evidence of his shrewd economic strategy to work multiple markets simultaneously while minimizing production

¹³⁶ His last MLV effort was a Czech-German co-production was *Důvod k rozvodu / Der Scheidungsgrund* (Grounds for Divorce, 1937), which starred Anny Ondra in both versions.

costs. His Berlin-based Ondra-Lamač-Film company served much the same purpose. Far from being a bastion of distinctly nationally oriented German films, the company specialized in MLVs and other forms of international co-production. Bergfelder comments that the German-language Ondra-Lamač Wallace films of the early 1930s are very much “transnational productions within the wider framework of the ‘Film Europe’ project of the time” (*International Adventures* 145). The Berlin location not only afforded Lamač access to some of the most advanced studios and best-loved actors in Europe, but also connected him to the most important distribution hub in the region. The company did not so much anchor Lamač in Germany as it opened up the doors to national cinema markets around the world. Regardless of the language he was filming in, Germany remained the most important node for securing funding and getting his products to global audiences.

Lamač’s mode of film production is defined by what could be termed a “multilocal” approach. Rather than communicating with a distinct authorial voice, he was more concerned with adapting the style of each film to the local cinematic idiom. His films seem acutely aware of their target national audience and aim to “speak the local language” as much as possible. Lamač was masterfully able to switch languages depending on the national film context that he was operating in, much like the variety performer in *Fair People*, who claims to converse in “Spanish, French, English, German, and even Chinese” (see song above). Although the general themes and style of his films were highly cosmopolitan in nature—borrowing freely from all manner of international trends—he relied on the possibilities of MLV production to “localize” his products to specific national audiences. This involved translating universal ideas and superficial attractions into local dialects of spoken language, tailoring the jokes to local tastes, and casting actors in order to maximize the appeal of the cast to local audiences. In other words,

Lamač was less interested in creating a single, universalizing cinematic mode that spoke to as wide an audience as possible than he was in using the apparatus to fashion a multitude of products, each specialized to a specific target group.

In contrast to Lamač, Machatý openly strived for an international style and approach that would make each of his films accessible (and marketable) to the broadest audience possible. Evidence of this approach can be seen in various aspects of his film aesthetic such as the use of international casts and the emphasis on images to tell the story, rather than on intertitles or spoken dialogue. Already in 1927, his first major work, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, prompted contemporary critics to comment on the “cosmopolitan” nature of Machatý’s film style.¹³⁷ Some have even suggested that the international success of this film hailed a significant “cosmopolitan” shift in Czechoslovak film production, marking the point when it began to expand its narrow focus on local audiences and started looking towards the broader global market (see Cargnelli, *Gustav Machaty* 15). The 1929 silent film *Erotikon* was not only cosmopolitan in style, but in the composition of its cast as well, featuring a literal smorgasbord of nations in its lineup. In this story of two love triangles linked together by the erotic escapades of one man, each of the five primary actors hail from a different country: George, the male seducer (Austrian Olaf Fjord); a young woman, who succumbs to his will (Slovenian Ita Rina); her husband after the affair (Italian Luigi Serventi); a married woman, with whom George is having affair (Lithuanian born German Charlotte Susa); and her husband (Czech Theodor Pištěk). As Jerzy Toeplitz writes in his bitter chastisement of *Erotikon*, “the casting of foreign actors only increases the cosmopolitan eclecticism inherent in the film form” (488).¹³⁸ Arguing from a Marxist perspective, Toeplitz is perhaps the most vocal intellectual critic of what he saw

137 See for example “Die Kreuzersonate [sic.],” *Der Film* (1 June 1927) cited in Goergen, 76.

138 Also quoted in Cargnelli 16.

as Machatý's "formalistic games" and lack of "solidarity with the people" (*Volksverbundenheit*). Clearly, this demand for "solidarity" suggests a connection or attachment with a specific community, which in this context could even be understood in national terms, since Toeplitz sets this "solidarity" in opposition to what he sees as "cosmopolitanism." Yet, it seems misguided to demand such social attachment to a specific regional or national group from a director who was not himself geographically or nationally grounded and who was primarily concerned with issues of transit and transition. Indeed, as I suggest here, this lack of grounding in one national or cultural context is a direct consequence of the Central European context that Machatý arose from and therefore a thoroughly natural characteristic of both his transnational impulses as well as his accented voice.

A fundamental impulse at the root of Machatý's creative project was the formulation of a globally intelligible film art. Shortly after the Berlin premiere of *Symphony of Love* (the German re-edit of *Ecstasy*)¹³⁹ in January 1935, Machatý was invited to speak at a screening of the film for students of the Berliner Universität. In this speech, he openly declares his desire to make film art that speaks to "simple and humble people" across the world:

Individual nations built their national theaters and had their national literature. But today, all citizens, from all corners of the earth want the same art and the same entertainment: they want their film. Film has become the standard form of entertainment in the 20th century. An American film touches a young female typist in a Ford factory in the same way that it touches a female worker at a

139 It should be noted that the title of the German release highlights the importance of music over dialogue and the attempt to emulate musical emotion through the lyrical assemblage of images. Furthermore it also directly evokes Walter Ruttmann's Avant-garde masterwork *Symphony of a Great City*, thereby evidencing the genealogy of Machatý's semi-experimental film (which was clearly influenced by Ruttmann).

macaroni factory in Naples, a young woman at the ticket booth in Schlesinger's Theater in Cape Town, or a female student of the Economic Academy in Tokyo. German films have had great success from the northernmost extremes of Europe to the farthest edges of the Balkan Peninsula, from the wide American west to the depths of the Orient. It brings a feeling of joy to work on such an art form.

(Machaty 4)

Clearly, this attempt at an international film language was hindered by the coming of sound, and with in spoken language—the factory worker in Naples will not be as touched by a film if she does not understand the language spoken in it. In this context, the innovative approach to sound in *Ecstasy* can be understood not just as “experimentation for experimentation’s sake,” but also as both a mode of address and a distribution strategy. By keeping the spoken parts in *Ecstasy* to a minimum, Machaty increased the international potential of the film. On the one hand, without relying on the crutch of dialogue (which facilitates storytelling, but also limits the potential audience), *Ecstasy* mobilizes more universally intelligible means—visual images, montage, and music—to relate the narrative and communicate emotions. On the other hand, the dearth of dialogue greatly facilitated the process of post-production overdubbing, allowing the original sound recording to be easily written over with dialogues in foreign languages.¹⁴⁰ The film was produced simultaneously in German, Czech, and French language versions, which became the

140 Limiting the amount of spoken language also aided the integration of multi-national actors into one filmic diegesis, by eliminating the potential for different accents to become evident in their speech. As with *Erotikon*, the main cast of *Ecstasy*, also came from diverse backgrounds: Austrian Jew Hedwig Kiesler (later famous as Hedy Lamarr) as Eva, German Aribert Mog as Adam, Croatian Zvonimir Rogoz as Eva’s husband Emil, and Prague-born, German-speaking actor Leopold Kramer as Eva’s father. Rogoz, for example, speaks only a handful of lines throughout the entire film, usually consisting of isolated words (e.g., “Eva!” “dich,” “ja,” “nein” etc.) thereby rendering his Croatian accent undetectable.

source for a number of overdubbed edits worldwide.¹⁴¹ This was the only time that Machatý simultaneously created different language versions of one film. His mode of operation was quite different from normal MLV production, though: instead of filming lengthy sequences multiple times with different actors working from various scripts, the basic raw film material was more or less the same for each film and the creation of versions was accomplished in post-production by means of overdubbing and editing.¹⁴² (The French version displays the highest amount of variation, since it replaced two of the main roles with French actors, thereby necessitating that each their scenes be filmed multiply.) Regardless of the language used in any particular version, though, the dialogue plays only a minimal role. For Machatý, the overall cinematic language and its universal appeal were far more important than the spoken dialogue.

In the speech quoted above, it is evident that the primary models for Machatý's vision of an international film language are Hollywood and Germany—indeed he shifts effortlessly from one to the other in praising the global reach of cinema. Machatý spent several years learning the trade in Hollywood in the early 1920s, before returning to Europe in the middle of the decade, where he sought to establish his own cosmopolitan idiom. Clearly, from his Central European perspective, the German industry was the gateway to the global market. Although he worked extensively in Austria in the late 1920s, his ultimate goal was to break into the larger German industry. Although *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *Erotikon* represented Machatý's breakthrough into

141 The Czech version features all the same actors in the main roles as in the German version, yet in most cases Czech speakers overdub their dialogue. The only exception was Rogoz, who could speak Czech, and therefore replayed all of his speaking scenes for the Czech version. The French version retained Kiesler and Rogoz, but employed French actors in the roles of Eva's lover (Pierre Nay) and her father (André Nox). It is likely that this alteration was part of a strategy to increase the international marketability of the film by casting actors familiar to French audiences.

142 For a detailed analysis of the differences between these three language versions and other international edits, see Bregant; and Joseph Garncarz, "Ekstase ohne Ende" as well as the comparison of dialogue lists in Loacker, *Ekstase* 465-478.

the German/Austrian film market, it was his 1933 film *Ecstasy* that garnered him overwhelming international attention. Surrounded by scandal, *Ecstasy* was awarded the top prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1934, becoming the first Czechoslovak film to achieve such high international accolades.¹⁴³ This was the first sound film that Machatý directed in a language other than Czech and the choice of predominantly German-speaking actors, which would suggest that his main target audiences were in Austria and Germany.¹⁴⁴ After two films geared primarily for Czechoslovakia, Machatý hoped with *Ecstasy* to finally break into the German-language market, which would then serve as springboard to a broader international public. The film did in fact achieve this international fame, or rather notoriety, but it failed to establish his career in the German industry.

Machatý's efforts to secure a foothold in Germany were severely hindered by the moral sensitivities of the Nazi regime and ultimately thwarted by their racial politics. At the time that *Nocturno* was made, *Ecstasy* was still in the process of being reworked into a film acceptable to the Reich censors (being eventually redubbed *Symphony of Love*). At this stage, the censors seemed less concerned about the matters of formal experimentation or the non-Aryan backgrounds of Machatý and Kiesler than with the questionable morality of the film.¹⁴⁵ Machatý has his eyes on German distribution for *Nocturno* as well, even if it would require severe

143 See Bono, "Exstase am Lido," Loacker, *Ekstase* 115-146.

144 According to Bono, however, it was the Czech version that was shown at the Venice festival. See Bono, 140 (note 1). Also note: a French version of the film *From Saturday to Sunday* was made, but only by post-synchronization of the original Czech print. Machatý did not originally intend on making a French version.

145 In this context, it is significant to note that censorship issues with the film's morality were not unique to Germany. *Ecstasy* did not have its London premiere until 1938 (Bregant 50) and was not legally screened in the United States until 1940 after being severely re-edited (see Bregant 51; Fischer; and Hediger).

alterations similar to those carried out on *Ecstasy*.¹⁴⁶ However, the film was never granted approval by Nazi censors and even *Symphony of Love* was pulled from distribution in the Reich immediately after its Berlin premiere once Machatý's "racial purity" came under closer scrutiny.¹⁴⁷ When Machatý was unable to provide documented evidence of his racial purity, his hopes of breaking into German cinema were finally dashed. Machatý had been effectively banished from Germany before even having the opportunity to work there—becoming an "exile" from the homeland where he had never lived.¹⁴⁸

Interestingly, just like its author, *Ecstasy* too was fated to a "homeless" existence in the interstitial spaces between national cinemas. Upon its release in Czechoslovakia, the film encountered a great level of criticism precisely for its "eclectic" and "international" style (see Horníček). In fact, Czech Marxist critic Lubomír Linhart went so far as to criticize *Ecstasy* for its overwhelmingly "Germanic" character, declaring that neither the film nor its director "express Czech cinematography," indeed that there is "nothing at all Czech in this film."¹⁴⁹ This criticism of the film was not unique and was supported by some Czech scholars into the 1960s. These attacks seem more directed against Machatý's capitalistic ambitions and his later status as an émigré director who refused to return to his homeland (because of the Communist regime there). The film in fact contains a number of visual elements that overtly situate the story in Prague and

146 It was not, in fact, unheard of for foreign films that involved Jewish personnel to play in the Reich. There were many cases, the identities of Jews involved in the film were covered up or even ignored. See Loacker and Prucha; Jung 85; and Johnson. See also Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

147 Machatý's mother was Jewish. She was murdered in Treblinka in 1942. Loacker indicates that *Symphonie der Liebe* only ran in German theaters for several days after the premiere before being pulled from distribution. Loacker "Gustav Machatý's Leben," Loacker, *Ekstase* 367.

148 Apparently, though, in early 1935 (prior to the investigation of his racial background and the censor's ban of *Nocturno*), Machatý had in fact successfully secured a provisional contract with Ufa and was slated to direct a film with Lída Baarová. See Loacker 366-367.

149 Quoted in Loacker, *Ekstase* 382, which in turn cites Jaroslav Brož and Myrtil Frida, "Gustav Machatý. Legenda a skutečnost 2," *Film a doba* 5 (Prague: 1969): 265.

in the mountainous landscape of Central Europe (the mountain sequences were in fact filmed in the Carpathian mountains of eastern Slovakia). Most conspicuous is the long crane shot over the Barrandov terraces on the Vltava river in Prague—the sight of this former well-known landmark would have immediately stood out as a signifier of the city to those familiar with it (fig. 13). Furthermore, the climactic suicide scene set in a rural inn particularly evokes Carpathian culture with the appearance of a musical group that includes gypsy-influenced violin playing and a cimbalom, a musical instrument distinctive for that area (fig. 13) These details might strike the modern viewer as simply bits of ornamentation without any deep cultural meaning, however the particular sense of place that the film evoked was not entirely lost among contemporary viewers.



Figure 13. Left: Prague landmark - the Barrandov terraces. Right: Typically Central European cimbalom. Both in *Ecstasy*. [Source: screen captures from American DVD release.]

In his review of *Symphony of Love*, one Berlin critic took issue with the failed attempt to “Germanize” a film that is so clearly tied to the Czech landscape and people.¹⁵⁰ Machatý himself felt that the distinctive regional milieu was not merely decoration, but an essential part of the story. In the early 1960s, when a New York company proposed that the remake of *Ecstasy* be

150 “Symphonie der Liebe,” *Berliner Tageblatt* 15 (9 Jan. 1935): 6. Full quote: “In der Bearbeitung wird der Versuch gemacht, die Handlung nach Deutschland zu verlegen. Nicht zum Vorteil des Filmes, der in tschechischer Landschaft und unter ihren Menschen spielt.”

filmed in Greece, Machatý responded vehemently, “You cannot just transplant Othello to Glasgow, or Hamlet to Sicily. Well, admittedly, anything is possible—but *Ecstasy* was and remains conceptually tied to *Mitteleuropa*, Vienna, Austria.”¹⁵¹ It would seem as if *Ecstasy* could serve as a prototype example for a “interstitial cinema”—a cosmopolitan film that does not fit neatly into any one national paradigm, equally claimed and rejected by factions in all national camps. Interestingly, the director himself is ambiguous in assigning the film to one specific national context. His suggestion that the film is conceptually tied to “Vienna” is curious since there are neither exterior shots of the city, nor explicit indicators of a Viennese context in the film. In juxtaposition to Machatý’s suggestion of a specific urban location, though, is the indication of a transnational regional context: *Mitteleuropa*. This suggests a cultural setting that is not defined according to a strong national allegiance, but by its highly multi-ethnic character. This invites us to wonder whether Machatý’s invocation of “Austria” here refers to the German-speaking nation-state formed after World War I or rather suggests the spirit of the Habsburg Empire that fostered a transregional identity that united various national and linguistic groups. Thus conceptualizing *Ecstasy* as an “Austrian” film, that is as a “middle European” film, can help account for the ambiguous positioning of this film and the difficulty that arises when attempting to ascribe it to one specific national context.

Ecstasy’s outsider status is not, of course, unique. Indeed, it is emblematic of Machatý career and his filmic output more generally. Curiously, the director is not even entirely “at home” in his own native cinema. As one contemporary scholar says, “In truth, Gustav Machatý

151 From a letter by Machatý to Paul Kohner, 22 June 1963, qtd. in Cargnelli, *Gustav Machatý* 45. According to the treatment that Machatý wrote for the remake of *Ecstasy*, the film was to be overtly set in Austria around in the first decade of the 20th century. The treatment specifically places the action in Prague (Troja chateau and the main train station), Vienna, and a Southern Bohemian castle among other locations.

occupies a somewhat peculiar and exceptional (*eigenartige und aussergewöhnliche*) position in the history of Czech cinema” (Klimeš, “Der junge Machatý” 61). In other words, his “accent” is not restricted to one national context—his voice seems to carry the same distinct accent whether it is heard in the context of Czech cinema or in the context of German/Austrian cinema. Yet, while Austrian and Czech scholars equally admit Machatý’s marginal position within their respective national cinemas, both also retain a solid investment in the man and his films—and arguably both are equally justified in so doing. Indeed, regardless of his Czech origins and consistently close ties to the Czechoslovak film industry for most of his career, Austrian scholarship can boast a direct claim on Machatý since his estate presently resides within the collection of the Filmarchiv Austria in Vienna. Furthermore, the recent swell of interest in Machatý’s life and work within Austrian cinema studies has done much to strengthen the perception that he is an “Austrian director.”¹⁵² Even so, there is no denying that as much as Machatý contributed to Austrian cinema, he also contributed to Czech cinema. Indeed, in the opening lines of his contribution to the Filmarchiv Austria’s volume on *Ecstasy*, Armin Loacker openly states that the film is not explicitly Austrian at all, but Czech. Yet, even this reversal of national identification rings an oversimplification that does not does full justice to the complex position that the film occupies. Indeed, as I have shown, the case of *Ecstasy* vividly illustrates the “homeless” nature of Machatý’s cinema—like the director himself, most of his films exist in a sort of no man’s land in the border regions between various national cinemas, marked by traces of Austrian, German, and Czech culture, yet definitively belonging to none. This is an

152 The two most important works Loacker, *Ekstase* and Cargnelli, *Gustav Machatý: Ein Filmregisseur zwischen Prag und Hollywood* were published in Vienna. There is also a section on Machatý in Büttner and Dewald 114-121.

extraterritorial body of films that frustrate any attempts to conceptualize according to traditional notions of national cinema.

It is perhaps useful at this point to return to Machatý's seemingly paradoxical claim that his "homeless" film (*Ecstasy*) is intrinsic to Central Europe and Austria in particular. What I am suggesting here is that the Central European context itself generated a certain sense of extraterritorial "homelessness." The identity split between local and global, between ethnic nation and empire was an inherent part of the Austro-Hungarian experience and the effects of this worldview lingered on after the fall of the Habsburgs. Indeed, there is much to suggest that this unique sense of "in between" is a defining characteristic of "Austrian cinema," at least during the first half of the 20th century. To a large extent, many of my observations on the motifs of wandering, extraterritoriality, and homelessness in the films of Machatý and Lamač can be thought of as distinctive features of Austrian cinema in general. According to Frieda Grafe, "Austrian film history is a phantasm, because it is not tied to a fixed place; its cinema is a kind of film without a specific place" (qtd. in Isenberg, "Permanent Vacation" 180).¹⁵³ Thinking in these terms, Lamač and Machatý can perhaps be thought of as belonging to the most typically "Austrian" directors of the period precisely *because of* the "extraterritorial" and "cosmopolitan" nature of their work.

Generally speaking, the German films of Lamač and Machatý are not linked to Prague or Bohemia in any direct way. (With its brief depiction of a well-known Prague landmark, *Ecstasy* stands as an important exception to this general rule, yet even here the overall feeling is of a generically cosmopolitan city than Prague in particular.) At the same time, the Czech-language

153 Original quote in Frieda Grafe, "Wiener Beiträge zu einer wahren Geschichte des Kinos," *Aufbruch ins Ungewisse: Österreichische Filmschaffende in der Emigration vor 1945*, eds. Christian Cargnelli and Michael Omasta, (Vienna: Wespennest, 1993), 227.

films of both Lamač and Machatý display a high degree of grounding in the Czech national culture and show a tendency for local settings. Many of their Czech productions were adaptations of well-respected works of national literature and often depicted easily recognizable Prague locations.¹⁵⁴ It can be argued that their Czech films tend to be firmly rooted in the national culture, whereas their German-language works typically operate within a more cosmopolitan framework. In other words, their “nomadic” accent is much more pronounced in German-language cinema than in that of their homeland. As discussed earlier, Machatý in particular conceived of German cinema as a model for a sort of universal film language that he could use to liberate his art from the limitations of his Czech national context to reach international audiences. This is not to say that the German-language films of Machatý and Lamač films are entirely devoid of any sense of regional specificity or grounding in the German or Austrian national context. The Viennese setting plays a prominent role in Machatý’s *Nocturno*, for example. More remarkably, Lamač’s German films display a conspicuous penchant for Viennese operetta and occasionally operate with many of the tropes common to the *Heimatfilm* genre that is emblematic of Austrian and Bavarian regional patriotism. (See my discussion of genre in Chapter 3.) Both directors demonstrate a strong facility for shifting between varying registers of “national address” and different modes of regional specificity—equally capable of speaking in a “cosmopolitan” voice as in “nationally grounded” voices, and

154 Machatý’s second sound film *Načeradec, král kibicu* (Načeradec, King of Kibitzer, 1932) was inspired by a popular novel by Karel Poláček. Lamač’s adaptations of “great” Czech works include: *Pantáta Bezoušek* (Old Man Bezoušek, 1927), adapted from the novel by Karel Václav Rais; *Velbloud uchem jehly* (Camel through the Eye of a Needle, 1926), based on the play by František Langer; and *Lucerna* (1925, 1938), based on the play by Alois Jirásek. Likewise, he filmed Jara Beneš’s famous Czech operetta *Na tý louče zelený* (On the Green Meadow, 1936) and wrote an original screenplay for his film *Karel Havliček Borovský* (1925), about the life of the Czech national Revivalist.

even displaying mastery of national idioms that seem diametrically opposed to each other (e.g., “German” and “Czech”).

The oscillation between opposed modes of “national address” is not as unusual or unexpected as one might just assume. This tension between national or ethnic loyalties is in fact distinct reflection of the Austro-Hungarian legacy in the region. The political developments of the latter decades of Austria-Hungary had fostered an environment of competing national, regional, and ethnic affiliations. The divisions between these conflicting modes of identity were generally far from clear-cut and many citizens learned to navigate multiple public and private roles in their day-to-day life. There was no inherent contradiction in describing oneself as both “Czech” *and* “Austrian.” Paradoxically, the Austro-Hungarian “nation” was characterized by a profound sense of multinationalism or even transnationalism.

Even Machatý’s and Lamač’s most important contributions to Czech national cinema can be imagined as intrinsically bound to the Austro-Hungarian context. Both directors were involved in the creation of a series of films based on the famous Czech literary character from Jaroslav Hašek’s novel *The Good Soldier Schweik* (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejk za světové války*) in the late 1920s. It was Karel Lamač who initiated the Good Soldier Schweik into Czech cinema, and into world cinema at the same time. He directed the first two installments in the four-film series that featured Karel Noll as Schweik: *Dobrý voják švejk* (The Good Soldier Schweik, 1926) and *Švejk na frontě* (Schweik at the Front, 1926). Gustav Machatý got involved in the project later, directing the final film in the series, *Schweik in Civilian Life* (1927).¹⁵⁵

Almost two decades later while in British exile, Lamač supplied a further, highly intriguing

155 Between Lamač’s films and Machatý’s film was *Švejk v ruském zájetí* (Schweik in Russian Captivity, 1927), directed by Svatopluk Innemann, who would later work on the Czech-German MLV *Sextanka/Arme kleine Inge* (Sweet Sixteen, 1936).

installment in the Schweik mythology in the form of the English-language film *Schweik's New Adventures* (1943). This topical updating of the Schweik story fed fantasies of Czech patriotism and resistance with its depiction of Schweik taking on the Nazi occupiers of his homeland. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson have credited this silent series of Schweik films with helping to create a Czech “national film tradition” (207). Yet, as much as these films are distinctly Czech in perspective, the cultural context that they inhabit is undeniably “Austrian.” Schweik’s uniquely “Czech” character only arises in contrast to the dominant Austro-Hungarian culture, as a marker of difference, as an accented voice within a Central European context governed by a generally Germanic paradigm.

I have argued above that we can attribute the “nomadic” or “transient” accent in the German films of Lamač and Machatý to their transnational and interstitial mode of production. What I am suggesting here is that this accent derives not only from the confrontation between a “German” host culture and a “Czech” home culture, but rather belongs to a more complex constellation of competing identities and allegiances that is typical to (post)Habsburg Central Europe. In other words these accented voices express the heterogeneity, multiplicity, and contradictions inherent to the region they come from. To a great extent the label “Central Europe” (or *Mittleuropa*) itself suggests a region that is defined in terms of transnationalism and multiculturalism. Indeed, aside from Lamač and Machatý, this region produced a slew of filmmakers that are in some way “interstitial,” divided between various modes of ethnic and national belonging.

Many of the most well known “Austrian” directors from the 1920s through 1950s (e.g., Pabst, Ulmer, Billy [Samuel] Wilder, Michael Curtiz [a.k.a. Mihály Kertész]) hailed from territories outside the post-World War I borders of Austria. At the same time, these and other

Viennese-born directors such as Fritz Lang, Joseph Sternberg, Otto Preminger, and Erich von Stroheim tend to be lumped together with other “German” filmmakers, without concern for possible regional and historical distinctions. Furthermore, for many of these individuals, a sense of Jewish identity prevails over any sense of national or regional grounding. Strictly in terms of geographic origin, Lamač and Machatý can be categorized together with well-known directors G. W. Pabst and Edgar Ulmer, who also have roots in the historic Czech lands of Austria-Hungary. Pabst’s childhood home was in the northern Bohemian town of Roudnice (Raudnitz in German) about 60 kilometers north of Prague. Ulmer was born into a Jewish family living in the heart of Moravia in Olomouc (Olmütz), which was home to a significant German-speaking Jewish community prior to World War II. On the surface it is simple geographic affinity that binds Pabst and Ulmer with Lamač and Machatý, who were both born in Prague, yet I would argue that the affinities run deeper. The overarching common factor that unites all of these directors is the way that their films (as well as their careers) tend to evade simple classification in terms of geographical or national categories. Both Pabst and Ulmer have been discussed as being “extraterritorial” and “homeless” respectively.¹⁵⁶ As I have demonstrated, the Czech directors Karel Lamač and Gustav Machatý fit into a similar paradigm of accented cinema, in terms of personal biography as well as of filmic themes. Like Ulmer and Pabst, both Machatý and Lamač boldly display the hallmarks of transculturation characteristic to the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is precisely the sense of “homelessness” and transience, moving fluidly across ethnic, linguistic, and national boundaries, that makes their work so prototypical to Central European culture as it existed under Habsburg rule and in the decades immediately following.

156 See: Rentschler *The Films of G. W. Pabst* and Isenberg, “Permanent Vacation.”

Chapter 3

The Tropes of Bohemia: Ethnicity, Culture, and Space in Genre

Nations, like genres, are born through a process that does not disappear with that birth. The imagining of community, like the genrefication process, always operates dialectically, through the transformation of an already existing community/genre.

-Rick Altman¹⁵⁷

As much as it was a cinema of stars, Third Reich Cinema was also a cinema of genres. In its first decades, however, academic study of Third Reich Cinema seemed to acknowledge only two grand genres: propaganda films and entertainment films. Following Goebbels's own outline, scholars more or less divided all films from the period into these two categories. For a long time, the focus remained clearly on the former, whereas the latter were dismissed as escapist entertainment with no other purpose than to distract and desensitize. It has only been in recent decades that scholars have begun to deal with the complex and widely diversified landscape of genres in Third Reich cinema. These studies have done much to expand our understanding of film culture during the Nazi period as a multilayered nexus of meaning and emotion, of ideology and desire. The first steps began in the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵⁸ A special issue of *Montage/Av* in 1994 dedicated to German film under National Socialism and Karsten Witte's 1995 book on comedy films in the Third Reich were landmarks that opened the way for further studies on genre and Nazi cinema.¹⁵⁹ Subsequently, multiple volumes of the annual CineGraph publication

157 *Film/Genre* 203.

158 See, for example: Belach *Wir tanzen um die Welt*, and Witte, "Visual Pleasure Inhibited."

159 See, for example, Witte, *Lachende Erben*. The most notable articles in terms of genre are: Lowry, "Der Ort meiner Träume?" and Kreimeier, "Von Henny Porten zu Zarah Leander"

have been dedicated to specific popular genres of the Nazi period and before.¹⁶⁰ Likewise, there has been a growing tendency towards the analysis of generic conventions and the function of genre in the cinema culture in recent Anglo-American publications on German film under National Socialism.¹⁶¹ Johannes von Moltke has provided the most focused and comprehensive exploration of one specific genre in his recently published study of *Heimatfilm*.¹⁶²

Although the formulaic nature of genre cinema was perfectly suited to the regulatory demands of the Nazi entertainment machine, it should be kept in mind that genre was a dominant force in German cinema since the 1910s. Indeed, many of the most popular genres during the Third Reich had had long traditions in German-language cinema, thus marking clear lines of continuity with Weimar Cinema. Furthermore, many of these genres, such as operetta, musical comedy, and *Heimatfilm*, continued long into the post-war era. My analysis takes into consideration films made prior to the Nazi takeover in 1933 and thereby illuminates continuities with Weimar cinema as well as subsequent transformations under National Socialism.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the position of Czechs and the Czech lands in German cinema in terms of genre and to outline the dominant generic tendencies. The body of films under consideration includes all German-language productions directed by Czechs or featuring at least one actor originally hailing from the Czech linguistic milieu. In addition, I consider the body German feature films set in the Czech lands, even if no Czechs were directly

160 Jörg Schöning, *Triviale Tropen: Exotische Reise- und Abenteuerfilme aus Deutschland 1919-1939* (München: edition text+kritik, 1997); Katja Uhlenbrok, ed., *MusikSpektakelFilm: Musiktheater und Tanzkultur im deutschen Film 1922-1937* (München: edition text+kritik, 1998); Malte Hagener and Jens Hans, eds., *Als die Filme singen lernten: Innovation und Tradition im Musikfilm 1928-1938* (München: edition text+kritik, 1999).

161 Most notable in this respect are: Hake *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich*, Rentschler *Ministry of Illusion*, and Koepnick *The Dark Mirror*. See also the special issue of *New German Critique* on Nazi Cinema: 74 (Spring-Summer 1998), and *The German Cinema Book* particularly the chapters by Bergfelder, von Moltke, and Horak.

162 Von Moltke, *No Place like Home*.

involved in the production process. This group of “Bohemian films” includes films made in Germany and Austria as well as those made in Prague, either as transnational MLVs or under the auspices of Prag-Film. Because of the special issues surrounding the MLV films and Prag-Film productions, though, these two categories are discussed more at length in chapters dedicated specifically to them. In this way, the present discussion is conceived as a sort of transitional territory between the first and second halves of the current study. It aims to shed a somewhat different light on some of the films mentioned in the previous two chapters, while also providing a thematic foundation to inform the analyses in the subsequent three chapters.

My analysis adopts a two-fold focus. First, I consider the contribution of Czech filmmakers to German genre cinema. What types of genres did Czechs tend towards in German cinema? What can this tell us about the position of Czechs in German cinema? Are there notable changes after the Nazi takeover in 1933 and later after the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939? If so, what are the implications? Second, I consider a subcategory of German cinema that I label “Bohemian films”, that is a body of films in which Bohemia and/or Moravia play a leading role either thematically or in terms of setting. While the group of “Bohemia films” does not in fact constitute a genre per se, it does frame a particular German cinematic discourse about Bohemia and Czechs, in which certain generic conventions, formulas, and expectations can be identified. It is perhaps best to think of these works in terms of a loosely related film cycle that are all at least partially set in Bohemia or Moravia and thereby engage with various issues related to cultural mapping and national identity. Thus, the second part of this chapter is concerned with examining how the German entertainment and culture industry cultivated and perpetuated certain specific stereotypes in the way it imagined Bohemia both as a geographic region and as a cultural space. The goal here is to describe the generic regime employed to imagine “Bohemia” and

outline the prevailing generic images of Bohemia that emerge from this body of films. What generic tropes do these films employ in their depiction of Bohemia (and Moravia) and its inhabitants? What does this tell us about the German perception of Bohemia and the Czechs?

A consistent feature of my examination here is the collusion between film genres and concepts of national and/or cultural identity. In what ways are certain genres linked to specific (German) national settings and other concepts of nationhood? How do they engage with questions of national identity formation and patterns of cultural assimilation and exclusion? Beyond the “Bohemian films” cycle, the three main generic regimes I address are Operetta (including light opera), *Heimatfilm*, and “Vienna films.” Operetta came into being well before the invention of cinema, while the *Heimatfilm* was in the early stages of canonization during this period. The category “Vienna film” is not a historically recognized genre per se, but has been used retrospectively, most importantly by Sabine Hake, to describe a group of films that share a variety of (nationally-conditioned) characteristics. My conception of a “Bohemian film” cycle is inspired by Hake’s work on “Vienna films.” In terms of Czech-influenced German film production, these four cinematic categories are not only the most common, but they also raise significant issues regarding how films both reflect national history and regional identity and actively shape these notions. How did these generic regimes become such dominating presences both in German films about Bohemia and in films made with Czech contributions? How are these four generic groups related and what is their connection to Bohemia (and Moravia)?

A recurring motif throughout my discussion is the role of music, which is a dominant feature in all the generic regimes mentioned here. Many discussions of Third Reich cinema (indeed of national cinemas in general) emphasize the important role of music in the articulation of cultural identity and national character. Music is a powerful vehicle that can be mobilized to

promote ideals of uniformity and belonging just as well as it can to express and validate difference. Altman, for example, writes of the unifying power of the national anthem, which unites the community in unisonance (*Film/Genre* 199). In reference to Third Reich cinema, Hake writes, “the popularity of musical forms confirmed the primacy of music in definitions of German national identity” (*German National Cinema* 72). My analysis explores various usages of music and considers the connotations of certain musical forms and styles within larger national and transnational frameworks.

Genre, Nation, and Ethnicity

Quite often, the process of genrefication is understood as a uniquely defining characteristic of popular cinema, in opposition to national, artistic, and *auteur* cinema. While overlooking or neglecting the fact that self-named *auteurs* also engage generic tropes, many scholars perceive genre cinema is commonly perceived as occupying a confrontational stance to both the artistic creation of *auteurs* and the formulation of a national cinema. Hake, for example, frames the generally heterogeneous nature of popular genre cinema as oppositional to the unifying tendencies of national cinema. Whereas the propaganda-driven Nazi films strove to articulate a single “Aryan-German” identity, popular genres provided a space for the fulfillment of exotic and cosmopolitan fantasies. “Genres provided the most effective framework for accommodating various social groups and for catering precisely to the specialised interests and sensibilities that allegedly had been dissolved into the unifying concepts of nation and race” (*German National Cinema* 72). She further asserts that “while the openly political films constituted the viewing subject in collective terms and addressed the audience as a unified body, the genre films participated in *the illusory validation of differences*: between social and individual norms, public

and private behaviour, gender roles and class differences” (*German National Cinema* 72, emphasis added). As I outline below, operetta seems to have been the ideal genre for the exposition of such differences. What are the implications of the validation of ethnic difference within the context of German cinema during the Third Reich, particularly when it involves the participation of Czechs, which Nazi doctrine viewed as both racially Other and inferior? What role does “Czechness” play in German genre cinema and how did this role change throughout the 1930s and 1940s?

In his seminal work *Film/Genre*, Rick Altman poses the question “what can genres teach us about nations?” and in response contends that the creation and maintenance of a national identity is similar in many ways to the process of defining a genre and its generic characteristics (195-206). Both practices are founded on patterns of inclusion and exclusion—national categories, like generic classifications, have porous and unfixed borders. In this sense, neither genre nor national cinema “spring full-blown from the head of Zeus” (Altman, *Film/Genre* 218). Thus he concludes that “genre theory might actually be a useful tool for analysing relationships between populations and the texts they use, for whatever purpose they might use them. Against all expectation, genre theory might actually help us think about nations” (*Film/Genre* 206). In German cinema studies, scholars such as Karsten Witte, Lutz Koepnick, Sabine Hake, and Johannes von Moltke have studied specific generic categories with particular attention to the way they engage issues of nationality and national cinema. Witte has analyzed the affinities between revue films from Hollywood and Babelsberg, describing, for example, how Babelsberg appropriated the dance aesthetic from Hollywood and “Germanized” it, i.e., infused it with deeper meaning (see “Visual Pleasure Inhibited”). In a similar fashion, Koepnick has addressed the transnational appropriation of the American western (99-136). Hake’s analysis of Wien-Film

demonstrates how this company's films employed generic formulae in the construction of a national Austrian identity distinct from the German neighbor to the north (*Popular Cinema* 149-171). Von Moltke provides an extensive examination of how *Heimatfilm* genre articulates German and Austrian "home" space and contributes to imagining the national community.

Hake maintains "almost all genres [in Third Reich cinema] were structured around a persistent anxiety over questions of identity" (*Popular Cinema* 13). My focus here is specifically on the function of genre in the articulation of *national* identity. My aim is to sidestep the common dichotomy between "genre/popular" on the one hand and "artistic/national" on the other to examine what can be said of genres that have strong ties to a particular national (or regional) culture. I am interested in genres that highlight (national) unity rather than difference. The most obvious example is the *Heimatfilm* genre, which explicitly foregrounds issues of the national and concepts of wholeness. Calling upon Altman's frameworks, von Moltke points the necessity to recognize the German-Austrian collaborative nature of the genre (*No Place Like Home* 25). As I point out below, certain traits of the *Heimatfilm* are detectable in many productions from the period that are not readily classified within the genre. In some cases, Czechs working in German cinema were actively engaged in constructing images (and sounds) of Heimat. The consideration of this genre becomes most intriguing in cases when characteristics of the *Heimatfilm* turn up in films dealing with Bohemia and Moravia, lands of ethnic and nationalistic contention that shifted from Austrian, to Czechoslovak, to German control within less than a quarter century (between 1918 and 1939). What role do Bohemia and Moravia play in German-Austrian notions of Heimat?

Film scholarship has identified several film cycles in German cinema from this period that are defined primarily in national terms. These groups of films take their name from the

geographic region invoked by their setting and each film in the cycle shares certain generic traits that are understood as emblematic of the national or regional character inherent to this space. As noted earlier, Hake describes “Vienna films” as a uniquely Austrian cycle within Third Reich cinema that “followed the formal conventions of classical genre cinema” (*Popular Cinema* 155). We could also point to one of the most clearly identifiable, specifically “German” genres in Third Reich cinema: the so-called “Prussian film.”¹⁶³ Although this genre was weighted with more mythical significance during the Nazi period, these films inspired by episodes from Prussia’s (military) past had firm roots in Weimar cinema, as was the case with most genres of the period.¹⁶⁴ In a similar vein, Réka Gulyás has described what she calls *Ungarnfilme* (German films set in Hungary), a cycle whose genealogy she traces back to the silent era.¹⁶⁵ Thus far, however, a distinct “Bohemian” cycle has not been identified and defined within the context of German cinema in this period. My analysis attempts to outline the characteristics of these “Bohemian films” and to position them in relation to German discourses of nation and Heimat.¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, I argue that this cycle constitutes a distinct subset of the *Heimatfilm* genre.

My reading of “Bohemian films” builds primarily upon Johannes von Moltke’s groundbreaking scholarship on the German *Heimatfilm*, which Thomas Elsaesser has dubbed “Germany’s only indigenous and historically most enduring genre” (*No Place Like Home* 3).

Von Moltke’s analysis contends that this genre is concerned first and foremost with questions of

163 See for example, Hake, *German National Cinema*, 82-83.

164 For a deeper analysis of generic continuities between Weimar and Nazi cinema, see for example, Klaus Kreimeier, “Von Henny Porten zu Zarah Leander.”

165 See Gulyás, particularly 49-53.

166 I prefer the term “Bohemian” to “Czech,” because Bohemian refers to a geographic area, whereas Czech tends more to imply a specific ethnic group, namely Czech speaking Slavs. I also consider films set in Moravia to be generically indistinguishable from those set in Bohemia and therefore prefer the shortened label “Bohemian” to the more correct yet less wieldy “Bohemian and Moravian” to refer to films set in either of these regions.

space and place. Building on the work of Celia Applegate and Alon Confino, he describes German idea of Heimat as “a spatial concept that would mediate between the regional and the national. Heimat functioned as a galvanizing notion that reconciled a local world with the larger, more impersonal, national sphere” (*No Place Like Home* 9). As the mediator between individual and nation, local places of Heimat are transformed into actual representation of the nation, whereby notions of locality, region, and nation become interchangeable, forming the basis of an “imagined community” (see *No Place Like Home* 9).

Musical Leanings

A brief overview of films by Czech directors and those featuring Czech actors reveals the predominance of certain genres or film cycles united by certain recurring conventions: namely, light comedies and what I generally term here as “music films.” I understand this latter designation to encompass the broad range of all films that utilize music, particularly singing, as a dominant narrative element—i.e., films that include multiple sequences whereby the on-screen characters sing or perform on musical instruments.¹⁶⁷ This category of “music films” also includes film revues and the so-called “singer films.” In many ways, “music films” of one type or another dominated the film culture of the period, not only in Germany and throughout Europe, but also in Hollywood. Over the past few decades, multiple studies have been devoted specifically to music films of the Third Reich making it perhaps the second most researched

¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, since most light comedies from this period include diegetic song and dance numbers and, conversely, most “musical films” can also be broadly defined as comedies, the distinction between these two genres is blurred and often indistinguishable.

group of films after the overtly propagandistic historical and war films.¹⁶⁸

A closer examination of the specific types of music films that Czech worked on reveals a remarkable trend towards film operettas and adaptations of light operas. This observation provokes a number of questions: Which factors might have led to the predominance of these musical sub-genres in films involving Czechs? What aspects of operetta and light opera made them suitable or attractive to Czech filmmakers? Is there anything specifically “Czech” or “Bohemian” about the films themselves?

On some level, it is true that without Lamač’s contribution, operettas and musical comedies might not stand out so prominently among the works of Czech filmmakers in Germany. Yet, beyond the films of Lamač, these genres are a recurring theme at the intersection of Czech, Austrian, and German film cultures. For example, musical comedies and operetta are a dominating presence among the 30-some Czech-German MLVs made between 1930 and 1938, particularly prior to 1935, at which time production began to tend towards melodrama and straight out comedy. Although Lamač was a leading figure in Czech-German MLV production, he was by no means the only director of musical comedies and operettas in this body of films; other directors include Viktor Janson (*Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will* [A Woman Who Knows What She Wants, 1934]), Otto Kanturek (*Das Glück von Grinzing* a.k.a. *Das Häuschen in Grinzing*, [The Little House below Emausy, 1933]), and Walther Kolm-Veltée (*Csárdás* a.k.a. *Ihre tollste Nacht* [Wild Night, 1935]).

Light opera and operetta adaptations consistently turn up at significant moments in the careers of other Czechs working in German cinema. For example, director Karel Anton’s first

168 For notable studies on music films of the Third Reich period see: Belach, *Wir tanzen um die Welt*; Hagener and Hans, *Als die Filme singen lernten*; Uhlenbrok, *MusikSpektakelFilm*; and Wedel *Der deutsche Musikfilm*.

effort in Germany, *Martha* (1936), was an interpretation of Friedrich von Flotow's 1844 comic opera of the same name.¹⁶⁹ One year prior to *Martha*, Lída Baarová's German film debut was likewise indebted to the light music genres. Although not directly adapted from an operetta, *Barcarole* (1935) is thematically indebted to Johann Strauss' *Eine Nacht in Venedig* (A Night in Venice) and takes the famous aria from Jacques Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (*The Tales of Hoffmann*) as its title and main musical motif. A few years later Baarová played the lead female role in a filmic interpretation of Johann Strauss' operetta *Die Fledermaus* (1937), which remains probably her most well-remembered film after the propaganda vehicles *Verräter* (Traitors, 1936) and *Patrioten* (Patriots, 1937). Although operetta and light opera were far from dominating presences in the oeuvres of these Czechs, films of these genres remain important landmarks in their careers and contribute to the generally high profile of these genres in films that involved Czechs.

Of particular interest here are the films that are adaptations (or invocations) of Viennese operetta with its preference for historical, rural, and folkloric settings. This is in contrast to the more cosmopolitan and often jazz-influenced revue films and so-called "singer films," as well as modern operettas made specifically for the big screen such as *Die Drei von der Tankstelle* (The Three from the Gas Station, 1930). In terms of numbers, adaptations of Viennese-style operettas constitute a larger percentage of films involving Czechs. What makes this body of films all the more interesting, however, are the affinities, interconnections, and continuities they point to

¹⁶⁹ The film also bears the alternative title *Letzte Rose*. It should be noted that unlike the Viennese operettas or other operas discussed below, Flotow's opera is distinguished by its distinctly "French" style, despite its German libretto. Accordingly, Anton simultaneously directed a French-language version of *Martha* (with the alternative title *Les dernières roses*). After many years of working in Czechoslovakia and France, Anton (using the Germanized version of his first name, Karl) remained in Germany after *Martha* and went on to become a prolific director across a surprisingly wide range of genres, including propaganda films, spy and adventure thrillers, and revue films.

between Czech, Austrian, and German film culture.

Operetta as Transnational Genre

Of all the musical film genres mentioned here, operetta is the one most invested in a deeper cultural tradition. As a musical genre, operetta predates the cinema by nearly half a century. Operetta can also be seen as the direct precursor for most of the music film subgenres, including the musical comedy, revue, and “singer films.”¹⁷⁰ Building on the *opéra comique*, *Singspiel* and *opera buffa* traditions, the operetta was first formulated in the works of Jacques Offenbach in Paris in the 1850s and 1860s. During the next few decades, the works of Johann Strauss Jr. solidified the uniquely Viennese operetta idiom, which would become the artistic style most closely associated with Central European *Gründerzeit* culture. By the time sound film had become institutionalized, the traditional Viennese-style operetta had all but died out, disappearing from the stages of Central Europe in favor of cabaret, revue, and Tiller-esque dance productions. It is noteworthy that operetta remained such a valuable source of material for the cinema of the 1930s given the antiquarian nature of the genre by that time.

More importantly for the current study, the standard musical and thematic tropes of (Viennese) operetta link it more directly to the cultural specificities of Central Europe than subgenres such as the revue film or “singer film,” which tend to draw more heavily on modern (often American) cosmopolitan elements. In many ways, the operetta, particularly in its Viennese mutation, is the most distinctly Central European genre of the early 20th century. Speaking of Third Reich film comedies, Hake has commented that “they modified the Prussian model of

170 Karsten Witte observes further, “it is a truism in the history of entertainment that the revue film is derived from the operetta; within the German tradition there is the additional burden that the revue continued in the vein of the silly Viennese operetta rather than the satirical Parisian operetta” (“Visual Pleasure Inhibited” 243).

Americanism by relying heavily on the Central European tastes and sensibilities that had influenced many comic registers during the 1920s and early 1930s” (*German National Cinema* 73). It is reasonable to conclude that the “Central European tastes” that Hake alludes to were rooted in and directly formed by the most popular comic genre of the period, the operetta. Since before World War I, the operetta tradition had always been a leading influence on Central European comedy films. Indeed, the main visual characteristics and thematic tropes that distinguished early Central European film comedies from the leading Hollywood models can be attributed to operetta.¹⁷¹

For obvious reasons, the primary mode of German-language film operetta was informed more by the Viennese tradition than by the older Parisian operetta style.¹⁷² Vienna was always the undisputed capital of the operetta in Central Europe. Indeed, nearly without fail, any discussion of Central European operetta cannot fail to invoke the mythological images of 19th century Vienna and the innocuous sentiment of pre-WWI Habsburg culture. The alliance between German-language film operetta and the mythologies of “Old Austria” and specifically “Vienna” have been analyzed at length. Francesco Bono describes how operetta films (in

171 Via the various waves of emigration from Europe to California, the operetta-influenced comedic sensibility eventually became settled in Hollywood and operetta, in a rather modified form, became recognized as a standard American genre. Yet, although it had been appropriated by Hollywood, the operetta genre consistently remained the domain of the Central European émigrés. According to Peter Krämer the steady flow of German and Austrian immigrants arriving in Hollywood in the 1920s usually found their niche in either war films or operetta. See Krämer, “Hollywood in Germany/Germany in Hollywood.” He also points out that most of the big hits of the 1920s and 1930 directed by Central European immigrants in Hollywood had German, Austrian, or “Ruritanian” (that is imaginary Central European) settings (228). As asserted above, although Czechs working in Austria and Germany often found themselves working on operettas, they did not experience such a level of generic “ghettoization” as Krämer describes for Central Europeans in Hollywood.

172 There were in fact several notable films based on French operettas, such as *Kiki* (1932) and *Mamsell Nitouche* (1932) both French-German co-productions directed by Karel Lamač. Yet, such exceptions were all made prior to 1934.

contrast to their “German” counterparts, revue films) fulfilled an almost therapeutic purpose that allowed Austria to come to terms with its own unique cultural history in the face of contemporary crises (see “Glücklich ist, wer vergisst”). Thomas Elsaesser likewise highlights film operetta as a uniquely Austrian genre with an ongoing commitment to mythologizing “Vienna,” regardless of whether produced in Budapest, Berlin, Hollywood, or Vienna itself (see “Das Lied ist aus”). Hake’s examination of “Vienna films” implies strong links between this cycle and operetta such that the two become essentially interchangeable (see *Popular Cinema*). With each of these authors, one gets the sense that “Austrian cinema” (in the broadest sense) of the 1930s-50s is more or less entirely synonymous with the definition of film operetta from this period.

As an emblem of German-Austrian culture, the operetta is a much-disputed object in the Czechoslovakian context. Interestingly, many cultural conservatives in the new Czechoslovak state also regarded the genre as a purely “Austrian” genre, that is an inherently “German” genre and foreign to the Czech tradition. In the political context of the time, the “Austrian” label is linked inextricably with the Habsburg suppression of Czech language and traditions, therefore designating it as an enemy in the battle to secure the national culture and sense of identity. There was a distinct tendency among certain critics to reject any film adaptations based on German/Austrian sources in the name of defending Czech culture. To these critics no genre was more emblematic of German/Austrian cultural imperialism than the operetta.

A closer look at the genre, however, reveals that there is more to be said about the ethnic and national connotations of operetta than the label “Austrian” might at first suggest. Far from being nationally purist or essentialist (that is, “exclusively German”), Viennese operetta is characterized by a highly multi-ethnic and international character. This can be attributed in part

to the varied backgrounds of its most famous composers. Arguably, the two most famous composers after Vienna-native Johann Strauss Jr. are Hungarian-born Franz (Ferenc) Lehár and Emmerich Kálmán (born Imre Koppstein). In terms of the current discussion, it should also be noted that many famous operetta composers hailed from the Austrian territories of Bohemia and Moravia.¹⁷³ The most important among these are Oskar Nedbal (born in Tábor), Leo Fall (born in Olomouc/Olmütz), Ralph Benatzky (born Rudolf Josef František Benatzký in Moravské Budějovice/Mährisch-Budweis), and Edmund Nick (born in Liberec/Reichenberg). Regardless of geographic origin, Vienna was the permanent point of reference and highest goal for all operetta composers in Central Europe. Here is where musical careers would begin and end. Furthermore, if one were to succeed in the genre, one had to accommodate to the specific musical tastes cultivated here. Consequently, regardless of the ethnic or regional culture associated with their place of birth, the work of most Central European operetta composers is first and foremost “Viennese” in style and indelibly linked to the mythological image of “Vienna.” The “Viennese” label here should in no way be taken as synonymous with “German,” though. Rather than promoting any restrictively “national” idiom (in the ethnic sense) the Viennese style tended rather towards the borrowing and celebration of diverse cultural idioms from across the Dual Monarchy (and beyond).

The composition of the Viennese operetta style is best described not so much as a process of cultural assimilation, but as a collection and centralization of peripheral ethnic styles and idioms. This mode of operetta offers a musical reflection of the multi-ethnic composition of the

173 In addition, Prague’s commitment to operetta (both historically and recently) should also be noted. For example, the renowned musical theater in Prague’s Karlín neighborhood, which was built in 1881 and at one time bore the name “Operetta in Karlín,” keeps the Viennese operetta tradition alive to this day with regular performances of classical works from the genre such as *Polenblut*, *Die Csárdásfürstin*, and *Die Zigeunerbaron*.

Dual Monarchy and provides a unique condensation and amalgamation of Central Europe's tremendously diverse cultural traditions, even if greatly simplified and largely assimilated into the dominant Viennese musical style. In his deeply insightful study of Viennese operetta, Moritz Csáky analyzes the heterogeneous and "modern" aesthetic of the genre in terms of the multi-ethnic plurality within the Dual Monarchy. He writes:

The Viennese operetta, the most important entertainment genre for the broad urban population around 1900, thrived on the wealth in quotation [*Zitatenreichtum*] of music and themes from throughout the realm. The cultural-political relevance of the operetta can be understood as two-fold. Firstly, the multiple coding seen in the Viennese operetta is evidence of the process of acculturation occurring at this time when [national or cultural] difference was gaining importance in the political realm. Secondly, the operetta also reflected stereotypical images of foreignness and codified these images in a blithely alienation [*heiter-vefremdeten*] manner. (218)

Contrasting it with the "German" tradition, Csáky describes the "wealth in quotation" (*Zitatenreichtum*) of Austrian music as one of its most unique characteristics, which he traces back to the at least the 18th century (to Haydn and Mozart) (207-208). He also lays out the process whereby "foreign" elements were subtly integrated into the greater "Viennese" style by Czech, Hungarian, Italian, or Jewish composers who brought subtle "ethnic" markers to their work, despite their efforts to mask their origins and assimilate their work into the dominant generic codes of the operetta (212-13).

Echoing Csáky's analysis, Elsaesser also points to the practice of ethnic performance inherent in the genre and its indebtedness to the Central European context:

The secret affinity that existed between Hollywood on one side and Vienna or Paris on the other was that they were societies of the spectacle, cities of make-believe and of the show. The decadence of the Hapsburg monarchy was in some sense the pervasive sense of impersonation, of pretending to be in possession of values and status that relied for credibility not on substance but on a convincing performance, on persuading others to take an appearance for the reality. There is a historical basis to this construction: One can think of Vienna as a “melting-pot” city, in which class conflicts and ethnic tensions are veiled by a kind of permeability between classes, a state of affairs dramatized most succinctly in operettas. (Elsaesser, “Ethnicity” 112)

In his essay on operetta, Elsaesser highlights the “double play” (doppelte Spiel) whereby “authenticity” and “falseness” reflect each other in a sort of cinematic “mise-en-abyme.”¹⁷⁴ In fact, the storylines of operettas often hinge upon the performative nature of national and social identity. Of course, it is a common literary trope whereby a member of the lower class masquerades themselves into high society, thus exposing the arbitrary nature of social status (and often with the subtext that love can overcome any class divides). Yet, for present concerns it is the ways that operetta enacts ethnic performance as a narrative trope that is more deserving of our attention.

Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* is perhaps the most definitive Viennese operetta and it is worth considering in light of the discussion at hand, since each of the three film adaptations of the operetta made between 1930 and the end of the war involved some level of Czech collaboration. The first German sound film version of the operetta was directed by Carl Lamač in

174 See Elsaesser, “Das Lied ist aus.”

1931 and starred Anny Ondra in the role of Adele.¹⁷⁵ Six years later Lída Baarová played the female lead role, Rosalinde/Maria Weigel, in the second sound adaptation of the film directed by Paul Verhoeven and Hans Zerlett (1937). Finally, the period's most famous version, which was directed by Géza von Bolváry and stars Johannes Heesters, was filmed in the Barrandov studios and at exterior locations in Prague during the final months of the war.¹⁷⁶

Csáky uses the example of *Die Fledermaus* as the springboard into his entire discussion of multi-ethnicity and transnationalism in Viennese operetta. He describes how the ballet sequence at the end of Act II—which features Spanish, Scottish, and Russian dances, as well as Bohemian (polka), and Hungarian (csárdás)—as a demonstration of the Viennese operetta's tradition of internationality and fascination with the exotic. This central act of the original stage version of *Die Fledermaus* takes place at a grand ball in the villa of the Russian Count Orlofsky. In most performances of the operetta, Orlofsky's lines are spoken with a thick Russian/Slavic accent that clearly denotes his identity as ethnic Other.¹⁷⁷ Falke uses Orlofsky's ball as an opportunity to stage an intrigue he flippantly refers to as “a bat's revenge” as a means to get back at his friend Eisenstein for embarrassing him a year previously. The resulting “comedy within a comedy” in Orlofsky's villa is an extravaganza of masquerade and assumed identity. Under

175 The film was a French-German co-production of Ondra-Lamac-Film and Vandor-Film (Paris). Together with Pierre Billon, Lamač also co-directed a French version of the film (*La chauve-souris*, 1931), which also featured Anny Ondra in the starring role.

176 Shot in late fall 1944, the Bolváry adaptation was the first major color film to be made in the Barrandov studios. Originally produced by the Terra-Filmkunst company, the film was not completed before the end of the war. Although originally feared lost, the material was recovered after the war and completed by the newly formed DEFA company. The completed film premiered in the Soviet Sector on Berlin on August 16, 1946, but did not play in West Germany until 1949.

177 With regard to gender performance it is, of course, highly significant that the Orlofsky character, an eighteen-year-old boy, is scored as a mezzo-soprano, thus warranting a female singer. Equally notable is the fact that Orlofsky is played by men well into their thirties or older in each of the German film versions mentioned here.

Falke's direction, Eisenstein plays the role of "Marquis Renard" while prison director Frank appears under the title of "Chevalier Chargrin," (whereby both purport a certain claim to French aristocracy). Eisenstein's maid, Adela, is also in attendance answering to the name "Olga" (although she professes not to speak Russian, which makes her presumed origins entirely unclear).

Eisenstein's wife, Rosalinde, who assumes the identity of a Hungarian countess and seduces her own husband in order to expose his unfaithful intentions, performs the most significant role in the whole masquerade. When other guests challenge the authenticity of the "Hungarian countess" despite her affected accent, Rosalinde is compelled to "prove" her ethnicity.¹⁷⁸ She does this through music, whereby she dances a *csárdás* (the Hungarian national dance) and sings a melody that opens with the following text:

Klänge der Heimat, ihr weckt mir das Sehnen,
Rufet die Tränen ins Auge mir!
Wenn ich euch höre, ihr heimischen Lieder,
Zieht mich's wieder, mein Ungarland, zu dir! (Strauss 58-59)

Sounds of the homeland, you awaken my desire
Summon tears to my eye!
When I hear you, songs of home,
I am drawn again, Hungary, to you!

This ethnic drag performance effectively puts an end to the speculation as to the "Hungarianness" of the countess. The "German" wife successfully performs the tropes of Hungary such that the audience is duped into perceiving her as "Hungarian." Within the logic of the operetta, the burden of (ethnic) proof is accomplished primarily through the cultural indices of music, specifically song and dance. Although the song text overtly professes (emotional) ties to

178 One guest comments: "Übrigens könnte ich zehn gegen eins wetten, daß sie keine Ungarin ist. Eine Dame jenseits der Leitha hat mehr Feuer und wäre in unserer Gesellschaft längst explodiert!" See Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*, 58f.

the Hungarian homeland, it is its performance as music, in specifically Hungarian tones (*Klänge*), that ultimately evokes the aura of Hungary, thereby lending credence to the words. Within the diegesis of *Die Fledermaus*, the perception of ethnic identity rests as much in linguistic and musical utterances as it does in outward appearance.

The 1937 film adaptation of *Die Fledermaus* directed by Paul Verhoeven extends the play of ethnic identity even further. In a sort of *mise en abyme* of self-reflectivity, the film opens with the story of Hans Weigel, a famous tenor, who cannot stand singing (or even hearing) *Die Fledermaus* even though much of his own popularity stems from his performance of Eisenstein on the stage and in recordings. Nevertheless, the relationship between Weigel and his wife Maria is oddly reminiscent of that between Eisenstein and Rosalinde: the husband is infatuated with the charms of a mysterious Hungarian countess, while the wife finds herself confronted with the wooing of an unwanted suitor. After this brief introduction that serves to establish the marital crisis, the majority of the narrative, including Orlofsky's ball, takes place in the mind of the dozing Weigel, whereby he dreams himself (and the audience) directly into the world of *Die Fledermaus*. From this point, the film more or less faithfully follows the basic story of the operetta, only to return to the "reality" of the waking world in the final moments so that marital harmony can be reestablished by virtue of the protagonist's realization of the error of his womanizing ways. Through the added framing narrative, the film introduces an extra level to the theme of identity performance inherent in the original operetta. Here, the singer whose career is built on his performance of the Eisenstein character imagines that he is in fact Eisenstein, who then assumes the identity of Marquis Renard at the ball. The film captures the original operetta sense of a "double foundation" in reality/authenticity and falseness/masquerade and intensifies it

a notch by presenting the entire narrative of the masquerade ball itself as a dream couched within a “reality” in which all the main characters appear in different guises.¹⁷⁹

In this adaptation, Lída Baarová plays the role of the modern German housewife. In the case of this character, the film’s expanded narrative level not only introduces an extension of the play of identity, but, more intriguingly, an added layer of ethnic performance. The viewing audience witnesses a Czech actress playing a German housewife, who in turn masquerades as a Hungarian countess. Baarová not only strives to convincingly mask her Czech diction in order to perform in language fitting to the role of a “German” housewife, but must also imitate the accent-laden speech of a native Hungarian who is also struggling with German pronunciation (for the sequence at Orlofsky’s ball).¹⁸⁰ As in the original operetta, Rosalinde’s song serves as an authentication of her Hungarian identity. In the dream-world of Verhoeven’s film, as Rosalinde begins to sing, her ball gown is abruptly replaced with a typically Hungarian dress and a troupe of dancers likewise in Hungarian kit magically appear to complement the ethnic spectacle (fig. 14). In some ways, the film offers significantly more multilayered images and sounds of ethnic play than the original operetta.¹⁸¹

179 For more on the “Doppelter Boden“ or “doppelte Spiel” between being and appearance (Sein und Schein) in operetta, see Elsaesser “Das Lied ist aus”

180 In a further extension of the simulacrum experience, it should be noted that the voice that we hear intoning the “Lied der Heimat” does not in fact belong to Baarová. As with the majority of the singing parts in the film, the actor’s voices were overdubbed in post-production by professional singers. According to Ulrich Klaus, the singing for Rosalinde was performed by Finnish soprano Aulikki Rautawaara. See the entry on *Die Fledermaus* in Klaus, *Deutsche Tonfilme* (015.37).

181 The film also includes other notable instances of ethnic play: The thickly-accented Russian count is played by Moravian-born actor Karel/Karl Stepanek. Furthermore, it is not only “non-German” characters that are marked with nationally (or regionally) specific indicators: the role of the jailer Frosch is performed with typical über-Austrian zest by Hans Moser, whose countless filmic depictions of Austrian servant-types are rooted in extreme cultural caricature



Figure 14. Lída Baarová’s ethnic performance as a “Hungarian” in *Die Fledermaus* (1937). [Source: screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

Verhoeven’s *Die Fledermaus* stands out in German film history for two reasons. First, it is a late example of a German-made adaptation of a Viennese operetta. According to the division of labor within the consolidated German film industry under Nazi leadership, the production of such sentimental “Vienna films” became the exclusive domain of Wien-Film. As Hake describes: “the mid-1930s saw a steady decline in German productions with Viennese themes” as films working in this milieu became more and more localized in the Austrian industry (*Popular Cinema* 156). Thus, this 1937 adaptation of *Die Fledermaus* stands as one of the last endeavors to capture the Viennese milieu in the Berlin studios. Second, the film is conspicuous for its celebration of European ethnic heterogeneity.

According to Hake, film production in post-*Anschluss* Vienna was compelled to avoid “nostalgic reminiscences about the multi-ethnic culture of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire”

(*Popular Cinema* 157). The consequences of this policy are thrown into relief if the 1937 film is compared with another adaptation of the operetta made in the closing years of the Nazi dictatorship. The 1945 version of *Die Fledermaus*, directed by Géza von Bolváry, does not feature the “Klänge der Heimat” number at all and Rosalinde never dons traditional Hungarian dress. In fact, she does not appear in mask at all—her costume relies primarily on her dyed red hair and her speech, which features a highly affected accent and the inclusion of many Hungarian words. The film does not entirely exclude ethnic performance, though. Count Orlofsky’s ball features pseudo-oriental dance performances by a troupe in some sort of Indian/Arabic costuming and maidens in Greek-style robes pouring wine for the guests. This later film enacts the containment and eclipsing of Central European cultural diversity via a shift to exotic, Oriental Otherness.¹⁸²

The Shifting National Registers of Operetta

Third Reich cinema initiated the process of “cleansing” the operetta long before the 1938 *Anschluss*. The inception of Nazi doctrine in German cinema during the mid-1930s marks a fundamental shift in the film operetta genre, away from celebrations of cultural and ethnic diversity towards notions of wholeness common to the Heimat genre and the National Socialist ideal of *Volksgemeinschaft* in general. In this process the operetta was stripped of one of its most basic qualities. To a certain extent, the operetta had always been a cultural haven for racial

¹⁸² The collapse of the exotic Other and erotic female should also be noted: the centerpiece of the Indian/Arabic number is a bare-breasted woman. Of course, this woman, as with all the exotic performers in this film, does not have any speaking lines. These figures do not have voices, they exist purely as visual spectacle. In terms of self-reflexive layering, however, this film is almost on par with the 1937 version: Johann Strauss himself appears in the narrative as an accomplice to “the bat’s” revenge. He performs a sequence from his new operetta (*Die Fledermaus*) at Orlofsky’s ball, which oddly echoes earlier events in the film, much to the astonishment of the characters involved.

tolerance in a culture of ever-greater inter-ethnic tension. As Csáky demonstrates, Lehár's works are noteworthy for their positive treatment of Jewish characters during a period of increasing anti-Semitism in Austria-Hungary at the turn of the century (219). In a sense, the genre itself is unthinkable without the contribution of Jewish composers. As with Viennese Modernism, many of the best-known proponents of the operetta were themselves of Jewish origin, most notably Jacques Offenbach, commonly recognized as the creator of the operetta form. Well-known Jewish composers of Viennese operetta include Oscar Straus, Leo Fall, and Emmerich Kálmán. 1934 saw German film adaptations of Straus's *Der letzte Walzer* (The Last Waltz) and Kálmán's *Csárdásfürstin* (The Gipsy Princess) and as late as 1935, Offenbach's well-known music could be heard in German cinemas as the thematic underpinning of *Barcarole* despite Nazi anti-Jewish prohibitions. However, as the decade progressed traditional Viennese operetta increasingly gave way to revue films and other more "modern" musical forms and those operettas that were produced lacked most of their original ethnic overtones. This development speaks to the increasing incompatibility of the Central European sense of cultural mixing inherent in the Viennese operetta tradition within the Nazi state with its preaching of racial essentialism and segregation.

A remarkable example of racial inclusion that contradicts official Nazi doctrine is Karel Lamač's 1934 film *Frasquita*, which has been described as the most successful film adapted from a Lehár operetta (Buchschwenter and Szely 223). Appearing on German screens the same year that the Nuremberg Laws were introduced, the plot of *Frasquita* tells of an "Aryan" man (to use the racialized terminology of the day) who falls in love with and eventually marries a gypsy woman. The racial element here is far more pronounced than in *Die Fledermaus*. In Strauss's operetta, the lead female, Rosalinde, only performed the part of a Hungarian—ethnic difference,

although celebrated, remained firmly in the realm of play and masquerade. In *Frasquita*, the lead female is gypsy by blood—indeed the film presents the process whereby she learns to “act” as a proper (German) lady. As in *Die Fledermaus*, the music is highly racialized and employed as a primary signifier of ethnicity. There is a clear distinction between the folk music performed by the gypsies and the serious musical culture patronized by the urban middle class. With a phonograph and microphone in tow, Hippolyt travels to the coast as a sort of audio ethnographer in the quest of quality field recordings of the local folk culture.¹⁸³ It is on the basis of his recordings of the gypsy *Frasquita*, that he is able to land her a contract with the theater company. Of course, a precondition of acceptance into “official” culture is that the gypsy girl must be transformed into a “fine lady.” Thus, as a sort of inverse to the example of Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, who relied on music to authenticate her assumed ethnic identity, *Frasquita* must mask her true ethnic background and adapt to the dictates of prevailing fashion. It is also worth noting that the role of the gypsy *Frasquita* is played by Czech soprano Jarmila Novotná, which adds a further (masked) level of ethnic play to the film. As with Baarová’s Rosalinde, the role of ethnic Other is embodied by a female, non-German (in this case Czech) performer. These casting choices introduce an echo of the racially-tinged male desire in the filmic narrative that extends to the male (German) cinema viewer.

As an Austrian production by the Atlantis-Film GmbH in Vienna, *Frasquita* can be easily understood within the “division of labor” that Hake describes, whereby “Vienna films” (including Viennese operettas) gradually became the exclusive domain of the Austrian productions. More importantly, the consummation of the relationship between a “German” man and a gypsy woman at the end of *Frasquita* stands in remarkable contrast to the prevailing trends

¹⁸³ Hippolyt’s undertaking suggests curious echoes of Béla Bartók and his ethnomusicology project.

in Third Reich cinema at the time. The timeless fantasy world of the operetta existed as one of the last spaces in German cinema of the mid-1930s in which cultural mixing and interracial relationships could be “unproblematically” articulated, that is without the need for a compulsory condemnation or punishment of the character’s actions. Of course, as the 1930s moved onward, it became increasingly difficult to gain approval for such films, even in Austria, where economic and political pressures from Germany (the main export market) a *de facto* application of the Aryan Laws even before the policies became officially instituted under the *Anschluss*.¹⁸⁴

Despite the fact that *Frasquita* was produced by an Austrian company and takes as its source the work of one of the most popular composers of Viennese operetta, there is very little of specifically Austrian character present in the film itself. With its emphasis on exotic seaside locations, bourgeois domestic interiors, and tuxedo-filled urban nightclubs, the film presents very little of the “Viennese milieu” generally associated with the genre. As Buchschwenter and Szely rightly point out, the only traces of overt “Austrian” atmosphere rests in the performances of the servant pair played by Hans Moser and Rudolf Carl (226). Both actors built their careers on playing such figures—lower class types with thick Austrian accents, who act as ridiculous fools, but are filled with folk charm and wisdom. In fact, it could be argued that Moser and Carl were character actors, who consistently performed the same character. Their film personas represent two of the most widely recognizable signifiers of “Vienna” in Austrian cinema from the middle part of the century. Beyond this overt enactment of Austrian culture as a particular mode of German identity, I would argue that the “Austrian” nature of *Frasquita* is also evidenced by its willingness to openly portray and celebrate ethnic difference. Such playful exploitations of Otherness are a deeply engrained generic trait of the operetta, which is closely tied to the wealth

184 For an extensive history of the institutionalization of the Aryan Laws in Austrian cinema of the mid-1930s, see Loacker and Prucha.

of ethnic diversity in the former territories united under the Dual Monarchy. Under National Socialism such multicultural tendencies were neutralized and cleansed from operetta, in favor of highlighting the specifically “German” aspects of Austrian identity (as contrasting yet complementary to the northern Prussian character). In *Frasquita*, however, we still find some last resonance of this generic theme before it would fall subject to the restrictive racial policies of the Third Reich.

For all the championing of “Old Austrian” manners and ways, the operetta films made during the Third Reich eclipsed certain elements of the original genre in order to highlight others. This development marks a temporary stagnation of the regenrefication process as Altman describes it. The image of “Vienna” was no longer one composed of a multi-cultural play of voices. The focus shifted to the homogenizing effect of the genre. The ethnically diverse periphery was no longer permitted to further influence the development of the genre, which in turn became stuck in a constant recycling of the same “Old Austrian” types. Placing less emphasis on cultural mixing, music became increasingly mobilized as a unifying force, reinforcing instances of uniquely Austrian unisonance within the symphony of the greater German Reich.¹⁸⁵ In Third Reich operetta films, the primary tension was no longer between the Viennese (German) core and the ethnically diverse periphery, but between strict (Prussian, even Nazi) Northern Germany and musical-mythical Austria.

The tendency toward this latter mode of operetta can already be traced in *Im weißen Rössl* (The White Horse Inn), which Karel Lamač made in 1935, one year after *Frasquita*. As with most of Lamač’s German-language production, this film is more firmly rooted in Austrian culture than in (Northern) German traditions. *The White Horse Inn* was a co-production of

185 See, for example, Hake’s analysis of Willi Forst’s Viennese Trilogy for an outline of how these later operettas fashioned Austrian identity: Hake (2001) 158-171.

Ondra-Lamac-GmbH in Berlin and the Vienna-based Hade-Film GmbH and was distributed by the Paul Freiwirth Filmverleih in Vienna. The film was based on the operetta of the same name, which Moravian-born composer Ralph Benatzky scored for the libretto by Erik Charell and Moravian-born Hans Müller-Einigen. The musical work, sometimes classified as a *Singspiel*, is set in the Austrian village of St. Wolfgang, which lies on the edge of the mountain-ringed Wolfgangsee, one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Salzkammergut region near Salzburg. With their conscious celebration of Austrian culture, many of the film's passages seem to operate as tourist advertisements or ethnographic accounts. In fact, the opening sequence of the film depicts a busload of tourists marveling at the majestic Alpine panorama as they arrive at the Wolfgangsee. Like these film figures (to whom we are never introduced and who play no role in the narrative), we the spectators are also invited to gaze with wonder at the beautiful landscape.

In many ways, Lamač's film, like the operetta it is based on, functions as a sort of tourist advertisement for St. Wolfgang and its environs. Exterior shooting was done on location around the Wolfgangsee and at the actual White Horse inn of the operetta's title, which lies on the north shore of the lake. The film is littered with gratuitous (non-narratively motivated) postcard-like shots of the panoramic Alpine landscape, including bucolic images of cows and sheep grazing peacefully on the hills above the lake. The musical soundtrack abounds with yodeling, pseudo-folk tunes, and an Alpine zither. The film highlights the differences between the local Austrian dialect and the Northern German linguistic idiom spoken by Giesecke, a visiting industrialist from Berlin. All of these aspects establish a touristic gaze that invites to viewer to drink in the "local flavor" of the hotel and its environs. The visitors from the north who are alternatively bewildered and bemused by the native culture can thus be thought of as a narrative point of

reference for the audience. The film is thus consistent with the “pseudo-ethnographic view of the local population” that was, according to von Moltke, a key concept of constituting the Alps as a tourist attraction since the 19th century (*No Place Like Home* 43).

In effect, the film functions as a thinly narrativized showcase of diverse representations and performances of (German) Austrian identity. The action in the last half of the film is centered round a folk festival, whereby the viewer is treated to lengthy musical sequences, colorful costumes (*Trachten*), parades, dancing, etc. Indeed, the personal conflicts and narrative developments that dominated the film’s exposition become increasingly insignificant as the film devolves more and more into an ethnic spectacle. The film overtly mobilizes these festive attractions to articulate a sense of local patriotism. In addition, the red and white Austrian flag is a recurring visual theme. We not only see profuse waving of the flag during the church festival scene, but as the Berlin visitors arrive in St. Wolfgang, a static close-up of the flag waving over their boat reinforces the Austrian setting. Whereas these brief markers serve as indicators of narrative place, they also clearly trade in patriotic sentiment and reinforce that the landscape, mentality, language, and traditions are essentially “Austrian” and as such distinct from northern German (specifically Prussian) culture.

Lamač’s adaptation of *The White Horse Inn* is an example of the more conservative strain of operetta that pervaded Third Reich cinema. In addition, with its evocation of tourist imagery and its emphasis on regional patriotism, the film also trades in many common tropes of the *Heimatfilm* genre. Operetta specialist Kevin Clarke has denounced Lamač’s adaptation of *The White Horse Inn* as a sanitized and reactionary revision of Benatzky’s original that brazenly omits all of its more progressive and risqué elements (see “Walzerträume”). He points out that, after removing the infamous bathing scene, any queer narrative subtexts, and all traces of

jazz music, Lamač's *The White Horse Inn* retains only the most stereotypical Austrian folk elements and comedy clichés (see "Gefährliches Gift"). Furthermore, the opening titles as well as all marketing materials credit Benatzky as the exclusive author of the operetta, thereby completely omitting the Jewish origins of the work in Erik Charell (co-author of the libretto) and Oskar Blumenthal (co-author of the stage comedy that served as Charell's model). As a result, the film marks the modulation of a progressive Weimar-era operetta of primarily Jewish and Moravian origins into a touristically-tinged celebration of Austrian identity with prototypical tendencies towards the sentimentality of the Heimat genre, one of the genres most easily associated with the Third Reich and the nostalgic postwar period.¹⁸⁶

As Johannes von Moltke has outlined, throughout its history the *Heimatfilm* genre has had a fairly stable set of plots and images, which include picturesque Alpine landscapes and peasants in traditional dress. He also mentions the repeated integration of (pseudo-)traditional *Volksmusik* as a common trait of the genre (*No Place Like Home* 23). All of these formulaic elements feature prominently in Lamač's adaptation of *The White Horse Inn*. Furthermore, the film invokes another prominent trait of the *Heimatfilm* as a key plot point: the confrontation of the rationalistic, materialist northern German (specifically, Prussian) character with the more relaxed, joyful mentality of the southern mountainfolk, who are defined by a more intimate connection to nature and music. Although it appeared at a time when the status of *Heimatfilm* as a genre was still being solidified, Lamač's film can clearly be understood as participating in the generic discourse of Heimat.

Von Moltke further elaborates on the *Heimatfilm* genre's preoccupation with questions of space and place as well as the spatial dialectics of Heimat and modernity. He asserts that the

¹⁸⁶ For more on the collusion between Third Reich cinema and the *Heimat* genre: Hake 2002, see Hake, *German National Cinema* 76.

Heimatfilm needs to be understood as a “spatial genre” given its recurrent use of particular landscapes and persistent foregrounding of regional and provincial spaces, which are commonly located in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps (“Evergreens” 19). He further notes the affinities between *Heimatfilm* iconography and the non-fiction “place films” from the early years of cinema as described by Tom Gunning, who describes how these films adopt the view of the tourist and uses spectacle as an invitation to sedentary sightseeing (see Gunning, “Before Documentary” 15).

The obsession with Austrian space in Lamač’s *The White Horse Inn* not only aligns the film with the *Heimatfilm* genre, but also presages the formulaic “Vienna films” of the 1940s. Indeed, given that “Vienna films” are in fact defined first and foremost in terms of (Viennese) space, we can inevitably expect a great deal of overlap between this genre (if we choose to understand it as such) and the *Heimatfilm*. Furthermore, the process whereby the operetta genre became increasingly preoccupied with articulations of (German) Austrian identity throughout the 1930s brought it ever closer to the sentimental clichés of the *Heimatfilm* genre.

The multi-ethnic, transnational space that genres like operetta has reserved for non-German filmmakers like Lamač and Baarová had shrunk considerable under National Socialism. The new order demanded generic regimes that were much more rigid in their depictions of national identity. As the 1930s progressed, the demand for Czech directors to assimilate into the new regime of the national grew more powerful—they had to locate a place in the new German cinematic Heimat or resign themselves to “foreigner” status. For Baarová, this meant performing exotic, yet suspect “non-Germans” in political thriller and melodramas since the multi-ethnic aspects of operetta were no longer desirable. After 1939, Anny Ondra dropped out of acting altogether, except for a few “ideologically correct” roles in the 1940s (see Chapter 1). After

being pushed out of Berlin, Lamač continued to work in Austria genre cinema for several years, but eventually sought refuge in Czechoslovakian national cinema until the Nazi takeover in 1939 forced him to emigrate from Central Europe. Notably, though, as the space for Czech personnel in German national cinema grew smaller, Third Reich cinema's interest in incorporating the "Czech lands" into the "home" territory increased.

Bohemian Spaces of Heimat

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s a number of German productions prominently (and overtly) feature the Bohemian or Moravian countryside. These productions constitute a cycle of films, which I refer to here as "Bohemian films," that are unified in their choice of settings and, more importantly, by the generic conventions they engage in imagining this setting in national and cultural terms. The most significant of these are: *Die verkaufte Braut* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1932), *Leinen aus Irland* (*Linen from Ireland*, 1939), *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (*A Little Night Music*, 1939), *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942), *Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid* (*Love, Passion, and Suffering*, 1943), and *Glück unterwegs* (*Happiness Along the Way*, 1944).¹⁸⁷ There are also a number of Czech-German MLVs where both versions are set in the Bohemian countryside. The aim of the current discussion is to establish the broad generic characteristics that link these films and to highlight those films not addressed elsewhere in this dissertation. The subsequent chapters frame the analysis of several "Bohemian films" within larger theoretical discussions. The following analyses of *A Little Night Music* and *The Bartered Bride* are intended

¹⁸⁷ To some extent, it might also be possible to think of certain other Prag-Film productions in these terms, namely *Himmel, wir erben ein Schloss!* (*Heavens, We've Inherited a Chateau!* 1942) and *Der zweite Schuß* (*The Second Shot*, 1943). Although both seem to take place in Bohemia, the setting is never made explicit, nor does it play a major role in the story. Therefore, they are not of concern in the present discussion.

to provide a framework for these later discussions by outlining the basic issues at stake in films operating in this cycle and situating these “Bohemian films” within German cinema more broadly. How can this body of films be understood in terms of nationalism, regionalism, and ethnic identity? What connections, if any, are there to the supposedly “German” *Heimatfilm* genre? In general terms, how do “Bohemia” and “Moravia” function as generic signifiers in German cinema?

All productions that can be thought of as “Bohemian films” (whereby this region serves an overt visual or narrative function) share certain iconographic and thematic tropes linking them to the *Heimatfilm* genre in general and with “Austria” in particular. Whether overtly or by implication each “Bohemia film” attributed the “local” places of Bohemia to a broader national sphere understood as “German.” Although it is perhaps most readily associated with the 1950s, von Moltke has demonstrated that the *Heimatfilm* has roots extending to the beginning of cinema and was already a recognized genre by the 1930s. Indeed during this hyper-nationalist period of its history, the *Heimatfilm* was seen as an exemplary format for fulfilling German sound film’s “mission” to achieve “the trinity of ‘German man [and] German song in the landscape’” (*No Place Like Home* 29). This ideal of harmony between man, music, and land is a particularly useful formulation for thinking about the articulations of Heimat in “Bohemian films” since almost all German/Austrian films set in Bohemia rely heavily on music, either as a component of the filmic soundtrack or as a narrative motif. With the conspicuous foregrounding of musical themes, many of the “Bohemian films” can also be thought of as “music films” in the broader sense. (*Linen from Ireland* and *The Golden City* are notable exceptions to this general rule. See Chapter 5.) In the German/Austrian filmic imaginary, the lands of Bohemia and Moravia generally evoke musical settings from the 18th and 19th century, i.e., with classical, pre-modern

musical idioms.

Historically speaking, Bohemia played a prominent role (both geographically and thematically) in the European classical music tradition, particularly in the realm of opera. Curiously, the folklore culture of the Bohemian countryside fostered both the German and the Czech national opera traditions during the Romantic period, serving as the setting and inspiration not only for Bedřich Smetana's *Prodaná nevěsta* (*The Bartered Bride*) but also for Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz*. Furthermore, already several decades before these German and Czech national operas laid their claims on Bohemia (and a century before Bohemia's last great "German" composer, Gustav Mahler, brought Romanticism to its culmination), Austrian master Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had developed an intimate connection with the territory.

Although most readily associated with Salzburg and Vienna, Mozart spent a great deal of time in Bohemia, specifically in Prague. The huge enthusiasm that greeted the 1787 performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*) in Prague fostered a legendary relationship between Mozart and the city, which saw the Bohemian capital as "the good city that supported and understood him at a time when he had allegedly been neglected, even scorned, by Vienna" (Solomon 417). Later that same year Mozart's *Don Giovanni* had its premiere in the Prague Estates Theater again with great success. The statement "my Praguers understand me" (*meine Prager verstehen mich*) attributed to the composer has become emblematic of the perceived special relationship between Mozart and Prague.¹⁸⁸

The filming of *A Little Night Music* began in the summer of 1939, less than one year after the annexation of the Sudetenland, or to describe this action with Nazi terminology, after this

188 Still today, the city's Mozart heritage remains a major attraction for Prague's tourist industry: daily performances of *Don Giovanni* persist as a perennial mainstay in the Estates Theater during the summer vacation season and the Bertramka villa, where the composer frequently stayed when visiting the city, is now home to a Mozart museum.

place of Heimat successfully returned “home” into the *Reich*. This was also just a few months after the formation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March of 1939, which brought the remainder of the so-called Czech lands under Nazi control. The film builds upon a mythology of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s attachment to Bohemia and Moravia in order to formulate a link between this local territory and the German cultural spirit, thereby legitimizing Nazi occupation to this land.

Based on Eduard Mörike’s 1856 novella *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* (*Mozart’s Journey to Prague*), the film presents a fictionalized account of Mozart’s journey by carriage from Vienna to Prague in order to conduct the premiere of his new opera *Don Giovanni*, which the musical genius has not in fact completed yet, due to a bit of composers block. Along the way, Mozart and his wife, Constanze, stop for the night at an inn somewhere near the tri-border between Austria (specifically Lower Austria [*Niederösterreich*]) and the former crown territories of Bohemia and Moravia.¹⁸⁹ Equally enchanted by the natural surroundings and by a chance erotic encounter with a local woman, Mozart finds the inspiration he needs to complete his masterwork.

Mozart’s almost spiritual connection to this landscape is established in the sequence preceding the arrival at the inn. When the composer and his wife stop the carriage for a picnic in nature, the musical genius muses about the beauty of the evergreen forest around them and laughs at Constanze’s unfamiliarity with the mountain flora. The implication is that his childhood is linked with this or a similar landscape—he is connected with the land in a deep, familial way—it is “in his blood,” so to speak. Embedded in this scene is a curious discussion about Mozart’s future prospects for employment in Vienna and Berlin, whereby the composer

189 Although neither provides a precise location, both the novella and the film seem to place the action somewhere near the town of Schrems.

complains that his work takes him to cities all over Europe, but never to his home, his Heimat (“immer nur nicht nach der Heimat”). The placement of this comment establishes a link between the on-screen idyllic mountainous setting, which is imagined to be Moravia, and the spiritual sense of Heimat. Of course, Mozart’s true “home” is Salzburg, yet *A Little Night Music* suggests this rural landscape as Mozart’s true inner Heimat. In a fantasy stretch of geographical imagination, the film manages to collapse Salzburg and the Moravian highlands into one space. The film ostensibly constructs for the imagined German/Austrian viewer a Moravia that is uniformly familiar and wholly integrated with Heimat. The result is a subconscious link between the local Moravian setting and a spiritual sense of “home” that lies at the root of Mozart’s music. This link is reiterated more powerfully later in the film. A young local female, who is infatuated with the composed, stares wistfully at the landscape outside her window as she sings an aria from Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*: “O tarry no longer, beloved soul” (O säume länger nicht, geliebte Seele! Sehnsuchtsvoll harret deiner hier die Freundin) [Act 4, Scene 4]. A match cut then transitions to a nearly identical shot of Mozart gazing through the window of the room at the inn, presumably at the same landscape, whereby he exclaims, “God, this Moravian country is beautiful!” (“Gott ist dieses mährisches Land schön!”) (fig.15). The female’s singing seems to have the magical effect of a siren’s song calling Mozart to come join her; in another sense, though, the effect is as if the land is singing the composer’s music back to him. This sequence synthesizes the female love interest and the Moravian countryside and establishes a synergy between this grand object of desire, the German-Austrian man, and his music. Inspired by the landscape, Mozart is filled with the urge to explore the surroundings, whereupon he meets the woman, an encounter ultimately supplies the inspiration to finally pen the ultimate scene of the still unfinished *Don Giovanni*. It is thus the Moravian landscape and the restless composer’s

desire for it that provides the motor of inspiration for the successful completion of one of his most revered works. In this way the film evokes a quasi-Wagnerian notion of the music of the Volk arising organically through man's attachment to the land, a sentiment that is also a key trope of the *Heimatfilm* genre.



Figure 15. Mozart admires the Moravia Heimat and finds his muse in *A Little Night Music*. [Source: screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

In imagining this “Moravian Heimat” *A Little Night Music* engages generic tropes and conventions that are identical to those it uses to code Austria. Thus, the film constructs for the imagined German/Austrian viewer a diegetic space that is uniformly familiar, wholly belonging to their sense of “home” territory. The southern dialect heard in the opening scenes in Vienna is the same as that spoken in the rural Moravian palace. What’s more, these same linguistic accents add local color to the sequences in the Prague opera house as well. The film clearly traces an

urban/rural dichotomy, yet there is no sense whatsoever of any level of ethnic or national difference between Vienna and Prague, between Austria and Bohemia/Moravia. The setting of the main narrative development in the border region between these territories is as ambiguous as it is noteworthy. Indeed, the physical crossing of the border is not emphasized at all. The only essential difference between Moravia and Austria is that between the *urban* Vienna and the *rural* setting of the provincial village and palace gardens. The generic codes used to present “Bohemia” and “Moravia” are those familiar from filmic depictions of “Vienna” and “Old Austria.” Although the film ostensibly takes part in Moravia/Bohemia, it ultimately conforms to the norms typical to the “Vienna films” of the period. This imaginary mapping of these territories onto Austria, both in terms of geography and national character, is typical for German “Bohemian films.”

Bartering for Bohemia

A few decades after Carl Maria von Weber’s *Der Freischütz* staked the German cultural claim in Bohemia as the first “truly German” opera, this territory provided the setting for the “Czech national opera *par excellence*” (Zöchling 488).¹⁹⁰ Bedřich Smetana’s light opera steeped in folk tradition, *Prodaná nevěsta* (*Die verkaufte Braut*, *The Bartered Bride*), originally premiered in 1866 and was the first internationally recognized Czech-language opera, establishing the foundation for later world famous Czech operas by Smetana, Antonín Dvořák (e.g., *Rusalka*),

¹⁹⁰ Perhaps Mozart paved the way for German to be an acceptable language for opera with the success of his *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*), but it is Carl Maria von Weber’s 1821 *Der Freischütz* that is widely recognized as the “first purely German opera” and “the German national opera *par excellence*” (Zentner and Würz 113; Schmierer, vol. 1: 564). Not only was this one of the first major operas written entirely in German, it was one of the first to be based solely on German cultural tradition, thereby pioneering the adaptation of regional German folklore for the musical stage that would inspire Wagner’s later masterpieces of German national mythology.

Leoš Janáček (e.g., *Jenůfa* [*The Cunning Little Vixen*]), and Bohuslav Martinů (e.g., *Veselohra na mostě* [*Comedy on the Bridge*]).¹⁹¹ Thus, like Weber's opera, *The Bartered Bride* is widely recognized as the first great example of the national operatic tradition.¹⁹² Furthermore, similarly to *Der Freischütz* in Germany, Smetana's opera hold a distinguished place in the Czech patriotic and nationalist tradition, indeed its significance for the collective Czech psyche is much more profound. The Czech character is most evident in the opera's numerous folk dances with their distinctive rhythms and meters (e.g., furiant, sousedka, polka, etc.). At the time it appeared, the opera's very depiction of peasant life was a poignant image of the survival of Czech culture through the dark years of Habsburg oppression. It was namely in the villages that the language and traditions had survived, whereas the Bohemian gentry and middle-class city-dwellers had become essentially Germanized in the centuries following the Battle of White Mountain (1620). The opera's conscious use of Czech language to create high art and its depiction of national folk traditions constituted a uniquely strong nationalist statement, which, in the political context of the time, stood in direct opposition to German/Austrian cultural hegemony.

At its Prague premiere in 1866, the opera appeared in a two-act version with spoken dialogues, in a style akin to the German *Singspiel* or Viennese operetta traditions, but Smetana later reworked the material multiple times before reaching the form widely known today. Whereas the initial performances of the opera were largely unsuccessful, it was the 1870 three-act revision with recitative that ultimately solidified the work's popularity in the Czech tradition. Although highly praised and beloved in Prague and Bohemia from 1970 onwards, the opera

191 Note: In German sources, Smetana's first name is commonly translated to "Friedrich." This version of the name is also found on German advertising materials to the Max Ophüls film. See, for example, *Film-Kurier* 14:207 (2 Sept. 1932): 4.

192 In fact, the folkloric spirit of *Der Freischütz* is understood as a direct inspiration for Smetana's compositions based on national legend. See Warrack, *German Opera* 307.

remained relatively unknown outside of the Czech lands for several decades. It was not until Max Kalbeck provided the first German translation of the work under the title *Die verkaufte Braut* that the opera began to gain worldwide attention. After the premiere of the opera's German version in Vienna on April 2, 1893, it was an immediate hit throughout Austria and Germany. It then became known around the globe, albeit in this German-language version. As with the films of Karel Lamač and Gustav Machatý, the path to international recognition for Smetana passed first through German-speaking territory. Ironically, the opera whose very essence stood in opposition to German/Austrian hegemony was first introduced to world audiences in its German-language incarnation. This development not only neutralized most of the work's nationalist charge, it subtly reinforced German hegemony over Bohemia by re-imagining the characters as German-speaking Bohemians.

In similar fashion, it was as a German-language film that the greatest Czech national opera entered the stage of world cinema. There had been several silent adaptations of Smetana's opera made in Czechoslovakia. These films were not well received in their home country and did not travel beyond its borders.¹⁹³ By contrast, the first sound adaptation of the opera in 1932 by German-born director Max Ophüls was a huge international hit and remains part of the world cinema consciousness to this day.¹⁹⁴ Significantly, this German production overshadows the Czech-language adaptation of Smetana's opera released by the Czechoslovak film industry in 1933, just one year after Ophüls's film. After a cool reception in its home country, it does not

193 The first adaptation came already in 1913 under the direction of Max Urban. In 1922, Oldřich Kmínek directed a version with famous Czech comic performer Karel Noll in the role of Kecal. (A few years later, Noll would become famous as the first actor to embody the Švejk character in the movies.) See Klimeš, "Max Ophüls" for a more detailed analysis of the unfavorable reception of these films in Czechoslovakia.

194 According to filmportal.de there were also two silent productions made in Berlin during the early years of cinema: first in 1908 by the Deutsche Bioscop company and again in 1916 by Greenbaum-Film. These films are completely forgotten today.

appear that this Czechoslovak production was ever distributed to Germany, Austria or beyond.

Ophüls's 1932 interpretation of Smetana's opera was the first widely acclaimed German work to attempt to fuse modern sound film technology with traditional opera. At the same time, it displays many traits of the nascent Heimat genre. In terms of ethnicity, the film translates the overtly "Czech" setting of the original opera into a "German" context, which raises significant questions about the representation of nationality, ethnicity, and the very notion Heimat. A point of primary concern here is whether a work of art that is ostensibly one of the greatest representatives of Czech culture loses its cultural currency when it is translated into a Germanic setting. How was the film perceived differently with the German and Czech contexts? What are the deeper cultural-ideological implications of this film and its imaginary mapping of Bohemia?

In its imagining of the 19th century Bohemian setting *The Bartered Bride* engages many of the same generic conventions common to depictions of "old Austria" at that time. At least on the surface, Ophüls's film also invokes several tropes of the *Heimatfilm*. This is most notable in the opera's investment in rural folk themes and the story's championing of love over materialistic-capitalistic motivations. In terms of its folk imagery, the final festival sequence in *The Bartered Bride* can be read as a sort of precursor to the scenes of celebration in Lamač's *The White Horse Inn* several years later.

The Bartered Bride shares with the *Heimatfilm* genre the extensive use of exterior filming and the focus on the rural landscape. The (reconstructed) village square is clearly situated in a natural setting, not on a sound stage (fig. 16). The opening sequence begins outside the village, on a country road. We follow several travelers on their way to the village. This sequence is all filmed on location reinforces the sense of the natural setting. The film also features several scenes in the wooded hills (supposedly just outside the village), notably in the famous duet

between Kezal and Hans, whereby the latter “sells” his claim to Marie. The folkloric costumes of the villagers and the music and decoration that accompany the festival heighten the film’s sense of “ethnographic authenticity.” All of these elements contribute to the film’s “folkloric staging of rural life as a tourist attraction” (von Moltke, *No Place Like Home* 49), which is a common trope of the *Heimatfilm* genre and films of the *Bergfilm* genre, such as *Das blaue Licht* (The Blue Light, 1932) which was released the same year as *The Bartered Bride*.



Figure 16. Imagining the German Bohemian rural village in *The Bartered Bride* (1932). [Source: Screen capture from video file at archive.org]

The confrontation of insiders (villages) and outsiders (tourists) is a common trope in films that operate within a clear sense of place such as those in the *Heimatfilm* genre. The overture to the film version of *The Bartered Bride* presents three groups of non-townsfolk all traveling the same road towards the town each in their own carriage. The audience is successively introduced to the outsiders—first Hans and the postal carriage, then Wenzel’s

family in a carriage decorated for the festival, and finally the circus train of carts—before entering the town and becoming acquainted with this rural space and its inhabitants, which are the prime focus of the opera. In fact, it is the arrival of these figures that provides the catalyst setting the town drama into motion. Being outsiders ourselves, we the film viewers are allied from the beginning with the circus and other visitors to this isolated Bohemian town.

Although the film diegesis does not overtly situate the geographic location of the village that lies at the center of the filmic action, we learn from various bits of dialogue that Hans' postal carriage is en route to Vienna via Pilsen. Towards the beginning of the film, Marie writes a note to her father, informing her that she has left for Prague to visit her aunt Lenchen there. As we later discover, though, she has no intention of going to Prague and instead implores Hans to take her with him to Pilsen. The next day, Wenzel also begs Hans to take him to Pilsen, where he will attempt to persuade the authorities there to override the mayor's decision to refuse the circus' permit. These brief allusions to actual geographic locations would logically place the town somewhere near to the west and/or north of Pilsen.¹⁹⁵ In this respect, ironically, Ophüls's film is more firmly situated in actual geographic space than Smetana's opera, which offers no hint as to the town's specific location, neither in the stage directions nor in the dialogue.

Even if it was not his intention, Ophüls's recasting the Czech setting of the original opera as a German-Bohemian village effectively neutralizes all of the opera's Czech-nationalist

195 The *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* for the film indicates that Hans' carriage is on the route between Dresden and Berlin. Such a path, however, would likely lead far to the east of Pilsen without warranting a visit to the city (and is more likely to pass through Prague). This information can thus be discounted as erroneous with regard to the film's actual diegesis. It should also be noted that the film brochure does not mention that the carriage will travel to Pilsen at all. See "Die verkaufte Braut," *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* 14:1801 (1932).

associations—a fact that did not go unnoticed among Czechoslovakians.¹⁹⁶ Whereas most German reviews of the film do not even mention the Czech origins of the opera, many critics in Czechoslovakia decried what they saw as the theft of the national culture. In fact, any more lengthy consideration of national or ethnic culture is entirely lacking in German accounts of the film. All debates about ethnic or national representation occurred exclusively on the Czechoslovakian side of the border.

Even as the film was still in production, there was uproar among Czech journalists in and numerous calls to prohibit the film's release in Czechoslovakia.¹⁹⁷ One month before the film's German premiere, the leading Czechoslovak film journal *Filmový kurýr* printed a lead article with the headline “*The Bartered Bride* cannot be allowed into Czechoslovakia.”¹⁹⁸ The anonymous author(s) had not yet even seen the film and expressly confess that they do not even want to see it, yet they label it a “tremendous debacle.”¹⁹⁹ The authors conveyed the warning that any attempt to distribute the German adaptation in Czechoslovakia would be an act of provocation that must be rebuffed. They advise the Ministry of Commerce that allowing the film into the country would lead to wide public disapproval and should not be risked. In the end, the film did not in fact pass censorship and was never released in Czechoslovakia. The Ministry of Commerce refused to approve the import of the film on the grounds that such a “malapropism of

196 Whereas in the Czech context (as well as abroad), the opera continues to be seen as one of the prime representatives of the national culture, Ophüls's film adopts a much more nuanced stance towards the folkloric subject matter and even provides space for meditation on the concept of representation itself. For this reason, Ophüls's film should not be read as an aggressive act of Germanic chauvinistic cultural appropriation.

197 For an overview of reactions to the film in the Czech press, see Klimeš, “Max Ophüls.”

198 Anon. “‘Prodaná nevěsta’ nemsí do ČSR” *Filmový kurýr* 6:28 (8 July 1932): 1.

199 Ibid.

the national opera cannot be permitted in Czechoslovakia.”²⁰⁰

Clearly the root of Czech antipathy for the film had less to do with its overall cinematographic quality or moral message than it did with its (mis)treatment of Smetana and Czech culture in general. The authors of the *Filmový kurýr* article mentioned above consider it bad enough that the first sound film adaptation of the Czech national opera was undertaken by German producers, but they point out the film erases all overt traces of “Czechness” from the original source material, thereby neutralizing its cultural currency. Beyond the obvious fact that all dialogues and songs are intoned in German, the authors claim that the implied Bohemian setting does not look like Bohemia at all, but bears all the hallmarks of a *Bavarian* village. The only hard evidence for their accusation comes from photographs from the set reprinted in German magazines, which display “grotesque” and “extravagant” costumes and improper rural architecture, according to Czech standards.²⁰¹ These comments hint at the affront to their national culture sensed by these Czech journalists. In their eyes, the film stood as a complete misrepresentation of Czech culture.²⁰² To think of it in terms of generic regimes: these critics rejected *The Bartered Bride* because it did not satisfactorily employ the generic conventions appropriate to representing Czech (or even Bohemian) culture. Most egregiously for these reviewers, the film displaces Czech conventions with German ones, thus inappropriately transplanting the national opera to a foreign national context, indeed one that is purely

200 As reported in *Film-Kurier*. Anonymous, “ ‘Verkaufte Braut’ für CSR verboten,” *Film-Kurier* 15: 38 (13 February 1933): 3.

201 Ibid.

202 For most critics, even the performance of Jarmila Novotná did not compensated for the overall lack of true Czech essence in the film. The singer was seen as too “cosmopolitan” of a figure to carry appropriate “national cultural” weight. Although widely known as a “Czech” singer, Novotná had strong ties to Germany. She belonged to the cast of the Berlin Kroll opera from 1919 to 1934 and had already appeared in several German films prior to *The Bartered Bride*.

antithetical to the spirit of the original opera.

The dispute between the ethnic coding of the village and its inhabitants brought to light by the Czech critics betrays an obsession with categories and labels, and a policing of “proper” application of these codes. The label “Bohemian” (*böhmisch* in German) is problematically ambiguous in terms of ethnic signification—it refers to a specific geographic area, but not to a specific linguistically or culturally defined group. The designation can be applied to all “Czech” and “German” populations in the region. Interestingly, the single Czech word *český* carries both the meaning “Bohemian” and “Czech.” There is no word for the territory that is distinct from the word for the Czech nation itself. By contrast, German (similar to English) uses two distinct words: one to refer to the geographical region (*böhmisch*), and another to denote the Slavic inhabitants in this region or the ethnic group derived from these inhabitants living elsewhere in the world (*tschechisch*). Naturally, one of the primary projects of the Czech National Revival was to define those aspects of Bohemian culture that were “Czech” and to clearly differentiate them from “German” elements.

Ironically, the composer of what would become the greatest Czech national opera was himself not fully conversant in the language at the time he was writing the music. In accordance with the norms of the day, Smetana grew up with German as his primary language, was unable to achieve any significant mastery over the Czech language until late in his life as a composer.²⁰³ As was true of the Czech National Revival in the 18th and 19th centuries in general, the opera’s depiction of Czech culture involved a process of reinvention and adhered to certain newly defined cultural norms. During the revival, the very notion of “Czech culture” needed to be

203 This was also true of fellow composers of the Czech National Revival, Antonín Dvořák and Zdeněk Fibich. See Grout and Williams (2003) 532 and Parker 253. As some have noted, Smetana’s first few operas are in fact marked by unnatural linguistic stress patterns because of erroneous musical phrasing resulting from his insufficient knowledge of the language.

reconstructed, the traditions and language relearned. Arbitrary norms were defined in order to delineate the national tradition and, in some cases, aspects of Czech culture were entirely invented. In this sense, the very concept of Czech national identity can be thought of as a sort of cultural program rooted in generally accepted generic norms. To determine whether a building or dress belongs to the “Czech” or “German” tradition, the observer was compelled to rely upon an artificially constructed list of criteria that did not necessarily correspond to historic or contemporary reality.

With regard to its overall theme and interpretation, the film ultimately works in direct opposition to the common meanings associated with the *Heimatfilm* genre. In most examples of *Heimatfilm*, modernity is seen as a foreign, disruptive force that impinges upon the peaceful balance of the film’s rustic, natural setting with ambiguous, often contradictory effects. In the *Bergfilm* subgenre of the *Heimatfilm*, for example, modernity is often encoded in the figures of tourists, who introduce a foreign element to the local, otherwise untouched space. Similarly, in Ophüls’s *The Bartered Bride* modernity arrives to the bucolic village in the form of outsiders. Brummer’s circus troupe and the other carnival presenters embody the incursion of modernity upon the rural village, primarily through their association with the then revolutionary technology of photography. In direct violation of the original text, however, the film presents these outsiders and representatives of modernity as the most positive characters and marginalizes the villagers or exposes them as petty and materialistic, thereby turning Smetana’s opera on its head. This shift is not only anti-Smetana, but also inverts the generic ideal of the *Heimatfilm* genre.

Nevertheless, the example of Ophüls’s adaptation of *The Bartered Bride* demonstrates just how easily nationally beloved works of Czech culture could be translated into German, even so far as to survive as one of the most enduring emblems of early (pre-Nazi) German sound film

culture. Such appropriations of Bohemian culture and artistic accomplishments (except, of course, those of Jews) as “German” would become more or less standard procedure in Third Reich cinema as a means of realizing Nazi imperial policies on screen.²⁰⁴ The “Bohemian film” genre in German cinema shares many hallmarks with *Heimatfilm*, operetta, and “Vienna films” (as well as the ethnographic-tinged subgenre *Ungarnfilme*). Most notable of these are the preponderance for music motives and rural folkloric settings, as well as a preference for historical contexts, specifically that which can be identified as depicting “old Austria.” In addition, the action in “Bohemian films” typically takes place prior to 1914 and the climactic events that would lead to the collapse of the German empires and the recognition of the (predominantly Slavic-governed) Czechoslovak state. This sentimental approach to history is, of course, also a common trait of “Vienna films” and operetta. In a very general sense, these genres are all preoccupied with (historical and cultural) memory. However, they only recall history in a partial and imperfect way: all of the nationalist strife and political struggles of the 19th century remain securely outside the frame.

Bohemia in the 1930s and 1940s was still very much a doubly defined space split between “German” and “Czech” identity. “Bohemia films,” therefore, inevitably engage with these discourses of identity. Even if they do not adopt a distinctly anti-Czech stance, their general refusal to recognize any Czech aspects of the territory and its culture constitutes a political statement. By blurring the lines between the Austria/Bohemia and the Czech lands, these films employ generic regimes of representation that construct Bohemia and Moravia as

204 Curiously, in the summer of 1944 there were plans were afloat for a Czech-German co-production of “Die verkaufte Braut” with Lída Baarová in the title role. See SUA, URP 110-4/490 (karton 43) “Lida Baarová” and 109-4/1464 (karton 91) “Lida Baarová.” Given the new state of affairs in the Czech lands, the political and ethnic implications of such a production would have been significantly more marked than in Ophüls’s film.

“German” spaces. This is evident, for example, in the collapse between Austria and Bohemia/Moravia in *A Little Night Music*. In the German filmic imagination, the Czech lands were represented by a fluctuating group of generic tropes that highlighted history, music, and nature, but typically no profound sense of ethnic or cultural difference (*Linen from Ireland* and *The Golden City* being two key exceptions).

While the Czech nationalist project sought to emphasize the differences (indeed oppositions) between Czech and “German” culture, German/Austrian nationalism consistently appropriated certain aspects of Bohemian culture as their own, while eclipsing and masking any sense of Czech contribution to this culture. For the most part the German filmic image of the Czech lands is almost always subsumed within a larger realm of signifiers belonging to “Old Austria.” In terms of visual language and basic themes, the films set in Bohemia do not differ in any significant way from the films of this period set in rural Austria. All of Bohemia and Moravia appear to be equivalent to any other (less mountainous) regions of the former Dual Monarchy. These territories are almost never conceived as distinct spaces, independent of the myth of a greater “Austrian” (i.e., “German”) identity. On the big screen, any traces of significant cultural distinction between Austria proper and the Czech lands were ignored and filmic depictions of these lands are more or less indistinguishable from those of imaginary “Austria.” In most German films set in the Bohemian countryside, there is never any indication of conflict, or even contact, between Germanic and Czech folk. Indeed, there is no evidence at all, no clearly identifiable signifiers of distinctly Czech (i.e., Slavic) culture in the countryside at all.²⁰⁵

205 With the German-Slavic conflict at the center of its narrative tragedy, *The Golden City* is the major exception to this general rule. In this case, the conflict is between the (Germanic) rural lifestyle and the decadent (Czech) life in the city. The absence of scenes of inter-ethnic tension in

Furthermore, the adoring gaze that “Bohemian films” cast on the countryside and its inhabitants demonstrates their affinity with the *Heimatfilm* genre. Their depictions of Bohemia and Moravia present a sort of “unspoiled,” pre-modern, and most importantly German Heimat. As a rule, the only inhabitants of the countryside in “Bohemian films” speak German and represent a sort of “regional variation” of German identity. As in the *Heimatfilm* genre music plays a key function in codifying Bohemia and its inhabitants. Of course, most musical references in these films specifically allude to “German” representatives of the musical tradition (e.g., Mozart, Friedrich von Flotow), while Czech composers such as Smetana rarely enter the picture. The “Bohemian film” cycle constitutes a distinct subset of the *Heimatfilm* genre that incorporates these local territories into the broader German national imaginary.

There are several factors that facilitated the perpetuation of the “Germanic” image of the Czech lands. First, there was a strong presence of “German” cultural reference points in the region, from Mozart and Weber, to Adalbert Stifter and German-nationalist authors such as Karl Hans Strobl. Second, there was a high level of cultural mixing between German and Czech populations, such that the two groups shared many traditions and significant distinctions were expressed as regional rather than ethnic.²⁰⁶ Third, the natural landscape did not vary greatly from other parts of Austria and/or Germany. It is for these last two reasons especially that “Bohemian films” could be so easily subsumed to the great Austrian genres. This stands in stark contrast to the *Ungarnfilme*, which, as Gulyás describes, profited from their depictions of the exotic Hungarian *puszta* and intonations of the distinctly non-Germanic *czárdás* music. This disparity is

Bohemia stands in stark contrast to the large body of Third Reich films depicting the struggles of Germans in Slavic territory, such as *Heimkehr* (Coming Home, 1941), *Feinde* (Enemies, 1940), *Friesennot* (Frisians in Distress, 1939), and *Flüchtlinge* (Fugitives, 1933). The implications of this unique example of Czech/German opposition are explored in depth in Chapter 5.

206 For an in-depth analysis of Czech/German mixing in Bohemia, see King.

likely do in great part to the fact that Hungarian elements were always a strong presence in Viennese operetta, whereas Bohemia and Moravia were comparatively underrepresented in the musical genre. In a certain sense, there is a longer tradition of invoking images of “exotic” Hungary that fed into the *Ungarnfilm* genre, whereas Bohemia was not as clearly differentiated from Austria proper in terms of clearly identifiable signifiers of regional or cultural specificity.

As the operetta genre gradually gave way in favor of the musical revue films, the involvement of Czech-speaking filmmakers in the German industry diminished starkly throughout the 1930s. The high point of direct Czech involvement in German film operetta was 1934-1938, only an adaptation of *Der Bettelstudent* (The Beggar Student, 1931) with Novotná and Lamač’s 1931 take on *Die Fledermaus* came before this, and nothing came after. Czech collaboration would resume only under the auspices of the “ghetto” of the Prag-Film company, which coerced and even forced the labor of Czechs in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Chapter 4

The Un-mixing of Bohemia: Hybridity and Heimat in Czech-German MLVs

As we approach and take in the corpus of all the versions in the attentive posture of comparison, the films' palimpsest offers us the flickering specter of endless alternatives. . . . What if the Habsburg empire were still standing, and everyone in it still, or again, spoke only the language of their emperor?

-Nataša Ďurovičová²⁰⁷

The production of Multiple Language Versions was a worldwide phenomenon that emerged in the early 1930s as a strategy to overcome the limitations for international distribution that synchronized sound film production brought with it. The MLV process involved the simultaneous production of one or more films that were to a greater or lesser extent identical except for the spoken dialogue. Each version generally utilized the same basic screenplay, the same sets and costumes, the same film crews, and often the same actors (if they were able to perform in multiple languages equally). The German industry was involved in the creation of foreign language versions in many languages and likewise many foreign producers made German versions aimed at distribution throughout Europe and beyond. Famous examples of German films that also made as foreign language versions include *Der blaue Engel*, which was filmed in English as *The Blue Angel* featuring Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, and most of the other performers in both films, and *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, which was made in French as *La Testament du Dr. Mabuse* with a very different cast of French-speaking actors. Czech-German MLV production is of particular note for a number of reasons. For one, Czechoslovakia

²⁰⁷ Introduction 14.

was the largest foreign producer of German language versions (see Albrecht 327ff.).²⁰⁸ No fewer than thirty German-language films came into being as the result of this mode of Czech-German coproduction, and many after the Nazi takeover in Germany. This fact alone bears testimony to Czechoslovakia's "special position" within German cinema. In addition, the issues raised by Czech-German MLVs are much different than those associated with French-German or English-German productions. In many ways, the cultural stakes are much higher, since these points of international intersection are laden with overtones of (post)imperialism and ethnic animosity of a much different variety than those between Germany/Austria and these other (western) nations. These MLV projects arose from an interstitial mode of production that brought together German and Czech filmmakers in interesting constellations and navigated a complex intercultural territory. Furthermore, many of these films were set in Prague and Bohemia, thus offering fertile ground for considering the issues at hand in this dissertation.

Over the past two decades, much has been written about the MLV phenomenon in the sphere of German cinema of the early 1930s.²⁰⁹ For the most part, scholarship has focused on films produced by German giant Ufa and with eyes fixed firmly toward the west, to versions made in French or English. While German-Czech MLVs have been the subject of several scholarly articles over the past decade, such research has emerged almost exclusively from Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic.²¹⁰ Thus far, Anglo-American film scholarship has

²⁰⁸ According to Albrecht Czechoslovakia was also on even par with Italy in the overall number of co-productions with the Third Reich.

²⁰⁹ See, for example, the works by Garncarz and Wahl, and the relevant contributions in the CineGraph volume *Babylon in FilmEuropa*.

²¹⁰ For the most part this scholarship has been published under the auspices of *CineGraph* and *Cinema & cie*. See, for example, Klimeš 2004, Mareš 2004, Szczepanik 2004, and Dvoráková 2006.

remained generally unaware of the very unique and highly compelling issues surrounding Czech-German MLV production.

Throughout the first decade of sound film production, there was a very special relationship between the Czechoslovak industry and German-language films. Between 1930 and 1938 about thirty productions were made in both a German and a Czech language version, resulting in a total of about sixty individual films. As a rule, the production of Czech-German MLVs occurred in Prague and almost exclusively at the initiative of Czech companies, occasionally as co-productions in cooperation with German or Austrian firms.²¹¹ The number of these MLVs is quite remarkable given the relatively limited production numbers for the Czechoslovak industry at the time: German language versions comprised over 10% of the entire Czech production during these years.²¹² Although Czechoslovak MLV production was not restricted exclusively to German versions, these undoubtedly dominated the industry's output. About 80% of all MLV projects realized in Czechoslovakia included German versions.²¹³ Of the circa thirty Czech productions with German language versions, only three were also made in a French version.²¹⁴ By contrast, a mere three films were made exclusively in Czech and French

²¹¹ Apparently, the films *Gehetzte Menschen*/*Štvaní lidé* (Hunted People, 1932/33) were the only Czech-German MLV pair to originate outside of Czechoslovakia. See Klimeš, "Multiple Language Versions" 90, 98.

²¹² See Klimeš "Multiple Language Versions" 89-90. Compare his estimate of three hundred Czechoslovak features from 1930-1938 with the thirty-one films he lists as being made in Czech and German versions.

²¹³ There were also eight Czechoslovak MLVs made in French. In addition, the American Paramount company produced three Czech-language versions for distribution in Czechoslovakia. See Klimeš "Multiple Language Versions" 89-90 and Szczepanik "Undoing the National" 55-56.

²¹⁴ *C. a k. polní maršálek*/*Der falsche Feldmarschall* [a.k.a. *Der k. und k. Feldmarschall*] (1930)/*Monsieur le Maréchal* (1931); *Ekstáze*/*Extase*/*Extase* (1932); and *Život je pes* (1933)/*Der Doppelbräutigam* [a.k.a. *So ein Hundeleben*] (1934)/*La Mari rêvé* (1935). See Klimeš, "Multiple Language Versions," 97-101.

versions without a German counterpart.²¹⁵ The record also shows evidence that a number of Czech versions of American films were made in the infamous Joinville studios by Paramount, yet it does not appear that Czech companies ever invested in the production of English language versions. From the beginning of the sound era until the last Czechoslovak MLV project, German versions were consistently favored over all other potential language versions.²¹⁶

There are two primary explanations for why German language versions occupied such a pronounced presence in the Czechoslovakian cinema of the 1930s. On the one hand, pragmatic economic factors played a dominant role: the populations of neighboring Austria and Germany offered a sizeable export market for German-language films. On the other hand, there were obvious cultural-historical reasons that underpinned German-Czech co-production: the long years of shared history between Czech and German-speaking populations in the region created a situation that facilitated the translation of a film subject from one language and cultural frame of reference to the other, with only minor alterations. Intimate cultural affinities between Germans and Czechs in this region persisted after the fall of the Habsburg Empire and the realization of the Czechoslovak state. At the time when these MLVs were being made in the early to mid-1930s, the country was home to a German-speaking population that comprised nearly one-fifth of the total population. However, despite the closeness of the two groups, the rise in ethno-nationalist sentiment in the first decades of the 20th century complicated any attempt to highlight potential areas of cultural overlap between Czechs and Germans. Given the increased

²¹⁵ *Lelíček ve službách Sherlocka Holmese/Le Roi bis* (1932); *Kantor Ideál/Professeur Cupidon* (1933), *Koho jsem včera líbal/Le Coup de trois* (1935). See Klimeš, “Multiple-Language Versions,” 97-101.

²¹⁶ This situation stands in stark contrast to the Ufa strategy, which first banked on English-language versions in the attempt to compete with Hollywood and then quickly turned its attention to French-language films, halting English production entirely by 1933. See Wahl “Babel’s Business.”

efforts on both sides of the Czechoslovak-German border to define the essential characteristics of the nation and to demarcate the “natural” and spiritual lands of this nation with the aim of unifying the imagined community within this territory, Czech-German MLV projects strode a precarious political tightrope.

Throughout the 1930s, many parts of the nascent Czechoslovak state, particularly Prague and the border region commonly referred to as the Sudetenland, were highly volatile spaces inhabited by hybrid and competing identities. Thinking associatively, we can conceive of the MLV project itself as analogous to the strategies of identity that governed everyday life in this area of Central Europe for centuries. Both the film material and the cultural practices indigenous to this territory are malleable to a multiplicity of ethno-national orientations as necessitated by the prevailing political conditions and the demands of the broader community. This chapter focuses primarily on the cultural-historical conditions of MLV production in the region and explores the ways the language versions can be seen as an expression of the Czech-German shared cultural history that simultaneously worked to obscure this common heritage. I examine the various ways that each language version imagines, or more commonly ignores, the spaces of Bohemia and Prague. This study thus seeks to provide compelling evidence toward a better understanding of the processes of cinematic territorialization and deterritorialization that are a primary concern of this dissertation. Furthermore, my analyses offer new insights into the way we think of nationalism and national cinema within the German-speaking context.

In the remainder of this chapter, I explore various aspects related to Czech-German MLV production with particular attention issues of national identity and cultural translation. Before launching into close analyses of individual films, I provide a brief overview of the political and economic conditions in which these MLVs arose. I also argue for the special position of the

Czechoslovak industry with regard to the production of German films and highlight certain areas that facilitated the translation from one language version to the other (e.g., source material from a shared cultural context, bilingual actors, etc.) My close examinations of specific films pay particular attention to the ways they imagine space and place, including the distinctions they make between the familiar and the exotic, the domestic and the foreign. I am most interested in the different strategies that the different language versions adopted in imagining or eliding Bohemia and the limits of translating this territory into the German context. In this regard, I demonstrate that the rural countryside was more readily imagined as a domestic German space, whereas Prague was almost always reserved as a specifically Czech space. The final part of the chapter explores the phenomenon of Czech-German MLV pairs that engage tropes common to the *Heimatfilm* genre. In this section, I look at the way the “local” places of the Sudetenland were ascribed to a national sphere understood alternately as German or Czech in accordance with the target linguistic group. The first matter at hand is to briefly consider how the current study fits in with existing scholarship on the MLV phenomenon.

Language Versions, National Identity, and Cultural Translation

For decades, the MLV phenomenon of the 1930s lingered on the periphery of film scholarship as a short-lived and somewhat odd product of the global industry’s transition to sound. The first studies of language versions focused exclusively on technological and industrial questions, dismissing these projects as highly flawed responses to the introduction of sound technology and the reorganization of distribution that accompanied it. In the last twenty years, though, there has been a fundamental shift in scholarly focus, away from viewing MLVs as little more than a curious, unsuccessful “glitch” of film history and toward a more nuanced approach that

conceives of this unique phenomenon as a complex attempt by film industries to mobilize new technology in “molding new reality-effects and new forms of subjectivity” (Ďurovičová, Introduction 9).²¹⁷ With this turn, scholars began to focus on the aesthetic content of individual language versions and to evaluate the implications of the variance between versions for our understanding of how cinema formulates cultural and national identities.

Ginette Vincendeau, Nataša Ďurovičová, Joseph Garncarz were among the first film historians to turn the focus of analysis of MLVs away from issues of technological reproduction in order to address questions representation related to national and cultural identity.²¹⁸ Their pioneering research of the late 1980s and early 1990s came at a time when the tenability of the national cinema paradigm itself had come into question.²¹⁹ As Ďurovičová describes it, language versions were of particular interest in this inquiry, because they provide “a prime test case for the limits of the national cinema paradigm” (Introduction 7). Vincendeau asserts that MLVs are so special in this respect because they are “located at the point of contact between the aesthetic (this term being used here rather loosely to cover cultural, thematic, and generic constructs) and the industrial dimensions of cinema” (25). Situated at the “exemplary meeting point of the economic and the cultural,” at the nexus between film’s national and international tendencies, MLVs occupy a uniquely hybrid space and thus provide a valuable perspective on the study of national cinemas (Vincendeau 35).

²¹⁷ The greatest boon to the renewed interest in MLVs occurred in the early 2000s. These new scholarly initiatives culminated in several landmark conferences on the subject: the MAGIS Gradisca International Film Studies Spring School from 2003-2006 (see *Cinema & Cie.* 4 [Spring 2004], 6 [Spring 2005], 7 [Fall 2005]) and the 2005 CineGraph conference in Hamburg (see Distelmeyer, *Babylon in FilmEuropa*).

²¹⁸ The works of primary importance here are: Vincendeau, “Hollywood Babylon”; Ďurovičová, “Translating America”; and Garncarz, *Filmfassungen*.

²¹⁹ Ďurovičová cites Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s 1985 “The Cinema After Babel: Language, Difference, Power” as seminal in this reconsideration of national cinema (Introduction 7, note 1.)

European film culture in the 1930s was an ideological battleground, where dreams of national unity and cultural viability played out and competed for influence. To varying degrees of explicitness, nations across the continent sought to coordinate and instrumentalize the cinema as a political tool, to both consolidate a sense of national unity as well as to differentiate the nation from its imagined Others. In a concurrent and seemingly paradoxical development, particular national film companies were deeply invested in the production of MLVs in order to address multiple national audiences. Because their very existence was precipitated by the necessity of international trade, MLVs overwhelmingly “belong to the despised category of ‘commercial’ cinema” (Vincendeau 34). In their essence of practicality MLVs tend to perform counter to the medium’s nationalist (and nationalizing) function, which understands film as a cultural artifact that arises organically from the spirit of the *Volk* to speak to and represent the imagined national community. Understood as a conglomerate of two or more films, MLV productions are by definition multinational, occurring at the intersections of different national contexts. In a related sense, these collaborative productions are also interstitial—deriving from multiple national cinemas, yet belonging exclusively to none.

Ďurovičová has described that, whereas a historical approach asks “*When* were versions?” a theoretical approach inquires “*What* is the particular nature of repetition in the versions?” (Introduction 9, emphasis added). In other words, film theory seeks to make meaning of the process whereby one filmic subject is replicated in various subtly altered forms in order to accommodate divergent viewing tastes and expectations. Thinking in terms of industrial production, Vincendeau reads the MLV phenomenon as a unique illustration of the constant tension in the film industry between “the necessity for standardisation to increase profitability on the one hand, and on the other the need for differentiation to ensure the renewal of demand” (29).

Echoing this reading, Malte Hagener describes how the MLV process can be understood as the “multiplication of one film into several different ones which oscillate between being identical and non-identical” (102). Beyond the concept of mathematical replication, however, Hagener suggests an approach to MLVs that focuses on questions of linguistic and cultural translation between the versions. In a similar vein, the work of Ďurovičová, Garncarz and others also evaluates the national-cultural significance of the MLV phenomenon.

Analyses of MLVs inevitably focus most of their attention on spoken language. This is understandable since, after all, language was *the* key factor to be addressed with the arrival of sound film technology.²²⁰ It is far more instructive, however, to look beyond the superficial features of spoken dialogue in order to consider the complex processes of translation that occur within the visual field, in the non-verbal aspects of the soundtrack, and in the basic narrative framework. These factors function together with spoken language to formulate the cultural character of each individual language version. As Ďurovičová argues, the early debates about MLVs “clearly revolve around the broadest domain of national identity, namely the *cultural* idiom, and, more particularly, its locus and its translatability” (“Translating America” 140). In describing how Hollywood MLV productions sought to “translate America,” she describes a process that not only involved the more or less mechanical translation of individual scripts in multiple languages but, more importantly, also demanded the transformation of all manner of cultural idioms in the effort to comply with the target cultural context. As part of this shift of focus toward cultural variation between language versions, Ďurovičová emphasizes the need to conceive of difference between language versions in terms of allographic rather than autographic

²²⁰ The attention to language is often implicit in the titles of works on MLVs. Note, for example, Krützen’s invocation of Esperanto and the preponderance of allusions to Babel/Babylon (Distelmeyer, Shohat and Stam, Vincendeau, Wahl).

properties. An “autographic” work (such as a painting) has a unique existence in time and space, whereby any subsequent lookalike works are considered copies (or forgeries). In contrast to this concept, an “allographic” work (such as a play or musical piece) exists only as a multiplicity of possible manifestations or performances. These qualities are, of course, not mutually exclusive, particularly when applied to film, however they represent two poles that demarcate a continuum of conceptual possibilities. A discussion that conceives of language versions as arising from the translation of one master text into linguistic variations emphasizes the autographic qualities of what is perceived as the “original” film. By contrast, the allographic properties of variation come to the forefront if each version is understood as an interpretation of a basic concept rather than an imperfect copy of an original. An analysis rooted in the concept of allographic variation thus seeks to highlight those elements that needed to be altered in order to conform to the national-linguistic film space imagined by the respective versions. This is a process that Ďurovičová describes as “cultural translation” or “national reassignment” (Introduction 9-10).²²¹

A framework based on these two concepts of variation highlights the distinction between those aspects of foreign language versions that are replicated for expediency’s sake and those that are altered due to the necessity of cultural adaptation. In other words, within any given set of MLV films there are certain textual elements that are duplicated for practical reasons, and thus copied “autographically,” and other “‘allographic’ elements of non-identity” that require local modification in order to signal national difference and firmly ground the diegesis in the desired cultural context (Ďurovičová, Introduction10). The tension between these two modes of replication and translation illustrates the delicate balancing act between national anchoring and

²²¹ She attributes the term “cultural translation” to Garncarz, although the source of this quote is unclear. (See Ďurovičová, Introduction 9-11.)

global appeal and/or intelligibility that lies at the root of any MLV production.²²² The language version phenomenon can be understood as a coping strategy that sought to maximize the cultural specificity of each individual version (allographic reproduction) in order to appeal to diverse audiences, while also replicating as many “universal” or shared qualities (autographic reproduction) in order to reduce the extra work needed for each production.

To a certain degree, any form of international co-production tends toward an erasing of cultural specificity. MLVs sought to overcome this obstacle by constructing versions that highlighted the properties of cultural specificity comprehensible to the target national audience. Props, lighting, acting style, narrative details, music etc. were altered in order to better speak to the intended viewer in his or her own cultural idiom. Comparative studies of complementary language versions thus often seek to isolate these elements of aesthetic difference as evidence for the defining characteristics of a particular national cinema culture or at least how this national cinema culture was perceived from the outside (by foreign production companies).²²³ As I argue here, however, it can be just as informative to consider those elements that are kept the same from version to version. Such elements that remain constant between two versions can be thought of as “mutually intelligible” in terms of national-cultural practice and therefore suggest sensibilities shared by both viewing groups.

Many scholars point out the paradigmatic distinction between Hollywood’s approach to language versions and the European mode of versioning. In this context, the term Foreign Language Versions (FLVs) is used to differentiate the more industrial Hollywood model from the more culturally sensitive European production of Multiple Language Versions (MLVs). In

²²² For a more in depth exploration of this tension, see chapter two of Wahl, *Das Sprechen des Spielfilms*.

²²³ See, for example, Charles O'Brien’s fascinating work on French national cinema derived from comparisons of (French, English, and German) language versions.

Vincendeau's assessment, the FLVs produced by Hollywood "were, on the whole, too standardized to satisfy the cultural diversity of their target audience, but too expensively differentiated to be profitable" (29). The US industry's most (in)famous foray into the international FLV project occurred at Paramount's Joinville studios in France. The operation of this famed "dream factory" emphasized autographic reproduction, whereby one master film was simultaneously replicated in four or five (and possibly as many as twelve) language versions aimed at markets across Europe and beyond.²²⁴ Despite Paramount's project to nationally "localize" each individual language version, the (German-language) films coming out of Joinville ultimately operated according to the larger mainstream cosmopolitan idiom intrinsic to international film trade. The studio worked with source material that had universal appeal in order to ensure translatability into a maximum of linguistic and cultural contexts with minimum alteration. This impulse to keep specific national connotation and regional grounding to a minimum resulted in an "extreme cultural leveling of the individual versions" (Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 71.) As Ďurovičová succinctly describes: "In Paramount's extreme variant of FLVs the national becomes gauged simply as the difference between the least possible and the least necessary inflection of the basic text: the ideology of culture is reduced to a contrast between different-sounding languages" ("Translating America" 144).

While the Paramount system may represent an extreme form of language version production, the process of cultural leveling it engaged in is not unique. Indeed, the neutralization of the national, to at least some degree, lies at the heart of most MLV projects from this period.

²²⁴ The label "dream factory" derives from Ilya Ehrenburg's lengthy essay about the Joinville studios (see Ďurovičová, "Translating America" 144). Although often accepted as fact, the accounts of twelve versions being made at one time remain anecdotal and several film historians have challenged the feasibility of this figure. Judging Ehrenburg's account as somewhat exaggerated, Wahl among others has argued that the serial production of MLVs at Joinville was not as intense as traditionally thought. See Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 72.

For example, broadly intelligible source material was a key concern for the German Ufa company, where famed producer Erich Pommer placed highest priority on master scripts that had universal comprehension (*Weltverständnis*) in order to facilitate translation into multiple versions (see Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 89). In his assessment of the German industry's MLV production, Garncarz concludes that the most important details of the story remain essentially the same from version to version, except nationality of characters and location of the action.²²⁵ Nevertheless, even if such alterations are predominantly superficial, it is important to keep in mind that this process of "national reassignment" fundamentally shifts the frame of cultural identification for the audience and has profound effects on how the individual films are viewed. Wahl has demonstrated how a few minor alterations between versions can create radically different national-cultural contexts. In comparing the Ufa film *Ich bei Tag, du bei Nacht* (I by Day, You by Night; 1932) with its French and English versions, for example, he concludes that, "the nationalist undertones of the German original version are either neutralized or recalibrated through the inclusion of appropriate details" (Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 90). We can find similar processes of "national reassignment" at work in Czech-German MLV production. At the same time, we can identify many elements that are replicated from one version to the next that function equally well in both cultural-national contexts. Consequently, these versions display similar processes of "cultural leveling" and "universal comprehension" as described for Paramount and Ufa above. However, whereas such leveling is seen as a failure on the part of these larger industries to "localize" their products, in the Czech-German context this autographic replication of cinematic effects can be understood as an indication of the high degree of cultural overlap that facilitated the production of these MLVs more generally. These areas of cultural

²²⁵ Garncarz, "Die bedrohte Internationalität" 129. Qtd. in Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 88.

overlap did not always benefit the MLV projects, though, and occasionally served as the catalyst for discontent by national ideologues on both sides of the linguistic divides. Individual language versions were criticized and even rejected if they were seen to be too little representative of their target culture and/or displaying signs of the “other” side of the cultural divide. These cases expose the limits of Czech-German cultural transfer.

Pierre Sorlin has outlined a series of “what for?” questions with regard to the issue of cultural translation between language versions: “What was it that made it necessary or advantageous to adapt a screenplay to another context or, on the contrary, to not modify anything? ... And what was required to make spectators feel that they were viewing a ‘national’ movie, not a film made in another country? What were the details and cultural hints to recreate a local atmosphere?” (20-21). The following analyses take Sorlin’s questions as a starting point in the effort to conceptualize the cultural differentiation between German language versions and their Czech counterparts. What characteristics, beyond the obvious feature of spoken language, makes the German versions particularly “German” as opposed to Czech (or Central European more generally)? At the same time, I consider certain key elements that are shared between the versions as indicators of cultural intersection. In addition to highlighting points of national-cultural distinction, this path of investigation also illuminates areas of overlap between the two cultures. Consequently, my analysis questions the definition of German national cinema and the tests the validity of the lines of demarcation that separate it from the cinema cultures of its Central European neighbors, in this case Czechoslovakia.

The study of MLV is in its very nature a cross-cultural pursuit. At the same time, a careful analysis of how the cinema of one country navigated the thorny meshes that entwine the local and the global can shed important light on our comprehension of the national cinematic

tradition. The MLV business model may be described as international in focus, however, in practice, the individual language versions work to reinforce ethnic-generic stereotypes and ideals of national belonging. The following analysis seeks to highlight some of the elements that were employed as culturally specific signifiers in German versions, or conversely, which elements were left out of these versions in order to minimize potential Czech cultural associations. As I argue here, the visual aspect of the film experience is just as crucial as the language on the soundtrack in addressing an imagined national audience. This emphasis on the national qualities of the image is by no means specific to analysis of MLV films—already in the era of silent cinema, Béla Balázs had argued that the national character of a film is most recognizable in its photographic (or rather cinematic) style.²²⁶ My focus here is how the differentiation in the visual codes works in conjunction with (or occasionally in contradiction to) the spoken language in creating “national” space in German and Czech film versions. In addition, I explore how other aspects of the soundtrack, such as music, also worked together with the images to address an imagined national subject.

Czech productions, German products

The creation of Czech-German MLVs was a one-sided undertaking motivated by Czechoslovakian companies aiming to tap into foreign capital as a means of securing funds for the production of Czech films for the home market. As Petr Szczepanik has argued, Czechoslovak MLVs were not made as part of a program of international expansionism or cultural export—as was the case with Hollywood and the German industry—but arose out of pure economic concerns for the domestic film industry. Fearful of being overrun with foreign-

²²⁶ Balázs, *Der sichtbare Mensch* 96. Qtd. in Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 123.

language imports from larger countries and consequently compelled ensure the cost-effectiveness of domestic production, Czech companies banked on the exportability of their own foreign-language versions as the most reliable way to support the still nascent national cinema through the creation of Czech-language films. German films were the most logical investment for Czech MLV production thanks to the geographic proximity of target audiences and the closely shared cultural heritage under the Holy Roman and Habsburg Empires, which facilitated the process of cultural transfer between versions.

Although the German and Austrian film industries undoubtedly had commercial interests in Czechoslovak cinema, they were not motivated to pursue Czech-German MLV production. In general, only small production companies from these countries engaged in making Czech versions and these only became involved as partners to Czech companies, which initiated the projects and assumed the leadership role.²²⁷ The largest German company to engage in MLV production, Ufa, had its sights turned almost exclusively westward, initially towards Anglo-American audiences (with English versions) and later towards French (with French versions).²²⁸ Ufa was not entirely averse to MLV projects involving languages from East-Central Europe, though, particularly in the early years of sound film production. In 1929 the German company shot its very first full-length, all-talkie feature film, *Melodie des Herzens* (Melody of the Heart,

²²⁷ The only sizeable German companies to be involved in MLV co-productions with Czech firms were Tobis (*Das Gässchen zum Paradies*, 1936) and Itala-Film (*Der Doppelbräutigam*, 1934), both of which collaborated with the Prague-based Moldavia-Film. The only Czech-German MLV pair that can be thought of as originating in Germany is *Gehetzte Menschen/Štvaní lidé* (1932/33), which was produced by Berlin-based Emco-Film GmbH. This appears to be the only production by this company, which was founded by actor-director Friedrich Fehér. Like Machatý and Lamač, the Vienna-born Fehér was very much a Central European transient figure, who circulated between Vienna, Prague, and Berlin before emigrating to the United States. Due to the unfixed nature of Fehér's career and exceptionally brief existence of his Berlin production company, I do not consider this MLV pair to be truly "German" in origin.

²²⁸ See Wahl, "Babel's Business" and *Das Sprechen* 60.

1929) in a Hungarian version, and made a further Hungarian version of a German film in 1932.²²⁹ After these initial experiments with Hungarian versions of German films, Ufa began to produce stand-alone Hungarian-language films in Budapest in 1932 (see Bock and Töteberg 363). In a parallel development, contingent agreements between Germany and Czechoslovakia at this time compelled Ufa to support the foreign industry in order to secure export markets for their films in the neighboring state.²³⁰ One of the ways it did this was to fund the production of local films with the cooperation of Czech actors and directors. Between 1933 and 1940, the Ufa representation in Prague produced fifteen Czech-language films, all of which were conceived exclusively for domestic Czechoslovak distribution.²³¹ Not one of these features was made in a German language version and none were exported to Germany. Ufa was unique in its engagement with Czech cinema—no other German or Austrian company was involved in the production of Czech films to such an extent. Thanks to the financial investments channeled through its Prague branch, Ufa had a large degree of executive involvement in the creation of “Czech national cinema” already in the 1930s, long before the occupation of the Prague studios under the Protectorate. At the same time, in the period from 1929 to 1936 during which Ufa undertook MLV production “on a grand scale,” the company did not contribute to the creation of a single Czech-language version (Wahl, “Babel’s Business” 235).²³² Likewise, no other German

²²⁹ The name of this second German-Hungarian MLV is unknown to me, but Wahl suggests evidence its existence in the Ufa records. See Wahl, *Das Sprechen* 60.

²³⁰ For more on the trade agreements between Germany and Czechoslovakia, see Klimeš, “Multiple-Language Versions” 93.

²³¹ For a detailed listing of these films, see Bock and Töteberg, 363.

²³² For a breakdown of Ufa MLVs by language, see also Wahl, *Das Sprechen des Spielfilms* 60.

or Austrian company single-handedly undertook the creation of Czech versions to complement their domestic production.²³³

Some German versions were made as part of international co-production agreements with German or Austrian producers, but in the majority of cases, Czechoslovak companies provided all the necessary capital for both versions.²³⁴ Although these films entered the market as “Czech-German co-productions” the financial investment and behind-the-camera labor that went into them was overwhelmingly Czech while the “German” credit was in name only. This was particularly true for Karel Lamač’s company Ondra-Lamac-Film, which was responsible for five Czech-German MLV projects, about one-sixth of all German-Czech MLV production. All five of these films came about as the result of joint agreements between Czechoslovakian-seated firm and Lamač’s company, which was effectively “German” only by virtue of its Berlin address.²³⁵

It would be misguided to view the Czechoslovak-made German versions made between 1930 and 1938 as a monolithic and homogeneous group. Although most of the films produced in this period can be described as belonging to “light genres” such as comedies, musical comedies,

²³³ The case of the Czechoslovak Wolfram-Film presents an interesting case for theorizing the relationship between MLV production and national identity. Founded in the early 1930s by German-speaking investors, the company aimed to establish a source of German-language cinema for the domestic language minority market. Wolfram took part in the production of four German language versions: *Tausend für eine Nacht* (1933), *Annette im Paradies* (1934), *Der Wilderer vom Egerland* (1935), and *Menschen in den Bergen* (1938).

²³⁴ For a detailed outline of these co-productions, see Klimeš, “Multiple-Language Versions” 97-101.

²³⁵ Together with Elekta, Ondra-Lamac-Film made: *C. a k. polní maršálek/Der falsche Feldmarschall* [a.k.a. *Der k. und k. Feldmarschall*] (1930); *On a jeho sestral/Er und seine Schwester* (1931); *To neznáte Hadimršku/Wehe wenn er losgelassen* (a.k.a. *Unter Geschäftsaufsicht*) (1931); and *Polská krev/Polenblut* (1934). Later, the company teamed up with the Czech firm Moldavia to produce *Důvod k rozvodu/Der Scheidungsgrund* (1937). Ondra-Lamac-Film was, in fact, deeply invested in the MLV production strategy—nearly half of the German films made by Ondra-Lamac-Film were concurrently shot in either Czech or French, and, in the case of *C. a k. polní maršálek/Der falsche Feldmarschall* [a.k.a. *Der k. und k. Feldmarschall*] (1930)/*Monsieur le Maréchal* (1931), in all three languages.

or operettas, there are also examples of other genres such as melodrama (*Když struny lkají/Ihr Junge* [When the Strings Wailed, 1930/31]), criminal film (*Štvaní lidí/Gehetzte Menschen* [Hunted People, 1933/32]), and spy thriller (*Aféra plukovníka Redla/Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* [The Affair of Colonel Redl, 1931]). Of particular interest for the current study are those MLV projects that bear some of the hallmarks of what would later become known as the *Heimatfilm* genre. The productions also varied widely in terms of professional investment and overall quality—this can occasionally be seen between the films in a particular MLV pair.

Although many of the German versions “made do” second rate and lesser known actors (including bilinguals from Czechoslovakia), quite a few featured top-billed stars from the period, such as Lien Deyers (*Der Doppelbräutigam* [Life is a Dog, 1934]), Lil Dagover (*Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will* [A Woman Who Knows What She Wants, 1934]), Paul Hörbiger (*Heiraten – aber wen?* [The False Pussycat, 1938], *Der Scheidungsgrund* [Grounds for Divorce, 1937]), and Hans Moser (*Das Gässchen zum Paradies* [Little Street in Paradise, 1936]). Likewise, whereas the vast majority of the German versions were directed by Czechs who were more or less unknown outside of their home country (e.g., Karel Lamač, Martin Frič), occasionally a well known German or Austrian was recruited to the director’s chair, such as Victor Janson (*Eine Frau, die weiß, was sie will*), Carl Boese (*Heiraten – aber wen?*), or Max Mack (*Tausend für eine Nacht* [A Thousand for One Night, 1932]).²³⁶ In a few cases from the middle of the decade, the initial creative energy behind Czech-German MLVs came from émigrés who were denied work in the German industry after the institution of anti-Jewish racial policies in the Reich in

²³⁶ Note: In order to make clear which language version is under consideration, for the purposes of the current chapter, I retain the foreign titles of each film in my discussion. An English translation of the title(s) is provided with the first mention of each language version or MLV pair, but each subsequent mention uses either the German or Czech title. English titles are taken from *Český hraný film II*.

1933/34. In many regards, then, it is useful to think of these so-called “independent films” or “emigrant films” as essentially German productions that only ended up in Czechoslovakia as a result of prohibitive conditions in Germany and later in Austria as it gradually succumbed to pressure from the Reich.²³⁷ The production of German versions in Prague not only provided a space for émigrés to continue working, but also supplied an expedient “front” behind which the involvement of “non-Aryan” filmmakers could be masked in the attempt to slyly sidestep the Reich’s racial and political prohibitions. Away from the direct oversight of Nazi cultural administrators, it was easy for Czechoslovak productions to concoct misleading production records, thereby creating the opportunity for German-language films from Prague to be distributed in the Reich despite the collaboration of Jews and other “undesirables” in their creation. In addition to Austrian cinema pioneers Walter Kolm-Veltée and Jakob and Luise Flack, the most notable filmmaker to find refuge in the Czech industry was director Robert Land, who became a central figure in the scandal surrounding the MLV film pair *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (Jana, 1935), which I discuss at length later in this chapter.

Although the German-language versions had limited distribution among German-language cinemas within Czechoslovakia, they were intended primarily for export. The main rationale behind the creation of these alternate versions was to tap into German and Austrian markets, which dwarfed the domestic Czechoslovakian market. These German-speaking markets offered immense potential for export and a crucial source of profit for the relatively small Czechoslovak industry. This special economic relationship was recognized on both sides of the

²³⁷ For more on this “independent film” phenomenon, see Klimeš, “Multiple-Language Films” 92, and Loacker/Prucha *Unerwünschtes Kino*. German language versions that were made by “émigrés” from Germany and Austria include: *Der Wilderer vom Egerland* (1935), *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (1935), *Csardas* (a.k.a. *Ihre tollste Nacht*, 1935), and *Hoheit tanzt Walzer* (1935), which was not made in a Czech version, but as the French version *Valse éternelle*.

linguistic border. In the words of one contemporary German author writing for the leading German trade journal *Film-Kurier*: “As Czech film production expands, it will be compelled to work on German versions, as has already been demonstrated with several Burian films and the Redl film. This is the only way for Czech film to achieve a broader foundation in the foreign market.”²³⁸ This author highlights the somewhat paradoxical situation of the Czech industry at that time: the surest and quickest way to make a name for itself on the international stage was to produce German-language films, most of which would be unseen by the majority of the Czechoslovak population.²³⁹ In this way, Czechoslovakia became deeply invested in creating films for German audiences, thereby contributing to German national cinema in a broad conception of the term.

As the historical record suggests, the German versions did in fact circulate far beyond the borders of Germany and Austria as international, albeit masked emissaries of “Czech cinema.” Film announcements in the *New York Times* from the period indicate that Czech-made German versions were a consistent feature in Manhattan theaters, while there is little evidence that any Czech versions played in the city.²⁴⁰ German versions, therefore, were the most crucial export

²³⁸ “Der Tschechenfilm als Exportartikel,” *Film-Kurier* 14.62 (12 March 1932): 3 (1. Beiblatt: 1). The author is referring here to the 1931 *Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* and the Vlasta Burian films *Der falsche Feldmarschall* (1930), *Er und seine Schwester* (1931), and *Unter Geschäftsaufsicht* (a.k.a. *Wehe, wenn er losgelassen*) (1931).

²³⁹ The *Film-Kurier* author acknowledges the Czech émigré communities in Vienna, Chicago, and Cleveland as potential targets for the export of Czech-language films, but quickly adds that the potential income from these markets is more or less negligible and therefore cannot factor largely in the Czech industry’s business strategy.

²⁴⁰ See the online archives of the *NY Times* movie reviews, which includes write-ups of Czechoslovak German versions such as *Versuchen Sie meine Schwester* (a.k.a. *Er und seine Schwester*) <<http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D01E0DD123BE433A25753C2A9609C946094D6CF>> (July 24, 2012) or *Der Adjutant seiner Hoheit* <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9505E5DC1238E13ABC4A51DFB667838F629EDE>> (July 24, 2012).

product for Czech film industry, accounting for the lion's share of its presence on the international market and ensuring a certain degree of commercial competitiveness in the global trade. The curious result of this business model, however, was that these films, which were marketed and subsequently viewed as "German" products (often by German-speaking émigré audiences) were in fact manufactured in Czechoslovakia. This resulted in instances of spectatorship whereby contemporary viewers were disposed to receive these films as part of their national culture without realizing that they were actually "foreign" products made in Czechoslovakia. For film historians and theorists, this situation invites compelling challenges to the concept of "national cinema," which are for the most part beyond the scope of the present study.

In light of the issues currently at hand in this dissertation, I will argue that, regardless of their Czechoslovak origins, we can read these German-language versions as part of "German national cinema" in the broad sense of the term. Indeed, it behooves us to acknowledge their German status (even if this status is marginal) if we are to properly assess their significance. If we look beyond the fact that the economic initiative for their production generally originated in the Czech industry, it becomes evident that there is quite a lot that is "German" or "Austrian" about these films. Most obviously, these German versions were the result of close collaboration with German and Austrian actors, directors, and production personnel. Additionally, a high percentage of the screenplays for these versions derived from existing German or Austrian sources. Furthermore, these versions were fashioned with an explicitly German-speaking audience in mind. Even though a Czechoslovakian production company stands behind them, these films are very much German products, in terms of their creative origins and distributional trajectories. These factors must be kept in mind if we are to fully understand the role that these

products play in film history. More importantly, German film scholarship on this period can benefit tremendously with the inclusion of these language versions in the overall picture.

All of the Czech-made German language versions are very much a part of the broader conversation within the realm of “German cinema” in the 1930s. Even though they were made outside of Germany, the fact that German audiences viewed them invites us to think of them in terms of German national cinema. As Andrew Higson has famously argued “the parameters of a national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as the site of production of films” (36). This approach shifts the emphasis away from analyzing only the films produced by a nation toward a consideration of how national audiences “construct their cultural identity in relation to the various products of the national and international film ... industries” (Higson 46). In other words, the nature of a national cinema is not only a factor of the films it produces (as Siegfried Kracauer assumes for his film analyses in *From Caligari to Hitler*), but is also shaped by the foreign films seen within the country that also contribute to the cinematic imaginary of the nation. Within this framework, foreign-made German language versions are more significant than any other category of international films because they are made purely with German audiences in mind. The primary purpose of their existence is to speak to German audiences. In this, they could perhaps be thought of as even “more German” with regard to audience address than certain films made in Germany, particularly those made specifically with an eye towards international distribution. Whereas many films made in Germany or Austria aim to speak to international audiences in addition to domestic viewers, German language versions seek for the most part to address German-speaking audiences alone.

Although they can be described as predominantly Czech in terms of production, German versions communicate a great deal about the nature of the cinema they tried to emulate and

conform to. The sounds and images of the German language versions should be read as the result of the filmmakers' attempt to meet the tastes and expectations of an imagined "German" audience. In other words, the filmmakers strove to make the films as "German" (and/or "Austrian") as possible—this is the goal of the process of "national reassignment" that Ďurovičová describes. Indeed, one measure of success for a foreign language version is the degree to which it "speaks to" the target audience in the same fashion as those products from their home market. A good language version not only communicates in the spoken language of the target audience, but also in the filmic language that this target audience is accustomed to. As a result of the efforts to meet audience expectations, these films offer a unique refraction of the stylistic tendencies in German cinema of the period. Furthermore, from the moment these films entered circulation in the German-speaking realm, they themselves became active contributors to the make-up of German national cinema (à la Higson).

Cultural Translation and Mutual Intelligibility in the Context of Central Europe

Although it is necessary to consider these language versions as part of German cinema, it must also be kept in mind that these are not typical products of the national cinema. They represent a unique category of German films and should be evaluated according to different criteria than used to judge non-version films made in Germany or Austria. Most importantly, the issue of translation, both linguistic and cultural, that must be taken into consideration. The interstitial nature of MLV production produces a whole set of issues related to cultural specificity and national identity that are not applicable to most "homegrown" films.

As was typical for MLV production in other places (see discussion above), Czechoslovak producers typically sought internationally palatable master scripts that told "universal" stories

allowing for easy translation into different cultural contexts with only minor alterations (see Szczepanik, “Undoing the National” 58-59). However, this was not the case for every Czechoslovak MLV. In fact, there is a significant number of productions that tell stories that are deeply rooted in Central European culture, and in some cases seek to operate in national-culturally specific German or Czech narrative frameworks. In the present chapter, I am more interested in these examples in which the Czech producers chose source material with a high degree of regional or cultural specificity. How did the filmmakers make the transition from one specific, language-bound cultural framework to the other, i.e., Czech to German and vice versa? What can be said about the things that needed to be change and, perhaps more compellingly, the things that remained unchanged presumably because they have more universal connotation in both cultural contexts? The pursuit of this second question begins with an investigation into the conditions of cultural overlap and/or intersection that facilitated the Czechoslovak film industry’s efforts to create “German” films.

The German film versions that came from Prague are much closer in character to the films made in Germany and Austria (as well as elsewhere in Central Europe) than those versions produced *en masse* by Hollywood, the largest competitor for German-language markets. Indeed, the Czechoslovak industry was in a far better position than any other foreign (i.e., non-German) industry to produce films that would appeal to German-speaking audience. To be sure, Czech-German MLV production was not carried out in the same industrial mode of serial replication inherent to Paramount’s operating model and thus did not necessitate the same degree of cultural leveling. However, the smaller scale of production was not the only factor that afforded the Czech industry the opportunity to make films able to resonate with German-speaking audiences. Filmmakers in Prague had a number of obvious advantages over their Hollywood counterparts

when it came to fabricating images that communicate a sense of culture or regional specificity that Germans and Austrians could identify as “local,” as belonging to their broad concept of “home.” Most significantly, the Czech and German peoples of Central Europe had a long tradition of shared history, being most notably unified under the Habsburg Crown and/or the Holy Roman Empire since the Middle Ages. The result was a high degree of cultural overlap, such that both ethnic groups share many of the same cultural idioms and embrace similar musical and artistic genres (e.g., operetta, brass ensembles, polka etc.). This facilitated the overall process of cultural translation since many visual and audio elements required little or no alteration between versions; these elements can be thought of as analogous to the formally related “cognates” shared by two lexical language systems.

Due to the deep-rootedness of the German cultural tradition in the region, Bohemia and Moravia, which now formed the heart of Czechoslovakia, offered a ready-made context for “German” stories, particularly with regard to mise-en-scene. The visual and cultural landscape of Bohemia and Moravia (some parts more than others) was perfectly suited as a MLV film set, as very few changes were necessary to convincingly transition from a “Czech” setting to a “German” setting. Images of the landscape, architecture, and everyday clothing could be used to communicate “home” to both groups with minimal alteration. The territory and its effects offer an easily translatable, even rewritable space. For example, the folk wedding at the beginning of both versions of *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* makes use of identical costumes, set designs, and props. Most importantly, they share the very same filming locations in a rural village of simple peasant houses and agricultural structures. All of these elements “fit” equally well in both the “German” and “Czech” contexts; in both cases, the physical setting is in harmony with the linguistic context. The language spoken by the on-screen characters is what

one might expect to naturally hear if a film crew were to record documentary footage in these spaces. If the same scene were to appear in an English- or French-language film, for example, the setting would appear out of synch with the language—audiences would naturally suspend disbelief and accept the “reality” of these events within the film’s diegesis, however there would be the constant reminder that these actors are communicating in a way that is not natural to this setting in the world outside of the cinema theater. The occurrence of German language within a Bohemian or Moravian setting carries a greater degree of authenticity than any other language (except of course Czech)—in this case, language and space work together to create an effect that can be viewed as approximating documentary actuality.

Another advantage that the Czechoslovak-made German versions had over Hollywood and other MLV producers was the nature of the source material for their stories. Vincendeau points out the “crucial importance of intertextual familiarity with genres and narrative patterns in the source material . . . for audience appeal and identification” (35). The suggestion is that it is not sufficient to simply translate the spoken dialogue of a screenplay; in order for the narrative to truly resonate with foreign audiences it must speak to the narrative and generic patterns that are familiar to them. Failing to properly realize this, most Hollywood FLVs simply did not address the culturally specific narrative expectations of international target audiences, including Germans and Austrians. By contrast, Czech-German MLVs were more successful in this respect precisely because the source material could be so easily transposed between the two cultural registers, which shared many of the same tastes and attitudes despite their intense political differences.

Given that the center of Czech-German MLV production was Prague, it is not surprising that the majority of the Czech-German MLVs had their origins in Czech sources that were then translated into German for that language version. It was the common model for MLV production

for the narrative material to originate from sources in the country of production and to then be translated (linguistically and culturally) into any number of versions. Contrary to this prevailing mode of MLV production, however, more than one third of the Czech-German MLVs were based on sources originally written in German, which were subsequently translated into Czech.²⁴¹ In these cases, then, it is misguided to think of the German version as an autographic copy of an original Czech film. Indeed, to some extent the German film can be described as the “original” since it is closer to the source literary text. According to this logic, the German-language versions “precede” the Czech versions, since the original text already existed in German/Austrian culture prior to the creation of either film. Ultimately, though, it is more productive to think of these MLV pairs as allographic versions arising from a position of Czech-German cultural intersection.

Although each of the Czech and German versions aim to invoke and emphasize the national-cultural properties familiar to their particular target audience, the settings and situations of these MLV pairs can be understood as expressions of a regionally defined, supra-national concept of cultural specificity: Central Europe. The existence of a certain Central European (or Middle European) cultural mindset that transcended national borders and contributed to a region-

²⁴¹ The following MLVs derived from source material originally written in German: *Tonka Šibenice/Die Galgentoni* and *Afera plukovníka Redla/Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* (both based on reportages by E. E. Kisch); *Polská krev/Polenblut, V tom domečku pod Emauzy/Das Glück von Grinzing*, and *Žena, která ví, co chce/Eine Frau, die weiss was sie will*, (all adapted from German operettas); *Polibek ve sněhu/Kuss im Schnee* (written by Leo Feld); *Anita v ráji/Annette im Paradies* (based on the play *Annette hat zuviel Geld* by Carl Rössler and Blader Olden); *Ze všech jediná/Adresse unbekannt* (adapted from the theater piece by Harald Bratt); *On a jeho sestra/Er und seine Schwester* (from the farce by Bernard Buchbinder); *Tisíc za jednu noc/Tausend für eine Nacht* (from the comedy play *Stöpsel*) and *To neznáte Hadimršku/Unter Geschäftsaufsicht* (a.k.a. *Wehe wenn er losgelassen*) (from the farce *Unter Geschäftsaufsicht*). These last two works were written by the well-know team F. R. Arnold und E. Bach. It should also be noted that Ernst Bach was born in Eger (Cheb) in what came to be known as the “Sudetenland” and was therefore himself a product of the German-Bohemian hybrid culture.

specific mode of filmmaking was part of the discourse on film in the early sound era. According to one German critic:

Ultimately (with the exception of the Prague sound film riots of September 1930 that were fortunately quelled very rapidly) the logic of practicality has for the most part emerged victorious. Czech nationals enjoy German sound films so well, because these films belong to the *Middle European mentality*; and in terms of the purely linguistic experience, German is and will remain the closest and most practical world language for Czechs, who even find themselves compelled to use it as a mutually intelligible idiom to communicate with their Slavic brothers at Pan-Slavic congresses (emphasis added).²⁴²

The author suggests that American or Western European films speak to Czech audiences from a position of foreignness, whereas German films operate in a mode that is familiar to them.

Extending this argument further, it would seem that a Czech film and a German film would share many of the same qualities and the only fundamental difference would be in the spoken language—and even here the language of German films is not altogether “foreign,” since most Czechs still understand it. Indeed, beyond asserting a shared Middle European “mentality,” this author also implicates German as the default *lingua franca* for the region (even among Slavs).

This attitude touches on a number of problematic issues related to cultural chauvinism and nationalist discourse that are beyond the scope of the present study, however, I do not believe that the concept of a Central European mentality is without merit. Indeed, much of my reading of Czech-German MLVs seeks to identify points of cultural intersection that would suggest a transnational, regional frame of reference. I would agree that German (and Austrian) films from

²⁴² “Das Sprachproblem” *Film-Kurier* 14.62 (12 March 1932): 5 (2. Beiblatt: 1).

this period speak to Czechoslovak audiences on much more familiar terms than other national cinemas. I would also further suggest that the inverse is true: Czechoslovak films operate within a certain Central European mentality that made them appealing to German and Austrian audiences.

Viewer Identification: Space, Place, and Language

In his article on MLV production in Czechoslovakia, Petr Szczepanik offers an excellent overview of the main strategies that MLV filmmakers employed in constructing divergent filmic spaces in the attempt to appeal to various international audiences. His analysis is based on the idea that MLVs strove to maintain a high degree of “sameness” with regard to the “space of production and of diegesis” as well as the “space of reception” (Szczepanik 57). This latter concept of space is related to the experience of watching the film—it describes the way the film communicates to the viewer, creating a link between the imagination of the viewer and the imaginary world on screen. When discussing the filmic text, Szczepanik employs the term “space” quite generally to describe the imagined world of on-screen event or “diegesis” (which he also calls “time-space”). My analysis builds upon Szczepanik’s foundation by introducing the idea of filmic *place* to the discussion of diegetic *space*, as he describes.

My understanding of “place” refers to *the specific geographic location implicated by a film’s setting*. In this respect, I am interested in the imagined cartographic coordinates of the filmic action, rather than the physical filming locations, except to the extent that these locations directly contribute to reinforcing the sense of onscreen diegesis, for example, when the image of an easily recognizable landmark or icon serves to link the action to a well-known geographic setting. A film need not, however, display identifiable landmarks to mark place; this can be

accomplished by any number of narrative devices: descriptive on-screen titles, bits of dialogue, voice-over, images of maps, etc. The main point is that the audience imagines the filmic action to take place in a specific, named geographic location. This conception of “place” stands in contrast to the more general term “space,” which I understand to denote a more abstract and diffuse idea that takes into account the implied national-cultural context of the onscreen world as well as the film’s mode of emotional address. “Space” is created by the film’s manipulation of sound and image and speaks to the viewer on a more emotional level, orienting them within the film’s imaginary world or diegesis. (In this respect, my use of the term is similar to the “space of reception that Szczepanik describes.) My use of “place” refers to a physical location (even if this location is imaginary) that exists outside the viewer, whereas a film’s conception of “space” engages a whole network of subjective thoughts and feelings that directly affects the viewer’s inner identification and engagement with the filmic action. This is not to imply that “place” does not evoke emotional response from the viewer; however, such emotional response is typically conditioned by factors outside the film, it is contingent on the viewer’s own personal connection to this geographic location. My conception of “space” is related to the way that the film language communicates place to the viewer—in this sense, spatial coding can condition certain emotional responses to place that the viewer might not have previously had. Whereas “place” relates to *what* is being imagined, “space” concerns *how* it is imagined. In terms of the discussion here, I am interested in the way that the “places” of Prague and Bohemia are constructed as “spaces” of identification for the viewer. Although the “place” remains the same, the definition of “space” is mutable—it can be identified as German, Czech, Austrian, Central European, Eastern European, Slavic et al., this space can be seen as a “home” or “foreign,” “friendly” or “enemy.” The

language used to characterize filmic space has a profound effect on how the viewers perceive and relate to it as a place.

Spoken language is a primary definer of filmic space—it creates a space of identification that provides an imaginary frame of reference allowing the viewer to relate to the filmic action on a cognitive and emotional level. Language need not be in harmony with the place represented on screen, but it should be intelligible to the target audience (perhaps with the aid of subtitles). Generally speaking, the goal of most individual language versions in the Czech-German context is to make space and place as isomorphic as possible within the target audience's imagination. German versions tend to be set in locations where German is typically spoken and Czech versions where Czech is commonly used. In those cases in which the setting of at least one version is the Czech lands, there is a consistent pattern of division in terms of how place relates to space. Whereas the Bohemian and Moravian periphery appears as a profoundly mutable place, equally lending itself to be read as a "German" or "Czech" space according to the film's linguistic-ethnic orientation, Prague emerges as a place that is distinctly and even exclusively "Czech" in nature. In other words, rural Bohemia and Moravia typically feature in both Czech and German versions, while a Prague setting is most commonly reserved for Czech versions alone (whereby another urban setting serves as the place of action in the German counterpart).

Michaela Krützen has written extensively about the "language barriers" that sound film introduced to international film trade. In the case of Czechoslovakia and Germany/Austria, though, this was for the most part a one-way barrier, since the majority of the Czechoslovakian population would have possessed at least a passive knowledge of German to facilitate the comprehension of dialogue spoken in that language. Czechoslovakia of the 1930s was still defined by a high degree of diglossia or bilingualism. Whereas very few of those who identified

as German could speak much more than pidgin Czech, a high percentage of the Czech-speaking population had learned enough German in school to effectively communicate in the language. As a consequence, a significant number of Czechoslovakian natives were conversant enough in both German and Czech to perform convincingly in both versions of Czech-German MLV pairs. Anny Ondra and Vlasta Burian typically reiterated their roles in both versions, performing alongside a German/Austrian cast in one a Czech cast in the other. Ondra, for example, appeared as the girl named (appropriately) “Anny” in both versions of the film pair *Der Scheidungsgrund/Důvod k rozvodu* (1937), playing the love interest to Paul Hörbiger in the former and to Czech heartthrob Odřich Nový in the latter. Likewise, the young Bohemian-born Hans Feher, performed alongside Eugen Klöpfer in the German version *Gehetzte Menschen* and Josef Rovenský in the Czech *Šťvaní lidé* (1933). The most successful bi-lingual Czech was Burian, who became a minor star in Germany by virtue of his performances in German versions such as *Der falsche Feldmarschall* (Imperial and Royal Field Marshal, 1930) and *Adjutant seiner Hoheit* (His Highness’ Adjutant, 1934). In terms of numbers, he was also the most prominent MLV actor—all together, he reiterated the lead role in both versions of five Czech-German MLVs. I have indicated here a few of the most notable bilingual actors, however, there is a large number of performers who had speaking roles in both German and Czech versions. The utilization of bilingual performers from one language version to the next demonstrates a certain degree of leveling of the national-cultural difference between the resulting films. The appearance of the same actor in two divergent national-linguistic contexts dislodges the sense fusion between the performing subject’s identity and the national classification of the film as a factor of the spoken language.

Although the talents of such bilingual actors were commonly utilized to minimize casting requirements from one version to the next, these performers rarely displayed their dual language capabilities within the context of one language version.²⁴³ This staging of multiple languages within one version is not unheard of in the context of global MLV production. A famous example is Emil Jannings's performance in *The Blue Angel* (the English version of *Der blaue Engel*) whereby he plays a German teacher of English, who speaks English to his students and to (the presumably American) Lola Lola, but communicates to all other characters in German (the local language). There is one notable example of such bilingualism in Czech-German MLVs: in the early Czech version *C. a. k. polní maršálek*, Vlasta Burian plays a Czech officer of the Austro-Hungarian army who interjects the occasional German word when commanding his soldiers for comic effect. Notably, the German version *Der falsche Feldmarschall* refrains from creating such a diglossic space, avoiding all traces of Czech language in the dialogue. The mixing of Czech and German in *C. a. k. polní maršálek* is a quite rare exception—the majority of all Czech-German MLV films followed the pattern of constructing filmic space governed by a single language.²⁴⁴ As a general rule, both language versions preferred to construct worlds governed by monolingualism as opposed to asserting any level of diglossia.

²⁴³ In his analysis of both versions, Petr Mareš has described how the Czech film employs the German language to mark the hegemonic position of German culture in the Habsburg Empire in order to then subtly subvert this position in its satire of the Austro-Hungarian military. See Mareš 68-70. While the German film retains the critique of power albeit couched in terms of a general resistance to authority in, the bilingual strategy of the Czech version infuses this message with a national-cultural vibe that would resonate deeply in its target linguistic audience.

²⁴⁴ Even in the case of *C. a. k. polní maršálek*, the suggestion of bilingualism is very tenuous, since the number of German interjections is in fact quite small. More importantly, most Czech audiences would have easily understood these German utterances, whereas, for example, English-speaking audiences of *The Blue Angel* were unlikely to comprehend the brief German passages.

Rather than recognizing any degree of linguistic or cultural heterogeneity, both Czech and German versions tended to ignore the existence of the other group and construct exclusively monolingual, and consequently monocultural spaces. As a general rule, no traces of Czech language or culture are to be found in the German-language versions and vice-versa. Initially, this might not seem at all unusual. After all, the process of fashioning a linguistically unified filmic space (whether in a language version or not) was common practice around the world at that time and is still the prevailing mode of filmmaking today. Furthermore, this aesthetic mode was particularly pertinent for language versions, whose very existence was rooted in the effort to create filmic products that spoke to a specific linguistically delimited audience. Yet, within the ethnically charged political landscape of interwar Central Europe, the depiction of place and national identity was inevitably linked to larger political struggles beyond the cinematic screen. In this region of Central Europe, where struggles for cultural identity and identification had raged, often quite violently, for centuries, the projection of a single linguistic-cultural onto recognizable (or intelligible) geographic places inevitably communicated a political message to the audience. As with all ethnic struggles, language was a primary issue of contention in Bohemia as well as one of the most powerful weapons in the struggle. In this agitated environment, an individual's choice to speak German or Czech often amounted to a political statement in itself. Likewise, the decision to put German or Czech words in the mouths of film characters inhabiting onscreen spaces understood as Bohemian or Moravian carried powerful ideological implications. In spite of the mixed multiethnic reality of Czechoslovakian society, both Czech and German language versions overwhelmingly project Bohemia and Moravia as fantasy spaces of linguistic and cultural homogeneity. Individual films that depicted these geographic places as entirely devoid of any culture markings that are not directly aligned with

the target linguistic audience inevitably (even if unwittingly) fueled nationalistic visions of a spiritual uniformity of land and ethnicity in this territory.

Parallel Spaces and Nationalized Places

Given the tendency for monolingual isolation in these MLVs, a fundamental question presents itself: Why was the opportunity to present a dually linguistic space and engage with cultural difference overwhelmingly ignored? Indeed, the multi-ethnic composition of the Czechoslovak state would seem to offer ideal conditions for exploring these areas. Yet, in the nationally charged climate of the period the political stakes for recognizing cultural plurality were simply too high—on both sides of the Czech-German language divide. Furthermore, the very practice of creating independent language versions was designed as a means to spare the audience any experience of dissonance, by coordinating all aspects of the film to conform to their cultural-linguistic context.

In fact, the strict partitioning of cultural-linguistic space seen in Czech-German MLV pairs was reflected in certain practices of everyday life at work in the country. The stark division was perhaps most striking in the historically diverse capital city. Although Prague's Czech- and German-speaking language groups shared a general living space, in actual day-to-day experience they had only limited interaction with one another. The Czechoslovak capital—and center of the film industry—was home to two distinct linguistic communities that existed side by side, in some ways quite literally. In his famous essay *Deutsche und Tschechen* (Germans and Czechs), Prague native Egon Erwin Kisch describes the divisions between the two language groups in his city at the beginning of the 20th century. He writes:

The Prague German did not maintain any non-business interaction with the city's half a million Czechs. He would never light his cigar with a match from the Czech School Society [*Matice školská*], just as a Czech would never light his with a match from a box of the German School Society [*Deutscher Schulverein*]. No German ever set foot in the Czech Burghers' Club, and no Czech ever entered the German Casino. Even instrumental concerts were monolingual, as were swimming facilities, parks, playgrounds, most restaurants, cafés, and stores. The main promenade of the Czechs was *Ferdinandstraße*, while the main promenade of the Germans was the “*Graben*.”²⁴⁵ (Kisch 75)

I invoke Kisch's vision of Prague here because it suggests a compelling illustration that echoes the process of non-interaction implicit in the Czech-German MLVs. Kisch describes a city made up of two parallel societies that do not overlap in any way. Viewed side by side, the Czech-German MLVs for the most part depict exactly this: two monolingual, hermetically isolated worlds segregated by a steadfast cultural divide. These parallel spaces are testimony to the insular nationalist tendencies at work in Prague and broader Bohemian and Moravian society in the first decades of the 20th century. Although Kisch's images of absolute ethno-linguistic segregation and isolation are analogous to the cultural spaces constructed in Czech-German MLVs, there is one crucial difference: whereas Kisch acknowledges both sides of the ethnic divide, the films do not—the non-addressed ethnic group remains firmly outside the frame and permanently off-screen.

Just as Kisch's Czechs and Germans marked out different spaces of the urban landscape (i.e., *Ferdinandstraße* versus the “*Graben*”) as their own, Czech-German MLVs also recognized

²⁴⁵ In present day Prague, *Ferdinandstraße* is named *Národní třída* and the *Graben* is known by the Czech name *Na příkopě*.

certain territorial divisions, although according to quite different parameters. As stated earlier, the Bohemian countryside functioned as a smoothly mutable space, easily imaginable as both a “Germanic” or “Czech” space and thus capable of speaking equally well to fantasies of Czech or German homogeneity. The case of Prague was quite different: in contrast to Kisch’s picture of a city equally divided between Czech and German cultural factions, both German and Czech film language versions envision Prague a more or less “Czech space.” From the Czech point of view, this amounted to a sort of “ethnic purification” of Prague eliminating any trace of German influence in the city. When the German presence was acknowledged, it remained firmly situated in the periphery, that is, in a more conservative, rural setting. Prague was reserved as a space of modernity, a symbolic “home space” for the newly energized sense of Czech nationhood.

In the following, I outline the major strategies whereby filmic place was modified between Czech and German language versions, citing specific examples that demonstrate these strategies. Like Szczepanik, I also identify four primary strategies, however, my list differs significantly from his. As described earlier, Szczepanik does not make any distinction between *space* and *place*. Consequently, his outline of strategies aims to account for all the various ways that MLVs sought to construct “a common denominator of the diegetic space” between the two versions (Szczepanik 58).²⁴⁶ By contrast, my goal is to closely analyze the major modes that filmmakers utilized to establish harmony between linguistic space and geographic place. Since I am also primarily concerned with issues of national-cultural identification with regard to Bohemia and Moravia (and Prague in particular), the majority of my analysis focuses on MLV pairs in which one or both versions are explicitly set in the Czech lands. I identify the following four strategies: (1) place is insignificant in the construction of linguistic space, (2) place shifts

²⁴⁶ The four strategies Szczepanik identifies are (1) commutable locations, (2) a non-specific/universal world, (3) a shared historic past, (4) exotic locales.

between Prague and an unnamed German city, (3) place shifts between Prague and Vienna, (4) place remains the same. My discussion of the first three strategies focuses on urban spaces and how place is modified to accommodate linguistic space. With the fourth strategy, the emphasis is on rural locations in the Bohemian or Moravia periphery. This last category receives greater attention, because it is in these films that we encounter the dual interpretation of the same territory as part of a Czech and German cultural sphere. My discussion ends with a consideration of the issue of nation and ethnicity within the context of some intriguing examples whereby both Czech and German versions operate within the *Heimatfilm* genre in order to mark the same Bohemian territory as “home.” This is not intended to be a comprehensive survey of all MLVs that engage with the issues at hand. Instead, I have chosen the most interesting examples for close examination within the context of the current dissertation.

Ambiguous Urban Places

With MLV pairs such as *Ulička v ráji/Das Gässchen zum Paradies* (1936), each version constructs filmic spaces that are distinctly codified as “Czech” or “German” respectively, however the specificity of place is ambiguous in *both* versions.²⁴⁷ The filmic action was filmed on the very same sets, which were designed such that they could be interpreted as two distinct places. This “signposting” of space is enacted in the opening shot of the film that introduces the “little street” announced in the title of both versions (fig. 17). A similar strategy is employed in the early MLV pair *Když struny lkají/Ihr Junge* (a.k.a. *Wenn die Geigen erklingen*, 1930), whereby the action of both versions begins in a unidentified rural location and later moves to an

²⁴⁷ Although some reviews of the German version describe it as a “Wiener Film,” the city is never specifically mentioned or indicated in the film. Despite some occurrences of a working title of the German version, *Hundefänger von Wien*, there is nothing within the film text itself to suggest that the location of the action is to be read as specifically as Vienna.

non-descript, but clearly Central European urban setting that is only referred to as “the City.” MLVs made according to this strategy worked with generic sets that could be easily adapted to the linguistic space by means of simple superficial alterations, such as the exchanging of street signs and other examples of written text.



Figure 17. The signposting of filmic space in *Das Gässchen zum Paradies* and *Ulička v ráji* (1936). [Source: screen captures from DVD—German version from television broadcast, Czech version from recording of NFA print.]

Prague contra Unnamed “German” City

A far more common strategy was to take advantage of location shooting in order to showcase Prague as the place of action in Czech versions. In most of these cases, the filmmakers worked to neutralize all traces of Prague-specificity in the German-language counterparts. The Czech versions included shots of recognizable Prague sights that firmly anchor the diegesis in the Bohemian capital within the viewer’s mind. By contrast, the typically low-budget productions could not afford to travel to Germany or Austria for location filming and were forced to either use stock footage of “German” cities or to shoot Prague in such a way that it could masquerade for a random unspecified German urban space.

The MLV pair *Život je pes/Der Doppelbräutigam* (1933/34) provides a useful illustration of this strategy. The Czech version overtly presents images of Prague streets and the some of the city's major sights (e.g., the national museum [Národní muzeum], Wenceslaus Square [Václavské náměstí], and the Lesser Town Square [Malostranské náměstí]), which unmistakably denote the *place* of the filmic action as the Czech capital (fig. 18). In the German version,



Figure 18. Wenceslaus Square (Václavské náměstí) marks the place as Prague in the opening scene of *Život je pes*. [Source: Screen capture from DVD of Czech television broadcast.]

however, the city locations are not recognizable as Prague at all. In some cases exterior sequences present in the Czech version are missing entirely in the German film. Alternatively, these exterior shots are filmed in such a way that the buildings in the background are non-descript and do not immediately invoke any specific geographic location. As a consequence, the *place* of the German version is left open, in that it is not overtly defined; the city could be Berlin,

Vienna, just as easily as any other (Germanic) metropolis. Regardless of the specific setting of the diegesis, the *space* depicted here is indisputably “German.” The music store where the main characters work is identified by the sign “Roland Musikverlag” in German, in contrast to the corresponding store in the Czech version, which is labeled as “Hudební nákladatelství Roland.” In this way, the cultural space of both versions is repeatedly underscored by the spoken and written use of language. In *Život je pes* the Czech space is clearly presented as Prague, while the specific geographic location of the German space in *Der Doppelbräutigam* remains unclear. Analogous examples of the split between Prague and unnamed German city can be seen in the MLV pairs *Poslíček lásky/Kein Wort von Liebe* (Messenger of Love, 1937) and *To neznáte Hadimršku/Wehe, wenn er losgelassen* a.k.a. *Unter Geschäftsaufsicht* (You Don’t Know Hadimrška, 1931).

The Czech versions create a much more comprehensive imaginary space of identification for their intended viewers than their German counterparts. As the most important and most recognizable city in Czechoslovakia, most Czech viewers would readily identify with images of the capital and relate to the characters that inhabit this location. By contrast, the filmmakers clearly thought that Prague was not capable of or suitable for establishing such feelings of belonging for German-speaking viewers. Perhaps there was concern that German-viewers would be “jarred” by the dissonance of seeing the Czech city, but hearing German? This might seem odd given the vibrant Prague-German community (of which Kisch and Kafka were two prominent literary representatives) still survived into the 1930s. Perhaps it was rather a decision on the part of the filmmakers to ignore the German minority in the city in order to realize the fantasy of Prague as a purely Czech city. Imagining contemporary Prague as an exclusively Czech space was, after all, the operating standard for Czech cinema at this time. It is therefore

conceivable that this mindset also influenced the way Czech producers chose to represent (or ignore) Prague in MLVs. Whatever the explanation, the films obviously demonstrate that Prague was incompatible with the national-cultural space sought after in German versions.

Prague contra Vienna

The third strategy is related to the second, but demonstrates the attempt on the part of the filmmakers to maintain a similar level of national-cultural identification in both language versions. In these cases, rather than shifting the action from Prague to an unnamed urban locale, the German versions make efforts to suggest geographical specificity in establishing the filmic place. The most common urban antecedent to Prague is not Berlin, as might be expected, but Vienna.

The shift between Vienna and Prague is suggested in the versions *Pobočník jeho výsosti/Adjutant seiner Hoheit*. Although both versions set the bulk of the story at a military outpost in Galicia, the opening action for the German-language version is clearly marked as Vienna, while the Czech version makes overt reference to Prague. For example, when the title character meets with a superior officer in *Adjutant seiner Hoheit*, the two reminisce about their wild nights in the Prater, in reference to Vienna's famous park, while the analogous scene in *Pobočník jeho výsosti* finds the same figures speaking of the Stromovka park in the north of Prague. In some cases the (dis)placement of the geographical setting is promoted as a defining character of each language versions. This is perhaps most obvious in the MLV pair *V tom domečku pod Emauzy/Das Glück von Grinzing* (In the Little House below Emausy, 1933) whereby the title of the Czech film points to a section of Prague, whereas the German title invokes a well-known suburb of Vienna.

In other words, the specificity of national-cultural place is highlighted directly in the titles of the different versions. Very often, the specificity of the alteration of these national-cultural places is entirely superficial, only suggested by the dialogue (as in the case of *Pobočník jeho výsostil Adjutant seiner Hoheit*) or other narrative devices, yet fully unrealized in terms of the visual image. For example, each version of the pair *Divoch/Der Wildfang* (Wild Girl, 1936) indicates the setting in Prague/Vienna in their respective opening credits, although this geographical distinction would appear to be superfluous, since all scenes in the respective cities are set in office interiors and nightclubs, non-places that do not display any regionally specific markings. In both versions, the majority of the plot takes place on the Yugoslavian coast near Dubrovnik, which is introduced in sweeping panoramic shots. This stands in stark contrast to Prague/Vienna, whose cityscapes are not shown at all. It is the shared Habsburg legacy that accounts for this Prague/Vienna dichotomy and facilitates the switch between the two. This is most obvious in those MLVs that are set in “old Austria,” at a time when Prague and Vienna shared many of the same cultural impulses under the unifying aegis of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Given the prominent role that the imperial army played in social life and the power it had in fostering a unified (military) identity among the various cultures of the empire, it is no surprise that some of the most successful MLV pairs, such as *Pobočník jeho výsostil Adjutant seiner Hoheit* capitalized on this particular aspect of shared history.

Even before the introduction of sound, such “versioning” was a well-established and common practice for preparing export products aimed at foreign audiences. In the Central European context, the national or regional character of the film could be altered quite easily, and could often be accomplished with the insertion of brief exterior scenes featuring recognizable landmarks filmed on location. For example, the Czechoslovak silent film *Veterán Votruba*

(Veteran Votruba, 1928, called *Spitzenhöschen und Schusterpech* in German) was marketed as a “Viennese story” in Austria and a “Prague story” in Czechoslovakia. The geographic contextualization of those copies intended for circulation in Czechoslovakia was accomplished by the simple insertion of a sequence filmed on location in Prague depicting veterans marching across the famous Charles Bridge.²⁴⁸ In such cases, the localization of the diegesis was solidified by means of location shooting. This localization process is utilized most powerfully when the film includes images of well-known sights specific to the setting (e.g., the Charles Bridge). If these limiting images of location-specific sites are left out of the film, however, much of the Prague cityscape could easily substitute for Vienna. Indeed, due to similarities in architectural style and city planning, Prague and Vienna share many of the same visual characteristics, allowing them to be easily substituted for each other on film.²⁴⁹ As pointed out above, though, the specificity of place is not always visually realized (through the inclusion of recognizable sights) and is merely suggested by verbal clues (e.g., dialogue, titles, etc.). Even if the city are not visually recognizable, the narrative localization of place is employed as a strategy to increasing the viewers’ emotional investment in the film’s linguistically-defined space, thereby creating a stronger connection with the national-cultural target audience

Dual Interpretations of Place

²⁴⁸ See *Ceský hraný film vol.1*, entry #348. Also note that this film deals with the experience of World War I, when Czechs and Austrians still fought side by side in the imperial military. (See my earlier comments in this section about the importance of the military as a tool of unification in Austria-Hungary.)

²⁴⁹ This is a similar phenomenon to Hollywood’s utilization of Toronto as a substitute for a number of visually similar US urban spaces, e.g., New York in *Three Men and a Baby*, Boston in *Good Will Hunting*, and Chicago in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. In each of these examples, the imagined place of action is an integral part of the narrative and several “montage inserts” of recognizable sights from those cities, whereas the majority of the location shooting features non-descript sites in Toronto.

The fourth strategy sets the action of both versions in exactly the same geographic place. A notable example of this mode occurs in the MLV pair *Tisíc za jednu noc/Tausend für eine Nacht* (1932).²⁵⁰ Although each version begins in a different imagined urban setting in a fashion analogous to that just described, the majority of the action for both versions is set in the very same geographic places, even though the filmic spaces have strictly diverging cultural-linguistic coding. The Czech version, *Tisíc za jednu noc*, begins in Prague and presents easily identifiable images of the city. The opening scenes present a factory owner who is planning a trip to the western Bohemian spa town of Mariánské lázně, where he hopes to marry his daughter to a rich suitor. After this brief introduction, the main action of the film quickly moves on to the spa town itself. Upon the arrival of the father and daughter in the town, the viewer is presented with a sign announcing “Mariánské lázně,” reinforcing the specificity of the filmic place. The location is, therefore, not only invoked verbally, but also shown visually. This geographically specific place is depicted as a linguistically-culturally homogenous filmic space: all characters speak exclusively Czech and all signs, posters, etc. are in Czech exclusively. An analogous process can be traced in the German version, with notably different cultural coding. The opening sequence of *Tausend für eine Nacht* is overtly set in Berlin and a series of location establishing shots present well-known images of *Friedrichstraße* and other sites in the city. As with its Czech counterpart, the German version situates the majority of the action in the very same Bohemian spa town, albeit under the label “Marienbad,” the German variant of the town name. This shift in naming is not merely an example of invoking the German variant in casual conversation—the change

²⁵⁰ The films were based on the popular stage comedy *Stöpsel* written by Franz Arnold and Ernst Bach. The German version was one of the few sound films made by famous German film pioneer Max Mack. It was, in fact, the Jewish director’s last “German” film before he was forced out of Central Europe. After leaving Germany, Mack spent some time in Prague before eventually emigrating to London.

applies to the physical location itself. As the father and daughter (and the spectator with them) arrive there, the sign announcing the town is also written “Marienbad.” In this moment, the film moves beyond the practice of maintaining linguistic unity by suggesting that the town’s official signage is itself written in German. Many of the images of the city are exactly the same as in the Czech versions, with the exception that here (in Marienbad) all public signs and posters are in German and all characters speak German (and without a Czech accent).²⁵¹ In a manner reminiscent of Kisch’s depiction of Prague, the Czech version presents the spa town as purely “Czech,” while the German film renders it as purely “German.”

This process of “signposting” in the German version would be analogous to a Hollywood movie transporting the narrative to the German city of Köln, and presenting an official-looking local sign proclaiming “Cologne” (the common English variant of the city’s name). Although this part of the country still had a significant ethnic German population, within the political reality of contemporary Czechoslovakia, there would be no official signs written in German. At the same time, however, the average viewer (particularly in the 1930s) is not distracted by such factual inaccuracies due to the suspension of disbelief that accompanies film spectatorship. After all, the depiction of such a sign lays no claim to document actuality and is employed rather as a simple narrative orientation device. However, the Mariánské lázně/Marienbad dichotomy described here has quite significant political and cultural ramifications. The seemingly innocent linguistic alteration of signs in *Tausend für eine Nacht* bore potentially profound meaning for German-speakers in Czechoslovakia. As Gary Cohen has demonstrated, the language of public signage in Bohemia was a primary issue of contention between Czech and German populations.

²⁵¹ This seemingly innocent alteration would have had profound meaning to German-speakers in Czechoslovakia. The 1892 decision to replace all bilingual signs in Prague with exclusively Czech ones was a particularly contentious issue for the German population. See Cohen 1-2.

The 1892 decision to replace all bilingual signs in Prague with exclusively Czech ones was a particularly troubling moment for the city's German community that signaled a serious blow to the prospects for their "ethnic survival" (see Cohen 1-2).

I do not suggest that the insertion of the "Marienbad" label in *Tausend für eine Nacht* represents a symbolic staking of nationalistic territorial claims on the part of the filmmakers. Indeed, if this were the case, one would expect the German sign to occur in the Czech version as well (or at least that the Czech sign "Marianské lázně" would not feature so prominently). Furthermore, the typical German spectator likely did not even take any special note of the German name on the sign. Nevertheless, I do suggest that the effect would have been quite different if the filmmakers had chosen to use the Czech name of the town on the sign in the German version. If this had been the case, the German viewer is more likely to have taken notice—the invocation of the Czech name could have very well been interpreted as a political statement, as an affront to the town German cultural heritage. By contrast, *Tausend für eine Nacht* subtly (even subconsciously) reasserts for its German audience the legitimacy of German signposting within Bohemia.

In a certain sense, neither language versions presents images of the spa town that are in accordance with their contemporary actuality. Even though after 1918 the town (now officially named Marianské lázně) belonged to the Czechoslovak state, it maintained its specifically (and historically) "German" character. In this sense, the viewer could expect to see a certain level of linguistic and cultural plurality, a certain multicultural atmosphere, in this filmic account of the town. However, both versions carefully exclude all aspects of Marianské lázně/Marienbad that might evoke a sense of spatial "foreignness" to their respective imagined audience.

The Shifting Spaces of Heimat

Building on the example of Mariánské lázně/Marienbad in *Tisíc za jednu noc/Tausend für eine Nacht*, I would like to focus more specifically on the ethno-national coding of space and place in those MLV films that depict rural Bohemia. The two MLV pair I discuss, *V cizím revíru/Der Wilderer von Egerland* (Poaching on Another's Patch, 1934) and *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald*, both attempt to evoke sentiments of regional-national belonging within their respective audiences. What makes these films so compelling is the fact that they share a surprising number of traits with what would later become codified as the *Heimatfilm* genre, yet each MLV pair invokes the exact same places of home as their foreign-language counterpart.

Johannes von Moltke has described how the idea of Heimat developed as a “spatial concept that would mediate between the regional and the national” (*No Place Like Home* 9). Building on the research of Celia Applegate, he argues: “Heimat functioned as a galvanizing notion that reconciled a local world with the larger, more impersonal, national sphere” (*No Place Like Home* 9). With the MLV films discussed below, the local (place) is fixed for both versions, while the national (space) is articulated as a factor of the target linguistic-cultural viewing community.

Moltke has illustrated how Heimat films of the 1930s were easily adapted to the ideological project of Fascism. Citing one reviewer from the period, he points out that the nationalist program ascribed a “mission” to German sound film: “to achieve the trinity of ‘German man [and] German song in the German landscape’” (*No Place Like Home* 29). This concept of wholeness that is a key tenet of the genre becomes problematic in the MLV pairs described here, since both the German and Czech versions depict the same places of the Sudetenland, although each imagines this territory as part of a different overarching national body. The comparative

analysis of these versions thus exposes the unity of man-song-land that Moltke describes as an artificial and instable construct rather than a fixed, eternal relationship as the ideology of Heimat imagines.

These films raise a number of questions about the relationship between cultural-national connotations of Heimat and geographic place.²⁵² For example, how can one physical setting be simultaneously imagined as a “home” for two distinct ethnic groups? What audio-visual elements are necessary to effectively communicate the desired sense of place that is crucial for the concept of Heimat? How exactly do Heimat-films tap into existing national sentiment and to what extent do they perpetuate or even actively create such sentiment in their viewers? Some have argued that although *Der Wilderer von Egerland* displays the typical characteristics the *Heimatfilm* genre, it nevertheless lacks the overbearing *Blut-und-Boden* ideology common to the Reich German films of this type from the same period (see Loacker and Prucha 197-198). However, just because the film does not overtly communicate nationalist sentiment does not mean that it completely lacks ideological overtones. Indeed, as outlined above, at the time these films were made, the depiction of either ethnic culture in these hotly contested territories (particularly to the exclusion of the other group) was inevitably part of the larger political-ideological debate, whether this was the intention or not.

²⁵² Given that the Heimat genre is generally thought of as a quintessentially German or Austrian phenomenon, it might strike one unfamiliar with Central European film history as odd to find that such films were also made in Czechoslovakia. Such folk-themed films, however, were not at all unusual within Czechoslovakian film culture of that time, which saw a number of popular pictures of peasant life such as *Řeka* (*The River*, 1933), and *Maryša* (1935), both of which were successful international exports. Indeed, it is quite possible that the great success of *Řeka* in Germany, where it premiered in May 1934 under the title *Junge Liebe* (Young love), supplied the primary impetus for the Czech industry to invest in German language versions of such folk-themed films. *Der Wilderer von Egerland* was made in the latter part of same year, while *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* was produced the next year (yet did not premiere in Germany and Austria until 1936). See Klaus, 053.35; 127.35.

With their evocations of Heimat, the German language versions discussed here imagine parts of the Bohemian territory as (still) belonging to the broadly conceived German nation. Yet, it must also be kept in mind that the Czech-language versions operate within precisely the same ideological frameworks, except oriented towards the Czech nation. Ultimately, these film pairs demonstrate the high degree of ambiguity and mutability that the Bohemian countryside possessed in matters of national identity well into the 1930s when these films were made. These Heimat-oriented MLVs offer compelling evidence of the cinema's power to (re-)imagine territory (in this case the Bohemian and Moravian landscape) and its inhabitants as part of a larger "homeland."

As previously mentioned, each language version in the MLV pairs I highlight here set their action in the same general place: in the heart of the so-called Sudetenland. Both *V cizím revíru* and *Der Wilderer vom Egerland* (1934) take place in an unnamed village and its surrounding woodlands located somewhere in the region known as Egerland in German, or Chebsko in Czech. The area takes its name from the historic town of Eger/Cheb, which is situated near the historic Bohemian-Bavarian border in close proximity to the famous spa towns of Karlsbad/Karlovy Vary, Marienbad/Marianské lázně, and Franzensbad/Františkové lázně. This was, in fact, one of the most Nazi-sympathetic regions of the Sudetenland, a place where Hitler's dream of a Greater German nation enjoyed widespread acceptance. Likewise, both versions of the *Jana* film are situated in a region of Czechoslovakia where German culture had a long and vibrant tradition: the mountainous Böhmerwald/Šumava region (Bohemian Forest in English) on the northeastern edge of the triple-border between Bohemia, Bavaria, and Austria. The action of both of these MLV projects are thus situated in areas of Czechoslovakia distinguished by a high degree of cultural overlap and ethnic conflict. At the time when the films

were made, the national character of this region was a matter of intense international debate with Nazi Germany demanding that the Egerland, the Bohemian Forest, and the rest of the so-called Sudetenland be “reinstated” to the German Empire on the basis of the Germanic nature of the land. In 1938, a few short years after these films played in theaters, the territory they depicted changed political hands as part of the infamous Munich Agreement: under international pressure Czechoslovakia was compelled to cede the Sudetenland to Germany.

In each case, the specificity of place is foregrounded in the titles of the German versions. While the Czech title *V cizím revíru* (literally, ‘In a foreign district’) makes reference to an unnamed place, whose geographic specificity only comes out within the filmic narrative, the German title indiscreetly proclaims the Egerland as the place of action. Whereas the single-worded Czech title *Jana* focuses solely on the lead character, the German title broadens its scope to include the geography of the setting with the addendum *das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (‘the girl from the Bohemian Forest’). This phenomenon is different from the titular labeling of place described above with regard to *V tom domečku pod Emauzy/Das Glück von Grinzing* in two significant ways. First, with that MLV pair, the place of each version shifted geographical coordinates in harmony with the linguistic space (from Prague in the Czech version to Vienna in the German film), whereas the setting of the films described here remains consistent from one version to the next. Second, in the previous example, the specificity of place is similarly highlighted in the title of each version, while in these cases, place is mentioned exclusively in the German versions. Consequently, place would seem to play a much more important role in the German films, while it is deemphasized in the Czech films. This foregrounding of place is all the more noteworthy given the ethnic disputes involving this territory at the time. The decision to tell the stories of German-speaking figures living within the borders of Czechoslovakia is a bold

enough political move, to further use this setting as a primary marketing tool (by declaring it in the title) smacks of blatant pandering to German nationalist sentiment.

Although the titles of the German versions are more explicit about their preoccupation with place, in terms of overall content the Czech versions are just as overt in their Heimat-oriented mode of address. In keeping with the *Heimatfilm* genre's promotion of regional specificities, both versions place great emphasis on the place of the action and highlight the isomorphism between the onscreen images and the geographic places they represent. In *V cizím revíru/Der Wilderer vom Egerland* for example, the opening credits of each film indicate (in their respective language) that location shooting occurred in the spa town Karlovy Vary/Karlsbad and in the surrounding area. (This introductory denotation of this spa town parallels the phenomenon described earlier with regard to Marienbad/Mariánské Lázně in *Tisíc za jednu noc/Tausend für eine Nacht*.) Similarly, the press material for *Jana* and *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* highlight the shooting locations in the rural areas of the Bohemian Forest. The films in both languages take equal advantage of location shooting to present "authentic" images from the places they describe; these rural Bohemian settings lent themselves to this double-utilization of place in a way that was inconceivable for Prague's urban spaces, which were generally promoted in the Czech versions only.

In terms of visual image and sound, all of these films are consistent in their mobilization of sound and image to emphasize the unity of man-song-land. These MLVs prominently feature iconography typical to the genre such as extensive panning shots of mountainous and forested landscapes, peasants in folk dress, isolated hunting lodges, etc. (fig. 19). Both versions remarkably employ nearly identical images to arouse sentimental feelings of Heimat from their respective, linguistically-defined audiences. The duplication of visual effects from one version to



Figure 19. The interchangeable iconography of Heimat in *V cizím revíru* and *Der Wilderer vom Egerland* (1934), used to depict the so-called Sudetenland. [Source: NFA.]

the other hints at a high level of cultural crossover, since the very same architecture, furniture, costumes, sometimes even human bodies can be employed to depict the life of two distinct imagined communities. In other words, the majority of the mise-en-scene (except for written signs) can be equally interpreted as either “German” or “Czech” and it is the linguistic context alone that aligns these objects, people, and spaces with any particular ethno-national affinity. The primary distinguishing elements between these parallel visions of Heimat are rooted in language, particularly the aural quality of the words intoned by the actors, which become even more powerful when sung to the strains of folk songs. Spoken or sung dialogue together with the occasional written words or framing titles are mobilized to superimpose a sense of ethnically-defined place onto images of space that are otherwise nationally ambiguous. Thus, the distinctions these two visions of Heimat are marked first and foremost by sound, that is by spoken language and music.

Both versions of these two MLV pairs employ nearly identical images to arouse sentimental feelings of Heimat (or *domov* in Czech) in their respective, linguistically-defined audiences. In the case of *V cizím revíru*/*Der Wilderer vom Egerland*, the duplication even extends to the physical presence of the characters: in a move that is extremely rare in the world of MLV films, the very same cast performs both versions. All of the main actors hailed from Bohemia and Moravia and commanded a degree of bilingualism that enabled them to acceptably voice their roles in German as well as Czech.²⁵³ To mask their Czech background, the opening credits of *Der Wilderer vom Egerland* introduced the actors under Germanized versions of their names, for example Markéta Krausová was presented as “Margarethe Kraus” and František Šlegel became “Franz Schleger.” Only the ethnically ambiguous name Oskar Marion appeared in the same form in both versions. The duplication of visual, behavioral, and cultural effects between the two versions of *Der Wilderer vom Egerland*/*V cizím revíru* exposes the shared culture between these two language groups or at least a high degree of cultural overlap. If the very same architecture, furniture, costumes, even human bodies can be employed to depict the life of two distinct imagined communities, then the only essential distinction between them is the sound of the words they speak. Such implicit recognition of hybridity is not in line with the ideals of ethnic purity that lies at the root of nationalist thought. In this regard, these films taken together suggest a perception of Czechoslovak culture that stands in contrast to that promoted by nationalist factions on both sides that stressed Czech-German ethnic difference.

²⁵³ Although the dialogue of a few supporting Czech actors was overdubbed in *Der Wilderer vom Egerland*, all of the major performers spoke their lines in German.

National integrity in the production of Heimat-culture was a primary concern in the discussions surrounding the MLV pair *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (1935).²⁵⁴ The reception of both versions on either side of the Czechoslovak/German border demonstrates the high ethno-nationalist stakes of a Heimat-themed film set in the Sudetenland in the years leading up to the Munich Pact. Although each group initially welcomed their language version for its portrayal of the nation's practices in a localized folk milieu, both Czechs and Germans ultimately rejected the films as inauthentic and disingenuous bearers of the national culture. The case of these films highlights the unstable tension between local and global inherent in MLV production and the untenable position that these films often occupied.

Although the only major distinction between the two versions is the language, both were touted as iconic exemplars of the folk heritage in the respective national cultures. The Czech version was marketed as a “new (Czech) Bohemian folk film” (*nový český lidový film*)²⁵⁵ that promised a genuine portrait of regional culture; meanwhile, the Germany version was promoted in the Reich as an authentic picture of life in the Sudetenland (fig. 20). Although the story they tell is more or less the same, the ethno-national worlds that they depict are mutually exclusive, or at least diametrically opposed. Those who envision the Sudeten territory as part of a German Heimat would never concede any Czech claims to the land, and vice-versa. The very fact that this story was made for two opposing national audiences bears testimony to the filmmakers' overall ambivalence to the very ideals of Heimat espoused in both films. In casting one geopolitical place as a dual Heimat, director Robert Land and his producers engage in game of

²⁵⁴ I present a longer discussion of this MLV pair and the nationalistically charged reactions to them in Johnson “Čí je to Heimat?”

²⁵⁵ Jana. Advertisement. *Večerní české slovo* 27.233 (11.10.1935): 3.

cultural masquerade that undermines the very foundations of Heimat ideology, which are rooted in the immutable connection between national culture and the land.

Since both versions were laden with such high cultural expectations, the authenticity of how they represented folk culture was a prime concern among the more nationalist-minded spectators in both national camps. The Czech version can be understood as reasserting the Czechoslovak claim to this land with its straightforward presentation of Slavic culture's deep roots in the region. Inversely, by mapping Heimat onto this Sudeten space, the German version overcomes the realignment of borders created after WWI and allegedly provides a space for German voices to resound from this "lost territory."

Meißner-Film
Prag II., Václavské nám. 30
Telefon Nr. 302.22, 270.32

JANA
das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald
Regie: Dr. Emil Synek
Soeben fertiggestellt!

◆ Ein Film aus dem sudetendeutschen Volksleben mit seinen Heimatliedern, Trachten und Gebräuchen

◆ Das große Ereignis der neuen Saison!

◆

Uraufführung im Herbst

Meißner-Film, Prag

Besetzung:
Jana . . . Leny Marenbach
Peter . . . Ewald Balsler
Michael . . . Fred Liewehr

Musik: Sudetendeutsche Volkslieder

Přijďte se podívat na premiéru
13771 nového českého lidového filmu:
JANA

V hlavních úlohách:
HELENA BUSCHOVÁ, ZDENĚK ŠTĚPÁNEK,
LADISLAV BOHÁČ, STANISLAV NEUMANN
Hudba: HASLER-SMATEK — Lidové písně
Premiéra ode dneška 11. října v biográfech:
**AERO BAJKAL-BERÁNEK-KAPITOL
LETNÁ-NA KOVÁRNĚ-PERŠTÝN
PILOTŮ-RADIO-ROKOKO-SKAUT
MONJPOL: MEISSNER-FILM PRAHA**

Figure 20. Competing advertisements promote the complementary versions *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (1935) as a depiction of “Sudeten German” or “Czech” culture depending on the target audience. [Sources: *Film-Kurier*, *Večerní české slovo*]

The Bohemian Forest, which provides the setting for both versions of the *Jana* material was home to the great 19th century author Adalbert Stifter, who prominently featured the territory in many of his texts such as the short stories “Granit” and “Der Hochwald.” Stifter’s writing typically incorporates lengthy descriptions of the landscape and employs a contemplative style to explore the topoi of the forest, Heimat, and fate. W. H Auden described Stifter’s famous story “Bergkristall” as “a quiet and beautiful parable about the relation of people to places, of man to nature” (254). Stifter’s aesthetic meshed quite well with many aspects of National Socialist ideology and provided a strong *völkisch* counterpoint to the “decadent” Jewish literature associated with Prague (Kafka, Brod, Leppin, Perutz, etc.). He thus stood out as one of the most desirable representatives of Bohemian-German culture in the eyes of German-Austrian nationalists. It is not surprising, then, that the producers of *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* attempted to play up the associations with the author as much as possible. In fact, some of the advertising materials for the film (wrongfully) assert that the screenplay is based on a story by Stifter. Although there is no direct connection to any specific work by the author, the influence of Stifter’s Heimat-infused portraits of the Bohemian Forest is evident in the narrative and audio-visual style of this MLV project.

Whereas both versions of the film suggest a profound organic connection between its characters and the Bohemian land they inhabit, in the case of the German version, this relationship is problematic since the film represents a German-speaking minority situated within the borders of Czechoslovakia. In other words, this Heimat lies beyond the political borders of Germany as they existed in 1935—it is a territory that has been severed from the German national body politically, but not spiritually. Much of the early discourse about *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* in the Reich imagines the film as a representative of “Sudeten

German” culture and thus as an important part of the larger German national-socialist project. Several months prior to its German premiere, the Reich’s leading trade journal *Film-Kurier* trumpeted the ethnographic integrity of the German homeland depicted in what it labeled “a Sudeten German film,” declaring: “The film presents colorful images of Sudeten German customs, dances, and costumes and employs familiar Bohemian Heimat songs.”²⁵⁶ The article sees *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* as providing expression to a “lost” branch of German culture that is gradually losing its voice. This point of view was made even more explicitly by the *Hannoverscher Anzeiger* in its assessment of the film, which “leads us into the wonderful landscape scenery of the deep, dark Bohemian Forest, to a people that lives beyond the borders of the Reich, but is nevertheless as German as we are in its lifestyle and song, and in its tradition and ancestral love for the Heimat.”²⁵⁷ These authors implicitly understood *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* as a prime exponent of the “Heim ins Reich” project that dominated Nazi discourse of the mid-1930s.

In the eyes and ears of many reviewers within the Reich, the soundtrack of *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* had a privileged role in communicating the imagined Sudeten German culture. Together with the spoken word, music bore significant cultural weight in fulfilling the film’s purported mission. On the occasion of the German premiere in Hamburg, an advertisement promised: “a film about a young girl’s fateful journey, framed by glorious landscapes and immortal Heimat songs,” thereby directly evoking the trinity of man-song-land understood as inherent to the Heimat project.²⁵⁸ Many reports on the film particularly emphasized the crucial role of music in expressing the sentiment of this “German home.” In its

²⁵⁶ “Ein sudetendeutscher Film,” *Film-Kurier* 17.177 (1.8.1935): 1.

²⁵⁷ Qtd. in “Neue glänzende Pressestimmen über Jana,” *Film-Kurier* 18.65 (17.3.1936): 4.

²⁵⁸ “Jana – Das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald, ein Frauenschicksal,” 7.

exuberance over what it sees as a “Sudeten German” film, the *Film-Kurier* review on the occasion of the film’s German premiere remarked: “Notably, the film foregrounds the music, which enables old German folk songs (*Volkslieder*) with choir and orchestra to ring out through the Bohemian Forest.”²⁵⁹ Another review claims: “the numerous German folk songs from the Bohemian forest go straight to one’s heart.”²⁶⁰ The most pointed staging of this particular Heimat occurs when the title character Jana stares longingly at the mountainous landscape outside her window and sings the words of the “Böhmerwaldlied” (Song of the Bohemian Forest): “Dort tief im Böhmerwald, dort liegt mein Heimatort” (There deep in the Bohemian Woods, there lies my home) (fig. 21 illustrates the analogous scene from the Czech version).²⁶¹ The program *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* for the film list includes the texts of several other famous Heimat songs whose melodies ostensibly feature on the soundtrack (fig. 21).²⁶² The constant reiteration of the Böhmerwaldlied and other Heimat songs drives home the message that the village and the surrounding lands are spiritually linked to the larger German Heimat even if officially within the boundaries of a Slav-dominated state. The Böhmerwaldlied is particularly important in this sense since it is autochthonous to the Sudetenland, a bearer of culture indigenous to this territory. For the nationalist-minded German viewer, this musical piece in particular works to reinforce the cultural legitimacy of the Germans who inhabit these Bohemian spaces.

²⁵⁹ “‘Jana’ / In der Kurbel” 3.

²⁶⁰ *Münchener Zeitung*, qtd. in “Neue glänzende Pressestimmen über Jana” 4.

²⁶¹ Andreas Hartauer (1839-1915) wrote this well-known Heimat song about the territory of his youth after he had moved to Austria as an adult. NOTE: the photograph is from the Czech version of the film, but the staging is closely replicated in the German version.

²⁶² The other song texts on the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* are: “Betrogene Liebe,” “Muß i denn zum Städtele ‘naus,” “Soldatenliebe,” “Grüße an die Heimat,” and “Mein stilles Tal.” The text to “Soldatenliebe” offers, for example, the following German-specific cultural kitsch: “Die Vöglein im Walde, die sangen so wunderschön. In der Heimat, in der Heimat, da gibt’s ein Wiedersehen.”

Ultimately, each version became the target of strongly negative reactions from reviewers in their respective national camps who took issue with the integrity of the ethno-national representations presented by the film. Just one week after praising the Sudeten German quality of *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald*, the German *Film-Kurier* launched an attack on the



Figure 21. The title character sings a paean to “homeland” in *Jana* (1936); the German film program for *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (1936) lists the texts of several songs that praise Heimat. [Sources: NFA, *Illustrierter Film-Kurier*]

film after it discovered that “neither the director, nor the authors, nor the music composer are Sudeten Germans, but rather Czechs”²⁶³ and are thus clearly incapable of being “guarantors for a ‘Sudeten German’ film.”²⁶⁴ In Czechoslovakia, there was a similar rejection of the ethnic representations in the Czech version of the film. One reviewer even proclaimed that *Jana* is not a Czech film at all, arguing that: “The spirit of this film is purely Germanic, despite the Czech folk costumes and Slavic music of Karel Hašler and Miloš Smatek. For the people that move around

²⁶³ “Fragliches um *Jana*,” *Film-Kurier* 18.61 (12.3.1936): 3.

²⁶⁴ “Fragliches um *Jana*.” 3.

in these costumes are not Czech people—these are not Czech peasants, these are people from somewhere in northern Germany, judging by their outward appearance and their theatrical diction.”²⁶⁵ Both Czechs and Germans pointed to a lack of ethnic authenticity and blamed “foreign” elements within the production team for this cultural subterfuge.

At the center of critique on both sides was director Robert Land, who in fact embodies the cultural hybridity typical for this part of Central Europe. He was born Robert Liebmann to a German-speaking Jewish family in the Moravian town of Kroměříž, which was probably better known by its German name, Kremsier, when he began life during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As with many filmmakers from this part of the continent (such as Mihály Kertész a.k.a. Michael Curtiz), Land launched his career in the Viennese film industry. In the late 1920s, he began to take on directing projects in Germany, which served as his base of operation until the anti-Jewish measures of the mid-1930s forced him to return to the land of his birth. He thus became curiously identified with the wave of “émigré” filmmakers who entered the Czechoslovak industry after fleeing Germany (and later Austria). In order to avoid the restrictions of the Nürnberg Laws and secure distribution rights in the German Reich, the producers of *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* listed Czech Emil Synek as director. Although Synek wrote the screenplay, it is unlikely that this entirely unknown and untrained individual had any directorial input on the finished film. In a clear attempt to mask his contribution, Land’s name is entirely absent in the production information of the German

²⁶⁵ *Lidové noviny* 43 (11.10.1935) 12. The mismatch between the rural milieu and theatrical speech patterns noted by this Czech critic was also a concern for some German reviewers, who noted for example: “The dialogues [...] present a fundamental break in the film’s line: on the one side, a strong emphasis on the attachment to the land [*Erdgebundenheit*] and then theater babble [*Theatergeschwätz*]. In terms of form, the words spoken here have nothing in common with peasant folk.” H v. D [?] “‘La Jana’ [sic!] / In der Kurbel,” *8-Uhr Abendblatt* 88.54 (4 March 1936) 8.

version. By contrast, Land was indicated as co-director (with Synek) of the Czech version. The outright rejection of *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* by *Film-Kurier* was founded primarily on Land's "émigré" status. The discovery that this Moravian Jew was involved in the production not only discredited the cultural integrity of these images of Sudeten German life, but also provided legal grounds for prohibiting the film within the Reich. At the same time, Land's longtime involvement with the Austrian and German industries was used to explain the shortcomings of the Czech version in depicting Bohemian country life. Both sides thus rejected Land, and by extension his film, as too "foreign" to reliably portray the national culture. Land failed to live up to the ethnic criteria expected by both nations: his German-speaking background excluded him from the Czech nation, while his Jewish-Moravian heritage barred him from the Reich. The case of Land and of *Jana/Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* illustrates the limited space for cultural hybridity in the nationally charged political environment of the mid-1930s. Both the individual Land and this MLV pair of films stand as examples of the Czech-German cultural overlap in this region, and precisely for this reason both were rejected for a lack of ethnic "purity."

On both sides of the Czech/German ethno-cultural divide, critics warned against what they perceived "inauthenticity" in the representation of national culture. In the end, both language versions failed to achieve the desired harmony between man, song, and land in the eyes and ears of their respective national target audiences. Both German and Czech critics consistently indicate the use of sound as a fundamental shortcoming of the films and a prime indicator of the disingenuous nature of their attempts at cultural representation. According to this line of criticism, by disrupting the unity of sound, image, and imagined space, the films fail to realize the promise of sound film and thereby violate the good faith of the film-going public. To

a certain extent, then, the disappointment in the “authenticity” of the *Jana* films can be understood as a manifestation of the unease that accompanied the spectator’s renegotiated relationship to the screen world with the introduction of sound cinema. More specifically, the criticism of sound in these films echoes early complaints against the perceptual incongruity between voice and body resulting from the process of post-synchronic dubbing. According to Vincendeau, “Dubbing upset the feeling of unity, of plentitude, of the character, and thus the spectator position. Moreover, it produced in the contemporary audience a feeling of being duped” (33). It was just such feeling of being duped that compelled German and Czech critics alike to reject the inauthentic sounds and images of Heimat in *Jana* and *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald*. For the most part nationalist-charged rejections of the film are contingent upon the viewer’s awareness of the international nature of its production. Indeed, such interstitial objects seem by their very nature doomed to fail in the project of successfully articulating a homogenous conception of Heimat.

In keeping with the conventions of the *Heimatfilm* genre, *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* contrasts the idyllic landscape of the countryside with the modernity of the city. In the case of the German version, the rural/urban contrast is further laden ethno-cultural overtones: the countryside here is imagined as purely German, whereas the urban spaces bear Czech cultural markings. The Czech presence in this otherwise German space becomes visible as soon as the action leaves the enclave of the rural village. When Jana’s initial love interest Michael boards a train for a Prague, where he will fulfill his military duty, he already enters into a space of linguistic hybridity. As Michael converses in German with his comrade on the train, the instructions for the compartment’s temperature controls, written in Czech, linger in the background (fig. 22). This autographic replication of mise-en-scene from the Czech version

creates a space of ethno-linguistic tension that does not exist in the Czech film, in which the written text is in harmony with the spoken dialogue (fig. 22). This pattern persists throughout the sequences set in Prague. In contrast to the culturally pure space of the rural village, Prague appears as a site of Czech-German hybridity, thereby introducing an uncommon element of dissonance and exposing cracks in the façade of the imaginary ideal of ethnic homogeneity in Bohemia.



Figure 22. Above: Linguistic homogeneity between Czech speakers and Czech written language is maintained in *Jana*. Below: Signs of hybridity with German-speaking figures in a space linguistically marked as Czech in *Jana*, *das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald*. [Source: NFA.]

An analogous cultural split between Prague and the Bohemian periphery is enacted in a short passage toward the end of *Tausend für eine Nacht*, when the female protagonist and her lover travel to capital city. As the couple arrives in the Prague, the film presents a montage of busy urban images (in a sequence visually identical to its counterpart in the Czech version). In this tour of the city, the viewer catches sight of numerous advertisements and street signs, all of which are exclusively in Czech, such as *nábytek* (furniture), *řeznictví* (butcher), and even *plzeňský prazdroj* (the Czech translation of the famous beer more commonly known worldwide by its German name, *Pilsner Urquell*). The linguistic signs in these urban spaces mark Prague as distinctly foreign to the culturally pure spaces of Marienbad, whose public signs were written

exclusively in German. The cultural distinction between these two spaces is most profound when a board prominently displaying the word “Přaha” appears towards the beginning of the montage sequence that introduces the urban setting. This sign bearing the Czech name of the city sets up a striking counterpart to the German sign “Marienbad” announcing the spa town earlier in the film.²⁶⁶ This linguistic dissonance is not present in the Czech version, in which all examples of written language harmonize with the spoken dialogue.

Throughout this sequence, the visual and aural wonders of the Golden City completely envelope the viewer in a touristic spectacle. In addition to the written signs, all of Prague’s most iconic sights provide the backdrop for our introduction to the famed “golden city”: the Vltava river (die Moldau), Karlův most (die Karlsbrücke, the Charles Bridge), Staroměstské náměstí (der Altstädterring, Old Town Square) etc. The sequence is underscored with clichéd strains of Bedřich Smetana’s symphonic poem *Vltava* (die Moldau) from his *Má vlast* (Meine Heimat, My Fatherland) cycle, further intensifying the touristic mode. This portion of the film enacts an excursion into exotic territory for the protagonists and we the viewers are invited to partake in their journey of discovery. This touristic, “outsider” view of Prague is completely lacking in the Czech version of the film, in which Prague was the starting point of the action prior to the journey to the spa town. Since the main female character of the Czech version actually resides in Prague, this sequence later in the film represents a return to a well-known location, indeed a sort of homecoming, as opposed to a trip into a foreign, exotic space, which is the case for the protagonist of the German version. For this girl from Berlin, who provides a frame of identification to the German viewer, the abundance of Czech street signs and other signifiers of

²⁶⁶ For an overview of Czech-German sign politics around the turn of the century, see Cohen 1-2 (as indicated earlier in note 45 in the current chapter).

Czechness emphasize the exotic status of the Prague milieu, in contrast to the pure German atmosphere that permeates Marienbad.

With the inclusion of the brief, yet remarkable sequence, the German film *Tausend für eine Nacht* stands as one of the few examples of cultural mixing to be found in the Czech-German MLVs. Ultimately, though, this Prague is not as cultural-linguistically homogenous as it might first appear. Despite the excess of Czech signifiers that introduce the city, the protagonists of the German version are able to effortlessly communicate with the local Prague population, who speak the same more or less accent-free German as the inhabitants of Marienbad. This is an urban space of competing ethnic signifiers, where Czech public signs co-exist with German-speaking café staff. By contrast, the Prague of *Tisíc za jednu noc* is purely Czech, in terms of both signs and spoken language. The Czech film thus imagines Praha and Mariánské lázně as equal parts of a unified Czech space. The cultural constellation is quite different in the German film, which imagines Marienbad as culturally unified with Berlin, but posits Praha as a mixture of German and Czech influences. This phenomenon is analogous with the Prague sequences of the *Jana* films as well. Whereas the settings of the Czech versions are linguistically and culturally homogenous, the German versions present a unique glimpse of a polyglot, ethnically hybrid Bohemian space.

These rare images of Prague invite us to consider: Were these hybrid depictions of Prague in German versions a conscious choice on the part of the filmmakers, or was it rather the result of a cost-cutting decision to autographically recycle the same footage of urban street life without regard to the resulting dissonance between spoken German and the Czech street signs? Due to the absence of spoken Czech and the fact that ethnic conflict is not otherwise thematized in the films, we are inclined to presume the second possibility. By contrast, the 1942 film *Die*

goldene Stadt (*The Golden City*) supplants images of written Czech are supplemented with smatterings of Czech in the predominantly German dialogue in order to underpin Prague's hybrid nature. Audio and visual cultural signifiers are carefully orchestrated to communicate the uncanny, interstitial character of the city, which was one of the film's key thematic elements.²⁶⁷ Czech-German cultural dissonance plays no role in any other parts of *Tausend für eine Nacht* or *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald*, though. In these cases, the images of Czech signs appear as a matter of expediency and the resulting suggestion of cultural-linguistic hybridity merely an unintentional byproduct that only draws the attention of the most discerning of viewers or of academics such as myself.

Even if these effects were created “on accident,” the images of Prague in these German versions could be viewed as some of the most “realistic” depictions of Czechoslovakia in films of the period, in terms of the way they relate to contemporary geo-political actuality. In a certain sense, the films subtly hint at the cultural divisions that marked the geography of Czechoslovakia in the mid-1930s. Although German culture in Prague had by the time of filming become almost entirely eclipsed by the Czech majority, Marienbad and other towns in the periphery known as the Sudetenland retained their historical roles as bastions of German-Bohemian cultural identity. Regardless of the country of origin or linguistic context, films of the 1930s consistently ignore or actively eschew the high degree of cultural hybridity in Prague and elsewhere in Bohemia. This is particularly true for Multiple Language Versions. Although a number of postwar films integrated Prague's prewar multicultural, hybrid status as a key element of the filmic diegesis (e.g., *Das Haus in der Karpfengasse* [The House in Carp Lane, 1965], *Der Mädchenkrieg* [Maiden's War, 1977]), this view of the city (and of Bohemia more generally) was extremely

²⁶⁷ For further examination of the depiction of Prague in *Die goldene Stadt*, see chapter 6 of this dissertation.

rare for prior to 1945. The only prominent example from German cinema to the contrary is *Die goldene Stadt* (The Golden City, 1942).

There is only one example of a MLV pair that utilizes Prague as the central setting for both versions. The city appears as the primary place of action for *Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* just as it does for its Czech counterpart *Afera plukovníka Redla* (1931). In a certain sense, it can be said that the German version of the film “works” as a believable diegetic space since it is set in the period prior to World War I: that is, in a time when Prague still belonged to Austria and German remained a common public language. Indeed, since the intrigue occurs among the high-ranking members of the Habsburg military apparatus, whose principle language of communication was German, the spoken German dialogue is perhaps more true to the historical record than the spoken Czech heard in the other version. *Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* is a unique exception to the rule, since Prague rarely appeared as a setting for German space in the language versions and when it did, it subtly introduced an unwanted level of ethno-linguistic heterogeneity to the diegesis. In the case of the *Redl* films, the Prague setting occurs as a factor of necessity, since the historical Alfred Redl was in fact captured and charged with espionage while serving in Prague as a Chief of the General Staff for the Austro-Hungarian military. It was then through the German-language reportage of Prague-native Egon Erwin Kisch that the Redl affair reached a broader audience.

Conclusion

In the majority of cases, the individual MLVs imagined linguistically and culturally homogeneous spaces. There are very few examples in which Czech and German influences mingle. In this, they are reminiscent of Kisch’s account of Prague as strictly divided between two

ethnic of space. His description of the Bohemian capital as two cities existing side by side, thus provides a useful allegory for thinking about the processes at work in the production of Czech-German MLVs. By categorically excluding any suggestion of a multi-linguistic, heteroglossic space, both linguistically homogenous visions of Bohemia presented only partial pictures of contemporary conditions in the region. A few notable exceptions to this general rule are *Jana*, *das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* (German version of *Jana*), *Tausend für eine Nacht* (German version of *Thousand for one Night*) and *C. a k. polní maršálek* (Czech version of *The Royal and Imperial Field Marshall*). The latter film incorporates bits of spoken German into the Czech dialogue for humorous effect, whereas in *Jana*, *das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* and *Tausend für eine Nacht*, the Czech language only appears in written form and never rises from the background to play a significant role in the plot. These appearances of a second language are not used to make overt statements about cultural hybridity (as is the case with the Vlasta Burian film). On the contrary, these instances of written Czech are only minor details in the scenes, the result of location shooting with available objects (i.e., markings on the side of a train, public signs, etc) and their appearance is ultimately inconsequential to the main narrative. In the end, it was likely that the casual viewer did not take any conscious notice these examples. Nevertheless, these minor points have profound implications for film scholarship, particularly with regard to our conceptions of national cinema.

Although the creation of monolingual space was common in 1930s cinema and remains the norm today, I argue that the Germanized images of Bohemia presented in certain German versions had significant political implications given the geo-political reality of the period. For example, street signs were contested markers of cultural territory in Bohemia at the end of the 19th and start of the 20th centuries and therefore the use of signs in these films suggest important

cultural-political resonances. Similarly, the ways that the various language versions imagined different Bohemian places in terms of ethnic space must be understood within the context of Czechoslovakian and German cultural politics of the period. Whereas Prague is typically reserved as a Czech space in the cinematic imaginary of Czech-German MLVs, the countryside is more malleable and easily accommodated to both Czech and German cultural contexts. With many of the MLVs set predominantly in the countryside, in a folk milieu, the place depicted on screen is generally the same for both language versions. Whereas the ethnographic or racial character of the imagined space shifts with the spoken language, the geographic coordinates remain constant. The Bohemian and Moravian countryside can be depicted as both Czech and German, or to put it more precisely it can be *either* Czech or German, but not both simultaneously. This points to a fundamental distinction between the imaginary potential of the Bohemian countryside and the capital city Prague.

Tausend für eine Nacht, *Der Wilderer von Egerland*, and *Jana, das Mädchen aus dem Böhmerwald* are all situated in western Bohemia, within the politically charged region known as the Sudetenland, a place that served as an imaginary space of identification for both Germans and Czechs. As seen in these examples, this territory can be easily “converted” to accommodate either national perspective in accordance with the film’s spoken language. Prague did not lend itself so easily to be presented as a purely German space. Even when the spoken language of the German versions never breaks the conceit of an isolated and unified linguistic space, there is never a fully comfortable sense of cultural-spatial wholeness. The films always supply subtle visual reminders that we are in an interstitial, polyglot space.

In the end, none of these films achieved critical or popular success. The very multi-cultural and interstitial mode in which the films were made seems to have disrupted any efforts

to utilize specific regional settings to evoke audience sentiment. This failure to successfully create culturally authentic filmic space was a common shortcoming of the MLV system of production more generally. Speaking about Hollywood's foray into MLV films, Ruth Vasey writes: "Despite the efforts of the studios to produce culturally authentic special-language versions, the films always seemed compromised. They were neither genuinely expressive of a local sentiment nor adequate to the prestige of the Hollywood silent cinema" (96).²⁶⁸ Despite their general lack of popular and critical success, however, the Czechoslovakian-made German versions were undeniably better equipped to speak to German audiences than their Hollywood competitors.

For what the Czechoslovak firms lacked in capital investment and technical expertise, they maintained a crucial advantage over Hollywood and other western film companies: immediate experience with German and Austrian culture. Indeed, given the history of the region, there was an extremely high degree of Czech-German cultural crossover. This environment of hybridity gave rise to a film aesthetic that can in some ways be better described as Central European than as belonging exclusively to one ethno-national body. As we have seen, Austria-Hungary and the shared culture it fostered is a primary point of departure for these MLVs. Although the specific places tend to be ambiguous, the linguistic accents and other cultural signifiers of the German versions regularly position the setting in contemporary Austria, or in the former Habsburg Empire. In those films with a historical setting, e.g., *C. a k. polní maršálek/Der falsche Feldmarschall*, even the Czech version can be described as "Austrian" by portraying life in Bohemia under the Habsburg crown. It should not come as a surprise that the most successful German language versions were those that depicted "Old Austria," most notably those that

²⁶⁸ Qtd. in Wahl, *Das Sprechen des Spielfilms* 66.

starred Vlasta Burian. Whether in a contemporary or historical context, Vienna is the most common urban setting for the German language versions, whereas Prague is naturally the city depicted in almost all Czech versions. The facility with which filmic space could be translated between these two urban centers points to the high degree of cultural affinity between them. As with many of the MLV pairs, only slight changes were required to reframe the filmic space for the anticipated national-linguistic audience. However easy the shift in cultural perspective might have been from the viewpoint of production, the political implications in the eyes of the national viewers were far from simple.

Chapter 5

Prague's Uncanny Places: Reflections of a Divided City

*Man kann Dich, Prag, nicht so mit Worten malen,
wie irgendeine andere, fremde Stadt.
Man muß mit Farben, wie sie Rembrandt hat,
Dein Bildnis auf die glatte Leinwand strahlen.*²⁶⁹
-Leo Hans Mally, *Krönung*, 1943

Midway through the 1942 German film *Die goldene Stadt* (The Golden City), we are confronted with a curious vision of the eponymous metropolis. We see the spires and domes of Prague from one of the most commonly recognizable “touristic views” of the city: looking from the right bank of the Vltava river over the medieval Charles Bridge to the Lesser Side (Malá Strana) with the castle hill looming over it. The scene is admittedly beautiful, yet it is also soaked with grotesque and slightly sinister overtones. Perhaps this can be attributed to the eerie Theremin-like music on the soundtrack, or to the somehow otherworldly light reflecting off the structures and the river. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that this sequence, which might have initially struck the viewer as relating location shots of the Bohemian capital, is a cinematic illusion *par excellence*. For these are images not of the actual brick and stone structures of Prague, but of a carefully detailed model of the golden city (fig. 23). In essence, this sequence establishes an *uncanny* encounter, whereby the artificial is initially taken or rather mistaken for the real. The structures appear “realistic,” to be sure, but the object pictured here is a simulation of the actual city. Think of it as an uncanny *double* of Prague.

By means of crosscut dissolves the images of the city are blended with the face of a young girl whose transfixed gaze conveys a strange sense of fear mixed with fascination. In fact, what we are ostensibly seeing in this sequence is the picture of Prague as it appears in her

²⁶⁹ Mally, *Prag: ein Gedichtbuch* 36.

fantasy. This is Anna Jobst, who lives in a small village in the southern Bohemian highlands in the region known as the Böhmerwald (Bohemian forest, Šumava in Czech), where her father, Melchoir Jobst, owns a larger farming estate. Anna’s father is an ethnic German, who has lived his whole life in the village, while her mother, Marie, was a Czech from Prague who died when Anna was only four. As we learn at the beginning of the film, Anna herself has never been to the birth city of her mother, yet she harbors a profound fascination—indeed an obsession—for Prague.



Figure 23. An uncanny vision of Prague from *The Golden City* (1942). [Source: screen capture from German DVD release]

The shimmering vision anticipates her (and our) eventual journey to the city in the second half of the film. Yet, this is not the only rendering of the cityscape that we as viewers encounter. The film opens with pages of a book titled, appropriately, “Prag: Die goldene Stadt” (Prague: the golden city), which contains a series of watercolor depictions of the city’s most famous sights (fig. 24). Beyond serving to establish Anna’s fascination with Prague, this token of tourism also

responds to the spectator's desire to see beautiful images of the golden city, generating anticipation of the visual spectacle to come. Later, Anna receives a postcard from Prague adorned with a colorful illustration of the Charles Bridge and the castle hill reminiscent of one of these watercolor images (fig. 24). It is, in fact, the contemplation of this postcard that directly triggers the vision described at the opening of this chapter. All these depictions of Prague (the watercolors, the postcard, and the vision) precede the spectacular location shots of the city seen later in the film. As spectators, we first see "Prague" as a fantasy image through Anna's eyes. In fact, many of the scenes filmed on location specifically reproduce these previously viewed depictions. In this way, the film sets these inanimate pictures in motion.



Figure 24. Artistic depictions of “the golden city” anticipate our arrival in Prague in *The Golden City*. [Source: screen capture from German DVD release.]

This instance of female fantasy projection coincides with the very mythological foundation of Prague itself. According to Czech legend, the pagan princess Libuše foresaw the existence of the city—in fact, it was this seer-sorceress who came to the future location of Prague and pointed out to her people where to build the city. In this sense, the physical city itself existed first as a fantasy vision, and more specifically as a female vision. Furthermore, most visual depictions of this founding moment of Czech identity render Libuše's fantasy projection

of Prague's glory in a way that directly evokes the cinematic mode (fig. 25). Anna's vision of Prague rehearses this myth as a "cinematic moment," a visual projection of spectacle and desire.



Figure 25. The mythical Libuše envisions Prague and foretells the founding of the city. [Source: cs.wikipedia.org]

The Golden City, that is, the 1942 projection of wondrous Prague, was one of the most popular films of the Nazi period and some sources even suggest that it was the biggest grossing film ever made under the Third Reich (see Lowry, *Pathos* 57), and it was well received not only within the borders of the Reich, but across Nazi occupied Europe. Part of the film's success surely lied with the popularity of its director and leading star. Veit Harlan was the Third Reich's most preeminent director, who had already made a name for himself with grand melodramatic and propagandistic pictures such as *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süß*, 1940) and *Der grosse König* (*The Great King*, 1942) prior to working on this film. As in most of Harlan's films, his wife, Swedish actress Kristina Söderbaum, one of the Reich's most popular stars, played the lead female role. Another audience draw was, of course, the promise of a melodramatic love story set in romantic, semi-

exotic locales, namely the Bohemian uplands and the so-called “golden city” itself. The exterior shooting, including locations in Prague, was particularly attractive because of the film’s innovative use of color photography. For example, in the sequence shown just shown, the “golden” quality of the city is highlighted to great effect in that all of the façades literally glisten with a golden hue as if they were gilded with the precious metal. In fact, *The Golden City* was somewhat of a sensation in the Third Reich, because it was only the second ever color feature produced in Germany. The promise of viewing Prague’s famous tourist sights in vivid color together with an emotional musical score was perhaps the greatest factor in assuring the film’s widespread success (fig. 26). The spectator’s desire to gaze upon the “city of a hundred spires” in all its vivid glory is echoed on screen by Anna’s fascination with Prague and her obsession with



Figure 26. Anna (in the approaching carriage) moves through the full-color architectural space of Prague. (*The Golden City*) [Source: screen capture from German DVD release.]

visiting it someday. The colorful artistic renderings of the city’s beauty viewed on multiple occasions in the first half of the film underscore her enthusiasm. When Anna eventually sets foot

in Prague midway through the film, she is visibly ecstatic about finally being in the city and this excitement is transferred to the film spectator, who is invited to view Prague vicariously through her eyes.

The fantastic vision of the city described in the opening of this chapter operates within quite a different emotional register from the scenes of Anna gazing in wonder at Prague's famous sights. When she imagines the city reflected on the watery surface, her fascination takes on a sinister aura and she appears magically hypnotized by this apparition of Prague. In retrospect, since this vision can be seen as setting off the chain of tragic events that with Anna's drowning, it is recognized as a harbinger of death. This menacing aura of the city resurfaces in a sequence towards the end of the film, when Anna revisits the Charles Bridge in a moment of utter despair. Here, in contrast to her first enthusiastic glimpse of the bridge and the castle hill, these very same structures seem to become animate and exert an oppressive power upon our distraught heroine. In this, our final exterior view of Prague, the original object of desire (both for Anna and spectator) now acts as a source of terror, fulfilling the premonition of doom hinted at in Anna's vision. This ambiguous perception of the Bohemian capital is not unique. Indeed, Prague consistently inhabits just such an uncanny place in the German cinematic imagination.

The current chapter examines the unique role played by Prague in its two major invocations in Third Reich cinema and traces the foundations for these representations of the city in two key examples from earliest decades of German cinema. Similarly to *The Golden City*, the earlier film *Leinen aus Irland* (*Linen from Ireland*, 1939) presents Prague as a source of danger and a space of confrontation between ethnic Germans and their Others. Both films construct a clear opposition between the infirm multiethnic urban spaces of Prague and the securely "German" Bohemian countryside. Whereas the depictions of rural life in the Bohemian periphery

are informed by generic tropes seen in other “Bohemian films,” the images of Prague build upon a set of cultural associations with the city that has been central to German cinema almost from its very beginnings. The city features centrally in two key films that were continue to be recognized as iconic early examples of the so-called “German Expressionist” style: *Der Student von Prag* (*The Student of Prague*, 1913) and *Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam* (*The Golem: How He Came into the World*, 1920). These early cinematic presentations of “Prague” not only reflect the long tradition of literature from and about the city, but also engage with the century-old, emotionally charged conversation about ethnic and national identity in the Bohemian capital.

By considering the broader political-social climate in Bohemia in the first half of the 20th century, my analysis seeks to situate these cinematic Pragues in a larger field of meaning. In this sense, the current analysis is an attempt to outline the genealogy of a certain “Prague discourse” within the German cinematic imagination. Progressing more or less chronologically, I construct my argument around three primary points of orientation: (1) Prague as a space of conflict and schism, (2) the cinematic mappings of the city in terms of racial identity and filmic space, and (3) the ways that all these factors work to project “Prague” as a visual spectacle that simultaneously inspired touristic wonder and uncanny terror in the audience—especially German spectators of the period. In each of these discussions, I emphasize the extent to which Prague itself is “animated” as an agent or character in the film narrative.

Although the uncanny features prominently in discussions of these earlier films, analyses of *Linen from Ireland* and *The Golden City* inevitably tend to focus on their ideological or propagandistic elements. Within this framework, scholars have generally concentrated on the issue of race (i.e., anti-Semitism) in the case of *Linen form Ireland* and on matters related to melodrama and gender in *The Golden City*. The goal here is to demonstrate how all of these

concerns can be specifically linked to Prague, thereby bringing a deeper understanding of the mechanisms at work in these films.

What I have identified as a “Bohemian film” sub-genre (which includes German-language versions of Czech films that overtly evoked a Bohemian setting) invariably imagined Bohemia and Moravia (commonly known today as “the Czech lands”) as purely German in character and population, as a simple extension of Austria or Bavaria (see Chapter 3). In most cases, the films did not depict any level of conflict between the Czech-speaking and German-speaking inhabitants of the territories. Indeed, they did not show any traces of Czechness whatsoever. The subtle and not so subtle elimination of signifiers of Czech culture served to fashion the Bohemian and Moravia countryside as a unified German space, which also informed German fantasies of the territorial integrity of the Sudetenland and beyond.

In many ways, the appropriation of “Prague” by German cinema represents a very similar phenomenon to the “annexation of an imaginary city” that Hake describes with respect to Vienna (*Popular Cinema* 149-171). Like Vienna, the image of Prague in German cinema bears certain consistent hallmarks that portray the city as if it were locked in a perpetual state of historicity. However, unlike Vienna, which is seen as a generally homogeneous and culturally “German” space, Prague is a contested site, where different identities compete for dominance. Furthermore, German cinema experiences the cinematic image of Prague as a mysterious space, tinged with a lingering aura of danger and even horror. Prague is repeatedly depicted as a site of phantasmagoric and potentially threatening encounters with Others (whether they be supernatural forces, Jews, or Slavs).

Prague Uncanny

In stark contrast to this image of the Bohemian countryside, Prague featured as a space of uncertainty, schism, and shifting identities. Although they display many tropes of the *Heimatfilm* genre, *The Golden City* and *Linen from Ireland* do not operate within the typical urban/rural dichotomy commonly seen in the genre as well as in other films from the period such as F.W. Murnau's *Sunrise* (1927). Likewise, the urban milieu is very different from those seen in the well-known German *Strassenfilm* genre. Admittedly, the city is associated with mass media, fashion, and some vague sense of "progress," yet in contrast to other critical portrayals of large cities, which characterize the period, the Prague we see in these films is not a hyper-modern industrial urban space teeming with throngs of people and vehicles. The negative valence attributed to the city here seems rooted less in general misgivings about modernity, than in intangible notions of fear, superstition, mythology, and the supernatural. Furthermore, the urban/rural split here is construed largely in terms of racial difference, whereby the uncertain ethnic character of the city poses a threat to the racial integrity of the countryside. All of these factors lend Prague a unique power that can best be described in terms of the uncanny.

My understanding of the "uncanny" is primarily informed by Sigmund Freud's famous essay of the same name and supplemented by Homi K. Bhabha's conception of the "unhomely" condition. In his oft-quoted essay, Freud explores various factors that not only disturb what he calls the ego, but also precipitate the specific sense of fright and dread that is specific to the uncanny. Such factors include the apparent animation of inanimate objects and the presence of a *Doppelgänger*, which he frames in terms of the unexpected return of repressed thoughts or emotions. Also important for the following discussion is Freud's semantic analysis of the word, whereby he emphasizes that the German word *unheimlich* connotes not only what in English

would translate as “un-homely” (or “unfamiliar”), but also “un-secret” (or “uncovered.”) In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha picks up on this concept of the “unhomely” to describe “the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (13). Although he is not as concerned with psychological fright as Freud is, Bhabha nevertheless recognizes the confrontation with unhomeliness as an uncanny experience. He describes the unhomely moment as one of displacement, in which “the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting” (13). By specifically linking this moment of disorientation to extra-territorial and cross-cultural encounters, Bhabha’s conception of the “unhomely” thus provides a useful metaphor for remapping Freud’s theories of the uncanny in terms of geographic space and culture, which is often closely related to race, particularly when dealing with Nazi discourse. The following examination understands the concepts “uncanny” and “unhomely” as describing two nuances of the same basic phenomenon. Thus, I employ the two terms more or less interchangeably, altering my usage according to context. All of the films discussed here are “fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference” in terms of an uncanny encounter (Bhabha 13). In each case, Prague’s unique position in the German imagination provides fertile foundation for the aesthetic exploration of unhomely moments.

The Student of Prague and *The Golem* are commonly described as preeminent examples of so-called Expressionist cinema. These films, however, stand out from other works generally associated with Expressionism, in which an unnamed or imaginary space provides a backdrop to the tales of fear and the uncanny—for example the fictional town of Holstenwall in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1920), or the unidentified urban spaces of *Von morgens bis Mitternacht* (*From Morn to Midnight*, 1920) and *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett*

(*Waxworks*, 1924). Indeed, the very title of *The Student of Prague* suggests the importance of setting in the uncanny city. The specificity of place also marks a contrast between “Prague films” and the urban-critical “Street film” (*Strassenfilm*) genre, in which the city also embodies a sense of danger (albeit of a profane rather than supernatural nature). In the prototypical work of the genre, *Die Strasse* (The Street, 1923), the urban setting is not specifically identified, but presented as “the city” as such. More than any other specific urban space, early German cinema consistently refers to Prague as a space of mystery, magic, and potential destruction.

We can perhaps think of Prague of as the ideal “Expressionist city,” because of its power to evoke haunting, dreamlike images. In her analysis of the Expressionist style, Lotte Eisner describes how the location shooting in Prague, “where dark, mysterious relics of the Middle Ages can still be seen,” provided the ideal setting for Wegener’s exploration of the “limitless expressive powers” of the cinema in *The Student of Prague* (42). Siegfried Kracauer invokes Prague as “that city where reality fuses with dreams, and dreams turn into visions of horror” (61). This confusion between dreams and reality suggests an uncanny encounter similar to that described by Freud. Kracauer goes to far as to attribute at least some of the dreamlike horror of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* to its obscure kinship with Prague when he points out that Hans Janowitz, one of the script’s authors, grew up there. With his comments on Janowitz’s origins, Kracauer implies some sort of latent connection between Prague and the nightmarish urban landscape presented in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Whether as physical location (*The Student of Prague*), fantasy setting (*The Golem*), or spiritual inspiration (*The Cabinet of Caligari*), Prague is a preeminent model for much of what would later be defined as the “Expressionist style.”

Jo Fox contends that Kracauer’s assessment is consistent with the essence of Prague as presented in *The Golden City* (see Fox 169). Having drawn this intriguing connection, however,

she does not significantly explore the implications of the uncanniness ascribed specifically to Prague, turning her attention instead to a discussion of the contrasting images of “city” and “rural” life in a more general sense, without attaching any significance to this particular urban setting and the position of German identity with it. This “uncanny factor” that creates an imaginary lineage from *Caligari* to Harlan’s film, and is directly attributed to the city of Prague, warrants closer attention.

Such perceptions of Prague as an expressionist or uncanny place has deep roots in the literary tradition—a tradition that the film industry consistently invoked and inflected to meet their own narrative and visual demands. The cinematic image of mysterious Prague or what I would call the “Prague uncanny” was, of course, strongly informed by the abundance of such portrayals in German and European literature of the late 19th and early 20th century.²⁷⁰ In addition to the well-known writings of Kafka, we are also reminded of the fantastic works of Gustav Meyrink, Hermann Ungar, and Paul Leppin. It should also be kept in mind that many proponents of literary Expressionism—Franz Werfel, Paul Kornfeld, Franz Janowitz, and Alfred Kubin, to name a few—were located at one time or another in Prague and often set the city in the center of their works. Building to a large extent on these literary foundations, cinematic Prague appears as an enigmatic, almost paradoxical space where contemporary civilization coexists with mythological superstition, magic, and mysticism. Furthermore, this urban space is consistently characterized by a sense of schism: it is a place of internal division and social confrontation, where the body is seemingly menaced with contamination and identity is constantly under threat of disintegration.

²⁷⁰ Peter Demetz provides an excellent concise (albeit selective) overview of “magical Prague” as a literary trope in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His summary is not limited to authors living in the city, but also includes foreign writers, such as George Eliot and Francis Marion Crawford. See Demetz 314-322.

Supernatural Doubles and Expressionist Prague

The 1913 film *The Student of Prague* is profoundly indebted to the Prague literary tradition of the uncanny as well as to European Romanticism more generally. The film was not just the precursor of the so-called “Expressionist cinema” of the Weimar period—it represents a defining instance of the uncanny in all of cinema. The story focuses on the poor student Balduin, who sets his eyes upon the Countess Margit Schwarzenberg. As a bid to win her favor, he enters into a Faustian pact with the mysterious Scapinelli. In exchange for one hundred thousand pieces of gold and social advancement, the student is tricked into selling his mirror reflection to this strange sorcerer. After Balduin then enters high society, he is haunted by his self-animate reflection, which repeatedly disrupts his relationship with the countess, kills on his behalf, and eventually drives him to madness and suicide. Of course, the double is perhaps the primary trope of the uncanny. In fact, Otto Rank opens his influential study of the *Doppelgänger* with a discussion of this very film, introducing ideas that Freud later specifically cites in his discussion of the double as an “object of terror” and an “uncanny harbinger of death” (Freud 142-43, 161).

Alongside Balduin, his double, the Countess Schwarzenberg, and the dastardly Scapinelli, Prague itself functions as one of the film’s primary agents. The importance of the city is established in the opening of the film, where a series of title cards followed by non-narrative filmic inserts introduces the aforementioned main players in the story. Notably the final title does not refer to a performer, but announces “the scene of the play: in Prague,”²⁷¹ and then cuts to a shot of the film’s director Stellan Rye and actor Paul Wegener looking out over the Vltava river up to the Prague castle (fig. 27). This image—which incidentally appears very similar to the

²⁷¹ According to the 2004 DVD release of *The Student of Prague* by Alpha Video.



Figure 27. *The Student of Prague* (1913): as the film introduces the Prague setting, the director and main actor coordinate the touristic gaze of the cinema audience. [Source: screen capture from Alpha Video DVD.]

view in the opening moments of *The Golden City*—not only treats Prague as a “character” and part of the action, but also establishes a spectacular mode of address, coordinating its presentation of the city with the touristic gaze of the spectator, who is expected to marvel at Prague’s beauty. The abundance of exterior shots of the city and its sights situates *The Student of Prague* within a larger culture of early cinema attractions that Tom Gunning describes as “place films,” which highlighted the cinema’s ability to bring exotic spaces and views to life on screen by presenting various, often panoramic views of a landscape or locale (15).

Yet, the visions of Prague presented in the film go beyond a simple touristic gaze designed to invoke wonder. Indeed, the cinematic presentation of the city’s landmarks invites the viewer to see them not only as sites of desire, but also as sites of terror. This is most evident in the film’s dramatic climax, when the cityscape becomes a space of phantasmagoric horror, and Balduin flees through the urban setting in the vain attempt to escape his darker half. There is no

place safe to hide, since his evil twin seems able to navigate and manipulate the urban space entirely to his pleasing. It is almost as if Balduin comes under attack from the city itself. No matter how fast he runs, he always finds his *Doppelgänger* lurking around the next corner, constantly appearing one step behind him, or even in front of him. In several instances, the body of the uncanny phantom even seems to merge with the urban architecture, for example when Balduin runs down Prague’s famous “Golden lane” as his double magically materializes behind an open door (fig. 28). It is almost as if the city is actively aiding the phantom in the conspiracy to destroy him, thereby transforming the entire urban space into a source of fear. In this way, the city becomes a primary agent in heightening the viewer’s sense of the uncanny. Crucially, it is in the final chase sequence that the use location shooting obtains full force. As we watch Balduin’s attempt to flee his double, we are transported on a breakneck tour of Prague and its sights, which had remained largely unseen until this point. In addition to the “Golden Lane,” we also see



Figure 28. Balduin runs down Prague’s famous “Golden lane” (shot on location) as his double materializes behind an open door (at left), becoming one with the architecture of the city. (*The Student of Prague*, 1913) [Source: screen capture from Alpha Video DVD]

another panoramic view of the Prague castle (fig. 29). It is as if these location images of the city are finally “erupting” after simmering beneath the surface of the *mise-en-scène* throughout the film. These eruptions serve to highlight the city through an uncanny mix of touristic wonder and supernatural awe.



Figure 29. The sights of Prague erupt as a source of both visual attraction and emotional fear in *The Student of Prague* (1913). [Source: screen capture from Alpha Video DVD.]

I would now like to turn to a closer examination of Balduin and his relationship to the Prague setting. As Heidi Schlüpmann has argued in her reading of the film, Balduin’s double embodies the Freudian return of the repressed, a constant reminder of the student’s humble origins, which he left behind in order to climb the social ladder. Thus, *The Student of Prague* illustrates “the psychic substructure of a threatening socio-political situation” (Schlüpmann 16). This is communicated visually by the fact that the reflection always appears exactly as it looked in the moment when Balduin sealed the pact—that is, as a student. Schlüpmann positions this

reading within the context of the crisis of the German bourgeoisie at the turn of the century and its confrontation with the aristocracy. I would like to suggest here, however, that the foregrounding of Balduin's identity as a student also invites us to read the film not only in terms of socioeconomic matters, but also as part of a larger ethnic discourse.

The image of the student features prominently in the iconography of the German struggle to maintain social power and a sense of identity in Bohemia throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. As the Czech national awakening brought its people an ever-greater sense of cultural identity and increased social standing within Habsburg society, many German Bohemians felt pushed into a defensive position and sought to solidify their own sense of national belonging. The effort to promote German ethnicity in Bohemia often spoke to a racially defined concept of nation or *Volk*. The Bohemian-German *völkisch* movement had a tradition dating to the early 1880s, when it began mobilizing the rural population around its nationalist populist ideology and new, more exclusive conception of Germanness: based in blood rather than in language, education, or conscious identification, as traditionally defined by the liberal establishment.²⁷² In his study of Germans in Prague during the decades preceding World War I, titled "The Politics of Ethnic Survival," Gary B. Cohen comments that the greatest impulse behind pro-German *völkisch* activity in Prague came from radically nationalist student organizations rooted in *völkisch* ideology—predominantly the traditional dueling fraternities and regional student associations known as *Landesmannschaften*). In many ways, the Prague student was one of the most easily identifiable icons of the *völkisch* cause in Bohemia. These students constituted the front line, so to speak, of the German Bohemian struggle for ethnic survival, since, as Cohen's

²⁷² For a more comprehensive overview of the Bohemian *völkisch* movement in the 19th and 20th centuries and the direct links to student organizations see Cohen, particularly 114-16, 145-57, 158-59, and 178-184.

account demonstrates, Prague was the most highly charged flashpoint for the confrontation between Czechs and Germans.

The end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century witnessed the widespread revival of the uniquely German literary genre known as *Studentenroman* (student novel). In alignment with the growing nationalistic inclinations of student organizations in the 19th century, the student novels from this period adopted much more of a patriotic tone than earlier incarnations of the genre and directly engaged with contemporary political issues. Such student novels were particularly popular among the German-speaking populace of Bohemia and Moravia because they were able to tap into the prevailing concerns about German cultural survival in the region. The majority of such novels set in Bohemia overtly thematized Prague German student life within the larger context of the ethnic struggle in the face of ever-increasing Czech hegemony. The most prolific Bohemian author of student novels was Karl Hans Strobl, who commonly titled his novels after well known Prague drinking establishments, particularly the beer halls frequented by the German student body (e.g., *Die Vaclavbude*, *Der Schipkapass*, *Das Wirtshaus "Zum König Przemysl"*), which were central to the action of his stories.

Hans Heinz Ewers's film drama *The Student of Prague* consciously operates within the *Studentenroman* genre and specifically displays the influence of Strobl. Most notable in this respect is Strobl's 1908 novel *Der Schipkapass*, which directly addresses the ethno-nationalist German cause in Prague. The linking of the student figure with the book's patriotic program is immediately evident in the image on the cover of the novel's first printing in Berlin displays, which displays a student holding the black-red-gold German flag (fig. 30). This illustration not only prefigures the Prague student that would later assume center stage in Rye's film, but also directly links this figure with the German nationalist struggle in the city. Beyond refiguring the

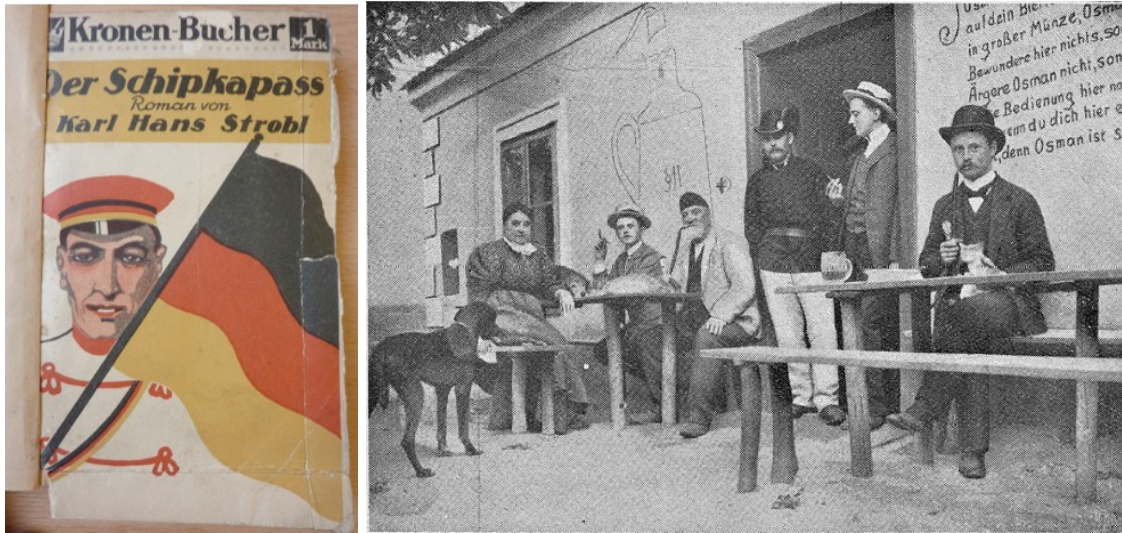


Figure 30. Left: The first edition cover of Karl Hans Strobl's *Der Schipkapass* specifically announces the novel's nationalist theme and the prominent role of the student in the struggle. [Source: photo of book (Berlin: Kronen Verlag, 1914 [?] from Czech national library)] Right: The Schipkapass beer hall on the outskirts of Prague a favored site for German students. [Source: de.wikipedia.org]

novel's narrative of a failed love between a poor student and an upper-class woman, Ewers's script also emulates Strobl's penchant to set the action in student drinking establishments. I would argue that the imagery of the opening sequence of *The Student of Prague* explicitly invokes the actual Schipkapass situated on the outskirts of Prague (fig. 30). Thus, although the film does not directly engage with nationalistic concerns or the Czech-German ethnic conflict, its position within the *Studentenroman* genre—not to mention Ewers' and Strobl's pronounced Nazi leanings—invites us to reconsider the racial implications of this Prague student in ways that I have suggested above.

The figure of the German student in Prague also invites us to read the uncanny encounter in terms of territorial crisis. The majority of these activist students came to the urban university from homes in the outlying, mostly German-speaking regions of Bohemia. In Prague, they found themselves in a decidedly unhomely environment that put their sense of identity and belonging to the test—a situation that very much echoes Balduin's existential crisis. The encounter with the

double can be understood as a spectacular rendering of the unhomely moment, which according to Bhabha “creeps up on you as stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself ... taking the measure of your dwelling in a state of ‘incredulous terror’” (13).

Sights of Division and Animation

The racial environment of the Bohemian capital would play a much more overt and direct role several years later in *The Golem: How He Came into the World*, directed by Paul Wegener, who also played the role of Balduin in the film just discussed. Although *The Golem* does not explicitly thematize Czech or German identity, the film directly engages the historical tensions between the city’s Jewish and Christian populations. Specifically, it recounts the legend of Rabbi Loew, a.k.a. the Maharal of Prague, who created the clay automaton known as the Golem. Originally conceived as a menial laborer and protector of the Jewish quarter, the Golem ultimately rampages out of control and threatens to destroy not only the ghetto but the also city’s Christian inhabitants, until it is deactivated by a gentile child just outside the ghetto walls.

With this tale of a lifeless figure that is magically brought to life, the film directly evokes Ernst Jentsch’s primary definition of the uncanny: namely, “doubt as to whether an apparently inanimate object is really alive and, conversely whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate,” a definition which Freud later appropriates and modifies in his famous essay (Freud 135). Yet, the Golem figure is not the sole source of uncanniness in the film. The emphasis on Jewish mysticism, its spectacle of ethnic stereotypes—indeed, the entire Jewish ghetto—serves to create a thoroughly uncanny space. In contrast to the documentary views in *The Student of Prague*, the city we see in *The Golem* is an elaborate studio set bearing the hallmarks of Expressionist design. With its stylized twisting staircases, dimly lit rooms, and narrow crowded

streets the ghetto's appearance formally supports the overall atmosphere of mystery and supernatural that underlies the film. Moreover, as Noah Isenberg points out, architect Hans Poelzig explicitly designed the film sets such to evoke a kind of "Yiddish vernacular" that echoes the physical characteristics of the Jewish inhabitants themselves. In turn, the masses of Jews that populate the ghetto's streets become integral parts in the construction of this urban entity. "Signifying a meeting ground for the Jewish city dwellers, the streets in Wegener's film fuse with the masses, becoming a unified symbolic expression of the stylized setting. The amorphous crowds of Jews, swarming through the various passages of the ghetto city, resemble the arteries of an urban body" (Isenberg 2009: 47). The film thus evokes an ominous collusion between a dark, destructive, force and the very architecture of Prague, similar to that described above in *The Student of Prague*. Just as Balduin's double seems able to magically emerge from every corner or shadow of the city's buildings and streets, the Jews in *The Golem* merge with the ghetto structures around them to form a singular (organic) entity of horror. In this way, according to Isenberg, the film set conveys "the Jewishness of the ghetto as the organic space from which an imagined physiognomy emerges" (Isenberg 2009: 49). This physiognomy is implicitly mapped onto the body of the Golem itself, such that it serves as a sort of anthropomorphic synecdoche of the ghetto and by extension of the entire Jewish body. Here, as in *The Student of Prague*, the city (or as least its Jewish ghetto) is explicitly aligned with a lingering sense of terror—and the destructive potential of the Bohemian city is channeled into an uncanny anthropomorphic figure.

Even if *The Golem* does not display a clearly anti-Semitic agenda, it nevertheless perpetuates certain established racial stereotypes: especially that of (Eastern) Jews as a "dirty" people with exotically distinct facial features, whose rituals seem closer to witchcraft than they

do to religion.²⁷³ In a further step, it portrays Jews as a potential source of destruction, not only to themselves, but also—more importantly—to the culture existing beyond the ghetto walls. The Prague we see here is a divided space: the Jews are physically isolated from the society at large by the imposing walls and gates of their ghetto. In addition, the Christian society around the Emperor’s court is even further removed from the ghetto: perched atop of a hill, on the opposite side of the river (fig. 31). Although this spatial mapping is surely inspired by Prague’s actual layout, evoking the most familiar “touristic view” of the city, the exaggerated proportions of the Expressionist set visually distort the urban space to emphasize the profound gap separating these



Figure 31. The dauntingly steep bridge over the Vltava emphasizes the stark divide that separates the castle (on the hilltop at right) from the Jewish ghetto. (*The Golem: How He Came into the World*, 1920) [Source: screen capture from DVD release by Kino Video]

²⁷³ Isenberg has commented on Weimar cinema’s reliance on the distinctly “ethnic” look and behavior of the Eastern Jews to visually mark all Jewish characters on screen. “The *Ostjude*,” he argues, “became a master icon of identification for the Jews at large. In the cinema, then, signs of Jewishness had to rely on cultural references to overt differences such as stereotypical Eastern Jewish physiognomy, religious and ritualistic symbols, and ghetto markings.” Isenberg, *Between Redemption* 93.

two ethnic groups. In contrast to the expressionistic ghetto, the sets for the court are structured according to geometric patterns and are more evenly and brightly illuminated. The refined clothing and demeanor of the courtiers also strikes a clear contrast to the visible dirtiness of the ghetto inhabitants. *The Golem* thus paints Prague as a thoroughly divided space, in which the dark, uncanny forces of the Jewish ghetto threaten to break free and destroy the enlightened civilization located on the hill. It is as if Balduin's divided person from *The Student of Prague* has been remapped in racial terms onto the very terrain of the city. As with Balduin's double, the ghetto can be understood metaphorically as a site of repression, containing powerful elements that the civilized court society attempts to keep locked away, but which threaten to erupt unexpectedly and with potentially tragic consequences.

Jewish Prague and German Countryside

The depiction of Prague as a locus for Jewish power reached a culmination within the Nazi propaganda machine. In the buildup to the occupation of the Sudetenland and subsequently of Prague itself, Julius Streicher's brutally anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer* ran a series of articles highlighting the "Jewish" character of the city and depicting the Czechoslovak government as vassals of the Jewish-Bolshevik-Masonic world conspiracy. On the eve of the Munich agreement in September 1938, *Der Stürmer* bore the headline: "Jew-Central Prague: Why is Czechoslovakia Europe's Cauldron of Unrest?" (*Judenzentrale Prag: Warum ist die Tschechoslowakei der Unruheherd Europas?*) (fig. 32). A few months later, as preparations were being made for the military occupation of what was left of Czechoslovakia, the entire November 1938 issue was devoted to the topic "The Jews and Czechoslovakia" (*Der Jude und die Tschechoslowakei*), featuring page after page of "evidence" portraying the Czechs as willing

minions within the grand Jewish plot. This special issue also ran a feature on the newly “liberated” Sudeten Germans, with photographs featuring figures defined by extremely overdetermined *völkisch*-ethnic qualities parading these people as some kind of ideal, pure specimens of the Germanic race (fig. 32). These images of Germans stood in stark contrast to the newspaper’s caricatures of Jews, thereby establishing a similar iconography of difference to that seen in *The Golem*.



Figure 32. Left: In September 1938, *Der Stürmer* positions Prague at the center of Europe’s “Jewish problem.” Right: The Nazi image of rural Sudeten Germans as idealized racial archetype in *Der Stürmer*. [Source: Stadtarchiv Nürnberg]

What is more, in Nazi discourse the Golem became a powerful symbol of the threatening powers at work in the Bohemian capital. 1942 saw the publication of the book *Golem...Geissel der Tschechen: Die Zersetzung des tschechischen Nationalismus* (Golem...Scourge of the Czechs: The Corrosion of Czech Nationalism), which presented “evidence” of the conspiracy

between Jews and Czech freemasons, otherwise described as “Semitic Czechoslovaks” (*semitische Tschechslowaken*), to usurp Czechoslovakian politics.²⁷⁴ Naturally, *Der Stürmer* hailed the Nazi actions in the Sudetenland as liberating this Ur-German population from their oppressive Czech-Jewish overlords—and the subsequent takeover of Prague was framed less as a victory over the Czechs than as a decisive blow against international Judaism.

This image of Prague as a site of Czech-Jewish collusion against racial Germans directly informs the 1939 anti-Semitic film *Linen from Ireland*. Film scholarship tends to discuss this film exclusively in relation to Nazi cinema’s other overtly anti-Semitic film treatises. It is commonly discussed together with *Robert und Bertram* (*Robert and Bertram*, 1939) as one of Nazi cinema’s first efforts to explicitly invoke the types of anti-Semitic caricature that would be more fully, and infamously, expanded later in such films as *Die Rothschilds* (*The Rothschilds*, 1940), *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süß*, 1940) and *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*, 1940).²⁷⁵ The image of the Jew in *Linen from Ireland*, therefore, has tended to be the primary focus of most analyses and in some cases, the examinations seem to be concerned merely with rating the level anti-Semitism in comparison to other films in this category.²⁷⁶ My aim here is to look beyond the iconography of Jewish stereotypes to examine the ways that the film projects anti-Semitism onto city spaces

²⁷⁴ The chapter titled “Semitische Tschechslowaken” is particularly interesting for its invocation of Sir John Retcliffe’s novel *Biarritz*, which describes a fictional meeting between the twelve tribes of Israel in Prague’s old Jewish cemetery to discuss their plan for world domination. This scene later served as the model for the infamous “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” The text unites this mythological meeting with the legend of the Golem and cites a particularly anti-Semitic passage from Karl Hans Strobl, in which the Golem is seen as a symbol of the Jewish people all together. See Jacobi 84-86. For a detailed description of the genealogy of the “Elders of Zion” myth and its connection to Prague Jewish lore see Umberto Eco’s wonderful essay “Fictional Protocols” in *Six Walks* 117-140.

²⁷⁵ See for example Leiser 75; Welch 238; Rentschler 152-153; and Tegel 113-128.

²⁷⁶ See, for example, Tegel’s “Two German Comedies (1939),” where she concludes of *Linen from Ireland* that “its antisemitism is qualitatively greater than that in *Robert und Bertram*, perhaps a product of the Austrian context where antisemitism flourished” (128) and “in some respects it is closer to the antisemitic films of 1940” (125).

and consider the implications of mapping the Jewish threat onto Prague and Bohemia. Thus, my examination is less interested in physiognomic and behavioral signifiers than with cartography and political landscapes.

In addition to creating a pretext for Nazi anti-Jewish measures, *Linen from Ireland* also functioned to legitimate the political necessity of the Austrian *Anschluss* and to demonstrate the success of the annexation. The film was, after all, one of the first productions of the newly restructured Wien-Film after the *Anschluss* in March of 1938, a fact that openly invites such political readings. Eric Rentschler comments that the film “meant to demonstrate that the film world of post-*Anschluss* Austria had fallen in line with Nazi priorities” (153). Likewise, Susan Tegel comments that the film “intended to show that the Austrian industry had been truly *gleichgeschaltet* [coordinated]” (125). Such interpretations of the film were prevalent already in the contemporary press, where one reviewer proclaimed that with this film “Vienna has now become a full-fledged member of the German film production.²⁷⁷ Quite surprisingly, though, most discussions neglect to mention what would appear to be the film’s more obvious comment on contemporary geo-political events, namely the annexation of the Sudetenland and the subsequent occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and the capital city of Prague.

Linen from Ireland premiered in the fall of 1939 almost exactly one year after the German annexation of the Sudetenland and only seven months after Nazi forces occupied Prague and the remainder of Bohemia and Moravia. Whereas the previously discussed films only hinted at inter-ethnic tensions, *Linen from Ireland* brings racial confrontation to the center stage. The film’s primary conflict pits a Prague Jew against German handworkers from the Bohemian countryside. Although the majority of the film takes place in Vienna in the latter years of the

²⁷⁷ “Wien gliedert sich nun vollwertig ins deutsche Filmschaffen ein.” *Berliner Morgenpost* 41.249 (18.10.1939): 9.

Habsburg Monarchy, the geographical origins of the main figures and questions of territory are of major significance. The plot revolves around a Prague-based textile concern, whose affairs are secretly steered by the Jew Dr. Egon Kuhn. Under Kuhn's guidance the company is pursuing a trade scheme that would devastate the livelihood of the rural German weavers living in the area around the town of Warnsdorf in the Bohemian borderlands. It is safe to presume that these handworkers would have been readily understood as "Sudeten Germans" in accordance with the political discourse of the day. In this way, the film overtly links the plight of these rural Germans as victims of economic (and even racial) discrimination by Prague bureaucrats with the so-called "Sudeten crisis" that culminated with the occupation of the Czechoslovakian borderlands by the Nazi Reich.

Given the regional setting of the film, the Czechs, based in the Bohemian capital, are naturally implied here as (hidden) perpetrators, a point that is subtly reinforced by the fact that the textile company operated by Kuhn is based in Prague. Although the owner and the board members are German-speakers, the name of the company, Libussa A.G., directly invokes Czech culture with its reference to the mythological Slavic princess who founded Prague (Libuše in Czech).²⁷⁸ With this minor gesture, "Jewishness" and "Czechness" are subtly conflated as one entity, becoming two sides of the same threat to Bohemian Germans. Thus, the film should not be thought of as "merely" anti-Semitic, but also as a voice, even if a barely inaudible one, within the broader discourses of anti-Slavism and racism more generally.

²⁷⁸ The myth of Libuše has been a recurring source of inspiration for both the Czech and German cultural traditions, and beyond. Smetana's opera based on the story of Prague's mythical founder was the first work performed in the Czech National Theater for its gala opening in 1881 as well as for the opening of the reconstructed theater two years later (after it was destroyed by fire). Austrian author Franz Grillparzer based his 1848 tragedy on the figure. Most recently, the female seer was the subject of the pseudo-art-house B-film *The Pagan Queen* (2009).

As we see in the Vienna sequences, though, the German identity of the empire's capital city is similarly threatened by "foreign" (that is, not ethnically German) influences. In distinct contrast to the purely German Warnsdorf, the Viennese Ministry suggests a highly hetero-ethnic space. The halls of the Ministry echo with Slavic-sounding names such as Kalinski and Palecky or Hungarian titles such as Horvath von Arpad-Fálvâ. This myriad of signifiers reflects the multi-ethnic makeup of the empire and ultimately all of these "foreigners" come off as ludicrous. Councilor Kalinski is an incompetent simpleton who is unable to remember friends' names or events of the previous evening, while the Hungarian Graf Horvath speaks a broken, almost infantile German. Another character has such a bizarre Hungarian-sounding name that nobody seems capable of pronouncing it properly, which becomes a sort of running gag through the Vienna sequences. Ultimately, "Vienna" appears as a sort of ethnic menagerie or freak show, a kind of "ethnographic exhibition" where the empire's decadent class is (literally) displayed in their "natural environment," that is, the artificial society of the Habsburg court. The multicultural character of Vienna is clearly linked with the bureaucratic disfunctionality of the imperial government. Although the people of Vienna bear no explicit malice towards to Bohemian weavers, their general indifference to the people of Warnsdorf provides fertile ground for those in Prague who wish to exploit these German handworkers. The Bohemian capital is a specific seat of impending danger, while Vienna is portrayed as a multi-ethnic space that needs to be realigned with its innate (i.e., German) sense of purpose. In this way, the film offers justification, by means of historical allegory, for both the 1938 Austrian *Anschluss* and the subsequent Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁹ In fact, the specificity of the Warnsdorf setting further foregrounds the Sudeten issue. The city (Warnsdorf in Czech) is situated in the industrialized territory of northern Bohemia, whose German inhabitants had a strong history of *völkisch*-oriented opposition to the liberal

The *Illustrierter Film Kurier* explicitly invokes these contemporary events when it states that Kuhn's plan to import duty-free linen from Ireland "would result in a tremendous [*ungeheueren*] economic upsurge for the 'Libussa.' At the same time, though, it would mean the destruction of the *domestic weaving industry, especially in the Sudeten region*" (Film program, emphasis added). This passage not only frames the struggle in terms of the discourse of Heimat but also directly plays on emotions surrounding the "Sudetenland" issue. In fact, very use of the term "Sudeten" here indicates an opportunistic anachronism at work in *Linen from Ireland*.

Although the term was probably known during the period depicted in the film as a geographical concept, it had not yet entered general political and social discourses. The political designation "Sudetenland" and the very notion of a "Sudeten" identity first came into prominence during the post-World War I bids for German-Bohemian independence (and/or unification with rump Austria) and in the years that followed the inclusion of these lands into the Czechoslovak state.

The *Illustrierter Film Kurier*'s indirect framing of the film's conflict as part of the larger "Sudeten issue" thus drove home the timely significance of the issues at stake for the 1939 viewer.

establishment in Prague. In fact, the city sits at the very edge of Bohemia, immediately on the border to Saxony, not far from Zittau. In the inverted mental geography of the *völkisch* imagination, however, the region was not seen as peripheral, but closer to the German center than Prague, the central city of the Czech incursion into Germany. Indeed, separated from central Bohemia by the Lusatian mountains, this lowland region of Bohemia known as the Šluknov hook (Šluknovský výběžek in Czech, Schluckenauer Zipfel or Böhmisches Niederland in German) had much stronger historical ties to the neighboring German states than to Prague and central Bohemia. The Lusatian mountains are a western extension of the Sudetes and therefore figure prominently in the *völkisch* mythology of the "Sudetenland." Warnsdorf lies only several kilometers from Reichenberg (today Liberec), which had been the capital of German Bohemia (Deutschböhmen) during the region's bid for independence from the nascent Czechoslovak state (with hopes for eventual integration with Germany) after the collapse of the Austrian monarchy in November 1918.

After 1919, as in most of the nascent “Sudetenland,” the German-speaking population in Warnsdorf felt discriminated against by the Czechoslovak central government in Prague. The city became a hotbed of support for the Nazi-sympathetic Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei), whose leader, Konrad Henlein spoke there in 1935 to a crowd of over 12,000 (which would account for over 80% of the city’s population at the time) (Fiala 30). In the 1938 parliamentary elections, on the eve of the Sudeten annexation, over 75% of the population voted in support of Henlein’s party. A direct parallel can be drawn between this very real sentiment in the 1930s and the historically framed insensitivity of the Prague-based Libussa A.G. for the welfare Bohemian weavers at the turn of the century in *Linen from Ireland*.

In its imaginary geography, the film clearly distinguishes between Prague’s Czech-Jew urban space and the Bohemian countryside inhabited by hard-working German folk. The opening scenes foreground the rural landscape, as the weavers travel to sell their wares in Warnsdorf. One contemporary reviewer draws attention to this presentation of the “enchanted landscape” (bezaubernde Landschaft) around “*quintessentially German Warnsdorf*” (“*urdeutsche Warnsdorf*”) (emphasis added).²⁸⁰ The reviewer also describes leader of the local linen trade, Alois Hubermaier as a “small industrialist of German Bohemian toughness” (“ein kleiner Fabrikant von *deutschböhmischer* Zähigkeit.”)²⁸¹ According to this terminology, “Bohemian” seems to represent a specific Germanic type that is bound to and defined by the rugged, pristine Bohemian land itself. Furthermore, the peasants and the inhabitants of Warnsdorf all speak with

²⁸⁰ Note that the use of the prefix “ur-“ in the German highlights not only the essential German character of the city, but also suggests that this quality is rooted in the very historical origins of culture in this territory.

²⁸¹ *Berliner Morgenpost* 41.249 (18 Oct. 1939) 9. By contrast, Kuhn’s uncle Sigi is described as “totally Eastern” (“ganz östlich”), in other words distinctly “not-German.”

a thick “Bohemian” accent, which is similar to (but still distinct from) the Viennese dialect.²⁸² This serves to further emphasize both the specificity of this particular German-speaking group and also the “commonality” of this group.²⁸³ In visual terms, these images of Warnsdorf’s inhabitants recall the depictions of “Sudeten Germans” promoted by *Der Stürmer* upon the “liberation” of the territory in 1938. The film’s depiction of these rural Bohemians as simple working folk stands in stark contrast to the portrayal of finely clothed businessmen in Prague and sophisticated, decadent bureaucrats in Vienna. This contrast, however, neatly accords with the “*Blut und Boden*” ideology that extolled the traditional values of country life as opposed to the cosmopolitan, intellectual, and mercantile tendencies associated with city existence.

Although only a few scenes actually take place in Prague itself, the city plays an important symbolic role not only as an urban center, but also—more specifically—as the seat of the Jew’s power and a threat in its own right. The film visually renders this metaphorical sense of menace in the scene in which Kuhn presents his trade strategy to the directors of the Libussa company: spread out on the wall behind him is a giant map of Europe with a number of lines jutting forth in all directions from Prague, a reflection of the Jew’s ambitions for conquest (fig. 33). This graphic topography of conquest looming behind Dr. Kuhn directly recalls the animated sequences in *Der ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*, 1940) depicting the plague-like “infestation” of the Jewish diaspora across Europe. However, whereas the Jewish invasion presented in Hippler’s propaganda film arrives from the east—i.e., from “foreign lands” outside of Europe—the Hebrew menace in *Linen from Ireland* is centered directly in Prague, in the heart of “home” territory (or *Heimat*), if we read the white-labeled space marking the Habsburg territory on the

²⁸² Expressions indicative of the Bohemian accent include [Leite] instead of “Leute”, or [Leesung] or [Liesung] instead of “Lösung.”

²⁸³ Likewise, the rural Bohemian dialect of German is also contrasted with the strongly Yiddish inflected dialect of Kuhn’s *Ostjude* uncle Sigi.

map as essentially “German” in nature. Furthermore, as it drives outward from German-controlled Austrian land, this menace poses the most direct and intense threat to the German Reich proper, whose borders lie immediately to the north and west of Prague. The map’s excess of arrows jutting violently into Germany renders the danger with graphic immediacy.²⁸⁴ In this way, the film pits the city in opposition to rural Bohemia as well as Germany and the rest of Europe.



Figure 33. In the boardroom of the “Libussa” company: Prague marks the cartographic center of Dr. Kuhn’s invasive potential. [Source: Screen capture from German VHS release]

Unlike the earlier films, in which Prague featured as visual attraction and setting for uncanny encounters, the city plays only a minor role in *Linen from Ireland*. Except for a fleeting establishing shot of a busy street in front of the Libussa building, all scenes set in Prague take place in the offices of the textile company. In contrast to the sweeping panoramas of the

²⁸⁴ In fact, the geographic dimensions of the map are subtly twisted in such a way that Bohemia itself appears to forcefully impinge into Germany from below.

Bohemian countryside that open and close the film, Prague appears as a cold and bureaucratic space, completely cut off from nature. Ultimately, “Prague” remains as little more than a symbolic cipher to pinpoint the primary source of danger in the film. The city marks the place where the Jew has gained a powerful foothold within “German” territory and from where he threatens to expand his influence across the political-economic landscape of Europe and even the world.

The German directors of the “largest textile company in Austria” (as Libussa is described) prove surprisingly easily deceived about the consequences of their actions and quickly bend to the will of the scheming Jewish capitalist. We are reminded of the decadent imperial court in *The Golem* that was too preoccupied with frivolous distractions to successfully deal with the Rabbi and his destructive creation. Indeed, the Rabbi and his monstrous creation can be read allegorically onto Kuhn and his textile company. Guided by Kuhn’s predatory aspirations, the Libussa company threatens to break free from its Prague confines and rampage across Central Europe, destroying the livelihoods of all honest working folk it encounters not unlike the Golem transgressing the ghetto walls to invade gentile space. This reading of Prague melds seamlessly with the official Nazi anti-Semitic and anti-Czech rhetoric, as voiced in *Der Stürmer*. Whether metaphorically imagined as Libussa, the mythical founder of the Czech capital (as well as the first Czech royal dynasty), or as the monstrous Golem, Prague is a location of inherent danger that must be monitored and ultimately neutralized.

Although *Linen from Ireland* does not depict Prague as an uncanny space, it imagines the city as the residence of a monstrous creature: that is, the assimilated Jew Kuhn. Clearly, this figure displays many similarities to the caricature of Süss Oppenheimer in the infamous anti-Semitic film *Jud Süß (Jew Süß)*—particularly the facility for deception and masquerade that

permits them each to infiltrate gentile society more or less undetected. In contrast to the massive wall separating the Christians from ethnically marked Jews in *The Golem*, the Jews in *Linen from Ireland* and *Jew Süß* have insinuated themselves into the Christian society by masking their true identity, thereby rendering themselves less easily identifiable and making their place in the society all the more terrifying. Kuhn's masquerade allows him to gain the confidence of and deceive not only the (German) board of the Libussa company but also the political elite in Vienna. Kuhn's duplicity is not directly recognizable in visual terms—as is, for example, the split in Balduin's nature—yet, his “true” nature is revealed in the final moments of the film when the defeated Jew drops the veil of assimilation and begins to speak in a Yiddish dialect thereby betraying his “foreign” origins.²⁸⁵ This moment enacts the return of the Eastern Jewish identity that Kuhn has repressed in the act of assimilation. The Jew here appears as an uncanny being that houses two (apparently) contradictory identities: the mask of western (Aryan) culture and the hidden eastern (Jewish) nature.

The film's depiction of Prague as a space seemingly under Kuhn's complete control marks it as a place where German identity is not fully secure and under attack from Hebrew (as well as Slavic) elements lurking in the city. It is very much an emblem of the modern “unhomely world,” which according to Bhabha is characterized by “ambivalences and ambiguities . . . sundering and splitting” (27). In contrast, the Bohemian countryside is seen as a historically stable space of pure Germanness inhabited by “traditional tradesmen ancestral to North Bohemia” (*die alten erbeingesessenen nordböhmischen Kaufleute*), who are ultimately able to thwart the uncanny Jew's destructive ploy.

²⁸⁵ Kuhn's true identity as an “Eastern Jew” (Ostjude) had already been hinted with the appearance of his uncle Sigi, who is easily identifiable as Yiddish, both in visual appearance and in speech. In some ways, Sigi can be thought of as Kuhn's double, a reminder of the “true” identity that he has repressed in the process of assimilation.

Alois Hubermaier, the mustached “small man” from the countryside, instigates a minor political coup when he travels to the Austrian capital and declares the system there a “pigsty” (*Schweinstall*). The result of this declaration is nothing less than to completely thwart Dr. Kuhn’s (which is to say, international Judaism’s) power play and to substantially reform the bureaucratic and industrial system in Austria (by making the Minister realize his folly and through the formation of an alliance with Libussa A.G. president Kettner). Not only does Hubermaier achieve justice for the Bohemian German workers, but we are given to believe that his action has instigated a major change towards curing the ineffective and unjust bureaucratic system in Vienna, a system that had proved all too vulnerable to manipulation by the likes of Kuhn.

These events echo the actual political developments of 1938. With the annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland to the Nazi Reich, Hitler not only realized Nazi political reform in Vienna, but also brought “justice” to the German workers of Bohemia.²⁸⁶ The final scene of *Linen from Ireland*, presents Hubermaier’s triumphal return to Warnsdorf where a large crowd of ecstatic locals welcomes him. The scene, replete with enthusiastic cheers and a sea of waving hands raised in a show of adoration, is oddly reminiscent of the all-too-common documentary images of joyous crowds greeting the Nazi *Führer* (fig. 34). The raised arms and the smiling faces of children flesh out this small-scale reenactment of a Nazi spectacle (which might appear to the modern viewer like a low-budget reenactment of a scene from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph des Willens* [*Triumph of the Will*, 1935]). In this moment, our perception of Alois Hubermaier

²⁸⁶ One review of the film makes this connection to contemporary politics clear. “Hier tritt [der altösterreichischen Schlamperei] ... bereits, obwohl die Handlung um 1910 spielt, der bessere Geist eines gesunden ostmärkischen Deutschtums gegenüber, das fremdrassigen Einflütungen und Anmaßlichkeiten nicht mehr schwächlich nachgibt, sondern tapfer für die eigenen Volksgenossen eintritt” (*Berliner Morgenpost* 41.249 [18 Oct. 1939]: 9).

(A.H.) blurs with the image of Adolf Hitler (A.H.), likewise a “simple man” from the provinces, who fashioned himself as the defender of his countrymen against the oppression of “sophisticated” politicians and Jewish-dominated international mercantile.

The film’s closing image is a medium close-up of Hubermaier, shot from a low angle that serves to emphasize the heroic power emanating from him. In a “*Führerrede*” that could be imagined coming from the mouth of the Nazi-aligned leader of the Sudeten German Party, Konrad Henlein, if not Hitler himself, Hubermaier proudly addresses his assembled admirers, whom he has successfully defended against certain economic desolation at the hands of the Prague Jew, proclaiming that they can now all return to the work they have done for 150 years, the production of “good old, honorable linen—linen from Bohemia” (“*gutes, altes, ehrliches Leinen – Leinen aus Böhmen*”). This final statement provides a defiant response to the Jewish



Figure 34. Alois Hubermaier’s (A.H.) triumphal entrance to Warnsdorf after defeating the Jewish threat to his Heimat (*Linen from Ireland*, 1939). [Source: screen capture from German VHS release.]

imported “linen from Ireland” introduced in the film’s title. The film thus forcefully reiterates the political message that the good, honest tradition of the Sudeten folk must be maintained in the face of outside oppression. Ultimately, as much as it constructs a negative portrayal of the power-hungry Jew, the film also works to create a positive image of German-Bohemian culture (which it perceives as “Sudeten German”), thereby defending German claims to the Bohemian countryside. Furthermore, the polemic urban/rural split imagines Prague not only as the direct opposite of the Bohemian landscape, but also as a direct challenge to the integrity of the German population there.

The Submerged Czech Threat

The Golden City employs a similar geographic constellation as *Linen from Ireland* to map out racial conflict, except this film explicitly pits Germans against Czechs. In this regard, it is the only example of a Nazi era film to directly address the issue of Czech-German relations or even to contain explicitly Czech characters. And yet, the film does not construct an image of Czechness that is defined by a strong sense of national identity and social commitment (as was the case by the start of the 20th century). Indeed, the indicators of Czech culture are so subtle that this aspect of the film passes by many viewers completely unnoticed. Nevertheless, *The Golden City* carefully orchestrates elements of the mise-en-scène and key lines of dialogue in the formulation of a clearly anti-Czech message. Although most scholarship views the German-Czech conflict as the product of competing discourses of national identity, whereby the national community is imagined according to shared cultural practices and a common language, Nazi ideology envisioned this as a clash between two essentially distinct racial groups that differ in blood and spirit. For this reason, I discuss the film’s nationalist ant-Czech stance in racial terms.

The goal here is not to deconstruct racist essentialism, but to understand how Nazi cinema maps this nationalist discourse onto a racial landscape.

Many authors have commented on the obscurity of the film's anti-Czech message and the general poverty of Czech identifiers. Stephen Lowry suggests that "the film's racism is likely to have been added more or less as an afterthought" and that "in today's frame of reference the anti-Czech elements are in the majority of cases completely inconspicuous" (*Pathos* 68).²⁸⁷ Antje Ascheid concludes that a racial, that is, anti-Czech reading of the film is only possible if the viewers came to it with preformed racist beliefs, "if they didn't, the film played out on the level of city versus country and tradition versus social reform" (Ascheid 74). At the other extreme, Stefan Zwicker and Petr Mareš provide extensive evidence for the film's anti-Czech message, but do little to relate this information back to a closer reading of the other conflicts that dominate the film. My goal here is to demonstrate how a clearer awareness of the underlying racial and territorial concerns can provide a deeper understanding of the many emotional levels on which the film operates. The film's deep-seated racial concerns prove crucial to deciphering the uncanniness of Anna's vision of Prague in the moon water and to understanding the unhomely encounter that lies at the heart of *The Golden City*.

It is, of course, true, as Ascheid suggests, that to a great extent the Czech-German confrontation is overshadowed by film's attention to the urban/rural divide. Furthermore, Anna's melodramatic affairs undoubtedly left a greater impact on contemporary viewers than the seemingly tacked on racial ideology, as Lowry argues. Yet, this racial issue is crucial to understanding not only the emotional power underlying the melodrama, but also the uncanny

²⁸⁷ Testimony to the obscure nature of the film's racial politics to the contemporary viewer can be found in Ascheid's confession that she "did not read the film as anti-Czech on first viewing and was pointed to this perspective only by critical literature on the film" (235, note 96).

presence of Prague, the golden city itself. At once point, Ascheid herself admits that Anna's ultimate death makes no sense unless we privilege the film's racist dimension above all others (77). Generally, though,, she forgoes a deeper exploration of the ways the film constructs the polemic German/Czech split and the implications of this within Nazi racial discourse in order to focus on issues of gender, contending that "the melodramatic force of the film . . . remains caught up in the tragic dimensions of being female in a male world" (73). Yet, as I argue here, that the film's emotional crisis operates another, nearly hidden, yet no less forceful level—precisely on the level of racial identification. This "other conflict" could be described as that of a German in a "Czech world" or more precisely as the attempt to preserve German cultural identity and racial integrity in the face of invasive Czech elements.

The racial mechanisms at work in *The Golden City* characterize Czechs as essentially negative opposites of the Germans and as a sort of "parasite" which thrives on the German "host" culture. This type of representation echoes Nazi cinema's common mode of imagining Jews. The primary Czech figures, Anna's aunt Donata Opferkuch and her son Toni, are shown as thieving, loud, and generally dirty—they are unhealthy (smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor before noon) and place a priority on money and public image over morality. Notably, however, all Czech characters are for the most part completely "assimilated" into the dominant "German" society—they speak only German and do not display any overt signifiers of Czech identity, except for the occasional exclamations of isolated Czech words such as "maminka" (mother) or "ježíšmarja" (Jesus and Mary, a common Czech explicative), which serve as a sort of subtle shorthand to mark their difference. This trope of masquerade echoes the stereotypical depictions of "assimilated" Jews, such as Dr. Kuhn in *Linen from Ireland* and infamously Süß

Oppenheimer in Harlan's earlier film *Jew Süß*. In fact, the entire racial framework laid out by *The Golden City* can be read as remapping negative Jewish stereotypes onto Czech characters.

The act of masquerade is most evident in the transformation that Toni undergoes in the course of the film: when Anna first meets him, he appears dapper and charming, yet once he has Anna under his control, he reveals what is understood as his "true" face: lazing around the apartment in his robe all day while forcing Anna to tend to the family store. Furthermore, the moment he realizes that Anna's father has excluded her from inheriting his land, Toni immediately drops her—thereby revealing that his only interest in her was financial, never emotional. This exposure of Toni's "true" nature (that is his "Czech nature") directly echoes the unmasking of the assimilated Jews in the anti-Semitic films mentioned above.

Prague Attractions versus German Heimat

Whereas the film's racial undertones remain largely obscure and only hinted at, the urban/rural conflict is overtly thematized. As in *Linen from Ireland*, *The Golden City* sets the inhabitants of Prague in direct opposition to the livelihood of the Germans who have their home in the Bohemian countryside. Scholarship has typically framed *The Golden City* in terms of the Nazi ideology of *Blut und Boden* (Blood and Soil), whereby idyllic rural life and the notion of "Heimat" is confronted with the destructive forces of the city. Employing iconography typical to the *Blut und Boden* ideology (as well as to the related *Heimatfilm* genre), Jobst's village is communicated through over-determined signifiers of stereotypical rural folklore and nature. These rustic images correspond with the idealistic representation of Sudeten Germans in *Der Stürmer* thereby exposing the film's ideological framework.

In stark contrast to Anna, who envisions Prague as an alluring fantasy, her father expresses a profound aversion to the city. He forbids Anna to travel to Prague and preaches to her the virtues of life in the village, that is, in their Heimat, and how this way of life must be preserved. At many points, he expresses disdain for life in the city, stating that people from the country cannot truly live in those asphalt streets because they are not from there, they have no roots there. His almost obsessive preoccupation with Heimat is pointed out by the Prague engineer Leidwein who jokingly comments on the proverb adorning the wall of Jobst's house: "Kein Ding oder Wesen ist von fern an seinem Ort kommen, sondern an dem Ort, wo es wächst, ist sein Grund," which can be roughly translated as "No thing or being arrives at its true place from afar. Rather, its foundation [or grounding] is located in that place where it grows." In other words, Jobst can be classified as the film's mouthpiece for the Nazi dogma of *Blut und Boden*. From Jobst's point of view, Prague represents the polar opposite to the concept of Heimat: it is an anti-Heimat or un-Heimat—indeed, it is *unheimlich* in every sense of the word.

Although the patriarchal protagonist Jobst, serving as the film's primary representative of ideology, gives voice to a resolutely anti-urban message, other aspects of the film present quite positive images of Prague in the effort to tap into the audience's visual and emotional desires. Ultimately, the depiction of Prague as a site of wonder challenges the very moral underpinning of the narrative.²⁸⁸ Despite its rhetorical condemnation of Prague, the film derives its emotional power from the spectator's desire to partake in the glorious spectacle of the golden city. In this context, viewer identification with Anna is crucial, since we experience Prague vicariously

²⁸⁸ Of course, this paradigm suggests an alignment with the classic narrative/visual split described by Laura Mulvey, whereby the male protagonist is aligned with the search to construct narrative meaning and female figures are a source of spectacle. The relevance of Mulvey's theory and its subsequent reworkings by feminist theory for our understanding of *The Golden City* is an important concern that is beyond the scope of the analysis offered here.

through Anna's fantasy. As Ascheid points out, "the spectator's sympathies are melodramatically aligned with [Anna's] character and further critical of the male actors in the narrative" (7). Thus, we can speak of an unresolved tension between the rational, ideological meaning associated with Jobst and the emotional experience and visual spectacle that we encounter through the character of Anna.

In contrast to Jobst's stable, grounded view of the world, Anna is a figure of motion, often thrilling and even dangerous motion. Anna's dynamic nature is established in one of the opening moments, when she (presumably energized by her attraction to Leidwein) races her horse-driven carriage at breakneck speed along a country road. As the accelerated images of the countryside fly by, the viewer is transported by the cinema's kinetic power. Likewise, Anna's fantasy has the power to animate the images of Prague. The first representations of Prague that we see—the watercolors and the postcard—are still, frozen, contained by the frame of the paper on which they are inscribed. In Anna's vision of the city on the surface of the moor water, however, is in motion—the river under the bridge ripples energetically, the beams of light reflected on the rooftops shimmer, and, more fundamentally, the camera pans throughout the space and shifts our perspective on the imaged city. These "touristic views" of the golden city are pure spectacle reminiscent of the early cinema of attraction. Later, when Anna herself travels through the streets of Prague, the viewer is once again treated to a spectacle of architecture and motion. The camera is mounted on a carriage that alternatively focuses on Anna's exuberant face as she takes in the visual wonder around her and shots of those wonders from her point of view. The action of this sequence echoes the earlier scene with the carriage in the moor. In both cases, the film transports the spectator through space, demonstrating the cinema's power to animate

architecture and the landscape, and uses Anna as a figure of identification to channel the emotions of the spectator.

Giuliana Bruno has argued that the travel-film genre, one of the most significant incarnations of the early cinema of attraction, “inscribed motion into the language of cinema, transporting the spectator into space and creating a multiform travel effect” (Bruno 20). She describes the connection between this power of motion and viewer emotion as a key element of cinematic expression (pointing out that the Greek word *kinema* itself connotes both motion and emotion. “Cinematic space,” she argues, “moves not only through time and space or narrative development but through inner space. Film moves, and fundamentally ‘moves’ us, with its ability to render affects and, in turn, to affect us” (Bruno 7). This connection is manifest in Anna’s tour of Prague described above, whereby the thrill of motion, which evokes of the early cinematic genre of the travel-film, directly coincides with the sexual tension of the melodramatic narrative. The animated Prague cityscape coincides, namely, with Anna’s sexual awakening. It was her interest in Leidwein that precipitated her initial vision of the city and here she is initiated the city’s sights by her future lover, Toni. Anna’s emotional response unleashes the kinetic power of the cinema and we the viewers are transported with her.

To return to the level narrative meaning, Anna’s body itself demands to be seen as the front line of the confrontation between Germans and Czech, as well as country and city. It is as if the external divisions evident in the films discussed earlier—between Balduin and his double, and between the Jewish ghetto and the imperial court—have here become internalized within the figure of Anna. In her very being, Anna is an interstitial figure, who occupies a position much like that Bhabha attributes to the female Aila in Nadine Gordimer’s *My Son’s Story* (Bhabha 19-

21).²⁸⁹ Like Gordimer's heroine, Anna "defines a boundary that is at once inside and outside, the insider's outsidedness" (Bhabha 20). This Czech-German hybrid literally embodies the "freak social and cultural displacements" inherent in the unhomey cross-cultural and extra-territorial space she inhabits (Bhabha 17).

Although she does not have a literal *Doppelgänger* marking her hybrid nature (as Balduin does in *The Student of Prague*), we can certainly conceive of two starkly contrasting incarnations: namely the "German Anna" from the country and the "Czech Anna" associated with Prague. Significantly, Anna's Czech relatives in the city refer to her as "Anuschka," a Slavic sounding diminutive.²⁹⁰ This slight shift in naming hints at a more fundamental transformation in Anna's being. Likewise, when she first arrives in the city, Anna wears a traditional folk dress (or *Tracht*) that not only marks her as rural, but also positions her in a specific German regional culture (fig. 35). Soon after her arrival, though, she acquires a more fashionable dress that brings her into visual alignment with life in the city (fig. 35). According to Ascheid, this transformation "virtually literalizes the kind of de-Germanization that Nazi ideologues condemned in their philosophy" (75). From this point on, this "city dress" adorns Anna in every scene of the film, even after she returns to her home in the failed attempt to mend affairs with her father. Her clothing thus serves as a visual signifier to complement her Slavic-

²⁸⁹ The role of gender in this "in-between" position is a matter that demands further exploration. In Bhabha's analysis, in all the examples he cites, female figures are the key conduit for the negotiation of unhomey moments within the society, yet he only briefly comments on the relevance of feminist critique in his theories (specifically alluding to Carole Pateman's *The Disorder of Women*). See Bhabha 15 ff.

²⁹⁰ As Mareš points out, this alternative signification is a bit misleading. Although it might sound to German ears like a plausible Czech diminutive form of the name "Anna," this is not the case in common practice (typical forms rather include "Anča," "Anička," or "Andula." Mareš suggests an affinity with the Hungarian diminutive form *Ánnuska*, whereas the name sounds Russian to the ears of other Czechs with whom I've spoken. By contrast, the name of Jobst's housekeeper, Maruschka, is indeed the common Czech diminutive of Maria. See Mareš 21.

sounding diminutive name in marking the victory of the urban/Czech side of Anna’s nature over her country/German side.

This regional and racial split in Anna’s sympathies must also be understood in conspicuously gendered psychological terms: namely as the split between the will of the father and the unconscious attraction to the mother. Even though Anna never really knew her mother, being only four years old when her mother died, she admits to having what she describes as an “uncanny longing for her” (“eine unheimliche Sehnsucht nach ihr.”) Accordingly, Anna harbors a similarly mysterious desire to leave the land of her father—indeed, her *Vaterland*—in order to experience Prague, popularly referred to in Bohemia as “mother of cities.”²⁹¹ As Bruno points out, early cinema consistently aligned views of the city with a seductive feminine power. Evoking the figure of the “woman from the city” in Murnau’s *Sunrise* (who beckons, “Come to the city!”), she argues that “the energy of the street and the magnetism of the cinema conjoin



Figure 35. Left: Fresh from the country, Anna still bears the cultural signifiers of her German *Heimat*. Right: The fashionable Prague dress visually marks the emergence of “Anuschka,” the Czech urbanite, and the figurative death of the German side of her nature. (*The Golden City*) [Source: screen captures from German DVD release.]

²⁹¹ Furthermore, as Bruno has pointed out, the very etymology of the word *metropolis*—“mother city”—encodes it as a distinctly female terrain. See Bruno 31.

architecturally with the female allure” (Bruno 26). Although a superficial reading would conclude that the male engineer Leidwein is the one who instills in Anna a yearning for the city, a full awareness of the mother’s alliance with Prague makes it clear that she is the dominant source of the heroine’s “uncanny desire.” Essentially, Leidwein thus functions as a catalyst that reawakens Anna’s latent desire for her mother and by extension for Prague.

We can once again turn to Freud for insight into why the manifestation of this power ascribed to the maternal, urban side of Anna’s being, appears as “uncanny.” Her entire life, Anna’s father has actively sought to prohibit all contact with Prague, keeping any indicators of the city secret from her and forbidding her to travel there. Essentially, he works to repress all memories and thought of Prague. Before the engineer Leidwein leaves the village, Jobst returns to him the picture book of Prague that the engineer had given to his daughter and later, he secretly hides the postcard that Leidwein had sent to Anna from the city. Believing that she has finally become committed to the land, though, he ultimately gives her the postcard. This image of the golden city immediately precipitates the trancelike vision of the city described at the beginning of the talk—as if the floodgates of Anna’s repressed memories of the city and her mother burst. The very next day, she decides to sneak away to the city while her father and fiancé are away from the village. In this sense, Prague comes to Anna very much in what Freud, drawing on Schelling, describes as the most profound form of the uncanny: as something that “was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open” (Freud 132). In other words, Prague is actually “nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed” (Freud 148). By extending this reading, Prague can be thought of evoking the dark “feminine” aspects of the psyche that must be constantly monitored and controlled in order to prevent destructive eruptions of the irrational.

Significantly, the fateful vision that entices Anna to Prague appears as a reflection on the surface of the moor water. First of all, through its connection to the Vltava river (die Moldau, in German) this body of water serves as a point of linkage between the Heimat of Anna's father and the home city of her mother. Of course, her gaze at the reflection on the moor surface can also be understood as a moment of narcissistic fixation, or rather as two instances of narcissism. As Anna first gazes into the water, we see the reflection of her face. In other words, we see her looking at herself. But then her visage slowly dissolves into our first phantasmic vision of the golden city. It is as if the still predominantly "German" Anna is glimpsing into the "Prague side" of her own being via this watery mirror. As if to highlight the hybrid interstitiality of this moment, the image of her body reappears later in the sequence and literally blurs with the fantasy vision of the city. This vision, which I introduced as an uncanny double of Prague, can also be seen as the uncanny double of Anna herself, or rather the uncanny externalized apparition of one half of her divided psyche or spirit. In this moment, the film initiates what Bhabha, borrowing from Levinas, describes as the act of "seeing inwardness from the outside," which he presents as a key component in the aesthetic realization of the unhomely (see Bhabha 22-23).

Clearly, water itself (be it the moor or its offspring river) is allied with the feminine, and specifically with Prague's uncanny quality, both of which represent destructive forces that must be contained. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, this projection of Prague as feminine fantasy is reminiscent of the seer princess Libuše's vision of the city. There is danger lurking below the watery surface of this wondrous vision: the moor is home to a frightful spirit called "Wassermann" who, according to local legend, snatches souls into its underwater realm. The film implicitly links this fantastic creature with the irrational force that drives both Anna and her mother to their drowning deaths in the moor. Since the vision in the moor was the first step in

Anna's tragic downfall in Prague, we can speak of a secret alliance between this supernatural "Ungeheuer" ('monster', as Anna calls the Wassermann) and the *Unheimlichkeit* (uncanny) of the golden city. According to Ascheid, "the moor as the place where Anna finally belongs simultaneously stands for femininity and female sexuality as well as for the repressive traditions of the patriarchy" (76). She bases this reading on the association of the moor with the mother and on the father's (failed) efforts to suppress this aspect of Anna's nature. She further likens Anna's tragic "legacy of womanhood" with that of all the female characters in the film, pointing out that "for *all* women in the film, life results in failure. Both Anna's aunt and her mother had tragic lives of unhappy unions with men; the same is repeated for Anna and her father's housekeeper [Maruschka]" (Ascheid 76). Yet, she ignores the fact that *all* of the women she discusses here are racially marked as Czech by the filmic narrative. Thus, her reading of the need to eradicate the moor as "a move toward eliminating the female from the text" (Ascheid 76) is likewise a move toward eliminating the Czech from the text.

The Vltava River that flows from the moor is after all a subtle, yet powerful marker of "Czechness," due to the association with Bedřich Smetana's tone poem of the same name that is repeatedly invoked throughout the film.²⁹² Although the film employs Smetana's music to establish the sinister link between the river, the city, and Anna's tragedy, its popularity among German audiences ensured that it was one of the film's most beloved qualities. Like the image of the golden city itself, the use of music is ambiguously situated somewhere between emotional attraction and cognitive repulsion.

²⁹² Notably, this piece belongs to the cycle of tone poems inspired by the Bohemian landscape and Czech legends called *Má vlast* or *Meine Heimat*, which lends many of its motifs to the soundtrack of *The Golden City*.

On the surface, the moor would seem to be aligned with the countryside in terms of the film's fundamental urban/rural geographical split. Yet, as I have demonstrated, much more is going on within these murky depths and there is much more at stake in the desire to eradicate it. Ascheid argues that "the moor looks innocuously pretty on the surface" but restlessness and unhappiness lurk underneath and she sees this interpretation of the moor as metaphoric for Anna's state of being (72-73). She further cites Harlan himself, who explains that he too conceived of the moor as a dangerous entity whose true nature is concealed by a veil of beauty: "The danger of the moor consists of the fact that it doesn't look dark and demonic, but that it resembles a lovely landscape of meadows and woods. The danger would cease if it was [sic.] clearly visible" (Ascheid 234, note 93.)²⁹³ In keeping with the analysis above, the moor can thus be understood as a metaphor for all of the dangerous or frightening elements that the film strives to contain: womanhood, the city, and Czechness, which all intersect in the figure of Anna.²⁹⁴

Conclusion

Consistent with the "Bohemian films" discussed in Chapter 3, the landscape presented in *Linen from Ireland* and *The Golden City* trades in characteristic tropes that embody a specific type of "Germanness." Bohemia appears as a space governed by traditional peasant values, not yet adulterated by the modern world of industrialization and international commerce. In both films,

²⁹³ Original source: Harlan, *Statt Autogramme* 54.

²⁹⁴ It should also be noted here that the metaphor of the moor could also be extended to the discussion of motion and Prague as visual spectacle. In the uplands of the German *Heimat* the water is still, contained by the stability of the moor, which reflects the firmness of the land there. Yet, in the city, this same water accelerates and grows into a formidable current. Anna sees an animate vision of Prague within the moor waters. Her subsequent kinetic passage through the city and her sexual awakening are reflected in the rushing torrents of the Vltava as it flows under the Charles Bridge. Just as the still images of Prague from the beginning of the film have become animated, the water is set into motion, making it more exciting, but also more dangerous.

however, the provincial countryside and its people are set in direct opposition to a looming menace centered in Prague. There is the persistent sense that the countryside is innately German and under constant threat from racial enemies, namely Jews and Czechs, who are directly linked with the city. In this way, Bohemia is transformed into a front line in the conflict between the German *Volk* and its Others, and the uncanny power of these enemy forces is at its strongest precisely in the capital city of Prague. In contrast to the straightforward images of a firmly grounded (racial or ethnic) homogeneity in the countryside, Prague emerges as an unhomely space of ambivalence and instability, where various identities compete for dominance. Prague is imagined as an essentially cross-cultural, multi-ethnic and even extra-territorial city and therefore occupies an “in between,” interstitial space. German cinema consistently evokes this quality to imagine the city as a place for uncanny or unhomely encounters.

It is useful to consider the significant position that *The Golden City* occupies in Third Reich cinema. The film was made precisely during the period of transition between the annexation of the Sudetenland and institution of the Protectorate (1938-39) and the launching of production at Prag-Film (mid-1942).²⁹⁵ In this context, the film’s enigmatic conclusion, in which Jobst finally relents his position on the local moor and calls for it to be drained and thus eliminated, demands particular attention. On the one hand, the project to renovate the moor was initiated by Prague engineers and could thus be understood as part of the city’s invasive danger to the countryside. In this sense, the ending might be understood as Jobst’s ultimate surrender to the will of the city. On the other hand, the elimination of the moor can be read symbolically as the containment of female power and the eradication of the Czech presence in the village. As my

²⁹⁵ Filming of the first Prag-Film production, *Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid*, began in July 1942. *The Golden City* first played at the Viennale on 3 September 1942 and had its German premiere two months later on 24 November 1942.

interpretation has shown, the moor is closely aligned with Anna's female sexuality and by extension with Prague itself and the Czechness that it houses. In this sense, the drying of the moor is a reassertion of the German stake in the (newly firm) land, and a severing of the fluid channel to Prague, which linked the city to the village via the watery flow of the Vltava river. By extension, the eradication of the moor also suggests the eclipsing of Czechness and even of Prague itself, or at least the dangerous racial elements that rendered it such an uncanny place. In this way, *The Golden City* is simultaneously a justification for the need to reclaim the Sudetenland and occupy Bohemia as well as the enactment of a sort of cultural or racial cleansing of the territory. This process of ethnic purification is in accord with the Nazi policies towards Czech (not to mention Jews) in the Protectorate. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, Third Reich films made after 1942 no longer imagine Prague as a site of uncanny horror, but as a decidedly homely place that is seamlessly integrated into the German national body. With this territory firmly in German hands and the Jewish and Czech population successfully contained, Third Reich worked to imagine Prague as a quintessentially German city devoid of racial conflict.

The films discussed in this chapter do not present a unilaterally negative image of Prague, though. In fact, perhaps the strongest attraction of *The Golden City* for contemporary viewers was the promise of fantastic moving images of Prague, seen for the first time in full color. In contrast to the basically straightforward and consistent presentation of the Bohemian countryside, the image of Prague and its meaning in German national cinema is much more complex and ambivalent. Despite being a visually and emotionally potent spectacle, the potential for ethnic confrontation and the dissolution of identity always lurks beneath the alluring surface.

Whereas touristic images of Prague are conspicuously absent from *Linen from Ireland*, Harlan's treatment offers an excess of representations: a book of watercolors, postcards, the watery apparition, and extensive location shooting that reiterates and animates these earlier views of the city. *The Golden City* demonstrates a fundamental disjuncture in the perception of Prague, which can be described in terms of a split between emotion and rationality. In emotional terms the audience is aligned with Anna—she is the object of our empathy and the conduit of our viewing desires. More importantly, we experience the glory of Prague's spectacular sights through her eyes. By contrast, Jobst's speeches about Heimat and his distrust of everything associated with the city communicate the film's ideological message, which at least on the surface brings it in line with the official Nazi propaganda. Ultimately, however, one could argue that it is not this anti-Czech or anti-Prague sentiment that remains in the viewer, but rather the emotional thrill of being transported through the golden city itself. By contrast, our perception of Prague in *Linen from Ireland* remains abstract—the city's architectural territory is never explored; sweeping panoramas and traveling camera shots are reserved exclusively for the presentation of the countryside. This film thus avoids the uncanny uncertainty inherent in Prague spaces by refusing to visually depict the city at all, while *The Golden City* embraces the ambiguity, which results in an irreconcilable disjuncture between emotion and meaning.

In any case, the Czech element remains subdued in both films. Neither *Linen from Ireland* nor *The Golden City* verbally addresses the Czech-German conflict, relying instead on allusion and innuendo. Czech culture remains to greater or lesser extent hidden, which, in keeping with a Freudian reading, lends it even greater uncanny potential. In contrast to the general tendency in German cinema to imagine Bohemia as an unproblematically "German" space, as a simple extension of rump Austria (see Chapter 3), *Linen from Ireland* and *The Golden*

City imagine the countryside as a space of racial confrontation. Specifically, this territory becomes center stage for a racial confrontation, indeed a struggle for German “ethnic survival” itself. In terms of both narrative and visual representation, Prague occupies a shared, “in-between” space. But, instead of realizing this as a place for the “healing of history” (Bhabha 25) and reunification of the (multi-ethnic) community, both films retreat in fear from the uncanny, interstitial city. After leaving his homeland to confront the threat emanating from the cross-cultural and multi-racial forces in Prague and Vienna, Hubermaier returns to rural Warnsdorf having restored (racial as well as economic) integrity to the territory. In a similar albeit less successful move, Anna flees the city in the failed attempt to reinstate her relationship with her father and, by extension, with her homeland. Her tragic death offers a forceful statement on the impossibility of reconciliation and her father subsequently orders the elimination of the moor, symbolically destroying the watery bridge between homeland and city as well as German and Czech. In a defiant refusal of the frightening instability inherent in the unhomely encounter, the resolution of conflict in both films implies a severing of communication, a geographic and cultural retreat from the danger that Prague represents.

This chapter has argued that early German cinema consistently perceived Prague as a place of uncanniness and unhomeliness. Above all, the sense of unease attributed to the city always derives from some sense of division or separation. A primary factor contributing to this feeling of schism is the city’s unique history as a contested space of racial conflict between Germans, Czechs, and Jews in which each faction struggled to mark out its territory. This obsession with borders was often mapped onto the visual terrain of the films, whereby Prague is construed as an “in-between” or interstitial place that is simultaneously “home” and “foreign” to the imagined German viewers. In contrast to the typical negative images of urban spaces in films

from this period, the fears associated with Prague are deeply rooted in broader anxieties related to race, social position, and territorial integrity. There is an unsettling ambivalence to this space, in which racial and cultural boundaries are challenged and things seem easily transformed into their opposite. It is this ambiguity of definition that contributed to the city's allure as a visual spectacle that simultaneously thrilled and frightened German film audiences. Ultimately, Prague becomes a floating signifier, whose deep-seated power to evoke both wonder and terror makes it a particularly uncanny place in the early German cinematic imagination

Chapter 6

(Re)Imagining German Bohemia: Prag-Film and Third Reich Cinema

Prague has become a center of German culture once again. . . . The Bohemian capital . . . owes its greatest times of cultural blossoming to the German spirit and German work. It was through Germans that Prague grew into a city. This German seed is once again able to assert itself in this space [Raum], where terrible historical errors have forged a twisted fate. Whereas ancient art forms that were violently and unnaturally suppressed for a time have rapidly managed to flourish once more given their firm roots in the people and the region, film—being a child of precisely that era when Prague’s German character was being raped—is now faced with the task of making itself at home [heimisch] here for the first time.

-Karl-Heinz Rücke²⁹⁶

On March 16, 1939 on the occasion of the official end to Czechoslovakia and the beginning of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia under the occupation of German troops, Adolf Hitler made clear the position of these territories within the Nazi imaginary:

The lands of Bohemia and Moravia belonged to the *Lebensraum* of the German *Volk* for a millennium. Violence and misguided judgment arbitrarily ripped them from their old, historic environment and ultimately created a pressure cooker of constant unrest by incorporating them into the artificial entity of Czechoslovakia. (qtd in Dvoráková, *Prag-Film* 9)

About three years later, the German-owned and operated Prag-Film AG began production, ostensibly serving to realize Hitler’s vision for the region in the realm of cinema. The Prag-Film company was founded on 21 November 1941 as the successor company to A-B Aktien-

²⁹⁶ Rücke, “Prag und der deutsche Film,” 1.

Filmfabriken (Dvořáková, *Prag-Film* 46-7, 56). German authorities had already assumed majority ownership and control of the Czechoslovakian A-B film company and its highly modern studios in April 1940—the name change simply served as a symbolic gesture marking the pinnacle of the takeover. The adoption of the “Prag-Film” label is best understood as a sort of political brand naming for a new mode of filmmaking being brought to the market. On paper, at least, the Prag-Film brand promised film products that imagine and reflect the German legacy in Prague and Bohemia, thereby reinforcing the Reich’s cultural-historical claim to the territory.

In October 1942, just as the tide was turning against the German army in Stalingrad, the first edition of *Feuilleton-Dienst*, the official trade publication of Prag-Film opened with a short article introducing the newly founded film company. The opening lines (quoted above) clearly lay out the national interests at stake in film production in Prague. These statements proclaim the nexus of place, culture, and identity in film and ascribe to filmmaking an ideological mission. Prag-Film spokesman Karl-Heinz Rücke posits his company as a primary “bearer of culture” that must now finally realize itself as part of a larger program to give new voice to the innate German identity of the city and the surrounding territories of Bohemia and Moravia. In a 1942 article for the Ufa-Filmkunst yearly bulletin, *Der deutsche Film*, production chief Carl W. Tetting formulates Prag-Film’s mission to represent the rich German culture and tradition of the land where it is situated. He writes: “Yet these energies [of representation] are not inherent in the city of Prague alone, the entire Bohemian and Moravian territory [*Raum*] imparts a great deal to our work.”²⁹⁷ In the *Feuilleton-Dienst* article quoted in the epigram to this chapter, Rücke expounds further on the interconnection of place, identity, and film in the creation of cinematic art and

²⁹⁷ “Doch nicht allein die Stadt Prag ist es, der solche Kräfte innewohnen, auch der gesamte Raum Böhmen und Mähren vermittelt unserer Arbeit unendlich viel.” C. W. Tetting, “Filmschaffen in Prag,” *Der deutsche Film* 1942/43, 66.

emphasizes the new company's commitment to develop these concepts within the Bohemian context: "In recent years, there have been many investigations into the relationship between the *landscape, ethnic character [Volkscharakter], and filmmaking*. The new formations within the overall German film production are an indication that the connection between these concepts should be consciously maintained . . . With Prag-Film AG as its representative, the German film production native [beheimatet] to Prague will successfully prove its value in this respect."²⁹⁸ He later insists that Prague as a site of film production will offer a "special accent" and "a unique value" to the greater landscape of German film production.²⁹⁹ Clearly, in Rücke's eyes, the goal is for Prag-Film to supplement the existing body of German cinema with films that are uniquely Bohemian in character. The particular mode of Bohemian culture to which Prag-Film aspires is always already of a "German" variety, since as Tetting reminds his readers, "Prag-Film rests on ancient, *German* cultural soil."³⁰⁰ In essence, Prag-Film promised the development of a uniquely "German-Bohemian cinema," something like a Bohemian subgenre of German national cinema. Thus, apart from providing supplemental income to the German film industry, Prag-Film also had the symbolic mission of representing the Reich's cultural stake in the Bohemian heartland. In this sense, Prag-Film, at least in theory, was entrusted with an overtly cultural and political responsibility, or, in other words, an ideological agenda. With the formation of this company we

²⁹⁸ "Man hat in letzter Zeit vielfach die Beziehung zwischen Landschaft, Volkscharakter, und Filmschaffen untersucht, die Neugründungen im Rahmen der Gesamtorganisation des deutschen Filmschaffens deuten darauf hin, daß hier ganz bewußt eine Verbundenheit gepflegt werden soll. . . . Das in Prag beheimatete deutsche Filmschaffen, repräsentiert durch die Prag-Film AG, wird sich in dieser Hinsicht zu bewähren wissen." Rücke, *Feuilleton-Dienst* 1, 1. Emphasis added. Note: "Volkscharakter" is also commonly translated as "national character," however, I have opted for "ethnic" here to highlight the racializing tendency of the discourse.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* ("Sollte Prag . . . der gesamtdeutschen Filmproduktion nicht eine besondere Note, einen eigenen Wert beifügen können?")

³⁰⁰ "Die 'Prag-Film' [steht] auf altem, *deutschem* Kulturboden." Tetting, *Der deutsche Film 1942/43*, 65. Emphasis added.

see how the Nazi apparatus imagined cinema as a potent weapon in the struggle to reclaim what Hitler had described as stolen Lebensraum. In the following, I explore the extent to which Prag-Film lived up to its stated goals and the implications of the “Prague” label to this short-lived branch of German cinema.

In its four years of existence Prag-Film only managed to produce a total of twelve feature-length narrative films together with a number of cultural documentary shorts (*Kulturfilme*) and a few animated films. The feature films were generally made very quickly on a cheap budget, often restricted within the confines of the studios and featuring mostly second-rate actors. None of the features were of particularly high quality and consequently never attained popular recognition in the Reich. In general, the Prag-Film A.G. barely broke even in terms of profits and was in a permanent state of financial difficulty, which was only exacerbated by the political scandals that plagued the company leadership. Not only was Prag-Film the youngest member of the Ufa-Filmkunst family, it was also the most sickly, a sort of bastard child, brought into the world under the inopportune circumstances of wartime. Stunted from birth and suffering from malnourishment, neglect, and abuse, the company was barely learning to walk when its life was brought to an early end in 1945. It is for this reason that the company is today only remembered (if at all) as a curious, awkward footnote to the cinema of the Third Reich.

Nevertheless, this material is very much worth discussing because it raises larger issues regarding German cinema’s conception of place, particularly in terms of “homeland” (*Heimat*) and the place of Bohemia within it. In addition, the analysis of the company’s feature films helps shed new light on broader concerns within German film production in the latter years of World War II. Furthermore, as the only German company to operate in “foreign” territory, that is,

beyond the borders of the Reich, raises thorny questions regarding the special relationship between Czech and German film production and the cultural implications.

Until recently, Prag-Film only turned up sporadically in the film scholarship and was typically relegated to footnote status within a broader discussion of film production under the Nazi regime.³⁰¹ It has only been in recent years, with the growing interest in Czech film culture under Nazi occupation, that European film scholars have begun to examine Prag-Film more closely. A large portion of this new writing on the topic, however, has been published only in Czech, which severely limits its potential for circulation.³⁰² The new scholarly interest in this area has started to spread beyond the Czech borders, though: 2005 and 2006 saw a Czech-German jointly organized conference cycle that focused specifically on cinema in the Protectorate with presentations by scholars from across Europe and the United States.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Brief discussions of Prag-Film turn up, for example, in Jürgen Spiker *Film und Kapital*, Wolfgang Becker *Film und Herrschaft*, Boguslaw Drewniak *Der deutsche Film 1938-1945*, and Klaus Kreimeier *The Ufa Story*.

³⁰² The most notable works include: Lukáš Kašpar, Petr Bednařík, and Jiří Doležal. Beyond these scholarly studies, Stanislav Motl has written a number of books that adopt a more “journalistic” approach to the subject. In addition, Czech publishers continue to churn out an astounding number of biographic accounts and popular books on (primarily female) stars from the period, most of which tend towards sensational topics, such as Nazi collaboration and sexual escapades. As with Motl, the historical veracity of these works is highly problematic, since they generally accept personal testimony, anecdotal evidence, and politically motivated documents from the period at face value. The frequency with which new such publications hit the bookshelves is a profound testament to the continued fascination with this chapter of the Czech nation’s film history.

³⁰³ The first of these conferences was held in Regensburg in 2005 under the title “Film und Filmpolitik im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren 1939-1945” (Film and Film Politics in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 1939-1945). The second conference “Kinematografie im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren und ihre reichsdeutschen Zusammenhänge” (Cinematography in the Protectorate of Bohemia und Moravia within the context of the Third Reich) was held in Ústí nad labem and the publication of the lectures is still forthcoming. At this second conference, I presented a shorter and less theoretically developed version of the current chapter under the title “Die Schilderung von Prag und Böhmen in Produktionen der Prag-Film im filmhistorischen Kontext.”

Most existing research tends to speak only to the position of the company within the hegemonic and corporate framework (or “political economy”) of the Nazi film industry, that is, as a structural or political entity.³⁰⁴ Most authors writing from the perspective of German cinema devote just a few pages to the company and yet none of them explore the deeper cultural implications of this “Bohemian” company within the German industry. In other words, German scholarship has more or less uncritically accepted the occupation and integration of ostensibly “foreign” film studios into the Reich’s production. On the other side of the linguistic border, most Czech scholarship on Prag-Film discusses the company within the broader context of the Nazi occupation, often focusing on the question of Czech “collaboration” and considering the implications for Czech cinema. The only extensive study in German to specifically address Prag-Film at any length thus far is Tereza Dvořáková’s *Prag-Film AG 1941-1945: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Protektorats- und Reichskinematographie* recently published by CineGraph. Drawing on extensive archival research, Dvořáková provides an extensive structural history of the production company. Yet, as with other scholars, Dvořáková is more concerned with Prag-Film as an economic, industrial, and political structure than in the broader cultural implications of the films themselves.

Significantly, no scholar, whether writing in German or Czech, has closely examined any specific Prag-Film productions to consider company’s significance starting with the actual films it made. Instead, the company is discussed in economic and political terms and if any specific films are even mentioned by name, the focus is on factual data such as production cost, premiere date, and production personnel. Dvořáková alone incorporates a comprehensive overview of the

³⁰⁴ One notable exception is Kreimeier’s study of Ufa, which was translated into English. Yet, even here, only three pages are dedicated to Prag-Film and only a few films are mentioned by name. Furthermore, there are a number of factual errors in Kreimeier’s account (for example, the mention of a non-existent director named Vladimir Stravinsky).

company's films.³⁰⁵ Yet, even she does little more than summarize the plot and major themes, point out interesting production facts, and offer a judgment of the film's overall success and aesthetic value. As elsewhere, there is no attempt to closely analyze the visual or narrative style of the films or to consider them within the broader context of German cinema. The present chapter sets out to fill in these gaps by switching the focus to the films themselves. Building on close readings of narrative themes and visual style, my analysis situates these films within the broader context of Third Reich cinema and examines how this company's production contributes to our understanding of German cinema's unique relationship to Bohemia.

I begin with a brief overview of the company in terms of its position vis-à-vis both German and Czech film production. Rather than providing an extensive overview of the various economic and political structures that determined the company, the goal of this section is to establish the basic context in which Prag-Film was working and to consider the importance of "Prague" as a site of German film production. Then I turn my focus to a close reading of several films with particular attention to the role of Prague and or Bohemia. As even a superficial analysis of the films reveals, Prag-Film was largely unsuccessful in realizing the regionally oriented, cultural-ideological function that its executives initially envisioned for the company. Nevertheless, these films offer fascinating views into Germany's and German cinema's perception of Prague and Bohemia. On the one hand, Prag-Film consistently deterritorialized the very place in which it was filming, creating generalized, generic spaces independent of specific geography. I demonstrate how it did this both in terms of country landscapes and urban cityscapes. On the other hand, many elements in these films contributed to a process of

³⁰⁵ Kašpar also discusses several of the films at length, but this account should be approached with extreme skepticism, since it is riddled with factual errors, in addition to being poorly structured and even offering contradictory analyses.

reterritorialization, whereby Bohemia is imagined as a purely German space. Most notable in this respect are the films that present Prague itself as an unproblematically German city.

Furthermore, I suggest that rather than creating a new space for representing “German-Bohemia,” Prag-Film instead worked within established paradigms associated with Austria, effectively annexing an imaginary Bohemia into the larger empire of German-Austrian cinema. This part of my argument is informed by Sabine Hake’s work on Wien-Film and what she calls the “Vienna effect.” Finally, I consider the implications of these Czech-German hybrid films with regard to issues raised elsewhere in this dissertation. It is after all highly ironic that the German film industry in Prague during the Protectorate was highly dependent on the local Czech workforce in producing their idealized visions of Bohemia as innately German and, more importantly, Czech-free.

Cinema in Prague and the Effects of Annexation

German companies, Ufa in particular, had maintained a strong presence in the Czech film industry throughout the previous decades, yet the events of 1938-39 precipitated a fundamental reorganization of Czech-German film relations.³⁰⁶ Under military occupation, all aspects of film culture in Prague and the Czech lands came under the control of the Nazi administered Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This new Reich-governed territory represented a large new market for the German industry in terms of distribution and exhibition. Within the first few

³⁰⁶ Ufa had begun investing in local film production as early as 1933, when its Prague subsidiary produced the Czech language film *Okénko* (The Little Window). Between 1933 and 1940, the Ufa’s Prague branch produced a total of fifteen Czech films, none of which were made in a German language version. See Klimeš 2007: 114-15, 126-127 n. 8. It is also worth noting that the vast majority of these Ufa film were directed by either Vladimír Slavinský or Martin Frič, who would later become two of the most important directors for Prag-Film (under the names Otto Pittermann and Martin Fritsch, respectively).

weeks of the Protectorate, the projection of Soviet films was forbidden in Bohemia and Moravia.³⁰⁷ At the same time, German films that had previously been banned in Czechoslovakia due to their nationalist tendentiousness were brought into the territory, for example *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, 1935), *Olympia I* (1938), *Der Herrscher* (*The Ruler*, 1937) and *Der Berg ruft* (*The Mountain Calls*, 1938) (see Drewniak 702). The Nazi administration also actively sought to curb the import of American features, which had dominated the Czech film market prior to March 1939. In order to fill the void left by the new restrictions on foreign films, more and more German archive prints were sent to Prague. Thus, for the German film industry, Prague quickly became (literally and figuratively) a city of great import. In addition, the German industry began buying up Czech movie theaters (see Drewniak 702). The most important of these new acquisitions was the “Broadway” in the center of Prague, which newly christened as the cinema “Am Graben” it became the premiere cinema for German cinema in the Protectorate. This change in names not only marks the shift from America to Germany as the standard for film consumption, but more importantly it points to the larger process to Germanize Czech film culture.³⁰⁸

Even more significant for the German industry than the new markets and film venues was the opportunity to incorporate the local film production facilities for the expansion of the Reich’s

³⁰⁷ According to Drewniak, the official prohibition went into effect on March 29, 1939. Drewniak 703.

³⁰⁸ More generally, the renaming of the cinema should be understood as part of the process to “reclaim” the German essence of Prague. “Am Graben” refers to the street in which the cinema was located. This pedestrian thoroughfare served as the center of public life in the city for ethnic Germans. It serves as their “Korso” and was home to the German Casino. When all street signs in the city were made exclusively Czech in the early 20th century, “Am Graben” was officially dubbed “Na příkopě.” The Nazi occupation saw the return of this and all other German street names and the name of the cinema emphasizes this. Furthermore, the location of the most important premiere cinema directly across from the former German Casino marks the attempt to reclaim the street as the center of German culture in the city.

film output. In 1939, Prague was home to no fewer than three major film studios, which the Nazi film apparatus sought to exploit as soon as possible. Immediately after occupation, the German industry began taking advantage of the modern, well equipped, and spacious studios at Barrandow (Barrandov), Hostiwar (Hostivař) and Radlitz (Radlice) by reducing the amount of space allotted for Czech production and delegating the space to German companies. The largest, and most important for German interests were the Barrandov studios, which were administered by the AB Aktien-Filmfabriken AG (AB-Film). These rather new studios had only been constructed in 1933 and ranked among the most modern production studios in Europe at the time. Already within two months of the inception of the Protectorate, the Bavaria-Film AG began work on *Verdacht auf Ursula* (Suspicious about Ursula, 1939) in the AB studios in Barrandov in May 1939.³⁰⁹ This would be only the first in a long line of German-language produced in the Bohemian capital until the end of the war. By the end of 1939, Bavaria had started production on a further four films in the Barrandov studios. In 1940, Terra-Filmkunst AG also began filming in Prague, including location shooting in the Alt-Neu Synagogue for Veit Harlan's *Jud Süß* (*Jew Süß*, 1940), which was also partially shot in the Barrandov studios. Terra and Bavaria remained the primary companies operating in the Prague film studios, although Tobis, Wien-Film, and Ufa each shot multiple films there. The presence of these latter three companies became increasingly pronounced in 1944 and 1945 as the war came home to the cities of the Reich.

From 1939 and 1945, the number of German films shot in Prague studios rose consistently each year. Whereas 1940—the first full year of shooting in Prague—saw the production of only nine features, when the city was liberated in May 1945 there were no fewer

³⁰⁹ Klaus lists the specific date of production as beginning on May 19.

than 25 German films that had either already entered distribution or were in various stages of production in the city's studios. In terms of percentages this accounted for anywhere from 10% (in 1940) to over 30% (in 1942 and subsequent years) of the total German film production.³¹⁰

The steady increase of films being made in Prague is primarily the result of a general shift in German film production away from Berlin and other cities in the Reich in the face of intensifying bombing raids there.

Relatively untouched by allied bombing and relatively removed from the encroaching front lines, Prague had become the most desired work location within the German film industry in the later years of the war.³¹¹ The conditions surrounding film production in Prague were unlike anywhere else in the German industry. The actors and other film workers on assignment in the "Golden City" led a life of luxury that was unknown (even inconceivable) with the Reich. They spent their nights in the city's richest hotels and indulged in long, often unruly nights of drinking.³¹² For German filmmakers Prague was an ideal space of escape from the harsh wartime realities that plagued other parts of the Reich. The decadent day to day life of the filmmakers in Prague, several steps removed from the harsh realities occurring in the Reich, came itself to

³¹⁰ These figures are based on the information that Klaus provides in reference to filming locations.

³¹¹ There was only one exceptional case of allied bombs falling on Prague. On 14 February US bombers destroyed several hundred buildings and killed over 700 citizens in the city. Supposedly, the planes got disoriented by cloudy weather and mistook Prague for their intended target of Dresden, which was being bombed 120 km to the north.

³¹² For accounts of the extravagant lifestyle and extraordinary circumstances of German filmmakers in Prague see for example the memoirs of actors Ursula Herking (96-100), Peter Kreuder 361-7), Anneliese Uhlig (166-173), Carl-Heinz Schroth (144-50), and director Géza von Cziffra (1975: 294-329, 1988: 251-275). In addition, the reconstructed version of *Shiva und die Galgenblume* from 1993 (by director Hans Georg Andres and scriptwriter Michaela Krützen) features interviews and commentary on the conditions in Prague by some of the filmmakers who were working on the film as the Red Army entered the city.

resemble the imaginary life depicted in the escapist entertainment produced by the Nazi apparatus, albeit tainted with the premonition of impending doom.

All film affairs in the capital of the Protectorate at the peak of production there fell under the combined administration of the Bohemian-Moravian Film Center (*Českomoravské filmové ústředí*, ČMFÚ) and Prag-Film, which in turn answered directly to the local Nazi cultural authorities.³¹³ The ČMFÚ was formed in 1941 as a Czech-German public corporation that carried mandatory membership for all cinema owners, distributors, and filmmakers in the Protectorate. While this organization primarily governed the production and exhibition of Czech films, Prag-Film was the entity that oversaw German film production in the city. This exclusively German company came into being via the appropriation and gradual transformation of existing Czechoslovakian economic structures. As soon as June 1939, the leading Czech production company and owner of the Barrandov studios, AB-Film, was decreed “Jewish property” and subsequently came under the administration of German Treuhänder Karl Schulz. By 1941 Max Winkler’s Cautio-Treuhand company (the financial institution behind the Ufi conglomerate) had acquired the majority share of stock in AB-Film from former chief Miloš Havel. From this point on the operation of the studios in Barrandov was monitored and steered by Winkler’s office in Berlin and the Nazi administration proceeded to invest substantial sums into expanding and improving the already modern studios atop the Barrandov hill.³¹⁴ On November 21 of that same year the Nazi board announced the official re-christening of “AB-Filmfabrikations AG” as “Prag-Film AG.” Eventually, the other two Prague film studios, Foja in Radlitz/Radlice and HOST in Hostiwar/Hostivař, also came under aegis of Prag-Film. Thus,

³¹³ For more on the Bohemian-Moravian Film Center, see Klimeš 117-121.

³¹⁴ This Nazi contribution to the studios remains intact to this day. In fact, the condition of the studios went relatively unchanged until recent years when another expansion project was just completed in December 2006.

within just a few years, the newly formed Prag-Film A.G. had been instituted as the primary body overseeing the administration of the Prague studios and of all German film production in the occupied city.

Of course, the duties of Prag-Film were not only administrative—the company was also responsible for film production under its own label. The production branch of Prag-Film, though, contributed very little to German cinema, bringing a mere twelve feature films and fourteen cultural documentary shorts (*Kulturfilme*) into the theaters. This accounts for only a small fraction of the over 80 German feature films shot in Prague studios or only location around the city between 1939 and 1945.³¹⁵ Thus, when judging the importance of Prague for the Reich's film industry, it is necessary to maintain this distinction between the production of Prag-Film A.G. and the general film conditions in the Bohemian capital. Whereas, Prag-Film A.G. was in a constant state of administrative and financial difficulty, which seriously impaired its own film production, Prague itself was very much a boomtown during the years of the Protectorate. From 1940 onward Prague was rapidly transforming into a new capital for German film fantasies: By 1944 the so-called “Prague bunker” in Barrandov was even beginning to overshadow Berlin's Babelsberg studios in terms of its importance for the Reich's film production (Kreimeier 338-9). When Goebbels visited Barrandov in November 1944 he declared Prague a “German film metropolis of the future” (Kreimeier 339). In fact many of the best remembered films of the war years were shot in the Prague studios and on location around the city, including Harlan's *Der grosse König* (The Great King, 1942), G. W. Pabst's *Paracelsus* (1943), the Hans Albers vehicle *Grosse Freiheit Nr. 7* (1944), Willi Forst's *Wiener Mädeln* (Young Girls of Vienna, 1945/49)

³¹⁵ According to the information offered by Ulrich Klaus in *Deutsche Tonfilme*, a total of 85 films were shot in Prague, either or in the studios or on location in the city, between 1939 and 1945. This number does not include productions underway in the studios at the end of the war, which were never completed.

and the adaptation of *Die Fledermaus* (The Mouse, 1945/46) with Johannes Heesters.³¹⁶ By contrast, the company that was the city's namesake never produced a film of lasting significance, either for film scholarship or for popular memory.

For the most part, "Prag-Film" was merely a unique kind of cinematic brand name, whose existence was primarily symbolic, to serve as the banner for the German film presence in the capital of the Protectorate. When it was introduced as a completely new and unknown company in 1942, the Prag-Film A.G. faced an uphill battle in attempting to gain brand-name recognition within the industry and among audiences. When the company began to bring its first productions onto the market, there was a massive effort within the Reich's film industry to quickly build a popular reputation for the "youngest of the German production companies." The materials in advertising packages sent out by the Deutsche Filmvertriebs-Gesellschaft GmbH in Berlin, constantly reiterated the name "Prag-Film" as if it were a sort of mantra and encouraged theater owners to do likewise in their own advertising.³¹⁷ The sooner "Prag-Film" gained recognition as a production company, the more the German industry could rely on profits from its new daughter corporation. As circumstances would have it, though, the Prag-Film A.G. was neither to achieve critical esteem nor financial fluidity.

³¹⁶ See Klaus. Note: the last two films mentioned were not completed and released until after the war had ended.

³¹⁷ See for example, the brochure for advertising materials (Werbehelfer) for *Himmel, wir erben ein Schloss*, which advises: "Make it your policy to speak of a "Prag-Film" in all possible announcements. Responsibility for the rapid initiation of "Prag-Film" is also entrusted to the theater owners. Please be aware of this duty!" ("Machen Sie es sich zum Grundsatz, möglichst in allen Ankündigungen von einem 'Prag-Film' zu sprechen. Die schnelle Einführung der 'Prag-Film' ist also nicht zuletzt in die Hand des Theaterbesitzers gegeben, bitte seien Sie sich dieses Auftrages bewußt!") BA-FA, folder 7124 "Himmel, wir erben ein Schloß."

Localizing Germany in Bohemia

As we have seen, representatives of Third Reich cinema such as Rücke and Tetting expressed a commitment to exploring the interconnections between landscape, folk character, and film production. Their vision for Prag-Film suggests a regionalized model of moviemaking, whereby studios and companies are explicitly charged with representing the area local to them, particularly the people who live there and their cultural traditions. According to such a framework, one would expect Bavaria-Film to focus specifically on the regional Bavarian landscape and culture, while Wien-Film would be concerned particularly with producing images of Vienna and Austrian more generally. In practice, of course, the productions of Bavaria-Film do not overwhelmingly display conspicuous culture-specific traits relating to Bavaria, and likewise the products of Berlin-Film are in no way more “Berlin-esque” in character than those of other companies. In the case of Wien-Film, however, there is some argument for a concerted approach to production that can be affiliated with the regional implications of the company’s brand name. Presumably, Wien-Film is also included as part of the “new formations” in German film production, to which Rücke ascribes (together with Prag-Film) the task of realizing the connection between film, landscape, and (regional) ethnicity.

According to Sabine Hake, there is indeed a certain cultural aesthetic that permeates many of Wien-Film’s productions and ties this company to its geographical landscape. She points out that a significant number of the company’s productions can be, in a sense, pigeonholed within a certain mode of the “Viennese,” in which the cinematic language available to represent “Wien” was limited by a rigid, pre-ordained system of representation. In her assessment, a primary function of this company established in 1938 was to “offer musical entertainment . . . from the viewpoint of Vienna as a variation on, if not alternative to, true Germanness” (*Popular*

Cinema 156). It is precisely this intention that lies at the heart of the sentiment expressed by Tetting and Rücke -- namely, the creation of a specifically Bohemian form of film entertainment that would present a variation of Germanness unique to the territory.

Not surprisingly, the ideological, cultural-ethnic mission of Prag-Film was best served by the documentary-style “culture films” (*Kulturfilme*) that the company produced. This generally holds for all German production at the time, which worked according to Goebbels’s “orchestra theory,” whereby culture films and newsreels bear the primary ideological burden, whereas feature films provide purely distractive entertainment. The majority of the company’s “culture films” focused on themes related specifically to Bohemia and Moravia or with other eastern territories of the historic “German Reich” such as East Prussia and Silesia. In terms of the lands previously belonging to Czechoslovakia, the focus tends towards either the German-dominated Sudetenland or Prague. The ethnographically-oriented *Prager Barock* (Prague Baroque, 1943) frames the blossoming of high baroque in Prague as the work of German and Italian artists and architects, while any Czech contribution to the city’s culture is completely ignored. *Egerland* (1942/43) presents the lifestyle and historic traditions of the German population in this Bohemian region. After asserting that the livelihood of these Germans was suppressed under Czechoslovak hegemony, the film specifically praises Konrad Henlein, leader of the Nazi Sudeten German party, for helping “liberate” them from Czech dominance. Another area of the so-called Sudetenland is the focus of *Rübezahls Reich* (Rübezahl’s Empire, 1944), which showcases the dramatic landscape of the Giant Mountains that are the setting for the numerous folk legends of the mountain spirit Rübezahl.³¹⁸ The film *Das Orchester* (The Orchestra, 1944)

³¹⁸ Note: Czech folklore also includes legends of this trickster spirit, who is often depicted as a giant or a gnome. In Czech there is actually an etymological link between the name of the

uses the overture to Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* to present the instruments of the orchestra. The choice of music is telling here, since Weber's opera is based on a Bohemian legend and set in the Jizera Mountain (Isergebirge) region of the Sudetenland—this particular overture thus serves to strengthen the link between the Bohemian land and German genius. This approach is also echoed in *Johann Gregor Mendel* (1945), which credits the work of this Bohemian-German genetic pioneer with founding the science that can lead to the eradication of degeneration in humans through selective breeding, an approach that was naturally embraced by Nazi race politics. In each of these cases, the political meanings are more or less transparent and the concerted effort to reassert the Reich's claims to these "historic German lands" in Bohemia is easily recognizable. Thus, it is easy to reconcile these films with Prag-Film's stated mission. In the case of the company's narrative features, however, the ideological content tends to be more subtle and complex.

Since the company produced only twelve full-length feature films that span a wide range of genres (*Heimatfilme*, musical comedies, screwball comedies, and criminal films), it is difficult to make generalizations about a "Prag-Film style." We can only speculate as to how the company might have looked if it hadn't been for the drastic turn the war took precisely at the moment when Prag-Film began production.³¹⁹ Nevertheless, for all the cultural-ideological posturing of

mountains, Krkonoše, and that of the spirit, Krakonoš. Naturally any links between the spirit and Czech culture are ignored.

³¹⁹ In addition to the twelve completed films, the company had two feature films in mid-production when Soviet troops marched into Prague. The Géza von Cziffra crime drama *Leuchtende Schatten* had been delayed in production, due to the director landing in jail for dealing on the black market. The Hans Albers vehicle *Shiva und die Galgenblume* under the direction of Hans Steinhoff, famous for such propaganda features as *Hitlerjunge Quex* and *Ohm Krüger*, was to be the first feature-length production in color from the Barrandov studios. We can only speculate, but it seems likely that the release of these high profile films would have greatly increased the reputation and the revenues of the struggling Prag-Film A.G. In any case, their completion would have pushed the company further outside the realm of "Bohemian

Tetting and Rücke, there is in fact very little evidence of a unique “Bohemianness” in any of the films actually made by Prag-Film. What is perhaps most striking about the feature productions of the Prag-Film is the almost complete absence of the city itself. For all the signifying potential of the company’s name, Prague and the surrounding Bohemian territory play a highly insignificant role in Prag-Film’s feature productions, whether in terms of setting or plot. In this respect, Prag-Film stands as a failed attempt to establish a new filmic space in which to represent the specific regional Bohemian-German identity as promoted by the company’s brand name and mission statements.

In fact, most of the images of Bohemia and its capital presented in Prag-Film movies are overtly couched in the larger historical context of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Consequently, the images in these films are more readily identifiable with the “topos Vienna” that Hake describes than any sort of “topos Prague.” Moreover, when Prague does appear in these films, the image is radically different than the “uncanny” or “unhomely” visions of the city traditionally seen in German cinema (discussed at length in Chapter 6). Ultimately, the “annexation of an imaginary city” (to borrow Hake’s term) that we see in the production of Prag-Film involved substantial renovation to the image of Prague—elements deemed “German” enough were salvaged for re-imagination as an extension of the “Austrian wing” of German cinema, while all other parts were covered up or discarded.

The impetus to investigate the ideological implications of these feature productions with regard to Bohemian culture and territory is provided by the company’s promotion of itself. Prag-Film’s production chief Tetting himself believed that the company’s unique cultural-ideological

themed films.” It is safe to say, though, that they would have nevertheless stood out among German productions from the period since both were crime films, a genre that had gone into considerable decline during the war years.

mission should not be relegated to the production of documentary shorts alone. He specifically states that the territory of Bohemia and Moravia “will not only be brought to life through the production of interesting culture films, it will also be the task of the events in diverse feature films to reflect this diverse and impressive place [*Lebensraum*] within their plots”³²⁰ In the first year of production at Prag-Film it appeared as if this policy would indeed be realized. In the subsequent 1943/44 volume of *Der deutsche Film*, Tetting proudly reports on three Bohemian-themed feature films that his company has already brought to German audiences. “The public will become first acquainted with the beautiful cities and landscapes of this region [*Raum*] with the films *Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid, Schicksal am Strom, Verliebte Leute* [i.e., *Glück unterwegs*]. Further planned projects, however, will draw upon the deep, underlying cultural context and place them in the center of the filmic events.”³²¹ With this statement, Tetting implicitly recognizes the lack of hard “cultural currency” carried by the company’s initial films, but promises that future productions will be more firmly rooted in the (German-)Bohemian culture. In essence, he is predicting the development of a uniquely “Bohemian German cinema” or at least a distinctly Bohemian cinematic genre.

Beyond the films mentioned here, though, Prag-Film only successfully produced one other film that could be thought of as engaging a specifically Bohemian thematic, namely the

³²⁰ “[der Raum Böhmen und Mähren] wird . . . nicht nur bei der Herstellung von interessanten Kulturfilmen lebendig werden, sondern es wird auch dem Geschehen verschiedener Spielfilme vorbehalten sein, diesen vielseitigen, eindrucksstarken Lebensraum im Rahmen der Handlung widerzuspiegeln.” Tetting, *Der deutsche Film 1942/43*, 66.

³²¹ “Mit den Filmen *Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid, Schicksal am Strom, Verliebte Leute* wird das Publikum bereits mit den Schönheiten von Stadt und Land dieses Raumes bekanntgemacht, weitere Planungen aber greifen die *tiefgehenden kulturellen Zusammenhänge* auf und stellen sie in den Mittelpunkt des filmischen Geschehens.“ C. W. Tetting, “Zum Programm der Prag-Film,” *Der deutsche Film 1943/44*, 31. Note: *Verliebte Leute* (People in Love) was one of the working titles for the film *Glück unterwegs*. This is in addition to the working title *Die Reise nach Wien* (The Journey to Vienna), which is discussed later in this chapter.

Pushkin-inspired historical piece *Der zweite Schuss* (The Second Shot) from 1943.³²² Of the twelve features produced by Prag-Film, it is only in these four films (i.e., the three mentioned by Tetting plus *The Second Shot*) that even suggest some sort of deeper connection with the territory in which they were made. A closer analysis of the films themselves reveals, however, that even they have very little that can be identified as typically “Bohemian” in character. On the contrary, it becomes evident that any connections these films make to the cultural heritage of the region are superficial and ultimately negligible. In stark contrast to Tetting’s regionalist trumpeting, none of these films truly “acquaints the audience with the beauty of the cities and landscape” of this territory. Instead, each of these films established at best a highly ambiguous and tentative link to the territory and its cultural tradition.

New German Homelands

In terms of visual and narrative style, *Love, Passion, and Suffering* (1942/43) can easily be understood within the aesthetic framework of the *Heimatfilm* genre. The film’s commitment to the idyllic presentation of country life is evident from the very opening moments. The title credits are displayed over a series of idealized images of a village and the romantic landscape around it (fig. 36). After the credits the film introduces one of the film’s protagonists, Anna, reaping a field with traditional scythe together with the rest of the village community (fig. 36). The entire opening sequence is underpinned by the soaring musical strains of a female choir with sweeping orchestral accompaniment, which intensifies the rural fantasy of the images. From the first moments, the film transports us to the “dreamy place” of rivers and fields as promised by

³²² In fact, it is curious that Tetting does not mention *Der zweite Schuss* in his list of films that showcase Bohemian culture. This would seem to indicate that even he realized that the coincidental and superficial setting of the film in Bohemia did not in fact specifically reflect the local culture in any way.



Figure 36. Left: The opening titles of *Love, Passion, and Suffering* immediately disclose the film's *Heimatfilm* inclinations. Right: The peasant girl Anna and her pastoral atmosphere. [Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

the advertising materials. No sooner are we introduced into this peaceful pastoral space than we experience a disruption from the outside: a massive explosion rocks a nearby hillside where a group of workers is preparing the way for the construction of a railway into the village. This construction project represents the incursion of “civilization” and “modernity” into this isolated and timeless space. These outside forces threaten to destroy the traditional rural way of life, bringing unrest into the otherwise peaceful village—as we witness dramatically when a violent melee erupts among the workers as they drink at the local pub. In its Manichean fantasy world, the film is excessively schematic in its employment of the tradition versus modernity formula typical of the *Heimatfilm*.

As is also common to the *Heimatfilm* genre, modernity and the disharmony associated with it is causally linked to urban life. The men at work on the railway hail from the city and their completed project will create direct transportation link between the urban and the rural, literally bringing the city to the village. This thematic confrontation between city and country is reinforced when we are transported to the city seen in the middle of the film. When the unwed Anna becomes pregnant—with the child of Paul, an engineer from the city in charge of

constructing the railway—she is compelled to leave her village in disgrace. She follows the railway tracks to the city, where she becomes a lowly flower peddler in order to support herself and her daughter, Therese. Our first impression of the city marks it as visually and aurally distinct from the pastoral countryside. We see a busy street filled with pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages—the urban style of clothing and the refined design of the carriages stand in clear opposition to the traditional costumes and wooden carts of the village. Strains of a Strauss waltz (*Tales from the Vienna Woods*) emerge from the façade of an upscale nightclub where Anna goes to sell her flowers. The impressions of urban modernism are further intensified when the narrative instantly leaps forward twenty years. Now these very same streets are bustling with automobiles and lively jazz music pours forth from the nightclub (fig. 37). The urban space is also tinged with the suggestion of moral depravity and marked as a space of danger. While making her rounds through the city, Therese is wooed by a sharply dressed baron, who tries to



Figure 37. Therese navigates the concrete urban streets peddling her dolls (*Love, Passion, and Suffering*). [Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

buy her love with dazzling pieces of gold. Propelled into shock at seeing her daughter with this man, Anna wanders into the busy street and is mortally injured by an automobile. Before she dies, Anna implores her daughter to leave the city and return to the village, presumably in order to escape from the degeneracy inherent in the urban space.

Obedying her mother, Therese returns to the village, where the remainder of the action occurs. Thus, the film follows a parabolic path in terms of narrative and spatial movement whereby the episodes in the city serve as the turning point. Whereas the story has followed Anna up to this point, after propelling us forward twenty years it immediately shifts the focus to her (now adult) daughter Therese—who like Anna also peddles on the street, selling straw dolls as opposed to flowers. As the daughter of an illicit affair between a village woman and city man, Therese inherits the “sins” of her mother. The aura of immorality that surrounds Therese brings disruption to the village when she returns there. The remainder of the film concerns the resolution of this disturbance in order to return the village to the state of harmony seen in the opening scenes.

Before she dies, Anna makes her daughter swear to never give her love to a man. Back in the village, Therese becomes the object of desire for multiple men there, but she is only truly interested in the artist, Marschall, who has traveled here from the city to capture the romantic landscapes on canvas. Despite her feelings, though, Therese does not confess her love to the artist, which brings suffering to them both. The moment of reconciliation comes when her father—who has also returned to the village—confesses on his deathbed that he never loved another woman besides Anna. With the “purity” of the love between her mother and father now confirmed, the weight of the past is lifted and Therese is able to realize her love with the artist.

At the same time, the discord that the building of the railway brought to the isolated village is overcome and life returns to the “natural” state of pastoral harmony.

One of the final shots makes the restoration of an original sense of balance literal by presenting a visual echo of the image of rural idyll that opened the film (fig. 38). In this moment, though, the scene is interrupted by the figure of the artist as he paints the landscape—his act of romantic artistic creation mirrors the film’s own objective to render ideal depictions of the countryside. This image also vindicates the “man from the city” by demonstrating his respect for the land and his efforts to capture this natural setting in art. In keeping with the typical format of the *Heimatfilm* genre, the film ends with “an imaginary solution to the conflict between tradition and progress, one which allows for the ostensibly harmonious coexistence of both” (von Moltke, *No Place* 64.) The consummation of the love between Therese and Marschall is also symbolic of a joyous marriage between urban and rural, between civilization and tradition, and the promise of a utopian future. This idealistic resolution of conflict is communicated in a tableau of true iconographic kitsch: seen from a low angle, Therese and Marschall stand with a lamb between them as they both gaze radiantly at the village below them with beaming smiles that proudly greet the glorious days ahead (fig. 38).

In a surprising number of ways, *Love, Passion, and Suffering* reiterates and reformulates many of the main themes of *The Golden City*. For example, both films clearly operate within the ideological and aesthetic parameters of the *Heimatfilm* genre in their promotion of *Blut and Boden* values. In keeping with this approach, both films foreground the urban/rural conflict. In each, the story opens with an idyllic rural village that is threatened by a modern engineering project operated by men from the city. In addition, both films position young female characters at the center of the city/country conflict. They are the film’s true victims, as the violence of the



Figure 38. Left: The closing moments of *Love, Passion, and Suffering* depict the restoration of the *Heimat* idyll as introduced during the opening credits (see fig. 36). Right: Images of pastoral kitsch punctuate the optimistic conclusion of *Love, Passion, and Suffering*. [Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

city is inflicted upon their bodies. Both films share a similar emotional core: a young village girl is in love with an engineer from the city, a relationship that results in the girl moving to the city and facing the consequences of an illegitimate pregnancy. The correlation is striking, particularly the fact that both village girls even bear the exact same name: Anna.³²³ What's more, just like Anna in *The Golden City*, Therese in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* must bear and even atone for the "sins" of her dead mother—in this way, both film suggest a certain sense of inherited guilt that is passed from one generation to the next (via the mother). In both cases, the daughter's fascination with the city is linked with gold: Therese receives gold pieces from her unscrupulous suitor, while Anna's vision of Prague renders the nickname of "the golden city" literally. It seems safe to presume that *Love, Passion, and Suffering* was to some extent inspired by and even modeled after *The Golden City*. Prag-Film executives likely sought to ride the coattails of

³²³ One of the original working titles for *Love, Passion, and Suffering* was in fact *Anna, die Magd (Anna the Maiden)*. This would have made the association with *The Golden City* even more evident, since that film was still quite fresh in the popular memory.

Harlan's hugely successful film in the attempt to create financial profit for the newly founded company.³²⁴

Despite the remarkable similarities between the two films, however, there are a number of significant differences that have profound implications with regard to the issues at stake in the current discussion. Most noticeable are the starkly divergent, nearly inverted, conclusions in each film: whereas Anna (in *The Golden City*) is rejected by her father and submits to the same tragic end as her mother, dying alone in the moor, Therese forgives her father, thereby dissolving her mother's curse and opening the door to a fairy tale happy ending with her beloved. As many sources have commented, Anna's tragic end in *The Golden City* marks a radical reformulation of the source material (Richard Billinger's stage drama *Der Gigant*).³²⁵ According to Harlan's own testimony, he was forced to change the ending under direct pressure from Goebbels, who deemed it incompatible with Nazi racial ideology that Anna be allowed to give birth to a "Czech bastard," who would be legal heir to her father's (German) land (Harlan, *Im Schatten* 95). Whereas the Anna in *The Golden City* commits a transgression that threat to the racial viability of the German homeland, the Anna in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* has an illicit liaison that breaks the moral norms of the village, yet lacks any farther reaching implications for the blood of the community. Thus, Therese's commitment to her mother's homeland is able to reconcile the sins of the previous generation and reunite the community.

In contrast to the Czech-German conflict central to Harlan's film, *Love, Passion, and Suffering* avoids all engagement with issues of race or ethnicity. In essence, we are invited to perceive both the rural and urban settings as uniformly "German," that is, free of ethnic

³²⁴ *Love, Passion, and Suffering* premiered on 13 August 1943, just over eight months after *The Golden City* had premiered in the Reich on 24 November 1942. (It was shown at the Venice film festival a few months earlier in September.)

³²⁵ See, for example, Ascheid 77 and Lowry, "Ideology and Excess" 138-139.

confrontation. In connection with this assertion, it should also be noted that the two films are radically divergent in their relationship to geographical space. While *The Golden City* overtly situates the action in the Bohemian Forest and in Prague (both contiguous with the Vltava river, which is also mentioned by name), *Love, Passion, and Suffering* is remarkably deficient of indicators that would orient the story within any specific geographic location. Although this seemingly superficial point might seem of little importance, I argue that this lack of grounding has a profound effect on how we ultimately understand the function of *Love, Passion, and Suffering* within the larger political and ideological context. Furthermore, I suggest that this move away from actual geography towards an undefined and therefore predominantly imaginary space is characteristic for all Prag-Film productions and marks a fundamental shift in German cinema's relationship to the Bohemian territory.

The most conspicuous distinction between *The Golden City* and *Love, Passion, and Suffering* is the lack of specificity with regard to the urban space in the latter. As outlined in the previous chapter, much of the emotional and ideological power of *The Golden City* derives from the fact that the city in the urban/rural conflict involves Prague and not just any random city. Prague occupied a unique place in the German imaginary as a space of architectural wonder as well as uncanny fear, its racial makeup marking it as a place of unstable identity, as a space that is simultaneously homely and unhomely. By contrast, the city in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* is never named, nor does it display any characteristics that might suggest the identity of the city. We do not see any definitive landmarks and there are no wide establishing shots to orient the viewer in this urban space by presenting the city skyline. Instead, the film unceremoniously inserts the spectator directly into the crowded streets of a generic looking European city (fig. 6). It is obvious to the discerning viewer that the urban scenes were not filmed on location in the

streets of any actual city, but rather on a sound stage with sets constructed in a generalized architectural style typical for any number of Central European metropolises. The strains of the Strauss waltz that accompany our first view of the city evoke Vienna, yet this is hardly a fixed signifier and such music could be used as cinematic shorthand to suggest any number of cities at the turn of the century, either within Austria-Hungary or beyond. In contrast to the well-known images (and sounds) of Prague, which immediately trigger a slew of associations and implications for the viewer, this anonymous urban space is open to interpretation. The only thing the film openly communicates is vague stereotypes and clichés of the city—any further associations are purely subject to the speculations and imagination of the viewer.

If we take into consideration that the film was made by Prag-Film and consequently understand the rural setting as belonging to the company's mission to showcase the newly re-acquisitioned territory of Bohemia or Moravia, we might be led to identify this imaginary urban space as Prague or even Brno. Yet, as the official advertising materials for *Love, Passion, and Suffering* show, Prag-Film deliberately neglected to feature any specific geographical connection to the folk themes in *Love, Passion, and Suffering*. Rather than asserting any specifically Bohemian character, these materials describe the filmic setting in overtly non-descript and generic terms. All specific geographical designations are suspiciously lacking in all published descriptions of the story or even of the filming itself. In all the marketing materials on file for the film in the German Bundesarchiv there are only few sentences suggesting that the setting is “exquisitely beautiful Bohemia” (“das herrlich schöne Böhmerland”) or the “uniquely charming Bohemian landscape.”³²⁶ Drawing on her access to the non-public and uncategorized Prag-Film

³²⁶ The former comment is on page 18 (the second to last page!) of the *Bild- und Text-Informationen: Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid* booklet, which proclaims that the film is set in “exquisitely beautiful Bohemia” (“das herrlich schöne Böhmerland”). The text following this

files at the Czech National Film Archives, Dvoráková concludes that the intended setting of the film is Moravia and adds that the filmmakers did not define the location more specifically “for propagandistic reasons” (Dvoráková 77). Her assertion that the setting is Moravia and not Bohemia as some advertising materials suggest serves to further highlight the ambiguity surrounding the film’s relationship to geographic space.

Likewise, the film text itself does little to situate the diegesis in any specific geographical context. The folk costumes and musical styles bear the stamp of Central Europe and the gently rolling hills suggest to topography of the region, yet any precise point of orientation are lacking. The customs, music, and costumes are generically “Central European” suggesting that the village might lie in any number of rural regions of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire (e.g., Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Galicia, even possibly Slovenia or Silesia).³²⁷ Thus, the evidence provided by the film and the materials that accompanied it demonstrates that little credence can be put in Tetting’s claim that *Love, Passion, and Suffering* belongs to those films that “acquaint the audience with the beauty of the cities and the landscape.” After all, how can the spectator get to know a region when she or he is unable to even identify the geographic place?

Even if we recognize the lack of specific cultural or geographic signifiers, the question might still remain: why is all of this ambiguity interesting? Despite the contradiction between Prag-Film’s stated goals and the resulting product, what difference does it make that the filmic space lacks definitive cartographic coordinates? To begin with, it should be noted that the Nazi

declaration, though, does not offer any further commentary or specification whatsoever. The second comment is in the advertising packet “Für die Auswertung.” BA-FA, folder 9933 “Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid.”

³²⁷ The music performed at the village festival, for example, is centered round the stringed cimbalom and punctuated with trilled “li-li-li” calls by the women—stylistic attributes that can be found in a number of regional styles throughout Central Europe. Note that the cimbalom also appears in *The Second Shot*, which is ostensibly set somewhere in Bohemia.

administration itself clearly believed that there was much at stake in this matter. As Dvoráková suggests, Prag-Film's concern with these issues led them to deliberately disassociate the setting with any specific geographic location "for propagandistic reasons." This assertion points to a connection between ideology and the representation of space that demands further exploration. Although at this point we can only speculate as to what political matters might have been at stake if the events of *Love, Passion, and Suffering* had a specific Bohemian or Moravian setting, we are nevertheless compelled to consider the implications of the geographic whitewashing practiced by the film.

As noted above, the historical discourse on the film employs only general terminology to describe the setting. The resulting image is that of an anonymous, idyllic countryside without any specific cultural or geographical referents. One promotional brochure paints the setting as "a rafting village isolated from the rest of the world ... a dreamy place between the river and the fields."³²⁸ The film's official information booklet places the action "in a secluded village somewhere at the edge of Europe," while the review in *Film-Kurier* describes the rural locale as the "countryside in the deep southwest."³²⁹ All of these descriptions downplay geographic specificity, while foregrounding the rural, almost dream-like, quality of the village. This is an intensely imaginary landscape that inhabits a space somewhere separate from the viewer's world. Although it bears certain surface traits of an ethnographic account of existing folk culture, it is

³²⁸ "[ein] abseits der Welt gelegen Flösserdorf . . . ein kleiner verträumter Ort zwischen Fluß und Feldern" *Bilder-Dienst der Prag-Film Aktiengesellschaft* 1 (24 Nov. 1942) 2-3. BA-FA, folder 9933 "Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid."

³²⁹ "irgendwo am Rande Europas in einem abgelegenen Dorf." *Bild- und Text-Informationen: Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid*. Berlin: Vertriebs-Presse-Referat der Deutschen Filmvertriebs-Gesellschaft m.b.H., 1942[?]. 7. BA-FA, folder 9933 "Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid." "Eine Landschaft tief im Südosten." Felix Henseleit, "Liebe, Leidenschaft und Leid," *Film-Kurier* 25.116. (16 Aug. 1943) 2.

nothing of the sort. All of the rural costumes, architecture, music, and customs are ultimately only empty clichés and representational shorthand for some imaginary “folk life.”

Although the story of *Love, Passion, and Suffering* resists being pinned to any specific regional or cultural context, the implication is clearly that the action, whether in the village or in the city, takes place in a space that is purely “German.” Whereas *The Golden City* frequently inserts bit of Czech language (both written and spoken) to underscore the hybrid nature of the city, the urban space in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* is purely German in character (albeit with a slight accent in the spoken language that invite associations with Austrian dialects). Furthermore, the film clearly imagines itself not as a depiction of some generalized idea of “rural life” somewhere in Europe, but specifically as a representation of the German homeland. The Prag-Film promotional brochure *Feuilleton-Dienst* introduces the film under the headline “Beloved homeland” (*geliebte Heimat*), which asserts that the *Heimatfilm* genre has achieved great popularity among German audiences in recent years and explicitly positions *Love, Passion, and Suffering* within the ideological program of the genre. Yet, here as elsewhere, the location and character of the homeland depicted in the film are not further qualified. The lack of any firm spatial grounding thereby lends a mythical quality to the film’s pastoral images, which are consequently perceived not only as relating the story of one rural community, but as an allegory for the German *Volksgemeinschaft* as a whole.

The exegesis of the film’s plot in the same *Feuilleton-Dienst* article employs the generic terminology of the *Heimatfilm* genre to suggest the meaning of the film for the German audience. The author describes how Anna is forced to leave the “quiet seclusion of her home village

[*heimatliches Dorf*]” and travel to the “remorseless city.”³³⁰ Then, in a nod towards the coupling of land and genetics inherent in *Blut und Boden* ideology, the article insists that Anna’s daughter Therese, despite her place of birth, is not a true “child of the city,” but maintains in her heart a desire to return to her homeland, that is, the region where her mother is from. Subsequently, according to this logic, Therese’s struggle to be accepted in her mother’s village is framed as a “battle for the homeland [*ein Kampf um die Heimat*].”³³¹ Implicitly, then, the author associates Therese’s battle with that of German soldiers, who are currently fighting to defend the homeland, concluding: “the law of military necessity, which has sent German soldiers thousands of kilometers from their homes [*Heimat*], has made us ever more aware of the love for our country and its earth, demanding that this love be seized and profoundly addressed in filmic form.”³³² Implicit in this discussion is the fact that, wherever it might be, Therese’s homeland belongs to “Germany” and that the integrity of this homeland is under threat and must be passionately protected. This “homeland” is not bound by physical borders of geography—it is rather an unlimited emotional ideal, an abstract fantasy realm for an imagined German community. In ascribing an ideological function into what might superficially appear to be a film divorced from contemporary political concerns, this article points to the deeper meaning of the spatial ambiguity, or deterritorialization, at work in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* and how this mode distinguishes it from many of the other “Bohemian” or “Prague films” discussed in this dissertation. This film does not problematize nor even acknowledge the German presence in Bohemia. Unlike the “Prague films” (discussed in Chapter 6), it is not concerned with mobilizing the viewer’s emotions to empathize with the plight of ethnic Germans in Bohemia. Indeed, this

³³⁰ E.m.e. , “Geliebte Heimat,” *Feuilleton-Dienst der Prag-Film Aktiengesellschaft* 1 (31 October 1942) 9. BA-FA, folder 7124 “Himmel, wir erben ein Schloß.”

³³¹ “Geliebte Heimat” 9.

³³² “Geliebte Heimat” 9.

film is not overtly concerned with Bohemia at all. Thus, it cannot even be read as an implicit confirmation of the innately German character of the region in which it was filmed and subsequently as a justification for the Reich's territorial claims there (as expressed, for example, by Mozart's obsession with the landscape of the Moravian "homeland" in *A Little Night Music*). By eclipsing all issues of race and territory, the film invests all of its emotional and ideological power in the urban/rural conflict and melodramatic clichés. In so doing, *Love, Passion, and Suffering* constructs an idealized representation of the imagined German nation that transcends any local contextualization and speaks directly to German fantasies of cultural integrity and territorial security that were a leading preoccupation in the latter years of World War II.

Although it is undoubtedly the most extreme case, *Love, Passion, and Suffering* is not the only Prag-Film production to invoke the sentiment of Heimat or to idealize rural village life. *Das schwarze Schaf* (The Black Sheep, 1943) tells the story of a powerful business woman from the city, who travels to a small rural village, where she is ultimately brought around to admire the traditional way of life there. The film also rehearses the typical visual mode of marking seen in *Love, Passion, and Suffering* and in *The Golden City*, albeit in reverse: as the woman gradually comes into alignment with the rural way of thinking, she simultaneously trades in her urban dress for a folk costume, which also happens to be "more ladylike" in the eyes to the locals. *Himmel wir erben ein Schloss* (Heavens, We've Inherited a Chateau, 1942) reiterates a similar urban/rural tension. When a city family inherits a country estate with a large manor house, the enterprising husband hatches a plan to construct a "modern housing development" on the land. Ultimately his wife (played by Anny Ondra) convinces him to renounce his capitalistic ambitions and to respect the land and its tradition. The film concludes with an iconic sequence that underscores the pro-rural message: the "enlightened" city couple steers a wooden cart filled with

hay along an idyllic country road while singing the lines “I am happy, you are happy!” (fig.39). In *Komm zu mir zurück* (Come back to me, 1944) a male workaholic leaves a hectic city of modern skyscrapers on a “forced vacation” to the Wörthersee in the Austrian Alps. Against the typically idyllic backdrop of mountains and alpine lakes, the man reignites the relationship with his estranged wife when he finally realizes that he has been more married to his work and city lifestyle than to her. All of these films incorporate elements of Heimat ideology into their otherwise lighthearted stories of domestic romance by pitting the traditional, grounded nature of country life against the dehumanizing existence in the city. In the end, each one achieves a utopian reconciliation between progress and tradition that is typical of the “reactionary modernism” inherent in Nazi ideology and typical for the *Heimatfilm* genre.³³³ Importantly,



Figure 39. Promotional still depicting the *Heimat*-driven iconography of *Heavens, We've Inherited a Chateau!* [Source: NFA]

³³³ For a brief overview of Jeffrey Herf's assessment of “reactionary modernism” and the inflections of this ideology in *Heimat* films, see von Moltke, *No Place Like Home* 67-69.

though, with the exception of *Come back to me* the exact location of this “homeland” is never made explicit. As with *Love, Passion, and Suffering*, these films operate in the realm of generic stereotypes of the country as opposed to navigating specific geographic or cultural terrain.

Reterritorializing Historical Bohemia

The Prag-Film features are not only conspicuous for creating fantasies of space, but also fantasies of time, or more specifically of history. In addition to the Heimat-themed films mentioned above, a number of Prag-Film productions evoke historical settings. These films create romantic, fantasy spaces that revive a previous era, specifically that of “old Austria.” Two notable examples are *The Second Shot* (1943) and *Glück unterwegs* (Happiness along the Way, 1943/44), both ostensibly set in Bohemia around 1850, during the Biedermeier period of stabilization following the unrest of 1848. *Feuilleton-Dienst* describes the action of *The Second Shot* as taking place against the “charming backdrop of a bygone age, in the lush countryside of Bohemia, with its grand estates.”³³⁴ Such comments about the “good old days” invoke a time before the great ethnic and nationalist tensions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In reality, such an idyllic time of comprehensive and amiable acceptance of Austrian (that is, German) hegemony in Bohemia never existed. As with so much of Third Reich cinema, these films strive to reconnect with a past that is thoroughly mythical and in so doing further mythologize an ideal image of history. By completely ignoring the ethnic questions that were becoming increasingly central to life in Bohemia during this period, these films effectively rewrite the history of the region.

³³⁴ H.H. “*Der zweite Schuß* und die grosse Wandlung,” *Feuilleton-Dienst der Prag-Film Aktiengesellschaft* 3 (17 June 1943) 26. BA-FA, folder 20259 “*Der zweite Schuß*.”

Beyond inventing a glorious German past, though, these two films also reterritorialize Bohemia in terms of geographic and cultural space. The erasure of any suggestion of a Czech presence in these spaces, implicitly constructs Bohemia as a territory that is purely German in character. This ethno-cultural remapping is perhaps most striking in *Happiness along the Way*, in which a significant segment of the narrative takes place in Prague. Notably, though, this Prague bears absolutely no markings of racial difference (be it Czech or Jewish), quite to the contrary it is seamlessly incorporated into the film's exclusively German space. Consequently, in contrast to the films examined in the previous chapter, the city no longer appears as an uncanny site of division and fear, but instead as a decidedly homely place where German art and music thrive.

Just as *Love, Passion, and Suffering* recycles many of the themes central to *The Golden City*, albeit in an "ethnically cleansed" form, *Happiness along the Way* reproduces many motifs from an earlier "Bohemian film," namely *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* (*A Little Night Music*, 1939). Like this Mozart vehicle, *Happiness along the Way* is imbued with a musical atmosphere and features a composer in the central role. Both composers undertake a journey to Prague during which they struggle to complete an opera score. A central motif in both films thus becomes the horse-drawn carriage, which transports the main character from their home location to Prague. As noted in Chapter 3, the screenplay for *A Little Night Music* was adapted from Eduard Mörike's 1956 novella *Mozart auf die Reise nach Prag* (*Mozart's Journey to Prague*). We can also presume that the same story also inspired the authors of *Happiness along the Way*, whose original title, *Die Reise nach Wien* (*The Journey to Vienna*) directly echoes Mörike's novella. In both narratives, the journey of the main characters brings them into contact with women who inspire them to create a musical masterpiece.

Happiness along the Way is set in the 1850s (a good 60 years after Mozart's fabled journey to Prague) and focuses on two male musicians from a provincial (presumably Bohemian) town, who undertake a journey to Vienna in order to save their local theater, which finds itself in danger of closing down due to financial troubles. They plan to secretly copy the score for Friedrich von Flotow's opera *Martha*, the biggest hit in Vienna at the time, and to then produce it in their hometown with the hopes of financially rejuvenating the theater.³³⁵ On the way to Vienna the two heroes have a stopover in Prague, where they end up in jail due to mistaken identity. Luckily, in prison they discover their own Muses and pen an entire opera themselves. Without completing the journey to Vienna, they return home, where their original opera proves to be a huge success capable of saving the theater. This musical triumph coincides with the confirmation of heterosexual love, as the two heroes end up with the women they desire. As with *A Little Night Music*, the action culminates in the final sequence in which the fruit of the main characters' musical genius is performed to a cheering crowd.

The journey-as-inspiration theme that lies at the heart of both films throws various aspects of the interrelationship between culture, territory, and mobility into relief. In *A Little Night Music*, Mozart travels from one capital city, Vienna, to another, Prague. Along the way, he crosses from the territory of Austria (Lower Austria, to be more exact) into Bohemia, possibly also passing through Moravia as well. As I have argued earlier, since the film does not acknowledge this traversing of borders as a transition into a different cultural frame of reference invites the viewer to perceive Bohemia and Moravia as essentially Austrian, without any cultural

³³⁵ *Martha* was premiered in Vienna in 1847 and became an instant hit, continually traveling throughout Europe in the subsequent decades. The first German-language performance of the opera in Prague took place in 1849, and a Czech-language performance quickly followed. It is thus curious that the protagonists of *Happiness Along the Way* decide to undertake a journey all the way to Vienna, when *Martha* was likely to be playing in Prague at the time as well.

or linguistic characteristics to differentiate it from Mozart's "homeland." By contrast, the entire narrative of *Happiness along the Way* takes place within the borders of Bohemia. Nevertheless, through its construction of a unified German space, this film expresses similar geo-cultural implications as *A Little Night Music*. Even if Austria proper is never shown, it is clearly the dominant force in Bohemia's cultural landscape—when the musicians seek musical inspiration, they set their sights namely on Vienna. With the Austrian capital as their intended goal, it is only by chance that they are held up "along the way" in Prague, whereby the Bohemian capital sets the stage for the resolution of the narrative drama. Although Prague is the goal of Mozart's journey, the city itself barely features in the film, being seen only in a few brief scenes that take place in the interior of the Estates Theater. The implication is that Prague is just as Austrian as the rest of Bohemia, yet the question remains open. In essence, *A Little Night Music* avoids the thorny issues of identity and politics associated with Prague by choosing to restrict all images of the city to the theater that it inseparably linked to Mozart's music. By contrast, the images that dominate the central segment of *Happiness along the Way* go a long way in solidifying the notion of Prague as a thoroughly Austrian (i.e., "German") city. Unlike Anna's journey to a profoundly hybrid space in *The Golden City*, the carriage ride in *Happiness along the Way* simply transports our heroes (and the viewer) into a space that differs very little from the heroes' hometown except in size. Rather than a space characterized by division, this Prague is more akin to a crossroads that brings people from different places together. In this respect, it is significant that the film depicts neither the Vltava River that divides the city horizontally nor the castle hill that creates separation on the vertical plane. These quintessential landmarks are ignored favor of more "unifying" shots of less distinct structures, whereby all the architecture is integrated into a

common, agreeable urban fabric. Although the city might be unfamiliar to the main characters, it is decidedly not unhomely.

Despite the deep national-cultural subtexts inherent in the film's mapping of Bohemia, the visual presentation of Prague in *Happiness along the Way* is more or less ornamental in nature and any engagement with specific aspects of the city's character is purely superficial. In contrast to the fetishization of Prague architecture in *The Golden City*, this film does not clearly present of the city's famous sights, or indeed any images that would specifically identify the city in any way. The spectator does not see any establishing shots of the famous skyline upon arrival in Prague. Instead, a medium-wide shot of a street scene, throws us directly into the urban milieu.³³⁶ The discerning viewer familiar with Prague might recognize a short segment of the Charles Bridge and a glimpse of one of its towers in the background of one shot (see fig. 40), yet all other exteriors present non-descript locations that could be in any number of cities. The film merely uses the city's generic medieval architecture as a backdrop to enhance the romantic fantasy atmosphere of the operetta-infused spectacle.

The incorporation of a specifically Prague character or lore into the narrative occurs only on a superficial level. The only indication of any local Prague-specific culture is the brief allusion to the Charles Bridge and the statue of Saint Nepomuk there. Upon taking up accommodation in his Prague hotel room, the main character, Florian, asks the servant maiden Dorle for advice how to find the woman he met on his journey but from whom he was unexpectedly separated before arriving in Prague. Dorle advises him to look for her on the

³³⁶ Puzzlingly, the absence of an establishing shot is inconsistent with the intention of the screenplay, which specifically calls for a wide exterior "Panorama von Prag" at the moment when the protagonists arrive there. The script further stipulates "Die Türme von Prag liegen in den Strahlen der schon tiefstehenden Sonne." Not only would such a shot have been in keeping with general film language at the time, but it would have presented a typical "touristic image" of Prague's towers. See Sibelius et al. 101.



Figure 40. A non-descript Prague street sets the scene for musical fantasies in *Happiness along the way*. **Right:** The lone “tourist shot” of Prague in *Happiness along the way*, which buries a section Charles Bridge in the background to the action. [Source: Screen capture from DVD of German television broadcast.]

Charles Bridge. She explains that all foreign visitors must visit the bridge, because of the superstition that “they are not allowed to depart from the city until they have seen Nepomuk” (Sibelius et al. 116). This famous Prague landmark also features briefly in *The Golden City*: on Anna’s touristic carriage ride through the city, she specifically points out the statue on the Charles Bridge and recounts the Nepomuk legend. Whereas the audience is able to marvel at images of the Nepomuk statues in *The Golden City*, the landmark is never actually shown in *Happiness along the Way*, remaining purely a matter of conversation. Indeed, the very mentioning of Nepomuk in this film comes off more or less a purely ornamental gesture—a piece of dialogue that adds a superficial sense of “Prague character,” but is never elaborated on, and not even visually represented. In terms of the narrative, this small aside about the Charles Bridge and Saint Nepomuk proves to be entirely superfluous: in the very next scene, Florian discovers that the woman he is seeking is lodging in the room next to his. (Indeed, she comes to him aurally: when he overhears a voice singing nearby, Florian instantly recognizes it as belonging to his beloved.) With the search now ended, a visit to the Charles Bridge is no longer

necessary. Whereas *The Golden City* uses the Nepomuk statue to intensify the spectacle of Prague and speak to the audience's desire to experience the city, the conversation about it in *Happiness along the Way* seems almost as an afterthought that goes nowhere, a negligible element to the musical love story just as the very appearance of Prague itself is merely incidental to the overall narrative. Just as the protagonists' extended stay in Prague is unplanned, so does our "visit" to the city seem to be simply the result of circumstance, in this case, the fact that the film was produced by Prag-Film.

The most outstanding feature of this filmic Prague it is not its architecture or its tourist sights, but its sheer aura of musicality. Immediately, upon their arrival in Prague, the protagonists encounter street musicians who perform a Bohemian-style march. Then, our two heroes check into a hotel that specifically caters to musicians, and consequently a place where impromptu musical performances are commonplace. Far removed from the eerie atmosphere commonly ascribed to the city in the German filmic tradition, this Prague is permeated with the breezy strains of the Viennese waltz and plays host to amusing situations reminiscent of the operetta tradition. (For example, the friendship between the two protagonists and their gruff but amiable jailer feels directly lifted from the quintessential Viennese operetta, *Die Fledermaus*.)³³⁷ Indeed, the central segment of the film would have played more or less the same if the protagonists had in fact made it to Vienna rather than getting hung up in Prague. Indeed, the obscuring of Prague's famous landmarks and local culture in favor of generic locations and musical stereotypes seems to have been directly styled after Wien-Film's construction of Vienna. In Hake's words, "through the transforming power of a waltz or a march, the urban setting was

³³⁷ The affinities with the famous Strauss operetta and other operetta's with the prison motif are even highlighted in the film's marketing. See, for example, the article "Fidele Gefängnisse" in the press brochure (Presseheft) issued under the film's working title *Verliebte Leute*. BA-FA 5895 "Glück unterwegs."

absorbed into an imaginary cityscape or, to be more accurate, a soundscape” (Hake, *Popular Cinema* 152). *Happiness along the Way* rehearses this very ritual of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in the service of fashioning a fantasy image of Prague as a purely imaginary, musical city.

Happiness along the Way builds on the musical associations with Bohemia previously established for example in *A Little Night Music* and *Die verkaufte Braut* (*The Bartered Bride*, 1932). Yet, by directly incorporating Prague into this musical image of Bohemia, this film offers a portrait of the city that is quite unique in the German tradition of the time. This Prague space is not at all uncanny or unhomey—on the contrary it is quite pleasant and cheerful. In contrast to the radical urban/rural divide in *Linen from Ireland*, *The Golden City* or *Love, Passion, and Suffering*, the Prague seen here does not stand in stark opposition to the countryside, nor does the city does represent a locus of threatening power. In fact, there is very little distinction at all between the countryside and the city—both are equally saturated with music. *Happiness along the Way* presents a thoroughly musical Bohemia with Prague as its capital, albeit merely a provincial offshoot of Vienna’s musicality (which is never seen in the film, but repeatedly invoked and heard).

In many ways, *Happiness along the Way* would have been right at home in the production roster of Wien-Film, in which “music and musicality were . . . the driving force behind the Vienna myth” (Hake, *Popular Cinema* 152). Yet, it is not the overt musical themes alone that constitute the film’s overwhelmingly Austrian or, more specifically, Viennese aura. As mentioned above, the film relies heavily on motifs common to Viennese operettas as a source of both stock characters and narrative devices. Furthermore, the costumes and set design serve as strong signifiers of the Austrian Biedermeier period. Perhaps the strongest marker, though, is the

Austrian accent that permeates the film's spoken language. A number of Prag-Film productions display similar characteristics that lend a particularly Austrian aura to the filmic space. This is most overt in *Come back to me*, which falls squarely into the touristic mode common to many Heimat-films with its multiple panoramic shots of the famous Austrian travel destination Wörthersee (Lake Wörth) and its mountainous surroundings. Although the specific location and timeframe of the film *Spiel* (Play, 1944) are less clear, the thick Austrian accent unmistakably situates the film in this particular cultural space. What is more, as with *Happiness along the Way* the action here is centered around a struggling theater troupe that must raise money to continue to function; at multiple points the film showcases the troupe's operetta performances. The costumes and set design of *The Second Shot* together with the spoken language strongly evoke the Biedermeier period in a style very similar to that of *Happiness along the Way*. It is notable that although both *The Second Shot* and *Happiness along the Way* are overtly set in Bohemia, they differ very little from *Play* in terms of their overall "Austrian aesthetic." The implication is that regardless of the inevitable regional variations, Bohemia is for all practical purposes indistinguishable from Austria proper. In this sense, Prag-Film was much more invested in the production of a uniquely Austrian cinema than a distinctly Bohemian one, or in other words they were invested in the reterritorialization of Austria to include Bohemia.

Imagining Prague as a modern German city

Of the remaining Prag-Film productions not yet addressed in this chapter, most have distinctly contemporary settings and prominently feature "modern" technology. *Seine beste Rolle* (His Best Role, 1943), *Dir zuliebe* (For your Sake, 1944) and *Sieben Briefe* (Seven Letters, 1943/44) are all set in some unnamed metropolitan space composed of designer interiors, sleek automobiles, and

tuxedo-filled nightclubs. Modern technology and media culture also play prominently in each of the stories: radio, telephones, phonographs, telegraph communication, newspapers, photography, etc. (*For your Sake* even features “fantasy” technological innovations such as a retractable mechanical panel that divides the married couple’s bed and is raised or lowered to reflect the current status of their relationship.) In essence, these films inhabit a fantasy space that is completely independent of physical geography. *Seven Letters* further expands this space beyond the initial urban setting when it transports the viewer to an unidentified seaside resort that is utterly cosmopolitan in atmosphere, even though German is the only language spoken or read there.

Besides *Happiness along the Way* Prague specifically functions as an overt setting for the action in only one other Prag-Film production, namely *Schicksal am Strom* (Fate on the Waves, 1944). Notably, this is the only German feature of the 1930s and 1940s to overtly reflect what appears to be contemporary Bohemia as opposed to couching the story in a historical setting. Nevertheless, in a mode very similar to that seen in the former film, the city here also serves little more than a purely superficial, even decorative function. The melodramatic story plays out on and along two of the main rivers in Bohemia, the Elbe and the Moldau (Vltava). The action opens somewhere on the Elbe downstream from Dresden aboard a freight barge en route to deliver its load in Prague. The film establishes a notable disparity in its mode of visually representing these two cities. A few minutes after that start, we see a panoramic shot of Dresden’s famous baroque skyline as the barge approaches the city. Soon thereafter, the barge arrives in Prague, yet without a comparable view of the equally famed Prague skyline—instead we see only the barge docked along the river in some non-descript location. Prague becomes the central location of the diegesis, yet recognizable images of the city itself are conspicuously

absent. The Prague we see on the screen is made up primarily of studio sets designed to evoke the narrow streets and baroque architecture of the city. Through the windows of an artist's studio, where the captain's daughter is employed, a painted backdrop suggests the city's trademark architecture, particularly in the area near the Charles Bridge. This location would appear to be confirmed by the fact that one character leaves the artist's studio and immediately makes a phone call from a booth, which is picturesquely situated at the foot of the Charles Bridge with a view of the Lesser Side across the river. This brief shot is in fact the only location shot to display recognizable Prague sites. In terms of the narrative, this space is to be read as Prague, yet there is nothing in the image to visually reinforce this perception. In end effect, Dresden enjoys a more inspiring screen presence than the Bohemian city, which is ostensibly the center-point of the filmic action.

The Symbolic Significance of Prag-Film

In the end, Prag-Film failed to create a new brand of cinema that draws upon the German Bohemian culture. As demonstrated here, the stories and overall aesthetic of most films relied much more on German cinematic stereotypes than they did on local inspirations. Despite the more precise geographical positioning of the action and the depictions of Prague, *Fate on the Waves* and *Happiness along the Way* are ultimately no more closely tied to Bohemian culture than *Love, Passion, and Suffering* or *The Second Shot*. Furthermore, the majority of the company's films are neither overly nor implicitly even set in Bohemia, often taking place in a non-specified, highly generic setting. Although the films were shot in Bohemia, in most cases the diegesis effectively deterritorializes the locations, leaving the specificity of geographic positioning unclear. In those cases where Prague does appear as a specifically designated place,

it has a superficial, mostly ornamental character. Location shots of the city are kept to a minimum and generally function merely as a picturesque backdrop to the filmic action—the city never becomes an active figure in the narrative, neither do any aspects of its unique cultural context play any significant role. In fact, more than anything Prag-Film contributed to the development of a particularly Austrian film aesthetic, or what Hake has called the “Vienna effect” (2002: 150). Rather than fashion a new, uniquely Bohemian style, the company implicitly reasserted the perception of Bohemia, including Prague, as subsumed under a more general notion of Austrian culture. To the casual spectator, apart from the occasional image of Prague, there is very little in terms of imagery or themes that lend these films any specific “Bohemian” character. As a consequence, there is nothing to overtly distinguish them from any other German or Austrian productions other than the “Prag-Film” label.³³⁸

³³⁸ It appears that neither of the two films still production at the end of the war (*Leuchtende Schatten* [Luminous Shadows] and *Shiva und die Galgenblume* [Shiva and the Gallows Flower]) was to engage in specifically Bohemian themes either. Intriguingly, though, there is evidence of an uncompleted film project that appears to have directly engaged the Bohemian theme. The “Produktionsplanung 1943/44” from the office of the Reichsfilmintendant (dated January 13, 1944) [BARCH - R55 655, 1-38] indicates that G.W. Pabst had been engaged to direct a film for Prag-Film with the title *Böhmische Romanze* (Bohemian Romance) (30). The title leads us to presume that the project would indeed produce a film that dealt in depth with the Bohemian-milieu. Indeed, among German directors, Pabst would have been ideally suited for such thematic material, since his place of birth and childhood home was in central Bohemia. However, we can only speculate as to the true character of this project, which never got beyond the planning board and about which nothing more seems to be known than the title, the mention of Pabst as director and “Jaroslav Tuzer” [i.e., Jaroslav Tuzar, *ed.*] as camera operator, and the indication of several potential actors. Filming was to begin in April 1944, but there is no indication that the film ever entered production. (Of the 12 films indicated in this document, only 4 actually entered production. Curiously, however, there is no mention here of *Shiva und die Galgenblume* or *Leuchtende Schatten*.) In the “Produktionsplan 1944/45” (*ibid.* 39-69) from December 2, 1944 there is no longer any mention of the Pabst film. Citing a report from the dramaturgy department of Prag-Film Lukáš Kašpar also cites *Böhmische Romanze* as an unrealized production. See Kašpar 251. Furthermore, there is the well-documented case of plans for Prag-Film to produce an updated version of *The Bartered Bride* with Lída Baarová in the title role—a project that likewise never reached the production stage.

Whether the geographic location is directly stated or only implied, the productions of Prag-Film imagine Bohemia (and Moravia) as a uniformly “German” space, completely devoid of any sense of racial or cultural conflict. In this, these films continue in the tradition of the “Bohemian films” discussed in Chapter 3, which systematically subsume the Czech lands within a broader, historically conditioned conception of greater Austria. This holds true not only for depictions of the rural countryside, but also for the representation of urban centers, including Prague itself. In contrast to the films discussed in the previous chapter, in which “Prague” served as a site of disruption to this otherwise German territory, an interstitial space where identity is contested and conflicted, the city seen in Prag-Film productions is totally free of all such cultural and racial threats. The implication seems to be that since the city has been successfully “reclaimed” by the German Reich, all unhomely elements have been eliminated, resulting in a wholly German space. It goes without saying that this fantasy image was quite distant from contemporary reality in Prague during the occupation. Despite the German occupation, Prague remained very much a “Czech” city, where Czech language and culture continued to dominate the overall character of the city, as it had done for at least 50 years prior to the creation of the Protectorate.

The question still remains, why did Prag-Film A.G. fail so greatly in its mission to “acquaint (German) audiences with the beauty of the cities and the countryside” of Bohemia and Moravia? I would suggest three possible explanations. First, we might ask if perhaps there was not a sufficiently strong and distinctly Bohemian-German tradition that was distinguishable from Austrian context to provide thematic frameworks for “*Böhmer-Filme*” (Bohemian films) analogous to the “Wiener-Filme” associated with that territory. Second, I would suggest that German cinema’s approach to Bohemia underwent a fundamental shift after the solidification of

the Protectorate; the framework previously informed by a state of confrontation was now defined as a state of occupation. Third, this trend towards filmic themes disconnected from easily identifiable spatial and temporal contexts is not particular to Prag-Film, but a common tendency German cinema of the later war years.

The body of literature most readily associated with Prague, namely the Jewish-dominated literature of the interwar years, would have been off-limits for filmic material, both for racial and aesthetic reasons (given its expressionistic and experimental tendencies). The question as to why literary frameworks from more “Heimat-inspired” Bohemian authors such as Adalbert Stifter, Hans Watzlik, and others were not employed by Prag-Film remains open to speculation. Indeed, given Karl Hans Strobl’s allegiance to the Nazi party, commitment to his Bohemian homeland, and previous experience in film, we can only wonder why he was never enlisted to produce tendentious Bohemian-German screenplays for the company. Despite the publishing of the large, highly nationalistic literary anthology *Heimkehr ins Reich* on the eve of the occupation in 1938, it seems that none of these works were suitable as the foundation for filmic renditions (see Kindermann). For all of the loud talk by Tetting, Rücke, and others, the evidence suggests that Prag-Film was not overly interested in addressing the complex story of German culture and identity in Bohemian territory.

Whereas German films made prior to 1942—and therefore pre-dating Prag-Film—tend to present the Czech lands and Prague in particular as a space of conflict, in the films after 1942 the battle appears to have already been won and the enemy defeated. In the films after 1942 we do not find any films in which Prague is clearly marked as a source of threatening power, be it of a racial, supernatural, or “modern” nature. Furthermore, except for the Prag-Film examples discussed here, there are absolutely no German films after 1942 that prominently feature either

Prague or Bohemia and Moravia in any way. It would seem that with the successful annexation of the Sudetenland and the installation of the Protectorate, this territory had ceased to be a “problem area” such as that depicted in *The Golden City*. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, this film was simultaneously a justification for the need to reclaim the Sudetenland and occupy Bohemia as well as the enactment of a sort of cultural or racial cleansing of the territory. This ideologically motivated approach is consistent with the overall Nazi racial policy of Germanization in the Protectorate, whereby all traces of a Czech national culture were to be gradually eradicated while future generations of ethnically suitable (i.e., non-Jewish) children would be raised as “German.” A certain logical sense can therefore be attributed to the fact that Reich productions featuring Bohemia and/or Prague made after *The Golden City* can (perhaps even must) conceive of this as a racially-culturally unproblematic and “homely” space.

The trend away from “problem films” was a defining characteristic of German film production in the later war years more generally.³³⁹ The shadow of the gradually deteriorating war situation loomed heavily over the production of Prag-Film from the very onset. The first Prag-Film production, *Love, Passion, and Suffering*, premiered 2 April 1943, just two months after the humbling defeat of German troops in Stalingrad and Goebbels subsequent call to “total war.” With the subsequent massive Allied bombing campaigns over Germany, the realities of war were literally beginning to hit home. Consequently, the German film production, which was already hitherto dominated by escapist genre pieces, began to focus attention ever more and more towards illusory alternate worlds of imagination, far removed from the harsh realities of the *Alltag*. In the film production under the shadow of total war “any direct references to the present yielded to stories without a discernable time and place” (Hake, *German National Cinema* 67).

³³⁹ This trend is generally noted in film scholarship. See for example, Hake *German National Cinema* or Kreimeier *The Ufa Story* for good overviews of the situation.

The authentic representation of real locations was not an ideal that film production strove for during this period. In fact, most films actively sought to eliminate links to the real world, aiming instead at the creation of an imaginary, dream space. As a child of these times, Prag-Film was overwhelmingly shaped by these conditions.

On multiple levels, it can be said that German film production in Prague during the Nazi occupation took place under a symbolic veil of the imaginary. Even as production teams were forced to flee to Prague from bomb-riddled Berlin, the fantasy images in films were becoming more and more removed from the reality of a country at war. The film industry was becoming increasingly committed to a process of dual escapism, the escape from Berlin and the escape from reality itself. This was to have duplicitous effects for Prague.

As a center of German film production, Prague was becoming more and more important throughout the 1940s. Yet, at the same time, in terms of visual representation, the city and Bohemian culture in general was gradually disappearing. If there were any traces of Czechness to be found in German films after 1942 (whether from Prag-Film or from any other studio), it was commonly of a masked nature, such as the actors, directors, and production workers who were forced to adopt Germanized names. At a time when an ever-increasing number of German films were being produced in Prague, representations of the city itself all but disappeared from German cinema, and when the city did appear it was typically only in the form of architectural ornamentation. This should not perhaps be viewed as a targeted action to mask Prague alone, but as part of the larger project of Third Reich cinema to mask all aspects of the wartime reality, to transform its spaces of horror into innocuous fantasy realms. Despite its growing significance as a site of fantasy production, it seems that “Prague” as a signifier simply did not fit into the new escapist cinematic vocabulary.

At the same time that the label “Prague” was losing its distinction as a cinematographic signifier, the city was being stripped of its former identity as the capital of Czech cinema. Even as the German production in Prague was growing with fierce intensity in the early 1940s, the domestic Czech industry was undergoing an imposed process of decline. At the outset, the Nazi administration sought to preserve social stability by ensuring that the Slavic population in the Protectorate continued to be supplied with Czech films. Consequently, Czech-language film production was allowed to proceed with a high level of autonomy, albeit at a greatly reduced rate, since the limited studio space was being given over more and more to German productions. This strategy, however, was intended only as a temporary solution during the initial transitional period of the occupation. The end goal of the administration was to eventually eliminate Czech-language film production altogether, leaving Czech audiences with German films as their only option for cinematic entertainment. This plan should be understood within the general policy of Germanization under the Nazi occupation whereby those Czechs worthy of Germanization shall be absorbed into the German *Volk*, whereas the undesirable remainder will be either disposed of or stripped of all social status.

Given these conditions, the creation of the “Prag-Film” brand name is curious indeed, particularly since the films with this label hardly differed from those that other companies shot in the Prague studios and on location in the city. It appears that this brand name served as little more than a corporate placeholder, a symbolic banner of German film production planted in the soil of city, reclaiming it as German cultural ground. The significance of Prag-Film for Third Reich cinema was thus not only financial and administrative purpose, but also of symbolic and representational importance. Ultimately, though, just as the brand name did not achieve financial success, so did it fail in its symbolic mission to create a “Bohemian-German” cinema. For the

most part, the Prag-Film succeeded merely in producing low-rate entertainment fare thematically indistinct from the productions of Wien-Film and other Ufi affiliates.

Despite the outward “nonpolitical” appearance of most Prag-Film feature productions, as German-Bohemian “bearers of culture” these films fulfilled a very political purpose. These productions carried significant ideological meaning within the cultural program of the Nazi occupation in Bohemia and Moravia. In Prag-Film we can observe the active application of the Nazi cultural policy in the Protectorate and the results that this had in terms of both Czech and German social systems in the region. Not only the land itself, but also its entire cultural heritage was being actively appropriated. The territory was perceived as always-already “German” and all manifestations of Czech cultural influence were either assimilated or eliminated. The process by which Prag-Film and the German industry in general appropriated Czech film labor, while at the same time eclipsing their identity and (nearly) all evidence of Czech culture in the territory, is an integral part of the Nazi political program.³⁴⁰ Although the content of the films in question might be “nonpolitical,” their form, as determined by mode of production and place in the Third Reich apparatus, serves a highly political function.

With regard to Bohemia, the German film industry of the 1930s and 1940s was consistently, even if unconsciously, engaged in a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The result was the effective elimination all Czech traces from the Bohemian landscape by creating fantasy images of this territory as purely German, that is, “imaginary” representations of Bohemia. Yet, at the same time, the industry’s images of “Germany” were themselves becoming more and more part of a grotesque self-replicating imaginary construct of

³⁴⁰ This appropriation of the territory’s cultural heritage is most evident in the *Kulturfilme* of Prag-Film, for example in the film *Prager Barock (Prague Baroque)*, which praises the “German” architecture of the city, while ignoring any Czech influences whatsoever.

“Germany” completely removed from reality. This was particularly true of the latter years of the war. In this context, Prag-Film was perhaps not as insignificant or unsuccessful as it might seem. Both in terms of work and product, the output of Prag-Film A.G. was hallmarked by the impulse to actively deterritorialize and displace cultural effects, to erase all traces of Czech influence (from the cultural landscape) and to (re-)claim the product as part of the German cultural heritage. With its generic and clichéd images of Bohemia as eternally under the spell of “old Austria,” Prag-Film not only eclipsed certain cultural realities of the region, but also conformed to German cinema’s more general escapist tendency at the time. Escapist cinema in general served to distract German audiences from the realities of Nazi Germany at war by creating an imaginary world independent of time and spatial obligations. Prag-Film as well as the other German companies producing in Prague during the Protectorate (Bavaria, Terra, Tobis, and Wien-Film) systematically presented location shots of the city and surroundings as generic urban spaces or allowed them to masquerade as other metropolises.³⁴¹ The German production thus effectively erased Prague’s signifying power from the filmic language. The ideological function of the Prag-Film label in this process is particularly significant. As the representative emblem of “Bohemian film” within the Reich, Prag-Film’s greatest symbolic function lies ultimately in the neutralization of its own signified object.

³⁴¹ For example, Prague location shooting doubles for Copenhagen in *Jenny und der Herr im Frack* (Jenny and the Fine-Dressed Man, 1941), and Berlin in *Frech und verliebt* (Impudent and in Love, 1945/48) and *Es lebe die Liebe* (Long Live Love, 1944).

Conclusion

By expelling the German population, Czech leaders rendered Bohemian politics completely Czech: not a Czech-Habsburg-German triad, and not a Czech-German line, but a Czech point.

-Jeremy King³⁴²

As the Red Army swept through eastern Moravia on its way to Prague, the production of *Shiva und die Galgenblume* (Shiva and the Gallows Flower) grew more chaotic until finally grinding to a halt in late April 1945. When the project, along with Nazi control over the city, collapsed, the Barrandov crew, which included a mixture of German and Czech personnel, was left to their own destinies. For the Germans, it was time to flee the enclosing Allied armies and to distance themselves from anything related to the Nazi establishment. Hans Steinhoff was actually one of the first to leave, escaping Prague by plane to Berlin, but met his end shortly afterward as his plane was shot down as he attempted to flee Berlin. Many of the actors such as Hans Albers, O. W. Fischer, and Mady Rahl went on to have successful careers in post-war West German and Austrian cinema. For the Czechs, this was a moment of liberation preceding the Soviet occupation of the city. After 1948, the Czechoslovak industry would come under central state control once again, this time under Communist rule. The Barrandov studios would continue to function as the center of the Czech film industry. Today, the same studios that housed the productions of Third Reich cinema are rented out to foreign companies for the filming of

³⁴² *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans* 190.

Hollywood blockbusters and other international features.³⁴³ In a situation analogous to film production during the Protectorate, major international co-productions are again being made with famous stars and directors, while the bulk of the labor behind the scenes is supplied by local Czech film technicians, catering companies, transportation services, etc. working for less than standard wages (compared to the home countries of the production companies). Since 1945, though, only a smattering of German-language films have been shot in the Barrandov studios. Indeed, after decades of cooperation and co-production at the beginning of the 20th century, World War II and its immediate aftermath marked a fundamental shift in Czech-German film relations and the closeness of those pre-war conditions would never be reached again.

The physical conditions that set the stage for these intersections of Czech and German culture have been forever altered. In the wake of the Nazi defeat, Bohemia and Moravia were “cleansed” of ethnic Germans either by execution or forcible expulsion. Somewhat paradoxically, whereas films prior to 1945 tended to gloss over and eclipse the intimate co-existence of German and Czech culture in Bohemia, post-war cinema keeps the memory of this shared history alive. Czech-German Bohemia no longer exists, yet there are many examples of films, both Czech and German, which address the Czech-German past and acknowledge the multi-lingual and intercultural environment indigenous to the territory of Bohemia and Moravia until the 1940s.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Recent films shot in the Barrandov studios include: *Mission Impossible* (1996), *The Bourne Identity* (2002), *Hart’s War* (2002), *Hellboy* (2004), *The Brothers Grimm* (2005), *Doom* (2005), *Hostel* (2005), and *the Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (2008).

³⁴⁴ Films that depict relationships between Czechs and Germans prior to 1948 include: *Das Haus in der Karpfengasse* (The House in Carp Lane, 1965), *Das Mädchenkrieg* (Maiden’s War, 1977), *Hilde, das Diensmädchen* (Housemaid Hilde, 1985). In addition many films about the World War II period and the Nazi occupation often feature on-screen Czech-German diglossia, although usually laden with overtones of power relationships (heroic Czechs set in opposition to cruel German occupiers). Prominent examples include *Vyšší princip* (Higher Principle, 1960). A

The research presented here has examined the various ways that issues of Czech and German identity played out in the cinema for decades before the Czech industry came under the control of Goebbels's propaganda machine. Although the two language groups rarely shared the same diegetic film space during these decades, there was always a high degree of cultural interaction going on off-screen, "behind the scenes," and below the surface of the filmic narratives. Czech-German cooperation and co-production extended back to the beginnings of cinema and continued in a more or less unbroken line up to the end of World War II. Much of this interaction occurred in the realm of Austrian cinema—although Austrian cinema was quite distinct from the German film industry, the two maintained a high degree of interaction and for many Czechs the path to a career in Berlin led through Vienna. The ratio of power in this relationship was never equal; the German and Austrian industries were always in a position of greater economic strength. As a result, capital tended to flow from Germany and Austria into the Czech industry, while talent was generally drawn in the opposite direction. The inception of the Third Reich after 1933 had an indirect effect on certain aspects of German-Czech film relations, but did not substantially alter the circulation of Czech filmmakers within German and Austrian cinema. After 1933 fewer Czech films were able to enter German, due to stricter censorship laws in the Reich, particularly the restrictions against films that Jews had taken part in. The Nazi anti-Semitic laws also led to a number of émigrés passing through Czech cinema as they fled Germany.

The bulk of the dissertation has been concerned with mapping various points of cultural transfer in the German-Austrian-Czech film culture of the 1930s and 1940s. Particular attention has been paid to analyzing the representation and performance of ethnicity and the layered

number of Czech films have addressed the issue of Czech guilt in the expulsion and murder of Germans after the war, for example *Adelheid* (1970) and *Mistři* (Champions, 2005).

connections between geographic space, national identity, and mass culture. I have argued that Nazi cinema's appropriation of Czech culture was informed and, more importantly, legitimated by the Austro-Hungarian legacy. This analysis provides a framework for understanding the German film industry's stake in the Czech lands and its people. Furthermore, I have highlighted the peculiar position within the German cinematic imagination occupied by Prague and the Czech territories and demonstrated how these cinematic spaces, which are at once "familiar" and "foreign," became settings for ethnic confrontation and for the negotiation of German identity.

In many ways, and contrary to the remarkable degree of off-screen interaction, German cinema's general strategy of dealing with the "Czech issue" echoes the mindset of the generation of Prague-German intellectuals in the late 19th century. "The simplest and in fact most common way for the Prague German-liberal establishment to cope with the Czech cultural renaissance was to ignore it" (Spector 42). It is for this reason, claims Scott Spector, that any explicit explorations of Czech-German relations, or indeed any traces of Czech culture at all, are almost entirely lacking in German-language literature from Prague during the pre-WWI period (for example, in the works of the Concordia group.) As we have seen, this strategy of avoidance is evident in the majority of German-language screen depictions of "Bohemia" from the 1930s. Even in *Die goldene Stadt* (*The Golden City*, 1942), German cinema's most direct attempt to confront Czech culture, the Slavic threat is never made explicit. Rather, it lurks around the edges of the image and between the lines of dialogue. Nevertheless, although German cinema for the most part does not directly recognize the Czech presence in Prague and/or Bohemia, I argue that the tensions inherent in the struggle for "ethnic survival" manifest themselves in these films in a number of

hidden or coded ways (Spector 42).³⁴⁵ In contrast to the relatively secure space of the (German) Bohemian countryside, Prague is the privileged site for this return of the repressed and the crisis of identity and even existence that it effects.

As a rule, the inhabitants of the countryside in “Bohemian films” speak exclusively German and represent a “regional variation” of German identity. In films such as *Leinen aus Irland* (Linen from Ireland, 1939) and *The Golden City* these folk are presented as simple, hard-working peasants with traditional values un-tainted by modernity, yet threatened by the decadence and degeneracy of the (Czech) city. Films such as *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and the Prag-Film feature *Glück unterwegs* (Happiness along the Way, 1943/44) emphasize the musical character of Bohemia and its inhabitants. Of course, all musical references in these films allude exclusively to specifically “German” representatives of the musical tradition (e.g., Mozart, Friedrich von Flotow), while Czech composers such as Smetana never enter the picture. These imagined Bohemian rural places appear to be “purely” German and without any traces of Czech influence. The historical setting further evokes a sense of timelessness that bypasses the political history of the 19th and 20th centuries and, instead, suggests the land’s eternal Germanic spirit.

In contrast to the consistently idyllic Heimat-laden images of the Bohemian countryside, Prague’s manifestations in German cinema are more complex in appearance and ambivalent in meaning. There is a strong tradition in German cinema whereby the city embodies a force that wields unearthly power over the other characters often instigating their downfall. At times, however, most notably in the Prag-Film productions, this urban setting is a convivial, exotic source of musical wonder. In some cases it is both at once, most notably in *The Golden City*,

³⁴⁵ My use of the term “ethnic survival” borrows from the title of Gary Cohen’s groundbreaking study of Prague-German national consciousness and political activism in the latter stages of the Habsburg Empire.

which is thus ambivalently hybrid in terms of mood and message. The position of this film in a transitional period of history can account for the “double game” that it plays. Prague, together with the rest of Bohemia had been “reclaimed” by the German Reich in 1938/39 and Nazi political mechanisms were instituted with the goal of “cleansing” the Czech presence from the territory. Part of this project involved a cinematic reclamation of the city. This can be seen for example in the 1943 Prag-Film documentary short *Prager Barock* (Prague Baroque), which celebrates Prague’s German (and Italian) cultural heritage, while ignoring any Czech contribution to the city’s historical character. *The Golden City* oscillates between this “new” conception of Prague as purely German and the lingering image of the city as a place of uncertainty, where (German) identity is unstable and constantly threatened. This latter vision of Prague had haunted German cinema since the very origins of the medium. At the end of *The Golden City*, the Sudeten German Jobst dries out the moors and symbolically breaks the Czech spell that hung over his land for generations, thus signaling a turning point in history. More, this film also appeared to mark a turn in the German film tradition. None of the Third Reich productions after 1942 set in Prague hint at any Czech presence in the city. In a parallel development, these depictions of the city lack any sense of the uncanny atmosphere intrinsic to German cinematic fantasies of Prague prior to the war. After the uncertainty of *The Golden City*, this space had been rewritten as securely and unequivocally German.

Whereas cities like Berlin and Hamburg can only be conceived of as German in character, Prague functions as a sort of open signifier in the film culture of the 1930s and 1940s, having the potential to represent a center of either Czech, German, or Jewish identity--not unlike a film studio. Whereas cinematic Vienna seems trapped in an eternal Strauss waltz from the late 19th century Imperial period, Prague evokes both claustrophobic medieval eeriness and the

delicacy of Baroque architecture, Smetana and Mozart at once. In the Czech-German film exchange in the first half of the century, Prague stood at the center of many symbolic battles for the territory of identity, both physically and figuratively.

Prague's status as an open signifier with seemingly unbounded representational potential invites comparison to the symbolic function of money. The value of the object is dependent of the fantasies that people are willing to invest in it and thus serves as a token of unlimited desire. In this sense, the "golden city" becomes a seductive object that each ethnic group strives to lay claim to, to possess, like money itself. Seen as a possession, this object has the potential to be lost, even stolen. Thus, Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer* and the film *Linen from Ireland* each trade in the image of Prague as a Jewish-regulated space of international commerce. The city's symbolic potential made it a key emblem of Nazi conquest, both militarily and cinematically. For the Nazi film industry, the Prague studios and their workforce of directors, actors, and production personnel were indeed a source of wealth, without which German motion picture production would have been greatly diminished during the last three or four years of the war.

German production in Prague during the Protectorate could not have occurred without the participation of local Czech filmmakers. This was truly a process of interethnic co-production. For the most part, Czech collaboration took place behind the scenes in the form of technical labor: cameramen, sound operators, make-up artists, set engineers, etc. In some cases, particularly under the banner of Prag-Film, Czech directors and actors assumed more active and visible roles German-language films. While capitalizing on this Czech labor, the Nazi industry did all it could to obscure the ethnic Otherness of the participants, by using Germanicized versions of their names in all film credits and marketing materials.

For Bohemian actors this process of assimilation involved a form of ethnic performance, as Czech bodies performed German identity on screen. The integration of Czech personnel into German film production was not a process unique to the war years. My work highlights various directors and performers from Czechoslovakia that participated in German cinema during the 1930s and earlier. In the decades prior to the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia directors from this region had proven their ability to tell “German” stories and to create moving images that passed as German cinema. Likewise, regardless of the official Nazi policy on the inferiority of the Slavic race, German cinema continued to find ways to integrate Czech actors, predominantly female performers. This process not only involved attempts to compensate for the perceived Otherness of the actor’s voice. Often these women were also expected to embody Aryan figures, to “pass” as German. My work has suggested various implications of this process for theorizing the racialized landscapes and national fantasies of Third Reich cinema. Above all, this process is analogous to German cinema’s overall approach to Bohemia and Czechs: economic necessity led the industry to integrate various aspects of Czech and Bohemian culture and cases where this led to ideological dissonance called for extensive measures of covering up, masquerade, and re-imagination.

Third Reich cinema’s approach to Bohemia and its Czech inhabitants exposes aspects of what has been termed Nazi society’s “split consciousness” in which official ideology and daily practice typically stood in a contradictory relationship. The high level of Czech integration into German cinema, especially during the Protectorate, demanded much more ideological “flexibility” than the analogous process with actors and directors from other “Aryan” ethnic groups, such as the half-English Lilian Harvey or the Swedes Kristina Söderbaum and Zarah Leander. That Czechs were not only permitted to participate in Third Reich cinema, but also

invited to masquerade as German points to the instability of the official conception of German identity. Likewise, highlighting the Czech origins of many German films from this period, such as those produced by Ondra-Lamac-Film or Czechoslovak MLVs, exposes fundamental slippages in the official Nazi doctrine of German art, including cinema, as a natural expression of the spirit that arises organically from the land of the *Volk*. A consideration of these films invites a reassessment of how we define the “national” of German cinema in this period.

My research consistently situates “Austria” (as both geographic space and national concept) as an arbitrating entity at most points of intersection between Czech and German cinema. Arbitration in this context assumed many different forms. This dissertation highlights three of them. First, Viennese film studios often served as the starting point for Czech filmmakers who eventually went to the German industry. In some cases, the pathway ran in the opposite direction, as when “émigrés” from the Nazi regime went to Vienna or Prague to work on co-productions with the Czechoslovak industry. Second, because of their common history under the Habsburgs, Austria and the Czech lands shared many cultural idioms that were foreign to their German cousins to the north. Many aspects of Austrian culture are in fact more closely aligned with Czech culture than with that in Germany proper. This cultural affinity made it easier for filmmakers from Bohemia and Moravia to enter German cinema by working on Austrian-themed films, which were similar in theme and atmosphere to films aimed at Czechoslovak audiences. Third and finally, many German films invoke the shared history and cultural kinship between Austria and the Czech lands as a strategy for the cinematic annexation of Bohemia and Moravia and their assimilation into the larger German *Reich*. In these cases, German cinema imagined these territories and their culture as regional variants of the broader unifying concept of pan-German culture, that is, as local iterations of the greater German *Heimat*.

Finally, I proposed the notion of “Austria” as a theoretical construct to overcome restrictive categories of “Czech” and “German” in favor of a conception of Central European cinema culture. I employ the term “Austria” here neither as category of the national nor as a label for the territory demarcated by the borders of the contemporary Austrian state, but rather to suggest the legacy of the Habsburg Empire and the associated concept of *Mitteleuropa*, which is by its very nature extraterritorial and transnational (incorporating Austria and Hungary as well as Bohemia and the German states). Thinking in this direction involves an understanding of generic tropes and cultural practices as regional rather than national. Elsaesser has argued that “the typical voice of Austrian cinema was always already an extraterritorial one” (“Das Lied ist aus” 89). This voice in turn resonates with the multi-lingual and transnational consciousness that existed for centuries under the Habsburg crown, when the Austrian empire encompassed most of Central Europe from Vienna to Transylvania, from Sarajevo to Galicia. Whereas their German cousins to the north were historically more concerned with constructing a strong, unified sense of national identity rooted in ethnicity and language, the Austrian state sought to accommodate for multiple language groups and cultural-ethnic identities within the ideology of its state apparatus. Although this state collapsed in 1918, the effects of this multi-cultural worldview persisted in consciousness of post-World War I Austrian national cinema. The Nazi annexation of Austrian cinema thus involved the integration of certain transnational and extraterritorial tendencies into its nationalist framework. German cinema did not simply ignore these qualities, it embraced them. “Austria” provided a ready-made framework for German cinema, even under Nazi dictatorship, to accommodate various nationalities and explore “exotic” fantasies of identity and territory. Given the extensive and complex ways that it intersected with Bohemia and Moravia, the extraterritorial and transnational effects associated with “Austria” facilitated the annexation

of Czech cinema into the Reich. Of course, this is not to suggest that we abandon the notion of German national cinema altogether or that we ignore the very real nationalist tendencies of certain Third Reich films. Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrates that German cinema of the 1930s and 1940s is as defined by extraterritorial operations and transnational intersections as it is by nationalist fantasies. The high degree of cultural transfer outlined here demands a reassessment of traditional conceptions of German national cinema, particularly during the Nazi period. The examples described here shed light on the fundamental role that Czech film personnel played in the construction of Third Reich cinema as well as the importance of Bohemia and Moravia as a territory for the projection of German national fantasies.

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NFA – Národní filmový archiv (National Film Archives, Prague)

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