Melodrama and Memory:
Historicizing Pathos in Czech Holocaust Films

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Dedication

To my grandmother, Joan Rose, who always answers the phone.

Abstract

This dissertation explores melodrama's engagement with the past in postwar Holocaust memorialization and examines its significance for the national projects of history and memory. Looking past the so-called "limits" of Holocaust representation, my research proposes that melodrama—much like memory—acts as a placeholder outside or beyond what can be experienced and mediates what lies between the event and its re-presentation. While most scholars and critics define Czech Holocaust films in terms of their "artistic approach" to the concentration camp universe (as opposed to the "Americanization" or "Hollywoodization" of the Holocaust), I argue that the historical circumstances of postwar Czechoslovakia provide a unique case for theorizing the melodramatic impulses of Holocaust memorialization. Starting from this point, I situate melodrama's relationship to Czech cinema during the period of the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic and the Nazi-occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. First, I interrogate historiographic problems of canon formation and examine how, in 1998, the National Film Archive in Prague (Národní filmový archiv or NFA) retroactively classified 67 feature-length fiction films made between 1930 and 1944 as generic melodramas in their volumes of *Czech Feature Films* (*Česky hraný film*). Then, I examine how Holocaust films produced in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1961 (the year in which the televised trial of Adolf Eichmann thrust the Holocaust into the international spotlight)—fiction and non-fiction, feature-length and short—relied on the melodramatic modality to negotiate Holocaust memory in the shifting national imaginary. I argue that melodrama not only helps to narrate a nation's memory of the past, or

institutionalize forms of national or communal remembrance, but it also enables us to recognize, anticipate, and remember *how to feel* toward the past and the collective meanings that have been passed down from one generation to the next. Tracing melodrama's emotional trajectory from *Nezapomeneme* (*Lest We Forget*, Václav Švarc, 1946) to *Distant Journey* (*Daleká Cesta*, Alfréd Radok, 1949) to *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1959), I develop a theory of historicized pathos that inextricably links melodrama to the memorializing impulse.

Table of Contents

List of Figures……..... vi – vii

Introduction……..... 1 – 34
Melodrama and Memory

Chapter One……..……. 35 – 80
Classifying Czech Melodrama

Chapter Two……. 81 – 162
Mrs. Morality Sweeps Through the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

Chapter Three…….. 163 – 198
Melodrama as Testimony: The Pathos of Never Again

Chapter Four…….. 199 – 276
Observations on the Czech Holocaust Melodrama

Epilogue……. 277 – 285

Filmography…… 286 – 299

Primary Sources……. 300 – 302

Secondary Sources……. 303 – 320

List of Figures

Figure 1…….. 84
One-Sheet for *Diagnosis X* (*Diagnosa X*, Leo Marten, 1933)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figure 2 ……. 90
Promotional Book for *Port Arthur* (Nicholas Farkas, 1936)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figure 3 …… 107
Cinema program for *Lark's Song* (*Skřivánčí píseň*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1933)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figure 4 …… 120
Cinema program for *Night Butterfly* (*Noční motýl*, František Čáp, 1941)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figure 5 …… 126
Cinema Program for *The Masked Lover* (*Maskovaná milenka*, Otakar Vávra, 1940)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figures 6 – 7……. 134
Promotional Posters for *Saturday* (*Sobota*, Václav Wasserman, 1945)
Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Figures 8 – 9 …… 137
Film Still, *Kristián* (Martin Frič, 1939)

Figures 10 – 11……. 145
Film Still, *Saturday* (*Sobota*, Václav Wasserman, 1945)

Figures 12 – 29……. 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173
Film Still, *Letter from Prague* (*Dopis z Prahy*, František Šádek, 1945)
National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic/ Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington D.C., United States.

Figures 30 – 47 …… 190, 192, 195, 196, 197
Film Still, *Lest We Forget* (*Nezapomeneme*, Václav Švarc, 1946)
National Film Archive, Prague

Figures 48 – 75 …… 210, 229, 230, 232, 234, 235, 237, 240, 241
Film Still, *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, Alfréd Radok, 1949)

Figures 76 – 77……. 244
Still Photograph from the set of *Distant Journey*
Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.

Figure 78…….. 247
Still Photograph, *Distant Journey*, *Nedělní Noviny Praha*, January 12, 1949
Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.

Figures 79 – 90 ……... 259, 260, 261, 263, 264
Film Still, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1960)

Figures 91 – 100……... 273, 274, 275, 276
Film Still, *There Are No Butterflies Here* (*Motýli tady nežijí*, Miro Bernát, 1958)
National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic

Melodrama and Memory

"To remember, one must imagine."

—Georges Didi-Huberman[1]

"Movies move and they move us. They are so much more than symptoms."

—Linda Williams[2]

There is a scene in *Judgment at Nuremberg* (Stanley Kramer, 1961) in which American prosecutor Colonel Tad Lawson presents to the courtroom footage filmed by Allied cameramen at the liberation of the Dachau and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. When the lights are dimmed, and the film is projected onto the screen, Lawson narrates its images, one after another. The people of the court are forced to look at documentary evidence of Nazi atrocities—to bear witness to gruesome visuals of skeletal survivors, gas chambers disguised as showers, crematoria full of ashes and bones, piles of hairbrushes, spectacles and gold teeth, and bulldozers pushing mountains of bodies into a mass grave. The act of looking is emphasized by close-ups of the four German judges who stand accused of crimes against humanity for their participation in the Nazi regime: Ernst Janning adverts his gaze from the screen, Emil Hahn presses his index fingers into his temples, Friedrich Hofsetter winces, and Werner Lampe wears an expression of disgust on his face. In the next scene, in a prison mess hall, Hahn remarks, "How dare

[1] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 30.
[2] Linda Williams, "Emotion Pictures: International Melodrama, A Virtual Report," *Film Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (Summer 2018), 21.

they show us those films? How dare they! We are not executioners. We are judges." Lampe's response is, "you do not think it was like that, do you?"

Watching the defendants watch the atrocity footage—excerpts of George Stevens's documentary *Nazi Concentration Camps* (1945), which was, in fact, used as evidence in the actual Nuremberg trials—it is clear that they are, as Linda Williams so evocatively puts it, "moved by the moving pictures."[3] In this scene the spectacle of suffering bodies—and bodies that *had once* suffered—calls on the defendants to have an emotional and moral response, even as it asks the film's audience to recognize their guilt.[4] Here is a scene that confirms Williams's assertion that melodrama is a form of public testimony to innocent virtue.[5] As Williams argues, melodrama's desire to confront social injustice is fully realized in the genre of the courtroom drama: "this quest for a democratic, plain-speaking recognition of innocence and guilt, a guilt or innocence that can be spoken out loud and *seen by all*, is inherently melodramatic."[6] But this scene also suggests melodrama's particular ability to confront the unrepresentability of Holocaust testimony: to produce emotional knowledge about its horrors in spite of the obliteration of the witness. These atrocity images might be thought of as melodramatizing the absences and gaps between the photographic present (with its promise of indexicality)

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[3] Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory*, ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 47. On film as visual documentation at the Nuremberg trials see: John J. Michalczyk, *Filming the End of the Holocaust: Allied Documentaries, Nuremberg and the Liberation of the Concentration Camps* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 65-122.

[4] On the visual representation of death in documentary see: Vivian Sobchack, "Inscribing Ethical Space: 10 Propositions on Death, Representation, and Documentary" (1984), in *The Documentary Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). 871-888.

[5] Ibid., 81.

[6] Ibid., 81. My emphasis

and the unknowable past with their excessive realism and extreme pathos of suffering victims. Here, then, the footage testifies to what the defendants *ought to* know, what they *could* have done, and what all *should* remember.

It is important to note that the year in which *Judgment at Nuremberg* was released is also the year noted by scholars as the beginning of the American awareness of the Holocaust.[7] It was the same year in which Adolf Eichmann stood trial in Jerusalem for crimes against the Jewish people and crimes against humanity.[8] The Eichmann trial—the first international television broadcast of a major court case—played an important role in establishing the Nazi genocide of European Jewry as a distinct event; more than that, it established the centrality of Jewish victims by way of survivor testimony. Most curious of all, given that *Judgment at Nuremberg* (an adaptation of Abby Mann's 1959 teleplay) began to shoot before Eichmann's May 1960 capture in Argentina, is that the tribunal announced their verdict (guilty) on the same day as the film's gala premiere at the Congress Hall in West Berlin.[9] If nothing else, this overlap reminds us that the film's

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[7] For a detailed account of *Judgment at Nuremberg*'s production and reception see: Robert G. Moller, "How to Judge Stanley Kramer's *Judgment at Nuremberg*," *German History* 31, no. 4 (2013), 497-522.
[8] On the Eichmann trial and its significance for the public awareness of the Holocaust see: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin books, 1963, 1964).; Deborah E. Lipstadt, *The Eichmann Trial* (New York: Schocken Books, 2011).; Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).; Annette Wieviorka notes that in the first decade after the war, Holocaust memory was largely limited to victim groups. Annette Wieviorska, "On Testimony," in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 23-32.
[9] Jennifer Frost makes a similar point: "Their work on *Judgment* at *Nuremberg* over the years 1957 to 1961 contradicts a longstanding historiographical contention that most Jewish-Americans paid little public attention to what came to be known as the 'Holocaust' until the Eichmann trial or even after the 1967 Six-Day War in Israel." Jennifer Frost, "Challenging the 'Hollywoodization' of the Holocaust: Reconsidering *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961)," *Jewish Film & New Media* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2013), 142.; For contemporary press on *Judgment at Nuremberg'*s release see David Bidner, "World Premiere for 'Nuremberg:' Kramer's Film Gets Mixed Responses in West Berlin," New York Times (December 15, 1961; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times, 1949).

release coincided with a significant perceptual shift in Holocaust remembrance. But the alignment of *Judgment at Nuremberg* with the Eichmann trial also runs the risk of minimizing the significance of the Holocaust films produced in the United States and elsewhere between the end of the war and 1961—the newsreels, propaganda films, and feature-length fiction films that first circulated images of the Nazi atrocities across the globe, and have had a lasting impact on the way the Holocaust is remembered.[10]

Many Holocaust scholars have claimed that after the initial shock of these atrocity images and up until the Eichmann trial there was a "decade of silence" about the Jewish genocide in both the American and European contexts.[11] However, as Lawrence Baron suggests, our understanding of the construction of Holocaust memory has been impeded by the failure to acknowledge the lasting impact of earlier public discourse about the mass murder of European Jewry.[12] Using Alan Mintz's "constructivist" model of Holocaust remembrance in the United States, for example, Baron argues that "the fate of American Jewry has always been perceived 'through an American lens and represented

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[10] On early Holocaust cinema see: Stuart Liebman, "Historiography/Holocaust Cinema Challenges and Advances," in *Cinema & the Shoah Art Confronts the Tragedy of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jean-Michel Frodon, trans. Anna Harrison and Tom Mes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), 206-207.; Lawrence Baron, "The First Wave of American Holocaust Films, 1945-1959," *American Historical Review*, 115, no. 1 (February 2010), 90-114.

[11] According to Peter Novik, American Holocaust consciousness was a "retrospective construction." Novik argues: "Between the end of the war and the 1960s, as anyone who has lived through those years can testify, the Holocaust made scarcely any appearance in American public discourse, and hardly more in Jewish public discourse—especially discourse directed to gentiles." Peter Novik, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 103.; Likewise, Deborah Lipstadt, one of the leading scholars of the Holocaust and denial, argues, "since the 1950s and most of the 1960s it was barely on the Jewish communal or theological agenda." Deborah E. Lipstadt, "America and the Memory of the Holocaust," *Modern Judaism* 16, no. 3 (1996), 195.; Alan Mintz asserts that although the novel, play and film versions of the *Diary of Anne Frank* were enormously popular in the 1950s, the "destruction of European Jewry did not figure in public culture"; rather, it was limited to survivor communities. Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 3-20.

[12] Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17, no.1 (Spring 2003), 63.

through styles of the imagination and modes of cultural production at work in our society.'"[13] He concludes that Americans did not "lack awareness" or "repress" memory of what came to be called the Holocaust; instead, he says, it is the understanding of the Holocaust that has grown and changed over time, corresponding to global interpretations and local sensibilities.[14]

Today, over fifty years later, *Judgment at Nuremberg* is considered a classic example of what Lawrence L. Langer and Alvin Rosenfeld have called the "Hollywoodization" or "Americanization" of the Holocaust.[15] For American critics like Annette Insdorf, the film has a clear ideological imperative; it presents an image of innocent victims of radical Nazi evil that confirms American moral virtue, and absolves

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[13] Ibid., 64.

[14] While the term Holocaust came into use in the 1950s, it took on a new significance after the 1978 television broadcast of the NBC miniseries *Holocaust*. Baron's analysis is reminiscent of theories of collective memory. Like Maurice Halbwachs, Baron sees the ways in which "social frames" shift as the past is remembered and remade in the present in response to the dominant values within a society at a particular point in history. Halbwachs writes: "No memory is possible outside the frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections." Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 182; For more on the use of collective, cultural, and social memory, including their overlaps and differences see: Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, eds. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2010-226.; Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, "Introduction" in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-62.

[15] "The American ethos," Alvin Rosenfield argues, is to "stress goodness, innocence, optimism, liberty, diversity, and equality. It is part of the same ethos to downplay or deny the dark and brutal sides of life and instead to place a preponderant emphasis on the saving power of individual moral conduct and collective deeds of redemption." In other words, he argues that tragedy is antithetical to the American worldview. Thus, when Hollywood films first addressed the events of the Holocaust in the late 1940s and 1950s, they coded the struggle against Nazi anti-Semitism as the struggle for the American ideal of equality. This was partially due to studio-enforced censorship (official and self-imposed), which required that the issue of Jewishness could not be explicit – or at least it could not be exclusively Jewish. Alvin Rosenfield, "The Americanization of the Holocaust on Stage and Screen," in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After a Half Century*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 119 – 150.

its citizens of any residual guilt.[16] Much has been made of the tendency in early films about the Holocaust to downplay Jewish suffering, and some critics forcefully argue that the Hollywood model denies the uniqueness of the event. But this tendency to universalize or relativize Jewish victimization is not unique to the American case, and as Stuart Liebman reminds us, "most of the films made between 1944 and 1949 barely mention Jews except as one category of victims among many, that is, as an afterthought."[17]

Of course, the term "Hollywoodization," also implies the linear causality, psychological motivation, and neat narrative closure associated with what David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger have called the "classical Hollywood narrative." [18] To speak of the "Hollywoodization" of the Holocaust, means to dismiss the illusory realism of the "classic realist text" (a contested concept in its own right), and implicitly, to belittle these films as sentimental or melodramatic. Indeed, for many Holocaust scholars, the "ban on images" (*Bilderverbot*) and melodrama go hand and hand.[19] While the case has been made that melodrama is emotionally manipulative and

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[16] Annette Insdof argues that *Judgment at Nuremberg* uses the classical Hollywood style to comfort its spectators. Insdorf questions whether Hollywood directors could make Holocaust films in "sufficiently complex terms and resist relying on epic effects, melodrama, and the stars whose previous roles often undermine their credibility as characters trapped in the maelstrom of Nazi genocide." And adds: "[a] film does not have to be made in or by America to be considered a Hollywood film." Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust 3rd Edition* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-4, 15.

[17] Liebman, "Historiography/ Holocaust Cinema," 206.

[18] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

[19] The Holocaust *Bilderverbot*—or the Second Commandment, which prohibits the constructs and worship of images of God—is typically traced to Theodor Adorno's famous and oft-misinterpreted assertion that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." Theodor Adorno "Cultural Criticism in Society," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Webber (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1997), 17-34. ; Also see: Gertrud Koch, "Mimesis and *Bilderverbot*," Screen 34, no. 3 (October 1993), 211-222.;

trivializes the horrors of the Holocaust, such an analysis reproduces old binaries of "high" versus "low" art and reinforces the dichotomy between modernism and popular culture.

Here, I take my cue from Miriam Hansen's seminal point that Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) is not Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985).[20] In fact, the films are "radically opposed to one another," says Hansen, but both "give sensory expression to an experience that radically defies sense."[21] Hansen advocates for what Alison Landsberg calls "prosthetic memory," and explains, "whether we like it or not, the predominant vehicles of public memory are the media of technical re/production and mass consumption."[22] Now we would note that Landsberg's prosthetic memory describes "deeply felt" public cultural memories that are produced by technologies of mass culture—and cinema in particular—to mediate historical trauma and "personalize the abstract forces of history."[23] Thus, in Landsberg's view, prosthetic memories are "taken on" at the intersection of individual and collective experience—indistinguishable from lived memory.[24] Yet, as this dissertation explains, if this new memory is "deeply felt," it is in part because melodrama's "historical genericity" (in Christine Gledhill's terms)

On the representability/unrepresentability debates see, for example: Dominick LaCapra, "Lanzmann's 'Shoah' : 'Here There Is No Why,'" *Critical Inquiry* 23, no.2 (Winter 1997), 231-269.; Karyn Ball, "For and against the Bildervebort: The Rhetoric of 'Unrepresentability' and Remediated 'Authenticity' in the German Reception of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*," in *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, eds. David Bathrick, Brad Prager, and Michael D. Richardson (Rochester: Camden House, 2008), 162-184.

[20] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "'Schindler's List Is Not 'Shoah': The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (Winter 1996), 305.

[21] Ibid., 305.

[22] Ibid., 294, 310.

[23] Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*, 19.

[24] Ibid., 3.

provides a means of moving us to recognize our relation to the past in the present.[25] Melodrama, I contend—with its inextricable links to modernity—is essential for the cinematic representation of historical phenomena—especially for the Holocaust—which Hayden White has called the paradigmatic "modernist event."[26] Melodrama offers new pathways to engage not only with the unimaginable, unrepresentable, and unknowable traumas of the Holocaust, but also the feelings and perspectives out of which its memorialization emerged and developed.

This dissertation addresses melodrama's engagement with the past in postwar Holocaust memorialization and examines its significance for the national projects of history and memory. Looking past the so-called "limits" of Holocaust representation, I consider how melodrama—much like memory—acts as a placeholder outside or beyond what can be experienced and mediates what lies between the event and its re-presentation. Like other cultural and aesthetic sites of memory, moving images can be approached as memorial texts. They organize, shape, and narrate a historical past that responds to the social, cultural, and political demands of different times and contexts. With this in mind, I suggest that melodrama does not only help to narrate a nation's memory of the past, or institutionalize forms of national or communal remembrance. It also enables us to recognize, anticipate, and remember *how to feel* toward the past and the collective meanings that have been passed down from one generation to the next. For as I

[25] Christine Gledhill, "Prologue: The Reach of Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), xxv.
[26] Hayden White, "The Modernist Event," in *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, ed. Vivian Sobchack (New York: Routledge, 1996), 20.

hope to make clear, melodrama takes questions of "what happened" and "what-can-or-cannot be represented" and reconfigures them in terms that address the pressures of time, memory, and the historicity of feeling. What can be felt historically? What should be remembered and memorialized? And what has been strategically forgotten?

Czech Holocaust Films

Significantly, one of the earliest feature-length narrative films about the Holocaust, Alfréd Radok's *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1949) emerged from postwar Czechoslovakia. In 1950, shortly after Czechoslovak censors banned it at home, *Distant Journey* screened in cinemas abroad, capturing the attention of foreign critics, most famously French critic André Bazin, who noted that its expressionistic style "[captured the] intrinsic and in a way metaphysical reality of the concentration camp universe."[27] Later, during the relative liberalization of the 1960s, Holocaust films by directors of the Czechoslovak New Wave, such as Zbyněk Brynych's *Transport from Paradise* (*Transport z ráje*, 1962) and Jan Němec's *Diamonds of the Night* (*Démanty noci*, 1964)—received international recognition and prestigious awards.[28] In 1966, Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos's *The Shop on Main Street* (*Obchod na korze*, 1965) became the first Czechoslovak film—and the first film about the Holocaust—to win an Oscar (for Best Foreign Language Picture). Two years later, Jiří Menzel's *Closely Watch Trains* (*Ostře*

[27] André Bazin, "The Ghetto as Concentration Camp: Alfréd Radok's *The Long Journey*," in *Bazin on Global Cinema 1948-1958*, trans. Bert Cardullo (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 92-104.; Although *Distan*t Journey was released in Czechoslovakia in 1949, it was not released abroad until at least 1950—and in some places, it did not appear in cinemas until 1952.
[28] Both films are adaptations of short stories by Arnost Lustig, a survivor of the Terezín ghetto.

sledované vlaky, 1966), received the same distinction. With their experimental cinematic strategies, formal innovations, and focus on ordinary people living under the Nazi occupation, these films from Czechoslovakia quickly gained a reputation as serious art films—emblematic of the "proper" approach to the representation of the Holocaust.[29]

In this context, it is no surprise that these films have been the focus of numerous critical and historiographic studies of Holocaust cinema. In fact, critics and scholars generally argue that they are at odds with the commercial fare produced by Hollywood. For example, in his widely cited study *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable*, Ilan Avisar dedicates a chapter to Czech cinema's "stylistic approach to the representation of the Holocaust on Screen," noting that "[these films represent] alternative artistic visions of the concentration camp universe—visions that subordinate the narrative to the overall conception of a discourse conceived and designed as a profound reflection of Holocaust trauma."[30] For Stuart Liebman and Leonard Quart, "Czech films of the Holocaust … eschew the conventions of socialist realism and commercial Hollywood filmmaking, and opt for a variety of novel formal strategies."[31] Similarly, Aaron Kerner points out that while American Holocaust films "lean towards

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[29] Among the Holocaust films made during the "Czechoslovak New Wave" are: *Romeo Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1959), *Transport from Paradise* (*Transport z ráje*, Zbyněk Brynych, 1962), *The Fifth Houseman is Fear* (*…a pátý jezdec je strach*, Zbyněk Brynych, 1964), *Diamonds of the Night* (*Démanty noci*, Jan Němec, 1964), *Dita Saxová* (Antonin Moskalyk, 1967), and *The Cremator* (*Spalovač mrtvol*, Juraj Herz, 1968).; Even Lawrence Baron contrasts *Judgment at Nuremberg*'s "universalizing narrative strategies" to the *The Shop on Main Street's* "existential dilemmas confronting individuals." Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* (Landham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 41-42.
[30] Ilan Avisar, Screening *the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable* (Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1988), 51.
[31] Stuart Liebman and Leonard Quart, "Czech Films of the Holocaust," *Cineaste* 22, no. 1 (April 1996), 51.

the melodramatic genre … Czech films are didactic, drawing from various traditions of realism."[32]

For the most part, melodrama has not been invoked as a fundamental element in the analysis of these films. Even when acknowledging their more melodramatic qualities, critics typically highlight what it is that makes them specifically Czech, often citing the local genre of the "tragi-comedy." The lack of the generic label "melodrama" can be understood, on the one hand as denoting its "serious" subject matter, but this also points to the significant relationship between the Holocaust and Czech national questions and themes in Czechoslovak cinema.

In film studies, national cinema typically describes the production, distribution, and exhibition practices of a clearly demarcated nation-state that is built upon shared national-cultural identity, ethnic and linguistic.[33] But subsequent critical studies have proposed a new vocabulary to account for "global," "international," "transnational" and "regional" cinema cultures. Mette Hjort provides yet another approach to account for "the cinema of small nations."[34] Noting anxieties about "population, GDP, territory, [and]

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[32] Aaron, Kerner, *Film and the Holocaust: New Perspectives on Dramas, Documentaries, and Experimental Films* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 123.

[33] For more on the phenomenon of national cinema see: Paul Willemen, "The National," in *Looks and Frictions* (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 206-219.; Paul Willemen, "The National Revisited," in *Theorising National Cinema*, eds. Valentine Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 2006), 29-43.; Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of Nation Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 57-58.; Mette Hjort, "Themes of Nation," in *Cinema and Nation*, eds. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 95-110.

[34]On the "cinema of small nations" see: Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie, "Introduction," in *The Cinema of Small Nations*, eds. Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 1-19.; Mette Hjort, *Small Nation, Global Cinema: The New Danish Cinema* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).; On "small" and "peripheral" cinemas see: Dina Iordanova, "Unseen Cinema: Notes on Small Cinemas and the Transnational," in *Small Cinemas in Global Markets: Genres, Identities, Narratives*, eds. David Desser, Janina Falkowska, Lenuta Glukin (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 259-

history of rule by non-co-national rule," Hjort argues that small national cinemas deploy certain cost-effective and creative strategies to ensure access and visibility.[35] Specifically, she draws on Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's work on "the politics of recognition" to explain the ways in which small cinemas "desire to see expressions of culturally inflicted identities recognized as valuable both internally and externally."[36] Thus, we might think of the ways in which Czech cinema, with its limited domestic market, has relied on Holocaust-themed films as a means of developing, maintaining, and promoting a recognizable cultural-national identity both domestically and abroad.

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to "Czech" cinema—and not "Czechoslovak" cinema—for several reasons. While, during the period this dissertation examines, the Czechoslovak film industry produced films by Czech and Slovak directors, actors, and crews, the primary focus of this study are specifically Czech national topics and questions in films made by this industry. Although films such as the *The Shop on Main Street* would treat Slovak history, Czechoslovak Holocaust films of the 1940s and 1950s largely engage with Czech national questions, selecting formative events, and promoting dominant forms of identity. To this end, "Czechoslovak" refers to institutions, laws, and policies related to the government or the state, as well as the film industry itself.[37] Central

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270. Janelle Blakenship and Tobis Nagl, "Introduction: Towards a Politics of Scale," in *European Visions: Small Cinemas in Transition*, eds. Janelle Blakenship and Tobis Nagl (Bielefield: Transcript-Verlag, 2015), 15-48.

[35] Mette Hjort, "Small Cinemas: How They Thrive and Why They Matter," *Mediascape: UCLA's Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* (Winter 2011).

[36] Mette Hjort, "Denmark," in *The Cinema of Small Nations*, eds. Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 25.

[37] This resulted in a variety of reconfigurations: the Czechoslovak Republic, Czecho-Slovakia (the "Second Republic"), the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (the "Third" Czechoslovak Republic), the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Czechoslovak Federal Republic, and finally the Czech Republic. As

to my study is the melodramatic story of a small nation located at the heart of Europe—bordered to the north by Germany, to the west by Poland, and to the south by Austria—abandoned and given away by the West in 1938, occupied by the Nazis, and isolated by the Iron Curtain. Rooted in the nineteenth century "national awakening" and the Czech national myth, this rhetoric of national victimization relies upon melodrama to nostalgically look back and imagine a Czech home that exists across the past, present, and future. The title of the Czech national anthem, "Where Is My Home?" ("*Kde domov můj?*"), further articulates this sentiment.

My point is that the dynamics of Czech cinema provide a unique case for theorizing the intrinsically melodramatic impulses of Holocaust memorialization. Starting from this point, I situate melodrama's relationship to Czech cinema during the period of the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic and the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. I take up historiographic problems of canon formation: Why would the National Film Archive in Prague (Národní filmový archiv or NFA) retroactively use the genre label "melodrama" to categorize feature-length fiction films from the 1930s and early-1940s? What is the value of melodrama for this particular point of Czech history? And how do the dynamics of the Czech case—and its status as a small cinema—force us to rethink the transnational, regional, and local dimensions of melodrama's genres? Then, I examine how Holocaust films produced in Czechoslovakia between 1945 and 1961—fiction and non-fiction, feature-length and short—relied on the melodramatic modality to

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Ivan Klimeš points out, if we went by these shifts, the province of a film would change as well, depending on a year that it was made. Ivan Klimeš, "National Cinema in a Transnational Context: A Central European Experience," *Iluminace* 25, no. 4 (2013), 28-29.

negotiate Holocaust memory according to the shifting national imaginary. How does melodrama narrate the Holocaust and make it morally legible? And what does the Holocaust bring to theories of moving image melodrama?

What I call *historicized pathos* accounts for why moving images move us through the past, and also how they move us to feel historically about that past. I say "feel historically" thinking of Richard Dyer's observation that "the pastiche of *Far from Heaven* (2002) [a pastiche of the Sirkian melodrama] not only makes the historicity of its affect evident but can also allow us to realize the *historicity of our feelings*."[38] Here my interest is not in the historical affects of pastiche, but in the historicity of melodramatic pathos. Christine Gledhill, drawing on Raymond Williams's concept of "structure of feeling"—or "a felt sense of [everyday] life"—argues that, "in materializing the fusion of individual and society, melodrama reveals the work of emotion and personality in social and political processes."[39] That is to say, melodrama's operations are continuously shifting according to the needs of the changing present, and these shifts can be accounted for in terms of their residual feelings—this, Jane Gaines suggests, makes films storehouses of "emotional knowledge."[40] Melodrama acts as buffer between experience

[38] Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 178. My emphasis.
[39] Christine Gledhill, "Prologue: The Reach of Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), x.; Also see: Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Peterborough: Broadview Press: 1975), 63.; Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979).
[40]Jane Gaines, "The Genius of Genre and the Ingenuity of Women," in *Gender Meets Genre in Postwar Cinemas*, ed. Christine Gledhill (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 15-28. For the purposes of this study I focus specifically on theories of melodramatic pathos. On melodrama and emotion see: E. Deidre Pribram, "Melodrama and the Aesthetics of Emotion," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 237-252.

and sentiment, knowing and feeling. The institutional force of melodrama—with its emphasis on nostalgically looking back—offers emotional knowledge about the past-we-have-lost, and enables us to affectively engage with the practices that shape our deep-felt memory of it. Thus, we could say that melodrama produces a historicity of feeling—yet the pathos it produces can itself be historicized. As Michel Foucault reminds us, "We believe that feelings are immutable, but every sentiment … has a history."[41] Historicized pathos refers to a felt sense of history and experience, but it also offers insight into how melodrama functions historically.

The Melodramatic Worldview

There is no doubting that melodrama has been a significant feature of cinema almost from its beginning, and yet it remains a particularly ambiguous term that can be used to discuss a wide range of texts. In film studies, there is a stubborn (and frankly melodramatic) narrative that persists: that melodrama is a bad object that must be reclaimed for good. There is a degree of truth to this, considering that the label melodrama continues to be used, at least colloquially, to dismiss works that are sentimental, emotionally manipulative, or generally outside the bounds of good taste. Following the seminal interventions of Peter Brooks, Thomas Elsaesser, Christine Gledhill, and Linda Williams, among others, we can safely say that melodrama has been rehabilitated as worthy of academic pursuit—more than that, it has been academically

[41] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 87.

championed.[42] Not only have these contributions encouraged film scholars to examine melodrama's broader significance for the study of national cinemas, art house films, prestige television shows, news programs, and as Williams notes, "even [films about] the Holocaust" (specifically Hollywood films like *Schindler's List*); it has also encouraged some to strategically use it to redeem other so-called "bad objects," particularly in the realm of camp.[43] This gets to the root of the problem: melodrama is now an aesthetic, a cultural practice, an ubiquitous umbrella-genre, and a transhistorical mode—it is both limited and limitless.[44]

It has been more than two decades since Linda Williams radically revised melodrama, calling it "the fundamental mode of popular American motion pictures," and inspiring an outpouring of comparative studies and expansions of her thesis in both

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[42] See, for example: Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Women's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 43-69.; Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).; Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Women's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 5-42.; Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 42-88.

[43] Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 53.; On melodrama and the Holocaust see: Marcia Landy, "Cinematic History, Melodrama, and the Holocaust," in *Humanity at the Limit: The Impact of the Holocaust Experience on Jews and Christians*, ed. Michael A. Singer (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 376-390.

[44] This is an adaptation of an argument I have made elsewhere: Koel Banerjee and Rachel Schaff, "Melodrama in Our Present: The Now of Cultural Nationalisms" (CFP, Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference, 2018).; I need to add, that this does not mean that everything is melodrama. As Williams and Gledhill put it: "Comedy, romance, and realism are equally distinctive modes that frequently mix with melodrama as well as one another. However, melodrama is crucial to understanding popular dramatic fictions in modernity. Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill, "Introduction," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 2.; For a good discussion of melodrama's ubiquity see: Despina Kakoudaki, "Melodrama and Apocalypse. Politics and the Melodrama Mode in Contagion," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 311-312.

American and global cinemas.[45] Recently the volume *Melodrama Unbound* set out to "unbind" melodrama scholarship from some of its preoccupations, including what Williams sees as its "fixation on excess and suffering victims."[46] While this volume offers important historiographic and theoretical studies that challenge some widely held assumptions in the field (for example, Williams's reconsideration of the "classical" in "classical realist" and "classical Hollywood cinema," and Jane Gaines's pioneering take on the "historical time theory of melodrama"), it is still not entirely clear: What are the stakes of calling a film a melodrama?[47] What is its value for studying different cinematic traditions? And, why is its critical reputation still up for debate?

Melodrama is a Historical Practice

I explore these questions by considering three crucial points about melodrama. First, melodrama is a historical practice, and its recognition is necessarily informed by knowledge of its cultural-critical discourse.[48] Of course, there is a vast body of

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45 Williams goes on: "it is not a specific genre like the western or horror film; it is not a 'deviation' of the classical realist narrative […] melodrama is a peculiarly democratic and American form that seeks dramatic elevation of moral irrational truths through a dialectic of pathos and action. It is the foundation of the classical Hollywood movie." Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 42.

[46] This volume came out of Screen Melodrama: Global Perspectives, a joint conference of New York University and Columbia University from February 28 to March 3, 2013.

[47] Linda Williams, "'Tales of Sound and Fury…' or, The Elephant of Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 169-184.; Jane Gaines, "Even More Tears: The *Historical Time* Theory of Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 325-340.

[48] This, of course, is indebted to Michel Foucault's concept of a "discursive practice": "[…] not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them." Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, 1972-1977, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mephram, and Kate Soper, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Random House, 1980), 139-142.

scholarship on melodrama in film studies, ranging from the neo-Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytic genre theory of the 1970s and 1980s, to more recent work on the melodramatic modality across a range of genres, histories, and national cultures. But certain studies have become more influential than others. As Anupama Kapse describes in her study of early Indian cinema, directly invoking the seminal work of Peter Brooks, melodrama may go by many other names, but its "resounding signs" can be seen throughout cinema itself:[49]

> Whether it was the mythological, the historical, the stunt, or the social, melodrama appeared again and again and again as the connective tissue that linked disparate genres, appearing primarily through the dramatization of conflicts between good and evil, and through the repeated manifestation of novel forms of suffering. As a mode, melodrama was both familiar and unfamiliar ....[50]

Following Kaspe's point, once melodrama is brought into critical view, it commands our recognition again and again. It lures us in, promising to unearth underlying social conditions, political processes, and emotions, and before we know it, it is "too late," we are unable to escape its grasp. Thus, in many ways, it is the study of melodrama that brings the melodramatic worldview to light. Or, to paraphrase Kapse: the "rhetorical weight" of melodrama offers a method of historical excavation.[51]

Indeed, Brooks's *The Melodramatic Imagination* is important for its historicization of melodrama's operative functions, showing its flexibility from stage to screen. This highly influential study of the fiction of Honoré de Balzac and Henry James

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[49] Anupama Kapse, "Melodrama as Method," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and* Media 54, no. 2 (Fall 2013), 147.
[50] Ibid., 147.
[51] Ibid., 150.

positioned melodrama as a mode of conception and expression, a product of Western modernity, which arose in France out of the post-revolution, post-Enlightenment, post-sacred world, where there was a sudden break in traditional notions of truth and morality.[52] According to his account, melodrama emerged in response to the loss of a traditional moral order, as an alternative sense-making system, making everyday life meaningful in the newly secular nation.[53] Melodrama, with its emphasis on Manichean binaries—good and evil, moral and amoral, victim and villain—standardizes a democratic language of morality and articulates what Brooks calls the "moral occult."[54] For Brooks, the spoken word is inadequate for proving morality; only the recognition of suffering—and by extension the recognition of innocence—can make morality legible.[55] Melodrama, he argues, is a "text of muteness," forcing the "unspeakable" (or for our purposes, the "unsayable") into expression.[56]

Perhaps the most valuable concept we gain from Brooks (and Thomas Elsaesser, who similarly articulated the term) is the "melodramatic imagination," which links melodrama to acts of social and national imagining.[57] This has positioned melodrama as the *ur*-genre in critical moments of nation building, or in moments of national crisis (re-

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[52] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 15-16, 43.
[53] Ibid., 20.
[54] Ibid., 5-6.
[55] Ibid., 42.
[56] Ibid., 56-81.
[57] Brooks published his essay "The Melodramatic Imagination" the same year Elsaesser published "Tales of Sound and Fury." Although Elsaesser and Brooks were unaware of each other's work, and the two works deal with different materials (literature versus film), both refer to the concept of the "melodramatic imagination. If nothing else, this overlap at least suggests a certain cultural importance that demanded a renewed attention and rehabilitation of melodrama. Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 1-23.; Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 43

building).[58] Significantly, melodrama lends an affective dimension to moments of social, political, and national upheaval. It is through the melodramatic imagination that national myths are re-cast into individual and social conflicts, leading to the public recognition of injustice. After all, the task of melodrama's expressive rhetoric is to render oppressor and victim visible and translate guilt and innocence into moral and emotional feeling.

Still, it is also important to remember Brooks's point that the melodramatic imagination needs, as he says, "both document and vision … and it is centrally concerned with the extrapolation from one to another."[59] Theories of moving image melodrama may be grounded in the discussion of feature-length fiction films, but as Brooks suggests, melodrama serves to document shared sociocultural values, experiences, and emotions of a place and time. This understanding of melodrama is reflected in film studies' expansion of Brooks' secular morality thesis, particularly the work of feminist scholars such as Gledhill, Williams, and Gaines, all of whom have gone on to discuss melodrama's significance for documentary films, foregrounding its complex (and often overlapping) relationship to the mode of realism.[60] If melodrama is a crucial mode for both fiction and documentary, then it does not only signify excessive sentimentality; instead it gestures

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[58] Political theory (and Benedict Anderson in particular) tells us that the very act of imagining the nation reciprocally involves exclusion by the very act (i.e. of limiting it) that constitutes it. While all large communities are imagined, the nation as an "imagined political community" stands out as one which promises a fraternity that subsumes all existing inequalities and differences within its boundaries, making the nation worth dying for. See: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

[59] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 22.

[60] See, for example: Jane Gaines, "Documentary Radicality," *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 171-178.; Christine Gledhill, "'An Abundance of Understatement:' Documentary, Melodrama, and Romance," in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and the British Cinema in the Second World War*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 220.

toward the real social problems that produced that sentiment. Melodrama, therefore, functions as a different kind of historical evidence.

Crucial to my argument is the defining emotion of melodrama—pathos—and its relationship to the temporal domain. As one of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion (along with logos and ethos), pathos leads us to feel a certain way by appealing to deeply felt emotions. Pathos, unlike pity, extends beyond sympathy toward the sufferings of tragic victims; it encompasses a range of emotions, including sadness, relief, guilt, satisfaction, and shock.[61] Pathos, or more specifically, tears, has been a longstanding preoccupation in melodrama studies. Yet, scholars such as Diedre Pribram, Gledhill, and Gaines have only recently moved past the "affective turn" to focus on the role of emotions and questions of aesthetic feeling.[62] Tracing melodrama's emotional trajectories, I demonstrate how the production of melodramatic pathos is crucial to a historical conception of the institutionalization of Holocaust memorialization.

Melodrama Is a Cultural Artifact

Second, melodrama is a cultural artifact that is historically contingent. It attests to the shared social values, feelings, and perceptions of a particular place and time. Gledhill has pointed out that the concept of melodrama is particularly flexible.[63] She explains:

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[61] For more on the emotions elicited by melodrama see: Julian Hanich and Winfried Menninghaus, "Beyond Sadness: The Multi-Emotional Trajectory of Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 56, no.4 (Summer 2017), 76-101.
[62]Pribram, "Melodrama and the Aesthetics of Emotion," 237-252.
[63] Christine Gledhill, "Rethinking Genre," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Linda Williams and Christine Gledhill (New York: Arnold, 2000), 221-243.

> Melodrama is not nor ever was a singular genre. However, we may retrospectively conceive of its historical effectivity in two interdependent ways: first as an early cultural machine for the mass production of popular genres capable of summoning up and putting into place different kinds of audience; second, as a modality, understood as a culturally conditioned mode of perception and aesthetic articulation.[64]

I cite Gledhill here to emphasize the fact that melodrama is not merely a genre or a mode—it is also, as she puts it, a "cross-generic modality" that negotiates the cultural work of ideological production and knowledge.[65] But Gledhill also reminds us that melodrama's genres are "constellations" of "cultural, aesthetic, and ideological materials" that each require contextual engagement.[66] Thus, there is always a need to historicize melodrama's functions whether it be through its institutional context (e.g., industrial and marketing categories, journalistic labels, critical and popular reception) or aesthetic and ideological effects.[67] In mapping the Hollywood melodrama onto indigenous traditions as well as local and regional cinematic practices, some accounts have suggested that melodrama is inherently transnational, most notably in studies that argue melodrama is a global vernacular that traverses different national cultures and articulates the modern experience. Certainly, Miriam Hansen's influential notion of "vernacular modernism" helps to explain the global pervasiveness of cinematic genres and forms in modernity; and yet, melodrama is not just a popular film genre—it is also a culturally specific literary, operatic, and theatrical form that, in many cases, pre-dates the

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[64] Ibid., 227.
[65] Ibid., 240.
[66] Christine Gledhill, "Introduction," in Gender and Genre in Postwar Cinemas, ed. Christine Gledhill (Urbana, Chicago & Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 4.
[67] Ibid., 238-239.

advent of cinema.[68] While the transnational nature of the melodramatic modality is indisputable, the specificities of its genres are less apparent and demand closer analysis. Answering Fredric Jameson's call to "always historicize," Chapters One and Two of this dissertation resist the desire to call Czech melodrama films strikingly reminiscent of Hollywood melodrama films, and instead asks questions of national-cultural specificity.[69]

In my own research on Czech cinema, I have been fascinated by the retrospective nature of melodrama—the ways in which it inspires us to recall, to recognize, and to articulate its emotional and sociocultural force in the present. Thus, I approach the study of melodrama as a "meta-archival" process that encourages reflection and fundamentally alters our relationship to the past. Since the "rediscovery" of Douglas Sirk's Universal films in the 1970s, the study of melodrama has always been preoccupied with historical excavation—it has always looked back to expose ironic and ideological subversion, the feminization of the family and the domestic sphere, racial victimization and vilification, and so on. Think of melodrama's obsession with the restoration of a space of innocence—its compulsion to return to a point of origin. Consider, for instance, that studies continue to historicize melodrama's theatrical and literary sources (Gledhill, Matthew Buckley), identify its diverse cultural contexts (Ira Bhaskar, Zhen Zhang), and debunk its meaning in contemporary film studies (Ben Singer, Steve Neale).[70] And, if we

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[68] Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 59-77.
[69] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 9.
[70] See: Gledhill, "Prologue," ix-xxvi.; Matthew Buckley, "Unbinding Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 15-30.; Ira Bhaskar, "Expressionist Aurality: The Stylized

continue to recall these studies, then we must also acknowledge that melodrama—a modality so bound up with "muteness" and delayed action—is almost always recognized after-the-fact. Only in hindsight can we reconcile this knowledge discrepancy between the film and our recollection and recognize that we are powerless to the structures that order this melodramatic meta-narrative of excavation and discovery.

Melodrama Makes Time Legible

Finally, I propose that Linda Williams's assertion that melodrama is the "dominant form" of mainstream motion pictures while true, does not go far enough.[71] There must be another reason for melodrama's ubiquity across cinema. Following Williams's example, I make a bolder claim: melodrama is the fundamental mode for all moving images. Melodrama makes time legible. The modality's investment in the affective experience of time addresses the phenomenology of moving images. Close attention to melodrama's emotional trajectory enables us to recognize the mechanisms that move us though temporal means. I should be clear that I do not mean melodrama does not exist elsewhere, but that the moving image, perhaps more than any other medium, realizes melodrama's futile search to recover lost time.

Aesthetic of *Bhava* in Indian Melodrama," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 253-272.; Zhen Zhang, "Transnational Melodrama, *Wenyi*, and the Orphan Imagination," in *Melodrama Unbound: Across History, Media, and National Cultures*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 83-98.; Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*: *Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).; Steve Neale, "Melo Talk: On the Meaning and Use of the Term 'Melodrama' in the American Trade Press," *Velvet Light Trap* (Fall 1993), 66-89.

[71] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 23.

For one thing, the narrative logic of melodrama allows us to see the flow of time by pointing to more easily identifiable temporal structures. Melodrama's dramatic narrative organizes time into clear cause-and-effect relationships, shifting emphasis from cause to consequence; its moral scheme works toward the recognition and confrontation of conflicts between polarizing forces such as good and evil, seeking justice for injustice. Thus, melodrama provides clear expectations and conventions that allow us to comprehend the progression of cinematic time as materialized duration.[72] In a similar vein, Laura Mulvey, writing about the resemblances of tropes of stillness and movement for both cinema and narrative points out:

> Cinema's forward movement, the successive order of film, merges easily into the order of narrative. Linearity, causality, and the linking figure of metonymy, all crucial elements of storytelling, find a correspondence in the unfolding, forward moving direction of film. While the main, middle, section of narrative is characterized by a drive forward, beginnings and ends are, on the contrary, characterized by stasis.[73]

Mulvey observes that both the perpetual flow of the film strip and the narrative move toward its "own certain death-like end."[74] As she explains, quoting Peter Brooks's analysis of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "Freud's concept of "the death drive" negotiates between the two, including, as it does, movement toward an end as the desire to return to an 'earlier' state."[75] Here we recall Linda Williams's point—also quoting

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[72] This recalls Edgar Morin's argument that the cinema, where "past memory, the imaginary future, and lived moment are simultaneously present and merged," is defined by Bergsonian durée. Edgar Morin, *The Cinema, Or, The Imaginary Man*, trans. Lorraine Mortimer (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 61.

[73] Laura Mulvey, "The Death Drive: Narrative Movement Stilled," in *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 69.

[74] Ibid., 70-71. From this perspective, images become a metonymic substitute, registering time and story visible.

[75] Ibid., 70. Also see: Peter Brooks, "Freud's Masterplot," *Yale French Studies*, no. 55/56 (1977), 280-300.

Brooks—that "melodrama begins, and wants to end, in a 'space of innocence.'"[76] Now consider that melodramatic protagonists always long to return to a "space of experience" that no longer exists or has never existed. This is the central paradox of melodrama: it is inherently "backward looking" and conservative in its reification of a "lost past" as a "space of innocence." But at the same time, it is forward-moving, and can be used to move audiences to socially progressive (even revolutionary) ends.[77]

Think further to the numerous ways in which melodramatic time can be linked to cinematic time itself. The historiographic character of the cinema, with its ability to record "real" time and duration merges past and present in the movement toward the imaginary future. It insists on the experience of lived time (and its pastness) in the present tense. As André Bazin tells us, cinema is "change mummified"—it is "embalmed time" that can be reanimated as lived duration.[78] Following Bazin's phenomenological approach, we know that cinematic time is not unrepeatable or irreversible—it has been, and can be again—and yet, it is always unreachable—there is inevitably a gap between the past and present, so we are left only with the memory-trace of our experience. Thus, we may experience the past re-animated in the present through the moving image—but we know that this experience is fleeting; we can never truly resurrect the past.

In Mary Ann Doane's view, such a fantasy is indicative of the "archival impulse" of cinema; the temporal imperative to preserve the original object before it is "too late"

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[76] Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 28.; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 29.
[77] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 37.
[78] André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?, Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press), 15.

and is irrevocably lost.[79] Doane explains that film, with its ability to record an imprint of "real" time seems to resist the pressures of time through its representability.[80] She goes on: "The indexicality of the cinematic sign appears as the guarantee of its status as a record of a temporality outside of itself—a pure time or duration which could not be that of its own functioning. This is what imbues cinematic time with historicity."[81] Doane's formulation, which accounts for the "strangely immaterial … experience of presence" that accompanies the cinema on the level of apparatus, diegesis, and spectatorship, also acknowledges that the overwhelming contingency of the medium demands the rationalization of this time.[82] We might think of melodrama's emotional trajectory—particularly its search for moral legibility as answering this call for rationalization. Consider, for example, that melodrama deploys formulas, clichés and stereotypes that enable us to recognize how to feel about relationships-in-time. In this sense, melodrama transforms the experience of cinematic time into something that is readable, enjoyable, and pleasurable—it elicits pathos. Besides moving us through the moving image, melodrama rationalizes the irrational, making it especially helpful for addressing the epistemological ruptures of the concentration camp universe.

Melodrama and Memorialization

Melodrama mediates between the material conditions of the medium and the seemingly immaterial: emotion, time, and memory. Today, with the "living connection" to the

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[79] Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time : Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 22.
80 Ibid., 22-23.
[81] Ibid., 22-23.
[82] Ibid., 22-23.

Holocaust rapidly dwindling, so much of Holocaust remembrance depends on the transmission of mediated forms of memory. Indeed, the connection between the Holocaust-as-history and the Holocaust-as-memory is now well-established in the discipline of memory studies. The "memory boom" of the last three decades has prompted many challenges and expansions to French sociologist Maurice Halbwach's highly influential notion of "the social frameworks of collective memory" to account for the role of cinema and other forms of mass cultural technology in the ongoing formations of local and global memoryscapes. This dissertation engages with two forms of "secondary" memory: "prosthetic memory" (Alison Landsberg), and "postmemory" (Marianne Hirsch).[83] Whereas prosthetic memory is "taken on" as a protheses that is identical to memory, Marianne Hirsch's postmemory is "mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation."[84] Hirsch describes postmemory as the affective transmission of an "inter- and trans-generational" and "affiliative" memory that is distinct-yet-related to familial memory or survivor testimony.[85] Thus, she takes up the visceral impact of photographic images, literary texts, and other artistic works to consider how postmemory works as a Derridean substitute that "approximates memory in its affective force."[86]

Ultimately, and despite its emphasis on temporal delay, Hirsch's understanding of postmemory only briefly accounts for the historical feeling of nostalgia that necessarily

[83] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*: *Writing and Visual Culture After the* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). ; Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*.
[84] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.
[85] Ibid., 20.
[86] Ibid., 5.

accompanies the visual representation of the historical past. In this regard, Pam Cook suggests that all representations of the past "[address] audiences as nostalgic spectators," and thus provide deeper insight into "our relationship with the past, about the connections between past and present, and our affective responses."[87] Debates over the "objectivity" of history and the "subjectivity" of memory, Cook argues, are rooted in the nostalgic longing for an inaccessible present—the "double-bind fantasy" of the eyewitness account (which is subjective itself).[88] Thus, Cook brings out the ways in which nostalgia bridges the overly simplified dichotomy of history and memory; however, she also helps to situate the ways in which nostalgia impinges on the melodramatic form itself.

At its heart then, this dissertation is concerned with the melodramatic impulses of Holocaust memorialization in Czech cinema. With this in mind, my study can be thought of as taking two different yet equally melodramatic trajectories. On one level, it examines what melodrama studies brings to the history and memory of the Holocaust. But this dissertation also explores what the Holocaust as an event and historical object brings to the study of melodrama. My hope is that the melodramatic nature of the Czech case will provide evidence of the ways in which postwar Holocaust films are both shaped by and shape national and transnational imaginations surrounding morality and catastrophe.

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[87] Pam Cook, "Rethinking Nostalgia: *In the Mood for Love* and *Far From Heaven*," in *Screening the Past*, ed. Pam Cook (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2-4.
[88] Ibid., 2-4.

Chapters

While the major focus is an examination of early Holocaust films in postwar Czechoslovakia, historiographical problems of canon formation are also discussed. In the first chapter I examine how, in 1998, the NFA retroactively used the genre label melodrama to categorize sixty-seven feature-length fiction films made between 1930 and 1944 in their volumes of Czech Feature Films (*Český hraný film*).[89] Curiously, with the exception of two films from the 1980s, no other films are classified as melodrama; the genre disappears. My analysis begins with questions of genre because, on the one hand, melodrama did not exist as an industrial, promotional, or critical category in Czech film discourse before this classification. On the other hand, the NFA's classification offers a delimited body of work to interrogate melodrama's operations during one particular historical juncture. Significantly, this fifteen-year period covers the final years of the interwar Czechoslovak Republic, the demoralizing effects of the Munich Accords, in which Czechoslovakia's French and British allies capitulated to Nazi Germany, allowing the annexation of the predominately German-inhabited Sudetenland—and it spans the entirety of the short-lived semi-fascist Second Republic, the creation of the nominally independent pro-German Slovak Republic, and the Nazi occupation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. To approach the specificities of Czech film melodrama it seems necessary to first discuss the relationship between the Czechoslovak and German film industries and examine the genre's functions in Weimar and Nazi films. The connection

[89] Eva Urbanová et al. eds, *Česky hraný film II: 1930-1945* (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1998).

to Nazi cinema undoubtedly helped to determine the NFA's response to these films and shaped their understanding of melodrama as a genre more generally.

What, then, does the NFA's label represent? In Chapter Two, I turn to the NFA's corpus to outline five overarching features that can be identified across these melodrama films. This chapter seeks to contextualize what melodrama might mean during the time of the interwar republic and the Nazi Protectorate, and also how these films may have taken on other meanings in the subsequent years. It is important for me to point out that this chapter does not seek to provide an exhaustive history of melodrama in the Czech lands. Within this chapter, I sketch a more general outline of some overarching features and trends to consider why these films were labeled melodrama and to speculate on what that might imply. Through a close reading of Václav Wasserman's 1945 melodrama *Saturday* (*Sobota*), I consider how the perception of melodrama films as "light entertainment" during the Nazi occupation provided yet another opportunity for these films during post-1968 period of "normalization" (*normalizace*). In addition to original reviews, promotional materials, and censorship documents, I look at those which appeared later in the 1970s. During the 1970s, *Saturday* and other "older Czech films" (*starší české filmy*) re-emerged in cinemas and on televisions across Czechoslovakia as "Films for Those Who Remember" ("*Filmy pro pamětníky*"/ FPP). Far from being apolitical entertainment or Nazi propaganda, these Czech melodrama films became a crucial for the transmission of collective memory, playing an active role in shaping and framing memories about the recent past, and at the same time, addressing the psychic needs of the changing present.

The last two chapters shift the focus to the role film played in the construction of the Holocaust in the postwar imaginary. Of course, in postwar and communist-era Czechoslovakia, moving-image representations of the Holocaust emerged from a complex set of determining factors: the desire to legitimate the Czechoslovak state both at home and abroad; the attempt to negotiate the construction of Holocaust memory in response to the shifting realities of the political present; and, following the Eichmann trial in the 1960s, the increasing international appeal of Holocaust films across Europe and the United States.

Chapter Three discusses melodrama as a form of historical testimony by analyzing two non-fiction short films made in Czechoslovakia immediately after the war: *A Letter from Prague* (*Dopis z Prahy*, František Šádek, 1945) and *Lest We Forget* (*Nezapomeneme*, Václav Švarc, 1946). In the immediate aftermath of the liberation, the newly nationalized *Krátký* (Short) Film studio produced, among others, non-fiction shorts about the war and the Nazi occupation with, as Lucie Česálková puts it, clear "cultural and pedagogical goals."[90] During this period, new memories were attached to the Jewish genocide and the Nazi occupation. The intense social and ideological crises of the war years had given rise to an atmosphere of hyper-nationalism, anti-German sentiment, and a revolutionary milieu influenced by the consolidation of Communist power in the region. An examination of two of these early non-fiction shorts about Nazi horrors shows they used melodramatic rhetoric—moral absolutes, excessive *mise-en-scène* (documentary images of torture, death, and excavations of mass graves), and an affective appeal to

[90] For more on Krátký film see: Lucia Česálková, *Atomy věčnosti: český krátký film 30. až 50. let.* Prague: National Film Archive, 2014.

pathos—to subordinate the persecution and genocide of the Jews in the interest of a nationalized victimhood. Short films of this postwar era, tasked with the strategic recollection of the past, stressed the renewal of the Czechoslovak state and affirmed the narratives of suffering and victimization that supported it.[91] By analyzing the pathos-charged statements "Never Again" and "never forget" (two examples of what Jane Gaines calls melodrama's "composite tenses"), I argue that melodrama can be best understood as a "memory *praxis*" that negotiates, interprets, and memorializes national suffering in the formulation of cultural memory.

Chapter Four traces the production of historicized pathos in three Czech Holocaust films produced between the liberation in 1945 and 1960, when footage of Eichmann's crimes began to be featured in Czechoslovak State Film's weekly newsreel, shifting public discourse on the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia.[92] I examine how *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, Alfréd Radok, 1949)—the first feature-length film about the Holocaust made in Czechoslovakia—and the last to be made for a decade—explicitly represented the suffering of Czech Jews in the Terezín ghetto. In contrast, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1960), the second feature-length film about the Holocaust to come out of Czechoslovakia, focuses on the experience of one Jew hidden by Czechs within the relative safety of the private sphere. While both films

[91] I am not suggesting that feature films did not, but their production was dramatically decreased in the early postwar years.

[92] Through the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel received publicity in Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to provide evidence of allow an Israeli investigrator to work in Czechoslovak archives. "Pražská Pinkasova synagoga a doklady o Eichmannově vraždné činnosti ve filmovém týyníku," *Věstník*, vol. 22, no. 9 (September 1960): 11 Quoted in Jacob Ari Labendz, "Re-negotiating Czechoslovakia. The State and the Jews in Communist Central Europe: The Czech Lands, 1945-1990 (PhD diss. Washington University St. Louis, 2014), 164fn105.

feature a “mixed romance” between a Jewish woman and a non-Jewish (Gentile) man, and emphasize the wartime experiences of ordinary Czechs, they are marked by very different ends. This chapter concludes with an examination of the ways in which the short documentary film *There Are No Butterflies Here* (*Motýli tady nežijí*, Miro Bernát, 1958), illustrating melodrama’s relationship to the forward-moving flow of cinematic time.

Finally, the Epilogue jumps forward in time to examine two Czech Holocaust films from the 2000s. This epilogue considers the retrospective dimensions of melodrama. In seeking to reorient melodrama to account for the institutionalization of Holocaust memorialization, I hope to bridge between and across the two parts into which this dissertation is divided: pre- and postwar, pre- and post-1989, past and future, genre and mode, history and memory. Historicizing the melodramatic trajectory of Holocaust memory makes present the dynamic processes of memorialization: it reveals what we *do* know, what *has been* done, and what *is* collectively remembered.

Chapter One
Classifying Czech Melodrama

"Melodrama is so moving because it hits home."
—Ben Singer[93]

On October 9, 1930, the year after the first Hollywood talkies were shown in Czechoslovakia, *When the Strings Wailed* (*Když struny lkají,* Friedrich Fehér), the first one hundred percent Czech-language talkie opened at Alfa, Prague's largest premiere cinema, on Wenceslas Square.[94] In a speech at the film's celebratory premiere, Jan Reiter, one of the chairmen of the Czechoslovak company Elekta-film, declared that the future of Czech sound films depended on its success.[95] In response to this speech, František Vodička, a reviewer for the leading Czech film periodical *Filmový kurýr* (*Film Courier*) remarked, "We wish there was no such dependency, because the film does not inspire hope for the future. There can only be the lesson that our people do not lack goodwill, but rather strict self-criticism and a great deal of training."[96]

In 1930, the question of how to help Czechoslovak films succeed both at home and abroad indeed dominated the public's imagination. The introduction of sound films,

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[93] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*, 45.
[94] That *When the Strings Wailed* was the first Czech-language talkie, Petr Szczepanik explains, is subject to some debate. Some critics claim that *Tonka of the Gallows* (*Tonka Šibenice*, Karel Anton, 1930) was the first Czech-language talkie. The "sound version" of *Tonka of the Gallows* premiered February 27, 1930**.** Whereas *When the Strings Wailed* was shot at the AB Vinohrady studios in Prague using newly installed Klangfilm sound recording technology, *Tonka of the Gallows* featured additional synchronized music and several spoken and sung passages that were recorded in Gaumont Studios in Paris. Petr Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy: Počátky zvukového filmu a česká mediální kultura 30.let* (Brno: Host, 2009), 30-31.
[95] For more on Elekta-film see: Jindřich Schwippel and Tomáš Lachman, "Elekta, a.s. (/1922/1928-1945/1955/)," *Iluminace* 22 (2010), 160-162.
[96] František Vodička, "*Když struny lkají …*" *Filmový kurýr*, September 26, 1930, 3-4.

Hollywood and others (especially British, French, and German), undoubtedly challenged cinema's international adaptability more broadly by highlighting national-linguistic differences. As Nancy Wingfield explains, however, "in Czechoslovakia, historical circumstance complicated popular reaction to sound films."[97] Following the end of the First World War in 1918, the independent Czechoslovak Republic was formed by joining the Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) to the regions of Slovakia and Ruthenia, thereby creating a multinational republic dominated by Czechs, but consisting of Slovaks, Hungarians (Magyrs), Poles, Jews, Ruthenes (Ukrainians), and other ethnic minorities. Seeking to transform the multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual state into a unified "nation" (*národ*), the new government established "Czechoslovak" as the official language of the republic. But while the Czechoslovak language was intended to assert the national character of the public sphere, the previous year, twenty American talkies were exhibited in the country and by that year at least one hundred and ninety-six English and German-language talkies dominated its film market.[98] The already-struggling Czechoslovak industry became increasingly aware of the dangers of foreign films and

[97] Nancy Wingfield, *Flag Wars and Stone Saints* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 199.
[98] Ibid., 201.; According to Szczepanik, on August 13, 1939, the American musical *Show Boat* (Henry A. Pollard, 1929) became the first sound film to screen in Prague. Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy*, 15; Moreover, Szczepanik notes: "American talkies dominated the playing time of all wired theatres during the second half of 1929, but there were 36 first-runs of German sound films in 1930, 106 in 1931 and 121 in 1932." Petr Szczepanik, "Hollywood in Disguise: Practices of exhibition and reception of foreign films in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, eds. Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, Phillippe Meers (New York: Routledge, 2011), 170-171.

their linguistic competition, and local audiences called for the release of talkies of their own.[99]

The Czech popular press was particularly concerned with the threat of German-language competition and appealed to "national feelings" (*národní cíty*) to provoke a mass-market war against German-made and German-speaking films.[100] This rhetoric struck a nerve with many Czech nationalists who still associated Germany with the hegemony of the Habsburg Empire, and thus objected to the presence of German language or German music in the public sphere, especially in the increasingly narrowed social space of the cinema. These tensions culminated early that fall with four days of violent street demonstrations by students, communists and Czech Fascists against screenings of five German-language talkies in Prague, resulting not only in vandalism to the cinemas where the films had been showing, but also with the destruction of German and Jewish property (though ostensibly anti-German, the demonstrations were in fact explicitly antisemitic).[101] All five of the films protested—three operettas, one comedy, and one antiwar film—as Wingfield notes, had been approved by Czechoslovakia's censorship board, and were even positively reviewed by some Czech publications.[102] As

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[99] Wingfield expands on this: "the introduction of sound films opened up a new front for cultural contention in Czechoslovakia as German-language films –produced in larger numbers and earlier than Czech films – appeared to challenge Czech hegemony in the aural landscape of the First Republic." *Flag Wars*, 200.
[100] Karel Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat německemu filmu?" *Fronta* 3, no. 48, October 30, 1930, 765-767.
[101] Protests began on Monday, September 22 and ended September 26. As Wingfield explains, "these protests, which involved the signing of national songs, attacks on German speakers, and the destruction of German and Jewish property, illustrate the congruence of a number of issues, including anti-Semitism, the continuing conflation of Germans and Jews that had been a regular feature of anti-German protests in the capital since the late nineteenth century, Czech domestic politics, Czech-German relations, cultural issues, economic questions and foreign politics." Wingfield, *Flag Wars*, 200.
[102] Ibid., 203.; Wingfield explains, for example, that the Czech National Socialist newspaper *České slovo* pronounced that German musical comedy *The Immortal Tramp's* (*Nesmrtelný lump*/ *Der unsterbliche*

Wingfield points out, none of these films addressed either Czechs or the First Republic, though, she writes, "most of them presented recognizable tropes, romanticized images of the Habsburg monarchy or Austria, with German dialogue."[103] However, in the eyes of Czech nationalists, the fact that they spoke German was enough to brand these films as bad objects. Some of the protestors chanted: "Down with Germans; down with the Jews! … We don't want any German kitsch, we want Czech films."[104]

Clearly, the release of *When the Strings Wailed* just a month after these demonstrations was meant to signify a future for homegrown Czech-language talkies, and with it a future for Czechoslovakia's national film production. Yet as this commentary from *Filmový kurýr* suggests, this film seemed to have showed audiences that despite their "good intentions," it would be impossible to produce a so-called "quality" Czech-speaking film that could match the technological standards of larger, wealthier film industries.[105] That is, the film's release reinforced the Czechs' already well-established sense of smallness (*malnost*), the inferiority complex that colored the perception of their nation, this time extending to the limitations of their domestic productions.[106] Nevertheless, box-office numbers show that *When the Strings Wailed* was among the top ten most popular films in Czechoslovakia that year—but not because audiences considered it a quality film.[107] Rather, as Karel Smrž remarks in his review of the film,

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Lump) presented "'lovely pictures of Styrian rural life'" and "predicted the film would become a sensation in Prague." Ibid., 204.
[103] Ibid., 200.
[104] Ibid., 210.
[105] Vodička, "Když struny lkají …"
[106] Bradley F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation: Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 105.
[107] *When the Strings Wailed* was the tenth most popular film in Prague that year, running for five

what drew audiences to the cinemas was the desire to "hear Czech spoken on the cinema screen."[108]

Although *When the Strings Wailed* was the first all-Czech-language talkie, judging from reviews of the film, it was still essentially seen as a manifestation of the German cultural hegemony. In many ways, it was: the Czechoslovak AB company hired Austrian actor-turned-director (of "Hungarian" or "Jewish" origins) Friedrich Fehér to take the lead on the over three-million-koruna film.[109] This was not out of the ordinary: multinational co-productions were common practice throughout the region, as it was for Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, and Austrians to work across industries.[110] But by bringing in a German-speaking foreigner (*cizinec*) to make the first all-Czech talkie, the AB company disappointed many who hoped to see a sound film that was truly one hundred percent Czech: one that was not only made in Bohemia with Czech actors who spoke the Czech language, but also had a Czech director and was solely funded by Czechs.[111] Not surprisingly then, many Czech critics considered *When the Strings Wailed* to be almost indistinguishable from the conventional "Berlin products" made by the Berlin-based

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consecutive weeks at Alfa with a popularity index of 5,500 viewers. Szczepanik "Hollywood in Disguise,"177.

[108] Karel Smrž, "Když struny lkají," *Rozpravy Aventina* 6, no. 2, October 2, 1930, 21.

[109] *When the Strings Wailed* was primarily German funded. We can assume that Friedrich Fehér's Jewishness only added to his sense of foreignness. Notably, Fehér starred as Francis in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, Robert Wiene, 1920). See: **"**Cizina o prvním českém 100 procentnim filmu," *ČFZ* 10, no. 38, September 7, 1930, 5.; "Maďarská skvrna v české filmové produkci aneb Fehérův hrůzný režijní debacle: 'Když struny lkají,'" *Filmové listy* 2, no. 25, August 30, 1930, 189.; Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."; Jaroslav Brož, "Když nás film promluvil," *Film a doba* 7, no. 6, June 1961, 398-399.

[110] For more on the overlapping Austrian, German, and Czech film industries see: Kevin B. Johnson, "Annexation Effects: Cultural Appropriation and the Politics of Place in Czech-German Films, 1930-1945," (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012); Ivan Klimeš, "Kulturní průmysl a politika. České a rakouské filmové hospodářství v politické krizi 30. let," in *Obrazy času Český a rakouský film 30. Let* (Prague & Brno: Knihovna Iluminace, 2003).

[111] F.H. Svoboda, "Když struny lkají …" *Národní listy* 70, no. 263, September 24, 1930.

Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa), the largest production company in the German Weimar Republic. [112] That is, it was different *only* because its dialogue was spoken in Czech.

One of these critics' main grievances was that there was simply no reason to entrust the future of Czech talkies to a foreigner, never mind one whom was already regarded as a "second class Berlin director."[113] The reviewer for *Filmový kurýr*, for example, cited the poor quality of Fehér's previous (Austrian and Czechoslovak) silent films, as well as his inexperience with the new sound technology, as proof that he was the wrong choice for the job.[114] It decidedly did not make things better that the director cast his own family—his wife, Austrian-Jewish silent film actress Magda Sonja, and their young son, Jeníček Fehér—in two of the film's main roles. While both were called out for their "clueless" performances, critics were kinder to Jeníček, since his performance was "not unlike other child actors," and was quite natural until he [spoke] and [delivered] the dialogue 'with feeling' like a school poem."[115] There was a consensus among critics that, indeed, Sonja was beautiful and charming, but she was simply not the right singer for the role. Moreover, they noted how the film's "lengthy and inefficient monologues"

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[112] "O jednom tajemství". On the history of Ufa see: Klaus Kreimeie, *The Ufa Story: A History of Germany's Greatest Film Company, 1918-1945*, trans. Robert and Rita Kimber (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
[113] Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."; Brož, "Když nás film promluvil."
[114] Vodička, "*Když struny lkají…*"
[115] Smrž, "*Když struny lkají.*"

and "absurd dialogue dominated by naïve and old-fashioned jargon," which was "laughable in its literariness," only highlighted her "hoarse and overused voice."[116]

For the majority of Czech critics, however, the issues taken up by the film's foreign artistic leadership represented something more unsettling—a conventional and generic product. After all, for these critics, *When the Strings Wailed* had bigger problems than its incompetent Austrian-Jewish director, its woefully miscast actors, and its mostly foreign funding: it suffered from a sentimental, literary, and weak story.[117]

Loosely based on the 1911 novella *The Devil* by Leo Tolstoy, *When the Strings Wailed* is about Slávka, a farmer's wife who flees her abusive husband with her young son Jeníček to face an unknown fate in the big city.[118] Though she is finally free of her husband's torment, she quickly finds her life in a downward spiral. Thrown into a life of poverty, Slávka takes the only job she can find as a dancer at a seedy nightclub. In an effort to shield her son from the shame of her new occupation, she sends him to live in the countryside with a woman who, unbeknownst to her, mistreats him. By the time the generosity of a nightclub patron makes it possible for the mother and son to be reunited, it is too late: Slávka learns that Jeníček has run away from his cruel caregiver with the

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[116] Vodička, "*Když struny lkají …*"; "Destinová a Kocián v českém mluvícím filmu 'Slovanská melodie,'" *A-Zet* no. 10, January 11, 1930, 5.; Svoboda, "*Když struny lkají …*"; Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."; Brož, "Když nás film."

[117] A. Danielis, J. Švercová, J. Vymětal, V. Březina, eds., *Československé filmy ve filmové distribuci I. - Dlouhé hrané zvukové filmy 1930-1987* (Prague: Nakladatel ÚPF, 1988), 83.; Smrž, "*Když struny lkají*."; Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."; Vodička, "*Když struny lkají*."

[118] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II,* 149.; Typescript of script for *When the Strings Wailed* by Brandt Johannes, Josef Kodíček, Library of the National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

help of a drifter (played by the Czech violin virtuoso, Jaroslav Kocián).[119] Of course, Jeníček arrives in the city just in time to witness his mother's death.

At the very end, in the film's *deus ex machina*, the drifter reveals himself to be a famous violin virtuoso who abandoned society long ago after suffering a broken heart. In this heart-wrenching moment, as Slávka dies in her son's arms, the drifter vows to care for the boy and foster his "musical genius."[120] *When the Strings Wailed* is thus a tragedy about the suffering of a woman who is victimized by the society she lives in. But with the addition of this *deus ex machina*, the film also ends with hope for young Jeníček's future; Slávka's suffering is not in vain, because she knows that her son has a future as a grand violinist. Just like the eponymous mother Stella Dallas, who, after driving away her daughter rather than be a burden, watches her lavish wedding outside in the rain through a picture window, the very suffering of the mother is validated in this final sacrificial gesture.[121]

According to a review in *Filmový kurýr*, this story drew on the "insufficient themes of women's suffering and poverty" in order to provoke "the cheap and overused emotion of pity from its audience."[122] This sentiment was echoed by Smrž in the cultural

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[119] The reviews were kinder to Jaroslav Kocián, perhaps because he was well respected Czech violinist and classical composer.
[120] Cinema program for *When the Strings Wailed*,1930, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[121] This evokes Mary Ann Doane's description of the "maternal melodrama" as "scenarios of separation, of separation and return or of threatened separation–dramas which play out all the permutations of the mother/child relation." Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Women's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 73.; For more on the maternal melodrama see: Linda Williams, "'Something Else besides a Mother:' 'Stella Dallas' and the Maternal Melodrama," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 1 (Autumn, 1984), 2-27.; Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Verso, 1982), 191-206.
[122] Vodička, "*Když struny lkají …*"

review magazine *Rozpravy Aventinum* (*Aventinum Discussions*), who referred to its "tearful" and "calendar-like theme," invoking a popular series of calendars meant for housewives that featured a new tear-jerking story for each day.[123] But Smrž was not the only critic to evoke this popular women's calendar series.[124] It is fair to say that the intensity with which critics rejected *When the Strings Wailed* as a "calendar cutout" suggests that the women who read these calendars were its intended—or perhaps its deserved—audience.[125] The critics' inordinate concern with sentimentality and bad taste further emphasizes this point. It was even said that the film was an "insult to the taste of Czech feelings," and therefore unworthy of its historical status as the first Czech talkie.[126] In short, the critical reception of *When the Strings Wailed* was fundamentally marked by a distaste toward the sentimental, emotional, and feminine sensibility of melodrama.

While the contemporary articles and reviews from the film's initial release seem to indicate that it is indeed a melodrama neither the genre label melodrama nor the adjective *melodramatic* are ever used. This is true, of course, for the film's promotional materials, which advertised the film as a "drama" or a "tragedy." On its posters, for example, *When the Strings Wailed* was touted as "A drama of love and tragic passions in the whirlwind of the big city" ("*Drama lásky a tragických vášní ve víru velkoměsta*!"), "The tragedy of a mother's heart" ("*Tragedie mateřskeho srdce*!"), and "A riveting

[123] Smrž, "*Když struny lkají*."
[124] See also: Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."; Vodička, "*Když struny lkají*…"
[125] Vodička, "*Když struny lkají*…"; Smrž, "*Když struny lkají*."
[126] Horký, "Tímhle chcete konkurovat."

drama of passion and love" ("*Strující drama vášní a lásky*").[127] At the same time, however, on cinema programs it was simply billed as "The first Czech all-talking musical feature film" ("*prvni český celomluvený hudebni velkofilm*").[128] Without specifically taking up the term, both this critical reception and promotional copy recall the ways in which melodrama has been consistently characterized in the discourse on popular Hollywood films: as women's films, weepies, and family dramas. Perhaps it was this basic sense of the genre that the National Film Archive in Prague (*Národní filmový archiv* or NFA) identified decades later when its staff looked at these materials and concluded that *When the Strings Wailed* should indeed be classified as a melodrama.[129]

The NFA did just this in 1998, cataloging *When the Strings Wailed* along with sixty-six other films made between 1930 and 1944 as melodramas. It did so in the second of its five volumes of *Czech Feature Film* (*Český hraný film*), which the archive compiled and distributed starting in the mid-1990s. The volumes aim to provide a comprehensive "official guide" to Czech feature film in both the Czech and English languages (including films that are no longer extant), from the beginnings of cinema in 1898, through the establishment of an independent Czech Republic in 1993.[130] In compliance with the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) Cataloguing Rules for Film Archives, each film title is supplemented with production information, including

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[127] One-sheet for *When the Strings Wailed*, 1930, 3, 200-13, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[128] Cinema program for "When the Strings Wailed," 1930, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[129] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*, 149-150.
[130] Ibid., 10-18. This volume expands upon the 1965 publication *Československý zvukový film 1930 – 1945* (*Czechoslovak Sound Film 1930 -1945*). It is worth noting that 1993 marks the denationalization of the Czech film industry.

the original release date, production company, distribution company, director, editor, producer, cast, crew, shooting locations, and a brief narrative summary.[131] But most important for the present project, under the title, each film is assigned a genre. Curiously, with the exception of two additional films from the 1980s, *Your Lovers are Notified* (*Oznamuje se láskám vašim*, Karel Kachyňa, 1988) and *On the Brigade* (*Na brigádě*, Tomáš Vorel, 1989), no films after 1944 are catalogued as melodrama.[132] According to the NFA, the genre essentially disappears.

This, of course, is a retrospective reading. In some ways, the volumes of *Czech Feature Film* serve as important resources for the study of Czech cinema, but there also is every reason to be critical of them.[133] Each volume was put together by a six-person team, consisting of archivists, film scholars, and librarians at the NFA, working from a mix of primary sources (surviving prints and negatives) and secondary sources (narrative descriptions, articles, advertising materials, reviews and periodicals, etc.).[134] And each individual section was compiled by a different member of the team: film content and notes were done by Eva Urbanová and Blažena Urgošíková, filmographies and indexes by Urbanová, contemporary documentation and preparation of illustration material were located by Jitka Panznerová, and sources and bibliographies by Ivan Klimeš.[135] But while the volumes aim to catalogue *all* Czech feature films—there are some glaring omissions:

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[131] Ibid., 10.
[132] The NFA translates this title as *Announced to Your Loves.*; I must also add, there are silent films classified as melodrama in Eva Urbanová et al. eds., *Česky hraný film I: 1898 -1930*, (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1995).
[133] The volumes are not without problems, but with the exception of more general survey studies on the Czechoslovak New Wave, they are often the only source on Czech feature-length films available to English-language readers.
[134] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*, 10.
[135] Ibid., 10.

specifically, the Protectorate-era films produced by Ufa's subsidiary company Prag-film.[136]

In his essay "National Cinema in a Transnational Context: A Central European Experience," Klimeš explains that this omission was inherited from Jiří Havelka's postwar account of Czech and Slovak cinemas between 1939 and 1945: Prag-film might have shot films in Prague's Barrandov studios—often with Czech directors, cameramen, actors, and other film workers—but Havelka claimed they did not count as part of Czech or Slovak cinemas because it was still a "Greater German Company."[137]As Klimeš points out, such a "'political' approach" clearly held currency at a time when anti-German and anti-fascist discourses were vital to the rebuilding of the postwar state.[138] However, Klimeš takes issue with the fact that this approach has not been interrogated by critics with any kind of historical scrutiny. Why haven't film historians challenged the "Czechness" of the fifteen films made by Prague's subsidiary of Ufa between 1933 and 1940 (years that coincide with Adolf Hitler's rise to power)?[139] And given that two of

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[136] Ivan Klimeš, "National Cinema in a Transnational Context: A Central European Experience," *Iluminace* 25, no. 4 (2013), 37.
[137] Ibid., 37. See: Jiří Havelka, *Filmové hospodářství v zemích českých a na Slovensku 1939 až 1945* (Prague: Čs. filmové nakladatelství, 1946).
[138] Ibid., 37-38.
[139] When the Ministry of Trade enacted a strict a quota system that imposed regulations on foreign film imports into Czechoslovakia in 1933, Ufa started to produce its own Czech-language films. This practice would continue after the quotas were abandoned in November 1934, lasting until 1940. In all cases no multiple language version was produced, which allowed Ufa to continue producing films in the country without much of a threat to the Czechoslovak market. *The Little Window* (*Okéno*, Vladimír Slavínský, 1933), *Her Doctor* (*Její lékař*, Vladimír Slavínský, 1933), *Madla from the Brickworks*, (*Madla z cihelny*, Vladimír Slavínský, 1933), *Golden Catherine* (*Zlatá Kateřina*, Vladimír Slavínský, 1934), *While You Have a Mother* (*Dokud máš maminku*, Jan Sviták, 1934), *Grandhotel Nevada* (Jan Sviták, 1934), *Father Karafiát* (*Pan otec Karafiát*, Jan Sviták, 1935), *The Comedian's Princess* (*Komediantská princezna*, Miroslav Cikán, 1936), *The Seamstress* (*Švadlenka*, Martin Frič, 1936), *Lawyer Vera* (*Advokátka Věra*, Martin Frič, 1937), *People on the Iceberg* (*Lidé na kře*, Martin Frič, 1937), *School is the Foundation of Life* (*Škola základ života*, Martin Frič, 1938), *Changing Wind* (*Jiný vzduch*, Martin Frič, 1939), *Macoun the Tramp*

these Ufa films—*While You Have a Mother* (*Dokud máš maminku*, Jan Sviták, 1934) and *Changing Wind* (*Jiný vzduch*, Martin Frič, 1939)—have been classified by the NFA as generic melodramas, what might this indicate about the critical association of melodrama with foreign productions?

Just as we need to reconsider the ways in which the NFA decided what films count as Czech, so too must we examine their classification of genre. For instance, what was the method by which the archive located and named the genre? First, both the "Foreword" and the "Introductory Note" by then-director of the NFA Vladimír Opěla outline the contents of the volume and the process by which it was systematically compiled. Neither acknowledge the topic of genre.[140] Nor do they provide context for its meaning or identification. Why include the category at all? Second, a selection of bibliographic sources is provided for each title (under the category "bibliography"). These bibliographies offer virtually the only evidence of the historical work that went into the cataloguing of each individual film, including, presumably the process of generic evaluation and naming. But it is still unclear which if any of these secondary materials actually informed these separate generic categories, or whether there was any consistency in their appraisal: whoever's job it was to identify genre could have picked and mixed any number of these materials. Thus, not only do the genre labels lack a clear historical or industrial basis, but they also appear to be an afterthought.

(*Tulák Macoun*, Ladislav Brom, 1939), *The Catacombs* (*Katakomby*, Martin Frič, 1940). Ivan Klimeš, A Dangerous Neighborhood: German Cinema in the Czechoslovak Region, 1933-45," in *Cinema and the Swastika: The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema*, eds. Roel Vande Winkel and David Welch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)," 113-114.

[140] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*, 10-20.

The NFA seems ambivalent about the identification of genre, but it still codified genre groups in what essentially functions as an "official" guide to Czech cinema. By identifying a film as belonging to a particular genre, the NFA has mapped out and defined a new generic corpus. The institutional force of the archive adds to this sense of authority and verifies the classification. Of course, this is not a new or unique phenomenon: any film can be placed within any number of genres or subgenres. Rick Altman's work on the process of "genrefication" is instructive here.[141] Altman outlines how genre is almost always assigned ad hoc; genres, he asserts, are "not democratically elected representatives of like-minded texts."[142] Rather, genre is always designated according to different sets of criteria that are determined by different institutional forces (production categories, exhibition practices, theorization, etc.). This is not to do away with the NFA's corpus, but to recognize that it serves as a useful prompt for beginning to study and interrogate the implied historical and ideological contexts and functions of its selected texts.

Significantly, the overwhelming majority of the films that constitute the genre melodrama were produced and exhibited in Czechoslovakia between the years 1930 and 1945. Prior to the publication of these volumes, these films were not necessarily grouped together, and none were explicitly called melodramas. Like so many other moving image-cultures, the term "melodrama" is missing from the contemporary Czech publicity and critical reviews. By and large, film critics, production materials, promotional materials,

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[141] Rick Altman, "Reusable Packaging: Generic Products and the Recycling Process," in Nick Browne, ed. *Refiguring American Film Genres: History and Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 5, 15.
[142] Ibid., 5, 15.

and censorship documents referred to these films as dramas, comedies, tragedies or any number of sub-genres of dramas, comedies, and tragedies—a fact that may partially explain the tendency of Czech film scholars to dismiss the NFA's volumes as "unserious" sources. However, recent Czech language scholarship—some of the only academic work on these particular films—has almost uniformly adopted the NFA's genre labels. For example, Lukáš Kašpar, in his study of Czech feature films and filmmakers in the Protectorate, invokes the genre melodrama to align Czech entertainment films with Nazi propaganda and look for signs of Czech resistance.[143]

Surely, the political interests of the Nazi apparatus shaped and intruded upon the production and content of Protectorate films—they were, of course, made to be ideologically in step with the occupier. During the war, the Office of the Reich Protector had a vested stake in the business interests and production culture of the domestic film industry, but it would be highly reductive to assert that all Czech productions were aligned with the goals of National Socialism—and equally so, to suggest that they all conveyed subtle anti-fascist messages. In my view, this is symptomatic of a simplistic view of melodrama that positions the genre as having one of two functions: political propaganda or popular entertainment. Moreover, these historians were certainly not the first to note melodrama's propagandistic functions or the genre's usefulness communicating the moral lessons of Nazi films. For example, in her seminal study of melodramatic representation in Weimar film, Patrice Petro comments that "the

[143] See: Lukáš Kašpar, *Český hraný film a filmaři za protektorátu: propaganda, kolaborace, rezistence* (Prague: Nakladatelství Libri, 2007).; Also see Jiří Doležal, *Česká kultura za protektorátu: školství, písemství, kinematografie* (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1996).

association of melodrama with Nazi ideology is by no means atypical"—but I will return to address this point later.[144]

Much is at stake in aligning melodrama with this period, since it is marked by the tail end of the interwar republic, the implementation of the Munich agreement and the short-lived authoritarian democracy of the "Second Republic," and spans the entirety of the Nazi occupation, when the Third Reich assumed control over all film business in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. These shifts and changes produced fundamental reconfigurations of cultural, political, and social life in the Czech lands, whose effects would be felt throughout the postwar period. And yet, this light generic category belies these momentous occurrences. Moreover, it suggests a desire to consign these films to female spectators, and thus to the domestic sphere, thereby ostensibly removing them from the highly charged realms of geopolitics and national politics.

What is interesting to note here is that feminism was historically linked to nationalism in the Czech lands. In her study of Czech feminists in the late Habsburg monarchy, Katherine David Fox notes that the Czech women's movement (which can be traced back to the Czech "national awakening" of the early 19th century) adopted the rhetoric and arguments of Czech nationalist sentiment to further their cause.[145] Fox argues that "women's rights activists drew strength from their identification with the Czech national movement and viewed their Czechness as, in many respects,

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[144] Patrice Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 27.
[145] Katherine David, "Czech Feminists and Nationalism in the Late Habsburg Monarchy: 'The First in Austria,'" *Journal of Women's Histor*y, vol. 3, no. 2 (Fall 1991), 26.

advantageous to their struggle as women."[146] Crucially, Czech feminists were influenced by the ideas of philosopher and politician Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who identified women's equality as critical to the democratic project of the Czech nation.[147] Thus, when Masaryk became president of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, women were granted full political rights under the 1920 Constitution. However, as Melissa Feinberg puts it, this "equality" had its limits; women's rights were still based on the idea of "womanhood" rather than "personhood."[148] Revisiting this paradox, Feinberg's study of gender politics in Czechoslovakia from 1918 to 1950 details the different ways in which Czechoslovak politicians invoked "natural" laws of gender difference to justify gendered divisions of labor and protect "women's roles" as proper wives, homemakers, and mothers.[149] Since the family, with its institutional ties to national duty and stability was positioned as the foundation of the state, women's domestic work was viewed as crucial to the future of the Czech nation. Examining the role of this gendered rhetoric in the occupied Czech lands, Feinberg suggests that it made a quick and easy transition, shifting to position women as "powerless subjects of the male-dominated state."[150] What is difficult to distinguish is the role of these melodrama films in promoting this gendered conception of Czech citizenship. Should these films be approached as essentially conservative or subversive? On the one hand, melodrama is closely identified with the

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[146] Ibid., 26.
[147] Melissa Feinberg notes that Masaryk's radical call for women's equality did not extend to the subject of sex. Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 17.
[148] Ibid., 556-557.
[149] Ibid., 34-35.
[150] Ibid., 176.

reinforcement of "correct" moral behavior, and on the other, it opens up a conceptual space for a female imaginary, thus challenging the male dominated public sphere.

What is clear, however, is that the presumption that these films served as insignificant entertainment for domestic audiences has led film scholars to neglect melodrama's socio-cultural and political functions (that is, outside of its more overt propagandistic functions). This is further supported by the fact that—like the majority of Czech cinema—most of these melodrama films have not been subtitled or released abroad. There are few exceptions: films produced as part of multiple-language-version (MLV) projects, especially German-language versions of Czech films, such as František Čáp's *Night Butterfly* (*Noční motýl*, 1941).

While this chapter directly engages genre studies, following Christine Gledhill's call to "rethink genre," it also seeks to reinsert comparative film history into the study of genre theory. "To understand exactly how the social and films interact," Gledhill writes, "we need a concept of genre capable of exploring the wider contextual culture in relationship to, rather than as an originating source of, aesthetic mutation and textual complications."[151] This approach, she explains, does not "diminish into a conservative formalism or a conceptually unrooted empirical historicism," but "demands more than ideological readings which translate forms back into social facts."[152] This means not only considering issues of film text and aesthetics (what Gledhill calls "the traditional concerns of film theory") but their relationship to broader cultural, industrial, institutional, and socio-historical contexts ("the central concerns of political economy,

[151] Gledhill, "Rethinking Genre," 221.
[152] Ibid., 221.

sociology and cultural studies”).[153] Melodrama may be studied as a historically emerging genre, yet in the case of Czech cinema (and in many others) its classification is fundamentally ahistorical. My task here is not to locate melodrama’s origins in Czech cinema or assign it a singular meaning, but to analyze the NFA’s retroactive genre classification from various perspectives (historical and theoretical), to outline major trends and broad characteristics of the corpus, and to put institutional pressures and popular discourse into dialogue.

In order to investigate the methodological questions prompted by the NFA’s delimitation of genre, I begin with the premise that melodrama is a cultural artifact that carries much more historical value that it has previously been given credit for. What I hope to emphasize here is that, like all genres, melodrama can be viewed as culturally specific and historically contingent. If we want to understand melodrama’s operations in Czech cinema, then, we must first put it in historical terms by contextualizing it within local, regional, and transnational practices, conceptions, and values. Thus, I investigate the transnational and cross-cultural relationship between Czech and German popular film genres; such a relationship was not only linked to the Nazi occupation, but was also a result of decades of transnational exchanges, migrations, and co-productions. As such, this chapter sheds light on the ways in which melodrama traversed national boundaries, and yet took on a very different role in Czech film history.

[153] Ibid., 221.

Genre problems

It is crucial to start by unpacking a few assumptions about genre. Put simply, genre is a classificatory concept that identifies a particular text as belonging to a larger body of work with shared themes, styles, attitudes, and values.[154] Christine Gledhill calls it "first and foremost a boundary phenomenon" that is "utilized by a range of different interest groups" in order to stake out, lay claim, and demarcate aesthetic practices.[155] But while the existence of genres may appear self-evident, as the Czech case suggests, the logic that governs their definition and demarcation is less clear-cut. Assigning genre is *not* an empirical taxonomic procedure—nor is it a scientific process. Rather, genre has a different purpose within different fields and is more often governed by industrial and cultural factors rather than any inherent logic.

This chapter is not meant to be another exploration of the problems that plague genre criticism, but it does insist that difficult questions of genre can form an understanding of the emotional and moral landscape of a particular place and time.[156] Steve Neale, for example, has suggested the genre criticism tends to fit into one of two categories: genres are either "conceived as institutionalized classes of texts and systems of expectations," or "as critically and theoretically constructed labels to discuss classes of

[154] For a comprehensive overview of this history of genre studies and criticism see: Christine Gledhill, "History of Genre Criticism. Introduction," in *The Cinema Book* 3rd ed., ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 252-259.; Steve Neale, "Genre Theory Since the 1980s," in *The Cinema Book* 3rd ed., ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute 2007), 260-264.
[155] Gledhill, "Rethinking Genre," 221-222.
[156] Barry Keith Grant notes: "Genre movies are always about the time and place they are made." Barry Keith Grant, *Film Genre: From Iconography to Ideology* (London: Wallflower, 2007), 5.

films."[157] Studies of genre have established the importance of these specific systems of expectations and conventions as they play a role in shaping public discourse on generic knowledge. It is this generic knowledge that allows for real-life social debates and tensions to be case within filmic formulaic narratives, for instance, within the dramatic conflicts between characters and society or victims and villains (as is the case for melodrama). Because it so clearly deals with public discourse, it is within the realm of the generic that films become sites of deep ideological analysis and historical documents. But, while genre endows certain objects, archetypal characters, and specific actors with symbolic, culturally determined meanings, Steve Neale has shown how the generic image itself becomes a form of cultural knowledge; an aspect of public opinion that further shapes an audience's expectations.[158] This, Neale explains is due to the "process-like" nature of genre, which "manifests itself as an interaction between three levels: the level of expectation, the level of generic corpus, and the level of the rules or norms that govern both."[159] Building on the work of Russian formalist critics and the work of Tzvetan Todorov in particular, he argues that genre is a historical system of relations, which is constantly revising itself over time.[160] Thus, for Neale, the ongoing revision of generic corpuses and its "regimes of verisimilitude" proves that the historical character of genre is inherently dynamic and culturally specific.[161]

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[157] Steve Neale, "Questions of Genre," in *Film and Theory*, eds. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 163.
[158] Neale, "Questions of Genre," 159.
[159] Ibid., 165.
[160] Ibid., 167.
[161] Ibid., 165.

Consider the case of melodrama, whose identification as a "valid" genre emerged in the 1970s alongside the development of the discipline of film studies.[162] Like other works of early genre theory, these initial studies sought to affirm the critical reputation of melodrama, and they did so by re-framing it as a subversive genre that addressed the intricacies and complexities demanded by cultural and ideological analysis. Film scholars such as Thomas Elsaesser, Laura Mulvey, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, and Thomas Schatz did not just produce accounts of melodrama's defining characteristics; they distinguished the "Hollywood family melodrama" as a specific generic category (or sub-genre) that Schatz explains, "focused on the social institution of the family itself as the basis for conflict."[163] Through their analysis of the family melodrama as a site of ideological critique these scholars effectively argued that melodrama could function as more than a descriptive term for works overwrought with emotion. This work positioned melodrama as a key concept for the critical discussion of film, particularly for popular Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, it moved away from auteurist studies to show that melodrama could be subversive under the auspices of the commodified industrial and social conditions of the Hollywood studio system.

This scholarship has inspired film critics and historians to continuously re-conceptualize melodrama beyond the generic boundaries of the Hollywood family melodrama and the women's film. The result of this, as we know, is a contemporary

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[162] For a compressive overview of melodrama theory/debates in film studies see: Mercer and Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility*.

[163] Thomas Schatz, "The Family Melodrama" in *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 154.; On melodrama see: Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 43-69.; Laura Mulvey, "Melodrama Inside and Outside the Home," in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 66-84.

discourse that has placed melodrama within several competing and overlapping definitions. Now, melodrama can be—and *has been*—applied to an expansive and diverse body of films throughout each decade. But while some enthusiastically embrace what Gledhill refers to as the "constellations" of melodrama's genres, others argue that this has effectively reduced melodrama's critical value.[164] For instance, Steve Neale and Ben Singer have attempted to establish a more precise account of melodrama as it was "originally used" in Hollywood.[165] In taking on more focused reception studies, both Singer and Neale have distinguished extra-cinematic materials such as advertisements, publicity photos, and journalistic reviews as crucial evidence for understanding how industries and audiences conceive of genres. However, while rightly emphasizing the historical study of films' reception and consumption, this new historicist approach often conflates elements that in Rick Altman's assessment "conventionally define these terms from the trade's point of view" with production and industrial standards.[166]

The practice of reception study has been called into question by critics who find that it treats genre as straightforward and unproblematic: a category simply used by Hollywood and other global film industries to discuss and promote films. In Altman's response to Neale, he rightfully points out that industrial and journalistic terms may crucially point to the presence of generic inconsistencies, but they are limited in their

[164] Gledhill, "Introduction," 4.
[165] Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity*.; Steve Neale, "Melo Talk, "66-89.
[166] Altman, "Reusable Packaging," 27.

ability to define them.[167] Altman sees the act of identifying genre as merely the first step in a multi-step "genrefication" process:

> The fact that a genre has previously been posited, defined, and delimited by Hollywood is often taken only as prima facie evidence that generic levels of meanings are operatives within or across a group of texts roughly designated by the Hollywood term and its usage. The industrial/ journalistic term thus founds a hypothesis about the presence of meaningful activity, but does not necessarily contribute a definition of delimitation of the genre in question.[168]

For a more generative genre analysis, Altman stresses the role of film critics and historians in interpreting a wide-range of historical sources and locating methods for defining and describing structures, functions, and systems specific to a majority of films.[169] Thus, Altman's "diachronic" approach offers insight into the pragmatic job of film critics and historians, which Altman believes to be crucial for the "synchronic" formation and ongoing interpretation of any generic corpus.[170] Rather than accept genre as clearly defined and delimited, he also assumes that even so-called "stable genres" are subject to the whims of genre cycles.[171] Obviously, no major genre remains forever unchanged. The fixing of a genre's definition ignores the fact that different genres have been designed by different sets of criteria. Following this line of thinking, Altman's approach, I think, correctly argues that the values of generic meanings are not fixed:

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[167] Here I am following dialogue between Steve Neale and Rick Altman in: Steve Neale, "'Melo Talk'" and Rick Altman, "Reusable Packaging."; Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).
[168]Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 13.
[169] Altman, "Reusable Packaging," 36-37.
[170] Rick Altman, "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre," *Cinema Journal* 23, no. 3, (Spring, 1984), 6-18. Altman, "Reusable Packaging," 33.
[171] Altman, "Reusable Packaging," 33.

genres will always reflect the audiences, producers, exhibitors, and the cultural agencies of the time and place films were made, distributed, and consumed.[172]

Further, Altman's approach emphasizes both historical and archival evidence; it uses the act of interpretation to complicate the traditional definition of popular genres and to recognize what Gledhill so insightfully calls the "fluidity" and mutability" of generic terminology and categories (especially with regards to melodrama).[173] This approach is especially helpful for addressing Czech film culture, which is complex in terms of production trends, the ways in which audiences interacted with cinematic products, and the strategies by which certain films have been re-purposed during different moments in history. Indeed, it is difficult to explain the historical dimensions of film spectatorship in the Czech lands.[174] Looking at documents regarding film censorship, exhibition, production and the particulars of advertising can expose genre cycles, as well as their shifts and trends in this national film culture. But critical reception also indicates how different kinds of audiences actually viewed films. Reception study may be only of limited value, but it is perhaps the best way to collect detailed information about a place's film culture—even an unofficial or unstable one—at a particular moment in time. Thus, the next chapter will take on a reception study to supplement broader institutional and critical histories of interwar and Protectorate-era film, and will illuminate the shifting national and social imaginaries that led to the resignification of the films that constitute this melodrama corpus.

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[172] Ibid., 33.
[173] Ibid., 12. Gledhill, "Rethinking Genre," 221.
[174] Klimeš, "National Cinema in a Transnational Context," 37.

As part of the broader project of genre theory and criticism, film scholars have a tendency to take Hollywood films as their focus. But as Alan Williams reminds us, "genre is not exclusively or even primarily a Hollywood phenomenon."[175] No doubt, the presumed hegemony of Hollywood popular cinema—particularly in small cinemas outside of Western Europe that have limited distribution and success beyond their domestic markets—has resulted in national manifestations of popular genres being characterized as inferior imitations. And yet, Czech cinema—a "small national cinema"—created its own variations of these popular genres, which have taken on divergent conventions and aesthetic sensibilities that reflect specific industrial and cultural practices; these genres perform important cultural work by responding to the needs of local nation-building projects and by expressing the indigenous culture and attitudes of their audiences.

Strangely, genre is not a primary topic within the study of Czech cinema. In fact, the history of popular genre in Czech cinema remains in many ways unwritten, as does the history of popular cinema more broadly. This is especially true for films made before the nationalization of Czechoslovak cinema in 1945. More recently, however, there have been some efforts to explain how genre operated in Czechoslovak films during state socialism.[176] There is also scholarship that offers close readings of individual films and

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[175] Alan Williams, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 2 (1984), 121-125.

[176] For recent examples of genre study in Czech cinema see: Jaromír Blažejovský, "Žánrová produkce v socialistických kinematografiích," *Iluminace* 23, no. 3 (2011), 5-10.; Jaromír Blažejovský, "Vypůjčená imaginace. Po stopách distribučních osudů žánrových filmů ve znárodněných kinematografiích," *Iluminace* 23, no. 3 (2011), 113-136.; Pavel Skopal, "Na tenkém ledě koprodukční spolupráce Srovnání žánrové produkce studií Barrandov a DEFA v polovině 60. let na příkladu snímku STRAŠNÁ ŽENA (1965)," *Iluminace* 23, no. 3 (2011), 5-10.

individual directors with regard to important genre-types. One example is Peter Hames's survey of Czech and Slovak cinema, in which he dedicates an entire chapter to describing the specificities of Czech comedy—not to mention a chapter on what he terms the genre of "the Holocaust."[177] However, these kinds of projects tend to have a symptomatic character and take the observation that the genre exists as their starting point. Often, they merely adopt or recalibrate Hollywood or German genre models, reading them onto Czech films in order to invite thematic understandings of certain groups of films.

Although most European and World cinemas can be (and have been) studied through Hollywood's sphere of influence, in the Czech case, this is a more complicated task. As Petr Bilík explains in his study of the western genre in Czech cinema, "the expansions of popular genres from the imported sound films of American origin often did not succeed because they had to be subtitled and Czechoslovak companies were not able to adopt Hollywood patterns in their own productions because of their high demands."[178] This point seems to echo the defeatist attitudes of 1930s reviewers, who declared, starting as early as the release of their first talkie, *When the Strings Wailed*, that the small Czechoslovak film industry could not measure up to the industrial standards of Hollywood. There was some truth to these claims: the new equipment required to produce and exhibit sound films more than tripled production budgets, and it was impossible to cover the costs with the box office returns generated from their small domestic market (especially since there was such limited commercial potential for the

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[177] Peter Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 2010.

[178] Petr Bilík, "The Sneaky Victory of Genre: The Story of One Czech Western," *Moravian Journal of Literature and Film* 5, no 2 (Fall 2014), 27.

export of Czech-language films).[179] Bilík nevertheless concludes that during the 1930s and 1940s Czech filmmakers adopted genre-specific elements from Hollywood. However, after the war and the February 1948 communist rise to power, he explains, traditional genre films were deemed too reminiscent of the bourgeois naïveté of pre-war productions and were quickly eradicated in favor of Czechoslovak socialist realist mutations.[180] To analyze the Czech-specific mutation of the western genre thus requires Bilík to disentangle the more functional aspects of the Hollywood genre model from the ideological intentions of the state-production company.[181]

Though Hollywood genre films were largely embraced in the interwar republic, there were several years when they were absent from the country's cinemas. In the early 1930s, Hollywood talkies were widely exhibited in Czechoslovak cinemas, and were indeed popular in the Czech lands.[182] But in 1932, the number of Hollywood talkies in Czechoslovak cinemas dramatically declined.[183] One reason for this decline was that German-language talkies were simply more comprehensible to Czechs than English-language talkies, and soon began to dominate the box office. [184] Another reason can be traced to the protectionist policies of the Czechoslovak government, which imposed

[179] Szczepanik notes that Czech films lost an average of 162,000 CZK. Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy*, 39.
[180] Bilík, "The Sneaky Victory," 28.
[181] Ibid., 28.
[182] Szczepanik, "Hollywood in Disguise," 170-171.
[183] Ibid.,172-174.
[184] As Szczepanik puts it: "Generally speaking, the English language could be actually heard at Czech theaters much less often than the supply data might suggest, particularly in the early sound years. Fox used both so-called international versions (with dialogue replaced by music and subtitles or intertitles) and German dubbing more extensively, while MGM and Paramount experienced with MLVs and Czech inserts. The reason behind these strategies of disguise was a legitimate fear that too much spoken English would destroy the public's interest in Hollywood products." Ibid., 172-174.

quotas on all film imports in order to protect domestic film production.[185] Although quotas were common across Europe, these were imposed later than most, and provoked a thirty-month boycott of the Czechoslovak market by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA).[186] Consequently, Hollywood films were not exhibited in Czechoslovak cinemas until 1935, when the American and Czechoslovak governments signed a film importation agreement, granting Hollywood unprecedented access to the market.[187] From 1935 until 1939, new and old Hollywood films flooded into cinemas.[188] In Czechoslovakia, cinemagoers' interest in Hollywood films was reinvigorated by the glamour of their movie stars, and as Szczepanik notes, especially for the desire to see films starring Swedish-born actress Greta Garbo.[189] However, the Nazi occupation and subsequent establishment of the Protectorate in 1939 resulted in the decline of Hollywood films yet again. At first, Hollywood films were restricted, and the Prague-based subsidiaries of American companies (Fox, MGM, Paramount, United Artist and Universal) were closed by the Nazis, and then, after the United States entered the war, they were banned completely.[190]

Even if cinemagoers and filmmakers had limited or sporadic access to Hollywood products in the Czech lands throughout the 1930s and 1940s, interest in these films did not disappear. Czech films very clearly referenced Hollywood's genre models and

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[185] Ibid., I71.
[186] Ibid.,170-171. For a detailed account of the MPPDA boycott see: Jindřiška Bláhová, "A Tough Job for Donald Duck —Hollywood, Czechoslovakia, and Selling Films behind the Iron Curtain, 1944-1952," (PhD diss., University of East Anglia and Charles University in Prague, 2010).
[187] Szczepanik, "Hollywood in Disguise," 172.
[188] Ibid., 173.
[189] Ibid., 173.
[190] Ibid., 185.

patterns. Of course, these generic conventions were also adapted from German films, which were enormously popular with local audiences, and perhaps the only European films able to compete successfully with Hollywood.

There are a number of reasons to study the influence of German cinematic traditions on Czech cinema. First, because the Czech lands share a border with Austria and Germany, the region is deeply rooted in German cultural traditions, which persisted after the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire and the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic. During the 1930s and 1940s, German-talkies nearly dominated the Czechoslovak market and ranked second only to Czech talkies in terms of viewer preference and sheer numbers.[191] The threat of German sound films not only provoked the 1930 film riots; it also inspired Czechoslovak filmmakers to imitate subject matter, character types, and plot patterns associated with profitable German products.[192] Part of the appeal undoubtedly derived from their linguistic and cultural translatability.[193] Obviously, this shared cultural frame of reference would also extend to local and regional forms of genres and tropes.

Second, as Kevin B. Johnson details, since the beginnings of cinema, film production brought together actors, crew members, directors, screenwriters, etc. from

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[191] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighborhood," 112.

[192] Yet even German cinema could not escape Hollywood's sphere of influence. During the early sound period, Sabine Hake explains, the Weimar film industry adopted the Hollywood model of production and set out to "Germanize successful formulas through the introductions of different characters, settings and atmospheres." Sabine Hake, *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 13.

[193] For a detailed account of this transnational network see Johnson, "Annexation Effects"—especially pages 1-40.

across Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany.[194] This multinational production network was formed out of a practical necessity and lasted until the end of World War II. Finally, not only was the small Czechoslovak film industry economically dependent on the more profitable German-language industries, especially during the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s, but they also relied on German companies to provide the cutting-edge film technologies.[195] In 1932 and 1933, Miloš Havel's AB Company opened Barrandov studio's state-of-the-art facilities just outside of Prague. As a result, Czechoslovakia became the largest foreign producer of German-language films, and this number only increased after the Nazi occupation of the country.[196] The Paris Agreement of 1930—one of the many Czechoslovak-Austrian/ Czechoslovak-German film policies of the 1930s and 1940s—placed Czechoslovakia under the patent zone of German conglomerate Tobis-Klangfilm, requiring Barrandov studios to pay a flat licensing fee for the use of the company's proprietary sound agreements.[197] Thus, even the future of Czech talkies relied on German technology. The question of what distinguishes the Czech film melodrama, in other words, cannot be theorized apart from questions of German influence, for it owes as much to the German film industry and its cultural traditions as it does to national forms of expression.

Unlike the Czech case, a wealth of scholarship connects melodrama with German cinema. Heide Schlüpmann has noted that melodrama was established in 1910s Germany

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[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid., 15.; Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighborhood," 113.
[196] Ibid., 113.
[197] On Tobis-Klangfilm see: Szczepanik, *Konzervy se slovy*, 215-243.; Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighborhood,"113.

as a female-oriented genre for bourgeois entertainment which used its dramatic narrative to "[assert] itself against the documentary quality of the medium."[198] Schlüpmann locates the genres "prehistory" in the transitional moment between the fascination with the technological possibilities of the new medium—what Tom Gunning calls "the cinema of attractions"—and narrative integration, and argues that this particularity has granted melodrama the ability to represent other types of "collisions."[199] She goes on to provide the example of the collision between two media (literature and cinema) and the "implied collision" between high and low culture (or as she explains, classical bourgeois and modern mass culture).[200] This move explicitly ties melodrama to notions of modernity.

The genre may have had a privileged relation to modern conflicts, yet, unlike its Hollywood counterpart, it avoided addressing these tensions head on, and thus was not essentially subversive. Schlüpmann thus argues that melodrama worked to suppress critiques of genre roles by restricting the "female narrative perspective" to "the mere content for which male bourgeois culture provided the form of representation."[201] She describes the female protagonist not as a victim hero, but as a passive "'eventful' character," whose tragic flaws were not developed by the story as much as they were "built in" to her femininity.[202] For Schlüpmann this point proves that melodrama was a "bourgeois patriarchal cinema," not a low popular form of female address.[203] On the contrary, she writes, it "placed women's history in the service of nationalism, and later

[198] Heide Schlüpmann, "Melodrama and the Social Drama in the Early German Cinema," *Camera Obscura* no. 8 (January 1990), 73-89.
[199] Ibid., 75-76.
[200] Ibid., 76.
[201] Ibid., 75.
[202] Ibid., 74.
[203] Ibid., 76.

National Socialism."[204] In other words, melodrama's so-called "reactionary element" may have advertised itself as revolutionary or empowering to women, but it actually served a highly ideological and disciplinary function.

In contrast to melodrama's more conservative tendencies, Schlüpmann puts the social drama, which rose to popularity in the 1920s Weimar Republic, and included several narrative types with subgenre labels that correspond to different types of narratives and settings: for example, the *Gesellschaftsfilm* (the bourgeois melodrama) and the *Problemfilm* (petit-bourgeois and working-class melodrama).[205] Such an approach was intended to address the female public differently than melodrama.

As Schlüpmann describes it: "it's documentation of reality broke with conventional dramatic form."[206] Although both genres represented the social problems of women, the social drama focused on the particular tragedy of a single, unique woman's—usually a mistress or a married woman's—ordinary life in a patriarchal society.[207] Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel call it a genre "where the individual confronts social contradictions (class difference, moral conventions, and poverty) beyond his/her control and/or comprehension."[208] Less occupied with distancing itself from theatrical attractions than melodrama, its contemporary counterpart, the social drama sought to appeal to female spectators by illuminating existing gender roles in a new way. Because

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[204] Ibid., 76.
[205] Ibid., 78. According to Thomas Elsaesser, the *Problemfilm* was itself broken into the subgenres *Straßenfilm* (street film), *Kammerspielfilm* (chamber-play film), and *Arbeiterfilm* (worker film). Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel eds. *The BFI Companion to German Cinema,* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 134.
[206] Schlüpmann, "Melodrama and the Social Drama," 78.
[207] Elsaesser and Wedel, *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, 134.
[208] Ibid., 134.

the genre responded to external censorship more directly, Elsaesser and Wedel explain, it restricted female narrative perspective.[209] But by drawing its subject matter from the social problems found in reality, it mediated every day and narrative form so that female viewers could reflect upon their own real challenges. However, Elsaesser and Wedel also note that the popularity of the social drama was short lived; the Nazi regime was necessarily threatened by films that represented social realities and banned the genre for being "defeatist."[210]

Similarly, Patrice Petro's historical study of gender and spectatorship in the Weimar cinema brings attention to the ways in which the film melodrama addressed female spectator's everyday experiences. While Petro, like Schlüpmann, demonstrates concern for overstating the continuities between Weimar and Nazi melodrama films, she nevertheless suggests that the melodramatic impulse she views as central to Weimar cinema persisted into the Third Reich.[211] Melodrama, scholars of cinema in the Third Reich have shown, was a particularly efficient tool for the distribution of Nazi ideology and its propaganda.[212] In his analysis of the Nazi film *The Golden City* (*Die goldene Stadt*, Viet Harlan, 1942), Stephen Lowry explains that, because Nazi films are full of "melodramatic clichés," at first glance they appear to be "shallow, seemingly apolitical

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[209] Ibid., 134.
[210] Ibid., 134.
[211] Indeed, for Petro, "Nazi cinema raises questions about the peculiar continues within the discontinuities of film history." Petro, *Joyless Streets*, 43.
[212] On melodrama in Nazi cinema see: Linda Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in Nazi Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).; Mary Elizabeth O'Brien, *Nazi Cinema as Enchantment: The Politics of Entertainment in the Third Reich* (Rochester: Camden House, 2004).; Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).

entertainment films," and are therefore "less identifiable as propaganda."[213] Following the call of Karsten Witte to resist "determining which features constitute a fascist film," and "instead to examine how films functioned under fascism, or rather in the context of fascism," Lowry asserts the fascist nature of these films is not explicit, and can only be distinguished through historical contextualization.[214] In fact, he notes, "in many respects, these productions hardly seem to differ from classical Hollywood fare."[215]

In most studies of Nazi film melodrama, scholars compare and contrast its formal trends (visual and narrative conventions) and ideological functions with those of classical Hollywood films. Often, melodrama's privileged status in the Third Reich is traced to minister of propaganda Joseph Goebbels's particular obsession with the emotional effects of Hollywood films. This approach is exemplified by Laura Heins, who cites Goebbels's praise for spectacular Hollywood films such as *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) in his private diaries and personal correspondence to argue that "the language Goebbels used to describe his reactions to films suggests that he saw melodramas as producing the most intense and most politically desirable spectator effects."[216] Petro puts it more bluntly, asking: "Was Nazi cinema merely a vision of the classical Hollywood

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[213] Stephen Lowry, "Ideology and Excess in Nazi Melodrama: The Golden City," *New German Critique*, no. 74 (Spring-Summer, 1998), 125-126.

[214] Karsten Witte, "The Indivisible Legacy of Nazi Cinemas," *New German Critique* no. 74, (Spring—Summer, 1998), 23.

[215]Lowry, "Ideology and Excess," 128. Similarly, Linda Schulte-Sasse remarks, "If, moreover, Hollywood-style cinema serves National Socialism so well, perhaps there is an implicit affinity between the subject effect and this cinematic style and of fascism (at least with respect to harmony)." Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich*,10.

[216] In her discussion of Goebbels love for *Gone with the Wind*, Heins turns to the Propaganda Minster's diary: "About *Gone with the Wind*, he wrote: Magnificent color and moving in its effect. One becomes completely sentimental while watching it. Leigh and Clark Gable act wonderfully. The mass scenes are captivatingly well done. A huge achievement of the Americans… We will follow this example." Laura Heins, *Nazi Film Melodrama* (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 17, 25.

cinema?"[217] For Petro, the relationship between the two national traditions tells us about the development of a "national (or rather nationalistic) cinema at the intersection of the classical and the popular."[218] In her view, the prominent position of melodrama in Nazi film pushes us to rethink the continuities and discontinuities of film history, especially the use of commonplace terms and categories frequently associated with Hollywood (i.e. the classical and the popular).[219]

Film scholars who have written about Nazi melodrama agree that these films served as critiques of the bourgeois domesticity of the private sphere. These scholars typically argue that much like the subgenre of the Hollywood family melodrama, Nazi melodramas presented family-based narratives to indict the construct of the nuclear family—but there were also some major differences. For example, Heins argues that while Nazi melodramas invited viewers to identify with protagonists who appeared to directly challenge traditional and familial roles, these challenges were not characterized by the "disruption" of the status quo (the liberation of the protagonist from traditional gender roles), but by "compensation"—that is, by the promise of intensified experiences outside of the home.[220] Whether or not these challenges were framed as revolutionary or empowering, Heins points out, they were actually reactionary in their goals to recalibrate the status quo of patriarchal family structures to fit within the ideological goals of the

[217] Patrice Petro, "Nazi Cinema at the Intersection of the Classical and the Popular," *New German Critique*, no. 74 (Spring-Sumer 1998), 43.
[218] Ibid., 55.
[219] Ibid., 41-55.
[220] Schulte-Sasse, *Entertaining the Third Reich*, 20-21.; Heins describes melodrama as being "used by the Nazis in a genre-contradictory manner." *Nazi Film Melodrama*, 10.

Reich.[221] Further, she explains that Nazi film melodramas tested the pressures of bourgeois modern life to sublimate the individual and render domestic concerns "ancillary to expansionist expression" ; they worked as spectatorial traps which readjusted and then reinforced the desired moral and emotional frameworks.[222]

Significantly, Heins argues that melodrama was not considered to be a "trivial or inferior genre" in the Third Reich; but she also notes that the genre's significance within Nazi cinema is a relatively recent invention:[223]

> The term 'melodrama' was rarely used in the Third Reich; instead, terms like 'dramatic fate' or 'tragedy' were sometimes employed in descriptions of films in a melodramatic register. However, the avoidance of the term did not so much indicate an inferior status of the mode as an underdeveloped concept of cinematic genres during the Third Reich; the Nazis made extensive use of melodramatic conventions without attempting to theorize a genre taxonomy or hierarchy. In contemporary film reviews, general descriptions were given in the form of plot synopsis but there was usually no attempt to categorize films in generic types.[224]

Here Heins suggests that before melodrama became substantiated as a widely recognized generic label for Nazi films, it already existed as a cultural form in the Third Reich, where it was evoked by indirect references and pseudonyms.[225] Therefore, to locate and interpret melodramatic form and expression, critics and viewers first had to become sufficiently aware of its structures, common features, and other generic conventions. Heins also stresses that in the Third Reich, film production and promotion was not carefully planned as it was in Hollywood, but rather followed a "somewhat random

[221] Heins, *Nazi Film Melodrama*, 11.
[222] Ibid., 9.
[223] Ibid., 17.
[224] Ibid., 15.
[225] Ibid., 15.

pattern," and thus films were not necessarily marketed towards women or any other particular type of audiences.[226] That is, generic concepts and models played little to no role in film production or publicity in the Third Reich. Putting these two observations together, Heins argues that this lack of generic vocabulary does not diminish the numerous ways in which the Nazis privileged melodrama.[227] However, Heins nevertheless falls into the same trap as other scholars who name the genre based on the recognition of its "resounding signs": the preoccupation with female protagonists, the emphasis on correct moral behavior, and the preservation of the home.

Perhaps the most obvious German genre to evoke this notion of melodrama is the *Heimatfilm*, typically translated as "homeland film." Like the Hollywood genre of the western, the *Heimatfilm* is, according to Johannes von Moltke, a "spatial genre," meaning that it "connotes a sense of place," which, in this case, "celebrate[s] the regional and provincial landscapes of the Bavarian countryside to glorify the idealized utopia of the German 'homeland.'"[228] Although Thomas Elsaesser dates its origins back "at least to the period between 1910 and 20," most scholars have argued few films from the Weimar period or the Third Reich can truly be considered *Heimatfilm*—the genre is primarily associated with German (and Austrian) films of the late 1940s and 1950s.[229] According to Elsaesser and Wedel, "Heimatfilme depict a world in which traditional values prevail: love triumphs over social and economic barriers, and the story is usually set in an idyllic

[226] Ibid., 15.
[227] Ibid., 15.
[228] Johannes von Moltke, "Evergreens: The Heimat Genre" in *The German Cinema Book*, eds. Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Gokturk (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 19.
[229] Ibid., 20.

German countryside, highlighting maypole and other folkloric traditions."[230] This comparison between the *Heimatfilm* and melodrama grows all the more compelling though when we consider their similar attempts to articulate morality through the recognition of binaries like town and village, young and old, and tradition and progress.[231] Both genres, for example, are obsessively concerned with preserving the space of the home (point of origin), and do so by appealing to traditional (regional and national) forms of moral virtue.

Frequently referred to as the precursor to the Heimat genre (and as Eric Rentschler points out, citing Siegfried Kracauer, to the blood-and-soil productions of the Third Reich), Rentschler notes that the *Bergfilm*, or "mountain film," genre of the 1920s and 1930s also featured "a combination of auratic landscapes, breathtaking atmospherics, and high pitched emotions."[232] As Elsaesser and Wedel put it, the *Bergfilm* "used simple melodramatic plots, splendidly highlighting the snow-covered mountains and often [involved] last-minute rescues."[233] Beyond these general characteristics, the *Bergfilm* projected German regional culture to domestic audiences. Likewise, it was not at all unusual to see localized films that asserted Czech regional folk culture in 1920s and 1930s Czechoslovakia.

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[230] Elsaesser and Wedel, *The BFI Companion to German Cinema*, 134.
[231] Ibid., 134.
[232] Eric Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the Bergfilm" in *Perspectives on German Cinema*, eds. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996), 693.
[233] Elsaesser and Wedel, *The BFI Companion*, 134. For Siegfried Kracauer, the *Bergfilm* was "half-monumental, half-sentimental." *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, revised and expanded ed., Leonardo Queresima, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004**),** 110-112.

One well-known example of a Czechoslovak folk film is *Jana* (Emil Synek and Robert Land, 1935), a Czech-German co-production with both and Czech and a German-language version.[234] According to the NFA, *Jana* is also a melodrama.[235] Perhaps the most identifiable connection to the *Heimatfilm*, Kevin B. Johnson explains, is *Jana*'s location. Set in the Bohemian forest on the northeastern edge of the border between the Czech lands, Bavaria, and Austria—a region commonly referred to as the "Sudetenland"—Johnson points out that the discourse around *Jana* calls attention to the region's longstanding history of Czech-German ethnic conflict.[236] In fact, the years of *Jana*'s production and original exhibition (1934 - 1935) coincided with intense debates regarding the national character of the Sudetenland. At the time of *Jana's* release, Adolf Hitler insisted on the "German nature" of the land and demanded that the Sudetenland be "reinstated" to the German empire. These ethnic tensions manifested in the rise of Konrad Heinlein's radical right Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei or SdP), which won sixty-seven percent of the total German vote in parliamentary elections and gained forty-four seats in the National Assembly. By September 1938, only several years after the film first screened in cinemas, the French and British acquiesced to Hitler's ultimatum to surrender the Sudetenland to Germany, and signed the Munich agreement, ceding the region to the Reich. Thus, *Jana*'s setting would, in Johnson's terms, "arouse

[234] This is also called an MLV pair. The title of the German version is *Das Mädel aus dem Böhmerwald* (*The Bohemian Girl*).
[235] Johnson, "Annexation Effects, 278-279.; Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*, 123.
[236] Ibid., 277.

sentimental feelings of *Heimat* (or *domov* in Czech) in their respective, linguistically-defined audiences."[237]

Moreover, both Czech and German versions present what is essentially the same story. In *Jana*, the film's title character is forced to leave her home after her mother's death to find work. Unable to find a job, the young woman is found exhausted in the woods by Michael, a young farmworker, who brings her to his family's farm which is managed by Petr, his older, more serious brother. Jana recuperates quickly and takes on the role of housekeeper. She is soon seduced by Michael and proceeds to fall in love with him. Michael, however, is called away to Prague to complete his military service, where he becomes caught up in a life of gambling and women. In a villainous turn, he even convinces the lovesick Jana to send him part of her savings in order to support his frivolous lifestyle.

Jana's delayed recognition of Michael's duplicity finally ends when she travels to Prague, only to discover him with another woman. Now that her dream-version of Michael has faded, Jana recognizes that it is Petr, the responsible and level-headed elder brother, who is the right man for her. The two marry and have a child and an overall happy life—that is, until Michael returns, and in a fit of jealousy, casts doubt on the child's paternity. With her reputation in shambles, and her realization that once again she might lose the security of a home, Jana runs away with her child. In the course of this, the brothers fight, and when Michael is shot, he finally confesses the falsity of his accusation. At the end of the film, Petr finds Jana and their child, and they return home. From the

[237] Ibid., 281.

comfort of the home, Jana (and her child) will regain their security and sense of belonging.

As Johnson points out in his analysis of the film, *Jana*'s dual contexts raise issues regarding the national implications of this home.[238] Both Czech and German versions present what is essentially the same story: in each version, the image of the local setting was re-cast within the language and the national-cultural traditions of the respective public sphere. Surely, this suggests that *Heimatfilm* and melodrama are not separate genres at all. Johnson shows how this is reflected in the contemporary discourse surrounding the film, both commercial and critical, and how the ambiguity of who the film truly "belonged to" was met strongly by negative reactions from both Czech and German critics and audiences.[239] Whereas in the German Reich, *Jana* was advertised as an authentic picture of life in the Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia, he shows that *Jana* was marketed as a model of the "new Czech folk film" ("*nový český lidový film*").[240] This, Johnson, explains, resulted in a "disappointment in the authenticity of the *Jana* films" which he understands as part of the "unease that accompanied the spectator's renegotiated relationship to the screen world with the introduction of sound cinema."[241]

Two other factors suggest that Czech discourse addressed the need to reclaim the film's regional cultural identity. First, promotional posters claimed the distinction of *Jana* being "a major event in Czech film" ("*velká událost v českém filmu*"), the "the newest Czech film" ("*nejnovější český filmu*"), and boasted that it represented a "true event for

[238] Ibid., 252.
[239] Ibid., 275.
[240] Ibid., 282.
[241] Ibid., 290.

Czech film!" ("*skutečná událost v českém filmu*").[242] Second, reviewers critiqued the film by calling attention to the involvement of Austrian and German film production, as if to explain this was, in fact, the reason why it couldn't genuinely depict life in a Bohemian village.

This was not a difficult task, considering that the media buzz around *Jana* was overwhelmingly negative. Reviewers panned it as a "disappointingly bad film" with a "technically primitive script," and instead focused on the scandals that dominated its production.[243] In fact, most reviews of the film note that Emil Synek, the film's screenwriter and co-director, was not even listed in its credits. A reviewer in the independent newspaper *Lidové noviny* (*People's News*) recounted the curious circumstances surrounding *Jana*'s production matter-of-factly:

> Some time ago, there were rumors that the author of the script was Dr. Emil Synek, and soon afterwards it was said that it wasn't him, but actually two German immigrants who wrote it, and the doctor only signed his name to it. This was to ensure that the film received state aid, as a film that was written by a foreigner wouldn't receive any. It seems that at first there was an agreement between Synek and the German immigrants on this matter, which was later violated. The immigrants filed a lawsuit against Synek arguing that he stole the script from them. According to the news, last week a court agreement was finalized in which the entrepreneurs and immigrants reached a financial settlement.[244]

This summary seems to reduce the production scandal to a struggle between the commercial ambitions of the Czechoslovak film industry and the financial preoccupation

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[242] Cinema programs and one-sheets for *Jana*, 1935, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.
[243] See: "Trajemství 'Jany,'"*Filmové listy* 7, no.15, November 22, 1935, 1-2.; "Boj o 'Janu,'" *Filmový kurýr* 9, no. 31, August 2, 1935; "Jana," *Filmová politika* 2 no. 35, October 11, 1935, 5.; "Jana," *Filmový kurýr* 9, no. 41, October 11, 1935, 2.
[244] *Lidové noviny* 43, no. 509, October 11, 1935, 12.

of its foreign (German) interlopers. Other newspapers and periodicals provided more detailed timelines, documenting every aspect of what was, in fact, a multi-tiered scandal. In November 1935, the Czech film periodical *Filmové listy* (*Film Papers*) published a two-page spread on the "biggest scandal the Czech film has seen in recent years," tracing the press coverage of the film from 1934, when it was first reported that Synek's screenplay was acquired for production by a Hollywood producer, through October 1935, when it was released in eleven of Czechoslovakia's premiere cinemas.[245]

Other scandalous events included: Czechoslovak producer Emil Meissner's acquisition of the script a full nine months after this original report, and his announcement it would be "the first film of the new Czech film cycle" (with an entirely new Czech cast—which would be re-cast once more); an interview in which Synek very publicly expressed dissatisfaction with *Jana*, going as far as to relate the crisis of the film's production to the bigger crisis of Czechoslovak film production; the libel concerns and financial details of the courtroom drama; and the question of the film's two directors. Robert Land, a director of popular German films, was brought in, first to direct the German-language-version of the film, *Das Mädel aus dem Böhmerwald*, and then to co-direct the Czech version with Synek. [246] However, Land, a Moravian-born Jew, could not have his name attached to the film. The omission of his name enabled *Jana* to get around

[245] "Tajemství 'Jany,'" 1-2.
[246] Ibid.; Synek's interview also appeared in several Czech-language publications under the title "S cizími penězi nelze hazardovat," *FTK*, no. 275, May 25, 1935, s. 2. ; *Filmový kurýr* 9, no. 23, June 7, 1935, 3. ; *Kinorevue* 1, no. 42, June 12, 1935. It also appeared in German-language publications under the title "Mit fremden Geld darf nicht hazardiert werden," *PFKor* 1, no. 77, May 25, 1935); *PFKu* 3, no. 113-115, June 8, 1935).

the Nuremberg Race Laws (which were passed in September of 1935), it also made it possible to distribute the German-language version in the German Reich.[247]

Meissner-film attempted to capitalize on *Jana*'s scandals, however the film was ultimately not profitable in Czechoslovakia. Although *Jana* screened in eleven cinemas, Szczepanik explains, most were "not regular first-run houses and with one exception, the film was only exhibited one week in each venue."[248] Thus while *Jana* ran for twelve weeks, "this exaggerated its real success, since ten of the eleven cinemas decided not to prolong the program."[249] The scandal was seen for the commercial trick that it was, and as the reviewer for *Lidové noviny* remarks, only added to cinemagoers' distrust of the commercial aspirations of Czechoslovakia's film production.[250]

To label *Jana* a generic melodrama is thus to agree with Synek that is a "commercial film affair," rather than a film with "possible artistic worth."[251] Though it is impossible to say precisely how or why the NFA identified genre, it is clear that there are certain shared qualities associated with the films they have labeled. A closer look at the promotional materials and journalistic reviews for *When the Strings Wailed* and *Jana*, for instance, shows that the films were panned owing to the foreign elements associated with its production (e.g.: foreign funding, foreign director, foreign-language version). Perhaps the genre label melodrama was nothing more than a vehicle for the NFA to reject these films as kitschy, frivolous, and insignificant. Not only does this carve out a space for a

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[247]German-language Censorship document for *Jana*, May 7 1940, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.
[248] Szczepanik, "Hollywood in Disguise," 180.
[249] Ibid., 180.
[250] *Lidové noviny* 43, no. 509, October 11, 1935, 12.
[251] Synek, "S cizími penězi."

true “Czech” cinema, it also positions films without these unsavory connotations—films that are not labeled as generic melodramas—as works worthy of representing a “serious national cinema.” In other words, if melodrama has been relegated to this particular period, it is precisely because of the bad reputation of the genre echoed the period’s own negative social dimensions.

While offering invaluable insight into the ways in which melodrama traversed national boundaries, we cannot fully form an understanding of Czech film melodrama by exploring its relationship to other cinematic practices. In the next chapter, I consider the specific historical constructions and cultural conventions of these Czech melodrama films. What can we learn about the function of melodrama in Czech cinema by looking at this designated generic corpus? How did the genre contribute to filmmaking practices in the First Republic and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia? What is it about this specific fourteen-year period that brought melodrama into focus? And, finally, at what expense have these Czech melodrama films taken on other meanings outside of this historical period, if they have taken on other meanings at all?

Chapter Two
Mrs. Morality Sweeps Through the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

In 1998, the National Film Archive in Prague (Národní filmový archiv or NFA) retroactively created melodrama as a genre that defined so-called "popular entertainment films" produced between 1930 and 1945.[252] Of course, melodrama *can* authentically be found in Czech cinema and existed as a generic or rhetorical category in both the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic and the Nazi occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: during the 1930s and 1940s, it had been regularly used in Czech discourse in reference to the opera and the theater.[253] Czech journalists and critics also used the term to refer to foreign films—and it appeared in foreign titles, such as the Hollywood film *Manhattan Melodrama* (W.S. Van Dyke, 1934). The fact remains, however, that melodrama was not a standard genre label for Czech films at that time. Rather, more prestigious genre labels like drama, romance or tragedy were applied to such films instead.

It is fair to say that melodrama has not been a particularly important concept in the study of Czech cinema. Indeed, little to no attention has been paid to the nature and meaning of melodrama as a film genre in Czech cinema, including its particular cultural context, aesthetic properties, or historical significance. To correct this oversight, this chapter examines the cultural and historical circumstances that inform this retroactive

[252] See: Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*.
[253] In the popular press, the term "melodrama" was used articles regarding the relationship between film and music, particularly in discussions of operetta genre. For instance, see: Jaroslav Brož, **"**Od melodramu k hudebnímu filmu," *Kinorevue*, 1944, 232-233; Melodrama is also used a genre category for silent films in: et al., *Česky hraný film Vol. I, 1898-1930* (Prague: Národní filmový archiv, 1995).

genre classification. What are the features that can be identified across the generic corpus that has been distinguished as the whole of melodrama specific to Czech cinema? What—if any—are the rules and conventions that govern these sixty-seven films catalogued by the NFA as melodrama? Do they share formal and stylistic attributes? And how has this genre classification shaped the historical understanding of films made under the Nazi Protectorate?

The genre of melodrama frequently coincides with the presence of multi-national co-productions and other transnational elements. Transnationality here does not refer to the cultural globalization that characterizes contemporary cinematic production; rather, it accounts for the multilingual tendencies and various supranational arrangements that marked cinematic production in Czechoslovakia during the 1930s and 1940s. This feature, of course, is not unique to the genre—and cannot be restricted to transnational co-operation initiatives. It is also symptomatic of the ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity of the Czech lands, which persisted after the establishment of the Czechoslovak state in 1918. In this context, it is no surprise that many of the films in the NFA's corpus were produced in various forms of co-production with larger "foreign" film industries (primarily German, and to a lesser extent, Austrian, French, etc.). More than nine were shot in multiple-language versions (MLVs): films shot simultaneously in different languages, using the same sets and plot, with different groups of actors, and working from culturally specific scripts that reflected domestic values.

Perhaps more than anything else, the advent of sound led to the articulation of national cinemas. During the early years of sound-film exhibition, the prohibitive production costs of the new sound technology made it necessary for Czech talkies to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers in order to secure export to larger foreign markets. To overcome the linguistic specificity of the talkie, Czechoslovak film production relied on a variety of exhibition strategies, including part-talkies, dubbing, and intertitles, however, MLVs quickly became the preferred means of production, enabling Czechoslovak films to reach international audiences.[254]

Comprehensive studies by Ivan Klimeš, Nataša Ďurovičová, and Petr Szczepanik have detailed the ways in which MLV projects were at once economically beneficial for Czechoslovak film production and helped stake out the domestic market for their own films.[255] Szczepanik emphasizes that "MLVs were export rather than import goods," to explain how "the MLVs produced in the Czechoslovak studios were not aiming to serve the international expansion of a national industry of the export of domestic cultural values under the veil of a foreign language—as was the case of their Hollywood counterparts."[256] But MLVs not only lowered the costs of sound production; as Szczepanik points out, they also lowered the costs of "spreading Czech in domestic

[254] Petr Szczepanik, "Undoing the National: Representing International Space in 1930s Czechoslovak MLVs," *Cinéma & Cie International Film Studies Journal*, no.4 (Spring 2004), 55-56.
[255] Szczepanik, "Undoing the National." ; Ivan Klimeš, "Multiple-language Versions of Czech Films and the Film Industry in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s," *Cinéma & Cie International Film Studies Journal*, no.4 (Spring 2004), 89-101.; Nataša Ďurovičová, "Introduction," *Cinéma & Cie International Film Studies Journal*, no.4 (Spring 2004), 7-16.
[256] Szczepanik, "Undoing the National," 56.

cinemas."[257] Thus, they played a fundamental role in projecting a unified Czechoslovak nation and national identity to the public.[258]

Between 1930 and 1938, when the Third Reich established hegemony over the film industry in the Czech lands, Czechoslovak film production made a total of thirty-nine MLVs.[259] The majority were German-language versions: thirty, compared to eight French-language versions.[260] This was the result of a series of bilateral agreements between the Czechoslovak and German governments that allowed the Czechoslovak film industry to produce five German-speaking versions per year.[261]

Figure 1

[257] Ibid., 56.
[258] Ibid., 56.
[259] Klimeš, "Multiple-Language Versions," 89.
[260] Ibid., 89.
[261] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 115.

One of these Czech-German MLVs is Leo Marten's 1933 melodrama *Diagnosis X* (*Diagnosa X*).[262] The promotional posters and one-sheets for the film advertise it as "A dramatic picture of the life of a doctor and his wife and child in 7 episodes" ("*Dramatický úsek ze života lékař, jeho ženy a dítěte o 7 dílech*"), and more provocatively, "A murder motivated by jealousy under the cover of science?" ("*Vražda ze žárlivosti pod rouškou vědy*?").[263] Another promotional copy serves almost as a warning, directing the cinema-goer to interpret the film in the context of declining social morals: "The social story of a famous surgeon's unhappy marriage" ("*Společenský příběh o nešťastném manželství slavného chiruga*").[264] In short, the promotional materials highlighted the degradation of "traditional morality" in everyday society.

Diagnosis X deals explicitly with the social consequences that arise from an unhappy marriage. Its protagonist is the famous surgeon Doctor Bernhard, who is so consumed by his work that he neglects his wife Helena and their young daughter. Lonely and craving attention, Helena is easily seduced by the charming Julian, who happens to be her husband's cousin. But when Julian begs her to run away with him, she refuses to leave her daughter behind. Because of this, Julian decides they have no future together, and moves on to a more appropriate lover (a young and beautiful dancer). Unfortunately,

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[262] The German-version was directed by Von Lukawieczki. *Filmový přehled*, "Diagnosis X [German Version]," Accessed July 1, 2017. http://www.filmovyprehled.cz/en/film/395586/diagnosis-x-german-version.

[263] One-sheet for *Diagnosis X*, 1933, 59-127122, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.; Cinema Program Diagnosis X, 1933, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic; One-sheet for "Diagnosis X, 1933, 627, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

[264] One-sheet for *Diagnosis X*, 1933, 627, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

a deadly and mysterious illness interferes with their happiness, forcing Julian to undergo a risky operation that only Doctor Bernhard can perform. Watching her husband save the life of her seducer, Helena realizes that she still loves him. The value of the nuclear family is reiterated in the final scene as Helena sees Bernhard for the first time not as an absentee husband and father, but as a selfless hero, and decides to put her marriage and family before her desire to be loved. Bernhard, in turn, pledges to spend more time with his family. The film ends with the family seemingly restored.

Bedřich Rádl's review for the periodical *Filmové listy* calls *Diagnosis X* a "psychological film" that depicts "a woman's drama [of being] swayed by two men, between her husband and her lover."[265] Rádl outlines what, in his opinion, are the important differences between the Czech and German versions. First, he notes the casting choices and the actor's performances, specifically the divergence in the "calculated characterizations of the characters."[266] For example, Rádl notes that where in the German version, the German actor Jack Mylong-Münz performs role of Julian (in this version, Fred) as "macho," in the Czech version, the Czech actor Arno Velecký performs Julian as "worldly."[267] Of course, this might just be a commentary on their acting choices, but it also articulates a difference in national-cultural gender norms, particularly differences in what constitutes the ideal form of masculinity. Furthermore, Rádl compliments the work of the "excellent translator," "whose supervision over dialogue will surely benefit the

[265] Dr. Bedřich Rádl, "Diagnosa X," *Filmové listy* 5, no. 2, February 23, 1933, 2.
[266] Ibid., 2.
[267] Ibid., 2.

film, if his advice is respected."[268] This review engages in an overt discussion of MLV films as cultural projects conceived to address the environment, atmosphere and overall mentality of their disparate audiences even in a contemporary setting.[269]

By contrast, a *Filmová politika* (*Film Politics*) review addresses only the Czech version of the film.[270] In fact, its reviewer enthusiastically welcomes *Diagnosis X* into Czech cinemas, writing, "after a platoon of comedies, it [was] nearly the only Czech film with a serious theme on Prague's cinema screens."[271] Similarly, a review published in the Czech-language daily newspaper, *Lidové noviny*, also ignores the film's German-pair.[272] Instead, it pans *Diagnosis X* as "another Czech film that could be made anywhere and whose Czechness lays only in amateur speech and in naïve details. Not even the film's setting is in any way typically Czech… It imitates the crude, stupid pomposity of Berlin *hochštapler* films."[273] Here, it is worth noting that the reviewer uses the German "*Hochštapler*" (charlatan) to describe the way in which *Diagnosis X* "imitates"—or perhaps more appropriately, sought to con its audiences into direct emotional involvement.[274] This seems to be a trend with these melodrama films: while of course linguistic mixing existed, it is not much of a leap to wonder if this was an unfavorable allusion to the popular genres and tastes associated with mass-produced German films—especially considering national attitudes toward German cultural hegemony.

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[268] Ibid., 2.
[269] Ibid, 2,
[270] "Diagnosa X," *Filmová politika* 1, no. 5, February 16, 1934, .3.
[271] Ibid., 3.
[272] OM, "Diagnosa X," *Lidové noviny* 42, no. 87, February 17, 1934, 8.
[273] Ibid., 8.
[274] Ibid., 8.

On top of the high cost of the shift to sound technology, the worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s hit Czechoslovakia especially hard. The small struggling domestic film industry solicited the support of larger film industries—both Hollywood and European—to secure export in more expansive markets, and in order to compete with the quality of films produced by other interwar liberal democracies. Indeed, during the 1930s and 1940s, the Czechoslovak film industry remained a "small cinema" when standing alone; the domestic industry was never entirely creatively or financially autonomous, though by the mid-1930s, it was fairly self-sufficient.[275] In 1932-1933, the construction of the AB Barrandov studios on the outskirts of Prague provided yet another solution to the industry's financial woes. The studios' modern production facilities—which included state-of-the-art equipment, facilities for production, and copying facilities—were rented out to many international companies, bringing new film business into Czechoslovakia, and providing new opportunities for local talent to work on foreign productions. In addition, following the implementation of the the Nuremberg Race Laws in 1935, Jewish producers, directors, and actors made their way to Prague from Germany, finding work in the production of multiple language versions of Czech films as well as Austrian "independent films" (films by Jewish emigrants), which would not be exported to Germany.[276]

Czech film critic Jaroslav Brož's commentary on the Barrandov's foreign-language productions speaks to some the financial responsibilities that the studios

[275] Szczepanik, "Undoing the National," 56.
[276] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighborhood," 116.

assumed.[277] As Brož explains, "For reasons of prestige and in order to demonstrate the advantages the new studios offered to prospective international producers, the AB company (Barrandov's parent company) undertook the production of foreign language versions of three costly historical super-films designed principally for distribution in France."[278] Indeed, at the time, France occupied a dominant position in the European film market, and Paris served as a center of mass cultural entertainment. Interestingly, though, only one of these three "super-films" (as Brož characterizes them), *Port Arthur* (Nicholas Farkas, 1936) is categorized by the NFA as a melodrama.

Port Arthur was produced by the Czechoslovak company Slavia-Film in co-operation with F.C.L Paris specifically for audiences outside of Czechoslovakia. Adapted from a novel of the same name by the French writer Pierre Frondale, the film was directed and photographed by German-speaking Austrian filmmakers, and even starred German-speaking actors (notably, the Austrian actor Anton Walbrook—credited as Adolf Wohlbrück).[279] The fact it has been categorized as a melodrama makes a direct connection between the foreign origins of films (though melodramas origins have also been traced to France), and allows us to explore the space between Czechoslovak production and the promotion and reception of the film which adopted overtly foreign terms.

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[277] Jaroslav Brož, *The Path of Fame of the Czechoslovak Film: A Short Outline of Its History from the Early Beginning to the Stream of Recent International Successes* (Prague: Československý Filmexport Press Department, 1967), 24.
[278] Ibid., 24.
[279] Born to a Jewish mother, Anton Walbrook was classified as a Jewish *Mischling* by the Nazi Racial Laws. He fled Berlin following the 1936 Olympics, and spent the war years working in British films.

Figure 2

The story of film also takes on a distinctly "international" tone, and is set in 1905, shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. The onset of the war serves as the backdrop to a story about an interracial marriage between Boris Ravenský, a Russian naval officer, and a young Japanese woman named Yuki, whose brother Iva Moura happens to be a Japanese spy.[280] *Port Arthur* has two central conflicts. There is first the familiar conflict between Yuki and her brother, who, in attempting to turn his sister into a Japanese spy, makes her an unwitting collaborator in his scheme. Though Yuki rejects her brother's offer, their secret meeting causes the second conflict. When Yuki is revealed to be a possible spy, the question of her innocence puts her marriage—and her husband's trust—to the test.

[280] Czech and German promotional materials use the French spelling of "Youki."

After several sensational battle scenes and equally miraculous escapes, the film ends with husband and wife reunited on a rapidly sinking battleship. Facing her imminent death, Yuki falls into her husband's arms, in what happens to be the exact location they were married. Both characters allow their national affiliations to get in the way of their love. In the end, their reunion comes too late to be rewarded with a truly happy-ending. Thus, *Port Arthur*'s wartime saga uses heroic sacrifices of individuals at war to negotiate the tensions between familial and marital love that is sublimated by a purer ideal of nationalist pathos.

In a 1936 *Kinorevue* (*Cinema Review*) report aptly titled "War at Barrandov," the film critic Josef Hloucha briefly comments on *Port Arthur*'s elaborate plot, though only to celebrate the impressive achievement of the film studio.[281] The article itself reads like an advertisement for the studio, with the purpose of promoting it as a major hub for international productions. Hloucha opens the article by calling attention to Barrandov's closeness to Prague, using its proximity to emphasize its "remarkable transformation to the hot and cruel warlike atmosphere of Port Arthur":

> A completely different world will appear when you enter the exhibition building of AB Barrandov's cinematic factories, which are only the film studios in Czechoslovakia, and are overflowing with life and heat. In the hallways, we encounter groups of Russian troops in costumes from the Russo-Japanese War, and learning against the windows waits a group of Japanese people from Port Arthur …. [282]

He goes on to praise the studio's accomplishments: the construction of grand battleship interiors, accurate period costumes, skillful wigmakers, and the talented make-up artists

[281] Josef Hloucha, "Naše filmová reportáž: Válka na Barrandově při natáčení Port Arthuru," *Kinorevue* 2, no. 52, 1936, 486-487.
[282] Ibid., 486-487.

who transformed Czech and German actors into "true sons of the Far East with their eyes slanted."[283] The atmosphere of the set, Hloucha proclaims, was thus "a perfect Babylon, but full of friendship and willingness."[284] Thus he stresses that this type of multinational cooperation could not have been possible elsewhere: the novelty of the transnational environment of Barrandov studios (and by extension, Czechoslovak film production) is precisely why it exceeds the abilities of most, if not all other European studios.[285]

Whether or not he truly believed that the Barrandov studios and its film workers were superior to their French or German counterparts, the mere fact that he highlights the contributions made by Walter Lustig and J.A. Holman (as the "representatives of Czech production") suggests that the talents of Czechoslovak film workers were essential to the film's final product.[286] Understandably, this article about the great accomplishment of *Port Arthur* is also a pitch for the future of the domestic film industry. After all, Hloucha makes this explicit when he states: "'*Port Arthur*' is the greatest film ever conceived in our studios. It brought to Prague dozens of outstanding foreign film actors who discovered Prague through the foreign film industry and demonstrated the great capacity of our studio and the abilities of our film industry workers. The film will be the biggest of the season."[287]

It is worth noting that *Port Arthur* was one of the few MLVs that was made in Barrandov without a Czech-language pair. Considered simply too large and too costly for

[283] Ibid., 486-487.
[284] Ibid., 486-487.
[285] Ibid., 486-487.
[286] Ibid., 486-487.
[287] Ibid., 486-487.

French film production, the script was brought to Barrandov studios by Slavia-Film's Walter Lustig, who recognized the box office potential of the project and used his extensive foreign contacts to secure both funding and distribution to over thirty-five countries.[288]

The producers of *Port Arthur* decided to make two versions of film in order to secure its export to a wide range of film markets: French and German.[289] Curiously, although an English-speaking version would have guaranteed its access to a more expansive market, the rights were merely reserved for a later date.[290] However, it was deemed impossible to make a Czech-speaking version; it would have been too much of an economic burden for the production company. Simply put: Czech language films were ultimately limited in scope because they were only marketable to audiences in the small market of Czechoslovakia.

Port Arthur may not have a Czech-language version, but because it was a Slavia-Film production, the NFA still counts it as a Czech film; *Czech Feature Films Vol. II* even includes unique entries for both the French and German versions. The classification of *Port Arthur* as a generic melodrama is not only because it told a romantic story, I would add that it reflects anxiety over its expression of so-called "foreign values." Thus,

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[288] "Před premierou 'Port Arthuru,'" *Pressa*, no. 4, January 8, 1937, 2.; Josef Hloucha,"Co přinesl Port Arthur." *Kinorevue* 3, no. 6, September 30, 1936.

[289] *Port Arthur* was one of four films made with German as the primary spoken language. The French-version of *Port Arthur* premiered in Paris's Marigon cinema on December 10, 1936, and in Czechoslovakia on January 22, 1937 in Prague's Juliš cinema, where is ran for one week. The German-version premiered January 15, 1937 and ran for one week in Prague's Julis cinema, and for two weeks in Světozor; it premiered in Vienna on December 6, 1936, and Berlin on December 7, 1936. "Port Arthur [French Version]," *Filmový přehled*. Accessed July 3, 2017. http://www.filmovyprehled.cz/en/film/395709/port-arthur-french-version.; Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II*, 265-266.

[290] The English language version of *Port Arthur* never came to fruition.

the film suggests another fundamental difference between the desire for Czech cinema to be a "cinema of quality," and the more entertainment oriented, mass produced French, German, and Hollywood films. This is not to designate melodrama as a specifically foreign concept but to suggest that the genre has been evoked here partly because of its affiliation with other—more sensationalist, more internationally popular, and yes, more economically viable—cinemas.

The genre of melodrama is overwhelmingly associated with films of literary origins. Many Czech film melodramas are adaptations of national literary texts (novels, novellas, short stories, folklore, etc.), operas and operettas, and radio and stage plays. Others are re-makes—newly filmed sound versions of successful silent films. But most are plucked off the pages of popular weekly magazines or "women's novels," collectively referred to as the "Red Library" ("*Červená knihovna*").[291]

Contemporary critics of these Czech film melodramas understandably noted their lack of realist qualities, formal and stiff dialogue, and use of clichéd plotlines and themes, dismissing their general "literariness." If melodrama is associated with a general sense of literariness, though, it is perhaps due to the origins of the genre. Melodrama, of course, is not unique to the cinema: the genre has existed in some form in prose fiction, opera, and

[291] Dagmar Mocná, *Červená knihovna: studie kulturně a literárně historická : pohled do dějin pokleslého žánru* (Prague: Paseka, 1996); Dagmar Mocná, "Červená knihovna" v českém filmu třicátých let.," *Iluminace*, 7, no. 2 (1995), 53-100. ; Dagmar Mocná and Josef Peterka, et al. *Encyklopedie literárních žánrů* (Prague: Paseka, 2004).

the theater since the late eighteenth century, in both bourgeois and popular examples.[292] And, of course, the practice of appropriating archetypes, stories, and themes from literature and the theater has—like melodrama—always been a significant feature of the cinema. Adaptation has been a ubiquitous practice since the earliest days of film production. Not only did adapting already popular forms of entertainment help to guarantee the commercial success of a film, it also served to explicitly link the newly established medium of the cinema to the cultural status of more foundational art forms.[293]

The broader struggle to equalize film art with other artistic disciplines takes on a distinct logic in the context of Czech cinema, with both a domestic and an international dimension. The Czech film melodramas of the 1930s and 1940s, for example, are intimately linked to the struggle to re-align the economic stakes of film production with the lofty goals of high art, and the cultural legitimation of Czechoslovak national cinema in particular. Faced with the dilemma of an uncertain future—a result of the lingering effects of the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s, the advent of expensive synchronous-sound technology, and the realization that foreign markets were practically

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[292]For more on the literary and theaters origins of melodrama see: Marcia Landy, "Introduction" in *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama,* ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 15; Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*; John G. Cawelti, "The Evolution of Social Melodrama," in *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama,* ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 50-67.

[293]This is linked to how, in histories of film theory, discussions of film art and its relationship to literature often focus on the role of the auteur. Theorizations of the auteur in cinema are rooted in literary theory, and range from proclamations that the film director is an author who brings to their cinematic-work a distinct visual style and interior meaning, to revaluations by theorists who reject auteurism as a critical practice which privileges one area of cinema over others, especially the role of the director over other facets of film production. The concept of the auteur in this case would involve both that of the literary source material, and also the film's director, tasked with faithfully translating the literary source material to the cinema's screen, hence maintaining its artistic value. For debates of the auteur in cinema: Pam Cook, "Introduction to Authorship in Cinema," in *The Cinema Book 3rd Edition*, ed. Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), 387-390.

closed to Czech-language films, even in dubbed or subtitled versions—those invested in the Czechoslovak cinema attempted to brand it a "cinema of quality."[294] Consequently, Czech filmmakers—most notably, writer-director Otakar Vávra—turned to classics of the national literature and the theater, drawing from the social themes established in the legitimate media, including the making of costume dramas.[295] These filmmakers continued to draw their scenarios from literary and theatrical sources during the Nazi occupation, despite extensive cutbacks in Protectorate-era film production.

Certainly, not all of these Czech film melodramas were adaptations of prestigious national texts, but a number of them were based on texts written by celebrated Czech authors, playwrights, and poets, most notably writers Jaroslav Hašek (*Poslední bohém*/ *The Last Bohemian*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1931), Ignát Hermann (*Bezdětná*/*Childless*, Miroslav J. Krňanský, 1935), and F.X. Svoboda (*Černý plamen*/*Black Flame*, Miroslav J. Krňanský, 1930), and the avant-garde writer and poet Vítězslav Nezval (*Za tichých nocí*/ *During Quiet Nights*, Zdeněk Gina Hašler 1940). In addition, several of these films are based on the works of international authors such as French novelist and playwright Honoré de Balzac (*The Masked Lover/ Maskovaná milenka*, Otakar Vávra, 1940), and Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (*When the Strings Wailed/ Když struny lkají*, Friedrich Fehér, 1930).

Vávra, one of the leading Czech writer-directors of the 1930s and 1940s, was outspoken in his desire to give film the same cultural cachet as literature, and thus his

[294] Mac Frič, "Zvukový a mluvící film," *Filmový kurýr*, no. 10, 1930, 9.
[295] Ivan Klimeš, "Czech Historical Film and Historical Traditions: The Merry Wives (1938)," in *Popular Cinemas in East Central Europe: Film Cultures and Histories*, eds. Dorota Ostrowska, Francesco Pitassio, Zsuzsanna Varga (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), 31-46.

films consistently drew on literary sources.[296] For instance, Vávra used Honoré de Balzac's French novella *L'Amour masqué* as the source material for his 1940 melodrama *The Masked Lover*. Basically, *The Masked Lover* has all the markings of a prestige film: it is an adaptation of a French novella and a historical costume drama with a well-respected director that features Lída Baarová, one of the most popular Czech actresses. This particular combination of sophisticated features and popular appeal has distinguished the film as a "serious artistic effort" from the time of the Nazi occupation; official distribution materials for the film's 1968 re-release asserts that under different historical circumstances, the film would have been an international success.[297] To put it another way that considers the bad reputation of melodrama: not only does the role of Vávra (as auteur) support the notion that *The Masked Lover* is a *quality* film—that it constitutes a serious artistic effort on behalf of all creative forces involved (starting with its source material), and is therefore deemed worthy of its international laurels—but it also serves to position the film as a more sophisticated example of the generic melodrama film.

More often though, the genre of melodrama is attributed to adaptations of sentimental stories from the popular interwar women's weeklies—magazines such as *Hvězda* (*Stars*) and *List paní a dívek* (*Women's and Girls Journal*), published for local readers as *Pražanka* (*Prague Woman*), and *Moravanka* (*Moravian Woman*)–and a

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[296] Antonin Liehm's description of the director makes this clear: "Vávra, a student of Renoir and Feyder, was reading for intentional laurels." Antonin Leihm, *Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience* (White Plains: International Arts and Sciences Press Inc, 1974), 27.; Klimeš, "Czech Historical Film," 36-37.

[297] "Československý filmový ústav Kino Ponrepo," Distribuční List, 136/68, October 25, 1968, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

specific type of romance novel.[298] This literary genre, which has a cultural lineage that can be traced back to before the first World War to calendars, magazines, and novels for women, was collectively known as the Red Library, a name which, as Dagmar Mocná explains in her study of 1930s film adaptations of the Red Library, comes from a series of romance novels published by the company *Rodina* in the 1920s and 1930s.[299] Originally, editions of the Red Library were bound in red cloth (red, naturally, because it signifies the heart, and evokes the love stories held within its pages), and embellished with the letter "R," the publishing house's proprietary emblem.[300] Moreover, Mocná notes, because books in this series were produced cheaply, released in large editions, and sold in a rather unconventional way—not in book stores, but in tobacco shops—they were able to reach the widest possible (female) audience.[301]

Over time, however, the Red Library became a catchall genre for all "cheap" women's literature.[302] A typical example tells "an exaggerated love story" about ordinary Czech girls and women set against the environment of everyday life.[303] The story places emphasis on the psychological inner lives of its female protagonists from their own point of view; rather than focusing on the external events around them.[304] The themes of the stories varied, depending on the targeted age group, but according to Mocná, were all about "the tangling and disentanglement of love plots," and had "unambiguously happy

[298] Mocná, "Červená knihovna" v českém," 54.
[299] Ibid., 53-54.
[300] Ibid., 53-54.
[301] Ibid., 54.
[302] Ibid., 54.
[303] Ibid., 54.
[304] Ibid., 54.

endings."[305] The novels marketed to young girls and teenagers—the "student variety" ("*studentská varianta*")—usually revolved around the daily happenings, obstacles, and trivial misunderstandings that get in the way of its main characters.[306] The novels that were marketed to adult women, however, took on more mature and serious social problems such as infidelity, divorce, motherhood, questions of freedom, class conflict, and social differences.[307]

During the 1930s and 1940s, the Red Library and its film adaptations flourished, providing formulaic, cheap entertainment for mass consumption, in contrast to more serious art films. It would be a mistake, though, to dismiss the literature of the Red Library and the films it inspired as examples of cheap entertainment. The novels and films we are dealing with are, of course, women's novels and women's pictures of a particular sort. Feminist critics such as Pam Cook, Mary Ann Doane, Christine Gledhill, and Laura Mulvey have concisely shown how the women's picture has the ability to

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[305] Ibid., 54.

[306] Ibid., 57.; For instance, the melodrama film *Sweet Sixteen* (*Sextánka*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1936), which was adapted from Vilém Neubauer's 1927 novel, tells the story of Eva Marenová (Hana Vítová), a sixteen-year-old student who falls in love with her new young teacher Jiří Hron (Rolf Wanka). First, Eva's crush on her teacher merely distracts her from her studies; then, after another teacher walks in on an innocent hug between Hron and Eva, she threatens to have him fired; this drives Eva, who riddled with guilt, to a suicide attempt. Ultimately, though, Eva survives and Hron does not face disciplinary action. At the end of the film, the teacher visits Eva in the hospital and confesses his love for her.

[307] Ibid., 60-61. *The Light of His Eyes* (*Světlo jeho očí*, Václav Kubásek, 1936), an adaptation of a novel by Maryna Radomerská, for instance, follows the dramatic story of Frank Nor (Jiří Dohnal), who loses both his eyesight and his superficial fiancée, and then meets Milena (Zita Kabátová), a young nurse who soon becomes "the light of his eyes." One day, Frank and Milena get into a car crash and he is knocked unconscious. When he awakes, he has regained his vision, but he mistakenly believes that his nurse was killed in the crash. Of course, Milena is right by his side, taking care of him, where she has been all along. But because Frank only knows his beloved nurse by the sound of her voice, and she is so overwhelmed with shock and happiness that she is unable to utter a single word, he does not recognize her and demands that she leave. In an effort to win Frank back, his former-fiancé invites him to a spa, where he meets a woman with a familiar voice: this voice, of course, belongs to Milena, who he learns has given birth to and has been raising their child alone. Now that Frank has regained his sight, and Milena has regained her voice, they are happily reunited.

address the everyday lives of women and their problems.[308] Women's picture constitutes a channel of expression for women's pleasure, offering a space to address women's very real needs and desires. More generally, scholarship on the women's picture acknowledges the historical role and the great influence of entertainment aimed at female audiences. With this emphasis, these films position the female spectator in relation to the narrative—and also the historical and ideological imperatives that linger beneath the surface of everyday life and existence. Analyses of these films thus reveals the tensions between the personal and the private spheres, as essential for exposing and moralizing the social problems found in everyday reality. In a very real sense, then, these Czech film melodramas document the dominant social and psychological needs and conflicts of these immensely difficult years in the Czech lands.

In the films that the NFA categorized as melodrama, music is a crucial element. This too is not surprising, considering that the word "melodrama" comes from the nineteenth-century French "*mélodrame*," a combination of the Greek "*melos*" (music) and "drama" (to play with). Melodrama literally means to play with music. Historically, melodrama developed in France after the revolution as a theatrical and operatic form; a drama

[308] See: Pam Cook, "Melodrama and the Women's Picture," in *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film & Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).; Doane, *The Desire to Desire*.; Christine Gledhill, "Stella Dallas and Feminist Film Theory," *Cinema Journal*, 25, no. 4 (1986), 44-48.; Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," *Movie* 25 (Winter), 53-56.; E. Ann Kaplan, "Mothering, Feminism and Representation: the Maternal Melodrama and the Women's Film 1910-40," in *Home is where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 113-137.; Annette Kuhn, "Women's genres." *Screen*, 25.1 (1984), 18-29.

accompanied by music. "It appears to have first been used in this sense," Peter Brooks explains, "by [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau to describe a play in which he sought a new emotional expressivity through a mixture of spoken soliloquy, pantomime, and orchestral accompaniment."[309] It was then used to describe "a popular drama derived by pantomime (itself accompanied by music) that did not fit within any of the accepted genres."[310]

Although the history of melodrama has most commonly been written as a history of the French exaggerated form of theatrical display, the Czech lands produced a different style of melodrama. As musicologist John Tyrrell puts it, "melodrama—the union of spoken words and instrumental music—is a medium with a long Czech pedigree."[311] As a hybrid musico-dramatic form, Tyrrell explains, melodrama was a "logical upgrade" to the "mixed-media Czech concerts" that featured recitation.[312] Following the creator of the genre, Georg (Jiří) Benda, whose early melodramas were intended for stage performances, the Czech composer Zdeněk Fibich cultivated the concert melodrama for the Provisional and National Theaters.[313] In 1875, Fibich's concert melodrama *Christmas Day* (*Štědrý den*), for voice and piano, sparked a compositional trend, influencing composers to produce an expansive body of concert melodramas throughout the region.[314]

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[309] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 58.
[310] Ibid., 58.
[311] John Tyrrell, *Czech Opera* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 84.
[312] John Tyrrell, "Janáček and Melodrama" in *Melodramatic Voices: Understanding Music Drama*, Sarah Hibberd, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 124.; Jan Smaczny, "The Operas and Melodramas of Zdeněk Fibich (1850- 1900), *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association*, Vol. 109 (1982-1983),119-133.
[313] Smaczny, "The Operas and Melodramas," 119-122.
[314] Tyrrell, "Janáček and Melodrama," 124.

Moreover, Tyrell explains that, in spite of falling out of fashion elsewhere, the concert melodrama remained "a favorite Czech genre" well into the 1920s and 1930s.[315] As he writes, the best-known concert melodramas from this period are by the musician, critic, and dramatist Emil František (E.F.) Burian, whose experimental orchestra Voiceband made its Prague debut in April 1927.[316] In order to fulfill his Poetist aesthetic of "polydynamika"—which Brian Locke describes as a "general aesthetic of art, wherein opposing elements were not blended into a harmonious *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but were instead liberated to create tension through contrasts and irregularities"—Burian created an ensemble of eight to twelve performers (trained in oratory, not in music), who "blended words, song, and poetic verse in different combinations to create a choir pastiche."[317] During its two-and-a-half year run, the Voiceband delivered major works of modern and revivalist Czech poetry by Karel Hynek Mácha, Karel Jaromír Erben, Jan Neruda, and Devětsil poets using what Locke describes as a "recitative-like chant, articulated in syncopated rhythms that were meant to evoke popular dances, often to the accompaniment of Burian at the piano or the drums."[318] In doing so, Burian gave his performances a definitively Czech identity.

Locke points out that "Burian's embrace of lyric sentimentality… gives into [sic.] the subjective whim of the audience, usually in order to make a social statement."[319]

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[315] Ibid., 124.
[316] Ibid., 217.
[317] Brian S. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 217.; Shawn Claybor, "Laughter and Hatred Are Neighbors: Adolf Hoffmeister and E.F. Burian in Stalinist Czechoslovakia, 1948-1956," *East European Politics and Societies* 26, no. 3 (August 2012), 602.
[318] Locke notes that the Voiceband also included poetry by non-Czech authors in their original languages. Locke, *Opera and Ideology in Prague*, 219-220, 377n104.
[319] Ibid., 377n101.

This, he suggests, is not dissimilar to the Brechtian epic theater; both aim to create a new social contract between audience and stage, to transform spectators into participants, and thus to renegotiate the audience's political and social consciousness both inside and outside the theater.[320] The relationship between Burian's Voiceband and the revolutionary epic theater of Bertolt Brecht is suggestive and parallels the ways in which film scholars have discussed Brecht's influence on the filmic strategies of melodramatic rhetoric, particularly German émigré (and student of Brecht) Douglas Sirk's postwar Hollywood melodramas. That the avant-garde sensibility of Burian is associated with the Czech mutation of the genre, for instance, recalls Sirk's use of Brechtian alienation techniques: his use of obvious clichés within the *mise-en-scène* (including heavy-handed musical cues) undercut the sentimental content of the film, and gesture to a deeper social criticism.[321] That Burian was later arrested by the Gestapo for his overtly Czech, anti-Nazi theatrical performances (the actress Lída Baarová was also rumored to be at fault for his arrest), and sent to Neuengamme concentration camp (and as Shawn Clybor notes, survived a death camp march, and an accidental bombing of a ship filled with former camp prisoners before returning to Prague as a hero of the resistance) ties these melodrama films to an important figure in the national narrative of Czech wartime resistance.[322] His affiliation with the genre not only links the beginnings of Czech sound

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[320] Ibid, 377n101.
[321] For more on Douglas Sirk and Brecht see: Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), 14.
[322] Claybor, "Laughter and Hatred Are Neighbors," 604.; Benjamin Frommer, "Gender Collaboration and Retribution in Bohemia and Moravia during World War II and After," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, eds. Nancy Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 111-112.

cinema to the high artistic values of the avant-garde, but also appears to further reinforce the myth of Czech exceptionalism.

Needless to say, the advent of the talkie and new sound technology reinforced music's status as a vital element of the cinema. Not only did the shift to talkies anchor sound within the image, but it also secured the film soundtrack's status as important to the integrity of film art. The fundamental function of soundtrack music is of course to underscore the narrative—it functions as the musical cue—the *melos* of melodrama. The soundtracks of these melodrama films consist of original scores by popular Czech singers and composers (including, notably, E.F. Burian and Karel Hašler, a singer, actor, and director so popular with Czechoslovak audiences of the time, Kevin. B. Johnson explains, that he was known as the "singer of the nation") as well as archival scores by classical composers with significance in Czechoslovakia (Czech composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana; European composers such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig von Beethoven, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart).[323] The presence of both low-brow popular music and nostalgic classical works express a powerful desire to cultivate national-cultural identity through musical tastes. More than just a mere production choice, the extensive use of genuine Czech music took advantage of the new technology to reiterate the principles and values that united Czech people.

[323] Johnson notes that director Vaclav Binovec's denunciation of Hašler in 1941 resulted in his deportation to the Mauthausen concentration camp, where he froze to death. Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 94.; Transcript of "Vzpomínka na člověka, pisničkáře a herce Karla Hašlera," 270, 5, Václav Wasserman Fond, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.; For a biography of Hašler see: Rudolf Deyl, *Písničkář Karel Hašler* (Prague: Panton, 1968).

Many of these films are also inspired by popular operettas. Besides updating more traditional versions of prestigious operas, Šárka Gmiterková explains, these "revenue operettas" were "lighter, more comical versions of the genre."[324] One of the operetta's distinguishing characteristics, for instance, is the presence of an organizing (and primarily romance-oriented) songbook that motivates the narrative. In these operetta films, the role of music is explicit and determines the construction of story so that the narrative involves and is motivated by the diegetic soundtrack. But even the films that did not draw on operettas commonly featured diegetic musical sequences where characters would break out into song and dance or perform musical instruments. These films may have been generalized as popular forms of musical comedy and referred to as "light music genres" or "singer films," yet they were not necessarily considered proper musicals.[325]

Often, these films featured characters who were musicians, singers, and composers who were performed by famous Czech musicians. In the 1933 film melodrama *Lark's Song* (*Skřivánčí píseň*, Svatopluk Innemann), for instance, one of the best known Czech sopranos Jarmila Novotná plays Mája Zemanová, also a famous opera diva.[326] Based on Jaroslav Kvapil's theatrical play *Oblaka* (*Cloud*), which gained

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[324] Šárka Gmiterková, "Importing Modern Venus," *Iluminace* 27, no. 1 (2015), 33fn22. On the operetta see: Richard Barrios, *A Song in the Dark: The Birth of the Musical Film* 2nd ed.(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).; Hort Claus and Anne Jackel, "'Der Kongress Tanzt: Ufa's Blockbuster Filmoperette for the World Market," in *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond*, eds. Bill Marshall and Robyn Stillwell (Exeter & Portland: Intellect Books 2000), 89-97; Ken Wlaschin, *Opera on Screen: A Guide to 100 Years of Films and Videos Featuring Operas, Opera Singers and Operettas* (Los Angeles: Beachwood Press, 1997); Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical*, 125-191.; On the operetta in Austrian and Czech context see: Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 187-189.

[325] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 187.

[326] Johnson briefly discusses Novotná's film career. Ibid., 43n29.

popularity at the National Theater, *Larks Song* begins when Petr Kocián leaves the seminary to visit his mother in the small South Bohemian village of Branov and runs into his childhood friend Mája. The old friends reconnect over nostalgic recollections of past summers and start to fall in love. Soon Petr's mother senses these changes in her son's demeanor, and her health rapidly declines. She is sick, her doctor concludes, because of her son's love for Mája; she will not live if her son abandons his dream of joining the priesthood. The doctor tells Mája about this diagnosis, driving her to leave the village and Petr for the stages of Prague.

Instead of returning to the seminary, though, Petr travels to Prague, where he finds Mája on stage performing "Habanera" from Georges Bizet's *Carmen.* Petr and the audience watch in delight as she sings the aria about the rebellious and untamable nature of love. However, just before they are to be reunited, Mája receives a telegram about Petr's mother's worsening health. Recognizing that she cannot allow Petr to abandon his mother, Mája decides she must pretend that she sees their relationship as a fling. Heartbroken, Petr runs to his mother's sickbed. In the end, Petr returns to the seminary after his mother's health improves, and Mája returns to the stage. Thus, while Mája or Petr cannot find love together, they can both continue on their own to work towards their first loves.

Lark's Song was a star vehicle for Novotná. The character of Maja was very obviously tailored to showcase the quality of Novotná's soprano voice, and her personality as a world-renowned diva. Her star image lent additional value to the film by functioning as both an organizing presence within the fictional diegesis, and also serving

as a device for selling the film. On promotional posters, Novotná's name was featured in bold capital letters equal in size to the film title.[327] Her bright smiling face was prominently positioned in the center of every poster. Cinema programs read: "Jarmila Novotná in her first Czech film *The Lark's Song*" ("*Jarmila Novotná v svém prvním českém filmu Skřivánčí píseň*").[328]

Figure 3

Important, too, is that *Lark Song*'s soundtrack features several songs from Bedřich Smetana's opera *Hubička* (*The Kiss*). Given that Smetana is the Bohemian composer most closely identified with Czech nationalism—in Locke's words, Smetana is

[327] Promotional Poster for "*Skřivánčí píseň*," 1933, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.
[328] Cinema program for "*Skřivánčí píseň*," 1933, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

"the so-called Founder/Father of Czech music"—the presence of his work has immediate implications for claiming Novotná (and her fictional counterpart) as an icon of Czech culture.[329] The use of Smetana also recalls Novotná's operatic debut at the age of seventeen as Mařenka in Smetana's comic opera—and nationally iconic—opera *The Bartered Bride* (*Prodaná nevěsta*) at the Czech National theater (*Národní divadlo*) in June 1925.[330] Furthermore, the previous year, Novotná starred in German director Max Ophüls's *The Bartered Bride* (*Die verkaufte Braute*, 1932), a musical comedy based on the opera.

The importance of music, however, lies not only in these film's soundtrack music, narrative themes, and casting choices, but in the methods by which they were advertised to the general public. Promotional posters for these films show that they were billed as "A film spoken—and sung—in Czech" ("*Český mluvený – zpívaný velkofilm*"), "A Czech musical feature film" ("*Český hudební velkofilm*"), "a musical film play" ("*hudební filmová hra*"), or as a "sound drama" ("*zvukové drama*").[331] Another form of advertising, the promotional souvenir song booklet, reproduced the sheet music and lyrics of the original songs from the film for audiences.[332] These served to supplement the cinema-

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[329] Locke, *Opera and Ideology*, 14.
[330] Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 232.
[331] Sczerpanik points out that these were early alternative terms for the "talkie." Petr Szczepanik, "Speech and Noise as Elements of an Intermedia History of Early Czech Sound Cinema" in *MLVs: Cinema and Other Media*, ed. Veronica Innocenti (Pasian di Prato: Campanotto, 2006), 187fn3.; One-sheets for "*Skřivánčí píseň*," 1933, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.; Promotional poster for *Skřivánčí píseň*," 1933, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.
[332] See, for example: Song booklet for "*Štěstí si poroučet nedá*" featured in *In the Little House Below Emausy* (*V tom domečku pod Emauzy*, Otto Kanturek),1933, 93/127825, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.; Song booklet for "*Slá*skou se soužení" featured in *For a Friend* (*Pro kamaráda*, Miroslav Cikán),1940, 374/135795, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive,

going experience and enabled the cinemagoer to take the film's music home with them. These advertising strategies speak to the ways in which these films played an essential role in popularizing Czech music culture and vice-versa.

Perhaps more important, however, for Czech cinema-goers, music was able to articulate aspects of their national identity and character beyond the mere presence of spoken Czech. The number of times music is highlighted suggests something significant, not necessarily about Czech music culture, but certainly about the mobilization of music into a uniting force; that is to say, it spoke very clearly to a particular national audience. Czech musical classics played a key role in fostering resistance, especially after June 1939, when Nazi authorities issued a decree banning the singing of national songs in public spaces.[333]

Melodrama films are credited to prominent Czech directors, many of whom are now considered auteurs of "classic" Czech cinema. One might think that these films were less prestigious and commercial productions, but that assumption would be incorrect. These melodrama films were not relegated to what we would think of as "B-film" or novice directors. Nor did their directors particularly specialize in directing women's films or other light genres. The fact that so many of these Czech film melodramas were directed by significant figures in Czech film production endows them with an additional

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Prague, Czech Republic.; Song booklet for "*Sen lásky*" featured in *The Light of His Eyes* (*Světlo jeho očí*, Václav Kubásek),1936, 190/127820, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.; Song booklet for "*Hvizdám sin a cestu*" featured in *Eighteen Years Old* (*Osmnáctiletá*, Miroslav Cikán),1939, 311/135814, Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.

[333] Chad Carl Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 36.

value; within the logic of auteurist approaches, this cements their status as film-texts that are worthy of closer analysis. In other words, these Czech film melodramas were not solely produced for mass entertainment (though they were certainly intended to be entertaining); rather they were produced to be profitable, to champion the power of the new medium, to prove that the cinema was not merely a surrogate for the theater, and, of course, to bolster a national consciousness by speaking and thinking Czech.

The top three directors of these Czech film melodramas were Václav Binovec, Miroslav Cikán, and Vladimir Slavínský, with an output of five a piece.[334] Following these directors, contributing a respectable four to the corpus, were Václav Kubásek, J.A. Holman, Svatopluk Innemann, and Jan Sviták.[335] Another seven directors made at least two.[336] The question, then, is whether this generic category is intended to indicate correlation between director, actor and film, or to merely to downplay their cultural value as unserious entertainment.

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[334] *Líza Soars to the Skies* (*Lízin let do nebe* (*Líza Irovská*, Václav Binovec, 1937), *Second Youth* (*Kneeling*) (*Druhé mládí* [*Klekání*], Václav Binovec, 1938), *Líza's Good Fortune* (*Lízino štěstí*, Václav Binovec, 1939), *The Innocent Girl* (*Nevinná*, Václav Binovec, 1939), *Love Song* (*Píseň lásky*, Václav Binovec, 1940), *King of the Street* (*Král ulice*, Miroslav Cikán, 1935), *Girl Behind the Shop Window* (*Děvče za výkladem*, Miroslav Cikán, 1937), *In Temptation* (*V pokušení*, Miroslav Cikán, 1938), *Eighteen Years Old* (*Osmnáctiletá*, Miroslav Cikán, 1939), *For a Friend* (*Pro kamaráda*, Miroslav Cikán, 1940); *The First Kiss* (*První políbení*, Vladimir Slavínský, 1935), *Heart at Dusk* (*Srdce v soumraku*, Vladimir Slavínský, 1936), *Woman Below the Cross* (*Žena pod křížem*, Vladimir Slavínský, 1937), *The Golden Man* (*Zlatý člověk*, Vladimir Slavínský, 1939), *Men Don't Age* (*Muži nestárnou*, Vladimir Slavínský, 1942).

[335] *The Song of a Great Love* (*Píseň o velké lásce*, Václav Kubásek, 1932), *Fortuitous Moment* (*Osudná chvíle* [*Hra náhody*], Václav Kubásek, 1935), *The Light of His Eyes* (*Světlo jeho očí*, Václav Kubásek, 1936), *Double Life* (*Dvojí život*, Václav Kubásek and Marie Glázrová, 1939), *Jana Kosinová's Past* (*Minulost Jany Kosinové*, 1940), *The Glove* (*Rukavička*, J.A. Holman, 1941), *Foolish Dream* (*Bláhový sen*, J.A. Holman, 1943), *The Last Bohemian* (*Poslední bohém*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1931), *Lark's Song* (*Skřivánčí píseň*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1934), *Music of the Hearts* (*Hudba srdcí*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1934), *Sweet Sixteen* (*Sextánka*, Svatopluk Innemann, 1936), *While You Have a Mother* (*Dokud máš maminku*, Jan Sviták, 1934), *Wild Girl* (*Divoch*, Jan Sviták, 1936), *Heart in Cellophane* (*Srdce v celofánu*, Jan Sviták, 1939), *The Last Inhabitant of Podskalí* (*Poslední Podskalák*, Jan Sviták, 1940).

[336] Martin Frič, Karel Špelina, Oldřich Kmínek, Karel Hašler, Leo Marten, Miroslav J. Krňanský, Čeněk Šlégl, František Čáp.

Of course, nearly all of these directors also made German-language films. In the 1920s and 1930s, Berlin was considered to be the "Hollywood of Europe," and its film studios attracted talent from across the continent to work on German films, which would then be distributed worldwide. However, as Klimeš, Johnson, and others have shown, the German film industry had a markedly different relationship to the Czechoslovak film industry than with any major European cinema or even Hollywood. While German directors and actors participated in the production of other foreign language cinemas and vice-versa, Johnson explains that, in the case of Czechoslovakia, this exchange was not reciprocal: capital moved towards Czechoslovakia, and Czech talent moved towards Germany.[337] By the 1930s, the German film industry recognized that Czech filmmakers and audiences made up a large portion of their business and decided to take a more active role in Czechoslovakia.[338] The largest and most powerful of the German production companies, Ufa, opened a subsidiary in Prague in 1933, and from 1933 to 1944, its films were a mainstay in Czechoslovak cinemas. Over this period, Ufa (after 1941 known as Prag-film) produced a total of fifteen Czech-language films.[339]

The local Czechoslovak talent quickly learned that working on an Ufa production was the best way to break into the more profitable German film industry. But while some directors pursued work in German-language production in the hopes of achieving their big break, others were more reluctant, and only did so under the circumstances of the

[337] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 17.
[338] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 114.
[339] Ibid., 120.

Nazi Protectorate when Czech directors were forcibly assimilated into the German apparatus.[340]

Immediately after the establishment of the Protectorate in March 1939, the Office of the Reich Protector assumed control of all film business. Prague, and the Barrandov studios in particular, adopted a major role in the production of German-language films, providing studio space and creative talent for both Czech and German filmmakers.[341] By the end of 1941, all of Czech film production was dissolved to create the monopoly Kosmos. The only interwar Czech production companies kept intact between 1943 and 1945 were Nationalfilm and Lucernafilm, with the understanding that they would both be depoliticized and serve mainly as outlets for German films.[342] Additionally, Czech film production was subject to highly regulated, Nazi sympathetic policies, which rendered German co-productions a political imperative.[343]

There is one story that is key to the Czech film industry's resistance narrative. As the story goes, faced with difficult decisions as to how they should behave under such restrictive conditions, several dozen writers, filmmakers, and actors met at the Prague cultural center Mánes in 1939.[344] Ivan Klimeš explains that, perhaps influenced by novelist and film director Vladislav Vančura's notion that "the cinema served as a rare point of contact between artists and the public," the assembly decided to continue work

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[340] From 1941 to 1945, the Prague subsidiary of Ufa became known as Prag-film. Notably, none of these Prag-film productions are included in *Czech Feature* Films II.
[341] For a detailed account see: Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood."
[342] Ibid., 120.
[343] Ibid., 124-25.
[344] Ibid., 124-125. For other descriptions of this meeting at Mánes see also: Peter Demetz, *Prague In Danger: The Years of German Occupation, 1939-45: Memories and History, Terror and Resistance, Theater and Jazz, Film and Poetry, Politics and War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 31.; Kašpar, *Český hraný film a filmaři,* 131.

would go on as usual.[345] So, rather than resist outright, they established three basic principles for Czech filmmakers working in the Protectorate: First, Czech films (especially films that dealt with contemporary subject matter) could not appear to collaborate with the Nazi regime. Second, Czech films should, as Klimeš puts it, "foster a mood of resistance" by representing highly symbolic stories with overtly national themes.[346] And third, every film should seek to add to and improve the quality of domestic film production. A model film would be an adaptation of a familiar literary text or theatrical play that includes easily identifiable music and iconic landscapes—to drive home what Klimeš calls "heritage as resistance."[347] This fit into the larger national narrative of Czech subjugation to larger nations that sought to oppress and rule it—historically, Czech resistance took so subtle a stance that even its "oppressors" surely did not notice.[348] Yet the Czech national narrative remained convinced of its efficacy, in the moment and in retrospect. However, what may not have been clear to the German occupiers was clear to the filmmakers' Czech co-nationals: in addition to using explicit references to Czech national culture, the use of the Czech language and Czech directors was a very real way of signaling to Czech cinemagoers that these films were interested in addressing specifically Czech audiences, with messages meant only for them.

The leading Czech directors in the Protectorate were František Čáp, Miroslav Cikán, Martin Frič, Vladimír Slavínský, and Otakar Vávra (who I have briefly discussed

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[345] A committed anti-fascist, Vladislav Vančura was arrested by the Nazis in 1942 and was executed following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich.
[346] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 124-125.
[347] Ibid., 124-125.
[348] Demetz, *Prague in Danger*, 47-51

elsewhere). In fact, Lukáš Kašpar notes that films by these directors were in such high demand by Czech audiences that they earned a salary three-times higher than their colleagues.[349] Frič was by far the most prolific of the bunch, making a total of eighteen Czech and two German films over the six years of occupation. Considered to be a "professional studio director" of historical and social comedies, his 1939 comedy *Kristián* (Martin Frič, 1939) was one of the most successful films of this period, and is now regarded as a classic of the Czech cinema. Though Frič directed three melodramas during the interwar period, only one of his Protectorate films—the 1939 Ufa film *Changing Wind* (*Jiný vzduch*)—is categorized as such.[350]

During this era, the yearly number of Czech films produced decreased steadily; whereas the Czech film production made and distributed forty-one feature-length films in 1939, they only made nine in 1944, and this dropped to one in 1945.[351] The extremely varied output of these film's directors, combined with the historical connotations of this period, suggests that melodrama might just be a general term to affiliate these Czech films with their German counterparts, thus discrediting them. Ultimately, even despite overwhelmingly positive legacies, this may be a way for the NFA to subtly condemn a generalized complicity in the Nazified film industry.[352]

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[349] Kašpar, *Český hraný film a filmaři*, 90.
[350] *A Little Street in Paradise* (*Ulička v ráji* [*Dobrodinec chudých psů*], Martin Frič, 1936), *Sister Angelika* (*Sestra Angelika*, Martin Frič, 1932).
[351] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 120. Although *Saturday* was produced in 1944, it was distributed in early 1945.
[352] The fact, for instance, that such celebrated directors Cikán, Frič, and Slavínský are known to have made films under the Germanized names of Martin Fritsch, Friedrich Zittau, and Otto Pittermann speaks directly to this point. Ibid., 247.

Melodrama films were star vehicles for the leading Czech performers of the 1930s and 1940s. These films circulated the star images of actors and actresses to mass audiences and elevated them to the status of national icons. During this time, some of the leading Czech film stars were character actors Otomar Korbelář and Zdeněk Štěpánek*;* comedians Vlasta Burian, Oldřich Nový, and Jindřich Plachta; and the most popular female actresses were Lída Baarová, Nataša Gollová, Adina Mandlová, Jiřina Štěpničková, and Hana Vítová. Given any film from the NFA's selected corpus, it is likely that it will feature at least one of these stars—and often, as many as four stars fill out a cast.

The film star is not merely a performer with a certain set of characteristics, but a complex set of cultural processes that signify cultural and national identity. The study of stars thus provides insight into the construction of social categories such as class, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. As Richard Dyer put it:

> We're fascinated by stars because they enact ways of making sense of the experience of being a person in a particular kind of social production (capitalism), with its particular organization of life into public and private spheres. We love them because they represent how we think that the experience is or how it would be lovely to feel that it is. Stars represent typical ways of behaving, feelings, and thinking in contemporary society, ways that have been socially, culturally, historically constructed.[353]

Kevin Johnson has pointed to the fact that studies of interwar and Protectorate-era film stars are predominately in the Czech language and exclusively for Czech readers, which has limited their crossover appeal to international audiences.[354] The majority of these publications are preoccupied with the period of the Protectorate. More recently, however,

[353] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 15.
[354] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 358.

Johnson and Šárka Gmiterková have published English-language studies that address the historiographical and theoretical questions raised by 1930s and 1940s Czech film stars. Johnson's study of Czech-German cultural transfer and appropriation in Third Reich cinema examines how the biggest Czech actresses of this period (Baarová, Gollová, Mandlová, Vítová) worked in Nazi Germany by engaging in forms of "ethnic masquerade."[355] The female star is similarly a focus of Gmiterková's work, which examines what it means to use the theoretical framework established by star studies in critiques of Czech stardom.[356] She asks: is it possible to use this framework to discuss stars who do not fit within the dominant Hollywood paradigm?

To fully explore this question, Gmiterková considers the career of Jiřina Štěpničková from the 1930s through the mid-1940s, analyzing the actress's unique star image in relation to the cultural implications of what she calls "hair symbolism."[357] Štěpničková's glowing-platinum-blondness and performances of national rural characters, she explains, earned the actress the nickname of "Czech Madonna"—for being "the perfect embodiment of heroines defined by loyalty, self-sacrifice and chastity"—but she was also criticized as too beautiful and too elaborately styled to authentically embody her roles.[358] Gmiterková argues that Štěpničková's star persona (as a quality actress) and career trajectory (as a so-called "folksy heroine") demonstrates how

[355] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 41-111.
[356] Gmiterková, "Importing Modern Venus," 31.
[357] Šárka Gmiterková, "Betrayed by Blondness: Jiřina Štěpničková between authenticity and excess – 1930–1945," *Celebrity Studies* 7, no. 1 (2016), 47.
[358] Gmiterková explains that the press labelled Štěpničková the "Czech Madonna" after a popular photo-still from the 1936 film *Vojnarka* (Vladimír Borský, 1936) in which where she holds a baby boy. Ibid., 51.

hair symbolism took on different connotations, depending on national preferences.[359] For instance, though Štěpničková was viewed as a "timeless Czech woman" before the war, she explains that, in postwar Czechoslovakia, the iconic value of the actress's blonde hair was corrupted by its association with Nazi Aryan aesthetics, therefore rendering her (and her hair) incompatible with the desire to use Czech heritage cinema as a form of passive resistance.[360]

The phenomenon of stardom takes on a different meaning in the context of Czech cinema than its meaning in Hollywood. When the Czech film industry expanded in the early-to-mid 1930s, producers became increasingly interested in capitalizing on the star phenomenon.[361] Unlike the Hollywood star system, however—which promoted its stars as beautiful-yet-unreachable—the Czech film industry decided to brand its stars first and foremost as artists.[362] As Gmiterková describes it, the Czech stars were framed as "supremely talented individuals … projecting an air of national authenticity based on speaking Czech and their physical appearances … and conveying a sense of personality, substance and depth due to their professional mastery, beauty, everydayness, and accessibility."[363] Further, Gmiterková borrows Richard deCordova's notion of the "picture personality" to argue that actors and actresses of the era were not thought of as "fashion models or trendsetters," or "bona fide stars" in the vein of Hollywood, but were

[359] Ibid., 46.
[360] Ibid., 47, 55-56.
[361] Gmiterková, "Importing Modern Venus," 34.
[362] Ibid., 34.
[363] Ibid., 34.

actors—actors who were cherished as she puts it, "mostly for their ability to speak clear and literary Czech and demonstrate the beauty of the long suppressed language."[364]

Again, here is where the theater stage and the cinema screen meet. The small Czechoslovak film industry simply could not afford to actively develop promising new talent; instead, Czechoslovak film production embraced the talent of celebrated stage actors, effectively limiting major speaking roles to a handful of A-listers.[365] The majority of Czech film stars began their careers on the stage, and usually continued working in the theater even after appearing in films. This made Czech film stars seem more accessible to the average cinemagoer, because they could just as easily see them perform on stage as on the screen.[366]

Significantly, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between stars of the First Republic and the Protectorate. Following the Nazi occupation, the most popular Czech stars from the 1930s did not stop working. Nor did they disappear into obscurity. Rather, popular actors and actresses continued to work in the Protectorate, and several even worked in the Nazi film industry. Of course, the majority of Czech actors were bilingual, and could convincingly perform in both Czech and German-language films. But as Johnson points out, during this time, it was Czech female stars who were thrust into the

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[364] Gmiterková, "Betrayed by Blondeness," 47.
[365] Ibid., 39.
[366] Just as significant, however, for a star's image were popular film magazines such as *Kinorevue*, which worked to cultivate the relationships between stars and their fans. The pages of the weekly magazine *Kinorevue*, which burst onto the market in September 1934, boasted exclusive interviews with stars, biographical information, as well as information planted by the film industry. Often, profiles of actors and actresses echoed the character traits from their latest star vehicle, fleshing out both the character's and the individual's lives. There was a clear marketing strategy behind this: audiences wanted to feel as if they already knew the star from watching their films; film magazines sought to confirm this familiarity. For more see: Gmiterková, "Importing Modern Venus," 34-35.

spotlight; while Czech actresses were almost always cast as the film's main protagonist or in roles crucial to plot development, Czech male actors were, as he says, "very rarely featured in more than supporting or ornamental roles."[367]

Johnson makes a strong case for understanding "[Czech] female actresses [as] the most prominent foreign import" into the Reich.[368] He goes on to explain that, after the institution of the Czech Protectorate in 1939, the German company Ufa selected four leading Czech female stars to be introduced to audiences as the "newest stars of the German film."[369] These four actresses—Zita Kabátová, Nataša Gollová, Adina Mandlová, and Hana Vítová—were quickly given German pseudonyms to Germanize their foreign sounding names: Kabátová became Maria von Buchlow, Gollová became Ada Goll, Mandlová became Lil Adina, and Vítová became Hana Witt.[370] The Czech newspaper *Večerní Praha* (*Prague Evening News*) reported in August 1942 that these were necessary name changes "to make them understandable for film-goers in the Reich."[371] However, as Johnson notes, because the Czech public was unwilling to let go of their homegrown stars, it is rare to find articles or reviews in the contemporary Czech press that refers to these actresses by their German pseudonyms.[372]

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[367] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 91.
[368] Ibid., 91.
[369] Ibid., 92.
[370] Ibid., 92-98.
[371] "Čeští herci v Pragfilmu," *Večerní Praha*, August 25, 1942. Qtd. In Johnson, 96.
[372] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 96-97.

Figure 4

Although these actresses were introduced by the German press to the Reich in 1942, none of them would appear in a German film until 1943.[373] By this time, German audiences were already aware of who they were: not only did their images circulate well beyond the small Czech market in German fan magazines, but they were also seen performing in the German-language versions of Czech films. In June 1943, for example, *Moths* (*Nachtfalter*), a German-dubbed version of František Čáp's (German pseudonym: Franz Cap) 1941 film *Night Butterfly* (*Noční motýl*), premiered in Berlin. It would go on to run in cinemas throughout the Reich. The film adaptation of the novella *Bears and Dancers* (*Medvědí a tanečníce*, written by Karel Novák) starred Hana Witt (Vítová) as

[373] Ibid., 92.

Marta Dekasová, a young governess, whose longing for a married man leads to her untimely death, and also Lil Adina (Mandlová) in the supporting role of her friend Anča. The release of the film's German-language version cast a different light on the Czech film, which was immensely popular with Czech audiences in 1941 during its original release and was by-and-large acclaimed by Czech critics. Most likely, it was this German-language version of *Night Butterfly*, and its connection to the Third Reich that solidified its generic label of melodrama. To best understand the effect the German-version may have had on the film's legacy in Czech cinema, we will do well to examine the reception of the film prior to its 1943 re-release.

Night Butterfly originally premiered as a Czech-language film on August 1, 1941, at the Film Harvest (*Filmové žně*) festival in the Moravian city of Zlín, where it closed the festival.[374] The film then screened at the ninth Venice International Film Festival, where it was awarded a prize (*Targa di segnalazione*). It went on to run for three consecutive weeks in two of Prague's premiere cinemas (Lucerna and Aleš).[375]

The independent conservative daily *Národní politika* (*National Politics*) reported favorably on the film's premiere, calling "the understandably awaited new Lucernafilm … a real film, with clean work, which opens up the gates for Čáp's greater success."[376] Though the reviewer certainly acknowledges Čáp's talent as the film's director, he also stresses that the film's actors played a large part its ultimate success. Notably, the

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[374] AL, "II filmové žně, Slavostni zakončení ve velkem kine –V pátek byly předvedený poslední filmy: 'Tetička' a 'Noční motýl,'" *Národní politika* 59, no. 214, August 3, 1941, 6.; Funded by the Ministry of Trade, the Filmové žně festival screened the year's new Czech films. Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 125.
[375] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II***,** 227.
[376] CTK, "Premiera filmu Noční motýl," *Národní Politka* 59, no. 283, October 11, 1941, 5.

reviewer draws a clear line between the contributions of the film's male actors (Gustav Nezval and Jaroslav Marvan) and its female actresses: "Hana Vítová finally got a dramatic role, and she immediately triumphed. Adina Mandlová also contributed the performance of a lifetime as her careless friend …. The men's roles remained somewhat in the background, but even those were well cast."[377]

Another review by Bedřich Rádl in the October 1941 issue of *Kinorevue* praises *Night Butterfly* and treats it like any other prestige film. Rádl describes it as a "sentimental drama" which stars "the most popular and skilled actors."[378] He too singles out Vítová and Mandlová's excellent performances, which contributed to the film's great success; the "best Czech film" and entirely "in step" with other European films of the time.[379]

In stark contrast to this glowing review, Jaroslav Matějček's 1943 *Kinorevue* article shifts to a much more negative tone:

> A half year ago Čáp and Krsk's *Night Butterfly* was shown for the first time .... From today's point of view, it is obvious that from a purely filmic perspective, there has been absolutely nothing better made since, although this assertion will perhaps cause a bit of bad blood. *Night Butterfly* did not have a groundbreaking theme. It's a calendar story about people who are not particularly interesting; about mental states that are not widely shared set in an environment that is anything but uplifting….[380]

While Matějček maintains that *Night Butterfly* is a "perfect film" and reveres Čáp's directorial talent, he takes up a distinctly different line of criticism. He goes on to argue:

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[377] AL, "II filmové žně, 6.
[378] Bedřich Rádl, "Krokem s filmovou Evropou: Noční motýl," *Kinorevue* 8, no.11, October 29, 1941, 83-84.
[379] Ibid. 83-84.
[380] Jaroslav Matějček, "Nezáleží jen na námětu," *Kinorevue* 9, no. 10, January 13, 1943, 73.

"it's not a combination of beautifully composed scenes [it's a] beautiful mastering of the actors who otherwise do not give as nice of performances."[381] What is striking about Matějček's statement, however, is not that he points to how the film drew these expert performances out of these popular actors, but that he eschews these previously acclaimed performances, in favor of pointing out the flaws of the film's "uninteresting" theme. Indeed, he appeals to both Czech filmmakers and cinemagoers alike, asking them to abandon the commonly held belief that the theme is the most important aspect of a film. Matějček points out that the myth of the "original theme" has already been proven false by more established art forms like lyric poetry and the literary novel, because these forms "always find new ways of portraying old things, which is to their great benefit." [382]

Interestingly, Matějček seems to be arguing in favor of melodrama: his fundamental argument is that *Night Butterfly*'s lack of originality does not mean it is not worth seeing for the first, or even for a second time; the film is, above all else, he writes, "presented as an artistic form, despite the fact it is not art."[383] He calls on Czech filmmakers and cinemagoers alike to look beyond the film's unoriginal theme, and instead focus on its unique visual expression of film language; for film art will ensure a future for Czech cinema.

Although they take markedly different positions, these reviewers agree that *Night Butterfly* is a quality film, moreover, both view it as representing the future of the Czech cinema. The most obvious change from the film's first to second release—and thus, the

[381] Ibid., 73.
[382] Ibid., 73.
[383] Ibid., 73.

first to second review in the same journal—is the addition of the dubbed-in-German (and with this, its Germanized title). *Night Butterfly* remained otherwise unchanged. Yet, significantly, Matějček's 1943 article avoids this point, and argues instead that "it's not just about the theme." It is not too much of a leap to conclude that the Czech critic was alarmed by the way in which *Night Butterfly'*s sentimental theme could be so effortlessly translated to fit the ambitions of the Nazi ideology. Pointedly, the film's stars were poised as an extension of that ideology, thus bringing it to the Protectorate in the form of the homegrown film star.

In spite of these efforts, none of these Czech actresses achieved stardom outside of the Protectorate. The Czech-born actress Lída Baarová would come close, but even she did not ascend to true film stardom in the Reich. Baarová's German film career took off in 1934 with her performance in *Barcarole* (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1934/35)—a part that she won through an Ufa contest.[384] Approximately a year before her big break, though, the Reich Film Chamber (Reichfilmkammer or RFK) was formed, and only several months earlier the Reich Cinema Law (February 16, 1934) put an end to the multi-ethnic atmosphere of the Weimar cinema, starting with the systematic expulsion of Jews from the film industry. Needless to say, at this time of heightened racial awareness, the German cinema was not welcoming of any non-German ethnic groups, including Czechs, however as Johnson explains, the German industry was in need of "new faces to captivate its audiences—and these new faces included 'foreign' faces as well."[385]

[384] Lída Baarová, *Života sladké hořkosti* (Ostrav: Liberex, 1998).
[385] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 81.

Despite all of this—and perhaps because of her affair with Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels—Baarová continued to be cast in big-budget Ufa productions, and was even integrated into the German star system.[386] As Johnson points out, her "exotic dark beauty [with] almond shaped eyes, high cheekbones, and dark hair"—made her perfectly suited to play the vamp or a woman of luxury and made her a sex symbol in the Reich.[387] At the same time, he explains, her foreign appearance, combined with her heavily Czech-accented German, also made her the prime target for public criticism, thrusting her into the center of debates about the roles foreigners should play in the German film industry.[388]

Baarová's foreignness affected her German film career in a number of ways. First, her visible Slavic identity limited the types of roles she was permitted to perform, and forced her to play, in Johnson's words, "exotic, yet suspect, non-Germans" in "thrillers and melodramas."[389] Then, in 1938, after learning that Goebbels was planning to leave his wife for Baarová, Hitler ordered the end of her German film career. As Baarová later recounted it, on October 24, 1938, Hitler gave Goebbels an ultimatum: "If you want to create history, you have to give up your personal life and dedicate yourself to your mission": she never saw Goebbels again.[390] As a result, *Prussian Love Story* (*Preußische Liebesgeschichte*, Paul Martin, 1938), her final German film, was banned throughout the

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[386] Antje Ascheid, *Hitler's Heroines: Stardom and Womanhood in Nazi Cinema* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 28-29, 39-40.; Stanislav Motl, *Prokletí Lídy Baarové* (Prague: Rybka Publishers, 2002).
[387] Johnson, "Annexation Effects," 82.
[388] Ibid., 75.
[389] Ibid., 206.
[390] This story is recounted by Baarová in the documentary *Doomed Beauty* (*Zkáza krásou*, Jakub Hejna, Helena Trestiková, 2016).

German Reich, her Ufa contract was cancelled, and she was forced to flee to Prague.[391] From 1939 to 1945, Baarová appeared exclusively in Czech and Italian films, including two Czech film melodramas: *The Masked Lover* (1940), and *During Quiet Nights* (1940).[392] In 1945, she was arrested for collaboration and faced the Extraordinary People's Courts, but unlike her contemporary Adina Mandlová, she was never put to trial.[393] She spent a year in Prague's Pankrác Prison before being released.[394]

Figure 5

[391] Kevin B. Johnson, "Foreign Attractions: Czech Stars and Ethnic Masquerade" in *Continuity and Crisis in German Cinema, 1928-1936*, eds. Barbara Hales, Mihaela Petrescu, and Valerie Weinstein (Rochester: Camden House, 2016), 210-232, 223.
[392] Ibid., 223.
[393] Frommer, "Gender Collaboration and Retribution," 111.
[394] Ibid., 111.

While Baarová remains famous for being Goebbels's mistress, over the years her reputation has in some ways been redeemed. Recent bio-pics and biographies depict Baarová, the most successful Czech actress of the 1930s and 1940s, as a tragic figure—a young girl blinded by her ambition and love for a powerful man—lamenting the fact that she could have been a great Hollywood star—the Czech Marlene Dietrich—that is, if the Nazis hadn't intervened in her career.[395]

Protectorate Melodrama

Melodrama's special relationship to the final years of the First Republic (1930-1938), the demoralizing effects of the Munich Agreement (September 30, 1938), and the entire duration of the Nazi occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (March 1939 -May 1945) becomes especially important for the chapters to follow. Moreover, melodrama's pervasiveness during the Protectorate, a period that is fundamentally tied to the Nazi regime, implies that the genre reflected overlapping and conflicting interests over the course of the Nazi occupation. These films must be examined in the context of this highly charged moment, during which external political conditions tinged all determining conditions of their existence.

The most recent studies by Czech historians such as Lukáš Kašpar that engage Protectorate-era films have abandoned the opinion stubbornly upheld by survivors and biographies that these films did not reflect Nazi ideology.[396] Instead, they claim that these

[395] Recent films about Baarová include the documentary *Doomed Beauty* (*Zkáza krásou*, Helena Trestiková and Jakub Nekuda, 2016) and the feature-film *The Devil's Mistress* (*Lída Baarová*, Filip Renč, 2016).
[396] See: Kašpar, *Český hraný film a filmaři*.

films were made for the enjoyment of Czech cinemagoers who were fundamentally uninterested in Nazi propaganda. Typically, these approaches examine the relationship between Protectorate genre films and propaganda and correctly suggest that these films served a highly significant if latent, propagandistic function. It is not wrong to say that, though not propaganda in the strictest sense, even seemingly apolitical films from this time promoted the Nazi ideology. And yet, these studies ultimately fail to grasp the significance of these films as historically strategic sites that offer a covert critique of the status quo, because they do not confront melodrama's critical value directly. Instead, they provide another explanation: that by taking up meaningful subject matter such as national history, literature, and other familiar stories, Czech filmmakers successfully avoided the ideological programs that accompanied the Nazi regime. However, by reducing Protectorate films to mere escapism, or by rejecting them as Nazi propaganda, these studies effectively fall into the same trap and obfuscate the actual socio-historical complexities that can be addressed by thinking of melodrama outside of its generic existence.

Protectorate film melodramas are intimately linked to the ideological milieu of the Nazi occupation. To paraphrase the title of Kašpar's book, this includes the dominant attitudes towards both collaboration and resistance. The industry-based limitations that were imposed by the Third Reich, coupled with external cultural phenomena, infused melodrama with much more cultural weight than it is traditionally given. It seems to me, however, that the intersection between these seemingly competing factors is what rendered melodrama visible to the NFA and made it the ideal genre to most effectively

voice Czech concerns under the repressive and brutal Nazi regime. We can think of popular cinema as the ultimate vessel for this ideological slippage because it was viewed as apolitical and was effectively written off by the censors as simply entertainment. Melodrama films could thus get away with expressing moral values which were on the surface applicable to the needs of the Third Reich yet expressed sentiments that supported a particular understanding of Czech national identity.

Melodrama's cultural work reveals important political assumptions about personal, home, and familial life within the social and psychic landscapes of the Protectorate. As we know, it is a particularly useful genre for representing the prevailing social problems and the realities they represent, because it is always grounded in the same conditions of verisimilitude as realism. But as Christine Gledhill helpfully reminds us, unlike realism, which is designed to repress underlying social issues, melodrama actively enables certain aspects of the affective world to be expressed.[397] The fact, for instance, that Protectorate-era films have only been categorized as generic melodramas from the vantage point of the present indicates that there is something about this particular moment in history that makes it relevant—both then and also how we read it retrospectively.

[397] Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 5-39.

***Saturday* (*Sobota,* Václav Wasserman, 1944)**

Václav Wasserman's 1944 film *Saturday* (*Sobota*) offers an excellent model for studying Protectorate-era melodrama.[398] *Saturday* presents the story of a young housewife, Helena Málková, who, despite the efforts of her well-intentioned and hard-working husband, is bored with her simple life. She is particularly dissatisfied with the fact that her husband Petr can only make time to take her out on Saturdays. One Sunday after Petr leaves for a business trip, Helena decides to help her brother Jiří at his flower shop. There she meets Richard Herbert, a wealthy industrialist. Richard, an older "Don Juan" type, immediately takes an interest in the beautiful Helena, yet he does not approach her outright. Instead, he tracks down her address and waits, flowers-in-hand, at her train stop with a chauffeured car. Helena is clearly flattered by his aggressive pursuit of her. At his insistence, she joins him for dinner at an intimate French restaurant, and then goes back to his cozy apartment for a "quick drink." But little does Helena know, the apartment is nothing more than his clandestine love nest. All evidence of this—a framed photograph of his chauffeur—is very clumsily hidden by Richard, who despite his bumbling, somehow successfully conceals that he actually lives in a luxurious urban villa with his elegant wife Luisa.

The naive Helena, who has yearned for excitement for so long, quickly falls in love with Richard. Unlike her distracted husband, Richard dotes on her; he constantly

[398] The film's alternate title was *Don Juan Goes into Retirement (Don Juan jde do pense*). "Czech-Moravian film headquarters in Prague 'Don Juan Goes into Retirement,' '*Saturday*,'" June 29, 1944, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.; Shooting Script for the film "Saturday," 1944, III 6f, inv. 622, Václav Wasserman Fond, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.

gives her gifts and can devote entire days to her—that is, every day except for Saturday. This leads Helena to believe that Richard is falling in love with her too, and so she impulsively moves into his apartment. Richard becomes annoyed, but because he still does not realize how serious she is about their relationship, he doesn't stop her. For him, of course, their relationship is just a fling. Once again, Helena is oblivious to this fact, and happily so.

On a Saturday without Richard, Helena goes with her brother Jiří to a nightclub, where, to both of their surprise, she crashes Richard's birthday celebration. For his part, Richard is embarrassed, and yet he still invites her over to his table, introduces her to his wife, and even invites her and Jiří to their villa. It is here that Helena recognizes what has truly been going on, and deeply shaken, she decides to leave him. The newly independent Helena goes on a series of job interviews, and during one such interview, she encounters Karla, one of Richard's former mistresses. The slighted woman further exposes his calculating and selfish behavior. She tells Helena that Richard's wife, Luisa, patiently endures every whim of her indulgent and careless husband, and continuously forgives his infidelities to keep their marriage intact. Though Helena is left discouraged and deflated, she returns to her job at Jiří's flower shop with her new friend Karla in tow.

At around this same time, Petr, who has returned to Prague, learns from Jiří about his wife's infidelity. But Petr reveals that he still loves his wife and welcomes her home with open arms. Finally cured of her foolish dream of romantic love, Helena returns to the stability of her husband. At the end of the film, three seemingly happy couples are presented: the reconciled Helena and Petr, the comfortable Luisa and Richard, and the

newly paired-up Karla and Jiří. In this way, the film neatly ties up the problem of lingering romantic entanglements. Rather than face any societal repercussions, Helena, Richard, and the ever-idealized home are, in many ways, maintained.

The production of *Saturday* coincided with the tail end of the occupation. In 1944, as the economic strain of the war intensified, and as the number of feature films produced per-year dropped steadily, the Protectorate film industry produced a record low of nine feature films.[399] *Saturday* was one of these films. It has the distinction of being one of the final feature films released during the occupation and was one of the first Czech feature films released in 1945.[400] Directed by Wasserman in production with Lucernafilm (a name synonymous with "quality popular filmmaking"), the screenplay was written by the screenwriter Josef Neuberg, based on an original story by the actress and novelist Olga Scheinpflugová (credited under the pseudonym St. Ratajová). Scheinpflugová was also the widow of Czech playwright and novelist Karel Čapek, an outspoken anti-fascist, whose sudden death by pneumonia in December 1938 was viewed by many Czechs as a casualty of the Munich betrayal.[401] Following the Nazi invasion in 1939, Scheinpflugová was interrogated by the Gestapo. Critical reviews of the film seem preoccupied with St. Ratajová's true identity; however, it is not clear whether this is a genuine expression of curiosity or a knowing wink to Czech readers.

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[399] Klimeš, "A Dangerous Neighbourhood," 120.
[400] *Saturday* also screened at Brno's Alfa, Panorama, and Alfa-Passage for 3 weeks.; "Central Film Rental, Distribution List, 'Saturday,' December 1970, Production Materials, National Film Archives Prague, Czech Republic. Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II,* 317.
[401] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 22.

On January 12, 1945, after screening several weeks in smaller cities across the Protectorate, *Saturday* opened in three of Prague's premiere theaters: Kapitol, Lucerna and Fénix, taking many reviewers by surprise.[402] The Film Approval Authority (Úřad pro schvalování filmů) had cancelled the film's Prague opening because of the scandal surrounding Oldřich Nový, its leading man: Nový's wife Alice was of "Jewish origins."[403] For one thing, Nový refused wear a yellow (or later white) star to denote his status as an Aryan-Jewish sympathizer.[404] Compounding this, he refused to divorce or denounce his wife, which would have lifted his protection, and condemned her to deportation—a death sentence.[405] The Nazi authorities used the fascist press to spread the rumor that Nový "got rid" of his Jewish spouse.[406] But when that didn't seem to work, they quickly pivoted to promote Wasserman's return to directing after a six year hiatus. In fact, most articles reported that the film shot relatively quickly in September 1944 at Prague's Hostivař Studios, with some additional exterior shots at the outskirts of the city's suburbs.[407]

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[402] "Central Film Rental, Distribution List, 'Saturday,' December 1970, Production Materials, National Film Archives Prague, Czech Republic. "Premiéry tohoto týdne 'Sobota,'" *Pressa* 7, no. 14. January, 1945.; Lr, "Dnešní premiéra filmu 'Sobota,'" *Pressa*, no. 8, January 1, 1945; "Filmová premiéra o dnešním manželství," *Venkov* 40, no.12, January 14, 1945, 4.; Ks, "První letošní filmová premiéra," *Lidové noviny* 53, no. 2, January 16, 1945, 4.

[403]Šárka Gmiterková, "Kristián v montérkách. Hvězdná osobnost Oldřicha Nového mezi kulturními průmysly, produkčními systémy a politickými režimy v letech 1936-1969" (PhD diss., Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, 2018), 76fn277.

[404] Ibid., 52.

[405] During the 1920s and 1930s, intermarriage between "Jews" and "non-Jews" not uncommon. In fact, the Bohemian lands had the highest intermarriage rates in Europe, and as Tatjana Lichtenstein notes "well over a third, and in some years closer to half, of all Jews who married non-Jews." Tatjana Lichtenstein, "'It is Not My Fault that You Are Jewish!' Jews, Czechs, and Memory of the Holocaust in Film, 1949-2009," *Dapim Studies on the Holocaust* 30, no. 2 (2016), 123.

[406] Gmiterková,"Kristián v montérkách," 52-53.

[407] Urbanová et al., *Česky hraný film II,* 317.

Figure 6 **Figure 7**

Saturday was relatively successful at the box office. Certainly, public interest was captured by the performances of the most popular Czech actors: Nový, Hana Vítová, Adina Mandlová (in what would be her final performance in a Czech film), Jiřina Štěpničková and Ladislav Boháč.[408] And yet, looking at the contemporary discourse, it is unclear what the audience's attitudes towards the film truly were. In fact, most reviewers avoided the topic altogether; others wrote something along the lines of "[*Saturday*] will certainly be met by audiences with success."[409] In critics' minds, it seems, what was crucially important about the film was its recognition of the pressing social crises and a

[408] After the war, Frommer explains, Adina Mandlová was faced charges in front of an Extraordinary People's Court because she starred in German films and had "social relations" with German men. See: Frommer, "Gender Collaboration and Retribution," 112.; For more on Mandlová see: Adina Mandlová, *Dneska už se tomu směju* (Prague: ČS filmový ústav, 1977).; Arnošt Tabášek, *Adina Mandlová: Fámy a skutečnost* (Prague: Nakladatelství Formát, 2003).
[409] Jaroslav Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou společenskou komedii," *Kinorevue* 11, no. 14, February, 7, 1945, 110-111.

sense of moral principles, rather than its artistic value. They overwhelmingly agreed that the film provided an interesting look at the problems of modern marriage, and served as a kind of kind of "mirror to society," shedding light upon the important and seemingly increasingly at risk institution of marriage—which they saw as being exacerbated by the socio-political atmosphere and the crumbling of Czech society more broadly.

Matějček, writing for *Kinorevue*, asserted that *Saturday* was not a comedy or a drama; rather, it was a "social comedy." This was in part an indictment of the genre, which he believed was overused to describe subpar films. The social comedy, Matějček argued, *should* indicate sophisticated acting, witty dialogue, and refined filmmaking and the use of advanced film language. It *should* indicate an overall aesthetic maturity. As he put it:

> In social comedies, everything is out in the open. There is no room for excuses. There is not even the richness of folklore, which would evoke national sentiments, and there isn't the excuse for the historical probability found in the epic, which in its attempt at effect ceases to be a film. For the viewer, salon comedy does not come with the sophisticated dilemmas about reasons found in all other kinds of films. Here the core of the plot must be developed using the intelligent expression of word and image. The actor must express their feeling using the most minimal of methods…[410]

One reason Matějček privileges the social comedy is its tendency to denote a complexity of artistic expression. As he suggests, the social comedy combines elements of several genres: it presents both psychological and humorous elements in order to illuminate the oppressive social circumstances. Generally speaking, in social comedies, the institution of the family is the basis for a conflict whose resolution must be found

[410] Ibid., 110-111

within extant societal structures and traditions. Though this dramatic conflict is expressed with emotional intensity, its expression transcends sentimental kitsch through the use of so-called sophisticated cinematic language. And, while not particularly comedy oriented, its narrative is lightened by moments of comedic realism to cast an ironic light on the drama of the main protagonist. We can conclude then, that the social comedy assumes a more specialized meaning, which coincides with certain (more sophisticated) formal and ideological factors.

Matějček considered *Saturday* to be a social comedy because it was, in his opinion, a "tasteful film, mildly and quietly orchestrated well executed acting with discrete salon wit."[411] He was not alone in his evaluation of the artistic value of the film. Similarly, a review in the weekly newspaper *Česky dělník* (*Czech Worker*) noted that, "If lately Czech films fall into two categories for evaluation—films with true artistic values, and the so-called entertainment film—we see that *Saturday* stands on the boundary of both these areas."[412] Even at the time of its release, reviewers of *Saturday* grappled with a decidedly diminished capacity to focus on the artistic value of film, while simultaneously and fundamentally challenging the limits of conventional representation.

For Matějček in *Kinorevue*, the Nový and Vítová star vehicle seemed, in many ways, to be a retelling of Martin Frič's 1939 film *Kristián*.[413] He was not alone in making this comparison; it was echoed by many other commentators. In *Kristián*, Nový plays a clerk at a travel agency who escapes the banality of his daily life—his dull job and wife

[411] Ibid., 110-111.
[412] Press book for *Saturday*, Page 1, 1945, in Promotional Materials, National Film Archive, Prague, Czech Republic.
[413] Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou," 110-111.

(Gollová)—by pretending to be a millionaire playboy once a month. Every day, Alois Novák (Nový) lies to his wife, and works overtime so that for one night he can indulge at the exclusive Orient Bar. At the Orient Bar, he poses as the wealthy and mysterious Mr. Kristián, who tips generously and dances with countless beautiful women. There, Mr. Kristián seduces these women with his extensive knowledge of foreign lands (gleaned from his travel agency brochures) and his velvety voice. Then, he disappears into the night with one simple request: "close your eyes, I'm leaving…" ("*zavřete oči, odcházím*…").

Figure 8

Figure 9

Though he keeps up this charade for some time, one fateful night at the Orient Bar, Mr. Kristián meets Zuzana (Mandlová), and this encounter puts his true identity into jeopardy. Like Alois, Zuzana craves a romantic adventure. However, unlike Alois, Zuzana choses to pursue this adventure outside of the safety of the Orient bar; after he disappears into the night, she decides she must track Mr. Kristián down. Zuzana finally realizes that Mr. Kristián is actually Alois when he pretends to be both himself and his brother Kristián. After being confronted by Zuzana, Alois returns to his life: he receives a promotion at work, and his faithful wife embraces him. In the end, the resolution is to

have both Alois and Zuzana "open their eyes;" to abandon their foolish dreams, and to embrace their true lives.

Because of the ways in which their narratives run parallel, we can view *Saturday* almost as a continuation of *Kristián*. Like *Kristián*, *Saturday* presents a story about the exploits of an aging Don Juan type, however, instead of asking us to sympathize with his romantic adventure, it asks us to empathize with the emotional suffering of a young, neglected housewife. There is one clear change, in that this time we primarily follow the interior drama of the female protagonist. The effect of this, as Matějček put it, is that *Saturday* is like *Kristián* but "upside down" ("*naruby*").[414] Even so, in the end, the same moral lesson is conveyed: the husband learns that "his life did not end at the altar."[415] Their moral lesson being, of course, that they live in a world where marriage is always complicated. Their romantic suffering facilitates the recognition that both husband and wife must fight for their marriage to survive.

The casting of Nový in the role of the aging Don Juan and Mandlová in the role of his willfully ignorant wife further encouraged audiences to identify the stars with their previous roles.[416] While the focus on the emotional life of the female protagonist was new, the appreciation of and dynamic between these characters was not.

For the contemporary critics—and indeed for the NFA—*Kristián* was not a melodrama or a social comedy; from the very beginning, it has been identified as a

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[414] Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou," 110-111.
[415] Ibid.,110-111.
[416] Press book for *Saturday*, Pg.14-15, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.; For more details about Nový's film career before and after communism see: Šárka Gmiterková, "The Stripping of His Charms. The Stability of Oldřich Nový's Star Image 1936-1955," in *Popular Cinemas in East Central Europe: Film Cultures and Histories*, eds. Dorota Ostrowska, Francesco Pitassio, Zsuzsanna Varda (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2017), 67-84.

comedy. What, then, could a social comedy do that a comedy—even a "quality" comedy such a *Kristián*—could not? To be sure, the two genres (or perhaps it is more appropriate to call them sub-genres) are closely related. After all, the comedy shares with the social comedy the ability to identify and reveal the farce of the present social reality through comic-oriented actions. Almost as if to defend the film's "serious" artistic value, however, the social comedy insists on presenting deeply felt social concerns as serious issues. That is not to say that the social comedy offers a more valid or even a more effective critique of social conventions, but rather that it critiques them more explicitly. In other words, the basic addition of the social forces an awareness of this foundational criticism.

It is easy enough to locate efforts to articulate *Saturday*'s social criticism within its critical reception. A review in *Filmový kurýr*, for example, refers to *Saturday* as a "comedy with a serious plot basis, giving insight into the crisis of modern marriage," and *Kinorevue* calls it a "psychological drama' with 'serious characters, inspired by real life."[417] Among other things, the film was called a "moralistic comedy" (*Lidové noviny*), a "psychological film" (*Národní práce*), and a "film comedy with an ethical base" (*Filmový kurýr*).[418] It is most likely, however, that audiences would have associated it with so-called women's films. Consider, for example, the following review from *Lidové noviny*: "It is entirely a woman's story with a pleasantly refined realism and generic psychology. Yet its scenes from a married life and society are skillfully crafted to

[417] Lr, "Zrcadlo společnosti ve filmu 'Sobota,'" *Kinorevue* 10, no. 46, September 20,1944, 363.; d, "Filmová komedie na etickem podkladu," *Filmový kurýr* 18, no. 34, August 25,1944, 4.
[418] Cha, "Sobota cílí papraveni ženy. Pokus o filmovou komedii," *Lidově listy* 24, no. 16, January 19, 1945, 3.; "Nový česky film 'Sobota,'" *Národní práce* 7, no.15, January 18, 1945, 2.

agree with popular conceptions, and offer the actors (and especially actresses) wonderful creative possibilities."[419] As long as the protagonist was female, and as long as she committed transgressions against societal expectations to disrupt and then reinforce the home or the domestic sphere, the film could be identified as a so-called women's film. And yet, according to critics, *Saturday* was still a film worth paying attention to. The goal of the film, of course, was to make the traditional space of the Czech home a sacred one for all even though the central crisis may not have directly spoken to everyone.

When the film's promotional posters used the slogan "It's not every day—Saturday" it was meant to describe a major plot point: while Helena's husband can only take her out on Saturdays, Richard can take her out every day of the week, with the exception of Saturdays.[420] Beyond its original intent (to position Helena's hard-working bureaucrat husband as the very opposite of the wealthy industrialist Richard), this slogan also suggests the breaking down of important social institutions, marriage in particular.

A reviewer for *Filmový kurýr* for example, called *Saturday* a response to the "decline of family morals" because of the imposition of an outside and foreign power, antithetical in many ways to Czech values and way of life and, indeed the culture against which Czechs had defined themselves in their most fundamental foundational narratives.[421] Moreover, the reviewer praised the film for its new, "more complicated" take on the "overused theme" of the love triangle, which "looks into the heart of the part

[419] KS, "První letošní filmová premiéra," 4.
[420] One-sheet for *Saturday*, 1945, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[421] "Filmová komedie na etickém podkladu," 4.

of modern society that is chock full of levity, moral unreliability and social irresponsibility."[422]

What was at issue, as one reviewer put it, was the "decomposition of the family," and so the film spoke directly to "one of the biggest crises of the present" in the only ways they could.[423] On the surface, *Saturday* might seem to be about a frivolous wife and an indulgent man, but there is something more at work here than simply their superficial desires. And, in fact, the film provided the opportunity for "a whole generation of people" to "cleverly reap the benefits from their cunning behavior," simply because it helped to clandestinely reinforce the traditional Czech model of domesticity.[424]

At its core, *Saturday* functions as a cautionary tale: it presents a story of a woman who leaves her home for an exciting romantic adventure. However, when she learns everything was not as it appears, she returns to her husband and home, reinforcing the traditional social order just as it was prior to her transgression. It is possible to think of the film as fitting within what Thomas Schatz outlines as the "intruder-redeemer" sub-theme of the Hollywood family melodrama—given that Helena falls prey to Richard, who personifies the intruder-redeemer who somehow has fashioned his own value system outside of the social ritual she feels so trapped in.[425] But I take an alternate reading here.

On a basic narrative level, her dalliance with Richard offers Helena a certain freedom; Richard promises to liberate her from her unhappy marriage and modest domestic life with the temptation of romantic love and socio-economic mobility. And yet,

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[422] Ibid., 4.
[423] Ibid., 4.
[424] Ibid., 4.
[425] Schatz, "The Family Melodrama," 148-167.

we know this choice is naïve, because in leaving her husband for a new lover, Helena is merely exchanging one domestic trap for another. She may have traded her modest village home for a luxurious city apartment, but it is just another (potentially just as isolating) domestic space.

Moreover, within the logic of the film's narrative, Richard's promise to Helena is undermined by our knowledge that he is ultimately nothing more than a serial philanderer. As such, we know he would never actually abandon his wife and class-bound family home. Helena's suffering seems inevitable. Her romantic delusions should propel her towards her downfall. Interestingly, though, the film identifies Helena's moral dilemma not through her capacity for suffering, but rather through her flawed understanding of the dynamics of romantic love in relation to the realities of everyday life. Ultimately, Helena chooses to return home, but only after she is confronted with her lover's bon vivant lifestyle. Helena makes the "moral choice," of course, and by abandoning her foolish dream, manages to assert her independence only to resign herself to the home.

Significantly, what I call the "foolish dream" scenario (named after the 1943 melodrama *Bláhový sen* [*Foolish Dream*, J.A. Holman]) represents a primary moral dilemma for the majority of the films that make up the Czech melodrama corpus. These films frequently depict an individual trapped within the social and emotional isolation of the domestic sphere who breaks out to find self-fulfillment (usually through the expression of an obsessive desire for romance, fame, or fortune), only to be confronted with the hard emotional truths of their social reality. More often than not, this is a

woman's crisis, but not always. Here a distinction can be made: while the films that center on a woman's crisis put emphasis on the direct portrayal of the female protagonist's psychological situation, the films featuring a man's crisis use humor to counter the male protagonist's selfish actions and thus humanize him. In almost all cases, the problems posed by the film's dramatic conflict lead to the female protagonist's emotional revelation—she comes to her senses—and her moral enlightenment forces the male protagonist to learn the error of his foolish ways and achieve marital happiness. Or, put another way, it is usually the female character who serves as the narrative agent for the male protagonist's resolution, which generally speaking, manifests itself as the necessity to conform to social expectations. The resolution to these films invariably reaffirms the cultural status quo, even when it seems implausible. A notable example here is that in *Saturday*, Helena's decision to leave helps Richard make the right decision (that is, the most socially acceptable and advantageous decision); he returns to his wife, promising to reward her devotion, prompting his closing pronouncement "[that they will] go away together."

This foolish dream scenario presents a strange moral scheme, because it does not identify victims or villains in the Brooksian sense, using purely Manichean binaries: a distinctive good and evil or moral and immoral (perhaps giving away its Nazi influence).[426] In *Saturday,* for example, there is no clear-cut tragic victim or mustache-twirling villain. And by no means do the films' central protagonists fit the mold of what we would typically identify as a virtuous hero or heroine, though both are afforded a high

[426] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 36.

degree of audience identification and knowledge. Still, the viewer is allowed to both understand the character's motivations and to identify with them.

In this respect, the film sends contradictory messages about who is truly guilty and who is innocent. Richard may have been the one to first pursue Helena, but we still know her to be complicit in their affair.[427] Although Helena may not have specifically sought Richard out or initially encouraged his advances, she ultimately falls for his pathological seduction and leaves her husband behind, thus undermining the sanctity of her marriage. This means that Richard is not alone in his moral delinquency: both parties are driven by their desires for emotional and sexual fulfillment to actively engage in an extra-marital affair.

Interestingly, though, nowhere does *Saturday* posit that Helena is an evil woman, nor is her feminine virtue held to a higher standard. Both Helena and Richard express their obsessive desires with little to no attention given to their (equally unsuccessful) marriages (to equally dutiful spouses). Consequently, their actions can be viewed as equally immoral, or at least neither can truly be considered virtuous. What is presented, then, is a more nuanced and psychologically motivated depiction of morality, which is articulated in the films when flawed individuals are exposed to the harsh truths of their social reality, so that in order to be virtuous these characters must confront their own flaws.

[427] Similarly, Gmiterková, notes, "Nový was never featured as the seducer who merely exploited women, and his courtships weren't presents in a 'hunter and prey' manner but as a growing cooperation between two strong individualities." Gmiterková, "The Stripping of His Charms," 72.

The contemporary reviews of *Saturday* for the most part, avoid placing Helena and Richard within the straightforward roles of the victim and villain. However, the same reviews almost always call Helena the film's heroine.[428] Still, even those who viewed Richard as a "more or less immoral" character chose to write affectionately about both of the film's central protagonists (and its supporting characters as well). And numerous critics pointed out that Helena and Richard strike distinctly different tones. They saw this unevenness as being purposefully done and meant to capture the emotional and moral conflicts of contemporary life.

Figure 10

Figure 11

The central characters are presented as emotional contrasts who display contradictory behavioral and attitudinal traits that are designed to highlight their generational and socioeconomic differences, an issue that would capture the imagination of Protectorate audiences. For these critics, the unevenness of the protagonists was only intensified by the casting—Hana Vítová, the young brunette beauty, whose deep-set eyes convey a certain emotional sensitivity, and Oldřich Nový (as Šárka Gmiterková calls him,

[428] Press book for *Saturday*, Pg.13, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.

the "Czech Chevalier") seem utterly incompatible.[429] The two actors employ very different styles of acting, for instance, which gives the feeling that Vítová's Helena resides within the realism of a psychological drama, and Nový's Richard resides within the screwball hijinks of a romantic comedy. The actor's star images certainly added to this feeling.

From the beginning of her film career in 1933, Hana Vítová was presented as kind, authentic, and intelligent, the Czech version of the Hollywood archetype of the "girl next door."[430] Early in her career, she became associated with parts in romance films, appearing as the "young lover," or the "poor girl who finally strikes gold in the form of a rich suitor."[431] These films centered on kind and gentle "melancholy heroines"—naïve women with a strong sense of morality and an unmistakable intelligence, who are ultimately forced to resign to their fate. Vítová's distinctive look greatly contributed this image of her. This was directly articulated in the journalistic discourse of the time. One *Kinorevue* reviewer, for instance, asserted that the "secret to her success" was her face, with its "rare symmetrical shape, the noble high forehead, pale eyes and lips, in which the corners hold back irony and wit."[432] As this suggests, there was just something about her face that conveyed a deep sense of maturity and perception.

Vítová was a hugely popular star, but because she was attached to a certain type of "undemanding role," specifically, the heroine in Red Library adaptations, she was

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[429] Gmiterková, "The Stripping of His Charms, 69.
[430] Press book for *Saturday*, Pg.13, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.; For more on Hana Vítová see: Rudolf Mihola, *Hana Vítová: Cesta ke šmíře* (Prague: Nakladatelství petrklíč, 2011).; Jaroslav Brož and Myrtil Frida, *Historie československého filmu v obrazech 1930-1945* (Prague: Orbis, 1966).
[431] V. A. Marek, "24 hodin Hany Vítové," *Kinorevue* 5, no. 17, 1938/1939, 326.
[432] Ibid., Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou."

given few opportunities to showcase the scope of her acting range.[433] Her ultimate breakthrough was her performance in the 1941 melodrama *Night Butterfly*, which achieved unprecedented commercial and critical success at home and abroad and established her reputation as an actress for quality films. This sudden shift demonstrates very clearly how the mere notion of a quality film can considerably change an actress's star image.

Similarly, *Saturday* was widely considered to be a film that enabled Vítová to showcase her acting skills, and thus rehabilitate her star image by positioning her as an actress with artistic vision. According to most reviewers, including the reviewer for the periodical *Pressa*, in the part of Helena, Vítová found a way "to play out her feelings and thoughts" beyond what existed the story's thin scenario, which "made her performance all the more remarkable."[434] Matějček too proclaimed that the film featured one of Vítová's best performances:

> Hana Vítová, here in the main role of Helena Málková, redeemed herself after her last film. From the unclear and at times quite improbable aspects of her character, she managed to create a gentle, bumbling creature who recognizes her weakness and gathers the strength to understand things that are difficult for a woman who had expected her life to be a waste. It is one of the best performances we have seen so far from this actress: psychologically deep, emotionally pure, and perfectly cinematic in civilism meticulously avoiding all theatrical means of expression.[435]

[433] Mocná, "Červená knihovna" v českém filmu," 53–100
[434] Lr, "Hana Vítová v moderní psychologicke ulože," *Pressa*, no. 7, January 11,1945.
[435] Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou."

Other reviewers agreed, including the reviewer from *Národní práce*, who asserted: "Hana Vítová attempts to give her heroine pathos as she acts out her emotional and spiritual state with sincerity."[436]

While critics seemed to have been surprised that Vítová, with her history of starring in sentimental weepies, was capable of turning out such an emotionally rich performance, it was readily assumed that Oldřich Nový would deliver a sophisticated comic performance.[437] Nový's acting, dancing, and singing skills were a key part of his star personae. Sure, he was a romantic lead, but he didn't have the look we would typically associate with a sex symbol. The middle-aged Nový often wore his greying hair slicked back and sported a well-tailored suit and tie. But his looks were almost beside the point; he was perceived by audiences as a comedic star. In fact, reviewers of *Saturday* overwhelmingly commented that it was Nový's performance that turned the character of a blasé industrialist into an opportunity to showcase his acting range. A critic for *Národní práce*, for instance, asserted:

> Nový's personal charm, the way he speaks, and his gestures accomplish probably no other performer could. His merit is due to a character who is … an immoral, superficial bon vivant, who does not hesitate to destroy extraneous emotional bonds, but who is, in the end, sympathetic, convincing everyone (even those who don't agree with him) to judge the Don Juan's failures less harshly.[438]

With Nový in the Don Juan role, *Saturday* pays unmistakable homage to *Kristián*. In contrast to *Saturday*, with *Kristián*, Nový became associated with the part of the elegant seducer; but at the same time, this character faithfully adhered to his marital vows of

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[436] "Nový český film 'Sobota,'" *Národní práce* 7, no. 15, January 18, 1945, 2.
[437] Lr, "Nový Nový," *Pressa*, no. 201, October 13, 1944.
[438] Srkal, "Zrající Don Juan," 3.

fidelity. The whole point of placing Nový in this role is that he is emphatically not the innocent dreamer he was in *Kristián* but a shadowy, calculating adulterer who actively carries out his seduction to its fruition. He had already played a variation of this part, and yet as the critics noted, he was able to find a way to make Richard distinct.[439] Even though Richard's lack of remorse suggests that he is morally bankrupt, in no way is his character presented as truly threatening or dangerous to the status quo.

Rather, Nový brings to his role his personal charm, cultured humor, and a sense of self-deprecation, which he uses to make Richard a sympathetic (or at least not a completely unsympathetic) character.

The charming comedic spectacle Nový stages for us ultimately overwhelms the very real reasons for his presumed villainy onto a pretend desire for our enjoyment—so that we do not see him as a villain. Significantly, for the audience, Richard's real offense is his infidelity; but once he returns to his wife he proves to us it is possible for him to change, and ultimately fulfils his duty as a husband. For the film's ending to be perceived as entirely unproblematic, we would have to sympathize with Richard's character and point of view. Nový's performance successfully elicits from us this willingness to forgive his indiscretions.

By the end of *Saturday,* Helena and Richard reconcile with their spouses, having forsaken their rebellious ways in favor of maintaining the status quo and retreating within the safety of the traditional home. Despite the serious nature of their indiscretions and the external factors at play, neither one is vilified by scandal, but allowed to return to the

[439] Ibid., 3.

safety of their homes. However, the way in which the film's narrative abruptly forces closure without bringing any of the goals and ambitions of the character to fruition makes this a particularly unsatisfactory resolution. What is presented recalls critical approaches to the melodramatic "unhappy, happy ending" in that realistically, it appears to be impossible, or at least highly improbable that things would turn out so well.[440] The addition to the final sequence of Jiří and Karla—understood as the innocent couple—comments on, and even criticizes the surface level in which the "troubled-couples" settled their conflicts. Not only is their relationship a direct byproduct of Helena and Richard's affair, but their new and unblemished fidelity declares itself as diametrically opposed to the tainted relationships of the two married couples. Immediately, we find ourselves asking: Are the couples truly happy? And, will Helena or Richard eventually face repercussions for their transgressions?

For Protectorate audiences, this resolution, with its acknowledgement of the impossibility of achieving a truly happy ending, would surely have a deep emotional resonance. On the surface, *Saturday* presents a portrait of a self-contained Czech society and makes no reference to the changed conditions of the outer world. But even this parallel world is haunted by the external factors at play. The fact, for instance, that Helena and Richard capitulate to more powerful institutional forces evokes notions of Czech victimhood. Thus, the film still carries a vision of the world in which the annexation of the Sudetenland after the Munich Accords, the great betrayal by

[440] For more on the "unhappy, happy ending" in the "Sirkian melodrama" see: Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning*; Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 43-69.; Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk," 53-56.; Paul Willemen, "Towards and Analysis of the Sirkian System," *Screen* 13, no. 4 (1972), 128-134.

Czechoslovakia's Western allies, resulted in their occupation by German forces. The ending actually camouflages any social inconsistences by re-focusing the audience's sympathies onto the domestic sphere, though other political strategies are not as easy to disguise.

To return to the generational gap between Richard and Helena, the two are very clearly products of different times—representing a society divided not only in terms of social standing, but also in terms of its distance from a happier time. The way in which the characters belong to different worlds forces us to reconsider the foundational values associated with the "golden age" of the First Republic: independence, economic prosperity, and humanist values.[441] These uniquely Czech themes would be known to Czech audiences, who could read between the lines, and would be sensitive to the different Czech experiences that Richard and Helena characterized. Richard, the wealthy urbane industrialist, would represent the romance and sophistication of an idealized First Republic high society. Helena's fascination with him would thereby express the younger generation's yearning for romance and luxury during the oppressive occupation. For Czech audiences, then, their affair would appear to unite the generations in their mutual desire to escape from the harsh realities of the occupation through a nostalgic return to a lost age, during which Czechoslovakia was independent, democratic, and thriving. Furthermore, though the press did not call attention to Nový's personal situation, audiences would have surely been aware of it. By January 1945, when the film was released, the Nazis started transporting the "last Jews" exempted from deportation. In

[441] On the "golden age" of the First Czechoslovak Republic see: Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*: *The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe 1914-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

February 1945, Nový was transported to the Hagibor labor camp in the eastern suburbs of Prague and then to the Osterode-Harz concentration camp in lower Saxony (he escaped in April 1945), and Alice was transported to the Terezín ghetto where she spent the last months of the war.[442]

But *Saturday* has an underlying narrative current that is more sinister than it appears on the surface. While there is no doubt that Richard made the bulk of his fortune during the years of the First Republic, his continued economic security would suggest a certain level of collaboration on his part. The Protectorate's industries played a central role in the German wartime economy, and so he must work in some way for the Reich (then again, we never actually see him work on screen).

Perhaps this detail was something that Czech cinemagoers could overlook or ignore. Because the film did not explicitly reference the outside world and its conflicts, audiences could choose to focus on the ways in which its depiction of domestic life recalled pre-war society. But where some saw the rejection of Nazi values, others saw these very same values on display. Despite speaking Czech and hinting at Czech-German collaboration, *Saturday* still expressed the values enforced by the Nazi censors. Thus, there is a mutual blind spot at the intersection of these two readings. The point being that though *Saturday* was not overtly political in any way, even the smallest gesture, either unwittingly or by design, would remind audiences of the political realities they wanted to see outside of the screen world.

[442] Gmiterková, "Kristián v montérkách," 54.

In retrospect, we can read *Saturday* for signs of resistance, although it fits the conventions of other films from the era intended to promote the Nazi's racialized ideology. One of the main goals of the Nazi cinema was to promote a social order in which women existed purely within the domestic sphere; their sole purpose to produce and raise young fascists. In this context, *Saturday*'s reinforcement of the domestic sphere—the ultimate reunion of the two married couples, and the added union of a third—takes on less than desirable connotations. That Helena eventually returns to her husband, for example, suggests that her future resides in the unwavering comfort of the home.

In December 1944, *Saturday* reflected the desired Nazi values.[443] Nový's name was simply removed from the opening credits, and the film passed inspection without being flagged for social critique or any other potentially subversive qualities.[444] The censors viewed *Saturday* as a straightforward romance about "the wife of a low-level official who leaves her husband for a wealthy industrialist, and then returns home."[445] Later, in the turbulent political and social climate of the postwar period, this fact, combined with its light theme and the presence of actress Adina Mandlová, condemned as a Nazi-collaborator, would become an indictment of the film. It was decisively a "collaborative effort" and thus was not screened in mainstream Czechoslovak cinemas for some time.

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[443] "Czech-Moravian film headquarters in Prague 'Don Juan Goes into Retirement,' 'Saturday,'" June 29, 1944, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[444] Gmiterková, "Kristián v monterkach," 76fn277.
[445] "Czech-Moravian film headquarters in Prague 'Don Juan Goes into Retirement,' 'Saturday,'" June 29, 1944, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.

In the cinemas of postwar Czechoslovakia, interwar and Protectorate feature films reappeared almost immediately as "older Czech films" (*starší české filmy*) suggesting that, though a decade old at most, they were nevertheless associated with a distant past, artifacts from a long vanished place and time.[446] The so-called "old films" (as they were referred to by the press) re-released had a clear social critique that supported the desired ideological point of view (such as *The White Disease/ Bílá nemoc* [Hugo Haas, 1937]—an adaptation of Karel Čapek's anti-fascist play), and were generally prestige films with clear cultural or artistic value (literary adaptations of national revival works or films considered socially and aesthetically progressive).[447]

But by 1948, certain film genres associated with popular entertainment, such as folk fairy tales, Red Library adaptations, and operettas were taken out of circulation completely.[448] Thus, little attention was paid to *Saturday*—or any other melodrama film—and this would remain the case until the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the circumstances surrounding their production, their particular cinematic style, or their social significance.[449]

This changed significantly after the Warsaw Pact armies shut down the short period of liberalization inaugurated by the reforms movement that resulted in the Prague Spring. After August 1968, the Moscow-aligned wing of the Czechoslovak Communist

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[446] While some of these films were part of the initial 100 pre-war titles that circulated in 1945 Czechoslovak distribution, by 1948, they were deemed unsuitable. See: Jiří Havelka, *Filmové hospodářství 1951 až 1955* (Prague: Čs. filmové nakladatelství, 1972), 307-314.; For more on "old films" see: Lukáš Skupa, "Filmy, které nestárnou: Distribuce českých meziválečných a protektoratnich filmu v letech 1945-1970" (Essay, Masarykova univerzita, 2008). I am grateful to Petr Szczepanik for pointing me to this essay.
[447] O.K. "Návrat Hugo Haase," *Filmová práce* 2 no. 15, April, 13, 1946, 4.
[448] Havelka, *Filmové hospodářství 1951 až 1955,* 307 – 314. ; Skupa, "Filmy, které nestárnou," 4-5.
[449] According to Skupa, *Saturday* was also briefly distributed in 1964. Skupa, "Filmy, které nestárnou," 12.

Party slowly implemented the process of "normalization" (*normalizace*), a term that Paula Bren explains, "denot[ed] the Communist Party's intention to return Czechoslovakia to 'normality' following the abnormality of Prague Spring."[450] By 1969, the counter-reform policies of normalization had affected the Czechoslovak film industry: production on new feature films ceased, some films made between 1969 and 1970 appeared briefly in cinemas and others not at all, older films were withdrawn from circulation (especially the New Wave films of the 1960s), reformers were purged from the industry, and the creative teams at Barrandov studios were replaced.[451] Moreover, the government introduced a new film program that would align with the normalization of popular culture.

Melodrama films spoke to the normalization in a number of ways. First, on a purely pragmatic level, they were already-made products without any overhead production costs. While some needed minimal edits to remove unsavory actors or scenes, most required little to no changes. These films were thus cheap to circulate and to distribute. Second, with their ostensible cultural naïveté and moral appeal, melodrama films seemed to be blank slates that could easily reflect the correct ideological perspective. Any hint of Nazi ideology could be pushed to the margins, and the film could be made to correspond to, and indeed to act out, whatever the state needed from

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[450] Paulina Bren, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall… Is the West the Fairest of Them All?: Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis)Contents," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 9, No 4 (Fall 2008), 836.

[451] Jaromír Blažejovský. "Czech Cinema in the Normalization Period (1969 – 1989): A Time of the Servants," in *Český filmový plakát 20. století* (Brno & Prague: Moravská galerie & Exlibris, 2004.), 68.; Pavel Skopal, "Filmy z nouze. Způsoby rámcování filmových projekcí a divácké zkušenosti v období stalinismu," *Iluminace* 21, no. 3 (2009), 70-91.; Pavel Skopal, "Úvod : plány, změny a continuity" in *Naplánovaná kinematografie : český filmový průmysl 1945 až 1960*, ed. Pavel Skopal (Prague : Academia, 2012), 11-26.

them. Furthermore, the light romantic content of these films, and their overwhelmingly female protagonists, encouraged the perception that they served as insignificant distractions from the overwhelming oppression of the Nazi occupation. Their long absence from cinemas meant that these films were fondly remembered by those who had seen them nearly twenty years prior. In this context, they could be completely divorced from any unsavory connotations, and introduced to an entire generation of cinemagoers who had not experienced the war

On December 19, 1969, *Saturday* was approved—as a "Czech film comedy"—to be re-released in cinemas throughout Czechoslovakia for audiences of all ages.[452] The "intelligent social comedy about the amorous adventures of a modern Don Juan" had its official premiere in January 1970.[453] Promotional materials and journalistic press from this retrospective release show that the historical circumstances of its original release were not hidden or pushed aside; rather, it was stated as a matter-of-fact. *Saturday*, the evaluator noted, would be well received by the "middle-generation of audiences"—the middle-aged cinemagoers for whom this film would evoke a nostalgia for their youth.[454] For these older audiences, *Saturday*'s status as an older Czech film provided an expanded context for emotional knowledge and thus could function as an experiential practice that fostered memory and reinforced identity formation. This was early in the normalization, when cultural questions were fresh and acute.

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[452] "Saturday," December 19, 1969, 412/93975, Promotional Materials, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Ibid.

Even its entry in *Filmový přehled* (*Film Review*), the film periodical that provided cinema managers and operators with detailed information about all films in domestic circulation, clearly states that *Saturday* was made in 1944, at the very end of the occupation. Moreover, it goes on to note that "the film, made at the end of the Nazi occupation, has all the features of films produced in that period: the lightness, uncomplicatedness, superficiality with which all serious problems were passed off at the time, translated into a comedic note and ultimately serving as at least a momentary escape from oppressive wartime life."[455] Though the entry makes it clear that *Saturday* is "not excellent art," it also distances itself from other films made during the Nazi occupation.[456] *Saturday*, it implies, provided Czech cinemagoers an important public space in which they could experience Czech values. It served as a lifeboat, allowing Czech cinemagoers a space of refuge in the "flood of German kitsch."[457] And, it echoes earlier reviews: first, reminding us the *Saturday* is a women's film that presents a sentimental story that is reminiscent of the "plain calendar stories [which were] filmed in en mass" during the interwar and Protectorate period; then, reinforcing the comparison to Frič's *Kristián*—"but this time in a woman's gender."[458]

Saturday was escapist entertainment intended for female audiences, it was already understood to be de-politicized. Because the film was viewed as an everyday morality tale—in which a woman is separated from and then returned to her home—it reinforced the status quo, and linked these dominant values and attitudes both symbolically and

[455] "Saturday," *Filmový přehled* 48, 1970.
[456] Ibid.
[457] Ibid.
[458] Ibid.

affectively to fundamental Czech values, recasting images of family, safety, and continuity within the contemporaneous social and political climate. The simplistic moralism of the film's plot made it easy for those in power to exploit any contradictions or ambiguities and replace them with alternate meanings. For instance, the film's ending—which undercuts the plot development by returning its protagonists to their points of origin with little evidence of substantive change (psychological or otherwise)—could be easily mapped onto the desired narrative of normalization, which Bren characterizes as "intended to be without events, stagnant."[459] This adaptability was ultimately made possible by the power of the Czech national myth, the pervasiveness of specific local moral narratives, and by the public knowledge that constructed a specific memory of that shared past—lived or transmitted.

Saturday was not only screened in cinemas, it was also broadcast on Czechoslovak state television (*Československá televize*) after its normalization-era "premiere."[460] In fact, a schedule published in *Týdeník Československé televize* (*Czechoslovak Television Weekly*) proves that the film reached the Czechoslovak public by entering their living rooms via the television in February 1969.[461] On this schedule, under a publicity still of Nový as the "modern Don Juan," it states: "Older Czech films are still very popular with the majority of television viewers. This week we have prepared

[459] Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 4.
[460] Šimon Bauer, "Televize jako prostředek subvencování kinematografie Analýza smluvních vztahů Československé televize a Československého státního filmu v období 1953-1965," (PhD Diss.: Masaryk University, 2011).
[461] "Týdeník Československá televize," February 8-17, 1969, Czech Television Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.

the comedy *Saturday* which was filmed in 1944 by the director Václav Wasserman."[462] More than that, television weeklies show additional broadcasts in 1971, 1973 and so on.[463] The editors always describe *Saturday* as a comedy. Its numerous broadcasts suggest Czechoslovak state television's early recognition of the importance of popular interwar and Protectorate films for shaping the collective memory of its citizens, and more broadly, the cultural value and power of melodrama.

Paulina Bren notes that in 1972, almost twenty years after Czechoslovak state television had its first broadcast, approximately 80 percent of Czechoslovak families owned a television set. [464] Bren has analyzed the way in which the low cultural form of television played a vital role in normalization politics, arguing that in the 1970s and 1980s, television offered Czechoslovakia's socialist citizens "an acceptable site for negotiating the world of late communist normalization and for working out one's relationship to the state."[465]As she suggests, "despite the lack of choices," television programs reached "all imaginable demographic groups … making, remaking, and unmaking meaning" for citizen viewers.[466] Television thus facilitated the everyday education of the socialist individual, shaping official public opinion, mediating politics, and informing cultural memory.

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[462] "Týdeník Československá televize," March 6, 1971, Czech Television Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[463] Ibid.
[464] Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer*, 112.
[465] Bren notes that after watching the events of the Prague Spring unfold on live on television, Czechoslovak Communist Party leadership decided to take advantage of the relatively new medium. Ibid., 8-9.
[466] Ibid., 9.

By 1973, Czechoslovak state television started broadcasting the program Films for Those Who Remember ("Filmy pro pamětníky"/ FPP) Sunday afternoons and evenings on channel one.[467] Initially, the "film-cycle" consisted of twenty titles from the 1930s and 1940s—a mix of drama, comedy, and action films—but over the years, more were added; this included melodramas like *Saturday*.[468] As a 1975 internal government report asserted, the FPP cycle was strategically formulated in response to the rapidly increasing influence of television over free time, to promote the "social function of the new medium of mass communication."[469] The reuse of "older Czech films" sought to inspire a "broad range of support from the ranks of television viewers," and bridge the generational divide between those who had lived through the war, and those who had not.[470] The films selected were not politically committed or even taken seriously by the public; instead, they were entertaining. As ordinary Czechoslovak citizens gathered around their televisions to watch these older films within the depoliticized space of the home, the films took on private meanings, even as they affirmed the official ideological goals of normalization.

The FPP cycle went on to play a particularly important role in constructing a Czech national experience of the past. Over the years, films included in the FPP film-cycle have been re-positioned in the popular imagination—they are no longer viewed as

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[467] "'Analyza divačkeho ohlasu cyklů Film Pro Pamětníky v letech 1973-1974, Studijní odbor ČST," Czech Television Archives, Prague, Czech Republic, 5.
[468] Ibid., 5.
[469] Ibid., 5.
[470] Ibid., 5. The DVDs of these films are also labelled "filmy pro pamětníky." According to the archival document, the average viewing of FPP for the period of 1973 to 1974 in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic was 63-percent.

“older Czech films,” but examples of “classic Czech cinema”—and continue to be broadcast under the auspices of the program, mostly on weekends and holidays.

To take this label—films for those who remember—to evoke the subjectivity of the witness—reflects a desire for audiences with a personal and lived connection to the wartime period, for whom these films would still carry lingering connotative echoes and experiential meanings. And for those who did not have lived memory of those times, these films would evoke emotions that would became a stand-in for the memory they could never actually possess. In the context of the historical moment these films represent, it is telling that their socio-cultural meaning was constructed in terms of witnessing and remembering—concepts so deeply tied to current studies of the Holocaust and its traumatic effects—with the goal to intertwine the various experiences of the war, making room for the addition of divergent local, regional, and national memories. Furthermore, the films for people who remember have been—and continue to be—watched by a broad spectrum of generations over the years. For each generation of viewers, these old films have different meanings, and these perspectives reflect their unique generational vantage points, expressing their national-cultural experience. Thus, viewers inscribe and highlight their knowledge of the past onto these films, simultaneously producing, shaping, and revising cultural meanings, which correspond with both individual and collective needs and desires.

What is so remarkable about this case study is that the NFA’s selected corpus restricts the genre to one specific historical moment. Ultimately, this judgment attaches melodrama to the social, cultural, and political history of Czech cinema during the Nazi

occupation, and implicitly, the events of the Holocaust. Melodrama gains a historical specificity; yet it also reveals that as much as the genre might be integral to this place and time, it must still be there, even if it remains unidentified, disguised as another genre form.

Where did melodrama go *after* 1945, the year in which the genre seemingly ceases to exist? Certainly, it did not just disappear from the Czech cinema in May 1945 with the liberation; the genre was not replaced during state socialism, and it was definitely not rendered unnecessary after the fall of the Iron Curtain. If a search into the specificities of Czech film melodrama was indeed successful in revealing the genre's essential characteristics and functions, the resulting analysis also unveils the usefulness of its popular and conventional ubiquity. Melodrama, while technically not considered to be an operative genre in post-1944 Czech cinema, actually enabled films to look back on the horrors of the past and stress the renewal of the nation. Melodrama might seem innocuous, but it is an important political tool for national memory projects, simultaneously reinforcing and supplanting memories as official history. Indeed, before and after Czechoslovak authorities developed policies to minimize any serious discussion of the Jewish Holocaust, Czechoslovak films deployed melodramatic rhetoric to make sense of the traumatic events of the wartime period, making narratives that would be morally legible for the Czech and Slovak public. The work of melodrama thus consisted of communicating a particular kind of cultural-national literacy, one that reinforced affective behavior, and produced the moral consciousness that embedded the Holocaust as part of a collective memory.

Chapter Three
Melodrama as Testimony: The Pathos of Never Again

"If the Holocaust is unsayable, then we must rethink the bases of testimony."

– Primo Levi[471]

Melodrama is the last witness called to the stand. Testaments become testimony. Melodrama attests to loss; it stands in for a time we can no longer reach but continuously strive for. If tragedy leads us to pity, then melodrama assuages collective guilt with the catharsis of pathos.[472] Melodrama answers the plea for justice: it posits cause and consequence, guilt and innocence, power and powerlessness by appealing to emotional and moral truths.[473] It serves as evidence—as a social document of emotional knowledge—it is *what can be said* and *what must be rendered* comprehensible.[474] Thus, melodrama needs to be understood as a form of historical testimony and a testament of prevailing social consciousness. Formulating melodrama in a way that navigates us around the problems of witnessing and the overinvestment in the un-representability of

[471] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (Abacus Books, 1989), 11-12.
[472] This is a reiteration of a discussion I had with Koel Banerjee.
[473] Christine Gledhill explains that melodrama asks, "how to live, who is justified, who are the innocents, where is villainy at work now?" Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 234.
[474] Linda Williams uses the analogy of the courtroom to discuss melodrama's demand for moral justice, writing: "audiences of melodrama are positioned like juries of common law trials. Guilt or innocence is determined by orchestrated recognitions of truth that are inextricably tied to how audiences, who are essentially juries of peers, feel toward the accused." Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 81. Similarly, Marcia Landy argues "In being confronted with the painful, affectively recusant images of the Holocaust, the spectator is summoned to do jury service and to make judgment." Marcia Landy, "Cinematic History, Melodrama, and the Holocaust," 379.

the horrors of the Holocaust reveals how films place emotional *knowing* about the Holocaust into a deeply felt historical narrative and collective memory.[475]

If, as Peter Brooks suggests, the melodramatic mode responds to moments of national crisis and ideological rupture, then the end of the war, quite predictably, triggered its moral imagination.[476] Certainly, the six long years of the occupation brought about radical changes in Czechoslovakia. As historian Bradley Abrams describes it, the brutality of the war and its destructive effects "created conditions encouraging for a radical reconstruction of the social and economic functions of Eastern Europe society [more broadly]."[477] All the wartime traumas—particularly the 1938 Munich betrayal, in which Czechoslovakia was "abandoned by her allies … split [in] two, and was forced to turn over Bohemia and Moravia to Nazi 'protection'"— led to what Abrams refers to as a "crisis of Czech consciousness."[478] The perceived moral failures and betrayal by Western liberal democracies, combined with the moral stigma of wartime collaboration, he explains, left Czechs preoccupied with the "struggle for the soul of the nation."[479] To put it in melodramatic terms, the struggle between the oppressive past and the promise of "building a new republic" culminated in moving Czechoslovak citizens along the "road to socialism."[480]

The political climate in postwar Czechoslovakia needs to be understood in order to place this film history in context. Briefly, historians have detailed how, in March 1945,

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[475] See: Halbwachs, "The Social Frameworks of Memory."; Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 75, no.1 (Spring 2008), 49-72.
[476] Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 5.
[477] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul*, 22.
[478] Ibid., 15.
[479] Ibid., 104.
[480] Ibid., 95.

during the last months of the war, former-and-future President Edvard Beneš traveled with several members of his exile government from London to Moscow, where they sat for political negotiations with the members of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa* or KSČ) and established the postwar government.[481] It was under Beneš's leadership that the so-called "National Front" (*Národní fronta*), a coalition made up of six political parties, four Czech and two Slovak, all leaning left-to-center, took shape.[482] The multiparty government ruled without opposition; all conservative parties, including Czechoslovakia's largest prewar party (the Czechoslovak Agrarians) were banned for "betraying the state" in the post-Munich era.[483] In April, the National Front met in the liberated Slovak town of Košice and announced the Košice Government Program (*Košický vládní program*), a series of ruling decrees that sought, as Jiří Knapík writes, "the 'democratization of culture'…[and] 'ideological revision,' understood as the targeted reinforcement of a 'Slavic,' and primarily pro-Soviet, orientation in cultural politics with a disavowal of any German cultural heritage in the Bohemian lands."[484] This included the "Great Decree," which ostensibly set out to punish "'Nazi criminals, traitors, and their accomplices," but as Benjamin Frommer

[481] Benjamin Frommer, "Retribution as Legitimation: The Uses of Political Justice in Postwar Czechoslovakia," *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 4 (November 2004), 480.
[482] Ibid., 480.
[483] Ibid., 480.
[484] Jiří Knapík, "Czechoslovak Culture and Cinema, 1945-1960," in *Cinema in Service of the State: Perspectives on Film Culture in the GDR and Czechoslovakia*, 1945-1960," eds. Lars Karl and Pavel Skopal (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 40.

explains, justified the "ethnic cleansing" of the Czech lands by positioning the transfer of Germans as the logical continuation of broader de-Nazification efforts.[485]

As Frommer has argued persuasively, the "extensive system of summary courts and administrative tribunals" established by presidential decree did not only seek to purge collaborators, but also to "legitimate the contemporary regime, justify its policies, and delegitimize its opponents."[486] Frommer borrows Rodney Barker's concept of "self-legitimation" to argue that the postwar trials provided a public venue for the country's leaders, the majority of whom spent the war in exile in London or Moscow, to validate their wartime and postwar decisions.[487] No doubt, he explains, Beneš was especially interested in using the trials for political ends, particularly to legitimate the expulsions of ethnic minorities from Czechoslovakia.[488] In addition, the trials publicly discredited the leadership of the Second Republic, namely former President Emil Hácha, who had blamed Beneš for the Munich betrayal, and thus bolstered his "claim as the rightful successor of the interwar republic."[489] And yet, Frommer notes, this wasn't completely necessary: the results of the first postwar elections in May 1946, as he says, "offer evidence of the popular legitimacy of the regime."[490] Indeed, as Frommer summarizes,

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[485] Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77, 63-94.
[486] Frommer, "Retribution as Legitimation," 477.; also see: *Frommer, National Cleansing*, 267-314.
[487] Ibid., 477-478.
[488] Ibid., 477-479.
[489] Ibid., 479. As Frommer explains, Beneš wanted to gain legal legitimacy his "theory of legal continuity," which argued that "the German invasion of March 1939 and the French-British failure to uphold guarantees to Czechoslovakia had violated, and therefore invalidated the Munich Pact of September 1938"—and thus, everything that happened in the war years, including his resignation, was invalid.
[490] Ibid., 479. While Frommer notes that it "another provisional parliament…it was merely a reshuffled version of the old one, chosen by the same National Front leaders who had run the country since the end of the war." Ibid., 481.

the power and importance of the trials added the judicial legitimacy needed to "endorse their version of the past, and consequently [their] claims to rule."[491]

Here, in the context of postwar retribution, we can think of melodrama as adding a sense of moral value to justice. Melodrama makes morality more than just legible—it legitimates it in the name of a historical narrative. With this in mind, this chapter analyzes two non-fiction short films made in Czechoslovakia just after the war: *A Letter from Prague* (*Dopis z Prahy*, František Šádek, 1945) and *Lest We Forget* (*Nezapomeneme*, Václav Švarc, 1946); one targeted at Western audiences, and the other at domestic audiences. Both short films use atrocity footage to fashion moral meaning about the nation's wartime past. I say moral meaning thinking of Hayden White's observation "that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats."[492] If these films have a visceral impact, it is not only because they depict the spectacle of atrocity footage, or because they mobilize a particular political ideology, but also because they attest to the pathos inherent in the act of remembering.

A Letter from Prague (*Dopis z prahy*, František Šádek, 1945)

In the "special newsreel" *A Letter from Prague*, Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, son of the "President-liberator" Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, speaks in English, saying that he has been writing letters to his friends abroad who seem "worried" and "puzzled" about the

[491] Ibid., 492.
[492] Hayden White, "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," *Critical Inquiry 7*, no.1 (Autumn 1980), 18.

speedy retribution and transfer of the country's German population.[493] Masaryk's answer expresses his deep felt patriotic conviction and his desire for foreigners to witness the crisis of the occupation and its aftermath for themselves: "I wish, my friends, you had been there and seen what the Germans had left behind. If you don't see, you can't ever quite understand." Following this opening speech, there is a cross-fade to black-and-white footage from the postwar trials of Josef Pfitzner, whom Masaryk describes as "the Nazi lord mayor of Prague," and the former State Secretary and State Minister of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Karl Hermann Frank; Pfitzner and Frank, the prisoners, are juxtaposed with evidence of their brutal crimes against Czechoslovak citizens, making their guilt absolutely visible.[494]

Figure 12

Figure 13

A Letter from Prague presents a particularly effective image of Czechoslovakia's wartime suffering at the hands of the Germans. Masaryk's voice-over commentary stresses the victimization of the country's "peaceful and decent citizens," and compels us

[493] Here I quote Masaryk's voice-over. His address is entirely in English.
[494] In spring and summer 1946, the Prague National Court tried five Czech government ministers of the former Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, including Frank and Pfitzner. Frommer, "Retribution as Legitimation," 482.; For more on the Frank trial and the use of Lidice footage as testimonial evidence see: Lucie Česálková, "Film Documentation of the Destruction of Lidice," *The Moving Image* 15, no. 2 (Fall 2015), 28-49.

to think likewise. He tells us, again and again, to look at the evidence—to *witness* the suffering, oppression, and death that the Germans brought not only to Czechs, but also to their Soviet allies. We next see graphic proof of Nazi violence against civilians—footage of men digging up bodies and pulling them from a mass grave.[495] These bodies—in various stages of undress and decomposition—are arranged in two rows and inspected by a doctor, who attempts to identify them, as Masaryk explains, "by their teeth or special marks."[496] The camera pans across the rows of corpses. This is followed by an official burial service for these "victims of Nazi Socialism" (a banner reads: "*Oběti nacistického socialismu*") in Karlovy Vary. Members of the Red Army and Czechoslovak authorities can clearly be seen looking on as the wooden coffins are lowered down into the earth. The camera pans across the mass grave to show the wooden coffins, numbered and lined up in orderly rows.

Figure 14

Figure 15

[495] This footage is taken from: The Czechoslovak Newsreel/*Československý filmový týdeník* 7/1945.
[496] Masaryk's voice-over.

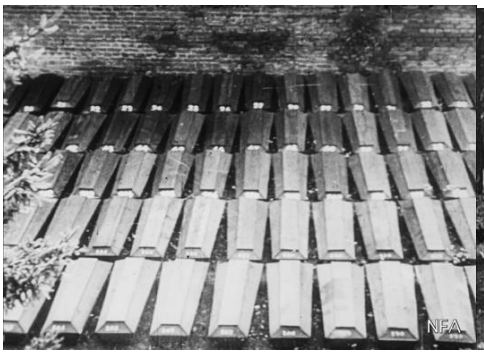

Figure 16 **Figure 17**

The film goes on to show footage of *what was once* the sleepy village of Lidice where, in revenge for the assassination of Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich, Nazi forces destroyed the town, and murdered or deported its inhabitants.[497] "This was Lidice," Masaryk tells us, "where people lived their lives like their brothers in Pennsylvania or Wales." A cut to an extreme close-up of a document dated 9 June 1942 displays the official order from the Reichsführer. "*LIDITZ*" is capitalized and heavily underlined in black ink. Next, we see the "only preserved footage" from the destruction of the village (which Masaryk also notes was shot by a German film unit).[498] In a seconds-long clip shot from a distance, a church implodes, and the village erupts in smoke. Then, we see footage shot in the aftermath of the destruction: the remnants of a house, the debris left behind, and an elementary school class photo that Masaryk tells us was taken just before that fateful day in June. "Where are they now?" he asks, putting names to the faces of some of the village's forever lost children. Another photograph, presumably taken by a Nazi photographer (a "perpetrator image"), shows what happened

[497] While Heydrich was not mortally wounded in the May 27, 1942 attack by Czech and Slovak paratroopers, he died of a blood infection on June 4 1942.
[498] Masaryk's voice-over.

to their fathers. The camera pans across the image, emphasizing the 193 bodies of the men and boys over the age of fifteen who were executed by firing squad on the ground, drawing our eyes to the mattresses the Nazis set against a wall to prevent the ricochet of bullets. Curiously, Masaryk does not mention that the village's women were deported to Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany—but the image that precedes the story of Lidice shows a bus marked Ravensbrück full of returning survivors.

Figure 18

Figure 19

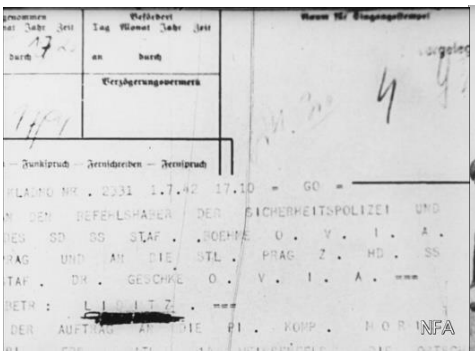

Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 22

Figure 23

Figure 24

Figure 25

The striking combination of wartime footage and postwar reflections—the interplay between past and present, life and death, still and moving images—gives a visceral feeling of what has been destroyed. It reminds us of the people who will never return and provides a narrative that insists all Germans answer for the ruthless crimes they committed in the previous years. Over footage of the triumphant May 5 Prague uprising, the liberation of Prague by the Red Army, and the liberation of Pilsen by United States forces, Masaryk addresses the moral imperative of retributive justice directly: "Never Again, calls our land. Never Again, whisper our dead ..." The final shots return to Lidice to testify to its postwar transformation into a memorial site visited by people from

all over the world wishing to pay their respects to "the village that was murdered."[499] Among those attending the memorial service led by a Catholic priest, a minor British official is singled out by name, and by close-up, suggesting a direct address to British audiences. Finally, the camera pans across the open field where Lidice once stood, and Masaryk declares: "Let the dead rest in peace. Let the guilty be punished. Let the evil be banned and forgotten.

Figure 26

Figure 27

Figure 28

Figure 29

[499] Masaryk's voice-over.

This final statement is crucial for how it positions Czechoslovakia's response to the traumas of the recent past. When the Foreign Minister says, "Never Again," he is reminding viewers of the massive loss of life and the moral devastation of the war years and calling for the restitution of traditional social and moral order in the newly reunited Czechoslovakia (the so-called Third Republic). Never Again, Alejandro Baer and Natan Snzaider tell us, "is a powerful formula, which provides moral certainty within a temporally organized world."[500] The phrase copies signs that were allegedly found at the liberation of Buchenwald and other concentration camps, connecting Czechoslovakia's moral virtue to that of other innocent victims of Nazi terror.[501] Here it helps to establish a dialogue between past and present that clarifies a privileged Czechoslovak victimhood and forcefully asserts the moral obligation to deal with Nazi crimes and past wrongs. Not only does it justify the trials and punishment of former Nazis, but it also seeks legitimacy for the removal of so-called "ethnic Germans" under the cover of security and protection from the repetition of this horrific past.[502] Thus, Masaryk's language aims to accomplish many things: to brand all Germans as villains, to justify, as Frommer says, the "national cleansing" of postwar Czechoslovakia, to manage the newly liberated and re-united

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[500] Alejandro Baer and Natan Snzaider, *Memory and Forgetting in the Post-Holocaust Era: The Ethics of Never Again* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 4.

[501] Ibid., 5. ; Baer and Snzaider also trace the saying to Buchenwald Oath. They write, "On April 19, 1945, only a few days after American troops had entered the Buchenwald concentration camp, thousands of survivors gathered around its *Appellplatz* and took the following oath …. mostly socialist and communist survivors (among them Jews)." Ibid., 9.; In *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg attributes its origins to handmade signs made by prisoners at Buchenwald and other camps shortly after being liberated by the Allies. Later, in an interview, Hilberg would revise this claim: "I think it was really the Communists who were behind that, but I am not sure." Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Third Edition (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 1289.; "Is there a New Anti-Semitism? A Conversation with Raul Hilberg," *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture* 6, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2007), http://www.logosjournal.com/issue_6.1-2/hilberg.htm.

[502] For more on the postwar "national cleansing" of Czechoslovakia see Frommer, *National Cleansing*.

Republic's image abroad, to promote Czechoslovak values as essentially good, just, and democratic, and to encourage viewers in the West to connect Nazi victimization to the Czechoslovak people.[503] Thus, Never Again insists on the importance on the act of remembering, not only for commemorating the historical past, but also for strategically dealing with the future in the present.

Never Again: the use of such a statement is ideal for the cinematic representation of the Holocaust because it appears to be an ethical mandate to the memorialization of historical trauma. An analogous statement would seem to be "never forget," which, in turn, invokes the aphorism by George Santayana, "those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it"—or "the act of remembering is an act of resistance, dissent, and challenge."[504] Both imply that our relationship to the past determines who we are in the present and our ability to shape a more desirable future. Yet the dialectical relationship between the two highlights the tensions between the imperative to remember, and the necessity of forgetting.

As Baer and Snzaider have shown, thinking about the ethics of Never Again constructs a new temporality that complicates the boundaries between past and present, history and memory.[505] The ethics of Never Again recognizes the "ethical work of engaged people" as crucial for the production of knowledge and meaning about the past:

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[503] This rhetoric evokes the Czech national myth. As Orzoff tells it: "under Habsburg rule, the innately democratic, peace-loving, tolerant Czechs were viciously repressed by bellicose, authoritarian, reactionary Austrians, under whose regime the Czech language and national consciousness almost died out. Czech national identity was rescued by a heroic, devoted group of intellectuals, dubbed the Awakeners, who brought the dormant nation back to life by recrafting literary Czech, retelling Czech history, and making political claims on behalf of a 'Czech nation.'" Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 11.
[504] George Santayana, *The Life of Reason: Reason in Common Sense* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998), 284.; Quoted in: Landy, "Cinematic History, Melodrama, and the Holocaust," 377.
[505] Baer and Snzaider, *Memory and Forgetting*, 5.

it insists that social, political, and cultural forces make history legible in the present.[506] Indeed, Never Again is fixated on the ethos of the past and its "already-known horrors" ; but, at the same time, it is also invested in our strong attachment to the past-we-have-lost, especially the sentimental pull to confront *what happened* in the contemporary moment.[507] While generally associated with the ethical dimensions of memorializing history—of recovering an authentic past—Never Again testifies to the nostalgic longings and affective pressures of time, insisting on its representability (in the form of imprints, ghosts, traces, or inscriptions).[508] In its command to remember, the phrase implies, of course, repetition: it reminds us Never Again, Again and Again. Thus, Never Again is an intrinsically melodramatic formula, rooted in the symbolic and affective potential of coming to terms with the past, and directed toward the future; this desire to connect affectively with re-presentations of the past produces a "too late" sensation—"a longing for a space of experience"—otherwise known as melodramatic pathos.[509]

Melodramatic Pathos: "Working Through," Time, and Timing

In his influential essay "Melodrama and Tears," Steve Neale established the centrality of time and timing to the production of melodramatic pathos.[510] Neale approaches melodrama as a mode of narration, and crucially shifts the discussion from questions of genre or mode to the melodramatic structures of narrative time: in particular, the

[506] Ibid., 5.
[507] Ibid., 5
[508] Ibid., 5.
[509] For more on melodramatic pathos and the "too late" sensation see: Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," 6-23.; Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 42-88.
[510] Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," 8.

fundamental "knowledge discrepancies" between the point of view of the characters and the point of view of the spectator.[511] In adapting literary critic Franco Moretti's understanding of "moving literature" and the narrative device of "too late" to film melodrama, Neale argued that melodrama moves us to tears through the *irreversibility* of time.[512] For Neale, as for Moretti, tears are a "product of powerlessness"—a powerlessness formed through hierarchical structures in knowledge (coincidences, misunderstandings, delays, etc.)—but also in the recognition that time (or a life) is irrevocably lost.[513] Because, Neale tells us, "time is the ultimate object of loss," tears are not limited to sad-ending melodramas; happy-ending melodramas are also suffused with a sense of loss, and we cry because "it is in reality always too late."[514] Try as we might, we cannot turn back the forward march of time.

But to Neale's "too late," Linda Williams added "in the nick of time."[515] There is no doubt that pathos comes from the knowledge of *irreversible time*, but as Williams notes, "action sometimes regains [or rather, *reverses*] it."[516] Citing Peter Brooks's claim that "melodrama begins, and wants to end, in a space of innocence," Williams argued that melodramatic protagonists often seek to reverse time—to return to a point of origin—to restore a time that existed before their suffering.[517] Williams concluded that melodrama is

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[511] Ibid., 7.
[512] Ibid., 8. Franco Moretti, "Kindergarten," in *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Form* (London: Verso, 2005),157-181.
[513] Ibid., 11.
[514] Ibid., 20-22.
[515] Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 69. My emphasis.
[516] Ibid., 68.
[517] Ibid., 65.

a "dialectic of pathos and action."[518] Or, to put it another way, in pathos-centered melodramatic narratives, action responds to the pathos of suffering and leads to the recognition of innocence. In other words: sometimes, Williams says, '"in the nick of time' defines [what is] 'too late.'"[519]

Jane Gaines, wanting to push melodrama theory even further, recently revisited the supremacy of the *irreversibility of time*. Gaines tackled issues raised by Neale's (via-Moretti's) "spectator powerlessness" and Williams's "reversible time" (or "the defeat of time") to identify a temporal structure that can produce "even more tears": a composite of "never to be" and "what could have been."[520] By engaging with the philosophy of history and the three modes of historical time, she suggested that melodrama is characterized by a temporal "asymmetry"—since melodrama's present is simultaneously backwards-looking, and forward-moving, in anticipation of an abstract future.[521] Significantly, Gaines re-directed the production of pathos from the loss of an object or a time in the past, to a larger loss: the fantasy of "having" an "unreached future."[522]

Gaines's emphasis on an "unreached future" accounts for melodrama's "composite tenses" such as "never was," "nevermore," and "never again."[523] If, as Gaines has suggested, "such phrases confess that melodrama as a modality is obsessed with the problem of the way that the 'former' present (the past) impinges on the 'present' present,

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[518] Ibid., 58.
[519] Ibid., 69.
[520] Gaines, "Even More Tears," 326- 329.
[521] Ibid., 329.
[522] Gaines notes, "It may be that the weeping is just weeping, or just uncontrollable sobbing, especially because at some historical moments the present is felt to be so unbearable and the future, as it is said, is felt to be all that we 'have.' But, of course, by definition, no one can ever really 'have' a future." Ibid., 339.
[523] Ibid., 333.

which is also the 'former future' of an earlier present now past," then we can say that melodrama acts as a placeholder for what is perceived as a more accessible present.[524] To return to my earlier point, this is why melodrama can be understood as a form of historical testimony. If melodrama structures an affective encounter between past, present, and future, then it also testifies to the pastness of past events and claims their significance in the present for the future. But melodrama's reverence for a lost past, and its dramatization of "irreversible-reversible time"—as Gaines puts it—suggests something more—not just its relationship to historical time, but its relationship to *emotional knowledge* about the historical past.

As I am arguing, melodrama is not only a form of testimony, it is, to borrow a concept from philosopher Paul Ricoeur, a "praxis of memory"—more than just a mode of narration, it negotiates, interprets, and canonizes (or as Ricoeur put it, "preserves") a collective identity through time.[525] To put it another way, melodrama constitutes a kind of memory work, bringing together Sigmund Freud's theorization of repetition ("working through") and mourning ("reconciliation").[526] After all, melodramatic pathos is a product of the hope for reconciliation with loss. Melodrama is especially important for working through questions of why and how feelings and memories are recollected and re-encountered in relation to past events. The repetition of feelings and memories, combined

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[524] Ibid., 333.
[525] Paul Ricoeur, "Memory and Forgetting," in *Questioning Ethics*, eds. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 2001), 7.
[526] Ibid., 7-8. Sigmund Freud, "Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psycho-Analysis: Remembering, Repetition, and Working Through, (1924), Trans. Joan Rivere, 366-76.; Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1995), 584-588.

with the rituals of commemoration, imbues melodramatic pathos with a historicity of feeling.

A Letter from Prague: Never Again!

During the early postwar years, *A Letter from Prague* and other short films were central agents in the politicization of the Czech wartime past. Studies of Czech cinema have discussed the important relationship between the short film and the state in the contexts of interwar and postwar Czechoslovakia and have detailed their ideological and pedagogical functions.[527] The short film has an extensive history in Czechoslovak cultural practice, dating back to the interwar period. Alice Lovejoy, for instance, writes in explicating Jiří Weiss's point that "practically every step of the new state film is an experiment'" that his "language linked postwar film to postwar statecraft…[and] it also indicated that interwar conceptions of cinema's 'function' remained central to the way that Czechoslovak film was understood in the first years after 1945."[528]

The nationalization of Czechoslovak cinema on August 11, 1945 established the Short (Krátký) film studio to serve as the state producer of short fiction and nonfiction

[527] In the mid-1930s, Lucie Česálková explains, Czech film magazines, filmmakers, and state-institutions used the term short film as a generic label "to describe movies lasting a maximum of twenty-minutes, which were in other cultural contexts, known according to their specialization (industrial, commercial, education), or more generally as useful."[527]; Lucie Česálková, *Atomy věčnosti : český krátký film 30. až 50. let.* (Prague: National Film Archive, 2014).; Lucie Česálková, "Nedostižné tempo růstu a zbrzděná avantgarda. Kompatibilita krátkometrážní filmové produkce s plánovaným hospodářstvím ČSR (1945-1960)," in *Naplánovaná kinematografie: český filmový průmysl 1945 až 1960*, ed. Pavel Skopal (Prague: Academia, 2012), 192-231.

[528] Alice Lovejoy, *Army Film and the Avant Garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015), 53-54.

films.[529] At this point, all film studios, including Short Film, were to be managed by the Ministry of Information, which was ideologically aligned with the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), and produced mostly non-fiction and documentary short films, which, as Lucie Česálková explains, had a "cultural-political cultural-educational mission."[530]

Česálková's account of the diplomatic function of short films in the postwar period positions *A Letter from Prague* as a "cultural broker," providing insight into how it represented and promoted specific national interests.[531] She explains, for example, that *A Letter from Prague*—one of the rare short films produced in Czechoslovakia deliberately for international distribution—was specifically designed to "connect to English culture."[532] Hence, Masaryk speaks in English and the short film represented Czechoslovakia at a 1945 anti-Nazi exhibition in London.[533] But as Česálková also points out, the short film's "clear political theme," together with its appeal to documentary realism (especially its use of atrocity images and other images of violence) often relegated it to screenings at nontheatrical venues such as embassies.[534] Perhaps even more crucially for this study, *A Letter from Prague* offered its (admittedly narrow)

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[529] Knapík provides a detailed outline of the nationalization of the film industry: "This was the first branch of the Czechoslovak economy to be nationalized. The decree granted the state the exclusive authority 'to maintain film studios, to manufacture exposed cinematographic films … to process films in a laboratory, to rent films, and to public screen them,' and further 'to import and export films for the whole territory of the Czechoslovak republic." Knapík, "Czechoslovak Culture and Cinema, 1945-1960," 42.
[530] Lucie Česálková, "Film as Diplomat: The Politics of Postwar Screenings at Czechoslovak Foreign Embassies," *Film History*, 17, no. 1 (2005), 108. Though the Ministry of Foreign Affairs originally intended for *A Letter from Prague* to be the first in a three-part short film series, the remaining films were scraped.
[531] Ibid., 98.
[532] Ibid., 98.
[533] Ibid., 98.
[534] Ibid., 99.

audiences a certain kind of affective engagement with the historical past—employing melodramatic rhetoric to simultaneously promote a vision of Czechness, and maintain a stable and recognizable Czechoslovak national identity.

A Letter from Prague grapples with the moral crisis of the war and the Nazi occupation in terms that revise and rearticulate the post-1938 Czech national myth: it presents a melodramatic portrait of a small, suffering nation that was, as Andrea Orzoff writes, "given away [by the Allies], demoralized, occupied, and rendered powerless [by "barbaric" German invaders]."[535] More specifically, the short film responds directly to negative reports in the foreign press about the postwar expulsions of Germans and virulent acts of antisemitism—referred to in *Filmová práce* as well-documented "internal political problems" that threatened the reputation of Czechoslovakia abroad.[536] The emphasis is on establishing German guilt and Czech innocence, yet it opens onto questions of witnessing, national identity, and the construction of collective memory.

Significantly, though, *A Letter from Prague* conflates anti-German sentiment with anti-Nazi (or even anti-Fascist) sentiment, exploiting spectator knowledge of Nazi terror, and using documentary footage to testify to the veracity of the evidence. But the short film uses images of Czech and Jewish suffering bodies interchangeably—with no reference to the privileged status of Jewish victims—implying that Czechs were the primary victims of Nazi crimes against humanity. Similarly, Jeremy Hicks's study of early Soviet wartime films argues that newsreels and documentaries established the

[535] Orzoff notes how the Czech national myth changed post-1938: "After 1938, the myth shifted to depict Czechs (now less frequently 'Czechoslovaks') as victims—of geography, the perfidy of the West, and an internal fifth column." Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 12.
[536] Quoted in Lucie Česálková, "Film as Diplomat," 98.

conventions and clichés for representing Nazi atrocities, which were quickly instrumentalized to fit the narrative of heroic Soviet resistance.[537] Hicks points out the degree to which there are affinities between the "Sovietization" and the "Americanization" of the Holocaust, specifically that both "[deny] the otherness of Eastern European Jews, who were the Nazis' primary victims."[538]

The visual recognition of the suffering body is key to melodrama's search for moral legibility. As Williams puts it, "if virtue is not obvious, suffering—often depicted as the literal suffering of the body—is."[539] Pathos is produced by witnessing the suffering of the innocent and culminates with intense feelings of sympathy for the struggling body on screen. But as we know, pathos is also a product of the narrative structures that put the viewer in the privileged position of *knowing* about the information presented and the order and outcome of events in time.

Again, although *A Letter from Prague* likens Czech wartime suffering to Jewish wartime suffering, the two are obviously different: the ultimate goal of the Nazi apparatus was the total eradication of European Jewry. And yet, the short film uses documentary images of Jewish suffering bodies—or as is more often the case, Jewish bodies that *had once* suffered—to argue for Czech moral virtue. Consequently, there is a change in the evidentiary status of these documentary images, in the framing of the historical event, and in the identification of true victimhood. The point is to use these images as "stirring testimony," to make the feeling of loss visceral, and to align the viewers' emotions in

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[537] Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938-1946* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 12.
[538] Ibid., 12.
[539] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 29.

such a way that advances political goals.[540] Jane Gaines calls this phenomenon "the pathos of fact."[541]

This blurring of Czech and Jewish suffering bodies reinforces the emotional identification with a collective suffering coded as Czech and promotes a victimization narrative that counters any rumors of Czechoslovakia's collaboration or indifference. It repudiates any and all guilt. It justifies any future injustices. As Jan Láníček has discussed, President Beneš's postwar government had conflicting views on how to handle "the Jewish problem," and did not know how to respond to accusations of Czech antisemitism.[542] And so, instead of addressing reports of hostilities and restitution disputes, *A Letter to Prague* focuses on "the German problem" to construct a narrative of Czech victimization.[543]

Particularly important for this victimization narrative is the narration by Jan Masaryk. While the documentary images of torture, destruction, and death offer irrefutable proof of the Nazis' crimes against the Czechs, the presence of Foreign Minister Masaryk as the expert witness qualifies this message for its Western viewers. In the West, and in England in particular, Jan Masaryk's personal reputation as a defender of Jews was based on two main points: that as Foreign Minister to the government-in-exile in London he was prominently featured on BBC's radio broadcasts where he spoke

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[540] Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis" in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, eds. Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 92.
[541] Ibid., 92.
[542] Jan Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews, 1938-48: Beyond Idealisation and Condemnation* (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), 162.
[543] On the Czech victimization narrative in national memory see: Michal Frankl, "The Sheep of Lidice: The Holocaust and the Construction of Czech National Identity," in *Bringing the Dark Past to Light: The Reception of the Holocaust in Postcommunist Europe*, eds. John-Paul Himka and Joanna Beata Michlic (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 166-194.

explicitly in support of Jews and condemned antisemitism, and that he had known ties to Jewish organizations in the United States.[544] Moreover, as the son of the founder of the nation, his image provides a nostalgic link to the golden era of the pre-war First Republic and serves as an implicit appeal to Western humanistic principles. Though he had limited power in shaping public policy, he carried a particular set of attachments and identifications with "Masarykian democracy" and thus implicitly signified the inclusivity of the postwar agenda regarding Jews.[545] President Masaryk earned his reputation as a "friend of the Jews" in his 1899 defense of Leopold Hilsner, a Jewish man accused of ritual murder of a young Christian woman.[546] And as Láníček remarks, his "reputation [was] further boosted when the Czechoslovak constitution allowed Jews to declare their nationality publicly and the country generally treated Jews decently."[547]

Choosing Jan Masaryk as narrator can thus be understood as an attempt to establish continuity with the country's democratic past (thus legitimating the policies of the new regime). But it also helps to align Czech victims with other sacrifices and acts of heroism (e.g., the assassination of Heydrich, the massacre at Lidice, and the Prague Uprising—all documented by the short film), legitimizing their particular struggle against the Germans, and making the postwar expulsions more palatable for Western audiences.

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[544] Láníček details these broadcasts: "During the war, the exiles did not try to change the presented perception of the Jews among the people at home… In fact, the reports coming from the Protectorate helped in the exiles in strengthening their perception of some parts of the Jewish population. Consequently, the exiles hardly broached the issues over the BBC at all. One of the exceptions was a broadcast by Masaryk on the occasion of the Jewish New Year in the autumn of 1943. He admitted that some Jews did not behave well before the war (meaning that they were Germanising), but he asked Czechs to overlook the Jewish usage of German as a language even during the war." Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, 32.
[545] For more on "Masarykian democracy" see: Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 30.
[546] On the Hilsner affair see: Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[547] Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*, 4.

The involvement of the Czech-Jewish émigré Jiří Weiss—as the film's writer (and its intended director)—is also telling. During the war, Weiss established his reputation as an exile in London who made anti-Fascist documentaries for the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and the British Crown Film Unit. But for those viewers abroad—particularly for viewers in Great Britain and the United States—Masaryk (and to a lesser degree, Weiss) would serve as nostalgic reminders of Czechoslovakia's idealized past, and their historical ties to Jews served as a marker of trustworthiness and the continuation of the tradition of Czech humanism, at least with regard to the Jewish minority.

Instead of explicitly dealing with the loss of Czechoslovakia's Jewish population, then, *A Letter from Prague* relies on pro-Jewish associations to stand in for the true expression of Czech sentiments for their western audiences. Similarly, the short film's focus on Nazi crimes allows space for the recognition of Jewish loss (especially in retrospect), partly because of the political value that was already attached to its anti-Fascist rhetoric and atrocity footage. *A Letter from Prague* was made in response to negative reports in the foreign press about "internal political problems," and set out to justify postwar German expulsions, while at the same time forging a homogenous Czechoslovak national identity.[548] The short film situates "the German problem" in the context of the Czech national myth and the renewal of the republic in order to demonstrate the crises faced by postwar Czechoslovakia. However, it fails to address the changing perception of German identity in the national imagination, particularly the fact that this historically included Jews.

[548] "Dopis z Prahy z anglických kin."

A Letter from Prague begins with an invocation to bear witness to the horrors of the past: to see it clearly with our own eyes. As the short film unfolds, it uses its melodramatic rhetoric to project a clear moral vision and writes a historical narrative in which Czechs are unambiguously victims of the Nazi regime. The short film ends with the pathos-charged assertion Never Again: but this does not merely commemorate or monumentalize the past, it also instrumentalizes recollection, narrating the events of the Holocaust in order to legitimate the nation, creating solidarity through suffering, and engaging viewers in the pathos of purging the nation of German evil.

***Lest we forget* (*Nezapomeneme,* Václav Švarc, 1946)**: **Never forget!**

Another example of this pathos-charged call to remember can be found in *Lest We Forget* (*Nezapomeneme,* Václav Švarc, 1946).[549] This short film presents a compilation of newsreels, official propaganda films, and photographs and film footage from the liberation of the concentration camps credited to Russian, British, French, and Yugoslav sources. Some additional "close-ups from the years of suffering" were provided by Major Miloš Staněk.[550] *Lest We Forget*'s extensive use of archival footage from various official sources gives the impression that it provides a comprehensive historical account of the

[549] There is little written about *Lest We Not Forget*. It is worth mentioning that the anthology *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* describes it as "a protest film portraying the horrors of the concentration camps, made after the liberation." Livia Rothkirchen, "Czechoslovakia," in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, eds. David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzveig (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 185.; The film is also referenced in a footnote in Jan Láníček and Stuart Liebman, "A Closer look at Alfréd Radok's Film *Distant Journey*," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30, no.1 (Spring 2016), 74fn9.

[550] Including footage from *Nazi Concentration Camps* (George Stevens, 1945); Alice Lovejoy's study of the Czechoslovak Army Studio notes that after the war, Staněk severed as a representative of the Main Department of Education and Enlightenment (*Hlavní správa výchovy* a *osvěty*, or HSVO). Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 59-60.

years of Nazi rule. All of this archival footage edited together illustrates the unstoppable force of the Reich throughout continental Europe and justifies Czechoslovakia's capitulation to its overwhelming power.

Made only a year after the liberation by Czechoslovak Film Chronicle (Československá filmová kronika) in cooperation with Short Film, *Lest We Forget* had, to borrow Česalkova's phrasing, a "cultural-political cultural-educational" function: the short compilation documentary offers a juxtaposition of past and present, positioning the viewer as witness to the wartime events and their after effects. [551] Like *A Letter from Prague*, *Lest We Forget* contrasts documentary images of the war and the occupation with staged footage from the postwar period. However, unlike *A Letter from Prague* in which an expert witness compels us to bear witness to the brutality and scale of the German atrocities, *Lest We Forget* uses a memorial service to structure an encounter with the past in the present. There is still a narrator who provides expository narration, but he directly addresses the assembly of mourners within the diegesis—and not in English, but in Czech, which suggests that *Lest We Forget* was intended to be seen by audiences at home. In one shot, we see a man in close-up visibly remembering the past and, in the next, we see the barbed wire fence of a concentration camp. The contrast between personal memory of the past, combined with more objective archival footage of events produces an emotional response to recalling history; it imposes a memory *of how to feel* toward what really happened, a historicized sense of pathos.

[551] Česálková, "Film as Diplomat," 108. On Czechoslovak Film Chronicle see: Pavel Zeman, "My se nemstíme…Československý zpravodajský a dokumentární film 1945-1947 a odsun Němců," *Paměť a dějiny* 2 (2013), 16-23.

Lest We Forget is a plea for Czechs and Slovaks to collectively see the horrors of the past and a mandate on the imperative to "never forget." The short film opens with a title card (in Czech): "Concentration camps were only one of the many Nazi crimes against humanity. We want this film to be a witness and a testimony for the future." This title card positions *Lest We Forget* as an eyewitness account of the Nazi concentration camps and the horrific atrocities committed, a claim supported by reference to legal terms such as crime, witness, and testimony. In this way, it echoes the affidavit that appeared before *Nazi Concentration Camps* (George Stevens, 1945). The question of film as witness is central to discussions of the representation and memorialization of the Holocaust. For instance, Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, accounting for the theoretical and philosophical issues presented by documentary treatments of the Holocaust, ask: "Can the witness and film be used as interchangeable words?"[552] Such questions concern the notion of film as a record of the past, which implies that the authenticity of documentary representation testifies to "factual history." Elizabeth Cowie suggests an illusory but significant relationship between documentary films and the remembered past. Because, as Cowie explains, "the Holocaust documentary can inform, but it can also—in bringing us to feel as and to feel for those we learn from and learn about in the documentary—enable us to form our own memories."[553]

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[552] Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman, "Film as Witness," in *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Film and Television Representations Since 1933*, eds. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 18.
[553] Elizabeth Cowie, "Seeing and Hearing for Ourselves: the Spectacle of Reality in Holocaust Documentary," in *The Holocaust and the Moving Image: Film and Television Representations since 1933*, eds. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 182.

In its introductory scenes, *Lest We Forget* establishes four separate memorial services. The first scene shows a Roman Catholic priest as he leads a mass at St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. The next scene shows a Rabbi as he leads a Jewish service from the bimah of the Old-New Synagogue (Staronová synagoga) in Prague's Jewish Quarter. The image cuts to the inside of a more modern Hussite church—but only briefly before panning up a marble statue of Jesus on the cross and cutting again.[554] This time, the image cuts to a large banner emblazoned with the lesser coat of arms of Czechoslovakia, and the camera tilts down to reveal a secular memorial service led by the radio and theatrical actor Jiří Vasmut.

Figure 30

Figure 31

Figure 32

Figure 33

When Vasmut starts his impassioned speech, the camera moves among the audience. Slowly, elegiacally, the camera pans over the audience of men and women—all

[554] I am grateful here to Gary B. Cohen's insightful suggestion that this church was mostly likely a staged set.

in black outfits—all somberly sitting, listening, and reflecting on past horrors. The camera finally stops on the weathered face of an elderly man. In close-up, he brings his hand to his furrowed brow, gesturing to the memories stored in his mind. The camera moves in closer, and a slow cross-dissolve transports us back through time and space, leaving us behind the barbed wires of a concentration camp. This flashback is explained through the use of self-conscious narration: "It's not possible to forget the world behind the barbed wire."[555]

Although the opening and closing sequences take place in the present of postwar Czechoslovakia, the rest unfolds in an extended flashback in which we are confronted with the past through archival footage of perpetrators, members of the resistance, and victims, bracketed together and arranged anachronistically. As Pam Cook concisely puts it, the flashback is "one of the most basic and familiar devices for articulating memory in film."[556] The flashback is both a cinematic technique and a storytelling device: it brings together two temporal events, collapsing the boundaries between past and present.[557] The flashback not only returns to revisit the past; it resurrects it, putting images and sounds to memory and history. In *Lest We Forget*, the flashback is triggered by a conventional visual cue: the use of a face in close-up creates the expectation that what follows will be a subjective and interiorized memory, but here, it serves a practical function: as a window into the documented (and thus, apparently objective) past. That is, the flashback is at

[555] My translation with Kateřina Lu.
[556] Pam Cook, ed. "Memory in the British Cinema: Brief Encounters," in *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 98.
[557] For a more detailed study of the flashback in film see: Maureen Cheryn Turim, *Flashbacks in Film: Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989); also see: Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory*.

once marked with the subjectivity of the remembered experience (from the vantage point of the present), but also, crucially, produces a documentary epistemology through which we see the factual and objective past. The flashback functions here as a source of knowledge, showing us what happened and telling us how the present came to be. The return to the past is hermeneutically determined and organized in such a way that it answers the question posed by the opening title card: *What (and whose) past must be witnessed and remembered?*

Figure 34

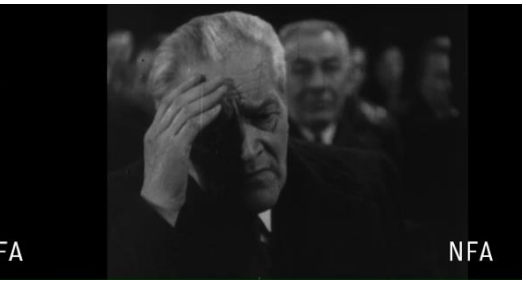

Figure 35

Figure 36

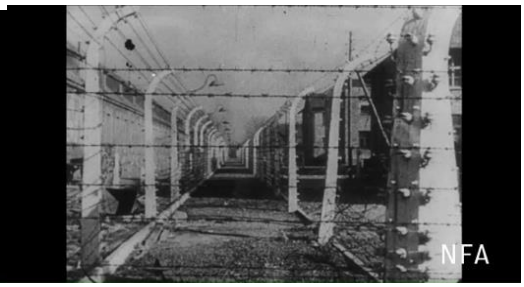

Figure 37

As the flashback begins, a slow cross-dissolve fades out from the elderly man in close-up, and, as it dissolves into a new shot, briefly superimposes his face onto an image of an empty concentration camp. *Lest We Forget* has already told us through the flashback that there is a difference between the “then” of the war and the “now” of the

film, but the visual effect of the superimposition makes this temporal disjuncture—or in Jaimie Baron's terms, "temporal disparity"—explicit.[558] Typically associated with spirit photography, the trick film genre, or transitions between shots, the superimposition foregrounds the ability of the photographic apparatus to mediate, interpret, and present an illusion of reality. The superimposition effect uses multiple-exposure or places images over each other in the frame, fusing individually captured images together: it merges separate planes of time, space, and meaning into a composite image, remaking our relation to time, producing a wholly new image, and altering signification in the process.

There are, in fact, several sequences in *Lest We Forget* that use the superimposition to subvert the spectacle of Fascist aesthetics, and, in so doing, expose the overwhelming excess of the recorded past. One notable example is a montage that appears mid-flashback. Filmed records of "the criminal leaders of fascism and their collaborators" in their heyday are damningly superimposed over atrocity footage shot after the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.[559] The montage utilizes staged Nazi propaganda footage of each perpetrator—primarily from newsreels, but also from *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, Leni Riefenstahl, 1935)—and places it at

[558] Baron uses the term "temporal disparity" to describe the experience of an appropriation film. This refers to the experience of the viewer "who perceives a 'then' and a 'now' generated within a single text …[this] allows it to be recognized as an archival document." Jaimie Baron, "The Archive Effect: Archival Footage as an Experience of Reception," *Projections* 6, no.2 (Winter 2012), 106.

[559] This footage from the liberation of Bergen-Belson occupies a special place in the iconography of Holocaust representation. Shot on April 15, 1945 by British Army Photographic Unit (AFPU) cameramen Harry Oakes and Mike Lewis, it was included in *Nazi Concentration Camps* (George Stevens, 1945) and shown at the Nuremberg War Crime Trials. As Aaron Kerner suggests, "the iconography of human suffering and abjection embodies in the Belsen footage, has—right or wrong—effectively become the representation of the Holocaust, and, though documentaries that examine the Holocaust in general, or a camp like Auschwitz might utilize the Belsen imagery as a 'substitute,' because of the scarcity of archival visual material documenting other camps, or because of the sheer potency of the imagery itself." Kerner, *Film and the Holocaust*,189.

the center of the frame. In the background, three separate shots repeat on loop; each shot depicts mass graves filled with emaciated corpses. At the same time, the film's narrator, Vasmut, forcefully indicts Nazi leaders and known collaborators, naming their treacherous crimes:

> One after the other falls down into hell: Hitler was the main architect of the mass destruction. In cruelty, Himmler was right on his heels. And in arrogance, Goering. And in lying, Goebbels. The comedian, Mussolini, who couldn't avoid the attacks of Italian partisans was an unsuccessful counterpart to the German dictator. The Spanish Franco was their faithful helper.[560]

Here the superimposition juxtaposes two mutually opposed images—the staged and the observed, the living and the dead, the identified and the faceless, the murderer and the murdered—to indicate a gap or an absence on behalf of the innocent. This is a complex representation that attests to the melodramatic nature of historical time, with its temporal asymmetry of the relations between past, present and future, to recall Gaines's argument, but also of the melodramatic excesses of cinematic time. Not only does this force disparate temporal occurrences to form a new relational bond in the present, suggesting its usefulness for the future, but it also stages a dramatic encounter between perpetrator and victim—what Gaines calls "a dramatized dilemma of historical time."[561] The viewer witnesses the confrontation they desire, but never actually happened.[562] The visual effect's fulfillment of this wish only reinforces the lingering sense of injustice. As Svetlana Boym tells us (invoking Walter Benjamin's dialectical image), the superimposition is a "cinematic image of nostalgia"—a longed-for fantasy, but a fantasy

[560] My translation with Kateřina Lu.
[561] Gaines, "Even More Tears," 333.
[562] Ibid., 333.

nonetheless—and so, "the moment we try to force it into a single image it breaks the frame or burns the surface."[563] Perhaps, then, it is also the cinematic image of melodrama?

Figure 38

Figure 39

Figure 40

Figure 41

As if the film itself is expressing anxiety about this illusory *trial-by-superimposition*, there is a visible distinction between the temporal planes: the Nazi criminals are carefully embedded in a separate place and time—removed from the consequences of their actions—and yet, at certain moments, the edges of the living overlap and bleed into the ghostly apparitions of the dead. The perpetrators, as a result, appear to be haunted by the remnants of their victims: both the corpses and the visible evidence that remains attest to their guilt. The affective power of the superimposition occurs through its ability to seemingly defy time and make different temporalities

[563] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xiii-xiv.

interact. A time that *never was* and yet, through the mimetic power of the cinema *can be* and *will be again*.

Ultimately, the flashback is resolved by another slow cross-dissolve onto a face in close-up. This is preceded by yet another superimposition, this time in the form of a photo-montage, which mixes a graphic illustration with the documentary image: white crosses are layered and stacked on top of the photographic image, magically multiplying over an empty field where a concentration camp once stood. This creates a composite image of a graveyard, showing a clear cause-and-effect that cannot be reversed: a melodramatic image of "never forget"—for death proves that time is irreversible—or, as Jane Gaines put it (paraphrasing Moretti), death "comes only once."[564] Thus, death is a marker of something larger at work, leaving survivors to reconcile the incomprehensibility of time through the practices of mourning.

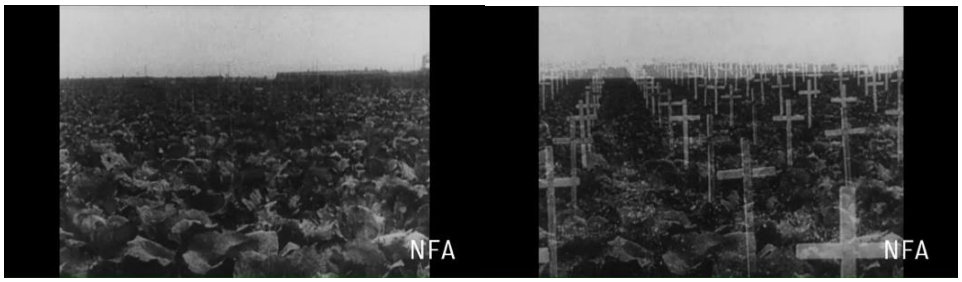

Figure 42 **Figure 43**

[564] Gaines, "Even More Tears," 328.; Moretti, "Kindergarten," 62.

Figure 44

Figure 45

Figure 46

Figure 47

This resolution is further articulated by a jolting zoom out from a close-up of a man's face. This mirrors the visual cue established by the first flashback; however, in this zoom out, a younger man replaces the first. On a basic level, this unites the two generations of men, establishing their moral virtue as Czech survivors of the Nazi crimes against humanity; but, this can also be read as a gesture of generational inheritance—a necessary change of guard for the socialist future of Czechoslovakia. The first flashback works to structure the encounter between past and present, but clearly, this resolution confirms the documentary images as a shared act of remembrance, aligning the viewers' emotions beyond the wartime years to the historical present.

The final moments of *Lest We Forget* are telling in this regard. Vasmut's closing statement uses the melodramatic rhetoric of victimhood, sacrifice, and loss to imagine a better future: "In light of the memory of our martyrs who were tortured to death by the

Nazis, let's promise brothers and sisters fidelity to our country, and fidelity to our ideals. This will help us to build a new world and a happier tomorrow." The audience replies in unison, "We promise!" This exchange directly addresses Vasmut and the audience as former-victims—present-survivors. At the same time, it unites the victim-survivors (not to be confused with melodrama's victim-heroes) in the ritual of mourning and in the pursuit of a new social order. But Vasmut's narration does not achieve this alone: the pathos-filled images of mourning and memorialization make guilt and virtue visible, understandable, and meaningful as felt emotions. Moreover, these images supplement the documentary evidence, claiming the fact of loss as collective memory. *Lest We Forget*, with its intensely affective investment in *knowing* about the historical past, produces a historical feeling that is instrumental to the imperative to never forget.

While *A Letter from Prague* does not address the topic of Nazi antisemitism, *Lest We Forget,* does, albeit briefly in an introductory sequence that unites Jews with Catholics and Czechs more generally. But there is also aerial footage shot from a plane over the Terezín ghetto that allows us to see the vast military fortress. The narrator states:

> The strange place of Terezín. In the so-called ghetto, the Nazis imprisoned the Jewish people. For six whole years this was a place of grief, distress, and fear for what would come the next day. Maria Theresa did not know when she was establishing the small fortress that she was preparing a prison and execution site for thousands of Czech citizens.

This move from Jewish to Czech victims is suggestive. And, as the next chapter will show, positions the film as an important forerunner to later Czech Holocaust films—particularly feature-length fiction films such as *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta,* Alfréd Radok, 1948) and *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1960).

Chapter Four
Observations on the Czech Holocaust Melodrama

> Although our film is based on historical facts, we are aware that we cannot capture reality without stylizing it. In writing the screenplay, we chose material in such a way as to capture, in every scene, a sort of general internal truth instead of an external truth. The very nature of the matter forced us to make numerous corrections to reality. It was not merely a case of extensive historical material, but above all, the impossibility of showing the brutal horrors of the years of occupation on screen. We realize that it is not in human power nor in the power of our craft, to show the depth and scope of all the suffering that Jews experienced on their – 'distant journeys.'
>
> —Alfréd Radok[565]

The final scene of Alfréd Radok's *Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, 1949), the first Czech feature-length narrative film about the Holocaust, opens on an extreme close-up of a Star of David badge. Hana, a Jewish prisoner at the Terezín ghetto, dramatically rips the Jewish badge off her coat's breast pocket. What follows is a match-cut, which replaces this liberatory image with a large Star of David monument and the shadow it casts upon the ground. A man walks into the frame, but his identity is obscured, eclipsed by the monument. When he takes off his wide-brimmed hat, an equally obscured female figure appears by his side. The camera moves to follow the pair as they exit the shadow of the Jewish monument and pass a series of white wooden crosses—one after another after another—grave-markers lined up in what seems to be endless rows. At last, the camera tilts upward, revealing Hana and her husband Toník (a Gentile) at what was once the site

[565] "Director Statement," Př. Č. 15/90, 15/2004, Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic. My translation with Alice Lovejoy.

of the Terezín ghetto.[566] The couple stops momentarily to take a long look at their surroundings. Perhaps they are contemplating the transformation of the landscape or are overwhelmed by the sheer number of graves; either way, both of their faces wear expressions of shock and disbelief. Finally, Hana's eyes meet Toník's in their mutual recognition of what has been lost. Toník takes Hana's arm and they walk arm-in-arm through the cemetery, towards a towering cross and the walls of the so-called "small fortress," into the horizon.[567] An omniscient voice-over read by the actor Václav Voska states: "Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, Gollnow, Ravensbrück, Oranienburg, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Łódź, Terezín, Gross-Rosen, Mauthausen. Seven million died in the concentration camps of the German Fascists. 140,000 people from across Europe went to Terezín. Only a few survived." The music swells to punctuate this pathos-filled statement, and the image fades to black.

Much scholarship and criticism has been devoted to the description and analysis of *Distant Journey's* final scene, especially its abrupt use of Christian iconography. Although some (mainly American critics) read it as a hopeful ending, arguing that it signifies "interfaith solidarity" between Czech Jews and Czech Gentiles, most agree that

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[566] Throughout this chapter, I follow Jan Láníček's lead and use the word "Gentile" to distinguish Hana's non-Jewish husband Toník. Jan Láníček, "After the Whirlwind: Jewish Absence in Postwar Czechoslovakia," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, no. 2 (2017), 278.

[567] Terezín (Theresienstadt) was originally built in 1780 by Hapsburg emperor Joseph II as a fortified garrison town, sixty kilometers northwest of Prague. In 1940, after Czechoslovakia was occupied by the Nazis, the ''small fortress'' became a Gestapo prison. In 1941, the town itself became a Jewish concentration and transit camp—the Nazis called it "Ghetto Theresienstadt." Between 1941 and 1945, 148,000 Jews were transported to Terezín; 74,000 of whom were from the Protectorate. Nazi propagandists presented the camp as a "model Jewish settlement" and staged social and cultural events for propaganda newsreels. Terezín was liberated by the Red Army in May 1945. For a comprehensive history of Terezín and its wartime function see: H.G Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941-1945: The Face of a Coerced Community*, trans. Belinda Cooper (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.); Anna Hájková, "To Terezín and Back Again: Czech Jews and their Bonds of Belonging from Deportations to the Postwar," *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 28, no. 1 (2014), 38–55.

it collapses distinctions between Jewish and Czech victimhood.[568] A primary reason for this conclusion is the misrepresentation of the Terezín ghetto—a site of uniquely Jewish suffering—as a site of non-Jewish loss. To Jan Láníček and Stuart Liebman, for example, the scene is "jarring," and "creates a visual falsehood:"[569]

> Suddenly shifting from ninety-five minutes of exclusively Jewish imagery (stars of David, menorahs…) to an overwhelming array of Christian icons suggest, against all logic, the astoundingly anti-historical idea that Christians were the primary victims at Terezín—even though virtually all of Radok's contemporaries knew that the ghetto had swallowed and destroyed Jews almost exclusively.[570]

As Láníček and Liebman rightly point out, the scene not only suppresses the reality of the Terezín ghetto, but such a narrative dénouement also provides a false resolution to the film's central conflict.[571] Despite *Distant Journey's* carefully constructed (and melodramatic) narrative about the plight of Czech Jews in Terezín, its concluding scene does not recognize the plot's full dramatic weight, alluding only obliquely to its Jewish characters' tragic fates. The liberal use of the cross-marked graves (a visual reminiscent of the composite image at the end of *Lest We Forget* [*Nezapomeneme,* Václav Švarc, 1946]) complicates the plot and creates confusion about what happened to Terezín's Jewish inmates, who had been represented throughout the duration of the film; it produces a fundamentally false image of the ghetto that displaces Jews from their position as its primary inhabitants and victims. The end result is an ambivalence toward

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[568] For example, Annette Insdorf writes: "With crosses and Jewish stars literally –or figuratively –sharing the frame, they record, commemorate, and offer a vision of possible Judeo-Christian unity." Moreover, Insforf argues that this "assimilationist" message is supported by the fact that the Jewish heroine is ultimately reunited with her Czech (Gentile) husband. Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*, 247, 257.
[569] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 62.
[570] Ibid., 62.
[571] Ibid., 62.

Jewish victimhood, since the *mise-en-scène* gives special significance to—or adds on—an entirely new set of victims.

It is worth noting that Radok knew first-hand that Jews were the main targets of the Nazis' genocidal policies, and also the primary inmates at the Terezín ghetto. The director was classified as a Jewish *Mischling* (of mixed ancestry) by Nazi racial laws, and both his Jewish father and ninety-five-year-old Jewish grandfather perished in the small fortress of Terezín.[572] Nevertheless, he was complicit in the fabrication of this *mise-en-scène* on location at the recently constructed National Cemetery in front of the Small Fortress, where, in 1945, victims exhumed from mass graves in Lovosice, Litoměřice, and Terezín were re-buried in mostly anonymous graves.[573] As Láníček and Liebman note, while the cemetery existed at the location prior to the shoot, production documents show that it was Radok who ordered the construction of the cross-marked graves in order to "dramatically enlarge the cemetery's boundaries."[574]

However, the artificial *mise-en-scène* is not the only aspect of the final scene that has troubled scholars. While the concluding voice-over names the Nazi ghettos and concentration camps and asserts the staggering number of victims of the Final Solution, it does not openly or directly reference the Nazis' systematic extermination of European Jewry. Moreover, it leaves out the fact that the Nazis essentially wiped out

[572] Podle listiny CV-Praha, 5209968, ITS Digital Archive. Accessed at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on September 21, 2017.
[573] Terezín Memorial, "The National Ceremony," Accessed: May 1, 2018. https://www.pamatnik-terezin.cz/the-national-cemetery.
[574] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 62.

Czechoslovakia's Jewish population.[575] Instead, the voice-over uses factual information about the Nazis' mass murders to establish a false consciousness about a universal tragedy, and, in doing so, instructs the spectator to consider different sets of victims, survivors, and experiences.

And yet, this epilogue—this "tacked on end"—was not included in the original script or in any of its drafts.[576] While a one-page addendum to the script exists in Radok's archives it is not known when the scene was added or by whom.[577] Was it written by Radok or by some nameless communist official? Láníček and Liebman suggest that its inclusion was the result of an "official intervention."[578]

Originally, *Distant Journey* ended with a *deus ex machina* "happy ending" that is characteristic of Hollywood melodramas. Or, following the Sirkian model, the film initially concluded with a "unhappy, happy ending" or a "false happy ending" that provided a temporary resolution for its narrative's unresolved problems.[579] One version of the script, housed in Radok's papers at the Archives of the National Museum in Prague, ends outside on a busy city street. Hana and Toník hold hands as they walk

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[575] On the Holocaust in the Czech lands, see: Livia Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln, Nebraska & Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press & Yad Vashem, 2005); Bryant, *Prague in Black*; Hana Kubátová, and Jan Láníček, "Jews and Gentiles in Central and Eastern Europe during the Holocaust in History and Memory," *Holocaust Studies* 23, no. 1-2 (February- April 2017), 1-16; Thomas Sniegon, *Vanished History: The Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Historical Culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).; Láníček, *Czech, Slovaks and Jews*.

[576] On the "tacked on" ending in Hollywood film see: David Bordwell, "Happily Ever After, Part Two," *The Velvet Light Trap* 19 (1982): 2-7.

[577] "Komentář ke konici filmu 'Daleká cesta,'" Př. Č. 15/90, 15/2004, Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.

[578] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 61-62.

[579] Laura Mulvey describes melodrama's unhappy, happy ending: "[it] raises along the road, a cloud of over determined irreconcilables which put up resistance to being neatly settled in the last five minutes." Mulvey, "Notes on Douglas Sirk," 53-56.; For more on the Sirkian "unhappy, happy ending" see: Jon Halliday, *Sirk on Sirk* (New York: Viking, 1972).

against the bustling foot traffic. They look at each other and smile—a variation of the iconic Hollywood kiss—and continue on their way as the image fades to black.[580] Another version, housed in the Archives of Barrandov Studios, adds yet another scene to this romantic reunion. This script ends by returning to the melodramatic "space of innocence"—the hospital where Hana's story begins.[581] This scene is set in the interior of the hospital's lobby. The scene description describes how the camera moves in closer to a bulletin board to show the date: 22 May 1945, nearly two weeks after the liberation. Underneath are the two names of the attending doctors: MUDr. Ant. Bureš and MUDr. Hana Burešová—then, the image fades to black.[582] Not only is the romantic couple reunited, but their pre-war jobs are magically restored as if the world is completely unchanged.

These earlier versions of the script use the melodramatic climax of Hana's liberation from Terezín to restore the "old state of things" and double back to a point of origin (the streets of Prague, the hospital) that existed before the catastrophic events of the narrative. However, these alternate endings do not immediately follow Hana's liberatory star-ripping gesture: rather, they are preceded by a family photo album that retrospectively illuminates Hana and Toník's personal losses.[583] In contrast to the general

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[580] Script for "*Distant Journey*," 1948, Př. Č. 15/90, 15/2004, Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.
[581] Script for "*Distant Journey*," 1948, A 18, the Archives of the Barrandov Studios, Prague, Czech Republic.
[582] Ibid.
[583] Script for "*Distant Journey*," 1948, Př. Č. 15/90, 15/2004, Alfréd Radok fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic; Script of *Daleká cesta*, 1948, A 18, the Archives of the Barrandov Studios, Prague, Czech Republic.; Láníček and Liebman make a similar observation about Kolár's original scenario: "The heroine and hero come to realize the magnitude of the Kaufmann family's losses as they peruse a prewar photo album." Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 57.

sense of melancholia that characterizes the film's final ending, these family photographs evoke more than just pity—they engage the strong pathos of mourning.[584] At the same time, both defy the historicity and pressures of time, repressing the events of the middle of the narrative to suggest that life will indeed move forward into an unknown future. In this way, they too are tacked on.

The various incarnations of *Distant Journey's* ending chart the rapid social and political upheavals in late-1940s Czechoslovakia. As this case demonstrates, the dramatic changes underpinning the film's production inspired strategic and ideological revisions of both the film and the historical past. Clearly, the tacked on ending reflects a new image of the past that corresponds with the shifting political value of Holocaust memory in the Czech master narrative. But it also changes the visceral impact of the melodramatic ending and its resulting feeling of pathos.

Tracing the production of historicized pathos in three early Czech Holocaust films: *Distant Journey*, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1960), and *There Are No Butterflies Here* (*Motýli tady nežijí,* Miro Bernát, 1958) makes clear that *Distant Journey*, celebrated by many critics as a masterpiece of Holocaust cinema, is also a film particularly representative of the swift politicization of Holocaust memory in postwar and Communist Czechoslovakia. The social and political ruptures underpinning *Distant Journey's* production, release, and reception, were "worked through" its melodramatic narrative and intense appeal to pathos. Historically specific developments continued to shape Holocaust memory in late-1950s Czechoslovakia; for

[584] Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 584-588.

example, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, the second Czech feature-length film about the Holocaust, revised emotional knowledge about an increasingly monumental past. Finally, the short documentary *There Are No Butterflies Here*, which animates the drawings and paintings of child prisoners of the Terezín ghetto, showcases its own historicity by resurrecting the remnants of a past that never was and would never be, provoking a discussion of melodrama's privileged relationship to cinematic time.

***Distant Journey* (*Daleká cesta*, Alfréd Radok, 1949)**

Distant Journey occupies a special position in the changing landscape of Holocaust memory in postwar Czechoslovakia. And, with few exceptions, scholars have studied the film's representation of the Jewish Holocaust in relation to specific historical developments. The melodramatic modality enabled *Distant Journey* to mediate the dominant values of its particular moment, negotiating intersecting and overlapping memory-meanings in emotional and moral terms. This process was consistent with some of the broader perceptual shifts that underscore the film's production, and historicizes its production of pathos.

Some clarification about the construction of Holocaust memory in postwar Czechoslovakia is essential here. Perhaps the most comprehensive account of Holocaust memorialization in Czechoslovakia comes from Czech historian Michal Frankl.[585] He has shown that after the liberation, emerging master narratives about World War II and the Holocaust established what he calls "interpretive frameworks of national suffering"

[585] Frankl, "The Sheep of Lidice," 166-194.

(namely, the Terezín ghetto, the period of so-called *heydrichiáda*, and the razing of Lidice) to replace "the final solution to the Jewish question" with the "Czech question."[586] The master narrative described by Frankl provided a convincing account of the persecution of good Czechs at the hands of evil Germans, enabling the disavowal of Czech collaboration and complicity with the Nazi regime.[587] Moreover, it helped to morally legitimate the postwar retribution trials, and expulsions of ethnic Germans as a necessary part of national healing. Interestingly, Frankl argues that because these master narratives appealed to foundational Czech myths, they were easily carried over into post-1948 historiography and were simply recycled by Czechoslovak Communist authorities in order to convey revolutionary messages to their own domestic audiences.[588]

In 1945/46, the recently nationalized Barrandov studios acquired *Journey* (*Cesta*), a semi-autobiographical scenario written by Czech Jewish lawyer and assimilationist Erik Kolár about an intermarried couple in Nazi-occupied Prague.[589] The project went through various stages of development over the next three years—including a number of re-writes with different screenwriters—before the studio hired Radok (a theater director with no previous filmmaking experience) and moved forward with his script co-written with screenwriter Mojmír Drvota, which shifted the story's focus from Jewish life in Prague to the Terezín ghetto.[590] In April 1948, two months after the Communist Party's rise to power and the same month as the Czechoslovak Film Society (Československá filmová

[586] Ibid., 173.
[587] Ibid., 173.
[588] Ibid., 174
[589] For a detailed history of *Daleká cesta*'s production see: Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 55-68.
[590] Ibid., 55-63.

společnost, ČEFIS) and Slovak Film Society (Slovenská filmová společnost) merged into the state-owned Czechoslovak State Film (Československý státní film), the Film Artistic Board (Filmový umělecký sbor or FIUS) approved this script with minor revisions.[591] Although the Czechoslovak film industry, in Alice Lovejoy's words, "had been dominated by the Communist Party since 1947," after February 1948, the KSČ set out to reorganize narrative feature film production.[592] Six months later, in November 1948, FIUS was dissolved and replaced with the Film Council (Filmová rada or FR) and Central Dramaturgy (Ústřední dramaturgie or UD).[593]

Principal photography on *Distant Journey* took place from April to November 1948, and post-production followed in early 1949.[594]On May 24, 1949, the Film Censorship Bureau of the Ministry of Information approved the film for release. In their report, the censors note: "it is a film that by depicting the fate of one family conveys and incarnates all the hardships of the Jews, their transport and life in Terezín, the infamous roads of hunger and death, and the final liberation."[595] By 1949, however, censorship in Czechoslovakia was unpredictable: *Distant Journey* received almost no publicity and a

[591] Jiří Knapík, *Únor a kultura. Sovětizace české kultury 1948–1950* (Prague, Libri, 2004), 47-48. Cited in Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 61.
[592] Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 61.
[593] Knapík, "Czechoslovak Culture and Cinema, 1945-1960," 48.
[594] Production documents for "*Distant Journey*," 1948, the Archives of the Barrandov Studios, Prague, Czech Republic. Also: Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 60.
[595] Minutes of the Censorship Board meeting about *Distant Journey*, 26 May 1949, Ministerstvo informací 1945–53, box 151, doc. no. 603/49, National Archives, Prague, Czech Republic. Cited in Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 66.

severely limited release.[596] Finally, in the summer of 1949—just months after its late-May premiere—the film was officially suppressed.

As Tatjana Lichtenstein has remarked, "it is astonishing that Radok was able to complete and release his film in 1949."[597] *Distant Journey* was made at precisely this moment of radical transformation in Czechoslovakia, and yet still represents the persecution and suffering of Czech Jews during the war. Strikingly, unlike the contemporaneous non-fiction shorts, these suffering bodies are explicitly labeled as Jewish in both the story and the expressive mise-en-scène, drawing attention to the fact that, in the absence of moral action, Jewish people had suffered during the occupation, whether it be at the hands of Germans, non-Jewish Czechs, or even other Jews.

For example, Hana, the female protagonist, is introduced using verbal and visual codes to emphasize her identity as a Jew. We witness the villainous Czech hospital administrator tell her that the Second Republic has to correct many of the First Republic's errors, especially its "humanist approach" to the Jews, and immediately recognize his antisemitic motives.[598] Just in case his spoken dialogue didn't make this clear enough, we are given a pointed close-up of a hospital bulletin board with the names of the attending doctors. Taped over the name Hana Kauffmanová is a note that reads "Jews, get out!" ("*Židi ven*!"). All of this has the effect of emphasizing Hana's powerlessness in the face of antisemitic persecution—it identifies her innocence and establishes her moral virtue.

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[596] Ibid., 66-68. Stuart Liebman, "Resistance and Representation in Alfréd Radok's 'Daleká cesta' (Distant Journey)," in *Holocaust Resistance in Europe and America: New Aspects and Dilemmas*, eds. Victoria Khiterer with Abigail S. Gruber (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 165-166..; Lovejoy, *Army Film*, 61.
[597] Lichtenstein, "'It is Not My Fault," 127.
[598] The interwar First Republic was considered a democratic safe haven for Jews. See Kieval, *Languages of Community*, 167–68, 202.

Moreover, her mute helplessness to profound social change identifies her as a victim, encouraging emotional empathy with her suffering. In addition, Jewish iconography is deployed throughout the film as "external visual cues," identifying its Jewish characters and, more important, making them visible. From the Star of David badge on Hana's breast pocket to the menorah on her bookshelf, the use of strategic costuming, props, and set design, as well as deep composition, thrusts her Jewishness into the foreground of the frame.

Figure 48 **Figure 49**

The film's explicit representation of Jewish victimization is especially interesting in light of the broadly shifting attitudes toward Jews and minority politics in postwar Czechoslovakia.[599] After the liberation, Jewish survivors of the Terezín ghetto and the Nazi concentration camps returned to Czechoslovakia, to find a fundamentally changed society.[600] Gone was the multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual interwar republic of

[599] Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*; Kateřina Čapková, *Czechs, Germans, Jews? National Identity and the Jews of Bohemia*, trans. Derek and Marzia Paton (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).
[600] Many Jews simply did not return and went elsewhere (especially Palestine and the United States). For more on the Jewish survivors who returned to Czechoslovakia see: Kateřina Čapková, "Germans or Jews? German-speaking Jews in Poland and Czechoslovakia after World War II," *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów/Jewish History Quarterly* 2 (2013), 348–362.; Jan Láníček, "Coming Home? Jewish Survivors in Postwar Czechoslovakia," in *Coming Home? Conflict and Return Migration in the Aftermath of Europe's*

memory. Jewish survivors who returned to the liberated country faced antisemitism and resentment from their non-Jewish neighbors (which, though hostile, was not nearly as brutal as in neighboring Poland or Slovak lands).[601] Moreover, Jews were also forced to grapple with state-driven persecution, which though not explicitly antisemitic, obstructed reparation and material restitution after the devastation that was the Holocaust and the Nazi occupation.[602]

Shortly after the war, the restored Czechoslovak government (led by pre-Munich president Edvard Beneš and the new multiparty National Front government [Národní fronta]) set out to construct a nation consisting of Czechs and Slovaks with a series of decrees.[603] The mass expulsions of ethnic Germans were designed to punish wartime treason and rid Czechoslovakia of the threat of Germanization. New, and in Anna Hájková's words, "ambiguously worded" citizenship laws stripped Jews and other ethnic minorities of their prewar minority rights and required them to reapply for citizenship.[604] While this program of "national cleansing" obviously affected the German minority, it also had an impact on Jewish survivors, especially those who chose German nationality on the 1930 national census.[605] Pre-war associations with German-language culture,

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Twentieth-Century Civil Wars, eds., Sharif Gemie, Norry Laporte, and Scott Soo (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 201–220.; Anna Hájková, "To Terezín and Back Again," 38–55.

[601] Jan Láníček, "What did it mean to be Loyal? Jewish Survivors in Post-War Czechoslovakia in a Comparative Perspective," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 3 (2014), 386; Helena Krejčová, "Český a slovenský antisemitismus, 1945–1948," in *Stránkami soudobých dějin: Sborník statí k pětašedesátinátm historika,* eds. K. Kaplan and K. Jech (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 1993).

[602] This would change later with the Czechoslovak Communist government under the thinly veiled pretense of "cosmopolitanism" and "anti-Zionism."

[603] For more on the situation in postwar Czechoslovakia see: Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing.*

[604] Hájková, "To Terezín and Back Again," 49.

[605] For more on the postwar citizenship laws and the historiography on Jews and postwar Czechoslovakia see: Láníček, *Czechs, Slovaks and the Jews*.; Helena Krejčová, "The Czech Lands at the Dawn of the New Age (Czech Anti-Semitism 1945-1948)" in *Anti-Semitism in Post- totalitarian Europe,* eds. Jan Hančil and

moreover, prompted many Jews to change their language and their German-sounding surnames in order to avoid deportation.[606] Although in 1946 President Beneš bowed to international demands and issued an exemption for Jews and anti-Fascist Germans, it was not always implemented, and as a result, some survivors were deported to Germany.[607] The increasing pressure for Jews to assimilate both culturally and linguistically and be "purely Czechoslovak" was compounded by Czechoslovak authorities' anxieties about the loyalties of Jewish nationalists (otherwise known as Zionists).[608] As Jan Láníček notes, Jewish survivors had to actively provide evidence of "positive ties" to the Czech nation, and declare they were "faithful and loyal to the Republic."[609] Thus, the final scene of *Distant Journey* seems to restore Hana's Czechoslovak citizenship.

Lisa Peschel has analyzed the ways in which Jewish survivors of the Terezín ghetto used the popular literary genre of the memoir to declare their loyalty to the Czechoslovak state, arguing that "with their vivid descriptions of Czech musical and theatrical performances in the Terezín ghetto [survivor memoirs] served as public

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Michael Chase (Prague: Franz Kafka Publishers, 1993), 115-124; Ivica Bumová, "The Jewish Community after 1945: Struggle for Civic and Social Rehabilitation" in *Holocaust as a Historical and Moral Problem of the Past and the Present: Collection of Studies from the Conference,* eds. Monika Vrzgulová and Daniela Richterová (Bratislava: Ševt, 1998), 253-278.; Petr Brod, "Židé v poválečném Československu" in *Židé v novodobých dějinách: Soubor přednášek FF ÚK,* ed. Václav Veber (Prague: Karolinum, 1997), 177-189; Blanka Soukupová, "Židé a židovská reprezentace v českých zemích v letech 1945-1948 (mezi režimem, židovstvím a judaismem)" in *Židovská menšina v Československu po druhé světové válce. Od osvobození k nové totalitě,* eds., Blanka Soukupová, Peter Salner and Miroslava Ludvíková, (Prague: Židovské museum v Praze, 2009), 55-80.

[606] Kateřina Čapková, "Between Expulsion and Rescue: The Transports for German-speaking Jews of Czechoslovakia in 1946," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2018), 66-92.

[607] As Čapkova explains, "most German-speaking Jews managed to avoid forced deportation […] many attempted to leave the country through other means because they found daily life in postwar Czechoslovakia economically, and oftentimes emotionally, unsustainable." Čapkova, "Between Expulsion and Rescue," 66.

[608] Láníček, "What did it mean to be Loyal," 388-395.

[609] Ibid., 395.

performances of belonging."[610] In this context, "belonging" does not just refer to re-integration or assimilation into postwar Czechoslovak society; as Peschel argues, it also refers to sociologist Vikki Bell's notion of belonging as a "'performative achievement' constituted through the ways that identities are embodied and reenacted."[611] Peschel's analysis reveals the critical function of literature and other forms of artistic representation in mediating Holocaust testimony. These early memoirs not only made political interventions on behalf of Jewish survivors but also appealed to shared emotional attachments to Czech culture.[612] As she suggests, in recollecting an individual's affective experience of Czech theater and musical performances in the ghetto, these survivor memoirs encouraged readers to imagine and empathize with the Jewish struggle more broadly, and in so doing, produced "feelings of solidarity between Jews among Czech non-Jews."[613]

Considering Radok's *Mischling* status, *Distant Journey* might be a similar performance of belonging.[614] Central to the plot is the theme of Jewish assimilation into Czechoslovak society, and thus the topic of Jewishness is often discussed in terms that express the character's deep emotional attachment to Czech language and culture. One scene stands out as a particularly good example. Early in the film, when Hana overhears her parents' plans to seek refuge in Puerto Rico, she refuses to join them. The one thing she will not do is leave her home. When her mother asks why—is it because of Toník,

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[610] Lisa A. Peschel, "A Joyful Act of Worship': Survivor Testimony on Czech Culture in the Terezín Ghetto and Postwar Reintegration in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1948," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2012), 211.
[611] Ibid., 211.
[612] Ibid., 211.
[613] Ibid., 211.
[614] Not to mention the fact that Erik Kolár was Jewish.

her "Aryan" fiancé?—she proudly declares, "I am rooted here by language, upbringing, people, countryside air—by everything." To this, her father replies, "Do you think this is easy for me?" Though the Kauffmans initially have some misgivings about Hana's decision to stay and marry a Gentile, they ultimately support their daughter and choose to remain with her in Prague. They cannot bring themselves to leave their daughter or their homeland behind. Hana's impassioned speech is typical of the kind of arguments being made about Jewish belonging in the period. To affirm her deep-rooted loyalty to the state, she adapts the melodramatic maxim "home is where the heart is."[615]

Perhaps most revealing in this respect is the film's use of a love story about a mixed couple.[616] In *Distant Journey*, the tensions between Jews and non-Jews are personified by Hana Kauffmanová (a Jew) and Antonín "Toník" Bureš (a Gentile), and the conflicts presented by the transformation of the social and political status quo are embodied by the trials and tribulations of their romantic relationship. The film does not, however, imply that non-Jews were necessarily the primary victims of Nazi persecution, but it does suggest that there were a variety of ways in which ordinary people—Jews and non-Jews alike—suffered, collaborated, and resisted during the occupation.

The trope of Jewish and Gentile lovers is not unique to Czech Holocaust films but is deeply rooted in the generic conventions of Holocaust cinema. According to Lawrence Baron, "since the end of World War II, filmmakers have been fascinated with how the

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[615] Christine Gledhill ed. *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Women's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987).
[616] For more on intermarriage in Czechoslovakia see: Benjamin Frommer, "Expulsion or Integration: Unmixing Interethnic Marriage in Postwar Czechoslovakia," *East European Politics and Societies* 14, no. 2 (2000), 381–410.

relationships between Jewish and Gentile lovers broke under or withstood peer pressure and state law against what was forbidden against miscegenation."[617] Such a transgression against societal expectations raises the potential of examining both subversive and conventional meanings of the status quo under Nazi rule. Judith Doneson adopts a similar line of argument. Turning to the recurring "dilemma of the condemned couple," Doneson argues it allows us to examine the gendered aspects of Jewish victimization.[618] As she points out, such scenarios frequently involve a Christian man who attempts to help a Jewess in need of protection.[619] Clearly, the motif of the Jewess as love-object sets up a feminine victimhood and contributes to the "feminization" of Jewish suffering more broadly. So, as Doneson notes, in *Distant Journey*—one of the "first Holocaust films to deal with this 'love theme'"—the figure of the Jewish female protagonist, Hana, serves to humanize Toník as the "Christian protector of the Jewish female," and cements his role as "the hero of the film."[620]

Doneson's comments indicate how the film feminizes Jewish victimhood, subordinating feminine pathos to masculine action, but her Christian theological reading takes Hana's moral authority for granted.[621] Toník may be Hana's Aryan protector, but the story is centered on her experience. Hana may be the victim heroine, but she does not suffer passively. Rather, she is moved by the suffering of others to take action—and we

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[617] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust*, 103-105.
[618] Judith E. Doneson, "The Jew as a Female Figure in Holocaust Film," *Shoah* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1978), 11-13, 18.
[619] Ibid., 13. For a different reading of gender in Holocaust films see: Esther Fuches, "Gender, Identity and Family in the European Holocaust Film: The Jewess as Virgin and Whore," in *Life, Death and Sacrifice Women and Family in the Holocaust,* ed. Esther Hertzog (Jerusalem: Esther Hertzog & Gefen Publishing House, 2008), 287-305.
[620] Ibid., 13.
[621] Ibid., 13.

spend the final quarter of the film on her quest to help her fellow Jewish prisoners in the Terezín ghetto. In short, it is not the Aryan, Toník, but Hana, the Jew, with whom we identify as morally righteous and come to sympathize with most strongly.[622]

Drawing on the work of Baron and Doneson, Tatjana Lichtenstein argues that "as manifestations of Holocaust memory, films about 'mixed couples'—intermarried families and intimate relationships between Jews and non-Jews—are particularly rich sources because they deal with the intersection of otherwise segregated worlds."[623] Lichtenstein suggests that in Czech Holocaust films, the mixed couple became a common trope because it provided a means for narratives to establish the "parallel victimization" of Jews and Czechs, and later during the period of liberalization facilitated by the reforms of the Prague Spring, provided filmmakers with the opportunity to raise hard questions about Czech complicity and collaboration under German occupation that thinly veiled a critique of state-socialism.[624]

In her analysis of *Distant Journey*, Lichtenstein reads Hana and Toník's mixed marriage in relation to the changing circumstances in late-1940s Czechoslovakia.[625] First of all, she sees the film as addressing the differences between Jews and Czechs on the basis of social class and family history rather than merely showcasing their intertwined experiences under Nazi rule.[626] Moreover, Lichtenstein calls attention to the moral choices made by Toník's non-Jewish father and brother, arguing that their self-sacrificial

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[622] Ingrid Lewis argues that we identify with Hana because her suffering is framed as a "universal." Ingrid Lewis, *Women in European Holocaust Films: Perpetrators, Victims and Resisters* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 133-147.
[623] Lichtenstein, "'It is Not My Fault'," 122.
[624] Ibid., 118.
[625] Ibid.,127-129.
[626] Ibid., 127-129.

actions in the face of Nazi injustice offer a metonymic substitute for the working-class and signal the film's ideological complicity with communist doctrine.[627] The narrative's juxtaposition of the working-class Bureš family and the film's overwhelmingly middle-and-upper class Jewish families, she goes on, might be seen as illustrating the heroism of the Czech working-class, connecting moral virtue with social injustice.[628] Lichtenstein concludes her analysis of the film by reflecting upon the ideological significance of the final scene:

> As the two gaze over the sea of crosses, the differences between the Nazi regime's Jewish and Czech victims are effectively erased. In this concluding take, Radok seems to anticipate the erasure of the distinct experience of Czech Jews in favor of the official universalizing narrative of 'Czechoslovak victims.'[629]

For Lichtenstein, the final scene undercuts the identification with Jewish victims of the Terezín ghetto, suggesting that the film is ultimately concerned with commemorating not Jewish victims but general "victims of fascism."[630] Such a reading positions the ending as a response to Czechoslovakia's socialist transformation and accounts for how it reflects and expresses the social values and revolutionary sentiments of the new social order. Although this argument is compelling for its connection to the politically motivated interpretations of the war and the Holocaust, opening up the possibility that the film could be read for its progressive or even revolutionary qualities (a point I will return to later), I would suggest that there is also a way in which it overstates the ending's overarching effect on the meaning of the film, giving too much power to these new

[627] Ibid.,127-129.
[628] Ibid.,127-129.
[629] Ibid., 129.
[630] Ibid., 129.

political ends. It goes without saying that *Distant Journey* does not have one specific meaning: multiple and intersecting meanings exist and continue to be negotiated across time, shifting with viewers and contexts. Indeed, the melodramatic modality provides a means to do so.

Certainly, it is true that the final scene obscures the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish victims by foregrounding the Czechoslovak victims of Terezín in creative new ways. Yet if we analyze the scene closely, looking at the heightening effects of camera movement, iconographic mise-en-scène, and shot composition, it can be seen more clearly as negotiating identification and difference in its appeal to the heightened emotional registers of memorialization. Again, here, as in previous scenes, melodrama's aesthetic and rhetorical strategies are employed to enact Jewish belonging.[631] The camera starts in a space overcast by the shadow of a Star of David monument and moves us out of its darkness and into the sunlit cemetery.[632] The landscape is filled with freshly covered cross-marked graves, vividly illustrating the renewed function of the site as a memorial to national martyrdom, a vision made explicit by the large cross monument placed toward the center of the frame. Though seemingly drowned among the sea of crosses, the iconic presence of the Star of David in the action tableaux gives prominence to the importance of the Jewish victims that came before, creating a visual bridge

[631]Here I take issue with Láníček's reading of the final scene, which stresses the presence of Christian iconography: "In fact, the final scene in *Distant Journey* starts with the camera focusing on a Star of David, which stands on the ground, before the viewers' attention turns to the left, surveying rows of crosses –the universal symbol of the Calvary. Implicitly, the scene points to the post-mortem baptism of the victims of the Shoah, who finally, after their deaths, found their place among the non-Jewish citizens of Czechoslovakia." Láníček, "After the Whirlwind," 279.

[632] Curiously, Michal Frankl notes that the Star of David monument wasn't erected until the 1995. If this is indeed true, this would suggest that, in addition to the cross-marked graves, Radok added the Star of David monument. Frankl, "The Sheep of Lidice," 176.

between the present-past and the present-future. Thus, even if this final scene takes imaginative license and revises the memorial-site using universalizing, monumentalizing rhetoric, it is impossible to erase the traces of its past from its present (or future). Hana and Toník's return to Terezín is haunted by the ghosts of their past, resurrected in the present through the symbolic use of Jewish iconography and the narrated interpretation of its meaning.

The deployment of camera movement is motivated by the actions of the reunited couple, emphasizing their moral power and value as righteous victim-heroes turned survivors. Following Hana and Toník, the dramatic movement of the camera visualizes the emotional impact of their personal victimization, loss, and nostalgia, and imbues the sequence with empathy arousing pathos. The use of a wide shot directs our attention to the only living bodies in the frame which is dominated by morbid imagery. Both Hana and Toník are implicated in this fantasy of national sacrifice and heroic action. But Hana's presence in the shot and her emblematic identity as a Jewish survivor of Terezín reminds us of the "unspeakable truth" of this image, and consequently, the logic of its artificial *mise-en-scène* breaks down.

Witnessing Hana's return to the site of her suffering produces a knowledge discrepancy between what we already know and what is being represented. From our privileged perspective, we are aware of the "true" circumstances of the Terezín ghetto and recognize the misleading nature of its construction (one reason why the scene is so "jarring").[633] The visual codes attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable tensions and

[633] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 162.

competing identifications of the present-day memorial-site not by erasing but substituting—or rather, *superimposing* imaginary national victims over the ghetto's Jewish victims. This leaves us with a composite image that blurs the truth, making everyone a victim. Bound up in each other's pasts, divided by nationalistic sentiments and antisemitic atmosphere of the Nazi occupation, in the aftermath of nationwide catastrophe, Jewish and non-Jewish victims are linked as Czechoslovak victims in the present to imagine a better future.

All of this leads back to the problem of the tacked on ending. Perhaps the best way to understand the effect of the final scene is to draw an analogy to the palimpsest, defined as "a written document, usually on vellum or parchment, that has been written upon several times, often with remnants of erased writing still visible."[634] As Mary Ann Doane explains, it is "the sum total of its rewritings through time."[635] While the palimpsest is necessarily tied to literature and writing, it has a wide range of visual and textual uses, and has a particular significance for memory discourse, since it is fundamentally concerned with the interconnected processes of visibility and invisibility, remembrance and forgetting.[636] Here Freud's "Mystic Writing-Pad" (*Wunderblock*) comes to mind—a children's toy consisting of two detachable-layers—one translucent

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[634] For more on the literary trope see: Gérard Genette, *Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree*, Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).
[635] Mary Ann Doane, "Remembering Women: Physical and Historical Constructions in Film Theory," in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990), 58.
[636] For more on the palimpsest and memory see: Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).; Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2013). Andreas Huyssen provides another approach to the literary trope, reading the palimpsestic texture of urban spaces and public memory-sites. "Cities, after all," Huyssen writes, "are incarnations of time in stone, sites of memory extending both in time and space." Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: University of California Press, 2003), 101.

celluloid, one waxed paper—placed on top of a dark brown wax slab.[637] A pointed stylus is used to write on the pad's "ever-ready receptive surface," but once this surface-layer is lifted, what was written disappears, leaving behind a blank slate and an imprint—a "memory-trace" of its inscription.[638] In Freud's view, the technology of the Mystic Writing-Pad parallels the "perceptual apparatus of the mind," pointing to the ruptures and gaps between perception-consciousness (the two detachable layers) and unconscious memory (the wax slab).[639] Similarly, Thomas Elsasser, in his analysis of Jacques Derrida's interpretation of Freud's Writing-Pad writes that it "recalls the ancient practice of the palimpsest, the writing process whereby mnemic impressions emerge, merge and re(e)merge through acts of layering and superimposition."[640] This description also evokes Elsaesser's earlier Freudian approach to melodrama in which he draws a connection between "dream-work" and melodramatic rhetoric.[641] The palimpsest of this scene, on the one hand, and in theories of melodrama, on the other, shows how earlier associations and meanings can be displaced, substituted, and written over, and yet remain nonetheless.[642]

The structure and logic of the palimpsest also recalls melodrama's composite tenses. Melodrama, as Jane Gaines tells us, is characterized by temporal asymmetry, allowing the remembered past and imagined future to co-exist within the present tense.[643] Indeed, it uncovers the unconscious subtext of memory-meanings and provides a way to

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[637] Sigmund Freud, "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad," (1925) in *General Psychological Theory*, 207-211.
[638] Ibid., 207.
[639] Ibid., 208.
[640] Thomas Elsaesser, "Freud as Media Theorist: Mystic Writing-Pads and the Matter of Memory," *Screen* 50, no.1 (Spring 2009), 106.
[641] Thomas Elsasser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," 43-69.
[642] Ibid., 43-69.
[643] Gaines, "Even More Tears," 329.

trace the residues memory traces leave behind. It dramatizes the intersections and gaps between presence and absence, the conscious and unconscious, memory and history, gesturing beneath and beyond the represented and narrated social world.[644] Along the same lines, *Distant Journey's* tacked on ending can be read as a palimpsest of multiple plotlines and earlier drafts, and account for the layers, erasures, and superimpositions of the emplotted narrative memory. The larger question here is to what extent the film's melodramatic strategies supplement and make present the dynamic processes of memorialization. How does it negotiate the complexities of this historical moment, rendering residual ethical conflicts legible as deeply felt emotions?

"Home is Where the Heart Is": From Family to Nation

No doubt, *Distant Journey*'s hybrid and multi-layered form—its particular combination of formal and narrative devices—makes it especially productive for considering the dilemmas of Holocaust representation. The film intercuts archival footage—Nazi propaganda, newsreels, and documentary footage shot by the liberating Allied armies and by Radok himself—with a realist aesthetic and an expressionist style (moving camera, unusual camera-angles, high-contrast lighting, theatrical sets, etc.). Perhaps most discussed by scholars (including Láníček and Liebman) is Radok's development of "trick montages" (*trikové montáže*), a variation of a picture-in-picture effect, in which the still-active frame of the fictional diegesis shrinks down in scale into the lower-third of the

[644] Ibid., 43-69.

frame.[645] As the fictional frame is set in the right side of the screen, a small frame of documentary footage expands to take its place, and the diegetic sound is replaced with non-diegetic music and omniscient voice-over narration. The juxtaposition of documentary and fiction footage, of realist and expressionist cinematography, and of naturalistic and excessive *mise-en-scène* evokes what Michael Rothberg calls a traumatic realist representation of the Holocaust.[646]

Rothberg proposes traumatic realism as an alternative to the realist/anti-realist divide in Holocaust discourse.[647] Unlike realist representations, which Rothberg explains, "claim that the Holocaust is knowable … and that this knowledge can be translated into a familiar mimetic universe"—and antirealist representations, which he notes, start from the premise that "the Holocaust is not knowable or would be knowable only under radically new regimes of knowledge that cannot be captured in traditional representational schemata"—traumatic realism "[considers] how the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of genocide intersect and co-exist."[648] For Rothberg, traumatic realism is less of a break from the realist project than a way to come to terms with its inherent contradictions.[649] As a mode of representation and historical understanding, he explains, traumatic realism combines the socio-aesthetic categories of realism,

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[645]Jiří Cieslar, "Daleká cesta/ Distant Journey" in *The Cinema of Central Europe*, ed. Peter Hames (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 46.; Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 63.
[646] Michael Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3-4.
[647] Ibid., 3-4. This is a play on Hal Foster's notion: "a realism in which the scars that mark the relationship of discourse to the real are not fetishistically denied, but exposed; a realism in which claims to reference live on, but so does the traumatic extremity that disables realist representation as usual." Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 135. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 32.
[648] Rothberg, *Traumatic Realism*, 9-12.
[649] Ibid., 9-12.

modernism, and postmodernism with their corresponding representational strategies of documentation, testimony, and engagement to produce the traumatic event as a "knowable" object.[650] Consequently, it highlights the difficulty of finding adequate visual and narrative forms of understanding and representing the Holocaust. And yet, it does not necessarily preclude it from making truth claims about its historical traumas.

Rothberg's conception of traumatic realism recalls theories of moving image melodrama. What he sees in the representational stakes of traumatic realism seems to be echoed in Christine Gledhill's description of the melodramatic mode. Drawing from Peter Brooks, Gledhill argues that melodrama mediates between the seemingly incompatible aesthetic and epistemological modes in modernity: while realism "ignores," and modernism "seeks obsessively to expose the gaps in bourgeois ideology," melodrama, Gledhill explains, "insists on the realities of life in a bourgeois democracy… [and] proceeds to insist on, force into aesthetic presence, desires for identity, value, and fullness of signification beyond the powers of language to supply."[651] Like Rothberg's traumatic realism, melodrama bridges the everyday and the extraordinary, the real and the imaginary, the known and the unknown, to get at the "inner truth" of the dominant values of social and historical reality. Thus, *Distant Journey* represents the traumatic reality of the Holocaust in an intrinsically melodramatic fashion.

I am not alone in claiming that *Distant Journey* is a melodrama. Antonin Liehm and Mira Liehm believe that early Czech films about the war "resembled westerns,"

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[650] Ibid., 9-12, 99-107, 179-186.
[651] Gledhill, "'Stella Dallas' and Feminist Film Theory," 45. Or as Linda Williams puts it "realist cinematic effects—whether of setting, action, acting or narrative motivation—most often operate in the service of melodramatic affects." Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 42.

because "the distinctions in these stories were precise: good was white and ultimately victorious, evil was black and safely vanquished, and the audience's identification with the 'good guys' was ensured."[652] They describe *Distant Journey* as "a dime-a-dozen story of a pleasant lad who, under the Nazi occupation, risks his life for his Jewish sweetheart."[653] The film's connection to melodrama is made explicit by film historians like Jiří Cieslar, who repeatedly refers to *Distant Journey's* "melodramatic story," and Peter Hames, who simply calls it "a touching melodrama."[654] In the same vein, Láníček and Liebman note: "The main plotline progresses in a conventional manner, not unlike countless melodramas from many countries over the prior decades."[655]

Unfortunately, the topic of melodrama more generally has not been pursued by Cieslar, Hames, Láníček and Liebman or any others. In fact, scholarship on the film has largely avoided discussing the film's more "melodramatic" aspects, and these particular scholars have not attempted to elaborate on their observations. But in only focusing on the film's more exemplary aspects (e.g., visual style, historical circumstances, censorship), they are missing an opportunity. What exactly do they mean by melodrama? I suspect that their use of the term should be taken at face value—that it provided an easy way to discount the film's focus on family, romance, and relationships (not coincidentally, all subject matter typically associated with the "women's film"). Again, here we see melodrama used as the quintessential "bad object" to position a conventional

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[652] It is worth noting that they call it "the war" and not "the Holocaust." Antonin Liehm and Mira Liehm, *The Most Important Art Eastern European Film After 1945* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977), 228.
[653] Ibid., 103.
[654] Cieslar, "Daleká cesta/ Distant Journey," 46.; Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema*, 106.
[655] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 63.

narrative as secondary to more serious (and thus, less feminine) aspects of the film. *Distant Journey's* romantic plot uses melodrama's nostalgic structure to displace dominant cultural values onto psychologically motivated conflicts in the private and domestic sphere and contextualizes them within the frameworks of historical memory.

Distant Journey tells the story of a patriotic, upper-middle-class Czech Jewish family in Prague, the Kauffmans. The film focuses on Hana, the family's adult daughter, who, at the start of the narrative, works in a hospital as a medical doctor. *Distant Journey* opens in 1939—just months before the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia—and ends in 1945, sometime after the May 8 liberation of Terezín. The tensions between personal experiences and socio-political forces are set up in a prologue. A didactic opening montage seamlessly intercuts Nazi propaganda with scenes from the fictional narrative—sensational scenes of Jews marching toward the trains that will take them east to the concentration camps, of Jewish prisoners scrubbing the streets of the Terezín ghetto in preparation for the arrival of the Red Cross, and of terrified child prisoners.

Significantly, in *Distant Journey*, the passage of time is not only established through the strategic deployment of documentary archival footage and trick montages; dates and time are also plainly visible within the *mise-en-scène* in the form of temporal markers such as newspapers or calendars. The film's attention to the passage of time, its situating of the recent past (as a time that "has been")—or to use Hayden White's term, the "emplotment" of "real events" into the narrative—serves to melodramatize "the [real]

events [and] endow them with meaning."[656] Indeed, *Distant Journey* tells a story by melodramatizing what is known to us already—it makes sense of historical traumas by appealing to the affective aspects of a recent and remembered experience as a time that was, and has past—to underscore the fact that the characters we care about are powerless to the pressures of time, unable to change their fates.

Early in *Distant Journey*, when Hana is suddenly fired from the hospital, the Czech administrator takes a sadistic, racially charged pleasure in firing her. Like any good melodramatic villain, a grotesque scar runs down the length of his face, rendering his evil visible. As he sneers at her through wire-rimmed glasses, Hana sits in silence, unable to find the words to respond. It is worth repeating that the following shot—a close-up of a hospital bulletin board sets this scene in February 1939, five months after the Munich Agreement ceded the Sudetenland to Germany, and a month prior to the Nazi occupation. This means Hana's firing was, as Lichtenstein writes, an anticipatory act of "self-Aryanization."[657] In other words, at the outset of the film, a scene shows a distinctly Czech anti-Semitism, characterizing it as an underlying social problem in interwar Czechoslovakia—not exclusively a German phenomenon. Significantly, this scene deviates from the postwar interpretive frameworks that positioned Germans as the sole perpetrators of the occupation and antisemitic crimes. It very clearly indicts Czech

[656] Hayden White, "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. Geoffrey Roberts (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 375-389.
[657] Lichtenstein expands on this point, writing "In fact, Hana's story opens with her dismissal by an openly antisemitic hospital administrator, a reference to the 'self-Aryanization' that some institutions undertook after the Munich crisis and thus well in advance of the German occupation." Lichtenstein, "'It Is Not My Fault,'"128.

collaboration, forcing the identification of villainy with Czechness, and complicating the notion of the purely Czech victimization narrative.

Before long, the German Nuremberg Laws are enacted in the newly formed Protectorate. The officially sanctioned antisemitic policies make life increasingly difficult for Hana and her family. The impact on the city more broadly is conveyed in a graphic montage: images of storefronts, newspaper headlines, and graffiti with antisemitic messages such as "Jews, out" ("*Židi ven*!"), "Jews are not welcome" ("*Židé v tomto podniku nevítáni*"), and "Jews and dogs forbidden" ("*Židé a psi zakázáno*"). Expository dialogue informs us that there are new restrictions on Jewish employment; that Hana's young brother can no longer attend his school or sports club; and that Jews are required to wear the yellow badge. Rumors spread that all of Prague's Jews will be soon be transported to the Terezín ghetto—or worse, to camps in the East. Perhaps most telling, however, is how defeated the bourgeois middle-class Kauffman family is when they learn that Jews are barred from the Czech National Theater (Národní divadlo), the symbol of the Czech national awakening.

Distant Journey deals with the harsh reality of Jewish life in the Protectorate, but it also tells a mixed love story about a Jewish woman and a Gentile man. The scene that sets this plot in action, when Toník proposes marriage, uses camera movement and symbolic *mise-en-scène* to foreshadow the obstacles to come. However, the scene opens up with a different proposal: first, Zdeněk Klein, the Kauffmans' Jewish neighbor, asks Hana to marry him and leave Prague behind, which she politely declines. Toník enters the Kauffman's apartment just as Zdeněk is leaving, and her two suitors size each other up.

Zdeněk is an insensitive man of action, self-assured to the point of being arrogant, especially in comparison to Toník, the romantic hero, who is presented as soft-spoken, gentle, and altruistic. This contrast, as developed in this brief scene, is important because it characterizes the men as complex individuals: it makes the point that ethnic identity does not necessarily determine moral character. At the same time, it advances the stereotype of the pushy and opportunistic Jew.

Figure 50 **Figure 51**

When Toník asks Hana to marry him, she deflects his proposal by suggesting that he pities her. The camera dollies in to punctuate the recklessness of his romantic gesture, and then whip-pans to capture Hana's reaction, the swift movement suggesting her surprise. Hana is initially wary, not wanting Toník to jeopardize his future by marrying a Jew. But he ignores the suggestion that he reconsider, grabs Hana's hands, and asserts his love for her. Throughout the scene, the use of deep space composition ensures that a menorah is always visible in the frame: it is first positioned in front of Hana's face in close-up—then, in a wide shot, it is placed between the couple—and finally, at the end of the scene, the camera tilts down from Hana and Toník's hands to the menorah. The menorah can thus be seen as a reminder of Hana's Jewishness, foreshadowing the

inevitable obstacle that will impede their relationship. The scene ends with a trick montage; as a medium-shot of the menorah shrinks into the corner of the frame, in marches documentary footage of Nazi troops.

Figure 52

Figure 53

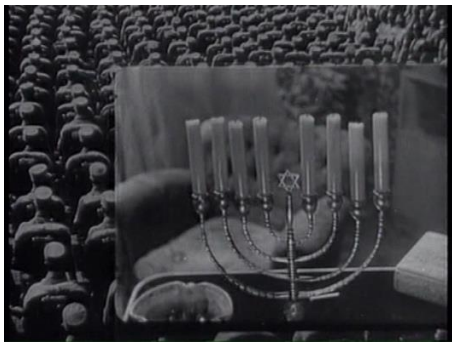

Figure 54

Figure 55

Once married to Toník (an "Aryan"), Hana is protected from transport to Terezín. But at the same time, Toník becomes a second-class citizen—a pariah in the eyes of the Protectorate. The hospital fires him, forcing him to work as a laborer in a factory. Before long, the rest of the Kauffman family is transported to Terezín along with most of the Protectorate's Jews, and their internment motivates the couple to work alongside Toník's father—who initially disapproves of his son's Jewish wife, but after realizing her family needs his help, has a change of heart—and brother who is part of the Czech underground

resistance. When an altruistic Czech gendarme arrives at their apartment with news from the ghetto and a letter from Hana's parents, the couple discusses selling their remaining valuables to fund their needs. Though they are willing to provide anything they can scrape together, one particularly odd request stands out to Hana, who asks (with a menorah and her Jewish badge clearly visible in the foreground of the frame): "Why does Daddy need black shoe polish?" It is then that Toník decides to sneak into Terezín and help the Kauffmans. What is significant, however, is that Toník arrives too late to save his wife's family—Zdeněk Klein, now a corrupt member of the ghetto's Jewish police, informs him that they have already been deported to an extermination camp in Poland. Toník does not just experience the emotional impact of this loss; he sees for the first time the dehumanizing conditions of life in the ghetto—the fear, despair, helplessness, and self-serving behavior of its inmates—a glimpse into the future that awaits Hana. But he never tells his wife about what he witnessed.

At the beginning of the film, Hana refused to immigrate to Puerto Rico, and her parents refused to leave her behind, but now she regrets this decision. The innocent daughter blames herself for her family's sufferings and also for the subsequent arrests of Toník's father and brother. She is overcome with guilt that her marriage has granted her relative privilege while costing her husband his normal status. One particularly affecting scene uses cross-cutting to show Hana and Toník simultaneously recognize their powerlessness to the overwhelming force of the Nazi regime. Hana explains to her colleague at the Jewish doctor's office that she feels responsible for Toník's situation because he will never divorce her (which would free him from the burden "of being tied

to a Jew," and condemn her to deportation), and she needs to find an alternative solution.[658] She cannot bear the moral burden of having condemned him to suffer further. Just as she asks for a few days off from work, the telephone rings: it is Toník, calling from a telephone booth. The audience knows that the Czech police just handed Toník their transport papers, but he cannot find the words to tell his wife. When Hana hears her husband's voice—and his pointed silence—she immediately knows that he is hiding something.

Figure 56

Figure 57

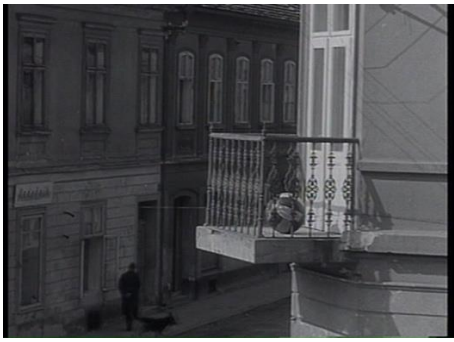

Figure 58

Figure 59

[658] Frommer, "Expulsion or Integration," 381–410.

Finally called to action, Hana decides that she must die so that Toník can live and pretends to have to stay late at work. But before Toník can hang up the telephone, she becomes panicked out of the knowledge that it is the last conversation they will ever have. The camera pans to show Hana's point of view as she describes the sight of the balcony outside her office window, empty aside from a child's lifeless ball, as a "beautiful" vision of a child at play without a care in the world. Pathos arises from this nostalgic image of an innocence forever lost and a future that was never realized—because of the Nazis, they would never have a chance to have a family of their very own. What is most moving about this scene is not what is said, since Hana and Toník both conceal information and talk around their emotional revelations, but their willingness to silently suffer in order to preserve the norms of their relationship and lessen the suffering of the person they love.

This sets up a sensational scene in which Hana attempts the ultimate self-sacrificial act in order to "liberate" Toník. The cross-cutting between her protracted preparation for self-abnegation and Toník's premonition that something is terribly wrong heightens the suspense and its resulting pathos. The dramatic tension mounts as Hana silently closes the curtains, locks the door, and turns off the lights—and her husband races to her rescue. As Linda Williams says: "mute pathos enables action."[659] When he reaches the office, Toník struggles before he is able to force his way through the door. Frantically, he looks for his wife: Did she jump out the window? Give herself a lethal injection? Inhale gas? Swallow poison? The use of canted-angles and moving camera

[659] Williams, "Melodrama Revised," 71.

contributes to the sense of urgency. It is only after we see all of these options that Hana is revealed: still alive and frozen in fear behind a medicine cabinet. Toník arrives just in the nick of time to save Hana, and yet, we know that his heroic act will not solve their real problem. Both recognize that they have run out of time; it is "too late" to stop their impending separation. However, with this scene, the knowledge discrepancy between Hana's and Toník's point of view is reconciled; any lingering tension is released with their embrace and Toník's whisper that they will "go together."

Figure 60

Figure 61

Figure 62

Figure 63

Figure 64 **Figure 65**

Figure 66 **Figure 67**

It is at this point that Hana and Toník are finally separated: she is sent to the Terezín ghetto, and he is deported to a labor camp for "Aryan" husbands.[660] Significantly, when Hana arrives at the Terezín ghetto, she is alone for the first time, without the support of her family or husband. Hana experiences the brutal realities of everyday life in the ghetto, and, after she sees a woman use her father's precious shoe polish, learns that her family is almost certainly dead. She becomes distraught and runs into a familiar face: Zdeněk. Now in a position of power, it is implied that Zdeněk offers her a very

different proposal—to protect her in exchange for sex—but again she declines.[661] Exiled from the world in which she once belonged, Hana loses her husband, her family, her identity, but she is still virtuous and characteristically empathetic to the suffering of others. Because Hana is a medical doctor, she becomes the caregiver of the children who arrived from camps in the east (but not without one major gaffe: she tries to put the traumatized children in the real showers), and then, after a typhus outbreak sweeps through the ghetto, she becomes a medic in the makeshift hospital ward.[662] Even in these dehumanizing conditions, she does the best she can to help those more helpless than herself.

In the film's sensational climax, Hana hears the sound of festivities taking place and runs through the typhus ward—past a visibly dying Zdeněk—to look out the window. And it is this vision of the Jewish prisoners celebrating the arrival of the liberating Red Army that prompts Hana to rip the Jewish badge off her coat—an action that expresses her liberation and symbolically restores her Czech identity.

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[661] For a detailed account of sexual barter in Terezín see Anna Hájková, "Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Negotiating the Sexual Economy of the Theresienstadt Ghetto, *Signs* 38, no. 3 (Spring 2013), 503-533.

[662] Láníček and Liebman put this scene in context: "This scene represented a known event. On August 24, 1943, the Germans transported 1,260 children from the destroyed Bialystok ghetto to Theresienstadt. Taken to shower, the children allegedly started to scream,' "No, no . . . gas!' In October the children were deported to Auschwitz and murdered." "A Closer Look," 74, fn19.

Figure 68

Figure 69

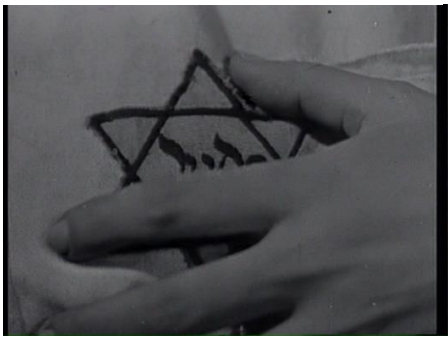

Figure 70

Figure 71

Returning to *Distant Journey's* tacked on ending: surely it signals hope for Hana and Toník's future, even as it reminds us of the overwhelmingly negative and traumatic memories of their past. Are we to conclude that Hana and Toník simply move on with their lives? That they go off into the future and make a new family of their very own? Most strikingly, the ending does not show the aftermath of the liberation or tell us of its lasting effects, however it is heavily implied that the Kaufmann family will never return home to Prague. The last we saw Hana's parents, they were marching through the rain and the mud toward trains bound for the extermination camps, her father's black shoe polish—his last hope for surviving the selection for the gas chambers—running down his face. The last we heard from Zdeněk, her parents had perished in the crematoriums of an

extermination camp—and we do not see her young brother at all after the initial transport. We also know that Toník's brother and father were arrested by the Nazis and sent to Mauthausen concentration camp. They too are never heard from again.

Both Jewish and non-Jewish families are almost completely wiped out, but this ending does not speak directly to these personal losses. Rather, they are lumped together with national victims in the newly built "Memorial for National Suffering"—a public memorial site established in 1947 to commemorate anti-Fascist and Communist resistance.[663] The refusal to acknowledge the human and material losses that shape Hana and Toník's present emotional state might confuse our sense of clear victimhood and values, but it does not change the couple's intrinsic moral righteousness as powerless victims turned survivors. While melodrama's compulsion to return to a space of innocence promises the restoration of the home, this scene presents a different kind of homecoming—a return to a restored homeland—the reunited Czechoslovak Republic. In this regard, the tacked on ending layers the universalizing values of a Czechoslovak identity over the details of personal history, repressing the individualized aspects of the plot, and reducing the complexities of Terezín's history to a single nation-building narrative.

It is clear that the final scene does not only foster a feeling of Jewish belonging—implicit in the cinematic strategies and visual iconography—but also envisions a version of Terezín that advances the interests of a new national-political identity. While not exactly a call for revolution, the tacked on ending does indeed seem to frame the

[663] Alena Heitlinger, "Politicizing Jewish Memory in Postwar Czechoslovakia," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 35, no. 2 (2005), 135-138.

memorial site in such a way that advances the interests of what Bradley Abrams discusses as the "Czechoslovak road to socialism."[664] Or more precisely, in the light of Czechoslovakia's Marxist-Leninist social transformation, it offers a revised view of Terezín's wartime past that appeals to a nationalist revolutionary pathos.[665] The tacked on ending is designed to give new knowledge about the places and faces we recognize, suppress ethnic differences, and reaffirm the narratives that will mobilize consciousness change. More than anything, the political rhetorical goal would be to declare victory over fascism, and imagine the new liberated future in relation to the emerging revolutionary present and engage viewers in the pathos of remaking society.[666]

Consider, for example, that at first glance, the final scene appears to resolve the narrative. Finally reunited, Hana and Toník return to Terezín to mourn what has been irrevocably lost (time, family, home) and honor it by propelling their union into the bright Communist future. The film ends with a wide shot that lingers on the repurposed ruins of Terezín, using the nostalgia for a past that never happened to imagine a possible future—with the clear implication that whatever happens will be a better alternative to the

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[664] Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul*, 184.

[665] Jane Gaines has developed the relationship between the melodrama's rhetorical strategies and progressive political action throughout a series of essays, which, though dealing with diverse array of subject-matter (documentary, narrative fiction, and avant-garde), build conceptually on each other. One of her central claims is that moving images relate to the political mimetic through what she calls "political mimesis," moving bodies through to re-produce radical political action in the present. Jane M. Gaines, "The Melos in Marxist Theory," in *The Hidden Foundation: Cinema and the Question of Class*, eds. David E. James and Rick Berg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 56-71.; also see: Gaines, "Political Mimesis," 84-102.

[666] As Gaines puts it: "Theatrical melodrama has historically been the preferred form of revolutionary periods for precisely its capacity to dichotomize swiftly, to identity targets, to encapsulate conflict, and to instill the kind of pride that can swell the ranks of malcontents. Revolutionary melodrama can be depended upon to narrate intolerable historical conditions in such a way that audiences wish to see wrongs 'righted,' are even moved to act upon their reaffirmed conviction, to act against tyranny and for 'the people.'" Gaines, "The Melos in Marxist Theory," 59-60.

present. This last memorable shot of *Distant Journey* nostalgically reclaims the remnants of Terezín as a "usable past" for future memory and identity formation. [667] Nostalgic longing therefore remakes this idealized vision of Terezín's past and folds it within the present to secure the higher values of the new socialist social order. It establishes an imagined homeland and anticipates the utopian vision that appears over the horizon. This recalls Andreas Huyssen's observation that "nostalgia can be a utopia in reverse."[668] That is to say, nostalgic desire and utopian anticipation are both marked by profound longing for a place that never has or will never again exist.[669] Such an image sends a mixed message: at the threshold of past and future, the surviving couple walks off into the utopian horizon, yet in the direction of the small fortress (the Gestapo prison).

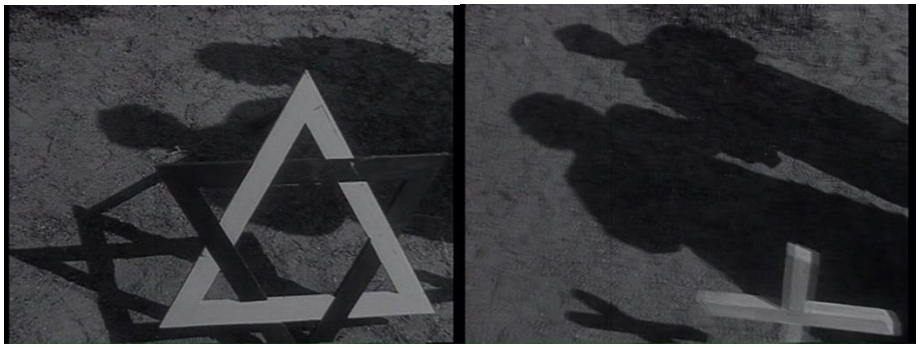

Figure 72 **Figure 73**

[667] Van Wyck Brook's term "usable past" has been used by scholars of Jewish history to discuss postwar Jewry's engagement with the past in the context of postwar societies. Here I use it to suggest the ways in which the ending sought to create a new collective past that would serve the interests of the postwar communist state. For example, see: David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
[668] Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room*, No. 23 (Spring 2006), 7.
[669] Ibid., 7.

Figure 74 **Figure 75**

Here then is a composite image that confirms Svetlana Boym's assertion that nostalgia can be at the same time "retrospective" and "prospective."[670] Not only does it look backwards, but it also moves forward (this, of course, is also the paradox of melodrama). Or as Boym puts it: "the fantasies of the past, determined by the needs to the present have a direct impact on the realities of the future."[671] Moreover, the image tells two different stories that bring into conversation fiction and reality, representation and history. To use Boym's terms, on the one hand, it is a "reflective" image characterized by "*algia*" or longing that expresses the individuals' nostalgia for the loss of personal and historical time.[672] However, on the other, it is a fundamentally "restorative" image characterized by "*nostos*" or the return home that reduces the complexity of Hana and Toník's personal experiences to a monumental national past.[673] Reflective and restorative nostalgia do not always work together, yet Boym's distinction suggests a false dichotomy.[674] Here, for instance, they are superimposed over each other to create an

[670] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xvi-xvii.
[671] Ibid., xvi.
[672] Ibid., xvi, 49-56.
[673] Ibid., xviii, 41-48.
[674] Ibid., 41-48.

idealized vision of Terezín's past in the present and animate its future function. The manipulated past coexists with the remnants of what came before; the tacked on ending affirms the past that remains in the present and engages with creating a new society. Consequently, Hana and Toník's story is not left behind or erased; rather, the final image is anchored in the emotion-laden memory of their personal experiences and traumas. In this sense, Boym's "historical emotion" of nostalgia is evoked through the conjunction of the social and personal, linking the national attachments with collective memory.[675]

Like melodrama, nostalgia is intimately linked to the emotional force of time and the sentimental pull to remember the "golden past." Christine Gledhill points to melodrama's deployment of the home and family as they "surface in a persistently nostalgic vein."[676] John Mercer and Martin Shingler note, "melodrama's search is for something lost, producing a more nostalgic attitude that can accommodate not just established forms of representation but even archaic ones."[677] And Cook has detailed melodrama's relationship to the "nostalgic memory film," describing the ways in which melodrama engages and evokes nostalgia within its narrative structure to "reflect upon its own mechanisms, and to encourage reflection in audiences."[678] There is indeed a tendency to diagnose the nostalgic attachment to the past as yet another affliction of the melodramatic imagination. But the special power of melodrama—and what makes it distinct-yet-related to nostalgia is this: melodrama takes nostalgia's "sentimental lament"

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[675] Ibid., 24.
[676] Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field," 21.
[677] John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility* (London: Wallflower, 2004), 86.
[678] Cook, "Rethinking Nostalgia," 5.

for an idealized space of experience and mobilizes it into dramatic action in the search for emotional knowledge and historical understanding.[679] The nostalgic dimensions of melodrama nevertheless stem from the injunction to remember an unreachable place or time—for the nostalgic yearning to turn back time and return to a space that may-or-may not have existed prior to the triggering moment of crisis or rupture. Nostalgia longs for the recuperation of the irretrievable past, reflecting on the intense and painful feelings of homesickness and loss; melodrama is deployed to "work through" this past and "make sense" of it in the present as a historical emotion. Melodrama moves us to a visceral reaction. It compels us to remember, to cry, and moves us toward consciousness change.

Melodrama institutionalizes a nostalgia for a very specific understanding of historical time—one that politicizes collective memory, identity, and emotional knowledge about the traumas of the recent past. Out of the nostalgia for a before time and for the promise of a better tomorrow, *Distant Journey* closes with a shot that lingers on the landscape of Terezín and reclaims it as a reconstructed monument, engaging viewers in the historicity of feeling that is brought upon by the overwhelming pathos of memorialization.

The Terezín Ghetto

The final section of *Distant Journey* is set in the Terezín ghetto—"the city the Führer gave to the Jews." In the film, the Terezín ghetto is more than just a backdrop or a plot point; the real world site was one of the film's principal shooting locations. Although

[679] See: Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 24.

some scenes set inside of the ghetto were filmed at Barrandov Studios using a constructed set, production documents show that twenty-four days were spent filming on the grounds of the former ghetto and transit camp.[680] These shooting locations included the road to Terezín, the train station, the police booth, the defensive walls and gate, the pavilion, and several streets.[681]

Figure 76

Figure 77

Distant Journey's use of the real-world location has several important functions. First, by representing the "real" Terezín, the film posits its authentic relationship to "the historical world."[682] The ontological status of the documentary image—what Bill Nichols refers to as its "indexical stickiness"—reinforces the evidentiary claim to the "historically real."[683] The referential function of the image anchors the fiction film in historical reality, and by extension, a lived, material reality. So, while not technically a documentary, *Distant Journey* makes a claim to the genuine realities of life in Terezín, providing visible evidence about both its past use as a Jewish ghetto and its present function as a

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[680] Production documents for "*Distant Journey*," 1948, the Archives of the Barrandov Studios, Prague, Czech Republic.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 154.
[683] Ibid., 154-156.

public memorial site. It is precisely this documentary immediacy that encourages us to recognize the gaps between the reality of Terezín and its representation, as well as between the real place and its (re)construction in national memory. And, as Paula Rabinowitz reminds us, "it is this very immediacy which demands refusal so that we understand our own historicity in order to begin to see what we bring to the viewing process, and more importantly what we get from it."[684]

Second, and related to Rabinowitz's point, the re-staging of everyday life in *what was once* the Terezín ghetto raises questions about the film's relationship to the (re)interpretation of Terezín in the Czech national narrative. If public memorial-sites testify to the politics of commemoration (what Pierre Nora famously termed "*lieux de mémoire*" or sites of memory), then we can think of the film as documenting the politicization of Terezín.[685] The film is thus an important record of national memory practices in the liberated Czechoslovakia.

Indeed, Terezín provides a site for tracing the construction of cultural memory. The film's reconstruction of the Jewish ghetto represents a specific vision of the past, keeping alive certain memories, while repressing others. While most of Terezín's original structures were left intact after the liberation, the ghetto's wartime past was not preserved: in fact, the big fortress, the town itself, was quickly repopulated. This, Alena Heitlinger explains, "made it relatively easy for the communist authorities to downplay

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[684] Paula Rabinowitz, "Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary, and the Ruins of Memory." *History and Theory* 32, no. 2 (May, 1993),128.
[685]On *lieux de mémoire* see: Pierre Nora, *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire Vol. I: The State*, trans. Mary Trouille and David P. Jordan (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

the Jewish character of Terezín."[686] In contrast, the small fortress, the political prison, was preserved in its entirety. The establishment of the "Memorial for National Suffering" in 1947 points at Terezín as a clear ideological tool for Czechoslovak suffering. The official memorial at the small fortress commemorated the memory of the anti-Fascist and communist resistance against Nazism, at the expense of commemorating Jewish persecution.[687] As David Lowenthal so concisely puts it: "commands to forget coexist with the zeal to commemorate."[688]

Even so, the articles and reports on the film are not characterized by the full erasure of Terezín's Jewish past, but by an awareness of its wartime function as a Jewish ghetto and transit hub—at least the articles published before the film's completion. During production, in 1948, *Distant Journey* was sold in the press as a film about "the suffering of Jewish prisoners in Terezín." One August 1948 report in *Filmové zpravodajství* (*Film News Bulletin*) details the construction of the Jewish ghetto set at Barrandov Studios:

> At Barrandov, director Alfréd Radok is shooting his first film about a Jewish family in the last World War. In the studio, the architect Jan Pacak built a copy of the 'home' the Germans built for the Jews in Terezín. There are many dusty rooms filled with mattresses, stoves, backpacks, and briefcases. And in this oppressive environment, the actors wear the requisite yellow star on their breast.[689]

However, press on the film is not limited to matter-of-fact reports about its production. In journals and newspaper reports on *Distant Journey* from 1948 and 1949, a number of

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[686] Heitlinger, "Politicizing Jewish Memory," 135-138.
[687] Ibid., 135-138.
[688] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country—Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 544.
[689] "Daleká cesta," *Filmové zpravodajstí* 4, no. 125, July 1,1948, 7-8.

articles explicitly mention the fate of Jewish prisoners in Terezín, especially those which feature interviews with figures associated with the its production, including Radok, Kolár, and the actress Anna Vaňková (who portrays Margit, a Jewish prisoner in the ghetto).[690] Among these articles is an interview with S. Schozová, a Jewish survivor of Terezín, who is featured in the climax of the film; she portrays the young woman who first spots the approaching Red Army and runs to alert her fellow prisoners.[691] Supporting photos show Schozová running down an empty street, Jewish prisoners huddled together in a small room, and the overwhelming chaos of the ghetto.[692]

Figure 78

Interesting here is an October 1948 article published in *Filmové noviny* "An Unfortunately Pressing Problem" ("*Problém bohužel živý*").[693] In the article, the critic Oldřich Kautský puts *Distant Journey* in dialogue with six feature-length films that premiered at the 1947 Venice Biennale—all of which focus on "the Jewish question."[694]

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[690] "Film o terezínkém ghetto," *Filmové noviny* 2, no. 38, September 17, 1948, 3.; "V Terezíně se filmovalo," *Rovnost*, no. 250, October 24, 1948, 5.; "V Terezíně se filmovalo." *Křesťanská žena* 1, no. 24, November 6,1948, 4.; *Čestník hlad M. Praha*, November 24, 1948.; "Anna Vaňková ve filmu 'Daleká cesta,'" *Filmové zpravodajství* 4, no.156, August 17, 1948, 8.
[691] *Filmové noviny*, October 22, 1948, 5.
[692] Ibid., 5. *Nedělní Noviny Praha*, January 12, 1949.
[693] O. Kautský, "Problém bohužel živý," *Filmové noviny*, October 19, 1948.
[694] Ibid.

Kautský starts by commending American films for their representation of the "widespread problem" of antisemitism, noting, "[these films] are not afraid to deal with the Jewish question, to show that there is antisemitism in American life, and combat it with artistic work."[695] Although American films such as *Crossfire* (Edward Dmytryk, 1947) and *Gentleman's Agreement* (Elia Kazan, 1947) prove that the phenomenon of antisemitism is not limited to Hitler and his "German backwardness," the critic goes on to assert that these films do not capture the high stakes of the subject matter. Rather, these films stress the dramatic stories that ran in the background of the war (an inevitable result of the United States' limited experience with the Nazi occupation).[696] In contrast, Kautský praises the Soviet film *The Unvanquished* (*Nepokorennye*, Mark Donskoi, 1945) and the Polish film *The Last Stage* (*Ostatni etap*, Wanda Jakubowska, 1947) because "[these films] place truth about the Jewish massacre in front of the spectator's eyes and force them to think about it."[697] Significantly, this places the persecution of European Jewry as central to understanding the psychic, social, and emotional impact of the Nazi crimes. For Kautský, *Distant Journey* fits very much into this second approach, and he concludes: "Czechoslovakia's production is not far behind, dealing with the problem of German antisemitism in the upcoming Radok film *Distant Journey*."[698]

But of course, the fate of the film was, in the end, determined by the rapidly shifting political climate of postwar Czechoslovakia. Despite the antisemitic discrimination and sentiment of the Beneš decrees, it was after the February 1948 coup

[695] Ibid.
[696] Ibid.
[697] Ibid.
[698] Ibid.

that blatantly anti-Jewish state-organized policies were imposed by the newly installed Czechoslovak Communist government. To be sure, toward the end of his life, Stalin's growing antisemitism, his series of imagined conspiracies against the Jews, more precisely, as Kevin McDermott notes, his 1949 campaign against cosmopolitanism and the "doctor's plot," positioned the Jew as a threat to the communist project.[699] During the late-Stalinist period, McDermott explains, the "enemy" was at first coded within the thinly veiled language of "anti-Titoism," echoing an early push against Trotskyism, which was then replaced with "anti-cosmopolitanism, "anti-Zionism," and "bourgeois nationalism."[700] This soon led to state-organized party purges and expulsions across the Soviet bloc, which made scapegoats of political opponents, who were commonly arrested, put on trial, and many of whom were put to death.

In Czechoslovakia, Jacob Labendz notes, this rhetoric was "molded … in accordance with Czech tradition and domestic political culture. They also placed it in the service of their own agendas."[701] In November 1952, Rudolf Slánský, a secular assimilated Jew and Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak party, was accused of leading an "Anti-State Conspiratorial Center," which consisted of fourteen high-ranking Communist officials, most of whom were of Jewish descent. The group was "proven" guilty of plotting to overthrow socialist order in Czechoslovakia, and on December 3, eleven were executed by hanging. Both Kevin McDermott and Melissa Feinberg have

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[699] Kevin McDermott, "A 'Polyphony of Voices'? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slánský Affair, *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008), 845.
[700] Ibid., 845. Also see: Kateřina Šímová, "The image of the 'Jew' as an 'enemy' in the propaganda of Late Stalinism and its reflection in the Czechoslovak context," *Holocaust Studies* 23, no. 1-2 (February-April 2017), 112-132.
[701] Labendz, "Re-negotiating Czechoslovakia, 87.

argued in their work on the public reaction to the Slánský trial that this rhetoric was indeed rooted in longstanding anti-Jewish attitudes within Czechoslovakia that can be traced back to the interwar era and through the intensification of antisemitism after the Munich betrayal in September 1938.[702] This was expressed in more or less certain terms in both the rhetoric of the trial and the propaganda campaign: eleven of the fourteen were officially described as being "of Jewish origins."[703] In other words, although Stalinist repression was dictated by the Soviet agenda, Czechoslovak communist authorities perpetuated these mass repressions and political trials in distinctly local terms.

Thus, in 1949, the censors' problem with *Distant Journey* was not just its explicit representation of Terezín in its capacity as a Jewish ghetto, but more generally, its representation of Jews. Because of its focus on Jewish victims, and because the film included scenes depicting Czech complicity and collaboration with the Nazi regime, in the end, there was no grand Prague premiere. The film's domestic distribution was limited to small villages before it was ultimately removed from circulation.[704]

However, most scholarship on *Distant Journey* has mistakenly claimed it was banned in Czechoslovakia until after the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Czech film scholar Jiří Cieslar, who has written extensively on the film in both Czech and English, has reiterated this point in several articles. For example, in his essay "Living with the long journey:

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[702] McDermott, "A 'Polyphony of Voices.'"; Melissa Feinberg, "Fantastic Truths, Compelling Lies: Radio Free Europe and the Response to the Slánský Trial in Czechoslovakia," *Contemporary European History*, 22, no. 1 (2013), 107–125. For a more detailed analysis of the Slánský affair see: Karel Kaplan, *Report on the Murder of the General Secretary* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990).; Jiří Pelikán, ed., *The Czechoslovak Political Trials, 1950-1954: The Suppressed Report of the Dubček Government's Commission of Inquiry* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971).; Jiří Pernes and Jan Foitzik, eds., *Politické procesy v Československu po 1945 a "případ Slánský"* (Prague: Prius, 2005).
[703] Ibid.
[704] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 66-67.

Alfréd Radok's *Daleká cesta*," Cieslar asserts: "Alfréd Radok is something of a legend in the Czech Republic; even during the forty-year period it was banned in Czechoslovakia, it remained in the collective consciousness as one of the country's film masterpieces."[705] In another essay, "*Daleká cesta* / Distant Journey," he adds: "Czech audiences were only able to see the film again when it was screened on television 6 May, 1991."[706] Many American and British scholars working on *Distant Journey* take an approach informed by Cieslar's work, and stress its ban in order to emphasize its subversive qualities.

Contrary to these claims, however, extensive archival documents show that *Distant Journey* was not banned in Czechoslovakia for forty years. Recently, Czech film historian Jaromír Blažejovský discovered announcements published in *Rudé pravo* (*Red Right*), the Czechoslovak Communist Party daily, which prove that the film was screened for the public in 1954, one year after the deaths of Stalin and his Czechoslovak counterpart, Klement Gottwald.[707] Láníček and Liebman have gone on to point out that *Distant Journey* was publicly screened in Czechoslovak cinemas in 1955, 1956, and 1959.[708] Moreover, the film appeared in Czechoslovak cinemas many times throughout the 1960s, and at least once in 1971. Using the data provided by *Czechoslovak Film and*

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[705] Jiří Cieslar, "Living with the long journey: Alfréd Radok's Daleká cesta," in *Holocaust and the moving Image: Representations in Film and Television Since 1933*, eds. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (London: Wallflower, 2005), 222.
[706] Jiří Cieslar, "*Daleká cesta* / Distant Journey," 45.; Also see: Jiří Cieslar, "Daleká cesta Alfréda Radoka," in *Alfréd Radok mezi filmem a divadlem*, ed. Eva Stehlíková (Prague: Akademie múzických umení and Národní filmový archiv, 2007), 9-39.; Veronika Ambros,"Escaping the Land of the Kitsch: The Polyvision of the Shoah in Daleká cesta (Distant Journey)" in *Zerstörer des Schweigens: Formen Künstlerischer Erinnerung an die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Vernichtungspolitik in Osteuropa* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 333–335.
[707] Jaromír Blažejovský, "V barvách piva, medu a vychlazené vodky," *Iluminace* 23, no. 2 (2011), 121.; Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 80.
[708] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 70.

Film Distribution Vol. I (*Československý film a filmová distribuce I*), Láníček and Liebman have come to the conclusion that "by 1987, the film had 6,919 public screenings and had been seen by 1,112,511 viewers in Czechoslovakia."[709] In addition, *Distant Journey* was also broadcast on Czechoslovak television (*Československá televize*/ ČST) in May 1959.[710] But considering that most Czechoslovaks did not own televisions until the 1960s, it would not have been seen by many viewers.

Regardless of whether or not *Distant Journey* was banned in Czechoslovakia, the rumor attests to the fact that its content was considered subversive. Presumably, the film's restricted release led Western critics to believe it did not warrant any further investigation. Or perhaps they took the government's "official stance" on the Holocaust at face value? It might be argued, finally, that *Distant Journey* was promoted as a "glimpse" into the formerly unseen reality of socialist Czechoslovakia to appeal to the larger film markets of the capitalist West (playing into yet another melodramatic binary). Surely if the Czechoslovak Communist authorities did not want its own citizens to see the film, it would provoke audiences' curiosity? The point of this would have been to construct knowledge about Czechoslovak cinema abroad, or alternatively, to cultivate sympathy for the country's wartime victimization. There is some evidence to support this: as Antonín Liehm writes, Czechoslovak Film's General Manager for Production, Vladimír Václavík, sent Radok updates about the film by post; and Radok's archives

[709] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 70.; Václav Březina, Aleš Danielis, Jindřiška Švecová, JanVymětal, eds., *Československý film a filmová distribuce* I (Prague: ÚPF 1988), 29.
[710] Television Program "*Rozhlas a televise*" May 4-8, 1959, Czech Television Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.

contain folders of international newspaper clippings with reviews and promotional advertisements.[711]

The overwhelming positive response by international critics no doubt cemented the film's legacy. In 1949, the film appeared at the Knokke-le-Zoute Film Festival in Belgium, as well as the Cannes Film Festival.[712] Reviews in the international press were overwhelmingly positive. Typical is Bosley Crowther's comment in the *New York Times*:

> From behind the Iron Curtain—from the Czechoslovak State Film Studios, which, of course, are subject to the direction of the Czechoslovak Government—has come, nonetheless, the most brilliant, the most powerful and horrifying film on the Nazis' persecution of Jews that this reviewer has yet seen.[713]

In France, it was reviewed by André Bazin, who compared it to Wanda Jakubowska's *The Last Stage* (*Ostatni etap*) (which he writes, "conveys the most direct, the most brutal aspect of a reality"), and saw it as the "one of the most formalistic films [he had] seen in a long time." [714] For Bazin, the expressionistic style of the film adequately captured the "nightmarish reality' of the Terezín ghetto—or a he put it, "because of the intrinsic and in a way metaphysical fidelity to the concentration-camp universe, the film recalls the world of Kafka and even more curiously, that of de Sade." [715]

On August, 19, 1950, *Distant Journey* had its U.S. premiere at the Stanley Theater in New York City.[716] As Láníček and Liebman write, it went on to screen in New York City, Hartford, Connecticut, and Los Angeles cinemas for five weeks; in addition, *Distant*

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[711] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 40.
[712] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 68.
[713] Bosley Crowther, "Two Arrivals: Powerful Film About the Nazi Persecution of Jews Comes From Czechoslovakia." *The New York Times The New York Times*, August 28, 1950.
[714] Bazin, "The Ghetto as Concentration Camp," 92-93.
[715] Ibid., 95.
[716] Láníček and Liebman, "A Closer Look," 68.

Journey screened in Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, the Soviet Union, Sweden, and Switzerland throughout the 1950s.[717] In many of these countries, including France, where it was billed as *Ghetto Terezín*, perhaps a deliberate reference to the Nazi propaganda film *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews* (*Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, Kurt Gerron, 1944) foregrounding the role of Terezín as the "model camp"—as well as certifying the film's historical authenticity.[718]

If *Distant Journey* has been described as a discovery (or rediscovery), it is also remembered as a "forgotten film." This points to the melodramatic devices, which narrate history and transmit memory, and moves us to a historicized pathos. In light of this melodramatic tale of suppression and discovery, it would seem that *Distant Journey* can be more accurately understood as the melodramatic point of origin for Czech Holocaust films.

***Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (*Romeo, Julie a tma*, Jiří Weiss, 1959)**

Similarly, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, the second Czech feature-length film about the Holocaust, received international acclaim. Directed by Jiří Weiss and adapted from Jan Otčenášek's popular novel of the same name, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* won awards at six international film festivals, including the Grand Prix at the 1960 San Sebastian Film

[717] Ibid., 68.
[718] International Publicity Materials, Př. Č. 15/90, 15/2004, Alfréd Radok Fond, Archives of the National Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.

Festival.[719] Unlike its predecessor, however, on April 15, 1960, the film premiered in Prague and could be seen in major cinemas throughout Czechoslovakia.[720]

Romeo, Juliet and Darkness is interesting for the way in which it represents a fundamental shift in Holocaust memory in Czechoslovakia.[721] Between 1953 and 1968, there was a "thaw" across the Eastern bloc precipitated by Stalin's death (in March 1953), and the revelations made during General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev's so-called secret speech of the Twelfth Party Congress in the Soviet Union (on February 25, 1956). However, the Czechoslovak Communist Party, led by Klement Gottwald's successor Antonín Novotný, largely avoided serious reform.[722] Following criticisms by the Czech and Slovak Writers' Unions about the slow pace of de-Stalinization in 1963, Jacob Labendz writes, "major divisions emerged within the Communist Party and within Czechoslovak society."[723] In this context, films, novels, and short stories about the Holocaust started to explore different kinds of stories about the occupation, specifically stories about non-communist resistance movements and the persecution of the Jews.[724] Though many of these films used the persecution of the Jews as metaphor or allegory for the Stalinist political culture, this subtext does not take away from the fact that these films explicitly deal with Jewish issues. By the time the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion put an end to the political and cultural openness of the Prague Spring in August 1968, and

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[719] Czechoslovak Film Press News English-language Press Packet, Promotional Materials Collection, Folder 759A, National Film Archives, Prague, Czech Republic.
[720] Jiří Havelka, *Čs. filmové hospodářství, 1956-1960* (Prague: Československý filmový ústav, 1972).
[721] Thomas Sniegon calls this the "individualization of the Holocaust." Sniegon, *Vanished History*, 62-65.
[722] For more on Czechoslovakia's "slow thaw" see: H. Gordon Skilling, "Czechoslovakia," in *The Communist States in Disarray, 1965-1971*, eds. Adam Bromke and T. Rakowska-Harmstone (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 43-72.
[723] Labendz, "Re-Negotiating Czechoslovakia," 192.
[724] Ibid., 192-193.

the topic of the Jewish Holocaust was suppressed once again, more than eleven Holocaust films had been produced in Czechoslovakia.

As this might suggest, even in the slightly more relaxed atmosphere of the 1950s, old rules about socialist realism and the de-Semitization of the Holocaust did not disappear overnight. Although clearly about the persecution of the Jews, the film adaptation of *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* minimized many of the novel's Jewish elements in translating from the page onto the screen. For example, the Jewish protagonist's name is changed from the recognizably Jewish "Ester" to the more Czech-seeming "Hanka" (undoubtedly chosen as a homage to *Distant Journey*). This did not go unnoticed by critics, including František Goldscheider, who, writing for *Kino*, noted, "that [Hanka] would be more appropriate, less biblical, and more historically accurate."[725] Despite this act of self-imposed censorship, however, because the film featured a Jewish protagonist and included scenes of Czech complicity, Communist authorities accused Weiss of making a Zionist film, and demanded re-editing before its release; the director removed one "anti-Czech" scene in which Pavel's neighbors refuse to help conceal Hanka from the Gestapo.[726]

Nonetheless, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*' subject matter did not attract negative press. On the contrary, the film only benefited from its Holocaust-related narrative. During the mid-1960s, the overwhelmingly positive reception of the New Wave films abroad sparked a demand for films from Czechoslovakia—specifically films about the

[725] František Goldscheider, "Romeo, Julie, a tma: Nejúspěšnější dílo novodobé české prózy ožije na plátně," *Kino* 15, no. 2, 1960, 24–25.
[726] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 69.

Holocaust. In 1965, at the height of this demand, *The Shop on Main Street* (*Obchod na korze*, Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965) opened the third New York Film Festival and won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Capitalizing on this success, the next year, Czechoslovak Filmexport (*Československý Filmexport*) re-released *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* under the English title *Sweet Light in a Dark Room*. As Weiss put it, "the distributor apparently decided there was money to be made in another film with a Jewish subject from the period of Nazi rule in Europe."[727] But critics did not shower the film with the same critical praise. As Bosley Crowther wrote in the *New York Times* in 1966, "The promise of '*Sweet Light in a Dark Room*' superficially gives of being another '*Shop on Main Street*' or something just around the corner from it is sadly unfulfilled."[728]

Romeo, Juliet and Darkness is a love story that follows Pavel, a Czech (Gentile) high school student in Prague who becomes a first-hand witness to Nazi terror. When he meets Hanka, a Jewish girl who has escaped transport to Terezín, the overwhelming power of his feelings toward her awakens his moral responsibility, moving him to take action in the face of extreme danger. The story about "star crossed lovers" is set amidst Reinhard Heydrich's reign of terror (the so-called "*heydrichiáda*") and unfolds from late-May to mid-June 1942, shortly after his May 27 assassination by Czech and Slovak paratroopers.

Here it is crucial to note that the appointment of Heydrich as Reich Protector in late September 1941 coincided with the radicalization of the Nazi racial policies. On

[727] Ibid., 69.
[728] Bosley Crowther, "Screen: 'Sweet Light in a Dark Room': Czechoslovak Feature Is at the Lincoln Art 2 Other Pictures Have Local Premieres*," The New York Times*, June 30, 1966, 28.

September 1, 1941, only a few weeks before his arrival in Prague, "full Jews" were branded with the yellow star with the word "*Jude*" (Jew).[729] One month later, in October 1941, the first waves of mass deportations expelled thousands of the Protectorate's Jewish population.[730] As Chad Bryant describes, upon his arrival, Heydrich set out to reward compliance with the Nazi policies and suppress all forms of resistance, using a combination of terror tactics (summary courts, arrests, and executions), and in Bryant's words, "optical effects" (including posters listing the names of "criminals," radio announcements, and denunciations of Czechs who displayed compassion for the Jews in newspapers) to scare Czechs into submission.[731] However, Heydrich's reign of terror did not end with his death.[732] In the wake of Heydrich's assassination, during the "*heydrichiáda*," 3,188 Czechs were arrested, 1,357 Czechs were sentenced to death, and the villages of Lidice and Ležáky were destroyed in retaliation.[733]

After the liberation, the legacy of the *heydrichiáda* was used to reinforce the official narrative of occupation as a national struggle between Czechs and Germans.[734] "By making the *heydrichiáda*, the symbol of terror against the Czechs, the historical backdrop to the drama playing out in Pavel's building," Tatjana Lichtenstein writes, "Weiss proposes that fear explains the failure of Czechs to help or even sympathize with

[729] Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 143-149.
[730] Ibid., 143-149.
[731] Ibid., 143-149.
[732] Ibid., 143.
[733] Ibid., 172.
[734] Lichtenstein, "'It Is Not My Fault," 132-133.

their Jewish neighbors.... The Holocaust as an event it therefore ignored."[735] However, this simplifies the ways in which the film displaces public history onto the private sphere,

In the opening scene of the film, we are introduced to Pavel as he stumbles into the empty attic of his family's apartment building. The camera pans around the room as his attention is instantly drawn to a suitcase discarded on the floor. The wind blows through the window and slams the door shut. Pavel is initially startled but turns back to pick up the suitcase. Hugging it to his chest, he begins to sob. When Pavel hears his mother's voice in the stairwell, he runs to lock the door. His mother tries to convince him to come home, insisting "you won't change anything about it," but he refuses. As Pavel stands with his back against the door, tears in his eyes, the camera moves into a close-up and dissolves into his flashback. The rest of the film unfolds in an extended flashback, recounting the memory of Pavel and Hanka's doomed romance.

Figure 79

Figure 80

[735] Ibid., 132-133.

Figure 81 **Figure 82**

After Pavel's Jewish neighbors, the Würm family, leave for transport, he promises their young son he will watch their pet guinea pig. When Pavel retrieves the pet from their abandoned apartment, he meets Hanka, who is looking for its former inhabitants. Although Pavel's friendliness toward the Würms may suggest his compassion for Jews, it is important to note, that he does not set out to help her. It is not until he sees Hanka hiding in the stairwell from the German soldiers moving Frau Kubiasová (the Czech mistress of a German soldier) into the Würm's apartment that he brings her up the stairs to the attic. For Pavel, it is a split-second decision that makes him a legitimate victim-hero. The last half of the film traces the effect of this action: Pavel and Hanka fall in love.

Pavel's existence is divided between two worlds: the outside world of the increasingly stifling atmosphere of the Protectorate—and the refuge of the attic. This divide is particularly explicit in a scene in which Pavel teaches Hanka how to dance. Throughout the scene, point-of-view shots are attributed to Pavel and Hanka, seeing each other's faces more and more clearly, all while spinning around in a circle. A 360-degree pan transforms the attic into an open sky. Although the point-of-view shots repeat, this time, the couple appears outside—in close-up, a slight breeze blows through their hair.

Pavel gazes at Hanka, lost in her beauty. Suddenly, the sky begins to darken. The action of Pavel tripping over a paint can triggers their return to the attic. Pavel, realizing the true nature of his feelings, tries to kiss Hanka. The first time, she pushes him away. The next day, Hanka tells Pavel that she will volunteer for transport. When he gets upset and turns away from her, she follows to comfort him. Finally, they kiss.

Figure 83

Figure 84

Figure 85

Figure 86

Pavel and Hanka's romance blossoms in the dark space of the attic. But in the world outside, Heydrich continues his reign of terror. The first sign of danger comes when Pavel's classmate is arrested for helping so-called "unregistered persons." The news prompts Pavel's mother to warn her son not to do something similar. This danger is compounded further when Heydrich is assassinated, sparking a brutal manhunt for his

killers in Prague, and unleashing a wave of roundups and executions of hundreds of ordinary Czechs (including Pavel's neighbors). More urgent, however, is the threat that lives just downstairs: after finding the corpse of her beloved dog buried in the courtyard (his barking threatened to expose Hanka's hiding space), Kubiasová becomes increasingly suspicious about Pavel's frequent trips to the attic. However, he decides to keep all this completely away from Hanka. It is clear the couple's blissful days together in the room are numbered.

At this point, Pavel confesses his secret to his mother. In the face of impending doom, his mother goes to the attic and pleads with the Jewish girl to leave and spare her son's life. When Hanka learns about the consequences Pavel faces for helping her, she becomes overcome with guilt and tells him that his mother is right. But Pavel can't live without Hanka, and they decide to leave the apartment together in the morning.

This plan is interrupted when the hunt for Heydrich's assassins comes to a head on the street outside the apartment building. The sound of machine gun fire causes the building's residents to gather in the courtyard. It is at this time that Kubiasová, who has long suspected Pavel has been hiding a girl in the attic, becomes frantic, and decides to put a stop to his shenanigans once and for all. Before Pavel's mother can stop the woman, Kubiasová runs up the stairs and starts pounding on the locked door. As soon as the couple hears the chaos outside, they jump to their feet. Pavel grabs a chair to use as a barricade, and Hanka's suitcase falls to the ground. At that moment, Hanka decides that she must sacrifice herself to save the man she loves. She dashes to the door to unlock it, prompting Pavel to drop the chair to stop her. Kubiasová opens the door to discover that

she was right all along: Pavel *was* with a girl in the attic. Without missing a beat, Kubiasová sees Hanka's Jewish badge, and shrieks at her to get out. Silently, Hanka slips out of the attic and makes her way down the stairs. Her face devoid of emotion, she ignores Pavel's grandfather's gentle pleas to come with him and leaves the relative safety of the apartment building.

Hanka flees into the streets of Prague, shutting the heavy door to the apartment complex behind her. Though Pavel heroically tries to stop her, because he struggles with Kubiasová, he arrives too late. In a quintessentially melodramatic fashion, he reaches the door just in the nick of time to hear the sound of machine gun fire. And then, one single shot. Surely, this can only mean one thing: Hanka is almost certainly dead. While Hanka's self-sacrifice is a gesture of her love for Pavel, it is also short-sighted; we are not sure if it will ultimately save him.

Figure 87

Figure 88

In the pathos-filled ending, the flashback ends: we return to the empty attic where we began. The camera pans to show the knocked-over chair and the discarded suitcase. The wind blows through the open window, turning the pages of a book left open by the lovers during their last day together, and the image fades to black.

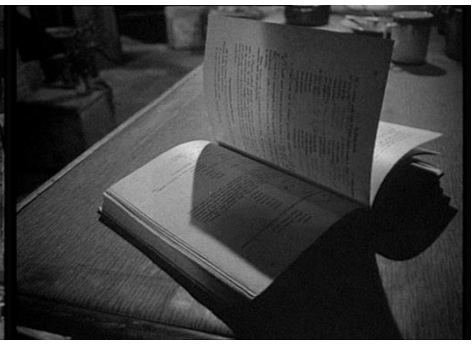

Figure 89 **Figure 90**

The ending moves us not only because it combines the pathos of Hanka's self-sacrifice with Pavel's failed rescue attempt; but because it returns to the attic where the couple fell in love—the melodramatic space of innocence. It constitutes a "temporal reversal" that returns us to a better space and time that exists outside the pressures of historical reality. It is crucial, however, to understand that the narrative is structured by Pavel's flashback, which is motivated by a close-up of his grief-stricken face reflecting on the death of Hanka. While we feel for her loss, we also identify with his grief, and are skeptical about the kind of future that awaits him and his family. In many ways, the larger significance of Pavel's choices is that they led to his own sacrifice: it is his grief that motivates the retelling of the past—and he retells it through his own suffering.

In the course of the film, Hanka, the feminized Jew, is denied agency and serves as a catalyst for Pavel's moral actions. Hanka's story is told through Pavel's point-of-view; she is *his* "sweet light in a dark room." In Lichtenstein's analysis of *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness,* she too stresses that Hanka "doesn't have a story of her own. All we learn is that she has a Jewish father. In fact, little seems to distinguish her from non-Jewish women than her dark features, timidity, and her yellow star. She is a de-Judaized Jew,

without family and history. Her Jewishness is manifest in her victimization."[736] Of course, the film is not really about Hanka's victimization (as a woman, or as a Jew), but about Pavel's inner dilemmas as he takes upon himself her innocent suffering and is moved to take transformative social action. What is rescued, in the end, I argue, is not Hanka, but Pavel's status as the film's victim-hero.

This suggests an argument similar to one that Tania Modleski makes in her article "Clint Eastwood and Male Weepies."[737] Modleski argues that in contrast to the female-centered weepie, in which a women's suffering is devalued as sentimental (or merely depressing), the "privileged suffering" of the male-centered weepie is elevated as "melancholia."[738] She turns to Renaissance scholar Julia Schiesari's work *The Gendering of Melancholia* to explain that "melancholia has historically been a cultural form of ethos that elevates not only men's sense of their own losses but also losses they appropriate from disempowered groups, 'in the process devaluing the historical reality of the disempowerment' of these groups."[739] In other words, rather than engage viewers in the pathos of women suffering over their losses, the male melancholic takes on the suffering of the disempowered to recognize the profundity of his own personal sacrifices.[740] The

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[736] Lichtenstein, "'It is Not my Fault,'" 133.
[737] Tania Modleski, "Clint Eastwood and Male Weepies," *American Literary History* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 136-158. Similarly, in an essay on the American labor documentary, Paula Rabinowitz explains that "men's tears are throwbacks to an era when the spectacle of men crying could be understood as part of the workings of an aristocratic order of 'sentimentality [under which] the prestige of suffering belongs to men.'" Paula Rabinowitz, "Melodrama/Male Drama The Sentimental Contract of American Labor Films (2002)," in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 837.
[738] Ibid., 138.
[739] Ibid., 139-140.
[740] Ibid., 140-158.

male melancholic (or more precisely, the "white male melancholic") is thus recuperated and redeemed in their suffering and mourning over the losses incurred.[741]

Although it is obvious that Pavel's moral virtue is redeemed by Hanka's sacrificial end, it is surely just as important to understand the utter impossibility of the lover's situation. By privileging Pavel's melancholic suffering, the love story becomes a metaphor for the Czech master narrative—and uses the official interpretation of the *heydrichiáda* to appeal to the corresponding national sentiment. After all, we know that the resolution of the film must reconcile an empathy that feels for Pavel with the knowledge that his fate cannot, within the confines of historical experience, be fundamentally challenged.

My point is not that *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* understates the Nazi persecution of the Jews, nor that it suppresses the realities of the Jewish Holocaust. Rather, it is that it recognizes the pragmatic and political limitations of true heroic actions by even "good Czechs" under Nazi rule. That is to say, even as it articulates guilt and innocence, it confronts us with the impossibility of passing moral judgment on those who behaved in ways that may be interpreted as contributing to the Nazi crimes against humanity.

In *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, like in *Distant Journey*, the Protectorate is remembered as a time in which it was impossible for ordinary Czechs to take transformative social action—at least not in any meaningful way. Like so many Czechs who lived under Nazi oppression, Pavel finds himself powerless to act or do anything about his situation. But while the Germans are clearly the evil villains, the presence of

[741] Ibid., 140-158.

contradictory Czech characters (victims, collaborators, bystanders, rescuers, persecutors) de-centers the distinction between "pure" victims and oppressors, deepening the ambiguity between the Manichean binaries of good and evil, and evoking what Primo Levi has called the ethical "gray zone" of the Holocaust and its aftermath.[742] The gray zone posits a retrospective assessment of morality, and acknowledges the historical complexities of real history. Particularly significant is its relationship to melodrama's search for moral legibility. Melodrama seeks to articulate a moral universe, but the moral realm is not static; it represents a wide range of values and can be mobilized to legitimize the suffering of even the most morally ambiguous victims. The work of melodrama is to dramatize personal crisis, to recast private conscience as emotional and moral sensation, to spectacularize the visceral intensity of guilt, and encourage the recognition of suffering innocence. In a similar way, the gray zone rejects moral equivalences, insisting that even victims are not exempt from moral abstraction or feelings of guilt and shame.[743] The gray zone can help to explain the emotionally and morally fraught nature of the Czech wartime situation, and to understand the morally problematic, yet undeniably complex realities of life in the Nazi Protectorate. Indeed, it shifts the emphasis from the issue of collective guilt (which Levi sees as a contradiction of terms), to the burden of personal responsibility.[744] In this specific context, our awareness of Pavel's willingness to act provides a way to reflect on his participation in the Nazi crimes. And, when Pavel reflects on past guilt, the retrospective act of remembering grounds his extreme situation in

[742]Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 25-56.
[743] Ibid., 25-56.
[744] Ibid., 57-74.

empathy, and ultimately makes him a victim hero. Memory is the key to his moral salvation.

Both *Distant Journey* and *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* are fundamentally love stories in which the Nazi occupation disrupts the central romance between a Jewish woman and a Gentile man. But there are some obvious differences. In *Distant Journey*, this rupture ultimately brings the mixed couple together: Hana and Toník are reunited, and though they will never recover the losses of their past, there is still hope for their future. In *Romeo, Juliet* and *Darkness*, it is the repressive atmosphere of the Nazi occupation that brings Hanka and Pavel together, and, in the end, irrevocably severs the couple. Hanka's death leaves Pavel behind to face an uncertain fate. They can never restore their relationship, and there is no hope left for their future. Never again will they recover the refuge of the attic. Even more than Hanka and Pavel's thwarted romance, what is at stake is the moral crisis of the Czech situation, which is rooted in the narrative of national victimization.

But more important, both films put into perspective the ways in which the constant historical shifts in postwar Czechoslovakia rendered melodrama a necessary cinematic form. Clearly, they evoked memories and conveyed emotionally affective messages that would be personally touching and politically relevant to domestic audiences. But in addition to at home, both of these films were viewed by international audiences. For those outside of Czechoslovakia, both films painted a picture of the Holocaust from what would be considered to be a uniquely Czech perspective. Both films contextualized these memories within a national experience, and yet were also easily

placed within a new seemingly universal narrative about Jewish suffering. Crucially, they were used to produce a new collective consciousness about the wartime experience. Thus, they historicize pathos for their audiences in different ways. Ultimately, *Distant Journey*, and *Romeo Juliet and Darkness* are known in both the Czech Republic and elsewhere as "Czech Holocaust films," though the understanding of that particular genre may vary.

Conclusion: *There Are No Butterflies Here* (*Motýli tady nežijí*, Miro Bernát, 1958)

A short documentary illustrates the melodramatic nature of cinematic time; Miro Bernát's *There Are No Butterflies Here* (1958) exhibits the colored pencil drawings, paper collages, and watercolor paintings made by the child prisoners of the Terezín ghetto between 1942 and 1945 during art lessons organized by the Bauhaus graduate and art educator Friedl Dicker-Brandeis.[745] The children's artwork represents their memories of life before Terezín and testifies to the everyday realities of life in the ghetto. We see their innermost thoughts, their deepest hopes and dreams, their fantasies and nightmares. These are intercut with filmed footage of the Terezín ghetto from the time when the film was made—an assemblage of still and moving images—in color, black-and-white, and sepia tone. The documentary value of the footage evokes a feeling of historicity. *There Are No Butterflies Here* confronts us with the beginning and the end of the children's stories—the before and after, the cause-and-effect—and forces us to grapple with the knowledge that this artwork is all that is left of the middle.

[745] For more about Friedl Dicker-Brandeis's life and work see: Johanna Branson, "Seeing through 'Paradise:' Artists and the Terezín Concentration Camp" (Boston: Massachusetts College of Art, 1991); Elena Makarova, *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis: Vienna 1898—Auschwitz 1944* (Los Angeles: Tallfellow/Every Picture Press, 2001).

Although the children's artwork was deposited into the archives of the Jewish Museum in Prague shortly after the liberation of the Terezín ghetto, it was not treated as "valuable material."[746] This changed after Jiří Weil, a Czech Jewish writer best known for his 1949 novel *Life with a Star* (*Život s hvězdou*) discovered the artwork and began to organize an exhibition at the Jewish Museum. As Hana Hříbková notes, it was not difficult for Weil and his colleagues at the museum to track the children's fates: most of the pieces were marked with a signature. The first exhibition of the children's drawings and poems opened in 1955 and was considered a great success. In the subsequent years, the exhibition traveled to Paris, Brno, Leipzig, Amsterdam, and Tokyo before finding a permanent home at the Jewish Museum, and inspired a number of musical compositions, plays, and books.[747]

It is worth noting that this initial exhibition took place three years after the publication of the English language translation of Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*. Throughout the 1950s, the story of Anne Frank was incredibly popular in the United States and elsewhere, and inspired enormously successful books, a Broadway play (1956), and a Hollywood movie (1959). That is to say, even before the Eichmann trial thrust the Holocaust into the international spotlight, there was a memorial discourse around child victims in place. The title of the short film refers to a poem by Pavel

[746] For a more detailed account see: Hana Hříbková, "Jiří Weil as Scientist: Genesis of the Book Children's Drawings and Poems: Terezín 1942-1944 and Film Butterflies Don't Live Here" in *The Representation of the Shoah in Literature, Theater and Film in Central Europe: 1950s and 1960s*, ed. Jiří Holý (Prague: Akropolis, 2012), 51-63.
[747] Ibid., 52-56.

Friedman—a young Jewish poet from Prague who lived in the Terezín ghetto and perished in Auschwitz on 29 September 1944:

> The last, the very last,
> So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
> Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing
> against the white stone…
>
> Such, such a yellow
> Is carried lightly 'way up high.
> It went away I'm sure because it wished
> to kiss the world goodbye.
>
> For seven weeks I've lived here,
> Penned up inside this ghetto
> But I have found my people here.
> The dandelions call to me
> And the white chestnut branches in the court.
> Only I never saw another Butterfly.
> That butterfly was the last one.
> Butterflies do not live here, in the ghetto.[748]

Friedman's poem was also featured in the 1959 book *Children's Drawings and Poems. Terezín 1942–1945* (*Dětské kresby na zastávce k smrti*). In 1971, the second edition of the book changed its title to *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*; as Hříbková suggests, this was probably due to the success of the film.[749]

The sense of melancholic nostalgia is enhanced by the music of the Czech composer Karl Reiner, notably, one of the few Jewish musicians interned in Terezín to survive transport to Auschwitz. Reiner's evocative score combines a Czech folk song with children's vocals and a military march. Together with Václav Voska's moving

[748] Hana Volavková ed., *I Never Saw Another Butterfly, Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezín Concentration Camp, 1942-1944* (New York: Schocken Books in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994). This is an updated and expanded edition of the 1959 version.
[749] Hříbková, "Jiří Weil as Scientist," 61.

voice-over narration and the performances of the children's poetry and stories, sound (what-can-be-said and what-can-be-expressed) supplements the illustrated accounts of the witnesses who cannot transmit their stories directly. In other words, melos supports the material conditions of the film itself.

Looking at the children's artwork as remnants of the past points to an important material consideration. Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer argue that "such material remnants can serve as testimonial objects that carry memory traces from the past and embody the process of its transmission."[750] Hirsch and Spitzer suggest that testimonial objects function as "'points of memory'—points of intersection between past and present, memory and post memory, personal remembrance and cultural recall."[751] They go on: "The term point is both spatial—such as a point on a map—and temporal—a moment in time; and it thus highlights the intersection of spatiality and temporality in the workings of personal and cultural memory."[752] In this respect, their analysis approaches Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. Hirsch and Spitzer associate Barthes *punctum* "with the knowledge of the inevitability of loss, change, a death."[753] The "memorial punctum" pricks us with the puncture—and the pathos of time moves us to remember, to mourn, and to memorialize.

From its opening black-and-white title card, "All documents, drawings and poems in this film are authentic, dating from 1941-1945," the documentary situates the

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[750] Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "Testimonial Objects: Memory, Gender, and Transmission," *Poetics Today* 27, no. 2 (2006), 355.
[751] Ibid., 359.
[752] Ibid., 360.
[753] Ibid., 360.

children's artwork and poems as testimonial objects. The production credits are accompanied by a colored pencil drawing of stick figures dancing in a circle. Looking at the paper's torn edges, the residual marks of time call attention to its eventual destruction, and with it, the memory of these children having ever existed. Here is an image that not only contemplates death, decay, and loss, but authenticates it. Indeed, the photographic capture of the material object produces a visible record that testifies to the certainty of ever-moving time. What has been lost and will never be again is the explicit subject of the documentary.

Figure 91

Figure 92

Figure 93

Figure 94

The use of contemporary documentary footage becomes more strategic when it comes to capturing the ruins of the Terezín ghetto. In one sequence, for instance, we are

transported inside of the children's facility L417 where twenty to forty children lived at a time. The image suddenly takes on a sepia-tone: it is tinted a nostalgic dusty brown and gold, which only emphasizes the sense of pastness. The camera pans around the room of empty bunk beds numbered one to twenty. The creative engagement with the space—the moving camera, combined with the ominous tones of the score—has the uncanny effect of a ghostly haunting. Various voices collide, inviting us to imagine for ourselves what it was like before—to imagine what actually went on day by day in this very place:

> Waiting at seven a.m., at twelve, and again at seven p.m. just to pour us warm water with salt. Waiting at seven am at twelve and again at seven p.m. just to pour us warm water with salt or coffee flavoring or give us a few potatoes...We got used to sleeping with no beds, to greeting soldiers, to walking on sidewalks...We got used to unprovoked slaps, punches, and executions. We got used to seeing people dying in their own feces...seeing ill ones in the dirt… seeing helpless doctors. We got used to thousands of unfortunate ones coming here and thousands of unfortunate ones leaving time and again.[754]

A woman shouts loudly in German: "All in line." And just like that, with the crash of a cymbal, the image fades to black.

Figure 95

Figure 96

[754] From an English subtitled version of the film.

This, as I see it, is the principle function of melodrama: to make time legible as an embodied emotion. The final scene of *There Are No Butterflies Here* opens with a close-up of Jewish surnames painted in black on a whitewashed wall. The camera slowly zooms out to reveal that the massive wall is completely covered with surnames. And yet, this only represents a small portion of the seventy-seven thousand two-hundred and ninety-seven Jews killed by the Nazis. The camera floats through the empty Pinkas Synagogue in Prague's Jewish Town, established in 1959 as the memorial to the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia.[755] The children's artwork is superimposed over the memorial site, staging an encounter between the drawing of a sunny day, the collage of a man with a hat, and the painting of a large house in the country, along with the monumental space. The composite image that emerges exposes the temporal disparity between "now" and "then"—*what has been lost*—pointing to the melodramatic excesses of cinematic time. However, this film also inserts the children's artwork into a familiar, conventional (perhaps even generic), and more easily digestible framework of cultural remembrance. Historical retrospect thrusts these children's drawings onto the stage of history.

Figure 97

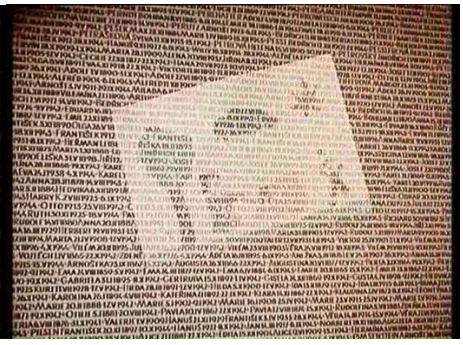

Figure 98

[755] Heitlinger, "Politicizing Jewish Memory," 136-138.

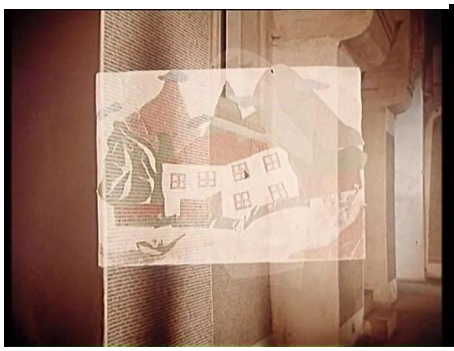

Figure 99 **Figure 100**

Once again Voska states: “Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, Buchenwald, Majdanek…” This, of course, echoes the final voice-over of *Distant Journey* (a voice-over also performed by Voska), but this time, Jewish suffering and victimhood is recognized and explicitly named. He continues: “Not all the names are here. Out of the 15,000 children who played and drew for a while only 100 came back. Drawings and poems. That’s all that’s left. And your memories.” *There Are No Butterflies Here* ends not with a plea to witness or to never forget, but rather a plea to listen to what is unsaid and to imagine an alternative ending: “Listen! Now it’s time. The wind sings songs of far away. Just look up to heaven and think about the violets…”

Epilogue

The expectations and conventions established by early Czech Holocaust films melodramatically persist into the present. Nearly seventy years after the production of *Distant Journey*, the Holocaust is now a topic par excellence in contemporary Czech cinema. Here I look at two recent Czech Holocaust films: *Divided We Fall* (*Musíme si pomáhat*, Jan Hřebejk, 2001) and *Protektor* (Marek Najbrt, 2009). My interest is not in the politics of Holocaust memory in the present-day Czech Republic, but in the particular way in which these films nostalgically look back to early Czech Holocaust films and memorialize the memorialization of the Holocaust. In short, what I call historicized pathos is a pathos that attests to the historicity of the Holocaust film itself.

The opening sequence of *Divided We Fall* condenses the rise of antisemitic policies in the Czech lands from 1937 to 1943 into eight minutes. In the first scene, set the year before the betrayal at Munich, we are introduced to three friends: David Wiener, the son of a wealthy Jewish industrialist, and two of his father's employees, Josef Čížek (a Czech) and Horst Prohaska (a Sudeten German). In the subsequent scenes, David and his family are evicted from their villa and deported to the Terezín ghetto. The next scene is set in 1943. The young Jew has escaped from a Polish concentration camp and made his way back to his hometown. As David stops to catch his breath in a doorway, he looks up to see a familiar face: Josef's neighbor František Šimáček. Having been told by Josef that Šimáček is a "good man," David asks him for help. But Šimáček betrays him, shouting, "Jew! A Jew is here!" David only narrowly escapes.

This sequence makes clear the increasingly stifling atmosphere of the Protectorate. The rest of the film follows what happens after Josef and his wife Marie decide to hide David in their tiny apartment. Unfortunately, the couple is frequently visited by Horst, who, at the insistence of his German wife, now works with the Nazis confiscating Jewish property. Josef takes a job with Horst to ward off his suspicions (and is thus viewed by neighbors as a collaborator); in turn, Horst provides the couple with extra food and medicine (perhaps knowingly helping David). Then, Marie rejects Horsts' advances. In retaliation, Horst asks the childless couple to give their spare room to a Nazi official who had a mental breakdown after losing his sons on the Eastern front. Marie pretends to be pregnant in order to prevent David from being discovered. This turn of events prompts Josef, who is infertile, to convince David to impregnate his wife. Just as Marie goes into labor, the town is liberated by the Red Army. In the end, David not only saves Josef and Horst from suffering a collaborators' fate, but also doesn't reveal that Šimáček—a member of the anti-Nazi resistance—tried to sell him out to the Nazis.

Divided We Fall makes it difficult to distinguish between victims and villains, collaborators and heroes of the resistance. This kind of moral ambiguity has an obvious logic for those familiar with the Holocaust films of the Czechoslovak New Wave of the late 1960s. As Ewa Mazierska points out, *Divided We Fall* "looks like a palimpsest of the war films made during this period."[756] In particular, it recalls *The Shop on Main Street*

[756] For Mazierska, its "most obvious 'relatives'" are *Diamonds of the Night* (*Démanty noci*, Jan Němec,1964), *Closely Watched Trains* (*Ostře sledované vlaky*, Jiří Menzel 1966), and *The Shop on Main Street* (*Obchod na korze*, Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965). Ewa Mazierska, *Masculinities in Polish, Czech, and Slovak Cinema. Black Peters and Men of Marble* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008),76.

(*Obchod na korze*, Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965) in that Josef grapples with the moral dilemma of whether to help his Jewish friends and neighbors. In *The Shop on Main Street*, Tono Brtko, a simple Slovak carpenter, is appointed as Aryan supervisor of a button shop run by the elderly Jewish widow Rosalie Lautmannová. Several weeks pass and Tono grows fond of the woman. Upon learning that the village's Jews will be deported, Tono is conflicted by his desire to help Mrs. Lautmannová and fear of punishment. But Tono does not really understand this until he sees the deportation of the village's Jews outside of the shop, and pushes Mrs. Lautmannová into a closet to hide. His good intentions, nevertheless, lead to her death. The guilt attached to his actions (or rather, inaction) drives Tono to hang himself.

Mrs. Lautmannová's death is the direct consequence of Tono's inability to act, but he is not coded as a villain. Throughout the film, Tono's moral crisis is acted out and his suffering is rendered visible—this is why we come to sympathize so strongly with him. Thus, Tono can be seen as a prototype for Josef. The two men are inextricably linked in their basic decency, general complicity, and compromised morality. But Josef takes action—after all, he saves the Jew, while Tono does not. And the final scene of the film affirms the viewers sense that Josef is a heroic "rescuer."[757]

Divided We Fall, like *The Shop on Main Street*, ends with a surreal epilogue. In *The Shop on Main Street*, Tono and a slightly younger Mrs. Lautmannová float through the village's promenade in slow motion to a festive waltz. He wears her late-husband's

[757] According to Annette Insdorf, "Ultimately, Josef is a wonderfully realistic hero—rumpled, weary, and useless until given the redemptive possibility to hide and save a Jew. Like his cinematic ancestor Tono in The Shop on Main Street, he is a lazy and reluctant rescuer; unlike Tono, however, Josef rises to the occasion and enables Jewish life to continue." Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*, 275.

suit and hat, she wears an old-fashioned dress, and the two dance into the horizon. In *Divided We Fall*, Josef pushes a carriage with David's infant son through the ruins of the town. He suddenly sees a vision of the Wiener family, playing cards and dressed in the same clothing as when they were deported, at a table in the middle of the wreckage. Holding up the infant and waving in slow-motion, he and the child seem to float over the ghostly family. The film ends on a hopeful note—a freeze frame of Josef looking up to the sky, implying that has rectified Tono's past mistakes.

The comparison between *Divided We Fall* and *The Shop on Main Street* is revealing, for it points to the various recurrent trends, characters, and plots that continue to emerge from the Czech national unconscious. As might be expected, much of the critical writing on *Divided We Fall* has focused on this transgenerational inheritance.[758] Anglophone critics have overwhelmingly praised the film for its "Czech humanism" and "typically Czech mix of irony and deadly seriousness."[759] One even called it "wonderfully, inescapably Czech."[760] Thus, there is a sense that this film speaks to the notion that Czech cinema that has historically strived to assert its essentially "Czech" identity.

Where *Divided We Fall* is in the mold of the acclaimed New Wave films of the 1960s, *Protektor* harkens back to the popular melodrama films of the late 1930s. In fact, an entirely new one appears in the film. In a scene from this film-within-a-film, a young

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[758] Also see: Omer Bartov, *The "Jew" in Cinema: From Golem to Don't Touch My Holocaust* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 115-119.
[759] A.O. Scott, "Film in Review; 'Divided We Fall,'" *The New York Times* (June 8, 2001), E00016.; Kenneth Turan, "Pulling Together Uneasily in Extraordinary Times," *The Los Angeles Times* (June 8, 2001), 48.
[760] Julian Graffy, "Divided We Fall," *Sight and Sound*, vol.2, no.6 (June 2002).

blonde woman is joined at a posh bar by a distinguished older man—an Oldřich Nový type in a smart tuxedo. When he asks her if she's been crying, she tells him to leave her alone. The man refuses, "Don't worry you're safe here with me." But she stares deeply into his eyes and says, "Safety with you is far from safe." This is the musical cue: as the couple make their way to the dance floor, she sings, "When I close my eyes, I disappear right away…"

Immediately, this scene recalls Martin Frič's 1939 classic film *Kristián*. Like *Kristián*, it is about an aging Don Juan type who seduces a world-weary blonde. The title of the film-within-a-film, "*Close Your Eyes*" quotes Mr. Kristián's iconic line: "close your eyes, I'm leaving…" ("*zavřete oči, odcházím*…"). But here, a woman sings it. Perhaps, like *Saturday* (*Sobota*, Václav Wasserman, 1944) before it, *Close Your Eyes* is another *Kristián* "upside down" ("*Kristián naruby*")?[761] In addition to these direct quotations, the song suggests the power of the darkened room of the cinema to serve as a refuge to the problems of the outer world: the woman sings, "My world would search for me in vain. I'm under the lids of my eyes. I'm safe." And, as sung by Hana, the film's Jewish protagonist, these lyrics take on a deeper meaning, foreshadowing her future reliance on the protection of her Aryan husband.

The heroine of *Protektor* follows in a long line of Jewish Hanas. Like her predecessors—*Distant Journey*'s Hana Kaufmannová and *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*'s Hanka—this Hana is also involved in a mixed romance. The film begins on May 27, 1942, the same day as the assassination attempt on Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich.

[761] Matějček, "Sobota. Pokus o českou," 110-111.

From here, there is a flashback to 1938: Hana is a successful actress on the verge of becoming a star of the Czech cinema, and her husband Emil works for Czechoslovak Radio. But after the German occupation, Hana's "Jewish origins" bring her once-promising career to a screeching halt. By contrast, Emil becomes an Aryan collaborator, capitalizing on his former colleagues' misfortune to become a major radio star. When Hana offers to divorce Emil, he refuses and promises to protect her. But as Hana becomes increasingly isolated at home, Emil indulges in the spoils of his fame, and decides to divorce her (and thus remove his protection). His plan is interrupted by the Heydrich assassination and the subsequent manhunt for his killers in Prague (the *heydrichiáda*). After Emil comes home with a stolen bicycle that coincidently fits the description of the one used by the assassins, Hana assumes that he was part of the plot—that his willingness to collaborate was just for show. Emil does not correct her. Eventually, of course, she learns the truth from Emil's young mistress, who tells her about his planned divorce.

It is at this point that—like the Hana in *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*—Hana volunteers for transport, sacrificing herself to the Nazis. She thus joins the mass of Jews on their way toward the train station to be deported. In a scene that is almost lifted out of *Distant Journey*, Emil tries to call his wife, but unlike Hana Kaufmannová, she does not pick up the phone to have one last conversation. Emil finally refuses to collaborate. Riding the stolen bike, he arrives just in the nick of time to see Hana. But it is too late to stop her self-sacrifice and also too late for his redemption. Hana and Emil look at each other and recognize that they have both run out of time. Then, Emil is dragged away by

SS officers. In the final shot of the film, Hana disappears into the crowd becoming one more nameless, faceless Jew headed toward an unknown future.

In her discussion of *Protektor*, Tatjana Lichtenstein has argued that the film can be seen as having the same official narrative of Czech victimization as films from the postwar period, especially because it uses the "*heydrichiáda* as the historical backdrop for the film's decisive dramatic and moral moments."[762] For Lichtenstein, then, "Najbrt may have set out to make a film about the Holocaust, but in the end *Protektor* merely used its Jewish characters to reinforce a familiar, longstanding narrative about the victimization of Czechs at the hands of the Germans."[763] It is true, of course, that the film reenacts the issues of this earlier narrative. The problem with this reading is that it emphasizes Emil's suffering without fully considering Hana's, for she is rendered powerless by the Nazi Racial Laws and yet she refuses to fall into the easy category of "Jewish victim." Here it is worth noting that Hana enacts her victimhood as if it is another film role to be performed. As she walks away from the camera toward the transport office, the brunette Hana is replaced by her blonde alter ego—her character from *Close Your Eyes*. And as she continues, she turns and looks straight into the camera's lens.

So what do these two examples demonstrate about the relationship between melodrama and the Holocaust? Both *Divided We Fall* and *Protektor* implore an imaginative encounter with the affective legacies of earlier Czech films. But relevant to us, these films recapitulate the melodramatic binaries of "serious" and "popular"

[762] Lichtenstein, "It Is Not My Fault," 138,
[763] Ibid., 139.

representations of the Holocaust. Perhaps most telling is Jiří Holý and Šárka Sladovníková's observation that "compared to other Holocaust-themed representations [*Protektor*] accentuates the emotions and experiences of both of the main protagonists."[764] It would appear that the emotional is antithetical to the ethical obligation of Holocaust representation—and by extension, to Czech national cinema. And yet emotions are significant cultural and historical formations, and have taken on significance in Holocaust memory. My study has tried to push beyond the misguided question of what counts as a "proper representation" and what has taken on the status of a "bad object." This distinction, as I have noted, has been historically used to marginalize melodrama's genres.

This dissertation has also tried to shed light on the fraught melodramatic history that has kept the Czech case at the center of Holocaust discourse. My hope is that I have shown that looking back to historicize the production of melodramatic pathos is important for understanding not only the emotions and perspectives used to institutionalize forms of national history and identity, but also the ongoing cultural processes of remembrance and forgetting. Recall the National Film Archive in Prague's retrospective categorization of melodrama, and the fact that these "old films" like *Kristián* are now incorporated in the Czech popular imagination as "films for those who remember" ("*Filmy pro pamětníky*"). Think back to how melodrama functions as a form of historical testimony and a testament to a prevailing social consciousness; how in postwar Czechoslovakia, short non-fiction films testified to the Nazis' wartime crimes in

[764] Jiří Holý and Šárka Sladovníková, "Čtyřikrát o Holocaustu," *Slovo a Smysl* (August 2015), vol. 12, no. 23, 71-72.

order to make morality more than just legible—they legitimated it in the name of a national victimhood. Lest we forget that in its superimposition of past, present, and future melodrama reminds us "Never Again" again and again and again. Moving us across and in time, melodrama memorializes the past and anticipates the future in new and creative ways that reflect the residual and emerging socio-political values of the ever-changing present. Melodrama may be backwards-looking, but its emotional trajectory is forever forward-moving, and like this dissertation, must eventually come to an end.

Filmography

1920

Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*)

Fiction Feature, B&W, Produced by Decla Film (Germany)
Director: Robert Wiene; Screenplay: Hans Janowitz, Carl Mayer; Cinematography: Willy Hameister

1930

Černý plamen (*Black Flame*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Dafa (Czechoslovakia, Germany)
Director: Miroslav J. Krňanský; Screenplay: Miroslav J. Krňanský and F.X. Svoboda; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Music: Vlastislav Antonín Vipler

Tonka Šibenice (*Tonka of the Gallows*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Karel Anton (Czechoslovakia/ France)
Director: Karel Anton Screenplay: Benno Vigny, Willy Haas; Cinematography: Eduard Hoesch; Sound: Herrmann S. Heller; Editor: Karel Anton; Music: Karel Hašler Erno Košťál

Když struny lkají (*When the Strings Wailed*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by AB Film (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Friedrich Fehér; Screenplay: Johannes Brandt, Josef Kodíček, Quido E. Kujal, Michal Mareš; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Editor: Friedrich Fehér; Music: František Alois Tichý, Otokar Nováček

1931

Poslední bohém (*The Last Bohemian*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta Film and Sonorfilm (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Svatopluk Innemann; Screenplay: Emil Artur Longen; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Helmuth Neumann; Music: Jára Beneš

1932

Die verkaufte Braute (*The Bartered Bride*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Bavaria Film (Germany)
Director Max Ophüls; Screenplay: Curt Alexander, Max Ophüls, Karel Sabina; Cinematography: Franz Koch, Reimar Kuntze; Editing: Paul Ostermayr; Music: Bedřich Smetana

Píseň o velké lásce (*The Song of a Great Love*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Grafo (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Václav Kubásek Screenplay: Václav Kubásek; Cinematography: Jaroslav Blažek, Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Vlastislav Antonín Vipler.

Sestra Angelika (*Sister Angelika*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Slavia Film (Czechoslovakia)
Director Martin Frič, Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Karel Degl, Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Jára Beneš

1933

Disagnosa X (*Diagnosis X*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Dafa (Czechoslovakia, Germany)
Director: Leo Marten; Screenplay: Bohumil Štěpánek, Karel Špelina; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Stelibský

Její lékař (*Her Doctor*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia, Germany)
Director: Vladimír Slavínský; Screenplay: Otakar Hanuš, *Vladimír Slavínský*; Cinematography: Jan Stallich, Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Kumok

Okéno (*The Little Window*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czecholslovakia, Germany)
Director: *Vladimír Slavínský*; Screenplay: Lomikar Kleiner, *Vladimír Slavínský*; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Kumok

Madla z cihelny (*Madla from the Brickworks*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia, Germany)
Director: *Vladimír Slavínský* Screenplay: Otakar Hanuš, *Vladimír Slavínský*; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Kumok

V tom domečku pod Emauzy (*In the Little House Below Emausy*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Oka (Otto Kanturek) (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Otto Kanturek; Screenplay: Karel Hašler, Otakar Hanuš, Otto Rádl; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Emil Maiwald, Artur Guttmann

Skřivánčí píseň (*Lark's Song*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta Film (Czechoslovakia)

Director: Svatopluk Innemann; Screenplay: Josef Neuberg; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Erno Košťál, Smetana, Bedřich Smetana, Georges Bizet

1934

Zlatá Kateřina (*Golden Catherine*)
Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director Vladimír Slavínský; Screenplay: Emil Artur Longen, *Vladimír Slavínský*; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Bedřich Poledník ; Music: Josef Kumok

Grandhotel Nevada

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: Bedřich Wermuth; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Kumok

Manhattan Melodrama

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (USA)
Director: W.S. Van Dyke; Screenplay: Oliver H. P. Garrett, Joseph L. Mankiewicz; Cinematography: James Wong Howe

Hudba srdcí (*Music of the Hearts*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Beda, Heller/AB (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Svatopluk Innemann; Screenplay: Quido E. Kujal; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: ; Music: Josef Kumok, Henryk Wieniawski, Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Niccolˇ Paganini, Henri Vieuxtemps, František Ondříček

Dokud máš maminku (*While You Have a Mother*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: Jan Gerstel, Bedřich Šulc, Bedřich Wermuth; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Josef Kumok

1935

Barcarole

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Germany)
Director: Gerhard Lamprecht; Screenplay: Gerhard Lamprecht; Cinematography: Friedl Behn-Grund; Music: Jacques Offenbach, Hans-Otto Borgmann

Bezdětná (*Childless*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Miroslav J. Krňanský; Screenplay: Bohumil Štěpánek, Otakar Vávra, Jan Reiter; Cinematography: Otto Heller; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Music: Josef Dobeš

Jana

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Meissner (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Emil Synek, Robert Land; Screenplay: Emil Synek; Cinematography: Jaroslav Blažek; Sound: Bedřich Poledník; Editor: Jan Kohout; Music: Karel Hašler, Miloš Smatek

Král ulice (*King of the Street*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Miroslav Cikán, Karel Hašler; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Josef Zora, František Šindelář; Music: Karel Hašler, Miloš Smatek

Osudná chvíle [*Hra náhody*] (*Fortuitous Moment*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by P.D.C (J.V. Musil) (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Václav Kubásek; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Josef Bulánek; Music: Saša Grossman

Pan otec Karafiát (*Father Karafiát*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/ Germany)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: Bohumil Štěpánek, Jan Gerstel, Bedřich Šulc, Bedřich Wermuth; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Vilém Taraba; Music: Josef Kumok

První políbení (*The First Kiss*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Schmitt Julius (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Vladimir Slavínský; Screenplay: Emil Artur Longen, Vladimir Slavínský, Julius Schmitt; Cinematography: Václav Vích; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Josef Dobeš

1936

Divoch (*Wild Girl*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Meteor (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: Čeněk Šlégl; Cinematography: Jan Roth; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Karel Hašler, Miloš Smatek

Komediantská princezna (*The Comedian's Princess*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Emanuel Brožík, Miroslav Cikán, Jan Gerstel; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka ; Sound: Josef Hora; Music: Eman Fiala, Julius Kalaš, Vilda Sýkora

Port Arthur

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Slavia Film/F.C.L Paris (Czechoslovakia/France)
Director: Nicholas Farkas; Screenplay: Henri Decoin, Nicholas Farkas, Arnold Lipp; Cinematography: Otto Heller, Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Otakar Jeremiáš

Sextánka (*Sweet Sixteen*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Meissner (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Svatopluk Innemann; Screenplay: Bohumil Štěpánek; Cinematography: Jan Roth; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Josef Kumok, Richard Wagner

Srdce v soumraku (*Heart at Dusk*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Vladimir Slavínský; Screenplay: Vladimir Slavínský; Cinematography: Jan Roth; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Josef Dobeš

Světlo jeho očí (*The Light of His Eyes*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Dafa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Václav Kubásek; Screenplay: Karel Melíšek, Jaroslav Mottl, Karel Špelina; Cinematography: Karel Degl; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Josef Stelibský

Švadlenka (*The Seamstress*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Julius Kalaš

Ulička v ráji [*Dobrodinec chudých psů*] (*A Little Street in Paradise*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Moldavia (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Hugo Haas, Otakar Vávra; Cinematography: Otto Heller; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: E.F. Burian

Vojnarka

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Terra (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Vladimír Borský*; Screenplay:* Vladimír Borský, Karel Hašler; Cinematography: Josef Bůžek, Jan Roth; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: E.F. Burian

1937

Advokátka Věra (*Lawyer Vera*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Julius Kalaš

Bílá nemoc (*The White Disease*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Moldavia (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Hugo Haas; Screenplay: Hugo Haas; Cinematography: Otto Heller; Sound: Vilém Taraba; Music: Ludwig van Beethoven, Jan Branberger

Děvče za výkladem (*The Girl Behind the Shop Window*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lepka (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Miroslav Cikán; Cinematography: Jan Rothl; Editor: Antonín Zelenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Julius Kalaš

Lidé na kře (*People on the Iceberg*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Editor: Jan Kohout Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Julius Kalaš

Lízin let do nebe [*Líza Irovská*] (*Líza Soars to the Skies*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Europa (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Václav Binovec; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Bohumil Vích; Sound: Stanislav Vondraš; Editor: Marie Bourová; Music: Josef Dobeš

Žena pod křížem (*Woman Below the Cross*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Slavia Film (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Vladimir Slavínský; Screenplay: Karel Melíšek, Vladimir Slavínský; Sound: Jan Roth; Music: J.B. Majer, Zdeněk Moudrý

1938

Druhé mládí [*Klekání*] (*Second Youth* [*Kneeling*])

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Arko (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Václav Binovec; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Bohumil Vích; Sound: Vilém Taraba; Editor: Marie Bourová; Music: Josef Dobeš

Preußische Liebesgeschichte (*Prussian Love Story*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Germany)
Director: Paul Martin

Škola základ života (*School is the Foundation of Life*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czechoslovakia/ Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Vilém Taraba; Editor: Jan Kohout; Music: Julius Kalaš, Jaroslav Mottl

V pokušení (*In Temptation*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by La Tricolore (Czecho-Slovakia)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Karel Steklý; Cinematography: Jan Roth; Sound: Josef Zora; Editor: Jan Kohout; Music: Miloš Smatek

1939

Dvojí život (*Double Life*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Grafo (Czecho-Slovakia)
Director: Václav Kubásek and Marie Glázrová; Screenplay: Václav Kubásek; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Pilát; Editor: Marie Bourová; Music: Jiří Srnka

Gone with the Wind

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Selznick International Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (USA)
Director: Victor Fleming; Screenplay: Sidney Howard; Cinematography: Ernst Haller; Editor: Hal C. Kern, James E. Newcom; Music: Max Steiner

Jiný vzduch (*Changing Wind*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Czecho-Slovakia/Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screeplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Stanislav Vondraš; Music: Julius Kalaš, Bedřich Smetana

Kristián

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by AB (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Eduard Šimáček; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: Stanislav Vondraš; Editor: Jan Kohout; Music: Sláva Eman Nováček

Lízino štěstí (*Líza's Good Fortune*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Europa (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Václav Binovec; Screeplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Josef Dobeš, Gioacchino Rossini, Franz Schubert

Nevinná (*The Innocent Girl*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Continental (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Václav Binovec; Screenplay: Felix de la Cámara; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: Emanuel Formánek ; Music: František Svojík

Osmnáctiletá (*Eighteen Years Old*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Nationalfilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Karel Steklý; Cinematography: Jan Stallich; Sound: Josef Zora; Music: Josef Stelibský

Srdce v celofánu (*Heart in Cellophane*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Praha-Film (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: František Kocourek, Přemysl Pražský, Saša Razov; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: Emanuel Formánek; Music: Josef Houštecký

Tulák Macoun (*Macoun the Tramp*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Brom (Czecho-Slovakia)
Director: Ladislav Brom; Screenplay: Miroslav Rutte, Karel Smrž; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: Emanuel Formánek ; Music: Josef Dobeš, František Škroup, Josef Leopold Zvonař

Zlatý člověk (*The Golden Man*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Slavia Film (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Vladimir Slavínský; Screenplay: Vladimir Slavínský; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Josef Dobeš

1940

Katakomby (*The Catacombs*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia /Germany)
Director: Martin Frič; Screenplay: Václav Wasserman; Cinematography: Václav Hanuš; Music: Georges Bizet, Julius Kalaš, Rudolf Friml

Maskovaná milenka (*The Masked Lover*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lucernafilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Otakar Vávra; Screenplay: Otakar Vávra; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Gioacchino Rossini, Jiří Srnka

Minulost Jany Kosinové (*Jana Kosinová's Past*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Elekta (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: J.A. Holman; Screenplay: J.A. Holman; Cinematography: Václav Hanuš; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: Jiří Srnka

Píseň lásky (*Love Song*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Brom (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)

Director: Václav Binovec; Screenplay: František Kocourek; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Sound: Emanuel Formánek; Music: Ludwig van Beethoven, Josef Suk, Šeremetěv, Dalibor C. Vačkář

Poslední Podskalák (*The Last Inhabitant of Podskalí*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Brom (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Jan Sviták; Screenplay: Josef Neuberg; Cinematography: Jaroslav Tuzar; Music: Josef Dobeš, Bedřich Smetana

Pro kamaráda (*For a Friend*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Nationalfilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Miroslav Cikán; Screenplay: Miroslav Cikán**,** Ladislav Jílek, Jaroslav Mottl; Cinematography: Julius Vegricht; Sound: Emanuel Formánek; Music: Josef Stelibský

Za tichých nocí (*During Quiet Nights*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lucernafilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Zdeněk Gina Hašler; Screenplay: Vítězslav Nezval; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Music: E.F. Burian, Petr Iljič Čajkovskij, Rudolf Friml, Karel Hašler, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Miloš Smatek, Jiří Traxler,

1941

Noční motýl (*Night Butterfly*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lucernafilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: František Čáp; Screenplay: František Čáp; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Editor: Antonín Zelenka; Music: Roman Blahník

Rukavička (*The Glove*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lloyd (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: J.A. Holman; Screenplay: J.A. Holman; Cinematographer: Václav Hanuš; Music: Johann Sebastian Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Fryderyk Chopin, Jiří Srnka

1942

Die goldene Stadt (*The Golden City*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Ufa (Germany)
Director: Viet Harlan; Cinematography: Bruno Mondi; Editor: Friedrich Karl von Putkamer; Music: Hans-Otto Borgmann, Bedřich Smetana

Muži nestárnou (*Men Don't Age*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lucernafilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Vladimir Slavínský; Screenplay: Vladimir Slavínský; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: František Šindelář; Editor: Jan Kohout; Music: Josef Dobeš, Bedřich Smetana

1943

Bláhový sen (*Foolish Dream*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Nationalfilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: J.A. Holman; Screenplay: : J.A. Holman, Josef Trojan; Cinematography: Václav Hanuš; Sound: Stanislav Vondraš; Editor: Gina Hašler; Music: Jiří Srnka, František Svojík

1944

Sobota (*Saturday*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Lucernafilm (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
Director: Václav Wasserman; Screenplay: Josef Neuberg; Cinematography: Ferdinand Pečenka; Sound: Stanislav Vondraš; Editor: Marie Kopecká; Music: Josef Stelibský, Jiří Traxler

Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt (*The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*)

"Ghetto film," B&W, Produced by Aktualita, Ministry of Propaganda of the Third Reich (Germany)
Director: Kurt Gerron

1945

Dopis z Prahy (*A Letter from Prague*)

Short Documentary (Compilation), B&W, Produced by Krátký Film Studio (Czechoslovakia)
Director: František Šádek; Screenplay: Jiří Weiss and František Šádek

Nazi Concentration Camps
Short Documentary (Compilation), B&W, Produced by U.S. Army Signal Corps
Director: George Stevens

Nepokorennye (*The Unvanquished*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Kiev Studios (USSR)
Director: Mark Donskoi; Screenplay: Boris Gorbatov and Mark Donskoi

1946

Nezapomeneme (*Lest We Forget*)

Documentary (Compilation), B&W, Czechoslovak Film Chronicle/ Krátký Film Studio (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Václav Švarc

1947

Crossfire

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by RKO Radio Pictures (USA)
Director: Edward Dmytryk; Screenplay: John Paxton; Cinematography: J. Roy Hunt; Editor: Harry Gerstad; Music: Roy Webb

Gentleman's Agreement

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Twentieth Century Fox (USA)
Director: Elia Kazan; Screenplay: Moss Hart, Elia Kazan; Cinematography: Arthur C. Miller; Editor: Harmon Jones; Music: Alfred Newman

Ostatni etap (*The Last Stage*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Polski (Poland)
Director: Wanda Jakubowska; Screenplay: Wanda Jakubowska Gerda Schneider; Cinematography: Boris (Bentsion) Monastyrski; Sound: Ran Radlicz; Music: Roman Palester

1949

Distant Journey (*Daleká cesta*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Czechoslovak State Film (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Alfréd Radok; Screenplay: Mojmír Drvota, Eric Kolár, and Alfréd Radok; Cinematography: Josef Střecha; Sound: Josef Vlček; Editor: Jiřina Lukešová; Music: Jiří Sternwald

1958

Motýli tady nežijí (*There Are No Butterflies Here*)

Short Documentary (Compilation), B&W and Color, Produced by The Studio of Popular Science and Instructional Film Studies in Prague (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Miro Bernát; Screenplay: Miro Bernát, Hana Volavková; Jiří Weil; Cinematography: Pavel Hrdlicka; Music: Karel Reiner

1960

Romeo Julie a tma (*Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Jiří Weiss; Screenplay: Jan Otčenášek and Jiří Weiss; Cinematography: Václav Hanuš; Sound: Emil Poledník; Editor: Miroslav Hájek; Music: Sláva Eman Nováček and Jiří Srnka

1961

Judgment at Nuremberg

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Roxlom Films (USA)
Director: Stanley Kramer; Screenplay: Abby Mann; Cinematography: Ernst Laszlo; Editor:Frederic Knudtson; Music: Ernst Gold

1962

Transport z ráje (*Transport from Paradise*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Zbyněk Brynych; Screenplay: Zbyněk Brynych and Arnošt Lustig; Cinematography: Jan Čuřík; Sound: Miloš Alster; Editor: Miroslav Hájek; Music: Norbert Schultze and Jiří Sternwald

1964

…a pátý jezdec je strach (*The Fifth Houseman is Fear*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Zbyněk Brynych; Screenplay: Hana Bělohradská, Zbyněk Brynych; Cinematography: Jan Kališ; Editor: Miroslav Hájek ; Music: Karel Hašler, Josef Kumok, Jiří Sternwald

Démanty noci (*Diamonds of the Night*)

Fiction short, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Jan Němec; Screenplay: Arnošt Lustig and Jan Němec; Cinematography: Jaroslav Kučera; Sound: František Černý; Editor: Miroslav Hájek

1965

Obchod na korze (*The Shop on Main Street*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)

Director: Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos; Screenplay: Ladislav Grosman, Ján Kadár, and Elmar Klos; Cinematography: Vladimír Novotný; Sound: Dobroslav Šrámek; Editor: Jaromír Janáček; Music: Zdeněk Liška

1966

Ostře sledované vlaky (*Closely Watched Trains*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Jiří Menzel; Screenplay: Bohumil Hrabal and Jiří Menzel; Cinematography: Jaromír Šofr; Sound: Jiří Pavlík; Editor: Jiřina Lukešová; Music: Jára Beneš, Leopold Korbař, and Jiří Šust

1967

Dita Saxová

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Antonin Moskalyk; Screenplay: Arnošt Lustig and Antonin Moskalyk; Cinematography: Karel Ludvík; Sound: Milan R. Novotný; Editor: Zdeněk Stehlík; Music: Luboš Fišer

1968

Spalovač mrtvol (*The Cremator*)

Fiction feature, B&W, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Juraj Herz; Screenply: Ladislav Fuks and Juraj Herz; Cinematography: Stanislav Milota; Sound: František Černý; Editor: Jaromír Janáček; Music: Antonín Dvořák, Zdeněk Liška

1985

Shoah

Documentary, Color, BBC, Historia, Les Films Aleph, Ministère de la Culture de la Republique Française (France/Israel/Poland)
Director/Writer: Claude Lanzmann; Cinematography: Dominique Chapuis, Jimmy Glasberg, Phil Gries, William Lubtchansky; Editor: Ziva Postec, Anna Ruiz

1988

Oznamuje se láskám vašim (*Your Lovers are Notified*)

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director/Screenplay: Karel Kachyňa; Cinematography: Richard Valenta; Sound: Pavel Jelínek; Music: Milan Svoboda

1989

Na brigade (*On the Brigade*)

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by Film Studio Barrandov (Czechoslovakia)
Director: Tomáš Vorel

1993

Schindler's List

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by Amblin Entertainment (USA)
Director: Steven Spielberg; Screenplay: Steven Zaillian; Cinematography: Janusz Kamiński; Editor: Michael Kahn; Music: John Williams

2001

Musíme si pomáhat (*Divided We Fall*)

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by Czech Television, Total HelpArt T.H.A (Czech Republic)
Director: Jan Hřebejk; Screenplay: Jan Hřebejk and Petr Jarchovský; Cinematography: Jan Malír; Sound: Karel Jaroš; Editor: Vladimír Barák; Music: Aleš Březina

2009

Protektor

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by Negativ, Box! Film -und Fernsehproduktions GmbH, Czech Television (Czech Republic)
Director: Marek Najbrt; Screenplay: Robert Geisler, Marek Najbrt, Banjamin Tuček; Cinematography: Miroslav Holman; Editor: Pavel Hrdlička; Music: Petr Marek

2016

Lída Baarová (*The Devil's Mistress*)

Fiction feature, Color, Produced by NoGup,The Czech Republic State Fund of Support and Development of Cinematography (Czech Republic)
Director: Filip Renč; Screenplay:Ivan Hubač; Cinematography: Petr Hojda

Zkáza krásou (*Doomed Beauty*)

Documentary, Color, Produced by Třeštíková Productions and Czech Television (Czech Republic)
Director/Screenplay: Jakub Hejna, Helena Trestiková, 2016); Music: Tadeáš Věrčák

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