

UNDOING THE NATIONAL: REPRESENTING INTERNATIONAL SPACE IN 1930S CZECHOSLOVAK MULTIPLE-LANGUAGE VERSIONS

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*The sound film, for its part, is dualistic.
Its dualism is hidden or disavowed to varying extent;
sometimes cinema's split is even on display.
The physical nature of film necessarily makes an incision
or cut between the body and the voice.
Then the cinema does its best to restitch the two together at the seam.*
Michel Chion

Between 1928 and 1931 the European and the US film industries tried out different strategies for adapting their sound films to markets in other countries. Regardless of their relative success, these strategies included: part-talkies, remakes of successful silent films, synopses of plot printed on cards and handed out to audiences in movie theatres, live commentators accompanying films, side-titles projected on a separate screen from slides, intertitles, superimposed titles, multiple-language versions, and different methods of dubbing or partial dubbing.¹ Thanks to a wide range of transformations and hybridizations brought on by the new technology of synchronized sound, the film commodity soon had at its disposal a range of variations unknown to it since its early years and the domain of exhibition gained, once again, a much stronger influence. At the same time, however, this tendency toward a greater variability was counterbalanced by a tendency toward standardization: film could no longer be accompanied by live spoken word and music to the same extent as before, and the speed of its projection could no longer be altered.

This tension between the tendency toward variability and the opposing tendency toward standardization is also apparent in “multiple-language versions” (MLVs). On the one hand, the MLVs had to devise a common denominator to link up different textual variants and to minimize economic expenses through the highest possible degree of repetitiveness in the sphere of their production. On the other hand, in order to meet the expectations of different national audiences, the particular variants required differentiation with regard to the fictional time-space (which we will later refer to as “diegesis”) of the subject matter and with regard to the elements of production.

Most Czech-spoken MLVs were not of the American or German provenience, since no majors in these countries considered Czechoslovakia to be a market big enough for them to start a larger-scale production of Czech-language or dubbed versions. Moreover, they assessed Czechoslovakia as a country where German-language ver-

sions could easily be distributed. Generally, it might thus be said that the MLVs were export rather than import goods: thirty-nine of the forty-two foreign-language versions of Czech films made during the 1930s were produced in Czechoslovakia (mostly in Prague).

This fact should perhaps be seen against the background of the excessive and unrealistic worries concerning the future of the Czechoslovak cinema in the sound era. Czechoslovak producers were keenly aware of the risks connected with the increased costs, the closing foreign markets to Czech-language films, and with the shrinking of the domestic market caused by the relatively rare sound movie-theatres at the beginning of 1930.² In sum, local attributes of national language accompanied by narrowed social space, the provincialism of the domestic stars and the relatively low technical and artistic quality of Czechoslovak films all hindered their prospects for international acceptance, even if they were presented in dubbed or subtitled versions. Thus it should be underscored that the MLVs produced in the Czechoslovak studios were not aiming to serve the international expansion of a national industry or the export of domestic cultural values under the veil of a foreign language – as was the case of their Hollywood counterparts. Their main purpose was, rather, to ensure the very survival of the domestic film industry by lowering the costs of sound production and, by extension, lowering the costs of spreading Czech in domestic cinemas.³ Later, following the rapid transition of the Czechoslovak movie theatres to sound, with the success of sound films shot in Czech version only, and with the boom of attendance in 1930–1931,⁴ these assumptions proved to be wrong. In the first half of 1930, however, such fears were well grounded.

In the Czechoslovak production practice of the 1930s, foreign-language and the Czech versions were usually shot in parallel, i.e. on the same sets and with the same costumes, and often by same director.⁵ Due to restricted resources and the fast pace of shooting⁶ no sophisticated attempts were introduced to adapt either the scenes, the costumes, the plot, social mannerisms, historic and geographic realities or political connotations to any preferences of the target audience. Following the logic of economy, any efforts to modify the film's diegetic space with regard to changes in the language were mostly very straightforward, not to say primitive. For the MLVs export it was necessary to combine maximum common denominator which would guarantee its economics with a minimum of variation which would afford an undisturbed viewing on the part of the foreign spectators.

The remainder of this paper will outline four basic strategies of how this economic logic affected the relationships between the textual variants in terms of diegetic time-space. Diegesis is the time-space of the story which is only constructed by the viewer in the process of reception, on the basis of correlation of the extratextual and intratextual data: the perception of the viewer and that of the character. Diegetic is what could be seen or heard by a character in the world of fiction and what the viewer imagines he or she would see if he or she were the character.⁷

As has been pointed out elsewhere, the American foreign-language versions provided not only a strategy of re-conquering the foreign markets given the changed global conditions of sound cinema; they also aimed to provide a formal compensation for the shattered subjectivity and increased spectatorial distance given rise in the confrontation of (a Hollywood) diegesis and the (American-speaking) actor's body with the large variety

of linguistic landscapes. Dubbing thus brought about discrepancies between the voice and the body in which the acoustic unity of diegetic space was fractured, while subtitles were perceived as unacceptable regression back to silent cinema and thereby a further obstacle in the viewer's identification with the character. MLVs, by contrast, offered, with their reliance on domestic actors, a potential for reintegration of the social and the linguistic space of film in the cultural space of reception. MLVs were based on the theatrical requirement of organic unity of body and voice which ensured the effect of presence and maintained the unity of the subject.⁸

In MLVs the aim to preserve both the character's organic unity and the viewer's immersion in diegesis confronts the need to generate several textual variants out of a single space of production (joint capital, the production capacities of the studio, sets, technological means, shared crew and actors) as well as a single "latent" diegesis of the script. The space of production can thus be said to be "used up" and temporalized by several more or less overlapping processes of shooting and postproduction. The fictional time-space of the script is transformed into two different texts which, in the course of their reception, seed clues for the viewer to construct two distinct manifestations of the film's diegesis.

Yet there are circumstances when something may keep us from imagining that we could perceive the same thing as the character if we were in his or her situation, and thus from constructing a coherent diegesis. Our acceptance of a character's perception can under some circumstances be incomplete or disturbed: this can for instance be the case when the voice and the body or the moving body and the diegetic space do not form an organic unity. We can then sense the actor "behind" the character, or the profilmic, physical material of the scene "behind" the story. When such fissures of diegesis occur, there emerges another, external space, pointing to the "real" place of production of the discourse itself. With respect to the MLVs such fissures and moments of incoherence thus refer to a composite space-time of production: an unknown foreign actor speaking with a strange accent, in exotic localities which, inexplicably, are peopled by characters speaking the local language. Or the discrepancy between the exterior and studio shots, or, as technical disturbance in the form of a noticeably substituted original sound track. Therefore, the key dilemma of MLVs was the question of how to profit from the economic advantages of an identical subject-matter and production set-up, while at the same time finding the best way of tackling the diverse cultural contexts of the various national audiences. In other words, how to preserve in all the versions the organic unity of body, voice and space.

Initially, the MLVs were conceived of as a procedure that would secure the economic return of the Czechoslovak producers' investments by providing all of the audiences with "a full guarantee of a real recognition of environment, atmosphere and mentality."⁹ In other words, the MLVs had to preserve the highest possible measure of "same" across the several textual variants without making this "same" seem strange. From a theoretical perspective this "sameness" penetrating the different versions has two forms: one of them corresponds to the space of production and of diegesis, the other to the space of reception. What is at stake in that latter space is not primarily the proper reading of the same semantic content, the same effect of "decoding," but rather the same degree of communicativeness, the feeling of authentic expressiveness and the full mobilization of cultural connotations.¹⁰ Sameness on the level of reception is the effect of a certain amount of variety (of language, of acting, of film style) on the level of pro-

duction and diegesis; while sameness on the level of diegesis and production can bring about a variety of differing effects in the space of reception. Let us next have a closer look at how the Czechoslovak MLVs constituted elements of sameness as common denominators of the diegesis. These common denominators had to be constructed so as to bring about the least possible disturbance, “noise” in the moment of reception.¹¹

In the sample of ten films to be examined here, I propose to identify four different strategies for constructing a common denominator of the diegetic space: (1) comutable locations, (2) a non-specific/universal world, (3) a shared historic past and (4) exotic locales. Thus, in the first case, it is an arbitrary and mechanical attribution of additional “signposts” that helps the domestic audience accept the diegesis as their own; in the second case, the fictional space can function as a stage for a drama of universal human values because it lacks any particular cultural anchorage; in the third case the different textual variants draw on some historic experience shared between two national audiences; in the last case exotic locale preferably equi-distant from both reception contexts, is used to make any “displacement” vis-à-vis the diegesis irrelevant.

The first strategy may be illustrated through the example of *V tom domečku pod Emauzy* (O. Kanturek, 1933). In the Czech version the story takes place in a Prague district near the well-known Emaus cloister, while the German version was renamed *Das Häuschen in Grinzing*, Grinzing being a suburb of Vienna, well known for its vineyards. The set design of the film itself was, however, left unchanged.¹² Interestingly, the change in the geographic setting of the plot actually bears on the Czech version and addresses the Czech, not the Austrian viewer, for in the Joseph Lanner operetta on which the film is based, and which has the same title as the German version, the setting of the story is in fact Grinzing. Nonetheless, the film’s exteriors were shot neither in Prague nor in Vienna but in Libechov, near Mělník, forty km. from Prague.

The second strategy is evident in *Ulička v ráji* (M. Frič, 1936) and its German version, *Das Gässchen zum Paradies*. A melodrama about three lonely beings – an old knacker, a little orphan and a stray dog – takes place in a small city with universal traits. As the designations of setting suggest – the mockingly named “Paradise street” (“Zum Paradies”), where Tobiáš the knacker (Hugo Haas in the Czech, Hans Moser in the German version) has his shack, or the name of the town weekly “Globus” (“The globe”), whose owner plays the part of the generous patron – the diegesis is constructed as a world of universal poles: the poor vs. the rich, the children vs. the adults, etc. The key message lies in overcoming these opposites and reaching an all-encompassing social reconciliation: the knacker adopts both the orphan and the dog, the rich man takes care of the poor knacker; all the characters free each other from poverty and/or loneliness. This utopian embrace of social classes encountered in the aftermath of the Depression replaces any more specific depictions of these classes, accentuating a sense of universality.

The contrast between the sober documentary look of the footage showing first stray dogs and then modernist public spaces, the expressionistic look of the knacker’s shanty, and the shots of the publisher’s ornamental villa creates a general sense of a discontinuous, incoherent space.¹³ This incoherence could possibly be interpreted as an attempt at condensing many different faces of the world in a single allegorical place. Nevertheless, a more practical reason is that both versions probably used the standing

resources of the Barrandov A-B studios, likely reusing the sets from the adjacent production of *Golem*, just completed there by Julien Duvivier.¹⁴ Even though some of the shots are duplicated, several camera set-ups are similar, and some minor characters, extras and the dog are identical, there are also significant differences in several shots, in some elements of *mise-en-scène*, in the acting styles of the main protagonists, as well as in the typology of some minor characters. These differences may be explained as side effects of the overall emancipation of visual style in sound cinema of the late 1930s. The universal feel of the social space is nonetheless apparent in both versions: the name of the small town is never mentioned, the headlines of the newspapers, or the shreds of posters are not identifiable and all the characters are somehow social outcasts (a comedian, a knacker, a publisher, an orphan) and could not be identified with any sizeable social group.

Let us now pay closer attention to the two latter strategies of “diegetic transposition.” As already noted, the third key mode used in MLVs production through which the joint space of production and latent diegesis was dedifferentiated for two different reception contexts consisted in the choice of a historic setting that could, in part at least, provide a common denominator for both the Czech- and the German-speaking audiences. The most popular actor capable of acting in both language versions was the theatre comedian Vlasta Burian who prided himself on his near-native knowledge of German. His films *C. a k. polní maršálek/Der Falsche Feldmarschall* (K. Lamač, 1930) and *Pobočník jeho výsosti/Der Adjutant seiner Hoheit* (M. Frič, 1933) are set in the milieu of the Austro-Hungarian army officers, embedding the German language in the very subject of the Czech screenplay. Thus for instance, in the Czech version of the first film the military commands are heard in German, German songs are sung, many characters have German names or ranks and most of the story takes place in a setting of a faraway province – military barracks in the Empire’s easternmost outpost Galicia. In other words, the Czech version already contains a potential for being transposed into the German cultural environment. On the level of language it also reveals a kind of *mise-en-abîme* principle of multilingualism: Burian delivers several German sentences, immediately repeating them in Czech.

The German version of the film imitates almost exactly the “canned theatre” style of the Czech version – studio scenes interrupted by a few identical exterior shots of cavalry displays, the same leitmotif, even the errors in editing (e.g. violation of the 180° line rule in the scene of the fake field marshal’s disclosure). The performances of the minor characters verge on dilettantism, and speaking in German Burian loses some of his bravado acting and delivery. Nevertheless, the star succeeded in preserving the integrity of his characteristic comic style on the level of facial expressions and diction, and it might thus be said that, in preserving the theatrical unity of subject and the effect of presence across different linguistic and social spaces he fulfills the key function of foreign-language versions.

Pobočník jeho výsosti/Der Adjutant seiner Hoheit is based on a theatre play by the same author, the story is again situated in the officer/aristocratic milieu of Austria-Hungary, and a section of it is again set in distant provincial barracks. However, the film is much more sophisticated in its use of nonverbal sound elements, establishing a prominent common denominator between the two versions. In the opening scene of a pistol duel the principal character, lieutenant Patera (V. Burian) is distracted from his turn to shoot by the singing of some birds, which he then starts to imitate. Later in film,

the tune from Bizet's *Carmen* which prince Evžen chooses as a secret signal from his mistress to adjutant Patera is used as a musical and vocal leitmotif, efficiently linked with the spaces of *mise-en-scène*. The recurring tune reinforces the continuity of editing (matching simultaneous whistling of different characters at different places), as well as the continuity of the non-diegetic music with the diegetic sound.

Not only does this sound effect provide motivation in a number of comic gags; it also serves as a universal metaphor of the new sound technology. Patera receives written instructions to whistle the tune from *Carmen* under the windows of the Prince's mistress, but can't remember it. After several attempts he asks some servants for help. The first one doesn't know the melody, but addresses the question successively to a number of footmen standing in a line-up side by side until the last one finally remembers. Here the metaphor of the new means of cinematographic *mediation* is dramatized. Technology of sound recording and reproduction is shown as something that is at once universal, capable of crossing different spaces, but also difficult, fugitive, requiring a lot of components and links on its way from the record to the receiver. Sound recording is not immediately perceptible (in contrast to e.g. photography) because sound needs to be reconstructed through a special apparatus. Lest he forgets, Patera intends to whistle the tune all the way to the mistress' windows, but then it slips his mind again as his carriage hits a pothole. He tries to whistle a number of other tunes, to no avail, until he is reminded of the right one by a squeaking pump. Later on, we hear the tune again, this time as an unintended sound flashback. Similar function is fulfilled in both versions by the sound of church bells. These uses of sound as a tool for connecting different places, objects and characters could be understood as an allegory of sound technology's powers and limits. They express a historical "imagination of technology"¹⁵ which fictionalizes the media apparatus and transcribes it into diegesis.¹⁶

Both versions contain a number of entirely or nearly identical shots and sequences, with respect both to the position of camera as well as to basic character movement; the versions share a few minor characters and most of the extras. Much like in *C. a k. polní maršálek/Der Falsche Feldmarschall*, the provincial town of Mňuk (where Patera is transferred to serve out his punishment) is neutral for both reception contexts. But in the German version "Prague" is changed to "Vienna", though no changes occur in sets. In fact, it would have made more sense to have Vienna in the Czech version, too, as the presence of prince Evžen and other members of Austrian aristocracy would suggest. Paradoxically, the principal agent of variation is therefore the main character, Burian himself, given his extensive improvising.

Der Falsche Feldmarschall had a successful premiere in Berlin but met with calls for its prohibition in Vienna's monarchist nationalist press, where the film was perceived as mocking the Austrian military tradition. "These protests led subsequently to a real prohibition on using former Austrian uniforms and ridiculing the former imperial and royal army in Czech films."¹⁷ *Der Adjutant seiner Hoheit* was re-examined by censors in Germany in 1934 and then prohibited because there too the mockery of the imperial army had become politically unacceptable.

The MLVs built around Vlasta Burian thus combine two complementary strategies: they sell abroad a highly adaptable star while also making use of history and sound as common denominators.

A competing strategy of double reading of a single space is developed in *Štvaní lidé* (F.

Fehér, 1933), or *Gehetzte Menschen* (F. Fehér, 1932). The plot of this drama of an unjustly convicted escaping prisoner whose assumed identity has been revealed after twenty years, on the day of his second marriage, when he and his son set out to escape, was situated in Marseille and the countryside of southern France. The soundtrack is dominated by non-diegetic music and expressive sound effects, while some of the lines in the Czech version are dubbed. The German version includes some extra footage, and is technically superior in terms of both its soundtrack and its editing. As far as style is concerned, both versions resemble a heterogeneous collage: they combine documentary and silent acted shots in accelerated motion with added music and noises, studio scenes with synchronous sound recording, dubbed sound as well as the dominant non-diegetic music; there is a variety of degrees of graininess and light exposure of the film stock, and drastic switches in the volume, pitch and timbre of the sound track. The most blatant manifestation of this heterogeneity (becoming effectively a technical break-down) is an exterior scene in the Czech version where under the police announcement on the radio in Czech a faint German voice can be heard (sic!).

There was no French version, which is why the setting could be considered as a distinct yet neutral third element for both national audiences. Contrary to many other MLVs the social milieu as well as the atmosphere of the local countryside is depicted in detail and in a suggestive way: the associative montage sequences of the silent exterior shots of rocks, ships and the harbor at the beginning of the film are later replaced by a rhythmic montage of a table being set, and of dancing and feasting wedding guests in a village house. Escaping through the streets of Marseille, the father and his son join a parade of musicians, and the expressive, free-ranging camera's sweeping movements show tall buildings in narrow streets as the expression of the boy's panic. The exteriors of Marseille were shot without sound and include only the main acting pairs: Jan Fehér (son of the director) and Josef Rovenský in the Czech version, and the same Jan Fehér with Eugen Klöpfer in the German version. The dialogue scenes were shot at the A-B studios in Prague. The role of a common denominator for the Czech and the German version is here filled by the exotic setting and by the convincing bilingual performance of the child protagonist.

Combining elements of several of early sound cinema strategies, *Štvaní lidé* has the characteristics of a hybrid. Foreign-language versions profit here from techniques of alternative construction of a synthetic transnational diegesis – sending the cinematographers out to exotic locations and combining the obtained material with scenes of conversation shot in studios.¹⁸ Paradoxically, *Štvaní lidé* also creates the effect typical for dubbed films: when speaking in Czech or German the French wedding guests, policemen and beggars could – against the background of the authentic exteriors – provoke a feeling of linguistic inappropriateness so common during the early years of dubbing,¹⁹ an impression further strengthened by the embedded elements of sound when it really was dubbed in. With regard to the exteriors of Marseille, obviously shot without sound (as indicated for example by the highly mobile camera and the accelerated motion) we can speak of partial supplement of sound – something the viewers were already acquainted with since the successful premiere of the first Czech “speaking” film *Tonka Šibenice* (K. Anton, 1930).

What these strategies for construction of a common denominator in terms of diegetic time and space all share is the attempt to establish a common ground for communica-

tion with two or more national audiences. Now, since the patterns described here come from a limited sample of films, they cannot be generalized mechanically. Nonetheless it is possible to establish correspondence with some quantitative data gathered from the surviving MLVs, and also with the discourse referring to them. The contemporary commentators criticized the MLVs on three general grounds, bearing on matters of aesthetics, the ideology of the national, and technical-economical issues. From the national point of view, they evaluated MLVs as an attempt to return to the international comprehensibility of silent cinema, but also as a (mostly lost) opportunity to reinforce the cinema's national identity through the specificity of its spoken language.²⁰

In his 1933 book *Dějiny filmu* (Film History), which primarily focuses on the technological aspects of the medium's evolution, the prominent pre-war film historian Karel Smrž includes a chapter called "Searching for the lost internationality." Here he considers the advantages and drawbacks issuing from the different strategies of overcoming the linguistic specificity of sound cinema: "international versions using inserted subtitles instead of dialogue;" "versions in various languages;" and two methods of "supplementary synchronization."²¹ Smrž sees the most perfect and the most simple of all the strategies for replacing one language by another in the dubbing procedure of the Berlin-based Rhytmographie company. On the other hand, he pays the least attention to subtitles which "show all the shortcomings of the silent cinema, but not a single advantage of the sound cinema."²² He perceives the MLVs as a transitory phase between subtitles and dubbing, for they first appeared to offer "the only hope for the world market" and the beginning of "a new period of film internationality,"²³ but soon showed themselves to hamper the continuous progress of work in studios because different actors had to take turns in the same sets; furthermore there was the expense of these versions compared to dubbing. The main reason for rejecting the MLVs, however, is the fact that they deny the principle of original in favor of serial production of a "mediocre commodity." For any masterpiece, according to Smrž, fundamentally defies the possibility of making more versions. MLVs destroy the actor's and director's conception of the original: "The artistic imprint of the original author is wiped off from the work forever."²⁴ Thus, MLVs deprive the original work of all essential artistic qualities and preserve the identical only in the area of decor and plot – the elements corresponding to our categories of production values and diegesis. In the words of another contemporary, the production of MLVs was considered as "word and sound factory," fabricating "word cans, prepared for distribution to all parts of the world."²⁵

Our count of the shooting locations and the temporal-geographical setting of the diegesis shows that among the forty-two films made with a foreign-language version only two thematise in any substantial sense the Czech country life and include elements of folklore,²⁶ while nine Czech variants work with five well-known Prague locations. Ten additional Czech variants situate the story or its subplot in exotic locations abroad, including mountain scenery, a spa or a castle; three take place in the era of Austria-Hungary,²⁷ and one refers to the times of medieval knights. Nevertheless, further research into other examples of MLVs could also show some inverse cases with the diegesis being adapted to the needs of a foreign audience. For example the heroine of *Falešná kočička* (Vl. Slavínský, 1937) sets out to study the customs and speech of the *Lumpenproletariat* from the suburb of Prague, even hiring a teacher to learn the local vernacular, and to sing drinking songs. Unfortunately, the fund of the National Film Archive does not have the German version,²⁸ which is why we still do

not know what kind of transformation these linguistic and social phenomena might have undergone in it.

MLVs open in front of us a new category of space – a space that is here constructed as a synthetic hybrid, in which different frames of reference and functions mix and are confronted on the level of production (e.g. film crews alternating on one set during the shoot), diegesis (e.g. a foreign actor speaking a domestic language) and reception (e.g. the ironic image of a historical past shared by two countries, causing the prohibition of the movie in one of them). The diegetic spaces of the Czechoslovak MLVs are somehow universal, commutable, smooth, but at the same time internally split. Invariably they reveal to some extent the existence of their doubles, at least insofar as they partake of undoing the national. One version refers to another, the textual logic of the common denominator allegorizing the transnational industrial production – which now includes the new sound technology.

- 1 See Donald Crafton, *History of American Cinema 4. The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), pp. 424-441.
- 2 The number of sound cinemas was rather low in 1929 and in the first half of 1930, but then it raised very quickly: from 10 at the beginning of 1930 to 148 in the end of the year, while the whole number of cinemas was 1817. See Ladislav Pištora, "Filmoví návštěvníci a kina na území České republiky," *Iluminace*, Vol. 8, no. 3 (1996), pp. 43-44.
- 3 See the extensive questionnaire made among six of the main Czech film producers and businessmen: [u], "Co bude nyní? Odborníci o nynějším stavu zvukových filmů," *Lidové noviny* (October 3, 1930), p. 6; *Lidové noviny* (October 10, 1930), p. 13; *Lidové noviny* (October 17, 1930), p. 12.
- 4 L. Pištora, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- 5 The director was changed nineteen times out of thirty-nine.
- 6 10-14 shooting days in studio with 30-50 shots per day on average. See Jaroslav Brož, "Na prahu jubilejního roku našeho filmu III.," *Film a doba*, Vol. 4, no. 4 (1958), p. 223. The parallel production of MLVs probably further increased these numbers.
- 7 Edward Branigan, *Narrative Comprehension and Film* (New York-London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 35, 50.
- 8 See Nataša Ďurovičová, "Translating America: The Hollywood Multilinguals 1929-1933," in Rick Altman (ed.), *Sound Theory, Sound Practice* (New York-London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 139-153.
- 9 "Co je nového ve filmu," *Národní politika*, no. 155 (June 6, 1930), p. 5.
- 10 See the distinction between the *semantic*, *expressive* and *phatic* dimensions of film speech as discussed by Nataša Ďurovičová, in "Local Ghosts: Dubbing Bodies in Early Sound Cinema," in Anna Antonini (ed.), *Il film e i suoi multipli/Film and Its Multiples* (Udine: Forum, 2003), p. 89.
- 11 A discussion at Gradisca Spring School's workshop directed by Nataša Ďurovičová and Francesco Pitassio led to a conclusion that there are two distinguishable types of common denominators in the field of MLVs. The first type involves sameness of the semantic content despite possible differences in reception on the part of a particular national audience. This is the case of Siodmak's *Voruntersuchung* and its French version, *Autour d'une enquête* (1931),

where not only the acting style, but also the names of the streets and characters from the German version are retained in the French version, and their foreignness is even emphasized through the superimpositions of two name tags. This effort to preserve a maximum of the semantic sameness thus leads to a literal superimposition of two different linguistic contexts within one diegesis, and hence to a sort of alienation effect in the French version. The second type, shown in Roberto Calabretto's analysis of Pabst's *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *L'Opéra de quat'sous* (1931), consists in the work towards the sameness of expressivity and communicativeness despite differences in semantic content. There are considerable differences in the acting styles and the construction of characters between these two versions, differences that could be understood as an attempt to adapt a Brechtian theatrical conception of film for the French spectators by making it more melodramatic, and by connoting the domestic popular theatrical style of acting and singing. The common denominator of Czech MLVs would then be an attempt to combine these two types into one.

- 12 Jan Kučera, "Československý film," in *Zvukový film let třicátých* (Prague: ČS. společnost pro šíření politických a vědeckých znalostí, 1960), p. 7.
- 13 This effect is for instance emphasized by the discrepancy between the spaciousness of the interior of the knacker's shanty and its relatively small exterior. This apparent disproportion was later parodied by Martin Frič in his self-referential film *Pytláková schovanka* (1949).
- 14 See *Czech Feature Film II. 1930-1945* (Praha: NFA, 1998), p. 374.
- 15 I am here referring loosely to James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema. Perception, Representation, Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 16-61.
- 16 During the 2003 Gradisca Spring School, Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener each presented a thought-provoking interpretation of allegorization or *mise-en-abîme*, within particular filmic texts, of sound technology in early sound films. Thomas Elsaesser went even further, suggesting that the allegorical presence of technology in early sound films could serve as a model for a new kind of textual analysis, focusing on the performativity of media apparatuses inside diegesis.
- 17 Luboš Bartošek, *Náš film. Kapitoly z dějin (1896 – 1945)* (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1985), p. 177.
- 18 See N. Ďurovičová, "Translating America: The Hollywood Multilinguals 1929-1933", *cit.*, p. 147.
- 19 See N. Ďurovičová, "Local Ghosts: Dubbing Bodies in Early Sound Cinema", *cit.*, p. 84.
- 20 See e.g. Rudolf Myzet, "O situaci I.-III.," *Lidové noviny* (May 1, 1931), p. 18; *Lidové noviny* (May 8, 1931), p. 10; *Lidové noviny* (May 15, 1931), p. 8. Myzet even claimed that Prague studios could serve as a base for film production in all European Slavic languages (much like Hollywood with its production in western languages). See also Gustav Machatý, "Co s českým filmem?," *Žijeme*, Vol. 2, no. 5 (1932), pp. 145-146.
- 21 Karel Smrž, *Dějiny filmu* (Praha: Družstevní práce, 1933), pp. 561-567.
- 22 *Ibidem*, p. 562.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 J. A. Urban, "V továrně na slova v Joinvillu," *Studio*, Vol. 2 (1930-1931), p. 206.
- 26 *Lidé pod horami/Menschen in den Bergen* (V. Wasserman, 1937); *Boží mlýny/Die Gottes Mühlen* (V. Wasserman, 1938). Two country films out of forty could represent approximately a half of the quantity which equals the total Czech production of the 1930s. It is interesting that both films were made in late 1930s, which could indicate shifts in the criteria for constructing common denominators.

- 27 In addition to the two Burian films described above there is also a spy drama *Aféra plukovníka Redla*/*Der Fall des Generalstabs-Oberst Redl* (K. Anton, 1931).
- 28 *Heiraten – aber wenn?* (in Germany)/*Verliebte Herzen* (in Czechoslovakia)/*Die falsche Katze* (in Austria).