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Lekhost a Tize: An Experiment in Film Production Methodology

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LEHKOST A TÍŽE: AN EXPERIMENT IN FILM PRODUCTION METHODOLOGY

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
The Department of Drama and Communications

by

Talley Mulligan

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ABSTRACT

Proliferation and convergence of new technologies as well as the diverse media they have given rise to has had a dramatic impact on the theory and practice of contemporary filmmaking. This trend also holds considerable implication for the range of cinematic forms likely to be embraced in the future as well as the methodologies necessarily exploited in their making. The formal and expressive possibilities inherent in the climate of experimentation existing at this unique juncture in history encourage out-of-the-ordinary solutions to long-standing problems while begging important questions regarding the process and goal of filmmaking. Taking the films of the Czech New Wave and their trademark formal experimentation as a point of departure, the present study attempts to incorporate the disparate influences of these novel circumstances and apply them to filmmaking. As such, LEHKOST A TÍŽE represents one filmmaker's efforts towards the goal of an intuitive and personal system of filmmaking, based on a flexible, yet expressive visual language that seeks to promote discovery without forfeiting narrative coherence.

INTRODUCTION

Art flies around truth, but with the definite intention of not getting burnt. Its capacity lies in finding in the dark void a place where the beam of light can be intensely caught, without this having been perceptible before. –Franz Kafka

Because cinema endeavors to represent the nature of the inner world human beings share as well as the material world within which we live, filmmakers find themselves in the awkward position of contriving via corporeal means to capture the quality and nuance of reality as experienced. It may be convincingly argued that the film medium is capable of recording only the surfaces of events, tangible traces of observable phenomena, but is entirely unable to access their essence. On the other hand, however, the ultimate objective of the process of filmmaking, coherent cinematic works, can seldom be considered objective regardless of the methodology employed in their making. Certainly though, the emotional authority films routinely demonstrate is an indication of their faculty for transmitting more subtle aspects of existence as well as concrete realities through the ordered presentation of the collected scenes that comprise them.

To achieve its project, cinema has developed an expressive, but highly fragmented language through which the variables of time, point of view, perspective and mise en scène, et al. may be manipulated to effect. Indeed, it is incumbent upon the

sense and syntax of the cinematic language filmmakers' employ to accomplish representation of both qualitative and substantive realms adequately in cinematic works. Not surprisingly, there are many permutations of the basic filmic language as a result of the divergent narrative traditions associated with different cultures as well as due to the essential contribution of individual experimentation. Whatever their differences, until recently all of cinema's practitioners shared effectively similar limitations resulting from the medium itself being fundamentally uniform, highlighting the resultant formal differences as compelling indices of the language and methodology utilized. This, of course, is changing dramatically now as the language of cinema itself is in flux due to previously unrelated technologies' aggressive encroachment upon what has been traditionally the domain of cinema alone. Needless to say, any implemented approach, related as it ultimately is to some representational language which, in turn, is predicated on the technology used, has profound implications for the results accomplished, regardless of whether the goal be truthfully portraying collections of relatively banal events as in anthropological works or seamless narratives depicting larger-than-life versions of literary works and the like.

Obviously filmmakers, like all artists, rely, consciously or otherwise, on points of reference (collectively comprising conceptual frameworks) while navigating the myriad decisions encountered during the process of motion picture production. All too often, however, contemporary filmmakers adopt the predictable approach insisted on by the Hollywood System and reinforced by the dominance of conventional narrative form, if not the pressures of the marketplace, rather than pursue the admittedly elusive goal of devising one's own methodology. There are also, of course, any number of good reasons for adopting the highly codified and widely accepted system advocated by Hollywood, not the least of which is its proven ability to effectively convey meaning through the cinematic language it has refined over the course of its history. But what other possibilities exist and what, if any, advantages might they offer? What implications do such alternatives hold for the process of filmmaking and, for that

matter, narrative form? Is it possible to devise and implement an individual system based fundamentally in the inherent capacities of the film medium? And what are the consequences for the future of cinematic form if paradigms currently considered unorthodox are brought to bear?

As if these questions weren't compelling enough on their own, the impact of recent technological advances cannot be overstated in their influential role on the novel representational forms emerging as a result. Widespread miniaturization and proliferation of consumer electronics, personal computers and digital imaging devices in particular, and convergence of disparate presentation technologies such as television, the World Wide Web and mobile telephony as well as the imminent displacement of video tape by an increasingly interactive DVD (Digital Versatile Discs) format as the primary means of motion picture distribution have blurred the lines between both the previously discreet technologies themselves and their characteristic forms. This perpetual dynamic between technology and art is, in one respect, nothing new, but the latest chapter in this ongoing exchange has given rise to unprecedented formal and expressive opportunities for which much work remains if adequate conceptual apparatus are to be developed to cope with its implications for the cinema. It, however, should be understood that, in the view of the author, the deconstruction of method simply for the sake of augmenting current understanding of the film medium itself, technology's catalytic effect notwithstanding, is also considered a valid and worthwhile goal to pursue.

The present study is not, however, a critical investigation of these problems, but an attempt at exploring these questions through application, documenting one filmmaker's approach toward the development of an organic and personal system of filmmaking influenced and encouraged by the climate of exploration fostered by recent technological advances as well as their advantageous effect upon the perceptual sophistication of audiences that are subject to them. It details an attempt aimed at the

shaping of an immediate and adaptive, yet expressive approach toward capturing and re-presenting “reality” whereby collaborative and improvisational techniques promote discovery and permit the distillation of narrative as a natural outgrowth of process rather than a pre-ordained and lifeless goal.

CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPMENT

Because the purpose of the present study is the development and testing of a conceptual framework and filmmaking methodology, it takes the inherent capacities of the film medium itself as its point of departure. It's ultimate aim is the development of an immediate system of filmmaking based on a flexible and expressive visual language in turn rooted in the intrinsic logic of cinematic structure and form. Through cinema's dismantling, reconstruction and subsequent extension – via integration of the emerging forms brought about by recent technological advances – it is anticipated the goal of broadening the director's understanding of the medium will, in some small measure, be accomplished. The question becomes then; how might the would-be filmmaker orient himself within the continuum existing between process and form, fragment and whole, surface and depth, in a meaningful way such that the position taken might inform to advantage the various phases of cinematic endeavor?

As a means of entry to this convoluted topic, I devised a threefold investigation into the subject of cinema's expressive capacity as related to production methodology. In the first phase of this plan I was to visit Prague in order to research pertinent Czech films, placing an emphasis on the range of possible cinematic messages in relation to shooting and editing strategies. After this I would remain in the Czech Republic to conduct formal experiments based on the ideas and techniques discovered, adapting those deemed compelling within the constraints of my own work. Finally, I would undertake production of the script that would ultimately evolve from and mirror my experience of the Czech capital.

Prior to leaving New Orleans for Prague, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to Dr. Michal Bregant, a historian at the Národní filmový archiv and professor of cinema at both F.A.M.U. and Karlova University through Dr John Hazlett, then Associate Dean of International Studies at the University of New Orleans. As I began corresponding with him in an attempt to better prepare myself for my studies in Prague, Dr. Bregant suggested many informative books and articles to help acquaint me with the work of the Czech filmmakers I would soon have more direct access to, but unfortunately many of these titles, like the films they discuss, were unavailable to me in America. As a result, my formal introduction to Czech cinema came later that year upon arrival to Prague and Charles University, when I enrolled in Dr. Bregant's class which provided the necessary context for the research I had been able to accomplish prior to leaving the States. Eventually, Dr. Bregant arranged for my access to both the N.F.A. and F.A.M.U. archives and we established a weekly appointment during which he entertained my many questions regarding the unique films I was being exposed to as well as advised me on how I might better focus the ideas comprising my thesis work.

Once it became known to Dr. Bregant that my script centered around several vignettes of Franz Kafka's work, he challenged me to develop my project from direct experience of Prague rather than through the filter of the esteemed writer's work. He explained to me that Kafka is seen as merely a transmitter of a commonly experienced reality that all Czechs share and that as such, I should exchange explicit referencing of his imagery for interpretation of Prague's underlying mood and atmosphere myself. Quite surprisingly, I discovered that among Czechs, Kafka is seldom considered a native son as a result of his writing in German rather than the venerated and understandably guarded Czech language. Nevertheless, this, of course, required development of an entirely new concept and script, which meant that I was effectively starting anew on a project I imagined was near completion. As such, I began work in what would be a very slow process of grasping enough of the formidable Czech

language to permit sufficient access to the unfamiliar culture and mesmerizingly beautiful environment I then found myself in.

Having accepted the challenge of undertaking a completely new project, I began studying Czech history in order to construct a backdrop against which the films I was by now routinely viewing could be understood as well as better inform the interviews I was conducting with the English-speaking Czech people I met while exploring the city. Through these conversations I was able to gain a much better understanding of the period that had given rise to the Czech New Wave films I was especially interested in as well as some sense of the tumultuous history the Czech people have endured. Through research and discussion of both the country's political and cultural life, to which the personal memories of the people interviewed added the richness of detail, a new concept started to appear and incrementally come into focus.

Throughout this process, my frequent meanderings in and around Prague shed additional light on the many fêted aspects of the city I had become familiar with as well as divulging less-obvious patterns that I was compelled to incorporate, many of which later developed into guiding principles. The city's extraordinary landscape, punctuated with the hundred spires that is its namesake, captured my imagination, eventually coming to represent for me the forces of gravity and levity, each vying for the embattled Czech psyche. The perpetual movement of people – literally and figuratively, physically and otherwise – forward and back in time also became a primary theme to which the complicating influence of technology, the transportation and communication varieties, in particular, was seen as supporting haphazard physical activity while distracting humanity from potentially more rewarding quests. Slowly, but surely, these influences and ideas transformed into a purposefully disjointed script designed to encourage a collaborative and improvisational approach, based on the fictional character T's struggles with gravity in his pursuit of the heavens.

CHAPTER 2: PRE-PRODUCTION

As I continued work on the script I began actively scouting locations, as opposed to the relatively haphazard approach I had adopted while initially acclimating to the city. This proved time consuming due to the sheer number of breathtaking places to be explored and the elusive nature of the script. Recognizing the need for significantly greater rigor and realizing that many of my initial observations needed bearing out, I began actively researching the city's built history in the university and public libraries as well as included the topic in my discussions with Dr. Bregant. At his suggestion, I also enrolled in noted historian Vaclav Cilek's "Architecture and Myth" class whereby I learned of and visited many of Prague's better-kept secrets that would inform and inspire the project. Over the course of our contact, Professor Cilek proved to be enormously helpful, meeting with me on several occasions to discuss the former Communist State's recent and distant past as well as various locations' historical significance and symbolic importance. He read my script and helped me select pertinent locations for the various scenes I was struggling to find appropriate settings for as well as offered his unique historical perspective which permitted me to more intelligently exploit them. Beyond this, he made numerous useful suggestions regarding fertile sources to reference and offered his insightful observations about the narrative I was developing itself.

Once the euphoria of finding myself in Prague began to dissipate – due in no small measure to the frustrations endured while attempting to learn the notoriously difficult Czech language – it became clear that the film would require more collaborators than I had imagined and I was at an enormous disadvantage with respect

to finding them. Realizing that I had met only a handful of people since my arrival to Prague – none of which were filmmakers or actors – I started plotting how I might introduce myself to the local filmmaking community. While it was in some ways an act of desperation and definitely a distraction from the work at hand, I offered my time to a few local independent filmmakers, agreeing to work on their projects free-of-charge in return for gaining access to the cast and crew working with them. This decision turned out to be wise – given that my repeated attempts to find the talent I required through agencies proved to be a waste of time as well as cost prohibitive – and suddenly, after months of fruitless searching, I was carrying on a worthwhile dialogue with several talented Czech filmmakers excited about contributing to my project.

After beginning discussions about what was now starting to resemble a complete script with the Director of Photography that had agreed to shoot the film for me, I turned my attention to the equally difficult job of finding appropriate actors. I began participating in casting calls for the various films for which I was donating my time which proved enlightening as I hadn't had any experience with the casting process before. This also turned out to be particularly useful as it also introduced me to several suitable actors without my assuming the burden of pitching my project, which was still in the formative stage, to them. In the end, however, I wound up "type casting" more eccentric people I had become acquainted with in the primary roles as I felt having a rapport with the actors was more important than their level accomplishment – especially in light of the collaborative approach I was pursuing. Once having decided on poet Vincent Farnsworth for the lead character, I began meeting with him to solicit his ideas and to bring his personal perspective and experience to the script. Upon learning that I intended to shoot the film entirely in Czech, Vincent suggested I also meet and discuss the project with local poet Kateřina Pinosová. As it was my intention all along to involve various collaborators as part and parcel of the process, the idea of this partnership was well received by Ms Pinosová and soon after she and I met to adapt my ideas into Czech. As a result, a rich, though accessible scenario rooted in Czech lore and

colloquial language was developed based on the themes of gravity and levity – originally culled from Kafka’s musings, but overlaid with my experience of modern day Prague.

In the meantime, I met with the various other collaborators that had committed to the project for the various crew positions. In these meetings storyboards and the extensive location photographs I had taken were presented in an attempt to illustrate the various shots with which I planned to render the subject. As some of the shots I proposed were somewhat unconventional, we conducted rehearsals to test the ideas and reviewed the Czech films in which similar techniques had been used so as to insure all key concepts had been adequately articulated. We discussed at length the production methodology I intended to employ so as to avoid surprises on set – speaking at length about the significance of camera angles and movement on the resulting narrative which, in spite the use of an effectively linear script, was required to be highly modular such that a maximum of alternate stories could be later constructed. In particular, the style of shooting I was advocating based on multiple alternates of emblematic actions – a welcome luxury of the digital format we were originating on – was discussed both in terms of its convenience as well as in connection with my ideas of modularity. These meetings proved informative and productive, allowing the incorporation of my colleagues’ suggestions while encouraging me as the their demonstrated understanding of the outlined visual language and production methodology developed.

Not long after the preliminary version of the script had been distributed among the crew, the DP who I had been meeting with regularly about the project and who I was confident understood what my expectations were regarding how the film should be shot, announced that he would be unavailable on the scheduled shoot days. Still making the final adjustments to the script, I began trying to arrange alternate shoot dates that accommodated his schedule while secretly searching for a suitable DP with which to replace him. This proved frustrating as the dates comfortable for the DP

conflicted with the actors schedules and the five alternate DPs I met with to discuss the project were all simply too busy – neither did they have the benefit of the numerous production meetings that had already taken place at that point.

Suddenly finding myself without a DP, but still interviewing candidates, I was forced to turn my attention to the question of other key issues that it was now impossible to defer any longer. Nevertheless, I decided that regardless of whether or not I would have to shoot the piece myself, it was absolutely necessary to set the schedule in stone once and for all rather than allow the entire project to be held hostage by any single individual's indecisiveness. As it had taken me nine weeks prior to locate, I quickly booked the Steadicam and immediately began making the necessary arrangements to find and reserve the large list of lighting equipment the now absent DP had insisted was absolutely necessary.

After having successfully scheduled the lights and other items, the part-time producer also acting as my translator and I turned our attention to booking the locations requiring formal permission. We had been negotiating arrangements with the necessary officials for weeks, but had met with the unexpected complication of self important former Communist bureaucrats requiring concessions for their cooperation. Similarly, the famed Barandov Studios where we sought the few costumes required for the story proved to be an appropriately Kafkaesque experience requiring numerous trips to non-existent offices in search of numerous mandatory authorization stamps – and this only after the lengthy process of establishing that the wardrobe department did, in fact, offer costumes for hire. After accumulating a pile of redundant paperwork issued by the several officials I'd visited, the majority of which, understandably, communicated exclusively in Czech (giving rise to several comical, but inexplicably frustrating episodes) I was escorted to the storage area housing tens of thousands of uniforms from every country and era – not to mention the scores of other outfits – where I was allowed to reserve my selections. Only after acquiring a letter from Dr

Bregant on official F.A.M.U. letterhead verifying my association with the school and requesting their cooperation, arranging to route all the invoices through a state-registered production company and surrendering the requisite moneys, was the bureaucracy satisfied it had sufficiently clarified for me the privilege of being subjected to its rigor. Finally, at long last, were permissions granted for our access to the preferred locations and the needed outfits made available.

With new insight for the producer's role, but exhausted as a result, it slowly became apparent that my experience preparing for the shoot had done more to acquaint me with the culture that informed so much of Kafka's work than the sum total of all my research. Just as Dr Bregant had suggested, the unique atmosphere of Prague was not limited to the absurd and melancholic musings of the esteemed author, but are indeed part and parcel of the place which exists for all to experience. Nonetheless, having finally completed all the myriad necessary arrangements I now had to quickly shift focus to facilitate actually shooting the film which was still, even at this late date, susceptible to the whims of cast and crew members' schedules, not to mention the limitations of an already expended budget.

CHAPTER 3: PRODUCTION

Having made my decision early to self-produce what I had planned would be a collaborative and therefore enjoyable project, I was disappointed to find the weeks prior to production becoming so unmanageable. Due to the DP's unpredictable schedule, the shoot had already been delayed several times over the course of the preceding months, effectively eliminating at the outset the sense of organization that had developed and otherwise would possibly have benefited the production later. In addition, coordinating the cast and other crew members' various schedules such that the DP's difficulty with commitment could be accommodated served only to fan the flames of confusion in the days immediately prior to shooting. Fortunately, the decision to keep cast and crew to a minimum in the interest of communication and such that access to locations could be relatively easily accomplished, minimized this growing headache. Nonetheless, logistics had by now become my sole preoccupation as the numerous contingencies created by seemingly minor changes proved to be far more complicated than I could have ever imagined, displacing the focus a dedicated producer might have afforded me.

Day one of shooting got off to an ominous start with three of four scheduled actors missing their call by over an hour, thus exacerbating the tension already present between the DP and myself. The surreal relationship of Hlavni Nadraží's 1970's glass-clad stairwells, where we were capture our first images, to Prague's majestic art nouveau main train station itself now seemed peculiarly appropriate somehow. Nonetheless, shooting commenced after finally successfully contacting the tardy talent a

nd inserting several generic shots originally planned for much later in the day. In one respect this turned out to be a happy accident because it permitted the DP to acclimate himself to the awkward Steadicam and monopod rigs which it was clear by now he was unaccustomed to. In addition, it also demanded he return focus to his own responsibilities, as opposed to calling into question every task asked of him – it also allowed me, as director, to resume my primary role of interacting with the talent that had actually made it to the set on time.

Once everyone arrived, cast and crew moved to the first scheduled location where we promptly began blocking for what should have been the first shot of the day, given its level of difficulty. After wasting far too much time and effort attempting to clarify talent and camera movements within the spiral staircase, complicated as it was due to an increasingly apparent language barrier, I was forced to bow to the pressure of time and press on, settling with the footage we had already managed to get. Already significantly behind schedule, cast and crew moved, albeit slowly, to the actual train tracks where the pressures of time constraints began to affect the director/DP relationship adversely. In spite of joint location scouts and numerous production meetings focusing on the desired angles and framing prior to ever shooting, an inordinate degree of effort was required to accomplish what had been agreed upon goals. The drastically different conceptions emerging, in spite of the lengthy discussions conducted on the subject during pre-production, created unnecessary tension and took its toll on the entire set, complicating the talent/director relationship as well.

Inside the station itself numerous difficulties were again encountered. In particular, communicating desired talent movement and coordinating the unorthodox and awkward camera blocking were problematic, testing everyone's patience and compromising my expectations. Additionally, the reality of enthusiastic, but non-professional actors was by now becoming increasingly apparent as a major limitation, while the more typical nuisances of unwanted passersby, cellular interference and the

like continually added insult to injury. Just as cast and crew managed to accomplish a level of teamwork and had finally begun working as a unit, time again intervened and a location change was required.

Upon arrival to Vaclavske Naměsti – several hours behind schedule at this point – and noticing an unannounced anti-abortion rally that filled the entire square which constituted a key location for the production, we began quickly setting up an impromptu shot which ironically became one of the strongest images in the final film. While the large and excitable crowd gathered below the large sculpture – which I had previously envisioned assuming a commanding position in frame – completely disrupted the bulk of our planned shots, adjustments were promptly made and surprisingly, once again, the resulting scenes made into the final cut. As I had been outspoken in my appreciation of “informed” improvisation I considered the successful reliance on intuitive sensibilities to be, in some degree, acknowledgement that my approach was not altogether bankrupt.

The next location, the Naměsti Miru subway station, proved to be a lesson in the disadvantages of shooting in a less-than-controlled environment. Due to complications associated with shooting on the extended escalator that was the location’s key attribute, talent movement was near impossible to adequately direct. The building’s unexpected effect on communication further complicated issues as the mobile telephones we were relying on for radio contact didn’t function in the underground passageways, adversely affecting timing of important beats in the script. In spite of additional assistance for this location which allowed me to shift my efforts to clarify objectives with the DP, the camera motion was largely inadequate and framing generally poor. Even worse, the cast grew impatient and less cooperative as I was not focusing the level of attention on them they had come to expect. Nonetheless, in the end there were some interesting accidents, but most of the footage for what I had conceived of as a dramatic finale went unused.

As I was still struggling to manage the various actors' scheduling conflicts caused by the repeated adjustment of shoot dates around the DP, day two began with my making the necessary calls to insure the actress required for the first location had transportation and understood clearly when and where we were to meet. After repeated assurances that she would meet us at the said place, she never arrived, the shift in the timeline suddenly becoming too imposing on her busy professional agenda. Numerous panicked calls for a replacement later, the role's original actress agreed to join us last minute in costume on the Uvoz Steps as the crew and principal actor broke for an early lunch. As it happened, the character's replacement proved to be a far more compelling actress than the more experienced girl, in spite of lacking her formal training.

While waiting for the arrival of the new actress, we rearranged the schedule and set up the shots required at the nearby Letenske Arcade, for which she was not needed, to make use of the time which was by now of primary concern. Only after we actually began shooting did it become apparent that the actor playing T's character had worn the wrong shoes thereby creating a major continuity issue and severely limiting the achievable shots. In order to work around this unforeseen and unwelcome problem which highlighted the importance of a dedicated continuity person, the DP concentrated on covering the script via a combination of long shots and close-ups, of which several impromptu extreme close-ups demonstrated his considerable talent.

Not long afterwards, however, the satisfaction resulting from the Uvoz successes, despite the formidable obstacles encountered, was overshadowed by arguments with the DP over whether the shots for our next location, Nerudova Ulici, were necessary or not. Eventually the increasingly demanding DP relented and set up the shot I had called for only to learn that the camera's lens was incapable of capturing the extreme foreground and background elements I had envisioned simultaneously. Sensing the

reluctance of both cast and crew after having witnessed this debacle, which wouldn't have been so disruptive were it not for the accompanying argument, I announced that we were wrapping the location, and we started our move as we were beginning to lose our light.

Upon arriving at Pražky Hrad, the trade-offs associated with the renegade filmmaking style I had chosen to pursue displaced the other many problems we had met with as primary. Unseasonably warm weather had prompted the first waves of tourists to swarm to the scenic castle complex, once again making the long shots I had planned next to impossible to achieve. Our inability to control the movement of the hundreds of passerby's complicated actors' movement, ruining one attempt after another as a result of missed marks and bad timing. In addition, many of the shots in which we did accomplish passable action suffered from substandard framing as a result of my concentrating entirely on the actors. Upon previewing the footage later that night, it was clear that re-shoots were already going to be a reality for the production.

By the time we arrived at Novy Svět, things had started to go a bit smoother though we did struggle with the overhead shots of T exiting the sewer much longer than we wanted due to a shaky camera caused by sudden strong winds and the lack of a crane. Nevertheless, we were enjoying a relatively productive day until passersby – intermittent in their appearances this time – once again managed to thwart our every effort to prevent them entering frame. Additionally, key props, on loan from antique shops and the Prague observatory, were damaged and destroyed when the principal actor tripped on the cobblestones I had previously found so appealing. Struggling to remain calm at the prospect of replacing vintage items whose value I couldn't even guess, I once again made the decision to wrap the location as we were done for the most part and I was now preoccupied with the implications of this potentially embarrassing, not to mention expensive, mishap.

Our final location of day number two was the bizarre Žižkov Transmitter, which was to play a major part in the film, representing the confusing influence of technology on humankind and the main character T in particular. While attempting to frame the series of shots I had called for, the limitations of the fixed-lens camera we were using again became abundantly clear as there was virtually no way to capture the images I had imagined. I had actually come to expect such surprises by this point, but was annoyed that a location for which I had done such thorough scouting and storyboarding (in which the DP had also participated) could present such unexpected challenges. Forced to improvise, we shot several alternates to insure there was script coverage which turned out reasonably well, but perhaps more importantly, drove home the message that a much better understanding of lenses commonly used in motion picture production was necessary to avoid similar problems in the future.

Day number three started on the long and extremely windy Nusle Most, otherwise known as the suicide bridge, where the elements effectively dictated what was, and wasn't, possible. The constant gusts of wind, combined with the same feeble overhead rig we had used on the Novy Svět location yielded similar, but much more pronounced results. As a means of trying to offset the noticeably shaky camera we were forced to repeat multiple takes of each shot until we were satisfied we had done everything we could under the circumstances. As day three was slightly lighter than the previous two days, we could afford this indulgence, after which we broke for lunch, loaded the long list of equipment the DP had ordered and headed to Vyšehrad.

Gorlice, a historical site housing a museum in an underground bunker below the castle walls and another of the many locations I was introduced to via Professor Cilek's class, was especially interesting for me because of its more recent function as storage for the original sculptures that line Karlove Most otherwise known as the Charles Bridge. This was also the set for which I had spent a good deal of time arranging the necessary lighting and other equipment. In contrast to almost every other location we used, I had

formally arranged for its use with the indispensable assistance of Ondrej Formanek who, with Dr Bregant's help, insured I was granted access for a fraction of the cost normally charged. Once there, we quickly completed several of the more straight-forward steadicam shots since the DP, who was also the camera operator, was by now fairly comfortable with its idiosyncracies. Afterwards we hurriedly began setting up the lighting equipment to achieve the look and atmosphere the story required, racing against the clock at this point due to issues locating breakers and outlets powerful enough to accommodate the sizeable instruments. Unfortunately, it soon became apparent that the DP didn't have the command of lighting his demo reel had demonstrated and numerous large, unnecessary lights littered the set, serving primarily as obstacles to be avoided by crew members as they rushed around in the dark. As a result, key images of the ominous fourteenth century sculptures that had largely justified the expense of shooting there remained elusive.

As our allotted time neared its end, mutual frustration with our results gave rise to an unexpected conversation between myself and the DP which once and for all confirmed my suspicion that he hadn't embraced the approach I had been at pains to outline and which all involved had willingly agreed upon at the outset. After calling for a variation of a shot that I wasn't pleased with, the DP launched into a critique of what he called an American style of shooting where multiple alternates of given actions are captured as opposed to committing one's self to a single angle. In spite of my retort that it had more to do with the substandard results he was achieving on his first attempts, it later occurred to me that the methodology I had defined largely as a result of scrutinizing independent Czech films that had interested me by was in some ways more like the Hollywood system I had set out to find an alternate for. The unconventional production techniques observed in the specific films I studied notwithstanding, learning of this extremely rigid production methodology which prefers exacting predetermination of all variables to the flexibility I was pursuing was unanticipated. Despite not satisfactorily accomplishing the entire shotlist due to all the mistakes and

legitimate difficulties encountered, I felt confident that there were also strong images, some of which were entirely improvisational, which was in concert with my desire to attempt a less linear and more immediate filmmaking style.

One week later, we were again inside the Hlavni Nadraži station to re-shoot sequences not adequately captured prior. Numerous difficulties were, once again, encountered, not the least of which was the unexpected obstacle bands of thieves within the station provided – watching our every move and waiting for an opportune moment. Understandably distracted by the bizarre working circumstances and the even further reduction in crew, efforts to communicate desired talent movement and coordinate the unorthodox and uncomfortable camera blocking became strained, thereby compromising expectations.

After doing what we could there, we broke for lunch and then moved to Pražky Hrad to re-shoot the sequence that we had failed to adequately capture there the first go around. Much to our surprise the temperature suddenly plummeted to seven degrees below zero Celsius and it began snowing even though it was now mid April. As the weather worsened into a blizzard, the freezing temperatures forced the talent to take refuge in a nearby cafe, only coming out when absolutely necessary. This put a huge strain on everything as rehearsals were effectively ruled out as heavy coats were necessary to bear the elements even for a short time. The relatively warm weather outfits the actors had worn for the earlier shoots were essential if continuity was to be maintained, but this limited shooting to fifteen minutes or less which was, of course, inadequate. In addition, I was now the defacto camera operator as Tomaö was already otherwise engaged on a commercial shoot and the strong winds accompanying the storm further tested my limited experience with the Steadicam. Nevertheless, some of the required shots were actually improved upon, but most of the footage was, as might

be expected, compromised as a result. Only after realizing I was physically unable to operate the camera any longer due to what I later learned was the beginnings of frostbite did I reluctantly concede defeat and release everyone, vowing to closely monitor weather forecasts prior to shooting in the future.

While many mistakes were made, the bulk of the footage shot was fine, in spite of the numerous difficulties encountered. Had I attempted to accurately render a specific story rather than utilize the script as a point of departure for improvisation, however, the results would certainly have fallen short. From the beginning, my intention had been to explore the implications for narrative of implementation of a production methodology based on the fragmentary nature of the cinema, but drawing on the flexibility of digital technology and incorporating the non-linear characteristics of new media. It was hoped that by codifying a visual language (defining shot types, hierarchy, etc.) based on the idea of narrative modularity rather than seamless linearity, the possibility of multiple stories resulting from the captured material would be promoted. The soundness of this idea, while seemingly apparent – the higher the degree of shot modularity, the easier re-ordering of material becomes – led to the discovery during post-production that while inter-shot modularity facilitates narrative modularity, it by no means guarantees it. In addition, failure to adequately capture key shots due to unforeseen circumstances (weather, location conflicts, operator errors, etc.), largely a result of the decision to self-produce, coupled with the interpersonal struggles that seemed to accompany the improvisational approach I had advocated, compromised what might have otherwise been a more conclusive exploration. Nevertheless, the exercise was worthwhile, if for no other reason than the more intimate understanding of cinematic language and clarification of highly personal aesthetic sensibilities regarding shot relationships that it afforded me.

CHAPTER 4: POST-PRODUCTION

After the completion of filming, I turned my attention to finalizing the arrangements for the licensing of the historical materials I had begun researching during pre-production. As my knowledge of the events surrounding the Soviet invasion of then Czechoslovakia was still limited, considerable additional work was needed before I was able to make the necessary inquiries regarding the materials I required. Though I had already developed a report with representatives of each of the major archives in Prague by this time, I was initially dissuaded from pursuing this goal by several of my colleagues who reiterated for me that obtaining the obligatory licensing was unlikely and, if I did manage to secure permissions, cost prohibitive.

In spite of this discouragement, I started the process of accurately articulating specific footage suitable for the project, based on what was becoming protracted research into the key figures involved in the events of the Prague Spring. It was explained to me by my archive contacts that it was necessary to specify the footage I was seeking not only in terms of the political figures appearing within it, but also in terms of image, movement, and sound which proved to be unusually complicated considering I had not been permitted to browse the archives and still had limited knowledge of what was available. Nevertheless, I began trying to imagine precisely what sort of footage would work best with what we had shot ourselves and wrote the respective archives describing explicitly what I needed, characterizing as clearly as possible framing, camera angles and movement. After much trial and error I eventually managed to adequately identify the materials I sought, thanks largely to the efforts of Bara Souckova of Krátký Films and Jiří Hoppe at the Institute of Contemporary History in

the Academy of Science. Several useful segments were authorized for my use soon afterwards and tapes ultimately assembled.

Once I had begun the process of logging the material I had spent so much time and effort arranging, it became apparent that the tapes would require conversion to NTSC from PAL before any editing would be possible. As I had already exhausted my projected budget by this point, the option of sending the tapes to a qualified post-production facility for transcoding was not possible, and so I began the time consuming process of performing this responsibility myself. Only after capturing the footage in PAL format, averaging even and odd fields to single frames, and manually cropping the images such that the aspect ratio corresponded to the NTSC standard could the material, finally, be output as image sequences in the standard NTSC 30fps time base.

Next, principle actor Vincent Farnsworth and I began recording the voice over that was to reflect the character T's musings about his struggles between heaven and earth. Auditioning the same basic rhythmic audio loop used during production to insure synchronization, we labored over poet Kateřina Pinosová's adaptation of the script so that Vincent's delivery would reflect T's persona and situation. This proved challenging as the colloquial language Kateřina had employed was difficult to perform, as pronunciation of many of the Czech words were especially awkward in combination. As a result, the recorded tracks required extensive editing to insure each word was intelligible and such that the pacing would complement the action. After struggling to edit the various takes into a coherent and fluid whole, it was finally decided to re-record the entire piece so that a more successful narration track could be accomplished.

Largely due to intervening preconceptions about structure, based on a linear script that wasn't originally part of the plan, early versions of LEHKOST A TÍŽE were disjointed and somewhat disappointing. However, after struggling with the more pragmatic issues and the delays in acquiring, transferring and converting the historical footage, enough distance had developed between myself and the piece that I could look

at the material more objectively, allowing for less encumbered reorganization of the film. In spite of constant computer crashes and drive space problems encountered because I had captured the footage at full resolution, the internal logic of the captured images slowly began to emerge, often times running counter to the sequence of the script used during shooting. Despite these ongoing technical problems and occasional losses of focus, the elements of the film increasingly began to fall into place, and unexpectedly a rough cut started to materialize.

Due to errors committed during production, however, several corrective measures were required for some of the shots in order for them to be included in the final version. Because we had skewed the color during production by white balancing to orange, to create a blue caste in keeping with T's melancholy, a few shots required extensive color correction in order for them to cut with adjacent shots. In addition, it was necessary to manually remove artifacts frame by frame from several key shots due to the DP's failure to ensure the lens was clean prior to each take. Because of the excessive winds experienced during shooting and budgetary limitations ruling out the hiring of a crane, some of the scenes calling for a stationary camera suffered from unwanted camera movement and motion stabilization filters became necessary. This resulted in an unexpected, but interesting jitter effect that was consistent with the atmosphere of alienation I was striving to accomplish and seemed to enhance the theme of technological mediation as well.

Several expressive special effects were also necessary to reiterate the thematic emphasis on communication technology's role in mankind's existential predicament and to facilitate transitions required of the *modular* visual language I had defined. I began analyzing pertinent examples and experimenting with several software tools I had previously had very little or no experience with. Taking television artifacts as a point of departure, I created several transitions using AfterEffects, even duplicating the cellular interference that had plagued us during production due to our reliance on

mobile phones for radio contact. In addition, various plug-ins were used to distort the images, both to mimic typical broadcast anomalies as well as to better render T's world as the living and breathing adversary he experienced it to be. As a final step, two identical versions of the completed edit were composited with one another to further saturate the color and make the mood of the piece more tangible.

As I had been interested in the idea of modularity as a means of maximizing narrative flexibility, it was natural for this preoccupation to be extended to the use of sound as well. Since the film revolved around the imaginary character T and his struggles with gravity, as illustrated through his perpetual trudging through Prague, his footsteps had been envisioned as a principle informer for the soundtrack from the outset. While shooting we had used audio loops of footsteps extensively such that some measure of control for pacing would be possible during editing and in hopes that this approach would supplement flexibility as well. Though this experiment was only moderately successful, it did help establish the repetitive and cyclical rhythm of T's world against which the more frenetic sections of music contrasted nicely. Based largely on recurring motifs, placed where their connection to the picture propelled the evolving narrative, the whole exercise became an assemblage of elements I had loosely qualified during the selection process as representative of the chaotic nature of modern life.

As all of the various elements slowly coalesced and the final cut began to take shape, the potential for harnessing the fragmentary nature of moving pictures toward my goal of a *modular* vocabulary was plain. While I was relieved that my assumptions regarding the mechanics of cinema appeared to have been, at least to some degree, validated, it soon afterwards became apparent that my preoccupation with so-called *modularity* could effectively be reduced to nothing more than experimentation with continuity and the various ways of accomplishing it. Nevertheless, a narrative did, to some extent, emerge as a result of the logic of the visual language itself, admittedly

benefited as a result of the compromise of adopting T's story as a vehicle through which to apply my approach.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

While it was understood at the outset that endless adjustment of any system that might grow out of the present exercise would undoubtedly be required, it is this very process, a system open to perpetual revision and extension, that was the expressed interest of the inquiry. It was further assumed that scrutiny would likely qualify many of the conventions this study takes as its point of departure, but this too is viewed as a far better consequence than blind acceptance of any system, however prevalent or functional it may be. LEHKOST A TÍŽE, as expected, served both to qualify and further elucidate several standard practices as well as reinforce the validity of the ideas that gave rise to the project.

Unfortunately, occasion to employ my intended approach frequently fell victim to unanticipated communication issues and relentless time constraints, so there was little opportunity to create an environment on the set supportive of the level of attention to subtlety and emphasis of intuitive sensibilities I desired. One of my principal goals had been to devise a way of working – keeping the crew minimal, with all the trade offs it represents, and working with cast and crew that I was confident appreciated my approach – such that I, as director, could maintain the focus necessary to operate in a mode promoting discovery of nuance and atmosphere in the moment. In addition, it had occurred to me that only in this manner might I also begin the protracted process of developing a personal style that takes advantage of the inherently fragmentary nature of cinema.

While development of a personal style is, arguably, a superficial and formalistic goal to pursue for its own sake, and especially premature for the novice filmmaker, it did reinforce the process of experimentation and verification I was preoccupied with – a filter through which unconventional results could be appreciated, rather than rejected due to differences with accepted practice. This was considered an advantage because of the direct connection with and deeper understanding of the visual language required of filmmakers employing irregular modes of expression which, when successful, tend to amplify their voices, making their work more authentic and original. Indeed, LEHKOST A TÍŽE bears marked similarities to productions accomplished in a much more conventional manner, but this was not viewed as problematic as it represents confirmation of my primary commitment for testing the validity and usefulness of a production methodology I had defined in connection with the representational language that it gave rise to.

Having committed myself to this fundamentally collaborative process, I endeavored to incorporate my contributors suggestions wherever possible, circumventing any recommendations that vied fundamentally with the concept, primarily because I felt that it would enrich the project appreciably, but also to foster a healthy rapport among the cast and crew during its making. Unfortunately, I found that this approach of investing in my colleagues largely backfired, compromising the visual language I had defined, and therefore, any narrative that it might have otherwise given rise to. Over reliance on the assembled team, for whose participation I am, nonetheless, genuinely appreciative, resulted in several near catastrophic incidences which I was often reluctant to dispute, as it only aggravated the tension already existing on the set; therefore, increasing the likelihood of additional problems, not to mention that there simply wasn't time for prolonged debates about what were often abstract ideas. My only consolation became the experience, first hand, of the trade-offs involved in investing implicitly in the expertise of one's production team toward the

accomplishment of mutual goals, offering an illustrative lesson regarding the fine line between faith and tyranny that directors must walk successfully.

Most importantly, perhaps, was the realization that many of the scores of crew members typically found on Hollywood sets, assistant directors in particular, are there precisely to enable the director to maintain the necessary focus on the script, actors and camera such that the film might be rendered in a manner consistent with his or her vision. For that matter, reflecting on the frustrations of pre-production, there is little doubt in my mind that any advantages of self-producing are far outweighed by the headache that inevitably accompanies it. Had I been able to enlist the services of an appropriate producer for *LEHKOST A TÍŽE*, perhaps the numerous distractions that were experienced could have been minimized, and the problems stemming from differences of vision avoided, or at least eliminated at a much earlier stage.

In the end, it seems the question is essentially one of balance, the key factor being the director's developing and maintaining a clear and guiding sense of what the film is about, or supposed to convey (notably not necessarily a story) throughout the process, as well as the language that should be employed to convey it, without which one cannot imagine success. Generally, technology's effect on contemporary filmmaking may be obvious, but it is the flux (flexible plural inclusive post-modern potential climate of experimentation) of new media forms that initially inspired me to search for a way to tell stories visually and permitted my approach. In spite of *LEHKOST A TÍŽE*'s relatively conventional form, I am convinced that the methodology employed represents a valid approach to embracing recent technological developments and their implications for the future of narrative form.

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APPENDIX A: KAFKA VIGNETTE

He is a free and secure citizen of this earth, for he is attached to a chain that is long enough to make all areas of the earth accessible to him, and yet only so long that nothing can pull him over the edges of the earth. At the same time, however, he is also a free and secure citizen of heaven, for he is also attached to a similarly calculated heavenly chain. Thus, if he wants to get down to earth, he is choked by the heavenly collar and chain; if he wants to get into heaven, he is choked by the earthly one. And in spite of this he has all the possibilities, and feels that it is so; indeed, he even refuses to attribute the whole thing to a mistake in the original chaining.

-Franz Kafka (from The Blue Octavo Notebooks)

APPENDIX B: FINAL SCRIPT

HIGH & LOW

BY TALLEY MULLIGAN

© 2002

SCREEN BLACK

FADE IN

EXT. UNKNOWN PLACE - NIGHT

chiaro scuro atmosphere, utter darkness...

[city ambience, wind, breathing, heartbeat, rattling chains]

slowly revolving down a length of taught chain secured out of sight overhead, a barely distinguishable person's determined face is discovered, revealing hands grappling with the restraint fastened around their neck - gradually moving down the shadowy form's length its jerking torso becomes discernible, stretched legs and kicking feet trying in vain to find bottom, unable to reach it...

beyond the kicking feet a 2nd taught chain secured out of sight now becomes visible, disappearing in the darkness below - again a slow spiraling motion commences, first coming into contact with the ankle it is bound to, then gradually continuing up and around the abstract figure's struggling length - once again a beleaguered, but resolute face is revealed, now with straining out-stretched arms and fidgeting hands, trying in vain to reach some unknown objective washed out by the intense light above...

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. HLAVNI NADRAZI PLANETARIUM - DAY

[loud and noisy police radios, static, intermittent tones, shuffling feet, command center ambience, transmitter tones]

T, a young, but visibly worn man is awakened suddenly, startled by impatient police and a cacophony of mocking radios broadcasting unsympathetic comments - the message somehow seems to be directed at him...

POLICE RADIOS

"...vyhovují vám mraky? A jak si představujete, že budete létat? Se zakrnelými křídly... a nohama z hlíny... nic pro vás není tak vysoko, nebo tak daleko... vy, který sedíte na zemi, se pádu obávat nemusíte... šílenec, který se potácí mezi ostatními..."

("...do the clouds suit you? what makes you think you can fly? with atrophied wings... and feet of clay... there are no heights or distances for you... he who sits on the ground need not fear a fall... staggering about bewildered among others")

as T's heavy head reluctantly attempts to adjust to the light of day and waking consciousness he begins nervously glancing around the glass-clad stairwell he considers his observatory, desperately trying to locate the most prized of his possessions - large books and charts, a satchel, some sort of telescope - strewn around him in a strangely ordered, yet deliberate, even meticulous manner - the police, however, grow bored of their little sport of provoking T and his unwillingness to play along...

the police now begin corralling him, roughly handling T as he frantically grasps after his paraphernalia, spinning this way and that in a futile attempt to secure his things as he is being extracted from his refuge...

[fragmented snatches of T's lackadaisical protest]

T

(stammering)

"...to...to není...ne...nemůžete...já
jenom...musím...proc?"

("...but...but...i was only...it isn't...i
must...you can't...why?")

suddenly finding himself outside and on the ground he slowly picks himself up, arranges the items he's managed to rescue and reluctantly trudges away as the police continue their ridicule in the distance behind...

T

(despondently)

"...branou, otevrenou dokorán. Neštěstí na
uvítanou..."

("...misfortune always enters by the door left
open for it...")

EXT. HLAVNI NADRAZI TRACKS

[city ambience, wind, transmission tones]

T stands bewildered among the rails criss-crossing the barren yard, staring at the large transmitter in the distance, trying to decipher its message...

EXT. VACLAVSKE NAMESTI - DAY

[early morning city ambience, traffic, car horns, auto radios, heartbeat, chatter of passersby (loop to draw attention to sameness of typical conversation), distant steady and rhythmic footsteps, insect colony]

persistently, but not without visible difficulty T walks slowly and directly from the museum steps in the distance through the chaotic square struggling to manage his burden in a bustling sea of pedestrians, tourists and cars - he stops here and there to readjust his load, occasionally ruminating on the frivolousness of contemporary life and the unnecessary malice people inflict upon one another daily...

T

"...kde cíhají lvi..."

("...where the lions are...")

as he slogs along his vacuous facial expressions betray his frustration with humanity, the slow regular motion of his feet and defeated posture conveying the effort of each step - he begins to mutter partially intelligible observations about his fellow man - half-hearted attempts to communicate - declaring his determination for freeing himself from these lowly concerns...

[tram bell, screeching brakes and squeaking wheels]

just as T's face nears he hesitates, looking over his shoulder as if receiving an unexpected message from an invisible ally, a loud bell sounds as a tram passes immediately in front of him, barely slowed by the driver's sudden breaking - startled, he recoils, fumbling with his things...

his eyes follow the tram as it careens out of sight - he exhales, reorienting himself...

T

(exasperated, but resolute)

"...prijdu na kloub zemské
přitažlivosti...gra-vi-ta-ci..."

("...testing gravity's resolve...")

EXT. EMBASSY STAIRCASE - DAY

[city ambience, shuffling feet, breathing]

as T descends the steep and narrow staircase under his unwieldy burden, his frustration and weariness is apparent, clutching the numerous papers and books that he struggles to hold on to as he endures the inconvenience of the steps...

EXT. MALOSTRANA 1 - DAY

[city ambience, rhythmic footsteps]

T continues to trudge through the winding, hilly streets, rearranging his load as the city's many spires stretch out overhead...

T

(muttering to himself)

"...lidi...jako planety..."

("...people...like planets...")

EXT. MALOSTRANA 2 - DAY

as he walks through the city's medieval corridors he drops items here and there, slowly, laboriously recovering them afterwards...

T

(continuing muttering - raising his voice at occasional passersby)

"...lítají bez cíle na nahodilých obežných drahách...ukrajují vteriny casu..."

("...drifting aimlessly through haphazard orbits...spanning time, taking space...")

EXT. MALOSTRANA 3 - DAY

as he walks his beleaguered gait becomes increasingly noticeable - he stops again and again - in the street, on the sidewalk, alongside a wall, on a bench - in unsuccessful attempts to extract the offending pebble that's found its way into his shoe without dropping anything further...

T

"...jsou v moci teles, co se točí kolem...bez ladu a skladu..."

("...subjecting and subject to the pull of spinning bodies nearby...spheres without their control...")

just as he manages to remedy the problem, a preoccupied passerby walks directly into T causing him to loosen his grip on his belongings - as he drops first one thing then everything the woman launches into a diatribe accusing T of not watching where he's going and that he could hurt someone, carrying all this junk around - after mechanically collecting the now battered equipment he reluctantly pushes on...

T

"...znají jenom ovzduší, které jejich svety vytvorí..."

("...aware only of the rarified atmospheres
their own worlds manufacture...")

EXT. MALOSTRANA 4 - DAY

in spite of his success removing the stone that had tormented him during his impromptu journey, his stride demonstrates no measurable improvement - as he lumbers by a doorway the buzzing of an intercom can be heard spewing its frivolous message - puzzled, he pauses, trying to decipher the scrambled communique...

EXT. KARLOVE MOST - DAY

T then passes through the passage beneath the old bridge's tower below the castle then descends its steps in search of some place to clear his head - as he approaches the river's edge gulls anxiously flock about in the overcast sky...

[fluttering of birds' wings]

T

"...nechtejí a odmítají...nejsou schopní si
predstavit, že na jiných planetách je taky
život..."

("...reluctant, unwilling, incapable of
imagining intelligent life on other
planets...")

EXT. STAROMESTKA NAMESTI - DAY

[loud squawking loudspeakers, network noises]

appearing from the shadows among the enormous buttresses of an old church, T enters the large square in search of the little-known passageway he routinely frequents, surprised by the a mass of babbling self-absorbed people rushing in every direction - resembling an inadvertently disturbed ant colony...

as the large speakers blare out their oppressive mandate, T winces, making a feeble attempt to protect his ears while maintaining his tiring grasp on his belongings...

he grumbles under his breath as he passes one after another robot-like persons, his obsessions, neuroses now becoming familiar...

T discovers a small door dotting the base of the medieval clock tower...

INT. CITY SEWER - DAY

[chamber ambience, flowing water, splashing footsteps]

as T enters the cramped corridor, struggling to adjust to the darkness of the city's antiquated sewage system he stretches out his legs in

attempt to find his footing, discovering instead the shallow stream running through its middle...

T

(sighing)

"...když te hodí do vody, naučíš se plavat..."

("...only in water can you learn to swim...")

EXT. CASTLE BUNKER - DAY

[chamber ambience, flowing water, splashing footsteps]

T slowly emerges from the bowels of the city's underground carefully transferring his already-weathered belongings through the small trap door in the shadows of the castle walls at pains to save them any further damage...

as he begins collecting the items he's placed around the peculiar opening he glances up, over his shoulder sensing the imposing tower's looming presence...

EXT. ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER - NIGHT

[transmissions, buzzing, footsteps become heartbeat, heavy breathing]

T looks up at the enormous antenna as if expecting a response, waiting for a reply, yet none comes - after a moment his attitude shifts noticeably as he appears to realize a mistake and nervously, awkwardly begins rapidly moving away from the imposing form...

as he makes his escape the shoelace he'd been ignoring takes its revenge causing T to trip, sending his papers sailing - flying into a minor fit, T throws his remaining items down, kicking them as they fall...

[sudden fluttering of birds' wings]

after regaining his composure he begins gingerly collecting everything, some of which have been broken in the fray - slowed once again by his reaction, he plods off grumbling...

T

(exasperated)

"...ke hvězdám vede těžká cesta..."

("one must travel a rough road to reach the stars")

EXT. CITY MOAT - DAY

[tram noises,]

T walks through the center of what was once the city's moat a tram descends the steep hill winding around the sharp curve that marks its entrance...

EXT. SHOP WINDOW - NIGHT

[breathing, tv programs, outside ambience, mental residue, ears ringing, tank chains, whistling bombs, explosions]

T stops abruptly, transfixed, looking at the numerous television screens displayed in an electronics storefront - he stands paralyzed, wincing as the images of frivolousness, disrespect and cruelty are imposed on his reflection...

disturbed by the display he searches the numerous screens stopping at images of people jumping from the nusle bridge, tempting fate - somehow reassured, his furrowed brow softens if in resignation, but further convinced his aim is true...

while the sound of the broadcasts steadily increases, T stands motionless watching, his silhouette remaining frozen over the images of suicides as they fill the screen - as the noise of the hysterical transmission recedes into the distance the earthbound figures gradually transform into winged creatures disappointing gravity among the clouds - quietly, peacefully floating...

EXT. NUSLE BRIDGE

[city ambience, ambulance sirens, traffic, car horns, auto radios, heart beat, distant steady and rhythmic footsteps]

T walks along the highway as traffic buzzes past disinterestedly...

still in some sort of trance, T disappointedly inspects the fence designed to thwart would-be jumpers...

T

(despondently)

"...z tohodle sveta se nikdy živý nedostanu..."

("...i'll never get out of this world alive...")

INT. METRO STATION - DAY

[ambience, escalators, trains, chatter, wind, pa announcement, etc]

T wanders through the maze of connecting passageways, unable to divorce himself completely from the airborne acrobatics still spinning in his mind's eye - as a single pigeon sails past him a lone phone box begins ringing nearby...

jarred from his euphoria by a hurried commuter brushing by aggressively trying to make up for lost time, T struggles to maintain his balance,

unable to divorce himself completely from the airborne acrobatics still spinning in his mind's eye...

T repeatedly implores passersby, mincing his philosophical mumblings and complaints as trains come and go and masses of commuters flood by largely ignoring him, occasionally even bumping into him, unnerving him and adding fuel to his already unbearably hot fire...

T

(getting attention -
refrain/extrapolation of poem)

"...telesa se motají po nahodilých obežných
drahách... ...vydechují a vdechují nakažlivou
zlobu a jed..."

[the television cacophony grows rapidly in intensity, volume]

as he approaches one last stragglng, preoccupied, behind-schedule commuter, T's angst finally gives way to vision - a composite memory of the countless unnecessary and malicious things people have done to one another from the beginning of time - both simple inconsideration and abject atrocities seizes him...

T

(emphatically, pleading, mildly
belligerent - to TARGET COMMUTER to
get his attention)

"...copak nevidíš, že se motáš po náhodné
obežné dráze... ...vydechuješ a vdechuješ
nakažlivou zlobu a jed!"

his unwitting target becomes the numerous perpetrators T holds responsible for the state of the world - everyone who refuses to accept the beauty of life, those making sport of misfortune out of ignorance and habit...

[orchestra tuning, collapsing strings, birds wings, bombs exploding]

reeling, T clings to the nearby escalator handrail which spared his fall - confused and exhausted by what has just happened, he struggles to right himself while riding the brisk machine downward...

recognizing the familiar sound of police radios below, T launches a desperate attempt to free himself from fate, fighting in a futile effort to force his way upward against the grain of both man and machine...

as his pace slows, T relents, hanging his head in defeat - he slumps down bewildered as patrons push past his motionless frame firing the obligatory reprimands expected of them - his books and papers

apathetically spilling out and down the steps as the masses raise their voices in a chorus of mutual dissatisfaction...

FADE OUT

APPENDIX C: SHOOTING SCHEDULE

SHOOTING SCHEDULE

01

Working Title : High & Low
 Director: Talley Mulligan
 Cameraman: Tomas Choura
 Editor: TBD
 Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 - 31/03/03

28/03/03

01 MONTAGE SEQUENCE DAY EXT CU (multiple) bez TALENT
 >>> *Nusle suicides transform into animated Palacskeho Namesti sculptures*

29/03/03

02	NADRAZI PLANETARIUM 1A	DAY	INT	VC (CU)	T, POLICIE
	>>> <i>T awakened and thrown out by police</i>				
03	NADRAZI PLANETARIUM 1B	DAY	EXT	MS	T, POLICIE
	>>> <i>T being thrown out of stairwell</i>				
04	NADRAZI PLANETARIUM 1C	DAY	INT&EXT	XCU (MULTIPLE)	T, POLICIE
	>>> <i>T's items being thrown out, falling</i>				
	NADRAZI TRAIN TRACKS 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
	>>> <i>T rises and looks at transmitter</i>				
	NADRAZI TRAIN TRACKS 1B	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
	>>> <i>T looks at transmitter then turns away (and back)</i>				
	NADRAZI TRAIN TRACKS ALTERNATE	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
	>>> <i>T looks at transmitter then turns away (and back)</i>				
	NADRAZI TRAIN TRACKS 1C	DAY	EXT	MS	T
	>>> <i>T looks at transmitter, listens and leaves</i>				
	METRO STATION 1	DAY	INT	MS	T, PASSERSBY
	>>> <i>T walks through station as bird flies by</i>				
	METRO STATION 2	DAY	INT	CU	T, TARGET
	>>> <i>T continues to walk through station then notices TARGET</i>				
	METRO STATION 3A	DAY	INT	VC (multiple CUs)	T, TARGET
	>>> <i>T's flashback</i>				
	METRO STATION 3 (insert)	DAY	INT	CU	T, TARGET
	>>> <i>following T's walking feet</i>				

SHOOTING SCHEDULE

02

Director: Talley Mulligan

Cameraman: Tomas Choura

Editor: TBD

Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 – 31/03/03

METRO STATION 4A	DAY	INT	MS	T
>>> <i>T steps onto escalator</i>				
METRO STATION 4B	DAY	INT	CU	T, POLICIE
>>> <i>T tries to escape and falls dropping his things</i>				
METRO STATION 4C	DAY	INT	MS	T, POLICIE
>>> <i>T falls and drops papers/props</i>				
METRO STATION 4D	DAY	INT	XCU (multiple)	T
>>> <i>T's feet faltering/hand dropping things, grabbing rail</i>				
METRO STATION 4 (insert)	DAY	INT	XCU (multiple)	bez
>>> <i>miscellaneous station/escalator details</i>				
VACLAVSKE NAMESTI 1A	DAY	EXT	MS	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T tries to cross busy street</i>				
VACLAVSKE NAMESTI 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T's feet crossing busy street</i>				
VACLAVSKE NAMESTI 1C	DAY	EXT	PS (LS)	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T descends square</i>				
STAROMESTKA NAMESTI 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T approaches square searching for source of noise</i>				
STAROMESTKA NAMESTI 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T enters busy square passing several people talking on mobiles</i>				
STAROMESTKA NAMESTI 1C	DAY	EXT	MS/PS (multiple)	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T passes several people talking on cellular phones</i>				
STAROMESTKA NAMESTI 1D	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T reaches into camera to grab door handle beyond</i>				
KARLOVE MOST 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>T walks along river under bridge</i>				
KARLOVE MOST 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
>>> <i>birds taking flight</i>				

SHOOTING SCHEDULE

03

Working Title : High & Low

Director: Talley Mulligan

Cameraman: Tomas Choura

Editor: TBD

Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 - 31/03/03

KARLOVE MOST 1C	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
<i>>>> T walks below bridge then up stairs</i>				

KARLOVE MOST 1D	DAY	EXT	CU	T, PASSERSBY
<i>>>> T's walking feet</i>				

30/03/03

UVOZ STAIRCASE 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
<i>>>> T walks down stairs</i>				
UVOZ STAIRCASE 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
<i>>>> T's feet shuffling down stairs</i>				
MALOSTRANA 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
<i>>>> T noticing spire, then transmitter</i>				
MALOSTRANA 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
<i>>>> T's walking feet</i>				
MALOSTRANA 1C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
<i>>>> T's hands as he resituates his load</i>				
MALOSTRANA 3A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
<i>>>> T fixing shoe</i>				
MALOSTRANA 3B	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
<i>>>> T's hands</i>				
MALOSTRANA 3C	DAY	EXT	CU	T, SCREAMING LADY
<i>>>> T's walking feet</i>				
MALOSTRANA 3D	DAY	EXT	VC (CU)	T, SCREAMING LADY
<i>>>> screaming lady circling around T</i>				
MALOSTRANA 3E	DAY	EXT	XCU	T, SCREAMING LADY
<i>>>> T's falling things</i>				
MALOSTRANA 4A	DAY	EXT	CU (multiple)	T
<i>>>> front, back, side views : T's feet on cobblestone street</i>				

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 Editor: TBD
 Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 – 31/03/03

MALOSTRANA 4B	DAY	EXT	MS (multiple)	T
>>> <i>oblique frontal and rear views : T's feet on cobblestone street</i>				
MALOSTRANA 4C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
>>> <i>T's hands fidgeting</i>				
MALOSTRANA 2A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T wandering through narrow winding streets</i>				
MALOSTRANA 2B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T's walking feet, untied shoes</i>				
MALOSTRANA 2C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
>>> <i>T's hands</i>				
MALOSTRANA 5A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T walking with awkward gate/posture</i>				
MALOSTRANA 5B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T's walking feet, untied shoes</i>				
MALOSTRANA 5C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
>>> <i>T's hands alternate</i>				
SEWER EXIT	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T exits underground</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T rises and discovers transmitter</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T approaches transmitter</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
>>> <i>T's hand gripping telescope anxiously</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1D	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T as he looks up at transmitter (into camera)</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1E	DAY	EXT	CU	T
>>> <i>T's feet as he circles transmitter</i>				
>>> <i>T stepping on shoestring, tripping</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1G	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
>>> <i>T dropping his things</i>				
ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1H	DAY	EXT	PS (LS)	T
>>> <i>T runs from tower</i>				

ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1I DAY EXT MS T
 >>> *T runs toward alongside the large glass building with transmitter's reflection*

SHOOTING SCHEDULE	05
--------------------------	-----------

Working Title : High & Low
 Director: Talley Mulligan
 Cameraman: Tomas Choura
 Editor: TBD
 Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 - 31/03/03

ZIZKOV TRANSMITTER 1F	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
-----------------------	-----	-----	-----	---

31/03/03

SUICIDE BRIDGE 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
-------------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T's feet walking along the barren bridge*

SUICIDE BRIDGE 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
-------------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T tries to climb fence*

SUICIDE BRIDGE 1C	DAY	EXT	PS (LS)	T
-------------------	-----	-----	---------	---

>>> *T walks along the barren bridge*

SUICIDE BRIDGE 1D	DAY	EXT	MS	T
-------------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T slides down hill beneath bridge*

SEWER ENTRANCE 2	DAY	EXT	MS (multiple)	T
------------------	-----	-----	---------------	---

>>> *T approaches door and reaches to open it*

SEWER ENTRANCE 3	DAY	EXT	CU	T
------------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T opens the small door to underground as though to enter*

SEWER	DAY	INT	CU	T
-------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T walks through underground*

UNKNOWN PLACE

(METAPHOR) 1A	DAY	INT	XCU	IDEAL MAN
---------------	-----	-----	-----	-----------

>>> *abstract person struggling between 2 worlds*

UNKNOWN PLACE

(METAPHOR) 1B	DAY	INT	CU	IDEAL MAN
---------------	-----	-----	----	-----------

>>> *abstract person struggling between 2 worlds*

Working Title : High & Low

Director: Talley Mulligan

Cameraman: Tomas Choura

Editor: TBD

Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 - 31/03/03

UNKNOWN PLACE

(METAPHOR) 1C	DAY	INT	MS	IDEAL MAN
---------------	-----	-----	----	-----------

>>> *abstract person struggling between 2 worlds*

SEWER	DAY	EXT	MS	T
-------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T walks through forest*

MALOSTRANA 2A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
---------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T tries to resituate his items (using nearby walls etc for support)*

MALOSTRANA 2B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
---------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T's walking feet near St Petr a Pavel*

MALOSTRANA 2C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
---------------	-----	-----	-----	---

>>> *T's hands digging in pockets*

GORLICE WALL 1A	DAY	EXT	CU	T
-----------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T walking along curved wall at gorlice*

GORLICE WALL 1B	DAY	EXT	CU	T
-----------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T's walking feet, untied shoes*

GORLICE WALL 1C	DAY	EXT	XCU	T
-----------------	-----	-----	-----	---

>>> *T's hands*

STORE WINDOW 1A	NIGHT	EXT	CU	T
-----------------	-------	-----	----	---

>>> *T's feet stopping in front of an electronics storefront*

STORE WINDOW 1B	NIGHT	EXT	MS	T
-----------------	-------	-----	----	---

>>> *T watches TV screens*

STORE WINDOW 1C	NIGHT	EXT	CU	T
-----------------	-------	-----	----	---

>>> *push in to screens as T watches TV*

CITY MOAT	DAY	EXT	MS	T
-----------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T walks from dark passage through valley*

LORETANSKE ARCADE	DAY	EXT	CU	T
-------------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T walks through passage*

ZIZKOV TUNNEL 1	DAY	INT	CU	T
-----------------	-----	-----	----	---

>>> *T enters the tunnel and is swallowed by the darkness*

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Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 - 31/03/03

ZIZKOV TUNNEL 2 >>> <i>T appears from the dark tunnel</i>	DAY	INT	MS	T
LOUDSPEAKERS >>> <i>loudspeakers</i>	DAY	EXT	CU (multiple)	bez talent
ANTENNAS >>> <i>antennas</i>	DAY	EXT	CU (multiple)	bez talent

APPENDIX D: FINAL BUDGET

FINAL PRODUCTION BUDGET

Working Title : High & Low
 Director: Talley Mulligan
 Cameraman: Tomas Choura
 Editor: TBD
 Shoot Dates : 28/03/03 – 31/03/03

TALENT COSTS

		ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
O/C Principal	Troll		IN KIND
O/C Principal	Screaming Lady		IN KIND
O/C Principal	Policie 1		IN KIND
O/C Principal	Policie 2		IN KIND
O/C Principal	Nadrazi Commuter 1		IN KIND
General Extra	Nadrazi Commuter 2		IN KIND
General Extra	Additional Commuter		IN KIND
Voice over	Troll		IN KIND
		SUB-TOTAL	0.00 Kč IN KIND
P&W		0.00%	N/A
Agent Fee		10%	N/A
		SUB-TOTAL	0.00 Kč IN KIND

CREW LABOR

CATEGORY	DAYS	RATE	OT	OT. RATE	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Producer						N/A
Director						IN KIND
Director of Photography	5	15000		2250	75,000 Kč	IN KIND
Camera Operator						N/A
Recordist	5	7500		1125	37,500 Kč	IN KIND
Location Contact/Scout						N/A
					SUB-TOTAL	112,500 Kč IN KIND
Labor fees & ins.					PT/P&W	N/A N/A
					TOTAL	112,500 Kč IN KIND

LOCATION EXPENSES

		ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Location Fees	Gorlice	9000 Kč	3000 Kč
Permits			
Car Rental	5 days	6000 Kč	3972 Kč
Parking tolls & Gas			1216.60 Kč
Other Vehicles			
Meals	No. People = 5 Cost per meal = 150 Kč x 3 meals	10,000 Kč	11,250 Kč
SUB-TOTAL		25,000 Kč	19,438.60 Kč

PROPS & WARDROBE

		ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Prop Rental			IN KIND
Prop Purchase		0.00 Kč	1500 Kč
Wardrobe Rental			1755.30 Kč
Wardrobe Purchase		0.00 Kč	4500 Kč
SUB-TOTAL		0.00 Kč	7755.30 Kč

EQUIPMENT RENTAL

		ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
CAMERA RENTAL	purchase	67,500 Kč	83,000 Kč
SOUND RENTAL	purchase	40,500 Kč	46,000 Kč
LIGHTING RENTAL	via AFM Rentals	26,325 Kč	IN KIND
GRIP RENTAL	N/A		
STEADICAM RENTAL		5000 Kč	1500 Kč
PRODUCTION SUPPLIES			4300 Kč
SUB-TOTAL		139,325 Kč	134,800 Kč

STOCK

		ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Tape Stock	Mini DV format	1800 Kč	2996 Kč
SUB-TOTAL		1800 Kč	2996 Kč

MISCELLANEOUS COSTS

	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Petty Cash		1000 Kč
Air Ship/Carriers		
Phones & Cable	1500 Kč	6000 Kč
Accountable Cash Expenditures under \$15. each		3431.53 Kč
External Billing Cost (Computer Accounting, etc.)		
Special Insurance		
		10,431.53
SUB-TOTAL	1500 Kč	Kč

POST-PRODUCTION

	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL
Code Cassettes		N/A
Time Code to "B" Roll		N/A
On-Line Editing		IN KIND
Off-Line Editing		IN KIND
Video Special EFX		IN KIND
Video-Audio Stock	Master, Safety Copies, Release Copies	
Titling		IN KIND
Audio Transfer		IN KIND
Audio Relay		N/A
Contract Elements		N/A
Additional VTR 4 Transfer		IN KIND
Sound Mix		IN KIND
Voice Over Record		IN KIND
Sound Effects		IN KIND
		0.00 Kč
SUB-TOTAL	0.00 Kč	0.00 Kč

PRODUCTION COST SUMMARY

PRE-PRODUCTION & WRAP COSTS	\$0.00
TALENT COST AND EXPENSES	\$0.00
CREW LABOR	\$0.00
LOCATION & TRAVEL EXPENSES	\$719.95
PROPS & WARDROBE	\$287.23
EQUIPMENT COSTS	\$4992.59
STOCK COST	\$110.96
MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES	\$406.72
POST PRODUCTION COST AND EXPENSES	\$0.00

CONTINGENCY (subject to normal trade variance $\pm 10\%$)

GRAND TOTAL **\$6517.45**

VITA

Talley Mulligan was born in Athens, Georgia on July 23rd 1965, and received his B.S. in Architecture from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1990. After working several years in the motion picture industry, he moved to New Orleans to pursue his love of music, returning eventually to academia and his interest in cinema. Throughout his academic career he has maintained professional involvement in the field of new media through participation in a variety of interactive multi-media, audio recording and video projects. Talley Mulligan currently resides in Prague, Czech Republic.



MASTER'S EXAMINATION REPORT
Thesis

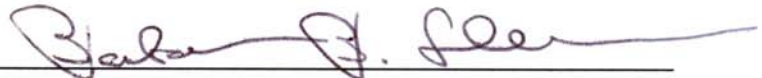
CANDIDATE: Talley Mulligan

MAJOR PROGRAM: Drama and Communications

TITLE OF THESIS: LEHKOST A TIŽE: AN EXPERIMENT IN FILM PRODUCTION
METHODOLOGY

APPROVED

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Major Professor (typed)


Signature

Dr. Kevin L. Graves
Committee Member (typed)


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Roger L. Benischek
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Robert C. Cashner
Dean of the Graduate School


Signature

DATE OF EXAMINATION:

May 12, 2003