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► To cite this version:

Milan Kroulik. Imagining Beyond the Human: Marketa Lazarová as Becoming-Animal. The Cine-Files, 2019, 14. hal-02123426

HAL Id: hal-02123426

<https://univ-tlse2.hal.science/hal-02123426>

Submitted on 8 May 2019

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Imagining Beyond the Human: *Marketa Lazarová* as Becoming-Animal

Milan Kroulík

Figuring Animality

Two anecdotes appear to be commonly associated with František Vlácil's magnum opus *Marketa Lazarová*. The more famous one is that it was voted by critics as the best Czech film ever made.¹ The other one is that the entire crew spent a year living in the wild, using only historical means of survival in order to create such material conditions as to be able to see through the eyes of medieval humans.² This experience as part of the creative process came to be part of the film itself, as it is in many ways unlike anything else done by the makers. A sprawling, ever-evolving chaos defying linearity and perspective, perhaps it could be best described as an arrangement of parts connected in complex relation with little that would resemble a unity into which all parts would disappear.³ The elements then form a multiplicity: the film is consciously one and many at the same time and forms no organic whole. Figures take on meaning based on proximity, not in and of themselves. Indeed, its acentral scattering, spanning space-time, is stated explicitly within the first minutes:

"Foolish deeds are scattered at random. Why listen? Is there sense in what was written? By chance, haphazardly, for poetry's sake, at the behest of a wandering echo, and because the oldest things carry over into the present."

While thematically, there are many connections with the rest of his oeuvre, which includes the continuous appearance of animals, the 1967 film is formally unique.⁴ I will enter the world this film proposes through the figures of animals. From this vantage point, *Marketa Lazarová* will appear as an attempt to make a pre-Cartesian cinema, in that it defies any stable center and fixed subjecthood, and in doing so moves along

lines of becoming within which animals figure prominently.⁵ Research has shown that the camera is the product of industrial rationality and a certain type of stabilized ocularcentrism,⁶ but editing can take cinema closer to animism. The ceaseless partaking of differing perspectives performs a world where everything enters into the uncertain realm between subject and object, animate and inanimate.⁷ Vlácil and his collaborators work with this tension in *Marketa Lazárová* by taking it decidedly toward an erasure of any established subject-position: almost every frame is decentered, sounds and sights don't add up, the montage seems accidental with little stability to hold on to, timelines are jumbled wantonly.⁸ It is a vision of life before rationalization, before the stabilization of a privileged subject-position, and before the institutionalization of a modern Judeo-Christian human-animal division—a place where the self, much like in some more recent works of art, is conceived “as porous with respect to a multiplicity of life forms.”⁹ In the Middle Ages when humans and animals lived next to each other, becoming-animal was always both a threat and a possibility.¹⁰ It is one of the reasons that stories of beastly transformation proliferated. *Marketa Lazárová* performs a mytho-history of becoming-animal that challenges the division between humans and animals that is largely taken for granted today. By the film's end, unruly forces have been eliminated, a hierarchical order has become dominant, and Marketa, the pregnant survivor, is made to walk the earth alone. The typical Vlácilian outcast here for once takes on a female form that carries with herself the hope for a different future. The movie, in its boundlessly energetic chaos, is that which precedes these moments of respite, where the editing slows down and Marketa walks calmly into the future. It proposes a life as human-animal hybrid, as continuous movement of ever-changing perspectives.

The film's unusual form results in a bewildering plot, as basic as it is. Two sons of the Kozlík clan rob a caravan and take the young son of the Bishop of Hennau hostage. The Bishop, an ally of the king, escapes and manages to come back for this son with an army under the leadership of Pivo, who used to be a brewer. Meanwhile, Lazar, the leader of a weaker, neighboring clan and father of the titular hero, aims to ally himself with the invading army and gain from this alliance. The Lazar clan will finally be devastated

through vengeful raids by their neighbors. The relationships between the many appearing characters dart off into multiple directions and variations. And, after an eventually successful attack by the king's army, the Kozlík clan is defeated and the leader imprisoned. In a desperate attempt to free the head of the clan, the few surviving Kozlík warriors are defeated by captain Pivo. Before being executed, the most prominent son of Kozlík, Mikoláš, is married to Marketa, and eventually she walks away from society pregnant and alone.

This then is a film of immanence, where images meet images and the whole remains a metaphysical impossibility. Embracing the cinema's potential to provide an interface to a world larger than human, Marketa Lazarová conveys "the strange power of cinema to at the same time make and unmake worlds," as Pierre Zaoui puts it.¹¹ Importantly, animal-images are never reduced to mere metaphors, as is common in much Western cinema.¹² Animals figure differently in this movie depending on which other figures they appear with. Correspondingly, I will organize this article around becoming-animal, or more specifically around three lines: the Kozlík clan as a nomadic multiplicity living with animals, Pivo's royal army as a state-captured war machine (by which I mean a band of disparate warriors now made use of by the state for its own ends, living above animals), and the *mise-en-scène* as a becoming-animal. I take *Marketa Lazarová* in its animalistic specificity, as a film that opens up different ways of relating to both history and the non-human world.



Figure 1: Wolves (*Marketa Lazarová*, 1966, dir. Vlácil)

Werewolves

What had to remain in the collective unconscious as a monstrous hybrid of human and animal, divided between the forest and the city—the werewolf—is, therefore, in its origin the figure of the man who has been banned from the city. That such a man is defined as a wolf-man and not simply as a wolf (the expression *caput lupinum* has the form of a juridical statute) is decisive here. The life of the bandit, like that of the sacred man, is not a piece of animal nature without any relation to law and the city. It is, rather, a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man, *physis* and *nomos*, exclusion and inclusion: the life of the bandit is the life of the *loup garou*, the werewolf, who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither.¹³

The film narrates a mytho-history about the Kozlík clan's ancestry:

Straba is thirsty for blood. Keep him out.

- *Why is he crying?*

He mocks people and himself. They threw his mother to the wolves. He grew up and became a human among wolves, and a wolf among humans. Disdain fosters his pride. Dislike breathes hatred. Scorned by all, Straba scorns them all in turn. He disgraced the holy ancestral places with a grimace. He does not want to bow to people or the gods. He is free like a wolf, like an animal in the woods, but he still has a human heart, and that heart is full of sorrow. He grew up, and those whose word is law would have him cast out.

- *What happened to him?*

He heard the men's counsel, and laughed. The quiet laugh of a wolf. He was beautiful. He chose the most comely of maidens. She feared him, yet she feared her father even more. The father decides whom you will submit to. Straba raged, and spilled the blood from her throat. They pounced on him, and put him in irons. A horrible punishment awaited him. Burn him at the stake, said one. Another said

let stallions trample him. They could not agree on how to kill him. Then the oldest one pronounced the sentence. May he have no place among humans, free as a wolf. His punishment would be in himself. Woden cast down lightning, but there were no clouds.

- And Straba?

He laughs with the quiet laugh of a wolf. He leaves, baring his teeth with that quiet laugh. Arrows had no power over him. He was free as a wolf. His life was not measured by the solstices. Yet he was alone. Those who do not suffer cannot experience delight. Life has no value without pain. At the time he longed for pain, and he sought death. He returned to those who had cast him out. But many years had passed, and they had all grown old. They only knew him from the ancient tales. The young men came at him with arms. One remembered, shouting, Stay away from him! He has come for death and we shall deny him. All retreated and mocked him. He had returned to die, yet death was denied him. Their mockery burned. He trembled like an aspen leaf. He searched for the place where his heart was. He seized the closest knife, and stabbed himself there. But the knife broke, and no blood was drawn. He was alone again.

- Does he weep?

No. Weeping is the gift of relief. Men do not know it. Their pride pursues eternal punishment. Straba is from their line. His ancestor came from the woman he wed.

Such is the mytho-history of the people of the Kozlík clan. Part-animal, part-human, always liminal, beyond humanity, beyond sociality, yet within. Creatures of impulse, Straba always actualizing in each one of them. Straba is an idea, very real as an idea and made materially real again and again by overtaking each man associated with him, except perhaps the little boy with whom Marketa sets off at the

end. Agamben's analysis of the werewolf as “the figure of man who has been banned from the city,”¹⁴ thus inhabiting the “threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man”¹⁵ appears to fit this mytho-history. But perhaps this is a little too hasty, a little too tied up with state reterritorialization that assimilates the local into its symbolic and physical existence. And it is the way such a consolidating state will see the werewolf. The myths people tell will have different effects based on which people tell them. One must thus ask, what is this mytho-history for the Kozlík clan? What if the wolfman or the bandit figure is not just an individual subject, but also a pack formed by an original, native people that keeps deterritorializing centralized power as long as it can? Vlácil's work generally shows that the indistinction of becoming-animal can lead to a sense of freedom and not just a *bare life*, but *Marketa Lazarová* proposes something even stronger: a critique of official history through the Kozlík band and their non-hierarchical relation with animals.

The relation between the retelling of the myth and the Kozlík clan in the diegetic world of the film is one of transformation. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro takes myth as translation or transformation and not as representation.¹⁶ The moment this myth and with it the figure of Straba appears, is when it is narrated, performed by Kozlík's wife. A performative retelling opens up a space through proximity of becoming (the imaginary) Straba, the wolf-man. Not by literally becoming a (were)wolf, since both Kozlík and his children remain firmly human in their outer, extensive form, but to become as fierce as a werewolf, by creating connections with this idea. After all, what is implied in the film's final reels is that the bloodline lives on but without the Straba narrative, which has been broken. The children “grew up to be fine boys.” The idea of Straba includes the breaking down of barriers between realms, or rather moving along these borders. In these border zones where Kozlík, Mikoláš and the others are, they can take on the intensities of associated animals.



Figure 2: Hunting Wolves (*Marketa Lazarová*, 1966, dir. Vlášil)



Figure 3: Birds of Prey (*Marketa Lazarová*, 1966, dir. Vlášil)

Nomads, Animals: The Kozlík (Little Goat) Clan

The small, aboriginal feudal clan gathered around Kozlík survives somewhere around the Mladá Boleslav area. For state (royal) authorities that are starting to control the area, they are unruly subjects, because, at least in winter, they rob passing caravans. At the beginning it seems that the clan is living at their dilapidated stronghold/homestead Roháček [Little Horn], yet as the film progresses, it becomes apparent that they live in multiple centers. They effectively become with the land, as a sort of “continual self-formation; [which] is one with its completely primitive, genetic being. And this self-formation is inseparable from its practical activity, that is to say, its practices.”¹⁷ These practical movements are related to

their dual “professions,” On the one hand, the clan migrates with the seasons—they are inseparable from the seasons, much like Vlácil's whole oeuvre. On the other, when they know the royal army is out to get them, they at times are forced to hide at a different stronghold, one built on a hill and mostly out of wood. It is the one where most of the clan meet their end. These travels are wolf-like, as they “travel in packs, at night, wandering.”¹⁸ Their main site is much sturdier, but also filled with animals, debris, dirt, and mud. Animals appear in every shot taken in the courtyard and sometimes even in interiors. They are part of the clan. The stronghold is so disorientingly conveyed by the cinematography, that a viewer gets easily lost as to where the camera, the voice, or the figures are. To this I will return later.

The clan is semi-nomadic. It is also a multiplicity, since while Kozlík is the clear head of the clan, the other members have their own often contradictory agencies and clash with him and each other. This is no lord who subsumes all other interests. It is only through being tough and cunning that Kozlík remains the leader and he can at times make many of the clan follow him unto death. This is less a formally political power, than a charismatic power. This becomes most apparent at the end, when Mikoláš, the most distinctive of his many sons, tries to break Kozlík out of the dungeon where he is held. It is not a rational decision, and neither is it good old-fashioned loyalty. It is something different, as if Mikoláš cannot help but to walk to his death. Perhaps it is the ancestry of Straba that makes rational decisions impossible.

There is a further group that makes up the clan and Alexandra can move between this group and that of the warriors. They are made up mostly of women, children and servants. While remaining in the background for most of the movie, when, after the defeat of the clan and capture of Kozlík, the band has moved to fishing grounds, it becomes clear that the clan stands to a large degree on the work of this group and that some of the fighting men can become part of these gatherers. “The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.).”¹⁹ The clan is also a multiplicity, made up of different groups with differing interests. This counts even for rituals, where formally the group presents itself as officially

converted to Christianity, but accommodates pagan practices, which are performed by at least two of Kozlík's children, Alexandra and Adam, the One-Armed. Which activities and groups within the clan come to the fore, depends on the location, which depends on seasons and circumstance, such as war, which while integral to the being of the clan often arrives as an event as if from outside. The war is brought to the clan by the king's forces, the clan does not start waging a war to capture territory or subdue unruly forces. The clan, comprised of the main “family” as well as numerous servants, is constantly on the move, settling into a temporary tranquility only when they reach the fishing grounds in early spring. The tide has turned, most fighters are dead and those that aren't, for the most part don't want to fight anymore. It is as if part of the clan has returned to its natural milieu, the originary world, the source of force for those of the clan who are not possessed by Straba. Those who come from wolves, those closest to Kozlík, remain exterior to any society, even this band of gatherers with little systematic hierarchy. They tend toward power, but in their fierceness they always undo any accumulation of power. Thus they are associated with the wolf, through Straba, but also in the film's visual imagery, as when Kozlík is chased by wolves making his movements more animal-like than usual. Death is a question of will, luck, chance, strength, madness. The film carries this energy into each and every of its pores, each molecule—energy that cannot be contained and directed, that lasts until death and then springs from the screen.

The characters too are multiple. They don't add up to a stable Cartesian identity, either being pulled this way or that. Men and women of action, they have little interiority and act on instinct rather than rational intention. Passionate in the original sense of the word, they are moved by something outside—action as movement, as force, but not as goal-oriented subjectivity. The film's structuration of voice-image reinforces this multiplicity, as voices come from outside the frame, from the past even or from somewhere else, as does God's, the cynical commentator of the story who at times can't resist the pull of the force unleashed by the film. Is it the person that is shown who is talking? But then why does she not move her mouth? Where is the originator of the voice? This ambiguity is supported by the sound mix, where voices

can sound close to the screen, but the characters who talk are hidden somewhere in the back. At other times, retroactively constructing a chain of causality, the viewer realizes that the voice belongs to images from the past or the future. Indeed, the movie is materialist in this sense: the viewer has to actively construct connections and causality, becoming aware of the historically embedded activity of sense-creation. Characters are traversed and moved by impulses of the world. After all, why else would Kozlík's son Mikoláš have shown mercy toward his prisoners? Why would Kozlík overreact and put his best fighter in chains? Why would this life make the young German knight Christian go insane? Why would Mikoláš feel the need to break his father, who had treated him miserably, from the dungeon, which even his mother who now wants him to abandon her husband knows is impossible to do?

Characters are associated with animals: Mikoláš with a falcon, Kozlík with wolves, Adam the One-handed with snakes, Marketa with doves. But these associations do not suggest identification but proximity. And since this is a world where people react to exterior milieus with little mediation, such proximity actively forms their comportment. The associated animals extract something from the characters, but they are not always allies. Animals can also defy their associated humans: A snake bit Adam for which he lost an arm. Wolves chase Kozlík. Marketa rejects institutionalized Christianity with which doves are associated. And Mikoláš, well, if he could fly, he maybe could even live ... but the pulsation of the earth drives him to death as much as the rest of Straba's descendants, even the fierce Alexandra, whose eventual death is implied by the final voice-over.

The Kozlík clan with its mytho-history of werewolves is one that emerged from the dust of time in the places it continues to roam. The story of Straba establishes the clan's substance as one that is external to dominant society, as a *homo sacer*. This figure, however, is double: an outcast and a sovereign. The clan's nobility is told through this negation. And such nobility is, from the point of view of the foreign state apparatus, no nobility at all. The clan can be exterminated much like beasts. The self-articulation through the affirmation of beastly origins connects with the lack of forming a continuous power-structure or state

apparatus.²⁰ This clan is not part of the pan-European nobility that occasionally sends caravans through the area. If anybody, these would have been the autochthonous, “original” Bohemians that evolved with the land, that emerged from the ground and from animals, and those that died in the land. Any modern conception of national identity, as figured by the world proposed in this film, is just a mix of the feudal state and a slowly forming, but weak bourgeoisie (as presented by Pivo who is torn between loyalties and opportunities), both of which are external to local formations. These two positions, the feudal state and the proto-bourgeoisie, share their instrumental and hierarchical relationship with animals. In this sense, the film presents an alien world, one where modern categories are only emergent, and where one could see class struggle between two feudal classes that are mutually exclusive—one local, multiple and singular, and one hierarchical, spanning the continent and subsuming singularities.

Bishops, Beer and Boleslav

The other main figurative force in this world then is that of the state apparatus. Its army is headed in an uneasy alliance by the former brewer Pivo [Beer] in order to capture the unruly Kozlík, especially after the clan kidnapped the Bishop of Hennau's son, the former of which is an important ally of the Czech king.²¹ These forces have a clear hierarchy, decreed by a distant king, and come from outside the area. They have no relation to animals other than an instrumental one. They fear the dark and the forest (for good reason, since these spaces belong to the local clans who have the upper hand in guerrilla tactics). They have horses for pulling, for carrying and for warfare. But these horses are always only support for humans. This is a machine of capture and submission. It is the law, the force of law, outside of which the werewolf will always exist. The werewolf here is associated with the band, the nomads outside the state, the war-machine that is not understood by the state.²² The state warriors have little to no identity, and exist only as parts of the armed forces, except for the nobleman who deems himself superior to the lowly clans of Roháček and gets killed. In fact, in the film he is dead even before he is killed. It is only through

eventual flash-backs that a sort of causality is established. Meanwhile, the Kozlíks tend toward warfare as hunting. They lie in wait and strike fast, like wild animals.

What is also striking about the state apparatus, is the absence of women. Within the clans, females appear continuously and in different positions of autonomy, even occasionally as warriors. While some division of labor is presented, it is not essentialized. People take different positions and roles on themselves within the clan, conveying a vision of Europe before the dominance of patriarchal capitalism, whose ontological assumptions are commonly projected onto past social formations.²³ The city of Mladá Boleslav is a stable entity from which the rule of royal law is exerted, but which connects to the other localities under state control.

Caught in between the deterritorializing clan and the reterritorialization of the state apparatus is Pivo. He is no noble, he has made his money with beer. He gets mocked for not being a real noble. As such, he was formed locally, but came to be associated with the state apparatus from beyond. He expresses sympathies with the Kozlík clan, even if these are somewhat paternalist. He is a proto-Bourgeois, using the emerging royal state to secure his privileges, but he does not entirely become this state. Where the Kozlík clan proposes a world that has disappeared, the figure of Pivo shows one that has become/was yet to come. He also remains liminal, but not through his association with the land or animals. It is mostly his prudent rationality that makes him liminal here.²⁴



Figure 4: Courtyard
(*Marketa Lazarová*, 1966,
dir. Vlášil)



Figure 5: Fishing
Grounds (*Marketa
Lazarová*, 1966, dir.
Vlašil)

Perspectival Becomings

All of the principles that form the figures proposed in *Marketa Lazarová* also organize the form of the film itself. They are evident straight from the first sequence.

A snowy landscape in winter. The image is static, no wind blows, and we're given not even the movement of light that would relate a sky above. This is the opening shot of the film. The second shot becomes a tracking shot that anticipates the movement of wolves that appear, as if driven only by their ferocity. They come out of the forest—it's a pack, a band running in the snow, close to the earth. The third shot begins with an image of a hawk in the bush. It appears to observe its prey, as an animal without men, before humans. But the frame changes, and a camera movement reveals a figure which is the extension of

this bird: the figure of the man, who also observes his prey. The shot engenders the becoming-animal of man before the solidification of the separation between Nature and Culture. The two figures are in proximity, in alliance. This becoming-animal is constant in the film. It is the power of the poetry of the medieval world of *Marketa Lazarová*. The film presents a total sensory immersion, such a sensory overload that a spectator cannot follow everything that happens and becomes self-aware as a center of indetermination, a zone of possibility, pulled from everyday life to become part of the fabric of the film. As spectators, we are decentered, torn from ourselves. Images here can no longer be reduced to the level of representation.

In another shot, when warriors loot a caravan, they must retreat into the forest because the army of the state has arrived. They communicate like birds, chirping. But the image shows only the movements of the characters in the forest, as the camera changes perspectives constantly and the sound is decentralized. We are never sure whether it is men who are chirping or unseen birds. We are between the two possibilities, the warriors are in a “zone of proximity”²⁵ with the animals, much like Straba, a man “grown among wolves” who “in the midst of men, became a wolf.”

The camera often finds itself between two perspectives: when the rider looks at the horse, the resulting image emerges not from the rider’s line of vision, but from somewhere nearer the height of the rider’s torso. We are in between, we are both. And immediately we become different. The Kino-eye movements are jerky, there is a fragmented rhythm that makes a closed totalization impossible. The montage follows the logic of the “perpetual field of interaction.”²⁶ Each cut is impossible to predict. We reach an almost “gaseous state, defined by the free movement of each molecule,”²⁷ however with a difference: the changing perspectives remain close to earth, close to animals traversing it. The rapid editing employed cannot be apprehended by a sedentary perception, too often taken as natural, which has become slow.²⁸ There are movements, immanent change, near the earth: an eternal horizontal differentiation. In one instance, the camera becomes the perspective of an arrow, an arrow that eventually pierces an eye. The

movement becomes contextualized as that of an arrow only after the event of penetration. And an arrow is of course the weapon of nomads and hunters with their proximity to animals of prey.

Images come from everywhere. They are not linked to any sedentary subjective or even generally human perspective. The images are ones of perpetual change, either change as movement in the shot or change as montage. In either case, change becomes foregrounded. In exceptional situations the movement stops on an image—perhaps it is the grandeur of a stag that is the power that arrests the movement for a while. These short pauses figure within the overall horizontal flow of images without verticalization, without unification of meaning.

The framed images keep close to the earth. They are nervous, unstable, precarious. It's not the modern “natural” perception, even when a tracking shot is reconfigured as a subjective image of a character or an animal. While modern perception is based on stability and legibility, this film, where there is no constancy or clarity, challenges the viewer's perceptive apparatus to become other. After all, we are put in proximity with the images that work on us. The shots exhibit constant movement and the editing reconfigures any meaning that seemed obvious. These reconfigurations have an effect even on God. At the beginning of the film a voice from the past speaking to the present begins to tell the main narrative as legend or myth. But if it is a mythical discourse, it is at the same time a cynical discourse. The commenting voice presents itself as a narrator that knows what will happen and seeks for a meaning in it. At the beginning of the second part of the film, the voice comes back to comment on the proceedings, but suddenly, unexpectedly it addresses a character. “What are you singing? What are you mumbling? – A prayer, My Lord. – This is neither a prayer nor a song. But a sermon.” The voice becomes the voice of God. But it is a God who mocks the living: “I would say that you make the sin of sodomy. You know she's not a woman nor you a ram.” In speaking with the priest, the voice becomes part of the earthly world. Sound is what connects God to the world and what is detached from concrete bodies. The sound of dialogue does not seem to originate in characters, and audio mixing does not produce an integrated space.

Often, it's impossible to tell who's talking, because the film does not fix the origin of the voice. And all voices are either whispered or echoed or both. Sound, of which the voice is but one form, comes from material depths. It is a material force that connects the earth, plants, animals, humans and God.



Figure 6: Stag Graveyard (*Marketa Lazarová*, 1966, dir. Vlácil)

Conclusion

While the themes elaborated in *Marketa Lazarová* are ones that are taken up repeatedly in Vlácil's oeuvre, they are treated most radically in this magnum opus. Perhaps this is also because the whole crew experienced the intensity of becoming-animal when they were filming for a year in the wild, while only using the materials people would have used historically (except for the recording technologies, of course). Living a certain way of life entered into the making of the film itself and required an innovative use of cinematic language. And while by the end of the narrative, the alternative to the state apparatus has been all but wiped out, the film can nevertheless be seen as cautiously optimistic about alternative forms of living. Through its unique visual and auditory configurations that question a fixed point of view, the film suggests that the clan is no *homo sacer*. Rather, its members live differently in a systematic way. To put it in other words, *homo sacer* is the clan as necessarily viewed by the feudal society, but not from the position of the clan. *Homo sacer* is relational, not essential, and the world produced within the film's diegesis plays with this

doubling—werewolves as external to society and werewolves as a point of view, a way of life onto itself.

If there is a direction to the drives and impulses that propel these characters, it is toward freedom: life outside the state, outside of metaphysics, outside of vertical accumulation. It's a nomad condition, a state of werewolves. There is not even a hierarchical structure in case of war; a child is fighting alongside adults, just with different techniques. The editing of the film does not privilege any level of temporality as its basis. There is no external reference point to offer a clear ground, just a perpetual flux of reterritorialization and deterritorialization of images, sounds and figures. The film becomes a border zone of transformation and gives birth to a possible community of subjects formed around alternative principles.

These impulses disperse any possibility of unification into a becoming-animal which cannot be subsumed by a narrative or a structure, much like the nomadic warriors of the Kozlík clan cannot become part of the new state. The story, indeed, is simple, even banal. One could even say that watching the film, one finds herself not in these times when life is so banal, so monotonous that stories have to become complex, but in times where stories are simple, but everything around them is complex. The frames, the shots and the editing are so ambiguous, so unbalanced, that often it is not possible to perceive what happened without reviewing the images. Indeed the images cannot be reterritorialized in the structure of the story. It is the story that is reterritorialized in the images, the God who is torn into the chaos of becoming. The tension between freedom and state, between stability of being and becoming acts on the figures and toward the end of the film this tension tears it all apart. But this is not the end, because the world is reassembled and new figures will appear. Marketa, who has left all organizations behind, is pregnant. She is a creator, she is the land on which and from which the becomings of men are happening. It is because of this power that she becomes the titular figure, even though throughout the film she seems to be of little importance. Life emerges from the bottom, from spaces little guarded. Yet, she walks away from the half-domesticated animal, a goat, to walk alone. She and her offspring will no longer come from

Straba, the werewolf. Whatever may come of her, life continues to appear.

His antlers were bigger than branches. He looked at us without fear. Kozlík motioned for silence. We went closer. It moved away, and we went after it. Below the hillside there was a bare plain. Grass, stones, lichen ... This valley was more wretched than a cemetery. Bones, limbs, a thousand antlers on white skulls. He stood alone in the middle. Defeated, alone. Alone. Kozlík whispered, "Look ..." "The solitude of death." He raised his antlers, and called.

- *Who did he call ...*

Shh!

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Notes

This essay was written within the project “Crisis of Rationality and Modern Thought,” within the grant project “Cinema as the Exteriority of Rationality,” at the Charles University, Faculty of the Arts, with financial support of the Specific university research in 2018.

¹ Peter Hames, *Czech and Slovak Cinema: Theme and Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 3.

² Antonín J. Liehm, *Ostře sledované filmy* (Praha: Národní filmový archiv, 2001), 218.

³ As the film scholar Peter Hames puts it, the aim is to “... recreate the immediacy of a novel where 'the whole' remains hidden.” Peter Hames, “Marketa Lazarová,” in *The Cinema of Central Europe*, ed. Peter Hames (London – New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 158.

⁴ For the sake of brevity, I am forced to exclude an analysis of the wider figural and thematic creations in the cinema of Vlášil, and to merely list them here: the world as ruin, inclusion/exclusion at the borders of nature and culture, three functions of animals (domestic, equal/liminal, wild). It is in the liminal sphere, most often signified by proximity to the forest and by wolf-dogs as the ultimate “companion species”, where his protagonists move. See Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Others* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003.,

- ⁵ František Vlácil, the director, doesn't put it this way of course, and while he talks about wanting to make a movie that is as if from another time and about how he wanted to understand a medieval experience in seeing. The filmmaker also acknowledges how problematic this is, since there is little to no evidence about how people would have lived six or seven centuries ago in Bohemia. (See Liehm, *Ostře*, 215–216)
- ⁶ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge – London: MIT Press, 1990).
- ⁷ This proximity between cinema and animating spectrality has been noted by a number of mostly Deleuzian authors (e.g. John Mullarkey. “Animal Spirits – Philosomorphism and the Background Revolts of Cinema,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 18, no. 1 (May 2013): 11–29).
- ⁸ See Bruno Dequen, “Trois (re)découvertes à ne pas manquer,” *25 images* 165 (December 2013–January 2014): 49.
- ⁹ May A. Ingawanij, “Animism and the Performative Realist Cinema of Apichatpong Weerasethakul,” in *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human*, eds. Anat Pick and Guinevere Narraway (New York – Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 91.
- ¹⁰ Esther Cohen, “Animals in Medieval Perceptions: The Image of the Ubiquitous Other,” in *Animals and Human Society: Changing Perspectives*, eds. Aubrey Manning and James Serpell (London: Routledge, 1994), 59–80.
- ¹¹ Pierre Zaoui, “L’iconodulie cinématographique ou la nouvelle offrande du monde (à propos de Cinéma 1 et 2 de Gilles Deleuze),” *Cinemas*, 16, no. 2–3 (2006): 185 (my own translation).
- ¹² Seung-Hoon Jeong, “A Global Cinematic Zone of Animal and Technology,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 18, no.1 (May 2013): 139.
- ¹³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1998), 105.
- ¹⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105.
- ¹⁵ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 105.
- ¹⁶ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2014), 205.
- ¹⁷ Jean-Christophe Goddard, “The Beech and the Palm Tree: Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre as a Project of Decolonization,” in *Rethinking German Idealism*, eds. Sean J. McGrath and Joseph Carew (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016): 140.
- ¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987), 267.
- ¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 380.
- ²⁰ We don't see any other people living in the area except for the clans and their people, implying perhaps that during winter all humans come together and spread out only with spring.
- ²¹ At the time allegedly Václav I. or Přemysl Otakar II., as would have become apparent in unfiled segments of this movie. (Liehm, *Ostře*, 218–219.)
- ²² Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 351–423.
- ²³ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia), 2004.
- ²⁴ Cf. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- ²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 164.
- ²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 360.
- ²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 84.
- ²⁸ Vlácil's affinity to the Soviet avant-garde is well-documented: “As a student, he also undertook an exercise in which he drew Sergei Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin* (*The Battleship Potemkin*, 1926) frame by frame.” (Hames, *Marketa*, 151.)