

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Looking back I realise that this project most probably had its origins in my MA class in Feminist Literary Theory taught by Lynne Pearce at Lancaster in 1991 when I, at that time untouched by any theory except orthodox Marxism, discovered feminist analysis and structuralism. The latter was made particularly attractive in the work of Judith Williamson in *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (1978), since it gave me a tool to read visual images—as opposed to written texts—for the first time. When I returned to the Czech Republic in early 1992, I immediately noticed the first outcroppings of billboards. To explain the significance of this to a Western reader, it is important to realise that there were *no* billboards before the 1989 changeover in the Czech Republic, with the exception of the occasional one advertising a local product (I remember there was *one* of those in my hometown).<sup>1</sup>

Newly equipped with feminist theories, I could not resist taking photos of the billboards using in some way female body or its parts, or making a point of the absence of the body. In my first work on the subject (Indruchová 1995a; 1995b), I analysed a sample of the billboards using Williamson's theory, looking for the (stereo)typical representations of women and femininity. Here I was attempting to determine, what currency the female body carried in the Czech context. My hypothesis was that if the gender relations which the billboards depicted did not exist in social consciousness, they could not have been used in advertising, because they would not be understood by the audience. Further, I proposed that since billboards were the most public advertising medium, they could only use the most commonly understood representations of femininity and, then, only those which complied with the accepted standards of good taste: the public functioned as a censor, in a way.

The investigation into the representation of women in advertising lead me naturally to starting to look at representations of men as well. At that time the project was already accepted as a research proposal at the English Department at Lancaster University. My objective was to find the ways in which billboard advertising—and other types of texts—in the Czech Republic structured femininity and masculinity. I re-focused my previous hypothesis and presumed that any gender relations portrayed in the *post*-1989 cultural products, would have to draw, specifically, on the *pre*-1989 social and cultural context, that is, on the gender relations as represented in the social and cultural consciousness then. This necessitated the inclusion of other types of texts into the research, as billboards were unavailable before 1989. Another reason to expand my textual sample beyond billboards was to have a broader platform for comparison, but I was now facing the problem of somehow counterbalancing the billboard sample from the post-1989 period by a sample of texts of reasonably similar properties. After careful consideration, I settled for middlebrow state-published Czech novels written in the decade before 1989. This type of text is 'similar' to billboards in that these works of fiction were read by a broad readership (more details below) and, in the case of a large

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<sup>1</sup> I use 'West' and 'Western', here and in the rest of this study, to designate Western-European and North-American thought, as distinct from Central/East European state-socialist thought.

portion of Czech fiction production, openly drew on contemporary social context. Some researchers point out that literature as a cultural medium had also another very important function in the Czech environment: since from the nineteenth century 'Czech literature entered the public sphere as a quintessentially political force' (Steiner 2000, 5) due to the particularities of the history of Czech national and political consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In other words, both billboards and these novels 'serve as the medium by which memory is shaped' (Castillo 1997, 104).

I therefore started researching the literature on the subject of femininity and masculinity, and tried to establish what the authors of the various articles and books considered to be the 'foundations of masculinity and femininity'. Griselda Pollock (1987) and David H. J. Morgan (1992) seemed to me to get the closest to the crux of the problem: Pollock placed *ideology* at the core of the relation between the masculine and the feminine, and Morgan identified *power* as the basis of the relationship. Having arrived at this finding, I realised that the narrow focus on the search for the *construction* of masculinity and femininity lead into a blind alley. For if a discussion of femininity and masculinity in Czech culture were to be productive, I had to discuss, first of all, the ideology or ideologies participating in the production of *the texts themselves* and of their interpretation: an approach pioneered by Pierre Macherey (Macherey 1978) and which seemed acutely appropriate in this case. This, of course, meant dealing with the ideological environment and the meaning of ideology during the pre-1989 period, that is, during the period of state socialism.<sup>3</sup>

Reading in the theories of ideology extended naturally to the reading in the theories of discourse, and opened up a whole new perspective on the research and its possibilities. Since the theories with which I was working were formulated in and for the environment of late capitalism (theories of ideology and of discourse) and patriarchy (feminist theories), I had to consider the interplay of all three concepts. The work began to form into its current shape. The focus now shifted to the problematic relation between state-socialist ideology, the discourse of consumer capitalism, and patriarchal discourse (see Chapter 3), and the goal of the research crystallised into looking at the discourses of femininity, masculinity, and feminism pre- and post-1989.<sup>4</sup> My preoccupation with

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Steiner outlines the crucial political moments in Czech literature: for example, the mobilisation of the Czech national movement in the nineteenth century occurred greatly through literary writings and involved a prominent group of Czech intellectuals-writers; the Fourth Congress of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union in July 1967 effectively started the Prague Spring; whilst the system itself also recruited writers to support its doctrines and actions, such as, in the case of the show trial of the Party General Secretary Rudolf Slánský in 1952. Hilský (1994) makes a similar argument. Both writers also express the fear that literature (including theatre) will lose its political significance in the post-1989 era.

<sup>3</sup> I considered carefully what term to use for that period and its political system. From among the available options used by various scholars in various fields—socialism, communism, real socialism, state capitalism, state socialism—I decided to use the latter, because all the others seemed ambiguous for one reason or another. It is a term used, for example, by the Czech-born Canadian feminist Alena Heitlinger (Heitlinger 1979), in her study on women in the Czech Republic and the Soviet Union, or by the Hungarian dissident Miklós Haraszti (Haraszti 1987) in his book on the situation in arts in Hungary before 1989. The relatively recent book by the political economist David Lane defines state socialism as follows: 'It is a society distinguished by a state-owned, more or less centrally administered economy, controlled by a dominant communist party which seeks, on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and through the agency of the state, to mobilise the population to reach a classless society' (Lane 1996, 5). The definition seems to cover fairly accurately the environment with which I will be concerned in my textual analyses.

<sup>4</sup> I will be using the term 'consumer capitalism' to denote a system of values in which status is acquired through ownership of or access to commodities, that is, a system typical for the period of late capitalism. As it will become apparent in my textual examples, commodities played an important role in the state-socialist ideology and resistance to it. The term 'consumer capitalism' is therefore suitable for this reason and also for convenience, as I needed to distinguish between the state-socialist ideology

the discourses of femininity and masculinity is perhaps self-explanatory in the light of the beginnings of the whole research. The readings in the theories of femininity and masculinity will provide a useful framework for the textual analyses, particularly, of Chapters 4, 5, 8, 9. However, the inclusion of the discourse of feminism requires further commentary.

The continuity of the Czech women's movement and feminism was disrupted by the accession of the Communist Party to power. Also, Milada Horáková, the President of the Women's National Council was executed for treason in 1950, following one of the show trials of the Stalinist period.<sup>5</sup> The history of the movement and its thoughts were erased from state-socialist accounts, except when it concerned the part associated with the working-class.<sup>6</sup> The state and the Party founded an umbrella women's organisation the Czechoslovak Union of Women, frequently referred to as 'lengthening the arm of the Communist Party' (Šiklová 1998b, 34)—a phrase used seriously in official accounts before 1989, and with irony, such as in my quotation, afterwards. When the second wave of the Women's Liberation Movement started in the West in the 1970s, its struggles did not reach the Czech Republic. The only way it was referred to in the few accounts available at the time was as a 'bourgeois' phenomenon: 'Feminism was considered by conscientious female members of the Communist Party to be a bourgeois ideology, whose aim was to splinter the unified battle of the working class enemies and capitalism' (Šiklová 1997a, 35). Feminism and the women's movement were not subjects of public discussion in the Czech Republic before 1989, and the discussion and awareness of feminist issues has been only slowly developing in the recent years.<sup>7</sup> Even Jiřina Šiklová, the founder of gender studies as an academic discipline in the Czech Republic and a former dissident, recalls the absence of any notion of feminism in the dissident circles, in which contemporary Western philosophical and critical works were written. She says that she did not encounter a single work dealing with feminist issues until the autumn of 1988, when she received an issue of *Lettre internationale* on *postfeminism* and was shocked that she 'hardly ever heard even of feminism and now

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and 'the other' system of values and expectations. I do not claim precision in the use of the term from the economic perspective or any other except as defined in this study.

By 'patriarchy', I understand a system of thought and social interaction, in which higher status in various spheres of human life is accorded to the male and masculine, and lower to the female and feminine.

<sup>5</sup> Horáková succeeded to the post the Czech senator Františka Plamínková, who was executed by the Nazis in 1942. Horáková herself was imprisoned by the Nazis for her activities in the resistance movement through her work in the Women's National Council from 1941 till the end of the war. After the war, she became an MP. After her trial and execution in 1950 (twelve other people were tried in the same trial, three of whom were executed) she became a symbol of communist oppression and the devastation of democratic values in the country.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to the Czech historian, Jitka Malečková, for clarification of this point.

<sup>7</sup> *Malá encyklopedie československá (A Concise Czechoslovak Encyclopaedia)*, vol.2 (1985) does not acknowledge the existence of any discussion of 'women's issues' either in the West or in the Czech Republic prior to the state-socialist era, when it defines them (or the 'woman question', as the literal translation would have it) as 'the issues of women's position in society, realisation of their actual equality, and their participation in the development of *socialist* society' (my emphasis). The same source (vol.6, 1987) equates 'feminists' with 'suffragettes', while emphasising the 'bourgeois nature of the movement' on the grounds of its inability 'to reveal the foundations of the unequal position of women in capitalist society'. The previously mentioned entry on women's issues explains to the reader that women's inequality originates with the private ownership which created preconditions for the dependence of women on men. The editorial collective of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences of the *Encyclopaedia* (1985) gives evidence of the unawareness of feminism even in the academic environment when the entry on 'feminism' defines the term as '1. In capitalist countries, a theory of political, economic and social equality of women with men, organised movement in favour of women's rights and interests; 2. behaviour, attitudes and expressions characteristic for persons of female sex; the characteristics generally ascribed to women can be manifest also in men as so-called feminist [*sic*] traits (dependence, passivity, dominance of intuitive components in mental processes).'

there was already postfeminism' (Šiklová 1999a, 132–33).<sup>8</sup> It is then safe to presume that literary texts written before and even after 1989 were not informed by contemporary feminist discussions. Therefore, when looking into the discourse of feminism in those texts, the best we can do is to consider their *feminist possibilities*.

The new perspective—focusing on the discourses of femininity, masculinity and feminism in the specific ideological/discursive environment—required narrowing down the period of research to the years immediately preceding and immediately following the 1989 changeover. This period would thus span from the time just before 1989, when the old structures—including multi-levelled censorship—could no longer maintain their iron grip on cultural expression with the former force due to the *perestroika*, to the time after 1989, when social and cultural channels were suddenly opened to difference, to alternative voices and did not yet solidify into new hegemonic institutions.<sup>9</sup> A more precise identification of this period of vast changes would be perhaps impossible from the perspective of textual criticism, because it would involve political and sociological analyses of the time, and setting up some criteria of the pace of social and cultural development.

Two events happened in the period immediately before and after 1989 which helped focus my textual samples. The first event was the announcement of the beginning of *perestroika* by Gustáv Husák in his New Year's address in 1987. In April of that year, Raisa Gorbacheva had accompanied her husband, the president of one of the two Cold War superpowers, on his official state visit to Czechoslovakia. The significance of

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<sup>8</sup> Šiklová further relates that the journal was confiscated during a police search in her flat and, together with other books of 'anti-state and anti-socialist content, burned on 31 March 1989 [...] as "ideologically damaging materials"' (Šiklová 1999a, 133). Šiklová participated in organising the distribution of clandestine book deliveries from the West into the dissident circles, for which activity she spent a year in prison in the 1980s.

The translation of the quotes from Šiklová and of all subsequent quotations from Czech—and Slovak, as the case may be—authors are my own, unless they are listed in the Bibliography as published in English.

<sup>9</sup> Jiřina Šmejkalová (1994a) outlines the censoring mechanisms in the state-socialist Czech Republic. Their main feature was 'anticipation': 'The publisher might propose a low print run for a certain book in anticipation of paper supply limits; the editor might make an author remove "rebellious chapters" from a novel in anticipation of comments expected from the clerk in the Ministry of Culture; the author might avoid certain passages in anticipation of the reaction of individuals throughout the institutional system of publishing who were familiar with the guidelines issued by the Ideological Committee of the Communist Party' (Šmejkalová-Strickland 1994a, 204).

The then president of Czechoslovakia, Gustáv Husák, announced the beginning of the *perestroika* in the country in his New Year's address in 1987: 'As a step of principal importance, we consider the onset of the preparations for the re-building [*přestavba*, that is, *perestroika*, as the translation from the Russian would go] of the economic mechanisms in the spirit of the resolutions of the XVIIth Congress [of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia]. The principles of this re-building have been approved, and we will further elaborate them and gradually put them into practice' (Husák 1987b).

her visit lies in that she was the first wife of a Soviet Bloc politician since Nina Khrushcheva to accompany her husband on a state visit. The second event was the dissolution of Czechoslovakia by a parliamentary decree in 1992 (sometimes referred to as the 'Velvet Divorce'). This event is perhaps not so much relevant to my subject of study, as it is relevant for marking an end of an era. At the same time as the Czechoslovak Parliament and the public debated whether or not to hold a referendum over the split of the country, the other Cold War superpower, the United States, held a presidential election which brought Bill Clinton to the presidency and Hillary Clinton to the post of the First Lady. Her importance mirrors that of Raisa Gorbacheva in that it was the first time since 1989 that a more substantial coverage of the American First Lady and access to international news sources on the event to the general Czech public was possible. Of course, it still proved difficult to limit *all* of my textual samples to that period, but I tried to make the selection as close to this time span as possible. My examples from fiction and journalism (see below) more or less fit within the given period, while billboards became more numerous after that and the last remaining set of texts (textbooks on physical culture—about which I will also say more below) were written and/or used in university courses over the whole decade prior to 1989.

This brings me to the criteria of text selection. In the case of billboards, the criteria had to be, by definition, subjective: I had to choose from among the several hundred photographs I had taken over the years those images which would best illustrate the scope of representations of femininity and masculinity. Such a subjective selection in the case of fiction would be logistically impossible, as I clearly was not familiar with several hundred or even several dozen fiction texts from the period. Also, I needed some evidence that a particular text indeed did target a wide audience and thus could have a claim to addressing a 'popular' reader, that is, a reader similar to the kind of person the billboards sought to address. In my search, I came across a large-scale survey of reading and readership in twenty Czech public libraries between 1986 and 1988. The main results were published by Aleš Haman as *Literatura z pohledu čtenářů* (*Literature from the Readers' Perspective*; 1991). Haman introduces the term 'best-reader' (an analogy derived from a 'best-seller') to identify the most frequently borrowed books from public libraries. The difference between a 'best-seller' and a 'best-reader' is important here: while people may *buy* a book for a whole host of reasons (such as, for a status symbol which is carefully placed on a coffee table and never read) it can be presumed that if somebody takes the trouble of going to a public library, he or she is more likely to read the books as well. In other words, the statistics of borrowings probably give more accurate numbers about the actual readership of a particular book than those of the number of copies sold.

It seemed to me that 'best-readers' and billboards would be ideal counterparts by the criterion of the breadth of their audience. On the one hand, billboards were the most public advertising medium and, as such, had to try and address as wide an audience as possible and, therefore, had to work with more general tastes and images than, let us say, magazines which target a more particular audience. On the other hand, 'best-readers' represented fiction texts best known among—and perhaps deliberately aimed at—the general public. In an article written in September 1989, Šiklová provides an important

insight into the qualities of the 'general public' with respect to their political stance, and asserts that politics was the *only* difference in Czech society which really mattered:

My visitor [from the West] is once again confused. He is looking for differentiation by social status, class affiliation, or some other broadly acceptable stratification based on profession, or education, or income, and so on. And I can't give him that, either!

Only two groups in our country can be clearly differentiated from the rest on the basis of political stance and social classification: the first comprises those currently in power, or what we call 'the socialist establishment', and the second consists of 'the dissidents', or the opposition. [...]

Between them, as in every country, there is a 'silent majority', for the most part consumption oriented and politically uninterested, and then there are the people in the so-called grey zone. (Šiklová 1992, 182–83)

She characterises the 'grey zone' as moral and educated professionals who were too timid to express their political views openly: they were involved neither with the communist elites nor with the dissidents, although they often interacted with the latter group and even helped them. They differed from the marginalised dissidents in that, due to the fact that they were 'within the structures' (that is, they had relatively normal professional careers and their children could obtain decent education), they also faced the regime on an everyday basis and were often more frustrated with and radical in their views than the dissidents. Šiklová also observes that the grey zone is growing. She then demonstrates through an anecdote how these people were eager to hear a confirmation of their frustrations and criticism from 'one of them', that is, from another member of the grey zone.

With respect to my own rationale, I hypothesised that a discussion of discourses and ideologies pre-1989 would be more representative in a best-seller, or a 'best-reader', because the popularity of these texts would suggest certain resonance with a large number of readers: with the 'silent majority' and the 'grey zone'. Also, these texts would be in line with the official ideology, because only such texts could be officially published before the 1989 changeover: that is, they were subject to the multi-levelled censorship I mentioned above. Further, given my interest in gender and the discourse of feminism, I wanted to preserve the balance of male- and female-authored texts. Finally, in order to make the sample homogenous, at least in some aspects of their subject matter and in their form, and also to have a more direct access to ideologies and discourses of the time, I decided to select only *novels* dealing with *contemporary Czech society*. Haman discusses four examples of 'best-readers' of which two were written approximately within my research period and are about people and issues in the contemporary Czech Republic: these include, Radek John's *Memento*, first published in 1986 (my page references are to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in 1989) and Zdena Frýbová's *Z neznámých důvodů* (*For Unknown Reasons*), first published in 1988 (my page references are to the edition published in 1993).<sup>10</sup> Both novels can also be placed into the category of best-sellers: each of the two novels was published—and sold—in well over a hundred thousand copies.<sup>11</sup> *Memento* achieved three editions between 1986 and 1989: the first edition of 20,000, the second of 50,000 copies, the third edition of 200,000 copies (all published in Prague by Československý spisovatel); the novel was

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase is a Czech version of the title of Ray Charles's song 'I Can't Stop Loving You', but I chose to use the literal translation instead of using the original name of the song, because the novel's plot centres around the 'unknown reasons' of the protagonists' actions rather than describes only happy love relationships.

<sup>11</sup> Since I am focusing solely on the Czech Republic, I am not including the Slovak translations of the novels. For accuracy, *Memento* was published in Slovak translation in Bratislava by Smena in 1989, *Z neznámých důvodů* came out in Slovak in Bratislava's publishing house Tatran in 1990 under the title *Z neznámých dôvodov*. Moreover, *Memento* came out also in Russian, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian and German between 1989 and 1990.

published again in 1990 in Prague by Iris and in 1995 in Ostrava by Středoevropské nakladatelství; *For Unknown Reasons* sold 95,000 copies and was published by Práce in Prague in 1988; it was then republished in 1993 in co-operation with two publishing houses, Papyrus in Prague and Jeva in Rudná u Prahy, and in 2001 the third revised edition was published in Prague by Šulc.<sup>12</sup>

One significant detail is that both novels can be classified as 'middlebrow', rather than entirely popular, which means, among other things, these texts were not written according to a pre-set plot formula, as is usual with some of the popular genres such as Mills and Boon or Harlequin romances.<sup>13</sup> The texts can then contain a wider range of issues. By 'middlebrow' I mean the type of fiction which mixes elements of highbrow with elements of the popular. Debra A. Castillo characterised the Spanish audience of such texts as reading:

widely but without high cultural pretensions; [...] proud of their love for serious books, [needing not] to be told who Cervantes or Laforet are, but [...] not required by these works to have to know anything terribly specific or technical about them. (Castillo 1997, 101)

Janice Radway (1994a) pointed out another very important feature of the middlebrow for feminist analysis which is relevant to my aim of looking for gender discourses and their relation to other discourses/ideologies at the time of social, economic and political transition:

A gender-sensitive, feminist analysis reveals, in fact, that middlebrow culture belongs at the chiasma of several intersecting histories, that is, where the history of the rapidly structuring economy intersects with the history of cultural production and with the history of women's changing social status and position. (Radway 1994a, 872)

The last detail to mention is that, under state socialism, it was mostly middlebrow books which were published. Some highbrow books were, of course, published, as well as popular ones, but their publication was complicated by the ideological dictate: anything that could 'corrupt' the taste of a socialist citizen needed to be excluded (that is, the lowbrow), because the socialist citizen had to be educated through literature.<sup>14</sup> The publication of the highbrow was complicated for the obvious reason that such books were likely to ask questions, which could be uncomfortable for the official ideology. To that we have to add the list of Czech and international 'banned' writers, who could not be published because of their political views.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In the pre-1989 period the size of print runs was public and printed in the publication details at the back of each book. This practice was dropped after 1989 in line with the general practice in market economies.

<sup>13</sup> Bridget Fowler (1991) and Janice Radway (1994b) characterise the usual plot outline of such romances.

<sup>14</sup> See Dobrenko (1995) on the development of and requirements on the middlebrow in the Soviet Union.

<sup>15</sup> These would include all Czech émigré writers, all Charter 77 signatories and others (Charter 77 was a human-rights movement in Czechoslovakia in 1977–1989. For more information on the movement see, for example, Skilling 1981). From among the well-known English writers, it was, for example, Graham Green and Tom Stoppard. The writers were banned in the Czech Republic for their support of Charter 77, Amnesty International, or any other organisation considered hostile to state socialism by the communist leaders, or for their personal comments on the state-socialist political situation. The state carried out also a thorough cleansing of book holdings in public libraries after the Soviet occupation of 1968. Dagmar Perstická (1990) compiled an overview of suppressed writers, works, *samizdat* (for the characterisation of *samizdat*, see below) publishing houses and émigré publication forums with a focus on the period following the Soviet invasion until 1989. Among others, she notes that all or some works of certain writers were removed from public libraries in 1973 by the decree of the Czech Ministry of Culture, ref. No. 9695/72 of 31 May 1972 (Perstická 1990, 103). Additional books were withdrawn from public funds, if one of the banned writers wrote a preface or contributed to

As no comprehensive published research is available on the analysis of Czech book production of the period, an outline of the situation after 1989 has to suffice as an indication of the previous state of literary production. However, a number of newspaper and scholarly articles were written on book production after 1989, and a recently published book by Jiřina Šmejkalová (*Kniha (k teorii a praxi knižní kultury)*; *A Book: Theory and Practice of Book Culture*; 2000) is the first longer study on the topic. Although the book contains minimal original research, it usefully summarises the debates surrounding the liberalisation of book publishing after 1989. It refers to the years up to 1996 as 'chaos', marked by uncoordinated book production, diversification of the market, and the mushrooming of private publishers.<sup>16</sup> Huge print runs were typical particularly in 1990–91, when émigré and *samizdat* titles were published in hundreds of thousands of copies.<sup>17</sup> In some cases, the market (in a country of ten million) absorbed between 250,000 to 500,000–print runs, but a certain saturation of the market occurred from the beginning of 1992 (Šmejkalová 2000, 139–40). In the first half of the 1990s, foreign capital did not have a significant share of the market (ibid. 144).

Once I selected the representative fiction texts for the pre-1989 period, I was curious to find out what their counterparts might be immediately after 1989, because of the dramatic situation in book publishing. Also, my billboard sample was from the period after the stormiest changes. I was aware that, given the politicisation of readership, in particular, readers' hunger for previously banned, émigré (written in detachment from the home culture) and *samizdat* (written from the margins) literature, and the diversification of the market into the full range from lowbrow to highbrow, the search might yield results which would not be compatible with my search for contemporary gender discourses. The methodological problem lay in that I was in no position to obtain exact data on library borrowings.

Nevertheless, I approached two libraries for information on their 'best-readers' by male and female authors between 1990 and 1993. I inquired in the Municipal Library in Prague-Opatov and the State Research Library in Kladno (a small industrial town

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an edited volume. All of these books were gradually returned to the libraries during 1989 (ibid.)—that is, as a part of the *perestroika* restructuring, before the November changes.

<sup>16</sup> Šmejkalová notes 550 registered publishers in the Czech Republic in 1990, 1080 in 1991, 1520 in 1992, and 1700 in 1993, compared to 45 in 1989 (Šmejkalová 2000, 138); *Almanach Labyrint* lists fluctuating numbers ranging from 250 to 500 between 1992 and 1996 (Dvořák 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; and 1996).

<sup>17</sup> 'The term *samizdat* (which literally means self-made publication or self-publishing) became popular after the Russian poet Nikolai Glazkov began in the mid-1940s to put the word *samsebiaizdat*—that is, self-publication of one's work—on the front page of his typewritten collection of poems' (Oushakine 2001, 194). Gordon Johnston adds: 'Apart from capturing a clear sense of what the poet was doing, *samebyaizdat* [*sic*] and its acronym are a parody of *Gosizdat*, the acronym for the official [Soviet] state publishing house. Initially, then, *samizdat* referred to the practice of an author publishing him or herself, but subsequent usage has extended this definition to cover all aspects of the production and distribution of "unofficial" material. [...] *Samizdat* refers exclusively to the unofficial production and distribution of text-based material in typed, mimeographed, xeroxed or printed form' (Johnston 1999, 122–23). Kohout (1990) records the history of the Edice Petlice (Edition Padlock) that a good typist could manage up to twelve copies, these were then bound, each copy signed by the author (which exempted them from the regulations of book production, because they all thus became individualised works of art rather than illegal publications) and hand-delivered to readers. There were waiting lists for each book and each reader passed their copy to the next person on the list. For the history and function of *samizdat* see, for example, Goetz-Stankiewicz (1992) and Johnston (1999).

outside Prague).<sup>18</sup> While the two libraries did not agree on the same text by a male author, they both listed Tereza Boučková's perspective of the life of Czech dissidents *Indiánský běh* (*Indian Run*; 1991 and 1992; my page references are to the 2<sup>nd</sup> expanded edition from 1992) as one of their 'best-readers'. However, the text can in no way be considered middlebrow, thus it does not constitute an adequate counterpart to the pre-1989 texts. Also, the author is the daughter of the famous dissident—and from 1979 émigré—writer Pavel Kohout, who published the first volume of *his* memoirs in 1990. Boučková's prose is strongly autobiographical and covers some of the same period as her father's book, as well as some identifiably similar events. The text then became a 'best-reader' probably for different reasons than the two pre-1989 texts: for example, the readers may have been eager to learn 'how it really was' in dissident circles. Moreover, it is probable that both of the other texts were read also because they dealt with previously tabooed topics: *For Unknown Reasons* with the lapsed work ethics during state socialism; and *Memento* with drug addiction—a phenomenon supposedly non-existent in state-socialist society. Nevertheless, I decided to include the text in my research as a sample of a different voice and, possibly, of an emerging discourse—that of 'female identity'—as that seems to be the underlying theme of the first-person narrative by a female narrator.<sup>19</sup> I did not originally consider this a new discourse, because I did not suspect that it existed. However, once I added it, the research called for the inclusion of *more* subversive discourses to my previously neat division into the discourses of femininity, masculinity and feminism, because, as Lois McNay warns:

An insistence on women as passive victims of male oppression oversimplifies the complexities of women's subordination by placing too great a stress on the universal nature of oppression and the common, undifferentiated enemy of patriarchy. Because of this insistence and a consequent failure to carry through a differentiated analysis of different cultural and historical contexts, areas of women's experience are either not understood in their full complexity, are devalued or remain obscured altogether. (McNay 1992, 64)

At this point I recalled my previous 'career' of a student of physical education, an experience which I thought I discarded once and forever with regards to academia. As a student of the Faculty of Sports and Physical Education of the Charles University in Prague between 1984–1989, I had to learn over and over again from the various textbooks about 'physical culture' (or 'body culture' as the literal translation of the Czech phrase *tělesná kultura* would go), a concept rather reserved to the Eastern Bloc countries. I re-read some of the textbooks (most of them written in the 1980s) and realised that the influence of the state-socialist ideology produced a by-product: the notion of a 'genderless' body. This discourse, as well as the community familiar with the concept of physical culture were an anomaly, since they were both limited to a small number of individuals. Even so, from the theoretical standpoint of examining the relation between state-socialist ideology and gender, this discourse is an excellent example of the interaction of these two entities.

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<sup>18</sup> The head of Acquisitions of the main one of the Prague municipal libraries, the Municipal Library in Prague 1, identified Opatov as the best organised of Prague public libraries regarding the records of borrowings.

<sup>19</sup> According to the inquiries I made at the Institute for Czech Literature of the Czech Academy of Sciences, original middlebrow literature disappeared after 1989 and was replaced by translations. Pavel Janáček of the Institute, sees Michal Viewegh and Jáchym Topol as the only two representatives of the genre at present. Viewegh's *Báječná léta pod psa* (*The Great Years When Life Sucked*; 1992) was also listed among the most frequently borrowed books according to one of the two libraries above.

The last issue which needed to be solved with respect to the textual sample was which other types of texts should be included. If I had billboards and fiction, I needed a more diverse range of texts to be able to balance the social and the literary in the texts. Mary Louis Pratt writes:

There seems to be a tendency in poetics to assume that conventions found to be operating in literature must by definition be literary conventions, that is, conventions primarily associated with literature and constitutive of 'literariness'. This judgement means in turn that such conventions are taken to be primarily associated with fictionality, and are studied primarily from an aesthetic viewpoint. Their historical, social and ideological dimensions are not explored, though these dimensions are as germane to the study of discourse and aesthetics. [...] There is much to be gained, then, from an analysis of linguistic representation which decentres the question of truth versus falsehood, fiction versus non-fiction, *literary genre versus nonliterary genre*, and focuses instead on generalised strategies of representation. (Pratt 1991, 21–22; my emphasis)

In order to have a better idea of what might constitute the 'literary' in the texts and what is likely to be the 'social', I reached out to journalism as a form between fiction and fact, a form in which the reporter's ideologies get written into the factual account. Together with the coverage of certain key events, I looked also at the official speeches made at the occasion of some of these and other events by leading politicians as representatives of the official ideology up to 1989, and then a contrasting sample after that date. I have indicated two of the key events already: the visit of Raisa Gorbacheva to Czechoslovakia in 1987, and the coverage of Hillary Clinton during the presidential campaign in 1992, and after her admission to the White House in 1993. To these two 'special' events, I included the coverage of and speeches at regular annual events: International Women's Day—8 March, May Day—1 May, and the presidential addresses on New Year's day (all between 1987 and 1993).

Selecting my textual sample was not the last hurdle which needed to be overcome. The main problem proved to be my theoretical framework. I was working with theories created in, and for, the period of late capitalism. They did not and could not take into account the eventuality that a form of socialism existed prior to capitalism and that its oppressive nature devalued a number of the key concepts in these theories, such as, 'equality', 'working class', 'public good' and many others. I had to solve a number of terminological issues for that reason, and also, because these intellectual concepts of ideology and discourse had developed in isolation from contemporary social and political debates. Petr Fidelius articulates this problem with irony in his essay on the principles of communist language, when he calls it the 'principle of the "big axe"':

According to this principle, humankind lives in two 'radically different' worlds, which have nothing in common. This severance is of 'class' origin, that is, it has its roots in the socio-economic sphere; from there it transfers into all other planes of human existence: *the class axe* reaches also into the political, cultural, ethical and other spheres. There are not and cannot be either shared legal principles or shared morality ... The inevitable consequence of the mental divide of reality is the severance of language. [...] And so, each of the 'worlds' will speak a different 'language'; the same words will become mutually incomprehensible to both sides. Any dialogue is then principally and theoretically impossible, because—according to Mr. Štrougal's famous line—'the content of concepts, as well as the nature of values in question are incompatible'.<sup>20</sup> [...] This 'incompatibility', supposedly, relates only to the issue of ideology; in practice, however, it means that virtually nothing can be talked about, because almost anything that concerns *human life* can become an ideological issue. (Fidelius 1998, 172–73; original emphasis)

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<sup>20</sup> Lubomír Štrougal, Czechoslovak Prime Minister from 1970 till 1988.

That I myself was not entirely exempt from the influence of the 'big axe' principle became obvious whenever I discussed my project with literary or cultural studies specialists from the West. We kept running out of vocabulary: a word, which for them had one meaning, meant something slightly different for me; terms, concepts, and categories did not quite correspond in these East–West discussions, but showed not easily describable differences. Šiklová expressed the same difficulty in an article written in September 1989: 'Conversations with friends from abroad almost always reach the point where I have to explain how many expressions that sound identical to terms used in the West—and are even translated identically—convey an entirely different meaning here' (Šiklová 1992, 181). Terry Eagleton views this issue in terms of 'language', 'discourse' and 'ideology':

A way of putting this point is to suggest that ideology is matter of 'discourse' rather than 'language'. It concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects. [...] The general point, then, is that exactly the same piece of language may be ideological in one context and not in another; ideology is a function of the relation of an utterance to its social context. (Eagleton 1991, 9)

It follows, then, that the same piece of language can have different effects in different ideologies. Every scholar from 'the East' trying to theorise 'the East' and communicate the findings to 'the West' has to face this problem: How much to explain, because what goes without saying in one environment, does not in other? I have already dealt with some of these initial confusions in this introduction, such as the position of 'middlebrow fiction', the significance of billboards, or the nature of censorship. I will address still more problems in Chapter 3.

György Szönyi formulates a similar problem from the 'other side', so to speak: that is, the problem of literary reception and understanding in Central and Eastern Europe without having the experience of the entire history of Western literary theory and the debates within in. He argues for the necessity of pluralism in literary approaches. It seems to him that, in the West, the anti-traditionalist approaches reached a hegemonic position, excluding others:

Of course I do not propose that we in the ex-Eastern-bloc countries deal only with outdated literary theory, but I would suggest that an undistanced assimilation to what nowadays is going on in contemporary theory, especially in England, may lead the unprepared Eastern European viewer to a distorted image about the nature of things and their ideological contexts. (Szönyi 1997, 44)

Thus the problem of 'translating' theoretical concepts is doubly complicated: in the direction from 'the East' to 'the West' and also in the other direction. For a literary critic then, the problem is not only how much to explain, but also to find *balance between literature, politics and the social context*, which means, by definition, a very interdisciplinary approach—to which my own problems with selecting the sample of texts bore witness. This puts the critic in a delicate position as a specialist in literature, who has to intrude into the space of sociologists, historians and political scientists. What makes the position even more risky is that often that which goes without saying is difficult to support with evidence, and one has to judge carefully how far the authority of experience can go.

Erhard Busek, the former Vice-Chancellor of Austria, wrote on the subject of the different meanings of words and their content that: 'communism robbed the peoples in

these countries of their history. The terminology of totalitarian ideology perverted the meaning of key concepts, such as freedom and peace or work and love' (Busek 1998, 48). In a similar vein, this thesis tries to negotiate the terms 'ideology' and 'discourse': it attempts to re-conceptualise ideology for state socialism and bring in gender as a concept which causes difficulty with the existing theoretical models. The fictional texts openly discuss gender roles against the ideological background, but given the ambivalent relation of the state-socialist ideology to the patriarchal discourse, I am interested not only in the agenda of these discussions (that is, what the issues of the feminine, the masculine and the feminist are), but also in their relation to the more complex ideological/discursive environment of state socialism, consumer capitalism and patriarchy. I shall investigate this relation also in two other types of texts—the billboards and the physical education textbooks—while I shall use the newspaper material mainly for illustration and comparison. To illustrate this ideological/discursive environment to the reader, I have included a page of sample quotations from a variety of texts pertaining to a discourse under examination before every analytical chapter, that is, before Chapters 3–9.

The research project finally acquired the following structure: Chapter 2 reviews selected works in the field of the theories of discourse, theories of ideology, and studies in femininity, masculinity and feminism along with a focus on work on popular culture. Chapter 3 explains some of the key terminological difficulties and sets out the theoretical framework of the project focusing on: dominant state-socialist ideology; the resistant discourse of consumer capitalism; and residual patriarchal discourse. The framework is then demonstrated *vis-à-vis* a passage and some further examples from *For Unknown Reasons*.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 investigate the discourses of femininity, masculinity, and feminism, respectively, on the two pre-1989 novels. Chapter 4 argues for the resistant potential of traditional Western femininity in relation to the state-socialist ideology on the example of *For Unknown Reasons*. The relation of three basic models of masculinity discussed in Western literature on the subject to *Memento* are discussed in Chapter 5: 'middle-class' masculinity characterised by work, achievement and promotion in the public world and by moral integrity (Tolson 1987; and others); 'working-class' masculinity characterised by 'an immediate, aggressive style of behaviour, [rather] than a vision of personal achievement' (ibid., 28); and the 'new man' masculinity characterised by representations of men in popular culture as consumer sex objects and challenging the previous forms (Mort 1987; Rutherford 1987; Segal 1990). I propose that the body became the last resort of masculinity in the environment where no alternative acceptable model was available, because the state-socialist ideology co-opted 'middle-class' masculinity and ascribed it to the model members of the working class, 'macho'/'working-class' masculinity was virtually criminalised, and the 'new man' type had not yet reached the Czech Republic.

Chapter 6 returns to *For Unknown Reasons*. If in Chapter 4 I considered the relation between the state-socialist ideology and femininity, that is, a concept from within the residual patriarchal discourse, in this chapter I look at the subversive potential of the text in relation to the patriarchal narrative formula of romance and claim the text for feminism.

I then consider the productive effect of state-socialist ideology in Chapter 7, in my analysis of the concept of physical culture in the standard textbooks for students of physical education in the 1980s. I argue that because the state-socialist ideology created

its own system of binaries (working class = good, bourgeois = bad) and every concept concerning human life had to be clearly placed on one or the other side, the traditional Western division of male/female, mind/body ceased to make sense. The dichotomy between these terms loosened up and the result was a concept of a genderless body. This body was constructed from within (I call it the 'internal' body), through its functions, rather than from the outside, through its appearance.

The 'post-1989 chapters', Chapters 8 and 9 consider some of the tendencies in the discourses of gender after 1989. Chapter 8 argues that Tereza Boučková's *Indian Run* was written in the void of discussions validating women's experience and women's perspective, and yet, it attempts to articulate a discourse of 'female identity'. Chapter 9 looks at femininity and masculinity in a sample of billboards. My argument is that although these images may seem to be standard Western representations of femininity and masculinity, they could have been read differently at the time in the Czech Republic due to the residual expectations and the perception of values from the times of state socialism.

Finally, the Conclusion (Chapter 10) considers the main tendencies in the discourses of gender discernible from the examples discussed in the study and relates them to the changing social and political environment. I propose that the positioning of the residual patriarchal discourse toward the state-socialist ideology could create conditions for women's disempowerment in the post-1989 period.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE INTRODUCTION

And which may be used differently by other authors, or may be new to the reader.

### 'Best-reader'

The most frequently borrowed books from public libraries. (See page 13 of the Introduction.)

### Consumer capitalism

A system of values in which status is acquired through ownership of or access to commodities, that is, a system typical for the period of late capitalism. As it will become apparent in my textual examples, commodities played an important role in the state-socialist ideology and resistance to it. The term 'consumer capitalism' is therefore suitable for this reason and also for convenience, as I needed to distinguish between the state-socialist ideology and 'the other' system of values and expectations. (See note 4 of the Introduction.)

### Middlebrow

The type of fiction which mixes elements of highbrow with elements of the popular. Debra A. Castillo characterised the Spanish audience of such texts as reading

Widely but without high cultural pretensions; [...] proud of their love for serious books, [needing not] to be told who Cervantes or Laforet are, but [...] not required by these works to have to know anything terribly specific or technical about them. (Castillo 1997, 101)

(See page 15 of the Introduction.)

### Patriarchy

A system of thought and social interaction, in which higher status in various spheres of human life is accorded to the male and masculine, and lower to the female and feminine. (See note 4 of the Introduction.)

### Samizdat

'The term *samizdat* (which literally means self-made publication or self-publishing) became popular after the Russian poet Nikolai Glazkov began in the mid-1940s to put the word *samsebiaizdat*—that is, self-publication of one's work—on the front page of his typewritten collection of poems' (Oushakine 2001, 194). Gordon Johnston adds: 'Apart from capturing a clear sense of what the poet was doing, *samebyaizdat* and its acronym are a parody of *Gosizdat*, the acronym for the official [Soviet] state publishing house. Initially, then, samizdat referred to the practice of an author publishing him or herself, but subsequent usage has extended this definition to cover all aspects of the production and distribution of 'unofficial' material. [...] Samizdat refers exclusively to the unofficial production and distribution of text-based material in typed, mimeographed, xeroxed or printed form'. (Johnston 1999, 122–23) (See note 17 of the Introduction.)

**State socialism**

'It is a society distinguished by a state-owned, more or less centrally administered economy, controlled by a dominant communist party which seeks, on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and through the agency of the state, to mobilise the population to reach a classless society'. (Lane 1996, 5) (See note 2 of the Introduction.)

**West, Western**

'West' and 'Western' designates Western-European and North-American thought, as distinct from Central/East European state-socialist thought. (See note 1 of the Introduction.)

