

DOCUMENTS III

A huge and spacious hangar of the largest Prague branch of the ČKD, division Compressors. The humming of the machines tells us that a normal work-day is in progress, but certain strong excitement and tension cannot be covered up. We have been there together with the workers since eight o'clock, and two hours still remain till the precious visit. [...] The last check-up if everything is in order, if there is not something somewhere that would spoil the impression. 'We tried hard', they say, and one can feel that they are proud of their plant, of revolutionary workers' traditions, of the experience and results of, by now, several generations, even if they don't speak about it. World-re-knowned products of the highest quality, come out of their hands. [...]

Suddenly the whole space fills with the blue workers' shirts. Yes, they are coming. Comrade Gorbachev stops. Hand shakes, cordial greetings ... Everybody wants to say at least a few words, to say how good they are, point out their successes. Warm, sincere, comradely atmosphere, such that only the Prague Kolben workers can create. [...]

Mikhail Gorbachev stopped by a huge lathe which was working on a huge six-ton rotor for axial turbo-compressor for the Soviet Union.

Jarmila Houřová and Jiří Stano, 1987. 'Ovzduší soudružské otevřenosti' [The Atmosphere of Comradely Openness], *Rudé právo*, 11 April, p. 1–2.

Miroslav Huščava, the chief foreman of a youth brigade, is a tunnel-grinder. He and his team relentlessly chisel away against the unyielding hard rock, break it off, and grind to free the way to the new reserves of coal. He makes the main, the largest-profile tunnels. He has built dozens of kilometres of underground highways, arteries, shafts, through which carts filled with coal or material stream, through which the fresh air blows, and water and electricity are conducted. [...]

He wanted more than he was doing, more than the technology, with which the tunnel-grinders worked, allowed him to do. They did not receive anything new. Progress had stopped. [...]

Miroslav Huščava, dark-haired, tall, strong man with broad shoulders has all he needs to use his physical assets together with his voice. 'To shout down a team is not a problem, but it's not my style,' he says. He prefers challenges, competitions between teams and individuals. 'Nobody wants to be the second or the last. Everybody naturally tries to be in the lead,' he adds. [...]

They trust him not only as a professional, but also as a communist, a person. Last year Miroslav Huščava became a member of the Presidium of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

Vlastimil Andřle, 1987. 'Sousto pro nás' [A Bite for Us], *Mladá fronta*, 1 May, p. 3.

5. DISCOURSE OF MASCULINITY: CORPOREAL MASCULINITY IN RADEK JOHN'S *MEMENTO* (1986)

As I showed in Chapter 2.4., the writings of Andrew Tolson (1987; first published 1977) and Lynne Segal (1990) were the most useful for the development of a model of masculinity which enabled a productive reading of Czech state-socialist texts. In this chapter I will, first, introduce the significance of my textual example; second, outline some general issues concerning the definition of masculinity; third, discuss my theoretical model of masculinity in more detail and, finally, apply the model to another pre-1989 Czech 'best-reading' novel, Radek John's *Memento* (first published 1986), within the ideological/discursive environment I outlined in Chapter 3.

Memento became a cult reading after its publication and its publishing history is even more impressive than that of *For Unknown Reasons*: the first three editions between 1986 and 1989 reached together the print-run of 330,000 copies, after which the book was reset and published in two other editions.¹ Nevertheless, the text contains hardly any of the complexities and contradictions of *For Unknown Reasons*: it is marked with a consistent narrative perspective, and the plot is driven by a single purpose—to warn against the dangers of drug abuse (it is a 'memento'). Two aspects are relevant to the present research: first, the novel deals with an issue until then considered taboo and supposedly non-existent in state-socialist societies (I will go into more detail in the textual analysis); and, second, as my discussion of the text will show, the narrative perspective is male and the protagonist's development (more appropriately, his regression) is conceived in terms of his masculinity. The first aspect, undoubtedly, constituted the popularity of the novel. For my research, it is important that the novel was written with a political purpose and read politically. The breakthrough of a taboo topic, however, had limitations: despite the open social criticism, it still had to be packaged in such a way that it did not contradict the official ideology—as was the case of *For Unknown Reasons* or any other officially published book.

As to the discourse of masculinity, reading a state-socialist text through this lens required trying to situate the text in the debates of Western masculinity, as no research on Czech men and masculinity is available.² Jeff Hearn (1996) points out the complexity of approaches to masculinity and its definition in contemporary research:

Masculinity and now masculinities are concepts that are used in a variety of ways, and with a variety of frameworks. These include psychological characteristics, gendered experiences, gender identity, sex-role socialisation, gendered behaviours, psychoanalysis, power analysis and institutional practices. In many of these uses and formulations, the idea of masculinity acts as a reference point against which behaviours and identities can be evaluated.

¹ Publishing history: 1986, 1st ed., Prague: Československý spisovatel (20,000 copies); 1987, 2nd ed., Prague: Československý spisovatel (50,000 copies); 1987, reprinted (60,000 copies); 1989, 3rd ed., Prague: Československý spisovatel (200,000 copies); 1989, 4th ed., Prague: Iris (print-run unknown); 1995, 1st ed., Ostrava: Středoevropské nakladatelství (print-run unknown). Apart from the Czech editions, the novel was published in Slovak (Bratislava: Smena, 1989; print-run unknown), German (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1989; print-run unknown), Russian (Moscow: Raduga; 100,000 copies), Ukrainian (Kyiv: Molod', 1990; 65,000 copies), Lithuanian (Vilnius: Vagos, 1989; 30,000 copies), and Latvian (Riga: Spriditis, 1990; 50,000 copies).

² I am aware of three research projects, which are under way, on Czech men—one concerning biographies of men in their 50s, one on the army, and one with a more general focus on masculinity—but no results have been published yet.

Masculinity effectively acts as a normative and indeed culturally specific standard. (Hearn 1996, 202–03)

By mentioning the cultural specificity of masculinity, Hearn joins those authors who agree that masculinity is not some immanent or unchangeable concept which all men possess and the task of the theorist is to analyse it and describe it, but that it is something which is created in social consciousness. Other authors (for example, Anthony Easthope 1990), while agreeing with the changing and constructed nature of masculinity, emphasise also its invisible quality. By that they mean that masculinity presents itself as being the objective, neutral point of view—the norm. This is certainly the problem in *Memento*, as my textual examples will show.

It is obviously beyond the scope and even purpose of the present study to cover the entire range of the definitions of masculinity/masculinities by contemporary research. However, from among the numerous researchers, I would like to mention the approach of David S. Gutterman (1994) who treats masculinity as a *discourse*, constantly changing and modified by a number of other discourses, while also allowing certain agency to the subjects. This last point is then particularly well elaborated upon by R. W. Connell who emphasises social *practice* as constitutive of masculinity and femininity (Connell 1995, 72). This seems to be the most suitable approach for the present study, while the actual concept of masculinity is perhaps best defined by Hearn who specifies that (in sociological literature) masculinity is 'generally used to refer to the cultural construction of men, the construction of men as gender' (Hearn 1996, 204–05).

These studies, apart from analysing concrete instances of masculinity, attempted to conceptualise masculinity as a whole. In the discussions of masculinity, they were preceded by, perhaps less theoretical and more analytical, studies which were not so much concerned with *what* masculinity, or masculinities, exactly are, but *how* they are structured. Several main models of post-war Western masculinity emerge from these works: 'middle-class' masculinity characterised by work, achievement and promotion in the public world and by moral integrity (Tolson 1987); 'working-class' masculinity characterised by 'an immediate, aggressive style of behaviour, [rather] than a vision of personal achievement' (ibid., 28), with working-class peer-groups constituting masculinity by acted-out collective toughness; and the 'new man' masculinity characterised by representations of men in popular culture as consumer sex objects and challenging the previous forms since the 1980s (Mort 1987, 194; Rutherford 1987, 38; Segal 1990, 292). In all these forms there are always aspects of what I would call the 'psychological' model of masculinity, that is, a set of personality features which are considered masculine, while this categorisation is formed on the basis of already existing representations of gender. It is these three types of masculinity: the 'middle-class', the 'working-class' and the 'new-man', against which I will read *Memento*, although the class-definitions are somewhat problematic in the state-socialist Czech environment.³

If we take these key models of post-war Western masculinity and confront them with the pre-1989 Czech situation, we find that the dominant state-socialist ideology co-opted the type of 'middle-class' masculinity for its communist hero, while banishing the 'working-class'/'macho' variant as unsuitable for a model socialist citizen. Meanwhile, the

³ I will use these terms throughout, despite the problem with their application in the state-socialist environment. To emphasise that they do not exactly relate to a particular class, but they stand for a type described by Tolson (1987), I will use them in quotation marks. I will also add the attribute 'macho' to the 'working-class' type to rule out any confusion as to what it refers to.

'new man' did not arrive until some years after 1989, due partly to the general economic backwardness of the country compared to the West, partly because of the usual delay with which Western cultural models arrive there, and partly because the 'new man' carries too much symbolism of consumer pleasure and individual success, rather than the pursuit of goals linked to the public good.⁴ However, it will be important to see what filled the void of any acceptable alternative masculinity in the ideological/discursive environment against which I explore my texts.

My analysis of *Memento* suggests that masculinity did not become the site of resistance against the dominant state-socialist ideology in the way femininity seemed to be. Instead, masculinity becomes focused on the physical body, because the body is felt as the only sure locus of an autonomous masculinity. I will spend the rest of this chapter discussing these speculations through specific textual examples.

When I first began to study masculinity in pre-1989 Czech Republic, I thought that state socialism practically 'took away' traditional masculinity from men and, as a result, there was no masculine image in popular culture (that is, if we do not count the Soviet 'super-hero' defying pain and striving for a better world, as was ubiquitous in Soviet war films fed to Czech schoolchildren). This initial observation was based on the experiences of my seminar/workshop on 'Gender and the Media' for secondary school teachers in the Czech Republic which I taught from 1997 to 1999. The participants had always been mostly women, with a few men among them. Every time I arrived at the section on masculinity in pre-1989 Czech media (which followed the section on 'femininity'), I asked the participants what they remembered as a masculine ideal presented in the media of the time. They searched their memories, usually listed a number of Czech soap operas and, invariably, failed to come up with any distinct image. In one or two cases, they mentioned—with a smirk—the main character from a television mini-series about life and work problems at a district Communist Party office.⁵ This character was played by a middle-aged, distinguished-looking actor and he could be described as a textbook archetype of a communist hero: committed to his work, sensitive to, and understanding of, the various personal problems of the people in the committee: just, direct and of a strong, incorruptible character.

This example seemed to support the view which came up in private conversations with several Czech feminist researchers (some of whom reported what their male friends had told them): state socialism defined men so strongly as workers and soldiers (that is, as defenders of the country and of socialism that there was no place left for any other aspects of traditional (or 'new') masculinity in the official discourse.⁶ Women, although also defined as workers, were defined as mothers as well (and once they were seen as

⁴ The consumerist orientation of the 'new man' would be inappropriate for the cumbersome, centrally-planned economy.

⁵ The character of Pláteník (Jaroslav Moučka) from the series *Okres na severu* (*A Northern District*), broadcast on Czechoslovak Television repeatedly throughout the 1980s (Sokolovský 1980).

⁶ The rhetoric of defence was not limited to men, as seen, for example, in the emphasis on the relationship between physical fitness and defence of the socialist system shows in the textbooks (for both males and females) used in courses on physical education in the 1980s (Šprynar 1983, passim). The army service, however, applied (and still applies) only to men: not only had they to serve in the army for one or two years, but they were obliged to participate in 'refresher' training every few years, they were obliged to hand in their draft card before travel abroad and could not go abroad at all for several years if they had served in certain units. All male university students had to go to the army for one day a week for two years of their studies and spend also a portion of their summers there. The army and the definition of men as soldiers was thus present all the time in ordinary everyday interaction.

mothers, other parts of the feminine discourse were available to them / imposed on them, too). Hana Havelková (1993a) points out that, in the resistance against the official ideology, women could withdraw quite legitimately to their feminine role as mothers and homemakers, because the family was held as a high value in the state-socialist system (she uses the term 'cult of motherhood'). Men, however, did not have an alternative place in discourse to which they could retreat; no form of masculinity outside the official ideology was available to them.⁷ This signals that there must have been some idea of masculinity somewhere. The reason why either myself, the attendants of my seminar, or my feminist colleagues could not see it was that we looked at it from some perspective which did not exist before 1989. I turned to the public addresses by leading male-politicians for clues to the location of masculinity in state socialism.

I looked at the May Day news coverage and the 'New Year's Presidential Addresses' between 1987–89 and found they all had two main features: One, apart from the expected emphasis on the 'working class' values and defining citizens as workers (reducing 'the human being to labour force' as Havel put it—Havel 1990), in their subtext, they were addressed to (working) men, rather than to citizens in general.⁸ For example, the articles published as part of the May Day coverage, tended to feature mostly men and their professions (as if it were enough that women and their professions were given prominent space two months earlier, on International Women's Day). Second, when the politicians listed the various categories of citizens, whom they were addressing, they placed women into a separate category—outside the sphere of work ('the millions of our citizens-communists, members of other political parties and non-party members, workers, co-operative farmers, intelligentsia, *the youth and women*, members of both of our brother-nations and all ethnic groups'—Jakeš 1988; my emphasis). These citizens-men were conceived of in terms of work, discipline and work initiative (the buzz-word in all of the speeches was *perestroika*). There was no mention of human relationships or moral values, let alone of fatherhood (as was the case of motherhood being usually mentioned together with women-workers in the International Women's Day articles). Even ecology was mentioned only in one speech, and that was addressed to women on the International Women's Day (Adamec 1989b).⁹ The characteristics—work, discipline, work initiative—are not unlike those listed for the 'middle-class' masculinity outlined by Tolson (1987). In state-socialist ideology, however, we have the significant shift that this kind of masculinity is addressed primarily

⁷ Havelková's argument is that women could use the excuse of family duties, for example, for not accepting party membership. Thus they participated less in the system. Men were coerced more into the co-operation with the system, because they could not fall back on their fatherhood. However, she also emphasises that, by rejecting party membership, women 'thus deliberately gave up the chance for any greater job advancement and, above all, the chance of participating in management' (p.70).

⁸ I used my own translation of Havel from the Czech document, rather than the published English version, because the translator of the English text used the word 'man' for the Czech *člověk*—'human being', which, although of masculine gender, means something else than *muž*—man. Using the published English version would add an unintended gender twist to the argument.

⁹ I looked at a total of nine speeches: 'New Year's Presidential Addresses' (Husák 1987b; 1988a; and 1989); and May Day speeches by leading politicians (Štrougal 1987; Husák 1987a; Jakeš 1988; Štrougal 1988; Jakeš 1989; Adamec 1989a).

to the working class (officially to everybody including women, but those properties are in particular examples of the rhetoric mostly framed within the working-class context).¹⁰ For example, in another article, one reporting on Mikhail Gorbachev's visit of a heavy-machinery plant in Prague, the atmosphere created by the (male) workers is described as follows: 'one can feel that they are proud of their plant, of revolutionary workers' traditions, of the experience and results of, by now, several generations, even if they don't speak about it' (Houřová and Stano 1987). There was also a formal way of linking the desired qualities to the working class. Traditionally, selected individuals were awarded the title 'Hero of Socialist Work' at the occasion of the May Day. Their biographies and interviews with some of them always appeared in the newspapers. Although not all of them were people in working-class professions, these were given prominence in the press and, among them, men were more frequently represented than women, despite the fact that women formed almost half of the workforce at the time. In 1987, the interviews were conducted with a bricklayer foreman, a miner, and a female cattle attendant (Andrle 1987; Šabata 1987; Štěpánek 1987); in 1988 the selection was remarkably similar: a miner, a chairman of an agricultural co-operative, and a female textile worker (Procházková 1988; Šabata 1988; Štěpánek 1988).

These examples show that desirability of the promotion in the public sphere, one aspect of traditional masculinity according to Tolson (1987), probably became dubious for many men (and for the protagonist of *Memento*, as I will show below) since it was co-opted by the ideal of the communist hero (see also the television mini-series example above). At another level, and I discussed it in Chapter 3, the unequal association of men with work, women with home, and the practical exclusion of men from the private sphere in a system, which proclaimed equality of men and women and considered the family a universal value, was due to the residual patriarchal discourse: it remained 'natural' and unspoken that it was women who were more responsible for the family and men for the world of work. Nevertheless, if this aspect of masculinity could be attractive to many men, state socialism did not allow them the full realisation of their role in the private sphere: the role of a man as the breadwinner in the family, became a mere figure of speech in real life since few families could afford to live on only one income, although the concepts of the male breadwinner or the 'head of the family' still belonged to the masculine discourse carried over from the residual patriarchal discourse.

What this amounts to is that the discourse of masculinity did not become a locus of potential resistance to the ideology of state socialism, as was the case of femininity. Instead, the result was a weakening and narrowing of masculine identity: a male individual could not identify with the kind of masculinity offered by the patriarchal discourse from the time before the communist take-over without either identifying with

¹⁰ Jiřina Šiklová offers an accurate summary of the everyday political speak: 'Socialism was built in the name of (and allegedly in favour of) the working class; workers and children from working-class families were preferentially enrolled in schools to acquire a better social position; the state boasted about having a "working-class president"; the term "working-class government" was used frequently' (Šiklová 1999b, 156). This association of the state-socialist ideology with the 'working class' will explain the generally negative overtones of the phrase 'working class' for the majority of the Czech public to the Western reader, for whom the phrase may have very different connotations.

the state-socialist ideology or being constantly reminded of his own 'insufficient masculinity' because of his practical economic equality with women.¹¹

The exploration of newspaper articles clearly revealed why masculinity was invisible to me, my students and the Czech feminists I asked for their perceptions of masculinity during state socialism. The problem originated in our biased definition of masculinity. It will become apparent if I now look back at the example of the male television-mini-series character cited earlier: we were considering it from the point of view of the new type of masculinity (the 'new man'—that is, in terms of the psychological characteristics, gendered behaviour, sexuality and 'the body', criteria listed by the later researchers in masculinity, such as Hearn 1996), rather than from the perspective of the social/institutional masculinities analysed by Andrew Tolson (1987). The socialist texts, however, were offering masculinity in the way suggested by Easthope (1990)—as something 'natural', not really there, something which is not yet described—and very much in terms of the traditional 'middle-class' and 'working-class/macho' masculinities. In other words, we were looking for a form of masculinity in the texts which was not there (that is, the 'new man') and did not see the other, invisible, masculinity (or masculinities). The argument about the 'disappearance of masculinity' then has to be adjusted to conditions and criteria which do not necessarily involve 'new man' masculinity. It means that, in the pre-1989 texts, the masculine discourse is a powerfully overdetermined (state-socialist) social and political context which reveals the workings of patriarchal power whilst keeping silent about 'men' themselves. It may be usefully confronted with the forms of 'middle-' and 'working-class' masculinities presented by Tolson, but it does not operate within representations of men as consumerist (sex) objects.

Michal, the main protagonist of *Memento*, engages in a number of relationships and experiences in a quest for self-identification: with his father and mother; his girlfriend Eva; a friend and later an adversary, Richard; with drugs, his body, violent masculinity, and the challenge of prison environment. Throughout the novel he provides reflections on these relationships, mostly by means of flashbacks, and often with intense scrutiny, in an attempt to find either where he went wrong or how far on the way down the 'dark gorge of the toboggan' (John 1989, 168) he was at which point.

I already mentioned the novel's consciousness-raising goal against drug addiction and the didactic authorial intentions suggested already in the novel's title: it is a 'memento', that is, a 'warning' (the book is dedicated 'to the dead and to the living'). In a barely fictional rendition of 'diligently collected material' documenting actual events, the author wants to warn readers against the dangers of ignorance when it comes to drug addiction ('a social evil which not even a socialist society escaped' (Bílek 1989, 282), but this was very much a taboo topic at the time: 'Who would have known to what problems I am plummeting then? One couldn't meet anybody as rotten through as I am now in Bohemia then. Or perhaps it was kept secret if there was someone like that?' (John 1989, 36). The uncovering of a taboo, rather than artistic qualities, was perhaps the key to the

¹¹ This statement should not be interpreted as saying that men's and women's income levels were the same. Havelková (1993b) and other researchers document that, statistically, men's salaries were higher than women's—just like in the West. What the statement about economic equality means is that the salaries, in general, were so low that it made the husband and wife dependent on each other—they were equal in their dependence.

success of the novel. It was read in the context of suppressed topics and of the uniform grey, about which I wrote in Chapter 3. Concerning the former, various issues were suppressed during state socialism despite the repeated emphasis on how it is important 'thoroughly to deal with all the negative phenomena, problems and shortcomings which slow down further healthy development of society' (Jakeš 1989). As to the latter, all the political speeches I examined are equally 'uniformly grey': there is no difference from one speech to the next, nothing about any concrete achievements or directions. It is a rhetoric of promise and vague pressure. Something along the lines: 'we are getting ready for *perestroika*, but without your work we cannot do it'. *Memento's* anti-hero is placed visibly into this environment of taboos and grey.

It is a story of a reasonably gifted young man, Michal, who becomes a drug addict without knowing it when he, as a secondary school (*gymnázium*) student, meets a group of 'young people of the kind [he] hadn't met before: magnanimous, aloof, above problems; and yet, friendly [...] and they did not abuse anything one had told them about oneself' (John 1988, 35–36).¹² The group is lead by Richard, a worker in pharmaceutical industry, who provides drugs to his 'friends' basically to make experiments on the effects of the various drugs on them. At the beginning, however, Michal thinks that Richard acts out of generosity and he is full of excitement over his new friends. The story places a lot of emphasis on Michal's innocence in becoming an addict ('Did we know, then, at the beginning, where this was going to go? Did anybody try to tell us?'—John 1989, 116); on the reasons why he joined the group (he thought that he had finally found friends who liked him, who were not judgemental and with whom he could relax); and how there was no way out for him without professional help and understanding from those around him once he was addicted. His fall is predicted by a specialist doctor at an early stage of his addiction: 'the longer you dope the smaller chance of a cure you have. You no longer have a chance to influence your condition by your own will' (John 1989, 46). This entire setting—the ignorant innocence, lack of understanding from the family, search for belonging and helplessness in the struggle against the drug—make Michal into a *victim*, although not a likeable character. It can be suggested that by this alone he acquires a 'feminine' characteristic which testifies to the emasculation of men by state socialism.¹³ Michal is entirely subjected to the forces he cannot control: society makes drugs into a taboo and pretends that they do not even exist in a socialist state ('If somebody knows about it here, they think that a druggie has to look like an apocalyptic monster'—John 1989, 116), and because of that he cannot gain understanding of his condition, and because of *that* he progresses to his unavoidable self-destruction. His 'career' proceeds from soft drugs to hard drugs, punctuated by spells in prison and detoxication treatment centres, to his final reduction to the state of a vegetable who 'is unable to ask when he needs to defecate, he is incontinent' (*ibid.*, 277).

¹² At the time of the story, *gymnázium* was a four-year secondary school for young people from approximately 14–18, which had a strong academic focus and was intended to prepare the students for university study.

¹³ Havelková suggests that the state oppressed both sexes and, therefore, women's issues in the Czech Republic cannot be studied separately from men's. While I do not entirely endorse this approach, I find her formulation of the state paternalism illuminating. She says: 'The totalitarian government thoroughly suspended individual subjectivity in the form of people's autonomous development as citizens, as owners, as thinking beings, as acting subjects, and as men and women shaping their own lives' (Havelková 1993a, 66).

None of Michal's relationships with people is permanent: he rejects his parents, and finds out about Richard's real motivations. The only relationship he desperately tries to maintain—with Eva—ends in Eva's violent death (perhaps suicide, perhaps murder). Each of these relationships, including the relationships to the drugs, to his body, and to the violent prison environment, can be understood in terms of particular models of masculinity, which he either rejects or loses, so that there is nothing left for him at the end. Although the book was possibly intended for a general young audience, without any gender discrimination, the whole story and Michal's relationships are so much embedded in discourse(s) of masculinity, as I will show below, that the woman-reader is inevitably alienated and excluded, at least in part, from the text.

Michal's relationship to his mother moves along the lines suggested by Jonathan Rutherford (1987): he has to reject his mother in order to assert his own masculinity. Seventeen-year old Michal reflects on his mother's ideas about him: 'What did you want me to be like? A loving son forever. Unconditionally. Unshakeably. Just not to grow up. Not to be independent' (John 1989, 40). The mother's care for Michal, her wish to protect him, keep him for herself even at the cost of countering secretly, first, father's restrictions imposed on Michal and, then, the father's eventual denouncement of his son are all brought up frequently in the text. Often it is in the context of Michal's efforts to break free from parental concern—as in the following quotation taken from Michal's numerous thoughts on his relationship with his mother:

Would you be afraid to mention anything to father, if I just ran out now, mom? You've kept everything secret from him for half a year. [...] This is my chance. I know I can patch it up with you somehow. If you at all find out that I disappeared. I just need to wait for mom to fall asleep and then take off over the balcony. (John 1989, 42)

Motherly love is seen so much in negative terms, as an overwhelmingly restraining and suffocating influence, that it enraged one critic: 'And that's the *memento*, dear moms, love your offsprings within limits or, better, don't love them at all, or else they end up like Michal' (Mikula 1987). Nevertheless, there are suggestions that blaming the mothers is not just the author's personal bias, but a sign of the prevailing masculine point of view in state socialism. The same argument appeared also in a full-page article in a serious newspaper, which came out about a year after the first publication of *Memento*, and written obviously on the basis of information obtained from drug specialists: 'Sometimes expulsion from school can sever the last thread enabling return, sometimes motherly care preventing the boy from becoming independent (as in, "who would cook and wash for him!?"') can be mortally dangerous' (Pecháčková 1987).

However, Michal's rejection of his mother is more than the 'necessary' masculine deed of rejecting the first woman in a man's life (Horrocks 1994). In compliance with the state-socialist ideology's rhetoric of 'gender equality', Michal's mother takes on the masculine characteristics of advancement in the public sphere and personal integrity ('from a typist to a departmental manager'—John 1989, 269), while she is also the 'heroic mother' whose love for her son never wavers. She keeps trying to help him until his last conscious moment in the story. This is what she tells him repeatedly, even after his return from the second prison sentence, when his father has discontinued all contact with him: 'Do you believe me that I want to help you?' (ibid., 268). She is the 'communist hero' as well as the usual traditional patriarchal model of a woman devoted to her family. Thus, by rejecting her, Michal rejects also the values embraced by the

traditional 'middle-class' masculinity represented by *both* of his parents. Given the position of these values in the state-socialist ideology, we might therefore conclude that he is also rejecting that ideology, making this a politically subversive text. I would suggest, however, that if there is such dual rejection, it is very indirect, mediated through an image of a void: the values of traditional masculinity are no longer adequate for him and his generation, but there is nothing else replacing them. Society, and by implication the 'paternalistic' state-socialist system, does not offer an alternative. I will discuss the implication of this 'emptiness' further in the chapter.

Michal's father, a former pilot, fills the traditional 'middle-class' masculinity proposed by Tolson to the full. He is not given much space 'on stage', he has hardly any speaking part, but he is omnipresent in that Michal confronts with him all the time, as well as he is there for a confrontation with the reader:

No pot belly or slacking shoulders. Always strict, undefeated, head up.—We survived concentration camps! And twenty five years in the cockpit! What have you achieved that you look at me with that all-knowing look and make judgements? (John 1989, 31)

Similar to the image of the mother, the father is not really seen as an ideal, although he represents the 'correct values', but again as a limiting influence, creating an environment from which Michal wants to escape. The father is threatening, and imprisoning: he presents himself to Michal as the model, and issues punishments and restrictions for Michal if he does not meet the expectations ('He remembered when father punished him by shaving his head after a teacher complained that Michal Otava and Olina Machová walk arm in arm during recess.'—John 1989, 40). The narrator's disapproval of the father's attitude is not articulated directly, but becomes obvious from the confrontation with the reasons why Michal joined the group of young people with whom he began to take drugs. It is the rejection of one set of values, one form of masculinity, with which Michal does not want to identify, and a search for something with which he can identify. The full expression of Michal's social dissatisfaction which brought him to drugs would probably be too politically subversive. To reduce the legitimacy of such a statement, it is put in the mouth of Richard, the villain, when he is subjected to questioning at a detoxication centre: 'What can you offer instead of the adventure with drugs? I prefer several years of beautiful, exceptional life full of euphoria and then death, to a long grey boredom!' (John 1989, 231). Significantly, Michal's reflection on this outburst is not its rejection, but a thought that Richard was not going to get out of the de-toxication centre if he continued to speak like this.

I pointed out earlier that the other type of traditional masculinity in Tolson (1987), the 'working-class' / 'macho' form, characterised, among others, by indulgence in verbal violence, was contrary to the image of a responsible socialist citizen. We can see the negative evaluation of that masculinity in *Memento*. The violent masculine discourse is relegated to the prison environment and to those drug addicts who became desperate for the drug. Michal's first encounter with it occurs during his first term in prison when the 'seniors', that is, longer-serving inmates, 'teach' him the rules:

'Gim'me the glass... [...] Clever. Very clever. Wire handles so that the young man did not burn his little fingers. Oops...' Michal's hands shot forward to catch

the falling glass. But to catch a glass a senior wants to break? Brazenness which one might not survive, his brain signalled. (John 1989, 159)

His second encounter with the truly violent masculine discourse comes when he becomes a regular among desperate drug addicts. Once it almost cost him his life when an addict suffering from withdrawal symptoms forced his way into Michal's flat and demanded drugs from him under the threat of stabbing him with a knife: "Bullshit," shouts the idiot. "I'll sink it into you, do you understand?" he changed his tone into a threatening whisper. His hands are shaking. [...] Eyes widened as if by fear. Not eyes. Irises. A withdrawal, Michal realised' (John 1989, 204).

Michal's fall into these environments is an indicator for the stage of his self-destruction. The violence—both verbal and actual—stands for social marginalisation and loss of humanity. It is often juxtaposed with Michal's pretended acceptance of the violent discourse (in prison, his macho act helps him survive) and an assertion of his own intellectual superiority (he makes 'the cleanest "*perník*" in Prague'—John 1989, 257).¹⁴ He needs this affirmation of his abilities to persuade himself that he does not belong to that 'fallen' world yet. Until the very end, he clearly does not want to belong to that discourse, that 'version' of masculinity—although the longer his condition persists the more doubts he has about his ability to stop his fall: 'Freedom! Finally, the jail gate closed. And I outside it. Never to come back no matter what! The same resolution as the last time?' (John 1989, 259). He makes promises to himself not to get into trouble again, but of course, as the reader knows, he is bound to fail.

The discourse of violent or 'macho' masculinity has two functions here. First, it is used as a *memento* for the reader: it is a threat to the reader's own 'humanity'. Second, it is an 'enemy' that needs to be defeated (only the reader knows that the fight is lost for a drug addict, Michal does not know that). The function of the enemy fits into another part of the masculine discourse: 'Like the Arthurian knight at arms, forever at war, with oneself, with women, with honour, the contemporary guardians of true manhood still believe that living one's life as a man involves toughness, struggle and conquest' (Segal 1990, 104).

The whole story has a typical masculine-quest structure in that Michal's relationship with the drug (and with all the accessories which come with it, that is, including the violence, the prison and the detoxication treatments) is structured like a series of battles stretching over a number of years. After each lost battle Michal makes resolutions to win, as in the following quotation recording Michal's thoughts during his second post-detention detoxication treatment:

To get over another hundred, hundred and fifty morning warm ups. How many have I already gone through? In jail, at Apolinář, in the army, in summer camps.¹⁵ A million of them. What's a hundred more compared to that? I have to bloody manage it. I will manage it. Pull my will together. Pull myself together. In the end, the doctors themselves will recommend the cancellation of the institutional treatment and my release. To be with Eva again. A new beginning. But without 'things!' (John 1989, 232)

¹⁴ '*Perník*' is a nickname for a certain kind of a home-made drug, which at that time was not on the list of illegal substances, although it was lethal.

¹⁵ Apolinář is a colloquialism for a detoxication treatment centre in Prague.

The *masculinity* of the reader is appealed to by the idea of fight, but he is also given his warning, by the explicit suggestion at the beginning that the fight is lost. The warning is against the loss of humanity through the loss of appropriate masculinity: the man is already defeated, he is 'helpless' (a feminine characteristic) no matter what he does.

The attack on Michal's masculinity and his search for belonging continue through Michal's friendship with Richard. Initially, Richard makes a more or less positive impression through Michal's eyes. Michal is impressed by Richard's attitude to drug-taking as enabling 're-imprint' or 'broadening of consciousness' (John 1989, 33).¹⁶ Richard is also the 'bloke who had been giving [Michal] "things" just like that for half a year' (ibid., 51). However, he gradually changes into a monster who cold-bloodedly experiments on humans. His beastliness would be just another hazard which comes along with getting into a drug-taking gang, if it were not for the fact that Richard is also homosexual.

Richard is portrayed as a stereotype of a gay as expressed by the homosexual poet John Addington Symonds 'lust written on his face [...] pale, languid, scented, effeminate, oblique in expression' (quoted in Segal 1990, 139): 'That soft smile of his, that attentiveness, the gesture with which he lights up a cigarette...' (John 1989, 54). What he implies is that, of course, these features could only belong to a homosexual and if he were more attentive to them at the beginning, he would have known what Richard's aim was (Eva tells astonished Michal that the friend who brought him among the group did so because '[he] knew that Richard would find him attractive'—ibid., 54). Richard's effeminate features and interest in literature are dangerously associated with his warped character. His smile is 'diabolic' (ibid., 53) and Michal reflects on him with an early hindsight: 'He assessed our condition accurately. He knew exactly when to stop supplying us' (ibid., 58). What he means is that Richard made him so dependent on the drug that he is now capable of engaging in a homosexual activity with Richard in exchange for drugs. Later, Richard's intentions are alluded to in relation to another young man when Richard responds to the young man's request for some specific drug: 'You have your chance', Richard smiles at Roman. 'You know the conditions ...' (ibid., 112).

The way Richard is represented shows profound homophobia which threatens 'established values, and in particular [...] ideologies confining sexuality to procreation and the family (Segal 1990, 158).¹⁷ While this is likely to be a message for the reader, from Michal's point of view these values are not really a concern. They are a part of the kind of masculinity represented by his father—which he rejected. Michal recollects several times how he agreed to accept Richard's proposal for intimacy in one of his desperate hunts for a drug, but it takes several flashbacks in the text before *most* of the story is revealed. Even then, it is such a horror and taboo that it cannot be even fully expressed.¹⁸ Michal never gets further in his recollections than 'he remembered every detail of that afternoon. Every fraying spot of the throw with a floral pattern' (John 1989,

¹⁶ Richard refers to the American psychologist Timothy Leary and his research on psychedelic drugs in the 1950s and 1960s.

¹⁷ Segal is summarising George Weinberg the 'inventor' of the term 'homophobia'.

¹⁸ While the gay rights movement spread widely in the US during the 1970s, homosexuality began to be addressed with extreme caution in the Czech media as late as in the 1980s. Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1961, but remained on the list of illnesses until 1993 'when the World Health Organization officially removed homosexuality from its list of illnesses' (Sokolová 2002).

79). The 'throw with a floral pattern', of course, stands for the act itself and by concentrating on the couch before his eyes, Michal displaces the act from his body onto another object.¹⁹ Even with the displacement, a recollection of the event during one of his drugged states makes him feel polluted. He cuts his wrists with a knife and watches the blood stream out and, with it, 'all the filth'. He wants to 'rinse that afternoon off himself' (ibid.).

Here we get to the threat that homosexuality presents from Michal's point of view (as well as it reinforces the message to the reader): it threatens the only 'belonging' that Michal has left, his relationship to his own body. Given Richard's character, it is implied that homosexuality threatens also humanity. Subjecting to it means the rock bottom of one's fall, the ultimate disintegration of one's personality: if all the 'representational forms' of masculinity were either lost or rejected, the only one that was left was the 'corporeal' masculinity, the closest to oneself because *physically* close. Rutherford makes the claim that within 'dominant meanings of masculinity' bodies are supposed to be subjected to men's wills:

Flesh, sexuality, emotionality, thus become seen as uncontrollable forces and a source of anxiety. Male sexuality becomes not so much a concern of our relationships with other people, but with ourselves: a struggle between our intellects and libidos. We live within a culture that alienates men from their bodies and sexuality. We learn to repress them because they are the antithesis of what it means to be masculine. It's a repression that we project onto others. Our struggle for self-control is acted out as mastery over others. (Rutherford 1987, 26)

Michal's destruction is in that his will could no longer control the body—the need for his drug is stronger than his will when he submits to Richard's homosexual desire. Earlier in the novel, Michal was also unable to control his heterosexual intercourse: the very first time he has the long-awaited opportunity to make love to Eva (after a mere half a year on drugs) his body is incapable of orgasm due to his intoxicated state. Apart from the loss of control over a man's body in the *story* of *Memento*, the *text* exploits also the taboo of the intimacy with a man's body and transgresses the taboo by explicit descriptions of the physical details and implications of the actions done to the body. Throughout the novel, the text proliferates in graphic detail about the state of Michal's body and his bodily functions. Michal contemplates himself as 'a brainwashed limping druggie' with 'liver gone, veins gone, abscesses, leg ulcers ...' (John 1989, 246, 251–52). The importance of the body for one's personal integrity (and humanity) is further reinforced by Michal's aversion to his body disfigured by the effects of needle inflammations. He is painfully aware of the appearance of his body and is humiliated by the presence of healthy young women-nurses around him even in a half-dead state when he is taken to an emergency ward in hospital:

Suddenly Michal longs to faint. Not to see. A helpless famished naked corpse strewn with wounds and scars among girls around twenty. [...] 'Nurse, a catheter,' says the doctor. Before Michal can take a breath, somebody's hands take him by his genitals. Maybe the hands of the nurse? He closes his eyes with shame. (John 1989, 20)

Although the danger of homosexuality was very much expressed in the traditional opposition of femininity and masculinity (homosexuals being effeminate and therefore not masculine), in the scene from the hospital, Michal reflects on his *body in relation* to women, while his *situation* is represented *in the opposition* of masculinity and femininity (a more general ambiguity concerning masculinity, observed, for example, by Roger Horrocks 1994, 48). The uttermost debasement for Michal is in that

¹⁹ The way the event is recorded in the text reminds one of the old Hollywood camera tricks to deliver the message that sex between heterosexual partners happened before explicit sexual scenes became permissible.

his *body* is not attractive to the healthy young nurses, while the reader is shown Michal as helpless, and what is more, in need of help from women, that is, in the most non-masculine situation.

The physical incapacitation carries over to the relationship with Eva. The inability to maintain the relationship is manifest in his inability to have sex and to produce a child. Michal 'cannot remember when [they] last made love' (John 1989, 101) because their sole concern is to obtain a daily dose of the drug. He answers to himself: 'When we both managed to have a whole evening without a drug' (*ibid.*). Both of their bodies are unattractive because they are emaciated and destroyed: 'It wouldn't be a problem to count [Eva's] ribs—like on a model skeleton during a biology lesson. And her breasts are just the two tips sticking out against the world' (John 1989, 53). Yet, Michal clings to this relationship as, apart from his body, the only 'belonging' left for him. He attempts to impose restrictions on them as to what drugs they would take, so that they could perhaps cure themselves—particularly, at the beginning of their relationship:

'We have to quit! [...] Right now. Before it's too late, Eva. You have to be with me!' He pressed to her as if he could protect her and himself against everything in this way. [...] 'I don't want you to become a druggie.' [...] 'Promise that you'll never start with shots!' (John 1989, 48)

Michal comes up with a similar outburst at every stage of their relationship (for example, when he is released from the army), or after every lost 'battle' (such as, when he is released from detoxication treatment). In this one relationship he wants to behave according to some norms of masculinity: he wants to be rational and protective of Eva. He is often overwhelmed by the desire 'to hold her and protect her against everything: against the whole world, against herself and against himself' (John 1989, 86). While he continues making plans for them and wants to protect Eva till the end, he becomes less confident that he would succeed as his condition worsens and he remembers all the times that he failed to stand up to his resolutions:

Already that evening we took a shot to celebrate freedom with the last of our supply. Just for once. And next time?—Again just for once, of course. Not more than one trip a week. ... But we were promising that to ourselves already when we were on opiates. (John 1989, 191)

He wants to regain control over himself and somebody else. He has spells when he wants a child, but it does not seem that he wants to be a father himself. Rather, it sounds as if he wants Eva to have a child: 'Suddenly he didn't want anything more than this. "You will have to stop [taking drugs], that 's all." [...] I had never loved anybody more than Eva at that time. My Madonna. Redemption' (*ibid.*, 195). This is again grappling for control: in this case, wanting to control her as well as himself. Her having a child would not only save him from taking drugs (as he naively believes), but it would also tie her to him and give him status in the discourse of masculinity ('a normal family' as Eva calls it—*ibid.*). We can see how Michal's belief comes from the residual patriarchal discourse: he longs for the image of the nuclear family with mother and child at home and himself responsible for them. Nevertheless, his desire for Eva to have a child is also an attempt for his own manipulation of this discourse: he wants Eva to save him by giving him responsibility over her and the child, because as far as he can see all other forms of masculinity, the rest of the masculine discourse, he has either rejected or lost. However, once again he is put into the helpless 'feminine' position: Eva (and her addiction) are stronger than he is; he fails in his own version of masculinity.

At least briefly, I would like to discuss Michal's relationship to the state-socialist definitions of a man, those of a worker and soldier. Michal not so much rejects these identities, as he fails in them. He loses his job of a tram driver when he causes a disturbance while in service, because he suffers from drug-induced hallucinations. He promised himself some time before this incident that he would not allow his addiction to get that far. Similarly, he cannot keep any subsequent jobs due to frequent absences from work caused by disabling withdrawal symptoms. The section of the novel recounting the story of Michal's two-year service in the army is perhaps the part when the text gets the closest to an open criticism of the system when it tells the story of how Michal was allowed to exploit the power structures to get access to drugs.

Michal is given responsibility for loading and escorting a truckload of pharmaceuticals and arranges that the truck hits the pile of stacked-up boxes waiting to be loaded on to the truck. A box with morphine is damaged in the accident and Michal obtains permission to carry out its destruction according to the regulations. Nobody supervises him, so he only pretends to destroy the content and, instead, he keeps it all. It is a story of one of the very few Michal's 'victories': he beats the system, but at the same time it is a step toward his own destruction, because it supplied him with drugs for the duration of his army service and after and, also, gains him prestige in front of his drug-taking girlfriend after his release from the army ('He was waiting for her to ask about the morphine so that he could tell her his heroic story with the damaged crate'—John 1989, 73). His prestige combined with regular drug-taking in the army create conditions in which there is no escape from the drug. From another perspective, the 'heroic' story of a 'lone soldier' obtaining 'ammunition' from the enemy's camp parodies a frequent motif in both state-socialist war films and a traditional masculine film genre—the Western. It is perhaps the only moment in the novel when traditional masculinity and heroism are displaced into a context which ultimately undermines them. Although even here the text's subversion is very limited. Michal's 'heroism' becomes a currency in his group, but it is a group of outcasts. Thus any subversion loses its force, because Michal and his 'friends' do not represent a role model for the reader, although their search for an alternative masculinity is made legitimate in the text.

I would now like to look back at the position of masculinity in the pre-1989 Czech ideological/discursive environment in the light of the various forms of masculinity discussed in this chapter. The relationships Michal forms in his life all more or less fit one or another kind of masculinity outlined in the critical works I cited. In the case of Michal, all of these forms of masculinity are either rejected or lost: he rejects the 'middle-class', respectable masculinity represented by his father, as well as the violent, 'macho' masculinity of the prison; he deplores the 'anti-masculinity' of Richard, while he also loses the prototypical masculine 'way of life'—life as a battle—and he also loses his own negotiated masculinity in the relationship with Eva.

It could be suggested that by rejecting the values represented by the father, Michal also rejects the state-socialist ideology which co-opted what I called throughout the 'middle-class' masculinity as a model for both genders. Yet, his rejection is not so much on political grounds *per se*, as it is because of the inadequacy of the values for him and his generation. However, the only alternatives to that model entertained by the novel are the violent masculinity of the prison and the 'anti-masculinity' of the homosexual Richard. As Michal has no desire to identify himself with either, he tries to claim agency in the discourse and construct *his own* idea of masculinity. That changes, but for the longest period it seems to be the following: to work only to have enough security to pursue a relationship and (self-controlled) drug-taking; to be independent of parents and other drug-addicts; and to have a 'normal' family, that is, to be made responsible/'redeemed' by Eva's reproductive capacity. The last item expresses Michal's scepticism as to his own capacities of free will and choice. He wants to act as a free individual and not to subscribe to somebody-else's values (his father's, society's), while hoping for 'domestic masculinity' and relying on the strength of the residual patriarchal gender roles to keep him away from self-destruction; (Horrocks pointed out that masochism and self-destruction are some of the main features of masculinity, although in a different context—Horrocks 1994, 42).²⁰ The fact that Michal fails in fulfilling his model of masculinity can be read as either that his destruction as a *thinking* subject has progressed too far because he has become entirely enslaved by drugs, or that any agency is impossible in the given environment which does not provide any more choices.

With respect to this last point, the example of Richard seems to suggest that agency is *not allowed*, or at least his kind of agency is not. This message seems to endorse the prescriptive state-socialist ideology, which defined the 'correct' values, set limits of individual difference and terms of 'proper' criticism (that is, which individuals and in what way could express their disagreement). Although this may not have been the author's intention, my examples nevertheless show that the only consistent criticism the narrative voice expresses about the system is lack of awareness-raising about the dangers of drugs.²¹ The rendition of masculinity does not provide space for the subversion of either the state-socialist ideology or of traditional masculine values.

²⁰ Horrocks speaks about the distancing of masculinity from everything feminine (emotions, vulnerability) as the underlying impulse of masochism and self-destruction.

²¹ Given the more or less journalistic approach to the issue of drugs, there seems to be a unity of the narrator and the author, although making Michal the focaliser creates the impression that it is Michal's voice throughout.

Indeed, by demonising homosexuality, the author reinforces the totalitarian atmosphere of general intolerance of difference. Thus the only subversive potential of *Memento* lies in addressing a taboo, and in that the bleak tone of the novel suggests that the state-socialist reality was not as rosy as the readers were so far made to believe.²²

Where the novel deserves attention from the perspective of the discourse of masculinity is the way it grapples with the 'void' of masculinity created by the inadequacy of the existing forms of masculinity for Michal's generation. Michal (and men like him in general) have nothing, not even their masculinity to fall back upon (unlike Anka in *For Unknown Reasons*, who has her femininity as a refuge and resistance). Significantly, Michal's 'dream' of an equivalent domestic masculinity—that is, fatherhood, care for family—never becomes a viable alternative.

This lack of any form of masculinity worth identifying with perhaps set the ground for the explosion of the 'new man' masculinity a few years after 1989, when men began to look at themselves, instead of only at women—a phenomenon identified in the literature on masculinity as rising in the West in the 1980s (Mort 1987, 194; Rutherford 1987, 38; Segal 1990, 292).²³ Since such a re-conceptualisation was not available at the time when the novel was written, the author finds the only remaining site for both his warning and his vision of possible redemption: the body. The body is the last resort, but also an unquestioned masculine value: its destruction is the ultimate debasement and disintegration of a 'man'.

The focus on the body in *Memento* can also be seen as an expression of general impotence of an individual living under the controlling and prescriptive state power. Renata Salecl observed this return to the body in contemporary art (in the sense of making bodies serve as works of art). Her interpretation was that it is because we, as individuals, have no power to influence anything outside our bodies, the body is the only thing we can control (Salecl 2000). Strangely enough, her remark on late-capitalist art is valid also for my example from state socialism (although Michal's body is not a work of art, but a subject in a—somewhat—artistic work).

Although the novel deals with a taboo topic and, therefore, may be thought of as exceptional rather than typical, the unorthodox nature of the lifestyle represented never really threatens the dominant, if largely invisible, patriarchal orthodoxy to which it is compared. Whilst Michal's tragedy may be seen to have derived, in part, from his frustration with the narrowness of the masculine roles offered to him, the fact that he finds no positive alternatives inevitably becomes the meaning, or *memento*, of the story. At the same time, we can accept this novel as a fledgling quest for a more individualistic, more empowered masculinity within Czech literature and culture. This will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

²² Miklós Haraszti (1987) notes the requirement of state-socialist art to be 'optimistic'; Josef Alan (1996a) notes this phenomenon as still prevailing in the Czech official culture throughout the 1970s.

²³ It cannot be said that the consumerist aspect of masculinity would be entirely missing from the discourse. However, it was reduced to the objectification of women for men's pleasure rather than turned to men themselves. Tomas's casual promiscuity in Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1985) bears witness to this phenomenon. Also, one of the first expressions of 'personal freedom' after November 1989 was a mushrooming of pornographic literature (previously banned). I noted in my MA thesis written in 1991–92 (Indruchová 1992) a number of locally produced magazines, some of which either defined men in terms of pornographic interests (*Premiant: magazín moderního muže; Premiant: a Magazine of the Modern Man*) or defined sexual freedom in terms of sexual availability of women to men (*Československý NEIreport, Czechoslovak NEIreport*—the magazine of the Independent Erotic Initiative—NEI—a political party). It is also telling that the first Western magazines for men in Czech were *Playboy* (launched in 1991) and *Penthouse* (launched in 1994), that is, magazines known for their pornographic content. *Esquire*, a magazine containing articles about men themselves, did not launch until 1996. Among the magazines for women, *Elle* publishes a supplement *Elle pour l'Homme* from time to time, but the first Czech issue of the supplement did not appear until 1996, while the first issue of the Czech *Elle* came out already in 1994—men, indeed, needed time to learn to look at themselves.

