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During our conversation, my friends called me with a request to run for various deputy mandates. The journalist listened to my excuses, we laughed, and finally, she believed that to get a public office is not at all difficult these days in this country, for men or for women: everybody wants to vote whoever makes few speeches at a meeting, so that they did not have to do the work themselves.

But the woman question—the woman question, the way I understand it, is still here and still awaits an answer… It seems that it remained the last of all today's questions, and I am a bit afraid as to what answers I might get. I am afraid not only of men's answers, but—surprisingly—women's as well. […]

[Western] 'Feminists' fight for the right to work—the opinion here is the contrary: that *it* will be solved when women stay in the home. But what is that *it*? Could it be the *it* my daughter asked me about with a child's directness: 'Mom, why almost all the girls in our club think that they are less than boys, and that they have to try and get them?'

Drahomíra Pithartová, 1991. 'Drahomíry Pithartové "ženské otázky"' [The 'Woman Question' of Drahomíra Pithartová], *Lidové Noviny, Literární noviny* supplement, 14 February (7), p.7; original emphasis.

Our Parliament does not need anything more than that the law commands into it the female element. At least, this is the opinion of the majority of citizens demanding the codification in law of how many seats should be reserved for deputies in skirts, according to the reputable company STEM. Nothing against a bit more women's fire and charm in the legislative benches, which would enliven the routine machine of the Parliament reason (and non-reason). Nothing pleases one more and sharpens the mind of a tired deputy than a pretty colleague whom he can dazzle with a brilliant speech. […]

Adherents of all similar solutions 'from above' are well advised to consult the Constitution, which has included in it, as one of its fundamental principles, the guarantee of the equality of all citizens regardless of race, religion, or sex. Woman is not a special or endangered species demanding special legislation. If women like to become involved in politics, nobody will stand in their way; just as nobody will prevent the voters to vote them into the Parliament.

Jana Bendová, 1993. 'Žena jako zvláštní druh?' [Woman as a Special Species?], *Mladá fronta Dnes*, 24 September.

[Journalist:] What is your view of the feminist movement?

[Olga Havlová:] After November [1989] Western feminists kept wondering why we did not support these trends here. Personally, I have great objections against them, because I don't want to be superior to anybody, whether it is a man, a woman, or a child. I envision a partner relationship between man and woman, not a radical calling that men need to be locked up behind a fence. Male and female ways of thinking does not mean a contrast, an antagonism, but it can be mutually beneficial. Radical feminism is, in a way, a waste of energy.

[Journalist:] What is your view on women's participation in politics?

[Olga Havlová:] I think that women belong to politics, and that political parties should give them greater opportunities at elections. During the last elections, I voted for a number of women, because they notice things which are more concrete and pointed, and concern practical life.

Radka Kvačková, Marie Šusterová, 1995. 'Feminismus je snaha o větší vliv žen' [Feminism Is an Effort for a Greater Influence of Women], *Lidové noviny*, 6 September, p. 2.

8. Discourse of 'Female Identity', or, Beyond 'Superwoman': Tereza Boučková's *Indian Run* (1991 and 1992)

Tereza Boučková's first book-length publication, *Indiánský běh* (*Indian Run*; 1991 and 1992; my references to the 1992 edition), belongs to a different category from the other fictional texts I have dealt with in some detail so far. Although it has been widely read and is thus 'popular' in one sense of the word, it is certainly not a middlebrow novel.[1] It has been called variously by critics: 'a controversial novella', which is 'not so much a testimony about the world as about [the author] herself' (Brezina 1992); a story 'through the eyes of the daughter: a scandal in the family?' (Petříček 1992); 'a prose-album', 'a metaphor of love and life' (Trávníčková 1992); [writing about] 'elementary values of life, [about] the "natural" everyday experience understood as a *glorious* destiny' (Janáček 1992; original emphasis); 'a defence of "little" lives' (Chuchma 1992a); 'a story of a woman searching in vain for emotional support (Brožová 1996); 'a non-militant manifesto of feminist literature' (Novotný 1992); whilst the readers of the German translation supposedly appreciate it as 'a beautiful ode to womanhood' (Strož 1995).

It is interesting, that the first two critics emphasise the autobiographical aspect of the work rather than treating it as a work of fiction: Boučková is a daughter of Pavel Kohout, a well-known Czech communist poet and playwright, an active participant in the Prague Spring in 1968, co-author of the Charter 77 (of which document Boučková is also a signatory) and, finally, an émigré writer and an Austrian citizen. Another group of critics appreciates primarily the generally 'human' themes of the work developed against the background of 'little' lives and everyday experience, rather than against 'grand' goals. Finally, the last group of reviewers stresses the author's and the narrator's 'femaleness' (several reviewers conflate the author with the narrator). This range of critical responses make the book particularly suitable for inclusion in this study: the private, the political and the female/feminist facets are all highly visible in the narrative. It is the simultaneous occurrence of the specificity of women's experience within the political context that made the book stand out from other literary productions by women at the time of its publication, when questions of women's identity and their different experience of political issues did not belong to a general public discussion. Also, the book is a contribution to the emerging discourses of feminism in the post-1989 era. The strong issue underlying the entire narrative is the woman-narrator's effort to find her place in the world and her search for her 'female identity'. Feminist concerns come to the fore

[1] Boučková's book came at the top of the list of most frequently borrowed books by women authors between 1990–93 during my inquiries at the Municipal Library Opatov and the State Research Library Kladno, two libraries recommended to me in 1997 by the head of acquisitions of the Municipal Library in Prague 1 (the largest Czech municipal library) as being both well-organised in terms of borrowing records and representative of public libraries. The mass response the book received is further reflected in my bibliographic research. That came up with more than twenty reviews in Czech newspapers and magazines at the occasion of the first (Slovak) and second (Czech) editions of the book, that is, by 1993 (see below about the publication history of the book). Some more reviews were published in 1994 and 1995 as a response to the publication of the German translation.

especially in the narrator's contextualisation of her personal and moral experience: her world is often the world of the male dissident heroes/martyrs, here represented by her father and, presumably, by Václav Havel (called 'Monologue' in the narrative). She exposes the cost to the family, and women in particular, of both the communist system and the men's pursuit of their ideals while disregarding their families. Although the daughter shares her father's hatred of the system and herself signs the Charter 77, she confronts his moral character and removes the aura of the dissident martyr from him. The final de-heroisation comes in the post-1989 episodes, in which Monologue's moral integrity with respect to the women in his life is brought to question.[2] Boučková, probably without much knowledge of feminist literature, brings forward the issue of the personal being also political (while the political, in her account, is always personal, too).

The text sits uneasily within the theoretical framework with which I have been working so far. While it is written explicitly in dissent from the state-socialist ideology, it makes little use of either the resistant discourse of consumer capitalism or the images of (Western) femininity drawn from the residual/emergent patriarchal discourse. Rather, it is a piece of writing in a 'void': attempting to discover a new discourse of 'female identity' in an environment where such things are yet to be imagined.[3] Judith Butler captures well the delicacy of such a position: 'For an identity to be an effect means that it is neither fatally determined nor fully artificial and arbitrary' (Butler 1990, 147). Boučková's narrator constructs her 'female identity' from elements of both personal—women's—experience and previously circulating discourses. These discourses derive, primarily, from the discussions of the dissident circles, that is, the discourse of 'freedom' associated with semi-organised dissident groups, such as Charter 77, and that concerned with the morality of the State in relation to its citizens.[4] These two 'sources' of 'female identity' are united in the pivotal message of the text, namely, the impossibility of separating private and public morality. I will be dealing with this problem later in the chapter.

The discourses of (Western) femininity and of consumer capitalism also pass through the text, but marginally. I will detail below how the discourse of femininity, on the one hand, intrudes into the female world of the narrator-protagonist and, on the other, is linked with the concept of freedom. The association of the positive influence of

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[2] Boučková's confrontation with the private morality of dissident men is written in the context of their public pronouncements about morality, such as the following lines from Václav Havel's first New Year's address broadcast on television on 1st January 1990 and published subsequently in all dailies just days after his election in the office in December 1989: 'The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves. […] Our main enemy today is our own bad traits: indifference to the common good; vanity; personal ambition; selfishness; and rivalry' (Havel 1992b, 391 and 395).

[3] I chose the term 'female' rather than 'women's' identity, because the construction of the concept seems to fit with Elaine Showalter's early division of women's literary tradition into feminine, feminist and female phases. Authors writing in the female phase which, according to Showalter, lasts at least in the English literary tradition from 1920 onwards, make use of women's experience as a source of autonomous art (Showalter 1979, 41). As we will see, Boučková places women's experience in the foreground of her narrative, although she is trying to tie it in with the values declared by the (mostly) male dissident leaders.

[4] I will not go into the details of this discourse at this point, because the positions of dissident groups in all of the countries of Central/Eastern Europe belong to common knowledge. Its relevant elements will be dealt with and explained in the textual analysis below.

'freedom' on the development of personal character with 'the West' is perhaps the only part of the resistant discourse of (consumer) capitalism which is heard in the text. Unlike my other textual examples, this novella does not make a substantive use of the symbolic value of consumption (as was the case in *For Unknown Reasons* and will be the case with billboard advertising discussed in Chapter 9).

In this chapter, I will first try to characterise the work as a piece of literature and outline its content, before pursuing my argument that the author is writing in a 'void' of discussions about women's experience and identity. I will then focus on the text's unifying feature, which is its 'epiphanic' structure, and finally, trace the gradual development of the narrator's 'female identity' through its four parts.

The first thing to observe is that *Indian Run* is hard to place in terms of literary genres: a slim 'novella'-type volume (157 pages of a small format), it nevertheless covers the first thirty-four years of the life of the main character-narrator. It is divided into four sections with separate titles, but each of the narratives is then broken into one-page or shorter fragments. In other words, it is a novel, but not quite; and it is a collection of short stories, but not quite. Its strong autobiographical aspect further complicates the classification as a literary form. Perhaps by eluding the constraints of traditional canonical literary forms, *Indian Run* can be seen as belonging to the more avant-garde strands within women's writing, although, on first inspection the text is also reminiscent of any number of postmodern literary experiments seen in the West since the 1980s.[5] For the purpose of this study, I will leave these problems of generic classification aside, but have nevertheless chosen to refer to the individual parts as stories. My main reasons for this are the sense of autonomy created by the epiphanies (maybe with the exception of the last part, 'The Epilogue'), and a certain independence of the parts in their publication history.

The first story, 'Indiánský běh' was published in 1988 in *samizdat* ('Indian Run'; *Revolver Revue*, no.12) and the third one, 'Končiny štěstí, končiny ticha' ('The Realm of Happiness, the Realm of Silence') was not included in the first edition of the book in 1991 (Bratislava: Fragment K).[6] Despite this 'independence', the book forms a unified whole together with the other two stories—'Žena z okolí týru' ('A Woman from around Thyrsus') and 'Krok, sun, krok … epilog' ('Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow …: the Epilogue')—through their characters and events which are described. 'Described' is an ill-fitting word as each story consists of little 'snapshots' from the life of one of the characters.[7] All stories except the third ('The Realm') are told in the first person. The narrator of the three stories bears a great similarity to the author. This is suggested already in the dedication of the book 'To Indian, Alpha, and Waltz …', who are already in the first story identified as the narrator's father, mother and second husband.

[5] In terms of the tradition of women's writing, I have in mind the now classics in thinking about women's writing: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf 1994) and Hélène Cixous's 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (Cixous 1991). The discussion of form, however, is not central to the argument of this study.

[6] *Indian Run* was published again in 1999 in a collection of other Boučková's work (Prague: Euromedia Group-Knižní klub). It was also translated into other languages: Dutch (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 1993), German (Berlin: Rowohlt and Berlin Verlag, 1993; Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996), and Hungarian (Budapest: Európa, 1997). I also came across a Serbian translation of 'Žena z okolí týra' in a workshop on Central European women's writing (Boučková 1994).

[7] I will use the word 'snapshot', as these fragments describe in short sentences single impressions, emotions or events. Also, one of the reviewers called the book an 'album' and the individual fragments 'photographs' (Trávníčková 1992).

'Indian Run' covers the time from the narrator's conception to probably the late 1980s.[8] The narrator (Burst Rubber) chooses allegorical names to talk, in her fragmentary fashion, about her childhood with her mother (Alpha), brother (Sunbeam) and sister (Lune), and about the children's search for a new father after their own (Indian) left them and formed another relationship (with a woman called here Muse).[9] She also includes her two marriages (to Mistake and Waltz), her mother's lovers (Cardplayer, Donovan and Monologue), the efforts of all the siblings to obtain the education they want, and her own search for her father. The connection between political/ideological issues and family life is heard the most strongly in the last two story-lines: the difficulty for children of a 'counter-revolutionary' to enter secondary and higher education, and the impossibility of the narrator to become close to her father despite their shared political principles.[10]

Unlike the 'family saga' of 'Indian Run' covering both family and political events, 'A Woman from around Thyrsus' consists of two, tightly woven story-lines: the narrator's attempts to conceive, and her and Waltz's efforts to dig a well in the garden of their cottage located in a weekend-house colony, where they decided to move from Prague. 'The Realm of Happiness, the Realm of Silence' is told in the third person about a nameless character. It is a story of a woman, whose life is remarkably similar to the life of Alpha in 'Indian Run'. It is as if the woman-narrator of that story now looks back at the life of her mother with new understanding brought about by experience and psychological maturity. Finally, 'Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow …: The Epilogue' is an epilogue in the true sense, as it brings the characters introduced previously to the present (that it is, to 1991, as the dating on the last page suggests: 'Vráž u Berouna, 1988–1991'): the narrator and Waltz adopt two children from an orphanage after they do not manage to have a child of their own, whilst the 'Velvet Revolution' of 1989 brings down the existing political regime. In addition, Alpha contracts breast cancer, but is cured, the family divided by forced emigrations reunites, and water finally somehow appears in the well thirty-or-so meters deep, and then—the narrator becomes pregnant.

As I noted in the introduction to this chapter, Boučková's voice spoke into a 'void'. Although some discussions of feminism and women's issues had appeared in the media already in the early 1990s, they were not a part of the everyday discourse, but rather a 'special-feature' in terms of programmes and articles. Frequently, the issues were treated from a strong sexist perspective. The most notorious of these was probably a series of articles by the famous Czech émigré writer Josef Škvorecký, slighting the issues of rape, sexual harassment and 'politically correct language' (Škvorecký 1992a; Škvorecký 1992b; Škvorecký 1992c). The newspaper coverage which I examined

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[8] The phrase 'Indian run' is a literal translation of a name given to a form of efficient and fast covering of long distances on foot supposedly used by American Indians. Indian running alternates walking and running after a set interval (such as 100 steps).

[9] The phrase 'Burst Rubber' refers to a child conceived due to a faulty condom.

[10] The children of a 'counter-revolutionary' referers to the *memoáromán* by Pavel Kohout, Boučková's father, *Z deníku kontrarevolucionáře aneb Životy od tanku k tanku* (*From a Diary of a Counter-Revolutionary, or Lives from a Tank to a Tank*)—that is, from the end of the Second World War to the Soviet occupation in 1968, written immediately after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and published in autumn of 1969 (J. C. Bücher, Germany). The publication of the Czech version was suppressed. It was finally published in 1997 (Kohout 1997). Since Boučková's narrator calls herself 'a daughter of a counter-revolutionary' (Boučková 1992, 17), it is probable that the author was familiar with her father's text at the time of writing *Indian Run*.

represents a more common discourse: coverage of the International Women's Day or of the wives of famous politicians (Raisa Gorbacheva and Hillary Clinton). The absence of an autonomous female voice is striking in these articles. Apart from interviews with women politicians and functionaries, the focus of 'non-political' articles on the occasion of the International Women's Day in the years before the political changeover was either exceptional women (in the sense of achieving the same as men: climbing Mount Everest; sailing around the world; competing in cars—n.a. 1987b); 'expert' views on infidelity (Pecháčková 1988); or interviews with popular men about their views on women (Horníček 1988). The politicians' speeches on these occasions emphasised how the socialist state was creating conditions for women to participate in the workforce, without the slightest hint at changes and problems in women's lives, which were not of a directly material nature—such as understanding, partnership, or personal fulfilment. The implication was always that any problems women might encounter could somehow be resolved by material solutions: better supplied shops, higher maternity benefits, and such like (Husák 1988b). If the newspaper coverage of Raisa Gorbacheva's visit in 1987 presented her with respect in terms of address ('Comrade Gorbacheva' or at least 'Raisa Maximovna') and her interests (architecture, education, women's issues), the post-1989 Czech coverage up to her death in 1999 lapse into the mere 'Raisa' in their terms of address, focus on her personal characteristics such as jealousy and hysteria (Plesník 1993; n.a. 1993a; n.a. 1993c), and no longer mention any of her intellectual achievements.[11] As to the coverage of Hillary Clinton during her husband's presidential campaign in 1992 and the beginning of her term as the First Lady in 1993, the majority of the articles in the three dailies I examined, draw almost exclusively on materials from international wire services and newspaper material. In other words, the Czech journalists did not produce much from their own perspective beyond making the actual selection from the international material. It is in this context of silence concerning women's consciousness and identity that Boučková presents her women-centred narrative, which—as I argue—tries at least to imagine a new model of 'female identity'.

I mentioned above the epiphanic quality of the individual stories. 'The Epilogue' is something of an exception, because of its function to pull all the characters and their relationships together, but all the other stories focus on one key moment that helps the narrator-protagonist make sense of the world around her. These revelations contribute substantially to the themes of gender and politics I will discuss later, together with the issue of an emerging 'female identity'. What is common to all three stories is that the narrator explicitly wants to achieve something (to achieve recognition from her father in 'Indian Run'; to conceive a child and dig a well of life-giving water in 'Thyrsus'; to understand her mother in 'The Realm'), but the search for the particular knowledge leads to achieving a more general knowledge which contributes to the narrator's growth as a person.

'Indian Run' begins with the birth of the narrator:

> I did not bring joy. Do you know the joke?
> Indian has three children. The first, a son, is called the Sunbeam, the second, a daughter, White Lune.
> And what is the name of the third one?
> Burst Rubber. (Boučková 1992, 9)

[11] The Western press provided a list of these achievements after her death (Bohlen 1999).

Thus the reader is made to understand that this is a story of an unwanted child. The father hardly ever appears in person, indeed the 'snapshots' from the early childhood note only the children's search for a new father ('If Alpha was not able to find him for us, we decided to find one ourselves'—11), which suggests that the biological father left before the narrator had any significant memory of him.[12] Yet there seems to be at least some contact, because Alpha and the children still have the rights to use a country house which Alpha and Indian jointly own: 'The top shelves were stuffed with delicacies we could not imagine even in a dream. [...] These were Indian's shelves. We were not allowed even to touch them. Ours offered flour, vinegar, salt' (11). The narrator's memories of this period introduce the father as an impersonation of luxury which is unreachable to the children and which he does not share with them. Yet, for the entire story, the narrator craves her father's recognition and love. She meticulously records every occasion when she 'met' her father. By that verb she does not mean a casual encounter, but her perception of understanding between them. The first 'meeting' with her play-writing father occurs at the age of fifteen, when she decides to apply to study drama despite her young age:

> We met every other day, recited poems and speeches, and sometimes even talked. He noticed me for the first time in my life and I learnt how beautiful it was to have a father, and I very much wanted him to like me. (22)

When she goes to take the entrance exam to the university, she is told that she is too young and not allowed to sit the exam. Some years later, she approaches her father again to help her with the preparation for the drama exam, but this time 'his heart made an about turn and said that it was not up to it [...] and thus deprived me of the possibility of meeting my father for the second time' (30). The displacement of the emotional withdrawal from the 'father-the person' to the father's heart is significant in that the narrator does not give up her search for the 'father-the-person'. They 'meet' twice more: when the narrator comes to support her father after a number of people turned away from him following his signature of Charter 77, and, after that, during an underground performance of *Macbeth* which was raided by the police (a real event—see note 13) and they 'walked out of the raided flat arm in arm. Father and daughter, a family wanting to protect itself' (40). Shortly after this, Indian emigrates and the narrator's hopes for the family reunion expressed in the quote above are thwarted. She still does not give up her father, despite some cruel reactions from him: he leaves her to her own resources during her visit to him abroad because he learns that she allowed a Charter 77 meeting in his Prague flat and thus exposed him to the danger of confiscation. She cannot understand 'that for Indian, who was the Charter's co-founder, its meeting was a subversive activity...' (43). Yet even after this, the narrator makes another attempt to connect with her father when he makes an airline flight (presumably already as a citizen of another state) via Prague and she manages to get permission from the police to speak to him for ten minutes. However, when she and Alpha go onto the outlook terrace at the airport to give him their last wave as a gesture of support, she realises it was all a staged 'comedy' on his part:

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[12] Given the numerous, but mostly short, quotations from Boučková's work in this chapter, I will give the page reference hereafter in the form of a number in parentheses, or following a long dash, in cases where the quotation is already in parenthesis—wherever this practice does not cause a possible confusion with a reference to another text.

> He sits indeed just next to the terrace and the journalists, who are there to record his heroic feat, photograph our heads in headscarves and silent handshakes […] The results of this comedy arrive soon. Indian increased his popularity. (50)

Apart from this, Alpha is punished by the state for her demonstrated support of her ex-husband (who is a *persona non grata* in Czechoslovakia) by loss of work and the denial of a passport, so that she cannot go and visit either Lune or Sunbeam who have also left the country, and the narrator is interrogated by the police. She concludes this 'snapshot' by noting that Indian does not talk to her. At this stage it seems that the narrator gives up her search for the father. She continues with accounts of her first (failed) marriage, and the beginning of her second one, Alpha's struggle to keep her job, Monologue's (Alpha's lover's) return from prison, and the death of her grandmother. It is a life full of, if not tragic events, then at least of hard trials, but the message seems to be that there is nothing to be done but endure them. Everything points to the story ending on a bleak note of resignation. It is the last event, however, the death of the grandmother, which changes the quality of the narrative and gives it an epiphanic quality. The narrator describes the cold and impersonal environment of the hospital where she and Alpha took their grandmother and how they were not even allowed to visit her because of a virus epidemic. The next 'snapshot' (the penultimate in the story) gives the account of the grandfather, who was asking after his wife the day after she was taken to hospital. He insisted that she had come at night, 'woke him up, stroked his face and lay down in her bed' (56). Subsequently, a telegram informs the family that the grandmother died that night: '"She came to me to say good bye", he said more calmly, and Alpha, who blamed herself for not taking her mother home and not being with her at that moment, asked if she was smiling' (56). After this line, the last 'snapshot' follows like this:

> And I believed in God.
>
> I believed that it was impossible for a human journey through life to end in a lonely bed of a cold hospital, with nothing to follow.
>
> I felt grandmother's head on my forehead and knew that God was with her that night and that he took her soul to him.
>
> I realised how temporary life is, and thought about father and began to fear that something could happen to him and I would not manage to tell him that I loved him.
>
> And so I sat down and wrote to him. And asked God for father to receive my letter in time. And He heard my plea. (57)

The despair and helplessness brought about by the social coldness of state institutions prompts in the narrator the discovery of a higher authority who is the only one capable of preserving the hope for emotional attachment. However, it is not only faith in God that the narrator discovers at that moment. She realises that no matter what the history of her relationship to Indian, he is a human being and deserves her love. Their misunderstandings and his rejections all suddenly seem petty in the face of her newly-discovered ultimate authority. The epiphany is the discovery of a higher emotional feeling than a perception of a personal attachment, for which the narrator has spent all these years looking.[13]

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[13] A story very similar to the narrator's about 'meeting' her father in a theatre performance and then uniting with him as a 'family' during the police raid appears in the second of Pavel Kohout's *memoárománs Kde je zakopán pes* (*Where the Dog Lies Buried*), first published in Germany by INDEX e.V. in 1987, and then in Czechoslovakia in 1990 (Kohout 1990), covering the period approximately from 1970 to 1979. In his account, the theatre piece is identified as the inspiration for the latter part of Tom Stoppard's *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth* (Stoppard 1980). The second 'meeting' between father and daughter following the publication of Charter 77, however, is not recorded by Kohout in his account (significant, if we allow that Kohout and Indian are one—real-life—person). Kohout also describes his transit flight through Prague, already as an Austrian citizen, on 17 November 1982. From

As to the obvious feminist issue of gender in this epiphany (referring to God as He), my suggestion is that it may not have a great significance in terms of feminist criticism, given the context of the whole text and the social context, in which the text was produced. First, any dispute over a political significance of the gender of a particular noun in Czech is made problematic because every noun is either masculine, feminine, or neutral. It does not mean that, in the case of the word '*Bůh*', 'God', there is no 'social history' to choosing a word which commands the male gender for the concept of god. However, once the word is there, it can only take male gender, because it cannot inflect as either feminine or neutral. Second, the narrator does not seem to have any orthodox faith: this is the only time she refers to the male Deity and the context is love as a higher principle. The 'snapshot' following this one is the opening of 'The Realm'. In it, the narrator does not appeal to God, but to the Virgin Mary to stop her miscarriage and protect her baby. Occasional religious references appear in another four 'snapshots', but none off them is explicitly addressed to either God, the Virgin Mary, or anybody else. The last of these 'snapshots' describes the narrator in the pain of an extra-uterine pregnancy. This time, she does not appeal to any Deity, but closes the 'snapshot' with a laconic statement: 'It is finished' (65), referring to John 19. 30. This is also the last religious reference in the whole text—from then on filled with other emotionally charged events which could merit appeals to the Deity—until the last line of the volume: 'Not God, Little Jesus (*Ježíšek*) gave us a [Christmas] present' (157).[14] This sufficiently demonstrates that the narrator's concept of religion does not fit into any traditional doctrine. Indeed, it seems that God for her signifies a higher principle as a source of love exceeding any individual's sense of right or justice.

Finally, given that the first version of 'Indian Run' was written before the November 1989 changes, the narrator's 'discovery' of God can be seen as a subversive act to the state-socialist ideology. The State actively discouraged religious practice and tried to eliminate its influence from all levels of society (for example, even in the 1980s, if somebody was either known as religious, or had their child married in a church, that person could expect sanctions at least in the form of a bar on career promotion). Also, religious activity concentrated in the dissident circles, to which the author of 'Indian Run' was connected. Therefore, it is easier to defend the function of religion in *Indian Run* on the grounds of subversion to the state-socialist ideology, than for/against a feminist cause.

The epiphany in 'A Woman from Around Thyrsus' also follows a death, but this time a death of somebody not necessarily known by the narrator. If 'Indian Run' began with the birth of an unwanted child, 'Thyrsus' begins with the miscarriage of a wanted child. The narrator describes vividly the blood of miscarriage flowing from her body and the despair following the doctors 'verdict': 'The uterus is empty' (61). This 'snapshot' is

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his rendering it is obvious that it was a political not a family move, although he feels that asking to see his younger daughter Tereza was to re-pay her for her feelings: 'but I will also receive from her expressions of sympathy, for which I will re-pay her in November 1982 during my *retributive* flight to Prague by wanting to see her specifically' (Kohout 1990, 512; my emphasis).

[14] In the Czech Christmas, it is not Father Christmas, but the Little Jesus who comes with presents.

followed by one from the narrator's and her husband's efforts to dig a well. The narrator's bitter humour talks about another two miscarriages, about her 'hysterical' pregnancy, infertility treatments, considerations of adoption, and various cures motivated by superstition and hearsay ('The next day we lunched on duck liver fried in onion. One infertile bodybuilder is said to have conceived after eating that.'—78). These episodes are more or less regularly interspersed with 'snapshots' from well-digging: the procession of diviners, each marking a different site, a similar procession of well-diggers, and the couple's persistence in digging the one well they began until the look down 'was as desperate as a look down a shaft of a sixteen-story building' (91). In the end, the couple decide to adopt a child. In the orphanage, the narrator is torn by doubts about their choice: 'You'll ruin your life, a voice cried out in me, you should learn to live without children! Remember all those vain attempts to conceive, my head was splitting with confusion, all those eager looks at the bellies of pregnant women' (94).

This internal confusion around the prejudice against adoption and the desperate desire for a child constitute the penultimate 'snapshot'. But these images of the narrator's own misery and pain are then contrasted with the last snapshot of the story: a death announcement from the close family of a thirty-five-year old man who died in a communist prison as a political prisoner. She reacts by comparing her situation to the situation of the mother who just lost her son:

> And thus ended the life of a person who wanted to live.
>
> Here, now, by his own truth.
>
> And I ask, how does a mother feel, who lost her son in this way?
>
> And I ask, what have I done to prevent it?
>
> I was thrashing my soul and body and felt that there could not be anything worse than what was happening to me right then.
>
> I identified myself with the illusion that a child equals happiness.
>
> But a child is responsibility. Responsibility for the whole world. It will be our son's first birthday soon. (95)

After years of focusing on her own difficulty, the narrator realises her own littleness. The knowledge of selfless love for a close person from 'Indian Run' is now broadened by the identification with the pain of an unknown person. She acknowledges the unimportance of her own personal trouble and sees her desire for a child as a selfish claim of a means to achieve her personal happiness. She now re-considers her relationship to her (adopted) child in the context of every individual's responsibility for the happiness of all children (and their parents), that is, for the future. Thus the message of love reaching beyond an individual's perception of right and wrong, and symbolised by the (male) god in the first epiphany, becomes 'secularised' and gendered: the narrator feels an alliance with another woman, and that alliance together with a mother's love is linked to larger societal concerns. It is this realisation of women's relation to the world which becomes central to the 'female identity' presented in *Indian Run*, as I will argue below.

'The Realm of Happiness, the Realm of Silence' is a story of a woman with three children who was abandoned by her husband but, despite his desertion and her commitment to her children, she still also wants to have a life of her own. Her life is full of tedious repetition:

> In the morning, she gets up, puts on her night-gown, wakes the children up, prepares breakfast, gets the children ready for school, goes shopping, and she is

thirty years old, she cooks lunch, and she is three hundred years old, and when she lies down in bed in the evening and looks at the picture of a foal and reads the letter to Marie, she dies.[15] (103)

Yet, amidst this resigned misery, she finds a lover and 'three words returned her to the world of womanhood, […] joy, hope ... / He said: "I love you"' (104). Consequently, the woman does her best to keep her lover because she does not want to be alone, despite the fact that he tries to strangle her in a fit of jealousy. Her body, however, does not forgive him: 'It could not overcome itself, no matter how hard the head tried. It longed to menstruate forever, and so it bled for a week, a fortnight, a month, two months' (110). Her reproductive powers, it seems, take on the role of the protector of her body against a damaging heterosexual relationship.[16] In the end, it is the son who moves the lover out because she would never summon the strength. The rest of the story is about the woman's search for love and affection. She wants to show herself that she is not old yet. She has one lover much younger than herself and another married one. The other lover is imprisoned for several years for his political activity and she plays their favourite music under the prison windows until she is chased away by the police. Her lover is released, but their relationship is no longer as passionate as it used to be; he now needs his wife more. The woman's mother dies, she cares for her father, goes to visit her children living abroad and there watches the fall of the Berlin Wall on television.

Gradually, it becomes apparent that the woman is Alpha from 'Indian Run' and the third-person narrator is the narrator of the previous stories: the children, the chronology of men in her life, the sickness and death of her mother and two of her children living abroad all that corresponds to the life of Alpha. Given the lessons her daughter-narrator learnt in the previous two stories, 'The Realm' can be read as the daughter's understanding of her mother's hardship and her need for emotional fulfilment after the learning experience of her own life. The epiphany, however, lies somewhere else. The last, only three-line 'snapshot' covers the time when the woman's/Alpha's father also becomes very sick and she has to care for him day by day regardless of her personal needs: 'In the morning she gets up, gets dressed, makes breakfast for father … And her name is Anna, Olga, Věra, Zuzana, Dorka, Jiřina, Marta, Jarmila, Kateřina …' (135). The daughter/narrator learns another lesson: the story, which so far resembled, or was, the story of her mother, can be any woman's story. She realises not only the

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[15] Kohout describes a telephone call from his ex-wife (Boučková's mother) two days after the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and while he was abroad: 'the television of my brain was following her route from the once beautiful entrance hall, […] through a hallway to the room, in which the light of a street lantern falls on a *merry foal*, which I once brought with me from China' (Kohout 1997, 259; my emphasis). Kohout provides sufficient information in his book for the reader to deduce that the author married his second wife (Boučková's mother) in October 1952 and visited China in 1954, that is, still in the early (tender?) days of their marriage. The special mention of the picture by Boučková could be read as her more private reproachful message to her father.

[16] The body symbolism in the book could be a long discussion. For example, the narrator's body also gives signs of disapproval of her first marriage, to Mistake, when the narrator begins to vomits immediately after the wedding ceremony and the condition persists for two days (48). Her body's 'refusal' of pregnancy could be again seen as a protective reaction: this time against reproduction in the state-socialist system (she conceives barely a year into the new, hopefully democratic, system). I mentioned the association between sterility / refusal to have children and state socialism in Chapter 4. Kohout himself gives another example: in his second *memoároman* he makes a connection between Zet's, his wife's, inability to have a child (although, according to him, she wanted one) and the stress caused by the perpetual police surveillance and harassment (Kohout 1990, 435).

women's lot, but also women's history, their connectedness. The narrator has come a long way in understanding her identity since the beginning of 'Indian Run': from a personal quest and the hurt feelings of a daughter deserted by her father. If the first story ends in discovering a love beyond personal justice, and the second in extending that love to compassion with another mother, and relating it to responsibility, the epiphany of the third story places the narrator firmly in the shared experience of women. It is no longer her unique personal relation to another human being, but her realisation that she is one of many: women, in the narrator's understanding, are not connected by their personal, but by collective experience.

This is the theme which is then brought to a conclusion in 'The Epilogue'. It also ties up with the strands of other themes, most of which together participate in the discussion of 'female identity'. In view of the cases discussed in this study so far, it is perhaps not surprising that 'female identity' is related not just to the traditional women's contexts (such as, men, other women, and family), but also to the more general political and social contexts. I will now examine more closely look at the key aspects of 'female identity' which seem to emerge throughout the three stories and 'The Epilogue', namely: (Western) femininity, the concept of the 'superwoman', the role of motherhood and family, and women's relation to men.

All the themes cited above also featured in my analyses of *For Unknown Reasons*, where we encountered the fantasy of (Western) femininity and the 'superwoman' on the one hand, contrasted with the rejection of motherhood and with non-reproductive family on the other. The attitude towards men, moreover, was one of 'beating-them-on-their-own-turf-and-exploiting-their-weaknesses'. In the present, post-1989 text, the same themes are heard, but re-defined. In *For Unknown Reasons*, (Western) femininity is represented as a desirable fantasy with a possible resistant twist to it in the light of the ideological/discursive environment of state socialism. Its heroine with an ideally-feminine external appearance gets what she wants in the male world, and can also do things that men cannot do because of ideological constraints. Further, the type of femininity she represents undermines the propaganda of grey egalitarianism. There is very little similar presentation and discursive positioning of femininity in *Indian Run*. Unlike the resistant *potential* written between the lines in *For Unknown Reasons*, the rebellion against state and patriarchal—even dissident-patriarchal—structures is openly expressed in *Indian Run*. The text asserts the right to an alternative voice. Femininity, as defined in the previous chapters, is almost an intrusive element, although never quite absent. Perhaps the only time the narrator talks about herself as trying to fit in the norms of femininity is in her early adolescence. The family goes to visit Indian and Muse (his new wife) and the narrator contrasts her inadequate attire pieced together from whatever Alpha and Lune left her with the exaggerated femininity of Muse:

> Muse opened the door. We barely recognised her. She was wearing a wig, a dress all the way to the floor, a gold pendant round her neck and little shoes on her feet like she was going to a ball. She stuck her hand in front of us, and held it outstretched and bent strangely the other way. Indian was rushing behind her to greet us. When he looked me over, he burst out laughing and said that I looked like a poor relation. The personal charm I was hoping to emanate, vanished. (16)

As if the narrator decided that this kind of femininity is not for her, she does not offer us a visual portrait of herself within the discourse again. From the perspective of the formation of her 'female identity', this can be read as taking disidentification with the

male-defined femininity as a starting point for developing a new, desired, identity.[17] Similarly, 'feminine' norms intrude into the happiness of the female-protagonist (Alpha) in 'The Realm'. The information the reader gains from 'Indian Run' and 'The Epilogue', together with a reference in 'The Realm' to a 'lover many years younger', allows us to deduce that the protagonist (Alpha) fell in love with a classmate of her son. The relationship, however, can be enjoyed strictly in private:

> But if her parents show up unexpectedly, the lover sits quickly down to a game of chess with her son. If he does not manage that, he runs from one room to the next—fortunately, all of them are communicating. In the afternoon they go to the movies. She looks good. She knows she became more beautiful. She does not need to hold hands with anybody, she was never a great one for that. Her young lover walks two steps ahead of her. (117)

This love comes at the point of the narrative when the reader is given an account of the protagonist's (Alpha's) bleak life of daily drudgery. Still, she has to defend her little island of happiness in front of her children and never admit it in public. From the perspective of 'feminine' norms, it remains unacceptable for a woman to be a generation older than her lover, she cannot publicly declare that 'today it's been a week since she felt the words "I Love"' (115). Interestingly, she has to pretend this denial not only because of the patriarchal norms, but also because of her civic duties as defined by the state-socialist ideology:

> During the day she is what the watchful eye wants her to be. A worker, running to catch a tram to work in the morning, a mule loaded with heavy shopping bags in the afternoon, and in the evening a mother who cooks or does the washing or irons or hoovers or prepares her children's snacks for the next day, or all that at the same time and a bit more. And then to go to bed, and the next day help to create the national product, […] so that she cultivates her self into a socialist citizen, because *the less of a woman,* the wealthier the national product, and more than a ton of steel produced per capita. But she does not sleep at night. She waits for her lover, despite that every day she hardens in her decision not to open the door, to end that second life which fills her with joy, and with strength […] to keep helping to create. (114; my emphasis)

There is no further explanation in 'The Realm' as to the relationship between being a 'woman' and a 'socialist human being', although this clearly puts the two terms in contradiction. Perhaps the narrator assumes that the opposition of the two is common knowledge? The quote seems to suggest that being a 'woman' ought to mean a right to happiness according to one's own feelings, rather than according to some 'approved' norms. In other words, 'woman' stands for the right to an autonomous selfhood, independent of duties and expectations. Womanhood, not 'femininity', thus conceived must therefore be seen as *this* protagonist's opposition to the state-socialist ideology, although we should also remember that by the time the book was actually published, state socialism *per se* had been dismantled.

The text, however, can still be read as having a feminist message, at least in the light of the anti-feminist propaganda of the day. Šiklová writes that Czech women

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[17] I use the term *disidentification* in the sense suggested by Macdonell: 'I have used this term [disidentification] to describe something which makes the forming of consciousness neither stagnant nor readily unified. What is involved appears as the effect in consciousness of the contradictions which traverse the sphere of ideology and discourse, such that, for the masses now subjected by capitalist regimes, disidentification is brought about through working on and against the dominant forms of ideological subjection. This is a question, at the level of thought, of the transformation and not the repetition of the meanings and identities dominantly imposed' (Macdonell 1986, 128).

rejected the idea of women's rights, because these were understood as synonymous with the state-socialist concept of 'emancipation', and thus discredited (Šiklová 1999b). Boučková, in her text, disrupts this equation by re-defining 'womanhood' in terms of 'personhood' and placing *that* in opposition to the state-socialist woman-worker: in her image, it is personhood, rather than 'femininity', which is exploited by that ideological system. Her imagery remains, by necessity, rudimentary, because she is writing about 'female identity' from within a 'void', as the above summary of Šiklová's argument makes clear: in the early 1990s, there was little discussion of specifically women's experience and identity. The idea of women's issues as a special category, within the notion of human rights simply did not exist then. Šiklová observes that the public attitude (including the positions of political parties) was the same as that of state-socialist ideologues: once democracy (or socialism, as the case was) was established, women's rights would be instituted by the nature of that system, therefore, there was no need to single them out. Often, this rhetoric was placed within the context of women returning to their traditional, 'feminine', positions, which state socialism 'denied' them. In this light, Boučková's disidentification with traditional femininity constitutes a covert feminist message.

'The Epilogue' gives more details, if not any more explanation, about the relation between the state-socialist ideological environment and womanhood/femininity through the character of Lune. Lune is extremely appearance-conscious throughout the book: the text is interspersed with Lune going on a date 'in Muse's dress' (20), 'sitting at her make-up box' (22), 'polishing her nails' (26), or experimenting with shoe polish due to the shortage of real black eye-liner on the market (14). She also dates a number of young men, goes to night clubs and discos, and arranges a date for her younger sister with the explicit aim of helping her lose her virginity. In short, Lune is a woman of the world: she makes the world suit her needs (somewhat like Anka in *For Unknown Reasons*). She is intelligent but not at all willing to submit to the rules of state education. She reads a great deal, but she is also a chronic truant and her graduation from secondary school is endangered. The final exams are the first instance in the book when Lune uses her 'feminine' skills to get her way:

> The decisive morning she set down at a mirror, slightly whitened her face with chalk and touched up shadows under her eyes with an eyebrow liner to impress the female committee. 'Just wait and see how they fall for it!' she said, and left for the exam of maturity.[18] And she passed. (28)

Lune's 'applied cosmetics' testify to the observations made, for example, by Marjorie Ferguson (1983) and Dorothy Smith (1988) that women acquire specialised (and, arguably, useful) knowledge and skills in their 'training' for the 'cult' of femininity. Lune uses her 'feminine' skills to deceive other women—already predisposed towards the concept of women as weak and fearful. It is an instance of Lune manipulating the discourse of femininity to her advantage. Similarly, through her charm and contacts with men, she manages to get a permission to study hotel management in Switzerland. In the end, she stays in Switzerland and comes back only after 1989 as 'beautiful and glamorous' (152). The reader does not learn much more about her accomplishments abroad than this (that she also had children in Switzerland is mentioned only in passing), as if neither her profession, nor her private life were more important than her achievements in 'femininity'. Yet, the implication from the examples I mentioned earlier

[18] The final exams at secondary school (roughly an equivalent of 'A' levels) are usually taken when students are eighteen, that is, they are coming off age. The official name of the exam is *maturita*. Traditionally, this exam is referred to by a phrase elevating it to a status of a major turning point in one's life, not merely in one's education, when it is called 'the exam of maturity'.

is that she achieved what she *wanted*—through her *performance* of femininity combined with courage and intelligence. The reading of this final assessment of Lune's success can be that although she learned to perform femininity while in the Czech Republic, she could realise its power and potential only in the West. At another place in the text, Lune—in Luzern—cries but her tears do not wash out the shoe polish on her eyes as it happened during emotional moments of her previous Prague life, 'because Western cosmetic products are prepared for human weakness' (45). The significance of the fulfilment of the feminine goal is not so different from the fantasy of glamorous femininity represented by Anka: it is a certain victory over the system. Boučková's text ascribes Lune's kind of femininity—and the West—a mythical status, which probably largely corresponded to real-life Czech women's desires nurtured by looking through imported Western fashion catalogues: Lune is transformed into a glamorous woman *after* she reaches the West. In her case, moreover, femininity is not 'by the way', it is a result of long-term personal effort, which she could fully develop only in a 'free' world. The practice of femininity thus becomes tied up with concepts of (Western) 'freedom' in a complex and problematic way to which I will return in the Conclusion.

Lune's exceptional nature brings me to the next theme: the 'superwoman'. Lune can be fitted into that category because of her exceptional achievements in femininity, but only partially. Unlike Anka in *For Unknown Reasons*, Lune does not really fulfil the image of 'superwoman' as championed by Western fiction in the 1980s (Marshment 1993) since she appears to have no career to build, nor unusual 'intelligence' to defend. Boučková, even considering the respect which her narrator expresses toward Lune's ingeniousness, re-defines 'superwoman'. Alpha and the narrator are clearly presented as 'superwomen', but more along the lines defined by Chris Corrin in *Superwoman and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (1992): they embody the ideal of the worker-mother. Boučková adds to those two roles required from women by the combined forces of state-socialist ideology and residual patriarchal discourse an important feature: moral integrity. Male-defined femininity is an intrusion into the way Alpha and the narrator want to live, as I suggested above.

At this point, it is also important to register the strong autobiographical element in *Indian Run*, which makes this book a suitable comparison with *For Unknown Reasons*, because it does give an idea about the realities of conflict and various forms of violence with which women (and men, too) had to cope. The instance of violence and conflict range from dramatic historical moments, such as when Alpha worries about Lune who went out to the streets of Prague when shooting could be heard in the background of radio broadcast during the Soviet occupation in August 1968, to the everyday oppression of the institutions of the system. This comes out strongly again in the life of Alpha, who had to humiliate herself constantly by begging those in power to arrange for her children (that is, the children of the 'counter-revolutionary', Indian) to receive a good education. Indeed, this point again testifies to the continuous presence of violence in women's lives: a theme that has recurred in interviews with women conducted in the Czech Republic in recent years.[19]

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[19] In 1998, I was approached by one of the editors of a magazine specialising in Czech gender issues to comment on a series of three interviews of three generations of women from one family. In reading the lengthy biographic interviews, I observed that the women were quite dispassionately giving accounts of spousal abuse, psychological abuse by the authorities and even sexual abuse by a father. They were speaking about these experiences in their life as about something which is simply there as a part of life. (The commentary has not been published, as it seems that the magazine ceased publication).

In this context of adverse circumstances, the narrator and, especially, Alpha, cope as real 'superwomen'. Neither of them competes with men: that is not even an issue, perhaps because it is not important to their self-definition as women and human beings? Although the narrator does want to be liked by her father, she refuses to debase herself to get his affection, because she wants him to accept her for who she is. The best example is an event in 'Indian Run' when, after a wild party to celebrate Alpha's birthday, Muse is found embracing Alpha's young lover. In the morning, Indian requests cold tea from his daughter as anti-hangover treatment for Muse, but the narrator refuses to provide the service. She comments: 'For the first time I found the courage to stand up to him face to face, not just in letters' (35). Solidarity with her mother is more important to the narrator than pleasing her father, when she feels that she is in the right. Thus, the narrator strives to get recognition from Indian on the one hand, but refuses to relinquish the various injustices in her life until the last pages of 'The Epilogue', on the other. There, she records Indian's reaction to her version of events, written presumably in a draft of the present text and sent to him for appreciation: '"Your book is full of anger and lies. I hope you'll rewrite it." Indian home again after twelve years' (148). Given that the sentence appears in the published version, she obviously did not obey and insisted on her perspective, no matter how angry it was going to make Indian.

This does not mean that the narrator (or Alpha) do not have to compromise. Alpha has to compromise in her struggle for a livelihood, having been threatened with losing her job after she showed solidarity with Indian following his emigration. The narrator also has to make compromises: she cannot study drama, so she has to be satisfied with participating in the private underground theatre; she cannot have a child of her own, so she adopts; she settles for not having enough well-water while she has two adopted babies, whose diapers need washing; and finally, she settles for a family without Indian (I will return to this point later). None of this, however, means that she ever gives in. The compromises are necessary for survival, but she does not accept her lot passively: when her well-diggers do a bad job and are drunk and lazy, she tolerates it for a while, but in the end yells her frustrations at them (and miscarries a few days later); in 'The Epilogue' she expresses her dissatisfaction with the course of the Velvet Revolution, as the changes in November 1989 became to be called:

> Velvet, tenderness, let's forgive each other, let bygones be bygones, we all collaborated, we all created totality, a secret agent as well as a stoker or porter or chimneysweeper; velvet, tenderness, let's not apply the principle of collective guilt to communists, they were bad, but also good, they executed only several dozen people, took the life of only several hundred, shot on the run, bullied to death in camps, and locked up in cells for years only several thousand, and they destroyed the morals and illusions of only several million. (147)

This is her cry for *justice*: forgiveness is not enough for her. It also echoes the New Year's speech by the new Czechoslovak president, Václav Havel (the character of Monologue (?), in her story):

> We had all become used to the totalitarian system and accepted it as an unchangeable fact and thus helped to perpetuate it. In other words, we are all [...] responsible for the operation of the totalitarian machinery; none of us is just a victim: we are all also its co-creators. [...] Many citizens perished in jails in the fifties, many were executed, thousands of human lives were destroyed, hundreds of thousands of talented people were forced to leave the country. (Havel 1992b, 392–93)

Boučková, by adding 'only' to her list of the crimes of the overthrown regime, gives a bitter twist to Havel's call for shared responsibility. For her, the co-option of Havel's words by the masses remains immoral if it is not followed by an action leading to a change in morality. Although the last episode of 'The Epilogue' ends with peace (she finds reconciliation with her husband, with whom she had previously quarrelled, and conceives a child), it is *not* a final reconciliation with her 'lot'. Indeed, the best proof of her refusal peacefully to accept all that has gone before is probably the book itself (if we allow a certain identification between the author and the narrator). Her 'superwoman' is thus a woman who remains true to her values despite adverse conditions, brings up her children and still can live a principled life: politically *and* personally. This 'superwoman' confronts the dissident/émigré heroes celebrated in much post-1989 literature by male authors, and comes out as morally superior to them. The narrator rejects this kind of heroism if it is not accompanied by moral integrity at a personal level.

Before I proceed with the discussion of a large, and in many ways, central, theme of the book—that of family—I will look briefly at a theme closely connected to it: motherhood. It is another unifying point of the four pieces collected in *Indian Run*. The book starts with an unwanted child (the birth of 'Burst Rubber') and ends with the conception of a wanted one. The moral imperatives of a parent are emphasised in that in both cases these are third-born children and both were conceived by accident (the narrator becomes pregnant in 'The Epilogue' 'when we were making up on Christmas Eve'—157). Parental responsibility seems, indeed, to be the chief preoccupation of the narrator: she was left by her father when she was three years old and sometimes wondered that she 'wasn't perhaps even tri-dimensional for him. He added to the count of two a third one and entered [her] under the item "alimonies" as a number' (17). The responsibility of a parent for his/her child *and* for the world, in which the child grows up is expressed the strongest in the epiphanic event at the end of 'Thyrsus' when the narrator ponders over the death announcement of the young man who died as a political prisoner.

However, motherhood, as conceived in 'Thyrsus' and the other stories, does not fit neatly into traditional patriarchal discourse. For one, the narrator always speaks about the necessity of 'parenthood', rather than 'just' motherhood, and the difference with her father is framed as a reproach for his withdrawal from the role of a father. And second, motherhood in 'Thyrsus' can be seen as explicitly feminist in character. As Lois McNay has observed:

> Whereas in earlier forms of feminist thought, motherhood had to be rejected in so far as 'compulsory heterosexuality' had made it the social destiny of all women, nowadays, feminists regard it as both one of the main supports of patriarchal domination and also one of the strongholds of feminine *[sic]* identity. This understanding of motherhood illustrates an alternative feminist approach to the body which is understood as lying at the threshold of subjectivity but not in terms of a fixed biological essence, nor as the result of social conditioning. (McNay 1992, 23–24)

Motherhood in 'Thyrsus' is connected to the narrator's body's long-lasting resistance to it, to her sense of the self, and to the role of the social environment in her endless attempts to conceive. The climax of this process comes in the epiphany in which it becomes clear to the narrator that motherhood/parenthood is not a social destiny, but a *political* condition. In this respect, Boučková's narrator's view is not all that different from Anka's seemingly radical refusal to have children. The reader does not know if Anka was an unwanted child as such, but she certainly 'was in the way' of her parents. Therefore, after she decided to become a dedicated professional, she made a decision not to have children, because it would be unfair to the child. I argued that this was an act of parental responsibility, because Anka realised that a child means commitment and cannot exist in the margins of the parents' professional life. The narrator of *Indian Run* has her professional ambitions (she wants to be an actress), but is not allowed to pursue them because of her father's political activities. The story of her desperate efforts to conceive comes only after she realises that the only 'career' open to her was that of a cleaning woman. It is, therefore, difficult to make any judgement on the degree of comparative importance between her desire to have a career and to have a child, or to what extent the child could have been a compensation for her inability to pursue a profession. The narrator obviously has a profession in the end—she becomes a writer—but she mentions the fact only once (in the commentary on her father's reaction to her book I quoted above). She gives many more details in 'The Epilogue' on her life as a mother. The problem of deciding between a child and a career for a woman is never directly presented. It is touched upon indirectly, by the narrator's appreciation of her mother's sacrifice in favour of her children, as I illustrated on the examples from 'The Realm'. Moreover, Indian is blamed for his lack of responsibility for his children. His blame is frequently implied and once it is expressed in a direct emotional appeal *vis-à-vis* his failure to intervene in Sunbeam's mistreatment by Alpha's partner (and Sunbeam's surrogate father): 'Where were you then, Indian?' (16).[20]

Indian's failure is contrasted with Waltz who is capable of replacing the mother if the situation requires it. Such a situation occurs at the end of 'The Epilogue' when the narrator has had enough: she is overworked from Christmas preparations, tired, feels unappreciated and reproached by Waltz for not being pleasant enough: '"Sour, sour …" sounded through the house and that was too much for me. I grabbed a rucksack, put a hunk of bread in it so that I did not die of starvation, and left home' (155). In a wonderful piece of self-mockery, she describes how she walked through ploughed fields, how her shoes became heavy with mud, how she grew increasingly cold and dirty. She began to doubt her decision in the light of spoiling Christmas for her children, but then adds another perspective:

> And when I managed to fall on the slippery clay, the point begged itself: It's not fair to me. […] I expected crying, but the house resounded with Christmas carols. I expected hunger, mess, confusion. … The boys were asleep and Waltz was just finishing the potato salad—wearing my apron. (156)

The picture of Waltz as a perfect 'mother' may be a hyperbole, but it is also the ultimate challenge to Indian who never cared for his parental duties. The accusation of the father not fulfilling his role can perhaps be seen as subversive to the still prevailing belief that a child needs first of all the mother (and in the Czech Republic it is still rare that children are given into the custody of the father after divorce; the mother has to be declared unfit for a serious reason, usually on account of her mental health), and thus

[20] Here it seems appropriate to mention that the nickname 'Indian' for the narrator's father refers probably to Kohout's own observation on men in his second *memoáromán*: 'I do not know an adult woman who still plays with dolls, but men are capable *of playing Indians* until they keel over; we don't ever grow up and, therefore, are sillier and, because of that, the more dangerous half of humanity' (Kohout 1990, 282; my emphasis).

placing the entire responsibility for the child's well-being onto the mother. This narrator insists that a father is equally important, and has equal obligations.[21]

That so much space is given to mother/parenthood, childlessness/sterility is also an important issue. It is the accompanying topic of the desire to become a mother in 'Thyrsus'. If, as I suggested, sterility/childlessness could be considered subversive to the state-socialist ideology in Frýbová's *For Unknown Reasons* and Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, in *Indian Run* it is connected to both the political system and to patriarchy (men's unreliability). The narrator has her first miscarriage after she gets angry with the lazy and drunk well-diggers:

> One day when they again sprawled on the porch and opened beers, I dared to ask if they were going to begin to work.
>
> 'You won't be telling me what I should and shouldn't do, I'm not used to such things,' shouted the neighbour at me.
>
> I did not manage to hold it in and yelled.
>
> I yelled out at them everything that had accumulated in me over the long months, I yelled, and in a week, Blessed Virgin, in a week the well was no longer so urgent. (63)

The well is a metaphor for life, but the stress caused by the unreliability of those who are supposed to bring this life to the surface causes the other life, the one in her womb, to be aborted. The drunken, exploitative workers can be seen as representatives of the corrupt state-socialist working class, which, with the inefficiency of the state service sector, ruled the country in the sense that most individuals were dependent on people with manual skills. At that time, there was no recourse or competition if the services provided by one worker were not satisfactory. One had to be grateful if a worker was willing to perform paid work: the narrator has to keep her workers supplied with vodka and beer to keep them going. The well-diggers are also symbolic of the patriarchal structures which have power over women: in this case, both the workers and the woman have the power to give life, but their power is superior to the woman's life-giving ability. They can kill the life in the woman (and not be held responsible). Thus, the men's 'big goal' of construction (the well-diggers boast by telling amazing stories of the wells they have dug out and from which the water gushed five meters high when they had hit the spring) keeps the woman from realising herself.

Childlessness is connected to politics even more closely through the symbolic success of the narrator conceiving after the changes of 1989; that is when an individual could begin to hope in free choices, the body is also 'freed'—it is the end of the sterile epoch. These symbolic connotations are implied by the narrator when she informs the reader that there is no *medical* reason why she should not be able to conceive (77). In this respect, the narrator's successful pregnancy after years of trying, mirrors Lune's success in the 'performance' of femininity once she reaches the free West. The most explicit criticism of the state-socialist system is expressed in an episode recounting how

[21] Šiklová (1999b) argues that a call for the enforcement of equal rights and responsibilities of fathers were characteristic of what she calls radical feminist positions in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s.

the narrator and her husband used rain water, which was contaminated after the Chernobyl catastrophe, for washing and watering their vegetable garden:

> Why had nobody informed us what we should do when such a catastrophe happens?
>
> It's my baby's first birthday. *In memoriam.* (84)

The implication is that she probably had a still birth as a result of the ideological disinformation of the population (minimal news were allowed to be published in the press at the time). In the text, the political aim of maintaining the image of the Soviet Union as a country of success and perfection interferes directly with 'the foundation of the state', that is, with the 'family'. The family as the locus of the close relation between the political and the private is, indeed, a recurrent theme within all the stories: There is rarely any family event discussed without it also being associated with the state-socialist ideology and politics. This is mostly due to the state's practice of reaching out into the family as a tool for keeping family members in subjection. The political is *always* personal because the state has the power to punish the dissent of one individual by punishing the whole family. Thus the narrator is not accepted to *gymnázium,* because she is 'a daughter of a counter-revolutionary' (17). Typically, the verdict of an anonymous state authority follows the narrator's reflections on how she was unwanted by her father and invisible to him.

In the situation where a father fails in supporting his children against the state, it is up to the mother to struggle with the system. In *Indian Run* it is symptomatic that the narrator never mentions Indian's or Alpha's professions. There are hints throughout the book that they have to do with theatre, but it is never specified. She probably wants to say that professional life is only secondary to the family or perhaps that one's profession cannot be primary in the conditions of the ideology of state socialism. Although it remains unclear in the text whether Indian pursued his profession at the expense of his family, or whether he was merely generally selfish, it is clear that Alpha cannot achieve a balance between her professional interests and the well-being of her children due to the interference of the state. She has to keep her job in order to be able to support herself and her children, but the importance of that work for her as a profession is not mentioned even in 'The Realm', which focuses only on her. The emphasis is always on her difficulties in managing both the job *and* a dignified upbringing for her children: 'Alpha is driving herself hard to earn some money, while Muse has a maid so that she is not overworked with walking her dachshund' (31).

In this book, the harmony between professional and private life is just as impossible as in *For Unknown Reasons*, although here the accusations against the state-socialist system are more explicit than there, which is perhaps understandable given that this book was written (for the most part) after 1989, and the part which was published before that time, came out in a dissident, 'unofficial' publishing house. Indian has presumably a successful professional life, but at the cost of his family: he abandons his three children and ultimately his only 'baby' is a dachshund. Alpha has her children to support her when she needs it, but her loyalty to them and to her ex-husband (Indian) costs her her career and, eventually, the job itself. The narrator, meanwhile, manages to create a family by adopting children, but can achieve a career (as a writer) only under changed political conditions. The same applies to Sunbeam, who marries young and has a child, but abandons both his son and his wife shortly after and resorts to drinking

('and Sunbeam moved to the Golden Tiger, because following his father's example he did not feel the need to love his child'—30). Several years later, he decides to emigrate (the narrator mentions that the artistic career he wanted was made impossible for him due to his political convictions), marry his ex-wife again and take her and his son with him. A change in him occurs again only in a different political environment. He returns from the West after 1989 as 'hardworking, responsible, reliable, punctual, in short, a totally different Sunbeam' (152).

In the confrontation between the relentless, punitive force of the state and relations between family members lies the principal conflict of the book. The narrator insists that one has the obligation to uphold one's political principles, although the state keeps virtually all individuals hostages through their families, while one also has to fulfil one's responsibilities toward one's family. The book is a critique of the state-socialist system as a whole—as a system which oppressed everyone regardless of gender—but the narrator also denies heroism/martyrdom to the male celebrities of the dissident/émigré circles if they compromised their moral integrity at the personal level. The author clearly believes in the integrity of public and private morality. The last theme I will be discussing in this chapter, the narrator's relationship to men, is primarily associated with this problem area.

It could be argued that, at some level, the four stories that comprise the book are recounting also the narrator's search for a male ideal. The first story, 'Indian Run', revolves around a personal quest to recover the lost father, but it soon becomes apparent that the narrator cannot accept the way Indian divorces his political and artistic principles from his private behaviour. This comes out very strongly in the scene from the airport I cited earlier, in which Indian exploits the genuine affection of his daughter and former wife to increase his prestige (presumably as an artist and a political exile from state-socialist Czechoslovakia). Moreover, he is oblivious to the consequences of this politicised 'family' event for the two women: the ban on passport issuance and the demotion from her job for his ex-wife, and police interrogations of his daughter. Together with the previous instances of Indian's relegation of his family to the margins of his life—his non-sharing of the material benefits of his popularity with his cash-poor children, and his anger with and abandonment of the narrator during her visit to him abroad after he learns that she allowed a Charter 77 meeting in his Prague flat—the narrator states clearly her moral principle: it is not acceptable that one's private life is at variance with one's political principles. The bearers of this lack of moral integrity are always the male characters in the book; female characters always preserve their integrity no matter what the circumstances are.[22]

Indian fails in the trial and is therefore abandoned: 'So we all met again after a number of years. Beautiful and glamorous Lune, Sunbeam, [...] Madonna—still with a childlike face—and I' (152). The family meets under strained circumstances: they have to discuss the further treatment of Alpha's breast cancer. Alpha is included in the family through their thoughts, although physically she is probably in the hospital; but Indian is missing both in person and in their thoughts. A few lines later the narrator implies the reason for his exclusion from the family circle: 'I wrote to Indian. He replied. Wrote a letter and included a Xerox copy of the agreement about the country house' (153). It is clear from the context that she asked him for financial help to contribute to Alpha's treatment in Switzerland, where Lune was taking her. Instead of helping, he encloses a copy of the agreement between him and Alpha, according to which she gave up the half

[22] The text does not discuss Muse in this context. It is obvious that the narrator does not approve of her, but she presents Muse at a purely personal level: outside political attitudes and issues of moral integrity.

of the country house which was hers by marital laws. The narrator has implied earlier in the story that Alpha's signature was probably not entirely voluntary, and says that after 1989 she refused to give up her legal right: 'and Indian was mad, because the nameless mother of his children [...] suddenly does not want to concede to him' (150). Indian's final exclusion from the family is underlined by the illustration on the title page of 'The Epilogue'. The illustrations for the 1992 edition were executed by Ondřej Kohout, the author's brother and a person bearing great similarities to Sunbeam. The cover illustration for 'Indian Run' shows three stylised dark figures (the three children) standing in a row from which a bright yellow figure (Indian) is taking a leap. The cover illustration of 'The Epilogue' features four bright yellow figures (probably the three children and Alpha) united in a row with a dark lying figure (Indian) floating above them and crossed out with a black cross.

In the episode dealing with the requests for financial help for Alpha's treatment, the moral stature of Alpha's former lover, Monologue, is also diminished:

> Lune and Sunbeam were trying to reach Monologue. They telegraphed him, left a message in the office. He became a celebrated and loved hero of the revolutionary days. And the world awards him prizes for his heroic stance. And prizes mean also money. If he contributed a tiny bit of those sums to the memory of a crazy love ... He did not respond. (153)

He, who previously figured as a political hero (the police came for him to Alpha's flat) and an emotional support for Alpha (especially in 'The Realm'), is shown as failing the same trial as Indian. The only positively-conceived male characters who are dealt with at some depth in the book are the 'reformed' Sunbeam and Waltz. However, the dilemma of political dissent and responsibility for one's family remains unresolved. Sunbeam escapes from adverse political conditions and becomes responsible with regards to his family only after that. Waltz is a responsible husband and father, but his dissenting views are manifest only in one instant in 'The Epilogue' in the scene which takes place probably in 1989:

> The twenty-first August came and Waltz went to Prague to demonstrate.[23]
>
> 'I only hope they won't take you in,' I said when he was leaving and feared that they would take Sausage, whom we did not have confirmed yet, as a revenge.[24]
>
> They did not take him in. Waltz came back and changed into his work-clothes. (145)

The narrator shows her support of his political activity, but is also worried about its possible consequences for the family. She is relieved not only that he comes back unharmed, but changes into work-clothes and returns to repairing the house for the family (symbolically, building the 'nest'). This is not to say that Waltz does not have strong and consistent political views against the regime, but that the problem of his political involvement *versus* his family responsibility is not given much space in the text. Therefore, the *ideal* male partner is never really imagined and there is no final alternative to the 'failures' of Indian and Monologue. Still, Waltz sometimes seems to come close to the ideal for which the narrator is looking, because he brings a degree of resolution to the conflict between male and female roles:

> He had the step of a dancer, also wrote poetry, made beautiful photographs, and when he cut off a piece of bread, he swept the crumbs in his palm and gave them to birds. If necessary, he exchanged his artistic talents for a spade and that really won my favour. (54)

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[23] The anniversary of the Soviet occupation in 1968.

[24] 'Sausage' is the name of the couple's second adoptive son.

He offers calm partnership flowing in the rhythm of (Viennese) Waltz, as the subtitle of 'The Epilogue' suggests ('Slow, Quick, Quick, Slow'—the steps of a Viennese Waltz). This contrasts with the hectic pace of alternative running and walking evoked in 'Indian Run', which is clearly symbolic of the emotional gap between the narrator and Indian. 'The Epilogue' waltzes through a major social and political upheaval, but with the pace of emotions slowed down: the two adopted sons simply require the full attention of their mother; storms of frustration between the narrator and Waltz are only passing showers; and the children's help to Alpha is understood as a matter of course. In short, emotional dilemmas are resolved and the family becomes a firm pillar of support, in which one family member will take over from another if needed (Lune takes responsibility for her sick mother; Waltz substitutes for the narrator in the motherly role during their Christmas quarrel).

The seeming sentimentality of the concluding 'snapshots' (the music of Christmas carols sounding through the house, family harmony, and the long-wished-for conception) should not be discarded as a trite happy-ending. Rather, it represents an abiding longing for peace and harmony which, as I argued, is also a strong narrative drive in *For Unknown Reasons*. Moreover, the calm at the end is hard won and achieved at the price of a number of material compromises: divorce, two adoptions, the 'loss' of father, the impossibility of having a profession (the narrator marries Waltz as a cleaning woman). There are also symbolic compromises: the well does not have enough life-giving water and the family still have to use rain water to wash themselves; she and Waltz build their home, but the wind always blows off the roof over their extension which was intended to give their house a stronger sense of permanence. Further, given the narrative of the whole book, the seemingly optimistic ending does not mean that everything will be without difficulties from then on. However, this matters less than the fact that the narrator has found emotional fulfilment and the basis for a new 'female identity'. Yet it is important to register that the narrator remains unreconciled with the lack of moral integrity in those around her. Toward the end of the last story, she gives this bitter account of the circumstances of Alpha's successful cure:

> The day when Alpha learned [...] that she was going to live, Grandpa died. In a loony bin, in a barred bed, smeared with faeces and urine, with arms blue with bruises from his vain attempts to run away. He died of hunger and thirst, because the hospital staff cannot spoon-feed every single loony, the hospital staff places the food and drink on the patient's bedside table. You understand, not enough people. They are just now out in the streets demonstrating their will for truth and love. It is the twenty first of August. (153)

This 'snapshot' is preceded by Alpha's difficult decision to place her father in a mental hospital because she herself has to have treatment and can no longer care for him. That same 'snapshot' also records Indian's and Monologue's (Havel's?) failures to help Alpha financially. In the quote above the narrator gives her account a particularly bitter flavour by evoking Havel's motto from the presidential campaign in December 1989 ('Truth and love have to win over lies and hatred'). Although the narrator achieves

much of what she wanted in the end, she does not yet forgive. And the final argument against a sentimental reading of the closing pages rests in the fact that the child comes almost as an anti-climax: after Alpha is cured, after the political system changes, and after the narrator redefines her family circle. In other words, it comes after the other goals towards which the narrator has struggled are achieved and after she has reconciled herself to not achieving the remaining goals the way she wanted; after having found a 'remedy' for her childlessness by adopting two sons and after almost having given up on ever having water in the well. The latter is another anti-climax which creates a symbolic counterpart to the fertility issue. The narrator just mentions in passing in 'The Epilogue' that 'water collected in [our well] by some miracle' (141).

These two anti-climaxes can also be read in the context of the narrator's emerging 'female identity': it is the larger, 'relational' goals which have to be satisfied before the individual ones. Thus the oppressive ideology, which interfered with people's private lives has to be removed, and the family has to reunite and form a genuinely supportive network. Only after that can individual hopes and wishes be realised.

Yet I would argue that despite the strong drives towards the values traditionally associated with women (family, children, relatedness as opposed to individualism), Boučková's understanding of 'female identity' is largely outside the traditional patriarchal structures. It defies femininity and it revolves around female solidarity, because although Sunbeam is included in the family at the end, for the most part of the narrative, it is the women who hold the family together and help each other when men fail. Boučková's 'female identity' also stems from women's experience, which is then complemented by the imperative of moral integrity. She puts in literary practice the old feminist credo 'the personal is political' in the sense that every 'little' life matters in creating a better or worse future (see the epiphany of 'Thyrsus'). She also turns the credo around and shows how the political, in the conditions of state-socialist ideology, is necessarily *always* personal: the private sphere is directly controlled by the political aims of the system. Her 'female identity' is thus always related to the more general political and social context.

As to the way she forms her understanding of 'female identity', her process is, in a way, the reverse of much of Anglo-American feminist writing of the 1960s and 1970s. In that writing, women were seeking individuality, because they had to cope with the particular ideology of women not being ever thought of as individuals, but always in relation to somebody. Boučková's 'reversed' development of 'female identity', however, should not be read as anti-feminist. It is as if she were answering the call of Jiřina Šiklová from 1993:

> I hope that our women will develop a different style than that of men, which is oriented toward individual success, consumption, and personal power. [...] I believe that our women who have had the experience of living under totalitarian regimes will not merely mimic men but will discover a new form of political participation and leadership with enough space for solidarity, one that will uphold our 'traditional' female qualities. I welcome more of such feminine [*sic*] traits in politics and leadership. (Šiklová 1993, 82)

Like the Anglo-American feminists, Boučková is also writing against particular ideological positions. In this case it is the pervasive Czech individualism which is here represented by Indian who pursues his own (no matter how honourable) goals at the

expense of those related to him not by *their* choice, but by *his* former choice.[25] Boučková's 'female identity' insists that an individual cannot ever denounce her responsibility for her family (and, by extension, for the world) in favour of her individual interests, be they a desire for motherhood or political convictions. There is even a reward for this moral integrity: such a woman is never alone, she will always have all those relations to help her survive no matter what the circumstances.

[25] Heitlingerová and Trnková find an individualistic stance of their respondents in their series of interviews with young women in 1995–96 (Heitlingerová and Trnková 1998, 182–84); Havelková also makes such an observation in her research (Havelková 1997, 60).