

A PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF THE NEAR PAST

Periodizing Works of Czech Literary
Authors Published from 1948 to 1989
from a Gender Perspective, with Special
Regard to Dissent and Exile Literature
of the 1970s and 1980s*

Jan Matonoha

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Abstract

The article reads the Czech literary canon during the period from 1948 to 1989 not from a consciously feminist standpoint, but from a gender perspective. Following works of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Wendy Brown, the article's primary focus is on fiction written by dissent and alternative writers, with an emphasis on their role in what the author calls "dispositives of silence," consisting of the discursive emergence of silencing and the affective dimension of "injurious attachments." The article holds that while the dissident and alternative literary scene's opposition to the then-official regime made the need for political opposition clearly visible to it, other issues, such as the drive towards gender equality, became invisible to it, which represents a case of injurious attachments. In the article's interpretative part, it reads literary works by writers Iva Pekárková, Tereza Boučková, and Pavel Kohout as examples that illustrate the issue of injurious attachments. In the article's final part, it supplements its thesis on dissident and alternative literature of the 1948–1989 period with a brief sketch of the literary evolution during the period, and it presents an overview of five major – and partly contradictory – tendencies that can be identified in the four decades in question.

Keywords

Gender, dispositives of silence, injurious attachments, discursive emergence of silencing, Czech fiction of the 1970s and 1980s, samizdat literature, exile literature

Introduction

According to Czech literary researcher Libuše Heczková, in Czech literature,¹ as far as feminism is concerned, there is nothing to research after 1948. A period of feminist engagements finished with the show trial and execution of senator and feminist Milada Horáková.² Heczková is undoubtedly right (although arguably, exceptions could be found in Czech literature, for instance in the 1960s); however, I hold that it is necessary to ask for the reasons for such a lack of feminist awareness in literature and to read a Czech literary canon not vis-à-vis a *feminist* standpoint but from a *gender* perspective.³

¹ This article focuses on Czech literature of the period of 1948–1989, unless otherwise stated.

² See Marie Bahenská, Libuše Heczková, and Dana Musilová *Iluze spásy. České feministické myšlení 19. a 20. století* (Nakladatelství a vydavatelství Veduta, Univerzita Hradec Králové: České Budějovice, Hradec Králové, 2011); also Marci Shore, "Narrative / Archive / Trace: The Trial of Milada Horáková," *Jedním okem / One Eye Open* special issue: Gender and Historical Memory 1 (1998), pp. 27–41, more recently Mirek Vodrážka, *Rozumí české ženy vlastní historii?* (Prague: Academia, 2017).

³ What I mean here is that it would be debatable (if not impossible) to refer to various pro-gender trends from 1948–1989 as being part of a self-conscious, sovereign, full-fledged feminist movement; however, gender as a category is still present, whether or not it is raised up in expert or literary debates. Also, occurring in the text of the article are the terms "a feminist standpoint" and "a gender perspective," which are in need of further explanation. I use the phrase "reading from a gender perspective" (and the like) when a simple presence/absence of gender in a given text is sought, while the feminist standpoint reads from a consciously *feminist* perspective. Also,

The primary focus of this article is a fiction literature by *dissent or alternative writers* and their role in what I call “dispositives of silence” and “injurious attachments” (see further). Following a brief theoretical framing and a slightly more extensive debate on the engagement of female dissidents (and their ambivalences),⁴ I focus on a closer reading of literary texts by three writers: Iva Pekárková, Tereza Boučková, and Pavel Kohout; however, to make this analysis more substantiated, symptomatic, and telling, I choose to supplement this treatise of dissent and alternative literature of the given period with a brief sketch of the literary evolution of the entire 1948–1989 period and what I see as major – partly contradictory – tendencies of the four decades in question. Furthermore, the paper builds upon my earlier paper published in a proceeding for Daniela Hodrová,⁵ trying to provide a preliminary attempt at mapping diachronically literary texts written by female authors from 1948–1989, with a special regard to the 1970s and 1980s. My aim is to show a paradoxical and contradictory logic that, as far as literature is concerned – and Hana Havelková has reached an identical conclusion regarding general gender dynamics on the social level – stands as follows: while the dissent and alternative literary scene opposed the then official regime, it remained complicit with it regarding issues of gender emancipation. I am trying to capture this by concepts of *injurious attachments* and the *discursive emergence of silencing* that leads to what I call *dispositives of silence*.

there is a crucial difference between my usage of the terms “feminist discourse” on the one hand and “gender discourse” on the other: while “feminist discourse” implies a view being taken by a subject informed by and aware of a feminist agenda, the “gender discourse” refers simply to the cases where gender as a category is at play (and – in the case of most of literary texts analysed here – going rather against the grain of feminist values, hence the *raison d’être* of the present paper). Given the partial (not full-fledged) moments in emancipatory gender dynamics (i.e., nearly approaching the level of “feminism”), below I also use the expression “pro-gender” to refer to these moments to capture these gender-advanced yet not full-fledged feminist dynamics. As to the term “proto-feminism” (proposed by Libora Oates-Indruchová 2012 in “The Beauty and the Loser: Cultural Representations of Gender in Late State Socialism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37 [2012], no. 2, pp. 357–383 and Libora Oates-Indruchová, “Unraveling a Tradition, or Spinning a Myth? Gender Critique in Czech Society and Culture,” *Slavic Review* 75 (2016), no. 4, pp. 919–943), I am a somewhat hesitant to use it since the long history of Czech feminism in literature stretching back to Božena Němcová, Karolína Světlá, Eliška Krásnohorská, etc. (cf. Marie Bahenská, Libuše Heczková, Dana Musilová. *Iluze spásy. České feministické myšlení 19. a 20. století* (Nakladatelství a vydavatelství Veduta, Univerzita Hradec Králové: České Budějovice and Hradec Králové, 2011).

⁴ Cf. Further in this article, my drawing on the papers included in the collection Haná Havelkova and Oates-Indruchová (eds.), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁵ Jan Matonoha “Předběžný mezipřířzkum (relativně) nejbližší uplynulého. Periodizace literatury psané autorkami v období 1948–1989 z genderového hlediska,” in Alice Jedličková and Stanislava Fedrová (eds.), *Vyvolávání točících vět. Daniele Hodrové k 5. červenci 2016* (Prague: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, 2016), pp. 209–230.

Dispositives of Silence: Interpellations, Injurious Attachments, and Discursive Emergence of Silencing – theoretical framework and concepts used

As to a theoretical framework, many works on silence (and silencing) have been published.⁶ In my approach, though, I shall predominantly base my inquiry on the concept of *wounded attachments* coined by Wendy Brown⁷ and *injuring* (injurious) *identities* by Judith Butler,⁸ which I find as the most relevant for my work. In a nutshell, my argument – leaning on Brown’s and Butler’s concepts – is the following: while focusing on fighting against the then political regime, another topic, here gender, slips the discursive attention of the dissident community, thus rendering those neglected and at the time invisible gender topic as a site of a potential epistemological injury.⁹ Building upon those concepts of injuring (injurious) identity and wounded attachments, I use Althusser’s term *interpellation*¹⁰ and *dispositive* (following the term coined in Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*,¹¹ which renders the impossibility to distinguish between the discursive and the affective visible), summarizing them in the concept of “discursive emergence of silencing.” Thus I follow the specific combination of discursive practices, affective investments, and paradoxical injuring identification that

⁶ Among others, Maria-Luisa Achino-Loeb (ed.), *Silence: The Currency of Power* (New York: Berghahn Book, 2006), Robin Patric Clair, *Organizing Silence: A World of Possibilities* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), in the case of Czech literature specifically Bronislava Volková, “Image of Women in Contemporary Czech Prose,” in *A Feminist’s Semiotic Odyssey Through Czech Literature* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), pp. 69–88. For a more detailed debate and overview, see Jan Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence: Gender, Feminism and Czech Literature between 1948 and 1989,” trans. Dagmar Pegues, in *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*, in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (eds.), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 162–187; Jan Matonoha, “Dispozitivní mlčení: zraňující identity a diskurzivní konstituce mlčení. Gender, feminismus a česká literatura v období 1948–1989,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová et al., *Vyvláštěný hlas. Proměny genderové kultury v české společnosti 1948–1989* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství SLON, 2015), pp. 351–391.

⁷ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁸ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

⁹ As I show both later in the section “On male authors” and in a more detailed overview of fiction written by female authors, the gendered aspect of life is cast in a troublesome way by both male authors (to demonstrate this, I include a brief section on the novel by Pavel Kohout further below) and (although to a substantially different extent, as shown below) also by female ones: the tricky logic of injurious identities (not obvious at first sight) pertains equally to male as well as female gender (to exemplify this, I include a debate of two female authors, Iva Pekárková and Tereza Boučková). Hence my attention toward the given topic.

¹⁰ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus,” in *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984/1970).

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995/1975).

ultimately become entwined and constitute the phenomenon I call “dispositives of silence.”¹² These interpellations and proposed subject positions (of a mother, martyr, helper, lover, friend, etc.)¹³ are both seemingly satisfactory (in their audacious stance against the then official regime) yet deeply injuring, disadvantaging, and disempowering from a gender perspective. What I focus on is criticizing Czechoslovakian dissent (samizdat, underground, and exile) literature, pointing out that while fighting the official regime, the sphere of gender politics remained untouched and silenced.

There are two crucial points for me I wish to stress. A) I approach “silence” as something that does not come naturally but is produced or rather emerges discursively. B) *Production* seems to imply a conscious, intentional meaning, while what matters to me is the unintended *emergence* as a side product of an intentional focus which was a fight against a then-official regime. Hence I am using the term “discursive emergence of silence” here as opposed to “the discursive production of silence.” I chose the word “emergence” to underscore the nature of the described discursive mechanisms, or rather processes that are characterized by the fact that they do not result from conscious or intentional activities performed by concrete individual actors; on the contrary, they originate as subsidiary, unintentional products or effects resulting from the confluence of a number of discursive factors. Therefore, the discursive origination of silence is not an intended aim of any individual actor; it is an unintentional structural phenomenon.

Debating Existing Approaches of Women in Dissent (and Literature)

As for the existing body of secondary literature, substantial work has been done on the topic of gender and of general (not only Czech) dissent (from a sociological perspective), be it in specific papers or separate chapters in key books on the period.¹⁴ As far as Czech

¹² In more detail, see Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence”; Matonoha, “Dispozitivity mlčení”, Matonoha, “Předběžný meziprůzkum”; Jan Matonoha, “Přítomný ženský hlas, zmizelý ženský subjekt: Hrabalova trilogie *Svatby v domě*,” in Roman Kanda (ed.), *Praze, ze kterých žiji. Dílo Bohumila Hrabala v proměnách. Ke 100. výročí autorova narození* (Prague: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, 2016), pp. 141–145, Jan Matonoha, “Paralelní anatomie. Dispozitivity mlčení, zraňující přilnutí a aspekty genderu,” in Věra Sokolová and Lúbia Kobová (eds.), *Odvaha nesoúhlasit. Feministické myšlení Hany Havelkové* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova, 2019), pp. 496–508.

¹³ See more closely in Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence”; Matonoha, “Dispozitivity mlčení.”

¹⁴ Namely H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Barbara J. Falk, “Reappraising Civil Society: Feminist Critique,” in *The Dilemmas of Dissidence in East-Central Europe* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2003), pp. 325–327; Shana Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret: The Women Who Defeated Communism in Poland* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 2006); Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Jonathan Bolton, *Worlds of Dissent* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 2012); Peggy Watson, “The Rise of Masculinism in Eastern Europe,” *New Left Review*, no. 198 (1993), pp. 71–82; Peggy Watson, “(Anti) feminism after Communism,” in Ann Oakley and Judith Mitchell (eds.), *Who’s Afraid of Feminism? Seeing Through the Backlash* (New York: New Press, 1997), pp. 144–161; Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist*

works are concerned, even separate monographs have appeared (in 2017): a significant volume of interviews with female dissidents¹⁵ has been published (with an introduction by Petr Blažek) and an important afterword by Marcela Linková);¹⁶ an equally important book appeared the same year by Mirek Vodrážka.¹⁷ With few exceptions,¹⁸ the topic has

Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Alena Wagnerová, "České ženy na cestě od reálného socialismu k reálnému kapitalismu," in Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma, and Eva Klimentová (eds.), *Feminismus devadesátých let českýma očima* (Prague: One Woman Press, 1999), pp. 80–90; Alena Wagnerová, "Ve vztahu člověka k člověku změnit svět... aneb ženské jméno Charty 77," in *Žena za socialismu. Československo 1945–1974 a reflexe vývoje před rokem 1989 a po něm* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2017 [1991]), pp. 214–219; Jiřina Šiklová, "Feminism and the Roots of Apathy in the Czech Republic," *Social Research* 64 (1997), no. 2, pp. 258–280; Jiřina Šiklová, "Women and the Charta 77 Movement in Czechoslovakia," in Robin Teske and Marry Ann Tétrault (eds.), *Conscious Acts and the Politics of Social Change: Feminist Approaches to Social Movements* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 265–272; Jiřina Šiklová, "O ženách v disentu," in Alena Vodáková and Olga Vodáková (eds.), *Rod ženský: Kdo jsme, odkud jsme přišly, kam jdeme?* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství – SLON, 2003), pp. 204–207; Jiřina Šiklová, "Podíl českých žen na samizdatu a opoziční činnosti v Československu období tzv. normalizace v letech 1969–1989," *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 9 (2008), no. 2, pp. 39–44; Gerlinda Šmausová, "Emancipace, socialismus a feminismus," in Libora Oates-Indruchová (ed.), *Tvrdošijnost myšlenky: od feministické kriminologie k teorii genderu* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství – SLON, 2011 [2006]); Kamila Bendová, "Ženy v Chartě 77," in Petr Blažek (ed.), *Opozice a odpor proti komunistickému režimu 1968–1989* (Prague: Dokořán, 2005), pp. 54–66; Mita Castle-Kanerova, "The Culture of Strong Woman in the Making," in Chris Corrin (ed.), *Superwoman and the Double Burden: Women's Experience of Change in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London: Scarlet Press, 1992), pp. 97–124; Hana Havelková, "Women in and after a 'classless' society," in Christine Zmroczek and Pat Mahony (eds.), *Women and Social Class: International Feminist Perspectives* (London: Taylor and Francis/UCL, 1999), pp. 69–84; Hana Havelková, "A Few Prefeminist Thoughts," in Nanette Funk and Magda Müller (eds.), *Gender Politics and Post Communism* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 62–73; Hana Havelková, "Ignored but Assumed: Family and Gender Between Public and Private Realms," *Czech Sociological Review* 4 (1996), no. 1, pp. 63–79; Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism*; Mary Hrabik-Samal, "Ženy a neoficiální kultura a literatura v Československu v letech 1969–1989," in Jolana Kusá and Peter Zajac (eds.), *Přítomnost minulosti, minulost přítomnosti* (Bratislava: Nadácia Milana Šimečku, 1996), pp. 81–95; Madelaine Hron, "'Word Made Flesh': Czech Women's Fiction from Communism to Post-Communism," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 4 (2003), no. 3, pp. 81–98; Rajendra A. Chitnis, "Writing as Being: Jiří Kratochvíl, Zuzana Brabcová, Daniela Hodrová, Michal Ajvaz, Jáchym Topol," in *Literature in Post-Communist Russia and Eastern Europe: The Russian, Czech, and Slovak Fiction of the Changes, 1988–1998* (London, New York: Routledge, 2005); Tiina A. Kirss, "Přítelkyně z domu smutku Evy Kantůrkové: Genderová mapa vězení," *Jedním okem / One Eye Open* special issue: Gender and Historical Memory 1 (1998), pp. 109–21; Nicola Nixon, "Cinderella's Suspicions: Feminism in the Shadow of the Cold War," *Australian Feminist Studies* 14 (2001), no. 35, pp. 209–223; Libora Oates-Indruchová, *Discourses of Gender in Pre- and Post-1989 Czech Culture* (Pardubice: Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Pardubice, 2002); Libora Oates-Indruchová, "The Imperative of Moral Integrity in Tereza Boučková's *Indian Run*," in Maria-Sabina Draga-Alexandru, Madalina Nicolaescu, and Helen Smith (eds.), *Women's Voices in Postcommunist Eastern Europe*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2005), pp. 71–88; Libora Oates-Indruchová, "The Beauty and the Loser"; Libora Oates-Indruchová, "Unraveling a Tradition, or Spinning a Myth? Gender Critique in Czech Society and Culture,"

not been covered as far as literature is concerned, though, hence the present paper (and my overall project of which this paper is a part). I suppose the entire question of the pro-gender activities – although not feminist, I think¹⁹ – or the lack of them is truly a

Slavic Review 75 (2016), no. 4: pp. 919–943; Laure Occhipinti, “Two Steps Back? Anti-Feminism in Eastern Europe,” *Anthropology Today* 12 (1996), no. 6, pp. 13–18; Iva Popovičová, “Gender and the Kundera Paradigm: ‘Truth-telling’ in The Book of Laughter and Forgetting,” *Jedním okem / One Eye Open* special issue: Gender and Historical Memory 1 (1998), pp. 132–151; Elena Sokol, “Vaculík a Procházková: Czech Sexual Poetics or Polemics?” *Slovo a smysl* 2 (2005), no. 3, pp. 197–210; Helena Sedláčková-Gibbs, “Dluhy Olze. Psaní, identita a gender v dopisech Václava Havla z vězení,” *Jedním okem / One Eye Open* special issue: Gender and Historical Memory 2 (1998), pp. 98–108; Marci Shore, “Narrative / Archive/ Trace: The Trial of Milada Horáková,” *Jedním okem / One Eye Open* special issue: Gender and Historical Memory 1 (1998), pp. 27–41; Jiřina Šmejkalová, “Co je feminismus? Kam s ní/m? Na okraj ženské otázky a současného feminismu,” *Tvar* 2 (1991), nos. 37–41, p. 16; Jiřina Šmejkalová, “Do Czech Women Need Feminism? Perspectives of Feminist Theories and Practices in Czechoslovakia,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 17 (1994), no. 3, pp. 277–282; Eva Věšíňová, “Feminismus ... ano?” *Iniciály* 2 (1992), no. 25, pp. 1–6; Eva Věšíňová, “Backlash a osudy feminismu (interview vedla Naďa Macurová),” *Tvar* 4 (1995), no. 1, p. 12; Eva Věšíňová, “Ženy v literatuře. Komparativní téma,” in Dobrava Moldanová (ed.), *Žena – Jazyk – Literatura* (Ústí nad Labem: PF UJEP, 1996), pp. 208–211; Eva Věšíňová-Kalivodová, “Czech Society in-between the Waves,” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 22 (2005), no. 4, pp. 421–435; Mirek Vodrážka, “Před velkým exodem: kořen českého antifeminismu,” *Tvar* 4 (1993), nos. 49–50, pp. 1, 8–9; Mirek Vodrážka, “Ženy, feminismus a gender v české společnosti v období 1989–1997: neortodoxní historická reflexe,” *Tvar* 4 (1998), no. 1, pp. 11–13; Mirek Vodrážka, “Hranice české společnosti střeží tajná ‘pohlavní policie,’” in Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma, and Eva Klimentová (eds.), *Feminismus devadesátých let českýma očima* (Prague: Marie Chřibková, 1999), pp. 254–259; Mirek Vodrážka, “Zemřel filozof Milan Machovec, feministka,” *Lidové noviny – Orientace* Jan. 18, 2003; Vodrážka, *Rozumí české ženy vlastní historii?*

¹⁵ Such as Kamila Bendová, Eva Kantůrková, Eda Kriseová, Dana Němcová, Věra Roubalová Kostlánová, Anna Šabatová, Jaroslava Šiktancová, Zdena Tominová, and many others.

¹⁶ I see the importance of, among many other things, pointing out the extensive role of female dissent actors that, as mentioned in the volume, for instance, far outreaches their public visibility and representation after 1989. See in more detail Naďa Straková and Marcela Linková (eds.), *Bytová revolta: jak ženy dělaly dissent* (Prague: Academia, 2017); cf. also an important afterword by Marcela Linková there, Marcela Linková, “Disidentská herstory: Ženy a jejich činnost v prostředí Charty 77,” in Naďa Straková and Marcela Linková (eds.), *Bytová revolta: jak ženy dělaly dissent* (Prague: Academia, 2017, pp. 373–389). However, as to the literary scene, I see a somewhat different and far less optimistic picture of pro-gender engagements of female authors; please see my doubts further below.

¹⁷ I see the book (Vodrážka, *Rozumí české ženy vlastní historii?*) as being important because of Vodrážka’s stress on Milada Horáková, although a paradoxical participation of female authors on the issue of the suppression of feminism should be also pointed out; hence the present paper and my project in general.

¹⁸ Namely Dana Nývltová, *Femme fatale české avantgardy: Marie Majerová – česká komunistka ve víru feminismu: s doprovodnou antologií* (Prague: Akropolis, 2011). Majerová’s novels in question were published in the late forties and the fifties – see below.

¹⁹ Cf. also recently Martina Pachmanová, “Feminismus a avantgarda v zrcadle (českých) dějin (umění),” *Profil současného výtvarného umění* (2019), no. 1, pp. 14–23.

thorny and difficult issue. One view is that pro-gender of engagements of women were feminist in everything but a name.²⁰ My view is that of Hana Havelková:²¹ in the period of 1948–1989, gender was expropriated from the hands of women by the then ruling regime. Unlike Marcela Linková, in a substantial and surely much appreciable collection of female Charter 77 signatories' interviews (Straková and Linková, *Bytová revolta*), I do not share her optimism on the positions of Czech dissent movement regarding feminism, at least as far as literary texts are concerned (cf. Zsófia Lóránd for Yugoslav context of dissident activities regarding gender agenda or Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz and Agnieszka Mrozik for a Polish context).^{22,23}

But one can be a little hesitant even on a general level. As mentioned, I find the potential concept of “dissent feminism” rather questionable for Czech context. Perhaps a

²⁰ Among others see Šiklová, “Podíl českých žen”; Megan R. Martin, “The Growth of Czech Feminism: Analyzing Resistance Activities through a Gendered Lens, 1968–1993,” *Gender – rovné příležitosti – výzkum* 10 (2009), no. 1, pp. 37–45, Straková and Linková *Bytová revolta*.

²¹ Hana Havelková, “Expropriated Voice: Transformation of Gender Culture under State Socialism; Czech Society 1948–89,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (eds.), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice*. London: Routledge, p. 3–27.

²² Cf. Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, for the Yugoslav context of dissident activities regarding the gender agenda, and for a Polish context, see Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz “Przez historię życia codziennego do historii kobiet. O współczesnej polskiej historiografii kobiecej,” *Kultura i społeczeństwo* (2005), no. 2, pp. 135–150 and Agnieszka Mrozik, “Crossing Boundaries: The Case of Wanda Wasilewska and Polish Communism,” *Aspasia: The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 11 (2017), pp. 19–53. In the context of Yugoslav dissent, the topic of pro-gender stances (let alone feminism) were mostly absent (Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*), mostly marked by either nationalism (resulting in the conflicts and war in the early 1990s) or – as a polemical response to the official discourse – by a turn to conservatism, making it a similar if not identical tendency in the Czech context too (cf. Václav Benda). The major difference between feminism and dissidence in Yugoslavia, Lóránd observes, is that Yugoslav feminism, unlike the dissident movement, did not refuse official cooperation (Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge*, p. 9). In literature, a rich (although at times slightly confused, as Zsófia Lóránd notes, *ibid.*, p. 98) presence of feminism – as seen, for instance, in novels by Slavenka Drakulić, published in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s (*ibid.*, p. 109) – did not occur in Czech literary discourse in exile and samizdat writing. Linhartová and Richterová (for *écriture féminine*) or Kantůrková and Kriseová are exceptions (see below); however, their works do not mention feminism explicitly and I would instead (in line with the terminology used here) label them as pro-gender. Paradoxically, as to Czech literature, more relevant pro-gender instances could be found in the official sphere (e.g., in writings by Jarmila Loukotková, but she cannot be considered a feminist author herself). The twist here is that in the seventies and eighties, pro-gender topics could be found more in official literature than in dissent literature.

²³ As to the issue of gender, in the generation and period of 1948–1989, more gender-oriented monographs focusing on the debate of generational differences and shifts fortunately started to appear, cf. Kateřina Kolářová and Věra Sokolová (eds.), *Gender and Generation* (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007), or most recently Anna Artwińska and Agnieszka Mrozik, (eds.), *Gender, Generations, and Communism in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2020); see namely Libuše Heczková and Kateřina Svatoňová on Ester Krumbachová or Francisca de Hahn for a more general debate.

pro-gender engagement of dissent women could be labelled as independent activities of women: there was a need, a push for it,²⁴ yet there was no channel to ventilate this energy, as the paradigm of feminism was discredited by having been adopted – or “expropriated,” in the words of Hana Havelková – into the official regime, and most independent cultural elites rebelled against it.²⁵ This kickback against the state-sponsored emancipation of women, while not labelled as feminism, can be seen through the mechanism of injurious attachments and it produced the effect, I think, of a dispositive of silence regarding feminist issues.

In connection to the dissent movement in Czech context,²⁶ Alena Wagnerová pointed out that there was a “battalion of *nameless* women who transcribed thousands of samizdat documents and Charter 77 (Charta 77) handwritten pages for the past few years and often transported and distributed banned publications in full shopping bags or baby trolleys; in short, they did a lot of this ‘minor everyday labour’ without which Charter 77 and other civic organisations including samizdat could not exist.”²⁷ However, seen from a different perspective, this is also the way to ensure the smooth functioning of dissident samizdat (which naturally was far from smooth given constant secret police efforts to ruin it) while at the same time making themselves completely invisible. The fact that female Charter 77 signatories doubt feminism, as such, is an ever-present occurrence in both the observations of Alena Wagnerová²⁸ and in the number of interviews made by Naďa Straková (with the exception of Eda Kriseová or Eva Kantůrková for instance, cf. in Linková and Straková, *Bytová revolta*).²⁹ Such a situation, such an unintentional setup, seems to be in fact a perfect situation of patriarchy: to have someone who not only without the need of being pushed to do that but also does so with internalized conviction that her invisibility is positive and worthy. I would call this a prototypical

²⁴ As is the case, for instance, in a chapter by Kateřina Zábrowská, “Between femininity and feminism: negotiating the identity of a ‘Czech socialist woman’ in women’s accounts of state socialism,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (eds.), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 109–132; cf. also in Oates-Indruchová, “Unraveling a Tradition, or Spinning a Myth?” or Straková and Linková, *Bytová revolta*; or Pachmanová, “Feminismus a avantgarda.”

²⁵ Martina Pachmanová (*ibid.*) holds that the expression of feminism of the seventies and eighties is – as far as Czech visual art is concerned – an oxymoron.

²⁶ Although Jiřina Šiklová doubted that dissenting women were merely transcribers, referring to the words of Věra Jirousová, cf. Šiklová, “Podíl českých žen.”

²⁷ Wagnerová, *Žena za socialismu*, p. 215.

²⁸ Wagnerová, *Žena za socialismu*.

²⁹ The tacit presumption of my argument is therefore simple: there would be no instances of injurious attachments as described in this article on the condition (which did not occur, though) that the women signatories or supporters of Charter 77 and various alternatives to the official rule in Czechoslovakia from 1948–1989 did not take (even with all exceptions granted, cf. Šiklová 2008, Straková and Linková 2017) such a sceptical view of gender politics is present in the novels and stories of the given period.

wounded attachment³⁰ and injuring (injurious) identity³¹ when one agenda – in this case (the unquestionably brave) resistance toward the official political regime – obscures and renders invisible another one, in this case gender emancipation, which was left untouched by Czech dissent.³²

Within a celebratory approach to Charter 77 activities as “modest emancipation,” we should not disregard that the official approach toward emancipation, childbearing and childrearing (e.g., an advanced network of free-of-charge kindergartens), and the advanced situation of women in their professional careers (a semi-compulsory, and therefore unvalued, fact) resulted in a situation, observed by Alena Wagnerová,³³ in which those few Western women who went behind the Iron Curtain admired the advancement and equal rights that women in Eastern Europe enjoyed. Of course, this could hardly balance all other numerous restrictions women had to face there, but it should not be overlooked. Alena Wagnerová summarized in her 2016 preface (to her much older mid-seventies book written in German and in Germany):

It is one of paradoxes of post-WWII development that the coming-into-being of gender equality was much more advanced in totalitarian states of the so-called Eastern bloc than in the democratic countries of Western Europe. [...] The acquired degree of so-called true or real equal rights (the ideologically loaded “reálné rovnoprávnosti”) was taken as unperceived and too much commonplace self-evidence. Czechoslovakian women – unlike women in Western Europe – did not have to fight for it, but instead they were given it as a gift – albeit a Trojan horse [*danajský dar*] at times – as an organic part of the political program of then socialist Czechoslovakia.³⁴

Thus while the gender advancements during the 1948–1989 period were quite significant, they were not presented as feminist but as socialist – or to use Hana Havelková’s term: expropriated.³⁵

³⁰ Brown, *States of Injury*.

³¹ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*.

³² See also Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence”; Matonoha “Dispozitivní mlčení”; Matonoha “Předběžný meziprůzkum (relativně) nejbliž uplynulého.”

³³ She otherwise very much supports the legacy of the Charter 77 women, and she herself is a resident of Saarbrücken, then part of Western Germany.

³⁴ Wagnerová, *Žena za socialismu*, pp. 10–12 (translation J. M.).

³⁵ Havelková, “Expropriated voice”; cf. also Veronika Šprincová, “Postavení žen v Československu v období let 1948–1989 v dobových sociologických výzkumech a datech,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates Indruchová (eds.), *Vyvláštěný hlas. Proměny genderové kultury v české společnosti*, pp. 169–206.

A General and Broad-brushed Division in Dozens of Plateaus: The 1950s and 1960s as Gender Progressive vs. the 1970s and 1980s as Rather Gender Regressive

Having said all that, however, my research so far shows that in the field of literature, the situation of the conflicting and often erratic trajectories of the development of positions toward gender³⁶ is by no means simple and straightforward: as far as female authors are concerned, the situation is much more complex, colourful, and nuanced. Even when restricted to decades, rather than particular years³⁷ (that is, talking of four decades, the 1950s through the 1980s), one can trace not just one or two but several variously interlacing and contradicting “trends.” Hence I choose to speak (in the Deleuzian-Guattarian fashion of referring to “Thousand Plateaus”) of dozens of plateaus.³⁸ With considerable generalization, it can be claimed that while the literature of the fifties and sixties displayed significant emancipatory streaks (to be continued from the pre-war era or somewhat rediscovered after 100 years of feminist thinking), the seventies and eighties displayed (with few exceptions mentioned here) a rather injurious logic of (mis)identifications.

The reassertion of conventional gender roles in normalisation spring – paradoxically – simultaneously from two opposing camps, reinforcing each other: in the official discourse of normalisation, a turn from the fifties and sixties back to conventional gender roles took place: “The entire period of Normalisation (1969–1989) is marked by an ideological return to a conservative conception of gender relations [...]. The reassertion of the petit-bourgeois model in state policy had the side effect of a stronger reassertion of patriarchal discourse.”³⁹ A trajectory of gender order in all four decades

³⁶ The topic of gender in literature involves a number of issues. The topics I touched upon in my recent papers include female characters being hyper-sexualised by a masculine gaze, a reduction of subjectivity to a female body (without paying attention to the body in its role as autonomous but easily overlooked agency), the degradation of feminism as an emancipatory and intellectual strand, etc. These issues pertain to a number of literary texts by – among others – Milan Kundera, Ludvík Vaculík, Václav Havel, Josef Škvorecký, Arnošt Lustig, Bohumil Hrabal; here cf. also further the section “On male authors” below.

³⁷ In literary history, there has been a strong leaning to go against grand narratives that reduce multiplicities of individual oeuvres; in the Czech case – cf. the debates and books edited by Vladimír Papoušek and Dalibor Tureček (with participation of Jiří Brabec, Jiří Vojvodík, Petr A. Bílek, Jan Wiendl) – discussing literary history (against the backdrop of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Stephen Greenblatt, Stanley Fish, Thomas Kuhn, Peter Zajac, etc.) as organised not by style, school, formation, etc. but by individual years. With this in mind, I have chosen to focus on decades only, even though, as it stands (and with such simplifications), one can talk of at least five different trajectories – see further below. Hence I talk here (referring to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s book) of “dozens of plateaus.”

³⁸ For a more detailed analysis, see Matonoha, “Přítomný ženský hlas.”

³⁹ Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, “Expropriated Voice,” p. 14–15; cf. also Barbara Havelková, “The Three Stages of Gender in Law,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová (eds.), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 31–56.

– a comparatively longer view of the fifties and sixties is relevant for the reading of the seventies and eighties as well – can be summed up as following:

from a short-lived attempt at dismantling the traditional gender order in the 1950s, through a reflection on gender roles in the 1960s (of which part was both a critical reflection on gender and a re-emergence of anti-emancipatory discourses), to a return to a conservative gender discourse in the 1970s and 1980.⁴⁰

In the literary dissent scene of the 1970s and 1980s, a backlash toward the official regime (and as an unintentional side effect, a backlash against the emancipation achieved so far) went – as said before, paradoxically enough – hand in hand with the official literary scene and the political regime that the dissent movement went against:

The State's change of attitude toward the gender order resonated with the traditionalist gender discourse (now-canonical) dissent/alternative actors, so that at the moment of the communist regime's demise these two large actors, who stood in opposition to each other in other areas of politics, concurred on gender politics.⁴¹

Thus as we would see below (in more detail), literary evolution in individual decades, as far as literature is concerned, follows general gender developments as summarized above.

In literary fiction, pro-gender voices can be thus tracked in a period prior to dissent, in the 1950s (pre-war as well as post-1948 communist authors and feminists, such as Marie Majerová and Marie Pujmanová)⁴² and namely in the 1960s (e.g., Alena Vostrá, Zdena Salivarová)⁴³ while – at least in comparison – pro-gender voices were rather absent during the 1970s and 1980s (when, for instance, in works by Iva Pekárková, Zuzana Brabcová, Tereza Boučková, Alexandra Berková, and Lenka Procházková gender dimensions are undervalued or absent entirely); a somewhat more palpable presence of these pro-gender topics can arguably be detected in novels by Eva Kantůrková or Eda Kriseová. Overall though, the given view rather confirms the theory of “expropriated voice,” as put forward by Hana Havelková,⁴⁴ in which – in my words – a pro-gender stance

⁴⁰ Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, “Expropriated voice,” p. 18.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² As to the need of rediscovering pre- as well as post-WWII communists and feminists, cf. for instance the work of Dana Nývltová (2011) or the case of Wanda Wasilewska in an article by Agnieszka Mroziak (2017).

⁴³ I consider her presence on the list as warranted – which is, however, somewhat paradoxical, given the highly troublesome gender-dimension of the literary works of her husband, Josef Škvorecký (see Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence,”; Matonoha, “Dispozitivity mlčení”). Perhaps it could be seen as a case when partners could not and should not be expected to share common (or all) values.

⁴⁴ Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, “Expropriated voice.”

became a part of the official paradigm, having been dispossessed by the official regime from feminists proper (and their voice having been suppressed or much transformed).⁴⁵

Thus I am still very hesitant to speak of “feminist” or at least pro-gender engagements in the seventies and especially the eighties in literature. One cannot rid himself – or herself – of certain doubts, even in views voiced by a prominent dissident and (from the nineties onwards) a feminist, Jiřina Šiklová (who, for instance, quotes Věra Jirousová disproving the theory of women only being transcribers): “As in here [i.e., in samizdat and dissent activities] or in exile, women who were politically engaged exercised equally important agency as men did, *only – let’s say – different in terms of its technology*” (my own translation and emphasis).⁴⁶ To which one might also contrast the words from *A Czech Dreambook* by Ludvík Vaculík: “When I find a pair of a capable female hands, I will have to have the text transcribed.”^{47,48}

Although I should add here, for the period of the seventies and eighties, that names such as Eva Kantůrková, Věra Jirousová, Eda Kriseová, Zdena Tominová, and others stand as an important exception to this prevailing tendency to disregard for feminist tenets (that is, to what I find as the logic of injurious attachments). For instance, I cannot skip the fact that Eva Kantůrková, whose mother was a pre-WWII feminist,⁴⁹ populated her arguably most well-known novel, *My Companions from a Bleak House / (Mé) Přítelkyně v domě / z domu smutku* (1984), with female characters. At the same time, though, two

⁴⁵ The feminist voice was suppressed often violently, as the aforementioned example of a politician – but also a feminist – Milada Horáková, executed in a public show trial, demonstrates. See Bahenská, Heczková, and Musilová *Iluze spásy*, and Vodrážka, *Rozumí české ženy vlastní historii?*; but a number of other less dramatic yet far-reaching examples could be mentioned, cf. the transformation and eventual closure of the Council of Women, headed by Milada Horáková, and subsequently, after her execution, called the Council of Czechoslovak Women, and finally, until 1967, the Czechoslovak Women’s Committee, a much smaller organisation consisting mostly of Czechoslovak Communist Party members and controlled by the Communist Party. See Denisa Nečasová, “Women’s Organizations in the Czech Lands, 1948–1989: An Historical Perspective,” in Hana Havelková and Libora Oates-Indruchová, *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 58–67.

⁴⁶ In the original: “Jak zde, tak v exilu stály politicky se angažující ženy spíše vedle svých partnerů a vykonávaly stejně významnou činnost jako muži, *jen řekněme technicky jinou*,” Jiřina Šiklová, “Podíl českých žen,” p. 43.

⁴⁷ In Ludvík Vaculík *Český snář* (samizdat edition Petlice, 1981). A translation of *A Czech Dreambook* appeared in 2019 (with an important afterword by Jonathan Bolton). Also cf. Jan Matonoha “Ženám inženýrství nevěřím,” *A2* 11 (2015), no. 16, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Cf. also, as Libora Oates-Indruchová points out, “feminist writings were not included, or at least not enough to affect awareness in nonconformist intellectual circles, as Šiklová, herself a member of the book-smuggling network, noted.” Oates-Indruchová, “Unraveling a Tradition, or Spinning a Myth?” p. 942, referring to Jiřina Šiklová, “Únava z vysvětlování,” in Marie Chřibková, Josef Chuchma, and Eva Klimentová (eds.), *Feminismus devadesátých let českýma očima* (Prague: One Woman Press, 1999), p. 133.

⁴⁹ Straková and Linková *Bytová revolta*, p. 99.

points of doubt could be raised here. 1. From a feminist view, one can find the choice of female characters there (mostly petty criminals) a little counterproductive. The choice made, of course, is not her own, as the novel was based upon particular inmates she encountered during her politically motivated imprisonment in Prague-Ruzyně Prison,⁵⁰ and of course, a reader cannot and should not expect to encounter some sterile, middle-class characters in the novel.⁵¹ Thus *female heroines* of one of the most well-known novels of dissent era recruit from petty criminals. 2. From a post-structuralist view, a doubt can be raised by her sticking to the discourse of universalist humanism rather than (particular forms of) feminism⁵² to capture specific life stories of the novel's individual female characters, which was further underscored by Václav Havel's preface to the book.⁵³

Importantly, though, in 1980, Kantůrková published a collection of interviews, among other reasons, as a response to Jiří Lederer's book *České rozhovory* (Czech interviews, 1978), where Eva Kantůrková, as she points out, was the only woman in the collection.⁵⁴ This prompted her to complement it with interviews by women: in the collection of interviews with women, entitled *Sešly jsme se v této knize* (We have come together in this book), maybe not downright feminist but surely pro-gender voices can be heard, albeit in somewhat hushed tones (e.g., in an interview with Věra Jirousová where she doubts the masculine *pre-given* appropriation framework of reality).⁵⁵

As to Eda Kriseová, she took part in international women's conferences in the early 1990s where she met, among others, Betty Friedan.⁵⁶ This, however, does not pertain to her novels from the 1970s, where feminism (in Kriseová's own fiction – to my mind – as well as in general) was mostly absent.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ This novel is the best known of the comparatively large number novels she wrote; a well-received TV series, based upon her novel, was filmed in 1992.

⁵¹ Cf. novels by Jean Genet, for instance, the difference being that Jean Genet transcended his petty criminal career through his writing, while the characters populating Kantůrková's novel in question do not.

⁵² What I have in mind here is an opposition (presented, for instance, by thinkers such as Donna Haraway, Sandra Harding, and Helen Longino) raised to the concept of a rather daring claim for a supposedly universal humanism that obscures a reality of speaking from a particular, always situated standpoint, and we can sense a critique going alongside similar lines much earlier, for instance in Gadamer's hermeneutics too.

⁵³ See Hron, "Word Made Flesh."

⁵⁴ Straková and Linková, *Bytová revolta*, p. 111.

⁵⁵ See Eva Kantůrková, *Sešly jsme se v této knize* (Prague: Toužimský a Moravec, 1991 [1980]), p. 95. But I still harbour certain doubts about the pro-gender engagements of voices expressed in these interviews. These doubts, however, go beyond the scope of this article and shall be addressed elsewhere.

⁵⁶ Straková and Linková, *Bytová revolta*, p. 156.

⁵⁷ I will address this ambiguity in more detail in future research, where I also will address the work of Mirek Vodrážka in the samizdat journal *Vokno* in the 1980s.

Phallogentrism, or on Male Authors

The metaphor of “dozens of plateaus” brings me to an important point: there is one exception to the rule of dozens of plateaus. What I can safely say is that a chauvinist and sexist paradigm generally prevailed among male authors throughout all four decades.⁵⁸ So while the male authors – such as Josef Škvorecký, Ludvík Vaculík, Václav Havel, Milan Kundera, Ivan Klíma, Jan Novák, Jan Pelc, etc.⁵⁹ – displayed constant male chauvinism and sexism throughout this period (thus following the above mentioned mechanism of injurious identities), a more colourful map of “dozen plateaus” with varying trajectories as displayed by female authors is put forward by the paper further below.⁶⁰

Closer Readings⁶¹ of Three Novels (from the 1980s): *Indian Run* by Tereza Boučková, *Train Truck Rainbows* by Iva Pekárková, and *The Hangwoman* by Pavel Kohout

At this point – while I will discuss the diachronic levels as to their (in gender terms) injurious dimensions in more detail further – I want to take a closer look at three particular novels published in dissent/exile. As to their pro-gender stance, I choose to discuss two novels by female authors in some more detail, both first published in 1988 (in samizdat

⁵⁸ With, arguably, the slightly ambivalent exceptions of samizdat and semi-samizdat editions by authors such as Bohumil Hrabal, Egony Bondy, and Alexandr Kliment or the exile writer Josef Jedlička.

⁵⁹ Cf. Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence,” “Dispozitivní mlčení,” “Ženám inženýrství nevěřím,” “Přítomný ženský hlas, zmizelý ženský subjekt,” “Paralelní anatomie.”

⁶⁰ As to male chauvinism in literary works by male authors, let me add – briefly – one telling and symptomatic (although far from simple) example, that of Milan Kundera’s works: while his novels and stories, at first sight, are (more or less clearly) misogynistic, by no means can one stop there – cf. John O’Brien’s book *Milan Kundera and Feminist Criticism: Dangerous Intersections* (New York: Palgrave, 1995) points out these ambivalences. However, somewhat differently from O’Brien, I postulate not a dichotomic structure of male chauvinism to be later deconstructed in Kundera’s post-structuralist logic (O’Brien, *Ibid.*) but rather a triadic one. Thus the sequence here is the following: sexism – deconstructive tropes – less obvious (and hidden within deconstructive tropes) and all the more dangerous and injurious (i.e., based on attachments that obscure a clear view) sexism. In other words: it is precisely through these alibi of (sometimes more, sometimes less) complex ambiguities and paradoxes that makes the fiction of Milan Kundera very appealing yet also by the same token injurious. Let me provide one brief example here: in the story “Hit-chiking Game” (“Falešný autostop” in the *Laughable Loves*, the *Směšné lásky* collection, 1967), a couple plays a game of fake hitchhiking that turns ugly, leading to a violent sexual act. The scene of reification and the violation of the female body is, however, as if muted by a “higher” deconstructive level of constant mutual misrepresentations and instability of meaning. On the third level, though, this misogynistic theme (which serves simply as a carrier and is hidden in its supposed higher deconstructive structure) works in an even more muted, indirect, less obvious and hence more injurious manner and thus has, I think, an even more significant injurious impact.

⁶¹ While using the expression “closer reading,” I consciously do not refer to the “method” (for the lack of a better word) of *close reading* since my theoretical basis as employed here is different: what I have in mind is simply debating several examples from Czech literature of the period in some detail.

and in exile, respectively). The first as an instance of a fence-sitting, ambivalent, undecided, hesitant, or possibly even – from a feminist perspective – downright troublesome novel by Tereza Boučková, published in samizdat Expedition Editions (Edice Expedice) entitled *Indiánský běh*; the second one is from a feminist perspective, I believe, very much ambiguous novel *Truck Stop Rainbows* by Iva Pekárková, published in exile. While the first instance is not that obvious and more ambivalent than the second one (which could be seen as a paradigm instance of the present topic⁶²), both do fit the logic of injurious attachments, as I shall try to describe further below. To point out that the issue is not by far limited to female authors, I also add here a critical reading of a male author (and the father of Tereza Boučková), Pavel Kohout (prefaced by a few lines on male authors of the given period in general, see further).

Both Tereza Boučková and Pavel Kohout are signatories of Charter 77 (the drafting of which Pavel Kohout played a significant role in) and I want to add here that I profoundly respect and value their personal bravery and moral integrity in what was at the time by all means a thoroughly dangerous undertaking. At the same time, though, I cannot ignore the gender attitudes present in their texts.⁶³

Tereza Boučková – *Indian Run*: “Tits OK”

As said, I shall start with the novel *Indian Run* (1988 in a samizdat publishing platform Expedice by Tereza Boučková, a story of dark humour, sharp wit, and irony – featuring among others, the topic of a relationship between a daughter and her father, the exiled writer Pavel Kohout). According to Libora Oates-Indruchová, in her novel *Indian Run*, Boučková pointed out a “discrepancy between public and private morality of male former dissidents in terms of gender in the transforming society.”⁶⁴ This line of interpretation, coming from an influential and important figure of academia, herself a full-fledged and long-standing feminist (and if I may say so, my dear friend) is worth pondering; at the same time, though, I feel I have to enter a friendly debate here on this point, thinking that as much as the supposed feminist attitudes of Tereza Boučková’s novel are concerned, the situation, as I argue below, is somewhat more ambivalent.

⁶² But see more on this further on, including the question of corporeality, in the section on Iva Pekárková.

⁶³ And those (i.e., their literary texts) I really only can talk about here. I do not comment on their personal ideas, which are unavailable to me both in principle – as authorial subjects of literary texts cannot be identified with physical persons of their author – and given that I am interested in the way those literary texts interpellated readers, are secondary to my endeavour here in the first place. The fact that I focus on literary texts I take also as a significant advantage compared with oral history interviews, where attitudes could differ substantially compared to the reality of several decades earlier. In contrast to that, literary texts remain there as – sometimes – uncomfortable traces of earlier views and stances.

⁶⁴ Oates-Indruchová, “Unraveling a Tradition, or Spinning a Myth?” p. 935. For details, cf. Oates-Indruchová, “The Imperative of Moral Integrity.”

A broad context that the entire narrative is made to be a part of is the relationship between the protagonist narrator and her father, Pavel Kohout (the title of the novel is *Indian Run*, with “Indian” being a nickname for Pavel Kohout, and “run” signifying his forced emigration from Czechoslovakia to Austria in 1979). Structure-wise, the novel is an ironic narration built on shortish, condensed chapters with spot-on punch lines. Seeing it as an unequivocally pro-gender piece of writing⁶⁵ is – to my mind – somewhat difficult. Compare it, for instance, with the following part, which – given the context of the preceding passage (painting an intriguing and colourful picture of the difficult yet groovy and dandy-like context of her brother’s study) – is hard to think of as a gender critique (translation mine): “These days [meaning during his university study time], Paprsek [a name for the author’s brother] spent most of his time in a pub, and when a pretty girl passed him on her way, he pondered and said, ‘Her tits are OK [Kozy dobrý].’”⁶⁶ This suggests, I think, that the given passage (standing as a final part of the shortish and dense chapter) is meant as an entertaining punch line that would underscore the non-conformist attitudes of the narrator’s brother, a semi-underground, rebellious student of the scenography programme of a theatre faculty. This “sexism”⁶⁷ could be considered as a very minor problem if it were not for the context it interpellated readers in, both now (one of the semi-canonical texts of underground fiction) and then (published as a samizdat, that is, in opposition to – or blissful ignorance of – the then ruling official regime). The logic of injurious attachments is in full swing here, I think: readers are expected to take these lines as entertaining ones; what is at stake here, however, indirectly and “subconsciously” wounds the reader by a to-be-looked-at-ness logic of this scene, which is painted as if natural and entertaining (and seemingly non-chalant) logic.⁶⁸ In its overall effect, I suspect it is a typical instance of injurious attachments.

⁶⁵ Except perhaps in terms of a critique of the distribution of domestic chores, its close attention to the everyday, common, unobvious, and often-times ignored features of reality, among others, old people, and arguably an ironic and implicitly critical portrayal of the heroine’s way of solving emotional disappointments through overeating, see p. 23, cf. also Oates-Indruchová 2005.

⁶⁶ Tereza Boučková, *Indiánský běh* (Prague: Grafoprint, 1992 [1988]), p. 25.

⁶⁷ Without wanting to go into complicated debate over the pornography and feminism issue and well-known names such as Adrea Dworkin, with Catharine MacKinnon on one side and Linda Williams or Wendy Brown on the other, and many others (and using these simplistic binaries), this is by no means to say my feminist critique would want to be anti-pornographic: as the examples of Jean Genet or Georges Bataille show (although partly troublesome as they might be), even very explicit representations of sexuality do not have to necessarily be sexist. The imagery of a given literary text should not run alongside popular gender stereotypes: what matters is not *what* but *how*, and *in what manner*.

⁶⁸ However, all that said, if compared to fiction produced by male authors, it still stands as a significantly less sexist portrayal of the female body.

Iva Pekárková – *Truck Stop Rainbows* and Injurious Attachments: To Gain Funds for an Honourable Cause by Prostituting a Female Body to Truck Drivers

To provide an example that can be quoted unambiguously as a paradigmatic instance of injurious attachments, I shall continue with the first novel by Iva Pekárková. In her 1988 exile novel *Feathers and Wings* (*Péra a perutě*),⁶⁹ Iva Pekárková, a strong-minded female author with an independent spirit, meant to shock the audience with her supposed “audacity.” A heated exchange over a novel by Jan Pelc ...*a bude hůř* (...and it’ll get worse) (from a gender perspective, troublesome as well) could be mentioned.⁷⁰ In the novel, Pekárková, among others portrays a female protagonist’s hitchhiking across Czechoslovakia. Among other themes in the book, one is that a close friend of the female central character cannot walk and is in desperate need of a wheelchair. Given that this “commodity” is (in the given fictional text, at least) very difficult to get by bordering on being virtually inaccessible in a state-run Czechoslovak economy, the female protagonist is set to get him funds for a wheelchair by any means necessary. This, however, is accompanied with an endorsement of very retrograde gender values perceived as an avant-garde, existential gesture of individual protest: for gathering enough money, she chooses to go into prostitution, hitchhiking and selling her body to passing truck drivers.

Prostitution could represent an act of “civil disobedience,” an act of personal rebellion (at the time when it was officially banned in communist Czechoslovakia).⁷¹ But here, in this context, I think what we encounter is again a very prototypical (yet not obvious in any straightforward manner) logic of *injurious attachments*: on a visible, heroic, and praise-worthy level, the female protagonist of the novel is set to gather enough money for the noble cause. At the same time, though, she chooses to earn money for

⁶⁹ Iva Pekárková, *Péra a perutě* (Prague: Mafá, 1998/1988), literally “Wings and Feathers” with – arguably – a hint to a Czech pejorative term in original. Engl. trans. as *Truck Stop Rainbows* by David Powelstock.

⁷⁰ Where both exile and dissent writers such as Rio Preisner, Ivan Sviták, or Egon Bondy took part and the debate’s misplaced extra-literary nature was pointed out by Petr Rezek in his (originally samizdat) polemic “Spor tří doktorů o dobro a krásu,” in *Filozofie a politika kýče* (Prague: Jan Placák and Ztichlá klika, 2007 [1986]), pp. 13–25.

⁷¹ In a highly accomplished article, Simona Fojtová emphasises the essential role of a crucial and neuralgic feminist notion of a body that, in the novel, rejects and re-draws the officially imprinted and aseptic understanding of a (female) body as a mere container for reproduction and labour in this period (i.e., in the late 1980s), instead putting a stress on the role of a body as a different means of knowing. This understanding of the body, alternative to the then-official regime, however, at the same time works within and re-deploys mechanisms of injurious attachments: while challenging the then officially sanctioned concepts of female body, the heroine (Fialka) chooses to seek a career of a prostitute (as mentioned above). And this logic of injurious attachments is taken even further as she chooses to sell her body for the sake of honourable cause (as I emphasize it further below). See Simona Fojtová, “The Body in Motion: Communism and Epistemology in Iva Pekárková’s Novel *Truck Stop Rainbows*,” *Aspasia* 3 (2009), no. 1, pp. 161–188

this purpose by becoming a prostitute, which is meant to be justified by this admirable act of self-sacrifice. What seems to redeem her choice is the fact the money is used for a charitable, honourable cause; what stands behind this charitable cause is, however, a very exploitative act of the female body. What is seen on the surface is a heroic act of sacrifice (or rebellion in society), what is unseen in the background is a process of injurious exploitation that is deliberately undertaken by a protagonist (an unwilling “victim”) herself. In other words, on the official level, the admirable cause is pursued, yet the other level, which is “glorified” (meant to “horrify a bourgeois”) indirectly, is that the protagonist is pushed or to some extent rather chooses to take up a part-time career as a prostitute. What is not seen in this gesture, what is being sacrificed here – within the logic of injurious attachments – is a female body and the woman’s sexuality.

Pavel Kohout – a Rare Instance When a Novel Features a Female Protagonist – as a Hangwoman

To point out that the issue of injurious attachments is not by any means limited to female authors, I include here also a short debate on the 1978 Pavel Kohout novel, *The Hangwoman*.⁷² The novel, a bizarre slapstick constructed in a deliberately provocative calm manner, is the story of an emotionally unresponsive, cold, inert girl with the sweet name of Lízinka Tachecí, whose subject of study and subsequent profession is very much a shocking one: in a dark parody of the violent practices of an official power, she studies and becomes a female executioner. In terms of a narrative approach (punctuated by constant intentional digressions) and the very inventive and provocative idea of a taciturn, silent female character, a student at a school for aspiring executioners, it is a very consuming and intricate novel. Such is also the case in terms of its content, where the bizarre story⁷³ is populated by a number of weird characters.⁷⁴ In terms of its gender dimensions, though, this exile novel is symptomatically troublesome.

Regarding the character of Lízinka Tachecí, Bronislava Volková (1997) directs our attention to the point that the fascination and the frustration of the male characters of the novel are eventually channelled into the scene where the female protagonist is being raped by one of the members of the school for executioners. Volková comments that not even such a drastic experience (of having been raped) moves or shakes the character,

⁷² Pavel Kohout, *Katyně* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 2000/1978). The novel was first published in German in Switzerland (in 1978), subsequently in Czech by an exile publishing house in Köln, Germany, in 1980 and a year later published in English translation.

⁷³ At her final exam, she executes her own teacher and subsequently marries another one, who himself is a semi-bigamist.

⁷⁴ Her unsuccessful suitor tortures his love-competitor to death and subsequently commits suicide; another female character, the mother of Lízinka Tachecí, is only slightly less repulsive than her daughter in her unshakeable desire for her daughter to pursue a good career.

that the event has no emotional impact on Lízinka. The coldly narrated scene of a rape could be subjected to a gender critique; this scene, no matter how disturbing, however, I think is not the main point of trouble in the plot (seen from – not only – a feminist perspective), and such a critique (undoubtedly justified in itself) merely scratches the surface of the issue. The fact that a female hero remains emotionally intact is not first of all an expression of gender insensitivity or gender blindness on the part of an author (although, again, the narrative choice of a rape scene is – from a gender perspective – quite telling) but rather a necessary part of the logic of a narrative structure (the scene serves as an instance of a shocking provocation testing the limits and patience of readers). The point that matters here, I think, is elsewhere: a tacit expectation of the scene is that the authority and self-image (and sexual arousal) of a male reader is built upon emotional, intellectual and violating penetration. The silence of a victim (of Lízinka Tachecí) is thus not (primarily) problematic in the sense of gender insensitivity toward a wounded body. It is rather the problem or rather an index of the sadistic gaze that remains frustrated, unfulfilled by this silence, by the lack of response. The narrative voice tacitly assumes, I think, that a reader will be frustrated by the fact that a female subject (Lízinka) remains inaccessible in her perfect shallow nature, which cannot be disturbed, not even by a rape. The reification and degradation of the female subject thus does not occur as much on the obvious, explicit level (the scene of rape, as such) as on the level of shared frustration instigated by a non-responsive subject. And it is, I think, this deeper, more implicit, less obvious level that follows into subtler mechanisms of readers' interpellations when the degradation of female subjectivity remains un-noticed and is carried out in a tacit manner. The scene is not (truly) noticed by the reader, since it has been covered by its primary, more "important" narrative function. Gender violence is thus not present primarily in the scene of rape but in an injurious mechanism enabling readers to ignore this scene of rape given the "higher" narrative function that builds upon that: to shock by the cold unshakeability and steadfastness (or oblivion) of the main character.

A More Detailed (Yet Still Abstract) Overview: Four Decades Reduced Into Several (Partly Contradictory) Trajectories

Following this rather close reading of a handful of novels, I would like to sketch an overview of pro-gender engagements in Czech literary texts from 1948–1989. It is surely impossible to apply a simple, linear, and homogeneous pattern to those four decades of literary history in question;⁷⁵ even the model introduced below is necessarily a reductive sketch in itself, depending naturally on the type of structuring applied and it should be read as such.

⁷⁵ Leaving aside a structuring into decades is itself a significant reduction; for more general social developments – or regresses, see Havelková and Oates Indruchová, "Expropriated Voice."

First Difference: Between the First Two vs. the Last Two Decades (that is, tak: that is, the 1950s and 1960s vs. the 1970s and 1980s) – a Sudden and Swift Drop in Gender Awareness

A gradual decline and regression of gender awareness is palpable, I think, throughout the four decades under analysis; however, there are significant and symptomatic differences between individual decades. As I already partly suggested above in the introduction, there is a sudden, significant difference between still comparatively vivid gender awareness of literary texts of the 1950s and 1960s on the one hand, as opposed to the normalisation – and the response countering it – of the 1970s and 1980s on the other. In other words: while in the fifties and sixties, there can be seen a steady continuation of a pre-war feminist consciousness or gender consciousness raising in the sixties,^{76,77} in the period of normalisation of the seventies and eighties and a counter-response to it, a discursive silence occurs, stemming, I think, mostly from an implicit yet somatised backlash against gender equality taken over by official regimes from the fifties onwards but also coming from an implicit backlash against aspects of feminism. In the seventies, within a backlash against the (enforced) egalitarian policy, conservative and religiously oriented – as well as un-reflected patriarchal – values (such as those promoted for instance by Václav Benda) increased their potential to attract sympathisers. The period of the eighties is then characterised by the slow-paced, gradual revival of pro-gender consciousness. This, however, is heavily marked by a) substantial isolation from international feminist and gender context being much alive and flourishing, and b) coming – or rather failing to come – to terms with affective attachments to the prestige of the symbolic capital of dissent.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ A sad exception here are sexist works by Arnošt Lustig, neatly representing or embodying the concept of – what I choose to refer to as – dispositives of silence and silencing as described in this and previous studies of mine (Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence,” “Dispozitivy mlčení”).

⁷⁷ Among others (in this and subsequent notes, I use the abbreviation “o” for officially published texts and “smz” for unofficial samizdat ones or “e” for those published in exile): Marie Pujmanová, *Svítání* (Dawn, 1949, o); *Sestra Alena* (Sister Alena, 1958, o); Marie Majerová: *Nejkrásnější svět* (The most beautiful world, 1950, o), *Dívky tepané ze stříbra* (Silver-wrought girls, 1964, o); Věra Linhartová – *Prostor k rozlišení* (*Space for differentiation*, 1964, o), *Mezipřůzkum nejbliž uplynulého* (Preliminary survey of the nearest past, 1964, o); Zdena Salivarová – *Pánská jízda* (A Stag Party, 1968, o); Alena Vostrá – *Vlažná vlna* (1966, o); a translation of a selection Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* accompanied by an important and insightful afterword by Jan Patočka (1966); and a friendly literary dispute between Zdena Salivarová and Milan Kundera. As to the English translation of the title of the novel *Vlažná vlna*, the phrase in question “*vlažná vlna*” (literally “a lukewarm wave”) refers to a particular type of hairstyle popular in the 1960s, but the phrase also takes on metaphorical meaning.

⁷⁸ This phenomenon is exemplified, among male authors by Josef Škvorecký, Ludvík Vaculík, Václav Havel, Milan Kundera, Ivan Klíma; and in the following works by female authors in the late seventies and eighties: Iva Pekárková, *Péra a perutě* (literally “Wings and feathers,” trans. into English as *Truck Stop Rainbows* by David Powelstock; 1989, e); Tereza Boučková, *Indiánský*

At the same time, though, there seems to be a need to at least implicitly articulate gender issues that ripened in silence and that paradoxically were addressed neither by the expropriated voices of state and expert owned knowledge and policies⁷⁹ nor by the visceral backlash against those just mentioned. Here, in this second case, we deal with (from a gender perspective) more “progressive” female authors that talk of a female experience in a rather indirect, implicit manner, yet their works still indicate or at times fully represent and criticize patriarchal society.⁸⁰

Second Inner Difference: Between the 1950s and the 1960s

There is a substantial difference in the reasons, and motives of the pro-gender discursive activity of the 1950s on the one hand and the 1960s on the other. While in the fifties, we can see remnants of the pre-war actual feminist ideas⁸¹ in the sixties, on the contrary, we can see a new grassroots pro-gender (albeit not always explicit) energy⁸² that stems from society itself, more spontaneously within the overall fresh reformist cultural dynamics.⁸³

běh (Indian run, 1988, smz); Zuzana Brabcová, *Daleko od stromu* (Far from the tree, 1987, e); Alexandra Berková, *Knižka s červeným obalem* (A book in a red cover, 1986, o); Lenka Procházková, *Růžová dáma, Přijed' ochutnat* (Pink lady and Come and have a taste, both 1982, e), *Oční kapky* (Eye Drops, 1987, e), *Smolná kniha* (The pitch book, 1989, s); here, one can detect rather difficult gender issues where gender awareness is mostly absent within the sphere of fighting back against the official ruling regime, or as an instance of injurious attachments.

⁷⁹ Cf. Havelková and Oates-Indruchová, *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism*.

⁸⁰ This group's texts include Eva Kantůrková's *Černá hvězda* (Black star, 1977, smz), *Pán věže* (Lord of the tower, 1979, smz), *Sešly jsme se v této knize* (interviews, 1980, e), and *Přítelkyně z domu smutku* (*My Companions in the Bleak House*, in an anonymous English translation, 1984, e); Eda Kriseová's *Křížová cesta kočárového kočího* (Calvary of the coachman's coach, 1977, smz, 1979, e), *Klíční kůstka netopýra* (The bat's clavicle, 1979, smz, 1982, e), *Pompejanka* (The Pompeian woman, 1979, smz); Zdena Salivarová's *Honzlová* (1972; all her novels after 1968 were published in exile in Toronto by the publishing company 68 Publishers, which she ran together with her husband Josef Škvorecký, cf. her book *Samožerbach* from 1977; a collection *Nebe peklo ráj* [Hopscotch] published in 1976 and later a long story “Pas de trois” from 1986).

⁸¹ E.g., in the novels *Nejkrásnější svět* (The most beautiful world, 1950, o), *Dívky tepané ze stříbra* (Silver-wrought girls, 1964, o) by Marie Majerová, and *Svítání* (Dawn, 1949 o) and *Sestra Alena* (Sister Alena, 1958 o) by Marie Pujmanová – i.e., by authors who grew up and were predominantly active prior to WWII (as – among others – communist feminists) but – themselves being part of this process – whose feminist voices were expropriated by the ruling regime.

⁸² The new grassroots energy – here I have Alena Vostrá or Zdena Salivarová in mind – comes, in my view, spontaneously without much direct knowledge of feminism (unlike in the case of the fifties, i.e., Majerová or Pujmanová, with their earlier, pre-WWII explicitly feminist agenda) and links directly with the more liberal environment of the sixties and the need for autonomous self-expression.

⁸³ E.g., the novel *Vlažná vlna* (1966, o) by Alena Vostrá or the short story collection *Pánská jízda* (*A Stag Party*, 1968, o), by Zdena Salivarová.

Third Inner Difference: Odd vs. Even Decades (the 1950s and 1970s vs. the 1960s and 1980s) – a Sinusoid in Different Motivations of Gender Discourses

As it has been partly suggested above, there is a significant difference in the organic, inner, autonomous “grassroots” motivation of pro-gender discourses that differentiate odd and even decades: thus while the 1960s and 1980s were periods when a pro-gender discourse grew rather spontaneous from inner needs, in the 1950s and 1970s, it grew instead either as a part of or as an opposition to official dominant ideological discourses. In the fifties, feminist (or if not downright feminist, then pro-gender) discourse remained partly present in a service of official socialist realism as a (true, fragmented) legacy inherited from pre-WWII feminism. In the seventies, it took – or rather lost – its shape and disappeared in opposition to the then present dominant state ideology. Both of these mechanisms (i.e., either being recruited to superordinate state ideology in the fifties or standing in strong opposition to it in the seventies) are in the end (regarding feminism) equally counterproductive: marked negatively by the official ideology of the fifties or rejected (implicitly but on the wholesale scale) in the seventies.

However, a “regress” of feminist consciousness (or its absence) in the seventies is markedly more pronounced and significant, which is a result of and could be accounted by, I think, two factors: firstly, by the general dynamics described above as the first, most general model (general progressive regress); and secondly, and more interestingly, by a paradoxical affective attachment to the prestige and symbolic capital of the resistant dissident stance, and (in terms of gender politics) wounding identities that grow out of this attachment.⁸⁴

Fourth Inner Difference: In the Nature of Obstacles and Possibilities for Critique.

The 1960s vs. the 1970s: A Confrontation with its Own Discourse (1960s) vs. a Confrontation with a Non-belonging Discourse (1970s)

These above-described gender differences in decades had, I think, also different possibilities as to their potential and platform of un/easiness or im/possibilities of critical reflection of gender dynamics. A possible different gender critique to be raised by dissent during and against the so-called normalisation in the 1970s in contrast to – in gender terms – a comparatively more pronounced critical stance of the 1960s is twofold.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ To certain degree, literary works affected by this mechanism include those indicated above, by Eva Kantůrková and Eda Kriseová. This is not to say that the texts in question could not be seen as pro-gender, but their topics are more subdued and diminished by what I refer to as the logic of injurious attachments.

⁸⁵ And it does not reside – as one could assume following a simple grand narrative of the liberal sixties and the tragic, oppressive seventies – in the fact that the more liberal sixties enabled writers to also focus on more “minor” liberalizing, emancipatory goals (such as feminism) while there was no space left for gender critiques, as dissent politics had to focus on its prime target of opposing the official regime.

Firstly: the situation was, as I perceive it, that the critique in the sixties would be as difficult (if not more so) than in the seventies, when in dissent, a gender critique – of an official regime, let alone of dissent itself – was mostly absent. While in the sixties, I think, it was necessary to overcome a strong tendency to a collective, spontaneous identification with progressive political, social, and cultural development, and even in spite of the collective euphoria to fire into one's own ranks,⁸⁶ in the seventies, one could have had awaited a critique that did not take place: and that is, within an elementary (and at the same time sophisticated) strategy of Charter 77, a critique of gender injustices could have been raised and levelled against the very official ranks who themselves promised to carry it. Alongside a number of other injustices perpetrated by the then ruling regime, dissent circles could have pointed out that these official ranks stand in straight contradiction to their own principles. Thus it would have been comparatively easy to add gender inequality to the list of other injustices.

Secondly: the other aspect of the paradoxical difficulties of gender critique in the sixties as opposed to the seventies is that the critique raised by dissident circles against official ruling power in the seventies (pointing out its own contradictions in gender equality it itself, at least officially argued for up to the sixties) would have aimed (as it did not, as argued above) on the then ruling power – that is, on an adversary part (which would have been surely much more epistemically, emotionally, and existentially easier) – while a gender critique in the sixties did fire into its own ranks (making it more difficult).

Fifth Difference: In the Nature of Inner and Outer Resistance that Pro-gender Discourses Faced

There is a clear difference in the nature of resistance and obstacles that stood in the way and had to be overcome by pro-gender or gender-oriented discourse. While the nature of those obstacles was very different (bordering sometimes on being antithetical), it was paradoxically equally grave in their consequences. While in the fifties, gender-oriented discourse was partly subsumed, and transformed into superordinate ideological state discourse, in the sixties, it had to overcome its belonging and its being a part of the enthusiasm of collective identification with the sixties reformist movement after a Stalinist stalemate. In contrast to that, the gender-oriented discourse (or the marked absence of it) of the seventies fought against official discourse and its recruitment of the emancipatory feminist agenda, which came to be denied by dissent seventies discourse, together with the state official discourse: this backlash and visceral rejection of the gender dynamics of a social situation by dissent literary discourses was especially destructive for its possible (then non-existent) feminist consciousness. In the eighties, pro-gender discourse carried an obstacle of having to overcome affective attachments to the prestige of the symbolic capital of dissent movement and its “regressive” gender dimension.

⁸⁶ As, for instance, the novel *Vlažná vlna* by Alena Vostrá or the story “Pánská jízda” by Zdena Salivarová from 1968 did.

Conclusion

To proceed to a conclusion, the rejection of pro-gender leanings can be explained away, I think, by two factors. First, it can be seen as an implicit (and often not fully articulated) negative response to gender equality put forward by an official regime in the early the 1950s and within a public domain in the 1960s, and partly inherited even in the more traditional and backward 1970s and 1980s. As to the second reason, which follows upon the first one, I try to capture it by the concept of injurious attachments: living in a gender-advanced society and taking it for granted,⁸⁷ authors could have been inclined to disregard gender advancement, embracing traditional patriarchal gender values instead.⁸⁸

Thus the mechanisms of injurious attachments, combined with the aforementioned discursive emergence of silence, result in what I refer to as “dispositives of silence and silencing.” This structure can be grasped through the concept of injurious attachments that uses mechanisms of so-called “wounded attachments”⁸⁹ and “injurious identities”⁹⁰: one goal is being pursued, while another one is neglected, kept in oblivion or downright invisibility. In the given situation, what is visible is the act of taking an oppositional stance toward a ruling regime in 1948–1989 while other issues – such as gender and feminism – become invisible, and readers (and arguably and pertinently – female readers) are interpellated toward such an – injurious – way of reading: in short, while (the need for) political opposition as clearly visible, other issues such as the drive towards legitimate gender equality becomes invisible, representing a case of injurious attachments. In contrast to that, an assortment of literary texts written by female authors is rather more colourful, with significant pro-gender aspects present, especially in the fifties and sixties, while – I think –the writing of the seventies and eighties is, seen from the feminist perspective, far more debatable.

⁸⁷ And frustrated by the political crimes of the official regime in the fifties, namely the execution of Milada Horáková, whose feminist agenda has been silently taken over by the official regime.

⁸⁸ As it could be seen in the case of Kamil Benda or the troublesome non-acceptance of feminism by Václav Havel in the mid-1980s, cf. his essay “Anatomy of a Reticence.” For more on this, see Matonoha, “Dispositives of Silence,” “Dispozitivity mlčení,” “Paralelní anatomie.”

⁸⁹ Brown, *States of Injury*.

⁹⁰ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*.