Narrative and Ideological Discourses in Representations of the Mašín Brothers

Josef Švéda

Degree: MPhil
Form of Study: Research
Department of Slavonic Studies
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
December 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This thesis deals with narrative representations of the story of the Mašín brothers who in 1951 established what they called 'a resistance group' against the Communist regime and killed three people. They escaped from Czechoslovakia in 1953, heading for West Berlin. Despite being hunted by more than 20,000 East German and Soviet troops, the Mašín brothers together with Milan Paumer got to West Berlin safely. Later, they went to the USA and joined the U.S. army. Their actions are still regarded as controversial in today's Czech Republic and are a topic of continuous public debate. Since the fall of Communism in 1989, this topic has been tackled by many historians as well as non-fiction writers. The thesis analyses a novel, *So Far So Good* [Zatím dobrý. Mašínovi a největší příběh studené války] by Jan Novák, and a historical book written by Barbara Masin called *Gauntlet: Five Friends, Twenty Thousand Enemy Troops, and the Secret That Could Have Changed the Course of the Cold War*. The thesis also examines two narratives about the Mašín brothers produced in Communist Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s – a short story by František Vrbecký called *The Dead Do Not Talk* and one episode of a famous television series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* entitled *Fear*. Whereas in the narratives produced in Communist Czechoslovakia the Mašíns are depicted as murderers, in the narratives published after 1989, they are portrayed as freedom fighters. This thesis analyses these narrative representations from a narratological point of view and assesses how their structures are related to the values, beliefs and opinions they promote. The semiotic and narratological approach (Porter Abbott, Seymour Chatman) is used as are contemporary critical theory (Roland Barthes, Theun A. van Dijk) and theory of history (Hayden White). The thesis is divided into three parts: the first two parts analyse the narratives from a narratological point of view and their affiliation to myth and the third part unravels the relationship of the narrative discourse to the beliefs and values inscribed in the narratives – ideological discourse.

Acknowledgements

I would like to offer my sincerest thanks to the following people for their help: My supervisor, Dr. Jan Čulík (University of Glasgow), for his expertise and the continued support and encouragement he has given me throughout this project, and also for translating all the quotations from the Czech resources into English.

I would like to thank Prof. Petr A. Bílek (Charles University, Prague) for inspiration and his willingness to discuss various topics regarding this paper. Also, I would like to thank Dr. John Bates (University of Glasgow) for his insightful comments.

Many warm thanks to Emma Heillig, David Green and Juulia Ahvensalmi for their help with proofreading this thesis. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Mariangela Palladino and Michael Kaethler for being such good friends.

Introduction

This thesis deals with narrative representations of a cause célèbre in the early history of Communist Czechoslovakia. In today's Czech Republic it is known as the 'Causa Mašín'. The narrative representations tell the story of Ctirad and Josef Mašín who in 1951 established what they called 'a resistance group' against the Communist regime. They escaped from Czechoslovakia in 1953 and headed for West Berlin. Despite being hunted by more than 20, 000 East German and Soviet troops, the Mašín brothers, together with Milan Paumer, got to West Berlin safely. Later, they went to the USA and joined the U.S. army.

Their actions are still regarded as controversial in today's Czech Republic and are the topic of continuous public debate. Those who defend the group's activities claim that armed resistance against the Communist regime was justifiable and regard them as heroes. Those who criticize them claim that they were nothing more than murderers because they cruelly killed six people (including one policeman who was unarmed and tied up). In 2007 a heated public debate started again after the Mašíns and Milan Paumer received a medal for their anti-Communist resistance which was personally invented for them by the Prime Minister, Mirek Topolánek.

Since the fall of Communism in 1989, this topic has been tackled by several historians (Němeček 1998, Masin 2005, Babka 2002) as well as non-fiction writers (Rambousek 1990, Novák 2004). It has also been treated in contemporary Communist newspapers and magazines *Red Justice* [Rudé právo] (1955), *Soldier* [Voják] (1965) and in the famous Czechoslovak television series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* [30 případů majora Zemana] (1975) and various other detective stories published in the 1970s and 1980s by the official (i.e. Communist) publishing houses in Czechoslovakia.[1] Even a superficial reading of these narratives reveals striking differences. Whereas in the narratives produced in Communist Czechoslovakia the Mašíns are depicted as murderers, in the narratives published after 1989, they are portrayed as freedom fighters. This obvious disparity raises many questions which this thesis aims to deal with: how do the narratives structure reality in order to make the Mašíns appear to be either killers, or heroes? What are the reasons for such

[1] See the bibliography.

differences? What is the relationship of the narrative structure to the beliefs and opinions they seem to promote?

This thesis analyses four selected narrative representations each dealing with the Mašín brothers' story to a different extent. The first two - *Gauntlet* (Masin 2006) and *So Far So Good* [Zatím dobrý. Mašínovi a největší příběh studené války] (Novák 2004) were published after 1989. Barbara Masin's book was published in the Czech Republic under the title *Legacy. The True Story of the Mašín Brothers* [Odkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů] in 2005. *So Far So Good*, although originally written in English, has not yet been published in the USA. *Gauntlet* identifies itself as a historical narrative whilst *So Far So Good* is a work of fiction. The other two narratives - *The Dead Do Not Talk* [Mrtví nemluví] (Vrbecký 1985) and *The Fear* [Strach] (which is one episode of *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases*; tv. 1975) - were produced in Communist Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. The former identifies itself as a historical narrative whereas the latter is a fictional television programme. These narratives present radically different portrayals of the Mašín brothers and are thus well suited for textual analysis. The prime objective of this thesis is to analyse these narrative representations from a narratological point of view and assess how the structures of these narratives are related to the values, beliefs and opinions they promote. In other words, the aim is to unravel the relationship of the narrative discourse to the ideological discourse.

The main methodological approach in this thesis is semiotics and it will be used on three different levels. The first is a narratological examination of the Mašín brothers' representations. Narratology is a subsequent discipline of semiotics, the general theory of signs, and seeks to analyse narrative communication. Narrative is seen here not as a mimetic reflection of the world but solely as a message (a textual construct) which forms a communicative process: someone (originator) produces a message (in this case narrative) and transmits it via certain code (language or film) to the receiver. Narrative examination discloses the inner structure of the narratives. As Roland Barthes put it: "The narrative is made up solely of functions: everything, in one way or another, is significant" (Barthes 1975: 245). Everything included in the narrative thus has a certain meaning. Special attention is therefore paid to the construction of the narrator (especially in shifts between the first and the third person narration), the characters and their actions, and to the relationship of the story to the narrative discourse. The analysis also deals with the way the narratives take care of

the recipient in order to maintain the positivity/negativity of the characters and how they create the reality effect. For the purposes of this thesis, it does not seem to be advantageous to discuss at length various approaches in narratological theory. A basic narratological apparatus is used and the terms are explained where appropriate with reference to contemporary theorists (Abbott, Barthes, Gennette, Chatman, and others).

The second aim is to attain a higher level of semiotic investigation. The theoretical framework for such analysis is provided by the works of Northrop Frye (1957, 1976), Hayden White (1978, 1987) and Roland Barthes whose book *Mythologies* (1972) might now seem to be problematic as it examines solely what he calls 'bourgeois myth'. However, this methodological approach regards myth as the 'naturalisation' of the symbolic order and as such it is a useful tool for examining any sort of mythical structure. Barthes' theory is grounded in general science - semiotics - and has many possible applications. It enables us to discern the myth in the narratives produced during the communist period in Czechoslovakia as well as in the recently published narratives.

Finally, the third level of focus brings us to the investigation of the relationship between the narrative discourse to the beliefs and values inscribed in the narratives – ideological discourse. As it will be shown, the narrative discourse in the narratives analysed in this thesis is not always in balance with the ideological discourse. It is sometimes congruent with it, but sometimes it is not. One can start to inquire which values, beliefs and opinions are inscribed in these narratives. Works of art (fiction) can be seen as immanent structures with a predominant aesthetic function. However, it is clear that even fictional stories transmit certain values: "In the domain of so-called 'high' literature and culture, the construction of certain ideas is only a part of the realisation of the aesthetic function. However, in the domain of pop-culture, the production of these ideas is a separate and important part of the message intended to be consumed" (Bílek 2007: 102). All of the analysed narratives can be, with some reservations, ranked as pop-cultural products.

When investigating the ideological discourse, the semiotic approach seems to be advantageous as it allows us to deconstruct the myths inscribed in the narratives by disclosing their artificiality. As Daniel Chandler reminds us, any attempt to reveal the ways in which codes operate within popular texts and historical narratives might prove to be problematic as the reader of these myths is always the product of his/her own culture. However, it seems to be beneficial to at least try to be reflective about

the values and beliefs which were promoted by these narratives in the past as well as to contemplate the "myths we live by" today (Chandler 2002: 145).

This type of investigation has been, so far, rather neglected in the field of Czech studies. The issue of ideology and its relation to the narrative has not been studied much in relation to Czech literary texts or other cultural products. Mainstream Czech literary scholarship is still deeply rooted in the structuralist-based approach (and its various modifications) which explores literature from the aesthetic point of view or focuses on the inner structure of narratives. The pioneering work in the Czech context is provided by Vladimír Macura (Macura 1983, 1992) who examined mythologies produced during the era of the Czech national revival and Stalinism. The problem of ideology and fiction was also tackled by Peter Steiner in his book *The Deserts of Bohemia: Czech Fiction and Its Social Context* (2000) which is perhaps the only publication on this topic published in English. Finally, there is an emerging wave of scholars (Činátl, Činátlová, Štochl among others) who, following in the footsteps of Vladimír Macura, investigated the 'ideologised narrative patterns' in the aforementioned television series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* comparing it with the James Bond films – *James Bond and Major Zeman: Ideologised Narrative Patterns* [Bond a major Zeman: Ideologizující vzorce vyprávění] (Bílek 2007). Petr A. Bílek's study *James Bond and Major Zeman: Semantics of Narrative Ideology* [James Bond a Major Zeman. Sémantika narativní ideologie] published in this volume of articles was a source of inspiration for this thesis. However, so far there have been very few papers which deal with contemporary Czech mythology (e.g. Čulík 2007). In this respect, this thesis deals with unexplored terrain and although it will not provide definitive answers, it will outline a basic direction for future explorations.

As to its structure, the thesis is divided into three main parts which correlate with the aforementioned theoretical distinction. The first chapter examines the recent narrative representations *Gauntlet* (1.1) and *So Far So Good* (1.2) and aims to assess their affiliation to a mythical universe (1.3). The second chapter then focuses on the detective stories produced in Communist Czechoslovakia – *The Dead Do Not Talk* (2.1) and *Fear*, the episode from the television series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* (2.2) and also deals with their specific modes of signification (2.3). An examination of the in/congruency of the narrative discourse with the system of beliefs and ideas is the ultimate goal of the final section (3). It has to be stressed that the present thesis does not intend to tackle the problem of ideology in its complexity as its main concern is

the narratological (and mythological) exploration of the Mašín brothers' narrative representations. Nevertheless, it aims to propose certain observations which can be used as a basis for further inquiry into this matter.

1. The Mašín Brothers as Heroes

The Mašín brothers' story has been narrated many times. Since their escape from Czechoslovakia in 1953 it has been tackled by historians, journalists, writers and filmmakers. In Communist Czechoslovakia, the Mašíns became characters in the officially published detective stories based on the so-called real events. After the fall of Communism in 1989, the story was retold again. Further narratives were produced by historians and writers and, although they tell more or less the same story, the narratives are quite different. In the detective stories and newspaper articles published before the Velvet Revolution, the Mašín brothers and their friends played the role of the criminals. The narratives written after 1989 portray them in a much more positive light. However, the concern of this thesis is not to assess the accuracy of these narrative representations, but rather to examine how the way in which the narratives are structured is related to the values and beliefs they contain.

Telling a story is one of the oldest verbal activities. Narrative structures help us to orientate ourselves in the world. Narrative is perhaps the most widespread syntagmatic structure and dominates semiotic studies. Theorists connect narrative with epistemology: "It is only through narrative that we know ourselves as active entities that operate through time" (Abbott 2002: 123). Or as Hayden White puts it: "Narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling*,[2] the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific" (White 1987: 215).

Narrative form can thus be seen as necessary for our understanding of reality. However, narrating also involves choosing certain events and organizing them into a plot with a beginning, middle and end. This process unavoidably involves the selection and preference of certain events over others. Therefore, narrative might also be regarded as an illusion: "The experience of a linear 'organic' flow of events is an illusion (albeit a necessary one) that masks the fact that it is the ending that *retroactively* confers the consistency of an organic whole of the preceding events" (Žižek 1991: 69). The choice of certain events is necessary as the narration naturally

[2] White points out that the words "narrative", "narration" and so on goes back to the ancient Sanskrit "gna" and it comes down to us via Latin "gnarus"; words for both "knowing" and "telling".

cannot be infinite but this, at the same time, means that the persons are textual constructs (characters) which possess only a limited number of qualities and that the story contains a limited quantity of events.

Narratology "is the study of the form and functioning of narrative […] It examines what all narratives have in common – narratively speaking – and what allows them to be narratively different" (Prince 1982: 4-5). The following narratological analysis thus focuses on the main constituents of the narrative: who speaks and how his voice affects the overall meaning of the message, how he structures the characters and presents the events. The thesis will also be concerned with the way in which the narrated events are said to represent historical events or whether they are somehow fictionalized as this ranking is an important part of the communicative process.

Such analysis is inherently selective. It focuses mainly on the narrative features which seem to be functional for undertaking a higher level of semiotic investigation. It mainly deals with the nodal points of the narratives: those which all of these narratives depict. Special attention is paid particularly to the Mašín brothers' actions which resulted in either killing or injuring some of the other characters. These scenes seem to be crucial for further investigation as they best reveal how the narratives take care of the recipient. In other words, they reveal how the reality is structured and presented in order to convey certain beliefs and values.

The goal of this chapter is to analyse the post-1989 books about the Mašín brothers, *Gauntlet* (1.1) and *So Far So Good* (1.2), from a narratological point of view and then to carry out a semiotic investigation in order to examine their strong affiliation to myth (1.3). The results of this analysis will be used to examine how the translation from "knowing into telling" (White 1987: 215) is also related to 'believing' in something or how the narrative structures are related to the values they contain.

1.1 *Gauntlet*: The Mašín Brothers' Struggle for Freedom and Democracy

The first narrative representation of the Mašín brothers' story that will be analysed is called *Gauntlet: Five Friends, Twenty Thousand Enemy Troops, and the Secret That*

Could Have Changed the Course of the Cold War (Masin 2006). This book was first published in 2005 in Czech under the title *Legacy. The True Story of the Mašín Brothers* [Odkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů], however, it was originally written in English so this edition will be the initial basis for the examination.[3]

1.1.1 Modality of the Narrative

Some of the narrative representations balance on the borderline between fiction and non-fiction (e.g. Novák 2004). Barbara Masin identifies *Gauntlet* in the preface as a historical book. She claims that the events happened in the way she recounts. The subtitle of the Czech edition - "The true story of the Mašín brothers" – also indicates the historiographical nature of the narrative. Barbara Masin comments on this in the author's note:

> Some dialogues in this book have been reconstructed and readjusted. In real life, conversation is characterised by frequent interruptions, repetitions and by unfinished sentences. People who try to remember conversations conducted fifty years ago rarely remember exact formulations which they then used. With these reservations everything that follows is the truth. (Masin 2005: 9) [4]

The author acknowledges that the dialogues have been reconstructed and somehow modified in one way or another but she insists that this is "the only exception" which has no consequence for the overall historical veracity. It functions as a signal to the reader who is thus from the very beginning assured that these events really happened in exactly the same manner as the (implied) author recounts them.[5] Masin explicitly stresses that her book is not a work of fiction:

[3] There are some differences between these two editions which will be taken into account.
[4] This comment is not present in the English edition (Masin 2006). All the quotes from the Czech primary and secondary sources were translated by Dr. Jan Čulík.
[5] Here the reference is to the concept of the implied author. The implied author is neither the real author nor the narrator. It is "the image of the author constructed by the reader as she or he reads the narrative. In an intentional reading, the implied author is that sensibility and moral intelligence that the reader gradually constructs to infer the intended meanings and effects of the narrative […] As the implied author should be kept distinct from the actual author, so the implied reader should be kept distinct from the actual reader. The implied reader is not necessarily you or I but the reader we infer to be an intended recipient of the narrative" (Abbott 2002: 191).

> In other words, this is neither a fictionalised description nor a documentary novel. What you will read on the following pages is what really happened. (Ibid.)

It is possible that she is reacting to Jan Novák's novel *So Far So Good* which deals with the same topic and was published in the Czech Republic in 2004 (a year before Masin's book). *Gauntlet* contains references to primary and secondary sources and the author refers to various German, Czech and American archive materials. The secondary sources consist of various books, articles and periodicals, a documentary film and also the World Wide Web.[6] All these features along with the statement of the author in the preface clearly indicate that this narrative representation aims to recount the so-called real and true story of the Mašín brothers. This is meant as a signal to the reader that *Gauntlet* is a historical narrative.

1.1.2 The Plot

In order to introduce the plot, let us quote the summary from the cover of the book:

> On 3 October 1953, five young men armed with four pistols crossed the border from Czechoslovakia into East Germany. Their mission was to deliver an explosive secret message from a Czechoslovak general to U.S. authorities at all costs. The journey was to take three days, and their ultimate objective was to join the U.S. Army Special Forces, then return to liberate their country. What ensued was the largest manhunt of the Cold War.
>
> This fast-paced book tells the exciting story of their plight as thousands of East German and Soviet troops chased them across swampland, forests, and fields for thirty-one days. After surviving several pitched gun battles, gunshot wounds, starvation, and the bitter cold, three finally reached West Berlin. Prior to their escape, they had formed the nucleus of an anti-Communist resistance group, inspired by the testament of celebrated World War II resistance leader, Czech general Josef Masin, father to two of the young men and grandfather to the author of this book.
>
> As she was growing up, Barbara Masin heard parts of this story. Eager to learn more, she began to investigate. The result of her efforts is this thriller, which makes use of eyewitness interviews and extensive archival research in four countries. Her book places events in their historical context and analyses the bitter present-day controversy surrounding the group's actions, examining the larger question of individuals making moral choices. It is a dramatic tale of courage and

[6] For complete bibliography see (Masin 2005: 385 and Masin 2006: 361).

> daring against overwhelming odds and a testament to American ideals of freedom. (Masin 2006)

The five men who tried to escape were the Mašín brothers (Ctirad Mašín, Josef Mašín Jr.), Milan Paumer, Zbyněk Janata and Václav Švéda but only the first three reached West Berlin. The first three chapters of the book (10%) concentrate on the story of Josef Mašín Sr. Chapters 4-10 (20%) are about the group's resistance activity and the Mašín family. More than half of the book (chapters 11-37 - 70%) deals with the group's escape to West Berlin. The internal part of the narrative is also a general history of Czechoslovakia and the history of the region is incorporated into the story. External historical events such as the Munich agreement in 1938, World War II, the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945, the Communist takeover in 1948 and so forth influence the main characters and their actions.

The narration starts directly in the middle of the story. Three men are hiding underneath a pile of branches. In the prologue we read:

> The first snow of the season fell on 6 October 1953, and thereafter every night brought subzero temperatures. Now, two weeks later, another gray dawn pushed its chilly fingers over the horizon, touching fir trees and haystacks that glittered white with hoar frost. In the cold morning air sound carried far, and from their cramped hideout under a pile of dead branches they could hear the woods ringing with sharp bursts of automatic weapons fire. (Masin 2006: 1)

The reader's interest and attention are secured by this exposition. Although we do not yet know who is hiding underneath the pile of branches and why, we are intrigued and want to continue reading. From the very beginning, the reader is made aware that this is a dramatic story. This device 'prolepsis'[7] corresponds to similar literary devices used in fiction. One can also observe that the narration starts with incredible details creating what Roland Barthes called the 'reality effect' (Barthes 1986: 132). This is the only case of prolepsis. Apart from this, the story is narrated in chronological order.

The first chapter starts with the birth of Josef Mašín Senior. The story has a distinct beginning and end. The last chapter is about the Mašín brothers' disappointment with the political situation – they feel betrayed that the U.S. did not

[7] "Flashforward. Introduction into the narrative of material that comes later in the story. The opposite of analepsis." (Abbott 2002: 195)

invade Czechoslovakia. In spite of their disillusionment, they remain firm believers in the "American ideals of freedom" (Masin 2006: 323). In the epilogue, the narrator mentions the fall of the Berlin Wall and the efforts to rehabilitate the Mašín family and their friends. Among other things, Barbara Masin also recounts the situation in Czechoslovakia after the fall of communism; although they were overthrown, the Communists still rule the country.[8] The span of the narrative therefore covers the whole of the 20th century.

1.1.3 The Father's Shadow Story

Josef Mašín Sr. was praised as a hero of both World Wars[9] and his life is an integral part of the story. Aristotle observed in Poetics that "a beginning is that which does not come necessarily after something else, but after which it is natural for another thing to exist or come to be" (Aristotle 1982: 52). This story begins with birth of Josef Mašín Sr. in 1896: "And it had all begun with my mysterious grandfather" (Masin 2006: 7). Josef Mašín Sr. fought for an independent Czechoslovakia in the Foreign Legions in the First World War. He received many medals for bravery and was also a member of the famous Czech home resistance group 'The Three Kings' which fought against the Nazis. This group conducted many sabotage activities (also a bomb attack in Berlin) and transmitted coded messages to London. Eventually in 1941, the group was destroyed and Josef Mašín was captured. After long and hard interrogations when he refused to testify against his colleagues from the resistance, he was executed in Kobylisy.

After World War II, Josef Mašín Sr. was praised as a hero. Books and articles have been published about his 'heroic deeds' during the struggle against the Nazis. The narrator suggests that Ctirad and Josef Mašín Jr. followed in his footsteps when they decided to fight against the Communists. Although the narration concentrates on the Mašín brothers' story more than on the deeds of their father, his life is an integral part of the story. The father's story can be identified as a sort of 'shadow story'.

[8] "The same Communist-era laws that legalized state-sponsored property theft, murder, torture, and blackmail. The same judges continue judging. The same bureaucrats who benefited from the graft-ridden, corrupt command economy under Communism continue today in their positions of power: in the ministries, in the largest national enterprises, and in the provincial government offices. Instead of a clean break with the past, continuity was and is the name of the game." (Masin 2006: 339)

[9] There is an extensive historical literature on Josef Mašín Sr. (Vozka 1946, Procházka 1947, Němeček 1998).

Porter Abbott writes about a 'shadow story' in his book discussing the narrative of a trial:

> […] character and motivation are often more difficult to make out than actions and events. You can often establish to a certainty what they were killed with […] These are gaps for which we get a lot of assistance from the evidence. But in the narrative of the trial, motive is necessarily out of sight. It is inferred from evidence, but can never be produced. It is something that you can neither hold or see. Of course sometimes motives are transparent. But it is also true that people can be highly complex. Moreover, there is always the possibility that someone who appears simple is in reality complex. (Abbott 2002: 146)

It is suggested that Josef Mašín Sr.'s personality and courage were the ultimate source of the Mašín brothers' strong motivation (and also obligation) to fight against the Communist regime. He was already dead when the Mašín brothers began their struggle and it is difficult to quantify the extent of his direct impact on the Mašín brothers' actions but the narrator suggests that it was his legacy that made them resist the Communists. This generates a causal relationship between the actions of the Mašín brothers and their father. His effect may be indirect, but in the story his character functions as a trigger.

The narrative contains letters which their father sent from prison and letters from other family members. The Mašín brothers' uncle Borek Novák, who later joined them in their resistance activity, congratulates them for the medals in the letter of 6 November 1946. [10] He writes:

> Your aunt and I congratulate you both on your high distinction. I have no doubt that in the event of war, both your chests will be decorated with many more medals, *because you are both Masins. You have in your blood all the essential characteristics of good soldiers and patriots. That is the most beautiful inheritance your famous father has left you, and you should defend it jealously.* It is a command of your golden father, who loved you more than his own life and it is his wish. Remember him often, and you will see that you will find strength in your memories... I repeat, *you are obligated by his memory and must fulfil his wish to become a whole man* who can make his contribution to the nation when called upon to do so. (Masin 2006: 52-53).[11]

[10] They received these medals from President Edvard Beneš "for personal bravery during the war". The narrator mentions that they damaged the transport of German airplanes and also sheltered a Russian POW Stiepan Sannikovov.
[11] Italicized by J.Š.

The brothers were only small children when their father was executed but after the war they began to discover who their father had been:

> Pepa and Radek saw their futures clearly: *they would follow in their father's footsteps and join the Czechoslovak military. They, too, would defend their country. Eagerly they read everything about their father that they could get their hands on.* They had been young children when their father disappeared from their lives forever, and now the two teenagers tried to reconcile fragmentary memories of him at home in Dolni Liboc with the towering legend described in the books and newspaper articles. 'It was at that time,' Radek recalled, '*that we came to the decision which was to influence all of our later lives, never to surrender to anybody, to decisively resist evil and injustice, and to never let anybody or anything stop us*'. (Masin 2006: 53)

The story and legend of their father are thus crucial to the story. It also corresponds to its thematic composition. The Czech edition of the book is called *Odkaz* which means 'legacy' or 'heritage'. The meaning is of course metaphorical. It is their father's legacy "to decisively resist evil and injustice" that his sons had to fulfil. There are more allusions to the family heritage in the book: "Radek and Pepa were in no doubt that the time had come for them to fulfil their father's mandate" (Masin 2006: 60). Josef Mašín Sr.'s heroic life story thus functions as a trigger. His legacy serves as the explanation of the Mašín brothers' later actions and their motivation. It is the 'shadow story' which plays a crucial role in the narrative; it suggests that their resistance activity was a necessary continuation of their father's struggle for freedom and the ultimate tribute to his legacy.

1.1.4 The Objective Narrator?

The narratological approach enables us to examine certain structural features of the narrative. The narrator is the one who tells a story, it can be seen as a textual device. Such an examination is necessary in order to grasp the narrative structure: "Narrative voice is a major element in the construction of the story it narrates. It is therefore crucial to determine the kind of person we have for a narrator" (Abbott 2002: 65-66). Let us suppose that the narrator of the historical work is not a real person who actually writes it. As Roland Barthes put it:

> […] both narrator and characters are essentially 'paper beings.' The living author of a narrative can in no way be mistaken for the narrator of that narrative; the signs of the narrator are embedded in the narrative, hence perfectly detectable by a semiological analysis. […] The one *who speaks* (in the narrative) is not the one *who writes* (in real life) and the one *who writes* is not the one *who is*. (Barthes 1975: 261)

Even in historical narrative the relationship between the narrator and the author is not straightforward. In the narrative discourse of *Gauntlet* there are two distinct narrative voices. The first one is mainly present in the prologue and in the epilogue; this is the first person narrator who talks about how she kept hearing this narrative from her father. It was a "favourite bedtime story" for her and her sister (Masin 2006: 2). In the epilogue, she recounts her efforts to write this book and the difficulties she encountered in the Czech Republic when trying to find the archive materials.[12] The first person narrative voice is thus used almost exclusively in the paratexts.[13]

In Chapter One, the first person narrator shifts to the third person narrator and this voice continues telling the story until the very end. The only sign of the first person narrator's presence in the narrative is when the narrative voice occasionally refers to some of the characters as 'my uncle', 'my grandfather' and so forth. The predominant narrative voice is the third person narrator. The events which the narrative mainly focuses on (the constituent events of the story) had happened before the narrator was even born. She did not take part in them. These events are narrated in the impersonal voice. The parts narrated in the first person can be identified as supplementary events because they are not necessary to the storyline and the story would remain intact without them (Abbott 2002: 188).

This textual device has, of course, its implications for the meaning of the narrative. The narrator's first person mask ('the daughter') is only detectable in the paratexts and largely hidden in the course of narration. The predominant third person voice ('the historian') thus creates the impression that the given information is not

[12] In the English edition of the book (Masin 2006) the voice in the first person is present only in the paratexts (prologue and epilogue). In the Czech edition (Masin 2005) it is present in the paratexts as well as in chapter 37. This is because in the English version there are only 35 chapters and the last two chapters are included in the epilogue.

[13] Paratext is Gerard Genette's term for material outside the narrative that is connected to it. They can be physically attached to the narrative vehicle (book, magazine): prefaces, tables of contents, title pages, blurbs on the jacket, illustrations. Paratexts can also be separated form the vehicle (comments by author, reviews etc.). They modify the way we read and interpret a narrative (Genette 1997).

affected by Barbara Masin's family ties, her own "needs, desires and limitations" (Abbott 2002: 66), and generates the illusion that the events are being recounted by an unbiased, 'objective' teller ('referential illusion').[14]

The narrator's discourse is mainly separated from the characters' discourse by direct speech. Occasionally, the free indirect style is used: "Zbynek didn't turn to see who it was. *No time!* He found himself on a cobblestone road […]" (Masin 2006: 183).[15] The author acknowledges at the very beginning of the book that the dialogues are "reconstructed and readjusted" (Masin 2005: 9). The story is a work of history and not a fictional one and thus the events narrated ought to be true. However, the narrator did not witness the events and she often had to rely solely on the personal recollections of eye-witnesses and participants. She also acknowledges that one of her resources is Ctirad Mašín's written chronology of the escape which he wrote in 1957 (Masin 2006: xii). From various sources (such as archive materials, historical books, eye-witness testimonies, personal notes etc.) she constructs a monolithic narrative discourse which is mediated mainly by a singular third-person narrator.

The narrated events are transformed from the original first person narrations of witnesses to impersonal narration. This is a common structure in historical works: "The writing style of professional historians has traditionally involved a variant of the nineteenth-century 'realist' novelist's omniscient narrator and fluent narrative. Historians have only fragmentary 'sources', but the style exerts pressure to produce a whole and continuous story, sustaining the impression of omniscience, leaping over evidential voids" (Megill, McCloskey 1987: 26). This is also the case in Barbara Masin's narrative. The subjective testimonies and accounts, which come mainly and sometimes solely from Josef and Ctirad Mašín themselves and other documents, are grouped and united in a single narrative voice, only sometimes to be interrupted by fabricated dialogues. Further analysis of selected scenes will demonstrate how deeply the construction of this type of the 'objective' teller affects the overall meaning of the narrative.

[14] Referential illusion is also Barthes' term. It is the "lack of sign of the 'speaker' […] the historian claims to let the referent speak for itself" (Barthes 1986: 132).
[15] Italicized by J.Š.

1.1.5 The Mašín Brothers: Rebels with a Cause

Characters are human or humanlike entities involved in the action that have agency (Abbott 2002: 188). These entities are complex and are defined by the sum of characteristics they possess (personality, external appearance), actions they carry out, speeches they utter and the human environment they are set in (family, social class) (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 59). Even in historical works the people represented are, in fact, not 'real', rather, they are defined as a sum of the characteristics inscribed in the narrative discourse and, naturally, the depiction of them can never be absolutely complete. The narrative consists only of the actions and characteristics relevant to the story or for the understanding of the events in general. The characters, even in historical narratives, are thus incomplete entities and, just like the fictional characters, they contain significant gaps.

In *Gauntlet* there are two main heroes, the Mašín brothers, whom the narrator describes as follows:

> Although Pepa and Radek were close in age and shared a physical resemblance, their personalities were quite different. Where Pepa was carefree, always up for a prank or a joke, Radek was a serious boy and mature beyond his years. As the oldest son, with his father gone, he took his role as the man of the house seriously. He was focused on his goals, studied hard, got good grades and was interested in all things technical. Pepa, on the other hand, couldn't be bothered with schoolwork. The two brothers were intense rivals about girls, about who was right, but they always held together as brothers. Against outside threats they presented a united front. (Masin 2006: 54-55)

The narrator does not question their actions – things they do make sense and are done with dignity and with concern for humanity. They are clearly presented as positive characters – the heroes who fight against the cruel Communist regime. The narrator does not critically judge their actions, but tends to describe their behaviour in positive terms:

> Radek, Pepa and their friends decided to turn the tables on the Communists. They would strike at the grassroots level, using the Communists' own methods. But there was an important difference between the Masin group and the followers of Marx and Lenin. *The Masins and their friends understood instinctively that if you are fighting*

> *for individual human life and dignity, you must do so with as much concern for innocent lives as humanly possible*. (Masin 2006: 67)[16]

The other important character in the story is their father, Josef Mašín Senior. He is also depicted as a hero and, as it was stated earlier, the narrator suggests that he had an enormous impact on the brothers' actions. The heroes could not pursue the 'ideals of freedom' without help. They needed someone who would help them make these ideals come true and it is their friends from Poděbrady who are able to do it:

> Radek, Pepa, Milan, and Vladimir formed the core. They had all grown up together. They knew each other as well as any boys could know each other, and they trusted each other completely. (Ibid. 68)

The narrator offers descriptions of their physical and mental characteristics. They are again depicted in positive terms:

> Milan was the quiet one in the group. […] A year older than Pepa, dark-haired and dark-eyed Milan was the retiring sort-the opposite of the gregarious Pepa-but the two boys were loyal friends. (Ibid. 68)

> Zbynek was a dark-haired, good-looking youth, a rebel without a cause, and Pepa immediately recognized a kindred spirit. […] He was a gifted athlete and he had a sort of reckless courage that impressed Pepa. (Ibid. 68-69)

> Vladimir was a quiet, retiring boy with a dry sense of humour. […] Vladimir shared Radek's passion for weapons and all things military. (Ibid. 69)

And finally Václav Švéda who joined the group later is described last:

> Vasek, as his friends called him, was an enthusiastic, upbeat young man with a ready laugh, about ten years older than the group members. (Masin 2006: 99)

The members of the group are depicted as young, good-looking men with a sense of humour. They provide the necessary help for the heroes' resistance actions. These characters acquire certain functions in the narrative – they are the Mašín brothers' helpers. Vladimír Hradec is an armourer, Milan Paumer is a driver and their uncle

[16] Italicized by J.Š.

Ctibor Novák functions as their advisor. Vašek and Zbyněk also join in on the dangerous actions. The Mašín brothers are, of course, the leaders of the group and, as such, they stand above the rest. They plan all of the actions and carefully consider all the details.

There is also a minor positive character, General Vaněk, who is an old friend of Josef Mašín Sr. His role is very important in the narrative because he passes on to the Mašíns a 'top secret' message for the Allies. He is in command of the troops in the Czechoslovak army and in case of a conflict with the West he would give them orders not to fight:

> If this division stood down and didn't fight, the western forces could pour through the breach and attack the Soviet bloc troops to the north and south from behind, decimating them with deadly speed, cutting off their supply lines and wreaking havoc in the rear. If some or all of Vanek's forces joined in the assault, the resulting mayhem in the Soviet bloc's ranks would be truly impressive. (Masin 2006: 121)

The Mašín brothers have to deliver this message to the Allies and thus, their actions effectively acquire a much higher importance. It is suggested that this information "could have changed the course of the Cold War" as the title says. The Mašín brothers' mission is thus important for the whole 'free world'.

1.1.6 The Communist 'Axis of Evil'

On the other side of the axiological axis[17] there are the negative characters that represent the evil side of the world. These are the Communists, policemen, troopers, detectives, investigators, militia men, and warders – in short, the adversaries of the heroes. The narrator clearly defines them:

> While the government waged a broad-based campaign of terror against the civilian population, the Masins' terror would be reserved for the enforcers of the regime, the StB, the SNB,[18] the militias and paramilitaries – those authorized to bear arms and enforce the regime's dictates. (Masin 2006: 67)

[17] By the 'axiological axis' we mean the division between the good and bad characters.
[18] StB – Státní bezpečnost (State security), SNB – Sbor národní bezpečnosti (National Security Service).

This is the literal definition of the enemy – the 'bad' characters. Narrative theory offers an examination of characters, for example, E. M. Forster (1927) distinguished between 'flat' and 'round' characters. The 'flat' characters can be "summed up in a single phrase" and have no existence apart from a single dominating quality (Forster 1927: 69). Round characters cannot be summed up in the same way and are not predictable (Ibid.67-78). The borderline between the 'flat' and 'round' characters is, of course, not always very sharp and characters are defined by their tendency to lean towards one pole or the other. We can create an axis which grasps the major opposition in this narrative ('flatness' vs. 'roundness') based on the textual analysis.

It can be claimed that in *Gauntlet* the positive characters are far more developed than the negative ones. They cannot really be called 'round' but rather 'more round' than the others. The narrator outlines their basic physical and mental descriptions. There is also an account of the heroes' psychological motivation that leads them to certain actions, such as the legacy of Josef Mašín Sr. as a strong motivational force and their commitment to fight against the Communist regime. The Mašín brothers and their companions are consistently referred to by their names, and, moreover, by the domestic variations of their names (Pepa, Radek, Vašek, Borek etc.) and the narrator often refers to the group as 'friends'. Along with the development of their characters, this makes them seen more human.

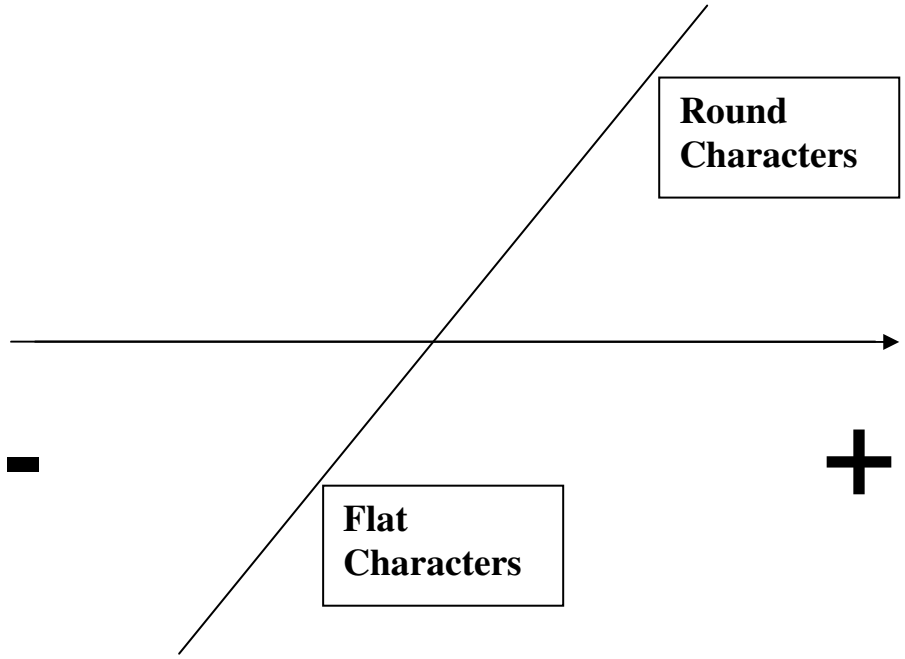
On the other hand, there is little development on the other side of the axiological axis. The negative characters are usually labelled by their assignment and there is no account of their personalities at all. These entities are not usually called by proper names (forenames or surnames) although their names are often known, but by their function in the state apparatus – a policeman, a militia man, an investigator etc. This leads to further dehumanisation of these 'adversaries'. They are thus 'empty vessels' rather than 'veritable' characters. They can be called 'flat' characters because they are underdeveloped. The narrator does not offer their internal characterisation, and there is no information concerning their lives or the possible motivations behind their actions. There is sometimes a brief account of their external appearance which functions merely to increase their negative portrayal:

> There were five investigators on the team. None of them looked as cruel and brutal as this man. (Masin 2005: 104)

A ticket seller who later reported the group to the police is presented as follows:

> The *surly-looking* middle-aged woman behind the counter looked at him *sharply*.[...] The ticket seller turned her *sharp gaze* away and with agonizing slowness issued the tickets [...] the *distrustful gaze* of the ticket seller following their every move. (Masin 2006: 166)[19]

This also functions as a hint in the narrative; the reader starts to become suspicious and wonders whether this interaction will have any consequence in the story. We can trace the correspondence between the intensity of characters' development with the central axiological (good vs. bad) axis of this story; the positive characters are far more developed than the bad ones. The following diagram shows the relationship between the 'flatness/roundness' of the characters and the axiological axis:



The negative characters are entities who, rather than having individual characteristics, are part of the abstract 'axis of evil'. Their most important feature is that they are the adversaries (armed enforcers of the Communist regime). This is in clear contrast with the depiction of the heroes who are at the very centre of attention and, as such, their individuality is highlighted. Furthermore, their friends and family are depicted in positive terms and the reader is informed about their qualities. The contrast between

[19] Italicized by J.Š.

the good and bad is thus realised as a binary opposition between the individual and abstract.

1.1.7 The Characters Bound to Their Actions

The characters are also defined by their actions. The Mašín brothers' armed struggle resulted in several casualties and the scenes where they eliminate their enemies are ripe for analysis. The following textual analysis focuses on certain crucial scenes staging the Mašín brothers' resistance activity. Its purpose is to investigate how the 'objective' narrator takes care of the recipient when depicting the killings of the policeman and other events related to their sabotage activity.[20] This quote is from chapter 7, *Joining the Battle*, in which Radek Mašín, Zbyněk Janata and Milan Paumer raid the police station. It is the second raid in Čelákovice:

> 'Where are the weapons?' Radek demanded.
> The policeman said nothing. *He was unabashedly studying their faces in the light. He was experienced and made no bones about taking his time to commit their features to memory.* When he was finished, he motioned his head toward his cabinet. It was fitted with a massive metal latch and outsize padlock. (Masin 2006: 75)[21]

In this scene, the narrator pinpoints the fact that the policeman (who has already been tied up) is "unabashedly" studying their faces in order to "commit their features to memory". This scenic sequence is followed by Radek's decision to kill the policeman:

> While Zbynek was hauling the weapons out to the ambulance, Radek turned to the policeman. *The man was glaring at him defiantly*.
> 'Comrade,' Radek said, 'we have to put you to sleep so that you don't do anything stupid before we disappear.'
> There was no question in his mind. *This policeman knew their faces and would submit detailed descriptions of them. Radek couldn't let that happen*. But he also had to avoid a repeat of the Chlumec fiasco: there could be no gunfire. He laid the policeman on the bunk, pressed a handkerchief doused with chloroform over his nose and mouth, and waited until the man was out cold. *Then he pulled his scout's knife from its sheath on his belt and slit the man's throat – exactly as his instructor had showed him***.** (Masin 2006: 76)[22]

[20] These killings are also at the core of the so called " Causa Mašín".
[21] Italicized by J.Š.
[22] Italicized by J.Š.

The narrator first lays the ground for Ctirad Mašín's action by mentioning a certain fact - the policeman studying their faces. The narrator then stresses the potential risk for the heroes and explains the reason why Radek comes to the decision to cut the policeman's throat. The reason why it is necessary to do it is then repeated again ("[…] knew their faces and would submit detailed descriptions of them. Radek couldn't let that happen."). The narrative creates this causality:

Presupposition: the group fights 'as humanly as possible'.

1) The policeman is the enemy.
2) He is experienced.
3) He is studying their faces in order to submit their description.
4) He has to die.
5) There could be no gunfire (unlike in Chlumec).
6) He slits the policeman's throat (as his instructor had showed him).

The third person narrator fabricates a powerful illusion grounded in narrative reasoning. It is suggested that the only reasonable thing to do in this particular situation was to cut the policeman's throat. The 'objective' narrator highlights a certain action made by the negative character (the policeman studying their faces). This action is taken as the impulse to another action by Ctirad Mašín – he slits his throat. The narrative in the way it is structured – by inscribing certain actions to the negative character (policeman) - justifies the action of the positive hero. Thus, the narrative stays coherent; the hero does not 'murder' the policeman cruelly (cutting his throat) for no reason, but 'neutralises' the enemy because it seems to be clear that he would submit their descriptions to the police. This chain of reasoning maintains the hero's positivity – his actions are justified. This action was necessary and Ctirad Mašín fulfils the condition regarding the 'human' nature of his actions.

There is another significant point in the quote above. Let us repeat the very last sentence: "Then he pulled his scout's knife from its sheath on his belt and slit the man's throat – exactly as his instructor had showed him." This refers to an event which was mentioned earlier in the course of narration. Ctirad Mašín took part in a fourteen day course in "military preparedness". "The course instructor was a rabid Communist. A diligent student, Radek graduated with flying colours" (Masin 2006:

67). One can clearly see that this event which happened some time before the raids on the police station has certain narrative motivation. Ctirad Mašín learnt this method (of eliminating the enemy quietly) in the military course which was supposed to train the Communists in partisan warfare. By reminding us of this event at the very moment when Ctirad cuts the policeman's throat, the narrator persuasively suggests that Ctirad just used "the Communists' own methods" (Masin 2006: 67) which contributes to a further justification of the hero.

It is very important to point out that this version of the scene (this narrative interpretation) is coherent with Ctirad Mašín's own testimony described in the book *Anything but Fear* [Jenom ne strach] (1990) by Ota Rambousek. This account tells the same story in the first person from the perspective of Ctirad Mašín. This version has also been used in various other historical books (Němeček 1998, Kalous 2002) on this topic. Barbara Masin used the book *Anything but Fear* as her source as well. This scene is narrated here as follows:

> Inside, we asked the policeman where the weapons were. At first, he didn't feel like saying anything and he gazed at both of us intently, standing there in the sharp light, examining our features the whole time. After a thorough examination, he pointed with his head towards the cupboard. *Comrade*, I said, *we now have to put you to sleep so that you don't create chaos for us before we disappear. He was a very unpleasant looking bloke, possibly with a lot of experience, judging from how he was behaving during the whole thing. There was no other way.* It was clear that if we allowed him to live, he would undoubtedly give the authorities our detailed descriptions.
> I placed him on the bunk bed and put him to sleep using chloroform. Now was the time to use my experience from the sabotage course, so I pulled out a boy scout's knife and implemented the rule about disabling the guard. (Rambousek 1990: 52)[23]

The similarity between the two passages is striking. This interpretation of the events has been used repeatedly by Czech historians. This chain of reasoning is very specific and it is not the only possible narrative representation. Czech historians used Ctirad Mašín's own interpretation. The action of the policeman (studying their faces) may also be regarded as a subjective impression of Ctirad Mašín whose decision to eliminate him is based on his own perception of the reality. However, when transferred to the third person, the narrative seems to suggest that there really was no

[23] Italicized by J.Š.

other option than to kill the policeman. In this very case, one can observe how important the shift from the first person to the third person is. It is not just a formal change but something that highly affects the meaning of the narrative, suggesting that this is the way things 'really' happened.

There is a similar situation in chapter 10, *The Class War Escalates*. Ctirad Mašín and Václav Švéda try to set straw stacks on fire in Moravia in order "to help push the already-tottering socialist economy over the edge, and to prove that the Communists were lying when they claimed to have full control of the country" (Masin 2006: 110). On their way home two men try to stop them:

> 'What are you doing here?' one of them challenged.
> Radek said nothing. *One look told him these two were militia types*. He pulled out his gun, took quick aim and fired twice. One in the chest, one to the head. The man let go of his bike and fell to the ground. The other man instantly flung away his bicycle and sprinted off into the cornfield, his back illuminated by the glow of the bicycle lamp. Radek fired twice at the receding silhouette. (Masin 2006: 111)[24]

The "militia types" had no uniforms or other signs indicating their assignment. The question is: How could one look tell him that these two were "militia types"? This scene is set in the complete darkness of night which makes it more likely that Ctirad Mašín could not be sure who he was shooting at. The narrator does not explain this obvious logical incoherency. Ctirad identifies his victims as militia men beforehand and thus he is justified in shooting at them; they are the enemies and he has to defend himself. He cannot jeopardise the success of the operation. Ctirad Mašín is the ultimate hero who would never shoot at defenceless, innocent civilians. Barbara Masin claims that: "it turned out that the two men were heads of the local fire department and in fact were members of the local militia" (Ibid.).

One can find a similar situation in the scene where the group attacks a vehicle with salaries in Hedvíkov. In this case, the negative character is a paymaster called Josef Rošický who points his hidden gun at Josef Mašín:

> 'Hands up!' Rosicky spat out. His face was angry, determined. He was backing away from Pepa, toward the ditch. […] In a split second, he sprang forward in a flying tackle, knocking Rosicky's arm from below and ramming his forearm up […] Pepa got his finger on the trigger, jammed

[24] Italicized by J.Š.

> the gun barrel between Rosicky's shoulder blades and pulled the trigger twice. When he leaped to his feet, *Comrade Rosicky, who had sworn an oath to defend the rule of the Party,* lay motionless in the ditch. It was all over for him. (Masin 2006: 105)

Josef Rošický is tagged as a 'Comrade' after the fight – he is a Communist. He "had sworn an oath to defend the rule of the Party" which means that he was a member of the People's Militia.[25] He is labelled as a militiaman at the very moment of his death. Josef Rošický is again identified as the enemy – he is an armed supporter of the regime. It is therefore suggested that Josef Mašín's act is the necessary 'elimination' of the enemy in self-defence. Again, we can clearly see the effort to justify the action of the positive hero.

1.1.8 Conclusion

This narratological analysis has illustrated the complex relations between the constituents of the narrative structure and its overall meaning. In the preface, the narrative is identified as historical signalling to the reader that these events really happened. The narrative thus refers to the historical persons and events. However, the narratological approach does not focus on whether these events really happened in the way they are told but regard the narratives as textual constructs. The story begins with Josef Mašín Sr. and this has been identified as a 'shadow story'. This generates a causal link between the Mašín brothers' actions and their father. The end of the story is when the Mašín brothers, along with Milan Paumer, arrive safely in West Berlin and join the U.S. Army in order to continue their struggle. *Gauntlet* thus offers a coherent plot with a distinct beginning, middle and end. The major element in the construction of the story is the narrative voice. The narrator in *Gauntlet* is a third person 'objective' narrator. The events are transformed from the original first person narrations of witnesses to the seemingly impersonal narration. This lack of sign of the speaker creates an illusion that the story 'narrates itself' (the referential illusion). The actions of the main heroes, especially those regarded as most controversial (e.g. the

[25] At the end of the book, there is the Oath For Members Of The Czechoslovak People's Militia. It reads as follows: " […] I am prepared to defend, with weapon in hand, the interests of the Party, the revolutionary gains of the working class, and the socialist state, above all against internal and external enemies. In case of need [I] will not question the need to sacrifice my own life in their defence. This I swear." (Masin 2006: 343). This paratext is complementary to the narrative; it is to prove that the members of Peoples militia swore to sacrifice their own lives in defence of the 'cruel regime'.

killings of the policemen) are recounted from the heroes' own perspective yet they are told by the 'objective' narrator. The Mašín brothers' subjective perspective is shifted and presented as objective reality. This alteration has an impact on the meaning and the reception of the narrative, as it ultimately increases its credibility. The reader is able to identify with the heroes because their actions are 'justified' and they retain their positive status and morality. The characters are clearly divided into two distinct groups. The Mašín brothers are positive heroes who are portrayed as the only ones who were able to fight the Communists and their friends and join the struggle for freedom. The positive characters are more 'round' than the negative ones who are mere functions (villains). The individuality of the negative figures is suppressed; they are part of an abstract 'axis of evil'. The analysis of the 'nodal' points disclosed various flaws in the chain of reasoning which again maintain the heroes' morality (injuring the fireman Stanislav Lecián). All these aspects clearly illustrate how the narrative arrangement effectively determines the overall effect of the narrative.

1.2 *So Far So Good*: The Romantic Heroes Struggling with Evil

The Mašín brothers' story does not attract only historians, it is also an attractive topic for novelists. In this section, the focus is on a novel written by the Czech-American writer Jan Novák called *So Far So Good* [Zatím dobrý. Mašínovi a největší příběh studené války] published in the Czech Republic in 2004.[26] This novel will be analysed from a narratological point of view as well.

1.2.1 A 'True Story' Refracted Through Fiction

Jan Novák (born 1953) emigrated from Czechoslovakia when he was sixteen and settled down in the USA. Whilst his earlier work is written in Czech, from the mid 1980s onwards he started to write his novels in English. The novel *So Far So Good* tackles the Mašín brothers' story, but it also details the destiny of the Mašín family in the 20th century. This novel is neither pure fiction nor history. It balances somewhere between these two poles.

[26] This novel was originally written in English but the English version has not been published yet.

The preface is an instruction to the (implied) reader on how to read the text. The author claims here that he used valid historical resources as well as his own fantasy and imagination.[27] He made use of various types of historical documents in the novel: judicial verdicts, newspaper articles, death certificates, records of Politburo meetings and a report from Ctirad Mašín's interrogation. He also refers to a report which records chronologically the events that happened when the group was escaping to Berlin in October 1953. This report was made by Ctirad Mašín, Josef Mašín, and Milan Paumer shortly after their escape and it was the main resource for Ota Rambousek's book *Anything but Fear* (Rambousek 1990).[28] However, the author claims that the "cornerstone" of his book was the interviews with the Mašín brothers:

> However, the cornerstone of this book is the interviews with the Mašín brothers, who willingly responded to many of my impertinent questions often relating to intimate matters. (Novák 2004: 8)

The author in the preface acknowledges that his intention was not to write a historical study, but a novel. He details this paradox:

> A truthful novel is a paradoxical genre, which sticks to the facts only in so far as they go, but then puts the finishing touches on them in its own way, and therefore I consider this book a biographical family myth about the Mašíns and the people around them. I improvised and re-created the unspoken feelings and forgotten dialogues from various indications just as I did while writing my 'purely' fictional novels, (which was altogether inspired by events equally real). (Novák 2004: 9)

It can be observed that this is the opposite of what one can find in the disclaimers of 'normal' fictional novels: "The characters and situations in this narrative are wholly fictitious and any resemblance to real persons and situations is purely coincidental."[29] The author stresses that the characters and situations are not purely fictitious.

[27] Jan Novák also claims that this novel is fiction in various interviews (Horáčková 2004, Pásková 2007).

[28] Jan Novák also claims he drew upon the historical studies by the Mašín brothers' sister Zdena Mašínová, and her husband Rudolf Martin, which detail the lives of the other members of the family (Martin, Mašínová 2001) as well as various other historical books (Procházka 1947, Vozka 1946, Němeček 1998, Mittmann 1995), the film documentaries made by Martin Vadas (1996; 1999) and he also mentions a work of fiction *Pes druhé roty* [*The Dog of The Second Company*] (Langer 1992). The author does not provide the reader with exact bibliographical references but merely refers to their titles (Novák 2005: 8). Neither are there any references to the historical resources in the course of the narration.

[29] This formula was taken as an example used by Genette 1997.

However, it is not a historical book. Jan Novák reflects on the twofold nature of the text. The term "true novel" grasps this paradox precisely – on the one hand, the narrative sticks to the facts which are taken from various historical resources as well as from interviews with eyewitnesses; on the other hand, it is said that it is fiction. A novel is, by definition, something invented, imaginative and fictional. However, Novák's text differs from the genre because of its constant reference to historical reality; certain places, dates, persons and situations.

In the quote above, he also comments on the "forgotten dialogues." It is symptomatic that he mentions the dialogues; they are somehow re-constructed and re-created. The same step is made by Barbara Masin in *Gauntlet*. The substantial difference is that according to Barbara Masin this is the only uncertain element from the perspective of historical validity (she cannot record the 'real dialogues' but she claims she is able to reconstruct them credibly). This kind of balancing between fact and fiction is commented on not just in the preface but also by the narrator of *So Far So Good*:

> But this succession of perceptions, feelings and thoughts through which one experiences the present has vanished from this tiny event, and so the novel must add them again; it must put in the naked facts and sketch them in with details, and so it will then perhaps be a story perceived as life, although only weirdly and implicitly […]. (Novák 2004: 11)

The narrator also uses various indicators which are supposed to suggest that the reference to reality is not straightforward and that the world represented may not fully correspond with it: "So let's say that it is quite chilly and that the yellowish haze softens the shine of the streetlights" (Ibid.). Novák's novel thus belongs to a certain genre and literary tradition. Jan Novák is a Czech-American author and his writing straddles the Czech and the American literary contexts. This fusion of fact and fiction is symptomatic of American prose in the second half of the 20th century:

> A period which had begun with John Hersey's documentary *Hiroshima* (1946) saw accurate reportage blur into the 'non-fiction novel,' as Truman Capote dubbed his *In Cold Blood* (1966), and the 'real life novel,' as Norman Mailer called his *The Executioner's Song* (1979). The elements that John Dos Passos in *U.S.A.* had categorically distinguished flowed together in a free interchange of historical data and imaginative fictionalizing, leading to the docudramas of cinema and television and the docufiction […]. (Ruland, Bradbury 1992: 382)

This type of narration aims to simulate and re-create historical reality by endowing dry historical facts with life. This fusion of historical reality and fiction is something rather new in the Czech literary context. The instructions the reader is given differ in *Gauntlet* to those in *So Far So Good*. In the first case, the preface identifies the narrative as a purely historical one, whereas the latter reminds the reader that it is a novel. The modality of *So Far So Good* is shifted, but both narratives aim to re-create past reality using the 'reality effect'.

1.2.2 The Exposition: The Father's Heroic Story

So Far So Good tells more or less the same story as *Gauntlet*. The story is narrated chronologically with one exception. Again, as in Barbara Masin's narrative, there is a case of prolepsis. The narration starts straight in the middle of the action – with the raid on the Chlumec police station. It is a dramatic set of events and its function is to attract the reader's attention. It is exactly the same technique as in *Gauntlet* where Barbara Masin used another dramatic event to open the narrative.

The story also begins with the "greatest hero of the Czech resistance during the Second World War", Josef Mašín Sr. His story is again taken as a starting point and functions as a trigger for the later actions of the Mašín brothers. Like in *Gauntlet*, in *So Far So Good* there is a strong causal connection between the story of the father and his sons. It is a 'story within a story' which is not just a separate unimportant episode but has necessary consequences for the causality. It works in the same manner as in *Gauntlet*. This 'shadow story' in *So Far So Good* also functions as an exposition and makes up approximately 10 % of the novel.[30] It is a separate story with its beginning (birth), middle (life) and end (death) that triggers later actions and events.

General Josef Mašín's separate story is thus the beginning (a narrative trigger) of the story of the Mašín brothers. Josef Mašín's impact is almost entirely indirect. His actions do not directly start the later actions, but his life attitudes and 'heroic deeds' (and the legend about their father) later influence his sons. The brothers have to fulfil their 'moral mandate' and fight against the Communist oppression. This link

[30] The Mašín brothers' story: 30% before the escape, 30% the escape, 30% after the escape so they are equally important.

also functions as a comparison between the Communist and Nazi terror which reverberates throughout the narrative. The Mašín brothers simply fight against the Communist regime in the same way as their father did against the Nazis:

> At that moment, the Mašíns are just about to declare war on Communism as their father, Josef Mašín Senior, would have done; the greatest hero of the Czech resistance during the Second World War who directed sabotage and assassinations. His sons decided to stand up to the Communists in the same way their father fought against the Nazis and so now they exchange a final, focused glance, 'What now, brother?' (Novák 2004: 15)

This is the first reference to their father in the narrative discourse. It is just before the Mašín brothers' raid the first police station. Significantly, the narrator chooses this very moment to recall their father's heroic deeds in order to make the causal connection between these two stories. Their father would certainly have done the same thing; had he still been alive, he would definitely have fought against the Communists, the narrator persuasively suggests. The narrator also illustrates the direct impact of their father and details how their father influenced their ideas:

> It is a black and white world, the truth is the truth and fair is fair, wrong is wrong, either or, so their father showed them, and what he said was always right. (Ibid. 123-24)

Although his sons were very young when he left home in 1939 and joined the Czech underground movement (Ctirad was 9 and Josef 7 years old) he had been able to pass his beliefs on to them. The narrator also suggests that the interconnection of their deeds springs from the family ties:

> The psychologists of the KGB focused on the father of the Mašíns, Josef Mašín Senior's outlook on life doubtlessly shaped the characters of his sons; they were brought up by a man who the Gestapo couldn't break, and against whom their courage and natural authority no one could match. Did they have heroism running through their veins? (Ibid. 22)

The narrator stresses the genetic ties between the father and his sons. It is as if heroic blood circulated through their veins and they were predestined for their mission. Their task is to serve their country and fight for its freedom:

> The moral commitment of the Mašín family is to military service: one fights for one's homeland, and when it comes down to it, one dies for it too, no other duty in life compares. (Ibid. 23)

The family ethos obliges the Mašín brothers to follow their father's path. When they see the injustice caused by the Communists, they immediately decide to act. Their actions are inspired by the great story of their father.

1.2.3 The Conflict and Its Resolution

After the end of the Second World War, the Mašín family lived a relatively peaceful life. Everyone was happy that the war was over and the Soviet Union was celebrated. Ctibor Novák (the Mašín brother's uncle) and their mother Zdena Mašínová (born Nováková) joined the Communist Party. Everything changed after the 1948 Communist takeover, an external event which is not generated by the characters themselves. However, it does have an immense impact on the characters and their actions. The Mašín family starts to be under constant pressure from the Communist authorities. Zdena Mašínová quits the Communist Party. They are moved from their flat and their property is confiscated. The Mašín brothers cannot study at the Military Academy. Their application is rejected because of their 'bourgeois origins'.

On the level of the story, this could be identified as the conflict of the story. The Communist takeover functions as a trigger for later actions. From this point onwards, the reader knows that there is 'evil' which must be defeated. The heroes start to act, they decide to resist and fight (in the very same manner as their father would) against the Communists. They establish a resistance group with Milan Paumer, Vladimír Hradec and some other friends. The narrator then details their sabotage activities as in Barbara Masin's narrative.

In 1953, the group finally decides to leave Czechoslovakia in order to join the U.S. Army. Their escape is the core of the story. The narrator details their suffering in the cold weather, dramatic gunfights with the German troops, and determination to succeed. The moment when the Mašín brothers and Milan Paumer finally reach West Berlin can be identified as the climax of the story.

After their escape, the three joined the U.S. Army hoping that they would be able to fight against the Soviet Bloc. At the time of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, they thought that their time had come, but they were highly disappointed because the

invasion did not take place. Unable to fulfil their ultimate goal of joining the U.S. Army and liberating the 'enslaved countries' of Eastern Europe, their disappointment leads them to leave the army and start their own business in which they are successful.

The Mašín brothers' story is central to the book, yet the novel is also a family saga. The author describes it as "a biographical family myth about the Mašíns and the people around them" (Novák 2004: 9). A great deal of the narrative discourse is devoted to the other members of the Mašín family. Besides Josef Mašín Sr., the narrator details the life of the Mašín brothers' grandmother Ema, their mother Zdena, their sister Nenda and various other characters. These other family members' stories are the integral part of the narrative discourse. After the group's escape, many people in Czechoslovakia are imprisoned, some executed. Zdena Mašínová dies in prison, Borek Novák, Zbyněk Janata and Václav Švéda are executed and their relatives spend several years in prison. The narrator also details the life story of Zdena (Nenda) Mašínová. She tries to get in touch with her brothers but is constantly followed by the Communist Secret Police (StB). This part of the story can be identified as the dénouement. It is the result of previous events - the actions of the brothers and their resistance group. But there is another significant development of the plot after their escape. The heroes start new 'adventures' in the free world and they start to run their own business. This may be regarded as another climax of the story. The very end sees Josef Mašín Jr. on his way to East Germany after the fall of the Berlin wall. He explores the places and the route which the group took to escape to the West, and recalls their ideas. The narrator confronts his 'idealistic' youth with the present. The very end of the story is set in some forty years after the group's escape. The reader is even provided with the exact date of Josef Mašín's journey to Eastern Germany – it is ten days after the reunion of the East and West Germany – October 13th. *So Far So Good* has a coherent narrative structure. It has its beginning, middle and end. The reality is presented in the form of a consistent story which is mainly focused on the actions of the Mašín brothers.

1.2.4 The Inter-Subjective Narrator?

The narrator of *So Far So Good* is not the 'objective', external voice in the third person as it was in *Gauntlet*. Formally, the narrator tells the story in the third person, but it is essential to stress that the narrator's discourse is more than that. Along with

the narrator's third person voice and marked direct speeches from the characters, free indirect style is frequently used.[31] "The author allows a character's voice momentarily to take over the narrative voice" (Abbot 2002: 70). The narrator's discourse is not always clearly discernible from the characters' discourse:

> This time they are all running together, they fly over the asphalt right behind the first lorry, jump over the ditch and observe how one military policeman after another dismounts from the back of the lorry and when the first one empty, the driver steps on the accelerator and drives away with a rattle, and immediately the soldiers from the carriage of the second truck are already jumping out, *so damnit man, is it possible that the same manoeuvres are taking place on every road in the surrounding area? So tonight it isn't really worth prowling around somewhere or running some marathon, it isn't possible to face this force, it is only possible to wait this out somewhere, and a damned good shelter will be needed. The only salvation is that sooner or later the cops will have to call off such a massive manhunt.* (Novák 2004: 419)[32]

In the first part of the quote, the third-person is used ("they are all running together"), the impersonal narrator recounts the events from the external perspective. But in the italicised part, the characters' discourse takes over the narrative voice. The perspective of the characters is indicated by the expressive language ("damnit man", "the cops") and subjective assessing of the situation ("it isn't possible to face this force"). Although the first-person is not used directly, it can be said that there is a subjective perspective of the characters. The narrator presents some facts (in the present tense) and lets the characters to express their own subjective perspective of reality:

> The situation is seen from the position of its participants. Formally we find the third person form, but the amount of direct speech, indirect speech and present tense form turns this into a blurred first person narration. (Trávníček 2004: 37)

This sort of discourse presents the feelings and motivations of the characters and the reader gains an insight into their internal world. The reality is coloured by the

[31] "Narrative representation of a character's thoughts and expressions without quotation marks or the usual addition of phrases like 'he thought' or 'he said' and without some of the grammatical markers. […] the third-person narration freely adapts itself for the temporary *indirect* expression of character's words or thoughts" (Abbott 2002: 190-91).
[32] Italicized by J.Š.

subjective perspective of the characters. As a result, the reader does not get a coherent picture of an objective reality, rather, this picture is refracted through the characters' subjectivity. The narrator also tries to assess the characters' feelings and thoughts. They are presented not as facts but as questions. The narrator tries to delve into their minds and uses the same method as when he speculates about unsustainable facts:

> What does Mašín think of when he sees his daughter for the first time? Did he not happen to make an agreement in no man's land years ago with his new god? Lord, give me just one more day and then take anything you want? Mašín never mentioned it. (Novák 2004: 52)

The narrator rarely finds the answer, but rather lets the reader consider various possibilities of what might have happened. It is clear that the narration techniques used in *So Far So Good* and in Barbara Masin's *Gauntlet* are different. Barbara Masin creates a strong illusion of objectivity. The narrator's third person voice presents certain actions, although it has been pointed out that these actions are sometimes subjective impressions of the characters (for instance the example with the policeman studying their faces in Čelákovice) transformed from first person singular into the third person narrator's discourse. This creates an illusion that things happened in the way they are recounted.

So Far So Good deals with the situation in a different way; the narrator does not create the objective illusion as it is in *Gauntlet* (1.1.4). The narrator is not a traditional third person 'objective' narrator, but rather is fully embedded in the subjective world of the Mašín brothers and their companions. Novák's narrative voice is also predominantly in the third person but the constant invasion of indirect speech shifts the perspective from an 'objective' reality into the realm of the characters' subjectivity. It is as if the narrator's voice were reproducing the opinions and viewpoints of the characters. As Jiří Trávníček put it:

> The author moves away, hiding behind his narrator; the narrator moves away, hiding behind his characters. The evaluation of what is going on is thus, as it were, left to the characters. The present tense implies that what we are reading is a mere news report. (Trávníček 2004: 37)

However, it is important to stress that what is presented by the narrator of *So Far So Good* is almost exclusively the perspective of the positive characters – the Mašín

brothers, their friends and family. The negative characters remain silent, their relationship to the events, attitudes and feelings are not present.

The difference between *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* is crucial in two aspects: the first one is given by the fact that *So Far So Good* is a novel; thus the relationship between reality and fiction is somehow blurred, whereas *Gauntlet* professes to be a piece of history. Jan Novák's narrator has no limitations in expressing imaginatively the characters' subjective relations to reality. He is fully embedded in the positive character's internal world. The perspective thus confuses objective and subjective reality. The illusion of objectivity which can be found in *Gauntlet* is constantly deconstructed. This inter-subjective perspective also corresponds with the transgressive nature of the novel which balances somewhere between fiction and history. The fact that the narrator does not mediate the subjective perspective of the negative characters corresponds with the whole arrangement of the narrative structure. The villains are in the shadows and the reader does not get any information regarding their motivation. This contributes to further dividing the axiological axis.

1.2.5 The Heroes and the Evildoers

The characters of *So Far So Good* are far more developed than in *Gauntlet*. The narrator does not simply offer the descriptions of their appearance and their actions, but provides the reader with accounts of their inner feelings and thoughts. There are two main heroes; Radek and Pepa Mašín. They are again in the very centre of the narrator's attention. They grow up during the Second World War and from their early childhood they start to fight against the Nazis. The same events as in *Gauntlet* are detailed but here the narrator also sketches the scenes. In 1944, the Mašín brothers damaged a transport of German air-fighters. They steal some weapons from the military wagon and in March 1945, they hide a Soviet prisoner of war in their cellar. At the very end of the war, Radek goes to secure the Czechoslovak borders and both of them receive medals for bravery during the war. They know exactly what they want to do in their lives and this idea does not disappear even when they are older. They want, like their father, to fight for their country and freedom. But after 1948 they are not accepted to the Military Academy and, thus, they cannot pursue their

career in the army. Furthermore, only Radek is accepted to the university whereas Pepa is not because of his 'bourgeois' class origins – he has to work as a labourer.

Radek is a bit older, but from early childhood Pepa has tried to keep up with him:

> They are siblings and they would quarrel over and over again. Radek is only eighteen months older and when Pepa properly concentrates, he proves to Radek he can outdo him, and so he learns to do everything with one hundred percent effort, and Radek has little alternative but to be careful. It is usually enough, he only has a one and a half year headstart, but at this age it is a substantial difference. (Novák 2004: 127)

The narrator stresses their rivalry which drives them to be even better and stronger. Their close relationship enables them to "read each other's thoughts" (Novák 2004: 233), this is also a result of the constant competition between the two. This makes them able to overcome great obstacles such as hard questionings in the infamous Bartolomějská detention cells:

> One must always know what the other person is thinking so that he might be able to keep up with him; in Bartolomějská, Radek cannot be better than Pepa and Pepa cannot be better than Radek. (Ibid.)

There appears to be little difference between the two. Pepa merely seems to be more carefree than Radek; this is the same observation as in *Gauntlet*. The narrator details Josef Mašín's affairs with women and describes one episode when such an affair resulted in his imprisonment. In the end, he is released and not taken to court.[33] Both brothers are determined to fight against Communism. They are bound to their father's legacy and are allowed to use the same methods as their father because Communism is seen to be as cruel as Nazism:

> The Mašín brothers were not born to be political failures. They are in the habit of returning every blow, so they have established their own resistance group in the Poděbrady spa. Their decision is so matter-of-fact that they do not even bother giving the resistance group a name. Their main idea is simple: the Communists want a class struggle, so let us give it to them. The brothers will fight them just as passionately and according to

[33] This episode is also mentioned in Vrbecký (1985) but it is not detailed in *Gauntlet*.

> the same rules by which their father had recently fought the Germans. (Novák 2004: 20)

These characters are clearly positive types. The narrator does not question their actions, never criticises their deeds. They are examples of romantic heroes – brave, moral, ready to fight against evil (embodied by the Communist regime). That is their primary motivation. The Mašín brothers are strong individuals; the real heroes who do not submit to anyone, not even the U.S. military 'machine'. They have their own rules and they know that nothing can bring them down:

> Simply, rules are there to be broken. The Mašín brothers will never fully accept the American way of military thinking, according to which the soldier's ego is destroyed during training and the soldier is then turned into a machine for fulfilling orders. The Mašín brothers know in advance that no one will ever break them. (Novák 2004: 624)

Their personalities are so strong that even the harsh drill of the U.S. Army cannot prevent them from being strong individuals. These romantic heroes do not respect rules that would diminish their individuality. Their determination to succeed and their strength are not given just by their 'heroic genes', a predetermined set of inherited qualities. A substantial part of their personalities which makes them superior is their strong will and resolution not to give up. In the Czech anti-Communist resistance, they learnt how to plan actions well and they also had to work really hard; running every day, learning to shoot and fight. This experience could also be used in the USA.

Their fellow soldiers in the U.S. army spent their money drinking and smoking while the Mašíns were training instead to improve their skills for the 'final battle'. Therefore, when they learnt that there would be no battle at all, they were able to run their own business. The narrative suggests that they had a chance to make their fortune, arriving in America with as little money as anyone else. It is no surprise that the heroes succeeded even in the free market economy. It is suggested that in the USA, everyone can make it but only by working hard. The Mašíns can now utilise the skills they had learnt during their struggle against Communism. Josef Mašín trades in sport airplanes and he soon becomes a millionaire:

> […] he learns how to deal with the best, he thinks ahead and he always has an alternative solution or an argument. It is a habit from the Czech resistance, he learns with astonishment that he surpasses many other

> businessmen who do not bother with planning, Pepa is really surprised but it is true, he soon starts to earn a lot of money. (Novák 2004: 709)

Ctirad experienced some trouble due to unexpected circumstances when a hurricane ruined his business. The narrator stresses that even this is a part of life in a free society and the important thing is not to give up. Ctirad Mašín has to build his business again from scratch:

> This is also a part of American life, to survive under any conditions. Radek has easily managed that, he has become a real American. (Ibid. 708)

Ctirad finally also becomes a prosperous businessman. Both brothers are thus not just brave freedom fighters but also the embodiment of the American dream.

There are other positive characters in the story as well. The other members of the Mašín family (Ema, Zdena, and Nenda) and their friends (Václav Švéda, Zbyněk Janata, Milan Paumer, Vladimír Hradec) play an important role. These characters are positive and also courageous but they cannot compete with the Mašíns. The two brothers clearly stand above the others. This is again a similar narrative arrangement as in *Gauntlet*. For example, Milan Paumer was the only one who made it to West Berlin with them but even he cannot be compared to the Mašíns:

> Paumer allowed himself to be pulled into the world of the Mašín brothers. Their size was a little bit too big for him; he realised this in America during the Special Forces military training. From that time onwards, this thought has always been with him. (Novák 2004: 714)

This is another romantic motif: their uniqueness is contrasted with one of their fellow freedom fighters. Despite his braveness, he is not equal to the Mašíns. This is something that makes them like romantic heroes.[34] In the narrative, all positive characters are constantly referred to by their nicknames. It has the same function as in *Gauntlet* – to humanise them. As Jiří Trávníček observed, the narrator depicts the members of the family:

[34] We will deal with the romantic nature of the Mašín brothers in *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* more fully later (see 1.3.2 and 3.3).

> Even though Novák spends the most time during his narrative with the brothers Ctirad and Josef, the female characters are drawn most graphically. (Trávníček 2004)

The narrator illuminates the tragic fate of the family and points out that the female heroines are strong and determined to resist the brutal regime. They are graphically depicted which means they are more 'round' than the bad characters. The reader has an insight into the family life and the background of the main heroes and also of the other positive characters. The 'roundness' of the positive characters is also related to the way in which the narrator structures reality. As pointed out earlier (1.2.4), the narrator transmits the subjective perspective of the characters. But it is almost exclusively the perspective of the main heroes or the other positive figures. The reader thus gets to know the motivations for their actions, private thoughts and personal stories. This affects the whole meaning of the narrative as it further differentiates the axiological axis.

On the other side, there are the villains. The narrator uses the same procedure that is used in *Gauntlet*. The reader learns from the beginning the definition of the enemy:

> This means that whoever puts on a uniform and represents brutal communist power with a weapon in his hands must bear responsibility for this. (Novák 2004: 20)

This definition again clearly differentiates the axiological axis: The German occupiers (the adversaries of Josef Mašín Sr.) are on the same side as the uniformed or armed Communists who enforce the 'brutal' regime. These are again policemen, investigators, militia men, troopers. They are called by their surnames (Kašík, Lecián, Rošický etc.) or by their function in the Communist (Nazi) state: militia man, trooper, Vopo, Gestapo officer. Some of the negative characters are also denoted by their nicknames. These are the nicknames of Ctirad's investigators: "Shortie, Boss, Butcher, Concentrated Hatred, Gorilla" (Novák 2004: 238). The narrator usually does not offer a direct description of them. If he gives details of their appearance or behaviour, it is done in negative terms:

> A group of young men in overcoats crowd inside the bus. They are all sporty types, they look serious, aggression emanates from their eyes; Pepa doesn't like it at all. (Ibid. 276)
>
> Rošický hits Pepa with an evil gaze. (Ibid. 276)
>
> What are you doing here? Lecián barks at him. (Ibid. 327)

The German ticket seller (who later reports the group to the police) is presented in the very same negative manner as in the Barbara Masin's narrative:

> Švéda thanks her politely, but that *swine* doesn't even respond. Švéda moves towards the exit, the *hag* leans out from her booth and watches Pepa peeling himself away from the noticeboard with the timetables. (Ibid. 396)[35]

The axiological axis is again sharply divided. The enemies acquire negative qualities. It can be claimed that this is again related to the subjective perspective of the positive figures. These negative features could be simply projections of the positive characters, primarily the Mašín brothers who regard these figures as their adversaries and therefore they are portrayed in negative terms.

However, the narrator stays silent on the subjective perspective of the negative characters. Their private thoughts and motivation are not present here. The reality is filtered solely through the heroes' perspective, not that of their adversaries. Therefore they are dehumanised, 'empty vessels'. In the narrative structure, they are again functions rather than veritable characters. They are simply the enforcers of the totalitarian state representing the "brutal Communist power" (Novák 2004: 20), and, as such, they are automatically regarded as enemies. Although in *So Far So Good*, they are referred to by their surnames (unlike in *Gauntlet*), their individuality is again limited. The narrator does not provide the reader with their private sphere and family background. This moves them even further away from the positive heroes, to the realm of evil.

The division between good and bad (the axiological axis) is very strong and it also corresponds with the 'flatness' and 'roundness' of the characters. The diagram offered previously (see 1.1.6) demonstrates the relationship between these two notions. This diagram is fully applicable to *So Far So Good* as well. The Mašíns

[35] Italicized by J.Š.

clearly stand above all others, which makes them out to be truly romantic heroes. Their allies and friends are human beings and the reader is allowed to see not just their public anti-Communist activity but also their private sphere. The villains, on the other hand, are just 'flat' figures, mere functions in the narrative; the reader gets almost no information about their personal stories.

1.2.6 The Characters and their Actions

So Far So Good pays the same attention to the heroes' resistance activity as *Gauntlet*. The following textual analysis aims to scrutinise the representation of the events where the Mašíns 'eliminate' their enemies in *So Far So Good*. The scene in which the group steals weapons in Čelákovice is depicted as follows:

> In the office, Radek orders Honzák to lie down on a sofa in the corner. There he ties him up with the parachute string, *but Honzák carefully examines him* while Radek is doing that - there is enough light here - then he concentrates on Janata, it is obvious *he is trying hard to remember their faces*, he has probably twigged, he must have realised that he has fallen into the hands of the Chlumec terrorists, undoubtedly he will be able to describe them in detail, *but it must never come to that.* (Novák 2004: 193)[36]

The focus is again, as in *Gauntlet*, on the policeman. He carefully scrutinises them, first Ctirad Mašín's face, then Janata's in order to submit their descriptions to the investigators ("it is obvious"). Then the narrator provides the reader with Ctirad Mašín's own perspective while still narrating in the third person:

> Radek has now made up his mind, he sees that this man is too dangerous, he has seen too much and he has missed nothing, this is about which of them will survive. (Ibid.)

After the indication of his internal decision to kill the policeman which is presented as unavoidable and necessary for the hero's survival, Ctirad Mašín acts:

> Radek takes out a boy scout's dagger and he *neutralises the enemy in the way they described it to them in the self-defence course*, he uses the fastest, quietest and most effective method, he cuts his throat. (Ibid. 194)

[36] Italicized by J.Š.

There is again (as in *Gauntlet*) the link between the military training which Ctirad Mašín undertook not long before the raid and the method of 'enemy neutralisation'. In *So Far So Good* the course which is mentioned thus also has narrative motivation:

> It is the purpose of the course to train reliable cadres in the principles of guerrilla warfare for the possibility that the tide would turn and the bourgeois reactionary forces would re-assume power; then the members of the Army Cooperation Union would conduct subversive actions against them. (Ibid. 175)

The killing of a person (especially when that person is defenceless and unarmed) might be regarded as immoral. But the narrative structures the reality to suggest that the hero simply used the same method the enemy ('the bourgeois reactionary forces') would have certainly used against him. The same chain of reasoning is used in Barbara Masin's narrative representation. The very end of this scene adds a final touch to this depiction of the hero:

> Surely he is not a criminal. He is a soldier. His fingerprints are everywhere, so what, he would not have been here for far too long any more anyway, soon he will be going the US army. He has just completed yet another battle in his war against communism. (Ibid. 194)

The narrator stresses again as many times in the course of narration that the hero is a 'soldier' in a struggle against Communism, not a common 'criminal' and he will soon join the American forces. The semantic field of the army (elimination of the enemy, war, soldier, to fight) is characteristic for the narrative discourse. It is significant that at this very moment, Ctirad is identified as a soldier as he retains his status of innocence.

Another potentially controversial scene which was analysed in *Gauntlet* (1.1.7) is the moment when Ctirad Mašín is stopped by two men (Lecián and Blažek) at night after setting the straw stacks on fire:

> These two men stood right in front of the front wheel, they have blocked his way, *there are more of them, they think they have cornered Radek*, but Radek has already released the safety catch on his gun. 'What are you doing here?!' Lecián barks at him, *he works as the commander of the voluntary fire service in Mořice and is also an auxiliary policemen, this is*

> *an infringement of his authority*, Radek does not give out a sound, he just presses the trigger and from his hip he fires at Lecián without aiming, Lecián gasps for breath, Radek now shoots for the second time, Lecián falls and collapses straight on his bicycle, he was hit in the chest and in his right eye. (Ibid. 327)[37]

It is very interesting to observe how the narrative takes care of the recipient. The narrator first maintains that Radek is alone and outnumbered – "cornered" – this is a set up for self-defence. Then Lecián (who "barks at him") is again identified as enemy ("auxiliary policeman") and thus Mašín is given the justification to shoot at him. The very same procedure is used in *Gauntlet*. The narrator stays silent on the fact that Ctirad Mašín could not know whether he was shooting at unarmed civilians or armed enforcers of the regime. The teller simply tags one of the characters (Lecián) and identifies him as the enemy which has to be eliminated.

The last crucial event we will look into is the scene where Josef Mašín shoots the paymaster Josef Rošický:

> Rošický is now holding the gun! They are standing four steps apart from each other. That man is pointing his gun at Pepa's stomach. 'Put your hands up!' *A fucking militiaman!* So this is why he has a gun. So this is why he had such a strange expression! If Pepa raised his hands now, it would be capital punishment for him and for his brother. […] BANG, Rošický gives a jerk, he has a surprised expression on his face, BANG, this is the end, Pepa pushes the lifeless body off himself. *Why, you stupid idiot, why? It wasn't even your money, you should have given up, this is all your fault, you idiot of a militia man, if you were not a commie, they wouldn't have ever given you that gun.* Minaříková is standing nearby, so she did manage to get out of that vehicle. (Ibid. 276-278)[38]

The reader is again confronted with the same arrangement. The hero is unarmed and his situation seems to be worse than that of his adversary (this immediately evokes some sympathy with him and raises the narrative tension). The negative character is now directly tagged. It is not indicated by quotation marks when the free indirect style is used; the expressive language indicates the character's thoughts: "fucking militiaman" After this exposé, the narrator suggests that it is necessary to act – the hero cannot surrender because this would mean "the death penalty" for him and his brother. After the hero shoots the enemy dead, he blames him for making troubles,

[37] Italicized by J.Š.
[38] Italicized by J.Š.

tags him again ("you idiot of a militia man") and adds a conditional clause: "if you were not a commie, they wouldn't have ever given you that gun." This is again in the form of free indirect speech, signalled by the expressive language and the use of direct address in second person singular). This deductive mental operation (*if, then*) assures the reader that Josef Mašín was well aware that this man had been a member of the People's Militia.

This event is also narrated by Václav Švéda in conversation with his father. Švéda explains why it was necessary to kill the militia man and repeats the same deductive argument: only members of the People's Militia are armed these days. No one else can get hold of a gun. Švéda's father (along with the reader) is assured that this act was necessary and that the man was certainly part of the 'axis of evil'. All of these scenes again clearly illustrate how the narrative takes care of the reader. The scenes bear a strong resemblance to those in *Gauntlet*.

1.2.7 Conclusion

So Far So Good is identified in the preface as a work of fiction. However, narrative analysis shows a striking similarity with *Gauntlet*. Both narratives offer similar, coherent plots (father-hero, resistance, escape) and a sharp division between the good and bad characters. The Mašín brothers are depicted as 'romantic' heroes and the narration focuses mainly on them. They fight bravely against the brutal communist regime and after their escape they are also able to succeed in the free market economy. They are strong individuals surpassing the others and no one can compete with them. The narrator of *So Far So Good* blurs the line between the objective and subjective perception of reality. The events (especially the Mašín brothers' resistance 'operations') are seen from the perspective of the characters. But again, as in *Gauntlet*, it is solely the perspective of the positive side of the axiological axis which is illuminated. The opposite side is in the shade and the negative characters are again merely dehumanised 'empty vessels'. Just as in *Gauntlet*, the villains are defined by their assignment in the communist state apparatus. The enemies of the heroes are those who put on a uniform as they represent brutal communist power. The narrator attributes the villains with features that increase their negativity (e.g. "hits Pepa with an evil gaze", "bark" etc.). The analysis of the scenes in *So Far So Good* where the Mašíns cause the death of the policemen proves to be almost similar to those in

Gauntlet. The events are again recounted from the subjective perspective of the heroes, but at this time not by the 'objective' but 'intersubjective' narrator. However, this narrator does not present the subjective perspective of the negative figures. *So Far So Good* is identified as a novel but shows a strong affiliation to *Gauntlet*. These two narratives thus create a complementary pair which needs to be investigated further.

1.3 The Myth of the Heroes

1.3.1 The Mašín Warriors

The analysis of *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* explored the 'inner' structure of the narratives within the narratological framework. The following section focuses on a higher level of semiotic examination, offering an analysis of the myth these narratives generate. The previous chapters demonstrated how deeply *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* are grounded in the mythical universe. These narratives tell a great story of the adventures and the struggle of the Mašín brothers and their friends. The Mašín brothers have all the necessary predispositions to be heroes. Their heroism originates from their early childhood, they dream about fighting for 'freedom and their country'. When the time comes and ruthless Communists are terrorising peaceful citizens, they are ready to launch a 'full-scale campaign' and, with the help of the Americans, save the Czechs.

They are similar to James Bond who is "the Cavalier entrusted with a mission" (Eco 1982: 260). "Bond indubitably represents Beauty and Virility as opposed to the Villain, who appears often monstrous" (Ibid. 246). The same qualities are possessed by the Mašín brothers and their adversaries respectively. The Mašín brothers' quest is a continuation of their father's freedom struggle. They are predetermined for their mission by their 'noble' origin. Their father was a 'knight' of both World Wars. He fought against the Austrian empire for the independent Czechoslovak state in the First World War and against the Nazis in the Second World War and his heroism is indisputable. Ctirad and Josef Mašín are his sons and they are closely connected to their father. The reader is always reminded about a genetic correspondence between them and the ethos of Mašín family:

> Did they have heroism running through their veins?" (Novák 2004: 22)
>
> You have in your blood all the essential characteristics of good soldiers and patriots. (Masin 2006: 53).
>
> 'Be proud of the Masin name. And always remember that the Masins fought for freedom.' (Masin 2006: 3)

This implies that their 'godlike' origin obliges them to fulfil their father's 'moral mandate'. The father's legacy functions in the narrative structure as a trigger and, at the same time (on the mythical level), it illustrates the exclusive origin of the heroes which predetermines them to act. This means that the brothers are also in a very close 'mental' relationship (which binds them to their father). Although the qualities of the brothers differ slightly, they share the same courage and abilities and "against outside threats they presented a united front" (Masin 2006: 55).

The Mašíns are born into this world with their quest which is to fight against the evil embodied in the Communist regime in the same way their father struggled against the Nazis. They are different from the others because they do fight. This is another quality which makes the Mašíns resemble the mythical heroes. The hero is active, he cannot passively wait until evil wins. His task is to step out of the lot of the ordinary and act - unlike the rest of the society.

> Nobody in Czechoslovakia, it seemed, was doing anything to reverse the Communists' hijacking of the government – except the Masin brothers. [They were, like their father, fighters, not victims]. (Masin 2006: 100)[39]

The others (the rest of the enslaved citizens) just accepted their sad fate. The Mašíns' peers were just "commiserating with each other in hushed voices" (Ibid.) but they had no courage to do anything to change the situation. This creates a void, an empty space which is filled by the heroes. The Mašíns do have all the qualities the hero needs to have. They are brave, strong, they "run like Zátopek"[40] and shoot like "Finnish snipers" (Novák 2004: 523) and their main possession is their moral superiority.

[39] The sentence in the brackets is included in the Czech language edition of the book (Masin 2005: 121) not in the English language edition.
[40] Emil Zátopek was a Czech athlete best known for winning three medals in long-distance events at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki.

A mythical hero is allowed to lie, to kill and to steal because he is pursuing higher, sublime values. So even the Mašín brothers have to lie (in order to lure the policeman out), they hijack cars, rob the vehicle with the money. They can also slit the throat of a policeman. The men they killed or injured could not have been innocent because they were the armed enforcers of the brutal Communist regime. However, the Mašín brothers realise that "if you are fighting for individual human life and dignity, you must do so with as much concern for innocent lives as humanly possible" (Masin 2006: 67). In order to identify with the hero, the reader must be sure that he really is a positive figure. For example, when the hero kills someone, the narrator explains why he has to eliminate this man by proving that he is a villain. The reader is assured that he was the enemy and that the heroes knew this.

The analysis of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* has demonstrated how these narratives maintain the appearance of the heroes' morality. For example, when in *Gauntlet*, Ctirad Mašín recognises even at night that the men without uniforms were militia types (1.1.7). The narratives also present a certain chain of reasoning which is congruent with the Mašín brothers' own interpretation of the events. All these techniques contribute to the 'moral' appearance of the main characters. The reader is able to see them in a positive light and they retain their status of innocence.

This strategy is also reinforced by the semantic field of 'war' which is present in both narratives. The reader is often reminded that they are "partisans and not common criminals" (Ibid. 107). All these deeds are part of their mission - The Mašíns are soldiers fighting in the war against Communism. This moves them closer to the mythical warriors. They are a variant of ancient heroes or medieval knights. It might seem that they fight their private war but this would not be precise. The good wise man, legionnaire Vaněk, gives them a piece of 'magical', top-secret information that could have changed the course of the Cold War had it been used properly. This implies that not only Czechoslovakia, but the whole world depended on the success of the Mašíns' mission. Their run for life and freedom becomes the run for the freedom of the entire world. The Mašíns possess all the characteristics of true heroes. They stand above all others and fight against well-defined villains.

These narratives thus generate a powerful heroic myth. Historical reality disappears and is substituted by the second order of signification. As Roland Barthes argues: "When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the latter remains.

There is here a paradoxical permutation in the reading operations, an abnormal regression from meaning to form, from the linguistic sign to the mythical signifier […] Myth does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, it holds it at one's disposal" (Barthes 1972: 117-118). The Mašíns possess all the characteristics of true heroes. They stand above all others and fight against the villains. Their heroism is a paradigm of elements which transforms "history into nature" (Ibid. 129). It also has a certain syntagmatic realisation – this is a narrative form of romance.

1.3.2 The Mašíns' Story as a Romance

Gauntlet and *So Far So Good* are fairly coherent narratives that are grounded in a mythical universe. They offer an easily legible black and white world. This narrative scheme is an integral part of the European cultural tradition, it is present in all mythological systems. Tales of heroes and their extraordinary deeds have been part of Western culture since antiquity. The Mašín myth is not grounded solely in a paradigm of elements, but also in the structure of the plot. In the paratexts, both narratives identify themselves bluntly as these types of stories. Barbara Masin's narrative is described as "a dramatic tale of courage and daring against overwhelming odds and a testament to American ideals of freedom" and Jan Novák's novel is identified as "a biographical family myth" (Novák 2004: 9). *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* belong to a narrative structure which Northrop Frye called romance. According to Frye, the other basic literary forms are tragedy, comedy, and satire. The romance is characterised as follows:

> The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. (Frye 1957: 187)

Frye's observations were originally applied to fiction. Hayden White in *Metahistory* (1978) adopted this distinction and used it when analysing historical narratives. The historian confronts the chaos of events already constituted and chooses elements of a particular story. He has to subordinate other events which he does not consider as

relevant: "This process of exclusion, stress, and subordination is carried out in the interest of constituting *a story of a particular kind*. That is to say, he 'emplots' his story" (White 1978: 6). The romantic thinkers and their reflections on history "turned upon their apprehension of the historical field as a 'Chaos of Being' which they then proceeded to comprehend respectively as simply a chaos, a plenum of creative force, and a field of struggle between heroic men and history itself" (White 1978: 149). The operation of 'emplotting' reality is not reserved solely for fictional narratives.

The plot analysis of the heroic narratives demonstrated that they perfectly fit into the category of romance. There is a discernible conflict – the Communist 1948 coup, the death struggle which is victorious. The Mašíns and Milan Paumer get to the West, winning over their foes – almost thirty thousand troops who hunt them across East Germany and try to kill them. The Mašíns' activity was a part of a campaign against Communism led by the USA. In the end, the war is successful as Communism disintegrates; that is the final 'catharsis'. The plot structures of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* are similar to romance. Romance is also characterised by a clear-cut division between good and bad:

> This vertical perspective partly accounts for the curious polarized characterization of romance, its tendency to split into heroes and villains. Romance avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life where everything is a mixture of good and bad. (Frye 1976: 50)

The previous observations disclosed the sharp division between the positive and negative characters. In both narratives, the axiological axis is extremely polarised. The reader gets an image of a clearly divided world where the forces of good (the USA) struggle against evil (the Soviet Bloc). This division participates in creating a mythical universe:

> The characterization of romance is really a feature of its mental landscape. Its heroes and villains exist primarily to symbolize a contrast between two worlds, one above the level of ordinary experience, the other below it. There is, first, a world associated with happiness, security, and peace; […] I shall call this idyllic world. (Frye 1976: 53)

In the heroic narratives, it is the USA which represents the idyllic world. It is a 'promised' land where people live happily and freely. The Mašíns wanted to join the Americans and help them liberate the world from communist oppression:

> Pepa and Radek concluded that a few hard-hitting sabotage actions could unleash the power of rumour and bring about popular rebellion to coincide with the expected American invasion. (Masin 2006: 113)

Americans are the ultimate hope and the prospective saviours of the Czechs. The Mašíns hoped that their sabotage activities would coincide with the American invasion. They wanted to induce a massive uprising. Their heroic deeds which seem to be supernatural are praised by the 'ordinary' people who think that these actions have been carried out by their potential miraculous saviours, the Americans:

> 'Parachutists from the West are attacking SNB policemen!' 'It is the first sally of the Third World War!' 'The Americans are coming!' 'The Americans will save the Czechs!' (Masin 2006: 76)

Or as Jan Novák has it:

> 'American partisans with flame-throwers ride about there, but none of them have been caught! No one saw them arrive, no one saw them leave, it is as if they had wings.' (Novák 2004: 332)

Their deeds seem to be almost magical. The rumour spreads across 'the enslaved nation', hyperbolises their abilities and raises the heroes to a divine pedestal:

> 'The partisans have special boots that allow them to jump over tall fences in a single leap! The Americans are on the move! U.S. Special Forces are already in Czechoslovakia. The invasion is under way!' […] After months and years of hoping and waiting, something, finally, was happening. (Masin 2006: 112)

This also proves that public opinion is clearly on the heroes' side and that people are waiting for someone to rescue them. After the Mašíns and their friends cannot operate in Czechoslovakia anymore, they want to continue with their liberating mission abroad and so they join the U.S. Special Forces. After they realise that the war will not occur, they start to run their own business at which they are successful. Josef Mašín Jr.'s life story is an example of the American dream. "He set out for America with five dollars in his pocket, built his own business from scratch, and ultimately

retired a millionaire several times over" (Masin 2006: 6). In the USA, if one works hard and has bright ideas, he can be a millionaire.

The romance includes the necessary counterpart to the 'paradise' which is the land behind the Iron Curtain, the cruel world of Communism:

> The other is a world of exciting adventures, but adventures which involve separation, loneliness, humiliation, pain, and the threat of more pain. I shall call this demonic or night world. Because of the powerful polarizing tendency in romance, we are usually carried directly from one to the other. (Frye 1976: 53)

Czechoslovakia after the Communist coup is a land where the heroes operate, yet it is still their home, they have their friends and family there. Everything changes after they cross the border with East Germany. This is the real zone of danger where they are left alone and have to make their way to the West. It is full of traps and unpredictable events. They lose two of their friends and after many adventures they finally reach the 'island of freedom' - West Berlin. The Soviet Bloc is a dark place ruled by a cruel dictator, Joseph Stalin, where people are executed for no reason, millions are dying in the Gulag, the system gets rid of its own representatives, and the individual human being means nothing. It is where evil comes from and stretches its clutches in order to swallow the free world.

So Far So Good and *Gauntlet* are popular tales, modern embodiments of romance; as Frye put it: "The close connection of the romantic and the popular runs all through literature" (Frye 1976: 23). Roland Barthes distinguishes two types of narratives according to their structure:

> Some narratives are predominantly functional (such as popular tales), while some others are predominantly indicial (such as 'psychological' novels). Between these two opposites, we have a whole spectrum of intermediary forms, deriving their characteristics from history, society, or genre. (Barthes 1975: 247)

Gauntlet and *So Far So Good* are predominantly functional narratives. The Mašíns conduct all their dangerous actions – they raid the police stations, rob the vehicle with the salaries and in the second half of the story they run for their lives through the danger zone of East Germany. The narrators do not meditate in length about the philosophical aspects of their actions. There are no long passages with descriptions of

space and surroundings as we know from realism, there are no deep investigations of the inner space of the characters. The functional units that are significant to the actions prevail. The focus is on the heroes and their 'dramatic' actions. The narrators do not question the heroes' actions. The narratives have a coherent plot and closure. Historical reality is 'emplotted' in the mode of romance.

However, as Hayden White put it: "real life can never be truthfully represented as having the kind of formal coherency met with in the conventional, well-made or fabulistic story" (White 1987: ix). This coherence and unity presented by a single voice has its ideological implications: "The narrative is not merely a neutral discursive form that may or may not be used to represent real events in their aspect as developmental processes but rather entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specifically political implications" (ibid.). These political and ideological aspects will be the object of further investigation.

2. The Mašín Brothers as Anti-Heroes

The Mašín brothers' story has also been tackled by writers and film-makers in Communist Czechoslovakia from the 1960s onwards. Here, the Mašíns are also characters in popular tales, though they are on the other side of the axiological axis. These narratives were published as detective stories based on real events (Janský 1966, Šulig 1976, Vrbecký 1985 and others), where the Mašíns played the role of the criminals. Even a superficial reading (and watching) of these detective stories, however, reveals that they are somehow different from other stories of this genre. The examination of the structures of these narratives aims to disclose the relationship (affiliation/diversion) to the popular genre of romance which here is realised as a detective story. As a point of reference, it may well serve the previous investigations of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* precisely because they have been identified as popular tales. The goal of this chapter is to analyse *The Dead Do Not Talk* (2.1) and *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* (2.2) from a narratological point of view and assess their affiliation to myth and its syntagmatic realisation (2.3). After this analysis, we can approach the issue of ideology.

2.1 *The Dead Do Not Talk*: The Struggle with the Enemies of Socialism

A short story by František Vrbecký (born 1934) called *The Dead Do Not Talk* [Mrtví nemluví] is part of a collection of short stories with the same title published in 1985. These stories are about seven "real cases about the struggle with the enemies of Socialism in our country" (Vrbecký 1985, cover). It deals with historical events that happened in Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. The central story, *The Dead Do Not Talk,* deals with the Mašín brothers' activity. According to the information from the cover of the book, the author has processed them "on the basis of documentary materials, in particular court files and also on the basis of witness accounts. All of these cases happened in the first decade after the Second World War" (Ibid.). The text is paratextually identified as non-fictional. It is factual discourse about events that happened in the past. This is the same procedure used in *Gauntlet* where the text is identified as non-fictional in the preface as well. Jan Novák's novel

crosses the border of factuality and presents itself as fiction. In the paratexts (cover, epilogue) in *The Dead Do Not Talk*, it is acknowledged that the author "underlined important facts by literary means" (Ibid.) but the historical core is supposedly real. This literary style adds just some colour to the narrative but it does not change its non-fictional status (yet there are no direct references to the historiographical resources). This is the signal to the reader that the story grasps historical reality.

2.1.1 The Father as an Ultimate Bourgeois

The narrative is much shorter than the narrative accounts which were analysed above. It focuses solely on the Mašín 'terrorist' activity in Czechoslovakia (the raids on the police stations, the robbery). The narrative ends when the Mašín brothers escape from Czechoslovakia. Although this account is short, it does mention the Mašín brothers' father, Josef Mašín. Again, he plays an important role in the story. His is also a 'shadow' story. However, their father is not depicted as a hero. Vrbecký mentions his resistance activity in the Second World War:

> It is admirable that the three patriotic colonels, Balabán, Morávek and Mašín, stayed on the occupied territory [of Czechoslovakia] after the setting up of the Protectorate and decided to get involved in resistance against fascism. (Vrbecký 1985: 74)

But the narrator only mentions the group's unimportant and rather 'ridiculous' actions:

> Lieutenant colonel Mašín went underground; along with other people he committed various individual anti-German acts (for instance painted anti-fascist slogans on the building of the infamous Pečkárna) [Gestapo interrogation centre]. (Ibid.)

Unlike in Masin's or Novák's narrative accounts, there is no mention of various resistance activities (the bombing in Berlin that he organised, transmitting coded messages to London etc.). The narrator acknowledges that Josef Mašín Sr. did not testify against his colleagues when he was interrogated by the Gestapo. But his most important characteristic, which is also crucial for the development of the story, is mentioned at the very beginning. He is the owner of a farm and an officer in a

bourgeois state. He is a typical representative of his class. He could never imagine that the world order could change:

> 'Our maid calls me Sir - this is how it should be,' he used to say to his officers. (Ibid.)

The narrator describes his attitude to his sons:

> Within the family, he holds the education of his sons firmly in his hands. He teaches them strict military discipline, he almost subjects them to military drill, he instils in them a feeling of superiority. As much as he possibly can, he stimulates their interest in the army and in weapons. He tells the nanny who takes care of his children: 'Who controls the army holds power. My boys will hold power one day. They will have a military career, so I do not wish you to show them any intimacy. Do not mollycoddle them.' (Ibid.)

The army means power and, the narrator suggests, this power is necessary to keep their bourgeois status. Therefore, his sons must 'control' the army in order to retain their status – they must be like their father - rich and powerful. That is the ultimate 'legacy' of Josef Mašín Sr. to his sons. This interpretation is very different from *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet*. Barbara Masin stresses their father's imperative "never to surrender to anybody, to decisively resist evil and injustice" (Masin 2006: 53), which they wanted to follow. Their goal was "to defend their country" (Ibid). That is why they wanted to join the army. The family ethos in these narratives is very different, it is the opposite – whereas Novák and Masin claim that this was their goal, Vrbecký stresses another reason: they wanted to stay rich and powerful. This is the Mašín brothers' father's true message to his sons.

Vrbecký (as well as Novák and Masin) quotes from the letter which Josef Mašín Sr. wrote in prison before his execution:

> I am leaving you here, my dear, with a great task. To bring up our children. Bring them up as human beings, honourable self-aware Czechs and patriots. I would like one of our boys to take up the management of our family farm. But this is not compulsory. If you do not feel like doing so, you don't have to. (Vrbecký 1985: 75)

After this quote, the narrator comments on it:

> Although it wasn't a compulsory condition in the will, the sons were going to guard the letter from their father and take it as his legacy. (Ibid.)

This serves as proof of the legacy the Mašín brothers followed. But it is a rather different legacy than in the heroic narratives. This is developed later in the narrative to strengthen the causal relationship between the Mašín brothers and their father's 'shadow story':

> 'My father did not fight for such a regime. I do not feel like joining the enthusiasm of the millions,' Ctirad shouted in front of his friends. He is right; the father's resistance against fascism was motivated by a different class allegiance. The Mašín family must remain rich and influential. Ctirad accepts this duty as his 'task for life', especially after he has not been accepted for study by the Military Academy at Hranice. He crumples up the envelope and says: 'The Mašíns never give up; the comrades should have learnt that from history.' (Vrbecký 1985: 79)

Josef Mašín Sr.'s armed struggle against the Nazis was motivated by his desire to stay influential and rich. This character is also very important for the narrative. His attitudes and actions play a crucial role in the narrative structure. This 'shadow story' serves as a narrative trigger in the same way as in *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* – his actions and attitudes ignite his sons' actions and have an impact on their motivations and set of beliefs. However, according to this narrative representation, the content of his legacy is completely different from the other narrative versions analysed here – it is to preserve their class status so that they would remain powerful, not to fight for freedom and democracy.

2.1.2 The Narrator as a Historian

The narrator of this short story puts on the mask of a historian. He pretends to be an external objective scholar who explores the archives and questions the eyewitnesses. The narrator occasionally refers to himself in the first person by mentioning his 'research activity'. The narrative discourse begins:

> Often, over the hundreds of pages of these documents I had to ask – how could all this have happened, what was the origin of all this horror spread by the Mašín brothers and their accomplices? After all, they were not offenders or psychologically flawed individuals. On the contrary, the

> Mašín family was highly respected after the Second World War because of the father, lieutenant colonel in the former Czechoslovak army. Celebratory articles and books were being written about Josef Mašín. (Vrbecký 1985: 3)

The narrative agent positions himself outside of the story. He is an external observer who is telling a story based solely on empirical evidence and does not refrain from condemning the criminals but when it comes to historical research and its objectivity, he pretends to stick to facts. In the course of narration, he refers to himself only occasionally in connection with studying historical documents (archive materials etc.): "One researches the documents in order to learn about the truth" (Ibid. 96) or here: "But we know from the reading of the protocols what followed" (Ibid. 85). Although there are some signs of the narrator's presence, the predominant narrative voice is the third person.

A specific procedure is used to enhance the appearance of the narrator's objectivity and credibility. The narrator sometimes indicates that he is not certain about some events. He admits that not everything is accessible to him because there is a lack of evidence. It is acknowledged that there are some gaps in the narrative which the narrator is not able to fill in because there are no archive materials or other historical resources. The narrator sometimes speculates but admits that this is speculation:

> Even though the author of this account has not found any information in the court files confirming that it was that way, he would nevertheless like to propose that […]. (Ibid. 90)

When detailing the second raid at the police station in Čelákovice, the narrator starts the scene off by identifying a gap in the narrative:

> *We do not know* why such a risky method was used. *No one knows exactly* how they managed to lure staff constable Honzátko out. Honzátko's trouser leg was folded up three times and *so we can assume* that he believed the story told to him by Mašín on arrival, that everything happened calmly and that the constable planned to take his bicycle to the place of the 'car crash'. When Mašín assured him that the place was not far, *he must have* changed his mind. (Ibid. 85-86).[41]

[41] Italicized by J.Š.

These indicators ("we do not know why", "it is possible to claim that", "probably") suggest that the narrator is uncertain about these events and he is speculating. It is, however, an acknowledged speculation based on certain 'empirical' indicators. The narrator uses some deductive procedures and tries to find out how the events really happened. He fills the gaps by piecing together various empirical traces of evidence. This is a procedure used also in detective stories. However, immediately after this 'uncertain' passage, the narration continues:

> The ambush, carried out in darkness by Janata and Paumer, first shocked the policeman. They quickly took away his personal weapon and before Honzátko managed to realise the true state of affairs, they tied him up with a parachute string. (Ibid. 86)

It can be observed that the modality of the passage is shifted. The narration shifts from the status of uncertainty into the realm of certainty again without providing reference to any new source of information. The narrator then describes the 'murder' of the policeman in detail. He first admits that he has no evidence for some parts of the story. Then he describes the scene of the crime in detail. The first passage is just an introductory one. It is less important than the crime itself (from the perspective of criminal law for example). The crucial event (the 'murder') is not presented as uncertain – it is again in the realm of certainty. The narrator tells us how the events really happened. The first uncertain passage functions as a background to the 'real' scene which comes next. The confrontation of these 'unknown' events with those which are 'known' creates the effect of reality. One might question whether all the facts the narrator tells are really valid, but the narrator acknowledges that his knowledge is limited (it is restricted precisely to the historical documents and eyewitness reports) and so the story is more trustworthy.

There is another procedure which simulates factuality. The narration is taken over by another narrator – by an eyewitness of the events. This is through the eyes of a character that takes over the narration. The first-person narrator testifies and tells us what happened. The reader thus gets the idea that this is the real narrative account, as the testimony of an ambulance driver shows:

> The plan was sophisticated and cruel. See for yourself what Bohumil Turina, the driver of the Prague ambulance service testified: 'I was on duty. After midnight, when nothing was happening, paramedic Kalvín

> came running, apparently there was a call and we must drive out. Someone telephoned that a wounded man was lying at the terminus of tram number five. Duty is duty, we went out.' (Ibid. 84)

This narration contains a detailed description of the events, as well as direct speeches from the characters. It resembles a third person narrative account. Then the driver is put to sleep and the narration is taken over by the 'historian' again:

> '[…] I don't remember any more.' But we know from the files what followed. They stole 1300 crowns from Turina's wallet while he was asleep. (Ibid. 85)

Significantly, the narrator again mentions the authority of the protocols. This creates the effect of the puzzle – the 'historian' puts the pieces of evidence together and endeavours to create a coherent narrative. However, right after this, the narration continues:

> Ctirad Mašín went again round both the men who were tied up who were hanging from the trees like hanged men and said that they had had enough. (Ibid.)

One could ask again who the observer was since the last possible eyewitness (the ambulance driver) has been put to sleep. Where did the narrator get this information from? This evident incoherency is again not commented on by the narrator. The function of this is to enhance the effect of reality. The predominant voice of *The Dead Do Not Talk* is the third person narrator. He claims to be a historian, an objective reporter who bases his narrative solely on historical documentation and research. However, it is clear that certain scenes are depicted in great detail with no evidence, thus one can question the credibility of his narration.

2.1.3 The Mašín Brothers as Anti-Heroes

The main focus in the narrative discourse is on the Mašín brothers. Their father's story functions as inspiration for them to preserve their class status and take good care of their family property, but the political situation changed and their class was "swept

into a chasm" by the victorious working class (Ibid. 96).[42] The Mašíns were not able to protect and save their family heritage but they would not sit at home and do nothing, they would act: "Ctirad constantly carries his father's last letter on his person for a good reason. They have failed to save their family's farm in Lošany, but they will take revenge" (Ibid. 84). Their terrorist and sabotage activity had nothing to do with fighting for their country, for freedom or democracy. It was just pure vengeance which drove these young murderers to kill and 'spread fear', the narrator suggests. They were driven by the desire to rule and also by capitalist greed – they want to reclaim their lost property. This quality affects their behaviour and actions. Their greediness goes so far that the brothers are even capable of betraying each other, the narrator speculates:

> Just a little comment here. Even though the author of this account has not found any information in the court files confirming that it was that way, he would nevertheless like to propose that each of the brothers was preoccupied with the idea of defection separately, thus assuming all the heroic deeds for himself. You see, Josef Mašín was also arrested shortly thereafter but in connection with something completely different. He struck up a relationship with a married woman and promised to elope with her and 'a sackful of dollars'. She agreed to go with him, but when quarrelling with her husband she made a mistake, mentioning the name of her lover, and the jealous husband reported both of them to the police. (Ibid. 90)

The brothers are not equal here as they are in *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* where they both share the same qualities – courage, resolve to fight and concern for humanity. Neither of them is significantly better or worse in their resistance activities. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, Ctirad is the older brother and as such he is stronger and crueller. He is the role model for Josef and even a substitute for his father. Josef appreciates Ctirad for his decisive actions, cold blood and courage. Ctirad is well aware of his influence on his brother and misuses it. He is the one who rules the group and plans all the actions.

The Mašín brothers are the protagonists. They are portrayed as ruthless killers and thieves – anti-heroes. The narrator meditates on what their souls are like. He tries to understand the soul of the "murderer who slits the throat of a man who is already dead" and who's only crime is that he is "an obstacle to get just a few submachine

[42] The narrator refers to the 1948 Communist takeover. After this all private property was nationalised.

guns" (Ibid. 96). The narrator is not able to answer his own questions. Ctirad Mašín did not feel any guilt because the people he had killed did not mean anything to him. The Mašín brothers were eager to murder and terrorise peaceful citizens because their ultimate motivation resided in their bourgeois class origin.

2.1.4 The Gangsters and the Bourgeois Family

The Mašín brothers' companions are depicted in the same way. They are thieves and selfish people. Václav Švéda married into a rich family but is now just a "pig feeder", Zbyněk Janata is "a thief" and Milan Paumer is a good driver but "a loafer" (Ibid. 79). They are all lazy and drink alcohol (they celebrate their operations and are often drunk at their meetings). There is a crucial quality that connects these characters. After the robbery in Hedvíkov they are arguing about who would get more money:

> The dividing of the money was accompanied by quarrels. Each of them was trying to get as much as possible. As though they had changed. But no, they had not changed; it's just that their real characteristics had come to the fore. (Ibid. 95-96)

Their true nature is to posses a lot of money and be in control. This is their common characteristic:

> In almost all their CVs it is possible to trace one common characteristic – their desire to regain the wealth they used to own once, their desire to get revenge for their loss of power and influence. Yes, the revolutionary wave which had hit their farms, their promising careers, factories and businesses, had swept them as a class into a chasm. They were free to support themselves by ordinary work, just like millions of other people. They, however, chose the struggle of trying to win back their lost positions. (Ibid. 96)

According to the narrator, they refused to work honestly like other people and wanted to destroy the new fair order which had been established by the Communists. The narrator condemns their greedy characters and discloses the true motivation of their actions. It is again the desire to take revenge after they lost their power and property which leads them to the terrible deeds. The reader does not get to know merely the Mašín brothers' and their friends but also gets insight into the whole family. The narrator focuses on Zdena Mašínová (their mother) and also their uncle Ctibor Novák.

The text is interspersed with dialogues so the reader gets to know the 'true' nature of these characters from what they say. In the following dialogue, Ctibor Novák advises Zdena Mašínová to join the Communist Party:

> 'Join them, Zdeňka. Join them, as long as they still trust you. You do have children, don't you? It is our duty to think of their future. – Right, I should join them? The estate owner Mašín in working class overalls with a red membership card? Really, brother, that's a good joke. Marching under the red banner, great... (Ibid. 78)

At first she does not think it is a good idea but then she changes her mind. She joins the Communist Party in May 1948 but not because she really believes in Communism but just to be safe and wait until the political situation changes. She was unmasked as a bourgeois and expelled from the party soon after. This interpretation is again radically different to Jan Novák's narrative where she joined the Party from pure idealism. At that time she truly believed that it was a good thing. She quit the Party soon after Milada Horáková[43] was taken into custody. Barbara Masin does not mention this at all.

In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the private sphere is illuminated but the portrayal of the family is radically different to the harmonic family life in the heroic narratives. Instead of being loving sons caring for their mother, the Mašín brothers are insolent brats:

> 'Sonny boy, do what we tell you. We mean well.' 'Mother, don't call me boy, ok? Put the coffee down and go,' the son snapped and turned his back to his mother. (Ibid. 87-88)

The ethos of the Mašín family is to fight for freedom and democracy. The name Mašín has connotations with these sublime notions. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the Mašín family is quite the opposite. The Mašín brothers, their friends and the whole Mašín family are negative characters. They are criminals, murderers and bad people who think only for themselves and are not able to work honestly like the millions of ordinary people who support the new socialist order. They have failed to come to terms with the fact that they had lost their property and their class status and that they

[43] Milada Horáková was a member of Czechoslovak parliament (1946-1948) who was executed in the 1950s Stalinist show trials.

are not in power anymore. They want to strike back and take revenge. The narrator clearly identifies the negative characters and their motivations. These characters are on the negative side of the axiological axis.

2.1.5 The Heroes of Everyday Life Struggling with Evil

There cannot be only bad people in the world and the Communist world is no exception. Heroes undoubtedly exist but they are not romantic 'chevaliers' who fight for good, killing hundreds of enemies. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the positive characters are just simple people who do not hesitate to resist evil and injustice when the time comes.

On the positive side of the axiological axis, there are the victims of the ruthless Mašín brothers and their conspirators. But they are not just passive victims. The narrator does not contemplate their simple heroism. He does not offer their direct characterisation as he does in case of the 'baddies', rather, their qualities are inscribed in their actions. The narrator focuses on the very core of the Mašín brothers' cruel actions – their terrorist activities and sabotage. He describes the two murders in Chlumec nad Cidlinou and Čelákovice, the robbery in Hedvíkov and also the sabotage in Moravia. The raid in Čelákovice police station is narrated as follows:

> They go in. Ctirad takes the tied-up person into a corner of the room and places him to face the wall. Janata is standing in the doorway. Paumer is sitting in the ambulance, the engine is idling. 'Where are the weapons?' The tied-up man doesn't respond. 'Weapons, I say!' Ctirad Mašín snaps and takes a step forward. At that point, Honzátko turns around sharply and intends to attack with his left foot, but he misses. He wanted to kick the attacker, but the attacker evaded him and fired his gun. The constable's body bounces up like a steel spring and falls to the ground. Deafened, Mašín contorts his face. It seems to him that the wounded person is trying to get up so he leaps, pulls out a dagger and in a sharp movement, cuts the dead man's throat. Blood spurts out from the deep wound. (Ibid. 86)

The policeman is turned to the wall so he cannot see the face of the attacker. This narrative representation differs from the heroic accounts where the policeman was studying their faces. Here, the policeman Honzátko is not just a passive observer - he acts. Although he is in a desperate situation, tied up and alone, he does not hesitate to attack the enemy. He did much more than duty called for and he paid the highest price

for this. The murderer has to make sure that the policeman is really dead so he slits his throat cruelly. The narrator dwells on the detail of the murder ("Blood spurts out from the deep wound").

The sabotage in Moravia where Ctirad Mašín and Václav Švéda set the straw stacks on fire is narrated from the perspective of the eyewitnesses Lecián and Blažek. After they spot the two suspicious men on bikes they begin to chase them. Lecián is depicted as the angry fireman because he thinks that these two men set the straw stacks on fire. Although it is not his duty to run after them, he immediately decides to do so. In this narrative it is not Lecián and Blažek who block the road as it is in *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet*, it is the stranger who is ready to attack:

> He couldn't see the face of the man wearing the protective helmet; it wasn't until much later that he remembers what followed. 'Here is my answer, then,' said the man, and he pulled out a gun and fired it twice. Jan Lecián yells in pain; the first bullet hits him in the chest, the other one in his right eye. Blažek is now bowing down over Lecián who is groaning with pain. (Ibid. 100)

The narrator zooms in from the perspective of Lecián and Blažek. Lecián "yells in pain" and "is groaning with pain". Blažek does not run away like a coward into the fields (as in Masin and Novák) but he immediately takes care of the casualty. He does not take cover himself until the attacker shoots once more. Lecián is an innocent victim of the terrorists. In this case it is not exactly clear if it was Václav Švéda or Ctirad Mašín who was shooting. Lecián was released from hospital fourteen weeks later. He had lost his right eye. The bandits caused more than 700 000 crowns of damage.

Ctirad Mašín wants to do something "big" because murdering two policemen "is nothing" (Ibid. 91). He is planning to kidnap the Secretary of Defence, General Čepička and bring him as a present to the Americans. This can only be done with an armoured car and therefore Mašín needs a million crowns. The plan is to rob a vehicle transporting cash for people's salaries. In this scene, Josef Mašín is pointing a gun at the unarmed paymaster Rošický who is angry at him and he is not afraid of him at all. Then Josef Mašín approaches and wants to put him to sleep:

> He goes towards him with a piece of white cloth. He is holding a gun in his other hand. Rošický jumps back. The attacker takes a step into the

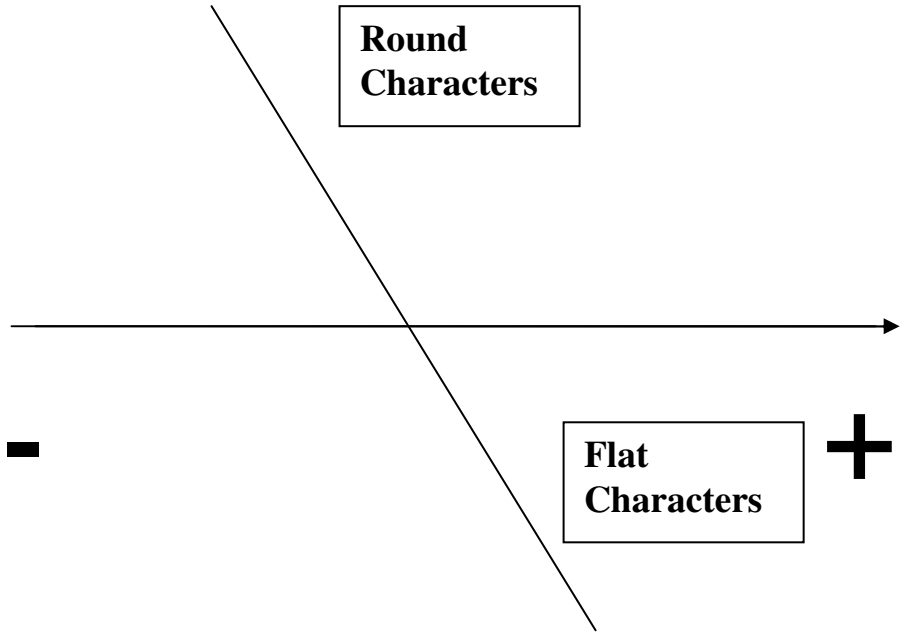
> void and then a shot is heard. Josef Rošický's body jerks forward and his head hits the fence. Mašín stands still for a moment and then he throws away the piece of cloth. It is no longer necessary to put the accountant to sleep. (Ibid. 94)

Rošický did not behave in the way the robber wanted him to and he was punished for this. Josef Mašín ruthlessly kills the man and then he comments on his terrible deed:

> 'Well, finally, what did you do with them there?' the 'militiaman' Švéda asks. 'Oh, that bloke was being naughty, I had to teach him a lesson,' says Mašín and jumps into the car. Ludmila Minaříková, having heard a shot a moment ago, is fearlessly running as fast as she can to get help. (Ibid. 95)

Minaříková is a cook who was near the vehicle by pure coincidence. At first she was frightened but, after hearing the gunshot, she overcomes her fear and runs for help. This is again different to the heroic narratives where Minaříková is so scared that she cannot even move. All of these positive characters are not romantic heroes in the same way the Mašín brothers are in *Gauntlet* or *So Far So Good*. They are simple and honest people and their heroism is spontaneous. They happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, they were dragged into these events by coincidence rather than because they really wanted to fight for freedom. Yet, when they see injustice, they are not afraid to act. They are the heroes of everyday life.

The axiological axis is again polarised, but this time the Mašín brothers and their friends are on the opposite side. They are portrayed in negative terms. They are 'more round' characters than the positive ones but this serves to present their terrorist activities and immoral and cruel behaviour. The diagram illustrates the relationship between the axiological axis and the 'roundness/flatness' of the characters.



The story lacks coherency, there is neither a distinct beginning nor proper closure. Closure is when "a narrative ends in such a way as to satisfy the expectations and answer questions that it has raised" (Abbott 2002: 188). In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, there are neither questions nor expectations raised. The narrative ends simply with the Mašín brothers' escape. The fact that the Mašíns were murderers is mentioned from the very beginning of the narrative and the narrator concludes with the same observation. The main focus is on the Mašín brothers who are the true anti-heroes. However, there is no positive main figure who could be in the centre of the narrator's attention and whom the reader could identify. All the positive characters play a minor role by comparison. This narrative setting makes it impossible for the reader to identify or sympathise with anyone. The story is not 'emplotted' in any particular way. It is, in fact, not a proper detective story. The 'anti-mythical' nature of *The Dead Do Not Talk* is thus not promoted through a coherent narrative structure as it is in case of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet*. It is neither romance nor proper tragedy. This lack of coherency of the narrative discourse will be related to the beliefs and values the narrative contain.

2.1.6 Conclusion

In *The Dead Do Not Talk* the Mašín brothers are clearly anti-heroes. In the paratext, the narrative is identified as historical. The literary style adds some colouring to the narrative but does not change its non-fictional status. The story starts with Josef Mašín Sr. both in *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* but in this case, he is not an ultimate hero but a bourgeois officer. He wants his sons to study at the Military Academy so that they can remain influential (he does not want them to fight for freedom and their country). An integral part of his legacy is also to take care of the family farm. These wishes of the Mašíns' father cannot be fulfilled so the brothers want to take revenge against the new Socialist state. The narrator puts on the mask of a historian and claims to recount the story using solely historical evidence provided by the archives. Yet, textual analysis has demonstrated that he provides no evidence for certain claims. Furthermore, he is not an unbiased narrator, but clearly condemns the Mašíns for their 'ruthless deeds'. The Mašín brothers here acquire negative characteristics; they are anti-heroes. The main villain is the older brother Ctirad Mašín who rules the group and plans all the actions. The friends of the Mašín brothers are also members of the defeated bourgeoisie who refused to work and want to get revenge for the loss of their property. All of the negative characters share these qualities. Moreover, they are alcoholics, loafers and thieves. On the other hand, there are the 'heroes of everyday life' who resist the bourgeois evil. However, there is no main positive hero (a detective or a secret agent) who would resolutely oppose the Mašíns. This seriously affects the coherency of the narrative. There is no closure and there is no hero with whom the reader could identify. The narration focuses only on the Mašín brothers and their activities. The lack of the main positive figure thus moves the narrative away from the type of romance: it is not a 'proper' detective story.

2.2 *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases*: A Non-Hero Struggling with Anti-Socialist Creatures

Major Zeman's Thirty Cases is a television detective series screened by Czechoslovak Television in three stages (tv. 1975, 1976, 1979-80, director Jiří Sequens). It was the result of seven years' work by Czechoslovak TV's Department for the Army, Defence and Security Affairs. A number of advisors from the Interior Ministry, and various synopsis writers, script writers and short story writers also took part in the project. The main initiators and authors of the project were Major Leoš Jirsák, Colonel Jan Kovář, Jaroslav Šikl, a writer and Jiří Procházka, a script editor (Janoušek 2008: 663).

The series depicts the life and career of a fictitious character, Detective Jan Zeman. The stories are loosely based on historical events (criminal cases) from Czechoslovak history. The eponymous character Jan Zeman is fictional and there are no direct references to historical persons. The eighth episode, *Fear,* was filmed in 1975 and is set in 1951 in Prague and its outskirts. Jan Zeman investigates the crimes of gangsters who attack a police station in order to get hold of guns. This story is loosely based on the Mašín brothers' activities but their names are not directly mentioned.

Major Zeman's Thirty Cases is a visual narrative and the following analysis pinpoints certain cinematic elements which contribute to the division of the axiological axis. The visual nature of the narrative also brings us to the question of the narrator. The theory of narrative is not united when it comes to identifying the existence of a narrator in cinematic art. Our standpoint is coherent with that of David Bordwell who does not regard the narrator as a distinct entity: "since any utterance can be construed with respect to a putative source, literary theory may be justified in looking for a speaking voice or narrator. But in watching films, we are seldom aware of being told something by an entity resembling a human being" (Bordwell 1985: 62). In *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases*, there is neither a voice-over narrator nor focalisation through one of the characters. It thus seems to be useful not to regard the narrator as a constitutive element in the narrative structure.

2.2.1 The Plot

Fear is narrated in chronological order; there are no cases of prolepsis or analepsis. It starts off with a domestic scene. Detective Zeman and his pregnant wife are in bed. She is about to give birth to her baby soon. Zeman is very nervous. His mother also lives with them. They call an ambulance. Zeman goes to the hospital with his wife. The paramedics take him back home. Then the paramedics are told to go and attend to an accident. It is reported that there is a man with a broken leg. When the paramedics arrive, they meet three armed men - Jula, Eda and Říša who order them to get into the ambulance and then they take them to a forest, tie them up and chloroform one of them. Jula hits one of them in the head with the butt of an automatic gun and chloroforms him as well. Říša then goes to the police station reporting an accident to a police officer. The policeman comes to the scene on a motorbike and is disarmed by Jula and Eda. The next scene is at the police station. Říša and Eda are taking guns and ammunition. Jula is sitting on the chair with his gun. The policeman is lying tied up on the bed. Jula orders his two collaborators to leave. Then he wants to chloroform the policeman who resists despite being tied up. Jula takes out his knife and starts to approach the policeman.

The investigation starts. Detective Zeman is called to the scene of the crime where he finds the dead body of the policeman whose throat has been cut. Jan Zeman finds a small bottle of chloroform which is evidence leading to Eda's girlfriend, Jiřina. They also find the paramedics in the forest. The paramedic who was hit by Jula is dead. Eda and Říša find out that Jula had killed the policeman and the paramedic. They agree to eliminate him. Eda meets his girlfriend Jiřina who tells him that she has been questioned by the police. He persuades her to not tell them that she stole the bottle of chloroform and gave it to him. After Eda leaves, the policemen, who are hidden nearby, approach Jiřina and take her for questioning. Eda and Říša have an appointment with Jula on a houseboat. Říša tries to tie him up but Jula resists and fights him. He pulls out his gun, but Eda shoots him dead first. At this moment Detectives Zeman and Stejskal enter the houseboat and arrest Říša and Eda. The final scene is in the hospital. Zeman talks with his wife, who has now already given birth to her baby, and confides that he was worried about her.

2.2.2 Detective Zeman and the Heroes of Everyday Life

The detective series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* draws a line between the good and the bad characters. On the positive side, there is Jan Zeman and his colleagues and other 'good people' who participate in building the socialist state. Major Zeman is the eponymous figure of the TV series who connects all the stories. He comes from a small village and later moves to Prague where he finally becomes Chief of Criminal Police. The TV series was examined by a team of scholars in a volume of articles *James Bond and Major Zeman: The Ideologized Narrative Patterns* [James Bond a major Zeman. Ideologizující vzorce vyprávění] published in 2007. They examined the narrative and ideological structures in *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases,* comparing it with the James Bond films. This analysis will be used as a basis for the examination of the episode *Fear*.

In a detective story, the main figure is a detective who possesses certain important attributes and a method of investigation. These qualities make him unique; he stands above the others and can therefore be identified as a romantic hero. Jan Zeman lacks all of these exclusive qualities:

> Detective Zeman has no exceptional or exclusive characteristics. Unless deliberate ordinariness isn't such a sign: he lives in a flat in the working class district of Prague, Žižkov, he smokes, he drinks alcohol. Even the food he likes hints that he is an ordinary man of the people: he likes his mother's cakes best; in alcohol, he prefers beer and liquor. (Bílek 2007: 49)

He is a 'plebeian' character, which is not a negative quality. His name[44] refers to an old tradition related to the land and there is an obvious allusion to the lower aristocracy which corresponds to the Hussite[45] fighters (Bílek 2007: 53). Hussite motives are an integral part of the Czech nationalist discourse. Beer and cakes ('buchty' in Czech) are also products referring to Czech national identity. This stresses Zeman's Czechness as a counterpart to the anti-socialist foreign agents who drink expensive foreign alcoholic beverages (cognac). Jan Zeman's 'plebeian' nature and simplicity correlate with the lack of unique qualities that are significant for a

[44] Jan is a traditional old Czech name (John in English). Surname "Zeman" ("yeoman" in English, derived from the noun "zem" – "land").
[45] The Hussites were a Christian movement within the Czech kingdom following the teachings of the reformer Jan Hus (1369?-1415).

'proper' detective. Although he is a clever detective and uses certain deductive methods, important contributions to the investigation are also provided by his colleagues. The whole team of detectives (Veselý, Kalina, Hradec, and others) and the "boys from the lab" (Bílek 2007:105) are ready to help Jan Zeman in resolving the complicated cases and they all successfully struggle against the enemies of socialism. Jan Zeman does not surpass the others.

In this respect it is significant that in *Fear*, although it is Jan Zeman who finds the bottle of chloroform, the one who draws the detectives' attention to the fact that it could be important to the investigation is Detective Stejskal. This emphasises that the detectives work in a team and that their individual contribution is not so important. Jan Zeman is not portrayed solely as a detective but also as a loving husband and father. The narrative discloses his private family life. As Petr Bílek observed:

> Zeman's character is built up on a contradiction: a decisive boss of the Prague Criminal Police (the public sphere) is totally inept in chatting up women, cannot use a corkscrew properly, does not know how to deal with his teenage daughter and cannot do housework (the private sphere). However, the conflict of both spheres expresses clearly one unambiguous meaning: the public sphere is much more important. (Bílek 2007: 107)

In *Fear*, the dominance of the public sphere over the private one is demonstrated by the parallel plot. Jan Zeman is waiting for a phone call from the hospital to hear news about the birth of his child and is staying patiently at home. When the phone rings, however, it is not the hospital but a policeman calling him to a crime scene. Although the private sphere is less important than Zeman's role as a detective, it has another important function. The private life humanises the eponymous character. It is the domain which depicts Detective Zeman as a 'normal' man who has his inadequacies. It is a function that should draw the character closer to normal people. He is thus, in a way, more 'realistic' than the romantic type of hero.

In *Fear*, the private story underlines Zeman's human side. The very first domestic scene where Lída Zemanová starts to feel that childbirth is approaching is built upon (intended) comic effect. Jan Zeman pretends to control himself and comforts his wife. However, he suddenly starts to panic and calls his mother who is, in contrast to him, calm and rational. The private sphere is also a space where the cruelty of the enemies of the state can be discussed. In *Fear*, Zeman discusses the case with his mother. She represents 'the voice of the public': "It is not your fault but

it is their fault! [Sigh] Such beasts!" (Sequens: 1975). She is pictured as a modest, simple, elderly woman who does not really understand politics. However, she knows that it is bad to kill people and she has to express her feelings.

Other positive characters are Zeman's colleagues the detectives (Kalina, Veselý, Žitný) and, as in *The Dead Do Not Talk,* there are the 'heroes of everyday life'. In the episode *Fear*, this type is represented by the murdered policeman and the ambulance driver. The ambulance driver meets Jan Zeman. He is the one who takes him and his wife to the hospital. While driving back from the hospital, there is a conversation between Zeman the paramedic in which Zeman appreciates him for his hard and challenging work. This is the character that is killed straight after that by an enraged Jula. When Jula wanted to chloroform his colleague, he started to scream at him: "You cowardly swine!" Jula goes crazy and hits him on the head with the butt of a submachine gun. After that, he is shaking and has a crazed look in his eye. Jula insanely screams: "You can't say this, it's not true. I am not a cowardly swine, do you understand? Who told you this? Such a gossip. You can't do this!" (Ibid.).

Another positive character that put up resistance to Jula was the policeman. Jula goes mad at the police station when he wants to chloroform him. Before that he asks him: "Are you afraid?" [The policeman shakes his head expressing disagreement]. He then starts screaming: "You are afraid because you are a coward cop who can't do anything, anything, do you understand?"(Ibid.). Jula then wants to chloroform the policeman but he, despite being tied up and alone, resists by pushing him away forcefully. Jula goes crazy and pulls out his knife and approaches him with a mad expression on his face. Later, the policeman is found dead with his throat cut. There is a similarity between *The Dead Do Not Talk* and *Major Zeman*. The policeman, despite being tied up, resists Jula's violence. Of course, he has no chance but he at least tries to resist. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the policeman acts in the same way. Both of these simple and diligent men who could not stand injustice paid the highest price for their courage.

2.2.3 The Gangsters: Jula, Eda, Říša

The main negative character is undoubtedly Jula. He is an authoritative leader of the gang. He is presumably in his forties. He is older than Říša and Eda (who are in their twenties). Jula is the one who murders the two victims ruthlessly. From his behaviour

one can deduce that he is insane. He gets angry easily especially when someone is reluctant to do what he wants. The scenes mentioned above (2.2.2) are self-explanatory. The motivation for his behaviour, which is also the main theme of the narrative, is fear. Jula obsessively uses the word 'fear' or the phrase 'to be afraid'[46] (in almost every scene) and constantly accuses people around him of being cowards:

> *Jula:* OK, I am changing the plan. [to Eda] You will not be avenging your father [to Říša] you will not be avenging your expulsion from university because you have become afraid. But I am not afraid, I hope you know this. And if I were to repeat all this, I would do it all again. You will bring those old military maps of your father's tomorrow and we will leave the Republic as soon as possible. (Ibid.)

However, at the end of the story we learn that he himself is a coward. Eda reveals this in a dialogue with Říša:

> Do you know why he [Jula] always accuses everyone of being a coward? Because he is a coward! He let his friend drown. He didn't help him because he was afraid. It has been haunting him his whole life. That's why he is so mad. He told me that once when he was drunk. I promised him that I would never tell anyone but I am fed up with him. Idiot! (Ibid.)

This 'shadow story' enables the viewer to fill in the gaps and figure out the true motivation behind Jula's terrible deeds. He gets angry and insane when someone calls him a coward because he tries to suppress his unconscious feelings that he behaved cowardly when he did not help his friend. This has been haunting him and caused him to develop a 'complex'. At the very end of the episode, Jan Zeman, in conversation with his wife, comments on Jula's psychological profile: "And I also found out what fear can do to people when they are afraid of themselves" (Ibid.). The motivation of the villain is ultimately confirmed.

Jula is also presented as someone who longs to seize power. There is again a similarity with *The Dead Do Not Talk* where the Mašín brothers want to be in power. It is revealed in his dialogue with Eda:

> Do you know what I found out? That their state is such a complicated organization that when there are just ten, twenty proper guys with guns that they are not afraid to use they can seize the state easily. And so they

[46] In Czech there is a phrase 'mít strach' ('to be afraid') which literally means 'to have fear'.

> should be concerned about just one thing; that there are not other proper guys with guns around who want the same thing. But we will take care of that. We can't do that without money; you know that, don't you?

This is one of the motives for his action. He wants to seize power and to be the one who rules. The 'complex of cowardice' along with his enormous will to be in power clearly depicts him as an insane person who is capable of anything. Eda and Říša are depicted as young men who want to get their revenge. Their motivation is the same but the reason for it is different. Říša wants to get revenge because he was forced to leave university. His mother describes him in a conversation with Eda:

> Did you introduce him to a girl? He is very shy, he himself is like a girl; you know him. He is so weak; he has always been like that. They have now sent him to work in the factory, just like me, I am afraid he will go to pot there. (Ibid.)

He is depicted as unstable, womanlike, bourgeois and possibly also homosexual. He is hysterical and when he learns that Jula killed the policeman and the ambulance driver, he starts to cry:

> *Říša*: He has been lying to us. I know this now.
> *Jula*: What do you know?
> *Říša*: You killed them. You killed two of them. You cut the throat of the one at the police station and the other one, the driver, he is also dead. You promised we would not be killing anyone. (Ibid.)

The question remains why he participated in stealing the guns. This stresses his unstable character and irrational behaviour. He is the total opposite of a proper hero – weak, indecisive and a coward. One can see that this is in direct opposition to the depiction of the Mašíns in the heroic narratives where they are strong, decisive and courageous. Another feature of his behaviour negatively shapes his portrayal; he is very rude when talking to his mother. After he comes home from work he says to her:

> *Říša*: Can I have something for supper, yeah?
> *Mother*: What manners are those?
> *Říša*: Look, get out of here. He is not interested in your complaining [mother leaves]. Do you hear this? [to Eda] I've had this every day since the old man left- (Ibid.)

He behaves like a spoiled child. It is exactly the same portrayal as was exemplified in *The Dead Do Not Talk* where Josef Mašín is also impolite when dealing with his mother. This again contrasts with the heroic narratives where the Mašíns love their mother and behave appropriately. Říša's friend Eda is much more calm and rational. According to Jula, he wants to get revenge for his dead father who was executed after the war:

> *Jula*: Remember your father. They hung him after the war when the whole cowardly German mess fell down. (Ibid.)

This is the only vague allusion to the Mašíns' father, though he was not executed after, but during the war. This explains why Eda joined the terrorist group. At first Eda is very weak when dealing with Jula. He obeys his orders and lets Jula manipulate him. He does not even protest when Jula slaps him in the face. But in the end he finds strength to resist. Eda is the one who plans to eliminate Jula and finally kills him at the end of the episode.

It can be observed that the narrative again creates a clear-cut division between good and evil. Detective Zeman, his family and colleagues along with 'ordinary' people acquire various positive attributes creating the positive side of the axiological axis. The gangsters are the opposite: ruthless and unbalanced murderers. The relationship between the axiological axis and the 'roundness/flatness' of the characters is determined by the fact that *Fear* is only one episode of the TV series. The main characters (the detectives, Zeman's family) who appear throughout the series are naturally more 'round'. Their characters develop over time. Some of them change from devoted helpers of the socialist state to traitors (Lieutenant Stejskal) who betrays the idea of socialism during the Prague Spring in 1968 and some stay faithful throughout the whole series (Veselý, Kalina) (Bílek 2007: 52). However, taking into consideration the episode *Fear* on its own, it can be observed that the negative characters' private sphere and motivations are revealed.

More or less the same space is devoted to the positive characters and to the world of the criminals. However, it is clear that this division has a certain function. Whereas in the 'heroic' narratives, the negative characters were in the shadows, in *Major Zeman*, they are more 'round' in order to increase their negative features. All of the aforementioned attributes which these characters acquire (cowardice, insanity,

effeminacy, rudeness) ultimately increase their negativity. This portrayal creates strong binary oppositions which separate the negative characters from the positive ones even more. Let us now examine these binary oppositions.

2.2.4 Axiological Binarism

There is a clear distinction between the two worlds outlined in the narrative: the harmonic world of the positive characters and the dark universe of the villains. The tension is created in various ways. The main opposition can be found within the semantic field of the family. Jan Zeman is the embodiment of a loving son. In the conversations with his mother, he often expresses his feelings to her and his mother reciprocates his love. They both remember their father and regret his violent death (which happened in the first episode and was, in fact, an initiatory impulse for Jan Zeman to join the police).

Another essential characteristic of Zeman is his relationship with his wife Lída Zemanová. They have a mutually loving relationship. He takes her to the hospital, patiently waits for the news about the birth of their child and he worries about her. He confides to Lieutenant Stejskal that he is afraid.[47] This creates an obvious contrast to Říša who is rude to his mother and Eda who does not behave nicely to his girlfriend.

The main theme of the episode is 'fear'. This creates an obvious contrast between the main villain, Jula, who was afraid ('had fear') to help his friend and consequently let him drown which is why he behaves so crudely, and Jan Zeman who is deeply concerned about his wife out of true love. As Zeman put it at the very end of the episode:

> I found out what fear is. I had fear. I was really worried about you. And I also found out what fear can do to people when they are afraid of themselves. (Ibid.)

Fear, in this respect, is a positive quality; it shows that it is not shameful to be worried about one's family and loved ones.[48] This notion of fear is different and it sharply

[47] Again the Czech phrase 'mít strach' underlines the theme of the episode 'fear'.
[48] One can hardly imagine a romantic hero such as 'good old' James Bond being concerned about someone so much.

contrasts with Jula's cowardly fear. The double-sided notion of fear thus corresponds to the overall binary scheme of the episode, raising the tension between the positive characters and the villains.

The secondary plot in the episode (the childbirth) is used and further developed. It serves as a contrastive element in a private conversation between Jan Zeman and his mother. Zeman has just received a phone call from his colleague about the murder of the policeman. He is devastated:

> *Mother*: And where're you gonna be in case they call from the hospital?
> *Zeman*: You see, we're expecting a boy or a girl, in short, a new beautiful life to be born; and there, not far from Prague such an awful thing happened. He was also a father, he had a family, children. What could their names be? (Ibid.)

This is again the same binary opposition. The 'new life' is radically contrasted with the murder of the policeman. The semantic field of the family (an innocent baby, in this particular case) is contrasted with the slaughter of an innocent father. This is further elaborated in the next scene. The use of contrast which is expressed here on the level of discourse is also sometimes highlighted by visual devices. When the crime scene is shown, the camera first shoots a close-up of the dead policeman's cut throat. Then next shot is of a detective. Then Zeman asks: "Does his wife know already?" and the policeman replies: "She has been taken to her relatives in Brandýs along with her two boys" (Ibid.). This dialogue again introduces and highlights the semantic notion of the family. Jan Zeman does not ask the sort of question which is usually asked by a normal detective in a regular detective story such as when the crime presumably happened or something to that effect, but Zeman's first question is about the policeman's wife and her children. This seems to be a significant deviation from the detective genre.

Along with these implicit meanings grouped together around a particular semantic field, other devices of the cinematic medium are used. There is, for example, use of the point of view. The camera shoots certain things (the cut throat) and after this there is an immediate mention of family on the level of discourse. In this respect, there is another significant shot: right after Jula is killed by Eda, a detail of two hands with rings (a symbol of love and faithfulness) is shown. It is detective Zeman and his wife in the hospital after their baby was born.

Another binary opposition that corresponds with the overall structure of the episode can be seen in the constructing of space. The villains' hiding place is a houseboat on the river Elbe:

> The river is presented as a transit area in the Zeman narratives. Danger passes through this area; the area is open to evil and is often connected with death. The river harbour in the episode entitled *Fear* is also used for an evil conspiracy. Jula's gang of subversives meets in a houseboat. The twilight of the deserted harbour, the dark surface of the river in autumn, covered by mist, creates a gloomy atmosphere which suitably resonates with the desires and the characters of the anti-heroes. (Bílek 2007: 70)

This dark place (and similar hiding places in the other episodes) is contrasted with the bright police office in Bartolomějská Street where the detectives have their meetings and discuss complicated cases. Another spatial binary opposition creates the contrastive nature of the homes of the villains and the main hero. Zeman's flat is simple; there is no expensive furniture or decorations. It clearly contrasts with the bourgeois flat of Říša where there is antique furniture, and paintings and coffee is served in porcelain cups. The positive folksiness and simplicity of Jan Zeman and his family is contrasted with the excessive and extravagant lifestyle of the bourgeoisie (Bílek 2007: 59).

All of the binary oppositions clearly correspond to the division of the axiological axis. Jula, Eda and Říša acquire negative features mainly by their actions. The viewer has the opportunity to see their ruthless actions as well as their malicious behaviour to each other and their family. The depiction of their private sphere seems to be important as it is a domain where these negative features are exemplified. There are also other negative (or 'dark') characteristics which are coherent with the structuring of the characters (e.g. the division of space). On the other hand, Detective Zeman is a devoted policeman serving his country and an embodiment of a loving son and husband. The detectives create a united and efficient team which in the end leads to the successful resolution of the case and capturing of the criminals.

This detective story (like others in the TV series) is only loosely based on the Mašín brothers' case as if Jula, Eda, and Říša were to embody all the villains in that period who were struggling against the socialist state. The name Mašín is not mentioned. However, certain scenes, especially the one with the raid on the police station, remind us of the actual historical events. It is a separate detective story with

its beginning (raid of the police station), middle (the investigation of the case) and end (capturing the criminals). It belongs to the genre of the detective story (a type of romance). However, there are significant deviations from the genre which move the narrative away from a detective story. These differences have certain (ideological) functions which need to be investigated further.

2.2.4 Conclusion

The episode *Fear* from the television series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* differs from the other narratives analysed here because it does not refer directly to the Mašín brothers. It is a fictional narrative but there is some similarity with the non-fictional accounts. The group's attack on a police office resembles the Mašín brothers' second raid in Čelákovice. There is also a mention of the gangster's father reminding us of Josef Mašín Sr. Detective Zeman is the eponymous (fictitious) character of the television series. Although he is the main hero, he lacks the qualities of a romantic hero. In contrast to *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* where the Mašíns clearly surpass the others, Jan Zeman is just one member of a team of investigators. Later, he becomes Chief of Criminal Police but he could never make it without the help of his colleagues. This is a significant diversion from the detective genre. The narrative is thus not a romantic but rather a realistic type. The narrative also provides the reader with information about Zeman's private sphere. These features humanise him and at the same time they prove that the public sphere is more important than the private sphere. This shows Zeman not solely as a decisive and politically conscious detective but also as a clumsy and uncertain man. Other positive characters are usually simple people who are not afraid to resist the gangsters. In this respect, *Fear* correlates with *The Dead Do Not Talk*. The positive characters are also simple and honest people who do their jobs and do not expect any reward for it. The policeman later killed by Ctirad Mašín also resists although he has been tied up. The gangsters are controlled by a ruthless Jula who plays the same role as Ctirad Mašín in *The Dead Do Not Talk*. He plans the actions and is the ultimate villain. In contrast to Jula, Eda and Říša are weak and womanlike characters. They are not brave freedom fighters, but murderers. The world of gangsters clearly contrasts with the world of the positive characters. This is realised through binary oppositions. The crucial device seems to be the semantic notion of the family. Jan Zeman as a loving husband and son is contrasted with

insolent Říša, Eda who is rude to his girlfriend and of course Jula who is insane; the childbirth is set against the murder of the policeman (who also had children). Another functional opposition which corresponds to the division of the axiological axis is space: the dark and hazy hiding place of the gangsters is set against the bright police office in Bartolomějská Street. These binary oppositions contribute to the division of the world into two irreconcilable sides: the good side of simple and honest people and the ruthless and selfish villains.

2.3 The Myth of the Anti-Heroes

In *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good*, the characters of the Mašín brothers occupy unique positions. They are heroes who stand above the rest of the characters and in both narratives they are at the very centre of the narrator's attention. They are exclusively positive characters. On the contrary, in *The Dead Do Not Talk* and *Major Zeman*, the Mašíns are negative characters. They are depicted as villains, ruthless murderers and robbers. Their other qualities are no less negative – they are also alcoholics, effeminate cowards and members of the malicious bourgeoisie. The motivations of the Mašín brothers and their companions are also very similar in both anti-heroic narratives. Their aim is to regain power and take revenge for the loss of their property which they did not want to share with ordinary people. Jula is also mentally ill. His paranoid tendency to accuse others of being cowards stems from his own psychological complex which contributes to his violent behaviour: he is afraid of himself.

We are again in the realm of the mythical. However, at this time it is not a myth of heroes, but the opposite: the Mašíns are portrayed as anti-heroes. Their actions are interpreted not as an armed struggle for freedom and democracy, but as criminal activity against the new socialist state. They are not soldiers, but murderers. The axiological axes in these mythical universes are ultimately reversed. Although both *Major Zeman* and *The Dead Do Not Talk* portray the Mašíns as anti-heroes, there are significant differences in their narrative structures. In the former, there is the eponymous figure of Jan Zeman who is not a typical 'romantic' hero whereas in the latter, the positive main character is missing completely and the main focus is on the

Mašín brothers. These two narrative configurations deserve a closer examination and will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.1 Major Zeman as a Non-Hero

The narrative function of the hero in the communist TV series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* is occupied by the character Jan Zeman. The series pictures his life and career but it is in a very different modus than in the heroic narratives. He is not a romantic type of hero like the Mašín brothers or, for instance, James Bond who is the epitome of a romantic hero. One can legitimately see a parallel between James Bond and the Mašíns. Their basic qualities are the same: they fight for freedom and liberty and they are, of course, brave and calm. They are strong individuals who are significantly better than the others. Miroslav Štochl contrasts the narratives of James Bond and Major Zeman. He observes that they are narrated in a different fashion. It is an antinomy of a romantic and realistic narrative style. James Bond stories are romantic narratives. They are spectacular shows with car chases, gun battles and explosions in various exotic locations. The Mašíns' heroic narratives belong to this category. The reader of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* is confronted with dramatic raids on police stations, robberies, gun battles etc. However, Major Zeman is, on the other hand, a 'realistic' type of a hero:

> The Zeman narratives are told in a 'sober', matter-of-fact, economical way. Zeman is a socialist worker who, in short, does his everyday work without expecting praise. While fulfilling his tasks, he always uses regular methods, deduction and rational contemplation. (Bílek 2007: 35)

Although he bravely defends the 'new' socialist order, his courage is not made for display. He is not praised for his deeds. Zeman modestly serves the communist state and does not expect any special reward: "Detective Zeman is not an action-based character. Shooting happens rarely and Zeman himself rarely falls into danger" (Ibid. 50). One can find the very same composition in other detective stories about the Mašín brothers (for example Janský 1966, Šulig 1976). There are detectives in these stories, although in both cases they are not important for the development of the plot. Interestingly, the realistic narrative modus is commented on in the preface of *Tady*

Bezpečnost [National Security Here] – one of the other anti-heroic narratives about the Mašíns:

> This is not a narrative about a Great Detective nor about his not so bright friend or a stupid Scotland Yard policeman. This is not a detective story. You will not read here about ingenious detection by an ingenious man. You will not read about numerous shoot-outs or about the boxing ability of the Tough Guy. This is a book about the work of our Security Services – these are ten real stories from police work since 1945. It is an attempt to create a Czech Pitaval[49] – a set of reports on some great, as well as some quite insignificant, cases. (Janský 1967: 3)

One can clearly see the contrast between the romantic and the realistic modus. This is also a signal to the reader: 'this is not a piece of fiction, this really happened'. The romantic narrative modus is contrasted here with the realistic one which is set in a proper historical context – Czechoslovakia after 1948. This is the time when the Communists launched their struggle against the enemies of socialism. The romantic modus is thus, because of the exquisite but ultimately unrealistic main figure, denounced as unlikely and fictitious. Set against this background, the 'simple' hero seems to be more 'realistic':

> Many books have been written about the Great Detectives. We know their often somewhat eccentric passions, habits and statements quite well. A Captain of the Prague Criminal Police K. will probably never become a model for a new, socialist Sherlock Holmes – even though, you know, he wouldn't be an uninteresting character. So, let us at least quote a statement made by this excellent policemen, it is quite noteworthy: You can only solve a murder if you walk a lot. The work of a criminal policeman is surely not too similar to the work of a postman, but there will be something in those words. (Ibid.)

The anonymous figure of the mysterious Captain K. (the name reminds us of Franz Kafka's characters) like Major Zeman, is the embodiment of a socialist hero. He can never become Sherlock Holmes. The radical gap between these two types cannot be reconciled. The socialist realistic hero relies on the hard and honest work of himself along with the other detectives. The socialist detective is compared to a postman who patiently delivers the letters. There is no ingenious deductive ability which could

[49] Pitaval is a collection of detective stories.

miraculously help to find the solution. There is no space for the great ideas of exceptional individuals but just the hard and diligent work of many.

It is worth mentioning that this type of narrative structure (with a non-heroic detective) was predominant in the era of 'normalisation' after 1968 in official detective literature: "The 'hero' of the stories, published by *Magnet*[50] was a whole group of criminal investigators, who have been organised according to their rank" (Janoušek 2008: 577). The main figures share the same quality. Major Zeman as well as the other socialist detectives - are socially determined. Their struggle with the enemies of socialism is possible solely as a collective effort by many detectives. Their actions make sense only if they are part of a broader group. Major Zeman and others are fully reliant on the team of detectives who patiently analyse every piece of evidence. They do not significantly stay above the others in any way. They are not heroes in the romantic sense – they are 'non-heroes'.

2.3.2 The Mašín Brothers as Anti-Heroes

In *The Dead Do Not Talk,* the central position is occupied by the Mašín brothers. There is no central positive character (a detective, a secret agent etc.) to fight against them. The narrator focuses on the Mašín brothers and their terrible crimes. They occupy the central position in the configuration of the characters (in contrast to Major Zeman who is the main figure in the narrative structure of the TV series). However, they are depicted as villains – 'anti-heroes'.

This is even more significant deviation from the detective genre (which belongs to the type of romance) than in the case of the Major Zeman stories where the role of the main detective is just 'weakened'. The narrative discourse loses its coherency. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the Mašíns and their co-conspirators are depicted as the ultimate villains. There is no space for ambiguity or doubts about their moral profile. They are indeed cruel murderers, members of the bourgeois class who refused to join the effort of the proletariat in creating the new socialist world. However, absence of a main positive character (a detective, a secret agent etc.) creates a significant void. This is not common, especially in pop-cultural (detective) stories as the connection between 'romantic' and 'popular' is very close (Frye 1976: 23).

[50] *Magnet* was a series of these detective stories published by *Our Army* [Naše vojsko].

The positive side of the axiological axis is occupied solely by the victims of the Mašín brothers' terror. They are simple people who are not afraid to fight against the evildoers. Such a radical elimination of the main positive character, of course, has an impact on the receptive effect of the narrative. There is no one with whom the reader would be able to identify – neither a romantic hero nor a 'socialist' non-hero. The narrative structure thus leaves out the feature that is an integral part of any coherent (pop-cultural) narrative.

This absence also affects the structure of the plot – the 'emplotment'. In a detective story, the development of the plot is usually focused on the detective as a main figure. It is common practice for the detective story to begin with a scene from the detective's (often private) life – e.g. Major Zeman, patiently waiting for a call from the hospital. The detective finds out about the crime, arrives at the crime scene and starts the investigation. Thus, the story has a coherent plot. There is a discernible beginning (a crime which breaks into the detective's privacy), middle (its investigation) and end (capturing of the criminals). The absence of the hero in *The Dead Do Not Talk* results in a lack of narrative coherency. The plot is not united by the positive action of a detective but rather the opposite – following the activity of the anti-heroes. It is thus neither romance nor tragedy, but can be called anti-romance.

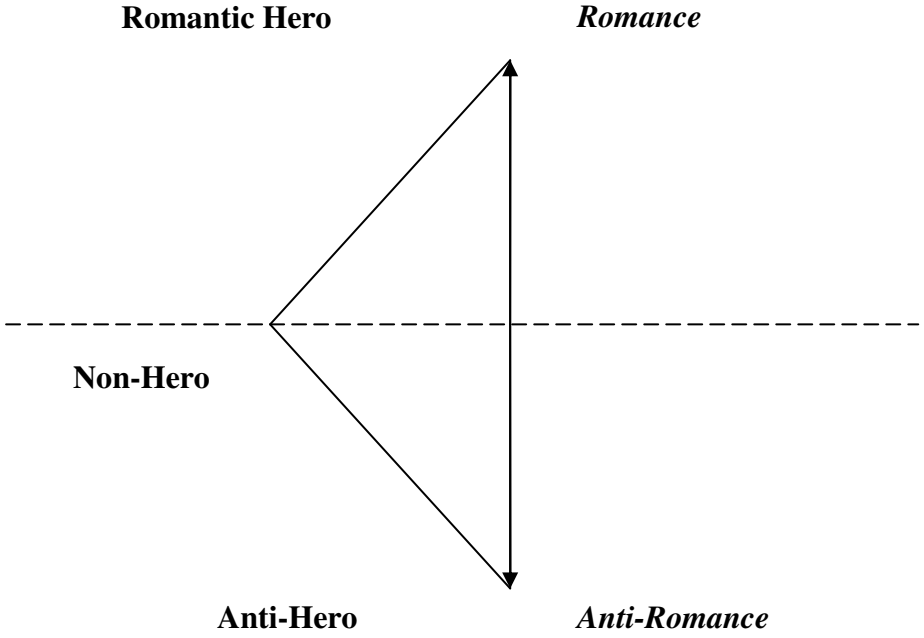
2.3.3 Conclusion: A Narrative Triad

In the background of the narrative and mythical analysis, one can easily discern three configurations which these narratives embody: the first is the narratives which are grounded in heroic myth. *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* both have this strong mythical background and are both romances. The relationship of the axiological axis and the 'roundness/flatness' of the characters also fit into this genre. The negative characters are in the shadow and less round whereas the heroes are at the very centre of the narration.

The second, one can say intermediary, position is that of the romantic quest of the non-hero. Major Zeman (and other similar non-heroes) does not surpass his colleagues and he is an organic part of a whole. He is not in any way a romantic hero as he is fully reliant on his team. Although this characteristic feature of a romance is missing, the narrative still holds together. Major Zeman has a quest - he struggles with the enemies of socialism. The story that has been analysed demonstrates a coherent

plot with a beginning, middle and a closure. The 'roundness/flatness' of the positive and negative characters within each episode is balanced. The viewer has insight into both positive and negative characters and can follow their actions and motivation. Thus, the narrative structure moves away from the romantic narrative style and the narrative discourse is less coherent than in the Mašín brothers' heroic narratives.

The third, extreme position is the radical elimination of the hero and replacing him with anti-heroes. The whole narrative is far less coherent than the others. The focus is on the negative side of the axiological axis, it stages the Mašíns as the ultimate villains while not offering any 'positive' hero. The narration follows only the 'irrational' behaviour of the villains and the story lacks coherency. The negative characters are thus more 'round' than the positive ones. The narrative unity breaks down. In this respect, it can be called 'anti-romance'. These three narrative configurations (hero, non-hero, and anti-hero) create a triad which can be graphically illustrated as follows:



3. Narrative and Ideological Discourses in the Mašín Brothers' Narratives

It seems to be clear that all of these narratives do not merely either inform the readers about historical events or amuse the audience, but that they also promote certain sets of beliefs, opinions and values – ideologies. The investigation so far has demonstrated the narrative structures and how they are embedded in the mythical universes. The next step one has to take is to pass from semiology to ideology. As Roland Barthes put it:

> If one wishes to connect a mythical schema to a general history, to explain how it corresponds to the interests of a definite society, in short, to pass from semiology to ideology, it is obviously at the level of the third type of focusing that one must place oneself: it is the reader of myths himself who must reveal their essential function. (Barthes 1972: 129)

The aim of the following section is precisely this third type of focusing which involves considering the relationship of the narrative and mythical structuring of reality to the ideologies that the narratives encompass. The narratological analysis disclosed various binary oppositions (the crucial division between good and bad is realised on many levels). These oppositions have been examined solely within the narratives (the inner structure), disregarding their social and historical context. The main concern of the following section is the transgression from the inner structure of the narratives into the social sphere – the investigation of the ideological discourse and its relation to the narrative discourse.

3.1 Narrative and Ideology

Petr A. Bílek (Bílek 2007) outlines the basic distinction between the narrative discourse and the ideological discourse. Ideological indexing is deeply interconnected with narrative coding. The ideological discourse either clashes or is in accordance with the discourse which is based on the narrative principles. Narrative is "the representation of an event or a series of events" (Abbott 2002: 12) and therefore the

basic principle of narrative organisation is an arrangement of the events and scenes into a series of time sequences.

> These basic rules of the narrative then impact on the way the essential elements of the depicted world are being structured. These rules influence the characters, the story and the space and time of it. The ideological line of the text must, thus, come to terms with the rules of the narrative encoding and decoding. (Bílek 207: 110)

The analysis of the narrative discourses in the Mašíns' narratives disclosed various different configurations. The main difference is in the position of the main hero and his relation to the other characters. In the heroic narratives, there is a distinguished hero (embodied in the two brothers), in the anti-heroic narratives there is either a non-hero or the positive hero is absent. The narrative configurations are different. However, what all of these narratives have in common is a sharp division between the positive and negative characters. These characters are textual constructs but unlike in purely fictitious narratives they refer to some extra-textual reality (the Mašín brothers, their friends, etc.). In this respect, the discourse we are dealing with is denotative as it refers to certain individuals. Denotation is closely linked to ideological discourse:

> Ideological discourse is, by definition, denotative. Its meaning is closed because this kind of discourse aims to characterise and explain the world in its totality. Thus, this kind of discourse is inevitably a denotative discourse. It needs to assume that it is universal and that the characteristics that it ascribes to phenomena are 'natural'. This is why this type of discourse attempts to define individual facts by means of firmly set networks of code, in which each constitutive element forms an integral part of the overall structure. (Bílek 2007: 111)

All of the narratives that have been analysed are embedded in history.[51] The narratives contain characters that denote certain individuals and refer to certain events and, as such, they all bear meanings and values related to certain social groups. Before considering the relationship of the narrative discourse to the ideological discourse in the Mašín brothers' narratives, we have to outline a basic definition of ideology.

[51] Perhaps with the exception of the episode of *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* where the Mašíns are not named directly. However, the narrative still maintains a mimetic reference as the events depicted are set at the same time as the other narrative representations (year 1951) and also some events are fairly similar.

3.2 Defining Ideology

There are many possible definitions of the term ideology. Contemporary theory offers various approaches to tackle this complex issue. Terry Eagleton in his book *Ideology: An Introduction* (1991) mentions various more or less random definitions of ideology (e.g. the process of producing meanings, signs and values in social life; a body of ideas characteristic to a particular social group or class; ideas which help to legitimise a dominant political power; false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power etc.). Some of these definitions deal with epistemological questions – those which are concerned with our knowledge of the world, others stay silent on this score. Some of them deal with 'false consciousness' while others (e.g. "action-oriented sets of beliefs") leave this issue open (Eagleton 1991: 3). Eagleton divides mainstream traditions in the theory of ideology into two categories. There is one central lineage, from Hegel and Marx to Georg Lukács and later Marxist thinkers that has been much preoccupied with ideas of true and false cognition, with ideology as illusion and distortion. The other tradition of thought is more concerned "with the function of ideas within social life than with their reality or unreality" (Ibid.).

The approach of this thesis belongs to the second stream in the theory of ideology – the semiotic analysis of discourse. This approach does not regard ideology as systematically 'distorted' communication, a text "in which, under the influence of unavowed social interests (of domination, etc.), a gap separates its 'official', public meaning from its actual intention – this is to say, in which we are dealing with an unreflected tension between the explicit enunciated content of the text and its pragmatic presuppositions" (Žižek 1994: 10). The discourse analysis reverts this relationship. Communication is always structured by various textual devices and, as such, cannot be simply identified as secondary rhetoric. Access to reality unbiased by any discursive devices is seen here as impossible and even ideological. "The 'zero level' of ideology consists in (mis)perceiving a discursive formation as an extra-discursive fact" (Ibid.). Žižek points out that discursive analysis thus refutes the idea of ideology seen as a 'blurred' notion of reality caused by some concealed interest, but it focuses on the communicative process itself.

In his book *Ideology. A multidisciplinary approach* (1998), Theun A. van Dijk proposes this definition of ideology:

> Ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of Us and Them as social groups. This means that ideologies probably have the format of a group schema, or at least the format of a group schema that reflects Our fundamental social, economic, political or cultural interests. [52] (Dijk 1998: 69)

It is evident that this definition stays silent on the epistemological score. It does not regard ideology as 'false consciousness' or a somehow distorted perception of reality, rather, it regards the process of communication as necessarily ideological – promoting certain values and beliefs. Furthermore, this particular definition does not deal with the power relationship. It leaves out the question of the dominance of power. This definition seems to be useful as it enables us to identify the beliefs and opinions of opposing social groups inscribed in the Mašín brothers' narrative representations. The values related to particular social groups are deeply connected to the structures of the narratives. The narratological analysis discerned certain oppositions within the narrative structure and the final two sections will relate them to particular social groups.

3.3 Liberal Romance

The previous chapters demonstrated how deeply *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* are grounded in the mythical universe: these narratives tell a great story of the adventures and the struggle of the Mašín brothers and their friends. They are the sons of 'the greatest Czech hero' of World War II and so they are determined to continue his mission. Their quest is to fight against communism, first in Czechoslovakia and then also across the globe. The Mašíns possess heroic qualities. The narrators focus on their inner mental world as well as their actions. They are part of the forces that struggle against the communist evildoers. As it has previously been shown, the division between good and bad is clear: the communists are the 'baddies'. They acquire negative features with no space for ambiguity. The counterpart to the free world led by the USA is the Soviet Union with its dark ruler, Joseph Stalin. The mythical universe is split into two opposing worlds. The narratives are pure romances. The myth that is created connects the Mašín brothers to their heroic predecessors.

[52] This definition was used by Petr A. Bílek in his study *James Bond and Major Zeman: Semantics of Narrative Ideology* [James Bond a Major Zeman. Sémantika narativní ideologie] (Bílek 2007).

So Far So Good and *Gauntlet* stage a powerful heroic myth. The main focus is on the heroes, their lives and brave actions. There is a sharp distinction between the positive characters ('Us') and the negative ones ('Them'). The communists and the armed forces acquire negative features. However, unlike in the anti-heroic narratives, here the negative figures are in the shade, they are empty vessels, dehumanised persons. This is a typical feature of a romance where the enemies of the heroes are not portrayed credibly. They are stripped of their individuality and depicted solely as members of the abstract 'axis of evil'. The reader is then willing to accept their 'elimination' as a necessary outcome of the heroes' struggle for freedom and democracy.

The narrators of *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* also directly attack the 'totalitarian' Communist ideology. The comparison between Nazism and Communism functions on the level of narrative. The struggle of the Mašíns' father who fought against the Nazis is often compared to the actions of their sons. The Mašín brothers' actions can be seen as legitimate. The narrators sometimes directly address this issue:

> It is not that the Communists in the 1950s were somehow practicing a kinder, gentler form of totalitarianism than the Nazis in the 1940s. They were not. It is not that they murdered fewer people. They did not. Instead of race genocide, the Communists practiced class genocide. In the Stalinist-Leninist Soviet Union and its client states all over the world, millions more were murdered than under Hitler's Nazi regime. (Masin 2006: 337)

The narrators often stress the dangerous and devastating nature of Communist ideology, pointing out the idea of class struggle. The doctrine of class struggle and the Leninist notion of the 'dictatorship of proletariat' are again used to justify the heroes' armed resistance. It is suggested that the Mašíns use the same methods as the Communists but in self-defence and as a reaction to their practices. This functions as another legitimisation of their violent actions.

The Mašíns' actions are interpreted as a war against Communism. The semantic notion of war is crucial in both narratives. They are interwoven with military terminology – 'battle', 'attack', 'sabotage against the targets', 'mission', 'operation', 'gunpower', 'launch a full-scale campaign' etc. This semantic field is related to the Mašíns' group activities and it deepens the effect of the struggle against Communism

and places the Mašín brothers and their group into the context of 'war'. This war is a part of the broader campaign against Communism around the globe and the Mašíns are an integral part of it. The heroes are thus not just mere citizens who would kill the policemen but they effectively become 'soldiers' in a war. The narrators structure reality to suggest that these soldiers had no other choice but to act as they did. All these features contribute to sustaining the Mašíns' heroic aura.

The world of freedom and happiness epitomises the United States of America:

> When the Iron Curtain endured, Dad was compelled to build a new life for himself, a life radically different from the one he had envisioned. He was proud to be an American citizen and would remind my sister and me that we, too, were citizens of the nation that, during its finest hour, represented and fought for the principles of freedom and self-determination around the world. The United States, he told us, was a beacon of hope for all peoples oppressed by dictatorships. (Masin 2006: 6)

The Mašíns fought for the 'American ideals' which are presented as universal. In *So Far So Good*, they join the U.S. Army and later decide to start their own business. They both succeed because of their strong personalities, willpower, resilience and wisdom. The heroic qualities they used in their freedom struggle are also indispensable in the 'free market jungle'. Josef Mašín retires as a millionaire. Although coming to the USA with five dollars in his pocket, he was able to make his fortune. His brother also started his own business. When he had trouble, he did not give up, but 'fought' the circumstances so that he could become a 'real' American.

Their heroic nature not only gives them the chance to merely survive under any circumstances, but to be the best. What we encounter here is the myth of a strong and unique individual. This myth was revived in the era of Enlightenment but has its origins in ancient Greece (Bílek 2007: 104). The Enlightenment period challenged the 'divine right of kings' and substituted it with liberty and equality of individuals who are responsible for their actions and can determine their own fate. The idea of the human being as a creative and unique individual is at the very centre of liberal thinking:

> Classical liberalism has a heroic aura of its own: enlightenment demands self-emancipation, and liberty is the work of independent spirits able to resist authority and find their own way out of prejudice. (Rosenblum 1987: 107)

The Mašíns do not succumb to the Communists, they do not even submit to state institutions (U.S. Army). They are romantic heroes in the purest sense. Romanticism developed the idea of a strong individual even further:

> Heroic individualism is the romantic pose at its most militant and self-assertive. Its resources for reconstruction are the revolutionary elements of liberalism – self-government, consent, and independence […] open-ended liberal notions of liberation appeal to certain romantic sensibilities who cannot abide prosaic peace and long for action commensurate with the dignity and intensity of desires. (Rosenblum 1987: 103)

The Mašín myth is deeply rooted in these ideological structures. The narrative structure of romance is coherent with the liberal ideological edifice. The 'predatory' individualism is at the root of liberal thinking. The Mašíns are strong individuals, being able first to resist communist evil and later to win their struggle in a capitalist society. The USA is a 'free' country which created the conditions for developing their skills and abilities. They tried hard and finally succeeded. This also serves as a direct refutation of Communist ideology as it effectively proves that if one makes an effort he/she has the chance to make his/her fortune. Romance is close to what Porter Abbott calls masterplot:

> We seem to connect our thinking about life, and particularly about our own lives, to a number of masterplots that we may or may not be fully aware of. To the extent that our values and identity are linked to a masterplot, the masterplot can have strong rhetorical impact. We tend to give credibility to narratives that are structured by it. There are some masterplots, very loosely conceived, that would appear to be universal: the quest, the story of revenge, seasonal myths of death and regeneration. (Abbott 2002: 42-43)

Gauntlet and *So Far So Good* are clearly linked to the masterplot. As such, these narratives appear universal and self-evident. They 'naturalise' the symbolic order and reify the result of discursive procedures into properties of the 'thing' itself as Barthes put it. The Communist 'Them' is the ultimate evil which stands against the positively represented 'Us'. The reader can easily identify with the heroes who are struggling against the 'axis of evil'. The values of the heroes - the 'American ideals of freedom' - are thus somehow taken for granted. The narrative discourse (the formation of

romance) is in accordance with ideological discourse (Liberalism). Ideological discourse is supported by a powerful heroic myth which is deeply rooted in European culture and, as such, it effectively conceals its artificial nature.

3.4 Communist Anti/Romance

Major Zeman's Thirty Cases and *The Dead Do Not Talk* have been identified as anti-heroic narratives. The central good/bad division running through both of these narratives is anchored by various narrative procedures. The Mašíns, their family and companions are depicted as villains and bad people and this is carried out through ideological indexing. These characters attain various negative characteristics (e.g. mad killers, saboteurs, subversive elements, homosexuals) which they acquire by direct condemnations from the narrator or the positive characters or by the division grounded in their action (they murder, steal, drink alcohol, are rude etc.). Their maliciousness arises from their capitalist greed. The negative characters are the Mašín brothers and their family (Zdena Mašínová, Ctibor Novák), Václav Švéda ('kulak'), Milan Paumer ('a loafer'), Vladimír Hradec etc. These figures are those who oppose to the Communist 'Us' creating the negative 'Them'. They are members of the defeated bourgeoisie, the reactionary forces that were 'swept into the chasm' of history, who refused to join the revolutionary forces in building the new socialist order. They want to stay in power, they do not want to share their excessive wealth with other people and do not agree with the redistribution of wealth. Their desire to possess and take revenge for their lost property leads them to commit all their terrible deeds.

Such ideological stratification of the world is symptomatic of the whole TV series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* as well as for the other socialist detective stories published in the 1970s and 1980s in Czechoslovakia:

> Crime subsequently tended to have an ideological dimension. Often there were anti-state conspiracies, organized from abroad, for instance by the Sudeten Germans or by Western intelligence agencies. Criminals were typically from higher social classes, they were the sons and daughters of the former bourgeoisie, contemporary 'entrepreneurs' making money in the grey economic area, artists and intellectuals. (Janoušek 2008: 577)

These malicious and lazy people are also connected to the other side of the world – to the capitalist West. They plan to escape there and they already have direct contacts with the Americans. In *The Dead Do Not Talk*, Ctibor Novák's contact in West Berlin - Doctor Betzoldarm - reminds us of the 'Jewish-American conspiracy'. The Mašíns want to continue with their subversive activities in Czechoslovakia as agents of the American Intelligence. The spatial East-West division corresponds to the ideologically constructed world, contributing to the binary opposition between the happy new Communist bloc (led by the Soviet Union) and rotten capitalist West – 'Them'. On the other hand, the positive characters are usually simple, hard working, diligent and 'class conscious' people who happily participate in building the socialist state. The detectives are members of the National Security Police and their activity is interpreted as a struggle against the enemies of socialism.

Other figures also acquire positive characteristics. They usually have a working class background. They are 'heroes of everyday life' who were not born into this world with a unique mission (as the Mašíns in the heroic narratives) yet are not afraid to act bravely when they encounter the enemies of socialism. This feature can be discerned in all of the positive characters. It is the ambulance drivers, the policemen who, despite being tied up, do not hesitate to attack. These normal people represent the Communist 'Us', as Dijk put it: "who we are, what we stand for, what our values are, and what our relationships are with other groups" (Dijk 1998: 69). The good/bad division is based on class status. It permeates through the narrative structure attributing positive qualities to the working class people who have "unambitious, routine, everyday, ordinary lives: if they do manual work voluntarily (a boat engineer, a woman farmhand) they carry out the same type of activity as the Zeman team" (Bílek 2007: 108).

Special attention must be paid to the narrative configurations of both narratives. There are two narrative configurations. Major Zeman is a good example of a simple man who comes from a poor background belonging to the communist 'Us' – he is a non-hero. He shares with his colleagues the traumatic experience from the concentration camp. He is not a romantic hero as he is fully reliant on his team. The myth one encounters here is that of the social determination of the individual (Bílek 2007: 105) and impossibility of 'real' individual action. This mythical configuration contrasts with the romantic-heroic myth. The realistic non-hero's individuality and personal courage is limited by social and historical 'objective' conditions. All of these

features move *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* and the other 'socialist' detective stories away from proper romance and form what Peter Steiner called a 'Marxist romance' (Steiner 2000: 134) with not just one hero who would surpass the others and overcome his lot but with multiple objectively determined heroes.[53]

The narrative configuration of the TV series *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* still shows signs of the detective (romantic) narrative mode. There is a main positive figure (although non-heroic), the episodes have coherent plots with a beginning, middle and end and there is also a significant narrative device - a closure. The narrative discourse still plays an important role as it retains the main features of a detective story. However, the narrative configuration in *The Dead Do Not Talk* moves even further away from the narrative configuration of the detective genre. The main positive hero with whom the reader could identify is missing. Instead, at the very centre of the narrator's attention there are the anti-heroic figures of the Mašín brothers. Other positive figures are more 'flat' than the negative ones and more 'round' positive characters are not present here. The narrative does not have a coherent plot, it even lacks closure. The narrative coherency is diminished to the utmost degree.

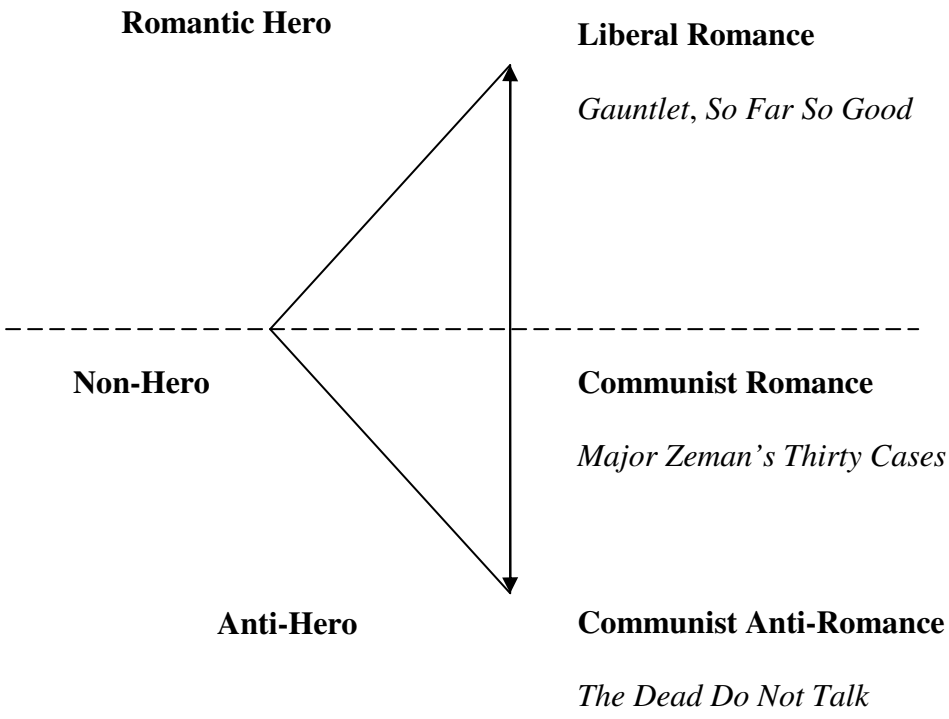
In *Major Zeman* and *The Dead Do Not Talk*, the narrative organisation either diminishes or excludes the hero. The narratives are less coherent which creates a void which is filled by ideological discourse. This in no way means that *The Dead Do Not Talk* and *Major Zeman* are 'more ideological' than the heroic narratives. Rather, it is that the ideological edifice is not supported by any clear mode of emplotment (romance, tragedy etc.) and it is not linked to any masterplot. As such, these narratives in comparison to *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet*, which are linked to the powerful myth with the structure of a romance, reveal their artificiality and instrumentality.

[53] It was, however, Hayden White who first pointed to the connection of Marx's conception of history to a romance paradigm: "It would not, then, be unjust to characterize the final vision of history which inspired Marx in his historical and social theorizing as a Romantic one." (White 1978: 282)

3.5 Conclusion: A Narrative and Ideological Triad

In these four narratives, we have identified three different narrative configurations and two ideological modes of signification. *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* are grounded in heroic myth and posses the plot structure of a romance. There are two main heroes (functioning as one), embodied by the Mašín brothers, who surpass the other characters with their unique qualities. The negative 'Them' is in the shade; the communists are presented as a united and abstract axis of evil, not as credible individuals. The reader is always reminded that they are evil, however, their motivation and personalities are not presented because this could blur the strict line dividing good from evil. The idea of a strong, free and predatory individual who is able to transcend the situation to which he is confined is at the core of the liberal ideological edifice. The Mašíns are able to win their mission against the Communists as well as their struggle in the capitalist jungle. Liberal ideology is fully congruent with the structure of romance. The narrative discourse is coherent, supported by a powerful myth which is congruent with the ideological discourse.

The second ideological position is the communist one. However, two different narrative configurations have been identified: non-heroic and anti-heroic. The non-heroic narrative modus which was widely produced in communist Czechoslovakia is partially coherent with romance but the main hero is substituted by multiple heroes. This is what Peter Steiner called a Marxist romance: "History, according to Marx, follows this romantic plot quite closely, though its hero is not one but many: the entire working class" (Steiner 2000: 119). Major Zeman and other socialist detectives are an embodiment of this type of hero. From the readers' perspective, it is perhaps not the best narrative device. However, the work has the structure of a detective story and it must be said that in the 1970s and 1980s, *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* did attract the attention of the public in Czechoslovakia. The narrative coherency is disturbed and the ideological edifice reveals itself. In the *Dead Do Not Talk,* the main hero is abandoned completely and the main position in the narrative structure is occupied by the anti-heroes. The story disintegrates into separate events; there is neither distinct beginning nor proper closure. The narrative discourse lacks coherency and ideological discourse takes over completely. The diagram illustrating the types of the narrative configurations can be now furnished with the particular ideological positions.


Romantic Hero
Liberal Romance
Gauntlet, So Far So Good
Non-Hero
Communist Romance
Major Zeman's Thirty Cases
Anti-Hero
Communist Anti-Romance
The Dead Do Not Talk

Conclusion

This thesis focuses on four narrative representations of the Mašín brothers. It aims to explore how the structures of these narratives are related to the values, beliefs and opinions they promote. The first part of the thesis analyses the two post-1989 narratives *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* from a narratological point of view. The Mašín brothers are portrayed here as positive heroes struggling for freedom and democracy. *Gauntlet* is a historical narrative and *So Far So Good* is a work of fiction. However, the examination of their inner narrative structure has proved that they share many features. The story begins with Josef Mašín Sr. and it has been identified as a 'shadow story' which generates a causal link between the actions of the Mašín brothers and their father. The end of the story is when the Mašín brothers, along with Milan Paumer, safely arrive in West Berlin and join the U.S. Army in order to continue with their struggle. In *So Far So Good,* the story ends with the Mašín brothers' successful business career in the USA. Both of these narratives clearly define the enemies. Those who are armed and wear uniforms of the Communist state represent its power and the Mašíns are justified in killing them if necessary. The analysis of the narrative voices in these two narratives has pointed out that in *Gauntlet* there is a traditional 'objective' type of narrator whereas in *So Far So Good*, the narrator blurs the line between the objective and subjective perception of reality. Both of these narrators, however, mediate solely the perspective of the heroes and not that of their adversaries. The narrators do not provide the reader with the motivations of their actions. The adversaries are not portrayed credibly and create an abstract 'axis of evil'.

The analysis of Barbara Masin's *Gauntlet* and Jan Novák's novel *So Far So Good* has demonstrated how deeply these narratives are embedded in a mythical universe. They are popular tales of courage and heroic struggle against the evil embodied in the communist regime and therefore they both can be identified as having the plot structure of romance which is "a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of the ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall" (White 1978: 9). The Mašíns are portrayed as the only people who were willing and able to fight against the Communists. Moreover, in *So Far So Good* they have acquired the features of the

romantic heroes who do not submit either to the Communists or to the harsh drill of the U.S. Army and who are also able to succeed in the free market economy.

This narrative configuration promotes a certain ideological standpoint. *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* are romances embedded in history. They refer to certain events and historical persons and, as such, they are denotative. Denotation is closely linked to an ideological discourse. The Mašíns fight against communism which is identified as a totalitarian system. The Communists are automatically regarded as negative characters ('Them') and the Mašíns and their friends who are fighting for liberal democracy are the positive characters ('Us'). *Gauntlet* and *So Far So Good* thus promote the idea of liberalism. The mythical universe realised in the form of romance corresponds to the liberal idea of a strong and unique individual who is able to break out of the situation to which he is confined. A narrative discourse is in congruence with an ideological discourse. This correspondence makes the narratives rhetorically effective as they are linked to the masterplot which is regarded as universal.

In the narratives produced during communist rule in Czechoslovakia, the villain-hero relationship is reversed. The textual analysis of *The Dead Do Not Talk* and *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* has disclosed that these texts share many substantial features. The narratives again sharply divide the good and bad characters. The Mašíns are staged as anti-socialist creatures and their goal is to regain power and class status. Moreover, they are alcoholics, loafers and thieves. The positive characters are then the heroes of everyday life who resist the bourgeois evil. In *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases*, there is the fictitious figure of Detective Zeman who is a realistic rather than a romantic hero. In contrast to *So Far So Good* and *Gauntlet* where the Mašíns clearly surpass the others, the figure of Jan Zeman is just one among many members of the team of investigators. Zeman lacks the essential features of a unique detective; he neither possesses ingenious deductive abilities nor is he the type of action hero such as James Bond. This disturbs the coherence of the narrative discourse, leaving an empty space which is filled with an ideological discourse. In *The Dead Do Not Talk,* the ideological discourse takes over completely. The Mašín brothers are in the very centre of the narrator's attention. The plot follows their terrorist actions until their escape to the USA. However, there is no main positive hero (a detective or a secret agent) who would resolutely oppose the Mašíns. The plot disintegrates as it describes solely the irrational behaviour of the criminals. These narrative features move *The*

Dead Do Not Talk away from a detective story (which is one of the realisations of romance). The narrative discourse is diminished to the utmost degree and the ideological edifice takes over.

The ideological background of these narratives comes from the Marxist idea of the social determination of the individual. This set of beliefs is in contrast to the liberal idea of a strong and unique human being who is able to change history. As it has been noted, the liberal ideology is in congruence with the heroic myth. The Mašín brothers are the prime example of how the contribution of the individual could "change the course of the Cold War" (Masin 2006) as well as how one can be successful if one works hard. On the other hand, communist mythology, in order to refute the idea of predatory individualism, has to stage not only one exquisite hero but plural heroes representing the entire working class. This is not compatible with the plot structure of romance as that requires a unique individual. In *Major Zeman's Thirty Cases* and *The Dead Do Not Talk* an ideological discourse takes over and reveals its artificiality. These narratives fail to fulfil the rules of a proper romance and therefore lose their rhetorical impact.

Communist ideology in the narratives produced before 1989 in Czechoslovakia is usually easily discernible. The question is whether we really live in a post-ideological world today. Peter Steiner claims that "the ideological battles of today are fought in Czechia on the floor of Parliament rather than in the pages of books" (Steiner 2000: 24). Can we really agree with his observation? This thesis can be regarded as an attempt to reassess this opinion. The Mašín brothers' narratives published today are far from relieved of ideology, but one can say that by using the powerful heroic myth which promotes liberal democracy, they seem to be more universal and natural than the narratives produced in the era of Communism.

Bibliography

Primary sources:

BABKA, Lukáš; VEBER, Václav et al. (2002): *Za svobodu a demokracii III. Třetí (protikomunistický) odboj*. Hradec Králové: Evropské hnutí v České republice, Univerzita Hradec Králové, Ústav filosofie a společenských věd v nakl. M&V.

JANSKÝ, R. (1966): *Tady Bezpečnost*. Prague: Naše vojsko.

LANGER, František (1992): *Pes druhé roty*. Prague: Albatros.

MASIN, Barbara (2005): O*dkaz. Pravdivý příběh bratří Mašínů*. Transl. by Leonid Křížek. Prague: Mladá fronta.

MASIN, Barbara (2006): *Gauntlet: five friends, twenty thousand enemy troops, and the secret that could have changed the course of the Cold War*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.

MAŠÍNOVÁ, Zdena; RUDOLF, Martin (2001): *Čtyři české osudy: tragický úděl rodiny Mašínovy*. Prague: Paseka.

NĚMEČEK, Jan (1998): *Mašínové. Zpráva o dvou generacích*. Prague: Torst.

NOVÁK, Jan (2004): *Zatím dobrý. Mašínovi a největší příběh studené války* [So Far So Good]. Transl.by Petra Žallmanová. Brno: Petrov.

PROCHÁZKA, Jaroslav (1947): *Sestupme ke kořenům…! Příspěvek ke kronice rodu Mašínů*. Nákladem Míst. Nár. výboru, Lošany: privately published.

RAMBOUSEK, Ota (1990): *Jenom ne strach.* Prague: Edice RR.

SEQUENS, Jiří (1975): *Třicet případů majora Zemana.* [Major Zeman's Thirty Cases] Episode 8, *Strach* [Fear]. Czechoslovak Television.

ŠULIG, R. J. (1976): *Životy pro život.* Prague: Naše vojsko.

VADAS, Martin (1996): *Země bez hrdinů, země bez zločinců…* Documentary Film, Czech Television.

VADAS, Martin (1999): *Proti komunismu se zbraní v ruce*. Documentary Film, Czech Television.

VOZKA, Jaroslav (1946): *Hrdinové domácího odboje*. Prague: Práce.

VRBECKÝ, František (1985): *Mrtví nemluví*. Prague: Naše vojsko.

Czechoslovak Periodical Publications

Rudé Právo, 19 January 1955.

Voják, issues 17-20, 1965.

Secondary sources:

ABBOTT, Porter (2002): *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ARISTOTLE (1982): *Poetics*. Transl By James Hulton. New York; London: Norton.

BARTHES, Roland (1972): *Mythologies* [Mythologies, originally 1957]. Transl. by Annete Lavers. London: Johnatan Cape.

BARTHES, Roland (1975): "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives" [Introduction à l'analyse structural des récits, originally 1966]

Transl. by Lionel Duisit. *New Literary History*, vol. 6, n. 2, On Narrative and Narratives, (Winter 1975), p. 237-272.

BARTHES, Roland (1986): *The Rustle of Language*. Transl. by Richard Howard. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

BÍLEK, Petr A. et al. (2007): *James Bond a major Zeman. Ideologizující vzorce vyprávění*. Prague: Pistorius, Olšanská paseka.

BORDWELL, David (1985): *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

CHANDLER, Daniel (2002): *Semiotics. The Basics*. London and New York: Routledge.

CHATMAN, Seymour (1978): *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

ČULÍK, Jan (2007): *Jací jsme: česká společnost v hraném filmu devadesátých a nultých let*. Brno: Host.

DIJK, Theun A. van (1998): *Ideology. A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.

EAGLETON, Terry (1991): *Ideology. An Introduction*. London: Verso.

ECO, Umberto (1982): "The Narrative Structure in Fleming" in Waites, B.; Bennet, T. (Eds.): *Popular Culture: Past and Present*. London: Croom Helm.

FORSTER, Edward, M. (1927): *Aspects of the novel*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

FRYE, Northrop (1976): *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: Harvard University Press.

FRYE, Northrop (1957): *The Anatomy of Criticism: four essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

GENETTE, Gérard (1997): *Paratexts: Thresholds Of Interpretation*. Transl. by Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

HORÁČKOVÁ, Alice (2004). "Jan Novák: Předkládám fakta. Úsudek ať si každý udělá sám." *Mladá Fronta Dnes*, 2.7., p. 6.

JANÁČEK, Pavel (1999): "Aby revoluce zůstala revolucí: Major Zeman jako literární postava a jeho tvůrce". *Respekt* 1999, vol. 38, p. 18.

JANOUŠEK, Pavel et al. (2008): *Dějiny české literatury 1945-1989*, IV. 1969-89. Prague: Academia.

MACURA, Vladimír (1983): *Znamení zrodu: české obrození jako kulturní typ*. Prague: Československý spisovatel.

MACURA, Vladimír (1992): *Šťastný věk (Symboly, emblémy, mýty 1948–1989).* Prague: Pražská imaginace.

MEGILL, Alan; McCLOSKEY, Donald (1987): "The Rhetoric of History" in Nelson, J. S., A. Megill; D.N. Mc Closkey eds.: *The Rhetoric of The Human Sciences: Languages and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

PÁSKOVÁ, Marie; ŠVÉDA, Josef (2007): "Čekám na film o Mašínech…". *Dobrá adresa*, vol. 4, p. 3, http://www.dobraadresa.cz/2007/DA04_07.pdf

PRINCE, Gerald (1982): *Narratology: The Form And Functioning Of Narrative*. Berlin; New York: Mouton.

RIMMON-KENAN, Shlomith (1983): *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. London: Meuthen& Co. Ltd.

ROSENBLUM, Nancy L. (1987): *Another Liberalism. Romanticism and the Reconstruction of Liberal Thought*. Cambridge, Mass.; London, England: Harvard University Press.

RULAND, Richard; BRADBURY, Malcolm (1992): *From Puritanism to Postmodernism: A History of American Literature*. New York; London: Penguin Books.

RŮŽIČKA, Daniel (2005): *Major Zeman – propaganda nebo krimi?* Prague: Práh.

STEINER, Peter (2000): *The Deserts of Bohemia. Czech Fiction and Its Social Context*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

ŠTOCHL, Miroslav (2007): "Špioni a my" in *James Bond a major Zeman. Ideologizující vzorce vyprávění*. Prague: Pistorius a Olšanská paseka.

TRÁVNÍČEK, Jiří (2004): "Ostří hoši, kteří se s tím moc nemazali". *Host: měsíčník pro literaturu a čtenáře*, vol. 20, n. 9, p. 37-39.

TRÁVNÍČEK, Jiří (2006): "Román. Nesoustavné poznámky 3". *Host: měsíčník pro literaturu a čtenáře*, vol. 22, n. 3, p. 24.

WHITE, Hayden (1978): *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

WHITE, Hayden (1987): *The Content of the Form***:** *Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

ŽIŽEK, Slavoj (1991): *Looking Awry. An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

ŽIŽEK, Slavoj (1994): "The Spectre of Ideology." In: Žižek, Slavoj ed.: *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso, p. 1-33.