

The Interplay of Ontological and Non-Ontological Discourses in Bohumil Hrabal's Novel *Too Loud a Solitude*

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Abstract

Bohumil Hrabal's novel *Too Loud a Solitude* is seen to comprise of two parallel narrative discourses which follow different epistemological principles. Whereas the first of the narrative voices which formulate the ontological discourse relies heavily upon Hrabal's use of intersexual references to canonical western texts, authorial figures and allusions to the Desecration Cogito, the alternate non-ontological discourse tries to understand the experiences and encounters of the narrator Hanta, who works at as compactor of wastepaper and old books.

These two discursive voices exist simultaneously in Bohumil Hrabal's novel, and interact with each other to create a complex narrative structure which goes on to provide, both the novel as well as the narrator with a self-reflexive narrative consciousness.

Furthermore, the non-ontological voice in the text which traces the traditional ideals and notions of Western art and metaphysics is used by the narrator Hanta as a mode of digression, to conceal and deviate from the absence of his lost lover. An absence which becomes the central problematic in Hanta's life, which in turn is revealed and assessed by the non-ontological strain in the novel, through the Derridean metaphors of cinders and ashes, thereby intertwining the two discursive models, in the textual fabric of Hrabal's narrative.

[**Keywords:** narrative discourses, ontological, non-ontological, western metaphysics, cinders and ashes]

INTRODUCTION

"Two things fill my mind with ever new and increasing wonder- the starry firmament above me and the moral law within me," but, changing my mind, I leafed through the younger Kant, and found an even more beautiful passage: "When the tremulous radiance of a summer night fill with twinkling stars, and the moon itself is full, I am slowly drawn into state of enhanced sensitivity, made of friendship and disdain for the world and eternity" (Hrabal 47-48).

-Bohumil Hrabal, *Too Loud a Solitude*

Bohumil Hrabal's novel *Too Loud a Solitude* can be said to follow the simultaneous presence of two narrative voices. That is, the storytelling mechanism in the text displays a double voicedness which goes on to create a parallel and divergent narrative. While one of the voices shuffle through the cross cultural currents in the history of Western metaphysics, the other voice tries to trace the event-like nature of real life insights which epitomize the narrative moment of the narrator Hanta - unlike the first, this second voice understands life not through 'philosophy', 'literature' or 'aesthetics', but partakes directly in the flow of existence through instances of 'epiphany', 'self-alienation', 'non-being' and 'phenomenon'.

Hrabal's storytelling therefore can be understood on the basis of two different perspectives of generating *meaning* and *understanding*:

1. The subjective orientation of being and knowledge on the one hand, and
2. The event-like nature of life on the other hand

However, before we undertake this comparative study between these two prevalent narrative discourses¹ in Hrabal's novel, a comprehensive understanding of what comprises the *ontological*² and *knowledge-oriented first voice* and the *non-ontological*³ and *event-centric second voice* in our discussion is required.

What will entail the *ontological sense* in this paper is a more traditional and subject oriented comprehension of the meaning of human life and history as is illustrated by Hanta's constant divergences into literary, philosophical and theological works. This would be discussed in the paper by constructing a narrative made out of the many intertextual references which the narrator of the novel frequently resorts to, from the selection of rare manuscripts which he finds through his experiences as a compactor of old books.

The books and works which he refers to go on to construct a coherent narrative discourse of its own in the novel which formulates a particular way by which human history and life can be understood and given meaning to.

The *non-ontological* sense on the other hand can be understood by the narrator's understanding of his own life as a series of discreet yet thematically connected moments or events which occur as consequence of 'insights', 'epiphanies' and 'realizations'.

These events occur only as pure phenomenon and do not implicate any kind of latent meaning which can be interpreted or gotten at. Subsequently, these moments of pure phenomenon not only provide the narrator with a more instinctual and intuitive understanding of life in its present and fleeting moment, but also mark a particular way of knowing the world and the events which take place inside it, events which remain irreducible and render themselves as 'traces without any origins'.

Therefore, whereas the historical and knowledge oriented voice in Hrabal's novel would depict its narrator's continual reliance on ontological modes of knowing through a number of intersexual references which he makes, references of works that remain emblematic of Western literature and metaphysics, and references which thereby always trace themselves back to a subject, an author or a philosophical doctrine, the

immediate and untraceable nature of the non-ontological would on the other hand, be investigated by Jacques Derrida's metaphor of 'cinders and ashes', which he takes up in his book *Cinders*, to illustrate the ultimately irreducible and intransitive nature of being and experience. This idea of intransitivity in Derrida's book would relate directly to certain encounters which Hrabal's narrator goes on to experience throughout the course of the novel, experiences which Jacques Derrida would consider, "as the better paradigm for...the trace- something that erases itself totally, radically, while presenting itself" (*Cinders* 1).

The Ontological Discourse in Bohumil Hrabal's *Too Loud a Solitude*

Such wisdom as I have has come to me unwittingly, and I look on my brain as a mass of hydraulically compacted thoughts, a bale of ideas, and my head as a smooth, shiny Aladdin's lamp (Hrabal 2).

The first chapter of the novel itself introduces us to the related questions of 'Will' and the 'Subject', and how reality needs the both (simultaneously) to exist at all. The narrator displays his epistemological strength, his 'will to power', to constitute how he envisions the world around him by explaining why he has been drinking beer for thirty five years,

"I, who live in a land that has known how to read and write for fifteen generations, drink so that what I read will prevent me from falling into everlasting sleep" (Hrabal 3), immediately assigning a greater philosophic depth to his otherwise pedantic banter by citing Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*- "...because I share with Hegel the view that a noble hearted man is not yet a nobleman, nor a criminal a murderer" (Hrabal 3).

In the second part of this treatise named *On Morality*, Hegel emphasizes the role of human subjectivity in the construction of the universe, thereby assigning the world an undisputed locus in the name of the subject and its being. Stating man's ability to be simultaneously aware of his own identity and will Hegel claims, Subjectivity is the conception made definite, differing therefore from the abstract, general will. Further, the will of the subject, though it still retains traces of self-involved simplicity, is the will of an individual, who is an object for himself. Hence subjectivity is the realization of the conception (Hegel 96).

This subject orientedness of both the narrator and as well as the novel allows the former to formulate a system of epistemological representations which not only privileges the way the narrator Hanta views life in the working class underbelly of post-war Prague, but also depict how his personal history as a compactor of old books makes him interpret the world around him in a way which complements his life and profession.

As a compactor of wastepaper and old books Hrabal's narrator remains very clear about his tendencies to correlate his thoughts to the world around him, a correlation which is not at all unmediated but always according to him, related to the unorthodox education he has obtained from the books he has come across at the press in which he works. In fact the 'freeplay' of subjective thoughts based on his experiences on the one hand and epistemological doctrines which he gathers from his life as a worker in the hydraulic press on the other hand, provide the narrative surface of the novel with two different

discourses which constantly relate and refer to one another either as forms of critique or as methods of assimilation.

Using a metaphor of his workplace Hanta stresses upon this very notion of 'interdiscursive' freeplay⁴ which is presented in the text, claiming at the very beginning of the novel that, I [he] am a jug filled with water both magic and plain...My education has been so unwitting I can't quite tell which of my thoughts come from me and which from my books...such wisdom as I have, has come to me unwittingly, and I look on my brain as a mass of hydraulically compacted thoughts, a bale of ideas... (Hrabal 1).

Acclimatized therefore to the general workings of 'decay', 'erosion', 'recycling', 'death' and 'mortality' as a destroyer of old and discarded manuscripts, the values of which remain universal, and his simultaneous familiarity with many of those works, makes his narration sway between the metaphors of digestion and decomposition, the philosophical and the experiential and the sacred and profane, as he goes on to describe the functioning of the hydraulic press in the most poetic way possible at the beginning of the third chapter,...the wastepaper, piled to the ceiling, wet and mouldy, ferments in a way that makes manure seem sweet, a swamp decomposing in the depths of my cellar...from a stump rotting in the mire (Hrabal 21).

This psychological blending of high and low culture is seen again as he refers to the works of Carl Sandburg and more particularly to his poem *Momus* while leaving the crematorium after the death of his mother, associating both the event and the text in an epistemological interplay,

I watched the smoke rising from the chimney into the sky, watched mama making her way upward to the heavens, but before leaving I decided to...stand there and think of the lines from Sandburg about how all that remains of a man is the phosphorus for a box of matches or the iron for a noose-worthy nail (Hrabal 13).

The reference made is to emphasize the limits of human mortality and the transient nature of the human flesh, a similar theme which the poet expounds in his poem *Momus*. In the poem, a classical symbol of satire and mockery is used by Sandburg to epitomize the face of wisdom in an anthropocentric universe that is always and forever consumed by conflict, war and death. In his poem, the figure of Momus is represented as a bronze statue which stands erect in the face of continuous adversity through the course of human history. It survives through the many changing fortunes of human joy and misery, the cycles of life, which always ends in despair, war and bloodshed; yet Momus maintains his smiling face of everlasting wisdom through every such alteration in Man's fate, knowing completely well the undeniable and equally futile tendencies present in us as a species, and consequently, offering an ironical yet vivid and in depth critique of the human condition.

I wonder, Momus,

Whether shadows of the dead sit somewhere and look with deep laughter

On men who play in terrible earnest the old, known, solemn repetitions of history.

A droning monotone soft as sea laughter hovers from your kindliness of bronze,

You give me the human ease of a mountain peak, purple, silent; (Sandburg 103).

Whereas the reference to Sandburg immediately reveals the narrator's predilection towards the irrefutable presence of conflict, war and deterioration in the history of Man, and the wise man's self-alienating course from such a predestination, Hanta's closely packed allusions in the third chapter to the 'Marxist Theory of the State', Hegel's idea of a 'dialectically eternal progression', and Arthur Rimbaud's poem *A Season in Hell* reinstates the narrator's vision of man's political predicament and offers a close critique of utopian socialism, stating the former's close proximity to human sentiments, which are ultimately selfish and centered around the fear of death and paralysis, as he proclaims,

I was always amazed at Hegel and what he taught me, namely, that the only one thing on earth worthy of fear is a situation that is petrified, congealed, or dying, and the only thing worthy of joy is a situation where not only the individual but also society as a whole wages a constant battle for self-justification (Hrabal 23).

Furthermore, the reference to Rimbaud introduces into the novel and within the narrator a more internal and spiritual sense of conflict, finally reversing the interior-exterior dialectic by introducing Christ's assertion of war from Mathhew 10:34, stating how "I could grasp the true nature of Christ's words, I come not to send peace but a sword"(Hrabal 23).

The narrator at this particular juncture in the novel presents/reiterates the theme of perpetual conflict by juxtaposing historical and political battles with the battle of the human soul. The juxtaposition is not just a superficial one, but runs through the context of his own life. Hanta imagines, below his rat infested apartment "two tightly organized rodent factions engaged at this very moment in a life and death struggle for supremacy of the sewers, a great rodent war over the rights to all the refuse and fecal matter flowing through the sewers to Podbaba" (Hrabal 22). This Hegelian metaphor of historical conflict is further accentuated by turning the ordinary and everyday conflict between rats into including universal values, cultural ethics and a deep rooted history of racial segregation in the western world. Hanta explains,

Today however my friends made an even deeper impression on me with reports of a war, a total, humanlike war, between white rats and brown, which though it ended in an absolute victory of the white, had led to their immediate breakdown into two groups, two opposing clans (Hrabal 22).

With the metaphor finally coming a full circle when the narrator cites Hegel from the *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* just after explaining the rat-war, The winning side would again break down, like gases and metals and all organic matter, into two dialectically opposed camps, the struggle for supremacy bringing life back to life, the desire for conflict resolution, promising imminent equilibrium, the world never stumbling for an instant (Hrabal 23).

The reference to Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell* completes the final extension of the Hegelian conceit. The poem, composed by Arthur Rimbaud on the verge of psychological madness and a spiritual impasse, follows the two voices of the poet. Much like Hrabal's narrative the poem construes a spiritual journey which begins with a descent into the

poet's mind and concludes with the section named *Farewell* where the poet humanizes such an internal conflict, imparting it upon the universal man relating it to our history of violence, and reminding his readers that, "A spiritual battle is as brutal as the battle of men" (Rimbaud 303).

A testimony which remains reminiscent of the narrator's view of his own life in Prague (and also of many others like him) as he mentions at the end of the third chapter; a life that is as much mental and interior as it is physical and exterior,

...my mind is clear by the thought that I am not alone, that there are thousands like me in Prague working underground...and that they have love, living, life-giving thoughts running through their heads (Hrabal 26).

This constructivist undercurrent (of conflict, war, violence and decay) which the narrator of the novel uses, by his employment of citations, references and allusions to great European writers and texts constitutes the ontological discourse in Hrabal's novel. This ontology, elaborated upon by the narrator of *Too Loud a Solitude*, functions purely in the realm of anthropocentric metaphysics (including Eurocentric notions of ethics, aesthetics and religion) and Western philosophy's overriding obsession with the superior status of the author and the subject on the one hand and with the related themes of conflict, war, death and decay on the other hand- an obsession with which the narrator Hanta is able to identify himself and therefore subsequently embark upon a philosophical-literary journey to understand and locate his existence as a working class individual living in late twentieth century Prague, within the political and cultural world around him and inside the nature of the universe as a whole.

The Non-Ontological Discourse in Bohumil Hrabal's *Too Loud a Solitude* "... how in the silence, the absolute silence of the night, when the senses lie dormant, an immortal spirit speaks in a nameless tongue of things that can be grasped but not described" (Hrabal 40-41).

The narrator of *Too loud a Solitude*, Hanta, displays a particular proclivity towards describing 'occurrences' and 'experiences' in his life that refuses to be broken down into encounters with any kinds of meaning or truth, both in the 'immediate sense' and also in the 'universal epistemological sense'. That is, the narrator Hanta focuses on specific 'events' from his life that remain irreducible yet contribute heavily to how the readers understand the narrator's journey inside the novel, his desires and wishes and the most intimate driving forces which constitutes how he thinks, what he thinks about and the eventual outcome of these thoughts.

This 'event-like' nature of Hanta's experiences point to a more non-ontological understanding of life and meaning, with respect to the narrator of the novel. That is, unlike the ontological strain in the narrative, which focuses more on traditional euro-centric literary and philosophical works, this non-ontological development and analysis tries to illustrate and understand how the narrator's one true yet unfortunate experience of love with the initially unnamed gypsy girl dominates his obsession to understand life and interpret its meaning from old books which he discovers in his press - a meaning which is suffused with the ideas of 'decomposition', 'death', 'decay' and 'everlasting conflicts', thereby compensating for his rejection in love and his constant desire to consequently cultivate an asymptomatic death drive.

This section of the paper strives to understand the 'event-oriented' nature of this specific discourse that runs throughout the context of the novel by the double metaphors of 'cinders' and 'ashes' which Jacques Derrida presents and uses in his book *Cinders*.

Jacques Derrida describes in his book how certain 'irreducible' and 'unfixed' events can be used to understand particular aspects of reality, aspects which in this scenario helps us interpret the nature of Hanta's life and his innermost obsessions and passions.

According to Derrida, pure event-like occurrences (much like the burning cinder) point to

1. Traces without any origins. A 'traceless trace' that does not trail back to an origin 'Subject' or 'Being', but refers back upon the nature of the 'trace-event' itself.
2. The transitory nature of things, and therefore the 'absence of being' and the 'presence of non-being', and
3. How events reveal the conditions of the possibility of their own existence. That is, they uncover how they themselves came to be.

Specific 'events' in Hrabal's novel are marked by 'insights', 'epiphanies' and 'realizations' on the part of the narrator, each of which fulfill the conditions of the 'irreducible event' set by Jacques Derrida in *Cinders*. These moments of epiphany and insight occur abruptly and at unexpected places in the novel, where the narrator is immediately able to grasp the innate nature of a specific moment, not through his sense of acquired knowledge but by intuition alone, portraying therefore the non-ontological and intransitive properties of the former.

It is Chapter five of Hrabal's novel which introduces the readers to the unnamed gypsy girl for the first time, as the narrator recollects, in one of the many drunken visions he has throughout the novel, the only time he has ever fallen in love. This is one of the few instances where Hrabal's narrator is seen contemplating on love, sensuality and beauty rather than destruction and death although his sequence of recollection ends on an abysmal note, ..as usual, when I drift off, I was joined by a tiny gypsy girl in the form of the milky Way, the quiet innocent gypsy girl who was the love of my youth...all things were more beautiful bathed in twilight...by the flames in the stove's open door the gypsy girl stood up naked, as she moved I saw her body outlined in a yellow halo..one evening I came home to find her gone...later I learned that she had been picked up by the gestapo and sent with a group of gypsies to a concentration camp, and whether she was burned to death at Majdanek or asphyxiated in an Auschwitz gas chamber, she never returned...a tiny gypsy girl whose name I'd never quite known (48-49).

It is this unknown and unnamed gypsy girl who haunts the narrator and his life at the hydraulic press as a compactor of books. And this namelessness of his only lover and her sudden and heartbreaking disappearance from his life becomes the central absence in the novel, an absence which the narrator constantly tries to compensate for by his nihilistic knowledge of universals. As Derrida says in his essay *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, it is these unknown 'absences' and 'spaces' in one's life which end up determining how his or her desire for the Other is constituted, and in *Cinders*, the same thought is

followed up and extended upon by the ubiquitous and pervasive nature of the event that leads to this creation of a 'nameless absence'.

Derrida claims that it is the trace of the nameless subject, the absent being, the alleged non-being which assumes importance in constructing the very nature of reality itself. Just like the narrator of the novel would never successfully come to know the real name of his long lost gypsy girl, a girl which he can only conjure in fleeting moments of vision, the 'cinder' presents itself only as trace, the trace of a subject that can never be known, but a trace that is powerful enough to construct and create life, experience and reality. Ned Lukacher explains this double bind, in the introductory chapter to Derrida's book,

A cinder is a very fragile entity that falls to dust, that crumbles and disperses. But cinders also name the resilience and the intractability of what is most delicate and most vulnerable (Cinders 2)

Here in Hrabal's narrative, it is not the name of the gypsy girl that is important therefore, but the event-like nature of her existence in the narrator's mind. She exists not as a name but as a complete story, and therefore in the form of a 'pure event' in the mind and memory of the narrator. She cannot be designated by a proper noun, but only by a place and space inside the narrator's memory. As a 'there-ness'.

Il y a là centre literally means "it has ashes there,there." By rendering the idiomatic il y a by "there is," we install the intransitive verb "to be" where, properly speaking, it does not belong, for in the French idiom what is in question is not the "being" of the entity but it's "thereness" (Cinders 2).

This 'there-ness' of the event is highlighted at the very beginning of the novel when the narrator Hanta describes the incorporeality of a well written book in the shape of a brilliantly formed insight- "When my eye falls on a real book, and looks past the printed word, what it sees is disembodied thoughts flying through air...because in the end everything is air" (Hrabal 2).

It is this claim that "everything is air" which forms the crux of the insight, an insight which is irreducible, because here air itself is thought of as irreducible matter into which all reducible matter eventually turns, providing it with an untraceability that is beyond analysis.

Christopher Butler in his book *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction* defines epiphany as a revelation, which lies beyond the grasp of discursive thinking, but achieved only "the close subjective apprehension of something which is entirely particular" (Butler 55).

In chapter three of Hrabal's novel, the narrator, while roaming around on the streets of Prague and on his way back to his cellar, while contemplating upon "the melancholy of a world eternally under construction" (Hrabal 23), looks up to the cityscape around him and undergoes an epiphanic moment, in which he envisions the classical model of civilization come to life. He reflects that, "through my tears I noticed something I never noticed before, namely, that the facades, the fronts of all the buildings, public and residential - I could see them all the way up to the drainpipes- were a reflection of

everything Hegel and Goethe had dreamed of and aspired to, the Greece in us, the beautiful Hellenic model and goal (Hrabal 24).

Similarly, later on in the same chapter, he is able to compare and associate in a moment of realization, the conflicting forces at play in the immediacy of his life and within the universe at large. He says, "I compact wastepaper, and when I press the green button the wall of my press advances, and when I press the red button it retreats, thereby describing a basic motion of the world, like the bellows of a concertina, like a circle, which must return to its point of departure" (Hrabal 28).

This duplicit and karmic force which cancels each other out in a contradictory motion of infinite embrace is repeated again at the beginning of chapter five where he upholds the sanctity and the education that is required for one to work in a hydraulic press. For the narrator Hanta, working in the press is a mere appearance oriented facsimile for the actual and inner functioning of the universe (of an infinite expansion and an infinite regress), the workings of which must be understood by the worker if he has to acknowledge the work that he does and the labor which he expends. Using classical terminology Hanta reiterates using a similar metaphor to that of the bellows of a concertina,...like a blacksmith's bellows, like everything in my press, turning into its opposite...because in my profession spiral and circle come together and *progressus ad futurum* meets *regressus ad originem*, and I experience it first-hand (Hrabal 37).

These moments of insights and epiphanies, as talked about earlier point to a central incapacity in the narrator and therefore in the way he lives and conducts his life. The incapacity which has followed from him being stuck within the memory of the nameless gypsy girl, an incapacity which has rendered his life a mere compensation for a loss from which he can never recover, and which condemns him to a loud and inescapable solitude. It is this self-realization of a static and petrified life within which he exists, which marks the central problematic in the novel,

It never ceased to amaze me, until suddenly one day I felt beautiful and holy for having had the courage to hold on to my sanity after all I'd seen and been through, body and soul, in too loud a solitude, and slowly I came to the realization that my work was hurling me headlong into an infinite field of omnipotence (Hrabal 41-42).

This regression into the other side of life, and a prolonged death drive, exhibited in the narrator's choice of profession and his constant deciphering of the universe in terms of decomposition and waste, and especially his attempted suicide at the end of the text can be understood by Derrida's metaphor of the 'burning fire'. Hrabal's narrative becomes inferential of a figurative fire which burns into the life of the narrator, erasing him at every moment in the text, and simultaneously taking him back towards the very origin where the erasure had begun - the memory and event of the unnamed gypsy girl, "and it is there a cinder burns" (Cinders 3).

It is her fire which burns him up towards his own 'erasure and death', a fire whose presence he had once noticed and realized during his limited time with her, "At first I thought she put so much wood on the fire just to win me over, but then I realized it was in her, the fire was in her, she couldn't live without fire" (Hrabal 45)

This insight becomes the primary realization for Hrabal's narrator in the novel, for it is in the gypsy girl within whom he locates the crux and the fire of his very existence. His paradise. And on the verge of a delirious death he finally accepts his vocation and predicament. As he envisions his afterlife, he remarks,

"I am entering a world where I have never been and holding a book open to a page that says 'Every beloved object is the center of a garden of paradise'" (Hrabal 85)

As the novel ends with Hanta's implied death, and therefore his complete erasure from life, the driving force of his life, a force which has been concealed and had remained hidden and elusive throughout the whole narrative finally reveals itself in the penultimate sentence of the novel. This final revelation which brings forth the sacrifice of the one who writes and produces the very text, is what for Derrida constitutes the 'cinder', a "name among others for these remains without a remainder" (Cinders 1), that something that erases itself totally, radically, while presenting itself.

...and the gypsy girl sends me a message from the ground, I see it making its way up the cord, I can almost reach it now, I stretch out my hand, I read the large, childlike letters: ILONKA. Yes, that was her name (Hrabal 86).

CONCLUSION

This interplay between the visible, the traceable and the ontological in the novel on the one hand, and the invisible, intransitive and the non-ontological on the other hand, not only makes Bohumil Hrabal's *Too Loud a Solitude*, a complicated and problematic novel in terms of its intended meaning and the many motivations behind the narrator's life and experiences, but also demands a critical reflexivity on the part of the one who reads.

This narrative and 'interdiscursive' buffering and interrelatedness culminate within the novel in the many moments of vision, dreams, intoxication and subliminal haze which the narrator experiences, pointing to the novelist's ability to construct a narrative that allows a considerable amount of epistemological 'freeplay' as far as the given narrator is concerned, providing him a double voiced-ness which prevails throughout his storytelling.

While I was on my fourth mug of beer, I noticed a pleasant looking young man next to the press, and I knew then and there that it was Jesus Himself. And soon he was joined by an old man...and I knew on the spot it could only be Lao-tze...my grandfathers and great-grandfathers had visions too when they drank, and they saw fairy tale characters (Hrabal 32-33).

Continuing in his drunken stupor, later on in the same chapter, I saw Jesus as a playboy and Lao-tze as an old gland abandoned bachelor...I saw Jesus as a romantic, Lao-tze as a classicist, Jesus as the flow, Lao-tze as the ebb, Jesus as spring, Lao-tze as autumn...Jesus as *progressus ad futurum*, Lao-tze as *regressus ad originem* (Hrabal 40).

And although it is the ontological sense which gives the novel and all the instances of 'intertextuality' present in it, a unified sense of truth-value, the non-ontological and deconstructive tendencies present in the text provide it with a dimension that helps us get closer to the psychological and emotional intricacies of the narrator, and also makes us look at Bohumil Hrabal's *Too Loud a Solitude*, as one single irreducible event which is

to be experienced and felt and not to be comprehended through interpretation(s) or by constructing meaning(s), which may confer upon it any kind of epistemological fixity.

NOTES

1. Discourse can be understood as a set of statements that legitimize or tries to legitimize a particular way of looking into the world or trying to interpret it.
2. Ontological here would concern chiefly western metaphysics' emphasis on the subject of a particular discourse or discipline.
3. The non-ontological would concern (a) the post-structuralist poetics of absence and non-being and (b) phenomenology's emphasis on the event or the phenomenon.
4. Jacques Derrida uses the word 'freeplay' in his essay *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* to designate the radical freedom of signs within a signifying system (he also simultaneously questions the structurality of such systems as well).

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