Title: "The World is an Absolute Toy to my Absolute Will." Ladislav Klíma's Egotism, Ludibrionism, and the Underground Culture of Czechoslovakia Under Soviet Rule

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Over forty years after his death Ladislav Klíma's works, concepts and philosophies became one major source for the progressive literary production of Czech community. The aggressive oppression of communist power gave them new significance. In order to understand the absurdity and dark cheerfulness of Czech underground culture in the 1970s and 80s, an analysis of Klíma's thought in his grotesque novel *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch* is necessary. Klíma asserts that pure subjectivity is in fact the only certainty, and yet a sovereign existence is achieved only through recognition. Hence one's own will is the only subject to be recognized and afforded any real agency. I propose to focus on how this philosophy is inscribed in the major bizarre characters of the novel: Sternenhoch, and Helga. Concentrating on the paradoxical, focalized narration could help us understand how the "the world" is in an actuality very different entity from that which it is traditionally perceived to be, the word is in fact "absurd," inconsequential and a void upon which a sovereign individual will imprint meaning. Since the world is the subject of individual will, and is not taken seriously, the roles accorded to "world" and "individual" are reversed. It is such conceptualization that was so important for the underground culture. The paper will also deal with the irony and paradox of Klíma's god-man longing for the absolute, which ought to remind us of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's "Übermensch" was a major concern of Klíma's theoretical writing and his works of fiction could be seen as application of these ideas, but in Klíma's own paradoxical "ludibrional" way (these ideas are subjects of "the game"). All this helped to create the "merry" underground culture and to found freedom even in a ideologically oppressive environment.