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Title: Fundamental Rules of Human Coexistence: Place and Time in Bohumil Hrabal's *Mr. Kafka and Other Tales from the Time of the Cult*

Abstract:

*They were people who had not forgotten the fundamental house rules of human coexistence and ... were able to call things and events by their real names and recognize them for what they were.*

Bohumil Hrabal, 1965

In Bohumil Hrabal's works the collapse of place and time is one of the central themes. Many titles of his novels carry spatial and temporal characteristics such as *In-House Weddings*, *A Little Town Where Time Stood Still*, etc. Even though Hrabal's texts usually recall an unconnected collage of images and short parallel stories, it is clear that Hrabal constructed in his own way an architecture of narrative that commented on, questioned, and resisted his time. The focus of this paper will be one of his early works written in the 1950s, later rewritten in order to satisfy the censors, and translated into English only in 2015. *Advertisement for The House Where I Do Not Want to Live Anymore* (in English *Mr. Kafka and Other Tales from the Time of the Cult*) shows the various spaces of postwar Prague which are full of longing for another time, a world "where humor and metaphysical escape can reign supreme." In the preface to his book (1965), Hrabal claims that the reader is about to face not a condemnation of "the time of the cult of personality," but an assurance that that particular era had the potential to produce not only something real but also something with which "it would be possible to go on living."

The more specific aim of this paper is to understand how during the Stalinist dark ages Hrabal manages to create a novel that nurtures the nostalgic idea of a brighter future. This nostalgic idea does not necessarily presume resistance to the state but follows total realism. This paper will also consider how this collapse of the reality and Hrabal's understanding of time and space influences Hrabal's writing. In particular, this paper seeks to recreate Hrabal's space in the novel: the buildings, the streets, the city, the routes of the characters, and what they all mean for the structure of the novel. Hrabal's surroundings, whether imaginary or real, emerge as one of the foundations for understanding and interpreting his vision of his time and of his existence.