

Title: Bohumil Hrabal's Metaphysics of Recycling: Dítě's Body and Haň'a's Books
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Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal's novellistic masterpiece *Too Loud a Solitude* (written 1976) has been analyzed and appreciated from many different standpoints: as a distinctly postmodernist reflection on the nature of art and authorship; as a protest against the destruction of culture wreaked by Husák's Czechoslovakia and other repressive regimes; as a mature example of the author's aesthetics of severe contrasts and confrontations; and as a summation of his existential philosophical outlook. This paper specifically examines the novella's central motifs of waste and recycling and relates them to the autobiographical protagonist Haň'a's meditations on the relative permanence or mutability of human beings, books, works of art, and ideas. Although at times Haň'a and Hrabal seem to deny or abhor the mortality of people and books, this study argues that the prevailing sentiment of both hero and author is a stoic—or perhaps rather an Ovidian or Heraclitan—acceptance of the impermanence of all things. By embracing the destruction in his wastepaper press of cultural treasures and eventually (through suicide) even of his own identity, Haň'a advances a positive reading of *panta rhei* as a natural process in which new life, beauty and value inevitably rise from the ashes of ruin. In so doing, Haň'a echoes the mature thoughts of Jan Dítě, the protagonist of Hrabal's novel *I Served the King of England* (written 1971), who comes to relish the anticipation of his dead body's decomposition into matter that will eventually nourish and be useful to future generations. Both Dítě (explicitly) and Haň'a (implicitly) supplement this faith in the immortality, through metamorphosis, of their physical remains with an affirmation of the belief that something of their souls will also survive them, for both engage the ideas of great minds long since deceased, and both interact with the ghosts of more anonymous persons who once occupied the spaces that they themselves now inhabit.