

# Writing Underground

Reflections on Samizdat Literature  
in Totalitarian Czechoslovakia

Martin Machovec



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**Martin Machovec**

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# 1. THE GROUP OF WRITERS AROUND THE PŮLNOC SERIES (1949–1955): A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF UNDERGROUND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Nowadays there is quite an extensive literature, comprising literary history, essays and memoirs<sup>1</sup> on the activities of the underground group of poets and prose writers who brought out their works in one

1) BONDY, Egon, "Kořeny českého literárního undergroundu v letech 1949–1953" [The Roots of the Czech Literary Underground, 1949–1953], *Haňta Press* 2, no. 8 (1990); in MACHOVEC, Martin (ed.), *Pohledy zevnitř. Česká undergroundová kultura ve svědectvích, dokumentech a interpretacích*, Praha: FF UK, 2008; In English in MACHOVEC, Martin (ed.), *Views from the Inside. Czech Underground Literature and Culture (1948–1989)*, Praha: FF UK, 2006; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Praha: Karolinum Press, 2018; BONDY, Egon, *Proních deset let* [The First Ten Years], Praha: Maťa, 2002; BOUDNÍK, Vladimír, *Z literární pozůstalosti* [From the Literary Papers], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1993; HRABAL, Bohumil, "Co je poezie?" [What is Poetry?], "Made in Czechoslovakia", "Blitzkrieg", in *Jarmilka. Sebrané spisy Bohumila Hrabala 3* [Collected Works of Bohumil Hrabal 3, Jarmilka], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1992; JELÍNEK, Oldřich, "Jak to všechno začalo..." [How it All Began], *Haňta Press* 5, no. 14 (1993); MACHOVEC, Martin, "Pokus o nástin geneze a vývoje básnického díla Egona Bondyho" [Attempted Outline of the Birth and Development of Egon Bondy's Poetic Work], *Vokno*, no. 21 (1990); MACHOVEC, Martin, "Šestnáct autorů českého literárního podzemí (1948–1989)" [Sixteen Authors from the Czech Literary Underground], *Literární archiv PNP*, no. 25 (1991); MACHOVEC, Martin, "Několik poznámek k podzemní ediční řadě Půlnoc" [Several Notes on the Underground Midnight Series], *Kritický sborník* 13, no. 3 (1993); MACHOVEC, Martin, "Viedeňská bohemistika o Půlnoci (Česká podzemní literatura 1948–1953)" [A Viennese Student of Czech Literature on Půlnoc (Czech Underground Literature 1948–1953)], *Kritický sborník* 18, no. 2–3 (1999); MACHOVEC, Martin, "Náčrt života a díla Egona Bondyho" [Outline of Life and Work of Egon Bondy], in Bouda Bondy. Projekt Bouda IV. [Czech National Theatre Summer Stage], Praha: Národní divadlo, 2007; MAINX, Oskar, *Poezie jako mýtus, svědectví a hra. Kapitoly z básnické poetiky Egona Bondyho* [Poetry as Myth, Testimony and Game. Chapters from the Poetics of Egon Bondy], Ostrava (Czech Republic): Protimluv, 2007; PILAŘ, Martin, *Underground*. Brno (Czech Republic): Host, 1999; TROUP, Zdeněk, "Poezie totality" [Poetry of Totality], *Rozeta* 1, no. 1 (1991); TYPLT, Jaromír F., "Dvě svědectví o Židovských jménech" [Two Testimonies of Jewish Names], *Host* 13, no. 3 (1997); TYPLT, Jaromír F., "Absolutní realismus a Totální hrobař" [Absolute Realism and the Totalitarian Gravedigger], *Host* 22, no. 1 (2006); VODSEĎÁLEK, Ivo – MAZAL, Tomáš, "S Ivo Vodseďálkem o letech radostného budování 49–53" [With Ivo Vodseďálek on the Years of Happy Building up Socialism 49–53], *Vokno*, no. 18 (1990); VODSEĎÁLEK, Ivo, *Felixír života* [Felixir of Life],

of the first ever Czech samizdat series (discounting underground works under the Protectorate) in the Půlnoc [Midnight] series and as separate associated texts, in individual volumes sorted by names, which were dated 1951–1955, but which were mostly written between 1949 and 1953. As the actual literary work that was brought out in the Půlnoc series has been preserved more or less in its entirety and was then mostly published<sup>2</sup> as early as in the first half of the 1990s, the situation is now fairly clear.

Brno (Czech Republic): Host, 2000; ZAND, Gertraude, *Totaler Realismus und Peinliche Poesie. Tschechische Untergrund-Literatur 1948–1953*, Wien: Peter Lang, 1998; ZANDOVÁ, Gertraude, “Básník – svědek – aktivista: Poetický program a vydavatelský projekt Egona Bondyho v čase stalinismu” [Poet, Witness, Activist: The Poetic Programme and Publishing Project of Egon Bondy under Stalinism], *Česká literatura* 46, no. 6 (1998); KUŽEL, Petr (ed.), *Myšlení a tvorba Egona Bondyho* [Egon Bondy’s Thoughts and Literary Activity], Praha: Filosofia, 2018; PŘIBÁŇ, Michal (ed.), *Český literární samizdat 1949–1989. Edice – časopisy – sborníky* [Czech Literary Samizdat 1949–1989. Series of Editions – Magazines – Anthologies], Praha: Academia – Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR, 2018 [on Půlnoc series see pp. 208–210; on Boudník’s Explosionismus series see pp. 183–185].

2) This primarily involves the first two volumes of the nine-volume work of BONDY, Egon, *Básnické dílo Egona Bondyho I–IX*. [The Poetic Work of Egon Bondy I–IX], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1990–1993; or, more recently, the first volume of Bondy’s *Básnické spisy I–III*. [Collected Poetic Works I–III], Praha: Argo, 2014–2016; see also the first two volumes of the five-volume *Dílo Ivo Vodseďálka – 1. Zuřeni* [Fury], 1992; 2. *Snění* [Dreaming], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1992; see also Vodseďálek’s one volume *Dílo* [Works], Praha: Argo, 2019; see also a volume of texts by KREJCAROVÁ, Jana, *Clarissa a jiné texty* [Clarissa and Other Texts], Praha: Concordia, 1990; see also KREJCAROVÁ-ČERNÁ, Jana, *Tohle je skutečnost (Básně, prózy, dopisy)* [This is reality (poems, prose, letters)], Praha: Torst, 2016; see also a selection from the samizdat volume by SVOBODA, Pavel, “Poesie i prósy” [Poetry and Prose], *Hařta Press* 7, no. 17 (1995); see also an excerpt from a text by BORN, Adolf – JELÍNEK, Oldřich, “Urajt”, *Hařta Press* 7, no. 17 (1995); see also SVOBODA, Pavel – MACHOVEC, Martin, “Zapomenutý spolutvůrce ‘trapné poetiky’” [A Forgotten Co-Creator of ‘Embarrassing Poetics’], *Revolver Revue*, no. 93 (2013); Bondy’s complete translations of Morgenstern from 1951 were published in a single volume: MORGENSTERN, Christian – BONDY, Egon, *Galgenlieder / Šibeniční písně* [Gallows Songs], Praha: Labyrint, 2000; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, *Šibeniční písně*, Praha: Labyrint, 2010; Bondy’s experimental “novel” 2000 (written in 1949–1950) was published in *Revolver Revue*, no. 45 (2001); another part of it is found in Bondy’s memoirs *Prvních deset let* – see Footnote 1; a problem is presented by Karel Žák’s literary work, which might well have been “passed down orally” by



Within the broad range of unofficial cultural activities which were originally given the avant-garde label and which existed at least in trace form after 1948 (hence leaving aside those writers who emigrated, fell entirely silent, were imprisoned or, of course, those who after “victorious February” attempted to comply or join the mainstream in one way or another), pride of place is taken by Teige and Effenberger’s surrealist group, which carried on its pre-1948 activities almost entirely in isolation. Its most prominent talents were clearly Mikuláš Medek and Karel Hynek. Activities also continued in Zbyněk Havlíček’s the “Spořilov” group and among some members of Skupina 42 [Group 42], particularly Jan Hanč, Jindřich Chalupecký, and Jiří Kolář. Entirely isolated from the other posthumous children of the Czech avant-garde was the Záběhllice surrealist group known as the Libeň psychics (librarian Zdeněk Buřil, 1924–1994, varnisher Jiří Šmoranc, 1924–2003, radio mechanic Vladimír Vávra, 1924–2005, and bookbinder Stanislav Vávra, \*1933), whose 1950s work was as a whole considered lost or destroyed, so that it only very gradually penetrated the Czech literary context after 1989.<sup>3</sup> However, as

other Půlnoc participants, but which never actually appeared in the series. A couple of fragments from this work from between 1947 and 1955 were collected in 1979 by Ivo Vodseďálek in the samizdat volume *Hra prstíčků mých neklidných* [Game of my Restless Little Fingers], from which again only a couple of small samples were presented a/ in *Haňta Press* 3, no. 9 (1991), b/ in *Voknoviny* 1, no. 2 (2014); a curious second samizdat edition of Vodseďálek’s *Trapná poesie* [Embarrassing Poetry], 1952, richly illustrated by Adolf Born and Oldřich Jelínek in a single samizdat copy, has never been published by regular printing presses.

3) With regard to the Záběhllice (or Libeň) group see the memoir article by VÁVRA, Stanislav: “Záběhllická skupina surrealistů – Libeňští psychici” [The Záběhllice Surrealist Group – Libeň Psychics], *Jarmark umění*, no. 2 (April 1991); see also *Haňta Press* 3, no. 10 and 11 (1991); see also extracts from original work by S. Vávra and J. Šmoranc in *Haňta Press* 3–5, no. 14 – no. 17 (1993–1995); also an interview: VÁVRA, Stanislav – TYPLT, Jaromír F., “Ukázat pramen a podat pohár” [To Show a Spring and to Offer a Goblet], *Iniciály* 2, no. 17/18 (1991); the fictionalized memoirs of S. Vávra present a testimony that is rather late and highly stylized (VÁVRA, Stanislav, *Zvířený prach* [Swirling Dust], Praha: MČ Praha 8, 2004); see also the three following volumes of texts by the “Libeň Psychics”: VÁVRA, Vladimír, *Muž v jiných končinách světa* [A Man in Other Corners of the Earth], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1992; VÁVRA, Stanislav, *Snovidení* [Dreamseeing], Praha: Pražská imaginace 1992; ŠMORANC, Jiří, *Děti periferie* [Children of the Periphery], Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1996.

early as 1948 the former avant-gardists became aware of Vladimír Boudník, with his first “explosionalist” manifesto on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1948. Bohumil Hrabal (and evidently Hrabal’s “neo-poetist” associate Karel Marysko, 1915–1988, who made a living as a performing concert musician) apparently got to know Jiří Kolář back in 1946, although awareness of Hrabal’s breakthrough 1950 texts that were so highly rated decades later<sup>4</sup> only got through to this very limited “public” some time later, perhaps around the mid-1950s. Skupina Ra [The Ra Group] entirely ceased its activities. Of those mentioned above, Teige and Hynek died shortly afterwards and none of those remaining were able to obtain vocation relating in any way to literature at least from 1949 until the mid-1950s. Most of them were engaged in working-class occupations. Kolář, who from 1948 to 1951 eked out a living at the Dílo co-operative and then at the Propaganda Section of the SNKLHU [State Literature, Music and Art Publishers], was imprisoned from 1952 to 1953, and did not go back to work when he was released. Other “maladjusted individuals” in similar straitened circumstances during the first half of the 1950s included Josef Škvorecký, Vratislav Effenberger, Vladimír Vokolek, Ladislav Dvořák, and Jan Zábrana, while repudiated Czech literary grandmasters such as Vladimír Holan, Jakub Deml, Bohuslav Reynek and a large number of other authors were totally isolated with no hope of publication. Subsistence issues of a similar kind also affected all the members of the group whose work was brought together in the Půlnoc samizdat series.

The initiators, creators and most prolific authors of the series, Ivo Vodseďálek (1931–2017) and in particular Egon Bondy, actual name Zbyněk Fišer (1930–2007), were in a certain sense the “renegades” from Teige’s and Effenberger’s surrealist group. Bondy made his sam-

It was not until after the death of Vladimír Vávra in 2005 that his younger brother Stanislav Vávra managed to reconstruct from his surviving manuscripts an anthology of texts by the “Libeň Psychics” lost in the 1950s. This anthology was published under the title *Libeňští psychici. Sborník básnických a prozaických textů z let 1945–1959* [Libeň Psychics. Collected Poetic and Prose Works from 1945–1959], Praha: Concordia, 2009.

4) HRABAL, Bohumil, *Bambino di Praga – Barvotisky – Krásná Poldi* [Bambino di Praga – Color Prints – Beautiful Poldi], Praha: Československý spisovatel, 1990; see also *Sebrané spisy Bohumila Hrabala*, vol. 2 – *Židovský svícen* [Jewish Candleholder], also vol. 3 – *Jarmilka*, Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1991 and 1992.

izdat debut, for the first time with his Jewish pseudonym, in what was still an entirely surrealist anthology *Židovská jména* [Jewish Names], which came out in early 1949 with Vratislav Effenberger, Karel Hynek, Oldřich Wenzl, Jan Zuska, Zdeněk Wagner, Jana Krejcarová and others<sup>5</sup> all represented under other Jewish pseudonyms. To a large extent, in spite of their manifesto for a radical schism with the poetics of surrealism, as documented particularly in the programme collections *Ich und es: totální realismus* [Ich und es: Total Realism]<sup>6</sup> (Egon Bondy, samizdat 1951)<sup>7</sup> and *Trapná poesie*<sup>8</sup> [Embarrassing Poetry] (I. Vodseďálek, samizdat 1951). It is also possible to include their work from the early 1950s, like that of Hrabal at the same time and much of Skupina 42 (Kolář, Blatný and Kainar) among the work of those who repeatedly insisted on matching themselves with the surrealist legacy. In the case of Bondy and Vodseďálek, there remained the poetics of the *objet trouvé*, the idea of dreams being equal to life (and of course life being equal to dreams!), admiration for the poetics of horror and the *roman noir*, the requirement for “purity”, “nakedness”, the linkage of the unlinkable, the drasticity of testimony aiming to épater le bourgeois [shock the bourgeois], the stylization of “childish naiveté”, the inability to hierarchize values, and in particular dogmatic “leftishness”, faith in the socialist revolution (albeit of a Trotskyist anti-Stalinist kind) and resistance to “religious obscurantism”. Some of these traits are more evident in Bondy, others in Vodseďálek, and still others in Krejcarová, but all of them can be pointed out in the Půlnoc series texts as a whole. What was radical, however, was the retreat from metaphor and imagery in poetic language, the drastic “purification” and “de-aestheticization”. Key works from the Půlnoc series, some of which were to be of crucial importance to the aesthetic orientation of the 1970s artistic

5) MACHOVEC, Martin (ed.), *Židovská jména* [Jewish Names], Praha: NLN, 1995; see also MACHOVEC, Martin, “Židovská jména rediviva. Významný objev pro dějiny samizdatu” [The Jewish Names Revived. An Important Finding for the History of Samizdat], A2 3, no. 51–52 (2007).

6) For this and other cited texts from the 1950s see BONDY, Egon, *Básnické spisy I.–III.* (see Footnote 2).

7) Dtto.

8) For this and other cited texts from the 1950s see VODSEĎÁLEK, Ivo, *Dílo Ivo Vodseďálka I., II.* (see Footnote 1).

underground include Bondy's poem *Jeskyně divů aneb Prager Leben* (*Pražský život*) [Cave of Wonders or Prager Leben; Prague Life] (1951), the poetics of which are notably similar to those of Hrabal's *Bambino di Praga*, which was written around the same time, even though Bondy and Hrabal did not know of each other at that time and met first only by the end of 1951. In other respects, it hints at Bondy's future development as an implacable critic, a regular firebrand and a dogmatic "wielder of the truth". Also of importance is the collection *Für Bondys unbekannte Geliebte aneb Nepřeberné bohatství* [For Bondy's Unknown Love or Inexhaustible Wealth] (1951), which to some extent restores the direct connection to the poetics used by surrealists at that time (e.g., applying Dalí's paranoid-critical method and Hynek's "graphic poetry" principle), as well as *Velká kniha* [Great Book] (1952), which was to be highly popular in the underground, particularly with its groundbreaking section *Ožralá Praha* [Hammered Prague], its barbaric-style antipoetisms, its nursery rhyme pseudo-primitivisms and of course its "naive realist" testimonies of the absurdities of the era, which form a striking counterpoint, e.g., to Kolář's contemporary "eye-witness" poetics. The long poem *Zbytky eposu* [Remnants of an Epic] (1955), is outstanding for several of its highly de-tabooing passages, which show inadvertent parallels between Bondy's early poetical works and several elements in those of writers of American Beat generation, as well as being a splendid display of surrealist poetics linking the unlinkable and ultimately testimony of Bondy's return to some sources of Czech literary modernism (Erben, Mácha, and Havlíček Borovský).

In his *Půlnoc* texts, Ivo Vodsedálek is far more consistent in adhering to the poetics of "embarrassment", disrupting the traditional punchline and of course the imagery of the poetical text (e.g., in the collection *Cesta na Rivieru* [Trip to the Riviera], 1951, *Smrt vtipu* [Death of the Joke], 1951, *Pilot a oráč* [Pilot and Ploughman], 1951, *Americké básně* [American Poems], 1953) poetics, which in a reevaluation of the surrealist *objet trouvé* and in contrast to Bondy's poetic work anticipates all the pathos-free poetics of American pop-art and hyperrealism. He also, on the other hand, revives the beauty of surrealist spectrality and chimerality in novel contexts (in the collection *Krajina a mravnost* [Landscape and Morality], 1953, the prose work *Kalvarie* [Calvary], 1954), while generally in

a number of his texts he uncovers the appeal of “Soviet mythology” (e.g., in the collection *Kvetoucí Ukrajina* [Blooming Ukraine], 1950, 1953), while admitting to his defencelessness in the face of the myth accepted by the masses and the futility of any resistance, which he nevertheless does offer, even though he is aware of the absurdity of such conduct, thus again presciently anticipating the ideas of some of his underground successors. (However, Vodsedálek’s work was unknown to the underground circle surrounding the Plastic People.)

In hindsight, it is quite tempting to see this grouping as a more or less monolithic school of poetry, if not actually as some kind of latent resistance cell, even though circumstances around the late forties and early fifties, i.e., the political reality of the times and the personal situations of the majority of members of that group, who were mostly around twenty years of age, largely rules out anything of that nature. Zand<sup>9</sup> calls them a “poetic circle” in an attempt to indicate the low degree of homogeneity within the group. The fact is that both initiators of the Půlnoc series – Bondy and Vodsedálek – were classmates at the Ječná Street grammar school in Prague, and they were brought together mainly by their interest in modern art in general and surrealism in particular, as well as ultimately to attempt a joint debut, which unfortunately took place during the period immediately following February 1948. These two artists, whose early works (i.e., at least until 1952) still bore many of the signs of juvenilia (e.g., experimenting and seeking out new forms, attempting a wide variety of genres, much “finding oneself” as it were, and almost desperate attempts to come up with something novel, independent and non-epigonic), had the good fortune to find a couple of congenial writers and artists among their contemporaries (poet and collagist Pavel Svoboda, 1930–2014, Jana Krejcarová-Fischlová-Černá-Ladmanová, 1928–1981, sculptor and poet Karel Žák, 1929–2015, and later book graphic artist and photographer Jaromír Valoušek, 1928–1993, in the early 1950s chemistry student and for a short time Vodsedálek’s wife Dana “Dagmara” Prchlíková, 1931–2006, at that time the “suprasexdadaists” Adolf

9) ZANDOVÁ, Gertraude, *Totální realismus a trapná poezie. Česká neoficiální literatura 1948–1953* [Total Realism and Embarrassing Poetry. Unofficial Czech Literature 1948–1953], Brno (Czech Republic): Host, 2002; ZANDOVÁ, Gertraude, “Básník – svědek – aktivista” (see Footnote 1).

Born, 1930–2016, and Oldřich Jelínek, \*1930, later psychologist Miloš Černý, 1931–2018, poet Emil Hokeš, 1931–2000 and perhaps a couple of others), who showed appreciation for their creative ambitions and who at least to some extent responded to them by showing them their own works. Another who was close to this group, or at least to some of its members, during the first half of the 1950s (typically, not all the aforementioned personally knew all those named below!) was a quite unknown secondary graphic art school graduate, Vladimír Boudník (1924–1968)<sup>10</sup> whom Zbyněk Fišer got to know as early as in 1948, as well as Mikuláš Medek (1926–1974), Emila Medková (1928–1985), Jaroslav Dočekal (1926–1975), Karel Hynek (1925–1953), Zbyněk Sekal (1923–1998) and Jan “Hanes” Reegen (1922–1952)<sup>11</sup> to name at least those whose familiarity with underground publishing

10) Regarding his work, see BOUDNÍK, Vladimír, *Z literární pozůstalosti* (see Footnote 1); BOUDNÍK, Vladimír, *Z korespondence* [From The Correspondence] I (1949–1956), *Z korespondence II* (1957–1968), Praha: Pražská imaginace, 1994; MERHAUT, Vladislav, *Zápisky o Vladimíru Boudníkovi* [Notes on Vladimír Boudník], Praha: Edice Revolver Revue, 1997.

11) The literary work of Mikuláš Medek, in which connections can be found with the Půlnoc writers, was published in the volume: MEDEK, Mikuláš, *Texty* [Texts], Praha: Torst, 1995; of great value with regard to Medek and Boudník's relationship to Bondy and his circle is the correspondence between Medek and Boudník: HARTMANN, Antonín – MRÁZ, Bohumír (eds.), “Boudník a Medek, korespondence” [Boudník and Medek, Correspondence], *Umění/Art* 45, no. 3/4 (1997); see also HARTMANN, Antonín – MRÁZ, Bohumír (eds.), “Boudník a Medek, dodatek ke korespondenci a další ‘texty pro Mikuláše Medka’” [Boudník and Medek, Additions to Correspondence and Other Texts for Mikuláš Medek], *Umění/Art* 45, no. 5 (1997); the work of the artist and writer Jaroslav Dočekal has not yet been successfully collected in its entirety, nor has it been appropriately examined. For samples of his work see: DOČEKAL, Jaroslav, “Smršťovače – hořké dávky. Z dopisů Jaroslavu Rotbauerovi” [Shrinkers – Bitter Doses. From Letters to Jaroslav Rotbauer], *Revolver Revue*, no. 29 (1995); see also *Dopisy Jaroslava Dočkalova Vladimíru Boudníkovi I–II*. [Letters of Jaroslav Dočekal to Vladimír Boudník I–II], Praha: Jan Placák – Ztichlá klika, 2017; HYNEK, Karel, *S vyloučením veřejnosti* [With the Exclusion of the Public], Praha: Torst, 1998. Regarding Jan Reegen see the samizdat volume: REEGEN, Jan, *Listy příteli. Dopisy Vladimíru Boudníkovi (1949–1952)* [Letters to a Friend. Letters to Vladimír Boudník 1949–1952], published by Václav Kadlec as the 56<sup>th</sup> publication in his samizdat *Pražská imaginace series* in 1989 (Stream 4, vol. 8). Bondy provides a testimony of his friendship with Reegen in his memoirs: BONDY, Egon, *Prvních deset let* (see Footnote 1).

activities at Půlnoc can be verified in some way.<sup>12</sup> (The Medeks and Hynek formed a connection for some time at least between Bondy's and Vodseďálek's circle and Efferberger's surrealist group, to whom it seems otherwise Bondy had a rather ambivalent relationship). The late avant-gardist JUDr. Bohumil Hrabal (1914-1997), who was quite isolated in the late 1940s and early 1950s, did not get to know Bondy until the end of 1951 (according to the latter's information), although the dating and content of Boudník's short story *Noc [Night]* – 10<sup>th</sup> October 1951 – indicate that they actually got to know each other somewhat earlier. Bondy recalls that (probably as early as 1951, but quite likely in 1952, evidently from 1951 or 1952) he met not only Boudník at Hrabal's, but also Karel Marysko.<sup>13</sup>

Surprisingly, however, the authors of the "Midnight Circle" did not have any demonstrable contacts with some of the other prominent artists and writers who at least for some time and in some respects "went underground", and who were in frequent contact during the 1950s with Hrabal and particularly with Jan Zábřana or Jiří Kolář (whose work they knew at least to some extent according to various testimonies), and Kolář's artistic and human double Josef Hiršal, who stated himself that he got to know Bondy's translations of Morgenstern at Hrabal's maybe in 1952, but perhaps as late as 1955, i.e., at a time when contacts between Bondy and Hrabal were again very limited.<sup>14</sup> Out of all the Půlnoc authors, Jana Krejcarová was the one who always led the most sociable life, and she evidently

12) In his memoirs *Prvních deset let* (see above) for the 1949-1955 period Bondy also refers to contacts with e.g. Alexej Kusák, Miroslav Lamač, Jaroslav Puchmertl, František Jůzek, Blanka Sochorová, Josef Lehoučka, Konstantin Sochor, František Drtikol, psychiatrist Václav Pinkava (Jan Křesadlo), or Andrej Bělocvětov. At Charles University, Faculty of Arts, where Ivo Vodseďálek studied aesthetics part-time, he got to know Milan Kundera, and even though he maintained occasional contact with him throughout the 1950s, he allegedly never told him about his literary ambitions.

13) The conspicuous similarity between some of Karel Marysko's poetic work and some of Egon Bondy's is pointed out in a study by MACHOVEC, Martin, "Literární dílo Karla Maryska" [The Literary Work of Karel Marysko], *Revolver Revue*, no. 34 (1997); Egon Bondy confirmed that he had met Marysko at Hrabal's home in Libeň in a personal conversation with the author.

14) HIRŠAL in MORGENSTERN, Christian, *Bim bam bum*, Praha: Český spisovatel, 1971, also in MORGENSTERN, Christian, *Morgenstern v Čechách. 21 proslulých básní ve 179 českých překladech 36 autorů* [Morgenstern in Bohemia. 21 Famous Poems in