Perhaps because of the Brothers Quay's interpretation of Street of Crocodiles, I'm always surprised when I return to Bruno Schulz's actual words on the page. The Quay Brothers--whom I think are probably the conduit for many of us with Schulz's work--created a gorgeous and haunted animated world of dirt, dolls, and machines. But Myla Goldberg, in her Recommendation, talks about the quality of Schulz's inimitable language, something that the film can't, by its nature, capture. It takes the breath away. I'm glad Myla Goldberg paired Schulz with Hrabal, creating a kind of reflective bounce between the two Eastern European masters. – NR.

Talking about just one writer is no fun, so instead I'll babble a bit about two of my favorite dead Eastern Europeans: Bruno Schulz and Bohumil Hrabal. First, Bruno Schulz. There are only two slim collections of short stories—Street of Crocodiles and Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass—but boy are they gorgeous. The man spent practically his entire life in
the small town of Drohobycz, Poland, a place that, like him, no longer exists. He makes the banal mythic, turning his tailor-father and his shop into a magical, beautiful, and often fearful place with a life of its own. Imaginative, evocative, imagistic, and sensual prose. Though Bohumil Hrabal is probably best known for Closely Watched Trains, my two favorites are Too Loud a Solitude and I Served the King of England, the former about a paper compactor, the latter about a midget who, among other things, works as a waiter during the German occupation of WWII. Both are humorous, dark, human novels which take place in unusual and unexpected corners of existence. Hrabal stays unpredictable, unpretentious, and bitingly smart. Both of these guys have feet firmly in the Kafka camp, another reason I probably like them so much.

Myla Goldberg’s novel *Bee Season* was named a *New York Times* Notable Book for 2000. She is currently working on a new novel concerning the 1918 influenza epidemic.