THE GREAT PHANTASMAGORICAL SEASON:

THE PROSE OF BRUNO SCHULZ

IN THE FRAMEWORK OF WALTER BENJAMIN'S *ARCADES PROJECT*

By

OKSANA LUTSYSHYNA

(Under the Direction of Jed Rasula)

ABSTRACT

This work examines the prose of Bruno Schulz in the light of Walter Benjamin's theories, - in particular, those pertaining to the specifics of urban life in the time of modernity, which is characterized by such phenomena as dreaming collective and phantasmagoria. These reflect the state of mind affected by a capitalism that shapes the relationships between people and commodity. Walter Benjamin speaks about three urban "Ur-types," or forms of living: the flâneur, the collector and the prostitute. He also introduces such a category of analysis as the dialectical image, which consists in regarding a phenomenon not in the framework of linear time, but as "dialectics at a standsill," similar to the (constantly developing) image momentarily arrested by a flash of lightning. I analyze Schulz's prose and the Benjaminian "urban types" (flâneur, collector, prostitute) in his prose, and focusing on the dialectical images that accompany them. I strive to demonstrate that Schulz, in his prose, reflects the condition of urban modernity despite writing about a small town and not a megapolis, like Benjamin.

INDEX WORDS: dreaming collective, phantasmagoria, dialectical image, wish image, Bruno Schulz, Walter Benjamin, modernity, flâneur, collector, fashion

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M.A. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA, 2006

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2014

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May 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express sincere gratitude to my major professor, Jed Rasula; to my committee, Desző Benedek, Thomas Cerbu, and Karen Underhill; and to my first academic advisor, Katarzyna Jerzak. I am greatly indebted to each of them for their time and support.

This project would have been impossible without the J.William Fulbright fellowship awarded to me for the 2012-2013 academic year. Due to this award, I was able to travel to Poland to conduct integral research on Bruno Schulz.

I am also deeply grateful to Jerzy Jarzębski of Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland, my Fulbright advisor, for his constant support and great kindness. My conversations with him and the exchange of ideas were absolutely indispensible for the progress of the present work.

I also thank all those who helped me (and held me) along the way: my parents, Olga and Petro Kishko, for their belief in me; my treasured interlocutors, Marianna Kiyanovska, Kevin Vaughn, Diana Saprikina, and Liz Bryant, for their time, involvement, and suggestions; my friends Oksana Lushchevska and Dzmitry Bandarenka, for their loving presence; and my daughter, Lydia Lutsyshyna, for being my joy.

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PREFACE

Viens-tu du ciel profond ou sors-tu de l'abîme,
O Beauté? ton regard, infernal et divin,
Verse confusément le bienfait et le crime […]

Charles Baudelaire, "Hymne à la beauté"

Manchmal, wenn es im Westen aufklärt,
schaue ich den glitzernden Geldflüssen zu,
die schäumend über die Ufer treten
und das eben noch dürre Land überschwemmen.

Michael Krüger, "Marx redet"

Anna Csillag, a phantom, a woman with lavish hair, a Job, a Salome, a commercial, boldly enters the dream-world of modernity and the works of its writers and philosophers, - a Polish-Jewish author of oneiric stories and a German-Jewish scholar of Marxism, Kabbalah, literature and cinematography. She says: "I, Anna Csillag," beginning her tale of woe and victory. In both *The Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin (1898-1940) and in the short story "The Book" by Bruno Schulz (1892-1942), Anna Czyllak, as Benjamin spells her name, - or Csillag, as her name is spelled in Schulz, - makes a brief, but memorable and significant appearance, prompting us to view her not just as a casual element of the reality of the epoch, but as a symbolic embodiment of its creative – and destructive - energies.

Historically, Anna Csillag/Czyllak is a character from a real advertisement of a product for stimulating hair growth, a "Csillag pomade" that she supposedly prepared herself. The advertisement appeared in a number of European newspapers in the period from 1885 to 1937,

in German, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian. Anna Csillag/Czyllak, as the story informs us, was afflicted by poor hair growth; to remedy the situation, she concocted a product that stimulated hair growth and the growth of beards in men, and made hair shiny and beautiful. The price of a jar ranged from 2 to 8 Marks, or Koronas, or roubles, depending on the size of the jar and currency of the country. This advertisement could be found in a number of European newspapers, and was immediately recognizable, as it featured a woman with exceptionally long hair.

In Bruno Schulz's story "The Book," young Joseph, the protagonist, is desperately seeking the lost "Authentic," a certain "old, forgotten" book he believes is the "holy original" of everything (*Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 9). The "Book" to which Joseph refers is obviously an old, useless calendar, but for Joseph it is "the Authentic" and the Book of Books, much more sacred than even the Bible; in fact, Joseph dismisses the latter, much preferring "the Authentic." The calendar, a kitschy collection of pictures and advertisements, is preserved only in part: for some time, the maid Adela, a sadistic ruler of the household in Schulz's universe, has been tearing pages out of it to wrap meat; the calendar has no real value, and only in Joseph's mind is it a priceless Book that he longs to retrieve. It is on the pages of this "Authentic" that Joseph sees Anna Csillag: "[T]here was a photograph of a rather stout and short woman with a face expressing energy and experience. From her head flowed an enormous stole of hair, which fell heavily down her back trailing its thick ends on the ground" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 4). The story behind the invention is told in "The Book" as that of Job:

> Była to długa historia, podobna w konstrukcji do historii Hioba. Anna Csillag z dopustu bożego dotknięta była słabym porostem. Całe miasteczko litowało się nad tym upośledzeniem, które wybaczano jej ze względu na nienaganny żywot, chociaż nie mogło ono być całkiem niezawinione. I oto stało się na skutek gorących modłów, że zdjęta była z jej głowy klątwa. Anna Csillag dostąpiła łaski oświecenia, otrzymała znaki i wskazówki i sporządziła specyfik, lek cudowny, który jej głowie przywrócił urodzajność. […]Na drugiej stronie pokazana była Anna Csillag w sześć tygodni po objawieniu jej recepty…[…] Anna Csillag stała się apostołką włochatości. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 139)
>
> It was a long story, similar in construction to the story of Job. […] By divine will, Anna Csillag was graced with the blessing of enlightenment. She received signs and portents and concocted a mixture, a miraculous nostrum that restored fertility to her scalp. […] On the reverse of the page, Anna Csillag was shown six weeks after the prescription was revealed to her. […] Anna Csillag became the apostle of hairiness. Having brought happiness to her native village, she now wanted to make the whole world happy and asked, begged, and urged everyone to accept for their salvation the gift of gods, the wonderful mixture of which she alone knew the secret. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 5)

In *The Arcades Project* the very same Anna emerges in Convolute H, "The Collector:"

> In hairdressers' windows, you can see the last women with long hair. They have richly undulated masses of hair, which are "permanent waves," petrified coiffures. […]

> Betrayed and sold, and the head of Salome made into an ornament - if that which dreams of a console there below is not the embalmed head of Anna Czyllak. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H1a, 1 204)

To be fair, Anna Csillag/Czyllak is not the only link between Schulz and Benjamin. A full list of similarities and compatibilities between Bruno Schulz and Walter Benjamin has been compiled by Adam Lipszyc. He contends that, first of all, Schulz's prose verges on philosophy, while Benjamin's method is highly indebted to literature (Lipszyc, *Rewizja procesu Jozefiny K. i inne lektury od zera* 65). This has been pointed out by a number of researchers, and, in particular, by Hannah Arendt in her "Introduction" to Benjamin's essay collection, *Illuminations*.

> Benjamin, whose spiritual existence had been formed and informed by Goethe, a poet and not a philosopher, and whose interest was almost exclusively aroused by poets and novelists, although he had studied philosophy, should have found it easier to communicate with poets than with theoreticians, whether of the dialectical or the metaphysical variety. (Arendt 14)

Schulz's prose has often been called "poetic," and, though not a philosopher by training, he is considered a philosopher (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 8). Schulz, overall, had rather complex relations with the actual terms "philosophy" and "philosophers," considering philosophy as a discipline less adequate for rendering life than literature or art. In a letter to Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), Schulz writes that

> W dziele sztuki nie została jeszcze przerwana pępowina łącząca je z całością naszej problematyki, krąży tam jeszcze krew tajemnicy, końce naczyń uchodzą w noc otaczającą i wracają stamtąd pełne ciemnego fluidu. W filozoficznej interpretacji mamy już tylko wypruty z całości problematyki preparat anatomiczny. (*Księga Listów* 101)
>
> In a work of art the umbilical cord linking it with the totality of our concerns has not yet being severed, the blood of the mystery still circulates; the ends of the blood vessels vanish into the surrounding night and return from it full of dark fluid. A philosophical interpretation only gives us an anatomical sample dissected from the total body of the problems involved in the work. (*Letters and Drawings* 122)

And yet, a number of Schulz's essays make researchers consider him one of Poland's philosophers. Both Schulz and Benjamin pay special attention to the idea of the language. To Schulz, myth is the Word ("Logos," alluding to the Gospel of John), and what is normally referred to as "reality" is but "the shadow of the world" (*Letters and Drawings* 117). "The essence of reality is Meaning or Sense. What lacks Sense is, for us, not reality" (115).

As Marta Bartosik contends, for Schulz, the Word is the central category in "Mythologization of Reality." Schulz's Word is an almost organic entity. Bartosik explains that Schulz uses the Word such that it does not have a binary structure yet – it is not divided into "name and idea, […] eikon and eidos, signifié and significant." Marta Bartosik mentions that in his sense-seeking, Schulz is skeptical about the possibility of a language of criticism; to him, a language of literature is real and primal, whereas the language that attempts to describe it, is isolated (Bartosik 46-47). This ancient word "was not yet a sign" (92), and this view is similar

to the one expressed by Walter Benjamin in "Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen," in which Benjamin underlines the role and presence of God, the first owner of the language (qtd. in Bartosik 92).

Another parallel between Schulz and Benjamin that Adam Lipszyc emphasizes is the fact that they are both deeply engaged in the German literary tradition, especially with such authors as Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis (Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg). Thirdly, writes Lipszyc, for both Schulz and Benjamin the figure of Franz Kafka was a major inspiration; Benjamin produced critical writings on Kafka, whereas Schulz edited the Polish translation of Kafka's *Trial*. Fourthly, Benjamin and Schulz were, each in his own unique way, fascinated by the topic of childhood: for example, Benjamin produced *Berlin Childhood Circa 1900* and kept a collection of children's toys; as for Bruno Schulz, his first collection of short stories, *Cinnamon Shops*, features a protagonist who is a child, and whose perspective is the one the reader follows. Both Schulz and Benjamin, as Lipszyc justly notes, saw childhood as a paradigm of perception that was potentially of a higher order than the adult one (Lipszyc, *Rewizja procesu Jozefiny K.* 65). Adam Lipszyc points out Schulz's intense preoccupation with the condition of childhood, which Schulz saw as an important ontological basis. Writes Schulz:

> Gdyż zdaje mi się, że ten rodzaj sztuki, jaki leży na sercu, jest właśnie regresją, jest powrotem, dzieciństwem. Gdyby można było uwstecznić rozwój, osiągnąć jakąś okrężną drogą powtórnie dzieciństwo, jeszcze raz mieć jego pełnię i bezmiar – to byłoby to ziszczeniem "genialnej epoki," "czasów mesjaszowych," które nam przez wszystkie mitologie są przyrzeczone i zaprzysiężone. Moim ideałem jest "dojrzeć" do dzieciństwa. To by dopiero była prawdziwa dojrzałość. (*Księga Listów* 114)

> A kind of art I care about is regression, return to childhood. If it were possible to reserve development, to attain the state of childhood again, to have its abundance and limitlessness once more, that "age of genius," those "messianic times" promised and sworn to us by all mythologies, would come to pass. My goal is to "mature" into childhood. That would be genuine maturity for you. (*Letters and Drawings* 126)

Another theme that both Schulz and Benjamin deal with is the messianic, since they both are greatly indebted to the Jewish intellectual and spiritual legacy. Some of the above-mentioned links between the two thinkers have already been explored: for example, there are studies of Schulz, Benjamin and Jewish modernity (Karen Underhill), as well as of Schulz, Benjamin and philosophy of language (Adam Lipszyc). There exist, no doubt, a number of possible matrices for interpreting the connections between Bruno Schulz's and Walter Benjamin's ideas; but the context of Jewish modernity or the philosophy of language do not exhaust the range of potential approaches. My primary focus for the present project is neither the issue of the messianic, nor the issue of language or childhood. It is the problem of modernity and the city, and, more specifically, the transition from the pre-modern to modern times, through the experience of urban living. I will rely on Susan Buck-Morss and on her interpretation of Walter Benjamin (specifically, on her book titled *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*), and concentrate on urban phantasmagoria and the transformations of a human mindset bombarded by endless commercials. In this sense, Anna Csillag-Chyllak is a very important element of the modern condition, and one of the key images in the universe of both Schulz and Benjamin.

Schulz and Benjamin, independently of each other, see in Anna a symbol, or a figure of transition, a "passage" (Smorag-Goldberg): she is simultaneously a commercial, "a petrified coiffure" used to attract customers, and a mythological entity – a Job or a Salome. She is the locus where the old myths meet the new (or perceived as new) reality of modern times, creating a conglomerate of meanings, or, in Benjamin's terms, one of modernity's dramatic "constellations" to be unraveled. The analysis of these constellations is the goal of my project.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Shop as Foundation of the "Chosen Land"

"We dreamed the region was being threatened by an unknown danger, was permeated by a mysterious menace. Against this peril and hazard we would find safe refuge and shelter in our fortress," Bruno Schulz writes in his narrative story "The Republic of Dreams" (*Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz: With Selected Prose* 220). In this particular instance, he is referring to children's games, storytelling, and heroic fairy-tale-like scenarios played out in the protagonist's neighborhood. Yet, the quote exists not only in the microcosm of the story, but also in the macrocosm of Schulz's entire oeuvre, indicating, among other things, the centrality of the topic of the city in his work, and pointing at the oneiric dimension of his prose. Bruno Schulz, a Galician Jew and Polish writer, was born in the small town of Drohobycz, which is presently in the territory of Ukraine. His work is a rich collection of themes, motifs, and topics, often of grotesque nature and convoluted structure. In his two collections of stories, *Cinnamon Shops* (*Sklepy Cynamonowe*), 1934, and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of an Hourglass* (*Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą*), 1937*,* he describes, in a dream-like manner, the life of a family in a provincial town, and various fantastical transformations and surprising occurrences that take place.

The collection *Cinnamon Shops* (*The Street of Crocodiles* in the English translation) consists of thirteen short stories featuring the young protagonist, his father Jacob, who is a

struggling merchant, and, partly, a madman and a poet, various relatives, and the maid Adela, the secret ruler of the household. In *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, which also consists of thirteen stories, we finally learn the protagonist's name - Joseph; he is now a grown man who lives through a love drama and other adult experiences. The world of childhood, so prominent in *Cinnamon Shops*, gives way to a number of much more depressive landscapes in the second book. As the Russian researcher Andrei Levkin observes, in *Cinnamon Shops* Schulz creates a personal heaven in a very special space he manages to construct for himself through writing. "This always sells, it is always read, everybody is interested in this, and everybody would like to create such a heaven for himself or herself," Levkin concludes, emphasizing the organic, authentic nature of Schulz's construction. However, in *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, continues Levkin, Schulz "falls out" of this heaven into outer space (Fanailova). Adam Lipszyc, a Polish philosopher and critic, points out that the last four stories of the second book – "Dodo," "Eddie," "The Old Age Pensioner," and "Loneliness" - show Schulz, often considered "the writer of childhood," "in grey colors," a melancholy Schulz, "a human being cut away from the rest of the world and oppressed by one's loneliness" (Lipszyc, "Schulz na szaro, Schulz przed prawem" 2).

The town Schulz depicts is never called by its name, "Drohobycz" (Jarzębski, *Prowincja Centrum. Przypisy do Schulza* 88), and yet many of its elements are recognizable to the informed reader. Galicia (today's Western Ukraine and Eastern Poland), a multicultural and multiethnic area, is a borderland, and was even more so during Schulz's time, with Ukrainian, Polish, German and Yiddish spoken freely. Schulz reveals himself as a writer of a borderland, of a Noah's arc (Vozniak, Foreword 16), which is, in a way, already a myth - a borderland that comprises many languages and cultures (Hrytsak 28). However, in his tackling of the theme of

the city Schulz goes far beyond creating a nostalgic conglomerate of childhood memories, local coloring, past bliss and the fantastical. His city, the "republic of dreams," along with being beautiful and enthralling, is also menacing and dramatic; memories and the colorful environment are just a part of Schulz's universe.

Bruno Schulz's "chosen land," "peculiar province," "the town unique in all world," his "fortress" and his confinement, the dream and the menace, is the key to understanding the Schulzian universe, and not simply one of the components of this universe. The city is more than a character and more than an image; it is not an entity in a row of homogeneous structures of similar entities, but a conceptual and ontological foundation of Schulz's world. At the center of the city as a basic matrix stands the shop (it is not accidental that the title of Schulz's first book, in Polish, is *Cinnamon Shops*), as the living nerve of the city and the marker of the city's modern condition. The shop is, literally, the foundation of life in Schulz's urban universe: it is the lowest floor of the house and the main occupation of the Father, who, not without trouble, financially maintains the family. Krzysztof Stala points out that, despite all the irony of the context, the shop is still "a metaphysical place," and "the symbol of the mystery" (197). This is how Schulz himself describes the shop in his story "The Dead Season:"

> Sklep, sklep był niezgłębiony. Był on metą wszystkich myśli, nocnych dociekań, przerażonych zadumań ojca. Niedocieczony i bez granic stał on poza wszystkim, co się działo, mroczny i uniwersalny. […]Po tych głuchych stopniach pilśni ojciec zstępował w głąb genealogii, na dno czasów. Był ostatnim z rodu, był Atlasem, na którego barkach spoczywał ciężar ogromnego testamentu. (Schulz, *Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą* 256)

> The shop itself was a perpetual mystery. It was the center of all Father's thoughts, of his nightly cogitations, of his frightening silences. […] In the surrounding darkness my father harked back to the past [in Polish "to the depth of genealogy" – O.L.], to the abyss of time ["to the bottom of time" – O.L.]. He was the last of his line, he was Atlas on whose shoulders rested the burden of an enormous legacy. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 107)

It is curious that out of all possible forms of social and economical life, Schulz chooses the shop to be the "bottom of times" and "the depth of genealogy." Everything in the stories revolves, more or less, around the shop. While it is true that Schulz's world, fictional and artistic, is too oneiric to be successfully analyzed with the help of any paradigms that rely on economic theory or social relations, the choice of a shop as an ontological basis indicates both the importance of certain processes of social life and the elevation of a trade establishment to the status of a highly symbolic entity. Moreover, Schulz shows the reader the shop in transition: it is the foundation that becomes invaded by forces and energies detrimental to its original function of the basic "bottom of time" and the deepest point of "genealogy." In other words, it is a pre-modern shop, the existence of which is threatened and its character altered by the emanations of the new times; it is an ancient Noah's arc that was suddenly inundated with the waters of modernity.

My analysis of the Schulzian city as part of modernity will rely on Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and draw on theoretical concepts outlined in it. Bruno Schulz and Walter Benjamin were contemporaries, though there are no accounts of them having met or being familiar with each other's work. While Bruno Schulz spent all of his life in his native town of Drohobycz, Walter Benjamin lived in megapolises, such as Berlin and Paris. Schulz and

Benjamin were seemingly occupied with rather different contexts: a small town versus a big city. In particular, Bruno Schulz was often regarded as a writer of a small town: either a very concrete provincial one, Drohobycz, a closed system, a shtetl, or a myth of a city, an oneiric construction that bore no traces of any social reality. However, I argue that Bruno Schulz's work presents a much more complex matrix, and that Walter Benjamin's paradigm offers a very fitting method for its analysis.

Walter Benjamin started working on *The Arcades Project* in 1927, and continued until his death in 1940. The project was never finished due to Benjamin's untimely death by suicide, in a moment of despair, when trying to escape Nazi-occupied Europe. *The Arcades Project* was Walter Benjamin's attempt to write a "philosophy of history" reconstructed from the material artifacts and buildings of the second half of the nineteenth century and projected both into the past and the present, since "each epoch dreams the one to follow" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 4). On the one hand, Benjamin wrote a history of Paris; on the other hand, it is a work meant to be a political statement, constructing an "Ur-history," "a history of the origins of that present historical moment which, while remaining largely invisible, is the determining motivation for Benjamin's interest in the past" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and The Arcades Project* 47). Norbert Bolz and Willem van Reijen call *The Arcades Project* "a critique of the modern age conceived as a commentary on the factual content of the nineteenth century" (Bolz and van Reijen 4).

In this chapter, I will (1) outline the existing Schulz scholarship, paying special attention to the works pertinent to my topic and discussing the main challenges in Schulz studies, (2) define the scope of my project, (3) introduce the methodology, and (4) briefly describe the chapters to follow.

A History of Readings

a) The Context and the First Critics

In their comprehensive introduction to a collection of essays on Bruno Schulz, *(Un)Masking Bruno Schulz: New Combinations, Further Fragmentations, Ultimate Reintegrations*, Kris Van Heuckelom and Dieter de Bruyn trace the history of critical reception of Schulz; they claim, not without reason, that the age of "Schulzophobia," or early "Schulzology," was succeeded by that of a veritable "Schulzomania" (de Bruyn and Van Heuckelom 9). During his lifetime, Schulz enjoyed little or no serious critical interpretations of his work. There were several reasons for this, though the one most commonly quoted is precisely his living in a small town and therefore not being naturally integrated into Polish literary life. The reality is more complex; some aspects of it have to do directly with literature and literary criticism, while others pertain to political perturbations and the spirit of time. According to Jerzy Jarzębski, a prominent Schulz scholar, Schulz belongs to the cohort of writers whose real significance reveals itself over time; his contemporaries, limited by the ideological lens of their time, could not grasp the real meanings of Schulz's prose. It took several generations of critics to begin to approach the essence of his work, which resists classifications and paradigms ("Wstęp" 5).

One could safely speculate that the main reason for lack of solid criticism on Schulz during his lifetime and actual publications was the aesthetic and political climate of Eastern Europe. When it comes to the very term "modernism," scholars do not always agree on its meaning. The term "modernism" in Poland did not mean the same thing as it did in other parts of Europe, and the Polish model of modernism has been called one of "the most independent from the western theoretical models" (Yakovenko 196). Traditionally, according to Kazimierz

Wyka, a prominent Polish critic whose legacy dominated the discourse about modernism until recently, the term applies only to the first decade of the *Młoda Polska* (*Young Poland*) artistic and literary movement (1890-1918), which rejected Positivism, prevalent in the preceding decades, and adopted symbolism, impressionism and especially neo-romanticism, and was inspired by the works of one of the great Polish poets of the 19th century, Juliusz Słowacki (Yakovenko 196-197). The first period of *Młoda Polska*, mostly developing in Krakow, was characterized by numerous explorations in art and literature, new topics and themes that some critics called "decadent," literary and artistic mystifications (for example, writing criticism about non-existing paintings), and overall galvanization of cultural life. Jerzy Jarzębski points out that Bruno Schulz had a rather late debut, and by the mid 1930s, "the cursed questions" of high modernism in the 1930s were not the focal points of critics' attention any more as they had been in 1910 and later. High modernism paid attention to the new condition of humanity, because, as Virginia Woolf said, "human character changed" (qtd. in Nycz 70), and the writers were left to deal with the shifts of imagination, expression and language that mirrored the crises in lifestyle and general existential malaise. As Ryszard Nycz contends, the main motifs of Polish modernism were feeling torn away from the world, being left without roots, alienation, and crisis of identity (70).

By the 1930s, however, descriptive and neo-naturalistic works took center stage. Also, the avant-garde movement was on the rise (for example, Julian Przyboś). Schulz simply did not fit the pattern with his particularly elaborate language and "inexpressible" topics, which he himself professed he preferred most. It was difficult to find a paradigm to correctly place him on the Polish literary map. He did not propagate "art for art's sake," like Stanisław Przybyszewski, was not part of any literary or social movement, and did not continue the

already known traditions. He was an innovator; but few at the time understood in what exactly the innovations he introduced consisted. Instead, Bruno Schulz and the other two great (and not easily classifiable) writers of the time period, Witold Gombrowicz and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, also known as Witkacy, became the focus of critics' attention later. Though they were not considered "modernist" (or anything else) in their lifetime, now they are at the center of Polish modernist canon. As Włodzimierz Bolecki states in his book *Polowanie na postmodenistow (w Polsce) i inne szkice*, the works by Schulz, Witkacy and Gombrowicz form "three most important variants of the never described in Poland tradition of mature Polish modernism" (Bolecki, *Polowanie na postmodenistow (w Polsce)* 51) – the modernism that was identified post factum.

One could embrace here the classification of modernist periods offered by Michał Paweł Markowski; it is necessary, however, to keep in mind that the term he uses, *nowoczesność*, in Polish means "modernity" rather than "modernism," but this "modernity," in fact, is much closer in meaning to the English term "modernism" than the English term "modernity," which signifies not only the literary but the civilizational context. In his book *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy (Modern Polish Literature: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy*), Michał Paweł Markowski quotes Linda Hutcheon (*A Poetics of Postmodernism*) who claims that modernity is not a homogeneous field (39). Markowski, following her thought and applying the idea of heterogeneity of modernity to the Polish context, contends that there are two distinct trends in Polish modern literature: a "conservative modernity" (*nowoczesność zachowawcza*) and a "critical modernity" (*nowoczesność krytyczna*). "Conservative modernity" strives to continue the traditions of Romanticism and modernism (the *Young Poland* literary movement), whereas "critical modernity" includes the element of crisis that indicates a rupture with these

traditions: crisis of identity, of representation, of truth and of interpretation (Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 39-40). Schulz, Witkacy and Gombrowicz represent "critical modernity," or modernism.

The early Schulz critics, used to different types of creative discourses, tended to see in Bruno Schulz a "rather special mix of avant-garde and naturalist writing" (de Bruyn and Van Heuckelom 6). It was common to state that Schulz's work had no theme or "leading idea" (10). At best, the critics focused on the beauty of Schulz' prose and its language (Tadeusz Breza, A. Grzymala-Siedlecki, A. Plesnewicz) or its connection with paintings, since Schulz was also an artist (J. Lorentowicz, J. E. Skiwski), but not on the deep philosophical essence of his works. At worst, they dismissed him altogether.

Politically, Schulz was also marginalized. He could never fit, either as a person or as a writer, into the culture of a literature that was forcing one to be politically engaged. Unfortunately, heavy political engagement was the reality of his time. For example, Ignacy Fik and Kazimierz Wyka, influential critics from the 1930s, state, somewhat accusatorily, that Schulz in his prose is avoiding the drama of the everyday, hiding instead in the realm of the oneiric. In particular, Wyka and Napierski proclaimed that Schulz's work is guilty of "antihumanism and establishment of chaos." They also attribute "immoral elements in Schulz's prose to the author's conduct in real life" (Jarzębski, "Wstęp" 10) which is undoubtedly a strong statement that is affected by the moral discourses of the period; Poland at the time was a rather conservative country with the prominent influence of the Catholic church and its ideas of moral conduct and chaste living. Other strong attacks were on political grounds, and belong to a Marxist critic Ignacy Fik. He calls Schulz and "others like him" "homosexuals, exhibitionists and psychopaths, degenerates, narcomaniacs, people who chronically suffer from stomach

trouble…[…] who don't distinguish between sleeping and waking, hypochondriacs, neurasthenics, misanthropes" (Fik 127), calling Schulz more names than one could possibly hope to find proofs for in his texts (or life, for that matter). Even such luminaries as Tadeusz Borowski denied the presence of "artistic spirit" in Schulz's works: "Więcej jest artyzmu w jednej krotkiej odezwie KPP niż we wszystkich *Sklepach cynamonowych* ("There is more artistic spirit in [a political address] than in all *Cinnamon Shops*") (qtd. in Budziński, *Schulz pod Kluczem* 245).

The years of "Schulzophobia" were followed by World War II. Schulz, as a Jew, was shot and killed by a Nazi officer, and some of his work lost – notably, the novel *Messiah* on which he had been working over the past years; it was never recovered. According to the rumor, the novel was confiscated by the Soviet secret police after the Soviet army entered Drohobycz and took hold of its archives. 1945-1955 were "the years of silence" (so called by Andzei Sulikowski). Starting from 1956 Schulzology moved forward again, but it was only in 1974 that the first conference on Schulz was organized by Wojciech Wyskiel, with such scholars as Włodzimierz Panas, Jerzy Jarzębski, Wojchiech Karkowski, and Krzysztof Klosiński in attendance. The first two important post-war critics who took Schulz seriously were his "Max Brod," Jerzy Ficowski, a poet and writer who made recovering and publishing Schulz's works the cause of his life, and Artur Sandauer who wrote a famous introduction to Schulz's oeuvre, titled "Rzeczywistość zdegradowana" ("A Degraded Reality"). Jerzy Jarzębski emphasizes that Ficowski was not only the "collector" and "preserver" of Schulz's oeuvre, but also a keen critic for whom Schulz was not simply a "representative" of this or that trend, but a unique phenomenon of its own kind ("Wstęp" 5). In fact, this is the difference in attitude between Jerzy Ficowski and Artur Sandauer that Jerzy Jarzębski notes: if Ficowski cares mostly for Schulz's

wholeness as a separate, unique universe, Sandauer is more preoccupied with inscribing Schulz in the context of world critical and philosophical thought (9). In particular, Sandauer claims that Schulz is a "masochist" and a somewhat "defective" person, but that it is a timely way to be so because modern art has become not a reflection of ideas but a direct transmission of creative selves. In other words, the term "masochist" is used by Sandauer in a positive aspect, as such a state can but enrich art. Unfortunately, this was not always understood in the correct context in which it was uttered, and Sandauer's claim predetermined the way Schulz would be read for decades to come.

b) Contemporary Critics and Schools

After Jerzy Ficowski, Artur Sandauer and the first conference on Bruno Schulz in 1974, the studies of Schulz became more heterogeneous, exploring numerous topics, some of which are femininity and gender, the Galician origin of Schulz, the Kabbalah, Biblical references, and so on. The language is one of the main trends in Schulz studies. In particular, Włodzimierz Bolecki writes on the model of "poetical prose" of Bruno Schulz. He defines the "poetical prose model" in opposition to the "vehicular prose model." "Whereas in the latter case the literary language is overshadowed by its referential function (as in Realism), in the former case it draws attention to its autonomy and thus takes on a reflective character," Bolecki states. With respect to Schulz's stories, Bolecki argues that his literary world is the result of linguistic rather than mimetic processes: "The narrative utterance stops being a story about what once existed because it turns out to be itself an event in language" ("Wypowiedz narracyjna przestaje byc opowiadaniem o tym, co niegdyś zaistniało, albowiem sama okazuje się zdarzeniem w języku") (*Poetycki model prozy w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym* 12).

The next important school is the syncretic approach that focuses on the analysis of Schulz's prose and drawings. Such analysis was and is pursued Małgorzata Kitowska-Łysiak, Dariusz Konrad Sikorski, and others. Such a syncretic approach is more than justified; a writer and a Holocaust survivor, Henryk Grynberg, who wrote, in particular, a collection of essays titled *Drohobycz, Drohobycz and Other Stories: True Tales From the Holocaust and Life After*, claims that Schulz was so talented a painter that he should have focused solely on that and not on his literary career (8). While this statement is somewhat hyperbolical, it is true that Schulz's drawings are more than just a secondary source of his images, and offer important insights into the nature of his universe. Dariusz Konrad Sikorski, in particular, interprets the most common symbols encoded in Schulz's drawings (a woman, a dog, a shoe), and shows the connections between Schulz's prose and graphical works (19, 24).

When defining the limits and the scope of the other main trends in order to attempt to classify them, I am inclined to keep in mind a curious characteristic of Schulz suggested by Michał Paweł Markowski: "Schulz jest do niczego" ("Schulz is useless") (*Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 12). What Markowski might be alluding to is certainly not Schulz being disposable or unimportant for the literary process, but a stand not unlike that of Franz Kafka (with whom Schulz was compared more than once, both in terms of lifestyle and writing), who claimed he would rather be "useless," that is, not engaged ideologically or serving any utilitarian purpose. Schulz tends to be deceptive: his language is ornamental and complex, his topics seemingly very literary and fantastical, and yet he is, as Markowski suggests, "close to life" – not "life" as a chain of everyday events, but as existence,

existentia. This existence is the very core of being, and therefore not exploitable for any ideological purposes - and, consequently, "useless."

This indicates that Schulz, who is, as it was suggested, a great stylist, a good painter, a writer of the local coloring and borderland culture, is primarily an artist concerned with philosophical ideas and depth. The schools that deal with Schulz and Jewish topics (e.g., Kabbalah connections), Schulz and philosophy and literary criticism, and Schulz and the structural and post-structural approach, are all, each in its own way, concerned with capturing this philosophical essence, in particular, his attempts to define Word and Sense, the main philosophical concepts that permeate his prose and essays, and propel forward the scholars who employ the above-mentioned approaches.

Some findings that fit into the problem of the Jewish/Kabbalistic themes in Schulz have produced much controversy over the years. Partly, this controversy was fueled by the famous film by Wojciech Has, "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass," which interprets the Jewish themes quite unconventionally. The suggestion in the film is that Schulz's text somehow foresaw or foreshadowed the Holocaust. This is an artistic decision not uncommon in Eastern Europe, which suffered enormously during World War II and is still striving to overcome numerous historical traumas. For example, one can recall the film "Commissar" by the Russian film-maker Aleksandr Askoldov, which is similarly anachronistic: it depicts the Russian Civil War, 1918-1920, but suggests, at the end, the Holocaust. In the case of debates around Wojcech Has's film, the main argument is that Schulz perished in 1942 and, subsequently, did not live to see the most terrifying of the horrors of war. Though nobody ever questioned the artistic merit of this extraordinary film, it nonetheless inspired grounded objections from the community of Schulz researchers. In particular, Jerzy Jarzębski contends that Wojciech Has's approach tends

to take liberties with some aspects of Schulz's work, making Schulz's city fit into the standard of a common "small Jewish town from Eastern Galicia" (*Prowincja Centrum* 51), while in reality, Schulz offers a much richer picture of the world and treatment of the city.

Another controversial researcher who tackled Jewish themes is Włodzimierz Panas, whose analysis of the (presumably present) Kabbalah symbols in Schulz is mostly considered an over- interpretation. Włodzimierz Panas proposed a reading of Schulz's prose in the framework of Lurianic Kabbalah in his book *Księga Blasku: Traktat o Kabale w prozie Brunona Schulza*. According to Panas, Schulz strategically uses the motifs of creation of the world (*cimcum*), decline of the world (*szewirat ha-kelim*), and the arrival of Messiah, or salvation (*tikkun*). Michał Paweł Markowski emphasizes that Schulz is a writer with a strong philosophical penchant, and, consequently, with a matching level of complexity, which makes it impossible to reduce him to binary oppositions of any kind (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 12). Ascribing a consistent religious agenda to Schulz, - most notably, a Kabbalah-related one – would be a way to squeeze him into a binary matrix that would define rigidly what he believed versus what he did not believe, and this would be a simplification. However, Bruno Schulz, as his first researcher Jerzy Ficowski states, was in his work (and in his life) "spiritual but not religious" (Ficowski 77). He was exposed to a number of cultural and religious traditions, but never fully embraced any; raised a Jew, he did not frequent the synagogue. Later, he intended to marry Josefina Szelińska, who was Jewish but converted to Catholicism. Jerzy Jarzębski adds that Schulz definitely did not adhere to any religious doctrine, be it Christianity or Kabbalah, and, therefore could not have written his prose in such a way as to encode specific religious messages. Rather, Jarzębski stresses, Schulz artistically and freely combines different elements coming from different systems, including

Christianity, Judaism and Greek myths: “Oryginalność Schulza polega bowiem nie na tym, że wykorystuje religijne wątki, ale raczej na tym, że ukazuje jak gdyby ich niewystarczalność, charakter swoistej matrycy, która rzeczywistość przekracza łub do niej nie dorasta” (Jarzębski, “Wstęp” 5). (“Schulz’s originality consists not in using religious themes, but rather in the fact that he exposes their inadequacy; [these themes constitute] a matrix that either goes beyond reality or never grows to match it” (*ol*)).

However, Jewish topics are, without doubt, present in Schulz; David Goldfarb justly points out the necessity, for a Schulz researcher, to be aware of them as well as to take into account basic Talmudic concepts. Goldfarb notes that Drohobycz was “in the heart of hasidic territory,” and this meant unlimited access to hasidic teaching and storytelling that Schulz was, no doubt, exposed to. “The period from 1864 to the outbreak of the First World War saw a flourishing of publication of popular editions, in Yiddish as well as German and Polish translation, of hasidic stories,” adds Goldfarb (Goldfarb, “A Living Schulz: Noc Wielkiego Sezonu” (“The Night of the Great Season”)). He also mentions that Schulz, most likely, had access to a German translation of the Talmud. All this shows that Jewish topics occupy a significant place in Schulz’s legacy.

The latest research on Schulz and Jewish themes, produced, most notably, by David Goldfarb, Shalom Lindenbaum, Adam Lipszyc and Karen Underhill, focuses on Schulz’s complexity rather than on him following the doctrine. David Goldfarb analyses Talmudic references and motifs of Judaic mythology in Schulz, in particular, the elements of the Hebrew calendar, the image of the birds, ramparts of cloth, the new moon, and others. Adam Lipszyc and Karen Underhill write on Schulz while employing Walter Benjamin’s writings. Adam Lipszyc discusses the mythical and the Messianic in Schulz and Benjamin. Karen Underhill

further explores Schulz's relationship with Kabbalah and Jewish topics, and also focuses on the Messianic. Underhill draws attention to specific allegorical descriptions of "messianic occurences" in Schulz, such as his use of colors, the images of breath, light, and the birds (Underhill 41).

Michał Paweł Markowski emphasizes the importance of "writ[ing] something of substance about Schulz, connected with life itself, […] free[ing] him from academic paralysis (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 16). Schulz did not only write prose; he also produced a number of essays, the most important of which, "The Mythologization of Reality" ("Mithologizacja rzeczywistości"), contains his explanation of his view on the concept of myth (and, in a broader sense, writing and being). In his most recent book on Schulz, Markowski attempts to inscribe Schulz in the context of Hegelian philosophy, and supports the claims that Schulz, in fact, was a philosopher himself.

One of the most fruitful approaches to analyzing Bruno Schulz's writings is employed by Jerzy Jarzębski. For instance, Jarzębski focuses on structures that compose the city in Schulz. Jarzębski systemically analyzes the city as labyrinth, as a mental map, as the sun clock, and proceeds to discuss its constitutive parts, such as the house and the bed in which the protagonist "watches" his dreams (that later become oneiric prose). According to Jarzębski, the bed in the family house is the veritable core of the universe for Schulz in that it is a place where one transitions from the world of the reality into the world of dreams, and simultaneously from the orderly space, organized around a center, into the world of the labyrinth ("świata przestrzeni uporzadkowanej wokól jakiegoś srodka do świata labiryntu") (Jarzębski, *Prowincja Centrum* 112). Jarzębski focuses on such structural units such as the labyrinth and the house, but he

inscribes them into a broad and open context of numerous reference fields. I will rely on the works of Jarzębski, especially his writings on Schulz's city, in this project.

Schulz and the City

Undeniably, the main structure in Schulz's work is the city. As was already mentioned, Schulz appears in a number of readings as a very provincial person, whose creative imagination, in reality largely fueled by pain and trauma, is supposedly feeding on the exotic already present in his "inexplicable" and "inexpressible" environment. However, as Jerzy Jarzębski has demonstrated, the issue of the presence of the real Drohobycz in Schulz's prose is not a fruitful venue, and neither is searching for its traces in his texts (or drawings). It is productive only to a certain degree to focus on the resemblance of Schulz's native town of Drohobycz to the city depicted in his creative work. This kind of research is indispensable in that it provides new details of Schulz's life and times, but it offers little insight into the philosophical nature of his writings (and drawings). Monica Spiridon, when discussing city-texts, contends that "even if a real city provides the model for a city-text, this is the mere axiomatic starting point of an endless semiotic process, which ends up in a series of different phantasmagoric architectures" (Spiridon 2). It can be concluded that the relationship between a real city and its text is not that of an object and its immediate, unified reflection, but a starting point, a "hub" that shoots off semiotic units that, in their turn, produce more semiotic units in a mathematical progression, by then constituting unrecognizable, transformed remnants of images.

To refute the myth of Schulz as a provincial writer and the ramifications of this reductive stand, Jerzy Jarzębski rejects the view that it was, in Schulz's times, very provincial.

In his *Prowincja Centrum. Przypisy do Schulza* Jarzębski states that Drohobycz, in fact, was a town with a life more vibrant than that of real backwaters.

> Ani Drohobycz nie był na przelomie wiekow tak prowincialną dziurą, jakby się komentatorom wydawało, ani jego lokacja na mapie - niepodal stołecznego wówczas Lwowa - nie odpowiadała wersji osady zagubionej na kresach, ani też Schulz nie był takim znów powincjuszem: w Wiedniu bywał częściej i dłużej niż to wcześniej sądzono […]" (109)
>
> Neither was Drohobycz of the fin de siècle as much of a provincial hole as it seemed to some commentators, nor did the town's location on the map – next to the capital city of Lwow – correspond to the idea of a village lost in the borderlands, nor was Schulz such a provincial: he spent more time in Vienna and went there more often that it was ever previously thought […] (*ol*)

Galicia, the area where Bruno Schulz is from, used to be one of the poorest provinces of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Eastern Europe in general (Hrycak 27). However, after the discovery of oil near Drohobycz, the situation changed for the better. In *Miasto Schulza* (*Schulz's City*), a book documenting written and spoken accounts of Drohobycz, Wisław Budziński pays special attention to the transformation of Drohobycz from a town with a traditional style to a town modernized by the unexpected discovery of oil in 1850. "From one day to the next gigantic fortunes, first-class villas, hotels, restaurants and… brothels grew in number" (20), according to the account of Sewer Ignacy Macijewski quoted by Budziński. Such rapid transformations meant that the city's population changed, too; as one of Schulz's first

critics Arthur Sandauer asserts, oil discovery "directed to that small patriarchal town the whole swarm of middlemen and conmen who, thanks to their lack of good conscience, triumphed over the old merchant caste" (ibid.). Such accounts testify to the fact that at least to some extent Drohobycz was a rather modernized place that featured many characteristics of urban capitalism: big stores, entertainment facilities, busy street life and tourism.

Jerzy Jarzębski adds that there were attempts to find in Schulz's city "a replica of a Jewish shtetl" or a "universal, mystical city, a symbol of all cities" ("Niektórzy chcieli w miescie Schulza odnalezć replikę zydowskiego sztetl, inni jeszsze dostrzegali w jego ksztalcie zarys miasta uniwersalnego i mitycznego, symbol wszystkich miast") (Jarzębski, *Prowincja Centrum* 89). However, as Jerzy Jarzębski argues, Schulz's city is bigger and much more multicultural than a shtetl, as it combines the coziness of a shtetl and cosmopolitanism of a bigger town, but it does not equal either one.

It is true that Schulz's relationship with Drohobycz forever remained a drama and an unresolved case; a provincial "hole" or not, Drohobycz's atmosphere was still not exactly conducive to free creative life and finding like-minded friends. There have been speculations on what could have become of Schulz if he had left his provincial city and traveled. Bruno Schulz's fate is curious: on the one hand, he was an honored interlocutor of such luminaries of his time as Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), Tadeusz Breza, Julian Tuwim, Zofia Nałkowska, and others. Thomas Anessi in his article "The Great Heresy of the Varsovian Center" writes that with the publication of *Cinnamon Shops* Schulz became known, "with the doors to the Warsaw literary and artistic world open to him" (400). He was highly valued by his peers, and received a prize from *Wiadomości Literackie*, a literary journal, in 1935, and the Golden Laurel award from the Polish Literary Academy. On the other hand,

despite Schulz's enjoying communication with his fellow writers and readers during his lifetime, it was only after his death that he was finally positioned as one of the chief representatives of Polish modernism. Yet, during his lifetime, even while his books were praised, he still remained a modest gymnasium teacher who lived in relative obscurity.

Bruno Schulz did have a chance to visit a number of European cities; he went to Vienna, Warsaw, and Paris, though, as Jerzy Jarzębski contends, the Paris trip was not one of his best: the time chosen for the visit was off, Schulz's French was far from perfect, and he suffered from his own shyness (*Prowincja Centrum* 113). His financial situation was never good, and in the letters to friends he contemplates whether he should take a trip or buy a couch. It is known that he never bought a couch. Schulz continually asked the government to give him a sabbatical to be able to concentrate on writing, but he was denied help. Most of the time Bruno Schulz was locked in Drohobycz, having no means to travel, and suffering from being trapped in an environment where he could not flourish as a writer or painter. He was not happy about his job at the gymnasium and complained about it – in particular, in his letters to Romana Halpern, a friend and a confidant: "I am able to find no charm in teaching, and I can't live without some charm, a little spice, some sort of piquant sauce to go with life. In this I differ tremendously from my fellow teachers." […] "My official duties fill me with fear and loathing and cast gloom over any joie de vivre" (*Letters and Drawings* 140). He continues: "My nervous system has a delicacy and fastidiousness that are not up to the demands of a life not sanctioned by art. I am afraid this school year may kill me" (*Letters and Drawings* 151). Schulz's own mother, with whom he did have a strong and rewarding bond, complained that Bruno Schulz would ask their maid to undress and pose for drawings: for her, this was indecent behavior (Buzdiński, *Schulz pod Kluczem* 27). Despite a rich correspondence and occasional trips, the truth is that Schulz

struggled – even in his closest environment, and this was a major difficulty he had to face; this is what formed him as a writer whose views and creative work are full of ambiguities: a provincial who resists being a provincial; a person with a bright mind whose characteristics, along with introverted propensities, timidity and aloofness, include passion, strong will and courage to approach controversial topics.

Igor Klekh, a Russian literary scholar, suggests that a number of Schuzian images embodied his desire to break through the limits, but that he was slowly failing at that, being deprived of appropriate interlocutors (whom he only had via correspondence), lonely and disappointed by his circumstances. Some of the themes from his stories, such as "forgotten rooms" covered in vegetation, or "eccentric" Time that produces "prodigal years which - like a sixth, smallest toe – grow a thirteenth freak month" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 125) are examples of excessive quantities that are almost corporeally tangible images signifying the "excess" in Schulz, the inability to be contained, and the deep ambiguity that he, as an artist, must have felt towards his environment, which held him and confined at the same time. Igor Klekh does not consider this Schulz's fault by any means; he only extrapolates the condition, projecting its potentially dangerous development (sinking deeper and deeper into the same life style and the same line of creative thinking), which never happened in reality (Klekh 52). Klekh's illuminating observations should, however, serve as a warning never to analyze Schulz *only* within the context of Drohobycz-as-a-small-town, without placing Drohobycz itself in larger contexts; this would mean to run a risk of envisioning Schulz as a somewhat deranged provincial person who spends his time consciously encoding religious messages into prose, and striving to be as isolated in his endeavor as possible. Yet, Schulz is not confined within his geography.

Moreover, Bruno Schulz, having lived in the "times of great changes" (Robertson 228), was not uncurious about science, new developments in technology and modern innovations. He was not "provincial" in this particular aspect. In her article about the railway, Theodosia Robertson points out that there is plenty of evidence in Schulz's stories to conclude that he was fascinated by at least two such innovations: electricity and the railway. When oil was discovered near Drohobycz, the Vienna government and its head, Eduard Graf von Taafe, decided to connect the town to the railway system of the area, which was successfully achieved in 1872. Oil, wheat, timber and beets were exported out of Galicia by train, and cotton and wool were imported from other areas of the Habsburg Empire. Schulz did understand that it was the opening of the railway that caused the demise of small merchants (and his father) in 1900-1914. His texts reflect a number of ambiguities of his attitude towards the innovations.

Jerzy Jarzębski analyzes Schulz's story "Comet," in which Schulz ironically describes the pseudo-scientific occupations of Jacob, the father of the protagonist. He emphasizes that Schulz's intentions are never to return to the idyllic "good old times" like the ones depicted in Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*. As Jerzy Jarzębski observes, technology, when it makes its appearance in Schulz's stories, is always a serious topic, not an ironic one; but this is not the case in the story "Comet" where the father stages "electrotechnical experiments" that were relevant a century earlier, and only for "shocking the ladies from a society" with the "Galvani phenomenon," but not at all contemporary or even totally scientific:

> W rezultacie tych badań ojciec doszedł do wyników zdu-miewających. Wykazał na przykład, że dzwonek elektryczny, oparty na zasadzie tzw. młotka Neefa, jest zwykłą mistyfikacją. […]Mój ojciec dotykał przy obiedzie paznokcia swego wielkiego palca

> trzonkiem łyżki zanurzonej w zupę, i oto w lampie zaczynało terkotać dzwonkiem Neefa. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 357)
>
> …My father […] achieved amazing results. He proved, for instance, that an electric bell, built on the principle of Neeffs's hammer, is an ordinary mystification. […] During dinner my father would touch the nail of his thumb with a handle of a spoon dipped in soup, and suddenly Neeff's bell would begin to rattle inside the lamp. (Schulz, *Street of Crocodiles* 146)

Jacob as a "scientist" is depicted ironically, pointing at the fact that Schulz never glorified the provincial lifestyle and did not relish it, despite the fact that he bemoaned the demise of the community due to the arrival of technological progress and modern times. It also shows that he was ironic about the idea of "progress," and this stand of his is similar to that of Benjamin, of which I will speak below.

Schulz's city, the source of his inspiration and frustration, was one of the most important aspects of his life and creative endeavors. As inspiration and literary phenomenon, it was neither a local haven nor a rigid structure, but rather a fluid and diverse locus that cannot be reduced to a simplified pattern, and that needs a global analytical approach.

Anna Csillag/Czyllak: Kitsch and Wish-Image

When talking about Anna Csillag/Chyllak, Schulz elevates her to the status of a Job, while Benjamin calls this beheaded Salome of the new epoch "betrayed and sold," in that she is reduced from a mythological and symbolic figure into a part of the commercialized environment, an advertisement, or a banality. However, no matter whether Anna is elevated or

reduced in status, both Schulz and Benjamin operate within the same matrix of meanings: the Biblical references. In a way, their seemingly polarized views of Anna are neutralized by the very nature of the metaphorization they apply to her: Anna is either a Job or a "betrayed" Salome, but Salome nonetheless; besides, she possesses the authenticity of a mythological figure or an ornament, with neither one being less than the other.

The change of attitude toward authenticity is one of the main themes of Schulz's "Book". What used to be considered "authentic" is not authentic any more, and vice versa. Schulz emphasizes the fluid nature of "the Authentic," the embodiment of which is the Book (the calendar): "Here we must stress a strange characteristic of the script […]: it unfolds while being read, its boundaries open to all currents and fluctuations" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 12). Its boundaries are "open" to the world, which means it is continually ready to change and accept new elements into itself. Its system of meanings is not closed. The "Authentic" that Joseph seeks, or the calendar, in this sense is more versatile than the Bible that his parents offer him: the Bible is "fixed," whereas the calendar is not, and its boundaries are fluid.

Anna Csillag/Czyllak's head, featured in Schulz's story and in *The Arcades Project*, becomes "an ornament," which has a status similar to that of art pieces that decorate the dwelling or the office. Not only is Anna herself a decoration, but she also helps others to develop the same kind of hair growth to decorate themselves and the environment; she starts with her village (brothers, brothers-in-law and other relatives, according to the ad, grow a lot of hair and thick beards), and then moves on to the capital cities, entering triumphantly their inviting arenas. Anna *sells* kitsch (the beauty one needs to acquire to blend in with the crowd of the new age) and *is* kitsch at the same time (her own head is used as a decoration). In the

context of Anna Csillag/Chyllak, kitsch as a term does not just denote banal art, but, more broadly, eradication of highly individualized features: all that which constitutes high art and strong personalities. Matei Calinescu points out that "kitsch may be conventionally defined as a specifically aesthetic form of lying. As such, it obviously has a lot to do with the modern illusion that beauty may be bought and sold" (229). The beauty Anna created (with the help of a cosmetic product) is for sale; it is also a rather uniform beauty, a prescribed one, illustrating Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony: thick hair, like Anna's, is one of its standards. It is not about the actual beauty of thick hair; it is about the fact this it is a necessary element of a "beautiful" person and belongs to large numbers of beautiful persons. Beauty is not seen in individualization, but in conformity. Beauty itself, as an idea, becomes kitsch.

Matei Calinescu states that kitsch, "technologically as well as aesthetically, is one of the most typical products of modernity" (226). As larger numbers of people obtain access to art, the latter inevitably lowers its standards (de Toqueville, qtd. in Calinescu 226). Toqueville stresses that "democracy encourages commercialism in literature and the arts" (238). Fewer consumers are refined enough to appreciate better art. Being much more common than art, kitsch becomes the authentic, reversing the hierarchy of values. The same is true for human appearance and beauty standards. Anna is authentic because she is common and therefore recognizable in the world in which a certain standard of beauty prevails, whereas a more individualized kind of beauty (just like high art, "real" art) is not necessarily available to the public for its validity to be acknowledged.

In his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin argues that "the technology of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the sphere of tradition." He adds that "by replicating the work many times over, it

substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence" (22). Anna Csillag/Czyllak, though not exactly "a work of art," shares certain characteristic features with it; she is reproducing (and is being reproduced) by selling her product to everybody and making beauty uniform.

Returning to Bruno Schulz's "Authentic" and its fluid boundaries open "to currents and fluctuations," one can attempt to see Anna Csillag/Czyllak in the same light; she is unmistakably present and yet profoundly transient. Anna does not exist: she is a phantom advertising a product and a type of beauty that is subject to change as soon as historical reality chooses another ideal. She has no essence of her own. As a space with open boundaries, she is a Salome who carries at least two sets of connotations: those of a mythological dancer who charms rulers and claims heads, and those of a severed head on display - a head with abnormally grown hair that she advertises. Capitalism, this John the anti-Baptist, claimed her head as a revenge of which she is not aware, and turned her into a zombie who can only glorify and propagate her condition of a talking doll. And yet, without the old myth she would not be interesting or recognizable to the consumers.

In both Schulz and Benjamin, Anna Csillag/Czyllak is authentic inauthenticity or inauthentic authenticity, a sign of the new times that also comprises old times and alludes to older signs, marking a very special era. She is "historical materialism" in that she embodies advertisement, but also "theology," a reference to the old myths of Job and Salome.

This leads to conceptualizing Anna Csillag/Czyllak as a Benjaminian "wish image." The embodiment of the connection between the old mythology and the (technologically) new ways that give it material shape is what Walter Benjamin calls a "wish image." He points out that no matter how modern, the new projects inevitably took the form of the old ones. "…Architects mimic the pillars of Pompeiian columns; factories mimic private villas, as later the first railroad

stations are modeled on chalets" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 38). What is produced as a result of such unconscious collaboration is a utopia that wishes to see itself facing the future but is in reality facing the "Ur-past," a form of an ancient archetype. The wish-image is something quite concrete in its form and yet dream-like in its intentions. The Paris arcades, which Benjamin describes in his *Arcades Project,* themselves exemplify the concept. They are galleries created for shopping, and yet they are a good example of transposition of the old into the new age: made of modern materials, steel and glass, they resemble old churches. Benjamin calls them temples of commodity capitalism:

> Encroachment of the architectural style of the archives on sacred architecture. Concerning Notre Dame de Lorette: the interior of this building is without doubt in excellent taste, only it is not the interior of a *church*. The splendid ceiling would suitably adorn the most brilliant ballroom in the world. The graceful lamps of bronze, with their frosted glass globes in different colors, look as though they came from the city's most elegant cafes. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: L2, 4 408)

In his essay "Capitalism as Religion" Benjamin points out that capitalism "serves essentially to allay the same anxieties, torments and disturbances to which the so-called religions offer answers" (288). He distinguishes three aspects of this religion. First, capitalism is a cult in which "things have a meaning only in their relationship to the cult." Second, this cult is characterized by permanence: it demands constant worship every day. Third, it operates on "pervasive guilt"– instead of the promise of atonement. Benjamin adds: "Capitalism is entirely without precedent in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its

complete destruction." He draws a comparison between the images of the saints and "the banknotes of different states" (289- 290). Calling the arcades the "temples" fits this paradigm. Moreover, it is not even just Benjamin's personal metaphor but rather a widely accepted expression: for instance, Émile Zola, a contemporary of the era of emergence of the *grands magasins* in Paris, in his novel *Au Bonheur des Dames,* several times refers to the gallery described in his work as "temple:" after a description of the gallery, all the iron and glass elements emphasized, it is referred to as a "cathedral of modern commerce" (Zola).

According to Walter Benjamin, the structures made of new materials but with an ancient idea encoded in them "served transitory purposes: covered markets, railroad stations, exhibitions. Iron was immediately allied with functional moments in the life of the economy" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: F2, 9 154). Benjamin emphasizes their "transitory nature," which is teleologically directed. These constructions are literally "passages," spaces that lead to other spaces. Their most important characteristic feature is the fact that they combine in themselves the ancient and the contemporary, which are in a continuous interaction:

> The arcade as iron construction stands on the verge of horizontal extension. That is a decisive condition for its "old-fashioned" appearance. In display, in this regard, a hybrid character, analogous in certain respects to that of the Baroque church – the "vaulted hall" that comprehends the chapels only as an extension of its own proper space, which is wider than ever before. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: F4, 5 160)

If capitalism is a religion, then Anna Czyllak/Csillag is one of its icons, or religious images, a "hybrid," a "passage" between the past and the present (or future). The arcades, the

"churches" of the new era, are, literally, "passages" (in French they are literally passages): as Volodymyr Yermolenko observes,

> A passage is a "corridor" that unites the streets; but its macabre and hallucinatory nature is similar to that of the *rites de passage*, the rites of passage, descending into hell and the rejuvenation of the soul. For Benjamin, a passage is passing through the petrified past of the nineteenth century, through the "pandemonium" of the nineteenth century, through the *dream* of the nineteenth century. (Yermolenko 42)

Goals, Methodology and Chapters to Follow

Unlike Marx who argues that the economic base determines the superstructure, or at least is the dominant element in the relationship of the two, Benjamin sees superstructure as a complex phenomenon whose role is not quite so easily defined. To him, within superstructure "there was a separate (and often autonomous) dialectical process, not less important and not "less noticeable" than the economy, but a slower one (Buck Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 124).

Analyzing the prose of Bruno Schulz with the help of Walter Benjamin's method of philosophical history, identifying dialectical images and the moments of danger and now-time (*Jetztzeit*) can, on the one hand, demonstrate that Schulz's prose, far from being a collection of childhood memories and ornamental language, is not just a literary event (no matter how refined) but a theologically significant entity ("theologically" in Benjamin's sense of the inner process of the dialectics of the superstructure), one of the discursive pillars of the construction of Polish modernity and, more abstractly, of modernity in general. On the other hand, such an

analysis can expand the idea of urban modernity, which is not confined to megapolises. Modernity occurred in small towns as well, even if these towns were less radiantly illuminated and less radically equipped with technological innovations. Regarded through the Benjaminian lens, Bruno Schulz emerges, firstly, as one of those who holds the keys to the most arcane and yet important part of the production of modernity, in a global sense: its theology; and secondly, as the one who shows the transformations of consciousness in a small, seemingly not very "modern" town, which nonetheless exhibits traits of modernity and in that does not differ too much from Paris or Berlin. The analysis of certain phenomena or artifacts as dialectical images is more than appropriate for Schulz. Schulz as the artist and philosopher, on the one hand, is "living in the past," and on the other, is deeply concerned with the future that will arrive after this past, which is often unacknowledged, mutilated, or discarded as unnecessary. He is all about restoring debris (in Benjamin's sense) and looking at it closely through the analytical lens.

Michał Paweł Markowski suggests that diverse methodological approaches to Schulz are important in that they consider multiple points of view and eliminate a number of traps that awaited for earlier generations of researchers, such as, for instance, Schulz-essentialism. Bruno Schulz is an artist whose world is very memorable, as it features striking images and unexpected plot turns. This often prompts researchers to explain Schulz with Schulz, claiming that one or the other seemingly inexplicable element of the text is this way simply because it is "Schulz's." Talking about the trap of Schulz-essentialism, Igor Klekh points out that instead of producing a veritable analysis of Schulz's prose by using an appropriate critical paradigm, the critics and interpreters "feel great temptation to become 'another Schulz' and to inhabit the world of dreams of their idol" (Klekh 52). Krzysztof Stala writes about the existence of Schulz

readings that “imitate the language of their subject of research,” evoking “the inexpressible” instead of analyzing the present (Stala 45). Michał Paweł Markowski also exposes the existence of reductive readings of Schulz that do not interpret but only paraphrase the writer from Drohobycz. “It is easier to speak like Schulz than about Schulz” (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 28). Schulz bestowed his readers with such memorable images that it can be difficult to venture outside of their magical spell. Writes Markowski: “Z Brunonem Schulzem kłopot jest taki: wszyscy wiedzą, że jest genialny, wszyscy mówią o jego potężnym wpływie, ale kiedy przychodzi co do czego, to kończy się na banałach, jakby miarą wielkości pisarza była wspólnota obiegowych sądów” (Markowski, “Rzespublika Marzen"). (“The trouble with Bruno Schulz is the following: everybody knows he’s a genius, everybody talks about his tremendous influence, but when push comes to shove it’s all restricted to banalities, as if the measure of a writer’s greatness were to be this community of popular judgments” (Tr. Stanley Bill).

Michał Paweł Markowski illustrates this tendency enumerating Schulzian images and themes that envelope the researchers and keep them blocked: “Ta więc ciągle te labirynty, mity, dominy, tandety, księgi, karakony i kafki. Bez przerwy sny, gnosy i czarny humor” (Markowski *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 55). (“Again and again, labyrinths, myths, dominatrices, books, cockroaches, and kafkas. Constantly dreams, gnosis and black humor”). Schulz, truly, offers unforgettable images, unexpected transformations and striking conclusions. These strong images form a unique matrix of a universe that seemingly invites interpretations and yet, in reality, resists them.

According to Michał Paweł Markowski, there are several reasons for essentialist readings of Bruno Schulz. Firstly, Schulz is obsessive, and he himself constantly returns to

images and topics, prompting his readers or researchers to stay within his universe. His imagery tends to be very repetitive, with the same motifs and types of transformations appearing over and over, throughout the stories and collections. As John Updike observes, Schulz's writing "never… propels us onward, but instead seems constantly to ask that we stop and reread" (qtd. in Brown 230). Secondly, Schulz, as Markowski contends, attacks his reader consciously with "inexpressible" topics, not offering them a "relaxing" read.

The question Michał Paweł Markowski asks when approaching Schulz studies as a whole is as follows: "Jak go nie parafrazować, lecz interpretować?" (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość. Schulz, Egzystencja, Literatura* 18). ("How not to paraphrase him, but interpret instead?") It seems like the only way to avoid either reading Schulz as a writer of binaries or as a writer to be paraphrased is to take a look at his prose in broader theoretical and historical contexts that will, eventually, offer parallels and explanations that were not expected before. In other words, the only way to move closer to Schulz is to move away from him. As it is, Schulz is not simply a provincial writer hiding from modernity behind fantasy. The town he is from, Drohobycz, is not a backwater too far removed from the metropolitan modernity (Rasula) of the big cities. Modernity took place everywhere, and in the provinces it might have manifested itself in ways different from Berlin or Paris, but it was unmistakably present.

The reading of Schulz's oeuvre through the paradigm of Walter Benjamin's *Paris Arcades* suggests a more distant point of observation and, most importantly, a systemic approach to the city as ontological basis of the Schulzian world, with the shop ("the arcade") being a space of passage that connects the past and the present and serves as the elemental topos of the universe depicted. It also focuses on the characteristic features of modernity in smaller towns. Instead of moving inward, towards what we think *Schulz-in-essence* is (or *should* be), I

suggest moving outward, to see what *Schulz-in-the-world* is. It has been already pointed out that Schulz's universe is truly unique; reading Schulz's city through the *Arcades Project* will place him in a broader context of modernity, and demonstrate that his unique universe is also truly global.

In his analysis of urban life, Walter Benjamin focuses on a number of themes and types that, to him, constitute and represent modernity. According to Susan Buck-Morss, Benjamin selected the flâneur, prostitute, and collector because they are "historical figures whose existence was precarious economically in their own time […], and socially across time because the dynamics of industrialism ultimately threatened these social types with extinction." He considered them to be the "Ur-forms of contemporary life." As she puts it, "In commodity society all of us are prostitutes, selling ourselves to strangers; all of us are collectors of things" (Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering" 35-37). In this project, I wish to apply Benjamin's paradigm of the Ur-forms of city life to Bruno Schulz's prose, and to analyze the collector, the flâneur and the prostitute, as they appear in his stories.

My methodology will consist in a close reading of Bruno Schulz's texts, and I will employ Benjaminian concepts, primarily dialectical image, wish image, phantasmagoria, dreaming collective, and Modernity as Hell. Each of the Ur-forms identified by Benjamin and found in Schulz (flâneur, prostitute, collector) will be viewed as a locus of a certain dialectical image, a repository of the moment of danger, and a place of the "rupture of time."

Chapter 2, "The Dream of Beauty and Evil: The Shop," will focus on explicating the condition of dreaming collective and its manifestations in Schulz's prose - in other words, demonstrating how the Schulzian world can be practically conceptualized in the framework of

Benjamin's theory. Chapter 3, "The Collector of the Living Dead: The Birds," will tackle the collector and the dialectical image of the birds, which are among the most prominent images in Schulz, and have been previously considered as Zoharic references. I will read them as debris on the field of history-as-decline. Chapter 4, "The Flâneur in Hell: the Train," will discuss the flâneur and the dialectical image of the train, which Schulz conceptualizes as a locus of fear and entrapment that is produced by technology. Chapter 5, "The Gaze of the Female Moloch: The Mannequin," will deal with the images of prostitute/woman/fashion and the dialectical image of the mannequin. Chapter 6 will provide a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DREAM OF BEAUTY AND EVIL: THE SHOP

The Priests and Temples of Shopping

In Bruno Schulz's story "The Night of the Great Season," Jacob, the owner of a store and the father of the young protagonist, is anxiously preparing for the customers to shop at his establishment. The season has just begun, and the whole city seems to be on the verge of anticipation:

> Przychodziła pora Wielkiego Sezonu. Ożywiały się ulice. O szóstej godzinie po południu miasto zakwitało gorączką, domy dostawały wypieków, a ludzie wędrowali ożywieni jakimś wewnętrznym ogniem, naszminkowani i ubarwieni jaskrawo, z oczyma błyszczącymi jakąs odświętną, *piękną i zlą febrą*. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 124) [Italics mine]
>
> The time of the Great Season was approaching. The streets were getting busy. At six in the evening the city became feverish, the houses stood flushed, and people walked about made up in bright colors, illuminated by some interior fire, their eyes shining with a festive fever, *beautiful yet evil*. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 127) [Italics mine]

Bruno Schulz emphasizes the "brightness" and the "feverish" nature of the atmosphere, but, generating an instant intrigue and a seeming contradiction, mentions that this beautiful "festive

fever" contains "evil." The "feverish" city that features "evil" and "beauty" immediately reminds the reader of an image from the poems of Charles Baudelaire, the title of whose collection, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, comprises both themes in question: flowers that stand for beauty and evil as their characteristic feature. They can also be interpreted in a broader Baudelairian context, as referring to the neuroses of urban life, full of unexpected contrasts.

"Beauty" and "evil" manifest themselves throughout the whole story. The store, which constitutes, as I have stated in the previous chapter, the ontological basis of the universe described, is clearly "beauty." Its goods consist of fabrics of different colors: "washed-out greys of distance… […] tapestry blues…[…] royal blues…the indigo of distant forests and the plush of rustling parks…the whispering shadows of wilting gardens… the waft of mold in the depth of autumn nights" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 128). The beauty of this environment seemingly contrasts with the "evil" nature of those who shop and who are depicted as intruders. The shoppers are called "the carefree worshippers of Baal," "rattles and nutcrackers" who commit "hideous" sins (134). The customers behave in such a ravenous way that they inspire the anger of Jacob:

> Moj ojciec wzrastał nagle nad tzmi grupami kupczących, wydłużony gniewem, i gromił z wysoka bałwochwalców potężnym slowem. Potem ponoszony rozpaczą, […] biegł obłędnie po bantach półek, po dudniących deskach ogołoconych rusztowań, ścigany przez obrazy bezwstydnej rozpusty, którą przeczuwał za plecami w głębi domu. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa 128)*
>
> My father would suddenly appear over a group of customers, increased in stature by his anger, to thunder against the idolaters with great and powerful words. Then, driven to

> despair, he would […] run crazily along the ledges and shelves, […] pursued by visions of the shameless lust which, he felt, was being given full reign behind his back. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 134)

The customers are, seemingly, doing what the customers should be doing: in short, touching fabrics, evaluating their quality, and simply shopping. And yet, something in their manners and in their behavior (and, perhaps, their mere existence) is deeply disturbing to Jacob. He finds them to be a threat to his establishment, and, ultimately, to his very being, his foundation, since the shop is clearly the basis of life in Schulz's stories: the beginning of "genealogy" and the "depth of depths." The shop holds the household, not the other way around. The first thing Jacob does in the morning is go to the shop. He is so invested in the shop that he literally becomes part of it: "For a moment father became flat, grown into the façade, and felt his outstretched hands, quivering and warm, merging into its golden stucco" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 98). The shop-assistants are part of the family, and it is impossible to differentiate between what in contemporary life is called "private" and "professional." The family and the workers have meals together and associate on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the customers, who are obviously paramount for the whole business, since they are the ones on whom profit and the well-being of the family depend, are seen as evil intruders, thus questioning the very nature of the endeavor.

"The Night of the Great Season" (from the first collection, *Cinnamon Shops* (1934)) has a "twin" story, "Dead Season," that appears in *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass (*1937), Schulz's second and final collection that describes the protagonist as an adult. In "The Night of Great Season," Jacob, the protagonist's father, prepares the store, welcomes the

customers, but is enraged and disappointed by their behavior: first, they act intoxicated, then begin to laugh; at the end of the story, strange birds arrive - presumably, either to protect or encourage the father - and die, stoned by the crowd. In "Dead Season," the "twin" story, Jacob, by now a very desperate merchant whom nobody in the house obeys because he has lost a lot of personal power as the head of the family due to financial crises, still runs his store, then negotiates for a loan with a visitor, and receives it. However, his mental health seems endangered and his state of mind hopeless, despite the relatively happy ending of "seven years of prosperity" that come as a result of his negotiations. In the case of the enigma of the "lustful" and infuriating customers, it is crucial to consider both of these stories that feature the shop as their primary image. "Dead Season" contains certain key elements for solving the riddles put forth in "The Night of the Great Season."

The action in "The Night of the Great Season" and "The Dead Season" is set, respectively, at night and in the wintertime, and during the day in the summer (Jarzębski). Jerzy Jarzębski pays special attention to the structure of Schulz's texts, pointing out the parallels.

Both stories contain hidden references to Jewish texts in their temporal paradigms. In particular, David Goldfarb analyzes "The Night of the Great Season" and its time. The action goes on during what Schulz calls "a freak month:" – "falszywy miesiac," a thirteenth month that grows "like a sixth, smallest toe" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 125). In his article "A Living Schulz: Noc Wielkiego Sezonu ("The Night of the Great Season")," David Goldfarb suggests that "wielki sezon," or "great season," can also be interpreted as a reference to "Great Week," or "Holy Week," or a holiday season. David Goldfarb adds that the Jewish High Holidays are considered "seasons," too, and that Easter and Yom Kippur were "the most fascinating holidays for Schulz" (Goldfarb). One can conclude that "the night of the great

season" is meant to be understood as a "special occasion," an out of the ordinary event with, perhaps, a somewhat festive atmosphere, or a period of time that has sacred meaning. David Goldfarb emphasizes the prominence of the Judaic themes in Schulz, stating that it is impossible to approach Schulz's world without paying attention to them. "Falszywy miesiac," "a freak month," is an entity that does not fit " the logic of the actual Hebrew calendar" (Goldfarb). And yet, David Goldfarb adds: "It is reassembled from scattered bits of text like the tablets of Moses" (ibid.). In Bruno Schulz's world, a number of mythologies are mixed and intertwined; Schulz "reassembles" them making them form a new entity in his text. In this sense, a "freak" month is not a direct Judaic reference, but can possibly be interpreted as such due to some other elements from the realm of Jewish mythology that are present in the story.

In "Dead Season," Schulz writes with nostalgia about the past, transporting the reader into the epoch before that of the big stores and economical changes that reshaped the landscape of Eastern Europe in general and of his (and his characters') native Galicia in particular:

> Na to mógł sobie pozwolić Bałanda i Ska i ci inni dyletanci branży, którym obcy był głód doskonałości, asceza wysokiego mistrzostwa. Ojciec patrzył z boleścią na upadek branży. Kto z dzisiejszej generacji kupców bławatnych znał jeszcze dobre tradycje dawnej sztuki […] Komu z dzisiejszych dostępne były ostatnie finezje stylu w wymianie not, memorandów i listów? Kto znał jeszcze cały urok dyplomacji kupieckiej, dyplomacji dobrej starej szkoły, cały ten pełen napięcia przebieg negocjacyj […] (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą*, Kometa 256)
>
> That was good enough for Balanda and Co, and these other dilettanti of the trade, who knew not the hunger for perfection nor the asceticism of high priesthood. My father

> suffered when he saw the downfall of the retail textile trade. Who of the present generation of the textile merchants remembered the good traditions of their ancient art? […] How many still remembered the charm of merchant diplomacy, the diplomacy of the good old school, the exciting stages of negotiation? […] (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 100)

This passage is unquestionably glorifying the past. It reminds of an epic saga of the good old days in that it puts the old-school merchants on a pedestal. It suggests that the new tradesmen do not have the graces of the ones who are slowly but inevitably disappearing. The old-style merchants are "high priests" of their profession, whereas a representative of either a bank or a competing firm (it is never quite clarified in the story) who comes towards the end of "Dead Season" to provide Jacob with the much-needed funding is called "a powerful demon." Moreover, the customers spoiled by such "demons" also become somewhat "demonic," or at least "possessed."

Positioning the merchants as "priests" and the shop, respectively, as "temple," sounds close to Walter Benjamin's definition of the arcades as "temples of commodity capitalism." The shop grew, but its major quality of a "church" is still present. This, however, does not mean that it is the same church with the same significance. In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin's main focus are the shopping galleries - ultimately, the shops, which he views as the basis of the modern condition and its most essential manifestation. In Bruno Schulz's world the shop is the center of everything: of the city, of family life, and of the family house, as it is its ground floor. In this chapter, I intend to discuss the shop as the foundation of Schulz's universe and the manifestations of modernity in a small town. The world Schulz describes is striking in that

some of its elements - for instance, mystical birds and rooms with vegetation - may distract the reader, preventing him or her from recognizing the (social) context of modernity. Yet the fervor of shopping, of beautiful but dead objects and the crowds, and, overall, the neurosis of urban life - and modernity as its broader matrix - is a common theme for European literature of the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. In Schulz, I will primarily focus on the close reading of the three stories: "The Night of the Great Season," "Dead Season," and "The Street of Crocodiles."

The Spectacle of the Fetish

The project of the 20th century began with what Jed Rasula calls "metropolitan modernity" - the rise of a new urban lifestyle and the accompanying mindset. If in the beginning of the nineteenth century the countryside landscape was considered the point of reference and the metaphor of the emotional state of a human being, with the rise of industrialism and mass production, the urban landscape, or the city-scape, took over the old matrix. The city became the new mirror in which people would see themselves, and a new form of psychic life was born. Charles Baudelaire was one of the first to recognize this in his *Fleurs du mal* in which he refers to the new elements of this psychic life – fleeting encounters in the crowd, ennui, the horror of the city crimes to which one gets used, the phantasmagoric feeling caused by commercialization, and so on. Jack the Ripper will say in 1888 that he gave birth to the twentieth century, but Charles Baudelaire had a vision of it before it was born.

For Walter Benjamin, it is the figure of Charles Baudelaire that ushers in the modern age. Barbara Johnson emphasizes that for Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire was "a passageway

into the whole nineteenth century, and particularly into the development of industrial capitalism after the French Revolution" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 182). Writes Benjamin:

> He [Baudelaire] was the first to speak of Paris from the point of view of her daily damned (the lighted gas jets flickering with the wind of Prostitution, the restaurants and their air vents, the hospitals, the gambling, the logs resounding as they are sawn and then dropped on the paved courtyards, the chimney corner, and the cats, beds, stockings, drunkards, the modern perfumes) – all in the remote, noble and superior fashion… The first […] who accuses himself rather than appearing triumphant, who shows his wounds, his laziness, his bored uselessness at the heart of this dedicated, workaday century. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* J10a 246)

In regard to urban capitalism and the idea of progress that propelled it forward, Walter Benjamin observed that the century surrounding Baudelaire, despite looking "flourishing," in reality was more of a desert. To Benjamin, it was Baudelaire who captured to the fullest the energy of the new times, or modernity, which began, roughly, in the middle of the 19th century. Baudelaire, to Benjamin, is primarily the writer of Paris, "the capital of the 19th century," the city on the example of which one can observe the manifestations of capitalism and industrialization, as well as their impact on human consciousness.

As Walter Benjamin writes in a letter to Max Horkheimer,

> Baudelaire's unique importance consists in having been the first one, and the most unswerving, to have apprehended, in both senses of the word, the productive energy of

> the individual alienated from himself – agnosticized and heightened through concretization. (*The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910-1940* 557)

The "productive energy" that happens to be "alienated" from the person calls for the definitions and interpretations proposed by Karl Marx and later developed by Walter Benjamin. In *Capital* (1867), Karl Marx talks about the process of alienation between laborers and the final products they have been working on, via the economic system. Marx defines commodity (*Kaufware*) as fetish. Commodities, the exchange value of which Marx primarily emphasized, became the fetishes of the marketplace. Writes Marx:

> The commodity-form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this. It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things. (Marx)

Fetish is what commodity transforms into after becoming part of the market. For Marx, it is the question of exchange value, first and foremost. As used by Karl Marx, the term "fetish" means "deceptive appearances of commodities as "fetishes" in the marketplace" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 81). In *The Arcades Project*, which is, to some extent, a critique of Marx's *Capital*, Walter Benjamin will appropriate and expand the term. For him, it will be less "the commodity-in-the-market" than "the commodity-on-display," with its expository nature emphasized. In other words, Benjamin is less concerned with economic relations between those

who produce things and commodities than with the transformations caused by fetish as it enters the realm of public life. It is the viewers and shoppers that are Benjamin's main focus, not the laborers who produced the commodity, and the main relationship, for him, is not the one going on between the workers and the commodity, but between the commodity and the public. As Norbert Bolz and Willem van Reijen contend, "[…] whereas for Marx the fetish-nature of the commodity is an objective fact, for Benjamin it is a phenomenon in the collective consciousness of human beings" (Bolz and van Reijen 37). To label the nature of that phenomenon, Walter Benjamin proposes the term "phantasmagoria." Writes Benjamin:

> The quality that pertains to the commodity as its fetish-nature is part of the commodity-producing society itself, not as it is in itself but as it always imagines and understands itself to be when it abstracts itself from the fact that it produces commodities. The image of itself that it thus produces, and habitually labels as its culture, corresponds to the concept of phantasmagoria (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 67)

The term phantasmagoria was coined circa late 1700s to denote presentations in the theatre of illusions that "literally took place on the threshold between science and superstition, between Enlightenment and Terror" (Gunning, qtd. in Boym, *Another Freedom* 22). Benjamin, using the term, primarily referred to the spectacle of the city of Paris which "dazzled the crowd" with its lights but also deceived it. Paris, which for Benjamin was more than a city but the "capital of the 19th century," was "a magic lantern show of optical illusions, rapidly changing size and blending with one another" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 81). Phantasmagoria of a big city, according to Benjamin, is the "culture" of the consumerist

society, a characteristic feature of the realm of collective consciousness Benjamin calls "dreaming collective," which is a state of human consciousness in the times of capitalist industrialization and the commodity turned into fetish. This state is very different from the supposedly achieved wakeful collective happiness and mindful, reasonable rejoicing from progress brought in by modernization and the implementation of the ideas of Enlightenment.

On the contrary, argues Benjamin, people are "asleep," unaware of the causes and effects of the events and moods of the times. In addition to being intoxicating by its very nature of a dream, "dreaming collective" means feeling falsely empowered, imagining that the world of commodity and advertisement speaks to each particular individual and thus constitutes a personalized domain (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 120). Commodity and a human being enter a relationship that masquerades as direct and individualized. Yet it is not as individualized as it seems; instead, it is almost totalitarian in its methods of subjugating everybody to the same view of the world, the latter becoming reduced to the mere standards of the prescribed consumption of correct goods.

The term "dreaming collective" refers to dreaming because Walter Benjamin, when considering writing about the arcades, was largely inspired by the artistic and theoretical findings of the Surrealists. His interest in them begins with the very idea of the arcades: it was in the Passage de l'Opéra that André Breton and Louis Aragon in 1919 started the Surrealist movement; the Passage was, in 1920, to be sacrificed to the building of Boulevard Haussmann, then demolished in 1925 - and to become, thus, one of the "symbols of Surrealists' energy" (Yermolenko 33). Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris* is centered around the Passage de l'Opéra. Benjamin states that *Le Paysan de Paris* was Aragon's way to commemorate the Passage de l'Opéra. It was Aragon who first identified the "passages," or the arcades, as "the

topos of commercial intoxication", the objects that allow us to understand that the real "dream of the bourgeois society is the illusion, a supple and elastic myth, the ephemeral, the commodity." Such a society transforms into the "kingdom of the hallucinatory" that allows one to enter it only for a short period of time, because it is no more than a passage, but not a place of permanence (Yermolenko 33).

The actual Paris arcades as the solidifying image for the project came to Benjamin while reading the novel by Louis Aragon, *Le Paysan de Paris.* "[…E]venings in bed I could not read more that a few words of it before my heartbeat got so strong I had to put the book down. […] And in fact the first notes of the Passagen come from this time," he writes to Adorno (*The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910-1940* 662-3). Benjamin, however, goes beyond the surrealists: if they cultivated dream, he focuses on "awakening." Surrealists, to him, "have opened our eyes to the self-destruction that capitalism is pursuing" (Bolz and van Reijen 40). To Benjamin, capitalism is what produce the sleep which he calls "dreaming collective," – a condition in which everybody is submerged in a dream-like state of mind that resists what he deems the most necessary operation, awakening, seeing everything as if in a flash of lightening and recognizing the dream for what it is.

Benjamin was also especially interested in the problem of dreaming. To him, human dreams were fascinating not necessarily in their psychoanalytical dimension, as elements to be deciphered, but also as "directly translating them onto canvas or a literary text" (Yermolenko 34). For the Surrealists, dreaming was a primal human experience that meant entering another reality, the sur-reality, and therefore was, supposedly, more truthful. To Benjamin, the Surrealists "have opened our eyes to the self-destruction that capitalism is pursuing" (Bolz and van Reijen 40). If the Surrealists, however, focus on the primary force of dreaming as liberating

and capable of producing the truth, Benjamin uses the term "dreaming collective" in a more negative aspect, a state contrary to that of "awakening," which is another elemental concept of his theory. Benjamin believes that history develops not in stories, but in images, and it is only during the times of "awakening," usually striking in a flash, like lightning - and, like lightning, very brightly - that these images reveal themselves. As Susan Buck-Morss contends:

> Benjamin also critiqued Surrealism for lack of constructive, dictatorial and disciplined side to its thinking. The Surrealists recognized reality as a dream; the *Passagen-Werk* was to evoke history in order to awaken its readers from it. Hence the title for *The Arcades Project* in this early stage: "a dialectical Fairy Scene." Benjamin was intending to tell the story of Sleeping Beauty once again. (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 34)

She continues: "The visible theoretical armature of the Passagen-Werk is a secular, sociopsychological theory of modernity as a dreamworld, and a conception of collective "awakening" from it as synonymous with revolutionary class consciousness" (253).

One important feature of Benjamin's method is absence of what Adorno called "mediation" – that is, the gradual transition between domains or states of being. Barbara Johnson refers to the exchange between Benjamin and Adorno concerning the problem of mediation. Adorno claims that Benjamin in his theoretical approaches neglects the issue of "mediation" between society and psychology; as an example, he (Adorno) brings up Benjamin's work on Baudelaire, which, according to Adorno, features dialectics "lacking mediation." Writes Adorno: "You show a prevailing tendency to relate the pragmatic contents

of Baudelaire's work directly and immediately to adjacent features in the social history, and, whenever possible, the economic features, of the time" (Johnson 74-75). The abruptness that results, though, is not a consequence of Benjamin's negligence - but, on the contrary, his insight into the problem of the method. The best illustration of this "lack of mediation" is Benjamin's concept of awakening.

When working on the concept of awakening, Benjamin turns to Marcel Proust's work, in particular, the beginning of *Swann's Way*, the first novel of the cycle *In Search of Lost Times*, in which the main character, Marcel, has a dream that he became a church. Writes Benjamin: "Just as Proust begins the story of his life with an awakening, so must every presentation of history begin with awakening; in fact, it should treat of nothing else. This one, accordingly, deals with awakening from the nineteenth century" (*The Arcades Project*: N4, 3 464).

Barbara Johnson emphasizes that Benjamin does not believe in the existence of "middle ground" between the collective sleep and awakening. The transition is not gradual but abrupt (Johnson 75). There is no way to be "partially asleep" or "partially awake," and the same applies to the collective dream of awakening.

This "moment of rupture," or "awakening," must also be "the beginning of history," just as it can be the beginning of a personal story (Proust's) (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: N4, 3 464). The main goal of the awakening is "revolutionary class consciousness," or shedding the influence of the illusion and hallucinatory power of commodity. Writes Benjamin:

> The new, dialectical method of doing history presents itself as the art of experiencing the present as waking world, a world to which that dream we name the past refers in truth. To pass through and carry out *what has been* in remembering the dream! –

> Therefore, remembering and awakening are most intimately related. Awakening is namely the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* K1, 3 389)

The "dreaming collective" is the phenomenon that accompanies the commodity-on-display. Dreaming collective refers less to the means and conditions of production of the commodity and more to the relationship of the customers to the commodity and the world of objects. The condition of intoxication and neurosis it causes is well exemplified in Émile Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames,* 1883, describing a big shopping gallery. The glorious Paris arcades, the proto-shopping malls that emerged, roughly, in the mid 19th century, signified a break with the previous long-standing tradition of small, privately owned shops. In the novel, the whole street of the lesser merchants goes bankrupt because of one of the *grands magasins* opening right across them. Women, the majority of shoppers, hungrily touch the luxurious fabrics, try on new clothes and overall succumb to the intoxication of acquisition. "There were clouds of lace, palpitations of muslin, trophies of silk, apotheoses of half-dressed dummies;" all one can see is "pale faces with flaming eyes." This is a true neurosis: "Hands were plunged into the overflowing heaps, retaining an intoxicated trembling from the contact" (Zola). This is an atmosphere largely different from that of the small shops across the street, and well illustrating the very phenomenon of dreaming collective.

Though the state of the dream is "collective," its ultimate teleological meaning is alienation rather than any kind of potential closeness - including "alienation from self" that Walter Benjamin sees in Baudelaire's project. Though mostly a productive force in Baudelaire, alienation from self can be viewed as the opposite of awakening, a continuous lingering in the

state of a hallucinatory illusion. As Guy Debord will later say in his *Society of the Spectacle*, this state of the collective mind is achieved by "an accumulation of images that serve to alienate us from a genuinely lived life. The image is […] a historical mutation of the form of commodity fetishism" (Introduction). The images overwhelm those who see them; speed, which the ideologue of the Futurists, Marinetti, and the leader of the Surrealists, Breton, viewed as the main marker of the modern times, dictates the rules of the new world. Technological advancements of the new era affected the economy, which should, hopefully, in its turn, serve as a better support for culture, but as Guy Debord points out, this new economy "transformed the world, but […] merely into a world dominated by the economy" (Chapter 2).

All this transformation promoted was further alienation.

The Demiurge Against the Street of Crocodiles

Returning to Bruno Schulz's stories and the seemingly inexplicable irritation that Jacob, the store owner, feels when dealing with customers, it is worth carefully considering the context of the shop itself and the language Bruno Schulz uses to describe it. I have already pointed out that the shop, obviously, stands for "beauty" (among other things). But "beauty" does not exhaust its system of meaning:

> Subiekci wyładowywali te nowe zapasy sycących bławatnych kolorów i wypełniali nimi, kitowali starannie wszystkie szpary i luki wysokich szaf. Był to rejestr olbrzymi wszelakich kolorów jesieni, ułożony warstwami, usortowany odcieniami, idący w dół i w górę, jak po dźwięcznych schodach, po gamach wszystkich oktaw barwnych. Zaczynał się u dołu i próbował jękliwie i nieśmiało altowych spełzłości i półtonów,

przechodził potem do spłowiałych popiołów dali, do gobelinowych błękitów i rosnąc ku górze coraz szerszymi akordami, dochodził do ciemnych granatów, do indyga lasów dalekich i do pluszu parków szumiących, ażeby potem poprzez wszystkie ochry, sangwiny, rudości i sepie wejść w szelestny cień więdnących ogrodów i dojść do ciemnego zapachu grzybów, do tchnienia próchna w głębiach nocy jesiennej i do głuchego akompaniamentu najciemniejszych basów. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 123)

The shop assistants unpacked these new supplies and filled with their rich, drapery colors, as with putty, all the holes and cracks of the tall cupboards. They ran the gamut of all the autumn shades and went up and down through the octaves of color. Beginning at the bottom, they tried shyly and plaintively the contralto semitones, passed on to the washed-out grays of distance, to tapestry blues and, going upward in ever broader chords, reached deep, royal blues, the indigo of distant forests and the plush of rustling parks, in order to enter, through the ochers, reds, tans and sepias, the whispering shadows of wilting gardens, and to reach finally the dark smell of fungi, the waft of mold in the depth of autumn nights and the dull accompaniment of the darkest basses. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 128)

This shop is the world after its creation. Jacob is a demiurge, a creator, a god that made the earth ("greys of distance") and the skies ("tapestry blues"), like in the Book of Genesis. Then, he created the seas ("deep, royal blues"), grass and forests ("the indigo of distant forests"). This description does not sound like that of a simple store. The shop as the foundation of life is a planet, a universe in miniature, a cosmos. Everything here is primal and real. Jacob's

store is his world, the one he created, and the language Schulz uses to emphasize this circumstance alludes to the Bible and the process of creation of the world. This shop is authenticity itself, just as is Genesis, the beginning of all other beginnings: it needs no mediation of any kind. It is an inherent part of the natural order, just as organic as the fungi and the skies. It is second to nothing. There is even a numerological dimension: if in the Bible God created the world in seven days, in the story the reader is presented with "the thirteenth month," "a thirteenth freak month." This semi-existing time is what Jacob uses for his creative endeavors.

Jacob is the mythical creator of this world, a demiurge of sorts, or at least a powerful (mythological) figure. Schulz refers to him as to a Moses or a Noah, or, sometimes, Jacob the Biblical character. The images of the prophets and Biblical figures that Schulz evokes in this story can be interpreted within the Judaic or Christian paradigm. In his close reading of the story, David Goldfarb points out that "The Night of Great Season" contains references to the father being Noah, since the night is called "undulating," that is, resembling the water and inundation. Later, the father also becomes Moses, lashing out at customers like a Moses who wages a war against the Golden Calf whom the infidels proclaim God. At any rate, the father is the one who has the power to create, salvage and defend the world that is under his reign (Goldfarb).

The reader is presented with the sound and the fury of the (symbolic) process of creation:

> Ściany sklepu znikły pod potężnymi formacjami tej sukiennej kosmogonii, pod tymi pasmami górskimi, piętrzącymi się w potężnych masywach. Otwierały się szerokie

> doliny wśród zboczy górskich i wśród szerokiego patosu wyżyn grzmiały linie kontynentów. Przestrzeń sklepu rozszerzyła się w panoramę jesiennego krajobrazu, pełną jezior i dali, a na tle tej scenerii ojciec wędrował wśród fałd i dolin fantastycznego Kanaanu […] (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 128)
>
> The walls of the shop disappeared under the powerful formations of that cosmogony of cloth, under its mountain ranges that rose in imposing massifs. Wide valleys opened up between the slopes, and the lines of continents loomed up from the pathos of broad planes. The interior of the shop formed itself into the panorama of an autumn landscape, full of lakes and distance. Against that backdrop my father wandered among the folds and valleys of a fantastic Canaan […] (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 133)

Everything in this cosmogony is full of pathos and power. This world is whole, not fragmented. It exists as a panorama, not as fragments. In this world, Jacob is a powerful person or even a god. He banishes the "infidels" (the customers): "[…] My father merged his angry gestures with the awe-inspiring landscape" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 134). He is called a "prophet" many a time; his anger is also "prophetic;" Schulz is referring to the great prophets of the Old Testament and their warning the citizens about the wrath of God and the upcoming disasters.

To better understand the meaning of the events in "The Night of the Great Season," I propose turning to another story from *Cinnamon Shops*, "The Street of Crocodiles." Jerzy Jarzębski points out that there exists a dramatic difference in Schulz's language choices depending on whether he talks about the center of the city or its periphery. If the center is described with elaborate precision and great attention to detail, the periphery is depicted only

very generally. The periphery is the famous Street of Crocodiles from the eponymous short story. This story occupies a special place in Schulz's legacy. It describes a new neighborhood with big stores and new ways of commerce, drastically different from the small shops of the city center. The overwhelming majority of Schulz's stories deal with the city center, and the "Street of Crocodiles" is the most notable exception, therefore providing a curious vantage point from which to observe the Schulzian universe.

The Street of Crocodiles (as well as "The Street of Crocodiles"), part of the "newer" neighborhood of businesses and big stores, features a number of distinct characteristics; it is a multifaceted conglomerate. Among other things, it is colorless, which is highly unusual for Schulz who, as a painter, is normally extremely attentive to color. "…The Street of Crocodiles shone with *the empty whiteness* that usually marks polar regions or unexplored countries of which almost nothing is known" [Italics mine]. Its vegetation is "empty and colorless" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 101); Schulz constantly emphasizes this area's "fatal lack of color" (102). "Everything was gray there, as in black-and-white photographs or in cheap illustrated catalogues" (ibid.) and "one's wandering proved as sterile and pointless as the excitement produced by a close study of pornographic albums" (102). Even a very brief comparison of this sterile lifelessness with Jacob's exquisitely colorful store and the primacy of the freshly created world the description of which evokes visual as well as auditory ("whispering gardens"), olfactory ("dark smell of fungi"), and sensory impressions ("cool fabrics"). In his article "*Sklepy cynamonowe* Brunona Schulza: apologia tandety," Andreas Schönle analyzes the concept of "tandeta," a word that, in Polish, means trash, bad, cheap materials, and low value of goods. *Tandeta* is "more authentic" than kitsch because it is unpretentious. Kitsch presupposes fakeness, *tandeta* only ugliness and bad quality:

W odróżnieniu od *kiczu, tandeta* nie musi implikować funkcji estetycznej. […]*Kicz* imituje sztukę w bardzo szczególny sposób – najczęsciej odtwarza te częsc dziela sztuki, która w danym okresie odczuwana jest jako konwencjonalna łub nawet stereotypowa. W porównaniu z *kiczem, tandeta* jest neco bardziej autentyczna, gdyz nie wypiera się swojej lichosci, łub, ujmując to nieco precyzyjniej: wyparcie się niskiej jakości nie stanowi jej cechy glównej, lecz jedynie dodana do funkcji instrumentalnej konkretnego przedmiotu. […] O ile falsz jest istotą *kiczu*, o tyle w przypadku *tandety* jest on tylko jednym z jej przedmiotów. (Schönle 59-60)

Unlike kitsch, *tandeta* does not have to imply an aesthetic function. Kitsch imitates art in a very specific way – mostly through representing tha that aspect of a piece of art that is considered to be the most convenstional or stereotypcial…. *Tandeta*, compared to kitsch, is slightly more authentic because its nature is not so obvious, or, more precisely, its low quality is not emphasized as its main feature, but exists as an addition to the whole characteristics of a specific object. Kitsch is [profoundly] fake, but fakeness is only one of tandeta's characterstic features. *(ol)*

In Schulz, the Street of Crocodiles is definitely *tandeta*. It is very different from the primal images from Jacob's store. The imitative nature of the Street of Crocodiles is revealed over and over: the district is called " a wild Klondike," a place where "pseudo-Americanism" rules, a "pretense of a city with features of "self-parody" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 105). All the stores are similar to each other to the point of not being recognizable. The district looks much like a "theatre" – "enormous and empty" (ibid.). The inhabitants of the center try to stay

away from this street – the place where "creatures without character" roam around. A shop assistant from the Street of Crocodiles who, like Jacob in "The Night of Great Season," unfolds the fabric for the clients to see, is not at all a demiurge: he is "fitting, folding, and draping the stream of material, forming it into imaginary jackets and trousers." It is notable that the cloth does not form gardens and forests, like in Jacob's store, but is transformed into "jackets and trousers," that is, commodities that have become fetish because they are for sale. Schulz adds: "That whole manipulation seemed suddenly unreal, a sham comedy, a screen ironically placed to hide the true meaning of things" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 103).

One important characteristic feature of the Street of Crocodiles' reality is being "thin as paper," "one-dimensional" and resembling an "old photograph." Jacob's world *equals* reality; Street of Crocodiles *imitates* it; Schulz compares the Street of Crocodiles to "a photograph in an illustrated magazine," where the buildings and the people are "so gray, so one-dimensional … Reality is as thin as paper and betrays with all its cracks its *imitative* character" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 103) [Italics mine]. He goes as far as to state: "Obviously, we were unable to afford anything better than a paper imitation, a montage of illustrations cut out from last year's moldering newspapers" (101). "Last year's moldering newspapers" seem to be an apotheosis of imitation: newspapers already are "imitations" in that they are printed in bulk, according to an original, but in Schulz they are also old and irrelevant, and so are the "old photographs" that are, most likely, featured in them. Equating imitation, in its negative aspect, with old photographs, sounds close to Walter Benjamin's ideas on photography and aura.

The concept of aura in Benjamin relates not only to works of art, but to any object which, when reproduced mechanically, changes in small but perceptible and significant ways. Writes Benjamin, in "Little History of Photography:"

> What is aura, actually? A strange web of space and time: the unique appearance of a distance, no matter how close it may be while at rest on a summer's noon, to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow on the observer, until the moment of the hour becomes part of their appearance - this is what it means to breathe the aura of those mountains, that branch. (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* 285)

For Benjamin, photography is one of the ways of ruining the aura, which is "a strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be" (23). "Aura," in Benjamin, is what makes the work of art authentic, but in a broader sense it can mean the authenticity of any object or building. Aura was ubiquitous before the times of mechanical reproducibility of art, but not just of art: of the objects of everyday use, too. "The whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological – and of course not only technological – reproduction" (21).

More importantly, aura is directly related to the historical context of the work in question. Writes Benjamin:

> In even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in particular place. It is this unique existence - and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. This history includes changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together

with any changes in ownership. (Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media* 21)

The background of history and, in general, the work of art's being embedded in a meaningful context is missing in the environment of dreaming collective and phantasmagoria. Dreaming collective operates as a grandiose collage of images that are disconnected from each other. These images have no aura, and, consequently, no discernable origin. Guy Debord, who describes a similar phenomenon, though not calling it "dreaming collective" and not using Benjamin's methodology, contends that

> [t]he images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. Fragmented views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a separate pseudoworld that can only be looked at. The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of automized images where even the deceivers are deceived. The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the nonliving. (Chapter 1)

In this sense, the Street of Crocodiles is "technologically reproduced" – physically, as a place where stores and warehouses with a lot of goods (delivered by train) are situated, and figuratively, as "an old photograph" from a "moldering newspaper." It is torn away from the realm of tradition, as the inhabitants of the center do not respect this peripheral district that they call "El Dorado for moral deserters" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 101). It is exactly this "deserting" from old ways and tradition that make those who live or trade on the Street of

Crocodiles dangerously corrupt and undesirable. Without aura, the world of commerce that is now selling and buying technologically reproducible objects in a technologically reproducible environment becomes victim to "dreaming collective" and gets submerged into a phantasmagoria. Small wonder that those who stroll the Streets of Crocodiles, or buy and sell there, are "a sleepy procession of puppets" who are "wandering "aimlessly" and "monotonously" around the neighborhood. "The crowd flows lazily by, and, strange to say, one can see it only indistinctly; the figures pass in gentle disarray, never reaching complete sharpness of outline" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 106).

Depth (Integrated Word) Versus Surface (Isolated Image)

In "The Night of the Great Season," the customers ready to enter Jacob's store are described as a "dense crowd" characterized by "loud confusion" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 130). Theirs is "a disorderly, entangled migration proceeding along the arteries of the autumnal city," and they form a "river, full of noise, of dark looks, of sly winks, intersected by conversations, chopped up by laughter, an enormous babel of gossip, tumult, and chatter" (130). They are depicted as a rather threatening entity, and threatening they prove to be: instead of entering the store, they "storm" it like a "fortress" (132). They are "a noisy mass" that scares Jacob to the point of "blowing a large shofar, sounding the alert" (132). The crowd, in the meantime, keeps yelling: "Jacob, start trading!" The crowd behaves rather aggressively, forcing Jacob to sell the fabrics while they sneer at him.

Jacob does try to serve the customers well, in his own way. As a good Demiurge, he demonstrates the beauty of the world that he created:

> Ściany sklepu znikły pod potężnymi formacjami tej sukiennej kosmogonii, pod tymi pasmami górskimi, piętrzącymi się w potężnych masywach. Otwierały się szerokie doliny wśród zboczy górskich i wśród szerokiego patosu wyżyn grzmiały linie kontynentów. Przestrzeń sklepu rozszerzyła się w panoramę jesiennego krajobrazu, pełną jezior i dali […] (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 123)
>
> The walls of the shop disappeared under the powerful formations of that *cosmogony* of cloth, under its mounting ranges that rose in imposing massifs. Wide alleys opened up between the slopes, and *lines of continents* loomed up from the pathos of broad plains. The interior of the shop formed itself into the *panorama* of an autumn landscape, full of lakes and distance. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 133) [Italics mine]

Schulz underscores the originality of the world created by Jacob and the fact that what Jacob does is, in fact, exactly that – creates the world and no less ("cosmogony"). The continents emerge and so does the panorama. This world is beautiful and spacious. Its landscape is truly a *land*-scape, not a city-scape.

The actual trading in this unusual (for the customers) shop quickly turns into a bacchanalia. While the customers greedily touch the fabrics, Jacob is appalled:

> Gdy ojciec mój, przerażony ohydą grzechu, wrastał gniewem swych gestów w grozę krajobrazu, w dole beztroski lud Baala oddawał się wyuzdanej wesołości. Jakaś parodystyczna pasja, jakaś zaraza śmiechu opanowała tę gawiedź. Jakże można było żądać powagi od nich, od tego ludu kołatek i dziadków do orzechów! Jak można było

żądać zrozumienia dla wielkich trosk ojca od tych młynków, mielących bezustannie kolorową miazgę słów! Głusi na gromy proroczego gniewu, przykucali ci handlarze w jedwabnych bekieszach małymi kupkami dookoła sfałdowanych gór materii, rozstrząsając gadatliwie wśród śmiechu zalety towaru. Ta czarna giełda roznosiła na swych prędkich językach szlachetną substancję krajobrazu, rozdrabniała ją siekaniną gadania i połykała niemal. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą*, Kometa 128-9)

When my father, horrified by the hideousness of sin, merged his angry gestures with the awe-inspiring landscape, *the carefree worshippers of Baal* below him gave themselves to unbridled mirth. An *epidemic of laughter* took hold of that mob. How could one expect seriousness from that race of *rattles and nutcrackers*! How could one demand understanding for my father's stupendous worries from these *windmills, incessantly grinding words to a colored pulp*! Deaf to the thunder of Father's prophetic wrath, those traders in silk caftans crouched in small groups around the piles of folded material gaily discussing, amid bursts of laughter, the qualities of the goods. These black-clad merchants with their rapid tongues *obscured the noble essence of the landscape, diminished it by the hash of words, almost engulfed it*. 134 [Italics mine]

This paragraph shows that the threat that Jacob perceived actually came true: the customers present a danger to the establishment. Their laughter is sacrilegious, and it offends the "noble essence of the landscape" – the primal and original world that has been just created by Jacob as a Demiurge. But they are more than just exhibiting unpleasant behavior: they are also threatening the store (which means the real world, the original world, the universe itself,

the authenticity) physically. They are "engulfing" it, and are compared to "windmills" that "grind" words "to a colored pulp." In other words, they desire to fragment Jacob's world, make it resemble the usual hallucinatory phantasmagoria composed of separate messages, not united to one another. This absence of origin and integration sounds very much like Walter Benjamin's dreaming collective: "The dreaming collective knows no history. Events pass before it as always identical and always new. The sensation of the newest and most modern is, in fact, just as much a dream formation of events as "the eternal return of the same" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: S2, 1 546).

It is the manifestation of the dreaming collective that seems to have enraged Jacob. The customers brought it with them like a dangerous infection, and are trying to spread it around. The Street of Crocodiles mercilessly penetrates the realm of the old merchants to destroy or at least subordinate them. In "Dead Season," the twin story of the "Night of the Great Season," Jacob's store is referred to as "niezgłebiony" – "deep," and also as "bottom of times" and "the beginning of genealogy." What Schulz persistently underscores here is the concept of depth. The shop is the foundation where everything begins. The "depth," or "underworld" in Schulz is not a signifier of the negative. The "underworld" (as it will be discussed in more detail in further chapters - in particular, in Chapter 4) is not equated with hell, but with the locus of beginning. In Schulz's story "Spring" this underworld in described extensively, with the emphasis on roots and fertility of this place where the very "stories" are born:

> Jesteśmy po drugiej stronie, jesteśmy u podszewki rzeczy, w ciemności fastrygowanej plączącą się fosforescencją. Co za krążenie, ruch i ciżba! Co za mrowie i miazga, ludy i pokolenia, tysiąckrotnie rozmnożone biblie i iliady! Co za wędrówka i tumult, plątanina

i zgiełk historii! Dalej już ta droga nie prowadzi. Jesteśmy na samym dnie, u ciemnych fundamentów, jesteśmy u Matek. Tu są te nieskończone inferna, te beznadziejne obszary osjaniczne, te opłakane nibelungi. Tu są te wielkie wylęgarnie historii, te fabryki fabulistyczne, mgliste fajczarnie fabuł i bajek. Teraz wreszcie rozumie się ten wielki i smutny mechanizm wiosny. Ach, ona rośnie na historiach. Ile zdarzeń, ile dziejów, ile losów! Wszystko cośmy kiedykolwiek czytali, wszystkie zasłyszane historie i wszystkie te, które się nam majaczą od dzieciństwa — nigdy nie zasłyszane — tu, nie gdzie indziej jest ich dom i ojczyzna. Skądże by pisarze brali swe koncepcje, skądże by czerpali odwagę do wymyślania, gdyby nie czuli za sobą tych rezerw, tych kapitałów, tych rozliczeń stokrotnych, którymi wibrują Podziemia. (Bruno Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 186)

We are […] at the lining of things, in gloom stitched in phosphorescence. There is a lot of movement and traffic, pulp and rot, tribes and generations, a brood of bibles and iliads multiplied a thousand times! Wanderings and tumult, the tangle and hubbub of history. That road leads no farther. We are here at the very bottom, at the dark foundations, among the Mothers. Here are the bottomless infernos, the hopeless Ossianic spaces, all those lamentable Nibelungs. Here are the great breeding grounds of history, factories of plots, hazy smoking rooms of fables and tales. […] Everything we have ever read, all the stories we have heard and those we have never heard but have been dreaming since childhood – here and nowhere else is their home and their motherland. Where would writers find their ideas, how would they muster the courage for invention, had they not been aware of these reserves, this frozen capital, these funds salted away in the underworld? (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 43)

It is obvious that the story, a told tale occupies a central place in this picture of the world; story is what begins the world altogether. In his essay "Mythologization of Reality," mentioned in Chapter 1, Schulz proclaims Word the main constitutive element of reality:

> Pierwotne słowo było majaczeniem, krążącym dookoła sensu światła, było wielką uniwersalną całością. Słowo w potocznym dzisiejszym znaczeniu jest już tylko fragmentem, rudymentem jakiejś dawnej wszechobejmującej, integralnej mitologii. Dlatego jest w nim dążność do odrastania, do regeneracji, do uzupełniania się w pełny sens. Życie słowa polega na tym, że napina się ono, pręży do tysięcy połączeń, jak poćwiartowane ciało węża z legendy, którego kawałki szukają się wzajemnie w ciemności. (Schulz, *Ksiega listów*)
>
> The primeval word was a shimmering aura circling around the sense of the world, was a great universal whole. The word in its common usage today is only a fragment, remnant of some former all-embracing, integral mythology. That is why it possesses a tendency to grow back, to regenerate and complete itself in full meaning. The life of a word consists in tensing and stretching itself toward a thousand connections, like the cut-up snake in the legend whose pieces search each other in the dark. (*Letters and Drawings* 115)

While this passage certainly provides insight into the images from Schulz's short stories in which strange vegetation invades the room as if from nowhere, and where all things exist as continuation and extension of one another, never dying, it also illustrates Schulz's point on

philosophy being philology: "We usually regard the word as the shadow of reality, its symbol. The reverse of this statement would be more correct: reality is the shadow of the word. Philosophy is actually philology, *the deep, creative exploration of the word*" (*Letters and Drawings* 117) [Italics mine].

Reality only exists in Word – the one that is born deep underground, near the realm of the "Mothers." The shop is also a "foundation" and the "beginning of genealogy" – the realm not of the Mother but the Father, and yet, also, the beginning of creation. Perhaps, the realm of the Mothers starts immediately under the shop, shining through its continents arranged by Jacob. This has autobiographical undertones that should be acknowledged: Schulz's work is, literally, inspired by his father's shop, as everything always comes from there – the images, the characters, the very life of the family. In a way, the shop *is* the Word in that it is sense-constructing and indivisible, original and authentic.

It is not accidental that the customers, when attempting to fragment Jacob's world, begin with words that they "grind to a pulp." Grinding means extreme fragmentation, dispersing, and destruction to the point of not being recognizable. What is more important, the customers talk incessantly, seemingly filling the space they invaded with words; but theirs are not real Words, not the ones that have the power to create – either continents and planets or stories. They are "empty:" the crowd, referred to as "the shapeless mob without face or individuality,"

> Wypełniał on niejako luki w krajobrazie, wyścielał tło dzwonkami i grzechotkami bezmyślnego gadania. Był to element błazeński, roztańczony tłum poliszynelów i arlekinów, który - sam bez poważnych intencyj handlowych - doprowadzał do absurdu

> gdzieniegdzie nawiązujące się tansakcje swymi błazeńskimi figlami. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 129)
>
> […] [F]illed the gaps in the landscape, […] *littered the background with the bells and rattles of its thoughtless chatter*. These were the jesters, the dancing crowd of Harlequins and Pulcinellas who, without any serious business intentions themselves, made by their clownish tricks a mockery of the negotiations starting here and there. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 135) [Italics mine]

The crowd consists of "rattles and nutcrackers," which is also a reference to empty chatter in Schulz. What the customers kill in Jacob's store is Word, which means Sense and also life, and creation itself. Only the original Word can create; the words that the customers bring with them from the realm of the Street of Crocodiles are pale imitations that have no power of creation in them. They are already sliced into little fragments that are arranged and rearranged to make up a fun show of phantasmagoria, but phantasmagoria is devoid of the real Word – and, consequently, real Sense. The customers are "jesters," and everything they say they repeat as heard elsewhere. They are speaking in scripts, whereas Jacob's words are those of a patriarch, Noah, Demiurge and the Creator himself.

The old culture, represented by the father as patriarch and Demiurge, in Schulz, in equated with the Word, Logos, as a creative impetus and building material for the world(s). The new one, that of the Street of Crocodiles and the new business models, is a destroyed, diminished word that has lost its power to create. The best metaphor to illustrate the capacities of this mutilated word is the list of advertisements or names of stores from "The Street of Crocodiles:" "Confiserie, Manicure, King of England." Schulz capitalizes these captions,

striving to render the atmosphere of the infamous street which, supposedly, "speaks," or at least appeals to the viewer and a potential shopper, but in reality does not: this "speaking" is not dialogical. It is but a monologue that a piece of the Word, an impotent word, is conducting with itself. These are the "fragment[s], remnant[s] of some former all-embracing, integral mythology" Schulz mentions in his essay quoted above. They stop functioning on the level of Sense and meaning, and are reduced to being visual markers, much like images described by Guy Debord in his *Society of the Spectacle.* However, the visual image by itself does not yet construct the dreaming collective; Guy Debord, whose work on the society of spectacle seems very close to Benjamin's ideas of dreaming collective, points out that "the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (Chapter 1). These relations, in their turn, are shaped by the means and ways of production, centered around the commodity as fetish: for Benjamin, the one on display.

The idea of displaying denies depth; the displayed goods have only surfaces and no depth. The world of the dreaming collective (the Street of Crocodiles) is shallow. It is only the world of the old Logos in Schulz (Jacob's shop) that has depth. The Word is integrated into history; it has roots; it is authentic - whereas the word-solidified-image in the realm of the dreaming collective is uprooted, a-historical, inauthentic. Its main feature is isolation. This helps define the very essence of dreaming collective: it is an isolated message, a dead word that becomes an illustration and a part of a background, without history or depth, and without the capacity to further create. The word here is atomized, but not connected to other words; the snake that was cut up to pieces, in Schulz's essay, cannot collect them together any more: these pieces continue to exist separately, and the meaning of the myth that used to be the force that held them together, is lost.

"Old" world in Schulz – <u>Jacob's store</u> - Word/natural plant-like growth/depth/creation/authenticity

"New" world in Schulz – <u>Street of Crocodiles</u> - Word-turned-image/"grinded" – "killed"/surface/sterility/imitation

Schulz's creative insights, when regarded according to Benjamin's paradigm of dreaming collective, point at an understanding of the condition of modernity as a clash of two distinct ontologies: one that is based on Word, a creative force that grows out of the "depth of depths," - and, like all things that grow, needs time to do so to come to fruition - and the one based on the dead word-as-fragment. The world created by Word cannot be too expansive, as it depends on slow growth and careful tending. On the contrary, the fragmented word composes a world of images organized into a collage, glittering and attracting attention, but offering no depth, only the surface, of alluring objects and messages. This world emerges very quickly, and its process of "growth" is not organic, but artificial. Its constitutive parts keep arranging and rearranging themselves, acting as visually appealing constructs. The world of the old-style merchants represents the times of the pre-modern life, with its modes of production that have not yet become profoundly mechanized. The worker was not yet alienated from the result of his labor, and the product was not a fetish or a commodity. The world of the Street of Crocodiles, on the other hand, features the modern life with its collage-like scenery, and its relationships between people reduced to a "spectacle," in Guy Debord's sense. Here, all kinds of alienation have already occurred: the one between the worker and his work (Marx), and the one between the product and its viewers (Benjamin).

Modernity reveals itself as a civilizational condition that attempts to reconcile and hold both of these modes of production: the old one ruled by Word, and the new one ruled by Spectacle. This attempt is what makes the condition of modernity so sharply dramatic and so heterogeneous.

The Prognosis

It is tempting to end the chapter by claiming that Jacob, the protagonist's father, the incarnation of valor and the keeper of the "correct" values, is (more or less successfully) defending the cause of the "old ways" and a certain "goodness" that they (supposedly) represent. It is true that in Jacob's store the goods for sale are not yet fetishes, and they do not have the fetish pseudo-aura; nor are they commodities-on-display that contribute to phantasmagoria. Phantasmagoria and dreaming collective have not yet infiltrated the stronghold of the old city center; they occupied only the periphery. They are slowly moving in, brought around, like a virus, by the crowd that carries it in their feverish eyes used to the mix of "beauty" and "evil." Jacob's store still features the world not as imitation of creation, but creation itself, pure genesis. However, to conclude that Jacob is the keeper of the old world would be premature - or, at least, incomplete. Though Schulz can push one to arrive at unexpected conclusions and make important connections, he (or, rather, his texts) always invites more than one interpretation. This time, one should keep in mind that Schulzian world goes far beyond any potential binaries. For example, Jacob, whom I read as a patriarch and a Demiurge (and who *is*, on some level, a patriarch and a Demiurge), is not exhausted by this paradigm, just as everything and everybody else in Schulz. The most significant characteristic feature of Schulz's images and characters is their profound complexity.

Jacob, on the one hand, is depicted like a righteous Old Testament prophet or a creator, and yet it is also obvious that these references are ironic as much as they are tragic. The month in which the events are supposedly taking place is "the thirteenth," that is, not quite real. This thirteenth month, firmly associated with Jacob, features "senile intemperance of the summer, its lustful and belated spirit of virility" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 125). Jacob, thus, is not only a patriarch and demiurge, but also an old man overcome by lust that he does not have a chance to satisfy. The reference to lust puts the demiurgical discourse into question, infusing the story with irony. This can be seen further in the text. For example, after the father returns home, he immediately stops being perceived or treated like a patriarch or even a man of authority, and is demoted to yet another family member, less influential than the mother or the maid Adela.

It is not accidental that Adela, in particular, is the one "closing" the story of cosmogony and imagination. In all Schulz's stories, Adela the maid is Jacob's constant antagonist (and constant frustrated desire): if he serves "the lost cause of poetry," that is, imagination, spirit and creativity, she represents domestic order and physical matter solidified in a womanly shape. Adela mocks his visions, and Jacob finds new ways to escape from her into them: he inundates the house with imaginary birds ("Birds"), he becomes a cockroach ("Cockroaches"), he joins the mythical and unrealistic fire brigade ("My Father Joins the Fire Brigade"), and, finally, produces a series of philosophical discourses on tailors' dummies in the image of which humans were made (the stories of the mannequin cycle). During these visions, Jacob might be a prophet; but when they are over, he returns to being a deranged paterfamilias.

This situation is tragic and comic, mundane and cosmic, and one of its most important features is its liminality. Jacob, the father, is doomed to transform incessantly, vacillating between worlds - that of Poetry and that of Prose. For example, in "Dead Season" Jacob

transforms into a giant horsefly; in "Cockroaches," into a cockroach; and so on. These transformations do not allow him (or, consequently, any of his worlds) to have any stable identity. His projected "madness" (or the condition Schulz and his protagonist, Joseph, call so) problematizes rigid definitions of what could potentially be called "positive" or "negative," "sacred" or "profane," "comical" or "tragic," "normal" or "abnormal." This madness is one of the important constitutive blocks of Schulz's universe; it can be synonymous with death and decay but also with creative process, inspiration and poetical or mythological perception of the world, depending on context. Therefore, if the actual "patriarch" ("the good") of the old-style trade reveals himself as such an unstable category, conflicted and conflicting, it is impossible to simply call the new ways of trade "evil" and "demonic." In this sense, the father being a "patriarch," a "God" and a "high priest" fighting the infidels does not fit a set of rigid binary opposition, nor does he have any consistent religious agenda that could be used as an interpretative matrix. Schulz is not the writer that relishes rigidity of any kind, be it religion or any other domain. Instead, his preferred construction is not a binary but a continuum - a multiplicity of forms, meanings and possible interpretations.

A close look at the story "The Night of the Great Season" reveals that in tone, the ending of the story does not resemble its beginning and the middle part. In the middle, Schulz describes the armies of smirking and sneering infidels infiltrating Jacob's temple, which he is unable to protect from them. These are the customers who arrive at the shop and bring their expectation of the dreaming collective. The father is referred to as the patriarch and demiurge, a powerful figure, a priest, and a warrior of sorts. The scenes are truly grand and awe-inspiring – Jacob creating the world anew from the fabrics in his store, the customers as an army of

intruders, the Elders that also come to participate in the bacchanalia, and the strange birds (of whom I will speak in the following chapter in more detail) that are destroyed by the crowd.

Nevertheless, the ending of the story contrasts with the grand scenes from its middle part; instead of any inspiring encounters or great battles, it depicts a quiet morning in the family environment:

> [O]jciec widział wstających ze snu subiektów. Podnosili się spomiędzy bali sukna i ziewali do słońca. W kuchni, na piętrze, Adela, ciepła od snu i ze zmierzwionymi włosami, mełła kawę na młynku, przyciskając go do białej piersi, od której ziarna nabierały blasku i gorąca. Kot mył się w słońcu. […] (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 132)
>
> Father saw shop assistants awakening from sleep. They rose from above the bales of cloth and yawned towards the sun. In the kitchen, on the floor above, Adela, warm from sleep and with unkempt hair, was grinding coffee in a mill which she pressed to her white bosom, imparting her warmth to the broken beans. The cat was washing itself in the sunlight. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 138)

The scene is mundane and highly ironic, as after the epic, Biblical imagery all the reader is shown is "Adela's white bosom," in a shift from the discourse of the heroic to a somewhat farcical eroticism. Instead of the creation of the world, cosmogony and genesis there are only the "yawning shop assistants," the maid and the morning cat. This morning world is not cosmic any more; there is nothing to look at through the telescope. The only thing, however, that does unite the two worlds is the image of grinding; just like words of the customers who came to the

shop are “ground,” so is the coffee that Adela is occupied with. The morning world, just as the world of the night (of the “great season”), is reduced to separate details and elements, fragments without the great panorama of creation of the world: the coffee beans are “broken” into many parts, having lost their wholeness; even Adela is not shown as a whole person, but as “bosom” and “hair,” and the main characteristic feature, a synecdoche of the shop assistants, is their open yawning mouths. As for the mystical birds that were killed by the crowd, there is no mention of them after father returns home. They either disappear or were never there. The reader is left to wonder whether anything depicted earlier happened to Jacob at all, or was just an episode of his madness.

Overall, Jacob cannot belong to any of the worlds: that of his visions does not exist, and the family one is too stifling, with all the reigning women and their “white bosoms” that symbolically threaten to crush not only the coffee beans but also the men of the family. Schulz’s goal is to show Jacob’s liminality, not his stability. This problematizes his being an unquestionable “patriarch” associated with Word, for he is also a broken man depicted ironically, subservient to Adela and the physicality she represents - the physicality that is, perhaps, more connected, via a constellation of dialectical images, to the Street of Crocodiles than the reader realizes at first; the physicality that will not let Jacob win this battle - after all, “grinding” and fragmentation has already infiltrated his home, not only his business. Therefore, the prognosis Schulz gives is the one far from positive for the world that operates on the depth of the primal Word. The Schulzian city is subject to the modern condition despite its not being a megapolis.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COLLECTOR OF THE LIVING DEAD: THE BIRDS

The (Doomed) Enterprise of Collecting

The image of the birds occupies an important place in Schulz's universe. Several stories from both of his collections, *Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, feature birds or birdsong. Two most prominent examples are "Birds" and "The Night of the Great Season." In "Birds," the protagonist's father, Jacob, begins collecting birds, mostly exotic ones. Financially ruined and mentally disturbed, Jacob stops leaving the house, as we find out from "Visitation." His illness, at first seemingly physical ("he would spend whole days in bed, surrounded by bottles of medicine and boxes of pills" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 38), quickly reveals itself as a more complex affliction. Jacob is either lethargic or agitated; eventually he begins talking to himself and to God out loud. "The spirit enter[s] into him," making him rise from the bed and resemble "an Old Testament prophet" (40). He spends his days at home, having traded the public sphere for the private, and not venturing out. At first his behavior, where he is irritable or sleepy, is more or less comprehensible to his family, but gradually he begins to act in a more estranged and secretive way. Jacob stops taking part in the family meals, and his "strange and complex affairs" puzzle his household. For example, he disappears from sight for hours, and occupies himself with something mysterious in the corner of the house. It is soon revealed that these "affairs" comprise collecting: in his case, birds.

Jacob is very passionate about his new hobby; he imports the birds' eggs from a number of "exotic" places: "Hamburg, or Holland, or from zoological stations in Africa" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 47) and places them in the attic. The birds, at first ugly "monsters" and "dragons" that did not resemble "future peacocks, pheasants, grouse or condors" (48), grow to be very colorful "feathery phantasms" filling the room with "colors, with splashes of crimson, strips of sapphire, verdigris, and silver" (ibid.). Jacob is very preoccupied with his collection, and even arranges "marriages" for his brood. However, soon the family notices unpleasant changes in Jacob's appearance: he becomes smaller and thinner, waves his hands like a bird and makes bird-like sounds. Adela, the maid, who is Jacob's antagonist, takes a broom and chases the birds away. Their unexpected return is described in another story, "The Night of Great Season:" they come back as "malformed" entities that are not well developed and therefore lifeless. They are but blind cadavers of birds, and the crowd destroys them with stones.

In her analysis, Karen Underhill traces bird images to the messianic-zoharic tradition, elements of which Bruno Schulz employs in his prose. Birds, along with the rainbow, breath, flame and dawn, allude to the messianic tradition of the Lurianic Kabbalah. "Messianic," as it is applied to Bruno Schulz's prose, means "awakening to the realization of [one's] own power (that of consciousness), and responsibility – to the present, and also to the past" (Underhill 13). The messianic constitutes a set of revelations that are, above all, "a revelation of language" and "an experience of a pure event of the word that exceeds every signification" (Agamben 134). Schulz employs the images of birds, dawn, breath and flame as the indicators of the messianic; according to Karen Underhill, "messianic image-portents are the intangible, and the living, of which the tangible, dead matter of the material world represents the other half" (Underhill 62). If the latter is a fixed structure, the messianic is the force capable of transcending it, and in

Schulz, birds are one of the markers of such a moment of transcending.

Within the messianic-zoharic imagery, Schulzian birds refer not only to the transcendent; they also embody the "empty shells," cadavers, *kalipott*, which is a reference to the kabbalistic myth of creation. Also, as Karen Underhill contends, the "emptied out and deformed shells of their [the birds'] former selves […] reflect a deep melancholy about the fate of Jewish tradition and culture, and perhaps the Hasidic storytelling tradition as well, of which his father represents a last prophet and an epigone" (Underhill 141). The shells, "the material of the profane world" (Underhill 143), broke. Though each of them does contain "divine substance," they are awaiting the *tikkun*, or repair or restoration. In this sense, the misshapen birds that arrive in "The Night of Great Season" are not just "the force of life," but also a world waiting to be saved; in short, birds in Schulz are highly ambiguous entities. Their ambiguity comes partly from the dialectical nature of the zoharic myth, which emphasizes the fact that each ending contains a new beginning (for example, the Temple is destroyed on the same day the Messiah is born), and partly - from the nature of Schulz's individual creative endeavor which is indebted, but not limited to, the kabbalistic doctrine.

I propose to focus on the birds as a collection and on Jacob, the father of the protagonist, as a collector, in Walter Benjamin's sense. The figure of the collector is deeply personal for Benjamin: he himself was a passionate collector. As Olena Haleta contends, collecting for Benjamin was first and foremost an intellectual action: the collector gives meaning to the things he collects. An example of such an attitude is Benjamin himself; for example, in his *Moscow Diary* he describes the acquisition of children's toys for his collection. *Moscow Diary* is driven, as Olena Haleta observes, not just by Benjamin's passion for Asja Lacis, but also by "another passion" – the one that makes him walk the cold streets, look for the

museums that changed their address, and buy the toys that he packs into his suitcase when leaving Moscow – without Asja. The toys are not just a set of random objects; on the contrary, they are extremely meaningful because they "substitute" for the Russian revolution that Benjamin was striving to understand, as well as for his (failed) relationship with Asja Lacis (Haleta 62-64).

Jacob does not simply "keep" birds, but handpicks specific exemplars he wishes to possess, and then orders the eggs by mail. The process of collecting and the state of managing the collection of birds could be interpreted within Walter Benjamin's paradigm of the collector, whom he viewed as one of the Ur-forms of modern life, along with the flâneur and the prostitute. I will consider Schulzian stories in the framework of Benjamin's writings on the collector. This might pose a seeming challenge, since Schulz's – or Jacob's - collection consists not of a set of objects but of live beings, which later transform into cadavers. They are not exactly a collection akin to that of butterflies, a popular endeavor; they do die in the process, but, dead, they stop being a collection, while butterflies, on the contrary, become a collection precisely after dying.

First and foremost, placing the item into a collection takes away this item's utilitarian function (Haleta 68). This is one of the principles of collecting, according to Walter Benjamin. The item – or the object – becomes detached from its own "usefulness:" "What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. […]" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* H1a, 2 205). Benjamin continues:

> For the true collector, every single thing in this system becomes an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch, the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes. […] Everything remembered, everything thought, everything conscious becomes socle, frame, pedestal, seal of his possession. […] Collecting is a form of practical memory. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H1a, 2 205)

The collection Benjamin mostly talks about, thus, is that of objects, but in the case of Schulzian Jacob this is not so. His collection is of living beings, or symbols, and yet it is possible to conceptualize it as a "collection" in the Benjaminian sense: the birds represent objects (or items) "detached from their original functions" and having entered into "closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H1a, 2). Though Jacob allows for the birds to "marry" in this captivity, they are, still, definitely not living in their natural environment.

Another characteristic feature of a collection is the fact that it is made up with great attention to details. The collector's gaze selects the items and singles them out. To choose the items in this way is to make them special (Haleta 64). Jacob picks the birds very carefully, ordering the eggs via catalogues; he collects only exotic kinds, ignoring the local sparrows and pigeons. The methodology of choosing the items does not necessarily consist in preferring the most aesthetically pleasing of them: Benjamin draws a parallel between the methods of the ragpicker and the collector. They both see value in things that might be considered garbage by others, believing that the real worth will reveal itself over time. Schulz's Jacob as a collector is a curious case this way because he collects birds whose exotic value nobody would contest, but who, in more ways than one, *are* trash, as we find out.

To conceptualize Jacob as a collector and birds as a dialectical image, I will turn to Benjamin's concepts of history and time - in particular, the time of Now, *Jetztzeit*. I intend to look at the specific ways in which Jacob, under the circumstances, fits the profile of a collector, and at whether he is - and can be - successful in this undertaking.

Dialectical Image

In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Walter Benjamin tells a story of an automaton "constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess." The secret of the automaton is a hunchback who sits inside the machine and operates a puppet that seemingly plays the game. "The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight" (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 253). This anecdote gives important insights into Benjamin's understanding of history and the role of a historian. The latter is not simply to describe the events ("historical materialism"), but also to uncover their reasons and causes ("theology," which to Benjamin is a "fundamental science;" in the earlier version of the exposé, it is "philology"). In other words, history is primarily "philosophical history."

As a method for analyzing history from this perspective, Walter Benjamin coins the term "dialectical image." Susan Halberman points out that the "critique of Enlightenment ideals was one thrust of Benjamin and Scholem's attack on the bourgeois, rationalistic, liberal culture into which they were born and against which they were always firmly allied" (Halberman 120). Benjamin believes that history develops not in stories, but in images, and it is only during the times of "awakening," usually striking in a flash, like lightning - and, like lightning, very brightly - that these images reveal themselves, cutting (or flashing) through the dense fabric of

the dreaming collective and revealing the truth. He calls such images "dialectical." Modern life, for Benjamin, is first and foremost "the reservoir of dialectical images" (Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* 134).

In a dialectical image,

> [i]t's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 462)

Dialectical images comprise "present, past, history and prehistory" (Pensky 115). These images, Benjamin continues, are found in language. The moment when the past and the present that the image contains come together Benjamin calls "now-time" (*Jetztzeit*). It is only the now-time that can "break open the continuum of "bourgeois" linear history in the service of redemption and revelation" (Halberman 116). Past and present form a "constellation," which should not be understood as a two-dimensional picture in the skies but rather a three-(or more) dimensional space, with the observer being placed in the inside. The past and the present stop existing in a linear fashion, with the past influencing the present, but inform each other, while at the same time remaining independent from each other. To illustrate this connection of times, we can turn to Benjamin's suggestion: to accurately describe a past epoch, he states, one has to forget everything that came after it, thus censoring one's own memory that inadvertently affects the researcher's understanding of the past.

An island lit up by the flash of lightning is the place where the dialectical image, a moment of *Jetztzeit* (now-time) and a space of rupture occurs. This moment is also "a moment of danger." In the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin writes:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 246)

This is how the constellation is made visible for a historian. This constellation denies the possibility of "progress" in the traditional Enlightenment sense. Benjamin was especially critical of the notion that progress is "automatic" (as the Darwinian doctrine claimed). To him, progress meant "no happy outcome" (Buck Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 79). In a pre-1935 entry Benjamin specifies:

> It can be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism within which the idea of progress has been annihilated. Precisely on this point historical materialism has every reason to distinguish itself sharply from bourgeois mental habits. Its basic principle is not progress, but actualization. (qtd. in Buck Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 79)

The belief in the idea of progress is one of the "mental habits" that Benjamin is so distrustful about. It is linear and supposedly moving towards a happy ending, like a fairy tale, discarding, in the meantime, every experience or trace of materiality that does not fit its objective of obligatory collective happiness. A dialectical image, as proposed by Benjamin, is a method dealing outside the epistemic box of such progress, and paying attention to everything, including that which linear history would consider unimportant, or plainly label as debris. However, debris contains meanings, which, if lost, are then missing from the picture of history, thus distorting it. In his August 5, 1935 letter to Benjamin, Theodor Wiesendrund Adorno summarizes his understanding of Benjamin's idea of the dialectical image (and Benjamin includes the excerpt from this letter in *The Arcades Project*, indicating how valuable he thought his friend's and colleague's contribution is, and how precise the definition):

> With the vitiation of their use value, the alienated things are hollowed out, and, as ciphers, they draw in meanings. Subjectivity takes possession of them insofar as it invests them with intentions of desire and fear. And insofar as defunct things stand in as images of subjective intentions, these latter present themselves as immemorial and eternal. Dialectical images are constellated between alienated things and incoming and disappearing meaning, are instantiated in the moment of indifference between death and meaning. While things in appearance are awakened to what is newest, death transforms the meanings to what is most ancient. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: N5, 2 456)

Benjamin adds that in the nineteenth century the amount of such "hollowed-out" things

"increases," because the technology is rapidly evolving, and thus a lot of things find themselves unused and essentially thrown away; they become debris – the very object of interest of philosophical history and potential dialectical images.

History as the Field of Debris

Benjamin's idea of history combines two "seemingly contradictory, but inseparable elements:" turning to the past that has disappeared or uncovering its archeology, and turning to the absent future, a historical soteriology, as Volodymyr Yermolenko observes (53). Benjamin's history, unlike that of the evolutionists, Hegel or even Henri Bergson, who all advocated, in different ways, the birth of the new phenomena out of the older ones, is more of a "symptom of absence and remoteness of the Garden of Eden and its […] paradise" (Yermolenko 61). History, for Benjamin, is a landscape full of debris, a collection of fragments, a world after catastrophe. Writing about *The Arcades Project,* in particular, Benjamin notes: "The pathos of this work: there are no periods of decline" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* 458). History is "written on nature's countenance in the sign-script of transience." (Benjamin, *Selected Writigs Volume 3* 180). The field of history is less that of development and more that of decline - primarily that of decline: "In the ruin, history has merged sensuously with the setting. And so configured, history finds expression not as a process of eternal life, but rather as one of unstoppable decline." (180). This is the field full of ruins to be retrieved and analyzed. Memory, for Benjamin, unfolds "not in time but in space." The task of a historian is to look through the debris, much like the famous "Angel of History" from Paul Klee's painting "Angelus Novus" which Benjamin bought in 1921 in Berlin:

> [The painting] named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 257-258)

Walter Benjamin introduces the metaphor of apocalyptic wind that leaves behind "wreckage;" he also talks about history being a whirlpool, a maelstrom (*Strudel*), emphasizing the non-linearity. In such a maelstrom, the events are set in motion by "the point of gravity, hidden in the abyss of history, in the archeological beginning" (Yermolenko 64). This means that some events can seemingly repeat themselves, but not touch or influence each other directly, being moved by the "invisible energy of the center." This point of gravity takes root in the origin of origins, Ursprung, a prehistory. Writes Benjamin:

> For the materialist historian, every epoch with which he occupies himself, is only prehistory for the epoch he must live in. And so, for him, there can be no appearance of repetition in history, since precisely those moments in the course of history which matter most to him, by virtue of their index as "fore-history," become moments of the present

> day and change their specific character according to the catastrophic or triumphant nature of that day. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* N9a, 8 474)

History is not only non-linear but also not homogeneous. Some times or periods are more saturated with the energies of the Ursprung, and some less. Benjamin discusses this in his "Theses On the Philosophy of History:"

> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]. Thus, to Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution. (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 261)

Karen Underhill stresses that *Jetztzeit*, the Now-time, is the idea around which the messianic in Benjamin centers. The messianic modern world must be linguistically embodied, as contends Bożena Shallcross (qtd. in Underhill 25). Adam Lipszyc, when writing on the myth and the messianic in Schulz and Benjamin, argues that in Benjamin, myth (which Benjamin himself considered "the opposite of history") is "a closed structure of immanent sense" (Lipszyc, *Rewizja Procesu Jozefiny K.* 67). Myth means fate and the impossibility to change or

to break through the oppressive structure of the already defined. The messianic, on the other hand, is "transforming the text into an open stage," to transcend the myth and to bring a human being closer to redemption (67). As Karen Underhill contends, "Messianic", as it moves from the theological to the post-theological text, almost becomes synonymous with the reinscription of the (chosen) individual, awakening to the realization of his or her own power (that of consciousness), and responsibility – to the present, and also the past" (Underhill 13). Writes Underhill:

> In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* he [Benjamin] develops a strategy by which the historical materialist – like a storyteller – can enact a version of messianic fulfillment, through interpretations of history. In the mind of the historical materialist the present can become a "model of messianic time," containing all of history in an extreme condensation. (Underhill 39)

In this sense, history cannot be myth and must contain a messianic element, or messianic time, the time of Now. In her study of the messianic in Schulz and Benjamin, Karen Underhill turns to Giorgio Agamben's work, *The Time That Remains*, in which Agamben is analyzing the letters of St. Paul - in particular, the concept of *"ho nyn kairos:"* precisely, "the time of the now." For Agamben, writes Underhill, "Paul's concept contains aspects of *both* presence and *remnant* – for "the time of the now" is also "the time that remains" – between now and the end." (Underhill 31).

Writes Agamben:

> The Jewish apocalyptic tradition and rabbinic tradition recognized a distinction between two times or two worlds (‘olamim): the ‘olam hazzeh, which designates the duration of the world from creation to its end, and the ‘olam habba, the world to come, the atemporal eternity that comes after the end of the world. [...] [The Greek equivalents of] [b]oth of these terms appear in the Pauline text, but messianic time, the time in which the apostle lives, the only time that concerns him, is neither “olam hazzeh” nor the “olam habba,” neither chronological time nor the apocalyptic eschaton. Once again, it is a remnant, the time that remains between these two times, when the division of time is itself divided, whether it be divided by a messianic caesura or Apelles’ cut. (Agamben 62)

The present, as Karen Underhill observes, “becomes the fragment, or remnant, a temporal trace, that points to messianic fulfillment” (31).

Susan Buck-Morss points out that Benjamin saw a connection between the modern epoch and that of the Baroque. She emphasizes that the Baroque poets were the ones who showed Benjamin that the “failed material” can be elevated to the position of allegory. Dialectical images are “a modern form of emblematics” (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 164-170). The era of the Baroque and the modern era happen to be opposite each other, grabbed by the maelstrom of history, the *Strudel*, for a brief period of time that then becomes Now-time (*Jetztzeit*), at the moment of danger and rupture during the storm that will, eventually, destroy a lot of that which constituted the fields of these histories, and turn its artifacts into debris. Dialectical images, says Benjamin, can be found in language; in this sense, the dialectical image is not quite something that *exists*, but rather something we *can see* – through the system of

mirroring that the epochs, lined up by the movements of the stormy winds, show us. There are differences, no doubt, in that the modern epoch is not a precise picture of the Baroque melancholy or destruction, but a modified one. Writes Buck-Morss:

> But whereas the Baroque dramas were melancholy reflections on the inevitability of decay and disintegration, in the *Passagen-Werk* the devaluation of (new) nature and its status as ruin becomes instructive politically. The debris of industrial culture teaches us not the necessity of submitting to historical catastrophe, but the fragility of the social order that tells us this catastrophe is necessary. (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 170)

In his world of ruins, anything can be allegory (Karen Underhill). The ideology of the Baroque era stressed that life and beauty are short-lived, and represent only *vanitas*, the vanity of life, its transience and evanescence. Therefore, everything is rather relative, and the realization of this inevitably leads to melancholy. Bolz and van Reijen emphasize, just as Susan Buck-Morss does, that "by means of labyrinth and ruin, Walter Benjamin showed that the nineteenth century quotes the Baroque era not only through these *topoi* but also in terms of this mental disposition" (31), this mental disposition being that of "ruinous disintegration and lack of orientation." They continue: "This melancholia was rooted in the fact that the Baroque era did not have certainty in redemption; however, despite the lack of the "direct path to heaven," it longed for redemption and could not quite abandon hope. This makes the Baroque man feel despair - or, as Bolz and van Reijen put it, "tensions between eternity and transience" (Bolz and van Reijen 32). "One of the strongest motifs in allegory," says Benjamin, is the "insight into the transience of things and

a desire to save them into eternity." He continues: "Allegory is established most lastingly at the point where transcience and eternity most closely adjoin" (Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* 397). This transience produces a certain apprehension because the world is viewed as not permanent but fragmented (Cowan 110).

Walter Benjamin focuses on allegory in his study of the Trauerspiel and in *The Arcades Project*. Writes Benjamin:

> Allegorical perception could thus constitute a style in the seventeenth century, in a way that it no longer could in the nineteenth. Baudelaire as allegorist was entirely isolated. He sought to recall the experience of the commodity to an allegorical experience. In this, he was doomed to founder, and it became clear that the relentlessness of his initiative was exceeded by the relentlessness of reality. Hence a strain in his work that feels pathological or sadistic only because it missed out on reality – though just by a hair. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* J67, 2 347)

Allegory is "beyond beauty." The objects are not selected for their beauty; rather, they are elevated to the position of allegory because of their meaningfulness. "Allegories are, in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things. Thus the Baroque cult of the ruins." (Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* 178).

Tandeta **as Building Material**

The conceptualization of history as a field of ruins that can potentially become allegories offers a paradigm for the analysis of Schulz's birds. The very word "ruin" resonates

with Schulz's text immediately. This is exactly what the birds are: ruins. They are even made of "trash" – *tandeta* in Polish. Their artificial, *tandeta*-based nature becomes revealed: "Only now, from nearby, did Father notice the wretchedness of that wasted generation, the nonsense of its second-hand anatomy" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 138). The birds in question are cadavers (empty shells to be filled), but also debris. When the crowd stones them, they fall down and reveal their real nature of creatures made of "paper" and a "formless heap of feathers." Writes Schulz:

> Były to ogromne wiechcie piór, wypchane byle jak starym ścierwem. […] Niektóre pokryte były kudłatą, zlepioną sierścią, jak żubry, i śmierdziały wstrętnie. Inne wreszcie były najwidoczniej z pewnego rodzaju papieru, puste w środku, a świetnie kolorowe na zewnątrz. Niektóre okazywały się z bliska niczym innym jak wielkimi pawimi ogonami, kolorowymi wachlarzami, w które niepojętym sposobem tchnięto jakiś pozór życia.
> (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 131-132)
> They have been nothing but an enormous bunches of feathers, stuffed carelessly with old carrion. […] Some were covered with a curly matted fur…[…] Others still must have been made of a kind of cardboard… […] Some of them proved at close quarters to be nothing more than large peacocks' tails, colorful tans…
> (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 138)

The birds are trash, and this is what the crowd (and Jacob himself) sees after the souls of the birds, "a semblance of life" (138), has departed. I have already referred to the meaning of the Polish word *tandeta* earlier, in the previous chapter, indicating that it differs from, for example,

kitsch in that it does not denote any aesthetic function. However, this time I am going to discuss the word and its meanings in more detail.

In his article "*Sklepy cynamonowe* Brunona Schulza: apologia tandety," Andreas Schönle focuses on one of the most prominent concepts in Schulz, namely, "*tandeta*" – a Polish word that means "trash," "cheap material of bad quality," and cannot be translated into English without significant semantic and connotative loss. *Tandeta* in Schulz is a multifaceted concept; partly, it denotes a negative aspect of creation, indicating "bad," the "not real" nature of the material, be it the world itself, an "alternative" human being fabricated in the image of a tailor's dummy, or the street of commercial life in the Schulzian city. On the other hand, *tandeta* symbolically represents the world of poetry, all the non-material, transcendent forces, and thus reveals itself as a complex philosophical entity. *Tandeta*, according to Andreas Schönle, imitates identity (61); it also admits the primacy of matter over the form. *Tandeta* provides collective uniformity to everything and everybody in the Schulzian world. It is, seemingly, an inorganic material, from which humans also can be created. Andreas Schönle, as I have just mentioned, points out that *tandeta* can also be interpreted as a sign of the poetic world: *tandeta* is like poetry, its forms are very diverse, and its nature is fragmentary; Jacob's birds are the perfect example of *tandeta*. They are his transient poetry that is then "killed" by the crowd and destroyed by Adela in her cleaning zeal.

On the one hand, therefore, the birds certainly were trash - that is *tandeta* in the sense of a cheap material; on the other hand, though, they symbolized the high philosophical and demiurgical aspirations of Jacob, and their *tandeta*-based nature refers to poetry, the space that is far removed from prose, that is the world of the protagonist's mother, the maid Adela, and their "female" order and everyday cleanliness that kill Jacob's creative spirit.

That the birds Jacob collects are not "real" is evident from the very beginning of the story "Birds." The first thing Schulz shows the reader is the city in winter days. Wojcech Owczarski contends that, in the Schulzian world, we always remain within the realm of the earthly element. The very beginning of the story contains a mention of "earth," matter:

> Nadeszły żółte, pełne nudy dni zimowe. Zrudziałą ziemię pokrywał dziurawy, przetarty, za krótki obrus śniegu. Na wiele dachów nie starczyło go i stały czarne lub rdzawe, gontowe strzechy i arki kryjące w sobie zakopcone przestrzenie strychów – czarne, zwęglone katedry, najeżone żebrami krokwi, płatwi i bantów – ciemne płuca wichrów zimowych. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 53)
>
> Came the yellow days of winter, filled with boredom. The rust-colored *earth* [Italics mine] was covered with a thread-bare, meager tablecloth of snow full of holes. There was not enough of it for some of the roofs and so they stood there, black and brown, shingle and thatch, arks containing the sooty expanses of attics – coal-black cathedrals, bristling with ribs of rafters, beams, and spars – the dark lungs of winter winds. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 45)

This is a picture of a town as if seen from flight, but this flight is ending. Whoever is in flight is going down instead of flying higher up. The story about aerial symbols begins with earth. There is nothing divine or aerial, quite the contrary: "Each dawn revealed new chimney stacks and chimney pots which and emerged during the hours of darkness, blown up by the night winds: the black pipes of a devil's organ" (45). Breathing, which is a "messianic occurrence"

(Karen Underhill), is the devil's breathing, the underlining of the world, its "dark" side. The only birds that live in this environment are, naturally, the crows "which in the evening covered the branches of the trees around the church with living black leaves" (45). They are the only "real" birds in the story.

The earth and the "earthly" birds – crows – are but one of the elements of the universe Schulz describes. The theme of chimneys and soot represents another aspect of it. Chimneys and soot trigger the associations with William Blake's poetry - in particular, the two poems about chimney-sweepers, one from "The Songs of Innocence," another from "The Songs of Experience." The chimney is a place between the sky and the earth, but it is not a happy one: in Blake's poem it is compared to a coffin; the chimney-sweepers were "locked in the coffins of black." In his essay "Fact and Symbol in 'The Chimney Sweeper,'" Northrop Frye analyzes the image of a chimney sweeper as well as summarizes the conditions of chimney sweepers' lives. The boys were actually considered "subhuman," slept in soot and were not allowed in church, because they were considered "not white," that is not clean and lacking in humanity (and, to revisit Schulz's imagery, touched "the devil's organ" of breathing – instead of a divine one) (50). This demonstrates that the chimney is a liminal space between worlds; it offers a life that is not quite a life, and is also death before death, the matter that is not "real" matter but soot, or *tandeta*.

Jacob lives and hatches his birds in the attic; the attic as a choice contrasts with the shop and the significance of the shop as the foundation of the household and the whole lifestyle of the family and the city. This time, there is nothing grounded about the premises: they are as far removed from the basis and the "depths of genealogy" as it is possible. Jacob is himself a

"bird," living high above the shop and its rootedness and authenticity, but being unable to leave the house and actually fly.

Tandeta, according to Andreas Schönle, is first and foremost a philosophical concept. It is the mediator between matter and form. It is more independent than the real matter in that it "does not depend on the Demiurge." Schönle emphasizes its profound malleability and capacity for constant change. *Tandeta* is short-lived and ambiguous. It is also connected to the idea of femininity. In the mannequin cycle, the two seamstresses Jacob is talking to, have "tandeta bodies" (to be discussed in Chapter 5). *Tandeta* is evasive like a woman, and, like a woman, powerful. Jacob, who is always harassed by Adela, the maid, collects *tandeta*-based birds as a femininity (or an aspect of it) that he can, this time, own and mold as he pleases.

Jacob's Collection

When discussing the figure of the collector, Olena Haleta calls him "the flâneur in profile." If the flâneur roams the streets, the collector's realm is the interior. The objects he collects are usually mass-produced and not necessarily original, but the collector makes them so by singling them out and placing them in the collection. He restores the authenticity of these objects by taking them out of the context of commodification, fetish, and dreaming collective. He gives value to that which until now has only one kind of value: that of the commodity. An object becomes part of the collection not because it is valuable; rather, it becomes valuable upon becoming part of the collection (Haleta 68).

Collecting, Benjamin sates, "is a primal phenomenon of study: the student collects knowledge" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H 4, 3 210). In this sense, every object the collector makes part of the collection becomes "an encyclopedia of all knowledge of the epoch,

the landscape, the industry, and the owner from which it comes. […] Everything remembered, everything thought, everything conscious becomes socle, frame, pedestal, seal of his possession." […] "Collecting is a form of practical memory" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* H1a, 2 205). The collector's relationship to things is "archaic" (Benjamin) in that, having taken them out of the domain of the mass production, he treats them as the only ones of their kind. The collector recalls the old woman from Huizinga's *Herbst des Mittelalters,* who is "dispos[ing] of even the meanest of [her] possessions through a separate and detailed testament." Benjamin quotes Huizinga's account of this woman: she bequeaths "her Sunday dress and cap to her parish, her bed to her godchild, a fur to her nurse, her everyday dress to a beggar woman, and four pounds *tournois* […] to the Franciscan friars" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H4, 4 210-211).

When discussing the relationship between the allegorist and the collector, Benjamin claims they are opposites of each other, but the collector has an allegorist in him, and vice versa. The allegorist "has given up the attempt to elucidate things through their context, and, from the outset, relies on his profundity to illuminate their meaning. The collector, by contrast, brings together what belongs together" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: H4a, 1).

The question that arises in relation to Schulz's texts is as follows: what is it that Jacob specifically collects? His collection is obviously made of *tandeta*, that is, trash with the capacity to change; the birds are not "real," in that they contrast with the perfectly real crows from the first pages of the story "Birds." He collects only exotic birds that he buys over the catalogues. To better understand the nature of his collection, I propose turning to yet another Schulz story where the birds feature quite prominently - namely, "The Night of the Great Season," which I have analyzed in the previous chapter, but without delving into the issue of the birds that are

also depicted there. In the story, the birds arrive towards the end of the shopping – and selling – experience:

> I wnet zaroiło się niebo jakąś kolorową wysypką, osypało się falującymi plamami, które rosły, dojrzewały i wnet napełniły przestworze dziwnym ludem ptaków, krążących i kołujących w wielkich, krzyżujących się spiralach. Całe niebo wypełniło się ich wzniosłym lotem, łopotem skrzydeł, majestatycznymi liniami cichych bujań. Niektóre z nich jak ogromne bociany płynęły nieruchomo na spokojnie rozpostartych skrzydłach, inne, podobne do kolorowych pióropuszów, do barbarzyńskich trofeów, trzepotały ciężko i niezgrabnie, ażeby utrzymać się na falach ciepłej aury; inne wreszcie, nieudolne konglomeraty skrzydeł, potężnych nóg i oskubanych szyj, przypominały źle wypchane sępy i kondory, z których wysypują się trociny. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą*, Kometa 130).
>
> And soon the sky. […] was filled with a strange tribe of birds, circling and revolving in great criss-crossing spirals. Their lofty flight, the movement of their wings, formed majestic scrolls that filled the silent sky. Some of them, enormous storks, floated almost immobile on calmly spread wings; others, resembling colored plums or barbarous trophies, had to flap their wings heavily and clumsily to maintain height upon the current of warm air; still others, formless conglomerations of wings, of powerful legs and bare necks, were like badly stuffed vultures and condors from which the sawdust was spilling. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 136)

Some of the birds are "two-headed," others are "with many wings," still others are

"crippled." Overall, Jacob welcomes them as "the distant, forgotten progeny of that generation of birds which at one time Adela had chased away." The birds are immediately recognized by the crowd as something worthless, which, technically, they are, for the birds are "misshapen" and "blind:" "That brood of freaks, that malformed, wasted tribe of birds, was now returning degenerated or overgrown. Nonsensically large, stupidly developed, the birds were empty and lifeless inside. […] They were like exhibits of extinct species in a museum, the lumber room of a birds' paradise" (137). The crowd, despite Jacob's jubilation upon seeing his former "collection," begins to throw stones into the birds.

Others look like "bald, dead camels," others "like bisons," and most of them are empty inside (138). What is significant is that they arrive immediately after the shopping debacle and Jacob's rage of the patriarch towards the "infidels" of his disrespectful customers, who were trying to bring dreaming collective into the realm of the Authentic. They are, when they arrive, *kellipot,* empty shells, and yet they are obviously much cherished by Jacob. They are his collection that disappeared and now returned to him. I interpret them as Jacob's materialized desire to preserve the "old" ways - of life, of trade, of human relationships – intact in the face of the dreaming collective, modernity and the attack of big capital. Jacob clings to his dreams of the world that is inevitably departing. In fact, it has already departed, and Jacob is single-handedly protecting its memory from the crowd that wishes to kill and has killed already: the old-style merchants and their businesses. The old way of life is now *tandeta*, trash, sawdust. All that is left to the town and its inhabitants is the Street of Crocodiles and its "arcades" with the phantasmagoria ruling. Write Bolz and van Reijen:

> The shopping arcades are […] symbols of boredom, or even melancholy. Inside them time stands still. The passerby turns to stone on the threshold – the shopping arcade *is* the threshold; it is a transition and a standstill. In the arcade, Benjamin's concept of dialectic at a standstill becomes manifest. This standstill is not to be confused with the achievement of a goal; the movement continues, but on a treadmill. The arcade becomes an endless passage. (Bolz and van Reijen 41)

The crowd is, from now on, stuck inside the passage - all the while Jacob is struggling to keep his birds as a collection. In fact, he is so intent to preserve them that he, quite logically, also turns into a bird - in particular, the condor we see first in "Birds," and then in "Cockroaches." The condor is Jacob's Doppelgänger for a while, until the two, at least in the minds of the family, merge and become one. The condor was "an enormous bird with a featherless neck, its face wrinkled and knobby. It was an emaciated ascetic, a Buddhist lama, full of imperturbable dignity in its behavior, guided by the rigid ceremonial of its great species" (48). He looked like Jacob's "older brother." The condor is swept out of the attic by the unmerciful Adela along with all the other birds, to reappear in the story "Cockroaches," as a stuffed decoration of the room. The condor stands "in the pose of a Buddhist sage, its bitter dried-up ascetic face petrified in an expression of extreme indifference and abnegation." Schulz emphasizes that the condor's eyes "had fallen out and sawdust scattered from the washed-out tear-stained sockets" (111). Jacob thus became a part of his own wretched collection.

Susan Buck-Morrs underscores that the Baroque poets Benjamin wrote about "saw in transitory nature an allegory for human history;" however, this history was not exactly a "road to salvation," but rather as death and ruin (*The Dialectics of Seeing* 174). Death and ruin are

then presented in the allegory as externalized evil: "Evil as such… exists only in allegory, is nothing other than allegory, and means something other than it is. It means in fact precisely the nonexistence of what it presents. The absolute vices, as exemplified by tyrants and intrigues are allegories. They are not real" (qtd. in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 175).

Jacob's birds can be read as such an allegory, with the evil exposed, or as a dialectical image. Susan Buck-Morrs argues that "allegory deserts both history and nature" (*The Dialectics of Seeing* 175). The birds are "the affirmation of the existence of truth," and this affirmation is "the first precondition for allegory; the second is its absence. Allegory could not exist if truth were accessible: as a mode of expression it arises in perpetual response to the human condition of being exiled from the truth that it would embrace" (Cowan 114). They are the ruin of Jacob's dreams, death - and Jacob's dreams and hopes at the same time. It is significant that after the birds are gone, their place in the attic is occupied by a tenant who happens to be "a lady telephone operator" (Cowan111). Instead of the shattered dreams of preserving the old lifestyle, one is faced with the technologically advanced phenomenon of a voice unattached to the face, a "magic" from a box, different from Jacob's home-cooked magic, the embodiment of progress.

Jacob as a collector is fighting oblivion and history as linear process, or as capitalist hell. His birds are a way to protest against the utilitarian essence of objects and the phantasmagorical spectacle of the dreaming collective.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FLÂNEUR IN HELL: THE TRAIN

The Image of the Labyrinth in Bruno Schulz

Bruno Schulz evokes the image of the labyrinth in several of his stories from the first collection, *Cinnamon Shops*: for instance, in the eponymous story, "Cinnamon Shops:" "…the city reached deeper and deeper into the *labyrinth* of winter nights" (Schulz, The Street of Crocodiles 85); in "The Street of Crocodiles:" "…*complicated* and manifold *profusion of streets and alleyways*" (100); in "The Gale," where the wind builds "*mazes*" over the city, one city over another (120), in "Visitation," and others [Italics mine]. The whole town is a labyrinth, an enigma, a space to navigate, and in which to find the correct door or the right street:

> Mieszkaliśmy w rynku, w jednym z tych ciemnych domów o pustych i ślepych fasadach, które tak trudno od siebie odróżnić. [...] Gdyż wszedłszy raz w niewłaściwą sień na niewłaściwe schody, dostawało się zazwyczaj w prawdziwy labirynt obcych mieszkań, ganków, niespodzianych wyjść na obce podwórza i zapominało się o początkowym celu wyprawy, ażeby po wielu dniach, wracając z manowców dziwnych i splątanych przygód, o jakimś szarym świcie przypomnieć sobie wśród wyrzutów sumienia dom rodzinny.. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 46)

> We lived on Market Square, in one of those dark houses with empty blind looks, so *difficult to distinguish one from another*… […] For, once you had entered the wrong doorway and set foot on the wrong staircase, you were liable to find yourself in *a real labyrinth of unfamiliar apartments and balconies*, and unexpected doors opening onto strange empty courtyards, and you forgot the initial object of your expedition, only to recall it days later after numerous strange and complicated adventures, on regaining the family home in the gray light of dawn. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 36-7) [Italics mine]

Most importantly, however, the maze does not just *force* but also *inspires* wandering, as it offers a perfect space for a flâneur: the young protagonist of the profoundly oneiric "Cinnamon Shops" walks the streets of his native town, discovering them as if an unfamiliar, and therefore more exciting terrain, a terra incognita yet to be explored. In the story, the boy's parents, upon the family's arrival at a theatre, send him home to fetch the father's wallet. He confesses that it is "exceedingly thoughtless" to send "a young boy on an urgent and important errand into a night like that" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 88), full of transformations (obviously, of a dream-like nature).

The boy sees the city as a space of wonder, passing curiosity shops (which he calls "cinnamon shops," referring to the color of their walls) that sell oddities:

> …[O]gnie bengalskie, szkatułki czarodziejskie, marki krajów dawno zaginionych, chińskie odbijanki, indygo, kalafonium z Malabaru, jaja owadów egzotycznych, papug, tukanów, żywe salamandry i bazyliszki, korzeń Mandragory, norymberskie

> mechanizmy, homunculusy w doniczkach … (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 93)
>
> …[B]engal lights, magic boxes, the stamps of long-forgotten countries, Chinese decals, indigo, calaphony from Malabar, the eggs of exotic insects, parrots, toucans, live salamanders and basilisks, mandrake roots, mechanical toys from Nuremberg, homunculi in jars. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 89)

The city is defamiliarized and therefore magnetic. But one of the most dramatic phenomena the nameless protagonist reports is that the streets "multiply, become confused and interchanged" (88). The most magical aspect of the night is its openness to the dimensions of space and time that are imperceptible during the day:

> Otwierają się w głębi miasta, żeby tak rzec, ulice podwójne, ulice sobowtóry, ulice kłamliwe i zwodne. Oczarowana i zmylona wyobraźnia wytwarza złudne plany miasta, rzekomo dawno znane i wiadome, w których te ulice mają swe miejsce i nazwę, a noc w niewyczerpanej swej płodności nie ma nic lepszego do roboty, jak dostarczać wciąż nowych i urojonych konfiguracji. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 92)
>
> There open up, deep inside a city, deep reflected streets, streets which are double, make-believe streets. One's imagination, bewitched and misled, creates illusory maps of the apparently familiar districts, maps in which the streets have their proper places and usual names but are provided with new and fictitious configurations by the inexhaustible inventiveness of the night. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 88)

In Schulz, the labyrinth is not confined to three-dimensional physical space. As Jerzy Jarzębski contends, the city and its buildings, in Schulz, are an instrument that helps peek into another reality. The city is "an order that reflects the structure of the world" (*Prowincja Centrum* 95). Jarzębski continues:

> Wszelkie zaburzenia owej struktury otwierają czlowiekowi drogę do innych rzeczywistości. Najbardziej charakterystycznym procesem tego rodzaju jest przeksztalcenie porządku przestzennego miasta w labiryntową przestrseń błądzenia. …[…] Pomijam tutaj wszystkie odmiany labiryntu, jakie znaleść można w jego opowiesciach (labirynth-psychika, labirynt –tekst, labirynth – wnętrznosc ciala, labirynt-historia) (Jarzębski, *Prowincja Centrum* 95)
>
> Any disturbance of this structure opens the way for other reality. The most characteristic process of transformation of this kind is the changing of the city stretched in space into the labyrinthine space of wandering [...] I omit here all varieties of the labyrinth, found in his stories (labyrinth-psyche, labyrinth-text, labyrinth – the inside of the body, labyrinth-history) *(ol)*

In their volume on Walter Benjamin's theory, Norbert Bolz and Willem van Reijen view labyrinth "as the metaphor of our earthly wanderings along the wrong path" (31). If in the first collection, *Cinnamon Shops*, the image of the labyrinth and the figure of the flâneur in Schulz are markers of a somewhat exotic urban condition and, overall, the state of "magic" that is expressed in time warps and confusion of spaces, in the second book of stories, *Sanatorium*

Under the Sign of the Hourglass, they sound much less magical and much more in line with the idea of "wandering along the wrong path." The sense of imminent discovery gives way to less joyful connotations that accompany the idea of the maze: its convoluted nature and absence of exit in sight make it less than inviting. Labyrinth is not an overwhelming enigma that fascinates a child: it is a harsh reality that an adult cannot escape. In the story "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass," in which Joseph, now an adult protagonist, visits his father in a strange sanatorium for the dead where they are made alive for a while (albeit kept in the state of sleep most of the time), ends up wandering, in the manner of a flâneur, inside the train he is taking to arrive to the sanatorium and to return home. The train is described as follows:

> Nigdy nie widziałem tych wagonów archaicznego typu, dawno wycofanych na innych liniach, obszernych jak pokoje, ciemnych i pełnych zakamarków. Te korytarze załamujące się pod różnymi kątami, te przedziały puste, labiryntowe i zimne miały w sobie coś dziwnie opuszczonego, coś niemal przerażającego. Przenosiłem się z wagonu do wagonu w poszukiwaniu jakiegoś przytulnego kąta. Wszędzie wiało, zimne przeciągi torowały sobie drogę przez te wnętrza, przewiercały na wskroś cały pociąg. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 270).
>
> Never before had I seen such archaic coaches; withdrawn from other lines long before, they were spacious as living rooms, dark, and with many recesses. Corridors crossed the empty compartments at various angles; *labyrinthine* and cold, they exuded the air of strange and frightening neglect. I moved from coach to coach looking for a comfortable corner. Drafts were everywhere: cold currents of air shooting through the interiors,

piercing the whole train from end to end. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 112) [Italics mine].

This time around, the Schulzian flâneur is neither engaged in any discoveries in an old curiosity shop nor fascinated by convoluted streets that repeat themselves. Instead, he is hopelessly stuck in a rather uncomfortable train taking him to a limbo full of (semi) dead people. And yet, the imagery of wandering and the space constructed as the labyrinth are still being evoked. It has been stated a number of times that Bruno Schulz's second collection of stories, the ones that feature the adult protagonist Joseph, is much more under the spell of a depressive mood than the first one, in which the protagonist is still a child who sees the world as fascinating and magical - that is, prone to potential favorable changes.

Schulz's second book is dealing with the disappointments of adulthood, and this factor could perhaps account for the disillusionment of the protagonist. Though this explanation is, no doubt, valid and in many ways absolutely correct, in this chapter I will attempt to regard the Schulzian flâneur and his habitat in the light of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, to trace the transformation this flâneur undergoes from a fascinated observer to a cold and discouraged passenger of the hellish train, to conceptualize the train as a dialectical image, and to explicate the transformations as expressions of the modern condition.

The Flâneur and the Modern City

The image of a city was for centuries regarded through "the theological position that the heavenly and earthly cities were contradictory extremes, one full of sin and suffering, the other a place of redemption and eternal bliss;" this stand was first challenged by Enlightenment

thinkers who called for creating the "heavenly" cities on earth, and advocated "material happiness" as their foundations (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 80). While analyzing the long-standing tradition of urban writing in the Western world, Burton Pike points out that "during 19th century the word city was increasingly represented in literature as an unstable refraction of an individual consciousness rather than as an object fixed in space." "By displacing the city backward in time in this fashion, [writers] wished to insure its metaphorization, to place it as firmly as possible in the realm of the imaginary while at the same time presenting it as "reality" (Pike 22).

The city, which is a "rhetorical topos" in the history of Western literature (Pike 4), is a recurrent organizing image. Pike emphasizes the existence of two major myths of the city: the city as perfection and as corruption. If before the 19th century and the beginning of modernity the city was an image of "fixed relationships," it later became "a primary image of flux, of dislocation rather than location" (Pike 17). Among the authors whose work exemplifies the city in its static condition, Pike mentions Honoré de Balzac, Voltaire, Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens. In their work, the city provides a point of stability and a holding environment for the narrative. The city is unchangeable, and serves as a point of reference.

In the mid-19th century the situation changes, and by the 20th city becomes more or less a synonym of flux. City stops being a potential Eden: as Proust has shown, the only true paradises are paradises lost. If in the beginning of the nineteenth century the countryside landscape was considered the point of reference and the metaphor of the emotional state of a human being, with the rise of industrialism and mass production, the urban landscape, or the city-scape, took over the old matrix. The city became the new mirror in which people would see themselves, and a new form of psychic life was born. Charles Baudelaire was one of the first to

recognize this in his *Fleurs du mal* in which he refers to the new elements of this psychic life. Jack the Ripper will say in 1888 that he gave birth to the twentieth century; but Charles Baudelaire had a vision of it before it was born.

The process of transformation that took place around fin de siècle and later on in the nineteen-twenties and even thirties is present in a number of literary works, such as the novels of the subgenre of the city-text; some of the most prominent examples are Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Andrei Bely's *Peterburg*, and Louis Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris*. They capture the quick pace of a city life, its broken rhythms, its rising modernity and phantasmagorical madness of commercials, lights and crime scenes that suddenly became much more prevalent than before. Speed became one of the main characteristics of the new time. Benjamin in his *Arcades Project* emphasizes the "colossal acceleration of the tempo of living" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: K3,1 394).

In *The Century*, Alain Badiou discusses the avant-garde's "passion for the real" (134). When talking about the poetry of the future, Vadim Shershenevich, a Russian poet, writes that the poets of the past used to select an image around which they structured the poem. All other images "were subordinated to it, and dependent upon [it]." However, as the new epoch came, this way to writing could not be pursued any longer. Shershenevich states that it was only possible when the tempo of life was "old, slow and strictly orderly" (Rasula and Conley, *Burning City* 31). While describing the process of this (new) kind of writing, he makes a connection between poetry production and movement of the streets: "the chaos of streets, the movements of towns, the roars of stations and harbors, the whole fill, the quick of temporary life, cannot be communicated other than by the internal motions of the verse." The image of "chaos" of the streets corresponds to the idea of the lack of the leading image in a poem. A

literary work had to reflect the non-linear nature of the process of life. In the past, the image used to serve as a sort of a blueprint for the poem; however, those days are gone, Shershenevich proclaims, because in reality the images do not follow each other orderly, but are mixed. He continues by saying that "on the city street, hundreds of motor cars, electric trams and bicycles flash before my eyes every moment, yet I retain all of these in my mind at once." He continues: "Why, then, is the view commonly held that such disorder and speed in poetry makes it meaningless for the reader?" (31). Modernist writing, just like modernist city, emphasized speed and non-linearity. The Earthly city stops being a mere reflection of the Heavenly city: it becomes an entity in its own right.

It was Charles Baudelaire who first identified one of the key features of the urban mentality: the concept of the flâneur. The flâneur explores the city, roams around it aimlessly (in a non-linear fashion) – or, rather, his aim is not to arrive at any specific place at any specific time, but to savor the experience of strolling. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin writes: "To leave without being forced in any way, and to follow your inspiration as if the mere fact of turning right or turning left already constituted an essentially poetic act," means to be a true *flâneur* (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: M9a, 4 436). Perhaps, one of the most interesting movements that took these ideas to heart was that of the dérivistes in 1920s. This was a situational urban practice, with the French word "dérive" meaning "drifting." The dérive was "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances…[it] involve[d] playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects." This practice was based on the assumption that "an urban neighborhood is determined not only by geographical and economical factors, but also by the image that its inhabitants and those of other neighborhoods have of it" (*Theory of the Dérive*).

According to Walter Benjamin, "the city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: M6a, 4 429). Labyrinth is the basic metaphor of the city, its main matrix. As a prototype, the labyrinth emerges in the arcades, in which "the commodities are suspended and shoved together in such boundless confusion that [they appear] like images out of the most incoherent dreams" (qtd. in Buck Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 254). Walter Benjamin draws a basic distinction between a "way" and a "street;" the first one "brings with it the terrors of wandering, some reverberation of which must have struck the leaders of nomadic tribes. In the incalculable turnings and resolutions of the way, there is even today, for the solitary wanderer, a detectable trace of the power of ancient directions over wandering hordes." The second, however, is much more restrictive:

> The person who travels a street, it would seem, has no need of any waywise guiding hand. It is not in wandering that man takes to the street, but rather in submitting to the monotonous, fascinating, constantly unrolling band of asphalt. The synthesis of these twin terrors, however – monotonous wandering – is represented in the labyrinth. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: P2, 1 519)

However, even in the binding world of the labyrinth, the flâneur carves his own path. He has a very special relationship with the city. The flâneur's aim is "to be away from home, yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, yet to remain hidden from the world" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project:* M14a, 1 443). This maze consists not only of buildings, but of people, too: the masses "stretch before the flâneur as a veil: they are

the newest drug for the solitary." Also, in the labyrinth of the city "the masses are the newest and inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: M16, 3).

Shopping arcades are the flâneur's habitat. He is strolling around them to, supposedly, take possession of the goods in the windows, but in reality he is himself a commodity. His movement is not utilitarian: he strolls for the sake of strolling, and to demonstrate this, he takes a turtle on a leash (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: M3, 8) - or, as the rumor goes, even a lobster (for example, Gerard de Nerval). The flâneur is an artist of sorts. Moreover, he is wandering in the maze not because he cannot find the right path, but because wandering is a way of postponement, a game the flâneur plays with himself. He is trying to postpone his arrival at the city center. His wandering is aimed at finding a place of awakening, - that is, immersing himself in the atmosphere of the past and waking up from the collective dream of the present phantasmagoria that is ruled by fetish. His routes through the city are, in a way, restoring the city as it was before major (and utilitarian) reconstructions, as in, for example, Haussmannization (Yermolenko 21), or "radical transformation of Paris […] mainly along the axis running through the Place de la Concorde and the Hotel de Ville" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: E1, 6 121).

Le Baron Haussmann changed the landscape of Paris, dramatically broadening the streets and making it virtually impossible for the citizens to raise barricades. What is ultimately significant in his claims to transform the city to make it more livable, more convenient for the people. The new conveniences come in one package with creating a "safer" environment and reducing the opportunities for unrest.

> New arteries …would link the center of Paris with the railroad stations, reducing congestion in the latter. Others would take part in the battle against poverty and revolution; they would be strategic routes, breaking through the sources of contagion and the centers of unrest, and permitting, with the influx of better air, the arrival of an armed force. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: E3 a, 3 128).

In this sense, the flâneur is a revolutionary, a protester, but also a detective that is constantly on the hunt for hidden treasures. Architecture, photography, empty side streets that avoided reconstruction are the sites that still hold the aura of the past and offer opportunities for the awakening that the flâneur desires.

Flânerie as the Crossing of Borders

The arcades, which are the flâneur's environment, are, literally, "passages" between 19th and 20th century. If the 19th century features stone architecture, the 20th appropriates new materials: steel and glass. Walter Benjamin was especially interested in the arcades precisely because of their transitional nature. The arcades are "a forgotten part of the history of modernity" (Yermolenko 28). They are simultaneously the inside and the outside, and the fact that flâneur chooses them as his habitat characterizes him as a border-crosser. In general, the arcades symbolize the inside and the outside of the city: both in terms of its physical dimensions and its mythological essence. The flâneur and the prostitute, two of the main urban types, are border-crossers. "They repeatedly go beyond borders of a stabilized form of life, as representatives of each one of us. They submit permanently to the *rites of passage* of the shopping arcade" (Yermolenko 38-39).

The flâneur, in particular, permanently lives on the edge of the interior and the exterior. The space of the interior (arcade) becomes a street, and the street becomes a home, a dwelling. Writes Benjamin:

> To […] [the flâneur] the shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafes are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done. (Benjamin, *The Writer for Modern Life* 37)

Benjamin calls the arcade "a windowless house." The windows that look down on it are like loges from which one gazes into its interior, but one cannot see out these windows to anything outside" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: Q2a, 7 532). The house, or the inside of the dwelling, can become a place for strolling, too. For example, in *The Arcades Project* Benjamin turns to the experience of Søren Kierkegaard who describes how he and his (Kierkegaard's) father "go for a walk" inside the room. The father asks Johannes (Kierkegaard's penname) where he would like to go, and Johannes answers that he wants to stroll along the seashore, so they "go." "This seems at first a poor substitute, but in fact… something quite novel awaited him." Johannes and his father become so absorbed in this game that they even "greeted other pedestrians" and saw "passing wagons and the inviting comfits of the pastry shops" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: M2a, 2).

This last example demonstrates that the line between interior and exterior is not merely blurred, but altogether imaginary, and points at another important border that the flâneur

crosses: that between the physical space and consciousness. In his article on psychopathologies of modern urbanism Anthony Vidler emphasizes the connection between the city and human psychic life. According to him, this connection has been noticed and analyzed by a number of thinkers, from Sigmund Freud to Erwin Panofsky. It is, however, paramount, as Vidler stresses, not to regard "the space of the psyche replacing the space of geometry," since they rather are "grafted" one to another, creating a complex relationship (Vidler 33). According to Walter Benjamin, "by day, the labyrinth of urban dwellings resembles consciousness" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: C1a, 2 84). Scott McCracken points out that "the image of the city [in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*] started to operate as an alternative to available models of consciousness, notably that of psychoanalysis" (McCracken149). Walter Benjamin in his fictionalized memoir *Berlin Chronicle* writes about a "map" that was in reality a "spatial model of self." He imagines "drawing diagram" of his life, and, upon doing so, finds out that this diagram looks like a labyrinth. One important feature of this labyrinth is that fact that is has "many entrances leading to the interior." Writes Benjamin:

> These entrances I call primal acquaintances; each of them is a graphic symbol of my acquaintance with a person whom I met, not through other people, but through neighborhood, family relationships, school comradeship, mistaken identity, companionship on travel, or other such – hardly numerous – situations. So many primal relationships, so many entrances to the maze. (Benjamin, qtd. in McCracken 150)

Just as the psychic life can become a "space" similar to urban space, the urban

space can become a form of psychic life. This is an especially significant aspect of the urban epistemology. Susan Buck-Morrs emphasizes that the flâneur, though being a figure of a consumer, is also an Ur-form of an intellectual (Buck-Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 304). The books he is reading are the streets, and to be able to do it successfully, he must conduct the work of a detective, looking through buildings and new boulevards, to discern the past that is looming around. Walking of the flâneur is almost a ritual, and certainly not a way to reach his point of destination. Michel de Certeau contends that "every story is a travel story – a spatial story." He compares "pedestrian processes to linguistic formation," drawing a connection between "city" and its "text." Moving around the city (as well as travelling – which is another word he uses to denote walking around the city), for him, is "an exploration of the deserted places of my memory," a practice that "invent[s] spaces." A city does not quite exist without somebody's memory, and without telling the story. Cities for him are primarily legends: "*legenda*: what is *to be read,* but also *can be read*." "A memory is only a Prince Charming who stays just long enough to awaken the Sleeping Beauties of our wordless stories" (*Practice of Everyday Life* 103-108).

> Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body (De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life 108*)

Writing in this sense is more than mere documenting: it is an active force that possesses the power to transform. As Michel de Certeau continues,

> […] Narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes. By means of whole panoply of codes, ordered ways of proceeding and constraints, they regulate changes in space (or moves from one place to another) made by stories in the form of places put in linear or interlaced series. (*The Practice of Everyday Life* 115)

Before the city becomes text (writing), it becomes memory, and memory – or writing – in its turn becomes the city. As Michel de Certeau states, "there is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence… haunted places are the only ones people can live in" (*Practice of Everyday Life* 108). He also points out that

> [to] take up on of Walter Benjamin's remarks concerning Proust, we might say that writing assumes the "form" of memory but not its "contents:" it is the endless effect of loss and debt, but it neither preserves nor restores an initial content, as this is forever lost (forgotten) and represented only by substitutes which are inverted and transformed according to the law set up by a founding exclusion. (*Writing of History* 323)

De Certeau is referring to Walter Benjamin's essay on Proust, where Benjamin says that "in his work Proust did not describe a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it" (*Illuminations*, "The Image of Proust" 204). In his poem "Le Cygne," Charles Baudelaire exclaims: "Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville /Change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d'un mortel" ("Old Paris is no more (the form of a city / Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart"). The poet addresses Andromache, who herself is a symbol of

memory, as memory is her only happiness and reason for being, and tells her that he sees the old Paris only "in memory."

It is for reasons of uncovering this memory that the flâneur undertakes his unstoppable quest around the city. Walter Benjamin sees the flâneur as a revolutionary of a kind; though it is only the proletariat, as he states, that has the capacity to be a revolutionary class, the flâneur is important because he accelerates the time of awakening. Seeking awakening, the flâneur crosses the lines between the exterior and interior, the physical space and the psychic life, and operates in the liminal space.

In his essay "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov," Walter Benjamin draws a parallel between wandering and epic storytelling. The novel as a form is opposed to storytelling; if the novel is the product of an isolated condition of an individual, storytelling resembles wandering. "What distinguishes the novel from the story (and from the epic in the narrowest sense) is its essential dependence on the book" (Benjamin, *Selected Writings Volume 3* 146). A novel is a product of an isolated writer addressing an isolated reader. The book is prison, whereas epos and storytelling are ways to break free from that prison (Yermolenko 188). In this sense, the flâneur is writing the book of the streets which is not "literature," but something closer to the very process of life.

However, there is one more significant boundary that he transcends; the arcade is not only a point of merging of the interior and exterior; it is also a passage between reality and myth. "As long as there is still one beggar around, there will still be myth" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: K6, 4 400).

The arcade symbolizes the entrance to the underworld: "the kingdom of the ephemeral, the kingdom of hallucination and mythology" that allows us to enter the phantasmagoria and the

Hell of modernity (Yermolenko 33). Walter Benjamin evokes the "places in ancient Greece" that were considered pathways to underworld. From the waking existence one descends to the underworld. These places are not visible or easily identifiable by day, and open up only at the times of sleep (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: C1a, 2 84). The passages are entrances to hell, - in particular, the hell of commodification and fetish. This is the ultimate trespassing and the ultimate boundary to cross. The arcades serve as passages between the inside and outside, consciousness and space, and, most importantly, reality and myth, thus creating a labyrinth, the limits of which cannot be captured within just one of these dimensions. This space cannot hold the flâneur for a long time, for it is too ephemeral:

> Having become the topos of commercial intoxication, commodity fetishism, for the first time, the arcades indicate that the real dream of a bourgeois society is illusion, a flexible […] myth, the ephemeral [..]. This allows us to enter it only for a short period of time; it was constructed as a passage from one everyday experience into the other; a passage through the space of phantasmagoria and a dream-like state. (Yermolenko 33)

The flâneur does not only wander in this space, seeking awakening; he also helps construct it as a labyrinth. The flâneur is, simultaneously, a consumer who does not buy anything, a detective and an Ur-intellectual trying to uncover the myth under the new developments of the city, and a stroller whose aim is to postpone arrival. His journeys take place inside and outside, often confused; or in his mind and in the physical space; but his most dangerous trip is that to the underworld of myths, merged with the phantasmagoria of the dreaming collective and infused with fetishized commodities.

The Schulzian Flâneur

Writing about Schulzian city, Jerzy Jarzębski points out that it is "organiczna całość insniejąca obiektywnie, łącznik niebios z ziemią, miara porządku i kosmiczny zegar, w którym odbija się cykl sloneczny" ("an organic wholeness that exists objectively, that which unites heavens with earth, the measure of order and a cosmic clock that reflects the solar cycle") (*Prowincja Centrum* 103). City is not just an organizing image of Schulz's prose, but its very ontology.

This is the space where the flâneur lives and walks. Tracing the Schulzian flâneur's routes, it becomes evident that he is crossing the above-defined boundaries: the interior/exterior, the psyche/physical space, and the reality/myth ones. In particular, the story "Cinnamon Shops" features the protagonist feeling lost as to where he is located: inside the building or outside, in the street. The young protagonist, after wandering around the night town, accidentally finds himself in the wing of the house belonging to the headmaster of the school. Looking for an exit, the boy finds an "arcade," and a glass door from the living room "leading to the terrace" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 94). While trying to exit, he realizes that "the living room did not have a front wall. It was a kind of a large loggia, connected by a few steps with a city square, an enclosed part of the square, because some of the garden furniture stood directly on the pavement" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 95). In the dream-like sequence of wandering, the interior and the exterior lose firm boundaries.

The boundary between the city and human psyche is also transcended. Jerzy Jarzębski emphasizes that the house is an intermediary image, a metaphor that stands both for a city and a human being, connecting them in a sort of a mathematical formula: the city as a house and the human being as a house means the city equals the human being:

Miasto jako całość przemienia się we snie w dom. Dom w ogóle – w zgodzie z weilu mitologicznymi zrodłami – jest obrazem czlowieka, zarówno jego fizyczności, jak psychiki […]. A zatem oniryczny obraz domu to obraz, w którym nakladają się na siebie symboliczne jakości. (Jarzębski, *Prowincja Centrum* 98)

City as wholeness turns into a house in dreams. The house in general – in accordance with many mythological sources – is the image of a human being, both in terms of physicality and psyche […]. Also, in the oneiric image of the house features symbolic qualities that superimpose each other. *(ol)*

One of the most prominent images of the house in Schulz is depicted in the story "Eddie:"

Zaledwie kończą się czynności dnia i mózg spracowany chciałby usnąć i zapomnieć, zaczyna się ta bezwładna krzątanina, ten splątany, ogromny rozgardiasz nocy lipcowej. Wszystkie mieszkania domu, wszystkie pokoje i alkierze pełne są wówczas gwaru, wędrówki, wchodzenia i wychodzenia. We wszystkich oknach stoją lampy stołowe z umbrami, nawet korytarze są jasno oświetlone i drzwi zamykają się i otwierają bez ustanku. Jedna wielka, bezładna, na wpół ironiczna rozmowa plącze się i gałęzi wśród ciągłych nieporozumień przez wszystkie komory tego ula. Na piętrze nie wiedzą dokładnie, o co chodzi tym z parteru, posyłają posłańców z pilnymi instrukcjami. Lecą kurierzy przez wszystkie mieszkania, schodami do góry, schodami na dół, zapominają

> po drodze instrukcji, odwoływani wciąż z powrotem po nowe zlecenia.. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 318)
>
> Once the activities of the day have finished and the tired brains long for sleep, the confused to-ing and fro-ing, the enormous tangled hubbub of a July night begins. All the apartments of the house, all rooms and alcoves are full of noise, of wanderings, enterings and leavings. In all windows lamps with milky shades can be seen, even passages are brightly lit and doors never stop being opened and closed. A great, disorderly, half-ironical conversation is conducted with constant misunderstandings in all the chambers of the human hive. On the second floor people misunderstand what those from the first floor have said and send emissaries with urgent instructions. Couriers run through all the apartments, upstairs and downstairs, forget their instructions on their way and are repeatedly called back. (Schulz, *The Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 153)

This passage sounds almost Buddhist in that it described the life of the "mind," never quiet, constantly talking and contradicting itself, and overall being in the state of turmoil. The "mind," or, speaking more generally, the human psyche, is a complex entity for which Schulz so aptly finds the metaphor of a house. The contradictions and opposing desires that populate a human being are depicted as living quarters and couriers running back and forth, unsuccessfully trying to connect the "apartments," or areas of human life or psychic activity, isolated and unknown to the other areas. The house is so big that it resembles a castle, in Kafkaesque sense, meaning that it is a city in miniature.

Another example of a human being becoming - or comprising – the city can be found in the story "Spring." A spring evening in the park is characterized by a certain magic that allows us to see the real nature of people, things and events:

> A dziewczętom pogłębiają się oczy, otwierają się w nich jakieś głębokie ogrody rozgałęzione alejami, labirynty parków ciemne i szumiące. Źrenice ich rozszerzają się odświętnym blaskiem, otwierają się bez oporu i wpuszczają tych zdobywców w szpalery swych ciemnych ogrodów, rozchodzących się ścieżkami wielokrotnie i symetrycznie jak strofy kancony […]. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 183)
>
> The girls' eyes sink deeper and reveal dark labyrinthine pools. Their pupils distend, open without resistance, and admit those conquerors who stare into their opaque darkness. (Schulz, *The Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 41) [the girls' pupils become larger, open without resistance and let the intruders in onto the alleys of their dark gardens that spread around symmetrically like the stanzas of the canzonas.][1]

Jerzy Jarzębski observes that space in Schulz becomes labyrinthine only when connections between people weaken (*Prowincja Centrum* 97). Wandering is a symbol of a life path, and this path is often lonely, if not to say exilic (96). The flâneur exhausts the possibilities of the world of the interior that offers him little comfort, or that of the exterior that lets him feel lost and yet not to escape his mundane existence altogether. His city and his psyche become merged, but that only means that even his dreams torture him, like in "Eddie," where the house,

[1] The second part of the quote is translated by me (*ol*), as the English translation by Celina Wieniewska omits several sentences.

though asleep, is not asleep, and mimics the life of the town even at night. The flâneur, the wanderer, drifts farther and farther away from the world of the familiar and his own family. Thus, he crosses the final boundary, only to find himself in the world of the myth.

In "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass," Joseph, the protagonist, descends into a limbo or hell, - most likely, the very one that Walter Benjamin mentions in *The Arcades Project*:

> Our waking existence likewise is a land which, at certain hidden points, leads down into the underworld – a land full of inconspicuous places from which dreams arise. All day long, suspecting nothing, we pass them by, but no sooner has sleep come than we are eagerly groping our way back to lose ourselves in the dark corridors. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: C1a, 2 84)

The underworld, in Schulz's story "Spring," literally begins immediately after the description of the girls' widened eyes that comprise parts of the city, - in the next subchapter, XVII. Schulz asks: "What is a spring dusk?" – and answers the question with a prolonged depiction of the underworld, also referred to as "Acheron" and "Orcus." This space, Schulz says, opens at the end of the road and at the "end of words" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 41), which, like the flâneur, "become confused, meandering, and raving" (ibid.). "The power of our magic has failed and the dark element that cannot be embraced is roaring somewhere beyond it. Words are split into their components and dissolved, they return to their etymology, re-enter their depths and distant obscure roots." (41-42). The underworld begins where the word falls apart; it is the place where the word originates, and yet the word

forcibly transforms upon touching its depths. Underworld is where the stories originate: “When under the turf a great many old tales and ancient sagas have been collected,” they grow through the roots of the trees, - the roots that begin in the underworld, or in underground.

However, though this space is called “Orcus” and “Acheron,” it does not impress the reader as ominous or irreparably sad. On the contrary, Schulz emphasized that even its very darkness is not constant, and is soon replaced by light: “It is not quite as dark here as we thought. […] The interior is pulsating with lights. It is, of course, he internal light of roots, wandering phosphorescence, tiny veins of light marbling the darkness, an evanescent shimmer of nightmarish substances” (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 42). This underworld is not threatening; instead, it is a repository of inspiration. It is a columbarium and a graveyard, but of the kind that produces new life, and not simply decays or disappears. In fact, all the “mummies” and “empty cocoons” might have already “come alive” and are cured of death. The underworld is “the great breeding grounds of history, factories of plots, hazy smoking rooms of fables and tales” (43).

In this underworld, the flâneur ends, just like anything and anybody else. This is the kingdom of the Great Mother, the chthonic beginning that lives outside of the realm of words. It “breeds” stories, but itself cannot participate in storytelling, the very foundation of the world. It has no negative aspect: the transformations this underworld is responsible for are creative, not destructive. In other words, it can hardly be called “hell,” because the underworld is not necessarily hell.

And yet the Schulzian world does feature hell, and this is where the flâneur is headed.

The Galician Train

As Jerzy Jarzębski contends, the city in the works of Polish modernists, such as, for example, Władysław Reymont or Wacław Berent, is usually depicted as a "terrifying moloch" (*Prowincja Centrum* 105). Perhaps, Schulzian city does not quite resemble a moloch, but it is not an idealized space, either:

> Miasto jako idealna miara przestrzeni i czasu, jako obraz jednocsesnie wnętrza ludskiego i kosmicznego porządku, jako teren aktywności czlowieka-budowniczego i jego najdoskonalszy twźr – takie miasto nie pojawia się u Schulza nigdy w postaci nieruchomej, zastyglej na wieczność struktury. (*Prowincja Centrum* 107)
>
> A city as an ideal measure of space and time, and the image of - simultaneously – the human and the cosmic interior, as a realm of activity of a human being as a creator and as this human being's perfect creation – such city does not make an appearance in Schulz in any fixed form, as an eternally stable structure. *(ol)*

Schulz, instead, avoids the extremes: his city is neither "totally good" nor "totally bad." He offers the reader a set of ambiguities as characteristic features of the city in question. His city is definitely the "city in flux," to use Pike's terminology; but it is never a perfection or an abomination. However, there is an image that Schulz clearly positions as ominous, and that is the image of the train.

The train makes a prominent appearance in the story "The Street of Crocodiles." Bruno Schulz constantly underscores the ambiguous nature of this district, which, on the one hand, wishes to pass for ultra-modern, and on the other, is utterly provincial and backward. First of

all, the street is "as broad as a city boulevard, but he roadway is made, like village squares, of beaten clay, full of puddles and overgrown with grass" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 105). The district even has trams, the embodied "ambition of the city councilors." The trams, however, are made of "papier-mâché with warped sides dented from the misuse of many years" (106). In addition to looking rather unreliable, the trams are pushed around by a special team of workers. These facts (the overgrown road instead of a real boulevard and the trams that are not exactly technologically advanced) prove that the Street of Crocodile, despite its global ambition, is not quite the megapolis it aspires to be.

Nevertheless, it still features the train. Bruno Schulz specifically notes that "the strangest thing of all is, however, the railway system in the Street of Crocodiles." There is no railway station, and the street serves as one. The people wait for the train, "a black, silent bunch alongside the barely visible lines of the track, their faces in profile: a row of pale cut-out paper figures" (107). The street is an imitation, and so are those who populate it: two-dimensional, paper-like. The train resembles a "snake." It enters the "corridor" composed of those who wait:

> Wjechał w ten czarny szpaler i ulica staje się ciemna od tego ciągu wozów, siejących pył węglowy. Ciemne sapanie parowozu i powiew dziwnej powagi, pełnej smutku, tłumiony pośpiech i zdenerwowanie zamieniają ulicę na chwilę w halę dworca kolejowego w szybko zapadającym zmierzchu zimowym. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium Pod Klepsydra, Kometa* 108)
>
> […] enters the black corridor, and the street darkens from the coal dust scattered by the line of carriages. The heavy breathing of the engine and the wave of a strange sad seriousness, the suppressed hurry and excitement transform the street for a moment into

the hall of a railway station in the quickly falling winter dusk. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 107)

The street is "reduced for a moment to form an improvised station filled with gloom and the breath of distant travel" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 107-8). The train does not bring the anticipation of a joyous travel; instead, it brings around "sadness" and "seriousness." Those who wish to ride it are filled with "excitement," and yet Schulz also describes them as a rather mournful procession, a "black corridor," " a black silent bunch," "pale cut-out paper figures." It is evident that the train is not depicted as a positive force.

Just as the train transforms the people into a mass in waiting, it also transforms the street into a "railway station," one of the "dream houses of the collective," among which Walter Benjamin names "arcades, winter gardens, panoramas, factories, wax museum, casinos, railroad stations" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: L1, 3 405). The "collective" in question is the dreaming collective, or a state of sleep that makes its unaware participants express their feelings "in code through the dream-language of fashion, advertising, and architecture" (Bolz and Van Reijen 46). The Street of Crocodiles is already a home to the dreaming collective, producing a number of images of itself as a "Klondike" and a "corrupt megapolis" which are not true, because the town Schulz describes is but an imitation of such entities. The Street of Crocodiles' sad fate is to be an imitation of a dream, which is also, in some ways, an imitation – of a state of matters that exist only in a dream.

In her article, Theodosia Robertson analyzes the train as a disturbing, anxiety-producing image. Overall, she observes, Schulz prefers to have his characters walk rather than ride. These walks are meaningful, as they often are metaphoric expressions of personal relationships

(Robertson 222). At times, the characters ride on bicycles; but whenever we see the train, this highest form of mechanically enhanced movement of the 19th century, "ton wypowiedzi narratorskiej zmienia się na nieokreslony łub zaprawiony smutkiem" ("the tone of the narration becomes vague or sad") (Robertson 223). Theodosia Robertson underscores that the train can be a marker of anxiety, as it is manifested in the scene in "The Street of Crocodiles;" a philosophical metaphor of time, as in "Genialna Epoka;" or the only means of transportation to reach the sanatorium for the semi-dead in which Joseph's father lives. Robertson compares two trips: the happy one undertaken by the still-nameless protagonist, a child, in "Cinnamon Shops" (on foot) and the not-so-happy one undertaken by Joseph in "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" (by train).

To understand the origins of such an attitude towards the train, Theodosia Robertson turns to historical reality. The railroad is a phenomenon that is met with ambivalence, at best, because it brought new industries to the provincial Galicia. Therefore, the train is, on the one hand, a marker of changes and progress, and on the other, it is not a positive symbol (227). No wonder that Schulz's narrator associates the railway with his family's financial demise: the prices were cheaper in the streets closer to railway, which was near the Street of Crocodiles, and allowed the merchants to bring in goods quicker and in larger quantities. The old-fashioned merchants could not compete, as they had to hire transportation (229). The demise of the Jewish small merchants in 1900-1914 started with the emergence of the railway. It may seem that in Schulzian prose, the train simply fits the new order of things, adding to the sleepiness; that the train does not bring any awareness or awakening to this sleeping realm, fitting into the atmosphere of the dreaming collective and the ruling phantasmagoria, which it reinforces.

However, I argue that the train as a dialectical image is the moment of awakening and an ultimate momentary paralysis, if not a discursive dismantling, of the dreaming collective.

Hades as Sanatorium, Sanatorium as Hades

The story "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" opens with protagonist, Joseph, on his way to visit his father at the sanatorium for the partially dead, taking the train; it is old and not particularly comfortable. The stations that this train passes are empty. It is significant that this train, seemingly, is much less energetic than the one that arrives at the middle of the Street of Crocodiles; this one's "breathing" is not "heavy." Instead, it moves "without a whistle, without a groan," "as if lost in meditation" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 112). The train is out of breath, and consequently, out of life. Its quietness and lack of vigor foreshadow the deathly atmosphere of the sanatorium: "The train was coming slowly to a halt, without puffing, without rattling, as if, together with the last breath of steam, life were slowly escaping from it" (113). Joseph arrives straight in hell: he meets the train conductor – Charon; a mythological figure, Dr. Gotard, who is Hades himself, the ruler of this sad town; the (human) dog, who is an obvious allusion to Cerberus; and the souls that are shadow-like (the sleepy "patients" of the Sanatorium). It might seem that this mythological, and rather typical, hell is the only one there is in Schulzian universe; and yet, with a Benjaminian analysis, it is possible to expand this vision and to observe hell not only as a mythological domain, but as a Hell of modernity, in the Benjaminian sense.

When Joseph arrives at the sanatorium, he is met with a lifelessness that matches that of the train: "Everything was empty and still" (113). Everybody in this place is either asleep or sleepy: "No one is very particular when it comes to sleep. At any place, at any time, one is

ready for a quiet snooze: with one's head propped on a restaurant table, in a horse-drawn cab, even standing up…" (125). The partially dead enjoy a certain temporary extension of life, but, according to the deal, their energy level is very low, and they wake up only occasionally. As Dr. Gotard, the main caretaker, tells Joseph, "[…] From the point of view of you home, from the perspective of your own country, your father is dead. This cannot be entirely remedied" (116). He continues explaining:

> Cały trick polega na tym […] że cofnęliśmy czas. Spóźniamy się tu z czasem o pewien interwał, którego wielkości niepodobna określić. Rzecz sprowadza się do prostego relatywizmu. Tu po prostu jeszcze śmierć ojca nie doszła do skutku, ta śmierć, która go w pańskiej ojczyźnie już dosięgła. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 275)
>
> The whole secret of the operation […] is that we have put back the clock. Here we are always late by a certain interval of time of which we cannot define the length. The whole thing is a matter of simple relativity. Here your father's death, the death that has already struck him in your country, has not occurred yet. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 117)

The flâneur here, in addition to crossing the boundaries between interior and exterior, space and mind, and reality and myth, is also crossing the one between the past and the present. Time in the town where he finds himself works in mysterious ways.

Joseph spends a good deal of his time wandering around the city, as his father mostly sleeps and cannot keep him company. "Time," however, is an entity that resists separation from

space in the sanatorium and the town that surrounds it. Joseph, as a flâneur, roams around time just as much he roams around space: "Whole chunks of time are casually lost somewhere; control over the continuity of the day is loosened until it finally ceases to matter; and the framework of uninterrupted chronology that one has been disciplined to notice every day is given up without regret" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 125). Sleeping and time lapses that happen as a result constitute important parts of the labyrinth of the town, which, in a way, mirrors the town Joseph and his father are from:

> O jakiejś porze dnia i nocy – ledwo widoczna niuansa nieba odróżnia te pory – budzę się przy balustradzie mostku prowadzącego do Sanatorium. Jest zmierzch. Musiałem, zmorzony sennością, długo bezwiednie wędrować po mieście, nim dowlokłem się, śmiertelnie zmęczony, do tego mostku. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 285)
>
> At a certain time of day or night […] I wake up at twilight at the railings of the footbridge leading to the Sanatorium. Overpowered by sleep, I must have wandered unconsciously for a long time all over he town before, mortally tired, I dragged myself to the bridge. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 125)

At the bridge Joseph is met by Dr. Gotard (or not; he cannot remember) and brought back to the Sanatorium (or not; he wakes up in his bed without any recollection of ever having left it).

Joseph takes strolls every day, but his outings are just as devoid of vigor and energy as the whole town. The town's streets are similar to the streets of the "real" town, the one Joseph left; they even feature restaurants, coffee shops and stores, but they are usually, with few

notable exceptions, empty, sleepy, and not at all thriving. When he finishes his meal, there usually is nobody to pay the money to. He as a flâneur visits the shops, but the commercial activity in them is so tenuous that he can hardly be a "commodity," in the Benjaminian sense. Joseph's father opened a store, too, but it is half-empty and not quite yet functioning. There are, seemingly, no commodities for this sleepy flâneur to empathize with; however, the father's store is the place where Joseph, unexpectedly, receives what he thinks is a pornographic book he ordered earlier – by mail. He is surprised that the book found him so quickly and was forwarded to his new address, which is not at all an address, since Sanatorium and its host town do not quite exist.

The object is not a book but, surprisingly, a folding telescope which, when assembled, becomes so big that it almost fills the room. Schulz describes it as "a labyrinth of black chambers, a long complex of camera obscuras, one within another" (*Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 124). This object also reminds "a long-bodied model automobile made of patent leather, a theatrical prop, its lightweight paper and stiff canvas imitating the bulkiness of reality." This object is a fine example of Schulz's humor, but its meaning is not exhausted by being thoroughly hilarious. When Joseph looks into this machine (which still somehow manages to remain a telescope, while being an oneiric automobile), he sees the Sanatorium and the maid who is walking along its corridor, and watches her for a while, as he is obviously erotically invested. After this séance of voyeurism, the machine becomes a sort of a vehicle: "Like a large black caterpillar, the telescope crept in the lighted shop - an enormous paper anthropod with two imitation headlights on the front" (124). The "paper dragon" makes an "outrageous exit," puzzling the customers.

"Trade and traffic," writes Benjamin, "are the two components of the street." However, in the arcade the traffic has died. The arcades are streets of "lascivious commerce only." The arcade is "wholly adapted to arousing desires." Benjamin continues: "Because in this streets the juices slow to a standstill, the commodity proliferates along the margins and enters into fantastic combinations, like the tissue in tumors. – The flâneur sabotages the traffic. Moreover, he is no buyer. He is merchandise" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: A3a, 7). The streets in the town with the adjacent Sanatorium are empty and devoid of traffic, and the stores are half-populated.

However, this does not mean that there are no commodities and no flâneurs. Joseph obviously finds a way to be a flâneur, and he managed to acquire a commodity, delivered to him by mail. This commodity is, literally, a fetish: a pornographic book, an object of desire, an alluring force. But the commodity fails the buyer (as it should, for it is but an illusion), and turns into something else – the telescope. Nevertheless, the telescope, in some ways, performs the same function as the book: it helps visualize the desire, in this case showing to Joseph the maid, and perpetuates the "dreaming collective" as the state of hallucinatory illusion.

The commodity "enters into fantastic combinations" with its parts and other commodities and aspects of reality; it changes shape and appearance, and yet remains the same in its essence: that which promises but cannot deliver. Joseph exits the shop inside the telescope, which now runs like an automobile, accompanied by surprised and perhaps offended whisper of the customers. The flâneur, whom the traffic supposedly did in, now becomes not only the merchandise but also the traffic, which "did him in" and which he now, in his turn, "is doing in," that is, exploiting. The automobile looks vaguely like the train, too; moreover, it

looks so confusing that it obviously not just disconcert but scare the people that gathered in the store and that are forced to watch Joseph's somewhat scandalous exit.

The Fear of the Modern

When Baron Le Haussmann considers "new arteries" of broad streets that "would link the center of Paris with the railroad stations, reducing congestion in the latter," he does that not only with the goals of power and control in mind, to ensure the unobstructed arrival of the armed forces in the case of insurgency, but also, presumably, for "battling against poverty and revolution" and for "the influx of better air" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: E3a, 3 128). Le Baron's goals, however, though dissimilar, share a profoundly utilitarian dimension: to provide practical conveniences, or, simply put, to serve the life of the community, or a panoptikon it has become, with some of the citizens watching and ruling the others.

Yet, no matter how one chooses evaluate Le Baron's intentions in terms of class struggle and the Marxist perspective, the railroad stations and technological progress they represent is not something always perceived positively. Walter Benjamin points out that the psyche of a modern person has not truly embraced technology and is in deep fear of it, no matter the fascination. Writes Benjamin: "The fantasies of the decline of Paris are a symptom of the fact that technology was not accepted. These visions bespeak the gloomy awareness that along with the great cities have evolved the means to raze them to the ground" (Benjamon, *The Arcades Project:* C7a, 4 97) This is easy to testify to, living in the 21st century: the falling skyscrapers were a nightmare from films (and the dreaming collective that often informs cinema) long before they became the nightmare of real life. In Benjamin's terms, Charon was

"ruined by the installation of a wire footbridge over the Styx" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: F2, 3 153).

Eventually, Joseph, Schulzian protagonist of "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" leaves town; this turns out to be a complicated task, at best: he is forced to run away from Cerberus, a man who is also a dog (or a dog who is a man), and to board the the train in secret, without saying goodbye to his father and Dr. Gotard. What is worse, the terrified Joseph, not knowing how to get rid of Cerberus, brings him to Jacob's room, and leaves the monster there while Jacob is away, for the two to imminently meet. Joseph boards the train, but the train never arrives anywhere:

> Od tego czasu jadę, jadę wciąż, zadomowiłem się niejako na kolei i tolerują mnie tam, wałęsającego się z wagonu do wagonu. Ogromne jak pokoje, wozy pełne są śmiecia i słomy, przeciągi przewiercają je na wskroś w szare bezbarwne dni. Moje ubranie podarło się, postrzępiło. Podarowano mi znoszony mundur kolejarza. Twarz mam obwiązaną brudną szmatą wskutek spuchniętego policzka. Siedzę w słomie i drzemię, a gdy jestem głodny, staję w korytarzu przed przedziałami drugiej klasy i śpiewam. I wrzucają mi drobne monety do mojej konduktorskiej czapki, do czarnej czapki kolejarza, z oddartym daszkiem. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 302)
>
> Since then, I have travelled continuously. I have made my home in that train, and everybody puts up with me as a wanderer from coach to coach. The compartments, enormous as rooms, are full of rubbish and straw, and cold drafts pierce them on gray, colorless days. My suit became torn and ragged. I have been given the shabby uniform

> of a railwayman. My face is bandaged with a dirty rag, because one of cheeks is swollen. I sit on the straw, dozing, and when hungry, I stand in the corridor outside a second-class compartment and sing. People throw small coins into my hat: a black railwayman's hat, its visor half torn away. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 140)

The visor we see his wearing is the same one Joseph, while riding the train to visit his father, sees on a strange man he does not recognize as himself or his Doppelgänger. He has been stuck in a time warp for quite a while, having become, in his turn, a Charon, a beggar who is collecting coins into his hat. He has "made his home" in he train, and is wandering around it as if it were a city locked into coaches.

One can read his being stuck in the gloomy kingdom of hell as the story of Persephone: it is possible that the decision to leave him forever on the premises of Hades has been made by the invisible authorities after he had partaken of the local food. In fact, this was not accomplished immediately: Joseph was not allowed to eat before he met with the ruler, or Dr. Gotard. While waiting for Dr. Gotard, Joseph is very tempted by the cookies in the empty cafeteria:

> Uczułem napływ niezwykłego łakomstwa. Zwłaszcza pewien gatunek kruchego ciasta z marmoladą jabłeczną napędzał mi do ust oskomę. Już chciałem podważyć jedno z tych ciast srebrną łopatką, gdy uczułem za sobą czyjąś obecność. Pokojówka weszła na cichych pantoflach i dotykała mi pleców palcami. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 272)

> I turned to the buffet and looked at the pastries and cake. They looked most appetizing. I wondered whether I should help myself; I suddenly felt extremely greedy. There was a particular kind of apple flan that made my mouth water. I was about to lift a piece of it with a silver knife when I felt somebody behind me. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 115)

Later, to satiate his hunger, he does find a coffee shop downtown, and dines on "excellent doughnuts" (122), and this might have been the beginning of his entrapment, of which he still knows nothing definitively, but which he intuitively senses: "Conditions in the Sanatorium are becoming daily more insufferable. It has to be admitted that we have fallen into a trap" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 130).

There is no exit from this particular trap. The train does not offer any deliverance. As a dialectical image, available for analysis, the train exists in the moment of rupture of times, or in the maelstrom of history, in the Now-time (*Jetztzeit*). Schulzian train goes both ways: into the future and into the past of mythology. On the one hand, it is a signal from the future and the curse of the present – a force ruinous to the small merchants, a black entity that divides the street into two, almost crashing into the crowd. It is a sign of progress that produces uneasiness, for the rational reason of destruction of the traditional old-style life and commerce, and for the irrational reason of fear of the new and the unknown. On the other hand, the train is itself a flâneur of sorts, in that it crosses boundaries between myth and reality.

The train is not quite the underground world; it unites the underground (Hades) and the "upper" world, but is rather "hell" than "underground." Schuzian underground, as I have already noted, is a fertile place whence the stories grow and where one can see the very roots of

existence. The train does not seem to reach any such roots. On the contrary, it is quite sterile. All it features is "rubbish and straw;" if when describing the "real" underground, Schulz uses the imagery from the organic world: the dead are compared to the "roots," and the darkness of the beginning of the world is a kind of a magical forest: "We are at the roots now, and at once everything becomes dark, spicy and tangled like in the depth of a forest. There is a smell of turf and a tree rot; roots wander about, entwined, full with juices that rise as if sucked up by pumps" (43). This underground produces, not kills. Yet, the train only features dead grass, "straw" – though, technically, it is also organic, it is obviously dead and unable to give birth to anything.

Schulz is, overall, not a great fan of time; he rather opts for timelessness. In the story "Spring," the protagonist is fascinated by the image of the ideal city that appears to him in timelessness. He stares at "[an] all-embracing mirror" that reflects the "ideal image of the city:"

> [I]dealny obraz miasta, fatamorganę przedłużoną w głąb jego świetlanej wklęsłości. Wtedy świat nieruchomiał na chwilę, stawał bez tchu, olśniony, chcąc wejść cały w ten złudny obraz, w tę prowizoryczną wieczność, którą mu otwierano. Ale szczęśliwa oferta mijała, wiatr łamał swe zwierciadło i czas brał nas znów w swe posiadanie…(Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 169)
>
> Fata Morgana magnified in the depth of its luminous concavity. Then the world stood motionless for a while, holding its breath, blinded, wanting to enter whole into that illusory picture […]. But the enticing offer passed, the wind broke its mirror, and Time took us into his possession once again. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 31)

However, time is less threatening then its constant repetition. The train is Hell because of the repetition of times. Looking at the train as at a dialectical image in the context of history is to see it in the Now-time, but taking it as a passenger means finding oneself the No-time of all the times happening at once. Schulzian flâneur is trapped in this artifact of modernity, the mechanical "flâneur" of the modern times, and also the hell of repetition. The train isolates the already defeated flâneur, whom "traffic did in" anyway: for example, the train at the Street of Crocodiles that brings in the new merchandise but also destroys the homes and the businesses of the old-style merchants. The train is a destructive force that is menace to the town, an intruder; but it is also a new holding environment, truly "from hell," that captures the town's wanderer, revolutionary, explorer and the courageous crosser of boundaries. Inside the train, there are no boundaries left for him to cross: technology took over, and now it is up to the technological devices and not humans to cross them. The flâneur is, from now on, redundant. He is locked away in an aspect of hell (repetitive time) and taken out of the city. The only labyrinth he has left to explore is, ironically, the inside of the train.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE GAZE OF THE FEMALE MOLOCH: THE MANNEQUIN

Schulz's Manneqins: Between Kabbalah and Irony

Bruno Schulz's cycle of short stories on mannequins ("Tailors' Dummies," "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, or The Second Book of Genesis," "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies: Continuation," and "Treatise on Tailor's Dummies: Conclusion") have been the focus of critical attention for decades. The stories are a puzzling combination of fantastical elements and philosophical extrapolations. The action is set in the household of Schulz's young protagonist, in the town where the family lives. The town is constantly immersed in sleep, amidst a seemingly interminable winter with "cold rooms," unmade beds and the city outside bleak, grey and "mournful" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 52). In this cycle, the father of the protagonist, Jacob (who is presumably insane), proposes a set of philosophical ideas regarding the nature of matter and the humankind of the new epoch soon to come. This humankind will be, supposedly, created according to the image of mannequins, or tailors' dummies. The father pontificates in front of a rather heterogeneous audience that consists of his son (the protagonist), two young seamstresses Polda and Pauline, and the maid Adela, - this latter, more of a strict cleaning lady than a sympathetic listener, being completely uninterested in his discourses, and quite antagonistic. It is unclear whether the mother of the protagonist and the wife of Jacob, is present. It is briefly mentioned that she was asleep (again) during at least one of Jacob's speeches, which is a fact quite in line with the sleepy atmosphere and which, to a degree, calls

into question the actual happenings: perhaps, they were only "seen" as dreams by the protagonist.

In the stories, Jacob, the father, muses about matter, humanity in general, and the creation of the world. The process of creation is not the privilege of the Demiurge alone, but of all spirits. Writes Schulz:

> [T]worzenie jest przywilejem wszystkich duchów. Materii dana jest nieskończona płodność, niewyczerpana moc życiowa i zarazem uwodna siła pokusy, która nas nęci do formowania. W głębi materii kształtują się niewyraźne uśmiechy, zawiązują się napięcia, zgęszczają się próby kształtów. Cała materia faluje od nieskończonych możliwości, które przez nią przechodzą mdłymi dreszczami […]Niema materii martwej […] martwota jest jedynie pozorem, za którym ukrywają się nieznane formy życia. Skala tych form jest nieskończona, a odcienie i niuanse niewyczerpane. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 65-66)
>
> Creation is the privilege of all spirits. Matter has been given infinite fertility, inexhaustible vitality, and, at the same time, a seductive power of temptation which invites us to create as well. In the depth of matter, indistinct smiles are shaped, tnesions build up, attempts at form appear. The whole of matter pulsate with infinite possibilities that send dull shivers through it […] There is no dead matter […] Lifelessness is only a disguise behind which hide unknown forms of life. The range of these forms is infinite and their shades and nuances limitless. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 59-60)

Włodzimierz Panas states that Schulz in his prose employs Kabbalistic teachings. The mannequin cycle proposes Schulz's philosophy, informed by Lurianic Kabbalah. Isaac Luria, a Palestinian mystic, in his works explains "the cosmic process from its absolute bginning to absolute end" (*Slownik Schulzcowski* 168). This is, as Panas argues, a reminiscence of the Kabbalistic view of the world. The world, according to Isaac Luria's theory of *cimcum*, is created out of light. Light is its basic substance. The world comes to existence from an explosion of the energy, amassed by God. *Szewirat ha-kelim*, another Luria's conception, is "the breaking of the vessels" (Panas 126). These vessels turned out to be unable to hold the substance of God's intentions and God's project. "The breaking of the 'vessels' of God's attributes scattered divine sparks in fragments throughout the material world" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 235). To restore harmony in the world, these vessels have to be collected and put together, and this is *tikkun*, or the salvation and the arrival of the Messiah. Panas points out that Schulz's prose contains the basic motives of Lurianic Kabbalah, such as creation of the world (*cimcum*), decline of the world, or the cosmic catastrophe (*szewirat ha-kelim*), and Messiah, or salvation (*tikkun*). The motive of creation of the world, as Panas contends, is quite evident in a number of Schulz's story (including the mannequin cycle), since the author is always preoccupied with cosmogony, the creation of the world and its wholeness.

Jerzy Jarzębski, on the contrary, postulates that in this particular cycle Schulz is expressing irony rather than serious ideas of creation. For him, the cycle contains "parody," but not necessarily in regard to the discourses that could or could not have informed the stories (i.e., Kabbalah etc.), but rather, generally, in regard to the genre of philosophical musings about the world, present in fiction: "nie ma u Schulza opisu objasniającego świat z pozycji 'eksperta' (*Prowincja Centrum* 37) ("There are no descriptions of the world from the point of view of an

'expert' in Schulz") In particular, Jarzębski draws the readers' attention to the fact that the father, Jacob, "carries […] the demonism of an experimenter of a rather old epoch," reminding us more of a researcher of nature in the style of Frankenstein than contemporary scholars, or "experts," – be it physics or philosophy (*Prowincja Centrum* 53). Such a person is hardly fit to bring his listeners an "expert" view of the world. When Jacob, the father, is referred to as a prophet, or a king, it is always, according to Jarzębski, meant ironically. For example, in the story "Birds" the father, supposedly, grows exotic birds, but in reality he is just collecting trash, and when Adela, the antagonistic maid, throws the trash away, Jacob comes downstairs "an exile king who lost his kingdom" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 50). It is obvious that the protagonist does not exactly believe in his father's "kingdom" seriously. Jacob is "building a Noah's arc" for birds, which is a Biblical allusion, but also sounds ironical, because the reality of the absence of "real" birds and the father's disease are all too evident. The presence of irony problematizes Włodrimierz Panas's claim that Schulz is writing, in an encoded way, a history of the creation of the world in Lurianic terms.

The ardent opponent of Panas's theory is also Michał Paweł Markowski, who in his book on modern Polish literature, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy*, contends that, though the cycle of stories "Treatise on the Tailors' Dummies" is among the most frequently interpreted Schulz's texts, most interpretations confine themselves to an approach that analyzes stories as direct manifestations of Schulz's philosophical or religious stand. According to Markowski, what the mannequin cycle primarily demonstrates is irony, and not Schulz's philosophical views: "Nie widziec […] ironii to nie rozumiec tego tekstu" (Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 212). To prove this, Markowski analyzes the language of the second story of the cycle, exposing connotations that

point at a direction very different from a serious religious discourse or zeal of a believer. For example, the father, Jacob, who expresses his views of the world and matter, does so, according to Markowski, only to attract attention of the young and reasonably attractive seamstresses, but not because he is truly thinking about the universe, - at least, not at that particular moment. In favor of this speaks Schulz's choice of words and expressions. Writes Schulz:

> Materii dana jest nieskończona płodność, niewyczerpana moc życiowa i zarazem uwodna siła pokusy, która nas nęci do formowania. W głębi materii kształtują się niewyraźne uśmiechy, zawiązują się napięcia, zgęszczają się próby kształtów. Cała materia faluje od nieskończonych możliwości, które przez nią przechodzą mdłymi dreszczami. Czekając na ożywcze tchnienie ducha, przelewa się ona w sobie bez końca, kusi tysiącem słodkich okrąglizn i miękkości, które z siebie w ślepych rojeniach wymajacza. Pozbawiona własnej inicjatywy, lubieżnie podatna, po kobiecemu plastyczna, uległa wobec wszystkich impulsów - stanowi ona teren wyjęty spod prawa, otwarty dla wszelkiego rodzaju szarlatanerii i dyletantyzmów, domenę wszelkich nadużyć i wątpliwych manipulacji demiurgicznych. Materia jest najbierniejszą i najbezbronniejszą istotą w kosmosie. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 65)
>
> Matter has been given *infinite fertility*, inexhaustible *vitality*, and, at the same time, a *seductive power of temptation* which invites us to create as well. In the depth of matter, *indistinct smiles* are shaped, tensions built up, attempts to form appear. The whole matter pulsates with *infinite possibilities* that send dull shivers through it…[…] It

> entices us with a thousand sweet, soft, round shapes which it blindly dreams up within itself. Deprived of all initiative, *indulgently acquiescent, pliable like a woman***,** *submissive* to every impulse…[…]. *Matter is the most passive and most defenseless essence in cosmos.* (qtd. in Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 213) [Italics Markowski's]

Michał Paweł Markowski points out that the language used in this excerpt is visibly eroticized. The choice of expressions like "infinite fertility," "pliable like a woman," "submissive," "seductive power of temptation," "vitality" indicate frustrated and neglected Jacob's rather immediate fascination with femininity rather than his desire to share his philosophical views. An old man who is trying to approach the girls in this way, talking his way towards them, is an expression of Schulz's irony, not philosophy or religion (Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 213).

Schulz's biographers stress that family relations and the disease of the father are obvious traumatic points in Schulz's life, reflected in his works. He is trying to reconcile his fascination with Jacob's, the father's, fantasy world, the value of which he, as a painter and writer in his own right, could not ignore, and the illness and gradual slide into madness of a close family member. Schulz is the writer of tensions and negotiations of tensions, and it is manifested in a number of the topics, family history and religious symbolisms being only two of them. He never offers total consistency, and his text is rich is innuendos.

Karen Underhill notes this lack of consistency in the realm of Schulz's religious thought. According to Underhill, Schulz is a Jewish thinker, and, though not a consistent or conscious Kabbalist, he is a writer whose work is nevertheless informed by the discourse of

messianism. She disagrees with Włodziemierz Panas's approach, according to which Schulz is consciously using Kabbalistic images in order to encode messages. She argues instead that Bruno Schulz's texts "preserve the dual poles of *irony* and *messianic poetics,* seeking an aesthetic mode in which the modern – present--world in ruins can still be the messianic world." (Underhill 11). In her dissertation, she researches the messianic message in Bruno Schulz and Walter Benjmain as a topos of tension, and concludes that both thinkers, who are Jewish and who are interested in Jewish messianic ideas, work towards "secularizing theology in order to save it," as Theodor Adorno puts it (Underhill 17).

In this light, Bruno Schulz's stories do contain traces of his views, but religious or philosophical ideas are not employed in order to encode a deliberate message because Schulz would not see the need in it. There are political reasons for this kind of a choice, too. If for German Jews the figure of Martin Buber who reintroduced Kabbalah - and Kabbalah itself - was revolutionary, and therefore deliberately integrated into texts, for Schulz it was not, as he belonged to Galician Jewry among whom Hasidism was not exotic and well-known for a long time before Buber. For Schulz, it is his natural environment, his germane epistemology, but not an aspiration. He is not prompted to further or advertise it. Rather, it is the material with which he is so comfortable that he can even afford to take it more playfully (Underhill).

In the mannequin cycle, Jacob's musings about the Second Demiurgy present philosophical challenge. Writes Schulz:

> Zbyt długo żyliśmy pod terrorem niedościgłej doskonałości Demiurga — mówił mój ojciec — zbyt długo doskonałość tego tworu paraliżowała naszą własną twórczość. Nie chcemy z nim konkurować. Nie mamy ambicji mu dorównać. Chcemy być twórcami we

własnej, niższej sferze, pragniemy dla siebie twórczości, pragniemy rozkoszy twórczej, pragniemy — jednym słowem — demiurgii. […] Nie zależy nam — mówił on — na tworach o długim oddechu, na istotach na daleką metę. Nasze kreatury nie będą bohaterami romansów w wielu tomach. Ich role będą krótkie, lapidarne[13], ich charaktery — bez dalszych planów. Często dla jednego gestu, dla jednego słowa podejmujemy się trudu powołania ich do życia na tę jedną chwilę. Przyznajemy otwarcie: nie będziemy kładli nacisku na trwałość ani solidność wykonania, twory nasze będą jak gdyby prowizoryczne, na jeden raz zrobione. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 66-67)

We have lived too long under the terror of the matchless perfection of the Demiurge. […]For too long, the perfection of his creation has paralyzed our own creative impulse. We don't wish to compete with him. We have no ambition to emulate him. We wish to be creators in our own, lower sphere; we want to have the privilege of creation, we want creative delights, we want – in one word – Demiurgy. […]We are not concerned […] with long-winded creations, with long-term beings. Our creatures will not be heroes of romances in many volumes. Their roles will be short, concise; their characters – without a background. Sometimes, for one gesture, for one word alone we shall make the effort to bring them to life. We openly admit: we shall not insist either on durability or solidity of workmanship; our creations will be temporary, to serve for a single occasion. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 60-61)

These creatures will be made of cheap materials and sometimes will sport only one hand, or leg, or have a back made of canvas, resembling cheap theatre decorations. Jacob

proclaims that “chcemy stworzyć po raz wtóry czlowieka – na obraz i podobieństwo manekinu” (68) (“we wish to create a man a second time – in the shape and semblance of a tailor’s dummy” (62)). Jerzy Jarzębski points out that

> Czlowieka Schulzowskiego cechuje n i e p i e ł n o ś ć, n i e d o s t a t e c z n o ś ć. Chciałby poznać świat i tajemnicy Buty, podczas gdy skazany jest na krótkie życie w ograniczonej przestrzeni; chciałby nasladować Boga w kreacyjnym rozmachu, tym czasem tworzyć potrafi jedynie niedoskonale odbitki rzeczywistości istot uwięzionych w jednym gestie badz funkcji. (qtd. in Owczarski 37)
>
> A Schulzian human is characterized by i n c o m p l e t e n e s s, l a c k. He would like to learn [everything about] the world and the mysteries of Being, while doomed to a short life in a confined space’ he would like to imitate God in his creative range, but he can only create imperfect imitations of the reality of beings trapped in one function. *(ol)* [Justification Jarzębski’s]

A human being assumes the role of God but fails; mannequins seem to stand in the place of a human; they are imitations of humans, but are even more imperfect. Moreover, they are but fragments, made of *tandeta*.

Karen Underhill proposes a view of mannequins in the framework of both the Kabbalah doctrine and Benjamin’s view of allegory, which, to her, has traits of adapting some of the Kabbalistic ideas. For Karen Underhill, mannequins are shells, parts of broken vessels, broken Godhead. They are matter that has become “an empty cadaver, because it is fallen” (139). They have strong allegorical meaning. As Adam Lipszyc specifies, “alegorie, w których rzeczy

pozbawione są pozorów życia i ducha, pozostają formami pokracznymi, złamanymi: są ruinami" (Lipszyc, *Sprawedliwosc na koncu języka: Czytanie Waltera Benjamina* 207) ("allegories, in which objects appear devoid of presence of life and spirit, are odd forms, they are broken: they are ruins"). According to Benjamin, in the realm of thought allegory is what ruin is in the realm of objects. He links "allegorical image-fragment to the idea of an empty shell" (Underhill 143). "Das Bild im Feld der allegorischen Intuition ist Bruchstück, Rune. Seine symbolische Schöhnheit verflüchtigt sich, da das Licht der Gottesgelahrheit drauf trifft. Der falsche Schein der Totalität geht aus" (Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, 237) ("In the field of allegorical intuition the image is a fragment, a ruin. Its beauty as a symbol evaporates when the light of divine learning falls upon it. The false appearance of totality is extinguished" (Benjamin, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* 176)).

Schulzian mannequins, empty shells, fragments, ruins, cadavers that are not filled with anything, and are waiting for a storyteller to fill them in with words, in order to make them alive, to bestow them with breath.

The mannequins, or tailors' dummies in Schulz are, therefore, objects, - or, rather, creatures, - from the discourses of a madman who is, at the same time, the last Poet of the city (Poetry is inspiration, and the opposite of everyday routine). They are the creations of his mind, and are reported to the reader by the protagonist, who is torn between feeling pained and perhaps even traumatized by his father's illness, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, fascination by his speeches, which might secretly conform with Joseph's own views on Poetry and Prose. The ideas about creation of the world and empty shells (manifested by mannequins) may be present, in an abridged and transformed way, in the cycle, though hardly as a conscious encoding device.

In this chapter, I intend to read the mannequin as a dialectical image, in Benjamin's sense, and to discover what constellation they are part of. The Kabbalistic interpretation of a mannequin as a shell (of a human) can and should be completed by an interpretation that is based more on the problems of social reality as described by Walter Benjamin; the problems of the modern world subject to urban phantasmagoria and the dreaming collective. Mannequins directly relate to fashion, and, as such, could be traced to the general idea of what I am tempted to call "femininity on the streets:" unlike the flâneur, who is a buyer and a commodity, the woman on the street is most definitely conceptualized more as a commodity, or, speaking broader, a prostitute, one of the Ur-forms of urban life, according to Benjamin.

Benjamin points out that "during the nineteenth century women were for the first time used in large numbers in the production process outside the home." He is talking about their employment in factories, first and foremost. This meant that "[…] masculine traits were bound to appear in these women eventually. These were caused, in particular, by the distorting influence of factory work. Higher forms of production, as well as political struggle per se, fostered masculine characteristics of a more refined nature." As Esther Leslie contends, "In Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, as in Marx, women are shown within commodity relations. The effects are multiple; providing the basis for a radical transformation of family relations, as well as an involvement in an absolute and deathly exploitation" (100). Leslie calls this phenomenon "women in crisis:" though visible, they immediately become objectified, to a large degree by themselves.

Benjamin argues that a Parisienne's beauty has an origin – her own gaze: "Before any man catches sight of her, she already sees herself ten times reflected" (qtd. in Leslie 101) – in the mirrors and windows of the shops, in the very phantasmagoric spectacle of the big city. The

gaze that pursues the woman is in this situation not only the gaze of patriarchy, but her own gaze, reflected back at her by the surfaces of the capitalist living. Capitalism itself turns her into an object; the windows reflect her, while the shops propose the correct kinds of clothing to look desirable, attractive and, ultimately, modern, turning her into a kind of a mannequin herself. However, Benjamin adds that fashion, "whilst locking the mannequin into the endlessness of modish consumption, also provides an escape route out of nature's despotic control" (Leslie 101). Benjamin makes a connection between these discourses and that of Calire Demar, a French feminist of the nineteenth century, who wrote a manifesto he quotes:

> No more motherhood! No more law of the blood! I say: no more motherhood. And, in fact, the woman emancipated… from the man, who then no longer pays her the price of her body, … will owe her existence… to her work alone. […] You want to *emancipate* the woman? Well, then, take the newborn child from the breast of the *blood-mother* and give it into the arms of the *social-mother*, a *nurse* employed by the state, and the child will be better raised…. Then, and then only will man, woman and the child be freed from the law of blood, from the exploitation of humanity by humanity. (Leslie 101)

However, this hope of liberation from the "laws of nature" and the structure of kinship, which could be an oppressive force but hardly more so than capitalism, seems, perhaps, no less utopian than the old model of patriarchal bliss, with strictly defined gender roles. A woman on the streets and the mannequin she turns into present the interpreter with a drama rather than a happy ending. The analysis of Schulzian mannequins can help uncover these mechanisms of social transformations.

Fashion as Madam Death

The term "modernity" was coined by Charles Baudelaire and used in his essay "A Painter of Modern Life." In a way, modernity itself begins with Charles Baudelaire, the author of *Fleurs du Mal*, dealing, among other things, with the condition of urban life as it became in the times of modernization. Baudelaire famously writes: "La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable. […] Cet élément transitoire, fugitif, dont les métamorphoses sont si fréquentes, vous n'avez pas le droit de le mépriser ou de vous en passer" (Baudelaire). ("Modernity is the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art, of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable. […] This transitory, fugitive element, whose metamorphoses are so rapid, must on no account be despised or dispensed with" (Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* 13)).

Though for Baudelaire modernity is mostly an artistic concept, denoting the new aesthetics, the interpretations of the term go far beyond the problems of art. The one most relevant to the current project is Baudelaire's take on the question of time(s). As Matei Calinescu observes, Baudelaire's notion of modernity "embodies the paradoxes of time awareness" that are "strikingly new" in that modernity is not viewed any more as a segment of time but as a connection of times (Calinescu 49). The ancient and the modern are not opposed to one another any more. Though Baudelaire at times uses the term "modern" in a pejorative sense, he mostly means it positively, praising the cult of artificiality that characterizes it.

Past and present in Baudelaire's definition form a unique relationship. In particular, Walter Benjamin disagreed with those who tended to see past and present simply fused in Baudelaire (qtd. in Buck Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 177). To Benjamin, the connection between the past and the present is so strong that it is rather a superimposition than a mere

linking. As Svetlana Boym contends, "in his [Benjamin's] view, every epoch dreams the next one and in doing so revises the one before it. Present "awakens" from the dreams of the past but remains "swollen" by them. Swelling, awakening, constellation – are Benjaminian images of the interrelated times" (Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* 27-28).

To describe the modern times, Walter Benjamin uses the term "Hell." This Hell is not a reference to the demonic, but to the concept of "superimposition of times" (Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* 27) - the past, the future and the present. To him, each epoch dreams the next one and revises it. The past and the present do not exist separately any longer, but inform one another creating wish-images. In Benjamin's own words, modernity as Hell

> deals not with the fact that "always the same thing" happens (*a forteriori* this is not about eternal recurrence) but the fact that on the face of that oversized head called earth precisely what is newest doesn't change; that this "newest" in all its pieces keeps remaining the same. It constitutes the eternity of Hell and its sadistic craving for innovation. To determine the totality of features in which this "modernity" imprints itself would mean to represent Hell. (Benjamin, qtd. in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 97)

> The "modern," the time of hell. The punishments of hell are always the newest thing going in this domain. What is at issue is not that "the same thing happens over and over," and even less would it be a question here of eternal return. It is rather that precisely in that which is newest the face of the world never alters, that this newest

> remains, in every respect, the same. – This constitutes the eternity of hell. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* S1, 5 544)

Hell is constant search and craving for the "newest" of the society. In this Hell there cannot be "progress" because all the times exist simultaneously; by postulating the issue of time in this way, Benjamin shows that the question of progress is problematized: the innovation is not what logically follows older things and phenomena but that which exists constantly merely for the sake of existing; in other words, it is an innovation that does not produce anything, because its goal is not production but repetition. According to Jurgen Habermas, "…the secular concept of modernity expresses the conviction that the future has already begun: it is the epoch of that lives for the future, that opens itself up to the novelty of the future" (Habermas 5-6). However, it is unclear what the future is: perhaps, it is only the idea of the future but not any specific material embodiment of it. Innovation exists as energy, but it goes around in circles instead of applying itself to producing something truly new.

Fashion is one of its essential metaphors of modernity as Hell of constant innovation. Fashion occupies a special place in *The Arcades Project*. Fashion, for Benjamin, is an integral part of modernity and, therefore, capitalism. As Susan Buck-Morss states, Benjamin intended to write a longer and fuller treatise on the "metaphysics of fashion." Fashion, for him, is the modern "measure of time" as well as an embodiment of the "changed relationship between subject and object that resulted from the 'new' nature of commodity production" (Buck-Morrs, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 97). One of the essential characteristic features of fashion is that it inscribes a human being into the world of urban phantasmagoria, which is the result of the transformation of the cities after the idea of progress. The latter was supported by bourgeois

Enlightenment, which did away with the binary idea of "heavenly" and "earthly" cities" popular in the earlier epochs. All cities became "earthly," their comfort and attractiveness being now the task of the human beings populating them.

Moreover, this comfort and attractiveness also became accessible for the vast majority. What used to be the privilege of the few turned out to be the domain of the many. Susan Buck-Morrs mentions that already in the second half of the 19th century, "urban brilliance and luxury" became, for the first time in history, available to the masses (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 81). In his *Revolt of the Masses,* published in 1929, José Ortega y Gasset points out that "the life of the ordinary man is today made up of the same vital repertory which before characterized only the superior elite groups," thus confirming that the tendency indeed developed" (Chapter 2). Ortega y Gasset agrees that "the 19th Century was of its essence revolutionary" because it was the time when technology level grew in an unprecedented way, and this resulted in "a parallel economic improvement in society" (ibid.).

> Never in the course of history had man been placed in vital surroundings even remotely familiar to those set up by the conditions just mentioned. We are, in fact, confronted with a radical innovation in human destiny, implanted by the 19th Century. A new stage has been mounted for human existence, new both in the physical and the social aspects. Three principles have made possible this new world: liberal democracy, scientific experiment, and industrialism. The two latter may be summed up in one word: technicism. (Chapter 6)

Ortega y Gasset seems to diagnose the same transformations and their ramifications for the masses as does Benjamin. However, for the sake of fairness, it is important to note that, though Ortega y Gasset and Benjamin would agree with each other regarding the technological change that placed an average person in the position of social privilege, until then reserved for the rich, Ortega y Gasset's agenda is different from Benjamin's. Ortega y Gasset is not concerned with the details of the said transformations, and, in a way, with the actual process that leaves behind traces and fossils that are invaluable to a historian. He is more of a social thinker than an archeologist, and is much more concerned with the general panorama of fin-de-siècle and the following years, the threat of Fascism and Bolshevism and even Marxism, - the latter inspires no fascination in him. His writings exude anxiety, as he is troubled by the political climate and sees his epoch as a very disturbing time in history. Benjamin, on the other hand, does not believe in "periods of decline," and politics for him matters less than material culture the epoch has produced.

The changes that the epoch went through were most tangible in megapolises and capital cities. The visual effect, the result of these changes and their symbol at the same time, was especially prominent. Paris, the object of Benjamin's analysis, was referred to as the City of Light and the City of Mirrors, proposing to the viewer "a dream-like setting" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: T1, 3 562). Writes Benjamin: "Arcades radiated through the Paris of the Empire like fairy grottos" (*The Arcades Project*: T1a, 8 564). Mirrors, which were another attribute of Paris street life, brought "the open expanse, the streets, into the café," perfecting "the art of the dazzling illusion." Benjamin describes this effect as the "distant horizons bright as day" opening throughout the capital. The key word used by Benjamin is "illusion" (*The Arcades Project*: R1, 1 537). In Convolute R, "Mirrors," for example, Benjamin describes iron

beams and glass panes that, depending on the lighting, transformed into "Greek columns..[…] Egyptian pilasters," or simply street lamps, thus deceiving and dazzling the crowd (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: R1, 3 538). Everything in a big city became a spectacle, a performance, in short, "phantasmagoria" (Buck-Morss, The *Dialectics of Seeing* 81).

The city lights of Paris, its streets and lit shops decorated with mirrors can be regarded as the precursors of a "dream world" of consumerist phantasmagoria of the later times (*The Arcades Project* 14). The illusion of a visual nature is one of the most essential components in the realm of dreaming collective. It is only logical for fashion, an art of visual presentation of clothes, to be a matching metaphor to indicate this state and its ramifications.

For Benjamin, whose methodology was partly informed by Marxist theories of the time, fashion as one of the expressions of capitalism is infused with social contexts. For example, he notes that "fashion functions as camouflage for quite specific interests of the ruling classes," who, according to Benjamin, want no fundamental changes and yet crave change. Fashion satisfies this desire, providing the seeming innovation, and yet not going any further than changing appearances and discourses surround them. Benjamin, however, does admit that it was not only the ruling classes that dictated fashion: when fashion became an integral part of the life of the lower classes, and cotton entered the scene, "the plebeian character of attire" grew popular among all strata of the population. The "man of the masses," in Ortegian sense, received access to that which was not within his reach before, and began to be able not only to consume fashion and its production, but to dictate it, as well. Overall, Susan Buck-Morrs states that Benajmin's views on fashion were paradoxical in that, on the one hand, he saw fashion as a possible "predicative of positive change," and on the other, as "an explanation of why it has not" (Buck Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 98). Each of the social classes could propose new

trends, and none felt the necessity to rebel – changing fashion proved to be satisfactory. The desire for social change was satiated, or least, misplaced.

There are two important discourses that emerge, for Benjamin, in regard to fashion. One is the construction of a social body with the help of clothes, and the other is attack on a biological body, because fashion, according to Benjamin, is closely connected to death. These discourses constantly interpenetrate and inform one another. Fashion obviously has social connotations in that its task is "to tell classes apart" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B6, B6a, 1 75). And yet, as it was mentioned above, Benjamin is aware of the fact that fashion changes and is at times dictates by the fabrics popular with lower classes. The relationship of fashion and death, or the world of the inorganic, is more complex. Fashion, according to Benjamin, is that which helps the social body to deny its biological origin.

> Every fashion to some extent a bitter satire on love; in every fashion, perversities are suggested by the most ruthless means. Every fashion stands in opposition to the organic. Every fashion couples the living body to the inorganic world. To the living, fashion defends the rights of the corps. The fetishism that succumbs to the sex appeal of the inorganic is its vital nerve. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B9, 1 79)

It seems that the term "inorganic" does not necessarily refer to the actual inanimate objects, but to any object that transformed into commodity. Fashion often mimicked the organic world or even borrowed ornaments from it, such as flowers or, paradoxically, fruit: "The fiery brunette cannot adorn herself more delightfully than with fruit braided in graceful little branches – cherries, red current, even branches of grapes… […] In general, the flowers chosen for

decorating the hair are quite large" (*The Arcades Project*: B3, 5 69). Flowers and fruit, though perfectly organic, are not perceived as organic any more: their "liveliness" is being denied by their function as a commodity, which turns them into fetishes and places them in the realm of petrified nature and phantasmagoria.

On the one hand, "fashion has opened the business of dialectical exchange between woman and ware – between carnal pleasure and the corps," according to Benjamin. Fashion creates a new body – the social one – for the person adhering to it, but instead takes away the biological body. "New clothing is quite literally at the borderline between subject and object, the individual and the cosmos" (Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing* 97). But what is even more provocative about fashion is that it changes very quickly.

> Fashion was never anything other than the parody of the motley cadaver provocation of death through the woman, and bitter coloqui with decay whispered between shrill bursts of mechanical laughter. That is fashion. And that is why she changes so quickly; she tittilates death and is already something different, something new, as he casts about to crush her. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B1, 4 63)

According to Benjamin, innovations do not constitute progress; modernity's craving for innovation is no more than a desire, but not a promise of fulfillment. Fashion, therefore, changes, but only within certain limits, and it is definitely not capable of changing anything radically in the society. It is condemned to walking around in circles. The main task of fashion is not to transcend reality, or social reality, but to make a woman look like "everybody's contemporary," for "that is the keenest and most secret satisfaction that fashion can offer a

woman" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B2, 5 66). This is very difficult because a woman must constantly change, by changing clothes and following fashion, and remain young. Moreover, it is not even a woman that she has to be, but someone in between a young girl and a genderless creature. It is not accidental that the ideal of Jugendstil era was a sterile woman, a woman who is not capable of giving birth: in Hell where everything becomes new and yet nothing changes, birth is impossible. Fashion is an attack on female fecundity. Birth and pregnancy need time, but in the modern Hell the latter devours itself like a mythical snake. This is how fashion attacks biology: by destroying time and its continuity. Susan Buck-Morss postulates that the "ideal for human subjects (urged into rigorous conformity to fashion's dictates) becomes the biological rigor mortis of eternal youth" (*The Dialectics of Seeing* 99), and the capability of changes is alienated from from the human beings.

If, as Benjamin posits, to be a contemporary of all is the most exquisite pleasure that fashion can offer a woman, then this means that many, if not all, will be aspiring to this ideal. Benjamin points out that "it is no longer art, as in the earlier times, but the clothing business that furnishes the prototype of the modern man and woman… mannequins become the model for imitation, and the soul becomes the image of the body" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B8, 4 78). Mannequin is the next logical step after the "rigor mortis" of youth as the ideal for the young and sterile humanity, constantly renewed in the Hell of modernity. Mannequin is the highest degree of this ideal. It is not only a visual image, but also a true embodiment of the new humanity. It can even reproduce – at the times when a real woman's reproductive power was suppressed. In Convolute Z, Benjamin mentions the scene of a dance of "demoiselles" (mannequins, mechanical dolls) giving birth on stage to generations of little dolls; immediately after birth, all of them began dancing: "It continued in this manner until eight generations were

there on the stage - all related to one another through spontaneous generation, like lice" (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project: Z 1, 4* 694). Mannequin found a way to reproduce, and even that it does better than a human being, quicker and with less strife, and in a way that is more pleasing to the eye, in line with the idea of a collectively dreamt phantasmagoria based on visual illusion. This contrasts, to a degree, with the manifesto of Claire Demar that I have quoted earlier: in a rather grotesque way, her desire to get rid of motherhood for humans is not fulfilled; the machines, instead, reproduce, imitating the biological ways of people. The mechanical dolls turn out to be more "human" than humans themselves. Returning to Bruno Schulz's cycle on mannequins and the issue of the humans imitating the mannequins, one can ask: in the phantasmagoria of fashion, who is imitating whom?

Spectrum of Humanness in Schulz

The problem of a human being, or a being in general, is one of the most intriguing in Schulz. Strange creatures populate his world. Firstly, it is easy to notice that Schulz does not care for a strict division between the world of the organic and the world of the inorganic. In particular, the furniture in the old houses, as it is reported by Jacob, the father and the Poet, is rather alive than dead: "Kto wie – mówil – ile jest terpiących, okaliczonych, fragmentarnych postaci życia, tak sztuczne sklecone, gwozdiamy na gwalt zbite życie szaf i stolow, ukrzyżowanego drzewa, cichych męczennikow okrutnej pomyslowości ludzkiej" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 76). "Who knows […] how many suffering, crippled, fragmentary forms of life there are, such as the artificially created life of chests and table quickly nailed together, crucified timbers, silent martyrs to cruel human inventiveness" (69). Just like furniture, a lamp on the wall is also a living being. It is a not exactly a lamp but a woman's head that is capable

of opening her eyes, and unmistakably human in that she even salivates and whispers: “Na rozchylonch ustach łsnila blonka sliny, pekająca od cichego szeptu” (76). “On the half-opened lips a bubble of saliva would glint, then burst with the softest of whispers” (70). On the other hand, organic beings (humans) turn into objects. For example, Jacob’s brother, due to some fantastical disease, turns into an enema: “[…]Zamienil sie stopniowo w zwój kiszek gumowych” (76). “[He] was gradually transformed into a bundle of ruber tubing [of an enema]” (70). The seamstresses in the mannequin cycle display the features of dolls – they lose their ability to move, their eyes look as if made of glass: “Dziewczęta siedziały nieruchomo z szklanymi oczyma” (68), “The girls sat motionless, with glazed eyes” (62).

In his article on Schulz’s bestiary, Andrzei Ossowski observes that the animals depicted in the stories often represent the protagonists’s family (e.g., father becomes a cockroach, a bird, a crab). Odssowski argues that while, for example, dogs and birds symbolize the “daytime,” cockroaches and crustaceans symbolize the “night” and all the derivative meanings that accompany it: darkness, insignificance of life, hidden presences, and shame. Andrzej Ossowski concludes that the reason Schulz’s bestiary is an essential topic to consider is because the “animals refer directly to a human being” (79), blurring the line between the two.

In his discourses, Jacob describes a new generation of beings that are, supposedly, soon to emerge: the so-called *generatio aequivoca*. The term itself comes from the works of Schopenhauer, whom Schulz read and valued. In Schulz, *generatio aequivoca* will be “jakiegoś pokolenia istot na wpól tylko organicznych, jakiejś psewdowegetacji i pseudofauny, resultatów fantastycznej fermentacji materii” (73) - “a species of things only half organic, a kind of pseudofauna and pseudoflora, the result of a fantastic fermentation of matter” (66). They are as follows:

> […]Twory podobne z pozoru do istot żywych, do kregowców, skorupiaków, czlonkonowóg, lecz pozor ten mylił. Byli to w istocie istoty amorfne, bez wewnętrznej struktury, plody imitatywnej tendencji materii, która obdarzona pamięcia, powtarza z przyzwyczajenia raz przyjęte ksztalty. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 73)
>
> [I]n appearance only, living creatures such as crustaceans, vertebrates, cephalopods. In reality the appearance was misleading –they were amorphous creatures, with no internal structure, products of the imitative tendency of matter which, equipped with memory, repeats of force of habit the forms already accepted. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 66)

Jacob adds that matter operates within a limited morphology, and that "pewien zasob form powtarza się wciąż na różnych kondygnacjach bytu" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 73) - "a certain quota of forms is repeated over and over again on various levels of existence" (66). The very idea of reproduction in Schulz is redefined. One of the basic methods of reproduction is proliferation, according to Krzysztof Stala (54). This is especially evident in the case of plants – they grow uncontrollably. They are examples of empty self-production, "the fermentation of matter," and their existence is not fruitful. This vegetation grows in a sickly manner. The motive of such growth repeats itself in Schulz, like a number of other motives. He continually describes rooms full of strange plants that grow out of furniture, under the beds and from the walls. The stems of these plants resemble tentacles of sea creatures (no wonder the proliferated matter described by Jacob in one of his monologues is taking the form of "crustaceans"). The

transformation that Jacob undergoes in the last story of Schulz's second collection, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, also includes tentacles, - this time, those of a crab, yet another sea creature, into which he turns. His family boils him and eats the meat, and yet "one leg lay on the edge of the dish, in some congealed tomato sauce and aspic that bore the traces of his escape" (178). Thus, even death cannot quite finish off the "proliferation of matter," having no power over it.

According to Stanisław Rosiek, Schulz considers the idea of a human being "fiction thought up by a genius" (*Słownik Schulzcowski* 72) There exist separate persons, but they do not necessarily constitute the whole category of humans. The images introduced by Schulz into his prose and drawings illustrate this tendency: for example, a human being can be actually not purely human, but a combination of a human and an animal form. At times, we witness transformations (such as of a human being, usually Jacob, into a new being – a cockroach, a crab, a bird), but these are not the only way that Schulz approaches the issue of changing of forms. Total transformation presupposes a completely new form, whereas a coexistence of forms is a contamination, a challenge to the nature of a binary paradigm of being.

The gallery of Schulzian images includes, in particular, a man-tiger from several of the drawings in his *Xięga Balwochwalcza* (*The Book of Idolatry*, a collection of drawings that feature erotic themes). The lower part of this creature's body is that of the animal, while the upper is human. Another famous example is the man-dog from the story "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass" from the eponymous collection. At first Joseph, the protagonist who is visiting his father in the sanatorium that represents a kind of a limbo where time stopped, thinks that the creature he encountered is a dog, - a rather frightening one, too: "The shaggy animal

was leaping toward me" (*Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 136). However, a minute later he realizes that he was wrong:

> Jak wielka jest moc uprzedzenia! Jak potężna jest sugestia strachu! Co za zaślepienie! Toż to był człowiek. Człowiek na łańcuchu […]. Proszę mnie źle nie rozumieć. Był to pies – niezawodnie, ale w postaci ludzkiej. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 298)
>
> How great is the power of prejudice! How powerful the hold of fear! How blind had I been! It was not a dog, it was a man. A chained man […]. I don't want to be misunderstood. He was a dog, certainly, but a dog in human shape. The quality of a dog is an inner quality and can be manifested as well in human as in animal shape. (Benjamin, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 137)

"Homo sapiens or Homo familiaris?" - asks Stanisław Rosiek on account of this creature in *Słownik Schulzowski* (74). Neither a dog nor a human can claim the honor of being called the primary, superior species, Rosiek notes. Both of them, dog and human, are but two ways of the incarnation of the matter, quite in line with Jacob's theories of creation. Matter is infinite, and therefore it makes no difference what to be – a human being, an enema, a human lamp, a dog with a human face, a crab, a cockroach. or a bird. In Schulzian world, there is no binary opposition human - non-human; instead, this universe operates on the continuum of forms, in accordance with Jacob's philosophy (albeit at times ironic). In the "Essay for S. I Witkiewicz," Schulz writes:

> Rzeczywistość przybiera pewne kształty tylko dla pozoru, dla żartu, dla zabawy. Ktoś jest człowiekiem, a ktoś karakonem, ale ten kształt nie sięga istoty, jest tylko rolą na chwilę przyjętą, tylko naskórkiem, który za chwilę zostanie zrzucony. Statuowany jest tu pewien skrajny monizm substancji, dla której poszczególne przedmioty są jedynie maskami. Życie substancji polega na zużywaniu niezmiernej ilości masek. Ta wędrówka form jest istotą życia. Dlatego z substancji tej emanuje aura jakiejś panironii. Obecna tam jest nieustannie atmosfera kulis, tylnej strony sceny, gdzie aktorzy po zrzuceniu kostiumów zaśmiewają się z patosu swych ról. W samym fakcie istnienia poszczególnego zawarta jest ironia, nabieranie, język po błazeńsku wystawiony. (Schulz, *Księga listów* 102)
>
> Reality takes on certain forms merely for the sake of appearance, for a joke or form of play. One person is a human, another is a cockroach, but shape does not penetrate essence, it is only a role adopted for a moment, an outer skin soon to be shed. […] This migration of forms is the essence of life. Thus all-pervading aura of irony emanates from this substance. There is an ever-present atmosphere of the stage, of sets viewed from behind, where the actors make fun of the pathos of their parts after stripping off their costumes. The bare fact of separate individual existence holds an irony, a hoax, a clown's stuck-out tongue. (Schulz, *Letters and Drawings* 113)

This passage contains a number of key issues for understanding Schulzian universe in regard to the problem of organic versus inorganic as well as human- non-human. This universe does not have "separate individual existence," and all forms that matter can take are, in a way, an illusion. Moreover, Schulz compares these forms to actors who are always ready to "strip their

clothes" backstage. He also mentions irony that is present under the circumstances. His reference to the actors sounds very closely to the "actors" made for one gesture, mentioned by Jacob, to the birds that Jacob (supposedly) hatches, and to the two seamstresses (whose bodies are described as "made of tandeta").

The Problem of Masculinity/Femininity in Schulz

After the opposition of organic and non-organic, the opposition of men and women is the next dramatic and not necessarily clear-cut issue. On the one hand, Jacob, the father, is opposed to the world of the women who surround him – mother and Adela. He is called "a Poet" and "a Prophet;" poetry and prose in Schulz's world mean two distinct and opposite existential states rather than literary forms. Poetry means Light, fantasy, imagination, movement and art, and prose is Darkness, a boring life devoid of any artistic or fantastical element. Poetry is "freeing the language from the power of convention" (Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 232). The women represent "order," "matter" and "prose," whereas the father, Jacob, incarnates "madness," "spirit" and "poetry." The division between feminine and masculine, as Markowski contends, does not follow conventional lines (for instance, women represent "order," though usually this space is reserved for men) (Markowski, *Polska literatura nowoczesna: Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* 260). Overall, in Schulz's world everything exists not so much in duality as in dialectics.

Artur Sandauer calls Schulz a masochist in his introduction to Schulz's publication (Sandauer 20), and thus programs generations of researchers to see Schulz as such, to seek more and more evidence to prove this, and, moreover, to interpret the writings using biographical data, which is, at best, reductive. Such an approach created an image of Schulz – a timid art

teacher, who was unable to form a relationship with a woman, and was forever "stepped on," just like many men or male-like figures in his drawings, subjugated by a sadistic female. Though Schulz might have been a "masochist" in his art and - perhaps – private life of which nobody has any knowledge, it is also true that he enjoyed long-lasting, rewarding relationships with women – primarily Debora Vogel, a Jewish writer who wrote in Yiddish and who inspired him to write prose, which he did in his letters to her; his fiancée Josephina Szelińska, a remarkable beauty for whom Schulz was "everything" and who never married, after her engagement with Schulz fell apart; Romana Halpern, a Warsaw socialite who helped Schulz in practical matters; Anna Plockier, his last love; and a number of others. It is quite obvious that none of these women treated him with anything vaguely resembling sadism.

Bruno Schulz's *Xięga Balwochwalcza*, a collection of drawings that comprise images of men subjugated by women who step and them or otherwise humiliate them, is seemingly easy to interpret. "Women" are always "dominating," and "men" – are "being dominated." Men idolize women, just as the title suggests. However, some of the drawings are more obscure than the others. The problem is that men are not always men, but also tigers, dogs, and, one is forced to assume, swine, since the woman who dominates them is called Circe. Men can also be "dwarfs" and "pilgrims," and, though they seem to preserve their human form, it is, as we have already observed in Schulz, an illusion, because matter is infinite and whimsically takes on random forms.

In her analysis of Schulz's story "Spring," Małgorzata Kitowska-Łysiak points out that not all women in Schulz are "idols" like the maid Adela or the idol-like Undula from *Xięga Balwochwalcza*. The researcher focuses on the image of Bianca, a girl who fascinates the protagonist of "Spring." The very name "Bianca," which is Italian means "white," references

such notions as emptiness, tabula rasa, purity and, potentially, sainthood (Kitowska-Łysiak 261). Kitowska-Łysiak warns against the interpretations of Bianca as a nymphet in the style of Nabokov, and proposes instead to interpret her as an androgyne, as in Mircea Eliade. According to Eliade, the very idea of creation of a woman out of Adam's rib already hints at the fact that the first human being on Earth was androgynous. The perfect human was "whole." Kitowska-Łysiak argues that in Schulzian world it is Bianca who is the perfect human being, and also a perfect woman, but not at all Adela or other more aggressive types. Bianca is almost a saint; she is pure. Bianca is also knowledgeable about the world, despite her young age, according to Schulz himself: "[…]when she lifts her eyes and looks straight at you, nothing can be hidden from her. Her youth has not protected her from being able to guess the most secret things." Bianca is "broken by form" (ibid.), that is, by convention:

> Every one of her gestures expresses submission, with good will and sad grace, to the prescribed forms. She does nothing that is unnecessary, each step is avariciously measured, just complying with the conventions, entering into her spirit without enthusiasm and only from a passive sense of duty (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 48)

But form is the fate of all; Bianca is not an exception. She submits to what everybody submits, it is just that she does it with grace. She is a saint, of sorts; a pure androgyne and yet also a woman. This shows that the very notion of a woman is not homogenous in Schulz.

In his "Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz, Schulz writes: "Początki mego rysowania gubią się w mgle mitologicznej. Jeszcze nie umiałem mówić, gdy pokrywałem już wszystkie papiery i

brzegi gazet gryzmołami, które wzbudzały uwagę otoczenia" (Schulz, *Księga listow* 99). "The beginnings of my graphic work are lost in mythological twilight. Before I could even talk, I was already converting every scrap of paper and the margins of newspapers with scribbles that attracted the attention of those around me" (*Letters and Drawings* 110). The famous Schulzian women that shock the reader and the viewer the most are not at all androgynous; they has little to do with sainthood, though they are worshipped. But they are worshipped as an idol. Dariusz Konrad Sikorski, when analyzing the world of symbols in Schulz, notes that the women he depicts are not "shy," but that they, instead, demand idolatry (Sikorski 37). He analyzes Schulz's drawings, which are the second constitutive part of his legacy, in particular, *Xięga Balwochwalcza*. The night, often depicted as the background, symbolizes, according to Sikorski, chaos and irrationality, even demonism. Men often kiss women's feet. Sometimes the woman is barefoot, but often she is wearing shoes or boots that are instruments and markers of her dominant position. As Sikorski points out, in the Old Testament the word "feet" is used as a euphemism for genitals, but feet are also symbols of power. In Schulz's drawings the shoe becomes the emblem of a procession adding a liturgical dimesion to the activity (Sikorski 54). Idolizing a woman becomes an occupation that has religious overtones.

As it was already mentioned, there is a tendency in Schulzian studies to interpret "men" (for example, Jacob) as representatives of Poetry (as Jacob who was single-handedly "defending the lost cause of poetry" in "Birds"), while viewing "Prose" as "women's" domain (or at least most women). The female "kingdom" is the realm of the everyday, but also the body and corporeality. In "A Night in July," Joseph describes the household after his sister gave birth to a little boy:

> Sprowadził on na dom nasz pewien powrót do stosunków prymitywnych, cofnął rozwój socjologiczny do koczowniczej i haremowej atmosfery matriarchatu z obozowiskiem pościeli, pieluszek, bielizny wiecznie pranej i suszonej, z niedbalstwem toalety kobiecej dążącej do obfitych obnażeń o charakterze wegetatywnie niewinnym, z kwaskowym zapachem niemowlęctwa i piersi mlekiem nabrzmiałych. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 234)
>
> He [the baby – OL] made our home revert to primitive conditions, he reduced us to nomadic and harem-like existence of a matriarchal encampment where bedding, diapers and sheets were forever being washed and dried, where marked neglect of female appearance was accompanied by a predilection for frequent stripping of awould-be innocent character, an acid aura of infancy and of breasts swelling with milk… (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 83)

It is now this wet-nurse of the baby who reigns in the house (the protagonist's sister is ill after birth, and has left for the spa). The nurse "impressed the seal of gynecocracy on the whole house. It was a gynecocracy based on the natural advantages of a replete and fully grown carnality" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 84).

Jacob, on the other hand, lives in a more fantastical world. In Schulz's second book of short stories, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, his rebellion against the rule of the mother (his wife) and the sadistic Adela takes on new forms: for instance, "joining the fire brigade," a strange (all-male) gathering of "knights" in shining armor who steal raspberry syrop from their wives and maids. It is unclear what their practical function is, and, most likely, they have none. Jacob confronts Adela, the maid, on account of her inability to comprehend "matters

of a higher order" (*Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 90). What is most remarkable about the scene is that the father is dressed like a knight, in shining armour of unknown origin: "[..] A veritable Saint George, looming large in a cuirass of polished golden tinplate, a sonorous armor complete with golden armlets" (90). Technically, this scene is Joseph's dream. The father is called Saint George, a reference to the saint who kills the dragon ("snake"). It is Adela's shoe that is called "the snake" in the mannequin cycle: "Adela's outstretched slipper trembled slightly and shone like a serpent's tongue" (63); it is implied that Jacob is forced to kiss her shoe in "The Second Book of Genesis." Now comes his time to "kill the snake," that is Adela and, broader speaking, her power. Jacob addresses Adela, accusing her of not having understood him: "Over and over you have frustrated my activities with outbursts of senseless anger" (90). His costume is supposed to be the uniform of a fire brigade, but in reality is just another expression of *tandeta*, or least an inapproapriate material. Adela is very quick to point that out: "Captain of the fire brigade, captain of some crowd of lay-abouts! […]The house is full of them! [They are] asleep in their brass helmets" (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 91). She also accuses this "fire brigade" of lustful thoughts: "If I glance at any one of them, he immediately becomes red in the face like an obscene turkey." Jacob would not take it, and responds that it is her own "vulgarity" that makes her think so (91).

According to Michał Paweł Markowski, Schulz puts a heavy emphasis on Adela's contrary nature as early as in the second paragraph of the opening story ("August") of the first collection, *Cinnamon Shops* (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązlość* 87). Adela comes from the market, where she was shopping for the family dinner, and brings fruit, vegetables and meat in her basket.

> Adela wracała w świetliste poranki, jak Pomona z ognia dnia rozżagwionego, wysypując z koszyka barwną urodę słońca - lśniące, pełne wody pod przejrzystą skórką czereśnie, tajemnicze, czarne wiśnie, których woń przekraczała to, co ziszczało się w smaku; morele, w których miąższu złotym był rdzeń długich popołudni; a obok tej czystej poezji owoców wyładowywała nabrzmiałe siłą i pożywnością płaty mięsa z klawiaturą żeber cielęcych, wodorosty jarzyn, niby zabite głowonogi i meduzy - surowy materiał obiadu o smaku jeszcze nie uformowanym i jałowym, wegetatywne i telluryczne ingrediencje obiadu o zapachu dzikim i polnym. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 23)
>
> On those luminous days Adela returned from the market, like Pomona emerging from the flames of day, spilling from her basket the colorful beauty of the sun – the shiny pink cherries full of juice under their transparent skins, the mysterious black morellos that smelled so much better than they tasted; apricots in whose golden pulp lay the core of long afternoons. And next to that pure poetry of fruit, she unloaded sides of meat with their keyboard of ribs swollen with energy and strength, and seaweeds of vegetables like dead octopuses and squids – the raw material of meals with a yet undefined taste, the vegetative and terrestrial ingredients of dinner, exuding a wild and rustic smell. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 25)

Markowski points out that Adela here is depicted both as a chaste Pomona, the goddess of gardens, and as Mother Earth. Fruit are the attributes of her Pomona-like aspect, but meat symbolizes flesh, fertility, - "unformed, wild matter" (Markowski, *Powszechna rozwiązłość* 87). Michał Paweł Markowski draws the reseachers' attention to the theme of meat in Schulz's

stories. The motif of meat appears not only in relation to Adela, but also other characters: the lips of Touya, the mad girl, are "fleshy;" Aunt Agatha, whom the boy and his mother visit, is "tall and ample, her round white flesh blotchy with the rust of freckles" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 32). Meat is featured all over Schulz's universe, and this prompts Markowski to conclude that Schulz is much more of a materialist in terms of his artistic philosophy than anything else. Schulz has often been considered as a creator of a mythical world, and the very word "myth" functioned as signifier of a non-existent, dream-like, fantastical realm that is automatically immaterial. As Markowski contends, researchers usually try to bring Schulz over to the side of the spirit and poetry, forgetting about the fact that next to the juicy berries and fruit, which are the signs of Schulz's imagination, we see bloody pieces of meat (88). However, as Markowski continues, it is meat that is the beginning of everything in Schulz, whose philosophical views were on the side of materialism.

Adela from the short stories and Undula, Circe and other dominatrices from the drawings are idols, and many of them wear shoes or other attire that is part of their nature as of the ones to be worshipped. Shoes, clothes and decorations are the inorganic element attached to the organic body, which, according to Benjamin, together create the discourse of fashion. The woman, or the idol, is a fantasy of fashion, on the one hand, and corporeality at times translated into prose, on the other. She is embodied in both cases: as a queen to be worshipped and as a ruler of the home (where "matriarchy" therefore sets in). However, it is unclear how to conceptualize a man. On the one hand, he is an armoured knight, a spirit itself who is ready to fight for the lost cause of poetry; on another, though, he is a tiger, or a dwarf, or a strange human dog overcome with lust, lying at the feet of a powerful woman and unable to rebel. If it is easy to see that the woman (except Bianca) is "matter," to regard the man as "spirit" is much

more difficult, because this idea has to be reconciled with the fact that he is also a beast. There seems to be two "pairs" in Schulzian prose: father-Bianca (who are described by the language with explicit connotations of purity, spirituality, light and even sainthood: he is a Saint George in shining ("light") armor, whereas she is "white"), and an animalized human male-Adela/Undula (who often appears at night, thus symbolizing Darkness). The first pair represents the world of Poetry, or Light and Spirit, the second – the world of Prose, Body, and Darkness.

Jacob and Bianca	Sainthood, spirituality, purity, Poetry, Light
A tiger/dog-like male and Adela/Undula	Sin, idolatry, lust, Prose, Darkness

Therefore, just like other categories – "the organic," "the inorganic," "human," "non-human," "the woman" (who can be Adela or Bianca) are not homogenous, neither is the category of "the man." He can also be "matter" – a semi-human, semi-dog-like creature longing for the touch, not necessarily gentle, of his mistress. It seems that any creature (including the non-organic entities) from Schulzian world does not necessarily represent his or her category, but him or her self. The only category they all have in common is that of *generatio aequivoca*.

Mannequin and *Generacio Equivoca*

One of the chief representatives of this "generatio" is mannequin itself. This is how it makes its first appearance in the text:

> Tymczasem w jadalni przygotowywano już scenerię wieczoru. Polda i Paulina, dziewczęta do szycia, rozgospodarowywały się w niej z rekwizytami swego fachu. Na ich ramionach wniesiona wchodziła do pokoju milcząca, nieruchoma pani, dama z kłaków i płótna, z czarną drewnianą gałką zamiast głowy. Ale ustawiona w kącie, między drzwiami a piecem, ta cicha dama stawała się panią sytuacji. Ze swego kąta, stojąc nieruchomo, nadzorowała w milczeniu pracę dziewcząt. Pełna krytycyzmu i niełaski przyjmowała ich starania i umizgi, z jakimi przyklękały przed nią, przymierzając fragmenty sukni, znaczone białą fastrygą. Obsługiwały z uwagą i cierpliwością milczący idol, którego nic zadowolić nie mogło. Ten moloch był nieubłaganym, jak tylko kobiece molochy być potrafią, i odsyłał je wciąż na nowo do pracy […] (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 61)
>
> Meanwhile, in the dining room, the scene was being set for the evening. Polda and Pauline, the seamtresses, spread themselves out there with the props of their trade. Carried on their shoulders, a silent immobile lady had entered the room, a lady of oakum and canvas, with a black wooden know instead of a head. But when stood in a corner, between the door and the stove, that silent woman became mistress of the situation. Standing motionless in the corner, she supervised the girls' advances and wooing as they knelt before her, fitting fragments of a dress marked with white basting thread. They waited with attention and patience on the silent idol, which was difficult to please. That

> moloch was inexorable as only a female moloch can be, and sent them back to work again and again […]. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 55)

At first, the mannequin is referred to as a "lady," a woman. She is not just being carried in – she "enters" the room, because even while being immobile, she is still powerful. In the situation of seeming passivity she is active. Instead of the head she has a "knob," which means that her humanity is compromised, but so is almost everyone's in Schulz. She is also an "idol" and a "moloch" – therefore, someone more than a human and less than a human at the same time.

Mannequins are present in the third story of the cycle, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies: Continuation." There, Jacob speaks about the figures of the "panopticon," or the waxwork museum. He says that these figures are "pathetic parodies" of dummies, but even like that they should not be treated lightly. The fact that the figures are locked away, according to Jacob, makes them suffer immensely. "Have you heard at night the terrible howling of these wax figures, shut in the fair-booths; the pitiful chorus of those forms of wood or porcelain, banging their fists against the walls of their prisons?" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 65). Wax figures resemble humans more then the mannequins, but humans are to be made in the image of a mannequin. Wax figures are but a parody of the mannequins, and therefore are weaker than the latter, but more capable of suffering. Wax figures are ideal masochists. Mannequins reveal themselves as an intermediary form that stands between humans and the wax figures; they are, seemingly, the line that divides a human being from a wax figure, which is an imitation of a human, a mirror. Wax figures are "jesting golems," an artificial creation that now comprises life it was not meant to have. And yet between these two – an "incomplete" (Jarzębski, qtd. in Owczarski 37) human being and its even more incomplete reflection (a "jesting golem" of a

wax figure) there stands a tailors' dummy, bringing the humans and the wax figures closer and yet further separating them.

Walter Benjamin's dialectical image presupposes the existence of a constellation of images, to trace all the connections between the past and the present. A constellation into which a mechanical "being" – or a mannequin – could be inscribed includes other images from the context of (metropolitan) modernity. One of such images, especially prominent in Benjamin, is the prostitute. Susan Buck-Morss, interpreting Benjamin, argues that fashion sells an alive body to the world of the inorganic, and this transaction resembles that of prostitution. Moreover, this transaction takes place at the time when prostitutes themselves are relying on the attractiveness of a fashionable dress as commodity, and only after having secured the dress, they sell their bodies to those willing to buy it. Prostitute as an image is closely connected with other ones, such as "exhibition," "fashion," and "advertisement" (Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering" 50). Prostitute as a seller imitates commodity and yet uses commodity to make herself more attractive: the very fact that her sexuality is for sale is attractive to her clients. Prostitute is one of the most dramatic images in Benjamin. She should have been a female version of flâneur, a man who wanders around the city. However, she is an object, and not just a subject: if for a man walking around the city by himself and without any goal was acceptable, for a woman it was not, and she was then perceived as a prostitute, even though she was not one. The body of a prostitute (a commodity) resembled a mannequin. The more expensive was her dress, the more she was liked.

The commodity and fetish triumph, and this means increasing loneliness and impotence, combined with the sterility as an aesthetic ideal. Mechanical dolls, wax figures and mannequins take over the space that used to be human. Susan Buck-Morss points at a paradox: ironically, if

playing with dolls was originally the way children learned the nurturing behavior of adult social relations, it has become a training ground for learning reified ones. The goal of little girls now is to become a "doll." This, she continues, "epitomizes that which Marx considered characteristic of the capitalist-industrial mode of production: machines which bring the promise of the naturalization of humanity and the humanization of nature result instead in the mechanization of both" (Buck-Morss, "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering" 54).

The mannequins in Benjamin seem different from the ones in Schulz since the latter is, at first sight, less preoccupied with the theme of capitalism and its ideologies. Here I intend to briefly return to the story "The Street of Crocodiles." The Street of Crocodiles is the place where "new business" rules, - the business that endangered the old lifestyle. One aspect of life in this district seems significant: the people who inhabit the street are "immoral." They are "creatures without character, without background, moral dregs, that inferior species of human being which is born in such ephemeral communities" (101). The buildings are referred to as "sterile," and so are the walks around the area: "[…] One's wandering proved as sterile and pointless as the excitement produced by a close study of pornographic albums" (102). The theme of sterility provides an interesting parallel with Benjamin: the buildings under consideration are the stores, often (mostly) with clothing, and therefore fashion, - the very social institution that invests in sterility as one of its essentials. The window shops display "shoddy goods" (in the original – made of *tandeta*), mannequins and dolls (108).

This street's curse is the fact that everything there is for sale. It is a commercial district specifically designed for business. It even has its own train station. Returning to the article by Theodosia Robertson on the meaning of railroad in Schulz, one can recall that the train as a

symbol of modernization was met with high level of ambivalence in old Galicia. The trains brought *tandeta* that were used at factories for mass production (Robertson 227).

Moreover, Schulz warns the readers that what is truly fatal about this district is that nothing "comes to fruition" here. All the gestures "hang in the air," movements become "exhausted" too early, unable to overcome "a certain point of inertia" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 109). This sounds suspiciously similar to Walter Benjamin's ideas about modernity as Hell, in which the cycles of endless repetitions that do not at all secure results. This is the epoch to which sterility is a fitting companion: it is living without conclusions and, at times, basic productivity, like, for example, fashion. The latter strives for innovation, but it is condemned to revolving in its cycles forever. The time at the Street of Crocodiles changed its flow, just like it did for the bigger cities under the spell of modernity. Now, the "bustle and uproar" of everyday - and all day – shopping activity cannot mask the fact that nothing is really happening.

This is a "degraded" area, almost a taboo for those from the more centrally located places, and yet many walk around here. The crowd consists of strollers, dandies, and prostitutes. In fact, in the story these latter appear in the paragraph directly following the one that mentions the mannequins in the window shops, - literally, in the next line. "Showily dressed" in long lace dresses, the prostitutes "begin to circulate" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 108). And yet, it is unclear if they actually are prostitutes. "The might even be the wives of hairdressers or restaurant bandleaders." All the images described so far are easy to conceptualize as a Benjaminian constellation: mannequin – prostitute – woman. The mannequin is on display, and this is the feature it has in common with the prostitute, who also puts herself on display to sell herself to a client. But this district turns any woman into a prostitute. A woman, as it was

already mentioned, cannot quite be a flâneur; her very being on this street automatically means her selling herself, becoming an object, a commodity, and thus – a fetish, just like the mannequin in the window shop. A woman, a mannequin, a prostitute are different manifestations of the "metaphysics of fashion," orchestrated by capitalism. They become each other, the lines between them disappearing. They form a cluster, or a dialectical image; in Schulzian terminology, they also join *generatio aequivoca.*

Poetry's Revenge on Modernity

At first sight, the mannequins from the commercial Street of Crocodiles and the silent immobile female moloch of a tailors' dummy that enters the family room are different entities. In the first case, the mannequins are surrounded by the district that exudes corruption and commercialism. Mannequin on the Street of Crocodiles exists in a close connection with the prostitute, exhibition, fashion and overall city life, as much as it is applicable to a provincial Galician town. In the second case, the mannequin is seemingly located in a very different kind of an environment. It "lives" in a home, in the family house, and, though this family is somewhat dysfunctional, its space is still private. This house is not a place for promenades. And yet Schulz refers to this mannequin as to a "female moloch," a cruel god that demands human sacrifices. Though the family drama in young Joseph's home is intense, there is nothing going on that could suggest any blood spilling activity, be it a sacrifice or a murder. It is possible to interpret the mannequin's effect on Jacob, the father, as a symbolic "murder;" however, this "murder" is too complex of an issue to be viewed only in the context of Jacob's frustrated sexuality, manifested in the form of alleged masochism, and his personal fascination/hate

directed at Adela and, potentially, the seamstresses. In this case, it is essential to understand what both Jacob and the mannequin represent, each in his or her (or its) turn.

It is important to return here to Jacob's discourse about the new humankind, the representatives of which will have only one leg or one arm, and no fully formed bodies. These "actors" created for the sake of one gesture: "If they be human beings, we shall give them, for example, only one profile, one hand, one leg, the one limb needed for their role. It would be pedantic to bother about the other, unnecessary, leg" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 61). The materials from which these creatures will be made include "papier-mâché, […] distemper, […] oakum and sawdust" (62), - in other words, *tandeta*.

> Demiurgos, ten wielki mistrz i artysta, czyni ją niewidzialną, każe jej zniknąć pod grą życia. My, przeciwnie, kochamy jej zgrzyt, jej oporność, jej pałubiastą niezgrabność. Lubimy pod każdym gestem, pod każdym ruchem widzieć jej ociężały wysiłek, jej bezwład, jej słodką niedźwiedziowatość. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 67)
>
> This is, - he [Jacob] continued with a pained smile, - the proof of our love for matter as such, for its fluffiness and porosity, for its unique mystical consistency. Demiurge […] made matter invisible, made it disappear under the surface of life. We, on the contrary, love its creaking, its resistance, its clumsiness. We like to see behind its gesture, behind each move, its inertia, its heavy effort, its bearlike awkwardness. (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 62)

A human being will be made in the image of a mannequin, and the mannequin is the "silent lady" of a female moloch, already present in the room. Schulz emphasizes again and again the erasure of a line between people and mannequins in this cycle: people are immovable like mannequins, and the mannequin is called a "lady." Polda and Pauline, the seamstresses who inspire Jacob, are referred to as "made of tandeta." If the mannequin is always referred to as a whole, though, humans are "dismembered." Jacob's speeches do allow him access to touching the girls: "Pulling Pauline's stocking down from her knee and studying with enraptured eyes the precise and noble structure of the joint […]" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 57). The girls become their "joints," "knees," or "glazed eyes," or "feet." A symbolic dismemberment of a female body, parts of which would be compared to alabaster or snow, was characteristic for the Baroque, and Walter Benjamin points out its significance in the context of fashion:

> The detailing of feminine beauties so dear to the poetry of the Baroque, a process in which each single part is exalted through a trope, secretly links up with the image of the corps. This parceling out of feminine beauty into its noteworthy constituents resembles a dissection, and the popular comparisons of bodily parts to alabaster, snow, precious stones, or other (mostly inorganic) formations makes the same point. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: B 9, 3 79-80)

Benjamin emphasizes the hybridity of fashion, its mixture of the organic and the inorganic, its "flirting with death" and yet mocking death. Polda and Pauline, the seamstresses, are "servants" of fashion, since they make clothing, and also its victims: they are already falling apart and transforming into the tailors' dummies, but they have not yet achieved the same status as the

"female moloch" whom they so devotedly serve. They are organic and inorganic at the same time, while the perfection – according to Jacob – will be made of *tandeta* and miss limbs, or at least have a knob instead of a head. To understand Jacob's relationship with the mannequin, which is central, no matter how paradoxical it may sound, to this family dynamics, it is important to briefly return to his life story both as Schulz's character and – to some extend – as Schulz's father.

Jacob is, as Schulz calls him, "the last Poet," but he is also a broken man, a businessman who went bankrupt. In the story "Dead Season," a fantastical account of the decline of the family business, the father is described as a defeated patriarch in charge of a shop empty of customers but filled with fabrics instead.

> Dla ojca mego był sklep nasz miejscem wiecznych udręczeń i zgryzot. Ten twór jego rąk nie od dziś zaczynał – dorastając – napierać nań z dnia na dzień coraz natarczywiej, przerastać go groźnie i niezrozumiale. Był on dla niego nadmiernym zadaniem, zadaniem nad siły, zadaniem wzniosłym i nieobjętym. Ogrom tej pretensji przerażał go. (Schulz, *Sklepy Cynamonowe, Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą, Kometa* 255)
>
> For my father our shop was the place of eternal anguish and torment. This creature of his hands had for some time, in the years of its growth, been pushing against him ever more violently from day to day, and it had finally outgrown him. The shop became for him a task beyond his strength, at once immense and sublime. The immensity of its claims frightened him. Even his life could not satisfy their awful extent. (Schulz, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 99)

He is trying to make ends meet, writes pleading letters to big companies, asking for deals and credits, continually looking for "a happy and inspired phrase that would give the required weight to his letters to Messrs. Christian Seipel & Sons, Spinners and Mechanical Weavers" (100). All of his efforts prove to be mostly futile in the end, - though he does obtain the loan he asked for, it is obvious that he will not avoid total ruin. Jacob suffers so much that he even briefly transforms into a buzzing in the room, after an episode of especially inappropriate behavior of his shop assistants and his young son (it is hinted that they might have engaged in collective masturbation when he entered the room). Jacob is shocked by their lack of interest in the fate of the shop, and transformation is the "way of out of an impossible situation." Jacob's family, along with shop assistants, are then forced to listen to his "hopeless lament, the expressively modulated dull plaint, running up and down the registers of boundless pain – an unrelieved suffering under the dark ceiling of the shop" (104). The very transformation Jacob undergoes is referred to as a "revenge" he takes on his family who cannot relate to his angst. The mother does not understand him, and the shop assistants, these useless "angels," as Schulz describes them, are lazy and chase Adela all day, play practical jokes on each other, or simply "turn[…] somersaults on the bales of cloth, pinch […] tents of fabric on the shelves, [make] swings from draperies" (Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles* 102), - in other words, do not assist their master.

Jacob's negotiations with a mysterious visitor, a man with a black beard, a person who obviously has financial power over him, seem not to go well. At first, the two men quarrel, and the situation becomes "inflammable" (Schulz, *The Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* 109). Towards the end of the talk the father's "apparent good humor seem[s] to be artificial and forced, while the black-bearded man […] was breathing kindness and optimism" (109). Jacob

eventually loses everything. Nobody wants to come to his shop, because everybody now frequents the Street of Crocodiles. The Street of Crocodiles ruined Jacob, forcing him to spend the rest of his days in his own house, locking him in. He could not exit it any more, except symbolically – as the "birds" he creates out of *tandeta*; however, even the birds are killed in "The Night of the Great Season." Jacob is neither a powerful "prophet" to the crowd, nor a respected husband, father and master in his own home. Everybody has power over him now, even the maid (Adela). All he can do now is throw *tandeta* around, - the very material from which he plans to construct the new humankind.

He plans to create a mannequin, or, rather, a lot of mannequins, all incomplete and lacking limbs or backs. They will be "molochs," but the disempowered ones, disembodied like the women in the poetry of the Baroque. This will be Jacob's revenge to the moloch: he will punish it by becoming its creator, its Demiurge; he will punish the moloch which is also a sadistic woman, Adela and all the Adelas in the world which is now infected with modernity. Modernity took his power away, and he now plans to use its methods of dehumanizing the living and turning them into mannequins in order to strike back. In this way, Jacob resists modernity and fashion.

In Walter Benjamin, the mannequin, or the mechanical doll, is in close connection with the images of a prostitute, flâneur, fashion and exhibition, that is the life of the streets. In Schulz, however, the mannequins evoke not only the images mentioned above, but also the dwelling. The mannequins in a metropolis definitely belong to the public sphere. In Schulz, they are actors in a family drama, which goes on inside the dwelling, in the sphere of the private. Walter Benjamin observes that dwelling is difficult to reflect on precisely because it is so primal:

> On the one hand, there is something age-old – perhaps eternal – to be recognized here, the image of that abode of the human being in the maternal womb; on the other hand, this motif of primal history notwithstanding, we must understand dwelling in its most extreme form as a condition of nineteenth-century existence. The original form of all dwelling is existence not in the house but in the shell. In the most extreme instances, the house becomes a shell. (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: I4, 4 220-221)

What Benjamin stresses is the passion of the 19th century to "encase" everything, be it a watch or a human family: "The nineteenth century […] conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all the appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling's interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case […]." (Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*: I4, 4 220-221). Benjamin admits that this kind of a mentality disappeared in the 20th century: the dwelling now mostly sported hotel rooms for those still living and the crematoriums for the dead.

A small provincial town described in Schulzian prose lives in the times of transition from old patriarchal ways, 19th century business ethics, to metropolitan modernity with its speed, lights, grandiosity of commercialism, and changed human relationships, which are not family-centered any more. The drama in Joseph's (the protagonist's) house is a family drama in the period of transition into industrialized capitalism, when dwelling will slowly lose its significance. From now on, the center of the city life will be focused on the Streets of Crocodiles, where the window shops will always shine brightly, and where the stores ("galleries") will be luring the customers in with new goods, promising them the innovations of

fashion which are not really innovations, but simply their illusion, in the realm of dreaming collective. The flâneurs and the prostitutes will themselves turn into commodities, and so will other men and women, whose mere presence on the Street of Crocodiles will mean their automatic participation in the collective fabrication of the illusion.

This will not be a quick process, - after all, Schulzian town is not a big city, and it will not transform with the same speed as a megapolis with more capital would. However, the town will not be able to avoid modernity-as-Hell, no matter Jacob's efforts to neutralize Adela-as-threatening-modern-feminitity. The hour of modernity's victory will come, sooner or later. So far, the inhabitants of the old part of the town, separated from the suspicious district where the "pseudo-Americanism" blossoms, are desperately trying to deal with the different manifestations of matter and its forms in the matrix of their, until now, eternal and uninterrupted life, infected with the hellish nature of modernity, - while the "female moloch," made of *tandeta*, is already prophetically staring at them from the corner of the room.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In his book *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Zygmunt Bauman addresses the problems of humanity in the modern - or, rather, post-modern – times. He defines liquid modernity as the condition in which the institutions "that guard the repetition of routines" and "patterns of acceptable behavior" do not stay solid any longer, but "decompose and melt" instead, leaving the individual unprotected and always ready to experience not merely danger, but sudden and unexpected danger, which intensifies its impact. This is the world without social solidarity, "long-term thinking, and planning," a fragmented life in which the idea of security, in both the legal and existential senses, is substituted by that of safety, a much more local expression of protection that is usually embodied by the walls, fences, and other ways of physically dividing the spaces in the hope of not letting in the potential intruders. Bauman calls this "the displacement of fear," which shifts "from cracks and fissures in the human condition where 'fate' is hatched and incubated, to areas of life largely unconnected to the genuine source of anxiety" (13).

Zygmunt Bauman specifically stresses that these fears are mostly manifesting themselves in the urban environment. This is where the amount of walls and obstacles is the biggest, both figuratively and physically. Despite the striving for safety and the numerous attempts to ensure it though such divisions of space, the people are still frightened, because the fears are "born of existential uncertainty" (92), and not of local threats. The desire for a secure,

predictable life is one of the most significant and powerful wishes the population of today experiences, and yet all it has at its disposal is the said walls and further fragmentation of the already fragmented reality.

Bruno Schulz and Walter Benjamin both, each in his own way, foresaw the problem of the universal fragmentation and alienation; we are living in the world they already sensed, in the aftermath of the ontological crisis caused by modernity and – which neither Schulz, nor Benjamin survived – World War II and its mass murders. While there is no way to speculate about the latter, the former, namely, the shift in consciousness, caused by the modern condition, is traceable to their writings. In this conclusion, I wish to revisit the main points of their discoveries and to connect them to the condition of today, demonstrating that their projects were not only literary and philosophical but also civilizational.

The first important issue is dreaming collective. Walter Benjamin identifies it as one of the most important characteristic features of the modern times. Dreaming collective is not exactly the same kind of a dream that the Surrealists cherished; it does not open the creativity and spontaneity of perception but shuts its down. The collective dream seemingly empowers those who live inside it, making them succumb to being constantly bombarded by commercials and the changing spectacle of fetish and commodity-on-display. Dreaming collective, unlike an individual dream or a sudden awakening, knows no spontaneity and no authenticity. The arcades and the goods in their windows are organized according to the principle of a gigantic collage, but, though it seems arbitrary, its very nature is the opposite of changeable. The pieces migrate, but the whole does not move, standing in front of our eyes like a giant screen.

In Bruno Schulz's universe, it is the father of the protagonist, Jacob, who is the last warrior fighting with the dreaming collective of the big stores that replaced the small ones like

his own. The shop, the foundation of the Schulzian city, is the locus of this drama. The shop is the origin, the depth, and genealogy of the "old" world; it comes from the Word-as-Logos, from the organic entity that reaches deep into the underworld, which is the repository of "stories." Dreaming collective, or the expectation of it, operates not on Word and not on the organic, but on Spectacle and the artificial. It has no roots and no authenticity, just like its most clearly defined embodiment, the famous (or infamous) Street of Crocodiles. The world of this street (and the world as it will become soon, after Jacob - and other Jacobs – depart) is fragmented, its messages abrupt and taken out of context. Jacob the father had time specifically budgeted for his Night of the Great Season of shopping, a special time of the year, - but now we are constantly living inside the Great Phantasmagorical Season which never begins and never ends.

The collector, one of the urban types along with the flâneur and the prostitute, identified by Walter Benjamin, the keeper of the memory, is a doomed figure in this kind of a world. In the modern times, the memory turns into dust sooner than ever. The Angel of History is still spreading his wings, but the amount of debris that blocks him is growing too fast for him to be able to deal with it. The field of history-as-storm (*Strudel*) is covered with so much debris that no historian can hope to uncover all of its treasures. The collector makes the last desperate attempt. Jacob in Schulz's stories does, too, though his collection is more allegorical: the birds are not exactly "objects," - they represent his failed hopes for the "old" world to survive. The birds are made of trash and perish, just like Jacob himself does. Ultimately, Jacob collects nothing. The world of the organic, deriving from Word (birds), is doomed and to be overpowered by the world of the spectacle and the inorganic, which has a capacity to (seemingly) change quicker; the illusion of change is all that is needed in this Hell of constant repetition, and organic matter cannot compete.

Walter Benjamin says that "traffic did the flâneur in." However, traffic is not the only enemy that the flâneur has: in the light of Zygmunt Bauman's findings, walls also did him in. In the world deprived of security and hungry at least for safety, the flâneur has nowhere to go and nowhere to wander, physically. Schulz's flâneur already senses the danger of the modern times, ending up trapped in a train, this symbol of technological progress hostile to a human being. The modern city has no need of a flâneur. He does not need to be pointing at the entrance to hell, because hell is now everywhere, and the underworld is sealed, guarding the realm of the organic that has been supplanted by artificial objects (mass-produced, displayed-as-commodity and gaining their value from this exhibition).

The flâneur was a viewer, but also a commodity; hence the "empathy with commodity" that he exhibited, his deep connection with it on the level of identification, an I-Thou relationship, in the terms of Martin Buber. In his work *I and Thou*, Martin Buber explains the basic distinction between the relationships "I-It" and "I-You," or "Thou." To him, the I-It relationship represents a certain already solidified experience where It is an object or a potential object, in contrast with I-You relationship, a fluid interaction that he also calls "encounter." Buber suggests that

> [W]hoever says You does not have something for his object. For wherever there is something there is also another something; every It borders on other Its; It is only by virtue of bordering on others. But where You is said there is no something. You has no borders. Whoever says You does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation. (Buber 55)

For him, "the basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being. The basic word I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being" (54). The world without the flâneur is the world of I-It.

Zygmunt Bauman introduces the figure of the hunter. One could say, perhaps, that the hunter now occupies the place once reserved for the flâneur, the intellectual of the streets. The hunter is constantly seeking to redefine himself. He is eternally overcome by boredom, which Benjamin saw as one of the main features of the modern times. Bauman quotes a famous Polish contemporary writer Andrzei Stasiuk who emphasized that it is the possibility of "becoming someone else" that serves as the major drive of today, instead of the hope for redemption (105-106). One can change appearance, jobs, intimate partners, but, as Walter Benjamin would argue, these would be but signs of living in the Hell of modernity-as-repetition, where change is a requirement, and where everything that happens is "the newest." Hunting, as Bauman contends, is but one of the utopias of extreme individualism, a utopia without the happy ending (Bauman 108).

The mannequin, a fake woman, a prostitute of the modern times, comes forth as one of the most powerful figures of the Hell of modernity, the one that helps construct the dreaming collective. The most fascinating and transformative aspect of Fashion, or, as Benjamin calls it, Madam Death, lies in its capacity to attach the inorganic to the organic. The woman, fortified by this force, becomes the symbol of sterility and eternal youth that produces nothing. Fashion is the most vicious and effective attack on the organic. In Schulz, Fashion, by means of the mannequin, dominates the dwelling of the family, changing the dynamics in it. If the shop used to be the foundation, the mannequin is the moloch who watches the family and makes sure the lifestyle they are leading corresponds to the needs of time. Jacob, the father, who used to be a

powerful ruler of the household, now is reduced to the role of a lustful but impotent old man, crushed by the fragmented and fragmenting femininity. His times, the times of the organic Word that produced the shop and maintained the well-being of the family, are gone; from now on, all he can do is fantasize about the Second Demiurgy that will make incomplete people out of *tandeta*; then, Jacob will take revenge on these creatures by removing their already feeble limbs, and thus refute modernity.

Essentially, Bruno Schulz's small town is the subject of the modern condition to the same degree as a megapolis; the modern condition to be understood as a certain organization of life and a mindset. Schulz does not seem to believe in linear time and progress, just like Benjamin. His "modern condition" (just like Benjamin's) is a rather dramatic conglomerate of fears, aspirations and focusing on patterns from the past. The dialectical images (the bird, the train and the mannequin) analyzed in this project are the moments of rupture, or stopped time, "dialectics at a standstill," taken out from the maelstrom of history; they demonstrate that the modern condition is characterized by fears and conflicts more than by anticipation of progress or its unquestioned acceptance.

Modernity is the point at which two ontologies meet, as one can see from Schulz's texts interpreted in the framework of Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. Modernity is the locus of the clash between the pre-modern times of, in Schulzian terms, the organic Word as impetus and model of creation (a grounded, possessing of genealogy, authentic way of growth, development and functioning in the world), and the inorganic Spectacle (a fragmented existence without foundation, the best metaphor - and the only habitat – for which is dreaming collective and the phantasmagoria it produces). The passage between these two modes is modernity, a wish image that combines the "old" and the "new." "I, Anna Csillag," says the voice inside the

passage – the inorganic, non-existing woman with thick hair, a Job and a Salome of the new age. She is the one who dictates fashion; she is the Madam Death and the moloch, whom Jacob so desperately fights, trying to take revenge on her for his failures. She is the dreaming collective and the fragmented story of hunting that has no end, - the story that others will keep telling, even if she disappears: the endless story of a commercial, the saga of our days.

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