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Creator's freedom. Schulz's late projects

“We have lived for too long under the terror of the matchless perfection of the Demiurge,” my father said. “For too long the perfection of his handiwork has paralysed our own creative instinct. 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.”

B. Schulz, *Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or the Second Book of Genesis*

The Habsburg empire was coming to an end, and the arsenal of creative models in that grand culture was diminishing. The demise spurred a debate on what culture is a creative culture, and what should the nature of the new Book of Genesis be like. The question about the birth of the new culture constituted the core of modernist literature, which discussed the usefulness and durability of its previous solutions, and which wanted to continue creating regardless of the dissolution of the form. It could seem that the creative one is the state culture, which is alive, i.e.: produces new citizen-friendly solutions, propagates artistic freedom, and turns to current issues. Culture also needs a state which exists on the map of the world. Furthermore, it seems that art feeds on the diversity of the material: be it historical, social, or ethnic. The k.k. monarchy did the impossible. It created from its grave. It created from its decay. It created its own myth, a myth of secured, happy, multi-national, multi-ethnic identity, based, according to Claudio Magris¹, on a multi-cultural nature, bureaucratism and... hedonism. In his best known essay, Magris thus defined the form of creation:

The term myth, which in itself indicates the distortion and deformation of reality resulting from the urge to extract from it the alleged fundamental truth, an assumed

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¹ C. Magris, “Mit habsburski w literaturze austriackiej moderny”, in: idem, *O demokracji, pamięci i Europie Środkowej*, selected and trans. J. Ugniewska, Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, Krakow 2016, p. 24. [English version translated from Polish].

meta-historic core capable of summarising in its essence, takes in the case a special meaning. The Habsburg myth is not a regular process of the transfiguration of the real world, any proper literary activity, but it is a complete substitution of the historic and social reality with another one, fictional and delusive, it is a sublimation of a specific society, and its transfer to a picturesque, safe, and organised world of tales.²

However, further in his argumentation, the author made a reservation that creators who gave the drive to the myth prosperity did not operate in their descriptions of the Monarchy, only its stylistic attractive potential, which they used for mass production of idealised abstract images. Magris also said that Musil or Roth often presented a more in-depth and ironic study of that reality. He took the liberty of making a generalisation calling the writers from the circle of the Habsburg culture “the prisoners to the transfiguration of the Danube world”³, which had first been mythologised several decades before the establishing the dual monarchy. In 1806, Francis II turned from emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation to Francis I, the emperor of Austria. Magris in *The Habsburg myth* did not strive to present a *real* image of Austria-Hungary, he did not say, like Stefan Zweig in *Świat wczorajszy*, “it was like that”. He actually focussed on the phenomenon of mythisation, in which writers of Jewish descent participated, who were brought up to a certain vision of that mythical world, yet they ceaselessly tried to create their own mythologies.

Habsburg authors mythologised the world, which had just passed. A day after the fall of the monarchy, they released work describing the special character of the country of law, order, and administration. A myth feeding on nostalgia, melancholia⁴, and a fetishised memory created the image of *Austria Felix* – a land of harmony and happiness. It did not distort reality, yet it allowed each story to create generalising structures, i.e. cultural diagnoses. That task was raised by literature, and in it: e.g. Joseph Roth, Robert Musil, Alfred Kubin, Gustav Meyrink, and, finally, Bruno Schulz. They wrote about a culture which noticed its own creative inefficiency, about a culture experiencing the civilisational crisis, thus unable to petrify and organise the inflowing modernisations. The undeniable end of monarchy, the trauma of WWI, and the impending spectre of another war foreshadowed by an economic crisis, national conflicts, totalitarianisms, and an apocalyptic mood proved, in fact, creative.

² Ibid., p. 16.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Interestingly enough, Freud consistently refused melancholia any creative powers. Only mourning “performed” in his analysis any “work”, Vide S. Freud, “Żałoba i melancholia”, in: idem, *Psychologia nieświadomości*, transl. Robert Reszke, Wydawnictwo KR, Warsaw 2009, pp. 148–149.

Schulz, the involuntary child of the Habsburg culture, wrote with a disbelief in grand stories. He did not trust the official languages editing the text of the handbook on modernity for modern people. He was interested in the outdated, yet unused, potential and private narratives. It was thanks to them that he joined the stream of uncertain, doubting, and blasphemous stories. How long had it been spun before him? And does it not offer the fullest, according to the author of *Treatise on Tailors' Dummies*, reflection of the phenomenon of existence? A story which protects one's individualism, and in the case of Schulz, who was afraid of his own consciousness being transformed, fences one from the world, and promotes elite creativity. In the programme text of Jakub's cosmology, Schulz doubted gnostically, and asked about the place of creation within the world of Habsburg Demiurge, a reality considered as alien, incomprehensible, and incomplete. In a story of a changing nature, Schulz said with conviction that modernity does not remember an experience, already distant and outdated, which helped create the cultural form of communication, and create language. Culture, then, does not remember the source of a metaphor which it uses, which is why it cannot describe itself, while everything that is new, it senses everything as artificial, colonising tradition, and imposing its own political-scientific-psychological discourse. Before Schulz, the reality was tested by Austrian-Hungarian creators. To the set of achievements of writers propagating trust in the language and words, talking about the need for recreation and regeneration of meaning, Schulz added a reflection on the remote rural areas of the k.k. Monarchy, which having applied the strategy of modernisation through copying, condemned itself to mindlessly reproducing grand stories. Reproducing while adding mistakes.⁵ Upon reading *The Other Side*, *The Golem*, and Roth's novel, Schulz built his own creative imagination. In *The Street of Crocodiles*, *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, and in the stories *The Republic of Dreams* and *A Homeland*, Schulz considered the demiurgic trait of a world limited to Franz Joseph I, and the strategy of existence in the world of a creative individual, the strategy of derivative demiurgy. The methods of the Creator described by the listed creators remained around temporal motifs: can one turn back time, return to a state of an undegenerated culture from before the decadence, and can one return to the speech of myths? Schulz added his own question: can one finally mature to their immaturity if one identifies the violent acceleration of things and time? Who could do that? According to Schulz: only the Demiurge himself.

As Magris noted, the disintegration of the Monarchy proved creative. It inspired at least three literary images of the demise raising the topic of creation

⁵ "He did not understand, Lieutenant Trotta, that rough peasant lads with noble hearts really existed, and that many things that really exist in the world were copied and put in bad books; they were bad copies, that's all." Vide J. Roth, *Marsz Radetzky'ego*, trans. W. Kragen, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 1995, p. 296. [English version: Roth, Joseph. *The Radetzky March*. Granta Publications. Kindle Edition].

in the post-Habsburg epoch. Any discussion should begin with an analysis of the suggestive image of the end of the Empire known from Roth's *The Radetzky March*. Then, when "on the ruin" a repeat creation will be possible, one must refer to a work emphasising the need for the restitution and regeneration of elemental meanings, to *The Golem* by Gustav Meyrink. I shall interpret also the self-creative devices applied by Schulz, which had much in common with the often omitted aspect of its presence in the literary world – a visible *shift*, which occurred in the sphere of the creative strategy, more and more inclined onto the *global nature* of artistic projects. As the final link of the description of the demiurgy of Habsburg reality, I consider the idea common for Schulz and Kubin for a regressive utopia, the creation of a new yet strangely familiar world.

What was the Habsburg world like? It was ending. Slowly yet consistently it shook in its foundations, it was falling apart, and dying, but its definitive end was not coming. That demise *in instalments* inspired creators to consider the essence of creation, bring to life reality and beings, and to postulate a self-renewal process. People talked then about the remedies, and myths renewing culture critically or as being beautiful: about the notion of *unity in variety*, *small homelands*, order, welfare state, the office-administration reality, or the other side of reality: the mighty traditions of the nations forming Austria-Hungary spanning several centuries. However, most interesting was the patchwork fragmented structure of the k.k. world, peculiar to artificial creations formed by the few for the masses. Basically, everyone saw the inauthenticity and stagnancy of the culture which had been ossifying for centuries, so both royalists and nationalists became open to the topics associated with nature, tribality, and savagery. When people saw the façade-like nature of art, modern anthropology was born, which promoted, appreciated by Schulz, a project of the return to authentic experiencing, naming, as well as creating culture. Roth wrote about the bureaucritism, the class divisions and the clarity of the world, and the formal dimension of demiurgy. Meyrink approached the darker sides of creation indicating the age-old, particularly intense in the latter half of the 19th c., esotericism of the epoch.

In the times when forgetting seemed to be, by default, substituted by modernist oblivion, when the entire narration-based world was passing, monarchies and grand families were passing, people started to consider the phenomenon of creation and the Creator.

Everything that grew took long to grow; and everything that ended took a long time to be forgotten. Everything that existed left behind traces of itself, and people then lived by their memories, just as we nowadays live by our capacity to forget, quickly and comprehensively.⁶

⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

Roth described Austria before “the grand war”⁷ in *The Radetzky March* through the qualities on which all creation depends. By indicating the order and the time of creation, the author expressed a conviction of the epoch on the significance of grand, strong and irrefutable models, which were the point of reference for all new creations. Those models were catalogued by memory, and they filled modern forms of existence. Attachment of the Habsburg epoch to memory provoked questions on the presence of a subject in the world, about whether “we can actually be present, since we are strongly bound with that which is gone.”⁸ Count Chojnicki opposed:

‘Because the Fatherland no longer exists.’

‘I’m afraid I don’t understand!’

‘I thought you mightn’t understand!’ said Chojnicki. ‘The fact is we’re all dead!’

(...)

‘Of course, taken literally,’ Chojnicki replied, ‘it still exists. We still have an army’ – he nodded at the Lieutenant – ‘and we have an officialdom’ – with a nod back at the District Commissioner. ‘But it’s falling apart as we speak. As we speak, it’s falling apart, it’s already fallen apart! An old man with not long to go, a head cold could finish him off, he keeps his throne by the simple miracle that he’s still able to sit on it. But how much longer, how much longer? The age doesn’t was us anymore!’⁹

Torpor and falsehood. Those were the markers of times which, according to the Count, could be defined using the metaphor of a morgue, or a wax museum, so popular in the rural areas of the Monarchy. We participate in events which guarantee the liveliness of a country, yet we ourselves are not alive. We reproduce, yet we do not create.

In no time, the platoon were on their feet in front of him, formed up into two ranks, and it struck him suddenly, and probably for the first time in his military career, that these men with their drilled precision were dead parts of dead machines that didn’t produce anything.¹⁰

The ceremonial drill of parades, marches, and anniversaries responded with the illusion of vitality to the prophecy of the demise of Habsburg strength.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ A. Jamroziakowa, “Elektroniczny hegemon obrazu czy bliskość bios w naszej sztuce?” in: eadem, *Rewizje – kontynuacje. Sztuka i estetyka w czasach transformacji*, Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, Poznań 1996, p. 101.

⁹ J. Roth, op. cit., pp. 180–181.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 231.

No, the world wasn't doomed, whatever Chojnicki said, you could see with your own eyes how alive it was! The inhabitants of this city, cheerful subjects of His Apostolic Majesty, members virtually of his household, thronged the entire Ringstrasse.¹¹

Another principle, which, if observed, guaranteed a successful show, was the care in replaying individual points in the plan of celebrations. The reading of perfectly known sheet music was supposed to confirm anew, and legitimise the meaning of the melody being played.

All their public concerts – they took place under the veranda of the District Commissioner – began with the Radetzky March. Although it was so familiar to all the members of the band that they could have played it in their sleep without a conductor, still the bandleader insisted on reading every note from the score. And, every Sunday, as though he was rehearsing the Radetzky March for the first time, in military and musicianly conscientiousness Nechwaj raised his head, his baton and his gaze and aimed all three simultaneously at whichever part of the circle around him most needed his commands. The bitter drums rolled, the sweet flutes warbled, and the win-some cymbals pealed. A pleasant and musing smile came to the faces of the listeners, and the blood quickened in their legs. Even as they stood still, they had the feeling they were marching. Young girls parted their lips and stopped breathing. Mature men looked at the ground and remembered their manoeuvres. Old women sat in the park some distance away, and wobbled their little grey heads. It was summer.¹²

The task was completed, and once again the collective illusion captivated the audience. The fate of such actions was, however, uncertain. They had to be repeated on a regular basis, even if there was an air of impending catastrophe. A catastrophe which came suddenly during the celebrations of the local regiment. The celebrations, which had been planned long in advance, and prepared in the minutest detail, were interrupted by the news of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Initially, the festivities continued as if nothing had happened. The organisers did organising miracles to prevent panic, and unnecessary excitement until the news was confirmed. When the news spread, immediately national antagonisms came to voice (in the unofficial languages of the Monarchy). Hungarian officers offended the late successor to the throne overtly delighted in the unavoidable end of the Habsburgs grandeur. Only second-lieutenant von Trotta, grandson of a hero from Solferino, protested fervently threatening: “The next man to say a word against the departed,” the Lieutenant resumed, “I will personally

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

shoot down!"¹³ To protect the sovereign was in Carl Joseph's blood. His grandfather saved the Emperor's life, he made his mark in history, and became part of the Habsburg myth. The ancestor transformed into an individual inconvenient for the Monarchy, engaging in a fight not only against the enemy of the Emperor, but also with the enemy of individuality, with the official historical discourse. The hero desired to participate in creation! He opposed the version of the Solferino events, which made its way to school handbooks, and he strove to remove his nobilitated name from the complete mythologised story. The last von Trotta, when uttering the memorable sentence, operated automatically. Being prisoner to the family story, always marked with the heroism of his grandfather, he himself could never become an outstanding individual. He was featureless, colourless, he did not know who he was, which was why he so easily agreed to perform any of the roles he was offered: of a son, student, soldier, or even a reduced in rank farm hand. As a child of the Habsburg era should be, he had much difficulty in coping with change, with any shifts within the existing conventions.

Now, even with a different rank and a new roster, how could one possibly alter his accepted form, calculated to last for the whole of a soldier's life, and introduce into the standard sentences unusual communications of circumstances to which one had still to grow accustomed oneself, and whose full import one was yet to grasp?¹⁴

Carl Joseph engaged in heroism fitting his times, i.e. remaining with declarations only. Roth wanted to actively defend his homeland. As a student at the Faculty of Philology of Vienna University, he enlisted with Józef Wittlin whom he met there. He was sent to the front, and he later fought with words working in the press corps. When WWI as well as his emigration to France ended, Roth supported the restitution of the monarchy, and the ascension to the throne of Otto von Habsburg (the son of the last emperor of Austria-Hungary). Immediately before the outbreak of WWII, Roth saw in that concept Austria's protection against Anschluss. He even travelled to Vienna to meet with chancellor Schuschnigg, and discuss the matter of national security. The meeting did not come to effect. Roth died in the last stage of his alcohol dependency on the eve of September 1939. Thus Wittlin wrote about Roth's passing away:

Roth rather belonged to the species of Isaiahs, who can see from afar the impending Apocalypse, and warn against it. God chooses such prophets on the eve of a catastrophe.

¹³ Ibid., p. 333.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

Apart from the byname *prophet*: Roth gained others as well. For some he was the *scribe* of the Habsburg era. Stefan Zweig read his novels as eulogies celebrating the Monarchy, not viewing Roth as a *critic*. The author of *The Radetzky March* would probably consider himself a *witness*, whose beliefs sanctioned the true nature of the account, as well as its protagonists.

In the novel, the Commissioner examined the Emperor, and confirmed his existence only when he received the favour of an audience, which was supposed to save the honour of the von Trotta family. The meeting between the Emperor and one who believed in him was a meeting of two matrices: the Mother (Latin *mater*) of the nations, and the Mother of Carl Joseph.

Their white whiskers, their narrow, sloping shoulders, their matching height and build, gave each of them the impression of confronting his own mirror image. One of them thought he had changed into a district commissioner. And the Emperor thought he was standing in front of his own mirror image.¹⁵

One conditioned the veracity of the other. Their fates, intertwined for long, revealed at the time of the meeting the power of their relationship. The story, which was personified by the Emperor, inspired the existence of the narrator, the Commissioner. In Roth's novel, the process went further as he associated the body of history with the narration. Thus there occurred a meeting of mirror images: the commissioner modelling the perfect mythical ruler, as symbolised by Franz Joseph I, and the Emperor, who referred to the same myth, for decades additionally noticing his reflection in the nation. Not always, though, the meeting of two worlds happens so peacefully. It was more often the case that two parties forced to meet felt a significant discomfort; one imposing on the other, trying to liken it to itself.

He slapped Demant on the shoulder, as if to help him regain his natural posture. Actually, he had a bit of a soft spot for the regimental doctor. But by gum, thunderation, the fellow was so unmilitary! If only he'd been a little bit more soldiery, one wouldn't have to look out for him quite so much!¹⁶

Doctor Demant did not possess military manners or attitude. Though having sympathy for the doctor, soldiers felt awkward in the company of a man from outside their order, feeling a natural need for imposing rules on him.

Rudolf from Schulz's *Spring* also confirmed the existence of the emperor. As proof, he presented the marker, and a detailed description of the ruler. Rudolf

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

refused Franz Joseph I any humanity. For him, the Emperor was only a sign: "His narrow eyes, dull like buttons embedded in triangular deltas of wrinkles, were not human eyes."¹⁷ Roth's opinion of the emperor's eyes was milder, yet surprisingly similar: "His hard and bright eyes had been looking confusedly into a confused distance for many years."¹⁸ Schulz's and Roth's views of the Emperor transcended each other. For Schulz, he seemed as a pure bureaucratic action that paralyzes individuality, spontaneity, and improvisation (creativity).

(...) Franz Joseph squared the world like paper, regulated its course with the help of patents, held it within procedural bounds, and insured it against derailment into things unforeseen, adventurous, or simply unpredictable.¹⁹

Roth rather described the solitude and the apparent alienation of Franz Joseph, who ruled thanks to a once accelerated temporal machine, and who simply became bored of administrating. Ruling stopped meaning creation, it came closer to "the pragmatism of boredom."²⁰ "Many things seem to point to the fact that Franz Joseph was in reality a powerful (...) ruler, and, at the same time, a very "sad demiurge."²²

The creators from the turn of the 20th c. translated their interest in individualism to spiritual practice. The subjects of Franz Joseph apart from the Emperor's cult also practised the new blasphemous creationist cults. At that time, the collective imagination was possessed by gnosticism, occultism, and tarot. In New York, Helena Blawatska established the Theosophical Society (Towarzystwo Teozoficzne). In London, there was established the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, members of which included Aleister Crowley, W.B. Yeats, and other enthusiasts of esotericism. Gustav Meyrink established the theosophical society *Zum blauen Stern* (Under the Blue Star). Hugely popular were the lectures of dr. Rudolf Steiner, the creator of anthroposophy, during which he discussed with unwavering enthusiasm with his many students various embodiments of beings. Franz Kafka, who participated in the meetings with Steiner, described in *Diaries* the rhetoric and the devotional nature of the doctor's presentations²³. That *tradition* was started (at

¹⁷ B. Schulz, *Wiosna*, p. 186. [English version: Schulz, B. *The Fictions of Bruno Schulz*. Picador].

¹⁸ J. Roth, op. cit., p. 240.

¹⁹ B. Schulz, *Wiosna*, p. 187.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 186.

²² Ibid.

²³ Kafka wrote about Steiner's lecture in his diary on 26 March 1911: "Rhetoric effect: Comfortable discussion of the objections of opponents (...) That rhetoric effect corresponds, in fact, to the imperative of the devotional mood. Continual looking at the palm of the extended hand." On 28 March 1911, he added: "Dr. Steiner is very much taken up with his absent disciples. At the lecture the dead press so about him. Hunger for knowledge? But do they really need it? Apparently.

the turn of the 17th c.) by another Father of Nations, the eccentric Rudolf II, whose many interests and obsessions included the hermetic philosophy, Satanism, occultism, cabala, and astronomy (in his court, there was a place for Johannes Kepler). He was also an avid alchemist, and the legend of his experiments inhabited the imagination of the gentry even in the times of Franz Joseph. Count Chojnicki from Roth's novel considered himself the continuator of the search for the philosopher's stone or gold. In the times of Rudolf II, Prague was seized by ontological, not political, matters. In Germany, there was the extremely emphatic, strongly integrating, Hasidic movement and the *Sefer Hasidim (Book of the Pious)* initiated in the 12th c. by Samuel of Speyer and his son Yehuda of Speyer, later developed and codified by Eleazar of Worms, which propagated asceticism, altruism, and distance to the world. Right next to the theoretical considerations on the essence of the Hasidic attitude, Eleazar of Worms presented²⁴ the principles of letter magic, which enables one to animate artificial man. The meditation on *Sefer Yetzirah* was supposed to only serve the intellectual skimming the creative power of the Creator. As a result of Rudolf II's hatred for the clergy, persecutions fell on Catholic priests and rabbis alternately. The history of those persecutions wrote the contemporary version of the story of the Golem, which, being one of the most vivid Yudaistic myths talking mainly about the beauty of intellectual creation, in time turned into a story of the limits and the ridiculousness of the acts of the Demiurge.

Modernist artists were closer to the private forms of demiurgy than a belief in grand stories. Schulz associated individualism with modesty, or more broadly: with art marginalised by elitarianism. By comparing his own thought on mythological stories so special for one's identity with their artistic executions in the works by Thomas Mann, Schulz wrote about Witkacy: "(...) I tried on a smaller scale to find my own history, my own mythical lineage."²⁵ Schulz thus marked also his own strategy of artistic conduct, which I shall consistently refer to as *the project*, considering the timorous and subtle nature of the creator's doings in his own case²⁶, and the specificity of the world he created, which was specific for its:

Sleeps two hours. Ever since someone once cut off his electric light he has always had a candle with him. He stood very close to Christ. (...) He is, perhaps, not the greatest contemporary psychic scholar, but he alone has been assigned the task of uniting theosophy and science. And that is why he knows everything, too. Once a botanist came to his native village, a great master of the occult. He enlightened him. That I would look up to Dr. Steiner was interpreted to me by the lady as the beginning of recollection. Vide F. Kafka, *Dzienniki 1910–1923. Część pierwsza*, trans. J. Werter, Puls, Londyn 1993, pp. 51–58. [English version: Kafka, F. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910–1913*. Secker & Warbur, London 1948].

²⁴ For example in *Sode razaja*.

²⁵ Vide B. Schulz, *Do S.I. Witkiewicza*, KL, p. 103. [English version translated from Polish]. First printed in: *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1935, issue 17.

²⁶ "(...) am I entitled to be content, is the Schulz case worth continuing, or further actions." Vide *Do Andrzeja Pleśniewicza*, KL, p. 115.

fragmentary and potential nature. He publicly wrote to Witkacy, yet mainly about the distancing towards the languages of modernity, the inauthentic culture, and fathers who, possibly, do not need to be killed, rather forgotten to create art which is dark and cool, art which "operates in the pre-moral depths."²⁷

At the time when people doubted the possibility of pure primal creation, they began to consider the available methods of re-creation, repeat creation, which were supposed to restore faith in creativity which touches basic meanings. The continuation of the criticism of the actions of Franz Joseph formulated the assumption:

If that authoritarian old man threw all his prestige on the scales, one could do nothing but give up all one's aspirations and longings, manage as well as one could in the only possible world – that is, a world without illusions and romanticism – and forget.²⁸

The bureaucratized and extremely uncreative reality forced a *reprogramming* of the mode of operation of an individual focussed on defending individualism. One of the proposals for defending oneself was: to forget. However, "(...) what does it mean to forget?"²⁹ What did the mechanism of anamnesis, according to Schulz, consist of, and what end did it serve?

(...) total regression (...), retreats into oneself, journeys to the roots. This is how we branch out into anamnesis and are shaken by underground subcutaneous shivers.³⁰

Plato's idea of reminding oneself of the once recognised was interpreted by Schulz as delving into the world of one's own subconscious. In *Timaeus*, Socrates accused Solon and his contemporaries of being oblivious and ignorant, through which qualities the modern people were convinced of the exceptional and unique nature of their times.³¹ *Phaedo*, on the other hand, focussed on explaining the process of recalling the content of the pre-existential period of our lives.

²⁷ Vide B. Schulz, *List do S.I. Witkiewicza*, p. 102.

²⁸ B. Schulz, *Wiosna*, p. 156.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³¹ Vide Plato, "Timaeus", in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. II, trans. W. Wytwicki, Unia Wydawnicza Verum, Kęty 1999, 23 B. "And whatever happened either in your country or in ours, or in any other region of which we are informed – if there were any actions noble or great or in any other way remarkable, they have all been written down by us of old, and are preserved in our temples. (...) and so you have to begin all over again like children, and know nothing of what happened in ancient times, either among us or among yourselves. As for those genealogies of yours which you just now recounted to us, Solon, they are no better than the tales of children. In the first place you remember a single deluge only, but there were many previous ones."

But if the knowledge which we acquired before birth was lost by us at birth, and if afterwards by the use of the senses we recovered what we previously knew, will not the process which we call learning be a recovering of the knowledge which is natural to us, and may not this be rightly termed recollection? Very true.³²

The dialogue did not decide about the significance of that content for spiritual and intellectual human development. Schulz, unlike Plato, offered an evaluation of “those messages”, placing particular emphasis on the need for one’s recollection of those. Meyrink similarly built the story of *The Golem* on the “transmigration of the spirit” of Athanasius Pernath, who experienced the strangeness of existence exactly through the lack of knowledge of his own provenance, or more precisely through amnesia which inflicted him due to a severe illness he had passed through.

I realised that the mainspring of all my thoughts and actions lay hidden in another, forgotten existence, and that I would never be able to uncover it. I am a cutting that has been grafted onto another stem, a branch sprouting from an alien stock. Even if I were to succeed in forcing my way into that locked ‘room’, would that not just mean I would once again fall prey to the ghosts that have been locked away in it?³³

Meyrink referred to the myth of Golem, and said that one should forget to find out who she/he was. The story of Golem was told by the Babylonian Talmud in the late Middle Ages. Yet the idea of Golem had already been raised by the *Book of Genesis* dated 3rd c. AD, which talked about the power of God’s creation through words and writings. The version of the story closest to Meyrink was the 16th-century legend of a rabbi who animated an artificial man made of clay. The animation was done using a spell written on a piece of paper, and placed in the mouth of the figure, which began to grow, and became obedient to the instructions of its master, working and protecting the Jewish community from persecution. Yet it rebelled against its creator, and it had to be neutralised. The metaphor of a dummy, an effigy, a mannequin, or a wax figure³⁴, extremely popular in modernist literature, was intended to evoke dread in the new man devoid of feelings, and undergoing increasing technicalisation. In Meyrink’s novel, insensitive modern people were replaced with Golem. The characters hiding in the ghetto or living in gutters and inns personified all the features of the Jewish

³² Plato, “Phaedo”, in: op. cit., 75 D.

³³ G. Meyrink, *Golem*, trans. A. Lange, Wydawnictwo Vesper, Czerwonak 2014, p. 67. [English version: Meyrink, G. *The Golem*, trans. M. Mitchell, Dedalus 2010].

³⁴ Vide B. Schulz, *Ulica Krokodyli*, OP, p. 83. Meyrink even wrote a compilation of short stories entitled *Waxworks* (1908).

community placed within the mystical tradition. Golem evokes menace appearing every thirty years in Prague. It identified with the psychological essence of the individuals it meets uncertain of their spirituality; it assumed their figure, and took them on a journey towards self-recognition. It thus met Athanasius Pernath, and his "clean slate". The underground Prague labyrinth was the perfect place for starting the journey deep into one's own subconscious. As well as to avoid the image of the hated city.

Meyrink hated Prague. He left it for ever when a bank he had established lost its credibility after he had been faced with resistance on the part of bureaucracy, which led to his being accused of embezzlement. Meyrink also fed on aversion to the system, for which a search for the truth was alien, while administrative procedure was dear. He ended up in prison, and he did not regain his previous position. He travelled Europe. He moved to Vienna establishing cooperation with the Munich-based periodical *Simplicissimus*, for which he translated, and wrote stories. He entered the circle of artists. He met many writers and plastic artists: Stefan Zweig, Max Brod, Max Klinger, and Alfred Kubin, with whom he wanted to cooperate to illustrate *The Golem*. However, the work on the novel was protracted. Meyrink, a seasoned author of short stories yet not of novels, had trouble structuring the work, which included too many plots and characters. Therefore, Kubin decided to use the already finished illustrations in his work entitled *The Other Side*. Golem was eventually illustrated by a Prague artist Hugo Steiner-Prag.

Master Pernath began his path to self-recognition with a mysterious meeting, as a result of which he came into possession of the *Book of Ibbur*. Being a specialist, he was to fix the initial included in the book, a significant initial: *J* is, in fact, the first letter of the name of God. Thus the protagonist's fate was marked from the start with the need to refer to a deity. The self-creation process, started by amnesia, the defence mechanism of memory, cannot be considered as a fully autonomous process. Another system of signs to which the protagonist's ego was supposed to refer was the symbolism of the cards of tarot³⁵ – Athanasius found, according to tarot interpreters, a card with the image of the Fool again associated with the first, though the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet that time, the letter *aleph*. That card was supposed to indicate Pernath's rebirth as an individual. Another theory, about the fact of finding that spiritual wanderer, rather indicated the card of the Magician, associated with the search of self-awareness. In finding the card, Athanasius would thus symbolically begin work on himself. The protagonist also came across a card with the image of the Hanged Man, the harbinger of imminent death, but also the duality of the spirit of an individual informed about the need to seek harmony.

³⁵ In Schulz's works, there appeared, e.g. a "spring horoscope", vide B, Schulz, *Spring*, p. 143.

Athanasius read the signs he was offered, yet he needed a guide through their world. He met Hillel Shemaiah, who displayed an in-depth knowledge of Talmud and cabala. He told him about the rewards awaiting the investigator, the reader of signs, which are offered to him by the world considered as a book. That reward is the individualisation of the spirit, the perfect ego, and self-consciousness ensuring protection in the modern world. At some stage of Athanasius's spiritual education, Hillel, as a defender of the mystical tradition of Judaism, had to start the discussion on the sense in Pernath's participation in the "mystery of the book":

Do you think there is no rhyme or reason why our Jewish books are written in consonants alone? Each reader has to find for himself the secret vowels that go with them and which reveal a meaning that is for him alone; the living word should not wither into dead dogma.³⁶

Hillel wanted to assure his disciple about the animating role of reading and renewing the senses included in the Book. The despondency afflicting Athanasius the neophyte was a foreshadowing of the despondency of the epoch, one of which Schulz became the spokesman. Was each language of the provinces which strived to talk about reality not exactly the "dead dogma" for the author of *Treatise on Tailors' Dummies*? Schulz did not believe in the exegesis of the meanings included in the new Book of Genesis. An exegesis which does not stop with the provincial understanding and acceptance of modernism will not protect, according to Schulz, the individual from the cruelty of the world, totalitarianism, and the impending catastrophe of WWII. Just like Kafka, Schulz did not see any rescue in the new languages discussing modernity, neither did he see it in Judaism, and the language of religion. He would rather perish than talk modernity.

Schulz's prose is interpreted through the teachings of Isaac Luria³⁷, and his theory of the *tikkun* process – the need to find and merge into a whole the fragments of broken dishes, so that they could return to their place specified by God. The mending of the world is the chief meaning of the *Aleinu* prayer, which is said to mark each of the three parts of the day. "Tikkun olam", words uttered by a worshipper, refer to the mystical goal of the Jewish community, i.e. to perfect the world through the Kingdom of the Almighty. The mission, on which Jews have embarked, began, though, together with its executors, secularising in the 19th c., while in the 20th c. it was rather focussed on the need to mend the world based on the ongoing changes within the social and political movements. Thus the group

³⁶ G. Meyrink, op. cit., pp. 140–141.

³⁷ The mystical interpretations of Schulz's prose along with the discussions by Władysław Panas unfortunately omitted the reflection on the history of philosophy of the author of *Treatise on Tailors' Dummies*. Vide W. Panas, *Księga Blasku. Traktat o kabale w prozie Brunona Schulza*, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 1997.

of the most engaged communists, socialists, economists, and politicians, came to include Jews, who departed from the original programme of their mission, which mainly served the development of the spirit and morality in God's Name.

Schulz enveloped the story of creation and art in the metaphor of demiurgy. He was interested in the grand creative power, thanks to which any project could immediately and outstandingly be fulfilled *ex nihilo*. He was fascinated by the immediate availability, and endless potential, which were shared by unknown creative forces distant from the world.³⁸ Schulz's demiurgy should be derived from several sources. Undoubtedly, he referred to Plato's tradition of talking about creation. According to Plato, a world made according to the model of an idea is the work of a craftsman-worker (Greek *demiurgos*). By creating, the Creator guards the order of creation – necessity decides about the formation of the world (Greek *ananke*), the creation of man is possible only after the formation of immortal beings, i.e. gods while mortals are created through the necessity to maintain order within the ladder of beings.³⁹ Schulz's demiurgy was derived by Jerzy Jarzębski⁴⁰ exactly from Plato by writing about *God* and *creator*. Jarzębski, the author of the introduction to an edition of Schulz's works by Biblioteka Narodowa, has had a huge impact on such an understanding of the term.⁴¹ Notes to that edition explained *demiurgy* with the safeguard of enabling the readers to choose a specific method of interpretation of the entire *Treatise on Tailors' Dummies*. The "method of interpretation" of the reflections on the essence included in *Treatise...* should be surely influenced by the vocabulary of Schulz's notion. The father is, in fact, referred to as the *Heresiarch*, while his doctrine as *k.k.-nish*.⁴² The reference to

³⁸ While analysing Schulz's attitude towards reality, Jan Kurowicki wrote of "(...) distancing from everyday matters, yet not in the trivial sense: as life's indifference to it. Rather in a deeper sense: in the distancing from it, escape from the laws of its mythology". Vide J. Kurowicki, *Normalność jako sen idioty. Wykłady o kulturowych i filozoficznych kontekstach literatury współczesnej*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej im. T. Kotarbińskiego, Zielona Góra 1994, p. 91.

³⁹ The order of creation was discussed in the dialogue: *Timaeus*. Vide Plato, *Dialogi*, vol. II... XIII, 41, BCD, pp. 690–691. "All these the creator first set in order, and out of them he constructed the universe, which was a single animal comprehending in itself all other animals, mortal and immortal. Now of the divine, he himself was the creator, but the creation of the mortal he committed to his offspring. And they, imitating him, received from him the immortal principle of the soul; and around this they proceeded to fashion a mortal body, and made it to be the vehicle of the soul, and constructed within the body a soul of another nature which was mortal, subject to terrible and irresistible affections." Vide *Ibid.*, XXXI, 69, CD, p. 722.

⁴⁰ J. Jarzębski, "Czasoprzestrzeń mitu i marzenia w prozie Brunona Schulza", in: *Powieść jako autokreacja*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Wrocław 1984, p. 215. vide *Traktat o manekinach*, note 2, p. 37.

⁴¹ The issue was also noted by A. Kalin, vide *idem*, "'Księga heretycka' – Schulzowski model kultury literackiej", in: *W ulamkach zwierciadła... Bruno Schulz w 110 rocznicę urodzin i 60 rocznicę śmierci*, ed. Władysław Panas, Małgorzata Kitowska-Lysiak, Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2003, note 25, p. 301.

⁴² B. Schulz, *Manekiny*, OP, p. 34.

gnostic heresy seemed justified. It was first referred to, as a side remark to his reflections, by Artur Sandauer⁴³. Later the thesis on the gnostic dimension of the Father's demiurgy was expanded by Arkadiusz Kalin⁴⁴. Gnosis as a philosophical and religious view became the highest heresy in the history of Judaism and Christianity. It talked about the creation of the world in a blasphemously dual manner. It challenged (through Ptolemy) the authenticity of the Old Testament, and the God described therein. It accused him of demiurgy, creative incapacity, it questioned the act of creation, and it saw in it a god of cruelty, a newly recognised god, an ungod. It sought the true god outside the zone of naming. It sought the god of ideas, not matter.

Demiurge, that grand master and artist, made matter invisible, made it disappear under the surface of life.⁴⁵

In gnosis, the formation of matter depends on Archons, the creators of world. They assume the role of the Old Testament God, securing the creation of living beings. Matter was, in fact,

(...) the most passive and the most defenceless essence in the cosmos. (...) All attempts at organising matter are transient and temporary, easy to reverse and to dissolve.⁴⁶

Was that the reason why the gnostic story of creation needed the notion of demiurgy? Why did it need a suggestion of power, which would take up the kneading of that which is compliant? However, such a *task* does not correspond to the gnostic principle of openness to cognition as gnosticism

(...) unlike the quickly solidifying in dogmatism, "totalitarian" and monopolistic forms of "Christianity" (Jewish, Greek and Roman Christianity) also in its Christian version remained true to the spirit of revelation, without degenerating into the letter, and retained its pluralistic, freedom focussed, and tolerant nature.⁴⁷

Due to its availability, gnostic cognition occurs not only thanks to a divine initiative and revelation, but it can also be achieved through spiritual training. It enables one to maintain spiritual individualism and a bond with the world of

⁴³ A. Sandauer, "Bóg, Szatan, Mesjasz i...?" in: *Pisma zebrane*, vol. II, p. 292.

⁴⁴ A. Kalin, dz. cyt., pp. 299–316.

⁴⁵ B. Schulz, *Traktat...*, OP, p. 38.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁷ J. Prokopiuk, "Hymn o Perle'. W świetle gnozy", in: idem, *Ścieżki wtajemniczenia. Gnosis aeterna*, Wydawnictwo tCHU, Warsaw 2000, p. 28 [English version translated from Polish].

spirit, protecting one against disarrangement, and excessive immersion in the world of unstable matter. It leads towards salvation, while its essence consists of rebellion and opposition to evil (gnosticism asks repeatedly: *Unde malum?*), and imperfection. Yet *gnosis* is particularly inclined to accept the role of people who are bright, gifted, who shall be granted the exclusive type of cognition told using the dark flashing language of myth, and coming from the depths of internal experience. Gnosticism of the Iranian type (typology by Hans Jonas⁴⁸), most exploited in Mani's doctrine, to which *gnosis* is often reduced, tells the myth of the creation of the world as a struggle between the good God and the evil Demiurge. It is an extremely dualistic myth, which tells of a fight, and a repeat separation of Lightness and Darkness. It is worth adding that there also exists a Syrian-Egyptian gnosticism, Monistic in nature, which has been continued in the Christian Valentinianism.

Did *gnosis* become the primary philosophy in Schulz's works? Did it enable the creation of a coherent image of the world? On the contrary. Schulz's demiurge remained at the service of a fragment and individuality aware of its own elitism and marginality.

Our creatures will not be the 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.⁴⁹

Schulz's strategy of self-creation indicated, though, that he did not wish to remain a fringe blasphemer. His presence in the Polish literary world was not just a fleeting moment. Upon publishing the first volume of his stories, Schulz found himself at a point where his previous fringe works were presented for the public to see, and for other writers to comment upon. That, it would seem, is the dream of each writer: to be commented upon! Schulz himself did write that: "I need a companion."⁵⁰ Schulz appreciated (also due to the security aspect) a partnership-base relation, affectionate, full of understanding for his creative sensitivity, and for the language of his stories. He, himself being his "most affectionate" reader⁵¹, was afraid of being *seized* by the language of others. He did not remit any attempts to protect⁵² himself, and to protect his writings. He discussed that matter in his letters (usually intended for publication)

⁴⁸ H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, Beacon Press, Boston 1958.

⁴⁹ *Traktat...*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ B. Schulz, *Do Tadeusza i Zofii Brezów*, KL, p. 48.

⁵¹ And reviewers, vide M. Bartosik, *Bruno Schulz jako krytyk*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, Krakow 2000.

⁵² Just like "Schulz in a subtle yet consistent way defended the independence of his texts, and the individuality of his own reflections on the issue of writing (...)", the significance of those activities were discussed by Tomasz Bocheński, vide T. Bocheński, *Czarny humor w twórczości Witkacego, Gombrowicza, Schulza*, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, Krakow 2005, pp. 141–150.

with many greats of the world of literature. His most important interlocutors included, in fact, Witkacy and Gombrowicz⁵³, with whom he argued about the importance of privacy, and marginality in artistic work. He chose his interlocutors, congenial interlocutors⁵⁴, carefully and precisely. Schulz was filled with “small feminine projects⁵⁵”, ideas which defined the development of his writings. His plans demanded fulfilment, while his ideas required implementation.

“The Demiurgus had valuable and interesting creative recipes at his disposal.”⁵⁶ Therefore, he did not create from nothing, he used *recipes*: overheard in the language of modernity, science, and authorities. Though, as it turned out, the recipes were completely legal, moral, and compliant with the official principles of creation. Schulz would rather use “certain illegal methods, a whole host of illicit and heretic methods,”⁵⁷ which corresponded to his creative philosophy independent of the discourse of the authorities. It was precisely “thanks to them that he created the multitude of types renewing through their own power.”⁵⁸ Schulz’s private rebellion did not separate the writer from the world of paid holidays, sanatorium stays, awards, and titles. Schulz, often resentful about his unsuccessful personal ventures, complained to his friend: “Facts and actions speak louder than intentions, while intentions, unfounded in facts, do not deserve anyone’s trust.”⁵⁹ Being a master of the epistolary art, he also wrote to the school authorities for a paid leave – unsuccessfully until 1936. Three years after the publication and the indubitable artistic success of *The Street of Crocodiles*, he was granted, though he did not possess the required education, the title of secondary school professor, and thus six months (January–June) of paid leave, which Schulz devoted to writing works, which he intended to include in the second volume of his stories. In 1936, he also became active in literary journals writing reviews, studies, and the first versions of his new stories for *Wiadomości Literackie*, *Pion*, *Skamander*, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, and in *Studio* he conducted a controversial and widely

⁵³ The Schulz–Witkacy, Schulz–Gombrowicz relations were discussed by Włodzimierz Bolecki, vide W. Bolecki, “Witkacy–Schulz, Schulz–Witkacy (Wariacje interpretacyjne)”, in: *Czytanie Schulza. Materiały międzynarodowej sesji naukowej Bruno Schulz – w stulecie urodzin i w pięćdziesięciolecie śmierci Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 8–10 czerwca 1992 roku*, Jerzy Jarzębski (ed.), Oficyna Naukowa i Literacka T.I.C, Kraków 1994.

⁵⁴ Vide J. Ficowski, “W poszukiwaniu partnera kongenialnego” in: *Czytanie Schulza...* Vide: B. Schulz, *Do Tadeusza i Zofii Brezów*, KL, p. 48. “I need closeness of a kindred spirit. I need some warranty of the internal world, the existence of which I have postulated. To continuously keep it on my own faith, bear it against everything through the strength of my defiance – it resembles the toil and torment of Atlas.”

⁵⁵ B. Schulz, *Ojczyzna*, OP, p. 379 [English version translated from Polish].

⁵⁶ Idem, *Traktat*, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ B. Schulz, *Do Andrzeja Pleśniewicza*, p. 115.

commented upon public exchange of letters with Witold Gombrowicz. Schulz was also planning at that time to marry Józefina Szelińska.

Those several months of 1936 were filled with events which gave Schulz, or so it appeared, hope for a European career. The author tried at that time, together with his devoted colleagues, to publish *The Street of Crocodiles* abroad. His *global projects* started to suffer more and more from the political situation in the Europe of developing ideologies. Despite the spectre of the impending war, Schulz decided to set off on a series of foreign visits. He first made a short, only three-day-long (yet unconfirmed in any documents), trip to Sweden. Afterwards, he sent an *exposé* to Italian publishers, in which he included his discussion of *The Street of Crocodiles*.⁶⁰ He tried to establish contact with Thomas Mann (with whom, according to Jerzy Ficowski, he exchanged letters⁶¹), by sending him his story entitled *Die Heimkehr*. Regarding the lost story, there even formed a rumour that Mann stole Schulz's text, and included it in *Doctor Faustus. Die Heimkehr (Return Home)*. The story written by Schulz originally in German (probably completed in October 1937) was supposed to draw the attention of readers abroad. The text was first sent to Izydor Berman, the German translator of Józef Wittlin, and later an attempt was made to deliver it to Thomas Mann himself, who could contribute to its publication on the German market. Unfortunately, any further fate of the story remains unknown. The next copy of the story was supposed to be sent east, to the Moscow-based *Indoizdat* publishing house

⁶⁰ Prior to that, he tried to deliver *The Street of Crocodiles* to another German writer Joseph Roth, yet an unfinished translation of the story made the attempt futile.

⁶¹ Maxim Biller was inspired by that "epistolary situation" – *Im Kopf von Bruno Schulz* made a literary exploitation of Schulz's attempt to contact Mann, spurred by the appearance in Drohobycz of Mann's doppelgänger, who through a behaviour dissimilar to the behaviour (imagined by Schulz) of the real "Doctor Mann" announced the writing of a novel on the Jewish pogrom in Drohobycz – the history of a community, on which Schulz could not/would not write. In his psychologisation of the character of Schulz, Biller went even further than Agata Tuszyńska in *Naręczona Schulza*. He was more successful in it, probably due to his liberal approach to biographical information, a play with associations, the use of well-known pieces of information from the writer's legend contrasted with a completely fictional visit of Thomas Mann to Drohobycz. If the visit was fake, the story about Schulz was fake as well. Or maybe it was just another of Biller's provocations? The two books referred to herein indicated, on the one hand, the power of Schulz's reception, and, on the other, the fictional capacity of the still unstudied facts from his biography. Vide M. Biller, *W głowie Brunona Schulza*, trans. M. Mirońska, Dom Wydawniczy PWN, Warsaw 2014, vide also A. Tuszyńska, *Naręczona Schulza*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Krakow 2015. Biller's Schulz thinks in German, is withdrawn, and notices the deficiency of provincial works. "Too long have they lived in isolation, without any contact with the world, the provincial existence made them fearful, unhinged, and excessively curious. They plan a one-day visit to the Uncle several months in advance, and before one of them goes to the capital, he puts his matters in order with Reynisz the notary. (...) I know (...) what I'm talking about as I'm just like them." Vide M. Biller, op. cit., p. 40. [English version translated from Polish].

The text was lost, yet it still speaks to us, though we do not know its content. It discussed Schulz's attempt to *globalise* his output. Jacek Scholz attempted, impossible in its assumptions, a *reconstruction*⁶² of the now unknown story by analysing the text of one of the last stories published by Schulz, i.e. *The Homeland*⁶³. The researcher put forward a bold hypothesis regarding the virtually organic relationship between both texts. The interesting analysis of topographic indications present in the texts, and the detailed description of the story itself detracts, though, somewhat from the core issue, i.e. the meanings included in the text. The part regarding the language of the work did, in fact, focus on the topic of the history of urban families, and their specificity. Could Schulz have striven towards such a style, and that type of writing? Such a meaning of the referred to analysis can only be presumed from Scholz's text. In fact, the author did not notice Schulz's emerging concept of urban history with the notion of the Return at its core included in the story. Scholz's reflections on the "homeland abroad" paradox (being a reference to the special situation of the inhabitants of the Monarchy, who should, and theoretically could, feel at home everywhere⁶⁴) ought to be supplemented with a motif characteristic of writers of Jewish descent of the "return to the home country", which was present in, e.g. Roth's *Hotel Savoy*. Bloomfield, an American, son of a Jewish factory owner, came to his father's country to, like every year, visit his grave. He did not want to open new factories – he got to the country to pay tribute to the former, not the new. The visitor from America stated: "I am an eastern Jew, and we have always had our homeland where our graves lay,"⁶⁵ though he added: "My son will be a complete American, because I will be buried there."⁶⁶ Schulz in *The Homeland* combined one of his main concepts, i.e. the concept of anamnesis, of the "artificial extension of childhood⁶⁷", of the return to the source of metaphor, with a new and emerging concept of *urban mythology*, probably modelled on Mann's ideas, considering the meanings present in the universal and monumental mythical stories. Schulz did not believe, though, in the possibility of telling the urban mythology. He discussed Mann with his major interlocutors: Witkacy, Debora Vogel, and Anna Płockier:

⁶² J. Scholz, "Oryginał czy przekład? Zagadka tekstu Brunona Schulza 'Ojczyzna'", in: *W ulamkach zwierciadła... Bruno Schulz w 110. rocznicę urodzin i 60. rocznicę śmierci*, A. Podgórska (ed.), Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2003, pp. 173–183.

⁶³ First printed in *Sygnaly* 1938, issue 59.

⁶⁴ J. Scholz wrote about that reality which was "(...) so regular and stable because it enabled one to immerse oneself in thoughts and return." And he continued: "But return where?" That question exposed Scholz's incomprehension of Schulz's concept of the return to childhood times. Vide J. Scholz, op. cit., p. 177.

⁶⁵ J. Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, trans. S. Berman, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warsaw 1959, p. 132.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ B. Schulz, *Do Andrzeja Pleśniewicza*, p. 113. [English version translated from Polish].

In Mann's works, those included Biblical stories, the ancient myths of Babylonia and Egypt. I tried on a smaller scale to find my own private mythology, my own "histories", my own mythical lineage.⁶⁸

Jacek Scholz asked whether Schulz: "could had written a text departing so far in terms of the style, language, and the mode of expression from his earlier works."⁶⁹ Alas, he could! He did write to Mann and the German burgher. Linguistic simplifications, urban reality, metaphors, and the storytelling potential were kept in check. The text seemed like a new urban novel emulating *Buddenbrooks*.⁷⁰

His work on the new mode of writing coincided with problems in his personal and professional life. After definitively parting with his fiancée, and publishing a collection of stories, i.e. *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*⁷¹, which did not meet his initial expectations, sensing a real threat from Western neighbours, he had visible problems with writing. *Projekt Zagranica* (Foreign Countries Project), which was progressing with much difficulty, eventually failed altogether.⁷² However, Schulz was awarded the Gold Laurel of the Polish Academy of Literature, and there were also attempts at translating *The Street of Crocodiles* (the case was "monitored" by Joseph Roth, who first opposed A. Grunbaum's translation of *August*, and later, unfortunately to no avail, tried to offer the job to Saul Fryszman). In 1939, supported by Gombrowicz, he once again tried to interest Italian publishers in Schulz's prose. Finally in 1938, already after the *Anschluss* of Austria, in the middle of the summer period, i.e. right in the heart of the Paris slack season, Schulz set off for the capital of France. He went to Paris at the suggestion of Debora Vogel, and his Łódź friends: a painter Natan Spiegel, and a pianist Maria Chasin; he met up with the latter's brother, Georg Rosenberg in Paris. Schulz was even offered a chance to exhibit his drawings in the autumn. However, he could not afford the obligatory immediate advance payment of 1,600

⁶⁸ B. Schulz, *Do Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza*, p. 103.

⁶⁹ J. Scholz, op. cit., p. 183.

⁷⁰ It was with that book that the Polish reception of Mann began; Stanisław Brzozowski admired it as early as 1904 in *Głos*.

⁷¹ He complained about *Sanatorium*, he wrote that the works were written earlier (some even before the texts included in *The Street of Crocodiles*). In a letter to Tadeusz Breza of 1936, he wrote: "My fragments which you have read, were written on the spot, once, I took them out now as a type of my *paralipomena*. Your praise is unjustified. Those are rather poor works. And he went on: I wrote only a bigger short story, about 60 print pages. I intend to print it in some journal, and later publish it together with my other short stories in a separate volume. I am not satisfied with it. I am already starting to long for a new style. I cannot conclude several short stories." Vide B. Schulz, *Do Tadeusza Brezy*, KL, p. 54. [English version translated from Polish].

⁷² The story *The Homeland* referred directly to them – it can be considered as an ironic comment to the situation in Schulz's personal life. The protagonist managed to end up abroad "too late; not as a victor, but as a wreck", vide B. Schulz, *Ojczyzna*, p. 372.

francs for the organisation of the event. He did not meet any new artists, apart from a few previous acquaintances, and out of all the Paris attractions he only visited a cabaret⁷³ and the museums which were opened at that time. Once again he was too late...

Schulz turned that delay into the basic principle governing the utopian world of *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, a work considerably inspired by a book by Alfred Kubin entitled *The Other Side*:

“The whole secret of the operation,” he added, ready to demonstrate its mechanism on his fingers, “is that we have to 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.”⁷⁴

Schulz used the delay to present the creative capabilities of the world, which remained loosely related to time⁷⁵, miraculously independent of the cruel modernity. Kubin presented his regressive utopia mainly as the perfect, in terms of its assumptions, creation of the ingenious individual – Patera. In *Sanatorium*, Schulz actually described the demonic Doctor Gotard, who “restored [Jakub] to the world of the living”, yet it was nothing like the portrait included in *The Other Side*, thus the conclusion: the presence of only the doctor in the story was a result of the need to indicate the subject responsible for creation. Patera was the ruler and the creator of the perfect state, which spanned some uncharted remote sections of Asia. To “furnish” Pearl, the capital of the country, he chose only belongings, old yet necessary things, marked by crime. “Patera feels an extraordinarily strong aversion to all kinds of progress”⁷⁶, he also makes sure progress does not reach his creation, dividing Pearl from the rest of the world with a tall wall.⁷⁷ When writing about the *material* preferences of his Demiurge, Schulz indicated

⁷³ Of course, there had to be some allusions to Schulz’s “inclinations”. A description of the visit to the *Casanova* cabaret: “He asked me timidly whether he can strike the shoulder of a woman at the neighbouring table, who obviously had nothing against that. He was moved by the fact of touching her. I understood then that he was a slave to his fantasies, and that he was not a happy man” as cited in: J. Ficowski, *Regiony wielkiej herezji*, Fundacja „Pogranicze”, Sejny 2002, p. 81. [English version translated from Polish].

⁷⁴ B. Schulz, *Sanatorium pod Klepsydrą*, OP, p. 254.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 262: “The compulsive readiness to account for the passage of time, the scrupulous penny-wise habit of reporting on the used-up hours – the pride and ambition of our economic system – are forsaken. Those cardinal virtues, which in the past one never dared to question, have long ago been abandoned.”

⁷⁶ A. Kubin, *Po tamtej stronie*, trans. A.M. Linke, Znak, Krakow 2008, p. 11. [English version: Kubin, Alfred. *The Other Side*. Dedalus Limited. Kindle Edition].

⁷⁷ Upon seeing a wall, the wife of the protagonist concluded: “I’ll never get out of here again.” Vide *ibid.*, p. 41.

the contrast with the mutual inclination, between the creative unit and the recreative one, as which he considered the tribe of the contemporary people:

The Demiurge was in love with consumable, superb, and complicated materials; we shall give priority to trash. We are simply entranced and enchanted by the cheapness, shabbiness, and inferiority of material.⁷⁸

On the one hand, by describing the utopias he created, he indicated concrete things as the necessary material of all states, even the utopian ones, on the other, he emphasised the distance between his regressive concepts from the standard ideas compliant with the latest trends in state creation drawn from totalitarian ideologies:

A dream's claim for becoming a concrete matter. A dream includes some type of a hunger for reality, some claim, which obliges reality, grows unnoticed into liability and demand, in a debt note, which demands to be repaid.⁷⁹

While other cities developed into economics, grew into statistical figures, into numbers – our city descended into essentiality.⁸⁰

In his project, Schulz drew inspiration from the republican system. Everyone in his story had their share in the formation of the republic of dreams, spelled in small caps, not even possessing a proprietary name. The mother rented a coach, the father “made a signal”⁸¹, there were also needed some companions. Schulz often talked about escaping the city, he wrote: Spring evokes in me the urge to set off on a two-person wander, some second-school camping.⁸² With the help of his colleagues, the protagonist of *Republika* wished to “(...) constitute new and independent laws, introduce a new hierarchy of measures and values⁸³”, which would be founded in the principle of “poetry and adventure, endless fascinations and surprises.”⁸⁴ Such futile statements were followed by a quick and decisive “transfer” of power, or rather the initiative to the Blue-eyed, who appeared in the republic of dreams as the main dreamer, its originator, designer, and executor, who considered nature to have priority in “organising” the world:

⁷⁸ B. Schulz, *Traktat...*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Idem, *Republika marzeń*, OP, p. 347. [English version translated from Polish]. *Republika marzeń*, first printed in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* 1936, issue 29 – uncollected work, not included in any collection.

⁸⁰ Idem, *Sanatorium...*, p. 326.

⁸¹ Idem, *Republika...*, p. 328.

⁸² Idem, *Do Andrzeja Pleśniewicza*, p. 114.

⁸³ Idem, *Republika...*, p. 329.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Blue-eyed is not an architect, rather a director. The director of landscapes and cosmic scenes. His high craft consists of his ability to grasp the intentions of nature, and to read its secret aspirations. Because nature is full of potential architecture, designs, and constructions.⁸⁵

His eyes were incredibly blue, not made for looking, rather for endless blueing in dreams. He said that when he arrived at the place I am referring to, at the anonymous, pristine and no one's country – he could immediately smell poetry and adventure, he saw in the air ready-made shapes and phantoms of a myth suspended above the area. He found in the atmosphere reformed shapes of that idea, plans, façades, and boards. He heard a calling, an internal voice, like Noah, when he received his orders and instructions. He was visited by the spirit of the idea lost in the atmosphere. He proclaimed the republic of dreams, a sovereign land of poetry.⁸⁶

In comparison, Patera's eyes "weren't eyes at all, they resembled two bright, shiny metal discs gleaming like two small moons. They were fixed onto me without any expression, or life."⁸⁷

Blue-eyed even earned a separate entry in *Słownik Schulzowski*⁸⁸, in which he was considered as the most mysterious character in Schulz's stories. The fact that he was supposedly inspired by Jerzy Reitman, the founder of the sanatorium in Korostów n. Skole, described by Schulz to Romana Halpern⁸⁹, ought to be supplemented by the naturally imposing literary inspiration of the author of *Republika marzeń*, i.e. the Blue-eyed people from Kubin's novel. Those were wise men residing in the suburbs of Pearl. Withdrawn, indifferent, and living in agreement with nature, possessing some mysterious profound knowledge on existence. They shared a strange bond with Patera, due to the incongruity of those old men with the organisation of the state. It was suspected that Patera, an alleged demiurge, was only a puppet in the hands of that community:

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 332. The name Blue-eyed was created through contradiction. Schulz noticed that Polish *enjoys* such contradictions, similarly to double negations.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 347–348.

⁸⁷ A. Kubin, op. cit., p. 104.

⁸⁸ Vide the "Błękitnooki" [Blue-eyed] entry by Jerzy Jarzębski, in: *Słownik Schulzowski*, pp. 51–52.

⁸⁹ A few miles from Drohobycz, there is a very beautiful sanatorium for convalescents, where a dreamer created an asylum for people "suffering from the soul". (...) there is a beautiful completely desolate mountain slope overgrown with a park of several thousand roses and a field of carnations. There is a hotel fitted in the style of Hutsuls and Empir or Beidermeier, a very nice main hall, a dining room, something like a forest lodge, and a Polish manor. (...) Its own electrical hub, own post office, in short: a fortress in a mountain retreat. Ibidem., *Do Romany Halpern*, KL, p. 161. [English version translated from Polish]

The mystery of Patera was never solved. Perhaps the blue-eyed tribe were the real masters and used magic powers to galvanise a lifeless dummy into life, so creating and destroying the Dream Realm as they thought fit.⁹⁰

Patera seemed a demiurge exactly through the fact of the endless marking of his presence in every aspect regarding the way Pearl operated. It was him, similarly to k.k. officials, who governed the administration, just like officials in ancient Greek states (e.g. in the Achean League), belonging to the body of 10 demiurges. Bureaucracy in Pearl resembled the notorious Habsburg reality well-known to Kubin.

‘To receive an invitation to an audience you need, apart from your certificates of birth, baptism and marriage, your father’s school-leaving certificate and your mother’s confirmation of vaccination. In room 16, down the corridor on the left, you must give details of your financial situation, education and any decorations you have been awarded. A character reference for your father-in-law is desirable but not absolutely essential.’⁹¹

Even more importantly, Patera governed the inhabitants’ minds – when the bonds between the ruler and his subjects became loose, there occurred the so-called clap, a special resetting of the revolutionary and unlawful considerations of Pearleans.

But there are many – oh, how many! – who are not always willing to submit; new arrivals in particular try to kick against the pricks. Whenever that inner resistance against our immutable fate grows too strong, the Brainstorm comes and everyone suffers. Today was such a day.⁹²

Paradoxically, Pearl also required its inhabitants to offer a strong representation of their individualism, though framed in the only possible forms of existence known from the k.k. monarchy:

And that’s what counted in the Dream Realm, *to make a show of being something*, anything, even a rogue or a pickpocket or whatever.⁹³

The idea of the state, assigned to Patera, also proposed the absolutely modern rule over plant and animal life. Pearl’s nature was touched with xeromorphism.

⁹⁰ A. Kubin, op. cit., p. 229.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 88–89.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 56.

The pervasive greyness, and existence without properties enabled one to break that world.

It was a mystery where all this teeming multitude of animals came from. They were now the true masters of the city and clearly they knew it. In bed I could hear running and a clatter of hooves, as if I were in a large metropolis. Camels and wild asses wandered through the streets; it was dangerous to tease them.

In contrast to this abundance of animals, plant life disappeared more and more. Everything was nibbled and crushed, and there was no new growth. The avenues of limes along the Embankment and out towards the cemetery consisted of nothing more than bare trunks. The earth was steaming, as if it intended to spew out even more creatures. Small holes gave off warm, sickly-smelling fumes. The nights were wreathed in a strange half-light that blurred all the contours.⁹⁴

The quoted description offers the most precise example of Schulz's inspiration by Kubin. The area of the Sanatorium from Schulz's story, similarly to Pearl, was inhabited by numerous dogs, and plants considered only as

I have already mentioned the black vegetation of the region. A certain kind of black fern deserves special mention: enormous bunches of it in vases are in the windows of every apartment here, and every public place. The fern is almost the symbol of mourning, the town's funeral crest.⁹⁵

Packs of black dogs are often seen in the vicinity of the Sanatorium. Of all shapes and sizes, they run at dusk along the roads and paths, engrossed in their own affairs, silent, tense, and alert.⁹⁶

Patera does not, however, rule everything. He is not the perfect ruler or, even less so, the perfect Creator, as in the process of creation things keep "eluding" him. It seems that he does not maintain the order of creation, the postulated ladder of beings⁹⁷, the order of the actions of the demiurge described by Plato in *Timaeus*. Patera does not use the help of Archons. Or maybe he himself is only

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

⁹⁵ B. Schulz, *Sanatorium...*, p. 266.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 270.

⁹⁷ God the creator creates gods. Why does the Creator want the creation of humans: for the purposes of order, actually. To exhaust the scope of the term "living being." It consists of immortal and mortal beings. And since immortal ones already exist, the mortal need be created. The creator of the world has a problem with that because his own children need be immortal, and only the grandchildren or the creations of the children may be mortal. That is why he turns to his children calling them for help. He himself will give humans an immortal element – the mind; stars shall give them the mortal part. Vide Plato, "Timaeus", in: *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. II, trans. W. Wytwicki, Unia Wydawnicza Verum, Kęty 1999, XIII, 41, BCD, pp. 690–691.

an Archon? And maybe that is why he does not predict the impending rebellion, the invasion of modernity, which appeared one day in the figure of a well-built American by the name of Hercules Bell.

I will never forget my first sight of him. In the doorway there appeared a man in his early forties, short and with massive shoulders. His features seemed to be a combination of bull and eagle, and everything was just slightly asymmetrical: a hook nose pushed to one side, a pronounced chin and a high, narrow, very angular forehead gave his head a kind of twisted recklessness. His black hair was thinning on top. He was wearing tails. He passed our table with short, springy steps.⁹⁸

Bell's image remains in line with his modern behaviour, with the lack of attachment to conventions, and with the challenging of the honorary code. His religion is capitalism. His arrival, enabling the arrival of modernity, caused political unrest in the Dream Realm, which, on the narrations of the past, succumbed to an imminent destruction, just like the Austria-Hungary Monarchy.

He was yet another American in the works of writers in the Habsburg culture. In *Hotel Savoy*, governed by the mysterious director Kaleguropulos (who turned out to be a lift-boy), Roth described the expectations of the city and hotel – defined by Roth as a “layered cemetery”⁹⁹ at Bloomfield:

They expect Bloomfield everywhere: In the orphanage a chimney crashes down. No one puts it up again because every year Bloomfield gives something to the orphanage. Sick Jews do not go to the doctor because Bloomfield will be coming to pay the bill. There has been a subsidence at the cemetery, two merchants' shops have been burnt to the ground, they stand in the lane with their rolls of goods and it does not occur to them to have the shops put up again, otherwise what would they have to take up with Bloomfield?¹⁰⁰

Yet Łódź inhabitants will never learn that creation depends on them. A contrary situation applied to the protagonist of *The Other Side*, who gradually became disillusioned with the greatness of Pearl, Patera, and even the American, who only personified strength and not wisdom, which was peculiar to the Blue-eyed

⁹⁸ A. Kubin, op. cit., p. 137.

⁹⁹ “The hotel no longer appealed to me: neither the stifling laundry, nor the gruesomely benevolent lift-boy nor the three floors of prisoners. This Hotel Savoy was like the world. Brilliant light shone out from it and splendour glittered from its seven storeys, but poverty made its home in its high places, and those who lived on high were in the depths, buried in airy graves, and the graves were in layers above the comfortable rooms of the well-nourished guests sitting down below, untroubled by the flimsy coffins overhead. I belong to those who are buried on high.” Vide J. Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, p. 38. [English version: Roth, J., *Hotel Savoy*, New York 2003]

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

people. "A world that was not always living had to be created piece by piece, and it was a continual process,¹⁰¹" said the resigned protagonist. Patera, in fact, as any of the demiurges described in this chapter, "(...) has had no monopoly of creation."¹⁰² His dealings were always considered as ambiguous and two-fold. "The demiurge is a hybrid,¹⁰³" thus concludes *The Other Side*. That ending, just like the name of the capital of the Dream Realm referred to the founding myth of gnosticism, to the *Hymn of the Pearl*, which was included in the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*. The authorship of the *Hymn* has been assigned to Bardaisan, condemned by Christians for voicing views which denied the Resurrection. The *Hymn*, which utilised the dual understanding of the nature of Christ typical for Manichaeism, described the journey of the Emissary in order to regain the pearl. The entire journey led to understanding oneself and integrating with the potentially lost fragments of ourselves (the Regent, the Emissary's brother, remained throughout the latter's long journey with his parents at home, at the end of the work withdrawing, symbolically merging into one with his returning brother).

The demiurges of Roth, Kubin, Meyrink, and Schulz were metaphors for the creation of the passing world. The authors noticed the agony of a great culture. They were inspired by the state of decay. They described the Creator through his creations: the clumsy copies of outdated or modern ideas. The ruler cannot govern one of the most important aspects of creation: time. Any manipulation of time, either turning it back or restitution prove an illusion as big as the myth – they are only possible in mythical reality. Regardless of any actions aimed at stopping the inflow of modernising processes, modernity wins against utopia, and intrudes unnoticed everywhere regression has been postulated. Then there occurs a demise of the world styled to resemble a myth, and the triumph of modernity. Writers who believed in the possibility of escaping modernity, and the rescue of individuality were aware of the limitations of their actions – they agreed to escape into privacy, into the creation of their own mythologies, and transferring them onto paper.

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¹⁰¹ A. Kubin, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁰² B. Schulz, *Traktat...*, p. 35.

¹⁰³ A. Kubin, op. cit., p. 232.

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Monika Szyszka vel Syska

Creator’s freedom. Schulz’s late projects

(Summary)

The article discusses the idea of creation coined by authors descended from the same, Austro-Hungarian cultural field, by: Bruno Schulz, Joseph Roth and Gustav Meyrink. Austro-Hungarian Monarchy created its own mythology based on nostalgia for the World, which was consigning to the dark recesses of history. The authors, conscious of inefficiency of contemporary culture, used the idea of Demiurge to show one of possible creating ideas.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bruno Schulz, creation, crisis Demiurge, education, exegesis, gnosis, culture, Modernity, myth