Literature and the Play-Element of Architecture: A Study of Design Process via Bruno Schulz's Prose

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Abstract

This dissertation positions the literary imagination as a fertile interlocutor to design process and architectural inquiry. Its premise is the architectural project in its full complexity, as it extends beyond the object, to emphasize the active reciprocity between the built environment, its geographical and cultural locality, and its human inhabitation. I take for granted that architecture participates to a multifaceted cultural matrix that includes memories, histories, hopes and ambitions, socially constructed norms and implicit values. These multilayered forces come to bear on the architectural project yet are too elusive and nuanced to be captured through conventional means of architectural design, which predominantly emphasize visual-based approaches to design.

I focus on design process to show that literary constructs—such as poetry, fiction, storytelling, and metaphor—are especially agile in rendering subtle yet essential forms of architectural knowledge that elude conventional tools of architectural research and practice. I draw on the very work that instigated this project: the English translation of architecturally trained Jewish-Polish author Bruno Schulz, whose metaphoric constructions are shown to engage language as a medium onto itself. My method follows a hermeneutic model that brings Schulz's prose in a dialogue with questions of concern for architecture: architectural representation, participation to locality, and engagement with world, matter, and making—all of which are specifically focused on the imaginative process of architectural inquiry. I bring to this conversation studies in philosophical hermeneutics, the history and theory of architecture, cultural history, as well as scholarship on Schulz, the mythic imagination, and cross-disciplinary studies, specifically those that focus on architecture and literature. I likewise bring my training in architecture and my experience as a designer, maker, and professor of design.

Through an architectural reading of Schulz's prose, this dissertation's contribution is to position literary language as a mode of architectural inquiry that expands the arsenal of the architect's design tactics by engaging, distilling, and building upon forms of architectural knowledge that evade visually-focused design processes such as drawings, sketches, and models: I show that poetic language can operate as a form of process-oriented architectural representation

to sustain architectural speculation as a dynamic field of play. I likewise show that literary practices draw on a stratified cultural imaginary and are especially deft at capturing the kind of place-specific knowledge that is implicit and elusive, including multi-sensory, temporal, atmospheric qualities of space. Finally, I argue that in their capacity to keep open self-contradictory or irreconcilable human questions and predicaments, literary constructions do not prematurely foreclose the generative potential of these complexities and can operate as a depository for thoughtful creative action that includes space-making practices. I complement my reading of Schulz with examples from pedagogy to convey that in its extended implications this capacity of the literary imagination allows it to saliently engage questions of human and environmental resilience.

Resumé

Cette dissertation place l'imagination littéraire en position d'interlocuteur fertile face au processus de design et questionnement architectural. Sa premise est le projet architectural en son entière complexité, soit qui s'étend au delà de l'objet, afin de souligner la réciprocité active entre l'environnement bâti, la géographie et la localité culturelle, puis l'habitation humaine. Je prends pour acquis que l'architecture participe a une matrice multiculturelle qui inclue les souvenirs, les histoires, les aspirations et les ambitions, ainsi que les normes socialement construites et les valeurs implicites. Ces forces multicouches agissent sur le projet architectural tout en étant trop furtives et nuancées pour être saisies via les moyens conventionnels de design architectural, c'est-à-dire les approches à prédominance visuelle.

Je focalise sur le processus de design afin de démontrer que les formes littéraires, telles que la poésie, la fiction, et le récit, sont particulièrement agiles à dépeindre les formes subtiles mais essentielles de savoirs architecturaux qui échappent aux outils conventionnels de la recherche et pratique architecturale. Je puise depuis l'oeuvre même qui a initiée ce projet, soit la

traduction anglaise de l'auteur judéo-polonais Bruno Schultz, formé en architecture, à qui l'utilisation particulière d'une figure de style, la métaphore, exemplifie une participation au langage en tant que médium en soi. J'adopte comme méthodologie un modèle herméneutique mettant en dialogue la prose de Schulz avec des sujets d'intérêt à l'architecture : la représentation architecturale; la participation au lieu; puis, l'acte de s'engager vis-à-vis la matière, dans celui de faire ainsi qu'avec le monde; chacun se concentrant spécifiquement sur le processus imaginatif d'investigation architecturale. Je joints à cette conversation des recherches en herméneutique philosophique, en histoire et théorie de l'architecture, en histoire culturelle, ainsi que portant sur Schultz, l'imagination mythique, puis des recherches interdisciplinaires, spécifiquement celles qui considèrent l'architecture et la littérature. J'y apporte également l'influence de ma formation en architecture et mon expérience en tant que designer et personne qui s'engage dans l'acte de faire, ainsi qu'en tant qu'enseignante en design.

Par le bias d'une lecture architecturale de la prose de Schultz, cette dissertation à pour contribution d'établir que le langage littéraire comme mode d'investigation architecturale vient accroître l'arsenal de tactics de design de l'architecte, comportant les esquisses, les maquettes et les dessins, du fait de s'engager avec, de distiller et de prendre appui sur les formes de savoirs architecturaux qui échappent à de telles formes visuelles du processus de design. J'établis que le langage poétique peut agir en tant que forme de représentation architecturale orientée sur le processus afin de soutenir la spéculation architecturale comme champ de jeu dynamique. Je démontre que les pratiques littéraires puisent dans un imaginaire culturel stratifié et sont particulièrement aptes à capter un savoir de nature implicite et furtif propre au lieu, notamment les qualités multi-sensorielles, multi-temporelles, et atmosphériques de l'espace. Finalement, je soutiens que dans leur capacité de maintenir ouvertes des questions et situations humaines auto-contradictoires et irréconciliables, les divers formes et procédés littéraires ne restreignent pas prématurément le potentiel génératif de ces complexités mais peuvent opérer comme dépositaire d'actions créatives réfléchies au bénéfice de pratiques reliées à l'environnement bâti. Je complète ma lecture de Schultz avec des exemples puisés de la pédagogie architecturale afin d'impartir que cette capacité de l'imagination littéraire, considérant tout l'étendu de son influence, lui permet d'aborder des questions portant sur la résilience humaine et l'environnement.

Contents

Abstract 2
Contents 5
Aknowledgements 8
Prologue 12

Introduction 14

On Forms of Knowledge in Architecture 14
Bruno Schulz: An Architecturally Trained Painter Turned Writer 19
Summary of Chapters 22
Interludes on Pedagogy 25
____ Six Fabrication Electives 26
____ Two (Beginning) Design Studios 27
____ Recesses 28

Methodology 30
A Cross-disciplinary Architectural Interpretation of Schulz's Prose 30
The Work's Horizon: Language and Authorial Biases 33
Primary Authorial Bias: Architectural Design is an Act of Hermeneutics 35
'Storytelling' & 'Literary Constructions': A Note on Terminology 36
What this Project is (Not) 37
____ More Than 'Narrative' in Architectural Design 38
____ A Non-Exhaustive Architectural Reading of Schulz's Prose 38

Review of Literature 40
A Note on Sources and Studies on Schulz's Work 41
Primary Sources and Constellation of Kindred Projects 42

Chapter 1 50

Idolatrous Bookes and Inglorious Domains: Schulz and The Avant-Garde 50
1.1 Metafiction, Form, and The *Paluba*: An Introduction to The Polish Avant-Garde 52
1.2 *The Idolatrous Booke The Book of Idolatry* 61
1.3 "Kneeling Devoutly Before the Godhead of Artistry": Idolatry in Schulz's Graphic Folio and Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* 65
1.4 Venus, Venus, Inglorious Domains: Eternal Tales and Compromised Ideals 76
1.5 Trapped Between Archaic Calves and The Cult of The Modern Leg 90

1.6 The Maidservant, Cultural Aunts & The Indifference of Matter 99
1.7 "Loosening the Tissue of Reality": Form and Metafiction in Schulz's Prose 106

Recess 1 114

Pedagogy and Interanimations Across Mediums: Storytelling and Subtle Subversions of the Canon 114

Chapter 2 117

Mythization and Metafiction: A Creative Act that Draws on a Layered Imaginary 117

2.1 Mythization, Form, Engagement with a Stratified Language 120
2.2 A Matrix of Myth. Mythization and Literary Kinship in Schulz's Prose 122
2.3 A Matrix of Myth and Metafiction: The Figure of Joseph 130
2.4 Mythologizing as a Poetic Act in Dialogue with Historicity and a Broader Literary Imaginary 137
2.5 Mythologizing and Mythization: A Dual Movement of Drawing from Depths and a Surface Tension 143
2.6 Towards a Creative Resistance of Locality in Architecture 149

Recess 2 151

Elemental Questions Immersed in the World of the Story: Literary Constructs Subsume the Concept 151

A Parallel to Ricoeur's "Symbol" and "Metaphor" 153
Layered Imaginaries 154
____ Layered Imaginaries: The Artificer Kingfish 155
____ Layered Imaginaries: A Hideout for a Modern-day Billy the Kid 158
____ Layered Imaginaries and the Question of Locality 161

Chapter 3 163

Drawing Out Architectural Representation by Way of Literary Language 163

3.1 Drawing and Drawing Out: Process in Architectural Inquiry 166
3.2 The Design Process is Rooted in Tacit Knowledge and Hermeneutic Play 169
3.3 On Architectural Representation: Literary Language Captures the Elusive with Precision 176
3.4 Theatre & *Tandeta*: Play, Interpretation and Translations Across Mediums in the Construction of Schulz's Prose 178
____ Theatre & Masquerade: A Multi-Faceted Enactment of Play 179
____ *Tandeta:* Schulz's Literary Image-Making Engages Language as a Medium Onto Itself 183
____ "In the Image and Likeness of a Mannequin" 191
3.5 The Matter of Language and The Element of Play: Architectural Representation in Schulz's Prose 195
____ Catachresis: The Improper Metaphor Captures Atmospheric Precision 198
____ Periphrasis: The Proliferating Metaphor Tunes Architectural Intentions 201
____ Metaphors Interlace Across Disciplines: A Quasi-Rehearsal for Architectural Practice 204
3.6 An Interpenetration Between Language and World: Schulz's Metaphoric Treatment of World and Matter 208

Recess 3 213

Language, Imagination, Process 213

The Literary Imagination in Representation and Process: Studio Billy the Kid 214

The Literary Imagination in Representation and Process: "Where Monsters Dwell" 218

Chapter 4 222

Creative Action and the Mythic Imagination: A Dialogue with World, Matter, and Locality 222

4.1 Architectural Design: An Act of Dwelling in the Provinces..... 224

4.2 Construing and Constructing Site: Eidetic Operations as Acts of Creative Resistance.....228

4.3 The Anonymous Historicity of Schulz's Rendering of Place.....232

4.4 A Rendering of Locale Absorbed in an Intensified Vision of the Mundane 242

4.5 Place in Time: Literary Language Captures Layered Temporalities 251

4.6 The Built and Unbuilt Environment Intertwine.....262

4.7 Interpenetration Between Language and World: Matter, Creative Agency and the Element of Wildness 267

____ Mutual Grafting Between *Physis* and *Poesis*, Human and World, Echoes a Mythic Sensibility.....269

____ The Poetic Imagination Intertwined with Matter and Lifeworld..... 275

Recess 4 284

Locality, Matter, Creative Action.....284

Literary 'Emplotments' Transposed Onto Building Processes 286

Expressive Instructions for Delicious Questions 288

Conclusion 292

Poetic Acts and World-Reconfiguring Practices.....292

Poetic Acts that Draw on Sedimented Imaginaries.....296

Poetic Acts of Making: An Intertwining of Imagination and the Lifeworld 297

A Dialectic of Play - The Literary Imagination as Architectural Representation and Critical Inquiry.....299

Works Cited 304

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Words are real and like people words have shadows,

And sometimes these shadows are vibrational synonyms.

– Sun Ra

Prologue

Imagine you are in Iceland. There's a road in front of you and the landscape at this particular point is fairly flat and open. For no apparent reason, the road swerves to the side and back to its straight course. When you ask a local about this peculiarity they reply in a dead-pan matter-of-fact tone: "There's an elf church there. You can't put a road through an elf church."[1]

What this story does, for many of us in the western world, is tamper with our expectations about evidence. That we doubt the factual reliability of this story suggests from the get-go, that what we can know with certainty operates on a higher level of value and belief than that which is not amenable to proof. What it also makes clear is our relationship with the world which we take to be outside of us. That it must somehow remain contained within the spectrum of our logic and sense perception, or perhaps much rather that if it does not, it has little bearing on the lines we carve onto a landscape. What the story of the road deflected by an invisible elf church presents to us is an attitude of humbleness towards the nebulous, the unknown, towards the world that overflows what we can explain about it. The community who accepts the story is not concerned with its factuality but is a community who accepts the stewardship of a landscape with a sense of wonder towards the presence of that which remains beyond the grasp of demonstrable proof.

The story of the road and the elf church is a story. It was told to me, someone who has never been to Iceland, which only increases its dubious status as fact.[2] Yet the very act of its telling speaks of its operative power: It brings our imagination to the precipice of something felt yet not fully articulable or demonstrable, at least not directly, not literally, not with the same tangible proof that is the road.

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[1] I am grateful to my sister, Sabina Matyiku, for bringing me back this story from her trip to Iceland in 2013. This anecdote retells an actual conversation with a local Icelander.

[2] While this specific story comes from a personal account, there are repeated other testimonies that reiterate the cultural predisposition of Icelanders to value phenomena in their environment that elude explanation. I am also well aware that I am threading a delicate line here, in a time of a pandemic, rife with misinformation, fabricated facts and conspiracy theories. What I am referring to here however is a folklore deeply ingrained in the imagination of Icelanders.

Whether an elf church is or is not there, whether Santa Claus exists, or whether time really *is* money, matters only little.[3] The consequences of such convictions are absolutely tangible in the things we build and the artifacts we make. It is precisely such myths and stories, at times seemingly absurd, that capture the richness of human nature. It is such common beliefs and rituals that build communities and sustain human culture and it is with them and for them that architects build, or rather, make space. This is perhaps the most provocative aspect of architecture—that it is an accomplice to the untidy matter of human stories, desires and aspirations. Every place or city is nuanced by shared values, norms, and stories, that are assumed, implied, or tactfully left unsaid. It is likewise nuanced by immaterial, temporally bound qualities of landscape and climate: whether it is foggy often or whether the rains are violent; the particular quality of light and the kind of scents the winds carry. I am mentioning these conditions because they too come to bear on architecture and because they are very much entangled with the stories that get told and the metaphors that guide human conduct. (We separate them in order to direct our thoughts and our arguments, but to our lived experience they are part of one continuum.) Such elemental and subtle qualities in essence delineate the particular character of a given community or locality. It is only by engaging such slippery, ambiguous and nuanced qualities that a knowing of place can be gathered in its full richness and depth.

As such, architecture participates to the human imaginary that includes shared stories, values and norms, histories and myths. Even if the architect's work typically results in concrete and measurable material compositions, it very much solicits the perspicacity of reading between the lines of this broader imaginary. While the work of architects calls upon a host of skills and expertise, my focus with this study is this task of interpreting between tangible materials, and forms of knowledge that are implicit, nuanced, hesitant, ambivalent, as well as forms of knowledge that are grasped only obliquely, and those courted in dialogue with the lifeworld. With a focus on the creative process that leads to architecture, the goal of this study is to show that literary and poetic constructs—such as storytelling, myths, fictions, poetry, and even more elementally, metaphor—can benefit especially this task of interpretation, crucial to the imaginative process that leads to architectural design.

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[3] Lakoff and Johnson produced a compelling study about how metaphors structure our thinking processes, systems of value, and ultimately sanction what is understood as appropriate conduct. The pervasive metaphor "time is money," is one they revisit often throughout their book. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, first ed. 1980).

Introduction

On Forms of Knowledge in Architecture

> "What's your story? It's all in the telling. Stories are compasses and architecture; we navigate by them, we build our sanctuaries and our prisons out of them, and to be without a story is to be lost in the vastness of a world that spreads in all directions like arctic tundra or sea ice. To love someone is to put yourself in their place, we say, which is to put yourself in their story, or figure out how to tell yourself their story. Which means that a place is a story, and stories are geography, and empathy is first of all an act of imagination, a storyteller's art, and then a way of traveling from here to there." – Rebecca Solnit[4]

When we think of Le Corbusier, it is not his poetry that first comes to mind, even though his *Poem of the Right Angle* (*Poème de l'angle droit*) is considered to be the synthesis of his personal thinking about architecture. It is also a little-known fact that celebrated Norwegian Architect Sverre Fehn and contemporary Irish duo Sheila O'Donnell and John Tuomey have integrated literary works in their design process and their architectural thinking. It cannot be coincidental that some of this century's most provocative architectural minds have employed literary tactics in their writing, practice, and pedagogy. Amongst them we find Bernard Tschumi, John Hejduk and Rem Koolhaas, who are well-known for their poignant contributions to the discipline and whose work has been surfacing every so often in recent studies that, like my own, investigate the cross-pollination between architecture and literature. Along with Tschumi, Koolhaas, and Hejduk, although much less discussed in scholarship, are the incisive, highly imaginative practices of Ben Nicholson, Douglas Darden, Lebbeus Woods, Perry Kulper, CJ Lim, duo Mark Smout and Laura Allen—amongst a handful of others—whose work and

[4] Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 3.

pedagogy have been exemplary in their imaginative shrewdness. They have engaged multiple mediums of architectural production—often including drawings, models, or collages—and they have also incorporated a number of written texts where poetry and imaginative storytelling have been at times combined with penetrating observations and caustic cultural commentary. These literary texts—such as the poems, reflections, and character sketches that are part of Hejduk's *Masque* projects— are vital components of these projects, conveying architectural intentions that cannot be otherwise carried by the drawings, models, or collages. Rather than explicate, these literary texts expand the possibilities of interpretation, rendering the respective architectural projects both imaginatively fertile and frustratingly reticent to theorization. I argue that the particular potency of literary constructions in architectural thinking rests in this imaginative fecundity that does not oblige closure and definition, that resists the desire to make certain what is not, that sustains an openness of potential readings which oftentimes say more in their ambiguity and contradiction.

This project's aim is to show how storytelling, fiction, poetry, and literary constructs in general can contribute to architectural thinking—not merely as descriptive or explanatory, but as autonomous and complementary modes of inquiry, capable of conveying essential architectural knowledge that eludes traditional tools of architectural research and practice. I look to the very work that instigated this project: the prose of architecturally trained Jewish-Polish writer Bruno Schulz whose metaphoric constructions engage language as a medium onto itself. This means that Schulz's depictions of architectural conditions do not describe architecture as it would be drawn but tamper with the referential dutifulness of language, to engage it instead for its texture and philological depth. In other words, Schulz's prose demonstrates how literary constructions are liable not to replace but rather to complement traditional mediums of architectural inquiry.

The first chapter examines the intellectual and artistic context in which Schulz was producing his work—that of the Polish avant-garde invested in metafictive preoccupations with literary form. In the second chapter I unpack Schulz's interest in mythologizing and mythization and draw a parallel to the process of architecture. I show that Schulz's mythization is not concerned with making myth or directed towards the past, but it involves a dual movement that draws on a layered imaginary to propel creative action. In chapter 3, I look at how this particular engagement with language performs the equivalent of an architectural representation that both captures and precipitates architectural knowledge not easily rendered through visual forms of

representation. In the fourth chapter I observe the way in which Schulz's prose presents what in architecture we understand as a rendering of site, context, or the characteristics of a given locality. I look as well at the attitude between matter, world, and creative agency that comes through in Schulz's prose.

Throughout this project, I emphasize that literary and poetic constructs sustain an element of play that is conducted in earnest, and which has the potential to precipitate imaginative architectural inquiry through a dialogue of discovery. This dialogue of discovery does not privilege the creative genius of the human mind, but rather engages forms of knowledge that are unknowable until they present themselves in the dialectic of play—between designer and the particular architectural questions and/or between architectural actions and the materials or media of engagement. I show how the literary imagination can both focus and expand this dialectic of play that is oriented towards discovery. In all, the project looks to position storytelling and literary artifacts as a salient counterpart to the arsenal of the architect's design tactics and modes of architectural inquiry.

The question of the kind of knowledge that storytelling and literary constructions can offer, and especially to the practice of architecture, is a multifaceted one and is a question I explore in this project from multiple angles. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf exquisitely captures significant moments in the life of an early-twentieth-century London. At one moment, on Bond Street, the usual flow of life and of people going about their shopping is interrupted by a violent explosion that is first thought to be a pistol and later confirmed to be the explosion of a motor car tire. All comes to a momentary standstill as it becomes noticed that the motor car was transporting a figure of political authority, perhaps the Queen, perhaps the Prime Minister. The car moves on, people resume their bustle and shopping. Yet a slight vibratory ripple is felt by this chance circumstance that has made palpable the vulnerability of the powers of empire and how they manifest in this taken-for-granted hum-drum of life. The Bond Street of a few minutes prior becomes a slightly different Bond Street:

> …when the sentence was finished something had happened. Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration; yet in its fullness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional; for in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the

> flag; of Empire. […] For the surface agitation of the passing car as it sunk grazed something very profound."[5]

Virginia Woolf's novel can be read as a rich resource of historical knowledge that tells us about the atmospheric and phenomenal qualities of an early-twentieth-century London.[6] What interests me here is not so much the content of *what* is captured but rather the *how* of what is captured. I reframe Woolf's perceptive observation to suggest that *literature* is able to create a surface agitation that grazes something very profound, something "that no mathematical instrument, though capable of [otherwise unthinkable feats], could register the vibration […]." It is *literature* that is the instrument so subtle "yet in its fullness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional." Thus, one facet of the knowledge held by storytelling is registered through the subtle antenna of literary perception. This kind of knowledge is tied in with that relating to human concerns that is not reducible to definite, categorical, or incontrovertible truths. Hans Blumenberg aptly notes that the purpose of storytelling is not to provide answers, but to dispel the unease and uncertainty of those circumstances in which answers are not possible.[7] Stories are necessary not because they explain, but because they prepare us for the encounter with difficult questions that can be ambivalent, contradictory, as well as those questions that ought to remain unanswered.

The story about the invisible elf church that deflected a road was offered to point out that, in the western world, we have inherited a predisposition to value forms of knowledge that privilege uncontestable proof. These forms of knowledge tend to supply us with the comfort of measurement and are thus easily instrumentalized towards feeding a capitalist-driven system of values. Resistance to this predisposition to privilege positivistic knowledge, was articulated as early as the eighteenth century by philosopher, rhetorician, jurist and philologist Giambattista Vico.[8] Vico insisted that positivistic knowledge offers only a partial understanding of human concerns, and to treat it as the only valuable type of knowledge risks the danger that our

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[5] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt, Inc., 1925), 18.
[6] This is part of the project of Angeliki Sioli, "The Architecture of Walking: Embodied Perception in Novels of the European City in the 1920s" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2015).
[7] Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985), see Part I Ch. 4: "Procedural Regulations", especially 126-8.
[8] Vico's *New Science* was a resistance to "science" becoming increasingly dominated by the ramifications of Descartes's philosophy. Although Vico was not polemically opposed to Descartes, he feared that the dogmatization of his theories would lead to a qualification of "knowledge" and "truth" as the truth of the positivist science. Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. Bergin and Fisch (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968).

understanding of humanity becomes impoverished. He believed that "truth" and "knowledge" could not be fully obtained unless the study of philosophy also considered the often-contradictory aspects of human nature. He emphasized that an adequate understanding of a people's imagination, could only be properly discerned by studying the particular myths, fables, and language. The *poetic wisdom* of language, as Vico called it, lies in the fact that it can preserve the complexity of human experience, with its multiplicity of meanings that are at times contradictory.

At stake here is that poetic language produces a freer and more fecund possibility of meaning, while rigid structures of knowledge demand closure and resolution. Such rigid forms of knowledge that favour discourses of certainty are instrumentalized towards their repeatability, and as such forego their dexterity to respond to the unpredictable. As Krystyna Illakowicz writes, "the modern constitution of knowledge [is] a discourse of certainty that leaves no space for the unexpected and the unsayable. […] Functional thinking becomes […] entrapped and reveals only what is expected, losing its propensity to face the unexpected."[9] In other words, poetic language propels inventiveness and imaginative perspicacity. If, as Blumenberg observes, storytelling is necessary in the absence of explanation, my goal here is to go further and show that storytelling and literary artifacts can also guide us *to act* within those questions in such a way that the questions and their contradictions remain open rather than prematurely foreclosed. This propelling towards action—and towards building—within this fertile opening of questions is in effect an enactment of imaginative resilience which is at the core of architectural inquiry.

The caveat here is that to "practice" architecture requires this kind of disciplined way of navigating ever so subtle undercurrents too evasive to be contained within hard boundaries. I very much insist that this practice of reading "surface agitations that graze something profound" is indeed a "practice" that requires practice, honing, and demands discipline. It is a specific kind of discipline, one that calls on shrewdness, perspicacity, antennas for subtle vibrations, and incorrigible optimism.

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[9] K. L. Illakowicz, "Renegotiating The Provincial: Bruno Schulz – Local Space and Local Rhythms" *The Polish Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (2004), 1073.

Bruno Schulz: An Architecturally Trained Painter Turned Writer

Bruno Schulz's work is the focus of this study for the simple reason that it was his prose that prompted me to see the potential of the literary imagination for architecture. I did not choose Schulz's fiction to fit the research, but it was rather the encounter with the work that instigated this project. Bruno Schulz (1892-1942) was a Polish-Jewish author, essayist, and graphic artist who wrote predominantly during the period between the two world wars. He lived in Drohobycz, a small provincial town in what is now Ukraine and which during Schulz's childhood was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. His training was in architecture which he pursued, with interruptions due to illness, at the *Polytechnic Institute of Lvov* between 1910 and 1914.[10] After the war, in 1917, he resumed his studies in Vienna, but only for a year. While in Vienna he decided to abandon architecture, and instead devote himself to painting. He eventually came to be best known for his short stories, which are semi-autobiographical reminiscences of his childhood. In large part, Schulz's work is not widely known. If at all, he is almost always first encountered through his short stories.[11] Many of these stories were first written as letters to people Schulz considered his intimate interlocutors. They were part of an immense body of letters that Schulz wrote throughout his life and of which a comparatively meager collection has survived the ravages of the Second World War who also claimed Schulz's life and that of too many of their addressees.[12]

With contemporaries Witold Gombrowicz and Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, Schulz was considered to constitute the experimental Polish avant-garde—although on the surface his prose

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[10] Information about Schulz's life, as well as his collected extant letters and essays, has been painstakingly gathered by his biographer, Jerzy Ficowski. I here draw especially on: Jerzy Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy—Bruno Schulz: A Biographical Portrait*, trans. and ed. Theodosia Robertson (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003). Bruno Schulz, *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, ed. Jerzy Ficowski, trans. Walter Arndt and Victoria Nelson (New York: Harper & Row, 1988. A number of other primary sources on Schulz (including essays as well as the "Letters and Applications to Regional and National School Authorities," that Schulz wrote between 1924-1938) re-emerged in a more favourable political climate and were translated in English in Czeslaw Prokopczyk, ed., *New Documents and Interpretations* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999). Additional details are supplied by the subsequent research presented in Brian Banks, *Muse & Messiah: The Life, Imagination & Legacy of Bruno Schulz (1892-1942)* (Ashby-de-la-Zouch: InkerMen, 2009).

[11] His first collection *Cinnamon Shops (Sklepy cynamonowe)*—known in the English translation as *The Street of Crocodiles*—was published in 1933, followed by a second collection in 1937, entitled *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass (Sanatorium pod klepsydra)*. He published a cluster of other stories in periodicals. These may have been part of a third volume, *The Messiah*, the manuscript of which continues to be lost after a few near-attempts at a supposed recovery by Jerzy Ficowski. For Ficowski's (mis)adventures trying to track down this manuscript see Ficowski, "Awaiting Messiah—A Postscript," in *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 155-62; as well as Jerzy Ficowski in an interview with Dorota Glowacka, "Interview in Warsaw, July 3, 1993" in *New Documents and Interpretations,* 55-69.

[12] Bruno Schulz was murdered on the street—in a killing spree that took the life of 230 others—by a Gestapo officer, on the 19th of November, 1942, during the German occupation of Drohobycz. One account of the gruesome details, gathered by Ficowski, can be found in Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 248-9.

seems to share very little with these two "conspirators," as Gombrowicz would later relay in his *Diary*. While Schulz's prose remains difficult to categorize, he has most often been compared with Kafka and Proust.[13] He traced his own lineage to the work of Rilke, Mann, and Goethe—all of whom he read in the original German, the language spoken in Schulz's childhood home.

Schulz was sickly and destitute for most of his life. His architectural training earned him a position as a teacher of arts and crafts at the local high school of his native Drohobycz. He often lamented that these teaching duties overwhelmed his time and the energy he would have devoted to writing. Despite this, Schulz was tenderly remembered by his students as an inspired but slightly strange character.[14] When his students became unruly, he was known to erupt in lengthy episodes of animated storytelling that often included gnomes, fairies, and knights. He reluctantly taught carpentry and drafting, and he seemed to have derived some enjoyment from teaching mathematics and painting.[15] He was unsatisfied with the limited number of fine art classes imposed by the curriculum, which compelled him to offer extracurricular drawing classes.[16] Brian Banks recounts that "when one asked why he painted things differently than they really are, Schulz replied that that is the beauty of artistic freedom, the ability to turn night into day and endow snowy mountains with luxuriant foliage."[17]

Given his training in architecture, his daily immersion in the teaching of carpentry, and his love for painting—which also combined with an incessant practice of drawing and sketching—it is easy to speculate how it is that Schulz's prose speaks so evocatively to an architectural imagination. The following imagery opens the story "Birds":

> Came the yellow days of winter, filled with boredom. The rust-colored earth was covered with at threadbare, 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 expanse of attics—coal black cathedrals, bristling with ribs of rafters, beams, and spars—the dark lungs of winter winds. Each dawn revealed new chimney stacks and chimney pots which had emerged during the hours of darkness, blown up by the night

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[13] For a comprehensive constellation of authors and artists that share artistic sensibilities with Schulz's work see Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, especially the chapter "The Myth of Reality."

[14] Anecdotes from former students about Schulz's generosity as a teacher and his impromptu episodes of storytelling are found in Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 174-7.

[15] Many of Schulz's letters to friends express his disdain for having to earn his living as a teacher, which he felt drained his energy for writing. Schulz especially despised teaching drafting, which—he describes in a letter to Tadeusz Wojciechowski—caused him "physical and spiritual deterioration" and he felt was reducing him to "a soulless automaton." (Schulz, "Letters to Friends and Colleagues, 1933-1940" in *New Documents*, 33.)

[16] Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 175.

[17] Ibid., 175-6.

> winds: the black pipes of a devil's organ. The chimney sweeps could not get rid of the crows which in the evening covered the branches of the trees around the church with living black leaves, then took off, fluttering, and came back, each clinging to its own place on its own branch, only to fly away at dawn in large flocks, like gusts of soot, flakes of dirt, undulating and fantastic, blackening with their insistent cawing the musty yellow streaks of light. The days hardened with cold and boredom like last year's loaves of bread. One began to cut them with blunt knives without appetite, with a lazy indifference.
>
> Father had stopped going out. He banked up the stoves, studied the ever-elusive essence of fire, experienced the salty, metallic taste and the smoky smell of wintry salamanders that licked the shiny soot in the throat of the chimney.[18]

A number of elements that are characteristic of Schulz's prose are apparent in this passage: The way he enlists quotidian objects in unexpected contexts in which they don't quite comfortably fit; The fact that he concentrates on layering a highly textured imagery while the plot remains subdued—lending the stories a pronounced tableau-like quality in which very little "happens."[19]; The tactic of building up the prose in long chains of similes and metaphors that conjure a restless image, reticent to settle on a final representation. It is this vivid, textured, image-immersed quality of his prose, along with his insistent focus on the tactile qualities of an otherwise banal every-day that, on a first encounter, captivates the architect's imagination.

The raw matter for Schulz's stories are the childhood reminiscences of Drohobycz, although as I am to observe further on, his literary treatment renders the town itself anonymous. The distinctly architectural spaces that take center stage in Schulz's stories maintain their biographical counterparts. They are the market square, the childhood home, and several spaces of commerce including the family-owned business. The market square of Schulz's stories had an intimate presence in his life. As the fiction also preserves, the house in which Schulz spent his childhood was in fact on market square. His father, Jacob, was a cloth merchant who conducted his business out of the family shop, which was on the ground floor of "the house on market

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[18] Bruno Schulz, "Birds," in *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, trans. Celina Wieniewska, (New York, London: Penguin Books, 2008), 19. Until Madeline Levine's 2018 translation, Celina Wieniewska's translation of Schulz's collected short stories has been the longest standing—even if it has been bemoaned by many for a number of reasons including omissions and mistranslations. When it was first carried out, it appears that the impetus for the translation was expediency rather than painstaking craft. I have spent the vast majority of this project relying on Wieniewska's translation and it will thus be quoted here most often, in the 2008 Penguin edition. I have resorted to alternative translations wherever this made an obvious and significant difference. Bruno Schulz, *Collected Stories*, trans. Madeline G. Levine (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2018).

[19] I build this observation on Krzysztof Stala, *On the Margins of Reality: The Paradoxes of Representation in Bruno Schulz's Fiction* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1993), 54-67.

square" as Schulz often describes it in his stories. Jacob was fairly old when Bruno was born, and was often sick and bed-ridden. Many of Schulz's stories recount his father performing his shopkeeper's work, which to the child narrator seemed mesmerizing and bewildering as well as mysterious and peculiar. The stories also allude to his father's long illness that led his eventual demise in 1915, during the First World War, when Bruno would have been aged twenty-three and recently completed a first portion of his architectural studies at the Lwow Polytechnic. About six months later "the house on market square" was destroyed during a Russian attack. Schulz's family no longer occupied this building at the time, as they had already suffered the loss of the family business. Schulz lived the rest of his life in the same small provincial town, only a few blocks away from market square. This means that for the remainder of his adult life, the square continuously confronted him with the palpable absence of the very building that captivated his childhood and the memories of his father.

While it would seem likely that the circumstances of Schulz's life might lend themselves to an architectural study that deals with memory and trauma, this is not the study I pursue. I am instead looking at the way in which Schulz works with language to build his prose, more specifically his architectural imagery. Schulz engaged language as a medium onto itself in ways that were (and still are) playfully subversive and highly imaginative. With similar intentions as those that preoccupied his contemporaries such as the more famous James Joyce, Schulz deliberately tampered with the referential function of language in order to coax language to operate as an autonomous medium, which, like Joyce, he mined for its mythic or philological depth. My focus here is to observe *how* the images of Schulz's prose are built, and what it means that these images engage language as a medium onto itself. I reflect on how this brings forth the capacity of poetic language to operate as a mode of architectural inquiry. While I rely on scholarship on Schulz that comes from literary studies, my own reading is undertaken though an architectural lens.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter—"Idolatrous Bookes and Inglorious Domains: Schulz and The Avant-Garde"—examines the philosophical, intellectual and artistic preoccupations underpinning Schulz's work in the context in which it emerged, namely that of the Polish literary avant-garde. I look at how

certain qualities of Schulz's work are refracted by a broader predisposition towards self-reflexivity and metafiction that was characteristic of experimental Polish literature, especially in Witold Gombrowicz's interest in immaturity and Karol Irzykowski's notion of the *pałuba*. I argue that much more clearly than his prose, Schulz's erotically charged *The Idolatrous Booke* operates as an interlocutor to the discussion surrounding Form, self-reflexivity and the *pałubic* element—all of which so actively preoccupied the Polish avant-garde. If his prose is where Schulz is most invested in his specific engagement with Form—and where his most fertile, linguistically articulated architectural imagery is to be found—I build towards it by first discussing how *The Idolatrous Booke* reciprocates the preoccupation of the broader intellectual and artistic context. In essence, this reading of *The Idolatrous Booke* operates as the primer for Schulz's particular relationship to language, his artistic psyche, as well as the tactics by which he constructed his prose. If this first chapter seems to be belaboured, it is so in order to bring forward the stark contrast between Schulz's prose and that of his contemporaries. It isn't that Schulz's prose doesn't partake in the same preoccupations as his *Idolatrous Booke* and the Polish avant-garde. It is simply that his prose also does a lot more, namely it engages language as a medium onto itself, and it presents the attitude between maker and world such that matter—including, but not limited to language—contributes its own agency. As we are to see in the last two chapters, these two aspects of Schulz's prose are where subtle forms of architectural knowledge most saliently come forward though literary texts.

Specific to Schulz's position in the Polish avant-garde was his interest in a mythologizing, or a mythization of reality, which, I contend, brings Schulz's prose closer to architectural praxis. The second chapter—"Mythization and Metafiction: A Creative Act that Draws on a Layered Imaginary"—unpacks Schulz's relationship to this interest to argue that, contrary to the presumptions that "mythologizing" is oriented towards making myth and a return to a past, mythologizing-mythization constitutes a critical engagement with the past and with tradition that is creative and future propelling. I show that by and large mythization entails a *poetic* operation that echoes both mythic and metafictive sensibilities and is particular in its insistent interest in the philological stratification of language via a layered imaginary that includes stories, histories, literature, myth, and literary artifacts in general. I look at Ricoeur together with scholarship on myth to present mythologizing-mythization as a dual-movement that both reaches into the depths of a layered imaginary and engages in a creative and innovative

projection towards the future. I draw a correspondence between this dual creative operation and the task that underscores architectural design and argue that more than capturing the cultural endowment of a given community, the stories, histories and literary artifacts that constitute this layered imaginary are in fact depositories for creative action. This becomes especially salient as a form of creative resistance to homogenizing narratives, a creative resistance that celebrates heterogeneity and contributes to community resilience.

The third chapter examines how literary language can operate as a medium for architectural representation that is specifically oriented towards discovery and the drawing out of architectural knowledge. Here I elaborate on how Schulz's exaggerated metaphoric constructions engage language as a medium onto itself which equally affects the architectural imagery presented in his prose. I argue that literary language is a fertile medium of architectural inquiry in that it precipitates two aspects that are intrinsic to the process of design: the act of interpretation across mediums and the dialectic of play that propels the discovery of new knowledge and imaginative ways of seeing. I build my argument with Ricoeur's studies of literary imagination, Gadamer's hermeneutics, Polanyi's notion of tacit knowledge, and Huizinga's understanding of play as culturally propelling human endeavour. In examining a number of distinct depictions of architecture from Schulz's stories, I show that literary language can be especially productive in bringing forth architectural knowledge that cannot be captured by visual forms of representation. Among such forms of architectural knowledge, I count the whole range of qualitative and atmospheric aspects of a space—sound, smell, temperature, etc.—but also those implicit yet nuanced predicaments that tend to be delicate, ambivalent, contradictory, and difficult to articulate. In comparison with traditional drawings, I show that literary language is especially agile in conveying the particular precision that belongs to the elusive and the implicit forces that come to bear on the architectural project. Furthermore, I show that with literary language, what is typically an abstract architectural question comes immersed within a depository of poetic images that capture the salient aspects of a project without having to articulate them explicitly.

In Chapter 4, I study Schulz's prose through the lens of the dialogue that unfolds between the making of architecture and locality, world, and matter. With the same focus towards the architectural design process and forms of knowledge that are implicit, tacit, and covert, I first look to how Schulz's literary language captures what in architecture is the equivalent of a study

of a site or of a given locality. I show that Schulz's images of place in fact render anonymous the locality on which they are based, thereby emphasizing less *what* is presented but rather *how* language distills an image of a locale that is qualitatively and temporally layered in a way that it eludes typical tactics for conveying a site, which tend to favour the visual. I argue that this is in part because Schulz's prose occupies a provincial position which is in effect a form of creative resistance against the homogenizing force of overarching historical narratives. I show that this creative resistance of the particular and the provincial emerge in Schulz's prose as series of resonances with a mythic imagination, yet always remain self-consciously metafictive. I note these mythic sensibilities by pointing to studies by Blumenberg, Vico, and Cassirer and showing how they refract a number of recent preoccupations in architectural discourse including David Leatherbarrow's "topography," James Corner's "eidetic image," and Rumiko Handa's notion of the incomplete and impermanent in architecture. The last section of this fourth chapter is dedicated to noticing the dynamics between creative agency, matter and world that unfold in Schulz's prose. I stay with Schulz's literary constructions but also discuss his attitude towards tactile matter and things, to ultimately argue that for Schulz, both literary language and the world of things, sustain agentic potentialities as well as knowledge that exists in excess of human graspability. I here examine Schulz's attitude towards world by pointing to the sensibilities it shares with a mythic imagination, phenomenology, Jane Bennett's vital materialism and Richard Sennett's observations of craft and its practice. I argue that Schulz's attitude towards matter and things is ecologically inclined in that it flattens hierarchies between the creative agency of human and world, and that ultimately his prose foregrounds how the poetic imagination and creative action are intertwined and co-emergent with the lifeworld.

Interludes on Pedagogy

Following each of the four chapters I step away from Schulz and draw connections between the points made in the chapter and reflections that are anchored in design pedagogy. I call these brief interludes "Recesses" and my aim with them is to reflect on a few first approaches in explicitly engaging the literary imagination in the design process. All of these are relatively early test-bed attempts: I have had the opportunity to integrate the literary imagination into design studio courses only in the spring of 2020. While there is still much to learn, explore, and refine, the first

few attempts have already been telling. I briefly introduce the exercises undertaken thus far, all of which were carried out with students under my guidance as well as in larger studios that I coordinated.

____ Six Fabrication Electives

I began incorporating the literary imagination in design pedagogy in 2013. This was a year after beginning my doctoral studies. I had the great fortune of being in charge of the project component associated with Dr. Pérez-Gómez history and theory lectures at McGill University in which students had the opportunity to either write a paper or complete a project.[20] This is an unconventional approach to the teaching of architectural history and theory, and one that was specific to the History and Theory program that Dr. Pérez-Gómez had founded at McGill over three decades ago. This approach is grounded on the conviction that history has the capacity to inform and to enrich acts of building that are situated in the present. Inspired by a great big binder of photocopies of previous syllabi, I proceeded to make my own version of a project that had, by then, gained some notoriety with many past students. With a focus on craft and material explorations I based the project sequence on Daedalus, the prototypical figure of the ancient Greek architect who was most famous for building the labyrinth to enclose the Minotaur. Daedalus was the maker of *daidala*, or artifacts that were so well crafted that they inspired *thaumata*—a profound sense of wonder mingled with fear, akin to the presence of the divine.[21]

Students started with short creative writing exercises that prompted them to pick three small objects and write about them in such a way that their text brought forth something invisible about the object. With some variation, they were then asked to develop one of their objects into a character that would be grafted on the myths and stories surrounding the figure of Daedalus. They translated their story and character into the visual realm of collage and drawing. With a focus on exquisite craft, students were eventually asked to build an artifact that enacted

[20] I remain tremendously indebted to Dr. Pérez-Gómez for making this opportunity available to me and for his support and enthusiasm towards my exploratory approaches to pedagogy.
[21] For a discussion on Daedalus and how the notion of craftsmanship is important for architectural practice see Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Myth of Dedalus: On the Architect's métier," in *Timely Meditations: Selected Essays on Architecture, Volume 1*, 1-21 (Montreal: Rightangle International, 2016).

something of this character that was significant to the student. While at McGill University, I taught variations of *Project Daedalus* on four occasions.[22]

During my year as visiting faculty at Louisiana State University I adapted *Project Daedalus* into a fabrication elective that drew on local literature and folklore to combine seminar discussions of theoretical readings with the crafting of an artifact. I named this course *The Artificer Kingfish*, after Huey P. Long, a shrewd politician from Louisiana's history who gave himself the nickname the Kingfish. Huey P. Long served as the 40th governor of Louisiana from 1928 to 1932 and was a member of the United States Senate from 1932 until his assassination in 1935. The actors and circumstances behind his assassination remain uncertain. What is certain is that, not unlike Daedalus' artifacts, he inspired both fear and admiration in those around him, including his adversaries. Huey Long was a demagogue who captured the public imagination often using storytelling as political rhetoric. Drawing on the spirit of the Kingfish, students worked with local stories towards a built intervention that sought to playfully recondition a public's encounter with familiar places. In the fall semester of 2019, I conducted another version of this course at CU Denver's College of Architecture and Planning.

Between the years 2013 and 2021, most of my direct experience of incorporating the literary imagination into design pedagogy consisted of these six fabrication courses. All six focused on craft and fabrication, provoking students to think of 'building' as a verb rather than a noun, an action rather than an object. The resulting projects were not designs of 'buildings' but the result of a building process.

____ Two (Beginning) Design Studios

It was only recently that I had the opportunity to integrate the literary imagination in design studio. The first instance was in the context of beginning design, in the spring semester of 2020, when I coordinated the undergraduate Design Studio II at CU Denver College of Architecture and Planning. Drawing from local history on the making of the American West, students worked with the stories and histories surrounding infamous cattle robber Billy the Kid, which included

[22] A version of my reflections on *Project Daedalus* have been published in Anca Matyiku, "Project Daedalus: An Earnest Play of Building Between Storytelling and Metaphors" *Writingplace Journal: Literary Methods in Architectural Education*, no.1 (2018): 59-74.

Michael Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*.[23] Students engaged the question of what it means to be illegal or to exist on the border of the law, by writing a modern-day Billy character and by designing a parasitic space within the urban fabric of downtown Denver. This was also a non-explicit nudge for students to imaginatively address delicate situations that presented themselves close at hand, in a city no stranger to gang violence and especially well acquainted with homelessness. With this particular studio, students worked with existing works of literature—especially Ondaatje's—as well as produced their own creative text.

I coordinated the same studio again the following year, in the spring of 2021 during what will come down as a memorable time in world history. The studio was a full-fledged remote pandemic studio and my co-instructors and I adjusted the studio sequence to a situation that turned out to be a difficult one for students in their first proper studio. Students likewise engaged the literary imagination by writing their own creative texts. In this case, they were prompted to design a monster client, that is, a human based person with a bodily variation who was also endowed with a type of movement and temperament that was chosen by the student. In this version of the studio, we gave students more specific guidelines towards their narratives. They were asked to articulate a short creative text for each of three criteria: a first text that captured how the monster's body engages the world; a second text that presented the monster at play; and the third that captured a memory that was meaningful to the monster. Students were emphatically asked to focus on qualities, textures, and atmospheres as well as to focus on the *how* rather than the *what*, the specific rather than the general. As is with all courses in which I prompt students to produce creative texts, they were given a number of short examples. As a monster precedent, Anne Carson's red winged monster in her *Autobiography of Red* was discussed in more detail, and through the same criteria as the three texts that students were asked to articulate.[24]

____ Recesses

Daedalus, Huey P. Long, Billy the Kid are all un-idealized characters with dubious motivations, who are far from being models of moral righteousness. They are all endowed with perspicacity,

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[23] Michael Ondaatje, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, 2nd ed, (New York: Vintage International, 2009).

[24] Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red: A Novel in Verse*, 1St Vintage Contemporaries ed. (New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1999).

charisma, and a shrewd ability to inspire awe and wonder. Yet they are also known for questionable actions such as murder, thievery and sabotage. This choice to anchor so many of these projects in the stories and histories of suspect yet beguiling figures is for me a way to explicitly throw students in the deep end of these questions. It is likewise an attempt to foster courage in engaging less-than-comfortable questions. While not all the courses I discuss here are centered on characters with questionable morals, a running thread here is the argument that those delightfully tricky aspects that bear on design—including ambiguities, dissonance, self-contradicting predicaments—are much more deftly captured in the accessible medium of literary language than they are in most other mediums familiar to architectural praxis.

In the four "Recesses" that follow each of the main chapters, I often argue that the literary imagination has this capacity to 'propel imaginative possibilities.' Like 'poetic action' this statement does not for us, in today's North American English adequately convey the subversive aspect of these operations which are in fact, in their most accomplished versions, always rife with risk and not without discomfort. I will not be able to do enough here to disrupt our ingrained associations with soppy-sentimentality-that-verges-on-pretentiousness that taints statements such as 'imaginative potential' and 'poetic action.' I will however do my best to insistently highlight their world-building capacity and operative power.

Methodology

A Cross-disciplinary Architectural Interpretation of Schulz's Prose

My method follows a hermeneutic model, and it consists of a dialogue that engages Bruno Schulz's prose, in the English translation, to foreground questions that are of concern for architecture—specifically with respect to design process and architectural inquiry. The project arose from the encounter with the prose itself, and the questions that opened up in this encounter. This is in tune with Hans-Georg Gadamer's understanding of the hermeneutic experience which places an importance on the openness of the question, or rather that the question is a "bringing into the open": "Hence we say that a question too "occurs" to us, that it "arises" or "presents itself" more than that we raise it or present it."[25] To engage in a hermeneutics of understanding is to foreground the *experience* of understanding as a *dialogue or reciprocity* through which the interlocutors are transformed. If compared to a conversation between two people, the dialogue does not seek agreement but it seeks to understand and to deepen the knowledge of one another, that is, to also gain new knowledge of oneself.[26] In the case of my reading of Schulz's prose, I did not seek to prove a hypothesis but rather started with the question that presented itself in the encounter with the prose, that is, a desire to understand what it is about Schulz's prose that conjures such vividly rich architectural images, what about it resonates so saliently with the architect's imagination, and then, what further opportunities does the literary imagination hold for architectural inquiry? In learning more about Schulz's prose, further questions of import to architecture emerged. For instance: "how does Schulz engage language as a medium onto itself and what does this mean for architectural representation that is constructed via language?" Also, "what can we understand about Schulz's interest in mythization, and how does it manifest itself

[25] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 374.
[26] Gadamer writes: "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were." Ibid., 387.

in the prose; how does it affect the representation of temporal scales, and the attitude between creative making and the lifeworld?"

To engage in a hermeneutics of understanding likewise means to place ourselves in the position of the other, while remaining committed to understand the prejudices and biases that are at play, especially our own. These situational prejudices is what Gadamer calls the "horizon" of each interlocutor, emphasizing a "fundamental non-definitiveness of the horizon in which [one's] understanding moves."[27] This "fusion of horizons" is thus perpetually re-iterated as horizons are never truly closed but shift continuously as the dialogue of understanding unfolds and new questions are opened up. Thus the making of new understanding is inherently an invested *interpretation*, which in this project is actively foregrounded and operates across mediums.[28] Schulz's own words with respect to studying and understanding his prose in fact intimate a hermeneutical approach, and have thus further guided my methodology:

> I would like to be spared from having to explain the reality of *The Cinnamon Shops*[29] in philosophical terms. Explaining the vision embedded in a work of art is like exposing the identities of actors: it means an end to the game, an impoverishment of a work's complexities. [The reason is not that art is a crossword puzzle with the key hidden and, and philosophy the same crossword puzzle solved.[30]] The difference lies deeper. In a work of art the umbilical cord joining the work to the interior world is not yet broken; it still courses with the blood of mystery; the ends of the vessels trail into the surrounding night and return full of warm fluid. A philosophical interpretation, on the other hand, gives only an anatomical slide. Still, I am curious: What would be the philosophical *credo* of *Cinnamon Shops* in purely discursive terms? I can only try to describe the kind of reality posited there – not seek its rational foundation.[31]

As such, in my aim to unpack Schulz's prose through architectural questions, I am guided in my method to describe the architectural understanding that is posited there, to observe the *what* and

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[27] Ibid., 381.

[28] The interpretation across mediums is also part of Gadamer's study who focuses his opus *Truth and Method* on the interpretation of historical texts, but equally discusses hermeneutic understanding in dialogue with works of art, understood more broadly.

[29] *Cinnamon Shops* refers to the title of Schulz's first published collection of short stories. In the English translation, this collection exists under the title *The Street of Crocodiles*.

[30] The text in brackets is a translation that comes from Schulz, "An Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz" in *Letters and Drawings*, 112. In Iribarne's translation, which I quote here, the same sentence reads as: "Not only because art is an anagram with a secret clue, while philosophy is an anagram already worked out."

[31] Bruno Schulz, "An Interview with Bruno Schulz: A Published Reply to Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz" trans. Louis Iribarne in *Cross Currents,* 6 (1987): 189. Ann Arbor: Dept. of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan. http://name.umdl.umich.edu/ANW0935.1987.001.

the *how* rather than rationalize the *why*. I look at what the work *does* and *how* it is operative rather than attempt to *explain* what it is or *why* it is. For instance, in examining the artistic and intellectual context in which Schulz produced his work I avoid going as far as to identify this context as the cause, and the work as the effect. Resonances between them inevitably come forward, but to claim that the work is explained by its context or is derivative of it, is to shortchange the work's operative power. This is in continuity with Gadamer's hermeneutic model which seeks to engage the world of the work, that is its ever-shifting horizon that unfolds with new questions that arise. It bears noting that at the same time Gadamer also insists on what he calls the work's "contemporaneity," which is its operative capacity as an eventness and a presentness—that is, an encounter that steps out of historicity to reconfigure understanding in the present, for the reader or spectator that engages with it. While the (poetic) work remains connected to its past and open towards the future, its operative power is not circumscribed by the context that produced it. "What unfolds before us is so much lifted out of the ongoing course of the ordinary world and so much enclosed in its own autonomous circle of meaning that no one is prompted to seek some other future of reality behind it. The [interlocutor] is set at an absolute distance, a distance that precludes practical or goal-oriented participation."[32] This preclusion for practical participation reiterates the importance that Gadamer attributes to the play element as a world reconfiguring encounter. Furthermore, the distance to which he is referring is not a barrier but "the distance necessary for seeing, and thus makes possible a genuine and comprehensive participation in what is presented before us."[33]

This project is both interdisciplinary and takes interdisciplinarity as its method of engagement. It both *performs* and *presents* translations, interpretations, cross-overs and interpenetrations between mediums and disciplines – most prominently between architecture, literature, modes of representation and practice, and pedagogy. To this conversation on architectural praxis and inquiry I bring together architectural theory, cultural history, literary studies, philosophical hermeneutics, studies on the mythic imagination as well as studies on the literary and creative imagination.

At its core, this project is a study of forms of knowledge that are intrinsic to architectural inquiry, yet they are operative without being articulable—such as for instance, what Michael

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[32] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 129.
[33] Ibid., 130.

Polanyi has identified as tacit knowledge and what Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have referred to as prereflective knowledge—or knowledge that we call upon without being (fully) aware that we are doing so, without being able to identify or define this form of knowledge with precision. To practice architecture thoughtfully is to also practice this engagement with forms of knowledge that involves a perceptive reading of a complex matrix of qualities and nuances that coagulate as the situatedness of the architectural project and present themselves to us as combination of physical presences, fleeting qualities, implicit understandings, actions and histories—to name just a few. We might call these forms of knowledge "intersubjective" so long as we also remind ourselves that they are multifarious, complex, delicate, numinous, slippery, nuanced by circumstance, and cannot be evaluated in terms of correctness.

This dissertation positions storytelling, literary, and poetic language as a most effective medium to engage and bring forth such slippery and numinous forms of knowledge that come to bear on the architectural project. My contribution is to show how this capacity of literary constructions is operative in architectural inquiry and design process. I read Schulz's prose as an architect and I observe how subtle forms of architectural knowledge come forth, in relation to the following architectural tasks: architectural representation, a rendering of a context or locality, and the attitude and engagement of a maker with world and matter.

The Work's Horizon: Language and Authorial Biases

The English language is much adept in presenting the certain, the defined and the categorized. I have found that words and turns of phrases that look to convey subtleties, ambiguities and paradoxes at times need steering away from appearing mawkish—and don't always manage an elegant steering away. Throughout this project, I often discuss those aspects of architecture that surpass its object-ness: the way that cultural values and norms, histories and myths, landscape, geography, and multiple forms of climate come to bear on architecture and do so through a multiplicity of relational and temporal scales. There is not one word in the English language that adequately conveys the spirit of that notion, and many other similarly spirited notions that are important to this project. These notions and their absence in vocabulary are also never strictly architectural. David Leatherbarrow's notion of "topography" certainly comes closest although I

have not felt confident that this notion is as ingrained in my reader's imagination as it is in my own architectural vocabulary.[34] Besides, it is the paucity of such words and notions in *general* vocabulary that amount to the more pronounced difficulty here. This absence of vocabulary has made it necessary for me to repeat the long sentence just above, several times over in a number of variations. Each time it begs for the concrete examples that don't always accompany it. What's more, the few words that are available—in my running collection I have 'implicit', 'incalculable', 'numinous', 'undefinable', 'subtle', 'uncertain', 'unsolvable'—have a tendency to be the negation of an affirmative that privileges certainty, definition, categorization. My goal has been to present these notions not simply as the 'not-', 'un-', 'in-' but as the "more than," that which is *in excess* of the known, that which *overflows* the boundaries of the definable. There is as such, a voluptuousness of knowledge that is being unmercifully truncated in the mere negation of the certain, the definable, the measurable. With the same bias in the background, I have sought to remain alert to the fact that the function of storytelling and poetic constructs is something other than that which is satisfied by analytical thought, and one must diligently guard against deferring to the latter as the arbiter for the validity of the former.

To speak about subtle forms of knowledge—such as those that are implicit, elusive, ambiguous, incalculable, and open ended—is to commit to a delicate balancing act. It requires a certain level of assertiveness and decisiveness that does not foreclose the potentiality of an ambiguity left open, and one that also carves out adequate space for it to unfold. Even just the word "knowledge" implies a certainty too strong for the kinds of contradictions and human questions that literary constructs are able to sustain. When I describe this kind of knowledge as "subtle" or "elusive forms of knowledge," or even "tacit" and, depending on context, "prereflective," these qualifications do not quite capture the power of a difficult question or predicament whose openness one ought to guard. In these efforts, I have gravitated towards speaking about resonances between things rather than tracing direct correspondences. I have also gravitated towards verbs that suggest a middle voice, and thus reinforce a dialogue and agentic reciprocity rather than the unidirectional agency of the active and passive voice. For instance, I have found myself steering away from writing that Schulz "uses" language and have rather noticed that he "works with" and "engages" language.

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[34] I discuss Leatherbarrow's notion of "topography" in architecture further on, in the review of literature.

If a hermeneutic approach is committed to understanding the world of a work, it is equally committed to bringing to the surface the biases that are at play in the world of the interpreter. Thus any diligent and invested study will always be inflected by the specific situation, temperament, and priorities of the writer, some of which, despite vigilant efforts, will inadvertently operate below the level of their direct awareness. In terms of priorities, I have noted that mine has been to show how literary language gives a voice to architectural forms of knowledge that are often too subtle for the register of the certain and the incontrovertible. My aim has not been to dismiss the necessity for analytic and positivistic knowledge but rather to dampen its overpowering instrumentalism that reduces knowledge to its utility and applicability, and thus forfeits its dexterity to face the unknown and the uncertain. My own position in this project is one of participation in the subject-matter rather than that of one who observes from a detached distance: I bring to this project not only a discursive engagement with philosophical studies and architectural theory but also knowledge derived from experience as an architect, as a maker, as well as experience in architectural pedagogy. This intimacy with the questions and subject-matter undoubtedly inflects how I have approached this project. Furthermore, while I have made every effort to convey to a general reader how this architect's and maker's knowledge plays into the text before us, it is certain that the reader's engagement with this text will be nuanced by whether they are a maker, an architect, a writer, a historian, etcetera. One reads about making architecture differently when they have invested themselves in the task, just as one reads about passion, loss, betrayal, and love with more salience when they have themselves experienced it.

Primary Authorial Bias: Architectural Design is an Act of Hermeneutics

Philosophical hermeneutics not only guides my architectural reading of Schulz's prose. The primary bias that underscores this project is that by 'architectural design process' I explicitly understand this process as a fundamentally hermeneutic undertaking. As I elaborate in the following chapters, I understand thoughtful and culturally conscientious architectural design as a hermeneutic process heavily invested in interpretation and the cross-pollination of disciplines. That a thoughtful design process is fundamentally grounded in a hermeneutical process has been discussed extensively by educators Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass who, like myself,

emphasize that space-making practices involve more than explorations in form and composition.[35] They insist that intrinsic to learning and practicing architecture is the cultivation of an attentiveness to *how* those formal and material aspects of design are implicated in the cultural, historical, social, geographical, temporal, and other circumstances of the design project. That architecture is "implicated" means that it draws on, learns from, contributes to, and critically engages this multifaceted horizon that circumscribes the particularities of the architectural project.

Throughout this project, when I speak about design process and architectural inquiry, I specifically mean that at stake is a dialectic grounded in earnest play that emphasizes process rather than result, aims at suspending the known in favour of precipitating discovery, and cultivates curiosity and risk-taking. The dialectic of play tempers the hubris of what the human intellect knows for certain and cultivates an environment in which knowledge comes forth through a dialogue that engages a heterogeneously distributed field of agents. Amongst them I observe the implicit forms of knowledge arising from a locality and those that are occasioned by a design circumstance; the tacit and pre-reflective knowledge that the architect has accumulated through experience but is not readily made explicit or defined; the resistance and opportunities that are discovered in a dialectic engagement with matter and the world that is most easily described as acts of making—whether drawings, models, mock-ups, and a whole range of architectural explorations. In reading Schulz's prose, I unpack how all these layers of architectural knowledge can be engaged, distilled, and drawn out through literary constructions. I further complement this conversation with a series of preliminary insights that I have gathered through my teaching practice.

'Storytelling' & 'Literary Constructions': A Note on Terminology

Throughout this project I discuss the operative role that storytelling and literary constructions can play for the architectural design process. Whether these two terms are or are not interchangeable depends on the context in which they come up. I understand 'literary constructions' as the broader term, which includes literature—that is, carefully composed poetic

[35] Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass, *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking* (London: Routledge, 2005).

language, typically by someone who sustains a writing practice, but in this context does not preclude the architect's creative writing. 'Storytelling' can likewise include the work of 'official' or 'professional' writers but it is also meant as a more democratizing practice that includes unvarnished personal histories and also stories and tales that persist over long stretches of time. In essence, 'storytelling' refers here to the elemental human necessity to tell stories, to make sense of the world and one's place within it, to domesticate the unknown and the unanswerable, as well as to cultivate courage and a sense of empowerment. 'Storytelling' can encompass any modality of 'literary construction' that participates to a broader imaginary—whether fiction, novels, poetry, prose, theatre, song, folktales, oral storytelling, etcetera. In short, 'storytelling' is a most active form of participation to a cultural imaginary, or what for architecture, I argue, counts as the context of a project. From the perspective of design process, I make the case for seeing the storytelling of a particular community as a rich depository for creative action and space-making opportunities. This is something that I believe to be important for my research beyond this project. I touch on it with the student projects but it is not active in my study of Schulz. This is because although his short stories are most certainly a form of storytelling, I am not engaging them in order to arrive at architectural designs. This is, as I've mentioned, because I am observing how he engages literary language to construct his prose, such that it performs fundamental operations of design process including sketching, representation, distilling of a site, and propelling imaginative possibilities. Because I am unpacking multiple aspects of the way he 'constructs' his architecturally-loaded images, as well as his multiple modalities of metaphors, the bulk of the dissertation focuses on Schulz's 'literary constructions.' In short, my focus is to study Schulz's literary constructions, in order to show how they contribute to a design process invested in engaging cultural imaginaries, which, I believe, is most saliently captured in storytelling and literary artifacts.

What this Project is (Not)

This project's contribution is to show how literary constructs and the literary imagination can be fertile depositories for architectural knowledge and action. In doing so, it also presents new methods for an architectural reading of literature. While I draw on scholarship on Schulz that

employs literary analysis, literary analysis is not what I am here undertaking, as I approach this from the perspective of architecture.

____ More Than 'Narrative' in Architectural Design

When I speak about the operative aspect of the literary imagination and storytelling, most of my audiences default to the assumption that my work focuses on 'narrative' in architecture. While this is not untrue, it is important to accentuate the fact that I look to position the literary imagination not as subservient to traditional mediums of design but as a mode of architectural inquiry, capable of holding its own architectural knowledge. Thus the notion of 'poetic image' is more appropriate here, as it encompasses more effectively the operative potential of literary language and its capacity to propel creative action. This is in tune with Schulz's prose which has a tendency to subdue 'plot' in favour of 'image.' I return to this point in my conclusion, after discussing Schulz's prose, which will bring the reader to a fuller understanding of what is at stake.

____ A Non-Exhaustive Architectural Reading of Schulz's Prose

I discuss here the insights and discoveries I've gleaned thus far, both in pedagogical exercises and in reading Schulz's prose through architectural theory. My findings are in no way prescriptive, nor are they exhaustive. My hope is that they spur on the possibility that further modes of engagement may be pursued in the cross-pollination between the literary imagination and architectural undertakings.

As this project looks at the opportunities that the literary imagination presents for architectural inquiry, some of my observations speak more generally to these opportunities. Others remain specific to Schulz's prose and as such are irreducible to a formulaic tactic of engagement that can be applied elsewhere. For instance, I see a potential for Schulz's imaginative prose to inspire architects towards their own writing, but I do not suggest that architects mimic Schulz's prose, nor do I wish to suggest a recipe for architectural imagery *à la* Schulz. Furthermore, I note that if the prose offers itself for interpretation towards multiple architectural insights, it is in no way reducible to those insights. In the same spirit, I do not claim

to have accomplished an exhaustive reading of the architectural knowledge that can be drawn out of Schulz's prose. His work sustains many possible interpretations, modes of engagement, and experiences of readings. It is salient in what it presents, demonstrates, and provokes, and not because it explains anything or proves a hypothesis outside itself. Insights can be drawn out with each new reading and not one reading of Schulz's prose will be all-encompassing.

In the same vein, I note also that the fecundity of the literary imagination for architecture certainly does not exhaust itself with a reading of Schulz, not even the thorough one I have endeavoured to bring forward. His work stands as an instance that poignantly speaks to my focus on forms of knowledge and design process and it has helped to carve out a boundary and a focus for my particular project. I insist that engaging literary artifacts in design process can take on countless modalities and thus, outside of Schulz's prose, I only go as far as drawing initial insights on the pedagogical exercises I explored up to now.

Put more bluntly, the point here is to insist that the work that moves is always richer than what can be said about it—and yet we feel compelled to take on the labour of making the rich potential that we see in it available to others. My work here has been to show how literary language can saliently precipitate a thoughtful yet playful imaginative process that can be directed towards space-making practices.

Review of Literature

This project contributes to an emerging field of architectural inquiry that explores the opportunities offered by the cross-pollination between literary methods and architecture. Within this emerging field, there is not yet a study that offers a direct precedent to my own, which focuses specifically on how the literary imagination can play into the process of design. As such, this project weaves itself into a constellation of studies that each contribute their own share of common preoccupations: There are studies that are attentive to those aspects of architecture that are part of its non-object-ness such as its cultural, geographic and temporal qualities; Connected to these are projects that focus on cultural histories, the study of place, as well as the study of site or context; A number of studies have contributed insight into the cross-pollination between architecture and literature, and with them have been works of philosophy that discuss the relationship between language, poetry and the creative imagination; Schulz's interest in mythization has led me to studies on the mythic imagination which further contribute to studies on language, the literary imagination and cultural imaginaries; A number of studies have focused on the designer's or the architects' imaginative process and the kind of knowledge particular to designers; Connected to them are projects concerned with questions of design pedagogy and those focusing on questions of representation; A number of other studies have discussed the relationship between craftsmanship, making, and the imagination; I have also looked at a number of studies that offer insight into the role that literature plays in life more generally; Finally, I have looked, though not exhaustively, to a number of authors who have written about the process of writing.[36]

[36] A more detailed literature review and annotated bibliography was submitted for committee evaluation in fulfillment of ARCH701, on March 31, 2017.

A Note on Sources and Studies on Schulz's Work

This project falls under the rubric of architectural scholarship rather than scholarship on Schulz. Just as there is no direct precedent to my project in architectural discourse, there is also not a study that undertakes a rigorous architectural reading of Schulz's prose. Closest to my own project has been Krzysztof Stala's *On the Margins of Reality: The Paradoxes of Representation in Bruno Schulz's Fiction*. My chapter on architectural representation draws heavily on Stala's thoughtful study. In all, there are very few book-length studies of Schulz's work. The vast majority of secondary sources on Schulz are in the form of essays. Even most of the sources published as monographs are in fact collections of essays that were associated with a particular conference or symposium. In general, studies of Schulz's work have had to confront the fact that it very much resists critical analysis. This has led to a heterogeneous array of approaches, with the most problematic being those that have treated Schulz's quasi-philosophical statements as an open structure that can be filled in with "highly inventive" content in order to impose the most far-fetched meanings onto the work.[37] Most scholarship on Schulz is from the perspective of literature, although there are also those that come from Slavic, Polish, and Jewish studies. Very few examine the architecture in Schulz's work, and none of them come from the discipline of architecture.

The English translations of Schulz's work have here served as the primary sources specific to Schulz. It is in English that they have for me connected to my architectural knowledge and thus prompted this study. Because this is an architectural study rather a literary study, the operative aspect of literary constructions is most adequately discussed in the language in which my own architectural thinking unfolds, that is, in English. Thus, the culture in which Schulz's work is being here studied is the discipline of architecture rather than Polish literature. I have complemented and enriched my reading of the prose with additional French and Romanian translations which I am able to understand. For questions about specific words or details I consulted the original Polish. A vast majority of secondary studies on Schulz that are important

[37] Amongst the more unfortunate examples are essays that tend to take Schulz's philosophical assertions too literally without much of an interpretive effort, or those who makes extraneous efforts to fit Schulz's work into a particular theory. There are also a number of essays that examine, or diagnose, Schulz's "neurosis" from a Jungian of Freudian perspective. For a succinct historical overview of the tendencies surrounding Schulz scholarship as well as some problematic methodologies that tend to crop up with Schulz scholarship, see Dieter De Bruyn and Kris van Heuckelom, "Introduction: Seven Decades of Schulzology," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz: New Combinations, Further Fragmentations, Ultimate Reintegrations*, edited by Dieter De Bruyn and Kris van Heuckelom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 9-20.

to this project have been translated into English.[38] Those that are most comprehensive or most important to my arguments—namely those of Krzysztof Stala and Brian Banks—are in fact in English.

Primary Sources and Constellation of Kindred Projects

This project finds the strongest affinities with a number of studies in architectural history and theory that bring to the foreground the implicit and subtle network of forces and temporalities that come to bear on architecture, thereby emphasizing a matrix of agencies that inflect buildings through time. David Leatherbarrow's *Uncommon Ground* (2000) is among the earliest to elaborate how architecture engages the latent, recessive, un-object-like qualities of place, which he refers to as the "topography" or the "horizon" of architectural works.[39] He notes that these "topographic" conditions tend to be heterogeneous and temporally bound qualities that might include climactic, geographic and cultural factors such as social customs and rituals of inhabitation. They are both the physical terrain but also the cultural practices that are stratified and continuously retraced by habits and repetitions: "Topography is a name for a network of complementary performances that weave into one fabric the action of a people and its history, a network enmeshed within a range of sites that are really very much like one another, similar but not the same." He goes on to note that "[the] task of architectural work is to set up the conditions under which [this] recessive horizon can articulate itself."[40] This position that architecture participates within a fabric of subtle performances—Leatherbarrow tells us—also entails a shift in what is understood to constitute the work of architecture. This shift directs the focus precisely on the *work of* architecture: less what architecture *is* but rather what it *does*. The assumption that architecture is a self-sufficient object is thereby contested. Leatherbarrow further elaborates this position in *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (2009).[41] In this book one can discern a stronger focus on how the building's topography can be generative for architectural inventiveness.

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[38] Banks notes that "[apart] from the reviews, all his work has been rendered into English." Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 57. While I have still found a few essays for which I have not tracked down an English translation, enough of their content has been discussed in other scholarship to understand that the insight they would offer to an architectural reading is less than paramount.
[39] David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground: Architecture, Technology, and Topography*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).
[40] Ibid., 210.
[41] David Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009).

A study that shares a similar focus and sensibility—and such studies are indeed much too sparse in architectural discourse—is Rumiko Handa's *Allure of the Incomplete, Imperfect, and Impermanent* (2015).[42] Handa argues that buildings are incomplete in that their material constitution changes in time, but also in the ways in which they engage human memories and imagination. Although she does not make explicit note of it, the examples she offers contribute to the argument that literature can play a crucial role in facilitating such engagement.[43] I bring as well to the conversation Dolores Hayden's *The Power of Place* (1995), along with a number of studies that inform this project less directly.[44] From the perspective of cultural history, particularly valuable have been Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* (1995) and Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (1992) which discuss the relationship between landscape, historicity and literature within a broader cultural imaginary.[45]

Moving the conversation even closer to a focus on architecture, the literary imagination and poetic language is Alberto Pérez-Gómez's recent work *Attunement* (2016).[46] Pérez-Gómez reminds us that while elusive cultural nuances evade logical explanation they are always a factor in a building's design, regardless of whether the architect is thoughtful enough to address them. He argues that because the architect must make decisions that cannot be accounted for by logic alone, metaphoric language is the appropriate tool for such operations. In other words, poetic language functions as a shortcut to pre-reflective knowledge and it operates within the same emerging and polysemic medium of the imagination. Pérez-Gómez's arguments are built around historical discourses, especially the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century concept of *"stimmung"* or "atmosphere." Architectural examples go back as far as Vitruvius and they include the work of Boullée, Ledoux, Hejduk, Piranesi, and Le Camus de Mézières. In large part, *Attunement* draws from history in order to prepare the theoretical arguments that form the

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[42] Rumiko Handa, *Allure of the Incomplete, Imperfect, and Impermanent: Designing and Appreciating Architecture as Nature* (New York: Routledge, 2015). Other similar studies include Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004); Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009).

[43] I am specifically thinking about Handa's example of the ruins of Kenilworth Castle and its re-imagining in the historical fiction of Sir Walter Scott.

[44] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995). Other studies include Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture: The Poetics of Construction in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995); Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012); Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local. Sense of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997).

[45] Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995). A similar, more activist-centered project is Lucy R. Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride Through Politics, Land Use, and Art in the Changing West* (New York: The New Press, 2014).

[46] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016).

foundation of my dissertation project. The book builds to the proposition that poetic narrative can function as a tool of architectural representation that is typically overlooked. It suggests that a literary narrative could foreground particular rituals and cultural habits, while a lyrical dimension could discern the emotional quality of architectural spaces. Pérez-Gómez does contend however that the attempts that have been made thus far have been limited and at times unclear; that there is much opportunity for exploring specific ways in which language might be useful for architectural design.

One such study is Klaske Havik's *Urban Literacy* (2014), which shares tangential interests to my own in that it explores how literary methods can become conceptual and practical tools for architecture.[47] With a focus on urban conditions, Havik identifies three 'scriptive' concepts—'description', 'transcription' and 'prescription'—which "supply a framework to structure knowledge and develop literary tools for research, education and design concerning architecture and the city."[48] She outlines each of these three "scriptive tools," connects theoretical sources to architectural discourse, and ends by offering examples of the work of an architect (most of which are from the second half of the twentieth century). In essence, Havik's book builds a collection of parallel and congruent tools between literature and architecture, thereby showing that these are already at play in architectural discourse.

A project that, similar to my own, draws on the literary works of an author who also expressed ideas about architecture, is Caroline Dionne's dissertation project "Running Out of Place: The Language and Architecture of Lewis Carroll" (2005).[49] Dionne's study examines the written work of Charles L. Dodgson/ Lewis Carroll—author, geometrician, logician—and is one of the few that comes from the perspective of architecture. Like Schulz, Carroll disrupts linguistic conventions, thereby amplifying the mutable, adaptable, polysemic aspect of language that heightens its poetic potential. A point of contact to my own project is the conversation surrounding partial forms of knowledge. In her reading of Carroll's poem *"The Hunting of the Snark,"* Dionne discusses forms of knowledge that elude representation and discursive language, suggesting that Carroll's poem is a satirical commentary on the certainty of positivistic knowledge. Overall, Dionne's focus is on Carroll's paradoxical use of language, his play on

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[47] Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2014).
[48] Ibid., 27.
[49] Caroline Dionne, "Running Out of Place: The Language and Architecture of Lewis Carroll" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2005).

words, and the use of "nonsense" in relation to space, time, bodily movement, and sense of self. Dionne suggests that there are correspondences and similarities between the way one experiences built spaces—qualitatively and temporally—and the quasi physicality of literary experience. Whereas I focus on language in the design process that leads to architecture, Dionne's project is about the embodied, event-based experience of built architectural spaces.

Overall, in architectural scholarship, this field of inquiry has been gaining momentum for only a little over a decade and a half.[50] An early instigator was the 2006 issue of the Netherlands-based international journal *OASE 70: Architecture & Literature, Reflections / Imaginations*.[51] Part of the *OASE 70* editorial team has spearheaded the online platform *Writingplace Laboratory for Architecture & Literature* which has been active since 2011 and has also been publishing the *Writingplace Journal* since 2018. The earliest projects that discuss architecture and literature come from the perspective of literary and cultural studies. A majority of them focus on the experience of the city at the turn of the twentieth century and tend to be connected to the experience of modernity.[52] In architectural scholarship, many of the recent publications have taken the form of edited volumes.[53]

Another cluster of studies have connected to my own in that they have examined literary methods in relation to the creative imagination.[54] Legendary architectural educator Marco

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[50] The earliest edited collection I have yet to come across, that examines the parallels between architecture and literature, and does so from the perspective of architecture is Muscoe Martin, Patreese Martin, Jennifer Pearson, Sarah Reid, Neil Sandvold, eds., *VIA 8: Architecture and Literature* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986). The VIA series was, until 1990, the architectural journal of the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania. Since this 1986 publication there is very little published on the topic until well into the 2000s.

[51] Christoph Grafe, Madeleine Maaskant, Klaske Havik, eds., *OASE 70, Architecture & Literature, Reflections/Imaginations* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2006).

[52] The beginning of my fourth chapter includes a more extensive list of studies that discuss the relationship between literature and the city. A fairly recent such study is David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012). This book comes from the discipline of literature and it explores literature and architecture as cultural forms of production within the historical context of modernity, beginning with the early nineteenth century.

[53] Sarah Edwards and Jonathan Charley, eds., *Writing the Modern City, Literature, Architecture, Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2012). With contributors from architecture, cultural and literary studies this interdisciplinary collection of essays discusses the cultural connections between works of prose narrative and a series of urban environments, focusing on the experience of modernity in the twentieth century. Recent edited collections that come from the field of architecture include Pedro Gadanho and Susana Oliveira, eds., *Once Upon a Place. Architecture and Fiction* (Lisbon, Caleidoscopio, 2013). Klaske Havik, Jorge Mejía Hernández, Susana Oliveira, Mark Proosten, Mike Chäfer, eds., *Writingplace: Investigations in Architecture and Literature* (Rotterdam: nai010 Publishers, 2016). Paul Emmons, Marcia Feuerstein, Carolina Dayer, eds., *Confabulations: Storytelling in Architecture* (New York, London: Routledge, 2017). Angeliki Sioli and Yoonchun Jung, eds., *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience* (New York, London: Routledge, 2018). Several of these are collections that were published following conferences or symposia.

[54] A number of the earlier books (which also come from literary studies) discuss the creative imagination by bringing together literature and discourse on architecture and spatial conditions. These tend to operate in the other direction, namely by discussing how spaces and cities have propelled the imaginative process of writers. Amongst them are: Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979). comes from literary studies and explores architecture as an analogue for literature in the work of authors Walter Pater, Gerard Manley

Frascari has become congruent with storytelling in architecture, most of all because storytelling was a trademark of his pedagogy. Several of his essays capture his ability to share architectural knowledge with the charisma and inventiveness of a storyteller.[55] Frascari also often describes that drawings, as well as buildings and details, "tell tales."[56] By this he means that drawings and other architectural "demonstrations" speak between the lines of what is present.[57] In the case of buildings, they speak in a manner similar to body language. While Frascari suggests that storytelling has the effect of propelling the architect's imagination, he doesn't go as far as making the argument for a deliberate engagement with the literary imagination in the making of drawings or the process of design.

Hopkins, Marcel Proust and Henry James. Through these writers, Frank discusses not only how literature is like architecture but also the interpenetration between space and time, interiority and exteriority, as well as inner and outer consciousness. She reflects on the activity of building and constructing understanding, as well as the process and nature of experience. Diana Festa-McCormick, *The City as Catalyst: A Study of Ten Novels* (Fairleigh: Dickinson University Press, 1979) likewise comes from literary studies and it examines how the city is an imaginative catalyst for the development of novels. Amongst the different chapters, Paris is examined in the novels of Balzac, Zola, and Rilke, Venice in Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, Alexandria in the work Lawrence Durrell, New York in John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*, and Andrei Bely's *Saint Petersburg*. Many of the authors discussed are Schulz's contemporaries. Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) is a book about the interplay between the human imagination and its dwelling spaces—from the archaic (gardens, rooms, streets, etc.), to the whimsical (haunted houses, Victorian parlours, ruins), to spaces that only exist in fiction and to worlds that are condensed in maps, catalogues and museum exhibits. Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature,* trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982) is amongst other things a book about the writer's imagination, the mental spaces that sustain creative process, the participation of literature to philosophical, social and political history. It too comes from the discipline of literature. Translator Ann Smock emphasizes the work's imposing reputation especially amongst prominent postwar French literary critics and philosophers.

[55] Marco Frascari, "Light, Six-Sided, Paradoxical Fight," *Nexus Network Journal* 4, no. 2 (Nov. 2002): 21-37. doi:http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1007/s00004-002-0031-3. In essays such as these he doesn't merely present conceptual ideas *about* architecture, but he offers an experience of architectural learning in the way he weaves the theoretical aspects of architecture with fantastical elements, stories, and with examples of built architecture. Here for example, the myth of the medusa weaves important philosophical lessons for architects. The fable of the three little piglets teaches us about the weight of a house made of brick and how in its stability it relinquishes a certain amount of merrymaking. This specific way of teaching architecture has the effectiveness of an imaginative engagement in understanding, in the way that fables, poetry and storytelling also do, and in the way that a purely conceptual explanation cannot because they appeal to our critical mind and not to our imagination. Other essays include Marco Frascari, "A Quasi-Necessary Cacotechnology: Few Happy Thoughts on Architectural Imagination and Facture," *Architectural Theory Review*. 10.2 (2005): 1-11. DOI: 10.1080/13264820509478538. Marco Frascari, "Cooking an Architectural Happy Cosmospoiesis," *Built Environment* (1978-). 31.1 (2005): 31-37. DOI: https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.2148/benv.31.1.31.62200. Marco Frascari, "Elegant Curiosity," *Log*. (2008): 69-79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41765617. Marco Frascari, "Lines as Architectural Thinking," *Architectural Theory Review*. 14.3 (2009): 200-212. DOI: 10.1080/13264820903341605.

[56] Most notably in his Marco Frascari, "The Tell-The-Tale Detail," in *Via 7: The Building of Architecture,* edited by Paula Behrens and Anthony Fisher, 23-37. Philadelphia: Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania, 1984.

[57] See also the edited volume Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale, and Bradley Starkey, eds., *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007).

My project also relies on Frascari's work especially for my discussion on architectural representation. What I mean by a kind of "drawing" that focuses on process rather than end result is the same as how Frascari presents drawing in his *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow-Food for the Architect's Imagination* (2011).[58] In this book Frascari offers a series of drawing exercises that are aimed at sustaining a fruitful environment for the architect's imaginative momentum. Drawing is thus understood as a process of discovery in architecture, concerning itself less with drawing as a form of communication to an outside observer. When I compare architectural representation in literature with drawing, it is precisely this kind of drawing that I have in mind: drawings oriented towards architectural discovery, drawings that "draw out" the architecture rather than represent its forms. In other words, I examine how literature and poetic language maintain the same criticality and architectural sensibility that, according to Frascari, can be sustained in architectural drawing. In his more distant *Monsters of Architecture* (1991), which was more heavily inflected by the theoretical discourse of its time, Frascari similarly discussed questions about architectural knowledge and pedagogy.[59]

A project with strong connections to my own and on which I rely heavily to build my argument that architectural design is in essence a dialectic act of hermeneutics, is Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne's *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as a Way of Thinking* (2005).[60] Another recent book with similar sensibilities and a distinct approach is Aarati Kanekar's *Architecture's Pretexts: Spaces of Translation* (2015).[61] Kanekar engages literature in

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[58] Marco Frascari, *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow-Food for the Architect's Imagination* ((London, New York: Routledge, 2011). Some sections of this book have appeared in earlier versions in the form of essays, as noted above.

[59] Marco Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture: Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory* (Savage, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991).

[60] Coyne and Snodgrass, *Interpretation in Architecture*. Another book on the imagination specific to design is Nigel Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2007). Cross argues for a particular intelligence in design that is a "designerly way of knowing" which is both and not quite either 'artistic' or 'scientific'. He emphasizes the constructive (rather than analytic) nature of design solutions as well as their iterative nature and their reliance on abductive rather than deductive, conjectural rather than logical ways of thinking. Cross focuses predominantly on product design and does not discuss the cultural or political dimension of design.

[61] Aarati Kanekar, *Architecture's Pretexts: Spaces of Translation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015). Each chapter focuses on an architectural project and how it was conceived on the basis of a transposition from another medium. The book begins with Giuseppe Terragni's Danteum, an unbuilt architectural project inspired directly by *The Divine Comedy*. The second project is Eisenman's contribution to the 1985 Venice Biennale, entitled "Moving Arrows Eros and Other Errors," which was based on the structure and narrative of *Romeo and Juliet*. Another chapter focuses on Peter Zumthor's Swiss Sound Box, how the space performs in the manner of an instrument, and how the architecture achieved an embodiment of music rather than an analogy. This is followed by an examination of the role of mapping, or notational systems, as generative instruments for design ideas in architecture—this through the practice of Perry Kulper and British firm Smout Allen. The last chapter focuses on the ways in which Koolhaas's Kunstal in Rotterdam explores the space of montage not as an image but rather as an analytical dimension capable of revealing a multiplicity of meanings.

order to explore one of the main interests of my project—the issue of translation, or transposition across mediums as a productive way of approaching architectural projects. She tells us that the generative kernel for this interest were the "architectonic, combinatorial, and shape-based ideas apparent in literary works, especially Calvino's novels."[62] With varying degrees of crossover to my project have been a number of studies in architectural pedagogy, studies on the creative imagination of architects, and studies on the particular knowledge and expertise of architecture as a discipline.[63]

Drifting a little farther from architectural studies proper, are a number of projects that focus on how language structures our imagination, our way of being in the world, and the way we build knowledge, truth, and ways of seeing and worldmaking. These include Nelson Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), David Abram's *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1997), George Steiner's *After Babel* (1998), Elaine Scarry's *Dreaming by the Book* (1999).[64] I have also looked at a number of studies that discuss the imaginative process involved in craft and making such as Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008) and Alva Nöe's *Strange Tools* (2015).[65] My interest in creative process across disciplines has led me to a number of books by authors as well as artists who have reflected on their own creative processes.[66] Finally a number of studies, who have also contributed to my arguments, are those that have reflected on the importance of literature for life.[67]

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[62] Ibid., xv.

[63] Starting with the most recent, I have looked at: Pierluigi Serraino, *The Creative Architect: Inside the Great Midcentury Personality Study* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2016); Tamar Zinguer, *Architecture in Play: Intimations of Modernism in Architectural Toys* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2015); Neil Spiller and Nic Clear, eds., *Educating Architects: How Tomorrow's Practitioners Will Learn Today*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2014); Roger K. Lewis, *Architect?: A Candid Guide to the Profession* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013); Joan Ockman, and Rebecca Williamson, *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012); Andrzej Piotrowski and Julia W. Robinson, *The Discipline of Architecture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Ulrich Franzen, Alberto Pérez Gómez, and Kim Shkapich, *Education of an Architect: A Point of View, the Cooper Union School of Art & Architecture* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999); Martin Pearce and Maggie Toy, *Educating Architects* (London: Academy Editions, 1995); John Hejduk, *Education of an Architect. The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union* (New York: Rizzoli Press, 1988).

[64] Lakoff and Johnson's study has already been cited earlier. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978). David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-That-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997). George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999).

[65] Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). Alva Nöe, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015). On a similar theme is David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968). A book more geared to students of architecture is Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Thinking Hand: Existential and Embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Chichester, U.K.: Willey, 2009).

[66] These include: Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (New York: Grove Press, 1988); Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1967-1968, ed*. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu (Cambridge, MA. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2000); William Stafford, *Writing the Australian Crawl: Views on the Writer's Vocation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1978); Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary. Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*,

If within this interdisciplinary matrix of studies my project participates most strongly to the field of inquiry that explores literary methods and practices in architecture, it bears noting that a significant number of these similarly-focused studies have only been published after I began to work on this project in 2012. In her introduction to *Literary Architecture*, Ellen Frank tells us that she has chosen her four authors (Pater, Hopkins, Proust and James) because their architectural analogues have allowed them to "give language and thought spatial extension, to present the where-ness of ideas and thoughts. By means of the analogue, they may give, or seem to give, substance to that which is no-thing, to that which does not occupy what we call substantial space. [They] do this by giving spirit-thought a dwelling place or abode."[68] In this emerging field of inquiry that looks to literature for architectural knowledge, we do the reverse: We tend to the spirit-thought so that it might adequately breathe itself into the dwelling places or abodes we build as architects. A strong driver for this field of inquiry is in response to an architectural culture conditioned by social media and saturated with the retinal image. Our intuition is that the literary imagination can imbibe this architectural culture with a multifaceted understanding that resists the flattening of the visual, with the kind of seeing and vision that acts, touches, and moves. My own project focuses on how literature instills this spirit-thought into the process and journey by which one arrives at architecture.

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ed. Leonard Woolf (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt, 2003). From the perspective of artistic practice I have most recently become familiar with Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, eds., *On Not Knowing. How Artists Think* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013).

[67] These include: Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1993); Hubert L. Dreyfus and Sean Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age* (New York: Free Press, 2011); Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millenium. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985-1986,* trans. Patrick Creagh (London: Penguin Classics, 2009); Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature: Essays*, trans. Patrick Creagh (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

[68] Frank, *Literary Architecture*, 12.

Chapter 1

Idolatrous Bookes and Inglorious Domains: Schulz and The Avant-Garde

There are many passages in Schulz's prose that seem to be describing everyday occurrences through a build-up of fastidious, immersive and captivating imagery. This is how the prose reads on the first encounter with the work. To a reader invested differently, the prose presents additional layers of engagement. Countless passages in the prose can be read as an attempt for Schulz to self-consciously describe, or even extricate, the creative process underpinning his writing. This can appear glaringly obvious to a reader invested with the perspective of one who may have attempted to themselves compose literature. The following passage comes from the story "Autumn" and it describes the end of the summer season:

> "You know that moment when summer, so recently buoyant and vigorous […] one day sustains a barely perceptible injury. The sun still blazes dense and copious, the landscape still wields the classic magisterial flourish bequeathed to this season by the genius of Poussin, but, strange to report, we return from a morning stroll oddly wearied and jejune. […] And we know that at dusk someone or other will take himself with a worried smile to a remote corner of summer and knock, knock at the wall to check if, in fact, the sound is still full and genuine. This testing carries with it a perverse relish in treacherous unmasking, a small frisson of scandal.
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> […] Finding no surcease in reality, you created a superstructure out of the figurative stuff of metaphor, you moved among associations and allusions, the imponderables between things. […] In the end your honeyed words grew cloying. […] The borders of your universality became visible; your grand style, your splendid baroque, which satisfied the needs of reality when you were in your prime, now turned out to be a mannered trick.[69]

[69] Schulz, "Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 323-5.

Folded within the description of a summer giving into fall one can discern a searing self-deprecating "unmasking" of Schulz's very own predisposition to compose prose that is buoyantly and vigorously metaphoric. He is self-conscious of this very technique that so much underlies his prose, questioning whether it has become "wearied and jejune" and revealed itself as a "mannered trick." One finds several other such passages throughout Schulz's prose. These can be discussed in relation to what was decades later identified as a "metafiction," "self-reflexivity" or "*autotematyzm*" in literary criticism. If Schulz's prose emerges as highly idiosyncratic, even amongst its contemporaries, it does participate to an experimental approach to literature that preoccupied the Polish literary avant-garde.

This chapter examines the philosophical, intellectual, and artistic preoccupations underpinning Schulz's work in the context in which it emerged, namely that of the Polish literary avant-garde. I look at how certain qualities of Schulz's work are refracted by a broader predisposition towards self-reflexivity and metafiction that was characteristic of experimental Polish literature, especially in Witold Gombrowicz's interest in immaturity and Karol Irzykowski's notion of the *pałuba*. With Gombrowicz and Stanisław Witkiewicz—Schulz's contemporaries and 'conspirators' in the literary avant-garde—Schulz shared an intense preoccupation with Form. All three were "consumed with experimenting with a certain explosive material called Form," as Gombrowicz would later write in his diary.[70] While Schulz's writing offers very few explicit statements about this interest in Form, this is definitely not the case with Gombrowicz who has left multiple vivacious texts that delve into this obsession. Gombrowicz tells us that each of them approached this "confrontation" with form in their own "utterly alone" manner, resulting in works that appear radically different from each other.[71] Despite this radical difference in appearances, Gombrowicz remains especially instructive in illuminating the broader artistic and intellectual preoccupations that were equally at stake in Schulz's work.

Schulz's artistic practice is steeped in both visual and literary modes of expression. The cross-pollination between the two is one of the facets that make Schulz's prose so very distinct. Schulz spent a year studying architecture in Vienna, during which time he decided to become a painter. While he had produced countless drawings and sketches from a very early age, one of

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[70] Witold Gombrowicz, *Diary*, trans. Lillian Vallee (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2012), 526.
[71] Ibid.

his first full-bodied projects as a visual artist was a folio of prints entitled *The Idolatrous Booke*, or *The Book of Idolatry*. The prints depict erotically-charged scenes that have been described as masochistic, in which several variations of Schulz himself take on the role of the idolater prostrating in veneration of a female idol. The prints are arresting as they are unsettling, and in this they echo—in a way that his prose does not—the most salient preoccupations that underlie Karol Irzykowski's *Pałuba* and Witold Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*.

I argue that much more clearly than his prose, Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* operates as an interlocutor to the discussion surrounding Form, self-reflexivity and the *pałubic* element—all of which so actively preoccupied the Polish Avant-Garde. If his prose is where Schulz is most invested in his specific engagement with Form—and where his most fertile, linguistically articulated architectural imagery is to be found—I build towards it by first discussing how *The Idolatrous Booke* reciprocates the preoccupation of the broader intellectual and artistic context. In essence, this reading of *The Idolatrous Booke* operates as the primer for Schulz's particular relationship to language, his artistic psyche, as well as the tactics by which he constructed his prose.

1.1 Metafiction, Form, and The *Paluba*: An Introduction to The Polish Avant-Garde

A defining characteristic of the highly experimental literature of the Polish avant-garde is a self-reflexive, self-referential and self-conscious fiction that has been characterized in Polish criticism as "*autotematyzm*" and has been subsequently identified as 'metafiction'. Most quoted as the culmination of both *autotematyzm* and 'metafiction' is the French *nouveau roman*—often exemplified by André Gide's 1925 novel *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*—although it bears noting that Gombrowicz thought the *nouveau roman* to reduce form to literary style.[72] The term *autotematyzm* was first coined by the influential Polish critic Artur Sandauer to denote a tendency in literary technique that sought to describe, or lay bare, the process of writing itself. For Sandauer, *autotematyzm* attempted to give a name to the movement in literature that paralleled the movement of abstract art: The core characteristic of both had to do with a gravitating away from an external referent while aiming to posit an autonomous, self-sufficient

[72] Ewa Płonowska Ziarek, ed., Introduction to *Gombrowicz's Grimaces: Modernism, Gender, Nationality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 11.

reality of the work, achieved through the very medium of its production. Sandauer's writing on *autotemayzm* takes place primarily in the postwar period, and since then, according to Dieter de Bruyn, the term *autotematyzm* has been problematic not only because it is virtually only used in Polish and is specific to Polish literary criticism, but even in Polish it has been questioned and re-defined to such an extent that it seems to no longer be efficacious.[73] De Bruyn suggests that term 'metafiction' encompasses more adequately the specific attributes of Polish literary avant-garde, while also permitting it to participate to a broader literary discourse. In other words, examining the literature through the lens of 'metafiction' expands the conversation beyond the boundaries of Polish literary analysis.

Mark Currie notes that the designation of 'metafiction' became most thoroughly articulated in relation to the self-reflexive, self-conscious postmodern American fiction in the 1970's and 1980's.[74] This however does not mean that 'metafiction' is restricted to postmodernism, but merely that the postmodern context was more equipped to articulate an understanding of the metafictive quality of certain literary texts: "Whereas postmodern fiction can generally be regarded as conscious metafiction, postmodern readings can also identify metafiction as an aspect of the unconscious level of the text, against the grain of realist intention, and therefore beyond any temporal boundaries which might apply to the term 'postmodernism'."[75]

Much of the problematics that arose around *autotematyzm* as well as 'metafiction' was that, by following the definition to its limits, the texts' self-reflexivity would result into a never-ending, self-negating aporia. What Mark Currie writes with respect to metafiction very much echoes the arguments brought up by Polish critics in relation to some of the problematics surrounding *autotematyzm*: "It is not enough that metafiction knows that it is fiction; it must also know that it is metafiction if its self-knowledge is adequate, and so on in an infinite logical regress."[76] He proposes that the essential characteristic of metafiction is that it operates as "a

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[73] Dieter De Bruyn writes that Sandauer first noted this tendency in his 1947 paper "Konstruktywny nihilizm" ("Constructive Nihilism") in which Sandauer had not yet used the term *autotemtatyzm* but rather referred to the same literary tendency as "self-thematicity". For a more detailed history of the term *autotematyzm*, as well as the issues that later arose around it in Polish literary criticism, see Dieter De Bruyn, "The Problem of *Autotematyzm* in Polish Literary Criticism, or How to Immobilize a Perpetuum Mobile of Nothingness," in *Perspectives on Slavic Literatures. Proceedings of the First International Perspectives on Slavistic Conference* (Leuven, September 17-19, *2004), eds*. Danaher, David S. and Van Heuckelom, Kris (Amsterdam: Pegasus, 2007), 127-139.

[74] Mark Currie, ed., *Metafiction* (London, New York: Longman Critical Readers, 1995).

[75] Ibid., 17.

[76] Ibid., 2.

borderline discourse, as a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and which takes that border as its subject [and] as a primary source of energy."[77] Currie insists that within this definition of metafiction, the term 'criticism' must remain loosely interpreted and that it stretches beyond a writer who, within the same literary text, engages in academic criticism of that same text. In this looser interpretation, 'criticism' can also refer to a text that engages in illusion-breaking tactics that explicitly highlight the artificiality of the literary text, often with the intention of tampering with the boundary between art and life by drawing attention to, and questioning this boundary. As we have noted in the extract at the beginning of this chapter, Schulz's fiction engages in the latter, by blurring the boundary between prose and criticism, even if outside of his fiction he actively contributed essays of literary and cultural criticism. Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* on the other hand, steps out of the narrative of the novel to present the reader with inserted texts that verge towards theoretical discourse. Schulz doesn't step out of his fiction as a cultural critic, but rather confers moments of the self-conscious reflexivity to his narrator and protagonist. As noted, in many instances, these self-reflexive passages of Schulz's stories are only discernible to a reader invested in reading them as such, and they might otherwise appear indistinguishable from the richly layered synesthetic imagery that so much characterizes his prose.

In his comparative studies on the metafictive element of the Polish avant-garde, Dieter De Bruyn warns against the tendency of some critics to take the discursive components of a text and take for granted that these can be used to elucidate the work, and that they constitute reliable utterances of their authors' actual opinions. He argues that a focus on the explicit commentaries that lay bare the process underlying the text misses the subtler, more implicit forms of self-reflexivity. Furthermore, what this can also lead to is a reductionist interpretation, that celebrates the work for the philosophical value of its discursive utterance, and grossly undermines the sophistication of its multilayered literary form. For instance, De Bruyn notes that

> "Irzykowski's actually equivocal anti-Modernist commentaries were interpolated rather unequivocally into many literary critical accounts, so that Pałuba started functioning as a univocal, more or less novelistic critique of conventional literary techniques and reading habits, instead of being interpreted

[77] Ibid.

> as an extraordinary artistic representation of the highly sophisticated literary self-consciousness of the author.[78]

In other words, the literary utterance overflows the philosophical insights or the literary criticism that can be discerned in a metafictive work. The autothematic voice opens a fecund questioning rather justify the work, and one must resist the impulse to apply to it an apparent order or to reduce the work to a philosophical credo. Another important aspect of metafiction is that it also opens itself beyond the content of the text and is further articulated in the process of reading. The act of reading and the role of the reader are in fact another set of discernible characteristics of 'metafiction' and this is the case for both Schulz and Gombrowicz. This means that 'metafiction' entails not only a literary text that is critical and self-aware of its own conventions but this text also relies on, as well as solicits a reader who is perceptive to this altered literary consciousness. The implications of this relationship to the reader are then twofold: first, if 'metafiction' is a function of reading this means that 'metafiction' is not completely a property inherent solely in the text. Second, this means that at the core of metafictive writing is a weakened authorial authority, an attitude of deliberately composing an open text. What I understand to differentiate metafiction from the fact that virtually any text is re-made in the act of reading, is the explicit provocation that the reader engages not only in its remaking, but also participates to the questioning of that boundary between fiction and criticism, between art and life.[79] Further on we see how Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* articulates this provocation in a forceful yet comic, viscerally uncomfortable intellectualism that I argue, is also palpable in Schulz's *The Booke of Idolatry*. Schulz's prose wraps such provocations in layers of intoxicating, sensorially rich imagery, its searing irony and (self)-criticism only apparent to a perceptive reader.

As is the case with much metafictional writing, both Gombrowicz and Schulz often display a self-conscious awareness of the artificiality of the construction that the text puts forward, engaging in an obsessive questioning of the relationship between language and world. It bears noting that with a critical discourse that is assimilated within the literary utterance, such texts cast into doubt the ability of this discourse to operate objectively. Put another way, one of

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[78] Dieter De Bruyn, "The Janus-Faced Author: Narrative Unreliability and Metafiction in Karol Irzykowski's Pałuba and Witold Gombrowicz's Ferdydurke," *Russian Literature* 62, no. 4 (2007): 406, doi:10.1016/j.ruslit.2007.10.004.

[79] It is of course possible to argue, as Roland Barthes has done in his well-known essay "The Death of the Author," that every work of literature maintains this openness of reading in which the author's authority is undermined and opened up by the reader's re-making of the text.

the primary mandates of metafiction is to question the very premise that language can present an objective and authoritative critical discourse—even when it engages in a theoretical rather than poetic discourse. This we will see is a propelling force in Schulz's work.

If Schulz, Gombrowicz and Witkiewicz were 'conspirators' in the Polish avant-garde, it is Gombrowicz who has left the most telling accounts of their intense preoccupation with 'Form'. Even if they approached this obsession in distinct manners, Gombrowicz's vivacious expository texts offer important insight into the artistic and intellectual context that inflected the work of all three. For these Polish 'conspirators', (especially more so for Gombrowicz and Schulz) this notion of 'form' must, in effect, be understood as an openness rather than a finality. Form refers to a process rather than a result, one in which artistic production is intrinsically intertwined and implicated in a continuous recreation and re-affirmation of both art and life:

> In fact we were conspirators. We were consumed with experimenting with a certain explosive material called Form. But this was not form in any ordinary sense—the issue was "creating form," "producing it," and "creating oneself through the creation of form." It is hard for me to explain this in a few words; those interested should look into our books. I will note only that although each of us began differently […] we had a certain trait in common. We were both utterly alone in confrontation with Form.[80]

At the very core of this obsession with "Form" is that it constitutes an openness that overflows a tightly-packaged theoretical understanding.[81] 'Form' cannot be understood on strictly discursive terms and without engaging the literary works. It is therefore not possible to fully grasp Form as a strictly intellectual exercise without the literary act, nor is it possible for an un-engaged reader to understand Form from a contemplative distance. The experience of the literary work and the act of reading itself are indispensable to understanding Form—they solicit the reader as a complicit agent in the creation of the work and of Form. Furthermore, it is not only through a distant act of "reading" that this participatory creation occurs, but through, and with everyday life itself. For Gombrowicz, Form was not a static or bounded manifestation of artistic production, but an immanent event, a dialectic in which art and cultural production are intrinsically tied to emergent social and political forces. The following is a telling account of the

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[80] Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 526.

[81] I maintain the capitalized "Form" to refer to the particular notion of 'form' that was obsessively sought for in the work of Schulz, Gombrowicz, and Witkacy.

stakes that are at play in Gombrowicz's understanding of Form, as it presents an inextricable interdependence between art, Form, social expression and the emergent nature of human culture:

> Certainly art is the perfecting of form. But you seem to think—and here is another of your cardinal mistakes—that art consists of creating works perfect in their form; you reduce this all-encompassing, omnihuman process of creating form to the turning out of poems and symphonies; and you've never been able to truly experience nor explain to others what an enormous role form plays in our lives. […] When a widow who walks behind her husband's casket cries and wails to the point of splitting her sides, you surmise she's wailing because she's overcome by her loss. Or when some engineer, doctor, or lawyer murders his wife, children, or friend, you think that he let himself be seized by bloodthirsty instincts. […] But in Reality matters stand as follows: a human being does not express himself forthrightly and in keeping with his nature but always in some well-defined form, and this form, this style, this manner of being is not of our making but is thrust upon us from outside—and this is why one and the same individual can present himself on the outside as wise or stupid, as bloodthirsty or angelic, as mature or immature—depending upon the style he happens to come up with, and in what way he is dependent on others. [We] tirelessly pursue form, we hassle other people with our style, our manners while riding in a streetcar, while eating or enjoying ourselves, while resting or attending to our business—we always, unceasingly, seek form, and we delight in it or suffer by it, and we conform to it or we violate and demolish it, or we let it create us, amen.[82]

We can thus discern that for Gombrowicz Form is not a static underlying structure or ordering principle but a dynamic, emergent and operative event. This event functions within an expanded matrix as an intersubjective process that constructs the artist as much as the artwork. According to Gombrowicz, art was quintessentially connected to everyday life and its production was not restricted to artists. He wrote that the practice of art was available to all and could be noticed in seemingly inconsequential actions such as an impromptu joke made in conversation, a flower that a girl might have pinned in her hair, or the feeling of being moved by the light of twilight.[83] With these examples Gombrowicz was looking to undermine artists' pretensions of superiority, believing that greatness in art is a social construct akin to idolatry and, as *Ferdydurke* repeatedly illustrates, is often instilled via the pedagogic mechanism. As was also the case with Schulz, Form for Gombrowicz did not flow solely out of the artist but it manifested itself out of an interaction with forces and circumstances from without. He wished to highlight that the artistic

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[82] Witold Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, trans. Danuta Borchardt (New Haven & London: Yale University Press) 80-1.
[83] Ibid., 78.

aspect of culture is a "muddled, complicated, and difficult communion with art" that cannot be easily subsumed in "simplistic phraseology" or a static form. To try to do so would be naïve and reductionist; a problematic dismissal of murky and inadmissible human predilections—such as stupidity, evil, crime—especially because, Gombrowicz insisted, this muddled and difficult territory is the basis of the emergence of culture and of collective life.[84] He writes:

> Nations die because of [Form]. It is the cause of wars. It creates something in us that is not of us. If you make light of it you'll never understand stupidity nor evil nor crime. It governs our slightest impulses. It is at the base of our collective life. For you, however, Form and Style still belong strictly to the realm of the aesthetic—for you style is on paper only, in the style of our stories. [85]

Gombrowicz was particularly interested in immaturity as a force that had the capacity to disrupt pre-established codes of behaviour or "proper form." He believed that immaturity consisted of those things in a society that were uncomfortable, base, and unpalatable. He believed that art could only be effective as an operative agent of culture if it functioned within this uncombed zone in which form remained indeterminate, in process, and thus maintained a vital force. This specific impulse in the uncombed, undomesticated impulses rooted in the formation of culture is in tune with Irzykowski's "*palubic* element," even though Gombrowicz denied a lineage between his work and Irzykowski's.[86]

Karol Irzykowski's first and only novel *Pałuba,* published in 1903, has been repeatedly identified as the literary and intellectual predecessor of the Polish literary avant-garde. Especially within Polish literary criticism, *Pałuba* is most often referred to as the quintessential example of *autotematyzm*. *Pałuba* presents a highly experimental and subversive approach to literary form, which has also rendered the work virtually untranslatable—and essentially untranslated—into other languages. The word *pałuba* was born with the novel itself as the novel introduced the word *pałuba* in the Polish language. According to several critics the word operates such that it

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[84] Ibid., 78-9.
[85] Ibid., 80-1.
[86] While Witold Gombrowicz denied there being a connection between his novel *Ferdydurke* (1937) and Irzykowski's *Pałuba*, a few months after its publication, two important voices in Polish literary criticism—that of Bruno Schulz and Artur Sandauer—discussed *Pałuba* as the direct predecessor of *Ferdydurke*. A discussion of the similarities that may have led both Schulz and Sandauer to make this connection can be found in Dieter De Bruyn, ""The Lie Always Rises to the Surface Like Oil": Toward a Metafictional Reading of Karol Irzykowski's *Pałuba* and Bruno Schulz's Fiction" in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz: New Combinations, Further Fragmentations, Ultimate Reintegrations*, eds. De Bruyn and van Heuckelom, 83-133 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

even requires translation every time it is used in Polish. In English *pałuba* is most often translated as "hag" or an awkward doll, often bearing the connotation of a roughly hewn figurine intended to be destroyed, like an effigy. Irzykowski deliberately wanted the word *pałuba* to elicit an uncomfortable tension. He chose the word because it is obscure yet unsettling even in Polish. Within the novel itself, Irzykowski describes what he wished to accomplish with this word: "That which is unlike anything else, should take a name which is unlike anything else, wild and strange, uncombed and unpleasant – uncomfortable to use, and therefore unlikely to become a worn coin."[87]

Pałuba is the title of the novel, and it is also the name of the book that is being written in the novel. This is the first metafictive layer of the novel—the fact that the book itself has a prehistory in the book. The novel in turn is not only composed of a narrative, but the storyline is interspersed with discursive texts that display a tendency to question the process of writing itself and to adopt a self-critical attitude toward literary conventions. De Bruyn summarizes *Pałuba* as follows:

> The novel consists of five different parts: the introductory novella entitled 'Sny Marii Dunin (palimpsest)' ('The Dreams of Maria Dunin (A Palimpsest)'), in which an anonymous archaeologist reports how he was initiated into the hidden 'Brotherhood of the Great Bell' ('Bractwo Wielkego Dzwonu'), then fell in love with the leader's daughter Maria, and eventually married her sister Hermina, after which the narrator admits that the entire story is a falsification; the "actual" novel 'Pałuba (studium biograficzne)' ('Pałuba [A Biographical Study]'), which tells the story of Piotr Strumieński's married life with Angelika and, after her suicide, with Ola; and three explanatory essays, respectively entitled 'Uwagi do *Pałuby*' ('Remarks to *Pałuba'*), 'Wyjaśnienie *Snów Marii Dunin* I zwiazek ich z *Pałuba*' ('An Explanation of *The Dreams of Maria Dunin* and Its Connection with *Pałuba*), and 'Szaniec *Pałuby*' ('The Rampart of *Pałuba*').[88]

De Bruyn points out that "even the actual novel consists mainly of explanatory digressions, discussing for instance the protagonists' psychology and (most prominently) the form of the novel which is being written."[89] In essence, the novel's reflexive tendency aims to lay bare the creative and psychological mechanisms that are at play in constructing the text. As is the case with what has been noted in relation metafiction, the novel also accentuates that a final version

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[87] Quoted in David Goldfarb, "Paluby in Bruno Schulz's Workshop" in *Bruno Schulz: New Readings, New Meanings*, 88.
[88] De Bruyn, "Metafiction in *Pałuba* and *Ferdydurke*," 84 note 2.
[89] Ibid., 84.

or representation (of reality) is not possible. It further accentuates a narrator's authority that is continuously problematized—the fallibility of the author's account is repeatedly brought forth. These same "metafictive" characteristics are also why *Pałuba* is considered "the paramount example of Polish autotematyzm."[90]

Within the conversation of *autotematyzm* and metafiction, Irzykowski's novel is specific precisely because the discomfort and strangeness that the "palubic element" sought to elicit. Irzykowski describes the "palubic element" as an unsettling, undomesticated nature that propels a struggle between itself and the "constructive element" of human culture. The "palubic element" is disruptive, incongruous, and it provokes uncomfortable and brutal confrontations with the question of what it means to partake to ideal forms of culture and civilization. Irzykowski's narrator tells us that the *palubic* element operates like "a sentence from the prison tower of egoism to the monstrous precipice of sincerity, the cutting of a nerve that feels only itself and coming to feel the nerve of the world."[91] The aim is that, in questioning the very core of one's values, a raw and vital life force can lead to moments of authenticity. This conscientiousness to rub raw and destabilize the very ground of one's values in the interest of an authentic participation to culture-making, finds parallels with the Polish literary avant-garde, especially in their preoccupation with 'Form'. With respect to Irzykowski, Gombrowicz, and Schulz, this encounter with the raw and disruptive life force is an intimate and personal one. They themselves become the frontline in this uncomfortable playground with the raw and uncombed culture-making forces.

In what follows I unpack Schulz's participation to this preoccupation with 'Form', the *palubic* element, and meta-artistic practices of the Polish avant-garde. I focus here on *The Booke of Idolatry* which presents more direct points of contact to the work of his contemporaries. In order to trace out the multi-layered nature of this specific context I look most closely at the parallels between Schulz's *The Booke of Idolatry* and Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*, which I then complement with comparative studies that include Irzykowski's *Pałuba*. It is likely already evident that 'Form' is particular in this context, and is more specific than how literary form is typically understood.

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[90] De Bruyn, "The Problem of *Autotematyzm*," 132.
[91] Goldfarb, "Paluby in Bruno Schulz's Workshop," 89.

1.2 *The Idolatrous Booke The Book of Idolatry*

Schulz's *The Book of Idolatry* or *The Idolatrous Booke (Xięga bałwochwalcza)* is not a book in the traditional sense, but refers to folios of graphic prints made from around twenty engraved glass plates through a process called *cliché-verre*. The first folios date from around 1920 which has led some scholars to insist that *The Book of Idolatry* marks Schulz's debut as an artist and that it is in effect Schulz's first book, predating the publication of his prose by more than a decade. The printed folios behave like a book in that they follow some of its compositional elements: They always include a cover, a frontispiece, and a print entitled "Dedication" in some of the folios, or "Introduction" in others.[92]

In their subject-matter the prints depict erotically charged scenes that carry strong connotations to masochism and foot fetish. Dominant female figures, several of which are nudes or partially nude, are idolized by a cast of dwarfish men that grovel submissively at their feet. The women tend to adopt a distant, contemptuous, or indifferent attitude. Their gaze is in large part directed outside the image, most often denying eye-contact with both the idolaters and the external viewer. Their leg is typically the dominating element in the scene and the focus of entranced adoration. Some of the scenes take place in an interior boudoir-like setting in which the female idol is either seated or reclining. Some present an exterior condition in the background, such as a city (recognizable as Drohobycz), a landscape, or a garden. Several scenes are depicted in the city proper, with the female idol—or idols—walking or standing. In these particular scenes, many of the women are clothed, though their presence remains domineering and the focus is, again, repeatedly drawn to their legs. In the vast majority of the prints, the idolaters that grovel at their feet are a combination of elders, functionaries, dwarves, religious figures, artists, and men that are grotesquely deformed including some whose back is that of an animal such as a dog or a feline. Important is the fact that a large number of these men's physiognomy are variations on Schulz's self-portrait. While these scenes are loaded with a heavy erotic tension that have often been described as masochistic, neither violent nor sexual acts are actually depicted. These acts seem imminent though they are never fulfilled. Theodosia

[92] Bruno Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, ed. Jerzy Ficowski (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990), print reproduced on page 51. (available also at "Dedication (Introduction)" (51) https://www.newstatesman.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/06/2015_18_bruno_schulz.jpg)

Robertson has noted that something of a paradox comes forth in the eroticism presented in *The Idolatrous Booke*: the theme of erotic female power repeats over and over to the point of monotony and boredom.[93]

The composition of the images make explicit allusions to well-known cultural traditions that blend together the grotesque, rococo, with canonical works of art, especially depictions of Venus from across art history. Critics have identified stylistic references to Goya, Félicien Rops, Toulouse-Lautrec, Edvard Munch and Aubrey Beardsley amongst a few others. The prints sometimes include elements of the *commedia dell'arte* such as the Pierrot and Harlequin figures. They also have been noted to borrow from turn of the century mass culture, such as fliers and advertisements.[94] Within the overall thematic of idolatry, other recurring tropes include processions, allusions to religious rituals, circuses, festivals and carnivalesque elements. The titles of the prints reveal a literary dimension to this folio: "Rites of Spring" alludes to archaic fertility rituals; "The Infanta and her Dwarfs" suggests a connection to Oscar Wilde's fairy-tale "The Birthday of The Infanta"; "Susanna at Her Toilet" recalls the biblical tale "Susanna and the Elders," which in turn has been widely painted by some of the most canonical painters in western art history including Caravaggio, Tintoretto, Rubens, Rembrandt and Tiepolo. Several scholars have connected the character of Undula—the only character that figures in the title of several of the prints—to Sacher-Masoch's Wanda, the dominatrix protagonist of his novel *Venus in Furs*. In a following chapter, we notice a similar tactic present in Schulz's stories: a matrix of allusions to myth, literature and well known artworks by which Schulz sets up a play of intertextual relations between familiar cultural references. Several critics have already noted that in Schulz's work—especially between the prose and *The Idolatrous Booke*—there is a complex element of interanimation between text and image. Marta Skwara has described Schulz as a "painterly" writer and a "writerly" visual artist. She notes that in transgressing taxonomic conventions of both art and literature, Schulz creates a "radically plural world and makes it function as a conduit for the disruptive potential of interdisciplinary and intertextual relations."[95] De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom have argued that this promiscuity and cross-pollination between the two artistic

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[93] Theodosia Robertson, "Bruno Schulz's Intimate Communication: From the "True Viewer" of Xiega balwochwalcza to the "True Reader" of 'Ksiega'," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz,* eds. De Bruyn and van Heuckelom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 453.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Marta Skwara, ""A (Wo)man on a Sofa" in Bruno Schulz's Art and Writings, Schulz as a "Painterly" and "Writerly" Artist," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz,* eds. De Bruyn and van Heuckelom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 196.

codes delineates an artistic continuum that also emphasizes the reflexive or meta-artistic character of Schulz's work.[96]

The prints have an undeniably arresting quality. The eroticized debasement and humiliation elicit in their viewer a whole range of complicated emotions both with respect to what they are witnessing in the imagery and in relation to Schulz's work.[97] This has led some to presuppose that they present their author's sexual preferences—an assumption that was in fact almost taken for granted by Schulz's contemporaries which only reinforced the image of Schulz as a masochist. Schulz famously remarked that he was able to express himself more fully in his prose than in his drawings.[98] This led some to infer that this limitation of his drawings, their failure to convey a universal vision, resulted from the fact that he was unable to move past "the narrowness of his private obsessions."[99] Others have adamantly defended Schulz from charges claiming pornographic content including critics who "have striven to cordon off Schulz from dicey sexuality, to keep his genius dignified and private."[100] Ficowski urges us to move past their seeming portrayal of the debasement of man, proposing that "Schulz's vision takes on a much more universal meaning that points toward the fertile struggle between spirit and matter," insisting that "[w]e have traveled far from the simple image of sexual cruelty and submission." [101]

In an study of the masochism of Schulz's prints, Ariko Kato examines the nuances of term "masochism" as it developed in relation to its namesake—Sacher Masoch's *Venus in Furs (Venus im Pelz,* 1870)—to show how the term carried different connotations in the original German than it did in the Polish translations.[102] She notes that in the original, the conversation taking place in German, a language in which Schulz as well as the Polish intelligentsia would have been fluent, masochism was part of a dialogue surrounding emerging theories about sexuality and psychology. She notes that the Polish was often mistranslated in key moments that exaggerated the wanton, abnormal, and degenerate connotations of masochism which, Kato

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[96] Dieter De Bruyn and Kris Van Heuckelom, "Artistic Reflexivity and Interartistic Contamination in Polish Modernism: The Graphic and Literary Works Of Bruno Schulz," *Symposium* 62, no. 3 (Fall, 2008): 178. http://search.proquest.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/docview/197677024?accountid=12339.

[97] Robertson, "Bruno Schulz's Intimate Communication," 451-4, 467-8. Robertson's essay offers a concise overview of the scholarship surrounding *The Booke of Idolatry* and contextualizes the prints in relation to other erotic prints in circulation at the time.

[98] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings,* 112.

[99] Theodosia Robertson charts out some of the scholarship surrounding this question. Robertson, "Bruno Schulz's Intimate Communication," 453.

[100] Ibid., 467.

[101] Jerzy Ficowski in the Introduction to Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz,* 7.

[102] Ariko Kato, "The Early Graphic Works of Bruno Schulz and Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*: Schulz as a Modernist," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz,* eds. De Bruyn and van Heuckelom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 219-49.

argues, led to a popular perception of masochism that exaggerated its illicit connotations, and had a direct effect on the perception of Schulz's work.[103] This was further reinforced by mentions of Schulz's masochism in publications of his intellectual contemporaries, so much so that by the time that the Encyclopedia of Sexology (first published in German in 1923) was translated into Polish in 1937, Schulz, along with Irzykowski and Witkacy were made exemplars of Polish writers who were allegedly influenced by Freud's theory, much to their disdain. My reading of *The Idolatrous Booke* is that the tension set up as erotic desire for submission and belittlement is part of a multifaceted highly sophisticated play that can only be discerned in the context of the Polish avant-garde. Whether Schulz derived pleasure from sado-masochistic role play will likely not be discovered with any level of certainty.[104] In itself, the answer to this fact is far less compelling than the multilayered sets of dialectics that come forth in conversation with their cultural background.

When examined in relation to the avant-garde's predisposition towards 'metafiction' and self-reflexivity, Gombrowicz's unpacking of Form, and Irzykowski's *palubic* element, these prints can be understood to operate as a subversive form of cultural criticism as well as artistic self-questioning on the part of their author. In doing so they participate to a multifaceted set of tensions between cultural forces and artistic production. At stake here is that these tensions are paradoxical, uncomfortable, and cannot be engaged as a purely intellectual exercise. If they do in fact point to "the fertile struggle between spirit and matter" as Ficowski maintains, this struggle is deeply entangled in the murky territory of raw, uncombed and inadmissible impulses. Their pronounced eroticism simultaneously operates as a mockery of intellectual discourse, frustrating the predisposition to subsume the work by that which can be explained or rationalized. My interpretation is that more noticeably so than his prose, Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* operates

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[103] Kato notes that the Polish translation (dated 1913 and re-published 1919 in Lviv) took significant liberties that exaggerated Wanda's sadism and rendered Severin's "suprasensuality" as abnormality. For instance, Kato points out that the title of Severin's manuscript translates from German to *Confessions of a Suprasensual Man*, which makes a deliberate connection to verses from Goethe's *Faust*. The Polish translator, which was left unidentified, rendered it as *Confessions of a Foolish Fanatic*. Within the text, the prominent term "suprasensual" was in one instance translated as the equivalent of "abnormality." Ibid., 230-6.

[104] A significant number of Schulz's intellectual and artistic interlocutors were women with whom he exchanged an unusually high number of letters. These include women with whom Schulz maintained or wished to maintain intimate relationships such as Debora Vogel, Zofia Nałkowska, and his fiancée Jozefina Szelinska. He was certainly attracted to strong women: Nałkowska with whom he was lovers for a short but intense period was an influential woman, also a writer, who secured the publication of Schulz's collections of short stories. His fiancée Josephina was likewise an extremely intelligent woman, also physically dominant as she was taller than him by a full head. In one of Ficowski's autobiographical searches from the 1980s, Irena Kejlin-Mitelman recounts an incident in which while Schulz, in the middle of painting her portrait went down to his knees before her and then stayed on all fours. (Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 152.) In a letter to Romana Halpern he paints an image of himself not unlike those in his *Idolatrous Booke* when he conveyed that with Jozefina's love he felt like "a human being and not just a lemur or gnome." Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 134.

as an incisive form of cultural criticism, which comes in sharper focus when examined in relation to the work of his contemporaries. While Schulz's literary output remains the focal point of this study, the prints in *The Idolatrous Booke* prove most illuminating in capturing the cultural background to which Schulz's prose also participated. This become especially clear when Schulz's *cliché-verre* prints are read in parallel with Gombrowicz's novel *Ferdydurke* as well as his understanding of Form.[105]

While the approach to Form in Schulz's prose is indeed drastically different than in Gombrowicz's writing, a number of striking common themes can be observed between Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* and Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke*: a commentary on the authority of artistic tradition with respect to their own artistic practice and a questioning of socially constructed idolatry of what is deemed to be greatness in art; a subjection of both authors, who cast themselves as their work's protagonists, to a position of humiliation, debasement, and impotence; an adoration of youth and immaturity that is associated with this paralyzing debasement and which is subsumed by erotic desire; an intense preoccupation with the (female) leg as the hypnotizing element in this uncomfortable seduction and which in Gombrowicz's Ferdydurke operates as both symptom and resistance to Poland's particular position in relation to modernity.

1.3 "Kneeling Devoutly Before the Godhead of Artistry": Idolatry in Schulz's Graphic Folio and Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*

Gombrowicz's investigations with Form continued during the post-war period while he was in exile in Argentina and until the end of his life. To stay contemporaneous with Schulz's work, we examine how Gombrowicz's interest in Form was carried out in his highly innovative novel *Ferdydurke* which was first published in 1937.[106] This interest in Form is multifaceted and impossible to distill in a few sentences. Gombrowicz himself insisted that one would need to read the work itself. As an introduction, we can say that in Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* Form is

[105] De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom note that Much more attention has been paid to the reflexive or "autothematic" techniques in Schulz's fiction, leaving the same techniques in his graphic works severely understudied. De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom, "Interartistic Contamination," 181-2.

[106] My rendering of Gombrowicz's approach to Form draws on Michael Goddard, *Gombrowicz, Polish Modernism, and the Subversion of Form* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2010).

enacted as a caustic-parodic subversion of social decorum and its political ramifications, especially with respect to how these operate within the unfolding arena between art and life, and in relation to publics, critics, culture and culture-making forces. The premise of *Ferdydurke* is a reverse initiation from adulthood into adolescence. The novel's main character and narrator is Joey, a 30-year-old writer who, troubled by a dream in which his adult and adolescent selves confront each other, sets out to produce a mature work that would allow him to properly shed his youth and assume his adult form, both as artist and as a man. His ambitions are interrupted and eventually cut short by T. Pimko, "a doctor of philosophy and a professor, in reality just a schoolteacher" who Joey describes as endowed with a "horribly banal and utterly commonplace Form."[107] Pimko administers a series of scrutinizing second-rate insights towards Joey's work, a kind of disciplinary procedure that works to progressively infantilize the aspiring author and diminish him to a pupil, whom Pimko then forcefully returns to the sixth grade. Joey's protests and best efforts to disentangle himself from the nightmarishly humiliating and pedantic situation are flatly dismissed, and he is treated like another schoolboy.

In the chapter entitled "Imprisonment and Further Belittlement" Joey becomes unwillingly absorbed into a disciplinary system driven by an ambition to inculcate its youth with a reverence for the classics which "was considered not only a pedagogical necessity but also a patriotic duty." [108] This was very much the pedagogical impetus during the period of independent Poland, which was generally characterized by heavy censorship of the arts and an open hostility towards innovation. The Polish government resorted to heavy-handed repressive measures against "anything suspected of being Bolshevik or anarchist, which included all forms of artistic experimentation. Writers were frequently harassed and arrested, magazines confiscated, and theaters raided."[109]

For Gombrowicz, this forceful inculcation of the classics essentially amounted to an *imposition of form* that was initiated at the level of pedagogy and discipline, in an attempt to actively steer culture-making values. Over and over, *Ferdydurke* brings out the vulnerability and absurdity of this programme by way of comic breakdowns and ridicule that repeatedly bring about senseless and monstrous disruptions. These disruptions are very much pointed towards

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[107] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 14.
[108] Goddard, *Gombrowicz and the Subversion of Form,* 39.
[109] Stanislaw Witkiewicz, *The Witkiewicz Reader,* ed. Daniel Gerould, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 117.

subverting this imposition of form, and their general tactic is to resort to grotesque deformations of the body. For instance, at one point during Joey's first class, the authority of the classics is called into question when a student named Gałkiewicz refuses to admire Juliusz Słowacki—one of Polish Romantic poets considered to be one of the great national poets. This brings all sense and classroom order to the precipice of chaos, to the point where the professor is driven to take out photographs of his family from his wallet and desperately plead: "Listen, Gałkiewicz, I have a wife and child! Have pity on the child at least!" The danger is averted at the last moment by the student named Syphon, through his recitation of Słowacki. The situation becomes redeemed by "the beauty of his recitation, enhanced by the beauty of the poem, by the greatness of the poet, and by the majesty of art, imperceptibly transformed itself into a monument to all possible beauty and greatness."[110] There is of course an overt insolence in this so-called reassurance of Słowacki's relevance which but mockingly vindicates the schoolmaster's near-desperate and absurd plight that "[g]reat poetry must be admired, because it is great and because it is poetry, and so we admire it."[111] Even while this professorial triumph averts an intellectual crisis, the classroom responds, almost as if by impulse, with a scene of chaotic and grotesque corporeal deformation: "those who were not busy counting the hairs on Ashface's scalp […] tried to count their own hairs and to dislocate their necks. [Meanwhile] others gave in to the awful habit of whispering to themselves, some tore off their buttons, destroying their clothes, and jungles and deserts of eerie gestures and bizarre actions blossomed everywhere."[112] The narrator presents this scene by clarifying that the "only choice remaining was between the pedagogic body and one's own body."[113] In other words, the body, albeit resorting to grotesque deformation, remains the only domain by which the individual can exercise the expression of form – a kind of mutilated and degraded surrogate for autonomy, one that still operates in an otherwise helpless situation.

Joey notes that the effects of this stifling pedagogic indoctrination are such that even past the "saving bell" those subjected to it became possessed by a "terrible impotence" to act in any other manner than the callowness and artificiality with which they were treated. As such, Joey becomes further embroiled in the exasperatingly infantile world of playground disputes—which are essentially parodies of the left and right division in the adult political world—and culminate

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[110] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 44.
[111] Ibid., 43.
[112] Ibid., 45.
[113] Ibid.

in *Ferdydurke*'s infamous scene of the "duel of faces." This duel takes place between playground powers Syphon and Kneadus, and which Joey, despite his repulsion and vehement objection that this take place at all, is not only trapped to witness, but is to act as adjudicator. The terms of the duel are read aloud with solemnity, sarcasm and some unease, proclaiming that "to each and every one of Pylaszczkiewicz's [Syphon's] inspiring and beatific faces, [Kneadus] shall respond with an ugly and demolishing counterface. The faces—as personal as possible, totally individual, and intrinsically his own, as wounding and shattering as possible—shall be administered without a silencer, to the very end."[114] The absurd, nightmarish and puerile "duel of the faces" essentially functions as a subversion of the identity-forming pedagogic mechanism. This helpless subversion occurs through a perverse deformation of the face, the very aspect of the subject's expression that constitutes his identity. In essence the duel is an objectification of the face that specifically hijacks the social power of the countenance to produce an overt attack on Form, via public mockery and degradation. While subversive, this tactic is also expressing a paralyzing entrapment into a mechanism that subsumes even those wishing to remain impartial passersby. We see this in the way that the narrator Joey becomes unwillingly absorbed into the helpless and infantilizing predicament: "I was stuck there in the middle like a fly caught in a web, unable to move."[115] "And my own face, like a mirror image of their faces, also turned freakish, while fear, disgust, and terror carved on it an indelible mark. A clown between two clowns, how could I attempt anything that would not be a grimace?"[116]

Overall, the bitterly parodic scenes that unfold in the playground as well as the classroom function as criticism of the disciplinary pedagogic mechanism. They convey how this disciplinary mechanism operates as an assemblage of power that dictates cultural (re)production and ultimately enacts disciplinary power over form—not only artistic form, but the very expression of the subject in their everyday existence. In noting that "all the components of the pedagogical assemblage are fully operational in the cultural field,"[117] Goddard points out that *Ferdydurke* performs not only a critique of pedagogy as a mechanism of power, but more generally a critique of cultural production at large. He does so by painting a series of grotesque scenes that both parody and surrender to the shallow self-reinforcing logic of the pedagogical

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[114] Ibid., 62.
[115] Ibid., 63.
[116] Ibid., 65.
[117] Goddard, *Gombrowicz and the Subversion of Form*, 43.

mechanism. The scenes are comical, disruptive, and uncomfortable. Note that the narrator, essentially a proxy for the author himself, is also very much subjected to humiliation and belittlement. In the second part of *Ferdydurke* this degradation shifts from the politics of an infantilizing classroom and extends into the erotic domain. This casting of oneself in a compromised position of impotence parallels the tactic Schulz employs in *The Idolatrous Booke* where he, the author, depicts himself as prostrating before an idolized muse-figure. It is possible to say that Schulz, like Gombrowicz, is in fact also playing with artistic traditions by disrupting the viewers' cultural memory and subverting established artistic cannons.[118]

As previously noted, the content and composition of several prints in *The Idolatrous Booke* recall well-known paintings from the history of western art. Often quoted are the explicit connection to Velazquez's *Venus at Her Mirror* (ca. 1650) and Titian's paintings of Venus, especially *Venus of Urbino* (ca. 1534). This active referencing of other works is one of the main features of metafiction, or in this case, meta-artistic practice. The effect of this gesture is that it calls to attention the artificiality of the work: in recalling other works of art, it openly breaks or "subverts its own referential illusion and in so doing places it on the boundary between fiction and criticism."[119] In playing with the boundary between art and life—or artifice and reality—the work highlights that any representational form is in fact relative and culturally constructed.

The meta-artistic or self-reflexive aspect of *The Idolatrous Booke* is further accentuated by the fact that Schulz includes himself in the image, often as a dwarfed or half-animal, idolater. In incorporating himself as a compromised prostrating figure in these well-known works of art, Schulz, at the time an aspiring painter, can be understood to call into question not only what is being idolized, but also his own position with respect to socially and culturally accepted *forms* of artistic expression. Much like Gombrowicz he is disrupting these expectations of artistic form via an objectification of the author, as well as by employing ridicule, humiliation and a grotesque deformation of the countenance and of the body. In making his deference explicit as well as uncomfortable, Schulz is both questioning his own role as an artist as well as deriding and subverting the authority of that which is assumed to constitute greatness in the painting tradition. This is at once a gesture of self-questioning, as well as an ironic gesture that calls out the

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[118] This point is made by several critics, though not in comparison to Gombrowicz. For instance, Skwara, "Schulz as a "Painterly" and "Writerly" Artist," 195-217.

[119] While Currie notes this with respect to metafictive practices in literature, the same can be said about Schulz's image-making. Currie, *Metafiction*, 5.

absurdity of the act of prostration before the artistic cannon. This again very much echoes Gombrowicz's commentary on the adoration of the literary cannon as a pedagogic instrument of power, which is ultimately directed towards shaping cultural value-systems.

The element of authorial intrusion is also one of the main features by which *Ferdydurke* articulates itself as a work of metafiction. Following the first part of the novel, which centers around the classroom scenes, are two digressive chapters that behave as discursive essays. These interruptions into the narrative of the novel deliberately compromise the Form of the novel: In other words, *Ferdydurke* not only presents situations in which culturally constructed expectations of Form are perpetually disrupted, but it also behaves disruptively towards its own Form. The intrusion of the discursive essays in the novel functions to break down conventional expectations about works of art as a totality. The first-person narrator, in one instance the protagonist of the unfolding narrative, is in another instance the discursive narrator of philosophical utterances which are further combined with frustratingly absurd seemingly anecdotal stories that are completely unrelated to the narrative surrounding Joey's infantilization. This consistency of voice combines with inconsistencies in the nature of the utterance to render the author unreliable. This unreliability of the author is deliberate, and much like the intrusion of Schulz's own portrait in *The Idolatrous Booke*, it lends the work multiple conflicting interpretations. This is an important element of meta-artistic practices: The possibility of many, often conflicting, versions of reality that unfold in a work, with none which can be taken as the ultimate authoritative version. We see this come up again and again in what follows. What this further emphasizes is the role of the reader in engaging the work, especially as the process of reading is likewise being disrupted. In *Ferdydurke*, the reader becomes themselves embroiled in an intersubjective questioning of mechanisms of power and one's agency to interrupt their imposition of form.

In the autothematic intrusion that follows the first part of Ferdydurke, under the heading "Preface to "The Child Runs Deep in Filidor"" Gombrowicz articulates his views on Form and turns to address his reader directly. The extract at the very beginning of this chapter, in which we noticed his presentation of Form come precisely from this discursive essay. In a passage that echoes the imagery of Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke,* Gombrowicz reflects on a Chopin concert in order to comment on social mimesis as a value-making cultural mechanism. He questions whether a Chopin concert is truly moving or whether the emotion of rapture is socially constructed and reinforced by the expressive enthusiasm of the collective, as well as a desire to

conform to, or affirm the shared experience:

> It's also possible that when some listeners, pale with emotion, applaud, scream, carry on, writhe in enthusiasm one should attribute this to the fact that others in the audience are also writhing, carrying on, shouting; […] And it's not until all of them in a bunch have sufficiently excited each other, it is only then, I tell you, that these expressions of emotion arouse their emotion—because we must comply with what we express. It's also true that by participating in the concert we fulfill something of a religious act (just as if we were assisting at the Holy Mass), kneeling devoutly before the Godhead of artistry; in this case our admiration is merely an act of homage and the fulfilling of a rite. Who can tell, however, how much real beauty there is in this Beauty, and how much of it is a sociohistorical process? Tut, tut, as everyone knows, mankind needs myth—it chooses this one or that one from among its numerous authors (but who can ever explore or shed light on the course that such a choice has taken?) […] And you want to enclose this muddled, complicated, and difficult communion with art in the naïve phrase: "the poet sings with inspiration, the listener lends his ear in admiration"?[120]

This scene of a quasi-religious idolatry that Gombrowicz paints here can be easily transferred to Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke*. This suggests that it is not unlikely that Schulz's prints were articulating a similar commentary and asking the same tangled questions with respect to his own role as artist and aspiring painter. In Gombrowicz's text there is the question of how much a work of art has genuine merit and how much is reinforced within a larger sociohistorical process. On one level, Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke* can be seen to operate similarly to Syphon's recitation of Słowacki: Schulz's prints are performing a "recitation" of familiar artworks as well as familiar tropes present in art history such as the reclining nude. Because Schulz is coupling these familiar references with uncomfortable images of himself prostrating before artistic tropes—such as the eroticized woman—he is unsettling this presumed homage to the artistic tradition. On one level, this gesture insolently calls out the absurdity that he as an aspiring painter ought to idolize "great [art] because it is great"[121] or because it has been inculcated by a pedagogical-cultural mechanism. In other words, the *Idolatrous Booke* can be seen as a disruptive act that calls into question the religiosity with which we admire "great art" by perpetually presenting its very author, as fulfilling the rite of prostrating before its Godhead.

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[120] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 79.
[121] Echoing the justification from earlier that "[g]reat poetry must be admired, because it is great and because it is poetry, and so we admire it" Ibid. Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 43.

Critics have routinely pointed out that the very title of the folio, *Xięga bałwochwalcza*, has religious connotations. The archaic word *xięga* (also *księga)* denotes a sacred book—or 'booke'—of spiritual significance like the Bible or *The Book of Genesis* and in Polish it is used much less often than the more common *ksiazka*.[122] The connection to religious idolatry is made explicit in several of the prints. "Procession" and "Pilgrims" clearly cast the adoration of the female figure in within a background of these scenes' religious programme – that of procession and pilgrimage.[123] The "Tribe of Pariahs" and "The Feast of Idolaters" similarly occur within the backdrop of what appears to be religious architecture and the banners of religious processions.[124] Several other prints are suggestive of archaic or pagan rites, especially fertility rituals: "Rites of Spring", "Garden Games", "The Enchanted City I", "The Enchanted City II."[125] The theme is repeated outside the *Idolatrous Booke* in a drawing entitled "Bacchanalia" which explicitly calls on the orgiastic ancient fertility rituals associated with Bacchus.[126]

This ritualized religiosity is superimposed with cues suggestive of erotic role-play: the recurring image of the foot fetish, the dominating woman figure, the subservient male figures groveling at their feet with a deformed and tormented look that combines ecstasy with anguish, as well as the recurring masochistic prop of the whip and the sexual trope of the woman's foot encased in leather. As Theodosia Robertson has pointed out, these scenes recall erotic mini-dramas in which all the players fulfill their prescribed and well-rehearsed roles: the entranced tortured men; the dominating unaffected women who are either nude or poised to draw attention to their leg.[127] Robertson also points to the fact that while these scenes are highly erotic, their repetition borders on tedium: The same situation is staged over and over *ad nauseam*. The roles are prescribed and the performances are highly formulaic. The images are repeating clichés to the point of absurdity and not without a nuance of sarcasm. This reiterates the suspicion that at least on one level, Schulz's prints unsettle the viewer because they disrupt their relationship to a

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[122] De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom, "Interartistic Contamination," 190 (note 5).

[123] Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, prints on pages 60 and 61 respectively. (also available at "Procession" (60) https://api.culture.pl/sites/default/files/styles/1920_auto/public/images/imported/literatura/_portrety/bruno%20schulz/bruno_schulz_procesja_grafika_cliche_verre_z_cyklu_xiega_balwochwalcza_1920-1924_0.jpg?itok=glPaPgs8 , "Pilgrims" (61) https://4.bp.blogspot.com/-TwzGbtbROLY/XH1Lu12VY3I/AAAAAAAAqOU/8zLQ5iqJIgcExDfUu47mf2QPg4YaMz0BgCK4BGAYYCw/s1600/pilgrims.jpg)

[124] Ibid., 59,71. (also available at "Tribe of Pariahs" (59) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/-ufEzcZBD_jfGPjya1jZhH9IS7sEjkkdt6D_ycMV2RHVFVjicrRcn8A8ZoEYMNjJYnCbWjjWp0niOGG_z2eGL4bb , "The Feast of Idolaters" (71) https://flashbak.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Bruno-Schulz-THE-RITE-OF-THE-IDOLATORS.jpg)

[125] Ibid., 69, 62, 63, 68. (also available at "Rites of Spring" (69) http://www.brunoschulz.org/xiega24_files/image002.jpg , "Garden Games" (62) https://media.mutualart.com/Images//2017_01/10/03/031432487/a29d93b8-1e3e-4255-8267-d9fba9865114.Jpeg, "The Enchanted City II" (68, 63 is a variation) https://i0.wp.com/www.farfromready.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/bruno-schulz-1922-zaczatowanie-miasto-ii.jpg?fit=2048%2C1636&ssl=1)

[126] Ibid., 95. (also available at "Bacchanalia" (95) http://www.brunoschulz.org/bahanalia_files/image002.jpg)

[127] Robertson, "Bruno Schulz's Intimate Communication," 453.

familiar body of cultural iconography. By combining them with explicitly erotic tropes such as foot fetish and suggestions of masochistic role-play, Schulz is exaggerating the artistic cliché to the point of absurdity and ridicule, while very much bringing the viewer to experience a whole set of complicated questions with respect to this gesture. The prints are unsettling and their eroticism is at once captivating, uncomfortable and abject. The viewer–reader is called upon to actively contribute to what's presented to them. As is inherently the case with erotic prints, the imagery engages their audience in an intimate participation reaching beyond the comfortable distance of an intellectual discourse.

The collection as a whole can be read as being not only subversive and disruptive, but in itself an act of idolatrous transgression. Kris van Heuckelom notes that when considered from the perspective of the Old Testament, the transgression reflects to the two-fold prohibition: the creative act of making graven images, and the "kneeling before" act of veneration and subordination. Van Heuckelom suggests that the Old Testament band on idolatry in itself carries erotic connotations with the Hebrew God presenting himself as a "jealous god"—equating idolatry to matrimonial betrayal.[128] Moreover, *The Idolatrous Booke*, not only inverts the biblical privilege of *The Word* over image but also purports to operate as a holy Booke, or a book of spiritual significance: "*The Book*, as the age-old medium of the sacred Word, is pulled away by the visual artist from the domain of the textual and redirected to the lower sphere of the image, the idol."[129] Van Heuckelom further notes that the Polish word *bałwochwalcza* reinforces the idolatrous aspect of the book as it carries the same connotation as the Greek 'eidōlon' which is precisely what Exodus prohibits in the tablets given to Moses.[130]

If we then re-iterate how the idolatry is enacted, we note that it is, one, depicted within the subject-matter of the prints and two, at the level of image-making itself. It is not only the prints that depict idolatry, but the artifact as a whole can be read as a transgressive act of idolatry. In English editions of Schulz's graphic works, *Xięga bałwochwalcza* has been commonly translated to *The Book (or Booke) of Idolatry*, a title that has also persisted in the English scholarship of Schulz's work.[131] Van Heuckelom and De Bruyn note that a more

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[128] Kris van Heuckelom, "In Defense of Idolatrous Creativity. Bruno Schulz's Xięga Bałwochwalcz and Traktat of manekinach albo Wtóra Księga Rodazaju" in *Bruno Schulz: New Readings, New Meanings = Bruno Schulz : Nouvelles lectures, nouvelles significations (*Montréal: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in Canada, 2009), 73, see also note 7.
[129] Ibid., 70.
[130] Ibid., 78.
[131] For instance, Bruno Schulz, *The Booke of Idolatry*, ed. J. Ficowski, trans. B. Piotrowska (Warsaw: Interpress, 1988).

appropriate translation would be *The Idolatrous Book(e),* because it reflects the Polish in suggesting that the book itself is idolatrous, not only the visual content of its prints.[132]

This autothematic, meta-artistic aspect of the Booke—'of idolatry' as well as itself 'idolatrous'—is further elaborated by the presence of a book that is depicted in some of the prints. These include two of the prints that appear to have been consistently placed at the end of each folio, and are themselves titled "The Book of Idolatry I" and "The Book of Idolatry II" (both *Xięga bałwochwalcza).* [133] "The Book of Idolatry I" depicts Schulz dressed in artist's clothes and kneeling with his torso and head rested on the bottom of a pedestal. His arms are open to grasp or embrace a giant open book. The dominating female has one leg between Schulz and the book with the other foot placed on his back, near the small of his neck. Another similar scene is presented in one of the multiple covers of the folio. Here the trope of religiosity is repeated with Schulz, rendered as a dwarf, is dressed in priestly clothing.[134] A similarly dressed man is coiled around the idol's foot, entranced. We see again an actual book that is open. The book shares the throne with the female idol, and is obstructed by her. This referential ambiguity of *The Booke of Idolatry*—both the artifact itself and/or a folio about "The Booke of Idolatry"—emphasizes the autoreferentiality, or meta-artistic underpinnings of the work: it "shows and thematizes to a certain extent the act of its own creation."[135] In addition, this doubling of the book prompts the viewer-reader to question, not only the nature of the idolatry, but also the nature of the artifact with which they are presented.

This book about a book finds a parallel in Irzykowski's *Pałuba*. The word *Pałuba* is the title of the novel, and it also refers to the name of the book that the narrating author is in the process of writing. Furthermore, the narrator notes that the current *Pałuba* that is being written exists as well in several other previous incarnations, and is projected to take on other future versions including "a popular edition" and "a school edition."[136] Here we see an echo of the multiple possible idolatrous bookes, both the versions of those depicted and the folio itself. All of these attempts to give the work its "form" perpetually results in a multiplicity of possible

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[132] Throughout this project, I have elected to predominantly use this version of the translated title while also maintaining the archaic denotation of "Booke." Van Heuckelom, "In Defense of Idolatrous Creativity," 71 footnote 3; also translated as "*The Idolatrous Booke"* in De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom, "Interartistic Contamination," 190 (note 6).

[133] Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 72-3. (also available at "The Book of Idolatry I" (72), https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/fXlfI0xb2ekjcl3vS7_s1YGotvH7f_3_WxpVya8V1mwPtyovtJB6vgfrlRvsj5Uv-jLQ7ZZNAFbg2qz-9b5oZVc , "The Book of Idolatry II" (73) http://info-poland.icm.edu.pl/classroom/schulz/x4s.jpg)

[134] Ibid., 48. (also available at "The cover of *The Book of Idolatry*" (48) http://info-poland.icm.edu.pl/classroom/schulz/x1s.jpg)

[135] Van Heuckelom, "In Defense of Idolatrous Creativity," 72.

[136] De Bruyn, "Metafiction in *Pałuba* and *Ferdydurke*," 410.

forms none of which encompass the ultimate or the ideal *booke*. This is further accentuated by the multiple incarnations of *The Idolatrous Booke* itself: the etched plates, the multiple folios which would all feature variations, and the fact that the prints were sometimes exhibited. Theodosia Robertson notes that *The Idolatrous Booke* would have started out as two incarnations: first the etched glass plates that Schulz would have used as negatives for his cliché-verre process of making the prints in a process similar to photography.[137] The second mode of existence of the book would have been the bound folios that Schulz produced. Each bound folio was slightly different in the composition and ordering of the prints and would have included anywhere from ten to twenty of the prints. Both of the prints that introduced the collection, namely the cover and frontispiece, would have varied with each folio. Furthermore, Schulz sometimes gave the same print slightly different titles between folios. Because only a few of the several dozens of folios are still in existence, it is difficult to tell just how much variation there was amongst them. What remains certain is that *The Booke* was a fluid entity and, unlike a proper holy 'booke', an authoritative final version never existed. All of this further undermines the implied sacredness or spiritual authority of the *booke* and emphasizes its transgressive nature.

The Idolatrous Booke thus exhibits a series of critical meta-artisic elements that were explored in the Polish avant-garde: a disruptive, unreliable Form that presents multiple often conflicting versions of reality; the impossibility of a final, ultimate representation; a work that is open to infinite interpretations and which also compromises the reliability of its author and involves its audience in an active, often intimate participation. We have discussed that on one layer of interpretation, *The Idolatrous Booke* operates as a critique of socially constructed idolatry towards that which constitutes greatness in art. Similar to *Ferdydurke*'s parody of the literary classics, their author responds to this imposition of Form—artistic as well as cultural—via uncomfortable scenes of humiliation and ridicule that include the author themselves and involve grotesque deformations of the body. If the body, especially in *Ferdydurke*, is the last resort as a locus of an authentic expression of Form, what both Schulz and Gombrowicz convey is a monstrous impotence and an unsettling subordination to an idolized figure which can be interpreted as the result of socio-historical processes. At this level, what is being idolized is the artistic tradition itself. In bringing metafictive discourse into the study of *The Idolatrous Booke*, we can read Schulz's authorial intrusion as a self-critical questioning of the artistic process, and

[137] Robertson, "Bruno Schulz's Intimate Communication," 454-7.

of artistic conventions. In Schulz's case, the familiar trope of the artist's muse is rendered as the dominatrix-masochist trope of erotic role-play with the author entering the scene and willingly submitting to an ideal that is in effect indifferent to his anguish and supplications. The heavily erotic aspect of the prints is precisely how the prints gain their unsettling power. The audience is not simply engaged in a critique of artistic production, but is confronted with a complicated and unsettling mixture of responses. The images trespass on compliant artistic criticism and they impose themselves on an intimate stratum of engagement, which resists articulation. In this uncomfortable communion with its audience *The Idolatrous Booke* resonates with Irzykowsky's "palubic element" as well as Gombrowicz interest in the murky sub-cultural realm that characterizes his interest in Form. I focus next on specifically this aspect of Schulz's idolatrous prints by examining to whom and what the idolatry is directed, and the significance of the eroticism that pervades the prints.

1.4 Venus, Venus, Inglorious Domains: Eternal Tales and Compromised Ideals

In many of the prints, what is typically the subject of religious veneration (such as, in Catholicism the crucifix or the statue of the Virgin) is replaced with the dominating female figure who is repeatedly placed on throne-like chairs and altar-like beds. The worshiping men at their feet assume a physical position of kneeling or bowing, their expression suggests both ecstasy and torment. The tone of the prints is erotic, with a trope highly suggestive of sado-masochism, repeated throughout *The Iodolatrous Booke*. We take a closer look at the women that play the (assigned) role of indifferent idol-dominatrix.

As noted earlier, many of the women depicted in the prints are re-castings of familiar paintings from the artistic cannon. Especially within the trope of the reclining nude, the idolized figure is often an explicit reference to Venus, the goddess of erotic desire. The print entitled "The Book of Idolatry II" is a variation on Titian's *Venus of Urbino,* and "The Eternal Tale" is a direct reference to Velazquez's *Venus at her Mirror*.[138] The Velazquez variation appears again in one

[138] Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 72, 52. (also available at "The Book of Idolatry I" (72) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/fXlfl0xb2ekjcl3vS7_s1YGotvH7f_3_WxpVya8V1mwPtyovtJB6vgfrlRvsj5Uv-jLQ7ZZNAFbg2qz-9b5oZVc , "The Eternal Tale" (52) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/-dDndcrRxAII5fdrTZlG4CrR0FgwmuYWkbtUk1HwOzRgRPF1RJMOsU55qp_-bIpf60uml2Pw8iF_XiQXu40mbfJhHjdD)

of the cover versions as well as outside the cliché-verre folio, in Schulz's drawings.[139] A print called "On Cythera" builds on the Venus matrix—the Greek island of Cythera is connected to the mythical birthplace of Venus-Aphrodite.[140] Critics have routinely pointed to the connection between the Undula character in *The Idolatrous Booke* and Sacher-Masoch's Wanda, the prototypical dominatrix from which "masochism" gained its namesake in the infamous novel *Venus in Furs (Venus im Pelz,* 1870).[141] Thus the matrix surrounding the mythological motif of the Venus figure further expands: Wanda, the central heroine is presented throughout the novel as a modern personification of the goddess Venus. The goddess in fact enraptures the imagination of Severin, the autobiographical hero, from early childhood. We notice again the explicitly religious ritual of praying, being transferred to the likeness of the goddess of erotic love:

> As a child he kneels in his father's library in front of a plaster Venus to whom he addresses the only prayers he knows: the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and Credo. As a young man he falls in love […] with a marble Venus, is plagued by hallucinations of her coming alive, and finally establishes and identity between the statue and the real woman, Wanda von Dunajew, to whom he transfers his feelings.[142]

The *Venus in Furs* imagery is further captured in the variation on Titian's *Venus of Urbino:* This print depicts the idolater (Schulz) with an open book which mirrors scenes in the novel in which Severin is reading to his Venus-Wanda. Schulz's reclining Venus emphasizes the Sacher-Masoch reference with the whip she is holding instead of Titian's roses. Ariko Kato points out that these prints could have easily operated as illustrations for *Venus in Furs*, speculating that Schulz would have made them out of his own accord and not in conjunction with a particular

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[139] The drawing variation on *Rokeby Venus* appears as "Untitled" in Ibid., 259. An image of the cover identified as "version V" is included in De Bruyn and Van Heuckelom, "Interartistic Contamination," fig. 5, 182. Two drawings "Venus and Amor" and "Venus and Amor (II)" have been reproduced in Kato, "Graphic Works of Schulz and *Venus in Furs*," 246.

[140] Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 64. (also available at "On Cythera" (64) http://www.brunoschulz.org/xiega18_files/image002.jpg)

[141] For the connections between *The Idolatrous Booke* and *Venus and Furs* I rely on the thoughtful study by Kato, "Graphic Works of Schulz and *Venus in Furs*," 219-49. For the Undula prints see Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 54-7 (also available at "Undula, the Eternal Ideal" (54) https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-uRKeMJ5skGk/X4Xzr-XAEfI/AAAAAAAAFQQ/dSYAxFefcZ4lmm4k6m0tiFILJisl-3fIgCLcBGAsYHQ/s500/4baebaf059203872f99b169ffc22c2b3.jpg , "Undula with the Artists" (55) https://api.culture.pl/sites/default/files/styles/1920_auto/public/field/image/undula-u-artystow-xiega-balwochwalcza-1920-22_0.jpg?itok=OaGoy3Or , "Undula Walks into the Night" (56) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/V3sBYEgHZbbcS3FfKcOcmB3dZWZqKp_4q2LEMKFfMd12INAh46XxTyN_RDwSc_YDl8n0KekRUdzgh_TGIrz3-2Ta0GTC014L0Y3f , "Undula at Night" (57) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/Ym9Ckzi5D5AawkhY2lVH-jQNhm0w7f3rsv_Bp9HICnSDHkWYSg3C4oFdh0I9AAwFvN5NoINYVt6H6exXY-ArQhb6qsoP4KuCcA. Kato also connects Schulz's print "A Bench" (*The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 58, also available at "A Bench" (58) https://scontent.fymq3-1.fna.fbcdn.net/v/t31.18172-8/10983468_1582527882011017_7920235009315145045_o.jpg?_nc_cat=101&ccb=1-5&_nc_sid=cdbe9c&_nc_ohc=aRnx_SNs4BYAX-xHgOU&_nc_ht=scontent.fymq3-1.fna&oh=9e782acdd4b90f4c92ab28ab9a6ead32&oe=619BCDAF) to a picture of Sacher-Masoch with Fanny Pistor included in Kato, 249.

[142] Ewa Kuryluk, "The Caterpillar Car, or Bruno Schulz's Drive into the Future of the Past," in *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 32.

publication.[143] Kato understands the prints as participating to a broader cultural context, noting that the topic of masochism and publications about sexuality more generally were relatively recent around the time when Schulz was making *The Idolatrous Booke* folios. Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* had been published in 1870 and translated into Polish only in 1904 with a few additional publications by 1919.[144] It was also during this time that Freud's theories on eroticism and the subconscious were becoming widely discussed throughout Europe, including Poland. Kato argues that *The Idolatrous Booke* can be understood to participate to a cultural discourse about these new streams of thought in psychology, in which eroticism and the unconscious played a central role.

The eroticism of the prints however is far from limited to intellectual discourse. Within this conversation, the very point of eroticism is that it cannot be contained and severed from the psychic reality of the author, or for that matter, that of the viewer. This is proclaimed by both of Schulz's 'conspirators'. Witkacy saw the "the erotic as *a constant, latent, potential substratum* […] an energy-laden potentiality constituting an integral part of our corporeal personality, of what we actually are intrinsically, in all that we experience." He felt that all that the human spirit brought forth was steeped in eroticism as a foundation and a propelling force; a primal energy to be transformed and sublimated that sustained the human "desire for a higher affirmation of the very fact of existence."[145] Gombrowicz put it more bluntly while also conferring to the erotic an ontological status: "I do not believe in a nonerotic philosophy. I do not trust any desexualized idea." [146]

Schulz corroborates this sentiment in what is perhaps the only discursive commentary on idolatry and eroticism. This exception occurs in an exchange with Gombrowicz that was published in the periodical *Studio* in 1936 and was suggested by its editor Bogusław Kuczyński. Here Gombrowicz provokes Schulz to respond to a statement made by a doctor's wife whom Gombrowicz (perhaps hypothetically) met by chance. The woman allegedly said that Bruno

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[143] Kato, "Graphic Works of Schulz and *Venus in Furs*," 224.
[144] Ibid., 230-2. Kato's article also presents a thorough investigation of the publication and translation history of *Venus in Furs*.
[145] Stanislaw Witkiewicz, "Unwashed Souls: A Psychological Study of the Inferiority Complex Carried Out According to Freud's System with Special Attention to Polish Problems," in *The Witkiewicz Reader*, ed. and trans. Daniel Gerould (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 315, emphasis in the original. This particular text was originally written in 1936.
[146] Witold Gombrowicz, preface to *Pornografia*, trans. Alastair Hamilton (New York: Grove Press, 1985), 9-10. Gombrowicz is here quoting, at least in part, his published *Diary*. The novel was first published in Polish in 1966 and in the same preface, Gombrowicz makes a point to note that *Pornografia* originates from *Ferdydurke*.

Schulz is "either a sick pervert or a poseur, but most probably a poseur."[147] After a little more provocation, Gombrowicz makes a few speculations as to how Schulz might react, ending with: "Or perhaps, indulging your masochistic tendencies, you will humiliate yourself and fall at the dainty toes of the satisfied doctor's wife."[148] This exchange between Gombrowicz and Schulz in fact presents their different attitudes towards public opinion in relation to their creative output and it is telling with respect to where they diverge in their preoccupation with Form. Although the broader conversation is not in effect about eroticism, Schulz does address it in his riposte conveying that he believes it to be an intrinsic part of not only the artistic but also the human psyche:

> Certainly, I appreciate and admit with all my heart that doctor's wife has beautiful thighs, but I put this matter in its own place. […] And the steadfastness of this worship does not prevent me from nourishing a sincere contempt, on the intellectual level, for her philistine dullness, her prefabricated thinking, her entirely alien and hostile mentality. […]
>
> Granted, this iridescent ambivalence, this Januslike duality of nature, which changes depending on whether I happen to consider the doctor's wife as the owner of her legs or of her intellect, is a puzzling phenomenon that gives cause for reflection […]. It seems to me that here we may have caught red-handed one of the basic antinomies of the human soul, as if we had struck a quivering metaphysical nerve. […] I have deliberately descended into the realm of sexuality because under the pressure of everyday life we have long been accustomed to keeping its transactions under separate accounts. But at this spot the multilayered structure of our psyche is quite evident.[149]

Schulz's public response to Gombrowicz's provocation goes on to include a very sarcastic paragraph that again recalls the imagery of *The Idolatrous Booke*: "Let us enthrone the doctor's wife from Wilcza Street, hosanna, hosanna, let us prostrate ourselves before her […] the timeless idol, object of all our yearnings, hosanna, hosanna, hosanna…"[150] Gombrowicz's provocation—"either a sick pervert or a poseur"—seems to be not in relation to Schulz prose, which in 1936 would have been actively published, but in relation to *The Idolatrous Booke* which had made its first appearance sixteen years prior.[151] The searing sarcasm in Schulz's response was actually just

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[147] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 117.
[148] Ibid., 118.
[149] Ibid., 121-2.
[150] Ibid., 124.
[151] *Cinnamon Shops* had been published in 1933, and according to Ficowski's chronology of Schulz's life and works 1935 and 1936 were especially active years in which Schulz's very active journal publications included articles as well as many of the

playing on the same reference that Gombrowicz had conjured when he suggested that Schulz might wish to "[indulge his] masochistic tendencies."

While Freud's theories were very much in the background, the three 'conspirators' of the Polish avant-garde were suspicious of the practice of psychoanalysis, believing that it did not achieve the same life-affirming potentiality as artistic production. Witkiewicz felt it was important to acknowledge that the erotic underpins the human drive towards higher ideals, and as such he believed Freud's insights on the subconscious were apt and timely. He felt however that psychoanalysis was counterproductive to a creative practice and perhaps more suitable for "normal" people who did not undertake artistic work. After being exposed to psychoanalysis himself, he was convinced that attempting to "resolve" his complexes might in fact sever the very creative force that propelled his work.[152] Schulz also expressed the sentiment that Freud's discoveries on the subconscious were circumscribed by their focus on pathology. He conveyed this in a footnote to his review of Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*.[153] Here he implies a correlation between Freud's theories of the unconscious and the subcultural, unofficial murky regions of the psyche that Gombrowicz correlates to "immaturity," which he understood to operate as an unsettling yet life-propelling force. Schulz believed that Freud's theories were stunted in their scientific seriousness, and identified Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* as a testament to how the inglorious subcultural realm of the human psyche can operate as a powerful reservoir for catapulting creative overthrows and cultural growth. In short, artistic practice was seen as capable of bypassing—or rather blow to pieces—the sterility of the scientific analysis of the psyche, and that art could most potently participate to genuine culture-making when it leveraged the creative potentiality of this murky subcultural force.

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stories that were later to be included in the collection *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*. Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 216-9.

[152] Witkiewicz, "Unwashed Souls," in *The Witkiewicz Reader*, 311-2.

[153] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 159.

This participation of the prints to a critical discourse in relation to the history of art as a whole, the cultural background of Freud's theories of the subconscious, as well as a self-reflexive commentary of the forces underlying their author's psyche is in alignment with the Polish avant-garde's predisposition towards *autotematyzm*, or the meta-artistic tendency to lay bare the artistic process itself. Schulz depicts himself in every single one of the prints, which signals towards a possible interpretation of *The Idolatrous Booke* as a repeated re-casting of the same theme: a self-portrait that does not simply reflect the countenance of the artist but his whole imaginative psyche, his uneasy position with respect to an inherited cultural memory.

The game of self-reflexivity is taking place in all the prints of *The Idolatrous Booke*, and it is especially multiplied in the previously mentioned re-castings of Velazquez's and Titian's reclining Venus. Even though each folio varied in arrangement and composition, it appears that all the folios would consistently close with "The Book of Idolatry II" and open with "The Eternal Tale." Much like in his celebrated *Las Meninas* (1656), the play on reflexivity is already an ambiguously orchestrated force in Velazquez's *Venus at her Mirror* (1649-51, also known as *Venus and Cupid*, *Rokeby Venus, The Toilet of Venus*). Velazquez's painting is also calling on the familiar trope of the reclining Venus, but unlike the Venuses we have seen before, this time the goddess has her back to the viewer. Across the composition, in a slight diagonal to the back of her head and torso, is Cupid, holding up a mirror in which the viewer is granted a view of the face of the goddess. The viewer is set up to see her face voyeuristically, by way of her reflection, through a kind of teasing game in which her countenance is first denied, then permitted. The viewer is in essence brought into the intimate world of looking at the goddess while she is reflecting on her own beauty. This further means that she is also able to look at the viewer catching this intimate moment of self-contemplation. The voyeur is acknowledged, yet this world remains inaccessible to them. I will not do justice to the complexities and ambiguities of Velazquez's work, but for our purposes, what seems to be taking place is a reflection on the participatory nature of the interplay between illusion and reality, seeing and being seen. Moreover, I venture to suggest that amongst many questions that the painting can elicit, Gombrowicz's is certainly amongst them: "Who can tell, […] how much real beauty there is in this Beauty, and how much of it is a sociohistorical process?"[154]

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[154] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 79.

In Schulz's "The Eternal Tale" the proportions are doubled with the frame extended vertically, creating a space below the recognizable figure of Velazquez's reclining Venus. In this print, the bed on which Venus is reclining is held by a shell-like structure that cannot but recall Botticelli's Venus, which is then collided with one of Schulz's obsessive motifs of the horse-drawn carriage. This elevated receptacle for reclining is not quite a divan, not quite a shell and not quite a carriage, but it is a combination of all three. It is lifted on a single pair of spiral Solomonic columns that hold up only the end of this floating shell, on the side of the Venus figure, although shifted outside what would be her center of gravity. No other structure is discernible at the other end of the floating divan, giving the impression that it is precariously suspended on a single point. The left leg of the idolized figure is taught and reaches into the zone below where her foot meets the artist's face. The artist is of course a version Schulz himself. His body is contorted backwards from what may have started as a seated position that has been thrown off-balance by the interaction with the leg of the Venus figure. He is gripping the rocks on which he is seated, with his gaze directed upwards at the Venus figure. His face is concealed by the foot that meets it. He is positioned directly below Cupid who is here floating such that his feet are also suspended below the bed, with the left foot landing on the same vertical plane as the artist's face, behind the foot of the Venus figure. This sets up a dynamic zig-zag composition in which the elevated Venus is the dominant element and the hinge-point of the image: her right leg relaxed on the bed is extended upwards towards Cupid, while her left leg reaches downwards towards the artist's face, a movement that shifts her pose into a kind of reclined contrapposto. Unlike Velazquez's Venus and most of Schulz idolized figures, the nude is turned to look over her shoulder towards the artist. Her left arm also pushes against the soft surface of her elevated seat, causing her shoulder to arch upwards. Both the artist and the Venus figure are poised such that they appear to exert a force against one another, making it unclear if the Venus figure is smothering his attempt to reach upwards, or if the artist is reaching towards her foot, licking or kissing its underside in an entranced state that could be read as both pain and ecstasy. Cupid is set only slightly higher than the Venus figure, across from her, floating above and perpendicular to Schulz's face. What would be the mirror in Velazquez's print is part of the cushion and does not produce a reflection. Instead of contemplating her own image, the Venus figure is looking over her shoulder, directly toward Schulz, or rather to the spot where her extended foot meets his

face. What mirrors her countenance is that of the artist. Beauty incarnate is thus reflected as both anguish and ecstasy.

There is very little from Schulz himself that can cast light as to what precisely he was exploring with any of the prints, and no less this one in particular. We note that the title of the print—"The Eternal Tale" or "The Primordial Fable"—suggests a narrative that should be familiar.[155] It is somehow supposed to be obvious to the viewer what this is about, yet the reality is exactly the opposite. This open omission of what seems like crucial or obvious information is a tactic that reiterates the meta-artistic aspect of the work, and it is also a feature that Schulz's prose shares with Irzykowski's *Pałuba*.[156] In both the narrator alludes to important information or makes it clear that it is left out altogether. This prompts the reader to construct their own version of the story, and to fill in the gaps for themselves. This impulse is reinforced by the fact that the characters in the novel are also repeatedly presented with what they interpret to be elusive signs and are thus compelled to look for hidden meanings and apparent symmetries. This, as we will see is also a feature of Schulz's prose. The viewer of "The Eternal Tale" is then prompted to construct a possible interpretation for what the "eternal tale" might be. A first impulse is to connect it to the Venus figure so pervasive in the painting tradition. Since Schulz is here specifically dressed in his artist's clothes, it seems clear that the tale refers to the relationship between the artist and an artistic ideal. Because the print quotes a particular Venus—Velazquez's—who typically reflects on her own beauty while also looking at her admirer, one possible reading is that the contemplation of her own beauty is refracted by her foot rather than her countenance, or that her image is in fact reflected in the artist's anguish. She is here responding rather than looking to her idolater, perhaps suppressing his reach towards an elevated dimension and/or indulging his foot-fetish in a ritual of entranced adoration. Yet in the dynamic between seeing and being seen, there is still the other participant that is suggested by Velazquez's Venus. We the viewers are granted, or perhaps coerced into a different kind of voyeurism in which we catch not the idol contemplating her own beauty, but the artist presenting to an external viewer, a portrait of himself in a state of both torment and ecstasy. Thus the viewer, accustomed to the contemplation of beauty, is offered a grotesque and uncomfortable deformation of the familiar trope to which one would otherwise be a complacent voyeur.

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[155] "The Primordial Fable" is the title of the same print in Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 75. The print is also available at "The Eternal Tale" (52) https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/-dDndcrRxAII5fdrTZlG4CrR0FgwmuYWkbtUk1HwOzRgRPF1RJMOsU55qp_-bIpf60uml2Pw8iF_XiQXu40mbfJhHjdD.

[156] De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 114.

"The Eternal Tale" would have consistently been the first print in the sequence, with the reference to another canonical Venus, that of Titian, consistently chosen to conclude the folios. "The Book of Idolatry II" recalls elements from several of Titian's versions of the reclining Venus: A half nude posing in the manner of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. The gaze of Schulz's Venus figure is obscured by a shadow and instead of a rose bouquet, she is holding a long object in her right hand, which recalls the whip of Sacher-Masoch's Venus as well as alludes to the flute held by Venus in Titian's *Venus with the Lute-player and Cupid*. In the place of the lute-player, or the puppy that is curled up next to Venus in the *Venus of Urbino*, "The Book of Idolatry II" depicts Schulz himself, kneeling with a book open in his hands, adopting a posture that suggests both admiration and fear. His clothing is the same as in his self-portrait at an easel, making it clear that he is once again presenting himself as the artist. His gaze is directed towards the reclining nude figure, specifically attempting to catch her gaze which is obscured by a shadow cast on her face. The posture could be interpreted as the offering of a book, or perhaps a servile offering of a reading—again alluding to the scenes in which Severin reads to Wanda in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*. The book's pages however are blank. In connection to the organ-player version of Titian's Venus depictions, it could also be interpreted that like the organ-player, Schulz is distracted from reading a book. It still remains uncertain whether the title of the print itself—"The Book of Idolatry II"—refers to the empty book that Schulz is holding, or to the idolatry of the familiar Venus figure.

Several meta-artistic features are repeated here. The tactic of foregrounding the artificiality of the work by quoting other works of art is further accentuated by quoting literature, which also emphasizes the inter-artistic pollination between text and image. Schulz is again playing up the referential ambiguity of the book by presenting "The Idolatrous Booke" in one of the prints of *The Idolatrous Booke*. The fact that there are two "The Idolatrous Booke" prints, both included consistently near the end, further undermines its status as an authoritative artifact of spiritual significance. The intrusion of the author into his own work can be read as a meta-artistic commentary that attempts to extricate the psychological (or psychic) process leading to the making of the work, saliently articulating the ambivalent relationship to erotic forces within the artist's work: At times the work is driven by desire, at times it is thwarted or interrupted by it. This specific feature—especially pronounced in the prints of *The Booke* that depict a book—is repeated in the print entitled "Undula with the Artists" in which a long line of idolaters bring

their work as an offering to a capricious idol.[157] The frame focuses on the moment when Schulz has brought his own work to the idol—perhaps as an offering, perhaps for scrutiny. The work that he has brought is strongly reminiscent of artifact at hand: a folio of loose images. These have just been scattered about with indifference and the idol is holding the last of these prints in her left hand. It is difficult to tell if she is actually looking at this print on simply past it. Her right hand is on her own extended thigh. Schulz is in the predictable position of kneeling before the idol, entranced by the extended foot that appears to have just emerged out of its high-heeled shoe.

The venerated muse is at once the embodiment of an ideal and a "philistine" tormentor, it both propels and frustrates the artist's creative libido. This idolized ideal brings the artist both anguish and ecstasy, yet remains unmoved and indifferent to the artist's aspirations, supplications, torment. The unperturbed, indifferent ideal is omnipresent throughout the prints of *The Idolatrous Booke*. Before this ideal the venerators appear to be experiencing an unsettling mixture of anguish, desire, servility and ecstasy all at once. It is also possible that Schulz is exaggerating the idolatry to the point of ridicule by pinching a sensitive nerve in colliding cultural memory with taboo subject-matter, and perhaps his own sexual fantasies. What is plain is that the prints enmesh the viewer in a series of muddled, oftentimes contradictory questions, that solicit their participation on an intimate level. No matter what is said and what sense can be made about them, their arresting power lies in a residual feeling of incongruity that cannot be put into words. This feeling confronts the viewer as an open question that touches those nerves of a multilayered human psyche and renders many explications possible and yet all slightly inadequate. In this the viewer shares with their author a kind of paralyzing impotence that over and over the prints reflect back, in an uncanny mirror. As such, it becomes clear that when we discuss metafiction, meta-artistic and self-reflexive practices in a work, what we're dealing with is not an author engaged in navel-gazing but an open invitation to a dialogue that questions our own participation to forms of idolatry and to culture-making. This entangling of the reader in a desire for an ultimately unattainable ideal, perpetually frustrated by the murky relationship with the erotic and subcultural stratum of the human psyche play an essential role in Irzykowski's *Pałuba* and Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*.

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[157] Schulz, *The Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, 55. (also available at "Undula with the Artists" (55) https://api.culture.pl/sites/default/files/styles/1920_auto/public/field/image/undula-u-artystow-xiega-balwochwalcza-1920-22_0.jpg?itok=OaGoy3Or)

A recurring theme in Irzykowski's *Pałuba* is this striving for an ideal that is perpetually denied and compromised. This occurs specifically in relation to ideals about love, which become grossly thwarted and complicated by sexual taboos. It is this theme that conveys most acutely what Irzykowski has described as the "*palubic* element" and it is for this reason that Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* reflects this artistic consciousness in a way that is much less subtle than his prose. The *palubic* element is most clearly captured in what is considered the "actual" novel, the "Biographical Study" of *Pałuba*, which is the story of how Piotr Strumieński deals with the suicide of his wife, Angelika. His tactics for responding to her suicide involve a series of creative undertakings that aim to construct an "ideal" image of Angelika and of their life together. He creates a museum dedicated to her memory through which he tries to set up a kind of myth or cult of Angelika. He also attempts to write Angelika's artistic biography, called *The Book of Love,* which in turn becomes grotesquely deformed by the *palubic* element. In the process of trying to accomplish an "ideal" rendering of Angelika's history he finds himself compelled to omit all sorts of mainly sexual details which essentially leads the project to complete and utter failure: "What else was this entire history of Angelika than arabesques around the most ordinary obscenities."[158] In other words the real core of Angelika's history consists of "ordinary obscenities" that completely overwhelm and overpower the pure and wholesome "ideal" attributes. Following this failure, Strumieński eventually redirects these artistic ambitions towards his and Ola's son Pawełek, whom he sees as a kind of spiritual incarnation of Angelika. He tries to instill in Pawełek artistic sensibilities with the intention that he, like Angelika, become a painter. Strumieński's tactic for achieving this is by setting up an optical illusion in the museum he created in Angelika's memory. This optical illusion, which consists of a three-dimensional image of a woman, is meant to instill in Pawełek an adoration for the beauty and ideal of pure love that he is searching for in his attempt to construct a myth of Angelika. This enterprise—the attempt to impose a particular ideal—again takes a grotesque turn. Pawełek, quite arbitrarily begins to refer to the apparition as Pałuba and, after his father closes the museum, he begins to associate this anonymous idol figure with "the loose village idiot Kseńka (whom the shepherds nickname Pałuba)."[159] When Kseńka initiates Pawełek into the sexual act,

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[158] Quoted in Dieter de Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 111. I rely heavily on Dieter de Bruyn's rendering of Irzykowski's *Pałuba*.
[159] Ibid., 112.

Strumieński's intention to instill in his son an idealized desire for love and beauty is transformed into its vulgarized opposite.

Parallels to Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* become already apparent: an aspiration towards an ideal of beauty which is reconstructed as a perverse mirror reflection, in this instance of the history of an artistic tradition. This quasi-divine ideal is deformed via an explicit eroticism that is made illicit by the taboo trope of masochism and the grotesque transformations of the idolaters' bodies into decrepit and beastly versions of humans. The artistic ideal becomes contaminated and distorted by the *palubic* element which most potently actualizes the unsettling incongruous strangeness of 'pałuba' by calling on the erotic substratum of the human psyche.

Irzykowski's narrator relays the intention behind the word "*pałuba*" which, as we recall, came into existence in the Polish language with the novel itself: "That which is unlike anything else, should take a name which is unlike anything else, wild and strange, uncombed and unpleasant – uncomfortable to use, and therefore unlikely to become a worn coin."[160] This is unsettling aura of something troubling yet whose meaning remains evasive and undefined is conferred on "pałuba" via the characters' response to the word. When Pawełek first mentions the "pałuba" his father struggles to pin-point why this word is disturbing to him. Irzykowski describes how the "sound of this word reminded Strumieński of something disgusting and ordinary at the same time, but he could not remember what it was. Admittedly, he had already learned from Pawełek that he had heard the word "pałuba" from the servants and the shepherds from the village, but Pawełek had not managed to explain in what sense the word was used."[161] Pawełek's use of the word is precisely linked with the slippery feeling of an experience that for him is new and unusual:

> Pawełek did not know the uses of the word "pałuba", and it did not immediately mean anything horrible or disgusting for him, so he almost only accidentally and integrally applied it to Angelika's image. It flew around in his head unguardedly and without any corresponding representation, and since it seemed to him to be an unusual word after all, he connected it with something that for him was anonymous and unusual at the same time, that is, with Angelika's image.[162]

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[160] Quoted by Goldfarb, "Paluby in Bruno Schulz's Workshop," 88.
[161] Quoted in De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 121-2.
[162] Quoted in Ibid., 123.

The innocence of this connotation to "pałuba" becomes slowly corrupted through Pawełek's interactions with his father, such that the positive associations he once held for the apparition of the woman in Angelika's museum become distorted into something enigmatic and troubling. The word thus remains elusive and equivocal, as the meanings that are connected with it prove unreliable and provisory. It is impossible to fully grasp the connotations of the word: the word withholds its own full articulation in language and remains rooted in something incongruous, a visceral memory that cannot be put into words. Similarly, *The Idolatrous Booke* tampers with a cultural memory of works of art by presenting them in such a way that they are both familiar and unsettling. Throughout the novel additional meanings are assigned to "pałuba," a tactic that emphasizes the artificiality and the provisory nature of any meaning connected to the word. The narrator makes a point that title was meant to capture that the novel's theme was the "disintegration of any thematicity."[163] In other words, both the novel and the word "pałuba" are heterogeneous constructions that perpetually frustrate the human tendency to impose order on the world. As Dieter De Bruyn aptly points out, one "could argue that the novel did not necessarily need a title but that the title needed a novel."[164]

The unreliability of the artifact is further accentuated by the fact that throughout the several sections that make up *Pałuba*, the reader is presented multiple texts, some of which are either directly part of the novel, others only imagined. Some texts that are presented turn out to be someone else's dubious recollections, others are subsequently revealed to be falsifications or fragmentary palimpsests. The novel with the same name that is in the process of being written in *Pałuba* has already existed in several other versions and is projected to take on several more. The reader is confronted with a completely unreliable narration and is left with the feeling that the actual text is always elsewhere. Furthermore, the narrating "author" perpetually contradicts, undermines, compromises and exposes his own account, such that the text seems to be prone to multiple self-destructive tendencies. The reader is then left with a dubious textual reality out of which an infinite number of potential interpretations that (s)he is prompted to perform, while also becoming aware of the impossibility of a final version of the text. This attitude of the narrator towards his reader is openly admitted towards the end of the novel:

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[163] Quoted in Ibid., 124.
[164] Ibid.

> I do not care about the reader's grimaces, conveniences and caprices, but I am giving him lectures on *Pałuba*, the version which lies somewhere in my head in a completely different form, and I am teaching him like a professor who gives part of the lecture aloud and in an accessible way, while he reads the other part, of which he doubts whether someone will understand it, with his face turned around to the wall.[165]

The narrator thus discloses a pervasive dislocation between what the narrator is able to expresses and what he actually means, as well as the withholding from the reader, or rather distorting the more tenuous aspects of the "lectures on *Pałuba*." This self-destructive tendency of the text calls upon the reader to engage in multiple possible interpretations, while also making the audience aware that final ultimate interpretation does not exist. The text then behaves less like a representation of reality and more like an open inquiry to which the reader is invited to partake, much like a player in a complex self-reflexive game. If the text proves equivocal and forsakes claims to an authentic final reality, the only tenable authenticity lies in the pleasure of playing, the constructing of tentative meanings, together with the awareness that any form of representation and sense-making is relative and provisory. As Dieter De Bruyn puts it, "those who take their ideals too seriously and ignore the "sense of role" will inevitably end up in chaos. Only those who are aware of the relativity of every human act, of the comedy that lies at the basis of every human aspiration, may experience a certain degree of authenticity."[166]

In *Pałuba*, the human desire to impose an ideal on everyday reality always inevitably leads to a grotesque fiasco. The narrating author assesses these ill-fated projects "as the struggle between the "constructive element" ("pierwiastek konstrucyjny") of human culture and the "palubic element" ("pierwiastek pałubiczny") of Nature."[167] In this tension to the constructive element of culture, Irzykowski's palubic element echoes Gombrowicz's interest in immaturity which is understood as a subcultural force that is disruptive but also vital.[168] I further unpack Gombrowicz's fascination with this inglorious domain by observing how it plays out in the idolatry of the woman's leg—the trope shared with Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke*. In *Ferdydurke* the leg presents itself as a perversely idolized modernity which positions the struggle

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[165] Quoted in De Bruyn, "Metafiction in *Pałuba* and *Ferdydurke*," 410-1.
[166] De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 118.
[167] De Bruyn, "Metafiction in *Pałuba* and *Ferdydurke*," 412.
[168] Even if Gombrowicz claims to not have read *Pałuba*, the novel was highly influential and would have been widely discussed in literary circles. Ibid., 412 see also 416 note 1 & 2.

with Form in relation to an archaic traditionalism to also act as a subversive commentary on the particular cultural predicament of independent Poland.

1.5 Trapped Between Archaic Calves and The Cult of The Modern Leg

Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke* and Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* both share an adoration of the leg that has an explicitly erotic presence. In *Ferdydurke* this entrancement with the leg is entwined with an adoration with youth, immaturity and modernity, and it takes place in the second part of the novel. Professor Pimko transfers Joey to the "modern household" of the Youngbloods under the pretext that Joey's troubling affectation of posturing for an adult cannot be overcome so long as Joey lives in his own apartment downtown. Pimko's ulterior motive is for Joey to fall in love with Zuta, the Youngbloods' sixteen-year-old daughter who is most often referred to as "the modern schoolgirl," or "the modern one." Joey suspects that this ploy aims to fully consolidate his infantilization and entrapment into youth and immaturity.

Miss Youngblood is cast as the as the epitome of the modern schoolgirl. She is described as "a perfect schoolgirl in her school-girlishness, and absolutely modern in her modernity. And doubly young—first by age and second by modernity—it was youth multiplied by youth."[169] Pimko is certain that the schoolgirl will inspire Joey "with youngblooded patriotism," but also confesses that he is putting himself in a precarious situation by "risking an encounter with the modern schoolgirl."[170] Pimko's apprehension becomes actualized and manifests itself in a shift in power relation between schoolmaster and schoolgirl. The mere presence of the schoolgirl exerts a dreadful power over the scene: "I was as frightened as someone who comes upon a presence stronger than oneself, moreover, my fear intensified when I saw that it was the prof who was scared of her, rather than she of the prof, that he was somewhat unsure of himself while exchanging greetings with this modern schoolgirl."[171] In other words, the familiar codes of behaviour and etiquette, those very elemental attributes of social form that rehearse pre-established dynamics of authority are being cast into question and destabilized by the mere entrance of the schoolgirl.

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[169] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 105.
[170] Ibid., 104.
[171] Ibid., 105.

In parallel to the prints of Schulz's *Idolatrous Booke*, an obsession with the leg plays an essential part in the worship of the schoolgirl and of modernity itself. Pimko's first attempt to lure Joey towards the modern schoolgirl involves a kind of incantatory ode to legs in which he flatters Joey's legs by connecting them "with those of the new generation" and by trying to establish "a kind of leg camaraderie with the schoolgirl."[172] Pimko is at once exalting and criticizing the barbarism of a youth that has been taken with "Americanism":

> "Legs," he egged me on to modernity, "legs, I know you, I know your athletics, I know the ways of the new Americanized generation, you prefer legs to hands, legs are the most important thing to you, the calves of your legs! The finer, spiritual things in life mean nothing to you, your calves are the thing. Athletics! The calves of your legs, legs," he went on flattering me, fast and furious, "it's the calves of your legs, it's your calves, calves, calves!"[173]

The professor mercilessly tempts Joey with the modern leg in a manner that he finds impossible to resist: "he was now making an issue of my modern legs. And there I was, listening and lapping it all up—his linking the calves of my legs with those of the new generation—and [I started] coming to feel the cruelty of youth toward old calves!"[174] By invoking the "cult of the calf of the leg," as it is described further on, Pimko's goal is to arise in Joey a desire for a communion with the modern schoolgirl. In the process, he makes it clear that this is essentially indistinguishable from a communion with modernity itself. In Pimko's incantation of the modern leg it also becomes apparent that the worship of modernity further entails a cruel belittlement of the old, on no other account than that of aged calves.

The tyranny of this fraught idolatry is conveyed via the helpless desire towards sixteen-year-old Zuta Youngblood and it unfolds in a series of episodes that recall scenes from Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke*. Most of these scenes occur between the modern schoolgirl and Joey, the narrating author. These scenes are part of a crisis of form in which the infantilized thirty-year-old Joey is unsure how to behave, what to do, what to say, especially when attempting to engage, please, or have the attention of "the modern one" who remains unperturbed and indifferent by his presence. In other words, his form and identity are cast into crisis alongside the modern school girl and her impassive formal attitude. Joey makes several attempts to crack her completely

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[172] Ibid., 110.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

controlled form, all of which end in further humiliation for the narrator. These include several scenes of voyeurism in which Joey feels that Zuta is aware of his gaze and tortures him with her beauty and "perfect form." At one point Joey barges into her room without knocking and when Zuta retorts him for doing so his response is: "Your obedient servant, at your feet."[175] After she reproaches him for his bad manners to which he bows down and repeats: "At your feet, your ladyship."[176] This is followed by a scene that borders on sexual assault when he's essentially moving towards her until she is against the wall. He confesses to the reader that he is trying to arise emotion out of her, to make her mad so that she may lose her composure and the beauty of her form. He compares himself to a madman, an ape, who pushes "on toward her like a drunkard, like a fiendish cat, a bandit."[177] One cannot help but recall here the scenes in which the groveling men, often Schulz himself, in *The Booke of Idolatry* are turned half-animal, sometimes given the back body of a feline. As he approaches her "hideously, like a monster" the first-person narrator is frustrated that "confronted with this madman she loses none of her beauty—while I become inhuman."[178] She meets him with a quiet hostility which, the narrator declares, make her even more beautiful. He proclaims (again to the reader) "I am in love, in love!..."[179] An earlier scene again recalls the fetishized foot of *The Idolatrous Booke*. Joey has been repeatedly accused of being "unnatural" and of "posing," which disturbs him greatly and continues to mull over in a "false solitude" in which his attempts at comradery with the modern one are flatly ignored. He finally notices Zuta with her foot on a stool, bent over to polish her shoe. This pose gives Joey courage noting that "there was something *classical* about it […] I thought that the modern one, caught in the act with her leg, would be more gracious and less formal."[180] He approaches her silently without eye contact and stops "right on the border of her space" with the intention to place himself "at her disposal" hoping that she may "succumb to the temptation of considering [him] useful."[181] To his torture and dismay, Zuta ends by once again accusing him of posing.

Joey's crisis of form that is further spurred on by the idolatry towards Zuta, compel him to further prying into the Youngbloods' personal spaces, looking for clues that might undermine the perfection of their modernity, especially the perfect form of "the modern one." In a drawer

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[175] Ibid., 126.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., 127.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid., 122 (emphasis mine).
[181] Ibid., 122-3.

that he forces open, he finds love letters addressed to Zuta which lead him to understand the full extent of the power held by "contemporary girls." Some of the letters were from students he recognized from school, others from aspiring poets, who like the supplicating artists in Schulz's prints were presenting their work to an unmoved idol who did not even open the letters. Joey describes these letters "as unpleasant, irritating, irksome, awkward, puerile, deplorable, shameful, and embarrassing as any ever beheld by History—either ancient or medieval."[182] The "real pandemonium" is however revealed by

> a heap of confidential letters from judges, attorneys, public prosecutors, pharmacists, businessmen, urban and rural citizens, doctors and such—from those high and mighty who had always impressed me so! […] Did these men, pretense notwithstanding, socialize with the schoolgirl? "Unbelievable," I went on repeating, "unbelievable!" Were they so oppressed by their Maturity that, unbeknownst to their wives and children, they had to send long letters to a modern schoolgirl? And here, of course, there was even less about calves of legs, on the contrary, each one of them explained in detail his reasons for the "exchange of thoughts," that he felt that "Miss Zuta" would understand him, that she wouldn't misconstrue etc., etc. They then went on and paid homage to the modern one in words that were long-winded yet servile, imploring her, in between the lines, to deign dream about them, in secret, of course. And each one, not mentioning the calves of his legs, not even once, underlined and emphasized to the utmost his modern boyishness.[183]

This image presents another direct parallel to Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke*. In prints such as "Pilgrims" and "Tribe of Pariahs" casts of old men, functionaries, and priests prostrate before the indifferent, irreverent, and youthful female figure. We then see Schulz himself enthralled in the same way, an image that echoes Joey's adoration of the cold and dismissive "modern one".

Goddard notes that the worship of the leg in *Ferdydurke,* is an embodiment of the worship of modernity, youth, and immaturity which reach their apex via the idolatry of the modern schoolgirl. The irresistible allure of sixteen-year-old Zuta Youngblood overcomes not only Joey, the artist whose form and identity have been violently thrown off kilter, but professor Pimko who is still lodged in the traditionalism which in *Ferdydurke* is often encompassed by Norwid's poetry.[184] If in the classroom, the act of questioning the authority of the classics was only temporarily cast into question, in the modern household this authority is met with flat out

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[182] Ibid., 158.
[183] Ibid., 161.
[184] Cyprian Norwid was one of the foremost Polish nineteenth century romantic poets.

indifference. When in the first meeting with the Youngbloods, Pimko invokes Norwid in relation to mores of propriety, Zuta asks dismissively "Who's Norwid?" The narrator reflects that Zuta "did it perfectly—she asked the question with the sporty ignorance of the young generation, with the amazement of the Era, matter-of-factly and without unduly involving herself in the question, and that's that, just to give him a taste of her sporty ignorance." Pimko follows with an exclamation of outrage at Zuta's ignorance, which evidently pleases Mrs. Youngblood who smilingly asserts: "It's the era, Professor, the era!"[185]

It is thus clear that this dismissive attitude towards the authority of tradition is not only characteristic of the schoolgirl but of the whole family unit who, throughout this second part of the novel, strain themselves to be ultra-modern by obliging what they perceive to be the new social norms of "the Era." This is made manifest especially in the liberalism that the Youngbloods so vehemently espouse in relation to their daughter's sexuality. They project a casual indifference in discussing hypothetical scenarios in which they imagine her daughter behaving with impudence and licentiousness, to the point that they carry out a full conversation about a hypothetical illegitimate child that might result from Zuta's behaviour. It is thus not only the authority of the pedagogical construct that is being undermined. What occurs is a whole shift in power relations that destabilize traditional family structure and patriarchal forms of power. Even within the family structure Zuta exerts the most authority. Reversing the patriarchal power structure, Mr. Youngblood is the most passive figure in the family dynamics even though he is a "man of Europe, an engineer and enlightened urban planner who studied in Paris."[186] Mrs. Youngblood, or Mrs. Engineer, is described as "a rather obese woman, but intelligent and civic-minded, […] also a member of a committee for rescuing infants."[187] She exerts considerable effort to act in accordance to ultra-modern and progressive norms. In doing so she often reprimands her husband for his passive pacifism, and especially exalts the modernity and youth that her daughter embodies, thereby emphasizing Zuta's power in the act of idolizing both youth and modernity. While Zuta's modernity is effortless, Mrs. Youngblood is actively looking to embody the principles of "the Era" so much so that with respect to her own role "she was generally a bit disgusted with "mother," [and] preferred "sister."[188] Having Joey—the thirty-year-

[185] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 115.
[186] Ibid., 139.
[187] Ibid., 110.
[188] Ibid., 139.

old who is posturing for an adult—live with them is an opportunity to feel more progressive and avant-garde:

> "…today's enterprising engineer's wives, fired up about group action and emancipation, despise any artificiality and affectation in young people, and they particularly can't stand their posing as adults. Progressive as they are, with all their energies geared toward the future, they hold the cult of youth more ardently than it has ever been held by anyone before, and nothing annoys them more than a boy messing up his tender years with posing. Worse still, not only do they dislike it, they actually like their dislike, because it gives them a sense of how progressive and modern they themselves are…"[189]

This dynamic between the archaic and modernity is an uneasy one: Joey is accused of posing—and repeatedly so—precisely because he isn't deemed sufficiently modern, but it is quite clear that Mrs. Youngblood's modernity isn't leading her to behave in a manner that is the quite the opposite of posing. She exerts considerable effort to partake in the presumably progressive agenda of modernity that remains nonetheless disingenuous, inauthentic and contrived, because of its dependence on a forced opposition: "the old woman was thrilled that the Era was making her younger than the boy who was younger by age. She turned herself into a young woman, and she turned me into a little old man."[190]

Joey's crisis and impotence—the entrapment into an inauthentic yet inescapable form—are thus not solely brought on by his adoration of youth and "the modern one." The modern and the archaic—Zuta and Pimko are equally tyrannical and it is the dynamic between them that so much troubles the first-person narrator. Thirty-year-old Joey who, in contrast to "the modern schoolgirl" is at times referred to as the "archaic schoolboy" is trapped between the infantilizing traditionalism of the professor and his desire to connect with and be part of youth and modernity: "… but, O my God, I didn't want to be old-fashioned with her, I wanted to be modern!"[191] He notes how his entrapment between the modern and the archaic is especially accentuated in the dynamics between Pimko and Zuta. Around the school girl Pimko seemed to become much more of "an unhappy, inept, and kindly granddaddy," but it's uncertain whether this was caused by the "postwar unruliness" of "unbridled youth" or whether Pimko, in adopting the role of "the

[189] Ibid., 112.
[190] Ibid., 134.
[191] Ibid., 136.

pedagogue of bygone views and principles" spurred on her unruliness.[192] Joey is greatly troubled by this situation which he finds rather perverse: feelings of jealousy towards Pimko and disgust at the way that both of them adopted a kind of rehearsed form that allowed them to feed off each other and in essence created each other: "Whom created whom—did the modern schoolgirl create the granddaddy, or did the granddaddy create the modern schoolgirl?"[193] The narrator bemoans this torturous sight "I suffered terribly as I watched the two of them fulfilling each other, concurring in everything, rhyming little lyrics and together creating spicy little old-new poetry, and it was horrible to watch how this antique of a man—his calves a thousandfold inferior to mine—was more in synchrony with this modern girl than I was."[194] "The two infantile realities—modern, old-fashioned—stimulating each other, chafing and exciting each other with a thousand of the strangest electric shocks, cumulated and rose into a world that became more and more fragmentary and green."[195]

Goddard argues that through this parodic portrait of the modern family, the second part of *Ferdydurke* operates as an allegorical portrait of the nation-state of Poland, not only in terms of political identity but with respect to a dislocated sense of cultural identity. He notes that the dissonant set of relationships between modernity and form, aptly conveys the particular predicament of independent Poland:

> All the references to "the Era" and "the Postwar Times," are not merely references to the modern in general but analyses of the adoption of these modern, Western values in the context of a minor European country, with an almost feudal social structure and a romantic obsession with its own traditions due to its delayed development. This contradiction between myths of origin and teleologies of the modern might be a worldwide phenomenon, but the particular intensity of this constellation as presented in *Ferdydurke* is specifically related to independent Poland. The novel seems to be asking how it is possible for the authoritarian Pimko and the ultra modern Youngbloods to exist in the same social world. […] So on one level the novel is allegorical of the contradiction between archaic and modern assemblages of power in the nation-state of independent Poland.[196]

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[192] Ibid., 135.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid., 134.
[196] Goddard, *Gombrowicz and the Subversion of Form*, 47-8.

With the idolatry of the leg and of modernity that are presented in *Ferdydurke*, Gombrowicz is both diagnosing Poland's relationship to modernity as well as subverting and critiquing it. Especially potent becomes his presentation of the role of the artist in cultural production: the crisis of cultural identity is exaggerated to the point of absurdity. This is pushed even further by the fact that, like Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* the author himself is presented in a series of compromised, unsettling circumstances. It is difficult to assess whether like Gombrowicz, Schulz's entranced adoration of the leg was explicitly invested in these same questions, or the same critique of Polish identity. We do know that both Schulz and Gombrowicz operated within this political and cultural climate of independent Poland. It is also questionable that Schulz would have been politically motivated in this way in making his prints –as this was rarely his artistic prerogative. Schulz made the first folios of *The Idolatrous Booke* around 1920 and he continued to produce folios as well as exhibit the prints until the 1930s. Even if their public presence was actually modest, those in his creative and intellectual circles would have very much been familiar with the prints. As we have just observed, a number of scenes in Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* can be read as close translations of the imagery depicted in *The Idolatrous Booke*. This suggests that even if Schulz didn't specifically intend the adoration of the leg to operate as a critique of Poland's awkward participation to modernity, Gombrowicz certainly found it effective to this end.

The accomplishments of *Ferydurke* however far from exceed the witty critique of Poland's particular predicament. For Gombrowicz, this subcultural force operated as a messy, unending striving to put forth a seemingly complete and finished façade—both at the level of the individual and of culture. He believed that the eternally unfinished, fragmented, inglorious domain of the psyche conveys a richer, more authentic existence that the thin official façade seeking to portray an accomplished ideal form. In his review of *Ferdydurke* Schulz writes that with the novel, Gombrowicz "shows that as immature, ridiculous greenhorns fighting for our expression on the plain of concreteness and dealing with our meaninglessness, we are closer to the truth than if we were solemn, sublime, mature, and completed."[197] According to Schulz, at stake is a rehabilitation of a genuine participation to cultural production, to reverse the condition that the individual "has always seen [themselves] as an incomplete, unimportant appendage of

[197] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 162.

[their] cultural substance."[198] It could be argued that Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* is subversive in the same way—that by presenting himself as an impotent "appendage" to a cultural tradition, by calling out the un-solemn, undignified, deplorable and wretched by way of reflection in "self-portraits" it might be possible to vindicate, or legitimize their participation to the "cultural substance." Especially for Gombrowicz, this obsession with the murky domain in which Form was perpetually created and compromised, involved the full reality and personhood of the artist:

> [By suggesting] certain problems, more or less linked to me, I pull myself into them and they lead me to secrets still unknown to me. To travel as far as possible into the virgin territory of culture, into its still half-wild, and so indecent, places, while exciting you to extremes, to excite even myself . . . I want to meet you in that jungle, bind myself to you in a way that is the most difficult and uncomfortable, for you and for me. […] I want to uncover my present moment and tie myself to you in our todayness.[199]

The practice of Form is thus volatile and fraught for the artist themselves—the artist does not have a privileged position of control but place themselves in a position of genuine vulnerability. *Ferdydurke*'s first-person narrator instigates a devious situation, an injection of senseless, shapeless, unsettling heterogeneity, which he hopes will liberate him from the entrapment in the ultra-modern household of the Youngbloods: "I couldn't foresee what would happen, […] all I knew was that I had to act in unison with each disfiguring absurd, murky, grotesque, and disharmonious element that would emerge, with each destructive component—and I was steeped in rancid, sickly terror, compared to which the powerful fear of being murdered is a mere trifle."[200] This continuous throwing of oneself into the uncomfortable disharmonious element occurs not only within the storyline of *Ferdydurke* but also with the presence of the novel in the world of its critics. I see in Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* a similar openness to the incongruous, a similar chance taken by putting himself right at the center of a compromising, disfiguring, absurd and intersubjective relationship to an artistic tradition.

In his review of *Ferdydurke,* Schulz remarked that this very review was able to capture but a meager cross section of the "living, whirling bulk of its body, hardly one of the thousand aspects of this thousand-faceted creature."[201] Out of the multi-faceted creature that is *The*

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[198] Ibid.
[199] Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 43.
[200] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 174.
[201] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 163.

Idolatrous Booke, we venture to look at one last face of the immutable idol, one that crosses over into Schulz's prose.

1.6 The Maidservant, Cultural Aunts & The Indifference of Matter

Amongst the depicted idol-figures that critics have noted to have parallels in Schulz's short stories is the maidservant Adela. Overall, the trope of idolatry is quite subdued in Schulz's prose and only but few instances in the prose depict scenes similar to those portrayed in *The Idolatrous Booke*. In the most memorable of them, it is the maidservant Adela who plays the role of the idol. Adela is throughout the short stories the woman who elicits desire in the men that populate the child-narrator's world, though not from the narrator himself: In "The Night of the Great Season" she is chased by the shop assistants all throughout the house, a flirtatious game of hide-and-seek that delights her and which she meets with giggles and the fluttering of lashes.[202] Several scenes describe men who watch her sleep from outside her balcony, making fruitless efforts to draw her out of her deep slumber.

Adela is the housekeeper of the boy narrator's home, and she is often cast as Jacob's archrival. Jacob, the father, preoccupies himself with one after another creative experiment that are as dubious as they are enchanting. He is described as an "incorrigible improviser", "fencing master of imagination" and a "metaphysical conjurer" whose undervalued magic ceaselessly fought against "the lethargy of empty days and nights."[203] Adela, the counterforce to Jacob's surges of inspiring creativity, perpetually thwarts his ambitions. She is said to have an almost limitless power over Father, a power that she derives from the banality of housekeeping tasks which for Jacob seem to have the exact effect of tickling: "When, with young firm gestures, the girl pushed a long-handled broom along the floor, Father could hardly bear it. […] He was ticklish to the point of madness. It was enough for Adela to waggle her fingers at him to imitate tickling, for him to […] wriggle in convulsions of laughter, imagining the tickling which he found irresistible."[204] There's an infantilization of the Father figure in this image—itself not without erotic undertones—that repeats in the prose, and which diminish Jacob's creative

[202] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 87.
[203] Schulz, "Tailors' Dummies," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 26.
[204] Ibid., 20.

projects to those of an exuberant and somewhat capricious child. In the story "Birds" Jacob builds a fantastical collection of ornithological specimens who take over the attic like colourful, fluttering hanging gardens. Jacob's bird kingdom comes to an abrupt end when "[one] day during spring cleaning, Adela suddenly appeared" and opened the attic window without hesitation.[205] Armed with her trusty broom she proceeds to disperse the birds into a cloud of screaming feathers and "like a furious maenad protected by the whirlwind of her thyrsus, danced the dance of destruction."[206]

The scene that most closely resembles the prints in *The Idolatrous Booke* occurs in the "Tailors' Dummies" or "Mannequins" cycle of stories. These stories follow the confrontation of the birds which left Father defeated. It is also in these stories that Jacob proclaims his tractate on human demiurgy, to an audience of indulging seamstresses, Polda and Pauline. The idolatrous scene occurs amidst Jacob's impassionate speeches, in an incident that the narrator introduces as "completely nonsensical and incomprehensible in the sequence of events":

> "Just as my father pronounced the word "dummy", Adela looked at her wristwatch and exchanged a knowing look with Polda. She then moved her chair forward and without getting up from it, lifted her dress to reveal her foot tightly covered in black silk, and then stretched it out stiffly like a serpent's head. […] My father coughed nervously, fell silent, and suddenly became very red in the face. Within a minute the lines on his face, so expressive and vibrant a moment before, became still and his expression became humble.
>
> He—the inspired Heresiach, just emerging from the clouds of exaltation—suddenly collapsed and folded up. […] Adela's outstretched slipper trembled slightly and shone like a serpent's tongue. My father rose slowly, still looking down, took a step forward like an automaton, and fell to his knees.[207]

Addressing the reader directly, the narrator advises that this insignificant incident should be treated lightly, that it "could probably be explained as vestigial automatism."[208] Adela, the embodiment of the prosaic is the idol that overcomes "the inspired Heresiach" and renders impotent his ambitions at human demiurgy. The power of her extended foot, like the well calibrated mechanism of the wristwatch, brings the wishful demiurge to his knees, reducing him to a speechless automaton – something that, as the narrator tells us, is "probably" vestigial. An

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[205] Ibid., 23.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid., 34.
[208] Ibid.

inversion takes place here—similar to the one in "the modern household" of *Ferdydurke*—where the servant becomes the dominating authority of the household. If we refract the extended foot-automaton scene back to those presented in *The Idolatrous Booke* we can subsequently read them as yet another commentary on the dynamic between visionary enterprises and philistine dullness. The power of the paralyzing idol is transferred to the tyranny of the banal and un-inspired bureaucracy of the everyday that reduce a person to a mechanical automaton. In a moment when Jacob feels impervious to Adela's dominance he reproaches her for her outbursts of anger that have repeatedly frustrated his creative undertakings: "the vulgarity and grossness of your language is only matched by its stupidity. Believe me, I am full of sorrow and pity for you. Unable to experience noble flights of fancy, you bear an unconscious grudge against everything that rises above the commonplace."[209] Her power however is very much still steeped in the erotic, even if, as far as erotic role-play, the maidservant is perhaps the most formulaic and cliché role among them.

In another scene of "Adela idolatry" or perhaps idolatry distilled towards the woman's shoe, Shloma, the town thief, shares his conviction that even God's divine creation was stunted by the power of the woman's shoe. This occurs in "The Age of Genius," a story in which Joseph, the boy-narrator, describes a time in which he was flooded with creative inspiration and drew feverishly and incessantly a Noah's ark of colourful creatures and monster apparitions. Joseph shows his drawings to Schloma, confessing that he is not certain that he really did make them: "Sometimes they seem to me unintentional plagiarism, something that has been suggested to me or remembered… As if something outside of me had used up my inspiration for an unknown purpose."[210] Joseph is further assured of this suspicion because he believes to have found "the great Original" which he is prepared to share with Schloma. It so happens that this "long unseen, precious, beloved script" is at the bottom of the drawer in which Adela has stored her silk dress, ribbons and high heels. Adela herself is absent, yet her shoe still entrances and overpowers Schloma's desire to witness "the great Original." While "deep in thought, with one of Adela's shoes in his hand looking at it meditatively," Shloma reflects that

> "The six days of Creation were divine and bright. But on the seventh day God broke down. On the seventh day He felt an unknown texture under His fingers,

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[209] Schulz, "My Father Joins the Fire Brigade," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 214.
[210] Schulz, "The Age of Genius," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 138.

> and frightened, He withdrew His hands from the world, although His creative fervor might have lasted for many more days and nights. Oh, Joseph, beware of the seventh day…"
>
> And lifting up with awe Adela's slim shoe, he spoke as if seduced by the lustrous eloquence of that empty shell of patent leather.
>
> "Do you understand the horrible cynicism of this symbol on a woman's foot, the provocation of her licentious walk on such elaborate heels? How can I leave you under the sway of that symbol? God forbid that I should do it…"[211]

As he is speaking, Shloma is also swiftly stuffing Adela's belonging into his pockets, under that pretext that he is protecting Joseph from a power to which the boy is still impervious. His motives in other words are ambivalent: the sincerity of the claim—that divine creation itself was stunted by the power of "the horrible cynicism" of the seductive shoe—is cast into doubt by the fact that it is a preface to Shloma stealing Adela's belongings. One cannot however deny that the theft is not motivated by the usefulness of the items but rather by the erotic fetish value they hold for Shloma. Their erotic power overcomes the desire to witness "the Original." There is a precious, sacred book to be discovered yet Shloma cannot resist the mystery of the frightening "unknown texture" of "that empty shell of patent leather." The scene echoes the imagery in the prints of *The Idolatrous Booke* in which the artifact of the book is depicted: the idolatry of the woman's foot, even *in absentia*, overwhelms the desire to know and partake in a sacred "Original." Furthermore, we see in this image a self-reflexive interanimation between text and image: Joseph's drawings temporarily become the protagonists of the story, which are then undermined by the suspicion of "unintentional plagiarism." Similar to *The Idolatrous Booke*, the reader, like Shloma, is presented with a "sacred script" or story inside a story, and with the promise of some authentic authoritative text which, like "The Eternal Tale," remains undisclosed and unseen.

The idolatry of the tedious maidservant is very much in line with the hostility and "philistine dullness" of the doctor's wife with which Gombrowicz provoked Schulz in their public sparring. Recall that part of their published exchange painted images of idolatry that quite obviously referenced Schulz's erotic folios. Recall also that the accusation "the doctor's wife" allegedly directed at Schulz was that he was "either a sick pervert or a poseur, but most probably

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[211] Ibid., 139.

a poseur."[212] This is essentially the same accusation that Zuta directs at the first-person narrator or *Ferdydurke* which was published two years following this exchange between Schulz and Gombrowicz. The trope of the philistine doctor's wife connects in fact with Gombrowicz's acute preoccupation with what he called the opinion of "cultural aunts."

> I'm not even talking about the heartfelt opinions so fondly held by our aunts, no, I mean the opinions of those other aunts—the cultural aunts, those female semi-writers and tacked-on semi-critics who make pronouncements in literary magazines. […]
>
> Unless you have ever found yourself in the laboratory of a cultural aunt and been dissected, mute and without a groan, by her trivializing mentality that turns all life lifeless, unless you have ever seen an auntie's critique of yourself in a newspaper, you have no concept of triviality, and auntie-triviality in particular."[213]

The figure of the cultural aunt as an artistic critic was an important manifestation of immaturity that so much preoccupied Gombrowicz. He adamantly believed that public opinion, especially the opinion of "the ignorant, dull, and slow-witted" provided the kind of discomfort that was a propelling force in his engagement with Form. He asserted that "man is profoundly dependent on the reflection of himself in another man's soul, be it even the soul of an idiot."[214] By provoking Schulz with the opinion of "the doctor's wife" Gombrowicz wanted to bring Schulz in the arena of these specific preoccupations. He ends his letter to Schulz with: "What good would your form be if it were only put into use at two thousand meters above the level of life? One must play the game with people on every level and in every possible situation. Our attitude towards matters of stupidity is perhaps even more important than our attitude toward the great, wise, principal problems."[215] Gombrowicz believes that Schulz, and most writers for that matter, espouse a pretentious attitude towards the general low-brow reader, and he is certainly challenging that here. It is also clear that for Gombrowicz the act of composing a response in relation to a public is very much part of artistic Form, understood as a participatory cultural event (ie. authorship was not limited to literary output but to a participation to a culture-in-the-making). In formulating his provocation, Gombrowicz insists that in the defense that Schulz is expected to

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[212] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 117.
[213] Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, 6.
[214] Ibid., 5.
[215] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 119.

articulate, the stakes are "a question not of content but rather form" and this is because "the cruelty of a thing lies in the fact that all objective arguments serve scarcely any purpose."[216] In other words, mere arguments or explanations will not be the criteria for how the "tribunal" judges his response but he is expected to compose himself appropriately before the scrutiny of "some accidental readers of *Studio*."[217] Schulz's response is thoughtful and receptive to what's at stake here for Gombrowicz. He believes that Gombrowicz has aptly identified the elusive force of a subcultural phenomenon that is anonymous, impossible to localize, and yet entrancing—a force that "sets up paradoxical hierarchies, gives shattering force to a shallow joke, gathers us up against our will or wisdom under the power of a collective guffaw."[218] Schulz's assessment is that Gombrowicz can do better (in his work) than merely "smoking out the dragon from its myriad hiding places."[219] As far as the specific idolatry of the opinion of the doctor's wife, Schulz argues that Gombrowicz misappropriates to this figure the vital and propelling biological force. His assessment is that it is in fact because of the vitality of the artist, that the friction of subcultural forces is in fact productive:

> You say not only that we, the brighter and better, have the right to make fun of the doctor's wife, but also that you acknowledge her equal right to scorn, disdain, and ridicule? […] You claim that in her person you defend vitality and biology, against abstraction, against our detachment from life. If this is biology, Witold, then you must mean the force of her immobility; if this is vitality, you must mean her heavy passive mass.
>
> But the avant-garde of biology is thought, experiment, creative discovery. We in fact, are this belligerent biology, this conquering biology; we are truly vital.[220]

The fascination with a public, with the reflection of oneself in multiple others that so propelled the work of Gombrowicz, did not seem to have interested Schulz in the least, as it is especially clear in their sparring over the opinion of the doctor's wife. Despite this, Schulz thought that this particular imperative and obsession of Gombrowicz's was an important one, and in his review of *Ferdydurke* he demonstrates a keen perceptiveness of what was at stake for his literary comrade.

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., 123.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Ibid., 124.

As Gombrowicz has vehemently noted, their literary output couldn't have been more different.[221] It is for this reason that looking at *Ferdydurke* in parallel to *The Idolatrous Booke* has enabled us to construct the intellectual, cultural, and political background within which Schulz's prose was written. If their literary output was "utterly alone" in their obsession with Form, what unites them is their dealings with the murky, inglorious domain that underlies the official but thin self-composure. Where they diverge is in their literature, in how each approached their obsession with Form: Gombrowicz was enthralled by the arena of politics and culture and the disruptive force of immaturity in humanity. Schulz was subsumed by the material of his work, by the tissue of language entangled with the tissue of the world. His interest in form was one of perpetual unfolding, in "loosening the web of reality."[222] Gombrowicz's assessment of Schulz's masochism boils down to a desire to subordinate himself to his art, to dissolve and vanish in it:

> Yes, the dialectic of pleasure and pain peculiar to masochism (and characteristic of art as well), and even more so the desire for self-destruction, can explain a great deal. […] But what if degradation and humility cost him nothing, what if they had no moral value in him, on the contrary, he was pleased by everything that degraded him, everything that hurled him to the ground. He approached art as if it were a lake he intended to drown in. Falling to his knees before the Spirit, he experienced sensual pleasure. He wanted to be a servant, nothing more. He craved nonexistence.[223]
>
> It is possible that his masochism also had a different aspect, I don't know, but it most certainly was homage paid to the powers of being that were trampling him.[224]

The Idolatrous Booke, only promiscuously qualifies as a "book." Its open-ended composition of images cheekily depict books that are in turn presented—perhaps as a sacrifice, a supplication for scrutiny, or both—to an idolized figure that meets the artist's inadequacy with a grandiose indifference. As such, the unattainable ideal can be read as the artist's striving in his own work—the striving and the ideal that are perpetually frustrated. This possible interpretation of *The Idolatrous Booke* recalls Georges Bataille when he writes that: "Base matter is external and foreign to ideal human aspirations and refuses to let itself be reduced to the great ontological

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[221] In a 1961 entry in his *Diary*, Gombrowicz reflects on his relationship to Schulz: "Were we friends? Colleagues? How often we were mentioned together in various literary inventories under "Polish experimental prose." And yet if anyone existed in Polish art who was 100 percent my opposite, it was he." Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 522.
[222] This often-quoted statement comes from the famous "Essay for S.I. Witkiewicz" in Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 113.
[223] Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 523-4.
[224] Ibid., 523.

machines that result from these aspirations."[225] Perhaps *The Idolatrous Booke* conveys that the force of the maidservant's philistine banality does not thwart from outside but from within, it consists of the artist's struggle with his own moments of artistic impotence, his own attempts at luring, coercing and seducing matter into his theater of unfolding Form.

1.7 "Loosening the Tissue of Reality": Form and Metafiction in Schulz's Prose

In dialogue with the voices of Schulz's 'conspirators' in the Polish avant-garde, *The Idolatrous Booke* has brought forth multiple layers of the meta-artistic, reflexive, preoccupations in which Schulz's prose is equally immersed. His text is distinct in its tendency to erupt into metaphoric images that drown out the self-reflexive utterances, making the metafictive strain in Schulz's fiction much less glaring, and much less intellectualized, than that of *Ferdydurke* and *Pałuba*. The overarching effect of *The Idolatrous Booke* is one of initial paralysis or a kind of debilitating impotence. Even if the prints participate to a series of complex dialogues, they are only brought forth through painstaking unpacking of their intellectual context—as I have just endeavoured to show. Schulz's prose on the other hand abundantly overflows its ties with this intellectual context and operates on a much more elemental level of human recognition. The reader's primary encounter with the prose consists of an abundance of restless, perpetually unfolding imagery that presents the quotidian phenomenal as wondrous, playful and strange. Within the metafictive conversation, Schulz's self-reflexive passages often double as such elaborate descriptions of mundane occurrences, and are overall subsumed by an overgrowth of proliferating images. There is not an equivalent in Schulz's prose to the reflective essays that disrupt the form of *Ferdydurke* and present an overt discourse on Form. One is in fact hard pressed to find a statement from Schulz himself that speaks explicitly of Form, even if he was invested in similar preoccupations.[226] Schulz spoke instead of a "migration of forms," of "loosening the tissue of reality" and of positing a substance that "exists in a state of constant fermentation, germination, hidden life."[227]

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[225] Georges Bataille and M. Richardson, *Georges Bataille: Essential Writings* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 14.
[226] Witkiewicz, who was interested in an ideal of Pure Form, was convinced that Schulz's prose was the closest realization to this ideal. Schulz, "Interview with Bruno Schulz," in *Letters and Drawings*, 107-10.
[227] Schulz, "An Essay for S.I. Witkiewicz," in *Letters and Drawings*, 113.

In comparing Schulz's prose with *Pałuba*, Dieter de Bruyn notes that "by repeatedly representing the tragedy of striving for the ideal, both Irzykowski and Schulz appear to be conscious of the inevitable fiasco of the enterprise."[228] Even though Schulz's prose does present the reader with an ideal that is perpetually denied, this frustration tends to be diffused and rendered forgettable by the metaphoric imagery that is conjured. The overarching experience offered by the prose is a rich proliferation of possibilities, what Krzystof Stala has called "an epiphany of abundance."[229] Schulz's narrator often reminds the reader of an absent, void center. But this void is enveloped in never-ending unfolding panoramas which are at once revelatory and illusory, enchanting and equivocal. For instance, the narrator tells us that an autumn "is poetically deceptive, an enormous purple-skinned onion disclosing ever new panoramas under each of its skins. No center can ever be reached."[230] In another instance, the narrator is feverishly interpreting the images in a stamp album: Cuba, Haiti, and Jamaica bring to life "roaring tropical oceans, with their azure archipelagoes, happy currents and tides and equatorial and salty monsoons."[231] Yet these stamps can be endlessly re-read and re-interpreted: The narrator urges the reader "not to forget [...] that no Mexico is final, […] that beyond each Mexico there opens another, even brighter one, a Mexico of supercolors and hyperaromas…"[232] These passages do not only describe a particular autumn or the enchanting stamps, but they metafictively speak to the images that emerge in Schulz's prose and even the collection of short stories as a whole. The prose thus both *reflects on* as well as *enacts* Schulz's engagement with language and his particular approach to Form.

Schulz's stories most often focus on banal, everyday occurrences such as a walk across the square, the selling of cloth, a puppy's first bark, a visit to an aunt. Schulz's narration draws on this unremarkable reality and performs, through language, what he called a "loosening of the tissue of reality." Grafted on the mundane, are overgrowths of exaggerated, multi-layered metaphors that accumulate, proliferate, ferment, and intertwine in a Protean playground of restless imagery. Critical to this unfolding imagery is the act of "reading" and interpretation. The interpretive effort is especially solicited of the reader but it is also undertaken by the narrator, most significantly in relation to two meta-artistic artifacts: The stamp album in "Spring" and the

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[228] De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 94.
[229] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 27.
[230] Schulz, "A Second Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 221.
[231] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 166.
[232] Ibid.

mythical *booke* in "The Book(e)." Like *The Idolatrous Booke,* both are books inside Schulz's overall book, both are composed of largely images—presented in the prose via linguistic descriptions—which then become the pretext for multiple exegetic readings. Thus, both the stamp album and *The Booke* also perform an active interanimation between text and image that is specific to Schulz's interest in Form. Both of them also operate as self-reflexive commentary on Schulz's collection at large. They are instances in which the content of the artifact at hand presents and reflects upon the process of its own making and the act of its creation.

At the level of the collection, the stories themselves have been described by many scholars as "images" or "tableaus" because they have a tendency to favour image over plot: They focus on building fastidiously layered, highly textured descriptions of mundane occurrences within which very little "happens."[233] Thus, if we consider Schulz's collections of short stories as a series of such tableaus, we understand how the two "books" that are composed of images operate as a meta-artistic commentary on the creation of the stories, as well as their openness to multiple readings and interpretations.

The stamp album of the story "Spring" becomes *the* book for reading that particular season, which is presented as a text that is to be interpreted "in a thousand different ways," like a horoscope.[234] In this story Joseph, the narrator, is a teenager who is overcome with adoration for Bianca, around whom revolves a significant part of the story. The stamps—colourful fragments of distant places—are encountered as a revelation of an "enormous, magnificent, colorful blasphemy of the world."[235] The stamp album is a "magnificent blasphemy" because it is the antithesis of the otherwise dreary world ruled by Franz Josef I whose looming profile, omnipresent in all the stamps and coins, imposed an uninspired uniformity onto the narrator's world. In other words, the stamps operate as windows into other worlds of imaginative possibilities. They are images that usurp a hackneyed reality by inflecting it with the strangeness of the other and thus precipitating new potentials for seeing. The narrator likens the album to divine creation noting that it "symbolized God's fervent tirade, a fiery and splendid philippic against Franz Josef and his estate of prose."[236]

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[233] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 54-67.
[234] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 142.
[235] Ibid., 151.
[236] Ibid., 152.

The stamp album is first encountered in the possession of Joseph's friend-adversary Rudolph, although, the narrator tells his reader that it was really predestined for himself, and that Rudolph behaved more like the album's servant than its owner. Hence at the outset, this authoritative "book" is undermined by its dubious procurement and the justification of what essentially amounts to its theft. Even if the reader is enchanted by the narrator's intoxicating enthusiasm for the stamp album, even if we trust Joseph to unleash all the imaginative potentiality stored therein, its owner and interpreter is de facto compromised. The stamp album is how the narrator interprets both "the text" of that particular spring, as well as the story around Bianca, which is presented to the reader as something of an "eternal tale": "In that story time can never change anything. The story appears in the starry horizons and will do so forever, always afresh, for once derailed from the tracks of time, it has become unfathomable, never to be exhausted by repetition."[237] This reading of spring as an "eternal tale" is later shown to be grossly misguided and compromised.

The meta-artistic features here are obvious. We recognize again the tease of the "eternal tale" that is allegedly repeated in this spring's text, only to find that this crucial information is never in fact revealed. These hints towards missing elements prompt the reader to fill in the gaps, to make their own version of what's presented. The characters themselves, especially Joseph, is given over to continuously looking for hidden meanings, actively trying to read the clues and connections between what he interprets to be signs or apparent symmetries. In Joseph's (exaggerated) reading of these signs, Bianca is the illegitimate child around whom revolves a political conspiracy, which he then undertakes to expose. The whole endeavour ends in bitter disappointment when Bianca runs off with Rudolph, having chosen him instead of Joseph. Joseph decides the appropriate decision is for him to take his own life, not because his amorous expedition was disappointed, but because he had failed in his interpretation of the 'text' of spring; because he had dared attempt to pursue what he thought was a dutiful, virtuous ideal. In other words, this story asserts that imaginative interpretation always runs dangerously close to megalomania.

Joseph is at the last minute "saved" by officers who arrest him under the accusation of having "some time ago […] dreamed the standard dream of the biblical Joseph." The story thus ends by deflating the hero's aspirations and denying his "valiant" suicide. The irony of this

[237] Ibid., 163.

ending is multiplied by Joseph being found guilty of dreaming "a standard dream." Our narrator is saved but also arrested as a result of his predictable dream.[238] Notice how the metafictive self-consciousness plays out here in the ironic mirroring between the boy narrator Joseph and his heretical ambitions to overcome the dreary world of Franz Josef I: Joseph the narrator fancies himself, and predictably so, as a version of the biblical Joseph who was famously deft in dream-reading. The whole Bianca conspiracy reads like exaggerated make-believe, or like a child playing a pretend game of cowboys and robbers in order to stave off boredom. The reader never in fact senses any actual danger and might allow themselves to be enchanted by the playfulness of the storytelling even if always aware of the artificiality of the enterprise. The narrator is thus compromised, both in his own story as well as before his reader. Furthermore, the narrating author, Joseph, is also taking on the same unending, perpetually frustrated interpretive task with which he is confronting his reader: Schulz's stories always maintain a level of elusiveness – it is never quite clear what they are all about. As De Bruyn puts it, "the reader is faced with a certain formal residue, some kind of narrative distortion, which causes a continual postponement of the text's explication."[239] Thus, with the disillusioned ending of "Spring," the narrating author is essentially presenting himself under the same predicament he is conferring upon his reader: an interpretive task that never arrives at an ultimate version but remains perpetually unfinished, thereby bringing forth the relativity of any representation.

The meta-artistic elements that emerge around the stamp album also reinforce, as was already noted, Schulz's elaborate interpenetration between text and image: The stamp album is granted the kind of authority of a sacred "Booke" yet it is composed solely of images.[240] It is a book made of fragments which solicits its reader's interpretive efforts: "A stamp album is a universal book, a compendium of knowledge about everything human. Naturally only by allusion, implication, and hint. You need some perspicacity, some courage of the heart, some imagination in order to find the fiery thread that runs through the pages of the book."[241] In this way, this book inside the book can be read as a model, or a maquette, for the overall collection of Schulz's stories, each of which we noted to emerge as an elaborate tableau. Schulz's prose, if in

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[238] A scene presented at the beginning of the story "Spring" suggests a parallel between the boy narrator and the biblical Joseph. I discuss this mythic matrix between the Joseph figure in the next chapter.
[239] De Bruyn notes that this quality of Schulz's prose is shared with Irzykowski's Pałuba, even if the two works are quite different in form and content. De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 84.
[240] Schulz once again uses the Polish "Księgi", capitalized mid-sentence, when he calls the stamp album, a "Book" which is the Polish word used to denote sacred books of spiritual significance.
[241] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 167.

itself understood as a book of images, likewise solicits its reader's interpretation, imagination and perspicacity. Yet, like the colourful stamps that are stand-in fragments for whole countries, the stories in and of themselves also present fastidiously crafted images that delight even as fragments, even if they point towards a larger reality that is in effect either absent or contributed by the reader. Thus, the prose solicits its reader to actively participate to its making.

The story "The Book" presents another exegetic undertaking of an authoritative but denigrated book. Here again we encounter a book inside the book we are reading. The choice for the Polish "*xięga" (or "księga")* for the title, like that of *The Idolatrous Booke* suggests yet another *booke* of spiritual significance. This book is in fact absent, it has been lost, and it connects to the child's narrator first enchanted memories that involve his father. The story centers around the search for this "great authentic" that Joseph remembers as a primordial book he encountered at the dawn of childhood. When he is presented with the Bible as a candidate for his obsessive search, the boy evaluates it as "a clumsy falsification." Father tells him that "The Book" is an ideal that is in fact a myth, connected to one's youth. Once a person becomes older, they understand that there are in fact a multitude of significant books. Joseph dismisses Father's insight because he is convinced that he has recognized his coveted, longed-for Booke, in the threadbare remnants of an almanac: It has always been there, used by Adela to pack Father's lunchmeats. All that has remained of it are a few last pages that are in fact advertisements which soothe insecurities and appeal to mass desires: There are promises of concoctions for abundant hair growth, healing balms, finches—perhaps automatons—meant to assuage the loneliness of hardened hearts and bachelors, barrel organs which might empower veterans and the disabled towards the lucrative income of a busker.

This "Booke"—which the narrator also qualifies as "the great original" and "the Authentic"—is once again, composed largely of images. Notice how the status of this "ideal" mythical book is undermined and rendered dubious: an almanac is a publication that is intended for a particular agricultural season and inevitably expires. Not only is the book itself one of questionable authority, but also what's left of it is but the "unofficial supplement, the tradesmen's entrance full of refuse and trash."[242] This lost book can be read as the strongest parallel to the search of the ideal that, like in *Pałuba*, is perpetually denied and compromised. In Schulz's case however, it is precisely this denigrated trashy existence, that endows it with the

[242] Schulz, "The Book," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 119.

elevated status of something like a spiritually significant book, with the potency of multiple possible interpretations. When the narrator takes to reading the advertisements, this short story becomes something like a story of stories which in themselves emerge as engaging tableaus that are constructed linguistically out of the remnants of mundane life. It is worth noting that once the narrator performs one reading of these low-brow advertisements, he then points out that every time one opens this "booke" new readings are possible. He goes on to suggest a slightly different reading of the same images: he draws from the same outdated advertisements to set up a slightly different constellation between them. The reader is told that an important characteristic of "the Authentic" is that it lives and grows. The script is endowed with the strange characteristic which, by now, the narrator tells us, should be obvious to the reader: the Authentic "unfolds while being read, its boundaries open to all currents and fluctuations."[243] This quality of the 'sacred' booke, is again, a self-reflexive observation on the nature of Schulz's prose. This, we will see shortly, is also operative at the level of the text, in the metaphoric constructions that are particular to his engagement with Form. The text unfolds in the process of reading because of this inherent openness that brings the reader to participate to the making of the images presented before them. The reader becomes aware of their own role in constructing a version of the work's reality.

With both the stamp album and the tattered remnants of the almanac we have observed the meta-artistic tactic of presenting an authoritative book that is at once idealized and denigrated and operates as a stand-in for Schulz's collections of stories as a whole. Crucial for this study as well, is to observe the element of interpretation that is accentuated throughout the prose, especially the interanimation that takes place between language and image. Yet, much like what has been said of *Pałuba* and of metafiction, the text eludes all attempts at a final and ultimate representation. The reader is faced with a continuous postponement of the text's meaning and becomes instead a participant in the making of multiple potential interpretations that always remain provisory. The reader is thus brought on to take an active role in the "heretic" image-making that Schulz casts out in his laboratory of form. In other words, Schulz sets up a kind of game in which *the readers themselves become players who adopt provisional roles*. The task of interpretation is then at its very core a game: "What the reader may learn from all this is that this "game" is the only kind of authenticity that literature has to offer."[244] It is this game of

[243] Ibid., 127.
[244] De Bruyn, "Metafictional Reading of *Pałuba* and Schulz's Fiction," 117.

interpretation rather than the search for a final meaning that becomes primary, and the reader is a crucial player in the unfolding theatrics of image-making. This by no means suggests that the text is completed in the reader – the text remains slippery, the reader is swept up in their role and a final, ultimate representation remains perpetually elusive.

Further on, I hone in to examine how Schulz builds his depictions of architecture such that the reader becomes invested in co-creating, and drawing out a manifold of possible architectural images. I elaborate how Schulz's specific approach to the question of Form is invested in language as matter, as the living tissue for a 'heretical demiurgy' as he called it. This attitude towards language as a medium onto itself is for Schulz entwined to an interest in mythologizing (or mythization). Both of these aspects are what make Schulz's work stand out not only from his conspirators in the avant-garde, but from that of most other writers. Important for this project is that both of these aspects are key to what makes Schulz's prose distinctly architectonic.

Recess 1

Pedagogy and Interanimations Across Mediums: Storytelling and Subtle Subversions of the Canon

In prompting architecture and design students to bring a story or to write an imaginative text, there is also an ulterior motive that students invest the project with something that matters to them personally. Over the course of the past seven years I have seen students respond to this exercise with various degrees of engagement and vulnerability, with some producing astonishing pieces of writing. It bears noting that I always accompany such a prompt with a varied offering of short imaginatively written literary excerpts, which I have called an opportunity for students "to warm up their inside voice."[245] Asking students to engage with a literary text and/or to compose their own, is a pretext for them to inject themselves into the project. The prompt operates under the basic premise that a personal architectural knowledge predates architecture school and it is steeped in personal experience. Thus to ask students to bring something, including a story or a text is to ask them to take a leap and to bring forward something of this knowledge that is salient to them. That "something" isn't just a stand-alone "thing" but it is in fact a world, one that is enmeshed and through the (literary) artifact has the potential to operate as a depository for creative action.

In connection to this first chapter's conversation, I can remark that in asking students to bring something personal to the design project, I am asking them to at least in part negotiate

[245] This collection of short literary examples that I provide for students whenever I prompt them to write their own text, has often included Francis Ponge's descriptions of objects from *The Voice of Things*, excerpts from Bruno Schulz, an excerpt from Alain-Robbe Grillet' *Jealousy*, Ben Nicholson's description of bread tags in his *Appliance House* project, and excerpts from J.A. Baker's *The Peregrine*. My goal is to offer a variety of literary voices that, even within a short passage, are able to cast afresh everyday objects and occurrences that one otherwise takes for granted. Bibliography other than that on Schulz is as follows: Francis Ponge, *Le Parti pris des choses* (Paris, 1967); Francis Ponge, *The Power of Language: Texts and Translations* (Berkeley, 1979); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Jealousy* and *In the Labyrinth*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1965); Ben Nicholson, *Appliance House* (Chicago, Ill: Chicago Institute for Architecture and Urbanism, 1990); J.A. Baker, *The Peregrine* (New York: New York Review Books, 1967).

personal impulses in relation to the politics of social cooperation. Most have been generous and obliging to their colleagues. If controversial, none have been inflammatory or reactionary—nowhere close to the outrageousness of Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke*. Not an insignificant number have also been courageous with their personal stories and questions. While I'm drawing these insights into teaching, I remind the reader that they are fresh and only just beginning to take shape. My guiding belief here is that, if, like Schulz and Gombrowicz we are responding to a canon, the very fact that personal experience is in fact valid as a resource for architectural knowledge, then, it has the capacity to operate, at the very least, as a subtle questioning of this presumed canon. This for me is also an oblique way towards the imperative of diversity and inclusion: By injecting the conversations with something from the students, my hope is to engage their specific and diverse backgrounds and world-views. This is not merely due-diligence to contemporary concerns but has always been a tactic that aims to draw on the rich potential that these personal and specific ways of seeing and being in the world can contribute to architectural discourse.

I have myself not been overly controversial with the briefs nor have I nudged students to be incendiary in their projects. I have however asked students to reflect on the politics of public space and of social interactions by prompting them to construct artifacts that recondition public space or disrupt our assumptions and expectations. Some of the richest student projects have brought forth questions that are discomforting but potent. For instance, in a recent fabrication seminar that drew on Colorado-based stories, a student worked with the legends of the tommyknockers. These are known to be mischievous spirits who live in the entrails of mines. They would sometimes warn miners of danger and other times playfully misplace their tools. To encounter a tommyknocker would be certain death—the legend goes. Through the folklore surrounding the tommyknockers this student's project became a question about resource extraction, which was closely tied with the mining history of Colorado in relation to its landscape. For the artifact, this student crafted their version of the tommyknockers, a series of fist-sized spiky lumpy sealed vessels made of Colorado red earth whose tips were painted gold. Each looked like a disconcerting and intriguing mixture of exotic fruit, lovable monster, and potential weapon. Inside each, the student placed a "charm" or a "spell" concoction that included semi-precious stones and aromatic herbs. The student made one tommyknocker for every colleague in the course. In its offering, colleagues were confronted with the decision of whether

to keep this fastidiously crafted object or to shatter it in order to extract the charm hidden in its entrails. In short, this student's project made palpable questions about systems of value and the violence and sacrifice that are often inherent in human economies, and one could argue, in every act of architecture and city-building.

Throughout this project I re-iterate how the literary imagination is especially deft at this work of speaking to architectural and human questions that are intrinsic to the architect's task and imaginative process. In their most poignant and most difficult, these human questions echo Gomobrowicz's preoccupation with the muddled territory that underscores the emergence of culture-making forces as well as our complicities and more dangerously, our complacencies. The importance that Gombrowicz explicitly attributed to the full personhood can be equally connected to design process, even if students or architects do not explicitly look to be as subversive as Gombrowicz. In bringing personal experience to the design process, this intimate knowledge constitutes an offering of the kind of knowledge that reaches deeper into the complexities and the humanity of the design task. To recall Schulz's words, it is not through the solemn, resolved, normative, and socially palatable aspects of our personhood that we genuinely contribute to the "cultural substance." It is rather in those incongruous, ill-fitting, dissonant and unresolved aspects that stick out against the grain of inculcated values and norms that we genuinely participate to their re-making—even if these aspects of ourselves seem to us impotent, immature and ridiculous.[246] The wager here is that, at its best, asking students to engage the literary imagination is an oblique way of asking them to draw on this specific personal and intersubjective knowledge and in order to tease out opportunities towards acts of building and space-making. The goal is not to be disruptive for the sake of disruption (as it might be easily inferred by the conversation with Gombrowicz's controversial tactics). The goal is rather to cultivate a design process that sustains the emergence of imaginative possibilities that would not be obvious at first. Such possibilities emerge by questioning that which we take for granted and thus operate subversively towards a presupposed canon, even if only subtly.

[246] I am referring to earlier in first chapter where I noted that in his review of *Ferdydurke* Schulz writes that with the novel, Gombrowicz "shows that as immature, ridiculous greenhorns fighting for our expression on the plain of concreteness and dealing with our meaninglessness, we are closer to the truth than if we were solemn, sublime, mature, and completed." Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 162.

Chapter 2

Mythization and Metafiction: A Creative Act that Draws on a Layered Imaginary

> "Language is a constant creation of alternative worlds. […] The teeming plurality of languages enacts the fundamentally creative, 'counter-factual' genius and psychic functions of language itself. […] Each different tongue offers its own denial of determinism. 'The world', it says, 'can be other.' Ambiguity, polysemy, opaqueness, the violation of grammatical and logical sequences, reciprocal incomprehensions, the capacity to lie – these are not pathologies of language but the roots of its genius. Without them the individual and the species would have withered." – George Steiner[247]

An essential facet of Schulz's prose emerges in relation to his interest in mythologizing, or a mythization of reality. This mythization, I argue, brings Schulz's prose closer to architecture. Specific to Schulz's mythization is that it positions the metafictive preoccupations of the avant-garde in relation to a stratified past. What is meant by a "stratified past" might include what one could qualify as 'tradition' as well as 'history'. Yet neither 'history' nor 'tradition' are for Schulz understood in the sense of our ready-made assumptions about them—first of all perhaps because they are not 'past' but they are better understood as a layered endowment that has been built up over time but it very much has the capacity to be active in the present. As far as tradition, it is always accompanied by a creative, poetic force that responds to the present. As far as history, this is a stratified as well as heterogeneous body that includes literary artifacts, stories, myths, and legends. Schulz's attitude was one of critical engagement with history and tradition and it remained quintessentially modern. This interest in mythization, which within the context of the

[247] Steiner, *After Babel,* 246.

Polish avant-garde remains distinctly Schulzean, is what I observe as a direct resonance to architectural praxis. I draw this correlation to architecture via Paul Ricoeur, and first, by way of architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton:

> The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great cultures, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind. […] In order to get on the road toward modernization, it is necessary to jettison the old cultural past which has been the *raison d'être* of a nation? Whence the paradox: on the one hand, it has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revindication before the colonialist's personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical, and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past. […] It is a fact: every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilization. There is the paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization.[248]

This discernment from Paul Ricoeur—about the tension between a progressive albeit homogenizing modernity and the desire to maintain a connection to the roots or the formative characteristics of a particular culture—was chosen by Frampton to open his essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism." First published in the early 1980s, Frampton's essay is considered seminal in the history of architectural theory. During its time, Frampton's goal was to propose an alternative to both modern and postmodern architecture. Modern architecture had gained a reputation for seeking an exacerbation from tradition and it was often observed that in the process, it became dismissive of place and its distinctive qualities. Frampton explicitly bemoans the homogenizing effects that "the freestanding high-rise and the serpentine freeway" have had on the urban fabric—a universalism that he saw as stifling of local sensibilities.[249] Postmodern architecture he saw as a schizoid approach that uncritically obliged high-tech production upon which it would superimpose the thin façade of historicist references, without considering the expressiveness of the building's function and inhabitation. Frampton advocated instead for a

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[248] This comes from Paul Ricoeur's *History and Truth* first published in 1955. It is here quoted as the epigraph to Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), 16.
[249] Ibid., 17.

"critical regionalism," or an approach to architecture was able to perform a "double mediation": to be both critical and astute in how it negotiates the inevitable universalizing force of globalization, and to engage a building's locale without falling prey to a sentimental vernacular.

Ricoeur's paradoxical predicament is articulated in relation to the homogenizing force of modernity which was understood to define itself through an emancipation from history and tradition, what Octavio Paz has described as "a tradition against itself."[250] For architecture, this dilemma was heavily imbricated with questions about technology, in particular building technologies that responded to the desire for a democratization of building through the use of new materials (such as steel, glass) and pre-fabrication processes. Because these new materials and building processes were devoid of cultural memory, they offered a historical clean slate, that, on one hand did respond to the desire for democratization, and on the other hand were seen as a threat to the expression of regional cultures.

In connecting what he calls "the creative nucleus…on the basis of which we interpret life" with "the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind," Ricoeur suggests a correlation between a mythic element and creative action. Yet generally speaking, when it comes to the question of myth, the term is as loaded as it is open-ended, making questionable its viability as a filter through which to approach a study of either architecture or literature. With respect to truth-claims, 'myth' can equally denote essential emotional truths and dubious, politically problematic un-truths. Schulz's term, 'mythologizing', especially for us today, comes wrapped in a healthy dose of suspicion. In commonly understood terms, "mythologizing" is instinctively presumed to be synonymous to "making myth" or "to render mythical." The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the most prevalent use of the verb 'to mythologize' as: "to convert into myth or mythology; to make mythical or the subject of a myth. Also (in extended use): to create or promote an exaggerated or idealized popular image of."[251] Thus to speak of 'myth' and 'mythologizing' doesn't come without a level of unease. More often than not we would rather leave the proverbial sleeping dogs lie.

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[250] Octavio Paz, *Children of the Mire*, trans. Rachel Phillips (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974).
[251] The most prevalent use of the verb 'to mythologize' is defined by the OED as: "to convert into myth or mythology; to make mythical or the subject of a myth. Also (in extended use): to create or promote an exaggerated or idealized popular image of." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythologize", (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124699#eid35224076)

2.1 Mythization, Form, Engagement with a Stratified Language

As a way into this delicate conversation, I start by looking at an essay by Gianni Vattimo which was written in 1985 and is thus contemporaneous with Frampton's essay.[252] Vattimo's incisive albeit succinct essay presents a critical appraisal of the biases that condition the understanding of myth, noting especially the theoretical confusion surrounding it. Important to note is that the essay is articulated in relation to questions about progress and tradition, history and technology, thus echoing the same concerns expressed about architecture in Frampton's notion of a 'critical regionalism'. Vattimo's overview of the apprehensions concerning myth is also contemporaneous with one of the most active periods of scholarship on Schulz's work, thus it is here telling of the biases that inflected studies on Schulz and his "mythologizing."[253] In his essay, Vattimo identifies three attitudes he considers to be pervasive in his time and which he believes to influence a (postmodern) understanding of myth: *archaism*, *cultural relativism*, and *limited rationality*.

Archaism, Vattimo writes, is characterized by a distrust in technological culture, which in its tendency towards objectification and capitalist exploitation "violates and destroys man's authentic relationship with both himself and nature."[254] He explains that According to this *archaist* attitude, myth is not only *not* "overcome" by progress, but constitutes a form of knowledge that is deemed more authentic. Vattimo equates *archaism* to a desire to recuperate myth and return to a mythic state. He qualifies this attitude as a utopian, politically dangerous, and altogether unacceptable attempt to restore traditional values, an attempt that according to Vattimo, is founded on a rejection of modernity. The principal issue then is that *archaism* aspires to a myth of origins, one that is supposed to *reverse* the Western myth of progress, to overthrow its imperialistic and colonialist tendencies, and to restore an "authentic" relationship between man and nature.

The second common attitude towards myth, *cultural relativism,* differs from *archaism* in that it does not see mythic knowledge as opposed, or superior to modern scientific knowledge. In fact, both forms of knowledge can be seen as myths that guide our conduct and our systems of

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[252] Gianni Vattimo and Jon R. Snyder, "Myth and the Fate of Secularization," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*. 9 (1985): 29-35.
[253] Critical reviews of Schulz's work were virtually non-existent until well after the Second World War and only really flourished around the 1990s. De Bruyn and van Heuckelom, "Introduction: Seven Decades of Schulzology," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz,* 9-25.
[254] Vattimo, "Myth and the Fate of Secularization," 30.

belief. Thus, mythic and positivistic knowledge are complementary rather than anachronistic, and each can be described as perpetuating their own "myths" or worldviews. Vattimo writes that in this case, "myth" refers to "a nondemonstrable and immediately lived knowledge,"[255] Here he points to Roland Barthes' study, which has been described as a de-masking of the myths that underlie mass culture.[256] In this sense, myth has little to do with mythic stories and is correlated with mass-media persuasion, of which one must learn to be skeptical.

From the perspective of what he calls *limited rationality*—the third attitude towards myth—Vattimo describes that mythic knowledge is understood as "narrative": It distinguishes itself from positivistic knowledge through its own positive element, namely *narrative structure*. According to Vattimo, examples of *limited rationality* are found in psychoanalysis, especially Jung's interest in archetypal myths including those of cultures who have never come in contact with Western civilization. They are also found in contemporary historiography which recognizes "the irreducible plurality of history itself,"[257] and echoing Barthes again, in an analysis of the contents of mass media. Vattimo notes that theories of *limited rationality* all have in common an idea that can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle: "that certain fields of experience cannot be understood through the use of demonstrative reason or the scientific method, but require instead a kind of knowledge that can only be described as "mythic."" [258] According to Vattimo, the issue with *limited rationality* is that it "attempts to skirt the problem of its own historical position," [259] and that it "does not have an explicit theory about the possibility of distinguishing fields reserved for mythic knowledge from fields reserved for scientific rationality." [260] What Vattimo describes as "mythic knowledge" is an awkward term for forms of knowledge that are nondemonstrable and lie outside of positivism.

Vattimo's essay has brought forward a number of tensions and dialectics that have been equally important to the discipline of architecture especially since modernity: the ambivalent relationship to technology and progress; questions of tradition as well as history; the necessity of addressing certain fields of experience other than those illuminated by positivistic knowledge. The fact that for Vattimo these other forms of knowledge "can only be described as mythic"

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[255] Ibid., 31.
[256] Barthes reflects on the myths he encounters in his everyday 1950s French life. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), originally published in 1957.
[257] Vattimo, "Myth and the Fate of Secularization," 32.
[258] Ibid.
[259] Ibid., 33.
[260] Ibid., 34.

accentuates how our vocabulary is lacking in properly naming these forms of knowledge—which also obfuscates this notion of the mythic. It is part of this project to ameliorate this inadequacy, by emphasizing and elaborating on such forms of knowledge that overflow explication and deductive logic. At the forefront of architectural concerns today is also the urgency to maintain a plurality of historical voices and the overthrow of ingrained imperialistic and colonialist tendencies. In other words, I'm here working towards showing how Schulz's mythologizing speaks to a number of dialectics that also play out in architecture, especially in relation to questions of design process and its participation to forms of creative resistance and community resilience.

Schulz's interest in 'mythization' plays off the self-conscious meta-artistic strain of the avant-garde and is what makes his approach to Form distinct. In what follows I show that, contrary to a large number of studies, this interest in mythization does not consist of a nostalgic return to myth or to the past, but is a critical, creative attitude that draws on language as a richly sedimented imaginary. If I use 'mythologizing' and 'mythization' interchangeably it is because Schulz did as well and as a pair they capture Schulz's particular investment in the relationship to myth. 'Mythologizing' is the more familiar term that echoes the elemental quasi-primordial aspect of myth. 'Mythization' is the English equivalent of a word that doesn't otherwise exist and is Schulz's inventive variation of the term.[261] Further on I elaborate how between the two an important dynamic is at play which both draws from a stratified imaginary and is quintessentially creative and future-propelling. I ultimately argue that what Schulz understands as a 'mythization' carries important parallels to the creative process that underlies architectural design.

2.2 A Matrix of Myth. Mythization and Literary Kinship in Schulz's Prose

Schulz's investment in myth, the mythic, and mythization refracts a wider preoccupation of the early twentieth century. During this time, scholarly interest in myth increased significantly with the publication Ernst Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* (*Das Mythische Denken*), which still remains amongst the most extensive studies of the mythic imagination. It was published in 1925 and was

[261] This was pointed out by Krystyna L. Illakowicz, "Renegotiating the Provincial," 1070. Further on, I revisit in more depth this dual meaning of 'mythologizing' and 'mythization'. Throughout this project, I use both English variations of the term interchangeably. I do so in order to highlight the effervescent or protean quality that can be gleaned from Schulz's understanding of the term, and to maintain that the notion of 'mythologizing' is much more charged than the word tends to convey in English.

part of a three-volume work entitled *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (*Die Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen)*.[262] This interest in myth was also manifested in literature and the arts. A canonical example is James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), a modern work that draws on the Homeric epic. It can be observed as well in many of the remarkable sculptures of Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), which often elaborated on themes from classical mythology. Similar mythic elements can be found in the poetry of Reiner Maria Rilke (1875-1926), a good friend of Rodin's and one of Schulz's most significant literary muses.[263] The connection to a mythic ground is also found in Thomas Mann's epic tetralogy *Joseph and his Brothers*—a contemporary rendition of the Jacob-Joseph Biblical tales—a book that was also one of Schulz's primary influences and would have propelled his preoccupation with myth.[264] Likewise, Schulz's short stories often invoke or allude to classical mythology, as well as the Jewish tradition and biblical tales. Most scholars, when treating of Schulz's "mythologizing," tend to focus on these fragments and allusions.[265]

An example is found in the story "August" in which Schulz presents us with a habitual walk across market square in the golden sharp light of a late Saturday afternoon. Passersby are described as wearing "that grimace of heat—as if the sun had forced his worshippers to wear identical masks of gold [smiling] at each other's pagan faces—the barbaric smiles of Bacchus."[266] Here we notice Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, is called upon to contribute to an evocative depiction of a typical afternoon saturated with glare.

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[262] It has not been established with certainty whether Schulz would have read Cassirer, but the work was well known and Schulz would have been able to read it in the original German. A number of scholars have noted that strong similarities between Cassirer's philosophy and Schulz's writing are much too discernable. For instance, Diana Kuprel's study of Schulz's mythologizing draws thoughtful parallels to Cassirer's "mythical consciousness." Diana Kuprel, "Errant Events on the Branch Tracks of Time: Bruno Schulz and Mythical Consciousness," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 40, No.1 (Spring 1996): 100-117. doi: 10.2307/308499. Czeslaw Prokopczyk also speculates that given the thematic and structural parallels between them, Schulz may have been thoroughly acquainted with Cassirer's philosophy. Czeslaw Prokopczyk, "The Mythical and the Ordinary in Bruno Schulz," in *New Documents and Interpretations,* 175-209.

[263] Schulz expresses his admiration for Rilke in several of his letters. As a point of highest praise he sometimes points out resonances between his interlocutor's and colleague's work to Rilke. In a letter to Rudolf Ottenbreit, Schulz conveys a feeling of obligation to continue Rilke's legacy: "there is so much to discuss on this subject [of Rilke] alone. […] I don't mean just Rilke, but also the matters that, so to speak, we have in common, matters between him and us, everything that he failed to write and we have to add." (Schulz, "Letters to Friends and Colleagues, 1933-1940," in *New Documents and Interpretations*," 26.)

[264] Schulz's admiration for Mann is well known. In an "Essay to S. I. Witkiewicz," Schulz writes: "I have always felt that the roots of the individual spirit, traced far enough down, would be lost in some matrix of myth. This is the ultimate depth; it is impossible to reach farther down. I later found an imposing artistic realization of this idea in Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*, where it is carried out on a monumental scale." Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 114.

[265] There is a further affinity between Schulz and surrealism, specifically with Louis Aragon who opened his *Paris Peasant* with a "Preface to a Modern Mythology." According to Brian Banks (*Muse & Messiah*, 41-3) there was minimal contact between Schulz and the surrealists. While it is possible to trace out further sensibilities between them, I resist doing so here. The principal difference is that unlike the surrealists' automatic writing, Schulz's prose was fastidiously crafted.

[266] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 4.

Another instance of a heavy mythic overlay can be found in the description of the father's shop in the story "The Night of the Great Season." This story describes a city overtaken by a feverish mob, intoxicated with the "ceremonial rites of autumn shopping."[267] This mob finally floods the father's cloth shop, which Schulz describes as a biblical landscape. The father is described as an angry prophet, at times likened to Moses, who is making vain attempts to temper the gregarious and sinful crowd that have invaded Father's carefully assembled dominion of colourful cloth. Schulz's imagery overlaps allusions to the land of Canaan, Moses' parting of the Red Sea, with his descent from Mount Sinai where he finds the Israelites worshiping an idol and transgressing the first two commandments that Yaweh had just entrusted to Moses:

> The bales overturned, unfolding in the air like enormous flags, the shelves exploded with bursts of draperies, with waterfalls of fabrics as if touched by the wand of Moses. […] The colourful contents of the shelves spread and multiplied, covering all the counters and tables. 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 lines of continents loomed up from 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. He strode about, his hands spread out prophetically to touch the clouds, and shaped the land with strokes of inspiration.
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> And down below, at the bottom of that Sinai which rose from my father's anger, stood the gesticulating crowd, cursing, worshipping Baal, and bargaining.[268]

Notice first, that in both of these examples, along with mythic allusions, an element of theatricality—of surfaces, masks, and temporary roles—is at play.[269] This interest in the fleeting is in fact an intrinsic aspect of Schulz's "mythization." We also note that both passages present mundane occurrences as if they would be endowed with sacral quality. This blending of the sacred and the profane can be read both as mining the quotidian for a spiritual dimension, as well as a transgressive denigration of the sacred. In the passage above, a night of commerce in the father's cloth shop is described as a re-interpretation of Moses' journey towards the promised land. Even the title of the story—"The Night of the Great Season"—carries several connotations to Talmudic and Christian rituals. David Goldfarb notes that the Polish could also be translated

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[267] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 86.
[268] Ibid., 89.
[269] I pick up on this in a subsequent chapter in which I discuss architectural representation.

as "*A* Night of *a* Great Season," denoting an unspecified night in a recurring season. He speculates that it could combine the Catholic Holy Week—which in Polish it literally translates to "Great Week"—with the Jewish High Holidays, the period, or "season" between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.[270] The story seems to also carry allusions to the extra month that occurs every three years in the Hebrew lunar calendar, and which is known to be endowed with propitious and magical properties. In other words, the events or seasons that occur in Schulz's mythic calendar, liberally and creatively borrow from multiple mythologies, traditions, and rituals. However, Schulz's use of allusions and fragments are not restricted to mythology or spiritual customs but can also be related to figures of speech, events tied to seasons, and secular practices more generally.

Alongside biblical primary names or those from classical mythology, Schulz also evokes historical characters, scientific events, literary figures, and other works of literature. Amongst them are "Poe's artificial Edens,"[271] seventeenth century tragicomedy *Le Cid* (which in turn alludes to an even older legend), silent film actress Asta Nielsen, Edison, an unfortunate Serbian Queen Draga, at least two of the Napoleons, the Infanta, the paintings of the Neapolitan school, Don Quixote, and so on. Many of these appearances and apparitions in Schulz's prose are like the tips of icebergs and could potentially lead both reader and scholar to construct multi-layered matrices between these fragments of cultural memory. For instance, the figure of the Infanta, typically known as the daughter of Spanish or Portugese monarchs, also appears in Schulz's stories, and even some of his graphic work, through the filter of Oscar Wilde's fairytale "The Birthday of the Infanta," which was published in 1891. The name itself is mentioned in the story "Spring"[272] in which the narrator suspects that Bianca, his teenage love interest, is the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico, also Franz Josef I's younger brother. In the story "Cinnamon Shops"[273] the narrator describes an impudent nightly visit into the headmaster's wing and imagines having to confront the "sibylline gaze" of the headmaster's daughter. This description is reminiscent of the moment when the dwarf, the protagonist of Wilde's story, meets the Infanta. The most obvious correspondence in Schulz's graphic work is the print in *The Idolatrous Booke* entitled "The Infanta and Her Dwarves." We also noted earlier that the print

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[270] David A. Goldfarb, "A Living Schulz: "Noc Wielkiego Sezonu" ("The Night of the Great Season")," *Prooftexts* 14. no. 1 (January, 1994): 25-47, http://www.jstor.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/stable/20689381, 34.
[271] Schulz, "Spring," in *Street of Crocodiles,* 172.
[272] Ibid., 198.
[273] Schulz, "Cinnamon Shops," in *The Street of Crocodiles,* 59-60.

"The Idolatrous Booke II" similarly refracts references to the mythology of Venus, paintings of the goddess from the artistic cannon, and the literary Venus of Sacher-Masoch's novel. Perhaps the most layered example is the figure of Joseph, which acts as a nodal point in Schulz's personal cosmogony. Further on I elaborate on how his presence refracts several Josephs from literature, myth, as well as Schulz's personal life, gathering multiple significations, oftentimes contradictory. The main point is exactly that Schulz's mythic references are not one-directional but they multiply and proliferate, often refracting other works of literature in the process. Another significant example of this can be found in the better-known short story "Sanatorium Under the Sign of Hourglass." This story is often read as an interpretation of the mythic journey to Hades or the underworld, but much fewer scholars note the resonances to Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*.

Despite all this, the general tendency in scholarship that covers Schulz's "mythologizing" is to focus on the Biblical, Talmudic, and mythic fragments, and to trace out or even reconstruct the constellation of their provenance.[274] Most studies tend to treat these fragments as being constitutive of Schulz's mythologizing. A large majority or Schulz scholars also tend to approach the work with the assumption that "mythologizing" is conditioned by a desire to return to the past.[275] I see this as a hasty assumption and an easy one to make, especially given that "myth" and "mythologizing" are terms that are both loaded and vaguely defined. My reading is that Schulz's mythologizing operates on several multi-nuanced layers and overtones that run a deeper course than the coating of mythic imagery.[276] I insist that the presence of such mythic fragments is only one facet of his interest in mythologizing, and that in fact mythologizing has more to do with language, literature, and storytelling and the elemental role that these play for the human imagination.

Schulz himself said little with regard to how mythologizing or mythization unfolds in his prose. If we consider his interest in mythologizing to be an essential aspect of his engagement with Form, we know that it is tied in with personal childhood memories. He described *Cinnamon*

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[274] Amongst those who reinforce this position are Russell E. Brown's *Myths and Relatives: Seven Essays on Bruno Schulz* (München: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1991), one of the lengthier discussions of Schulz's work, albeit just a collection of seven essays.

[275] That Schulz's mythologizing is directed towards the past is essentially taken for granted in most studies and it is an assumption that nuances even the most astute of studies on Schulz's work, including those of Czeslaw Prokopczyk and Krystyna Illakowicz whose work is discussed in this chapter. Prokopczyk, "Foreword to Schulz's Essays," in *New Documents and Interpretations,* 37-42.

[276] Diana Kuprel is one of the few scholars who corroborate the argument that the mythic consciousness in Schulz's fiction goes beyond the empirical artifacts that call upon mythic elements or what Russell E. Brown has identified with "myth complexes". (Kuprel, "Errant Events on the Branch Tracks of Time" has aslready been cited here.)

Shops—his first collection of short stories—as an "autobiography, or rather a spiritual genealogy" that follows the spiritual family tree down to those depths where it merges with mythology [where] the roots of the individual spirit, traced far enough down, would be lost in some matrix of myth."[277] Here he draws a parallel to Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers* in which he sees the same impulse realized "on a monumental scale," as he has put it:

> Mann shows that beneath all human events, when the chaff of time and individual variation is blown away, certain primeval patterns, "stories," are found, by which these events form and reform in great repeating pulses. For Mann, these are the Biblical tales, the timeless myths of Babylon and Egypt. On my more modest scale I have attempted to uncover my own private mythology, my own "stories," my own mythic family tree. Just as the ancients traced their ancestry from mythical unions with the gods, so I understood to establish for myself some mythical generation of forebears, a fictitious family from which I trace my true descent. In a way these "stories" are real, represent my way of living, my personal fate.[278]

Another description of his *Cinnamon Shops*, which Schulz had sent to a potential German publisher, offers a variation on how the prose "recreates" his family history "not from their actual elements, events, characters, or experiences, but by seeking their mythic content, the primal meaning of that history."[279] Here Schulz expresses his conviction that in order to "plumb the deepest level of biography" the poet must look to "a spiritual dimension, not in the category of facts but in their transcendent meaning."[280] He makes it clear that he is not concerned with the biographical accuracy of personal history, but is rather intent on distilling an elemental stratum of a "private mythology" that can be traced to the domain of childhood experience:

> This book, however, is not a repository of a mythology culturally grounded in *res gestae*,[281] bearing the stamp of history. The elements of the mythological idiom operating here rise out of that misty region of early childhood fantasies, forebodings, anticipations, terrors which is the true spawning ground of mythical thinking.[282]

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[277] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 114.
[278] Ibid.
[279] Ibid., 153.
[280] Ibid.
[281] *res gestae*: 1. An account of things done or of a person's achievements or career; things done or achieved themselves; events in the past. Chiefly *literary*. 2. *Law*. The facts of a case; *esp*. spoken words admitted as evidence on the grounds that they relate to an action which is itself admissible. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "res gestae." http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/244685?redirectedFrom=res+gestae#eid
[282] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 154.

In other words, it is not the correctness of historical facts that interest Schulz but rather the constellation of that which persists in the poet's psyche by virtue of its saliency and pregnance. Here we note a resonance between Schulz's intentions and Blumenberg's study of the mythic imagination. Blumenberg explains that mythical stories are not grounded temporally. This further means that they tend to repeat, that they can be called upon over and over again. This detachment from temporal identities is tied in with the fact that myths and stories compensate in the form of pregnance. This means that they have persisted because they have been retold many times over by virtue of their significance. Blumenberg writes that "the reason a story could become so old was simply that it enjoyed the special protection of memory as a result of the truth that it contained. […] Thus 'mneme' [memory] becomes the unerring organ for determining if not what is true, at least what is significant."[283] This is why, Blumenberg explains, that myths cannot be deliberately created. Rather, they are the result of an emergent process of the collective imagination. They persist because they are needed and called upon again and again, because they speak to elemental human concerns. The way that human agency takes part in this process is important here: the persistence and re-emergence of certain (mythic) stories is not a matter of human will but rather of a psychic or emotional exigency.

When describing his book to a potential publisher Schulz emphasizes that his prose seeks to reach a mythic content or a "transcendent meaning." It is important to remember however that his prose always remains self-questioningly metafictive. Schulz is fully aware that his poetic enterprise is under the gravitational orbit of a non-existent ultimate ideal. In a statement that tellingly intimates his creative practice, Schulz reflects on certain images that one acquires in childhood which for him "function like those threads in the solution around which the significance of the world crystallizes."[284] "It seems to me that the rest of one's life is spent interpreting these insights, breaking them down to the last fragment of meaning we can master, testing them against the broadest intellectual spectrum we can manage," Schulz writes. The artist's creative efforts amount to "an unending exegesis, a commentary on that one couplet of poetry assigned to them."[285] The point for him is not to resolve the mystery of these preoccupations:

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[283] Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 149.
[284] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 110.
[285] Ibid., 111.

> Art, for that matter, does not resolve that secret completely. The secret stays in a tangle. The knot the soul got itself tied up in is not a false one that comes undone when you pull the ends. On the contrary, it draws tighter. We handle it, trace the path of the separate threads, look for the end of the string, and out of these manipulations comes art.[286]

The poet and the artist's work is thus not an end onto itself but rather the *residue* and the *trace* of these manipulations. What propels the work is this absorbed engagement, the earnest and charged playing with questions that are never to be completely solved. The reason why these questions are not subject to explanation is because they participate to life itself as it unfolds, bringing into presence that which lies outside the full grasp of human knowability: "In a work of art the umbilical cord linking it with the totality of our concerns has not yet been 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."[287] Art operates "at a premoral depth" Schulz tells us. "As a spontaneous utterance of life, a work of art poses tasks for ethics, not the reverse. If art were merely to confirm what had already been established elsewhere it would be superfluous. The role of art is to be a probe sunk into the nameless."[288] We see here a direct resonance with Gombrowicz's insatiable obsession that art ought to participate with a visceral, uncombed life-force. It bears noting that these observations about the operative value of art occur in the same essay for S. I. Witkiewicz that also articulates Schulz's desire to construct a "spiritual genealogy" that "follows the spiritual family tree down to those depths where it merges into mythology."[289] Thus we understand that Schulz's mythologizing is the farthest removed from a *return* to a nostalgic or naïve mythic existence. What preoccupies Schulz in fact is to sink into the "nameless," to swim in and drink from the dark fluid that flows in the blood vessels of night, of the unknown, to become "*lost* in some matrix of myth," and "to be *lost* in the mutterings of mythological delirium." Here to be 'lost' suggests both a dissipation into this fathomless realm of myth, as well as a deliberate desire to engage the murky territory of unknowability and not knowing, for its generative potential. I return to this in subsequent chapters where I draw the connection between knowing and not knowing in the process of design. For the moment, I turn to observe how mythization presents itself in the figure of Josef, which operates as a nodal point in

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[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid., 112.
[288] Ibid., 113.
[289] Ibid., 114.

Schulz's "matrix of myth." I notice how this figure intertwines with myth, literature, history, and Schulz's intimate biography.

2.3 A Matrix of Myth and Metafiction: The Figure of Joseph

In Schulz's stories the figure of Joseph ramifies into a constellation of several other Josephs whose presence in the short stories as well as in Schulz's biography stratify in various layers of resonance, dissonance, accord, or multiplicity. The boy narrator is named Joseph in a number of short stories and remains unnamed in the others. Both of Schulz's collections of short stories center around his father, who was named Jacob both in reality and in the stories. Colluding his father's name with the well-known tale in the Torah and the Old Testament, Schulz's first-person narrator becomes Joseph, son of Jacob. The biblical Joseph is best known for his perspicacity to decode dreams, most famously having decoded the Pharaoh's dreams, leading to strategies that ensured Egypt's prosperity during seven difficult years of famine.[290] Not only does the Joseph-son-of-Jacob trope refract the biblical story, but it also echoes Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*, a tetralogy of epic proportions that elaborated the same tale, which Schulz quoted as being seminal to his own work.[291] It is in fact more likely that it was Mann's work that compelled Schulz to play into his narrator's role as "the son of Jacob."

Let us return to the story "Spring" which, as our narrator, a teenage Joseph tells us, opens like every other spring, with an atmosphere pregnant with horoscopes and an impulse to become entangled in this feeling of promise and misleading divinations. Yet this spring was somehow more magnificent than the others, and this story, the narrator confesses, hopes to live up to this spring's heroic inspiration. During the "wild and spacious nights that preceded the spring,"[292] Jacob would habitually take Joseph out to supper in a garden restaurant, tucked away in a far corner of market square. It was in such an evening— in which the stars were especially splendid for a moment (only to return to their eternal indifference), and the moon was glowing

[290] The biblical tale describes that the Pharaoh had a dream about seven fat cows that were devoured by seven lean cows, paired with another dream about seven plump ears of grain, devoured by seven meager and thin ears of grain. Joseph correctly interpreted as foretelling seven prosperous years followed by seven meager ones, and advised the Pharaoh to build infrastructure to preserve and store the grain harvested during the plentiful years, in anticipation for the lean ones.
[291] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 114.
[292] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 142.

benevolently—that the most explicit parallel to the biblical Joseph is invoked. After supper, Joseph, Jacob, and the town photographer decided to go for a walk:

> We walked thus under the waxing moon. My father and the photographer half-carried me between them, for I was stumbling with tiredness and hardly able to walk. Our steps crunched in the moist sand. It had been a long time since I had slept while walking, and under my eyelids I now saw the whole phosphorescence of the sky, full of luminous signs, of signals and starry phenomena. At last we reached an open field. My father laid me down on a coat spread on the ground. With closed eyes I saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars aligned in the sky and parading before me. "Bravo, Joseph!" my father exclaimed and clapped his hands in praise. I committed an unconscious plagiarism of another Joseph and the circumstances were not the same, but no one held it against me. My father, Jacob, shook his head and smacked his lips, and the photographer stood his tripod on the sand, pulled out his camera like a concertina, and hid himself entirely in the folds of its black cloth: he was photographing the strange phenomenon, a shining horoscope in the sky, while I, my head swimming in brightness, lay blinded on the ground and limply held up my dream to exposure.[293]

In the biblical tale, Joseph is Jacob's twelfth son, although he is favoured by his father because he is the long-awaited son of Jacob's beloved Rachel, for whom Jacob had patiently endured seven years of waiting to finally join in marriage, after he had been forced by her father to first betroth Rachel's elder sister Leah. The eleven stars that appear in Joseph's vision recall the eleven brothers who were Leah's sons, and the coat that is spread on the ground echo the richly woven "coat of many colours" that in the biblical tale, Jacob is known to have gifted Joseph.

The heavy presence of the moon at the beginning of "Spring" especially echoes Mann's rendition of the tale. In the "Prelude" to the work Mann tells us that the moon is the story-teller's star.[294] In the opening of the tetralogy Mann's narrator describes Joseph performing rituals to the moon, yet his reverence is closer to a seductive courtship: "It was true that he had found it sweet and of good omen to display his young body to her, with whom he felt himself connected through his horoscope and by all sorts of intuitions and imaginings; convinced that she must take pleasure in it, and of set purpose to charm her—or the powers above in general—and prejudice them in his favour."[295] Mann's Joseph is charming, beautiful, and self-assured—all attributes diametrically opposed to those that Schulz possessed, and which also extended to his first-person

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[293] Ibid., 146-7.
[294] Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 32.
[295] Ibid., 48.

boy narrator. As such we note a contrasting pair of Josephs that is embedded within Schulz's "spiritual genealogy."

In a move that is often encountered in his prose, Schulz's rendition also diminishes the atmosphere of cosmic resonance that he seems to so earnestly construct. He plays on self-deprecating irony when his narrator accuses himself of having "committed an unconscious plagiarism." Furthermore, it is not clear if Jacob is congratulating Joseph for supposedly dream-reading that night's phenomenal sky or if he is sarcastically scolding his son for his drowsiness and for requiring to be carried between his two companions. Schulz's Joseph believes himself to be a dream-reader and yet his steadfastness is undermined by the fact that sleep in fact overcomes him, and he can barely hold himself upright.

The story "Spring" presents us with an additional Joseph in Schulz's spiritual matrix. Franz Josef I, the Austro-Hungarian monarch, is one of the few characters in Schulz's fiction that matches a figure from recognizable history that also coincided with the time period of his stories. This is an exception in Schulz's stories, which otherwise insistently dilute identifiers of the factual histories in which they occur. As we noted in our metafictive reading of the stamp album, Franz Josef is presented as the antithesis of the imaginative spirit and stands to squander the boy narrator's (Joseph's) ambitions. A common interpretation among Schulz scholars is to read Franz Josef as another facet of the Father figure. Russell E. Brown replaces Schulz's first name with that of his narrator's when he notes that "[i]n Joseph's mind [Jacob and Franz Josef] ruled together over the paradise of his childhood."[296] Indeed, Franz Josef died at the age of 86 in 1916, only a year after Schulz's father. In other words, both of these figures, so present during Schulz's childhood, perished during First World War along with "the house on market square." If the Father is the primary protagonist of Schulz's stories, Franz Josef does emerge as another father figure—both are often referred to in the stories as a world-creating Demiurge:

> Many things seem to point to the fact that Franz Josef was in reality a powerful but sad Demiurge. His narrow eyes, dull like buttons embedded in triangular deltas of wrinkles, were not human eyes. His face, with its milky white sideburns brushed back like those of Japanese demons, was the face of an old mopish fox. Seen from a distance, [that face] owing to a certain combination of wrinkles, seemed to smile. From nearby that smile unmasked itself as a grimace of bitterness and prosaic matter-of-factness, unrelieved by the spark of

[296] My interpretation that Franz Josef is part of a matrix of myth differs than most scholars including Brown, who argues that the exception to a-historicity has to do with nostalgia. Brown, "Politics and Society in Bruno Schulz," in *Myths and Relatives,* 123.

> any idea. […] His element was a world held […] by the pragmatism of boredom. The atmosphere of chanceries and police stations was the air he breathed. […] Franz Josef 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. [297]

Schulz's description draws from the monarch's actual physiognomy to present Franz Josef as the embodiment of dull and dreary bureaucracy. He asserts the same force of the prosaic and the procedural as the maidservant Adela. Franz Josef is presented in stark contrast to the visionary ambitions of Jacob who is often described as an inspired "heresiac." Schulz's narrator tells us that Jacob's imaginative spirit fought for its cause against the force of indifference perpetuated by those around him, including his own family. The narrator notes that it was precisely this quasi-magical power that conferred Jacob his own kind of sovereignty despite the fact that it was taken for granted:

> Only now do I understand the lonely hero who alone had waged war against the fathomless, elemental boredom that strangled the city. Without any support, without recognition on our part, that strangest of men was defending the lost cause of poetry. He was like a magic mill, into the hoppers of which the bran of empty hours was poured, to reemerge flowering in all the colors and scents of oriental spices. But, used to the splendid showmanship of that metaphysical conjurer, we were inclined to underrate the value of his sovereign magic, which saved us from the lethargy of empty days and nights.[298]

Even though Franz Josef connects to the historical figure, Schulz blurs the facts of history, tending towards a fairy-tale version of the monarch. In his creative interpretation of the stamp album the narrator of "Spring" surmises that Bianca, the subject of his enthralled adoration, is the illegitimate offspring Archduke Maximilian, the victim of a political conspiracy. In actual history, Maximilian was Franz Josef's younger brother who eventually became Emperor Maximilian I of Mexico. While the emperor Franz Josef would have reigned during Schulz's childhood, Maximilian was executed in 1867, twenty-five years before Schulz was born. Schulz's version of this (hi)story supposes that Franz Josef sabotaged his younger brother, the more imaginative and charismatic Archduke Maximilian:

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[297] Schulz, "Spring," in *Street of Crocodiles*, 173-4.
[298] Schulz, "Tailors' Dummies," in *Street of Crocodiles,* 25.

> Who hasn't a brother under one form or another who follows him like a shadow, an antithesis, the partner in an eternal dialogue? According to one version, he was only a cousin; according to another he had never been born. […] Perhaps he had only invented him anyway, substituted someone else for him, in order to play out the symbolic drama, to repeat once more, for the thousandth time, ceremoniously and ritually that prelegal and fatal act that, in spite of the thousand repetitions, occurs again and again. The conditionally born, unfortunate antagonist, professionally wronged, as it were, because of his role, bore the name of Archduke Maximilian. The very sound of that name, mentioned in a whisper, renews our blood, makes it redder and brighter, makes it pulsate quickly in the clear colors of enthusiasm, of postal sealing wax, and of the red pencil in which happy messages are printed. […] The Demiurge himself loved him secretly while he plotted his downfall.[299]

Again, we see an antithetical mirroring of Franz Josef, in the gleeful excitement projected by the figure of Maximilian. It is interesting that Schulz casts Maximilian's very existence into doubt: He is a figure who may have not even existed, who may have simply been a necessary invention in order to fulfill a prerequisite recurrence of mythic fratricide. In other words, Schulz's "history" reaches outside the linearity of actual history in order to prioritize the repetition of acts that is characteristic of a mythic consciousness. Maximilian's death is described not a singular event, but as a re-enactment of the symbolic drama of fratricide that occurs again and again in a mythic view of the world.

Allusions to stories that repeat over and again, are to be found throughout the fiction. As was noted earlier, at the beginning of "Spring" the narrator prefaces the story by making a point that what is about to happen is a variation of an eternal tale, a story that has been "derailed from the tracks of time" and is therefore "never to be exhausted by repetition."[300] This mythic inclination, understood through Blumenberg's study, in this particular instance nudges as well towards Schulz's "private mythology." When Schulz starts describing this eternal tale that has become unfathomable, he starts with the image of the man who hugs the child in his arms. This image comes from Goethe's *Erl King* which Schulz remembers his mother reading to him at age eight and which for him counts as one of those key images that propel his work in unending exegesis.[301] Schulz reiterates Goethe's ballad when he describes that as the man "walks on and on [he] soothes the little girl endlessly, monotonously, and without hope, helpless against the

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[299] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 175.
[300] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 163.
[301] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 111.

whispers and sweet persuasions of the night […]"[302] In Goethe's ballad the father loses the child to the fatal seductions of the nightly forest they are traversing on their way home. In "Spring" Schulz breaks with the familiar plot when he tells us that this story "is about a princess kidnapped and changed for another child." As we already know, this kidnapped child is supposedly Bianca. As we also know, this "mythic" reading of the story is tempered by metafictive irony: The 'eternal tale' is a tease that is only mentioned so that it can be perpetually denied; In the end, ambitions that might be equated with a desire for a "mythic" dimension reveal Joseph's interpretive efforts as misguided, over-confident and ultimately contrived. Joseph reflects that his misguided conduct rested in his aspiration to deliberately write his own story onto the kind of story that is "never to be exhausted by repetition."[303] In the final scene, Joseph decides to alter the course of his personal history by committing suicide. As we already noted, this act is prevented by an officer who arrests him under the charge of having "dreamed the standard dream of the biblical Joseph."[304] Joseph remarks on the bittersweet irony of the situation reflecting that "I have outpaced that early dream by actions that are much more dangerous and that I wanted to expiate by taking my own life, yet it is this obsolete dream that has saved my life."[305] The officer addresses him as Joseph N., the only moment in the story where a family name is implied, which belittles his lineage to a mythical Jacob, and most certainly hints towards Kafka's Joseph K.

The many Josephs that are echoed in Schulz's stories, from history, biblical tales, and other works of literature, build up into what is essentially a multi-faceted self-portrait of the writer's spirit. Schulz's "spiritual genealogy" performs a kind of acupuncture on his personal biography by establishing points of contact with mythic tales as well as the work of his literary kin. Schulz's biography further multiplies the many aspects surrounding the Joseph figure. The school he attended as a youth, and in which he later unenthusiastically earned his living as a teacher, was named Franz Joseph I Drohobych State Gymnasium. One can thus understand the Franz Josef character of Schulz's "Spring" in yet another light, as a prosaic yet tyrannical incarnation of his teaching duties—an authoritative force that loomed large in his daily life, and

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[302] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 164.
[303] In this text one can also read a self-reflexive, self-deprecating commentary on the level of writing technique and Schulz's experimentation with narrative plotline.
[304] Schulz, "Spring" in *Street of Crocodiles*, 203.
[305] Ibid.

which Schulz often lamented as stifling his momentum for writing.[306] A final Josef figure—and one can never be certain if there could be more—is Schulz's fiancée Jozefina Szelinska, yet another life force for Schulz that would have been diametrically opposed to the monarch's uninspired matter-of-factness. Szelinska was "a woman of considerable knowledge and intelligence"[307] as Ficowski describes her, who held a Ph.D. in Polish philology and translated Kafka's *The Trial* into Polish. She and Schulz seem to have harboured immense love and admiration for each other.[308] It could also be related to Schulz's love for Jozefina that the boy narrator of his stories is named Joseph. This occurs in about half the stories of *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass,* Schulz's second published collection of stories, which was in fact dedicated to Jozefina. While drafts of the stories in *Sanatorium* may have existed earlier, it is interesting that those in which the narrator is named Joseph were first published individually in periodicals, between 1934 and 1935, during their courtship and engagement.[309]

The constellation of the many Josephs that multiply, corroborate, and are antithetical to each other makes a strong case for what Schulz has identified as his attempt to chart out a matrix of myth, one that combines biographical details with allusions to myth, biblical stories, and other works of literature. As we have seen, the mythic elements still operate within the metafictive discourse, which means they are unfailingly accompanied by irony and self-deprecating remarks that deliberately cast their seriousness into doubt. The figure of Josephs thus operates as an accentuated example of how Schulz's mythization manifests itself in his prose. This is but one facet of Schulz's interest in mythization. The point here was to show that Schulz's tactic to weave allusions to myth into his stories presents a nuanced engagement with history, modernity, the avant-garde, and the mythic imagination. I continue to unpack Schulz's mythization by examining how Schulz's prose operates in a way that refracts a mythic imagination. I focus on the relationship to language and to poetic acts to ultimately show that Schulz's mythization performs a creative-critical operation that finds parallel to the process that ought to underpin thoughtful architectural design.

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[306] I further elaborate on these biographic details in a later chapter.
[307] Ficowski in interview with Glowacka, in *New Documents and Interpretations*, 68.
[308] Schulz admiration and love for Szelinska can be read in his letters, especially those addressed to Romana Halpern. Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, esp. 134-5, 138.
[309] This timing can be noted in Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 213-20.

2.4 Mythologizing as a Poetic Act in Dialogue with Historicity and a Broader Literary Imaginary

In examining how the figure of Joseph operates as a nodal point in Schulz's matrix of myth we have also gained a glimpse of how Schulz's mythization engages historical content, through the figures of the Austro-Hungarian Monarch and his younger brother the Archduke Maximilian. The relationship between myth and history is also a point of contention in Vattimo's assessment of myth. While Vattimo does not speak directly to the discussion surrounding Schulz's treatment of history, his overarching issue with all the attitudes surrounding myth is that they fail to properly address the problem of historicity. He notes that the large majority of studies of myth have been based on an evolutionistic model. They understand myth as part of a condition belonging to the primitive mind that has been gradually overcome. In Vattimo's view, this evolutionistic model of history is no longer adequate, and yet, he tells us, no satisfying philosophy of history has emerged.[310] He writes that "if we want to be faithful to our historical experience, we must realize that our relationship with myth, once demythization itself has been proven to be a myth, will not be restored to its original state, but will remain marked by this experience. A theory of the presence of myth in contemporary culture must take this as its point of departure."[311] Here we note a self-consciousness that we have already seen to preoccupy meta-artistic practices. More important however is that Vattimo's essay reiterates a pervasive impasse which is an inability to conceive of myth outside the linearity that is imposed by a chronologically-biased historicity: Whether we are speaking of a regressive desire to recover or return to the past, or we are marching forward towards progress, it seems that we are confined to moving along a line. This, I believe, is a fundamental roadblock, one that still conditions our most readily available perception of myth. For an alternative model of history, I turn to Vico's study of myth, which essentially illuminates how Schulz's "mythologizing" is conditioned by a philological and poetic emphasis that has nothing to do with a desire to "make" or "return to" myth.

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[310] While Vattimo's assessment of myth does cover Cassirer's work, he omits two significant studies of myth, specifically those of Giambattista Vico and Hans Blumenberg. Blumenberg was more than likely too close in time for Vattimo to be aware of: His major study of myth, was published in German in 1979, translated into English in 1985, the same year as Vattimo's essay, and into Italian not until 1991. Vico might have been two centuries too distant into the past, or his work might have been misunderstood as too confabulatory to reference as philosophical discourse. Both Vico and Blumenberg are here critical in unpacking Schulz's interest in "mythologizing."

[311] Vattimo, "Myth and the Fate of Secularization," 34.

Giambattista Vico was an eighteenth-century philologist, philosopher, rhetorician and jurist whose major work the *New Science* was amongst the first substantial studies to address the mythic imagination.[312] One of the primary motivations of this work was to warn against the danger of applying Descartes' indubitable truths to human affairs. Originally titled *Principles of New Science About the Common Nature of Nations,* Vico proposed that a model of history capable of adequately encapsulating human nature is not linear or evolutionistic but based on a model of what he described as "*corsi e ricorsi*". He believed that at the basis of all cultures and nations are three stages of humanity: the divine or poetic, the heroic, and the humanistic. While it seems that humanity moves from a crude barbarism of poetic imagination, to a heroic age, and then on to a civilized state of intellectual reflection, in fact Vico's "*corsi e ricorsi*" suggests that the stages of humanity are not progressive but they are always layered into one another. Vico's model has been described as a spiral: neither cyclical nor linear but both. As such, myth, or the mythic impulse is always part of civilization and it essentially refers to the poetic nature of the human imagination: The knowledge of human affairs—human truths, rather than positivistic truths—are not immutable or incontrovertible but have to be continuously re-made. In other words, technology advances by establishing certain discoveries as stable and irrefutable knowledge so that it can progressively build upon itself. This model however, is ineffective for the type of knowledge required by disciplines tending to the humanities. To re-interpret Vico's "corsi e ricorsi," in human affairs certain motifs *recur*—ambitions for the future, the effects of human passions such as love, desires, anticipations, betrayal, sacrifices, and dealings with death—all the while civilization *courses on* and new circumstances arise—be they historical events, natural disasters, or technological advancements. Vico reminds us that human truths require to be continuously reconstructed in order to address the particularity of a given situation—it is not possible to apply ready-made solutions or formulas.

Looking at the nature of the humanities from a different angle is the plain fact that Shakespeare is not a progressive improvement on Homer, nor Melville on Shakespeare.[313] Literary works—and all artistic works for that matter—generate discrete universes of wisdom, inexhaustible in their capacity to offer insights to questions that are both new and timeless. Vico believed that what allows humanity to continuously perform this reconstruction of human

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[312] Vico's study was already brought up in the introduction.
[313] I first encountered this point in Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, 7.

knowledge and truth is the creative, or poetic nature of the imagination. For Vico, this poetic capacity is embedded in myth, language, and the stratified meanings that words and stories gather over time. It was for this reason that Vico attributed particular importance to philology. This is an element that, as we are about to see, is intrinsic to Schulz's understanding of "mythologizing."

Schulz most explicitly presents his understanding of 'mythologizing' in the often-quoted essay "The Mythologizing of Reality."[314] It bears noting that he never drew explicit connections between the beliefs put forward in this essay and how a "mythization" might unfold in his fiction. He draws no direct correspondences to his prose. This omission is telling in and of itself—it seems appropriate that he would resist going as far as to claim that his prose *achieved* "a mythologizing of reality," even less suggesting explicit ways of how it can be applied in one's work. Thus, it still remains that Schulz's own words about mythization are sparse and therefore cryptic. Let us then examine a large section of "The Mythologizing of Reality." Notice that the focus of the essay is the relationship between myth, mythologizing, and poetry more generally:

> Poetry happens when short-circuits of sense occur between words, a sudden regeneration of the primeval myths.
>
> As we manipulate everyday words, we forget that they are fragments of lost but eternal stories, that we are building our houses with broken pieces of sculptures and ruined statues of gods as the barbarians did. Even the soberest of our notions and categories are remote derivatives of myths and ancient oral epics. […] The most fundamental function of the spirit is inventing fables, creating tales. […] It seeks out sense at the very top of its scaffoldings and artificial stackings of level upon level. Yet the building materials it uses were used once before; they come from forgotten, fragmented tales or "histories." Poetry recognizes these lost meanings, restores words to their places, connects them by the old semantics. In the poet's mind, the word remembers, so to speak, its essential meaning, blossoms, unfolds spontaneously according to its own inner laws, regains its wholeness. Thus all poetry is mythologizing and strives to restore myths to the world. […]
>
> The human spirit is indefatigable in supplying glosses to life by means of myths, in "making sense" of reality. The word itself, left to its own devices, gravitates toward sense.
>
> Sense is the element that involves mankind in the process of realization. It is an absolute given that cannot be derived from other givens. Therefore what makes sense to us cannot be defined. The process of imparting meaning to the world

[314] Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 115-17.

> is closely bound up with the word. Language is man's metaphysical organ. Nonetheless, in the course of time the word becomes static and rigid, stops being the conductor of new meanings. The poet restores conductivity to words by new quasi-electric tensions that are produced by an accumulation of charges. […]
>
> 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. [315]

Several aspects of Schulz's understanding of 'myth' can be discerned from this text: One has to do with an elemental necessity of the human imagination for storytelling that seeks out the kinds of human meanings that myths rehearse in countless variations—something I elaborate in the company of Northrop Frye and Hans Blumenberg. A second aspect, perhaps the most important to this study, is that Schulz's "mythologizing" involves a poetic operation that reaches into the stratified meanings of words and the sediments of language—this is how poetry "restores myths to the world." He attributes particular significance to philology, and in this he echoes an aspect that we just discussed to be important in Giambattista Vico's study of the mythic imagination. Third facet of myth is what Schulz describes that myths act as "glosses of life" which alludes to those beliefs and assumptions that are idiosyncratic of a person or a culture, exemplified already with Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*. This refers to the constellation of implicit beliefs, values and social norms that permeate a particular group or community. They are not 'myths' in the sense that they are untrue, but they are particular versions of reality that albeit implicit (and thus elusive), satisfy a need for coherence and self-understanding. Barthes' focus is to show how such mythologies are most successfully reinforced, propagated, and consumed through mass-media, and how for this reason one must practice skepticism and be critical of one's complacency.

At the beginning of this chapter, I noted that the allusions to myth that permeate Schulz's prose are accompanied by an at least equal weight of references to literature. This participation to a broader imaginary that is encompassed by literary artifacts is another aspect that is intrinsic to Schulz's mythologizing—and while it includes biblical or classical mythology it is far from being restricted to such explicit mythic content. In *The Educated Imagination* Northrop Frye specifically elaborates on this correlation between a contemporary understanding of myth and the literary imagination, proposing that modern literature is in effect a surrogate, or rather a modern

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[315] Ibid., 115-6.

transplant of mythology.[316] Frye notes that allusions to classical mythology or biblical tales are typical in literature: "All themes and characters and stories that you encounter in literature belong to one big interlocking family."[317] He emphasizes that literary artifacts are never independent occurrences but they participate to a broader imaginative world in which stories are interconnected and sometimes echo one another.[318] He contends that one can discern in literary works common threads that are in continuity with those of stories and myths that appear to be timeless. As an example, he pairs the Odyssey with Huckleberry Finn, which although seemingly different, they address similar underlying elements: "the disguises, the ingenious lies to get out of scrapes, the exciting adventures that often suddenly turn tragic, […] the sense of a human comradeship stronger than any disaster." He also notes that "Melville goes out of his way to explain how his white whale belongs in the same family of sea monsters that turn up in Greek myths and in the Bible."[319] This, he goes on, doesn't mean that literature isn't inventive, but rather "that everything is new, and yet recognizably the same kind of thing as the old…"[320] Building onto this, Frye argues that while literature has replaced the gods with characters like ourselves, it is performing the same function that mythology had previously:

> We have to look at the figures of speech a writer uses, his images and symbols, to realize that underneath all the complexity of human life that uneasy stare at an alien nature is still haunting us, and the problem of surmounting it still with us. [Literature] is still doing the same job that mythology did earlier, but filling in its huge cloudy shapes with sharper lights and deeper shadows.[321]

I had noted that most scholars treating Schulz's mythologizing tend to focus on the mythic fragments. In light of Frye's insight, I expand on this interpretation by suggesting that the mythic quality of Schulz's prose consists of embedding his text within *a body of storytelling*. This can include allusions to pre-existing stories or myths but it does not *hinge on* such myth fragments.

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[316] Frye, *The Educated Imagination*, 18.
[317] As an example Frye mentions that Yeats calls upon Odysseus and King Priam in his poetry. In fact, he argues that these two bodies of storytelling—classical and biblical—constitute the cornerstone of western literary imagination and they should form the basis of education for writers and readers alike. He writes: "If we don't know the Bible and the central Stories of Greek and Roman literature, we can still read books and see plays, but our knowledge of literature can't grow, just as our knowledge of mathematics can't grow if we don't learn the multiplication table." This stance, first articulated in Canada in 1963 privileges the western cannon and it is not without colonialist implications. Ibid., 27-8.
[318] Ibid., 27.
[319] Ibid., 16.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Ibid., 22.

Schulz's *mythologizing* then is more comprehensively understood to engage the (Western) imaginary at large, an imaginary in which stories and myths permeate, sediment, and repeat.

A similar understanding of how the mythic imagination persists in a modern age is Hans Blumenberg's much more extensive study *Work on Myth,* to which we already referred earlier. Blumenberg focuses on the myth of Prometheus, discussing how it can be observed to resurface across centuries in multiple, epoch-specific variations. He examines the permutations of this perennial myth from classical mythology to the modern incarnations of Faust and elaborates on how these variations reflect or respond to the consciousness of their particular era. Similar to Frye, Blumenberg understands 'myth' to refer to stories or themes that carry across epochs in multiple re-iterations but are also adaptable to discrete circumstances. He shows that certain myths are called upon because they address human concerns that cannot be dissipated or extinguished, and in this repetition, they build up (and reflect) an inherent pregnance. Thus, Blumbenberg explains, myth cannot be willfully made by individuals, but it forms itself over time because it resonates with a broader imaginary.[322] As such, despite the fact that the verb 'to mythologize' most readily denotes "to convert into myth or mythology; to make mythical or the subject of a myth,"[323] I emphasize that Schulz's mythologizing must not be confused with a deliberate intention to make myth, nor is it confined to a regression towards the past.

If thus far I have been suggesting that Schulz's understanding of myth tends to combine a literary inheritance with a set of values that operates in the present, Blumenberg shows more clearly how the two are intertwined. Blumenberg's work can essentially be understood as a contemporary demonstration of Vico's sense how myths are operative across epochs and are therefore not confined to linear historicity nor do they resort to an anti-progressive *return* the past. It would be more appropriate to say that the past rises from its depth in order to greet the present, and that at the same time the present reaches into the depth of the proverbial "what is already there."

Recall also that in its participation to a metafictive sensibility, this predisposition to refer to a familiar body of literature is a tactic that questions and undermines the literary work by bringing to the foreground its status as a work of artifice. As such, Schulz's mythologizing is at its core modern and self-critical. It is neither nostalgic nor utopian but rather operative and future

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[322] In the case of Schulz the broader imaginary is a western Judeo-Christian one.
[323] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythologize," http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124699#eid35224076.

propelling. This intertwined reciprocal movement—of drawing from a stratified past in order to be operative in the present and project into the future—is a crucial aspect of Schulz's mythologizing.

2.5 Mythologizing and Mythization: A Dual Movement of Drawing from Depths and a Surface Tension

Krystyna Illakowicz notes that even within Schulz's terminology one can discern a dual but reciprocal movement that at once projects the present and draws from the past, a movement that oscillates between a destabilizing of sense and sense-making. Illakowicz draws to our attention that while the title of Schulz's seminal essay is almost always translated as *"The Mythologizing of Reality,"* Schulz actually titled it "*Mityzacja Rzeczwistosci*." She notes that '*mityzacja'* is in fact Schulz's own word, and that it is used alongside the more conventional Polish word '*mitologizacja'*. In English the two are most often translated as 'mythologizing' or sometimes 'mythicization', or even in rare instances as 'mythologization'. Illakowicz translates the word as 'mythization' because she believes it to capture "the ambiguity and outlandishness of the original Polish '*mityzacja'*."[324] Amongst all the different variations of the English translations, Illakowicz's 'mythization' does not exist in the Oxford English Dictionary[325], making it a suitable English counterpart to Schulz's '*mityzacja*', which, according to Illakowicz, is also absent from the Polish dictionary. Thus the word 'mythologizing' is implicated with an unofficial stealthy twin: 'mythization.' Schulz's choice of words—one archaic and one fabricated—reveals that a two-fold intertwining of meaning is implicit in the notion of 'mythization.' Illakowicz explains:

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[324] Illakowicz, "Renegotiating the Provincial," 1070.

[325] It was already mentioned that according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the most prevalent use of the verb 'to mythologize' is defined by as: "to convert into myth or mythology; to make mythical or the subject of a myth. Also (in extended use): to create or promote an exaggerated or idealized popular image of." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythologize", http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124699#eid35224076.) The noun 'mythologizing' is described as "the action of mythologize v.; the creation of myths or mythology; mythological interpretation; an instance of this." *(Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythologizing", http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/244141?rskey=Iw0gmn&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid.) Similar meanings are found in the entry 'mythologization' defined as "the action or result of mythologizing a person or thing; interpretation as a myth." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythologization", http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/253667?redirectedFrom=mythologization#eid. 'Mythicization' is defined as "The creation of a myth or myths; transformation into the subject of myth." (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "mythicization", http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/253666?redirectedFrom=mythicization#eid.)

> In the essay, Schulz uses both *mityzacja* and *mitologizacja*. Both are integral components of the signification processes indicative of the forces/currents of moment itself (something like centrifugal and centripetal): the former relating more to the movement of regression and fragmentation, and the latter to a movement towards already formed senses, as in mythology. *Mityzacja* implies formless, aleatory, chaotic movement, and mythologizing a more systematic movement, closer to the structures of knowledge. But knowledge, as Schulz points out, is also myth. Thus mythization and mythologizing run next to each other, and at the same time counter to each other in the same hermeneutic circle […] [326]

Put another way, mythologizing or mythization is at once destabilizing—in the same way that poetry disrupts congealed meanings of words—as well as an act of grounding, or of resonating with something elemental—of a culture or of the human condition more generally. If we take a cue from Schulz's interest in philology, the stratification of meanings that are embedded in words, we can say that mythization is "original" both in the sense that it connects to a primordial "origin" as well as in the modern sense of "original," which denotes "innovative."

That 'mythologizing' is essentially synonymous with poetry is the most accentuated trait of Schulz's interest in myth. In making this correlation between mythologizing and poetry, he pays special attention to the philological depth of language—the meanings that words accrue over time. In "The Mythologizing of Reality" Schulz writes that within words are sedimented multiple meanings and connections, but that the practical needs of everyday life are predisposed to condense and stabilize the meanings of words. The poet's role is to revive the latent creative potentiality of language:

> The nameless does not exist for us. To name something means to include it in some universal Sense. The isolated word as a mosaic piece is a late product of, an early result of technology. […] 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 the word consists in tensing and stretching itself toward a thousand connections, like the cut-up snake in the legend whose pieces search for each other in the dark. This thousand-formed but integral organism of the word was torn apart into syllables, sounds, everyday speech; and in these new forms, adapted to practical needs, it was handed down to us as a handy code of communication. In this way the life of the word, its development, was shunted onto a new track, the track of mundane life, and subjected to new rules of order. But if for some cause the restrictions of

[326] Illakowicz, "Renegotiating the Provincial," 1070.

> pragmatic reality loosen their grip, if the word, released from their restraint, a reversal of current, occurs; the word strives for its former connections, wants to complete itself with Sense. And this striving of the word toward its matrix, its yearning for the primeval home of words, we call poetry. […]
>
> Thus all poetry is mythologizing and strives to restore myths to the world.[327]

When Ernst Cassirer describes the poetic aspect of the mythic imagination he notes that it is characterized by an enraptured attention to the spellbinding effect of the world, as it is given to sense perception. He explains that part of the project of Enlightenment has been to progress beyond the enthralling effect of the "sensible present" and to "transform the 'rhapsody of perceptions' by which the world of sense is actually presented to us, into a system, a coherent epitome of laws."[328] This has the precise effect that Schulz criticizes, which is that in the process, language is resigned to a narrow capacity to express meaning. Schulz essentially makes the case that the role of poetry is to counterbalance this abbreviation and to restore the multiplicity of meanings that lie dormant in language. In presenting this position, Schulz relates poetry with 'myth' and 'mythologizing.' In other words, for Schulz, as well as for Vico, the mythic aspect of poetics presumes an elemental aspect of the human imagination that persists through time.

When Schulz writes that the "isolated word as a mosaic piece is a late product of, an early result of technology," he suggests that poetry constitutes that creative resistance that contests the commodification and instrumentalization of language into a technological resource. Echoing Martin Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology," Schulz's mythologizing is an operation aimed at counterbalancing the "enframing" of language to perform its representational task, thereby abbreviating its polysemic potential and reducing words to isolated fragments.[329] Krystyna Illakowicz writes that both Heidegger and Schulz "question the modern constitution of knowledge as a discourse of certainty that leaves no space for the unexpected and the unsayable."[330] Put another way, language becomes instrumentalized when technological modes of thinking insist on exactness, efficiency, and closure, thereby curtailing the inherent agility of

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[327] Bruno Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality" in *Letters and Drawings*, 115-16.
[328] Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, translated by Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), 26.
[329] In his "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger writes that when technology reduces resources to their functional potential it performs an "enframing." For instance, he notes that the Rhine is "enframed" by technology when it is reduced to its capacity to generate hydro-electric power, and to dismiss the poetic power that the Rhine has accrued over time, in the imaginary of the communities who inhabit that particular landscape. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, 307-41 (London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi, Auckland: Harper Perrenial, 2008).
[330] Illakowicz, "Renegotiating the Provincial," 1073.

language to convey multiple possible meanings, ambiguities, to capture paradoxes; its perspicacity to capture subtleties and allusions. This reduction of language to its functional communication, as a technological "standing reserve" as Heidegger would call it, constitutes a violent truncation committed to language, a severing of its semantic fecundity. Reality itself diminishes as a result because the language that describes it diminishes. Language is made rigid, clumsy and stiffened, leading to an impoverishment of our ability to enlist it in elastic thinking. "Functional thinking becomes equally entrapped and reveals only what is expected, losing its propensity to face the unexpected."[331] By contesting the ordering and categorizing paradigms of technological ambitions, Schulz—and poetry in general—render them problematic, questioning their rigidity and their constant need for closure and accomplishment. Understood this way, poetry constitutes a 'mythologizing' because it aims to re-invigorate this polysemic capacity of language. Poetic language is thus seen both as the resistance to a homogenizing force and the quintessential tool for such operations. This is an act of creative resistance that draws from the particular and the specific—the spellbinding potential of the everyday that Cassirer attributed to the mythic imagination—rather than the already ordered and categorized that is prioritized by the paradigm of universality.

While Schulz's essay presents "mythologizing" as being synonymous to poetry, he does not, in any way, limit "poetry" to verse. As a matter of fact, Schulz never wrote verse. "Mythologizing" is to be more precisely understood as that which is the *work of* poets, or even *poetic acts*. The distinction is crucial because it focuses less on the artifact of poetry and more on what it does—its capacity to operate onto the world. As such, mythologizing boils down to poetic acts that are agents of creative resistance. The "mythic" aspect of mythologizing refers to a way of seeing and articulating the world through the polysemic fecundity of language. This polysemic fecundity draws from the fact that language sustains a sedimentation of multiple meanings, it is part of an interconnected matrix that includes other stories, myths, fables, poetry, and so on. It is this that Schulz means when he relies on the architecturally explicit comparison to write that "we are building our houses with broken pieces of sculptures and ruined statues of gods as the barbarians did. Even the soberest of our notions and categories are remote derivatives of myths and ancient oral epics."[332]

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[331] Ibid.
[332] Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 115-6.

Cycling back to the two-fold movement inherent in Schulz's mythization, it is productive to draw a connection to Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the interconnection between "symbol" and "metaphor." In *Interpretation Theory*, Ricoeur describes that operative within literary works is an essential interdependence of two opposing movements between the aleatory surface of the metaphor and the deeper-rooted dimension of the symbol.[333] Ricoeur begins with the premise that literary works sustain several possibilities of interpretation and do not force the reader to choose one correct version. He explains that unlike scientific works which aim at being taken literally, poetic works sustain a surplus of meaning and a "productive ambiguity." On this basis, he is exploring the question whether this surplus of meaning exceeds the linguistic sign. His conclusion suggests that it does, precisely because of the intertwining between 'symbol' and 'metaphor.' Ricoeur explains that the metaphor enables new visions of reality because it produces a tension or what he calls "a tensive apprehension." This tension prompts us to see things other than expected and to produce alternative possibilities for understanding or seeing reality.[334] Echoing Schulz, Ricoeur writes that ordinary vision resists this tension because it remains immobilized by the functional or predictable use of words. The metaphor eclipses "the objective, manipulable world [and] thus makes way for the revelation of a new dimension of reality and truth."[335] Ricoeur tells us that while metaphors are more volatile and operate on the surface, symbols are bound by roots that reach into the depths of the human imagination. The metaphor enables us to see the symbol as being irreducible to a conceptual equivalent and to perceive its capacity for endless exegesis. He writes that something of the symbol "does not correspond to a metaphor and, because of this fact, resists any linguistic, semantic, or logical transcription."[336] This is similar to Schulz's intimation: "Sense is the element that involves mankind in the process of realization. It is an absolute given that cannot be derived from other givens. Therefore what makes sense to us cannot be defined."[337] This very much resonates with Ricoeur's understanding of the symbol. In the next sentence, Schulz follows with something that is suggestive of Ricoeur's metaphor: "The process of imparting meaning to the world is closely

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[333] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976).
[334] Ricoeur elaborates extensively on the metaphor and its capacity to propel new understandings and visions of reality in his major work *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
[335] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 68.
[336] Ibid., 57.
[337] Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 116.

bound up with the word. [In] the course of time the word becomes static and rigid, stops being the conductor of new meanings. The poet restores conductivity to words by new quasi-electric tensions that are produced by an accumulation of charges."[338] Echoing Schulz, Ricoeur notes that the symbol "testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life. It is born where force and form coincide."[339] Ricoeur draws this particular chapter to a close with a succinct summary:

> To conclude, I will say that we must accept two contrary propositions concerning the relationship between metaphors and symbols. On one side, there is more in the metaphor than in the symbol; on the other side, there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor. There is more in the metaphor than in the symbol in the sense that it brings to language the implicit semantics of the symbol. What remains confused in the symbol—the assimilation of one thing to another, and of us to things; the endless correspondence between the elements—is clarified in the tension of the metaphorical utterance.
>
> But there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor. Metaphor is just the linguistic procedure—that bizarre form of predication—within which the symbolic power is deposited. The symbol remains a two-dimensional phenomenon to the extent that the semantic face refers back to the non-semantic one. The symbol is bound in a way that the metaphor is not. Symbols have roots. Symbols plunge us into the shadowy experience of power. Metaphors are just the linguistic surface of symbols, and they owe their power to relate the semantic surface to the presemantic surface in the depths of human experience to the two-dimensional structure of the symbol."[340]

This overview of the dynamic between symbol and metaphor resembles very closely the way in which Schulz's mythologizing and mythization operate as a two-sided intertwined movement between surface metaphors and rooted symbols. This dual movement is not *directed towards* but rather *draws from* the past—or rather draw on the accrued endowment that persists in language and the body of literature, poetry and literary artifacts. Thus we understand that Schulz's mythization, while it echoes sensibilities of a mythic imagination, has nothing to do with making myth, and speaks more readily to an elemental function of the poetic and literary imagination that operates between a pregnant past and an expectant future.

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[338] Ibid.
[339] Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 59.
[340] Ibid., 68-9.

2.6 Towards a Creative Resistance of Locality in Architecture

There is here a direct correspondence to what confronts the work of architecture: It demands creative action that is future oriented yet always responds to the accrued endowment of its given situation. In the case of architecture this endowment consists of an intertwining between the sedimented imaginary of stories, histories and myths, and the tactile reality of geology and climate. This doubly-oriented creative action is already active in the process that leads to design.

Since Kenneth Frampton has articulated his call towards a critical regionalism, our understanding of the relationship between technology, modernity, tradition, and architecture's responsiveness to its locale has been repeatedly shown to be much more nuanced.[341] If the concerns surrounding modernity no longer haunt architecture, Ricoeur's observation of the homogenizing power of colonialist attitudes has been gaining rapid, and necessary, cultural urgency which very much confronts the discipline of architecture as well as all other facets of life. For us today, Frampton's critical regionalism translates less to the region or place as such but rather to the resilience of specific communities. In speaking about 'place', or 'locality' these also imply a community of people, especially those for which a creative resistance to homogenizing, colonialist forces has been and continues to be critical. This simply means, especially in North America, that a given 'regionalism' can potentially include a heterogeneity of multiple localities or communities. Understood in this way, the literary imaginary of such particular communities becomes especially significant as form of cultural resilience and thus, I argue, also significant in propelling architectural projects.

My proposition here is a simple one: that storytelling and literature be more rigorously considered as a rich resource to be engaged in architectural design. I argue that stories, histories and literary artifacts not only capture the cultural endowment of a community but are in fact depositories for creative action. This creative action has the potential to operate on multiple fronts, including, though not limited to, architecture and the built environment.

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[341] For instance the very recent Karla Britton and Robert McCarter, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Lifeworld: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Frampton* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2020). Other studies include Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground;* Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Réjean Legault, eds., *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2000); Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2001); Colin St. John Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project* (London: Academy Editions, 1995).

In the chapter that follows I draw parallels between Schulz's literary constructions and architectural representation. In the final chapter I look at the attitude towards world and matter that is presented in Schulz's prose, which, through the lens of an architectural reading, both world and matter become invested with questions of place, locality, building, and making. A number of critical issues that have come up thus far, are re-iterated in these later chapters: That literary language can engage forms of knowledge that come to bear on architectural design—it is especially fecund in its agility to convey multiple possible meanings, ambiguities, paradoxes as well as in its perspicacity to capture subtle, implicit and tacit forms of knowledge. As we have seen with Ricoeur, literary and poetic constructions are polysemic and not reducible to a conceptual equivalent. They delay certainty and closure in favour of opening possibilities. Poetic constructions nurture ambiguity which is productive because it can sustain a surplus of meaning and a capacity for endless exegesis. In suspending the known in favour of the possible, they make space for the unsayable and cultivate the unexpected towards risk-taking and discovery. Rather than providing explanations, poetic language suspends what is known and certain in order to court the generative potential of the nebulous and the unknowable. Furthermore, I argue that poetic and literary constructions have the capacity to operate as a form of imaginative resilience in the face of the unexpected and the unsayable.

In the remaining two chapters I examine how all of this unfolds in literary language with respect to architectural representation, capturing qualities of a locale, and engagement with matter and world. Mythic and metafictive sensibilities will continue to play into this conversation in ways that are both specific to Schulz's prose as well as informing of a broader discourse. The overarching argument that I pursue throughout is that within the design process that leads to architecture, literary language can sustain an element of earnest play that propels imaginative possibilities and has the potential to creatively resist homogenizing forces.

Recess 2

Elemental Questions Immersed in the World of the Story: Literary Constructs Subsume the Concept

We have just observed with Schulz's mythization a double-sided poetic action: a reaching into the depths of a stratified imaginary that is accompanied by a surface agitation which is creative and future-propelling. In reflecting on the student work, it is possible to draw a parallel to this dual movement in the way that the students' creative texts became operative in their projects. For many—and especially the richer and more thoughtful projects—the literary texts provided a world of particular circumstances, moods, qualities, and temporal rhythms. In working within this universe of the texts—whether this text was written by an author or by the students themselves—students also distilled specific questions that would guide their future projects. These questions drew out a number of potent human motivations: dreams and uncertainties, desires and delusions, seductions and sacrifices. The stories led students to explorations that extended beyond a traditional design brief and began to touch on architectural concerns that are tied in with elemental human questions and paradoxes: that building walls often protects as well as entraps; that in every act of revealing there is also a concealment; that we inhabit time as much as we inhabit space; that the accumulation of the seemingly insignificant can built up to momentous events, and so on. As we have seen earlier, the legend of the tommyknockers brought forth the inherent dilemma of architecture: that acts of building and technological progress have often demanded acts of violence. Often enough, the questions that emerged for students in their stories are the very same questions and motivations as those that propel human making and city-building. Yet because of their creative texts, these elemental questions were not being asked in the abstract but rather were being engaged within the specific world of their stories, which was loaded with experiential qualities and temporalities.

For instance, the dilemma that walls can be both a haven and a prison came up with one of the students in the *Project Daedalus* sequence. This student worked with a moose tooth. Their previous vocation as a dental hygienist led them to a first creative text that reflected on how the tooth's specificity begins to be formed while a fetus in the womb. When this student grafted the moose tooth onto the Daedalus myth, they imagined the moment when queen Pesiphae gave birth to the Minotaur. They first imagined that King Minos would have had an isolated temple built atop a mountain specifically for the momentous birth of what he believed to be his child. Within the story, the tooth was imagined to have fallen out the queen's mouth during what would have been an all the more excruciating delivery. The student imagined that the Minotaur's birth was so peculiar and horrifying that even the queen's midwives fled screaming. The king likewise abandoned his wife upon seeing the monster he had not fathered. With her only defense as her fallen tooth, the queen used it to cut the umbilical cord that bound her to the monster, and to defend herself against his attacks.

This student's project developed by focusing on the queen's entrapment. It translated to an artifact that carved itself into the inside wall of a wooden cabinet: an intricate ball-jointed bronze prosthesis that fated the tooth to a slow labour of gouging itself an escape—a process by which it was also destined to grow increasingly more intimate to its prison. We can say that this project brought to the surface a dilemma inherent in building walls: that they negotiate between wildness and human culture but that in doing so they simultaneously protect and hold captive. This elemental condition isn't expressed in the abstract but it is interwoven with the particular details of the student's creative text, which tells the story of a queen who has just given birth to a monster and must now deliver herself from its rage. The text captured the bittersweet atmosphere of courage mingled with desperation. This atmosphere, as well as the actions described in the story, focused design intentions and were also suggestive of approaches to building such as carving, gouging, and bonding. In other words, the story provided a depository of specific qualities through which the abstract question might be translated into materials and building tactics. I return to this in the conversation that follows the fourth chapter.

To pick up on the earlier conversation, this project is also an example in which the student's experience and knowledge-base as a dental hygienist came to play a pronounced role in their process—from the first observation of a tooth's growth in a fetus, to the making of the project which drew on dentistry-inspired techniques such as casting and intricate detail-work.

Admittedly, in most typical circumstances the way that personal knowledge plays into the process of design is much less clearly delineated than it was for this particular student. It is important to recognize the value of knowledge and personal experience that cannot be outlined quite so explicitly. The main point I wish to make here is that literary artifacts offer the possibility to bring forth elemental questions, as well as immerse those questions in specific qualities that can eventually become suggestive towards actions of building. It is helpful here to compare this approach—at arriving at a project through a literary artifact—with the more typical approach of designing from a concept.[342] While the 'concept' aims to focus architectural intentions, it is general, tends towards the abstract, and can sometimes restrict students who might prematurely commit to an intuition. In contrast, literary texts have been able to momentarily suspend this commitment and to instead foster a playful imaginative environment. Students arrived at their general concepts *via* their creative writing. Once there, their stories also functioned as a rich depository of qualities and atmospheres that would further propel future stages of the project.

A Parallel to Ricoeur's "Symbol" and "Metaphor"

Let us make a case here for a parallel to Ricoeur's discourse regarding the dynamic between the 'symbol' and 'metaphor'. We could draw a connection between Ricoeur's understanding of the 'symbol' and what we have identified as those elemental questions that come to bear on the making of architecture. As such, in the example above, the 'symbol' is signaled by the paradox inherent in building walls—that they simultaneously protect and hold captive. We might also suggest that the *metaphoric potency* of this elemental condition lives in the particular details of the creative text: the way in which the literary text was articulated to tell the story of a queen who has been abandoned and is now trapped together with the monster to which she has just given birth. The equivalent of the 'symbol' here can be described as slow, rooted in the depths of human knowledge. Yet it only becomes operative in the surface tension that is sparked by the volatile metaphoric utterance. The element of hermeneutic interpretation that is so important for Ricoeur is in this case, that of the architect (or student of architecture) who draws from the text

[342] I elaborate on this, as well as the student work that resulted from *Project Daedalus* in Anca Matyiku, "Project Daedalus," *Writingplace Journal*.

towards architectural experiences and acts of building. I want to make the case that the metaphoric power of the text is amplified with the architectural intention. It is perhaps too hasty a parallel to say that a student of architecture can reliably produce literary texts that operate at the level of what Ricoeur intends by 'metaphor.' If however we count not just the text of the story (written by the student) but also that the very fact that it is oriented beyond itself—that is, towards an architectural task—this positions the metaphoric entity in the hermeneutics of understanding between the written text and the architectural question. I come back to this notion later on, once I have outlined Ricoeur's understanding of the metaphor in relation to architectural representation.

For the moment, I stay with the comparison to the 'concept.' Let us keep in mind that for Ricoeur, the premise of this dynamic between 'symbol' and 'metaphor' is the *plurivocity* of the text—that literary works maintain a surplus of meaning, such that they sustain multiple possible interpretations and not simply convey information.[343] The symbol and the metaphor are intertwined and co-dependent, and neither is reducible to a conceptual equivalent. Yet, this does not have to exclude the concept. Ricoeur emphasizes that "[t]here is no need to deny the concept in order to admit that symbols give rise to an endless exegesis. If no concept can exhaust the requirement of further thinking borne by symbols, this idea signifies only that no given categorization can embrace all the semantic possibilities of a symbol."[344] Perhaps obvious, but if we follow Ricoeur's notion of 'plurivocity,' this means that with each text, many interpretations are possible—both of the meaning of the text as well as how an architect interprets it towards architectural actions.

Layered Imaginaries

In the above example, the layered imaginary within which the moose-tooth project unfolded brought together the myth of Daedalus, the understanding of the prototypical Ancient Greek architect, the student's knowledge of dentistry, their former life in Northern Ontario where the moose tooth was found, as well as the story about queen Pesiphae's labour that the student

[343] With the notion of *plurivocity* Ricoeur extends the polysemic potential of the word, and even that of the sentence to the full literary work such as poems, narratives and essays. He notes this on the very first page, in the Introduction. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, xi.
[344] Ibid., 57.

grafted onto the familiar myth. This layering was a result of the context of the project (a history course), my prompt for the project (Daedalus, the surrounding myths, and the notion of craft), the student's previous life experiences and knowledge, and finally the narrative they wrote. All of these forms of knowledge, imaginaries, and contextual elements informed the literary artifacts that participated to the creative process behind this particular project, namely, the Daedalus myths, the creative texts that the student wrote, as well as the shorter texts I had provided for students to "warm up their inside voice."[345] In outlining the various "layered imaginaries" that took part in the design process of the other courses I mentioned earlier, I hope to emphasize the wide openness in the possibilities for literary artifacts, and to counterbalance this project's focus on Schulz. The point I make with this is that *the choice for literary accompaniment in the design process is in fact a design decision*, whether this design decision is that of the professor, the student of architecture, or, outside of the realm of pedagogy, that of the architect.

____ Layered Imaginaries: The Artificer Kingfish

The Artificer Kingfish was an elective seminar-based course that I ran at Louisiana State University and combined theoretical readings with a fabrication component. The premise of the fabrication component was a variation on *Project Daedalus*, one more actively invested in the politics and social dynamics of public space. While *Project Daedalus* was positioned in relation to history, with *The Artificer Kingfish* I took the opportunity to engage storytelling and literature that was local to Louisiana. Both *Project Daedalus* and *The Artificer Kingfish* were upper-level courses that were also open to lower-level undergraduate students, resulting in a kind of "vertical-studio" format. I again made a fist offering of literary fragments centered around Louisiana and by Louisiana writers. Students were prompted to find their own local story, legend, or folktale as a catalyst for their eventual projects, which were revealed to them in small increments. Like with *Project Daedalus* our focus was on "building" as a verb and an action rather than a noun.

What I noted earlier with the students' work and process in *Project Daedalus* was echoed here as well: The concept driving the project was immersed in a depository for action, while the stories drew out elemental human preoccupations—which I have paralleled to Ricoeur's

[345] The examples of texts most often offered to students were already cited in a footnote in the introduction.

understanding of the deeper rooted 'symbol.' These elemental preoccupations were tied into the specific localities, details and qualities of the stories—which I have paralleled with Ricoeur's 'metaphor.' I suggested that this interanimation between the elemental and the particular guided students in the act of interpretation across mediums, which ultimately led to materially-grounded architectural actions.

The stories and the accompanying projects they propelled included the following sampling: A frog-gigging story about noticing little moons, half-moons, and quarter-moons – that is, the positions of a frog's eyes in the dark—was translated into a prosthetic armature for navigating in the dark by bringing forth the otherness of the frog's perception. A dancefloor that responded unpredictably under a body's weight sought to evoke the unsettling, sinister atmosphere that spread over New Orleans on March 19, 1919 when the serial killer known as the Axeman of New Orleans had allegedly published a letter in the local newspaper that he would, that night, spare those who would "jazz it out" with a jazz band in full swing. Folktales surrounding the antagonistic duo Bouqui and Lapin, became the pretext for a series of furtively planted objects that looked to offer unsolicited architectural advice of questionable value. A playful folk song about "a lady made like a sandwich" led to a cluster of subversive utensils for the improper taking of tea. A delicate canopy that responded to the wind, rain, and sunlight drew on the dramatic death of Louisiana's feared and revered Julia Brown. Brown who was a faith healer whom many suspected to be a voodoo priestess. She lived at the edge of the Manchac Wetlands at the turn of the twentieth century and was known for her efficacious curatives as well as the dreadful apprehension she inspired in the residents of nearby Frenier. She was known to rock on her porch, singing eerie songs about events that often came to be. Some saw her clairvoyance as a prophecy, others suspected the grim events were the result of a curse of her own casting. Most memorably she used to sing that the day she would die she would take the whole town with her. The day of her death, September 29th 1915, turned out to correspond with a hurricane that hit unexpectedly and completely destroyed Frenier as well as nearby Ruddock and Napton, claiming around 300 lives.

If we revisit the conversation between story and concept, we can look at the last three projects noted above and present their respective concepts as playing the trickster, building a weather-responsive shroud, and subverting etiquette. I could note that the elemental human preoccupations that these projects bring forth are the human impulse to ritualize the act of eating

into dining, the desire to see into an otherwise unpredictable future, and the trickster-fool as an archetypal figure who casts into question forms of truth and knowledge that we take for granted. The specifics of the stories with which the students worked, informed and propelled how each interpreted the stories into a built artifact, as well as the accompanying rituals or temporal considerations. The same argument as above holds: that these texts—or what built up to the layered imaginary as it was manifested in the literary texts—maintained a surplus of possible interpretation, and what Ricoeur has termed the *plurivocity* of the text. With the *Artificer Kingfish*, the 'layered imaginary' that drove the student projects consisted of the Louisiana-specific stories, histories, folk-tales, folk-songs and oral histories they selected, as well as the literary artifacts they themselves composed. I'll note that with this particular group of students, their own texts were of especially high quality.

Overall the stories and projects operated within their wider locality and imaginary to draw out Louisiana's tenuous relationship to its marshy bayou, its hurricane-swept voodoo-infused imagination and its infectious love for jazz, food and revelry. While a point can certainly be made for place-specific architectural design, I argue that this specificity of locality is not necessarily limited to the geographical locality but can be as specific as the community whose needs occasion the future architecture. What I want to add to the above conversation is that what the literary and poetic artifact most compellingly contributes to the design process, especially in comparison to a concept-driven approach to design, is that while the concept tends toward resolution, the story keeps open the questions at the heart of the architectural inquiry. "The narrative allows us to preserve opposition which we are otherwise in danger of losing to the flatness of the concept and conceptual criticism," writes Verene.[346] Verene is discussing Vico's *New Science* which attributes a crucial role to the poetic imagination in the making of human knowledge. He goes on to note that the "logic of imagination does not differ from the logic of the concept because it uses different categories but because it uses no categories at all."[347] "Categorical thought has no place for memory and the narrative. The category invites us to create ultimate singles, unequivocal grounds for thought and being. Memory and imagination allow us to treat opposition as a dramatic force."[348] In other words, literary artifacts operate within these layered imaginaries that combine memory with imagination such that the ambivalent and

[346] Donald Phillip Verene, *Vico's Science of Imagination* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981): 191-92.
[347] Ibid., 217.
[348] Ibid., 216.

contradictory forces that underscore human experience are brought forth, without demanding resolution. If I consider the three *Artificer Kingfish* projects, I remark that Compairs Bouqui and Lapin are neither good or bad, but they are at once cunning and helpless in their predicament; the figure of a voodoo priestess inspires both dread and reassurance; and the line between mores of propriety and their absurdity is blurred to comic effect. In short, the concept gravitates towards a design solution, while the story can lead to projects that sustain a multifaceted conversation about the things we build and the way they participate to culture-making forces. At their most successful, the stories guided students to projects that were able to engage those same contradictory and delicate human questions *and* to ultimately give them material body, and with it, articulate spatial experiences. It is possible to project how, if this course would have been a design studio leading to the design of a building, the improper dining utensils might have led to the design of a pastry academy and the Julia Brown project might have arrived at a birthing or a wellness center. This would reverse the typical direction from programme to design process, making the pedagogical project more research-oriented rather than design-solution-oriented. My point however is that there is much architectural knowledge to be mined from storytelling that does not oblige the arrival at "a" building. Whether the project at which one arrives is a building, spaces, or acts of building, I argue that one of the most salient opportunities of engaging literary and poetic artifacts in the process that leads to design is this heightened level of participation to cultural histories and to cultures-in-the-making.

____ Layered Imaginaries: A Hideout for a Modern-day Billy the Kid[349]

The studio centered around Billy the Kid—titled "the shrewd, the robber & the kid"—was the first time I had the opportunity to actively engage the literary imagination in design studio. This was during the spring semester of 2020 at CU Denver's College of Architecture and Planning. The studio was a beginning design studio that I coordinated and taught together with three

[349] The discussion surrounding the hideout for Billy the Kid, both here and further on, is currently in process of being included in an edited volume. Anca Matyiku, "Storytellers and Outlaws: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching as Research," in *Catalysts and tensions: The relationship between space and language in architectural education* (working), ed. Kasia Nawratek (London, New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

colleagues, each with our own section of students.[350] Like *The Artificer Kingfish*, the goal was to maintain a connection to local history. Drawing on the histories of the making of the American West, we prompted students to work with the stories and histories surrounding Billy the Kid, whose short and incendiary life has achieved a kind of legendary or even mythic status in the history of the West. Billy the Kid (1859-1881) was likely born Henry McCarty and was known by a number of other pseudonyms including William H. Bonney. He was an infamously fearless cattle robber and was notorious for his swift and unflinching gunmanship. He fought in New Mexico's Lincoln County War and was charged with three murders he allegedly committed during this time. Billy the Kid was eventually shot and killed at the age of 21 by Sheriff Pat Garrett who used to be Billy's friend and accomplice. In other words, during the making of the American West, the law itself was in the making and volatile, such that Patt Garrett the robber became sheriff, the outlaw became the law. As such, the facts of history remain as tenuous as those of justice and wrongdoings, and Billy the Kid's life lent itself to romanticized variations and exaggerations. It is telling that Pat Garrett himself wrote a version of Billy the Kid's biography.[351]

Pat Garrett's biography was part of the constellation of cultural artifacts that we engaged in the studio sequence, which also included Aaron Copland's music composition for ballet Billy the Kid. We however relied most heavily on Michael Ondaatje's fictional autobiography, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. I chose the stories of Billy the Kid for this particular studio precisely because of this constellation of cultural artifacts, one that converged in this historical figure that was also close in age with the students in the course. I saw this as an opportunity towards an interdisciplinary approach to teaching design, one that relied heavily on history, storytelling, and the literary imagination. Just as with the fabrication courses I discussed earlier, the broader aim was to introduce architecture students, from their very first design studio, to the understanding that architecture is always complicit to broader imaginaries, as well as to very delicate social and political dynamics. This was especially emphasized in the final project, which asked students to design a hideout for a modern-day Billy, or a person who existed on the border

[350] This was the students' first full-fledged design studio. It followed a 3-credit studio in which students learned representation techniques and did not extensively produce their own designs. (A full design studio in the United States curriculum is 6 credits, twice as heavily weighed as general college-level courses.) The studio sequence would not have been what it was without the fantastic conversations and tremendous insights of my colleagues at CU Denver: Brian Dale, Michelle Frankel and Paul Mitchell. I am indebted to them and very grateful for the opportunity to have worked together on this studio sequence.

[351] Pat F. Garrett, *The Authentic Life of Billy, the Kid: The Noted Desperado of the Southwest, Whose Deeds of Daring and Blood Made His Name a Terror in New Mexico, Arizona and Northern Mexico* (Houston: Frontier Press of Texas, 1953).

of the law. This is when students—after being presented with the stories, histories, and Ondaatje's text—wrote their own literary texts to capture this character they were asked to imagine. Their final design was a parasitic space located in an alleyway in downtown Denver, nearby Union Station and behind the historical Oxford Hotel. The underlying intention was to nudge students to imaginatively address delicate situations that presented themselves close at hand, in a city no stranger to gang violence and especially well acquainted with homelessness.

To sum up, the local history of the making of the American West, along with the stories, literary, and cultural artifacts surrounding Billy the Kid, as well as the students' creative texts, all add up to the "layered literary imaginary" that activated this studio sequence. I point out here that the curation of these literary imaginaries by myself, (the professor), was in fact a design decision. They were selected because they were intuitively seen as fertile constellation of cultural artifacts. The literary artifacts, especially Ondaatje's text, were very much chosen because they captured delicate dynamics between history, politics, myth-making, justice, and what it means to be criminal, all of which had the potential to be saliently engaged in the social and political circumstances of today's Denver.

With the fabrication courses, there was a much tighter-knit connection between built project and the literary artifacts that led students towards these projects. Both the programme and the site of the project (for those that had a site) emerged through each student's specific fascinations and architectural questions, and had direct material implications. With the Billy the Kid studio, the literary artifacts were less of a driving force. This was because students also had to juggle the architectural programme and site which were pre-determined rather than conditioned by the literary artifact. Because the literary artifacts were less directly implicated in the end result, my reflection on how they played out in the context of studio is better suited to the interlude following chapter three, where I read Schulz's prose with a focus on literary language as a medium of process-oriented architectural representation. Following chapter three I also reflect on what this means in the context of beginning design, as well as observe the dynamics between the literature that was given to the students, the literary texts they themselves composed, and how both played out in the students' approach to their final design.

____ Layered Imaginaries and the Question of Locality

To summarize the connection between my study of Schulz's prose and my insights from pedagogy, I note that the second chapter highlighted the resonances between Ricoeur, the dual movement of Schulz's mythization, that is, the act of drawing on a stratified endowment to creatively project towards possible futures. While in architectural design this 'stratified endowment' might most readily suggest itself as the culture and the characteristics of a locale, what I have intended to show with the student projects is that what constitutes the locality of the architectural project becomes much more flexible with the literary artifact. This means that in being articulated via the literary artifact, this locality can become much more specific to the questions occasioned by the architectural project. (This is especially clear with *The Artificer Kingfish* where the projects went beyond engaging questions of 'place'—ie. Louisiana—and extended to much more specific communities and architectural questions.) While with the fabrication courses the students distilled their project from literary artifacts, this sequence of operation need not be rigid—such that, the literary artifact can be equally operative in the case of a typical architectural project which starts with certain programmatic exigencies. In this case, a literary artifact might be either written or selected by the architect, student, or professor because they consider it apt to the particular demands of the project at hand. The Billy the Kid studio was one version of this approach, in which the choice for literary and cultural artifacts was the design decision that inflected the professor's approach to designing the studio sequence.

Overall, my examples of architectural pedagogy, although not yet numerous, have allowed me to explore how this "stratified endowment" might be *engaged* as well as *focused through* literary artifacts, which then can participate to creatively propel design possibilities. I made a parallel between Ricoeur's understanding of 'symbol' and 'metaphor' to note that architectural design, in its inherent participation to culture-making, also touches on deeply-rooted elemental concerns that manifest themselves in the particularity of the design circumstance. At stake here is that the literary imagination is especially potent in bringing forward both these deeply-rooted concerns as well as the circumstantial particularity, which can then come to play in the design process. In drawing a comparison with a concept-based approach to architectural design, I have shown that storytelling and literary artifacts offer the extended opportunity of keeping open the delicate questions that underscore architecture's participation to

politics (and so on), which I believe to be especially important to emphasize for students of design. We can for instance reflect on the difference between the following: asking students to design a hideout for a homeless person; and asking students to engage with local history and the stories of Billy the Kid in order to make a hideout for someone who exists on the border of the law. The first prompt can quickly foster a kind of saviour-complex not atypical of architects which can potentially exacerbate the disempowerment of the humans it supposedly serves. The second prompt solicits a much more nuanced, perhaps more sophisticated level of engagement from the students, while having the potential to bring forward our own (the architects') less-than-comfortable complicities to questions of social justice and the politics of public space. The second prompt, via the literary imagination, also fosters imaginative possibilities towards architectural actions, and sustains what Ricoeur has called the 'plurivocity' of possible interpretations. This imaginative potential of storytelling and literary artifacts is something I continue to emphasize throughout this project.

Chapter 3

Drawing Out Architectural Representation by Way of Literary Language

The passages in Schulz's prose most profuse with architectural images are often found in his exuberant descriptions of the sky, and especially those accompanied by wind and night. Throughout Schulz's stories, the sky, wind and night are often described to be given over to imaginative theatrics of architecture, landscapes, cities and creatures. When a gale grows stronger and fiercer as night envelops the city, Schulz describes that it begins "to build a many-storied multilevel spiral over the city, a black maze, growing relentlessly upward."[352] In a kind of architectural frenzy, this maze feverishly proliferates as the wind "shot out along galleries of rooms, raced amid claps of thunder through long corridors and then allowed all those imaginary structures to collapse, spreading out and rising into the formless stratosphere."[353] Such passages posit a protean expansiveness to the night, wind and sky, which is articulated through an outpour of architectural imagery:

> No one has ever charted the topography of a July night. It remains unrecorded in the geography of one's inner cosmos. […] A night in July! The secret fluid of dusk, the living, watchful, and mobile matter of darkness, ceaselessly shaping something out of chaos and immediately rejecting every shape. Black timber out of which caves, vaults, nooks, and niches along the path of a sleepy wanderer are constructed. Like an insistent talker, the night accompanies a lonely pilgrim, shutting him within the circle of his apparitions, indefatigable in invention and in fantasies, evoking for him starry distance, white Milky Ways, the labyrinths of successive Colosseums and Forums. The night air, that black Proteus playfully forming velvety densities streaked with the scent of jasmine, cascades of ozone, sudden airless wastes rising like black globes into the infinite, monstrous grapes of darkness flowing with dark juice! I elbow my way along these tight passages, I lower my head to pass under arches and low

[352] Schulz, "The Gale," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 79.
[353] Ibid.

> vaults, and suddenly the ceiling breaks open with a starry sigh, a wide cupola slides away for a moment, and I am led again between narrow walls and passages.[354]

What do we actually "see" with this image? The passage above supposedly describes the narrator's movement through a night in July. The imagery however is bewildering, slippery and restless, making it tricky for the reader to discern what exactly they are "seeing." What is occurring in fact is a "seeing" that is delayed. The reader is instead engaged in a game of searching for the image in all of the suggested shapes, objects, scents, colours, movements, textures, sounds, spaces, etcetera, that are brought forth by Schulz's cavalcade of metaphoric images. This inability of the reader to immediately grasp the image presented to them does not lead to a sense of helplessness but rather an impression of abundance: many potential images can be extracted from this short passage. Schulz's prose, as can already be noticed here, is built though manifold metaphoric manipulations and superstructures, conjuring imagery that is restless, profusely layered, and synesthetically charged. In his thoughtful study of the paradoxes of representation in Schulz's prose, Krzysztof Stala outlines several metaphoric manipulations: metaphors that interlace; metaphors that condense meaning; metaphors that proliferate in descriptive chains, never settling on a final image; metaphoric constructions that are stratified, along with those that disperse horizontally. In the last section of this chapter I examine how these metaphoric nets, condensations and superstructures operate when presenting architectural spaces in Schulz's prose. To get there, I first elaborate on how exactly Schulz engages language as a medium onto itself. For the moment, let us observe another passage in which fantastical architecture is being read in the sky:

> Long before Versailles, clouds in the immense skies of summer evenings arranged themselves into the kinds of spacious compounds that religious orders live and worship in, ethereal megalomaniacal residences, had tried their hand at stage setting, piling up towering structures, oversized and world-scale layouts. The grand theater of uncircumscribed airspace is inexhaustible in its ideas, its projects, its aerial preliminaries; it hallucinates an architecture of grandiose inspiration, an ethereal, transcendental brand of urbanistics.[355]

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[354] Schulz, "A Night in July," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 207-8.
[355] Schulz, "The Republic of Dreams," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 321.

Notice how in all three of the passages above, it is not architecture that is officially presented to the reader. Architecture is in fact enlisted as a metaphor to describe the gale, the night and the sky. Yet notice also how in these images it isn't exactly certain if the night and the sky are begetting architecture or if it is the other way around. On one hand, especially to an architect, these passages read as an entranced state in which the imagination is flooded with potential architecture. They suggest that these all-enveloping substances have a protean capacity for architecture: that the indeterminate immensity of night, the sky, and the wind can be read and deciphered into a delirium of potential architectures. On the other hand, these images also reverse this dynamic: they present the night and the sky as human constructions, built out of architectural reveries: Put another way, architecture is called upon to theatrically perform a rendering of the night, the sky, and the wind. This is in tune with what we will later note to be a tendency in Schulz's prose to build his literary images as if they were describing works of human artifice such as paintings, tapestries, engravings, etc. In short, in Schulz's prose, reality tends to imitate art—an attitude that both exalts human making and relegates it to the domain of second-grade creation, or "heretic demiurgy" as Schulz calls it. As we are about to observe, this is only a glimpse into the tensions and paradoxes that Schulz brings forth between questions of representation, reality, and works of artifice. In the opening to the previous chapter, we noted this as a metafictive tactic that explicitly highlights the artificiality of the text by tampering with the boundary between art and life. The night in July passage can also be read as a metafictive rendering of the overall structure of Schulz's prose: like the temporary structures that feverishly build up and dissipate, Schulz constructs images that are flimsy, provisional and open ended. This is what makes these images vulnerable and equivocal, but also compelling in their openness to endless interpretation.

In this chapter, I unpack how Schulz's prose enlists literary language as a medium of architectural representation. As such I discuss Schulz's linguistic image-making in relation to the tradition of architectural drawing. My overall focus is on the design process that leads to architecture, especially the element of interpretation and that of open-ended play that are intrinsic to this process. I ultimately argue that Schulz's prose demonstrates how literary language can propel both the element of interpretation and of play, and therefore can be understood as an essential counterpart to drawing, and other visual forms of making-as-process.

3.1 Drawing and Drawing Out: Process in Architectural Inquiry

In presenting the architecturally-rendered description of the night, I touched on a few tendencies in Schulz's prose that this chapter is about to discuss more extensively. In comparing Schulz's linguistically constructed architectural representations with process-oriented architectural drawings, I look to elaborate on how literature and poetic constructs can complement architectural inquiry. I begin by establishing a connection to architectural drawings in the way that they are understood by Marco Frascari, who, as previously mentioned, was invested in the storytelling aspect of drawings and architecture:

> The idea of architecture is not a building, for architecture to exist in human consciousness someone has to draft a story. […] In this case, to write is not to know, but to produce something. In writing fairytales, authors do not know what is the crowning moment of magic in their story, but, saliently and sapiently, the authors fabricate the "magic in the story" by writing the story.[356]

Frascari is here arguing for the storytelling potential of architecture, a potential that is built through what he calls "non-trivial architectural drawings." The "story" and "fairytale" to which he is referring, are for him inscribed in such drawings—these are drawings that tell stories. My aim is to propose something of a mirroring of that relation such that storytelling can in fact propel as well as accompany drawings, while seeking to also preserve Frascari's underlying intention. Important also is Frascari's observation that the "magic in the story" is not known in advance but emerges through a process undertaken with patience, care and cleverness. With a focus on design process, I too advocate for the suspension of the known, in favour of the process that leads to, or discovers the work.

The aim of this chapter is to show how literary language can propel the imaginative process that is oriented towards architectural design. The focus here is representation in architecture—specifically how representational techniques have the capacity to draw out salient architectural preoccupations as well as to precipitate the process of design. The term "representational techniques" immediately conjures the drawing as the architect's primary mode of engagement—and rightfully so. My aim here is to propose literary language, as a potential technique of representation—one that expands the arsenal of the architect's imaginative tools and

[356] Frascari, *Eleven Exercises,* 12.

tactics of operation. I show that this expansion of arsenal into the medium of poetic language can prove especially productive in the territory of those issues that are not easily picturable yet remain central to the architectural task.

Architecture operates within an expanded matrix of values and priorities that are implicit, vaguely defined and at times contradictory—those elusive characteristics around which communities are built, and tend to gather under the designation of "culture." To make architecture is to make space for as well as to orient these commonly held values, memories and ambitions. (These in fact are the very motives that give rise to the need for architecture.) As such, central to the architect's task is an act of interpretation between these vaguely defined forces and the tangible material definition of the built environment. The argument I put forth here is twofold: that the literary imagination is especially agile in engaging these elusive characteristics; and that the literary imagination can propel the task of interpretation between these implicit, vaguely defined conditions and the material reality of the built environment. This, as I am about to show, is because at the level of design process, literary language sustains an element of earnest play that leads to discovery and inventiveness. I build towards this argument by weaving together Polanyi's tacit knowledge, Ricoeur's metaphor, and Gadamer's play, and by examining how Schulz's language builds up to what can be understood as architectural representation achieved through the medium of literary language.

By "architectural representation" I intend a direct parallel to the process of drawing, or rather the process of *drawing out* architecture. Such drawings may be explanatory but they do more than explain. They are oriented towards discovery, towards process, towards following hunches and courting intuitions and towards drawing out architectural knowledge. In his introduction to *Drawing Architecture*, Neil Spiller proposes that an audience might approach these drawings as being endowed with "donegality"—a term he borrows from Michael Ward. Quoting Ward's *Planet Narnia*, Spiller writes that "by donegality we mean to denote the spiritual essence or quiddity of a work […], its peculiar and deliberated atmosphere or quality…that the author sought to conjure, but which was designed to remain implicit."[357] As noted, this perspicacity to bring forth the implicit is of primary concern, although the main goal is to leverage this 'implicit' towards architectural discovery. Less of a concern is that these drawings

[357] Neil Spiller, Introduction to *Drawing Architecture*, guest ed. Neil Spiller, Architectural Design, September/October 2013, Profile No. 225 (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 15. Spiller is quoting Michael Ward, Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 75.

are made for a generic hypothetical audience, but instead they constitute the practice and practicing of architectural inquiry. Because they meddle in vaguely defined yet salient territories, such drawings operate like reinvigorating explorations into the unknown, are a counterpoint to reductivism and embrace multiplicity. Whether such drawings are ever intended to become buildings is less consequential than the fact that they sustain architectural thinking and discovery as a dynamic field of play. They open opportunities for thinking *with* and thinking *through* architectural questions rather than a thinking *about* architecture.[358] They operate as an "investigative device, a voyage of discovery, a series of glances into the future" as Peter Cook has written in his contribution to *Drawing Architecture*.[359]

When I call on "drawing" as a parallel to architectural representation that is constructed through language, the term "drawing" remains open and inclusive to any potential mediums that lead to *drawing out*—hand drawings as much as digital drawings, models, sketches, collages, sketch models, exploratory maquettes, etc. In the design process that leads to architecture, these "tactics for drawing out" capture something essential about the intentions that are to be transposed in the future architecture. In making them, there is as much an intention as there is a discovery and a recognition: the project presents itself to the architect who draws it out, or fleshes it out. Sometimes such drawings or gestures are revisited in later stages of the project as a check-in, to ensure that the final project, as it comes along with all its functional needs, still captures the distillate of those intentions. Sometimes such drawings count towards what's currently referred to as "research through making" or "research by design." This does not rule out what some might call, for better or for worse "paper architecture," which contributes to speculative research in architecture and enrich the imaginative depository of the discipline. Peter Cook's celebrated *Drawing: The Motive Force of Architecture* captures this critical and imaginative work of a whole generation of architects, showing how drawing is precisely "a motive force" in the discipline.[360] Even more recently, the work put forth by contemporary and

[358] This is also something that Marco Frascari has often articulated in his writing.
[359] Peter Cook, "Looking and Drawing," *Drawing Architecture*, 80.
[360] Peter Cook, *Drawing: The Motive Force of Architecture*, 2nd ed, AD Primers (Chichester, West Sussex, England: Wiley, 2014).

emerging practices continues to build onto, and reimagine the relationship between practice, drawing and other forms of making.[361]

Because this project focuses on design process and those tools and tactics that propel and catalyze imaginative momentum, it tends towards questions of pedagogy. I imagine it especially pertinent when thinking of design and architecture students who are learning to trust themselves and of professors of design trying to cultivate risk-taking, imaginative leaps, curiosity, and attentiveness to opportunities that present themselves along the way. As such, tactics that draw out architectural insights, cultivate discovery, and broaden possibilities for speculation contribute to what Marco Frascari has described as "non-trivial architectural drawings." Focusing precisely on architectural pedagogy and learning, Frascari writes that such drawings "are the very condition of architectural experimentations; they exist before all the other kinds of architectural experiences. […] They belong to a specific category of representation that makes architectural thinking possible."[362]

3.2 The Design Process is Rooted in Tacit Knowledge and Hermeneutic Play

Frascari points out that essential to what architects do is the "conjectural imagination" which he describes as operating through "analogies, homologies and demonstrative metaphors."[363] An important aspect of the conjectural imagination is, according to Frascari, that it "transcends professional boundaries." My goal is to elaborate this point that the conjectural imagination relies on imaginative leaps that *benefit* from cross-disciplinary knowledge—including, especially here, the crossing of disciplines with literature, history, and storytelling. This further means that the conjectural imagination relies as well on forms of knowledge that are tacit and not directly articulable. In relation to architectural drawings, Frascari notes that "most of the ideas and issues that are central and seminal to the essential make-up of architectural drawings remain strangely elusive and inexpressible in terms other than those used in the facture of the drawings

[361] In the last few years we have witnessed that major online architecture databases such as Architizer and ArchDaily have begun to organize architectural drawing competitions. Another prominent yearly competition, organized by Blank Space and running since 2013, is the Architecture and Fairy Tales which combines storytelling with fantastical world-building.
[362] Frascari, *Eleven Exercises*, 9.
[363] Ibid., 6.

themselves."[364] In other words, the knowledge that drives the making of architectural drawings, and architectural inquiry more broadly speaking, can be operative without being articulable. This is what Michael Polanyi has identified as "tacit knowledge."[365] Polanyi explains that tacit knowledge refers to the things we can grasp pre-reflectively, or the things we know before we can describe with precision. A situation in which we commonly use our tacit knowledge is when we decide on a gift for someone: We know for instance that a friend would find a particular sweater delightful. Even if we can't explain precisely why this is so, we know our friend sufficiently to sense the resonance to an object that would make an appropriate gift for them, or an object that would be grossly inappropriate. What is architecture if not a kind of gift to a particular community—a gift that is made by reading what is wished for and not said between the lines of what is?

Essentially, Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge brings to the fore that we "know more than we can tell."[366] He suggests that this form of knowledge is particularly useful when we are confronted with something more complex than our conception of it. Tacit knowledge is likewise operative in the way one understands those implicit and slippery predilections—characteristic of a community or a locale—that are salient to an architectural project. Tacit knowledge then refers to the discerning intuition that is operative both in understanding the basis of an architectural project, as well as in the imaginative process of its eventual design. In short, tacit knowledge, along with the conjectural imagination, is what we, as architects, call upon both to read a design situation and to act within it. Because by nature, design situations always overflow our conception of them, they also always harbour opportunities for discovery. Polanyi explains that we engage with such complex tasks, even if they are not completely within our grasp, because we intuitively know that they will lead us to new discoveries.[367] As such, we surrender to the fact that the task before us has the capacity to surprise us. This act of surrender to possibilities that are yet undisclosed, brings us to the notion of 'play' which I believe to be essential in propelling the creative process that leads to design. Hans-Georg Gadamer's understanding of play is instructive here because it is invested in the question of interpretation that is critical to the design

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[364] Ibid., 4-5.
[365] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
[366] Ibid., 4.
[367] Polanyi's *Tacit Knowledge* focuses in fact on scientific research, arguing that tacit knowledge is the basic personal intuition that leads scientists to discovery.

process.[368] Gadamer explains that in order for a game to exist, there must be something with a capacity to respond, something that appears "to do surprising things of its own accord."[369] The game is a reality that overflows the player's knowledge of what is possible: The player knows they are playing, "but he does not know what exactly he "knows" in knowing that."[370] The play then becomes primary. The result of the game is not pre-determined but it emerges in the act of playing. Here we have circled back to Frascari's "non-trivial architectural drawings", or tactics of representation that are generative because they do not show what is known in advance, but their making draws out new potentialities for seeing and knowing. Thus, at the core of Frascari's "non-trivial architectural drawings" is very much this notion of play as a dialogue for discovery.

As I already noted, what's at stake here is the task of translation and interpretation underlying the imaginative process that leads to design. This task is most aptly understood through the lens of hermeneutics. Tacit knowledge, the conjectural imagination, and the openness that is sustained in play are all oriented towards the hermeneutic task of invested interpretation. That architectural design is in essence an act of hermeneutics has been thoroughly discussed by architectural educators Richard Coyne and Adrian Snodgrass.[371] They draw on Gadamer's hermeneutics, to argue that "to design is to interpret," both with respect to understanding the context and the specificity of a given design task as well as in building towards a design proposition.[372] Extending Gadamer's notions of 'play' and 'dialogue' to architecture, Coyne and Snodgrass present the process of architectural design as a dialogue that a designer enters with a particular design situation. They argue that much like a dialogue between two interlocutors, architectural design is a game, the rules of which are not predefined but rather circumscribed by a particular context and circumstance.[373] They explain that when a designer projects certain anticipations, this is nothing like the verification and the falsification of a hypothesis: their anticipation is rather 'fulfilled' or 'disappointed'. If fulfilled, it builds and enriches the anticipations; If disappointed, it opens up new possibilities of interpretation. Thus,

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[368] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 106-35.
[369] Ibid., 110.
[370] Ibid., 107.
[371] Coyne and Snodgrass's study was already cited in the introduction.
[372] Gadamer's hermeneutics focuses on the study of historical artifacts and the interpretation of texts, which he argues, is always inflected with the context of a present in which a particular work is interpreted. Coyne and Snodgrass elaborate on how that same interpretive dialectic is at the basis of architectural design.
[373] Coyne and Snodgrass emphasize the disclosive function of the dialogue: "Whereas formal language is one at the disposal of the user, the language of authentic dialogue does not belong to the speakers, but rather possesses and guides them. Its function is not instrumental, but disclosive; it reveals understanding from within itself, and thereby serves as a medium that transmits understanding between the speakers." Coyne and Snodgrass, *Interpretation in Architecture*, 49.

like a dialogue, design is not simply a logical or deductive process that demonstrates or verifies a hypothesis, but a continuously unfolding horizon of understanding.[374] Coyne and Snodgrass make a point that in comparing the process of architectural design to that of play, one ought to bear in mind that the rules of the game that govern design "are not restricted to those which are explicitly formulated, but also include a multitude of unspoken rules deriving from the cultural tradition of the designer in general and from design tradition in particular."[375] Thus we note again that when it comes to design, the conjectural imagination and tacit understanding are multiplied and solicited on several fronts.

Overall, Coyne and Snodgrass present a thorough argument that the process of architectural design is inherently much like the way we use language in dialogue, that is, for the purpose of arriving at an understanding. In architecture, this understanding leads to the proposition of a design that is qualified by appropriateness rather than correctness. This process occurs within a field of interactions and is carried out via intuition, tacit understanding, and creative leaps that evade logic. Thus, the very nature of architectural design is that of 'play' conducted in earnest. This means that design decisions become apparent, they are 'drawn out' through this dialectic game. Play sustains a capacity for surprise, and thereby allows unpremeditated possibilities to disclose themselves. Thus, design understood as hermeneutic play orients the notion of design agency away from the designer and towards the dialectic of play: The design does not emerge fully formed in the designer's mind, but rather unfolds in the process of playing.

So far, I have presented architectural design as being rooted in a hermeneutic process of play that calls on tacit knowledge and the conjectural imagination. I have shown that these are operative especially towards the task of interpretation that is central to architectural design, a task that comes in sharper focus when considering the necessity of appropriate translation between the material constitution of the built environment and the matrix of subtle and implicit forces within which architecture participates. All of this thus far prefaces what is at stake in the process of architectural design in general.

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[374] Gadamer explains that in the process of hermeneutical understanding (of a historical text) involves a cycle of projection and revision: Before we begin a text we project meaning and expectation. This meaning is then continuously revised as we proceed through the text, leading to a perpetual cycle of anticipation and revision. Ibid., 36-7.
[375] Ibid., 67.

I now shift to discuss how literary language can contribute to this design process. As noted, Coyne and Snodgrass make the case of architectural design as hermeneutic play, by drawing parallels between the process of design and a dialogue that typically takes place through language. For them the dialogue in language and the dialogue between an architect and the design situation remain on parallel tracks. My aim is to show that language itself can participate to the process of design; that poetically deployed language can in fact both propel the element of hermeneutic play, as well as deftly engage those implicit characteristics of a design circumstance. This I argue, is because at the level of design process, the literary imagination is especially efficacious in engaging tacit knowledge and sustaining the conjectural imagination, through an element of play that leads to discovery. By "literary language" I mean language that is engaged poetically and imaginatively rather than language directed towards explanation. This is a loose and provisory qualification, as the line between the poetic and functional deployment of language is blurred and quite often determined by the circumstance in which it is deployed. What I mean by "poetic language" will become clearer shortly, as I discuss Ricoeur's metaphor. I do insist however that in practice, what qualifies as "poetic language" is ultimately at the discretion of the architect for whom the choice of literary text proves meaningful.

Johan Huizinga was amongst the first to memorably articulate that poetry and play are interconnected and that both are culturally consequential endeavours.[376] In his *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Huizinga, who also informs Gadamer's notion of play, outlines that play and poetry are not merely frivolous but a significant function of culture proper. In fact, Huizinga equates 'play' with 'poetry' and attributes to both an indispensable function in culture-making.[377] He writes that "[poetry], in its original culture-making capacity, is born in and as play."[378] For Huizinga, Gadamer, as well as Coyne and Snodgrass, play is not antithetical to seriousness but rather includes it. As such, the culture-making capacity of poetry, hermeneutic play and architectural design, imply a process that engages play *in earnest*. My goal is to show that literary poetic constructions have the potential to significantly heighten the element of

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[376] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture,* trans. unidentified (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955). Huizinga had wishes the subtitle of the book to be translated in English as "a study of the play-element *of* culture" which denotes that play is not merely nested in culture but is rather intrinsically of culture.

[377] "All poetry is born of play: the sacred play of worship, the festive play of courtship, the martial play of the contest, the disputatious play of braggadocio, mockery and invective, the nimble play of wit and readiness. How far is the play-quality of poetry preserved when civilization grows more complicated?" (Ibid., 129.) Huizinga is especially preoccupied with the spiritual and ritual dimension of play in archaic societies. Poetry thus includes hymns, incantation, sorcery, soothsaying, prophecy, etc.

[378] Ibid., 122.

earnest play during the architectural design process. I build towards this argument through Ricoeur's studies on metaphor and the literary imagination.

The claim that language is crucially productive towards the creative imagination has been most rigorously articulated by Paul Ricoeur. In his *Rule of Metaphor,* Ricoeur argues that the imagination is primarily linguistic, meaning that language is how we are able to construct images in the mind's eye, and to ultimately envision new possibilities for reality. According to Ricoeur, the 'metaphor' is the operative principle that challenges our understanding of reality, and thereby enables us to see reality otherwise. Ricoeur explains that the basic function of the metaphor is to bring together unexpected combinations of words that disrupt pre-existing assumptions about that which those words are expected to designate. In short, metaphors create a friction or a rupture in our ready-made assumptions about correspondences between world and language. This creates a gap, a kind of opening in which meaning is temporarily suspended and questioned. [379] This opening is generative because it prompts the imagination to construct new ways of understanding and of '*seeing as'*—and it is therefore achieved through an interplay between language and 'image'. A rudimentary comparison to this can be found in how one builds new muscle mass: When we exercise, ruptures in the muscle tissue prompt the making of new, stronger muscles. Thus, the metaphor as understood by Ricoeur, is productive in that it solicits the elasticity of one's imagination and creative powers, and thereby stretches our imaginative muscle. In all, the metaphor enables our imagination to see new potential realities, to creatively construct imaginative possibilities that do not yet exist. Ricoeur describes that this productive aspect of metaphor is "the function of fiction in shaping reality."[380]

If we connect Ricoeur's metaphor with Huizinga's understanding of play, we discern more clearly the close connection that Huizinga attributed between play and poetry. Like Ricoeur's metaphor, Huizinga describes that play temporarily steps out reality. An element of

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[379] Ricoeur is far from alone in treating the metaphor as more than an ornamental device. For instance, Octavio Paz and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have argued that it is a given aspect of language that between words and that which they designate the correspondences are not direct; that the word is *an interpretation* of the thing but it never completely contains or defines it. Octavio Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre*, trans. Ruth L. C. Simms (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1973). Maurice Mearleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1964). For Paz, this gap between words and the things they identify already qualifies the word as a metaphor of the thing. Furthermore, the meaning of words is nuanced by their syntax, the contexts in which they are articulated, as well as, George Steiner suggests, by that which is implied and by what is left unsaid. Steiner argues that it is precisely this indirect, and unstable nature of language, the 'weak' links between word and world that give language its strength, its inventive, expressive, and adaptive power. (Steiner, *After Babel*)

[380] Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, no. 2 (1979): 123-141.

tension is likewise part of play, in that the outcome is sometimes desired but never certain.[381] This suspension of reality is not "only pretend" because it induces in the players a highly immersed and participatory state that captivates them. Huizinga points out that etymologically "illusion" literally means "in-play" as it comes "from *inlusio*, *illudere*, or *inludere,*" with the root *ludus*, the general Latin word for 'play'.[382] We thus note that 'illusion' like Ricoeur's understanding of fiction and the fictive means something other than 'not reality', and that 'something other' in fact is revealed to have an operative capacity towards renewed visions of reality. Play, Huizinga notes, opens a temporary world within the ordinary world, which allows the players to participate in a reality more intense or augmented. In short, play opens a pocket that suspends ordinary life in order to actualize a world within a world. Similarly, Ricoeur's metaphor creates a tension between words that suspends habitual meanings and opens the possibility for new ways of seeing reality.

The parallel between Ricoeur's metaphor and the process of architectural design is obvious here: Both are concerned with new visions of reality. When architects design a space, they are imagining a future which does not yet exist; they project fictive possibilities that eventually condense into built works. This act of projecting possible futures is in effect an act of play conducted in earnest—a stepping out of what *is,* in order to imagine what is possible. It seems then that the productive potential of literary language, with the metaphor as its kernel, can equally propel the element of play in the imaginative process that leads to this world-making task.

[381] The list of games that Huizinga has in mind here is wide and it includes sports, contests, religious rituals, festivals, children's play etc.
[382] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 11.

3.3 On Architectural Representation: Literary Language Captures the Elusive with Precision

> The word connects the visible trace with the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared, like a frail emergency bridge flung over the abyss.
>
> For this reason, the proper use of language, for me personally, is one that enables us to approach things (present or absent) with discretion, attention, and caution, with respect for what things (present or absent) communicate without words. – Italo Calvino on "Exactitude"[383]

I have already noted that I am here looking to establish a connection between architectural drawings oriented towards process and discovery—Frascari's "non-trivial" drawings—and architectural imagery that is constructed via literary language. If drawings present their architectural knowledge in the realm of the visible, my intention is to show that literary language can bring into focus 'everything but' the purely optical that is salient to an architectural project. What language can do more easily than drawing is to bypass the realm of the optical while propelling imaginative vision. I show that all senses—sound, temperature, texture, smell, rhythm, reflectivity, etc.—are more effectively conveyed in language than they are in drawing. I show also that language can engage elusive norms, values, and human aspirations that are often implicit or irreconcilably ambivalent. In short, I argue, literary language allows us to present the elusive with precision. This is not the precision of sharp lines and measurement, but the kind of precision appropriate to intersubjective and tacit forms of understanding.

This capacity of language, I argue, is foregrounded by the fact that literary language relies on multi-sensory synesthetic and intersubjective capacity for *vision* rather than the purely *visible* which greatly expands on the visual aspect that so much governs drawings.[384] I am not at all claiming that the *visual* doesn't capture vision—my enthusiasm for the architect's drawings should betray as much—but rather that language can prolong the element of play, delay the

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[383] Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, 77.

[384] The differentiation between "vision," "visual," "visible" and "optics" is a tricky one as the senses are never separated. As Marco Frascari reminds us often, in architectural drawings between the visible lines of architectural drawings emerges the implicit which can only be brought forth as such, that is, vision emerges between the lines of the visible. What's at stake here for me is not necessarily that the optical image, as a default, doesn't sustain a capacity for vision, but rather that the lens of focus of the implicit can be wider and more layered with literary language.

casting out of architectural knowledge into the hardened defined lines of the drawing, and thereby sustain a potential depth of seeing and of engaging the implicit specificities that are occasioned by the architectural project. In short, linguistically constructed architectural images can hold the image in the mind's eye while maintaining the focused precision called for in those elusive characteristics not defined by sharp boundaries. I see literary language as being able to operate as the distillate, to help elaborate, or to complement drawing and all other forms of architectural exploration. I propose that literary language and storytelling can operate both in tandem with and in anticipation of generative drawings, or "non-trivial architectural drawings" as Frascari has called them.

All literature, storytelling, and myth inherently capture (and participate to) implicit values and ambitions that are important to the locale or community that gives rise to their existence. Because they participate to a cultural imaginary, all such linguistically constructed artifacts can be mined for architectural knowledge. What we get with Schulz's prose, is an exaggerated, nearly didactic demonstration of how literary language can propel world-making, sustain an element of play and maintain an openness of representation. The architectural imagery presented via his literary language, is able to capture elusive and atmospheric qualities of space while also remaining open to multiple possible interpretations, such that literary language proves especially efficacious towards the imaginative process that leads to design.

The task here is to unpack what about Schulz's prose makes it so salient to the architectural imagination, and thereby, how literary language might be best deployed towards architectural design. I pay special attention to two aspects of Schulz's prose that I have also identified to be important in design process: the element of play, and the act of interpretation across mediums. These occur both at the level of the two collections of short stories, and at the finer-grain structure of the text. I proceed by first examining the elements of play and interpretation in the overall collection of stories, and end by unpacking how Schulz constructs his architectural images via literary language.

3.4 Theatre & *Tandeta*: Play, Interpretation and Translations Across Mediums in the Construction of Schulz's Prose

It bears recalling that Schulz's creative imagination was at its core grounded on crossing multiple disciplines. He first studied architecture at the *Polytechnic Institute of Lvov*, which was interrupted by the outbreak of World War I. In 1917 he travelled to Vienna with the intention to resume his architectural studies there, but these appear to have been short-lived. While in Vienna he decided to abandon architecture and pursue instead a career as a painter and graphic artist. His first stories were born as letters to intimate friends whom he considered his intellectual interlocutors, and were not published as a collection until the 1930s. Throughout his life, perhaps even before he learned to write, Schulz sketched incessantly onto whatever scraps of paper and the margins of newspapers that were readily available. He earned his living teaching arts and crafts—including drafting, carpentry and painting—at the local high school of his native Drohobycz. This means that unlike most authors who describe architecture, Schulz's imagination was steeped in a daily tactile engagement with materials and craft processes. All of these interests and practices would have contributed to Schulz's distinct imagination as well as the idiosyncratic quality of his fiction.

The previous chapters brought forward that Schulz's overall body of work—discussed with his *Idolatrous Booke*—is invested in an interanimation that occurs between text and image. We noted that the stories themselves are closer to a tableau rather than plot: They build up meticulously layered imagery that describes an otherwise mundane quotidian in which nothing consequential actually "happens."[385] We have observed that both the stamp album and the tattered remnants of the almanac, or "The Booke," are meta-artistic artifacts that reflect on the collection as a whole, emphasizing the open-ended nature of the prose, and the importance of imaginative interpretation. We remarked as well the especially significant role of the reader who is solicited, or enticed, to engage with a restless text that never settles on a final and ultimate representation. As such, the primary experience of the prose is not an ultimate meaning but a

[385] The story "Spring" with its supposed thread of a political intrigue, can be seen as an experiment in breaking away from this tendency and actually attempting a semblance of a narrative plot. The quasi-plot surrounding Bianca however still remains punctuated by such insistent images that pool and eddy into tableaus that are tangentially connected to the overall story. The famous journey to the roots of spring, as well as the depiction of spring courtships taking place in the park are two such "tableaus."

game of imaginative interpretation in which readers becomes active players, who willingly adopt provisional roles and participate in constructing the imagery presented through language.

We thus recognize that those two elements that we identified as being important to the design process—interpretation and play—are already intrinsic to Schulz's prose on several fronts. More significantly, both interpretation and play also converge in the reader, who in our case is also the reader invested in architectural inquiry. In the last section of this chapter I hone in to examine how Schulz's games with metaphors build his depictions of architecture such that the reader becomes invested in co-creating the manifold architectural images that can be drawn out. I build towards this by first examining how the element of play is intrinsic to the way Schulz constructs his prose. At the basis of his imagery, including of course his architectural imagery, are the operative principle of the *tandeta*, and the pronounced trope of theatricality and masquerade. Both of these further illuminate the element of play that underscores Schulz's prose. They also lead us to understand how it is that Schulz engages language as a medium onto itself.

____ Theatre & Masquerade: A Multi-Faceted Enactment of Play

The element of play in Schulz's prose is most prominently enacted through an all-pervasive theatricality, which, following its meta-artistic inclination, also operates on multiple fronts. The prose consistently calls upon imagery of masks and theater: In "August," people are described to greet one another with a "grimace of heat—as if the sun had forced his worshippers to wear identical masks of gold."[386] In "The Night of the Great Season" the dusk is depicted as a plague that consumes faces in the crowd, turning them into shapeless spots which are then shed "one mask after another."[387] As both of these two images suggest, this theatricality is often performed as a highly circumstantial interpenetration between humans and world such that the boundaries between sentient and insentient forces, human and animal, image and figure of speech meld together in the theatrical performance. The actors are not only human. A whole chorus of beings, weather and seasonal phenomena, all seem to be taking part in a continuous staging of theatrical performances: During a hot and windless August afternoon, the acacias are observed to "rustle their foliage in a theatrical gesture, as if wanting to display the elegance of the silver lining of

[386] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 4.
[387] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 86.

their leaves."[388] In the Street of Crocodiles, "one has the impression that […] on either side the improvised masquerade is already disintegrating and, unable to endure, crumbles behind us into plaster and sawdust, into the storeroom of an enormous empty theater. The tenseness of an artificial pose, the assumed earnestness of a mask, an ironical pathos tremble on this façade."[389]

The abundant imagery of theater and theatrical performance also has a tendency to carry metafictive utterances. Upon closer inspection, it becomes noticeable that this trope of theatricality also encompasses the performance of the narrator. For instance, a gale is described at first as "an enormous black moving amphitheater." Further on in the same story, its authenticity is cast into doubt. Suggested is the possible exposition of mere theatrics:

> "[Perhaps] the gale and the night had surrounded our house with dark stage props and some machinery to imitate howling, whistling, and groaning? […] We were increasingly inclined to think that the gale was only an invention of the night, a poor representation on a confined stage of the tragic immensity, the cosmic homelessness and loneliness of the wind."[390]

A slight shift can be detected here, especially in the last sentence. Schulz is infusing the image of the gale with a self-reflexive commentary. By suggesting that the dramatic manifestation of a rainstorm was a shoddy imitation, he is also drawing attention to the artificiality of text before us: he is reminding the reader that they are experiencing the gale through the lens of literary construction. This commentary about the border between artifice and reality also operates as a self-conscious utterance on artistic endeavours: it reads like an admission that human efforts of mimesis are inherently doomed to merely achieve "a poor representation on a confined stage." Thus a tension is brought forth between what is presented and the process of presenting it: Smuggled into the image of the gale as theatrical performance is a self-conscious commentary that aims to lay bare the process of artistic creation—the perpetual striving to represent the human experience of the world, a striving that is ultimately doomed in all attempts to fully and adequately capture it. A less subtle instance of a similar metafictive utterance occurs in "A Second Autumn." Here the representation of a clandestine autumn is noted to betray the cheap artificiality of its theatricality:

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[388] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 4.
[389] Schulz, "The Street of Crocodiles," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 68.
[390] Schulz, "The Gale," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 78, 80-81.

> Autumn is a great touring show, poetically deceptive, an enormous purple-skinned onion disclosing ever new panoramas under each of its skins. No center can ever be reached. Behind each wing that is moved and stored away new and radiant scenes open up, true and alive for a moment, until you realize that they are made of cardboard. All perspectives are painted, all the panoramas made of board, and only the smell is authentic, the smell of wilting scenery, of theatrical dressing rooms, redolent of greasepaint and scent. […] And there is an atmosphere of feverish haste, of belated carnival, a ballroom about to empty in the small hours, a panic of masked people who cannot find their real clothes.[391]

This image allegedly describes a peculiar climactic condition the narrator qualifies as "a second autumn." The passage starts with the familiar condition of deciduous trees that change their colour and shed their leaves in a quick sequence that gives way to an unfolding of spellbinding panoramas. Schulz then collides this condition with multi-sensory images of a theatre's backstage machinations, and then begins to drift into an elaborate image of the theatre that confesses its inauthenticity. The passage can very much be read as a self-reflexive utterance on the artificiality of the text itself: The prose itself has been noted to behave as a sequence of unfolding panoramas, none of which are final, all of which are equivocal and given over to provisory theatrics and interpretations. That "no center can ever be reached" is by now an obvious signal that an ultimate ideal representation is not possible. The show is enchanting but towards the end it gives way to the anxiety of having lost one's "real clothes." We have likely already discerned that there is no such thing as "real clothes," that the only thing that is possible is the provisory mask, beyond which are further and further masks, all of which respond to the particular and fleeting circumstances to which these "masks" participate.

The trope of theatricality that is so pervasive in Schulz's stories reveals another layer: the prose is itself a mask for a self-reflexive and self-conscious commentary on human making and works of artifice. It isn't just the acacias, the wind, or the human crowds that put on masks and take part in theatrical play, but the narrating author himself betrays a similar connivance. Schulz states this overtly when, before embarking to tell the story "The Age of Genius," the first-person narrator addresses his audience directly to draw attention that the story he is about to present is akin to a theatrical performance. He confesses that "[t]he reader may have caught some of our stage fright: we can feel his anxiety. In spite of appearances our heart is heavy, and we are full of

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[391] Schulz, "A Second Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 221.

fear."[392] Notice how Schulz makes his reader complicit in this gesture that casts into doubt the text we are about to read: The narrator is plagued by stage fright. The reader is told that they are anxious and that this anxiety is palpable to the performing narrator. Together, both reader and narrator must proceed with keeping up appearances despite their distress and trepidation.

Stepping outside of the imagery in the short stories, in the famous essay to S. I. Witkiewicz, Schulz explicitly notes that theatricality operates as the underscoring reality of his prose. In the passage below he is reflecting on *Cinnamon Shops*, his first published collection of short stories:[393]

> *Cinnamon Shops* offers a certain recipe for reality, posits a certain special kind of substance. The substance of that reality exists in a state of constant fermentation, germination, hidden life. It contains no dead, hard, limited objects. Everything diffuses beyond its borders, remains in a given shape only momentarily, leaving this shape behind at the first opportunity. A principle of sorts appears in the habits, the modes of existence of this reality: universal masquerade. Reality takes on certain shapes merely for the sake of appearance, as a joke or form of play. […] A certain extreme monism of the life substance is assumed here, for which specific objects are nothing more than masks. The life of the substance consists in the assuming and consuming of numberless masks. This migration of forms is the essence of life. Thus an 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. [394]

In this often-quoted passage, the "reality" to which Schulz refers is ambiguous. Many critics read this as the reality the prose projects onto the world—the reality for which *Cinnamon Shops* is a recipe. It can also be interpreted that Schulz is discussing here the reality of his stories and that "the substance of that reality" is language. It is very much language intertwined with world that performs this "universal masquerade." I do however focus on language for the time being and come back to matter and world further on.

What is made clear here is that theatricality operates not only representationally and meta-artistically—by casting images of sentient and insentient characters partaking in theatrical play, which can be further read as self-reflexive commentary—but Schulz is in fact enlisting language to perform theatrically. This is a crucial aspect of how Schulz constructs his images,

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[392] Schulz, "The Book," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 128.
[393] "Cinnamon Shops" is also the name of one of the stories in the collection. The reader is reminded that in the English translation this collection of short stories has appeared under the title of a different story, *The Street of Crocodiles*.
[394] Schulz, "An Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz," in *Letters and Drawings*, 113.

including his depictions of architecture: His images are built by casting words in unexpected roles that promiscuously cross taxonomies of representation. What results are images that explicitly emphasize the materiality of language, together with a deliberate effort to loosen language from the duty of representation. This promiscuous theatricality of language is intertwined in Schulz's prose with the notion of the *"tandeta."*

____ *Tandeta:* Schulz's Literary Image-Making Engages Language as a Medium Onto Itself

The shoddy, imitative pathos of the gale, the cheaply-made poetically deceptive panoramas presented as the autumn's theatricality, and the trashy tattered remnants in which the child narrator recognizes his mythic booke, are all refractions of Schulz's "*tandeta,"* which Andreas Schonle has identified as the operative principle of Schulz's prose.[395] As we have just noted the *tandeta* operates at the level of the stories, but even more illuminating for this study is how it inflects the manner in which Schulz constructs his text, including his architectural imagery.

Schonle points out that "*tandeta"* is a Polish word that appears in Schulz's stories but is lost in translation. Provisionally, *tandeta* can be understood to refer to an object of cheap material that is also coarsely made. Quoting *The Great Polish-English Dictionary*, Schonle notes the translation for tandeta as "trash, rubbish, truck; trumpery; shoddy (goods)." He emphasizes however that "[none] of these translations is fully adequate and each of them is deceiving if considered individually."[396] The word's persistence in Schulz's text is not apparent in translation because the word lacks a direct correspondent in other languages and is translated differently in each context. Schonle unpacks the nuances of this multifaceted metaphor by first explaining that through a combination of the Polish word *tandeta* and the German word *Tand* one understands it to designate a shoddy object of common, unrefined craftsmanship that holds no value in the manner of high arts.[397] It suggests "low culture" goods, such as those sold at a fair. It also

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[395] Andreas Schonle, "*Cinnamon Shops* by Bruno Schulz: The Apology of 'Tandeta'," *The Polish Review,* Vol. 36, No.2 (1991): 127-44, University of Illinois Press on behalf of the Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences of America, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25778556.
[396] Ibid., 129.
[397] Schonle does not find it necessary to justify why the German word *Tand* is meaningful in this context. German was the language in which Schulz read all authors he cited to be his strongest literary influences (Mann, Rilke, Kafka). German was not only widely spoken in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire of Schulz's time, but it was the language spoken in the Schulzes' household, as it was his mother's first language.

suggests playfulness and frivolousness and it carries the spirit of a cultural artifact that is dispensable and has a mass-culture appeal. Unlike works of high art, the making of *tandeta* artifacts is not burdened by a self-conscious process but is rather carelessly and impulsively made. Schonle further notes that *tandeta* is associated with toys for children and with junky used things, such as one might find at a flea market. This also confers on *tandeta* the appeal of trash and treasure combined, alluding to an artifact that has outlived its intended function and has become more susceptible to imaginative re-appropriation. As noted, we have already encountered the spirit of the *tandeta* in the shoddy advertisements of the discarded almanac in which the boy-narrator Joseph recognized his long-lost mythical artifact of the living *Booke*.

In the Polish original, the word *'tandeta'* appears most often in the "Mannequins" cycle of stories which includes: "A Treatise on Mannequins; or, The Second Book of Genesis"; "A Treatise on Mannequins, Continued"; "A Treatise on Mannequins, Conclusion."[398] These stories can be read as a quasi-manifesto on human demiurgy. The manifesto is proclaimed through Jacob, the narrator's father, who is the central hero of Schulz's stories. He is described throughout the collection of stories as an inspired Heresiarch whose family has grown accustomed to questioning his lucidity and to underrating his imaginative prowess. Considered from the perspective of a metafictive reading, Schulz's narrator shares the self-reflexive utterances with the Father. Thus, presented through the questionable voice of Jacob, this quasi-manifesto is equivocal from the very beginning. Jacob's proclamations are impassioned yet impulsive and volatile. They could be read as conjectural propositions that push the limits of a thought experiment, oftentimes to the point of irony. The main narrator reinforces the dubiousness of Jacob's claims, by letting the reader know that he does not necessarily share Father's claims: "I don't know on whose behalf my father was proclaiming these demands […] As for us, we did not share these demiurgical aspirations."[399]

Jacob's vehement manifesto posits a doctrine for a "second Genesis," aiming to legitimize the creative impulse of a potential "human demiurgy" even if these ambitions are fated to remain imperfect in comparison to divine creation:

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[398] I am using here the titles of the most recent translation of Schulz's stories by M. Levine. In Wieniewska's long standing translation they are titled "Tailors' Dummies" with sub-stories "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis"; "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, Continuation"; "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, Conclusion." In Polish the three stories are clustered under the title "Manekiny" and their sub-titles are as follows: "Traktat o manekinach albo Wtóra Księga Rodzaju"): "Traktat o manekinach. Ciag dalszy"; "Traktat o manekinach. Dokończenie"

[399] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 32.

> "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 creation has paralyzed 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."[400]

Schonle positions Jacob's manifesto on human demiurgy as synonymous to an "apologia of *tandeta*."[401] Jacob professes that while "Demiurge was in love with consummate, superb and complicated materials; we shall give priority to trash (*tandeta*). We are simply entranced and enchanted by the cheapness, shabbiness, and inferiority (*tandetnosc*) of material."[402] He insists that the preferred matter of this "heretic demiurgy" are cheap, playful, scrap-like materials that no one would regret using frivolously, like papier-mâché, coloured tissue, oakum and sawdust. We notice here that these same materials are those used for imitation and illusions and are especially effective in making theatrical props. The materials of choice also recall those that schoolchildren might use quite recklessly. They are not precious and therefore can sustain uninhibited playfulness. This also ties back to the notion that *tandeta* refers to something that is produced without consideration for durability:

> "We are not concerned," he said, "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.[403]

An architecturally-minded reader might find troubling this blatant rejection of solidity and durability proclaimed by Jacob, especially given that Schulz calls on words that refer to tactile materials. I see in Jacob's enthusiasm for *tandeta* not a manifesto on the production of human works, but rather a manifesto on the creative process that leads to the design of such works. It is not the resulting architecture that is cheap, shoddy, and *tandeta*-like. In fact, the *tandeta* very much refers to a process of uninhibited play in which the materials used are not precious and

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[400] Ibid.
[401] Schonle, "Apology of 'Tandeta'," 130.
[402] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 33.
[403] Ibid.

therefore can be used freely and without regret. This is suggested in the attitude of delight that the seamstresses adopt towards the colourful scraps of leftover fabric: "The girls trod absentmindedly on the bright shreds of material, wading carelessly in the rubbish of a possible carnival, in the storeroom for some great unrealized masquerade."[404] Note their state of distraction and absentmindedness and the lack of inherent value of the material. The function of the fabric has been accomplished already in the making of the tailored items. Yet this dispensable throw-away material harbours a potential carnival: play is presented here both as outcome (the carnival) and as the process of realizing it (the girls' enthusiasm). The narrator proceeds to tell us that "their hearts, the quick magic of their fingers were not in the boring dresses which remained on the table, but in the thousand scraps, the frivolous and fickle trimmings, with the colorful fantastic snowstorm with which they could smother the whole city."[405] Over the premeditated and calculated task of dress-making *tandeta* thus foregrounds play and delight in the unanticipated potential of residual, dispensable material. This preferred material, like the fabric used for the boring dresses, has already performed its intended function and is no longer a valued commodity.

This playful engagement with dispensable materials towards new discoveries seems to be a satisfying enough philosophy to relate back to the process of design. This is a conclusion not without merit. Yet this manifesto for human demiurgy becomes especially poignant when we consider that the material that is being referred to is in fact *language*. As Schonle puts it "*tandeta* acquires its most perfect realization as literature."[406] Thus understood, the creative freedom of this human demiurgy is accomplished through this cheap, *tandeta*-like and commonplace medium of language. In reflecting that the matter most pliable and dispensable without regret is that of language, Schonle posits that *tandeta* constitutes a literary paradigm for Schulz, and it contributes to the idiosyncratic poetic aspect of Schulz's storytelling. Thus, the metaphor of the *tandeta* underscores the particular way in which Schulz constructs his prose.

This interpretation that the material and substance of Jacob's human demiurgy refers to language, is further accentuated if we connect back to how Schulz described the restless substance that characterizes the reality of his prose, in his essay for S. I. Witkiewicz: "Reality takes on certain shapes merely for the sake of appearance, as a joke or form of play. […] The life

[404] Ibid., 28.
[405] Ibid.
[406] Schonle, "Apology of 'Tandeta'," 135.

of the substance consists in the assuming and consuming of numberless masks."[407] Here we note a resonance with Jacob's claim that the creations of human demiurgy are only needed to adopt provisory roles, that they shall be "temporary, to serve for a single occasion."[408] What the essay makes clear is that the reality of the prose is not just composed of dispensable, shoddy masks, but that there is a movement and a metamorphosis at play. Schulz is essentially articulating an intentional approach by which language becomes animated, rendered into a substance that is unstable yet generative. Here we notice a close correspondence to what Ricoeur, decades later, will have outlined much more thoroughly with his study of metaphor: that the metaphoric construction destabilizes assumptions about the meaning of words so that they become generative, so that they open up new ways of seeing and imagining. In Schulz's literary universe this occurs with an unbridled exuberance. One can describe that what Schulz wishes to accomplish with language is something of an alchemy: To bring together words such that the resulting prose behaves like a living tissue. This connects as well to Schulz's essay "The Mythologizing of Reality," where he notes that "in the course of time the word becomes static and rigid, stops being the conductor of new meanings." He describes the work of the poet as "[restoring] conductivity to words by new quasi-electric tensions" to the effect that this would sustain what he again calls the *life* of the word: "The life of the word consists in tensing and stretching itself toward a thousand connections."[409] Counter to this mercurial potential of language are words that appear to be static, rigid, and predictable because they have been reduced to a prescribed, prosaic function. Limited by this particular function, they forfeit their currency and potentiality to spark new meanings. If we look back to the "idolatrous" scene that takes place between Father and Adela, precisely within the "Tailors' Dummies" cycle, we can understand it as a meta-artistic image that presents Schulz's approach to language and Form: Adela, with the power of prosaic pragmatism turns Jacob, the inspired "heresiarch", to a stiff and rigid automaton—she brings out something inherently there: his "vestigial automatism."

To briefly re-iterate, we are unpacking how Schulz uses language as a medium onto itself in order to construct his imagery, especially his architectural imagery. The notion of the *tandeta* has been understood as the operative principle in his prose, which, if connected to architectural design does not result in shoddy, carelessly constructed artifacts, but reflects an imaginative

[407] Schulz, "An Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz," in *Letters and Drawings*, 113.
[408] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis," in *Street of Crocodiles*, 33.
[409] Schulz, "Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 115.

process that can be undertaken through the medium of language. In this process, ordinary, banal and dispensable words become playfully activated and charge each other towards new representational and imaginative possibilities. Yet more can be said still with respect to how the *tandeta* engages the material of language and what specifically it means to say that Schulz uses language as a medium onto itself.

It was noted earlier that the *tandeta* implies an element of illusion or trickery which recalls theatre and carnival, but that it is also constructed rather coarsely which brings forward its artificiality. Schonle points out that *tandeta* imitates form, but doesn't completely merge with it. The carelessness of its construction thus highlights the materiality of the object that is made. While it aims at illusion and is fundamentally imitative, *tandeta* also maintains a level of honesty with respect to its materiality—it doesn't disown its materiality. Like in a theatrical performance, the audience is aware of, as well as immersed in, the illusory status of that which is unfolding before them.

This participatory aspect of materiality is expressed as well in Jacob's apology of the *tandeta*. Jacob vehemently asserts that matter itself takes on a creative role, insisting on an interdependence between human creation and the matter or the material through which this creation is accomplished: "'There is no dead matter,' he taught us, '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.'"[410] Jacob passionately exalts matter and attributes to it a restless creative impulse, suggesting a creative dialogue between matter and the human aspirations for demiurgy:

> "The Demiurge," said my father, "has no monopoly of creation, for 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, tensions build up, attempts at form appear. The whole of matter pulsates with infinite possibilities and send dull shivers through it. Waiting for the life-giving breath of the spirit, it is endlessly in motion. It entices us with a thousand sweet, soft, round shapes which it blindly dreams up within itself."[411]

The above suggests that the creative fertility of matter is on the same level to that of *The* Demiurge, and thus implies a status above the "lower sphere" of human demiurgy. Matter is

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[410] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis," in *Street of Crocodiles*, 31.
[411] Ibid.

already "endlessly in motion" and, in fact, seduces and entices the creative instinct of the meager human demiurge, who has the tendency to become paralyzed by the perfect creation of The Demiurge. This dialectic between human creation and matter, brings up an important discussion with respect to creative agency—it connects back to Gadamer's notion of play, which suspends what is known in favour of a dialogue that leads to new understanding. I eventually argue that in the design process this dialectic extends beyond the materiality of language, to include the play that an architect might take on in their engagement with a particular material. For the moment let us focus on how language, the matter of Schulz's prose, takes on an active role in constructing the *tandeta*-like imagery.

In order to understand the role that language-as-material plays in the making of Schulz's images, it is instructive to look at Schonle's comparison between the tailor's dummy (mannequin) and the waxwork figure. Both the mannequin and the waxwork function as representations of a human, and both are discussed in Jacob's apologia for a heretic demiurgy. Schonle explains that while the waxwork is motivated by the accurate visual representation of a human, it is enslaved by this motivation and thereby it forfeits its own materiality. The dummy on the other hand, does not aspire to emulate a materiality other than its own. While it is a stand-in for a human, it also sustains an identity on its own terms. This identity is intrinsically linked with the fact that its materiality comes to the fore. Jacob's treatise on human demiurgy clearly conveys this passion for matter: "Demiurge, that great master and artist, 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 each gesture, behind each move, its inertia, its heavy effort, its bearlike awkwardness."[412] All of this reiterates the observation that *tandeta* maintains a sense of honesty because it does not disown its materiality or its existence as a work of artifice, but in fact celebrates it.

In contrast, the waxwork fulfills the one rigid function of representing a particular human, and it is reduced to this function—which ironically aspires to be "realistic." In his proclamations, Jacob laments the fate of waxwork figures: "Can you imagine the pain, the dull imprisoned suffering, hewn into the matter of that dummy which does not know why it must be what it is, why it must remain in that forcibly imposed form which is no more than a parody? Do you understand *the power of form, of expression, of pretense*, the arbitrary tyranny imposed on a

[412] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies, Continuation," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 33.

helpless block […]"[413] The waxwork thus remains forever constrained by the form and semblance of one particular human and it cannot be anything other than this inflexible representation. The wax, or the material of which it is made, is subservient to the function of a realistic representation that is imposed upon it from without: it pretends to be human skin, eyes, etc. and is therefore reduced to this function. There is nothing about the wax as a material that contributes to the expressiveness of the representation: it is at all times representing something other than what it is. This sort of "pretense"—as Jacob calls it—is non-existent in the mannequin whose head consists of a simple wooden knob. In contrast to the waxwork, the tailor's dummy—a representation of a human reduced to a canvas bust and a wooden knob—can be called upon for multiple other roles. Note also how, in comparison to the waxwork, the mannequin takes on a much more active, in fact domineering, role in what unfolds:

> Carried on their shoulders, a silent immobile lady had entered the room, a lady of oakum and canvas, with a black wooden knob instead of a head. But when stood in the corner, between the door and the stove, that silent woman became the mistress of the situation. Standing motionless in her corner, she supervised the girls' advances and wooings 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 could be, and sent them back to work again and again […][414]

An interesting paradox is at play here: the dummy is a copy of a human that does not try to masquerade as a material other than what it is, and in maintaining this honesty with respect to its materiality it can be imagined to take on multiple roles. Even within this brief scene: she is "a silent immobile lady," then becomes "the mistress of the situation," an unremitting "silent idol" and finally a "female Moloch," the gruesome Hebrew-biblical idol connected to child sacrifice. Because the mannequin does not faithfully represent the human but instead is predicated by the material of which it is made, because it does not posture to be what it is not, the mannequin remains open to interpretation – it can quickly and easily "[assume] and [consume] numberless masks." The mannequin obliges not the *realism* of that for which it is a stand-in, but in foregrounding the *reality of the material* of which it is made, remains open to multiple possibilities of being. The life of the waxwork ends at its dutiful representation of one particular

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[413] Ibid., 35. (my emphasis)
[414] Schulz, "Tailors' Dummies," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 28.

human and it feeds nothing to the imagination – it cannot be anything else. The mannequin can be called upon to take on other roles: It can be imaginatively re-interpreted. In other words, the mannequin is a form of representation that remains suggestive and therefore offers imaginative momentum in the creative process of writing, and towards the aspirations for human demiurgy.

Let us identify what's in fact at stake here: the "life" which we are discussing here is not the life of the waxwork or the dummy, but the life of the (human) imagination which is itself propelled by revitalizing the "life" of language though its *tandeta* performance, or, by enlisting it to take on awkwardly-fitting temporary roles. Schulz is speaking about a potentiality to propel the creative imagination when he writes that the "substance of [the reality of his stories] exists in a state of constant fermentation, germination, hidden life."[415] The intrinsic characteristic of *tandeta* and of Schulz's prose is the power of its suggestiveness and the openness of its interpretation.

____ "In the Image and Likeness of a Mannequin"

In Jacob's tractate, the mannequin is not only a metaphor for a creative process that engages the agency of matter. It is in fact the model and idol for this heretical demiurgy. Notice how the passage that describes the mannequin-Moloch, included just above, mirrors the scenes in *The Idolatrous Booke*: The tailor's dummy is presented as the implacable idol. The seamstresses take on the role of the idolaters, performing a kind of supplicant, prostrating ritual while the silent idol remains impervious to their courtship. At the culmination of his treatise, Jacob proclaims that the ultimate aspiration is "to create man for the second time, in the image and likeness of a mannequin."[416] This proclamation occurs in the story entitled "A Treatise on Mannequins; or, The Second Book of Genesis" and the "image and likeness" (*na obraz i podobieństwo*) explicitly refers to the original Book of Genesis in which the Hebrew god creates man in his "image and likeness."[417] Thus the mannequin is not only the idolized figure in the dress-making ritual, but in Jacob's heretic demiurgy, it also replaces the God of biblical Genesis as a model for the making of man.

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[415] Quoted earlier. Schulz, "An Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz," in *Letters and Drawings*, 113.
[416] Schulz, "A Treatise on Mannequins; or, The Second Book of Genesis," in *Collected Stories*, 27. In the Penguin edition Wieniewska's translation "in the shape and semblance of a tailor's dummy" doesn't fully capture the connection with the biblical creation story. I remind the reader that "*Collected Stories*" refers to Madeline G. Levine's translation of Schulz's prose.
[417] Van Heuckelom, "In Defense of Idolatrous Creativity," 77.

We have spoken of the mannequin as a representation of a human only to discover that for Schulz, the heretic creation of human demiurgy—or the second(ary) act of genesis, the one performed on the lower sphere of creation—it is the human that is re-made in the image of the mannequin. If we follow Jacob's tractate along Plato's Demiurge, we note that Jacob's heretic demiurgy, is even further degraded in its removal from reality: it is at least one step below art, which merely accomplishes appearances of appearances of Platonic Forms.[418] This has already been obvious with Schulz's *The Idolatrous Booke* which presents copies of familiar works of art—a tactic that as we have seen, has multifaceted implications and interpretations. Another aspect of the *tandeta* constructions of Schulz's prose is the tendency to give themselves away as copies of other images, as shoddy, second-grade imitations of other works of human artifice: In "August," the acacias in market square "looked with their bright leaves like the trees on old tapestries."[419] In "Cinnamon Shops" after the boy-narrator has just attended Professor Arendt's nightly art classes, he observes how the milky diffused light of a snow-covered night "was like the gray paper of an engraving on which the thick bushes corresponded to the deep black lines of decoration."[420] The narrator reflects that "[the] night was copying now, at that late hour, the nightly landscape of Professor Arendt's engravings, reenacting his fantasies."[421] In another instance, the narrator describes the coach journey to a typical summer holiday in the countryside: "Like the yellowed pages of an old fable, the landscape became paler and more brittle […] In that windy nowhere, […] we might have ridden to the limits of time and reality […] – an immobile coach on large wheels, stuck in the clouds of a parchment sky; an old illustration; a forgotten woodcut in an old-fashioned, moldy novel […]"[422] In "The Night of the Great Season," at a given moment, the sky "resembled those in old murals, full of monsters and fantastic beasts, which circled around, passing and eluding each other in elliptical maneuvers."[423] During a spring dusk, a park scene focuses on the flirtatious rituals of youths in which the narrator describes that

[418] Scholars have commented on the connection to Plato's Demiurge on the basis that Jacob's manifesto suggests this connection in putting forth an apologia for a heretic demiurgy. A slightly lengthier treatment of Jacob's heretical demiurgy in relation to Platonic metaphysics can be found in Van Heuckelom, "In Defense of Idolatrous Creativity," 78-80.
[419] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 4.
[420] Schulz, "Cinnamon Shops," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 58.
[421] Ibid.
[422] Schulz, "My Father Joins the Fire Brigade," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 211-2.
[423] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 92.

"the park quickly fills with pink varnish, with shining lacquer that makes every other color glow deeper."[424]

These images present a tendency of Schulz's prose to borrow from a variety of pictorial and graphic traditions, to seemingly describe not reality as given, but reality as it is filtered through other works of human artifice such as engraving, mural, painting, etc. This can certainly be read as a meta-artistic gesture that self-consciously brings forth the mediated nature of any form of representation. This iconic layer also contributes to an overall effect of an image left open, a representation that is delayed. Similar to the *tandeta*, the materiality of the image is emphasized, by drawing attention to the fact that the image is a tapestry, engraving, or parchment. This tactic further interrupts and postpones what it is that the reader is supposed to "see," thereby engaging the reader in a game of searching for the image amidst all the suggested material, objects, textures, etc.[425]

In addition to the borrowing from pictorial and graphic traditions, it is also possible to read into Schulz's imagery certain correspondences to specific artists and writers. As was already shown in the previous chapter, Schulz's prose constantly presents imagery that call on other literary works, as well as mythical and biblical stories. Such an example are the paintings of Ignacio Zuloaga, the Basque Spanish painter who has been quoted amongst Schulz's most loved.[426] Like Schulz's imagery, Zuloaga's paintings are highly theatrical and are characterized by a dramatic articulation of the sky. In a number of what amounts to meta-artistic utterances, Schulz's narrator explicitly tells us that reality is derivative of art: "Autumn looks for herself in the sap and primitive vigor of the Dürers and Brueghels."[427] The strange meteorological conditions of a "second autumn" are explained as having a "secondary, derivative character […] which is nothing other than the result of our climate having been poisoned by the miasmas exuded by the degenerate specimens of baroque art crowded in our museums."[428] This story especially presents *mimesis* as inverted, such that it is *physis* that which imitates, falls prey to, and is infected by the creative ferment propelled by human artifacts.[429]

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[424] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 158.
[425] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 107.
[426] Jan Zielinski, "Zuloaga (Rilke?) Schulz," in *(Un)masking Bruno Schulz,* 251-65.
[427] Schulz, "Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 325.
[428] This passage is also easily identified as a meta-artistic utterance by which the author lays bare the very tricks of composing the work. Schulz, "A Second Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 219.
[429] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 101-3.

Overall, Schulz's prose has a tendency to be rendered through the lens of other works of art—his imagery consists of copies of other human works of artifice. These images are built via a promiscuous interpenetration between text and image, an interanimation between language and visual mediums of representation such as tapestries, engravings, parchments, murals, paintings, etc. Like the prints of *The Idolatrous Booke* this foregrounds that every artistic creation is in fact mediated and artificial. It also highlights that our perception as readers and viewers is never neutral but it is always formed by an expanded imaginary of other works that we have seen and read which further shapes how we see the world around us. In short, in Schulz's work, reality imitates art. Or, our vision of the world is filtered through and also renewed by other poetic ways of seeing and interpreting the world. Even if we "usually regard the word as the shadow of reality," Schulz tells us, the opposite is in fact more accurate: "reality is the shadow of the word."[430] This predisposition can be read both as conferring on human artifacts a denigrated status (forever condemned to be a second-rate imitation), but also exalts human artifacts as the very medium for poetic re-appropriation and re-imagining of reality.

Next I pay attention to those passages in Schulz's prose that describe architecture and spatial conditions. I examine how Schulz constructs his metaphoric images and how he engages language as a medium of architectural representation. I show first how Schulz's *tandeta*-driven prose leverages the dispensable nature of the matter that is language in order to build up architectural imagery that operates as mock-ups, or models, of architectural representation. No different than Schulz's general tendency to constructing images via language, the images that describe architectural conditions are restless and open to multiple possible readings. This openness solicits the reader to actively participate to their making, and thus instills an element of play in the process by which one imaginatively "sees" these restless images.

[430] Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 116-7.

3.5 The Matter of Language and The Element of Play: Architectural Representation in Schulz's Prose[431]

We have noted that the allure of the *tandeta* is that it is not precious so it can be used frivolously and without regret. For Schulz, who was also a graphic artist, painter, and taught carpentry, language is very much a common, dispensable medium that allows for unencumbered creativity, for the testing of possible realities. The *tandeta*-quality of language extends to how Schulz builds his imagery such that he solicits the material qualities of language. We have noted to be significant that *tandeta* does not disown its materiality, it fosters ambivalence and undermines any expectations of unequivocal truth-claims. The substance of the stories – language – acquires a life of its own and is thereby freed from the instrumental task of representation. Schulz does this by placing language in temporary and slightly inappropriate roles, by asking language to perform in unexpected, awkward scenarios that tamper with its representational function. This is emphasized through the multiple modalities in which he constructs metaphors that proliferate, stratify, are exaggerated and multi-layered. This *tandeta*-like structure of Schulz's prose produces a text that is textured and restless, resulting in images that are instilled with an effervescent potential towards multiple possible readings and interpretations. With each reading, the imagery that is depicted emerges in a new light and sparks new meanings. In essence, the *tandeta* prose of Schulz's stories has the effect that propels the reader's imagination to construct the imagery presented through the text. Recall that the "special kind of substance" of Schulz's stories—as described in the "Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz"—is not *the* reality of his prose, but is rather a *recipe for* reality. What Schulz is referring to is the fact that the *tandeta*-like character of his text—the restless quality of the imagery, the crowding together of ordinary words that take on temporary roles—invites the creative interpretation of the reader.

I now turn my attention to how Schulz's literary language builds up depictions of spatial and architectural conditions. I unpack a number of these architectural representations by observing how through the *tandeta* and his specific metaphoric constructions Schulz uses language as a medium onto itself. My aim is to show how these linguistically constructed architectural images engage the architect's tacit knowledge while sustaining an element of

[431] A partial, earlier version of this section was published in Anca Matyiku, "Architecture Drawn Out of Bruno Schulz's Poetic Prose," in *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience*, eds. A. Sioli and Y. Jung (New York, London: Routledge, 2018), 114-22.

openness and of play which propels imaginative possibilities in the process of architectural design.

As I am about to examine how Schulz's prose offers itself as a form of architectural representation that is constructed via literary language, I remind the reader that my focus is directed towards the imaginative process that leads to design. My interest is in what gets extracted, uncovered, or *drawn out* in this process of "drawing" with language. As noted at the outset of this chapter, the basis here is that architecture participates to a layered imaginary, a complex multiplicity of subtle and implicit values, norms, desires and ambitions that are critical to the architecture that is needed because it is critical to the community or locale for whom the architect is called on to project a future architecture. At stake here is that design process requires an engagement with subtle yet critical forms of knowledge. It also requires a discerning interpretation between this subtle and implicit knowledge and what is, in contrast, the measurable material reality of the built environment.

Typically, architectural design is accomplished through visual or tactile processes such as drawings or models. While these are invaluable tools, they are predisposed towards the visual and the well-defined, both of which tend to overpower the more subtle and implicit qualities that come to bear on architectural projects. I argue that literature can engage, more deftly than drawings, this matrix of implicit yet elusive qualities that are vital to the future architecture. In no way do I mean to undermine the rich potential of architectural drawings, but rather suggest that literature operate in tandem with drawing, as a tactic towards architectural design. To start, I suggest that literary texts—whether written by the architect or appropriated from another author—be used towards *and* together with drawing in the process of finding the future architecture.

Two aspects of architectural design have been identified as being particularly demanding of the architect's perspicacity: The first has to do with engaging the subtle forces and qualities that underscore architectural projects. Here we can think of atmospheric qualities that are sought in the eventual architecture. (Imagine for example the task of designing a soothing space for mourning, or a space that captures the feeling of a fresh start). We can however equally think about circumstances that confront us with ambivalent, at times self-contradictory predicaments. (For instance, consider the delicate question of how architecture ought to respond to the need for punishment and rehabilitation of crime, especially given that blame, responsibility and justice are

at once tangled up with global questions about human rights and inherently specific to a given community.) The second demanding task of the architect is to leverage and build onto these subtle forms of knowledge towards the physical materiality of architecture. (ie. What gets built, in turn conditions, perpetuates and/or enables how delicate circumstances are managed, leveraged or whether they are ignored.) By examining how architecture is presented in Bruno Schulz's fiction I pay attention to how Schulz's particular linguistic constructions engage these two aspects that demand of the architect a discerning shrewdness. To be clear, I do not propose that one should draw new architecture from Schulz's prose. Instead I look at how his literary language performs a "sketching", "drawing" or "mock-up" of those architecturally-implicated qualities that are less easily rendered visually. My aim here is two-fold: One, to show that literary language is especially agile in handling the particular precision that belongs to the elusive and the implicit. The other is to show that literary language can propel, precipitate and catalyze a process of imaginative play in which architectural possibilities suggest themselves. In the examples that follow, we extract architectural imagery to observe what Schulz's manipulations of language offer to architectural conditions that are *in the process of being imagined,* in the process of being drawn out.

Through Ricoeur's extensive studies on metaphor, fiction and narrative, we have noted that literary constructs stretch the imaginative muscle and sustain an element of play. We have grasped that more than an ornamental device, the function of the metaphor is to generate a tension between words and their supposed designations, a tension that compels us to construct imaginative ways of seeing and re-envisioning reality. As such, Ricoeur demonstrates, fiction and the fictive are not merely *reproductive* of reality but are in fact *productive* of new potential realities. Ricoeur's studies enable us to link the literary imagination to the process that leads to architectural design and to argue that literary constructs can be fruitfully enlisted in the imaginative process that leads to architectural design.

If Ricoeur's metaphor is a kind of operative base unit for re-describing reality, Schulz's prose goes even further: It has a tendency to dislocate words from their presumed direct or accurate representation of the things that they purport to designate. This is precisely how Schulz's language can be understood to perform theatrically. In soliciting language to take on unlikely roles, Schulz's metaphoric constructions are augmented or exaggerated to such an

extent that they problematize the assumption that language is referentially transparent. His metaphors are multiplied, exaggerated and inverted, taking on multiple modalities and dialectics.

____ Catachresis: The Improper Metaphor Captures Atmospheric Precision

The 'catachresis' is the most prevalent manipulation of metaphor in Schulz's prose. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'catachresis' as "the improper use of words; the application of a term to a thing which it does not properly denote; the abuse or perversion of a trope or metaphor."[432] Schulz's language constantly performs acrobatics across and between "proper" categories of representation. He creates dislocations between words and their depictions, which leads to unexpected cross-contaminations and synesthetic interchanges. He often uses words that refer to palpable and visceral experiences—shapes, objects, textures, tastes, temperature—to describe ephemeral and intangible experiences. Consider an example from the story "The Age of Genius". It describes Shloma, the town's petty criminal, stepping from the barber's shop into an empty market square, soon after his "usual" spring release from prison. I underline the instances in which catachresis is most pronounced:

> Having come down the steps, he found himself completely alone on the edge of the large, empty square, which that afternoon seemed shaped like a gourd; like a new, unopened year. Shloma stood on its threshold, gray and extinguished, steeped in blueness and incapable of making a decision that would break the perfect roundness of an unused day. Only once a year, on his discharge from prison, did Shloma feel so clean, unburdened, and new. Then the day received him unto itself, washed from sin, renewed, reconciled with the world, and with a sigh it opened before him the spotless orbs of its horizons. […] He stood at the edge of the day and did not dare cross it, or advance with his small, youthful, slightly limping steps into the gently vaulted conch of the afternoon. A translucent shadow lay over the city. The silence of that third hour after midday extracted from the walls of houses the pure whiteness of chalk and spread it voicelessly, like a pack of cards.[433]

The architectural setting for this scene is an empty square in the early spring, at Easter time. We are given the words 'gourd', 'unopened', 'edge', 'conch', 'chalk', 'pack of cards'. These words are used within a completely unexpected and inappropriate context. They call upon very concrete

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[432] *Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.* "catachresis." (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28665?redirectedFrom=catachresis#eid)
[433] Schulz, "The Age of Genius," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 136. (my emphasis)

objects in order to describe formless things such as silence, a particular afternoon, an "unopened year", "an unused day." This "abuse or perversion" of words is essentially a manifestation of the *tandeta*: The words chosen but shoddily and clumsily fit the roles in which they are cast. Because of this, their materiality is brought to the foreground and actively contributes to the texture of the image that is presented. For instance, we are told that silence—and this is the silence characteristic of that afternoon hour—is capable of extracting "the pure whiteness of chalk" from the walls of houses. One could say that the catachresis in this sentence builds an image that echoes the purifying effect of divine forgiveness that is imparted at Easter. This purity is however chalk-like, powdery, and threatens to disintegrate—much like the thief's integrity. The silence then spreads this chalky forgiveness like a pack of cards: it is dealt like fate, or maybe like chance, like fortune-telling or a gambler's game. It prompts the reader to ask whether it is ever possible for Schloma to escape his predicament and if he really is to blame for his petty crimes. The scene paints Scholma's hesitation and ambivalence: He *might* dare to make the initial step—a step that is both youthful and slightly limping—into the square, and tamper with "the perfect roundness of an unused day," which is in fact already more than halfway passed. The chances for another round, for a clean slate, are belated like Schloma who is forty yet child-like and spends most of his life in prison. This unlikely collection of words actually construes an image of remarkable atmospheric precision: one of a hopeful anticipation mixed with hesitation, tainted by the premonition of another judgment that seems to be pre-emptively enacted in the tribunal of market square. This precise atmosphere is not merely presenting a fleeting "mood": It brings forth irreconcilable questions and contradictions that surround the politics of punishment, incarceration, forgiveness and blame-casting. This passage is able to capture, with remarkable agility, ambivalent, contradictory attitudes towards a particular situation: the empathy mixed with resentment one feels for the thief; Schloma's hope for the future mixed with the resignation of a fate he has not been able to yet escape. Such murky irreconcilable dynamics between of socio-political values and aspirations are often at the very core of why architecture is needed.

I have already noted that one of the most compelling yet trickiest aspects of the architect's work is to engage with such subtle nuances of spaces and delicate predicaments that can be ambivalent and self-contradictory. Recall also that the dominant tools of practice and of learning architecture—most typically drawings—favour the visual and only with much less ease can they express the wide range of elusive qualities that come to bear on the built environment.

With this in mind, let us take a moment and imagine a drawing that an architect would make of market square. Such a drawing would very likely focus on the visual and the measurable physical mass of the constructed elements. It would take a lot of effort for a drawing to be as expressive and atmospheric as the above passage. Even if the medium and execution of the drawing could effectively capture the ambivalent relationship—between the thief's renewed chance, his likely predicament, and the broader questions of judgment, punishment and rehabilitation that are brought forth in this passage—this would likely still need some manner of linguistic articulation to be fully expressed. This brings me to one of my main arguments, which is that language can render how architecture is entangled with these intangible, implicit and delicate nuances much quicker than drawing and in a way that is much more explicit. Furthermore, I suggest that should one endeavour to make such an expressive drawing, the literary passage could focus and anchor its intentions; it could operate as a mockup for the atmosphere that is intended. One could approach this drawing by focusing, as I did, on 'silence', 'chalk', and 'pack of cards' as anchors. One could also begin by focusing on the qualities brought forth by 'gourd', 'unopened year', 'the roundness of an unused day', and by the image of Schloma at once 'gray and extinguished' as well as 'steeped in blueness'. This is demonstrative of how Schulz's prose is constructed such that it remains open to multiple possible readings. This is also a clear example how the reader is solicited, even enticed, to play an active role in the making of the image, such that with each reading new potential images are be brought forth.

Going back to the architectural representations in Schulz's prose, we move on to another example rich in catachresis, the startling misuse of words. The following passage comes from a depiction of the home during a certain stretch of weeks that are remembered for their ambience of "mournful drowsiness":

> We were beset again from all sides by the mournful grayness of the city which crept through the windows with the dark rash of dawn, with the mushroom growth of dusk, developing into the shaggy fur of long winter nights. […]
>
> Beds unmade for days on end, piled high with bedding crumpled and disordered from the weight of dreams, stood like deep boats waiting to sail into the dank and confusing labyrinths of some dark starless Venice.[434]

[434] Schulz, "Tailors' Dummies," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 25-26. (my emphasis)

The reader is once again given words for tangible substances that transgress expected categories of representation: 'dawn' with 'rash', 'dusk' with 'mushroom growth', 'winter nights' with 'shaggy fur'. Although unlikely, these pairings render the sensation of dread and lethargy remarkably palpable. Krzysztof Stala notes that through the tactic of relieving words from their usual taxonomies, Schulz's words become animated; that they "wander freely" and begin to form unexpected connections.[435] This dislocation, Stala argues, can at times render the image more precise. For example, while the simile between beds and boats might seem forced, it relieves the word 'bed' from commonly held associations and it actually focuses the image of the bed as a vessel for a journey into the world of dreams. This is what Stala identifies as "*ostranienie*" or a defamiliarization produced by a kind of "spot-metaphor" involving a depiction of the object (bed) via specific qualities of a different object (boat).[436] This focused experienced of the bed as a vessel is further elaborated with the simile of sleep as a labyrinth, which in being further connected to Venice, confer a fluid, watery character onto the nightly labyrinthine wanderings undertaken while dreaming.

____ Periphrasis: The Proliferating Metaphor Tunes Architectural Intentions

Another notable aspect in the passage above is the way the image of the house is built up a series of metaphors that are making repeated attempts to name the same thing: the hostile mournfulness that creeps into the house; the dark rash of dawn; mushroom dusk; winter days growing into shaggy fur. This layering of metaphoric images is another of Schulz's linguistic manipulations—the aforementioned 'periphrasis'. This is the metaphoric construction that most contributes to what has been noted as the textured, painting-like quality of his prose. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'periphrasis' refers to "a figure of speech in which a meaning is expressed by several words instead of by few or one; a roundabout way of speaking; circumlocution."[437] Krzysztof Stala describes Schulz's periphrasis as a restless language that has the tendency to proliferate and does not settle on a final representation. This layering produces a playful ambivalence of meaning: it generates an "overgrowth" of imagery. Yet, it should also be noted that not one of these multiple possible images fully carries the task of representation. The effect

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[435] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 31-9.
[436] Stala borrows this term from W. Shklovski. Ibid., 87-8.
[437] *Oxford English Dictionary, s.v.* "periphrasis." (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141026?redirectedFrom=periphrasis#eid--)

is that the images the reader conjures in their imagination mutate and multiply with every reading. An ultimate and unequivocal version cannot be pronounced and so the language sustains an openness of signification. The prose emerges as textured tableaus that are meticulously constructed and appear to immerse the reader in an insistent act of observing. They offer the imagination an inexhaustible capacity for extracting multiple possible images of spatial conditions. Once again, we notice another facet of the reader's active role in conjuring the image. Even with the reader's participation, the image is always restless, refusing to settle on a final and ultimate representation.

Let us revisit the connection between drawing and linguistically constructed architectural imagery. Let us pretend that we are in an architectural drawing workshop and we are given the task to draw a space. The only direction we are given is that the space take on a somnolent atmosphere appropriate for mourning. For some, this might be sufficient to incite a whirlwind of architectural imagery. For others, the task would seem daunting at first—as happens often enough at the beginning of architectural design. It is quite likely that the task would appear less impenetrable if we were instead invited to draw a space for mourning, that might be reminiscent of a blotchy, itchy light at dawn, mushroom growth that slowly turns into shaggy fur. If we were in fact to begin this drawing, would most of us think it appropriate to draw mushrooms and shaggy fur? My guess is that if we did, this hypothetical drawing workshop would seem quite uninspired. What these metaphors reveal is that for Schulz, the architectural imaginer, languidness and mourning share something with mushroom-ness, weighty dreams, a furry shagginess that might belong to the winter night, and so on. The actual drawing—and the future architecture for that matter—exist somewhere *between* all these qualities. What the space becomes not only depends on the architect's sensibilities and interpretation but very much solicits them. To restate this another way, it is unavoidable that this imagery *has to be interpreted,* in order to be translated into the architecture. As we might recall, this act of interpreting qualities that are slippery to grasp is our primary focus. Once again, while the imaginary possibilities seem countless, the atmosphere sought for by the text is unmistakable.

It is important to remark that this task—of expressing the furry shagginess of the winter night into an architectural condition—not only *requires* interpretation but it also *facilitates* it. By itself, the proposition to "design a languid space for mourning" is rather abstract. The further description that this atmosphere shares something with "mushroom fur" and the "dark rash of

dawn" instills an element of playfulness in the process of achieving this task. I elaborated earlier on the fact that 'play' conducted in earnest is understood to be an essential element in how one approaches architectural design. I believe that it can enable the architect to engage those very slippery atmospheric conditions and their participation to multifaceted and delicate predicaments. Because these elements do not benefit from sharp definition, the task solicits an architect's discerning intuition, or the tacit knowledge described by Michael Polanyi. Tacit knowledge, as we have discussed earlier, refers to the things we can grasp pre-reflectively, or the things we know before we can articulate with precision. In the case of our example, we *tacitly know* that there is some sense in the coupling between a languid atmosphere and the image of a fuzzy mushroom dusk. Even though it is not completely straightforward to explain why exactly this is so, this pairing seems unproblematic. Not only is it unproblematic but we accept it because we sense in it a potential to propel the task of imagining this particular space. This potential that is perceptible yet non-articulable opens a dialectic of earnest play: We recognize that in engaging with the metaphors conjured by Schulz—of a mushroom growth paired with dusk; the shaggy fur paired with long winter nights; etc.—these will lead us to discoveries in our task of creating a somnolent space for mourning. Thus we notice that the metaphoric utterance propels imaginative play. In the process, the architect suspends decisions and engages instead in a dialogue which recognizes in the interpretive task a capacity to lead to possibilities that are yet undisclosed.[438] In other words, if an architect is looking to express the furry shagginess of the winter night, she is in fact postponing design decisions yet focusing her intentions—she is engaging 'play' in earnest. In the process, the architect would be more inclined to discover architectural elements or details that would not have been obvious at first.[439] Imagine for instance a generic architectural element such as a window, a door-handle, a bench, or a light fixture. These could be anything at all, yet in suggesting that they contribute to an atmosphere that has the character of shaggy fur and winter nights, the playfulness of this suggestion has the potential to propel creative reconsideration of

[438] This again, echoes Gadamer's notion of 'play' which, as discussed earlier, has been shown by Coyne and Snodgrass as inherent in the architectural design process.

[439] For another take on how architectural details might tell a story and contribute to architectural character, see the article mentioned in the introduction, Frascari, "The Tell-The-Tale Detail" in *Via 7: The Building of Architecture,* 23-37. Frascari's main point here is that the detail, rather than the plan, might take on a more generative role in the design process and towards the eventual architecture. He exemplifies this with Carlo Scarpa's deployment of generative details, or details that tell stories. Similar to the drawings that tell stories, Frascari does not go as far as to suggest that literary language or storytelling can propel the architect towards such details, which is a point that I make here.

these generic architectural elements, leading to a design that is more appropriate to the specific architectural project.

Let us take a moment and notice that this cluster of metaphors, this poetic utterance, captures tacit knowledge in a way that explanatory language cannot—not yet, and not fully. The whole point of tacit knowledge is that it bypasses articulation, especially when we are confronted with a task that is more complex than our conception of it—an aspect we have already ascertained about architectural design. We notice then that poetic language trumps discursive language in this capacity to draw forth implicit forms of knowledge.[440] In short, poetic language can cultivate the essence of a project without having to articulate it.

____ Metaphors Interlace Across Disciplines: A Quasi-Rehearsal for Architectural Practice

Circling back to Schulz's fiction, we noticed that the playfulness of his architectural imagery often involves seemingly misplaced and mildly absurd choices of words—as in the examples of the catachresis. In the case of the periphrasis, it is manifested in the restless imagery that seems to mutate and multiply with every reading. It is also important to point out that in his depictions of architecture, his choice of architectural words is quite minimal. In fact, his metaphors have the tendency to interlace into what Stala has identified as chains of metaphors or "metaphoric nets." These nets have the tendency to cross over between disciplines and thereby "extinguish" the literal meaning of what is presented.[441] In the previous example, we noticed the biological, animal-like metaphorical cluster that was layered onto the image of the house in order to conjure the experience of dread and drowsiness. In other instances, such as the introductory passage that described a July night, the cross-over of disciplines is reversed and architectural language performs metaphorically. In the example that follows "a new still-empty house" is solicited for its smell and sonority. The passage does not in fact describe an actual house, but the sensations accompanying a particular time period in which the possibility of a fresh start was palpable.

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[440] I remind the reader that when I discuss the agility of language to convey architectural imagery and to draw out architectural knowledge, I am specifically referring to language that is engaged poetically. Throughout this project I use 'literary language' interchangeably with 'poetic language' to recall this fecund aspect of language that can be harnessed towards architectural inquiry.

[441] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 86.

Before we examine Schulz's passage, let us once again revisit our hypothetical drawing workshop. Let us imagine that we are asked to design a space that effectively conjures the atmosphere of a fresh start. Perhaps it is a space that stimulates learning in children, or a space for someone starting a new chapter in their life. I ask the reader to imagine themselves beginning to sketch, in their mind's eye, a first gesture towards what this space might be. The only prompt is that this space capture this invigorating, hopeful excitement towards the future. Let us take a moment and imagine this space.

Once the reader has settled on a first gesture, I invite them to the same imaginative task. This time, I accompany the prompt with a passage from Schulz's prose that conveys a similar promise for a new beginning:

> The mornings were strangely refreshing and tart. From the quietened and cooler flow of time, from the completely new smell in the air, from the different consistency of the light, one could recognize that one had entered a new series of days […]
>
> Voices trembled under these new skies resonantly and lightly, as in a new and still-empty house which smells of varnish and paint, of things begun and not yet used. With a strange emotion one tried out new echoes, one bit into them with curiosity as, on a cool and sober morning on the eve of a journey, one bites into a fresh, still warm currant loaf.[442]

This is an imaginative exercise that I have tried with multiple crowds. Schulz's passage has often been greeted with a smile, especially for those who have become willing players in this game of imagining a space for a fresh start. The reader may have likewise noticed themselves finding images in their mind's eye both more swiftly and with more enthusiasm for this task. The enticement to play this game of imagining this particular space starts with the metaphors that disrupt our ready-made assumptions about skies, houses, currant loaves, etc.

Notice the startling juxtapositions that are presented here: a new empty house is instilled with new and resonant skies; the action of biting into an echo, one that is accompanied by a strange emotion full of curiosity; a fresh, still warm currant loaf that tastes like the specific sober morning on the eve of a journey. Notice also that most of the qualities that are called upon here are not visual, yet they are quite evocative. A space is opened in our mind's eye in which architectural possibilities emerge: one begins to imagine textures, the way materials might

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[442] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 84.

absorb or reflect sound and temperature, the quality of light, the sonority of materials. Even certain colours emerge, even though colours are not mentioned.

(I for one am fairly certain that my version of this space ought to include splashes of pinks, corals, and soft orange – the colour of red and soft-pink currants rather than those of black currants. The black currant comes in as well, because its dark, opaque, slightly fuzzy skin, along with its intriguing tartness carries that sensation of curiosity mingled with a strange emotion. My first instinct is that something in this space, perhaps something that gets touched a lot, is made of hard, dark wood, but overall the space itself is brighter and more sonorous. I know also that there are reflective surfaces that catch glints of light but they also quite easily become warm in the sun. The sun also ought to animate this space, and ideally it does so in the morning and in a way that is deliberately articulated to play with reflections and shadows. Likewise, I know for certain that in my version of the space, there is no place for the shaggy fur and dusty, musty mushroom-like somnolence of earlier. In other words, I am already making decisions about materials that are appropriate or not appropriate, based on the qualities that are important to this task, as is focused through the literary text.)

It is important to point out that this linguistically-conjured representation of a future possible space is very precise in the atmosphere it seeks to capture but it doesn't literally describe what that space looks like. The power of this passage is that each reader and each architectural imaginer will come up with a different space. There is not one "correct" design but many "appropriate" designs. The image is both specific but flexible for interpretation. The same we noted with the previous excerpt holds here: this literary construction of the space not only *requires* interpretation but it also *facilitates* it. Note that the difference between the two prompts is that the first relies solely on the general requirements of a project. By itself, the proposition to "design a space for a fresh start" is rather abstract. The further description that this atmosphere shares something with the sensation of "biting into an echo" and "a fresh, still warm currant loaf" instills an element of playfulness in the process of achieving the task of interpreting the prompt into an eventual spatial experience. If we once again imagine that we are composing a drawing of this space, we tacitly recognize that there is a creative opportunity in the coupling between the atmosphere of a hopeful new beginning and the sensation of biting into a tangy, still warm loaf that's bursting with the intriguing flavour of currants. We can't explain why this metaphor seems appropriate, but we certainly sense that this strange juxtaposition of experiences,

conjured via language, sparks new possibilities for what this space might be. We would not be likely to literally draw these "things", but we would begin to interpret this imagery into rhythms, or textures, the quality of light, sound, and so on. This brings us back to Gadamer's notion of 'play': the metaphoric construction is experienced as a catalyst to a playful dialectic between the designer and the suspended reality of the image produced by Schulz's proliferating metaphor. A designer can sense that should they engage in the game of interpreting the literary image—of the currant loaf amidst a cool flow of time when "things begun [are] not yet used" and under resonant skies—design opportunities will present themselves in the process. Thus, the result of this game of imagining the space is not pre-determined but it emerges in the act of playing. This element of play is very much in earnest: as with all architectural projects, there are significant social and cultural consequences to whether the designer effectively accomplishes the experience necessary with that particular space. There is no denying that the stakes are high if for instance we imagine that this might be a learning space for children, a halfway house, or a rehabilitation center.

As we have observed, the metaphorical leaps presented in our short passage are especially rich in catachresis and periphrasis. The synesthetic interchange is particularly pronounced: skies are new, inside a house, and cause voices to tremble; one is asked to imagine the sensation of biting into an echo which in turn tastes like a still-warm currant loaf that's being eaten precisely "on the eve of a journey." The fact that Schulz is performing these multiple cross-overs and transpositions merits closer examination: His imagination is soliciting those very subtle sensibilities that are necessary to interpret between the elusive and concrete elements of architecture. An interesting parallel to architectural practice can be discerned here: It could be said that Schulz is carrying out this act of interpretation through language. In other words, the metaphoric constructions could be understood to constitute part of an architect's "practice": a quasi-rehearsal for the performance of interpretation and translation across mediums. I take this further to suggest that this practice—performed in the medium of language—hones an architect's ability to engage the 'tacit knowledge' that was mentioned earlier.

To briefly recapitulate, we have observed how Schulz's exaggerated metaphors build up architectural images that convey those elusive aspects of space with remarkable precision. This is an important although typically not a straightforward task for an architect. We have also

observed that Schulz's periphrasis effectively conjures those elusive, atmospherically charged spatial qualities, and yet the imagery remains open to manifold possibilities for interpretation. Within this layering of metaphors, words are dislocated from their representational function. Rather than representing the words themselves, a potential architectural space builds up *between* the words and inspires the architect's imagination and interpretive effort. It is essential to note that Schulz's language does not operate as a means to an end; it does not attempt to *describe* architectural spaces as if they were drawings. As discussed through the principle of the *tandeta*, Schulz's language is not subservient to visual representation but it operates as *a medium onto itself*. If one considers the suggestion that language and drawing both operate as tools for architectural design, the language does not *serve* the drawing but it functions on its own terms. While drawing is an especially efficacious medium for expressing the material constitution of a future architecture, literary constructions have proven especially deft at conveying the immaterial and implicit forces that come to bear on the architectural project.

We have thus far insisted that the material for Schulz's *tandeta* "second-rate" creation is language. Yet there remains something to be said about Schulz's tendency to build his metaphors by calling on words that refer to mundane objects. In doing so, Schulz not only frees language from its referential function but also subverts the utilitarian functionalism of the objects that he enlists in his image-making. In short, his metaphoric treatment doesn't stop at language but it extends to the familiar world itself and thereby also extracts creative possibilities from the quotidian materiality that is otherwise taken for granted. I elaborate on this by first noticing in Schulz's prose how the metaphoric treatment of the world itself occurs via (de)gradations of reality and ranges of suspended disbelief.

3.6 An Interpenetration Between Language and World: Schulz's Metaphoric Treatment of World and Matter

In his study of the paradoxes of representation in Schulz's prose, Krzysztof Stala identifies what he calls "two fundamental strategies toward reality, two complementary projects of *mimesis*."[443] On one hand is a "negative" strategy, an apparent disintegration of the world, or what Schulz has

[443] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 111.

called "loosening the tissue of reality." This strategy manifests as a dispersion of reference between language and world which the reader experiences as an undermining of stability and identity. On the other hand, is a "positive" strategy of metaphoric realization which "unveils new worlds, new ways of being in the world, new configurations."[444] The overall effect of Schulz's techniques of representation is what Stala calls "an undermined ontological security" which suspends "the reader's beliefs in the presupposed truthfulness of the represented world."[445] What is striking to me is how much Stala's reading of the two complementary strategies recall the operative effect of Ricoeur's metaphor. To put all of this another way, I propose that Schulz's tactic of representation is performing a metaphoric operation not only on words but also on the world that we take for granted: on objects, landscapes, and human beings. Schulz is in effect tampering with our assumptions about reality, not just our assumptions about words and their functional designations. In doing so he brings forth an intimate interdependence and interpenetration between language and world. His representations of reality operate on multiple levels of suspended disbelief. Scenes that are likely real (a depiction of the city during winter), morph into, or are interspersed with, scenes that are fantastical, mythical, surreal, fairy-tale-like, etc. (uncle Edward it transformed into an electric doorbell, Father is described as taking on the characteristics of a cockroach, an opulent overgrowth of vegetation takes over rooms that are forgotten, then dissipate without a trace). Even the scenes that are supposedly "likely realistic" are often constructed through highly promiscuous metaphors such that the borders are continuously blurred between the metaphoric use of an image, and the presentation of an unlikely, fairy-tale-like occurrence. For instance, "last year's loaves of bread [that are cut] with blunt knives [and] without appetite" are metaphors that in fact describe a series of winter days that are "hardened with cold and boredom."[446] In the same story, the unattractive blanket of snow that covers the city is likened to a "threadbare, meager tablecloth" that is full of holes.[447] Here the metaphoric image is built through the poetic juxtaposition of words as well as the texture of the image they call upon. "Bread", "blunt knives", "threadbare tablecloth" are not describing those very things but rather give the reader a taste of the stale boredom. It is fairly clear that the metaphors here, even if striking, are conveying a believable situation: the atmosphere

[444] Ibid.
[445] Ibid., 112.
[446] Schulz, "Birds," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 19.
[447] Ibid.

characteristic of those particular winter days. On the opposite spectrum of suspended disbelief is the story of Father who, in "dividing his death into installments" eventually turns into a crab, is cooked by the family, and yet manages to escape so that his death remains equivocal. In a similar instance, uncle Edward willingly submits himself to Father's scientific experiments and becomes transformed into an electrical door-entry bell. These make-believe occurrences bring the reader into the realm of the child's suspension of disbelief, one in which the adults in the stories are unperturbed by the turn of events. We can describe these instances as ones in which the world itself is undergoing metaphoric treatment—humans and everyday objects are de-familiarized and estranged. The reader's attitude towards these passages is similar to knowing that a child riding a broom isn't really riding a horse although we also willingly indulge the child in this make-believe play and even spur it on.

What's more, Schulz's prose doesn't only present reality on these two spectrums, but also tampers with multiple gradients in-between. There are passages that are ambivalently both and neither of these two conditions. In an early morning hour glaring with sunshine, Father is described to flatten and merge with the façade of the house, like many other fathers who have "become the concierges of their own gateways."[448] A few moments later, "he wrenched himself away, regained a third dimension and, made human once more, freed the metal-framed door of the shop from its bolts, bars, and padlocks."[449] Here Schulz is first presenting an image that can be read as a poetic rendering of the interdependence between the home and the memory of the father: that the facades of houses absorb the countenance of their fathers which their sons will later recognize. Schulz then proceeds to break-up and scatter this metaphoric image by telling the reader that this merging into the façade "actually happened" which we know because father re-emerged from the façade, regained his three-dimensionality, and tended to the practical needs of his shop-keeping business. In another instance, the colourful images depicted on stamps from distant lands are described to lift from the pages of the stamp album and inf(l)ect the hackneyed world with surges of fantastical possibilities. In this case, reality is seen anew through an imaginative appropriation that is obvious and exaggerated (ie. we know that the stamps don't "literally" lift off the page and beget wondrous objects and fantastical landscapes before our eyes, but we also understand how they can spur on such a fertile imaginative outpour). Stala

[448] Schulz, "Dead Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 223.
[449] Ibid., 224.

describes Schulz's prose as a play with "grades" and "densities" of reality, which tampers with the reader's expectations about their relationship to the represented world. The prose presents "various semi-, and quarter- realities, the creation of worlds that "hang" on metaphor, on imagination, on desire, on jokes." Stala goes on to note that this "manifoldness of the modalities of being [is what] altogether makes an individual, idiomatic trait of Schulzean poetics."[450]

This mischievous playfulness of Schulz's (re)presentations of a supposed "reality" can be traced to the premise of the prose itself: the narrator is a philosopher-child figure, who is at times replaced by the exuberant father-heretic figure. The text oscillates between insightful, attentive, and quasi-philosophical presentations of mundane occurrences, and pockets in which a child's vision of the world erupts and takes over the prose. What we then understand by the metaphoric treatment of the world itself is Schulz's tactic of presenting objects, beings, etc. as removed or smuggled out of their familiar context. This can be observed at all "grades and densities of realities" in Schulz's laboratory. Blunt knives and stale bread build up the sensation of boredom and indifference; the crab that once was Father leaves one of its cooked legs in the "congealed tomato sauce"; "the great corvette of Guiana, exploding with all its sails" lifts off of a colourful stamp and sails across the sky; Colosseums and multi-layered labyrinths emerge from and/or build up the fertile substance of the night. All of these images, regardless of the "grade" of the reality they represent, call on familiar, tangible things and beings that are uprooted from their habitual context.[451] They are cast into roles that subvert and undermine their pragmatic "functionalism" and, like Ricoeur's metaphor, amplify the sense of estrangement and suspend reality in order to propel it towards new possibilities. In Stala's assessment, "the known, "domesticated" world (object, human beings) is displayed as the "alien", other world; as if seen or experienced for the first time. A fundamental otherness, estrangement of the world, is the primary condition for its creative disclosing."[452]

A direct parallel to Ricoeur's metaphor—which vivifies the stale meaning of words by disrupting their representational function—is thus transposed onto the reader's relationship to the world and the so-called reality that is represented. Mundane objects are shaken out of their utilitarian duties and instead become "autonomous entities endowed with stratified levels of meaning [whose] "suchness" has been revealed; they cease to be transparent objects-

[450] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 112.
[451] Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles*: "Birds," 19; "Father's Last Escape," 311; "Spring," 165; "A Night in July," 107.
[452] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 113.

supplements, they become the "subjects" of sense, the pivot that sets in motion a play of meaning."[453] This offers another glimpse into how the Schulzean "principle of universal masquerade" is actualized: people, places, objects and even weather phenomena, dismiss their preconceived identity or function (their ready-to-hand-ness as Heidegger would put it) in order to take on "momentary roles" and participate to a theatrical play that Schulz casts out.[454] "They are all objects from daily life which, deprived of their ordinary utility, serve as catalysers of fabulative power, provoking new events, becoming kernels of new realities, or pre-texts of quasi-philosophical discourses."[455] As we have already observed several times, the reader equally takes on a participatory role in this imaginative game of discerning Schulz's multilayered, ever-shifting images.

The fact that Schulz's prose exhibits an amplified multimodal interlacing between language and world means that both participate to imaginative re-making. In one sense, we keep in mind that the "objects" and overall reality of Schulz's prose are manifested through language. As we have just observed, Schulz's prose also presents the world as such, to be capable of disclosing creative potentialities—and I come back to this at the end of the chapter that follows. Returning to the conversation of architectural representation as process and as creative unfolding, we observe, with renewed strength how literary language, world, and matter are entwined in this generative "tissue of reality" as Schulz has called it. Process-oriented architectural representations—Marco Frascari's "non-trivial" drawings—that are articulated through the medium of literary language thus propel the creative imagination not only as living images in the mind's eye, but as active re-imaginings of our tactile engagement with matter and world. In short, "non-trivial drawings" composed through language are never constrained by this medium but always reach into the world of matter, of mundane reality, and have the potential to precipitate creative making in all of its material and imaginative modes of architectural inquiry.

[453] Ibid.
[454] Stala makes the connection between Heidegger's ready-to-handnesss and Schulz's prose. Ibid., 114.
[455] Ibid., 116.

Recess 3

Language, Imagination, Process

We just noticed that Schulz's distinct metaphors tend to call on words that describe tactile, often mundane objects and experiences. We noted that this results in an estrangement and a creative disclosing of the world as an "otherness" that propels imaginative possibilities. In short, Schulz's prose highlights how poetic literary language can perform a metaphoric treatment of the world itself, which gains potency especially when considered from the perspective of design and architecture—and all those disciplines that concern themselves with the handling, re-making, and crafting of worldly material artifacts. With the student projects, this connection between the literary imagination and making has been much easier to discern in the fabrication courses. Here we saw direct links between queen Pesiphae's fallen tooth, the feeling of desperation, and actions of gouging, scraping, and casting. We also spoke about the ghostly presence of one hundred and more translucent gloves both animated and endangered by rain, wind and sunlight in memory of the feared and revered voodoo priestess. With both *Project Daedalus* and *The Artificer Kingfish* the stories or literary texts—which in all cases included literature as well as creative texts written by the students—not only distilled the students' architectural focus but became suggestive of craft-processes and material explorations. This conversation on the interpretive leap between the text and the constructed artifact is more productive following the fourth chapter. I focus here on how literary writing operated in the process of design as a complementary medium of architectural representation. Thus the design studios offer an opportunity to reflect not only on the imaginative process, but also on the kinds of literary texts that proved more fertile towards this task.

The Literary Imagination in Representation and Process: Studio Billy the Kid

As noted earlier, the prompt for students to "write" a character who existed on the border of the law followed an invested engagement with a wider constellation of cultural and literary artifacts centered around Billy the Kid. Michael Ondaatje's text—*The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*—was essentially the underlying force in the students' projects. I noted already that I understand my choice of this particular literary work as a deliberate design decision that I built into the studio coordination. Ondaatje's text is a thoughtful creative interpretation of Billy the Kid's life story. Built on historical fragments and testimonies, the text moves between poetry, prose, and interspersed archival fragments. I chose the text because it has architectural immediacy: It presents a beautifully crafted narrative that inhabits the visceral experience of what life would have been like for Billy, moving through the unforgiving, violent, sun-drenched landscapes of the Wild West. It also conveys these experiential qualities of the landscape in a way that dispells ready-made romanticized ideas about the Wild West. The first half of the semester, which consisted of a series of exercises that introduced students to the rudiments of beginning design—composition, hierarchy, model-building, plaster-casting, and so on—were developed with Ondaatje's text as an anchor. With the final project—a parasitic hideout space sited in a Denver alleyway—students were asked to articulate their inhabitant or "client" through a creative text. They were asked to design this hideout for a modern-day Billy, or someone who operated on the border of the law.

My directive for this creative text leaned heavily on my observation of Schulz's prose: That the text would not replace what can be drawn but rather complement it, and focus thus on qualitative, experiential qualities that might also unfold in both time and space. I emphasized that students focus on specific details rather than general or broad statements. I also asked them to focus on qualitative details such as sounds, texture, smells, rhythms, etcetera rather than focus too heavily on the potential plot—a focus on "how" rather than the "what." I steered them away from describing the character and asked them to focus instead on imagining the character in specific circumstances. In tune with the sense of literary text-as-complement-to-drawing I also steered them away from describing spaces. I asked them to focus on experiences and events—not so much the "who" or "what" of things, but rather what these "do"—and to describe them with as much fastidiousness and qualitative detail as possible. In short, the texts were meant to trace

out those aspects of architecture that are not immediately picturable, while drawing out the students' own interests and intuitions. What I observed is that, even with Ondaatje's text as a guiding example, the steering and nudging does not necessarily guarantee the projected outcome. With the Billy the Kid studio, the creative texts that the students wrote did not inform the design as closely as was the case with the fabrication elective. Likewise, the efficacy of the creative text towards the design process was less obvious. Students had difficulty with composing the text, even with my insistence that they articulate experiences and qualities rather than ideas. Many texts, even though well crafted, still tended towards philosophical meditations or ideological rhetoric. In a telling instance, one student wrote a first text that they imagined as a letter Pat Garrett—Billy's former accomplice who became sheriff and eventually killed him—wrote to Billy to justify the moral grounds on which he was now hunting Billy down for his criminal acts. The letter was ideological and had a somewhat preachy parental tone. This text was soon abandoned and replaced by a different text, and the character of a comic-book inspired vigilante whose rooftop hideout was obfuscated by a splintered maze-like structure. This student's second text was much more specific with respect to rituals and qualitative experiences, and this proved to be more helpful toward their design process. However, the text didn't drive the design as much as I had anticipated, but the two were developed in tandem. This was also the case with another student whose eventual hideout was a defunct rooftop HVAC unit. This student's first text was invested in poignant philosophical questions but also lacked the specifics of the character and of qualitative experience. It was eventually this decision to inhabit the HVAC unit that led this student to a narrative that offered the backstory of how this person became homeless and therefore reinforced rather than drove the design.[456]

In some cases, the creative texts only went as far as articulating a tone for the project. For instance, one student's text (a relatively short poem) conveyed a free-spirited detachment inspired by the historical Billy and transferred to an audacious parkour artist. His eventual hideout was a sculptural crystal-like escape route that played with the glare and reflections of a prominent Colorado sun. Some students stayed closer to the Ondaatje text and their own remained modest. One student in particular was especially perceptive to the very nuanced

[456] I describe these projects more extensively in Anca Matyiku, "Storytellers and Outlaws: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching as Research," in *Space and Language in Architectural Education: Catalysts and Tensions*, ed. Kasia Nawratek (Routledge, forthcoming).

qualities of light that Ondaatje captured. This student obsessively studied the light and shadows in the Denver alley and became interested in a hideout that inhabited shadows inside shadows. I found this student's process and thinking to be especially sophisticated for a beginning design student, although their final project was less developed than those of their colleagues.

With the fabrication courses, the design process remained intimately connected with the literary artifacts. In contrast, I noticed that with the Billy the Kid studio the text didn't act as much as an anchor, and there was a lot more back-and-forth between the students' text and the design. The difference, I believe, was in the fact that with the design studio the additional factors that drove the design were not explicitly connected to the literary artifact but operated independent of it. For instance, with the fabrication courses, students did sometimes have a site, but this site was chosen in the process of developing the artifact through the literary text(s). What one might identify as the programme for the artifact (or spatial intervention) was also developed through the story or literary text—which in all cases included literature as well as creative texts written by the students. Another notable difference between the fabrication-based projects and the Billy the Kid projects was that in the fabrication courses, the creative texts that the students wrote were overall of higher quality. This is not at all surprising given that we are describing the difference between beginning design students who were thrown into the task of creative writing, and upper-level students who for the most part elected to participate in the fabrication courses.

Overall, the students' own creative texts proved to be less of a driving force in the design of their hideouts. I still however believe it to be an important accompaniment to the process of design, and the teaching of design. Some students' texts have been astounding in their literary quality, but even when this is not the case, the creative texts still helped students to find a focus to their project. If we revisit the earlier parallel to a concept-based approach to design, we could say that the concept for all the students boiled down to "hiding in plain sight"—whether in a discreet or ostentatious manner. The "how" of what that meant, materially and architecturally, gained specificity from the stories and characters students wrote. I would like to in fact emphasize, that especially for a first design studio, the student projects were overall highly imaginative. Some were sculptural and playful, others discreet and stealthy. In all, amongst themselves displayed a very diverse array of approaching the prompt. My sense is that this was both a function of the open-endedness of the design prompt, as well as its being accompanied by storytelling.

With respect to the effectiveness of creative texts in architectural design, I also still maintain that focusing a text on specific qualitative, temporal, and experiential conditions propels the creative imagination much more than do ideas and insights articulated in the abstract. What I discovered with this studio was that composing such a text is by no means an easy task and can in fact prove to be as much of a design problem as the architecture itself. The work of the student who stayed closer to the Ondaatje text suggests that perhaps staying close to the text written by a professional author might be a more fruitful for beginning design.

The decision to engage literature and creative writing was grounded on my insistence to present students, even beginning design students, with the notion that architecture is more than a formal object and it is always embroiled with social and political dynamics, as well as the temporal and fleeting aspects that are specific to places and their inhabitants. It would simply not be possible, without literature and storytelling, to bring students to experience that polarized ideas having to do with social justice and moral righteousness are implicated in architectural design. Without the particulars (especially the particulars having to do with human characters and experiential qualities) it would likewise not be possible to expose students to the nuanced, delicate, and often contradictory nature of such human questions and predicaments. To reiterate the points made earlier, the story of Billy the Kid as well as the students' creative texts, situated this architectural question in specificity while also keeping open the more delicate social questions that bear on architecture.

It is certainly true that not just any (attempts at) literary writing are as effective as they could be towards propelling a design process. While it may be that no such efforts are completely in vain, when it comes to guiding students to write their own creative texts, there are tactics that are more fertile than others. My observations with the Billy the Kid studio suggest that the voice of a well written text—in this case Ondaatje's—can prove especially fertile in the context of beginning design studio. I chose the text because of the way in which I conveyed the experiential qualities of the landscape of the Wild West—both with respect to its unforgiving climate and its untidy politics. I made the point earlier that the choice of literary text can be seen a crucial design decision. In this case, what counts as an effective literary text is tacitly deemed as such by the instructor, student, or architect who chooses it. Yet even if inflected by one's own general tendencies and priorities, the text itself remains open-ended towards imaginative engagement.

The texts that beginning design students wrote were not always explicitly legible as drivers in their eventual design. Yet I still think that articulating the creative texts is a valuable exercise. This is not only so because some students do produce astounding and extremely well-articulated texts. Even for those who do not, engaging the literary imagination still pushes them to stretch their imaginative muscle in a medium that can bring forward aspects of their architectural interests that otherwise evade traditional design tools such as drawings, sketches, or models. As with all architectural projects, the circuitous and unexpected turns of any design process discovers that certain mediums and explorations can be more fruitful than others. As I have just noted, even if the student's writing ability remains outside the range of what a professor can control, presenting students with compelling literary works does not.

Following studio Billy the Kid, I coordinated the same undergraduate level studio at CU Denver's College of Architecture and Planning again the following year. This was in the spring of 2021, that is, a studio conducted remotely in the middle of the COVID pandemic. This time there was no Billy the Kid, there was no border-of-the-law, no tapping into local history and the making of the American West, and there was no implied social and political rhetoric. When we finished studio Billy the Kid the switch to remote studio was fresh and in retrospect, our momentum strong. A year later and almost a year into the pandemic we tempered our ambitions and turned to stories about monsters. This became an opportunity for a different kind of approach to engaging storytelling and the literary imagination in pedagogy, one that I believe to be a more appropriate approach for a beginning design studio.

The Literary Imagination in Representation and Process: "Where Monsters Dwell"

"Where Monsters Dwell" was the pandemic approach to a beginning design studio consisting of two studio sections conducted remotely and one socially-distanced in-person section.[457] The first half of the semester focused once again on the rudiments of beginning design, again inflected with an interdisciplinary approach, including literary language. Students started with a short literary text or a piece of music—either chosen from a selection provided by the professors or

[457] I was once again the coordinator of this studio sequence and worked together with Michelle Frankel, who was also part of Studio Billy the Kid as well as Felix Tannenbaum. The prompts and project sequence for this studio were developed and refined through many engaging conversations with both Felix and Michelle. Their insights were indispensable, and I remain grateful and indebted to them both.

brought by themselves. They translated this work into 2D compositions, 3D compositions, and a sequence of volumes. They then took section cuts that revealed the spaces within the volumes. They were then asked to inhabit these spaces with two beings and an atmospheric quality. In the second half of the semester students designed a human-based monster through a combination of text and collage. The first step was a kind of mad-lib exercise through which students explored three possible monster-candidates. They were asked to design a human-based monster that featured a bodily variance, augmentation, or addition. This monster was to be endowed with a favoured type of movement—such as swimming, swinging, burrowing, etcetera. The quality of this movement had to also be considered (ie. fast, slow, unpredictable, skittish, graceful, and so on). Finally, we asked students to be specific about the interiority and mannerisms of their monster—whether they are solitary, proud, rambunctious, mischievous, etcetera. We offered students the literary example of Geryon, the red winged monster from Anne Carson's *Autobiography of Red*. Geryon is melancholy, thoughtful, and in love with Herakles who perpetually breaks his heart. Thus, the design of the monster-being was an exercise conducted in language, one that focused on the body, character, and mannerisms of the monster. Students were then prompted to continue with creative writing and compose three short texts that would be nuanced by the character and interiority of their monster. Each of the three texts were given very specific prompts: One was a description of the monster going about a mundane task such that it would bring forth how their body engages the world. As was the case with the Billy the Kid character, we asked students to focus on what their monster does rather than what they look like. A second was a description of an instance in which the monster-being plays—focusing on specifics and potentially articulated from their perspective. A third text described a memory that was considered meaningful to the monster-being. Like with the prompt for the modern-day Billy character, we again emphasized that they be specific, detail-oriented, experience-oriented, and to imagine particular occurrences or circumstances rather than describing generic moments. We also prompted them to leverage the expressive potential of language—ie. the choice of words, the sound of words, how words connected to one another, the rhythm of the text, etc.— hoping for a nuanced interiority, mannerism, temperament, and character of the monster-being. Together we looked at instances in which Anne Carson did precisely those things with her imaginative descriptions of the red winged monster: the way his body navigated space, his memories, and the moments of play.

Students developed the set of three specific narratives together with three sets of collages aimed at capturing the same aspects of the monster's life through visual composition, texture, rhythm and scale. These initial gestures guided students towards developing a space for play and sanctuary space for their monster on a site located along the Platte River in Denver. In all, I would describe this prompt as much more guided and direct approach to engaging the literary language as complementary to visual representation. This approach is certainly much more choreographed than, for instance, the narrative about the modern-day Billy who operated on the border of the law, even if the directive of how to approach the writing of the texts—ie. focus on the qualitative and the specific—was essentially the same for both. These three texts about the monster-being are also knit much tighter to the architectural programme (the space for play, the body moving in space) than it was the case with the Billy the Kid studio where students were also asked to consider local history, as well as social and political aspects of architecture. While not as overtly conscientious of the culture-making implications of architecture as in the Billy the Kid studio, designing the monster-being through language was perhaps a task much easier to bite into, especially for beginning design and certainly in the absence of an in-person studio culture.

My assessment with this approach is that this more restrained and a more parameter-based directive to the creative texts written by students is more appropriate and more productive at the level of beginning design. Even if the students' texts were not all at the level of literary writing—though they never fail to surprise—having the specific directives ensured that those temporal, phenomenal, ritual-based, aspects of architecture were being articulated in the text and contributing to the visual and spatial explorations that ensued. I do however insist that the literary example articulated by the writer—in this case Anne Carson—is a still of crucial importance and constitutes a design decision on the part of the instructor. The monster-being was of course an implicit surrogate for the politics of "otherness" as much as it was an opportunity for students to let a version of their inner monster shine through. It does not, however open the same kinds of nuanced and contradictory questions as we have seen with the fabrication electives and with Studio Billy the Kid. It remains up to the instructor and the circumstances of the studio to balance the weightiness of the topic with the light-heartedness and playfulness of the literary texts—both those that are offered and those that are asked of students to compose.

To sum up, a number of observations relating to the third chapter's focus on representation in Schulz's prose resurfaced with the pedagogic exercises: Literary constructions

are especially effective in capturing important aspects of architecture that are not easily rendered in the realm of the visual yet are salient to the architectural process. We repeatedly noted the full range of sensorial and temporal qualities, as well as the more elusive and implicit human values and motivations. In conversation with questions of architectural representation, we have observed how literary texts can operate as a complement to drawing, especially the kind of drawing and making that emphasize process and discovery. I have described this as a dialectical engagement with architectural knowledge in all of its subtle and implicit forms, including the students' own tacit knowledge, curiosities, and questions about architecture. Prompts that asked students to bring a literary text or to articulate a text are seen as oblique ways aimed at drawing out this knowledge and curiosity about architecture that they already possess—and nudges them to invest themselves in the project by instilling it with something about which they care. Even without catachresis, periphrasis, and Schulz's other exaggerated metaphoric constructions, we have seen a potential for the literary imagination to saliently expand the arsenal of the architect's tools and to propel the imaginative process that leads to design. Moving beyond Schulz's prose, the reflections on pedagogy have allowed me to identify the kinds of literary texts that tend to be more helpful to students—even if such observations are at this time only relying on a few pedagogical exercises. Especially when it comes to prompting students to articulate their own writing, I have noted that texts that stay close to the project itself have been especially effective. With the monster-beings I have speculated that prompts with tighter, more focused directives seem to have been more helpful for beginning design. What I maintained consistent in all of the courses so far is the prompt that students focus on those very things that best complement the visual such as the other senses, temporalities and phenomena, as well as staying specific and detailed rather than general. I insist that asking students to write a creative text is an important exercise in elastic interpretive thinking and imaginative play, even if it is a gamble on the quality of what they can produce. I also insist that literary texts written by authors are potent depositories of architectural knowledge and can prove especially fecund in architectural pedagogy.

Chapter 4

Creative Action and the Mythic Imagination: A Dialogue with World, Matter, and Locality

> "The tyranny of the quantifiable is partly the failure of language and discourse to describe more complex, subtle, and fluid phenomena, as well as the failure of those who shape opinions and make decisions to understand and value these slipperier things. It is difficult, sometimes even impossible, to value what cannot be named or described, and so the task of naming and describing is an essential one in any revolt against the status quo of capitalism and consumerism. Ultimately the destruction of the Earth is due in part, perhaps in large part, to a failure of the imagination or to its eclipse by systems of accounting that can't count what matters. The revolt against this destruction is a revolt of the imagination, in favor of subtleties, of pleasures money can't buy and corporations can't command, of being producers rather than consumers of meaning, of the slow, the meandering, the digressive, the exploratory, the numinous, the uncertain." – Rebecca Solnit[458]

This chapter looks at Schulz's prose to examine the dialectics between creative agency and world. While in the previous chapter I focused on language as the matter for drawing and drawing out subtle and implicit forms of architectural knowledge, I here examine design process at the peripheries of this act of drawing architecture: On one hand, I focus on how Schulz's literary language captures the site and locale that inaugurate the design process. On the other hand, this chapter observes the relationship to the world of matter that is put forward in Schulz's prose. I am referring here to the relationship between matter and maker (or, 'heretic demiurgy' — to oblige Schulz's term) which in architecture underlies the leap from drawings, towards the engagement with material and construction processes. We will notice constant cross-overs that

[458] Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me*, (New York: Haymarket Books, 2014), 105.

trespass this presupposed linearity of site-drawing-material. We will also notice a pervasive interanimation and interdependence between what can be qualified as the creative agency of the human, the non-human, and, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the creative agency of language itself. In both the dialectic with matter and the way in which Schulz's literary language distills the site or locale, we witness a sensibility that refracts aspects of a mythic imagination. In short, this chapter shifts the conversation to the dialectic between architecture and world, while maintaining the same underscoring focus on the agility of literary language to engage subtle forms of knowledge and precipitate the imaginative process of design.

While my goal here is to examine how Schulz's literary imagination captures what in architectural design we understand as the site, context, or locale, it is significant to note the peculiar way in which Schulz's stories refract the place in which they occur: While Schulz's prose is drawn from a particular context—his native Drohobycz, a small provincial town of what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire—this context emerges in the prose as an anonymous town that is virtually unattached to historical and political identities. At first this might seem contradictory to an architectural reading that focuses on understanding the particular temperaments of a locale. In effect, this act of rendering anonymous historicity and place, brings forward not so much what the context *is*, but rather *how* Schulz's language constructs and captures this context, in ways that are especially perceptive via the literary imagination. Much like in the previous chapter, we are examining how to the typical architectural tools for reading a site—such as maps, diagrams, photographs, or drawings—literary language contributes its particular agility for capturing its implicit, recessive and nuanced characteristics that come to bear on the architectural project. In what follows, I study how Schulz's language constructs images of place that are layered and perceptive.

My reading of Schulz's representations of what in architecture we identify as the site or context, draws a parallel to James Corner's "eidetic operations." In examining the dialectic between maker and world, I bring together studies on the mythic imagination and recent discourse which includes studies in phenomenology, Jane Bennett's vital materialism, and Richard Sennett's interest in the politics of craftsmanship. I argue that Schulz's position as a "dweller of the provinces" (both literally and metaphorically) performs a dual mediation between presentness and tradition that is poetic and future propelling, as well as positing a dialectical and ecological inclination towards matter and the lifeworld.

4.1 Architectural Design: An Act of Dwelling in the Provinces

Schulz's participation to modernity is very much defined by his provincial position, meaning that it inhabits several kinds of in-between-ness, not just that between the urban and rural. Another is the way in which his prose occupies an ambivalent position in relation to historiography. As Schulz himself tells us, his stories are amongst those that "occurred too late, after the whole of time has been distributed, divided and allotted; events that have been left in the cold, unregistered, hanging in the air, homeless, and errant […]"[459] Krystyna Illakowicz argues that Schulz's work, by virtue of its marginal and "provincial" existence offers a compelling counter-narrative that disrupts the homogenizing grand narratives of Western culture. She suggests that such narratives have the tendency to dismiss provincial cultures as anomalies that are deemed as "too local and stagnant".[460] She notes that Schulz's prose contests the paradigm of speed that has been especially enforced in metropolitan centers. We are about to notice the different modalities in which Schulz's prose tampers with progressive time and measured chronometries: time pools, disintegrates, empties, turns back, becomes spatialized, and promiscuously mimics a mythic sensibility. Illakowicz adds that the ethos of speed, is also "at the core of every act of modern marginalization or provincialization. In this context, [Schulz's] slow, non-linear, circulatory movement clearly contests the production of theories, categorizations and ordering maneuvers which follow the directives from the center."[461] From the perspective Western Enlightenment in general "time is too narrow for all events"—as Schulz noted about his own prose—especially those that occur in the regressive backwaters of the provinces and which, especially during Schulz's time had no place in the ordered grand narratives of Western thought. In refusing to oblige the pressures of speed, progress and linearity, Schulz's linguistic renderings of place and locality observe a layering of chronometries and thus expand in temporal depth. While most critics attribute a backwards movement to Schulz's mythization, I show here that the way he builds his imagery-heavy prose involves instead an intrinsically creative movement of sinking and rising.

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[459] Schulz, "The Age of Genius," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 129.
[460] Krystyna Illakowicz offers a telling overview of this condition of marginalization and dismissal of provincial cultures. Illakowicz, "Renegotiating the Provincial," 1067-8.
[461] Ibid., 1066.

The provincial position of Schulz's prose, along with the mythic predispositions that it adopts, extends as well to the dialectics towards matter and world—both metaphorically but also viscerally. Robert Harrison notes that in the provinces, stones have an underbelly that is rooted in the ground and connected with the life therein. For Harrison, this image implies a peripheral position which has access to forms of knowledge that are otherwise inactive when they have been "wiped clean, and made to order":

> When one ceases to dwell in a province, or when the province gets overtaken by the center, one finds oneself within the dispersed utopia of cities and academies. The provincial dweller knows that if you pull a rock from out of the ground and turn it upside down, you are likely to find on its underside a covert world of soil, roots, worms, and insects. A nonprovincial dweller either never suspects or else tends to forget such a thing, for the stones that make up his city have already been abstracted from the ground, wiped clean, and made to order. A province, in other words, is a place where stones have two sides.[462]

As an architect, I read this image of a rock partially submerged in the ground as a particular way of seeing the relationship between building and site: That subtle and latent forces that shape a given locale—and inadvertently come to bear on architecture—remain recessive and are unamenable to precise definition. In this indeterminate state constitutes their reserve for potentiality—the metaphorical "world of soil, roots, worms, and insects" that is hidden from view but rich with possibility and latently active. This essentially echoes our earlier discussion: what David Leatherbarrow has identified as the "topographical horizon" of a particular place, what Rumiko Handa has articulated as the generative potential of "the incomplete, imperfect, and impermanent," and what Alberto Pérez-Gómez has described as an *attunement* with a cultural ground that cannot be abstracted and overflows logic. Schulz himself corroborates this sentiment when, in a passage that seems to present explicit reflections about architecture, describes his visionary architect, or rather, his "director of cosmic landscapes and sceneries [whose] art consists in knowing how to read [nature's] arcane ambitions."[463] Because of this capacity to *read* "nature's potential architecture, " this architect's works are unlike those that "once completed, they become hermetic, cut off from nature, consolidated on a base of their own."[464] This architect-orchestrator's work "has not cut itself from the great cosmic contexts; it

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[462] Harrison, *Forests*, 246.
[463] Schulz, "The Republic of Dreams," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 321.
[464] Ibid., 322.

is immersed in them half-humanized like a centaur, harnessed to the sublime processes of nature, still unfinished and growing."[465]

This so far speaks of an architecture that actively seeks to engage a context that is by nature partially recessive and indeterminate. To an architect, the stone rooted in the ground evokes a dialogue between building and site, that the position of the provinces refers to a way of seeing architecture not as abstracted from the ground but as half-immersed in the life processes with which it is entwined. Let us recall however that the focus here is to unpack what this means for the design process that leads to such architectural works. What then does a stone with two sides suggest about the imaginative process that leads to architecture? Moments in Schulz's prose go as far as speaking to the creative process that besets writers. An often-quoted passage in the story "Spring" can be read as an elaboration on the spirit evoked by the rock in the provinces. Here Schulz superimposes self-reflective meditations about the process of writing with the imagery of a journey into the dark and tangled undersoil of a forest. He casts an image of protean darkness that is laden with an excess of vegetative possibilities. Upon this he layers in the image of an undersoil sedimented with traces and fragments of stories, myths and fables:

> Words are split into their components and dissolved, they return to their etymology, reenter their depths and distant obscure roots. […]
>
> It is not quite as dark here as we thought. On the contrary, the interior is pulsating with light. It is, of course, the internal light of roots, a wandering phosphorescence, tiny veins of light marbling the darkness, and evanescent shimmer of nightmarish substances. […] For it is only above ground, in the light of day, that we are a trembling, articulate bundle of tunes; in the depth we disintegrate again into black murmurs, confused purring, a multitude of unfinished stories. […]
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> Here are the labyrinths of depth, […] Age-old tales. Seven layers (like in ancient Troy), corridors, chambers, treasure chests. […] a brood of Bibles and Iliads multiplied a thousand times! […] We are here at the very bottom, in the dark foundations, among the Mothers. […] 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 before 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

[465] Ibid.

> been aware of these reserves, this frozen capital, these funds salted away in the underworld?[466]

The sedimentation of stories, epics, and tales, as old as Bibles and Odysseys, together with those that might have been or have remained tentative, and those that have never materialized, constitute the repository of "frozen capital" from which writers draw up the sap of their inventiveness. Recalling the second chapter, this particular passage allows us to read the image of the rock whose underbelly is rooted in the ground as a metafictive utterance that describes the two-fold movement intrinsic to Schulz's mythization: A surface tension that disrupts ossified meanings (of words), and a simultaneous act of drawing from the depths of language and human stories. It is worth re-stating that Schulz's mythization does not so much refer to a particular kind of poetry. He is merely directing our attention to the fact that in its world-building capacity, poetry reaches into the depositories of the human imagination that accrued in language and literary artifacts. This "frozen capital" that is stratified in language and literary artifacts essentially constitutes the cultural imaginary of a particular locale. It offers a multifaceted portrait of how communities relate to their built as well as unbuilt environment. In other words, the body of literature that comes forth within a community, very much "speaks" the place; it negotiates and makes sense of the environment; it captures that community's anxieties and aspirations. Literature thus emerges as a vital organ for refracting, as well as understanding this human relationship to a locality.

My argument here is that the poetic capacity that is accrued in language can extend to inform the poetic imperative of architectural endeavours. As such, the two facets of reading the partially-buried stone—as being rooted in an indeterminate dimension that comes to bear on both the architectural and the literary imagination—are to be shown as part of a broader vision in which the literary imagination and the poetic acts that propel architectural design are in fact intertwined and mutually edifying. The process of architectural design is itself a dialogue that dwells in the "provinces," or an act of border-conditions: It operates at the threshold between order and indeterminacy, between clear logical tactics and tacit intuitions, between the articulate and the still undisclosed potential. This of course reiterates the argument I pursue throughout, which is that literary constructions are especially deft in capturing tacit knowledge, dormant

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[466] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 160-2.

potential, and indeterminate qualities that in fact *benefit* from the absence of defined boundaries. All of these slippery characteristics belong to both the latent characteristics of a locale *as well as* to the workings of the creative imagination. The act of poetic construction, for both architecture and literature, is a constant dialogue between these explicit and implicit imaginaries and forms of knowledge.

4.2 Construing and Constructing Site: Eidetic Operations as Acts of Creative Resistance

The beginning of architectural design entails a deliberate position with respect to the context of a future architectural intervention.[467] A number of tactics can be employed, in order to distill certain aspects of the particular locale that are important to a future work of architecture. Most familiar approaches to site analysis include the making of maps and diagrams.[468] A given architectural project could call for a site analysis that encompasses several mappings or diagrams. These might highlight different uses and forms of inhabitation present in a particular place, such as parks, transportation networks, or residential, cultural, or commercial building uses. There are also mappings that chart out flows and temporal characteristics of a place. A study of the sun's trajectory, as well as where shadows fall on a site, is one of the most elemental of architectural considerations. Other more ambitious mappings aim to distill complex networks that engage forces that are more indeterminate in nature.[469]

Landscapes and cities are complex organisms, making the architect's means of analysis inevitably partial, and the possibilities for mapping a given place inexhaustible. Because site analyses focus on elements that are important to a particular architectural project, they prioritize

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[467] While nowadays we can take for granted that engaging the context is a quintessential consideration to architectural design, a testament that exceptions to this approach do exist is the relatively recent François Blanciak, *Siteless: 1001 Building Forms* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008).

[468] Recent literature that discusses the role of the diagram in architecture includes Mark Garcia, ed., *The Diagrams of Architecture: A Reader*, (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2010); Stan Allen, *Points+Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999); Simon Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 4th edition (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[469] Genevieve Baudoin points to Buckminster Fuller's World Maps and more recently, the project *Water Ecologies* by Lateral Office which attempts to integrate a water infrastructure within a network of unpredictable forces. Genevieve Baudoin, "Infrastructural Networks," in *Interpreting Site: Studies in Perception, Representation, and Design* (New York and London: Routledge, 2016), 129-39. Stan Allen's very definition of site focuses on the complex systems of flows. Drawing from the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Allen understands "site" as what he calls "field conditions." He explains that a site is constituted by the relationships between things not by the things themselves, thus foregrounding architecture's participation to open-ended networks and their complex dynamic, and emergent behaviours. (Stan Allen, *Points + Lines.)*

certain aspects of a place while they omit others. In other words, sites are not passive but they are actively *constructed* in preparation for an architectural project.[470] This is especially evident in architectural competitions where site analyses become an effective tool for grounding and justifying design decisions. Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn open their edited volume *Site Matters* by drawing attention to this aspect, by discussing the invited architectural propositions for the Olympic Village that accompanied New York city's bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. They note how the different design teams responded to different aspects of the same site, and that this conditioned the proposed design, the way in which teams presented their understanding of the site, as well as the scale and extent to which they engaged the surrounding area.[471] Burns & Kahn note that "modes of representation construe sites," and that they have a "formative role in the production of site knowledge."[472]

At stake here are those intrinsic characteristics of a locale that are latent, and thus difficult to draw or quantify, what for instance what David Leatherbarrow has termed the "topographies" or "cultural horizon" of an architectural work. With a more explicit focus on human inhabitation and the rituals that unfold in a place, James Corner has similarly identified "eidetic constructs." While Corner speaks from the perspective of landscape architecture, he is equally concerned with the question of how design interventions adequately engage a place. Similar to Leatherbarrow, Corner argues that instead of an objectified and aestheticized view of landscape—such as that of a tourist or an outsider—it is important to consider how a landscape is invested with human engagement—the habits, rituals, and patterns that are retraced through time and ultimately forge a sense of community. He describes an "eidetic construct" as the collective image that coagulates in the mind's eye, "a spatio-organizational image that is not necessarily picturable but is nonetheless laconic and communicable. As with all maps, such an image produces an appearance that is otherwise not visible, even though it rings true and eventually naturalizes into accepted convention."[473] He elaborates that "[s]uch eidetic constructs effectively bind individuals to a collective and orient them within a larger milieu. Thus, as highly situated and intersubjective schemata, eidetic mappings lie at the core of shaping an invisible landscape,

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[470] This is also noted by Christopher Mead, Foreword to *Interpreting Site,* ed. Genevieve Baudoin as well as other studies that come up shortly.
[471] Carol Burns and Andrea Kahn, *Site Matters: Design Concepts, Histories, and Strategies* (New York: Routledge, 2005), vii.
[472] Ibid., xv.
[473] James Corner, "Eidetic Operations and New Landscapes," in *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*, ed. James Corner (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 161.

one that is more an unfolding spatiality than surface appearance, more poetic property than the delineation of immediate real estate."[474]

For Corner, eidetic images, whether picturable or not, are not merely retinal "but may equally be acoustic, tactile, cognitive, or intuitive."[475] Of essence is their active role in the process of (re)configuring the continuously unfolding, dynamic interplay between locality and a broader collective consciousness. Moving quite seamlessly into the realm of design process, Corner articulates a need for representational tactics that aim to overcome the dominance of vision, and to capture this layered but latent unfolding between locale and a given community. He qualifies such representational techniques as *eidetic operations* which he describes as "specific ideational techniques for construing (imagining) and constructing (projecting) new landscapes."[476]

Eidetic operations, Corner clarifies, are innovative, yet they do not necessarily have to imply radical tactics. Eidetic operations are distinguished in their intention rather than their medium: they presuppose an active intentionality rather than a passive neutrality. For instance, he points to the diagrams produced by OMA and MVRDV, describing that the eidetic function of the diagrams known as "datascapes"—essentially quantitative information presented in a thoughtful manner—rests on their rhetorical power, their ability to find fresh and persuasive ways of framing familiar issues.[477] In his own practice, Corner employs "composite montages" as a tactic for *construing* and *constructing* a "site."[478] These montages aim to be both analytical and compositionally thoughtful, and they combine several mediums including drawings, maps, data-graphs, photography, and collage. While these montages are visually compelling, Corner stresses their potential agency in propelling design. He writes that "[c]omposite montage is essentially an affiliative and productive technique, aimed not toward limitation and control but toward emancipation, heterogeneity, and open-ended relations among parts. In particular, analytic and systematic operations can precipitate revelatory and rich effects."[479] We see here again a direct

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[474] Ibid., 161-2.
[475] Ibid., 153.
[476] Ibid., 162-3.
[477] Corner, "Eidetic Operations," in *Recovering Landscape*, 166.
[478] This notion that a site is both construed and constructed comes up again in the same wording in Burns & Kahn, *Site Matters*, vii; Christopher Mead, Foreword to *Interpreting Site*, edited by Baudoin. Marco Frascari has also written about the relationship between the constructed and the construed.
[479] Corner, "Eidetic Operations," in *Recovering Landscape*, 166.

resonance to drawing as a process of discovery and of drawing out, this time with a more explicit interest in engaging the site or locale.

If MVRDV and OMA's "datascape" diagrams—albeit now dated—persuasively boil down and synthesize large quantities of information, Corner's montages operate on the opposite spectrum. They remain open-ended, expanding the possibilities of multiple interpretations. While not transparent to logical explanation, they are eloquently suggestive of architectural possibilities. Echoing Corner's notion of the eidetic image, Genevieve Baudoin places particular importance on the fact that Corner's composite montages capture experiential qualities of a site; the intricate combination of haptic, visceral, and sensual understanding of a place that engages memory and anticipation, both personal and shared by many.[480]

Thus, eidetic images can help us understand a site, and through them a site is both construed and constructed. Furthermore, site analyses—such as maps, diagrams, and other forms of synthesizing or constructing a "site"—not only express knowledge about a particular locale, but they also crystalize it: in every act of representation there is a creation, or rather a re-creation or a re-formulation of the site with respect to those of its qualities that are vital to the intentions of the future architecture. I would go even further to suggest that, site analyses are already instilled with design intentions; they prepare the ground or inaugurate the eventual design.

In this chapter, I show that the literary constructions can operate as an equivalent to 'eidetic images' and that they can do so with remarkable agility. We are about to see that Schulz's linguistic renderings of place are especially attuned to capturing qualities that overcome and go far beyond the visual, while maintaining an open-ended potential for construing a site and propelling a future design. In this, Schulz's renderings of site are more similar to Corner's montages than to MVRDV's diagrams. Overall, my aim is to show how literary constructs can complement the current arsenal of the architect's design tactics and can offer another mode of engaging the process of design. Much like the open-ended experiential drawings or collages their role is to be suggestive, to tease out opportunities, to allow both site and architectural questions to percolate their own suggestions towards engaging a site.

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[480] Baudoin, "Experiencing Site," in *Interpreting Site*. Baudoin refers to Frampton's essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism," which I have discussed earlier. To Corner's montages I would also add the interpretive maps of Perry Kulper as well as the site drawings and instruments of British duo Smout Allen. Both are discussed in the chapter entitled "Space of Representation: The Generative Maps of Perry Kulper and Smout Allen," in Kanekar, *Architecture's Pretexts,* 107-33.

4.3 The Anonymous Historicity of Schulz's Rendering of Place

Most studies that examine what literature can tell us about a particular place, revolve around the emergence of the metropolis and the experience of modernity. Over and over, these studies foreground how much modernity is intertwined with the city, and how literature is able to convey the disjointed, accelerated, and evanescent qualities that characterized this experience. Some of these studies make an effort to distill how literature captures the modern metropolis as a heterogeneous organism of splintered perceptions whose dynamic pulse is at once confounding and liberating. The earliest such scholarship comes from literary studies, and it focuses on the cultural, material, economic and social histories that can be discerned in novels from early to late modernity.[481] Other studies focus on the heterogeneity of experience sustained by the city and how this emerges in works of literature as a multiplicity of representations.[482] Similar inquiries from the perspective of architecture are significantly fewer and much more recent. In an edited volume, Rumiko Handa and James Potter focus on how architecture figures in historical fiction in order to discern the rich albeit murky aspect of architecture that deals with "impression, psychology, reaction, smell, listening, emotion, and bodily movement."[483] Angeliki Sioli's study challenges typical considerations of what constitutes the "context" of architectural interventions

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[481] In one of the earlier studies, Burton Pike explores the phenomenon of "city" and how the human imagination has responded to it in Western literature. He examines how changes in the novel between eighteenth to the twentieth centuries reflect shifts in cultural values, and it is especially interested in the sense of fragmentation and of the alienated individual so prevalent in the modern city. Pike concludes with the reflection that literature might be the only realm that is able to capture the tangled complexities and paradoxes that define the nature of cities and are intrinsic to the experience of modernity. Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981). More recently, Robert Alter has focused on how the novel, beginning with Flaubert and ending in the 1920s, has recorded the modern metropolis' impact on the senses and the imagination of the individual, their experience of time and space, the body's response in relation to increase of urban density, crowds, the noise and tumult that ensued. Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). Other examples from the perspective of literature and cultural studies include: Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). William Sharpe, *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). A study of the shifting tensions and relationships between the country and the city as it emerges in English literature can be found in Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[482] For instance, Hana Wirth-Nesher explicitly avoids linking modernity with the typical tropes of alienation, isolation, fragmentation, and examines how the city is codified by the urban dweller and their particular circumstance with respect to history, politics, gender, class and race. Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Most other such studies come as edited volumes, with the vast majority from the perspective of literary or cultural studies. Different edited volumes on this are still to be referenced here.

[483] Iain Borden, foreword to *Conjuring the Real: The Role of Architecture in Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* ed. Rumiko Handa and James Potter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), xi.

and suggests that literature renders the city in a way that encompasses the complexity of the social and political situations that affect their dwellers.[484]

Both Sioli's as well as Handa and Potter's studies connect to my own in that they discuss qualities and atmospheres of cities that are not easily rendered visually. Unlike my study of Schulz's prose, both of these studies are also in large part concerned with particular cities at a moment in history. This differs from Schulz's prose which cannot be said to overtly portray Drohobycz in the same way that Joyce's *Ulysses* portrays Dublin in June of 1904, the way in which *Mrs. Dalloway* renders a summer day in London, soon after the First World War, or how Aragon's *Paris Peasant* captures an arcade fated for demolition and other scenes from early twentieth century Paris. While certain elements particular to Drohobycz and the surrounding landscape can be discerned in Schulz's prose, these are few and they presuppose an intimate familiarity with Drohobycz, a place that does not echo in the western imaginary in the way of London, Paris, or Dublin. In short, most studies that examine what the literature of modernity can tell us about a particular context, tend to have recourse to an identifiable place, usually a city.

Schulz's prose deliberately dissolves identifiers of the time and place in which it occurs. His stories take place in a small provincial town that is virtually unknown and is never mentioned by name in Schulz's short stories.[485] This makes a study of Schulz's prose nearly redundant to an examination of how literature can complement traditional historiographies. If the scope of this chapter is to unpack how the context is presented in Schulz's prose, it is not the historical and political context in which Schulz wrote the stories—of an Austro-Hungarian Drohobycz—that comes to the foreground. Schulz's prose does not so much facilitate a reading of what the context *is*, but rather *how* his literary imagination in fact portrays those very qualities of a locale that interest us because they are difficult to draw and impossible to measure or quantify. In dissolving geopolitical and historical identifiers the prose focuses instead on qualities of place that abide by multiple other chronometries than those of historicity. In this tactic, Schulz's prose refracts a number of sensibilities that are also characteristic of a mythic

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[484] Focusing on seminal novels of High Modernism—Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Andrei Bely's *St. Petersburg*, and Philippe Soupault's *Last Nights of Paris*—Sioli analyzes how urban atmospheres influence human behaviour and how these atmospheres are in turn shaped by the characters' actions. She argues that literature can offer architects and urban planners insight into how human inhabitants interact with the city, how they experience and appropriate urban space, and how literature contributes a historical account of the moods and atmospheres during a particular period in the life of the particular cities. Sioli, "The Architecture of Walking."

[485] The one occurrence in which Drohobycz is mentioned is in Celina Wieniewska's longest standing English translation which is inaccurate as Schulz in fact calls on Bolechow, another nearby town. Schulz, "A Second Fall," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 222.

imagination, especially with respect to the dialectic between human and world. This inflection of the mythic imagination can be understood as another facet of Schulz's mythization. It bears reiterating however that this does not equate with a desire to *make myth* or *return to* myth. Certain aspects of Schulz's prose can be said to *behave like* myth, or *operate in the manner* of myth, but as I have shown in the first two chapters, the work remains self-consciously modern.

With a focus on the relationship to locale, world and matter, I observe four major modes in which Schulz's prose behaves in a manner that echoes a mythic sensibility: At its most elemental, Schulz's prose resonates with the mythic imagination in that it conjures an intensified vision of the mundane which inflects representations of spaces and events. A second mythic mode is Schulz's treatment of time: he produces a layering of temporal scales that subsume the linear chronology of history. A third, already noted, is the correlation between mythization and Schulz's tendency to render histories and identities of time and place anonymous. The fourth mythic mode relates to the attitude towards world and matter which, to an architectural focus, extends into a discourse about embodied and prereflective knowledge, creative agency, as well as ecology.

Overall, my aim is to observe how Schulz's engagement with these mythic attitudes inflect his linguistic renderings of place. I show that these linguistically articulated renderings bring forth knowledge of a locale that is much more difficult to capture in maps, diagrams, drawings, photographs, etc. that traditionally constitute a study of site in architecture. In short, to the question of architectural representation that I discussed in the previous chapter, I layer in the ramifications of representation towards the constitution of a locale—be it geographical or otherwise. I start by first noticing the presence and pronounced absence of history and place-identity in Schulz's autobiographical prose.

The second chapter has already touched on the near-absence of explicit connections to historical or geographical identifiers. Emperor Franz Josef makes a number of appearances, yet Schulz's stories render him more like a character in a fairy tale than a historical figure. One can suspect that the 1910 apparition of Halley's Comet is the basis for Schulz's story "The Comet," although nothing in the text divulges that this is the case. Certain atmospheric qualities particular to the historical time-period can be discerned, such as the pervasive industrialization of small towns which also began to affect Drohobycz when oil was discovered at the turn of the century. In "The Street of Crocodiles" Schulz writes that "[t]he spirit of the times, the mechanism of

economics, had not spared our city and had taken root in a sector of its periphery which then developed into a parasitical quarter."[486] In this story, Schulz's narrator deplores this fast-growing, dubious quarter which he describes as having succumbed to a vulgar "pseudo-Americanism" that emanates an "odor or corruption." Brian Banks relays that this repugnant odour would have not been merely metaphorical, as the distinct smell of oil (mingled with horse manure) was heavily felt in Drohobycz.[487] In an essay entitled "Galicia in the Work of Bruno Schulz," Bohdan Budurowycz extracts landmarks and places that are recognizable in Schulz's stories, pointing to Stryjska Street, market square, and the Holy Trinity Church.[488] It quickly becomes obvious however, that such identifiable features are few and overshadowed by the layers of fantastical elements so prevalent in Schulz's prose. Budurowycz recognizes that "[t]he dreamlike quality of Schulz's writings makes it difficult, if not impossible, to pin down with any precision the details of his imaginary peregrinations […]"[489] Jerzy Ficowski, Schulz's biographer, offers additional details with respect to what of Schulz's stories that were grounded in reality. Although he also points out that while fascinating to uncover, the fiction stands autonomously, without the reader's knowledge of these autobiographical details. Ficowski contends that Schulz's "world is self-referential and does not require recourse to psychological origins, since what was personal became universal and what was provincial became a world in itself."[490] To Budurowycz's study Ficowski adds biographical correspondences from the area surrounding Drohobycz, such as "Little Hill" that appears in "The Republic of Dreams", or certain elements that match the description of places in the outskirts of Truskawiec where the family would go on weekend outings.[491] Ficowski also notes the characters in Schulz's stories that had correspondents to Drohobycz's daily life. Amongst them are the mentally challenged beggar-woman named Touya (Tłuja), the character Dodo who was based on Schulz's cousin David Heimberg, and Nemrod the family dog was the protagonist of Schulz's story with the same name.

With respect to places, Stryjska Street is mentioned by name in "August," at the very beginning of the *Cinnamon Shops* collection: "Thus my mother and I ambled along the two

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[486] Schulz, "The Street of Crocodiles," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 64.
[487] According to a local resident the nearby river was so polluted that the poor would skim the oil from the surface of the river to sell it in the street. Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 96.
[488] Bohdan Budurowycz, "Galicia in the Work of Bruno Schulz," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*. 28, no. 4 (December 1986): 359-368.
[489] Ibid., 361.
[490] Ficowski, *Regions of Great Heresy*, 92.
[491] Ibid., 96.

sunny sides of Market Square, guiding our broken shadows along the houses as over a keyboard. […] And finally on the corner of Stryjska Street we passed within the shadow of the chemist's shop."[492] Interestingly, Stryjska is also the street that inspired the story "The Street of Crocodiles." In tune with a more general operative mode in Schulz's prose, things and name-places are not explained or clarified, but their identities stretch, or multiply as dictated by the specific poetics of a particular circumstance. While Crocodile Street was based on this existing street, this correlation is omitted in Schulz's prose, causing its presence and identity to double: it becomes two different streets. As the story "August" portrays, Styjska Street was in reality connected to market square. It is likely that Schulz wanted to obfuscate this proximity in "The Street of Crocodiles," and to emphasize the metaphoric distance between the enchanted realm of his father's shop and the licentious commerce taking place in this quarter of dubious integrity.

Russel E. Brown also remarks that "Bruno Schulz's fiction is set in a world stripped of geographical, nominal, and historical markers, […]"[493] Brown unpacks how the social and political situation of Drohobych during Schulz's life becomes refracted by Joseph, the autobiographical boy-narrator of Schulz's short stories. He notes that these stories display and overwhelming reticence to include primary names of places and people: Tysmenica River appears in "The Street of Crocodiles,"[494] and young Bruno's former art teacher, Professor Arendt is mentioned in "Cinnamon Shops."[495] One instance in which "Drohobycz" is named as the home of Robinson Crusoe in Celina Wieniewska's English translation is in fact an infringement on Schulz's reticence who in fact calls on Bolechow, another nearby town.[496] These very few "accurate" identifications are of course overwhelmed by the prevalent use of primary names and places that are drawn from myth, biblical tales, other literary works, or places such as Milan, Honduras, or Canada which to the child-narrator appear exotic.

Brown also notes that historical events are essentially absent despite the fact that this time period was fraught by incredible political turmoil. Amongst the powerful events that took place during his life, yet are completely absent from his fiction are: the First World War; the Russian Revolution of 1917; the emergence of the Second Polish Republic; the "Drohobych armed

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[492] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 5.
[493] Russell E. Brown, "Politics and Society in the Fiction of Bruno Schulz: Suppression and Allusion," in *Myths and Relatives,* 120-1.
[494] Schulz, "The Street of Crocodiles," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 63.
[495] Schulz, "Cinnamon Shops," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 57.
[496] Schulz, "A Second Fall," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 222.

revolt" of 1919; the rightist paramilitary outbursts surrounding Marshal Pilsudski that took place between the wars.[497] Omitted as well are references to the multiplicity of ethnicities—Poles, Ukrainians, Christians, Jews—and the tensions that existed between them. This, Brown notes, is also apparent in the lack of ethnicity displayed by the names of Schulz's characters as is the complete absence of family names.

Vira Meniok, a professor at Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University in Schulz's native Drohobycz, takes for granted that the town presented in Schulz's stories is a sublimated, mythologized "phenomenon of Town." She writes that "[t]his phenomenon is not the result of real determinants of Drohobycz and its history; it is not about contemporary Drohobycz or Drohobycz from the past, where Schultz lived."[498] Although Meniok doesn't dwell on it, this forceful stance confirms the reader's experience: Schulz's rendering of the locale in which his stories take place emerges as an archaic manifestation of town-ness. As Krzysztof Stala puts it "Schulz's Drohobycz might have been located in any time, anywhere, the town is left outside history, on the margins of time."[499] Even though Stala does not discuss mythization, Schulz's predisposition towards obscuring the historical and geopolitical context of his memories, echoes what Hans Blumenberg understands to be one of the operative principles of mythical stories: that they are "seldom localized in space and never in time."[500] He notes that mythical validity draws precisely from a-temporality, anonymity of a given date, as well as un-placedness. Echoing's Stala's assessment of Schulz's work, Blumenberg explains that mythical stories appear to be occurring anywhere and at any time. While this inclination to render the identity of place anonymous can be seen as having affinity to the mythic imagination, it bears noting that a number of actual geo-political circumstances might have strengthened this impulse.

When Brown points out the events that are "missing" from Schulz's prose, he highlights that the factual reality of the political situation was anything but stable during the time when Schulz was writing his stories. In fact, geo-political identities were tenuous and unreliable throughout Schulz's life. Until the 1918 Treaty of Versailles, Poland had not existed on a map of Europe. What was once the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had in 1772 been partitioned

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[497] Brown, "Politics and Society in Bruno Schulz," in *Myths and Relatives,* 119-20, 124.
[498] Vira Meniok, "The Republic of Dreams: Town in Schulz's creation and interpretation," trans. Anna Wrobel, in *Bruno Schulz: New Readings, New Meanings = Bruno Schulz: nouvelles lectures, nouvelles significations*, ed. S. Latek (Montréal: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in Canada, 2009), 115.
[499] Stala, *On the Margins of Reality*, 54.
[500] Blumenberg, *Work on Myth,* 39.

amongst the empires of Prussia, Russia, and Austria. As was the case for many of the former Austro-Hungarian countries, nations were interspersed. The experience of "nationhood" did not correspond to land or borders—which would continually shift—but to the language and habits of a peoples. Literature was at the frontier of coagulating a sense of cultural identity, and this was especially true for Polish writers. Adam Zagajewski notes that during the twentieth century, "Poland had no central unifying institutions—except for literature and art and sporadic political and military actions planned by both exiled and nonexiled activists and patriotic aristocrats."[501] Due to the fact that after World War I Poland was a new geopolitical invention, "writers in interwar Central and Eastern Europe were acutely aware of the special challenges they faced in creating a new literature that would both reflect and advance these new realia in the very moment of their becoming."[502] Schulz wrote in Polish, and while his essays and literary reviews demonstrate an active participation to intellectual life in Poland, it is not altogether clear how committed he would have been to what others understood as the task of literature to reconstitute the body politics of Poland. Two of Schulz's essays that re-surfaced following the communist regime indicate that he held a high regard for Marshall Joseph Pilsudski, as well as the work of writers Kazimierz Wierzynski and Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, whose literary efforts captured the enthusiasm for Pilsudski's leadership of a newly reconstituted Poland.[503]

If, as Brown has pointed out, Schulz's prose does not overtly capture the tensions between ethnic identities, these tensions would have certainly been part of Schulz's experience. It seems that strong anti-Semitic sentiments did not go without tremendous outbreaks of violence, especially following World War I.[504] Schulz's family might have very well been part of what Omer Bartov has identified as the "Polish Jewry [that] underwent a drastic transformation manifested in greatly accelerated acculturation, secularization, and modernization."[505] While Bartov is speaking about the interwar period, it appears that Schulz's parents applied themselves to such efforts much earlier on. Brian Banks tells us that his mother, had changed her Jewish first

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[501] Adam Zagajewski, ed., *Polish Writers on Writing* (San Antonio, Texas: Trinity University Press, 2007).
[502] Benjamin Paloff, *Lost in the Shadow of the Word: Space, Time, and Freedom in Interwar Eastern Europe* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2016), 7.
[503] Bruno Schulz, "Tragic Freedom" and "At Belvedere," trans. C. Prokopczyk, in Schulz, *New Documents and Interpretations*.
[504] Banks suggests that a violent anti-semitic event occurred in June 1911 in Drohobycz's market square, and that Schulz might have witnessed the death of someone close to him. Banks does not give us a reference as to how he obtained this information. Banks, *Muse & Messiah,*139. Omer Bartov tells us that the invasion of the Russian army after World War I caused subsequent violence amongst Ukranian, Polish, and Bolshevik camps. This fighting "was accompanied by such outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence as the pogrom of November 1918 in L'viv, where score of Jews were murdered by Polish soldiers." Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18.
[505] Bartov, *Erased*, 19.

name to the Christian 'Henrietta' likely because it was to be inscribed in the sign above the family cloth shop, which read 'Henrietta Schulz'.[506] Both Bruno (born in 1892) and his brother, elder by eleven years, were educated in Polish rather than Yiddish. According to Banks, this seems to not have been standard practice even for secularized Jewish families.[507] Along Polish, German tended to be used for commerce and was also spoken in the home—a language that young Bruno knew fluently and through which he came to be acquainted with the majority of his literary influences including Goethe, Rilke, Mann, and Kafka.

If Schulz was ever a target of anti-Semitism during his life, none of the letters that survived the war hint that this might have been the case. The only time religion is mentioned in Schulz's letters, it is in the context of his wish to marry his Catholic fiancée, Jozefina Szelinska. In a letter to Romana Halpern, Schulz asks for practical advice on the matter of civil marriages, telling his addressee that he had renounced his Jewish affiliations but did not wish to convert to Catholicism.[508] Jerzy Ficowski, claims that Schulz would have not wished to participate in any disputes other than artistic ones and that he would have refrained from responding to manifestations of anti-Semitism. Ficowski believes that "[Schulz] wanted to be left in peace because his creative work was the only important thing in his life."[509] This of course would have been prior to the German occupation of Drohobycz when his Jewish heritage decided his fate and led to his infuriatingly tragic death.[510]

Geo-political entities lacked strong definition even prior to World War I, when the political situation was much less turbulent. This political stability refers to what would have been Schulz's childhood, the time period captured in his stories. Under the auspices of a multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, name-places existed in multiple languages, rendering their identity more fluid. For example, the city in which Schulz studied architecture was called Lwów in Polish, L'vov in Russian, Lemberg in German, sometimes referred to by the Latin Leopolis, and is currently known as L'viv (or Lviv) in what is now Ukraine. After the collapse of the Empire, and following subsequent drastic political shifts, many geo-political entities changed name or altogether disappeared. Galicia for instance, no longer figures on contemporary maps even

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[506] Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 138.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 134-5.
[509] Jerzy Ficowski in "Interview in Warsaw, July 3, 1993" with Dorota Glowacka, edited and translated by D. Glowacka, in Schulz, *New Documents and Interpretations*, 65.
[510] The circumstances of Bruno Schulz's murder were mentioned in the introduction. An eyewitness account is found in Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 248-9.

though the region persists in the cultural identity of its inhabitants.[511] Many street names were changed, sometimes more than once and within a relatively short time span. Stryjska Street, one of the very few actual places that are named in Schulz's prose, has since changed to Mazepa Street in today's Ukrainian Drohobycz.

While Drohobycz, so steeped in childhood memories, essentially became the muse of his prose, Schulz felt trapped and profoundly isolated there. In many of his letters to friends and colleagues, he fervently expresses his thirst for intellectual exchanges with those he considered kindred spirits or mentor figures. As noted in the introduction, Schulz also struggled with anxiety, depression, poor health, and often lamented that his teaching duties took up too much of his time and stifled his momentum for writing.[512] He wrote numerous letters to the ministry of education requesting paid leaves of absences so that he could pursue his literary endeavours.[513] An additional burden to his already meagre teacher's salary, was that he had to sustain not only himself but his brother's widow and their young son. Several of his letters convey attempts to relocate to a city with a more stimulating intellectual and cultural life. These include letters to friends or acquaintances he felt might be able to help him, as well as official letters to the ministry of education in which he requested transfer to a city with a university such as Lwow or Warsaw. These requests were more insistent around 1936, when he still hoped to marry Jozefina Szelinska, whose circumstances required her to move away from Drohobycz. When his attempts to obtain a transfer ended in failure, Schulz's grief was compounded by the fact that it also ended their engagement.[514]

Debates go both ways as to whether Schulz's profound isolation and his entrapment in the place of his birth were the required ingredients for his masterful prose. Brian Banks speculates that Drohobycz was the necessary stimulus for his creativity as well as "the source of his despairing isolation."[515] Ficowski on the other hand, is convinced that Schulz's imagination would have thrived in any place. When asked if he believed that Drohobycz nourished Schulz's artistic imagination, Ficowski expressed the belief that the primary impetus for Schulz was his

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[511] Quoted in Bartov, *Erased,* 8.
[512] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings,* especially letters to Tadeusz and Zofia Breza, Zenon Wasniewski, Waclaw Czarski, Kazimierz Truchanowski, Romana Halpern, and Anna Plockier.
[513] Schulz, "Letters and Applications to Regional and National School Authorities, 1924-1938," in Schulz, *New Documents and Interpretations*, 5-19.
[514] Schulz describes their mutual love and admiration, as well as his deplorable sadness following their break-up, in some of the surviving letters including those to Romana Halpern and Zofia and Tadeusz Breza. Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, especially 58, 63, 65, 134, 138, 144, 152.
[515] Banks, *Muse & Messiah*, 222.

desire to recapture the enchantment of a child's first encounter with the world and is only tied to Drohobycz in that he happened to have been born there.[516]

If Drohobycz might have supplied the raw material of his literary work, Schulz certainly felt stagnant there and constantly craved the freshness of an outside interlocutor. An instance when this longing is made overt is a 1934 letter to Tadeusz Breza—a writer, editor, and friend—in which Schulz urges him to visit in the hope that it might propel his writing: "I'd like to show you Drohobycz and its surroundings and see the landscape of my youth afresh through your eyes, guide you into the unwritten chapters of *Cinnamon Shops*. Please come."[517] In another letter, he notes that even though life in a provincial town might have afforded him a quiet atmosphere suitable to writing, his disdain for Drohobycz was so acute it seems to have even caused his stomach to revolt. To Romana Halpern he confesses that "[i]n order to write I need to have an especially benign and favourable climate around me—a good portion of belief in myself, quiet, security… […] It is true that in Warsaw I wouldn't have this creative isolation. On the other hand, I wouldn't face death by tedium, creeping boredom, horrible vomiting fits from the drabness of life."[518] In a letter from 1937 Schulz describes that through his writing, he was able to creatively transform the tedium of daily life, and that this was in fact necessary for his survival:

> It seems that the world, life, is always important to me solely as raw material for writing. The moment I cannot make creative use of life, it becomes either fearsome and perilous to me, or fatally tedious. To sustain curiosity, creative incentive, to fight the process of sterilization, boredom—these are my most important and urgent tasks. Without the zest this adds to life I would fall—alive—into a lethal lethargy. Literary art has accustomed me to its stimuli and sharp sensations. 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 might kill me.[519]

To sum up, it appears that the actual historical and political situations throughout Schulz's life, were unstable and did not inspire Schulz to commit them to posterity. In all likelihood, he felt removed and disinterested in the insipid political or ethnic clashes that were so prevalent throughout his life. It remains clear that it was to the creative spirit and the respite afforded by

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[516] Ficowski in interview with Glowacka, in Schulz, *New Documents and Interpretations*, 62.
[517] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 54.
[518] Letter to Romana Halpern, dated August 30, 1937. Ibid., 151.
[519] Ibid.

writing that he maintained the strongest allegiances. As I have noted previously, it is because the historical time and place of Schulz's stories is rendered anonymous, that I am able to focus instead on how Schulz performs an attentive, quasi-alchemical presentation of place via his literary constructions.

I now shift my focus to examine instances in which locality is presented in Schulz's prose—what I have qualified as the equivalent of an architectural study of a site or context. As we are about to notice, several attitudes and representational tactics echo a mythic sensibility towards world.

4.4 A Rendering of Locale Absorbed in an Intensified Vision of the Mundane

> "Ordinary things contain the deepest mysteries. […] This is easily enough explained, since everything ordinary seems at once neutral and indispensable, but it is a delusion, and a delusion with consequences too, as it hides the power that the customary arrangement of domestic space exerts over our lives, and at the same time conceals the fact that this organization has an origin and a purpose." – Robin Evans [520]

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Schulz's text is predisposed towards image rather than plot. This inadvertently inflects the way his prose renders spatial conditions. His metaphors have the tendency to build up profusely layered tableau-like imagery that focus on insignificant quotidian events. For instance, in the beginning of the story "Spring" describes Jacob and Joseph's habitual suppers as well as their walk across the square. While in reality this walk across the square would be quite short and unremarkable, Schulz's depiction spends considerable energy in building up the imagery and atmosphere of this mundane occurrence that bears next to no consequence in the overall plotline, but is rather stubbornly preoccupied with that particular moment. This is also the case in the way that Schulz's prose presents what to an architect is the equivalent of a linguistic rendering of place or locale: This rendering of place is built up through stratified images that are immersed in a meticulous act of observing. We examine a passage that follows Jacob and Joseph's habitual dinner. It is preceded by a series of other tableaus that presented the night sky as a majestic force that casts a mood of playful tension and uncertain

[520] Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors and Passages," in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), 56.

horoscopes on the protagonists' evening outing. This particular passage describes their walk home which they decided to prolong by way of a detour "through distant suburbs." Here the previously hostile night becomes softened by a gentle rain and a benevolent, violet moon:

> We entered a climate of gentle warm spring; the silvery reflection of a young, violet moon just risen crept on the muddy path. That pre-spring night antedated itself, feverishly anticipating its later phases. The air, a short while before seasoned with the usual tartness of the time of year, became sweetly insipid, filled with the smell of rain, of damp loam, and of the first snowdrops that bloomed spectrally in the white, magic light. And it was strange that under that benevolent moon frog spawn did not spread on the silvery mud, that the night did not resound with a thousand gossiping mouths on those graveled riverbanks saturated with shiny drops of sweet water. And one had to imagine the croaking of frogs in the night, which was filled with the murmur of subterranean springs, so that—after a moment of stillness—the moon might continue on its way and climb higher in the sky, spreading wide its whiteness, ever more luminous, more magical and transcendental.[521]

I remind the reader that this image describes a mundane after-dinner walk, a detour through the suburbs—which in Drohobycz simply meant an area of the town near market square in which houses were separate and interspersed with greenery rather than built into the continuous façade characteristic of the Austro-Hungarian urban fabric. Let us first take a moment to imagine a photograph of this part of town. Notice all the qualities in Schulz's image that would be either absent or overlooked in such a photograph. If we examine this image as a rendering of a locale we quickly notice a number of elements that come into focus by virtue of the fact that it is constructed through language: The image tells us it is tied to a season. In fact, it fastidiously conjures that very particular threshold when the tartness of a late winter gives way to the sweet dampness of an early spring. Nothing really 'happens' in this image. It simply describes an uneventful moment in time that is at once cyclical and very specific. We notice also the prominence of silvery reflections, a soft dampness that is built onto with the violet-white glow of the moon and punctuated by the timid bloom of snowdrops. A would-be, yet momentarily absent musicality of frogs and "the murmur of subterranean springs" build up the image in anticipation of the near future. All of this reiterates the text's predisposition towards periphrasis that we unpacked in our earlier observations of the architectural spaces in Schulz's prose. It also re-iterates how much literary language can capture the character of a place though a sensorially rich

[521] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 146.

rendering of sounds, temperatures, humidity, smells, reflections, etc. that build up a tactile image which overflows the visible. To an architect who, this time, is focused on context, these are the kinds of nuances that very much characterize a given locale, yet they often remain poorly articulated in traditional maps, diagrams, and photographs of a site because they are difficult to grasp via visual forms of representation. Dolores Hayden notes that the un-monumental and the mundane manifestations of a place are inextricable aspects of what constitutes the ever elusive "sense of place"—and yet these are too often overlooked in heritage studies. This is especially true of the rich array of qualitative, immaterial, and temporal aspects that are intrinsic in the way a landscape persists in the memory, and which take part in the human habits and material culture of a place. She argues that "[if] place does provide an overload of possible meanings for the researcher, it is place's very same assault on all ways of knowing (sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste) that makes it powerful as a source of memory, as a weave where one strand ties in another."[522] These are the kinds of qualities often exist outside of historical narratives. The artifacts that are built in a given place—whether they are cities or stories, or myths—are always in response to such pre-existing conditions. Schulz's prose can then be said to operate as renderings of locality that capture this richly sensorial culture of a place.

This intensified and attentive vision of the mundane is one of the most elemental ways in which Schulz's prose reciprocates the mythic imagination. Ernst Cassirer notes that the mythical imagination "is captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it. It comes to rest in the immediate experience; the sensible present is so great that everything else dwindles before it."[523] Diana Kuprel's corroborates this parallel to Cassirer, arguing that Schulz's short stories demonstrate the presence of what Cassirer calls a "mythical consciousness." Kuprel writes that this mythical mode of consciousness is activated by the poetic capacity of language, producing "a spontaneous, dynamic and provisional world out of an excess of a banal and degraded visual reality." She emphasizes the poetic and creative aspect of this engagement with the world, noting that Schulz's "mythologizing" is in effect an act of poetic consciousness, "an original mode of configuring reality."[524]

The creative aspect of this linguistically constructed image is an important one, especially given our endeavour to draw parallels between Schulz's prose and architectural tactics that distill

[522] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 18.
[523] Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, 32.
[524] Diana Kuprel, "Bruno Schulz and Mythical Consciousness," 101.

a sense of place. In fact, *any* representation of place is, at least in part, creatively constructed. Even a photograph will be framed in such a way as to include certain elements and omit others, it will wait for certain things to pass and others to come into focus. In other words, representations of place are always mediated, and to a certain extent are creatively constructed. Similarly, when an architect studies a site, they focus on elements that are important to a particular architectural project, meaning that they prioritize certain aspects of a place while they omit others. This connects back to the beginning of the chapter when we discussed how the "site" is not passive but is actively *constructed* in preparation for an architectural project.[525] As noted earlier in this chapter, tactics for representing and distilling a site—of which maps, photographs, and diagrams are most typical—not only convey knowledge about a specific locality, but they also crystalize it. It bears repeating that every act of representation is a creative operation, in which "site" is reconfigured, or re-created in response to those of its qualities that are vital to the intentions (or intuitions) that occasioned the future architecture. Every medium of representation, when engaged with discernment has this potential to crystalize architectural knowledge about a site. As we have shown in the previous chapter the potential of literary language is that it can capture, with its own kind of precision, that which is elusive and ambiguous. Schulz's passage is exemplary of how one might leverage creative language to achieve an image of place that is attentive, focused, and highly specific to the intentions of its maker. When Schulz constructs an image of an early spring evening in the suburbs by calling on silvery mud, a violet moon, the creaking of frogs, subterranean murmurs, the smell of rain, etc., he has already asserted a creative position. We can say that the act of choosing and orchestrating words and sentences, performs a slower deliberation of his representational focus than would the act of taking a photograph. (This is not at all to diminish the power of that medium but rather to observe its blind spots.) What poetic language can also do that photographs cannot, is operate at a heterogeneity of scales and temporalities: the snowdrops come into focus just as much as the light of the moon and the subterranean springs; the present moment is instilled with the anticipation of the sound of croaking frogs—a sound that is both still to come and a familiar memory of that particular season. As we are about to see, this layering of temporalities is a prominent feature in the way that Schulz's prose presents place.

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[525] Christopher Mead, Foreword to *Interpreting Site*, ix.

We move on to a depiction of another habitual walk across market square, this time taking place in a hot August afternoon. Building on to our previous chapter's reading of market square, we here read it as an architectural site. This means that we focus our attention on the way Schulz's prose renders the interaction between the built and the unbuilt. As is the case for many of Schulz's stories, "August," opens by setting the tone with the atmospheric quality of that particular season. Later on, Schulz's narrator describes what is an otherwise unremarkable walk across the square, during a sunny late-afternoon:

> Dizzy with light, we dipped into that enormous book of holidays, its pages blazing with sunshine and scented with the sweet melting pulp of golden pears.[526]
>
> On Saturday afternoons I used to go for a walk with my mother. From the dusk of the hallway, we stepped at once into the brightness of the day. The passersby, bathed in the melting gold, had their eyes half-closed against the glare, as if they were drenched with honey. Upper lips were drawn back, exposing the teeth. Everyone in this golden day wore that grimace of heat—as if the sun had forced his worshippers to wear identical masks of gold. The old and the young, women and children, greeted each other with these masks, painted on their faces with thick gold paint; they smiled at each other's pagan faces—the barbaric smiles of Bacchus.[527]

This is another instance in which we observe Schulz's prose as an intensified vision of the mundane. The premise of this imagery is quite prosaic: it describes a walk along the sunny sides of market square during a very hot summer afternoon. A slightly more penetrating description would be to say that the heat and glare induce an atmosphere of torpid dizziness akin to inebriation. Schulz's language goes far beyond that, building up this evanescent moment through richly sensorial imagery that layers in textures, tastes, temperature, scent, surfaces, further woven in with human gestures. This thick present is evocatively choreographed in a short passage, engulfing the reader in an experience that is haptic and viscerally engaging. Schulz begins with a familiar bodily reaction to hot glare—the grimacing squint that one involuntarily adopts—and suffuses it with imagery that draws on the presence of the sun and its summer heat as it persists in the human imaginary: sun worshipping, glistening gold which accentuates the dizzying fire of the late afternoon sun, dripping honey, pagan rituals. All echo a multitude of sensations

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[526] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 3.
[527] Ibid., 4.

including archaic agricultural celebrations that are made overt by eliciting Bacchus, the god of the grape-harvest, wine, and religious ecstasy whose thyrsus is also known to be dripping with honey.

All these elements build onto and reverberate one another to make palpable the experience of a hot and glaring August sun, the sensation of a sweet intoxication that is similar to a torpid drunkenness. This sensation is rendered with more precision by layering in the images of scented pears, viscous honey and dripping gold. This depiction of market square testifies to Ficowski's observation that "individual images in Schulz's writing, intensified by the mythicization of the object, are truer and more evocative than realistic description."[528] Here Ficowski implies that Schulz's mythization operates not only as a poetic act of language but can also recast the relationship between a mythically inclined imagination and everyday things. The mythic attitude toward the world is manifested, as Cassirer has noted, in this enthralled and intensified vision of the mundane. In this particular image of the square during an August afternoon, Schulz also weaves in the image of the mythic Bacchus. The invocation of Bacchus and pagan grimaces is an instance of what Stala has identified as a metaphor that performs a condensation of meaning. This metaphoric construction runs counter to the periphrasis. Rather than a restless dispersal through a chain of metaphors, it generates images that have the capacity to unfold endlessly, often by way of connection to myth, biblical and storytelling elements. In his essay "The Mythologizing of Reality" Schulz writes that "[p]oetry happens when short-circuits of sense occur between words, a sudden regeneration of the primeval myths."[529] In essence, it is language itself that is embedded in a primeval mythology: philologically speaking, words operate within a cosmology of meaning and significance. Schulz writes that the imperative of poetic acts is sense-making, which is realized because poetry vivifies the latent constellations of meaning that are stored in language. In the passage just discussed, such a constellation is made apparent with the image that is conjured by weaving together sun-worship, molten gold, faces drenched in honey, pagan grimaces of heat, the torpid atmosphere, and the presence of the mythic Bacchus which re-iterates and coagulates several of these images. This constellation that condenses around the image of Bacchus essentially relies on language as a point of access to this expanded cultural imaginary. Yet this image also operates towards world such that the prose

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[528] Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 97.
[529] Schulz, "The Mythologizing of Reality," in *Letters and Drawings*, 115.

imbues the things it calls on—afternoon heat, honey, pears—with a mythic-poetic dimension. Continuing with this particular image of market square in "August," Schulz dwells for a moment on the walk itself:

> Thus my mother and I ambled along the two sunny sides of Market Square, guiding our broken shadows along the houses as over a keyboard.[530] Under our soft steps the squares of the paving stones slowly filed past—some the pale pink of human skin, some golden, some blue gray, all flat, warm and velvety in the sun, like sundials, trodden to the point of obliteration […][531]

Under the near-blinding glare of the honey-soaked August sun, the elongated shadows of the late afternoon come into focus. When Schulz notes their play along the surface of the houses "as over a keyboard," he imbues this image with rhythm and musicality: it is as if the characters have taken their shadows out for a walk, precisely for the purpose of playing the music of a hot August afternoon on the familiar instrument that is the built-up façade of market square. The fleeting moment is thus layered in with rhythm, attentively observing the musicality of its evanescence. Attention then shifts to the pavement, where one's squinting takes a soothing reprieve from the sun's glare in the flat velvety texture and the soft hues of the paving stones.

If we once again compare what would be a photograph of the square in an August late-afternoon, we notice how much this image of passersby as wearing golden Bacchus-worshipping masks is creatively constructed. We also notice how much this atmosphere depends on language as well as a common cultural imaginary. This cultural memory—which is otherwise un-photographable—brings in a very specific focus to this image of market square by layering in a whole constellation of qualitative nuances that resonate and orbit around the iconography surrounding Bacchus. In other words, literary language is shown to construct an image of place that is even more specific to its author's intentions.

If an architect constructed this particular image of the square with a future project in mind, the glistening, honey-dripping and intoxicating golden breath of Bacchus would be chosen because the architect senses an opportunity to imaginatively propel this project. A pedestrian speculation would be that this project might be a winery or a restaurant—for which the late

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[530] Schulz never capitalizes "market square" in Polish. Wieniewska's English translation capitalizes it in some moments—as seen at the beginning of this extract—but it does not in others. When I refer to market square I maintain Schulz's intention and keep it as a common noun.
[531] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 5.

afternoon hour is important. The essential point however is not *what* is presented but rather *how* the image of the urban square is constructed. Schulz's passage is exemplary of how one might leverage creative language to achieve an image of place that is attentive, focused, and highly specific to the intentions of its maker; an image that is able to focus with equal intensity on fleeting moments as on the depths of a cultural imaginary, and all the temporal scales in between.

This sun worshipping image of the square also connects back to a broader cultural history of the discipline of architecture. There was time in human history when Orpheus' enchanted lyre was felt to have the power to seduce the sun into rising—so necessary a life force was the sun's light, so deep the fear that the sun would refuse to return at dawn. This era along with its fears are now long gone, farther away from us than can be easily remembered. Even if the thought of a human imagination so captivated by the sun seems to us archaic, the observance of the sun's journey across the sky remains a primordial architectural consideration. One of the first lessons of architecture school is to acknowledge a future building's solar orientation; to respond to the way a building's face addresses its cardinal direction. "The worship of the sun and the measurement of time from its light reach back to the earliest recorded history of man," writes architect Harry Wolf.[532] In the first architectural treatise that has been committed to posterity, in the first century BCE, the Roman architect Vitruvius counts the building of *gnomons*, or solar clocks, to be one of the main works of the architect, along with buildings and machines. For Vitruvius, architecture constituted those works that aligned human endeavours with the cosmos. The *gnomon*, essentially the needle of a sundial, is an analog for the human condition, a stand-in for the upright animal whose gaze is directed to the distance of sky and its infinity, and who, conditioned by the awareness of life's passing, aspires to transcend it. The horizontal shadow united to the ground tells time but it also tells of the inevitable time when the upright creature folds back into their shadow and is swallowed by the ground.

Schulz's depiction of market square in a late August afternoon attentively observes how the square tells time, how it solicits those very upright creatures with sun-worshiping inclinations to act as time's needle. Not only that, but it paints that particular time, in that particular place in all its viscerally rich sensations that accompany it. If one were to propose an architectural intervention in this particular space, the orientation with respect to the sun would come laden with this richly layered rendering of place. If one were to propose an architectural intervention

[532] Quoted in Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 321.

anywhere, one has become aware that such a rendering of solar orientation is possible. It is probable that after becoming acquainted with Schulz's passage, the reader will experience a playful musicality whenever noticing their shadow gliding over hard surfaces in the late afternoon, or that cramped faces squinting in the glare of a bright afternoon might seem to echo a distant archaic ritual dedicated to the sun. In other words, Schulz's prose far surpasses the place from which it arose, because it offers a new power of seeing the ordinary. The manner in which Schulz's prose paints the specific market square that he knew more intimately than he had wished, achieves precisely what Schulz hoped to do with his literature, namely to transcend and transpose it into a dimension that speaks to an elemental condition. This primordial universality, far from being distant and out of reach, arises out the very surface of sensuous experience, the minutia of smells, tastes, textures, and sounds. It also arises in the presence of a particular moment in time, where Schulz's prose notices how the fleeting and ephemeral play of light greets the geological memory embedded in paving stones.

As with the earlier image of spring night, we notice that Schulz's image of the square builds up by attentively observing multiple temporal layers. These range from the fleeting, repeatable, and those inscribed in geological time. With the rhythm of shadows, we notice how time unfolds in space at the scale and cadence of the human body. By calling on the image of the "sundial" Schulz draws attention not only to the duration of bodies moving through space, but to the way in which the architectural space of the square is in itself a timepiece. It is to the particular treatment of time in Schulz's prose that I turn to next.

4.5 Place in Time: Literary Language Captures Layered Temporalities[533]

> "Not surprisingly, we objectify time and pay handsome rewards […] to those who can tie time down in improved chronometry. Although the modern period has succeeded brilliantly in this very regard, it has also fallen into the schizoid state of having made objective, as clock-time and world-time, what is in fact a most diaphanous and ephemeral, most "obscure," in human experience. We end by obsessing about what is no object at all. We feel obligated to tell time in an objective manner; but in fact we only obliged ourselves to do so by our own sub rosa subreptions, becoming thereby our own pawns in the losing game of time."[534]

Building onto Schulz's intensified vision of the mundane is his particular treatment of time. I had noted earlier how Schulz's town is rendered in his prose as being outside of history, on the peripheries of time. His short stories deliberately eschew historical identifiers and are constructed as a series of fastidiously layered tableaus that do little to push the plot onwards. An immediately apparent feature in Schulz's fiction is that he undermines the measured and homogeneous notion of clock time. He insists that the time in his stories is freed from the disciplined, tyrannical demands of productive efficiency: "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."[535] Schulz's narrator often takes care to note that the moments described in the stories take place in a delinquent or "heretical" kind of time that runs on illegal and parallel tracks. Thus freed of the vigilance of "continuous regulations and corrections, [time] immediately begins to do tricks, run wild, play irresponsible practical jokes, and indulge in crazy clowning."[536] In addition, time is also subject to a slew of dubious compulsions such as decomposition, reversals, accelerations, metamorphosis and so on. Time is described as having "passed uncounted, making unfamiliar knots and abbreviations in its

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[533] A version of my reading of how Schulz's language operates as representation of place and locality has been published in Anca Matyiku, "Literary Language and Palimpsests of Chronometries: Representations of Urban Space in Bruno Schulz's Prose," in *La Città Palinsesto / The City as Palimpsest*, ed. Maria Ines Pascariello (Napoli: FedOA - Federico II University Press, 2020), 365-70. http://www.fedoabooks.unina.it/index.php/fedoapress/catalog/view/249/279/1464-1

[534] Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World,* 2nd edition (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 11.

[535] Schulz, "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 253.

[536] Ibid., 255.

passage."[537] What the narrator tells us about time in the "Age of Genius," aptly describes an overarching condition with respect to the time in which Schulz's stories are located:

> Ordinary facts are arranged within time, strung along its length as on a thread. There they have their antecedents and their consequences, which crowd tightly together and press hard one upon the other without any pause. This has its importance for any narrative, of which continuity and successiveness are the soul.
>
> Yet what is to be done with events that have no place of their own in time; events that have occurred too late, after the whole of time has been distributed, divided and allotted; events that have been left in the cold, unregistered, hanging in the air, homeless, and errant? Could it be that time is too narrow for all events? […]
>
> Have you ever heard of parallel streams of time within a two-track time? Yes, there are such branchlines of time, somewhat illegal and suspect, but when, like us, one is burdened with contraband of supernumerary events that cannot be registered, one cannot be too fussy. Let us try to find at some point of history such a branchline, a blind track onto which to shunt these illegal events.[538]

This attitude towards time, is a major facet of Schulz's provincial position. As Illakowicz has noted, Schulz's prose does not oblige the paradigm of speed. She points out that it is both subject to marginalization by homogenizing narratives of Western culture as well as provides a subversive counter-narrative. Since the events described in Schulz's stories are part of the "burdensome contraband of illegal events," they occupy equally dubious pockets, branch-lines, or parallel streams of time that are loosened from the linear course of history. It might have already become noticeable that Schulz's stories abide instead by the chronometry of seasons and repeatable cyclical events. It is not a narrative plot that flows in a linear and consistent stream that drives Schulz's stories, but rather the obsessive focus on imagery that pools and eddies. His time markers are almost never attributed to a specific moment in time, and they are often accompanied by language that reinforces a detachment from temporal identity: "often", "sometimes", "already for some time", "on Saturday afternoons," and so on. His stories capture unremarkable events and repeatable quotidian activities that become rituals. Oftentimes a story is opened with a highly atmospheric condition that could occur in any given year, during the particular season that situates each story:

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[537] Schulz, "Father Joins the Fire Brigade," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 212.
[538] Schulz, "The Age of Genius," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 129.

> On those luminous mornings, Adela returned from the market, like Pomona emerging from the flames of day, spilling from her basket the colorful beauty of the sun […][539]
>
> It happened during the period of gray days that followed the splendid colorfulness of my father's heroic era.[540]
>
> The mornings were strangely refreshing and tart. From the quietened and cooler flow of time, from the completely new smell in the air, from the different consistency of the light, one could recognize that one had entered a new series of days […][541]
>
> At the time of the shortest, sleepy winter days, edged on both sides with the furry dusk of mornings and evenings, when the city reached out deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of winter nights, and was shaken reluctantly into consciousness by the short dawn, my father was already lost, sold and surrender to the other sphere."[542]

As we have already copiously noted, Schulz's stories are almost never driven by narrative but instead, they focus obsessively on imagery and tend to describe occurrences that might be repeatable and tied to seasonal or cyclical events. Notice how, especially in the last two extracts, temporal indicators not only focus on seasons, eras, series of days but they are given synesthetic attributes such as colour, smell, texture, temperature. Furthermore, time is spatialized: days can be entered, they can have furry edges, and winter nights are labyrinthine. Images that are meant to situate the stories in time give in to highly stratified, highly textured tableaus that essential describe events that bear little significance to the storyline. "They are nothing but isolated traces of everyday life, of boredom, of the void time in which nothing essential happens."[543] The moments and events described in Schulz's stories refuse to propel the plot onwards. They become significant not in the way they affect a chain of events but in the poetic force of their imagery. This preoccupation with image is also very much pronounced when Schulz describes singular events. In the story "Pan," Schulz transforms the very substance of time into the elaborate personification of a crazed vagabond:

> It was there that I saw him first and for the only time in my life, at a noon hour crazy with heat. It was at a moment when time, demented and wild, breaks away from the treadmill of events and like an escaping vagabond, runs

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[539] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 3.
[540] Schulz, "Cockroaches," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 73.
[541] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 84.
[542] Schulz, "Cinnamon Shops," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 53.
[543] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 57.

> shouting across fields. Then the summer grows out of control, spreads at all points all over space with a wild impetus, doubling and trebling itself into an unknown, lunatic dimension.[544]

Instead of being part of a linear flow of time, the events depicted in Schulz's fiction attach themselves to eras, seasons, and are subsumed by spiritual and agricultural chronometries that obey their own inner forces rather the steady flow of measured histories and chronologies. Time as such is accelerated, repeated, emptied, molded and shaped, loosened, stratified, personified, turned back. Furthermore, time is endowed with spatial, physical, and visceral qualities. Brian Banks notes that this preoccupation with seasons, nature, and agricultural time is a common thread in Polish literature.[545] It may have been especially pronounced for Schulz, given the provincial locale of his stories, which would have positioned him to be more perceptive to such a wide array of chronometries than would have been the case for a writer located in a metropolitan center. This particular treatment of time also brings Schulz's prose in line with the sensibility of a mythic consciousness, as elaborated by Ernst Cassirer:

> Specific sacral acts are meticulously assigned to definite times and seasons, outside of which they would lose all sacral power. All religious activity is organized according to very definite time intervals, e.g. periods of seven or nine days, weeks, or months. The "holy days," the times of festival, interrupt the uniform flow of life and introduce distinct lines of demarcation.[546]

I have noted how Schulz's stories are often embedded within such intervals of time; that they gain significance in relation to particular seasons and the rituals associated with temporal specificity that is cyclical rather than singular. While Schulz does include reference to religious rites, what is in fact occurring in his prose is something of a profanation of the sacred and simultaneous (heretic) sacralization of the mundane. The rituals described in Schulz's prose are not wholeheartedly religious. This is clear with the earlier image that described a mundane walk across the square as a participation to a timeless pagan ritual. The manner in which the stories call on details about religious practices ambivalently border irony. Their quasi-spirituality participates to Schulz's zealous preoccupation with carrying out an "inspired heresy." For instance, it was noted in a previous chapter that the story "The (A) Night of the (a) Great

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[544] Schulz, "Pan," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 46-7.
[545] Banks, Muse and Messiah, 100.
[546] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Volume 2: Mythical Thought,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 108.

Season," calls on allusions to several religious rituals—Jewish as well as Catholic—but as it has just been discussed, it in fact describes the "ceremonial rites of autumn shopping."[547] Thus, the operational principle behind Schulz's "inspired heresy" is that it smuggles in, the contraband of spiritual and sacred power that his writing instills in the commonplace. Whenever Schulz's prose displays mythic sensibilities, these are perpetually counteracted by a self-deprecating, metafictive self-consciousness.

The resonance to a mythic attitude towards world is also refracted by Schulz's rendering of time as a substance endowed with visceral qualities. Cassirer notes that a mythical intuition focuses on the qualitative and concrete rather than the quantitative and abstract, adding that this intuition inflects both the consciousness of time as well as that of space. He writes that "cosmic time itself is first apprehended by myth in [a] peculiar biological form, for to the mythical consciousness the regularity of the natural process, the periodicity of the planets and the seasons, appears entirely as a life process."[548] Cassirer goes on to note how within this sensibility, the distinctions between past, present, and future dissolve and the relationship to time becomes predicated by its meaning or significance and is transformed into pure identity. Past, present, and future interpenetrate and become qualitative; the overpowering magic of the significant "now" is "laden with the past and pregnant with the future."[549] This is refracted in the way that Schulz's prose collapses temporal linearity, and instead combines verticality (depth, unfathomability) and repetition: personal history becomes entangled with natural history, and with the cyclical and repeatable chronometry of climate and seasons. This layering of temporalities is particularly pronounced in the following description of market square from the story "August," which opens the collection of stories *Cinnamon Shops*:

> Market Square was empty and white hot, swept by hot winds like a biblical desert. The thorny acacias […] rustled their foliage in a theatrical gesture, as if wanting to display the elegance of the silver lining of their leaves that resembled the fox-fur lining of a nobleman's coat.
>
> The old houses, worn smooth by the winds of innumerable days, played tricks with the reflections of the atmosphere, with echoes and memories of colors scattered in the depth of the cloudless sky. It seemed as if whole generations of summer days, like patient stonemasons cleaning the mildewed plaster from old facades, had removed the deceptive varnish revealing more and more clearly

[547] Schulz, "The Night of the Great Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 86.
[548] Cassirer, *Vol. 2: Mythic Thought*, 109.
[549] Cassirer is here translating a quote from Leibniz. Ibid., 111.

> the true face of the houses, the features that fate had given them and life had shaped for them from the inside. Now the windows, blinded by the glare of the empty square, had fallen asleep; the balconies declared their emptiness to heaven; the open doorways smelt of coolness and wine. […]
>
> One expected that, any minute, the Samaritan's donkey, led by the bridle, would stop in front of the wine merchant's vaulted doorway and that two servants would carefully ease a sick man from the red-hot saddle and carry him slowly up the cool stairs to the floor above, already redolent of the Sabbath.[550]

Notice how much the image of this urban space unfolds in a particular moment: it is a hot sunny August day, in the late afternoon. This image is set in time, almost more than it is set in space. This image also presents, in an almost didactic manner, a careful observation on how the space of the square engages a stratification of time and memory. It captures the multiplicity of temporalities that play out in a particular urban site, drawing out the chronometries that build up to a characteristic sense of place: At the minutely immediate time scale, Schulz captures an abundance of ephemeral yet acutely tactile qualities such as the gestures of thorny acacias, the playful reflections of the atmosphere, the depth of the sky, the smell of the doorways, the empty balconies to which are attributed the character of exasperated declarations. At the time-scale of seasonal repetition Schulz observes the traces that are accrued over long durations in how the "houses are worn smooth by the wind." The same wind that momentarily rustled the acacias is noted to have, in the long run, instilled a particular character in the façades of the houses. In comparing summer days with "patient stonemasons" Schulz is describing that the architectural make-up of the square absorbs the characteristics of their climate and their inhabitation: time itself is a builder that carries out constructions by accruing traces of actions and of sensibilities. In its most distant time scale, the passage from "August" reaches into the depth of a collective imaginary. The stage is set at the beginning by likening the square in the heat to a biblical desert. This image is built upon a few sentences later by recalling the ancient biblical tale of the Samaritan's generous and selfless deed, as well as anticipating its repetition.[551] In other words, this distant act is not only in a past that is essentially timeless, but it also persists as a possibility

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[550] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles,* 4-5.

[551] The story is one of the parables known to have been told by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. It tells of a man who is travelling on the road between cities and falls prey to a gang of bandits who steal his belongings and beat him to near death, leaving him on the side of the road. While a few others pass him by and avoid the dying destitute man, the good Samaritan is one who happens to pass by and takes it upon himself to bring the stranger in need to the city and to care for him to recovery, with no expectation for future re-payment. The term has been adopted in jurisprudence, into what's known as "Good Samaritan Laws." Such laws usually offer legal protection to those helping others who are injured or in peril.

for the immediate future. This detail re-iterates a primordial impulse that drives city-building: that within the protective boundaries of cities, its citizens are not only protected from unlawful vagaries, but that the act of good citizenship is to care for one's kin in need, without expectation for future restitution. If it is anything that literary depictions of place can capture—in a way that is otherwise much more difficult for photographs, maps, or diagrams—it is precisely this layering of chronometries.

In the above passage, Schulz maps out and renders the space of the square in such a way that it captures how this urban condition is layered within multiple temporal scales, how it is woven between tactile details, and a broader cultural imaginary that includes archaic stories and tales. If we read this through Blumenberg's observation that mythic stories are those that are repeatedly called upon based on necessity, then such myths and stories can even be understood as participating to a kind of natural history of the human imagination. The manner in which the insights of these stories are fossilized in human memory can be said to be analogous to the way a rock absorbs geological time within its makeup.

When Schulz's rendering of place engages a multiplicity of temporal rhythms, these go beyond a temporal position with respect to past, present and future. The way in which he captures such temporalities calls forth qualities of a place that are synesthetic and viscerally palpable. These renderings not only capture temporal and ephemeral qualities but more importantly, they also speak to how the physical, temporal and ephemeral are intertwined and play off each other. If we read Schulz's prose with the eye of an architect, we could say that the literary imagination offers new ways of seeing the context of a future architecture in such a way that it brings forth the imaginative potential that arises out of the very fabric of everyday reality.

Let us now reflect on the fact that between this and the previous chapter we examined three linguistic renderings of market square—Schloma's fresh start during an Easter afternoon, the walk during a torpid late-afternoon in August, and most recently, the square during a hot summer day. Schulz's prose offers us several other moments in market square, all as distinct as they are intensely layered representations of this space. Because these present to us the exact same urban space yet are so very distinct from one another, this brings us to notice just how actively poetic language has performed the task of creative construction. This reminds us that literary language in fact emphasizes *and* propels the creative aspect of representation: choices are made in both what is represented and the words deemed appropriate to represent it, which has led

to highly specific images of place. In other words, linguistically constructed images of place do more than describe what's there: they are suggestive of qualitative, atmospheric, and spatial opportunities that are in no way restricted to the past. If we again consider this through the lens of the architect, we can say that by *drawing out* and *drawing on* the palimpsestic reality of place, linguistic forms of representation come pregnant with possibilities for future architectural interventions.

Schulz's fastidious observation captures with an uncanny precision and attention to detail, what are otherwise overlooked quotidian occurrences, often focusing on the interplay between the built environment and momentary and fleeting phenomena. His portrayal of market square demonstrates precisely the power of the overlooked and un-monumental characteristics of urban space. In eschewing the overarching grand narrative of historical time, and by dwelling on temporal layers ranging from fleeting minutia to the timelessness of myth, Schulz, by way of literary language, also brings forth the multiple durations, temporal scales, and collective memories that unfold, thicken, and overlap to construct an image of a locale. If Schulz renders his town anonymous, what we are given is imagery that speaks more elementally about the built environment and its place within the choreography of human inhabitation and seasonal temperaments. Schulz's text has little to do with capturing memories specific to Drohobycz. Rather it implants new ways of seeing locality as a quotidian already rich with poetic opportunities. He demonstrates that language can mine the ordinary for its revelatory capacity. To be yet more precise, it is poetic language that does the extracting, and it is language that is mined for this power of seeing the ordinary. Ficowski writes that "Schulz's creative fantasy does not invent a new parallel reality, independent of ordinary experience; rather it enters the everyday, bypassing areas ignored by human experience, relieving its seriousness and competing with its well-worn roads. […] Myth then is capable, as hesitant as reality that has been unsettled, of imperceptibly penetrating reality and merging with it."[552] As we have witnessed, this "myth" Ficowski speaks of does not so much refer to myth as artifact but rather to a mythic sensibility, which essentially amounts to a particular way of seeing and relating to the world, and most importantly to enlisting poetic language to construct this vision and relationship to the world. As Kuprel puts it, "[i]n Schulz's work, mythical consciousness functions as a 'formative energy' of the poetic spirit, a self-contained form of interpretation which asserts itself amid the realia of the

[552] Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 99.

surrounding environment […]"[553] Thus we understand that in its most elemental modality, Schulz's mythization is a poetic operation that is preoccupied with plumbing the unfathomable depths of language, the sedimentation of countless meanings that words and language have accrued over time. The fragments of mythic artifacts that appear in his prose can in fact be attributed to this broader interest in the philological depth of language. Language emerges as the very depository in which the sediments of the human imaginary—stories, myths, fables, proverbs, figures of speech—have stratified over the ages, and so it presents itself as a fertile medium for creative presentations and re-presentations of reality. As such, what we have been describing as Schulz's mythization—or more precisely, the effect of this mythization on the way in which Schulz's prose captures architectural conditions such as 'site' and 'context'—have in fact demonstrated strong resonance to the everyday unmonumental characteristics that Dolores Hayden has described as constituting the culture of a place, as well as what David Leatherbarrow has identified as a building's "topography."[554]

This resonance is especially strong in the way Schulz's prose focuses on the dialogue that plays out between the built and unbuilt environment. Leatherbarrow writes that works of architecture cannot be understood only as self-sufficient objects, but they are in fact co-determined—meaning that they are both built and the result of un-built forces. As such, a creative dialogue and a reciprocity are always at play between buildings, their topographies, and their inhabitation.[555] Recall that underlying Leatherbarrow's intention in introducing the notions of "topography" and "horizon" is to articulate an understanding of how architecture engages locality and how it participates to a community's sense of identity. This is an understanding of place that brings attention to those very subtle and latent characteristics of a given locale that are not subject to straight-forward articulation. Such characteristics tend to be implicit and they remain recessive to our understanding. Leatherbarrow explains that "topography" refers to the polytrophic and temporally bound situations of a place that could include climactic, geographic and cultural factors—those very factors so prominent in Schulz's prose, as noted with the passage of market square we have just examined. Yet care must be taken here, because the essential quality of "topographical horizons" is that they overflow quantification and objective

[553] Kuprel, "Bruno Schulz and Mythical Consciousness," 112.
[554] This understanding of David Leatherbarrow's "topography" draws predominantly from his *Uncommon Ground* and *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*—as cited earlier.
[555] These particular notes are from Leatherbarrow, *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*.

comprehension. The kinds of recessive or latent qualities that build up to an image of place are not exactly captured *in the lines* of Schulz's prose. Rather, they emerge *between* the words and lines: With every reading the prose offers new opportunities to interpret these literary constructions into imagery. Yet it also lingers on the palate—certain nuances still remain elusive, make palpable the potential of other yet to be realized interpretations. When Leatherbarrow has described that the "topographies" that characterize a place refer to those latent, ambient, and not object-like qualities he has also insisted that these elusive or vague qualities of topographies are not limiting, but in fact enable them to sustain *more* potential than is apparent—that these ever-shifting and recessive qualities render these topographies *generative* for architectural interventions. He warns however that it would short-circuit its operative capacity if one would hasten to define or pin-point what a future project's topography might be. This characteristic is also true of poetic and literary constructs. More specifically, I mean that poetic and literary constructs capture, as well as in their own right sustain and propitiate this excess of potential—they simultaneously convey elements of these topographies and are suggestive for architectural possibilities. Leatherbarrow describes "topography" as "the conditions that exist before its elements are congealed or hardened into distinct entities."[556] I contend that linguistic and literary constructs are especially agile in doing this work of sustaining a surplus of potential and of meaning, and that they do so by postponing congealment into distinct entities. This is how they can express *and* engage multiple nuances of "topographies."

When Leatherbarrow describes "topography" as the horizon as the circumstances that are present—both the physical terrain but also the cultural practices that are stratified and continuously retraced by habits and repetitions—he insists on similar priorities to James Corner's "eidetic constructs." Corner's differentiation between *landskip* and *landschaft* is illuminating here: He explains that *landskip* refers to a landscape that is objectified, to be beheld and dominated, usually by vision and aesthetic criteria. This landscape might be beheld this way by a tourist or someone who is not invested in the landscape in such a way that it comes to bear on their life. In contrast, *landschaft* refers to a landscape that is invested with habits, rituals, patterns of engagement through time—the significance of which accrues through embodied participation. Corner writes that "the formation of synaesthetic, cognitive images forges a collective sense of

[556] Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground*, 193.

place and relationship evolved through *work*."[557] As such, Corner insists on the necessity for representational tactics—which he calls *eidetic operations*—that aim at overcoming the dominance of vision and aim to capture this layered but latent unfolding between place and its inhabitants. We have noted how Schulz's prose presents us with images that do precisely this. Corner's elucidation further reinforces this resonance between Schulz and eidetic operations: "I use the term *eidetic* here to refer to a mental conception that may be picturable but may equally be acoustic, tactile, cognitive, or intuitive. Thus, unlike the purely retinal impression of pictures, eidetic images contain a broad range of ideas that lie at the core of human creativity."[558]

We can thus say that Schulz's linguistic renderings of place operate as eidetic images that capture a future building's implicit topography and that in doing so his prose offers us poetic language *as a potential medium* for eloquently composing such eidetic images. Because Schulz renders the place of his images anonymous it is less significant to say that what he gives us are eidetic images of Drohobycz, and much more significant to say that he shows us *how* language can offer a mode of constructing such eidetic images. A parallel of this would be to note how the Nolli map has become a classic tool of representation that still continues to be adopted for many locations other than Rome.[559]

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[557] Corner, "Eidetic Operations," 161.
[558] Ibid., 153.
[559] Giambattista Nolli's 1748 map of Rome (*Pianta Grande di Roma*) is a pivotal example of a figure-ground map and it is commonly referred to as the "Nolli Map." One of the best-known aspects of this map is that Nolli rendered the interior space of public buildings, such as the Pantheon and all of Rome's churches, as "ground"—ie. in the same way that he rendered open public spaces—thereby emphasizing the civic importance of public buildings. Since then, "Nolli maps" have known to be made of other places using a similar technique.

4.6 The Built and Unbuilt Environment Intertwine

> "We need only take language too in the living or nascent state, with all its references, those behind it, which connected to the mute things it interpellates, and those it sends before itself and which make up the world of things said—with its movement, its subtleties, its reversals, its life, which expresses and multiplies tenfold the life of the bare things. Language is a life, is our life and the life of the things. Not that *language* takes possession of life and reserves for itself: what would there be to say if there existed nothing but things said?" – Maurice Merleau-Ponty[560]

By looking at the architectural imagery in Schulz's prose I have so far focused on the role that language, more specifically poetic and literary language can construct an image of place while also bringing forth knowledge about spaces and localities that is otherwise subtle and implicit. I end this project by drawing attention to the tactile places and spaces themselves, and by noticing the attitude towards matter and world that pervades in Schulz's stories. The dominant trait of this disposition is an active interpenetration between the built and the unbuilt environment, between accrued time and the fleeting, between human interiorities and the spaces they inhabit. If Schulz was preoccupied with the tissue of language, his prose makes palpable how this tissue intertwines with world, echoing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the flesh: "we situate ourselves in ourselves *and* in the things, in ourselves *and* in the other, at the point where, by a sort of *chiasm*, we become the others and we become world."[561]

In one instance, the house of Uncle Charles whose wife and children left for the summer imparts his dejected loneliness: "The rooms, empty and neglected, did not approve of him, the furniture and the walls watched him in silent criticism. He felt, entering that stillness, like an intruder in an underwater kingdom with a different, separate notion of time. Opening his own drawers, he felt like a thief […]"[562] In "Visitation," the first signs of father's illness are accompanied by what appears to be anxiety about the shop's accounts. In moments of "concentrated work, interrupted by lonely monologues," whenever father was seated on the large bed amongst pillows, the light and shadows cast by the lamp corroborate the pervasive sense of disquiet: "[The] room grew enormous as the shadows above the lampshade merged with the deep

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[560] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 125-6. (emphasis in original)
[561] Ibid., 160.
[562] Schulz, "Mr. Charles," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 51.

city beyond the window […]"[563] "The bitter smell of illness settled like a rug in the room and the arabesques on the wallpaper loomed darker."[564]

Schulz's interior spaces are often infiltrated and animated by the exterior, the city, the weather, and other ephemeral phenomena: In the month of August, the family home, the "dark second-floor apartment [on] Market Square was shot through each day by the naked heat of summer: the silence of the shimmering streaks of air, the squares of brightness dreaming their intense dreams on the floor."[565] The same house, saturated with the bright glare of an early morning, "absorbed the first fires of the morning with a sleepy face melting in brilliance, its features slightly twitching from intense dreams."[566] This is reverberated in the interior rooms, which "in the semidarkness of drawn blinds were still filled with the harmonious breathing of sleeping people."[567] When that morning, father—who seems to be the only castaway from that morning's quiet and fiery dreams—opens the heavy door of the shop, even "the grumbling dusk took a step back from the entrance, moved a few inches deeper, changed position and lay down again inside."[568] The dusk is here endearingly painted as a domesticated house pet that, slightly bothered by father disrupting its blissful sleep, insistently moves even deeper into the space of the shop. Similarly depicted as another lovable inhabitant of the shop is the morning freshness, which "rising like smoke from the cool tiles of the pavement, stood shyly on the threshold in a tiny, trembling stream of air."[569] In the story "Spring," the anticipation of that seasons' quixotic intrigues are captured in the interanimation between rooms after midnight and the shiver-like wind of insects that flow in from the park: "In long, slow gulps the dark room inhales the air of the park, its fluffy seeds and pollens, its silent plushy moths, that fly softly around the walls. The wallpaper bristles with fear, cool ecstasies and flights of fancy begin, the panic and the folly of a night in May, long after midnight."[570]

To look closer at the intertwining between interior and exterior, the built and the unbuilt, we stay with the story "Spring" and revisit that habitual night during this hope-filled season, a night such as those hallowed by a supper that Joseph enjoyed with his father. This supper is

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[563] Schulz, "Visitation," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 13.
[564] Ibid., 12.
[565] Schulz, "August," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 3.
[566] Schulz, "Dead Season," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 223.
[567] Ibid.
[568] Ibid., 224.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Schulz, "Spring," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 191.

described to have taken place in a garden restaurant, concealed between houses in the farthest corner of market square. The narrator sets the stage for this story by noting that, like every other spring, this spring too falls under the auspices of ambitious horoscopes that breathlessly venture to outflow their season, to recklessly engage in blind interpretations and frivolous guesses. Yet, as we have already observed, this spring is also more remarkable than the others, blessed with unusual courage and inspiration. We are told that this particular dinner took place in one of those early spring nights that the narrator describes as being wild and spacious, filled with vast skies and stars "not yet ordered into constellations."[571] This magisterial night was particularly triumphant. Subsumed by its own whims and lazy playfulness, it overwhelmed all human pleadings and undertakings only to return to its cosmic indifference. The narrator tells us that this night's immensity at first intimidated even the noble music of violins and cellos that "lay neglected under the voiceless downpour of the stars"[572] to later timidly join "the lost human cause and [plead] before the indifferent tribunal of stars."[573] Following their dinner, Joseph, his father, and the town photographer, take a detour towards home and stop by the pastry shop. While engrossed in selecting their cakes, the boy narrator, for the first time notices Bianca, who, as we already know, is to become the central figure of this unusually magnificent spring. We examine how Schulz's rendering of this moment in the pastry shop absorbs the atmosphere of the setting that engulfs it, as well as creates boundaries that demarcate moments of contrast within this context:

> On our way home we stopped at a pastry shop to get cakes. No sooner had we entered the white icing-sugar room than the night suddenly tensed up and became watchful lest we should escape. It waited for us patiently, outside the door, showing the unmoving stars through the window panes of the shop while we were inside selecting our cakes with great deliberation.
>
> It was then that I saw Bianca for the first time. She stood sideways in front of the counter with her governess; she was slim and linear in a white dress as if she had just left the zodiac. She did not turn her head but stood with the perfect poise of a young girl, eating a cream bun. I could not see her clearly, for the zigzags of starry lines still lingered under my eyelids. It was the first time that our still confused horoscopes had crossed, met, and dissolved in indifference.

[571] Ibid., 143.
[572] Ibid., 144.
[573] Ibid., 145.

> We did not anticipate our fate from that early aspect of the stars, and we left the shop casually, making the glass-fronted door rattle.[574]

The tableau has been building up with depictions of the night as a creature-like force that reigns over the atmosphere playfully, indifferently, and majestically all at once. The space of the shop offers the human characters an interlude from the night's dominion. Yet this moment of reprieve is accentuated by pressure imposed by the night's patient watchfulness, tauntingly displaying "the unmoving stars" through the window. Inside the shop is flooded by this surrounding darkness, punctuated by stars. The illuminated glow of powdered sugar accentuates the sparkle of stardust. Bianca's presence contributes to this luminescence (and it could very well be that the whole tableau has been building up in anticipation of her presence): she is described as a transposition of a starry constellation, accentuated by her perfect poise, the linearity of her figure and the whiteness of her dress and her very name which recalls whiteness. The cream bun that she is eating ushers in the image of the milky moon, which is to become dominant in the images that follow. The cream bun also layers into the atmosphere of this tableau the tactile sensuousness of a fluffy sweet filled with the viscous and aromatic cream. Echoing the character of the spring itself, this is a moment in which stars are scattered and misaligned, and horoscopes are still muddled. Bianca's slim and linear figure seems as if "she had just left the zodiac," and is still disoriented by this recent departure. This encounter does not recognize its future fate and it dissipates with the crass rattle of a glass door being shut.

These images reiterate what was noted earlier with Schulz's representation: that Schulz's metaphoric constructions bring forth a wondrous dimension of the world by making it strange, by enlisting familiar objects to perform unlikely roles. In this conversation that for architecture extends to site and locality—and is likewise directed to matter, world and making—the image above is one amongst many in Schulz's prose that also performs a mirroring between the distant cosmic bodies and the intimate human-made world: The star dust and the soft milky moon are reiterated in the powdery cream bun; The indifferent stars are superimposed to the crass rattle of the window whose flatness is reinforced with the linear poise of Bianca's oblivion to her and Joseph's star-crossed future; The whole tableau is constructed as glimpses of brightness—both distant and intimate—that punctuate the night's all-enveloping cosmic yet restless darkness. A

[574] Ibid., 145-6.

kind of communion is established between the distant and the intimate. It projects a mundane yet tender moment in a pastry shop to make palpable unsettling yet perennial metaphysical questions: "If we are ourselves in question in the very unfolding of our life, […] it is because we ourselves are one sole continued question, a perpetual enterprise of taking our bearings on the constellations of the world, and of taking the bearings of the things on our dimensions."[575]

Schulz's prose articulates these "taking of bearings" such that the moon and the distant sky are brought close in the measure of the cream bun, and thus become part of oneself through the most intimate act of it being tasted and absorbed into one's body. The cream bun is an object of craft, a human-made experience though which Schulz establishes a kind of sympathetic magic to cosmic forces that transcend human comprehension. To sum up, in Schulz's prose the built intertwines with the unbuilt, interiors are suffused and vivified by exteriority, and architectural spaces and moods inflect the interiorities of the human players. This interanimation and interpenetration—that casts the built, unbuilt and the human as part of a connective tissue—is certainly articulated through the literary imagination, but it also extends towards world. Schulz's prose also suggests (and in fact also makes explicit) a creative agency that is instilled in world, things, and matter. This attitude re-iterates the main points I have been pursuing throughout, although this time we are going beyond the relationship to language: That for Schulz, poetic action involves a dialectic of play which engages forms of knowledge that are tacit, subtle, and slippery. Part of this dialectic involves an equal element of not knowing or suspended knowing, as well as forms of knowledge that emerge in the very dialogue with world, matter and making, and has the potential to precipitate creative discovery. One might say that this particular intimacy to world, matter, and human making, is one of the most salient ways in which Schulz's prose resonates with the architect's imagination.

[575] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 103.

4.7 Interpenetration Between Language and World: Matter, Creative Agency and the Element of Wildness

In presenting the *tandeta* as the operative principle by which Schulz constructs his prose, I have discussed how the shoddy dispensable material that preoccupies Schulz's human demiurgy refers to language. It is clear however that for Schulz it doesn't end there. His prose does more than simply re-appropriate our relationship to language and words. I ended the previous chapter by drawing attention to the fact that Schulz's prose can be read as a metaphoric treatment of the world itself. In enlisting mundane things—objects, textures, temporal and weather phenomena, etcetera—to perform unlikely or improper roles, his metaphoric constructions not only subvert the expectation that language is referentially transparent, but also tamper with the pragmatic functionalism of the things they call upon. The world thus estranged, made alien, is experienced as an undomesticated otherness. Poetic utterance and world become complicit in bringing forth an element of wildness that exists beyond and at the borders of human knowing. In Stala's estimation, it is "not the relation between the word and the world that is broken; it is rather the ordering nets of language and actions imposed upon the world that are being torn; those nets and structures that enable the apprehension of things in their 'handiness'."[576] As such, in making the familiar strange, Schulz's prose reminds us of the fecundity of the world, things, and matter—a fecundity that overflows the intellectual categories that serve our utilitarian means and ends.

The way that Schulz presents the Father character of his stories essentially describes the very relationship between his own work in the engagement with world: "His problematic and heretical experiments touch the roots of the world's mystery. He is forever tempted to lay impious hands on the secret sensual nodes of the world's cohesion, to run caressing and provoking fingers over the most sensitive sources of its mystery."[577] Schulz likewise focuses on the tactile, sensual nodes of an otherwise ordinary world. His prose brings forth the way in which world, language and human imagination intertwine. By tampering with the tissue of language he is provoking imaginative surcharges that disrupt the supposed distance between subject and world.

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[576] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 116.
[577] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 154-5.

We recall as well that in our discussion of the architectural representation in Schulz's prose we noted that he often constructs his images through the filter of other artistic works. This element of interpenetration between human artifice and world is perhaps most accentuated in moments in which Schulz presents *physis* as imitating, becoming contaminated by human art: In "A Second Autumn," the narrator tells us that Jacob presents the peculiar temperament of a particular "second" fall, in one of his scientific studies of comparative meteorology entitled *Outline of General Systematics of the Autumn*. In it, Jacob explains that the occurrence of a belated, parasitical second fall is "nothing other than the result of our climate having been poisoned by the miasmas exuded by degenerate specimens of baroque art crowded in our museums."[578] Through the eccentric figure of Jacob, Schulz presents what Stala has called the audacious concept of a "*mimesis* inverted": "it is not art that imitates Nature, it is rather *physis* imitating human artifacts."[579] This *physis* however, is in fact being rendered via the prose, it is a representation of "a second fall" that is once again doubly filtered through human artifice—Schulz's prose, which in this case renders this decadent fall though the filter of the baroque tradition.

The interpenetration between world and human demiurgy occurs in both directions in Schulz's prose. We have already seen this with the architecturally-heavy images that seem to spawn out of the night and the sky. His "republic of dreams," which he describes as "part fortress, part theater, part laboratory of visions," imagines that "nature would be yoked to its purpose."[580] Schulz's narrator tells us that "the spirit of nature was by its very essence a great storyteller. […] You only needed to lay a trap under this sky full of ghosts to catch one."[581] In this short story, Schulz presents us other passages that can be read as articulating a creative praxis. Several suggest a grafting of human enterprise onto world, a grafting that becomes enmeshed in the world's becoming: "this unleashed theatre spilled over into nature, expanding into reality, soaking up impulses and inspiration from all elements, undulating with the great tidal ebb and flow of natural currents."[582] It is here that Schulz outlines his vision of the architect –mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—who is in fact "no architect, [but] rather, a director,

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[578] Schulz, "A Second Autumn," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 219.
[579] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 102.
[580] Schulz, "The Republic of Dreams," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 319.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Ibid.

a director of cosmic landscapes and sceneries."[583] This architect's work is likewise dependent on 'reading' nature: "His art consists in catching nature's intentions in midair, knowing how to read her arcane ambitions. For nature is full of potential architecture, rife with plans and construction."[584]

Without elaborating, Stala connects Schulz's motive to graft the human onto the natural to his interest in mythologizing. He writes that "[to] saturate things with human meaning, to read from the *physis* "the architecture of imagination," to reveal the entanglement of *physis* and *poesis*, their mutual grafting—these formulas seem to produce a veritable interpretation of the Schulzean project of mythologizing of reality."[585]

____ Mutual Grafting Between *Physis* and *Poesis*, Human and World, Echoes a Mythic Sensibility

In looking at Cassirer's study of the mythic imagination, certain correspondences can be drawn to Schulz's attitude towards matter and world. Cassirer observes that mythical thinking is bound to bodies, substances, and specific circumstances. He draws the comparison to scientific thinking, which, he notes, aims at an emancipation of the idea from the material—it focuses on the reproducible and repeatable rather than the discrete instance. In contrast, myth "lives entirely by the presence of its object—by the intensity with which it seizes and takes possession of consciousness in a specific moment. Myth lacks any means of extending the moment beyond itself, of looking ahead of it or behind it, of relating it as a particular to the elements of reality as a whole."[586] In other words, for a mythic imagination the present doesn't compare itself against the horizon of what for scientific thinking would be a codified law. "[Mythic] consciousness is bound by its mere facticity; it possesses neither the impulsion nor the means to correct or criticize what is given here and now, to limit its objectivity by measuring it against something not given, something past or future"[587] This reiterates what was noted earlier: that Schulz's prose behaves similarly to the mythic imagination in that it becomes enthralled by the immediate and discrete reality that confronts it. What's more, mythical thinking exhibits an especially intimate

[583] Ibid., 321.
[584] Ibid.
[585] By and large, Stala steers clear of discussing Schulz's mythization. Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 45.
[586] Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Vol 2: Mythical Thought*, 35.
[587] Ibid., 36.

relationship between world and language. In mythical thinking, the object is inseparable from language because it coincides with word and name.[588] Yet the name does not merely signify, or represent an idealized signification, but *is* as well as *acts*. "For where we see a mere analogy, i.e. a mere *relation*, myth sees immediate existence and presence. For myth, there is no mere sign which suggests something distant and absent."[589] Cassirer clarifies that for the mythic imagination this attitude is neither a rejection of abstract thinking, nor a celebration of sensuous content but rather a confrontation with the concrete unity between thing and signification:

> The mythical world is concrete not because it has to do with sensuous objective contents, not because it excludes and repels all merely abstract factors—all that is merely signification and sign; it is concrete because in it the two factors, thing and signification, are undifferentiated, because they merge, grow together, concresce in an immediate unity.[590]

In Schulz's prose, the attitude towards the world, echoes that of a mythic consciousness in that it lacks a passive contemplation of the object and instead *partakes* in a lifeworld. This lifeworld is less defined by discrete objects than it is by their continuous interpenetration. For the mythic imagination, Cassirer tells us, there is likewise an absence of a separation between the material and the psychic. Both are united in significance and the power of the intuition, which essentially amount to magical-mythic action. Even when within the mythic imagination there begins to emerge the emancipation of a "soul"—or a self-identification that distinguishes the individual from the world—there persists an interpenetration especially with respect to effectuating this magical-mythic action: "There is only a single undivided sphere of efficacy, within which a continuous exchange takes place between the two spheres that we usually distinguish as the world of the soul and the world of matter."[591] This relationship to world is manifested as well in the way that mythical consciousness treats the death of the individual, namely not as a termination but as a transition into a different sphere of existence:

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[588] This is especially clear with word magic: "word and name do not merely have a function of describing or portraying but contain within them the object and its real powers…[The] mythical-magical power of language is truly manifested in articulated sound. The formed word is itself restricted and individual: each word governs a specific realm of being, over which it may be said to exert unlimited and sovereign power. And it is most of all the proper name that is bound by mysterious ties to the individuality of an *essence*." (emphasis in original) Ibid., 40.
[589] Ibid., 68.
[590] Ibid., 24.
[591] Ibid., 158.

> Thus for myth death is never an annihilation of existence but only a passage into another form of existence, and at the basic and original levels of mythical thinking this form itself can be conceived only in thoroughgoing sensuous concretion. The deceased still "is," and this being can be seen and described only in physical terms. Even if, unlike the living, he appears as a powerless shadow, this shadow itself still has full reality; it resembles him not only in form and feature but also in its sensory and physical needs.[592]

In this treatment of Father's death, Schulz seems to wholeheartedly echo this mythic sensibility, especially the way it is presented in the story "Father's Last Escape." In effect, Father never dies with certainty. "He had been dying a number of times, always with some reservation," the narrator tells us.[593] These "installments" that supposedly add up to his eventual, though unverifiable death, involve a series of metamorphoses: At one point he is suspected to have become a stuffed condor. Then he is found as a crab who never fails to be present during family meals. He is eventually cooked and left by the remorseful and horrified family in the sitting room, covered by a velvet cloth. After weeks of immobility next to "the album of family photographs and a musical cigarette box" he begins to slowly recover until one day his plate is found with but one leg left on the edge of the dish, in the "congealed tomato sauce and aspic that bore the traces of his escape," which marks the beginning of a "homeless wandering."[594] The fact that this boundary between life and death is a fluid one rather than a drastic divide echoes what Cassirer has identified as characteristic of the mythic imagination. In Schulz's case this death in installments has a definite comedic effect, which further inflects not only Father's death but also his persistence beyond death, in the way that household objects are described to absorb his characteristics. This can be read as a facet of what Cassirer has identified as the reality of the deceased that still "is," which like a "powerless shadow" manifests itself in the qualities of the spaces and artifacts he has instilled with his former presence:

> [Father's] features were already dispersed throughout the room in which he had lived, and were sprouting in it, creating at some points strange points of likeness that were most expressive. The wallpaper began in certain places to initiate his habitual nervous tic; the flower designs arranged themselves into the doleful elements of his smile, symmetrical as the fossilized imprint of a trilobite. For a time, we gave a wide berth to his fur coat lined with polecat skins. The fur coat breathed. The panic of small animals sewn together and

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[592] Ibid., 160.
[593] Schulz, "Father's Last Escape," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 307.
[594] Ibid., 311.

> biting into one another passed through it in helpless currents and lost itself in the folds of the fur.[595]

The interpenetration between human beings and the non-human—a feature that is pervasive to Schulz's prose—is not reserved for significant life events but casually extends to quotidian occurrences and unfolds with the same tragi-comedic effect. This casual interpenetration tends to occur by way of inversions between the human and the non-human, what Stala has called a reversal of "the natural order of things."[596] We notice this in the "Mannequins" cycle: As the otherwise utilitarian object that is the tailor's dummy becomes a "silent idol" and a mythic "inexorable Moloch," the seamstresses become transformed into "ornithological specimens" that have been cross-bred with the tools of their trade:

> [The seamstresses], spindle shaped and slender, like the wooden spools from which the threads were unwound, and just as restless, manipulated the pile of silk and cloth with deft movements, cut into its colorful mass with clanking shears, made their machine whir, pressing its pedal with a cheap little patent leather foot, while around them rose a pile of scraps, varicolored strips and rags like spat-out shells and husks around two fastidious, wasteful parrots. The crooked jaws of the shears opened with a creaking sound like the beaks of these colorful birds.[597]

This scene is supposedly what prompts Jacob's tractate on human demiurgy in which he vehemently proclaims his desire "to create man for the second time, in the image and likeness of a mannequin."[598] Having just lost his kingdom of birds to Adela's cruel housekeeping, Jacob transfers his ornithological fascination onto the seamstresses' "thin and ordinary little bodies."[599] These inversions—in which objects are instilled with authoritative agency while the human is rendered into presumably "lesser" forms of life—occur at the level of metaphoric language. Correspondences, resonances, and interpenetrations between human and non-human are made apparent in the choice of metaphoric simile: Schulz focuses the description of the seamstresses' movements to recall those of wooden spools, exotic birds, parrot-like scissors, etc. A similar transformation occurs when during Jacob's decline, his revulsion for cockroaches leads him to absorb their characteristics:

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[595] Ibid., 308.
[596] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 89.
[597] Schulz, "Mannequins," in *Collected Stories*, 22.
[598] Schulz, "A Treatise on Mannequins; or, The Second Book of Genesis," in *Collected Stories*, 27.
[599] Ibid., 29.

> He hid for days on end, in corners, in wardrobes, under the eiderdowns. I saw him sometimes looking pensively at his own hands, examining the consistency of skin and nails, on which black spots began to appear like the scales of a cockroach. […] He lay on the floor naked, stained with black totem spots [and] moved with the many-limbed, complicated movements of a strange ritual in which I recognized with horror and imitation of the ceremonial crawl of a cockroach. From that day on we gave Father up for lost. His resemblance to a cockroach became daily more pronounced—he was being transformed into one. We got used to it.[600]

Because the correspondences between the human and the non-human remain at the level of metaphor, this inversion does not have the psychological weight present for instance in Kafka's transformation into a cockroach.[601] The reversals between the human and non-human, animate and inanimate, can be linked with Schulz's pan-masquerade—the perpetually unfolding theatricality in which everyone and everything are enlisted to corroborate Schulz's tableaus and as a result adopt temporary, often ill-fitting roles that disrupt their familiar, preconceived identities. What comes forward is a kind of empathetic reciprocity, a kinship between the human and non-human:

> In a running feud with the cockroach tribe that inundated the apartment one day with its teeming black hordes, he becomes inadvertently trapped by his corrosive hatred in those labyrinths of feeling where revulsion transforms itself into sinister seduction—and bit by bit he assumes the manners and way of life of the detested species.[602]

In Cassirer's account of the mythic imagination this intermingling between the human and other species of beings (and sometimes objects) can be attributed to a totemic, spiritually significant correspondence that becomes manifest between the human and the non-human. In Schulz's case this interpenetration carries much less weight, especially because it occurs with a frivolous detachment, "as joke or form of play" as Schulz described it. The affinities and sympathies between human and world are, in Schulz's prose, not invested with the same metaphysical consequence as they would for a mythic imagination.

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[600] Schulz, "Cockroaches," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 76.
[601] Franz Kafka, "Metamorphosis," in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, 89-139 (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1971).
[602] Schulz, *Letters and Drawings*, 155.

Overall, and with respect to the attitude towards world, Schulz's prose echoes that of a mythic imagination only in an intuitive manner: he never fleshed out particular philosophies or made explicit connections to Cassirer's work. Unlike that of a mythic imagination, Schulz's was a project that was fundamentally modern. This means that what for a mythic imagination would have been experienced as sacred and metaphysical, for Schulz always gave in to irony and "pan-masquerade" as he called it: Neither the sacred or the profane are wholeheartedly such, but both always intertwine and question one another. For the mythic imagination, the world was understood as "Thou" rather than "it."[603] In this there is a sense that the world overflows human knowledge of it, and sustains a capacity to surprise and to reveal itself anew. This is something that Schulz's prose makes present when he enlists familiar objects in circumstances that present them as alien. Understood through Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenological project of *givenness*, we can say that Schulz's prose presents the world—which we otherwise take for granted—as an unreproducible event. Marion writes that in treating phenomena as technical objects they become limited by the intentionality and expectations that we confer upon them: "we no longer see them, we no longer have even the need to see them, because we foresee them for a long time."[604] In encountering the object as an event phenomenon, there occurs an attitude similar to that towards another human being that enthralls us "without warning and anticipation"—in other words a 'Thou'.[605] This "eventmentality of the phenomenon" as Marion calls it, exceeds our ability to describe it exhaustively, and exists *in excess* of our ability to know it: "we cannot assign to it a single cause or any reason, or rather, none other than itself, in the pure energy of its unquestionable happening."[606] "The present rises up as first and the first happens as pure event—unforeseeable, irreversible, unrepeatable as such, immediately past and devoid of cause or of reason."[607] We can thus say that Schulz's prose makes manifest an attitude towards world that resonates with a mythic sensibility to render the world as event phenomenon—which we can understand as contributing to Schulz's perpetually unfolding theatricality.

For the mythic imagination, it is a given that the awe-inspiring world overwhelms human knowledge. In contrast, we see in Schulz a desire to recover this wonder and enchantment before

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[603] This is outlined in H. and H.A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson and Thorkild Jacobsen, *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1951).
[604] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 35.
[605] Ibid., 37.
[606] Ibid., 37-8.
[607] Ibid., 41.

the world, to allow the material of his work to subsume the "I" and to speak for itself. This reiterates what was noted towards the end of the first chapter, when Witold Gombrowicz described Schulz's masochism as utter submission to his work: "He approached art as if it were a lake he intended to drown in. […] He craved nonexistence."[608] "Bruno was more of an artist than all of the *poètes maudits* put together, and for the paradoxical reason that he did not adore art at all. In adoring, one is someone, and he preferred to lose himself in it, to vanish altogether."[609]

As I mentioned earlier, Stala has noted—albeit in passing and without elaboration—that central to Schulz's mythologizing is his ability to "[saturate] things with human meaning" and to reveal the "entanglement of *physis* and *poesis*."[610] I argue that Schulz's attitude to world and matter goes beyond the human-focused poetic meaning making. My reading is that Schulz also opens up an undomesticated wildness in the world that we otherwise take for granted. In this we have noted points of contact to a mythic imagination, and we have also noted a distinctly modern sensibility. This wildness, is the *excess* that Marion describes, which brings a humbling awareness that the world surpasses the human ability to grasp it. What's more, the world can inflect human enterprise from beyond this threshold of human knowability. I argue that ultimately, Schulz's prose also shows that this wildness of the world can disrupt and contradict the human predisposition towards meaning-making, thus revealing both its vulnerability and a renewed creative potential.

____ The Poetic Imagination Intertwined with Matter and Lifeworld

That the world can operate from beyond the threshold of human knowability, and that acts of human making can cultivate the world's capacity of surprise, becomes especially salient in the relationship between maker and matter that underscores architecture. Here again I make the same argument as earlier: With a focus on the creative unfolding that is design process, the architect engages in a dialectic of play that draws out forms of knowledge that are prereflective and tacit, in other words operative without being fully knowable. We have discussed extensively how poetic language can be especially agile in engaging these forms of knowledge. Yet this element of a playful dialogue, especially to an architect, also always occurs in relation to tactile matter,

[608] Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 523.
[609] Gombrowicz, *Diary*, 525-6.
[610] Stala, *Paradoxes of Representation in Schulz's Fiction*, 45.

whether in the architect's drawings, sketches, models, mock-ups and material investigations. I contend that this open-ended play with materials, this curiosity and risk taking by which the architect is thinking *with* rather than *about* materials is especially salient in architectural praxis.

The importance that Richard Sennett attributes to craft resonates here. Sennett posits that a craftsperson's imagination is shaped by engaging tools, resistance, and ambiguity—that resistance and ambiguity propel imaginative leaps. These are especially fertile towards building up knowledge and skill when the craftsperson maintains an attitude of working *with* rather than against the resistance and ambiguity of a design problem, at times creatively re-appropriating tools and thinking imaginatively about the resistance of materials. Sennett points out that this imaginative cross-fertilization occurs across disciplines. For instance, in rebuilding London after the great fire of 1666 Christopher Wren drew on his knowledge from dissection, connecting the circulation of fluids in the body with the flow of traffic and the transportation of goods.[611] In engineering a successful tunnel in the unstable soil beneath the Thames, Peter Barlow and James Greathead worked with the resistance of the soil and water rather than against it. Barlow's creative leap came when he imagined his own body swimming through water—an imaginative leap that involved an identification with the problem as well as drawing on familiar bodily experiences.[612] In short, Sennett points out that tacit knowledge of the world and our capacity to creatively act within it, build up though material engagement and by cultivating skill over a long-term sustained practice.

Thus, an invested dialogue with matter draws on prereflective knowledge and the wisdom of matter that exists *in excess* of our ideas and thoughts about it. Tacit knowledge is both *drawn out* and *built onto* in this dialogue, in which knowledge, through touch, play, and risk-taking co-emerges with embodied knowing to propel action that is at once deliberate and calls on prereflective knowledge. Schulz's metaphoric treatment of language and world shows us not only what words can do to stretch the imaginative muscle, but he also imaginatively re-appropriates the creative potential of matter. His prose posits an attitude to matter that is attuned to the living being-ness and givenness of the world, resisting its objectification. This attitude brings forward a dialectic openness that is mindful of the fact that, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty has put it, world and things

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[611] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 204.
[612] Ibid., 218-20.

> offer themselves… only to someone who wishes not to have them but to see them, not to hold them as with forceps, or to immobilize them as under the objective of a microscope, but to let them be and to witness their continued being—to someone who [is] a question consonant with the porous being which it questions and from which it obtains not an *answer*, but a confirmation of its astonishment.[613]

As I have shown, Schulz's metaphoric treatment of the world foregrounds its capacity for wonder. His poetic language presents a porous gliding between world and human imagination in a theatre that probes and unravels the stable knowing of the world and allows us not to pin it down but to witness its unfolding and its creative potentiality. In short, language is shown capable of charging this relationship between maker and matter – it brings forth the creative potentiality of matter such that it precipitates action and participation. We recall that Schulz's architect was presented as more of an orchestrator who is deft at 'reading' the potential architecture that already permeates the more-than-human world. As previously noted, Schulz also tells us that the work of this architect, differs from that of most human works in that it does not insist on completeness but remains open, unfinished, growing, and participates to processes of life. It is "half-humanized like a centaur, harnessed to the sublime processes of nature."[614] Much like it is reflected in the engagement with the *tandeta*, human agency operates in dialogue with matter and world.

We revisit Jacob's claim that 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. […] It entices us with a thousand sweet, soft, round shapes which it blindly dreams up within itself."[615] If we allow it to speak more directly to the architect engaged with matter, we are able to read in it a position that sets up a dialogue between Jane Bennett's 'vital materialism' and Merleau-Ponty's notion of the flesh. Both are preoccupied with a dialogic agency between human, world and matter. In his last, unfinished work, Merleau-Ponty is invested "to know precisely what the being of the world means"—suggesting a living unfolding of the world and our ability to comprehend it.[616] This knowledge of the world's being is for Merleau-Ponty both only possible through the body as well as exceeds it. Schulz's prose repeatedly presents

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[613] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 101-2.
[614] Schulz, "The Republic of Dreams," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 322.
[615] Schulz, "Treatise on Tailors' Dummies or The Second Book of Genesis," in *The Street of Crocodiles*, 31.
[616] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 6.

situations that make palpable the sense that "[b]etween [things themselves] and me there are henceforth hidden powers, that whole vegetation of possible phantasms."[617] Merleau-Ponty approaches the dialogue between human and world with a focus on knowledge-making, especially as it arises through embodied perception. Bennett focuses more intently on the question of creative agency, positing an agentic vitality that is intrinsic to matter, claiming that there "was never a time when human agency was anything other than an interfolding network of humanity and nonhumanity."[618] She positions vital materialism as "a more radical displacement of the human subject than phenomenology has done," though her assessment of Merleau-Ponty is that he "himself seemed to be moving in this direction in his unfinished *Visible and Unvisible*."[619] Bennett's overarching concern is the politics of an anthropocentric hubris which she wishes to temper by emphasizing the agentic interdependence between humans and world. To this end, she argues for a '*thing-power*' that is *intrinsic to* matter. She wishes "to detach materiality from the figures of passive, mechanistic, or divinely infused substance," insisting that "vibrant matter is *not* the raw material for the creative activity of humans or God."[620] Her aim is to give a voice to the non-human, and in effect to elevate the status of a materiality that is shared across all bodies, arguing that humans are also "composed of vital materials, that our powers are thing-power."[621] She looks to probe beyond the life-matter binary by drawing "attention to an efficacy of objects in excess of the human meanings, designs, or purposes they express or serve."[622]

For Bennett, in recognizing that all bodies withhold a capacity for agency, has the further ethical implications that value be distributed more generously to bodies that are typically "othered." This agency and resistance of all bodies is something that Schulz brings forward in the way he presents the interanimation between human, nonhuman, world and matter—oftentimes, overtly celebrating the protean power of the world's tissue, as we have especially seen in his rendering of the night. Part of the goal of a vital materialist, Bennett tells us, is to allow oneself to be fascinated by objects, to allow the wonder of objects to shine through. This is precisely what we have noted about Schulz's prose, especially with the way in which he

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[617] Ibid., 8-9.
[618] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 31.
[619] Ibid., 30.
[620] Ibid., xiii. (emphasis in the original)
[621] Ibid., 11.
[622] Ibid., 20.

estranges objects from their familiar roles. This for Bennett amounts to cultivating an 'ambitious naiveté' that would allow for a "strange and incomplete commonality with the out-side."[623] She proposes that "[o]ne tactic might be to revisit and become temporarily infected by discredited philosophies of nature, risking "the taint of superstition, animism, vitalism, anthropomorphism, and other premodern attitudes.""[624] In this, Bennett's call to develop a capacity for naiveté and wonder resonates with the mythic sensibilities in Schulz's prose. In their study of the mythic imagination the Frankforts emphasize a participatory relationship to world, in which humans understand phenomena as a 'Thou' rather than an objectified 'It.' Thus, "'Thou' is not contemplated with intellectual detachment; it is experienced as a life confronting life, involving every faculty of [humans] in a reciprocal relationship."[625]

At stake, both for Bennett and for the mythic imagination, is the dynamic of power and dominance between humans and world—a conversation that is important for its ecological implications.

Bennett's interest can be read in Schulz's attitude towards matter: a non-linear, non-hierarchical agency that is distributed across a heterogeneous field of acting bodies, rather than an agency centralized in the human. For Bennett the implications are ecological as well as political: If the human and non-human are both inextricably enmeshed in a matrix of relations, actions reverberate along this matrix such that to harm one thing is to harm another, including the self. What she writes in the introduction to her first chapter of *Vibrant Matter,* can just as easily describe the extended implications of what we have thus far noted to be the attitudes between human, matter and world, that govern the Schulzean universe:

> The story will highlight the extent to which human being and thinghood overlap, the extent to which the us and the it slip-slide into each other. One moral of the story is that we are also nonhuman and that things, too, are vital players in the world. The hope is that the story will enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology.[626]

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[623] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 17.
[624] Ibid., 18. Bennett is here quoting W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 149.
[625] Frankfort, *Before Philosophy*, 14.
[626] Ibid., 4.

Bennett's vital materialism is a call to see beyond the instrumentalization of matter and in doing so to dispel the preconception that matter is passive and merely serves the human. In other words, to advocate for a vital materialism is to temper our anthropocentric hubris, which led by our "earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption" has hindered us "from detecting (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) a fuller range of the nonhuman powers circulating around and within human bodies."[627] Part of Bennett's bigger project is a philosophy of a process-oriented selfhood that acknowledges the "influx and efflux" of exchanges between one's body and the more-than-human world.[628] For her the ultimate goal is an egalitarian politics that engenders positive public virtues and fortifies democracy, a case she makes by examining the influx-and-efflux of Whitman's work. The practice of this porous, process-oriented self involves an attunement to the wonder of vital matter. It likewise involves the practice of attentiveness to the subtleties of a lively world, as well as our human participation and entanglement with the vibratory powers of the more-than-human.

Both Merleau-Ponty and Bennett emphasize the dialectic, participatory intertwining of human and non-human. I read in Bennett's porous and process-oriented self, a closer-than-acknowledged connection with Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh and intertwining. In having tilted towards the exchange between self and world (influx and efflux), and away from a presupposed dominance of the subject, Bennett, I think, gravitates towards phenomenology. In trying to steer away from the subject as the center of action, the foundational presumption is that human action is carried out by the dominating, individualistic, and ego-driven subject. The human ego once decentered, she then cycles back to emphasize the interdependence between the agentic power of human and a lively more than-human-world.[629] Yet for phenomenology, it is not necessary to go away from the subject in order to speak about how world is already intrinsically operative in human consciousness and action. The embodied imagination already acknowledges the "influx and efflux" between body and world as an intertwining that operates prelinguistically and prereflectively—that is, not driven by the individualistic ego—to sustain the possibility for

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[627] Ibid., ix. Bennett's examples include the potentially harmful activity of decomposing trash; the conglomerate actions of electricity and power grid systems that can build up to their failure—as it has occurred in the blackout that affected a large part of North America in 2003; the manner in which omega-3 fatty acids, or corn syrup for that matter, act within our bodies to inflect our moods, health, and ultimately our judgements.

[628] Jane Bennett, *Influx and Efflux: Writing Up with Walt Whitman* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[629] This comes through especially in the way she positions the guiding question of her most recent book, *Influx and Efflux*: "What can, in a lively, more-than-human world, reoccupy the place of the willful individual positioned above the fray? And how best to describe such a model of self and action?" Bennett, *Influx and Efflux*, xviii-xix.

poetic action. In short, Bennett's vital materialism problematizes anthropocentrism by first reducing the complexity of human consciousness and its relationship to world. It then, in *Influx and Efflux*, returns to reclaim this complexity (although does not do so fully) by focusing not on the subject but on the subject's being inflected, imbibed, and transformed in a continuous exchange with the more-than-human world. I very much share Bennett's emphasis on the ecological imperative and I also share with her an emphasis on subtle forms of knowledge that are operative towards wiser and more empathetic responses to world, and for architecture, the built environment. I likewise share her desire to focus creative agency of the human away from the ego-driven intellect and towards an active and embodied engagement with world. My concern is that Bennett's vital materialism can run the danger of disempowering the operative, world-reconfiguring potency of poetic action. Bennett relies heavily on Whitman and Thoreau's work, and yet the efficacy of the poetics that are at play are neither fully acknowledged in her arguments, nor is the political potency of poetic action sufficiently emphasized. To be clear, she does recognize that Whitman's poetry has the capacity to cultivate "radical possession and habit of good heart" (as Whitman has put it) and does so as inspirational and poetic rather than polemical rhetoric which "requires inducements that are slow, subtle, indirect, persistent."[630] What is missing here is a person that *not only is receptive* to the currents of sympathies to world that is brought forth by (Whitman's) poetry. What is missing or undermined—in a philosophy of agentic vibrant matter that effluxes and influxes personhood—is the non-official-poet person *actively invested in the practice of poetic acts*, not merely through, but also not without, their receptivity towards the beingness of the world with which they are intertwined. This, I think, is not only crucial towards political well-being but it is as fundamental to the practice of architecture as it is to the cultivation of the architect's imagination. Writing from the perspective of architecture, Alberto Pérez-Gómez points out that the built environment matters because of the intricate relationship between human and world, because experience and knowledge of world is codependent and coemergent with it. "For humans, the lifeworld is linguistic and symbolic," Pérez-Gómez writes.[631] As such, the world of vibrant matter that is important to Bennett, is for the architect—and in fact, for the political human—intrinsically a world that is human-made, inherently inflected by human culture as well as language. This certainly does not undermine that

[630] Bennett, *Influx and Efflux*, 71.
[631] Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement*, 143.

the architect operates from a dialectical position to the matter that participates to the built environment. It also does not undermine the fact that practicing mindfulness of this dialectic—and it indeed requires practice and diligent mindfulness—places the architect in a position of empathy rather than dominance with not just the wisdom of matter but also the wisdom of locality and the sedimented cultural habits of the community for whom they are making architecture. Pérez-Gómez insists that a phenomenological understanding of our intertwining with the lifeworld breeds empathy towards the environment, suggesting an ecological attitude. He writes that "the environment is part of our consciousness, it is not an "other," or a collection of objects; it is indeed part of our being. Through emphatic projection, we understand that we are part of the environment."[632] No doubt that, as Bennett maintains, the being of the world and our being intertwined with it inflects multiple forms of action and agency. I thus venture to infer that Bennett, Merleau-Ponty, and Sennett would be in accord that the risking and the building of knowledge (especially including prereflective and tacit material knowledge) requires that one, (especially the architect) cultivate an openness to the wisdom of the more-than-human and our entanglement with the lifeworld. However, when it comes to our turn to act in the world—and to act *in concert with* world rather than *in dominance of* world—in order to do so ethically and empathetically we must reach beyond the intellect into the sediments of prereflective and embodied knowledge, that is, we must strive for poetic action. Especially for architectural and design practice, when it comes to knowing (and to building knowledge) about the world and acting wisely within that ecology—our capacity for knowing, acting, and making remain intrinsically an exercise of the embodied imagination, a poetic operation that draws on the murky intertwining of body, world, and language and therefore always risks in order to build.

To sum up, Schulz's prose certainly cultivates an attitude between the human and the more-than-human that complicates the hierarchy of agency between them. There is however more to the prose than celebrating this dialectic between the creative agency of maker, world, and matter. The ecological stance that is at play here, cycles back to poetic language and its capacity to sustain elasticity of imagination; it cycles back to the crucial importance of subtle, tacit forms of knowledge that overflow that which is quantifiable, unambiguous and categorical. This was already alluded to with the epigraph that set the tone to this chapter. "Ultimately the destruction of the Earth is due in part, perhaps in large part, to a failure of the imagination or to

[632] Ibid., 228.

its eclipse by systems of accounting that can't count what matters."[633] The systems of accounting to which Rebecca Solnit is referring are precisely those systems that dismiss the value of the numinous, the ambiguous, the subtle, the more complex, the slipperier phenomena and forms of knowledge. Such systems of accounting value instead that which can be quantified, measured, and traded for profit—even if, precisely who or what, profits, appears to be dubious bedfellows with those very "fantasies of conquest and consumption" of which Bennett is critical. "The revolt against this destruction is a revolt of the imagination," Solnit tells us.[634] This means that when poetic and literary language bring value to the numinous, the ambiguous, the subtle, the more complex, the slipperier phenomena and forms of knowledge they in effect perform an act of creative resistance against forces in which it isn't only the non-human who is dismissed as unproductive, non-vital, and therefore ineffectual. Moreover, by "creative resistance" I don't simply mean a denouncing or a criticism of such homogenizing powers. Like Schulz's prose has shown us—in its affinities with a mythic sensibility as well as its riotous theatricality—that the literary imagination reaches beyond mere criticism, calls on embodied and prereflective knowledge, precipitates creative action, and propels possible futures. Likewise, mere protest without creative action cannot ever amount to architecture. As I have endeavored to show with Schulz's prose, this creative action is more salient—and wiser—when it reaches beyond the creative agency of the individual genius and is instead undertaken as a poetic engagement with both language and world.

[633] Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me*, 105.
[634] Ibid.

Recess 4

Locality, Matter, Creative Action

We look again to pedagogical exercises to notice more attentively what the literary imagination has meant for students, in relation to the physical presences of site and material engagement. We have already discerned that the landscapes and geographies specific to a place have percolated in the projects when students were prompted to work with local histories and storytelling. In Colorado several projects responded to the unabiding mountainous landscape and its mining industry. In Louisiana we saw the volatility and precariousness of marshes and hurricanes come forth, as well as the passion for jazz, food, and revelry. In some cases, students opted to lean on stories that resonated more heavily on a personal level. This reiterates my earlier point that a locality is culturally situated and it is both more nuanced and expands beyond the geography of a given location. In short, we can take for granted that stories and histories already come instilled with the pleasures and anxieties of the landscape in which they arise, and whether this landscape is geographical, socio-political, or personal. I have not yet conducted a design studio in which I prompted students to employ literary language to construct "mappings" or representations of a locality that come anywhere close to what I have unpacked in Schulz's text.[635] I have for the most part treated the story or the qualitatively-focused creative text—both those written by students and brought from literature—as a more subtle but layered locality, or what we could call a diving board, or a playground for the project itself.

The fabrication courses are perhaps the most suitable to discuss how the students' engagement with literary texts precipitated acts of making and translations across mediums. The first observation is that this translation was always invested in a high level of interpretation and that it was seldom linear. Making the leap from the story to the artifact—what it would be, how it

[635] For a number of literary tactics employed in design pedagogy, including a response to site, see Klaske Havik, "TerriStories. Literary Tools for Capturing Atmosphere in Architectural Pedagogy," *Ambiances*, no. 5 (2019) http://journals.openedition.org/ambiances/2787.

would operate—involved a combination of iterative studies that were both material-based as well as identifying and fine-tuning the design question that was to guide the fabrication project. As such, in this interim stage, the students and I would often revisit the texts they had written, shifting focus to various parts of the texts and hunting for new cues towards determining what the construction of each student's artifact would entail. I noted earlier that the stories would eventually operate as depositories for specific qualities and experiences that could unfold multiple possible approaches to the project. In retrospect and after several fabrication courses, I can reflect that this leap, which was often the most difficult moment in the project, benefited again by focusing on the experience or the social dynamic that the artifact would be able to sustain. Again, it was most productive to identify what the construction (whether an object or a space) would *do*, rather than what it *was*. For instance, recall the student in the *Project Daedalus* sequence who worked with the moose tooth and queen Pesiphea's birthing of the Minotaur. This student moved from the story into the drawing prompt by scratching an anatomical image of the tooth onto a piece of wood. They eventually located their project—a manifestation of the queen's entrapment—in the hard grain that remained after sandblasting an existing wood cabinet. Drawing from their background as a dental hygienist, the student made a series of casts of the tooth and cabinet site which were ultimately recast in wax, cojoined and cast into bronze. The final project resulted in a blunt bronze carving tool that was both intimately enmeshed in the hard grain of the cabinet and had the possibility to carve itself an awkward and laborious escape. In this case, the translation between story and project emerged though a series of actions such as scratching, carving, and gouging—atmospherically charged with violence and desperation—that were interpreted into a material procedure that engaged the musculature of the wood's grain, as well as the bodily intimacy of dental work.

I take a moment to reflect what this means with respect to our earlier discussion on the student projects and the connection with Ricoeur's hermeneutics. I look at his notion of 'emplotment'—which is outlined in *Time and Narrative*—to argue that the operative function of the 'metaphor' extends beyond the medium of language. I focus on 'emplotment' rather than 'narrative' because for architecture 'narrative' is a specific technique which, while productive, does not precisely describe my focus here.[636] 'Emplotment' makes for a clearer way to speak to

[636] I return to this point in the conclusion. An example of this approach can be found in Wim van den Bergh and Mark Proosten, "Narrative as an Educational Approach," in *Writingplace*, ed. Klaske Havik et. all (Rotterdam: nai010publishers, 2016), 110-130.

the imaginative leap between literary constructions and the poetics of 'building' as process-driven action invested in a dialogue with materials and making.

Literary 'Emplotments' Transposed Onto Building Processes

Following the second chapter we looked at the dual movement of Schulz's mythization together with Ricoeur's dynamic between the 'symbol' and 'metaphor' as he outlined it in *Interpretation Theory*. In relation to the student projects, I drew a parallel between the elemental questions that surfaced in the students' stories to Ricoeur's rooted 'symbol,' and presented the specific details of the stories as the 'metaphor' or the metaphoric potentiality—noting as well their intertwined codependence. Given Ricoeur's emphasis on the semantic role of metaphor—that is, his insistence that the metaphor is operative through the sentence and not only as a bringing together of words—what Ricoeur has identified as the *plurivocity* of the text became an important consideration. He explains that literary works sustain several possibilities of interpretation and do not force the reader to choose one correct version. Through the intertwining of the symbol and the metaphor, Ricoeur points out that poetic works sustain a 'productive ambiguity' as well as a *surplus of meaning* which in fact, *exceeds the linguistic sign*.

If the creative texts operate as a layering of manifold 'metaphors,' this goes beyond a mere cluster of images that are rich in imaginative tension. The metaphoric potential of the stories is woven into a coherence which Ricoeur identifies as 'narrative' or 'plot.' Following Aristotle's *Poetics* where the poet is identified as a 'maker of plots,' Ricoeur explains that the notion of 'emplotment' refers to a mimesis of action. Here 'mimesis' is understood in the Aristotelian sense, as an 'imitation' or a 'representation.' Ricoeur however clarifies that:

> If we continue to translate mimesis by "imitation," we have to understand something completely contrary to a copy of some preexisting reality and speak instead of a creative imitation. And if we translate mimesis as "representation" […] we must not understand by this word some redoubling of presence, as we could still do for Platonic mimesis, but rather the break that opens the space for fiction.[637]

[637] Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative *Vol. I*, 45.

Recall from earlier that for Ricoeur, to 'open the space for fiction' is to open the possibility of a new vision of reality. New visions of reality are also the domain of architectural works, especially with respect to design process, or, the vision that precedes the tangible articulation of built works. In connecting his work on metaphor with narrative, Ricoeur explains that "making a narrative […] is to remake action following the poem's invitation," noting that the poetic work's operative potential lies in its 'function of refiguration' which essentially, via the metaphor, redescribes and *augments* reality.[638] The students' projects are a testimony that this 'creative imitation' of action that is inherent in literary 'emplotment,' can most certainly be carried out through the remaking of action in material construction and building details. If we recall the queen Pesiphae project, the student's creative writing came to be expressive not only of particular atmospheres, but it was also suggestive towards material engagement with tactics such as carving, gouging, and bonding. In other words, the metaphoric potency of the story was generative of potential action beyond the medium of literature.

In the *Artificer Kingfish* sequence the student working with the voodoo priestess quickly made the decision that their project would be understood as the shroud of Julia Brown. Drawing on the overlap between her death and the hurricane that wiped out three small towns, this student intuitively decided that the project needed to be responsive to the wind and the rain and that it would need to suggest an experience that was both soothing and threatening. The delicate weaving of the multitude of translucent surgical gloves, faced upwards to collect rainwater recalled both Julia Brown's healing curatives as well as the ghostly absence of those who perished in the foreshadowed hurricane. The resulting built project seems both appropriate and expressive, yet it is important to observe that the student's process was not as linear as it appears in retrospect.

There were, for all students, steps along the way that were abandoned, merely serving to understand what the project *was not*. The texts students had written proved especially helpful in moments in which they were the most stuck. Their creative writing enabled us to draw fresh interpretations and re-interpretations which also pointed to *specific* courses of action: for Julia Brown, we would look for not just any 'shroud', but *the* shroud in the *particular* text the student wrote—in this case a haunting, rhythmically compelling poem charged with potent imagery. Instead of discussing general ideas about architecture we would ask the questions

[638] Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative Vol. I*, 81.

through the texts, which offered a playful way to approach an impasse. Furthermore, the potential for surprise that is so important in 'play' was nurtured along the way: I would often remind the students to resist the temptation of deciding ahead of time where their project would end up. The students were encouraged to remain open to discoveries that were unpremeditated, to trust that the process of engaging with a particular material would offer its own insights as to how to move forward—essentially, to enter into what Gadamer would call a 'dialogue' with the design process. As previously noted, it was most helpful to focus on what the projects needed to *do*, rather than on what they *were*. In all, students approached the translation between story and building project in a way that was particular to each. The literary constructs both focused their design intentions while keeping open their process and mode of engagement. The specific qualities that came through in the stories were suggestive of expressive materials and experiences, as well as operated as a potential depository for action and material inquiry.

As mentioned previously, the practicing of such interpretive transpositions is unavoidable in architecture, whose material and tactile reality is always entangled with the riddles and paradoxes that drive human desires and aspirations. We have contended that this tricky act of interpretation is valued for *appropriateness*, rather than *correctness*. It's essential to emphasize that this perspicacity in interpretation is not simply there, but *it is a practice*, and a practice that requires honing and it likewise requires the practice of engaging *and* of building tacit knowledge. I argue that in architecture and design, material inquiry and craft processes are indispensable to the practice of building tacit knowledge. In this process and practice, I have understood literary language as a potential precipitate for creative leaps in delicate design circumstances. I end this reflection on pedagogy by looking to Richard Sennett's rendering of expressive instructions as another example in which we can observe the efficacy of imaginative language in building new knowledge.

Expressive Instructions for Delicious Questions

Richard Sennett notes that a seasoned craftsperson relies on a multiplicity of tacit forms of knowledge that they have cultivated and honed over long durations of time. This inadvertently makes explanations of what they do frustratingly difficult to articulate which proves especially tricky when it comes to guiding or teaching another person. Sennett reflects on the frustration of

written instructions, and argues that when faced with a difficult procedure, such instructions are much more communicative when the language employed is expressive rather than simply denotative. He makes this point by comparing instructions for preparing the decadent *Poulet à la d'Albufera* (and a variation known as a *Poulet à la Berrichonne*), a chicken dish created by Napoleon's eminent chef which became the pinnacle of nineteenth century haute-cuisine.[639] This recipe involves operations that are otherwise difficult without demonstration, including the deboning of the chicken. Sennet's first example is the instruction from Richard Olney, which he qualifies as "dead denotation" because it is effective only if the novice reading it has previous experience with undertaking this delicate operation. In other words, Olney relies that the reader's tacit knowledge already includes previous experience with preparing the chicken. Sennett suspects that the absence of this previous experience would likely lead to an unfortunate dismembering for many a chicken. In contrast, the three examples of instructions that Sennett believes to be effective all rely on storytelling tactics: Julia Child's sympathetic description makes an effort to recall the experience of the novice. It empathetically anticipates difficulties for the novice, and compares them to other familiar experiences and bodily sensations in order to guide the recipe. Elizabeth David sets the scene of the recipe's geographical and cultural provenance "as though it was a tale from Ovid," transporting the reader to a place where they can inhabit the foreignness of making a dish from afar.[640] Sennett's own cooking teacher, Madame Benshaw, employs poetic metaphors that prompt contemplation and add symbolic value to the preparation of the chicken. What the three effective examples all have in common is that they employ seemingly superfluous storytelling and metaphors. They also make an effort to conjure an experience for the novice, one that relies on familiar bodily experiences to guide their actions towards an understanding of the unfamiliar recipe. What all of these examples demonstrate, is that metaphoric language has the ability to guide actions that allow a person to *make knowledge for themselves*. Language does so when it is such articulated that it engages the imagination—in these three examples, it connects familiar, bodily memories, as well as the poetics of metaphor—towards knowledge. Metaphors can draw on tacit knowledge to lead to imaginative leaps towards the making of new knowledge through actions that engage materials. Because it involves the student's imagination in an active manner, the student is empowered to make this knowledge for

[639] Sennett, "Chapter Six: Expressive Instructions," in *The Craftsman*, 179-93.
[640] Ibid., 187.

themselves. This knowledge-making is important to architectural practice and learning because it both *draws on* and *builds onto* embodied knowledge, that is, bodily knowledge and intuition one gains in engagement with world and matter. In short, seemingly superfluous but highly imaginative literary writing precipitates learning-through-making. This echoes what I noted about Schulz's metaphors: that they bring this visceral connection to the world to the foreground, and it is particularly evocative because enlists familiar, everyday, easily manipulable objects to conjure an imaginative playground that remains open to interpretation and solicits the reader-architect to creatively make the image for themselves. As I already observed this is both an empowerment and an incitement toward poetic action.

I noted already that with respect to building knowledge, skill, and competence, Sennett's overarching point is that moments in which a craftsperson responds to resistance and ambiguity are the most fertile in propelling imaginative leaps and building the imagination. I argue that this potentiality translates as well to metaphoric language: Expressive instructions are more effective than denotative ones precisely because they generate imaginative ambiguity and resistance. The resistance is in the blurring of language that would rather insist on utility (of getting the task done). The expressive language brings ambiguity to the experience of engaging with the instructions—therefore calling on the reader-novice to make the instructions for themselves. Furthermore, the expressive language that invests the reader in imaginative leaps—does so by calling on specific bodily memories and embodied, prereflective forms of knowledge. Thus, in the practicing of one's perspicacity and elasticity of imagination both the making of things and the making of metaphors intertwine towards imaginative leaps and forms of knowledge that draw on as well as build on a designer's tacit knowledge.

I have insisted throughout that the special power of storytelling is that they capture elemental human predicaments, especially those for which it is valuable to keep open the questions and contradictions of these predicaments. As I observed with Blumenberg's study on myth, this pregnancy of certain stories becomes revealed over time by virtue of their being retold. For the student projects the retelling occurred by sheer virtue of their being selected as an inaugural design decision. I noted as well that the efficacy of the stories relies as well on the specificity of its details, qualities, and its situation which have the potential to operate as a depository for

action. We looked at how this action took material form through a design process that involved working with a high level of interpretation, curiosity, cleverness, and tenacity.

I end by highlighting the open-endedness of the potential for storytelling and literary language towards propelling the design process, and by reiterating my reluctance to pin down formulaic approaches, whether for pedagogy or practice. While each student started their project by engaging the literary imagination with the same prompts, their literary texts and building process took on a course that was specific to each, as well as driven by their own interests. Even if the literary constructs focused design intention, they did not constrain the process to a prescriptive mode of engagement. That the students' trajectories were so varied indicates that the literary text allowed each design circumstance to develop according to its own sensibility and the specific concerns of a particular design endeavour. I have likewise observed that the student's creative writing allowed abstract architectural concepts to emerge, while at the same time operating as a depository of intuitions suggestive of concrete qualities. The literary imagination has proven especially astute in giving flesh to subtle, elusive forces by playing on the resonances between tactile objects and their poetic potency. As such, the student's texts facilitated the process of earnest play that is intrinsic to architectural design, it clarified the specific directions of the phenomenal experiences sought by each project, and was at times suggestive of appropriate materials and building techniques. If the leaps across mediums seem mysterious it is because the architect's discerning sensibility remains the indispensable ingredient.

Conclusion

Poetic Acts and World-Reconfiguring Practices

> "But where my grandmother left my grandfather to silence, she revealed to us the grand and dark elegance of language in stories that filled our nights without electricity, our nights of dry faces and often empty stomachs. Using her stories like food, she filled us up with legends of flying women who inhabited the billowing darkness. As if letting out the day, rearranging the world, she in her nightly cadences would set the events, the real meanings of the world, right. The blunt edges of the days, the brutality of want, she would set to their dialectic, their causes and their redemption. Every child where I was born heard these stories but what I remember about her stories of the soucouyant and la jablesse, women so unlike her, is how they drove her voice to its most guttural and its most honeyed. Through these sounds she had sent messages for us, her woman-children, parables on how we should live in the world. She could not think herself past her time and her context, so her statements though profound were somewhat unfinished. They only hinted at the real. Her body huddled in a question mark on the bed most days. She was, however, as suggestive as she could be about taking power, her fingers thick with wash water. But her warnings were sprinkled frequently and sufficiently enough to be libation for the woman-spirit in us […]" – Dionne Brand [641]

Storytelling is worldbuilding. It is the elemental, most accessible mode by which humans practice optimism and project possible worlds. Stories are acts of courage, of resilience, and of redemption, and they can be empowering and future propelling. Stories can likewise be misguided and dangerous, they can be weaponized towards intolerance and have been used to justify and systematize oppression, violence, and the taking of lives. It is the year 2021 and never

[641] Dionne Brand, *Bread out of Stone* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994), 32-3.

in recent history has this been more palpable.[642] In the first chapter I discussed how Schulz's *Booke of Idolatry* echoed Gombrowicz's preoccupation with the murky domain of culture-making forces, and which for both Gombrowicz and Schulz entailed a practice of placing oneself in a position of vulnerability, ridicule, and humiliation. I noted that in superimposing religious ritual with explicit allusions to sado-masochistic role-play, Schulz's *Booke of Idolatry* can be read as a critical commentary on socially constructed idolatry, making palpable an uncomfortable and complicated position with respect to authority, artistic canons, and inculcated values. Likewise, for Gombrowicz the muddled territory in which culture-in-the-making awkwardly and uncomfortably articulates itself, was always embroiled with the inglorious, unpalatable aspects of our complicities and complacencies. The complicities and complacencies of every day well-meaning human beings never played a more nefarious role in the western imagination than in the history that would follow. This is the history that claimed Schulz's life—one amongst millions. In looking to write the history of the vanished Jews of Eastern Galicia (which also includes a story about Drohobycz and Bruno Schulz's life and murder), Omer Bartov reflects on the intricate and muddled dynamics between people who "played their assigned roles" in the machinery that led to the Holocaust and how the stories he uncovered "further complicate[d] any previous notion [he] had of a strict distinction between perpetrators, victims, and bystanders."[643] Bartov writes:

> The horror and tragedy of genocide is that it is an event in which human beings, who under other circumstances could and sometimes did befriend or even love each other, are transformed into hunters and their prey. But how could one reconstruct that part of the story? How could one give back to both perpetrators and victims their humanity yet not deny or obfuscate the atrocity? … to bring the protagonists of the event together in one place, to which they come as any other men and women would, and in which they take up the roles dictated by the nature of the atrocity, even as they perform these roles in accordance with their individual traits, character, and upbringing.[644]

Bartov's book recalls a history that still confronts us with the unspeakable brutality, the most extreme manifestation of complicities and complacencies of everyday men and women playing

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[642] The questioning of truth-claims and the fabrication of facts have, on this side of the planet, most prominently come into focus in the aftermath of Donald Trump's US presidency, the violent attacks of the United States Capitol on January 6th of this year 2021, and ongoing conspiracy theories circulating around the Covid-19 vaccines.
[643] Bartov, *Erased*, xiii-xiv.
[644] Ibid., xi-xiv.

their assigned roles within a situation in which idolatry, violence, and obedient subordination took a most sinister turn. What is important here is the telling of the story and the making of space for the difficult question to be posed.

In our own time, our complacencies have come in sharper focus with the global pandemic that started early last year and since then has brought forth the vulnerabilities and systemic injustices deeply ingrained in our daily practices, our politics, and systems of value. These have likewise brought us to uncomfortable reckonings about privilege, the godheads of our socially constructed idolatries, and the roles we have unquestioningly played to exacerbate systems of value and policies that continue to undermine basic human dignity. It is however not this project's work to write the cultural history of current events, nor is it to untangle the dynamics between politics of persuasion, complacency, and human psychology. I am here recalling culture-making forces to which architecture and space-making practices inherently participate and can in fact (often unwittingly) exacerbate. The work of distinguishing the proverbial baby from the bathwater is the kind of delicate and invested work that one ought to approach attentive to the particularities of each circumstance. It calls on the cultivation of a critical yet inquisitive attitude along with generosity of imagination, and also, it risks error. I have previously made the case that poetic action (which is my preferred term for 'poetry') isn't necessary when or because it is easy, but when and because it is difficult. It is necessary not because it explains, but because it allows for difficult questions to be lived. At its best, it can also empower world reconfiguring acts of hope and beauty.

In her reflection on beauty and justice Elaine Scarry presents beauty as an encounter that fills us with a desire to propitiate, to replicate, and to create more of it. In other words, beauty is a motive force, incites a desire for action and for creation, and according to Scarry, also propels the desire towards education: "This willingness continually to revise one's own location in order to place oneself in the path of beauty is the basic impulse underlying education."[645] It isn't that beauty unfailingly accompanies truth, but more importantly, Scarry insists, it overcomes indifference, and propels an enduring *aspiration for truth*, despite its also being liable to error:

> It is not that a poem or a painting or a palm tree or a person is "true," but rather that it ignites the desire for truth by giving us, with an electric brightness shared by almost no other uninvited, freely arriving perceptual event, the

[645] Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7.

> experience of conviction and the experience, as well, of error. This liability to error, contestation, and plurality—for which "beauty" over the centuries has so often been belittled—has sometimes been cited as evidence of its falsehood and distance from "truth," when it is instead the case that our very aspiration for truth is its legacy. It creates, without itself fulfilling, the aspiration for enduring certitude. It comes to us, with no work of our own; then leaves us prepared to undergo a giant labor.[646]

The encounter with beauty precipitates a desire to undertake a giant labour. Essential is not what *it is* but that *it moves*. This desire for making beauty present underscores the making of architecture as well as the teaching of architecture. Not only does it drive the work of architects, but its aspiration is likewise to arrive for others, with no work of their own, and to instill in them the desire for its generous replication. Storytelling can be powerful and it certainly risks being misguided. Because I speak from the perspective of architecture I have stayed on the side of optimism and of generosity of imagination. I have thus emphasized the worldbuilding capacity of storytelling and its ability to empower the projection of possible worlds.

My goal throughout has been to show that the resilience and agility of imagination that is at the core of storytelling and poetic language can be directed towards the process and practice of architectural design; that language employed poetically has the capacity to stretch the imaginative muscle of architects and designers; and that the practice of making metaphors is a practice that carries over and cross-pollinates acts of poetic making in the tactile and the material. I have shown several ways in which literary constructions can operate analogously and in tandem with architectural drawings, especially process-oriented drawings. Most salient I believe, is the capacity of literary language to bring forward human questions such that it sustains these questions' ambivalences, contradictions, and nuances. I have insisted that there is an intimate relationship between poetic language and forms of knowledge that are elusive, numinous, resistant to definition, and whose potency draws on their capacity to engage ambiguity, complexity, and multiplicity. "[T]he poem is language […] but it is also something more," Octavio Paz tells us. "And that something more cannot be explained by language, although it can only be reached by means of it. […] The poetic experience cannot be reduced to the word and, nevertheless, only the word expresses it."[647] In short, architecture deals with those

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[646] Ibid., 52-3.
[647] Paz, *The Bow and the Lyre*, 95-6.

things and questions that overflow explication, quantification, and categorization. To make architecture that is thoughtful towards these human complexities is to make culturally conscientious architecture. Literature proves to be especially fleet-footed in capturing these nuanced complexities because it operates between the lines of what is said to reach beyond itself and convey that which remains unsayable. As I have shown, this agility of literary and poetic language is what makes it a fertile accompaniment to space-making practices, especially during the process of design.

Poetic Acts that Draw on Sedimented Imaginaries

The philological depth of language, its participation within broader imaginaries that combine memory with imagination is a significant aspect that has come forth in asking what it means that Schulz engages language as a medium onto itself—and how this then extends into an architectural design practice. In the second chapter I unpacked Schulz's prose in relation to his interest in mythization and drew a parallel to the architectural task. I showed that mythologizing-mythization is most appropriately understood as poetic acts specific in that they involve a dual-movement that combines an act of drawing on the depths of a layered imaginary, with the world-reconfiguring disruption of the metaphoric surface, to ultimately inform innovative worldbuilding action in the present. I noted that Schulz's understanding of mythization is neither an attempt to make myth, nor a nostalgic, romanticized regression towards the past. It is rather future propelling and involves a poetic task that operates within matrices of stories and myths, as well as the multifaceted connections that are sedimented in language, in order to respond to elemental human questions and predicaments. I have argued that this creative engagement with layered imaginaries already underscores thoughtful architectural design.

Moving beyond Schulz's prose, I have also argued that more than capturing the sense of culture, community or locality, the stories, histories, and literary works that are intrinsic to this layered imaginary are in fact rich depositories for creative action—that they can sustain an approach to space-making invested in the salient and nuanced complexities of the community for which it is built. I have made the point that the extent to which one engages layered imaginaries is in effect a design decision – one always does so in design, yet one can be more explicit about engaging these imaginaries through the medium of literature and storytelling. The examples from

pedagogy have been suggestive of how this stratified knowledge, sustained through literary constructions, is both *brought forward* as well as *engaged in* design process in order to propel imaginative action towards the process of design, fabrication, and space-making. As I have noted, the layered potency of poetic language involves a suspension of the known and of the certain, nurtures productive ambiguity, and opens towards the unexpected, in order to court its generative and imaginative potential. This dialogue with forms of knowledge that elude our grasp and involves the courting of unpremeditated discoveries is intertwined with matter and lifeworld, and this is especially so with architectural design.

Poetic Acts of Making: An Intertwining of Imagination and the Lifeworld

In the fourth chapter I focused on the attitude toward matter and lifeworld in Schulz's prose by looking at two aspects that are significant to an architectural design process: the equivalent of what in architecture we understand as site or locality, and the poetic agency harboured by mundane objects and matter to precipitate imaginative design processes and material inquiry. I have noted that Schulz's metaphoric treatment extends to world, thus recasting it anew and foregrounding its capacity for wonder. I have also noted a deliberate interanimation and interpenetration—between space and time, the built and the unbuilt, interiorities and exteriorities—that cast human experience and lifeworld as part of the same connective tissue. This attitude of interconnectedness can be understood to echo a mythic sensibility in that it is not merely a detached contemplation of the object but actively partakes in the lifeworld and its perpetual unfolding. This in turn mirrors a phenomenological understanding of lifeworld and human knowledge as intertwined and co-emergent.

I have likewise observed a number of other resonances between Schulz's attitude towards matter and world and that of a mythic imagination: a reticence of the occurrences in Schulz's prose to align themselves to discrete identities of historical time and place; a counter tendency of the prose to entwine itself into a matrix that brings together a sedimented imaginary of storytelling and multilayered temporal scales; an attentive and intensified rendering of the mundane which mines it for its imaginative and poetic potential while bringing forth the importance of the qualitative and the specific; a dialectic interdependence between the creative agency of the human and the potentiality of the lifeworld which exists *in excess* of human grasp.

I have noted correspondences between these attitudes towards world that I have observed in Schulz's work and recent architectural discourse—especially the theoretical work of David Leatherbarrow, Rumiko Handa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, James Corner, and Dolores Hayden—that emphasizes the active reciprocity between the built environment, its geographical and cultural locality, and its human inhabitation—all of which insist on considering the complexity of the architectural project far beyond its object-ness and emphasize architecture's participation and attunement within the cultures and life processes that condition the characteristics of site and locality.

I insist that I have not in any way advocated a return to a mythic imagination—in the way that is understood by Cassirer and the Frankforts for instance. In the context of modernity (Schulz's), and increasingly significant within our own contemporary situation, the mythic *sensibilities* can best be understood to translate to a poetic imagination that is invested in its interdependence to the lifeworld. It emphasizes an attentiveness to the qualitative and the concrete over the quantitative and abstract, which lends itself to a consciousness in which spatial conditions and temporalities are layered and heterogeneous. The poetic imagination confronts the unexpectedness of the beingness of the world, which presents us with human questions that are at once timeless and unprecedented. To fully sustain this perspicacity and imaginative resilience, the poetic imagination values multiplicity and contradiction. Understood through the lens of a mythic inclination, the poetic imagination maintains an ecological imperative that resists the conceit of human dominance over the more-than-human world and cultivates a sense of wonder towards the knowledge that exists *in excess* of human comprehension.

To act poetically in the engagement with matter is for an architect a practice that solicits the dexterity of performing imaginative leaps between mediums of drawing, making, and discovery. I have thus insisted on the *practice* of this interpretive perspicacity—that it does indeed require explicit practice, discipline, and an active building upon tacit forms of knowledge. I have throughout made the case for the fecundity of literary constructions in the practice of cultivating architectural knowledge. I have likewise emphasized that the literary imagination is not enough but that the practice and pedagogy of architecture builds tacit forms of knowledge in an active engagement with materials. Thus positioned, the practice of architecture comes closer to what it means to practice for an athlete, a dancer, or a musician. That is, a honing and building upon of knowledge that involves an active element of play and iteration, as well as an active

cross-pollination of disciplines. I have drawn parallels to Richard Sennett's understanding of craftsmanship in order to argue that the literary imagination can efficaciously sustain an attitude of openness to resistance and ambiguity, which is in effect a practice of embracing risk-taking that can potentially lead to intuitive leaps and the making of new knowledge.

I have brough Sennett into the conversation because his project is ultimately democratizing and political. For him craftsmanship is an attitude through which the individual cultivates a desire for work well done and feels empowered towards making, which is in essence a self-making that arrives at self-knowledge. Sennett's notion of craftsmanship is a rethinking of Hannah Arendt's interpretation of work: that humans first make, then they reflect on the consequences of what they make.[648] Coming from the philosophical tradition of pragmatism he posits that a "more balanced view is that thinking and feeling are contained within the process of making."[649] He argues that the possibility of pride in work well done is as universal as play and thus is available to all rather than being restricted to those of exceptional intelligence.[650] For Sennett, this leads to the further implication that to cultivate a crafts-like relationship to one's work is a life practice that also cultivates invested citizenship and a healthy democracy.

A Dialectic of Play - The Literary Imagination as Architectural Representation and Critical Inquiry

If the architect's quintessential creative tool is the drawing, I have looked to show how literary language can operate as a mode of architectural representation and thereby expand the arsenal of the architect's imaginative tools and tactics of operation. In the third chapter I have specifically focused on process-oriented generative drawings that operate in the spirit of Marco Frascari's "non-trivial architectural drawings," which is to say, drawings as a form of inquiry and of drawing-out architectural knowledge. I have noted that these are the kind of drawings that are oriented towards discovery, sustain architectural thinking as a dynamic field of play, embrace multiplicity, and are therefore a counterpoint to reductivism.

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[648] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
[649] Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 7.
[650] "Physical acts of repetition and practice enable this *Animal laborans* to develop skill from within and to reconfigure the material world through a slow process of metamorphosis. The origin of all these powers is as simple, as elemental, as physical as playing games with toys." Ibid., 294.

The broad argument I have pursued here is that literary constructions can efficaciously complement traditional modes of architectural inquiry—that they have the potential to operate both *in tandem with* and *in anticipation of* visual and tactile design tools. While I have primarily focused the conversation on drawing as 'modes of architectural inquiry,' I have insisted that this certainly also includes other generative operations such as models, sketches, material investigations, and so on. When it comes to engaging the literary imagination, I have suggested that the architect (or student of architecture, or instructor) might choose to work with an existing work of literature and/or they themselves write a text that helps capture their intention. I have insisted that this choice of a literary work is in fact an inaugural design decision. I have emphasized that an important aspect of literary constructions that are analogous and complementary to generative process-oriented drawings is that of play conducted in earnest. I have looked to Ricoeur, Gadamer, and Huizinga to show that design is an act of hermeneutics that involves a dialectic of play, which engages tacit and pre-reflective knowledge and is invested with culture-making potential.

Specific to Schulz has been to unpack the question of how his prose engages language as a medium onto itself. From the perspective of representation, I noted the operative metaphor of the *tandeta* and the multilayered theatricality of his prose which has lent itself to architectural imagery that is restless, profusely layered, synesthetically charged, and open to multiple imaginative readings. I have likewise noted that this openness to interpretation invites the reader-architect to take on an invested participatory role in the making of the image. I have also drawn attention to the fundamentally interdisciplinary aspect of Schulz's prose (the interanimation between image and text) as well as his practice, which combined an architectural background and carpentry with a passion for painting and the visual arts. This reflects the very premise of this study which is the proposition that literature cross-pollinate architectural research towards an augmented interdisciplinarity. Especially effective for the architectural imagination has been the fact that his metaphors are exaggerated which has been shown to intensify the element of play.

Most important with Schulz's prose we have noticed the significance of the specific and particular over then general – that his imagery is not reducible to a conceptual equivalent. Therefore, the crucial insight is that most effective to design is to engage literary language that is experientially and qualitatively specific to the design project—which has been further emphasized with the pedagogical exercises that I have explored thus far. This leads me to insist

on the role of literary language in design process as '*poetic image'* rather than 'narrative.' While this has been implicit throughout this project—especially given Schulz's predisposition towards image rather than plot—the immediate assumption from my peers has revealed the notion of 'narrative' in design process to maintain a stronger gravitational pull, and thus I find myself obliged to clarify. Narrative, as I understand it in architectural design, operates similarly to a script, and involves descriptions of what takes place in a particular space.[651] This allows the architect or the student of architecture to notice the rituals, events, and temporal qualities that spaces sustain, making it especially productive towards focusing the *experiences* that a space makes possible, and deflecting from a tendency to disproportionally prioritize the formal object-ness of architecture. My take is that narrative, while certainly important and productive, can stay a little too close to an 'application' of language towards space-making practices—language describes, and therefore operates in the service of the future design. In focusing on poetic image, Schulz's prose has demonstrated how poetic language has the capacity to operate as a medium onto itself. Thus, a literary language focused on poetic image captures not only what is known and intended, but it can also engage that which is not-yet-known overtly, such as implicit forms of cultural and architectural knowledge. In discussing the student work I have drawn attention to the operative capacity of the poetic image, as well as its capacity to extend the poetic action in tactile and material acts of making. Whereas the 'narrative' is more direct, 'poetic image' also has the potential to precipitate engaged creative action in ways that are much more subtle and nuanced. As such, 'poetic image' *includes* 'narrative' but also expands beyond it. Therefore, while language *can* describe spaces and things that might be built or drawn, I have suggested that more powerful is its capacity to foster a creative environment in which the architect's imagination can discern (and generate) the images between words.

We have seen in Schulz's architectural imagery that language can render atmospheric qualities with remarkable dexterity, and that the metaphoric constructs are at once specific yet malleable, precise yet open. This calls on the architect's vision and sensibilities to construct the image for themselves, and more importantly it leads to poetic action that precipitates across mediums. This I have argued, places the linguistically articulated poetic image in the realm of autonomous mode of architectural inquiry—not merely descriptive or explanatory but capable of

[651] A classic example is the notion of the architectural promenade, which involves the orchestration of sequences such as for instance in Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. I also cited earlier in "Recess 4" Van den Bergh and Proosten, "Narrative as an Educational Approach."

conveying essential architectural knowledge that eludes, as well as complements visual and tactile tools of architectural inquiry.

In the last century this has been most poignantly articulated in architectural practices that have engaged in cultural criticism – both of politics and of architecture as a discipline. Amongst these are the politically-subversive drawings of Brodski and Utkin, John Hejduk's Masque projects, Douglas Darden's *Condemned Buildings*, and Ben Nicholson's *Appliance House* and *Loaf House* projects—to name a few. All of these combine several mediums of production, most heavily relying on drawing and incisive written texts. In all, the texts do not describe the drawing but stand on their own as necessary components to the subversive poignancy of the projects. All of these are architectural projects that were never intended to be built physically. I end with unbuilt (or unbuildable) projects, or what has been described, at time pejoratively, as 'paper architecture' because I believe this to be where the work of architects is the most empowered politically.

Architecture is political. Hospitals, prisons, libraries, planned parenthood clinics, police headquarters, schools, public spaces, spaces for protest, places for play, etcetera, get built (or not built) according to the politics of the powers at be. Their very existence or non-existence is a political reality, and one with profound social consequences. By the time an architect is needed *to build* the facts have congealed, the funding has been secured, the ground has been broken (at least figuratively), for better and for worse. The very decision of which architect gets the job plays into and corroborates the politics at hand. This is not to express mistrust towards those who have the capital power—I mean here, playfully, the power of capital—to build. Whether the client is the government, the developer, the philanthropist or the community, the architectural design is more often than not, as politically charged or as complacent as the project itself already calls for. (Think for instance how much room for questioning or critical imagination there is in a standard prison commission, and in some cases, a hospital commission.) This is not to say that the practice of architecture does not have the agency of political questioning. It merely means that direct and explicit acts of politics and critical imagination are much more accessible in the self-sufficient realm of drawing and writing. The architects that I cited have all engaged various degrees of political subversiveness in their practice. What's more important is that the projects I mentioned are not just forms of criticism, but are earnest and tenacious poetic acts that demonstrate an immense investment of time, work, and generosity of imagination. They can be

read as cultural and political commentaries thorough and through, but their power rests in the fact that no explanation or theoretical rhetoric can exhaust their capacity to both probe and imaginatively propel architecture as a discipline. Speculative projects such as these cultivate beauty and the desire for its perpetual replication, leaving virtually every architect that encounters them filled with the desire to undertake the labour of replicating their experience for others. As I have shown, the literary imagination can be a fertile, imagination-propelling interlocutor in many facets of the design process. It is in such projects that challenge our assumptions and tend to the beauty of the discipline where literary practices can be most clearly understood to be operating as autonomous modes of architectural inquiry.

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