

Jerzy Kandziora: Jerzy Ficowski on Schulz – Between Reconstruction and Rhetoric (*Reflections on Regions of the Great Heresy*)¹

1

Whenever the role of a biographer, a commentator of a work of an exceptional artist or writer is taken on by another remarkable writer, we – who attempt to “read” this role – are obliged to be particularly sensitive to the specific rhetoric employed in such a situation. In this case, rhetoric should be understood as a way of shaping the artistic text – that is, not merely as a reconstruction of some objective truth, embedded in sources and testimonies, but also as an original story, an artistic statement in its own right.

Commentators of Jerzy Ficowski’s writing on Bruno Schulz emphasize the persistent, diligent detective effort the author of *Regions of the Great Heresy* put into discovering and saving all of Schulz’s works that were not devoured by the war – as well as into writing his biography². The *ratio* between the biographer’s and commentator’s respective activities is crucial here. I will, of course, also look into this reconstruction, but what seems equally important is the nature of the poetics of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, the recognition of the traditions and conventions that are prominent in Ficowski’s first work on Schulz, and establishing which elements of Schulz’s aesthetics are particularly close to Ficowski’s poetic sensitivity³ and allow us to read *Regions* as a kind of guide to Ficowski’s own kind of poetry.

Ficowski’s opening confession about Schulz, regarding the book’s genesis, is quite instructive here. “Although I did not know Schulz personally and am not

1 The article was written as part of a research project financed by the National Science Center under decision number DEC-2011/03/B/HS2/04352.

2 See among others: J. Jarzębski, “Krytyk miłujący: Jerzy Ficowski jako badacz twórczości Schulza”, [in:] idem, *Prowincja Centrum. Notatki do Schulza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2005, p. 174; idem, “Jerzy Ficowski”, entry in: *Słownik schulzowski*, red. W. Bolecki, J. Jarzębski, S. Rosiek, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria 2006, p. 115–117; A. Słucki, *Księga i autentyk*, “Twórczość” 1967, no. 10, p. 125.

3 Ficowski’s debut volume *Ołowiani żołnierze* was published in 1948, an extremely important year in the author’s Schulzological explorations.

engaged in either literary theory or literary criticism, I persisted in my resolve to write *Regions of the Great Heresy*. My desire was not a new one. It had emerged immediately after my initial delight with *Cinnamon Shops* [in 1942 – JK]. My first sudden thought was to thank this writer – previously unknown to me, and about whom I knew nothing – and to express to him my appreciation for his existence” (RGH 25)⁴.

Next comes a description of an attempt to contact Schulz by letter in 1942.

We learn about a letter marked with, as Ficowski writes, “all the enthusiasm of an eighteen-year-old”, containing expressions of his greatest admiration, as well as a sentence about “the greatest writer of our time”. It seems, though, the letter never reached the addressee. Ficowski found out about Schulz’s death in the spring of 1943⁵. *Regions* became, as the author confesses, a response to the event, “an irrational act of reader’s gratitude” of someone who, after reading, imagined Schulz as a “kind of genius who sometimes creates great religious systems, or a magician and master of black arts, whose predecessors were burnt at medieval stakes” (RGH 26).

This matter and this confession are important because they confirm that *Regions of the Great Heresy* could not be a cold and distant book. Even if the material of this work developed so much over the years – it transformed from a short essay, “some thirty-odd pages in manuscript” (RGH 27), written by an eighteen-year-old in 1943⁶ into a work that contained 248 pages in its first edition – it

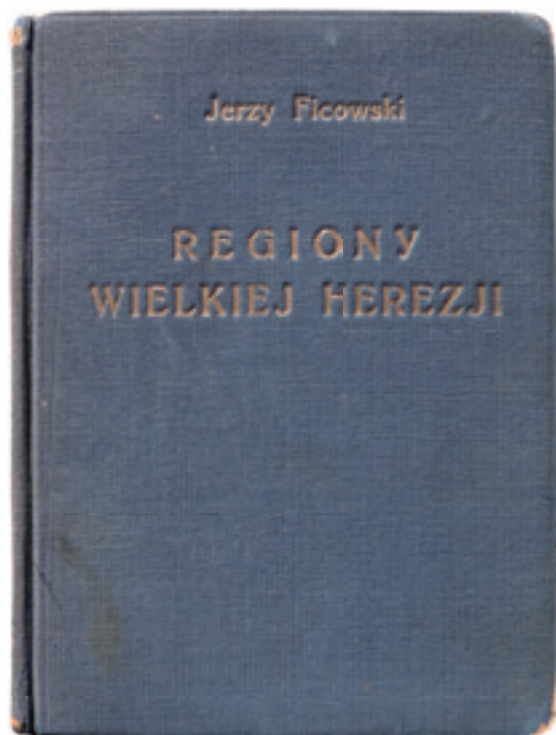
4 J. Ficowski, *Regions of the Great Heresy. Bruno Schulz: A Biographical Portrait*, translated and edited by Theodosia Robertson, New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company 2003, p. 25. Quotations from this source are further marked with the abbreviation “RGH” and a page number.

5 We read, in a letter from Jerzy Ficowski to his sister Krystyna, typewritten during the war: “As you know, about a month ago I sent a letter to Bruno Schulz. Since I addressed it to Drohobych (Galicia), I expected that the letter would take a week to 3 weeks to be delivered. Could you imagine that 3 days ago Mr Pleśniewicz (the friend of Schulz to whom he addressed the letters) called the chamberlain’s friends to inform that Bruno Schulz died the previous day [!]. I am devastated! We won’t see a talent of this kind anytime soon. Dadek [Adam Pawlikowski] has not yet learned the details of his death, but any day now he will see Pleśniewicz or his friends (the family of one of your friends, Dadek’s “fiancée”) and find out. I wonder if he [Schulz] received my letter before he died. I do not wish this to sound weird, but I think that if he read my letter before his death, it must have made him happy as it was written with great and sincere admiration. Or maybe he did manage to reply, and I will still receive a letter from him?” (letter from J. Ficowski to K. Ficowska, no date, with a later, handwritten note: “(1942) / letter from J. Ficowski”, typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence of Jerzy Ficowski. Letters, notebooks and copies of letters to the following, files A–Ł, no. 165/83 et seq.). This later dating of Ficowski’s own letter is questionable. After all, he writes in *Regions* that he learned about Schulz’s death in the spring of 1943 (RGH 25), and there is a sentence in the quoted letter that also suggests the spring of 1943: “I will probably start work on Monday, I will waste the most beautiful days of spring”. Thereby, the first information about the date of Schulz’s death that reached Ficowski seems to be quite late and imprecise (in fact, Schulz died on November 19, 1942) and that Ficowski’s letter to Schulz was sent after the writer’s death.

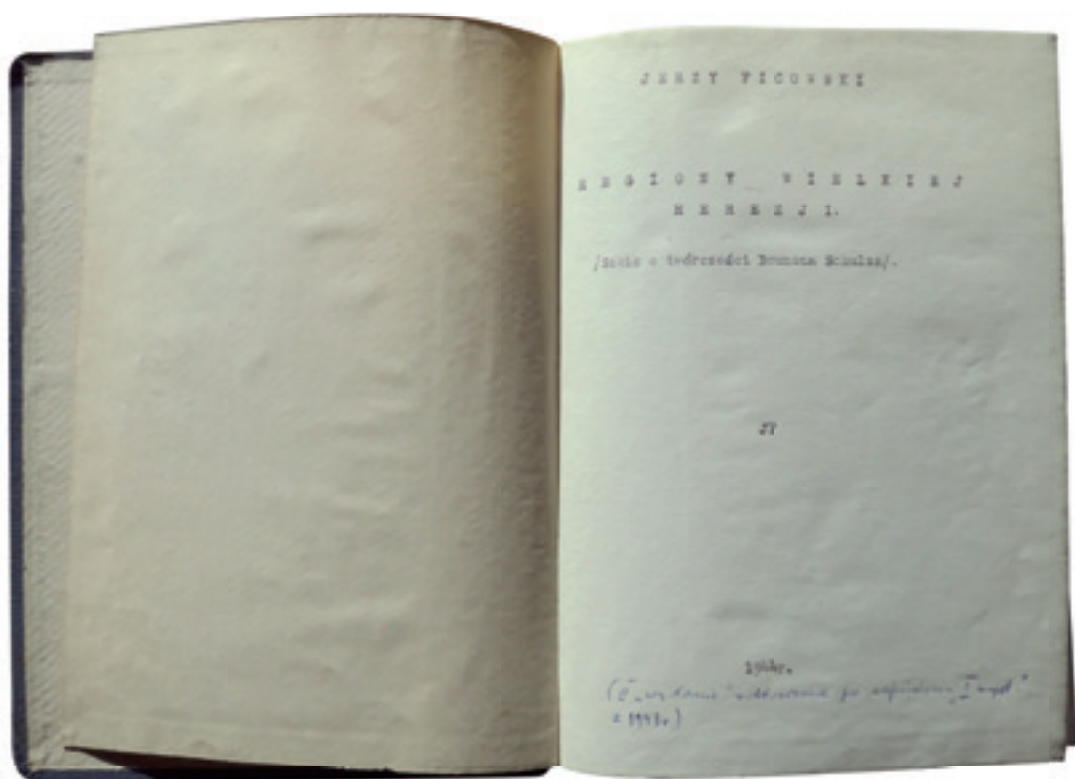
6 A handwritten copy titled *Regiony wielkiej herezji (Szkic o twórczości Brunona Schulza)* [Regions of the Great Heresy (Sketch on the Work of Bruno Schulz)], dated “1944”, a recreated version of the



Jerzy Ficowski – shooter “Wrak” [Wreck] from the regiment Baszta [Tower], Home Army, Mokotów, 1944. Jerzy Ficowski’s Archive, deposited at the University of Warsaw Library



The first version of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, 1944 – the second “edition”, reconstructed after the first edition from 1943 was lost. Jerzy Ficowski’s Archive, deposited at the University of Warsaw Library



still remains a very personal book. It is situated in the very centre of Ficowski's writing sensitivity and enters into complex relationships with both his poetry, which in turn took inspiration from Schulz's prose, and the trend of popular, fictional literature. This trend also shaped the narrative about Schulz, determining its dramaturgy, resulting in extraordinary popularity, and this paradoxical phenomenon – a writer of the absolute artistic avant-garde of the interwar period, about whom Polish critical treatises were and are still being written, was placed by Ficowski in the very centre of the consciousness of educated Poles, and even, to some extent, in the Polish mass imagination.

2

Although *Regiony wielkiej herezji* (English translation: *Regions of the Great Heresy*), published in 1967, used a subtitle *Szkice o życiu i twórczości Brunona Schulza* [Sketches on the Life and Work of Bruno Schulz], the book seems to be rather homogeneous, unlike Ficowski's next "schulzological" work, *Okolice sklepów cynamonowych* (1986), about which the author himself wrote the following in his preface: "What I have included in this book are notes from only one stage of this meandering [following the footsteps of Schulz – JK], but full of various observations"⁷.

Regions was hardly a mere collection of "notes". *Rzecz o Brunonie Schulzu* [A Thing About Bruno Schulz] was the subtitle Ficowski gave the text in the third edition (1992) as if correcting the elusiveness of the original subtitle. Published for the first time eleven years after the thaw of 1956, twenty-five years after Ficowski discovered Schulz, it was designed as a complete text in itself.

The compositional idea of the whole project is as important here as the poetics of subsequent individual chapters. As Ficowski's first concise publication about Schulz, the book was supposed to provide a complete and coherent image of the author of *The Cinnamon Shops*. An image complete and systematic despite the contrasting nature of reality – despite numerous biographical gaps, and the loss of manuscripts, letters and Schulz's artworks. While reading *Regions*, we can notice the presence of the imperative of combining the biography and the work, the need to indicate and describe the relations between Schulz, his work and the world surrounding him, and even the "smuggling" of certain features of poetics and imagination through discreet paraphrases. In this respect, it is worth taking a closer look at the narrative of Ficowski's book.

lost text from 1943, can currently be found in the Manuscript Department of the Library of the University of Warsaw, file 158.

⁷ J. Ficowski, *Okolice sklepów cynamonowych*, Kraków, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1986, p. 7.

Throughout it, we can observe biographical chapters regularly interspersing with the interpretive ones, devoted mostly to Schulz's poetics and philosophy of writing. The writer's story begins with a biographical chapter, "Bruno, Son of Jacob", and takes us to 1918, the end of the "happy epoch" (RGH 42), marked by the father's illness and the end of his work as a merchant, the family leaving the house in Drohobych (1910), the death of the father and the burning of the house (1915), and finally World War I. Ficowski emphasizes that the time of the mother's caretaking and the period of the father's illness are not included in Schulz's mythology.

Instead, we have two chapters devoted to a reconstruction of Schulz's mythology ("The Book, or Childhood Regained") and reflections on time in Schulz's works ("Schulzian Time"). The first one shows the entire uniqueness of Schulz's image of childhood as an "age of genius", which contains the "iron capital" of imagination, with the Book, the Authentic, located in the centre. It may take the form of the last pages of an illustrated weekly magazine saved from destruction. The power of the Book as a source of childhood myths lies in its visual experience, in its setting in ordinariness, and sometimes even campness – for example in advertisements in magazines that suddenly "take on magical power and poetic content" (RGH 75). The chapter devoted to time emphasizes the essentially compensatory nature of Schulz's writing, which opposes the dictate of real time. It activates alternative time, that is subordinated to psychological needs, and which characterizes heretical trends, "side streets", and volatile density of time, especially in "Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass", the "most monothematic" story in this respect (RGH 85).

The following two chapters: "Return to School" and "The Prehistory and Origin of *Cinnamon Shops*", are again of biographical nature. The first one characterizes Schulz as a teacher of drawing at the Drohobych middle school (where he worked since 1924), and provides information on Schulz's early creative activity, especially in visual arts, and about his family situation, which, like his career as a teacher, was rather destructive to his work as a writer. The chapter on the genesis of *The Cinnamon Shops* describes Schulz's correspondence with Władysław Riff and Debora Vogel, and their artistic dialogues that inspired Schulz; it formulates a hypothesis about the initiating role their lost (or destroyed) letters played in the emergence of respective texts. Particularly detailed is the description (in the form of postscripts to the letters to Debora Vogel) of the very birth of *The Cinnamon Shops*⁸, published thanks to the recommendation of Zofia Nałkowska

⁸ In the Library of the University of Warsaw, in Jerzy Ficowski's archive, we can find a manuscript of the Polish translation of Rachela Auerbach *Nie dosnute nicie. Garść wspomnień: zebrane wiadomości o życiu i twórczości Debory Vogel i Brunona Schulza oraz ich zagładzie z ręk niemieckich* (Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of Warsaw, file 121c), which contains the following passage:

and advocated by Rachela Auerbach (RGH 63). Ficowski extensively reconstructs Schulz's literary dialogue with Vogel. In this chapter, he also establishes the chronology of Schulz's work, pointing out that his short stories from *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, published after *The Cinnamon Shops*, were in fact his earliest works, written in the 1920s, during Schulz's communication with Riff or shortly after the latter's death.

Once again returning to the content of the work, the chapter "Phantoms and Reality" explores the elements of actual topography and physiognomy of the inhabitants of Drohobych in Schulz's mythologized world. During his stay in Drohobych in 1965, Ficowski learnt about the extraordinary faithfulness of Schulz's metaphors to the realities of the city and its surroundings. Ficowski calls this *modus operandi* – grounding the myth in the logic of reality, in the real properties of beings, objects and places – "Schulz's mythology". The chapter offers many examples of mythologization in the sphere of imagery. It ends with a consideration of the protective function of humour in Schulz's mythologies and a distinction between the worlds of Schulz and Kafka, the former of which brings a compensating myth that alleviates the horror of existence, while the latter suggests a descent to "metaphysical terror from which there could be no return" (RGH 102).

In the chapter "Excursions Abroad", the biography discusses the 1930s. We observe the expansion or a renewal of Schulz's recognition in the literary world caused by his writing debut (Nałkowska, Witkacy, Breza, "Wiadomości Literackie"). The critical reception of *The Cinnamon Shops* (1933) is discussed, as well as the psychological situation of the writer who, after a successful debut, wants to write something new, but his teaching job limits his possibilities. Ficowski lists Schulz's new works, written during his vacation from school duties in 1936, during which he also worked on reviews and prepared for printing the text of *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* (1937), mainly composed out of old pieces. The novel *Messiah* is also mentioned. Events from the private life of the writer included, among other things, the death of his mother (1931), his broken engagement with Józefina Szelińska (1937) – who is never mentioned by name – and his trips to Stockholm (1936) and Paris (1938).

"The 'postscripts' that followed one another in these letters were so stunningly interesting and original that [Debora Vogel] gave them to me to read". Except for this account, the beginnings of *The Cinnamon Shops* are acknowledged in the lost correspondence by a fragment of a letter, firstly mentioned by Ficowski in "Epistolografia Brunona Schulza", [in:] B. Schulz, *Proza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1964, p. 542. In this letter, addressed in 1936 to Romana Halpern, we read: "*The Cinnamon Shops* were slowly coming into being in my letters. They were mostly addressed to Mrs Debora Vogel". Also, the retrospective references to these letters and former contacts included in Vogel's late letters to Schulz from 1938, as well as Schulz's mention in a letter to the critic Andrzej Pleśniewicz from 1936, indicate the origins of Schulz's work (see also J. Ficowski, "Słowo wstępne", [in:] B. Schulz: *Księga listów*, collected and edited by J. Ficowski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1975, p. 6, 8–9).

The penultimate chapter – “Magic and Definition” – is another dive into Schulz’s imagination, this time focused on metamorphoses, and the protean form of matter in his prose. Ficowski emphasizes the non-oneiric, always *quasi*-rationalized nature of these changes, which Schulz describes in cause-and-effect relationships and in scientific terms (“fermentation”, “decomposition”, “precipitation” and so on). Ficowski distinguishes various stages of these transformations, people’s metamorphoses, and half-transitions, and also focuses on Schulz’s literariness, its poetic nature and definition, which give the “new myths” the appearance of treatises. Finally, he emphasizes the self-referential dimension of the father figure, in whose shop, as in Schulz’s work, the multicoloured matter and the discipline of terms and procedures coexist, creating “magic and definition”. This is the final interpretive formula of the analytical current of Ficowski’s book.

The last chapter – “The Last Fairy Tale of Bruno Schulz” – returns to biography, covering the period of Nazi occupation until Schulz’s death. The writer is characterised as hypersensitive, and defenceless against captivity and aggression. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the following aspects: the period of Soviet occupation, Schulz’s teaching work, his artworks commissioned by propaganda officials, the officials’ refusal to publish Schulz’s works as inconsistent with the *zeitgeist*, and then – the growing threat under the German occupation: involuntary artworks made for the Gestapo officer Landau and by the orders of the Drohobych Gestapo, cataloguing confiscated book collections, news of the death of friends – Anna Płockier and Marek Zwillich – in a mass execution, Schulz’s resettlement to the ghetto, planning a departure to Warsaw on falsified papers, and his death at the hands of a Gestapo officer in the so-called “wild action” on November 19, 1942.

When reading *Regions of the Great Heresy*, we are constantly moving – I tried to depict this in the above summary – between the matter of the biography, presented in a specific way, and the content of Schulz’s work, subjected to deep exegesis. This alternation of biographical parts in which Schulz’s life is reconstructed with the narrative about the artistic language, the world of imagination, and the Schulz myth, the rules of which are often discussed, echoes something fundamental to Schulz’s fiction – the oscillation between the specific material, the matter of events, the vegetative sphere and the regions of fantasy emerging from them. At the highest level of generality, such a composition of *Regions* can be a reflection of Schulz’s metaphor of the Book-Authentic. A book made of pages of a destroyed illustrated magazine, filled with advertisements (“The Book”) or Rudolf’s “stamp book” (*markownik* in “Wiosna”) will be the seed source of fantastic worlds. Of course, in *Regions* Ficowski does not transform Schulz’s biography into a fairy tale; this comparison has a limited scope. But two components (the empiricism of biography and the world of myth) and two attitudes (a collector and bookkeeper of memory and an exegete of myths and a poet) coexist in Ficowski’s book, which becomes a constant turning of the pages of reality and the legend inherent in literary work.

This is the first compositional echo of Schulz's artistic philosophy resonating in Ficowski's book. However, I would like to complicate this image a bit and perhaps take it beyond the metaphor of the Book-Authentic and move towards more philological considerations, related also to the contexts of history and literature. I would like to distinguish two elements in Ficowski's construction that seem crucial for his attitude towards Schulz in *Regions of the Great Heresy*. The first would be the reconstruction and recovery of Schulz's biography, despite history, and the second is the poetry of explication of Schulz's world, which, at the same time, would be defining the principles of Ficowski's poetic imagination. In other words, it can be expressed as the co-presence of a story that contrasts decay, loss, and confusion with the very traditional coherence of the presented world, a kind of *vie romancée* (although, of course, Ficowski's book is not a biography in the strict sense), and a deeply interiorized "poetic exercise" that was also important for Ficowski as a programmatic statement. Of course, in both cases, we are dealing with the same saving gesture of extraordinary power Ficowski performed.

3

Let us start with the reconstruction of Schulz's biography in *Regions*. How is this reconstruction carried out? How does the need to rebuild Schulz's world manifest itself? To explain this precisely, I will quote a later text by the author of *Regions*. In Ficowski's study *W poszukiwaniu partnera kongenialnego*, written in 1992, the unveiling of two newly discovered letters from Bruno Schulz dated 1934 – to Rudolf Ottenbreit, a professor of Polish literature and a teacher at a middle school in Rzeszów – is accompanied by a reflection that must truly move someone who carefully and repeatedly read *Regions of the Great Heresy*. Ficowski writes: "His [Schulz's] biography, fragments of which I have been collecting for half a century, has largely fallen into oblivion along with all those relatives, friends, confidants, allies, brothers in art... Only fragments have been found. Therefore, we do not know how many people he trusted, who he tried to trust as a congenial partner, and how many disappointments he experienced during these epistolary queries, full of false hopes. [...] Despite the passage of so many years, lost details and faint fragments of his biography are still coming to light, and from them emerge figures close to Schulz, including those about whom we knew nothing. One of such people was Rudolf Ottenbreit"⁹.

This is the language of reflection on Schulz that is absent in *Regions of the Great Heresy*. The language of biography which does not hide missing links and is aware of its incompleteness. It suggests that, despite previous searches, the biography

⁹ J. Ficowski, "W poszukiwaniu partnera kongenialnego", [in:] *Czytanie Schulza. Materiały międzynarodowej sesji naukowej "Bruno Schulz – w stulecie urodzin i w pięćdziesięciolecie śmierci"*, ed. J. Jarzębski, Kraków: Instytut Filologii Polskiej UJ 1994, p. 28–29.

composed of fragments is not final; it seems that subsequent discoveries – letters, people, “congenial partners” – could give it shapes, landmarks, and emotional vectors different from those previously “established” by the biographer, or at least significantly modified. It can be said that only against the background of these relatively late reflections Ficowski wrote at a time when his most important works on Schulz had already been published, one can understand the significant internal coherence of the biographical current of Ficowski’s first book. While the former was written in the poetics of “filling space”, the sketch, written many years later, departs from that convention, focusing instead on what we did not know about Schulz’s life, employing the poetics of “information deficiency”. It proves that we can also consider Schulz’s biography as incomplete, partial, or fragmentary.

This is why Ficowski’s confession is so touching. The text allows us to strengthen our reading intuitions and realize that a full biography is a convention, especially in the case of Schulz’s fate, and that we can look for these elements in *Regions* that empower the coherence of the world and biography, that in a way mask – or perhaps one should say: rebuild – the gaps in space and time caused by the Holocaust that devoured Schulz, his manuscripts, and letters, written mainly to other victims.

Regions of the Great Heresy is not a biographical story. There are no fictional dialogues, no reconstructions, and no novel conventions in full swing, using direct speech. And yet, let’s face it, a certain fictionalization of biography comes to the fore in the biographical parts. It results from Ficowski’s reluctance to use footnotes and, to a large extent, the implementation of marked quotations from sources, primarily letters and accounts obtained in the early period of research (the late 1940s) from Drohobych students or colleagues of Schulz who survived the war. Some of these accounts were embedded in the narrative without quotation marks, as hidden quotes¹⁰. As a result, the texture of the narrative may give the impression of a fictionalized story:

“Once, in the second or third class, when given a homework assignment in which the pupils were free to choose their topic, Schulz filled up an entire notebook with a kind of a fairy-tale story about a horse. Amazed at the extraordinary composition, the Polish instructor showed the notebook to Joseph Staromiejski, director of the gymnasium. Realizing the value of the composition, Staromiejski shared it with his colleagues” (RGH 37).

10 The names of people who contributed to *Regions of the Great Heresy* are mentioned at the end of the first chapter titled “Znalazłem autentyk (zamiast wstępu)”. The number of these names changed: in edition 1 (1967) – 51, in edition 2 (1975) – 55, in edition 3 (1992) – 54 and the formula “and many others”. In another edition (J. Ficowski, *Regiony wielkiej herezji i okolice. Bruno Schulz i jego mitologia* – op. cit.), which contains *Regions of the Great Heresy*, Ficowski no longer includes this list of names, contenting himself with collective acknowledgements.

“The entire household was permeated by a strange and gloomy aura: three old women pacing like cats, its cluttered length and width in soft carpet slippers, appearing unexpectedly at any moment in every nook and corner of the large flat. The depressing atmosphere of this impoverished home impressed every visitor. Its silence was broken only by Hania’s nervous attacks or meowing of cats. It was a quiet without isolation, one threatened by continual anxiety” (RGH 48).

“He was commonly considered to be a person who was good ‘to the point of being ridiculous’. An egoist, Schulz nevertheless did not know how to be neutral toward human injustice. Himself sunk in poverty, he never refused alms to a beggar. He once even gave a beggar five zlotys” (RGH 53).

“Above and beyond these voluntary activities, he had – in addition to his classes – numerous obligations of the most boring kind. He gritted his teeth in hopeless despair when he was overloaded with many hours of handicraft work classes, and at the same time had to prepare and give specialized lectures, such as the one he gave in Stryj in 1932 titled *Artistic Formation in Cardboard and Its Application in School*” (RGH 53).

It seems that in this type of narrative, the elements of reality (the mention of director Staromiejski, the title of Schulz’s paper) are intertwined with elements of characterization, the citation or source of which becomes unclear due to the lack of quotation marks, bringing them closer to the convention of the novel (“He gritted his teeth in hopeless despair”, “He once even gave a beggar five zlotys”, a suggestive characterization of Schulz’s apartment). To a greater extent than it might seem, these *quasi*-novelistic fragments, resembling the point-of-view technique, perhaps even close to indirect speech, have their prototype in witness accounts. Most of these accounts have been preserved in Jerzy Ficowski’s archive and can today be compared with the text of *Regions of the Great Heresy*. I will quote two of them to show how the author processed the material.

This is a passage from a letter from Michał Chajes, Schulz’s friend: “What stands out among the memories of his childhood and school years is his friendliness, as he was always happy to help his friends with, for example, drawings and homework, which earned him the general respect of the class. When, in one of the first grades of middle school, the class was given an assignment to write a fairy tale about a horse, Szulc [*sic*] wrote the length of a notebook. It must have been something outstanding there since the teacher thought it was worth showing the principal of the middle school, Staromiejski, who took the notebook as a kind of curiosity, which itself had already been widely commented on in the class and throughout the whole school”¹¹.

¹¹ Letter from M. Chajes to J. Ficowski of June 18, 1948, typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence of Jerzy Ficowski [hereinafter: Correspondence...], file Ce-Cze (no. 134/80 et seq.).

Another passage comes from Emil Lewandowski's letter: "I was a peer and a close friend of his nephew who lived with Schulz [*sic*] in one apartment. I remember the thick silence and dimness of their apartment – the household members in felt slippers outdid the cats with the noiselessness of their movements"¹².

The way Ficowski makes fragments of accounts function as a larger whole often does not even consist in telling them completely in "his own words", but in a certain narrativisation, in placing them in a psychological action, in a story, in a broader image of Schulz. Another example is the description of Schulz's meeting with Zofia Nałkowska, which paved the way for him to publish *The Cinnamon Shops*. Initially, in the first two editions of *Regions* (1967 and 1975), the following description was included:

"It was all about Zofia Nałkowska. One day, a shy and startled Schulz visited her in Warsaw. The presence of a few more people took away the very rest of his composure, so he asked the writer for half an hour just for himself, alone. Nałkowska read the fragment, then – delighted and moved – supported the cause and led to the publication of *The Shops* in 'Rój' in December 1933"¹³.

In 1985, Ficowski received a letter from Alicia Giangrande, an Argentinian painter who spent her youth in pre-war Warsaw¹⁴, showing the real course of the event, in fact revealing Ficowski's earlier "fictionalization". The author included this account in place of the previous fragment in the third edition of *Regions* (1992). It significantly modifies the situation originally constructed by Ficowski. Schulz gave his manuscript to Nałkowska to read. There is no mention of a "private" conversation here, nor is there any mention of the presence of any witnesses in Nałkowska's house. Schulz, however, exhibited a surprising determination at a party at Róża Gross's guesthouse, when he asked Nałkowska's friend, Magdalena Gross, to make an appointment with the writer on the same day. "His voice had a pleading tone, but at the same time was very strong"¹⁵ – Giangrande recalls.

In a sense, one story replaced another. In this case, I am not tracing factual accuracy (Giangrande's account obviously has an advantage over the earlier version), but rather the psychological dramaturgy that connects both variants of

¹² Letter from E. Lewandowski to J. Ficowski of July 10, 1948, manuscript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file L–Lips (no. 61/79 et seq.).

¹³ J. Ficowski, *Regiony wielkiej herezji. Szkice o życiu i twórczości Brunona Schulza*, wyd. 1, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1967.

¹⁴ Letter from A. Giangrande to J. Ficowski dated April 16, 1985, manuscript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file G–Gró (no. 61/79 et seq.). Giangrande's account of Schulz was previously published in Rita Gombrowicz's book *Gombrowicz en Argentine. Temoignages et documents 1939–1963* (Paris 1984).

¹⁵ J. Ficowski, *Regiony wielkiej herezji. Rzecz o Brunonie Schulzu*, wyd. 3, poprawione i uzupełnione, Warszawa: Słowa 1992, p. 83.

the visit at Nałkowska's. Both images – of the shy and startled Schulz and the determined Schulz – place the writer in a certain narrative¹⁶.

In the subsequent biographical chapters of *Regions*, a series of episodes are combined into a story in a way that does not raise questions about what happened “in between”. In such writing, there are no formulas such as: “at this point the trace ends”, “we don't know what Schulz was doing during those six months, who he was in contact with”, “we find our protagonist in 1936 in Paris” and so on. What I am talking about here is the feature of narrative that does not create questions about gaps and blanks in the biography, but develops into a coherent whole, with a certain novelistic fluidity, suggesting a continuum without gaps or significant disruptions.

Observing Ficowski's construction of a biographical narrative from other people's accounts, we must recall the tradition of the great realist novel, of which the author of *Regions of the Great Heresy* was an admirer. In particular, he was a passionate reader of Charles Dickens throughout his life¹⁷. The tradition of Polish realist prose of the 19th century was also important to Ficowski's writing sensitivity, including works by such authors as Klemens Junosza-Szaniawski (who was called by one of the pre-war critics a “Polish Dickens”)¹⁸, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski¹⁹, and Ignacy Chodźko.

Paradoxically, the story about Schulz's life, the reveller of Polish interwar fiction, is governed by the axiology of the traditional narrative of the realist novel, outlining the framework of biography, which should not go beyond a certain

16 Interestingly, the 1948 memory of Paweł Zieliński, the husband of Magdalena Gross (see Bruno Schulz. *Listy, fragmenty. Wspomnienia o pisarzu*, zebrał i oprac. J. Ficowski, Kraków, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1984, p. 65–66), quoting her account on this subject, is closer to the memory of Alicia Giangrande than to Ficowski's version, which would confirm that the original fragment contained an element of quite free “psychologization”.

17 Ficowski's bibliography includes several articles devoted to Dickens: *Stulecie “Opowieści wigilijnych”*, “Gazeta Ludowa” 1946, No. 310, p. 4; *Charles Dickens, “Młodzi idą”* 1948, No. 9, p. 5; *Dickens w Polsce*, “Nowa Kultura” 1962, no. 49, p. 5; *Dickens w polskim dyliżansie*, “Przekrój” 1988, no. 2223 and 2224. Moreover, Dickensian motifs appear in Ficowski's texts (the poems *Niejaki Dickens* and *Sen bezsenności*, the song *Klub Pickwicka*). In Ficowski's archive, we can find a calendar in the form of a notebook “Mostostal Warszawa SA” for 1998. In the calendar under August 9, 1998, the author left a note from his stay in Obory: “I was reading the wonderful *Klub Pickwicka* for the hundredth time in my bed...” (Manuscripts Department, Library of the University of Warsaw, file 26).

18 J. Kułaga, *Zapomniany polski Dickens*, “Kurier Literacko-Naukowy” 1937, no. 18 of April 26, p. 4–5 (supplement to IKC 1937, no. 114). In Jerzy Ficowski's archive (Manuscript Cabinet BUW, file 143) there is a clip of this article and an incomplete clip of an article by Julian Krzyżanowski *Artyzm pisarza „z płowym wąsem”* (*Słowo o Klemensie Junoszy*), “Kurier Literacko-Naukowy” 1938, no. 16 of April 17, p. 4–5 (supplement to IKC 1938, no. 107), and Ficowski's handwritten notes regarding the positivist short story writer and novelist. Klemens Junosza is another, next to Ignacy Chodźko and Franciszek Kościuszko, the hero of the poem “Ballada o trzech mociupańskich”.

19 See J. Ficowski, *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, “Młodzi idą”* 1948, no. 12, p. 11; idem, preface to: J. I. Kraszewski, *Chata za wsią*, Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza 1956.

world of values, should not autonomize threads, break away from the unifying fictionalization and, at times, somewhat didactic and moralistic auras. It is impossible to understand the novelisation in Schulz's biography, the kind of cognitive optimism, and a certain note of didacticism, without remembering this old school of Polish and European fiction, which influenced Ficowski's sensitivity from his early years. For the same reason, some of the takes in the reports about Schulz included in letters collected by Ficowski have been excluded and right now are gathered in the archive of the author of the *Regions*. To appreciate Ficowski's biographical choices, it is worth to mention here these testimonies, detached from specific genre axiology, written as independent, unbiased observations of eyewitnesses that arose in those people who knew Schulz personally and had no reason to discredit a figure close to them or to smooth their memory of him.

For example, the story of Michał Chajes, Schulz's friend, is characterized by verve, a specific vigour of memories that are not typical of other parts of *Regions*. This dense, factual text from 1948 was certainly greatly helpful to Ficowski. It can be called the report of a close neighbour who knows almost everything about the family. In the original, the factual nature of this story borders on bluntness, maybe even gossip, but these are the touches of reality that lend it the value of authenticity. They, of course, had to be weakened in the literary development. Chajes openly writes about the diseases of Schulz's family members (syphilis of Hoffman, the husband of Bruno's sister, Hania, as a probable reason for his suicide, and the tuberculosis of the engineer Izydor Schulz). The presentation of characters is made with complete directness and visuality:

[About Bruno:] "By nature – like his father – he was skinny and physically underdeveloped, excessively thin. He had – a fallen breast, a terrible pallor or yellowness of the complexion, an elongated head, sunken bony cheeks, in which large black eyes glowed with some incredible light" ²⁰; [about her mother and father:] "The roundness and plumpness of her shapes contrasted remarkably with the 'spiderness' of her husband Jakub" ²¹; [about women:] "Szulc [*sic*] had three youthful 'crushes,' but without any sensual basis in the everyday use of this word. The first was Mila Lustig, wife of a lawyer, murdered by the Germans, the next was her cousin, Tynka Kupferberg, married to Sternbach, currently living in Cracow, and finally, Fryderyka Wagner, married to Wiesenberg, wife of a doctor, currently living in Palestine" ²².

The factual clarity and descriptive bluntness of Chajes's account obviously did not fit the narrative of *Regions*, which is why Ficowski reformulated or softened

²⁰ M. Chajes, letter to J. Ficowski of June 7, 1948 (attachment, p. 1), typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file Ce–Cze (no. 134/80 et seq.).

²¹ M. Chajes, letter to J. Ficowski of June 18, 1948.

²² Ibidem.

them. A similar thing happened with the topic of Schulz's masochism – present, of course, in *Regions* – which is most extensively illuminated by the account of another friend of Schulz, Tadeusz Lubowiecki (Izydor Friedman). However, Ficowski does not refer to this part of Friedman's memories and uses only the information about the last months of Schulz's life. Friedman was the key witness there. On the orders of the Judenrat and the local Gestapo, Schulz and Friedman catalogued the book collections confiscated by the occupiers. Schulz was shot in one of the streets of Drohobycz in front of Friedman, who then buried him.

The thread of masochism in Izydor Friedman's account sheds interesting light on the pre-war small-town ambience, extracting the witness himself from the merely thanatic stream of his memories. It shows him as a colourful character, and, above all, offers detail on masochism in the biography of Schulz himself. Friedman writes to Ficowski: "I am an old, obdurate bachelor and – if you will excuse the expression – a womanizer. I was once considered one of the *jeunesse dorée* of a provincial town [...] and at that stage I came into contact with Sch.[ulz]. Since, apart from women and, I emphasize, whores, I had a keen interest in literature (of course, as a consumer) and art (as a member of aestheticizing intelligentsia). We became very close friends shortly after we met in 1935. Bruno had unlimited trust in me and, sensing that I was – I flatter myself – quite intelligent and well-read, he allowed me to gain some insight into his private life, especially his sexual life. [...] I am convinced that you will use the material very carefully"²³. Ficowski used Friedman's account of Schulz's masochism only to a small extent, in the essay "Feretron z pantofelkiem" in the book *Okolice sklepów cynamonowych*. Thus, Schulz became, one might say, a virtual masochist in *Regions*, mainly a fetishist. And one more quote from Ficowski's archive, from the memoirs of a Drohobych teacher, Kazimierz Hoffmann, a young friend of Schulz, who reports on the most dramatic period of Schulz's life, when he was dependent on Felix Landau, the local Gestapo's official for Jewish affairs: "Brunon painted 'al fresco' in a palace where the head of the Gestapo lived. Plaster was removed from the walls and ceilings, scaffolding was erected and Brunon painted according to long-agreed designs, just like in a church. Brunon was playing a waiting game (that is what he told me), he was enjoying life, he was simply ebullient. His spiritual state at that time required great psychological expertise. Bruno seemed to be grateful for his talent. Despite the criminal atmosphere in which Brunon was creating at that time, his designs were probably masterpieces. Brunon owed his life to them. He was creating and he was happy that people were pleased with him. The SS men enjoyed art. Brunon walked around as if in a trance"²⁴.

²³ Letter from T. Lubowiecki to J. Ficowski from August 24–26, 1948, typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file Lipt–Ł (no. 61/79 et seq.).

²⁴ Letter from K. Hoffmann to J. Ficowski from March 30, 1965, typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file L–Lips [as: Secondary School in Bystrzyca] (no. 61/79 et seq.).

Hoffmann signals the paradoxical nature of Schulz's behaviour, typical of victims whose torturer temporarily spared them their life and created a certain margin of freedom. At the same time, this piece does not belong to the didactic canon, assigned to the axiology of traditional realistic biographical narrative. Therefore, the fact that this fragment of the letter was not quoted by Ficowski (although another fragment of this letter, regarding the students' attitude towards Schulz, appeared in the form of a quote²⁵), but reported it in a way that alleviates the demonism of the entire situation and the drastic nature of Hoffmann's account (RGH 47), is Ficowski's empathetic gesture that also confirms the existence of those quasi-novelistic axiological frameworks, unifying Schulz's world, which the author of *Regions* accepted as binding.

Also, Friedman's account contains an entry which, especially in the final part, is suspended in a significant axiological void, while being undoubtedly a faithful testimony of the victims' individual experience: "In 1942 the Drohobych Judenrat sent me and Szulc [*sic*] to work in a library that was subordinated to the Gestapo. It was a collection of all public and major private libraries, the confiscation of which was started in 1939 by the Soviet authorities and then was extended in 1941 the Germans. Its core consisted of the collections belonging to Jesuits from Chyrów. It consisted of about 100,000 volumes, which Szulc and I were ordered to catalogue or destroy. This work lasted several months, was interesting, suited our preferences and, in comparison to the work of other Jews, it was a real paradise. Schulc and I were talking for hours"²⁶.

Testimonies of this type – such as the quoted accounts of Hoffmann and Friedman, memories from the very bottom of hell – contain the unquestionable truth of the moment, the truth of survival, but not the truth of history understood as a story about villains and victims. Therefore, in the biography, they are blurred.

What we have characterized as a specific strategy of saving the protagonist of the *Regions of the Great Heresy* is limiting the space of Schulz's biography, denying its entropy, its gaps, and axiologically undefined places. Within the same strategy, Ficowski uses yet another technique of establishing Schulz in the real world, intensifying his existence, introducing him strongly into the circulation of his times, the network of interpersonal connections and exchange of artistic ideas. He refers to Schulz's own formula – "a partner for exploratory undertakings" (RGH 58) – that is, a person who is particularly close to him, a partner of

25 We read, among other things: "His unusual, uncommon, inspired and delicate character elicited respect — the young people experienced his lessons, they sensed that they were dealing with an extraordinary person" (RGH 54). This is a quote from a letter from K. Hoffmann to J. Ficowski of March 30, 1965.

26 Letter from T. Lubowiecki to J. Ficowski of June 23, 1948, typescript in the Ossolineum collection: Correspondence..., file Lipt-Ł (no. 61/79 et seq.).

artistic disputes, but also a partner in writing practice²⁷. Two such characters for whom the author of *Regions* later also coins the term “congenial partners”²⁸, played, in his opinion, a special role in Schulz’s life and work: Władysław Riff (1901–1927) and Debora Vogel (1902–1942).

What turned out to be crucial for this partnership or cooperation was Schulz’s intensive correspondence with both figures at various stages of his life and, of course, the spiritual and artistic format of both Riff and Vogel, who were engaged in their own writing work. It was throughout correspondence with Riff, the author of “a novel of psychic adventures” (RGH 59), that Schulz awakened as a writer in the 1920s. Later, in the early 1930s, after Riff’s death, Vogel, the author of, among others, the poetry book *Manekiny* [Tailor’s Dummies] and the volume of prose *Akacje kwitną* [Acacias are blooming], became Schulz’s next “congenial partner”. In their letters, the first fragments of *The Cinnamon Shops* were born, in the form of extended postscripts, “gradually more and more dominant over other contents of the correspondence”²⁹. What makes the thesis about far-reaching borrowings and mutual inspirations particularly dramatic, is the fact that all of Schulz’s correspondence with Riff and Vogel from the period of the “congenial partnership”, as well as the manuscript of Riff’s unpublished novel, were lost. Ficowski, not knowing the content of this correspondence and relying on indirect accounts, undertook a specific reconstruction of the letters-dialogues, as if building an epistolary quasi-reality.

It is worth quoting these fragments of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, which “mediate” over time and move us with the degree of realization of what no longer exists. This is what Ficowski says about Schulz’s correspondence with Riff: “It was a long discussion, conducted in instalments, on the topic of art, any scattered references to ordinary reality were artistic transitions bearing signs of literary treatment” (RGH 59). A little later, in the same chapter (“The Prehistory and Origin of *Cinnamon Shops*”), there is a “reading” of the correspondence with Vogel: “They began to exchange letters, and over the course a year, Schulz’s letters began to contain startling mythological stories developed in lengthy postscripts” (RGH 62)³⁰.

²⁷ This formula is quoted by Ficowski comes from Schulz’s letter to Tadeusz Breza of June 21, 1934, [in:] B. Schulz, *Księga listów*, zebrał i przygotował do druku J. Ficowski, wyd. 3, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria 2008, p. 48.

²⁸ J. Ficowski, “W poszukiwaniu partnera kongenialnego...”, op. cit.

²⁹ J. Ficowski, “Wprowadzenie do *Księgi listów*”, [in:] B. Schulz, *Księga listów*, wyd. 3, p. 13.

³⁰ This fragment sounds very similar to Ficowski’s introduction to the first edition of Schulz’s *Księga listów* (1975). It is even expanded there: “[...] Debora Vogel read the magical history of Drohobych as a novel in instalments, with delight increasing from letter to letter [...]” (*Księga listów*, wyd. 1, p. 8). The fact that in the next editions of *Księga listów* (2002 and 2008) the introduction, given a new shape, seems to diminish the previously suggested scope of the first fruits of *The Cinnamon Shops*, contained in the letters to Vogel, seems to be relevant to this matter. The phrases “over the

“Somewhere”, “more or less”, “successively”, and “extensive” – these are the words used to describe reality, they contain an element of gradation, the use of which requires a prior autopsy, which in this case is a gesture of empathy, mediation in the sphere of the author’s imagination. This is also the case with the dialogue between Deborah and Bruno, opposing the non-existence of the letters, and faked by Ficowski, in which the role of letters was played by fragments of Schulz’s *The Cinnamon Shops* and Vogel’s *Akacje kwitną*:

“Rubbish pours over the earth”, writes Vogel. – “Calico... stiff and dry, without pulp...”. Schulz replies: “The demiurge fell in love with dry, perfect and complex materials – we give preference to trash” [...]. Vogel is inclined to agree: “But the soul of raw materials is very delicate and fantastic. It is only necessary to release the hidden soul of matter”. And Schulz agrees, too: “There are no dead, hard, limited objects. [...] Lifelessness is only a facade concealing forms of life unknown to us” (RGH 65).

Ficowski does not hide this “reconstruction”, he writes about these quotes “as if we are still participating in the long-ago epistolary debate between Debora and Bruno” (RGH 65). He seems to be deeply engaged in making that lost correspondence and its creators more real, putting masks of reality on these phantoms, so that their no longer existing faces and bodies regain contours. Reconstruction, let us repeat, is essentially a way of saving and rebuilding the life fabric of Schulz himself, the space of his art, which, as a spiritual biography, is situated in dialogues, relationships, and the broader trend of artistic life.

The topic of borrowings is also interesting in this respect. Ficowski closely observes this issue in the correspondence between Schulz and his “congenial partners”, and even gives it a slightly sensational flavour. We learn that one of Schulz’s stories contains a fragment which – “according to the testimony of people acquainted with both Riff and Schulz” (RGH 60) – is a literal quote from Riff’s letter³¹. Ficowski also recalls one of the few surviving late letters of Debora Vogel to Schulz, in which she mentions old opinions of her friends, suggesting excessive similarity between the writings of both authors (RGH 67). Deciding how strong these affinities were³² was probably of less importance to Ficowski than to observe their value as tangible evidence. Their existence means that although there are

course of a year”, “in lengthy postscripts” disappear; we no longer read about the “dazzling stories” contained in the letters, but about the “beginnings of dazzling stories” (*Księga listów*, wyd. 3, p. 13).

31 In the introduction to the second edition of Schulz’s *Księga listów* (Gdańsk 2002), a new clue appears in this regard. It is Halina Drohocka’s account, describing Schulz’s “superstitious” reaction to her question about Riff a few years after his death. Ficowski comments: “Maybe he felt the burden of a neglected debt that was too late to repay?” – *ibidem*, p. 12.

32 Moreover, he comments on Vogel’s writing: “Her literary output – inferior to that of Schulz – is not of primary importance. Above all, Debora Vogel was the best, the most intellectually stimulating and creative muse for Bruno Schulz” (RGH 68).

no more letters, there must have been a flow of artistic ideas in them. Therefore, the very existence of these suppositions weighs immeasurably more on the scale of reality than the question of their validity. Thus, paradoxically, consideration of artistic imitation, which by definition means weakening the writer's identity, leads here – on the contrary – to the strengthening of reality and “saving” the writer's artistic existence.

Could Ficowski, in the biographical part of his book about Schulz, pose as a kind of a medium and an illusionist, deriving the content of the lost letters from the circumstantial evidence, from traces animating the past and bringing it to life? In fact, we have been close to the world of Schulz's fiction for quite a while – for example, his story “Spring” from *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, in which the long-deceased figures of European history, courts and dynasties from before the great revolution and world war, rise from the dead and wake up to return to life, put into lethargic motion by Józef and brought into the world from the myth-creating Rudolf's “stamp book”. The expressive ontology of time, the categories of being and non-being, are unnoticeably incorporated into the biographical chapters of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, leading us to the question of the presence of sensitivity and demiurgic nature of the poet “managing” the non-existence.

4

It can be said that Ficowski is brought into the realm of poetry just by asking the question: what did everything that got lost look like? What was Schulz's lost correspondence like? One might say, that while tracing the evolution of Ficowski's introductions to the editions of Schulz's letters, started in the 1964 volume *Proza* and continued in *Księga listów* (1975; 2nd edition, revised and supplemented: 2002; 3rd edition: 2008), we can notice how the individualistic poetic figure of another space develops together with the concept of introduction as considerations of the non-existent letters. We can observe these tendencies in Ficowski's commentaries on Schulz's lost correspondence with Włodzimierz Riff, Debora Vogel, Józefina Szelińska and Zofia Nałkowska. Unprecedented in the editions of writers epistolography, this peculiar practice consists in devoting a major part of editorial commentary to stories about unpreserved letters and their senders. One has to be a poet to use such a bold and unconventional technique. Ficowski even provides guidelines to the reader on how to read, signalling the purposefulness of a construction of this kind: “We are paradoxically correct about devoting the introduction to *Księga listów* to the letters that do not exist. The remaining texts included in *Księga* are supplemented and explained with footnotes or commentary”³³.

³³ J. Ficowski, “Wprowadzenie do *Księgi listów*”, op. cit., p. 13.

Four chapters of *Regions of the Great Heresy* devoted to Schulz's work – “The Book, or Childhood Regained”, “Schulzian time”, “Phantoms and Reality” and “Magic and Definition” – are a poetic reading of Schulz. Or, to be more precise, two kinds of poetic reading. The narrative of these chapters has its own dense linguistic structure that is far from the biographical chapters, which, using other people's accounts, were primarily a construction of a certain continuum of events, a reconstruction of Schulz's life. The narrative is directed inwards, towards specifying, sometimes repeatedly, the rules of Schulz's writing and imagination, his ways of building worlds. In this respect, the interpretative chapters should be read against the background of the language of Schulz's fiction, because just as the entire structure of the book with its specific alternation of chapters, it is a paraphrase of the dual nature – magical and mundane – of Schulz's stories. Therefore, each of these chapters in a way paraphrases the formal characteristics of Schulz's narrative and becomes a detector of some of its stylistic features. The second context, the background that must be recalled, is Jerzy Ficowski's poetry itself. The way in which the author of *Regions* defines Schulz's prose can, in fact, also be read as his self-commentary on his own poetry. In his poems, Ficowski offers a peculiar translation of Schulz's narrative style, transferring many of its elements into the realities of contemporary poetry.

When it comes to the first matter, we find specific Schulz-like meandering syntactic structures in *Regions of the Great Heresy*. Ficowski's reflections on the language and world of Schulz's stories are governed by recurrences, repetitions and clarifications. His interpretive formulas, full of anthropomorphisms and processing, develop almost biologically. At the same time, there is the phenomenon of, as Ficowski calls it, “poetic definition” (RGH 125). The word wants to “cling” as much as possible to the described creative process, to the essence of phenomena, to multiply their characteristics, and simultaneously to be definitive and, in a way, to become the world itself. This feature of Ficowski's style of analysis is well illustrated by the description of the relationship between Schulz and Kafka, which, incidentally, is quoted by Julian Przyboś in his review of *Regions* as an example of Ficowski's poetic competence³⁴: “Schulz was a builder of a reality-asylum, that was

34 Przyboś writes: “I quoted his sentences here with satisfaction, I liked their conciseness and accuracy. They were formulated by a poet [...]” (J. Przyboś, *Ficowski o Schulzu*, “Życie Warszawy” 1967, no. 280; quote from the reprint in the collection: *Wcielenia Jerzego Ficowskiego według recenzji, szkiców i rozmów z lat 1956–2007*, selection, edition and introduction by P. Sommer, Sejny: Pogranicze 2010, p. 461). Before Przyboś's review was published, Józefina Szelińska, Schulz's former fiancée, wrote a letter to Ficowski about the poetic intuition contained in the book. It is worth quoting this fragment in full length since it corresponds to our earlier considerations about the novelistic element in *Regions*: “In your [...] book, you recreated Bruno's full extremely complicated personality, while having only fragmentary shreds of material obtained from many people, which you used in a masterly way, without a trace of seams, basting, without the burden of footnotes, without visible philologist's equipment, but which remains hidden, marked with quotations from letters and re-

a marvellous ‘intensification of the taste of the world’; Kafka was an inhabitant and propagator of the world of terror, an ascetic hermit awaiting a miracle of justice that never came. Schulz was a metaphysician, garbed in all the wealth of colour; Kafka was a mystic in a hair shirt of worldly denials. Schulz was a creator and ruler of the compensatory Myth; Kafka – the Sisyphean seeker of the Absolute. Schulz, the lavish creator of mundane Olympias, produced a metaphysics of an animate reality, while Kafka became the bookkeeper of the all-enveloping Abyss” (RGH 101).

And yet another example: “Gradual degeneration is always the mythological road to change, as well as the source of beauty, the mythic principle of Schulzian aesthetics. Decline is at the same time the birth of a new quality, decay accounts for new vegetation, infection stimulates generative processes” (RGH 119).

We can notice, in this intense description and naming effort, a deep interiorization of Schulz’s work and essentially poetic maximalism of embracing the fullness of words and, through them, reaching the bottom of meanings. The language of Schulz’s stories, for example in *The Cinnamon Shops*, is governed by words. Ficowski himself, while writing about language and words, also characterizes certain features of the narrative of *Regions of the Great Heresy*: “Language is Schulz’s magic wand, we cannot imagine his world outside of verbal material. It is indissolubly and organically connected to his vision, which cannot be translated into the medium of any other art. As Schulz wrote: ‘Poetry – that is a short clasp of sense between words, a sudden regeneration of primitive myths’. [...] The Schulzian word is not intensified, laconic, and clearly measured as in contemporary poetry, rather it is a component in a definition, in elaborate verbal images, a living thing leading a gregarious mode of life. Carefully chosen for the greatest accuracy and precision, words combine into apparent redundancies, each contributing to the vividness of description, to an analysis of the appearance of some new elements or point of view. Only the entire series of quasi-definitions yields the full picture, enriched with the bounty of hypotheses and propositions, but without tautological superfluity or monotony” (RGH 122–123).

This quote perfectly describes what one might feel while reading *Regions* – the sense of Ficowski “infecting us” with his critical diction on Schulz’s prose. We can also follow this process in the sphere of organizing biographies or bodies of work by using specific concepts-spells that possess Schulz’s provenance and fabulous

ports collected about Schulz, so that every detail in his biography and the “artist’s portrait” is documented, authentic, and legitimate because it is always supported by sources – these letters and information. This is not *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, it is the very truth, seen through the eyes of an artist and a poet, a mental organization extremely close to Bruno. Only a poet can write like that about another poet” (letter from J. Szelińska to J. Ficowski of September 5, 1967; in the collection of the Manuscript Department of the Library of the University of Warsaw, file 28).

power to establish new worlds, which are all small founding acts in themselves: “the second epistolographic era”³⁵, “partners in exploratory undertakings” (RGH 58) or the titular “regions of the great heresy” (taken from Schulz’s story *Tailor’s Dummies*, they are actually a prototype of this type of magic formulism that outlines the world).

Moreover, in this quote Ficowski calls Schulz a poet³⁶ more than once. He places the pre-war writer among the most outstanding Polish poets. In the light of Schulz’s essays, it is fully justified. Especially in “Mityzacja rzeczywistości”, Schulz shows poetry as a superior, a somehow supra-generic category, which is the touchstone of all authentic art: “Poetry discovers these lost meanings, restores words to their place, connects them according to their old meanings. [...] That is why all poetry is, in a sense, mythologizing, it strives to recreate myths about the world. [...] The human spirit is tireless in glossing life with the help of myths, in “making sense” of reality³⁷.

However, we are still interested in Ficowski’s definition of ‘Schulz as a poet’ in the aspect of another “saving” the author of *The Cinnamon Shops*. This time I would like to point out the way Schulz’s mythology turns out to be an excellent guide to some features of the poetry of Ficowski himself. I do not intend to suggest that Ficowski, writing *Regions of the Great Heresy* in the 1950s and 1960s, mediated Schulz’s readings in his poetic paths, that he tuned his interpretations of Schulz’s mythology to what personally inspired him most in Schulz; nevertheless, there is no doubt that his self-referential comments on Schulz is very striking. There was probably a parallelism in Ficowski’s poetic reading and his critical reading of Schulz. Ficowski speaks about Schulz inspirations in his poetry: “I am convinced that the most important thing here is not content, fictionalization, metaphors, or Schulz’s wonderful multitude of words that have no right to exist in my poem. A poem is what remains after eliminating everything unnecessary. Well, this essence, the ‘golden core of the afternoons’, as Schulz describes the fruits brought by Adela – is somewhere in my poetry. So [...] I claim that I preserve the essence of Schulz’s Myth, the Myth of Childhood in my poetry”³⁸.

In four interpretative chapters of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, Jerzy Ficowski establishes the dominant features of Bruno Schulz’s work and points out those features of the poetics of *The Cinnamon Shops* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass* that he finds crucial. “The Book, or, Childhood Regained” highlights

35 J. Ficowski, “Słowo wstępne”, [in:] B. Schulz, *Księga listów*, op. cit., p. 9.

36 See more mentions of Schulz as a “poet-mythologist” (RGH 98) and his prose as “metaphysics of an animate reality” (RGH 99) in the chapter “Phantoms and Reality”.

37 B. Schulz, “Mityzacja rzeczywistości”, [in:] idem, *Opowiadania, wybór esejów i listów*, ed. J. Jarzębski, Wrocław: Ossolineum 1998, p. 384–385

38 “W życzliwości dla cudu. Z Jerzym Ficowskim rozmawia Magdalena Lebecka [1995]” [in:] *Wcielenia Jerzego Ficowskiego*, op. cit., p. 673.

two features of Schulz's mythology – the time of childhood being the condition for the conception of the myth, the story, and the growth of a fantastic world, and simultaneously, commonness, mundanity and even campness – spheres with no sense of uniqueness “that do not suspect their mythic potential” (RGH 75) – that constitute the foundation of the conception of the myth. All established mythology is only a pathetic substitute for what grows in the mythological imagination of a child, stimulated by a wonderful ‘knick-knack’ – the Book-Authentic.

Ficowski's poem, in which a child's imagination turns a portrait of a bourgeois interior into an exotic hunting land, seems to be a perfect model of poetic realization of an image taken from the “age of genius” of childhood:

Since the end of the century
stealthily,
dressing up with fringes,
vital skins crawl,
shedding hair
of ottomanosaurs,
trophies from the living room thickets.
[...]
This is the epic of it all.
Plush is running out
with fringes.
End.³⁹

The poem echoes what Schulz wrote in 1932 in a letter to Stefan Szuman about one of his poems: “This intertwining of a generic pantheistic mythology with the individual one of children's tapestry and furniture seems, to me, legal, very apt and proper, because these two mythologies strangely interpret and complement each other”⁴⁰.

It seems, however, that the most important thing in Ficowski's poetry – if we talk about the presence of childhood as Schulz's “age of genius” – will not be the existence of a child character, someone like Joseph from *The Cinnamon Shops*. In fact, “childhood”, or rather the mythological potential of childhood, is inscribed in all of Ficowski's poetry and I would characterize it, on the one hand,

³⁹ J. Ficowski, *Gorączka na rzeczy*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 2002.

⁴⁰ Letter from B. Schulz to S. Szuman of July 24, 1932, quote. after: J. Ficowski, “Przyczynki do autoportretu mitologa”, [in:] idem, *Regiony wielkiej herezji i okolice*, p. 208. In an essay of the same title “Przyczynki do autoportretu mitologa”, which belongs to the series *Okolice sklepów cyrkonowych*, Ficowski, on the example of Schulz's letters to Szuman, shows the essentially self-commentary nature of most of Schulz's critics about the works of other authors.

as extraordinary sensuality, and on the other – as something associative, combinatorial in the way of perceiving the world at all levels, i.e. images and language. The ability to take a “first look”, free from established ontological and linguistic categories, undoubtedly links Ficowski to Schulz, although it probably has its origins in the pre-Schulz era, resulting from Ficowski’s ability to transfer childhood sensitivity beyond the Rubicon of maturity. The author of *Regions* writes about Schulz: “The poet-mythologist both recognizes reality’s laws and opposes them, suggesting new relationships with new consequences” (RGH 98–99).

This principle gives rise to, for example, Schulz’s story-myth in “The Age of Genius” about the causes of the deer’s timidity: the reason for it is their horns, twisted – says Schulz – “into a fantastic arabesque, invisible to their eyes, yet frightening” (quoted after: RGH 98). Several of Ficowski’s poems also originate from this principle, including the series “Sześć etiud”: “Since the carps have gone deaf / as a result of / being constantly in the water / they know / people are mute” [“Odkąd karpie ogłuchły / wskutek / ciągłego przebywania w wodzie / wiedzą / człowiek jest niemy”] (“Odkąd karpie”, GR 95). The first examples of such “heretical” poetic plots can be found in the debut “Ołowiani żołnierze” (in the series *Bajki*).

Schulz’s myth derives, as Ficowski says, from the sphere of commonness and trash. This area of reality is also an extremely important thread in his poetry. “Anti-hierarchy and obscurity”, writes Paulina Czwordon, “are among the most fundamental properties of Jerzy Ficowski’s poetry”⁴¹. If we compared Ficowski’s peripheral areas, carefully sorted out by Czwordon, with those he uses in *Regions* to characterize Schulz’s prose, we might not be able to find some parts of these areas in Schulz’s work. We know Schulz, the poet of the province, yet deprived of the ethnography and the Gypsies; Schulz with cripples but without humanized “knock-kneed” saints and archangels; with the private family stories but with no urban folklore. Schulz’s playing with the culture of authority and officialdom is more fundamental, closer to the core of hierarchical and patriarchal culture, the culture of the Book, and his forays into unofficiality somewhat a suspension of its jurisdiction, or – as Jan Błoński writes – a comment that “is made forward, complementing the old message, improving it or developing it!”⁴².

A more general thing must be said, maybe quite hidden from us for all these years since the creation of *Regions*: Schulz, as “antihierarchical and hole-and-corner” as he was, with all his originality and artistic wonders, must have been, for Ficowski, the embodiment of complete and independent art and posed as (similarly – yet perhaps to the lesser extent – to Leśmian and Wojtkiewicz) a form

41 P. Czwordon, *Empatia i obserwacja. O poezji Jerzego Ficowskiego*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie 2010, p. 22.

42 J. Błoński, “Świat jako księga i komentarz”, [in:] *Czytanie Schulza*, op. cit., p. 82–83.

of *constans*, a point of reference, and of an area of renewal of his own creativity in this difficult post-war time of ideological discipline of art and the enforcement of doctrinal restrictions. This role of Schulz, significant especially after 1965, can be found in *Regions of the Great Heresy*, precisely in connection with the exposure of these elements of “illegitimacy”, “heresy”, and “degression”. The author, writes the following about the terms “illegal events”, “unfair manipulation”, and “great heresy”: “They are ironic, a purposeful manipulation of language by a writer who regularly condemned hackneyed dogmas and conducted revelatory attacks upon accepted truths” (RGH 84). A little later he also quotes a “revolting” fragment from “Spring”: “[...] the prison seemed to be irrevocably shut, when the opening was bricked up, when everything had conspired to keep silent about You, Oh God, when Franz Josef had barred and sealed even the last chink so that one should not even have been able to see You, then You arose in a roaring of seas and continents and gave him the lie. You, God, took upon Yourself, the odium of heresy and exploded upon the world with this enormous, magnificent, colourful blasphemy. Oh, magnificent Heresiarch!” (RGH 84).

These fragments, as well as Ficowski’s comment on the quote from “Spring”⁴³ must have resonated with additional, antidogmatic meanings in the 1960s. The poet, it seems, found in Schulz an ally on broader issues: creative freedom and freedom of expression, which, after the experiences of socialist realism remained a point of issue. Ficowski, who participated in the independent artistic movement, as, among others, the author of satirical songs, was well versed in the rules of the parabolic narrative, and he knew with whom the recipient of this quote in the 1960s could identify the figure of Emperor Franz Joseph from Schulz’s story.

It is necessary to mention two other important components of Schulz’s mythology – apart from the “the age of genius” of childhood as a source of myths, and campness and ordinariness as a myth-bearing area – to which Ficowski devotes special attention in *Regions of the Great Heresy*, and which are echoed quite clearly in his poetic practice. What I mean here is an in-depth analysis of the scientific or organic subsoil of mythical metamorphoses (chapter “Magic and Definition”) and an extensive lesson on the transformations of Schulz’s time (chapter “Schulzian Time”) as components of Schulz’s fantasy. When it comes to apparent continuities – Ficowski’s elevation of the most valuable components of Schulz’s art beyond time, making it a component of the post-war poetic sensitivity,

43 “The beauty and diversity of the world emanating from the album of postage stamps contrasts with the bureaucratized version of the world of the imperial-royal monarchy, where everything is known in advance and there is no room for surprises”. The God to whom this apostrophe is addressed must have had additional, anti-dogmatic meanings in the 1960s. He is a “heresiarch” – that is, a rebel against the prevailing religion of boredom; he “exploded upon the world with this enormous, magnificent, colourful blasphemy” – he dares to proclaim the truth of poetry, unpopular among the followers of the “gospel of prose” (RGH 84).

giving it new applications, most literally: giving them a second life – these two appear the most crucial. It is also because Ficowski transfers or translates these metamorphoses from Schulz's prose into poetry using the poetic means such as anthropomorphism, homonymy, and personification.

The chapter "Magic and Definition" analyses this feature of Schulz's fantasy, which places all transcendences of states of reality, and transitions to other "dimensions", initiating mythical stories, in the order of organic and chemical processes. There is always some, vegetative, empirically verifiable subsoil to these transformations. Ficowski collects Schulz's stories about "fermentation", "degeneration", "and "decomposition", which can, for example, cause the phenomenon of "second autumn", "the result of our climate having been poisoned by the miasmas exuded by degenerate specimens of baroque art crowded in our museums"⁴⁴ or conduce to spreading of "a species of beings only half-organic" and "pseudofauna and pseudoflora", which occupy "old apartments [...] abounding in the humus of memories, of nostalgia, and of sterile boredom"⁴⁵. They can also, "on the same psychochemical principle" (RGH 119), transform the inhabitants of Schulz's world into insects (the father transformed once into a fly, then into a cockroach) or into a pile of decayed matter (Aunt Perasia transformed into a flake of ash).

Ficowski claims that "in Schulz's fiction every change is a consequence of some inner tension that has reached its culmination. At this point, a new quality emerges, and new dynamics are revealed. Their hidden embryonic state is externalized, which Schulz presents as an exposition of the origins of the new phenomenon" (RGH 117).

The source of these transformations, their somewhat elementary form, are the anthropomorphisations, animisations and reifications, abundant in Schulz's prose⁴⁶. They constitute a constant disruption of the boundary between living and inanimate matter, the crystallization of abstract concepts into material phenomena, transfers of psychic energies that acquire motor properties, and changes in states of matter.

Here, we are very close to the poetry of the author of *Regions of the Great Heresy*. The effortlessness with which objects, concepts and people are transformed

⁴⁴ B. Schulz, "A Second Autumn", [in:] idem, *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, p. 219.

⁴⁵ B. Schulz, "Treatise on Tailor's Dummies. Conclusion", [in:] idem, *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, op. cit., p. 37.

⁴⁶ Here are two examples, taken from the story "August": "An enormous sun flower, lifted on a powerful stem and suffering from hypertrophy, clad in the yellow mourning of the last sorrowful days of its life, bent under the weight of its monstrous girth." (B. Schulz, "August", *The Street of Crocodiles and Other Stories*, op. cit., p. 5); "My aunt was complaining. It was the principal burden of her conversation, the voice of that white and fertile flesh, floating as it were outside the boundaries of her person, held only loosely in the fetters of individual form, and despite those fetters, ready to multiply, to scatter, branch out, and divide into a family" (ibidem, p. 9).

in Ficowski's poems originates from the spirit of Schulz's prose. At the same time, these transformations penetrate another issue, become a kind of poetic instrument that allows Ficowski to name the world in a unique way, practice, for example, poetic historic-philosophical reflection, and enter the most difficult collective experiences. These are poems in which the suppression of emotions and pathos becomes a condition of credibility of poetic dignity – poems about the Holocaust, the times of Poland's national enslavement, as well as about singular forms of oppression: about old age and evanescence.

Thus, in the poem "5 VIII 1942" (from the series "Odczytanie popiołów"), the metamorphoses of Korczak and the children are as a somewhat attempt to softly enter into the reality of their last moments. The piece "rewinds" the Old Doctor's life to the time before his birth, and multiplies the children's time, giving them a whole, yet "unlived" life:

the Old Doctor saw suddenly
that children became
old like him
getting older
so they had to catch up with the grey of the ashes
so when he was hit
by askar or an SS-man
they saw that Doctor
became a child like them
getting smaller and smaller
until he was not born [...] (GR 181)

It is also difficult not to think about Schulz's metamorphoses and inversions of space when reading the poem "Spis abonentów sieci telefonów miasta stołecznego Warszawy na rok 1938/39", dedicated to Rafael Scharf, restoring the memory of those "who were once caught / in the act / of life", describing a space of non-existence:

After a sudden move of exact addresses
to general onomastics
numbers returned to the abstraction of figures
and flesh became a word
in the Subscribers Armory
These are the authenticated elect
who are Nobody on no streets [...] (GR 253)

Fairy-tale metamorphoses, in the plots of the Holocaust, restore, despite death, the shadows of the exterminated, become, in other poetic narratives, a subtle

instrument of personification of time and a distanced interpretation of history. Through these metamorphoses, inscribed in the rules of substantial changes, Ficowski establishes a type of reflection on the history of Poland, which is paradoxically far from legend-making and belongs to the purest trend of post-war poetry communicating with collective historical experience. These metamorphoses sometimes have the character personifications inserted into the poetic narrative with unusual super-semantics: “the flints turned cold in November/ January cut them down with frost” (GR 167) – a description of three noblemen travelling through the sad landscape of the partition era in “Ballada o trzech mociumpañskich”; “The congress hall was still smouldering / the sofa overstayed” (GR 92) – in a nostalgic story about the poet’s grandparents (“Zaręby Kościelne”); “in the corner for the forebears / a samovar wheedled [...] / from which long ago hatched / double-headed tri-partitioned eagle” – in the poem “Apokryf” (GR 340). Or they take the form of longer stories, for example, a humorous study on national consciousness, about the self-translation of the work *Les mémoires par l'abbé Gaspard* into Polish in a larch wardrobe (“Trzy tańce polskie: I. Polonez czyli epos modrzewiowy”; GR 304–305)

Schulz’s reversible time held back, and directed into side branches, penetrating Ficowski’s poems in many ways and, similarly to substantial transformations, allowing the poet to find a language that is particularly apt for recording experiences that remain outside the circle of Schulz’s themes. Ficowski describes the fantastic time in Schulz’s stories as a response to the dictates of real-time, as a “mythic road to freedom” (RGH 89). Ficowski writes that “time obeys the precise rules of psychology, while in questioning ordinarily accepted principles, it is a mythic refuge in the face of the unavoidable passage of time” (RGH 82). He adds that it is “digging into the root of things, pursuing an actualized metaphor inevitably leads into a multileveled time that adapts to the needs of the creative imagination, instead of a dictator, time becomes a submissive servant” (RGH 88). The time in “Spring” arises from the deepest psychological needs, “the time of discovery and creation” (RGH 87) emerges from Rudolf’s fabulous “stamp book”, and the time of “Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass” is “perversely enlisted to counteract death” (RGH 85).

Ficowski’s poetic reality is similar to Schulz’s “reading” of time, but not – establishing it with complete voluntarism. It is not a “heretical”, “illegal” time, a time of stories, as in Schulz’s work, but rather a specific poetic over-perception of time, seeing it as changeable, distorted, held back, rushed by human emotions. The time that is arrested or appropriated while talking about social space, or problematic time, with inhuman intervals and courses – in outer space or in the microworld of insects – while discussing the scale of life and transience. The clock from the poem “Apokryf” seems to be a kind of periphrasis of the dysfunctions of social time in Ficowski’s poetry:

the clock wobbled and wobbled
 over cool panikhida
 [...]
 and gifted us after the timequakes
 shards of hours, scraps of years
 brass scales of customs wars
 and this is our 'day before tomorrow'
 which doesn't want to come
 today (GR 340)

Such "shards" and "scraps" of time can be found in poems about the last war and its aftereffects, for example in "Kwatera AK", where the time taken from the fallen ones burdens their descendants and, thanks to poetic homonymy, takes on a double meaning:

they gave the old age
 for the use of the living
 their stooped daughters come to them, it is a real piece of time
 (GR 220; emphasis mine – JK)

Animated, personified, de-linear time also appears in "Przepowiednie" and "Pojutrznie". The emotive diction of these poems, written during martial law in 1981–1982, sweeps reality into a whirlwind of transformation, takes it under poetic control, and has an increased temporality – repeated expeditions into the 19th century, animations of time. Here it is mouldable in a Schulzian way, it lengthens, with the power of an inverted "Dybicz's binoculars", making the horizon of freedom recede ("the fuse lengthens / until the day that explodes", "pales / the day after dawn / the severed head / of the wasted day"), brings it closer with the power of collective longings ("we have been in agreement for centuries / with freedom / sometimes we confuse it with spring / then again with autumn"), moves back ("this is how we follow this time / to that time / clocks are aiming at us / from the guard towers"), becomes a tool of power ("squadrons of hours are coming / until one moment, dropped from above / hits your illegal sleep"), and is a source of pain ("because we are so hurt by time / that each hour / will bring more pain")⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ All quotations in this paragraph from the non-censored edition: Marcin Komiega [J. Ficowski], *Przepowiednie. Pojutrznie*, wyd. 2, Warszawa: Głos 1985.

In the very intimate perspective of passing and old age in Ficowski's late poems (the volumes *Zawczas z poniewczasem*, *Pantareja*), temporality intensifies – again having much in common with Schulz's fairy-tale peripheries of time – evoking circum-human times: insect, animal, and also cosmic, revealing the relativity of human time, and even the problematic nature of death. Unclear remains the moment of pseudoscorpion's departure from life (“resident of records and book collections / does not defile the folios / feeds / on easily digestible abstractions”, *Glosa*, ZzP 42)⁴⁸, the multi-generational life of blacksmiths create one uninterrupted life (“I met them, blacksmiths, / on the third day of the creation of the world / with my grandparents who are no longer there / and they are with them / to this day”, *Kowale kowalątka*, ZzP 57), the time of bats, created “after the sunset of genesis”, and which can last for years in a state of lethargy (*Konfraternia Chiropterańska*, ZzP 36), or the “second lives” of pupating butterflies, that question the exclusivity of one measure of time⁴⁹. We also know these lethargic, incomplete existences as the forms of survival of organisms in the “illegal” intervals of Schulz's time in the stories “Spring” and “Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass”.

Thus, reading the interpretative chapters of *Regions of the Great Heresy*, we find numerous clues leading to Jerzy Ficowski's poetry. “Saving” Schulz, which we define as the main principle of this book, was achieved, to a certain extent, with mutual benefit. It was related both to giving a “new life” to Schulz's magical imagination in the area of Polish contemporary poetry and to enriching Ficowski's poetry itself, which was born and developed its most original elements in Schulz's atmosphere, with the “memory” of Schulz. It was a deeply processed memory, embedded in the living intelligence of wonder-tracking Ficowski, introducing the components of the imagination of the loner from Drohobycz into new contexts and scenes of modernity, and into the private cosmogony of the contemporary poet. This is an extraordinary case of poetic sensitivities and potencies prevailing over time. But also, in the introduction to *Regions of the Great Heresy*, Ficowski wrote: “In the following story, *The Age of Genius*, the narrator Joseph accidentally discovers that scrap of paper from childhood – the last pages of an old illustrated weekly. He confides to his friend, the town thief, Shloma: “I have to confess to you... I found the Authentic... Well, I, too, have found the Authentic – in 1942. It was Schulz's first collection of stories, published in 1934, *Cinnamon Shops*. A book different from all others [...] one for which no rival has ever emerged” (RGH 27).

48 ZzP – J. Ficowski, *Zawczas z poniewczasem*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 2004.

49 Paulina Czwordon aptly writes that in *Pantarea*, Ficowski “strengthens his position among small animals even more closely ‘from the bottom’ of the hierarchy, but also among ‘upper’ friends: insects and birds, rusting junipers and extremely common and scattered herbs” (P. Czwordon, “Podróż w czas (O *Pantarei* Jerzego Ficowskiego)”, [in:] *Wcielenia Jerzego Ficowskiego*, op. cit., p. 332).

This important “founding” confession of Ficowski’s essays on Schulz turned out to be not only the opening of *Regions of Great Heresy* but also an introduction to one of the most important phenomena of post-war Polish poetry⁵⁰.

Translated from Polish by Language Extreme

50 The author of this article would like to thank Mrs Elżbieta Ficowska for kindly providing materials from Jerzy Ficowski’s archive and agreeing to publish their fragments. He would also like to thank the Curator, Ewa Piskurewicz, for her valuable help during repeated inquiries at the Manuscripts Department of the Library of the University of Warsaw.