

Katarzyna Lukas: Issues of memory in the works of Bruno Schulz from the viewpoint of German Memory Studies

Writer as a precursor of scientific reflection

In his self-commentaries, Thomas Mann, whom Bruno Schulz held in high esteem, half-jokingly claimed a “copyright” to certain sociological concepts that he, as a novelist, conveyed in his works before they were phrased in the language of social science. He meant that in *Buddenbrooks* he captured the issues of the German bourgeoisie as a cultural formation, which was simultaneously described by the sociologists Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and Werner Sombart¹. Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist and founding father of German collective memory research, deciphered other sociological constructs in Mann’s prose², too. In the tetralogy *Joseph and His Brothers*, he finds elements of cultural memory theory, one of the most important paradigms in the modern humanities. In his Biblical stories, Assmann argues, Mann described the mechanisms of collective memory creation and transmission as aptly and perceptively as his (almost) contemporaries: the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) and the German art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929), the scholars to whom today’s German Memory Studies owe key inspirations.

Since Jan Assmann fruitfully reconstructs the “theory of memory” from Mann’s works, taking as its keystone the notion of myth (which, as we know,

1 In his collection of essays *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, in the chapter *Bürgerly Nature* (Bürgerlichkeit), Thomas Mann refers to the hypothesis that the modern capitalist entrepreneur, who embodies the spirit of the said ideology, was shaped by Protestant ethics. Mann claims that he came to find this “discovery” of sociologists earlier on his own, through intuition and observation. While conceding the point to Werner Sombart, who in 1913 wrote about the capitalist entrepreneur as “a synthesis of hero, merchant, and burgher,” Mann notes that he expressed the same thought in *Buddenbrooks* twelve years before; see T. Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden. Frankfurter Ausgabe, Bd. 13.1), p. 159; and in English: idem, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, translated by W. D. Morris, New York 1987, p. 103–104.

2 See J. Assmann, *A Life in Quotation: Thomas Mann and the Phenomenology of Cultural Memory*, in: idem, *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies*, trans. R. Livingstone, Stanford University Press 2006, p. 155–177.

is very close to Schulz's understanding of it)³, it is worth considering whether a coherent concept of cultural memory, if only in outline, appears in the prose of *Cinnamon Shops*' author. In my opinion, the concept can be found there. It is ahead of what today's cultural studies scholars say about collective memory because it exposes, as I will try to demonstrate, the tangents and interactions between individual and supra-individual memory. Of course, the presence of memory issues in Schulz's works is no new discovery. It has already been pointed out that many of his elaborate descriptions are metaphors for the human psyche, in which the subconscious and memory play an important role. For example, Jerzy Jarzębski reads the image of a disorderly nocturnal journey through the floors of the house in *A July Night* as a poetic transformation of the Freudian model of the psyche, where memories are repressed and censored⁴. Schulz's apocrypha, palimpsests, attics, storehouses, and granaries are nothing more than classic figures of *memoria*, with its tradition dating back to antiquity⁵. Reconstructing the whole of Schulz's putative "theory of memory" would go beyond the scope of this article. Thus, I will focus on selected aspects of it: first of all, on the analogies and differences between Schulz's and Mann's depictions of *memoria*. In addition, I would like to point out that the themes set in motion by the author of *Cinnamon Shops* in his vision of *memoria*, namely Jungian theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious, are sources that are marginalized and even rejected in the current memory discourse – wrongly so, in my opinion. Moreover, the mechanisms of memory which Schulz conveys through literary means and describes in autopoetic texts can be read through the prism of Warburg's concept in a much more convincing way than Mann's "Biblical" novel. However, one must immediately stipulate that these are *ex post* interpretations, since there is no evidence that Schulz read Jung⁶, let alone Warburg, whose works were unknown in interwar Poland⁷.

3 I wrote about this in the article: *Jungowska wizja archetypów i artyści w prozie Brunona Schulza i jej przekładzie na język niemiecki* [The Jungian Vision of Archetypes and The Artist in Bruno Schulz's Prose and Its German Translation], in: *Translatio i literatura*, edited by A. Kukułka-Wojtasik, Warsaw 2011, p. 215–223; and in *Fremdheit - Gedächtnis - Translation: Interpretationskategorien einer kulturorientierten Literaturwissenschaft*, Berlin 2018, p. 215–219.

4 See J. Jarzębski, *Schulzowskie miejsca i znaki* [The Schulzian Places and Signs], Gdańsk 2016, p. 19–20.

5 On metaphors of memory cf. A. Assmann, *Metaphors, Models, and Media of Memory*, in: eadem, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge 2011, p. 137–169.

6 See J. Jarzębski, op. cit. p. 11.

7 The first Polish translation of Warburg's selected works was published in 2010; see A. Warburg, *Narodziny Wenus i inne szkice renesansowe* [The Birth of Venus and Other Renaissance Sketches], translated and prefaced by R. Kasperowicz, Gdańsk 2010.

Mann's "theory of memory" and its interpretation today: Warburg or Jung?

Jan Assmann derives Mann's "theory of memory" from the author's understanding of myth. For Mann, myth is a universal narrative scheme, realized through different varieties as "stories" (transmitted orally or written down). The heroes of myth are model characters playing predetermined roles. A prehistoric man, with a yet unformed sense of individuality, was ready to identify with the group and accept the mythical role imposed on him. In Mann's works, the mythical is always connected with the collective: the tetralogy about Joseph discusses, as Mann writes in his self-commentary, "the birth of the self from the mythical collective."⁸ It is the social dimension that allows Assmann to interpret Mann's myth as a form of "organization of cultural memory."⁹ The author of *Joseph and His Brothers* expresses his belief that the identity and memory of the individual are shaped, on the one hand, by the unconscious "mythical" forces of the collective and, on the other, through participation in social communication: in religious rituals, rites, and festivals. Formalized, oral intergenerational transmission plays an important role in this process: the stories of the elders (Schönes Gespräch – "fine discourse"¹⁰), which young Joseph listens to, give meaning to contemporary events. Assmann identifies aspects of both Halbwachs' and Warburg's concepts in this representation of the individual and collective (communicative) memory's weave. Halbwachs would be alluded to by Mann's demonstration of the memory transmission process within its "social frameworks"¹¹, which enable the individual to assimilate the collective idea of the past and locate his own biography within it. On the other hand, Assmann sees a connection with Warburg's thought in the fact that the identity, behaviour, and actions of Mann's protagonist are influenced by the unconscious "mnemonic energy" emanating from the collective past. In my estimation, this is rather an echo of Jung's theory of archetypes, coinciding in part with Warburg's ideas.

⁸ In original: "die Geburt des Ich aus dem mythischen Kollektiv", T. Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder. Ein Vortrag*, in: idem, *Reden und Aufsätze (I)* (*Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, Bd. 9), Frankfurt am Main 1990, p. 665, translation from German by K. Lukas.

⁹ See J. Assmann, op. cit. p. 161.

¹⁰ In the German original written in capital letters to emphasise its ritualistic, festive character (see T. Mann, *Joseph und seine Brüder. Der erste Roman: Die Geschichten Jaakobs*, Frankfurt am Main 2008, p. 119; and in English: T. Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, translated by J. E. Woods, vol. 1, 2005, p. 89).

¹¹ These "social frameworks" (*cadres sociaux*) are: family, religious community, social class, and profession; see M. Halbwachs, *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, in: idem, *On Collective Memory*, translated by L. A. Coser, Chicago and London 1992, p. 37–167.

Interpretations of Mann's prose in the Jungian spirit are widely known and supported by the writer's own self-commentary¹². The inspiration from depth psychology in the tetralogy about Joseph is most clearly evidenced by the metaphor of the "well of the past" in the Prelude, read as a poetic image of the Jungian collective unconscious. It is to it that Mann attributes a key role in shaping individual biography. However, as Assmann argues, the writer, in his literary vision of collective memory, goes beyond Jung's (as well as Freud's) diagnoses by overcoming their biologicistic stigma: Mann shows that the individual assimilates myth, understood by Assmann as a metonymy of cultural memory, not through genetic heritage but through cultural transmission¹³.

This interpretation of Mann's "theory of memory" is in line with the current German Memory Studies. It assumes, following Halbwachs, a social, rather than biological, transmission of memory between generations¹⁴. German Memory Studies are sceptical of Jung's hypotheses. What is more, Jan Assmann rejects the theory of archetypes¹⁵, the unconscious contents of the mind common to all people, which, according to Jung's supposition, are related to the hereditary structure of the brain and depend neither on individual experience nor on intentional socio-cultural transmission¹⁶. Dismissing the premise, Assmann and other German scholars after him ignore the similarity of archetypes to Warburg's "engrams" and "pathos formulas" that draw from the same sources.

The Hamburg scholar, a researcher of the Italian Renaissance, adapted the concept of engram for art history, with the idea itself having been coined by

12 For Mann, myth is a psychoanalytical concept that can be naturally transferred into the realm of literature: "The mythical interest is as native to psychoanalysis as the psychological interest is to all creative writing", T. Mann, *Freud und die Zukunft*, in: idem, *Reden und Aufsätze (1) (Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden, Bd. 9)*, Frankfurt am Main 1990, p. 493; and in English: idem, *Freud and The Future*, in: *Freud. A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by P. Meisel, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter, Englewood Cliffs 1981, p. 55.

13 See J. Assmann, op. cit. p. 165.

14 In addition, the concept of cultural memory was founded on the works of Lotman and Uspensky, who define culture as "the nonhereditary memory of the community": J. Lotman and B. Uspensky, *On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture*, translated by G. Mihaychuk, p. 213, in: "New Literary History", vol. 9, no. 2, 1978, p. 211–232.

15 "Their [Halbwachs' and Warburg's] otherwise fundamentally different approaches meet in a decisive dismissal of numerous turn-of-the-century attempts to conceive collective memory in biological terms as an inheritable or 'racial memory,' a tendency which would still obtain, for instance, in C. G. Jung's theory of archetypes" (J. Assmann, *Collective Memory and Cultural Identity*, translated by John Czaplicka, p. 125, in: "New German Critique", no. 65, p. 125–133). In addition, Assmann accuses Jung of "the individual and psychological contraction of the memory concept" which, according to the German Egyptologist, "obscures the ways in which the past is given communicative and cultural presence." (idem, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge 2011, p. 33).

16 See C.G. Jung, *Definitionen*, in: *C.G. Jungs Taschenbuchausgabe in elf Bänden, Bd. 3: Typologie* [Typology], München 1993, p. 193.

zoologist Richard Semon, whom Jung also referenced, explaining the essence of his archetypes¹⁷. An engram, or “memory trace,” is, according to Warburg, the perpetuated psychic energy of an affect: ecstasy or phobia experienced collectively by participants of ancient religious practices¹⁸. These practices had a tremendous traumatizing power that imprinted itself in the memory of individuals and the group as a whole, taking the form of specific gestures, poses, facial expressions, and ritualized behaviour. Although these primordial affects have been collectively suppressed, they recur in later eras in the form of images, the so-called pathos formulas (*Pathosformeln*), recognizable in the visual arts of the West¹⁹. Pathos formulas constitute the “language” of painting, sculpture, and printmaking (including applied arts) and, at the same time, a certain unconscious cultural resource²⁰. In his study of Italian Renaissance painting, Warburg shows how these visual “memory traces,” i.e., images of certain gestures and poses, are reactivated by painters who, he conjectures, were subjected to the unconscious forces of collective image memory (*Bildgedächtnis*).

Warburg does not unequivocally decide whether engrams are passed on by purely hereditary means, or whether cultural participation is indispensable for their acquisition, and the historical-cultural context necessary for their reactivation. According to Giorgio Agamben, engrams have a historical genesis, recurring in a particular era due to the confluence of various historical factors, unlike Jung’s “timeless” archetypes²¹. At the same time, Warburg’s conceptualisations such as: “heritage preserved in the memory”²² (*gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut*), “the lasting legacy of memory”²³ (*unverlierbare Erbmasse*, more accurately translated as “indelible hereditary mass”), or “inherited mass of impressions”²⁴ (*Eindruckserbmasse*) would speak in favour of the “biological” hypothesis.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 127.

¹⁸ See T. Majewski, *Engram*, in: *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci* [Modi Memorandi. Lexicon of Memory Culture], edited by M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba, Warsaw 2014, p.115.

¹⁹ See A. Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne—The Original*, ed. Roberto Ohrt and Axel Heil, Berlin: Hatje Cantz 2020). For an accessible explanation of Warburg’s intricate concept, reconstructed on the basis of works preserved only in fragments and sketches, see: P. Rösch, *Aby Warburg*, Paderborn 2010.

²⁰ Cf. A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization. Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge 2011, p. 358.

²¹ See G. Agamben, *Aby Warburg and the “Nameless Science”*, in idem, *Potentialities. Collected Essays on Philosophy*, Stanford 1999, p. 89–103.

²² A. Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas. Introduction (1929)*, translated by M. Rampley; English translation first published in “Art in Translation”, 1 (March 2009), p. 273–283, republished online: https://www.engramma.it/eOS/index.php?id_articolo=3082. The original wording after the edition: A. Warburg, *Mnemosyne Einleitung*, in: idem, *Werke in einem Band*, Hg. M. Treml, S. Weigel, P. Ladwig, Berlin 2010, p. 631.

²³ Ibid. German quote: p. 629.

²⁴ Ibid. German quote: p. 630.

Without a doubt, they betray inspiration from positivist naturalistic discourse, the same discourse to which Jung referred. Warburg's alleged conjecture about the genetic transmission of collective "image memory" would bring his concept closer to Jung's belief in the organic basis of collective unconsciousness. Today, the prevailing position among Warburg's editors and commentators is that the notion of collective "image memory" includes the hypothesis of both psychobiological and historical conditions of cultural transmission²⁵. Certainly, the Hamburg scholar's reflection on cultural memory is not as resolutely "anti-biological" as Jan Assmann reads it, just as it is unfair and rash to nullify Jung's archetypes as relics of the 19th-century biologism. The cultural studies potential of the Swiss psychologist's statements deserves to be appreciated in today's Memory Studies, if only because of the archetypes, like Warburg's engrams, being visual and coming to the fore in every brilliant, visionary work, while the creator himself is a "collective man, a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind"²⁶, that is: he transposes archetypes, felt only intuitively, into the means of expression of art or literature.

I would accept Assmann's proposal that Mann's tetralogy should be read as a poetic synthesis of two sociological theories of collective memory, Halbwachs's and Warburg's, only in the part concerning the first of these scholars. What may seem to be a literary confirmation of Warburg's ideas in Mann's prose derives, in fact, from depth psychology, which fascinated many writers in the interwar years. In my opinion, the "Warburgian component," whose presence in *Joseph and His Brothers* is debatable, manifests itself much more clearly in Schulz's concept of memory.

The Schulzian "cultural unconscious"

A vivid picture of the cultural "archive" can be found in Schulz's *The Mythologizing of Reality*, an essay discussing poetry and, more broadly, all culture-creating activity as based on the reuse of old "myths." In the text, they can be understood as a universal, timeless resource of all concepts, characters, plots, and narrative threads at the disposal of the creator²⁷: "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. [...] Not one scrap of an idea of ours does not originate in myth

²⁵ Cf. P. Rösch, op. cit. p. 51.

²⁶ C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Literature*, in: idem: *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume 15*, edited and translated by G. Adler and R. F. C. Hull, Princeton 1971, p.101.

²⁷ See W. Bolecki, *Mit [Myth]*, in: *Słownik schulzowski [The Schulzian Dictionary]*, edited by W. Bolecki, J. Jarzębski, S. Rosiek, Gdańsk 2006, p. 222.

[...].”²⁸ The image of ruins, a debris pile of shards, brings to mind the well-known metaphor of memory, i.e. recollecting as excavating. For example, both Freud and Walter Benjamin compared attempts to reconstruct repressed memories to the work of an archaeologist²⁹. While both had individual memory in mind, in Schulz’s case, the ruins illustrate the overlap and interaction between the individual’s (the poet’s) memory and cultural memory, the latter being, on the one hand, fixed in artifacts (“sculptures” and “statues,” i.e., external media), and, on the other hand, excavated by the poet. While reading Schulz’s essay in a Jungian context, we can identify his “stories” with archetypes that the creator “translates” into the language of art.

A poetic variant of the metaphor of memory as archaeological layers is found in the short story *Spring*, which refers to “descent into the Underworld.” Its famous XVII excerpt is an elaborate metaphor of cultural memory³⁰, its unconscious areas, and their interference with the memory of the individual, the poet:

“Here are the labyrinths of the interior, the storehouses and granaries of things. Here are the still-warm graves, the dry rot and muck. Ancient stories. Seven levels, as in ancient Troy, corridors, chambers, treasuries. [...] What a swarm and pulp, tribes and generations, bibles and iliads multiplied a thousand times! What wandering about and tumult, what muddle and clamour of stories. This road goes no farther. We are at the very bottom, at the dark foundations, we are at the Mothers. Here are the endless infernos, the hopeless Ossianic expanses, the pitiful Nibelungen. [...] Everything that we ever read, all the stories we ever heard and all those—never heard—that have haunted us since childhood, here and nowhere else is their fatherland. Where else would writers have taken their concepts, where else would they have gathered the courage to invent had they not sensed behind them these reserves, this capital, these hundredfold accounts with which the Underworld vibrates?”³¹

In the description above, Schulz captures the dual nature of cultural resources: conscious and unconscious. On the one hand, as sources of inspiration for the artist, he refers to antiquity (Troy, Iliad), Christianity (Bible), universal literature (Dante, Goethe, Ossian, *The Song of the Nibelungs*), that is to the tradition

²⁸ B. Schulz, *The Mythologizing of Reality*, in: idem, *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz: with Selected Prose*, edited by J. Ficowski, translated by W. Arndt with V. Nelson. New York 1988, p. 115–116.

²⁹ See S. Freud, *Constructions in Analysis*, in: *The Standard Edition of The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited and translated by J. Strachey, London 1964, p. 259; W. Benjamin, *Excavations and Memory*, in: *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, vol. 2, part 2, edited by M. P. Bullock, M. W. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith, Cambridge, Mass. 2005, p. 576.

³⁰ M. P. Markowski interprets it differently: as a literary transposition of Freudian topology of the psyche (see idem, *Polska literatura nowoczesna. Leśmian, Schulz, Witkacy* [Polish Modern Literature. Lesmian, Schulz, Witkacy], Kraków 2007, p. 227).

³¹ B. Schulz, *Collected Stories*, translated by Madeline G. Levine, Evanstone 2018, p. 120–121.

consciously passed down from generation to generation. It includes content objectified as cultural texts, knowledge that can be acquired in the process of learning and intellectual cognition. On the other hand, Schulz's "stories [...] never heard—that have haunted us since childhood" can be understood as unconscious, merely intuitive inspirations for the artistic creativity from which the poet draws unknowingly. The Jungian affiliation is very clearly drawn here: "the Underworld," in which fragments of cultural heritage coexist with mythical "stories," is a vision of the collective unconscious as a storehouse of archetypes, providing support for the individual memory and imagination of the poet or painter. Schulz thus anticipates the category of cultural memory, a cultural-sociological construct created in the face of the reflection that the concepts of "culture" and "tradition" are insufficient to describe and explain all the manifestations and mechanisms of *homo symbolicus*' activity. "Tradition," after all, refers to intentional transmission³². To what extent the notion of culture accommodates unconscious processes and involuntary cultural transmission is still debated³³. In fact, the development of the term *cultural memory* was an attempt to grapple with the problem of whether there is such a thing as a "cultural unconscious" and to what extent it can be identified with the collective unconscious in the sense of Jung or Lacan. While culture and tradition can be discussed without involving the concept of the unconscious, reflection on cultural memory cannot do without it. The essence of memory, organic and supra-individual, is founded on the dynamics of the conscious and the unconscious³⁴. In this context, we can see how bold and forward-looking was the anthropological reflection that Schulz captured by literary means. The existence of the collective unconscious as the basis of individual artistic expression is as obvious to the Drohobych writer as the fact that the individual memory and imagination of a poet or painter are the result of the interplay of acquired cultural knowledge and irrational forces springing from the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which demand to be given

32 Cf. J. Ruchatz, *Tradierung*, in: *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, Hg. N. Petthes, J. Ruchatz, Reinbek 2001, p. 586–587; J. Szacki, *Tradition*, in: *Deutsch-Polnische Erinnerungsorte*, Hg. R. Traba, P. O. Loew, Bd. 5: *Erinnerung auf Polnisch. Texte zu Theorie und Praxis des sozialen Gedächtnisses*, Paderborn 2015, p. 78. Even if the subject of transmission is non-discursive content (for example, embodied knowledge), it is of a conscious nature (cf. E. Klekot, *Tradycja* [Tradition], in *Modi memorandi...*, p. 500).

33 The question arose in the discussion about the concept of cultural memory articulated by Jan Assmann in his article *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, "Erwägen – Wissen – Ethik" 2002, Heft 2, p. 239–247. The problem of a hypothetical "cultural unconscious" is raised by critics who polemicise with Assmann in the same journal, above all: E. Santner, *The Locations of Memory*, p. 220–222; H. Winkler, *Das Unbewusste der Kultur?*, p. 270–271; and A. Langenohl, "Kulturelles Gedächtnis?" *Soziologische Bedenken*, "Erwägen – Wissen – Ethik" 2002, Heft 2, p. 255–258.

34 See A. Assmann, *Vier Formen des Gedächtnisses – eine Replik*, "Erwägen – Wissen – Ethik" 2002, Heft 2, p. 235.

artistic shape. Schulz, unlike today's researchers of collective memory, has no doubt that culture is created not only through the official, conscious, and planned transmission of knowledge resources, science, and art. To use "a Schulzian term," this process takes place somewhere on the side tracks, too, surreptitiously and outside of the consciousness of its participants.

Schulz and the Warburg engrams

What is the difference between Schulz's and Mann's "theory of memory"? The Drohobych writer links the unconscious areas of cultural memory with visual art more strongly than the German novelist. We remember that Joseph from the story *The Age of Genius*, unlike his Biblical namesake in Mann's novel, is a spirited draughtsman. However, the visions that Schulz's protagonist transfers to paper as a child are attributed not to himself but to the overwhelming action of psychic energy streaming from the collective unconscious, the "storehouse" of images, ideas, and concepts striving to be articulated, to which the artist and the child have the fullest access:

"Oh, those luminous drawings, springing up as if under a stranger's hand; oh, those transparent colors and shadows! [...] From the start I was assailed by doubt as to whether I am in fact their author. At times they seemed to me to be involuntary plagiarisms, something that was hinted to me, handed to me... As if something alien served as my inspiration for goals that I don't know."³⁵

"Luminous drawings," which impose themselves on the artist involuntarily yet with extreme intensity, bring to mind not only Jungian archetypes (strictly: archetypal images), but also Warburg's pathos formulas. In the introduction to *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, the Hamburg scholar writes about the figures, gestures, and themes that demand visual expression, which are part of the "inherited mass of impressions, created in fear"³⁶ (*phobisch geprägte Eindruckserbmasse*) and guide the painter's hand:

"It is in the area of mass orgiastic seizure that one should seek the mint that stamps the expressive forms of extreme inner possession on the memory with such intensity—inasmuch as it can be expressed through gesture—that these engrams of affective experience survive in the form of a heritage preserved in the memory. They serve as models that shape the outline drawn by the artist's hand, once the extreme values of the language of gesture appear in the daylight through the formative medium of the artist's hand."³⁷

³⁵ B. Schulz, *Collected Stories...*, p. 96, 102.

³⁶ A. Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas. Introduction...*, op. cit. The German wording: idem, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, op. cit., p. 630.

³⁷ A. Warburg, *Mnemosyne Atlas. Introduction...*, op. cit. In original: "In der Region der orgiastischen

Despite the complicated wording, the parallels with Schulz's description are clearly discernible in this passage.

Unlike Mann, Schulz does not seem to resolve that the transmission of the unconscious content of cultural memory occurs exclusively, or mainly, through social contacts. On the contrary: in my view, Schulz allows for the possibility that humans inherit "stories," "fictions and fables" as innate capital. I believe the oft-quoted words from an open letter to Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, the metapoetic equivalent of the above excerpt from *The Age of Genius*, allow for a conclusion like that. In the letter to Witkiewicz, Schulz writes about certain (archetypal) images accompanying him since childhood, the provenience of which he cannot explain but it certainly cannot be sought in his individual experience:

"The beginnings of my graphic work are lost in mythological twilight. Before I could even talk, I was already covering every scrap of paper and the margins of newspapers with scribbles that attracted the attention of those around me. At first they were all horses and wagons. [...] I don't know how we manage to acquire certain images in childhood that carry decisive meanings for us. [...] There are texts that are marked out, made ready for us somehow, lying in wait for us at the very entrance to life. [...] Such images amount to an agenda, establish an iron capital of the spirit, proffered to us very early in the form of forebodings and half-conscious experiences."³⁸

The "iron capital of the spirit, proffered to us very early" can again be read both in the Jungian sense as collective unconscious as well as "in Warburgian terms." The images, which the child reaching for the pencil has never seen but which impose themselves on him along with their primordial, overpowering psychic energy, can be read, in my opinion, as "expressive forms of extreme inner possession," "engrams of affective experience" from the prehistoric collective. Schulz, like Warburg, does not exclude the existence of an organic basis for the "iron capital of the spirit." This interpretation of his anthropological reflection would probably not be wrong, given the omnipresence of "biological" metaphors in his prose.

There is yet another similarity between Schulz and Warburg that is mentionable, namely their penchant for "scraps" and for unsophisticated products of the fine arts. Postage stamps, an advertising catalogue, pornographic photographs,

Massenergriffenheit ist das Prägewerk zu suchen, das dem Gedächtnis die Ausdrucksformen des maximalen inneren Ergriffenseins, soweit es sich gebärdensprachlich ausdrücken lässt, in solcher Intensität einhämmernd, dass diese Engramme leidenschaftlicher Erfahrung als gedächtnisbewahrtes Erbgut überleben und vorbildlich den Umriss bestimmen, den die Künstlerhand schafft, sobald Höchstwerte der Gebärdensprache durch Künstlerhand im Tageslicht der Gestaltung hervortreten wollen" (A. Warburg, *Mnemosyne Einleitung...*, p. 631).

³⁸ B. Schulz, *An Essay for S. I. Witkiewicz*, in: idem, *Letters and Drawings...*, p. 110–111.

“old folios full of the strangest etchings”³⁹; all these products of applied graphics of dubious artistic value are elevated to the status of sacrum in Schulz’s works. They are potential parts of the Book, in which some superior idea becomes present: a myth, an unknowable reality that can only be intuited. Warburg looked at the visual arts in a similar way. In his *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*, he juxtaposed reproductions of Renaissance paintings side by side with photographs of ancient sarcophagi and coins, primitive ephemeral prints from the Reformation period, contemporary newspaper photographs, postage stamps, advertisements for cosmetics and shipping companies⁴⁰, and thus traced the journey of pathos formulas in the history of Western European “image memory”.

The equality of outstanding works and graphic junk testifies to the belief that “for the purposes of the history of human expression and the topography of cultural memory, even the most marginal visual products, inferior, mass, popular, occasional objects, mean as much as the canonical masterpieces of Raphael or Dürer.”⁴¹ Engrams, images of gestures and movements of unconscious phobic genesis, release the affects “frozen” in them in unexpected places and contexts. The image-forming power of the engram, working in defiance of a draughtsman’s will, emanates also from artworks that are poor, derivative, disregarded, or those that are denied the title of works of art at all. Both Warburg and Schulz take visual scraps extremely seriously; because such images are created intuitively, in an act of reflexive self-expression, the collective cultural unconscious is activated in them, whether consisted in Warburgian notions of engram and pathos formulas or called *myth* by Schulz.

Conclusion

Although the interpretation of Schulz’s work from the positions of Memory Studies that are a decade younger is a backward projection of certain cultural concepts, it is probably not a gross misuse. The Drohobych writer anticipates the postmodern notion of cultural memory and suggests an affirmative answer to the question of whether there is a “cultural unconscious.” What emerges from his prose is highly original and groundbreaking, though, from the viewpoint of German Memory Studies, a peculiarly heretical view of individual and collective memory. Schulz does not hesitate to combine “biologistic” and “cultural” themes that can be read in the spirit of both Jung and Warburg, which is possible because

³⁹ B. Schulz, *Collected Stories...*, p. 47.

⁴⁰ See A. Warburg, *Bilderatlas Mnemosyne—The Original*, op. cit., tables 77, 78, 79.

⁴¹ R. Kasperowicz, *Obraz w koncepcji Aby'ego Warburga* [Image in Aby Warburg’s Concept], “Konteksty. Polska sztuka ludowa” [The Contexts. Polish Folk Art] 2011, no. 2–3, p. 38. Translated from Polish by M. Kurek.

of the similarities between the concepts of archetype and engram. Schulz emphasises the visual character of cultural memory and the unconscious, and perhaps biological mechanism of its transmission, thus opening memory reflection paths, which, for example, in Jan Assmann's view, were bypassed⁴² or closed in advance. That is why Schulz's take on *memoria* is a noteworthy alternative, or at least an "offshoot" of today's Memory Studies that is worth exploring.

Translated from Polish by Marta Kurek

⁴² The "bypassed path" within Assmann's early theory would be visual art as a testimony of cultural memory, as the German Egyptologist recognised the primacy of writing over other memory media (see M. Saryusz-Wolska, *Pamięć kulturowa* [Cultural memory], in: *Modi memorandi...*, p. 337).