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## **Bruno Schulz goes to school. The thematic biography**

### **Summary**

The aim of this dissertation is to present a new form of biography of Bruno Schulz, a Polish-Jewish writer and artist. A biography does not necessarily mean the story of the entire life of its protagonist, from birth until death. Instead, a thematic biography is a biography focused on particular aspects of a person's life. In this case, the subject is school as an institution, in which he studied and worked. Accordingly, this biography covers the two periods of Bruno Schulz's life: when he was a student, and when he was a teacher.

In order to shed new light on the author of *The Cinnamon Shops*, the recovered events are put into multiple and rich contexts. They show Schulz as a student, a schoolmate and a teacher. The research investigates ways in which he was earning a living as a civil servant, caught up in school ideologies and entangled in a series of historical events. These aspects of Schulz's biography are analyzed according to sociology of literature and cultural studies: in their versions after the archival turn and the ethical turn. The adopted approach is characterized by a radical differentiation of perspective from a vast overview to a detailed micro-analysis. The reconstruction of events is based on heretofore fragmented, disorganized, and previously unknown archival material.

The dissertation does not have an exclusively chronological arrangement, which seems more natural for a biography, but rather a mixed one: chronological and problematic. It begins with an introduction, after which it is arranged into two main parts, roughly following the themes of 'student' and 'teacher'. Each part opens with a text of a theoretical nature, referring to findings in the field of biographical theory. They signify the importance of the subject matter, and a framework for reading the subsequent texts. In the introduction to the first part, the overarching issue is the representation of childhood in the writer's biography – or rather, its absence or insufficiency, and the problems and benefits such representation brings. Using the concepts of Hayden White, Paul Ricœur and Mieke Bal, this text proposes a justification for a representation of childhood, adequate to its relevance in biography. In the introduction to the

second part, the key issue is the Bernard Lahire's concept of the "double life of writers", based on the theory of Pierre Bourdieu. The professional work of the writer (their second life) makes their literary work (first life) financially possible, but at the same time hinders it due to taking away the literary autonomy.

The first part introduces Schulz as a primary school student, following the petit-bourgeois model of acquiring education in a state school with Polish as the language of instruction. Later, Schulz becomes a student of a Galician secondary school, an institution that was a product of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is difficult to reconstruct Schulz's relationships with his school friends and show the more universal experience of a student in Galician at the turn of the century. However, there is a lot of intact evidence which informs of the kinds of things Schulz studied, what demands were made on him and how he dealt with them, as well as what effects it might have had.

The second part, after the theoretical introduction, opens with tracing Schulz's entire career as a teacher: getting a job, being promoted, receiving pay rises. Consequently, it considers what economic and social position it secured for him. Next, the environment of the intelligentsia after World War I, which organized itself within the framework of various associations, is inspected. Then a closer look is given to the Teachers' Society of Secondary and Higher Schools, to which Schulz belonged. Historical changes, the onslaught of which is felt before, then became pivotal, as the World War II begun and the occupation of Drohobych by the Soviet Union started. As a result, the entire school system was changing, and Schulz had to reinvent himself in the new reality. Not only at the beginning of the occupation, but already since his literary debut he wanted to quit being a teacher in order to pursue a literary career. Nevertheless, this change never happened. In the penultimate chapter, in a different poetics, the voice is given to Schulz's students – a unique opportunity to see his corporeality, the body with which he worked in school for seventeen years.

The second part, and at the same time the whole work, ends with a personal text, which maximizes the autothematic reflection present throughout. The form of this dissertation, proposed as its own form of biography, is realized in the transition from precisely documented source analysis to personal reflection of a scholar, from theoretical statement to historical matter, from reconstruction of one person's life to the portrait of their environment.