The city of tar

Pictorial imagination and apocalyptic landscapes in Gustav Meyrink's poetics

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Candidate:
Maria Diletta Giordano

Personal number:
1354274

Advisors:
Alessandro Catalano
Štěpán Zbytovský

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Introduction

Gustav Meyrink and his time

„Die Kriegserklärung erfolgte, wie allgemein bekannt,
am einunddreißigsten September denkwürdiger Erinnerung."[1]

During an Austrian cattle fair in which pretentiously decorated oxen from all regions of the monarchy have been prepared for a monumental exhibition, foreign minister Alois III[2] is looking for the right words to open the event and is nervously handling a series of notes put in his pocket by his assistants, notes containing pleasantries covering various sorts of occasions. Unsure about what piece of paper he should choose, the emperor finds himself lost in all these ceremonial statements, and erroneously picks a red one announcing: "I… declare… war". Despite the initially perplex reaction of the audience, the declaration is welcomed by all social classes and, some days later, the Austrian government realizes that an appropriate enemy must be found. Thessaly is chosen as target, because its ruler is the only European monarch unrelated to royal families. Therefore, after several confused attempts to find Greece, the imperial army reaches the eastern region which is believed to be Thessaly. There, surprisingly finding almost no resistance from the encountered populations, the army conquers a city after fighting an easy battle. Great exultance spreads throughout the Habsburg empire, until someone realizes that the occupied territory is not part of Thessaly nor of Turkey, but is actually Sarajevo, a city which, as the I-narrator explains, "schon lange, lange gut österreichisch und schon seit Kaiser Franz Josefs Zeiten der Monarchie angegliedert ist"[3].

This short story, written by Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932) and called *Die Erstürmung von Sarajewo*, was conceived and published in 1908, six years before the assassination of count Franz Ferdinand experienced by Austro-Hungary in 1914. When nine years later, in 1917, Kurt Wolff Verlag published the last volume of Meyrink's *Gesammelte Werke*, this tale was excluded from the print. In 1921, some

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[1] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die Erstürmung von Sarajevo*, in: *März*, 17.07.1908, pp. 137-147, here: p. 138.
[2] Meyrink refers here to Alois Lexa von Aehrenthal (1854-1912), foreign minister of Austro-Hungary from 1906 to 1912.
[3] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die Erstürmung von Sarajevo*, p. 147.

years after the end of World War I, when replying to a brief feuilleton-letter published in the magazine *Der Drache* which addressed the absence, among other cut titles, of the Sarajevo story in Meyrink's complete works, the author elaborated on this exclusion. In his reply to this criticism, Meyrink explains the reasons, linked to censorship, for the cuts and the editing process, and in relation to *Die Erstürmung von Sarajewo*, he states:

So hingegen bleibt mir nichts übrig, als, Verzeihung heischend, eine Entschuldigung zu stammeln.
Welche folgendermaßen lautet: Vor einiger Zeit war nämlich Krieg. Zu dieser Zeit waltete nämlich eine gewisse Zensur.
Nun hatte sich leider begeben, daß ich anno 1905 in einem Anfall von Prophetie die strategischen Merkmale jenes denkwürdigen Feldzuges vorausgeahnt und in einer Novelle: „Die Erstürmung von Sarajevo" niedergelegt hatte, die der große österreichische General Potiorek gegen Serbien 10 Jahre später in unvergeßliche Tat umsetzen sollte.[4]

In his monumental Gustav Meyrink biography, Hartmut Binder quotes, in relation to the "Anfall von Prophetie", the letter which accompanied the manuscript of the Sarajevo story sent to Albert Langen on June 14th 1908, where Meyrink reassures the publisher about possible censorship, by pointing out that: "ich verlegte die Handlung absichtlich in eine Zeit der Zukunft, die für Östreich noch nicht angebrochen ist"[5]. The underlining is Meyrink's.

A posteriori, Meyrink's intuition can be, if not actually explained, at least traced back to two main lines of thought. The first one is the sense of political instability that, at the time the story was written, pervaded Austro-Hungary and made it possible for apocalyptic thinkers like Meyrink to perceive the Habsburg empire as a collapsing organism: some reasons for this perspective were the growing Slavic revolts in several areas of the land and the incapability of the central government to manage regions of the empire where the situation had become extremely tense. Not surprisingly, one of the regions of which Austrian-Germanophone literates of the *Jahrhundertwende* were more skeptical was precisely Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was seen as a disgraced "krypto-colonial" experiment[6]. The connections between this view and Meyrink's "prophecy" are even clearer when considering that Bosnia-Herzegovina had been occupied in 1878 but officially annexed to the empire only in October of 1908, some months after the publishing of *Die Erstürmung von Sarajewo*.

Furthermore, Meyrink himself had experienced the complicated relationships between Vienna and its cumbersome attachments, having lived in the most prosperous of them, the Reign of Bohemia, for twenty years between his adolescence and his 30s. It is true that Meyrink had left Prague four years

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[4] Meyrink, Gustav, *An den Drachen*, in: *Der Drache*, Jahrgang II, n. 26 (30.3.1921), p. 11.
[5] Meyrink to Albert Langen, 14.06.1908, quoted from Binder, Hartmut, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, Prag: Vitalis 2009, p. 427.
[6] Ruthner, Clemens, *Habsburgs ‚Dark Continent'. Postkoloniale Lektüren zur österreichischen Literatur und Kultur im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen, Narr Franke Attempto 2017, p. 317.

before writing the novella, and he had been living in Munich for two years; at the time of the Sarajevo story, he was touring northern Italy with his wife and his colleague Alexander Roda Roda (1872-1945)[7]. Yet, he had lived in Vienna from 1903 to 1904 in addition to his twenty Bohemian years, and both the foreign and the domestic affairs of Austro-Hungary were extremely familiar to him. As an example of his perspective on the political situation in Bohemia, in 1907 he had stated in his pamphlet *Prag: eine optimistisch gehaltene Städtschilderung in vier Bildern*, describing a Czech demonstration:

Jede Truppe zieht zuerst vor das böhmische Nationaltheater, jubelt dort, und dann geht es zum Deutschen Kasino. Dort wird Halt gemacht und längere Zeit ein Wort wiederholt, das ungefähr soviel wie „Krepier!" bedeutet. […] – Ich bin unberufen kein Prager, würde mich aber auch nicht fürchten, denn der „Aufzug" ist in Prag etwas ganz Alltägliches.[8]

Following the same perspective, nine years after *Die Erstürmung* Meyrink addressed the weaknesses of Austrian politics using the more powerful example of a fictional mass revolt in Prague, in his novel *Walpurgisnacht*. This time, his story experienced far wider circulation than the 1908 tale.

However, the „Anfall von Prophetie" can also retrospectively be inserted into that framework relating to a sense of approaching end identified by literary criticism as part of the *fin de siècle* crisis culture (in both political and philosophical terms), a feeling of decline which was extremely stressed in Germany and Germanophone Austria[9]. An important trait of this turn of the century is the manifestation, in literature as well as in other intellectual and artistic fields, of a growing anti-bourgeois attitude addressing the inevitable decline of the liberal middle-class, along with its idiosyncrasies. This topic interacts, in several cases, with the semantic of the prefiguration of death, of stagnation and of morbidity.

When it comes to Meyrink's position among this discourse, Helga Abret observes in her monography *Gustav Meyrink Conteur* (1974) that Jean-Paul Sartre's definition of the anti-bourgeois literate can

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[7] See: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 181.

[8] Meyrink, Gustav, Meyrink, Gustav, *Prag: eine optimistisch gehaltene Städtschilderung in vier Bildern*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2 (*Des deutschen Spießers Wunderhorn. Gesammelte Novellen*), Münich/Wien: Langen Müller 1982, pp. 286-294, here: p. 292.

[9] The bibliography on the *Fin de Siècle* sense of decline in the western (and especially European) culture is extremely rich. We mention here some histories of German literature which were useful for this research: Spengler, Peter, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur, 1870-1900: von der Reichsgründung bis zur Jahrhundertwende* in: *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, München: C.H. Beck 2004; Martini, Fritz / Müller-Seidel, Walter (ed.), *Zeit der Moderne: zur deutschen Literatur von der Jahrhundertwende bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart: Kröner 1984; Trommel, Frank (ed.), *Jahrhundertwende: vom Naturalismus zum Expressionismus: 1880-1918*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rohwolt 1987; Nautz, Jurgen / Vahrenkamp, Richard (ed.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende: Einflusse Umwelt Wirkungen*, Wien/Köln/Graz: Bohlau 1993; Buglioni, Chiara Maria / Castellari, Marco et. al., *Letteratura tedesca. Dal Medioevo al primo Novecento*, Firenze: Le Monnier 2019. Meaningful were also monographic works focused on the *Stimmung* in the *Jahrhundertwende* including: Schorske, Carl E., *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, New York: Vintage Books 1981; Saler, Michael (ed.), *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, New York: Routledge 2015 and Brittnacher, Hans Richard, *Erschöpfung und Gewalt. Opferphantasien in der Literatur der Fin de Siècle*, Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau 2001.

be effectively applied to the author of *Der Golem* (1915): Sartre describes the anti-middle-class type of this period as "a rebel but not a revolutionary", as an author presenting "an aesthetic of opposition and bitterness" who "wants to preserve social order in order to be able to feel like a stranger in his own home"[10]. This definition is, according to Abert, applicable to Meyrink's poetics, as:

Celui-ci a, en effet, le sentiment très vif d'une crise de la civilisation, le pressentiment d'un proche effondrement. […] Ce sentiment d'une crise était particulièrement répandu dans les milieux intellectuels d'Autriche-Hongrie. Cet état d'esprit entraine le refus de la réalité existante. Meyrink critique l'ordre établi, la famille, l'armée, la justice. C'est pourquoi les catégories sociales les plus attaquées sont les militaires, les médecins, les magistrats. Meyrink vise aussi le progrès technique. Il voit dans le monde de la machine un aspect démoniaque de notre temps.[11]

In fact, literary criticism had identified the connection between Meyrink's favorite topics – satire, grotesque, fantastic mode and decadent perspective – and his anti-bourgeoise attitude as early as in the 1950s. Marga-Evelin Thierfelder, author of *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks* (1952), describes this connection as the result of Meyrink's aversion to any kind of *Scheinkultur*, and by doing so interprets the mechanisms of unmasking and disclosure as constitutive elements of his poetics[12]. In this regard, Meyrink's satirical production and his fantastic and esoteric work must be considered aimed at the same weaknesses of society: the comical-tragical types populating Meyrink's short stories should be seen, from this perspective, as symptoms of a western illness, i.e., of the bourgeoise tendency to hide from its approaching decline by seeking distraction in its obsession for appearance. This social class is problematic, furthermore, for its absence of perspective when distinguishing between important and irrelevant - prioritizing the conventional at the detriment of the human - as well as for its preconceptions about the direction of history, society and, more in general, for its prejudices against any investigation concerning the interpretation of reality. The middle-class is associated in Meyrink's satire to *Spießertum* and symbolizes the Veil of Maya that must be uncovered to see the real structure of the world[13].

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[10] Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Qu'est que la littérature?*, Paris: Gallimard 1948, p. 140.

[11] Abret, Helga, *Gustav Meyrink Conteur*, Bern/Frankfurt: Herbert Lang/Peter Lang 1976, p. 190.

[12] Thierfelder, Marga-Eveline, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, München 1952 [Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung zur Doktorwürde der Philosophische Fakultät LMU München], p. 69.

[13] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, p. 7-8. This attitude is then compared to the focus of Expressionism: "Denn der Expressionismus ist, schon seiner ganzen künstlerischen Zielsetzung nach – Abkehr von der diesseitig orientierten bürgerlichen Welt, Bruch mit aller Tradition –, ausgesprochen anti-bürgerlich eingestellt. Wir sehen also in diesem Punkt Meyrink bereits als einen frühen Vertreter expressionistischen Gedankengutes. Ebenso wie Hauberrisser im Grünen Gesicht, verzichtet auch er auf das geistige Erbe seiner Vorfahren, weil ihm, wie allen Expressionisten späterhin, dieses Erbgut als schal und nichtig erscheint. Im Bürgertum sieht er nur eine verflachte, dekadente, selbstzufriedene Gesellschaftsschicht, die eine europäische Scheinkultur vertritt, während sie, blind am Rande des Abgrunds dahin taumelnd, sich entweder ihrer wahren Situation überhaupt nicht bewusst ist, oder sie zumindest nicht wahrhaben möchte."

The connection between this aspect and the genre of fantastic literature[14] (which gladly includes Meyrink's work within its ranks despite it only partially following the theoretical premises of the genre[15]) must be traced back to the very definition of this category: the fantastic sets itself apart from fantasy and conventional fairytales in that it implies the trespassing of an irrational force into the rational order. The starting point of the fantastic (as understood by Roger Caillois, Louis Vax and Tzvetan Todorov) is the intuition of an unknown dimension that reveals itself progressively within a text where the supernatural is not part of the original worldbuilding[16]. This second dimension constitutes, according to Robert Mühlher's reflection in *Dichtung der Krise* (1951)[17], the *Ahnung* of the essence of reality which, to the fantastic author, is a cosmic *Abgrund* of nothingness. The *Abgrund*, when revealed, has people question any value and rational thought conceived within everyday life, where human beings have the illusion of building meaning and having agency. The aim of the fantastic author is not to reveal the *Abgrund* in its entireness, but to suggest its existence to the reader[18]. In this regard, Mühlher interprets Meyrink's Golem as the representation of a threatening nothingness[19].

It is implied that the existence of this abyss is not compatible with the rationality imposed by those social categories that, as Abret explained, are the target of Meyrink's satirical attack – the ones representing bureaucracy, the military, the scientists (agents of technological progress and dehumanization), and more in general any social order based on conventions. In this respect, it must be mentioned how the debate regarding the fantastic stresses the connection between this genre and the subversion of rationalism and positivism, qualities that, in the case of E.T.A. Hoffmann's (1776-1822) conception of uncanny, are associated to the bourgeoise conventions that follow the Enlightenment and, in the case of the flourishing fantastic production between the *fin de siècle* and the 1930s in German and Austrian context, to the alienation that followed the industrial revolution[20].

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[14] With "fantastic literature" is understood a literary genre which in German literature is designated as *Phantastik* and which involves a series of works highly influenced by the atmospheric components typical of E.T.A. Hoffmann's (1776-1822) literary production and of the categories of the *schwarze Romantik*, especially the qualities of unsettling and uncanny. A more detailed description of the genre is given the chapter 1.3.

[15] My skepticism towards the classification of Meyrink's work as fantastic, in the meaning attributed to this term by Roger Caillois, Louis Vax and Tzvetan Todorov, mainly originates from the fact that Meyrink's content is fundamentally allegorical. More on the topic in chapter 1.3.2.

[16] For the other parameters defining the genre, see: chapter 1.3.2.

[17] Mühlher, Robert, *Dichtung der Krise. Mythos und Psychologie in der Dichtung des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Wien: Herold 1951. Mühlher writes before the fantastic acquired the canonic parameters of the rational/irrational relation and of Todorov's 'hesitation'. He actually speaks of 'fantastic realism' and aims at highlighting the will, in the analyzed texts, of deciphering reality instead of providing evasion. The corpus analyzed in the essay mostly corresponds, however, to the collection of works canonically identified as fantastic in its more recent definition.

[18] Mühlher, p. 447: „Die „neue Beziehung zwischen Realismus und Phantastik" ... erblicke das Wirkliche nicht mehr als Welt der Erscheinung im platonischen-faustischen Sinn, sondern als Kontur der Dinge vor dem Abgrund, als Verzerrung und Selbstbehauptung der Dinge vor dem Abgrund des Nichts, welches man auch Teufel heißen könnte."

[19] Mühlher, pp. 475-476.

[20] Cfr. Cottone, Margerita, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930. Gustav Meyrink e d'intorni*, Palermo: Sellerio 2009, p. 23.

It is interesting that both Thierfelder's notion of *Scheinkultur* and Mühlher's perspective on fantastic realism suggest the connection between Meyrink's work and the act of revealing, which is in fact the main focus of this dissertation, along with the previously mentioned sense of approaching end that equally influences most of his work. To put it simply, this thesis analyzes the manifestations of apocalypticism in Meyrink's poetics both from its revelatory and from its eschatological perspective. Core of this analysis is Meyrink's depiction of space as vehicle for an apocalyptic teaching. The aim of the dissertation is, in fact, to highlight how space depiction in the investigated corpus represents not only a driving force of the plot, as is frequently the case in fantastic literature, but also a visual representation of Meyrink's view on the authentic structure of reality (i.e., the unified existence of the spiritual and of the concrete). From this perspective, space depiction in the researched corpus constitutes a fundamental part of the author's philosophical message, and not merely a tool supporting the characters' self-discovery. The spaces taken into consideration are porous, subjected to deconstruction and reconstruction, they cause uncertainty for the characters in a manner similar to fantastic spaces, and interact constantly with the protagonists' inner growth, in that the progressive investigation of space openly corresponds to the investigation of the self, as already highlighted by the scholars who analyzed *Der Golem* (1915) and *Das grüne Gesicht* (1916) from a psychoanalytical perspective[21].

A brief introduction to Gustav Meyrink's main philosophical categories

This thesis must be understood as a work concerning the author's poetics more than the content of his esoteric message; however, during the investigation it proved necessary to establish some fundamental premises in regards to Meyrink's philosophy before allowing the text analysis to follow a literary direction. Alexander Jeger's dissertation *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink* (2019) was a fundamental source in deciphering this philosophical content. The work analyzes Meyrink's novels[22] following their content in light of Julius Evola's (1898-1974)

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[21] Interesting in this regard is Sigrid Meyer's reflection on *Der Golem* in: Meyer, Sigrid, *Golem: Die literarische Rezeption eines Stoffes*, Bern: Herbert Lange 1975. The work actually focuses on the legend of the Golem and on the meaning of the automat in German literature, but also uses categories of the psychoanalysis, such as the role of the dream and of the removed content, to interpret this figure and Meyrink's novel. In Chapter 4 there will be mentioned two sources related to Meyrink's work interpreted through a psychoanalytical perspective, in particular Carl Jung's reflection on *Das grüne Gesicht* in *Symbole der Wandlung* (1912) (Here consulted from: Jung, Carl, *Symbols of Transformation*, in: *Collective Works*, vol. 5, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton / Bollingen 1976) and Matthew Fike's recent re-elaboration of Jung's ideas on the topic in: Fike, Matthew A., *Four novels in Jung's 1925 Seminar: Literary discussion and Analytical Psychology*, London: Routledge 2020.
[22] *Der Golem* (1915), *Das Grüne Gesicht* (1916), *Walpurgisnacht* (1917) and *Der weiße Dominikaner* (1921). Jeger does not consider *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* (1927) in his corpus since the last novel of Meyrink's is believed to be the result of a collaboration with Friedrich Alfred Schmidt Noerr (1877-1969) and not entirely a Meyrink's work. The origin of this novel is discussed in Binder's biography (Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, pp. 643-654) but also in: Harmsen, Theodor, *Gustav Meyrink und seine Freunde*, Amsterdam: In de Pelikan 2009, pp. 178-191.

esoteric commentaries but also taking into consideration literary research as a valid stimulus, and refers to Meyrink's autobiographical essays *Die Verwandlung des Blutes* (1928/29) and *An der Grenze des Jenseits* (1923) as main sources of information on the *Initiationsweg* as conceived by the writer – where the *Initiationsweg* is believed to be the focus of the plots being analyzed. To some extent, Jeger sees Meyrink as a systematic writer despite the frequently combined use of disparate doctrines stemming both from western and eastern sources – doctrines which should often be understood as literary devices more than as philosophical reference points[23]. In this respect, he follows the literary scholars who ascribed a clear *weltkonstitutiv* tendency and a precise *Weltentwurf*, that is intended to be part of the initiatic revelation, to Meyrink's novels, where reality is understood as being made of both a spiritual and a concrete sphere[24]. This dualism is the root of the initiation process, which aims at the *Überwindung* of the separation between the aforementioned spheres in the protagonist's mind, so that in the end of Meyrink's novels the initiate becomes capable of perceiving the world as one sole dimension where the spiritual and the concrete do not act as contradictory elements but as part of a whole.

The investigation following the structure of reality corresponds, however, to the investigation of the Self for all Meyrink's protagonists, whose identity always appears, to some extent, 'fragmentary' at the beginning of the novels. Their identity is, hence, rediscovered throughout the narration, where the characters are put in the position of uncovering certain sides of their inner reality, the sides dedicated to perceiving the spiritual sphere. The inner revolution shown by Meyrink aims, therefore, at the individual acquirement of self-knowledge, or at the establishment of a permanent contact between the rational and the unconscious. Jeger observes how the origin of pain is linked, for Meyrink, to an *innere Gespaltenheit* that must be overcome, and which the author identifies as a conflict between conscious and unconscious thought –not to be understood in a Freudian sense, but as a rational and a spiritual side of thought respectively[25], as stated in *Die Verwandlung des Blutes*:

Jeder Mensch ist im Bewusstsein gespalten und ebenso jedes Tier. […] Das selbständige Arbeiten des Herzens und der Verdauung, die Machtlosigkeit gegenüber Stimmungen und Gedanken, die einem »einfallen« und lang nicht loslassen,

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[23] Jeger, Alexander, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, Basel: Bommer 2019, pp. 21-22.

[24] Cfr. Cersowsky on the Golem's narrative structure: "[Die Textinention] bestimmt sich durch die Präsentation einer phantastischen Kontrastrelation zwischen einer natürlichen und einer übernatürlich-spirituellen Dimension, die sich im Mytischen kristallisiert. – Durch die Konsequenz dieser Relation gewinnt die Romanstruktur bei aller Kompliziertheit beträchtliche Kohärenz. Es entsteht der Eindruck eines geschlossenen Ganzen, eines Zusammenhangs aller Elemente der dargestellten Welt. Wenn es einmal heißt „Manche Dinge der Erde können nicht loskommen voneinander" (G 51), so wird damit jene universelle Kohärenz, eingebunden in die Koppelung von Materiellen und Seelisch-Geistigem, angedeutet." (Cersowsky, Peter, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts: Untersuchungen zum Strukturwandel des Genres, seinen geistesgeschichtlichen Voraussetzungen und zur Tradition der „schwarzen Romantik" insbesondere bei Gustav Meyrink, Alfred Kubin und Franz Kafka*, München: Fink 1989, p. 47).

[25] Cfr. Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, pp. 28-29.

Träume, Wehrlosigkeit gegenüber dem Schlafbedürfnis und so vieles andere sind doch deutliche Beweise, dass der Mensch nichts weniger ist als Herr in seinem Hause! Schizophrenie also im weiteren Sinne des Wortes! Sagen, Märchen und Legenden weisen auf solche Mängel hin: Das zerbrochene Schwert, das Siegfried wieder ganz macht, während es den »Zwergen« nicht gelang, trotz aller List und Erfindungsgabe; das schlafende Dornröschen, das durch einen Kuss erweckt werden muss, der Sündenfall in der Bibel.[26]

Jeger finds a common *Tiefstruktur* in the four investigated novels, which is independent from the individual plots and whose constitutive elements are: first, a cyclicity of events (*das Zyklische*) that characterizes the life of the protagonists and that must be interrupted to allow their personal growth[27], and second, a secret (*Geheimnis*) that motivates the actions undertaken by the protagonists to change the negative cyclicity of their lives[28]. When it comes to the *Initiationsweg* itself, Jeger identifies five key-moments that occur in all four narrations: 1) the beginning (characterized by its cyclicity); 2) the progressive and the 'ascendent' estrangement from the initial situation – an estrangement that is connected to a 'fantastic' event and to the encounter with an unreachable woman –; 3) a third phase of "moral collapse" where the very existence of the protagonist's world is questioned and the character experiences what Jeger calls the "metaphoric death"; 4) a fourth phase where the character acquires a new life where his perception of the world has changed in favor of a unified inner life of conscious and unconscious; 5) in the end a final moment when the plot and the inner growth of the character are acknowledged as fulfilled[29]. In addition, it should be highlighted that Meyrink's solutions for the characters' inner growth are seen by Jeger as intentionally devoid of a specific dogmatic teaching, and that the togetherness of philosophies and religious thoughts introduced in the novels are meant to stress the complete openness and freedom to find the appropriate sources for individual spiritual revolution. The concept of 'individual' is fundamental for Meyrink's worldview, as the author excludes any possible collective growth. From this notion stems his anti-dogmatism and his refusal of collective religious movements. Moreover, Meyrink also stresses that the individuum must find their way in their own inner reality, and must not be guided by any external force, be it a god or a demon, precisely in virtue of their individual independence[30]. Any conception of divinity

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[26] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die Verwandlung des Blutes* in: *An der Grenze des Jenseits, Die Verwandlung des Blutes – Zwei Essays zu den Themen, Okkultismus und Yoga*, hrsg. von Marianne Schneider, Berlin 2006, pp. 76-157, here: p. 106.

[27] This process traces the notion of breaking the mechanism of *karma* in Mahayana Buddhism.

[28] Jeger, Alexander, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 9.

[29] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink* pp. 9-10.

[30] Cfr. Jeger *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 40: „Da es die Überzeugung von Meyrink ist, dass die wesentlichen Wahrheiten dem Menschen von „innen" – d.h. aus der Quelle des eigenen Selbst, des Wesenskerns, vermittelt durch den „Lotsen" – zukommen, ist bestenfalls trügerisch, schlimmstenfalls gefährlich, was als Einfluss von „aussen" an den Menschen herantritt. Es verwundert daher nicht, dass Meyrink jegliche Dogmatik in Bezug auf religiöse Fragen, wie gesagt, strikt ablehnt und dass er entsprechend besonders die geistige Dynamik von Gruppen, wie sie in institutionalisierten Religionen oder in Sekten zum Vorschein kommt, sehr kritisch betrachtet. Ganz klar ist für Meyrink, dass jegliche konkret „religiöse" Vorstellung mit theistischem Kern nur auf Abwege führen kann: Weil alle Möglichkeiten nur im eigenen Wesen angelegt seien, führe jede Annahme einer externen, personalen Gottheit

when it comes to personal growth only enhances the *innere Gespaltenheit* and results in what Meyrink openly calls a spiritual schizophrenia[31].

Thierfelder's reflections on the author's worldview, based on the concepts of *Scheinbild*, revelation and crisis, were also useful in understanding Meyrink's philosophy. Besides the previously mentioned double structure of reality, made of a deceiving perceived world on the one hand (*Scheinbild*) and of an essential dimension that must be uncovered through a path of self-discovery on the other, Thierfelder highlights the importance acquired, in Meyrink's message, by the triumph over a moment of crisis[32] where the initiate must choose whether to live on by acquiring a new life perspective or let himself perish. This key-moment, which Thierfelder describes through the example of the essayistic story *Der Lotse* (1952)[33], constitutes the decisive change of perspective for the main characters, and has also been noticed by Jeger, who stresses how this change is usually described as sudden[34]. In this regard, Jeger quotes Meyrink's *Verwandlung des Blutes*:

„Umstellen der Erkenntnis allein bewirkt, dass das Fatum sich ändert. Ein Wegdenken des Schattens an der Wand hat keinerlei Wirkung; um ihn zu verändern, muss der Gegenstand, der zwischen Licht und Wand steht, anders gestellt werden. Wer das vermag – bildlich gesprochen –, der wird Herr über sein Schicksal."[35]

These aspects of Meyrink's philosophical thought are considered most relevant to the present research. One of the initial sections of the thesis is dedicated to the relationship between this worldview and its impact on Meyrink's poetics. In this section, chapter 3.1-3.2, the explanation of Meyrink's perspective on the structure of reality and its literary outcomes is given through the analysis of the literary motifs introduced in *Der Lotse*, the essay where the author recounts his first encounter with esoteric matters.

The debate on Meyrink's poetics of visual imagination and the 'Prague paradigm'

The present study is divided into two main blocks, the first being dedicated to the definition of some elements of Meyrink's spatial poetics and the second being entirely devoted to text analysis, implying that the investigation of the latter follows the conclusions drawn in the former.

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zwangsläufig weg von der angestrebten Zentrierung im inneren Selbst und von der Realisierung des Wesenskerns." Here, Jeger also refers to Meyrink's *Verwandlung des Blutes*, pp. 89-114.

[31] *Die Verwandlung des Blutes*, p. 114. Interesting is the connection between this conception of *Gespaltenheit* and the fracture between the I and the Self which is identified by Mühlher as root of the investigation of the Self constituting the base of the fantastic narration, see: Mühlher, *Dichtung der Krise*, p. 454.

[32] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, pp. 3-4.

[33] Printed 1955. The text used for the analyses in the following chapters is: Meyrink, Gustav, *Der Lotse*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern. Nachgelassenes und Verstreutes*, hrsg. von Eduard Frank, Wien 1973, S. 286-293

[34] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 39.

[35] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die Verwandlung des Blutes*, p. 77.

The starting point of the first half of the thesis is Meyrink's predisposition for visuality, as well as his understanding of *Bild* and of *bildhafte Einbildung* as fundamental guidelines for the revelation process and, more in general, as signs of inner growth. Archival research involving the Meyrinkiana-*Nachlass* in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München and the manuscripts *Der Golem* and *Meister Leonhard* (1917), both preserved in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, has shown the extreme attention given by the author to the concepts of sight and visual perception, an investigation reported in chapter 3 (3.1.1. and 3.1.2.). This attention had already been noticed by previous research: the topic had been thematized in Abert's *Gustav Meyrink Conteur* and in Manfred Lube's *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie* (1970). Lube states in this regard that „Ein Characteristikum von Meyrinks denken ist seine Bevorzugung des Anschaulichen, des Konkreten vor dem Abstrakten"[36], while Abert observes:

L'imagination créatrice de Meyrink était essentiellement subordonnée à l'impact visuel. Dans sa création littéraire l'image jouait un rôle privilégié. La prédominance du concret est un de traits primordiaux de son œuvre. […] Pour comprendre le genèse interne des récits de Meyrink, il nous faut examiner avant tout le rôle de l'image.[37]

Abert recognizes, in this discourse, two kinds of images characterizing Meyrink's literary creation. The first one is the "experienced image" (*image vécue*), understood as a series of scenes of grotesque or unsettling quality which have their roots in the author's biography and, given their peculiarity, seem to have obsessed the writer as they tend to be repeatedly used in his creations. An example of these images are Meyrink's depictions of carnivalesque fairs and their attractions (such as phenomena of deformities and para-scientific experiments) which stem from Meyrink's own experience as spectator at similar events[38]. The second kind is the "elaborated image" (*image élaborée*), which also originated in Meyrink's biography but is connected to his observation of works of art: these images include Meyrink's references to existing pictures, sculptures, etchings and pieces of architecture. In this regard, Abert references the author's friendship with painters and illustrators such as Alfred Kubin (1877-1959), Franz Christophe (1875-1946), Olaf Gulbrasson (1873-1958) etc., and also identifies numerous works of art that are openly addressed in Meyrink's short stories[39]. In the same respect, Lube dedicates a section of his dissertation to the close relationship between Meyrink's space depiction and the heritage of the *Jugendstil*[40], which Margherita Cottone associates to the author's frequent depiction of grotesque apartments characterized by anthropomorphic ornaments – which in

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[36] Lube, Manfred, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, Graz 1970 (Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der philosophischen Fakultät der Karl-Franzens-Universität), p. 228.
[37] Abert, *Gustav Meyrink Conteur,* p. 55.
[38] Abert, *Gustav Meyrink Conteur*, pp. 55-58.
[39] Abert, *Gustav Meyrink Conteur*, pp. 58-59.
[40] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 254-265.

Meyrink's prose become objects made of actual human body parts (for example, the corpse clock in *Das Präparat*)[41]. Furthermore, Lube reports a series of statements coming from Meyrink's notes, essays and novels where the concept of *Bild* is placed in opposition to verbal language (*Wort*). Such sources include the text *Bilder im Luftraum* (1927)[42], where the author declares to have acquired a pictorial imagination as a consequence of his spiritual awakening, and by doing so openly associates the idea of *Bild* to the concept of 'vision' understood in a mystical sense (see: chapter 3.1.). However, Lube considers the unfinished novel *Das Haus des Alchemisten* (1973) the most complete repertoire of Meyrink's thoughts on the *Bild/Wort* opposition, a reflection that led to the inclusion of said work in the corpus of this research.

Two works represent a point of departure when reflecting on Meyrink's pictorial creation: the manuscript of *Meister Leonhard*[43], consulted in the literature archive in Marbach, and the fragment *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, along with its exposés. The manuscripts and the typewritten documents related to this work were examined in Munich (Meyrinkiana), but the exposé and the unfinished novel are, in this dissertation, mainly analyzed through the version that was published in *Das Haus zur letzten Latern* (1973). Visuality is here considered a programmatic trait of the author's poetics, where the stylistic experimentation with concrete descriptions interacts with the philosophical notion of vision, which is part of the apocalyptic message included in Meyrink's novels.

The importance of visual imagination in Meyrink's narrative has also been noticed by literary criticism in relation to the descriptions of the Prague landscape in *Der Golem* and in *Walpurgisnacht*, works where the depiction of the Bohemian capital can be analyzed, beyond its symbolic quality as metaphor for the inner reality, as part of an imagery characterizing Bohemian German literature between the *Jahrhundertwende* and the 1930s. This imagery is presented in chapter 2.3.-2.4. and consists of the insistent use of motifs related to the sphere of the magical, the mysterious and, at the same time, of the decadent. This attitude is present in numerous works from this period, including Paul Leppin's *Severins Gang in die Finsternis* (1914), Rainer Marie Rilke's *Zwei Prager Geschichten* (1899), Max Brod's *Tycho Brahe's Weg zu Gott* (1917), Auguste Hauschner's *Der Tod des Löwen* (1916), and can be primarily connected to a conception of Prague as a 'far away' land of the marvelous, at the margin of civilization, that is also present in English and French literature since Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* (where 'Bohemia' is told to be a desertic land on the sea,

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[41] Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*, p. 42: "Vi è in questa scena finale un gusto per il grottesco che, pur rasentando il cattivo gusto, sembra nascondere anche un'allusione sarcastica allo stile funerario dell'epoca, in cui oggetti in forma antropomorfa ornavano le abitazioni come preziosi arredi." [There is a penchant for the grotesque in this scene which, albeit bordering on bad taste, seems to conceal a sarcastic allusion to the funerary style of the time, where anthropomorphic objects ornated houses like precious pieces of furniture.]

[42] Meyrink, Gustav, *Bilder im Luftraum*, in: Prager Tageblatt 56, nr. 561, 27.XI.1927, Morgenausgabe, p. II.

[43] The final version was published in *Fledermäuse* (1916).

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symbolizing a non-existing dimension), but also in 19[44] century Germany[44]. Meyrink was aware of this stereotype, as is evident in *Prag*, where he states: „Selten wissen Engländer oder Franzosen, wo Prag liegt, - denn sie haben, wie es in der Bibel steht, den besseren Teil erwählt"[45]. On the other hand, however, the specific use of this motif in Bohemian German literature has been traced back to a second idea, i.e., the association of a city at the margin of a political or cultural organism (in this case, at the eastern border of the Austro-Hungarian empire) with Jurij Lotman's (1922-1993) concept of the eccentric city (chapter 2.4.2.)[46]. According to Lotman, who theorized the notion of eccentricity using Saint Petersburg as point of departure, the imagery characterizing the eccentric metropolis depicts it as a dimension where, on the one hand, there is communication between the reigns of reality and imagination, of wakefulness and dream, of life and death, but also of rationality and irrationality, while, on the other hand, the existence of the city is constantly perceived as being threatened by natural and cosmic disruptive forces[47]. This association between Prague and the idea of eccentricity makes the Bohemian capital relatable to both an idea of revelation (stemming from the communication between several nuances of real and unreal) and a certain understanding of eschatology/sense of approaching end. Since these two nuances of apocalypticism correspond to the ones investigated in the present dissertation, the role of the eccentric Prague in the analysis of Meyrink's revelatory spaces becomes extremely meaningful. Chapter 3 examines, therefore, two late texts of Meyrink's that can be considered emblematic of the author's conception of Prague: the short stories *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* (1929) and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* (1928). The two works feature the idea of Prague as threshold between two dimensions as the main object of discussion, a notion that Meyrink introduces by stressing the correspondence between the Czech terms *Praha*, Prague, and *práh*, threshold[48]. The analysis in Chapter 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. first of all shows the traits that make this city an appropriate symbol of Meyrink's worldview, by highlighting how the author ascribes to this landscape the ability to connect not only rational and irrational reality, but also different cultural (eastern and western) and temporal (past and present) spaces. Another part of Chapter 3, section 3.4., hypothesizes the establishment, in Meyrink's narrative, of a 'Prague paradigm' influencing his creation of apocalyptic spaces. To highlight the correspondences between Meyrink's Prague and other texts of his that present settings other than the Czech capital, it has been chosen to analyze space depiction in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, an unfinished novel posthumously

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[44] Cfr. Sayer, Derek, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, trans. Alena Sayer, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000, pp. 5-17.
[45] *Prag. Eine optimistisch gehaltene Städteschilderung in vier Bildern*, p. 286.
[46] See: Fritz, Susanne, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, Dresden: Thelem 2005.
[47] See: Lotman, Jurij, *Il simbolismo di Pietroburgo e i problemi della semiotica della città* in: *Semiosfera:l'asimmetria e il dialogo delle strutture pensanti*, trans. Simonetta Silvestroni, Venezia: Marsilio 1985, pp. 225-245. The constant threatening is here attributed to the fact that the eccentric city is considered to be existing against the divine/cosmic plan, differently from the concentric one, which was planned to be eternal and in constant communication with the divine.
[48] Cfr. Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*, p. 60.

published in 1973 and set in an anonymous German city. The space taken into consideration in the analysis of 3.4. is not so much the city but the building called *Haus zum Pfau*, actual focus of the narration, which presents a series of similarities with the Prague depicted in *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* and *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*. The analysis of these two short stories, of *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, and of the role of the *Bild/Wort* opposition in Meyrink's mystical discourse, leads to two main conclusions: first, an observation of the functional 'Prague paradigm' in all the researched texts, second, the importance of the notion of timelessness (*Zeitlosigkeit*) in constructing the 'Prague' landscape, and consequently Meyrink's literary space. The literary devices used by the author to indicate the absence of time, or rather the synthesis of all time dimensions in a non-chronological continuum, are numerous, and include pseudepigraphs and constant references to historical events characterizing the reception of Prague's history in several Bohemian German works (the Hussite Wars, Rudolph II, the dismantling of the Jewish district, legends related to the Hunger Tower and so forth). This *Zeitolsigkeit* seems to constitute the actual structure of reality in Meyrink's worldview – in this respect, the final part of this first half of the dissertation (3.5 and 3.6) hypothesizes a connection between the role of the image in Meyrink's programmatic reflection on the superiority of the pictorial imagination and his conception of time. By taking into account the aesthetic conception of figurative arts as the art of space, where time is absent, and of literature (word) as the art of time, where space is excluded[49], this final analysis suggests a close link between the aesthetic idea of image as immediate and timeless and Meyrink's appreciation of the pictorial imagination at the detriment of the verbal one.

Space and time in the genre apocalypse and their relation to Meyrink's poetics

When it comes to the methodological approaches concerning apocalyptic time and space, a further premise must be made, since some theories related to the notion of apocalyptic time and space have warranted special attention in this field. Initial theoretical approaches to apocalyptic methodology derive from research on biblical and apocryphal material. The choice of using these materials might look inappropriate when it comes to analyzing Meyrink's narrative, which apparently refers more to oriental spirituality than to biblical texts and either way shows the author's awareness of the apocalyptic perspectives of modernity. However, this choice actually takes into account the author's Evangelic heritage, his frequent contacts with Christian mystical movements such as the circle of Rosicrucian Alois Mailänder (1843-1905)[50], as well as his relationship with the Theosophical Society

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[49] The main reference is here Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729-1781) treatise *Laokoon* (1766).
[50] Alois Mailänder was a Catholic Rosicrucian mystical who had his activity of religious teaching in a *Bruderheim* in Dreieichhain (currently part of the city Dreieich). Alois Mailänder's circle entered in contact with Meyrink in the last

which referred, among other sources, to the writings of Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)[51]. These movements included an apocalyptic perspective referring to biblical and apocryphal literature[52]. Besides, the similarities between texts such as *Das grüne Gesicht*, which ends with the destruction of the 'old world' through a violent storm that only spares the initiated, and the *Book of Revelation*, attracted sufficient attention to justify a more in-depth analysis of the connections between Meyrink's apocalyptic poetics and the model of space and time given in canonic and apocryphal apocalypses. The first of the chosen guidelines, first introduced by John Collins in *Apocalyptic Imagination* (1984, 1998, 2016)[53], and reaffirmed in more recent times[54],

decade of the 19th century. Part of the correspondence between him and Meyrink is preserved in the Meyrinkiana-*Nachlass* (from Mailänder to Meyrink) and refers to a series of spiritual exercises prescribed to the author by the mystical, and which Meyrink followed from 1893 to 1905. For further information in this regard see: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, pp. 177-199.

[51] Swedenborg is referenced several times in Meyrink's *An der Grenze des Jenseits* (1923). In the first occurrence of the name in the essay it is said of the philosopher: "Swedenborg, ein Mensch, der über jeden Zweifel bewiesen hat, daß er die Gabe des Hellsehens in geradezu erstaunlichem Maße besaß" (Meyrink, Gustav, *An der Grenze des Jenseits*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern. Nachgelassenes und Verstreutes*, hrsg. von Eduard Frank, Wien 1973, pp. 372-451, here: p. 378).

[52] In the Germanophone context, the rediscovery of an apocalyptic mentality in a religious sense derives in huge part from a special attention given, not surprisingly, to sources stemming from the end-time awareness in Evangelic field, such as the interpretation of Saint John's apocalypse made by the philologue Johannes Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) through a millenarist perspective (Bengel, Johannes Albrecht, *Erklärte Offenbarung Johannis und vielmehr Jesu Christi*, Stuttgart: Erhard 1740, original text available at: https://digital.lb-oldenburg.de/vd18/content/thumbview/684109) and the occultist commentaries to sacred scripts made by the theologue Friedrich Christoph Oetinger (1702-1782). Worth of attention were, nevertheless, also the 17th and 18th century philosophers and theologues who had influenced these manifestations of Pietist mystic: important in this field were the works of Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), which struggled to give an interpretation of the relationship between earthly and otherworldly dimensions, but also of the nature of God. In both authors is evident, in this respect, a mysticism that exceeds the reading of the Scripts and gets closer to fields of philosophy where the interaction between nature and spirituality is more pronounced: in this direction must be understood their interest in alchemy in 16th century natural philosophy and, with a different and more visionary perspective, in occultism. About the importance of Böhme and Swedenborg in the eschatological reflection in 19th and 20th century German culture see: Zimdars-Swartz, Sandra L. / Zimdars-Swartz, Paul F., *Apocalypticism in Western Europe*, in: Stein, Stephen J. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 3, *Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age*, pp. 266-267. When it comes to Meyrink's contacts with groups concerned with philosophical conceptions close to these philosophers, an important role is played by his knowledge of Helena Petrowna Blavatsky (1831-1891)' Theosophical Society, and his belonging to the lodge *Zum Blauen Stern*, theosophical group founded in Meyrink's apartment in Prague. The Theosophical Society is mentioned in *Die Verwandlung des Blutes* as part of his experiences as well. See: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 120: "Die von Meyrink erwähnte *Theosophische Gesellschaft* (*Theosophical Society*) war eine freie Vereinigung nach Art der Freimauerei ohne beglaubigte Autorität. [Die Gesellschaft] wurde am 17. November 1875 in New York gegründet, und zwar von Helena Petrowna Blavatsky (1831-1891), William Q. Judge (1851-1896) und dem amerikanischen Journalisten Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) […] Meyrink stand den Folgeerscheinungen der von Helena Blavatsky ausgelöste Bestrebungen skeptisch gegenüber, auch wenn er keineswegs die Existenz geistiger Führer bestritt. […] (p. 107)" and in regards to *Zum Blauen Stern*: "Von dem Wiener Theosophenzirkel ging die Gründung der Prager Ortsgruppe aus, die dazu bestimmt war, die *Theosophische Gesellschaft* in der böhmischen Metropole zu verankern. Es war der Baron Leonhardi, der 1891 Friedrich Eckstein und den Grafen Polycarp von Leiningen-Billigheim nach Prag brachte und in Meyrinks Wohnung in der Ferdinandsstraße die Loge *Zum blauen Stern* gründete.".

[53] Collins edited his research anew several times, and the edition consulted in this research is the most recent (2016). However, Collin's first definition of apocalyptic literature, reported in all the editions of the book, had already been published in the magazine *Semeia*, n. 14, in 1979. See: Collins, John, *Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 2016, p.5.

[54] Cfr. Di Tommaso, Lorenzo: "Il concetto apocalittico di spazio presume l'esistenza di due realtà separate e distinte. Una realtà è trascendente/ultraterrena; l'altra realtà è mondano/terrena. Sebbene queste realtà siano tradizionalmente chiamate «Paradiso» (o «Cielo»: rendiamo qui con «Paradiso» il termine inglese «Heaven») e «Terra» («Earth»), entrambe sono categorie ontologiche piuttosto che ambiti cosmologici o entità fisiche. Nella mentalità apocalittica, il Paradiso è la realtà genuina e perfetta. È eterno, indistruttibile e l'unica fonte di dati veritieri. Possiede il carattere di entità definitiva

defines the genre apocalypse as a kind of literature where a transcendent reality is revealed and where space is hence composed of two layers, i.e., the earthly and the otherworldly dimension, that become tangent as consequence of the revelatory process[55]. This notion was useful in that it suited not only the idea of Prague's eccentricity, but also, as is discovered in the analysis, Meyrink's own idea of space. The second guideline, on the other hand, is the relationship between the eschatological time that can be found in apocalypses, which is unidirectional (Collins: "the revelation is [...] temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation"[56]), and the cyclical perspective which can also be observed in apocalyptical texts. This relationship between eschatology and cyclical time is close to Meyrink's view of cosmic time. Given the premise that apocalyptic time is seen by Collins and other scholars as something exclusively oriented towards an *eschaton*, a study by Frances Flannery Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model* (1999), combines the eschatological and the cyclical perspective, in that it observes the mutual references between destination and beginning in Jewish and apocryphal apocalypses, where the revealed *telos*, or the revealed paradise, tends to correspond to the Eden of the Genesis. Since, in fact, correspondences between the events of the revelation and the events of the biblical past are frequent throughout the analyzed apocalypses and do not influence the *eschaton* exclusively, Dailey sees in this repetition a representation of the absence of chronological time and theorizes a model that can illustrate these peculiarities: the spiral model (chapter 1.4)[57]. This study is highly meaningful for the interpretation of Meyrink's apocalyptic poetics because it thematizes correspondences and communication between several temporal dimensions and the resulting *Zeitlosigkeit* as seen from a chronological perspective, a topic that is deeply rooted in the currently analyzed corpus.

However, the choice of using methodological references related to biblical and apocryphal texts does not mean promoting a perspective on Meyrink's writing that ignores the apocalyptic components more relatable to the literature of his time – a literature which, as previously stated, widely explored the apocalyptical perspective, especially when it comes to the depiction of eschatological worldviews in a decadent sense. In fact, the corpus selected for this dissertation stands out for being linked to

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universale. La Terra, d'altra parte, è considerata l'opposto del Cielo sotto ogni aspetto: una volta era perfetta, ma ora è imperfetta, essendo stata irrimediabilmente corrotta dal male" [The apocalyptic conception of space presumes the existence of two separated realities. One is transcendent/otherworldly; the other is worldly/earthly. Although these realities are traditionally defined as "Heaven" [...] and "Earth", they are both ontological categories rather than cosmological fields or physical entities. According to apocalyptic mentality, Heaven is the genuine and perfect reality. It is eternal, indestructible and the only source of true information. It possesses the character of a definitive and universal entity. The Earth, on the other hand, is considered the opposite of Heaven in every aspect: it was once perfect, but it is now defective, since it has been irreparably corrupted by evil.] (Di Tommaso, Lorenzo, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, in: Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo, 2020, n. 1, pp. 73-99, here: p. 80).
[55] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 5-7. Collins' work has also been fundamental for the understanding of the formal parameters of apocalypses as a genre and of apocalypticism as attitude and cultural movement.
[56] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 5.
[57] See: Dailey, Frances Flannery, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model* in: 1999 Seminar Papers, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 1999, pp. 231-246. The model is also explained in chapter 1.4.3.

metropolitan landscapes on the one hand - since the main focus of the text analysis are *Das grüne Gesicht*, set in Amsterdam, and *Walpurgisnacht*, set in Prague - and to World War I on the other - since the novels have been published in 1916 and 1917 respectively. Hence, part of the aims of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between an apocalyptic model, deriving from a Jewish-Christian eschatological perspective, and the apocalyptic models of the *Moderne*, where the biblical component interacts with the sense of an approaching end caused by the estranging metropolises - milieus characterized by problematics such as the emergence of the mass man and an automation/mechanization of life that leads to questioning the position of human beings within the contemporary world.

Notes to text analysis

The second half of the thesis is mainly dedicated to the analysis of *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Walpurgisnacht*, but it also includes two other texts, Alfred Kubin's *Die andere Seite* and Auguste Hauschner's (1850-1924) *Der Tod des Löwen*. The selection of *Das grüne Gesicht* has primarily been inspired by the explicitly apocalyptic content of the novel: the story revolves around the main character's inner growth, but the plot is set in an imaginary post-war Amsterdam, which is described as a metropolis invaded by people from all of western and eastern Europe. The atmosphere in this environment is extremely tense, people are irreparably traumatized by the violence of the first worldly conflict and the stagnant, putrescent city seems to announce the imminent end of the world – until, in the final chapters, seasons literally cease to alternate. In the end, during an eternally grey and dry season, the city is destroyed by a tornado along with the rest of Europe. Given the extreme importance of spatial *Metaphorik* related to apocalypticism in this case and the scarce interest shown so far by literary criticism for this novel, it has been decided to devote not one but two chapters to this work. The first analysis, in chapter 4, is focused on the representations of the mass/individuum dichotomy and on the placement of Meyrink's Amsterdam in the category of the eccentric cities on the one hand and of the introduced Prague paradigm on the other, while the second analysis, in chapter 5, concentrates on the analogies between *Das grüne Gesicht* and Kubin's *Die andere Seite*. This first comparative study is reminiscent of the intellectual friendship between Meyrink and Kubin, as well as of the collaboration between the two authors in relation to the first conception of *Der Golem*, whose illustrated edition had been initially commissioned to Kubin himself. The aim of the chapter is to show the continuity of an aesthetic dialogue connecting the two writers beyond their first mutual project, also taking into account the influence of the first *Golem* manuscript on Kubin's imagination, an influence which is evident when noticing how Meyrink's suggestions affected the depiction of

Kubin's fictional city, Perle. The analysis proceeds, in this case, by highlighting the similar structures of Meyrink's Amsterdam and Kubin's Perle, which fit the definition of heterotopias and heterochronias given by Michel Foucault (chapter 5.4.1.), and by pointing out the problematic relationship with the idea of the future that is visible in both novels and that foreshadows the final collapse of both Amsterdam and Perle. A reflection on the role of collapsing space itself is presented in the last section of the chapter.

The second comparative study (chapter 6) looks at the connections between Auguste Hauschner's spatial poetics in *Der Tod des Löwen* and Meyrink's space depiction in *Walpurgisnacht*, both understood in apocalyptical terms. Since the reception of Hauschner in relation to Meyrink's work is not as widespread as Kubin's in literary criticism, this section first presents an introduction to the topic. The points of contact between her novel *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Der Golem*, which are not merely limited to the eccentric Prague imagery, are also matter of discussion throughout the chapter: both novels show in fact an apocalyptic structure focused on the fragmentary identity of the protagonists, where the aspirations of the characters are linked to the encounter with doppelgangers and, on the other hand, with an unreachable girl (cfr. Jeger) who is also the daughter of a spiritual guide, as well as with a 'golem' symbolizing anonymity. Hauschner's knowledge of Meyrink's text, as well as an association of the two texts that was drawn right after the publication of Hauschner's novella, are attested by Helena Teufel's archive research published in *Auguste Hauschner – Eine Pragerin in Berlin* (1991)[58]. This close intertextual relationship between *Der Golem* and *Der Tod des Löwen* is the point of departure for the comparative study between Hauschner's Prague novella and *Walpurgisnacht*. The reasons for the selection of *Walpurgisnacht*, instead of *Der Golem*, as object of comparison for the apocalyptic perspective, derives from the eschatological and decadent traits that constitute the main difference between the novels that were conceived by Meyrink during wartime and *Der Golem*, which, although its first chapters were published between 1913 and 1914, is actually the product of an older imagination where World War I does not play any role and the deconstruction of space is not as violent as in *Walpurgisnacht* and in *Das grüne Gesicht*. In these two later texts, the decline of the 'old world' and of contemporary society in general, which stands in opposition to the initiation process, is the main matter of discussion. *Walpurgisnacht* and *Der Tod des Löwen* were both published during WWI, and both envisage a political decay of Prague where the city acquires violent apocalyptic traits and where the nobles are represented as a putrescent class destined to die due to their psychological weaknesses (weaknesses which lead to political paralysis). The identity search that characterizes *Der Tod des Löwen* is also present in *Walpurgisnacht*, where this topic

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[58] See: Teufel, Helena, *Auguste Hauschner – Eine Pragerin in Berlin*, in: Pazi, Margherita / Zimmermann, Hans Dieter (ed.), *Berlin und der Prager Kreis*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 1991, pp. 57-81, here: p. 76.

involves all the main characters but only one of them goes through an actual initiation. Peculiar in the two novels is the use of the doppelgangers as revelation tool, and more specifically the device of the mirror, which is analyzed in virtue of its heterotopic quality. Both novels end with the deconstruction or transformation of environments connected to traumatic and memorial aspects (the 17th century Jewish district in *Der Tod des Löwen* and the Hunger Tower in *Walpurgisnacht*), with the protagonists dying after the fulfillment (whether positive or negative in nature) of their revelatory paths, with Prague waiting for a new incoming political leadership and with the awareness that the political and social landscape has experienced a permanent change.

The research highlights how Meyrink's work concerns an interaction between a philosophical message linked to a series of spiritual teachings and a socio-political discourse strongly connected to the tense situations of his time. The analysis of space depiction reveals the double nature of a space of political crisis, as is the case of the dichotomic space in the Prague of *Walpurgisnacht*, which also acquires a metaphoric value by representing a relationship between conscious and unconscious thought. Pointing out the correspondence provided by the representation of personal growth in an environment characterized by evident socio-political issues, not only highlights Meyrink's observation of his contemporary world, which undermines his image of an author mostly detached from the problems of his time, but also makes particular aspects of his poetics apparent. At the same time, the comparative analysis reveals how the writer's techniques and interests connecting inner reality and socio-political matter are partially shared by Alfred Kubin and Auguste Hauschner, while also possessing qualities which clearly prove the uniqueness of Gustav Meyrink as an author.

Part I

Theoretical approaches and Meyrink's spatial poetics

Chapter I

Frameworks

1. Premise

This chapter examines a series of theoretical frameworks in which Meyrink's spatial poetics has been inserted by literary research starting from the 1950s, and highlights what aspects of these frameworks can be considered relevant to the present dissertation. In addition, it explains how the theoretical approaches to Meyrink's apocalyptic space are connected to the theories being mentioned, and what reflections on temporal and spatial structures of the genre apocalypse can interact with this research. As stated in the introduction, the interest of literary criticism for Meyrink's space depiction mainly revolves around his novel *Der Golem*. This focus has led the research on Meyrink's spatial poetics to take the landscape of Prague depicted in this work, and the dimension of the *Judenstadt* in particular, as main reference points. Another consequence of this Golem-centered theory has been that the categories stemming from the characteristics related to this piece of fiction have been chosen as guidelines for the understanding of Meyrink's poetics in general. Since *Der Golem* is mainly categorized as esoteric work and as fantastic and metropolitan literature, the spatial models related to these genres are the ones still considered most relevant to the current interpretation of Meyrink. Excluding the relationships between Meyrink's Prague and esoteric models, *Der Golem* has been interpreted, when it comes to space depiction, mostly through the categories of the *Phantastik* and of the *Unheimlich*, but also through the lens of the conflict between estrangement and identity/memory in *Fin de Siècle* metropolitan literature, as well as through Expressionism's interpretation of urban space. Recent research has also added another methodological perspective that can be applied to Meyrink's Prague, that of intercultural studies, which is linked to the understanding of Prague's landscape as transcultural organism. All these frameworks engage with one category usually associated to esoterism, that of the threshold.

It has been explained that Meyrink's researched corpus in this dissertation belongs almost entirely, with the exception of the *Meister Leonhard* manuscript, to a metropolitan context. Three of these texts are set in Prague (*Walpurgisnacht*, *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*), while the other two are set in Amsterdam (*Das grüne Gesicht*) and in a generic German city (*Das Haus des Alchemisten*). Aesthetic traits stemming from metropolitan literature, especially those related to the representations of heterogenic collective spaces and to the discussion of individual anonymity and estrangement mechanisms, are strongly present in the novels here taken into consideration, while the researched short stories tend to concentrate on the relationship between metropolitan environment and a particular conception of time and memory in this collective dimension. Categories related to these fields are, therefore, meaningful to this research, and they become increasingly important throughout this analysis as they interact with apocalyptic conceptions of the city – as it happens to be the focus of the metropolitan branch of Expressionism.

It should be added that Meyrink's literary space is fundamentally influenced by the paradigms of uncertainty, which according to Tzvetan Todorov (1939-2017) characterize the fantastic mentality (see: chapter 1.3.3.). Although Meyrink's texts should also be considered allegorical (and therefore not properly fantastic according to Todorov's definition), it is true that numerous artifices put his protagonists in uncertain situations, that this uncertainty is fundamental when it comes to the revelation process and that the role of spatial dimension in this discourse is critical. This is true for all the analyzed texts, although the inserted artifices are various, and this is the reason why a theoretical reflection on fantastic space is provided in this chapter.

A third methodological approach presented here stems from the definition of apocalyptic literature and from the conception of time and space deriving from the very notion of apocalypse. The section dedicated to this topic refers in fact to categories connected to the biblical conception of the apocalyptic, a conception whose echoes are extremely visible in Meyrink's work, especially when it comes to the representation of the final collapse in *Das grüne Gesicht*. The most interesting aspect of the reflection on apocalyptic chronotopos is the relationship between certain spatial theories conceived to interpret biblical and apocryphal apocalypses and the correspondences found in Meyrink's conception of space and time.

It is important to highlight that the genres and the currents of thought presented here as frameworks – Metropolitan literature (along with its manifestation in Expressionism), as well as fantastic and apocalyptic literature – are not necessarily movements that Meyrink can be said to belong to. In fact, it is problematic to place Meyrink in any movement not linked to his open devotion to mystic and esoteric matters. It is true that Meyrink has been frequently understood as an author of the Fantastic and that this categorization is considered mostly adequate in light of his frequent use of uncanny

atmospheres, and also in virtue of the numerous references he makes to the work of Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffmann, the main sources of inspiration for the aforementioned atmospheric component. However, this classification can hardly be applied to all of Meyrink's work and the author's use of the fantastic quality is mainly a point of departure to describe an initiation process – a topic that places his production in other categories.

The same argument can be made for metropolitan literature. *Moderne*'s aesthetic related to the metropolis, as well as the problems related to consciousness, perception, individuality and identity that are thematized in this literature, should be considered (when it comes to Meyrink's use of them) stylistic and metaphoric tools intended as an expression of a precise message that is linked to spiritual growth, and not only as an investigation of urban social conditions. Not that the social component of metropolitan landscapes is ignored in Meyrink's work: on the contrary, although this aspect is not always thematized in Meyrink's narration, most of his representations of urban milieus reveal a precise knowledge of collective social mechanisms, and a preliminary observation of socio-cultural problematics that are part of urban landscapes. Yet, these components have the main function of making his ethical and mystical message more concrete as it is developed in an environment possessing traits that sound familiar and credible to the reader, and that turn the spiritual experience of the protagonist into an answer to contemporary interrogatives.

When it comes to apocalyptical literature, the matter is more complex as the genre apocalypse is in fact linked to a precise cultural phase which is temporally very far from Meyrink's production, and as it represents a relationship between human and divine that is not acknowledged in Meyrink's philosophical thought – which refuses any dependence from a divine force, since referring to an otherworldly sphere would only enhance the *Gespaltenheit* that defines the crisis of human inner life. However, Meyrink's worldview is characterized by the existence of two planes of reality, which can be defined as the *Scheinbild* and the essence but, when it comes to the human role in this division, must be intended as rational and unconscious thought. Hence, his space representation must be considered apocalyptic as it involves the contact between these two spheres, while not describing a contact between the worldly and the otherworldly dimension, as usually is the case in biblical and apocryphal texts.

2. Literature and urban landscape

Giving a complete framework of the immense critical and essayistic literature on the phenomena connecting urban milieus and narrative genres during Meyrink's time is not possible in this context, and it would be fairly challenging even if this dissertation were solely dedicated to the depiction of

urban space. Some guidelines must nevertheless be provided, clearly favoring those which are most connected to Meyrink's attitude towards metropolitan environment.

The perspectives on literary urban landscapes are multiple: studies concentrate on architecture, or on the urbanistic side of literary depictions, or they can analyze the sociological aspect of the kaleidoscopic dimension of the represented city by highlighting its monetary and cultural discontinuities; or again, additionally, these studies can propose a closer look at the role and at the representations of crowds. Other areas of interest are the studies on the effects caused by the metropolitan stimuli on the individuum: these take into account the depersonalization stemming from the very existence of urban industrial space, including the intrinsic individuum/mass conflict, but also focus on the peculiarities of individual sensory perception in the urban milieu. Moreover, semiotics also gave a meaningful contribution in describing the relationship between literature and urban space by highlighting the cultural categories that are mirrored by given urban structures. The latter matter is treated in chapter 2.4, and it won't be object of discussion here. Instead, this section will be dedicated to the studies on the relationship between individuum and urban stimuli, focusing both on the problems related to loss of identity/individuality as the result of the confrontation between individuum and mass dimensions, and on the matter of kaleidoscopic perception. Secondly, a further section will observe the temporal aspects related to the depiction of urban landscape, taking into consideration the overlapping of historic dimensions and also the manifestations of cultural memory.

2.1 Urban space and multiplicity

Whatever the chosen approach to the topic, it can be stated that literature must face, when depicting urban landscapes, the challenge of representing multiplicity. This multiplicity can appear in several layers (sociological, cultural, temporal, merely physical, linguistic levels and so on), but is always the main characteristic of the metropolitan milieu[59]: literature works with the trope of urban heterogeneity by highlighting the conflicting situation deriving from it, but also by thematizing the problem of providing a certain 'point of view' in an environment which, due to its enormous dimensions, cannot be grasped entirely nor really depicted, if not, and this is important, partially or subjectively.

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[59] „Städte als politische, religiöse und kulturelle Zentren sind in besonderem Maße von Heterogenität geprägt, da sich in ihnen unterschiedliche Lebensweisen und Weltanschauungen begegnen. Hinzu kommt, dass Bauwerke, Ortsnamen und Denkmäler, die älter sind als die aktuell herrschenden politischen und sozialen Strukturen der Stadt, Spuren tragen, die in die Vergangenheit zurückweisen." Ulrike Mascher, *Stadttexte und Selbstbilder der Prager Moderne(n). Literarische Identitätsdiskurse im urbanen Raum*, p. 21.

As explained by Karl Schlögel in *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit* (2003)[60] and noted by Brahim Moussa in *Heterotopie im theoretischen Realismus* (2012)[61], the 'spatial turn'[62] asks literature a clear question: how does writing, an art obliged to introduce different parts in sequence in order to reveal the whole, deal with the representation of multiplicity[63]? This question, which was only recently asked more insistently by literary criticism in relation to space, but was already thematized in Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766), arose within poetics much earlier than the theoretical spatial turn, and became central for authors when it came to depicting city landscapes.

Ulrike Mascher observes in her research *Stadttexte und Selbstbilder der Prager Moderne(n)* (2021) that: „Ihre Heterogenität und Vieldeutigkeit in kultureller, politischer, sozialer und sprachlicher Hinsicht machen die Stadt zu *dem* Topos der Moderne."[64] The role of the metropolis is not in fact that predominant during the *Moderne*, since representations of rural areas or, in general, of fictional environments devoid of a metropolitan framework, are not rare in this period and they also display heterogeneity. Regardless, this statement identifies the *Moderne* as a mirror for conflicts and crises related to concepts such as cultural identity, nationalism and politics, but also to the development of a new sort of individual world experience where the discovery of the subconscious and of the extreme subjectivity of perceived space and time played a meaningful role, and where the city constituted an adequate territory for investigation. From this perspective, it can be said that the *Fin de Siècle* is characterized by a series of new attempts to rediscover reality, to codify the perceived world through a new analysis of a physical and cultural environment which not only has changed in its appearance, due to an essential technological progress, but is also experienced differently due to the consequences this change caused to people's worldview. The answers provided by writers to these consequences are visible in the development of techniques such as the *Sekundenstil*, where the protagonist's perception of phenomena is described in every single frame, so that literally every second of the

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[60] Schödel, Karl, *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, München: Hanser 2003.

[61] Moussa, Brahim, *Heterotopie im theoretischen Realismus. Andere Räume, andere Texte*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis 2012.

[62] The term 'spatial turn' was initially used by Edward Soja in *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), where he presents the contribution of the first scholars who interpreted history as readable through the observation of spaces instead of by exclusively concentrating on the concept of duration, time and sequence, a shift Soja describes as stemming from the thought of postmodernity but still very difficult, in the 1980s, to accept in opposition to the prevailing historicism that keeps highlighting the prevailing importance of the analysis of time. The origins of the process must be placed, according to Soja, in the decades 1970s and 1980s, and the voices that emerged despite the academic skepticism and that must be considered the ground voices of spatial turn nowadays are the ones, Soja states, of Henri Lefebvre and Michael Foucault. The problem faced by Lefebvre and Foucault, and in general by the historicism aligned to the spatial turn, is the reading of history and society not only through the observation of events from a chronological perspective, but also through a new approach in reading maps of public, private, political and social spaces. Soja names this shift a "critical sensibility to the spatiality of social life", where humanity and the world in general are considered not only in virtue of their "making history", but also of building "human geographies". Main premise of this perspective is that space reflects/mirrors a series of cultural signs that can explain historical phenomena and social structures in a meaningful measure, so that events, phenomena and human beings are seen as part of both an historical and a geographical context. See: Soja, Edward W., *Postmodernist Geographies. The Reassertion of space in critical theory*, London/New York: Verso 1989, p 11.

[63] See: Moussa, *Heterotopie im theoretischen Realismus*, p. 13.

[64] Mascher, *Stadttexte und Selbstbilder der Prager Moderne(n)*, p. 21.

phenomenon acquires importance because of how it affects the character's inner life, and the event described from the character's internal perspective lasts the same amount of seconds that are needed to read the actual sequence.

This naturalistic technique is exemplified by a passage in Gerhart Hauptmann's (1862-1946) *Bahnwärter Thiel* (1888), where the arrival of a train, a process lasting circa 20 seconds, is described as:

Der Zug wurde sichtbar – er kam näher – in unzählbar sich überhastenden Stößen fauchte der Dampf aus dem schwarzen Maschinenschlote. Da: ein – zwei – drei milchweiße Dampfstrahlen quollen kerzengerade empor, und gleich darauf brachte die Luft den Pfiff der Maschine getragen. Dreimal hintereinander, kurz, grell, beängstigend. Sie bremsen, dachte Thiel, warum nur? Und wieder gellten die Notpfiffe schreiend, den Widerhall weckend, diesmal in langer, ununterbrochener Reihe.[65]

It actually takes 20 seconds to read this passage and the phases of the arrival are depicted using details which are not necessary for understanding the movement of the train in and of itself but are there to prolong the sequence. In this respect, the approaching train is not only described through its appearance in the distance ("der Zug wurde sichtbar") but is stressed by the redundant "er kam näher", which expands the duration of the movement and also expresses a deeper impact on the character perceiving it. The same can be said for the counting of the steam emissions ("ein – zwei – drei milchweiße Dampfstrahlen"). In fact, for the reader, the vision of the incoming train must last the same number of seconds it lasts for the character, for two main reasons: first, this creates empathy between the reader and the protagonist, and second, it prepares the reader for the literal impact this passage will have on Thiel's emotion in the following sequences, since Thiel still does not know that the train is braking abruptly because his own son is on the tracks.

Either way, the function of the *Sekundenstil* is fundamentally linked to the expression of inner reality, which in this technique is not delivered through the explicit mention of feelings and thoughts, but through the description of the way an external event, apparently a mere physical phenomenon, affects the character's perception.

In his monography *Imagined Cities. Urban experience and the language of the novel* (2005), Robert Alter observes that the development of the novel during the 19th and the 20th century is fundamentally linked, on a narratological level, to a constant shift towards the subjective experience the main characters have in relation to phenomena, a narrative shift he calls "experiential realism":

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[65] Hauptmann, Gerhart, *Bahnwärter Thiel*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1970, p. 29.

One decisive development in the novel through the late decades of the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth […] is the practice of conducting the narrative more and more through the moment-by-moment experience – sensory, visceral, and mental – of the main character or characters. This general procedure, which I shall call experiential realism, can be central to the narrative even when the novelist is also minutely concerned with social and material realia. […] The perception of the fundamental categories of time and space, the boundaries of the self, and the autonomy of the individual began to change. […] What sets [novelists] off from journalists, is the shifting pulse of experience felt by the individual, how the mind and the senses take in the world, construct it, or on occasion are confounded by it. [66]

The growing tendency towards experiential realism mirrors, but also establishes, a correspondence between inner reality and external environment, so that the analysis of the former corresponds to some extent to the analysis of the latter. The measure and the forms taken by this correspondence are naturally up to authors, genres, and literary movements. A discourse about the acknowledgment of the subjective experience of time and space has already been established and does not bear repeating; what must be stressed in this case is how the complexity of urban environment can be considered indicative when it comes to mirroring the complexity of inner life next to the political and cultural conflicts characterizing not only the *Fin de Siècle*, but also the 20th century in a more general framework. In this regard, Robert Alart stresses the role of subjectivity that is intrinsic to urban depiction despite the pretension of realism that is typical of certain literary movements:

[…] There is a qualitative difference between journalism and fiction writing that the focus on the representation of material reality tends to blur, and there may be inherent limits on the access of the novelistic imagination to objective, collective realities. To write a novel, after all, is to re-create the world from a highly colored point of view – inevitably, that of the novelist, and, often, that of the principal character as well. This strong mediation of an individual imagination is as clearly manifested in a novelist such as Emile Zola who claims to be a scrupulously empirical student of contemporary society as it is in a lyric novelist such as Virginia Woolf. [67]

When it comes to introducing literary representations of urban environments in Meyrink's time, it is therefore necessary to consider two things: on the one hand, the growing importance of subjectivity that is revealed in the modern novel through descriptions coming from what Alert calls a "highly colored point of view", and, on the other hand, the consequent interest for individual perception characterized by a "moment-by-moment experience". To better understand how these two elements (subjectivity and experiential realism) are connected when it comes to metropolitan milieus, it is useful to mention a 20th century study that permanently influenced criticism and philosophical inquiries related to the depiction and reception of city landscapes: Georg Simmel's *Die Großstadt*

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[66] Alter, Robert, *Imagined Cities. Urban experience and the language of the novel*, New Heaven/London: Yale University Press 2005, pp. X-XI.
[67] Alter, *Imagined Cities*, p. X.

und das Geistesleben (1903). In this famous essay, the philosopher thematizes the great conflict that is intrinsic to the very structure of the metropolis, the one between the individuum and the form taken by society within the city. This form puts the individual experience in a difficult position, since, being metropolitan society governed by precise laws of market and production, it imposes rhythms that preserve profit and which follow the rhythm of industry, therefore subjecting the individuum to these same economic laws and excluding any individual development that would come into conflict with them. In this regard, Simmel states that the rhythm of the city is characterized by the presence of a common "clock" regulating the life of every citizen, a clock that follows the economic rhythm, not the human one, so that "Wenn alle Uhren in Berlin plötzlich in verschiedener Richtung falschgehen würden, auch nur um den Spielraum einer Stunde, so wäre sein ganzes wirtschaftliches und sonstiges Verkehrsleben auf lange hinaus zerrüttet"[68]. It is easy to observe the difference between this treatment of time, which in the above statement is only taken into consideration in its 'objective' form, and the subjectivity presented in earlier reflections. Not surprisingly, in this regard Simmel adds:

Die Pünktlichkeit, Berechenbarkeit, Exaktheit, die die Komplikationen und Ausgedehntheiten des großstädtischen Lebens ihm [dem Großstädter] aufzwingen, steht nicht nur in engstem Zusammenhange mit ihrem geldwirtschaftlichen und ihrem intellektualistischen Charakter, sondern muss auch die Inhalte des Lebens färben und den Ausschluss jener irrationalen, instinktiven, souveränen Wesenszüge und Impulse begünstigen, die von sich aus die Lebensform bestimmen wollen, statt sie als eine allgemeine, schematisch präzisierte von außen zu empfangen.[69]

The philosopher also points out how the mind of writers and thinkers who attribute enormous value to the development of an individual inner reality cannot always adapt to the exclusion of subjectivity from everyday life.

On the other hand, Simmel also considers the perceptive and sensory aspect of the metropolitan lifestyle as worth mentioning. The other trait he considers intrinsic to the urban sphere is the abnormal quantity of stimuli that influences and to some extent 'pollutes' the citizens' perception. These stimuli come in auditive and visual form and make the metropolitan citizen slave of their presence: the inhabitants of the metropolis are forced to change their means of communication and their relationship to movement and space in order to adapt to the noise of the traffic, to the voices of the crowded space and to the constant changes in the city landscape, where people and vehicles pass by, appear and disappear, in a few seconds. To bypass the inconvenience of the hyperstimulation, citizens become indifferent to the abrupt changes in the environment and protect themselves from the eternally present crowd by interiorly detaching from it. This causes a permanent change in human

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[68] Simmel, Georg, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, Musaicum Books OK Publishing 2017 (ebook ed.), p. 8.
[69] Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, p. 8.

relationships, since the individuum is led to ignore the people surrounding them, a phenomenon that leads to the sociological paradox of a city that provides freedom, since life is not regulated by the control of the peers and people are not constantly observed and judged by a group composed of family and acquaintances, but are instead part of a stream of anonymous and unknown figures. On the other hand, metropolises promote a lifestyle which is not respectful of people's necessities as individuals and causes immense stress and mental exhaustion in order to preserve an economic rhythm that requires constant movement and activity. Literature describing this context deals, therefore, with this multiplicity of stimuli and with this paradoxical freedom where, as Simmel states, „hier wie sonst ist es keineswegs notwendig, dass die Freiheit des Menschen sich in seinem Gefühlsleben als Wohlbefinden spiegele"[70]. The answer of the writers can therefore thematize the sense of estrangement and anonymity given by the immensity of the crowd, an estrangement enhanced by the visual and auditive pollution of the metropolis, but it can also describe the perception of individuals who try to orient themselves in this intricate context and manage to find strategies to decode the metropolitan fabric. In the latter case, the aim of the writer is an exercise of perception: the author struggles to present the reader with a series of details which would otherwise pass unobserved.

2.2 The *flânerie*

Linked to this exercise are genres such as the 'physiognomy', the *feuilleton* and the *flânerie*. The *flânerie*, especially, proposes a countermovement to the general metropolitan 'clock', an action which not only opposes the imposed mechanical and economic rhythm, but also questions the premise that connects, in the metropolitan dimension, movement and production: if citizens are always required to move and to adapt to the city rhythm in order to preserve the market, production and economic growth, the *flaneur* walks throughout the city totally aimless, merely observing metropolitan life, and promotes a relationship between city and individuum which is based on laziness on the one hand and on attention to details on the other. Literary criticism struggled to give a definition of the *flaneur* that clearly distinguishes it from other phenomena related to the act of strolling and to metropolitan depiction. The debate on this figure can be extended to many fields, including geography, chronology, gender orientation and so forth. Starting from the following basic definition:

The flaneur is a solitary walker who patrols the city with a certain hauteur. One might define him thus: a solitary, disembodied being of the masculine gender who roams the streets in silence, gathering impressions in order to relay them later on to his peers. The adjective "solitary" is important. Though it is possible to find earlier texts celebrating urban walks (by John Donne, for example), those walks are in company – profoundly different and by its very nature more social proposition.

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[70] Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, p. 17.

The flaneur is characterized as a quintessentially Parisian figure, a product of the nineteenth century.[71]

It is either way possible to identify examples of *flânerie* in other European contexts - especially when it comes to London metropolitan literature - and to trace the flaneur's attitude back to some previous forms of city depictions, such as the ones published in the English *The Spectator*[72]. Moreover, the more recent debate on the existence of a female model of the *flaneur*, the *flaneuse*, has put the exclusive link between manhood and *flânerie* into question. Some recent contributions on the topic also questioned the existence of this literary figure in the first place[73]. However, this is not the place for examining these argumentations in detail: when it comes to this dissertation, the phenomenon of *flânerie* is important for it provides a literary model where an attempt to read the urban fabric is explicitly made, an attempt that deserves more attention here.

It cannot be doubted that the figure of the *flaneur* owns much of its acknowledgment to Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and to the definition given by the French decadent poet in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863):

The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flaneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world… The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito.[74]

Baudelaire's words introduce a figure who, despite rejecting elements of metropolitan life such as productivity and indifference towards the surrounding environment, builds a relationship with the city that can be summarized as extremely positive, a relationship of admiration and "immense joy" that depends on the element that the *flaneur* finds the most wonderful: the crowd. Not surprisingly, a second definition provided by the author in regards to this human type will be *homme des foules*, man of the crowd. The aim of the *flaneur* is, in fact, to describe the actions undertaken by this crowd as well as its attitude, the colored cloths and voices that characterize the scene - elements which he must divide into sections to provide, at the end, a general picture of the street, of the square, of the Parisian *passage* he is walking through. In this process, the identity of the narrating voice dissolves completely

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[71] Conlin, Johnathan, *"This Publick Sort of Obscurity": The Origins of the Flâneur in London and Paris, 1660-1780*, in: Wrigley, Richard (ed.), *The Flâneur Abroad: Historical and International Perspectives*, Newcastle: Cambrige Scholars Publishing 2014, pp. 14-39, here: p. 15.

[72] Conlin, *The Origins of the Flâneur in London and Paris*, p. 22-24.

[73] Turcot, Laurent, *Did the Flâneur Exist? A Parisian Overview*, in: Wrigley, Richard (ed.), *The Flâneur Abroad: Historical and International Perspectives*, Newcastle: Cambrige Scholars Publishing 2014, pp. 40-66.

[74] Baudelaire, Charles, *The Painter of Modern Life*, in: *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne, London: Phaidon 1964, pp. 1-40, here: p. 9.

to be absorbed by the surrounding people it is depicting. This is the meaning of Baudelaire's title *The painter of Modern Life*. Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), who analyzed Baudelaire's treatment of the city landscape in depth, in his *Passagen-Werk* (1982)[75] and in *Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire* (1971), observes how this pictorial ability that actually stems from being among the crowd is decisive when it comes to distinguishing the 19th century *flaneur* from the previous model of city depiction; in order to stress this distinction, Benjamin references E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *Des Vetters Eckfenster* (1822), where a paralyzed man teaches his visiting cousin to enjoy the market scene he can observe from his window, a landscape (the *Gendarmenmarkt* in Berlin) which represents a never-ending source of distractions and delight for him. In this story, Hoffmann depicts the market by introducing a series of characters (the flower-seller, the bookseller and so forth) who have their own little individual stories within the general framework of the market square. The scene is told in a predominantly visual way, and the aim of the narration is to build the general picture of a colored scene viewed from above. In this case, however, a clear distance between the observer and the object of the description is visible. This distance is enhanced by the I-narrator (the visiting cousin who is learning the observation techniques) engaging in constant dialogue with the other voice of the narration, the paralyzed man who tells him the stories regarding the marketplace. Hoffmann's work must be considered a reflection on urban observation, exposed in a dialogical form, where topics of urban landscape such as the crowd, the window perspective and the problem of representing the exceptional fascination of multiplicity are thoroughly analyzed. Nevertheless, it is interesting that Hoffmann's solution to the matter is to place the point of view in a distance (the high window looking over the market), while the *flaneur*'s solution is to immerge himself into the crowd and to become part of the general picture[76]. Benjamin, who compares this story not only to Baudelaire's definitions but also to the *flaneur* acting as I-narrator in Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) *Man of the Crowd* (1840), states in this regard:

Auf der eine Seite ein Vielerlei kleiner Genregebilder, die insgesamt ein Album von kolorierten Stichen bilden; auf der andern Seite ein Aufriß, der einen großen Radierer zu inspirieren imstande wäre; eine unabsehbare Menge, in welcher keiner dem andern ganz deutlich und keiner dem anderen ganz undurchschaubar ist. Dem deutschen Kleinbürger sind

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[75] Benjamin actually worked on these essays from 1927 to 1940. Benjamin, Walter, *Das Passagen-Werk*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1982.

[76] "Aber wie befangen geht der Blick dessen über die Menge hin, der in seinem Hauswesen installiert ist. Und wie durchdringend ist der des Mannes, der durch die Scheiben des Kaffeehauses starrt. In dem Unterschied der Beobachtungsposten steckt der Unterschied zwischen Berlin und London. Auf der einen Seite der Privatier; er sitzt im Erker wie in einer Rangloge; wenn er auf dem Markt sich deutlicher umsehen will, so hat er einen Opergucker zur Hand. Auf der anderen Seite der Konsument, der namenlose, der ins Kaffeehaus eintritt und es in kurzem, angezogen von dem Magneten der Masse, von dem er unablässig bestrichen wird, wieder verlassen wird." Benjamin, Walter, *Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire*, in: ders., *Charles Baudelaire. Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, Frankfurt a.M. Suhrkamp 2019, pp. 7-100, here: p. 47.

seine Grenzen eng gesteckt. Und doch war Hoffmann nach seiner Veranlagung von der Familie der Poe und der Baudelaire.[77]

It is interesting for this dissertation, that the link between Meyrink's city depiction and the *flaneur*'s observation technique can be traced back to the line connecting Hoffmann to Baudelaire and Poe, not only in relation to the problems and to the fascination deriving from the multiplicity of a colored landscape and from the carnivalesque sides of this big picture, but also in regards to other elements that were shared by the "family" Benjamin talks about (Hoffmann, Baudelaire, Poe), which is their interest for the unsettling side of certain human behaviors. It should be mentioned, in this respect, that Meyrink's poetics seems reminiscent of the 19th century *flaneur*, especially when it comes to the uncanny elements that can be associated to it. These uncanny elements are strongly related, once again, to the relationship between this figure and the crowd. The fact that Hoffmann's narrators maintained the distance provided by the high window is not accidental: the two narrating figures remain detached enough that they can keep their own perception and their own identity separated from the crowd, and the reader can imagine the primary observer, the funny "cousin" with the binoculars, as vividly as they can visualize the scenes in the depicted crowd. In fact, the reader can hardly imagine Hoffmann's story without picturing the cousin sitting at the window. Moreover, the scenes in the marketplace focus on specific individuals and, as pointed out by Benjamin, the characters become protagonists of several separated pictures which are only linked through from the above view of the narrators. The people in the market factually acquire a more precise identity through the cousin's observation. What happens in the *flânerie* and is described in its unsettling quality by Poe in *The Man of the Crowd* is, on the contrary, the total blending between observer and surrounding people. These people appear as clearly visible social types on the one hand but cannot be identified as individuals on the other:

Their brows were knit, and their eyes rolled quickly; when pushed against by fellow-wayfarers they evinced no symptom of impatience, but adjusted their clothes and hurried on. Others, still a numerous class, were restless in their movements, had flushed faces, and talked and gesticulated to themselves, as if feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around. When impeded in their progress, these people suddenly ceased muttering; but redoubled their gesticulations, and awaited, with an absent and overdone smile upon their lips, the course of the persons impeding them. If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion. There was nothing very distinctive about these two large classes beyond what I have noted.[78]

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[77] Benjamin, Walter, *Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire*, in: ders., *Charles Baudelaire. Ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus*, Frankfurt a.M. Suhrkamp 2019, pp. 7-100, here: p. 47.
[78] Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Man of the Crowd*, in: *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Cambridge (Massachusetts)/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 1978, p. 508.

The use of plural pronouns will be consistent throughout the entire narration and will only be interrupted when it comes to the person described in the title, the "man of the crowd".

The I-narrator of *The Man of the Crowd* leaves the café because he notices, among the people he is looking at through the windowpane, a man who, for unclear reasons, completely captures his attention. The dizzy protagonist will follow this individuum, who apparently possesses nothing so interesting as to justify such a fixation, for an entire day (a spectrum which also involves night, since the story begins in the afternoon), and won't stop even to sleep or to rest. The man being followed is hardly distinguishable from the rest of the crowd, and it is impossible to understand anything about his identity, even though the I-narrator has been observing him for hours. At the end of the story, an overlapping between the I-narrator and the "man of the crowd" is revealed. This odd overlapping also explains the complete loss of identity experienced by the protagonist, who initially only sees this man as part of the crowd and fails to identify him as his own doppelganger.

Being Meyrink's poetics strongly focused on the matter of identity, it is not surprising to find a correspondence between his depictions of urban space and a narrative perspective that highlights the unsettling quality of the anonymous mass. This correspondence was inquired by Jutta Müller-Tamm in *Die untote Stadt* (2004) and will be analyzed in detail in chapter 4.

Poe's text, which as explained by Benjamin follows the structure of the detective story concentrating on the concepts of inquiry, research and the analysis of reality (even in absence of a clear crime), displays another trait that is peculiar of the *flânerie* form: the struggle to decipher urban space when observing elements that are understandable to some extent (the human types within the crowd) but also unreadable in their essence (the lack of clear identity in these same people). The topic must be associated to the powerful metaphor of the "textuality of the city", where the city is interpreted as a text that must be read. This notion, which is slightly different from the idea of the "text of a city" introduced by semiotics and treated in chapter 2.4, derives from the immense inventory of images, impressions, and thoughts that can be elicited by the urban landscape. The premise for this notion is the individual ability to interpret the city from a personal perspective, where the values associated to districts, buildings, roads and houses are arbitrary and completely influenced by personal experience – therefore, the interpretation of such an environment is not only very personal but extremely complex when it comes to understanding the value this space acquires for others, and especially for an entire population. In this respect, Jonathan Conlin's states in his essay on the origins of the *flaneur*:

The city is made up of both bricks and mortar and that imagined that we all carry around with us in our imaginations. The city of the imagination weaves its web of metaphors, associations and fantasies around the actual buildings, streets and

spaces. Meanwhile the buildings' design shifts to reflect the fantasies, in turn spawning new ones. Crucial to this mutually-reflexive evolution is the city's "textuality."[79]

Reading the city text means, therefore, deciphering the "web of metaphors, associations and fantasies" evoked by the urban structure. It should be pointed out that this fruitful association between the concepts of 'text' and 'urban landscape' is something writers were fully aware of long before literary criticism identified it: to stress the reference to this metaphor, the I-narrator of *Man of the Crowd* even holds a book during his stroll, a German book which is too hard for him to read. The impossibility to decipher the city and the crowd is highlighted, in this case, by the fact that the book remains unreadable until the end of the narration. The same metaphor also appears in Meyrink's *Der Golem* and *Das grüne Gesicht*, but with another outcome[80]. One of the reasons why this overlap between city representation and the concept of reading a landscape acquires such resonance throughout literature is that it provides a solution to the problem of how to represent multiplicity in writing, an art form which is bound to consequentiality: the need to 'turn the pages' of the urban texture justifies the act of describing images one after the other from the narrator's perspective, because this narrator is taking the time to 'read' and to decode the city's fundamental traits, which is something the reader is required to do as well.

2.3 Temporality of the city landscape

This metaphor is also very fruitful when it comes to, as previously introduced, describing the meaning that a certain metropolitan landscape has for a community. In this case it is useful to reference Henri Lefebvre's (1901-1991) reflections regarding the dependence of perceived space on the social conventions that were built in relation to a certain spatial dimension. In *La production de l'espace* (1974), Lefebvre highlights that his analysis concentrates on space from a point of view that can be defined as sociological, i.e., the aim of his research is to analyze space as independent from the distinction between 'mental' space, 'physical' space and the dimension where social life occurs. Lefebvre refutes here any separation between the three notions:

What term should be used to describe the division which keeps the various types of space away from each other, so that physical space, mental space and social space do not overlap? Distortion? Disjunction? Schism? Break? As a matter of fact, the term used is far less important than the distance that separates 'ideal' space which has to do with mental (logico-mathematical)

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[79] Conlin, *The Origins of the Flâneur in London and Paris*, p. 14. Conlin refers here to: Donald, James, *Imagining the Modern City*, London: Athlone 1999, pp. 44-45. In the same text see also: p. 8 and p. 13.
[80] See Chapter 4.4. and 4.5. for the comparison between the metaphor of the book in Poe's and Meyrink's narration.

categories, from 'real' space, which is the space of social practice. In actuality each of these two kinds involves, underpins and presupposes the other.[81]

The matter is not, therefore, to analyze the way in which the subject thinks of the spatial dimension, but, instead, to unify the individuum and the experienced environment in order to consequently read the meanings that space acquires through the actions undertaken within it. Since these actions are factually interactions, the problem of perception is here interpreted by Lefebvre as the perception of social spheres and in virtue of social behaviors. Lefebvre argues therefore that "space is a product"[82], and that "the object of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*"[83]. The understanding of this process of production can serve for a better understanding of society[84]. Again, this kind of analysis cannot be conducted without considering the physical body of the spatial dimension (logico-mathematical), its practical usage and its assessment – but all these concepts must be taken as a unified object of interest[85]. Lefebvre conceives three forms of experienced space that are part of the human interactional sphere[86].

The first form is the 'spatial practice' (*la pratique spatiale*), a notion defining the material use of the spatial dimension, meaning the spaces where social life occurs. This category includes the places where the actions of production (work) and reproduction (family) take place, and it involves a certain degree of performance and competence that must be acquired and shown within the social group. Lefebvre considers the dimension of the 'spatial practice' as the product of a long process, where society presents and represents itself, hence this form of space is characterized by the creation of cohesion within the group. The places resulting from this form are sites that are typical of each social formation: without indulging in details by classifying different kinds of society, here Lefebvre names those fundamental categories that can be found at the root of culture within a more general framework, such as the building of central sites related to religion and politics, but also the building of social practice revolving around the consecration of some elements at the detriment of the negative forces

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[81] Lefebvre, Henri, *The production of space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell 1991, p. 14.
[82] Lefebvre, Henri, *The production of space*, p. 36.
[83] Lefebvre, Henri, *The production of space,* pp. 36-37.
[84] Lefebvre, Henri, *The production of space*, pp. 33-34: "In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act. From the point of view of this subject, the behavior of their space is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and at that same space contains their graves. From the point of view of knowing (*connaissance*), social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society."
[85] Lefebvre, Henri, *The production of space*, p. 15: "What is called, therefore, is a thoroughgoing exposition of these concepts, and of their relations, on the one hand with the extreme formal abstraction of logico-mathematical space, and on the other hand with the practico-sensory realm of social space. To proceed otherwise would result in a new fragmentation of the concrete universal into its original Hegelian moments: the *particular* (in this case descriptions or cross-sections of social space); the *general* (logical and mathematical); and the *singular* (i.e., 'places' considered as natural in their merely physical or sensory reality)."
[86] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 33.

threatening the community. From this distinction comes the production, for example, of places related to life and death, to devotion and amusement, to family and to the larger community; in addition, the distinction also results in the necessary division of social groups separated by different 'initiation degrees' within the same society[87]. The environments that represent the social practice are made to be, therefore, divided as much as they are intended to be linked and cohesive, since these elements are meant to construct social unity. To decipher the spatial practice of a society it is therefore necessary to decipher the spaces produced by it– where this production must be understood as a long process where the spatial dimension was originally 'experienced' and secondarily conceived and planned[88].

The second form is named the 'representations of space' (*les représentations de l'espace*), and it constitutes the spatial dimension as it is represented in cartography, and as measurable through technical instruments. This moment is the actual form where the active conception of space takes place, a moment linked to "knowledge, to signs, to codes and to 'frontal' relations"[89]. It is a dimension dominated by logical-mathematical ideas and it is considered an ordering factor: the aim of the representations of space is, namely, to harmonize the perceived and experienced space with the conceived one, and these representations must be therefore identified as the primary "mode of production"[90] of space itself. Verbalization of the spatial dimension through codes and signs and intellectual interpretation are the fundamental moments related to this form of social space, which can thus be taken as "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain kind of artists with a scientific bent."[91] As they belong to a mathematic and intellectually conceived dimension, the representations of space might appear as separated from the spatial practice, but they actually establish the relations between objects and environments. These relations are not fixed in time and can break and change when they start lacking consistency as societies develop in different, new cultural and interactional directions. However, representations of space remain fundamental as ordering factor for social and political practice[92].

The third form, the 'representational space' (*les espace de représentation*) is the experienced space as it can be interpreted through images, symbols, and attributions of meaning that are not related to an intellectual sphere. Lefebvre defines it as the space "which imagination seeks to change and appropriate", since "it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects"[93]. This is therefore

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[87] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 34.
[88] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 38.
[89] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 33.
[90] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 39.
[91] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 38.
[92] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 41.
[93] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 39.

a dimension that users and inhabitants interpret in ways that can be considered to go beyond the functional and mathematical idea of space, since this space experiences, through its inhabitants, a new signification process and becomes enriched of symbols whose meaning can be evident to the people involved but, when the categories of thought used to attribute meaning to it are not transparent anymore, is also completely uncoded. Lefebvre considers the representational space the space of art, since it requires a reading that goes beyond the evident, measurable factors of the aforementioned representations of space. However, representational space must also be distinguished from the spatial practice because it includes the meaning acquired by space in virtue of the social interactions taking place within it, but it does it without showing the social practice directly. Instead, this category provides information about the perception inhabitants have of social practice by analyzing a level of perception that is not directly linked to contemporary logic and practical usage. The representational space can, therefore, be meaningful to make the 'reader' of social space understand the meanings users attribute to social practice.

Representational spaces, on the other hand, need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people. Ethnologists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts are students of such representational spaces, whether they are aware of it or not […] Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an effective kernel or center: Ego, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time.[94]

In this regard, James Donald connects Henri Lefebvre's thought on perceived space to the idea of 'city texture' by observing how Lefebvre's notion of 'representational space' is near to the aforementioned concept of 'imagined city'.

Representational space is "the dominated - and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects". This is Lefebvre's version of my imagined city, the city between mental space, social space and physical space. The strength of his approach lies in his determination to show *how* the texture of this imagined space is produced.[95]

Moreover, perceived space is also "the material embodiment of a history of social relations"[96]. It follows that the changes experienced by social relations in a given urban space are reflected in its structure. Therefore, one of the most meaningful applications of this reflection in the studies on

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[94] Lefebvre, *The production of space*, p. 42.
[95] Donald, James, *Imagining the Modern City*, p. 16.
[96] Donald, James, *Imagining the Modern City*, p. 16.

literary space is connecting the problem of the textuality of the city with the recodification of different temporal dimensions that constitute the cultural identity of a metropolis, problem that has become even more meaningful given the importance attributed to the notion of "place of memory" after 1945[97]. The essence of this connection is viewing the metropolitan landscape as theater of social changes that are fully visible in the metamorphosis constantly experienced by architecture and other urbanistic traits, a metamorphosis were buildings, streets, monuments and so forth can be considered cultural symbols that can be signified in more directions anytime this is needed. The impact of metropolitan constant change on the individuum can result in estrangement, as Baudelaire explains in *Le Cygne* (The Swan):

A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,

Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville

Change plus vite, hélas ! que le coeur d'un mortel) ;

[Suddenly made fruitful my teeming memory,

As I walked across the new Carrousel.

— Old Paris is no more (the form of a city

Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart);]

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,

Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,

Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques,

Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus. […]

[I see only in memory that camp of stalls,

Those piles of shafts, of rough hewn cornices, the grass,

The huge stone blocks stained green in puddles of water,

And in the windows shine the jumbled bric-a-brac.

Once a menagerie was set up there;][98]

Here, the poet describes the sense of instability caused by the urbanistic modifications taking place during the first half of the 19th century. In this period Paris not only experienced a massive

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[97] Cfr. Assmann, Aleida, *Geschichte findet Stadt* in: Csáky, Moritz / Leitgelb, Christoph (hrsg.), *Kommunikation – Gedächtnis – Raum. Kulturwissenschaften nach dem „Spatial Turn"*, Bielefeld: transcript 2009; Assmann, Aleida, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Münich: C.H. Beck 1999.

[98] Baudelaire, *Le Cygne* in: *Le Fleur du Mal*, mozambook 2001 (ebook ed.).

enlargement by progressively incorporating its suburbs[99], but was also theater of constant political fights. In this regard, Baudelaire's description of the individuum experiencing a once familiar space in metamorphosis can be shifted to a further collective perspective if the past of the urban landscape is associated with a political and social past, which, in the case of *The Swan*, is not especially thematized. Part of the heterogeneity of the city depends, on the temporal level, from its possibility to reflect meaningful moments of social history which remain embodied in the urban texture, so that this landscape is characterized by the presence of traces of its past, and "im städtischen Raum verschmelzen Vergangenes, Gegenwärtiges und Zukünftiges miteinander und es kommt zu einer sichtbaren Überlagung verschiedener historischen Hinsichten"[100].

The importance temporal overlapping acquires in Meyrink's poetics is clarified in chapter 3. For now, it can be said that the author's awareness of the multiple temporal dimensions characterizing the metropolitan space is made apparent in his interpretation of Prague, the metropolis mostly characterizing his work. Different temporal layers are openly expressed in the depiction of the Prague Jewish district in three phases: its former enclosed structure, its dismantling, and the new structure it acquired during the second half of the 19th century. In fact, the overlapping between past and present is part of the tropes inventory of the so-called Prague German literature, as better clarified in chapter 2 (2.3. and 2.4.).

2.4 Urban space and Expressionism

Expressionism in the *Moderne*

The experience of the *flaneur* and his strong relationship to an urban landscape that has to be interpreted, decoded and observed in all its phenomena must be distinguished from a new literary model of space depiction that subverted German poetics during the 1910s, years in which the three novels of Meyrink's considered in this dissertation were published. This new form of artistic interpretation is called Expressionism.

It should be said in advance that Meyrink is not and shouldn't be categorized as expressionist author. He was familiar with expressionist poetics and shared many of the Expressionists' interests, especially their representation of apocalyptic landscapes, their eschatological perspective and an attitude that refused the notion of objectivity. Correspondences between his work and expressionist aesthetic have been highlighted by Thierfelder and Abret throughout their entire dissertations, but, as

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[99] See: Alter, *Imagining the City*, p. 4.
[100] Mascher, *Stadttexte und Selbstbilder der Prager Moderne(n)*, p. 21.

pointed out by Abret, Meyrink's perspective is in fact different from Expressionism especially in that the author remains skeptical in regard to any idea of socio-cultural regeneration[101]. Apart from this ideological component, contacts regarding expressionist form and contents are frequent but not as much as they allow literary criticism to canonically locate Meyrink in Expressionism. Nevertheless, understanding the expressionist experience of metropolitan environments and of expressionist spatial poetics in general can be useful to decode numerous Meyrink's motifs.

As observed by Theodor Anz in his essay *Literatur des Expressionismus* (2002), this movement must be studied as part of a wider literary context, the one of the German *Moderne*, a cultural period that embraces the second half of the nineteenth century and the first thirty years of the twentieth, and that gave birth to numerous currents of thought in regard to the transformation that western world was experiencing in that moment, being these years a time of deep social and technological revolutions; the *Moderne* is, therefore, characterized by a series of contradictory attitudes whose main keynotes can be summarized in two widest approaches, which will be explained in this section.

It should be first prefaced that the meaning of *Moderne* can be understood in two directions. The first one is, basically, the experience of the social development which had occurred starting from the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment and which had been extremely accelerated during the 19th century. *Moderne* designates here technological progress, affirmation of industry, urbanization, new communication and mobility systems, new state administration, growing bureaucracy and rationalization[102]. Main consequence of these phenomena is the birth of a more complex society on the legal level, but also, as previously stated, of a new life rhythm respecting the new parameters of industry and rationalization more than it respected the individuum. However, a second consequence of these new attitudes is strictly connected to culture and to thought, and this is the:

Entzauberung tradierter Mythen und die kritische Überprüfung metaphysischer Gewissheiten, die fortschrittsgläubige Ausweitung der rationalen Verfügungsgewalt über die äußere Natur und, im sozialpsychologischen Bereich, den Zwang des zivilisierten Subjekts zur Disziplinierung der eigenen Natur, des Körpers und der Affekte.[103]

This application of rationality on every aspect of human life has deep roots, it is well known, in the cult of reason (*Vernunft*) that characterizes Enlightenment and that, between the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th, receives a cultural reply through the experiences related to the cult of feeling and fantasy theorized by the *Romantik* on the one hand and through the growing importance of

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[101] Abert, *Gustav Meyrink Conteur* p. 187.
[102] On the interdependence between the concept *Moderne* and the idea of 'progress' instead of the idea of 'new' see: Weiß, Johannes, *Antinomien der Moderne*, in: Nautz, Jurgen / Vahrenkamp, Richard (ed.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende: Einflusse Umwelt Wirkungen*, Wien/Köln/Graz: Bohlau 1993, pp. 51-61.
[103] Anz, Theodor, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, Stuttgart/Weimar: J. B. Metzler 2010, p. 18.

uncanny motifs in the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann on the other. Nevertheless, the revolution of rationality (and above all of rationalization) that takes place during the *Moderne* has a second nature that was fundamentally absent during the theorizing of Enlightenment, i.e., the enormous and abrupt change in the role of human beings when it comes to a society that has become progressively dependent on mechanical devices and that, not to forget, has permanently questioned individuality by basing on the notion of mass society. If Hoffmann infers the dangers of a completely positive worldview by ironizing on its infallibility and warns from an excessive mechanization of human life by overlapping human beings and automata, the rationalization of the *Moderne* takes place when the processes foreshadowed by Hoffmann are become, to some extent, part of the everyday life. It is true that the spreading of modernity is not uniform in this period, that it occurred much slower in not urban areas, and that it did not regard all western countries in the same measure. When it comes to Expressionism, however, the word addresses a phenomenon that regards industrialized environments of Germany and Central Europe. If Berlin can be considered the city *par excellence* in the Expressionist context, a great contribution is also given by other metropolises, including the city of Prague, which is, in this moment, the main industrialized Central-European urban area[104].

Anz defines the kind of *Moderne* connected to technological development and rationalization as *zivilisatorische Moderne*[105]. Part of the cultural reaction deriving by these phenomena is effectively aligned with them, and declaims their fruitful impact on the economic development, seeing them as undiscussed progress of humankind. When it comes to art and literature, a special promotion of national art is made in this context, nationalism is enhanced both in literature and art and the *Neuklassik* movement stresses the constant reference to a traditional form of narrative and poetry, a reference that is linked, again, to the construction of a stronger national pride. This position is, paradoxically, highly conservative in terms of form and content, and also refers to a tradition strongly connected to religious thought. The expression of backwardness that emerges in this case along with the praise of social and technical progress must be traced back to the last concept mentioned by Anz in the previously quoted passage: the importance given, in the higher social shifts producing most of art and culture, to a model of social interaction that can be identified as the bourgeois one. Again, this model owns most of its regulations to the notion of rationality, here understood as absolute control of instinct and emotion. The human being is considered here the fulfilled project of evolution, being it the quintessential rational animal.

Interesting is that these same years follow the discovery of the unconscious thought and the development of psychoanalytic investigation. The spreading of the positivist worldview is

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[104] A closer look at the Prague German literature of these years is provided in chapter 2.
[105] Anz, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, p. 20.

accompanied, on the opposite side, by Schopenauer's thought on subjectivity pervading human world experience, by Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) theories on the existence of interior time, and naturally by Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) attention for the manifestations of the irrational plane of the mind – dreams, complexes, anxiety, deliria, but also any expression of inner life invading the everyday rational dimension[106]. Some of the consequences of these discoveries on literature have been previously discussed (see: *Sekundenstil*), but they also include the development of the stream of consciousness, of the *Erlebte Rede*, and of the inner monologue. These narratological forms have the function to stress the role of inner life in the characters' world experience, and they witness the importance of the notions 'irrationality', 'subjectivity' and 'subconscious' persisting despite the contemporary positivist attitude.

These elements lead to the second direction of the *Moderne*, the aesthetic one[107], direction to which Expressionism belongs. This branch of art and literature opposes to the *zivilisatorische Moderne* so far that it assumes the technic and social changes experienced by the western society but prefers to thematize, instead of its miracles, the weaknesses deriving from them. The 'weaknesses' are to be understood in this case as the crisis of an individuum who, differently from what happens in 'civilization Modernism', surrenders during the fight against their emotional and irrational sphere, gives voice to their unconscious thoughts and represents reality according to their subjective feeling and perception[108]. The world described by the *ästhetische Moderne* is, therefore, rich of similes, metaphors and allegories tracing the feeling of unease, distress, anxiety, fear, wonder and dream/visionary mindsets of the poet. The writer belonging to the aesthetic modernism claims that they "have no truth anymore"[109]: consequence of this statement is that all the reality described by these writers is made of a series of elements perceived through their subjective filter and through their emotion, and the results lack logical continuity, rational order and clear, definite structures or contours. The fracture with tradition in view of this unstable, incomplete, unclear framework of reality is recognizing the narrative and pictorial finite and ordered form as a substantial lie: as the structure of reality fails, what remains are pieces that must be connected in new ways in the attempt to describe the illogical essence of the world. Therefore, the pictorial and literary languages are broken down and their constitutive principles lose their traditional order. Structures like the *erlebte Rede*, the stream of

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[106] See also: Kiss, Endre, *Über die österreichisch-mitteleuropäischen Rationalität*, in: Nautz, Jurgen / Vahrenkamp, Richard (ed.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende: Einflusse Umwelt Wirkungen*, Wien/Köln/Graz: Bohlau 1993, pp. 101-109.
[107] Anz, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, p. 20.
[108] „Der zivilisatorischen Moderne im Sinne Nordaus entspricht der Kult des siegreichen Kämpfers, dessen Stärke den kontinuierlichen Fortschritt garantiert. In der ästhetischen Moderne verliert der Typus des kämpferischen Subjekts vielfach alle erhabenen Qualitäten. In Döblins Werk wird der Kämpfer zur pathologischen Figur. Die Sympathie des Autors gilt den Schwachen, den Verlierern.", Anz, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, p. 21.
[109] „Wir haben keine Wahrheit mehr". Carl Einstein, *Der Snobb*, in: Einstein, Carl, *Werke. Berliner Ausgabe*, Bd. 1, Berlin Fennei & Walz 1992, p. 33.

consciousness, the fragment composition, the breaking of the verse with enjambement, inversion and the dismantling of syllables are some of the results this crisis of the principle 'objective reality' has on literary form. When it comes to Expressionism, this movement must be understood as a manifestation of this attitude, and as part of those cultural movements that are defined as avantgardes, to which Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism and Futurism belong despite their having different perspectives on the described crisis of objectivity. Characteristic of literary avantgardes is a work on language that aims to dismantle conventions regulating syntax, morphology, composition of verses and stanzas, consequentiality of the discourse. Language is reduced, in this case, to its very ground: phonemes and graphic sign:

Die expressionistische Wortkunst des Sturm-Kreises und der Dadaismus lösten mit Sympathie für die prälogischen, vorzivilisierten und spielerischen Ausdrucksformen des Kindes die logische Syntax auf. Spricht Nordau schließlich mit seinem Modernitätsverständnis abfällig von den „gelben Menschen Ostasien", so wird für die ästhetische Moderne der fernen Osten zum Projektionsraum antizivilisatorischer Wünsche.[110]

From this perspective must be read the assumption of the presence of a *moderne Primitivität* in Expressionism, where artists and writers' interest for art stemming from Africa and Asia, but also for the expressive means of childhood, derives from an interest for the essential forms that are used in these kinds of art to describe reality, since these forms are understood as devoid of the conventions that constituted European tradition. Root of this preference is the assumption that: „Dieser Erwachsenenhochmut des europäischen Kulturmenschen aber beginnt heute wankend zu werden und der wachsenden Einsicht in die elementare Großartigkeit primitiver Lebens- und Kunstäußerungen zu weichen."[111] With other words, the order of form and content prescribed by social conventions and tradition appears inadequate to describe reality as it is seen in aesthetic modernism, and especially in the avantgardes. What must be used to reveal the actual structure of reality from their perspective is, therefore, a series of gestures characterized by spontaneity and by the ability to connect the reader to the essence of the writer's world experience.

2.4.1 Metropolitan milieu in Expressionism

While the *flaneur*, even in its more unsettling reflections, fundamentally privileges the human landscape of metropolitan life, this does not happen in the Expressionist *Großstadtlyrik*, where the

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[110] Anz, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, p. 22.
[111] Worringer, Wilhelm, *Entwicklungsgeschichtliches zur modernsten Kunst*, in: *Im Kampf um die Kunst. Die Antwort auf den ‚Protest deutscher Künstler*, München 1911, pp. 92-99.

city is considered as a living being that is independent from the human sphere, is capable of swallowing humankind as such, and is made of concrete matters (cement, buildings, iron, machines, heavy and noisy vehicle, smoke and so forth) that acquires will, anthropomorphic or monstrous traits, and more in general a threatening quality. The human sphere is here considered as a passive subject experiencing the city in its mind and constantly fearing the pressure of the urban environment.

Was kritisiert der „fortgeschrittene", intellektuelle Großstadtlyriker? Nicht zuletzt den Fortschritt. Über die psychischen Lasten einer rapide modernisierten Lebenswelt spricht die Großstadtlyrik des Expressionismus immer wieder.[112]

In this regard, the lyrical I or the I-narrator's perspective is drenched in fear, anguish, tension and in a constant sense of impotence. Here takes place the *Steigerung des Nervenslebens* observed by Simmel in his aforementioned essay on the metropolis, and this 'nervous' character of the Expressionist poetry becomes 'neurotic', subjected to hysteric and psychotic episodes, but also acquires that *Kränklichkeit* typical of other branches of Modernism, a kind of chronic and generic condition that makes it impossible for modern characters to act: the inner crisis of the character's perspective, put in front of the complexity of a society that changes too fast for the individuum to adapt (and which does not even consider the individuum as a reference point), expresses itself in the correspondence between the interior and the physical weakness. The elan to life is therefore suspended, in this case, leaving space to the acknowledgment of the link between technical progress and a new form of distress that does not lead to rebellion and activity, but results in a stillness that cannot be overcome, nor rationally (positively) explained.

Equally critical are, however, the consequences of this distress on the aesthetic level. The images chosen by Expressionists to depict the relationship between individuum and urban landscape are meant to highlight the sufferance and impotence experienced by the neurotic metropolitan citizen, and are therefore characterized by an inventory of motifs stemming from the grotesque and the apocalyptic languages. An example of these aesthetic tendencies of Expressionist urban lyric can be given through Ernst Blass' (1890-1939) poem *Der Nervenschwache*, which includes the following stanzas:

Mit einer Stirn, die Traum und Angst zerfraßen,
Mit einem Körper, der verzweifelt hängt
An einem Seile, das ein Teufel schwenkt,
- So läuft er[113] durch die langen Großstadtstraßen

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[112] Anz, *Literatur des Expressionismus*, p. 103.
[113] Blass, Ernst, *Der Nervenschwache*, in: Blass, Ernst, *Die Straßen komme ich entlang geweht. Sämtliche Gedichte*, München/Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag 1980, p. 24.

[…] Der Mond liegt wie ein Schleim
auf ungeheuer nachtendem Velours.
Die Sterne zucken zart wie Embryos
An einer unsichtbaren Nebelschnur. [114]

The major part of Blass' poem does not reference any clear landscape except for the city streets, and focuses instead on the inner life of the protagonist expressed in the third person – i.e., the weak of nerves. To do so, Blass mentions mindsets and emotions such as "dream", "fear" and visions of several kinds, including the quoted one of the devil waving the rope from which the protagonist is hanging. The only other elements of physical landscape inserted in the poem are the moon and the stars, the moon "laying like drool" and the starts "trembling like embryos". The images reference a certain idea of grotesque language connecting intimate parts of human organism to the cosmic matter, but also enhances, through this association, the idea of a fragile reality that 'shivers' expecting the collapse (apocalyptic). However, what can also be seen here is a confrontation of the poet with the Romantic imaginary, a confrontation that results in the overturning of this imaginary into a series of similes evoking cosmic threat and visceral impotence: symbols of poetic transcendence in Romanticism such as the elements of the night sky, are described as not only earthly but also weak and threatened items, pervaded by the protagonist's feeling of instability. Interesting is also that Blass does not cry for a lost relationship with nature which must be retrieved, but instead depicts a situation that cannot be solved and takes place in an eternal present, and by doing so avoids any idea of nostalgia that could connect his verses with the Romantic tradition.

A second side of this aesthetic, also characterized by an apocalyptic tendency, is the one attributing an anthropomorphic tension and a demonic body to urban space. This attitude, differently from the first one, acknowledges not only the threatening quality of the metropolis, but also its admirable and fascinating power, or its immense energy. The city becomes, in this kind of lyric that is clearly influenced by the Futurist aesthetic, a majestic matter that must be feared but also highly respected in virtue of its exceptionality. One of the most famous poems in this regard, Georg Heym's *Der Gott der Stadt*, associates urban landscape with the power of the pagan god Baal, a figure that is here depicted as the divinity not only governing but also devouring cities at his delight:

Auf einem Häuserblocke sitzt er breit.
Die Winde lagern schwarz um seine Stirn.
Er schaut voll Wut, wo fern in Einsamkeit

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[114] Blass, Ernst, *Der Nervenschwache*.

Die letzten Häuser in das Land verirrn.

Vom Abend glänzt der rote Bauch dem Baal,
Die großen Städte knieen um ihn her.
Der Kirchenglocken ungeheure Zahl
Wogt auf zu ihm aus schwarzer Türme Meer. [...]

Er streckt ins Dunkel seine Fleischerfaust.
Er schüttelt sie. Ein Meer von Feuer jagt
Durch eine Straße. Und der Glutqualm braust
Und frißt sie auf, bis spät der Morgen tagt.[115]

The poem shows a predominance of atmospheres related to the colors of industrial landscapes: nuances of black and red acquire here substance of "black winds", "fire", "embers smoke" and so forth. The entire sequence takes place between evening and night, where the arrival of the evening through sunset is associated to the light illuminating Baal's enormous body ("Baal's red belly"), while darkness pervades all the other scenes. The natural element of the sea becomes a sea of belltowers, and it melts completely, in the end, with fire ("Ein Meer von Feuer jagt/durch eine Straße"). By doing so, Heym addresses the Romantic symbology of water, opposes to it, and eventually chooses to reference, instead, the Biblical tradition related to apocalyptic glowing waters. Furthermore, Heym works on the contrast between Christian and pagan/atheist spirituality, attributing the metropolis a power that questions any religious force to emerge if not one connected to matter and concreteness. The function of the bells resounding when the cities kneel down to Baal is precisely that they enhance this questioning.

Either way, it can be pointed out that the two poems show, though possessing a different attitude, a descriptive tendency refusing the naturalistic depiction: instead of depicting the hostility of city landscapes by addressing the social component of the metropolitan milieu, or the problems related to urbanistic issues, or also their unhealthy environmental factors, the Expressionist texts observe these landscapes through the lens of imagination, emotion and, in a more general framework, through the filter of a disrupted inner life.

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[115] Heym, Georg, *Der Gott der Stadt*, in: Heym, Georg, *Der ewige Tag*, Leipzig: Rohwolt 1911, p. 13.

3. The Fantastic

3.1 The uncanny

When it comes to a perspective where psychology and literature are involved, the first in-depth reflection on the uncanny is attributed to Sigmund Freud's essay *Das Unheimliche* (1919), research that actually references the work of Ernst Jentsch *Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen* (1906) among its most influential sources. The two essays are based on common premises and their analyses are initially linguistic in nature, giving an interpretation of the word *unheimlich*, which Jentsch takes to mean "strange", in relation to its root *heimlich*, "familiar". Freud expands the linguistic research by taking into account the equivalent of the adjective *unheimlich* in other languages, like Latin, ancient Greek, French, English, Hebrew and Arabic, then traces back the term to its three main spheres of meaning: "strange", "uncomfortable" and "demonic"[116]. One of the main differences between Freud's and Jentsch's analyses lays in this broadening of meaning, since Freud does not accept Jentsch's postulate according to which the main prerogative of an event that feels uncanny is linked to the sphere of the strange and unfamiliar, meaning an encounter with the unknown. Although Freud considers this notion productive in relation to his analysis, he does not see every encounter with the unfamiliar as potentially uncanny and concentrates rather on the notion of *heimlich* (familiar, intimate, own) intrinsic to the term. Starting from this correspondence, he postulates a continuity between *heimlich* and *unheimlich* and hypothesizes that the constitutive trait of the *unheimlich* is its link to elements that can be recognized as familiar, close to intimate human feelings. From this perspective, the *unheimlich* is: „irgendeine Art von heimlich […] nichts Neues oder Fremdes, sondern etwas dem Seelenleben von alters her Vertrautes, das ihm nur durch den Prozess der Verdrängung entfremdet worden ist."[117]

Therefore, unsettling phenomena can be traced back to the uncanny when they find resonance in the subconscious and awaken instinctive fears that belong to the subject's inner life. In his in-depth analysis of the unsettling motifs appearing in E.T.A. Hoffmann's tale *Der Sandmann*, Freud questions the uncanny quality of the automaton Olimpia claimed by Jentsch and identifies the unsettling component of the story with the legend of the Sandman, which gives the work its name, told in the first part of the tale: according to this legend, told by the protagonist's gouvernante, the Sandman is a mysterious figure that comes at night to help children sleep by scattering sand over their eyes. When he finds sleepless children during the night, he steals and collects their eyes. This legend is recalled

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[116] Freud, Sigmund, *Das Unheimliche*, Berlin: Europäischer Literaturvlg 2012, p. 5.
[117] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 22.

many times in the tale, first of all in an episode of the protagonist's childhood where he associates the Sandman with a friend of his father's, who, according to his memories, tried to burn his eyes after taking his body apart as you would do with a puppet. To interpret the functions and the meanings of this episode, Freud resorts to the psychological associations connected to the loss of eyes or sight, a fear that is ancestral and highly present in stories and myths[118] and which represents the anguish deriving from a castration complex[119]. It follows that the uncanny quality of the story does not stem from the encounter with the new or the strange, but from an intimate resonance of the events with a fear deeply rooted in the protagonist's (but also in the reader's) subconscious. Freud also points out the presence, in these subconscious fears, of elements he can trace back to a primitive cultural state strongly linked to an animistic worldview that sees nature as emanation of human dimension and consequently attributes characteristics such as thought and inner life to it. This perspective shows a narcissistic aspect that can be observed in most uncanny motifs, like the relationship between the literary trope of the doppelganger and the ancestral fear of death, where the doppelganger symbolizes the desire for immortality[120]; a similar primitive anguish is visible in the unintentional repetition that is inherent in the representation of labyrinths and in loss of orientation in general[121]. However, Freud points out that the narcissistic strategies that ascribed nature a human and relatable character were actually efficient when dealing with the mentioned ancestral fears, and that therefore they represented a familiar (*heimlich*) factor. The animistic aspects left traces which now feel uncanny because they have been removed from modern culture:

Es scheint, dass wir alle in unserer individuellen Entwicklung eine diesem Animismus der Primitiven entsprechende Phase durchgemacht haben, dass sie bei keinem von uns abgelaufen ist, ohne noch äußerungsfähige Reste und Spuren zu hinterlassen, und dass alles, was uns heute als ‚unheimlich' erscheint, die Bedingung erfüllt, dass es an diese Reste animistischer Seelentätigkeit rührt und sie zur Äußerung anregt[122]

The *Reste* and *Spuren* of the ancestral worldview are deep and can be hidden but not eradicated. This is especially clear when observing how cultured adults are still irrationally afraid of phenomena that can be explained scientifically as harmless. In this regard, Freud mentions the unsettling feeling

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[118] Ex: Oedipus and Medusa.
[119] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 14.
[120] Freud references here Otto Rank (1884-1939): „Das Motiv des Doppelgängers hat in einer gleichnamigen Arbeit von O. Rank eine eingehende Würdigung gefunden. Dort werden die Beziehungen des Doppelgängers zum Spiegel- und Schattenbild, zum Schutzgeist, zur Seelenlehre und zur Todesfurcht untersucht, es fällt aber auch helles Licht auf die überraschende Entwicklungsgeschichte des Motivs. Denn der Doppelgänger war ursprünglich eine Versicherung gegen den Untergang des Ichs, eine »energische Dementierung der Macht des Todes« (O. Rank) und wahrscheinlich war die »unsterbliche« Seele der erste Doppelgänger des Leibes." (Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, pp. 16-17)
[121] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 18.
[122] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 21.

awakened by ideas connected to death such as dead beings returning to life, ghosts, spirits, wraiths. No lack of knowledge can justify the persistence of this tense relationship with these topics, the origin of this reaction can only be understood through the acknowledgement of a primitive worldview within human subconscious:

Offiziell glauben die sogenannten Gebildeten nicht mehr an das Sichtbarwerden der Verstorbenen als Seelen, haben deren Erscheinung an entlegene und selten verwirklichte Bedingungen geknüpft, und die ursprünglich höchst zweideutige, ambivalente Gefühlseinstellung zum Toten ist für die höheren Schichten des Seelenlebens zur eindeutigen der Pietät abgeschwächt geworden[123].

Similarly, the fear deriving from the three depriving conditions of silence, darkness and loneliness is connected to the suppressed fantasy of the mother's womb, which associates these states with the awakening of primordial and childish anguishes. In light of this reflection, Freud identifies the prefix *un-* in the word *unheimlich* with the "Mark der Verdrängung".

However, Freud admits that the motifs mentioned in his analysis can be *unheimlich* in some cases and *heimlich* in others, thus ascribing this notion a subjective character and highlighting the importance of the context in which these situations appear. Images related to amputations, the presence of ghosts and reawakening of the dead, for example, can be interpreted as neutral or even positive events in the context of a fairytale. The mere presence of suppressed elements of primitive and unconscious tendencies is therefore not decisive for a definition of uncanny[124]. The acknowledgement of this ambiguity is a key concept because it attributes a main role to the environment and the setting of a narration: Freud begins the analysis of these environmental factors by distinguishing between two sides of uncanny circumstances, the ones connected to experiences (*das Unheimliche des Erlebens*) and the ones stemming from imagination and readings (*das Unheimliche, das man sich vorstellt*)[125].

The events that result uncanny in real life can be connected, as previously stated, to primitive and animistic convictions that persist in modern culture despite the intellectual awareness of their fallacy:

Greifen wir das Unheimliche der Allmacht der Gedanken, der prompten Wunscherfüllung, der geheimen schädigenden Kräfte, der Wiederkehr der Toten heraus. Die Bedingung, unter der hier das Gefühl des Unheimlichen entsteht, ist nicht zu verkennen. Wir - oder unsere primitiven Urahnen – haben dereinst diese Möglichkeiten für Wirklichkeit gehalten, waren von der Realität dieser Vorgänge überzeugt. Heute glauben wir nicht mehr daran, wir haben diese Denkweisen

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[123] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 23.
[124] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 26.
[125] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 28.

überwunden, aber wir fühlen uns dieser neuen Überzeugungen nicht ganz sicher, die alten leben noch in uns fort und lauern auf Bestätigung[126].

The reawakening of these ancient convictions can be caused by the individual experience of events which lead to questioning scientific and rational explanations for a particular phenomenon. Coincidences, for example, can lead people to connect individual actions, or thoughts, to a circumstance that occurred[127]. It is true that the occurrence of some events on similar dates and in similar places is not always interpreted the same way, since the relationship with primitive and animistic traits of human culture is personal, however, the unsettling atmosphere connected to this sphere is characterized by the questioning, even for a short time, of rational reality. It should be pointed out that in this case Freud considers animistic tendencies of human thought as something that has basically been overcome. The persistence of some traits linked to this sphere is related to an uncertainty that is proper of humankind and is caused by the very long time these convictions were bequeathed across generations.

The other field of the experienced uncanny stems from the aforementioned suppressed childhood complexes and differs from the reawakening of animistic worldviews because in this case reality and its laws are not questioned: the psychic and inner perception comes here into play, when the overlapping of a situation with the emergence of suppressed memories and fears provokes unsettling feelings in the individuum. Here, differently from the animistic tendencies, Freud considers these complexes unsolved and not overcome traits, which have a strong influence by virtue of their being suppressed but still present in people's mind. Therefore, he distinguishes, in the experienced uncanny, between phenomena related to the overcome (*überwunden*) and phenomena related to the suppressed (*verdrängt*).

When it comes to the uncanny in narrative and imagination, Freud begins his reflection by observing that events and phenomena that would result unsettling and disturbing in real life are perceived neutrally in works of fantasy by reason of their fictionality. However, he also admits that fiction has a wider range of possibilities that real life is precluded, when it comes to the creation of uncanny effects, and that therefore the imagined uncanny survives on a wider spectrum. In this phase of his analysis, Freud starts to problematize the presence of the "ground of reality" (*Boden der Realität*)[128] in fictional texts, and postulates its absence in genres close to fairytales, where events related to animistic convictions are not represented as exceptions but are, in fact, part of the physical rules of the narrated milieu. Another category of texts, such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Shakespeare's

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[126] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 28.
[127] Freud mentions here the inferred link between individual desire and the death of a hated person. (Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 28).
[128] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 30.

Hamlet, is not as far from the ground of reality as fairytales, but accepts the existence of ghosts, wraiths, magic crafts and dimensions like Heaven and Hell as part of the author's poetic creation. In this case, the reader sees these elements as instruments of the plot and attributes them a specific function that easily justifies their existence. In both cases, regardless, the presence of elements that would be highly uncanny in real life, such as the appearance of demons and spirits of the dead, cannot be described as unsettling, since the reader perceives these phenomena as something far from their everyday world.

In this regard, Freud hypothesizes that uncanny events in fiction must be connected to the ground of reality to be seen as such, and that elements that can be unsettling in real life potentially provoke the same feeling in art and literature. Nevertheless, uncanny situations in fiction are much more various than the possibilities of unsettling events related to real experiences, because the author can manipulate the reader by adding elements that are uncommon or almost impossible on the ground of reality:

Er verrät uns dann gewissermaßen an unseren für überwunden gehaltenen Aberglauben, er betrügt uns, indem er uns die gemeine Wirklichkeit verspricht und dann doch über diese hinausgeht. Wir reagieren auf seine Fiktionen so, wie wir auf eigene Erlebnisse reagiert hätten; wenn wir den Betrug merken, ist es zu spät, der Dichter hat seine Absicht bereits erreicht, aber ich muß behaupten, er hat keine reine Wirkung erzielt. Bei uns bleibt ein Gefühl von Unbefriedigung, eine Art von Groll über die versuchte Täuschung, wie ich es besonders deutlich nach der Lektüre von Schnitzlers Erzählung »Die Weissagung« und ähnlichen mit dem Wunderbaren liebäugelnden Produktionen verspürt habe[129].

The relationship between author and reader becomes central in this context and Freud describes it as a deceit where a story is set in an environment that can be interpreted as reality and yet, despite this, "goes beyond it" through literary artifices. The term used to describe this process, *hinausgehen*, has the meaning of exceeding, overtaking, but also going out, implying the presence of a margin which is crossed. Therefore, according to this definition, the ground of reality, as well as the presence of its physical and rational limits, is a necessary premise for uncanny events in fiction and said limits must look fragile as a consequence of the narrator's perspective. Nevertheless, the statement that this perspective is deceitful implies that the limits are not really surpassed and the suggested fragility of rationality, a condition that would disturb the reader in their everyday life, is the actual spectrum of the uncanny effect. This fragility is dependent, according to Freud, on an amplification of the inner and psychic reality at the detriment of the ground of rationality, which is typical of the protagonists of uncanny stories.

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[129] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 30.

The section dedicated to fantastic literature in this thesis shows a close relation to this perspective, since the major studies about the matter are highly influenced by this view and point out the importance of the *Boden der gemeinen Realität* in the definition of the genre. Anyway, it should be pointed out that Freud's idea of uncanny describes events that remain on the ground of reality, although the presence of animistic convictions is hinted at or the psychic reality of the protagonists sometimes overlaps with and takes over the ground of everyday life, while the reflection on the fantastic is based on the idea of uncertainty between the ground of reality and a supernatural dimension. This means that the fantastic mainly problematizes the interpretation of the uncanny event, which can be attributed to psychotic episodes of the protagonists or to strange/rare natural phenomena and therefore stays on the ground of everyday life *or* exceeds this sphere and can be seen as a manifestation of the supernatural. The matter of intellectual uncertainty (*intellektuelle Unsicherheit*) is considered central to this reflection, but Freud rejects its importance in the creation of an uncanny quality by discussing Jentsch's interpretation of *Der Sandmann*, where Jentsch theorizes the function of intellectual indecision: in the episode with the automaton Olimpia, Jentsch identifies the source of the unsettling feeling with the uncertainty of whether to classify the woman as a human being or as a puppet. In this case, Freud objects that the status of Olimpia as an automaton is in fact carefully explained by the narrator of the story and that Nathaniel's behavior is considered not only ridiculous in and of itself, but also a source of ridiculous actions by the bourgeois society around Coppelius and Olimpia's house, actions that are depicted with an irony that excludes any uncanny effect. However, when it comes to the main matter of the story, the relationship between Nathaniel and the character who resembles the Sandman (the lawyer Coppola and/or the optician Coppelius), Freud's interpretation of *Der Sandmann* sees the intellectual indecision of the reader, who must decide whether Nathaniel's experience is authentic or a product of a neurotic fantasy, as irrelevant to the uncanny quality of the tale:

Aber im Verlaufe der Hoffmann'schen Erzählung schwindet dieser Zweifel, wir merken, daß der Dichter uns selbst durch die Brille oder das Perspektiv des dämonischen Optikers schauen lassen will, ja daß er vielleicht in höchsteigener Person durch solch ein Instrument geguckt hat. Der Schluß der Erzählung macht es ja klar, daß der Optiker Coppola wirklich der Advokat Coppelius und also auch der Sandmann ist. Eine »intellektuelle Unsicherheit« kommt hier nicht mehr in Frage: wir wissen jetzt, daß uns nicht die Phantasiegebilde eines Wahnsinnigen vorgeführt werden sollen, hinter denen wir in rationalistischer Überlegenheit den nüchternen Sachverhalt erkennen mögen, und – der Eindruck des Unheimlichen hat sich durch diese Aufklärung nicht im mindesten verringert[130].

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[130] Freud, *Das Unheimliche*, p. 14.

The statement according to which E.T.A. Hoffman clearly intended Coppola and Coppelius to be identified as the Sandman may be controversial, nevertheless the reading of *Der Sandmann* does not become any less unsettling when the last chapter (where, according to Freud, the identification becomes obvious) is compared to the one that precedes it, where events could be more easily attributed to Nathaniel's psychosis. In other words, the uncanny quality belongs to both spheres of interpretation.

3.2 Defining fantastic literature

The definition of fantastic literature as a genre[131] is still a debatable matter and deserves an introduction of its own. First of all, it is necessary to say that research on the fantastic, although currently developed in different directions which include the studies on horror literature and the category of the uncanny, is essentially based on four studies that gave shape to the concept and distinguished this kind of literature from other genres which involve the supernatural. These studies are Roger Caillois' *Au coeur du fantastique* (1965), Luis Vax' works *La seduction de l'étrange. Étude sur la litterature fantastique* (1965) and *L'art e la litterature fantastique* (1960), and Tzvetan Todorov's *Introduction à la litterature fantastique* (1970). As explained by Margherita Cottone, any definition of fantastic literature must have at its core a description of the relationship between reality and the supernatural/unnatural dimension involved in the narration. The starting point of this analysis, i.e., the idea of reality itself, can actually be a misleading category, since any definition of reality is based on cultural background and can change according to variables such as the historical period in which a work is conceived[132] and the perception of natural phenomena in different cultural areas[133]. Moreover, in the context of fantastic literature three conceptions of "real" are involved: the one of the author, the one of the protagonist and the one of the reader. The interactions among these dimensions are crucial in defining the fantastic and will be better explained in the next paragraphs.

In *L'art et la littèrature fantastique*, Vax introduces the concept of "everyday life" as fundamental background when discussing fantastic literature: "The fantastic story likes letting us look at the way

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[131] "We may ask how valid a definition of a genre may be if it permits a work to "change genre" by a simple sentence" (Todorov, Tzvetan, *The Fantastic. A structural approach to a literary genre*, trans. Richard Howard, Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University 1973, p. 43.)

[132] Cottone, pp. 18-19.

[133] "Definitions of what can 'be' and images of what cannot be, obviously undergo considerable historical shifts. Non-secularized societies hold different beliefs from secular cultures as to what constitutes 'reality'. Presentations of otherness are imagined and interpreted differently. In what we could call a supernatural economy, otherness is transcendent, marvellously different from the human: the results are religious fantasies of angels, devils, heavens, hells, promised lands, and pagan fantasies of elves, dwarves, fairies, fairyland of 'faery'. In a natural, or secular, economy, otherness is not located elsewhere: it is read as a projection of merely human fears and desires transforming the world through subjective perceptions." (Jackson 1981 : 23-24)

we, people, are those who act in our everyday world and all of a sudden find ourselves to face the unexplainable."[134]

The contact between everyday life and the unexplainable is the starting point of Vax's distinction between the fantastic story and the fairytale: while the fairytale is set in a world external to the reader's everyday life, a place where there's no "scandal" in breaking the laws of nature, the fantastic story is based on the "conflict" between the ordinary world (whose physical laws are common to both the protagonist's and the reader's perception) and events that suggest a possible presence of supernatural phenomena in everyday life[135]. The fact that this presence is *possible* gives a first hint in defining the relationship between "reality" and the supernatural element, and suggests that, in the fantastic dimension, the actual existence of the latter has not been confirmed: Vax's statement that the fantastic "originates precisely from the conflicts between reality and possibility"[136] links this genre to a space where the two concepts communicate[137] but, unlike what happens in fairytales, the paranormal phenomena cannot be accepted as legitimate part of the protagonists' world. Caillois' analysis embraces this perspective and stresses the hostile relationship between reality and supernatural elements in the fantastic by defining it as the narrative dimension that "opens a crack, a bewildering, almost unbearable intrusion in the ordinary world"[138]. He also draws a map of literary motifs typical of the genre:

The pact with the devil, the ghost, the personified death appearing in the world of the living, the invisible and indefinable thing, the vampire, the statue, the mannequin, the armor, the automata, that enliven by themselves, the curse of a sorcerer, the ghost-woman…[139]

Todorov consolidates these views by remarking on the necessary presence, in the fantastic story, of a world that follows the same laws of nature as the one inhabited by the reader, where demons, fairies and other components referencing a supernatural sphere are normally excluded. Nevertheless, he tries to take a step further and also references two other sources, Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900) and Montague Rhodes James (1862-1931), the former reflecting explicitly on the fantastic and the latter explaining creative processes related to his ghost stories. In these different contexts, the philosopher and the author point out that the characters facing the manifestation of "impossible" phenomena find

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[134] Vax, Louis, *L'art et la littèrature fantastique*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1973, p. 6.
[135] Vax, *L'art et la littèrature fantastique*, pp. 5-6.
[136] Vax, *L'art et la littèrature fantastique*, p. 6.
[137] Berg, Stephan, *Schlimme Zeiten, böse Räume. Zeit- und Raumstrukturen in der phantastischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler 1991, p. 6.
[138] Caillois, Roger, *L'Obliques precede de images… images…*, Paris: Gallimard 1987, p. 14, and: Caillois, Roger, *Nel cuore del fantastico*, trans. Laura Guarino, Milano: Feltrinelli 1965, p. 92
[139] Caillois, *L'Obliques precede de images… images…*, p. 28.

themselves in a state of uncertainty where they are forced to choose between accepting the experienced situation as a supernatural event or opting for any explanation related to logic and rationality.

It is sometimes necessary to keep a loophole for a natural explanation, but I might add that this hole should be small enough to be unusable.[140]

[…] the definitions of Solovyov and James, et al., indicated further the possibility of supplying two explanations of the supernatural event, and, consequently, the fact that someone must choose between them. It was therefore more suggestive, richer […][141]

Starting from this position, Todorov finds the concepts of "hesitation" and "uncertainty" to be the fundamental categories in the definition of fantastic literature:

There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect. […]
Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.[142]

The importance of 'indecision' had already been the object of Louis Vax's theory ("an ideal art of the fantastic must keep to indecision"). Placing the fantastic narrative on the border between two "adjacent genres"[143], the marvelous and the uncanny, may lead to considering this kind of literature as evanescent and not autonomous, but Todorov does not find this risk any problematic, since the merging of genres and categories in a work of literature is a relatively common phenomenon which does not exclude the existence of several tendencies that can be clearly distinguished within a text[144]. One of the most interesting traits of Todorov's reflection on hesitation is that he involves the role of reception in this analysis. He distinguishes between the hesitation of the character, who must choose between natural and supernatural causes, and the uncertainty of the reader, who finds themselves involved in the character's choice but must also decide how to interpret the character's perspective. According to Todorov, both kinds of hesitation are essential when creating a fantastic atmosphere,

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[140] James, Montague Rhodes, quoted from: Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 26.
[141] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 27. The comparison is between Solovyov and James' perspective and the previously mentioned theories (Caillois and Vax).
[142] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 26.
[143] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 42.
[144] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41-43.

and strategies that lead to the reader's hesitation are a constitutive element of the story.[145] This statement can be better understood through a short analysis of one of Henry James' (1843-1916) most famous works, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)[146]. This ghost tale tells the story of a young girl who starts working in a manor called Bly as a governess for a rich English family. She takes care of two children, Flora and Miles, who are the most beautiful and delightful pupils the woman (but also the reader) could ever encounter. After a while, the governess starts noticing the presence of two other people in the children's lives, two figures she spots in different areas of the manor and who, she discovers, resemble Rebecca Jessel and Peter Quint, previous employees of the children's uncle who are, in fact, dead. After having witnessed some concerning signs in the behavior of the children and having reported her doubts to the governess, the preceptor starts thinking that Flora and Miles could be somehow under the influence of the ghosts of the two dead adults. The governess, who is presented as innocent and illiterate, seems to believe the teacher's assumption because of the latter's culture and intelligence. The children, though, resist every attempt the preceptor makes to befree them, until the influence of the ghosts apparently grows to the point that Flora gets sick and Miles dies.

The hesitation in this novella is present on two different levels. The first level is the choice the main character has to make when she has to interpret the appearance of Rebecca Jessel and Peter Quint in the manor: although she never really questions what she sees, the preceptor carefully analyses every signal of the influence of the two figures on Flora and Miles' gestures before deciding to worry about their relationship with the ghosts. Her hesitation ceases when she realizes that Flora can actually see Miss Jessel's ghost but is making an effort to protect the entity. After this scene, she decides to actively intervene to save her pupils. Despite this, the novella doesn't really indulge in the marvelous because the reader is still hesitating in their interpretation of the events and will remain uncertain until the end of the story. This happens because the reason for hesitation in the main character is the presence of the ghosts, while the cause for hesitation in the reader is the questionable reliability of the main character. Although the preceptor, who tells the story in the first person, makes it clear that everything she has experienced leads to the conclusion that two ghosts are haunting the manor, especially her students, and even if the terrible events that end the story seem to support this perspective, the doubt that the ghosts may only be a product of the protagonist's imagination remains a possible interpretation of the entire tale. The author doesn't give any hint that can help the reader

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[145] "The fantastic therefore implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters; that world is defined by the reader's own ambiguous perception of the events narrated. It must be noted that we have in mind no actual reader, but the role of the reader implicit in the text (just as the narrator function is implicit in the text). The perception of this implicit reader is given in the text with the same precision as the movements of the characters." (Todorov 1973 [1970]: 31)

[146] James, Henry, *The Turn of the Screw*, Boston: Bedford Books 1995.

trace back the events to a sole perspective, and this is particularly evident at the end of the story, where Miles' death occurs at the very last moment and no time for reflections or analyses is given.[147] This example explains on the one hand the importance of the reader's hesitation in defining the fantastic genre, while on the other highlighting the fact that a complete identification of the reader's perspective with the characters' point of view is not necessary.[148]

When it comes to the role of supernatural events occurring in the fantastic text, they normally cause an unsettling atmosphere, although they can seem fascinating in the eyes of the characters. However, these events must also be excluded from any allegorical or poetic interpretation, since these spheres would eliminate the meaning of hesitation[149]. This statement is problematic when it comes to Meyrink's work, where, being it explicitly devoted to a mystical message, the events related to the supernatural have a high allegorical component to the extent that analyses of his worldbuilding entirely based on tarots, on cabala, on astrology, but also on Taoism and Buddhism have been made and can be considered an accountable decoding of the symbols mentioned by the author. True is, however, that instruments coming from fantastic literature and related to the notion of uncertainty are frequent in Meyrink's space depiction and that they are in fact meant to cause uncertainty and disorientation in his protagonists, as it will be seen in the text analysis of his novels.

Research on fantastic literature after Vax, Caillois and Todorov basically accepts their theory on the existence of two interacting dimensions (reality and supernatural elements related to the uncanny) that find themselves in continuous conflict, and identifies in this conflict the constitutive element of fantastic narrative. Nevertheless, some of these works remark on the vagueness of the notion of "reality" used as a basis, and point out the necessity to refer to the laws of the referenced fictional worlds rather than to concepts like "laws of nature"[150] or "everyday life"[151]. One of these studies, Eric S. Rabkin's *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976), places the existence of fantastic in the moment when "the groundrules of a narrative are forced to make a 180 degree reversal, when prevailing perspectives are directly contradicted"[152]. By stressing the concept of "rules" instead of the contradiction between "real" and "unreal", Rabkin suggests a perspective where the rational order of a given world is a better starting point, for a definition of fantastic, than the idea of "reality" itself. However, the most productive element of the quoted statement is the metaphor of the 180 degree reversal, which reveals other nuances of the relationship between the rational order and the unnatural events taking place in

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[147] Cfr. Valverde, Rebeca Gualberto, *The Fantastic Modernist; or Henry James' "The Turning of the Screw", Revisited*, Revista de Filologia Inglesia, 33, 2012, pp. 97-114, here: pp. 98-100; Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 43.
[148] Cfr. Todorov, *The Fantastic*, pp. 31-32.
[149] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 32.
[150] Zgorzelski, Andrzej, *Understanding Fantasy*, in: *Zagadniena Rodzajow Literarckich*, XV, 2 (1972), p. 108.
[151] Rabkin, Eric S., *The Fantastic in Literature*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1976, p. 12.
[152] Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature*, p. 197.

the fantastic narrative, and describes this relation as an interaction of rationality and its exact opposite. Irene Bessière expresses a similar point of view in her essay *Le recit fantastique. La poetique de l'incertain* (1974) where she argues that the link between fantastic and rationality is intrinsic and much more important than its connections to irrationality, since the best antonym of a rational order is, in this context, an anti-rational order rather than an irrational one. Rabkin and Bessière's perspective can be better understood by identifying the anti-rational as a dimension where contradictions of logic exist and must be accepted, whereas an irrational order must not refer to logic and rationality when affirming its own existence. This statement implies that the fantastic shows a dialectical process where rationality faces manifestations of logical contradictions, and where this confrontation is thematized. When it comes to the nature of this confrontation, and to the conflict between the two orders, Bessière lays down the experience of the "limits of reason" as a fundamental condition of fantastic[153]. Todorov had expressed a similar view in his reflections about the uncanny, by identifying it with an "experience of limits" [154]. Bessière sees this process as a moment in which the intellectual premises for establishing the notion of a rational order are questioned at their core, whereas some credit is given to the hypothesis of a supernatural or unnatural dimension[155]. Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981)[156], highly influenced by Bessière's view, reflects on the idea of limit by employing the concept of "paraxis", a noun linked to the semantic field of optics. Jackson associates fantastic literature to the process of distorting reality in order to create a "re-placed and dis-located" world, which is not an alternative dimension but a place of "alterity". The optical concept of "paraxis" describes this deformation:

A paraxial region is an area in which light rays *seem* to unite at a point after reflection. In this area, object and image seem to collide, but in fact neither object nor reconstituted image genuinely reside there: nothing does. This paraxial area could be taken to represent the spectral region of the fantastic, whose imaginary world is neither entirely 'real' (object), not entirely 'unreal' (image), but is located somewhere indeterminately between the two.[157]

This definition not only describes the space of limit as fundamental, but also identifies in this border a space that is proper of the fantastic and that stems from an area between real and unreal, which is basically empty and is not meant to be filled in any way. This happens because one of the main differences between the literature of the marvelous, to which other sorts of fantasy belong, and fantastic literature is that the former creates a new world, while the latter does not create anything: at

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[153] Bessière, Irene, *Le rècit fantastique. La poetique de l'incertain*, Paris : Larousse 1974, p. 62.
[154] Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 48.
[155] Bessière, *Le rècit fantastique. La poetique de l'incertain*, p. 62.
[156] Jackson, Rosemary, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*, London: Methuen 1981.
[157] Jackson, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*, p. 19.

the contrary, it tends to dissolve the contours and to let absences and empty places emerge[158]. A recent study by Margherita Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania. Gustav Meyrink e dintorni* (2009), also interprets the fantastic from a spatial point of view and embraces the idea of a limit between real and unreal constituting a dimension where this genre takes place. Unlike Jackson, she comes to this conclusion by reflecting on Todorov's notion of hesitation, and defines the fantastic as "literature of the threshold":

Questa [la soglia], come figura del moderno, si presenta come esperienza del limite, inteso non più soltanto come una frontiera, bensì come luogo d'attesa, spazio intermedio, punto di tangenza in cui è possibile una diversa esperienza delle cose. Il fantastico, infatti, sembra avere origine in quella *Zwischenwelt*, quel mondo o anche quel momento intermedio in cui non si riesce ad accettare una spiegazione razionale oppure irrazionale dell'esistenza. In questa zona neutra, ma carica di tensione e ricca di infinite possibilità, due diverse realtà entrano in contatto confondendosi tra loro, cosicché ciò che è solitamente naturale acquista un carattere misterioso, sovrannaturale e viceversa.[159]

[as figure of modernity, it [the threshold] introduces itself as experience of the limit, understood not only as a border, but as a waiting space, intermediate space, point of tangency where a different experience of things is possible. The fantastic seems to origin in that *Zwischenwelt*, that world but also that intermediate moment where one cannot accept a rational or irrational explanation of the existence. In this neutral zone, which is charged of tension and of infinite possibilities, two different realities enter in contact by confusing with each other, so that what is usually natural acquires a mysterious, supernatural quality, and vice versa.]

Here the threshold is presented as a "neutral" space, rather than an empty dimension. An interesting trait of this sort of "waiting room" is that it allows a mutual influence between rational and irrational sides of existence, which means that, on the threshold, not only does irrationality invade the rational order, but unnatural elements can also acquire a natural character. This point of view is clearly different from Jackson's perspective and is reminiscent of a conception that sees limit and threshold as productive spaces. Interesting in this regard is Jurij Lotman's theorization of the Semiosphere, a cultural dimension of texts and languages where the semiotic act is possible. Fundamental in this notion is the designation of the limits of the semiosphere, or its borders: "La 'chiusura' della semiosfera è rivelata dal fatto che essa non può avere rapporti con testi che le sono estranei da un punto di vista semiotico o con non testi. Perché essi acquistino realtà per la semiosfera, è necessario tradurli in una delle lingue del suo spazio interno e semiotizzare i fatti non semiotici"[160]. The borders

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[158] Jackson, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion*, p. 45.

[159] Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*, p. 20.

[160] Lotman, Jurij, *Semiosfera: l'asimmetria e il dialogo delle strutture pensanti*, trans. Simonetta Silvestroni, Venezia: Marsilio 1985, p. 59. [That the semiosphere is enclosed is revealed by the fact that it cannot have relationships with texts which are strange to it from a semiotic point of view, nor with non-texts. It is necessary to translate them in one of the languages of its inner space or to give meaning to the non-semiotic facts.]

of the semiosphere are productive in that they allow the communication with other semiospheres, a communication which comes along with the act of translating: "Come in matematica, dove si chiama confine l'insieme di punti che appartengono nello stesso tempo allo spazio interno e a quello esterno, il confine semiotico è la somma dei "filtri" linguistici di traduzione"[161]. An explicit interaction between the semiosphere and this 'threshold' nature of the fantastic in relation to Meyrink's work is proposed by Eric J. Klaus' in his monography *Somnambulistic Lucidity. The Sleepwalker in the Works of Gustav Meyrink* (2018), where he observes the *liminale Zustände* in which Meyrink's characters experience the labile nature of rational reality[162].

Either way, both Jackson's and Cottone's theories come to the conclusion that fantastic literature inhabits a border dimension and problematize the nature of this dividing line in a way that clearly introduces the bond between this literature and the studies on literary space. Moreover, this moves the main focus from the definition of the relationship between real and unreal in fantastic literature to the description of the space it occupies, and to the consequences deriving from the nature of this in-between spot. This allows the reader and the researcher to actually look for manifestations of this dimension in literary space depiction, viewing this zone as an area of its own, and to analyze it by using the concepts of limit and threshold as main paradigms.

German fantastic literature certainly experiences a meaningful bloom between the end of the 19th century and the first thirty years of the 20th, especially in Munich, Vienna and Prague[163], cities where Meyrink lived in different moments of his life. A possible explanation for the reawakened interest in this genre can be associated to the tense and unstable atmosphere of German and Austrian *Fin de Siècle*, to the deep sense of uncertainty which gave rise to the disintegration of the greatest European monarchies, to the failure of liberalism and in the end resulted in the World War I. This same feeling is, on the other hand, closely linked to the decisive transition to modernity which was described in the previous section on urban space[164]. *Fin de Siècle* is characterized by a typical, unique "Mischung

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[161] Lotman, *Semiosfera*, pp. 58-59. [As it happens in math, where the border designates the togetherness dots belonging to both the inner and the outer space at the same time, the semiotic border is the togetherness of the linguistic "filters" in translation.]

[162] Actually, Klaus also uses this notion also to analyze the cultural context surrounding Meyrink. When it comes to the liminality of the sleepwalker, the figure which is the focus of his analysis, Klaus states as methodological premise that: "The taxonomy of the semiosphere, that is, boundary, core, texts, and explosion, will frame the readings of Meyrinkian sleepwalkers as symbols of liminality. These terms will provide spatial reference points, illustrating how the somnambulists wander the borders of this word and the next, finding themselves caught in meteor showers of text from occult corners of existence, texts requiring translation into the language of everyday, walking consciousness. Once properly interpreted, these semiotic explosions reveal knowledge that leads to salvation." (Klaus, Eric J., *Somnambulistic Lucidity. The Sleepwalker in the Works of Gustav Meyrink*, New York / Bern / Berlin / Brussels / Vienna / Oxford / Warsaw 2018, p. 8.

[163] Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*, p. 26.

[164] Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, p. 161.

von Erwartungsangst und Nostalgie"[165], which is expressed by the numerous and divergent aesthetic categories of Decadentism: representations of violent scenarios and apocalyptical landscapes play here a meaningful role. Hannelore Bublitz also defines this time as the epoch of the " 'Entdeckung des Menschen' und seiner Endlichkeit – seines Unvermögens zur Unsterblichkeit – und damit zusammenhängend, die Endlichkeit der Dinge"[166] The strong presence of fantastic literature during these years must be interpreted within this framework, nevertheless it cannot be considered a mere expression of the inner instability of the *Fin-de-Siècle* individuum, but also a counterpart of that unconditional faith in progress which emerges through positivist models in the second half of the 19th century and starts showing its weaknesses during the transition to the 20th. The evident connection between fantastic and irrationality or anti-rationality leads fantastic literary mode to question those philosophies and social patterns that require interpreting reality through a completely scientific approach. In light of this, Caillois states that the first condition for the existence of the fantastic is the assumption of an "obligatory rational order" or of a "strict determinism based on cause and effect". This perspective does not only refer to the relationship between fantastic literature and 19th century's Positivism, but to the fantastic in general, and can be used to introduce some of the elements most characteristic of one of the most important contribution to the creation of German fantastic: the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann. The connections between E.T.A. Hoffmann's writing and the Illuminist attitude worshipping reason and rationality are explicit in the uncanny character ascribed to mechanic and optical devices as well as in the constant irony that comes with every attempt of understanding and controlling the world scientifically.

3.3. Literary space in fantastic literature

Stefan Berg's research *Schlimme Zeiten, böse Räume* (1991) analyzes the consequences of these processes on literary space depiction and highlights the connection between fantastic literature and the aforementioned sense of instability, by associating the deformation of space and time, that is typical of the genre, with a "krisenhaften und fragmentarischen Welterfahrung"[167]. As previously stated, the *Fin de Siècle* is a very productive phase for the fantastic in this regard, since this period introduces, beside a crisis of political and social stability, an actual crisis of the perception and of the

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[165] Brittnacher, *Erschöpfung und Gewalt*, p. 9.
[166] Bublitz, Hannelore, *Der verdrängte Tor im Diskurs der Moderne*, in: Nautz, Jurgen / Vahrenkamp, Richard (ed.), *Die Wiener Jahrhundertwende: Einflusse Umwelt Wirkungen*, Wien/Köln/Graz: Bohlau 1993, pp. 62-79, here: p. 66.
[167] „Sie [die Untersuchung] soll […] zeigen, wie sehr Subjekt-Werdung und Subjekt-Gewißheit von einem „vernünftig" gegliederten, sinnstiftenden Raum-Zeit-Kontinuum abhängig sind, wie sehr also der verzerrte Raum-Zeit-Zusammenhang die Möglichkeit einer „geglückten" Subjekt-Werdung und Subjekt-Identität generell problematisiert." Berg, *Schlimme Zeiten, böse Räume*, p. 3.

experience of the world, a phenomenon that must be associated to the acceleration of the pace of life during the transition to modern times. This disturbed mindset is expressed in several literary, artistic and philosophical movements throughout whole Europe during the *Jahrhundertwende* and, more in general, during the *Moderne* (see: 1.2.): more in particular, the categories time and space are powerfully influenced by this mindset and become object of research. What emerges from the philosophical and literary research of that time is the establishment of a connection between a healthy development of subjectivity and a rational and meaningful structure (but also perception) of time and space, while the crisis of identity and subjectivity starts to be symbolized by a disrupted depiction of these categories. Manifestations of this problems have been mentioned already in the previous paragraphs. When it comes to defying the main traits of fantastic space, the need to express a disruption of temporal and spatial structure must be considered the main knot of the matter.

From this perspective, two main things can be said about fantastic space: first, it is the mirror and the physical embodiment of the character's uncertainty; second, this same uncertain space is also potentially threatening and is built in a way that it can provide a series of unsettling stimuli. In a word, if literary space in horror literature designates the dimension where a horrific event can take place, fantastic space is a dimension where an encounter between rationality and irrationality can occur. It follows that the premise of this kind of space is the possibility of disrupting the natural order of phenomena, and that this unstable dimension will be defined from a series of techniques that guarantee a feeling of threat, uncanny, and inscrutability.

It has been pointed out by Rosemary Jackson that one of the traits helping this effect is the establishment of a close system where the laws regulating nature and society are dismantled progressively. This can work for an enclosed community, a peculiar district or, much more common in 19th and 20th century literature, an isolated house or a single room. In this regard, it can be interesting to see Edgar Allan Poe's reflection *Philosophy of composition* (1846), where he recounts about his *modus operandi* using the composition of *The Raven* (1845) as example:

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven – and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields – but it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident – it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention […]
I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber – a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. […] I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity of the chamber.[168]

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[168] Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, in: Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Raven and The Philosophy of Composition*, San Francisco / New York: Paul Elder and Company 1907, p. 32.

Important in this statement is how the enclosed state of the setting is characterized by a contrast between inner and outer space where, Poe specifies through his parenthesis "(physical)", the chamber is a safety place compared to the external stormy night. In fact, the author points out how the serenity of the lover's room is only apparent, and how the night chaos is destined to have access to an apparently intimate and safe dimension through the window. The space of this single room is, therefore, enclosed enough to attract the selective attention of the reader, to become a dimension where a subversion of the order is possible and where no way out is given (the external space is too hostile to serve as escape). In this case, the storm has the double nature to allow the entrance of the disorder in the lover's safe place, but also enhances the possibility of isolation. This sense of isolation is also increased by the darkness appearing when the lyrical-I opens the chamber door: "—here I opened wide the door;- Darkness there, and nothing more. Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before;"[169].

It should be also pointed out that the setting of *The Raven* is not unsettling per se: the room is, as the author himself states, "richly furnished"[170]: silk and velvet cover curtains and sits, light comes from lamps and embers ("On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er, But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er"[171]), art objects (such as the bust of Pallas on which the raven perches) and books fill the room with beauty and knowledge[172]. Furthermore, the 'chamber' is a beloved space for the lyrical-I in view of the happy memories that are linked to it, the ones where his lover Lenore was still alive. The unsettling quality of the scene is precisely related to the admission, in such a protected and loved space, of an element that subverts the lyrical-I's interaction with reality by giving voice and body to his torments. This way, the category of *Heimlich* implicit in the *Unheimlich* is preserved and the impression on the reader is stronger in that what receives a clear attack in the case of *The Raven* is the most precious space for a human being: his own home. As Hans Richard Brittnacher explains in *Ästhetik des Horrors* (1995):

[das] Haus ist der Inbegriff von Schutz und Geborgenheit. *Die eigenen vier Wände, my home is my castle, Herr im eigenen Hause* – aus solchen Redensarten spricht die Zufriedenheit, den Unbilden der Natur, der Einsamkeit, dem agoraphobischen Ausgesetztsein entkommen zu sein. Das Haus schützt gleichermaßen vor Wind, Regen, Kälte, wilden

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[169] Poe, *The Raven*, in: Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Raven and The Philosophy of Composition*, San Francisco / New York: Paul Elder and Company 1907, pp. 49-53.

[170] Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 32.

[171] Poe, *The Raven*, p. 77.

[172] See: Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, p. 23. "I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration- the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem." and Poe, *Philosophy of Composition*, p. 32: "The room is represented as richly furnished - this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis."

Tieren und unerwünschten Eindringlingen. […] Im Haus vergegenständlicht sich Zivilisation, in ihm triumphiert die ästhetische Formgebung der Menschen über die Natur – er hat den größten Ängsten der Verlassenheit, der Verlorenheit, der Einsamkeit mit eigener Tatkraft ein sichtbares Symbol seines Widerstandes entgegengesetzt.[173]

It was prefaced that fantastic space must not only allow the entrance of the uncanny, but also guarantee, to some extent, the uncertainty that characterizes the fantastic mode. Fundamental in this case is, therefore, that the setting of a fantastic sequence allows both explanations of strange phenomena: the rational and the irrational one[174]. Moving shadows, odd lights and sounds, mirages and other phenomena typical of this literature must, therefore, be easily justified by an environment that allows their occurrence. In Poe's case, an effect of this kind is given by the author's use of the tapping of the raven that confuses the lyrical-I, who opens the house door instead of the window because he finds it more logical and, seeing the empty dark space outside, conceives the possibility of his dead lover having knocked to enter the room. The consequence of this mistake is that the lyrical-I discovers this way the unsettling deep darkness surrounding his chamber and his sense of solitude increases, until it changes into fear and torment. In this instance, the effect of likelihood of the confusing event is given by simply thematizing the double access to the external space that is conventionally constitutive of houses (doors and windows). This simple artifice gives the lyrical-I the chance to have a moment to stand alone in front of an abyss of darkness. In other more complex cases, the explanation of the phenomena can be provided by involving houses or other spatial dimensions possessing hidden spots (underground galleries, attics devoid of clean windows, cellars) or abandoned areas (the permanently closed room/building or the dead village). In virtue of their being not immediately accessible, these places are justified to provoke sensory stimuli that, though unsettling, can prove themselves to be only caused by a particular spatial situation. This element is also the clearest connection between the *Fin de Siècle* fantastic and the gothic novel: Berg observes how the use of these spatial traits enhances the atmospheric value of narration in Horace Walpole's gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) far more interestingly than the depiction of the castle in and of itself, and in this regard states that:

In der Burg, die kein einziges Mal von außen geschildert wird, werden wir mit weiträumigen Hallen, Galerien, einem schwarzen Turm und über ausgedehnte Treppensysteme erreichbaren Kammern konfrontiert. Das ist nicht nur nicht ungewöhnlich, es ist schlicht banal. Interessanter wird das Schloß allerdings durch die Tatsache, daß es durch ein System von Geheimgängen unterminiert ist.[175]

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[173] Brittnacher, Hans Richard, *Ästhetik des Horrors. Gespenster, Vampire, Monster, Teufel und künstliche Menschen in der phantastischen Literatur*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1995, p. 92.
[174] Other artifices not linked to space depiction are efficiently used for this purpose. Two of them are the unreliable narrator and the use of dubitative forms.
[175] Berg, *Schlimme Zeiten, böse Räume*, p. 41.

The major unsettling effect is obtained, hence, by depicting a space that cannot be understood in its manifestation and that cannot be interpreted as a stable, rational object. Physic disorientation happens here to overlap with, and partially because, psychic disorientation. The protagonist of both the gothic novel and the fantastic story becomes prey of this deformed architecture[176]. However, a substantial difference between these two dimensions should be pointed out: in comparison to the gothic novel, the fantastic story focuses on the protagonist's inner life in a much higher measure, and the function of the deformed space in fantastic literature tends to be identified as mirroring the protagonist's own dark spaces, fixations, unexpressed fears and perverted desire. This does not happen in such a direct way in the gothic novel, where the protagonist experiences a kind of both uncertainty and fear which is not dependent on self-investigation, although the deformed space enhances the protagonist's understanding of reality and meaningfully affects their rational thought. The reason for this fracture between the gothic novel and fantastic literature finds an explanation in the growing importance of inner reality during the years that saw the major development of this genre (starting, therefore, from the second half of the 19th century) and consequently in the growing interest for the investigation of dark spots of this inner reality. One of the results of this process is the correspondence, in the fantastic story, between the fear of the deformed, threatening space and the fear of one's own[177]. A second one is the increasing shift, in this kind of narration, towards the protagonist's loss of reason as outcome of the narrated events, as it frequently happens in the work of H.P. Lovecraft's. The assumption that the role of elements guaranteeing sensory confusion (darkness, labyrinthic structures and so forth) is critical in fantastic space should not, therefore, surprise anyone. Marosi mentions in this regard the states of deprivation identified by Freud, *Dunkelheit*, *Verlassenheit*, *Stille*, which make protagonists extremely receptive to unsettling manifestations and which decisively contribute to the emersion of uncanny atmospheres[178].

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[176] See: Berg, p. 41: „Es ist genau diese Koppelung von verzerrter Architektur und einer ihr spiegelbildlich zugeordneten psychisch-physischen Desorientierung des Protagonisten, die das Neue an der Welt Walpoles ausmacht. Der Mensch, orientierungslos in der völligen Dunkelheit, umgeben von einem deformierten Raum: ein Katastrophenszenario."

[177] See: Marosi, Silvia, *Unheimliche Szenerien – Schauplätze des Grauens. Typen und Funktionen von Innenraumdarstellung in der deutschsprachigen Horrorliteratur des 20. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel von Gustav Meyrinks, Hanns Heinz Ewers, Walter Brandorff, Malte Sembten und Michael Siefener*, Passau: EDFC 2006, p. 105. Stephen King reflects on the matter by also mentioning the growing importance of this correspondence in the 20th century horror story.

[178] See: Marosi, *Unheimliche Szenerien – Schauplätze des Grauens*, p. 110, and Freud, *Das Unheimliche* p. 32.

4. Research on the apocalyptical discourse

4.1 General guidelines and the definition of apocalypse

Collins, author of *Apocalyptic imagination*, introduces apocalyptic literature as a category generating confusion and skepsis in literary criticism due to the 'semantic confusion' deriving by the numerous nuances that are connected to the term and that can appear extremely divergent when it comes to observe the use of derivatives such as 'apocalyptic' or 'apocalypticism', in describing texts and atmospheres which have little in common with the ground meaning of the notion 'apocalypse', revelation, in and of itself. In this regard, Klaus Koch points out in *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (1970) that the word 'apocalyptic' does not stem from the Greek term *apokalypsis* directly, but as derivative of the term 'apocalypse' used to define the *Book of Revelation*. This same point of view is expressed by Paolo Sacchi in *Formazioni e linee portanti dell'apocalittica giudaica precristiana* (1995), where he states: "the name 'apocalyptic' is purely conventional and does not have any relation to St. John's Apocalypse [*Book of Revelation*], which is the source where the term originates"[179]. This derivation has the consequence of attributing to the term 'apocalyptic' additional nuances that are related to the Evangelist's text, and, in light of this problem, Koch distinguishes between 'apocalypse' as literature product and 'apocalyptic' movements[180], while more recent research tends to distinguish between "apocalypse as a literary genre, apocalypticism as a social ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology as a set of ideas and motifs that may also be found in other literary genres and social settings"[181].

To understand the story and the prerogatives of the genre, it is now necessary to trace the notion of apocalypse to the Biblical *Book of Revelation*, first apocalypse defined as such (the term 'apocalypse' is used to refer to text only starting from Christianity[182]), and to highlight the existence of a series of Jewish works which appear to be essential in defining the genre in its earliest manifestation. Beside the *1 Enoch*[183], considered by Sacchi the fundamental starting point for a reflection on the genre apocalypse[184] despite it not being introduced as such in its tradition, the following texts are therefore

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[179] Sacchi, Paolo, *Formazioni e linee portanti dell'apocalittica giudaica precristiana*, in: "Ricerche storico-bibliche" 7,2, pp. 19-36, here: p. 26.

[180] Koch, Klaus, *The Rediscovery of Apocalytpic*, Trans. Margareth Kohl, Naperville: Alec R. Allenson Inc. 1980, pp. 18-36.

[181] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 2.

[182] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 3.

[183] The Book of Enoch, transmitted through its Ge'ez manuscript, is an apocryphal text considered canonical in the Ethiopian Church, written in the 1st century AD. The text treats various arguments but also includes an apocalyptical component, especially in the sections 83-104.

[184] See: Sacchi, Paolo, *L'apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia*, Brescia: Paideia 1990.

worth of mention: *Daniel's apocalypse*[185], *4 Ezra*[186], the *Sibylline Oracles*[187], *2/3 Baruch*[188], *2 Enoch*[189], the *Apocalypse of Abraham*[190], the *Testament of Abraham*[191]. These works, although showing revelatory visions and prophecies, are composed of several divergent sections and can hence be classified into several literary categories[192]. Their multiplicity of form and content makes it extremely complex to give a clarification of what the ancient category of apocalyptic looks like and to define the genre through stable parameters. However, an analysis of the traits that make these texts worth of mention for the apocalyptic genre has convinced literary criticism to identify some useful parameters that can be introduced in this context as a starting point for describing the methodological approach of this dissertation, which has apocalyptic imagination as guideline[193].

As previously stated, the most ancient text that can be traced back to the apocalyptic tradition is the so-called *Book of Enoch*, which can be considered the starting point for research on apocalyptic tradition in ancient texts and provides one of the most important parameters for the definition of the apocalyptic, which is the confrontation of humankind with the idea of evil. The analysis of the apocryphal texts reported in *Semeia 14* and continuously elaborated by Collins throughout the

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[185] Apocryphal text tracing style and content of the *Book of Daniel* (Old Testament), dated 9th Century AD, discovered in its Persian version. The text is divided into two sections, the first dedicated to the Babylonian exile and the second constituted by revelations and prophecies.

[186] Apocryphal text, included in chapters 3-14 of *2 Ezra*, dated by scholarship between 70 and 218 CE despite its being considered canonical and written during the Babylon exile (6th Century AD) in the Ethiopian Church. The text is pseudoepigraphical, written by a scribe who traces the style of the *Book of Ezra*.

[187] Apocryphal text consisting of prophecies collected in 12 books, written in Greek exameters, which can be divided into two sections: the first one, related to Jewish culture, was written between the 2nd and the 1st century AD; the second, the Christian part of the Oracles, was written between the 1st and the 4th century CE.

[188] With *2 Baruch* is designated an apocryphal text date between the 1st and the 2nd century CE after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. Being it transmitted through its Syrian manuscripts, it is also called the *Syrian apocalypse of Baruch*. The apocalypse occupies the chapters 1-77 of the text. Differently *3 Baruch* in an apocryphal text also called the *Greek apocalypse of Baruch* since it survives in Greek manuscripts. It is dated between the 1st and the 3rd century CE.

[189] *2 Enoch* is also called the *Slavonic Book of Enoch* or the *Apocalypse of Enoch*, is dated to the 1st century CE and survives only in manuscripts redacted in Old Church Slavonic. The text is entirely dedicated to apocalyptic visions, concluding with the Enoch's metamorphosis into the angel Metatron.

[190] Apocryphal text dated between 70-150 CE, transmitted through Old Slavonic manuscripts, showing Abraham's conversion from polytheism to monotheism.

[191] Apocryphal text dated to end of the 1st century CE, transmitted through manuscripts redacted in Greek, Old Slavonic, Roman, Ethiopian, Copt and Arabic, telling a celestial journey of Abraham, accompanied by archangel Michael. For the list of apocalyptic texts of Jewish matter see: Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 2, and, for a slightly different point of view, also: Koch, p. 23: "If we are to arrive at a historical perception of the background against which apocalyptic ideas grew up, as well as a serviceable and generally applicable concept of apocalyptic, we must start from the writings which were composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, or in which, at least, the Hebrew or Aramaic spirit is dominant. To this group belong first and foremost the *Book of Daniel*, *1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Book of Revelation*, with its Semitic tendencies."

[192] This dissertation analyzes the characteristics of the mentioned apocalypses which, in form and content, are most useful for the analysis of secular texts of the 20th century, as is the case of our researched corpus. It is the case to remember that every text mentioned in this section has its own extremely complex philological history, and that the information provided in this chapter are not oriented towards the historical and anthropological complexity of the exegesis of these apocalypses.

[193] See: Collins, John (ed.), *Apocalypse. The Morphology of a Genre*, in: Semeia, n. 14, 1979. Cfr. Koch, p. 23: "We can only ascertain what is apocalyptic about these writings if characteristics common to the type can be demonstrated. If we are to succeed at all in the future in arriving at a binding definition of apocalyptic, a starting point in form of criticism and literary and linguistic history is, in the nature of things, the only one possible."

development of his entire work on the topic, showed that an apocalypse can also be defined as: "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."[194]

Interestingly, the very general definition of apocalypse given in this case involves as distinctive trait the peculiar treatment of time and space, two dimensions of extreme interest for this work. Nevertheless, the first element pointed out by Collins in this statement is the close relationship, in the apocalyptic literature, between the revelatory act and the narrative framework. Aim of the latter is describing the manner of revelation: it can take the form of an otherworldly journey or of a vision[195]; it can be supported by a philosophical dissertation in dialogic form; or it can be embodied through the finding of a heavenly book[196]. In this narrative framework, is revealed "something about the destiny of mankind which has hitherto been a secret (*raz*, *mysterion*) guarded in heaven but which will soon come to pass on earth and which will be of absolutely decisive importance for everyone involved."[197] The form taken by the revelatory act is mostly the one of a direct dialogue between the human recipient and a heavenly counterpart, and this element justifies the association of apocalypses with another genre, the one of the prophecy, although, as Collins observes, the language of apocalyptic texts also stems from the fields of mythology and cosmology. Function of the heavenly counterpart is mediating the answers of God to questions regarding matters such as the problem of evil, of sufferance, and of human eschatology[198].

The need for a heavenly counterpart implies, however, that the recipient of the message would not be able to understand its content without the help of a guide, a mediator between the otherworldly dimension and the earthly sphere. This guide can be identified with an angel.

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[194] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 5.

[195] Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalytpic*, p. 24: "although the vision can be replaced by mere audition (as it is already the case in Dan. 9)".

[196] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 6.

[197] Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalytpic*, p. 24.

[198] It is necessary to remember that the research on the definition of the apocalyptic is developed in another direction as well: Paolo Sacchi's diachronic one. For Sacchi, the analysis of the texts is not oriented towards the matter of the definition of the genre on a formal level in and of itself, but it investigates the possible existence of an apocalyptic mentality on an anthropological and political level, a current of thought whose testimony would be the apocalypses. In this case, the main question is: "are there, in Jewish history of ideas, great fundamental problems which are to be found in the classic apocalyptic, or in the works which are traditionally considered apocalyptic?" (Sacchi, Paolo, *L'Apocalittica Giudaica e la sua Storia*, p. 19). In this regard, Sacchi concentrates especially on the problem of evil presented in *The Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch*). Another perspective privileging especially the anthropological analysis is provided by Vittoria Cerutti in: Cerutti, Vittoria, *Antropologia e Apocalittica*, Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider 1990, where she investigates the Jewish apocalyptic in regard to three main religious systems: Greek-Roman and Mesopotamic polytheisms, the hermetic systems of gnostic and neo-platonic alignment and Jewish and Christian monotheisms. This diachronic and historical-anthropological perspective cannot be considered in detail in this context.

When it comes to the recipient, Collins, who concentrates on Jewish apocryphal literature, observes the correspondence between the receiver of the revelation and a "venerable figure from the distant past, whose name is used pseudonymously"[199]. The use of pseudepigraph is part of the narrative framework and has the double function of emphasizing the mysterious component of the text and of highlighting its remoteness and its timelessness. Although this discourse might not be suitable when it comes to modern and contemporary literature of apocalyptic content, the reference to a mystical figure of the past certainly plays a meaningful role in Meyrink's work, and especially in *Das grüne Gesicht*. As observed by Dailey, the association between the use of pseudonymous references and a certain conception of not linear time is meaningful: first, the instrumentalization of eminent figures of the past evokes a strong relationship between these figures and contemporaneity; secondly, the figures addressed through pseudepigraph are also attributed, in these apocalyptic apocryphal texts, a series of traits connecting them to other prophets and patriarchs, creating an imagery where all these authoritative personalities share an eternal temporal dimension[200].

Collins also identifies another main trait regarding the observer: its function of showing human impotence when facing the revealed otherworldly almighty. This role can be enhanced using the trope of human impossibility to physically perceive the greatness of the revealed divine dimension, as it is shown in *4 Ezra*, when Ezra finds himself beholding a vision of Zion and, after receiving an interpretation of its meaning, is ordered by his guide Uriel to visit the holy city: "do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be affrighted, but go in and see the splendor and beauty and the vast greatness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes be able to see: and then afterwards you shall hear as much as your ears can comprehend."[201] Similarly, the recipient might sometimes be unable to stand the revealed dimension to the extent that he trembles and faints[202]. Certainly, the physical reaction coincides with an intellectual uncertainty that can only be overcome through the words of the guide: not surprisingly, when it comes to the aforementioned Zion envisioned by Ezra, the city appears after Ezra encounters a suffering woman, and then the following dialogue between the recipient and his guide, Uriel, takes place:

I said: Speak, my lord; only do not forsake me, lest I die before my time. For I have seen what I did not know, and I have heard what I do not understand. Or is my mind deceived, and my soul dreaming? Now therefore I entreat you to give your servant an explanation of this.

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[199] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p 6.
[200] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 232.
[201] *Fourth Book of Ezra*, Jefferson: Yahweh's congregation, 10:55-56, p. 62. From now on: 4 Ezra
[202] See: Dailey, p. 237. See also: Stone, Michael E., *A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions*, in: The Harvard Theological Review, vol. 96 n. 2, April 2003, pp. 167-180. Stone also stresses the importance of Ezra's reaction to the appearance of the city as paradigmatic and more powerful than any other manifestations of surprise in other apocalyptic texts (pp. 173-174).

Then he answered me and said, Hear me, and I shall inform you, and tell you about the things which you are afraid of, for YAHWEH the Most High will reveal many secret things to you. […] This is the interpretation: This woman whom you saw, whom you now behold as an established city, is Zion.[203].

The angel leaves no room for Ezra's uncertainty to grow, and solves for him the riddle provided by the symbolic transformation taking place before the recipient's eyes. This does not imply that recipients in apocalypses are completely passive figures who do not experience any evolution in thought: on the contrary, apocalyptic texts can take the shape of a philosophical dialogue where the revelation of mysteries encounters resistance and skepticism from the recipient's side, and consequently the acceptance of the revealed dimension has consequences on the recipient's worldview[204]. It should be pointed out, however, that apocalypses are composite in character and that therefore a general rule on the observer's personality is not possible to identify. The aforementioned lines of *4 Ezra* have, in this regard, nothing in common with the canonical *Book of Revelation*, where the otherworldly dimension is revealed through consecutive images which do not leave much room for dialogue:

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstand […] To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. […] To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. […] To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.[205]

The imperative words of the angel to John show, in fact, a further trait influencing form and content of apocalypses: their exhortative quality, which according to Collins can be identified, with its variations, in all apocalypses. This trait must be traced back to some of the tropes influencing the content of most apocalyptic literature related to Jewish and Christian imagery, such as the matter of final judgment and the retribution beyond death[206]. Either way, the *Book of Revelation* shows an elaboration of words heard by the Evangelist in the final lines[207] and a growing understanding of

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[203] *Fourth Book of Ezra*, Jefferson: Yahweh's congregation, 10:37-44, p. 60-61.
[204] Especially in relation to *4 Ezra*, see: Stone, *A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions*, pp. 175-176.
[205] *Book of Revelation*, 2:1-29.
[206] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 7.
[207] "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen." *Book of Revelation* (22:19-21).

God's plan towards the final chapters (*Book of Revelation*, 21-22), where John does not need the direct speech of the heavenly counterpart to understand the mechanisms that make New Jerusalem alive[208]. Function of the observer is, hence, not only the passive reception and active understanding of the words of the heavenly counterpart, but also the drawing of conclusions that must be shared with his own community. When it comes to delivering the message contained in the visions, it is written in *The Book of Revelation*: "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later"[209]. This quote is followed by the sequence *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, which is based on the imperative: "write"[210], expressing the responsibility of the chosen observer towards collectivity. In this regard, Collins also adds that criticism accepts apocalypses as generated by certain social and historical circumstances, and also remarks that scholarship tends to associate these circumstances with situations of actual distress and oppression[211], although, when it comes to the apocalyptic worldview in millenarist groups on the other hand, revelatory texts are equally produced in different social categories, not only in the weakest ones[212].

Last characteristic of the recipients is their strong relationship with another linguistic trait of apocalypses: the importance of the semantic field related to sensory perception, especially when it comes to the spheres of sight and audition. The *Book of Revelation* makes repetitive use of expressions that highlight the role of the observer: "Then I saw", "I watched", "I looked", "I heard". Similarly, in *The Book of Enoch* the repetition concerns the expressions: "I investigated", "Observe (imperative)", "I observed" "behold" (imperative)[213]. The importance of these references to sight have been noted

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[208] "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.", *Book of Revelation* (21: 22-27).

[209] *The Book of Revelation*, 1:19.

[210] To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstand […] To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. […] To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. […] To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." (*Book of Revelation*, 2:1-3:22).

[211] He references in this regard: Vielhauer, Philip / Strecker, Georg, *Apocalypses and Related Subjects*, in: Hennecke, Edgard / Schneemelcher, Wilhelm (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, Trans. R. McWilson, Louisville: Westminister John Knox 1965, vol. 2, pp. 542-568, here: p. 568.

[212] Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, pp. 27-29.

[213] See for example: *The Book of Enoch*, 2: 1-7: "1 Observe ye everything that takes place in the heaven, how they do not change their orbits, and the luminaries which are in the heaven, how they all rise and set in order each in its season, and transgress not against their appointed order. 2 Behold ye the earth, and give heed to the things which take place upon it from first to last, how steadfast they are, how none of the things upon earth change, but all the works of God appear to you. Behold the summer and the winter, how the whole earth is filled with water, and clouds and dew and rain lie upon

by Dailey in relation to *4 Ezra*, where in the fourth vision the frequency of verbs related to sight increases critically, and it can be commented as consequence of the overlapping between the physical sight and the prophetic vision[214]. Koch also points out that the matter of seeing is frequently used in the introduction to apocalyptic texts, although some apocalypses show the consolidated alternative to this beginning by using as opening the confrontation of the recipient with an ethical matter tormenting him[215].

4.2 Historical apocalypses and otherworldly apocalypses

Collins also distinguishes between historical apocalypses, revealing the meaning and the eschatology of human history, and otherworldly apocalypses, which reveal new aspects of nature and of the universe on a cosmological level[216]. He points out that some apocalypses, such as the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and some parts of *1 Enoch*, show the influence of both strands, but that these categories tend to be separated in a more general framework. Interesting is the connection between these strands and the concepts of temporal and spatial dimension included in Collins' definition of apocalypse, since it can be inferred how historic apocalypses will dedicate more attention to the temporal sphere, interrogating it to understand the meaning of a series of events, while the otherworldly apocalypses will focus on the spatial dimension since their main concern is the description of the new spaces seen by the recipient[217]. It should be noted, however, that the concepts of time and space cannot be interpreted, in this case, with the same parameters of the physical categories they conventionally describe. This is especially true for the category of time in apocalypses, which must be discussed in light of the premise that Biblical time, the temporal dimension mainly influencing apocalypses, cannot be understood as a chronological line. F. F. Dailey, who discusses apocalyptical time as non-

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it. 3 Observe and see how in the winter all the trees seem as though they had withered and shed all their leaves, except fourteen trees, which do not lose their foliage but retain the old foliage from two to three years till the new comes. 4 And again, observe ye the days of summer how the sun is above the earth over against it. And you seek shade and shelter by reason of the heat of the sun, and the earth also burns with growing heat, and so you cannot tread on the earth, or on a rock by reason of its heat. 5 Observe ye how the trees cover themselves with green leaves and bear fruit: wherefore give ye heed and know with regard to all His works, and recognize how He that liveth for ever hath made them so. 6 And all His works go on thus from year to year for ever, and all the tasks which they accomplish for Him, and their tasks change not, but according as God hath ordained so is it done. 7 And behold how the sea and the rivers in like manner accomplish and change not their tasks from His commandments (*The Complete Book of Enoch. Standard English Version*, trans. Dr. Jay Winter, Winter publishing 2015 (ebook), p. 14).

[214] Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalytpic*, p. 24: "The apocalyptic cycles associate a whole series of formal characteristics with the account of the prophetic vision. To take only one of these: the first great vision cycle in Revelation begins like many other apocalyptic ones: 'After this I looked and lo, an open door' (4.1). Amos begins the account of his vision very similarly: 'Thus, the Lord God showed me: behold, he was forming locusts' (7.1). In both cases the word 'see' is part of the introduction."

[215] Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalytpic*, pp. 24-25.

[216] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 8. See also: Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, p. 76.

[217] See: Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, p. 6.

linear phenomenon in his work *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, references in this regard the conclusions of John Marsh according to which the language of the Bible does not possess any concept or term for the notion of *chronos*, since the Bible operates instead with the notion of 'realistic time', where 'time' is not defined by its passing chronologically, but by its content[218]. Thorleif Boman, who agrees with Marsh in evaluating the content of time as main category of Biblical thought in this regard, creates for this instance the definition 'psychological time', which stresses the value of the experiences characterizing a certain period above its position in a chronological setting[219]. The term 'psychological' must be understood here as expression of the experienced events defining a depicted time, and not be confused with the meaning it acquired in relation to modern literature, since the latter stresses the subjective component of experience, while the experience of time in the Old Testament is always dependent on a heavenly will only[220]. David S. Russell follows these reflections and highlights the connection between the notion of 'psychological/realistic time' and the 'contemporaneity' between apocalypses and patriarchs/prophets suggested by pseudepigraph, as it was previously discussed[221]. Given the premise of this absence of a factual chronological consistency in Biblical time, the main matter in regard to time in apocalypses themselves is, given the importance of the eschatological component in these texts, the theorization of a model that can take into account the studies describing a linear apocalyptical time pointing towards an *eschaton*, but also considering the evidence, in these same apocalypses, of a cyclical temporal dimension. Dailey refers here especially to *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* apocalypses, where the end of time described as an *eschaton* in the texts tends to be explicitly overlapped with the notions characterizing the beginning of history according to Genesis. It is said, for example, in the conclusions drawn by the scribe in *2 Baruch*:

And it will happen that after He has brought down everything which is in the world, and has sat down in eternal shalom on the throne of the Kingdom, and then joy will be revealed and rest will appear. And then health will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. […] And the wild beasts will come from the wood and serve men, and the asps and dragons will come out of their holes to subject themselves to a child. And women will no longer have pain when they bear, nor will they be tormented when they yield the fruits of their womb. And it will happen in those days that the reapers will not become tired, and the farmers will not wear themselves out, because the products of themselves will shoot out speedily, during the time that they work on them in full tranquility.[222]

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[218] See: Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 232 and Marsh, John, *The Fullness of Time*, London: Nisbet 1952, pp. 20-21, 77, 179.
[219] Boman, Thorleif, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1970, pp. 137-139.
[220] See: Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 242.
[221] See: Russell, David Syme, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic: 200 BC – 100 AD*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1974, pp. 209, 134-136, 210-212, and Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 232.
[222] *2 Baruch*, 73:1-74:1, Jefferson, Books of Yahweh's Sword, pp. 47-48.

Similarly, it is stated in *4 Ezra* that "the world shall be turned back to primeval silence the seventh day, as it was at the first beginnings: so that no one shall remain"[223], where the seven days implied in the utterance correspond to the seven days of the Creation[224].

Cyclicity is also made apparent in the reference to a factual alternation of epochs giving shape to a series of cycles, like the succession of twelve epochs of 'bright' and 'dark' waters addressed in 2 Baruch, where the bright waters represent wisdom and justice while the dark ones stand for ignorance and wickedness. An akin tendency is the one associating an event taking place in the apocalypse to a meaningful fact that has taken place in the Old Testament, as it happens at the end of 4 Ezra, where the giving of the Torah to Ezra references the delivery of the Torah at Sinai[225]. As observed by Dailey, these correspondences also evoke that 'contemporaneity' stemming from pseudepigraph that had been pointed out by Russell.

In order to combine these nuances of cyclicity with the importance given to the *eschaton* in apocalypses, Dailey proposes a model comprehending both circularity and linearity, the spiral model, which is illustrated as follows[226]:
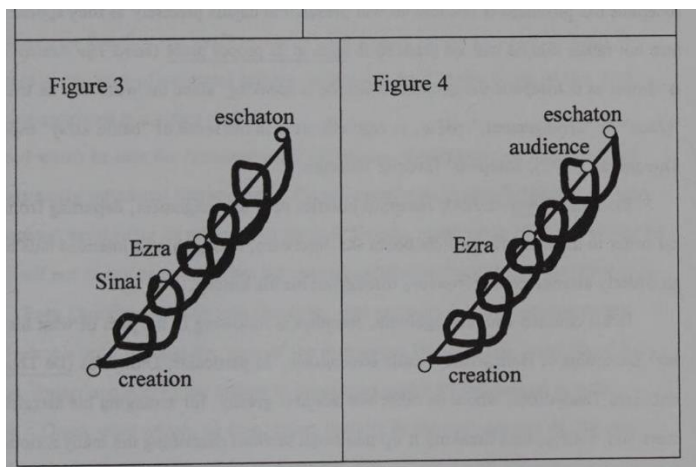
The model represents a line taking from creation to *eschaton*, ideally ascendent since "the general upwards slope of the spiral is meant to depict the overall temporal progression towards the *eschaton*"[227]. The spiral, originating in the same spots constituting the extremes of the segment beginning/end of history and therefore connecting them as well, represents the seer's ability to get access to different historical dimensions corresponding to his own told experiences. Dailey points out

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[223] 4 Ezra, 70:30, p. 36.
[224] Stone, *A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions*, p. 217 and Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 234.
[225] See: 4 Ezra, 14:37-48, pp. 79-81; Daley, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 235.
[226] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 245.
[227] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 236.

that the loops of the spiral do not intend to give a measure of a temporal unity constituting the length of historical cycles; on the contrary, they are meant to stress the notion that the content characterizing these cycles can be mirrored in different moments, and highlight how this content results more important than duration in apocalyptical time. By doing so, the spiral model theorized by Dailey not only shows the complex relationship between beginning and *eschaton*, but also represents the meaning repetitions acquire when it comes to building Biblical time. However, Dailey also points out the limits of his representation by highlighting the difficulty in depicting the concept of eternity linked to both notions beginning and *eschaton*: apocalypses address for their nature the notion of eternity as comprehension of history, what was before the genesis and what is manifested after the end of history, so that eternity, understood as 'divine time'[228] since independent from history, "stretches out on either side" of the spiral model[229]. The problem with eternity in Biblical time, and this matter is connected to the aforementioned 'contemporaneity' and to the problem of cyclicity, is that it implies, as aim after the *eschaton*, a dimension to which history is directed; but, on the other hand, this eternity cannot be assumed as a future 'time', not only because chronological order and duration play no role in Biblical time, but also because the category 'eternity' is conceptually conceived as permanently existing. It follows that the line connecting genesis and *eschaton* ascends towards eternity while already including eternity itself. The paradox stemming from this contradiction explains the connection or the overlapping between the concepts eternity and timelessness: if apocalypses intend to represent the incoming divine time, or eternity, they do so by highlighting the existence of this same divine time *both* in the moment of the writing *and* in the other addressed temporal dimension. This is especially true in virtue of the fact that no time is conceivable which is not divine – and consequently eternal. Since eternity cannot imply the passing of epochs, it must be understood as a timeless dimension. This is expressed more clearly in *2 Baruch*:

And it will happen after this day which I appointed is over that both the shape of those who are found to be guilty as also the splendor of those who have proved to be righteous will be changed. […] They shall see that world which is now invisible to them hidden to them. And time will no longer make them older. […] Miracles, however, will appear at their own time to those who are saved because of their works and for whom the Torah is now a hope, and intelligence, expectation, and wisdom a trust.[230]

The heavenly guide of Baruch refers here to a 'time' that must and will come, an epoch in which righteousness will overcome wickedness and in which 'time' won't make people older anymore. However, it is also stated in the passage that the 'world' in which righteousness reigns and people do

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[228] See: Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 240.
[229] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 238.
[230] 2 Baruch, 51:1-7, p. 32.

not depend on the passing of time anymore is something currently existing, but invisible to people. Baruch is also told, when he has the vision of New Jerusalem, that "this city will be delivered up for a time […] it is not this building that is in your midst now; it is that which will be revealed, with ME, that was already prepared from the moment that I decided to create Paradise."[231]. It follows that New Jerusalem and the eternity it represents already exist in the moment of the apocalypse, only waiting to be revealed, and that "divine time – or timelessness – exists alongside human time and may be accessed by the privileged few who are granted divinely sent visions and dreams, in which the normal constraints of time (and space) are erased"[232]. In this case, the spiral model fails in representing eternity because it cannot express the correspondence between eternal time and timelessness[233].

It must be said that this view on apocalyptical time is not universally accepted in more recent studies. Lorenzo Di Tommaso's contribution *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità* (2020), which examines the concept "apocalyptical worldview", refuses categorically the idea of any cyclicity in such a context. In this respect, the scholar states:

Il Tempo apocalittico è unicamente una proprietà della realtà mondana o terrena. È lineare, finito e unidirezionale. La storia apocalittica è la registrazione degli eventi nel tempo; è panoramica (comprende passato storico, presente contemporaneo e futuro escatologico), esaustiva (tutti gli eventi storici rientrano nel suo ambito, anche se solo pochi dati sono considerati significativi) e universale (afferma di essere l'unica e sola fonte valida di verità e di significato storico). La storia apocalittica è sempre escatologica; è un errore categorico comprenderla come se includesse solo eventi passati.[234]

[Apocalyptical Time is only proper of the worldly or earthly reality. It is linear, finite and unidirectional. The apocalyptical history is the registration of the events in time; it is panoramic (it embraces historical past, contemporary present and eschatological future), exhaustive (every historical event belongs to its field, even when only few information related to it are considered meaningful) and universal (it claims to be the only valid source of truth and of historical meaning). The apocalyptical history is always eschatological; it is a categorical mistake to understand it as embracing only past events.]

By describing apocalyptical time as unidirectional, Di Tommaso addresses Dailey's research as *contra* directly[235]. Di Tommaso's contribution does not analyze Dailey's position in detail; the quoted statement can be read as based on the absolute dominion of eschatology over any secondary idea of timelessness or cyclicity that can be implied in apocalypses expression of divine time. Di Tommaso adds, in this regard, that the *telos* remains the most important component of apocalyptical time, being

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[231] 2 Baruch, 4:1-3, p. 3.
[232] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 240. Despite his understanding of Biblical time as chronological, Oscar Cullmann highlights this correspondence between future and present in apocalypse as well in: Cullmann, Oscar, *Christ and Time. The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag 1962, pp. 61-68.
[233] Dailey, *Non-Linear Time in Apocalyptic Texts: The Spiral Model*, p. 239.
[234] Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, p. 81.
[235] Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, p. 81.

the apocalyptical text oriented towards an inevitable end. Furthermore, "revealed history" in apocalyptic literature is, according to this view: always exclusive because it cannot bear any interpretation or opinion; always contemporary to the Chosen who experience it; short-sighted, because it only refers to the Chosen.

In fact, the divergence between Di Tommaso's and Dailey's perspective must either way be read in light of a substantial difference in their actual concern: while Daley concentrates on apocalypse as a genre and on notions related to Biblical conception of time and space, Di Tommaso takes the apocalyptical worldview, or what Collins and Koch call apocalypticism, as main object. The main difference between apocalypse and apocalypticism consists in the terms being indicating a genre and a philosophical/ideological movement respectively. The apocalyptical worldview can be applied, as Di Tommaso reminds, both to religious and secular literature, and from it stems the "apocalyptical speculation", which is meant to reveal the real nature of space, of time and of existence[236]. Proper of this worldview are also the communication between earth and otherworldly spaces and the conflict between the evil, or the adversaries, and the right ones, the Chosen.

When it comes to Di Tommaso's utterance that "apocalyptical history is always eschatological; it is a categorical mistake to understand it as including only past events", this statement cannot really be connected to Dailey's sources and theoretical approach, since the ideas exposed in Dailey's contribution and in the other studies referenced in his analysis are not compatible with the notion of chronological past.

Given these premises, any reflection on space and time in apocalypse and in apocalypticism has the aim, in this case, to build a methodological ground for the analysis of space depiction in those works of Gustav Meyrink's that can be defined as apocalyptic. It follows that choosing between Dailey's spiral model and Di Tommaso's exclusivity of eschatology and *telos* as reference points in this dissertation only depends on which of these perspectives is more adequate to approach Meyrink's apocalyptical narration.

4.3 Apocalyptic and hermeneutic

In his essay *Literature and Apocalyptic*, Douglas Robinson traces a panoramic view of the interaction between apocalyptic matter and literary criticism, and by doing so theorizes five hermeneutics that, in his opinion, can be related to most of apocalyptic literature. His reflection, although more specialized in American and English elaborations of the Christian and Hebrew apocalyptic model,

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[236] Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, p. 81.

does not base on a specific *corpus* as much as it embraces the problem of interpreting texts stemming from a prophetic component: the investigated area, when it comes to apocalyptic literature, is a field where confessional and secular perspectives overlap more frequently than it would be thinkable, to the extent that giving a clear distinction between confessional and secular apocalyptic literature becomes a task of extreme complexity. Therefore, his hermeneutic system does not derive from a definition of apocalyptic literature but from the very worldview that can be identified in a given text, provided that the categories theorized by his study can always interact.

These categories are: the biblical hermeneutic, predicting an imminent end of history which is displaced by God and is meant to lead to a new reign of peace and justice; the annihilative hermeneutic, predicting an equally imminent end but without any confessional perspective and only leading to oblivion; the continuative hermeneutic, only predicting the course of history without stressing the sense of cosmic end; the ethical hermeneutic, where the agents identify their personal growth as an apocalyptic journey; the romantic hermeneutic, where the apocalyptic structure of the text actually comes to a revelation where the world is rediscovered as something infinite and with paradisiac or hellish traits[237].

The analysis given in the following chapters will highlight how Meyrink's conception of apocalyptical space and time can be explained as corresponding, at least in its main traits, to Dailey's reflection on time in apocalypse and to Robinson's description of these hermeneutic layers. Peculiarity of Meyrink's narration is the fact that the author not only tends to consider timelessness (*Zeitlosigkeit*) as fundamental structure of reality, but also struggles to explain this concept leading it to interact with the spatial dimension, which must reflect timelessness and its revelation. Furthermore, Meyrink also stresses the conflict between timelessness and the chronological structure of the 'apparent reality' by problematizing his characters' search for identity. Here, the ethical and the romantic dimensions overlap: as it will be seen in the analysis, Meyrink's revelation process does not refer to an incoming new world as much as it is focused on giving a new interpretation of reality.

Now, the next sections focus on the notion of literary space and on the literary spatial models that will be shown in the text analysis as most influent in Meyrink's spatial poetics, models which can interact to some extent with the apocalyptic discourse.

The next theoretical chapter introduces, on the other hand, the elements of Meyrink's poetics that mostly focus on visual representation and space, and it provides a first analysis of two texts that can be considered to some extent programmatic and that belong to his late work (1926-1927). Aim of the following reflections is to explain Meyrink's treatment of space in view of the notion *Zeitlosigkeit*,

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[237] Robinson, Douglas, *Literature and Apocalyptic*, in: Stein, Stephen J. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 3, *Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age*, pp. 360-392, here: p. 372.

and to highlight the contacts between this matter and Dailey's spiral model on the one hand and with the Robinson's romantic hermeneutic on the other.

Chapter 2

Gustav Meyrink's poetics and the city of Prague

It has been acknowledged by most of research on Meyrink's work and biography that the author's relationship with the city of Prague should be summarized as contradictory and bivalent. When it comes to mentioning a resounding example of this relationship in his writing, scholars show special delight in quoting Flugbeil's thoughts in chapter 7 of the novel *Walpurgisnacht* (1917):

Es gibt keine Stadt der Welt, der man so gern den Rücken kehren möchte, wenn man in ihr wohnt, wie Prag; aber auch keine, nach der man sich so zurücksehnt, kaum, daß man sie verlassen hat.[238]

The contradiction in Flugbeil's feelings in not very different from the evident ambivalence of Meyrink's apparent habit in depicting the Bohemian capital as a hostile environment pretty much in every *Prager Roman* or Prague short story of his, while, in fact, keeping on setting main narrative paths in this same city. The biographic reasons for the author's detachment from Prague in the first years of the 20th century are numerous and have been long analyzed in research on his private life by Manfred Lube, Mohammed Qasim and Hartmut Binder; however, one of the main primary sources on the writer's own thoughts on the topic is provided by Kurt Krolop in *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, where Meyrink's statement on the question is reported entirely: here, the writer affirms that he came to the Bohemian capital as *Gymnasiast* and left it seventeen years later as "Schriftsteller, krank und arm"[239]. He describes the mood he experienced every time he saw the city after long time as a "würgende[s], unheimliche[s] Gefühl"[240], adds that Prague is for him the city of the "Verbrechersintelligenz"[241], and defines its atmosphere as "die Atmosphäre des Hasses"[242]. Nevertheless, he admits to the interviewer that his memories of the city are still quite vivid, and that the presence of Prague haunts him in dreams: when he wakes up from one of these dreams, he explains, he feels like being freed from a nightmare. Moreover, a part of him would still like living in Prague, but "nur in der Erinnerung"[243].

Worth of attention is that this relationship *Anziehung/Abstoßung* mentioned by Meyrink himself (and consequently stressed by scholars) occurs in another statement collected during the survey: Franz

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[238] Meyrink, Gustav, *Walpurgisnacht*, in: Meyrink, Gustav, *Gesammelte Werke*, München/Wien: Langen Müller 1982, vol. 4 (*Fledermäuse/Walpurgisnacht*), pp. 167-378, here: p. 315.

[239] Krolop, Kurt, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, in: Germanistica Pragensia, n.4, 1966, pp. 47-64, here: p. 49.

[240] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 49.

[241] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 49.

[242] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 49.

[243] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, pp. 49-50.

Werfel explains to have left Prague for his own salvation and considers this city as an environment unreal for those who are not Czech citizens, who experience it as a daydream, a 'paralyzing Ghetto'. Then he indulges in the topoi of the magic, unsettling Prague, by stating that such an environment can be tolerated only „als einen Drogenrausch, als eine Fata Morgana des Lebens."[244] Nevertheless, Werfel also admits that, although the Prague Germans left, they still loves their homeland "deren Leben ihm [dem Prager Deutschen] wie ein ferner Wahn vorkommt."[245], and by doing so confirms the trope of the "Anziehungs- und Abstoßungskraft"[246] that is mentioned in *Walpurgisnacht*. The trope also appears in other texts not related to this inquiry: more famous than Meyrink and Franz Werfel's (1890-1945) words are the ones written by Franz Kafka (1883-1924) in a letter to his youth friend Oskar Pollak (1883-1915) of 1902: "Prag läßt nicht los. Uns beide nicht. Dieses Mütterchen hat Krallen. Da muß man sich fügen, oder -. An zwei Seiten müßten wir es anzünden, am Vyšehrad und am Hradschin, dann wäre es möglich, daß wir loskommen."[247], where the writer expresses his desire to live in an environment other from Prague and yet feels constantly attached to it.

The Bohemian capital as a thinking entity possessing a conscious ability to ward off people and attract them at the same time, manifestation of a demonic force, seems to belong to the same field introduced by Meyrink in *Die Statd mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, where he openly describes the city not only as a living organism, but also as a puppet master. The fact that this notion is shared by other intellectuals that produced part of the so-called *Prager deutsche Literatur* points out that Flugbeil's words are not an isolated case to trace back merely to Meyrink's biographic component: they must be interpreted as part of a wider range of *topoi* linked to the German Prague territory. Secondly, they also must be inserted in the frame that Lube defines as a decisive mental structure for Meyrink's writing and world building: Meyrink's consistency in presenting contrasts and contradictions that are not meant to be solved as they are meant to be developed and expanded[248].

When it comes to the literary research, the most meaningful part of Meyrink's statement quoted by Kurt Krolop is, however, the one where the author explains part of the fascination he attributes to the Bohemian city:

Seit ich Prag verlassen habe, lebe ich, zwei Jahre Wien nicht gerechnet, in Deutschland und habe viele deutsche Städte gesehen – auch solche, die schöne mittelalterliche Bauten tragen wie Prag und eine ähnliche blutige Vergangenheit haben; in keiner jedoch schwingt jene unfaßbar merkwürdige Stimmung. Sie sind – desinfiziert und man geht in ihnen herum wie in langweiligen Museen.[249]

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[244] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 52.

[245] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 52.

[246] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 315.

[247] Kafka, Franz, *Briefe*, Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer 1966, (An Oskar Pollak, December 20th 1902), p. 14.

[248] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 188-189.

[249] Krolop, *Hinweis auf eine verschollene Rundfrage: „Warum haben Sie Prag verlassen?"*, p. 50.

The main distinguishing trait of Prague is, according to this statement, its inseparable link to past times, and its ability to preserve it in a way Meyrink finds different from other cities which can boast an equally meaningful historical and artistic heritage. What he describes is a preservation enabling the observers to experience the past as part of the present and not as something long gone, dead or distant like the atmosphere of a gallery. The interaction between different temporal dimensions is therefore explicitly defined by the author as the most important element of Prague space in his perception, and this reflection can serve as basis for the concept of *Zeitlosigkeit* that is considered as main structure of *Der Golem* and *Walpurgisnacht* and that can be associated to several other works Meyrink's. This, the problem of *Anziehung/Abstoßung*, the matter of contrasts and other traits Meyrink attributes to Prague are the main object of this section, which has two main aims: illustrating those tropes of Prague space of the *Prager Moderne* that mostly influenced Meyrink's creation, and analyzing to what extent Meyrink's view on Prague's space can be identified as constitutive structure of his poetics serving as imaginative category also for those texts which are not directly connected to the Bohemian city.

1. Prague's literary scene during the *Moderne*: between *Deutschtum* and *Tschechentum*
1.1. The notion 'Prague German literature'

When it comes to his representation of the space of Prague, Meyrink's literary production must be inserted into the larger theoretical framework that analyzes depictions of the Bohemian capital in the so-called Prague German literature during the *Moderne*; literary research examining these aspects has highlighted the need to approach this subject by focusing on cultural identity: this means that the peculiarities of Prague's territory emerging in its literature (both in Czech and German language, but especially concerning the German works) must be seen as an expression of a landscape that can be defined as highly problematic due to the constant interactions between its three main cultures – Czech, German, Jewish. Part of the tropes appearing in Meyrink's production have their roots in these peculiarities and must, therefore, be understood within this theoretical approach.

Despite his lacking factual Bohemian heritage, the constant relation between his work and the city of Prague led numerous literature historians to classify Meyrink as part of the so-called Bohemian German literature, or more specifically to see him as a 'Prague author'. Given the peculiarities of the intercultural relations provided by its territory, Bohemian German literature must be considered as a phenomenon with specific traits which distinguish it from other branches of Germanophone literature and are object of discussion in this section; the concept has been identified in literary research during

different phases, starting from the very first acknowledgment of its existence in the 19th century through the first histories of German literature mentioning contributions from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia[250], proceeding with debates around the possibility to give it a national or cultural consistency in view of the peculiarities that made it easy to interpret it as a phenomenon of an isolated minority in a Czech environment[251], and acquiring a more precise definition only in recent times. It should be noticed that the starting point for the analysis of this literary field was first the German literature of Prague, understandably considered as representative of its manifestation: the concept *Prager deutsche Literatur* was object of discussion starting from the debate on the so-called *Prager Roman*[252] and found a scientific designation in the 1960s. This definition must be traced back to a series of scholars which developed research on the branch within the Czech-Slovak German studies: results of these research were collected in a volume stemming from the scientific contributions given during the two Liblice conferences *Weltfreunde: Konferenz über die Prager deutsche Literatur* (1965). The contributions collected in the homonymous volume, edited by Eduard Goldstücker (1913-2000)[253], give temporal, spatial and ideological parameters of the field Prague German literature. We can read in a statement of Goldstücker's:

Unter dem Begriff Prager deutsche Literatur verstehen die Veranstalter unserer Konferenz das literarische Werk einer bedeutenden Reihe von Dichtern und Schriftstellern, die im letzten Viertel des 19. Jahrhunderts entweder in Prag geboren wurden oder, aus der böhmischen oder mährischen Provinz stammend, vor dem Zusammenbruch der österreichischen Monarchie in Prag die entscheidenden Jahren ihres künstlerischen Reifens durchlebten und in den meisten Fällen hier auch ihre literarische Tätigkeit aufnahmen.[254]

The temporal reference point "im letzten Viertel des 19. Jahrhunderts" does not show an absence of Prague literature before this moment, but the presence of a wide net of Prague German authors writing between the *Jahrhundertwende* and 1945, authors who acquired universal acknowledgement outside Bohemia. Goldstücker openly focuses on this *Glanzzeit* of the Prague German literature and dates its

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[250] See: Höhne, Steffen, *Germanistik in den böhmischen Ländern*, in: Becher, Peter / Höhne, Steffen / Krappmann, Jörg / Weinberg, Manfred (hrsg.), *Handbuch der deutschen Literatur Prags und der Böhmischen Länder*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler 2017 (from now onward: *Handbuch*), pp. 17-23, here: p. 20.

[251] See for example the position of Arne Novák (1880-1939), debated in: Krolop, Kurt, *Die tschechisch-deutschen Auseinandersetzungen über den „Prager Roman" (1914-1918)*, in: Becher, Peter / Knechtel, Anna (hrsg.), *Praha-Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, Passau: Karl Stutz 2010, pp. 175-182.

[252] Beside the aforementioned: Krolop, *Die tschechisch-deutschen Auseinandersetzungen über den „Prager Roman" (1914-1918)*, see also: Escher, Georg, *„In Prag gibt es keine deutsche Literatur". Überlegungen zu Geschichte und Implikationen des Begriffs „Prager deutsche Literatur"*, in: Becher, Peter / Knechtel, Anna (hrsg.), *Praha-Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, Passau: Karl Stutz 2010, pp. 197-211.

[253] The acts of this conference were published in 1967 in the homonymous volume, from which the quoted sentences are referenced: Goldstücker, Eduard (hrsg.), *Weltfreunde: Konferenz über die Prager deutsche Literatur*, Prag: Verlag der Tschekoslowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1967. From now on: *Weltfreunde*.

[254] Goldstücker, Eduard, *Die Prager deutsche Literatur als historisches Phänomen*, in: *Weltfreunde*, pp. 21-46, here: p. 21.

beginning in 1894, year in which Rainer M. Rilke's (1875-1926) collection *Leben und Lieder* was published[255]. The considered environment is also restricted to Prague even in the cases where the analyzed authors stem from other areas of Bohemia and Moravia, so that the center of the scholar's study becomes the Prague years of the given writers and their literary activity mainly linked to the Bohemian capital. According to this first definition, to these generations of Prague novelists and poets belong, to mention only some of them, Paul Leppin (1878-1945), Oskar Wiener (1873-1944), Franz Kafka, Max Brod (1884-1968), Ernst Weiß (1882-1940), Egon Erwin Kisch (1885-1948), Ludwig Winder (1889-1946), Ernst Sommer (1888-1955), Franz Werfel, Rudolph Fuchs (1890-1942), Otto Pick (1887-1940), Viktor Hadwiger (1878-1911), Johannes Urzidil (1896-1970), Hermann Ungar (1893-1929), Camill Hoffmann (1878-1944), Leo Perutz (1882-1957), Franz Karl Weiskopf (1900-1955). To these and other writers, Goldstücker adds "der etwas ältere Verfasser des *Golem*, Gustav Meyrink"[256].

When it comes to the ideological discourse, Prague German literature is set apart from the Sudeten German literature by highlighting that none of the considered authors of the former category ever took nationalistic positions or participated in any way to antisemite initiatives, despite acknowledging their German heritage; most of the authors mentioned by Goldstücker actually stem from Jewish families, but those who do not show biographic links to Jewish culture never declared themselves antisemite as well.

These ideas have been highly reviewed in more recent research, their definitions have been criticized as limiting, their parameters widened and their political position more in-depth analyzed. Nevertheless, these first attempt to define the categories of Prague German literature gave the bases for the debate on the identity problem linked to the Prague German writers, since they chose to focus on the cultural aspects that distinguished these literates from other representatives of Germanophone literature. The position of Prague German literary production, in alignment to a national-oriented history of literature, is, in this case, problematized, and the evident difficulties when it comes to classifying it are openly expressed: Goldstücker observes how these literates equally influenced the history of German literature, of Austrian literature, but also partially of Czech-Slovak[257] literature, since the modernist Prague's literary context can hardly be imagined without personalities such as Kafka and Werfel. Even more meaningful is the reflection on how these personalities saw themselves and how they interpreted their role among Prague's cultures, or their „Zusammensetzung aus den quantitativ und qualitativ ständig veränderlichen Elementen dreier Kulturen deutlich, die sich in Prag

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[255] The end of this period must coincide with the beginning of World War II for clear historical reasons. See: Goldstücker, Eduard, *Die Prager deutsche Literatur als historisches Phänomen*, p. 21.
[256] Goldstücker, Eduard, *Die Prager deutsche Literatur als historisches Phänomen*, p. 22.
[257] These reflections were written in 1967.

seit jeher berührten und sich gegenseitig verflochten: der tschechischen, der deutschen und der jüdischen.“[258] The participants to the Liblice conferences were mostly influenced, in this regard, by Pavel Eisner's view according to which isolation must be considered a constitutive element of Prague German culture, which should be seen as an island in the Czech culture. The metaphor of the triple ghetto used by Eisner in this context finds constant echo in the *Weltfreunde* conference: this assumption stems from the analysis of Franz Kafka's biography, is therefore mainly referred to Prague's German Jews, and takes into account religion, social status and ethnic aspects. Eisner comments on the topic stating that from the Czech perspective

the German Jew was a stranger in three senses: as a Jew, either owning to creed or to a mixed blood; as a generally comfortable, prosperous and, often enough, rich citizen, in the midst of a crowd of proletarians and small bourgeois; and thirdly as a "German"[259]

He also uses other powerful metaphors to describe this kind of "voluntary ghetto"[260], such as the one of "air-tight space"[261] and the idea that "Czech Prague was a flowing river; the German Jew sat on the bank with his back turned."[262]

1.2. German and Czechs in *Fin de Siècle* Prague

Without concentrating on the Jewish side of the matter and looking at this situation in light of more recent studies, it can be said that Prague Germans were, in the years of the development of major Prague German literature, factually a decreasing minority according to statistics: in 1900, German population constituted only the 8,57 % of Prague citizenship, where the rest of it (more than 91%)[263] was almost exclusively represented by Czechs, so that the Prague landscape appears at a first look much less colorful in regard to plurilingualism and multiculturality in comparison to other areas of

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[258] Goldstücker, Eduard, *Die Prager deutsche Literatur als historisches Phänomen*, p. 23.
[259] Eisner, Paul, *Franz Kafka and Prague*, New York: Arts, Inc. 1950, p. 36.
[260] Eisner, *Franz Kafka and Prague*, p. 26.
[261] Eisner, *Franz Kafka and Prague*, p. 35.
[262] Eisner, *Franz Kafka and Prague*, p. 31. However, Eisner's idea of social isolation also stems from the idea that the Prague Germans fundamentally lacked a proper social variety and concentrated in a group devoid of proletariat.
[263] In actual numbers: In 1900 the population of Prague, capital of the Reign of Bohemia, included 18.261 Germans and 194.615 Czechs. See: Luft, Robert, *Zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag um 1900. Zweisprachige Welten, nationale Interferenzen und Verbindungen über ethnische Grenze*, in: Brücken, Jahr 4, 1-2, 1996, pp. 143-169, here: p. 143.

the Habsburg empire[264]. The number of German citizens in the city had been diminishing drastically during the previous fifty years[265].

Derek Sayer speaks, in this regard, of a progressive Czechization of Bohemian society, and especially of the Prague one, taking place between the end of the 18th century and the end of the 19th. The reasons for this phenomenon are multiple and cannot be analyzed in detail in this context, however a decisive factor in this process can be identified with the economic development experienced by the reign of Bohemia during these years. This development was strongly connected to the growing number of industries founded in Bohemia and Moravia starting from early 18th century[266] and to the progressive concentration of new masses of population, along with their linguistic heritage, in industrial environments. As it happened in most north-European countries, in order to keep up with the rising number of workers emigrating from rural areas, cities began to develop a series of industrial suburbs which, although remaining separated from the actual cities in administration, factually enlarged the urban areas changing their structure abruptly and making them metropolises of a brand-new kind. When it comes to Prague, districts of this kind were Karlín, Libeň and Smichov[267]. This economic shift had the main consequence of promoting the emergence of a new proletariat on the one hand and of a new Czech middle-class linked to the new industrial entrepreneurship on the other. To the latter must be added the growing number of Jewish (of German tongue) entrepreneurships which played a fundamental role in Bohemian industrial panorama, especially in the textile industry[268].

This socio-economic change took place while a renewed interest for Bohemian history and Czech culture was starting to emerge as well, at first in Czech aristocratic circles between the second half of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th, and secondly in the middle-class around the 1840s. This interest had led a series of Czech nobles to invest in the foundation of various cultural societies[269] and in archivistic projects such as the first National Museum in 1818[270] (named *Vaterländisches Museum* in German by its financers and translated as *Narodní české museum* by the scholar Joseph

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[264] Citizens having a language other than German or Czech as mother tongue were only 0,1% of the whole Prague population. See: Luft, *Zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag um 1900*, p. 143.

[265] Cfr. Fiala-Fürst, Ingeborg, *Der Beitrag der Prager deutschen Literatur zum deutschen Expressionismus*, Saarbrücken: Röhrig Universitätsverlag 2016, p. 13: „Während sich im Jahre 1848 noch 60% der Prager Bevölkerung zur deutschen Nationalität meldeten, waren es im Jahre 1880 nur noch 15%, 1910, bei der letzten Volkszahlung der österreich-ungarischen Monarchie ganze 6%.".

[266] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, pp. 84-88.

[267] It deserves to say that Prague was not one of the first areas experiencing this shift, as explained by Peter Demetz in: Demetz, Peter, *Prague in Black and Gold. Scenes From the Life of a European City*, New York: Hill and Wang 2011, p. 284.

[268] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, pp. 284-285.

[269] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 54: "[…]the same aristocratic circles [the one around Count František z Kolovrat (1778-1861), Count Kaspar Steinberg, Count František Klebelsberg] had earlier been responsible for setting up the Royal Society of Bohemia in 1784 [*Česká společnost nauk*, from 1790 *Královská česká společnost nauk*], the Patriotic Economic Society of the Czech Kingdom [*Vlastenecko-hospodářská společnost v Království českém*] in 1788, and the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art [*Společnost vlasteneckých přátel umění*] in 1796."

[270] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, pp. 55-56.

Jungmann[271]) and the forming of new libraries. The same aristocracy had meanwhile acquired the habit of supporting and keep contacts with a series of new scholars and philologers[272] concerned with the rediscovery of Czech language and Bohemian history, a tendency that mirrored the rediscovery of Germanic medieval culture in Germany, strongly linked to the interest for popular culture, during the *Frühromantik*. Philology and rediscovery of documents stemming between the time of Hussite Wars and the 17th century becomes central in this phase, to which belong the first History of Czech Language and Literature, written in German by Josef Dobrovský in 1792 (*Geschichte der Böhmischen Spache und Literatur*), František Martin Pelcl's publishing of Bohuslav Balbín's *Defense of the Slavonic Language* (1672/1673) and of his own New Czech Chronicle (*Nová kronika česká*, 1791-95). Some years later the philologist, historian and translator Josef Jungmann (1773-1847) showed a more radical attitude by giving school lectures in Czech instead of German as it was prescribed[273]. He also translated into Czech works of German and English authors (including Goethe, Schiller, Gray and Milton) and wrote a series of philological surveys such as the German-Czech dictionary (*Slovník česko-německý*, 1834-1839)[274] All these initiatives expressed on the one hand a desire of reconnecting with a past of Czech culture that had been excluded from research for centuries, and the legitimation of its renewed development on the other. This spirit and the meticulous investigation on Czech language through philology and translation were influent factors in the reemergence of an original Czech literature in the early 19th century[275].

In 1848, year of revolutionary movements in several European countries including Italy, Hungary and Germany, there was a moment of violent agitations in Bohemia as well: here, the atmosphere was powerfully influenced not only by the news about the tense situation in Europe, but also more specifically by the student revolts in Vienna. Interesting when it comes to the so-called Czechization is, in this case, that the Bohemian revolutionary movement, despite it being essentially linked to workers' riots (begun in 1844)[276] and to demands in socialist direction, acquired an ethnic quality in

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[271] Jungmann intentionally translates here the German word for "patriotic" as "national", see: Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 55.

[272] In regard to patronage see: Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, pp. 62-63.

[273] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 71.

[274] As well as his history of Czech literature (*Historie literatury české*, 1825) and the first Czech scientific periodical, *Krok* (1821), named after the legendary Princess Libuše's father.

[275] The first modern almanac of Czech poetry was published by Antonín Jaromír Puchmajer (1769-1820) in several volumes from 1795 to 1814. Fundamental personalities of this time are Josef Kajetán Tyl (1808-1856) and Karel Hynek Mácha (1810-1836). Tyl, author of the text currently known as the Czech national anthem, „*Kde domov můj?*", became first editor of the Czech magazine *Květy české* in 1833. He also wrote a series of nationally oriented novellas and plays, including *The Last Czech* (*Poslední Čech*), *The Love of a Patriot* (*Láska Vlastencova*), *The Love of a Patriotess* (*Láska Vlastenky*) and *Jan Hus*. Fundamental in the 1830s was also the contribution of Karel Hynek Mácha, whose central work *Máj* (1836), not really received as patriotic from his contemporaries, is considered nowadays as a milestone of Czech Romanticism. Mácha's contribution to patriotic literature was either way visible in other works, some of which published by Tyl in *Květy*.

[276] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, pp. 285-286.

few months[277]. If nationalist orientation was not decisive in the armed fight in the summer of 1848, which lasted few days and was harshly suppressed when the military bombarded the barricades[278], the separatist attitude never ceased in the following decades and the demands for an acknowledgment of Czech language in administration and education increased throughout the rest of the 19th century. The governmental decisions in this regard were intransigent in the first years of Restauration, when the Czech press ceased to be released. However, the publishing of Czech magazines re-started in 1860s and the number of readers of Czech press increased progressively between the 1860s and the 1890s also in virtue of the spreading use of Czech language in primary schools[279].

It is true that statistics do not take all information concerning identity into account, so that bilingualism, hybrid situations and cultural aspects influencing people's everyday life are not visible in this framework[280]. True is also that the referenced statistics based more on the language people claimed to use in their private life than on other parameters. Third, the progressive development of nationalist attitudes during the second half of the 19th century had given nationality a central role in public life and had confirmed the necessary identity between individuum and national alignment; nevertheless, public administration lacked the instruments to factually ascribe an official national classification in territories where the political system included populations belonging to different cultures and to different ethnic and religious groups[281]. The contradiction intrinsic to the necessity to distinguish, in a statistic, between Czech and German nationality in Prague's territory, when both categories possessed an Austrian and secondarily a Bohemian citizenship, gives a clue on the complexity of the matter. However, many works produced in Prague's German literature show, from the authors' perspective, a clear awareness of the consequences related to being German or Czech in Prague during the Habsburg empire, and the same is visible in Czech literature. The nationalist

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[277] Part of the problem consisted, at this stage, in the possibilities to align the Bohemian revolution either to the demands of the German revolutionary movement, which prepared an elective assembly in Frankfurt, or to an action in favor of Czech culture in particular, of Slavic heritage more in general – but, in synthesis, in favor of expressing an affirmation of Slavic Bohemian independence from Germany, politically and culturally speaking, and the refusal of any affiliation with the conceived Frankfurt national parliament. This division was clarified explicitly when the intellectual František Palacký (1798-1876) refused the invitation to join the discussions preparing the ground for the election of a German national parliament, and he did so by addressing his sense of national belonging to Czech (and Slavic) people. Cultural associations such as the Concordia, whose aim was the preservation of Bohemian cultural and historical patrimony, split off into two different entities, the German Concordia and the Czech Svornost, while new cultural associations of Slavic orientation emerged, such as the Slavia and the Slovanská Lípa[277]. The division between two branches of Czechs and Germans increased progressively until even Bohemian intellectuals of German heritage who had declared their respect and admiration for Czech culture in their literary works, such as Alfred Meissner (1822-1885) and Moritz Hartmann (1821-1872), ended up aligning to Frankfurt Assembly, while, on the other hand, Czech intellectuals organized the first Slav Congress, where discussants and participants of Austria and Eastern Europe gathered from June 2nd to June 12th 1848. Worth of mention is the presence, at this event, of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. See: Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, pp. 295-296.
[278] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 298.
[279] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, pp. 89-90.
[280] See: Luft, *Zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag um 1900*, pp. 144-145.
[281] Luft, *Zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag um 1900*, p. 145.

movements characterizing Bohemian society between the 19th and the 20th century exclude any uncertainty regarding this awareness - therefore, despite the apparent confusion in the parameters ascribing national belonging, a distinction between the two groups was certainly part of Bohemian culture before 1918 and there is no reason to question the persistence of this category after the establishment of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, when the emigration of 'German' citizens intensified.

When it comes to the role of *Deutschtum* and *Tschechentum* in art and literature, a clearer clue on the cultural atmosphere in Prague during the second half of the 19th century is provided by the dualism visible in cultural associations. After 1860 the amount of Bohemian *Kulturvereine* had been increasing considerably, since the end of neo-absolutism had been followed by a series of liberal laws concerning associations and the freedom of the press[282]. The need for expression and affirmation of national identities gave birth to numerous *Bildungs -* and *Kulturvereine* representing both German and Czech culture, with strong political connotations. In the field of *Kulturvereine* the debate concerning languages was considerable and led, for example, to the foundation of a surprising amount of music associations: in 1877 there were 355 official *Gesang –* and *Musikvereine*, such as the Czech *Beseda brněská* (Citizen's Resource of Brno, 1860), *Hlahol* (Sound, 1861) and *Moravan* (Moravian, 1863), which found their German counterpart in *Deutscher Männergesangverein*.[283] The most important German *Kulturverein* in Prague was the *Deutsches Casino* (1861–1943), which had been conceived as counterpart of the Czech organization *Měšťanská beseda* (Bourgeois Resource), the only Czech cultural association at the time of the *Vormärz*. The *Deutsches Casino* took on a leading role among the German associations: several groups were founded following its example and supervision, this was the case of the *Verein deutscher Schriftsteller und Künstler in Böhmen Concordia* (1871), the main association of German writers. This group's evident core aim was to preserve traditional German culture, in line with the ideas of the *Casino*, and its attention was pointed towards canonical German literature. [284]

The year 1891 saw the foundation of the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung deutscher Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur* (1891-1945), that constituted the German counterpart of the *Česká akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a uměni* (1890). The *Gesellschaft* supported the spreading of German science and art by organizing cultural events, giving scholarships and financing the creation of monuments. Among the artists that received support from the organization were Gustav Mahler and Rainer Maria Rilke. Other projects financed by the society were related to publishing, including initiatives like the printing of the *Deutsche Bibliothek aus Böhmen* (1894-1940) with the *Prague-*

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[282] Höhne, Steffen / Petrbok, Václav, *Vereine und kulturelle Institutionen*, in: *Handbuch*, pp. 89-95, here: p. 91.
[283] Höhne / Petrbok, *Vereine und kulturelle Institutionen*, p. 92.
[284] Höhne / Petrbok, *Vereine und kulturelle Institutionen*, p. 92.

Reichenberger Stifter Ausgabe (1901-1979) and the magazine *Deutsche Arbeit*, which published the annual list of Bohemian German works on literature, science and art (*Übersicht über die Leistungen der Deutschen in Böhmen auf dem Gebiete der Wissenschaft und Kunst*).[285]

These societies and associations had a clear socio-political position, and this aspect was actually in line with their Czech counterparts:

Deutlich ist ein kulturpolitischer Anspruch, gemäß dem Wissenschaft sowie ästhetische Praxen instrumentalisiert und die kulturelle Stärke unter Ausschluss „nichtdeutscher" Elemente unter Beweis gestellt werden sollte. Die „eigene" Kultur war Teil der „nationalen Erweckung", womit man in organisatorischer Hinsicht das erfolgreiche Vorbild der tschechischen Gesellschaft kopierte, der seit dem Vormärz ein erfolgreicher Emanzipationsprozess nicht nur in kultureller und wissenschaftlicher, sondern auch in ökonomischer und in sozialer Hinsicht gelungen war. Darüber hinaus wurden die Loylität zur habsburgischen Dynastie sowie die Zugehörigkeit zur gesamtdeutschen Kultur unterstrichen.[286]

The situation was not very different when it came to student associations: the first Czech and German student groups had been founded in May 1848, with the names *Slavín* and *Teutonia* respectively, and had been followed by *Liberalia*, *Hilaria*, *Praga* and *Lotos*, the latter of which stood out for its peculiar attitude, having been conceived as bilingual and binational. Similarily, the *Lese- und Redehalle der deutschen Studenten in Prag*[287] was founded in 1848 contemporarily to its Czech counterpart, the *Akademický čtenářský spolek*. The dualism was, therefore, fully respected, and the exception of the *Lotos* confirms this general tendency.

Symbol of the separation between the two sides and expression of Czech's cultural affirmation was the foundation of the Czech national theater *Narodní divadlo* in 1883[288], followed by the one of the German *Nationaltheater* in 1888. The two buildings were erected side by side and are still visible in their contrast nowadays, although the former German theater obviously lost this national connotation and is currently the Prague Opera.

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[285] Höhne / Petrbok, *Vereine und kulturelle Institutionen*, p. 92-93.
[286] *Handbuch*, 93.
[287] The group organized classes, debates, exhibitions, lectures and events related to theater. Some of its members were important personalities of Prague's German literature and culture, such as Friedrich Adler (1857-1938), Max Brod (1884-1968), Bruno Kafka (1881-1931) and Willy Haas (1891-1973). See also: Čermák, Josef: *Das Kultur- und Vereinsleben der Prager Studenten. Die Lese- und Redehalle der deutschen Studenten in Prag*. In: Brücken: Germanistisches Jahrbuch Tschechien-Slowakei. Neue Folge, vol. 9/10 (2001/2002), pp. 107-189.
[288] See: Spector, Scott, *Prague Territories. National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press 2000, pos. 177-187: "Of course, both form and function in this case – the sort of place Prague was to be – were profoundly contested issues as the city transformed from a sparkling provincial satellite of German culture to the centerpiece of the Czech nation. This shift is aptly articulated in the transformation of the "horse-market" (Roßmarkt) to the bustling Wenceslaus Square in the course of the 19th century. Both Wenceslaus Square and, below it stretching to the bank of the Moldau/Vltava, the avenue named Ferdinand (a name that would give way to the present Národní, or National, boulevard) seemed monuments to a rising Czech Prague, on the latter concourse arose the spectacular modernist Czech National Theater, deliberately dwarfing the two German theaters at the opposite end of Wenceslaus Square; when it was ravaged by fire shortly after its opening, it sprang up again miraculously from its own ashes – a symbol not to be kept down."

1.3. From *Concordia* to *Jung Prague*

From its foundation to the last years of the 19th century, the *Verein deutscher Schriftsteller und Künstler in Böhmen Concordia* maintained a predominant role among the cultural associations concerning literature and art: it worked as meeting point for most of Prague's authors, but also seemed to supervise the literary production of the time, showing conservative tendencies. These views are clearly expressed in Alfred Klaar's text *Aus alten Tagen der Prager Concordia*, where it is stated that

Dabei wurde nicht der Hauptakzent auf die „Modernität", auf die Moden der letzten Jahre, gelegt und der Bruch mit den Traditionen noch nicht, wie es heute vielseitig fanatisch geschieht, zur Hauptbedingung des entgegenkommenden Interesses gemacht.[289]

In fact, Klaar's conservative positions, which were shared by other intellectuals of the environment represented in this text, also influenced his view on the role of Czech culture in Prague's literary scene: so, he states, for example, that the peripheric position attributed to Prague German art in Germanophone context must be linked to the obstructionism in cultural exchange shown by the Czechs who owned, at a certain point, institutions such as the *Museumgesellschaft* founded by Goethe's acquaintance Count Kaspar Starnberg, and who did not look for any form of collaboration with German authors, included Goethe himself. In this instance, Klaar speaks of a cultural scene where "Von der Vereinigungen zur Förderung der bildenden Kunst fühlten sich die Deutschen immer mehr ausgeschlossen"[290].

A decisive countermovement to this attitude was waged in 1898, when a group of artists, mainly belonging to the generation born around 1870, gathered around Oskar Wiener and Paul Leppin and founded a circle called *Jung Prag*, which aimed at the transformation of Prague's literary context and had the group *Jung Wien*[291] as model[292]. *Jung Prag* can be described as a *neu-romantisch*, anti-bourgeois movement where the subversion of tradition was the main trait, so that „Thematisch lag der Schwerpunkt auf den Gebieten des Morbiden und Tabuisierten, also abseits des „Normalen", um sich bewusst gegen eine verstaubte und antiquierte bürgerliche Kultur zu wenden"[293]. The experience

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[289] Klaar, Alfred, *Aus alten Tagen der Prager Concordia*, in: Nettl, Paul (ed.), *Alt-Prager Almanach*, Prag: Die Bücherstube 1926, pp. 8-9.

[290] Klaar, *Aus alten Tagen der Prager Concordia*, p. 6.

[291] Carl E. Schorske (1981). *Fin-De-Siecle Vienna*, p. 212.

[292] Schmeer, Veronika, *Inszenierung des Unheimlichen*, Göttingen: V&R unipress, p. 49.

[293] Schmeer, Veronika, *Inszenierung des Unheimlichen*, p. 49. Oskar Wiener's recounting in this regard is: Es waren etwa zehn junge Leute, die nicht den studentischen Kreisen angehörten und daher von der Presse und der Prager deutschen

of *Jung Prag* was very brief, but it involved, on different levels, a series of interesting personalities, and especially those who started the process, already acknowledged in the *Liblice Konferenz*, of emancipating Prague literature from the designation of 'provincial' within the context of German literature:

Das deutsche Prag – noch am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts literarische Provinz – begann bereits um das Jahr 1905 zu erwachen durch die Werke seiner zweiten dichterischen Generation, die sich um den organisatorischen Geist Oskar Wieners und Paul Leppins und um die 1906 gegründete und bald darauf verbotene Zeitschrift „Wir" scharte, sich programmatisch – um sich von der vorherigen Generation der Prager „Literaturpäpste" aus dem Literatursalon Concordia zu unterscheiden – Jung Prag nannte und neben den bereits fast vergessenen Autoren Emil Faktor, Camill Hoffmann, Paul Wiegler, Leo Heller, Hedda Sauer, Auguste Hauschner, Viktor Hadwiger, Ottokar Winitzkz der Weltliteratur Rainer Maria Rilke und Gustav Meyrink schenkte.[294]

One of the sources of their will for new expressive tools was the decisive change that, during the years surrounding the *Jung Prag* initiative, the attitude towards the concepts of *Deutschtum* and *Tschechentum* was experiencing within the intellectual sphere not only in Prague but also in the rest of the Austrian territory and, partially, in Germany as well. This change is visible when it comes to the increase of mutual translations between Czech and German literary productions, a phenomenon which can be found in magazines in Czech as well as in German language. Examples of this tendency especially towards translation of Czech Modernist literature in German can be seen in the *Wiener Rundschau* (1896-1901)[295], *Moderne Dichtung* (1890-1891), *Ver Sacrum* (1898-1903) and *Neue Revue* (1893-1903), which dedicated a part of their activity to the mediation of Czech Modernism[296], but also the Vienna magazine *Die Zeit* (1894-1904), where this mediation was also coordinated by Czech intellectuals such as Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and František Václav Krejčí, and by the Bohemian German Camill Hoffmann, also member of the *Jung Prag* collective. The mediation provided by Masaryk, Krejčí and Hoffmann was also meaningful for the publishing exeeperience that followed *Die Zeit*, the *Oesterreichische Rundschau* (1904-1924). Beside its role in sharing Czech literature, *Die Zeit* showed a view on cultural identity that promoted the notion of multiculturality

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Gesellschaft nicht ernst genommen wurden. Sie schwärmten, schrieben Verse und standen mit dem Bürgertum auf Kriegsfuß. Mehrere davon sind jung an Jahren gestorben, andere verschollen oder haben die Kunst an den Nagel gehängt und bürgerliche Berufe ergriffen. Der Poesie treu geblieben bin nur ich und Margarete Beutler, die damals als Erzieherin in Karlsbad lebte. Auch Hugo Steiner, jetzt Professor an der Akademie für graphische Kunst in Leipzig und Bildhauer Karl Wilfert d. J. gehörten „Jung-Prag" an, das sein Hauptquartier im Café „Renaissance" hatte." (Wiener, Oskar, *Mit Detlev von Liliencron durch Prag*, in: Wiener, Oskar, *Alt-Prager Guckkasten. Wanderungen durch das romantische Prag*, Prag / Wien / Leipzig: Verlag A. Haase 1922, pp. 35-104, here: p. 35.

[294] Fiala-Fürst, Fiala-Fürst, *Der Beitrag der Prager deutschen Literatur zum deutschen Expressionismus*, pp. 13-14.

[295] In this case, for instance, Jiři Karásek z Lvovic's works in: Wiener Rundschau, 1/Bd. 2/23, pp. 868-869. Karásek was also translated in: Die Gesellschaft 15 Bd. 4/2, p. 118.

[296] See: Merhautová, Lucie, *Frühe Moderne in Böhmen*, in; *Handbuch*, pp. 172-181, here: p. 178.

within the Austrian territory in a more general framework, and a similar attitude was also made apparent in *Von Pol zu Pol* (1883-1884) and in the *Allgemeine oesterreichische Litteraturzeitung* (1885-1886). Outside Austria, an experience worth of mention is *Die Gesellschaft* (Munich, 1885-1902), where the mediation of Czech modernist literature was not provided by Czech intellectuals, but by Bohemian and Moravian German authors, including the two personalities that had founded the *Jung Prag* idea, Oskar Wiener and Paul Leppin. Besides[297], interesting in this regard is also the magazine *Das literarische Echo* (1898-1923), which reserved a special section to the so-called *Tschechische Briefe*, based on the collaboration of Bohemian German and Czech critics[298].

When it comes to the presence of Germanophone Modernism in Czech literary press, meaningful and interesting is the case of the magazine founded by Arnošt Procházka and Jiří Karásek in 1894, *Moderní Revue*. The magazine, which shared an anti-bourgeois attitude like satirical projects such as the *Simplicissimus* in Munich, concentrated on divulgating international phenomena of the *Moderne* with an alignment that was similar to that of *Die Zeit*, and equally had a program that could be defined as supranational[299], and looked at western Europe as constant source of inspiration. Through a long a fruitful collaboration with the Polish symbolist author Stanisław Przybyszewski, who in virtue of his bilingualism (that is reflected in his production in both Polish and German language) and his interest for art and literature of northern Europe was very active in providing the magazine contacts and stimuli, *Moderní Revue* published numerous texts from Germanophone and Scandinavian cultural areas, without forgetting stimuli from France, main reference point for both Procházka and Karásek at the beginning of their career, and England. Texts by Prague Germans, including Rilke, Paul Leppin and Camill Hoffmann, were published there in Czech translation as well as in their original language. Interesting is in this latter case, however, the redaction's refuse to introduce these figures as 'Austrian'

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[297] A different experience outside the translation of single pieces in magazines is the cycle *Aus der tschechischen Novellistik*, realized by Hoffmann and Wiener in 1902. The collection included stories by Julius Zeyer, František Xaver Svoboda, Josef Karel Šlejhar, Vilém Mrštík and Růžena Svobodová, and was dedicated to share the beginning of Czech Realism and Naturalism. See: *Handbuch*, p. 178.

[298] See; *Handbuch*, p. 178: „die *Tschechischen Briefe* schrieben deutschböhmische wie tschechische Kritiker – Wiener, Arnošt/Ernst Kraus, Hoffamnn, Krejčí, und Arne Novák. Der letztgenannte rezensierte z. B. auch die Novellensammlung *Flammen* von Fráňa Šrámek, die in Übersetzung von Otto Pick im *Ernst Rowohlt Verlag* 1913 erschien. Mit seinem Referat wies Novák auf die Entstehung von neuen von neuen interpersonellen wie publizistischen Netzwerken in den Vorkriegsjahren hin, was der deutsch-tschechischen literarischen Vermittlung neue künstlerische Qualität und Ausformungen verliehen habe."

[299] See: Stewart, Niel, *Bohemiens im böhmischen Blätterwald. Die Zeitschrift Moderní revue und die Prager Moderne*, Heidelberg: Winter 2019, pp. 62-63: „Zu einer Zeit, da sich im bröckelnden Habsburgerreich die dauernden Spannungen zwischen der deutschen und der tschechischen Bevölkerung in Demonstrationen, Streiks und Unruhen entluden, offerierten Procházka und Karásek ihrer Leserschaft ein Programm, welches den bourgeoisen Provinzialismus überwinden sollte, den sie als das eigentliche Hauptproblem der böhmischen Länder um 1900 ansahen. Die symbolische Geographie der „nationalen Wiedergeburt" hatte auf der Vorstellung eines homogenen, um das „slawische Prag" zentrierten tschechischen Kulturraumes beruht; dagegen relativierte der Kosmopolitismus der *Revue* dieses Modell ganz grundsätzlich, indem die „goldene Stadt" einerseits wieder an die gesamte europäische Peripherie gerückt, andererseits aber mit anderen Metropolen und Sprachen in Verbindung gesetzt wurde."

or stemming from the Habsburg monarchy: they were simply defined as "German" authors from Prague, or as "foreign writers"[300].

A wider discourse could be made about the experiences that transcended the official channel of the magazines and influenced the personal contacts between Czech and Bohemian German intellectuals. The space for this matter must be shortened in this context, but three of the most meaningful experiences that shaped the mindset of personalities of *Weltliteratur* must be mentioned either way. The first one is Rilke's admiration of the Czech poet Jaroslav Vrchlický, to whom he dedicated a poem *Jar. Vrchlický* published in *Larenopfer* (1895). That this admiration went beyond the literary reference is shown by Rilke's letter to the author, a document attached to a copy of the lyrical collection sent to him together with a private dedicatory sonnet by Rilke himself[301]. The second is Max Brod's intense activity as translator and mediator, and especially his German version of the Leoš Janáček's (1854-1928) libretti[302]. The third is the famous exchange between Franz Kafka and Milena Jesenská (1896-1944), entirely published and acknowledged as literary work on its own.

A territory of cultural exchange between Bohemian Germans and Czech, was therefore, despite the role of nationalism, possible and in fact existing[303], and this list only includes some of the official examples of this communication. The studies on Bohemian German literature that followed (and critically questioned) the Liblice conference concentrated on this communication and worked on this field through an interpretation of cultural space near to the concept of interculturality and transculturality, but also to the notion of semiosphere theorized by Lotman. This approach highlights the hybrid quality of the cultural components that must be taken into account when discussing individual identity, and also points out the productivity of those cultural areas that can be considered in a border position geographically, linguistically, nationally and culturally speaking. In this case, Eisner's metaphor of the Prague triple ghetto is not accepted as factual since the isolation implicit in this expression does not allow the intense net of relationships that has been suggested in this section to emerge. At the detriment of the *Dreifaches Ghetto* is, therefore, privileged the image of the *Prager*

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[300] See: Stewart, Niel, *Bohemiens im böhmischen Blätterwald*, p. 85.

[301] See: Rilke an Vrchlický, Prag, den 29.01.1896:

„Hochwerter Meister,

längst liegt das Exemplar von „Larenopfer" bereit, das ich Ihnen, ein kleines, schlichtes Zeichen meiner aufrichtigen Verehrung, zu überreichen gedachte. Warum ich es verzögert hatte, sagen Ihnen die Widmungszeilen, die ich dem Exemplar vorangestellt habe: jenes Gefühl banger Befangenheit, dessen voll der Jünger vor den Meister tritt, – war es .... und dann ein zweiter äußerer Grund: Mir war Ihre Adresse nicht bekannt, hochgeschätzter Herr.

Ich bitte Sie, nehmen Sie gütigst meine Widmung entgegen! [...]"

Available at: http://www.ipsl.cz/index.php?id=713&menu=echa&query=rilke&str=echo.php (last visit on January 25th 2023).

[302] *Jenůfa* (1918), *Katja Kabanowa* (1922), *Das schlaue Füchslein* (1925), *Die Sache Makropulos* (1926), *Aus einem Totenhaus* (1930).

[303] See also: Luft, *Zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in Prag um 1900*, p. 153.

Kreis theorized by Max Brod in his homonymous work in 1966, where he declares himself skeptical towards Eisner's separatist thought in the first place.

1.4 The *Prager Kreis*

Mit den Tschechen hatten wir gute Nachbarschaft und die tschechischen Dichter liebten wir; da gab es überhaupt nichts, was, wie Grenze oder Absonderung abgesperrt hätte. Wir alle beherrschten die tschechische Sprache vollständig, die uns nicht weniger als die deutsche sagte.[304]

In this essay, published one year after the Liblice conference, Brod approaches the concept *Prager deutsche Literatur* from a more biographical point of view[305] and takes the group of intellectuals he belonged to, composed of Franz Kafka, Felitz Welsch and Oskar Baum, as main reference point. He defines this literary environment as a circle, actually the *engerer Kreis*, and analyzed the history of Prague through the contacts (in a direct form, or as mere literary influence) this sphere had with other Prague literates:

Dieser „engere Prager Kreis" trat in mehr oder minder nähere Beziehung zu andern Gruppen oder Einzelgestalten des Prager geistigen Lebens. So etwa zum (jüngeren) Kreis um Werfel und Willy Haas – zum Kreis der älteren Generation, in der Rilke und Gustav Meyrink, Hugo Salus, Paul Leppin und Oskar Wiener überragten. Zum zionistischen Kreis um Hugo Bergmann, Robert Weltsch, Hans Kohn, Siegmund Kaznelson, Viktor Kellner, Oskar Epstein u.a. Zu den Dichtern aus Mähren wie Max Zweig, Ernst Weiß, zu dem erfindungsreichen Urzidil [...] Oder zu Einzelgängern wie dem Erzähler Walther Seidl, wie zu Hermann Grab, Camill Hoffmann, Auguste Hauschner [...][306]

Here, Brod prefers to analyze Prague German literature as a system based on exchange, intellectual friendship, elective affinities and communication, a system in which authors do not distinguish themselves for a peculiar style or for a philosophical attitude, and do not build anything such as a *Prager Schule*[307], but must be considered as builders of a cultural environment which promoted open-mindedness and a supranational conception of art and literature. More than in a definition of the characteristics of the Prague literature, however, the importance of Brod's essay probably lays in his

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[304] Brod, Max, *Der Prager Kreis*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1979, p. 207.
[305] A wide description of the relationships Brod held with personalities of Prague literary scene is provided in the also completely autobiographical work *Streitbares Leben*.
[306] Brod, *Der Prager Kreis*, p. 41.
[307] See: Brod, *Der Prager Kreis* p. 9: „Man spricht seit einiger Zeit von einer „Prager Schule". Ich finde diesen Begriff nicht recht zutreffend. Denn zu einer Schule gehört wohl ein Lehrer und auch so etwas wie ein Schulprogramm. Wir hatten weder den einen noch das andere. Ich habe daher absichtlich eine Bezeichnung gewählt, die lockerer, schwankender, verschwimmender ist. Ich spreche lieber von einem Prager Kreis."

expanding the context that could be considered as conventional "Prague literature", as he renounces the chronological limits proposed by Goldstücker in favor of a more flexible inclusion of the generations before Rilke's ("Man kann füglich bis 1830 zurückgehen, dem Jahr, in dem Marie Ebner-Eschenbach geboren wurde"[308]), and also considers authors from "Deutschen aus den Randgebieten"[309] of Bohemia as worth of mention in the cases where they influenced the "Prague circle" in some way. Nevertheless, Brod fully detaches his discourse from the Sudeten literature just like it was done by the party of the Liblice conference.

Despite the limits of Brod's model when it comes to treating those areas which were not linked to the experience of the identified *Prager Kreise*, and despite the dangers stemming from the generalization linked to the high biographical component of his analysis, this contribution is to some extent better compatible with the recent studies which treat the *Tripolis Prag* as a transcultural space, especially when it comes to the detriment of the notion "triple ghetto" and to the model of touching spheres given by the image of the circles – although this symbolism also involves the notion of an enclosed space and of a central focus[310].

Scholars pay attention, however, not to interpret these classifications as a solution to the problem of identity that is still considered the basis of Bohemian German literature. It should be said that the generation of *Jung Prag*, the elder intellectuals who supported them (including personalities such as Auguste Hauschner and Hugo Salus) and the personalities of Kafka's generation who mostly influenced world literature showed, in comparison to the attitude of the previous literary movements within Prague and the Bohemian territory, a clear interest for cultural exchange, and acknowledged the potential of an area characterized by a complexity, when it comes to the so-called *Identitätsstiftung*, that could be examined and observed beyond the notions deriving by a dualistic perspective. The consequence of this acknowledgement is, again, not a univocal solution to the identity problem, but the acceptance of a hybrid condition that must be evaluated as such. Consequently, categories of identity-complexity such as contrast, hybridity and interaction between cultural symbols and collective myths of different sources become constitutive part of the aesthetic related to Bohemian and Prague German literature. These categories appear in any kind of narration

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[308] Brod, *Der Prager Kreis*, p. 9.

[309] „Ich spreche hier nur von Prag, ich halte es nicht für meine Aufgabe, der Literaturgeschichte der Sudetendeutschen eine weitere Arbeit dieser Art hinzuzufügen. Von den deutschen aus den Randgebieten habe ich bisher nur diejenigen Dichter hervorgehoben, die (wie z.B. Stifter) unendlichen Einfluss auf uns, den Prager Kreis, hatten, und werde auch in der Folge nur jene behandeln, die auf den Prager Kreis wirkten, mit ihm Kontakt hatten (Mühlberger, Dietzenschmidt, Walter Seidl u.a.). Damit sollen die anderen nicht im geringsten herabgesetzt werden. Es gibt unter ihnen hervorragende Lyriker, wie den völlig in sich geschlossenen, eigenartigen Richard Schaukal, gute Erzähler wie z. B. Karl Hans Strobl, Kolbenheyer, Brehm – aber mit dem Prager Kreis, den ich behandle, hatten sie keine ideelle Verbindung." Brod, *Der Prager Kreis*, p. 74.

[310] *Handbuch*, pp. 196-197.

and genre, and they certainly have interesting effects on those texts where the representation of urban space is central, as it is the case of our researched corpus.

The problem of identity related to matters such as nationality, cultural heritage and language can be investigated as a component which in some cases mixes (in Bohemia German literature related to the Prague landscape) with the disintegration of identity and individuality that must be understood as constitutive part of human experience during Modernism and that is often exemplified in the experience of urban space in wider meaning. The two binaries of cultural identity crisis and the psychological experience of threatened individual identity typical of city literature, ground of modern subject crisis, travel parallelly in the Prague context of the *Jahrhundertwende* and their fruitful interaction is one of the prerogatives that made Bohemian German literature of these years not only so prolific but also so resonant in European literature.

2. Psychotops in Prague German literature

This interaction is characterized by the relationship which literary figures entertain not only with the impressions of urban landscape and its stimuli as such, but with certain elements of this landscape that have been classified as psychotops for Bohemian Germans due to their link to certain historical frameworks, i.e. cultural symbols centered around the establishment of German culture in the Bohemian territory. These frameworks are mainly the Hussite wars and the Prague's baroque with all the tropes related to the age of Rudolph II[311]. In this regard, symbolic elements of the landscape mainly thematized in Bohemian German literature are the Hradschin (Hradčany), the Karlsbrücke, (Karlův Most), the Kleinseite (Malá Strana), the Altstädter Ring, the Altstädter Rathaus, the Hungerturm (Daliborka), the Moldava (Vltava) with a special attention to the role of bridges and quays, the Judenstadt in several phases of its existence, from its position as factual ghetto to the process of its *Assanation*. The way these elements interact with topoi of city literature such as the disintegration of subjectivity and the matter of fragmentary perception has been shown in Georg Escher's study *Labile Moderne*, where the comparative analysis of Rainer Maria Rilke's (1875-1926) *König Bohusch* (1897) and Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic's *Stojaté vody* (1895) links the protagonists' identity crisis with the presence, in the character's observation, of pieces of the pre-modern world that persist in a constantly changing landscape where renovations and structural modifications are part of the everyday life. The contrast between the alienating dimension of modernity and the strength of ancient buildings enhances the protagonists' estrangement and highlights the impossibility to reconcile perceived reality and inner subjective experience. This fracture, object of identity discourse

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[311] The latter category includes the legends around the Prague's alchemists and the tropes connected to the *Judenstadt*, where Rabbi Ben Bezalel Löw, the Golem and the Jewish cemetery play the main role and constitute the same series of *topoi* which characterizes Meyrink's work as well.

in many contexts of modern European literature, takes in Prague's German literature a series of contours that can be connected to aspect of the Romantic tradition, especially the ones where antiquity and elements of irrational experience are put together. Traces of the crisis shown in Joseph von Eichendorff's (1788-1857) *Das Marmorbild* (1818), where pieces of an ancient, pagan, classic art threaten the protagonist's psyche through a power stemming from their endurance of passing time, in a way that looks very similar to the effect of myth and fairytale in Hoffmann's *Der goldene Topf* (1814), re-emerge here in the constant evocation of those elements of Prague's history that most stimulate reflections on an overlapping of past and present, leading the reader to question the very substance of things and landscapes perceived by the characters – who are, in fact, completely overwhelmed by this uncertainty.

The role of psychotops becomes, therefore, ambivalent: on the one hand, they provide an identity building function and constitute the right ground for discussing the character's frequently ambiguous position within a mosaic of cultures; on the other, their link to a dimension other than the everyday life and their hinting at elements of the past communicate with the modern debate on the position of the individuum and on the problems related to individual perception. This is even more evident when these elements are anchored to a morbid aesthetic: environments such as the Daliborka, highly thematized in Meyrink's *Walpurgisnacht* but also in Rilke's *Die Geschwister* (1897), where the sphere of the fantastic and of the marvelous are not as essential as in Meyrink's narration, or the former Jewish district, not only are part of a cultural frame and of a past that can come to surface anytime, but also acquire the core of their memorial charge through the description of the sufferance they held (the Daliborka) or of the peculiar lifestyle and isolation provided by them (the ghetto).

However, part of the importance attributed to these psychotops in the literature of these years must be traced back to the first reflections on preserving urban memory/history/past, which are enhanced, between 19th and 20th century, as reactions to urbanistic modifications planned in metropolises throughout Europe. During this period, urbanistic plans changed Prague's landscape by eliminating some of the cultural symbols that had proved themselves as *identitätsstiftend* and productive in regard to collective imagery. The protests against the reconditioning of the ghetto are proof of the link between this phenomenon and the emergency of a cultural crisis:

Die gegen die Assanierung gerichtete, vom prominenten Autor Vilém Mrštík angeführte und in der Literatur reflektierte Protestbewegung prägt den Begriff von *stará Praha* (*Alt-Prag*) mit, ist aber zugleich selbst ein zutiefst modernes Phänomen, hat doch der Architekturhistoriker Gerhard Vinken (2010) nachgewiesen, dass das Konzept *Altstadt*, erst im

Zuge der großen Umbauprojekte entsteht und der Moderne in ganz Europa inhärent ist. Vielleicht kann man sogar sagen, die Denkmal- und Heitmatschutzbewegung sei ein früher Vertreter einer Gegenmoderne im Sinne Ulrick Becks [...][312]

One of the most interesting expressions of this discourse is the surprising growth of Josefstadt depictions written precisely during the same years in which the district had stopped existing as such: this space experiences in the years right after its demolition/reconditioning a remarkable fortune in literature and acquires a peculiar imaginative nuance right in virtue of its now only literary existence[313]. Not so surprising is the *topos*, so frequent in Prague German literature, of depictions or hints at traits and unsettling elements of the ghetto that persist in the area despite the renovations: the loss of a so powerful psychotop cannot be fully accepted and traces of its former existence must be looked for and preserved in literary fiction. Escher rightly identifies a remarkable consequence of this process in the depictions of the *Judenstadt* as privileged landscape for the manifestation of "die Krise eines stabilen Sinnzusammenhangs und der Interpretierbarkeit des städtischen Raums"[314]. The ghetto is theater of the prototypical experiences of the modern metropolis: the aimless walking, the disorientation, the decomposition (*Auflösung*) of space and identity accompanied by nature metaphors and elements of femininity – all threatening the (in German literature usually male) protagonist[315]. Beside this iconic image, however, other spaces of Prague city literature can serve a similar purpose: interesting in this regard is the use of the Daliborka as keynote of perception crisis in *Die Geschwister*. In the Hunger Tower, Luisa, actual protagonist of Rilke's story, has a delusion where she defeats the imaginary enemy of her childhood's nightmares (fantasies still persisting in her adulthood) while observing the elements of the violent past related to the building, a dimension that remained preserved both in legends and, somehow, in her own memory[316].

Here, Luisa's delusion can be related to three elements. First, it can be inserted into the framework of the 'uncertain space' that is linked to the fantastic *Unentschlossenheit* (the reader does not

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[312] Georg Escher, *Labile Moderne*, in: Weinberg, Manfred / Wutsdorff, Irina et al., *Prager Moderne(n). Interkulturelle Perspektiven auf Raum, Identität und Literatur*, Bielefeld: transcript 2018, pp. 53-66, here: pp. 55-56.

[313] An interesting case is the representation of the ghetto before and after the *Assanation* given in Leppin's *Der Gespenst der Judenstadt* (1918), where the syphilis remains as persisting trace of the dismantled district. The relationship with these elements of the past does not lead, in cases like this, to the construction of a unitary framework in the reading of space and in the perception of reality. Instead, the confrontation with it ends up in a manifestation of the same initial crisis condition

[314] Georg Escher, *Labile Moderne*, p. 56.

[315] Georg Escher, *Labile Moderne*, p. 56.

[316] "Er war stumm und schwarz. Ihr schlug das Herz in die Kehle hinauf und, erschreckt, senkte sie den Blick und er fiel, fiel in eine endlose Tiefe. Sie wußte: So stand sie am Rande des Turms. So war sie selber das blaue Fräulein. An ihrem Frieren fühlte sie, daß sie ohne Kleider war, ganz ohne Kleider. Mit bebenden Fingern tastete sie an ihrem Leib hin, und sie empfand seine bloße Glätte. Dann blickte sie auf: oben war Nacht, sternlos. Und dann stand er bei ihr, fast vor ihr, nah am Abgrund. Das blaue Fräulein rächte sich: diesmal er. Und sie hob unwillkürlich die Hände und stieß gerade nach ihm hin bis sie an seine Schultern drängten, dann aber, im Augenblicke der jähen Berührung, packte sie ihn krampfhaft, riß ihn zurück, zu sich, fühlte ihn, und in einer neuen, tiefen, zitternden Seligkeit verging ihr die Sinne." Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Die Geschwister*, in: Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Gesammelte Werke*, Düsseldorf: Null-Papier Verlag 2016, pp. 718-761, here: p. 740-741.

understand to which extent the events experienced in the tower by Luisa find their counterpart in reality) but also to the modern unreadability of space. The delusion stems from the protagonist's confrontation with past times[317] and the awareness of the association of some of the past elements with contemporary situations or events, which describes the same paradox introduced by Escher. Second, it is linked to a confrontation with the fictional level of transmitted history, such as the legend of prison Dalibor when it comes to the literary tradition around the Hunger Tower[318]. Legends of this kind are one of the key components of the urban aesthetic in Prague's German literature, and contributed to associate it with the problematic *topos* 'magic and dark Prague'. The motif is in fact much older than the *Fin de Siècle*. In fact, the use of 'Bohemia' in Shakespeare's *The Winter Tale* makes apparent how this land, like the Greek region of Arcadia and several Italian cities, can be associated to the realm of fantasy in western culture since a very long time. Specifically in Shakespeare, it represents "a realm of youth and innocence located at the opposite moral pole from the world-weariness, sophistication, and decadence of the equally fictionalized Sicilian court in which the play begins"[319]. Derek Sayer, who gives this example to open his *The Coasts of Bohemia*, also mentions the decadent traits attributed to it by Puccini in *La Bohème* and the representation of Prague given by Guillaume Apollinaire in his poem *Zone* (which will be analyzed in the next chapter) where the Bohemian capital is seen as a place where ancient times froze, despite the fact that Apollinaire visited Prague in a moment when it looked absolutely modern, much more modern than other European cities[320]: "The Bohemia of these quotations […] evidently belongs on the same map as Atlantis, El Dorado, and King Solomon's mines"[321].

When it comes to the reception of Prague's atmosphere in the years preceding Meyrink's *Prager Texte*, Peter Demetz observes that, in the same years where most of the topographic changes towards modernity occurred in Prague's Old Town, a literature glorifying its mystical, magical and ancient aspects emerged outside Bohemia, especially in American and English literature. Demetz references as meaningful example George Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* (1859) and Marion Crawford's *The Witch of Prague* (1891), but also points out that the trope was already present in German literature before 1900 by mentioning Paul Raabe's *Holunderblüte* (1863) and Hermann Goetsche's use of the Prague cemetery as location of conspiracy in *Biartriz* (1868). Demetz writes in this regard that:

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[317] See also: Zusi, Peter, *„Wie ein Kind ist unser Volk": Hybrid Identity and National Consciousness in Rilke's "Zwei Prager Geschichten"*, in: The German Quarterly, Summer, 2006, Vol. 79, n. 3, pp. 329-346, p. 336.
[318] The implication of this matter in Meyrink is explained later in the chapter.
[319] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 5.
[320] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 6.
[321] Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, p. 6.

Diese Autoren, ob sie das wußten oder nicht, unternahmen den Versuch, den älteren Schauerroman (man darf ihn auch the gothic novel oder schwarzromantisch nennen) in Prag zu lokalisieren. Der Prozeß der Lokalisierung war in Prag einfacher und gründlicher zu bewältigen als in München oder Berlin, denn die Schriftsteller waren in der vorteilhaften Lage, lang tradierte historische und legendäre Motive mobilisieren zu können und ihre Sache durch Antezedenten zu stärken. Prag war ein schauriger Ort, eben weil es schon lokale Schauergeschichten gab, und zu den alten wie den neuen gehörten ein fester Personenstand -- der Golem, der Ewige Jude, Rabbi Löw, Rudolf II. -- und besondere Szenarien und Kulissen, winkelige Straßen, abgelegene Orte, Klöster, Synagogen, Friedhöfe und Gefängnisse, dazu schicksalhafte Begegnungen, melodramatische Todesfälle, okkulte Kräfte und die jüdisch-exotischen Ingredienzen, die auch die Antisemiten nicht missen wollten.[322]

This trope is, when it comes to our field of interest, mainly related to a series of novels published in the years around World War I: Meyink's *Der Golem* and *Walpurgisnacht*, Paul Leppin's *Severins Gang in die Finsternis*, Max Brod's *Tycho Brahe's Weg zu Gott* and Auguste Hauschner's *Der Tod des Löwen*. The traits that are most meaningful to this dissertation analysis will be seen more in detail in the next paragraphs and in chapter 2.4.

2.1. Prague German literature and Meyrink's work

Now, it should be wondered to what extent the context and the categories of Prague German literature can be applied to Meyrink's work. Meyrink's relationship with Prague differs from the one of the previously mentioned authors, first in consideration of his peculiar position as Prague citizen of German nationality: as previously said, despite his long permanence in the Austro-Hungarian empire, Meyrink was a Bavarian citizen born in Vienna who spent his first years in Munich and Hamburg and, after he left Prague, lived in Montreux, Vienna, Munich and Starnberg. The role of Prague in his education and in the shaping of his mindset was major, but never resulted in a feeling of national belonging: Meyrink never depicted himself as a Prague German and the very few manifestations of national feeling reported in the biographic research report him signing a document on the defense of German national dignity against public calumny during the first worldly conflict, an expression of cultural awareness where Prague and Bohemia are excluded[323]. That said, Meyrink never expressed relevant concern on defending German national pride and the letters revealing his attitude towards warfare not only show his non-violent position but also highlight how his frustration for Germany's defeat was focused on its practical consequences – while, when it comes to patriotism, his satires explain anything the reader would be eager to know about his opinions. Apart from these documents, his *Nachlass* does not provide further information on the topic; however, it can be added that his

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[322] Demetz, Peter, *Die Legende vom Magischen Prag*, in: Transit 07/1993, pp. 142-161.
[323] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 113-126.

literary work never associates personal growth with the acknowledgement of national identity. In the cases where a specific cultural aspect is relevant for the inner path of his characters[324], nationality itself does not play an equally important role, and either way the position of the German Bohemian within the three (or better: the plurality of) Prague cultures remains completely absent from his analysis. This does not mean that Meyrink was unaware of the national conflicts surrounding him during his Prague years, which would be impossible considering the violence of their manifestations, and does not indicate a lack of personal interest in the topic: the matter is treated in his first Prague text already (*Prag: eine optimistisch gehaltene Darstellung in vier Bildern*), and finds an explicit in-depth reflection in his novel *Walpurgisnacht*, where the national conflict between aristocracy and proletarians implies an expression of national identity as well[325]. What lacks in his work is ascribing the German Bohemian a central role and providing a clear reflection on the peculiarities of his hybrid cultural position, a choice that shows Meyrink's personal detachment from this notion and his interpretation of identity as something independent from national heritage.

The paradox of this assumption is that Meyrink elects, on the other hand, the space of Prague as privileged dimension for the search of personal identity and for the reflection on the self the same way as proper Bohemian German authors do - and does so by interrogating the same cultural symbols that are central in the works of the latter. This shows a circulation of these cultural questions on a metaphoric level that exceeds the *Nationaliätsfrage*. It is therefore less surprising, then, how Meyrink differs from these authors as he goes beyond this view and also makes Prague a symbol of the complexity of reality and a paradigm of his worldview, so that the Bohemian capital becomes the place where the sides of reality that are visible to his 'initiate' protagonists are made apparent more easily.

Two consequences of this discourse can be, therefore, pointed out.

First, Meyrink's interest for the identity research, which is central in his whole literary production, appears independent from the problem of nationality and from the interaction between national and cultural heritage of his protagonists. More relevant, as it will be evident in the analysis chapters of this dissertation, are the events that characterize the protagonists' personal experience and the reconciliation with the spiritual path of their ancestors.

Second, Meyrink's Prague space perfectly interacts on the other hand with the idea of an identity research and the extraordinary effect this environment had in his first novel had the main consequence of making the establishment of an interrogated space a constitutive and then necessary element for

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[324] As is the case of the debate between two Jewish personalities, Sephardi and Eidotter, in *Das grüne Gesicht*. However, in this instance as well is not the belonging to a certain field of Judaism the decisive element for the spiritual salvation of the characters.
[325] See: Chapter 6.

his more complex literary projects. Made these premises, the categories that are more relevant for this space can be examined more in-depth.

3. The literary space of Germanophone Prague during the years 1900-1930 and literary criticism

3.1. *Phantastik* and decadence in Prague German literature

The previous paragraphs have tried to analyze the cultural scene of Prague by observing the problems related to a dualistic perspective on the matter, and highlighted the elements that can make the dualistic attitude look problematic when it comes to exchange and contacts of certain intellectual spheres. This section observes the Bohemian German approach to Prague space taking, either way, the difference with the Czech attitude into account.

When it comes to dualism, one of the most interesting statements concerning Prague's German literature in this regard is Arne Novák's review of the Czech translation of Meyrink's *Der Golem* (1915), published in 1917. This review has been object of discussion in several occasions, from E.E. Kisch's comments held in his letter[326] to Antonín Macek (1872-1923) on April 22nd 1917, to Krolop's considerations in his reflections on the concept *Prager Roman* (2010)[327] and, more recently, to Irina Wutsdorff's contribution *Prager Moderne(n)?*[328]. In his review, Novák observes how Meyrink's text mirrors without any doubt a dualistic vision of Prague's population that can be thought as typical of Prague's German literature, where "Nad Vltavou bydlí dvě plemena, odlišná jazykem, mravem i krví"[329], where the Germans appear privileged and cultured while Czechs represent simpleminded servants. Then, it is added:

Ze skutečného života pražského nezná, či lépe řečeno, nechce znáti pisatel „Golema" praničeho. Zcela úmyslně zamlčuje, že kolem groteskního ostrůvku, jakým jest zdejší ghetto, hučí a proudí ruch průmyslový a obchodní, vědecké a umělecké snažení, radostný a mladistvý příboj zdravého a schopného národa.[330]

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[326] The letter was translated into Czech by Jarmila Haasová-Nečasová and published in 1959, then published in its original German text in Paul Reimann's *Von Herder bis Kisch* in 1961 (Reimann, Paul, *Von Herder bis Kisch. Studien zur Geschichte der deutsch-österreichisch-tschechischen Literaturbeziehungen*, Berlin: 1961)

[327] Krolop, Kurt, *Die tschechisch-deutschen Auseinandersetzungen über den „Prager Roman" (1914-1918)*, in: Peter Becher / Anna Knechtel (Hrsg.), *Praha – Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, Passau: Karl Stutz 2010, pp. 175-182. Here: p. 176.

[328] Wutsdorff, Irina, *Prager Moderne(n)?*, in: Manfred Weinberg / Irina Wutsdorff / Štěpán Zbytovský, *Prager Moderne(n). Interkulturelle Perspektiven auf Raum, Identität und Literatur*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2018, pp. 21-52.

[329] Novák, Arne, *Pražský Roman?* In: Novák, Arne, *Krajané a sousedé. Kniha studií a podobizen*, Praha 1922 [1917], pp. 179-183. Here, p. 181.

[330] Novák, Arne, *Pražský Roman?* In: Novák, Arne, *Krajané a sousedé. Kniha studií a podobizen*, Praha 1922 [1917], pp. 179-183. Here, p. 181.

In fact, Novák's critic concentrates on a precise attitude of Prague German authors that has been acknowledged in many later studies: their apparent tendency to only look towards a past dimension of the city, stressing the traits that recall its antiquity rather than showing the industrial and progressive sides of its environment. Moreover, this literature denies to Prague, according to Novák, any aspect concerning energy, optimism and a healthy desire of life, only describing 'grotesque little island' whose decadent and morbid aspects are extended from the 'ghetto' to the whole urban environment and draw a frame of decadence, illness, pessimism and rottenness. This tendency has been pointed out in several studies concerning not only Meyrink's way of interpreting Prague space, but also other German authors of the same field, and manifestations of its influence are not difficult to find. It can be read in the first pages of Leppin's *Severins Gang in die Finsternis*, for example:

Am liebsten waren ihm die Straßen, die Abseits von dem großen Getriebe lagen. Wenn er die Augen zusammenkniff und durch die geschlossenen Lider schaute, bekamen die Häuser ein phantastisches Aussehen. Dann ging er an den Mauern der großen Gärten vorbei, die sich an die Krankenhäuser und Institute schlossen. Der Geruch des faulenden Laubs und der feuchten Erde schlug ihm entgegen. Irgendwo in der Nähe wusste er eine Kirche.[331]

In these four lines, not distant from the opening of the novel, the environmental depiction responds to Novák's criteria almost completely: although it is implicit that the city has an 'intense movement' in some areas (the first thing belonging to Prague described by the narrator in this text is the noise provoked by trams and people's chatting), the protagonist chooses those spots where this rhythm slows down and certain sides of the city can emerge in their unsettling quality. There, the elements pointed out by the Czech critic come to light: houses become *phantastisch* and Severin encounters a series of gardens which are not signals of bloom or life, since they surround hospitals and clinics on unspecified kind. Apart from these buildings, only a church is mentioned, but not directly seen. The sphere of illness is here absolutely evident, and the juxtaposition of the 'rotting leaves' and 'humid earth', elements belonging in fact to autumn[332], to the depiction of hospitals, links the scene to the themes of decadence, death and putrescence. Not surprisingly, Leppin's novel concerns a young German man who loses his mind by reacting to numerous stimuli provided by certain Prague environments linked to seduction and occult sciences[333], where women apparently play the most meaningful role but the metaphor provided by the opening of a café called 'The spider' in the second part of the narration reveals the prevailing role of the urban space itself in this process of decay. In a similar attitude, if Leppin's Prague space ties Severin and other characters through an invisible web,

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[331] Leppin, Paul, *Severins Gang in die Finsternis*, Vezseny: ngiyaw eBooks 2016, p. 7.
[332] The temporal reference to autumn opens the narration.
[333] The character initiating Severin to this knowledge is made using Meyrink as main model.

Meyrink ascribes the Bohemian city the title of 'puppetmaster', and, when it comes to the semantic field of decay and rotting, provides a series of interesting similes, one of which is the powerful image of the leeches that infest the Vltava, highly present in *Walpurgisnacht* and also mentioned in an earlier work, *Prag: eine optimistische Darstellung in vier Bildern*. Auguste Hauschner represents the 17th century Hradschin under the 'poisonous light' of a comet, evoking, by doing so, the impression of a sick city, and ends her novella with a violent fire in the *Judenstadt*, followed by the death of the emperor Rudolph II. Symbols of the grotesque mentioned by Novák are also the idea of the dead city and the metaphors linked to the idea of labyrinth. Paul Wiegler's *Das Haus an der Moldau* (1934), though written later than the other referenced works, gives an idea of the influence of the Prague German tradition in this direction, since the writer did not belong to Prague's literary environment longer that 5 years but was deeply impressed by some aspects of its cultural atmosphere. When his protagonist, Schandera, commits suicide at the end of the novel, it is stated that

Am Rechen des Wehrs staute sich die Flut der Moldau. Die Kathedrale auf dem Hradschin verdunkelte sich, der Kinskypark, der Petřin. Tot war die Stadt mit allem, was er durchlebt hatte. Doch nun sah er gerade unter sich das Trottoir. Wie an jenem Septemberabend glaubte er, in derselben Ebene mit der Straße, zwischen den müden Passanten zu sein.[334]

The scene presents the trope of the panoramic view of the Hradschin associated not to a mere sense of wonder and a sensation of control of urban space, but to a sense of instability and to a clear perception of decline – where the panorama clearly mirrors the protagonist's fate. To stress this concept, the image of the 'dead city' is also used in this passage.

3.2. A different relationship with Prague: Germanophone and Czech literature

This way of intending Prague's space looks limiting and deceptive especially when comparing this perspective to contemporary Czech literature, where the city looks lively and oriented to both progress and technological development, and above all to optimism. The myth of Libuše's profecy 'I see a city whose glory will touch the stars' is the main guideline in this other direction, where literature mirrors Czech's aspiration to independence and cultural emancipation, and, in the years following the foundation of the Republic of Czecho-Slovakia, to the enthusiasm and the hopes accompanying the beginning of a new political project. Proof of this enthusiasm are movements linked to the avantgarde such as Poetismus and Devětsil, which promote a more "fröhlichen, technisierten Moderne"[335]

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[334] Wiegler, Paul, *Das Haus an der Moldau*, Berlin: Rohwolt 1934, p. 314. Here, the protagonist commits suicide by letting himself fall from a high window, a clear refence to Prague's defenestration. See: Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 193.

[335] Wutsdorff, Irina, *Prager Moderne(n): die deutsch- und tschechischsprachige Literatur in vergleichender Perspektive*, in: Weinberg, Manfred / Wutsdorff, Irina et al., *Prager Moderne(n). Interkulturelle Perspektiven auf Raum, Identität und Literatur*, Bielefeld: transcript 2018, pp. 21-52, here: p. 27.

although the Czech Avantgarde acknowledges the necessity of abstraction and fantasy to avoid an excess of technique at the detriment of individuality[336].While these sources can be associated to the faith in progress and to the turn to future that characterizes other European avantgarde movements including Futurism, Dada and Surrealism, Prague German literature seems to be more easily connected with some aspects of Expressionism that are related to a clear skepticism towards the technologic evolution, and tends to be more mindful of the extreme consequences that can derive from it.

The reasons for this difference have been identified by literature historians, for many decades, in the socio-political component characterizing the life of the two groups, Germans and Czechs, in the *Fin de Siècle* Bohemia. As previously mentioned, German population in Bohemia experiences, from the second half of the 19th Century to the first half of the 20th, a decisive decrease. Although concepts such as 'island' or 'triple ghetto' have been, as it will be explained later, deeply re-dimensioned and reviewed in more recent studies, the continuity these ideas had in the interpretation of Prague German texts and their persistence in current studies at least as term of comparison cannot be underestimated, as it has its reason of being in providing a powerful, though not completely exact, image of the peculiar position Germans occupied in Prague's cultural context. Literary criticism after 2000 has shown that this group, which had a paradoxical role of leading culture in administration, governmental decisions and education despite its clearly being a minority when it came to statistics, was not as separated from Czech citizens and Czech culture as it has been stated in past times, and drew a design of the everyday contacts between the two spheres, also identifying an intense exchange in art and literature between meaningful Czech and German personalities. However, the perception of change, of a political turn in Bohemia towards an emancipation of the Czech culture at the detriment of the German, was a matter this minority had to deal with. Surely, the reactions to this phenomenon were not homogenous, and numerous were the personalities who strived for a collaboration and for a growth of the mutual influence between Czechs and Germans in shaping an open cultural context[337]. Either way, the critical works that mostly characterized the reception of Prague German literature after 1945 concentrated on the perception of Prague as a hostile environment where the German personality feels unwanted, excluded and somehow relegated in a specific area – which can also be identified with the image of a ghetto or an island. This critical attitude also considered the sense of decline which not only affected Prague's German population, which clearly felt the end of their cultural monopole, but also the whole territory of the Habsburg Empire, which is aware, during the *Fin de Siècle*, of the progressive increase of political movements

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[336] See: Wutsdorff, *Prager Moderne(n)*, pp. 27-28.
[337] See: Chapter 2.3.1.

towards a new asset. The apocalyptic content of Austrian texts such as Alfred Kubin's *Die andere Seite* (1909) signalizes the circulation of atmospheres defined by decadence and by a sense of the end which spreads widely throughout the empire, and the receptiveness of Prague's German citizens in this regard is not surprising, especially when thinking about the circulation of similar tendencies even outside this context, in Germany, France, Italy and England, and about the leading role of ideas stemming from Reich German culture in Bohemian German context.

Czech literature shows a different attitude towards future times in virtue of the coincidence between the weakening of the imperial political system and the arise of a new dimension where its cultural program could develop and finally find the right acknowledgement. As previously explained, the Czech *fin de Siècle* is inextricably linked to the concepts of rebirth, independence, emancipation and flourishing.

Either way, studies after 2000 also pointed out the presence, in Czech literary context in the first half of the 20th century, of motives near to the ones of Prague German literature, motives where decadent and phantastic traits play a leading role, although these do not really stem, in Czech production, from the same sense of estrangement related to German culture. These contacts mainly demonstrate the circulation of decadent atmospheres and the fascination of phantastic modes that also influenced Czech culture, which is not surprising since Bohemia occupied, in the cultural exchange between eastern and western Europe, a logic central position. The resonance western European decadent and phantastic literature had in this exchange was meaningful, not to mention the high presence of these same stimuli in eastern European culture, (especially the ones coming from Russian literature). However, it must be taken into account that these manifestations were exceptional, in Czech context, compared to the movements which characterized Czech *Fin de Siècle* literature, which were, as previously said, oriented to a progressive avantgarde and to extremely lively atmospheres.

4. From the *Prager Roman* to the *Prager Text*

4.1. The notion *Prager Roman*

The observation of common traits in several texts related to Prague, produced in Bohemian German context between 1894 and 1945, led the literary research on the field to theorize a possible classification of these works in a more general frame. The establishment of a unitary categorization for this phenomenon is connected to a series of theoretical premises which cannot be ignored when approaching the topic, including the very basic assumption that acknowledging a specific framework to Bohemian German production also implies a distinction between this literature and the German literature of other Germanophone areas. This clear starting point arises some questions, including

whether Bohemian Germans can be ascribed a precise literary and cultural identity in light of the reflections on their hybrid quality that were made by literature historians in the first half of the 20th century already. A summarizing statement on this matter, given by F. X. Šalda and reported by Krolop in the 2010 volume *Praha – Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, affirms:

In Prag gibt es keine deutsche Literatur, jedoch einige deutsche Literaten, mit demselben Recht oder derselben Zufälligkeit, mit der einige in Pest leben oder vor kurzem lebten. Die Literatur ist nämlich etwas anderes als eine Gruppe von Literaten, und seien sie noch so zahlreich, die in einer Region oder in einer Stadt leben; Literatur ist ein höherer Organismus, der mit seinem Leben eine gesetzmäßige Antwort auf ein nationales Ganzes ist, so wie eine Blüte zum Stamm gehört.[338]

This opinion is part of Šalda's review of the Czech translation of Max Brod's *Tycho Brahes Weg zu Gott*. The contribution, named *Židovský román staropražský*, was published in the agrarian daily *Venkov* on February 2nd 1918; it mirrors the echoes of the previously mentioned statement on *Der Golem* given by Novák in 1917, and the two attitudes provide a clear panorama on the tense political and ideological atmosphere of these years. Šalda's review, appearing nine months before the foundation of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, is closely linked to the identity of literary production and national alignment, and also shows the tendency to ascribe rootlessness to Bohemian German literates, which, as he explains later, are not „eine Nation, die schicksalhaft und einzelartig mit diesem Boden verbunden ist und gerade mit *diesem* Boden. *Ihre* Nation, ihr Baum ist mit seinen Wurzeln anderswo als in diesem böhmischen Land beheimatet"[339]. Bohemian Germans are therefore defined, later in the review, as colonists, and consequently as a population not possessing a literature of its own, but "only magazines"[340]. Krolop observes how the opinions of Bohemian scholars experience an important turn after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, when the political program of the newborn Czechoslovakia prefers to highlight the multinational quality of the new state. This turn reflects a more reconciling attitude and is contemporary to acts of mediation where Otto Pick, Paul/Pavel Eisner and Max Brod play a central role, although the cultural atmosphere in Czechoslovakia never reached the multinational balance they strived for. In this new context, however, a decisive attempt to define an existing Bohemian German literature which can be distinguished from the one of the Reich and the Austrian literary production is visible in the anthology *Deutsche Erzähler aus der Tschechoslowakei. Ein Sammelbuch herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Otto Pick* (1922). This volume collects works of authors stemming from Prague but also other Bohemian regions, and includes a preface by Otto Pick where it is stated:

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[338] Krolop, Kurt, *Praha – Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, p. 178.
[339] Krolop, Kurt, *Praha – Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, p. 178.
[340] Krolop, Kurt, *Praha – Prag 1900-1945. Literaturstadt zweier Sprachen*, p. 179.

Ein undefinierbarer Hauch, fremd und vertraut zugleich, weht uns aus den Dichtungen der deutschen Dichter aus der Tschechoslowakei entgegen. Wir fühlen ihn, wenn wir „Witiko" lesen, aus Rilkes Lyrik und Erzählungen weht er uns an, und die gläsern klare Prosa eines Franz Kafka ist wohl derjenigen einiges Adalbert Stifters, aber keineswegs etwa der Sprache des Norddeutschen Thomas Mann verwandt. Es ist auch nicht das, was irrtümlich als „österreichisch" bezeichnet wird.[341]

Despite the increase of these opinions after World War I and the numerous studies meaning to clarify the aspects distinguishing these authors from the rest of Germanophone production, these remain not easy to identify in a common framework, and the extremely various styles and interests of Prague German literates makes it impossible to categorize their works in a unitary movement[342]. However, Meyrink's case is fortunately connected to a trait that has more stable parameters in scientific literature than other aspects of Bohemian German literature, which is the concept of *Prager Roman*. This definition, that had been treated skeptically by Arne Novák in his review of *Der Golem*, entitled *Pražský Román?*, must be first referred to a series of novels published between 1915 and 1917. This group of novels had already been identified as more unitary than other Bohemian German works in the Liblice conference[343], due to its special treatment of certain aspects of Prague's urban landscape, and includes Meyrink's *Der Golem* (1915) and *Walpurgisnacht* (1917), Max Brod's *Tycho Brahes Weg zu Gott* (1917), Egon Erwin Kisch's *Der Mädchenhirt* (1914) and Auguste Hauschner's *Der Tod des Löwen* (1917). It should be signalized that already during World War I and before the publishing of these works, Otokar Fischer had noted Bohemian German author's concern in the interpretation of Prague's space, while observing that, when it came to the branch of Bohemian German literature that detached itself from chauvinistic perspectives, Prague emerged in it as a newly discovered object to be deeply thought and reinvented[344]. When it comes to the link between the five mentioned 'Prague novels', this element identified by Fischer plays the main role, since biographic and linguistic traits shared by the authors cannot be considered as important as their experimenting with the depiction of Prague's environment, and, even more meaningful, this environment appears as the main creative trigger of the narration.

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[341] Pick, Otto, *Vorwort*, in: Ders. (hrsg.), *Deutsche Erzähler aus der Tschechoslowakei. Ein Sammelbuch herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Otto Pick*, Reichenberg / Prag / Leipzig / Wien: Heris 1922, pp. XI-XII.

[342] See also: Georg Escher, *„In Prag gibt es keine deutsche Literatur". Überlegungen zu Geschichte und Implikationen des Begriffs Prager deutsche Literatur*. Here particularly relevant: pp. 197-198.

[343] See: Krolop, Kurt, *Die tschechisch-deutsche Auseinandersetzungen über den „Prager Roman"*, p. 175. Krolop also refers here to his previous mention of this group of novels in: Ders. *Geschichte und Vorgeschichte der Prager deutschen Literatur des „expressionistischen Jahrzehnts"*, in: *Weltfreunde*, pp. 47-87, here particularly relevant: pp. 65-66.

[344] Otokar Fischer, *Neznámá Praha*, in: *Narodní listy*, July 2nd 1914. (quoted in German by Georg Escher in *„In Prag gibt es keine deutsche Literatur". Überlegungen zu Geschichte und Implikationen des Begriffs Prager deutsche Literatur*, p. 202).

4.2. The notion *Prager Text*

However, texts conceiving the space of Prague as independent object of literary reflection were, during those years, much more numerous, and did not only appear in form of novels. A collection of these texts, consisting of works produced by Bohemian authors mainly in German language (but also, in some cases, in Czech language), and works by German-speaking authors who spent part of their life in Bohemia, is analyzed in detail in Susanne Fritz's essay *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*. It includes novels, poems and short stories concerning topics that are already visible in the five aforementioned *Prager Romane*, and which can be seen as constitutive elements for Fritz's collection: within a context of a wide field of discussion on national and cultural identity through the concepts of *Deutschtum*, *Tschechentum* and *Judentum* and, emerge more restricted thematic areas such as the history of Prague, student life, phantastic, Jewish culture, decadence.

Fritz refers here to the critical perspective of the 'text of a city', concept theorized by the Moscow and Tartu School of Semiotics, which describes literary works where cities find a way to emerge and to 'speak by themselves'. In this regard, it is stated in Vladimir Toporov's *Peterburgskij tekst: ego genezis i struktura, ego mastera* (1984):

La città ci parla attraverso le sue vie, le sue piazze, le sue acque, le isole, i giardini, gli edifici, i monumenti, le persone, la storia, le idee e può essere intesa come un particolare testo eterogeneo, cui si attribuisce un significato generale, sulla base del quale è possibile ricostruire un particolare sistema di segni che si realizza nel testo stesso.[345]

[The city speaks to us through its streets, its squares, its waters, its islands, gardens, buildings, monuments, people, history, ideas, and it can be understood as a particular heterogenous text, to which a general meaning is attributed. This meaning constitutes the basis on which it is possible to build a new particular system of signs, which is made real in the text itself.]

Ground of this ideas is the premise that it is possible to code a certain literary representation of the city through the identification of those basic symbols that constitute the semiotic assets in rooted conceptions of a certain urban environment: here, symbols and codes reveal the thought categories that characterize cultural perspectives on cities, and those categories that influence its representation in art and literature despite the differences that might appear between a certain work and another.

Toporov theorizes, when it comes to specifying the nature of these semiotic traits, the existence of five fundamental categories: the foundation of the city, its threshold, its holiness (and consequently its inviolability), its eschatology and its gender. Lotman points out, in *The structure of the literary*

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[345] Toporov, Vladimir Nikolaevič, *Il testo pietroburghese: genesi, struttura, maestri*, Italian trans. Tania Triberio, in: eSamizdat. Rivista Di Culture Dei Paesi Slavi, 2020 (XIII), pp. 433-441.

text, how foundation must be seen as "an act of beginning", and how, since most of city foundations are only known through mythology, the narration chosen for this beginning expresses a precise cultural perception. From this perspective, it must be concluded that this cultural perception inevitably influences literature independently from forms and contents present in heterogeneous literary texts. The aforementioned prophecy of the soothsayer Libuše works therefore as constitutive trace of the act of the beginning, and it defines the association between the future and a utopian project. No wonder that this concept powerfully influenced the political rhetoric in the 1830s/1840s in the Czech aspiration for renewal, while Bohemian Germans could not completely embrace the same foundation myth as part of their own identity, since their presence in the territory was not linked to this action. Despite this difference, references to Libuše and to her prophecy appear in several German works: meaningful in this regard is the role of this figure in Auguste Hauschner's *Die Familie Lowositz*, where the main character Rudolph, a Bohemian German Jew, participates in the opening of the Czech national theater as background character. The opera is Bedřich Smetana's *Libuše*, with whose text Rudolph is absolutely familiar. The young man admires Czech literature, Czech mythology and Czech language, nevertheless he feels completely aligned with the German culture that was transmitted to him by his (mostly) assimilated family, and by the Christian German schools he attended. In the moment when he witnesses the enthusiasm of the Czech public at the opening of the theatre, he also understands the link between their involvement and the myth of Libuše. In the same moment, he also realizes how he feels estranged in this situation, as this tradition does belong to his experience as Prague citizen, to his interests and to his love for literature, but not to his cultural identity.

Now, the discourse on mythology is also the ground for those cultural references which work as basis for a linguistic patrimony of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, stories and fairytales, historical events and legends. In some cases, this can also be considered as an inventory of literary motives: when it comes to Prague, these motives can be identified with the historical transmission of emperor Karl IV, Jan Hus, the Hussite movement and the Hussite Wars, Jan Žižka z Trocnova, the Prague defenestrations of 1419 and 1618, the battle on the White Mountain, the emperor Rudolph II, Tycho Brahe, John Dee and other alchemists, the Thirty Years' War, the Omladina. The Jewish legends upon Rabbi Ben Bezalel Löw and the stories reported in the Sippurim belong more to the Bohemian German culture than to the Czech one, while the cult of Saint Nepomuk is shared by both sides. This inventory belongs to what Toporov defines as the 'spiritual/cultural' component of a city's literary imagery, while the 'material/cultural' component includes elements of the physical geography of the area and its fundamental topographical traits, especially the ones referring to the interaction between streets and alleys of the everyday life and those places which can be defined as representative spaces such as main squares, monuments and particular buildings. This category can interact with architect

Richard Neutra's (1892-1970) definition of 'psychotop': „Objekte, die wir mit gleichermaßen Interesse, mit besonderem Affekt besetzen können. Das kann ein Bild an der Wand und ebenso der erholsame Gang in eine bevorzugte Landschaft sein."[346]

The main traits characterizing Prague's geographical position are identified by Fritz in its connecting Germany and East Europe through commercial roads on the one hand, and in its laying on a river on the other. The two elements are linked to Toporov's fundamental category of the threshold, concept involving a further moment of observation, a moment that gives cities the function of borders between some specific areas, for example between north and south or east and west in Europe. In the case of Prague, the given limits are the ones between earth and water (position near a river) and between East and West (commercial crossroad from Russia to Germany). Now, as long as this position of crossing space becomes part of the literary imagery, it also acquires a symbolic value going beyond its mere geographic meaning: the symbolic range of the threshold category in literature is wide enough that it ascribes cities an even bigger role, which is the border between reality and fantasy, reality and dream, earth and heaven, life and death. This is one of the reasons why, when analysing in through semiotic categories, Prague is associated to esoterism, so that „der geographischen Schwellenlage entspricht eine geistig-esoterische […]: Prag wird nun als Schwelle zwischen diesseitiger und jenseitiger Welt. Damit wird die Stadt zu einer Ort Heiligkeit"[347].

Therefore, Tartu scholars also mention eschatology and holiness as decisive aspects of urban texts: every historic city has its own spirituality, which is reflected in literature through legends and myths, but also in the religions that influenced its history – consequently, according to the aforementioned 'spiritual/cultural' component. Now, Toporov's theorization of the threshold category also interacts with another semiotic model originated in Jurij Lotman's studies on the city: the distinction between concentric and eccentric metropolises. Relating to the first phase of foundation, when it comes to its semiotic interpretation, Lotman calls the areas where foundation myths show the image of a city on the top of a mountain or a hill concentric. A city of this kind connects a higher space (sky, heaven) to the earth (the ground under the mountain's slope) and the legends related to these areas usually show a genesis where gods and divine figures play an important role. Gods give the city a beginning, but no end is planned because this city is supposed to be eternal. A good example of concentric city is Rome, the eternal city par excellence. The term 'concentric' describes the centrality of these spaces from a cultural point of view: concentric cities are in the centre of a defined geographical area, which means that the cultural environment of this area (which can be a region or an actual state) looks at it

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[346] Referenced indirectly from: Mitscherlich, Alexander, *Die Unwirklichkeit unserer Städte. Anstieftung zum Unfrieden*, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp 1965, p. 14.
[347] Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 17.

constantly, confirming its role of mediator between earth and heaven, its divine genesis and its eternity.

By contrast, cities occupying a border space are named eccentric because they stand on the fringe of a given cultural or geographical space. They have been built on a riverbank, on the seashore, on a political border between two countries; therefore, they do not symbolise a link between heaven and earth, but a threshold between two worlds. Their existence isn't part of a divine or cosmic plan and is considered against nature: eccentric cities are not meant to be eternal, they fight against nature all the time and the natural/artificial opposition is essential in defining their identity. This leads to two ways of interpreting these spaces: a first one where the eccentric city stands for the victory of human reason on the natural order and a second one where the perversion of this natural order, generated by the existence of this city, is made apparent. Lotman finds in these two interpretations the source for the eschatological myths connected to eccentric cities, myths that include predominant elements like prophecies of catastrophes, forecasts of decline and a sense of damnation in relation to the inevitable revenge of nature. Now, it must be said that in some cases a city can be considered both concentric and eccentric depending on the cultural and political perspective. The case of Prague is a meaningful example of this phenomenon, since it is concentric from a Bohemian point of view but held an eccentric position for centuries as part of the Austrian empire - more specifically, as part of a border zone facing the districts under Russian influence. The huge amount of Prague legends born in the German speaking community, legends where esoteric and eschatological elements play a far more significant role than they do in Czech literature, is not so surprising, given Lotman's theories.

The aspect of gender is linked to the personification of urban spaces, which does not always give the same results in literature: for example, if Prague is often imagined as female creature, Berlin is mostly referred to as a male character. Consequence of this choice is for example the appearance, in Prague German literature, of the aforementioned trope where the male character surrenders the oppressing urban environment described through feminine attributes, and the overlapping between influence of the city on the main characters and a dangerous female figure built following a decadent pattern.

The *Prager Text* is, therefore, a wide definition for those literary pieces which share the semiotic traits identified in Fritz's analysis as constitutive of a certain Prague imagery, and which were produced by authors which had a biographic link with the Bohemian capital, in the years between 1894 and 1945 according to a temporal definition of Prague German literature that must be traced back to the Liblice conference. Interestingly, Fritz also includes in her collection of Prague texts three works of Czech writers: *Prosinec* by Viktor Dyk, Jiři Karásek ze Lvovic's *Gotická duše* and Vítězslav Nezval's *Židovský Hřbitov*, since those respond to the same semantic and semiotic imagery of her theoretical framework.

This approach to the *Prager Text* reveals itself particularly meaningful in the analysis of Meyrink's worldbuilding in the way it does not only concentrate on an inventory of motives that must be placed in Prague's specific context: instead, it goes beyond theories regarding specific literary genres and it also highlights the existence of cultural mindsets and ground structures influencing the choices of those motives and narrative patterns that helped to shape a certain imagery of the depicted Prague. The discourse on these mindsets and ground structures can interact with some reflections on Meyrink's worldview, and it makes it easier to identify which elements, within the structures introduced by Fritz, mostly fascinated the author and convinced him to use Prague's environment and references to the Bohemian capital throughout his literary production.

1. The concept of *Schilderung* in Meyrink's poetics

Between 1925 and 1926[348], Gustav Meyrink prepares a presentation for a book he is working on, starting from fundamental elements of the narration, such as context and characters, and concluding with a summary of the plot. This document, which as far as we know was never sent by Meyrink to any publishing house but was published by a nephew of Meyrink's and is currently preserved in the "Meyrinkiana" archive in Munich, is a description of *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, a posthumous work published for the first time in 1973, along with other writings, in the collection *Das Haus zur letzten Latern* (1973). The abstract is divided into 4 sections, of which the first one, *Vorbemerkungen, Stil und Diktion*, includes discussions that lead the reader to identify the document as a declaration of poetics. It opens with the following statement:

Durch abwechslungsreiche und sich im Effekt steigernde Handlung allein kann ein Roman nicht jene Spannung erhalten, die er meines Erachtens haben muss, wenn er Anspruch erheben will, ein vollkommenes Kunstwerk genannt zu werden; es gehört noch dazu, dass die Schilderung an sich originell, stimmungsvoll, lebendig, optisch wirkend und derart erregend ist, dass der Leser vom ersten bis zum letzten Satz im Banne gehalten wird.

Ein weiteres Ingrediens eines Kunstwerkes ist, - wenigstens bin ich dieser Meinung – dass der Handlung sowohl, wie den handelnden Personen ein kosmischer tieferer Sinn verborgen zu Grunde liegt. Natürlich soll dieser Sinn nur für den feinfühligen Leser offenbar werden; *aufdringlich soll die tiefere Bedeutung niemals wirken*.[349]

These lines have already been commented by scholars including Mohammed Qasim, Manfred Lube and Gianfranco de Turris. What emerges from the passage is the presence of two main planes in Meyrink's creation, the first one being bringing visuality in the act of writing and the second one being the presence of something that must emerge through reading without being shown at all. The concept of *Schilderung* that lies on the basis of Meyrink's poetics according to these words can be used as a starting point for the reflections of this chapter, which aims to present the main research questions of this dissertation, and to give some guidelines about the way they will be answered.

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[348] The date is provided by Meyrinkiana archive in Munich: https://www.bavarikon.de/object/BSB-HSS-00000BSB00103016 (last access: Jabuary 25th 2023).

[349] Meyrink, Gustav, *Exposé des gesammten Romans*, in: Das *Haus zur letzten Latern*, München/Wien: Langen Müller 1973, pp.123-143 (from now on: *Exposé*), here: p. 125.

1.1. Programmatical texts and archive research: Meyrink's *Exposé* in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* and Meyrink's notes in the *Meyrinkiana-Nachlass*

The Grimm etymological dictionary of German language describes the verb *schildern* as connected to the substantives *schilder* and *maler*, and possessing the first meaning of "*abmahlen*, *pingere*, *depingere*, *im bild darstellen*"[350]; nevertheless, it also states that it is used in literary texts as a synonym of *zeigen*, "to show", or to define the act of representing something by writing. In the quoted notes, Meyrink definitely refers to this latter use, showing a preference for *schildern* rather than *zeigen*[351]; at the same time, though, he builds a lexical net around this concept, a net that expresses the importance of the figurative element inherent in the first term: this lexical net includes *scheinbar*, *optisch wirkend*, and is made wider in other notes. The connection Meyrink wishes to establish between writing and image, between narration and visual components, can therefore be already glimpsed at in this brief declaration. The relationship between author and reader that emerges from the document can be summarized with the idea that the reader must be gripped by the story from the very first moment: he must be bound by a spell stemming from an incisive and concrete representation, that must be *lebendig* and *optisch wirkend* as well. Later in the abstract, Meyrink stresses the importance of a clear *Schilderung* in establishing a connection between author and reader when he reflects on characters depiction:

Ich glaube in dem vorliegenden Roman das Erregende, das Originelle in der Schilderung, das Lebendige und Fesselnde am besten dadurch zu erreichen, daß ich die auftretenden Personen zumeist in direkter Rede sprechen lasse. Da die Charaktere sehr voneinander verschieden sind, ergibt sich naturgemäß daraus ein ungemein buntes Farbenspiel auch im Stil des Romans, und die Figuren selbst werden optisch sichtbar, ohne daß ich sie in Aussehen weitläufig schildern müßte.[352]

The use of the metaphor "playing with colors", where *Farbenspiel* is reinforced by the adjective *bunt*, is supported by the following statement according to which the characters in the novel become *optisch sichtbar* through direct speech. In the remaining document, the verb *schildern* is used instead of *zeigen*, as well as in the place of its semi-synonym *darstellen*.

This section tries to give a more in-depth analysis of the relationship between Meyrink's writing and the matter of *Schilderung*, and to do so must start with an attempt to clarify the author's attitude to

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[350] *Schildern* in: Grimm Wörterbuch Online: https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB#1 (last access: January 26th 2023).
[351] See: Meyrinkiana XI, 1.: „Schildern, wie die Menschen unglücklich sind, weil sie nie [?] in die Zukunft starren und dadurch das "Leben" nie fühlen." (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Signatur: Meyrinkiana XI, 1.)
[352] *Exposé*, p. 125.

the concepts of visuality and image. By doing so, this discourse interacts with a critical debate on Meyrink's poetics that has been punctually presented in Manfred Lube's dissertation *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie* (1970). Lube's work stems from detailed research of the author's Meyrinkiana-*Nachlass* and embraces his whole published corpus in a general observation of Meyrink's attitude to writing. To reflect on his creative process[353], Lube concentrates at first on the role of symbols and symbolizing images not only in Meyrink's poetics but also in the *Anmerkungen* that can be found in his notebooks: in this regard, he reports elements describing Meyrink's tendency to visualize images of interest before a meaningful narrative matter for his stories, such as:

Novellenthema: Jemand findet (eingemauert od. sonstwo) einen grossen Feldstein, aus dem manchmal [...] ein dumpfes Lachen klingt. (myst. Doppelsinn dazu finden)[354]

Die Kanonenkugel muss symbolisch etwas vorstellen zwischen den beiden Welten.[355]

Zu entwickelnde Symbole: Walpurgisnacht; Penguin;[356]

The notes are concrete representation of the two narrative levels presented by Meyrink in the exposé, i.e., of the necessary interaction between powerful image and deep, hidden philosophical meaning. Lube goes further in his interpretation of the statements by hypothesizing that, in Meyrink's creation, the visualization of the images constantly precedes the identification of the element they must symbolize[357]. The consistency of this practice, where the picture serves as basis for meaning, can be questioned when it comes to Meyrink's planning of new works, since other archive findings can show how central topics in projects are independent from visual guidelines[358]. However, the high presence of images noted by Meyrink to be source of inspiration for literary work is evident, and one of the most interesting traits is the connection between pictures and dreams that is stressed in the *Anmerkungen*:

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[353] Differently from the scholars who had worked on the same topic before him, Lube only uses the sources on Meyrink's biography to introduce aspects of his poetics, clearly distinguishing the text analysis from the investigation of his private life, and gives relatively little space to his mystical experiences.

[354] Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Signatur: Meyrinkiana (from now on: Meyrinkiana XI, 1. (black notebook).

[355] Meyrinkiana X (mixed, not numbered handwritten pieces of paper).

[356] Meyrinkiana X (mixed, not numbered handwritten pieces of paper).

[357] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 169: „Die Verfahrenweise Meyrinks war die, zuerst den als Symbol geeigneten Gegenstand zu schaffen, und dann erst zu symbolisierenden Sachverhalt ausfindig zu machen."

[358] Meyrinkiana XI, 1, p. 4: „Schlusspunkt und Gipfel des Romans: Haselmayer findet in die Gegenwart [?] und dadurch ins ewige Leben! Schildern, wie die Menschen unglücklich sind, weil sie nie [drum?] in die Zukunft starren und dadurch das "Leben" nie fühlen. Die Gegenwart ist die Lupe, durch die wir ins Glück gelangen und "geniessen"." Here, the verb *schildern* basically translates the concept of *zeigen* without other implications.

[NB: [?] indicates not deciphered handwritten words]

Träume: Tretmühle

     Das Schloss mit der zerbrochenen Treppe[359]

Eigene Träume als Lehren

    a)   der Turm

Ramakrishna[?]: [?] es mit den Träumen

    b)   Die Fabrik

    c)   die Schlange

    d)   das geradestehen auf dem wassergipfel

    e)   das grüne Gesicht[360]

Some of the reported "dreams" or visions resulted in published works, such as *Die Tretmühle* and *Das grüne Gesicht*. The extreme synthesis of the notes does not allow a clear reconstruction of the creative process that led from the "dream" to the final projects[361], and the reflection on these statements must be prudent. Nevertheless, the fact that the synthesis of every dream emerges as an essential symbol should be taken into account. In his dissertation of Meyrink's satire, William Buskirk reports in *The Bases of Satire in Gustav Meyrink's Work* (1957) the link between this creative process and the author's experience with yoga, so that the "skeleton plan"[362] of his novels should be traced back to his meditation experience. The representation of these visions in the most concrete manner is problematized in other notes, where the concept of *Schilderung* is thematized again:

Traumleben so schildern, als ob es wirklich wäre, um einen seltsamen Eindruck hervorzubringen[363]

Träume (<u>sichtbar</u>) schildern[364]

The constellation mentioned in the previous paragraph is enriched here through the ideas of *wirklich*, *Eindruck* and *sichtbar*. Further information about the relationship between Meyrink and the visual elements that accompany the act of *schildern* are held in another of his very few texts containing traces of programmatic reflections, *Bilder im Luftraum* (1927), where he states that his *Sehenkönnen*

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[359] Meyrinkiana X (mixed, not numbered manuscript pieces of paper) X.
[360] Meyrinkiana XI, 1.
[361] The same group of documents (Meyrinkiana X) contains several notes on *Das grüne Gesicht* and other works, but they appear in a more advanced state, where the relationship between image and content is not evident and Meyrink's reflection concentrate on philosophical aspects.
[362] Van Buskirk, William R., *The Bases of Satire in Gustav Meyrink's Work*, University of Michigan (Dissertation) 1957, p. 87.
[363] Meyrinkiana XI, 1.
[364] Meyrinkiana XI, 1.

was the first reason for his beginning literary activity[365]. Similarly, in *Die Verwandlung des Blutes* he defines the development of a pictorial imagination/pictorial thought as a progress in his spiritual education, since he used to think *in Worten* during phases of his life where he had no knowledge of the teachings that changed his mindset[366].

The most interesting contribute to the analysis of visuality in Meyrink's poetics made in recent times is the philological work made by Nora Elisabeth Gottbrath *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe* (2015). In this extremely detailed archival research of some manuscripts Meyrink's[367], where the main focus is the philological reconstruction of the histories of these documents and their entire transcription, Gottbrath dedicates some final paragraphs to the conclusions she draws on Meyrink's poetics following the author's devices in handwriting. She comments on the characteristic presence of *Gedankenstriche* in Meyrink's texts, an element which stems from his handwritten *Fassungen* and which is mostly preserved in publishing. Gottbrath, which relates this device to the interpretation of Meyrink's writing as visionary – where this peculiar interpunction points out the passage from a dimension to the other – states in this regard that:

In der Regel treten Gedankenstriche einzeln oder paarweise auf, als „öffnender" und als „schließender" Gedankenstrich vor und nach einem Einschub. Gustav Meyrink aber bedient sich des Gedankenstrichs in Form einer massiven Häufung, verkettet ganze Reihen von ihnen miteinander, sodass oftmals mehrere Zeilen hintereinander nur von Gedankenstrichen bevölkert werden. […] Die gereihten Gedankenstriche grenzen häufig Szenen visionären oder anderweitig okkulten Charakters von den umgebenden „alltäglichen" Handlungssequenzen ab und bilden somit eine – durchlässige – Grenze zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits.[368]

In relation to the manuscript taken into consideration in this chapter, *Meister Leonhard*, Gottbrath observes how the use of *Gedankenstriche* seems to indicate the passage from life to death[369] but also the progressive emergence of the protagonist's inner reality at the detriment of the rational thought.

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[365] Meyrinkiana V, 3, p. 7. See also: Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 214.

[366] Meyrinkiana VI, 14, p. 8. See also: Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 224.

[367] Gottbrath transcripted *Der Golem* (DLA Marbach), *Der Albino* (Bibliothek und Literaturarchiv Monacensia, München), *Meister Leonhard* (DLA Marbach), *Der Maskenball des Prinzen Daraschekoh* (Bibliothek und Literaturarchiv Monacensia, München).

[368] Gottbrath, Nora Elisabeth, *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe*, Ubstadt-Weiher / Heidelberg / Neustadt an der Weinstraße / Basel: verlag regionalkultur 2015, vol. 2, pp. 413-414.

[369] „Die für Meyrinks Handschriften so typischen gehäuften Gedankenstriche tauchen etwas auf Seite 17 recto des Autographs auf. Nach den Worten „ [...] und quälen den Sterbenden zu Tode.", wobei hier bereits die Überschneidung von wörtlichen und übertragenden Sinne ins Auge sticht, fällt vor allen die Kumulation der Gedankenstriche nach dem Satz auf. 16 Gedankenstriche verteilt auf zwei Zeilen hat Meyrink an diese Stelle gesetzt. Ein weiteres Mal trennen und verbinden sie gleichzeitig eine Textpassage, in welcher der Übergang vom Leben zum Tod geschildert wird." (Gottbrath, *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe*, p. 415).

She references in particular the moment when Leonhard acquires/discovers his new spiritual name, Jacob de Vitriaco, a moment when every syllable of the name is separated through *Gedankenstriche*.

Bemerkenswert ist, dass Meyrink diesen Namen in seine einzelnen Silben zerlegt und diese nicht, wie zunächst naheliegend, durch Bindestriche zu einander in Bezug setzt, sondern auf Gedankenstriche zurückgreift: *Ja – cob – de – Vi – tri – a – co*. Der Name wird durch diese gleichsam zergliedert und rhythmisiert. Im Handlungsverlauf ohnehin übernatürlich aufgeladen, erhält er dadurch den Charakter einer Beschwörung oder eines Zauberwortes, weil magische Rede häufig rhythmisiert wird.[370]

Gottbrath's reflections on Meyrink's manuscripts are especially illuminating in that they also analyze the relationship the author had with the act of handwriting in general and his considering the handwritten text itself as a visionary product. In this regard, she also mentions the peculiar use of different colors in Meyrink's *Autographen*[371] and his association between the idea of ink (*Tinte*) and magic (*Zauberei*), which emerges from a note in Meyrinkina X: "Jetzt muss ich noch mit Tinte zaubern, später wird's mein bloßer Willen tun"[372].

The pictorial imagination emerges as fundamental component of Meyrink's thought and as constitutive element of his literary production: to conclude this preliminary analysis in this regard, it can be interesting to remember one of the author's declarations to his French translator Arnold Waldstein, reported by the latter in his preface to *Le Cabinet des Figure de Cire* (1976), where it is said that Meyrink considered his stories a kind of "reservoir of the pictures that laid on him, and that he presented to the reader in their unrefined form"[373].

Hypotheses on the reasons leading Meyrink to ascribe a superior quality to pictorial thought in comparison to verbal imagination may base on the meaningful role played by the concept of sight in esoterism. Meyrink's interest for practices where the sight was extended to a deeper knowledge are visible in his texts *Bilder im Luftraum*, *Haschisch und Hellsehen* and *Die Verwandlung des Blutes*, but the metaphor of sight/understanding is also the strongest of Meyrink's literary guideline in his novels: this is visible through the use of optical instruments in *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Walpurgisnacht* and through the importance held by the representation of change of perspective in his narration, a topic that is discussed in another section of this chapter. However, one for the most productive statements in this regard can be found in *Das Haus zum Pfau/Das Haus des Alchemisten*, where Lube finds a peak in Meyrink's symbolic storytelling: here, one of the characters affirms that "Hinter alle Dinge stehen – die Bilder", a sentence that describes Meyrink's view on the superiority of images on

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[370] Gottbrath, *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe*, vol. 2, p. 416.
[371] Gottbrath, *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe* vol. 2, pp. 418-419.
[372] Meyrinkiana X.
[373] Waldstein, Arnold, *Preface*, in: *Le Cabinet des Figure de Cire*, Èdition Retz, Paris 1976, p. 9.

words consequently to the mere fact that they are not a human construction, but an independent entity constituting the essence of reality. This discourse also gives a further hint to interpret the problem of the 'unrefined form' quoted by Waldstein. Here, Meyrink seems to reflect on the function taken by words in describing his visions: according to the statement, what he searches for is a representation devoid of frills that works efficiently in virtue of its being essential. This speaks in favor of a choice of words that is precisely oriented through concreteness to the detriment of opacity and abstraction, an element that has been noted by Lube[374] and that also emerges from the research conducted for this dissertation on the *Meister Leonhard* manuscript preserved in Marbach's *Deutsches Literaturarchiv*, where the handwritten text shows a series of corrections[375] aiming to eliminate the verbal forms that might be considered generic and nebulous, but also to highlight changes of the narrative rhythm graphically.

1.2. *Schilderung* in the manuscript *Meister Leonhard*

The most evident editing operations in this regard concern pages 16-18 and 26-28 of the manuscript, interestingly the ones describing the death of Leonhard's father and mother respectively. In page 17, Leonhard witnesses his father's progressive loss of consciousness and blames himself for his inability to speak his name out loud – an inability stemming from his constantly enduring his mother's oppressive behavior. In this tense sequence, the published version reports the signs of agony in five lines, each one made of a single verbal form except for the last line, where two actions are separated by a full stop[376]. The manuscript shows the same sequence in one line, then corrected by the author:

[The apices represent interpolations]

F Stockt. F Fängt wieder an. F Der Mund bricht ab. F Verstummt. F Der Mund klappt auf. F Bleibt offen stehen.[377]

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[374] „Ein Characteristikum von Meyrinks denken ist seine Bevorzugung des Anschaulichen, des Konkreten vor dem Abstrakten." See: Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 228.

[375] That these changes can be attributed to Meyrink himself has been confirmed by Gottbrath's philological work, see: Gottbrath, *Vorarbeiten und Studien zu einer historisch-kritischen Gustav-Meyrink-Ausgabe*, vol. 2, p. 156.

[376] Cfr. Published *Endfassung*: „Er [Leonhard] rauft sich das Haar und schlägt sich ins Gesicht: tausend Worte stürmen zu gleicher Zeit auf ihn ein, nur das eine, das er mit brennendem Herzen sucht, will nicht erscheinen – und das Röcheln wird schwächer und schwächer.
Stockt.
Fängt wieder an.
Bricht ab.
Verstummt.
Der Mund klappt auf. Bleibt offen stehen." (Meyrink, Gustav, *Meister Leonhard*, in: Meyrink, Gustav, *Gesammelte Werke*, München/Wien: Langen Müller 1982, vol. 4 (*Fledermäuse/Walpurgisnacht*), pp. 7-52, here: p. 17).

[377] DLA Marbach, B: Meyrink, Gustav 58.336 (from now on: Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*), p. 17. The meaning of „F" as „neue Zeile" is written on the margin of the same page. As shown in footnote 350, the published version did not separate the last line according to the correction of this phase of the manuscript. A similar process is visible in the

This gesture might signalize a need to spare paper, however it can remind of Meyrink's request to separate the chapters of *Der Golem* by adding blank pages – a clear sign of the author's evaluation of the effect of blank space on the reader. Corrections linked to the problem of concreteness and specificity of the description – especially space depiction – can be found in the sequence that connects the deaths of the two parents:

Meister Leonhard ~~sieht~~ starrt hinein in ein neues Bild[378]

ein gähnendes viereckiges Loch darunter führt[379]

Die Männer steigen die steinernen Stufen hinab[380]

Here, the generic verb *sehen* is substituted by the more specific *starren*; the hole that opens the secret underground corridor leading to the family chapel is not only *gähnend* but also *viereckig*, and the men's movement in the last line is accompanied by an inserted physical detail about the stairs. Other corrections deserving closer attention are in the sequence of Leonhard's mother's death, which is the passage showing most of the meaningful editing operations in the whole manuscript. In this sequence, Leonhard and the girl he loves, Sabine, enter the family chapel to have their very first physical contact. Their emotions hinder their otherwise extremely sharp sense of space and time and they do not see Leonhard's mother entering the chapel from the secret underground corridor. Once they understand that they have been caught, Leonhard kills his mother. The scene presents a series of perspective changes on a narratological level: the point of view alternatively changes from Leonhard, who is overwhelmed by the emotion of touching Sabine for the first time, to an external narrator who 'sees' Leonhard's mother coming, then finally to Sabine who spots Leonhard's mother spying them during the embrace. In this case, object of Meyrink's attention is the concreteness of movements:

mit ~~keuchendem~~ stockendem Atem[381]

die Pforte der Kapelle ist angelehnt, sie ~~reissen~~ stossen sie auf[382]

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following page, describing Leonhard's emotion: "F [at the left margin of the sheet] F Die Luft ist voll Glanz. F Leonhard stürzt die Tränen aus den Augen." Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 18.
[378] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 20.
[379] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 20.
[380] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 21.
[381] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 26.
[382] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 27.

starrt einen Moment ^{wie gelähmt}383

Unfähig, ~~sich~~ ^{ein Glied} zu ~~bewegen~~ ^{rühren}, stehen die beiden mit ~~sich[?]~~ aufgerissenen Augen ~~da~~ und stieren ^{wortlos} ~~einander[?]~~ ^{sich} an, ~~dann~~ ^{Die Beine} schlottern ihnen ^{unter dem Leib}384

tauscht die Dienerschaft Vermutungen, wo die Gräfin ~~stecken mag~~ ^{bleibt}385

The first statement shows a change in the nuance of anxiety held in the participle *keuchend* (panting) with the idea of fatigue implicit in *stockend*. In the second line, the action of opening is re-written through opposite movements, so that the act of tearing the gap open is converted to the act of pushing it open, while in the third line the static attitude implicit in the verb *starren* (to stare) is stressed by the simile *wie gelähmt* (like paralyzed). In the fourth statement, the generic *bewegen* is substituted by the concept 'moving a member' and the author specifies the link between the trembling legs and the rest of the body.

When it comes to the change of perspective, one of the most interesting passages is the description of Sabine realizing the presence of Leonhard's mother:

Langsam wächst eine Gestalt aus dem Boden, Sabine sieht es mit halbgeschlossenen Lidern wie ~~durch einem~~ ^{hinter roten} Schleiern, plötzlich durchzuckt sie die ~~furchtbare~~ ^{jähe} Erkenntnis der Lage 386

The choice of specifying the color of the imaginary veil through which Sabine sees the woman coming anticipates in part the protagonist's murder and also gives Sabine an aura of intense emotion. Secondly, the presence of a red stain surprises the reader and introduces the incoming abrupt change that is going to affect the narration in the rhythm and in the atmosphere.

A further problem of the scene relies in the characters' awareness, since both Sabine and Leonhard have been living or working under the oppressive presence of Leonhard's mother and had to learn how to be aware of every single step or movement of the old lady. The space of his house and of the land surrounding it is something Leonhard perceives as an extension of his own body, and Meyrink highlights in the encounter between him and Sabine the sudden absence of this personality trait. His reflecting on the matter is mirrored in the corrections:

von einem Holzspreize gestützt, ^{sehen das gähnende viereckige Loch im Boden nicht,} fühlen den eiskalten Hauch nicht

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383 Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 27.
384 Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 28.
385 Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 28.
386 Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 27.

aber es ~~ist~~ ᵇˡᵉⁱᵇᵗ für ihr[e] ~~Bewusstsein~~ ~~Erkenntnis~~ ᴮᵉʷᵘˢˢᵗˢᵉⁱⁿ ᵈᵉˢˢᵉⁿ, ʷᵃˢ ⌈vorgeht⌉, belanglos

A last scene of high interest for Meyrink's work on environmental description takes place right after Leonhard's mother's death, which is followed by the sunset. Here, the description of nature acquires a nuance of secrecy and threat:

Das Abendrot verwandelt das Wasser im Brunnen des Schlosses in eine Blutlache, die Fenster des Schlosses [?]glühendes ᵍˡüʰᵉⁿ ~~stehen~~ in ˡᵒʰᵉⁿᵈᵉⁿ Flammen, die Schatten der Bäume ~~werden~~ ʷᵃᶜʰˢᵉⁿ zu langen dünnen schwarzen Armen, die sich mit [?] [?]-zoll um zoll vorwärts ~~tastenden~~ schleichenden Fingern ~~über [?]~~über den Rasen ~~schleichen~~ ᵗᵃˢᵗᵉⁿ, das ˡᵉᵗᶻᵗᵉ Zirpen der Grillen zu ersticken.[387]

Here, the verb *stehen* is corrected in the less generic *glühen*, and the attribute *lohend* stresses the aggressive quality of the simile associating flames to the color of the reddish sunlight illuminating the fountain. Afterwards, the generic *werden* is corrected in *wachsen*, which is not only more concrete as it describes a physical process but also gives the trees an anthropomorphic quality that sounds consistent with the mentioned 'thin, black arms'. Interesting is also the work on the last sentence, where the variation on the construction with the verbs *schleichen* and *tasten* is evident.

The look at the corrections makes not emerge Meyrink's inclination to visuality and concreteness in his narrative, but highlights his specific attention to the topic and his intense commitment in this regard, an element that results especially meaningful when thinking that the considered manuscript is a very advanced state of work – this is evident when comparing it to the published version – and it is nevertheless still subjected to review in those spots where the author's description is most evocative.

1.3. Visuality in characters' depiction and in literary space

A distinction must be made between Meyrink's visuality in characters' depiction and his treatment of literary space. It is evident to the reader that not many of Meyrink's characters receive the same attention given to environments, and that the most described people in Meyrink's work are often those whose appearance is peculiar and defined by deformations or ridiculous elements – and that negative characters are usually physically depicted, whereas the positive ones are often only characterized by their words. This attitude is more visible in novels than in short stories, since the latter seldom include physically described people. Most depicted in *Der Golem* are Aaron Wassertum and Rosina, two

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[387] Manuscript *Meister Leonhard*, p. 28. Like in the previous notes from Meyrinkiana, the [?] represents not deciphered words.

characters who are identified by their physical flaws; a lower level of description is given to Loisa (defined by his smallpox scars), Jaromir (whose gestures are more important than his appearance), Angelina and Charaousek; Mirjam and Hillel, despite their extremely positive role in the narration, are hardly visible to the reader[388] and the protagonist, Athanasius Pernath, is not depicted at all. The same phenomenon characterizes *Das Grüne Gesicht*, where the physical depictions only concern Zitter Arpád, Usibepu, Eidotter and Klinkerboorgh. None of the protagonists – Hauberrisser, Eva, Pfeill, Swammerdam and Sephardi – seems to deserve this attention. An abrupt change in this *modus operandi* can be found in *Walpurgisnacht*, where the two protagonists Flugbeil and Liesel are described over and over: they are both characterized by ridiculous traits such as Flugbeil's incredibly tall figure and his elegance - which, put together, make him look like a penguin - and Liesel's worn out, once elegant clothes - highlighting the signs of old age and poverty on her body. These and further examples can point out Meyrink's preference to identify his characters by one or two distinctive traits that often relate to the sphere of deformation, grotesque or ridiculous. However, *Das Haus des Alchemisten* includes much more detailed physical descriptions in comparison to the author's previous novels and to most of his short stories. When it comes to Meyrink's reflections on character depiction, the Exposé of *Das Haus des Alchemisten* is revelatory of one of the techniques the author will use most frequently in this fragmentary work: in one of the quoted passage it is stated that the characters should be represented through the use of direct speech. Given Meyrink's attention to reporting the traits of his character's spoken language, this passage could be meaning that their 'speaking' is sufficient not only to characterize them but also to make them fully visible to the reader. This introduces another of the main traits Meyrink's writing, the predominant role of linguistic tools such as dialect, pronunciation flaws and individual speaking habits (repetitions, interruptions, stutter and so forth) in characters representation. This element appears in most of his works: it can be seen in Wassertum's uncertain pronunciation in *Der Golem*, in the several accents present in Amsterdam in *Das grüne Gesicht*, in the Prague German spoken by the nobles in *Walpurgisnacht* and in the numerous short stories where language is highly thematized such as the parody *Jörn Uhl*, *Izzi Pizzi*, *Tut sich – Macht sich – Prinzess* etc. However, reading the first chapter of the fragment *Das Haus des Alchemisten* gives an additional input to the interpretation of "direct speech" as descriptive tool. The first pages of the unfinished novel are characterized by the presence of Gracchus Meyer, employee who ascribed himself the role of touristic guide to the reporter who must write about the "house of the alchemist" for a Berlin magazine. Meyer is a very nervous man, strives for receiving a monetary reward for his assistance and does not want anybody in the café[389] to interfere in his

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[388] Cfr. Chapter 6.4.2.
[389] As it will be better explained later, the building hosts several commercial activities.

informative monologue: he hopes that, by doing so, the reporter will be grateful to him alone in the end. Therefore, he speaks incredibly fast, hardly takes breaks to breath during his speech and describes to the journalist every single thing he sees. He also states he has a great observation ability because the place where he is employed, the courthouse, has led him to become very attentive to details. The reader is informed by him about many guests of the café and of the house. A good example of Gracchus Meyer's depictions in direct speech is the one of an Egyptian man called Markus:

»[...]Wenn Sie den werten Kopf wenden, Herr Berichterstatter, können Sie ihn im Wandspiegel sehen. Der hochgewachsene Mensch dort in dem ägyptischen Anzug mit den goldenen Tressen und dem Dolch in der Schärpe! Jetzt nimmt er gerade den Fez ab. Er hat die seltsame Gewohnheit, bisweilen die Zähne zu fletschen wie ein Tiger. Sie sind pechschwarz. Ich erschrecke jedesmal, sooft ich es sehe.« - Gracchus Meyer schnappte einen Augenblick nach Luft, setzte aber sofort in tröstlichem Tone hinzu, als beruhige er sich selber damit: »Das kommt vom Betelkauen. Es färbt die Zähne schwarz. [...]«"[390]

The description provides an establishing shot of the observed monk: Gracchus Meyer talks about his tall figure, his cloths - telling something about the geographic origin of the character-, the accessories that let see elements of his lifestyle, such as the gold military stripes and the dagger; then, the employee concentrates on a physical trait that attracts the reader's whole attention, Markus' black teeth, which will be useful in the following pages not only to make the character acquainted to the reader, but also *optisch sichtbar*. True is, that here Meyrink mixes the direct speech with his usual technique of the grotesque and strange detail. However, this is not really surprising since in the Exposé he had written:

Die meisten handelnden Personen sind seltsame Charaktere und haben folgerichtig eine dementsprechende Ausdrucksweise und Denkart; lediglich des nötigen Kontrastes wegen stehen ihnen ein paar alltägliche Nebentypen, die gelegentlich humoristisch geschildert werden, im Spiel gegenüber.[391]

Therefore, Meyrink's statement according to which the *direkte Rede* must be considered the main tool to describe his characters must be understood from the perspective of the linguistic habits of the speaking characters, like Gracchus Meyer's habit to always repeating "Herr Berichtstetter" to his interlocutor, but also in relation to insert many human descriptions in his characters' speeches directly. This preference for direct speech as mirror of the *handelnde Personen* does not hinder Meyrink to realize evocative human descriptions such as those representing Wassertum and Rosina

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[390] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 46.
[391] *Exposé*, pp. 125-126.

in *Der Golem*, but clearly emphasizes the different perspective the author has when it comes to depicting people in comparison to his literary space: the house is fundamentally observed in silence by the reporter, and other traits about its are physical structure are read by him in a chronical/a manuscript.

However, starting point of this chapter is the assumption that a huge part of Meyrink's work, and this is especially true for his novels, is focused on the way his protagonists interpret their environment more than on the protagonists themselves, and that this attitude is represented not only through the high number of space depictions at the detriment of human descriptions, but also through the interaction subject/space in the narration.

That said, Meyrink's space depiction also follows some peculiar patterns that must be identified and understood, since they work as narrative structures constituting not only part of the plot, but also a persistent symbology of the inner development of Meyrink's characters – i.e., of the message contained in the novel.

2. Introduction to Meyrink's worldbuilding

It must be assumed as a matter of fact that Meyrink's treatment of space and his operations of worldbuilding are strongly connected with a philosophical worldview which is constitutive element of his literary message, and that this worldview must be considered as starting point for understanding his spatial representations – but also the role of the Prague's poetical transposition in this regard.

One of the most meaningful works observing the links between Meyrink's philosophical conception of reality, the literary movements of his time and his production in fiction is, despite its age, Marga – Evelin Thierfelder's dissertation *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*[392]. Thierfelder's analysis must be distinguished from other similar operations: works treating Meyrink's worldview through his philosophical essays are not rare in secondary literature and mainly base on the author's contacts with the numerous religious fields explored in his spiritual research, also analyzing the literary motives inspired by these streams of thought; Thierfelder's attitude differs from these studies as it concentrates on Meyrink's essential understanding of the world while accepting its religious syncretism and highlighting the results of his reflections more than the processes, the biographical experiences, the studies and the experiments that led him to obtain them. It is, therefore, assumed that Meyrink's literary production expresses a sense of crisis, and particularly a religious crisis which, nevertheless, is not only linked to his personal experiences and should not be looked at only through the individual, biographical component of the lens provided by the text *Der Lotse* (1973), as almost

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[392] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, München: 1952.

all the dissertations on Meyrink's worldview begin, but also in light of a philosophical attitude that is part of the *Zeitgeist* of the *Jahrhundertwende*, a moment in which the centrality of the human being, his sovereignty on the world and his relationship with a superior almighty are fundamentally questioned due to social changes on the one hand and to the turn to subjectivity in philosophical research on the other. Thierfelder uses this assumption as starting point to explore the elements of Meyrink's thought that can also be seen in other literary manifestations of his time, especially for what concerns the appearance of movements such as the *Neuromantik* and the Expressionism in the first half of the 20th century. Therefore, her research remains on a literary ground despite discussing philosophical and ideological aspects and points out the constant link between Meyrink and the literary context surrounding him, so that the instruments and the strategies used to express his worldview are treated as key elements.

Our research, however, does not concentrate on Meyrink's *Weltbild* with the meaning this notion acquires in Thierfelder's work, but only on those aspects of his perspective on reality that influence the proper worldbuilding in his work of fiction, and especially the ones concerning space invention. The main notion identified by Thierfelder that must be considered in this regard is the concept of *Umschlag*, or Meyrink's problematizing the conflict between essence and appearance in human perception of reality. This is also the main guideline of this analysis of Meyrink's poetics, which aims to define not only the author's worldbuilding in and of itself but also its relationship with the categories of the Prague space explored in the previous sections.

2.1. The problem of the *Scheinbild*

Meyrink's worldbuilding is entirely based on the notions of revelation. It has been stated in the section about the idea of *Schilderung* that constitutive element of Meyrink's poetics is, according to the author himself, the presence of a deeper content that should not be apparent to any reader but only be understood by those who approach the text with the intention to code it. The *Exposé* communicates in this case the programmatic existence of two levels of literary creation which, in a more general analysis, end up describing the difference between form and content, and the problem of their interaction that Meyrink finds of particular interest. Nevertheless, the reader of Meyrink's novels can have a closer look at the author's affirmation that „der Handlung sowohl, wie den handelnden Personen ein kosmischer tieferer Sinn verborgen zu Grunde liegt"[393] and recognize in it part of Meyrink's considerations on the perceived reality which emerge from his whole work of fiction,

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[393] *Exposé*, p. 125.

including Hillel's words in *Der Golem*: "Jedes Ding auf Erden ist nichts als ein ewiges Symbol im Staub gekleidet."[394]

The problem of reading reality is present as constitutive element throughout the entire Meyrink's literary production and is the main source of rhetoric experimentation in his narrative act. The so often quoted passage from the first pages of the unfinished *Der Lotse* begins with:

ich saß in Prag in meinem Junggesellenzimmer vor meinem Schreibtisch, steckte den Abschiedsbrief, den ich an meine Mutter geschrieben hatte, in das Kuvert und griff nach dem Revolver, der vor mir lag; denn ich wollte die Fahrt über den Styx antreten, wollte ein Leben, das mir schal und wertlos und trostarm für alle Zukunft zu sein schien, von mir werfen. In diesem Augenblick betrat "der Lotse mit der Tarnkappe vor dem Gesicht", wie ich ihn seitdem nenne, den Bord meines Lebensschiffes und riß das Steuer herum. Ich hörte ein Rascheln an der Stubentüre, die hinaus auf den Hausflur führt, und als ich mich umdrehte, sah ich, daß sich etwas Weißes unter den Türrand über die Schwelle ins Zimmer schob. Es war ein gedrucktes Heft.[395]

The essay claims to be autobiographic and, as most of information provided by Meyrink on his life, should not be taken literally. This does not mean that scholars need to doubt about Meyrink's trouble during his young years: research about the author's biography confirms the plausibility of his planning a suicidal attempt. Nevertheless, when it comes to the reason why the writer abandoned his intentions, it is not the reader's task to concentrate on the factual appearance of a copybook under his house door as much as it is necessary to notice the high symbolic charge of the narrated event. When taken as a literary text disconnected by a biographic component, this story can be intended as an inventory of the most important spatial symbols influencing Meyrink's space invention: this inventory includes Prague, a generic guide named *der Lotse*, the threshold represented by the house door, the overstepping of the threshold by a salvific element and, eventually, the materialization of this salvific element in a written copybook. The copybook symbolizes the need to read reality in a new light, and its strong link to a spatial element (the door, but also a generic threshold) also hints at the importance that a new interpretation acquired by the notion of perceived space. The reader should, therefore, remember that Meyrink's initiate characters, Athanasius Pernath, Fortunat Hauberrisser and the reporter from Berlin who plays the main character of *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, they all start their spiritual journey by finding a book, and that the reading of this book corresponds to the close observation of a particular space surrounding them, a space that looks obscure and not easy to code: here come literary places such as the Prague Jewish district, Amsterdam's *Jodenbuurt*, and the *Haus zum Pfau*. A closer look to the correspondence between written word and depicted space in Meyrink's

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[394] Meyrink, Gustav, *Der Golem*, in: Meyrink, Gustav, *Gesammelte Werke*, München/Wien: Langen Müller 1982, (from now on: G), p. 85
[395] Meyrink, Gustav, *Der Lotse*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, pp. 286-193, here: p. 286.

novels is given in chapter 4.5.1.; here, it must be assumed that Meyrink's work speaks of a need for a new perspective, a new *Weltanschauung*, and explains how this necessity is caused by human difficulty in interpreting a non-transparent reality; moreover, his work expresses, through the high attention on space depiction, how non-transparency is part of people's everyday life independently from particular places and events, since opacity is presented as a trait of the perceived world in general. In these regards, the aforementioned statement by Meyrink's character Hillel, where experienced reality is defined as an "eternal symbol covered in dust", points out that, if reality is not transparent, it is because a *Scheinbild* constantly hides the very essence of the world.

In fact, Meyrink's conception of reality could, to some extent, be inserted into the same framework of the crisis of perception visible in the magic idealism theorized by Novalis starting from Kant's considerations on productive imagination, or the ability to create a representation of reality which do not necessarily stem from experience: here, imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) acquires the main role as creative force, and, if Kant remains linked to the *Ding-an-sich* as reference point, it is the individual and subjective perspective that prevails in the process that leads from Kant's reflection to Fichte's idealism[396]. In the latter case, the „I" and its perception are assumed as basis of shaped reality, it is an absolute creative power, and this is the ground on which Novalis writes his fragments on the fundamental role of imagination. Novalis considers the subjective creative ability as a spell human beings cast on themselves: through this spell, the perceived world is built, and people are not aware of this process, which the poet considers as an act of authentic magical power. The 'magic' of creation is, further in this Novalis' reflection, also an ability that can be developed and can reach hypothetical incredible results if adequately practiced[397]. The contact with oriental religions and philosophies that had been vehiculated to the Germanophone world starting from the first translations of Sanskrit texts during the *Romantik* had allowed a re-elaboration of Kantian theories and Idealism that led to Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's research – where the inconsistency of objectivity got dismantled in a decisive nihilistic turn. Therefore, even without referencing Meyrink's personal experience in Mahayana Buddhism and in Yoga it is possible to infer the extreme actuality of his debate on perception, despite Meyrink's indulging in esoteric teachings:

Unschwer lässt sich Meyrinks Vorstellung von der äußeren Welt als einer Scheinwelt, als Trug, als Maya, auf das Wirksamwerden östlicher Einflüsse zurückzuführen. […] Jenen Zug zum Osten verfolgen wir in der deutschen Literatur schon seit der Romantik, die sich gerade von dort eine geistige Wiedergeburt und Befreiung von den Fesseln eines im Endlichen begrenzten Daseinsideals erhoffte.[398]

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[396] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, p. 30.
[397] See: Volkmann-Schluck, Karl-Heinz / Janke, Wolfgang et al.: *Novalis' magischer Idealismus*, in: Volkmann-Schluck, Karl-Heinz, *Von der Wahrheit der Dichtung*, Leida: Brill 2022, pp. 121-131.
[398] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, p. 69.

In this regard, it can be useful to remember Meyrink's statement in *An der Grenze des Jenseits*: „Eine objektive Wirklichkeit gibt es überhaupt nicht, sondern nur eine subjektive. Alles, was Form hat, ist nur subjektiv, von mir aus gesehen-wirklich, und niemals objektiv-wirklich."[399] The same can be said about statements such as: „Die Welt ist dort, um kaputt gemacht zu werden"[400].

Nevertheless Meyrink, differently from other intellectuals theorizing the conflict between perception and essence of reality, also proposes the existence of a factual counterworld characterized by the notion of authenticity[401]. Unfortunately, not all the literary depictions of this invisible dimension give the expected results, so that, for example, the new, empty world tracing the Garden of Eden where Hauberrisser and Eva find themselves at the end of *Das grüne Gesicht* does not possess the narrative efficacy of the *Haus zur letzten Latern* inhabited by Athanasius Pernath and Miriam at the conclusion of *Der Golem* as the former appears completely detached from the rest of the plot while the latter is in balance with the previous narration.

However, the problem of a *Scheinbild* opposed to authenticity has, in Meyrink's poetics, outcomes that are much easier for the reader to accept and that can be associated to the anti-bourgeois attitude characterizing Meyrink's satire, a tendency that is also a fundamental trait of Expressionism. Thierfelder speaks here of the author's opposition to the anti-bourgeois *Scheinkultur*, and of Meyrink's tendency to analyze, in his *Des deutschen Spießers Wunderhorn*, exactly those traits that define the crisis of the middle class, a matter highly thematized in *Fin de Siècle* literature. As it was stated by several voices in literary criticism, separating Meyrink's philosophical thought from his satirical production is fundamentally a mistake, since the author already treats the main topics of his worldview in his first stories: the need for a revolution of the authenticity at the detriment of social conventions, the skepsis towards a technological progress that can be harmful to the same people who invented it, the presence of a second ground of reality.

Now, it can be analyzed what consequences the conflict between *Schein* and authenticity had in Meyrink's poetics when it comes to space invention.

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[399] Meyrink, Gustav, *An der Grenze des Jenseits*, p. 392. Schopenhauer thinks differently, see: *Ding-an-sich* in Schopenhauer Lexikon (Digital) „Das angeschaute Objekt aber muß etwas an sich selbst seyn und nicht bloß etwas für Andere: denn sonst wäre es schlechthin nur Vorstellung, und wir hätten einen absoluten Idealismus, der am Ende theoretischer Egoismus würde, bei welchem alle Realität wegfällt und die Welt zum bloßen subjektiven Phantasma wird." (https://www.arthur-schopenhauer-studienkreis.de/Lebensphilosophie/Wille-Ding-an-sich/wille-ding-an-sich.html)
[400] G, p. 158.
[401] Thierfelder, *Das Weltbild in der Dichtung Gustav Meyrinks*, p. 31.

2.2. The bases of Meyrink's invented space

The first premise to be made on Meyrink's invented space is that the environmental dimension is never a dead matter in his writing. Much has been written about the anthropomorphic quality of the Prague ghetto in *Der Golem*, and this element has been traced back to the aesthetic of the phantastic genre and, on the other hand, to the sphere of the grotesque. In fact, Thierfelder adds a third component to this treatment of urban space and highlights the connection between this attitude towards environment to the expressionist relationship to the matter in and of itself. In the expressionist environmental aesthetic, the substance of reality is problematized to the extent that objects and matter in their current form are seen as mere manifestation of their actual potential. Duty of the poet is to free the object from the limit of its rational appearance and to give an interpretation of its hidden essence. In this regard, it can be said that human beings are called not to take perceived reality as it looks like for granted: they are stimulated to observe it from different perspectives until a more complete appearance of the treated space or object is provided. These ideas are not limited to literature, as it is evident in the experiments with optical perception that, begun with Impressionism, led to movements like Cubism and abstract art - where objects are distorted in virtue of their being looked at from different perspectives at the same time. Just like what happens in the figurative avantgarde, Expressionists explore the potential of the described thing, until:

Alles bekommt Beziehung zur Ewigkeit... Ein Haus ist nicht mehr Gegenstand, nicht mehr nur Stein, nur Anblick, nur ein Viereck mit Attributen des Schön- oder Hässlichseins. Es steigt darüber hinaus. Es wird so lange gesucht in seinem eigenlichsten Wesen, bis seine tiefere Form sich ergibt, bis das Haus aufsteht, das befreit ist von dem dumpfen Zwang der falschen Wirklichkeit, das bis zum letzten Winkel gesondert ist und gesiebt, auf den Ausdruck, der auch auf Kosten seiner Ähnlichkeit den letzten Charakter herausbringt, bis es schwebt oder einstürzt, sich reckt oder gefriert, bis endlich alles erfüllt ist, das an Möglichkeiten in ihm schläft.[402]

Aim of this attitude towards reality is awakening human perceptive ability, which has gotten used to a series of mechanical activities and to an environment that makes senses dull. The world becomes, therefore, a thing to be continuously rediscovered and revealed, and to be seen with curiosity but also, to some extent, with suspect. Meyrink's attributing traits of a living being to certain houses or to an entire district is, therefore, a tendency that can be also associated to this new perspective towards objectiveness – an element fully inserted in literary frameworks separated from his personal worldview. It is evident, however, that these traits are not necessarily anthropomorphic as they can

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[402] Kasimir Edschmid, *Über den dichterischen Expressionismus in der Literatur und die neue Dichtung* in: Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit, Berlin: Erich Roiss Verlag 1921, p. 55f.

also reference a more generic form of life or, to go back to Edschmidt's quoted definition, of 'eternity'. One of the most important statements in this regard can be found in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*:

„Und das, Herr Berichterstatter, hat mich auf den Gedanken gebracht, das obere Stockwerk müsse erst in späteren Jahrhunderten aufgesetzt worden sein. Gewiß eine wundervolle Entdeckung. Das Haus ist also nicht wie andere Häuser fertig auf die Welt gekommen; nein, nein: es ist gewachsen! Gewachsen, so wie Menschen wachsen. Es steht also gewissermaßen zwischen den lebenden und den toten Dingen. Es ist eine Art Zwischenglied!"[403]

The quoted passage refers to the fact that the walls of the house get thinner from the ground floor to the highest level of the building. The statement includes two of the most important tropes of Meyrink's spatial poetics: the environment as living and active subject and the idea of the house as *Zwischenglied* between two dimensions, which are, in the character's perspective, the one of the livings and the one of the dead. In this section, the text *Das Haus des Alchemisten* will be used as main reference for the description of Meyrink's poetics, since, despite its being fragmentary, it includes most of the main tropes of the author's work and, being it his last developed project, it can be seen as the point of arrival of his literary and philosophical research. The whole plot revolves around the events taking place in the *Haus zum Pfau*, a building standing in an anonymous German city, belonging to a clockmaker[404] who rented its rooms to several commercial activities, including a café, a cinema, a hotel. The roof of the building, which is made in glass, is used by one of its inhabitants as landing platform for his personal aircraft. The clockmaker has his laboratory on the first floor of the building. The novel is entirely dedicated to the relationship between the characters and the house. It can be read in the *Exposé* to the project:

Das Haus übt auf jeden seiner Bewohner und alle seine Gäste einen intensiven, merkwürdigen Einfluss aus (was natürlich nie plump mit Worten gesagt wird); jedermann wird, wenn er es betritt, gewissermaßen in seinem Schicksal vorangepeitscht, - etwa so, als entwickle sich die Seele der Menschen unter der Aura des Hauses rascher als außerhalb. – Es ist, als sei das „Lebenselixir" des einst darin gelebt habenden Alchemisten ins Mauerwerk übergangen und strahle unsichtbar daraus zurück.

Da jeder der im Hause Verkehrenden charakteristisch anders beschaffen ist, so ergibt sich aus dem Galoppschritt des ablaufenden Schicksals ein entsprechend kaleidoskopisch buntes Gesamtbild.[405]

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[403] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, pp. 49-50.
[404] The third chapter of *Das Haus des Alchemisten* quotes and references one of Meyrink's short stories, *Der Uhrmacher*, which constitutes a solid basis for the whole project of the unfinished novel.
[405] *Exposé*, p. 128.

It is planned, therefore, that the house behaves as an active subject influencing the evolution of its inhabitants. The meaning of the living space in Meyrink's worldbuilding must be searched for in the importance given to the relationship between individuum and environment when it comes to his protagonists' personal growth. Just like the space surrounding the I-narrator in *Der Lotse* provides a solution for the protagonist's desperation, most of Meyrink's main characters find the answers to their existential questions and to their inner emptiness by rediscovering the environment they inhabit. The correspondence between environmental exploration and exploration of the self, which will be mentioned in the next chapters as well, is the main reason for this phenomenon.

3. Meyrink's representation of Prague in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*: introduction

To better understand this perspective concerning the relationship space-individuum in Meyrink's poetics, the analysis must start from the space that, it is presumed in this thesis, constitutes the basis of the author's invention – the space of Prague as it appears in his texts *Der Golem*, *Walpurgisnacht*, *Prag: eine optimistische Darstellung in vier Bildern*, *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*.

It should be said in advance that the importance of Prague in Meyrink's poetics is not only evident through the success obtained by his so-called *Prager Romane* in comparison to other works of his, but also in the persistence of this environment in his production, which is consistent throughout his entire literary activity. Aim of this section is to introduce one of the main objects of analysis in this dissertation: demonstrating that the presence of the Bohemian capital in Meyrink's production must be traced back to the correspondence between the categories given to the Prague space as eccentric city in Prague German literature and the worldview of Meyrink that was previously presented. It can be shown that the Prague invented by Meyrink not only references an imagery connected to parameters of the eccentric space such as apocalypticism and threshold position, but also other topics of the *Prager Text* such as the constant confrontation between a male protagonist, estranged by the environment surrounding him, and the city acting as living subject. These parameters interact strongly with Meyrink's view on the relationship between perceived reality (*Erscheinung*) and the essence of things that must be discovered by finding a fragile dimension (the threshold) giving access to another level of interpretation and allowing a deconstruction of the given environment. Meyrink's texts have the main function to describe a process of personal growth where the main character explores the

reality surrounding him and learns to question the substance and the stability of his perceptive experience: things and spaces, made uncertain through instruments of the phantastic mode, are then deconstructed to be re-interpreted in a new light. Starting from these assumptions, it can be said that Meyrink's invented space possesses some clear traits. An analysis of these traits will be conducted here through the close reading of two texts related to Prague which do not concentrate on the relationship between the city and an the individuum but are centered on Prague itself. These are the feuilletons *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*. Both texts portray the Bohemian capital as an active environment with a clear personality, and are not developed around a plot as much as they merely describe a Prague characterized by oddities and by a strong connection with an invisible world. These oddities and peculiarities are presented as stories told by an I-narrator whose personal growth, however, is not thematized at all: both first-person voices are treated as observers and not as part of the reported content. The absence of a protagonist interacting with the urban space makes the texts completely independent from the transformations caused by the conflict city/individuum: here, Meyrink exposes the characteristics of his worldbuilding without having to be mindful of the focalization on active characters influencing the depiction of Prague's space through the filter of their personality. The I-narrator in *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* presents the city from an external perspective, in an essay resembling the travel guides and the historical text: despite his talking in first person at the beginning to communicate that he knows the city very well - a rhetoric artifice to suggest the likeliness of the to-be-told story - he behaves as omniscient narrator in the rest of the text. *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, on the other hand, presents an I-narrator walking through the city who decides to visit the Hunger Tower despite knowing the building very well: there, he encounters an old, deaf man who acts as a guide. The voice of the man is the main source of information on Prague's strange traits during the first part of the story. When the I-narrator goes home, he finds a second person who claims to descend from the historic Prague family Zahradka, willing to tell him something about the legends related to Prague and to an old lodge called the 'Sat Bhai'[406], or the 'Asian Brothers' (*Asiatische Brüder*). Here, the voice of the I-narrator has the only function to link the recounting of the two storytellers, and to serve as summarizing opinion on the truthfulness of the told content.

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[406] The lodge of the Sat Bhai is a factual Masonic society of Anglo-Indian origin, introduced into England during the 1870s. The name "Sat Bhai", Seven Feathers, refers to the bird *Malacocersis Grisis*, which flies in groups of seven. Meyrink had been accepted in this order in 1893. The certificate of admission is preserved in the Meyrinkiana-*Nachlass* and a picture of it was published by Hartmut Binder in his monography. The symbol of belonging to the society, a big oval, dark ring, is visible in Olaf Gulbransson's caricature (*Gustav Meyrink*, 1904), where Meyrink's eyes and hands are set in the center of attention. See: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, pp. 153-161 and p. 360. Information about the sect are available at https://freemasonry.bcy.ca/aqc/fringe/appendix2.html and at https://www.encyclopedia.com/science/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/sat-bhai.

3.1. The concept of threshold

The main spatial element pointed out in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, is (not surprisingly) the threshold position of the city of Prague, which is the literary motif guiding the narration throughout the text. As pointed out by Cottone, the text introduces the Bohemian capital as the conjunction of the Eastern and the Western geographical and cultural sphere: the feuilleton opens with a legend according to which seven Asian monks planted a little bush on a rock on the left bank of the Vltava, and that the Hradschin was erected on that same spot. The same seven Asian Monks can, states the I-narrator, be found in a legend related to an Indian city called Allahabad, which also has a second name: 'Prag'. Then, the I-narrator cannot but add: "und [die Stadt] heißt wie Praha (die tschechische Benennung für Prag) auf deutsch also: die Schwelle."[407] Later, at the end of the text, it is mentioned that the order of the Sat Bhai, which as been present in Prague for a very long time, has now its representatives in England and India. Aim of the order, the character says, is to find "the threshold" and stepover it – as he personally did already. The sect has the function to connect the two spheres East and West for the second time in the narration, and it also embodies the idea of searching a hidden sphere of reality, a searching which expanded from a center (Prague) in two directions: England (West) and India (East). However, here Meyrink also explicitly mentions the further semiotic value of the threshold category – the transposition from the geographical and cultural crossroad to the symbol of a point of encounter between fantasy and reality, or between two sides of reality – the perceived and the hidden/authentic one:

Ich kenne keine Stadt, die wie Prag, wenn man in ihr wohnt und mit ihr geistig verwittert ist, einen so oft und in so merkwürdig zauberhafter Art lockt, die Orte ihrer Vergangenheit aufzusuchen. Es ist, als riefen die Toten uns Lebende bis an die Stelle, wo sie einst ihr Dasein verbracht, um uns zuzuraunen, dass Prag nicht umsonst den Namen „die Schwelle" führt – dass es in Wirklichkeit eine Schwelle zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits ist, eine Schwelle, viel schmäler als an anderen Orten.[408]

The literary Prague shaped by Meyrink is, therefore, a geographic center and a place where the limits between the perceived and the authentic reality are more labile "than in other places". This statement implies that the structure of reality proposed by the author does not depend on the environment itself: the specificity of the invented Prague is that it must serve the purpose to the revelation of the hidden

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[407] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, pp. 162-166, here: p.162.
[408] *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, pp. 162-163.

dimension and must therefore have a fragile and porous contour from which manifestations of the 'authentic' reality can enter. The overlapping between concreteness and abstractness is also introduced at the beginning of *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, where the I-narrator exposes his personal knowledge of Prague, the city he wants to describe, and states:

Alles, was ich je erlebt, kann ich vor das innere Auge rufen, als stünde es lebenstrotzend da ... banne ich jedoch Prag vor meinem Blick, so wird es deutlicher wie alles andere – so deutlich, dass es nicht mehr wirklich, sondern gespenstisch erscheint. Jeder Mensch, den ich dort gekannt, gerinnt zum Gespenst und zum Bewohner eines Reiches, das Tod nicht kennt.[409]

The analysis chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation will make it clear how this structure is also used for the other urban space that Meyrink treated in detail in his fiction production: the space of Amsterdam in *Das grüne Gesicht*. Here, it will be only shown as this model of center/threshold can also be applied to the 'Peacock House' (*Das Haus zum Pfau*) in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, a case where the dimension of a single building is expanded through its heterotopic traits to resemble a city landscape following the literary pattern proposed in Meyrink's Prague. Before moving to this topic, however, it has been decided to dedicate a paragraph to the similarities between *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Le passant de Prague* (1903), a comparison suggested by the observation of a series of common traits in the two stories with regard to content and narrative structure.

3.2 *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* and *Le passant de Prague*

Apollinaire's *Le passant de Prague* tells the story of a French traveler who, through the railway starting from Dresden, arrives to Prague and, when asking for information to find a hotel, encounters an affable Jewish man who proposes himself as a touristic guide. The man reveals himself to be the Eternal Jew (or the Wandering Jew), explains his story to the I-narrator and shows him all his favorite places of the Bohemian capital, including the Jewish district and its brothels. The guide is characterized by his immortality and this same trait seems to belong to several parts of the city when these are shown through the filter of the Eternal Jew's timelessness. This text is considered one of the main sources that influenced the western European imagery of Prague as place of fantasy and of ancient time and is therefore considered interesting in relation to Meyrink's texts which have been written several years later this publishing. This analysis will highlight the traits which not only are linked to the image of a Prague characterized by antiquity and darkness, but also by timelessness and

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[409] Meyrink, Gustav, *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, pp. 157-161, here: p. 158.

an apocalyptical atmosphere, in Apollinaire's perception already. Moreover, since the Eternal Jew is a fundamental figure in Meyrink's novel *Das grüne Gesicht* (see: chapter 4), showing the parallels between the interpretation of Prague of the two authors has been considered relevant to this research. Both *Le passant de Prague* and *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* have a touristic guide as key-figure of their narration, and in both cases the Prague discourse introduced by the guide is influenced by the notion of timelessness and immortality. In fact, this same comparison can also be applied, with regard to the content, to some passages of *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* as well.

In Apollinaire, Prague is a city associated to fantasy and to an ancient time preserved by its buildings. This discourse is also present in his poem *Zone*, which will be also referenced in this paragraph.

The first section of *Le passant de Prague* shows the Bohemian capital as a cultural mosaic open to internationality, and also defined by a strong relationship with antiquity:

En mars 1902, je fus à Prague.

J'arrivais de Dresde.

Dès Bodenbach, où sont les douanes autrichiennes, les allures des employés de chemin de fer m'avaient

montré que la raideur allemande n'existe pas dans l'empire des Habsbourg. […] À la sortie de la gare François–Joseph, après avoir congédié les faquins, d'obséquiosité tout italienne, qui s'offraient en un allemand incompréhensible, je m'engageai dans de vieilles rues, afin de trouver un logis en rapport avec ma bourse de voyageur peu riche. Selon une habitude assez inconvenante, mais très commode quand on ne connaît rien d'une ville, je me renseignai auprès de plusieurs passants.[410]

It can be seen that the first description of Prague is characterized by a series of comparisons to other European lands: first element of this comparison is the difference between the German and the Austrian organization, where the Austrian one is presented as lacking and ridiculous; secondly, it is said that the behavior of Czech porters is as obsequious as the one of the Italians; in the sequence that follows this quote, the I-narrator asks for information in German and is not understood by anyone, because Czech seems to be the only spoken language of the population – which highly surprises him. Nevertheless, right afterwards he meets someone who replies to him in French and explains that: "You can speak French, sir, we hate Germans more than Frenchmen do […] We only speak Czech in Prague. But when you'll speak French, who is able to answer will do it with pleasure"[411]. The good relationship between Czech and French culture is then definitely established by the Prague feast for the hundredth anniversary of Victor Hugo, where "The windows of the book shops looked like

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[410] Apollinaire, Guillaume, *Le passant de Prague*, in: Apollinaire, Guillaume, *L'Heresiarque et Cie*, Paris: P.V. Stock 1910, p. 4.

[411] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 4.

bibliographical museums honoring the poet"[412]. The choice to set the visit on the anniversary is a further reference to the relationship between Prague and a certain idea of literary tradition.

Second trait characterizing this first impression of Prague is the idea of preserved past evoked by the words "I entered a series of ancient streets". The I-narrator finds an accommodation and meets another walker who recognizes his accent and who offers to guide him throughout the city. The man appears to be in his sixties but still vigorous, and he is dressed in a way that reminds the protagonist of a certain iconography: a long brown coat with otter fur around the neck, black trousers, a wide-brim hat, and a black bandage covering his forehead. This last element is one of the symbols connected to the Eternal Jew, and the I-narrator starts to understand this reference when he is told by his guide about his long journey throughout Europe during the last five centuries. Some sequences later, the man confirms the likelihood of the I-narrator's suspect: "'I am the Wandering Jew. You probably had figured it out. I am the Eternal Jew – this is the way Germans call me. I am Isaac Laquedem'"[413].

The passage that follows this statement provides a panoramic view of the legend regarding this figure:

—On vous attribue souvent le nom d'Ahasvérus?
—Mon Dieu, ces noms m'appartiennent et bien d'autres encore! La complainte que l'on chanta après ma visite à Bruxelles me nomme Isaac Laquedem, d'après Philippe Mouskes, qui, en 1243, mit en rimes flamandes mon histoire. Le chroniqueur anglais Mathieu de Paris, qui la tenait du patriarche arménien, l'avait déjà racontée. Depuis, les poètes et les chroniqueurs ont souvent rapporté mes passages, sous le nom d'Ahasver, Ahasvérus ou Ahasvère, dans telles ou telles villes. Les Italiens me nomment Buttadio—en latin; Buttadeus;—les Bretons, Boudedeo; les Espagnols, Juan Esp.ra−en−Dios. Je préfère le nom d'Isaac Laquedem, sous lequel on m'a vu souvent en Hollande. […][414]

The Eternal Jew reports a couple of other legends that are told about him, but does not want to talk too much about his identity, and prefers to only declare that Jesus ordered him to wander until his return.

The legendary figure is therefore defined, as it is implicit in his name, by the two traits of immortality and wandering. The main difference between this personality and the guide found by the I-narrator of *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* in the Daliborka is designated by the anonymity of the latter in comparison to the fame of Isaac Laquedem, but also by the wooden lag belonging to Meyrink's image of the guide, which, it is implicit, should impair him to walk for a long time contrarily to Laquedem's case. Nevertheless, both guides are encountered by chance by both I-narrators and have the function to show places of Prague that are connected to its historic memory and to stress the relationship connecting Prague's present and past dimension. The Eternal Jew shows to Apollinaire's I-narrator some places: the clock of the Town Hall with the Twelve Apostles, the Jewish district, the Synagogue, the Charles Bridge, the hill of the Hradschin (the castle and the cathedral). Interesting in this regard

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[412] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 5.
[413] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 11.
[414] *Le passant de Prague*, pp. 5-6.

is a parallel between Meyrink's (*Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschalg*) and Apollinaire's depiction of the clock of the Town Hall:

Nous nous tûmes, visitâmes l'église, puis allâmes entendre tinter l'heure à l'horloge de l'Hôtel de Ville. La Mort, tirant la corde, sonnait en hochant la tête. D'autres statuettes remuaient, tandis que le coq battait des ailes et que, devant une fenêtre ouverte, les Douze Apôtres passaient en jetant un coup d'oeil impassible sur la rue.[415]

Auf ihrem Altstädter Ring ist am Rathaus eine große, sagenumwobene astronomische Uhr mit den Tierkreiszeichen angebracht, darin öffnet sich Schlag Mittag ein Türchen, und heraustreten, einer nach dem andern, die zwölf Apostel; stumm, als hätten sie sich überzeugt, daß sie Zeit, auf die sie geduldig warten, noch nicht gekommen sei, verschwinden sie wieder, verdrängt von einer dreizehnten Gestalt, dem Tod mit Hippe und Sandglas. Auch er geht, und über ihm kräht der Hahn der fernen Auferstehung wie eine Prophezeihung der Apokalypse.[416]

The depiction of the clock is also resumed by Hauschner in *Der Tod des Löwen* and is part of the Prague topoi listed in the *Prager Text* discourse. The insistence on the motif of the Death as focus of the attention of the reader, which is brought as first element in Apollinaire's depiction and as last one in Meyrink's according to the German attitude in postponing the essential part of the discourse, introduces in both texts an apocalyptic inclination. This is explicit in the words that follow the description of the Death in Meyrink's text: "Auch er [der Tod] geht, und über ihm kräht der Hahn der fernen Auferstehung wie eine Prophezeihung der Apokalypse." and is resumed by the French author when the I-narrator has an epiphany of his death in the Hradschin:

Nous visitâmes le château royal du Hradschin, aux salles majestueuses et désolées, puis la cathédrale, où sont les tombes royales et la châsse d'argent de saint Népomucène. Dans la chapelle où l'on couronnait les rois de Bohême, et où le saint roi Wenceslas subit le martyre, Laquedem me fit remarquer que les murailles étaient de gemmes: agates et améthystes. Il m'indiqua une améthyste:
—Voyez, au centre, les veinures dessinent une face aux yeux flamboyants et fous. On prétend que c'est le masque de Napoléon.
—C'est mon visage, m'écriai−je, avec mes yeux sombres et jaloux![417]

This epiphany also stresses a connection between the apocalyptic perspective and the discourse on a timeline characterized by eternity and emergence of different temporal planes. The city of Prague is used as symbol of this eschatological and at the same time atemporal perspective. The Eternal Jew reacts to the I-narrator's fear of Death, and consequently of time passing, by mentioning a series of

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[415] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 6.
[416] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, p. 158.
[417] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 16.

figures who are linked to the idea of ascension: Enoch, Elijah, Apollonius of Tiana. The guide also mentions Empedocles, who is connected to the theorization of reincarnation in western culture and based his philosophy on the concepts of eternity of life and of life as eternal transformation. The mention of Elijah must, on the other hand be traced back to the overlapping, in several studies, between this personality and the Eternal Jew. Both Elijah and Enoch are also connected to prophetic literature and to the idea of immortality stemming from the ascension, while Enoch is also an important character in the apocalyptic pseudo-epigraph, being the Enoch 1 one of the most meaningful texts of apocalyptic content in Jewish culture (see: chapter 1). Beside this reference, the amethyst is also a sign of an emergence of different dimensions: the stone, which symbolizes sobriety and balance, is canonically associated to Christ's sufferance (and consequently to the clergy) due to the shapes acquired by its veining. The sufferance of Christ, which also defines the beginning of the Eternal Jew's wandering, is here deprived of its sacrality when turned to Napoleon's mask, but eventually this path, which is desecrating but also resulting in an historic modernization of a traditional motif, shifts to the protagonist's own soul when he recognizes himself in the mask drawn by the veining. The stone becomes, in this process, an object extending time. The amethyst is also present in another work of Apollinaire's that is strongly connected to Prague, the poem Zone, published in the collection *Alcools* (1902) where the stone is associated to Christ:

Vous priez toute la nuit dans la chapelle du collège
Tandis qu'éternelle et adorable profondeur améthyste
Tourne à jamais la flamboyante gloire du Christ[418]

Zone also includes references to the same figures mentioned by the Eternal Jew:

Les anges voltigent autour du joli voltigeur
Icare Enoch Elie Apollonius de Thyane
Flottent autour du premier aéroplane[419]

As it is evident in the third verse of the quotation, Enoch, Elijah and Apollonius of Tiana are referenced here in relation to their ascension to Heaven (understood as Paradise, but also as sky in this context), but they are also associated to the first mention of a human being willing to fly, Icarus, and to the final realization of this desire through technological progress – the airplane. *Zone*, a poem which describes the relationship between elements of modernity and ancient times, is a work where

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[418] Apollinaire, Guillaume, *Zone*, in: Apollinaire, Guillaume, *Alcools*, trans. Meredith Williams, Doubleday: Garden City 1964 (ENG when quoted the translated lines), pp. 2-9, here: p. 4.
[419] *Zone*, p. 4.

both the emergence of antiquity in the present and a clear sense of the end are highly visible. Both traits are evident in the lines opening the poem:

A la fin tu es las de ce monde ancien
Bergère ô tour Eiffel le troupeau des ponts bêle ce matin
Tu en as assez de vivre dans l'antiquité grecque et romaine
Ici même les automobiles ont l'air d'être anciennes
La religion seule est restée toute neuve la religion[420]

The poem, beginning with the words "in the end"[421], ends up with one of the most famous symbols of apocalyptic timelessness, the breaking of the sun, expressed with a personified description of a crepuscular state: "decapitated sun"[422] that also hints at the circularity of the composition. A part of it is, however, dedicated to Prague and to parts of its landscape, the Hradschin and the St. Veit's Dome, that are mentioned in *Le Passant de Prague*. The epiphany of the Death in the St. Veit's cathedral told in the latter is narrated in Zone as well, but the stone associated to the event is the agate and not the amethyst ("Appalled you find a picture of yourself in the veined agates at Saint Vitus';/You were mortally sad when you saw yourself there"[423]). A last element pointing to Prague's *Zeitlosigkeit* and to the apocalyptical traits attributed to its literary imagery, mentioned in both *Zone* and *Le Passant de Prague*, is the depiction of the Jewish district, where it is told that the clock of the Jewish town hall "goes backwards"[424]. The image, which in fact refers to the actual structure of Jewish clocks, is meant as a foreshadowing of death in both works, since in *Le Passant de Prague* it is said that "The synagogue looks like a grave where is sleeping the old, veiled parchment role, an admirable Thora. Then Laquedem red on the Town Hall clock that it was 3:00"[425] with a clear reference to the time of Christ's last breath, while it is said in Zone that: "the hands of the public clock in the ghetto move withershins/And you too move slowly backward into your life"[426].

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[420] *Zone*, p. 2.
[421] *Zone* (ENG), p. 3.
[422] *Zone* ENG, p. 13.
[423] *Zone* ENG, p. 9.
[424] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 6.
[425] *Le passant de Prague*, p. 6.
[426] *Zone* ENG, p. 9.

4. An introduction to Meyrink's 'timelessness'

4.1. The kaleidoscopic *Haus zum Pfau* and an introduction to Meyrink's 'timeless' characters

The house of the alchemist, or the Peacock House, hosts several commercial activities, functions as airport and cinema at the same time, and some of its rented apartments are large enough to seem entire houses of their own. Moreover, it is visited and inhabited by people of several nationalities, coming from all over the world. The fact that it has grown gradually as people do, that no-one can know who built it, and the way the structure has changed from one level to the other, makes it similar to an expanding city that grows spontaneously, and where the center and the periphery look different in their structure.

The Peacock House appears as a colorful space at the first glance when the character that corresponds to the perspective of the reader, a reporter who only wears checked cloths, enters it for the first time at the beginning of the fragment-novel. The man comes from Berlin and must write an article about this peculiar building and its inhabitants. That the house finds itself in a German city is stated in the Exposé, where Meyrink also points out that the street names should make it evident, but it is also clarified in the third chapter of the story. When the reporter arrives, the house door is opened by "a young girl, blue-black haired, wearing Turkish female trousers"[427] and he gets winded up in a cloud of "sweet smell of oriental tobacco"[428] welcoming him into the café at the ground floor. On the other hand, the character is taken to a table by a German employee called Gracchus Meyer, his touristic guide. The room is full of personalities from oriental regions: the owner of the café, Khorsul Khan, and his daughter Leila stem from Persia; Leila learns juggling from another inhabitant of the house, the Copt Markus; Dr. Steen, the man who owns the glass terrace of the building on which he makes his aircraft land, is, instead, son of an Englishman and a Mongol woman. The owner of the building, however, is a clockmaker called Günstenhöver, a personality that can be traced back to an alchemist stemming from Germany and, according to other studies, operating in Bohemia under Rudolph II[429]. And, as previously stated, the city outside the Peacock House looks not so different from any anonymous German city: it is said that it has a *Salpetergasse*, a *Marktplatz*, an hotel, a *Marienkathedrale*, names extremely generic for places which are not meant to be described in detail. In this monotonous context, the building is a place of encounter for cultures from the West and the East, and it can be said that traditions and religions mix within its walls. Furthermore, the place seems literally to attract people from all over the world without any clear reason. It can therefore be inserted

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[427] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, p. 42.
[428] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, p. 42.
[429] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 196.

in a framework of a crowded metropolitan environment, and, similarly to Prague, at the crossroad between Eastern and Western spheres. However, to correspond to Meyrink's Prague, the building should also show a porous contour and an intrinsic fragility allowing an irrational and an invisible dimension to appear in its inhabitants' life. This porous quality is made apparent in the chapter *Großmutter Wasserdampf*, second chapter of the novel, a section where the philosophical teachings inherent to space and time, and reporting Meyrink's worldview, are exposed through the reporter's reading of a manuscript written by one of the German guests of the Peacock House, a scholar called Apulejus Ochs. Here this scholar, called the 'eternal student' since he gained more than eight master degrees, exposes a part of his story related to a certain wall of Güstenhöver's house: this wall has a particular spot where a stain of humidity appears and disappears from time to time. When Ochs was younger, one of his friends, called Adam Trapp, apparently entered the wall and discovered a new dimension. The following statement is read by the reporter in the manuscript, and told from the perspective of the scholar Apulejus Ochs in the first person:

Ein nasser Fleck in einer alten Mauer, was wäre daran Absonderliches! - - - - Absonderlich ist nur: seit Menschengedenken weiß jedes Kind in unserer Stadt um diesen nassen Fleck, und doch knüpft sich keine Historie an ihn – keine Sage, kein Ammenmärchen raunt. Sonst bilden sich Legenden schnell. […] Hier haben Sie versagt – sind nie zu Wort gekommen. Es ist, als sei der Fleck gefeit gegen alles, was Menschenphantasie ersinnen könnte. Drei Wochen bleibt er verschwunden, dann plötzlich erscheint er wieder – über Nacht – und trieft vor Nässe.[430]

When Ochs asks his friend what the stain means, this, who overstepped its threshold, replies: "It's no stain: it's an entrance"[431]. It is stated in the quoted passage that the wall is famous in the city despite the absence of legends related to it, and this is explained by the assumption that "the stain is invulnerable to whatever human fantasy can conceive". This opinion, as well as the idea that "here the legends failed… they never came to words", is analyzed more in-depth later in Ochs' manuscript, when he recounts how his own way of thinking changed after having heard of Adam Trapp's overstepping the threshold signalized by the stain of humidity to find Felicitas, or, more literally, happiness. When it comes to describing this change in Ochs' intellect, Meyrink goes back to the idea of "thinking through images" which he had also exposed in *Bilder im Luftraum*[432]:

Seine Rede hatte mich erschüttert von Kopf bis zu den Füßen. – Ich konnte nicht sprechen. - - Sind das wirklich Worte einer Sprache gewesen, die ich gehört habe? Ob es nicht Bilder waren? Bilder aus Worten? Bilder, die man hört – auf

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[430] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, pp. 80-81.
[431] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 81.
[432] It must be highlighted that the essay and the exposé to *Das Haus des Alchemisten* were apparently written around the same years, 1925-1927.

unbegreifliche Weise –, statt sie zu sehen? Bilder einer Welt, die uns „Leichen" verschlossen sei? - - - Hinter allen Dingen stehen – die Bilder![433]

The fading of words, changing into images according to Ochs' discourse, has been interpreted by Lube as a sign of Meyrink's partial *Sprachskepsis*[434]. This possibility should be analyzed in light of another of the author's tropes when it comes to space invention, the absence of time, but before proceeding to this territory, it should be said that the fading of words should be interpreted first of all as a deconstruction of rationality and, again, of concreteness, since the manifestation of language, which is voice and text, is put, through the assumption of the words 'failing' in describing reality in a position of uncertainty, to the extent that they dissolve into images.

However, the real substance of the stained wall in the Peacock House is reported later in Ochs' manuscript, this time from the perspective of the friend who had entered it. It should be said in advance that this man had found the correspondence between the stain and the entrance to another dimension after having intensely suffered after losing the woman he loved, Felicitas, Güstenhöver's niece, who had died very young. The strong connection with the girl had led her to show him the entrance to the world she currently inhabited. The initiation of the male character through the search for a passed away loved one, and especially a dead female soulmate, is another trope of Meyrink's novel, a situation shared by Pernath looking for Miriam in the dismantled ghetto at the end of *Der Golem* and by Hauberrisser looking for Eva throughout Amsterdam in *Das grüne Gesicht*. This narrative expedient is related to two of the main components of Meyrink's philosophical thought, the idea of hermaphrodite[435] and the discovery of the *Zeitlosigkeit* through the confrontation with death. When Ochs' friend oversteps the threshold indicated by the stain, he finds a room illuminated by a table lamp. At the table sits an old lady, so old to be defined *steinalt*, who is knitting a grey stocking. She keeps her eyes on the knitting needle when she welcomes him, and explains that she cannot stop looking at it, not even for an instant, because interrupting her work would mean the cessation of people's heartbeat – of his, too. Then, she adds:

„Das ist das Zimmer der wirklichen Gegenwart, mein Sohn. Die Gegenwart ist für alle Wesen, die tot sind, weil sie nicht wissen, was das Leben ist, ein verborgenes Geheimnis. Die Gegenwart ist für die Wesen der Erde unfassbar, denn sie leben nicht in der Wirklichkeit. Könnten sie die Gegenwart fühlen, so hätten sie auch den Eingang zur Ewigkeit, denn die Gegenwart ist nichts anderes als die Ewigkeit, darinnen das wahre Leben steht."[436]

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[433] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 83.
[434] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 250-252. The term *Sprachskepsis* is mentioned by Lube only referencing an esoteric context, and should not be associated to other discourses related to this notion.
[435] See: Cersowsky, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 44.
[436] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 84.

Felicitas explains to her former lover that the old lady is *Urgroßmutter Wasserdampf*, great-grandmother Steam, the original great-grandmother of all human beings. She normally sits knitting, apparently, stocking, but she is actually working on an eternally long thread which has no beginning and no end. "If I stopped knitting, so she says,", Felicitas adds, "there would be only present, but this is not the will of Life, that the great clockmaker lets his hands sink down"[437].

Although the importance of Meyrink's space depiction has been stated as main category in this dissertation, when it comes to understand the Prague pattern present in his novels, and which appears in relation to the Peacock House as well, it is necessary to have a closer look at the notion of eternal present mentioned by Urgroßmutter Wasserdampf and Felicitas, a notion that is crucial here as well as in the rest of Meyrink's work.

4.2. Meyrink's timelessness in the Prague psychotops

As previously stated, two are the men in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* to communicate with the I-narrator telling him about the elements they consider constitutive for the history of Prague. The I-narrator, who is initially led through the city by a "gewisse unsichtbare Hand"[438] over the Vltava to the Kleinseite, and then high to the hill of the Hradschin, encounters the first guide when he decides to enter the Daliborka, the Hunger Tower. This man remains invisible to the reader for the entire sequence, apart from the detail of his wooden leg and his narrating voice. He tells the I-narrator two legends related to the Daliborka, the one of prisoner Dalibor who dug a hole into the stonewall of his cell and almost reached the outside just before getting caught and beheaded, and the one of Countess Zahradka, imprisoned for having poisoned her son to death. The guide adds:

„Später wurde ruchbar, sie [Gräfin Zahradka] hätte es getan, weil er [ihr Sohn] einer teuflischen ketzerische Sekte, genannte die Asiatischen Brüder, angehört habe. Daraufhin wurde für ihre arme Seele eine Messe drüben im Dom gelesen und die Daliborka für alle Zeiten geschlossen."[439]

When the I-narrator asks to go more in-depth in the discourse about the Asian Brothers, the guide looks at him without understanding, and the I-narrator realizes this man is deaf. When he gets home, however, a second man awaits him in his apartment, this time it is a man that will be physically described to the reader: "in worn-out cloths, more or less a fifty-year-old, with the uncertain, shy eyes

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[437] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 84.
[438] *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, p. 163.
[439] *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, p. 164.

of a nuts"[440]. This individuum introduces himself as Count Zahradka and claims to be member of the Asian Brothers sect, and also to have overstepped 'the threshold'. Unfortunately, he does not remember what this expression means, because the process strongly affected his memory. The protagonist asks himself if the man, who looks like a ragman, will also try to sell him something, but this does not happen: the visitor just goes away after having walked up and down through the room nervously, staring at the clock, for a while. The story ends with the I-narrator looking for information about the Asian Brothers, finding out that they factually existed, and that they included among their members not only Cola Rienzi and Petrarch, but also a man called Count Zahradka. In the final sentence, the I-narrator states to have seen a crest where the symbol of the Asian Brothers was drawn beneath a Pope crown.

The family Zahradka and the Hunger Tower where part of Meyrink's work already since their much more meaningful appearance in the novel *Walpurgisnacht*, where a Countess Zahradka belongs to the noble families dethroned by the people of Prague, while another protagonist, her illegitimate son Otokar who ignores his heritage, guides the revolutionary action aiming to depose them. The young Otokar, whose foster family looks after the Hunger Tower for work and organizes the guided visits to the site, initially supports the revolutionaries by allowing them to use the place as a hideout for their conspiration, but then he is even elected as new sovereign by the agitated mass. When the victory of this party seems to be certain, Countess Zahradka murders her son by shooting him with an old gun dating back to the Thirty Years' War.

While the Daliborka appears as psychotop in several *Prager Texte*, including *Die Geschwister* - Rilke's second story of the *Zwei Prager Geschichten*, where the legend regarding Dalibor is told by the Czech patriot Rezek to the two protagonists - the family Zahradka seems to be a prerogative of Meyrink's imagery. It can be pointed out that the Zahradkas are, in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* as well as in *Walpurgisnacht*, a family representing a special link between East and West[441], but also that they establish, in both works, a special connection between different temporal dimensions. This is clear in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* when it comes to the encounter between the I-narrator and the Count Zahradka, who appears to be the same character of the told legend, poisoned by his mother but still persisting in Prague since he overstepped the 'threshold' through the spiritual practice of the Asian Brothers. In *Walpurgisnacht*, as it will be seen in chapter 6, manifestations of the *Zeitlosigkeit* include the nobles who insist to live in an environment separated from the rest of the world, and who exclude any hint at present times from their sight and from their understanding, but also Polyxena's

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[440] *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, p. 165.
[441] Family Zahradka's link with Eastern culture in *Walpurgisnacht* is represented by the presence of the Aweysha, the ability to control other people's actions: this trait is attributed to Polyxena Zahradka, ancestor of the countess.

overlapping with her homonymous ancestor, who manages to possess her[442] and after doing so leads Prague to a bloody revolutionary action. Other signs of this absence of time will be explored later in this dissertation through a close reading of the novel (chapter 6).

5. Further nuances of *Zeitlosigkeit* in *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* and in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*

A similar attitude towards the space of Prague is also visible in *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*. Here, Meyrink uses another of his tropes: the association between Prague and a puppet master[443] controlling a series of citizens who can only be described as *wahnsinnig[444]*. In relation to this association, it is stated:

Marionetten sterben nicht, wenn sie von der Bühne verschwinden; und Marionetten sind alle Wesen, die die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag zusammenhält. Andere Städte, so alt sie auch sein mögen, muten mich an wie unter der Gewalt ihrer Menschen stehend; wie desinfiziert von keimtötenden Säuren – Prag gestaltet und bewegt wie ein Marionettenspieler seine Bewohner von ihrem ersten bis zu ihrem letzten Atemzug.[445]

The trope of the puppet master interacts here with the idea of eternity attributed to Prague's environment. The meaning of this association can be traced back to the notion of active space on the one hand and to the identification between the space of Prague and a source of narration on the other – both interpretations find a sequel in Meyrink's narrative patterns in other works. The productivity of Prague as fruitful basin of legends and stories becomes, nevertheless, the very center of *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* in the moment when another of these legends is referenced at the end of the short story: the mention of Jan Žižka. The historical character is introduced by a man who Meyrink uses as second narrator only in the final sequence: a man who speaks with the voice of a woman, is short and beardless, looks similar to Napoleon and foretells the future to his visitors using an incunabulum written in giant Hebrew characters. The man tells some visitors, as the I-narrator "oversteps the threshold of his house"[446]:

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[442] Other elements related to this discourse can be found in chapter 6.
[443] It should be noted that the puppet master Zwakh in *Der Golem* is also the figure telling feuilletons. When thinking about Meyrink's idea of Prague as puppet master, the role of Zwakh seems the one of a personification of the city which speaks about its own darkness.
[444] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, p. 159. In *Walpurgisnacht* there is another clear example of a relationship puppet master/puppet in the moment when Polyxena uses Aweysha on Zrcadlo. It is interesting to notice that Polyxena is actually making use, in this case, of a primordial force belonging to the very essence of Prague, the blood of the Vltava (see: chapter 6), while the function given to Zrcadlo is to make an historical figure of Prague alive again, Jan Žižka.
[445] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern*, p. 158.
[446] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, p. 160.

„Das Trommeln, das sie in der Nacht vor der Mauer zur Letzten Latern' gehört haben, kommt nicht von den Soldaten; es kommt von der Trommel des toten Ziska (sic), der, bevor er starb, befahl daß man ihm die Haut abzöge und auf eine Trommel spanne, damit man ihn hören könne, auch wenn er gestorben sei" – „Was haben Sie damit gemeint?" fragte ich, als wir allein waren. Er tat erstaunt oder war es wirklich und leugnete, solches gesagt zu haben. Später erfuhr ich, er vergäße alles sofort, kaum, daß er es ausgesprochen hätte. Er sei mondsüchtig, auch am helllichten Tag. Später, als der große Krieg ausbrach, mußte ich an die Trommel Ziskas, des Einäugigen denken. Mir war, als begriffe ich dumpf eine Art schattenhaften Zusammenhang. Oder war es Zufall? Ich glaube es nicht; die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag hat eine seltsame Art, durch den Mund ihrer Marionetten zu reden![447]

Meyrink uses here the device of the Fool to give voice to Prague's memory[448]; the legend of Žižka's drum is treated as a constitutive matter of the city persisting despite the chronological distance between the present of the I-narrator and the Hussite Wars. This distance is factually shortened through the mention of the drums still sounding to the present day and through the idea of the link between the drums and the outbreaking of the Great War. The first element attributes to Žižka the function of link between historic memory and present time, while in the second situation the context of Prague is widened to the one of World War I, and Prague is considered responsible for the outburst of the worldly conflict, an idea already mentioned in the first part of the feuilleton[449]. Both ideas were already expressed in *Walpurgisnacht*: Liesel connects the beginning of the war to Prague's madness during her speech to Otokar in chapter 3, and Žižka is involved in the narration starting from this same conversation onward, where Polyxena uses Aweysha on Zrcadlo and leads him to act like the Hussite hero[450]. To understand the two matters clearly it is necessary to go back to the interpretation of Prague as threshold: being Prague a dimension where the separation between the apparent space and the authentic space is labile, the city works especially well to explain mechanisms of reality which would result otherwise obscure. These mechanisms include the persistence of the past in the present

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[447] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, pp. 160-161.

[448] See also: *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, p. 159. The Fool (*Der Wahnsinnige*) is in Meyrink a character as positive as in Shakespear's dramas, since this figure has a similar role of truthteller and by doing so must be inserted in the apocalyptic quality of Prague, the space where truth comes to surface. See in this regard the role of the *Wahnsinniger* in *Der Uhrmacher*, where it is stated: "Und wieder starrte ich ihn an und grübelte: heute zum ersten Male habe ich ihn gesehn? Das kann nicht sein! Wir kennen uns doch seit...? Da durchzuckte mich Erinnerung wir ein heller Blitz: niemals war ich als Schulbub an einer weißen Mauer entlanglaufen; niemals hatte ich mich vor einem wahnsinnigen Uhrmacher gefürchtet, der hinter ihr hausen sollte; das leere, mir unverständliche Wort „wahnsinnig" war's gewesen, das mich geschreckt hatte in frühester Jugend, als man mir drohte, ich würde „es" werden, wenn ich nicht bald zu Verstand käme." (Meyrink, Gustav, *Der Uhrmacher*, in: in: *Das Haus zur letzten Latern. Nachgelassenes und Verstreutes*, hrsg. von Eduard Frank, Wien 1973, pp. 144-156, here: p. 153.) The *Verstand* is here to understand as a representation of the conventional bourgeoise culture (*Scheinkultur*), which is then explicitly defined through the addressing of the "bourgeois" clock with 12 numbers counterposed to the clock of the seer, with 14 figures.

[449] Cfr. *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, p. 158.

[450] The novel ends up with the repetition of the two historical circumstances mentioned in *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* and *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*: Countess Zahradka's Medea act when killing her son, reminiscent of her ancestor condemned to death in the Hunger Tower, and the skinning of Žižka, which defines the tragic fate of Zrcadlo.

and a special sense of the end that characterizes the apocalyptic text in Modernism, represented by the revelation of war and by the foreshadowing of a violent collapse. Müller-Tamm's study *Die untote Stadt* (2004) explains how this attitude in worldbuilding is visible in the satire *Prag: eine optimistische Darstellung* already, since the *Zeitlosigkeit*, or the overlapping between the past and the present, is suggested in this feuilleton by the use of a model of *Stadtdarstellung* which is to trace back to the tradition of the outdated *Tableau*, but it is used to describe current occurrences[451]. However, the effect of *Zeitlosigkeit* on the landscape of Prague is not always made apparent through the use of an individual historical character: the most fortunate case of this *Gegenwärtigkeit der Vergangenheit* in Meyrink's *Prager Texte* is certainly the Jewish ghetto in *Der Golem*, an environment conceived as a crossroad between three epochs[452]. Elements suggesting the overlapping of time dimensions can acquire several features in Meyrink's poetics, but even more meaningful is the way how this *Zeitlosigkeit* attributed to Prague appears as constitutive element of Meyrink's worldbuilding in contexts where the Bohemian city is not mentioned at all.

The Peacock House in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* is owned, as previously stated, by a clockmaker. This character, here named Güstenhöver with an explicit reference to the medieval alchemist from Strasbourg, was a key personality in Meyrink's story *Der Urmacher* as well. In this previous mention, he appears as an old anonymous clockmaker who helps the protagonist with a special clock he inherited from his ancestors: this object is very peculiar, since it counts until fourteen instead of until twelve, and shows a series of symbolic images in place of the numbers[453] – so, it is impossible to read for those who are not initiated to its mystery. The protagonist really needs to have it repaired because since the object stopped working, he feels a particular fragility in his heart as well. Luckily the alchemist who built it, *der Urmacher* of the title, has no difficulty to repair it. This man, who loves his activity as a doctor healing his living patients, is devoted to his work and always notices the connections between his clients and their clocks: he understands clearly that the protagonist's alchemic clock is influenced by the sufferance of his heart. The worldbuilding and the concepts elaborated in this short story influenced Meyrink's unfinished novel to the extent that entire parts of it are quoted within the third chapter of *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, the section *Ismene*, where Güstenhöver and his wife Petronella appear, and where consequently the laboratory of the clockmaker is introduced. The following section is present in both the short story and the unfinished novel, but is quoted from its final version in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*:

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[451] Müller-Tamm, Jutta, (2004): *Die untote Stadt. Prag als Allegorie bei Gustav Meyrink.* – In: *Weimarer Beiträge* 50, H. 4, 559-575, here: p. 563.

[452] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, pp. 570-571.

[453] The clock is built following the principles of alchemy. An essay about the symbology of this object is: Kayserling, Arnold, *Die Metaphysik des Uhrmachers*, Wien: Verlag der Palme 1966.

Auf einem Bord, bezogen mit rotem Sammet, liegen ihrer wohl an die Hundert – aus blauem, aus grünem, aus gelbem Email – juwelengeschmückt, graviert, gerippt, glatte und gekerbte, manche flach, manche wie Eier. Man hört sie nicht – sie zirpen zu leise, und doch fühlt man: die Luft, die über ihnen schwebt, muß lebendig sein von dem unhörbaren Geräusch, das sie von sich geben. Vielleicht rast doch der Sturm eines Zwergenreichs. […] Alle, alle sind einst krank gewesen; Uhrenarzt Hieronymus, der Geduldige, der Besorgte, hat sie wieder gesund gemacht.

Und alle können jetzt wieder acht geben, jedes auf seine Weise, daß keine Minute verloren geht und sie die Gegenwart nicht unbemerkt entschlüpfen lassen.[454]

The laboratory is, not surprisingly, a dimension dominated by the notion of time. This place seems to have a physics of its own, powerfully influenced by the stored clocks, to the extent that the air is moved by the passing of time reflected by their hands. It is a dimension where people can actually *feel* time as something concrete and can almost touch it. The reader should remember, at this stage, that Urgroßmutter Wasserdampf had talked about a "great clockmaker", whose hands never rest and whose plan is not understandable but must be followed either way. In the analysis of the scene related to the old lady, the concept of the eternal present had been mentioned: it is the element that characterizes the dimension where Felicitas had been taken after her death, but also the dimension of a revealed, authentic space. The concept of present, *Gegenwart*, is mentioned here as well, in the image of the clocks that have the function to preserve it, to guard it, by reporting the passing instants it is made of. This scene does not mention a past or a future dimension. Nevertheless, a parallel between this moment and the previous scene with the old lady in the room of the *ewiger Gegenwart* should be taken into account: the room of time is here in apparent opposition with the old lady's dimension. Decisive to separate the two environments is the fact that the clockmaker's room is available for the living, while this does not happen for the space beyond the stain of humidity. However, the two planes have the same temporal concept at basis of their invented space – the *Gegenwart* – and are in constant communication, as it is explained by the old lady to Felicitas, who, when the Urgroßmutter talks about a clockmaker, understands: "Ob sie den Onkel Güstenhöver damit meint?"[455]. The idea that the present is the real component of eternal time must be considered true for any dimension due to the fact that the man who controls the passing of time confirms its importance as well as the lady of the revealed space. However, the relationship between the time measured by the alchemist and the eternity described by the old lady can also be analyzed in terms of apocalyptic time, and in this case the notion of spiral model can be resumed. According to Daley's thought, the time in apocalyptic text was characterized by a lack of factual chronological order at the advantage of a timeless dimension where the events constitute the only category of orientation together with the

[454] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 100.
[455] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 84.

spatial one. On the other hand, a situation of eschatology related to these events is also fundamental in the apocalyptic narrative structure. This double presence of eschatological perspective and timelessness seems to be mirrored in some way by the presence of a clock laboratory in the same building where Großmutter Wasserdampf can be found working at her stockings. Another element of the spiral is now to mention: the symbolic role of the loop as a narrative condition where the seer has access to different historical events of several epochs. Aim of this condition is to build a stable relationship between several historical dimensions through a prophetic figure, and this is a topic on which Meyrink experimented in many ways, as it can be seen in the mentioned three texts and in the two novels that will be object of discussion in the following chapters. The figure of the eternal guide in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, the Zahradkas and Jan Žižka certainly have a similar function, but the notion of a character who is tangent to many historical epochs as the spiral is tangent to many spots of the line in Daley's model is extremely present in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* as well.

While the idea of *Zeitlosigkeit* is introduced as basis of the revealed reality beyond the wall of the house, a second symbol of this characteristic is Güstenhöver himself: the man is apparently the descendent of the old alchemist, but some details speak in favor of some complications in this regard: the employee Gracchus Meyer informs the reader and the reporter about the necessity, for an alchemist like the historical Güstenhöver, to abstain from sexuality and remain virgin. Even more mysterious is, in this regard, the employee's affirmation: "Also: über das Leben des Güstenhöver ist gar nichts bekannt. Begraben liegt er nirgends in der Stadt; ich hätte es in der Chronik finden müssen. Daher die Legende, er sei überhaupt nicht gestorben. Verheiratet war er auch nicht."[456]

Two interpretations of the story are possible in this case: either the alchemist never really died, or the clockmaker is factually an inexplicable descendent who, like Polyxena Lambua, inherited the traits of his ancestor almost looking like a reincarnation of this historical character. In this regard, it can be useful to have a new look at Meyrink's notes in his exposé:

Einer Legende nach […] wohnte in alter Zeit ein berühmter Alchemist – Güstenhöver – darin [im Haus zum Pfau], über dessen Ende historisch vollkommenes Dunkel herrscht und der auf ganz andere Art als die sonstigen Alchimisten nach dem „Lebenselixir" gesucht hat. [... [Er ist ein] steinalter Uhrmacher und Uhrenreparateur, der seinen bescheidenen Beruf mit so übermächtiger Gewissenhaftigkeit durchführt [...], als wäre es ihm von Gott auferlegte Mission. Alles, was ihm geschieht, ist äußerst Harmonie.[457]

Central to Güstenhöver's story is, hence, the *Lebenselixir*, which is also mentioned in the manuscript the reporter reads in his hotel room, the document written by Apulejus Ochs about his friend Adam

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[456] *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, p. 48.
[457] *Exposé*, pp. 126-129.

Trapp finding out where his Felicitas lays. The matter of finding Felicitas, happiness, is reminded by the "äußerst Harmonie" which surrounds the timeless alchemist. The potion of life is part of the conclusion of Adam's story, since the man currently lives alone as a sort of eremite, strolling alone and mostly silent throughout the city all the time, poorly dressed and barefoot, since, he claims, he does not feel the cold anymore, and also affirms to have found the *Lebenselixir*. This potion stems, he says, from the powder he rubs from the walls of Güstenhöver's house.

It is easy to deduce how this element gives the house a further nuance of *Zeitlosigkeit*, since its walls are claimed to be built of the same substance that allows people to defeat the concept of duration and of time passing, to the extent that it can be used to make human beings permanently alive – where being alive means, as stated by the Urgroßmutter Wasserdampf, acknowledging and experiencing the absolute dominance of the eternal present on the traditional concept of time. This building which grows like a human being, has 'thick' ground walls and 'thinner' peripheric walls on the higher layers, which possesses separated environments of any kind, from a cinema to a café and an airport, which hosts people of several western and eastern cultures and shows an intrinsic phantastic instability through which it lets two realities to communicate, resembles therefore even more a threshold dimension that is internally expanded like a city. Which means, it clearly resembles the aforementioned Prague paradigm of Meyrink's poetics.

6. The meaning of threshold and *Zeitlosigkeit* in relation to Meyrink's research on visuality

To conclude this discourse on the meaning of the threshold and of the *Zeitlosigkeit* for Meyrink's space invention, it is necessary to go back for a last time to the matter of the prevailing role of images on words that had been previously introduced from *Bilder im Luftraum* ("Hinter allen Dingen stehen – die Bilder!") and that is also visible in the importance acquired by the concept of *Bild* in Ochs' perception after Adam's recounting about Urgroßmutter Wasserdampf. Lube speaks in this case, as previously said, of Meyrink's partial *Sprachskepsis*, and proposes that this attitude towards the minor power of language must be interpreted as an interpretation of reality where gestures acquire more importance than words: "Die Ersetzbarkeit der Wortsprache durch eine Gebärdensprache"[458]. Lube also observes that: „Wir sind uns bewußt, daß, wenn von einer Sprachskepsis bei Meyrink geredet werden kann, diese nur eine relative ist, daß heißt, daß sie Meyrinks Sprache nur insofern betraf, als diese Werkzeug der Magie, der Beschwörung sein könnte."[459] Interesting is, that Lube also mentions

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[458] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 251.
[459] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 252. The statement aims not only to clarify the object of Meyrink's *Sprachskepsis* but also to detach him from actual representatives of the German *Sprachskepsis*-movement, who concentrate on experimenting with the language to show its limits, and do not, like

Meyrink's insistence on the power of words when it comes to Dr. Steen, the character who tries to control the guests of the Peacock House in *Das Haus des Alchimisten*. This person is described as the owner of a very strong personality which can influence people's mind only by using some specific, secret words – even when these words are only thought and communicated through a glance, or a simple gesture. The character who introduces Dr Steen's ability to the reporter is Apulejus Ochs, who explains to him how dangerous this man can be despite his being apparently silent and harmless:

„Was sind denn, genau besehen, Worte? Mitteilungen durch Rede: Mitteilungen durch Klänge. Sind Mitteilungen durch Fingersprache, also Taubstummsprache, nicht auch Worte im gewissen Sinn? ...
Und was das „Wort" anbelangt, so ist es nicht nur ein Verständigungsmittel Schwätzbedürftiger, sondern etwas unendlich viel Größeres und auch – Gefährlicheres!"[460]

Now, the problem with Ochs' statement is it being said by the same person who later declares, through the manuscript he gives to the reporter, how words lose any importance and concreteness in comparison to images once the true *zeitlose* dimension is revealed. Lube's statement according to which Meyrink's *Skepsis* is expressed in his attributing to the language only the power of mystification can be, therefore, partially accepted, but an analysis of this matter can precede a little further.

When it comes to explaining the reasons connected to this attitude towards words, Lube references an opinion on Meyrink's language expressed by Schödel, who fundamentally considers Meyrink not really able to describe the chosen matter of his entire work, i.e., his spirituality, through his technique[461]. In this regard, Lube accepts this assumption and hypothesizes that Meyrink might have been aware of his limits:

Meyrink war sich, auch wenn er nicht alle zu Verfügung stehenden Möglichkeiten der Sprache ausgenutzt hatte, wohl darüber bewußt, mit Worten nicht alles ausdrücken zu können, was er erlebte und was also die stoffliche Grundlage seiner Dichtungen gewesen war.[462]

Now, aim of the reflection we can make in light of this statement is not to judge Meyrink's awareness of his limits as a writer and as a vehicle for spiritual teachings, first because there is no proof of any direct consideration made by the author on the matter, and second because this awareness being true

Meyrink, simply declare their attitude towards it nor limit themselves to use certain thematic motifs such as the demonic/magic quality of the speech.
[460] *Das Haus des Alchimisten*, pp. 67-68.
[461] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 252 and Schödel, Sigfried, *Studien zu den phantastischen Erzählungen Gustav Meyrinks*, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität zu Erlangen-Nürnberg 1965 (Dissertation), pp. 174-175.
[462] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, p. 252.

does not necessarily justify the frequent mention of the power of images at the detriment of words in his work. What must be asked in this case is why, in the narration of *Das Haus des Alchimisten*, the character who speaks for Meyrink's philosophical thought should insist on the importance of the *Bild*. Answering this question with a definitive interpretation is not possible in this research but, in order to propose a hypothesis in this regard which stems from an aesthetic point of view, it might be useful to reflect on the conception of word that characterized the very definition of writing in literary aesthetics during the years in which Meyrink wrote, a conception that factually persisted until the *spatial turn*.

6.1. The relationship between time and literature before the *spatial turn*

A reference point[463] to understanding the aforementioned conception is the Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's (1729-1781) *Laokoon* (1766), a treatise according to which a fundamental distinction between literature and figurative art must be made, where literature is the art of temporality while figurative art is the art of spatiality. The importance of G.H. Lessing's essay *Laokoon* in relation to Meyrink's poetics relies in the fact that is focuses on the differences occurring in representation and imitation of nature between figurative arts and the literature. The topic can be to some extent related to the attention given to the distinction between the efficiency of visuality and the efficiency of language which appears in several statements Meyrink's, and which will be object of discussion in the chapter "On Schilderung" as well.

Starting point of Lessing's reflection in *Laokoon* is that literature (*Dichtkunst* and figurative arts (*Malerei*[464]) have different aims in realizing their work, that they start from divergent perspectives and must therefore be interpreted through separated categories when it comes to judging their grade of representation and their efficacy in imitating nature. The author's intention is to contest, by doing so, the scholars who tend to measure both phenomena according to the same parameters:

Völlig aber, als ob sich gar keine solche Verschiedenheit fände, haben viele der neuesten Kunstrichter aus jener Übereinstimmung der Malerei und Poesie die krudesten Dinge von der Welt geschlossen. Bald zwingen sie die Poesie in die engern Schranken der Malerei; bald lassen sie die Malerei die ganze weite Sphäre der Poesie füllen. Alles was der einen Recht ist, soll auch der andern vergönnt sein; alles was in der einen gefällt oder mißfällt, soll notwendig auch in der

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[463] The philosophical conception of space in Meyrink's time was, however, evolving: in fact, works such as Cassirer's *Mythischer, Ästhetischer und Theoretischer Raum* (1931) show how the reception of space and the relationship between the human being and the spatial component of their life was object of discussion during the 1930s. The enhanced role of the emotional component of literary space between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th prove that this interest was even wider in the literary experimentation. However, the association between literature and the category of time provided by Lessing was still considered meaningful during these years and the first establishment of a link between literature and space of a theoretical level is, in fact, connected to the spatial turn.
[464] Lessing specifies that he will use this term to also describe sculpture.

andern gefallen oder mißfallen; und voll von dieser Idee, sprechen sie in dem zuversichtlichsten Tone die seichtesten Urteile, wenn sie, in den Werken des Dichters und Malers über einerlei Vorwurf, die darin bemerkten Abweichungen von einander zu Fehlern machen, die sie dem einen oder dem andern, nach dem sie entweder mehr Geschmack an der Dichtkunst oder an der Malerei haben, zur Last legen[465].

To reflect on the matter, Lessing focuses on the representation, in both literature and figurative arts, of the myth of Laokoon, the Trojan warrior who dies killed by two snakes, Porcete and Caribea, along with his children[466]. The story, which is told by Virgil in the Aeneid but must be traced back to a far more ancient time, is also represented in the iconic sculpture of the Rhodes School (1st Century AC)[467]. Lessing's preliminary analysis identifies the main differences between the two works and hypothesizes that they might be stemming from the observation of a third source instead of being linked through a relationship of cause and effect. The second difference is more meaningful and is related to the expression of the main character, who bursts out, in the death sequence reported in the *Aeneid*, with a terrible scream of pain. In the sculpture, on the contrary, he appears, despite his being clearly suffering[468], in a pose where pain is to some extent withheld and slightly more discreet, and where the act of screaming, so much stressed in Virgil's work, is not as evident as the reader of the *Aeneid* would expect.

These differences are to be connected, according to Lessing, to the very aim of art, which is the delight of the observer/reader, while science must aim at revealing truth. It follows that the rules of art must stem from those categories which make it beautiful and involving[469]. This includes, in the case of figurative art, the problem of representing actions that are highly unpleasant for the observer to look at, such as a Medea's killing her own children, and emotions that make the characters assume poses and expressions that can be defined as indecorous and, more simply, ugly[470]. This tension is highly evident in Greek and Roman art, where violent emotions are substituted with expressions that are more pleasant to look at. An example of this discourse is the substitution of Zeus' rage with gravity, but also Timanthes' choice to avoid representing Agamemnon's expression of intense pain during the sacrifice of his daughter: in this latter case, the painter decided to depict the subject who covers his face with a veil to not see Iphigenia passing out[471]. Beauty is, in this case, the main trait that must be

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[465] Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, Berlin: Karl-Maria Guth 2016, p. 9.
[466] Laokoon is punished by Athena for having understood Ulysses' trick of the horse of Troy, and for consequently having shot the first lance at the belly of the horse. The legend, belonging to the Greek epics, is told in Virgil's *Aeneid*.
[467] The marbled sculpture preserved in the Vatican Museums is probably the copy an original bronze Hellenistic work.
[468] The work was built under the influence of Hellenistic representations, where the feelings grow of importance in comparison to their withheld appearance during the Classic Age.
[469] Lessing, *Laokoon*, pp. 18-20.
[470] Lessing uses the term *hässlich*.
[471] Lessing, *Laokoon*, p. 19. The painting influenced the reproduction of this scene made by Pietro Testa, *Sacrificio di Ifigenia* (1640-1642).

preserved in the image. The same can be said about the relationship between figurative art and the concept of need: in Greek and Roman art, it is frequent to find works where the notion of realism that would influence the presence of some elements in the picture is made secondary: this is evident in the absence of cloths in the *Laokoon*, an element that, despite its being logically present in the scene, would hinder the observer to see the beauty of Laokoon's twisted body.

This discourse leads to a second reflection, the one regarding the need, for the figurative art, to choose a precise moment of an entire story to represent the very core of its message. The problem stems from the trait that Lessing ascribes the most to *Malerei* in comparison to *Dichtkunst*: its distance from the notion progressive action. The work of figurative art nourishes itself of the observer's fantasy, which has to deduce the past and the future of the depicted moment, but also makes an instant last eternally, since the fragment of a scene is depicted as devoid of its progressiveness[472]. The representation of Medea made by Timomachus (1st century BC) is exemplificative of this phenomenon: the painter depicted the woman in the moment when she is going to make her decision to kill her children. The observers experience her thought, know what tragedy is going to happen because they know the myth, but still might have an irrational hope that the woman will take a different decision in the end and will let her children live on. No element of the picture can give certainty of Medea's destiny. This tension is something typical of the figurative art, which does not exist in poetry.

Now, let's get to the one consequence of this reflection that links Lessing's theories with the research on literary space that developed in the last hundred years: after observing this connection between visual depiction (in painting and sculpture) and the idea of a 'decisive instant' that must synthetize the message of an entire story, Lessing explains that the lack of progressive action in figurative art constitutes a good premise to separate this concept from the notion of the passing of time. Figurative art belongs to the representation in space, a task which it accomplishes perfectly since it allows the synthesis of several parts into the same depicted product: when put in a painted or sculptured image, these parts result in a global impression. This is the main difference between *Dichtung* and *Malerei* that is presented in the *Laokoon*: literature is not able to provide this same synthesis. When a poet describes an object that must be visualized by the reader in space, they must list a series of parts that must be synthetized by the reader only through their imagination.

Literature, therefore, cannot belong to the notion of space as much as it belongs to the concept of progressiveness, or of the passing of time. This main difference defines the divergent categories that must be used in criticism to evaluate the work of figurative or of literary art. Lessing defines literature

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[472] Lessing, *Laokoon*, pp. 24-25.

as the field of art that deals with 'plots'; on the contrary, as shown in the following sequence, *Malerei* must be associated with the depiction of 'bodies'[473]:

Doch alle Körper existieren nicht allein in dem Raume, sondern auch in der Zeit. Sie dauern fort, und können in jedem Augenblicke ihrer Dauer anders erscheinen, und in anderer Verbindung stehen. Jede dieser augenblicklichen Erscheinungen und Verbindungen ist die Wirkung einer vorhergehenden, und kann die Ursache einer folgenden, und sonach gleichsam das Zentrum einer Handlung sein. Folglich kann die Malerei auch Handlungen nachahmen, aber nur andeutungsweise durch Körper.

Auf der andern Seite können Handlungen nicht für sich selbst bestehen, sondern müssen gewissen Wesen anhängen. In so fern nun diese Wesen Körper sind, oder als Körper betrachtet werden, schildert die Poesie auch Körper, aber nur andeutungsweise durch Handlungen.

The consequences of this statements were actually meaningful and long lasting: Lessing's aesthetic system had classified *Malerei* as the art of space, that delt with objects and bodies and was therefore to evaluate for its efficiency in representing a certain object more than for its invention of the object[474]. On the other hand, *Dichtung* had been classified as the art of time, excluded from the notion of space because of it lacking a synthetizing device.

Although it is not possible to acquire the necessary information about Meyrink's knowledge of Lessing's essay, the circulation of the *Laokoon* in Germanophone context during his time cannot be ignored, and the fact that only after 1945 it was really possible to contest Lessing's refusal of any connection between literature and space gives a clear idea of the extremely close relationship linking literature, word and temporality that was conceivable for Meyrink. Moreover, an association between image and absence of time was increased, on the other hand, by the technological progress in photography and cinema, a series of devices which had developed according to the principle to make an instant everlasting, and which generated the impression of defeating time. The fact that Meyrink's narrative concentrates on space and theorizes the absence of time can be, therefore, the main element to understand Adam Trapp's reflection on the power of the image at the detriment of the word.

Conclusions on the apocalyptical hermeneutic of the researched texts and of the Prague Paradigm

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[473] Lessing, *Laokoon*, p. 77: „Gegenstände, die neben einander oder deren Teile neben einander existieren, heißen Körper. Folglich sind Körper mit ihren sichtbaren Eigenschaften, die eigentlichen Gegenstände der Malerei.
Gegenstände, die auf einander, oder deren Teile auf einander folgen, heißen überhaupt Handlungen. Folglich sind Handlungen der eigentliche Gegenstand der Poesie."

[474] Lessing, p. 63: „Die Ursache scheinet diese zu sein. Bei dem Artisten dünket uns die Ausführung schwerer, als die Erfindung; bei dem Dichter hingegen ist es umgekehrt, und seine Ausführung dünket uns gegen die Erfindung das Leichtere."

To conclude this extremely dense chapter, it is necessary to summarize the results achieved in this first analysis of Meyrink's poetics.

First of all, a clear analysis of Meyrink's attention to the topic of visuality in early stages of his work has been conducted to highlight the role of the image in his poetics and in his worldview. In order to make this attention apparent, it has been decided to focus in first instance on the Exposé of *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, where the connection between pictorial imagination and writing is stated by Meyrink in the paragraph *Vorbemerkungen*, *Stil und Diktion*. Two programmatical parameters of Meyrink's creation are introduced through this document: the importance of *optisch wirkend* descriptions and the presence of two narrative layers in his idea of literary production - the superficial plot and the essential esoteric meaning. This stated, the presence of Meyrink's attention to concrete descriptions has been further highlighted through the observation of his notes preserved in the Meyrinkiana, where a series of references to images possessing a high visual and symbolic charge can be found. It was also pointed out that these images are often reported in Meyrink's notebooks long before they found a destination in defined literary experiments and were in fact first written down in virtue of their interesting visual impact. The analysis of these notes has been supported by earlier analysis of Meyrink's archival material, especially Manfred Lube's reflections. Once this interest in visuality has been commented through the Meyrinkiana material, a more practical example of Meyrink's work on concrete descriptions has been shown by introducing the editing of the manuscript *Meister Leonhard* preserved in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv. Gottbrath's earlier work on Meyrink's manuscripts was especially meaningful to this analysis, in that it made it possible to treat the considered interpolations as part of Meyrink's own editing process. The observation of the manuscript highlighted how Meyrink's inclination towards visuality is hinted at by his interpolations aiming at a clearer depiction of the relationship between main character and surrounding environment, a relationship which changes progressively following the character's esoteric path of self-discovery. This observation was necessary as a premise for the analysis on the interpretation of space in Meyrink's novels that was conducted in chapters 4, 5, and 6: this premise is that, especially when it comes to main characters, Meyrink focuses more on environmental depictions than on descriptions of the characters themselves because it is the relationship between character and environment that can be interpreted as main interest of his narration. The importance of this relationship can be explained as metaphor for the change of the character's point of view and of their renewed perspective on life and on their interpretation of reality.

In second instance, Meyrink's spatial patterns have been interpreted and defined through the model of the 'Prague paradigm'. The notion of Prague paradigm refers to Meyrink using traits initially attributed to the Prague invented for the novels *Der Golem* and in *Walpurgisnacht* to conceive and describe other environments in his later works. To demonstrate the persistence of a Prague model in works set in other contexts and to understand the importance of this metaphor in the entire work of the author, a second analysis was conducted starting from the beginning of *Der Lotse*. Here, the description of the initial situation where the I-narrator tells about his suicidal intentions in his apartment in Prague and later describes the appearance of a book under his house door, was observed by pointing out the traits of this sequence that can be traced back to some of Meyrink's favorite narrative patterns: the city of Prague, a generic spiritual guide named *der Lotse*, the physical threshold represented by the house door, the overstepping of the door by a salvific agent and, eventually, the materialization of this agent in a manuscript. Once these traits have been pointed out, the counterposing of two layers in Meyrink's worldview was suggested. The existence of these two layers of reality is hinted at in *der Lotse* through the copybook, metaphor for the idea of 'reading' the world in a different way to achieve a spiritual growth. In order to give an appropriate explanation of the opposition between appearance and essence in Meyrink's worldview, the analysis conducted by Thierfelder on the author's philosophical and religious perspective was introduced, and the notion of *Scheinbild*, counterposed to a hidden truth that must be revealed, was discussed from an esoteric as well as from a cultural point of view, referring to the 'crisis feeling' strongly thematized during the *fin de siècle* and to the reflections of individual perception following Idealism.

The presence of this double structure appearance/essence was then identified as main trait of Meyrink's space invention, and the analysis of the feuilletons *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* helped highlighting the correspondence between this structure and the author's invention of Prague. The choice of these feuilletons instead of the novels *Der Golem* and *Walpurgisnacht* as examples for the analysis was led by the assumption that the formers have been written during the same years of the mentioned programmatic Exposé – which means, in a phase where the author's reflection of his own poetics was mature. Moreover, the feuilletons focus on Prague's nature in and of itself, as the plot is reduced to the minimum and the city is the actual protagonist of both texts. The investigation of the patterns regarding the representation of Prague in the two texts suggested the possible interpretation of the Bohemian capital as apocalyptic landscape in Meyrink's work: especially the role of threshold attributed to Prague in both *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* can be understood as an apocalyptic position, but not revealing an otherworldly dimension as much as explicative about a structure of the present reality both in its temporal and spatial categories. In order to understand whether there is a continuity between this apocalyptic concept of Prague and other fundamental spaces conceived by the author, it

has been shown that there is a contact between this spatial conception and the project of the building of the Peacock House which is central to the plot in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*. The Peacock House is in Meyrink's text the representation of a threshold space which possesses numerous traits working as revelation devices, such as: the humidity stain, the apparent ability to grow (causing the building to exist between the living and the lifeless), the power to give eternal life and so forth. The author's use of references to the semantic field of the threshold is the main connection to the space of Prague depicted in *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, as well as in Meyrink's novels *Der Golem* and *Walpurgisnacht*. Other elements suggesting the semantic overlapping between Meyrink's Prague and the Peacock House relate to the sphere of the eccentricity: the way the building resembles a crowded city where East and West seem to meet and its threshold position between two kinds of reality makes it similar to an eccentric city where the apocalyptic quality is intrinsic to its nature. This further connection to Prague reinforces the possibility to trace a clear spatial paradigm in Meyrink's spatial worldbuilding, by highlighting traits that affect both the representation of metropolitan environments and of the analyzed heterotopic building – which is the last complex space conceived by the author, made up for a work that was meant to summarize his esoteric experiences in an advanced phase of his career. The constant reference to elements of Prague emerging from his novels and his feuilletons to depict the Peacock House makes it possible to identify this city as a reference model.

As final result, the emergence of this paradigm allows the reader to associate the characteristics of *Der Golem*'s Prague with Meyrink's conception of reality on the one hand, and with Meyrink's conception of spiritual growth on the other. This space becomes therefore the main metaphor to be considered the basis for Meyrink's literary environments.

As third result, the *Zeitlosigkeit* was identified as fundamental structure in the Prague paradigm. This trait was investigated initially by outlining the communication between Meyrink's model of apocalyptic Prague and Apollinaire's texts *Le passant de Prague* and *Zone*, a communication which also highlighted the links between Meyrink's Prague and the eccentric Prague in the European *Fin de Siècle* literature. This section observed the apocalyptic quality of the symbols mentioned in both Meyrink's feuilletons and Apollinaire's texts and focused especially on those suggesting references to a peculiar conception of time: the clock of the Town Hall, the Jewish clock in the Jewish district, Apollinaire's mention of the Eternal Jew as a city guide and Meyrink's anonymous guide in the Daliborka. Apollinaire's addressing the Eternal Jew not only resembles Meyrink's mention of eternal Prague historical characters, but also allows to extend the notions of eternity and timelessness to the

city of Amsterdam, referenced next to Prague in *Zone* by Apollinaire and elected as main landscape of the narration by Meyrink in *Das grüne Gesicht*.

In order to further demonstrate the importance of the notion *Zeitlosigkeit* for Meyrink's Prague, the presence of psychotops suggesting a persistence of past dimensions in the present as well as a cyclicity of history was analyzed more in detail, along with the presence of 'timeless' characters such as Meyrink's Countess Zahradka, by using *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt* and *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* as reference points once again. Similar phenomena of timelessness are present in other Meyrink's invented spaces: here, an analysis of these phenomena in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* was also conducted in order to highlight how *Zeitlosigkeit* can be considered part of the Prague paradigm introduced in the chapter as structural element of Meyrink's space depiction.

Furtherly, a connection between image and timelessness has been established, in order to identify the reasons for Meyrink's privileging the idea of image at the detriment of the 'word' in his poetics. Hypotheses on this matter were made in first instance by mentioning the connection between sight and personal growth expressed in *Bilder im Luftraum*; the parts of the text meaningful in this regard, where the author explained how his creativity is linked to visuality and to an acquired new awareness of himself and of the world surrounding him, were quoted and commented at the beginning of the chapter. A second element explaining the superiority of the *Bild* in Meyrink's worldview is given through an association between the idea of image and the idea of atemporality. Starting from the idea of *Scheinbild* in opposition to the true, not concrete dimension that must be revealed to the Chosen protagonist, it is hypothesized that the *Scheinbild* is characterized by an apparent temporality that is widely discussed as a *Trugbild* in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*. The link between visuality and timelessness has been analyzed through considerations connecting image and timelessness in view of Lessing's reflection on poetry and figurative arts. This led to a possible association of the image with the absence of time: poetry is considered by Lessing a form of art that is bound to the temporal layer, since written narration follows a line of consequential episodes, and the representation of a scene in poetry must be conducted through the description of singular parts introduced one by one. The vision provided by the art of writing lacks immediacy and a clear view of the whole. The analysis in this chapter hypothesized that this lacking view can be associated to Meyrink's reflection on the imperfection and on the fallacy of words, which are a metaphor for the fallacy of the *Scheinbild* that is target of Meyrink's objection, and that has been defined by the author as temporal. The concept of image being an atemporal and also a 'spatial' art, elaborated by Lessing and reported in the chapter, has been then connected to Meyrink's preference for the image – which, as he states, is the real dimension at the ground of the authentic world.

A last resemblance can be observed between Meyrink's Prague paradigm and apocalyptic texts providing a 'romantic' concept of revelation. Both *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag* and *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, as well as *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, tell the path of a character who is learning to see the real structure of the world as something existing beyond the perceived reality; both reference the concept of timelessness as constitutive of the revealed dimension. In the texts analyzed in this chapter, differently from the final part of *Das grüne Gesicht*, the revelation does not have the collapse of the perceived reality as an outcome, but, in fact, shows how the apocalyptic structure of the text is based on the act of revelation itself, and how it is connected to the personal growth of the main characters. It can be said, from this perspective, that the eschatological discourse in these texts is not oriented towards annihilation as revealing instrument. The strong connection between the apocalypse understood as discovery of the second dimension and the development of Meyrink's character in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* and of the I-narrators in the two short stories can remind of the ethical hermeneutic mentioned in chapter 1.4.3, theorized by Douglas Robinson in *Apocalyptic and Literature*: ethical hermeneutic designates a series of works having an apocalyptical perspective not as they observe the dismantling of a society or of a physically collapsing world, but as they show the destruction of ideas, thoughts, systems of feelings and philosophies, and as they point, by doing so, to the creation of a new system of ideas influencing the individual world experience.

Works possessing such a structure are "ethical in their intent" in that "what the external upheavals do occur on the outside bring about the end (and transformation) of something on the inside"[475] and also deliver the message that meaningful changes are not meant to stem from cosmic forces or from very high political dimensions only, since revolutions can also occur in the individuum, and the ethical personal growth is attributed a new importance. The revolution of thought is understood, in these texts, as the real engine moving the eschatological progress. That the importance of ethical and spiritual revolution in Meyrink's work is extreme does not need further explanation, and the topic will also be discussed in the next chapters. However, which direction this revolution of thought should take according to Meyrink can be better understood in light of another hermeneutic of the five theorized by Robinson. This hermeneutic can really apply to Meyrink's texts in a general framework, and is the 'romantic' one.

Romantic hermeneutic, as introduced by Douglas Robinson, applies to works where the apocalyptic process reveals in fact a second structure of reality, but where it is also implied that the revealed content is not a newly created dimension, but a part of everyday reality that was not visible to human beings earlier. This perspective is mentioned by Robinson by referencing William Blake's

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[475] Robinson, *Apocalyptic and Literature*, p. 383.

interpretation of the *Book of Revelation* and Northrop Frye's comment on Blake's ideas[476]. William Blake writes in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that:

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life[477], and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite, and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. […]

If the doors of perception where cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is: infinite.

For man has disclosed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.[478]

The apocalypse is seen here as a path towards knowledge and towards a new way of perceiving (sensual enjoyment) where the images used by Blake mainly refer to the act of opening: the cherub guarding the gate to Eden is ordered to leave, the doors of perception are cleansed and the people are not dependent on the narrow, limited vision resembling the Platonic cavern[479] anymore. The collapse of the perceived world is here not an ending, but the dismantling of wrong assumptions in regard to reality, a dismantling which is necessary since reality is experienced by human beings as something limited and lacking, while it is, in fact, infinite[480]. Most important is, in this case, that the renewed world discovered in the *Book of Revelation* is, according to Blake, present in everyday life already[481]. Starting from this premise, the romantic hermeneutic can be applied to texts which give the same message Blake attributes to John's apocalypse, i.e., the overlapping between revealed content and everyday reality. The revelation given to Adam Trapp in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* is appropriate in mirroring these criteria: the man discovers, by looking for Felicitas, the continuity between life and death, but also the overlapping between the concrete world and an otherworldly dimension which is, in fact, nothing but the very structure of his everyday reality. Moreover, this second dimension is so clearly part of Adam's life that it is accessible through a normal wall, provided that there is a desire

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[476] Frye, Northrop, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1947.

[477] The tree of life is also present in *Das grüne Gesicht* during the collapse.

[478] Blake, William, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in: Blake, William, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erman, Doubleday: Garden City 1965, p. 39.

[479] See: Chapter 4 also addresses the matter of knowledge related to the image of the cavern in the figure of Chider Grün.

[480] See: Robinson, p. 370: "The old husk of the world, the false reality that *we* take for real, Blake images as the "Covering Cherub" from Genesis 3:24 and Ezekiel 28:14-16, the living creature that God stationed at the gate of Eden to block humankind from the tree of life, whose fruit would make humans into gods. By destroying that Cherub – or, here, by simply ordering it to depart – the poet opens the gate to paradise and to humanity's natural divinity."

[481] Useful of this perspective is that Blake associates the apocalyptic eschatology with the revelation of a dimension devoid of time and of limits in general. See: Welch, Dennis, *Center, Circumference, and Vegetation Symbolism in the Writings of William Blake*. Most of Blake's words related to infiniteness of reality must be understood as part of his discourse against John Locke's philosophy of eternity, which described the concept as a mathematical process related to division and multiplication, and in fact refused to attribute it a real limitlessness.

to walk through the humidity stain. The responsibility is, hence, given only to the observer: Adam attempted to learn the real structure of reality because of his pain, and discovered it by refusing the limits imposed by rationality and common sense, but nothing has changed in the world itself. The only revolutionary action in this story is Adam acquiring knowledge: his revelation is personal, despite it regarding the entire universe. A similar perspective is pertinent to the short story that is acknowldged as propedeutic to *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, *Der Uhrmacher*, where the clock worker states: "die bürgerliche Uhr geht ihren alten Gang, doch den Weg aus dem Bannkreis der Zeit des Menschentiers weisen auch ihre Zeiger nicht. Trächtig sind alle ihre Stunden – jede mit einem anderen Ideal –, aber was zur Welt kommt, ist ein Wechselbalg"[482]. In this case too, the revelation of the artisan is not about the discovery of a new world, but about human perception of time and space in the present one, where the perceived time is a *Wechselbalg* despite the truth hidden even in the "bourgeois clock", whose hours are in fact "pregnant" but not understood. The I-narrator of the story experiences the deconstruction of his perception, in an apocalyptic process where the revealed reality is not external to the perceived one. The association between this revelation moment and the romantic hermeneutic leads to a more certain categorization of the author's spatial models as apocalyptic.

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[482] *Der Uhrmacher*, in: *Haus zur letzten Latern*, p. 155.

Chapter 4

**The apocalyptic perspective in the space of Amsterdam
in Gustav Meyrink's *Das Grüne Gesicht***

1. Introduction: Amsterdam and the eccentric metropolises in *Mitteleuropa*

Gustav Meyrink's novel *Das Grüne Gesicht*, published in 1916 for the Kurt Wolff-Verlag, can be seen as a peculiar episode set between the novels *Der Golem* (1915) and *Walpurgisnacht* (1917), two works that achieved great success and that contributed in shaping a certain literary image of Prague characterized by recurring dark and mystical elements, where a strong connection between the past and the present of the Bohemian metropolis is stressed.

Even at a first glance, *Das Grüne Gesicht* appears different from the Prague novels for the scarce attention it drew and for being set in the capital of the Netherlands. The choice of this backdrop is a unique occurrence in Meyrink's work and is even more surprising in light of the fact that, despite the accuracy of the topographic indications provided in the novel and the close attention to urban descriptions, the author's relationship with Amsterdam is weak at best[483]. The notes preserved in the Meyrinkiana of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek concern mainly the philosophical message of the novel and do not show evidence of Meyrink's work on the topographic aspect of his conception despite the importance acquired by the space of Amsterdam in the narration. Some notes on Amsterdam's environmental component are in fact preserved in part in Amsterdam itself, in an archive which was not possible to visit during this research, the Meyrinkiana-Sammlung in the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermeneutica. The material of this archive has been presented by Theodor Harmsen in his monography *Gustav Meyrink und seine Freunde* (2010). Of the *Notizbuch* present in the Amsterdam collection, Harmsen published a page related to *Das grüne Gesicht* where Meyrink noted phrases in Dutch and street names[484]. Harmsen considers the notes of the novel preserved in the BPH as the first preparatory guidelines to the project:

Das Notizbuch aus der Sammlung der BPH hatte Meyrink wahrscheinlich während der Entstehungsphase des Romans *Das grüne Gesicht* in Gebrauch. Darin sammelte er u.a. Informationen über das Straßenbild und die Gebäude von

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[483] Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der* Magie, p. 554.
[484] Harmsen, Theodor, *Gustav Meyrink und seine Freunde*, p. 136.

Amsterdam, den ungewöhnlichen Schauplatz des Romans. Er notierte auch niederländische Worte und Sätze, die schließlich in den Roman Eingang fanden. Meyrink war des Niederländischen nicht mächtig, wie aus dem Notizbuch und dem Roman auch hervorgeht. Warum ist Amsterdam Ort der Handlung und nicht Prag, München oder Wien? Natürlich war das Amsterdam des 17. Jahrhunderts ein Babel der Sekten, ein magisches Zentrum. Möglicherweise bot sich auch das moderne Amsterdam als Handlungskulisse an, da die Stadt nicht von dem Ersten Weltkrieg betroffen war und der Roman in einem zukünftigen Nachkriegseuropa spielt.[485]

Given the several Meyrink's stories set in unknown and sometimes imaginary places, it must be pointed out that the environment of *Das Grüne Gesicht* does not belong to the marvellous atmospheres of his fairytales and that the plot of this novel is strongly connected to European socio-political changes provoked by the Great War: Meyrink's intent in writing *Das Grüne Gesicht* was openly explaining his view on the meaning of the conflict[486]. Meyrink's world building in this text is precise, detailed, and it shows a relatively good knowledge of Amsterdam's topography. The constant use of toponyms and references to realistic itineraries proves the author's interest in the urban structure and in spatial representation in general. Unlike from what happens in other texts of Meyrink's, the plot of *Das Grüne Gesicht* does not revolve around a certain district or a certain house:[487] the story takes place in a wider environment, the range of character actions expands constantly, and historical buildings and urban myths do not play the important role attributed to them in *Der Golem*, in *Die Walpurgisnacht* and in *Der Engel vom Westlichen Fenster*. It is true, anyway, that most of the mentioned places are now part of the historic centre of Amsterdam, which is not surprising in light of the fact that Meyrink's main source of information about the city was probably a tourist guide: the list of mentioned districts includes Nes, Zeedijk, the Jewish district Jodenbuurt, the Herengracht, the Saint Nicholas Cathedral. Three zones of the suburbs are referenced: Hilversum, Hooigracht (Leyden), as well as an anonymous plain in front of Amsterdam (on the eastern side) where the main character Hauberrisser moves during the last part of the novel.

The central role of space within the narration is evident in the detailed descriptions of the aforementioned areas but is also explicit in one of the main focuses of the plot: an apocalyptical storm that destroys Amsterdam in the final chapters. A close reading of this space requires an analysis of Amsterdam's topographic traits that are given in the text and an understanding of the semiotic implications of its peculiar position, a reflection that can be conducted with the help of Jurij Lotman's theorization of concentric and eccentric metropolis, a dichotomy that also shows connections between Meyrink's depiction of the Dutch capital and his representation of other central European cities such Vienna and Prague. To do so, this research simulates a possible use of the space theories introduced

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[485] Harmsen, Theodor, *Gustav Meyrink und seine Freunde*, p. 138.
[486] Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der* Magie, p. 554.
[487] See Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 149.

in Susanne Fritz's text *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes* in analysing the spatial representation of Amsterdam in the novel, since it discusses the peculiar relationship between semiotic elements proper of central European cities and the *topoi* that characterize literary depictions of this areas. Fritz's study concentrates, after this premises, on space theories related to Vienna, Trieste and Venice, the main urban areas in Central Europe in the 19th century beside Prague, and describes the connection between their appearance, mythology and history and their representation in literary works during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century. Her analysis makes it clear that the three cities show meaningful common elements from a topographic and cultural point of view, and highlights the literary tropes which address the multiculturalism these metropolises, their border position and their particular atmosphere of obscurity and, especially during the *Fin de Siècle*, of decadence.

Trieste is normally described as crossroad between Italian, Slovenian and Austrian culture, where Italian is conventionally the main language but Slovenians represent more than half of the population, while the political system depends on Austrian administration. The co-existence of these three cultures gives birth to conflicts and uncertainty, which consequently lead to an identity crisis that is evident in literary texts but is also visible in the transition to modernity and to the industrial world. In her work *Arbeitundkulturvereine und die Entwicklung städtischer Öffentlichkeit in Triest vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, Sabine Ruter affirms that the ethnical conflicts in Trieste are strongly linked to wider social phenomena such as the lack of a stable border between the metropolitan areas and the suburbs and the enormous immigration waves from eastern districts to the city, an immigration that threatened the unstable balance among the three cultures but was typical of the Austro-Hungarian empire[488].

The mythical traits ascribed to Venice show other motifs, though multiculturalism is present in this city as well. Due to its geographical traits it is seen as the sinking city, but also as a city arising from the waves, whose literary representation is inseparable from the laguna:

Die Nähe zum Elementaren ist für die Imagination Venedigs entscheidend: Keine andere Stadt führt (verführt) so sehr zu aquatischen (z. T. ozeanischen) Träumen. Sie befindet sich am Schnittpunkt von Natur und Kultur, von Natur und Geschichte.[489]

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[488] Ruter, Sabine, *Arbeiterkulturvereine und Entwicklung städtischer Öffentlichkeit in Triest vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, in: Andreas R. Hoffmann / Anna Veronika Wendland (Hgg.), *Stadt und Öffentlichkeit in Ostmitteleuropa 1900-1939. Beiträge zur Entstehung moderner Urbanität zwischen Berlin, Charkiv, Tallin und Triest*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2002, p. 197.
[489] Dieterle, Bernard, *Die versunkene Stadt. Sechs Kapitel zum literarische Venedig-Mythos*, Frankfurt am Main/Bern: Peter Lang 1995, p. 16.

The idea of *Schnittpunkt* connects Venice to the notion of threshold that has been mentioned as decisive for the eccentric model[490]. It is interesting to note that the eccentricity of this city mainly depends on her relationship with nature, which is considered more important than its geographic border position. This makes the connection between Venice imaginary and Lotman's starting point for the discourse on eccentric cities, Saint Peterburg's text, extremely relevant:

L'eterna lotta fra gli elementi naturali e la cultura, basata sull'idea della città dannata, si manifesta nel mito di Pietroburgo come antitesi fra l'acqua e la pietra. Questa pietra non è naturale, ma elaborata dall'uomo, non è roccia che si trova lì da sempre, ma pietra che vi è stata trasportata, levigata "umanizzata", "culturalizzata". Perciò nel mito di Pietroburgo la pietra, la roccia, lo scoglio non hanno le abituali caratteristiche dell'immobilità, della stabilità, della capacità di contrastare la forza impetuosa dei venti e delle onde, ma hanno la caratteristica antinaturale di potersi spostare.[491]

[The eternal fight between nature and culture, based on the idea of the damned city, shows itself in the myth of Petersburg as antithesis between water and stone. This stone is not natural, but elaborated by human beings, it is not rock existing there ever since, it is stone which has been moved, levigated, "humanized" und "culturalized". Therefore, in the myth of Petersburg the stone, the rock and the cliff do not have the usual traits of immobility, of stability, of the ability to contrast the impetuous force of wind and waves, but they possess the anti-natural characteristic to be able to move.]

Both quoted passages thematize the fight between culture and nature, where culture must be intended as human element and as consequent creation of urban spaces. The previous chapter about the fall of Amsterdam clarified the instability of its position as mediator between earth and sky and highlighted the characteristics that made the fight against nature extremely violent. When it comes to establishing a stronger connection to a central European city of the constellation, the evident similarities between Amsterdam and Venice allow to trace a path that links the Italian city, Meyrink's Amsterdam and Lotman's thoughts about the eccentricity of Saint Petersburg: then, this path highlights how Meyrink's Amsterdam belongs to the constellation of eccentric cities in virtue of its fight for outliving, which means the constant tension between emerging and submerging. When it comes to the natural element of water, it can be interesting to point out how its semiotic interpretation changes in comparison to its appearance in literature on concentric metropolises, such as in the case of Paris, which in 18th and 19th century French literature can be conceived as "a place of scintillating energies, exemplified here be the grand display of running water bursting from drain sprouts and rolling across rooftops in a rainstorm"[492]. Contrarily, water in Venice does not stand for life or vitality, but expresses a feeling of stagnation and putrefaction, beside the danger the sea represents for the Italian city.

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[490] See: Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 53.
[491] Lotman, *Il simbolismo di Pietroburgo e i problemi della semiotica della città*, p. 228.
[492] Robert Alart, *Imagining the City*, p. 10.

In regard to the protagonist of Venice literature, Fritz observes that a consistent part of literary myths revolving around this city do not concentrate on its history as much as they focus on the idea of Venice as *Reisestadt*:

Der Venedig-Mythos wurde damit im Gegensatz zu den Mythen Prags oder Triests nicht von einheimischen Literaten geprägt, die eine fragwürdig gewordene Existenz in ihrer Heimat reflektieren, sondern ist mit seiner Entstehung in der mannigfaltigen europäischen Reiseliteratur und ihrer Perspektive eines „Blickes von außen" begründet[493].

The perspective of the foreigner is characterized by the establishment of a relationship between a lyrical "I" whose attitude must be mostly traced back to the canons of romantic literature, especially the one stemming in British context: the foreign "I" mirrors in the laguna and discovers his inner world together with the city. This moment is therefore an authentic form of encounter, where the city meets the poet/traveler and *vice versa*[494]. However, what distinguishes the relationship created through this encounter is observation, implicit in the act of mirroring, activity that requires attention and knowledge to interpret and read space, but still more passive than other ways of experiencing environment. Hence, beside the perspective of the foreigner, the *flaneur*, when considering this figure embodiment of inaction, leisure, and detachment, can be mentioned as ideal narrator or spectator in Venice literature, since the presence of water can be seen as an element that enhances passivity and distance in the observer:

Dieses passivische Moment des Vorübergleitens von der „aquatischen" Menge kann in Venedig seine Entsprechung in der Gondelfahrt finden: das Ich läßt sich auf dem Wasser treiben, läßt die Palazzi vorübergleiten, genießt die Stadt als pure Erscheinung und macht sie gleichzeitig zu „seinem" Raum.

The *topoi* related to the eccentricity of Venice highlight, then, not only its relationship with nature, but also the role of the foreign observer and the *flaneur* as narrative instruments that are valid for literature on eccentric metropolises.

Fritz further points out parallelisms between the representation of Prague and the representation of Vienna in literary texts and in journalism. Vienna is set on the west-east axis of European culture, initially described as the most eastern "west city" because of its geographical position and then depicted as an urban area that acquired many eastern traits due to the immigration waves from Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia. Mainly because of this second characteristic, it can be

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[493] Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 52. This assumption must be read in a perspective where Fritz involves the works that mainly influenced the literary image of Venice in European context between 18th century, beginning of the "Grand Tours", and the first half of the 20th century.

[494] Dieterle, *Die versunkene Stadt*, p. 19.

identified as *Porta Orientis*, the Gate to East, an image Vienna shares with Prague. This position also gives Vienna multicultural traits which are present in the Bohemian city as well, but also describes its being involved in the conflict between the German and the Slavic parts of the Austrian Empire, an element that highly influenced its social and political position especially between the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century[495]. A second axis on which Vienna can be set is the urbanization-land axis, which explains how the city's development towards modernity changed and embittered its relationship with the suburbs, which did not experience the same industrial and cultural acceleration. These two axes (west-east and urbanization-land) show Vienna's border position, making its condition of threshold and its eccentricity evident, and point out the high level of conflict that characterized its atmosphere:

Soon new social groups raised claims to political participation: the peasantry, the urban artisans and workers, and the Slavic peoples. In the 1880's these groups formed mass parties to challenge the liberal hegemony—anti-Semitic Christian Socials and Pan-Germans, Socialists, and Slavic nationalists. Their success was rapid. […] The Christian Social demagogues began a decade of rule in Vienna which combined all that was anathema to classical liberalism: anti-Semitism, clericalism, and municipal socialism. On the national level as well, the liberals were broken as a parliamentary political power by 1900, never to revive. They had been crushed by modern mass movements, Christian, anti-Semitic, socialist, and nationalist.[496]

The fact that these tensions do not seem to be mirrored in Vienna's literature of this period highlights the peculiarities of the reaction of the artists working in this context, which concentrate on inwardness and usually create characters defined by passivity and aestheticism, who actually concentrate in perfectioning themselves and their lifestyle, characters who are not so different from the *flaneur* in their tendency to leisure and abstract self-reflection[497]. Hence, the close relationship between Vienna and the discovery of subconscious and its exploration of the states of consciousness, individual perception and so forth, is not surprising.

Now, it should be reminded that Fritz's discourse on Vienna, Venice and Trieste aims, as the title of her studies suggest, at establishing a constellation of literary urban landscapes that can interact with the so-called *Prager Text* (see: chapter 2.4.2.), and this defines the consequent belonging of Prague to the system of eccentric cities of Central Europe, although this is only true for Prague's German literature, and not for the Czech literary context, since the city has a peripheric and border position in

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[495] Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, p. 25.
[496] Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, p. 25.
[497] Relatable to the aforementioned image of the gondola on Venice laguna is Schorke's definition of this phenomenon: "As his sense of what Hofmannsthal called *das Gleitende*, the slipping away of the world, increased, the bourgeois turned his appropriated aesthetic culture inward to the cultivation of the self, of his personal uniqueness. This tendency inevitably led to preoccupation with one's own psychic life. It provides the link between devotion to art and concern with the psyche." (Schorske, *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, p. 27)

the K.u.k monarchy but a central position as the capital of Bohemia. Typical traits of Prague German literature between 19th and 20th century have already been analysed in the methodological chapter, and the similarities between the main topics of this literature and the ones listed for the cities of Vienna, Venice and Trieste are evident, above all the interaction between different cultural systems (German, Czech and Jewish)[498] and decadence[499]. What is interesting of Fritz analysis in regard to Meyrink's Amsterdam is the occurrence, in the mentioned Central European system, of traits that are relatable to the image of the Dutch capital given in *Das Grüne Gesicht* and in some cases to the biography of the author as well (this is true for Vienna and Prague). The decisive role of water and the tension between emerging and submerging establishes a link between Amsterdam and Venice as well as the high number of foreigners that characterize its atmosphere, creating a sense of multiculturality[500] that in a certain measure belongs to Amsterdam's myth of religious tolerance[501] and constant cultural exchange linked to maritime commerce through the West India Company. Starting from these premises, this chapter makes an in-depth analysis of traits which make possible to categorize, at least in some aspects, Meyrink's Amsterdam as an eccentric city, such as the absence of mediation between the Dutch capital and a higher cosmic plan, its consequent fight against natural elements, the presence of decadent *topoi* and, on a narrative level, the presence of the perspective of the foreigner and of a particular kind of *flaneur* who experiences by walking the foreshadowing of an incoming catastrophe and can then be distinguished by the Parisian and Londoner stroller. These elements also connects this idea of eccentricity to the notion of apocalyptic. Further, a special attention is given to the relationship between space depiction in the novel and the dichotomy individuality/anonymity in Meyrink's discourse.

2. Introduction to *Zeitlosigkeit* in Meyrink's characters: Chider Grün, Antoinette de Bourignon and Jan Swammerdam

2.1. Notes on "Chider Grün"

An analysis of the figure of Chider Grün, the mystical character that can be considered the main premise of the story, gives a preliminary idea of the overlapping of several cultural spheres in the

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[498] These cultures are listed as topics: *Deutschtum*, *Tschechentum*, *Judentum*. (Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, pp. 33-46)
[499] Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, pp. 59-63.
[500] In this case, it is hard to talk about a transcultural system because of the recent migrant wave depicted in the novel, although the interaction between different philosophies and cultures is, as is stated in the next paragraphs, highly present.
[501] See: Schöffer, I, *The Jews in the Netherlands: The position of a minority through three centuries*, in: Studia Rosenthaliana, March 1981, Vol. 15, n. 1, pp. 85-100; Lesger, Clé/ Van Leeuwen, Marco H.D., *Residential Segregation from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Century: Evidence from the Netherlands*, in: The Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Winter 2012, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Winter 2012), pp. 333-369.

narration. The name Chider Grün can be traced back to a character of the eighteenth surah of the Qu'ran (the sura of "The Cave"), al-Khidr (variants: Khider, Khadir, Khedìr, Khizìr), whose name literally means: "the green". The surah is divided into three parts, the first being dedicated to the legend of the Seven Sleepers, seven men who had fled religious persecution by hiding in a cave. As a reward for their pure faith, Allah gives them a deep sleep and allows them to survive unconsciously for 309 years. When they wake up, they are safe and can leave the cave without risking their lives. The second part of the sura, the one concerning al-Khidr, concentrates on Moses, who encounters the green man in a place were "two seas meet"[502] and is guided by him through a spiritual journey where he sees his master commit a series of cruel and apparently unreasonable actions against or in favor of humankind. The meaning of Moses' story is connected to acceptance of the inscrutable and indescribable laws that govern the world, which can only be understood by God. Al-Khidr is attributed a special intuition that allows him to have a strong relationship with God. He can be considered a kind of saint figure who has the role both of initiate and initiator, which means he is a human with privileges such as a great spiritual knowledge and immortality. The origin of the legend can be traced back to ancient myths about nature and water but is not clear, whereas an association of this character with the prophet Elijah has been stated by many sources. Demandt also reports an interpretation of this character that arouses much interest in this research: he references the scholar Al-Qazwini, who associates the Green with the passing of epochs. One of the legends linked to him focuses on the idea of a cyclical interpretation of time:

Er besuchte eine Stadt, in der niemand wußte, wann sie erbaut worden war. 500 Jahren später fand er dort eine Wüstenei, wo ein Mann Kräuter sammelte, der meinte: „das war hier immer so." Nach weiteren 500 Jahren fand Chider an dem Ort ein Meer. Die Fischer wußten nicht, seit wann es das gab. Noch abermals 500 Jahren war das Gebiet immer trocken und grün, und nach nochmals 500 Jahren fand Chider hier eine Stadt, prächtiger als die erste, von der die Leute glaubten, sie stände schon ewig.[503]

Although the connection between Meyrink's Chider Grün and the Qu'ran character are evident in the name and in the description of the man, as well as in the importance of the green color that is associated to this person, neither al-Khidr or the Qu'ran are explicitly mentioned in *Das Grüne Gesicht* and the legend that mainly characterizes the appearance of Chider Grün in the novel is the one of the Eternal Jew, or the Wandering Jew. The legend of the Wandering Jew has several sources that have been analyzed in Arno Schmidt's research *Das Volksbuch vom Ewigen Juden. Ein Beitrag*

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[502] The Koran (surah 18) has been consulted in Italian: *Il Corano*, trans. Ida Zilio-Grandi, ed. Alberto Ventura, Milano: Mondadori 2010, here: p. 178.
[503] Demandt, Alexander, *Zeit. Eine Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin: LVD 2015, p. 193.

zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Buches (1927)[504]. Schmidt's study examines the main text that led to the circulation of the legend in a German context, the anonymous *Kurze Beschreibung und Erzehlung von einem Juden mit Namen Ahasverus* (1602). The text, printed in Leyden at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century, tells the story of a shoemaker called Ahasverus who witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and did not help him, neither when Jews voted to free a criminal, choosing between Barabbam and Jesus, or when Jesus passed in front of his house with the cross on his back. Instead, Ahasver voted for the liberation of Barabbam and observed Christ's sorrow indifferently from the threshold of his own house. As consequence of his indifference, the shoemaker is condemned by God to leave Jerusalem and his family for good and to wander earth until the Messiah comes back to the world at the end of time. Schmidt also mentions a series of stories that are focused on men who acted harshly towards Jesus during the last days before his death on the cross and that can be associated with the legend of Ahasverus: the first is an episode told in John's gospel (18, 22) that describes the violent gestures of Malchus, servant of the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas[505]. Similarly, Roger of Wendower (around 1237), monk of St. Albans in England, talks about Chartaphilus, Pilatus' doorman, who hit Jesus in the nape at the entrance of the court. According to the report, the man became Christian and is still alive today with the name of Joseph. Other two sources come from Italy and describe the figure of Buttadio/Buttadeus, whose name means "the one who hits God", in the writings of Guido Bonatti from Forlì (circa 1300) and Filippo from Novara (circa 1255). These characters share not only a violent attitude towards the Lord, but also being in the position of the common man, people without real power and political importance who are only identifiable because of their despicable gestures. Nevertheless, only the Ahasaverus story points out the condition of permanent wandering and exile of the main character.

The legend of the Wandering Jew is mentioned by Hauberrisser during a conversation with a friend of his, the Baron Pfeill, and the matter apparently has no link to any event of the previous chapters. In this sequence a child, the daughter of an old shoemaker named Klinkherbogk, asks Baron Pfeill for help and Hauberrisser understands that his friend, who reacts harshly towards the little girl but still gives her some money, has probably been supporting the man's family for a long time. Since Baron Pfeill does not like to be recognized as a philanthrope, Hauberrisser asks him if the legend of the Eternal Jew really stems from the Netherlands. Pfeill answers that „Nun, es heißt doch, der Ewige Jude sei ursprünglich der Schuster Ahaschwerosch in Jerusalem gewesen und habe Jesus, als er auf

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[504] Schmidt, Arno, *Das Volksbuch vom Ewigen Juden. Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Buches*, Danzig: A. W. Kafeman 1927.

[505] Caiaphas arrested Jesus in the Gethsemane's Garden with the help of Judas. John's gospel highlights the violence of Malchus, who slapped Jesus in the face, and also reports that the servant got his ear cut from one of Jesus' disciples. In consequence of this behavior, Malchus is condemned to walked underground around the columns Jesus had been bent to. (Schmidt, *Das Volksbuch vom Ewigen Juden*, p. 10)

seinem Weg nach Golgotha – der Schädelstätte – ausruhen wollte, mit Flüchen fortgejagt. Seitdem müsse er selbst wandern und könne nicht sterben, ehe nicht Christus wiedergekommen sei."[506]

In the following lines, Pfeill shares with Hauberrisser some of the other sources concerning the story of the Wandering Jew. References to the Leyden text are also mentioned in this case:

"Im dreizehnten Jahrhundert behauptete ein englischer Bischof, in Armenien einen Juden namens Kartaphilos kennen gelernt zu haben, der ihm anvertraut hätte, zu gewissen Mondphasen verjünge sich sein Körper, und er sei dann eine Zeitlang Johannes der Evangelist, von dem Christus bekanntlich gesagt hat, er werde den Tod nicht schmecken. – In Holland heißt der Ewige Jude Isaak Laquedem; man hat in einem Mann, der diesen Namen trug, den Ahasver vermutet, weil er lange vor einem steinernen Christuskopf stehen geblieben war und ausgerufen hatte: ‚das ist er, das ist er; so hat er ausgesehen!' In den Museen von Basel und Bern wird sogar ein Schuh gezeigt, ein rechter und ein linker, die [...] in unklare Verbindung mit dem Ewigen Juden gebracht wurden"[507]

Then, Pfeill opens up and tells his friend about a picture of this character in a gallery in Leyden:

"[…] Es soll von einem unbekannten Meister stammen und stellt den Ahasver dar: ein Gesicht von olivenbronzener Farbe, unglaublich schreckhaft, eine schwarze Binde um die Stirn, die Augen ohne Weiß und ohne Pupillen, wie – wie soll ich sagen – fast wie Schlünde. Es hat mich noch lange bis in die Träume verfolgt. […] Die schwarze Binde um die Stirn, las ich später irgendwo, gilt im Orient als sicheres Kennzeichen des Ewigen Juden. Angeblich soll er damit ein flammendes Kreuz verhüllen, dessen Licht immer wieder sein Gehirn verzehrt, wenn dieses bis zu einer gewissen Grade der Vollkommenheit nachgewachsen ist. – Die Gelehrten behaupten, es seien lediglich Anspielungen auf kosmische Vorgänge, die den Mond beträfen, und der Ewige Jude heiße auch deshalb: Chider, das ist der „Grüne", aber das scheint mir Blech zu sein."[508]

The association of Ahasver and the Green in this passage, through the description of a picture, is visually powerful but cannot be seen as a unifying point of view when it comes to discussing the identity of the man with the green face. The Jewish shoemaker Klinkherbogk does not mention the Eternal Jew during the séance, and Doctor Sephardi does not express any decisive thought on this point.

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[506] Meyrink, *Das Grüne Gesicht*, in: Meyrink, Gustav, *Gesammelte Werke*, München/Wien: Langen Müller 1982 [1916], vol. 3, (From now onward: GG), p. 38.
[507] GG, p. 39.
[508] GG, p. 40.

2.2. Chider, Madame de Bourignon and Jan Swammerdam: apocalyptical timelessness

The idea of associating the Eternal Jew and the Qu'ran character is not accidental and should not be attributed merely to Meyrink's tendency to mix elements of different cultures: the connection between the two characters, based on their immortality and their obligation to wander, had been already pointed out in theological and philosophical discussions during Meyrink's time, including writings and lectures by Karl Jung and Rudolf Steiner. Jung's ideas on the topic are expressed in *Symbols of Transformation of the Libido* (1912), where he considers the legend of the eternal wanderer a metaphor for "an aspect of the human psyche that is immortal"[509]. When it comes to the origin of the Ahasver myth, he states:

The legend of Ahasuerus, whose first literary traces are to be found in the thirteenth century, appears to be of Occidental origin. The figure of the Eternal Jew has undergone even more literary elaboration than that of Faust, practically all of it dating from the last century. If the figure were not called Ahasuerus, it would still exist under another name, perhaps as the Comte de Saint-Germain, the mysterious Rosicrucian, whose immortality is assured and whose present whereabouts are supposed to be known. Although the stories about Ahasuerus cannot be traced beyond the thirteenth century, the oral tradition may go further back, and it is possible that a link with the Orient once existed. There the parallel figure is Khidr or El-Khadr, the "eternally youthful Chider" celebrated in the song by Friedrich Rückert.[510]

Jung correctly observes that the name "Khidr" does not appear in the Qu'ran[511] and is only openly introduced in the commentaries[512]. He also reports another legend linked to al-Khidr, where this figure follows the armies of Alexander the Great and drinks with him from the "stream of life", which makes them both immortal[513]. Another mentioned association is the one between the green man and the biblical Elijah, who left human life by ascending to Heaven and therefore never really died. In regard to the stream of life, Jung remarks upon similarities between the couple Khidr/Alexander and the biblical episode of Jesus' baptism where John has the role of spiritual guide. The relationship between Elijah and Ahasverus is remarked upon in Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy as well: Steiner's reflection on the figure of Ahasverus began in the last decade of the 19th century and went on for the following thirty years[514]. In his lectures held in March of 1922 in Bern and Dornach, he concentrated

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[509] Dohe, Carrie B., *Jung's Wandering Archetype: Race and religion in analytical psychology*, London: Routledge 2016, p. 153.
[510] Jung, JCW, p. 181.
[511] The green man is introduced by the following sentence: "And they found one of our servants, whom We had endowed with our grace and wisdom." See: JCW, p. 182.
[512] Jung mentions al-Bukhari (d. 870) and al-Tabari (d. 923).
[513] Jung, JCW, p. 181.
[514] Paddock, Fred, *Judaism and Anthroposophy*, Forest Row: Rudolf Steiner Press 2004[ebook]: "The theme of Ahasverus figures in Rudolf Steiner's thinking over the years, starting in the 1890s, when he was publishing the *Magazine for literature*. It took different connotations as Steiner's thinking evolved. Originally, independently of its religious

his analysis on the implications of the character's immortality, which was acquired in a non-traditional way but is still an element remindful of divinity. This "godlike quality" is shared, as previously stated, by the prophet Elijah, and Steiner is also convinced that this Jewish biblical personality is represented in Islam by the figure of al-Khidr. This creates a stable connection, in anthroposophy, between the Eternal Jew, Elijah and the Green[515].

This connection to Elijah becomes especially meaningful when it comes to the relationship between *Das grüne Gesicht* and formal aspects of the apocalyptical text identified in chapter 1.4 as constitutive elements of the apocryphal apocalypses. In particular, the notion of pseudepigraph indicated by Collins and discussed by Dailey in his essay about the non-linear structure of apocalypse (see: chapter 1.3.) can be useful to understand one of the roles of Chider Grün in Meyrink's narration. From this perspective, the addressing of an eminent figure stemming from an ancestral dimension in apocalypses has the main function to set the revealed message into an eternal present by highlighting the link between the writer and the addressed immortal prophet – a link which defeats the notion of chronological time at the advantage of a world conception based on the idea of timelessness where the main events of human history are permanently connected.

This same idea of timelessness is hinted at, in *Das grüne Gesicht*, by the presence of historical characters stemming from the 17th century Amsterdam, in particular Madame de Bourignon and Jan Swammerdam. The two figures appear in chapter 4, when, after having discussed about the visions of Chider Grün had by Eva and Pfeill. Doctor Sephardi and the girl plan to take part in a séance led by a group of people interested in mystic and esoterism that will meet up in the Zee Dyk (a district characterized by a high crime-rate right until the 20th century)[516]. Some members of this group are Madame Bourignon (Eva's aunt), the butterfly collector Jan Swammerdam (owner of the apartment where the séance takes place), his sister, an old Russian Jew called Lazarus (spiritual name) Eidotter and an old former shoemaker named Klinkherbogk along with a child, Katje, who is apparently his granddaughter[517]. The ritual they perform during the evening has been identified as the cabalist procedure *makifim*, also known as the "changing of the lights"[518]. Madame Bourignon must be identified as the mystic Antoinette de Bourignon (1616-1680), a philosopher and mystical who, in the Amsterdam of the 17th century, gathered intellectuals and philosophers of various fields. Jan

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components, Ahasverus represented among other things a positive quality of detachment from atavistic blood-based social organization. If Ahasverus had taken on a godlike quality, it was similar to the "godlike" quality of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. This "pulling oneself up by one's root" remained essential for humankind to evolve into the future."

[515] Paddock, *Judaism and Anthroposophy*: The mysterious triad *Ahasverus-Elijah-Chidher* may be seen as reference to the resurrection body, perceived as God's image in supersensible bodily form, rather than as the preservation of mineral contents.

[516] See: GG. p. 83, and *Baedekers Reisehandbücher – Belgien und Holland*, Leipzig: Karl Baedeker 1914, pp. 399-413.

[517] GG, p. 90.

[518] See: Dlousz, Magdalena (hrsg.) *Vom Troglodytenland ins Reich der Scheherazade: Archäologie, Kunst und Religion zwischen Okzident und Orient*, Berlin: Frank & Trimme 2014, p. 361.

Swammerdam (1637-1680), who was acquainted with her, was an entomologist and a scientist famous for his research of vivisection and on anatomy in general. Swammerdam's treatises had a strong connection with religious ideas, since he was convinced that experimental science had the main aim to demonstrate the wonder of divine creation. That this attitude was authentic is shown by his interest in de Bourignon's mystic. De Bourignon, whose attitude was close to millenarism and to the ideas of a spirituality reconnecting the individuum with the original message of the Scripts, discouraged her adepts to care about earthly occupations, and looked at Swammerdam's work with skepticism. The scientist was highly influenced by her judgement all over his last years and re-evaluated his work in light of her opinion[519].

The use of these figures stemming from a time where Amsterdam's mystic had experienced a clear development not far from an apocalyptical worldview belongs, although with evident difference, with the same suggestion of continuity between historical moments of importance at the detriment of a chronological worldview.

2.3. Further interpretations of Chider Grün's role: *Urmensch* and connections to Meyrink's Golem symbology

Another work of Meyrink's time must be mentioned when reflecting on Chider Grün: the comparative study *Chider* (1909) by orientalist Karl Voller. His analysis is referenced by Karl Jung, who mentions it as the primary source of his information about this figure. A recent study regarding the contacts between Meyrink and Austrian painter Oskar Kokoschka has also pointed out the possible influence of Voller's writings on Meyrink's comparative perspective. Magdalena Dluosz, author of the essay[520], states:

Die Vision des Grünsichtigen, der meist mit dem „ewigen Juden" Ahasver identifiziert wird, zieht sich wie ein roter Faden durch das ganze Buch. Sie erscheint den Figuren auch an früheren Stellen des Handlungsgefüges als Zeichen für weitere Stufen ihres inneren Fortkommens. Die Konstruktion des Phantoms (Naturgeistes) des „Urmenschen", der aber auch die Gestalten des islamischen Heiligen al-Chidr (al-Khadr), sowie einer gnostischen, um das Kreuz herumschlingenden Schlangengottheit beinhaltet, wurde Meyrink möglicherweise z.T. durch das religionsvergleichende Studium des damals bekannten Orientalisten Karl Vollers inspiriert.[521]

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[519] See: Bouquet, Henri, *Le mysticisme d'un anatomist du XVIIe siècle: Jean Swammerdam et Antoinette Bourignon*, Lyon: Æsculape 1912, pp.171-176; Cobb, Matthew, *Reading and writing The Book of Nature: Jan Swammerdam (1637–1680)*, in: Endeavour Vol. 24(3) 2000, pp. 122-128; van der Does, Marthe, *Antoinette Bourignon: Sa Vie (1616-1680)*, Gronigue, Son Œuvre 1974).

[520] Dluosz, Magdalena, *Oskar Kokoschka Bildnis von Gustav Meyrink* in: Magdalena Dluosz, *Von Troglodytenland ins Reich der Sheherazade*.

[521] Dluosz, *Oskar Kokoschka Bildnis von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 326.

Since Jung's *Symbols of Transformation of the Libido* and Karl Voller's *Chider* were published prior to Meyrink's *Das Grüne Gesicht*, both works, along with Steiner's first reflections in the *Magazine for Literature*, can be considered possible sources for the author's interest in the interactions between the legend of the Eternal Jew and the Green, but since no proof for this suggestion is provided it can only be pointed out that Meyrink's approach and Voller and Jung's methodology show some affinities. In this perspective, Dluosz's study also points out that the creation of the "Urmensch" has a comparative level that involves other cultures, including Usibepu's spirituality which is linked to the snake-divinity. Even when it comes to the legend of the Wandering Jew, the Christian origin of the myth is highlighted by the words used to describe his immortality: "Er wird nicht den Tod schmecken". The sentence is present in the 1602 *Volksbuch* and is a quote from the Luther Bible, used in Matthew's gospel to describe resurrection:

Denn es wird geschehen, daß des Menschen Sohn komme in der Herrlichkeit seines Vaters mit seinen Engeln; und alsdann wird er einem jeglichen vergelten nach seinen Werken. (16,27) Wahrlich ich sage euch: Es stehen etliche hier, die nicht schmecken werden den Tod, bis daß sie des Menschen Sohn kommen sehen in seinem Reich. (16,28)

This comparative attitude is constant throughout the book when reflecting on the Green Face and no culture prevails on the other when it comes to a definition of the figure represented by the face. The interest of Meyrink's characters is in fact focused on the message the Green Face wants to deliver and on the reason that led this mysterious character to reveal himself:

"Der Vater Fräulein von Druysens hat, wie Sie kurz nach Ihrem Eintritt im Laufe der Schilderung Ihres Besuchs bei Klinkherborgk erwähnten, den Mann mit dem erzgrünen Gesicht wörtlich den ‚Urmenschen' genannt, - ich selbst hörte meine Vision im Vexiersalon sich mit einem ähnlichen Namen bezeichnen, - Pfeill glaubte, das Porträt des Ewigen Juden, also ebenfalls eines Wesens, dessen Ursprung weit in der Vergangenheit zurückliegt, gesehen zu haben, […] Ich für meinen Teil, so kindisch es Ihnen klingen mag, glaube ...: es ist ein und dasselbe spukhafte Geschöpf, das da in unser Leben getreten ist."[522]

The quoted statement is pronounced in chapter 7 by Hauberrisser in a group formed by him, Sephardi, Pfeill and Eva. The answer he receives from Sephardi, who represents a very cautious and partially skeptical point of view, is especially interesting. Sephardi does not deny the existence of a spiritual character, a sort of *Urmensch* who really did appear in his colleagues' life; however, he suggests this man should be identified as knowledge, in this case a sort of collective wisdom linked to a

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[522] GG, p. 162.

supernatural sphere that was part of human culture in the past and is now forgotten. The revelation of the Green Face may announce the return of this long-gone sphere:

„Daß das Phantom unter der Maske eines Urmenschen auftritt, bedeutet, denke ich, nichts anderes als: Ein Wissen, eine Erkenntnis, sogar vielleicht eine außerordentliche seelische Fähigkeit, die einstmals in längst vergangenen Zeiten des Menschengeschlechts existiert hatte, bekannt war und in Vergessenheit geriet. […] Verstehen Sie mich nicht falsch, ich sage nicht, daß das Phantom etwa kein selbständig existierendes Wesen seine könnte – im Gegenteil, ich behaupte sogar: jeder Gedanke ist ein solches Wesen. – Der Vater Fräulein Evas hat übrigens den Ausspruch getan: ,Er – der Vorläufer – ist der einzige Mensch, der kein Gespenst ist'.“[523]

The conclusion of the story does not attribute a well-defined identity to the Green despite the first name he uses to introduce himself, therefore he probably must be understood as a transcultural figure. Sephardi's words are revealing from this perspective, because they link Chider to a collective conscience and memory. It can be useful to remember that *Das grüne Gesicht* was published one year after the *Golem*, novel in which the community in Prague ghetto faces a legendary figure who, it seems, appears periodically. On the one hand, the Golem is easily recognized by people who encounter him; on the other, recalling the physical trait of this character is impossible. The 'clay man' and Chider Grün nominally refer to different traditions, but they have several elements in common and these must be pointed out, starting from the fact that both characters are de facto immortal. Apart from it, Chider and the Golem are spotted periodically[524], furthermore they are 'spotted' but their appearance always reveals itself a deception until the protagonists do not have a plain access to the spiritual dimension that belongs to these figures: the picture Pfeill remembers never existed and the Vexiersalon never belonged to Chider Grün, just like the spotted Golem in the Prague ghetto is Pernath in one case and a beggar in the other. This element places these characters in a threshold dimension between existence and non-existence. Similarly, the Golem can be interpreted as the expression of a collective thought in the Prague ghetto and can be traced back to an embodiment of collective unconscious. In this regard, Jutta Müller-Tamm states in *Die untote Stadt* (2004):

Zugleich wird das periodische Wiederauftreten des Golem als Idee erläutert, die einem kollektiven Unbewußten entsprungen ist; da, wo die Bewohner des Ghettos glauben, den Golem zu sehen, handelt es sich um eine Täuschung: einmal Pernath, einmal ein Bettler in den Golemkleidern.

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[523] GG, p. 163.
[524] In this respect, Gershom Scholem notes: "Nach Meyrinks Interpretation ist der Golem eine Ahasverische Erscheinung, die alle dreiunddreißig Jahre – die Zahl ist wohl nicht zufällig die der Lebensjahre Jesu – am Fenster eines Zimmers ohne Zugang im Prager Ghetto erscheint." (Scholem, Gershom, *Zur Kabbalah und ihre Symbolik*, Zürich: Rhein-Verlag 1960, pp. 209-210).

Im Zusammenhang mit der Golem-Pernath-Handlung wird auch die Topographie des städtischen Raums bedeutsam, indem sie mit den Ebenen des Psychologischen und des Phantastischen verbunden wird. Das Ghetto erscheint als Wohnraum und Aktionsort des Golems, der eine sowohl übernatürliche wie individualpsychologisch und kollektivpsychologisch zu erklärende Daseinsform besitzt.[525]

This statement not only associates the Golem with a plan that is "übernatürlich" on the one hand and "individualpsychologisch und kollektivpsychologisch" on the other, but also mentions a further link between this mythical character and the environment he represents. This ascribes the connection with collective memory not only to the Golem but also to the ghetto itself, which is "zugleich Metapher des Gedächtnisses und der Erinnerung schlechthin"[526].

Similarly, in his essay *Jung and Meyrink*, Matthew A. Fink states about *The Green Face* that:

The novel also comments on what Jung would have recognized as the collective unconscious, "the treasure-house of primordial images". There is a transhistorical quality to the collective unconscious – it seems to encompass all times and all images, as two on Meyrink's descriptions suggest. "Hauberrisser strolled back in the direction from which he had come and soon found himself back in the Middle Ages, as if time had stood still for hundreds of years in that part of the city." Amsterdam's labyrinthine streets and alleys figure forth the complexities of the human mind, and the character's wanderings there enact the historical dimension of the deep unconscious, much as Jung's "house" dream takes him backward in time on each lower floor.[527]

Fink establishes a clear identity, in the novel, between Amsterdam and the mind. A declaration of this intent is explicit, according to Fike, when Hauberrisser, coming home at night in chapter 3, compares the building of Chider Grün's shop to a thinking human head:

Unwillkürlich verglich er auf dem Wege zu seiner Wohnung das phantastische Durcheinander im Innern dieses Schädels aus Mauerwerk mit den vielerlei krausen Gedanken in dem Kopfe eines Menschen, und Mutmaßungen, als könnten hinter der finstern steinerne Stirne da oben Rätsel schlafen, von denen Amsterdam sich nichts träumen ließ, verdichteten sich in seiner Brust zu einem beklemmenden Vorgefühl gefährlicher, an der Schwelle des Geschicks lauernder Ereignisse.[528]

In this perspective, Fike identifies the international and uncontrolled character of Amsterdam with a "playground of consciousness" and states that in general "Hauberrisser's inner exploration corresponds to his exploration of Amsterdam"[529]. This statement and Jung's/Fike's interpretation of

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[525] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, pp. 564-565.
[526] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 570.
[527] Fink, *Four Novels in Jung's 1925 seminar*, p. 56.
[528] GG, p. 70.
[529] Fike, *Four Novels in Jung's 1925 seminar*, p. 65.

the novel[530] won't be contradicted in the current research, but, as explained in the introductive chapters, they will constitute only one of the methodological references for this analysis, since the interpretation of space as embodiment of consciousness does not answer the questions about the choice of a metropolis with the characteristics of Amsterdam, nor highlight the relationship between this metropolitan space and other urban structures that were more familiar to the author. The relationship between Hauberisser and the represented city follows, in a certain measure, the canons of other *Weltliteratur* works of the 19th and 20th century that problematize the confrontation between individuality and collectivity, and the interaction of these patterns with traits of Meyrink's writing more related to spirituality and psychology is exactly the element that makes this topic worthy of a closer analysis.

3. The fragile space of Amsterdam

It has been previously stated that the depicted Dutch capital actually constitutes an independent secondary plot. Being the apocalyptical storm a constitutive part of the narration, the urban and suburban space is thematized and appears as a living and unstable thing which goes from a condition of overwhelming crowded dimension to a state of absolute emptiness and silence. The transition between the two moments is characterized by a hurricane where the crowded space seems to collapse and finally falls.

The constant threat of Armageddon ascribes Amsterdam the role of threshold between current reality and a possible apocalyptic future landscape, which is actually placed in a spatial and temporal border position. This theme is central in the last chapters of the novel, starting from chapter 14, where the oppression of an incoming catastrophe spreads throughout Holland:

Ein eisiger, lichtloser Winter war über Holland hingegangen, hatte sein weißes Sterbeleilach auf die Ebenen gebreitet und langsam, langsam wieder weggezogen, – aber der Frühling blieb aus.

Als ob die Erde nie mehr erwachen könnte.

Man sprach von unabwendbarer Hungersnot und dem Ende der Welt.[531]

From this moment on, the images relating to Amsterdam and its suburbs describe the shrinking distance between earth and sky: "Der Raum unter dem Himmel war eine undurchdringliche, staubige

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[530] Fike works on Meyrink's text following the notes C. Jung had written on *Das Grüne Gesicht* for a seminary that never took place (the subject of the lecture was changed and Marie Hay's *The Evile Vineyard* became the actual theme of the lesson).
[531] GG, p. 290.

Masse geworden. [...] Hinter ihm lag das schwarze Amsterdam in der roten sinkenden Sonne wie ein ungeheurer brennender Pechklumpen."[532]

The city loses its skyline and the earth's contours vanish in an aggregation of dust. In this first phase there is still a distinction between the ground and the sky, but the ground already gave up part of its identity. The sky further seems to touch the earth directly through the burning light of the sun sinking into the horizon. The opposition between the dull colours of the earth and the glowing light makes this contact particularly violent, while the similitude comparing Amsterdam to a tar lump explains the gradual disappearance of borders, anticipating the destruction of the city. This passage also excludes a concentric position of Amsterdam in the mediation between earth and sky, since the sky approaching is an inevitable threat and Amsterdam has no chance to oppose its power. The only mediation it can provide is warning against the final storm: Hauberrisser spends the night before the catastrophe awake because of the tense atmosphere, looks desperately out of the window towards Amsterdam's towers and when the dawn finally comes he hears the bells ringing, a sound that disappears just before the roar of the howling hurricane reaches his house:

Ein glanzloses Zwielicht irrte durch den Raum; die Pappel vor dem Fenster, die Sträucher in der Ferne und die Türme Amsterdams waren wie von trüben Scheinwerfern matt erhellt. Darunter lag die Ebene mit ihren Wiesen gleich einem großen erblindeten Spiegel. Hauberrisser blickte mit seinem Feldstecher hinüber auf die Stadt, die sich – ein in Angst erstarrtes Bild – fahlbeleuchtet von dem schattenhaften Hintergrund abhob und jeden Augenblick den Todesstreich zu erwarten schien. Banges, atemloses Glockenläuten zitterte in Wellen bis weit ins Land hinein, – plötzlich verstummte es jäh: ein dumpfes Brausen ging durch die Luft, und die Pappel beugte sich ächzend zur Erde nieder.[533]

What is surprising about this description is that Meyrink does not mention any link between water and the future destruction: though he sets his story in a city built underneath the sea level, a city that always fought against floods, he chooses a hurricane as final catastrophe. A logical connection between hurricanes and floods is evident but water is mentioned only in the form of rain, even during the worst phases of the storm. If Amsterdam shows a close connection to Venice in its structure, its relationship with water and the risks of floods are not central during these phases. The real danger in Meyrink's storm is represented by the wind:

Windstöße fegten mit Peitschenhieben über den Boden hin, das welke Gras kämmend, und rissen die spärlichen, niedrigen Sträucher aus den Wurzeln.

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[532] GG, p. 310.
[533] GG, p. 313.

Nach wenigen Minuten waren die Landschaft in einer ungeheuren Staubwolke verschwunden, – dann tauchte sie wieder auf, kaum mehr zu erkennen: die Deiche weißer Gischt; Windmühlenflügel – abgerissen von ihren Leibern, die, in stumpfe Rümpfe verwandelt, in der braunen Erde hockten – quirlten hoch in den Lüften.[534]

The image of the landscape disappearing and reappearing in the wind and the one of windmill blades flying as they are separated from their supports, which are crouched on the ground, illustrate the vertical conflict between earth and sky, between the two dimensions of above and below, a conflict where Amsterdam's skyline acts as vanishing border. This same conflict is highlighted by the only psychotop used in the novel, the bell tower of the Saint Nichols Church. The tower, which represents Hauberrisser's personal connection with the city, seems to symbolize Amsterdam's strength to resist the storm. In the first phase of the hurricane, it remains standing, untouched by the violence of the wind, sole surviving building in a sea of ruins[535]. The fact that in the end it gets destroyed like everything else defines the conclusion of the conflict between the eccentric city and nature:

Da! – War es eine Täuschung? Schwankten nicht die beiden Türme der Nikolaskirche?
Der eine stürzte plötzlich in sich zusammen; - der andere flog wirbelnd hoch in die Luft, zerbarst wie eine Rakete, - die ungeheure Glocke schwebte einen Augenblick frei zwischen Himmel und Erde.[536]

Now, it must be reminded that this experience, despite it taking place only in the final chapters, influences the whole narration, because the atmosphere depicted by Meyrink foreshadows the final destruction in every detail, and this is true for both human and spatial sphere. The eccentricity of this city is fundamentally dependent on its conflict with natural elements, which, as previously stated, makes possible to associate it to Venice. The other element that characterizes the depiction of Amsterdam, the presence of decadent traits, is linked to this discourse.

In this respect, the description of nature in the first chapters is particularly indicative, since natural landscapes are depicted as dull and hostile. Scenes of rural life in the suburbs take a nuance of decadence when windmills are compared to black crosses: „die Windmühlen mit ihren Flügeln als die ersten schwarzen Kreuzeszeichen einer kommenden ewigen Nacht"[537]. In this case, a fusion of Hauberrisser's emotions with the landscape also takes place:

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[534] GG, p. 313.
[535] GG, p. 318.
[536] GG, p. 321.
[537] GG, p. 57.

Dann, als das Gras dunkel wurde und aus der Erde ein silbriger Nebel stieg, bis die Herden in Rauch zu stehen schienen, kam es ihm vor, als wäre sein Kopf ein Kerker, und er selbst säße darin und blickte durch seine Augen hindurch wie durch langsam erblindende Fenster in eine Welt der Freiheit hinein, die für immer Abschied nimmt.[538]

References to death and putrescence are present throughout the narration, and especially in those chapters that are related to Hauberrisser's inwardness – moments in which he spends long moments walking aimlessly and alone, and where he reflects (not always explicitly) about his feelings. One of the main interesting scenes in this regard takes place in chapter 6, during a walk taken by the protagonist in order to clear his mind after discovering that Chider's *Vexiersalon* was apparently a product of his imagination. In this peculiar scene, which will be object of research in following paragraphs as well, Hauberrisser explores a nameless district that shows definite signs of time passing, an abandoned area whose emptiness strongly contrasts with the representation of Amsterdam as an imploding crowded space. This district is depicted as extremely fascinating, and the first houses spotted by the main character do not reveal the abandoned state of the area; nevertheless, the deeper Hauberrisser walks, the more the district is marked by traits telling the fall of a once respectable and beautiful environment.

Hohe Ulmen mit regungslosen Zweigen und Blättern ragten aus winzigen grünen Gärtchen, umstaunt von einem Gedräng uralter Giebelbauten, die mit ihren schwarzen Fassaden und den hellen Holzgitterfenstern, sauber gewaschen wie Sonntagstaat, greisen, freundlichen Mütterchen glichen. […] Moos wuchs zwischen den Ritzen des Pflasters, und rötlich marmorne Platten mit verwitterten Grabschriften, eingelassen in Wandnischen, erzählten von Friedhöfen, die einst hier gestanden haben mochten. [...] Geruch nach Nässe in der Luft, und in halboffenen Holzröhren, rechtwinklig zusammengefügt auf glitschigen Geländerstangen, ein klares Rinnsal in raschem Gefälle hinab in ein Labyrinth morscher, splittriger Plankenwände.[539]

When it comes to the topic of sinking, the images related to this sphere are not as frequent as the reader might think, even because Meyrink's choice is more oriented, it seems, to a fusion between earth and water through elements like mud, moss and humidity in general ("Moos wuchs zwichen den Ritzen" – "Geruch der Nässe in der Luft"). However, the idea of submerging is present in the description of Chider Grün's shop in the first pages, where the building appears to Hauberrisser as a tower "der… in der weichen Torferde versunken war"[540]. Similarly, in the nameless abandoned district some houses must support each other to avoid falling, a phenomenon that reiterates the fragility of the bottom of peat:

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[538] GG, p. 57.
[539] GG, p. 137.
[540] GG, p. 15.

Gleich darauf eine krumme Reihe engbrüstiger, hoher Gebäude, den Tag verfinsternd, schief, wie dicht vor dem Einsturz, und eins das andere stützend, als schwanke der Boden.[541]

Decadent traits are also visible in the description of underprivileged environments, a matter of interest for city literature in general but that in this case must be inserted in a frame where the entire landscape seems to go on the same path leading to the final collapse. In chapter 3, Meyrink describes through Hauberrisser's eyes a district in the suburbs. It is just before sunset, canals are full of empty boats, women and kids enjoy the end of the day and the lights of oil lamps appear gradually:

Er entließ den Wagen und ging der Richtung zu, in der seine Wohnung lag, durch winklige Gassen, Grachten entlang, in denen regungslos schwarze plumpe Kähne schwammen, eingetaucht in eine Flut fauler Äpfel und verwesenden Unrats, unter Giebeln mit eisernen Hebearmen hinweg, die aus vornübergebeugten Mauern sich im Wasser spiegelten. [...]

Rasch schritt er hindurch an den offenen Hausfluren vorbei, die ihn anhauchten mit ihrem Atem von Fischgeruch, Arbeitsschweiß und ärmlichem Alltag, über Plätze hin, wo an den Ecken die Waffelbäcker ihre Stände aufgeschlagen hatten und ein Brodem von brenzlichem Schmalzdampf bis in die schmalen Gassen zog.[542]

Now, it is not possible to decipher all the reasons that led the author to elect this city as a pattern for Hauberrisser's mind, but some reflections in this direction are allowed. The main question must be if Amsterdam's eccentric traits in its physical structure and in its appearance have a correspondence with two prerogatives of Meyrink's writing: the presence of *Verunsicherungtechniken* related to the sphere of fantastic literature and the strong connection between thought and space in his characters' experience. In this case, Bernardt Dieterle's study on Venice can be a useful starting point: one of the central aspects in his analysis is the interaction between the semiotic traits of the submerging/emerging Italian city and the exponents of phantastic literature such as Edgar Allan Poe and E.T.A. Hoffman. In this regard, Dieterle states that the idea of *versinken* is, when it comes to Venice, "immer metaphorisch, immer im Raum eines 'als ob' zu verstehen"[543]. In other words: the fragile balance between city and water allows the hypothesis of events and phenomena that would not happen in other circumstances. This element can be connected to the idea of Meyrink's Amsterdam, equally experiencing a fragile balance between emerging and submerging, as a door connecting the plane of everyday life with another dimension – a dimension, where, as it was illustrated in the introduction to the novel, the laws of physical reality are labile. When it comes to

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[541] GG, p. 137.
[542] GG, p. 32.
[543] Dieterle, *Die versunkene Stadt*, p. 203.

the assumption according to which Hauberrisser's exploration of Amsterdam represents an interior journey in his own thought, the association between aquatic spaces and the exploration of the subconscious has already been made in relation to Venice and is part of the process through which the lyrical 'I' encounters their inwardness in the laguna. The reasons that led Meyrink to choose Amsterdam instead of Venice for his second novel did not – unfortunately – emerge from the research that brought to the writing of this chapter and further hypotheses in this regard won't be made in this context. Nevertheless, it can be stated that, when it comes to the semiotic traits characterizing Amsterdam, the comparison with Venice is necessary and maybe, in the case of *Das Grüne Gesicht*, it can help to highlight the connection between the physical structure of the aquatic and fragile environment and some aspects of Meyrink's narration.

4. Flanerie, anonymity and *Massenmenschen* in *Das Grüne Gesicht*

This section analyses the topic of observation in *Das Grüne Gesicht* and highlights the aspects related to this sphere that mostly connect Gustav Meyrink's depiction of Amsterdam to Lotman's model of the eccentric metropolis. These aspects are the use of the *flaneur* perspective, the look of the foreigner and the occurrence of other decadent traits in the description of crowded spaces and unprivileged environments. The research on these topics points out how Meyrink's use of *topoi* stemming from city literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century leads to problematizing the relationship between his main character's individuality and the international and anonym mass he encounters on the streets of Amsterdam. The matter of individuality must be considered central in the novel in light of the fact that *Das Grüne Gesicht* revolves around Hauberrisser's spiritual development and that his growth is not linked to the collectivity surrounding him, but on the contrary privileges his detachment from the metropolitan mass, a detail clearly evident when looking at the distance that separates the protagonist from Amsterdam in the last chapters. The fact that Hauberrisser's friends - baron Pfeill, Sephardi and Swammerdam – and Eva van Druysen also find their salvation through their own spiritual and philosophical path stresses this trait even more.

It must be pointed out that this analysis is mainly based on the main character's point of view and that the perspectives of other characters are not considered central in regard of this topic[544]. Therefore, when it comes to researching on *flânerie* motifs in the novel it is necessary to discuss first of all the

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[544] However, the perspective of other characters is interesting for other discourses. A meaningful example of remarkable observation is thematized in chapter 8, where Eva, who just had a clear sign of the approaching of her death, changes her way of looking at Amsterdam because her capability of seeing and reading reality, and especially people's feelings, is enhanced by the awareness of her destiny. See: GG, 184-186.

traits that make Hauberisser a possible *flaneur* and that allow to associate his perception of Amsterdam to some examples of *flânerie* literature. A definition of *flânerie* as a phenomenon has already been provided (theory): establishing a connection between this definition and Meyrink's main character requires a close attention to the traits that mostly define this activity, such as the *flaneur*'s detachment from the observed context, his consequent patent indifference, his passivity and his scientific way of exploring urban environment. Although the most of these traits actually characterize Hauberrisser's personality and attitude – and this will be seen during the rest of the analysis - attributing to this character the role of *flaneur* can actually be more problematic than it seems.

It is true that the first condition for the existence of *flânerie* is the act of walking aimlessly, a trait that characterizes Hauberrisser from the start of the novel, where he is walking through the Jodenbuurt with no reason, and at a certain point, since he has no appointments to run to, stops in Chider Grün's shop only to have a break from the crowd. However, it must be said in advance that, differently from other characters of *flânerie* literature who consider the examined city their natural environment and view their walking among the crowds and observing people's behavior as their fundamental way of being, Hauberrisser does not seem to feel at ease in Amsterdam and his walking aimlessly is more a consequence of his troubled mindset than a call. In view of this fact, this analysis will highlight, when needed, the traits of the *flânerie* shown by the character, but won't be take this definition of a main parameter.

Furthermore, the Dutch capital is understandably perceived by him as extremely hostile, above all in virtue of the difficult situation the city is experiencing given the migratory wave following World War I: the urban area experienced by the main character must be first understood as a hyper-full and collapsing environment, where population grows at an exponential rate and people arrive and leave from all over Europe without any scheme or control, intensifying the chaotic general picture:

Seit Monaten war Holland überschwemmt von Fremden aller Nationen, die, kaum daß der Krieg beendet war und beständig wachsenden inneren politischen Kämpfen den Schauplatz abgetreten hatte, ihre alte Heimat verließen und teils dauernd Zuflucht in den niederländischen Städten suchten, teils sie als vorübergehenden Aufenthalt wählten, um von dort aus einem klaren Überblick zu gewinnen, auf welchem Fleck Erde sie künftighin ihren Wohnsitz aufschlagen könnten.[545]

Because of its opening on the sea, Amsterdam is literally swamped not only by water but also by people who wait for their chance to emigrate or look for refuge. Meyrink uses terms expressing movement and uncertainty at the same time: *überschwemmt*, *Zuflucht*, *vorübergehenden*, *Fleck Erde*, *aufschlagen*. It must be highlighted that *Das Grune Gesicht* is set in an imaginary time right after the

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[545] GG, 31.

end of World War I, which is a transitional phase where there is an attempt to leave the past behind but no positive vision of the future is provided. In this condition, Amsterdam is represented as a crowded waiting space. The described phenomenon cannot be traced back to a realistic depiction of immigration and urban enlargement, although Amsterdam had actually lived a great expansion during the 18th and 19th century and had therefore been object of several initiatives of city planning and relocation[546], a process that had grown stronger during the transition between 19th and 20th century and that European metropolises generally have in common. Nevertheless, this crowded context is depicted as an exceptional situation, where constant movement of extremely nervous human masses causes a sense of instability and lack of control:

In Amsterdam und Rotterdam waren die alten Hotels bis auf das letzte Zimmer besetzt, und täglich entstanden neue; ein Mischmasch von Sprachen schwirrte durch die besseren Straßen, und stündlich gingen Extrazüge nach dem Haag, gefüllt mit ab- und durchgebrannten Politikern und Politikerinnen aller Rassen, die beim Dauerfriedenskongreß ein immerwährendes Wort mit dreinreden wollten, wollten, wie man der endgültig entflohenen Kuh am sichersten die Stalltür verrammeln könnte.[547]

Such a waiting space can be understood as a transition between two moments or two environments; this points out Amsterdam's role as threshold city, and its function of mediator between different dimensions. First of all, from a spatial point of view Amsterdam is a border that separates land and water, but also Europe from other possible destinations. Meyrink clarifies from the second chapter that if European citizens feel the pressure of an imminent catastrophe and suffer terribly for the consequences of the Great War, the same can't be said for other continents, especially not for America: people try to read newspapers from overseas, because they say the truth while European journalism is manipulated, and Brazil is mentioned more than once as a possible refuge. In the last chapters, one of the main characters emigrates to Brazil to found a Jewish state and by doing so avoids the storm that destroys Amsterdam. During this final hurricane, Hauberrisser is sure that he is experiencing a European phenomenon: he does not ask himself which parts of the world will survive the devastation, only which European cities will. This ascribes the metropolis an intersectional and international character that allows another comparison between its representation and the depiction of eccentric spaces.

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[546] Delaney, Kate/Lesger, Clé, *Patterns of retail relocation and urban form in Amsterdam in the mid-eighteenth century*, pp. 24-47; Meyrink himself refers to relocation in chapter 3 and 4 in regard to the Nes and the Zee Dyk.
[547] GG, p. 32.

4.1 A crowded space: the circus

Interesting is the fact that Hauberrisser had decided to move to the Dutch capital despite his being fully aware this peculiar atmosphere:

er [Hauberrisser] hatte sich die sonderbare Idee zurechtgelegt, mitten in einer Stadt, die sozusagen über Nacht infolge der Zeitläufe aus einem Weltmarkt mit gezügelter Leidenschaft zu einem internationalen Tummelplatz hirnverwirrender, wilder Instinkte geworden war, als Einsiedler, als innerlich Unbeteiligter, zu leben, und hatte seinen Plan auch bis zu einem gewissen Grade durchgeführt, doch jetzt brach die alte Müdigkeit, durch irgendein winzigen Anlaß wieder erweckt, abermals hervor[548]

Not surprisingly, the sequence is characterized by the opposition between expressions related to collectivity, interaction and collective feelings (*internationaler Tummelplatz hirnverwirrender, wilder Instinkte*) and the search for solitude and above all estrangement (*Einsiedler*, *innerlich Unbeteiligter*), and points out the fact that the distance between the protagonist and Amsterdam's population is the core of Hauberrisser's intentions and plans.

The chapter also provides an interesting scene in regard to crowded spaces: the first depiction of human environment following the description of the large number of foreigners emigrated to Amsterdam after World War I. In this sequence, the protagonist finds himself walking by the circus where Usibepu, according to Zitter Arpád, works and displays his magic. The first moments of this scene are characterized by the protagonist's sudden realization of the peculiar attitude of people around him, a moment of awareness that shows the inner detachment of Hauberrisser's perception:

Als sei bisher blind gewesen, erschreckte ihn plötzlich auf's tiefste der Ausdruck in den Gesichtern, die ihn umwimmelten. Das waren nicht mehr die Mienen von Menschen, die, vergnügungssüchtig oder, um die Sorgen des Tages zu verschütten, zu einer Schaustellung eilten, wie sie von früher her in seiner Erinnerung lebten! Die beginnenden Anzeichen einer unheilbaren Entwurzeltseins sprachen aus ihnen. Der bloße Kampf ums Dasein gräbt andere Furchen und Linien in die Haut.[549]

The passage highlights the contrast between physical proximity and emotional separation, expressed through the verb *erschrecken*, that characterizes Hauberrisser's perspective from this moment onward. The protagonist's view ascribes a feeling of *unheilbaren Entwurzeltseins* to the multitude,

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[548] GG, 54.
[549] GG, p. 54.

which also evokes an idea of fracture. The nature of this sense of 'rootlessness' is still unclear during this phase, since it is not explained if this emotion is connected to the international component of the crowd or if Hauberrisser is witnessing the actions of a multitude estranged from the world itself. It should be noted, nevertheless, that Hauberrisser's reflection implies no continuity between the complex feeling associated to the expression on these people's faces and the character's own desperation, introduced to the reader in the previous pages. While he can remember how his feeling of decay was shared by several people he encountered before moving to Amsterdam ("fast jeder, mit dem er darüber gesprochen hatte, wußte von sich selbst Ähnliches zu berichten"), Hauberrisser now experiences a clear separation from people's fury, in line with the aforementioned notions of *Unbeteiligkeit* and *Einsiedelei*.

Nevertheless, the main character also shows an attention to details that reveals more than a general look towards the mass: especially when it comes to "andere Furchen und Linien in die Haut", Hauberrisser's perspective becomes more relatable to August de Lacroix' definition of *flaneurs* as: "That small privileged number of men of leisure and spirit who study the human heart from nature itself, and society from the great book of the world which lies ever open under their eyes."[550]

The following lines are dedicated to a series of similes where the crowd reminds the protagonist of certain copper etchings depicting plague orgies and dances of the Middle Age. A second association made by Hauberrisser compares these people to flocks of birds flying in circle above the earth when they perceive an earthquake approaching. Both comparisons highlight the feeling of separation between Hauberrisser and the observed group: the distance is expressed by mentioning events and objects related to a distant past (copper etchings depicting ancient rites) and actions typical of animal behavior. The same attitude is visible in the depiction that follows:

Wagen um Wagen raste zum Zirkus, und mit einer nervösen Hast, als ginge es um Leben und Tod, eilten die Leute hinein: Damen, brillantenübersät, mit fein geschnittenen Gesichtern, zu Kokotten gewordene französische Baronessen, vornehme, schlanke Engländerinnen, noch vor kurzem zur besten Gesellschaft gehörig, jetzt zu zweit am Arme irgendeines über Nacht reich gewordenen Börsenhalunken mit Rattenaugen und Hyänenschnauze, – russische Fürstinnen, jede Fieber an ihnen zuckend vor Übernächtigkeit und Überreiztheit; nirgends mehr auch nur eine Spur ehemaliger aristokratischer Gelassenheit – alles hinweggespült von den Wellen einer geistigen Sintflut.[551]

The similarity between human and animal behavior influencing the appearance of the described people is a recurring motif in Meyrink's poetics and can be traced back to a peculiar way of thinking

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[550] See: Turcot, *Did the Flâneur Exist? A Parisian Overview*, p. 46.
[551] GG, pp. 54-55.

according to which perceived reality hides numerous shades and nuances[552], but must also be inserted in a frame of *Dekadenz-Metaphorik* where this *topos* is extremely fruitful[553]. In the quoted description, elements of the crowd are revealing its real nature, normally hidden by social norms ("noch vor kurzem zur besten Gesellschaft gehörig"; "ehemaliger aristokratischer Gelassenheit") and the responsibility of this metamorphosis must be attributed to a *geistiger Sintflut*. The word *Sintflut* literally indicates the great flood[554] but has also a figurative meaning of "tide" or "multitude". It can be seen as foreshadowing of the catastrophe that will take place in the final chapters of the novel, but also as a clear connection to the element of water, reminiscent of Amsterdam's topography. Furthermore, it is associated to the idea of crowds presented in the previous lines.

It is notable that the paragraphs following this description concern the enclosed space of the circus where numerous animals are treated violently:

Wie das Vorzeichen einer kommenden furchtbaren Zeit erscholl im Innern des Hauses in Intervallen, bald schreckhaft nahe und laut, dann wieder plötzlich erstickt von zufallenden dicken Vorhängen, das langgezogene heisere Gebrüll von wilden Bestien, und ein beißender Geruch nach Raubtieratem, Parfüm, rohem Fleisch und Pferdeschweiß wehte auf die Straße heraus.[555]

Here, Meyrink describes an unseen enclosed space through his senses of hearing and smell. The characteristics of the imprisoned animals establishes a continuity with the previously depicted humans and the fusion between human and animal environments is evident when noticing that the whole scene is dedicated to the beasts but some sporadic human traits are mentioned: the curtains try to hide both the sense of desperation outside the circus and the hoarse cries inside, but smells give away the presence of wild and obscure elements, as the perfume used by humans mixes with "the breath of birds of prey", "raw flesh" and "horse sweat". The reader must also notice that Hauberrisser

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[552] In this regard, it can be useful to reference Oskar A. H. Schmitz (1873-1931)'s *Dämon Welt. Jahre der Entwicklung* (1926). Schmitz encountered Meyrink in the sanatorium *Weißer Hirsch*, where the writer went through a healing period after the beginning of his spinal bone issues. Schmitz had a deep influence on Meyrink's career and helped him write his first short story *Der heiße Soldat* (See: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, pp. 222-244). Schmitz's memories depict Meyrink as a peculiar figure who, despite his slight lameness, always appeared elegant, had blue penetrating eyes and displayed a peculiar world view, according to which everything he saw could be interpreted in many different ways. For example, he claimed to believe that some of the guests in the sanatorium were hiding a second nature as animals or supernatural creatures. (Schmitz, Oscar Adolf Hermann, *Dämon Welt. Jahre der Entwicklung*, München: Georg Müller Verlag 1926, p. 264.)

[553] See, in this regard, Alfred Kubin's use of the association animal reign/humankind that characterizes the second part of his novel *Die andere Seite*, which is entirely dedicated to the progressive collapse of the *Traumreich*. The topic is better analyzed in the chapter "Constellations". A first introduction to the contacts between Kubin and Meyrink is also provided in the following pages.

[554] In the Grimm Wörterbuch: *Sündflut*. See: https://woerterbuchnetz.de/?sigle=DWB&bookref=20,1168,35#1 (17/05/2022).

[555] GG, p. 55.

does not enter the circus, an element that contributes to the separation between the protagonist and the crowded space.

This sequence actually reaches its outcome with a memory of the protagonist which heavily relates to violence: here, Hauberrisser is reminded of a bear enclosed in a cage, an entertaining spectacle he had witnessed more than once during fun fairs [556]. The memory awakens a further image of crowded space in Hauberrisser's mind, where groups of humans are replaced by groups of animals: tormented by the remorse of not having done anything to save the bear's life, the protagonist visualizes "a shadow of countless murdered and tortured animals" that have cursed human race and whose blood "roars for revenge."[557]

4.2. A crowded place: the inn

The presence of a circus introduces the topic of the theatrical dimension that is developed during the following sequences. As previously stated, Hauberrisser struggles to maintain a distance between himself and the hysteric crowd, and in the end of the circus scene – where he does not enter the tent – he decides to go to a quieter place, therefore he leaves the city center and goes to the suburbs by carriage. After the brief sequence of his peaceful but highly melancholic trip in a peripheric district, a countryside setting, Hauberrisser gets off the carriage and takes a road that should lead to his apartment. He then crosses a silver bridge that should take him "in die feinen Stadtviertel" but, before reaching them, finds himself in a place that the narrator describes as a red-light district, which is familiar to Hauberrisser:

Die alte Amsterdamer „Neß", die berüchtigte Dirnen- und Zuhälterstraße, vor Jahren niedergerissen, war hier wie eine scheußliche Krankheit, die plötzlich von neuem hervorbricht, in einem anderen Stadtviertel wieder auferstanden mit einem ähnlichen, nicht mehr so wilden und rohen, aber weit furchtbares Gesicht. […] Oben, in den ersten und zweiten Stockwerken einzelner Häuser, herrschte eine andere Art Leben – ein lautloses, flüsterndes, katzenhaft lauerndes hinter roten Gardinen. Kurzes, schnelles Fingertrommeln an den Scheiben, da und dort gedämpfte Rufe, hastig abgerissen, in allen Sprachen der Welt und dennoch nicht mißzuverstehen[558]

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[556] "Ein Bär hinter den Käfigstäben einer wandernden Menagerie, der, die linke Tatze gefesselt, eine Verkörperung grenzloser Verzweiflung, von einem Bein auf's andere trat – unablässig, tagelang, monatelang, noch Jahre später, als er ihm wieder auf einem Schaubudemarkt begegnete" (GG, p. 55)
[557] GG, p. 56.
[558] GG, pp. 50-60.

Hauberrisser enters one of the locals of the street, a sort of restaurant and dance hall in a corner house. This peculiar place is the second crowded space this chapter brings under the microscope.

The narrator describes the local as a „menschenüberfüllter Saal mit runden, gelbgedeckten Tischen", where people are pressed in a thick mass[559]. When Hauberrisser comes in, a Polish man wearing cloths typical of oriental Jews according to stereotypes (like a caftan and high boots) is singing in a whimsical German. The narrator points out that the song in not understood by the public, mostly composed by Dutch middle-class people, and that the Polish man is not "gekleidet" but "verkleidet", which highlights the parodistic component of the show. After this first moment, Hauberrisser finds a sit at a table of four Dutch women and becomes spectator of a confusing, uninterrupted series of numbers that appear to him like "die Arabesken in einem Kaleidoskop"[560]:

Pudellockige englische Babygirls von schreckenerregender Unschuld, Apachen mit rotwollen Shawls, eine syrische Bauchtänzerin, gefüllt mit wild wogenden Eingeweiden, Glockenimitatoren und bayrische melodisch rülpsende Schnadahüpfler.[561]

The parallelism between this kind of show and the circus encountered in the previous crowded sequence is evident and not casual: Hauberrisser has run away from the city center to escape the mass that was reversing itself under the colored tent under which the mix of sounds and smells suggested being a very chaotic environment, and now finds himself in a dimension that is drenched of nonsense phenomena.

The presence of the circus becomes even clearer when, at the end of the "kaleidoscopic" show, the local changes its look completely for the second part of the evening. Since at this time of the day another kind of public is awaited, the waiters also change elements of the furniture: they cover the tables with damask tablecloths and put tulips in the middle, substitute Hauberrisser's tableware with pieces of silverware, a fan is switched on in order to "clear the plebeian air"[562], some chairs covered in leather are brought in front of the stage and a red carpet is laid out throughout the whole room. During this preparation, Hauberrisser is the only guest remained, since the others left the local after the end of the first show, and is also the only person in the room who does not know what is happening around him while the waiters change their cloths and wear liveries and begin to act in a much more formal way. The protagonist assists to the changes in the environment the same way he would witness the change of scenography during a play, an element that highlights his peculiar position of spectator

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[559] GG, pp. 60-61.
[560] GG, p. 63.
[561] GG, p. 63.
[562] GG, p. 64.

even in a moment when nothing is really happening on the actual stage of the local, but also make emerge the peculiar atmosphere of the place: the theatrical character of the previously reported scenes, exasperated in the change in the furniture and in the attitude of the waiters, finds its peak in the moment when the new guests arrive and Hauberrisser recognizes them:

Man hörte das Vorfahren von Wagen und Automobilen auf der Straße.

Damen in Abendtoilette von ausgesuchter Eleganz, Herren in Frack strömten herein: dieselbe internationale, scheinbar feinste Gesellschaft, die Hauberrisser abends sich in den Zirkus hatte drängen sehen. In wenigen Minuten waren die Räume voll bis zum letzten Platz.[563]

The passage clarifies that Hauberrisser's attempt to avoid the crowd of the circus was a failure because exactly the same group of people followed him to the local and influenced the environment completely by filling it "bis zum letzten Platz", probably using the same aggressive movements the protagonist saw in the previously described scene that took place in the center of Amsterdam ("hatte *drängen* sehen").

In order to interpret the functions of the presented scenes of crowd, it can be interesting to analyze them in light of Jon Hughes' *Modernity and Ambivalence in Kubin's "Die andere Seite"* (2007)[564] and the second being Jutta Müller-Tamm's *Die untote Stadt* (2004), an essay that is fundamental for the analysis of Amsterdam's space given in this chapter and that will be cited more than once in other paragraphs as well *Modernity and Ambivalence in Kubin's "Die andere Seite"* introduces two topics that can be fruitful when interpreting Amsterdam's space: first of all, it presents painter Alfred Kubin's (1877-1959) novel *Die andere Seite* (1909), which is strongly linked to Gustav Meyrink's work; secondly, it introduces the theme of the loss of identity as a trait of modernity, a matter that is extremely meaningful when it comes to Hauberrisser's experience of urban space, and especially of crowded space. The connection between Meyrink and Kubin are pointed out in many essays about the authors, the most important link between their work being Meyrink's novel *Der Golem*, which was originally supposed to be illustrated by the painter[565]. The latter was then forced to interrupt his work when Meyrink had a "creative crisis" (*Schaffenskrise*)[566], and as a consequence of the hiatus in Meyrink's writing, Kubin decided to use the already realized drawings for his own novel *Die andere*

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[563] G, p. 64.
[564] Hughes, Jon, *Modernity and Ambivalence in Alfred Kubin's "Die andere Seite"*, in: Austrian Studies, Vol. 15, Austrian Satire and Other Essays (2007), pp. 80- 95.
[565] Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 386: "Bei ihren Gesprächen auf dem Semmering verabredeten die beiden, daß Kubin einen Roman, an dem Meyrink gerade arbeitete, illustrieren sollte. Kubin schrieb darüber an seine Frau Hedwig (...), er habe diesem Projekt Meyrink „den zweiten Wind" gegeben."
[566] See: Schmeer, *Inszenierung des Unheimlichen*, p. 165.

Seite[567], while *Der Golem* was published only years later illustrated by engraver Hugo Steiner-Prag (1880-1945)[568]. The fact that Meyrink and Kubin's agreement about the illustrations had been made prior to the writing of Kubin's work, whose publishing predates Meyrink's *Der Golem* by 5 years, is indicative of the entity of Meyrink's crisis. Either way, their contacts and their attempt to collaborate partially explain the similarities between *Die andere Seite* and *Das Grüne Gesicht*, elements that are meaningful enough to also be analyzed in other sections of this thesis. Like *Das Grüne Gesicht*, Kubin's novel is set in a metropolis which, in the end, experiences a natural, political and ideological collapse. This metropolis is fictional and is the capital of the *Traumreich* (Dream Kingdom), a land of Kubin's own invention, located in an unspecified oriental region beyond the reign of Samarkand[569].

4.3. The crowded space in Amsterdam and in the *Traumreich*

The exact structure of the *Traumreich* will be discussed in another section, but some elements are particularly noteworthy in this context. For one thing, it is an international place, an artificial reign where the natives have been pushed to the margins, in reserves located in the countryside, while European citizens of all kinds have come there to start a new life (admiring the utopic nature of its foundation). Secondly, there is a rejection of modernity: the founder and leader of the kingdom, a man named Patera (acquaintance of the first-person narrator ever since they were schoolmates), gave the reign the structure of a "modern" city that follows the standards of the second part of the 19th century, while rejecting any change that could bring technological and cultural progress. The novel definitely reflects the ambivalence of progress and tradition that is typical of the Austrian cultural context during the *Fin de Siècle*, but also embodies "the archetypal anxieties of a period of increased cultural and political instability"[570] that goes beyond the margins of the K.u.k. monarchy. As an example of these anxieties, Hughes reflects on a representation of crowded space in chapter 4, where Kubin depicts a "crowded and distinctly feminized ghetto"[571] in which the protagonist/narrator gets lost during the night:

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[567] Veronika Schmeer conducted an interesting analysis of the attempts for illustations of Meyrink's *Der Golem* made by Kubin, Richard Teschner and Hugo Steiner-Prag in her work *Inszenierung des Unheimlichen*, where she writes(165): "Darüber hinaus ist nicht mehr nachvollziehbar, welche Illustrationen bereits für den *Golem* existierten und welche im Schaffensprozess des Romans *Die andere Seite* entstanden sind. In einem Brief spricht Kubin von elf fertig gestellten Illustrationen. Richard Arthur Schroeder hat versucht, anhand inhaltlicher Merkmale eine Gruppe möglicher Golem-Illustrationen aus den 52 Zeichnungen für *Die andere Seite* herauszuarbeiten. Insgesamt will er acht der insgesamt elf Illustrationen identifizieren. Ein Identifikationsversuch anhand von Textvergleichen ist problematisch, da die Romanfassung während der Kubin'schen Illustrationsphase nicht mit der später erschienen Roman übereinstimmt." Here, Schmeer refers to Kubin's letter to Hans von Müller (30 December 1908) and Schroeder (1970).

[568] Detailed information about this Steiner-Prag's work in: Schmeer, *Inszenierung des Unheimlichen*, pp. 80-140.

[569] Kubin, *Die andere Seite*, p. 42.

[570] Huges, *Modernity and Ambivalence in Alfred Kubin's "Die andere Seite"*, p. 86.

[571] Huges, *Modernity and Ambivalence in Alfred Kubin's "Die andere Seite"*, p. 86.

So sah ich rechts und links nur schmutzige Spelunken und Lasterhöhlen. Aus allen Gossen dampfte und stank es. Ich machte meine größten Schritte. Ein geschminkter Bursche faßte einen Zipfel meines Schlafrockes und riß ihn mir herunter. – Patch! Saß ihm eine Ohrfeige. Aber das hätte ich lieber nicht tun sollen. Nun hub es recht an. Mit Heulen und Hallorufen wurde Jagd auf mich gemacht. Ein aufgedunsenes, riesenhaftes Weib trat mir entgegen und wollte mir ein Bein stellen. Ich sprang leicht über sie hinweg und verlor den Stock dabei. Sie wälzte sich im Straßenkot, mein Hemd blieb ihr als Trophäe.[572]

In this passage, the narrator finds himself in an environment that questions all the social boundaries of modesty and discretion, and where his personal space is threatened: the fact that he is walking in the "Spelunken" while wearing only a nightgown stresses the protagonist's condition of extreme vulnerability, which becomes even more thematized when the gown is torn apart and taken as trophy by an "aufgedunsenes, riesenhaftes Weib". In this context, the loss of the walking stick naturally implies the loss of the dignity which is attributed by the protagonist to his social status, a dignity which is also put into question by the "Jagd" started by the men and women who follow him in what looks like an actual sexual assault. In his essay, Jon Hughes associates this scene with the loss of identity:

This farcical yet unnerving episode finds the narrator, as a consequence of a series of unwise spontaneous decisions, disoriented and naked as he is chased by a mob characterized by raw sexuality and filth. The threat, it would seem, is physical and real, but in literally stripping the narrator it serves as much to expose the precarious nature of the narrator's 'dignified' social identity as to legitimize his anxieties.[573]

Hughes' comment focuses on social identity, but it can be argued that even the individuality of the character is highly threatened during this scene. The fact that the attempted assault concentrates on sexuality can be associated to the idea of a gendered mass, where the crowd invading the bourgeois male protagonist's personal space and literally ripping his identity is feminized[574]. Now, points of contact between this scene and Hauberrisser's experience in the red-light district can be found, although Meyrink's protagonist does not get assaulted in any way. First of all, the constant remarks on the amount of people in the rooms of the restaurant highlight the unpleasant feeling given by

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[572] Kubin, *Die andere Seite*, p. 154-155.
[573] Hughes, *Modernity and Ambivalence in Alfred Kubin's "Die andere Seite"*, p. 87.
[574] Cfr. Huyssen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Basingstock: 1980, pp. 44-62. Especially meaningful is p. 46: "The political, psychological and aesthetic discourse around the turn of the century […] consistently and obsessively genders mass culture and the masses as feminine, while high culture, whether traditional or modern, clearly remains the privileged realm of male culture."

contact: the room Hauberrisser enters is "menschenüberfüllt"[575], he tries to find a seat but his movements are difficult because the crowd is "dicht gedrängt"[576], therefore he has the feeling of literally swimming through a stream of people, a perception that is clarified when the only table he finds with two available seats is described as an island:

Nur an einem Tisch in der Mitte lehnten auffallenderweise noch ein paar leere Stühle. Drei wohlbeleibte, gereifte Frauen und eine alte, strengblickende mit Adlernase und Hornbrille saßen, emsig Strümpfe strickend, um eine mit buntwollener Gockelhaube bedeckte Kaffeekanne herum wie in einer Insel häuslichen Friedens.[577]

The portrait of the ladies has, however, an intimate quality that sounds strange in the context of a restaurant of this district, which is also a dance hall and offers shows of various nature: the fact that the four ladies are knitting reassures Hauberrisser but raises some questions for the reader. The contrast between this motherly gesture and the environment is clear, and the reader might ask himself why these were the only available seats in the entire room.

In a first moment, Hauberrisser hypothesizes that this peculiar group of women is a family, a widowed mother with her three daughters, but at a second look he understands that the four "konnten […] kaum verwandt sein"[578], since the three young girls have very different somatic traits and are clearly Dutch, judging from their appearance, while the older woman is a southern type.

Schmunzelnd bracht ihm der Kellner das Beefsteak; ringsum die Leute an den Tischen grinsten, sahen herüber, tauschten halblaute Bemerkungen, was hatte das alles zu bedeuten? Hauberrisser konnte nicht klug daraus werden; er musterte heimlich die vier Frauen, nein, unmöglich, sie waren die Spießbürgerlichkeit selbst. Schon das gesetzte Alter verbürgte ihre Ehrbarkeit.[579]

Hauberrisser' opinion on the social status of the ladies, merely based on their appearance, reveals itself to be wrong at the end of the show, when the protagonist finds himself alone at the table and realizes that his former company left him a visiting card, written in German, which openly presents them: "Madame Gitel Schlamp / die ganze Nacht geöffnet / 15 Damen / Im eigenen Palais". This misunderstanding actually follows the same steps of a sequence in the first chapter, when Hauberrisser explores the *Vexiersalon* and, in order to distract himself from some painful thoughts

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[575] GG, p. 60.
[576] GG, p. 61.
[577] GG, p. 61.
[578] GG, p. 61.
[579] GG, pp. 61-62.

about his past, looks at a bookcase and notices certain volumes which he finds a bit out of place in the shop, both for being in *Goldschnitt* and for the strange content of the titles:

"Lauter Bände in Goldschnitt?" – Kopfschüttelnd buchstabierte er die wundersamen, ganz und gar nicht zur übrigen Umgebung passenden, gekerbten Rückentitel: „Leidinger, G., Geschichte des akademischen Gesangvereins Bonn," „Aken, Fr. Grundriß der Lehre vom Tempus und Modus im Griechischen," „Neunauge, K.W., Die Heilung der Hämorrhoiden im klassischen Altertum"? […] und er nahm "Aalke Pott, Über den Lebertran und seine steigende Beliebtheit, 3. Band" und blätterte darin.[580]

The paper and print are, Hauberrisser notices, not as high quality as the binding: the elegant volume on cod-liver oil actually belongs to the *Sodom- und Gomorrhabiliothek*, is part of the *Sammelwerk für Hagestolze* and constitutes a work called *Bekenntnisse eines lasterhaften Schulmädchens*.

The situation amuses Hauberrisser, who laughs out loud and by doing so leads one of the other clients, who is looking at certain images through a kinetoscope, to embarrassedly leave the place, not before trying to hide his liking for pornography by confusingly murmuring his appreciation for the pictures of "city landscapes" he was admiring[581]. The absurdity of the scene is exasperated when the man bumps into a cuckoo clock while getting his coat: as soon as the device's mechanism is set off, the figure of a provocative, skimpily dressed woman, comes out of the clock in place of the cuckoo, and sings an obscene song about a woodworker.[582]

Therefore, when it comes to the four ladies in the restaurant, the repetition of a scene in which Hauberrisser misunderstands the context he finds himself in is remarkable because this similarity allows to trace a parallel between the inn and the shop, and provides a first hint about the identity of the two, which the protagonist only discovers when he leaves the inn:

Er betrat eins der beiden schmalen Seitengäßchen, die links und rechts das Tingeltangel umgaben, und schritt gleich darauf an einem Laubengang aus Glas vorüber, der ihm merkwürdig bekannt vorkam.

Als er um die Ecke bog, stand er vor dem mit Rollblech verschlossenen Laden Chider Grün's. Das Lokal, das er soeben verlassen, war nur der rückwärtige Teil des sonderbaren, turmähnlichen Hauses in den Jodenbreetstraat mit dem flachen Dach, das schon nachmittags seine Aufmerksamkeit erregt hatte.[583]

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[580] GG, p. 22.
[581] Meyrink points out that this man's expression has been changed "ins Schweinkopfartige", another reference to the overlapping people/animals, and that this struggles to get himself together and appear like a respectable merchant again. (GG, p. 23).
[582] GG, p. 23.
[583] GG, p. 71.

Besides his difficulties in interpreting social categories around him, the protagonist also finds it problematic to understand the feelings of the crowd that surrounds him. The matter emerges during the very first part of the show, when a Dutch couple gets on the stage and starts singing a song about some brothels that were shut down. The Dutch guests around Hauberrisser are strongly moved by the song and cry as if it was talking about the consequence of the war, a reaction with which the protagonist is not able to empathize. The contrast between the topic of the song and the gravitas of the performers has an alienating effect, which is then enhanced by the following sequences of the show - also characterized by paradoxes and nonsensical structures. In this case, Hauberrisser really struggles to orient himself through the numerous stimuli he receives from the environment of the inn: people, as previously stated, build a milieu of kaleidoscopic experiences and impressions, and the whole context seems to lack logic, which naturally constitutes the main cause of disorientation for the protagonist.

4.4. Fragmentary vision in *Das grüne Gesicht*'s crowd scenes

What the protagonist faces is the impossibility of having a general interpretation of the environment that surrounds him, a state that is closely linked to the sphere of fragmentary perception so strongly thematized in fictional and scientific literature on modern urban space, and especially during the *Fin de Siècle*. The topic, introduced in this scene, is then developed in other scenes of the novel and is one of the main traits in the description of the Amsterdam Jewish district Jodenbuurt. Here, Meyrink describes Hauberrisser's perception of the district as extremely full of visual and auditory stimuli, and the general picture is a mosaic of different scenes and sounds. The sequence starts with the protagonist being "mitten drin" the Jodenbuurt:

Einen lahmen Greis hatte man mitsamt dem Bett, unter dem ein Nachtgeschirr stand, vor ein Haustor getragen, damit er die „frische Luft" genießen könne, und daneben an einer Straßenecke hielt ein schwammig aufgedunsener Jude, von oben bis unten beklettert von bunten Puppen wie Gulliver mit den Zwergen, Spielzeug feil und rief dazu […]: poppipoppipoppipoppipoppipoppi.

„Kleerko, Kleerko, Kle-e-erkooooop," dröhnte eine Art Jesajas mit Talar […]

Dann wieder tönte aus einer Quergasse ein vielstimmiger Chor in den merkwürdigsten Modulationen: „Nieuwe haring, niwe ha-a-a-ng; aardbeien – aare – ba – je! De mooie, de mooie, de mooie; augurkjes, gezond en goedkoop," [...]

Berge von bestialisch stinkenden Fetzen versperrten den Weg [...][584]

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[584] GG, p. 133-134.

The depiction is based on a series of images, sounds and smells which have no connection to one another even though they are close in space and time: "einen lahmen Greis hatte man mitsamt dem Bett …", "*daneben* an einer Straßenecke ein schwammig gedunsener Jude" etc. The sequence is built following the same steps of the numerous impressions that the inn gives to Hauberisses and revoles around the idea of a fragmentary experience of the milieu. In light of these comparisons, Meyrink's interest in the spatial experience of urban environment during modern times becomes more evident: the confusing effect produced by the kaleidoscopic depiction reminds Georg Simmel's observations on the behavior of psyche in metropolitan life, where the critical state of a mind constantly facing "tausend individuelle Modifikationen" is analyzed[585]. However, it should be noticed that Meyrink's analysis also includes the consequences of this fragmentary *Welterfahrung* on the observer, which he identifies as the awakening of a protective indifference, or as an act of desensitizing. During the depiction of the two shows in the inn, this theme is expressed from two different perspectives. The first show, taking place in the early evening, has a surprising effect of reassuring chaos on Hauberrisser, in virtue of its nonsensical character and of the colorful mosaic it creates. The disconnected, nonsensical numbers seem to have the special ability to calm the nerves and ease the mind. Therefore, Hauberrisser relaxes and allows the environment to engulf him, to the extent that he loses the perception of time and space for a very long while: when he wakes up from this peculiar state of mind, he discovers that he is the only guest in the restaurant. The fact that Hauberrisser literally loses himself in this scene gives us a first hint about the nature of the interaction between him and the crowd, a relationship which might not be characterized by direct violence like the aforementioned sequence of *Die andere Seite* (although elements of violence have been pointed out in the depictions of crowded spaces within the city center) but likewise signifies a loss of identity for the protagonist. However, the stimuli's transformation from an aggressive kaleidoscope to a calming effect that Meyrink defines as a "fast narkotische Nervenberuhigung"[586] can also be associated with the idea of desensitizing that characterizes modern space perception in city literature. During the second part of the evening, a moment characterized by the presence of international aristocracy, this desensitizing trait is highlighted during a peculiar scene, the start of a second show, when a magician suddenly disappears from the stage and the public has no reaction at all. Surprised by the absence of emotion on people's faces, Hauberrisser starts at this point to question his perception and interpretation of reality:

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[585] Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, p. 5. This view on individual perception in metropolises is a milestone on the sociology of urban space (see: chapter 2) and determined a precise line in the critic of city literature, where elements of the fragmentary experience of the milieu are highly pointed out.

[586] GG, p. 63.

Als sei überhaupt nichts geschehen, ging man heiter plaudernd zur Tagesordnung über.

Hauberrisser hatte die Empfindung, als säßen mit einemmal lauter Gespenster um ihm herum; er fuhr mit den Fingern über das Tischtuch und sog den mit Moschus durchtränkten Blütenduft ein: - das Gefühl der Unwirklichkeit steigerte sich in ihm nur noch bis zum tiefsten Grauen.[587]

This feeling of *Unwirklichkeit* clearly represents Hauberrisser's sense of estrangement: as happened during the song of the Dutch couple in the early evening, Hauberrisser's emotions do not find any correspondence among the rest of the audience, and the protagonist is not able to affirm his own perspective within himself. On the contrary, he questions his feelings and leaves the inn experiencing a deep sense of shame for his spontaneity of thought. In this case, Hauberrisser witnesses a higher level of indifference and compares his "Gemütsbewegung"[588] with the rationality shown by the audience[589], which, we should remember, just got back from a circus show. What the protagonist identifies as common sense, however, can also be interpreted as an artificial form of rationality that, in light of Georg Simmel's statement, is explained as a mechanism that produces a protective indifference:

So schafft der Typus des Großstädters, - der natürlich von tausend individuellen Modifikationen umspielt ist - sich ein Schutzorgan gegen die Entwurzelung, mit der die Strömungen und Diskrepanzen seines äußeren Milieus ihn bedrohen: statt mit dem Gemüte reagiert er auf diese im wesentlichen mit dem Verstande, dem die Steigerung des Bewusstseins, wie dieselbe Ursache sie erzeugte, die seelische Prärogative verschafft;[590]

What is also interesting in the quoted scene with the magician is the presence of the concepts of fear and death evoked by the terms *Gespenster* and *tiefstes Grauen*. The reader must ask themselves the reasons of Hauberrisser's terror, which is linked to the vanishing contours of reality but also to the idea of ghosts presented in the previous line. Here it must be remembered that what causes the main character to associate the crowd with the *Gespenster* is the lack of emotions witnessed by the protagonist, and that the represented "ghosts" are therefore linked to the idea of indifference, to a lack of expressions, personality and, implicitly, of individual contours. What really scares Hauberrisser in this case, and also causes his sense of unrealness, is not the image of threatening wraiths, but the anonymity of the audience. Since the main consequence of Hauberrisser's experience of the crowd in the previous scene had been a temporary loss of self, the risk of becoming part of a soulless audience

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[587] GG, p. 68.
[588] GG, p. 68.
[589] „Was war, im Grunde genommen, so Schreckliches geschehen?" asks himself Hauberrisser (GG, p. 68).
[590] Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben*, p. 5.

causes him a deep sense of threat that leads him to leave the hall in order to hold on to his identity. Meaningful is the fact that he waits for a moment of darkness, when the lights are momentarily off, to run away[591], as if he feared being followed by the crowd. Since the group of aristocrats had actually 'followed' him from the circus to the inn, although with a lack of awareness that characterizes its anonymity, this irrational gesture can be interpreted as having a symbolic value that allows to identify this chapter as the representation of Hauberrisser's fight for his individuality within an urban space that is always putting it at risk.

Nevertheless, an aspect of this dangerous atmosphere that must still be clarified is the role of Amsterdam as urban entity in having an estranging effect along with the international crowd. To better understand the role of the Dutch capital in this process, it can be fruitful to go back to the notion of *Unbeteiligkeit* which is mentioned as an intent of Hauberrisser's when his thoughts are reported in chapter 2. Starting from this concept, the presence of the international population must be compared to the few Dutch characters and habits that are represented in the analyzed crowded scenes. Then, the reader must ask themselves if the exasperated international component of the Amsterdam discourse stands for a narration of interculturality or if it represents a space that is so international that it becomes anonymous.

5. Considerations on two Jewish districts

Although Chider Grün's *Vexiersalon* is in the Jodenbreetstraat (main street of the Jodenbuurt), Meyrink explicitly introduces the Jewish district only in chapter 6, where he defines it as "dieser seltsamste europäische Stadtviertel"[592]. To reflect on the concept of anonymity, a closer look to this section of the novel can highlight some aspects regarding the identity of Amsterdam, taking into account that the represented district is recognized nowadays as an interesting European Jewish citadel and that it hosts one of the most well-renowned attractions in Amsterdam, the Rembrandt's house. The Dutch painter Rembrandt Harmenszoon Van Rijn (1606-1669) depicted elements of this area himself and gave the Jewish immigrants much importance in his portraits and in his works concerning the Old Testament[593]. Given the presence of the Rembrandt's Museum, the Baedeker guide of 1914 dedicates a section of its own to the district and describes it as an area rich of commercial activities and especially famous for diamonds and intaglios[594]. Despite its first definition as a 'Jewish district',

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[591] GG, p. 68.
[592] GG, 133.
[593] On the topic: DeWitt, Lloyd, *Testing Tradition Against Nature: Rembrandt's Radical New Image of Jesus*, in: DeWitt, Lloyd, *Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus*, New Heaven/New York: Yale University Press 2011.
[594] Baedeker, Karl, *Belgien und Holland*, Leipzig: Verlag von Karl Baedeker 1914, pp. 405-407.

by Meyrink's time and by the years following World War I the Jewish community in Amsterdam was not confined to the Jodenbuurt but was spread throughout the city thanks to a series of emancipatory acts that had begun at the end of the 18th century, when the separation between State and Church had led the Dutch government to emanate laws in favor of free settlement and the immigration of Jewish groups[595]. From that moment onward, Jews had settled in other parts of the city or had moved to the countryside, sometimes founding villages of their own, so that the Jodenbuurt had lost its main role in this community[596]. Another thing that should be mentioned in this context is that the district was never turned to a ghetto, not even in the first phases of Sephardic immigration in the 17th century[597], an element that distinguishes it from the Jewish district mentioned by Meyrink in his first novel *Der Golem*, the Prague ghetto.

Despite the definition given at the beginning of the description, Meyrink does not really mention those elements that could justify the diversity of the Amsterdam Jodebuurt when compared to other European Jewish districts: the absence of a ghetto atmosphere, the colorful panorama of commercial activities and the presence of gems intaglio tradition[598] are not included in his depiction. Even more surprisingly, Rembrandt's house and the 17th century Synagogue do not exist in *Das Grüne Gesicht*, despite Meyrink's reported interest in Rembrandt's art[599].

The general picture of Hauberrisser's arrival in the Jodenbuurt gives the impression of a district devoid of psychotops[600] and characterized by another uncontrolled, moving and screaming multitude[601], which must be distinguished from the previously encountered groups of people because of its extreme poverty. The description shows therefore a general urban neglect:

Das ganze Leben der Bewohner spielte sich anscheinend auf der Gasse ab. – Da wurde im Freien gekocht, gebügelt und gewaschen. Ein Strick hing quer über die Straße, mit schmutzigen Strümpfen daran zum Trocknen und so niedrig, daß der Kutscher sich bücken mußte, um sie nicht mit dem Kopf herunterzureißen. – Uhrmacher saßen vor kleinen Tischen und glotzten, die Lupen in die Augen geklemmt, der Droschke nach wie erschreckte Tiefseefische; - Kinder wurden gesäugt oder über Kanalgitter gehalten.[602]

It seems clear from this depiction that life in the district is characterized by being outdoors, making every aspect of human life a visible spectacle: the sphere of domestic intimacy is shown through the

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[595] Schöffer, I, *The Jews in the Netherlands*, p. 92. However, the Baedeker guide states that the *Judenviertel* was mainly inhabited by Jews in 1914 (Baedeker, p. 405).
[596] Schöffer, I, *The Jews in the Netherlands*, p. 93.
[597] Schöffer, I, *The Jews in the Netherlands*, p. 90.
[598] It might be interesting to remember that Athanasius Pernath, the *Golem*'s protagonist, is a gems engraver.
[599] Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 389.
[600] See: Chapter 2.
[601] The movement and the chaotic overlapping of voices in the Jodenbuurt crowd has already been reported in the previous pages.
[602] GG, p. 133.

images of cooking, ironing, washing and nursing; the working world is represented by clockmakers and, afterwards, by peddlers; above all, the constant presence of filth is pointed out ("Kinder wurden…über Kanalgitter gehalten", "mit schmutzigen Strümpfen daran zum Trocknen"), a trait that is fully illustrated in a further passage of the description:

Berge von bestialisch stinkendenden Fetzen versperrten den Weg und mußten erst weggeräumt werden, um die Straße frei zu machen. Scharen jüdischer Lumpensammler hatten sie aufgetürmt und schleppten emsig immer noch neue Haufen heran, wobei sie verschmähten, sich der üblichen Säcke zu bedienen, und die Bündel schmutziger Lappen der Einfachheit halber unter den halbaufgeknöpften Kaftans auf dem bloße Leibe, eingeklemmt zwischen Rippen und Achseln, trugen.[603]

The presence of tangible details regarding unprivileged environments and the tendency to stress the unhealthiness of certain urban landscapes is not surprising in Meyrink's poetics: his attention for these contexts had already been made clear in *Der Golem*, where characters like Rosina, Jaromir and Charousek appear to be unfortunate victims of an extreme urban neglect, and where even very positive people such as Rabbi Hillel and his daughter Miriam, who are necessary to Athanasius Pernath's personal growth, must suffer poverty. After all, Meyrink could source from two centuries of city literature where underprivileged environments played a meaningful role, and he had translated some of these models from English to German himself[604]. Furthermore, the topic is part of the canons of decadent literature that is typical of the *Fin de Siècle* depiction of eccentric cities. What deserves more attention in this case is the difference between the picture that is given of the Jodenbuurt and the description of the ghetto in Meyrink's *Der Golem*: here, the Jewish district is characterized by its peculiar, almost threatening architecture, the darkness of its alleys and a mysterious atmosphere where whispered secrets and illegible thoughts are attributed to the anthropomorphic buildings. Passages related to Meyrink's Prague depiction are object of research since their very publishing and the pages including the first description of the ghetto are probably the most quoted from his first novel. At the risk of being unoriginal, this analysis must make use of some of them as well:

Ich[605] […] musterte die mißfarbigen Häuser, die da vor meinen Augen wie verdrossene alte Tiere im Regen nebeneinanderhockten. Wie unheimlich und verkommen sie alle aussahen!

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[603] GG, p. 134.

[604] In this regard, the contacts between Meyrink's work and his translation of Charles Dickens' novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *Bleak House* must be taken into special account. Cersowski highlights this relationship clearly and also points out the elements that associate, when it comes to models of city literature, some traits of Meyrink's writing to topics and techniques of Naturalism (Cersowski, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 34-39). This last assumption is probably more problematic than his analysis of Dickens' influence on Meyrink's depiction of the Prague Jewish district in *Der Golem*, nevertheless it opens a wide range of comparative levels in a direction that is different from the phantastic traits of Meyrink's milieus.

[605] *Der Golem* is told in first person, where the "I" of the *Rahmenhandlung* is an anonym narrator and the one of the *Binnenhandlung* is Athanasius Pernath.

Ohne Überlegung hingebaut standen sie da, wie Unkraut, das aus dem Boden dringt. […] Unter dem Himmel sahen sie aus, als lägen sie im Schlaf, und man spürte nichts von dem tückischen, feindseligen Leben, das zuweilen von ihnen ausstrahlt, wenn der Nebel der Herbstabende in den Gassen liegt und ihr leises, kaum merkliches Mienenspiel verbergen hilft. [...] Oft träumte mir, ich hätte diese Häuser belauscht in ihrem spukhaften Treiben und mit angstvollem Staunen erfahren, daß sie die heimlichen Herren der Gasse seien, sich ihres Lebens und Fühlens entäußern und es wieder an sich ziehen können – es tagsüber den Bewohnern, die hier hausen, borgen, um es in kommender Nacht mit Wucherzinsen wieder zurückzufordern.[606]

The narration in the first person is an initial difference between this description and the one given in *Das Grüne Gesicht*. It is interesting to point out that the "I" perspective in this case does not completely change the relationship between the main character and the depicted Jewish district: Athanasius Pernath surely knows the Prague ghetto much better than Hauberrisser knows the Jodenbuurt[607], but he is not a longstanding inhabitant of this area, and was brought to the ghetto after a period of hospitalization about which he hardly has recollection.

He had been treated for severe depression due to the end of a love relationship, and the doctors had decided to send him to the ghetto, a place that had nothing to do with the protagonist's past and where his memory wouldn't be stimulated. Seen from this perspective, Pernath's point of view is a bit more similar to the one of the foreigners than it previously seemed.

Secondly, the dominating element in Meyrink's Prague ghetto are buildings, and their supremacy remains for the rest of the description, which lasts several pages and hardly mentions the human component of the landscape. In this district, the author makes it clear from the start that the depicted houses can be considered alive and constitute the backbone of the community: they are compared to animals, weeds and then to humans, and every comparison adds increasingly aggressive nuances (*verdrossen*, *Unkraut*, *im spukhaften Treiben*). In their being associated to human beings, the houses also show a mysterious character that is evident in the use of words related to privacy and secrecy: *belauscht*, *heimlich*, *verbergen*. The real life of the ghetto seems to be ungraspable and invisible, which strongly contrasts with what happens in the Judenbuurt, where people live "im Freien"[608].

When it comes to 'real' humans, the narrator points out that the inhabitants merely *think* that they possess their homes and that they are the main living beings in the district, while their life and feelings are in fact *geborgt*, "borrowed", from the buildings, which take them back during the night:

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[606] G, 30-31.

[607] The second chapter of *Der Golem* opens with the "I"-narrator who 'wakes up' in the ghetto as Athanasius Pernath and recognizes Aaron Wassertrum's junk shop. (G, p. 10). The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the stories of some inhabitants of the district, and those are very familiar to Pernath.

[608] GG, 133.

Und lasse ich die seltsamen Menschen, die in ihnen wohnen wie Schemen, wie Wesen – nicht von Müttern geboren - , die in ihrem Denken und Tun wie aus Stücken wahllos zusammengefügt scheinen.[609]

The idea of human beings who lack will, who act like "scripts" and who are not born from women must be linked to Meyrink's literary shaping of Prague as puppet master, as thinking subject that exercises a secret and obscure power over its inhabitants. Some years later, the author largely explored this metaphor in the short story *Die Stadt mit dem Heimlichen Herzschlag*, where he wrote:

Marionetten sterben nicht, wenn sie von der Bühne verschwinden; und Marionetten sind alle Wesen, die die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag zusammenhält. Andere Städte, so alt sie auch sein mögen, muten mich an wie unter der Gewalt ihrer Menschen stehend; wie desinfiziert von keimtötenden Säuren – Prag gestaltet und bewegt wie ein Marionettenspieler seine Bewohner von ihrem ersten bis zu ihrem letzten Atemzug.[610]

From this perspective, the inhabitants of the ghetto must be understood as creatures deprived of personality and individuality[611], which brings this analysis back to the matter that it meant to discuss in the first place: the problem of anonymity. In this case, Jutta Müller-Tamm's statement according to which people in Meyrink's Jewish district are characterized by impotence is absolutely pertinent[612], and she argues that the lack of individuality in the district is exactly the reason why Pernath, who is not supposed to remember about his past, has been sent there:

Hierzu gehört beispielsweise auch, daß das Ghetto bei Meyrink als besonders anonymer Lebensraum gekennzeichnet wird; der aus dem Irrenhaus entlassene Pernath, so erfahren wir von Zwakh, wurde von seinem Arzt deshalb im Ghetto untergebracht, weil sich dort »niemand um ihn kümmern und mit Fragen nach früheren Zeiten beunruhigen würde«[613]

It should be pointed out that Meyrink's first novel is based on Athanasius Pernath's personal growth the same way *Das Grüne Gesicht* is based on Fortunat Hauberrisser's. Pernath has lost his memory and the main obstacle to his maturation is exactly to have been deprived of his past and consequently of part of his awareness: in this context, his living in an anonymous environment is a fundamental passage of his education. However, Müller-Tamm's quoted definition might be better applied to the people of the ghetto than to the district itself, which actually seems to have an identity of its own,

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[609] G, 31.
[610] *Die Stadt mit dem heimlichen Herzschlag*, (*Das Haus zur letzten Latern*) p. 164.
[611] See: Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 568.
[612] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 568: Die Dämonie des Ghettoraums präsentiert sich in dieser Weise als Bestandteil einer modernen Stadterfahrung, die durch das Ohnmachtsgefühl des Einzelnen geprägt ist.
[613] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 568.

completely independent from its inhabitants and from urban planning: the previously introduced metaphor of the weeds expresses precisely this lack of control.

It emerges from the brief mention of the Prague ghetto that its atmosphere is clearly different from Meyrink's Jodenbuurt: the two districts actually seem to be opposites in many respects. The silence in the Prague ghetto, where houses mutely communicate more than the people who live inside them, contrasts with the constant uproar of the Amsterdam Jewish district; in the case of Prague, buildings dominate the scene, while in the second description people are important enough that they draw all attention. A parallelism between the two hardly seems possible, but the fact that both novels use the Jewish district as starting point for the protagonist's spiritual journey suggests that a closer look in this direction is necessary, and that maybe the search for the self that constitutes Hauberrisser's aim in *The Green Face* equally starts in district that shows some traces of anonymity. It can be wondered, for example, if the idea of a space where privacy is completely absent does not hint at the lack of individuality suffered by the inhabitants in such an environment. Similarly, the continuous stimuli received by all the senses at the same time make the act of reflecting in the Jodenbuurt impossible.

5.1. Exploration of the self in the Jewish district

The lack of architecture in the description of the Jodenbuurt must also be considered meaningful, especially when compared to the anthropomorphic shaping of the buildings in Meyrink's Prague ghetto, and it makes it hard to remember any aspect of the district that is not linked to crowds, noise and grime, traits that are in fact not so "peculiar" in European cities and that, on the contrary, tend to characterize literature on urban space since its very beginning. This comparison becomes even more interesting when it comes to the presence, in both environments, of a place that allows the exploration of the self and seems to break the physical laws that shape the districts. In the case of the *Golem*, this place is naturally the house beside the synagogue in the Altschulgasse, which Pernath enters by chance from a secret gallery leading from his apartment to a room which does not have any real outside entrance and which, it is said in the ghetto, is the space where the Golem usually appears. In the case of *The Green Face*, this building is Chider Grün's shop, really Zitter Arpád's shop, which is only entered by the protagonist until the delusion of the name *Der Vexiersalon Chider Grün*'s is kept. The shop, besides being the place where Hauberrisser meets the figure that gives him a first hint of a new interpretation of reality, is exceptional in many respects. First, it is the only building in the whole ghetto that gets a description, which occurs in chapter 1 instead of chapter 6:

Das Haus, in dem der Laden des Chider Grün in einen gürtelartig rings herumlaufenden, rechts und links bis in zwei parallele Quergässchen sich hineinziehenden schmalen Glasvorbau mündete, schien, nach den trüben leblosen

Fensterscheiben zu schließen, ein Warenspeicher zu sein, dessen Rückseite vermutlich in eine sogenannte Gracht abfiel – eine der zahlreichen, für den Handelsverkehr bestimmten Wasserstraßen.

In niedriger Würfelform aufgeführt, glich es dem oberen Teil eines dunklen viereckigen Turmes, der im Lauf der Jahre allmählich bis zum Rande seiner steinernen Halskrause – des jetzigen Glasvorbaues – in der weichen Torferde versunken war.[614]

The description provides a series of details which make the shop recognizable, starting from its location between two parallel alleys accessible on both sides through a protruding glass window, with its back entrance leading to the *gracht*. Its peculiar dice-like form is also eye-catching, and the fact that it resembles a sunken tower introduces an element that is completely lacking in following descriptions of the Jodenbuurt: the sensation of time passing, connected to a feeling of decay that foreshadows an inevitable defeat in the fight against nature – the most characteristic trait of the eccentric Amsterdam.

The other main element that must be highlighted when comparing the Jodenbuurt and the Prague ghetto is the presence, in both explorations of the environments conducted by the protagonists, of a literary motif which can be summarized as the gesture of 'reading' the city and that is hinted at by the presence of books in scenes related to these areas. The *topos*, analyzed in depth by Müller-Tamm, draws a link between Edgar Allan Poe's *Man of the Crowd* and Meyrink's description of the Prague Jewish district. Müller-Tamm observes the presence of the motif in *Der Golem* by highlighting the similarities between Athanasius Pernath's attempt to decipher the real nature of the obscure houses of the ghetto and the act of renovating and reading the book *Ibbur*. The book has been given to Pernath by a mysterious man who, because of his unmemorable traits, could be identified as the Golem, that is to say Pernath's doppelganger. The overlapping of Pernath and the Golem is suggested by the narrator himself: in the chapter *I*, the mysterious man who enters the protagonist's house acts as if he was "at home" and gives a book to Pernath, who reads it as if it was "his own mind" [615]. After this chapter, in which the protagonist seems to discover something about himself but no further information about this discovery is provided, comes the chapter *Prag*, where the aforementioned description of the ghetto is given. A possible correlation between the *Ibbur* and the attentive exploration of the ghetto is, therefore, feasible.

Meyrink's knowledge of Edgar Allan Poe's work is confirmed by several studies[616] and the encounter in both *Der Golem* and *Man of the Crowd* with a doppelganger, especially a doppelganger that is closely connected to the environment and the people observed by the narrator, is a valid starting point

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[614] GG, p. 16.
[615] See: G, p. 21-24. See also: Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p 565.
[616] See also: Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 349.

for the in-depth comparison drawn by Müller-Tamm. *Man of the Crowd* starts with the mention of a German book which is impossible to read for the English-speaking narrator:

It was well said of a certain German book that "er lässt sich nicht lesen"- it does not permit itself to be read. There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told. Men die nightly in their beds, wringing the hands of ghostly confessors, and looking them piteously in the eyes- die with despair of heart and convulsion of throat, on account of the hideousness of mysteries which will not suffer themselves to be revealed. Now and then, alas, the conscience of man takes up a burden so heavy in horror that it can be thrown down only into the grave. And thus the essence of all crime is undivulged.[617]

Right after this, the narrator tells the reader that, at the time of the reported episode, he was recovering from a non-specified illness and that maybe his highly sensitive and positive mindset allowed him to really enjoy the sight of the crowd through the windowpane of a certain "D… coffee house"[618]. Poe's protagonist remains seated in the café until he spots a man who draws his attention entirely:

With my brow to the glass, I was thus occupied in scrutinizing the mob, when suddenly there came into view a countenance (that of a decrepit old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age)- a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression. Anything even remotely resembling that expression I had never seen before.[619]

When he sees the man's face, the narrator decides to get up and follow him with no rational reason. He can read a series of contradicting emotions and personality traits in the man's expression (vast mental power, caution, penuriousness, avarice and so forth[620]), signs of a complex mind who really triggers his curiosity and literally attracts him. He follows the stranger through several districts and, after some paragraphs, he starts to attribute the man feelings and intentions he could never decipher from the mere observation of his behavior, especially when only looking at his figure from a distance to avoid being seen. The observation of the stranger lasts one night and one day. When the narrator and the stranger both approach the street where the D…Hotel and the D…Coffee House (starting point of the narration but also the current residence of the protagonist) are located, the narrator finally manages to look at the man's face a second time. The man does not notice his observer, who, after this second attentive look, understands he has been following the steps of a "man of the crowd"[621], whose personality and deeds are not understandable and are also impossible to learn. The man, the

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[617] Poe, Edgar Allan, *The Man of the Crowd*, in: *The complete works of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York: The modern library 1938, p. 475.
[618] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 475.
[619] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 478.
[620] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 478.
[621] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 481.

protagonist understands, will never stop wandering throughout the city because "he refuses to be alone"[622]. A consolidated critical reading of this short story sees the stranger as embodiment of the mass man, a character who does not have any personality or individuality, a product of modernity only existing as "Bestandteil der Masse"[623], who cannot stop nor rest and doesn't even need to, because he only needs the crowd to affirm his own existence[624]. The structure of the story, that is based on aimless walkabouts and detailed observation from a distance, while also highlighting the overlapping of the protagonist's perspective with the foreigner's, led literary criticism to easily identify the man as the flaneur alter ego of the main character. Therefore, Müller-Tamm compares Poe's work with *Der Golem* on the basis of a "Doppelgängerkonstellation"[625]. The motif of the German book follows the I-narrator's city exploration through every step, and especially in the aspects regarding the man of the crowd:

The wild effects of the light enchained me to an examination of individual faces; and although the rapidity with which the world of light flitted before the window prevented me from casting more than a glance upon each visage, still it seemed that, in my then peculiar mental state, I could frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years. […] I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated. "How wild a history," I said to myself, "is written within that bosom!"[626]

At the very end of the story, the narrator openly associates the complexity of the reality seen during his walkabout with the unreadable book:

The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the 'Hortulus Animae,'1 and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that "er lasst sich nicht lesen."[627]

The statement highlights the symbolic link between reading and observing/exploring urban environment - a link that, according to Müller-Tamm's research, also applies to Athanasius Pernath's observation of the ghetto. A further step of this analysis is a clearer association between the idea of mass man and Meyrink's writing in *Der Golem*. Following this concept and keeping in mind the functions of the stranger in Poe's story, Müller-Tamm identifies the Golem not only as the Doppelganger of the protagonist but also as an embodiment of the anonymous population of Meyrink's Prague ghetto.

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[622] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 481.
[623] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 566.
[624] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 566.
[625] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 566.
[626] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 475-478.
[627] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 481.

Analyzing the Jodenbuurt in light of these reflections becomes a concrete possibility, since the relationship between Athanasius Pernath and the book *Ibbur* is specular to the one between Hauberrisser and the paper roll with the spiritual teachings that include, among other names, Chider Grün[628]. It is not by coincidence that he travels to the Jewish district of Amsterdam right after reading the paper roll. The roll is not the only element that introduces the link between reading and exploring in the Jodenbuurt, since Hauberrisser reads a book not long after having entered the *Vexiersalon*, the pornographic book that was described in the previous paragraph. Hauberrisser's reaction to the discovery of the real content of the book is not only a loud laugh, but also a comment that reminds Poe's reflecting on the overlapping of the German illegible book and some obscure aspects of reality which are impossible to understand. Hauberrisser reads the right title and states:

„Wahrhaftig, man glaubt die 'Grundlage des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts' vor sich zu haben: außen brummliges Gelehrtengetue und innen – der Schrei nach Geld oder Weiber."[629]

The main difference between Meyrink and Poe's use of this motif is that, unlike Poe's protagonist, Hauberrisser's reading does not show reality as fully incomprehensible, since the book he holds in his hands is not written in a foreign language and the premise of "er lässt sich nicht lesen"[630] is absent in this context. Nevertheless, Hauberrisser's book reveals a complexity of reality that the protagonist must take into account in the following chapters as well, and this complexity, as previously analyzed, is reflected in his observation of the strange crowds of Amsterdam. What also emerges from Hauberrisser's experience with written paper is that the first book is not sufficient for him to really understand reality properly, and that he needs another help to find the part of himself that allows him to survive physical death: the first volume introduces the correspondence between reading and environment experience, and shows him the difference between cover and content, which means between surface and substance. Then, the paper roll appears as consequence of the reflections following his visit in the *Vexiersalon*. The fact that the paper roll arrives to Hauberrisser from a niche on his own bed, while the steps preceding its appearance cannot belong to anyone but the protagonist because he surely locked the door before going to bed, is indicative of the connection between this object and Hauberrisser's change in his thought. However, the roll is not as understandable as the first book, since it is handwritten, the writing has partially faded and some pages have been torn apart.

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[628] Cfr. Marzin, Florian F., *Okkultismus und Phantastik in den Romanen Gustav Meyrinks*, Essen: die Blaue Eule 1986, p. 77: „Chider Grün, wie der Ewige Jude auch genannt wird, erfüllt dabei eine Funktion eines deus es machina und ist derjenige, der in letzter Konsequenz Hauberrisser den Weg zur höheren Daseinsebene zeigt. Wie schon im „Golem" mit dem Buch Ibbur, so ist auch hier wieder ein Schriftstück der auslösende Faktor für das Beschreiten des okkulten Weges, wobei Schwammerdam die Rolle des weltlichen Führers übernimmt."

[629] GG, pp. 22-23.

[630] Poe, *The Man of the Crowd*, p. 475.

The main character finds himself forced to fill the gaps: this reason brings him to the Jewish district, and, alike in the *Golem*, the depiction of the area follows the protagonist's reading of a text. In this perspective, the confusion Hauberrisser witnesses in the Jodenbuurt and the fragments of daily life he spots reflect his first difficulties in interpreting the text he's holding in his hands.

Now, it must be taken into account that the paper roll represents above all, as previously explained, the thought, and the correspondence between reading and exploring urban environment has to be collocated in a frame where the overlapping between city and subconscious is the main guideline. Hence, the lack of privateness and individuality in the Jodenbuurt must be read in a perspective where the figures of modern culture and the *topoi* of European city literature are used, alike in the *Golem*, as effective ways of expressing the confusion and the identity crisis of the modern individuum.

6. The use of phychotops

The problem of the presence of psychotops in Meyrink's depiction of Amsterdam introduces a further comparison between the space of the Dutch capital and Prague's representation in *Der Golem*. As explained in the methodological chapter, the notion of psychotop is a key concept when it comes to shaping the identity of an urban space, and their presence distinguishes a built up area from a city or a metropolis where its inhabitants can see themselves as part of a cultural microcosm. When it comes to the Prague space, Susanne Fritz highlights the need to difference between the psychotops belonging to Czech literature and the ones belonging to German Bohemian literature, since the two cultures understandably identify themselves with different symbols, districts and so forth[631]. In this regard, she states:

Die wichtigste identitätsstiftende Einheit ist dabei, was die Prager Deutschen betrifft, zweifellos das Panorama mit Karlsbrücke, Moldau, Kleinseite und Hradschin, das man vom Altstädter Ufer aus erblickt. Bedeutsam ist weiterhin das einstige jüdische Ghetto mit seinem berühmten Friedhof, der Altstädter Ring und das Altstädter Rathaus Eine wesentlich geringere Rolle spielen dann der Wenzelplatz, und das Nationalmuseum, die zwar ebenso wie der Karlsplatz, das Neustädter Rathaus oder das Nationaltheater in der Prager deutschsprachigen Literatur als Lokalität angesprochen werden, aber im Gegensatz zu ihrer Gestaltung in der tschechischen Literatur keinen Psychotopcharakter entwickeln. Die tschechische Literatur schildert im Gegensatz zur deutschsprachigen dann noch die ausschließlich tschechisch besiedelten Vorstädte wie Karlín/Karolinental oder Žižkov.[632]

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[631] It is implied that the psychotops change not only according to the cultures residing in the city but also to time and historical phases.
[632] Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 25.

Correspondences between Meyrink's *Prager Texte* and this model are clear: *Der Golem* played a great role in shaping a Prague imagery linked to its narrow and dark alleys, its medieval and baroque architecture, an imagery that glorifies the romantic look on the Moldova and the mysteries of the Alchemistengasse. Similarly, *Walpurgisnacht* concentrates on the contrast between two dimensions of Prague's topography, *oben* and *unten*, where *oben* indicates the fortress of the Hradschin and the Kleinseite, home and refuge of Prague's German aristocracy, and *unten* represents the Altstadt, home of the other social categories, which is called *die Welt* by the aristocracy. The two sides are divided and connected through the Karlbrücke mentioned by Fritz. In *Der Engel des westlichen Fenster*, which is actually set in Prague only in its central chapters, the Bohemian capital is represented in its baroque period, the time of Rudolph II, and the most depicted spots are, again, the Alchemistengasse, the Hradschin and a series of underground labyrinths. In light of this list, it is clear that, despite the anonymity and the lack of individuality that characterize the inhabitants of the ghetto according to Müller-Tamm, Meyrink's Prague is rich of elements that highlight at least some aspects of its identity, and his use of psychotops is interesting enough to shape a new conception of the Bohemian capital. The picture deriving from this conception might be deceiving and superficial from an historical point of view, but is far from depicting an anonymous environment: the idea of setting *Der Golem* or *Walpurgisnacht* in another European city is an impossible thought.

Nevertheless, it is true that the *Golem*'s ghetto is not so rich of psychotops as the scenes that are set outside of it. The places of the Jewish district which play a meaningful role for Athanasius Pernath are Aaron Wassertum's shop, the building in the Altschulgasse and the pub *Zum alten Ungelt*. The synagogue is mentioned, but not treated as an influencing element. The rest of the ghetto is characterized, as previously stated, by the peculiarities of its houses, porches and dark alleys, and none of these traits help Pernath feel as if he belongs. Despite the importance of the events taking place in the district, and of the figures of Rabbi Hillel and his daughter, the main character remains an outsider in the area. This becomes even more evident when he spends a day with his former lover Angelina away from the ghetto, on the Moldava, in the chapter *Weib*. At the end of their rendezvous, Pernath, still bewildered because of the nice day, feels extremely sad at the thought of going home, the Altstadt seems to him much more luminous than his own district:

Der Glanz eines kurzen Nachtmittags hatte mich für immer zum Fremdling in meiner Wohnstätte gemacht.

Eine Spanne von wenigen Wochen, vielleicht nur von Tagen, dann mußte das Glück vorüber sein – und nichts blieb davon als eine wehe, schöne Erinnerung.

Und dann?

Dann war ich heimatlos hier und drüben, diesseits und jenseits des Flusses.[633]

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[633] G, p. 203.

The experience outside the Jewish district leads Pernath to question his already fragile relationship with this environment and allows the protagonist's lack of reference points to emerge. Nevertheless, he understands that the places where he spent the day with Angelina are equally strange to him. When he decides to have a last look at Angelina's house before going home, he gets lost because of the mist and, after walking through some dark and unfamiliar alleys, he recognizes the Hungerturm (*Daliborka*) and the Hirschgraben. Then, he realizes that he is walking on the Goldmachergasse, the street of the alchemists. The street ends with a house that stands above the others, being a little taller than them. Pernath decides to ask there for help. In the house, he sees an old man who walks around holding a candle. The old man cannot see him nor hear him[634]. After this, the protagonist gives up his research of Angelina's house and goes back to the Jewish district, more precisely to the *Alten Ungelt*, where he tells his friends about his wandering through the mist. One of them, Prokop, explains to him:

Übrigens, um auf das weiße Haus auf der Kleinseite zurückzukommen: die Sache ist furchtbar interessant. Es geht nämlich eine alte Sage, daß dort oben in der Alchemistengasse ein Haus steht, das nur bei Nebel sichtbar wird, und auch da bloß 'Sonntagskinder'. Man nennt es 'die Mauer zum letzten Latern'. Wer bei Tag hinaufgeht, sieht dort nur einen großen, grauen Stein – dahinter stürzt es jäh an in die Tiefe in den Hirschgraben, und Sie können von Glück sagen, Pernath, daß Sie keinen Schritt weiter gemacht haben: sie wären unfehlbar hinuntergefallen und hätten sämtliche Knochen gebrochen.[635]

The house at the „last lantern" is the place where the foundation of Prague began, according to the legends[636]. The encounter with the man holding a candle, and the visit at the house in general, are extremely meaningful for the development of Pernath's self-awareness, and the narrative structure changes abruptly after this sequence: in the following chapters, the protagonist is imprisoned and spends a very long time enclosed. However, the old house at the last lantern is the place where the I-narrator of the *Rahmenhandlung* finds Pernath and Miriam at the end of the novel. There, they are living their eternal life.

In light of these events, it is not hard to understand the link that had brought the protagonist to the house in the first place, since there he could find a trace of his real identity. When it comes to the use of psychotops in this case, what emerges is that the re-discovery of Pernath's individuality is strongly connected to the places that can be considered meaningful for the city's identity as well, and

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[634] G, p. 204-205.
[635] G, p. 210.
[636] Müller-Tamm, *Die untote Stadt*, p. 571.

especially to its past[637]. The fact that the protagonist walks completely alone in the scene where he finds the house stresses this connection.

Now, it should be asked whether the relationship between Amsterdam and Hauberrisser follows a similar framework.

Right after discovering the real name of the *Vexiersalon*, Hauberrisser experiences a moment of solitude and urban exploration that can be seen as counterpart of Athanasius Pernath's wandering in the Kleinseite. Hauberrisser is still holding the paper roll in his hand, there is no mist to make his movements difficult, but his mind is confused and full of doubts about his perception and his memory. This scene is characterized by two elements: the protagonist's aimless walking and the complete silence and desolation of the part of the city he is exploring. The name of the district where he finds himself wandering at this point is not stated, but the place is described as an old urban area whose buildings seem to date back to Middle Age. The area also looks completely empty and abandoned, which is very strange when thinking about the crowd that characterizes the other mentioned districts of Amsterdam:

Die Häuser ausgestorben, als hätte seit Jahrhunderten kein menschliches Wesen mehr darin gewohnt, - hier und da eine Angorakatze mitten unter den grell blühenden Topfblumen auf barocken Fenstersimsen verschlafen ins goldene Mittagslicht blinzelnd; nirgends ein Laut. […] Sackgassen, eingeengt von hohen Mauern mit schweren, glatten, festverschlossenen Eichentoren darin, die seit ihrem Bestehen wohl noch nie eine Hand geöffnet hatte. […] Ein Gittertür vor einem Klosterhof stand offen. – Er ging hinein und sah eine Bank unter hängenden Weidenzweigen. Ringsum hohes, wucherndes Gras. Nirgends ein Mensch weit und breit, kein Gesicht hinter den Fenstern. Alles wie ausgestorben.[638]

The connection between this scene and Hauberrisser's partial re-discovery of his inner self has already been highlighted by Matthew A. Fike[639] and the topic in and of itself won't be object of research in this context. What must be noted here is the lack of topographic coordinates, normally reported by the narrator, and of psychotops. The characteristics of this scene are in no way connected to Amsterdam's past apart from the described antiquity of the area, which does not set this scenario apart from any other European capital. Even elements like the presence of water, of canals and boats is not hinted at by the text in this case.

After this reflexive moment, Hauberrisser bases the development of his self-awareness on the philosophic dialogue with Pfeill, Sephardi, Swammerdam and Eva. In the chapters following Eva's disappearance, Hauberrisser withdraws in his apartment and studies the manuscript. The

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[637] The overlapping between past and present in these sequences is object of another chapter.
[638] GG, pp. 136-138. Apart from silence and solitude, another element connecting this scene with the sequence at the Hirschgraben is the presence of gardens and elms.
[639] Fike, *Four novels in Jung's 1925 Seminar*, p. 59.

opportunities for the occurring of psychotops lack completely[640], and his spiritual growth seems independent from them. Moreover, he does not seem to find any personal connection to Amsterdam itself and in the end of the novel, when he watches the destruction of the city from a distance, he does not feel as if he belongs to that environment.

The only element that resembles a psychotop in this picture is constituted by the canals of the Zee Dyk, where Klinkherborgk's body is found and where Eva is assaulted by Usibepu. The same area hosts Swammerdam's apartment, and the inn where Usibepu and Zitter Arpád spend their nights drinking and gambling is also in the same building. There, projecting its shadow, stands the Niklas kerk. The two elements – Zee Dyk, Niklas Kerk - are mostly mentioned in the same sequences and seem to have a deeper meaning not only for Hauberrisser but also for other characters. In chapter 4, when Sephardi and Eva are invited to visit Swammerdam, the Zee Dyk is described for the first time, using the following words:

"ein[e] krumm[e], stockfinster[e] Gasse, die sich im "unheimlichsten Viertel Amsterdams am Zusammenfluß zweier Grachten in unmittelbarer Nähe der düstern Nicolas Kerk hinzog."[641]

What this place means for Eva is clarified in chapter 8, where she feels attracted to the district without an understandable reason. When she gets there, she understands that nothing but Usibepu's spiritual strength has called her to those canals. She spots the Niklas Kerk from the moment of her arrival in the Zee Dyk. The sight of the church follows her during the whole sequence of her encounter with the Zulu, from his appearance to the end of the chase: in fact, Eva looks for refuge in the Niklas Kerk and tries to get inside it, or at least to the garden behind it[642], making the church the actual backdrop of the fight between the woman and Usibepu.

The church is less present during the chapters following Eva's disappearance, but it appears again as the place where the woman's funeral is held and where Usibepu witnesses her ascension to the sky.

The last noteworthy appearance of this psychotop occurs in the final chapter of the novel, where Hauberrisser sees bell tower collapsing, witnesses the destruction of the Zee Dyk and thinks back to the meetings that took place in Swammerdam's apartment:

Lange wagte ich nicht, den Blick nach der Stadt zu wenden, aus Furcht, die Nikolaskirche mitsamt dem dicht daneben befindlichen Haus am Zee Dyk, in dem sich Swammerdam und Pfeill befanden, könnte weggeweht sein, - dann, als er

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[640] Chider Grün's shop can be considered a sort of psychotop for Hauberrisser. However, the shop in and of itself does not define Amsterdam's identity, even because it was invented by the author.
[641] GG, p. 89.
[642] Binder, *Gustav Meyrink. Ein Leben im Bann der Magie*, p. 554.

zögernd und voll Angst hinschaute, sah er, daß sie wohl noch unversehrt zum Himmel regte, aber aus einer Insel von Schutt: - fast das ganze übrige Giebelmeer war ein einziger flacher Trümmerhaufen.[643]

The scene where the Nikolaskirche is actually destroyed has already been quoted and commented: the fall of the church makes it clear for Hauberrisser that the city has come to its end.

A gap between the use of psychotops in the *Prager Texte* and the depiction of Amsterdam in *Das Grüne Gesicht* is, despite the exception of the Saint Nicholas church, evident. In *Das Grüne Gesicht*, Meyrink does not connect the main character's personal growth to selected cultural elements of the city and lets the only aforementioned psychotop be destroyed by the final storm, just like every other area of Amsterdam. It can be hypothesized that, being he aware of the collapse that would have ended the novel, the author might have decided to underplay the value of Amsterdam's main architectural and cultural symbols. Either way, the previous reported depictions have shown a clear tendency to characterize the city mostly through representations of crowded and international spaces – where Dutch culture played a minor role – on the one hand, and of desolate landscapes related to unnamed suburbs or old nameless and abandoned districts on the other. These observations speak in favor of a conception of Amsterdam as a place progressively deprived of its individuality.

Conclusions

The chapter has introduced the philosophical message behind the confrontation between Hauberrisser and Chider Grün, a figure which possesses the main characteristics of internationality and immortality. Chider has been identified as a transcultural character linked to both Islamic and Jewish tradition, representing al-Khidr and the Eternal Jew respectively, and to a symbology linked to the representations of prophet Elijah. A further connection between him and the figure of the African Usibepu has been pointed out by taking into consideration textual elements hinting at this association: in this case, Pfeill's and Eva's statements suggesting the link between Usibepu were especially useful, as well as the appearance of Chider in Amsterdam; in addition, the notion of an ancestral knowledge possessed by an original collective mind (or 'collective unconscious', following Jung's and Fike's reflections on *Das grüne Gesicht*), a knowledge referencing a dimension beyond the concrete sphere, has proved essential. In this respect, it has been highlighted that Chider's immortality must be understood as the representation of a dimension which is universal and timeless. The role of Chider, or of Elijah, has been traced back to a symbol of this ancestral collective mind.

It has been observed how the concept of *Zeitlosigkeit* becomes visible, in *Das grüne Gesicht*, not only through the appearance of Chider Grün, but also through Meyrink's addressing Jan Swammerdam

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[643] GG, p. 316.

and Madame de Bourignon, two figures not belonging to the chronological time when his story is set but being totally adequate to the apocalyptic context of the described events. Their presence makes an absence of chronological time apparent, but also hints at a philosophical current connecting mystic and millenarism, and their involvement in the narration suggests one of the possible reasons for Meyrink's fascination for Amsterdam as literary landscape; besides, references to 17th century millenarism and to Elijah make the importance of the apocalyptic thought apparent long before the beginning of the final collapse.

The text analysis of the chapter had the result to identify Amsterdam as a manifestation of the Prague paradigm introduced in chapter 3: this reflection, started from the acknowledgement of the threshold position of the Dutch capital, was supported by the association between Chider Grün and the Prague Golem in Meyrink's narrations, and by the observation of specular narrative mechanisms and sequences related to urban space in the two novels.

As a further result, Hauberrisser's plot has been identified as an identity search in an environment which promotes anonymity and follows the patterns of Lotman's eccentric city. A constellation of eccentric metropolises has been introduced in order to make the traits connecting Amsterdam to this notion more apparent. Through its association to the concept of eccentricity, Amsterdam has been described as a border space politically and culturally speaking, but also as an extremely fragile urban space in precarious balance between emerging and submerging. Extremely meaningful for the analysis was the connection between eccentric cities and the idea of a space where concrete and spiritual reality can meet in virtue of its threshold role. In this respect, it was useful to observe the importance of the notion anonymity in both novels, and of the identity discovery in crowded places. This correspondence has a common root in the mechanisms of Poe's *Man of the Crowd*, where the idea of unreadability creates a powerful metaphoric connection between urban crowded space and written text, a metaphor influencing several key passages of both Meyrink's *Der Golem* and *Das grüne Gesicht*. From this point of view, it has been possible to analyze the relationship between the Jewish districts of Prague and Amsterdam, and to observe this further emergence of the Prague model. The last section of the chapter achieved to describe the main difference between the two literary landscapes Prague and Amsterdam by noticing the different use of psychotops made by Meyrink in his two first novels, and by highlighting how psychotops play a marginal role in *Das grüne Gesicht*. This choice has been interpreted in virtue of the close relationship connecting Amsterdam and the idea of anonymity, but also in view of the apocalyptic perspective of Meyrink's narration in this text – a perspective where the final collapse and the eschatological level work as fundamental guidelines. The analysis in the next chapter resonates with the matter of *eschaton* in a more precise way by observing the correspondence between collapsing space and origin of history in the author's depiction

of Amsterdam's fall. This continuation takes place through a comparison between Meyrink's novel and Kubin's *Die andere Seite*.

Chapter 5

Apocalyptic landscapes and collapsing spaces

in Gustav Meyrink's *Das grüne Gesicht* and Alfred Kubin's *Die andere Seite*

1. Introduction: the relationship between Meyrink's and Kubin's work

Comparisons between Meyrink and Kubin's writing are not new to literary criticism. Stephan Berg classifies both authors as *Raum-Autoren* and analyzes *Die Andere Seite* and *Der Golem* in his work *Schlimme Zeiten, Böse Räume* firstly by considering the problem of the *Unschlüssigkeit* deriving from the use of the narrative frame in both novels, and secondly by basing on the constitutive elements of the city of Perle in their utopic quality, that are compared to the deformation of the historical Prague ghetto conducted by Meyrink. Berg himself accepts a definition of space in *Die andere Seite* as apocalyptic, a dimension that: "in ein apokalyptisches Geschehen münd[et], das das Subjekt zu verschlingen droht."[644] By doing so, Berg continues the path started by Cersowski, who had undertaken the same process equally problematizing the notion of *Unschlüssigkeit* expressed through the interaction between *Binnenhandlungen* and *Rahmenhandlung* of the novels. Contacts between the character of Patera and the concept of the Golem in and of itself are also part of Cersowski's analysis.[645] The comparison between *Der Golem* and *Die andere Seite* has inspired studies in recent times that highlighted the heterotopic traits of both Meyrink's Prague and Kubin's Perle[646]. A parallelism between Perle's structure and the city of Prague in general is also part of the critical debate around Kubin's novel[647].

The interest in comparing the two authors stems not only from their common classification as writers belonging to the *Phantastik*, but also from the close relationship between the first draft of *Der Golem* and Kubin's art: as explained in the previous chapter, Meyrink's collaboration with Kubin for the illustrations of the novel had started some years before the writing of *Die andere Seite*, and the artist had been powerfully influenced by the first chapters of Meyrink's work, for which he already had produced a series of drawings when Meyrink had a creative and mystical crisis. The use of some motives typical of Meyrink's writing, especially the ones related to anthropomorphic architecture and to the creation of an atmosphere where the urban context seems to have an independent thought, even using its power on the inhabitants, is to trace back to this contact with the manuscript of *Der Golem*.

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[644] Berg, *Schlimme Zeiten, Böse Räume*, p. 235.
[645] Cersowski, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 96.
[646] Ruthner, *Habsburgs ‚Dark Continent'*; Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*
[647] Cottone, *La letteratura fantastica in Austria e Germania 1900-1930*, pp. 64-68.

Meaningful example of the similarities between Prague's depiction in *Der Golem* and Perle is the passage:

Die Häuser spielten da eine bedeutende Rolle. Oft war es mir, als ob die Menschen nur ihretwegen da wären und nicht umgekehrt. Diese Häuser das waren die starken, wirklichen Individuen. Stumm und doch wieder vielsagend standen sie da. Ein jedes hatte so seine bestimmte Geschichte, man mußte nur warten können und sie stückweise den alten Bauten abtrotzen. Diese Häuser wechselten sehr mit ihren Launen. Manche haßten sich, eiferten gegenseitig aufeinander.[648]

The similarities between this sequence and the description of the living houses in *Der Golem* are evident, not only in the idea of the anthropomorphic architecture in and of itself, but also in the interactions that characterize the hypothetical life of the buildings, where feelings of suspicion and forms of hatred are the norm.

Berg points out that Kubin's project tends to represent:

was Meyrink zwar schildert, aber im esoterischen Anderswo aufzuheben versucht: der Welt-Raum als schlußendlich und grundsätzlich heilloser Ort, indessen paradoxem Durcheinander kein Ausgleich der Gegensätze und damit keine Rettung des Individuums mehr gelingen kann.[649]

In this perspective, *Die andere Seite* can be read as an extreme narration of some of the constitutive elements of *Der Golem*, to which an apocalyptical quality must be added. True is that, apart from this clear close contact, Kubin also embraces with his work a much more pessimistic view on the future in comparison to Meyrink's first novel, and that this vision must be connected to the political uncertainty characterizing the Austro-Hungarian empire in the year of its publication[650]. The spectrum of the landscape treated by the author is much wider than the Prague district in Meyrink's novel, since in *Die andere Seite* an entire new reign is conceived, a reign that works as a distorted and in some ways parodic version of *Mitteleuropa*, and this constitutes the main difference between Kubin and Meyrink's work: while Meyrink's *Der Golem* aims at illustrating a path towards a personal spiritual growth discussing social matters that find their expression in the depiction of the ghetto according to the models of modern city literature, Kubin actually concentrates himself on the depiction of a physical and metaphorical fall of an urban space that is part of a wider invented reign clearly representing a distortion of a dark empire: the specific message on the political and social level given by the collapse of the system in the Dream Kingdom plays here the main role. The difference in the conclusions of the two novels shows, in this perspective, an opposite attitude, where in Meyrink the

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[648] *Die andere Seite*, p. 103.
[649] Berg, *Schlimme Zeiten, böse Räume*, p. 236.
[650] Ruthner, *Habsburgs „Dark Continent"*, pp. 193-194.

protagonist really reaches enlightenment, in a timeless dimension, while Kubin's powerless I-narrator witnesses the fall of the Dream Kingdom and ends up in a psychiatric clinic. Moreover, where Meyrink shows a character who finds his individuality above the limits of time and space, Kubin portraits the progressive falling apart of the protagonist's identity.

However, Ruthner rightly defines *Die andere Seite*:

die Initialzündung für eine ganze Serie von deutschsprachigen Romanen gewesen, die unmittelbar vor und nach dem Zusammenbruch der Habsburger- und Hohenzollern-Monarchien von phantastischen Welten und deren Untergängen erzählten – wobei sie häufig Österreich-Ungarn als Reich der unbegrenzten Unmöglichkeiten meinten und damit gleichzeitig einen gewissen apokalyptischen bon ton der Zeit bedienten.[651]

And names two other works Meyrink's that better fit the apocalyptic model: *Das Grüne Gesicht* and *Walpurgisnacht*.

Unlike the comparison between *Die andere Seite* and *Der Golem*, the relationships between Kubin's text and Meyrink's second novel *Das Grüne Gesicht* are not normalized in literary criticism despite Ruthner's intuition. Lube noticed in his research that the two works might have the same point of departure, stating that: "*Das Grüne Gesicht*, Meyrinks zweiter Roman, enthält eine weitere wichtige Entsprechung zu Kubins *Andere Seite*, nämlich den Untergang einer Welt, der von geistigen Verirrungen und Verwirrungen hervorgerufen erscheint."[652] This chapter starts from this premise and tries to fill this void by showing that a continuity between Meyrink and Kubin's literary imagination can be established after the publication of *Der Golem* as well. To do so, the apocalyptic quality of the two texts *Das Grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite* will be the focus of the discussion.

2. Introduction to the comparison between Kubin's Perle and Meyrink's Amsterdam

As it was explained in the introduction, the spaces analyzed in this chapter can be defined as collapsing, with the collapse being linked to a sort of generic natural catastrophe which, in both cases, cannot be traced back to significant environmental causes. No scientific cause is provided for these catastrophes, because motivating the disaster is not functional to the plot nor it is perceived as necessary by the reader. Despite the lack of scientific proof of the incoming danger, the kind of natural disasters that destroy Kubin's Perle and Meyrink's Amsterdam are perceived as inevitable from the beginning by all characters in the novels, as well as by the reader, and this occurs because the end of these cities is suggested to be intrinsic to the structure of these environments.

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[651] Ruthner, *Habsburgs „Dark Continent"*, p. 179.
[652] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 181-182.

Both for Hauberrisser and Kubin's I-narrator the experience of the final catastrophe is an expedient to reach a better understanding of reality, made even more meaningful when we assume that the landscape in both novels can be interpreted as metaphor for the protagonists' inner life.

A revelatory quality is made apparent in both Meyrink and Kubin's texts, which are scattered with visionary moments and progressive epiphanies. Both novels are structured around a dialogue between the protagonists and two figures that can be interpreted as supernatural tools, identified as Chider Grün (or Elijah) and Patera. The main difference between these two communications is the form given to the dialogical act, which in *Das grüne Gesicht* – where Hauberrisser sees the prophet but also has the paper roll with spiritual teachings – is dependent on both visions and written word, whereas in *Die andere Seite* books and writing play no role (not only in the dialogue with Patera but throughout the whole narration), since Patera only communicates through visions and violent oscillations in the protagonist's mood. Moreover, both novels end with a self-standing sentence that summarizes the meaning of the protagonists' experiences:

Er war hüben und drüben
Ein lebendiger Mensch[653]

Der Demiurg ist ein Zwitter[654]

The fact that these propositions appear separately from the body of the text highlights that both sentences transcend the plot in some way, despite their being a consequence of the narration. They must be understood as the core of a revelation, an essential message that must be preserved by the reader and that consequently is reported in a short and simple form and closes the novel with last information that is easily remembered. In this respect it is stated by Klaus in *Somnambulistic Lucidity* that "these words not only summarize the message of the novel but also describe Meyrink himself, as Eduard Frank showed. Achieving a dual existence and maintaining poise and clarity in the state of ambiguity, is Hauberrisser's skill cultivated by yoga, achieved in somnambulistic fugues. Again, the coarticulation of Meyrink's philosophy and the cultural context is clear – salvation is at hand despite the maelstrom of woe and destruction that has engulfed the West. It is found in looking beyond waking sight, looking within and calling forth the dormant spiritual self, all of which is made manifest in the wake of somnambulistic lucidity."[655]

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[653] GG, p. 324.
[654] *Die andere Seite*, p. 407.
[655] Klaus, *Somnambulistic Lucidity*, p. 118.

Similarities between the novels and the apocalyptic models introduced in chapter 1.4 are also visible, although neither text features all of the categories that define the genre according to Robert Koch: the wait for the end and cosmic catastrophes certainly characterize the whole narration in Meyrink's Amsterdam and the second half of *Die andere Seite*, dedicated to Perle's decline. The feeling of 'waiting for the end' is equally thematized by Meyrink and Kubin, who both concentrate on giving signals of the approaching end when depicting the environment – a matter that is central to the following sections of this analysis. The presence of manifestations of Elijah in *Das grüne Gesicht* and the divine nature of Patera but also, to some extent, of Herkules Bell in *Die andere Seite*, can point to the existence of angels and demons. The division of historical time into epochs is more evident in Meyrink's work than in Kubin's: in Kubin's case, no interest for a future time of humanity is present, while *Das grüne Gesicht* proposes a worldview where the destruction of the old world leads to the foundation of a new one, giving form to a cyclical vision of time, and this is evident in Meyrink's mention of figures linked to millenarist philosophy such as Antoinette Bourignon[656]. Nevertheless, a reflection on history is expressed in *Die andere Seite* through the choice of having the year 1860 be the eternal time of the Dream Kingdom, a year that is placed seven years prior to the creation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Seven years is also the time needed by Herkules Bell to enter the Dream Kingdom[657].

The analysis in the following sections will further highlight the traits that make a special pattern apparent in *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite*: the connection between the earth/sky opposition mentioned by Di Tommaso and the position of the eccentric cities Perle and Amsterdam. Even before involving the factual act of deconstruction of these spaces, this association is first evident from a look at the characters of the two novels. Di Tommaso claims that the conflict between earth and sky is reflected in the opposition between "chosen" and "adversaries"[658] that characterizes the genre, an opposition that highlights the collective quality of revelations: from this perspective, apocalyptic texts have a main informative function that is especially meaningful during historical periods where the identity of a group is threatened. By informing the group of the real quality of space and time and of the meaning of existence, the function of the apocalypse becomes above all social: re-establishing and maintaining the identity of the society the revelation is addressed to[659]. Now, the relationship of Meyrink and Kubin's work with this notion must be interpreted in light of the main difference

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[656] Bouldin, Elizabeth, *Women Prophets and Radical Protestantism in the British Atlantic World 1640-1730*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 114-115.

[657] See: Fanetti, Giulia, *Il demiurgo è ibrido, ovvero ermafrodita Letture postasburgica e postcoloniale di «Die andere Seite» di Alfred Kubin*, in: Studia Theodisca, XXVIII (2021), pp. 25-42, here: p. 31.

[658] Where the term "chosen" indicates the ones who receive the real revelation and guide the group towards a better era and the term "adversaries" designates the ones who do not follow the path suggested by the real revelation but a false view.

[659] Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, pp. 80-81.

between these novels and the *corpus* examined by the aforementioned Collins, Koch and Di Tommaso, a *corpus* stemming from Jewish pre-Christian writings and from the gospels. The enormous temporal distance that separates these works from Meyrink and Kubin's production makes it necessary to interpret the role of collectivity in *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite* from a different perspective. Both texts present the opposition between different worldviews and are partially built around this notion: in Kubin's case, the dichotomy Patera/Herkules Bell is literally a conflict between two *Weltvorstellungen*, one oriented towards immobility and one oriented towards future, movement and progress; in Meyrink's work, the vision of Elijah/Chider Grün characterizes the difference between people who survive the final storm in some way or another (by emigrating, or by becoming the inhabitants of a new dimension) and the ones who do not see the Green Face, who are destined to factual death. In the latter case, the character Zitter Arpád, who pretends to be Elijah and collects followers in front of his former shop, is a clear representation of this conflict. Nevertheless, the revelations had by the protagonists, who should be identified as the chosen ones, are closely linked to an individualistic point of view, which becomes clear when considering that the last chapters of the two novels only show the survival of the main character. This is especially true of Kubin's work, where the protagonist is the only person to survive the fall of the Dream Kingdom besides Herkules Bell[660]. However, when it comes to Meyrink's novel, even though the ones chosen to see the Green Face are several, they are not part of an acknowledged collectivity and some of them have their own spiritual path which has nothing in common with Hauberrisser's or Eva's. One of the most interesting passages showing this contradiction is in chapter 9, where the secondary character Sephardi visits Lazarus Eidotter, another member of the group surrounding Madame de Bourignon and Jan Swammerdam, who is in prison after having turned himself and claimed to have killed Klinkherbogk for money. Eidotter is a very old man who never could have climbed on a rope to reach Klinkherbogk's room on the fifth floor, as the real murderer did according to the police report, but his description of the crime was so detailed that the police had to accept it as factual while also treating the man's faith as an aggravating factor. Actually, Eidotter's confession comes from his peculiar ability to experience the unjust gestures of other people as if he himself were the culprit. This ability stems from his relationship with prophet Elijah, whom he encountered years before. In this scene, Sephardi, who does not know anything about Eidotter's talent, comes to visit him because he wants to know why the old man turned himself in. He points out from the very beginning that he mainly came to see a fellow worshiper: Sephardi knows that part of Eidotter's trial is held on the basis of his Jewish heritage, and therefore feels personally involved. Eidotter shows no interest for the fact that

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[660] Bell is also the only character whose perspective is given in addition to the I-narrator's: every time the protagonist detaches from himself, he borrows the perspective of the Adversary, which suggests a close relationship and a partial overlapping between these two characters.

he and Sephardi share the same faith and avoids identifying himself as part of a group, nevertheless he explains his ability to the visitor and clarifies many elements of the revelation he had from the Green Face years before. Then, he asks Sephardi to withhold this information, because he accepted to take the blame for the real criminal, who is Usibepu, and does not want to be released by the police. In this instance, he defines himself as part of a group for the first time:

Eidotter hielt ihn am Ärmel fest: „Sie haben mir versprochen, zu schweigen, Herr Dokter! Um Elias willen darf ka Blut nicht fließen. Die Rache is mein. Und dann –„ – das freundliche Greisengesicht bekam plötzlich etwas drohend Fanatisches, Prophetenhaftes –, „und dann is der Mörder aner von unsere Leut! – Nicht ä Jud, wie Sie jetzt wieder meinen –„ erklärte er, als er Sephardis verdutzte Miene bemerkte, – „aber doch aner von unsere Leut! Ich hab's erkannt, wie ich ihn soeben innerlich angeschaut hab'. – „[661]

When Eidotter says "of our people", he means the ones who have seen the Green Face and have walked on a spiritual path close to his[662]. The contradiction in this notion of "group" relies on the individuality of this spiritual path, which, is suggested, cannot just be revealed but must be earned by each person in their own way. From this perspective, the collective value of the apocalypses in *Das grüne Gesicht* must be interpreted using categories that express, through the terms "chosen" and "others", the conflict between the wise individuum and mass, rather than the idea of the threatened identity of a certain group where the members are easily identified as the "chosen".

It has been stated that the eschatological model of time in apocalyptic literature does not exclude a temporal architecture associated with cyclicity and timelessness. When it comes to the expression of the temporal matter in Meyrink's *Das grüne Gesicht* and Kubin's *Die andere Seite*, cyclicity and timelessness are useful and recurring notions in this analysis, since the two environments of Meyrink's Amsterdam and Kubin's Dream Kingdom show heterochronical aspects.

3. The trope of the detached observer

The comparative reading of *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite* requires a first analysis of the role of the observer in the two texts. These observers can be identified as Hauberrisser and Kubin's I-narrator (who remains unnamed throughout the whole novel), nevertheless the matter is more complicated in *Das grüne Gesicht* than in *Die andere Seite*, since Meyrink's novel shows more than one character involved in sequences where mysteries are revealed.

In chapter 8, Eva van Druysen encounters the Green one after witnessing an opening in the sky:

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[661] GG, p. 223.
[662] The reader knows that Eidotter is right on this matter because Usibepu sees the Green one in Swammerdam's apartment some hours before killing Klinkherbogk and recognizes the spiritual importance of this figure without hesitating.

Querüber ging ein Riß aus fahlem Licht und die Sterne stürzten hinein wie eine vom Sturmwind gejagte Wolke schimmernder Eintagsfliegen. Dann tat sich eine Halle auf, und an einem langen Tisch saßen uralte Männer in faltigen Gewändern, die Augen starr auf sie gerichtet, als seien sie bereit, ihre Rede zu vernehmen. […] Langsam begann sich der Riß wieder zu schließen und die Milchstraße legte sich, als die Halle und der Tisch immer undeutlicher wurden und verschwammen, wie eine leuchtende Narbe am Himmel darüber.[663]

The opening, described through very concrete metaphors and similes such as "wie eine leuchtende Narbe am Himmel" ("like a luminous scar in the sky"), evokes transformations in the sky that are strongly present in the *Book of Revelation*. From this perspective, the biblical text reports that the sky "receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place"[664], but also: "These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying"[665]. There is no doubt that Eva here is having a revelation about the meaning of her life and her death, and that this vision is depicted through canons that are close to the biblical apocalyptic; however, this vision lacks the collective dimension that characterizes the apocalyptic genre and the so-called "apocalyptic worldview", a teleological perspective that analyzes human history as something with a predetermined destination[666]. Different is the case of Swammerdam and Eidotter, who actually have an eschatological revelation concerning a teleological and collective perspective: both characters foresee the destruction of Europe, as stated in chapter 14[667]. When comparing their experience to Hauberrisser's, who only witnesses the collapse of Amsterdam when it becomes factual, Swammerdam and Eidotter's revelation probably follows the canons of the apocalyptic epiphany more closely the events reported through the protagonist's eyes, since this sort of revelation can be seen as belonging to an apocalyptic context only when it takes the form of a prediction. The aim of the apocalyptical experience is to deliver a message from the chosen observer to the community – this is partially achieved by Eidotter and Swammerdam, who recount what they have seen to those around them. In this perspective, the reader can interpret *Das grüne Gesicht* as a text with a strong apocalyptical worldview where several "chosen ones" are present.

The two main characters of Meyrink and Kubin's works are passive and detached observers of the final destruction of Amsterdam and of the Dream Kingdom: Meyrink's main character, Hauberrisser, decides to move to the suburbs, in a very isolated area, after his lover's funeral. He witnesses the final storm by looking at the city from a distance. The introduction to this distant space, the new home of

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[663] GG, p. 181.
[664] *Book of Revelation*, 6:14.
[665] *Book of Revelation*, 11:6.
[666] Di Tommaso, *Il genere "apocalisse" e l'"apocalittico" nella tarda antichità*, p. 81.
[667] GG, p. 308.

Meyrink's protagonist, takes place at the beginning of chapter 14, the first chapter dedicated to the collapse: Hauberrisser lives now in a very old (*uralten*) independent house south-east of Amsterdam. The antiquity of the house is pointed out and, a unique occurrence within the novel, is connected to a legendary past of the area:

Er lebte in einem uralten alleinstehenden Haus, von dem die Sage ging, es sei ursprünglich ein sogenannter Druidenstein gewesen.[668]

This relationship between the house and a long-gone past is very interesting if one considers the peculiar relationship between past and present that characterizes Meyrink's Amsterdam, a topic that will be object of research in the following sections: for the time being, it can be stated that the reference to the Druids does not belong to any other environment depicted in the novel and that therefore this provides a first hint of the distance between the urban space described in the previous chapters and this new point of view.

Furthermore, binoculars, an object related to distant observation, appear for the first time at the beginning of chapter 14:

Von seinem Fenster aus konnte er die Stadt mit ihren düstern Bauten und den Wald von Schiffmasten im Hintergrund wie ein dunsthauchendes, stachliges Ungeheuer vor sich liegen sehen. Wenn er sobald in solchen Momenten das Fernglas zur Hand nahm und den Anblick der beiden Spitzen der Nikolaskirche und der andern zahllosen Türme und Giebel nahe an sein Auge rückte, wurde ihm jedesmal ganz unbeschreiblich sonderbar zu Mute[669]

When it comes to Kubin's I-narrator, he detaches from Perle's environment by becoming completely indifferent to the fate of the Dream Kingdom, and this is a consequence of his wife's death. During the final phases of the destruction, he also puts physical distance between himself and the collapsing space of the Kingdom by following the "blue-eyed people", the natives of that land, into a cave dug inside the mountain at which feet the Kingdom had originally been built:

Ich folgte den blauäugigen Männern durch ein schmales Tor, das in die Felswand eingelassen war. Im trüben Licht einzelner Fackeln führte eine lange Stiege mit ungleichmäßigen Stufen empor. Meine Führer verschwanden in einem Felsgeschoß, das seitlich in die Wand gegraben war. Ich aber stieg immer höher, um mich nach einem geschützten Platz umzusehen, und gelangte wieder ins Freie und sah den geröteten Himmel über mir. Ich befand mich in der alten Bergfestung. Einzelne Geschütze standen noch auf die Stadt gerichtet, sonst waren die Lafetten zerbrochen und die bronzenen Rohre lagen verstreut auf den Wällen. Schroff fiel hier die Bergwand einige hundert Meter ab.[670]

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[668] GG, p. 290.
[669] GG, p. 291.
[670] *Die andere Seite*, p. 275.

3.1 Detached observation in *Das grüne Gesicht*

Like Hauberrisser, Kubin's protagonist finds himself experiencing the last hours of the Dream Kingdom in a spot that is strongly linked to a long-gone past dimension and, similarly to what happens Meyrink's novel, this reference to a past time of the land is a rare occurrence. It seems that the two protagonists have the chance to witness the collapse from a spot that is connected to an act of foundation, a first hint of a circular conception of time similar to one theorized by Dailey in his spiral model.

However, it can be said that both characters are detached not only from the collapsing environments but also from other concrete aspects of reality, although their reactions present different grades and nuances and result in different philosophical consequences.

It can be interesting to observe how this process of detachment is linked in both cases to the loss of a loved one. In Meyrink's case, losing Eva is decisive for Hauberrisser's spiritual growth, which is strongly dependent on the reflections concerning mortality and death that stemmed from this event. As previously explained, Eva's funeral follows an encounter between her and the protagonist where the survival of the woman appears to be shown. The juxtaposition of these two events is meaningful for its contradictions. Furthermore, it establishes the predominating role of spirituality over the physical world. Consequently, Meyrink's third-person narrator can state:

Anfangs hatte er [Hauberrisser] zuweilen das Grab Evas auf dem unweit liegenden Friedhof besucht, aber es war immer nur ein mechanischer, gedankenloser Spaziergang gewesen.

Wenn er sich vorstellen wollte, sie läge da unten in der Erde, und er müßte Schmerz darüber empfinden, erschien ihm der Gedanke so widersinnig, daß er oft vergaß, die Blumen, die er mitgebracht hatte, auf dem Hügel niederzulegen, und sie wieder nach Hause nahm. [671]

This absence of pain had already been introduced in chapter 10 during the prison conversation between Sephardi and Eidotter regarding the murder of Klinkherbogk, and is associated to the encounter between a truth-seeker and the prophet Elijah – which is metaphor for reaching immortality.[672] Nevertheless, Hauberrisser's indifference to Eva's grave must also be interpreted in

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[671] GG, p. 291.

[672] Cfr. GG, p. 230: „Sephardi schwieg. Er sah ein, daß sich eine geistige Kluft des Verständnisses zwischen ihm und dem Alten auftrat, die sich nicht überbrücken ließ. Wohl deckte sich, wenn er ausspann, vieles, was er soeben von Eidotter gehört hatte, mit seinen eignen Theorien über die innere Weiterentwicklung der menschlichen Rasse; - er selber hatte immer der Ansicht zugeneigt und es auch ausgesprochen, (...) daß der Weg dazu in den Religionen und im Glauben an sie läge, aber jetzt, wo er an dem Greis ein lebendiges Beispiel vor sich sah, fühlte er sich durch die Wirklichkeit überrascht und enttäuscht zugleich. Er mußte sich eingestehen, daß Eidotter dadurch, daß er dem Schmerz nicht mehr

light of the revelation of Eva's immortality given by Chider Grün in chapter 12: "who was once brought to life the way she was, can die no longer – but someone who is dead like you are, can live again."[673]

The analysis in chapter 4 highlighted Hauberrisser's detachment from Amsterdam's crowd in the first half of the novel and the relationship between his individuality and a threatening collectivity. In that case, the focus of the analysis was Hauberrisser's struggle to hold on to his self. The chapters related to the final storm also dedicate several pages to crowd and collective behaviors: the differences between these pages and the ones thematizing collectivity in the first chapters reflect the change in the protagonist's management of his individuality, which is not threatened the same way in these final crowd descriptions. The crowd in chapter 14 senses the approaching of the final storm and expresses its anguish by flooding the streets without control:

Von Schauder und Ekel ergriffen irrte Hauberrisser durch alle möglichen winkligen Gassen, immer von neuem durch Volksmassen aus seiner Richtung vertrieben, bis er schließlich keinen Schritt mehr weiter tun konnte [...] An einem Stehenbleiben war nicht zu denken; selbst die kleinsten Höfe und Winkelgäßchen waren überflutet von Menschen [...][674]

The movement of the crowd certainly makes Hauberrisser feel overwhelmed and downright scared, and this reminds the reader of the previously described crowded scenes. Nevertheless, some divergent elements must by pointed out in this case. First of all, Hauberrisser does not spend much time alone among the crowd, because he encounters Pfeill right after his arrival to the Jodenbreetstraat[675] and is then invited to Swammerdam's house (which the two men will not reach because of the chaotic state of the city)[676]. The whole crowded scene after the encounter is therefore characterized by the opposition between the Pfeill/Hauberrisser dialogue and the expressions of fear and anguish among the population. The structure of the scene gives little space to Hauberrisser's inner life, since Pfeill's words play the main role in this context. This is the moment when the fate of the other characters that had been put aside in chapters 11-13 is told to the protagonist: the function of the scene is to give a final summary of all the parallel plots that developed around Swammerdam, Sephardi, Zitter Arpád and Eidotter, accompanying the novel through its first steps towards its conclusion. The opposition between the dialogue and the moving crowd also suggests an idea of separated spheres: it is interesting

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unterlag, unendlich viel reicher war als alle seine Mitgeschöpfe, - er beneidete ihn um seine Fähigkeit und dennoch hätte er nicht mit ihm tauschen mögen."

[673] GG, p. 274.
[674] GG, p. 305-306.
[675] GG, p. 305.
[676] Cfr. GG, p. 308: „Er (Swammerdam) hat einen Boten zu mir geschickt," rief Pfeill zurück, „ich solle augenblicklich zu ihm kommen und dich vorher holen gehen und mitbringen. - - - Gut, daß wir uns auf dem Wege getroffen haben. - - - Er zittert um uns, hat er mir sagen lassen; er glaubt, nur in seiner Nähe wären wir sicher."

that the dialogue continues despite the constant interruptions and stimuli provided by the environment.

„Zuerst hat er [Zitter] die Rukstinat geheiratet und dann die Ärmste, um zu ihrem Geld zu kommen, ver –„
„Vergiftet" verstand Hauberrisser undeutlich: eine Prozession dumpf singender, vermummter Gestalten, weiße, spitzige Kapuzen über den Gesichtern wie Fehmrichter und Fackeln in den Händen, hatte Pfeill von ihm abgedrängt und ihr murmelnder, eintöniger Choral: „o sanktissima, o pi-issima, dulcis virgo Maaa – riii- aaah" hatte die letzten Worte zur Hälfte verschlungen.
Pfeill tauchte wieder auf; sein Gesicht war geschwärzt von Fackelrauch: - „Und dann hat er ihr Geld in den Pokerklubs verspielt."[677]

Pfeill's speech is interrupted not only by the voices singing *Salve, Regina* but also by the movements of the crowd that separate him and Hauberrisser. Pfeill's face being darker because of the smoke of the torches showcases the peculiar atmosphere embracing people's actions. In these pages of chapter 14, several groups of praying and wandering people appear, and most of them participate to mass supplications. One group shows adoration for Zitter Arpád, who has turned his *Vexiersalon* into a religious site. He claims to be the prophet Elijah and is followed by many. The second group was introduced in the previous quote, the third is called "eine Truppe gesangbuchplärrender Weiber", a band of women coarsely singing the hymns. Despite these distracting elements, Pfeill goes back to his speech after every interruption without forgetting the conversation topic. This stresses the idea of separation between the protagonists and the depicted collectivity, while also suggesting that neither Pfeill nor Hauberrisser concentrate on the crowd if not to avoid the danger provided by its rash movement. There is also another passage in the dialogue that can be interesting when it comes to the distance between the couple Pfeill/Hauberrisser and the rest of Amsterdam's people:

"Neulich wieder hat er [Lazarus Eidotter] vorausgesagt, es käme eine schreckliche Katastrophe über Europa, damit eine neue Zeit vorbereitet werde. […] Mit der Katastrophe hat er vielleicht nicht so unrecht. - - - Du siehst ja, wie es hier zugeht. - - - Amsterdam erwartet die Sintflut. - - - Die ganze Menschheit ist toll geworden. - - Die Eisenbahnen sind längst eingestellt, sonst wäre ich schon mal zu dir in deine Arche Noah hinausgekommen. – Heute scheint der Gipfelpunkt des Aufruhrs zu sein. - - Ach, ich hätte dir ja so unendlich zu erzählen - - Gott, wenn nur nicht dieses ewige Gewühl um und herum wäre, man kann ja kaum einen Satz zu Ende sprechen - - - mir ist inzwischen auch unglaublich viel passiert - - - "[678]

Pfeill's point of view expresses a clear separation between him and the crowd's behavior: the sentence "Amsterdam erwartet die Sintflut" ("Amsterdam is expecting the Great Flood") is not followed or

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[677] GG, p. 306-307.
[678] GG, p. 308.

preceded by any sign of fear or personal involvement when it comes to this wait, despite him admitting the possibility of the final catastrophe. The same can be said for "Heute scheint der Gipfelpunkt des Aufruhrs zu sein" ("Today, the agitation seems to have reached its peak"), where a distance between the speaker and the tumult is clearly perceived. The fact that Pfeill complains about not being able to finish his sentences because of „dieses ewige Gewühl" ("this eternal throng") is the final proof of this detachment.

Hauberrisser also concentrates on the dialogue and asks Pfeill for information about their friends. The event that puts a definitive end to their exchange is the appearance of a collective mirage in the sky of Amsterdam that scares the crowd and the protagonists in a way that makes it impossible for everybody to communicate rationally. The two friends are separated and Hauberrisser gives up reaching Swammerdam's house. This is also a meaningful element related to Hauberrisser's detachment from Amsterdam's environment and, in this peculiar case, from humankind: the protagonist had been invited to Swammerdam's apartment to remain safe and sound during the final storm, because the entomologist claimed to have prophesized the survival of the Nikolaskirche, the church next to his home. Hauberrisser does not accept the invitation (he is not able, but he also doesn't put forward too much of an effort), preferring to return to his house in the countryside.

3.2. Indifference as vehicle of detachment and salvation in *Die andere Seite*

The inner detachment of Kubin's I-narrator from the society of the Dream Kingdom and from the physical world in general is a process that begins with the death of his wife. The intense pain following this experience makes the protagonist completely passive and more vulnerable to Patera's power. The reader sees it first in chapter 5, *Die Vorstadt*, where the I-narrator states:

Was ich vor allem lernte war, den Wert der Indolenz zu schätzen. Diese zu erobern, erfordert für einen lebhaften Menschen die Arbeit eines Lebens. Hat man ihre Süßigkeit einmal erfaßt, so hält man sie, wenn auch unter stetem Kampfe, für immer fest. Auch ich versuchte jetzt Steine, Blumen, Tiere und Menschen stundenlang gesammelt zu betrachten. Dabei wurde mein Auge geschärft, so wie es Geruch und Gehör schon waren.[679]

The ability to observe and experience nature in a more intense way is not the gift the reader would have expected and has no relationship with the artistic career of the main character. What it hints at is the expanding influence of Patera's spell on the I-narrator:

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[679] *Die andere Seite*, 213.

Ich fühlte mich abstrakt, als schwankender Gleichgewichtspunkt von Kräften — ein Gedankengang, der mir niemals wieder gekommen ist. Jetzt verstand ich Patera, den Herrn, den ungeheuren Meister. Nun war ich mitten unter den großen Burlesken ein Hauptlacher, ohne zu verlernen, mit den Gequälten zu zittern.[680]

The protagonist's first loss of control of the self is followed by the arrival of Herkules Bell and by the first symptoms of suffering within the Dream Kingdom, where Patera's weaker and scared imagination produces a series of hysterical episodes in the population and a disorder in the animal life. These events will be object of discussion in the following sections, what must be introduced here is the second encounter between Patera and the protagonist. In this scene, the I-narrator is forced to go to the sovereign's palace: he wakes up in the middle of the night with the instinct to go there without any reasonable explanation other than the power of Patera's spell. Once he gets to the palace, he asks the sovereign why he did not help his wife when she was sick, and receives no answer besides the enigmatic "I helped, and I will help you too."[681] After this, Patera allows the protagonist to see inside his mind for some moments. The phenomenon is not described in detail because the ineffable quality hinting at the divine nature of Patera must remain concealed, but the main consequence of this encounter is a definitive change in the protagonist's sensitivity: from this moment onward, the I-narrator's perception becomes numb as he loses his feelings of pain and affection and reacts with indifference and detachment to any change in the surrounding environment[682]. A reflection by the narrator, linking this attitude to his surviving the final catastrophe, is interesting in this regard:

Nur durch diese Begegnung war es erklärlich, daß ich die letzten Schrecken, die über das Traumreich heraufstiegen, schauen und doch überleben konnte. Meine Gefühllosigkeit war der Schutz meiner Natur. Als eine Reihe von Schemen zog die Agonie des Traumstaates an meinem Auge vorüber.[683]

Therefore, in both Meyrink's and Kubin's novel the collapse follows a process of *Erkenntnis* that reveals the protagonists' new aspects of reality, and the consequence of this process is the main characters' detachment – although to different degrees – from the environment that will get destroyed at the end of the narration. The perspective of the observer can be defined as external and distant. The quoted Kubin passage, where a connection between detachment is associated with surviving, raises questions regarding both texts and the matter can be object of discussion after the analysis of the collapsing space itself.

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[680] *Die andere Seite*, p. 215.
[681] *Die andere Seite*, p. 298.
[682] *Die andere Seite*, p. 307: Die Spannkraft meiner Nerven war gebrochen. Das Geschick, in welcher Gestalt es auch erschien, konnte mich nicht mehr aus meiner stetigen Ruhe reißen.
[683] *Die andere Seite*, p. 310.

4. Heterotopias and heterochronias in Meyrink and Kubin's work

4.1. Heterotopias and heterochronias: a definition

This section will highlight the way both Meyrink's Amsterdam and Kubin's Dream Kingdom are both subject to laws of time and space that allow them to interact with models of heterotopias. The concept of heterotopia must be traced back to Michel Foucault's lecture *Des espaces autres*[684] (1967), where it is theorized as opposition to the notion of 'utopia', understood as a non-existing space. Here, the term 'heterotopia' refers to those existing environments that follow temporal and social canons different from those of common everyday life, or dimensions that provide a separation from normal social patterns in terms of time and space.

Foucault recognizes that a praiseworthy effort has been made during the 20th century to highlight the subjective component of human perception of space. However, he focuses, in his analysis, on the built, external space, which is characterized by a system of relations connecting the different spatial dimensions of everyday life. This heterogeneous space must be therefore understood as made of sites representing different aspects of this life, sites such as the ones of transportation (streets, trains…), the ones of temporary relaxation (cafes, cinemas, beaches…), the ones of rest (house, bedroom, bed…) and so forth[685].

In this respect, the author claims to be mostly interested in those spaces that question the normal relations of everyday life, by suspending them, by neutralizing them or by inverting them properly. These spaces can be of two sorts, utopias and heterotopias, the latter distinguished from the former in virtue of its factual existence.

Understandably, Foucault spends only few words on the concept of utopia, being it an idea the audience had to be familiar with, and he moves almost straightforwardly to the definition of heterotopias, and to do so he mentions six main principles that are meant to give it a clear structure.

The first of these principles is that no society is devoid of heterotopias, and this is especially evident in the several forms taken throughout the development from primitive to modern culture in regards to what Foucault calls the heterotopies of crisis. These are spaces dedicated to moments that are considered delicate within the life of the community and that originate places considered sacred or forbidden. These were places dedicated to "adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women,

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[684] Here referenced from Jan Miskowiec's translation into English: *The Other Spaces: Utopia and Heterotopia*, in: Diacritics, vol. 16, n. 1, Spring 1986, pp. 22-27.
[685] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 24.

elderly etc."[686] Modern expression of these heterotopies are, despite their having disappeared in many of their manifestations, the role of boarding schools during the 19th and the military service, places where the first appearance of sexual virility was supposed to take place – away from home and isolated from society. Foucault hypothesizes a current metamorphosis of the heterotopies of crisis, which are being replaced, in contemporary western society, by the heterotopies of deviation:

Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and of course prisons, and one should perhaps add retirement homes that are, as it were, on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation.[687]

Secondly, heterotopies can change function and meaning within the same society in the course of time despite their theoretically remaining the same structure and still possessing a stable aim. This is the case of cemeteries, heterotopic because of their peculiar function that excludes the normal relations attributed to places dedicated to life, and because of their including in the same dimension elements stemming from different times, nations and social shifts. Cemeteries have changed their meaning for societies during the 19th century, when they were taken away from their central position in the urban context and moved to peripheries, where they got excluded from the everyday experience of the average citizens. The message related to this movement is the acquirement of a new perception of this space dedicated to death and stillness, which is currently supposed to "bring illness to the living"[688].

The third principle mentioned by Foucault, decisive for the very definition of the heterotopy, is that it juxtaposes "in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible"[689]. Meaningful examples of this phenomenon are, in contemporary society, cinemas and theatres (but more meaningful today, internet and smartphones), where the stage and the screen have the ability to connect the spectators with dimensions which would never be possibly accessible in a normal rectangular room otherwise.

Another trait characterizing heterotopy is the conception of time they imply, a conception that differs from human perception of time in the dimension of everyday life. The cemetery, for example, provides a vision of reality where time is made still through death but also, to some extent, connected

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[686] Foucault, p. 24.
[687] Foucault, p. 25.
[688] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 25. The author explains this change by mentioning the metamorphosis the conception of death experienced in western society during the 19th century, a change where the very existence of a soul and the possibility of resurrection were questioned to the extent that the previously existing relationship between individuals and death got irremediably twisted. The denial of soul and resurrection made the contact with bodies of the dead something devoid of meaning, that had to be avoided when not necessary.
[689] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 25.

to eternity. This twist of time conception in heterotopies is called by Foucault "heterochrony" and will be mentioned more than once in the text analysis of this dissertation. Beside the cemetery, meaningful heterotopies/heterochronies mentioned by the author are those sites of culture which have the aim of literally "accumulating time"[690], such as museums and libraries. However, human society also has invented heterotopies where time is concretely conceptualized in its transitory quality: this is the case of festivals and fairgrounds, where these not include only different spaces, as in cinema and theater, but also thematize the exceptionality and the precarious aspect of their existence.

When it comes to the place heterotopies acquire in society and the relation people and their everyday life establish with them, Foucault adds:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification[691]

Given this relation of ambivalence established between normal and heterotopic spaces, it is still to understand which is the real function of heterotopies/heterochronies in societies. Foucault mentions here two fundamental effects. The first of these roles is, he states, providing illusion, i.e., explicitly showing an illusory spatial dimension that has the consequence to make the spaces of everyday life equally questionable in their partition and conceptualization. The second function would be, instead, building a space of compensation, opposite at traits of everyday space that cannot but be considered imperfections. This function is clearly visible, Foucault specifies, in colonies, where a new sort of society was explicitly planned, built up according to a specific project. In the first American colonies created by Puritans during the 17th century, for example, where life was regulated by a new rhythm that equally influenced the life of every inhabitant and where individuality was sacrificed to achieve a lifestyle demanding absolute perfectionism and functionality. Besides, Foucault mentions another heterotopic space to conclude, a dimension where all the addressed aspects are included and which he finds in virtue of its enclosed and heterotopic quality an element extremely fruitful for human imagination: the heterotopy of the ship, a place which is not only enclosed but also a dimension literally floating, therefore permanently elsewhere, isolated but "at the same time [...] given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens."[692]

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[690] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 26.
[691] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 26.
[692] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 27.

This statement concluding *Des Espaces Autres* is highest interesting to this dissertation, since it introduces the straight correspondence between heterotopy/heterochrony and imagination, i.e, between this peculiar form of space and literary production.

4.2. Heterotopias and time in *Das grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite*

Connecting Meyrink and Kubin's spaces to this notion highlights two phenomena related to these environments, the first being their isolation and their independency from laws of everyday life, and the second being their special relationship with time. The link between heterotopias and the establishment of new temporal laws is clarified in the fourth principle that defines the importance of heterochronia in this context: "The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time"[693].

As explained in the section about the apocalyptic genre, apocalyptic time responds to laws that have a logic of their own, and this logic can be interpreted either as highly one-directional, or cyclical, or through the notion of timelessness; either way, this logic certainly takes the eschatological perspective into account. When it comes to the novels object of this chapter's analysis, it can be said that the eschatological principle is fully met when it comes to the decadent traits that characterize the environments of Amsterdam and Perle, traits that establish their path towards an incoming fall. However, elements of cyclicity and timelessness are strongly present in the two works. The depiction of the collapsing space must be analyzed here in light of the complex heterotopia/heterochronia interaction that is intrinsic to the two cities.

4.3. The Dream Kingdom and the notion of past

The case of the Dream Kingdom can certainly be distinguished from Amsterdam (and from any existing metropolis) for being defined by a temporal structure that is artificially oriented to the past on the one hand and to a stagnant present on the other. From this perspective, the concept of future is completely excluded from the environmental frame of Patera's reign, and this is made clear from the beginning, since in the first chapter, where the I-narrator is told about the Dream Kingdom for the first time, Patera's helper Gautsch highlights carefully that this artificial space is not conceived as a utopia, because a utopia implies a project that includes a kind of "better or alternative future", while:

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[693] Foucault, *The Other Spaces*, p. 26.

Der Herr dieses Landes ist weit davon entfernt, eine Utopie, eine Art Zukunftsstaat schaffen zu wollen[694]

The lack of transparency in the noun *Zukunftstaat* expresses the way every relationship between the Dream Kingdom and the concept of future is potentially excluded from Gautsch's speech. This relationship is also thematized in the I-narrator's own description of the reign, where he states that having children is not a priority for the people of the Dream Kingdom, although this sometimes happens[695]. Then, he concludes:

Man lebte hier in einer bewegten Gegenwart, nicht in der unsicheren Zukunft, von der doch kein Existierender etwas hat. Durch Kinder wollte man die Nerven nicht ruinieren, die Frauen nicht altern machen.[696]

The idea of the *bewegten Gegenwart* provides an accurate definition of the phenomenon and introduces the first part of the paradox that characterizes the Dream Kingdom in its essential structure: the problem of the year 1860, a past dimension for those who live outside the reign and an eternal present for those who live within the walls.

The kind of past that is given to the environment of the Dream Kingdom possesses traits that make it easy to understand it as a distortion, since Patera's instruction to keep the clock frozen in 1860 does not imply any critical awareness of this temporal dimension: since the calendar is not supposed to go beyond this date, no future and no past are really provided and comparisons between this year and past times are not possible. For the same reasons, reflections on the direction of history are hindered. The I-narrator keeps track of the passing time and can tell the readers that he spent about three years in the Dream Kingdom, but no recurring events or anniversaries would allow the readers to understand this on their own: no references to feasts or religious events are given and the passing of seasons is not described as meaningful since the meteorological conditions of the reign are fundamentally stable throughout the year:

Der Wetteranzeiger stand immer auf „anhaltend trüb und schlecht", doch war eine warme, weiche Luft wie bei unserer Ankunft die Regel. Ähnlich gegensatzlos verhielten sich die Jahreszeiten. Ein fünf Monate langes Frühjahr – fünf Monate Herbst; dauerndes Zwielicht in der Nacht kennzeichneten den kurzen, heißen Sommer, endlose Dämmerungen und ein paar Schneeflocken den Winter.[697]

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[694] *Die andere Seite*, p. 14.
[695] See also: Fanetti, *Il demiurgo è ibrido, ovvero ermafrodita*, p. 32: "[Nel *Traumreich*] non vi è alcuna prospettiva futura – non nasce quasi nessun bambino e l'economia lentamente tracolla." [[In the *Traumreich*] there is no perspective for the future – babies hardly come to the world and economy collapses slowly.]
[696] *Die andere Seite*, p. 81.
[697] *Die andere Seite*, pp. 76-77.

This monotony in the atmosphere has the main function of making the environment feel "harmonic" to the reader with its nuances of grey and brown[698], and it also evokes the picture of a place where the sun never shines, and where the inactive mood of the inhabitants is also reflected in the stillness of nature. However, one of the consequences of this meteorological consistency is the absence of true separation between seasons: despite the presence of elements that let the readers orient themselves through these atmospheres (such as the mention of snow in the scene that takes place in the French district in chapter 4), the passing time is not described through the passing of seasons and the general impression is one of an eternal and stagnant present even when it comes to the behavior of nature. When the I-narrator states that a certain number of years have passed since his arrival, the readers have no instruments to determine this themselves and must believe his statement although no narrative elements would lead them in that direction.

The other element that mostly characterizes the problematic perception of time in the Dream Kingdom is the Dreamers' relationship with memory. To better understand the paradoxes related to this matter, it must be remembered that the Dream Kingdom is made of old houses that were taken from Europe, entirely relocated to the reign, and have remained the same since. Such an attitude would lead the reader to infer a relationship with memory that could resemble a worship or even a cult. Nevertheless, some elements make it apparent that this is not the case. The first element is the lack of criteria when Patera's chooses the things and buildings that must be taken to the reign: if there is the tendency to choose, for government and administration purposes, buildings with a violent history on the one hand, on the other there is also an equally strong tendency to choose things and buildings that are insignificant and do not respond to any criteria of beauty, functionality or emotional relation. Moreover, all the buildings that are not related to public administration are collected from all over Europe and transplanted without any logic, like a grotesque collage. The metaphoric value of this juxtaposition can be read through two main paradigms. First, the irrational presence of urbanistic and household elements stemming from disparate sources, giving a feeling of a fragmentary and unlogic order, can be seen as an expression of the architecture of a dream, which is made of impression collected by the dreamer during their life and that can be combined without following any consistent pattern. Secondly, the placement of various buildings from *Mitteleuropa* into an undetermined oriental region, where the native inhabitants have been marginalized, could be reminiscent of the presence of western architecture in colonies. The link between *Die andere Seite* and the European debate on colonialism during the first years of the 20th century has been highlighted

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[698] *Die andere Seite*, p. 76.

by Cersowsky[699], but also by Clemens Ruthner[700], as well as by the scholars who followed the latter's perspective[701], and elements that can be traced back to metaphors for colonial mentality are present throughout the whole novel: this can be seen in the displacement and the segregation of the blue-eyed native population, in the marginalization of certain social groups in the French district, in the river named Negro after the language of the *conquistadores*, and finally in the aggressive vitality of nature which seems to be the main obstacle to the establishment of a civil lifestyle. According to some interpretations of the text, this extreme spreading of wilderness is actually a manifestation of the will of the land to take back spaces which do not really belong to the colonizers – that is, Patera and the Dreamers.[702]

However, another interesting trait of the presence of these old and foreign buildings emerges when it comes to the relationship between the Dreamers and the elements they should recognize as part of their own past. In chapter 2, on the day that follows the arrival of the I-narrator and his wife to the Dream Kingdom, the couple looks for a new home in the reign, and the protagonist feels attracted by an apartment that seems surprisingly familiar to him. He and his wife requests to see it and the I-narrator is able to orient himself within the house despite seeing it for the first time:

Wie aus Kindertagen bekannt kam es mir auf einmal vor. »Hier ist's ja, was wir suchen«, rief ich darauf hindeutend. »Im zweiten Stock kommen wir unter!« Meine Gefährtin war recht verwundert über meine Sicherheit. »Woher willst du denn

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[699] Cersowsky, *Phantastische Literatur im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 71.

[700] Ruthner, *Habsburgs „Dark Continent"*, pp. 191-201. Here Ruther observes how the conception of the *Traumreich* gives Kubin the chance to discuss several types of otherness and to investigate on *Ansiedlungexperimente* linked to political and economic colonialism, but also to Sionism movements. "Auch ist das Faktum nicht ohne Belang, dass das „Traumreich" so etwas wie ein imaginiertes Kolonialreich ist. Es wurde zu Zeiten erdacht, als die letzte große Expansionsbewegung des europäischen Imperialismus in Afrika und Asien bereits stattgefunden hatte; speziell wurden im Entstehungsjahr der *Anderen Seite* (1908) die „Kongogräuel" des belgischen Königs weltweit diskutiert wie auch – als Ausdruck von „Kolonialisierungsambitionen innerhalb Europas" – Bosnien-Herzegowina von der Habsburger Monarchie formell annektiert, wodurch der Kontinent avant la lettre an den Rand eines Weltkriegs geriet. Hofmann weist in diesem Zusammenhang auf Kubins Reisen durch Ungarn, Dalmatien und Bosnien 1907 und 1909 hin, auf der Kubin wesentliche Eindrücke im Sinne eines inneren Exotismus empfangen habe, und er liest Herkules Bell als Stimme des ‚modernen' Berlin seinem ‚kleinen Bruder' und Alliierten Österreich-Ungarn gegenüber." (Ruthner, *Habsburgs „Dark Continent"*, pp. 195-196).

[701] Fanetti, *Il demiurgo è ibrido, ovvero ermafrodita*, pp. 36-37: "Il romanzo di Kubin viene redatto in un tempo in cui, a seguito del grande movimento espansionistico europeo, cominciano a circolare importanti dibattiti sulle modalità e le conseguenze dell'imperialismo: nel 1908 in tutto il mondo si stanno discutendo, per esempio, le atrocità della Corona belga sulla popolazione del Congo, così come le ampiamente contestate ambizioni coloniali intraeuropee dell'impero asburgico in Bosnia Erzegovina, formalmente annessa proprio in quell'anno, le quali portano il continente e il mondo intero un passo più vicino al conflitto. Perciò, benché la componente colonialista sia sicuramente la più dimenticata e sottovalutata sfumatura del mito, questo testo riflette parzialmente le discussioni reali che al tempo dell'autore la strategia narrativa e politica asburgica accendeva: l'Austria veniva raccontata come un impero coloniale, almeno in potenza." [Kubin's novel is redacted in a time when, after a great expansionistic movement, debates on modality and consequences of imperialism begin to spread: in 1908, the atrocities committed by the Belgian Crown at the detriment of the Congolese population are discussed all over the world, like the same colonial ambitions of the Habsburg empire in Bosnia-Herzegovina, annexed in that same year, are heavily contested. These ambitions lead the continent and the world a step closer to the conflict. Therefore, although the colonial component is surely the most forgotten and underestimated nuance of the [Habsburg] myth, this text partially reflects the actual discussions which the Habsburg narrative and political strategy lighted up at the author's time: Austria was narrated as a colonial empire, at least potentially.]

[702] Fanetti, *Il demiurgo è ibrido, ovvero ermafrodita*, p. 38.

das so bestimmt wissen?« fragte sie mich, ein wenig spöttisch lächelnd. Dafür hatte ich allerdings keinen Grund, es schien mir einfach selbstverständlich. Und gottlob! Ich hatte recht, es war wirklich eine Wohnung mit drei Zimmern und Küche zu haben. Ein Friseur — zugleich Hausverwalter — der unten seinen Laden hatte, führte uns hinauf.[703]

The connection between the explored apartment and the narrator's childhood is evident and the knowledge about the origin of the buildings in the Dream Kingdom allows the reader to deduce that the protagonist is walking in a house that he actually inhabited in the past and that was eventually moved to the reign afterwards. Despite this, the narrator himself does not give any sign of realizing the authentic biographic connection between him and the apartment; the reaction: „Dafür hatte ich allerdings keinen Grund, es schien mir einfach selbstverständlich" is a first symptom of lacking (self) awareness and of scarce analytic capability, distinctive traits acquired little by little by the inhabitants of the Kingdom as they get used to the atmosphere of the reign – an atmosphere that, being similar to the one found in dreams, does not imply a logic connection between the elements that constitute reality, nor the need to reflect on the phenomena in terms of cause and effect[704]. The absence of any reference to past events in the Dreamers' speeches and conversations should also be mentioned in this regard. The presence of buildings related to Central-European past cannot, therefore, be associated so easily with a cult of the past and with an act of memory in general, especially in light of the protagonist's statement "Later, I forgot my homeland entirely"[705], a phenomenon related to the excessive presence of nonsensical occurrences within the reign – that is, a lack of the logic[706] necessary to build a chronological mindset and to properly remember things.

Später vergaß ich meine Heimat gänzlich. Man gewöhnte sich im Traumland derart an das Unwahrscheinlichste, daß einem nichts mehr auffiel.[707]

This manifestation of oblivion/amnesia in an environment that should be entirely based on the constant presence of the past in the everyday life of the citizens, through architecture, furniture and habits, shows a very strong paradoxical quality.

A peculiar attitude is also apparent in the way antiquities are perceived by the Dreamers. As explained by Gautsch in the first chapter, Patera is an obsessive collector, but he is more interested in antiquities than in art, and beauty and utility aren't included among his criteria when it comes to choosing the

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[703] *Die andere Seite*, p. 85.

[704] See *Die andere Seite*, p. 87: „Natürlich kratzte ich sofort meinen Namen hin, man entschloß sich im Traumreich sehr leicht zu so etwas, niemand überlegte lange."

[705] *Die andere Seite*, p. 86.

[706] The lack of reason must be interpreted here as a necessary element for resisting modernity. See: Fanetti, *Il demiurgo è ibrido, ovvero ermafrodita*, p. 31.

[707] *Die andere Seite*, p. 86.

items he orders from Europe. This absence of beauty must actually be extended to the concept of care, an element that is pointed out in chapter 3, *Alltag*, where the I-narrator argues with the barber who works in his same building because of the dirt covering the entire barber shop. When the protagonist suggests that things that are so connected to personal hygiene like razors and washbasins could (and should) be kept clean, the barber replies, confused, that he stays away from renovations[708]. Now, the idea of renovation can appear strange in this context, since renovating implies rebuilding or replacing, while the concept of cleaning implies a re-discovery of what dust and filth covered – something that can be identified as the past. A third example of this problem is the notebook where the I-narrator describes his impressions on the Dream Kingdom and Perle at the beginning of his journey: as the protagonist gets used to the atmosphere of Patera's reign and his mindset becomes similar to that of the Dreamers, his notes begin to change and to lose consistency and shape, until they become unintelligible:

Dieser Brief lag in dem Notizbuch, das man unter meinen Lumpen fand, als das Traumreich untergegangen war. Auch das weiter unten angegebene Verzeichnis der heiligen Sachen fand ich in dem Buche, sonst waren die Blätter nur mit unleserlichen Schriftzügen bedeckt; ausgenommen die Innenseite des Umschlags, auf der sich die oberflächliche Skizze eines Stadtplans von Perle, sowie flüchtige Angaben befanden, die ich mir zur eigenen Orientierung in den ersten Tagen gemacht hatte.[709]

The notebook must be interpreted here as a metaphor for the protagonist's memory and thoughts, elements that get progressively damaged during his permanence in the reign.

The assumption that the Dream Kingdom is not a place of memory[710] finds a justification is these elements.

The absence of past and future can be interpreted as part of the premises for the very existence of the Dream Kingdom. The time of the dream is characterized by the lack of spatial and temporal logic, which is what happens in the space invented by Kubin. It has been noted that Kubin's philosophical readings might have influenced this creation. One of the main sources of inspiration for the artist were Schopenhauer's thoughts on the perception of time, where he points out a clear connection between the perception of time and mental health: according to this view, a broken relationship with the passing of time (both in relation to the past and the future) signalizes an altered state of mind, which is a topic closely related to the shaping of the Dream Kingdom.[711]

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[708] He uses the expression: "Ich hüte mich vor Neuerungen" (K, p. 106), where the verb *hüten* implies a nuance of protection, as if the mere idea of *Neuerung* concretely scared the barber.
[709] *Die andere Seite*, p. 107.
[710] Greschonig, Steffen, *„Die andere Seite" des Menschen. Raum, Zeit und Posthumanismus bei Alfred Kubin*, in: Weimarer Beiträge 53, 2007, 2, pp. 267-276, here: p. 269.
[711] Greschonig, *„Die andere Seite" des Menschen*, p. 268.

Nevertheless, there is some kind of future that is implied in Patera's reign, which expresses itself through predestination. Predestination is a very important element in the Dream Kingdom, since those who are invited by Patera to join his creation are apparently destined to. This is said by Gautsch in the first chapter:

Zunächst wäre hier zu bemerken, daß jeder Mensch, der bei uns Aufnahme findet, durch Geburt oder ein späteres Schicksal dazu prädestiniert ist.[712]

The topic emerges a second time at the end of the protagonist's journey through East Europe, when he and his wife reach the walls of the reign in chapter 2 and the woman understands that her destiny is to die within those walls:

Als ich schon eine Weile in diesem Gewölbe gegangen war, überkam mich wie auf einen Schlag ein ganz unbekanntes, gräßliches Gefühl. Es ging vom Hinterkopf aus und fuhr das Rückgrat entlang, mein Atem stockte und der Herzschlag setzte aus. Hilflos sah ich mich nach meiner Frau um, aber die war selbst leichenblaß, Todesangst spiegelte sich auf ihrem Antlitz, und mit zitternder Stimme flüsterte sie: „Nie mehr komme ich da heraus."[713]

Similarly, Gautsch has no doubt that the protagonist will accept to come to the Dream Kingdom when he is invited: although the I-narrator looks highly confused by the stories told by Patera's helper and does not show any real interest in the reign at first, Gautsch is completely sure he will come, because this is the protagonist's fate.

The nature of the future implied in this predestination warrants reflection: future is, by its own nature, unknown and unintelligible, whereas the idea that every inhabitant of Patera's reign is guided by a clear fate transforms the Dream Kingdom in a place where everything leads to a dead end, which is a paradoxical way of intending the future. Meaningfully, none of the characters except for the 'Adversary' makes any effort to change their fate, even though the tragic events linked to it are evident: When the protagonist's wife understands she is going to die within the walls of the Dream Kingdom, neither she nor her husband tries to oppose this destiny – they enter the walls. Secondly, the scene shows traces of a future decay that are already apparent in present time.

Examples of predestination are scattered throughout the narration, and this is also linked to the fact that, as explained in the introduction, Patera is depicted as a puppet master in his environment and the inhabitants of his reign cannot question his influence on their actions. This stresses the victory of the eternal, stagnant present over the future, even in cases where the future is thematized. A last

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[712] *Die andere Seite*, p. 14.
[713] *Die andere Seite*, p. 66.

example, particularly meaningful as it constitutes an anticipation of the revolutionary actions taken, in the final chapters, by the people sensing the imminent destruction of the Dream Kingdom, should be mentioned: as previously stated, the administration and government buildings of the capital Perle, as well as the other buildings, are structures that have been sent from Europe, but they are also buildings with a violent historical background. This is made clear in one of Herkules Bell's first speeches:

[Herkules Bell:] "Der Palast ist zusammengeflickt aus Trümmern von Stätten, die der Schauplatz blutiger Verschwörungen und Revolutionen waren. Patera ging beim Sammeln bis auf die ältesten Zeiten zurück. Bruchstücke vom Eskorial, von der Bastille, von altrömischen Arenen wurden zu seinem Bau verwandt, Steinblöcke vom Tower und vom Hradschin, vom Vatikan und vom Kreml sind auf sein Anstiften gestohlen, losgebrochen und hierhergeschleppt worden."[714]

4.4. Heterotopic traits in Meyrink's Amsterdam

The relationship between Meyrink's Amsterdam and the concept of heterotopy is similarly evident when it comes to analyzing its relationship with the notions of past and future, also corresponding, to some extent, to the categories of apocalyptical time, and the dialectical perspective that characterizes the relationship between earth and sky in this context.

It was stated in the introduction to *The Green Face* that the novel is set in an imaginary post-war situation and that this setting must be connected to Meyrink's will of explaining the meaning of World War I through this text. This element makes it possible for the reader to place the narration in an imaginary future following the publication of the novel, despite the absence of an explicit date in the text itself. In chapter 2, where the general historical frame is given, the narrator speaks of the end of an unknown conflict that has led to "growing internal political conflicts"[715]. Later, the discourse moves to the "billige Prophezeiung, das Ende des europäischen Krieges werde einen Auswandererstrom der ärmeren Bevölkerungsschichten aus den am härtesten mitgenommenen Gegenden zur Folge haben"[716], where the war is described as the „europäischer Krieg", a definition which might not be as transparent as the name *Großer Krieg*, main term used during the years of the conflict[717], but that nevertheless gives a clear idea of the extension of the conflict, which makes it possible to associate it to World War I. A further element that speaks in favor of this association are

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[714] *Die andere Seite*, p. 245.
[715] GG, p. 31.
[716] GG, p. 31.
[717] https://www.kulturrat.de/themen/erinnerungskultur/ersterweltkrieg/der-grosse-krieg/#:~:text=Bereits%20die%20Zeitgenossen%20nannten%20den,damals%20vom%20%E2%80%9EGro%C3%9Fen%20Krieg%E2%80%9C. (Last access: 25/07/2022).

the unsolvable problems deriving from it, including not only the inner conflicts originated from its end but also the sense of incurability felt by Amsterdam's population, which suggests that the aforementioned war had an unprecedented development in terms of destructive force.

However, a precise chronological reference is not given within the narration. This omission can find its first and logic justification in the fact that the author could not foresee a date for the end of the Great War while writing the novel, but also gives space for reflecting on the consequences of the creation of a space devoid of chronological frames. This reflection is more meaningful when it comes to the matter of timelessness mentioned by Dailey in relation to the apocalyptical discourse, and when this absence of *chronos* is compared to the eternal present built by Kubin through the persistence of the year 1860 in the *Traumreich*.

A premise that must be made when comparing the relationship of Meyrink's Amsterdam to the past and the one appearing in Patera's project, is that these two dimensions are theoretically based on opposite principles, since Patera's reign should be set in a permanent past whose paradoxes have been highlighted in the previous paragraphs, while the immigrants in Amsterdam have the main aim of leaving their own past behind. This is also Hauberrisser's intention, as clarified in chapter 1, when the protagonist smells wood stain and resin in Chider Grün's shop and some fragmented memories come out:

Der eigentümliche Duft nach Harz und Farbe nahm ihn einen Augenblick ganz gefangen. – Weihnachten! Kinderjahre! Atemloses Warten vor Schlüssellöchern; […] Nichts vermag die Vergangenheit so schnell wieder jung zu machen, wie der Lackgeruch von Nürnberger Spielzeug, - der Fremde schüttelte den Bann ab, „es wächst nichts Gutes aus der Erinnerung: erst läßt sich alles süß an, dann hat das Leben eines Tages plötzlich ein Oberlehrergesicht, um einen schließlich mit blutrünstiger Teufelfratze - - - nein, nein, ich will nicht!"[718]

In this case, the environment triggers the unconscious of the protagonist, which struggles to let memories emerge, but Hauberrisser's explicit rebellion against recollection sets a limit for this flashback. Other references to Hauberrisser's previous life that are sporadically given throughout the narration are treated as elements with no relevance to the plot or to the character's personal growth[719]. In chapter 6, after his visit to the Jewish district, Hauberrisser has a long introspective walk (see: chapter *Amsterdam*) where he asks himself what traits of his past could have led to the mindset he acquired recently. In this sequence, Hauberrisser must accept that all his memories are useless for understanding the matter:

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[718] GG, p. 21.
[719] GG, p. 139.

Wie wohl jeder junge Mensch, war er bis über Dreißig hinaus ein Sklave seiner Leidenschaften gewesen [...]. Daß er als Kind besonders grüblerischer Natur gewesen wäre, war ihm auch nicht erinnerlich, - wo stak also die Wurzel, aus der dieses fremdartige, blütelose Reis hervorsproßte, das er sein gegenwärtiges Ich nannte?

„Es gibt ein inneres, heimliches Wachstum," – erinnerte er sich plötzlich, erst vor wenigen Stunden gelesen zu haben;

The sentence "Es gibt ein inneres, heimliches Wachstum" stresses the difference between the protagonist's past and the *gegenwärtiges Ich* that is the main object of Hauberrisser's analysis, and establishes the ceasing of the continuity between past and present in the character's development: the "heimliches Wachstum" is not linked to solving elements of Hauberrisser's memory, but to the emergence of a new mindset according to which a new beginning will be possible. In this perspective, the interaction between the space of Amsterdam and Hauberrisser's past is essentially absent: on the contrary, this environment has the function of allowing his brand-new beginning.

This phenomenon is also present in the depiction of Amsterdam's crowd, as shown by the opposition between the new worlds imagined in relation to the new continent and the necessity of ceasing the relationships with Europe, representing the old world. Both notions – the desire to emigrate to the new world that characterizes Amsterdam's population and Hauberrisser's progressive detachment from his past – must be read taking into account the role of Amsterdam as threshold. The threshold role of this environment is expressed, among other things, through the stressing of present – constant threshold between past and future. Sephardi's journey from the old continent to the new, where Amsterdam is a physical waiting space, is analogous to Hauberrisser's interior journey, where Amsterdam is the space of the present that cancels the past and provides the opportunity to start over without yet providing visions of the future.

4.5. Heterochronia and *Zeitlosigkeit*

As seen in the previous analysis, the contacts between past and present events in Meyrink's *Das grüne Gesicht* can be interpreted as an absence of an actual chronological structure in the representation of human history (chapter 4). It is interesting to notice how this timelessness is expressed, in this novel, not by using references to topographical elements reminding of the past, nor through the repetition of historical occurrences that can be considered *identitätsstiftend* for the Dutch city. In this regard, the representation of Amsterdam's *Zeitlosigkeit* diverges completely from the one of Prague's *Zeitlosigkeit* in *Der Golem*, but also in *Walpurgisnacht*, as it will be explained in the next chapter. Rather, the depiction of Amsterdam's topography seems to be devoid of actual references to the historical identity of the city.

Spatial elements of Amsterdam's structure can be observed through this lens as well. Relevant to this discourse is also the absence of descriptions concerning monuments and historical buildings that characterizes Meyrink's representation of the Dutch capital, a matter that has been discussed in the previous chapter (*Amsterdam*) because of its link with the concept of anonymity. When it comes to the interpretation of Amsterdam as heterotopia and heterochronia, this notion must be seen in a broader context, where a city lacking psychotops is not only devoid of identity but also of history, which here symbolizes a lack of past in a more general framework. An interesting comparison can be made here between this absence of psychotops in *Das grüne Gesicht* and the buildings and monuments that characterize Perle, which are collages composed by fragments of the psychotops of other cities. The idea of a palace where stones from the Bastille and the Kremlin meet not only foreshadows the violent actions that will occur at the end of *Die andere Seite*, but also stresses the idea of overlapping spatial and temporal dimensions: the buildings listed by Herkules Bell belong to different geographical areas, have been built during different historical periods, and now co-exist in a unique work of architecture. Lastly, the collage represents a destruction and a reconstruction of the past in a non-linear way.

The presence, in Meyrink's Amsterdam, of people coming from all over Europe and from different historical periods can be traced back to the same idea of overlapping and collage. The most interesting examples of this phenomenon are the characters Jan Swammerdam, an entomologist who lived between 1637 and 1680 but is presented in *Das grüne Gesicht* as a living person during Hauberrisser's time, and the mystic Antoinette de Bourignon, a Flemish erudite who influenced Jan Swammerdam's philosophical thought. The latter appears in the novel as Eva van Druysen's aunt, with the name Madame de Bourignon. This behavior finds a parallel in *Der Golem*'s peculiar temporal structure, where the ghetto is represented in three different phases – its original state, its dismantling, and the new district seen by the I-narrator of the *Rahmenhandlung*. Müller-Tamm highlights the connection of this structure with a concept dear to Meyrink: the *Zeitlosigkeit*, a view according to which the main character's development is linked to recognizing that the notion of 'eternal life' must be associated to a dimension devoid of time, where all the epochs overlap and exist at the same time. In this frame must be inscribed the persistence, in the space of *Der Golem*, of elements of Prague's past that keep on modifying the urban structure, making Meyrink's Prague an uncertain space.

5. The actual collapse

The final storm that destroys Amsterdam is the main topic of the last two chapters of Meyrink's novel, while Kubin dedicates the whole second half of *Die andere Seite* to the process of decadence in the

Dream Kingdom. As previously stated, no reason for the collapse of the two environments is given by the narrators, although, when it comes to Kubin's work, the arrival of Herkules Bell can be considered the main cause of this decline, since the event stimulates a conflict between two leading minds; conversely, the destruction of Amsterdam (and Europe) in *Das grüne Gesicht* can only be traced back to an unclear necessity, on a cosmological level, to the end of a life cycle that results in the beginning of a new one. Nevertheless, the attention of the narrator is, in both Meyrink and Kubin's novels, entirely centered on the environmental manifestations of this decay[720]. The two depictions show similarities in both tropes and style, despite the diverging functions of the decadence in the novels – if the focus of this sequence in *Das grüne Gesicht* is Hauberrisser's inner experience and his survival, Kubin's interest lies more in the destruction of the Kingdom itself, which represents the dismantling of a powerful imagination. These similarities are object of research in this section.

As previously stated, signs of the incoming collapse are scattered throughout the novels from the very beginning. Germs of the final decay are expressed, in *Die andere Seite*, through the epileptic nature of Perle's space, which is subjected to the crises of its creator and therefore becomes highly fragile, resembling a mechanism that gives signs of structural failure and could break at any time.

In *Das grüne Gesicht*, the topic is expressed through the images related to sinking and in the representation of Amsterdam as a full space that cannot contain any more people than the ones it already welcomed: the interaction between the idea of fullness, expressed through the image of hotels booked to the last room, and a city model based on the balance between sinking and emerging, heavily foreshadows this collapse. Moreover, the reader is also introduced multiple times to the link between the appearance of Elijah, or Chider, and the end of an era. Further elements regarding putrescence and decadence in the two novels have been introduced in the previous sections.

5.1. The sun and other signs of natural timelessness

The very first environmental transition towards a possible destruction in *Die andere Seite* is set in the chapter *Der Widersacher*, where a change in the sky is noted by the Dreamers:

Die Grenzüberwachung funktionierte nach wie vor gut, aber innerhalb der Mauern war alles wie geladen von drohendem Unheil. Schwül und drückend, wie früher nie, war die Luft; ein fahler, heller Glanz lag über unserer Stadt, es drangen sogar einige Male schräge Sonnenstrahlen durch den sonst unbeweglichen Wolkenschleier. Dieses unangenehm

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[720] The connection between the decay and the conflict of the leading intelligences of Bell and Patera is introduced by Patera's phrase "Ich bin müde", then openly thematized, in Kubin, only in few pages towards the end of the novel.

blendende Licht war sehr unheimlich, wir waren keine Sonne mehr gewohnt, ein erfrischender Regen wäre uns weit lieber gewesen.[721]

The changing atmosphere through natural elements that wouldn't be perceived as threatening in normal situations is very interesting in this sequence: the sense of oppression does not come from manifestations of bad weather, but from the sun and a kind of heavy air. This happens in a context characterized by a grey atmosphere, where, as previously stated, the sun never really shines, since clouds are always covering it.

The same atmosphere is described by Meyrink in his Amsterdam when it prepares for the storm in the two final chapters. In this case, we have a city where winter came and went without bringing spring: the narrator describes this phenomenon as the earth not being able to wake up anymore. More in detail:

Fahlgelbe Maitage kamen und verschwanden: - noch immer sproßten die Wiesen nicht.

Die Bäume standen kahl und dürr – ohne Knospen, in den Wurzeln erfroren. Überall schwarze, tote Äcker, das Gras braun und welk; eine schreckhafte Windstille; das Meer unbeweglich wie aus Glas; seit Monaten kein Tropfen Regen, eine trübe Sonne hinter staubigen Schleiern, - die Natur schwül und ohne Tau.[722]

Kubin and Meyrink's passages are built around the same leading concepts: both use the attributes *fahl*, *schwül*, *unbeweglich*, where *unbeweglich* is referred to things that cannot be considered still in nature, like clouds and the sea. Both sequences report the need for rain and express the sense of tragedy these elements bring with them: the earth cannot wake up in Meyrink's Amsterdam, while the mention of *Unheil*, catastrophe, summarizes Kubin's text.

When it comes to the main sequences of the deconstruction, it is interesting to observe that parallelisms between the two works are possible despite the different number of chapters dedicated to the matter by the authors. Both collapses begin with a moment of apparent death, or of forced immobility. The aforementioned passages highlighted this characteristic already; in Meyrink's text, the concept is also pointed out in the following lines:

Ein eisiger, lichtloser Winter war über Holland hingegangen, hatte sein weißes Sterbeleilach auf die Ebenen gebreitet und langsam, langsam wieder weggezogen, – aber der Frühling blieb aus.

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[721] *Die andere Seite*, p. 240. The passage follows a long sequence where a sort of epileptic behavior produces doppelgangers for all the inhabitants of the reign: every single person has the chance to encounter his own doppelganger, who has a different life and a completely independent existence from the "original" character. This also happens with dead people: the protagonist encounters not only his own doppelganger but also his dead wife's, who is married to another man and has a completely different life.
[722] GG, p. 290.

Als ob die Erde nie mehr erwachen könnte.[723]

Here, the long, dark winter gives in to an intermediate season which can be interpreted as a standstill, a situation where time has definitely paused. Meyrink's choice to avoid establishing a season for the collapse, locating it after winter, a moment when a rebirth of nature is expected, is meaningful as it materializes the idea of timelessness embodied in Amsterdam from the very beginning.

5.2. Virulent life in Kubin's Perle

Kubin's strategy is slightly different and describes the contrast between a moment of forced stasis for the people and an acceleration in the life of other animals. In the chapter *Die Hölle*, where Herkules Bell declares his intention to overthrow Patera, the Dreamers are informed by him about the connection between the sovereign's power and their sleep: using an article in the newspaper, the American claims that it is necessary to give up sleeping to overcome Patera's mind control[724]. The Dream Kingdom's silent reply to this action of propaganda is a narcolepsy epidemic that engulfs the whole city of Perle and its suburbs:

Eine unwiderstehliche Schlafsucht senkte sich auf Perle. Im Archiv brach sie aus und verbreitete sich von da über Stadt und Land. Kein Mensch konnte der Epidemie widerstehen. Wer sich eben noch seiner Frische rühmte, hatte, ehe er sich's versah, den Keim der Krankheit schon irgendwo aufgefaßt.
Sehr bald wurde ihr ansteckender Charakter erkannt, doch fand kein Arzt ein Heilmittel.[725]

The descriptions of sleeping people, told from Herkules Bell's perspective[726], can be read as embodiments of the concepts of "Dream Kingdom" and "Dreamers". The most meaningful element contributing to the unsettling quality of this phase is the reaction of nature to the epidemic, discovered by the population at the moment of their awakening:

Die Traumstadt wachte auf und fand sich — in einer Art Tierparadies. Während unseres langen Schlummers hatte sich eine andere Welt derartig ausgebreitet, daß wir in ernstester Gefahr schwebten, verdrängt zu werden, die Tierwelt.

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[723] GG, p. 290.
[724] *Die andere Seite*, p. 246. "Bürger! Nun, da ich euch die Augen geöffnet habe, schließt sie nicht wieder! Noch einmal fordere ich euch alle auf, den Sturz dieser Bestie zu beschleunigen. Einen Rat gebe ich euch! Hüte sich jeder vor dem Schlaf! Das ist die Zeit, in welcher der Herr euch knechtet! In der Ohnmacht des Schlafes seid ihr ihm ausgeliefert, da bläst er euch seine tückischen Ideen ein, erneuert und verstärkt er täglich seinen infernalischen Bann und zerstört euren Willen."
[725] *Die andere Seite*, p. 266.
[726] Bell is the only character that does not surrender to the impulse of sleeping throughout the whole epidemic.

Allerdings war es schon in der letzten Zeit aufgefallen, daß Ratten und Mäuse in diesem Jahre besonders gediehen. Aber auch über einfallende Raubvögel und vierbeinige Hühnerdiebe wurde Klage geführt.[727]

In concrete opposition to the narcolepsy that had exasperated the already lethargic traits of the *Traumreich*, the passages that follow the epidemic concentrate on an explosion of life: meaningful occurrences of this phase are an invasion of ants and a counter-epidemic of insomnia. Animals of every kind proliferate in the reign, also causing episodes of extreme violence[728], and the narrator starts recognizing animal traits in the Dreamers as well. The problem of proliferation, of the excess of life, can also be read as a manifestation of an aesthetic of the monstrosity that traces back to Romanticism, where, unlike the Enlightenment's canon (where monstrosity was associated with physical deformation), it is life propagation that is seen as unnatural, disruptive and unsettling[729]. This perspective can also be related to apocalyptic literature, as shown in Elena Gomel's definition of the 'apocalyptic body', a notion that focuses on the connection between literary apocalyptic worldview and the presence of crowds, violence and deviated corporeity in general[730]. The changes in Melitta Lampenbogen and Brendel's behavior are good examples of this process. During the invasion of the ants, Melitta starts having an incredible number of affairs, hordes of lovers enter her room, and this change in her sexual life is reported through a description that resembles the depiction just given to the ants invading houses. The juxtaposition of these two images allows the reader to compare the two situations and attribute an animal quality to the characters involved. This quality is then confirmed by a love letter addressed to Melitta, found by the I-narrator, where the woman is called "Meine Ameisenkönigin"[731]. A similar attitude underlines the sequence dedicated to Brendel, who, after Melitta's death, loses his mind and is found by the I-narrator as he escapes a group of dogs by climbing a tree, holding something that is later revealed to be Melitta's head. The dogs surround him and bark at him as if he were a cat, simile which is used by the narrator himself to describe the scene[732]. As Melitta's head falls from his hands, Brendel climbs down the tree and fights to the death with the dogs[733].

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[727] *Die andere Seite*, p. 270.

[728] A meaningful example is Melitta Lampenbogen's death, caused by a Great Dane. See: *Die andere Seite*, p. 288.

[729] In this regard it is stated by Denise Gigante that "the aesthetic definition of monstrosity changed significantly [. . .] from an Enlightenment concept of defect or deformity to a Romantic notion of monstrosity as too much life" and of: "life propagating itself to excess from within"" Gigante, Denise. *The Monster in the Rainbow: Keats and the Science of Life*, in: PMLA 117 (2002): 433–448, here: p. 434.

[730] Gomel, Elana, *The Plague of Utopias: Pestilence and Apocalyptic Body*, in: *Twentieth Century Literature*, 46, 2000, pp. 405-433.

[731] *Die andere Seite*, pp. 281-282.

[732] *Die andere Seite*, p. 338.

[733] The overlapping of animal and human behaviors in Meyrink's *The Green Face* has already been object of discussion in the previous chapter, and the parallelisms between Kubin's and Meyrink's description of increasing violence and are, therefore, easy to infer at this stage.

From this moment onward, depictions of the explosions of life in some areas alternate, in *The Other Side*, with the progressive crumbling of other areas: the invasions of animals and insects find their opposition in the expanding of mold in every corner of the Kingdom, a mold that covers anything and anyone and that cannot be held back or washed away; the third epidemic of this phase, the *Zerbröckelung*, a progressive crumbling and dismantling of things and buildings all over Perle, can be placed in the same category. However, all the described phenomena must be interpreted as abrupt changes in a stillness that had characterized the reign from its very beginning. Interesting is the fact that this constant changing corresponds to the cessation of the magic of the clocktower, and to the absence of clocks, which people have no time to recharge anymore and progressively stop working. The I-narrator states that at this point "it was not possible to distinguish between day and night anymore".

5.3. Excess of life in Meyrink's Amsterdam

The depiction of a situation of stillness/apparent death is followed by a virulent movement in Meyrink's novel as well. After the sequence describing the intermediate season where the earth cannot awake, Hauberrisser writes down his reflections on the spiritual teachings he has learned throughout the narration up to that point. The following day, he decides to go to Amsterdam to check on his friends whom he is really worried about, and a bizarre proliferation of ants is reported here as well. In this context, the insects play a main role on a concrete as well as on a metaphorical level. Right before reaching the city, the protagonist encounters a figure which, observed from a distance, resembles a giant ("übermenschlich groß"[734]) man in talar walking towards him. Hauberrisser identifies him, through his clothing and the shape of his head, as an old Jew. The man is seven feet tall and walks without moving his feet:

Je näher der Mann herankam, desto unwirklicher schien er zu werden; […] seine Konturen hatten etwas Lockeres, Schleierndes; […] Wenige Minuten später war der Jude fast durchsichtig geworden, als bestünde er nur aus einem schütteren Gebilde zahlloser schwarzer Punkte und nicht aus einer festen Masse.
Gleich darauf sah Hauberrisser, als die Gestalt in unmittelbarster Nähe lautlos an ihm vorbei schwebte, daß es eine Wolke fliegender Ameisen angenommen hatte und beibehielt […][735]

Then, when Hauberrisser walks with Pfeill through the panicking crowd, he hears his friend comparing the enormous amount of Jews that is leaving the Netherlands (to found a new Zionist state

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[734] GG, p. 303.
[735] GG, p. 303.

in Brazil along with Sephardi) to a "rolling swarm of ants"[736], which gives consistency to the previously described phenomenon: from this perspective, the swarm of ants that takes the shape of an old Jew can be interpreted as foreshadowing Pfeill's metaphor. Nevertheless, it also describes a form of animal life that is highly unusual and of unsettling quality.

An explosion of life also characterizes Amsterdam, which in the last chapter is not only full of people but is also permeated of movement and uninterrupted noise. The crowd scenes which this section of the novel is centered around have already been introduced in the chapter regarding Hauberrisser and Pfeill's detachment, therefore it does not bear repeating. However, it must be highlighted that the opposition between stillness and exceeding movement/life is present in Meyrink's structure of the collapsing phases, similarly to Kubin's attitude, despite their being described on a smaller scale. Furthermore, the metaphor of the ants overlapping to human beings appears in both novels when it comes to the scenes related movement and proliferation of life.

5.4. The role of delusions before the Fallout

After these two initial phases, the apparent death or forced immobility and the description of extreme activity, another moment of the progressive environmental collapse that is shared by the two texts is noticeable. Differently from the previous elements, this process is not a modification of reality and only interacts with people's mind.

Both in Kubin and Meyrink's text, the two main initial phases are followed by a disturbance in people's perception. The description of a powerful hallucinatory state in Kubin's work takes place during a series of violent actions undertaken by the population who, drenched in despair, have given birth to a revolutionary movement whose only aim seems to be indiscriminate destruction, and the descriptions of this moment are characterized by the recurring image of buildings set on fire. In the middle of this tumult, sensory perception starts to waver:

Störungen des Sehvermögens überfielen nun die Traumleute. Zuerst war es ein Regenbogenschein, der die Gegenstände umgab. Später verschoben sich für ihre Augen alle natürlichen Proportionen, kleine Häuschen hielten sie für vielstöckige Türme, die falschen Perspektiven täuschten sie und verursachten ihnen Bangigkeit, sie glaubten sich eingeschlossen, wo sie es nicht waren. Es kam ihnen vor, als hingen die Gebäude gegen die Straßen hinüber, oder balancierten auf zu schmalen Fundamenten. Ihnen entgegenkommende Menschen verdoppelten oder vervielfachten sich, wurden zu Ansammlungen! Sie hoben die Beine, um über eingebildete Hindernisse hinweg zu schreiten, tasteten sich auf allen vieren den Boden entlang, stets vor sich einen Abgrund wähnend.[737]

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[736] GG, p. 307.
[737] *Die andere Seite*, p. 370.

Similarly, at the peak of the intense anguish of Amsterdam's population, a collective vision interrupts the various forms of tumult in the city. The scene is powerfully described as a moment of sudden silence and stillness, where people are paralyzed by fear and the exasperated movement of the previous phases is interrupted abruptly:

Hoch oben am Himmel kreisten noch immer kämpfend die seltsamen Dunstgebilde wie geflügelte Riesenfische, aber darunter hatten sich schneegekrönte Wolkenberge aufgetürmt und mitten darin in einem Tal lag, von schrägen Sonnenstrahlen beleuchtet, die Luftspiegelung einer fremden, südlichen Stadt mit weißen flachen Dächern und maurischen Bogentoren.

Männer mit wallenden Burnussen und dunkeln stolzen Gesichtern schritten langsam durch die lehmfarbenen Straßen. [...] Draußen vor den Wällen der Stadt breitete sich eine rötliche Wüste, deren Ränder in den Wolken verschwammen, und eine Kamelkarawane zog schemenhaft in die flimmernde Luft hinein.

Wohl eine Stunde lang blieb die Fata Morgana in zauberischer Farbenpracht am Himmel stehen.[738]

The two events can be traced back to different intentions, since Kubin's characters have a series of visions which are not consistent in their appearance, whereas Meyrink builds a scene where all the delusions belong to the same context. The main difference between these sequences is that the visions in Perle stress a sense of extreme confusion, while Meyrink's depiction of the *Fata Morgana* seems to show another side of reality which can also be interpreted as an ideal path, which means that this vision could contain a message for Amsterdam's people.

Nevertheless, the mere presence of this element in both novels should not be overlooked and constitutes a parallelism between the two works in and of itself: the consequences of these visions on the final destruction or on the plot are in fact inexistent in both cases, and the readers must ask themselves what kind of phenomenon they were actually introducing. These episodes can be the assumed to possess a highly atmospheric charge, however, it is also important to briefly reflect on the source of these visions. The fact that the visions are unified among the whole population excludes a phenomenon of collective madness or a mere manifestation of individual stress. On the other hand, no natural origin of the hallucination is suggested to the reader, hence it must be assumed that the visions come directly from the cosmic force that is causing the collapse. From this perspective, the episodes can be read as an unambiguous communication between this cosmological force and the worldly dimension. Although hallucinations of some kind are already scattered throughout the two novels, these particular sequences stand out because they hint at a communication aimed at a collective, a phenomenon which is independent from individual perception. They constitute a shared

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[738] GG, p. 309-310.

peculiarity in the two novels because of this unique collective form and for being presented despite having no actual consequence.

5.5. The final phase

When it comes to the actual collapse through phenomena related to storms, both Amsterdam and Perle experience wind as the final destructive element. Nevertheless, cave ins and the threatening role of earth, or the fragility of the soil under the feet of the characters, are also thematized in the novels and the balance between these disruptive forces deserves closer attention, especially when it comes to placing Amsterdam and Perle in the framework of eccentric cities.

It has been stated in the previous sections that there is a strong connection between the image of the threatening sky and apocalyptic literature. This finds its justification, among other things, in the symbolic overturning of the natural order in the representation of elements related to the sky, such as the sun, the moon and the stars, and in the establishment of a new regular spatial-temporal continuity. The anomalies in the representation of the aforementioned elements can often be traced back to the expression of the fragility of time: the sun, that measures time during the day, symbolizes a disturbance in the temporal structure anytime it is covered by clouds in an unnatural way or whenever it displaces nuances of colors or positions which cannot be normally attributed to it. From this perspective, the normal state of the permanently grey sky over the Dream Kingdom highlights the absence of an actual temporal continuum within that enclosed space, a matter that was analyzed in the paragraph related to the heterotopic quality of the reign. Hence, the frequent presence of elements that attribute a threatening quality to the sky in Meyrink and Kubin's texts is not surprising of this view. The two authors base part of their descriptions on the contrast between dark and light colors. This element seems peculiar when thinking about the chromatic harmony that characterizes the Dream Kingdom according to the first descriptions of Kubin's I-narrator, since this harmony mainly revolves around the colors grey and brown. A similar tendency is actually visible, despite it not being initially thematized in Hauberrisser's perception, in Meyrink's Amsterdam. The dull colors of the environment in *Das grüne Gesicht* are easy to infer when the protagonist expresses, in chapter 3, how he misses the bright summer days, and are strongly present during the collapse. It can be said that both novels express the general, visual impression of the fall of Amsterdam and Perle through a preliminary disruption of the chromatic harmony. This leads to a growing number of scenes that

privilege crepuscular atmospheres – dawns and sunsets[739]. For example, the rising sun on one of the numerous days during the long agony of the Dream Kingdom is described as follows:

In der Richtung auf Perle fing der Himmel sich zu röten an — — ein greller Schein, der rasch stärker wurde, sich an der Wolkenbank brach und bald den ganzen Horizont einnahm. Besorgt schaute der Amerikaner auf diese neue Glut. Das rostige Ungetüm schob sich jetzt, ohne seine Geschwindigkeit zu vermindern, durch das Schlammeer. Die schwarze, hohe Bugwelle, die es vor sich hertrieb, überschüttete den Führer mit schleimigem Wasser.[740]

It can be said that the dawn does not seem to bring any solace in this scene and that special attention is given to the moments when the strong, intense glowing light of the sun touches other surfaces, a moment which is described as a violent contact: the luminous light becomes stronger and 'breaks' through the clouds, then it spreads to the muddy land with frightening speed, after having been defined as a monstrosity (*Ungetüm*). The adjective *rostig* concretely describes the threatening nature of the aforementioned *Glut*, which is treated as a dangerous oxidation.

A similar juxtaposition of colors is present in the description of the dawn on the second day of apocalyptic atmosphere in *Das grüne Gesicht*:

Endlich ging die Sonne auf, trotzdem blieb der Himmel tiefschwarz, nur ringsum am Horizon glomm ein greller, schwefelgelber Streifen, als habe sich eine dunkle Halbkugel mit glühendem Rand auf die Erde herabgesenkt.[741]

Here, the unsettling quality of the scene is given by the contrast between the rising sun and a sky that remains black (*tiefschwarz*). The second part of the description thematizes, like Kubin's passage, the contact between the sun and the earth. The process is depicted starting from the idea of an obscure sun, or of a light that has been influenced by the darkness of its surroundings, and is centered around the brighter stripe on the horizon that constitutes the only real sign of the incoming dawn. This stripe touches the earth acquiring a color that, like the rusty red of the sun in Kubin's scene, possesses a nuance of toxicity and illness: sulfur yellow (*schwefelgelb*). Extremely powerful is the consequent simile that stresses the idea of irreparable decay by inverting the movement of the sun, from rising to sinking, when defining it as a "frightening dark semi-sphere with a burning margin, falling on the land". The image evokes the balance between the emerging and submerging of Amsterdam's territory, also pointing out the possible threat coming from both earth and sky.

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[739] Kubin also exasperates this experience by concentrating on the violence of the crowd that progressively sets the city on fire.
[740] *Die andere Seite*, p. 368.
[741] GG, p. 313.

This tension between emerging and submerging is highly present in both Amsterdam and Perle, which are built on canals and a swamp respectively. It has been stated that water is not thematized as a danger in *Das grüne Gesicht*, despite the peculiar structure of the Dutch capital. The hostility of the earth in the chapters dedicated to the collapse is therefore expressed through the darkness that characterizes the soil. In the description of the dawn that precedes the beginning of the final storm, the narrator states:

Am Himmel lag bereits der erste Schein des anbrechenden Morgens; die Luft war bleifarben und ließ die verdorrte Steppe vor dem Fenster wie einen riesigen wollenen Teppich mit den grauen Wasserstraßen als hellen Streifen darin erschein.[742]

Then, the discourse remains consistent during the last moments of calm, where the earth is affected by unexplainable phenomena:

Als die Dämmerung herabsank, tauchten große, trübgraue Flächen aus der Erde und krochen über die Steppe wie ausgebreitete, wandelnde Tücher, - er sah, daß er zahllose Scharen von Mäusen waren, die, aus ihren Löchern geschlüpft, pfeifend und aufgeregt durcheinander huschten. [...]

Die moorbraun gewordenen Wasser bekamen zuweilen kleine kreisrunde Krater, ohne daß auch nur ein Lufthauch sie getroffen hätte, oder schlugen, wie unter unsichtbaren Steinwürfen, vereinzelte, spitzige Wellenkegel, die gleich darauf wieder spurlos verschwanden.[743]

Here, the movements of the earth have no reasonable cause and create a feeling of a highly fragile space. The same feeling is given by the mice escaping their burrows, as they see the underground as not safe anymore. The colors attributed to the earth and the water are interesting as well: beside the image of the dark grey surfaces moving like tissues, reminiscent of the *wollener Teppich* introduced in the previously quoted sentence, water is attributed an earthly quality, expressed through the brown color of the moor, which eliminates any possible luminescence and transparency it might possess. Another interesting image expressing the grey, hostile quality of the soil in this atmosphere, is the peculiar simile:

(…) die Türme Amsterdams waren wie von trüben Scheinwerfen matt erhellt. Darunter lag die Ebene mit ihren Wiesen gleich einem großen erblindeten Spiegel.[744]

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[742] GG, p. 301.
[743] GG, p. 311.
[744] GG, p. 313.

In this moment, the oxymoron of the *trüben Scheinwerfen* is enhanced by the contrast between the light and the idea of the opaque mirror, evoking a color close to a grey, non-uniform filth.

In comparison to Meyrink's depiction of the collapse, where it only appears sporadically and only as an element logically influenced by the tornado, water plays a more important role in Kubin's text, where the porous soil of the swamp is highly thematized. In order to connect the movement of water to the actions of the inhabitants, the author juxtaposes a violent scene centered around a sudden *Mordlust*, stemming from the prolonged frustration of the Dreamers (forced by the numerous calamities that have affected Perle to live on the rivers of the Negro and to sleep in tents), and an initiative called *Gesellschaftschlaf*. In this scene, which concentrates on the unreasonable murders and on acts of cannibalism, the description of violence is alternated with depictions of drowning bodies, and the river becomes the central focus of the action. The scene that follows the massacre shows a series of submerged buildings:

In der Stadt wurden Extrablätter verteilt, die von einem neuen Unglück berichteten: der große Tempel war in dem See verschwunden, Mönche hatten die Botschaft gebracht. Man vermutete, daß die Grundfesten längst unterwaschen waren und der weiche Sandboden nun nachgegeben hatte. Einige Priester waren beim Singen ihrer Hymnen ertrunken. Sie müssen vom Tode völlig überrascht worden sein, denn ihre Posaunen ertönten noch, als der Bau schon zur Hälfte im Wasser lag. Es war alles sehr schnell vor sich gegangen, die schweren Marmorwände versanken, ohne einzustürzen.[745]

The speed that characterizes the violence of the river describes an abrupt process resembling the action of swallowing, where walls do not break, and buildings sink intact. The personification of the swamp through the act of eating is clearer in statements such as: "Am Bahnhofe fraß der Sumpf."[746], or in the more evocative:

Der Negro raunt — bald ist es, als wäre er hungrig, und seine Wellen lecken löffelweise den Sand vom Ufer, bald klagt er in vielstimmigem, mystischem Gesang.[747]

A last image of submerging deserves attention for its efficacy in showing the balance between emerging and submerging related to the swamp:

Das Gebäude hatte sich geneigt, der Perron war mit Schlamm und Schilf überdeckt, durch die verfaulten Türen kroch der Morast in die Wartesäle, von den Bänken und Polstern ertönten Wehmutslieder der Unken. Über die Büfetts krabbelten Molche und kleine Käferlarven. Die unzähligen Geschöpfe, welche Perle durchwandert, die Gärten verwüstet und die Menschen geängstigt hatten, alle stammten sie aus dem Sumpfe der sich viele Meilen ins graue Dunkel ausstreckte. Aber

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[745] *Die andere Seite*, p. 324.
[746] *Die andere Seite*, p. 361.
[747] *Die andere Seite*, p. 360.

er gab nicht nur, er nahm auch Leben. Unzählige Träumer, Bauern, Fischer, schlummerten in seiner nassen Erde. — Der Trügerische! Wie harmlos vermochte er auszusehen, während unter der Moosdecke sich die Schlangen knäulten.[748]

The balance is described through the ability to generate and take life that is attributed to the fertile swamp: the act of giving life to a huge number of animals represents its fruitful nature, but is also leads to the death of the citizens of the Dream Kingdom. Interestingly, this attribution of responsibility to the Negro and to the surrounding swamp comes relatively late in comparison to the depictions of the invasion of animals in the first phases of the long collapse of the *Traumreich*, which gives an idea of the I-narrator's attention progressively moving to the wider spectrum of the natural danger: from the mere description of the crisis of Perle, the depictions of collapsing spaces come progressively closer to the cores of the destruction and to the discovery of the conflict between earth and sky.

When it comes to the effect of the final storm on architecture, or of the actual violence of wind in *Das grüne Gesicht*, and to the consequences of the combination of water and wind in *Die andere Seite*, two motives that show the conflict between the human settlement and the catastrophe coming from the sky must be highlighted.

The first motif is the destruction of mills, which is meaningful in relation to the topic of wind. Mills are present, in both novels, at the beginning and at the end of the narration. In *Das grüne Gesicht*, they are part of the first environmental description, in chapter 3, of the rural district where Hauberrisser lives and they are, although associated to a very calm scene, drenched with feelings foreshadowing decay[749]. In the case of *Die andere Seite*, the district where the city mill stands[750] is the protagonist's favorite area of the Dream Kingdom. In both texts, the mills are associated with human elements, more vaguely by Meyrink, who compares them to the motion of *Kreuzzeichen*, and very clearly by Kubin, where the burning structure of Perle's mill[751] resembles the "geöffnete Leibe eines Menschen"[752]. The destruction of the city mill in Kubin's text is caused by fires started by the population of Perle. In this instance, the construction is seen as a giant torch lighting up the sky:

Gegen den Fluß zu war der Himmel noch immer von der brennenden Mühle gerötet.[753]

However, windmills appear during the last phase of the catastrophe, with a powerful image showing the rests of the constructions collapsing alongside the other buildings:

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[748] *Die andere Seite*, pp. 361-362.
[749] The simile where mills are identified with *Kreuzeszeichnen* has been object of discussion in the previous chapter.
[750] Perle has a main watermill in the city. As it will be explained, windmills appear later in the descriptions of the final catastrophe.
[751] The mills are set on fire in the chapter *Die Hölle*.
[752] *Die andere Seite*, p. 330.
[753] *Die andere Seite*, p. 337.

Die Hütten fingen an, sich zu bewegen, die Windmühlen schlugen mit ihren Armen nach den Eindringlingen, die Strohdächer sträubten ihr struppiges Haar, die Zelte blähten sich, als beherbergten sie Winde, die Bäume griffen mit ihren Ästen nach den Menschen, die Stangen bogen sich wie Rohre, schließlich kletterten die Tempelchen und Häuser aufeinander und sprachen mit entsetzlich lauter, vernehmlicher Stimme in schnarrendem Ton seltsame Worte eine unverständliche, dunkle Häusersprache![754]

The scene is characterized by the personification of every piece of architecture in the landscape. Anthropomorphic traits such as *Armen*, *Haar,* and the act of speaking cannot but evoke Meyrink's speaking houses in the Prager Ghetto of the *Golem*, a motif that had already been quoted in the description of Perle's buildings in the first chapters of the novel, and that here stresses the simile between the death of the urban landscape and the death of a living being.

Similarly, Meyrink states in *Das grüne Gesicht*:

Nach wenigen Minuten war die Landschaft in einer ungeheuren Staubwolke verschwunden, - dann tauchte sie wieder auf, kaum mehr zu erkennen: die Deiche weißer Gischt; Windmühlenflügel – abgerissen von ihren Leibern, die, in stumpfe Rümpfe verwandelt, in der braunen hockten – quirlten hoch in den Lüften.[755]

Anthropomorphic traits such as *Leibern*, *Rümpfe* and *hockten* are the leading semantic motif in this scene as well. This description is even more interesting when thinking that Meyrink does not insert any dead body in the depiction of the collapse, which is witnessed by Hauberrisser from a 'protected' area. The physical death and its manifestations in the population of Amsterdam are completely absent in the novel, which is surprising when comparing the tameness of these sequences not only to the crude depiction of human bodies in Kubin's text but also to the way Meyrink expresses the same topic in other works, especially the stories related to the *Wachsfigurenkabinett*[756].

The last motif of the architectural decay that will be object of discussion in this chapter is the role of the bell tower.

It has been stated that the *Uhrbann*, the spell of the clocktower, is the center of Patera's power in *Das grüne Gesicht*; the tower is therefore the main psychotope of Perle and, in virtue of its importance, it is also the last architectural element of the city to be destroyed by the final storm. Before its destruction, the fall of the city is literally announced by the sound of the bells of other towers, echoing through the almost emptied landscape at the end of the collapse:

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[754] *Die andere Seite*, p. 378.
[755] GG, p. 314.
[756] See Cottone's reflections on anthropomorphism in *Das Präparat* and *Die Pflanzen der Doktor Cinderella*, referenced in the Introduction in relation to the *Jugendstil*.

Von allen Türmen Perles ertönten die Glocken, melodisch, imposant läuteten sie den Schwanengesang der sterbenden Stadt. Ich war zu Tränen gerührt, mir war als schritte ich im Leichenzug beim Begräbnis des Traumreiches.[757]

And when it comes to the last tower standing, the motif is reprised to highlight the desolation of the scene, from the choral sound of the first sequence to the solitude of the second:

Das Geläute war verstummt, die Türme eingestürzt, nur der große Uhrturm stand noch, seine mächtige Glocke summte in tiefen Baßtönen.[758]

The apocalyptic motif of the ringing bells melts here with the consistent personification of the city, where the first coral bells announce the beginning of a funeral procession and the last tolling of the *Uhrturm* acts as a funeral bell.

Similarly, the importance of the bell tower in the final scenes of *Das grüne Gesicht* marks the role of the St. Nicholas church as only psychotope of the city of Amsterdam. The destruction of its tower literary signifies the end of the world in this context. The announcement given through the bells is present here as well:

Banges, atemloses Glockenläuten zitterte in Wellen bis weit ins Land hinein, - plötzlich verstummte es jäh: ein dumpfes Brausen ging durch die Luft und die Pappel beugte sich ächzend zur Erde nieder.[759]

The importance of the tower of Saint Nicholas is highlighted by the chronological distance, analogous to what happens in Perle, which separates the destruction of the other towers of the city and the fall of the last:

Kirchtum auf Kirchtum folgte, - Sekundenlang noch schwärzliche Klumpen, von Taifunwirbeln hoch emporgerissen, dann zu jagenden Streifen am Horizont geworden – dann Punkte – und nichts mehr. […]

Da! – War es eine Täuschung? Schwankten nicht die beiden Türme der Nikolaskirche? Der eine stürzte plötzlich in sich zusammen; - der andere flog wirbelnd hoch in die Luft, zerbarst wie eine Rakete, - die ungeheure Glocke schwebte einen Augenblick frei zwischen Himmel und Erde.[760]

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[757] *Die andere Seite*, p. 376.
[758] *Die andere Seite*, pp. 381-382.
[759] GG, p. 313.
[760] GG, 314-321.

The two images are chronologically separated by a day, and the impact of the fall of Saint Nicholas is clearly different from Hauberrisser's reaction to the destruction of the other towers. This is not only evident in the protagonist's thoughts that follow the last sequence, where Hauberrisser feels worried for Swammerdam and Pfeill, but also in the use of terms that stress the heavy atmosphere of the final fall – the *ungeheure Glocke*, the comparison to a rocket and the slow description of the bell's last movement before falling to the ground. The presence of a similar structure in the relationship between the collapse and these architectural elements is therefore recognizable.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to giving an outline of the elements connecting *Das Grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite* in relation to their apocalyptic narrative, and analyzed their similarities in terms of plot construction and environmental depictions, as well as the peculiar relationships established by the cities of Perle and Amsterdam with the notion of chronological time.

As first result, it has been highlighted that the collapse of the urban space is seen in both novels through the perspective of a protagonist who has detached himself from the rest of the population affected by the catastrophe, and it has been pointed out how the protagonist's detachment is assumed as a salvific component and as a sign of an advanced inner growth in both Meyrink's and Kubin's narration. This enhances one the components that are relevant to the analysis of the apocalyptic in this thesis, the idea of a connection between spatial disruption and revelatory act.

That said, the space of Amsterdam and Perle has been analyzed through the relationship existing between the two cities and the notion of chronological time, and through the depiction of their fall. As second result, it has been observed that both Amsterdam and Perle have a peculiar relationship with memory and past: while Amsterdam is chosen as a landscape where Europeans take refuge to leave their past behind and is also depicted as a city devoid of historical memory and psychotops, Perle has been looked at as a city where an eternal present seems to reign, since the year 1860 is considered everlasting and no future is provided – which also means, no past is logically given.

The third result of the analysis was that, in virtue of this element, Perle and Amsterdam have been interpreted as heterochronias, while the sense of cyclicity has been observed as part of the collapse since both Meyrink's and Kubin's protagonist observe the catastrophe from a spot connected to the forgotten origin of the cities.

After this analysis aiming at the discovery of circularity and apocalyptic *Zeitlosigkeit* in Meyrink's and Kubin's landscape, the research focused on the depiction of the actual collapse in both *Die andere Seite* and *Das grüne Gesicht*. This last sections made apparent a series of common motifs describing

the conflict between the earthly and a cosmic dimension: the use of similar images such as the proliferation of life, the glowing and threatening sun, the windmills hanging between earth and sky and the fall of the clocktower/belltower, as well as the role played by the porous and unstable terrain enhancing the eccentric quality of the two emerging/submerging cities, showed the circulation of a similar pictorial imagination in the two works in regard to the eschatological collapse.

It has been concluded that both Meyrink and Kubin have set an apocalyptic eschatological moment in an urban environment characterized by heterotopic and heterochronic traits. Outcome of the shown heterochronic characteristics is in fact an orientation towards the notion of timelessness, which in both *Die andere Seite* and *Das grüne Gesicht* also hints at a cyclicity of human history. This cyclical structure is suggested by the authors setting the protagonists on an ancestral element (an ancient site outside Amsterdam and the mountain respectively) to watch the collapse of their world. Furthermore, the living beings which have remained safe on this ancestral place are the once designated to start over. This cyclicity, from which the notion of chronological time must nevertheless be detached, overlaps with the expressions of timelessness in the depicted environments and results in a situation very similar from the one described by Dailey in the paradoxical relationship between eschatology, cyclicity and absence of time that characterizes the apocalypses of 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* (see: chapter 1.4).

The contacts between the two works observed in this analysis with regard to formal aspects and content are several and suggest a communication between Meyrink's and Kubin's creation which goes beyond Kubin's taking inspiration from *Der Golem* for his anthropomorphic architecture.

Chapter 6

Apocalyptic in dichotomic space and identity search in

Gustav Meyrink's *Walpurgisnacht* and Auguste Hauschner's *Der Tod des Löwen*

1. Introduction

This chapter develops a comparative study involving Meyrink's *Walpurgisnacht*, and Auguste Hauschner's novella *Der Tod des Löwen*. Both Meyrink's novels and Hauschner's novella were published during WWI, in 1917 and 1916 respectively, and are categorized as *Prager Texte*, since they are both set in Prague and portray the city according to the parameters of Bohemian-German literature during the first half of the 20th century. Similarly to the situation described in the chapter about Kubin, *Der Tod des Löwen* can be easily associated to Meyrink's production through an already made comparison to *Der Golem*, a work which will be present in the analysis of paragraph 3.2: the two works have been placed side by side in numerous studies both for the topics discussed in Hauschner's narration, where the character Rabbi Löw plays a meaningful role and the existence of a proper Golem in the rabbi's house is suggested, but they were also juxtaposed in light of the similarities between the Ghetto representations dominating both novels. It has been pointed out that the narrative structure of the two works revolves around a series of common motifs, including: the frequent attribution of living traits to inanimate objects, the presence of a rabbi who has a meaningful role in changing the mindset of the protagonists, the depiction of the rabbi's daughter as an ethereal figure providing a contact between spiritual and earthly dimension, the exploration of Old Prague and the meaningful role of some elements related to the *topoi* of the so-called 'magic Prague', such as the alchemy and, above all, the mystic associated to the Jewish district. Besides this, common elements in the literary activity of the two authors are their participation to the environment linked to *Jung Prag*[761], their contacts with the *Lesehalle* and their constant exchange with personalities such as Max Brod and Paul Leppin. Moreover, Meyrink and Hauschner were both acquainted to Hugo Steiner-Prag, who illustrated their work highlighting their thematic and atmospheric similarities. However, Auguste Hauschner's work did not receive much attention from literary criticism and Hella-Sabrine Lange, who dedicated a monography to her[762], rightly defines Hauschner a *vergessene Autorin*[763], although more recent studies on Bohemian-German literature began to give her proper space. Despite

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[761] Fiala-Fürst, *Der Beitrag der Prager deutschen Literatur zum deutschen Expressionismus*, p. 15.

[762] Lange, Hella-Sabrina, *„Wir stehen alle wie zwischen zwei Zeiten". Zum Werk der Schriftstellerin Auguste Hauschner (1850-1924)*, Essen: Klartext 2006.

[763] Lange, Hella-Sabrina, *Vergangenheitsmythos zur Zukunftsutopie – Die Schriftstellerin Auguste Hauschner*, in: Brücken, 2005, pp. 183-199, here: p. 183.

this, close readings of Hauschner's works remain rare and her name, even in essays regarding the *Prager Moderne*, appears mostly in lists of authors linked to the tropes of magic Prague rather than in in-depth analyses. Hence, the decision of comparing her novella to Meyrink's works through a close reading entirely dedicated to it is more original than expected, and hopefully will prove to be fruitful.

Central to this analysis are the motifs regarding the question of identity in the two works, along with a focus on the relationship between main characters and Prague's environment which also takes into account intimate spaces such as rooms and private houses. Identity *Stiftung* is central topic in both Hauschner's and Meyrink's poetics, although the forms and the aims of the two authors diverge in certain traits which will be described throughout this chapter. Both authors connect the matter of identity to finding a space of belonging on the one hand, and to deciphering the complexity of reality on the other. In this respect, the identity discovery must also be understood as apocalyptic disclosure. Hauschner, like Meyrink, uses the tools of *Ich-Entsicherung* and *Raumentsicherung* that are typical of fantastic literature, and does so to describe an identity crisis related not only to her main character but to what this character, Rudolph II, represents in political ideology – the reign of Bohemia and, on a larger scale, state power. The use of motifs such as the presence of cabala, of alchemy and of ghostly atmospheres, but also the unexplainable appearance of a threatening comet on the sky of Prague, must be read in virtue of the correspondence between political symbology and character's development.

Der Tod des Löwen shares with *Walpurgisnacht* its apocalyptic quality and its focus on the decadence of the old notion of state and national identity. The aristocracy depicted in Meyrink's *Walpurgisnacht*, a novel set during World War I, shares the same mental weakness evident in Rudolph II, and equally desires to maintain maximum detachment from the world outside the Hradschin. In this case, however, the world eventually enters the walls of the fortress through revolutionary action. Interesting is, and will be object of discussion, that in both *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht* the spatiality oriented to revelatory actions overlaps with a spatial component that is apocalyptic in the eschatological sense, and which in its acts of deconstruction resembles the works discussed in the previous chapter (*Das grüne Gesicht* and *Die andere Seite*).

The first section of the analysis focuses on the dichotomic structure in Hauschner and Meyrink's depiction of Prague in both *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht*. The observation of this structure helps the reader reflecting on the nature of the conflict described by the authors, where the divided space plays a critical role. The second and third section is dedicated to the involvement of this dichotomy in the identity search of the two protagonists, Rudolph of Habsburg and the court doctor Flugbeil. The fourth and last section concerns two symbols of the apocalyptic eschatology in

Hauschner's and Meyrink's Prague – the comet that obsesses Rudolph in *Der Tod des Löwen* and the Hunger Tower in *Walpurgisnacht*.

2. The dichotomic space structure in *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht*

In can be stated that both Hauschner's and Meyrink's works start in the Hradschin and use a paradox related to the power position of their protagonists as primary cause of the events: the first scene shows the representatives of aristocracy (a group of nobles in *Walpurgisnacht* and Rudolph II in *Der Tod des Löwen*) in a moment of deep crisis in psychological terms, a moment where the strength that is conventionally related to power is in contrast with an extreme mental weakness.

In the first pages of Hauschner's novella, Rudolph awakes from a nightmare in his room, a room where the only lights are provided by candles despite the bright sky outside the palace: the main character prefers the curtains to always be closed, because a red comet recently started shining in the night sky over Prague, a phenomenon which results at the very least unsettling to Rudolph, who sees the comet as a sign of decline and misfortune. However, the heavy curtains of the room cause an isolation that enhances the emperor's fear of an assassination attempt: he cannot control what happens outside and has the feeling of being left alone, deprived of an adequate protection:

„So ist das Fürchterliche wahr. Meine Leibwache ist überfallen. Ich höre ihren Schritt nicht mehr."
Der Obristkammer, sein Leinentuch um die verletzten Fingerspitzen, näherte sich mit Gelassenheit dem Fenster. „Der Schritt der Wache ist nicht hierherauf zu hören, weil Majestät die Fensterladen haben schließen und die schweren Vorhänge darüberziehen lassen. Wenn Majestät gestattet, dass er sie beides öffne?" […] [er] öffnete den Riegel. Die kalte Nachtluft drang herein, und durch die Stille klang das harte Klipp-Klapp, mit dem die Tritte der Soldaten von den Steinen widerhallten.[764]

Despite this disadvantage, Rudolph asks his subordinates to close the shutters twice in the lines that follow this conversation. The second time, he adds that the "light of wraiths [the light of the comet] awakes all the evil spirits"[765]. The rest of the scene shows the ruler's paranoia growing progressively, until he hurts one of his subordinates by stabbing him. The calm reaction of the hurt man and his readiness to manage this moment of tension suggests the high frequency of these violent reactions and hint at the ruler's mental weakness.

The structure of the palace makes it clear that the emperor's inclination towards darkness, or towards dark and enclosed spaces, is not new to the court and does not depend exclusively on the comet. In the hours following the awakening from his nightmare, Rudolph decides to go to Tycho Brahe's

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[764] Hauschner, Auguste, *Der Tod des Löwen*, Prag: homunculus 2019 (from now on: TL), pp. 13-14.
[765] TL, p. 17.

observatory to discuss the matter of the comet with him. In this instance, he claims that "dangers only threaten me when I'm close to people"[766], and then walks through a series of corridors that are only illuminated by a few lamps that are intentionally aligned far from each other, in order to provide no real light, while they stress the darkness of these spaces. In the left wing of the fortress, a secret staircase awaits the emperor and leads him to the garden of the palace. The garden is also characterized by a *Verborgenheit* quality: bushes and leafy trees are meant to create a protective environment where the emperor can walk unseen, and the first impression described through the eyes of the main character is the anguish caused by a partial lack of this protective atmosphere in winter, when bushes and trees are thinner[767]. This insistence on dimness is constant throughout the novel, and can be interpreted as expression of the main character's anguished mood, but also as a symbolic fumbling in the dark highlighting the protagonist's lack of knowledge about his fate.

The overlapping of physical darkness and Rudolph's inner life is suggested in the very first pages already, when, during a short moment where Rudolph feels relieved before leaving his room to reach Tycho Brahe, the narrator states: "The cloud that covered [Rudolph's] upset soul opened and, as if excited by joy, the emperor started walking more cheerfully"[768], an image that retraces the movement of opening/closing curtains, an element that was strongly present in the scene. The motif of 'reading space' used in order to figure out elements of the emperor's inner life and destiny, or the correspondence between changes in spatial dimension and the ruler's reactions, recurs throughout the whole novel in several forms, one of which is the reading of cosmic space (*Raum* indicates both spatiality in general and the astronomical dimension) from Tycho Brahe's observatory.

The moment of crisis for Meyrink's aristocracy is slightly different, in that the Hradschin depicted by Meyrink does not possess any appearance of central power at the beginning of the narration: no emperor or king lives in the castle, the fortress is in total decay since its inhabitants do not have the wealth to maintain it, the owner only dispose of few remained servants and are not capable of house-management themselves. The inhabitants are few nobles, mostly old people except the young Polyxena, and their court doctor, Flugbeil, the only bourgeois protagonist of the novel. Three characters find their identity to be questioned in this narration: the noble Polyxena, the orphan Ottokar and the court doctor Flugbeil. The last one, Flugbeil, is the one having most space in terms of inner life depiction, and is also the one who can mostly be compared to Pernath and Rudolph – since the author attributes special importance to his personal growth. In fact, although Polyxena and Ottokar have the chance to learn something about their identity, Flugbeil is the character who fulfills the

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[766] TL, p. 19.
[767] TL, p. 24.
[768] TL, p. 18.

initiation, while the two lovers end up destroying themselves. Flugbeil, also called 'Penguin' because of the awkward impression given by his very tall figure in his elegant cloths, is the only bourgeois character in the narration; he lives in the Hradschin, in the same environment of countess Zahradka and baron Elsenwanger's, and stems from a middleclass family which always dedicated itself to reach the same grade of social dignity belonging to aristocracy. Penguin spends most of his time together with the nobles and has acquired their habits since he was born – among these habits, he learned the aversion for everything that is located beyond the Vltava, outside the Hdradschin.

The crisis experienced by these nobles begins when a man who is unknown to the inhabitants of the fortress enters the garden outside the room where the characters are having dinner, and is attacked by the watchdog. The man, then brought inside the castle and visited by Flugbeil, is a sleepwalker recognized by one of the servants, the waitress Božena, as an actor named Zrcadlo. The man is lunatic, always has a bizarre behavior and is hardly able to take care of himself. He is the guest of the *böhmische* Liesel, a woman familiar to all male characters in the castle, and especially to Flugbeil. When Zrcadlo awakes from his unconscious state, something strange happens and causes a deep sensation of unease: Zrcadlo's face changes into the one of baron Elsenwanger's dead brother. After this transformation, the actor stands up and walks to a spot of the room where a secret drawer is hidden, to open it. This reminds the baron of his guilty feeling for the death of his brother, a death which seems to be connected to a secret and was in fact caused by the baron himself. Elsenwanger gets so restless that he begins to lose part of his self-awareness and rationality, experiencing a crisis which slowly leads him to lose his mind. The role of Zrcadlo becomes fundamental in the narration as his Czech name means "mirror": he is capable of taking the traits of any person, dead or alive, and he is a vehicle to the discovery of identity of the main character Flugbeil – as mirror and as doppelgänger, but also as heterotopic device.

Both *Walpurgisnacht* and *Der Tod des Löwen* start, therefore, with the representation of the decay of the political stability and with a hint at the correlation between this decay and mental weakness. Apart from this element, which constitutes the point of departure for the analysis of the sense of the end characterizing both novels, central to the analysis of the Prague space depicted in these works is the dichotomic structure of the narrated environment – object of discussion of the next paragraphs.

2.1 Some words about Hauschner's protagonists: the emperor and the rabbi

Before introducing Hauschner's space depiction in Prague's novel, a couple of premises about the two main characters of the story, Kaiser Rudolph II and Rabbi Ben Bezalel Löw, must be made. Both characters are historical figures whose traits are manipulated by Hauschner in a very mindful way,

and the differences between the historical events concerning them and their relationship, as well as the author's re-interpretation of the sources about them, makes it clearer to the reader that a certain message was implicit in the designation of the protagonists.

Rudolph II of Habsburg (1522-1612) was the son of Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg and reigned the Habsburg Empire between 1576 and 1611. He was born in Vienna and raised in Spain. When he became emperor, 1576, Prague was the center of the Habsburg reign. Rudolph II moved there in 1579, and let build his castle there in 1583. He brought his collection of curiosities and art objects to the Prague palace, a collection which he continued to enlarge during his reign. He had been educated in Spain and was a very cultured personality as early as when he was crowned at 24: he spoke many modern languages, including a little Czech, was extremely interested in art and sciences and promoted them through several initiatives of patronage. He invited at his court numerous scientists including Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), alchemists (including the Günstenhöver mentioned by Meyrink in *Das Haus des Alchemisten*, and Edward Kelley and John Dee, protagonists of *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster*) and painters from all over Europe but especially from Italy and Holland (including Giuseppe Arcimboldo, 1526-1593, who painted a very famous portrait of Rudolph and had already been at Maximilian's court) [769]. Rudolph moved the court of the Habsburg empire from Vienna to Prague in 1583. His reign was characterized by a cultural flourishment in an international direction, but also by a series of arguments caused by constant tension between the monarch and the Bohemian Estates. These tensions were mainly caused by Rudolph favoring the Catholic party, a tendency enhanced by the renewed relationship between him and the Pope after 1599. His foreign policy was characterized by cultural exchange on the one hand and by the war against the Turks on the other. His mind became extremely weak in the last years of his reign, when he mainly isolated himself from the rest of the government[770]. Hauschner's novel is set in this last period and makes use of the several legends that surround this figure: much has been written and said about Rudolph's eccentricity and paranoid attitudes, but also of his interest in alchemy and in occultism. Angelo Maria Ripellino traces in his *Praga Magica* a clear picture of the reception of this historical figure as literary character: Rudolph is often depicted, and this is the case of Hauschner's representation, as a personality alienated from the urgences of his reign and only attracted by aspects of reality surrounded by a magical and mystical aura.

Restio a concedere udienze, lasciava che ambasciatori stranieri attendessero per mesi e mesi nelle anticamere, che erano, come le barbierie, sorgenti di chiacchiere. Ma in cambio avevano adito a lui i fabbricanti di oroscopi e specchi magici e omuncoli, i gabbamondo come Jeronymo Scotta. Dalle sue stanze situate nell'ala più interna, sopra il Fossato dei Cervi

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[769] Marshall, *The Mercurial Emperor*, pos. 1837; Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, pp. 182-185.
[770] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, pp. 179-200.

[Hirschgraben], scendeva talvolta in giardino, per ammirare le siepi di tulipani e i viali di acacie, l'aranciera, le serre, gli zampilli, le statue, le pergole, i volatili esotici, e in specie il leone africano, la cui morte, - secondo un oracolo – sarebbe stata preludio della sua morte.[771]

[He would not gladly concede meetings, he'd let foreign ambassadors wait for months and months in the anti-chambers which were, like barber shops, occasion of chats. But, on the other hand, he gave access to makers of horoscopes, to manufacturers of magical mirrors and homunculi, to rascals like Jeronymo Scotta. Sometimes he walked from his rooms situated in the inner wing of the castle, over the Hirschgraben, down into the garden to admire the tulip bushes and the acacias boulevards, the orangeries, the greenhouses, the fountains, the arbors, the exotic birds and especially the African lion whose death, according to an oracle, would have been the prelude to his.]

The mentioned legend of the lion whose death is meant to prelude to the emperor's death is the story referenced by Hauschner in *Der Tod des Löwen*.

Rudolph's relationship with the Jewish community of Prague was mainly one of tolerance, since he confirmed the privileges it had during his father's reign and prevented the authorities other than the imperial power to interfere in the Jewish self-rule. The Jewish community in Prague was, in the 17th century, one of the greatest in Europe, to the extent that the Bohemian city was considered a sort of capital of the Jewish diaspora as well (Em be-Jisrael, Mother of Israel, as the major Ashkenazi cultural centers are named)[772]. The fame of the Prague Jewish district during Rudolph's time is based on the economic growth this environment experienced during the 17th century, and to its richness in the cultural and spiritual field. From these situations stems the consequent increase of the sources on personalities emerging in the Jewish cultural environment, such as the politician and philanthrope Mordechai Maisl (1528-1601), the Cabbalist rabbi Yehuda Löw ben Besalel (1525-1609), and the Talmudist and doctor Eliezer Ashkenazi (1512-1585). Among these personalities, Yehuda Löw ben Besalel is certainly the most known outside the Prague context, since to him is linked the legend of the creation of the golem. Löw ben Besalel held, in fact, the major European school of Cabbalist studies, an institution which distinguished itself from other schools of the same alignment for it being organized in a progressist way – to the extent that it was used as model for the foundation of the Jewish university in Prague, the Academia Judaeorum. Despite his involvement in the Cabbala, however, Löw ben Besalel was not interested in any form of magic. The legend told by the puppet

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[771] Ripellino, *Praga Magica*, Torino: Einaudi 1991, pp. 86-87.

[772] "There was a long-established and lively printing press – the first book in Hebrew had been printed in Prague in 1512. The rabbis of Prague were also famously learned and well travelled, studying in the Jewish schools in Germany, Poland, Italy or Egypt. The large Jewish community in Prague, compared to those in other European capitals, enjoyed considerable privileges and were some of the wealthiest citizens. They were expected to contribute handsomely to the coffers of the empire. The richest man in Prague and mayor of the Jewish Town, Mordechai Maisel, maintained a close contact with the court and nobility. Although the medieval church had decreed that Jews could not take part in trade and finance, Rudolf granted him a special trading privilege in 1592." (Marshall, Peter, *The Mercurial Emperor: The Magic Circle of Rudolph II in Renaissance Prague*, London: Pimlico 2007, pos. 1780, ebook ed.).

master Zwakh in Meyrink's novel *Der Golem* is included in Josef Svátek's (1835-1897) collection *Pražské pověsti a legendy* (1883)[773] and in Leopold Weisel's (1804-1873) collection of Jewish stories *Sippurim* (1847)[774], where it is told about rabbi Löw Besalel creating a human-looking servant out of clay, a creature which was capable of moving as long as it had a certain piece of paper in his mouth. On this piece of paper, the *schem*, was written a word in Hebrew which gave life to the clay man. Every evening, the rabbi took the *schem* out of the golem's mouth to be sure that he'd stay quiet and still during the night. One Friday night, nevertheless, the rabbi forgot to put the servant to sleep before going to the synagogue and the golem destroyed Löw ben Besalel's house. The rabbi then came to stop it, took the piece of paper out of its mouth and destroyed it. Afterwards, he collected the pieces of the clay man and hid them in the attic of the old synagogue, where they were apparently still preserved at Svátek's time. In another version of the legend, the golem had the word *emeth*, truth, written on his forehead, and the rabbi used to cancel the first letter of the term every Friday evening, because the creature was not allowed to work on the Shabbat. When the rabbi canceled this letter, the word *emeth* became *meth*, death, and the golem stopped to function[775]. One Friday evening, the rabbi forgot to cancel the letter -*e* and to stop the golem, and the creature started to damage the ghetto. The literature about origins and conceptions of legends related to the golem and their circulation starting from the Jewish mystic is extremely vast[776], and the reception of this figure has acquired several symbolic values according to times and cultures it entered in contact with. The use of this motif made by Meyrink and Hauschner is related to the association of this figure with the tropes of the doppelganger[777] and of the fragmentation of the "I", themes which are part of the discourse on the identity crisis that has already been introduced in the analysis of chapter 4.

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[773] Svátek, Josef, *Pražské pověsti a legendy*, Praha-Lytomyšl: Paseka 1997, pp. 181-182.

[774] Weisel, Leopold, *Der Golem* in: *Sippurim: Eine Sammlung jüdischer Sagen, Märchen und Geschichten, als ein Beitrag zu Völkerkunde*, Prag: Wolf Pascheles 1847, pp. 51-52.

[775] Cfr. On the connection between Jakob Grimm (1785-1863) and the divulgation of this story (1808), see: Scholem, Gershom, *Zur Kabbalah und ihre Symbolik*, Zürich: Rhein-Verlag 1960, p. 210.

[776] Fundamental works on the tradition of the golem concept in Jewish culture and on its placement in the Cabbalistic sciences are certainly: Scholem, Gershom, *Zur Kabbalah und ihre Symbolik*, Zürich: Rhein-Verlag 1960; Idel, Moshe, *Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid* (1990), here consulted in its Italian translation: Idel, Moshe, *Il Golem. L'antropoide artificiale nelle tradizioni magiche e mistiche dell'ebraismo*, Torino: Einaudi 2006. Among the main works in regard to the circulation of the legend in western European culture and especially in German literature, see: Bloch, Chajim, *Der Prager Golem. Von seiner „Geburt" bis zu seinem „Tod"*, Berlin: B. Harz 1920; Rosenberg, Beate, *Die Golemsage und ihre Verwertung in der deutschen Literatur*, Breslau: H. Priebatsch 1934; Mayer, Sigrid, *Golem. Die literarische Rezeption eines Stoffes*, Bern: Herbert Lang 1975; Brolsma-Stancu, Simona, *Der Prager Golem, ein Polygänger*, in: Bayerdoerfer, Hans Peter / Roll, Walter (hrsg.), *Auseinandersetzungen um jiddische Sprache und Literatur. Jüdische Komponenten in der deutschen Literatur – Die Assimilationskontroverse*, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 1986, pp. 187-195; Neher, André, *Faust et le Maharal de Prague: le mythe et le réel*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1987.

[777] This topic also has a very long history in literary criticism especially starting from Otto Rank's *Der Doppelgänger* (1914). Among the relevant monographies on the matter in relation tot he German context: Curci, Anna Maria, *A. von Chamisso, E.T.A. Hoffmann, A. von Arnim, G. Meyrink, A. Schnitzler, H. Hesse: das Doppelgängermotiv in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Loescher: Torino1997; Föhler, Birgit, *Differenzierung, Polarisierung, Gegensetzung. Das Doppelgängermotiv in der Literatur der deutschen Romantik im Kontext der zeitgenössischen Anthropologie*, Marburg: Tectum Verlag 2004; Hildenbrock, Aglaja, *Das andere Ich: künstlicher*

Lange connects Hauschner's addressing of the golem to the mystical idea of creation, and also observes how this figure works for the author as a symbol for the dichotomy spirit/matter and spirit/power, suggesting the conflict between these spheres within the inner life of Rudolph, a conflict which will be discussed in the following paragraphs[778]. In the comparative analysis that follows this introduction, the golem will play a meaningful role in paragraph 4.2, where the figure of the rabbi's servant (Jabob) will be investigated in relation to the emperor's identity search.

2.3. Dichotomic space in *Der Tod des Löwen*

In *Vergangenheitsmythos zur Zukunftsutopie – Die Schriftstellerin Auguste Hauschner* (2005), Hella-Sabrina Lange defines the space of Prague in *Der Tod des Löwen* as a macrocosm that includes a series of separated microcosms which do not happen to be connected[779]. The main microcosms identified in her reading are the Hradschin, the Alchemistengasse and the Judenstadt, while the Moldaubrücke results, in this perspective, as the only connection between the Hradschin and the ghetto[780]. The complete separation of these three islands might be seen as controversial, especially when thinking about Hauschner's effort in describing the itinerary from the Hradschin to the Judenstadt, where the emperor passes through a series of buildings and areas that work as psychotops for the German-Bohemian culture: the Karlsbrücke, the Altstadt, the Teinkirche, the Rathaus and so forth[781]. When it comes to the Alchemistengasse, the author repetitively specifies how these alleys function as attachment of the Hradschin, through statements such as:

Kurz vor dem Burgtor änderte der Kaiser die Richtung seines Wegs und bog nach rechts ab in ein hofartiges Gässchen, das nur auf seiner Seite angebaut war und, dem Boden eines Sacks gleich, an einem Ende keinen Ausgang hatte. Die

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Mensch und Doppelgänger in der deutsch- und englischsprachigen Literatur, Tübingen: Stauffenburg 1986. When it comes to the association between the golem and the doppelganger motif in Meyrink, see especially: Klaus, Eric J., *Somnambulistic Lucidity. The Sleepwalker in the works of Gustav Meyrink*, Bern: Peter Lang – International Academic Publishers 2018; Serio, Marco, *Costellazioni del doppio nel "Golem" di Gustav Meyrink*, in: Studia Austriaca XX (2012), pp. 33-53.

[778] „Die Polarität der Golemfigur spiegelt zum einen den praktischen Nutzen, der sich mit der Erzeugung eines künstlichen Menschen verbindet, zum anderen ahmt seine Erschaffung den ersten göttlichen Schöpfungsakt nach und wird damit zum Signum menschlicher Hybris. Das Verhältnis von Geist und Macht wird nun durch den Golem, den Beweis für die Macht des Geistes virulent. In der Erschaffung des Golems erhebt sich der Mensch selbst zum Schöfer, indem er eine geradezu mythische Schau der Schöpfung eröffnet." (Lange, *„Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten*, p. 162).

[779] „Prägnant ist auch das topographische Element, wobei die Stadt Prag als Makrokosmos und die einzelnen Schauplätze, Hradschin, Alchemistengasse und jüdisches Viertel, als Mikrokosmos gesehen werden können. […] Die memoriale Topographie der Stadt wird durch die Akzentuierung bestimmter Fixpunkte konkretisiert. Innerhalb der Trias Hradschin, Alchemistengasse und jüdisches Viertel lässt sich das Gründgerüst der Handlung verorten. Alle drei Orten sind gekennzeichnet durch ihre Isolation von den anderen. Einzig die Moldaubrücke erschein als metaphorisches Bindeglied und wird zum Signum jeweiliger Überschreitung." Lange, *Vergangenheitsmythos zur Zukunftsutopie – Die Schriftstellerin Auguste Hauschner*, p. 190.

[780] Lange, *Vergangenheitsmythos zur Zukunftsutopie – Die Schriftstellerin Auguste Hauschner*, p. 190.

[781] TL, p. 58.

Häuser dieses Gässchens waren, wie Schwalbenester an einen Mauervorsprung, dem Rand des kaiserlichen Gartens angeklebt, dort wo er sich als baumbestandener Graben zum Gehege der kaiserlichen Hirsche abwärtssenkte.[782]

The metaphor of the swallow nests not only describes the proximity of the Hradschin to the Alchemistengasse, but also expresses a relationship of dependency. The separation between Prague's districts mentioned by Lange must be related, therefore, to a discourse concerning narrative unites, since the sequences in Hauschner's novella tend to respect the unities of space and time, and some chapters, such as the one dedicated to Renatus Cytatus and the Alchemistengasse, as well as the one dedicated to Tycho Brahe and his observatory, are completely set in these environments. Among Hauschner's microcosms, Brahe's Luftschloss Belvedere can be seen as a self-standing area: it only appears in chapter two, right after the emperor left the Hradschin's park, and the chapter opens with a scene set in front of the observatory[783]. Nevertheless, the author points out the link between this area and the previously introduced park by saying that the Luftschloss lies "an der Grenze des kaiserlichen Parks"[784]. Therefore, the physical connections between the landscapes mentioned in the novel are fundamentally hinted at. In fact, Lange herself does not stress the concept of *Isolation* in her monography, where she instead highlights especially how these three parts of the city are related to the identity search of the protagonist: "Zentrale Bedeutung gewinnen die divergierende Räume. Den äußeren topographischen Rahmen bildet die Stadt Prag. In diesem territorial fixierbaren Makrokosmos kommt es zu einer Durchmischung und zu einem Aufeinandertreffen von nationalen, konfessionellen und sozialen Räumen, die zur Metapher der Suche nach der eigenen Identität werden"[785]. In her analysis, Lange also dedicates special attention to the Moldaubrücke as connection means[786]. It is true, however, that all the environments addressed by Hauschner in *Der Tod des Löwen* possess different atmospheres and express divergent cultures, ways of thinking, religions and social dimensions, and that narrative unities separate them because each landscape corresponds to a different attempt to solve Rudolph's anguish about himself, his future, and to give him the knowledge about universe he craves so much: if Brahe's observatory in the Belvedere belongs to the sphere of science, Cytatus' laboratory in the Alchemistengasse to alchemy and Ben Bezalel Löw's house in the ghetto to the cabala. The three characters also represent three different kinds of spirituality: Brahe's agnosticism/atheism, Cytatus' Christianity, and Löw's Judaism. Interesting is that the three men meet in Tycho Brahe's Luftschloss Belvedere, where the scientist hosts them. Although Cytatus and the Rabbi show the application of their spiritual knowledge only when they are in their own milieu, their

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[782] TL, p. 111.
[783] It is also interesting that the Belvedere was not Tycho Brahe's observatory in fact (see: Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 189).
[784] TL, p. 31.
[785] Lange, „*Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten*", p. 153.
[786] Lange, „*Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten*", pp. 154-155.

encounter in the Belvedere makes Tycho's observatory relatable to a neutral dimension, where different convictions have the chance to communicate. To confirm the importance of this dimension and of its neutrality, this is the place where Rudolph and Ben Bezalel Löw establish their first actual communication, a dialogue which will lead the emperor to visit the *Judenstadt*.

Lange's idea of the microcosms is accountable when it comes to defining the ghetto as a dimension radically separated from the protagonist's sphere not in terms of topography and social matters, but of spiritual and psychological distance. The Jewish district becomes, throughout the novel, the place where he can learn something he never knew before, and therefore it constitutes the actual stepping out of a protected dimension for the protagonist – who also steps out, through the Judenstadt, of the cyclicity of his anguish. The ghetto covers this function in a way that is much different from the role of the Alchemistengasse or the Belvedere, which are in fact under Rudolph's influence and obey to his rules. The Judenstadt means for Rudolph the unknown and, to some extent, the danger – the threat to his safety becomes concrete when the Rabbi's servant, Jabob, hurts him in an excess of jealousy. The sense of unease that defines the separation, in terms of Rudolph's psychological path, between familiar milieus and the ghetto, is visible in the description of the walk undertaken by the emperor when he wants to visit Ben Bezalel, hoping to get access to the secrets of the cabala. When describing the market area near the *Rathaus*, where the emperor and his guards pass by, numerous details signalize an atmosphere that starts to be threatening:

…der Markt, war wie ein Ring gerundet […], Zeltbuden waren auf seinem lückenhaften Pflaster aufgestellt, das Volk umdrängte sie und gaffte, hungrige Vaganten erspähten die Gelegenheit zum Mausen. Den Bürgersöhnen war das Gewühl willkommen, sich hübschen Dirnen anzudrängen, den ausgebotenen Waren gönnten sie keinen Blick; denn die Verkäufer fehlten, die keinen festen Standplatz innehaben durften, die Hausierer, die zwischen ihrem bunten Plunder zuweilen Schätze bargen, Brokatstücke, Tierfelle, orientalische Gewebe, die Juden fehlten. Nach Sonnenuntergang wurden sie aus der Christenstadt verjagt.[787]

Most decisive sings of the separation are made apparent, however, when Rudolph actually reaches the ghetto. The extreme discomfort of the area is described through anthropomorphic architecture:

Rudolph von Habsburg stand in der Judenstadt. Eine offene Gasse, der freie Himmel über ihr, und doch luftlos wie ein Kerkerraum, dem die Decke tief auf den Balken liegt. [...] Blind und taub schritt der Kaiser durch diese unbekannte Welt. Er nahm ihre Hässlichkeit nicht in sich auf: Die schmale Häuser, schief und überhängend (wie kranke Zähne, die gelockert sind), von Brandlegung verwüstet, den rauchgeschwärzten Mauern ein Notdach aufgestülpt. Nur selten, dass ein Bauwerk eine Zierde zeigte, ein Erkerchen, einen Säulengiebel, eines der alten Wahrzeichen, wie sie Wohn- und Werkstätten der Christen schmücken.[788]

The anthropomorphic traits of the depiction can be considered reminiscent of Meyrink's representation of the Jewish district in *Der Golem*, but actually have part of their origin in another

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[787] TL, p. 58.
[788] TL, p. 63.

Hauschner's novel, *Die Familie Lowositz* (1908), where the ghetto is described in very similar terms. Here, the Jewish district is depicted after its mid 19th century *Assanation*:

„Der Stahldraht, der diesen Stadtteil einst von der Außenwelt abgeschlossen hatte, war zerschnitten. Aber auf diesen Gassen lag noch immer Kerkerstimmung. Draußen blühte die künstlerische Schönheit vergangener Zeiten, hier war das Alter nur ein hässliches Gebrechen. Wie Runzel in einem verwitterten Gesicht kreuzten sich die engen, luftberaubten Gässchen. Windschiefe, schmale Häuser hingen vornüber aus der Reihe, wie lockere Zähne in einem welken Kiefer. Die Armut beider Konfessionen drängte sich in diesem grauen Winkel." [789]

The changing atmosphere in the introduced environment highlights the partial separation between the microcosms. The fact that these places appear separated and different stresses in fact the psychological shift in Rudolph's narrative arch as the character walks through these divergent dimensions. When it comes to a better definition of the elements that divide these microcosms, it can be hypothesized that the space of Prague in *Der Tod des Löwen* seems dichotomic in nature: the Judenstadt constitutes for the emperor the sphere of the outside world and of the discovery, as well as the chance of a possible renewal, while the Hradschin appears as a dimension familiar to Rudolph but also representing stagnation.

2.4. The dichotomic space in *Walpurgisnacht*

The Prague space depicted by Meyrink is evidently dichotomic as well. Prague is divided, here, into two realities: the Hradschin on the one hand and the rest of the city, which is called "Prague" by the nobles, on the other. The Hradschin is the actual milieu in which the narration is set, while the rest of the city never appears in the novel – only its inhabitants appear when they invade the Hradschin in the final chapter. Meyrink's story is in fact only seen from the perspective of the nobles, who are depicted as alienated from every aspect of practical life. The alienation of this group and the extreme division between 'Prague' and the Hradschin is introduced when the court councilman comes back to the fortress from outside and informs the other protagonists – the countess Zahradka, the baron Konstantin Elsenwanger and the court doctor Flugbeil – that he had gone to Prague for a hair cut. The reaction of the characters is extreme astonishment, incredulity and concern for their comrade. Interestingly, the moment in which the councilman must have crossed the Karlsbrücke is openly expressed as a troublesome moment[790]: the nobles think the bridge as a very unstable connection that

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[789] Hauschner, *Die Familie Lowositz*, p. 85.
[790] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 170.

can break anytime. When it comes to the reasons of the extreme anguish the protagonists feel towards the city of 'Prague' beyond the river, it is stated:

"Ich war ieberhaupt mein Lebentag noch nicht in Prag" erklärte Gräfin Zahradka schaudernd. „Das könnt' mich so haben! – Wo sie meine Vorfahren auf dem Altstädter Ring hingerichtet haben!"
„Nun das war damals im Dreißigjährigen Krieg, Gnädigste", suchte sie der Pinguin zu beruhigen. „Das ist schon lange her."
„Ach was – ich denk' es noch wie heite. Ieberhaupt, die verfluchten Preißen! [...] Daß Sie sich nicht gefirchtet haben, Herr Hofrat? Was, wenn Sie unten in Prag den Preißen in die Hände gefallen wären?"[791]

Meyrink recurs here to two of his typical tropes, the re-evocation of the past and the satirical inclination. In this novel more than in others, the historical matter is treated from this double perspective. The "petrified aristocracy" is obsessed with the memory of their ancestors to the extent that they cannot accept many aspects of the present and prefer living within the walls of the fortress than being forced to see how the world really looks like; on the other hand, past and present actually overlap in the story of Polyxena and Ottokar, and in parts of the revolutionary action such as the episode in which Zrcadlo takes the features of the patriot Žižka and lets himself skin by his comrades to build a drum. The first use of the historical aspects is related to the comic and the grotesque, the second to the sphere of the *unheimlich*. All these phenomena can be, however, seen under a much more meaningful light for this research, the notion of *Zeitlosigkeit*, as it will be seen in the next sections.

However, it should be pointed out the area surrounding the actual palace of the Hradschin is equally separated from the aristocracy and is harshly affected by the poverty caused by the war: although the aristocratic protagonists do not consider the inhabitants of the hill a danger, these people embrace the revolutionary cause as well, and fight beside the feared 'Prague' in the second half of the novel.

The border between the Hradschin and 'Prague' is identified with the river Moldava. The meaning of this line is greater than a geographic indication for the author, who associates the waters of Prague with the concept of blood. This association occurs as early as in his short story *Prag. Eine optimistich gehaltene Städteschilderung in vier Bildern*, where the narrator states: „Die Nebbich, die im südlichen Böhmen entspringt und sich schließlich doch in die Elbe ergießt, fließt rasch an der Stadt vorüber. Dem harmlosen Fremdling erschient sie auf den ersten Blick mächtig wie der Mississippi, sie ist aber nur vier Millimeter tief und mit Blutegeln angefüllt."[792]

In *Walpurgisnacht*, the Moldava acquires an extremely violent quality where the idea of the *Blutegeln* is finely enlarged. The matter is addressed by the 'Bohemian' Liesel in chapter 3, a chapter called *Hungerturm* which introduces the second plot of the novel (the first one being related to Flugbeil).

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[791] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 171.
[792] Meyrink, *Prag. Eine optimistisch gehaltene Darstellung in vier Bildern*, p. 286.

The protagonists of this second narrative line are the orphan Ottokar Vondrejc, violinist, adoptive son of two guides of the *Hungerturm* (cfr. Chapter 3.3.2, *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*) and Polyxena Lambua, Countess Zahradka's niece.

In the first scene of the chapter, Ottokar goes visit the Bohemian Liesel to receive a soothsay about his future. The old lady tells him that his destiny is linked to the one of the Prague hero Jan Žižka. When Ottokar, confused by this statement, asks for clarifications, Liesel replies:

„Wenn die Moldau nicht so rasch flösse, heut' noch wäre sie rot von Blut." – Dann änderte sie mit einemmal den Ton in grimmiger Lustigkeit: „Weißt du, Buberl, warum so viel Blutegel in der Moldau sind? Vom Ursprung bis zur Elbe – wo du am Ufer einen Stein aufhebst, immer sind kleine Blutegel darunter. Das kommt, weil früher der Fluß ganz aus Blut bestand. Und sie warten, weil sie wissen, daß sie eines Tags wieder neues Futter kriegen"[793]

The statement that the border between the Hradschin and the 'lower city' is made of blood – consequently of conflicts – enhances on the one hand the caducity of Prague which in this interpretation is even more close to the concept of an eccentric city. On the other, the topic acquires an additional nuance if considering the division between the two parts of the city as the real core of the narration. In fact, the importance of this separation grows throughout the novel until the revolutionary action permanently changes the social order. Since the matter of the division (*Gespaltenheit*) must be considered central in Meyrink's view (see: Introduction), some reflections on his using a blood river as dividing line are allowed and worth of mention.

The topic of blood recurs in several moments in *Walpurgisnacht*, and this is especially evident in the relationship between Ottokar and Polyxena. Polyxena, who is the descendant of a former Countess Zahradka who was the last prisoner to die in the Daliborka. This woman had been imprisoned for having killed her husband (the character is mentioned in Meyrink's work *Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, see chapter 3.2.). The young Polyxena seems to have a strong connection to her ancestor, as she appears to have a peculiar relationship with blood. This relationship, characterized by attraction, is explained when the childhood of Polyxena is addressed in chapter 5, *Aweysha*. This chapter also introduces the ability of Countess Zahradka's niece to control the actions of other people using her own mind – an ability that is called Aweysha, as she discovers in the following chapter. When thinking about her childhood as a student in the monastery *Sacré-Coeur*, Polyxena remembers:

Dort im Kloster fiel das Wort „Liebe" zum erstenmal: Liebe zum Erlöser, den Polyxena stündlich vor Augen hatte, ans Kreuz genagelt, mit blutigen Malen, blutender Brustwunde und blutigen Tropfen unter der Dornenkrone – Liebe zum

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[793] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 210.

Gebet, in dem zur Sprache wurde, was gleichzeitig ihr vor Augen stand: Blut, Märtyrertum, Geißelung, Kreuzigung, Blut, Blut. – Dann die Liebe zu einem Gnadenbild, in dessen Herzen sieben Schwester staken. Blutrote Ampeln. Blut. Blut. Und das Blut als das Sinnbild des Lebens wurde die Inbrunst ihrer Seele, fraß sich in eins Innerste.

[…] Nur die Liebe blieb haften.

Aber die Liebe zum – – Blut.[794]

Polyxena expresses her attraction for blood in two main ways. The first is her support to the revolutionaries who want to occupy the Hradschin although the fortress is the place where she and her family live. She supports the revolt despite the evident desire of the revolutionaries to kill all the nobles inside the palace, including Countess Zahradka. Polyxena, fascinated by the idea of a conflict, exercises her control on Zrcadlo, who is in the rebels' group too, and makes him act like a resurrected Jan Žižka, whose traits he will also acquire at the end of the novel, when he gets skinned as it is told in the legends regarding Žižka. The second expression of Polyxena's obsession for blood is her interest for Ottokar who is, in fact, her cousin. Ottokar's relation to the Zahradkas, obscure to Ottokar himself, is hinted at by Bohemian Liesel in chapter 3, when she comments on Ottokar's frequent visits to Countess Zahradka ("Die alte sah überrascht auf, studierte wieder lang und aufmerksam den Gesichtsschnitt des jungen Mannes und nickte dann, wie jemand, der seiner Sache gewiß ist. […] 'Und hat sie dich gern, die Zahradka?' - 'Sie ist meine Patin.' Die „böhmische Liesel" lachte auf: - ‚Patin, hä hä, Patin!'"), and is confirmed by the events that follow Liesel's prophecy.

Polyxena is therefore attracted by a relationship she already has with Ottokar, the one with his blood, which is also her own[795].

That Polyxena's relationship with Ottokar and her attraction for blood in general are decisive elements in destabilizing the order and destroying the imaginary safety of the Hradschin makes the importance of blood much greater, and the blood in the Moldava acquires a more relevant position: what separates the two sides of Prague is factually a matter of blood, a blood which has been occulted (Ottokar's identity has been hidden to preserve Countess Zahradka's respectability) and currently awaits to emerge. In the end, this blood causes the final disruption of the aristocratic protagonists' isolated fortress.

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[794] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 271.

[795] See: Jeger, p. 80: "Das unterdrückte „Blut" erzwingt sich seinen Weg über das Vergiessen fremden Blutes, über die entgrenzte Gewalt des Aufstandes und schliesslich im katastrophalen Vernichten der Träger des Geheimnisses selbst, das heisst das Auslöschen der alten verschworenen Adligen: Das „Blut" findet seinen Weg auch physisch, indem Polyxena von Ottokar schwanger wird und den „Keim der Rasse Borivoj, der nicht stirbt" unter ihrer Brust trägt (W S. 197). Der Aufstand der Anarchisten ist in diesem Zusammenhang ein blosses Werkzeug der geheimnisvollen Kräfte des „Blutes", denn nur durch den Aufstand verwirklichen sich die Wünsche Ottokars und Polyxenas: Polyxena erhält das von ihr ersehnte „Blut" im doppelten Sinn: Im Gewaltexzess des Aufstands wird ihre „wollüstige Begierde" nach „Blutvergiessen" (W S. 110) erfüllt, zugleich wird sie zur Trägerin des „Blutes" Ottokars, des königlichen Blutes, das die Erneuerung des alten Adels aus ihr bringen wird."

The focus on the dichotomic space in this first section of the analysis is justified by the fact that the represented dichotomies can be considered the point of departure and the main narrative dynamic of both *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht*. Both stories tell about a tense relationship between two environments, the ghetto and the Hradschin in Hauschner's novella and the Hradschin and the rest of Prague in Meyrink's novel, and both works do not reach a reconciliation of this conflict in the end. This lack of conciliation is associated with the definitive decline represented in the final scenes. An interesting point of departure for an interpretation of these highly symbolic works can be, therefore, to decipher what the addressed dichotomies stand for.

3. Dichotomies and the discovery of identity

3.1. The discovery of identity in Hauschner's novella

At the time of the publishing of the two examined works, both Hauschner and Meyrink had already elaborated the landscape of Prague to make it the space of an identity search. It should be said in advance that differently from Meyrink's concept of identity discovery, which is clearly independent from the ideas of ethnicity, dogmatic religious issues and nationality, Hauschner's attitude towards the notion of identity actually takes the concept of *Heimat* into account. Hella-Sabine Lange dedicated some reflections to this topic in *"Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten"* and observed that the relationship between Hauschner's work and the idea of homeland is more complex than it seems when looking at *Die Familie Lowositz* (1908), first 'Prague novel' of the author which handles the conflict between Czech and Germans in Prague during Bismarck's time as seen from the perspective of a German Jewish student, Rudolph Lowositz. The discussion on Rudolph Lowositz's position in the nationalist debate is clearly thematized in the novel and is enhanced through the filter of his Jewish heritage. Hauschner presents the political matter in detail and her interest in socio-political mechanisms is in fact extremely evident in other works including *Der Tod des Löwen*. The topic is especially considered in her novel *Die Siedlung* (1918), where she represents the life of a Bavarian community following socialist principles. However, as early *Die Familie Lowositz* suggests how Hauschner's intentions go beyond the external political circumstances and the collective notions of national identity. In fact, there are two Lowositz protagonists in the novel: the second is Rudolph's younger sister Camilla, who, differently from her brother, spends her adolescence enclosed in the domestic sphere and in the social net of Prague Jewish families, never experiencing Rudolph's

independence, nor various stimuli related to politics which he can receive, nor his excellent education. Nevertheless, half of the novel is dedicated to Camilla's identity development, which is apparently independent from external political factors. Moreover, Rudolph's complex identity discourse is characterized by his multiple cultural interests - which include his devotion to German culture beside his interest for Czech music and literature - and by the lack of any correspondence between his intense inner life and the social categories where he is required to settle. *Rudolph und Camilla*, second volume dedicated to the Lowositzs, follows similar guidelines and explores the development of individual identity through travelling, since the landscape is moved from Prague to Berlin. Despite having left the complex political landscape of Prague, both protagonists still encounter difficulties in finding a place in the society corresponding to their individual traits. It is stated by Lange that:

Im Hinblick auf die Identitätsproblematik erweist sich Auguste Hauschners Werk von einer äußerten Komplexität. Es ist nicht die eher simple Positionierung innerhalb bestimmter großangelegter Identitätsfelder, etwa die Verortung in einen topographischen Rahmen, sondern die Suche nach der „Eigenen", die jenseits kollektiver Identitäten stattfindet. So ist das Streben der jeweiligen Protagonisten nicht von der Selbstpositionierung in festgesteckten kulturellen Feldern motiviert, d.h. es findet keine dezidierte Festschreibung von Identität unter nationalen oder religiösen Aspekten statt, sondern die individuelle Verwirklichung steht im Mittelpunkt. Dieser Individualitätsaspekt ist nichtdestotrotz geleitet von der Suche nach „Heimat", die zwar nicht konkret topographisch benennbar sein muß, sich jedoch im Gefüge der festgeschriebenen Identitäten bewegt.[796]

The topographical concepts considered by Hauschner in her Prague novel must be seen, according to Lange, as part of a more complex identity discovery which is identified as the search for an individual and unique Self beyond collective definitions. The correspondence between the socio-political component and the development of the protagonists' inner life is in fact one of the prerogatives of Hauschner's work, since identity destabilization is represented in a framework where the historical level is strongly *identitätsstiftend* and provides a great metaphorical richness. Moreover, this correspondence between inner development in Hauschner's protagonists, the topographical layer of the narration and the political refences are signs of the connection of all these aspects in the author's worldview – part of her message seems to be linked, from this perspective, to the highlighting of this synthesis.

In *Der Tod des Löwen*, the matter of identity is problematized through the destabilization of a historical period that works as basis for Prague German culture, the time of Rudolph II (see: chapter 2.3.2; 2.4.1; 2.4.2): here, Hauschner chooses the emperor as main character and builds his fictional personality around a weak mental state where the I-notion is constantly threatened. His paranoid

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[796] Lange, *„Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten"*, p. 42.

delirium hinders Rudolph in finding a dimension where he feels safe, and his actions are led by the main principle of excluding the outside world from his sphere. The topic is expressed by his fear of seeing his reign invaded by the forces that his brother Matthias might send from Hungary (for which Rudolph placed mercenaries at the borders of Bohemia) and by his request to keep the Hradschin in darkness.

At the very beginning of the novel, the emperor of Bohemia finds himself in deep distress because of two signs of decline which showed up in his court and in his capital, and which obsess him: these signs are the illness of his lion Mehmet Ali, that is linked to him through a prophecy, and a shining comet that appeared in the sky some days earlier. Uncertain about how to interpret the movement of the comet and the sickness of his doppelganger lion, he looks for answers in Tycho Brahe's observations of the sky, as well as in alchemy, in the magic studies conducted by a man named Renus Cysatus (an acquaintance of Brahe's who, unlike him, trusts spirituality more than science), and in the cabalistic teachings of Rabbi Ben Bezalel Löw. The variety of the emperor's stimuli and interests makes him a protagonist characterized by multiplicity and complexity, close to the aforementioned Rudolph Lowositz. It should be pointed out that the aim of Rudolph's search is theoretically his destiny, his future, and that the connection between this element and the cabala is not openly clarified in the narration. In fact, the real focus of Rudolph's attention when it comes to the cabala is not explicit, especially considering that his worries are several, divergent, and involve any aspect of his life. This generalization leads the literary research to ask whether and where the identity topic really emerges in the narration, because the greed of knowledge of the emperor is as total as the Faustian, and never focuses on identity or on inner life explicitly[797].

Yet, a scene where the identity problem is exposed can be mentioned – the second scene of the first chapter, the one following Rudolph's crisis in his chamber. To leave the Hradschin and visit Tycho Brahe, the emperor walks through a corridor where portraits of his ancestors hang on the walls; it seems to him, who is watching them through the filter of his paranoia, that the people in the portraits are observing and judging his actions. It was mentioned how Rudolph wishes to keep the world outside the Hradschin parted from himself, and that he hides the external world from his perception by using heavy curtains. This tendency appears enhanced in the corridor where the portraits of his genealogy hang:

Um die Welt noch sicherer von sich abzuwehren, waren auf sein Geheiß an den Fensterausblicken der Galerie bastionenartig Erker vorgebaut. So wurde auch am Tag behindert einzufallen und es gab niemals eine Stunde, in der die

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[797] Suggestions from Goehte's *Faust* are present in the novel. One of the clearest references to Goethe's character is the final scene where Rudolph encounters the Death in front of his lion's cage, in an atmosphere openly resembling the Faust's *Kerkerszene*.

Umrisse und Farbe der Ahnenbilder, die die Wände schmückten, deutlich erkennbar wurden. Doch der auf und nieder Wandelnde trug ihre Einzelheiten in der Seele. Die meisten, auch die, die er um ihres Kunstwerts willen hätte schätzen müssen, weckten Gefühle der Unlust in ihm auf.[798]

The relationship between Rudolph and his heritage, with the historical dimension behind his present, is not harmonic. He looks at some of the figures on the wall (his grandmother Isabella, his uncle Philipp), remembers his coronation and the first years of his reign where he did not fear anything – while in the last years, on the contrary, he only perceives suspect and deceit. The idea of hiding from the family portraits affects the whole experience of the corridor, but, as Rudolph himself understands, he brings the traits of his ancestors in his own soul.

Familienkonterfeie! Vater, Mutter, umgeben von der überreichen Zahl der Kinder. So viel Geschwister, so viele Widersacher. Und standen nicht sogar in jenem Rahmen, Hand in Hand, zwei Knaben in kurzen Wärmsern, einen langhaarigen Hund in ihrer Mitte?
Rudolph und Matthias!
Im Halbdunkel schickte der Schreitende eine Verwünschung zu der Leinwand auf.[799]

The idea of a conflict is openly introduced in these lines. That Rudolph's enemy in Hauschner's novel is not an actual Matthias is clarified by the fact that this character never appears in the narration while the conflictual dynamic remains present either way. The relationship between the emperor and his ancestors represents here a detachment from his own past, a past which also symbolizes his tradition and part of his identity. The identity problem becomes even more complex after the appearance of Mehmet Ali, Rudolph's lion, which is linked through a prophecy to the emperor's destiny: when the lion will die, so will his owner. The lion becomes, in this discourse, a kind of doppelganger for the protagonist, but also represents something which Rudolph desires to ignore: his weakness, his impotence and his approaching death.

That the encounter with Rabbi Ben Bezalel Löw is decisive in comparison to the ones between Rudolph and the other two scholars, Brahe and Cytatus, is evident from the first moments of their contact, where both figures factually seem to have a socio-cultural identity conflict from the very beginning.

The first contact between Rudolph II and Rabbi Löw is entirely dependent on the hierarchical order that divides the two men, which are, from Rudolph's perspective, on the highest and the lowest step of the social scale respectively. Hauschner insists on this perception of social categories throughout the entire sequence, where the emperor feels the need to reaffirm his authority continuously on the

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[798] TL, p. 20.
[799] TL, p. 23.

one hand and finds himself forced to ask the Rabbi for a favor on the other. The tension between these two feelings constitutes the strength of the scene and builds the fundamental structure of the relationship between the two characters, a relation that influences the development of the plot in other chapters. So, it is said in this first encounter:

"Tritt näher, Jude."
Wir ein Almosen warf der Kaiser die drei Silben hin. […] „Mir dünkt, Rabbi, ich sah dich schon. Bist du nicht derselbe, der sich mir auf der Brücke vor zwei Jahren in die Räder warf?"
„Ich bin derselbe, Majestät. […] Ich tat es, Herr" erwiderte der Rabbi, „weil Befehl von euch ergangen war, sie [meine Gnadenbrüder] mit Kind und Kindeskindern binnen Wochenfrist aus den Mauern Prags zu weisen."
Der Kaiser hob den Fuß, als wolle er ein ekles Gewürm zertreten. „Sie haben es verdient. Die Brunnen haben sie vergiftet, den Keim der Pest in meine Stadt gesät."[800]

The sequence depicts a relationship of subordination where the memory of past violence is highly present. The reference to the painful time of the epidemic and to its interpretation explains the fundamental conflict that divides the emperor and the Jew, and the cultural prejudices that hinder a smooth communication between the two. The event is not important in and of itself but symbolizes the diversity of perspectives in the characters, while it also expresses Rudolph's attitude towards Jews. The expressions "He gave out these three syllables like charity" and "The emperor lifted up his foot, as if he wanted to stomp a disgusting worm" highlight the perspective of the main character. Further tension is added to the scene by the fact that the Rabbi should not be in Tycho Brahe's observatory during the night but should remain in the Jewish district. The following moments of the scene rely on the ambivalence of Rabbi Löw, who must maintain a balance between reacting to the emperor's calumnies and never stepping over the line that would cause his arrest. At the same time, the author presents Rudolph's own ambivalence between his desire to affirm his authority by arresting the Jew and his curiosity regarding the cabala. When the Rabbi points out that his people endured a *pogrom* two years earlier despite his own successful commitment in stopping the epidemic, the narrator states:

Des Kaisers erste Regung war: die Wache. Sie soll den Kerl packen und verhaften. Aber wieder kam die Empfindung über ihn, als dränge etwas Fremdes sich in seinen Willen und hielte die Entschließung fest. Er flüchtete zu einem höhnischen Gelächter: „Und alle seid ihr doch zurückgekommen. Ungeziefer ist eben nur mit Feuer zu vertreiben." […] Aber langsam, als bekämpfe er nur mühsam seinen Widerwillen, näherte er sich dem Rabbiner. Es war, als ob ein Tier das andere beschleiche. „Es sei; ich will dir lohnen mit dem Gold, nach dem ihr alle giert. Verrate mir den Pakt, den du damals mit Jehova abgeschlossen hast."[801]

The beginning of Rudolph's narrative arch relies in the delicate moment when he decides to concede the Jew a favor to discover something, and when he does so by leaving aside the conventions related

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[800] TL, p. 44.
[801] TL, p. 46.

to his status and his habit. The premises given in this dialogue, where the two characters can be visualized facing each other standing on their own positions and on their social identity model, are that the emperor must expose himself to something which is alien to him, and discover a field where he has no knowledge or power.

This unknown and at the same time attractive side is symbolized by Jewish mystic, and then in spatial terms by the *Judenstadt*.

3.2. The matter of identity in *Walpurgisnacht*

The character experiencing catharsis and fulfills the initiation path in *Walpurgisnacht* is Flugbeil, the Penguin, whose routine is interrupted, as it happens for the nobles in the Hradschin, by the visit of Zrcadlo. During this instance is introduced the aforementioned character of the Bohemian Liesel, a former beautiful prostitute who lives in the lower levels of the Hradschin and has now become an old lady. Flugbeil had had an affair with her during his youth.

In this context, Flugbeil constitutes a convincing parallel to Hauschner's Rudolph since this character also experiences a crisis linked to time passing: if Rudolph sees his decay reflected through the old age and sickness of his lion, doctor 'Penguin' feels an abrupt anguish about his age when he realizes that Liesel, the Czech woman he had loved when he was younger, has grown older. Interestingly, this epiphany is not linked to the first scene of the novel, where he meets the woman in the Hradschin: here, Liesel comes to pick up Zrcadlo and the signs of her age and her poverty are stressed through the description of her dresses and her body; nevertheless, Flugbeil only realizes how true this deterioration is when he looks at the woman through his telescope. The presence of a telescope in doctor's chamber is actually another trait addressing the detachment of the inhabitants of the Hradschin from the rest of Prague:

Die drei Zimmer, die er bewohnte, lagen im südlichen Flügel der königlichen Burg, die ihm die k. k. Schloßhauptmannschaft, als er pensioniert worden war, angewiesen hatte. Von einer vorgebauten Brüstung aus, in der ein mächtiges Fernrohr stand, konnte er hinab in die „Welt", nach Prag, sehen und dahinter, am Horizont, noch die Wälder und sanft gewellten grünen Flächen einer Hügellandschaft unterscheiden, während ein anderes Fenster der oberen Flußlauf der Moldau – ein silberig glitzerndes Band, das sich in dunstiger Ferne verlor – als Aussicht bot.[802]

In the same sequence where Flugbeil watches Liesel through the telescope lens, he takes his journal out of his desk and flips through it, looking for notes that could explain to him his own familiarity to Zrcado at the one hand, and indulging in the contemplation of his memories on the other. The habit of journaling not only constitutes the doctor's connection to his own past, but also expresses the

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[802] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 191.

continuity between him and his family, a family that dedicated itself to the medical care and, more in general, to the support, of the Hradschin aristocracy. The journal represents here for Flugbeil the equivalent of Rudolph and Zahradka's contemplation of their heritage on the walls of the fortress.

Seit seinem fünfundzwanzigsten Jahre und von dem Datum angefangen, als sein Vater gestorben war, hatte er pünktlich jeden Morgen seine Erlebnisse – genau – wie seine seligen Vorfahren eingetragen und jeden Tag mit fortlaufenden Zahlen versehen. – Der heutige trug bereits die Ziffer 16.117. [...] Zu anderen Zeiten hätte er es wie Stolz empfunden, sich eines Lebens, so regelmäßig und abgezirkelt wie das kaum eines der exklusivsten Hradschiner Adelskreise rühmen zu können, und daß auch seinem Blute – trotzdem es nicht blau und nur bürgerlich war – jegliche Hast und jegliche plebejische Fortschrittsgier seit Generationen abhanden gekommen sei.[803]

Nevertheless, the events of the first chapters (the encounter with Zrcadlo and the Bohemian Liesel, Elsenwanger's reaction to the sight of his brother's doppelganger, the dream of his past with Liesel during the night) force him to read these pages from a different perspective:

Während des Durchlesens der einzelnen Notizen war ihm – zum erstenmal – unwillkürlich zu Bewußtsein gekommen, wie unsäglich eintönig, im Grunde genommen, seine Jahre dahingeflossen waren. […] Befremdet sah er sich in der Stube um. Die schmucklosen, weißgekalkten Wände störten ihn. Früher hatten sie ihn doch nie gestört! – Warum plötzlich jetzt?[804]

The sudden absence of pride for his consistency in journaling and his abruptly feeling unease in his apartment introduce the beginning of a conflict in Flugbeil's inner life that can be described as an identity crisis. Meyrink dedicates the rest of the chapter to establishing this mindset in his protagonist: confused, Flugbeil decides to go visit Liesel and see Zrcadlo, therefore asks his driver to take him to the Totengasse, where he thinks to find the old prostitute. The driver explains to him that it is not necessary to leave the area around the Hradschin to visit Liesel, and informs Penguin about the definition of "New World" to describe the Hirschgraben area. When he reaches the road where the Bohemian Liesel lives, Flugbeil spots some children play outside and observes the manifestations of the spring in the *Burg*. He realizes to have never looked at plants, flowers or nature in general participating to them, and to have never played happily when he was a child. He feels like he had "betrayed his soul for his whole long life"[805]. Here, the character begins to look for Liesel's house. Flugbeil's transition to a different environment finally starts to take place: after passing by many houses and commercial activities which, he notices, are victim of the economic crisis caused by the war, Penguin finds the right house and enters it; there, he finds the old lady eating a bread soup with a wood bowl on her knees. The difference between the woman's house and the rooms of the Hradschin leaves him astonished:

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[803] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 190-191.
[804] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 190-191.
[805] *Walpurignacht*, p. 196.

Die Stube, gleichzeitig Küche, Wohnzimmer und auch Schlafraum – nach einer Lagerstätte aus alten Lumpen, Strohknödeln und zerknülltem Zeitungspapier in der Ecke zu schließen –, war unendlich schmutzig und vernachlässigt. Alles – Tisch, Stühle, Kommode, Geschirr – stand wild durcheinander; aufgeräumt sah eigentlich nur sie „böhmische Liesel" selbst aus, da ihr der unvermutete Besuch offenbar große Freude bereitete. […] Er [Flugbeil] öffnete ein paarmal den Mund und schloß ihn wortlos wieder – wußte nicht, was er sagen sollte. „Liesel", brachte er endlich mühsam hervor, „Liesel, geht's dir so schlecht?"[806]

Flugbeil's naïve, almost ridiculous, reaction only comes after several minutes, instants in which Liesel welcomes him cheerfully, and, sincerely happy to see him, starts to recall memories of the time spent together when they were younger. The whole sequence with Liesel's celebration of the past corresponds to a contemporary growing unease in Penguin, who is overwhelmed by the poverty and filth surrounding him, along with the contrast between his memory of the young Liesel and her current appearance. Words have here little importance: Liesel's emotion in receiving a visit of her former lover is strong enough to let her renounce any eloquence. She first welcomes Flugbeil with elegant formulas in *hochdeutsch*, then she relaxes and changes her tone indulging in the Prague's *Jargon* ("Ein Feschak bist d' und bleibst d' halt doch, Penguin"[807]); after the pleasantries, the woman gets up and takes an old daguerreotype from a shelf and kisses it many times. Flugbeil recognizes in the daguerreotype an old present of his: the picture, now discolored, shows Penguin in his young years. Liesel's peculiar gesture is followed by an even more surprising one: the woman starts abruptly to dance, a silent tribute to their old pastimes. Flugbeil, already stunned by the kissing of his old picture, cannot but notice any detail that make this action grotesque: Liesel's "zerlumpter Rock", her "skelettartige dürre Beine"[808], her worn-out leather boots which are so old that cannot be taken off without breaking apart[809]. Despite his compassion for her, Penguin cannot but define Liesel's dance "eine gespentische Gavotte", or even a "Danse macabre"[810]. In the end, Liesel is reminded of another memory and sings an old, familiar motif to his guest. The presence of these spontaneous gestures in spite of a canonic communication enhances the unsettling quality of the atmosphere and gives Penguin a feeling of estrangement, which is only interrupted when the woman sits down again and faces the pain of her lost past. When Flugbeil sees Liesel hiding her desperate face in her hands and cry, he has the courage to ask if she is really doing so badly. His behavior also changes a bit: at first, he had not kissed the woman's hand for embarrassment and disgust, here he forgets about these feelings for a brief moment and touches her, where the author either way stresses the unpleasant state of the woman's looking: ("Er [Penguin] vergaß seinen Ekel vor ihrem schmutzigen Haar und legte

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[806] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 200.
[807] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 198.
[808] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 199.
[809] "Sie kann sie jahrelang nicht ausgezogen haben, das Leder würde in Stücke zerfallen sein. Sie schläft in ihnen", kam ein halber Gedanke flüsternd an seinem Bewußtsein vorbei. – *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 200.
[810] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 199.

ihr die Hand vorsichtig auf den Kopf, als getraue er sich nicht recht – streichelte sie sogar schüchtern"[811]). An element of the room continues upsetting him though, and this is his daguerreotype on the shelf. He perceives the picture "staring" at him, showing him in a group of elegant men belonging to aristocracy, who became "white princes and barons".

…er selbst mit lachenden, lustigen Augen, in goldbetreßtem Rock, den Dreispitz unter dem Arm. –
Schon vorhin, als er das Bild als das seinige erkannt hatte, war die Absicht in ihm aufgestiegen, es heimlich zu entfernen; unwillkürlich machte er seinen Schritt darauf zu – schämte sich aber sofort seines Gedankens und blieb stehen.[812]

It is necessary to notice that the picture is the second optical device mentioned in the novel and in relation to Flugbeil. The devices are supposed to introduce an idea of distance: he uses the telescope to watch the people outside the fortress so that he can experience the world through a filter without any need to leave his private and detached dimension. It is clear, however, that the telescope shows to the character something he wants to ignore but which is certainly real and contemporary. The photograph, on the other hand, is an identity mark, similar to a mirror but capable of resisting the passing of time. Nevertheless, the contrast between Flugbeil's present appearance and the man in the picture indicates that the observation of the protagonist is turned to an inquiry on his self, but is still a detached, or filtered, perspective.

In chapter 4, *Im Spiegel*, Flugbeil explores another environment away from the Hradschin aristocracy. Since he cannot sleep, he decides to spend the night in the *Grüner Frosch*, a tavern where he used to go with his friends before the beginning of the war. He hopes to find Zrcadlo in there, who, according to Bohemian Liesel's report, likes spending his nights attending Prague pubs. Here, Meyrink reports a legend according to which the *Grüner Frosch* also was the place where the 1848 revolution started[813].

This reference to the tavern has a kernel of truth, because pubs played a meaningful role in building organized groups during the 1848 revolutionary movements. Pubs were, in Prague, the places where newspaper were read aloud and where members of the middleclass and of the working class had the chance to have ideological exchanges[814]. The most emergent of these pubs was Petr Faster's inn in

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[811] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 201.
[812] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 201.
[813] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 245.
[814] See Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 286: "[…] across the river, young law and medical students, budding philosophers, and a few radical artisans huddled together in the usual pubs to drink beer and to develop plans for great changes, especially at Petr Faster's inn on what was later called Wenceslas Square. Elsewhere, at the Golden Scale (now 3 Havelská Street), the innkeeper had reserved a small room under the roof for the Repeal Club, whose members sympathized with the Irish opposition to English rule and were fond of new if somewhat confused ideas. In an age of close police surveillance, precise information from restless Italy, Hungary, and France was not easy to come by: the telegraph served the authorities, the new railroad line from Prague to Vienna made a detour overnight, and the only foreign newspaper available to a few subscribers was the mildly liberal *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*. At 10 a.m., when coffeehouses were full of people waiting for the latest issue of this Augsburg newspaper (one for coffeehouse), the owner

the Wenceslas Square, which was called the *Zlatá Husa*, the Golden Goose, a name not so far from Meyrink's *Grüner Frosch*. The innkeeper of the *Zlatá Husa* even presided the second of the meetings where the first petition requesting reforms on political and economic matters, with a strong focus on the working class issues, was discussed[815].

Penguin's desire of leaving the Hradschin during the night to reach the *Grüner Frosch* also stems from his recently acquired skepticism and repulsion towards his telescope, which he fears after the morning where he looked through it and saw Liesel's old traits.

The tavern has a double nature: it displays respectability and loyalty to aristocracy on the one hand and has a very bad reputation on the other. The reputation is caused by the presence of affairs among the costumers and by the rumors according to which the innkeeper was once a pirate. To elude the circulation of this backchat, the innkeeper hung a high number of oil portraits representing generations of Prague aristocracy. However, the idea that the inn might have been the starting fire of the revolution currently influences people's view on the place's reputation.

Penguin sits in a spot where the oil portraits are well visible, in a room that is always reserved for his group despite the fact that he and his friends have not been entering the inn for three years. From his sit, he can see the entry to the other rooms on both the right and the left side, and a big mirror on the entrance door. From this latter mirror is also possible to have a look at the adjacent rooms.

The table in front of Flugbeil is illuminated by an electric lamp[816]. In this position, he can see his lighted reflection on the door mirror:

Sooft er aufblicke, sah er in dem Spiegel an der Türe einen zweiten kaiserlichen Leibarzt sitzen, und jedesmal, wenn er es tat, kam ihm der Einfall, wie höchst wunderbar es eigentlich sei, daß sein Spiegelbild mit der linken Hand trank, wenn er selber dazu die rechte gebrauchte, und daß jener Doppelgänger, würfe er ihm seinen Siegelring zu, diesen nur am rechten Goldfinger tragen könnte.[817]

The idea of *Umkehrung* that constitutes the basis of the mirror vision makes Flugbeil reflect on the process of inversion that can take place in someone who, like him, is changing his way of looking at life[818]. Since the paradoxes that are implicit in the overturning of reality in the reflection process and their consequences on his way of thinking scare him, he then puts the lamp away from his face to

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of the place made a dash to the post office in the Minor Town to pick up his copy and hastened back clutching the paper in his hands."

[815] See Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 287-288.

[816] Electricity is absent in the apartments of the aristocracy.

[817] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 246.

[818] „Wo im Raume mag nur diese Umkehrung stattfinden? – Ja, ja, natürlich: in einem einzigen mathematischen Punkt genaugenommen. – Merkwürdig, genug, daß in einem so winzigen Punkt so ungeheuer viel mehr geschehen kann als im ausgedehnten Raume selbst." Ein unbestimmtes Bangigkeitsgefühl, er könne, wenn er der Sache weiter nachginge und das in ihr enthaltene Gesetz auch auf andere Fragen ausdehne, zu der peinlichen Schlußfolgerung kommen, der Mensch sei überhaupt unfähig, irgend etwas aus bewußtem Willen heraus zu unternehmen – sei vielmehr nur die hilflose Maschine eines rätselhaften Punktes in seinem Innern –, ließ ihn von weiterem Grübeln abstehen." (*Walpurgisnacht*, p. 246).

hide his reflection in the mirror. By doing so, he illuminates the reflection of the adjacent rooms. In one of them is a couch with a swollen padding and a curved table. When he recognizes it, Penguin is overcome by nostalgia and remembers when he had loved Liesel on that couch for the first time. Instinctively and irrationally, he checks more attentively in the reflection to see if the surface does not show Liesel's image beside him. In this moment, Flugbeil realizes how his memory seems to be influencing his mind more than the mirror:

Nein, jetzt trug er den Spiegel, der jedes Bild bewahrt, doch in sich selbst; der an der Tür war ja nur ein treuloses, vergeßliches Glas. […] Einen Strauß Teerosen hatte sie im Gürtel stecken gehabt – damals – plötzlich roch er den Duft der Blumen, als seien sie dicht in seiner Nähe.
Es ist etwas Geisterhaftes um Erinnerungen, wenn sie wieder lebendig werden! Sie kommen heraus, wie aus einem winzigen Punkte, dehnen sich aus, stehen mit einemmal im Raum – schöner und gegenwärtiger noch, als sie gewesen sind. [819]

The act of remembrance, that had started through the mirror, takes here another direction and the ability of *Umkehrung* attributed to the glass becomes a process in Flugbeil's inner life, so that the "minuscule spot" where the overturning of the perception of reality takes place in the physical reflection coincides with minuscule spot where memories come alive and by doing so overturn perception in a similar way. This passage, where the point of view changes abruptly, can also be interpreted according to Thierfelder's and Jeger's conceptions of the sudden epiphanies which are thought by Meyrink to be a fundamental phase of the initiation. In comparison to the episodes regarding the telescope and Bohemian Liesel's daguerreotype of Flugbeil, this episode also uses a visual device to vehicle the protagonist's progress in the initiation but, to enhance the concept of his growing self-awareness, uses something which really belongs to Flugbeil's present identity and combines it with his remembrance. Here, the mirror is understood by the author in its heterotopic and heterochronic qualities and shows another overlapping between past and present.

The peak of Penguin's crisis and his search for a place to belong is reached in chapter 7, *Abschied*, where the doctor receives four visits in his room, the first one being a detective who wants to ruin his reputation by sharing his relationship with Bohemian Liesel, the second and the third being Elsenwanger and Zahradka, and the last one being Liesel. This long sequence has a peculiar structure where Flugbeil's apartment becomes the center of the plot, the characters ordinarily enter and leave the scene like in a theatre sequence, and their declarations are spaced out by the doctor's inner monologue. Elsenwanger and Zahradka come one after the other to reveal two secrets: Elsenwanger gives Flugbeil the closed letter of his brother, the Zahradka explains that she is afraid of flies, a phobia originated from having closed her husband in the cellar after having poisoned him. Liesel comes only

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[819] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 247.

to tell him that the revolution has become factual, and that he risks being killed by the rebels if he does not flee. The scene of all these dialogues is Flugbeil's room, which is full of clothes randomly spread on the floor, as well as of opened suitcases: the doctor had prepared everything for his annual trip to Karlsbad, but now he needs his trousers and does not know how to open the locked suitcase that contains them; therefore, he is only wearing a pajama and is looking in the other suitcases for the right key.

Just like the attention for journaling, Flugbeil's good habits in fashion noticed by Liesel in chapter 2 ("Ein Feschak bist d'") are consistent in his characterization: Meyrink always specifies what the doctor wears anytime he leaves his room, a very seldom occurrence in Meyrink's human descriptions. Cloths are mentioned by Meyrink when they represent a characteristic of the protagonists' inner *Gespaltenheit*, like it has been seen in *Das Haus des Alchemisten* with the *karierter* man. Of Flugbeil's look it is said, for example:

[der kaiserliche Leibarzt] ergriff Zylinder, Handschuhe und Elfenbeinstock und verfügte sich knarrenden Fußes die kühle Steintreppe hinab in den Schloßhof [...][820]

[er] knöpfte die bereits gelockerten Hosenträger wieder fest, stellte auch im übrigen seine Toilette wieder her und begab sich, das Gesicht in abweisende Falten gelegt (damit entfernte Bekannte, denen er ebenfalls so spät noch begegnen könnte, nicht Ungebührliches von ihm dächten) [...][821]

In the daguerreotype Liesel's, Flugbeil also notices what he and the other men in the picture had on. The overlapping between the notions of cloth and *habitus*, where the cloths are understood as representing part of the identity of the character, is evident in the sequence. When Liesel comes to Flugbeil's room, and by doing so voluntarily returns Penguin's gesture of visiting her in an environment other than his, the doctor is happy to finally see someone who cares about him, but he also finds himself torn between welcoming her in his space and saving the appearance in name of his ancestors who had chosen to stand exclusively on the side of the aristocracy a century earlier. In this moment, he begins to give importance to Elsenwanger and Zahradka's confessions and to see the environment he lives in as the result of a *Scheinkultur*: "Schwachsinnige Trottel, besoffene Schlemmer, treulose Dienstboten, abgefeimte Wirte, Erpressergesindel und Gattenmörderinnen, wohin ich schaue"[822]. Here, Flugbeil decides to detach from the conventions he has been following his whole life and welcomes Liesel in his room recognizing that she really cares about him and that he has the right to let her enter his space. After this, Liesel orders to him to flee to save his life, and the following exchange takes place:

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[820] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 196.
[821] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 244.
[822] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 341.

"Also ja. Meinetwegen. Aber was soll ich denn tun? […] Du siehst doch, ich habe keine Hosen."

„No, so zieh halt welche an!"

„Wenn ich aber den Schlüssel nicht find'" heulte der Pinguin auf, mit einem erbosten Blick auf den sächsischen Koffer […]

„Du hast doch da 'en Schlüssel um den Hals. – Vielleicht is es der?"

„Schlüssel? Ich? Hals?" der Herr kaiserliche Leibarzt fuhr sich an die Gurgel, stieß einen markerschütternden Freudenschrei aus und hüpfte mit der Behendigkeit eines Känguruhs über den Westenberg. - - -

Einige Minuten später saß er glückstrahlend wie ein Kind, in Rock, Hosen Strümpfen und Stiefel auf der Kuppe des Hemdengletschers – ihm gegenüber auf einem anderen Hügel die „böhmische Liesel", und zwischen den beiden, unten in der Tiefe, wand sich ein farbiges Band aus Krawatten bis zum Ofen hin. - - -[823]

This is the fourth instance where Flugbeil experiences a piece of self-discover. Here, meaningfully, he does not need any optical device to recognize a part of himself, symbolized by the key around his neck, but it is the Bohemian Liesel who helps him find the solution to his problem.

It is interesting how the space depiction in the whole sequence, but especially in these lines, depends on the presence of cloths which draw a new geography of the room: shirts built a glacier, other pieces of cloth built a second hill, and the two uplands are divided through a line of colored ties. This new geography seems in some way reminiscent of another, older division, the one between the Hradschin and the other Prague citizens. Now, it should be noticed that the two characters still stand on two separate sides of the tie-river.

In solving this division, the presence of Liesel plays a meaningful role for the second time, the first one being the moment when she had entered Flugbeil's room. Still sitting on his glacier of shirts, the doctor proposes Liesel to follow him to a safe place away from Prague. In this instance, Flugbeil chooses at first Leitomišl as destination, but he then excludes it because "er bei einem solchen Reise unbedingt eine Brücke passieren müsse"[824]. Therefore, he chooses Pisek, which lays on the same side of the Moldava where the Hradschin stands. This utterance clearly expresses how he still stands for part of his preconcept convictions. He also proposes Liesel to become his personal household, other sign that he still perceives a clear distance between himself and the old woman. The woman's reaction to this proposal is in a first moment emotional and extremely humble: she kneels to the doctor's feet and by doing so falls on the dividing tie-river:

Die Alte hatte sich mit einem gurgelnden Laut in die Krawattenschlucht gestürzt, lag zu seinen Füßen und wollte ihm die Stiefel küssen. Vergebens bemühte er sich, sie aufzuheben: „Lisinko, geh, mach doch keine G'schichten. Schau, was is

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[823] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 344-345.
[824] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 346.

denn weiter dab - - ", vor Rührung erstickte ihm die Stimme. „Laß mich – laß mich da liegen, Taddäus", schluchzte die Alte. „Bitte dich, sch-schau mich nicht an, d-du machst dir die Augen – schmutzig - -"

„Lis - - ", würgte der kaiserliche Leibarzt, brachte aber den Namen nicht heraus; […] Eine Stelle aus der Bibel fiel ihm ein, aber er schämte sich, sie auszusprechen, um nicht pathetisch zu werden.

Überdies wußte er sie nicht genau. – „ – und ermangeln sich des Ruhmes", zitierte es schließlich automatisch.[825]

Flugbeil's biblical quotation is from Romans 3:23. The refenced passage debates about whether the privileges attributed to Jewish people in comparison to other sinners are real and concludes that this is not the case: the whole sentence recites: "Ich sage aber von solcher Gerechtigkeit vor Gott, die da kommt durch den Glauben an Jesum Christum zu allen und auf alle, die da glauben. Denn es ist hier kein Unterschied: sie sind all zumal Sünder und mangeln des Ruhmes, den sie bei Gott haben sollten, und werden ohne Verdienst gerecht aus seiner Gnade durch die Erlösung, so durch Jesum Christum geschehen ist […]"[826].

Sometime after this utterance, Liesel slowly calms down and her attitude towards Flugbeil changes abruptly; the doctor suddenly sees her in a completely new light, as she had experienced a metamorphosis. Saint Paul's passage had only pointed out the first moment of real spiritual and physical contact between the two figures where the characters were equally moved. The moment traces the scene in chapter 2 where Flugbeil had touched Liesel's head holding back his disgust. Here, on the contrary, the two figures have finally abandoned their separate uplands of clothes and are now close enough that Liesel touches Flugbeil's shoulders with her hands, and he feels at ease with this gesture: "Die da vor ihm stand, die Hände auf seine Schultern gelegt, war in keinem Zug mehr die alte grauenhafte Liesel, aber auch nicht die junge, wie er sie einst zu kennen geglaubt"[827].

In this instance, Liesel stops being humble and servile to her former lover and tells him the reason why she came visit him. The picture she had of him has broken while she was kissing it. She went to Zrcadlo for help: his ability to acquire the facial traits of other people had always amazed her in the past, because, when Zrcadlo looked at Liesel, he tended to acquire the traits of somebody close to her heart, since he'd became the living copy of the Flugbeil in the picture. This time, however, the metamorphosis has not taken place: Liesel has asked Zrcadlo to transform into the young Flugbeil as usual, but he has acquired a completely different shape:

„Es war kein Mensch mehr, – nackt und bis auf ein Hüftentuch, schmal um die Schultern und etwas Schwarzes, Hohes auf dem Kopf, das aber doch in der Finsternis geglitzert hat."

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[825] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 346.
[826] Romans, 3:22-24.
[827] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 347.

„Sonderbar, sonderbar, ich hab' heute Nacht von so einem Wesen geträumt" – der Herr kaiserliche Leibarzt griff sich sinnend an die Stirn. – „Hat es dir gesprochen? Was hat er gesagt?"

„Er hat gesagt, was ich jetzt versteh'. – Er hat gesagt: Sei froh, daß das Bild zerbrochen ist! Hast du die denn nicht immer gewünscht, er soll zerbrechen? – Ich hab' dir deinen Wunsch erfüllt, warum weinst du? – Es war ein trügerisches Bild. Sei nicht traurig. […] Von einem Bild in der Brust, das nie zerbrechen kann; und von einem Land der ewigen Jugend hat er gesprochen. […]" [828].

The figure seen by Liesel through Zrcadlo's body has factually already appeared in the narration, in Flugbeil's dream at the beginning of this last chapter, where the doctor had identified him with Lucifer. The figure had confirmed Flugbeil's intuition by stating that his aim was to bring light on people's desires – in Flugbeil's case, the desire of becoming young again; in Liesel's case, to go back to the time where she and Flugbeil had shared their young years. To realize Liesel's desire, he has made the picture break into pieces, because this image was a *Trugbild*, as it showed something frozen in time. Lucifer had revealed to Flugbeil the notion of timelessness which constitutes the real structure of the world in his dream: "„Denn auch deine *Seele* fleht: Sie will jung sein. Darum werde ich euer *beider* Wunsch erfüllen. Ewige Jugend ist ewige Zukunft, und in dem Reich der Ewigkeit wacht auch die Vergangenheit wieder auf als ewige Gegenwart.""[829]

Liesel has understood to have hung to a deceiving image of Flugbeil since he had left her. She had always avoided to go back to him and shatter into pieces the idea she had preserved of him. But they have met again and she has understood her mistake. Therefore, the picture has broken: "Die 'bömische Liesel' schüttelte den Kopf: „Ein so schönes Bild, wie du's mir vorhin geschenkt hast, Taddäus, kannst du mir nicht geben. Ich werd's immer bei mir herumtragen, und es wird nie mehr zerbrochen'"[830].

The scene shows that Liesel has in fact experienced an inner path that mirrors the one of Flugbeil[831]. After this utterance, Liesel leaves the room refusing any proposal to stay by the doctor without explaining her sudden detachment. In the precise moment when she leaves, an explosion interrupts Flugbeil's thoughts. His servant rushes to him and warns him to not leave the castle until the situation with the revolutionaries calms down; then, he locks Flugbeil within the room to protect him, ordering

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[828] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 349-350.
[829] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 319.
[830] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 351.
[831] There is a series of details which lead the reader to understand that the similarities between Flugbeil and Liesel could be traced back to an identity overlapping resembling a doppelganger dynamic. In fact, a slightly different interpretation of this correspondences can probably go closer to Meyrink's real intent if Liesel is read as a manifestation of Flugbeil's inner life. Not that her existence is questioned in this process: Liesel is a factual character and is not a projection of Flugbeil's subconscious only visible to him. Nevertheless, if the elements presented in *Walpurgisnacht* must be interpreted as part of the protagonist's initiation, Liesel represents his attachment to concreteness at the detriment of the unconscious thought, and, similarly to Eva in *Das Grüne Gesicht* and to Mirjam in *Der Golem*, her death represents the protagonist' renounce to a life based on rationality and concreteness exclusively.

to wait for his signal to come out. When he is finally freed, Flugbeil immediately walks to his coach and, before reaching it, sees the procession dedicated to Liesel, who has died hit on her head while she was trying to defend the fortress.

Jeger associates Flugbeil's obligation to stay in his room while the revolt takes place outside and the experience which is specular, in Flugbeil's initiation, to the actual imprisonment of Athanasius Pernath in *Der Golem*, a phase which Jeger designates as the "metaphorischer Tod des Helden". Jeger considers this moment a fundamental passage for the initiation of Meyrink's main characters, which is also present in *Das Grüne Gesicht* (Hauberrisser's depression after Eva's disappearance) and in *Der weiße Dominikaner* (Christopher's feverish state). During this phase, the protagonists lose any contact with the outside world and find themselves in a timeless dimension until they are ready to leave their prison. Within the concrete or metaphoric walls of their isolation, their unconscious thought emerges until it overlaps to the rational one[832]. This moment is characterized by the impotence of the protagonists in relation to the events surrounding the room where they are enclosed: the rational agency must be excluded from their inner experience, otherwise the unconscious thought cannot emerge completely:

Die innere Verwandlung kann also nicht als aktive, bewusste Handlung erfolgen, kann nicht tätig errungen werden, hat nichts gemein mit Aktionismus und rationalem Handeln, sondern sie kommt als eine Art irrationaler „Gnade" über den zerbrochenen Helden. Dies darf jedoch nicht mit einem theistischen Element verwechselt werden: Es handelt sich vielmehr um das innere Selbst, den Wesenskern, der an dieser Stelle des Todeszustands „erwacht" und den Helden in seinem Bewusstsein zu bestimmen beginnt.[833]

In Flugbeil's case, this moment is characterized by the acknowledgment of all the social personalities he has been displacing throughout his life and by his attempt to decipher what constitutes, instead, his real I, which has always been covered by his social obligations and forced to a certain kind of obedience to the heritage of his family. At the end of his turmoil, he decides to tidy up his room and to organize all his suits and his accessories to leave the chamber in its best state. Jeger rightly reads

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[832] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 152: „Dieser Zustand ist jeweils gekennzeichnet durch eine vollkommene Ohnmacht des Protagonisten. Bis dahin unbewusste oder verdrängte Teile des Ichs dringen an die Oberfläche, was sich konkret in Zuständen vermeintlicher Wahnvorstellungen zeigen kann. Auf dem Höhepunkt der Ohnmacht, wenn der Protagonist innerlich „gebrochen" ist und völlig auf seinen Willen verzichtet, kommt es allerdings zu einer geistigen Umpolung, die als eine „Wiedergeburt" verstanden werden kann, durch die der „alte" Zustand endgültig abgestreift wird. Es findet damit zugleich eine radikale Abkehr vom „Aussen" zugunsten des eigenen Bewusstseins, des eigenen Selbst, des eigenen Wesenskerns, statt. Damit diese Transformation eintritt, muss der Held zwangsläufig sein ganzes vorheriges Leben aufgeben. [...]"
[833] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 152.

this passage as Flugbeil's goodbye to his former self. The definitive caesura between Flugbeil's former life and the person he has begun is the doctor's abandon of his diary, his family tradition[834].

4. Identity search and dichotomic space

4.1 Flugbeil and "Prague, the world"

Es gibt keine Stadt der Welt, der man so gern den Rücken kehren möchte, wenn man in ihr wohnt, wie Prag; aber auch keine, nach der man sich so zurücksehnt, kaum, daß man sie verlassen hat.
Auch der Herr kaiserliche Leibarzt war ein Opfer dieser sonderbaren Anziehungs- und Anstoßungskraft, obwohl er eigentlich nicht in Prag wohnte, vielmehr – im Gegenteil – auf dem Hradschin.[835]

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the space in the Prague of this novel is divided into two spheres, the one of the Hradschin and the one of 'lower Prague'. It has also been observed that this second Prague is never shown in the novel, nor characters coming from this sphere are openly introduced in the narration apart from Stefan Brabetz, the private detective who is investigating on the secret life conducted by the inhabitants of the fortress. Bohemian Liesel's house and all the buildings visited by Penguin and by the other characters of *Walpurgisnacht* are in the so-called New World, around the Hirschgraben, where the opposition between this sphere and the highest fortress is either way extremely clear. The fact that the lower Prague is never shown in a novel based on the ideas of dichotomy and *Gespaltenheit*, and which addresses the action of cancelling preconcepts on as the premise for initiation, must be seen as an unexpected peculiarity. Antagonist of Flugbeil's worldview is not 'Prague', but the social class where Liesel belongs – which is the poor people living on the Hirschgraben. The initiation of the main character depends on the contact between the Hradschin and the New World, and even the revolt conducted by the Prague mass is not conceived on the other side of the Moldava, but in the Hunger Tower. The fragile bridge mentioned at the beginning of the narration is, therefore, never crossed. If the initiation of Flugbeil is fulfilled despite this lacking border-crossing, despite his never reaching the 'threshold' that is represented by Prague,

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[834] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 158: „Der vormals chaotische, nun aber „aufgeräumte" Raum zeigt sich hier als Sinnbild, als Analogie zum verwandelten Bewusstsein des Helden. Nun gehorchen ihm plötzlich alle die Dinge, die sich ihm zuvor widersetzt hatten, die Herrschaft in der „Wohnung" ist neu gegründet auf einer festen inneren Grundlage. […] Er pflegt und kleidet sich nun mit grosser Sorgfalt, zieht sich seine alte „Gala-Uniform" an und bereitet sich auf „die Reise" (eine Metapher für den Übergang) vor. Daraufhin verfasst er sein Testament und nimmt den Familienfolianten, das „Diarium", hervor. Dieses Buch, das seine Bindung an die Ahnen und die Tradition symbolisiert, schliesst er ab, indem er unter seinen eigenen Namen einen Strich zieht, damit also sich selber als letzten Vertreter des Stammes anerkennt. Damit emanzipiert er sich von der Familienpflicht und zeigt sich als erhaben über ihren Einfluss. In genau diesem Moment, als Flugbeil die Ordnung im „Raum" vollends errungen hat und nun bereit ist, schliesst Ladislaus, der Diener, ihm endlich die Tür auf, befreit ihn aus „seinem Gefängnis", um ihm zur Flucht zu verhelfen. Als die Tür sich öffnet, ist Flugbeil denn auch, wie es die Verblüffung des Dieners Ladislaus unterstreicht, ein „Anderer" geworden".
[835] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 315-316.

the reader can ask themselves what meaning has the conception of such a dichotomic space in this worldbuilding.

A peculiar definition of the dichotomic space of the novel beyond the social conventions shown in the Hradschin in the first chapter is given by Bohemian Liesel in the third one, *Hungerturm*, where she explains to Ottokar her suspects against detective Brabetz, but also her intuition about the intentions of this figure:

„Hast d's noch nie bemerkt, Buberl […] daß in Prag alles wahnsinnig ist? Vor lauter Heimlichkeit? Du bist doch selbst verrückt, Buberl, und weißt es bloß nicht! - - Freilich, hier oben auf dem Hradschin, da is eine andere Art Wahnsinn. – Ganz anders als unten. - - So – so mehr ein versteinerter Wahnsinn. – Wie überhaupt hier ober alles zu Stein geworden ist. - - Aber wenn's einmal losbricht, dann is es, wie wenn steinerne Riesen plötzlich anfangen zu leben und die Stadt in Trümmer schlagen. […] und der Stefan Brabetz, der riecht's wahrscheinlich, daß hier auf dem Hradschin irgend was in der Luft is. Irgendwas los."[836]

The two sides of the dichotomic space become, in Liesel's description, the space of stone and the space of secrecy. The attribution of a stony quality to the Hradschin is repeated in the last chapter, by Lucifer, in Flugbeil's dream, where the demon states that he intentionally set Flugbeil's heritage in a dimension of stone, surrounded by people of stone, to realize their desires of elevation[837]. Liesel, however, also introduces the possibility that the stone dimension of the Hradschin could soon awaken, and that Brabetz' interest for the private life of its inhabitants could be connected in some way to this coming back to life of a sleeping city.

The image of the stony Hradschin belongs to the ideas of stagnation that have been already introduced in this chapter. It is interesting to observe how the opposition between the two sides acquires a quality in Liesel's mind that is completely divergent from a socio-economical discourse. The idea of a *Heimlichkeit* dominating the Prague beyond the Moldava resonates with the discourse she had made just before the arrival of Brabetz, the discourse on the leeches in the river and on the blood that is the root of the division between the two areas: in both cases, something flows in the underground that is only waiting to awaken the city of stone. These something is materialized, according to Liesel's ideas, in blood and secrecy.

Jeger considers Ottokar's identity the real secret around which revolves the external plot of the novel – or the plot which does not focus on Flugbeil's initiation[838]. It is true that Ottokar's blood is the trait that stimulates his incestuous relationship with Polyxena, and that their union is the leading force of the final revolt of Prague: here, the same people who had avoided to face their secrets until the arrival

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[836] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 214.
[837] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 319.
[838] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, pp. 78-82.

of Zrcadlo and whose minds had become completely fogged through paranoid thoughts, which are Countess Zahradka and Baron Elsenwanger, experience a violent death and, above all, a public revelation of their real character. At the end of this process, Ottokar is crowned new king of Bohemia and the countess shoots him after having admitted being his mother – while, in the same revolt, Polyxena perishes as well. It can therefore be said that Countess Zahradka encounters its end from its own hand, or, better said, from parts of its own blood which she wanted to hide.

It must be remembered once more that one of the central matters for Meyrink's philosophical thought is the *innere Gespaltenheit* as origin of human pain, and that the space the author depicted in *Walpurgisnacht* is one where the division is the main focus. The problem of this space is constituted by the exclusion of a side that is called "the threshold", characterized by secrecy: the source of this exclusion is identified by the river associated with blood, and Ottokar's story demonstrates that the *Gespaltenheit* that led to the exclusion of the "threshold" must be identified with the Hradschin's own blood. The Hradschin is here a surface that tries to ignore a series of underground mechanisms symbolized by the bloody Moldava and by the "air full of secrets" which Liesel feels to be the air of the Prague beyond the bridges.

The association of these dynamics with the relationship between a rational and an unconscious thought is from this perspective a bit clearer. This other-side Prague is not explicitly depicted in the novel because it is not needed, since it represents no concrete dimension, but a series of secrets and the hidden unconscious thought which emerges in other ways throughout the novel.

This reflection is helpful to better understand one of the last scenes of the novel, Flugbeil's suicide on the railway, a scene which has remained unclear to many scholars and partially remains unclear to this dissertation as well.

In most of Meyrink's works it is implied that a threshold must be stepped over to overcome the *innere Gespaltenheit* and to understand the unified structure of reality, where the image is associated with authenticity at the detriment of the chronological order which, for Meyrink, is only an illusion as it enhances the inner fracture.

The suicide is welcomed by Flugbeil after he has left the Hradschin and is trying to reach Pisek, where he believes to find a new life. This belief is, however, only a covering desire, since he has understood during the "imprisonment" in his chamber that he is now ready for his last journey.

Now, the suicidal act with the train has been associated to an expressionist aesthetic by Quasim[839] and to a conflict between earthly and otherworldly dimension by Jeger. Without debating against

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[839] Interesting in this regard is the discourse on the literary motive of the train/locomotive in the *Fin de Siècle*, whose manifestation in G. Hauptmann's *Bahnwärter Thiel* have been seen in chapter 1.2. Other works highly influenced by this idea are Julius Hart's *Auf der Fahrt nach Berlin* (1882), where a religious component is also hinted at, and Paul Raabe's *Meister Autor* (1874). Peter Sprengler states in this regard: "Die Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit wurde von den Menschen des 19. Jahrhunderts vor allem anhand der Eisenbahn erfahren, deren Ausbau in Deutschland nach der

these positions, which have solid bases and remain relevant to this discourse, this last paragraph related to the dichotomy of space must resonate with the role of the train in the whole last chapter, in view of the fact that Flugbeil theoretically never overcomes his fear of crossing the bridge to Prague, i.e., to the threshold.

When Flugbeil wakes up from the dream where he saw Lucifer, he hears a tram passing by. Since this noise had never been noticed before this scene, the reader can easily conclude, after Flugbeil's suicide, that this scene foreshadows his death – and this is basically right. The tram, however, had been mentioned in the first chapter as the means of transport taken by the only noble of the Hradschin who had been in Prague to let his hair cut. The fact that the first and the last chapter of the novel dedicated to Penguin begin by mentioning a railway is especially meaningful when thinking about Flugbeil's last gesture.

Da es ihm [Flugbeil] nicht glücken wollte, aufzuwachen, blieb ihm nichts anderes übrig, als in festen, traumlosen Schlummer zu versinken. - - - - - - - - - - - Punkt 5 Uhr früh pflegte regelmäßig ein scheußlicher schriller Ton, hervorgerufen durch einen elektrischen Straßenbahnwagen, der um diese Zeit unten in Prag beim böhmischen Theater in eine Kurve bog und die Schienen zum Heulen brachte, die Schläfer auf dem Hradschin zu wecken.
Der Herr kaiserliche Leibarzt war so gewöhnt an diese unliebsame Lebensäußerung der verächtlichen „Welt", daß sie ihn gar nicht mehr störte [...][840]

This description, where the noise of the tram reaching Prague is described as terrible and its destination is said as the *verächtliche Welt*, diverges from the one given of the second train of the chapter, which, it should be added, is suggested to transport the military forces which have been called to suppress the revolt to Prague.

In this second case, the description is given through the eyes of Flugbeil, who sees the rails as a road leading to the infinite. Jeger interprets the fascination of the railroad as Flugbeil's abandon of his circular life where his mistakes where always repeated and no growth was provided. Moreover, the tracks are divided at first and then are unified in the distance, to symbolize the overcoming of the *innere Gespaltenheit*[841]. When the train comes, what Flugbeil sees is:

Reichsgründung rapide zunahm. Seit der Eröffnung der ersten Eisenbahnlinie auf deutschem Boden 1835 hatte sich in Zustimmung und Besorgnis einer reichhaltige Literatur um das neue Fortbewegungsmittel gebildet, das ja übrigens auch neue Lektüre-möglichkeiten freisetzte, auf die der Buchhandel mit dem Verlag von Eisenbahn- und Reisebibliotheken reagierte.Der Technikschock der beschleunigten Industrialisierung nach 1870 führte zu seiner verstärkten Thematisierung des gesamten Bahnkomplexes, die sich aus naheliegenden Gründen vielfach mit der Großstadtdarstellung verschränkt." (ders. *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1870-1900*).
[840] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 320.
[841] Jeger, *Der Weg der Initiation zum Selbst in den Romanen von Gustav Meyrink*, p. 182:„Er hat den zyklischen Bewegungsmodus seines Lebensraumes, das „Im-Kreis-Gehen" der Tradition und Gewohnheit, durchbrochen. Seinem Verlassen des Hradschin – also dem Abstieg vom Burgberg – folgt die „Reise" aus der Stadt auf das Land hinaus in Richtung „Pisek". Wir sehen auch im sich hierbei ereignenden Unfall das Thema des „Grad'aus!" als Gegensatz zum Zyklischen (das zerbrochene, sich nicht mehr drehende „Rad" der Kutsche) angedeutet. Entgegen den Beteuerungen des

Die Erde fing an zu zittern.

Der kaiserliche Leibarzt fühlte deutlich das Beben der Schwellen unter seinen Füßen.

Ein Brausen wie von unsichtbaren Riesenflügeln ging durch die Luft.

„Es sind meine eigenen", murmelte der kaiserliche Leibarzt. „ich werde fliegen können."

Plötzlich stand auf dem Schnittpunkt der Schienen in der Ferne ein schwarzer Klumpen und wuchs und wuchs.

Ein Zug mit verlöschten Lichtern donnerte heran. Winzige rote Punkte wir Korallenschnüre flogen ihm zu beiden Seiten nach: die türkischen Mützen bosnischer Soldaten, die aus den Wagenfenster schauten.[842]

The locomotive seems here to Flugbeil as something alive and pleasant, where its energy is associated to life: the vehicle is luminous, the air generated by the friction appears to him building a new pair of wings, with which he will be finally able to fly - while the red caps of the soldiers sprout like coral threads. Under his feet are trembling the sleepers of the rail, which in German are called *Schwelle* precisely like the threshold.

An interpretation can be given in view of these details: this scene mirrors the other moments where Flugbeil refused any connection to the chaotic Prague, the threshold, all the moments where the tram linking his superficial life to a deeper level of knowledge was available for him and he found it dangerous, unpleasant or just part of a landscape that had to be ignored. In the moment when he faces the locomotive and does not move, his perception of the concrete is substituted by another imagination, a visionary layer which emerges as a new worldview where the threshold is not dangerous anymore. This does not exclude, however, the concrete level of life, which means that the protagonist experiences the consequence of his gesture like Athanasius Pernath faces his death when he falls down from a building in flames in the ghetto at the end of *Der Golem*.

A last reflection must be made about the very ending of the novel. The last pages of *Walpurgisnacht* are dedicated to Polyxena who recognizes that the revolt is being suppressed and that the attempts made to make Ottokar king of Bohemia have failed. Polyxena is not worried about this defeat, and announces to Lucifer that she is pregnant ("Der Keim der Rasse Borivoj, die nicht sterben kann, die nur schläft, um immer wieder aufzuwachen, ist mir anvertraut"[843]).

Kutschers, die Reparatur sei nur von kurzer Dauer, geht Flugbeil zu Fuss weiter, „immer geradeaus", woraus wir sehen können, dass Rad und Achse an dieser Stelle wesentlich symbolischen Charakter haben (W S. 191). Er klettert eine Böschung empor, die auf ein Zuggleis führt. Die beiden Schienenteile des Gleises besitzen eine wichtige metaphorische Bedeutung: Flugbeil assoziiert ihren visuellen Schnittpunkt am Horizont mit der „Ewigkeit" – sie werden zu zwei unvereinten Hälften, also assoziierbar mit dem gespaltenen Leben, das Flugbeil bislang geführt hat: „'Dort, wo sie sich schneiden, ist die Ewigkeit […] in diesem Punkt geschieht die Verwandlung! – Dort muss – dort muss Pisek sein.'" (W S. 192). Hier wird also der Sehnsuchtsort, das Dorf Pisek, endgültig als Symbol erkennbar, dessen Bedeutung in der Verbindung der Gegensätze, im Überwinden der Spaltung liegt."

[842] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 361-362.

[843] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 376.

In this last chapter, the military which Polyxena has identified as composed of soldiers of a generic eastern origin (Turkish, Tatars, the names used in these pages are various) has successfully tried to re-establish the order and has killed Ottokar. The militaries are currently looking for the crown of the Zahradkas in the same moments when Polyxena walks with Lucifer in the Sacré-Coeur, where she had discovered her connection to blood. There she decides to hang her portrait.

To the initiation of Flugbeil corresponds, on the other hand, an irreparable political decay, where the abyss of the threshold has destroyed the Hradschin as it had been known. Two interpretations of this collective failure must be pointed out in this conclusion.

The first is related to the notion of *Abgrund* which, in fantastic literature, designates the look into the unknown provided by the experiences of disorientation. If it can be said that "Prague" has influenced both Flugbeil and the rest of the population of the Hradschin, and that the threshold leading to the essence, to the Self, has been experienced by all the protagonists, a statement by Mühlher can help decipher this different outcome on a mere allegoric level:

Wer dieser Selbst aber erkennt, ohne damit seine Person zu letzter Einheit und Vollendung zusammenfassen zu können, der befindet sich in der gleichen Lage wie eben unser schönen Jüngling Narkissos, der sterben mußte, weil er nach Tiresias' Wort sich selbst erkannte.

Hat die Seele aber ihren wahren Kern erschaut, dann vermag sie alle Eigenschaften, die der Schale dieses Kernes, dem Ich, angehören, als „Todesfeinde" zu erkennen, als Schreckgespenster, die den Kern der Seele würgen und bedrücken, und vor Entsetzen erzittern machen.[844]

Flugbeil's case belong to the second statement, the Hradschin to the first one. The collective outcome of the conflict between the two sides of the *Gespaltenheit* is not positive, and this excludes the possibility to read the whole work as a representation of Flugbeil's inner path. The space introduced by Meyrink is in fact solid in the allegoric as well as in the more concrete political direction. This trait is shared by Meyrink and Auguste Hauschner in the same way: the political matter debated in the narration constantly overlaps the individual development of the main character, so that the structure of reality proposed in the novels proposes the constant mirroring between the inner and external dimension of the human being. Meyrink shows the inner path of Flugbeil and Liesel, but also the story of a conflict which is not solved and is destined to repeat.

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[844] Mühlher, *Dichtung der Krise*, p. 433.

4.2 Rudolph and Golde

When asked by the emperor to share his knowledge of the cabala, Rabbi Löw initially refuses, because only innocent men can be initiated to the mysteries of the cabala - then, since the emperor insists and visits him in the *Judenstadt* during the night, he gives Rudolph a vision of the immensity of God:

Ein Ton, ähnlich dem Zittern einer Saite (oder schlug ein silberhelles Glöckchen an?), flirrte auf und versank in das Anschwellen harfenzarter Harmonien. Es war, als tönten die Schwingungen der Luft, wenn des Rabbis Atem sie bewegte, das Licht verdämmerte, Musik und Rede flossen ineinander. Des Kaisers Sinne vermochten nicht mehr, Wirklichkeit von Fantasie zu unterscheiden. […] Wie in einem Spiegel offenbaren sich ihm dann die Reize ihrer verborgensten Symbole, in ein Meer brennender Seligkeit versunken, vereint er sich mit Gott, empfängt er seinen Kuss.[845]

This vision is then interrupted by the arrival of Golde, Rabbi's fifteen-year-old daughter, who distracts her father and causes the emperor to wake up. Golde has a meaningful role in the narration and can be compared to Rabbi Hillel's daughter Miriam in *Der Golem*, a similarity that has already been highlighted by Lange and Schmeer.

In both *Der Golem* and *Der Tod des Löwen*, the protagonist encounters the female characters, Mirjam and Golde respectively, by chance in the house of a Rabbi: in the case of *Der Golem*, Mirjam is the person who welcomes Pernath to the Rabbi's home when the protagonist is urgently looking for Hillel, while Golde's presence in Ben Bezalel's house is only discovered in the second part of the long cabala-sequence in chapter 3, when she, driven by her interest for the ritual, reaches her father and the emperor. The Rabbi's reaction when the girl enters the room ("Golde, my daughter, why did you do this to me?"[846]), explains how important it was for Ben Bezalel that she remained hidden from the emperor's gaze. Nevertheless, both Mirjam and Golde play a central role in the narration: the women awaken and reinforce a desire of immortality and rebirth in both Pernath and Rudolph, although these desires go in different directions at the end of the two novels. The directions taken by the protagonists' aspirations, however, are foreshadowed during the presentation of the female characters, which expresses the first difference between Meyrink and Hauschner's attitudes. In *Der Golem*, the I-narrator states:

Ein sonderbares Mädchen übrigens, diese Mirjam! Ein Typus, wie ich ihn noch nie gesehen.
Eine Schönheit, so fremdartig, daß man sie im ersten Moment gar nicht fassen kann – Eine Schönheit, die einen stumm macht, wenn man sie ansieht, ein unerklärliches Gefühl, so etwas wie leise Mutlosigkeit, in einem erweckt.
Nach Proportionsgesetzen, die seit Jahrtausenden verlorengegangen sein müssen, ist dieses Gesicht geformt, grübelte ich mir zurecht, wie ich es so im Geiste wieder vor mir sah.[847]

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[845] TL, pp. 71-73.
[846] TL, p. 75.
[847] G, p. 123.

In the lines that follow this generic and ethereal description, Pernath tries to associate Mirjam's appearance to one of the gemstones he works with, but fails to find an appropriate one, since the color that characterizes Mirjam's essence – a "blue-black shine in her hair and her eyes"[848] – is impossible to reproduce with only one gem; later, the engraver also observes that a cameo would also be inadequate for this purpose, because it would overshadow the traits that highlight the girl's connection to a visionary attitude, such as the "smallness of her face"[849]. At the end of his reflection, the protagonist admits that the only way to represent Mirjam with physical means is to build a mosaic, an idea that mirrors the concept of overlapping dimensions that characterizes the end of the novel, the *Zeitlosigkeit*.

The distance between this description, which hardly contains concrete elements about the character's appearance, and other depictions of Meyrink's, is as stunning as it is meaningful for the interpretation of the girl's role within the novel.

On the contrary, Hauschner's presentation of Golde is concrete enough to make the emperor's attraction to the girl's body evident from the very first moment. Interestingly, Rudolph perceives Golde's presence and beauty through the reflection in her father's terrified eyes:

In ihrer Öffnung steht das Bildnis eines jungen Mädchens. Ein Kind noch, doch in der Biegsamkeit der Linie, die von dem Nacken zu den Hüften geht, ist schon die Verlockung des Geschlechts. […] In das weiße, mantelartige Gewand ist sie wohl eilig eingeschlüpft und hat um die Mitte eine goldene Kordel nachlässig gebunden; es lässt die zarte Gurgel frei und die knabenschlanken Arme; schwarze Flechten, wie vom Schlaf gelockert, hängen schwarz darauf herab. Ein scheues Lächeln schimmert aus ihren blauen Augen […][850]

It can be pointed out, when it comes to the description of hair and eyes, that the presence of the colors black and blue is shared by Golde and Mirjam. The other motifs regarding Golde's beauty, such as her cape-like clothing and the dark curly locks falling upon her face, belong to a stereotypical image of Jewish women linked to spirituality, elements that emerge from Hugo Steiner-Prag's depiction of the character[851]: Steiner-Prag depicts Golde as a white-dressed figure surrounded by darkness and adds a hooked nose to the attributes mentioned by Hauschner. She is illuminated by the menorah and escorted by the house-keeper Sara, who also follows the aforementioned stereotypes.[852]

However, the attention for Golde's body shows how Rudolph's attraction for her follows a clear direction, which is the emphasis of youth. The idea of having a relationship with the young girl who he sees as "still a child", overlaps with Rudolph's desire of knowledge and understanding, and with

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[848] G, p. 123.
[849] G, p. 123.
[850] TL, p. 75.
[851] TL, p. 77.
[852] A detailed description of Steiner-Prag's representation of Golde is in: Schmeer, p. 190. The author of the commentary also points out that the drawer chooses the menorah for the picture despite Hauschner's statement about Golde's being illuminated by the fireplace.

his search for a way to overcome the natural decay of his body[853]. What the emperor does not see in the girl's appearance are some decadent traits that foreshadow the failure of his expectations: the girl is extremely weak, often sick, and her health is so fragile that her father fears for her every time she leaves her bed. This health issues are real and not just a projection of Ben Bezalel, as is clearly expressed when the housekeeper comes to help Golde go back to bed and the girl can hardly walk without her support. Also, the Rabbi explains to Rudolph that, of his five children, Golde is the only one who is still alive, which introduces the idea of a family and a dynasty that have reached their end. After the encounter, the emperor leaves the Rabbi's house with a dizzy mind. The sequence that follows this event is characterized by the sudden presence of light in the emperor's rooms. Rudolph has decided to ask for Golde's hand and now prepares every kind of gifts for her, such as gemstones and precious fabric; he also buys a series of art objects, especially marble sculptures, and by doing so he evokes the idea that he wants to build a wall of beauty around himself. Hauschner meaningfully shows the reader that in this moment

Durch die hohen Fensterscheiben flutete die Wintersonne ungehindert zu und tanzte lustig zwischen Überfluss und Pracht. Der scheue schwermütiger Kaiser wehrte sie nicht ab, zehn Jahre schienen von seinen Zügen weggewischt, die etwas nach rechts gezerrte Oberlippe trug ein Lächeln und seine Augen waren von einer glücklichen Erwartung aufgehellt.[854]

The change in the emperor's attitude towards the windows, which he normally fears since the presence of the comet reminds him of his delicate position, and the overlapping between the winter sun and Rudolph's illuminated face, make it clear that Hauschner's first guideline to portray the protagonist's relationship with reality is precisely the window. This brief moment of happiness leads to the only window-sequence in the novella that depicts the panoramic landscape of Prague in a highly positive light. The motif of the window appears a third time in the narration, during the final feast in the castle (when the emperor's plan of marrying Golde has failed) and it shows the fall of the *Judenstadt*, which is set on fire. In this final case, the vision of the burning ghetto in the distance is not shown through the perspective of the protagonist, but through the eyes of some people participating to the banquet. Meaningfully, the emperor does not look out of the window during this sequence: this time not because of his fear but due to his renewed, granitic indifference towards the external world. The presence of Golde is, therefore, connected to the only moment in which Hauschner's protagonist wishes to change and develop a connection with the rest of humankind[855]: this is made even more apparent in Hauschner's depiction of the emperor's delirium during the

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[853] „Irdische Wollust und unirdische Geistigkeit, die Verschmelzung mit dem Höchsten durch sinnlichen Genuß, und er werde in einem Kuß Erkenntnis schlürfen können und zu Gott gelangen durch Liebesraserei.", p. 149.
[854] TL, p. 88.
[855] See: Fritz, *Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 138.

banquet, where the description of Golde which was given in chapter 3 is repeated verbatim. The delirium passage follows the news of the fire set in the Jewish district, an event that does not disturb the guests of the feast, who continue their conversation laughing at the predicament of the Jews. In this paradoxical atmosphere, Rudolph dissociates himself from the environment and has a long moment of inwardness, where the room of the banquet dissolves, and the image of Golde appears to him as if he was "touched by a magic wand"[856]. As previously stated, Golde is here depicted with the exact same words used during the first encounter between the two characters. The words following this repetition are:

Und es geschieht ein Wunder. Ein Brunnen quillt in des Kaisers Herzen auf; das Alter, dieser Würger aller Freude, fällt von ihm ab, mit seinem Unvermögen, mit seiner Schwermut und mit seinem Gram. Die Stimmung jener Nacht schwebt über ihm, die erwartungsvolle Spannung, in der er sicher war, dass er nur die Arme nach der Erscheinung auszustrecken brauche, um eine Wonne darin einzuschließen, wie sie noch kein Sterblicher erfahren hatte.[857]

The opposition between Golde's youth and the emperor's old age, which is the main cause of his inner darkness, is made strongly apparent in these lines, leading the girl's role to emerge in the narration: her being the only link between Hauschner's protagonist and the rest of the world. The metaphor that, in the emperor's heart, associates the girl's image to a fountain, stresses this role. In this phase of delirium, the emperor detects the sound of the bells alerting the city about the fire in the Jewish district: the district howls for help, a cry which the emperor verbalizes in his head as: "Helft – helft – Die Gefahr ist groß". This is the only instance throughout the whole sequence of the feast/fire, where the protagonist, moved by Golde's vision, hesitates in his desire to see the Jewish population die. Unfortunately, the re-establishment of a connection between him and humanity is interrupted when he feels the pain of the wound caused to him by the Rabbi's servant during the evening in which he had asked for Golde's hand. In light of this memory, he decides to abstain from helping the Jewish district. As stated by Fritz, Golde's influence is not sufficient to save the emperor's soul, which is now linked to a demonic side of existence[858], but any attempt was probably doomed to fail from the very beginning of the narration, as foreshadowed by the numerous decadent traits present in the character of Golde. Golde's impossibility to save the protagonist despite her salvific role defines her as negative mirror of Mirjam's experience.

Hauschner describes Golde's perception of the environment she lives in as:

das alte Haus mit seinen dunklen Stuben, von den Schatten der Verstorbenen in graue Traurigkeit gehüllt, darin der Vater, weiß und ragend, gütig, aber streng, gebeugt vom Kummer und Erinnerung, heimlich doch gekrönt mit dem Stirnband der Magie. Die ganze Luft geschwängert von Geheimnissen und Unbegreiflichkeiten, aus alten Büchern stiegen sie

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[856] TL, p. 149.
[857] TL, p. 149.
[858] Fritz (*Die Entstehung des Prager Textes*, p. 138) talks about a concrete pact with the devil.

hervor, loderten in Flammen aus dem Herd, umschwebten unsichtbar das Mädchen, von ihrem Atem fühlte sie sich angerührt.[859]

Similarly to Meyrink's Mirijam, who claimed to constantly wait for a miracle to come, Golde is characterized by her waiting for something extraordinary to happen. The main difference between the two character's perspectives lies in the different attitude that their fathers show when facing life, an attitude which can be seen as optimistic in Mirjam's case, since her father educated her to serenity and acceptance of life's difficulties[860], while Golde's vision of her father is characterized by the ideas of sadness and worry. However, the most interesting trait shared by the two women is how their education resulted in the vocation of waiting for something important and spiritually meaningful to happen, like a miracle. Again, Mirjam's words explain her feelings clearly:

"Hunger? Das wird tausendfach aufgewogen durch die Hoffnung und das Warten."
„Das Warten?" fragte ich erstaunt.
„Das Warten auf ein Wunder. Kennen Sie das nicht? Nein? Da sind Sie aber ein ganz, ganz armer Mensch. – Daß das so wenige kennen?! Sehen Sie, das ist auch der Grund, weshalb ich nie ausgehe und mit niemand verkehre. Ich hatte wohl früher ein paar Freundinnen – Jüdinnen natürlich, wie ich – aber wir redeten immer aneinander vorbei; sie verstanden mich nicht und ich sie nicht.[861]

Golde, unlike Mirjam, does not speak to Rudolph about her constant waiting: interestingly, the matter is introduced when the emperor, who has come to ask for her hand, asks her whether she is afraid of him. Then, she replies:

„Ich harrte Euer, hoher Herr."
Es war eine halbe Unwahrheit. Ja, Golde Löw, das Kind von fünfzehn Jahren, verzehrte sich in Sehnsucht nach dem Wunderbaren, harrte in atemloser Spannung, dass es komme, das Unerhörte, sie aus Niedrigkeit zu lösen, zu märchenhafter Größe zu erhöhen. Wie eine Treibhauspflanze hatte sie sich vorzeitig erschlossen in der Glut des Sonderlebens.[862]

This tendency to wait is highly important when it comes to Golde's and Rudolph's opposing perspectives.

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[859] TL, p. 95.
[860] Hillel's attitude towards life is explained in Mirjam's tale of her mother's death: "Als meine Mutter starb – nur ich weiß, wie er sie geliebt hat, ich war damals noch ein kleines Mädchen –, glaubte ich vor Schmerz ersticken zu müssen, und ich lief zu ihm hin und krallte mich in seinem Rock und wollte aufschreien und konnte doch nicht, weil alles gelähmt war in mir – und – und da - - mit läuft es wieder eiskalt über den Rücken, wenn ich daran denke – sah er mich lächelnd an, küßte mich auf die Stirn und fuhr mir mit der Hand über die Augen. Und von dem Moment an bis heute war jedes Leid, daß ich meine Mutter verloren hatte, wie ausgetilgt in mir. Nicht eine Träne konnte ich vergießen, als sie begraben wurde; ich sah die Sonne als strahlende Hand Gottes am Himmel stehen und wunderte mich, warum die Menschen weinten. Mein Vater ging hinter dem Sarge her, neben mir, und wenn ich aufblickte, lächelte er jedesmal leise, und ich fühlte, wie das Entsetzen durch die Menge fuhr, als sie es sahen." (G, p. 156). This interpretation of death is specular to Hauberrisser's feelings at Eva's funeral and can therefore be seen as the primary source for the end of *The Green Face*. The idea of *Entsetzen* in people's eyes, however, highlights the unsettling quality of Hillel's personality.
[861] G, p. 157.
[862] TL, p. 95.

The concept of wait introduces a sort of conflict between Golde and Rudolph, but miracles are not the topic in this case: the object of Golde's hope is *das Unerhörte*, the incredible, a notion close to the idea of miracle but devoid of the religious nuance that belongs to the world *Wunder*. Moreover, Golde's wait takes, in comparison to Mirjam's, a completely different direction, which can be summarized as the aspiration for a better social status. When Hauschner mentions Golde's desire to see her family freed from wretchedness, her thoughts are represented as generic, partially naïve on the one hand but very concrete on the other: since she is the Rabbi's daughter, Golde lives a life of contradictions:

Eine Fürstin im Umkreis von zwanzig Ghettogassen, jenseits des Gefängnisses eine Verachtete. Daheim in Seide und Geschmeide, draußen in unscheinbarer Tracht und mit dem Abzeichen der Schmach.[863]

The description of the dark house, which follows these words, expresses not only a will to overcome these contradictions, but also Golde's desire to leave her father's house. More details about the girl's perception of her identity, details that can explain other nuances of the awaited "*Unerhörte*", are given right afterwards, when the topic of her spiritual education is addressed. Hauschner represents Golde as highly educated in the fundamental elements of Jewish belief, and apparently absorbed by religious readings: she hardly has contacts with other human beings, since she does not have any friends and she refuses to spend time with her relatives, since reading is her only interest. However, what Hauschner expresses after this statement is Golde's peculiar relationship with the episodes she usually reads: it is said that Golde "trank […] die ruhmvolle Vergangenheit des Judenstamms in sich hinein". Then, Hauschner lists a series of biblical episodes where strong women are the protagonists: Jael, Heber's wife, killing Sisara by hammering a nail into his head; Judith killing Holofernes, Ruth marrying Boaz, Esther seducing Ahasuerus – episodes Golde loves to read about. The whole list is clearly presented from Golde's perspective, since the narrator takes time to describe physical details concerning the women's gestures: the reader sees Jael's hands hitting Heber, Ruth's body kneeling at Boaz's feet, Judith's attitude when kneeling to Holofernes and begging him before hitting him with two sword blows to the throat. Afterwards, a longer description of Esther's attractive body is given. Hauschner also informs the reader about Golde's passion for the Song of Salomon, another chapter where the body is thematized:

Aber im Hohen Lied Salomons musste sie immer in Verwirrung innehalten, von jedem Vers geküsst, und sie folgte seinen Rhythmen bebend mit verhehltem Glück, wie die Braut dem Bräutigam zur Hochzeitskammer. Auch gestern Nacht...[864]

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[863] TL, p. 95.
[864] TL, p. 96.

This description shows what *das Unerhörtes* represents in Golde's mind; the meaning of her reply "I was waiting for you, sir", suggests the girl's will to enter adult life and pursue the development for a new identity. This desire cannot be interpreted but in a very concrete way despite the generic and apparently childish quality which could be associated to a fifteen-year-old girl who is waiting for something incredible to happen.

Interestingly, Hauschner extends the description of Golde's feelings for another two sequences by representing the girl's memory of one of her father's rituals, a ritual that had taken place the previous night and that had caused her to have a series of visions.

In die Falten ihres Nachtkleids gehüllt, hatte sie sich hinabgeschlichen, war eingebrochen in das Mysterium... Indessen die Erinnerung so mit aufgeregten Wellen über Goldes Seele lief, war ihr Gesicht still und kinderhaft geblieben. Ein Rätsel lächelte von ihren Lippen, als sie einfach sagte: „Ich wusste, dass Ihr kommen würde, Herr."[865]

The repeating of her reply: "I knew that you'd come, sir" acquires here a different weight. It makes it clear to the reader that the confrontation between Rudolph and Golde is based, surprisingly, on similar desires: although she ignores the actual identity of the man, sees him as old but still characterized by an innate refinement ("she had never met someone with power so clearly written on his forehead"[866]) and feels that connecting with him would represent the growth she yearns for – socially and intimately. When Rudolph reveals his identity, Golde's assumptions are confirmed and she finds herself uncertain, attracted by the idea of leaving her home and becoming the emperor's bride, but also afraid of this change and aware of her difficult position as a young Jewish girl. Confused, she tries to stall before giving an answer to the emperor's wedding proposal:

…fehlte ihr der Mut, ihm von ihrem Volk großer Traurigkeit zu sagen. So klagte sie ihr eigenes Schicksal an. Mutterlos, ohne Geschwister, entwurzelt in der eigenen Sippe, der Vater immer so weit weg von ihr, wie an einem jenseitigen Ufer, zu dem es keine Brücke gibt. Und sie mit ihrer Wärme vor dem Leben, wie ein Kind, das, die Arme voll mit Blumen, zu den anderen läuft und gibt und schenkt und nichts zurückhält, alle Gaben in die Leere wirft und dasteht, ausgeplündert, einsam.[867]

Against all odds, the emperor actually listens to Golde's words, and they make his feelings for her even stronger:

Das ist sie also auch. Nicht nur das Vorspiel zu einer Jubelsymphonie der Sinne, die Auferstehung gestorbener Empfindungen, auch das Echo ist sie meines eigenen Ichs. Wie beim Namen angerufen drängten alle seine Schmerzen in die Höhe. Ins Leere ... wie weit weg von ihm die Menschen, wie an einem jenseitigen Ufer ... ausgeplündert ... einsam...[868]

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[865] TL, p. 98.
[866] TL, p. 98.
[867] TL, p. 101.
[868] TL, p. 101.

It can be said that the peculiarity of the whole scene rests on how the emperor's inner life is mirrored by the girl's feelings. This becomes visible when the same expressions are used to describe the thoughts of both characters: the metaphor of the bridge that separates Golde from her father reminds of the wall of glass that separates Mirjam from Hillel, but is interpreted by Rudolph as a mirror of his relationship with other human beings. It is interesting to note that the space given to Golde's inner life is exceptional: in no other sequence of the novella is the narrator's point of view so unstable as in the confrontation between the emperor and the young girl, where the overlapping of the two perspectives, along with the shift of the narrative focus, gives the idea of two identities blending for a moment through the words: *ausgeplündert*, *einsam*. When Rudolph states that the girl is "not only […] the awakening of dead emotions, but also the echo of my own self", he attributes to her the qualities of a younger doppelganger. It should be noted that these two distant characters, which were apparently only linked by Rudolph's idealization of the young girl's beauty, share a strong sense of deterritorialization: Golde's entire speech is scattered with elements that can be traced back to spatial categories: "entwurzelt in der eigenen Sippe", "weit weg", "am jenseitigen Ufer", "keine Brücke", "ins Leere". The importance of the spatial element is made clear by the fact that the emperor's thoughts respond to this speech using the same concepts. The words "Ins Leere", "wie weit weg", "wie an einem jenseitigen Ufer" are the ones that break through Rudolph's heart.

It is interesting to note that the Golem, present in both novels as a concept[869], is decisive in unifying Pernath with Mirjam and in separating Rudolph and Golde. In Meyrink's *Der Golem*, Zwakh's tale about the Jewish legend of the clay man starts a series of mechanisms that bring Pernath closer to Hillel, starting from Pernath's identification with the wood-puppet and continuing when he falls into a dizzy state and Hillel shakes him out of it by touching his eyes three times. The motif of the Golem is therefore associated to a status of morbidity but also of remembrance, which is completely positive when taking the end of the story into account, where the protagonist acknowledges his real place and finds himself inhabiting the very historical memory of Prague, overlapped with the present and the future.

The role of the Golem in Hauschner's novella is apparently simpler, since a figure akin to it actually appears as a servant named Jabob in Rabbi Löw's house. From this perspective, Hauschner's story appears more similar to the legend of Rabbi Löw's Golem included in the *Sippurim*, but it is interesting to observe that both Meyrink and Hauschner maintain a certain ambiguity when treating this matter: while this ambiguity, in Meyrink's case, has the outcome of hinting at an overlapping between the Golem and Pernath and no physical proof of the appearance of this figure is otherwise

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[869] It will be later discussed whether Hauschner's golem is conceptual or factual.

given, Hauschner's Rabbi Löw, on the other hand, shows reticence when talking about his creation, even when Rudolph outright asks him directly whether his servant is the legendary Golem. The differences between the *Sippurim* and Hauschner's version of the story are basically related to moving the accident with the uncontrolled Golem, which in the legend destroys a part of the Jewish district, from a collective to a singular dimension: here, instead of attacking the ghetto indiscriminately, Jabob only uses his violence against the emperor, when he separates Rudolph and Golde during their first and last embrace. It can be noted, however, that the most extreme consequence of the servant's behavior is the fire in the ghetto, and that the collective fate of the Jewish district is therefore connected to the Golem's violence either way. Nevertheless, the meaningful element of Jabob assaulting the emperor is that it is decisive in dissolving the enchantment that had made Rudolph capable of positive emotions, and that, by doing so, it re-establishes the natural order of his attitude and his natural disgust for the Jewish district. Interestingly, Rudolph's aversion after the fight against the Golem is explicitly driven by an abrupt change in his general perspective:

Ekel war in ihm, vor sich selber, weil er ihn vor der Umgebung hatte. Wo hatte sie ihn hingelockt, die allzu willfährige Fantasie? Ein Mörder, eine Dirne, ein Betrüger. Schweigend schob er sich zum Ausgang, vorüber an dem Rabbi, der nicht wagte, Hand an ihn zu legen. An der Schwelle wandte er sich um und spuckte dem Juden ins Gesicht.[870]

Right after this realization, Rudolph leaves the ghetto completely indifferent to the numerous Jews who are interested in him and are trying to engage him in conversation: to him the space is as empty "wie auf menschenleerer Straße"[871]. Once he leaves the Jewish district, Hauschner's space depiction resumes the *topos* of the dark Prague reflecting Rudolph's desperation:

Bei seinem Ausgang hatte der Himmel einem sanften Rain geglichen, an dem des Abendsterns kaum aufgebrochene Knospe blühte, nun war er dunkel und gefurcht wie ein aufgepflügter Acker, in die Friedlichkeit der Luft brach der Ostwind mit kriegerischen Stößen, und die offene Landschaft war mit Nebel wie mit grauem Gram umhängt.[872]

A more in-depth reflection on the role of the Golem, or of Jabob, is necessary. From his first appearance onward, Jabob is described by Hauschner as not memorable, with a face that is characterized by the indefiniteness of his traits, an idea which is can be traced back to Meyrink at least in part. This element is introduced by Hauschner as "something incomplete", evoking the idea of a sculpture that has not been finished yet: "als habe eine Künstlerhand die Form den rohen Stoff entrissen, aber ihre Ungefügigkeit noch nicht gegliedert."[873] Schmeer and Lange have noted other descriptive elements associated to the character, elements that stress his connection to the realm of

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[870] TL, pp. 104-105.
[871] TL, p. 105.
[872] TL, p. 107.
[873] TL, p. 82.

the artificial and of the mechanical: he has an "iron fist", he raises his arm like "a machine lifts its piston" and his rage is compared to "steam in an overheated chamber"[874]. Nevertheless, Jabob also shows some human traits that make it complicated to interpret him, the most interesting of which is the relationship between him and Golde[875]. In chapter 3, during the first night in the Judenstadt, when Rudolph asks Rabbi Löw for information about the girl, the narrator observes that the servant "regte sich, als wolle er an einer Fessel reißen."[876] It is not clear whether the feelings that move the servant are authentic or if they are the consequence of his connection to the Rabbi. Nevertheless, a continuation of this discourse is presented in chapter four, where suggestions regarding Golde's changing perception of her body and her first imagination of sexuality are thematized. Here, surprisingly, a part of Golde's interest is directed at Jabob:

Und Jabob, diese Aufreizung zu Schreck und Neugier, dieser Sinnenaufruhr, dieses Rätsel wilder Kraft, das sich vor dem Vater duckte wie das Raubtier vor der Peitsche. In der unbeherrschten Sehnsucht dieses Knabes spiegelte sich ihre Schönheit, ihre früh bewusst gewordene Geschlechtigkeit spielte mit der Tragik der Gefahr, die sie durch ihn bedrohte, und kostete in ihr den Vorgeschmack zukünftigen Triumphs.[877]

The place where both Meyrink's Golem and Jabob come from, the Prague *Judenstadt*, can be interpreted in view of the epiphanic nature of these figures. It is stated by Müller-Tamm that Meyrink's ghetto is a representation of modern space, where people are deprived of their identity and where the Golem/Man of the crowd only symbolizes this anonym collectivity. Moreover, Müller-Tamm sees Meyrink's Jewish district as devoid of past, element which defines its being an urban phenomenon that acts against nature: the problem of Pernath's memory finds its solution in the moment when he rediscovers the past of the city, and he finds his immortality on the threshold where Prague's history had begun. However, the paradox of this statement is the close link between the Golem and the beginning of Pernath's healing process, and the fact that this process originates in the past-lacking ghetto, despite its needing other parts of the city to develop.

On the contrary, a clear memory of Jabob remains in Rudolph's mind after their fight. The moment in which, during the feast, Rudolph decides to let the Jewish district burn and not to help the inhabitants despite his love for Golde, mirrors the sequence where the servant's aggression had made space change in Rudolph's perception: when the emperor remembers Jabob's existence, is the pain caused by the wound to play the main role, a wound which reminds the emperor of the received

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[874] TL, p. 102.
[875] In her *Nachwort* to the new edition of the novella, Veronika Jičínská refuses any connection between Jabob and the golem and states that: "Die so breit aufgenommene jüdische Sage von Golem wird in Hauschners Novelle dagegen nur gleich berührt: Rabbi Löw hat zwar einen Diener im Haus, der ist aber aus Fleisch und Blut"[875], however, the examples provided by Lange are certainly related to another sphere, and they must be taken into account. Moreover, the lack of an insurance in one of the two ways of interpreting the character is intentional in Hauschner's writing.
[876] TL, p. 80.
[877] TL, p. 96.

injustice. In this case, the author uses the metaphor of a falling wall to describe the emperor's obtuse perception becoming clearer: once he feels the pain again, the protagonist sees now the feast with his usual attitude, and attributes to all the participants the role of the enemy. Right after this moment, Rudolph leaves the room and goes visiting his lion, which is in agony. This long sequence, where Rudolph literally encounters a personification of death, closes the novella. It can be stated that the memory of Jabob's gesture, the only concrete gesture experienced by the emperor in a series of paranoid visions, gives the protagonist the second confirm of his inevitable decline – where the first one had been given through his aggression in the previous chapter, a sequence that had brought to the explosion of the comet. Given the revealing quality of this trait, it can be suggested that the character of Jobob is linked to an epiphanic nature: despite his being partially connected to the idea of bogus, he actually shows what the emperor was looking for through the use of cabala, alchemy and astronomy, which is the truth about his fate – and he does it by provoking physical pain to the emperor and defeating him in a fight, consequently putting him before his own weakness. However, it can interestingly be noted that this epiphanic nature is shared by Meyrink's idea of Golem as well, where the Golem is not a concrete individuum but a personification of the removed, of the past that the city of Prague is not able to include in its everyday dimension, and is also the representation of something that must be discovered. Müller-Tamm's essay *Die untote Stadt*, that has been used as interpretative device in chapter 4.5, highlighted the role of anonymity in Meyrink's Jewish district: here, the anonym quality ascribed to Meyrink's Golem can be also be attributed to Jabob in a way that is much less ambiguous than the attribution of mere mechanical traits: despite his being able to feel and his strong emotions, Jabob does not acquire a real personality apart from being associated to a negative mirror of Golde's passive weakness. The Rabbi's servant essentially feels rage and *Sehnsucht*, but the reasons of his behavior and his emotions are never explained, and this also happens because the character never speaks. Therefore, he becomes a polarized character, divided between the extremes of machinery and pure emotion, where none of these traits can be associated to individuality. When the Rabbi comes home to calm Jabob down, he uses the same strength of persuasion that is needed to suffocate an intense and vague instinct:

Nun hatte der Rabbi ihn erreicht. Noch musste er seinen Atem suchen, den Blick nur brannte er in die Züge seines Knechts, drängend, bohrend, dass sich die Form des eigenen Willens in die Absichten des fremden prägt. Ruckwiese, langsam, wie von einem Kran gedreht, senkte sich die Körpermasse. Mit harten Stößen, als ob die Wut aus ihm herausgeblasen werde, arbeitete die Lunge, das Stiergenick brach ein, das Gerüst der Knochen schien sich zu erweichen. Ein Leichtes wäre es gewesen, den Schwankenden zu fällen. Doch sein Besieger, da er von ihm lassen konnte, war selbst von vielfältigem Jammer unterjocht.[878]

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[878] TL, p. 103.

Hauschner greatly expresses here, by avoiding naming the subjects, the overlapping of the two characters in the painful action of dominating themselves. The reader can easily understand that the named body parts belong to Jabob, nevertheless his name is not said explicitly and the ambiguity between Ben Bezalel Löw and his servant is kept throughout the whole paragraph, where the identities are suspended for a moment.

5. Foreshadowing decline

5.1. Prefiguration of death in Rudolph's Prague: The comet and the city landscape

Both *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht* appear to have a prophecy as narrative expedient. In *Der Tod des Löwen*, the connected destiny of the lion and the emperor result in a doppelganger relationship established between the two figures. To the lion Mehmet Ali are dedicated a section of the first chapter and one of the last one, a demonstration of the importance of this motif as recurring image of the emperor's destiny. In the first chapter, the animal appears chronically sick like its owner: it has reached the point where it refuses nourishment, prelude of its agony. The emperor visits Mehmet Ali before going to Tycho Brahe. He tries to nourish the animal through the cage himself.

Mehmet Ali war des Kaisers Liebling. Durch eine Weissagung waren ihrer beider Schicksale verknüpft: Des Löwen Ende sollte dem Monarchen Tod bedeuten. […] Vor dem Zwinger stand der Menschenbeherrscher, finster in den Falten seines schwarzen Samts, drinnen, im Hintergrund seiner Behausung, hielt sich das gewaltigste der Tiere, in seiner ganzen Länge hingestreckt, den Kopf gramvoll tief herabsenkt. Regungslos. Nur von Zeit zu Zeit lief ein Zittern durch die eingefallenen Flanken.
Dem Kaiser […] wie unsinnig vor dem bedrohlichen Symbol der eigenen Zukunft, kam die Erinnerung eines bösen Spiels […] Den Arm mit dem kleinen Leichnam weit in das Löwenhaus gestreckt, zischte er dem Teilnahmslosen zu: „Nimm's oder es kriegt es der Mathias."[879]

The lion has learnt to react to this sentence by biting the offered object, and so it does in this instance as well: it literally grasps the only thing to which the emperor holds on, his hatred towards his brother in Hungary. The spatial component of the scene is characterized by the cage, which distinguishes the two sides of the confrontation. The importance of the concepts of cage and imprisonment, which can be interpreted in light of the doppelganger association between the two characters and of Rudolph's identity search, is confirmed in the last chapter, where the emperor visits the now agonizing lion and, looking at him, realizes how the animal only wished to live on the other side of the bars. It is said in

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[879] TL, p. 24.

this case that "Er löste seinem Freund die Knechtschaft, frei sollte fortan leben, der ein Freigeborener war"[880].

The lion tries to go out of the cage, but dies as soon as he reaches the opening. The emperor finally understands how serious his mistake has been: "Ich hätte ihm die Freiheit früher wiedergeben sollen, es war zu spät"[881]. This overlapping of the roles had been suggested throughout the whole novel, in regard to both the emperor's attempt to open himself through delusions and the lion which was destined to die from the very beginning. The failure of Rudolph's search was already written in the lion's reject of nourishment.

If this prophecy constitutes the main prefiguration of death in Hauschner's plot, symbols of decline are scattered throughout the novel and Mehmet Ali is only the second of them – but it is also the one which lasts longer. This section discusses the symbols of decline related to apocalyptic space.

The first apocalyptical sign in the novel is introduced in the first lines and is the comet shining on Prague. Elements regarding this symbol have been introduced in the previous paragraphs. Here, two things must be added about it. The first one is the way this symbol represents a fundamental part of the protagonist's narrative arch. This happens not only when it is introduced as a shining object communicating an idea of fall, but especially when it factually mirrors the emperor's failure after his second, violent encounter with Jabob. This is especially clear in the sequence that follows Rudolph's abandoning the ghetto. Here, the comet not only ceases to shine, but it also breaks when Rudolph looks at it in despair:

Es war, als seufzte die Geschmähte, so heftig stöhnte der Orkan; er riss an den Kleidern des Monarchen, er peitschte in die Moldau, dass sie gurgelnd gegen die Brückenpfeiler schlug, er riss des Himmels Dunkelheit entzwei. Aus missfärbigen Schleiern, ihre Ränder waren kupfern gefärbt, sprang der Komet hervor und schleuderte das Feuer seiner Rute dem Kaiser mitten in das eiferne Gesicht.
Dieser Augenblick vollendete des Kaisers seelische Vernichtung, er duckte sich wie vor der Mündung einer Waffe, kehrte sich dann zur Flucht, sinnlos geworden vor Entsetzen.[882]

Here the comet seems not only to represent the definitive fall of the emperor, but also its double nature as depiction of the protagonist's state of mind. The second thing which should be noticed in this regard is that the comet is associated in both its first appearance in chapter 1 and in its collapse in chapter 4 to a certain depiction of the city landscape. In chapter 4, after Jabob's aggression, the emperor thinks about the old easier times when he trusted his land and his guards, when his glory was at its peak.

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[880] TL, p. 159.
[881] TL, p. 160.
[882] TL, p. 108.

Den breiten überbrückten Strom, rechts und links, wie Wächter um ihn hingestellt, die Anhöhen, die auf ihrem Rücken stolze Denkmäler vaterländischer Geschichte trugen, Wyschehrad, mit dem Schloss der Stammmutter Libusa, der Hradschin, auf dem die Kirchenpracht und die Paläste der edelsten Geschlechter sich um die Hofburg schmiegten wie die Reifen einer Krone um ihren schönsten Edelstein. In der Talsohle, am jenseitigen Ufer, die Altstadt und die Neustadt, der Sitz der Handwerker und Bürger, das Obdach der Künstler und Gelehrten, die er, ein neuer Medicäer, an seinen Hof berufen hatte, Ruhm und Glanz über das Böhmerland zu breiten.[883]

Here the vision is not only general but also panoramic, and it is reported from an indefinite high spot that can only be identified with the protagonist's memory. The meaning of the panoramic view in modern city literature has been interpreted as a control device, since the observation from a peak is the only way to have a clear vision of the urban context. To this need of control belong drawn skylines and postcard depictions (in figurative arts, but also in literature). The reason for this association is that the panorama eludes the obliged fragmentary and deconstructive observation that otherwise characterizes human perception of urban space. Rudolph's relationship with panoramic views is thematized twice in the novella, the second time being the just quoted one and the first one being the window scene in the first chapter, where the emperor refuses to look outside whereas captain Rumpf, who feels in control of the situation despite his being constantly accused of betrayal, looks at the city that stands at the feet of the Hradschin with serenity and satisfaction at first, then with an unsettled perspective:

Vor ihm lag die Stadt im weiten Kreis gebreitet. Alle Einzelheiten waren in ihr aufgehoben. Jenseits der Schießscharten der Schlossummauerung und der grasbewachsenen Bastionen hoben sich die Konturen der Kirchen und Adelsschlösser, die aus den schmalen, ärmlichen Behausungen der Kleinen Seite ragten, ein paar Öllampen bezeichneten den Weg der Moldaubrücke, doch in der Neustadt war jede Deutlichkeit verlöscht, sie verschwamm zu einer Masse, in die hier und da aus einem Wirtshausfenster ein blasser Funken sprang. […] die Halbkugel des Firmaments, blauschwarzer Atlas mit hellem Sternengold durchstickt. Aber quer über seine Wölbung lief, gleich einem mörderischen Tier, das die kleinen Sterne jagte, die grelle Feuerbrunst eines Kometen. Seine Rute krümmte sich nach Osten, wie ein Türkensäbel, und Blut schien aus seinem Rot auf dem Schlaf der dunklen Stadt zu tropfen.[884]

The function of this scene is not only giving the reader a first overview of the city that will be the landscape of the narration throughout the novella, but also to depict the contrast between the controlling feeling of the panorama and the unsettling threat of the red comet. It is interesting how the feeling of unease grows as much as the glance of the observer moves to the *Neustadt*, perceived as an uncontrolled mass.

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[883] TL, p. 107.
[884] TL, pp. 14-15.

In the second description, the one in chapter 4, the author had first used images stressing the idea of unity and consistency, such as the idea of the palaces of noble family holding on tide to themselves around the court "like the rings of a crown around their most beautiful ruby". This simile helps the reader to have a vision of the city as something united, unanimous, solid and easy to control. Completely different is the emperor's view of the city when his mind comes back to the present:

Heute sah er nicht die Gliederung der Bauten, nicht den Reiz, zu dem sie sich mit Berg und Fluss zusammenfanden, nicht ihre Bedeutung für des Volkes Leben. Die Dächer deckte er von den Gebäuden ab, blickte in die Leidenschaften, die unter ihnen tobten. Alle gegen ihn ... Und so beharrlich er ihm den Rücken kehrte, um seine Existenz zu leugnen, der düstere Ghettowinkel rückte doch an ihn heran und der nadelspitzenscharfe Schmerz um Golde vergiftete die offene Wund seines Liebeshasses.[885]

Here, the emperor questions every detail of the general overview: he cannot see the buildings as a unique urban structure (*Gliederung*), he denies the relationship of the city with the natural elements around which it was built, and for the first time he finds the houses as threatening as human beings: Rudolph mentally uncovers the buildings and sees betrayals in them, just like Pernath thinks about the houses of the Jewish district as creatures with a secret life and a secret language. Following the same pattern, Hauschner also chooses this moment to definitely personify the *Judenstadt*, which inexplicably moves towards the emperor, ignoring physical laws and hindering the protagonist to forget about its existence. After this passage, the comet explodes and so makes any hope for the protagonist's fate cease.

When it comes to the apocalyptic quality of the comet, it can be said first that it anticipates not only the decay of the emperor by polluting the landscape of Prague, but also foreshadows a direction which will be taken by the narration by pointing at East, where the *Judenstadt* lays looking from the Hradschin, and where the emperor unfruitfully searches for his answers. While the East can be associated to the sunrise, the comet is immediately associated to the opposite phenomenon, as stated by the narrator when Rudolph goes out at night in chapter 1: "Der Himmel zündete das Licht dazu, aus dem dunklen, mit Sternenflimmergold bestickten Kleid streckte Gott die Fackel seines Zorns hervor. Wem leuchtete sie Untergang?"[886]. By designating the East as a symbol of Rudolph's decline, the comet reverts the normal natural phenomena of time passing, where the rebirth comes from the eastern sunrise. A similar disturbance of the normal temporal order had also been hinted at when Rumpf had seen the light of the comet disturbing the normal night darkness. However, the most interesting side of this sign of decay is that is also ascribes the East (which is represented here by the

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885 TL, p. 108.
886 TL, p. 24.

Judenstadt but can also be interpreted in a wider meaning) the role of the antagonist in the narration – this is in fact the moment where the dichotomic space is clearly suggested.

A last spatial element foreshadowing decay which is worth of mention in this case in the presence of the Town Hall clock introduced in this Hauschner's novel as well:

Die Menschenwelle ergoss sich jetzt unter den Rathausturm, in den eine Kunstuhr eingelassen war. Ihr Zeiger wies die achte Stunde. Und nun bewegte sich die Glocke, achtmal schlugen ihre Koppel an die metallische Gewandung; bei jedem Schlag trat die hölzerne Gestalt eines Apostels aus der Mauerluke, dreht sich im Halbkreis um das Zifferblatt, um jenseits seines Ausgangspunkts in dem Gemäuer zu verschwinden. Und jeden Umgang begleitete der Hahn, der zu Häupten der Figuren thronte, mit Flügelschlag und lautem Krähen.[887]

The clock has already been mentioned in this dissertation, as it was part of Meyrink's imagination as well and as it played an important role in Apollinaire's works related to Prague – *Le passant de Prague* and *Zone*. Hauschner's depiction of the building is not especially peculiar, but it is interesting to observe how this description takes place beside a discourse on Rudolph's political stagnation.

This element is introduced by mentioning the political and administrative figures who have been trying to talk to Rudolph for many months and here, in the building in front of the Town Hall, discuss the serious situations of the reign.

5.2. Prefigurations of decline in Meyrink's Hradschin: the *Hungerturm*

The prophecy chosen by Meyrink for his novel is Liesel's soothsay on the perdurance of the 'Borivoj's' blood, and of the violence deriving from it in the landscape of Prague. This prophecy not only is part of an apocalyptic landscape destined to decline, but also hints at a cyclicity of this progress. It should be noticed that this cyclicity, differently from Flugbeil's, is not broken at the end of the novel, nor it is meant to. To the revelatory quality of the apocalyptic space in Flugbeil's experience is opposed the eschatological quality of the apocalyptic space of the Hradschin and Prague where Polyxena survives. As symbol of the foreshadowing of decay of Prague and of the outcome of the revolts is the Hunger Tower where the revolutionaries meet thanks to Ottokar's help. The tower is the center of the tragedy of the Hradschin families and of the rebirth of the Zahradkas' blood at the same time, and it is present in the central chapters of the novel.

The first thing that must be said about this symbol is that a previous analysis of a Meyrink's text linked to it (*Die geheimnisvolle Stadt*, see: chapter 3.3.2) made it easy to associate the tower to a

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[887] *Löwen*, p. 61.

certain Countess Zahradka who had killed her husband and had written on the walls with her blood. This story is mindful of the legend told to Luisa in *Die zwei Prager Geschichten*, where to this figure a second one was introduced, the one of violinist Dalibor whose music can still be heard (see: chapter 2.4.). In *Walpurgisnacht*, both the story of the woman who wrote on the walls with her blood and the one of the violinist are preserved: the representation of violinist Ottokar is reminiscent of Dalibor's music, while Polyxena is aware of the fact that her ancestor has been imprisoned in the tower: "Eine kleine eiserne Tür mit einem Kruzifix führte in das Gelaß nebenan, in dem vor zweihundert Jahren eine Komtesse Polyxena, eingekerkert gewesen war. – Sie hatte ihren Gatte vergiftet und, ehe sie im Wahnsinn starb, sich die Adern des Handgelenkes aufgebissen und mit ihrem Blut sein Bild an die Wand gemalt"[888].

Ottokar is connected to the tower for many reasons: the first is the correspondence between his blood and the one spread on the prison wall; the second is his being the foster child of the keeper of the *Hungerturm*; the third is he using the tower not only to meet her cousin, but also to awaken the prophecy of the violence linked to his family when he lets the revolutionaries enter the tower. Ottokar and the tower are, in fact, in constant correspondence.

In chapter 3, dedicated to him and to the *Hungerturm*, Ottokar walks to the top of the Hradschin hill to visit Countess Zahradka, whom he still believes to be his godmother. When he reaches the top of the hill, he has a panoramic view of Prague which seems to be powerfully influenced by the prophecy he heard by Liesel at the beginning of the chapter:

Das Abendrot lag auf der Stadt, glomm in Purpurstreifen über die langen Brücken, strömte – in Blut verwandeltes Gold – im Flusse unter ihnen Pfeilern dahin.
Loderte in tausend Fenstern, als stünden die Häuser in Brand.
Der Student starrte in das Bild hinein; die Worte der alten Frau und was sie von der Moldau gesagt und daß ihre Wellen einstens rot gewesen, klangen ihm in den Ohren;[889]

The view is characterized by the transformation of the golden nuance traditionally associated to the Barock Prague, here shown as the light reflecting on the river, in the colors of the sunset which Ottokar sees as representation of the blood Liesel told him about. The predominance of the red color influences the view to the extent that the whole city seems to burn in the protagonist's mind. After this moment, which foreshadows the fires started by the revolutionaries in the second half of the novels, Ottokar envisages himself as King of Bohemia. He looks at the Wallenstein's monument,

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[888] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 232.
[889] *Walpurgisnacht*, pp. 216-217.

when he is factually crowned later by the revolutionaries, and his ambition and the color of blood melt in the sequence.

He meets Polyxena in the tower on that same day after she enters the same chamber where he is playing violin for Countess Zahradka and shows him a precise time by moving the hands of a still clock to the right position. When he comes out of the palace where his godmother lives and realizes that he is going to meet Polyxena that night, he sees the Hunger Tower in a completely different light when he comes back home.

Voll Grauen blickte er zu dem Hungerturm hin, der mit seinem runden weißen Hut hinter der zerbröckelten Mauer aus dem Hirschgraben ragte. – Immer noch lebte der Turm, fühlte er dumpf – wie viele Opfer waren in seinem steinernen Bauch schon wahnsinnig geworden, aber immer noch hatte der Moloch[890] nicht genug –, jetzt, nach einem Jahrhundert des Todesschlafs, wachte er wieder auf. Das erste Mal von seiner Kinderzeit sah er ihn nicht als ein Werk von Menschenhand vor sich – nein, es war ein granitenes Ungeheuer mit schauerlichen Eingeweiden, die Fleisch und Blut verdauen konnten gleich denen einer reißenden nächtlichen Tieres.[891]

The first apocalyptic trait attributed to the tower is that it suggests a cyclicity of violence implicit in the phrase "after a sleep of death lasted a hundred years, it is awakening again". The personification of the building is a familiar technique in Meyrink's poetic and does not need any further commentary in this context in and of itself (see: chapter 4), but the manner in which this vivification occurs is worth of mention because of some references to previous literary works. The association of the tower with a monster devouring his victims (Prague citizens indiscriminately) seems to be reminiscent of the description of Baal as insatiable divine being in Georg Heym's *Der Gott der Stadt*: "Vom Abend glänzt der rote Bauch dem Baal/Die großen Städte knien um ihn her. […] Er streckt ins Dunkel seine Fleischerfaust. / Er schüttelt sie. Ein Meer von Feuer jagt / Durch eine Straße. Und der Glutqualm braust / Und frisst sie auf, bis spät der Morgen tagt"[892]. This similarity is enhanced by the refence to Moloch, a pagan divinity whose origin is not far from the one of Baal, and which is also associated to it when it comes to the origin of its name[893]. Moloch is also juxtaposed to the semantic field of fire[894].

In chapter 5, *Aweysha*, the meeting of the revolutionaries reveals another trait through which an eschatological component is attributed to the *Hungerturm*. In this case, the discourse is not dependent

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[890] Peter Sprengel speaks of *Moloch Technik* when it comes to the conflict between man and machinery (Sprengel, *Geschichte der deutschsprachigen Literatur 1870-1900*, pp. 28-30.
[891] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 229.
[892] Heym, p. 13.
[893] See: *Moloch* in: Encyclopedia Judaica, p. 230: "The accepted view since A. Geiger is that *Moloch* is a tendentious misvocalization of the word *melekh*, "king", the original vowels being changed and patterned after the vocalization of *boshet*, "shame", which was often used as an intentional substitute for Baal."
[894] *Moloch* in: Encyclopedia Judaica, p. 230.

from space depiction as much as it is from Meyrink's setting of a political speech in this building. This speech, made by a Russian revolutionary and a 'Czech from Prague', is presented to the reader only through two sentences: "Das Proletariat hat nichts zu verlieren, als seine Ketten" and "Besitz ist Diebstahl"[895]. In addition, Polyxena, point of view of this sequence, also hears a series of fragmentary references to Jan Žižka. Qasim points out how the socio-political matter in *Walpurgisnacht* is treated in a way that cannot but show a series of contradictions, the main one being the difference between the attention given by Meyrink to generic social criticism and an attitude in depicting the revolutionary action mainly directed to highlight hypocrisy and individual greed of the leading figures[896]. This dissertation won't discuss the matter of realism in the depiction of political movements, but some words about Meyrink's perspective on the political matter treated in the novel must be included, since these notions influence the perception and the reading of the dichotomic space and is also part of the apocalyptic discourse. The revolutionary action discussed in *Walpurgisnacht* is a clear proof of Meyrink's interest in the actual emancipatory actions undertaken by Czechs for their independence and shows a view on the topic that was not openly shared, or admitted, by the public opinion: Qasim quotes in this regard an article of Hermann Bahr published in 1916 in the *Neue Rundschau* where is it stated that:

Es ist nicht wahr, daß Böhmen innerlich für Österreich verloren ist... in Österreich will das tschechische Volk seine nationalen Bedürfnisse erfüllen, auf Österreich hofft es und bleibt für Österreich bereit.[897]

Meyrink shows in *Walpurgisnacht* a completely different perspective on the Czech's intentions, a perspective that probably came from his proximity to the Bohemian political context: although he had left Prague many years before, his correspondences with his Prague acquaintances had not stopped, and the twenty years spent in the Bohemian capital had made him fully aware of the attitude of the Czech population towards the Austrian empire. That the dichotomic space depicted in *Walpurgisnacht* stems from very concrete observations on a real context has been underestimated by the wing of literary criticism that prefers interpreting this work in light of the numerous references to esoterism appearing in the narration, or have been reason of mockery in contemporary reviews. For example, it is stated in the *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde* that:

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[895] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 283.
[896] Qasim, Mohammed, *Gustav Meyrink. Eine monographische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz 1981, pp. 147-148: "Man würde sicherlich darin die literarisch artikulierte Sozialanklage sehen, daß der kaiserliche Leibarzt durch sein Fernrohr zufällig eine Frau mit einem toten Kind zu sehen bekommt. Andererseits würde derjenige, der von Meyrink eine objektive Darstellung des Proletariats und seiner Probleme erwartet, vollkommen enttäuscht sein. Er hatte eben für die Aktionen der Masse kein Verständnis."
[897] Qasim, *Gustav Meyrink. Eine monographische Untersuchung*, p. 143.

Das „Grüne Gesicht“ und „Walpurgisnacht“, spielten nicht in der Traumwelt, und da erhoben sich jene Forderungen, die Meyrink nicht zu erfüllen vermochte und die er vergebens durch immer gehäuftere Phantastik zum Schweigen zu bringen versucht.[898]

In fact, Meyrink was acquainted at the time with the anarchist Erich Mühsam, who should have written an afterword to the edition of Meyrink's complete works[899]. Discussions about socialism and anarchism were familiar to him and the influence of this element in conceiving *Walpurgisnacht* should not be denied. Archive research in Münich's *Meyrinkiana* gives further suggestions about the openly political origin of the dichotomic space: documents that can be traced back to *Walpurgisnacht* report lines such as "Demokratie (Prag) stürzt den versteinerten Adel"[900], where democracy must not be intended as a political system but as people agency in general, and the word *Prag* in the parenthesis shows that the Hradschin should be seen as a separate macrocosm (cfr. Lange's view on Hauschner's space). Furthermore, elements of the apocalyptic discourse are also present in the revolutionary movements of the first half of the 20th century and in earlier political philosophy oriented towards socialist ideas, as observed by Paul F. and Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz in *Apocalypticism in Modern Western Europe* (1998)[901]. In this regard, an interesting personality turning the Christian gospel into a thought of practical social renewal had been Charles Fourier (1772-1837), thinker who had defined himself as the 'Messiah of Reason' and considered himself as a prophet of an approaching new epoch of universal harmony. He claimed to translate the New Testament into practice and to have found a way to decipher the very structure that would have unlocked the utopian future time. Main trait of his thought was the idea that human agency had the complete dominion as transformation force, implying that the divine agency played basically no role in the change of society and in the creation of a utopic dimension characterized by justice. This faith in the power of human sphere in regard to the eschatological process attracted many admirers, including Karl Marx, who united Fourier's ideas with Hegel's dialectic to theorize a social development based on class warfare. This moment of conflict is meant to experience its peak in a worldwide workers' revolt leading to the final collapse of capitalistic society. Key notion of Marx's apocalyptical thought is the structure of the eschatological moment as result of the Hegelian transformation of the negative into the positive, a moment of the dialectic which influenced most of the eschatological thought of left-wing Hegelian intellectuals and that was crucial to Bakunin's anarchic thought as well. On the other hand, fundamental of Marx's theory in this respect is the active role of population in this process. In both the exaltation of an incoming future at the

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[898] G.W. (Georg Witkowski?), Review of Gustav Meyrink, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 6 Bände, Kurt Wolff Verlag 1918, in: *Zeitschrift für Bücherfreunde*, Neue Folge, 10. Jahrgang, H. 5/6 1918-1919, pp. 275-276.
[899] Qasim, *Gustav Meyrink. Eine monographische Untersuchung*, p. 146.
[900] Meyrinkiana, X.
[901] Zimdars-Swartz, *Apocalypticism in Modern Western Europe*, pp. 285-289.

detriment of the present society and in the faith in human agency, the contact between Marx's and Fourier's ideas is made apparent.

When it comes to apocalypticism in the anarchic movements, it should be mentioned that Michail Bakunin's (1814-1876) ideas were also influenced by the eschatological substrate designating human agency and a revolutionary act as key processes of world transformation. Bakunin fundamentally detaches from Marx and from other forms of left-wing philosophy in Marxist perspective in that he considers the future as an unfinished project more than a utopia with clear contours to respect and in that he does not think of working class as a category that must be turned to an organized organism, but rather as a mass that must conduct its revolution through a series of spontaneous and not coordinated actions, in a situation where a complete democracy and a total absence of leading role is assured. Nevertheless, Bakunin is linked to Hegel's dialectic in the same eschatological perspective present in Marx and Engels' theories and also uses a series of categories and notions to express his thought that are to trace back to the apocalyptical language. This is highly clear in his definition of the "principle of Revolution", which is for him "the radical overthrow of all presently existing religious, political, economic and social organizations and institutions … and the reconstruction … of the world society on the basic of liberty, reason, justice and work"[902].

Nevertheless, it would be misleading to interpret *Walpurgisnacht* as a socialist novel, since Meyrink's skepticism towards collective political movements is openly expressed and thematized in the text[903], and it was also highly present in *Das Grüne Gesicht*, where alienating mass actions are depicted more than once and it is also stated: "Das Gegenteil von dem, was der große Haufen tut, ist an sich schon richtig"[904]. Moreover, the end of the novel, where the military comes to Prague to re-establish an order, shows the author's lack of expectations about the revolutionary attitude[905].

History and conflict in Meyrink and Hauschner

The dismantling of an ancient hierarchical order, however, seem to have appeared to Meyrink a realistic outcome of WWI[906]. The depiction given by Hauschner of the governmental crisis in *Der Tod des Löwen* can also be read in this direction.

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[902] Bakunin, Michail, *Selected Writings of Michail Bakunin*, London: Cape 1973, p. 64.
[903] Of a Russian revolutionary leader in the novel it is said: "Worauf es ihm einzig und allein kam, war: sich selbst an die Spitze der Bewegung zu setzen, gleichgültig, welchen Namen sie tragen würde." (*Walpurgisnacht*, p. 299)
[904] GG, p. 151.
[905] The one sent to re-establish the order is a Bosnian regiment.
[906] See: Qasim, *Gustav Meyrink. Eine monographische Untersuchung*, p. 147.

It is interesting to note that both works focus on a moment of political weakness caused by an inner division of the considered reigns, a division represented by depicting of Prague as a dichotomic dimension where the Hradschin is separated from the eastern side of the river.

Meyrink uses a series of artifices to assure the reader to receive the environment as a contemporary dimension connected to a sense of ancestral instability, where violence originates from the very ground of Prague, here an eccentric city unstable on water similarly to Amsterdam in *Das grüne Gesicht*. As stated by Polyxena:

"Grundwasser" – mitten in ihrer Gedankenreihe war plötzlich das Wort "Grundwasser" aufgeschossen. Eine Stimme in ihr schien es gerufen zu haben. – "Warum: Grundwasser?" – welchen Zusammenhang hatte es mit dem, woran sie dachte? – Sie wußte nicht einmal genau, was das war: "Grundwasser".– [...]
Und aus dieser unbewußten Vorstellung wuchs ein Bild hervor: Blut war's, das da emporstieg aus der Tiefe – ein Meer von Blut, das aus dem Boden drang, aus den Gittern der Kanäle quoll, die Straßen erfüllte, bis es in Strömen sich in die Moldau ergoß.
– Blut, das wahre Grundwasser Prags.[907]

The ancestral instability connects the historical events evoked by the author: the Hussite Wars referenced through the appearance Jan Žižka; the Thirty Years' War referenced through the mention of Wallenstein's monument and through the war remembered by Countess Zahradka; the 1848 revolution mentioned in relation to the tavern *Grüner Frosch*; the last people sentenced to death in the Hunger Tower. All these events find a correspondence in the situations taking place in *Walpurgisnacht*: the revolution is repeated; Countess Zahradka shoots her son with a 17th century gun; the last woman to die in the Hunger Tower reincarnates in Polyxena; Jan Žižka is evoked by Zrcadlo; Ottokar is crowned king on the Wallenstein's monument. Through these mentions, the past of violence of the city lives, in all its manifestation, in a contemporary dimension which seems, this way, to be deprived of a chronological substance. The effect of *Zeitlosigkeit* given in this case can be seen as mirroring the non-chronological model theorized by Dailey as spiral (see: chapter 1.4), whose tangencies have being listed and whose *eschaton* is the foreshadowed explosion of violence – an event tracing the origin of the city.

It can be observed, however, that both Hauschner's and Meyrink's works do not deal with Prague's past as much as they deal with a contemporary dimension of an incurable conflict which can have its outcome only in a division. In Hauschner's work, this trait is especially evident not only in the story itself – where, as seen in the analysis, no conciliation between Rudolph and Golde's reality is provided – but also when it comes to those traits of Rudolph's historical personality and his encounters with

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[907] *Walpurgisnacht*, p. 285.

the astronom Brahe and with Rabbi Löw that have been clearly manipulated by the author. Lange observes in *"Wir stehen beide zwischen zwei Zeiten"* that the historical matter is handled by Hauschner with a series of imprecisions:

Leider unterlaufen der Autorin allerdings kleinere Fehler, so daß zwar sowohl die Erwähnung des Kometen als auch der bevorstehende Krieg zwischen Rudolph und seinem Bruder auf das Jahr 1607 schließen lässt, jedoch der dänische Astronom Tycho Brahe, der hier die Funktion des kaiserlichen Beraters einnimmt, zu dieser Zeitpunkt verstorben war. Auch hat den Chroniken zufolge ein Besuch Rabbi Löws am Hof des alchemistisch und okkultistisch interessiert Rudolph II. einzig im Jahr 1592 stattgefunden.[908]

Interpreting these imprecisions as errors is a possibility that cannot be excluded since the present research does not have access to the archival material that would be necessary to have a clear framework of Hauschner's work on the historical sources concerning the time of Rudolph II. Nevertheless, understanding as a mistake the author's decision to place the encounters with Brahe and Rabbi Löw just before the fall of the emperor along with the comet has the consequence to underestimate the narrative value of this temporal shift. The events are concentrated, in Hauschner's novella, around a moment of Rudolph's life which is decisive and cathartic, and this characteristic can be interpreted as an intentional manipulation. Furthermore, this overlapping of events taking place in several years looks not so different from the elements of *Zeitlosigkeit* observed in the analysis especially in Meyrink's work – where, also, all the historical dimensions overlap to aim at the same eschatological moment. An historical imprecision which results extremely relevant for our discourse is Rudolph's attitude towards Jewish culture and the fact that this trait is not reported in the historical sources. In fact, Jewish culture flourished during Rudolph II's government not only because the order of expulsion of the 16th century had been called off by Maximilian II in 1567, but also because Rudolph kept protecting the privileges of the community during his reign and guaranteed that Prague authorities did not intervene against it in any way. Demetz states that "In his time eight to ten thousand people may have resided in the Jewish quarter, more than ever before, and it was proudly praised as 'the mother-in-Israel', the most populous Jewish community in the Diaspora"[909]. Hauschner's re-elaboration of history can be understood as a paradoxical position maybe led by the idea of making the landscape of her Prague closer to the contemporary political tension, and to enhance the increasing division between eastern and western regions of the empire. The lack of any conciliation in the dichotomic space can be interpreted as expression of the same absence of inner cohesiveness, which is represented as impossible heal.

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[908] Lange, *"Wir stehen alle zwischen zwei Zeiten"*, p. 152.
[909] Demetz, *Prague in Black and Gold*, p. 201.

This relationship between the contemporary political issues and the appearance of tropes of magic Prague in an apocalyptic direction is the trait that mostly makes the analyzed works a common manifestation. Both works handle the matter of Prague's mysticism and history with a clear fascination for a literary tradition close to Neo-Romanticism and to the rediscovery of the English and French interpretation of 'magic Prague', but the signs addressing contemporaneity in the novels are numerous and it would be deceiving to only interpret them as a celebration of the Prague landscape and of its literary imagery.

Conclusions

This comparative analysis started from the established communication between Meyrink's and Hauschner's work, a communication which had *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Der Golem* as a basis. The main result of this chapter is an extension of this communication to a second novel of Meyrink's: the indirect dialogue between the two examined novels has been explained here not only in light of the authors' common use of tropes of Prague German literature as atmospheric component, but also in virtue of their representation of Prague in an apocalyptic worldview strongly linked to a sense of decline stemming from a precise political context. It was shown that both *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht* focus on an identity search which is linked to the idea of revelation implicit in apocalyptic texts, and that this revelation has both an individual and a collective component. The individual side of the revelation process revolves around the two protagonists Flugbeil and Rudolph, who experience the space of Prague as dichotomic because of their *innere Gespaltenheit*, and who need to have an active exchange with a side of the city they consider unsettling in order to achieve a successful self-discovery. It was observed that the search for a conciliation between the individual protagonist and an unfamiliar microcosm have different outcomes in the two novels, which also highlight Hauschner's perception of Rudolph as a symbol of collective declining history – while Flugbeil seems to be, for Meyrink, an individuum who reaches a positive result.

The collective component of the revelatory process is a prefiguration of fall in both novels. The role of fire in *Der Tod des Löwen* mirrors, in this respect, the role of blood and of the Moldava in Meyrink's *Walpurgisnacht*.

It was explained that Meyrink's Prague does not show any conciliation between the Hradschin and the rest of the city, but also that the conciliation needed in this novel does not actually revolve around two different sides of Prague as much as it describes a lacking process of self-discovery in the nobles of the Hradschin, who find themselves annihilated by their own descendants – their own blood. *Walpurgisnacht* seems to introduce two identity searches which have a different ending – the

individual one, with a positive outcome, and the collective one, which is a failure. In Hauschner's novel, the outcome of the two dimension looks, as it was stated, much more consistent.

It has been observed that both narrations show a peculiar relationship between characters and time. Meyrink's timelessness has been pointed out through the observation of the constant correspondence between past and present in the Zahradka family, but also through the cyclicity of Prague's historical violence. This cyclicity is expressed as its best when it comes to Polyxena's greed of blood which does not aim to completing a violent revolution at once, but to conducting periodical actions which can destroy any order in the city. When it comes to Flugbeil's personal revelation, the idea of timelessness is introduced through the breaking of the daguerreotype, an image of the self that was fragile and set in a precise moment of the past – therefore, not authentic enough so survive beyond the material sphere.

The manipulation of time in *Der Tod des Löwen* is more linked to natural elements such as the comet, and to the inversion of the normal conception of East as the direction of birth – here, the East becomes the direction of decline because the comet points at it. This allowed the present analysis to infer a reference to the tensions between East and West that were visible in 1917 socio-political context. It was observed that a similar tension is also represented by the conflict between Rudolph and Matthias and by the manipulation of the historical sources to create a philosophical conflict between Rudolph and Rabbi Löw.

The attention to the interaction between historical matter and individual identity search, which has also been observed in Meyrink's addressing the Czech revolutionary movement and the Bosnian army, has proved to be the main common trait of the two novels *Der Tod des Löwen* and *Walpurgisnacht*, a trait which is meaningfully expressed through the representation of space and through its apocalyptic components which always remind the reader, to some extent, of a contemporary incurable tension.

Final reflections on the research

In reply to Eduard Frank's observation that Gustav Meyrink had a clear tendency to avoid direct answers to the existential questions posed in his works, and that the author also showed a relevant lack of a systematic thought in philosophical sense, Lube stated in his *Beiträge* that Meyrink only avoided systems when these were not prescribed by himself[910].

The analysis conducted in this dissertation has shown that, although not in rigid terms, Gustav Meyrink has theorized a system to represent his way of thinking through precise spatial categories. The first main result of this work is the identification, in this respect, of a spatial pattern illustrating these categories, the Prague paradigm.

If the model of the threshold that had been highlighted by Margherita Cottone in respect to Todorov's, Caillois' and Vax' ideas on the definition of the Fantastic highlights a relationship connecting uncertainty and subversion– characteristic traits of this literary genre – with a concept that can be linked to the esoteric sphere, the analysis of Meyrink's texts conducted in this thesis showed how the connection between the author's use of techniques proper of Fantastic literature is a main expedient to communicate to the reader his worldview by enhancing hesitation mechanisms. These mechanisms hint at a double structure of reality, where the concrete and the spiritual layers co-exist.

It has been shown in these chapters that this double nature of reality constituted for the author a basic structure of his worldview, and that the importance of giving this conception a concrete shape was for him an aim going beyond the limits of literary ambition. When it comes to the actual role of Prague in the Prague paradigm, it has been demonstrated that the shape that has been chosen by Meyrink to represent his worldview results in a preference for the city of Prague understood as factual threshold, a space that has become an actual model serving as a basis for the spatial poetics presented in the works he explicitly dedicated to the initiation path – his novels. This paradigm has been analyzed in its manifestations in all the analysis chapters.

The second main result of this dissertation is the successful association of the Prague paradigm to the concept and the models of apocalyptic literature: the spatial patterns Meyrink's have been observed as manifestations of a world that must be deconstructed and constantly questioned in order to let the essential, spiritual side of reality emerge. In this respect, the text analysis made apparent how the concept of revelation in Meyrink's poetics is expressed through the depiction of porous and fragile spaces but also through the addressing of unreadable spaces such as metropolises where the

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[910] Lube, *Beiträge zur Biographie Gustav Meyrinks und Studien zu seiner Kunsttheorie*, pp. 226-228.

protagonist finds his identity unstable before achieving the initiation. In regard to the apocalyptical worldbuilding, the connection between Meyrink's concept of time and space has proved to be close to the spiral model of the apocalyptic literature considered in the first theoretical chapter – the Book of Revelation and the apocrypha – in that it presents the trait of timelessness, corresponding to the idea of eternity, as a basis.

The comparison with the works of Auguste Hauschner and Alfred Kubin have shown how Meyrink's attitude towards space depiction in an apocalyptic direction including the eschatological and the revelatory meaning of the word are part of a shared cultural context, despite the fact that Meyrink's interpretation of the Prague paradigm has unique traits which have emerged in the comparative analysis.

To conclude, a final reflection on what the research on Meyrink's eccentric space still has to offer, and how this research can be widened in the future, can be made.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the archival research for this dissertation has been conducted in the second half of my doctorate path, and the archives visited in this period have been the Handschriftenlesesaal of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München and the Deutsches Literatur Archiv in Marbach. An archive which still deserves more attention especially in relation to Meyrink's depiction of Amsterdam is the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermeneutica in Amsterdam, whose possessions in regard to Meyrink have been presented by Theodor Harmsen in his research *Gustav Meyrink und seine Freunde* (2010). The institution Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermeneutica, which constitutes a reference point for the investigation of materials in regard to the esoteric, inherited a collection of documents put together by a series of Meyrink's acquaintances from the 1940s to the 1970s, and was enriched in 1985 through the arrival to Amsterdam of Meyrink's *Autograph* of *Der weiße Dominikaner*. This manuscript had remained unfound since WWII, and it is believed to have been brought to America by Jewish immigrants before the outburst of the conflict. All this material has been collected in the BPH by its founder, J. R. Rietman, former acquaintance Meyrink's.

Interesting for the prosecution of the research presented in this dissertation is a *Notizbuch* where the author noted information about Amsterdam. Harmsen published, in this regard, one of the pages where Meyrink noted phrases in Dutch and a couple of topographic suggestions, as explained in chapter 4. The work published by Harmsen on Meyrink's Amsterdam-Sammlung dedicates very few pages on the author's preparation of his second eccentric landscape (the first one being, naturally, the city of Prague), and this happens not for a lack of interest in *Das grüne Gesicht* in and of itself as much as for the intention of Harmen's investigation, which aims at giving general outlook of the material collected in the BPH and at making this material interact with Meyrink's philosophical and

esoteric interests, as well as with his connections with an extremely vast net of intellectuals. In fact, it can be noted that most of the archival research related to the Meyrinkianas has the interaction between the archive findings and Meyrink's biography and intellectual acquaintances as main object of interest. The pieces of research focused on this direction understandably have a wide perspective and do not concentrate on the genesis of Meyrink's works other than *Der Golem*. As explained in chapter 3, an important contribution in the archival research on the *Autographen* has been given by Nora Elisabeth Gottbrath whose project aimed at the realization of an historical-critical edition of Meyrink's work. Gottbrath's philological attention moves decisively the critical interest from the biographic component to the poetological one, a direction which wanted to be the focus of this dissertation as well – although my research was not philological in nature. In my opinion, the prosecution of the research I conducted during these years should enhance the archival component of the corpus and reconstruct the genesis of Meyrink's spatial poetics through a more in-depth philological observation especially when it comes to the material regarding *Das grüne Gesicht*. It would be also extremely fruitful to promote a better interaction between the *Das grüne Gesicht* sources collected in the *Nachlass* in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek with the Amsterdam-Sammlung. The conclusion of this dissertation is therefore extremely open and my last thought goes to the hope that a prosecution on the peculiarities of Meyrink's style and technique will be promoted during the next years.

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