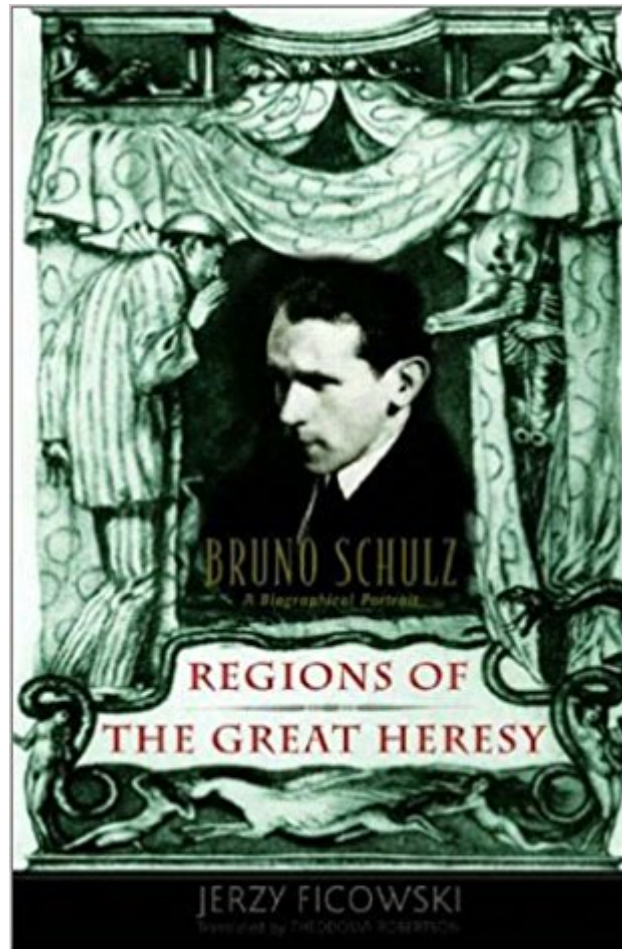




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# Regions Of The Great Heresy: Bruno Schulz, A Biographical Portrait



## Synopsis

Sixty years after his death, Bruno Schulz remains one of the twentieth century's greatest and most enigmatic writers. Here in *Regions of the Great Heresy*, the renowned Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski presents the first biography of the man whose best-known story collections are *The Street of Corocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Without Ficowski there would be no Schulz, just as without Max Brod, there would be no Kafka.” - Jaroslaw Anders, *The New Republic*  
“Bruno Schulz was one of the great writers....[His] verbal art strikes us - stuns, even - with its overload of beauty.” - John Updike  
--This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Text: English (translation) Original Language: Polish

Good book on a little known genius. Schultz was a writer in the mold of Kafka and an artist of considerable talent.

A passionate beautifully produced book giving an account of the life and work of this genius who was a Baudelaire in paint and Yeats in prose, yet largely neglected until recent years. Google him and don't forget to click on the Reference Section entry "Art works". Wallow in Eros and intelligence. The price of \$5 I paid at was ridiculously low.

Sixty-seven years ago (on Nov. 19, 1942), Bruno Schulz was shot to death on the streets of his hometown -- Drohobycz, Poland (now Ukraine) -- by a Gestapo officer named Gunther. Schulz had thus far survived the Nazi occupation as a "necessary Jew" under the protection of another Gestapo officer, Felix Landau. But when Landau killed a Jewish dentist whose protector was Gunther, the latter retaliated, announcing, "You killed my Jew--I killed yours." So ended the rather dull and unhappy life of Bruno Schulz, a small, shy, sickly schoolteacher who had lived his entire 50 years in the provincial city of Drohobycz and yet managed to produce one of the most original and influential works of literature of 20th-century Europe -- "Cinnamon Shops" (or, as it is also known in the United States, "The Street of Crocodiles").

REGIONS OF THE GREAT HERESY (the phrase is borrowed from one of Schulz's stories in "Cinnamon Shops") is the only book-length biography of Schulz, written by the man most responsible for preserving and promoting Schulz as a noteworthy author. Jerzy Ficowski was enthralled with "Cinnamon Shops" when he first read it as an 18-year-old in 1942. He wrote a fan letter to Schulz, but it probably was never delivered, because Schulz had already been moved into a Jewish ghetto, something that Ficowski only learned after he learned about Schulz's murder. After WWII, Ficowski dedicated himself to collecting as much by and about Schulz as he could. Because of the incredible devastation that WWII and the Holocaust had wrought on the Jewish population of Poland, this was an extremely daunting task, searching for needles not in haystacks but in rubble, ashes, and memories. Ficowski memorialized his findings in a handful of articles and books, including this "biographical portrait" of Schulz. As suggested by the subtitle, REGIONS OF THE GREAT HERESY is not a conventional biography. It consists of 13 loosely associated essays, arranged as chapters in a rough chronological order. From them, a workable portrait of Schulz does emerge. There also is a fair amount of discussion and analysis of his works, translations of 17 of Schulz's letters (all but one of which can also be found in "Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz"), and some valuable bibliographical information. Given the importance of Jerzy Ficowski to what we now know about Bruno Schulz and to his current literary prestige, I feel a little churlish in criticizing REGIONS OF THE GREAT HERESY, but the truth of the matter is that this is not a biography of the first rank, or even the second. The major problem is that it is too worshipful. It is the work of an acolyte who does little to guard against its entry into the realm of hagiography. In addition, the writing is often clichéd or mawkish, and much of Ficowski's exegesis or analysis of Schulz's work has too high a quotient of B.S. Nevertheless, for fans and students of Bruno Schulz, REGIONS OF THE GREAT HERESY contains much biographical data not readily available elsewhere, as well as 26 photographs and examples of Schulz's artwork. Finally, there is

an intriguing chapter about how Schulz's lost magnum opus, "Messiah", as well as another book, may still exist in manuscript form in a packet somewhere in Russia or the Ukraine, perhaps in the archives of the KGB.

Jerzy Ficowski's decades-long dedication to preserving the memory of Bruno Schulz has become legendary. This book is testament to his labors. It will long be the standard biography.

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