



Polish Modernism in a Double Transfer: Bolesław Leśmian in Russian and the Illustrative and Editorial Choices of Andrei Bazilevsky

Polski modernizm w podwójnym transferze:
Leśmian po rosyjsku
i wybory ilustracyjno-edytorskie Andrieja Bazilewskiego

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ABSTRACT | *Bezludnaya ballada* (2006) is a comprehensive collection of Russian translations of the major Polish modernist author Bolesław Leśmian. The book is equipped with graphic works by important Polish artists who were Leśmian's contemporaries. However, the potential connected to such a double cultural transfer is underplayed by the editor and publisher, Andrei Bazilevsky. The aim of the article is thus to examine whether the volume is indeed composed as a meaningful bi-semiotic complex, among other things, whether particular illustrative choices are felicitous, and to what extent the recipients have a chance to taste the Polish modernism in a double dose.

KEYWORDS | Bolesław Leśmian, Andrei Bazilevsky, poetry translation, modernist art, illustration strategies in translation

The linguistic idiosyncrasies and the peculiarity of the poetic vision make it extremely difficult for the works of the eminent Polish modernist writer Bolesław Leśmian (1877—1937) to overcome the barrier of translation and foreign reception. His diction, teeming with linguistic as well as conceptual strangeness, places him among the greatest Polish poets, at the same time making an extraordinary translation challenge of his texts, in which language defamiliarised on lexical and syntactic level combines with a preoccupation with philosophical questions, with fairy-tale-like or folksy settings, and with the formal perfection of verse¹. Hence the thesis, or even practical postulate, already advanced previously, that apposite selection of illustrative material in foreign-language editions could be a factor facilitating his reception². In this article I intend to look at one foreign edition in precisely such a perspective.

It should be noted that, while translation scholars' interest in paratexts and in multimodality has grown significantly in recent decades, associative potential and strategic use of illustrations as part of translational communication remain understudied, especially outside children's literature. Nonetheless, the importance of such research has been validated early on, when Ewa Teodorowicz-Hellman showed that the same rendition of a foreign text reissued with different sets of illustrations may generate completely different interpretations within a receiving culture³. Jerzy Jarniewicz, in turn, argues that the graphic design of a recent Polish retranslation of *Alice in Wonderland* conspires with the textual strategy: the presence of multiple Alices visualised by various artists in wildly different styles supports the translator in his daring to depart from translational tradition(s) and in being overtly "unfaithful"⁴. Among the still rare studies on illustrating renditions of verse, Anna Bednarczyk includes cover images in her analysis of paratexts in a Polish edition of Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero*⁵.

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- 1 A description in English of this poetics, along with an outline of difficulties of translating his verse from Polish is available in: M. Kaźmierczak, "Translating from Leśmianesque into English: An Interview about Polish Literature's Mission Impossible," interviewer: M. Gliński, 2017/04/24, *Culture.pl*, The Adam Mickiewicz Institute, <http://culture.pl/en/article/translating-from-lesmianesque-into-english-an-interview-about-polish-literatures-mission-impossible>, accessed 25.09.2022.
 - 2 M. Kaźmierczak, "Leśmian, Malczewski, przekład," in *Leśmian w Europie i na świecie*, eds. Ż. Nalewajk, M. Supel (Warszawa: WUW, 2019).
 - 3 E. Teodorowicz-Hellman, "Nils Holgerssons resa över Polen: En analys av läsprocesen," *Slovo: Journal of Slavic Languages and Literatures*, no. 44 (1995).
 - 4 J. Jarniewicz, "Niewierny, czyli tłumacz w krainie czarów," in J. Jarniewicz, *Tłumacz między innymi. Szkice o przekładach, językach i literaturze* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 2018), 263—264.
 - 5 A. Bednarczyk, "Polskie parateksty *Poematu bez bohatera* Anny Achmatowej," *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem*, vol. XVII, ed. E. Skibińska (2011): 37—41.

Like the last one mentioned, the present contribution is focused on Polish—Russian translational traffic, albeit in the other direction. Since the case involves illustrative material adopted from the source culture, it is relevant to note that Sylvia Liseling Nilsson has demonstrated that the visual code deployed in a translated book is an important carrier of implicit cultural information, and a sensitive one in terms of truth value of the message⁶.

More prominent Western studies are not drawn upon here for the reason that they offer no parallel to the analysis below and therefore no framework to extrapolate. Firstly, although a certain turn toward the pictorial can be perceived in translation research, analyses predominantly focus on cover design. A cover, however, is *less* than a set of illustrations — which is what will be examined in the present article — and in some respects it is *more*, inasmuch as it (potentially) unites graphic and verbal paratext. Neither will emphasis on the commercial aspect of the peritext be pertinent for the material in hand (see footnote 11). Secondly, authors of available recent publications assume that an illustration is — or they probe whether it should be — a visual translation of the verbal text. Thus, their cases may not involve interlingual mediation or the discussions tend to underplay or even suppress interlingual contexts. By contrast, this is no foray into intersemiotic translation, but a study of *intersemiotic aspects of (interlingual) translation*: a situation of mediating between languages (and comparing language versions) in which taking into account other semiotic codes/layers apart from the verbal one is characteristic or obligatory⁷. I have previously argued in detail that, while certain illustrations may constitute visual translations of texts which they complement, illustrating is not generically of a translational nature and should not be automatically treated as such⁸. Where pre-existing autonomous graphic material is harnessed by a publisher — as in the volume to be surveyed — such a supposition is invalidated beforehand on logical grounds. Instead, the expectations with respect to the given translational edition will be the following: that the co-presence of the semiotic layers should (be shown to) make sense, aesthetically and hermeneutically, and that the relation between them will accommodate the changed linguistic-cultural context or will be influenced by this shift.

6 S.A. Liseling Nilsson, *Kod kulturowy a przekład. Na podstawie wybranych utworów Astrid Lindgren i ich polskich przekładów* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2012), 222—278.

7 M. Kaźmierczak, “From Intersemiotic Translation to Intersemiotic Aspects of Translation,” *Przekładaniec: A Journal of Translation Studies*, no. 34—35 (2018); English version: *Word and Image in Translation*, 7—35, see esp. pp. 26—31.

8 *Ibid.*, 16—23. A similar reasoning was used by Brian Mossop, for somewhat different conclusions (B. Mossop, “Judging a translation by its cover,” *The Translator*, vol. 24, no. 1 [2018]).

In 2006 the volume *Безлюдная баллада или Слова для песни без слов*⁹ [transcr.: *Bezludnaya ballada ili Slova dla pesni bez slov*], edited by Andrei Bazilevsky, was issued by the publishing house “Wahazar”, offering the Russian reader a comprehensive cross-section of Leśmian’s work: not only his poetry — some 250 poems — but also dramatic pieces, literary prose and essays. Bazilevsky reprints 161 poetic translations previously published and includes through his choices almost all translators of Leśmian to that point; he also brings back to circulation dispersed and forgotten renditions. The majority of the translations are new texts, often — though this is not the rule — bolder, i.e. closer to the originals in terms of their idiom and poetics than the earlier renditions, known mainly from the 1971 volume *Стихи*¹⁰. He makes a number of works available in several variants, reprinting in the commentaries 78 translations parallel to those in the main text. In his own words, Bazilevsky (1957—2019) “as a researcher, translator or editor, ha[s] always been guided primarily by the artistic impression”¹¹ (trans. mine). It comes as no surprise then that in this ambitiously conceived volume he took care to provide a refined visual setting for the texts. As illustrations, reproductions of autographs of two of Leśmian’s poems were used, but mostly and most importantly — works by Polish artists. The names given on the editorial page — Zak, Okuń, Wyspiański, Bulas, Weiss — testify that in an act of intercultural communication which a publishing project is, there takes place, as it were, a double transfer: the translated modernist literature is accompanied by modernist art contemporary with it, drawn from the source culture as well.

However, which works are whose, as you look at uncaptioned illustrations? Particulars are difficult to find in the book, which contains a preface, a chronology, extensive editorial endnotes and various additional contents on the end pages. The desired information is contained in the ‘Word from the publisher’, as late as on page 776¹². Unfortunately, Bazilevsky limits himself here

9 Б. Лесьмян, *Безлюдная баллада или Слова для песни без слов. Поэзия. Театр. Проза*, ed. and pref. А. Базилевский (Москва: Вахазар, 2006). The title of the volume is composed of two (translated) titles of Leśmian’s poems — see further in the article.

10 Б. Лесьмян, *Стихи*, pref. А. Гелескул, sel. Н. Богомолова (Москва: Художественная литература, 1971). Translations reprinted from this edition in *Безлюдная баллада* will be referenced in the main text with the use of the abbreviation ST.

11 A. Bazylewski, “Literatura polska w słowiańskiej bibliotece wydawnictwa „Wahazar”,” *Acta Polono-Ruthenica*, no. 12 (2007): 105. It may be worth pointing out that in this self-commentary Bazilevsky describes his publishing enterprise as non-profit making (pp. 113—114).

12 Базилевский, “От составителя,” 776.

to enumerating again the names of the authors of the artworks used, with the only difference being the alignment with the location within the volume. Nor, with the exception of the painting reproduced on the cover, are the works' titles or dates of creation given¹³. While a Russian recipient interested in the Polish culture may have heard of Wyspiański as a distinguished playwright, theatre artist and painter (in this order), the other names will probably tell him or her nothing (we are considering a poetry reader, rather than an artist or art connoisseur). However, it is impossible to ascertain from the volume *Безлюдная баллада* whether Eugeniusz Zak, Edward Okuń, Stanisław Wyspiański and Wojciech Weiss were contemporaries of the poet, later illustrators of Polish editions of his poems, or whether the choice of their illustrations and no others is completely arbitrary¹⁴. Moreover, Leśmian's likeness on p. 701 is ostensibly a photograph, which may raise doubts as to whether Jan Bulas indicated as its author was indeed, as Bazilevsky claims, a graphic artist. (In fact, Bulas's work did not make it into the book, and a photograph was apparently shifted to fill the empty space).

It is surprising that the potential inherent in the illustrative decision has not been tapped — instead of bringing out the temporal and semantic links between the verbal and the visual components, the editor of the volume (as

13 Cf. *ibid.*

14 Information is, nowadays, recoverable from the Internet. However, a scrutiny of the history of the Russian Wikipedia's entries on Zak, Okuń and Weiss reveals that they were not launched until a few years after the publication of the discussed volume of Leśmian, while the entry on Wyspiański is contemporary with it. Zak may have had Russian acquaintances in the Parisian artistic milieu, nevertheless, Russian general reference works from later decades seem to omit him. Of those here, Wyspiański has been the only one regularly featured in Russian-language encyclopaedias, presented in the first place as a writer — logically, given that his texts have been translated (particular plays yet in the 1900s—1910s, and a collection of dramas appeared in 1963), while his visual art has been exhibited just once, to the best of my knowledge, with his name heading a display of Polish art of his time (cf. Т. Добровольский, Е. Гот, И. Бобровская, *Станислав Wyspiański и художники его времени. Каталог выставки (Москва, июнь—июль 1958)*, trans. И. Колошинская (Kraków: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1958); of the former USSR countries, apparently only Ukraine houses items by Wyspiański, in Lviv National Art Gallery. Even art encyclopaedias tend to miss the Polish artists in question, only making an exception for Wyspiański (see e.g. *Популярная художественная энциклопедия. Архитектура, живопись, скульптура, графика, декоративное искусство*, ed. В.М. Полевой et al. [Москва: Советская энциклопедия, 1986]). Polish art is not known well in Russia outside specialist circles: note its absence from the 100-volume popular series on art, *Великие художники* [Great Painters], published by Komsomolskaya Pravda with Direkt-Media (2009—2011), reproducing the Western canon of painters, with a heavy addition of Russian names.

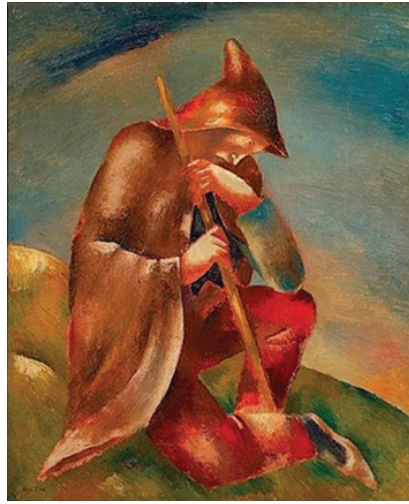
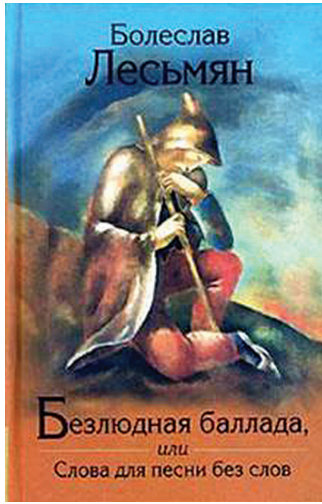
author of the verbal paratexts and publisher at the same time) even implicates them. This is by no means typical of the “Collection of Polish Literature” («Коллекция польской литературы») issued by the publishing house “Wahazar” — to compare, the volumes of K.I. Gałczyński, C.K. Norwid and Tymoteusz Karpowicz are provided by Bazilevsky with at least precise identification of the visual works used¹⁵. This gives me a further stimulus to investigate whether here we are indeed dealing with a consciously arranged artistic whole, including whether it seems legitimate to have used particular artworks as illustrative material for Leśmian’s works, and whether the Russian recipient can actually savour a double dose of Polish modernism. Bazilevsky declared that in his publishing projects, “[t]he selection of texts [was] made according to a scholarly-artistic and educational agenda, based on the criterion of uniqueness and universalism in the face of contemporary challenges”¹⁶ (trans. mine) — so let us check whether, in the given case, the notion of text extends to the entire semiotic complex. In doing so, I will focus on intermedial relations — embracing the translations — rather than on characterising the translations themselves (as the latter has been to a significant extent done elsewhere).

It will be appropriate to begin with the cover, which carries the only element identified for the recipients by the publisher. It features a reproduction of Eugeniusz Zak’s painting *Wędrowiec* [The Wanderer] dating from 1924 (cf. il. 1 and 2). Zak (1884—1926), a prominent artist from the École de Paris circle, was an acquaintance of Leśmian, or rather of his wife, Zofia *née* Chylińska, herself a painter. He and the couple were seeing each other in Paris, and Zak even made a portrait of the poet (1905, a photographic reproduction is in the collection of the National Museum, Warsaw, not on display)¹⁷. Thus, the choice of his work for the cover of a Leśmian volume has some biographical justification, even if there is no indication that this particular painting had any direct connection with or influence on the writer.

15 Cf. editorial material in: Ц.К. Норвид, *Пилигрим, или Последняя сказка* (2002), К.И. Галчинский, *Фарландия, или Путешествие в Темноград* (2004), Т. Карпович, *Единожды один, или Границы бесконечности* (2016, all three: Москва: Вахазар).

16 Bazylewski, “Literatura polska w słowiańskiej bibliotece...,” 110.

17 Cf. The National Museum in Warsaw — online catalog, <https://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/965331>, accessed 25.09.2022.



Il. 1. BB — cover

Il. 2. E. Zak, *Wędrowiec*, 1924, priv. coll.¹⁸

Wanderers are a frequent motif in Zak's paintings; likewise, the lyrical subject or protagonist of Leśmian's poems is very often a *homo viator*, either literally or metaphorically. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz points to the presence in his poetry in the 1920s and 1930s of the figure of the wanderer who cannot place himself or abide anywhere, personifying the "existence that is transitory or itinerant"¹⁹. For readers of the volume *Безлюдная баллада*, this theme becomes apparent from the first poem of the selection from Leśmian's second volume, *The Meadow* (orig. *Łąka*) — "Topielec" [The Drowner], a text which Rymkiewicz cites as an example of the motif. A new translation is presented in the Russian volume and Stanislav Chumakov accentuates the motif by repeating the lexeme *странник* ('pilgrim, wanderer, drifter') — see highlighting in the texts²⁰, which contrasts this solution with the noun 'wanderer' and the pronoun 'he' in the original:

18 The cover possibly uses the other authorial version of the painting, which would account for the difference in colour palette. Painting more than one version of a given work was Zak's constant practice.

19 J.M. Rymkiewicz, "Wędrowiec," in J.M. Rymkiewicz, *Leśmian. Encyklopedia* (Warszawa: Sic!, 2001), 394.

20 All the bolding in quotations has been added for the sake of indicating elements in focus. Throughout the paper explanations of the meaning of the extracts, or else glosses of the single words or phrases on which the argumentation pivots, will be given in the main text. Systematic glossing is not necessary to follow the argument.

Leżą zwłoki wędrowca, zbędne sobie zwłoki.
Przewędrował świat cały z obłoków w obłoki [...]
A on biegnął wybrzeżami coraz innych światów (“Topielec”, PZ p. 165, Ł)²¹.

Самому себе чуждое мертвое тело
Препокойно лежало и в небо глядело.
Был то странник. Он мир пересек многократно [...].
Странник мчал по окраинам новых вселенных
(“Утопленник”, ВВ p. 103)²².

In Leśmian’s work, the eponymous figure of the poem “Wiatrak”, that is, a Windmill, is a paradoxical, immobilised wayfarer as well. In Sergei Petrov’s version published in *Безлюдная баллада*, it becomes a ‘peregrinator’ (the folkloric-poetic word *калика* means a pilgrim or a mendicant singing devotional songs²³):

Wędrowcze, w jednym miejscu zatkwiony kosturem (“Wiatrak”, p. 182, Ł).

Костылем ты уткнулся на месте, калика (“Ветряк”, ВВ p. 110).

The characters of “Ballada dziadowska” [The Beggarly Ballad] and “Dusiołek” [Chokester] roam the world as well, which is conspicuous in the new translations, again by Petrov:

Szedł skądkolwiek gdziekolwiek — byle zażyć wywczasu
(“Ballada dziadowska”, PZ p. 198, Ł).

Шел незнамо откуда над рекой по угору (“Дедовская баллада”, ВВ p. 115).

21 B. Leśmian, *Poezje zebrane*, ed. A. Madyda (Toruń: Algo, 2000). All quotations from original texts come from this edition, with page references given in the main text after the abbreviation PZ. Further abbreviations serve locating a given poem within Leśmian’s oeuvre and refer to the titles of his original volumes: SR stands for *Sad rozstajny*, 1912 (*The Crossroads Orchard*), Ł — for *Łąka*, 1920 (*The Meadow*), NC — *Napój cienisty*, 1936 (*The Shadowy Potion*), DL — *Dziejba leśna*, 1938, posthum. (*The Sylvan Befallings*); the volume titles here correspond to those used in the editions translated by Marian Polak-Chlabicz, while some of them have a longer tradition in English translations of or discourse on the poet.

22 Лесьмян, *Безлюдная баллада...*; henceforward all references to this edition are given in the main text and are indicated by the abbreviation ВВ.

23 See dictionaries, e.g. С. Кузнецов (ed.), *Большой толковый словарь русского языка* (С-Петербург: Норинт, 2004).

Szedł po świecie Bajdała,
Co go wiosna zagrzała — (“Dusiołek”, PZ p. 201, Ł).

Шел по свете Байдала,
Как весна пригревала (“Давилко”, ВВ p. 117).

In “Dąb” [The Oak], toadstools ‘strut [each] on one leg into nothingness’ in the face of death. The overlap between the Polish term for a mushroom’s stem (*nóżka*, morphologically a diminutive) and the word for ‘leg’, *noga*, allows Leśmian to create a fresh poetic image which also resonates with the expression ‘to have one foot in the grave’ (Pol. *jedną nogą w grobie*). In the new translation by Irina Polakova-Sevostyanova, toadstools ‘limped away into nowhere’ (*хромать* — ‘to limp’):

I grał marsze żałobne muchomorów, co **kroczą**
Jedną nogą donikąd, kiedy zgon swój zoczą (“Dąb”, PZ p. 224, Ł).

Как под марш погребальный мухоморы, **хромая**,
В никуда уходили, молча смерть принимая (“Дуб”, ВВ p. 128).

In Leśmian’s poetic world(s) disability need not hinder roving, however. In “Żołnierz” [The Soldier], after all, ‘two God’s cripples’ (orig. “dwa boże kulawce”), the mutilated protagonist together with the clumsily sculpted statue of Christ, ‘leaped as far as to heavens’ (“doskoczyli do samego nieba”, PZ p. 253, Ł). This is fully conveyed in Petrov’s translation, where the same content is phrased as “два хромца беспалых” [...] “Допрыгались наконец до самого неба” (“Солдат”, ВВ p. 142), and no less so in that of Maria Petrovykh, reprinted from ST and in ВВ placed in the commentaries section (ВВ p. 738—740).

The theme under discussion is also present in the translations by Anatoly Geleskul — old and new ones — which Bazilevsky privileges through his selecting and editorial decisions. Geleskul even amplifies the motif by introducing the term ‘pilgrim’ (*пилигрим*) into the translation of “Przyjdę jutro, choć nie znam godziny...” [‘I will come tomorrow, though I know not the hour...’]:

Lecz ty jedna mnie poznasz niezłomie,
Gdy twe imię śpiewając w doliny, [...]
Przyjdę [...] (PZ p. 45, SR).

Но узнаешь меня в **пилигриме**

Под лохмотьями горе-пророка — (“Я приду”, ВВ р. 66).

The concretisation ‘you will recognise me in the pilgrim...’ is, however, at odds with the meaning of the poem, whose lyrical subject does not know in what appearance he will return to his beloved: cf. ‘I do not know the face, that will be my face’ (orig. “Nie znam twarzy, co będzie mą twarzą”), a declaration retained in the Russian rendition.

Gennady Zeldovych’s introducing an occasional word into his translation of the piece “Przedwieczerz” [Eventide] also contributes to the strengthening of the motif, while raising no comparable doubt. In the original, a well is said to tempt one to bow over it ‘while going’; in the Russian text it entices ‘one who passes by’:

I nie śmierć, ale studnia, gdzie mrok dno pomylił,

Chce, byś **idąc**, skroń ku niej bezwolnie nachylił... (PZ p. 415, NC).

Не гибель, а просто сомревший колодец

Манит, чтоб щекою прильнул **мимоходец**... (“Предвечерье”, ВВ р. 222).

The exemplification above, though merely selected, proves sufficiently that the motifs of the road, the journey, the pilgrim or walker are very strongly present in the volume *Безлюдная баллада* as a result of editorial choices, and translators preserve or even emphasise them in texts, which makes the painting reproduced on the cover a very fitting foreshadowing of the book’s content. In addition, the blurred contours, the hazy background, the intermingling of muted colours, the play of light and shadow (a suggestion of sunset? the moon’s disc in the background?) all relate Zak’s work to the moods, colour vocabulary and settings of Leśmian’s poetry. What aligns Zak’s painting with the poetics of Leśmian’s works is also his Wanderer’s attire, suggesting that the scene is set in indefinite past. The walking stick and hood could link him to a particular wanderer of Leśmian’s — the Windmill. The line from Petrov’s version quoted above opens with the noun *костыль*, ‘stick’, while two lines further the hood is replaced by *шлык*, i.e. an ancient headgear, conical in form — as in the painting²⁴.

Let us turn to the illustrations inside the volume, which, as has been mentioned, require identifying in terms of titles and provenance. The frontispiece

24 Cf. С. Кузнецов (ed.), *Большой толковый словарь...*, meaning listed as the second of the two.

of the section “Поэзия” (Poetry) is a graphic work by Edward Okuń depicting a female figure playing the violin, or perhaps a fiddle, her flowing hair blending with the landscape (cf. il. 3). Okuń (1872—1945), an artist associated with the Art Nouveau style, created vignettes and covers for, among others, *Chimera*, an acclaimed Polish monthly devoted to literature and art, edited by Zenon Przesmycki in Warsaw in the period 1901—1907. Leśmian, too, collaborated with *Chimera*: he published in it (only several times, but throughout the magazine’s existence — from its second issue to its final one) and participated in editorial work on it²⁵. The illustration reproduced in *Безлюдная баллада* comes from this very periodical. It was published in volume VII, issue 20/21 (May—June 1904), on p. 308 — at the end of Leśmian’s prose tale “Z dziejów Czarnego Grodu” [From the History of the Black Town] — the last of his “Legends of Longing” (*Legendy tęsknoty*).



Il.3. E. Okuń, a vignette from *Chimera* 1904, vol. VII, issue 20/21, p.308 (BB p.11, „Поэзия”)

It is not, however, an ornament inspired by Leśmian’s text — it had previously been reproduced in the second volume of *Chimera* (1901, issues 4—5) several times in Jan Kasprowicz’s poem “Salve Regina” (pp. 53, 58, 67), then as a vignette for Julius Zeyer’s sketch “King Cophetua” in Przesmycki’s translation from Czech (1902, vol. VI, issue 16, p. 4). Perhaps this is why Okuń’s artwork does not organically fuse with the verse in *Безлюдная баллада*. Although the vignette features the motif of reflection (here: trees in a river), which was characteristic of the poet, other elements may be dubious. Hair, eagerly showcased by Art Nouveau artists because of its flowing lines, is not an element of bodily beauty of particular interest to Leśmian²⁶. However, this motif is justified by the translations present in the Russian volume: “Koca”, i.e. ‘The Braid’

25 Cf. J.M. Rymkiewicz, “Chimera,” in *Leśmian. Encyklopedia...*, 41—48.

26 Cf. the hierarchical list compiled by Marian Stala: M. Stala, “Jam jest miejsce spotkania,” in M. Stala, *Trzy nieskończoności. O poezji Adama Mickiewicza, Bolesława Leśmiana i Czesława Miłosa* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 102.

(orig. “Warkocz”), in a new rendition by Polakova-Sevostyanova (BB p. 155) or the sonnet from the sequence “Ангелы” (orig. “Aniołowie”), in which the eponymous Angels display loose hair (“рассыпав волос копны”, BB p. 85) in Marina Koreneva’s translation, just as they like to do according to the original (“Lubią [...] / Kłękać i włosy rozpuszczać do kolan”, PZ p. 83). When Leśmian writes of an abandoned lover: ‘You sweep the dusty road before us / With your **braids**, with your braids, with your braids!’, in Bazilevsky’s version the hair becomes unplaited (*волосы* — ‘hair’):

Pylną drogę zamiatasz przed nami
Warkoczami, warkoczami, warkoczami!
 (“Com uczynił, żeś nagle pobladła?...”, PZ p. 497, DL)

“Пыль дорог метешь перед нами
Волосами, волосами, волосами!”
 (“Что я сделал, что ты побледнела...”, trans. A. Bazilevsky, BB p. 268)

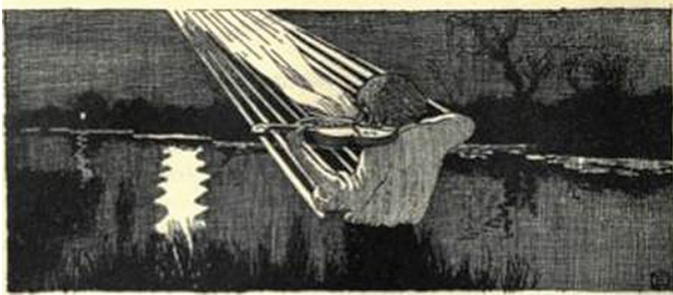
The importance of music to Leśmian’s work is undeniable, but it is most often song and chant that are referred to, as in the volume’s subheading, *Слова для песни без слов*, which translates as ‘Words for a song without words’ (orig. poem title: “Słowa do pieśni bez słów”, PZ p. 464). The violin, however, appears in his verse just once: the protagonist of the ballad “Matysek” plays it, but this piece is not to be found in the publication under discussion. The only fiddle about which the Russian recipient will read is mediated, as unreal as the camel and robbers in a desert, all imagined by a child at a family breakfast, and Leonid Martynov’s translation leaves no doubt that it was the sunshine that painted all these on a wall:

A słońce malowało mi na ścianie [...]
 Złote **skrzypce** — złote otchłanie... (“Wspomnienie”, PZ p. 434, NC).

Утром свежим на стене рисовало
 Солнце сверкающей кистью
 Золотую **скрипку**, золотое покрывало
 (“Воспоминание”, BB p. 230, repr. from ST).

The frontispieces of the other sections — ‘Theatre’, ‘Prose’ and ‘Essays’ — also use Okuń’s vignettes. In the case of the drawing that opens “Tearp” (BB p. 279), not only the figure of a boy with a violin is justified this time, but also the mysterious rays and the hands outstretched towards the musician,

given that Leśmian's dramatic output is represented here primarily by the "mimic fairy tale" *Skrzypek opętany* [The Possessed Fiddler], translated by Andrei Bazilevsky as *Неустовый скрипач*. As Leśmian's theatrical works were not published in the author's lifetime, it is impossible to select an illustration originally associated with them. In *Безлюдная баллада*, the theatrical pieces are preceded by a reproduction of the heading for *Baśń o rycerzu Pańskim* [The Tale of the Lord's Knight] — the first of the "Legends of Longing" (*Chimera*, vol. VII, issue 19, p. 42).



Il. 4. E. Okuń, illustration for *Legendy tęsknoty*, *Chimera* vol. VII, issue 19, p. 42 (BB p. 279, "Tearp")

The prose section contains the last of these tales, "Из истории Черного Града" [From the History of the Black Town, orig. "Z dziejów Czarnego Grodu"], translated by Bazilevsky. However, the drawing used here as an illustration is the one that once served as the general frontispiece for the "Legends of Longing", and through the figure of the knight is more closely associated with the first piece of the cycle (*Chimera*, 1904, vol. VII, issue 19, p. 41). In turn, the vignette for "Z dziejów Czarnego Grodu" depicting an architectural composition (*Chimera* 1904, vol. VII, issue 20/21, p. 300) in *Безлюдная баллада* opens the section devoted to essays (BB p. 599), with which it does not correspond thematically²⁷.

What was not used, however, were illustrations to Leśmian's poems published in *Chimera*, despite the fact that they could perhaps have provided a more adequate visual framing. Let us state that a woodcut by J. Stanisławski was used as the heading of "Ogród zaklęty" [The Enchanted Garden] (vol. I, issue 2, p. 289), and the cycle "Z księgi przeczuc" [From the Book of Intuitions] was again decorated by Okuń (vol. V, issue 15, pp. 384 and 400). Not including these artworks could indicate that when choosing the visual paratexts for *Безлюдная баллада* perhaps only one year's issues of *Chimera* were

²⁷ It was also reprinted in *Chimera's* last volume, heading Leśmian's poetic cycle *Oddaleni* [Far-Awaying Ones] (vol. X, issue 28/29, p. 248).

available, those of volume VII. It may also have been the source from which the translation was made of the prose tale, which had not been republished in Polish for a long time (since 1962).



Il. 5. E. Okuń, frontispiece for *Legandy tęsknoty*, *Chimera* vol. VII, issue 19, p. 41 (BB p. 357, “Проза”)



Il. 6. E. Okuń, illustration for *Legandy tęsknoty*, *Chimera* vol. VII, issue 20/21, p. 300 (BB p. 599, “Әссе”)

Should Okuń’s illustrations seem over-stylised and too sophisticated in comparison with Leśmian’s writing, it is worth remembering that the poet did not formally belong to the group of artists associated with *Chimera*, and published there works that were, in a way, adapted to the profile of the magazine — Parnassian and different from the texts which today are considered most characteristic of him. When *Chimera* ceased to appear, not only had Leśmian not yet written his best works, but he had not even published his first collection, *The Crossroads Orchard* (*Sad rozstajny*, 1912). Okuń, in turn, is said to have fully realised in graphics the periodical’s symbolist and Art Nouveau ideals, while offering visual interpretations and syntheses of the verbal material, with a deliberate focus on emotional extremes²⁸.

28 Cf. E. Sączko, “Styl ilustracji Edwarda Okunia w czasopiśmie „Chimera”,” *Annales Academiae Paedagogicae Cracoviensis — Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia*, III (2005): 299—313.

Let us return to poetic texts within *Безлюдная баллада*. Each of the sections corresponding to the volumes published by the poet, as well as the selection of uncollected poems that opens the publication, has its title page adorned with a print by Stanisław Wyspiański depicting a plant motif. Wyspiański (1869—1907) undoubtedly had an influence on his entire epoch, or at any rate on all artists in some way inclining towards symbolism. However, it is difficult to establish whether the author of *The Meadow* had anything in common with him other than understanding art as mythopoeia. It is worth noting that Leśmian reviewed a production of Wyspiański's tragedy *Klątwa* [The Curse] and included his plays in the repertoire of Teatr Polski (The Polish Theatre) in Łódź, of which he was literary manager during the 1916/1917 season²⁹. In several cases both artists also collaborated with the same periodicals — apart from *Chimera* it was the Kraków-based *Życie*. It is from this magazine that five, or perhaps all, of Wyspiański's graphic works used in *Безлюдная баллада* come.

I propose to consider Wyspiański's drawings as a whole set, rather than ascribing them to specific cycles of poems. Such an approach is suggested by the positioning of the first of the illustrations, which depicts dandelion flowers (cf. il. 7)³⁰. It is the frontispiece of the section *Два белые крыла* [Two White Wings], containing dispersed works by Leśmian — translations together with his own Russian-language poems (the title, given by the editor, is drawn from the sixth poem of the cycle *Лунное похмелье* [Drunk on Moonlight], written in Russian). Field flowers and weeds are not typical of Leśmian's early, aestheticising poetry. However, dandelion (Pol. *dmuchawiec*) does appear in a later poem — only once, but in an excellent and well-known one. It is “Ballada bezludna” [Peopleless Ballad], which certainly draws the Russian readers' attention as the title piece of the collection. Dandelions appear in both of the translations presented in the 2006 volume:

I **dmuchawiec** kroplą mlecza błyskał w zadrach swej łąciny (PZ p. 226, Ł).

Одуванчики плескали молоко в колючки зноя
 (“Безлюдная баллада”, trans. A. Geleskul, BB p. 130).

Заусенились на солнце **одуванчиковы** снасти
 (“Безлюдная баллада”, trans. G. Zeldovych, BB p. 735).

29 P. Łopuszański, *Leśmian* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000), 123.

30 Or the field milk thistle, but the two are identified in popular perception, both of nature and its representations. Leśmian actually alludes to the milk sap in both, which also gives milk thistle its Polish name, *mlecz* — see the second bolding in the quote below the paragraph (Geleskul compresses milk sap [*млечный сок*] to ‘milk’, *молоко*, with the reference, I believe, remaining understandable).



Il. 7, 8. S. Wyspiański, *Kwiaty mlecza; Irysy* — graphic art for *Życie*, 1898

Two other decorative prints require a brief comment only. The frontispiece of *The Crossroads Orchard* (Russian: *Сад на перепутье*, BB p. 55) features irises (cf. il. 8). The ornamental iris seems at odds with Leśmian's floral choices, inasmuch as Urszula Kęsikowa emphasises the simplicity of his imagery involving plants³¹. The second of Wyspiański's drawings must therefore be regarded as not very happily chosen. In contrast, the rose, which opens the segment *The Shadowy Potion* (*Студеное питье*, BB p. 175), despite some shifts of imagery in translation, remains an appropriate visual counterpart to Leśmian's poetic vision.

As “the poet of the meadow”, on the other hand, he receives a perfect match in the third of these illustrations: the section *Луг* (*The Meadow*, orig. *Łąka*) opens with an image of cornflowers (BB p. 101, cf. il. 9). In the title poem, about the meeting and union between the human speaker and the Meadow, these flowers feature prominently in Polish and so they do in Sergei Shorgin's rendition:

Rozróżniając na óslep **chabry** od kąkoli (“Łąka”, part I, PZ p. 303, Ł)

Ты, на ощупь отлича

Васильки от иван-чая (“Луговина”, trans. S. Shorgin, BB p. 167).

A pierś moja tej nocy **chabrami** porośla (part VI, PZ p. 313, Ł).

Луговина-чаровница

Мою грудь в **васильковый** лужок превратила! (BB p. 173).

31 U. Kęsikowa, “Leksyka roślinna w poezji Leśmiana,” in *Twórczość Bolesława Leśmiana. Studia i szkice*, eds T. Cieślak, B. Stelmaszczyk (Kraków: Universitas, 2000), 392.

In the second extract, cornflowers have grown overnight on the lyrical subject's breast. In the translation the speaker discovers that the Meadow's spells have turned his chest into a 'cornflower lea'.

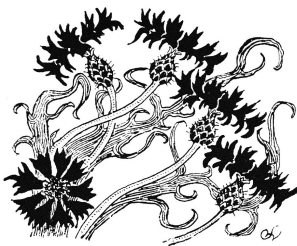
Nevertheless, for example, in Geleskul's translation of "Piła" [The Saw], the cornflower has been replaced by heather (BB p. 123). This translator also removes cornflowers (and flowers in general) from the early poem "Przyjdę jutro..." [I'll come tomorrow...], which already employs the same metaphor as in the later "Łąka", as well as from "Miłość stroskana" [Love Distressed], where they turn into rue (*рута*):

Duch mój, **chabrem** porośły i wrzosem
Burz zapragnął, co chłodem go zwarzą! ("Przyjdę jutro...", PZ p. 45, SR).

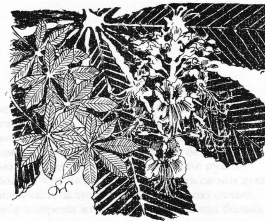
Грозовая, ночная, лесная,
В сумрак бора душа моя канет ("Я приду", BB p. 65).

Dawnoś to w zbożu rwał **chabry** i maki? ("Miłość stroskana", PZ p. 517, DL)
Давно ли шел за **рутой** на покосы? ("Тоскующая любовь", BB p. 275)

Through lexical choices — not only Geleskul's — the frequency of mentions of cornflowers decreases quite significantly in the Russian macro-text of Leśmian's poetry. Thus, the illustration which would seem most natural in an original edition of the poet's verse is no longer so obvious in the Russian publication.



Луг

Лесное
действие

Il. 9, 10. S. Wyspiański, *Chabry; Kasztan* — graphic art, as used for frontispieces
in BB, pp. 101, 263

The visual complementation seems hardly matching in the case of the drawing of chestnut leaves and blossoms which is aligned with *The Sylvan Befallings*

(*Лесное действо*, BB p. 263, cf. il. 10). The chestnut tree was important for Wyspiański (the habit of the leaves makes them a highly expressive graphic motif, and these trees were part of the scenery of Kraków, the city where the artist lived and which features in his verbal and visual works), whereas it does not appear even once in Leśmian's poetry. In Russian, it was introduced into "Leśmian's botany" by Geleskul, when he rendered "Wieczór" [Evening] yet for the 1971 volume:

Drobne okno otwórz niespodzianie,
 Niech zobaczę twe łóżko przy ścianie!
 Taka cisza, że nie poznać świata —
 Jeden tylko na **dębie** liść lata (PZ p. 411, NC).

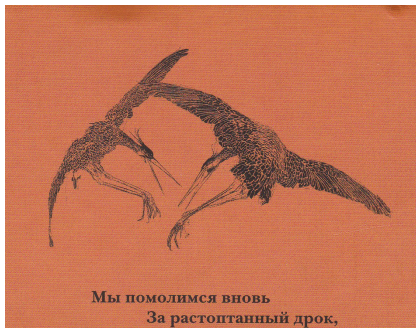
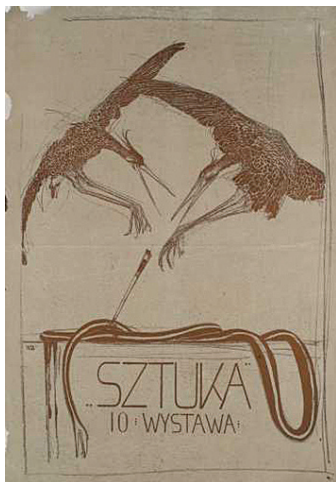
Распахни негаданно-нежданно
 Мне окошко в зелени **каштана!**
 Тишина — как на земле нездешней,
 Только лист летает на **черешне** ("Вечер", ST p. 204, repr. in BB: p. 219).

In the translation, an oak has apparently split into a chestnut and a cherry tree, with the two names of the trees motivated solely by rhyme (*нежданно — каштана; нездешней — черешне*), while their co-occurrence violates the logic of the imagery in the poem. Reprinting the text in the edition under study does not substantiate the choice of the illustration, especially given the indicated weakness of this version. A plant motif much better matched to the poems would have been an oak leaf, or a maple leaf — expansive as the latter tree is in Russian translations.

Also noteworthy is the image of two rather menacing-looking birds placed on the back cover. It is a fragment of a work by Wojciech Weiss (1875—1950) — a 1905 poster for the 10th exhibition of the Society of the Polish Artists "Sztuka" (cf. il. 11 and 12). It should be noted that Leśmian spent the year 1905 in Paris and Brittany, so he could not have had much to do with the exhibition, held in Kraków — therefore a link, if there is one, has to be sought on a plane other than the biographical one.

The poster depicts two herons over the body of a snake pierced by a paintbrush. Magda Czubińska reminds art viewers that "Like other snake-hunting animals, the heron represents the forces of good and wisdom"³² (trans. mine).

32 M. Czubińska [online], "Sztuka — 10. Wystawa," The National Museum in Krakow — Digital Collections, <https://zbiory.mnk.pl/pl/wyniki-wyszukiwania/zaawansowane/katalog/325415>, accessed 25.09.2022.



Il. 11. W. Weiss, poster for the 1905 “Sztuka” exhibition

Il. 12. BB back cover — fragment of Weiss’s poster

By contrast, the reproduction as cut for the back cover of *Безлюдная баллада* gives the impression that the birds are fighting each other. Do any texts justify such an expressive scene? It has nothing to do either with “Pieśń o ptaku i cieniu” [The Song of the Bird and the Shadow] or with the general symbolic use of birds, which in Leśmian’s work often become associated with grief and death (as in the poems “Śmiercie” or “Brat” — ‘Deaths’, ‘Brother’). On several occasions, Leśmian refers to birds of prey: the hawk (cf. “W słońcu”, “Spotkanie” — ‘In the Sun’, ‘Meeting’) or the raven (it is ‘the only spectator of emptiness’ in “Bałwan ze śniegu” — ‘The Snowman’), and these images have been retained in the Russian translations, but they do not evoke the associations with aggression that the fragment of Weiss’s poster imposes. The motif from the cover can perhaps only be linked to the translation of “Zielona godzina” [The Green Hour] by Sergei Shorgin:

Как свой **клюв** опускает **болотная птица** —
 Душу ввергну в трясины, где жабы дыханье,
 Чтоб познала **природы нутро до конца** (“Зеленый час”, part II, BB p. 69).

A comparison with the original makes it clear that in this case the translator has “sharpened” the imagery:

Duchu mój, wrażeń ciebie, niby **dziób bociani**,
 W mokradła, żab oddechem nabrzmięła i wzdęta,
 Byś poznał woń pod ziemią zaczajonych wód! (part II, PZ p. 51, SR).

The familiar stork (*bocian*) is replaced with a generalised ‘marsh bird’ (*болотная птица*). Moreover, the translator assigns a much greater significance to the activity described by means of the comparison with a bird’s beak (Polish: *dziób*; Russian: *клюв*). In the Russian text ‘driving the soul — like a beak — into the deep water’ is meant to enable one to get to know ‘the inner side [entrails?] of nature all the way through’. Thus, it becomes an epistemological activity, which at least partially legitimises the illustration. However, are cognitive actions linked to aggression in Leśmian’s work? In his original oeuvre, it is man who succumbs to nature rather than the other way round — this is evidenced by the way in which exploring “Greenness” ends in death in “Topielec” [The Drowner], as well as by the joyful hierogamy of “The Meadow”. The use of the fragment of Weiss’s poster must therefore be considered a controversial editorial move.

Let us summarise the considerations on the double transfer of modernism as implemented through the visual aspects of the volume *Безлюдная баллада*. The cover is a very good announcement for the book: its suggestion that the motif of the wanderer will be profiled in the selection of texts and in the translations is vindicated by the textual content, and emphasising this aspect is itself artistically justified. The illustrations within the volume, however, do not always connect harmoniously with the poems. Sometimes this discrepancy is due to translational shifts, as in the case of the cornflower, in other instances the choice of illustrations as such is highly debatable (the iris, the chestnut). The use of graphics with floral motifs might seem an editorial safe bet with regard to Leśmian, who is strongly associated with imagery involving trees and flowers. However, the examples reviewed prove that precisely with a poet who attached such great importance to “greenness”, editors need to exercise particular caution when selecting illustrations featuring plants.

The cases of the chestnut or Weiss’s poster, in turn, show that translators’ texts can influence the graphic design of translated books not only when formed by a foreign illustrator unfamiliar with the originals³³, but also when the visual material is drawn from the polysystem of the source culture. It should be noted that the works by Polish artists selected for *Безлюдная баллада* are themselves very representative examples of their authors’ subject matter and

33 Cf. D. Yermolovich, “As you translate so shall you draw,” *Knight Letter*, no. 97 (2016): 11–22 (see esp. pp. 11, 13, 16). With respect to translations of Leśmian’s poems in the 1971 collection *Стухи*, which carried xylographies commissioned from a Russian artist, such an influence is explored in: M. Kaźmierczak, “Leśmian po rosyjsku ilustrowany przez Alinę Golachowską,” in *Dialog czy nieporozumienie? Z zagadnień krytyki przekładu*, eds P. Fast, P. Janikowski (Katowice: Śląsk, 2006), 63–84.

techniques. In terms of the style and “feel” of the epoch, they convey truthful information about the source culture³⁴. However, in the absence of any commentary, they turn out to be a missed opportunity to present Leśmian — an aesthete, an art critic, in his youth a bohemian — against the background of the Polish art of his time.

Finally, does reading the collection *Безлюдная баллада* indeed result in a two-dimensional perception of Polish modernism? — For this to happen, the Russian-speaking recipient would have to take on the role of a detective, as I have done for the sake of this article. Thus, the “publishing utopia” which Bazilevsky saw as the ultimate goal of “Wahazar’s” ventures³⁵ has not been realised here. Perhaps this is because the translator, editor and publisher in one person did not take on yet another role — that of an intermedial comparatist.

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34 Cf. Liseling Nilsson, *Kod kulturowy a przekład...*

35 A. Bazylewski, “Literatura polska w słowiańskiej bibliotece...”, 113.

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Marta Kaźmierczak

Polski modernizm w podwójnym transferze: Leśmian po rosyjsku i wybory ilustracyjno-edytorskie Andrieja Bazilewskiego

STRESZCZENIE | Wydany przez Andrieja Bazilewskiego tom *Безлюдная баллада* (2006) zawiera obszerny przekrój twórczości Bolesława Leśmiana w rosyjskich przekładach. Oprawę graficzną publikacji stanowią zaś prace współczesnych poecie polskich artystów. Dokonuje się więc niejako podwójny transfer z kultury źródłowej: modernistycznych tekstów i sztuki. Wiążący się z tym potencjał nie został jednak przez redaktora tomu, będącego zarazem wydawcą, wykorzystany. Daje to impuls do zbadania, czy istotnie mamy do czynienia z celowo komponowaną artystyczną całością, m.in. czy zasadne jest wykorzystanie poszczególnych dzieł jako materiału ilustrującego utwory Leśmiana i na ile odbiorca ma szansę obcowania z podwójną dawką polskiego modernizmu.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE | Bolesław Leśmian, Andriej Bazilewskij, przekład poetycki, sztuka modernizmu, tłumaczenie a strategię ilustracyjne

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Polish Modernism in a Double Transfer: Bolesław Leśmian in Russian and the Illustrative and Editorial Choices of Andrei Bazilevsky

SUMMARY | *Bezлюдnaya ballada* (2006) is a comprehensive collection of Russian translations of the major Polish modernist author Bolesław Leśmian. The book is equipped with graphic works by important Polish artists who were Leśmian's contemporaries. However, the potential connected to such a double cultural transfer is underplayed by the editor and publisher, Andrei Bazilevsky. The aim of the article is thus to examine whether the volume is indeed composed as a meaningful bi-semiotic complex, among other things, whether particular illustrative choices are felicitous, and to what extent the recipients have a chance to taste the Polish modernism in a double dose.

KEYWORDS | Bolesław Leśmian, Andrei Bazilevsky, poetry translation, modernist art, illustration strategies in translation

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