

Żaneta Nalewajk

Leśmian Internationally: Contextual Relations

A Comparative Study



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This book shows the literary legacy of Bolesław Leśmian, the great Polish writer, as engaged in a dialogue with the tradition, and forged on the crossroads of literatures, and epochs. Exploring American, French and Russian contexts (Poe's writing, Baudelaire's *oeuvre*, Balmont's texts, the symbolist style, the bylinna tradition), highlighting the correspondences between Leśmian and the romantics (Pushkin, Gogol) as well as the modernists (Jesienin, Gorodetsky) and connecting his work to Ukrainian culture through the evocation of old Slavic folklore, the book showcases Leśmian's work as an example of inter-literary and inter-cultural transfer of aesthetics, styles, genres and motifs. A crucial outcome of this research is the codifying of a contextual analysis as a method of comparative studies.

The Author

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LEŠMIAN INTERNATIONALLY: CONTEXTUAL RELATIONS.
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Translated by Klara Naszkowska and Alan Lockwood

Edited by Tomasz Wiśniewski



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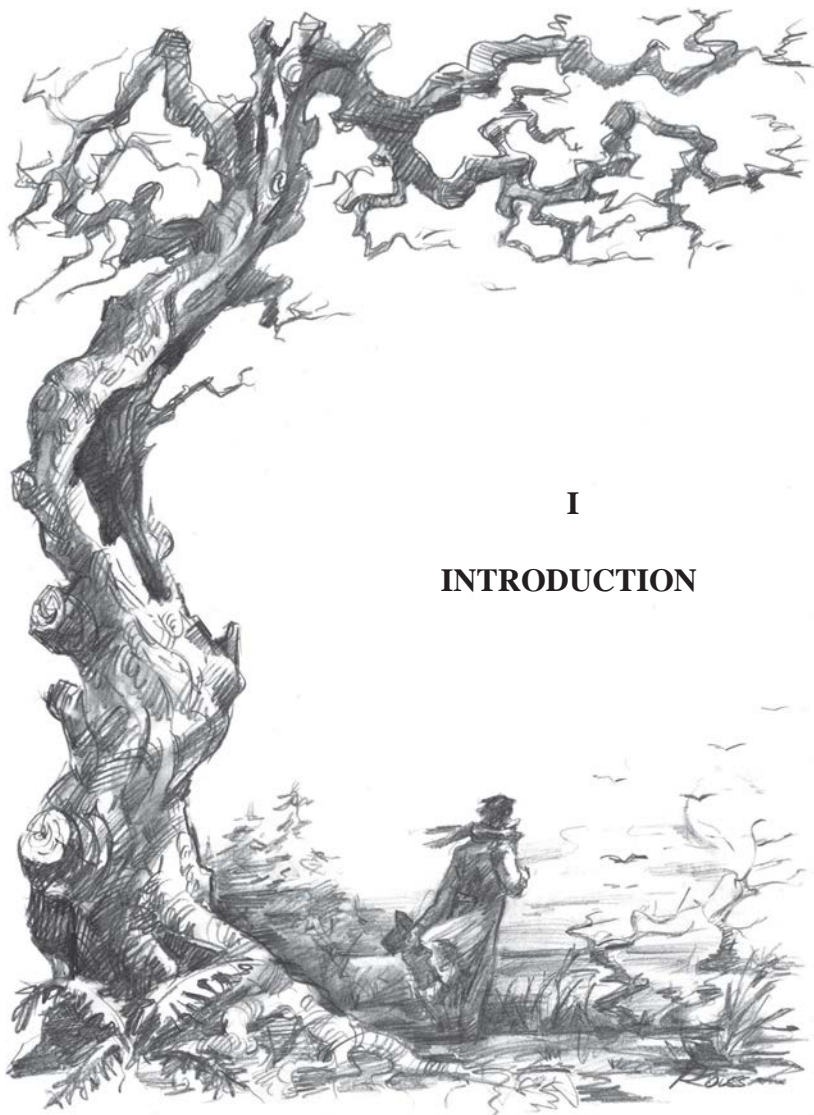
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LEŚMIAN INTERNATIONALLY: CONTEXTUAL RELATIONS
A COMPARATIVE STUDY





I

INTRODUCTION

Although his literary debut that was the 1912 volume *Sad rozstajny* [*Crossroads Orchard*] went practically unnoticed, at present Bolesław Leśmian holds in the opinion of contemporary Polish literary scholars a very firm position in the national literary canon. Two fundamental monographs, Jacek Trznadel's *Twórczość Leśmiana. (Próba przekroju)* [*The Works of Leśmian (A Cross-section Attempt)*] (1964)¹ and Michał Głowiński's *Zaświat przedstawiony. Szkice o poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* [*Underworld Presented: Essays on the Poetry of Bolesław Leśmian*] (1981),² have been followed by a constantly growing number of new interpretations of the author's literary legacy.

If, however, we sieve through hundreds of Polish and foreign studies devoted to Leśmian, searching for texts that present his detailed portrait as a writer whose *oeuvre* includes numerous references to foreign masterpieces and to cultural phenomena differing from national ones, we find just over ten items. The list of these studies written in the second half of the twentieth century would certainly include the chapter "Niektóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego a wiersze rosyjskie Leśmiana" ["Some Problems of Russian Symbolism versus Leśmian's Russian Poems"] in Seweryn Pollak's volume *Srebrny wiek i później* [*Silver Age and Later*] (1971),³ the chapter in Rochelle Heller Stone's *Bolesław Leśmian: The Poet and His Poetry* (1976),⁴ "Leśmian and the Russian Contemporary Literary Scene," and her introduction to *Skrzypek opętany* [*Mad Fiddler*] (1985),⁵ Michał Głowiński's article "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire" first published in the collection *Wielojęzyczność literatury i problemy przekładu artystycznego* [*Multilingualism of Literature and the Problems of Artistic Translation*] (1984),⁶ and Wołodymyr Wasyleńko's monograph

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- 1 Jacek Trznadel, *Twórczość Bolesława Leśmiana. (Próba przekroju)* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1964).
 - 2 Michał Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony. Szkice o poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981).
 - 3 Seweryn Pollak, "Niektóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego a wiersze rosyjskie Leśmiana," in: *Srebrny wiek i później* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1971), pp. 236-262.
 - 4 Rochelle Heller-Stone, "Leśmian and the Russian Contemporary Literary Scene," in: *Bolesław Leśmian: The Poet and His Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 147-181.
 - 5 Rochelle Heller-Stone, "Wstęp," in: *Bolesław Leśmian, Skrzypek opętany* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985), pp. 5-126.
 - 6 Michał Głowiński, "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire," in: *Wielojęzyczność literatury i problemy przekładu artystycznego*, ed. Edward Balcerzan (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy

*Поетичний світ Болеслава Лесьмяна [Bolesław Leśmian's Poetical World] (1990).*⁷

The list of such works that were written in the 21st century would include: Andriej Bazylewski's article "Baśń mimiczna Leśmiana 'Skrzypek opętany' w kontekście symbolizmu rosyjskiego" ["Leśmian's Mimical Fairy Tale 'Mad Fiddler' in the Context of Russian Symbolism"] and the article by Wasylenko titled "W kręgu rosyjskojęzycznej poezji Bolesława Leśmiana" ["In the Circle of Bolesław Leśmian's Russian Poetry"] in *Poetyki Leśmiana. Leśmian i inni [Leśmian's Poetics: Leśmian and Others]* (2002),⁸ Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz's essay "Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę. 'Piesni Wasilisy Priemudroj' Bolesława Leśmiana wobec rosyjskiej poezji symbolistycznej" ["Sofia Enchanted into a Fairy-tale Daughter of a Tsar: Bolesław Leśmian's 'Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest' against Russian Symbolist Poetry"] (2003),⁹ Anna Sobieska's *Twórczość Leśmiana w kręgu filozoficznej myśli symbolizmu rosyjskiego [Leśmian's Work in the Circle of the Philosophical Thought of Russian Symbolism]* (2005),¹⁰ and the chapter "Dwa symbolizmy" ["Two Symbolisms"] from Edward Boniecki's volume *Archaiczny świat Bolesława Leśmiana. Studium historycznoliterackie [Bolesław Leśmian's Archaic World: A Study from the History of Literature]* (2008).¹¹ This list should also include Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany's 2012 text, "Zawier(u)szony znikomek. Rimbaud Leśmiana. Recepcja nowoczesna?" ["Misplaced Nearunbeen: Leśmian's Rimbaud, a Modern Reception"], which revises the formerly undisputed conviction that the poet was strongly inspired by Rimbaud.¹²

im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1984), pp. 157-169; or in: Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*.

7 Володимир Василенко [Volodymyr Vasylenko], *Поетичний світ Болеслава Лесьмяна* (Київ: Наукова думка, 1990).

8 Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz and Witold Sadowski, eds. *Poetyki Leśmiana. Leśmian i inni* (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2002), pp. 31-44, 139-161.

9 Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, "Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę. 'Piesni Wasilisy Priemudroj' Bolesława Leśmiana wobec rosyjskiej poezji symbolistycznej," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, No. 3 (2003), pp. 27-49.

10 Anna Sobieska, *Twórczość Leśmiana w kręgu filozoficznej myśli symbolizmu rosyjskiego* (Kraków: Universitas, 2005).

11 Edward Boniecki, *Archaiczny świat Bolesława Leśmiana. Studium historycznoliterackie* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2008), pp. 7-36.

12 Katarzyna Kuczyńska-Koschany, "Zawier(u)szony znikomek. Rimbaud Leśmiana. Recepcja nowoczesna?," in: *Leśmian nowoczesny i ponowoczesny*, ed. Bogusław

Despite the fact that Polish literary scholars have assured Leśmian a spot in the literary hall of fame and recognize his work as an almost unique phenomenon in the history of Polish literature, the poet has not been a favorite subject of analysis among comparatists. This situation is reflected by the fact that, since his book debut in 1912 with *Crossroads Orchard*, only a small number of published texts have compared Leśmian's literary *oeuvre* with those of foreign authors. All the above-mentioned works take on analytical and factual characters. Their authors usually set forth theses with a status of literary criticism,¹³ and use comparison for various reasons.

First of all, comparisons have been limited to references, as in the case of Stanisław Brzozowski's essay "Miriam," in which the Polish philosopher, writer, columnist and literary critic of the Young Poland era described the difference between Novalis, Poe, Tadeusz Miciński, the Czech writer Julius Zeyer and Leśmian in a single sentence.¹⁴ Similar comparisons can be found in the book by Waław Kubacki, the Polish literary historian and critic, *Lata terminowania. Szkice literackie* [*Years of Apprenticeship: Literary Essays*], with phrases including "like in Poe" and "almost like Baudelaire." The former referred to the coexistence of symbolism and naturalism in Leśmian's poetry, the latter to the link between literary visionaries and burlesque.¹⁵

Second, comparisons were made with the intention of discrediting Leśmian, as in the review by Otto (Jan Nelken, a Polish psychoanalyst occasionally involved in literary criticism), "Wrażenia i refleksy" ["Impressions and Reflections"]. After reading *Crossroads Orchard*, the critic stated that Leśmian was "extremely influenced by French culture"¹⁶ and that, among its representatives, the poet was artistically indebted mostly to Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine. Nelken argued for Leśmian's reliance on the poetical solutions used by Baudelaire by referring to

Grodzki and Dariusz Trzeźniowski, *Radomskie Monografie Filologiczne*, No. 1 (2012), pp. 291-308.

- 13 For the topos of Leśmian's literary criticism, see: Małgorzata Górczyńska, *Miejsca Leśmiana. Studium topiki krytycznoliterackiej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011). The book includes a chronological bibliography of works of literary criticism devoted to the poet, see: Górczyńska, *Miejsca Leśmiana*, pp. 569-583.
- 14 Stanisław Brzozowski, "Miriam," in: *Kultura i życie. Zagadnienia sztuki i twórczości. W walce o światopogląd* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), p. 97 [originally published in: *Głos*, No. 52 (1910), p. 812]
- 15 Waław Kubacki, *Lata terminowania. Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1963), p. 366.
- 16 Otto [Jan Nelken], "Wrażenia i refleksy," *Prawda*, No. 43 (1912), p. 13.

the cycle “Oddaleńcy” [“The Remote Ones”]. Nelken also emphasized the secondary character of the poem “Nieznaną podróż Sindbada-Żeglarza” [“The Unknown Journey of Sinbad the Sailor”]. In this case, he identified Edgar Allan Poe’s tale “Ligeia” as the source of influence. His accusation of unoriginality was based on the discussion of a motif of the protagonists’ hair changing color, present in both Leśmian and Poe, and of the theme of murder resulting not from an act but rather solely from intention. Nelken believes Leśmian to be an epigone.

Third, a comparative method was used by writers to elevate Leśmian. This was the intention of the Austrian-Polish philologist Forst de Battaglia, who discussed Leśmian in his essay “Polnische Poesie der Gegenwart. Bolesław Leśmian” [“Polish Contemporary Poetry: Bolesław Leśmian”].¹⁷ Battaglia recognized Leśmian as a virtuoso able to appropriate models from others and fill them with wonderful new content. At the same time, he believed Leśmian to be a symbolist and a Parnassian; he discussed the poet’s inspirations from works of Arthur Rimbaud and Henry James, and listed Leśmian’s masters rooted in the Polish literary tradition: Franciszek Karpiński, Adam Mickiewicz and Cyprian Norwid. Leśmian’s cousin, Antoni Lange, polemicized with Battaglia – not quite justly – accusing him of reducing the poet’s work to a combination of influences.¹⁸

Finally, comparative studies served to show the independence of the Polish writer’s talent. Such was the case in Julian Przyboś’s essays “Poeci żywiołu...” [“Poets of the Element”] and “Czytając Supervielle’a” [“Reading Supervielle”].¹⁹ Comparison of works of Leśmian and Russian poet Sergei Yesenin was the starting point for the thesis that “the author of *The Meadow* appears to be [...] incomparable; he is the only poet of our symbolism, who created his world by himself, a sovereign creator, a creator without a beginning.”²⁰ Before that, in the interwar period, Stefan Napierski, a Polish literary critic and poet, employed the comparative method in his text “Bolesław Leśmian,” which presented the poet as “the only entirely original Polish symbolist [...] a born symbolist, impervious to trends, one who developed trends, independent from the foreign authors.”²¹

17 Otto Forst de Battaglia, “Polnische Poesie der Gegenwart. Bolesław Leśmian,” *Pologne Littéraire*, No. 6 (1927), p. 2.

18 Antoni Lange, “À propos de Leśmian,” *Pologne Littéraire*, Nos. 11-12 (1927), p. 6.

19 Julian Przyboś, “Poeci żywiołu. Sergiusz Jesienin i Bolesław Leśmian,” *Kurier Literacko-Naukowy*, No. 7 (1926), p. 8-9; Julian Przyboś, “Czytając Supervielle’a,” *Ateneum*, Nos. 4-5 (1938), pp. 708-710.

20 Przyboś, “Czytając Supervielle’a,” p. 709.

21 Stefan Napierski, “Bolesław Leśmian,” *Wiadomości Literackie*, No. 15 (1931), p. 2.

Paradoxically, the conviction that Leśmian deserves, in Czesław Miłosz's words, to "be ranked with the great figures of modern European literature"²² or even world literature, relatively rarely goes hand in hand with comparative contextual studies and comparative poetical studies. A similar situation exists with the dispute over Leśmian's symbolism, despite the fact that Leśmian's monographer and editor (with major contributions to the dissemination of Leśmian's heritage), Jacek Trznadel, stated almost a quarter of a century ago: "A comparison of Leśmian and symbolism should be a comparison of works (a task that has just been initiated in a number of studies), and not a comparison of theories, or even of a theory and poetry."²³ There is much truth to this statement, as research reduced to a comparison of two theories neglects artistic practice, while confrontation between a theory and literary work runs the risk of treating works as illustrations of theoretical concepts. One ambition of this book – not, however, the only one – is to fill the gap, at least in part, in comparative studies of poetry focused on Leśmian's symbolism.

On the other hand, the very issue of specifying symbolism (which rejects the material world and sensory cognition in favor of the world of ideas accessible by means of a symbol) is very complex. This is the case even if we do not adopt a broad definition of the phenomenon, by which symbolism is an artistic trend of the second half of the nineteenth century with precedents in the century's first half (and even in the eighteenth century) and with continuators in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Even if we consider symbolism a narrowly understood literary trend with a well-defined time frame and premises culminating in Jean Moréas' famous symbolist manifesto from 1886, the issue remains debatable of whether it can be described as a uniform, internally consistent artistic formation. After all, there are national variants of symbolism, often rivaling each other, not just in a relationship of correspondence.²⁴ Such is the case with theoretical approaches to French and Russian symbolisms that influenced the work of Leśmian.

It is pertinent to bear in mind that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Russian writers had to face with the problem of autonomy and independence of Russian symbolism, among other issues. The questions of artistic

22 Czesław Miłosz, *History of Polish Literature* (London: University of California Press, 1983), p. 351.

23 Jacek Trznadel, "Wstęp," in: Bolesław Leśmian, *Poezje wybrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2019), p. 60.

24 Cf. Anna Balakian, ed., *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984).

independence and specificity must have been relevant at the time, if only because these trends had first appeared in France, and reflection upon them was part of a broader discussion of self-determination of native culture that took place in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century. Disputes over the independence of symbolism led to a divide among representatives of the Russian symbolist movement into two camps: *Zapadniki* (*zapad*, Russian for “the West”) and Slavophiles. Dmitry Merezhkovsky and sometimes Valery Bryusov, for instance, were regarded as representatives of the former, while Vyacheslav Ivanov was associated with the latter.²⁵ Opponents of symbolism regarded it as a “late manifestation of the naive approach of *Zapadniki*.”²⁶ In contrast, opponents of Slavophilism advocated for establishing cultural contacts with the West, and for a literary and intellectual exchange of ideas allowing Russian literature an opportunity to actively participate in trends in artistic development characteristic to the West, and to move closer spiritually to the West.

Russian artists with a pro-Western orientation turned, for example, to French culture,²⁷ where symbolism was a well-developed late nineteenth century trend. Russian interest in this trend came about: pan-European skepticism towards the

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- 25 The applied nomenclature refers to a revision of categories popular in Russia in the periods 1830–1860 (in the case of *Zapadniki*) and in 1840–1870 (in the case of Slavophilism). Tatyana Yosifovna Yerochina argues that we may discuss the idea of *Zapadniki* in Russian culture even in the seventeenth century, while the roots of Slavophilism must be sought in the Middle Ages, see: Татьяна Йосифовна Ерохина [Tatyana Yosifovna Yerochina], “Традиция ‘присвоения’ чужого в ментальности и культуре России рубежа XIX–XX веков,” in: *Традиционное и нетрадиционное в культуре России*, ed. Игорь Владимирович Кондаков (Москва: Наука, 2008), pp. 451–452, 452. Yerochina also wrote that Russian philologists, when emphasizing the affiliation of poets of the so-called Silver Age to one of the indicated trends, take into account not only philosophical views of the authors but also, perhaps above all, their pro-Western approach.
- 26 Игорь Иванович Гарин [Igor Ivanovich Garin], *Пророки и Поэты*, Vol. 3 (Москва: Терра 1994), p. 423.
- 27 Valentina Alexandrovna Kryuchkova reminds us that sources of the Russian symbolist movement can be found not only in French symbolism, but also in English culture, specifically in the works of William Blake, and in German Romanticism, particularly in the works of Novalis and Friedrich Schelling. She has also argues that the precursor of the French symbolist movement, Charles Baudelaire, and his followers Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine, recognized as their predecessor the American Romantic Edgar Allan Poe, see: Валентина Александровна Крючкова [Valentina Alexandrovna Kryuchkova], *Символизм в изобразительном искусстве* (Москва: Изобразительное искусство, 1994).

idea of reason being the source of knowledge about the world, a sense of a forthcoming crisis, a turn towards the realm of feelings, a search for a new language of poetical expression, focus on the inner world, and a conviction about the existence of an intuitive bond with what constitutes the essence of external reality. For Russians, however, French symbolism was not so much a model to imitate as an impulse for artistic and spiritual development, soon to be born in the form of a specific variant as the Russian symbolist movement.²⁸

It appears that “older symbolists” contributed most significantly as theoreticians to the popularization of French symbolist literature in Russia: Merezhkovsky, the author of the article “О причинах упадка и новых течениях в современной русской литературе” [“On Reasons for the Fall and New Trends in Contemporary Russian Literature”],²⁹ Bryusov, an older Russian symbolist seen as a creator of the movement,³⁰ and Konstantin Balmont as a translator. According

28 Cf. Валентин Фердинандович Асмус [Valentin Ferdinandovich Asmus], “Философия и эстетика русского символизма,” *Литературное наследство*, Nos. 27-28 (1937), p. 11.

29 Дмитрий Мережковский [Dimitry Merezhkovsky], О причинах упадка и о новых течениях современной русской литературы,” in: *Rosyjskie kierunki literackie. Przełom 19 i 20 wieku*, ed. Zbigniew Barański and Jerzy Litwinow (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 1982), pp. 10-14. Merezhkovsky did not proclaim a new trend in Russian literature, but indicated significant tendencies in European culture that were supposed to build the fundamentals of Russian symbolism in the future. One was French symbolism, termed French Neo-Romanticism by Merezhkovsky. He particularly believed it pertinent in Russia to imitate a predilection of representatives of the movement towards subjectivization of literature and the ideological turn towards the philosophical tradition of idealism, which he saw not as a fad but as a necessary protest against positivism and a long-awaited return to interest in what is significant and eternal.

30 Thanks to Bryusov, three *Русские символисты* [Russian symbolists] almanacs were published in 1894 and 1895, which dub symbolist poetry the “poetry of the future.” According to their editor, symbolists are characterized by tendencies towards extremes and mysticism, with their poems characterized by innovativeness, illustrative aims, allusiveness and suggestiveness in the verse. Poetic works that are filled with bold tropes and figures of thought, and references to feelings that may concern a modern human being. Bryusov also expressed a conviction about the convergence of poetry and music, and emphasized that musicality is used to build atmosphere in a poem. According to him, such poetry was meant for a reader as “a milestone on the way to the invisible.” The majority of poems published in them was written by Bryusov under the pseudonyms W. Darov, A. Bronin, K. Sozontov, Z. Fuks. The almanacs included poetical works written by Alexander Alexandrovich Miropolsky (Alexander Alexandrovich Lang), Nikolai Nikolayevich Novich (Nikolai Nikolayevich Bakhtin), Erl Martov (Andrey

to Merezhkovsky, French poets undertook an exploration of the mysteries of the world and beauty, with significant aesthetic investigations; they lacked a spiritual leader, however, identified later by the Russians as Vladimir Solovyov, a Russian philosopher of the “eternal feminine,” poet and Slavophile. They recognized him as a charismatic figure, an author of poems with philosophical depth capable of setting a poetical path towards an eventual break in the spiritual impasse in culture. Merezhkovsky believed this to be possible by drawing on vital sources of religion and on ancient tradition.³¹ For this reason, French symbolism could not be the right symbolism for the Russians. Its birth proved to be a matter of the future. And this did not take long: Solovyov’s ideas quickly influenced aesthetic views and the works of the younger symbolists Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely and Vyacheslav Ivanov. Leśmian’s symbolism was identified with the latter’s concept of “concrete symbolism.”³²

What is characteristic of studies of Leśmian’s symbolism in that situation? We know the poet was interested in achievements of the French (the pre-symbolist Baudelaire, above all) and of the Russians, and, moreover, he was fascinated by the Romantic legacy. This included the Russians Alexander Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol and Poe, recognized by both the French and the Russian symbolists as the precursor of the trend. The question just posed leads to the realization that Leśmian’s work, in its entirety, cannot be reduced to assumptions of theoreticians of symbolism, just as French symbolism cannot be reduced to Russian symbolism, and vice versa. Another issue arises: how to establish a relationship between these inspirations and Leśmian’s interest in folklore and sentiment for Ukrainian landscape, discussed by the poet in an interview with the critic Edward Boyé?³³ Their discussion, leading to the conclusion that Leśmian’s *oeuvre* had an illustrative character in relation to the existing concepts, may need to be juxtaposed with a contextual analysis of his works, and then with a comparison of their poetics with texts of other authors, with the style of the period, and with the literary and cultural traditions to which he referred.

Edmundovich Bugon), G. Zaronim (Alexander Vasilyevich Gippius), Victor Estafievich Chironopulo.

31 Мережковский [Merezhkovsky], “О причинах упадка,” p. 457.

32 Sobieska, *Twórczość Leśmiana*; Boniecki, *Archaiczny świat*.

33 Edward Boyé, “Dialogi akademickie – w niepojętej zieloności. Rozmowa z Bolesławem Leśmianem,” in: Bolesław Leśmian, *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 500–501 [originally published as: Edward Boyé, “W niepojętej zieloności,” *Pion*, No. 23 (1934), pp. 6–8.]

This book presents arguments that aim to depict the artistic legacy of Bolesław Leśmian as dialoguing with tradition and with his predecessors, at the intersection of literatures, cultures and epochs.

Among the possible types of contextual relations that Leśmian's work enters, I decided to focus on two: international interliterary filiations (that is, parallels detectable in the poetics of works, determined by literary contacts) and intercultural homologies (that is, correspondences in the shape of works, motivated by contacts with a common archetype). I chose to analyze only contextual relations that influenced the shape of the works of Leśmian and have attempted to show their poetic consequences. A study of the associations of his work with the *oeuvre* of the American Romantic Edgar Allan Poe, the works of French symbolist Charles Baudelaire, the older Russian symbolist Konstantin Balmont and other Russian symbolists, concludes with a description of textual effects of these filiations, manifested in the form of literary borrowings, translation replicas, aesthetic transformations, and stylistic and structural influences. In my analysis of the intercultural homologies, I attempt to identify sources of correspondences between Leśmian's work and the works of Romantics (Pushkin and Gogol), of Russian modernists (Sergei Yesenin and Sergei Gorodetsky), and of Ukrainian culture and folklore. In this part of the book, I demonstrate that similarities in the construction of characters present in literary works by these authors result from references to common archetypes, including proto-Slavic folklore, the tradition of *bylina*, or traditional Russian song praising heroes and their achievements, and the pilgrim tradition called *kaliki perekhozhie*. I have attempted to describe transformations these archetypes have undergone over time, and to prove that references to them in Leśmian's work were manifested through structural reminiscences, metaphorical and parodist-apocryphal transformations, and lexical repetitions, as well as genre, structural and thematic modifications. When describing contextual relations, I concentrate on Leśmian's international, intercultural and inter-epochal connections.

I chose to leave the third type of contextual relations – i.e. analogies – out of my study. This decision was motivated by a conviction that a study of Leśmian's work should, first and foremost, include obligatory contexts – critical to shedding light on the roots informing his legacy in the international literary and cultural tradition. Moreover, an analysis of analogies unsupported by factual connections would result in a development of associative or even coincidental comparisons. For a study of such phenomena to be meaningful, a comparatist should work on extensive material in their analysis of similarities. An investigation of a large number of analogous phenomena allows developing a structural model, as evidenced by Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. It also

enables building a good typology of, for example, literary genres. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to formulate a concept of the relations between the phenomena under study, and to describe features that connect them, as William Jones did in his proposition of the existence of relations between European and Indian languages (his findings allowed the formulation of a hypothesis about the Proto-Indo-European language). In the case of comparative studies of international connections in Leśmian's work, however, a fragmentary description of analogies would not have enhanced knowledge.

In addition to international and inter-epochal contexts, this book focuses on continuations of Leśmian's poetics. Unfortunately, it does not include a discussion of literary continuations of international contexts, due to the absence of works that could be subjected to analysis. The reason leading to this situation could be the lack of awareness outside Poland of the existence of strong ties connecting Leśmian collections such as *The Meadow* with European and world literature. And it appears that over time, in this respect, circumstances have deteriorated for Leśmian's literary legacy. Rochelle Heller Stone wrote in her book that at the outset of the twentieth century, Russian symbolists treated Leśmian as their compatriot rather than a foreign poet. This is evidenced by the fact that his Russian poems were included in the almanac *Чтец-декламатор* [*Reader-Declaimer*] in 1909 and in 1913.³⁴ In 1912, one Russian commentator described Leśmian as "known [*небезызвестный*] in Russian literature."³⁵ Although just two years later what appears to be the most comprehensive Russian encyclopedia termed Leśmian a "Polish poet,"³⁶ in 1959 his texts were included in the anthology of Russian symbolism *Versdichtung der russischen Symbolisten* [*Poetry of Russian Symbolists*] and published in Wiesbaden.³⁷ Since then, the number of Leśmian's works translated into foreign languages (particularly into Russian³⁸)

34 Rochelle Heller-Stone, *Bolesław Leśmian: The Poet and His Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 51.

35 Quoted from: Antoni Juniewicz, "Nowe wiersze rosyjskie Leśmiana," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, No. 1 (1964), pp. 147–153.

36 Константин Арсеньев [Konstantin Arsenyev,] ed., *Новый энциклопедический словарь*, Vol. 24 (Петроград: Брокгауз и Ефрон, 1915).

37 Cf. Johannes Holthusen and Dmitrij Czyżewskij, eds., *Versdichtung der russischen Symbolisten* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959), quoted from: Heller-Stone, *Bolesław Leśmian*, pp. 151, 323.

38 For the translation of Leśmian's work to Russian, see: Marta Kaźmierczak, "Leśmian po rosyjsku – zarys recepcji," in: *Literatura polska w świecie*, Vol. 3: *Obecności*, ed. Romuald Cudak (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Gnome, 2010), pp. 181–192; <http://publikacje.ils.uw.edu>.

has grown remarkably; however, there is still much to be done in the area of stimulating the literary reception of his works. It appears that future success in this field would be measured simply by the multitude of references in foreign literature to his works. However, their absence has not prevented the achievement of another goal: an investigation of references to his works in contemporary Polish literature up to this writing. Studies devoted to this issue have allowed the determination that the continuation of Leśmian's poetics is an important component of literary culture in the present day.

The research presented in this volume was preceded by a methodological essay devoted to the issue of context, which is rarely discussed in Poland in a theoretical way.³⁹ I approached the issue in a much broader way, compared to detailed studies of Leśmian included in this book. However, typologies presented in the book's theoretical part allow – I hope – discovery of the type of comparative contextual studies used in this work.

The texts devoted to international and inter-epochal contextual relations in Leśmian's work and the continuation of the poetics of his works are results of comparative research I conducted from 2009 to 2014. Aware of the immense contribution of my predecessors to the development of Leśmian studies and the state of knowledge on relations between the poet and native tradition, I attempted to focus in my own comparative studies on issues not previously analyzed in detail, or only partially discussed. I believe that studies on the legacy of Leśmian – like the legacy itself – deserve to be internationalized in a similar way to studies devoted, for example, to Poe. As the author of this work, I will gain a sense of deep satisfaction if, in the future, Leśmian studies develop dynamically in this direction.

On the other hand, scientific comparison of Leśmian's work with texts by world-famous authors such as Poe, Baudelaire, Pushkin and Gogol does not always lead to the conclusion that all Leśmian works are equally exceptional, with no weaker works among them. A comparative analysis of Leśmian's legacy against the achievements of artists whose recognition is not only local, however, was the prerequisite for determining the area in which Leśmian's artistic achievements are unsurpassed.

pl/pl/publication/view/polski-lesmian-po-rosyjsku-zarys-recepcji/, last accessed 20.12.2014.

39 The book includes a methodological article "Problematyka kontekstów i metod badań w komparatystyce," originally published as: Żaneta Nalewajk, "Problematyka kontekstów i metod badań w komparatystyce," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (2012), pp. 51–65.

Reflections published in this volume represent the diachronic comparative studies, and stem from the observation that Leśmian's work is a great example that illustrates the phenomenon of interliterary and intercultural transmission of aesthetics, styles, genres, motifs and ideas, allowing the description of their transformations. The ambition of comparative studies on Leśmian and his contextual relations have been to expand aspects of historical knowledge about literature transcending the boundaries of a single language and a single cultural area. A comparison of Leśmian's literary output with the works of his foreign predecessors, authors who were his contemporaries, and his Polish successors has permitted, first, the identification of elements characteristic for Romanticism and symbolism in his works. Second, it has provided the opportunity to explain the significance of residual (past) codes for the development of Leśmian's poetics. Third, it has allowed to describe Leśmian's relations with his dominant contemporary literary codes. And finally, it has become possible to clarify the role played by references to Leśmian's legacy in other authors' poetic texts.

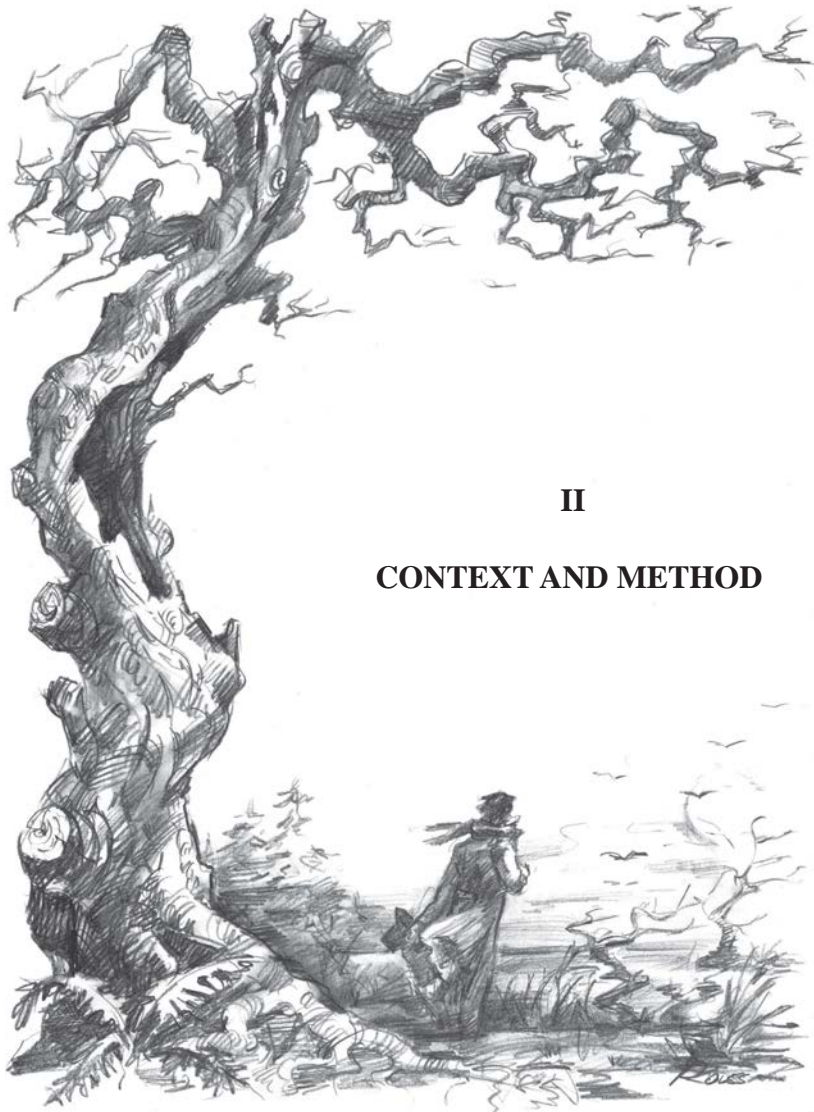
Furthermore, after situating Leśmian's works in the broad context of interliterary and intercultural relationships, it is possible to bring to light repetitive elements in his writing, while also highlighting its characteristic features. It has created a platform that enables me to show the poet's works as open to international and inter-epochal dialogue, and as awaiting new discoveries in this field.

* * *

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II

CONTEXT AND METHOD



PROBLEMS OF CONTEXTS AND RESEARCH METHODS IN COMPARATIVE STUDIES

The subject of comparative studies

In the initial part of his article “The Crisis of Comparative Literature” from 1959, René Wellek formulated a radical thesis that comparative studies are a discipline without a well-defined subject and, most importantly, without a precise methodology.⁴⁰ The question of whether comparative studies is a subject-oriented discipline or a meta-discipline remains a topic of ongoing discussion – in Poland, as well.⁴¹

As a result of these disputes,⁴² which prove the capacity for self-assessment among representatives of comparative studies, researchers today⁴³ increasingly

40 René Wellek, “The Crisis of Comparative Literature,” in: *Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 1, ed. Werner P. Friedrich (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), pp. 149–159.

41 For the evolution of Polish comparative studies, see: Henryk Markiewicz, “Badania porównawcze w literaturoznawstwie polskim,” in: *Z dziejów polskiej wiedzy o literaturze* (Kraków: Universitas, 1998), pp. 142–157; Maria Cieśla-Korytowska, “Komparatystyka w Polsce,” *Ruch Literacki*, No. 4 (1995), pp. 521–530.

42 Papers voicing various opinions in this dispute can be found in these volumes: Halina Janaszek-Ivaničková, ed., *Antologia zagranicznej komparatystyki literackiej* (Warszawa: Instytut Kultury, 1997); Tomasz Bilczewski, ed., *Niewspółmierność. Perspektywy nowoczesnej komparatystyki. Antologia* (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010); Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, ed., *Badania porównawcze. Dyskusja o metodzie. Radziejowice 6–8 lutego 1997 r.* (Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 1998); in the monographic edition *Comparative Literature at a Crossroads? of Comparative Critical Studies*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1–2 (2006); and in the quarterly journal *Tekstualia*’s special volume *Komparatystyka – upadek czy wzlot?*, No. 4 (31) (2012).

43 For example: Edward Kasperski, *Kategorie komparatystyki* (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010); Bogusław Bakula, “W stronę komparatystyki integralnej,” *Porównania*, No. 1 (2004), pp. 10–17 (an extended version of the article is available here: Bogusław Bakula, “W stronę komparatystyki integralnej,” in: *Historia i komparatystyka* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo “Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne,” 2000), pp. 7–30); Ewa Szczęsna, “Komparatystyka dzisiaj: propozycje, zagadnienia teoretyczne, rekonesanse. Wprowadzenie,” in: *Komparatystyka dzisiaj*, Vol. 1: *Problemy teoretyczne*, ed. Ewa Szczęsna and Edward Kasperski (Kraków: Universitas, 2010), pp. 5–11; Paweł Wolski, “Metaporównanie. Komparatystyka jako system samozwrotny,” *Porównania*, No. 4 (2007), pp. 40–51; Robert Weninger, “Comparative Literature at a Crossroads? An Introduction,” *Comparative Critical Studies*, Vol. 3, Nos. 1–2 (2006), pp. 11–19.

agree with the opinion that comparative studies embrace three fields, associated in the first place with a methodological reflection, in the second with empirical studies, and in the third place with the theory of comparative studies.⁴⁴ Such a definition of the area of interest allows one to broach beyond the way of thinking about the discipline in terms of oppositions, with detailed comparative studies on one side and a methodological reflection on the other. That binary attitude usually leads indirectly to the false assumption that a researcher focused on the former pays inadequate attention to the issue of effectiveness and cognitive value of methods she or he employs. If we adopt a broad definition of comparative studies, presuming that they reach beyond a single country and only one language, in order to:

examine relations occurring within:

- particular art forms (such as literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, film and theater),
- types of writing and semi-artistic practices present in popular and mass culture;

recognize relations between those art forms, types of writing and semi-artistic practices;

investigate and describe their relations with humanist fields of knowledge and awareness (philosophy, anthropology and the social sciences, for example);

specify relations between those art forms, types of writing and semi-artistic practices, and other products of humanist expression (such as folk culture or religion);

a discipline stemming from the consideration of the properties of the media/medium used to achieve such expression and undertaking a theoretical and methodological reflection⁴⁵ – then the issue of methods used in comparative studies will prove to be particularly important. And even more so when a comparatist uses more than a comparison in their studies.⁴⁶ She or he may – as the

44 See: Kasperski, *Kategorie komparatystyki*, pp. 46–57. The validity of the above-mentioned argument gains with increasing frequency an institutional recognition and is manifested in universities with the establishment of new departments dedicated to comparative studies.

45 Cf. Kasperski, *Kategorie komparatystyki*, pp. 46–57.

46 For the comparative method, see: Ewa Szczęsna, “Ontologia i epistemologia porównania,” in: *Komparatystyka dzisiaj*, Vol. 1: *Problemy teoretyczne*, ed. Ewa Szczęsna and Edward Kasperski (Kraków: Universitas, 2010), pp. 97–113; Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Badania porównawcze*.

name of the discipline suggests – go beyond the limits of disciplines understood in a narrow sense. Even when dealing with a given knowledge, she or he purports both to revise this knowledge and also to achieve a cognitive increase. For this reason, the aim of my reflections is to develop a typology of contexts and a codification of procedures – of a comparative context analysis – understood as one of the possible methods that can be used in historically oriented comparative studies.

Typology of contexts

I agree with Jerzy Bartmiński who stated that “the art of interpretation of an artistic text [...] in recent decades is mainly concerned with contextualization”⁴⁷ and interdisciplinarity. It is pertinent to note that the issue of intertextuality⁴⁸ is dynamically developing thanks to Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*,⁴⁹ though in research practice and, above all, in university education one can observe a significant increase of the area of freedom in terms of interpreting texts/phenomena of culture. In extreme cases, this freedom is presented (in a pragmatic spirit) as subject to no boundaries that could depend on the subject under study.⁵⁰ The latter, in turn, lead to statements that a literary/ artistic/ discourse/ intersemiotic text has neither signals of delimitation, nor clear rules governing its coherence or disturbing its integrity, and that there are no – and cannot be –, intertextual/ interdiscursive/ intersemiotic and other properties instilled in a text. Whenever a debate concerning the above problem wells up in literary criticism,⁵¹ it is usually focused on the issue of interpretation.

47 Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Badania porównawcze*, p. 57.

48 Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in: *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 64–91; Henryk Markiewicz, “Odmiany intertekstualności,” in: *Literaturoznawstwo i jego sąsiedztwa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1989), pp. 198–228; Edward Kasperski, “Związki literackie, intertekstualność i literatura powszechna,” in: *Teoria literatury w sytuacji ponowoczesności* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DIG, 1996), pp. 91–105; Ryszard Nycz, “Intertekstualność i jej zakresy: teksty, gatunki, światy,” in: *Tekstowy świat. Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze* (Warszawa: Universitas, 1995), pp. 59–85.

49 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

50 See: Andrzej Szahaj, “Granice anarchizmu interpretacyjnego,” *Teksty Drugie*, No. 6 (1997), pp. 5–33.

51 Cf. the following responses to Andrzej Szahaj’s paper from *Teksty Drugie*, No. 6 (1997): Henryk Markiewicz, “Staroświeckie glosy,” pp. 45–49; Michał Paweł Markowski,

With less frequency, such debates bring about attempts to create a typology of contexts, while those attempts have been undertaken both in linguistics⁵² and in philosophy of language,⁵³ and there is still a vivid ongoing discussion on the subject in these fields. In the case of the philosophy of language, the debate continues between supporters of minimalism⁵⁴ and semantic contextualism.⁵⁵

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- “Postęp?,” pp. 81–82; Stefan Morawski, “O zdradliwej swobodzie interpretacji,” pp. 51–62; see also: Włodzimierz Bolecki, “Wyznania członka lokalnej wspólnoty interpretacyjnej,” pp. 171–186 [for an extended version see: Włodzimierz Bolecki, *Polowanie na postmodernistów (w Polsce) i inne szkice* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999), pp. 397–414]. See also Szahaj’s response to the polemical voices: Andrzej Szahaj, “Paninterpretacjonizm, czyli nie ma niczego w tekście, czego by pierwiej nie było w kontekście (Odpowiedź krytykom),” *Teksty Drugie*, No. 4 (1998), pp. 91–103.
- 52 For linguistic schools founded on assumptions associated with contextualism, see: Jerzy Bartmiński, “Kontekst założony, historyczny czy kreowany,” in: *Polska genologia lingwistyczna*, ed. Danuta Ostaszewska and Romuald Cudak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), pp. 57–58. They include John Rupert Firth’s London School (referring to the anthropological functionalism of Bronisław Malinowski and offering contextual understanding of utterances as an element of the social communication process), the interactional sociolinguistics of John J. Gumperz (using the term “contextual cues” that define the interpretation framework of utterances), the interactional discourse analysis of Teun van Dijk, and lexical semantics practiced by the following scholars: Jerzy Bartmiński, Anna Wierzbicka, Ryszard Tokarski and Leon Komnicz.
- 53 At first, logicians advocated for a narrow definition of the term “context.” At the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Sanders Peirce presented a graphic representation of logical formulas, which acknowledged linguistic contexts, see: Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, ed. Max H. Fisch, Christian J. W. Kloesel, Edward C. Moore, Nathan Houser and André De Tienne (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). In Poland, the issue of the dispute between minimalism and contextualism is studied by Dr. Joanna Odrowąż-Sypniewska from the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Warsaw. Contextual studies are also conducted by Tadeusz Ciecierski, see: Tadeusz Ciecierski, *Zależność kontekstowa. Wprowadzenie do problematyki* (Warszawa: Ośrodek Badań Filozoficznych, 2011).
- 54 For example: Herman Cappelen, Ernie Lepore and Emma Borg, see: Herman Cappelen and Ernie Lepore, *Insensitive Semantics: A Defense of Semantic Minimalism and Speech Act Pluralism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Emma Borg, *Minimal Semantics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 55 Supporters of contextualism include: Charles Travis and François Recanati, see: Charles Travis, *The True and the False: the Domain of Pragmatics* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1981); François Recanati, “‘What Is Said’ and the Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction,” in: *The Semantics/pragmatics Distinction*, ed. Claudia Bianchi (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2003), pp. 45–64. Representatives of this viewpoint regard it as a remedy

Even if we adopt the assumption that knowledge can depend on context,⁵⁶ then describing that context allows us to understand what system should be the point of reference in order for findings to be valid – thus, the context must be taken into consideration. This assumption does not eliminate the following questions: what is the character of the relations?; does it lead to the fact that knowledge is aspectual, or rather that knowledge changes with context (do statements that are true in one context become false in another)? Moreover, other problems remain unsolved: is it important in the process of generating cognitive boost which context is chosen, or does the context have an incidental character in the sense that it can be replaced with any other context without compromising the quality of the study – in other words, are contexts equivalent? Furthermore, the assumption that knowledge depends on the context does not automatically answer the question of whether the studied subject includes indicators of context/s, or whether the researcher is fully responsible for choosing it and we should therefore exclude from consideration the issue of the presence of signals informing us about the speaker's intention, as well as the issue of indicators of presupposition and attribution, which may signal the context/s allowing a specification of the object under analysis.

It will be possible to verify and falsify historically oriented comparative studies when we provide answers to these questions and create a typology of contexts,.

Contexts can be classified according to methods of communication such as:

linguistic,
nonverbal,
intersemiotic,
multimedia.

The first will be important for comparative studies, especially when the compared texts were written in at least two different languages; the second if there are interferences with the first or if it is a component of the third or the fourth

to the problem of vagueness and ambiguity of utterances formed in natural language. It is relevant to add that Edmund Husserl was among the first philosophers who took an interest in the issue of differences between incidental utterances (dependent on the context) and ambiguous utterances, see: Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

56 James Pryor, in his discussion of the most frequently debated problems of contemporary epistemology, included issues of contextualism, see: James Pryor, "Highlights of Recent Epistemology," *British Journal of the Philosophy of Science*, No. 52 (2001), pp. 96-100.

one; while the components of the third and fourth always require a comparison and a functional analysis.

With reference to the character of relations between recipient and context, we may divide contexts into:

visual,
audio,
multisensory.

With reference to the presence of contextual indicators in a literary/ artistic/ discursive text, we may distinguish the following types of contexts:

- a) obligatory (when indicators are present in the analyzed text and have to be taken into account in the process of specifying the context),
- b) optional (imposed by the recipient).⁵⁷

With reference to the recipient's level of awareness of the context of a literary/ artistic/ discursive text, we may distinguish:

- a) conscious contexts,
- b) unconscious contexts (which can become conscious with more data).

With reference to function, we may distinguish the following types of contexts:

- a) aesthetic,
- b) non-aesthetic.

The literary context is one of many types of aesthetic contexts (along with painting and musical contexts, for example). It is pertinent to emphasize that within one literary text there are frequently indicators of intertextuality/ intersemiotics/ interdiscursivity that simultaneously refer to a number of different contexts (both aesthetic and non-aesthetic), which makes such a text a potential subject of comparative studies.

With reference to the purpose of contextual comparative studies, we may distinguish:

- 1) a historical situational context, which can be divided into:
 - context of reception/ reading (a reception of works written by one author by another author, for example);
 - context of the genesis of work (genetic) – in historically oriented comparative studies treated as auxiliary;

57 Cf. Nycz, "Intertekstualność i jej zakresy," p. 85.

- 2) pragmatic context (referred to if the subject of the investigation differs from the comparative historical reconstruction).

The first context will find applications as the subject of reconstruction or a system of reference in contextual historically oriented comparative analysis. The second is employed in comparative criticism, which openly constructs/ arbitrarily chooses context in order to model/ reinterpret/ validate meanings. In the first case, there is no arbitrariness in the choice of context – the pragmatic context will be regarded as the subject of analytical procedures that are supposed to describe, for example, the properties of reception of a certain work in a given time.

In contextual comparative historically oriented studies examining literary texts, it is insufficient to analyze linguistic contexts (syntax, lexis and idiom), and ones that are paralinguistic (punctuation, orthography), thematic and structural (genre, style), and to divide them into proximate contexts (present in a given text), original (characteristic of works of given authors and determining, for example, the meaning of notions used by them), and context connected with a particular epoch (characteristic of linguistic norms of a given time).⁵⁸ Factual relations are another issue requiring discussion. With reference to their presence (genetic studies are helpful in detecting relations of this kind) or absence between certain literary/ artistic/ discursive/ semiotic phenomena, we may distinguish the following contextual relations:

interliterary/ interartistic filiations (parallelisms determined by literary/ artistic contacts);

interliterary/ interartistic homologies (parallelisms determined by contacts with a common literary/ artistic archetype);

- 3) interliterary/ interartistic analogies (parallelisms determined by factors other than contacts).⁵⁹

58 I refer here to elements of typology put forth by Jadwiga Puzynina, see her: "Kontekst a rozumienie tekstu," in: *Polska genologia lingwistyczna*, ed. Danuta Ostaszewska and Romuald Cudak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008), pp. 258-259.

59 I am referring to selected elements of the typology of contextual relationships proposed by Henryk Markiewicz, while attempting to indicate the possibility of using it not only with reference to the works of literature, see: Henryk Markiewicz, "Zakres i podział literaturoznawstwa porównawczego," in: *Zbliżenia dawne i nowe. Rozprawy i szkice z wiedzy o literaturze* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976), pp. 5-19.

The first two of the above-listed types of contextual relations have significance in, for instance, comparative studies aimed at specifying the context of works written by a given author in reference to the literary/ artistic tradition of more than one linguistic or semiotic field. It is relevant to emphasize that the presence of factual relations does not automatically dictate the significance of context. It also does not guarantee that poetics are parallel, though it can be helpful in selecting and defining the context. The key role in determining an adequate field of reference for the analysis will be played by signals of intertextuality/ intersemiotics/ interdiscursivity present in a literary/ artistic/ discursive text. If it is possible to find an additional validation for them by identifying factual relations between the literary/ artistic/ discursive texts, then the choice of context will be more justified. The third in the list of contextual relations will be most significant for studies aimed at developing a systematics of literary/ artistic/ discursive/ media genres.

Contextual analysis as a method of historical comparative studies

The following description of the procedure of contextual analysis was prepared with particular attention on one trend of comparative studies: literary comparative studies (focused on historically oriented research of the features of poetics of works). However, it appears that this method, when suitably modified (due to properties of the subject of investigation), can also be used as a tool that allows an identification and description of relations occurring between other texts and cultural phenomena.

A researcher undertaking the challenge of systematic work with the context of literary works faces a number of questions that require answers. The first is the issue of the scope of meaning of the term. The context (*contextus*: Latin for “connection, relationship, course”) in the narrowest grammatical sense can be defined as a fragment of a text required for a correct understanding of a given word or a set of expressions. Thus, it is a set of specifically shaped linguistic units (or elements, such as phone, morpheme, word, sentence) surrounding another unit and allowing for the correct identification of its meaning and function. In literary studies, context is a set of references that are critical for conducting an analysis and interpreting a work of literature. In the broadest understanding, it is a set of (not only literary) factors associated with a given research subject, which determines through correct identification and recognition both the possibility and the character of the reception of work. When we concentrate on the second and third meanings, we inevitably face questions about the character of relations connecting these references and factors with the given work of literature, and

determining its meaning, as well as about the research stages contributing to the investigation conducted in line with the historical-literary comparative research.

The first necessary stage in such analysis is an immanent recognition and description of the structure of the text that could not have functioned as a work of literature had it not been for the above-mentioned linguistic and artistic structure. Second, the results of such research require placement within a context. This process involves recognition of intertextual/ intersemiotic signals included in the text, and their subsequent verification with reference, for example, to knowledge from the history of languages used in these works, then finally placing the text in a historical context. However, not every location of a literary work within a context proves to be an example of the comparative research discussed here. For instance, a work written in the poetics of a specific genre, or a motif present in the work, might be analyzed with reference to another (earlier or later) text written by the same author that manifests some similarities and some formal differences in comparison to the work under study. In that case, the context of research will be the writer's *oeuvre*. A researcher will apply a comparison; the narrowness of the context, however, will determine placing the analysis within historical-literary research. Exceptions can include the situation when a given author proves to be bilingual. Similarly, when the point of reference in an investigation of a single work or the *oeuvre* of one author is a literary trend present not only in one national literature, but regarded as a category that enables the distinction of a large group of texts (written in a particular historical period) and their artistic properties (structure, lexis, style, themes). Moreover, if we understand contexts in a broad meaning as models of thinking accepted by a (literary, artistic, scientific) collectivity, and if we assume that they are prone to conventionalization, while their primary function is to stabilize the framework of communication, then a reconstruction of those contexts will become a prerequisite for grasping that which is individual and original in literary, artistic or discursive practices, and consequentially also for rediscovering works of literature which have been unjustly underestimated by their contemporary readers.

Contextual analysis – situated within comparative literary studies understood in a strict sense, which treats historical-literary knowledge as an auxiliary method – applied as a method after defining a historically verifiable comparative basis (founded on the signals of intertextuality and factual relations, or on observations aimed at developing a classification⁶⁰ that lead to a conclusion that phenomena at once analogous and significantly diversified occur in culturally

60 The classification process is here understood, following Aristotle, as assigning certain phenomena – literary, in this case – to known classes and types of objects with definable features. This mentioned operation is a necessary condition for predicting properties

diverse areas) will apply to works written in various languages, while these languages may be – but do not need be – understood only as national languages. They may also be understood as languages of other art forms or discourses, such as languages used by certain fields of science and/or other jargons, under the condition that their elements, penetrating a given work of literature, turn out to be meaningful and sufficient for identifying the source⁶¹ they belong to. It is apposite to recognize the fact that they constitute a dynamic quality in a semantical sense, capable of changing its meaning and functioning in a new system of reference, and of acquiring literary properties they did not initially have. For this reason, in the case analyzed, we would describe not only the relations between the elements of a given work, but also the role they played in the original context, as well as the function they began to perform in the new, textual, intersemiotic or interdiscursive environment. If such processes as expanding other languages to literary texts and/or spreading of literariness to languages or other disciplines are far-reaching, these stated transformations might determine the emergence of new trends in humanistic thought or a redefinition of disciplines (their merger or division) – a reorientation of the previous approach, in other words. Contextual analysis enables us to capture such transformations.

Another type of approach to context can result in methodological mistakes that prevent any substantial cognitive findings. In literature-focused studies, there are three types of practices that are most typical in this regard. The first treats a work of literature as an illustration of discursive theses formulated within an inadequate system of reference. This situation occurs when issues of poetics are being disregarded, when an analysis of the texts' aesthetics is entirely replaced by deliberations over, for example, the ideological message included in the texts, which is subjected solely to an assessment from the perspective of the "here and now," irrespective of both a broader horizon determined by the history of ideas and reflection on the principles governing historiography. The second risk is of an analysis and interpretation of phrases taken out of context, resulting in an involuntary modernization of the work and in ignoring knowledge from, for instance, the history of the language. The third practice is connected with

of new objects with reference to the system and to the description of changes occurring during the time that the phenomena are subject to, see: Aristotle, *Categories. On Interpretation. Prior Analytics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938).

61 The source could be found not only in a particular work, discursive text or an intersemiotic phenomenon, but also their entire groups defined using, for example, such categories as genres or styles.

either underestimating the original context, specific elements of which had been used by the writer, or granting the original context excessive importance. The following examples may illustrate the potential level of complexity of literary processes.

In the case of the reception of the literary heritage of a given author, we often deal with the phenomenon of borrowings from that heritage while reading works by artists born in later epochs or other cultures, who have different linguistic background. This is the case with Bolesław Leśmian. The works of Edgar Allan Poe influenced the works of Leśmian indirectly, through translations and through literary texts and critical essays written by other authors, including Baudelaire, and through writings of Russian symbolists, particularly Konstantin Balmont. In this case, a direct comparison assessing Leśmian's literary works (he did not speak English) and his opinions about Poe against the American reception of Poe's works would be inadequate and ahistorical – in other words, pointless. Furthermore, French and Russian admirers of Poe, writing in the spirit of symbolism, remained under the influence of Baudelaire's literary heritage, adopting the majority of his opinions about the literary significance of Poe's *oeuvre* and, consequently, purporting to separate those works from their original context. It was supposed to be a kind of "punishment" of American literary circles for insufficient recognition of Poe and, as a result, for underestimating his achievements. In the light of this information, it is relevant to state that "Poe as read by Leśmian" could not have been the same author as Poe read by American Romantics or as Poe read by Russian and French symbolists (a representative investigation of this issue requires both taking into consideration the specificity of the reception and the contexts of the epoch, and also conducting extensive comparative analyses).

It is easy to imagine that a critically oriented analysis of Leśmian's translations of Poe's prose would have led to very unsatisfactory findings, provided that the criticism was based solely on a comparative study of English and Polish texts, since we are well aware that Leśmian translated from Baudelaire's French translations.

The situation has been similar in the case of folk motifs in Leśmian's works. Contrary to his claims, he did not draw them solely from original sources, (this can be proven by a philological comparative analysis and by results derived from verifiable knowledge of facts about the poet's relationships), but from Russian Romantic texts, particularly those written by representatives of Russian poetry's Silver Age. In this case, Leśmian's interest in the *bylina* tradition was significant, which also inspired Russian Romantics, due to the popularity of Slavophilism. A direct comparison of Leśmian's works with the results of field research into folk tradition would undoubtedly give the poet broader

recognition, as it would treat him as an ethnographer (which he was not), yet it would also completely falsify the image of the international literary transmission of motifs and prevent determination of the anthropological meaning of their transformations in time, and, most of all, it would result in an ahistorical study. In other words, Leśmian's borrowed literary inspirations from folk tradition were not – and could not be – equivalent to folklore understood as folk tradition, functioning within the oral forms of literature (such as folk tales, ballads, parables, proverbs), rituals, customs and artistic products of material culture.

This set of examples serves to illustrate the key principle of the method of contextual analysis. A researcher who decides to apply it has to be aware, first of all, of the historical and relative aspects of textual meanings; however, they should not confuse the latter with relativism, which would legitimize complete freedom in the choice of reference system. In the case of artistically valuable works of literature, the above-mentioned interactions cannot be reduced to influences or lax repetitions of well-known artistic solutions (if this was the case, any author inspired by the legacy of another author would merely have the status of an epigone), or to the sum of elements or to the issue of genesis and, additionally, these do not need to be one-dimensional or solely literary.

It is relevant to remember that even the most sound and thorough contextual analysis is aspectual and must remain so. However, the choice of a proper context should guarantee that the outcomes of analyses conducted by various scholars are complementary. As a result, at a preliminary stage of contextual analysis, it is necessary to resolve issues of adequacy of context and the way to optimally conduct the contextual analysis so that the viewpoints selected on the subject under study provide the most comprehensive characterization. Thus, a contextual analysis requires meta-awareness associated with the context. Its absence, however, should not be treated solely as a potential weakness of particular analysts “that is their own fault.” It could be associated with the fact that rules adding up to given patterns of thought remain transparent, invisible, beyond words for people as well as to people living in certain moments in history. This situation can be observed, for instance, in statements claiming that some texts cannot be placed in any comparative, historical or critical contexts, or that they are prone to an endless number of contextualizations, while the latter, provided that they are supposed to generate non-contradictory information, are finite and countable, even if in a given historical moment it may seem otherwise. Comparative research frequently allows for verification of the context choice.

Contextual comparative analysis of literary texts against the issue of historicity

So as to reduce the material scrutinized in comparative analysis, it is necessary to define a historical context. A literary scholar must do this if they do not want their selection to have an entirely arbitrary character, although it appears impossible to avoid arbitrariness entirely. By not restricting the field of detailed research and not attempting to define the context, the analysis would have to be conducted in perpetuum, as the horizon of the understanding of text, as with the broadly understood time horizon, remains permanently open,⁶² first and foremost, and also partially inaccessible. In the case of comparative literature, we must talk about openness because context comprises various sources of inspiration of a given author: contemporaneous and stemming from earlier epochs, along with circumstances contributing to the final shape of the text and impacting its reception (and additionally, if the work has great artistic value, it extends beyond all these sources of inspiration).

At this point, we face the issue of partial inaccessibility of context, due to the fact that knowledge of the past tends to be both aspectual and full of gaps. This problem grows along with the age of a written text. The state of affairs marks the limits of the applicability of contextual analysis. It appears that as a method it is less efficient in cases where the context requires reconstruction and a lack exists of reliable sources for doing so. In such a case, a reconstruction has the status of a hypothesis and may be conducted on the basis of data acquired from other linguistic areas, as well as from other semiotic areas. However, it is pertinent to stress that in both variants of comparative research described above, we are dealing with hypotheses. However, they are not equivalent and can be evaluated. In the first case, the more adequate the contexts taken into account in the process of analyzing a given literary phenomenon are, the greater the chance of arriving at a hypothesis of the literary past that is more comprehensive and verifiable is. The fewer the factors taken into account in a historically oriented comparative research, the more prone the statements about the past are to simplification, additions of ideological content and reductive descriptions. On the other hand, in an ideal situation we would deal with a reconstructive and comparative approach that aims at establishing a certain vision of the past that goes beyond one linguistic circle (or one artistic language, in the case of intersemiotic

62 Cf. Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991); Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz, *Metafizyczne rozważania o czasie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2003).

comparative analysis, or one discourse, in the case of discursive comparative analysis). The formulated findings will inevitably include both a set of facts and a set of probabilities, with the former dominating the latter.

Obviously, one might question the attempt to arrive at true historical findings, including comparative ones, since an analyst is also immersed in time. In fact, in their description of the subject of investigation, a historian refers to what situates on their cognitive horizon, or is within their capabilities of understanding⁶³ (connected to a certain viewpoint) as determined by a certain paradigm of thinking, the convention of the epoch, cultural patterns, etc. It is beneficial when such criticism brings about a deepening of methodological awareness; it is much worse when it hinders the development of detailed research, and retracts into shifts of attention to other issues, which may result in an enumeration of circumstances that prevent the conducting of historically oriented comparative analysis.

Certainly, historical circumstances exercise influence on how a researcher understands the subject under study. However, it does not mean that if they decide to conduct a historically oriented investigation, they should feel excused from continually attempting to become aware of their own temporality (and, in turn, the temporal quality of their findings and the historical contextualization of the cognitive process), and to create in good faith fantastic constructions resulting from ill-conceived associative comparisons, from wishful thinking, fabricated myths or pragmatically (politically, for instance) defined goals, which treat the literary past as a tool to achieve something separate from approaching (despite obvious limitations) the essence of the literary past. This understanding of the attempt to contextualize literary works written in the past and in other languages will stem, on one hand, from awareness of the process of partial deontologization of the past and, on the other, it will become a statement of opposition against complete freedom and anarchy in comparative-historical research. In the case of historically oriented comparative studies it is important, therefore, to assume this in order to establish a comparative framework, and necessary to determining the context.

For comparative studies that use the tools of historical poetics, the principal approach is diachronic – going beyond national categories. It has the shape, first of all, of comparative cross-epoch research (naturally, it does not in itself exclude the possibility of – and need for – a synchronous approach, particularly if a comparatist wants to investigate large groups of literary phenomena, which did not

63 Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006).

necessarily develop in a relatively recent past); and second, of a cross-cultural one. To the extent that is possible, these analyses will have an empirical character that requires verification due, for example, to the emergence of new sources.

Significantly, context understood as a set of points of reference necessary for grasping the meaning of a literary text is not only connected with the past but can also refer to continual artistic practices. This understanding requires an examination associated with a necessary investigation of the literary reception of a given author's legacy and indicating those aspects of their work that were artistically fertile for their followers and were subjected to creative transformations by them – despite linguistic and cultural differences, or perhaps because of them. Furthermore, it is necessary to answer questions about the tasks of elements of poetics of a given author used by their successors in the new artistic context: Why did they chose those particular components? How were they transformed? Were they subject to mythologization? How did their function change? It is also significant to establish if we are dealing with stylization⁶⁴ and whether it has a creative character, or it is but a pastiche of subject or form that introduces no new meaning to literary tradition. Is it a creative continuation, in the form, for instance, of a polemically oriented parody (of subject, genre, style), or does the text complement the original, or fulfill the function of a literary commentary with a dialogic structure?

It is relevant to emphasize once again that contextual analysis treated as a method that may be applied in an examination of literary, artistic or discursive practices with a continual character need not be limited to a selection of context based on factual relations. In the age of digital revolution – the emergence of new means of communication and their coexistence with techniques that were once dominant – context is the very medium that delivers the text to the reader and that may decisively contribute to the shaping and meaning of content, the way it is understood, and the specificity of roles in the shipper-receiver relationship.

Aims of contextual comparative analysis

In the proposed model of contextual analysis, we can distinguish the following objectives of historically and literary-oriented comparative studies:

- generation of an aspectual increase of historical knowledge (extending beyond boundaries of one linguistic and cultural area);

64 Cf. Stanisław Balbus, *Między stylami* (Kraków: Universitas, 1993).

- deconstruction of elements of national historical-literary models (revisiting the simplifications resulting from, for example, choosing too narrow a context for analysis);
- development of components that can be incorporated into cross-national historical-literary syntheses identifying the phenomenon of intercultural transmission and transformations of genres, styles, motifs, aesthetics and ideas in time;
- description (by comparison) of the presence of codes of literary culture (trends) in the works of selected authors: definition of the significance of the literary residual (past) codes, discussion of the dominant codes (contemporary to an author) and the contribution of selected authors to the development of emerging literary codes;
- description (in a broad context) of all inherent properties of the work of selected authors (capturing signals of changes in a cross-national, historical-literary process);
- recognition of the specificity of the mechanisms of contextualization and decontextualization in the cross-national historical-literary process;
- development of components of the cross-national literary taxonomy (such as genres or motifs and their functions) – in the case of studies focused on analogies, and not on filiations and homologies;
- presentation of national literatures as open (in a historically oriented process of international/ intercultural/ intersemiotic contacts) both to unidirectional and to two-directional or multidirectional dialogue with other literatures, semiospheres⁶⁵ and discourses.

In the light of the aims described above of contextual comparative analysis in literary studies, it is pertinent to remember that the tendency to identify the issue of context with the idea of influences⁶⁶ has dominated critical discourse turned

65 In the case of intersemiotic and intermedia studies not focused on literature, the aims of comparative historical research will include: a) recognizing and specifying the historical course of relations between semiospheres; b) developing foundations for an intersemiotic and intermedia historical poetics based on empirical detailed research; c) developing a dictionary of the history of intersemiotic terms; d) preparing a taxonomy (based on analogies) of intersemiotic and intermedia genres, and identifying transformations occurring within them in time (for instance, in terms of contextual relations stemming from factual affiliations and homologies).

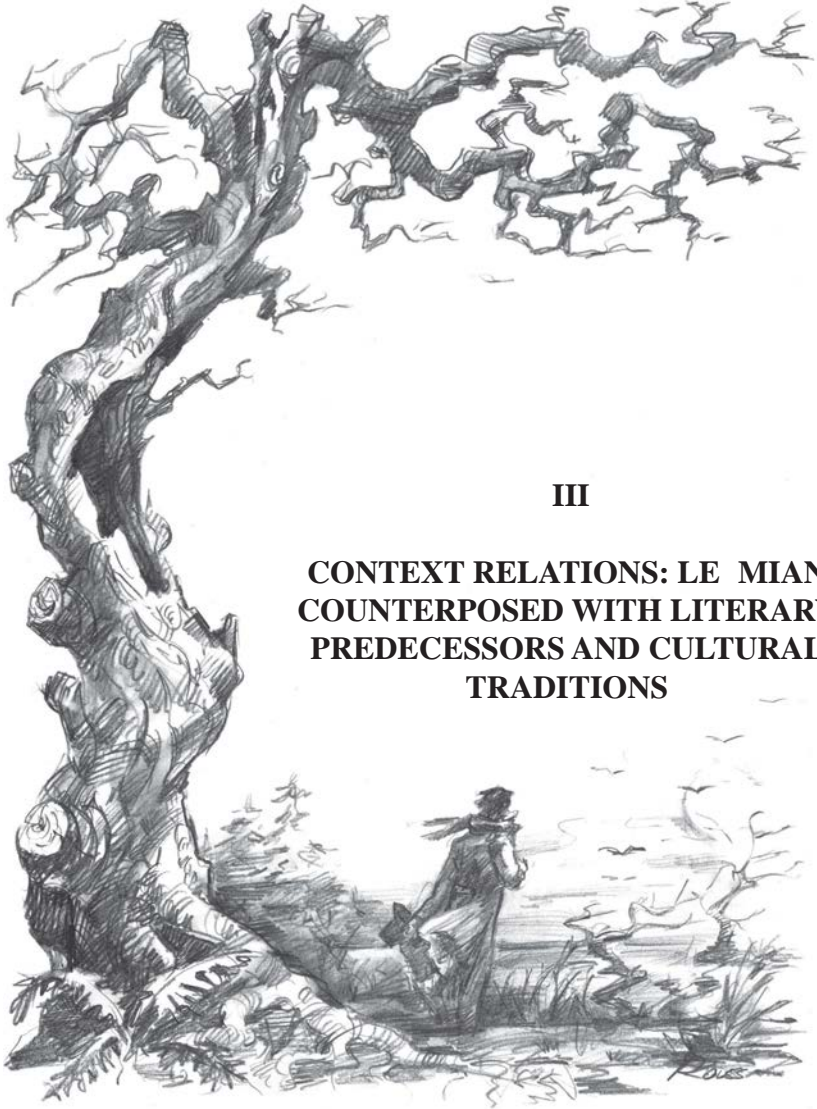
66 Cf. Wellek, “The Crisis of Comparative Literature.” The pejorative term “influenecology” was popularized in the Polish literary discourse in the interwar period. Initially, it was used mainly by literary critics. For example, it is present in Karol Irzykowski’s *Słowo wśród porcelany. Studia nad nowszą myślą literacką w Polsce* [*Elephant*

on comparative studies as well as the one functioning within its scope, not only at the birth of the traditional variant of the discipline identified with comparative literature (which formally emerged at the start of the nineteenth century), but also as late as the twentieth century, in the course of specifying research fields of comparative studies as a discipline. As a result, historically oriented comparative research has frequently been identified solely and unjustly with futile explorations in – and cataloging of – contexts. Consequently, the discipline was evaluated unilaterally, bringing about the opinion that comparative historical research is incapable of generating new knowledge, and is not utile in identifying significant widespread phenomena and in describing relations they enter.

The very attempt to systematize contexts should be enough to prove that the issue at hand is far more complex, requiring a codification of methods allowing for close comparative analysis of given material – for example, contextual analysis. Pertinent, again, is the emphasis that this method could potentially be applied to more than studying literatures in different languages. Its character may be – but does not need to be – literature-oriented. Similarly, relations between literature, semiospheres and discourses can hardly be viewed as unidirectional. The competences of the researcher should determine the scope of the applied method and its orientation – the broader the better – with the only condition being that the research is thorough. Paradoxically, the thoroughness and profoundness of analysis usually depends on the diligence of researchers and the time they can dedicate to the study, rather than – contrary to popular opinion – on the attempt to address noncomplex issues, a strategy which supposedly prevents arrival at overly far-reaching conclusions. However, the risk of oversimplification also concerns specialized research – the malpractice usually stems from insufficient determination of context, leading in turn to findings that are easily undermined. Thus, cognitive flexibility and openness and diligent work determine the success of both types of research.

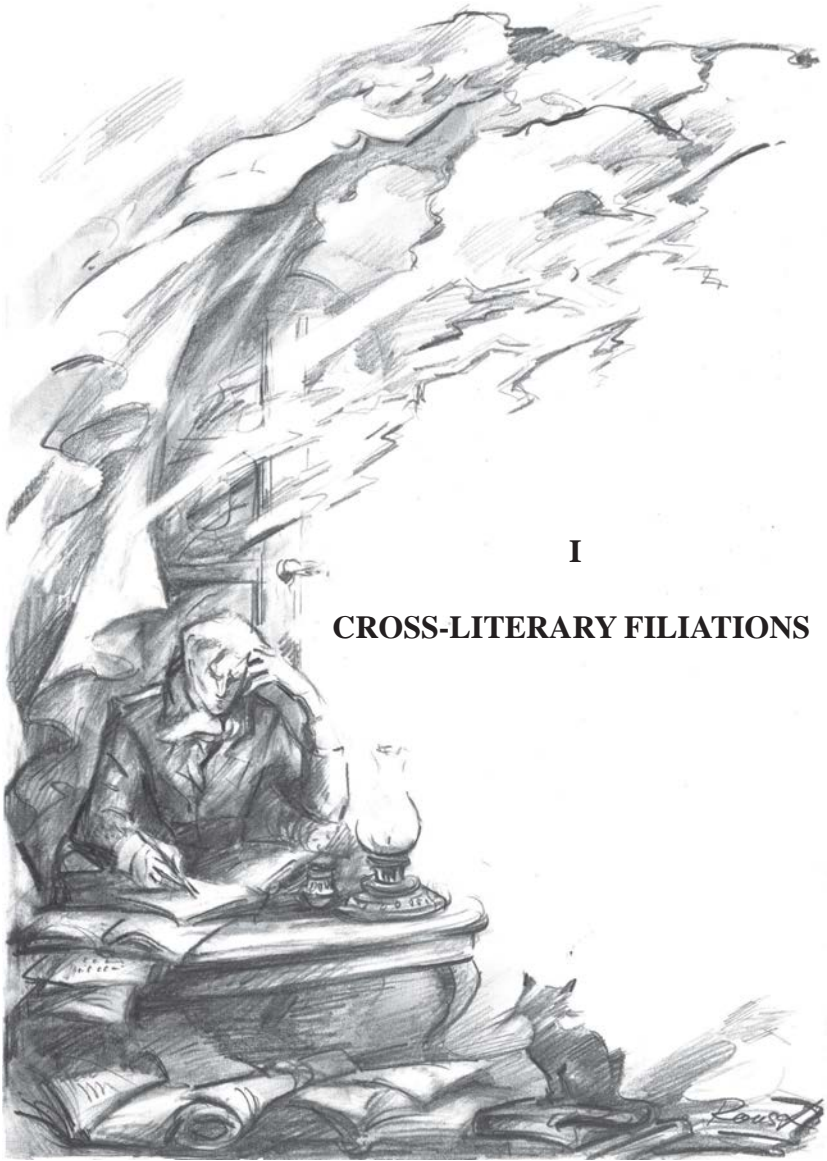
Surrounded by Porcelain: Studies in the Recent Literary Thought in Poland]. Irzykowski attributes coining of the term to Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, see: Karol Irzykowski, “W oblężeniu,” in: *Pisma. Słón wśród porcelany, Lżejszy kaliber* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976), pp. 42–56. The term also appears in a prewar critical book by Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki, see: Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki, “Wpływologia,” in: *Ludzie i dzieła* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), pp. 245–249; Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki, “Jeszcze o wpływologii,” in: *Ludzie i dzieła* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), pp. 250–253. The notion of “influenceology” later became an element of colloquial scholarly jargon, used primarily to discredit historically oriented comparative research, instead of identifying and describing its procedures.

To conclude: if comparative studies are to be understood as a discipline extending beyond literary studies, we can hardly speak of its death, especially if we take into account the vast amount of detailed research and the theoretical and methodological challenges facing its representatives.



III

CONTEXT RELATIONS: LE MIAN COUNTERPOSED WITH LITERARY PREDECESSORS AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS



I

CROSS-LITERARY FILIATIONS



Literary Mediations (Poe – Baudelaire – Balmont – Leśmian)

Poe via the symbolists: searching for sources of Leśmian's inspirations

In Polish literary studies and criticism since Leśmian's day, a lively discussion has focused on the issue of relations between the poet and symbolism. In the first phase of reception of his work, Leśmian was accused of imitation in relation to the modernist Young Poland movement's manifestations of that style or was described as the original continuator of symbolist poetics.⁶⁷ In the second phase, from the 1960s, heated debate over Leśmian's symbolism defined in relation to French traditions dominated.⁶⁸ Then in the third phase (2005 and 2008) – exemplified in works by Anna Sobieska and Edward Boniecki⁶⁹ – the key interpretative contexts of the poet's work were program statements made by representatives and theoreticians of Russian symbolism. In the case of recent reception of Leśmian's *oeuvre*, there is an evident tendency not to compare his works with the literary texts of symbolists, but with their theoretical and philosophical statements.⁷⁰ Thus, we are dealing here neither with comparative

67 Cf. Ludwik Fryde, "Klasyk i dwaj romantycy," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, No. 12 (1937), pp. 234–235; Hieronim Michalski, "Wizerunek poety," *Pion*, No. 38 (1938), p. 3; Karol Wiktor Zawodziński, *Liryka polska w dobie jej kryzysu* (Warszawa: Skład gł. w Księgarni Towarzystwa Wydawniczego [Jakub Mortkowicz], 1939), p. 34.

68 The research circle not advocating this idea of unambiguous inclusion of Leśmian's work into the symbolist phase included Jacek Trznadel and Artur Sandauer, see: Trznadel, "Wstęp;" Jacek Trznadel, "Symbol i konkret," in: *Twórczość Leśmiana. (Próba przekroju)* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1964), pp. 30–61; Artur Sandauer, "Pośmiertny tryumf Młodej Polski. Rzecz o Bolesławie Leśmianie," in: *Zebrane pisma krytyczne*, Vol. 1: *Studia o literaturze współczesnej* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), pp. 50–77 [first printed in: *Twórczość*, No. 1 (1964), pp. 41–55] The image of Leśmian as symbolist was close to Zbigniew Bieńkowski, Janusz Sławiński and Michał Głowiński, see: Zbigniew Bieńkowski, "Szczyty symbolizmu," in: *Modelunki. Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1966), pp. 452–466 [originally printed in: *Twórczość*, No. 8 (1962), pp. 47–54]; Janusz Sławiński, review of Bolesław Leśmian, *Szkice literackie, Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 1 (1961), pp. 218–231; Michał Głowiński, review of Jacek Trznadel, *Twórczość Leśmiana. (Próba przekroju)*, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 4 (1964), pp. 585–597.

69 Sobieska, *Twórczość Leśmiana*; Boniecki, *Archaiczny świat*.

70 For an example of a different approach, see: Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, "Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę." It is also pertinent to recall an earlier article: Pollak, "Niektóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego."

literary studies, nor with an exploration of affiliations and homologues within the poetics or aesthetics, but with an attempt to position Leśmian's poetry within the history of ideas.

Interestingly, studies on relations between Leśmian and symbolism have rather significantly disregarded the issue of the intermediation of Russian and French symbolists in Leśmian's reception of Poe (with the exception of brief comments, pages-long remarks and an article by Michał Głowiński, "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire").⁷¹ We have faced this situation despite the fact that Poe's works decisively influenced not only the final shape of program statements of French and Russian precursors to – and representatives of – this movement, but also poetics of their texts. Simultaneously they were a valuable source of inspiration for Leśmian. Thanks to this mediation, symbolists – indebted to Poe in the literary aspect, and responsible for his European recognition – exerted influence on Leśmian in two ways. First, they conveyed to him literary symbolist models inspired by Poe's work, and second, their understanding – proven in their texts – of the importance of Poe's legacy influenced, *inter alia*, Leśmian's reception of Poe's achievements. At this point, I would like to address the latter issue.

As has been already mentioned, Leśmian's contact with Poe's works was not direct since the poet, who did not speak English, could only read Poe's works in Russian, Polish and French. For this reason, Leśmian translated Poe's tales from *Histoires Extraordinaires par Edgar Poe* by Baudelaire. As a result, the influence of the precursor of French decadents and symbolists was indisputably exerted on Leśmian's reception of Poe. Relations are far less defined between Leśmian and Stéphane Mallarmé, the movement's key theoretician, translator of Poe's poetry into prose, and the author of the sonnet "The Tomb of Edgar Poe"⁷² A similar case is with Arthur Rimbaud,⁷³ the author of "The Drunken Boat," believed to be directly inspired by Poe's tale "A Descent into the Maelström." We know that Leśmian intended to translate French prose to earn a living in

71 Głowiński, "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire."

72 Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Tomb of Edgar Poe," in: *Collected Poems* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), p. 71.

73 Rimbaud's name appears repeatedly in Leśmian's correspondence, listed among many others. Leśmian mentions him once apart from these lists of names. This came in conversation with Edward Boyé, when he quoted Rimbaud: "I made rules for the form and movement of every consonant, and I boasted of inventing, with rhythms from within me, a kind of poetry that all the senses, sooner or later, would recognize" [Arthur

Paris. Books he considered, in a letter to Zenon Przesmycki from March 1906, included Mallarmé's *Divagations* (1897) and Rimbaud's⁷⁴ poetic prose. However, we do not know if Leśmian knew of Mallarmé's translations in the collection *Les Poèmes d'Edgar Poe*, which appeared in Paris in 1889, and in Brussels the previous year. We also do not know if Leśmian was in any way familiar with Rimbaud's opinion on Poe's *oeuvre*.

On the other hand, Leśmian could have read translations of Poe's works by Konstantin Balmont, who represented the older generation of Russian symbolists, with whom he had been friends since his stay in France from 1903 to 1906. Importantly, Balmont was familiar, as Leśmian was, with Baudelaire's poetry and with his essays about Poe. It is also possible that Leśmian became acquainted through direct contact with Dmitry Merezhkovsky in Paris with the latter's Russian translation of "The Raven," published in 1890 in the eleventh issue of the Russian literary journal *Северный вестник* [*Northern Messenger*] printed in Sankt Petersburg. It is pertinent to add that Merezhkovsky's contribution to the

Rimbaud, "A Season in Hell," in: *The Complete Works* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008), p. 232]. Cf. Edward Boyé, "W niepojętej zieloności," *Pion*, No. 23 (1934), pp. 6-8 [reprint: "Dialogi akademickie – w niepojętej zieloności. Rozmowa z Bolesławem Leśmianem," in: *Bolesław Leśmian, Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 500–501].

- 74 "I am speaking of an entire selection of most recent French works that I shall call Fren[ch] prose in general, which includes novels and prose containing a deeper metaphysical concept or a purely artistical one (Mal[larmé]'s *Divagations*, Rimb[aud]'s prose)." [Bolesław Leśmian, *Utwory rozproszone. Listy*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1962), p. 304. Piotr Śniedziewski addressed the issue of Leśmian's interest in rhythm – characteristic of French symbolists – as visible in his works and views, see Śniedziewski: "Treść, gdy w rytm się stacza. Leśmian i symboliczna fascynacja rytmem," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, Vol. 2 (2006), pp. 135–152. According to Śniedziewski, the most suitable literary context for an investigation of Leśmian's work and aesthetical views is French symbolism in the variant represented by Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé and Arthur Rimbaud. For a persuasive undermining of the theory about Rimbaud inspiring Leśmian's work, see: Kuczyńska-Koschany, "Zawier(u)szony znikomek." The conclusion of her argument reads: "The difference between poetical idioms, as well as temperaments, brought about a situation in which 'read' did not translate into 'creatively absorbed.' Leśmian, like Baudelaire, sensed that he is on the edge, at the turn of modernity (thus in the quoted conversation there is a far-reaching Leśmian intuition that he is closer to the author of *Flowers of Evil*)" [Kuczyńska-Koschany, "Zawier(u)szony znikomek," p. 306].

popularization of Poe's legacy was much smaller than that of Balmont, therefore a potential influence on Leśmian's opinion about Poe's literary achievements of the former is likely to have been proportionally weaker.

In this context, several questions seem important: Was Leśmian's reception of Poe's work, intermediated by Baudelaire and Balmont, associated only with the short period he devoted to translation and reading other translations? Or was that intermediation more profound, leaving its mark on his aesthetic views and literary legacy? One should also consider in which aspects Baudelaire and Balmont had identified Poe as their precursor, and to what extent Poe, recognized by way of the symbolists, inspired Leśmian, and to what extent he proved the medium of a transmission of poetics well-known in the literary tradition. To answer these questions, it is worth looking at the following issues:

- first, the importance of the influence of French and Russian symbolists' views on the development of Leśmian's views on Poe's work, in particular the question about the extent to which Leśmian's beliefs about Poe's work were autonomous, and the extent to which they had been adopted from the French and the Russians;
- second, the issue of the influence of Poe's legacy on the shape of Leśmian's literary output; it will also be cognitively valuable to attempt to answer the question of whether inspirations intermediated by the symbolists have been expressed in symbolic poetics or in other variants of the text's shape.

In my consideration of these problems, I will concentrate on the reception of Poe's works as attested in texts by these two translators and authors of works on Poe, Charles Baudelaire and Konstantin Balmont, in other words, by authors who at the time exerted influence on Leśmian (I will exclude uncertain cases). First, I will attempt to reconstruct Baudelaire's views on the work of Poe, to confront them with Leśmian's opinions, and to investigate literary solutions present in his texts; and second, I will reconstruct Balmont's viewpoint and consider what Leśmian could adopt from him.

Baudelaire's Poe

Charles Baudelaire, French poet, precursor of the decadent movement and of symbolism, studied Poe for many years, publishing translations of his works between 1852 and 1865. Chronologically, his collections of translations from Poe's works appeared thus: *Histoires extraordinaires* (1856) [*Extraordinary Tales*], *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires* (1857) [*New Extraordinary Tales*], *L'Aventures d'Arthur Gordon Pym de Nantucket* (1858) [*The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of*

Nantucket], *Eureka ou essai sur l'univers matériel et spirituel* (1863) [*Eureka or an Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe*] and *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* (1865) [*Tales Grotesque and Serious*]. Additionally, Baudelaire wrote repeatedly about Poe, for instance in the essay that introduced his translation of “La Genèse d’un poème” (from the Poe essay “The Philosophy of Composition”),⁷⁵ as well as in the essays “Edgar Poe: Révélation magnétique (Introduction)” [“Edgar Allan Poe: Preface to ‘Mesmeric Revelation’”], the introduction to *Histoires extraordinaires* [*Extraordinary Tales*], “Edgar Allan Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages” [“Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works”] and “Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe” [“New Notes on Edgar Poe”], published as the introduction to *New Extraordinary Tales*.⁷⁶

In his essay “Edgar Allan Poe: Preface to ‘Mesmeric Revelation,’” Baudelaire situated the writer among authors whose superiority over other writers is indisputable, for three reasons: Poe developed a poetic method, he then strived tirelessly to astonish readers by incorporating in his works elements of the uncanny, and finally he developed his own philosophy expressed through literary means. In his other texts, and especially in “Edgar Poe: His Life and Works,” Baudelaire discussed Poe in a laudatory tone and with compassion – he presented him as an insightful, oversensitive man who was misunderstood by the American society. For that reason, he attempted to extrude the interpretation of Poe’s works and his achievements from their native context.

Baudelaire, as precursor of French symbolism, appreciated Poe for additional reasons, on several levels.

First, Baudelaire regarded Poe to be a master of logic – he asserted that “[Joseph] De Maistre and Edgar Poe have taught me to reason,”⁷⁷ and also believed that the American writer “enjoyed [...] the grand common sense of Machiavelli.”⁷⁸

75 Charles Baudelaire, “La Genèse d’un poème,” in: *Œuvres complètes: traductions*, ed. Jacques Crépet (Paris: Louis Conard, 1936), pp. 151-177.

76 Cf. Charles Baudelaire, “Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works,” in: *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1873), pp. 1-21. The text was first published as: Charles Baudelaire, “Edgar Poe, sa vie et ses ouvrages,” *La Revue de Paris* (March/April 1852), pp. 138-156 [reprint in: Edgar Allan Poe, *Histoires extraordinaires* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, Libraires éditeur, 1856), pp. VII-XXXI]. Charles Baudelaire, “Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe,” in: *Selective Critical Studies of Baudelaire*, ed. D. Parmée (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949), pp. 50-69.

77 Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2006), p. 107.

78 Baudelaire, “Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works,” p. 4.

Second, Baudelaire appreciated Poe's skillful narrative technique, aware that the latter used literary devices to play with the principle of probability and to create the illusion of credibility.⁷⁹ I believe that here we arrive on a significant plane of the influence Poe exerted indirectly via Baudelaire on narrative strategies Leśmian used in *Klechdy polskie* [*Old Polish Folktales*], which the latter discussed in his letter to Przesmycki, presenting arguments he had used in corresponding with that volume's would-be publisher, Mortkowicz (who rejected the "phallic and murderous element of *Old Polish Folktales*").⁸⁰ Leśmian adapted key motifs in those texts from earlier literature based on folklore; however, the intentionally ambiguous narrative strategies used in the texts remind me of Poe. Leśmian explained to the editor that he attempted to reference the Romantic literary tradition of Gogol, Hoffmann and Poe. He chose the genre of folktale [*klechda*]⁸¹ rather than fairy tale. While they share similar motifs and themes, in the case of the first genre, social, cultural and geographical realities of a given region play a more important role than fantasy does. Leśmian's *Old Polish Folktales*, like Poe's "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade," reveal in a parodistic way the human dimension of what initially strikes us with uncanniness and appears a phenomenon with a supernatural genealogy. Poe frequently used this device in his tales, as exemplified in "The Black Cat" and "Ligeia."

Third, Baudelaire greatly appreciated Poe's contribution to the modernization of techniques for constructing a literary character. Additionally, he pointed out that the first volume of Poe's poems was already penetrated by "extra-terrestrial accent, that calmness of melancholy, that delicious solemnity."⁸² According to Baudelaire, the characteristic extra-terrestrial accent was most visible in *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*: "for arabesque and grotesque ornamentation repulses the human figure; and we shall see that, in most respects, the works of Poe are extra, or superhuman."⁸³ In this case, analogies present in Leśmian's poems seem obvious, with aborted incarnations and visitors from a postmortem

79 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 19.

80 Leśmian, Bolesław, "[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego, Cannes [1914]," in: *Utworky rozproszone. Listy. Z pism Bolesława Leśmiana*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1962), p. 338.

81 *Klechda* – a folk tale associated with a fairy tale that – like a fairy tale – contains fantastic elements, but, in contrast to it, is strongly rooted in the realities and customs of the region.

82 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 7.

83 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 8.

reality or characters of an unclear ontological status, functioning at the borderline of the world and the afterworld.

In the fourth place, Baudelaire identified an important literary technique in Poe's work, namely aestheticization of female characters: beautiful, but also suffering, ill, melancholic, dead or dying. Baudelaire argued that in Poe's works there is no love, and his heroines "are always veiled with a mist of unchangeable melancholy,"⁸⁴ able to stifle and suppress every passion. He noticed that despite the fact that Poe's works show a particular aesthetic predilection for the grotesque and macabre, they contain "not a single passage which treats of wantonness, or even of sensual enjoyment."⁸⁵ Leśmian's work is also deprived of these inspirations – they are in polar opposition to, for instance, female characters created in ballads (Leśmian drew from Poe's models maintained in the aesthetics of the macabre). Nevertheless, one can indicate in Leśmian's oeuvre a group of works in which dead female figures are aestheticized. Moreover, as with Poe's heroines (for instance, in "Ligeia"), they are twofold, as exemplified by the two girls of Sindbad, the doubled Whirlus and Twirlus, and the twofold girl Znikomka ["the Evanescent One"].

Fifth, as Diderot was for Baudelaire a "blood-red author," Poe was for him a "writer of the nerves."⁸⁶ Baudelaire saw him as a keen observer of complex psychological processes, one important manifestation of which was the tendency to write texts using the poetics of black humor and the macabre. Baudelaire, although he did not use those terms, explained the described phenomenon thus:

No man, I repeat, has told, with greater magic the *exceptions* of human life and nature [...]; absurdity installing itself in the intellect, and governing it with a crushing logic; hysteria usurping the place of will, a contradiction established between the nerves and the mind, and men out of all accord expressing grief by laughter.⁸⁷

The characteristic for Poe of a tendency to show conflicts between emotions and reason as well as cruelty and horror in a comical way has, according to Baudelaire, a nature of paradoxical reaction. This is well exemplified in "King Pest" and "The Premature Burial." These macabre aesthetics also appear in "Never Bet the Devil Your Head," "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament." One may find traces of Poe's inspiration in Baudelaire's "Danse macabre," "Le Mort jouyeux" ["The Joyful Corpse"] and "L'amour et le crâne" ["Cupid and the

84 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 16.

85 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 16.

86 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 20.

87 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 20, original emphasis.

Skull”], but macabre aesthetics did not dominate his work. To the contrary, in this regard Leśmian turned out to be among the most creative followers of Poe. This is evidenced in the ballads “Jadwiga” [“Jadwiga”] and “The Gorilla”⁸⁸ from the collection *The Shadowy Drink*, “Ballada dziadowska” [“A Beggar’s Ballad”], “Whirlus and Twirlus,”⁸⁹ “The Saw”⁹⁰ and “Garbus” [“Hunchback”] from the collection *The Meadow*, and the poems “In the Cemetery Corner,”⁹¹ “Mortsocks”⁹² and “Karczma” [“The Inn”] (also from *The Shadowy Drink*) and “Zaloty” [“Courtship”] (from *The Meadow*). Poe’s works, written in macabre poetics, appear to be precursory to Leśmian’s literary visions and, moreover, turn out to be among the “transmission belts” that allow motifs with sources in the Middle Ages, having taken deep roots in the literary tradition and European iconography, to penetrate the works of Leśmian in an indirect way. The importance of Poe’s influence would be the transmission of an alternative model. Comical play with fear and disgust, present in the works of both authors, permits them to be seen as exceptional experts on the human psyche. Baudelaire, on the other hand, in his essay “New Notes on Edgar Poe” saw in Poe both a creator of serious concepts and a great humorist, as he also wanted to be regarded. Additionally, he identified Poe as mocking the idea of progress. He wrote: “A civilized man invents the philosophy of progress in order to console himself after his abdication and his defeat.”⁹³

Sixth, Baudelaire also attempted to identify the issues present in Poe’s works. According to him, Poe wrote about subjects that are unverifiable and about evil. Baudelaire understood the source of this evil in a specific gnostic way, which would, in my opinion, be difficult to demonstrate unambiguously in Poe’s texts. Baudelaire, in his consideration of the existence of natural evil in human beings and an inclination towards evil motivated by perversion, which “constantly

88 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Gorilla,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 97.

89 Bolesław Leśmian, “Whirlus and Twirlus,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), pp. 39–43.

90 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Saw,” *Tekstualia* 4 (51) (2017), pp. 223–224.

91 Bolesław Leśmian, “In the Cemetery Corner,” *Tekstualia* 4 (43) (2015), p. 155.

92 Bolesław Leśmian, “Mortsocks,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 117.

93 Baudelaire, “Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe,” p. 57.

makes them killers and suiciders at the same time, murderers and executioners⁹⁴ did not exclude divine agency. He believed that God uses depraved deeds to punish evildoers and to sanction order, and that culprits are his accomplices.⁹⁵ Baudelaire's convictions about evil and God's conception in Poe are not reflected or continued in any form in Leśmian's works or in his remarks concerning Poe. However, Leśmian and Poe certainly share an interest in the issue of evil, often considered in the eschatological context.

Seventh, by focusing on Poe's poetics in "New Notes on Edgar Poe," Baudelaire summarized the main theses of "The Poetic Principle" and "The Philosophy of Composition." He also emphasized that Poe condemned epic poetry for its excessive length, excluding as it does the possibility of achieving a unity of effect as postulated by the author of "The Raven." Baudelaire believed that among Poe's statements this also deserved appreciation. Leśmian, however, would not have shared that view, for, as we have seen, he dreamed of a "Polish *bylina*" and although he never created it, he remained unflinching charmed by the old-Russian folk heroic epic, as he expressed in, for instance, his poetic tale "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim" ["Tale of the Lord's Knight"], published in 1904 in *Chimera*.⁹⁶ His fascination with the element of epic is proven not only in ballads (also written by Poe), but also in the *Polish Folktales*. Nevertheless, even in those works Poe's work influenced the shape of the narrative plane.

Finally, Baudelaire devoted much space to the importance of rhythm and rhyme in the output of Poe, who, according to Baudelaire, had proven that rhythm can have many various meanings and fulfill a limitless number of functions, and rhyme is a source of pleasures including mathematical and musical ones. It is evident that the great importance of rhythm in Leśmian's aesthetics

94 Baudelaire, "Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe," p. 54.

95 Andrzej Kijowski, in his text "Grymas Baudelaire'a" ["Baudelaire's Grimace"], defined the writer's concept of evil: "Baudelaire perceived nature as a neutral state of existence in which the human being is a wild, cruel animal capable only of crime and evil. Everything that is good and noble in man is superficial: beauty, grace, culture, morality, all is the work of the imagination, the queen of talents. Imagination brings women to care about beauty and charm, and men to restrain their wild instincts, invent laws, moral systems, create culture. Everything that is human is the work of imagination. It is most perfectly and purely expressed in poetry. Poetry is the essence of existence; the critique of poetry is the critique of man, the critique of all his talents, all parts of his being and his relations with other people" [Andrzej Kijowski, "Grymas Baudelaire'a," in: Charles Baudelaire, *Sztuka romantyczna. Dzienniki poufne* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1971), p. 13].

96 Bolesław Leśmian, "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim," *Chimera*, No. 19 (1904), pp. 41-59.

and poetics, described repeatedly, certainly brings him close to symbolism in its French (Mallarmé) and Polish versions, and especially in the Russian variant, while the attempt to associate rhythm with what is most primitive distances Leśmian from Poe.⁹⁷

Balmont's Poe

The second writer who intermediated in Leśmian's reception of Poe, Konstantin Balmont, an older Russian symbolist who had a decadent period in his work, began to translate the selected works of the American writer in 1895, when Poe was already known in Russia. As a result, Balmont published five volumes of Poe's writings in Russia. The first (published in 1901) was *Поэмы, сказки* [*Poems, Fables*], the second (1905) was *Рассказы, статьи, отрывки, афоризмы* [*Tales, Journalism, Fragments, Aphorisms*], the third and the fourth (1910–1912) were *Страшные рассказы, гротеску* [*Horrible Tales and the Grotesque*] and *Необычайные приключения* [*Extraordinary Adventures*], respectively, and the fifth (appearing along with the previous two) included, as its title stated, *Биография, Эврика, письма, послесловие* [*Biography, Eureka, Letters and Afterword*].

Two texts reveal Balmont's views on Poe's life and work most clearly. The first is a comprehensive, hundred-plus page biographical text, "Очерк жизни Эдгара По" ["Sketch of the Life of Edgar Poe"] based on three works: William F. Gill's *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*⁹⁸ and John H. Ingram's *Edgar Allan Poe, His Life, Letters, and Opinions*⁹⁹ published at the end of the nineteenth century in London, with the third, *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe* by James A. Harrison,¹⁰⁰ published in the early twentieth century in New York City. "Sketch of the Life of Edgar Poe" reveals relatively little about Balmont's reception of Poe's work, except perhaps for the fact that Balmont perceived "Shadow – a Parable," "The Conqueror Worm" and "A Dream within a Dream" as masterpieces. In order to create them, according to Balmont, "it was not enough to be a genius. He had to be a unique

97 Cf. Bolesław Leśmian, "Rytm jako światopogląd," in: *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 66–68; Bolesław Leśmian, "U źródeł rytmu (Studium poetyckie)," in: *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 69–75.

98 Cf. William Fearing Gill, *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878).

99 Cf. John Henry Ingram, *Edgar Allan Poe, His Life, Letters, and Opinions*, Vols. 1–2 (London: John Hogg, 1880).

100 Cf. James Albert Harrison, *Life and Letters of Edgar Allan Poe*, Vols. 1–2 (New York: T.Y. Crowell & Co., 1902–1903).

genius.”¹⁰¹ These three texts greatly influenced the shaping of thanatotic aesthetics in Leśmian’s poetical works.

Balmont used his reflections on Poe’s life and work to try to define poetic writing and to clarify its relations with music. Like most symbolists, he contrasted poetry writing and scientific work. The purpose of the former is to give pleasure to the reader, while the latter attempts to discover truth. Balmont also contrasted poetry and prose – he believed that a work deserves to be called a poem when it provides aesthetic pleasure instead of a sense of experiencing precisely defined phenomena. Prose presents images of phenomena via precise sensations, while poetry speaks to the reader using the poetics of uncertainty, allusion and presupposition. Musicality in poems plays an essential role in creating those effects: a subtle sound is perceived, but is also difficult to define in reception. Music combined with thought guarantees aesthetic pleasure to the reader and turns into poetry. Music without thought is simply music, and thought without music is prose – a type of artistic expression that remained to be fully defined.

According to Balmont, in Poe’s early lyrics, although minor deficiencies of skill may be found, one could hear the melody of the poem, heard already in full force in 1831, the year that indicated the birth of a great poet. The harmonious and antithetical combinations of consonants and vowels alone create poetry with an excellent wording that “exists in Death, in Judgment, in Pain, in Sin”¹⁰² (Balmont believed this tendency was developed to the extreme by Baudelaire, Poe’s follower and admirer). In the reconstructed views of Balmont (himself accused by his contemporaries of displaying excessive attachment to tonal aspects of poetry, to the detriment of its semantic layer), one may clearly see the direction and particular stages of influence of literary solutions developed by Poe. That influence was exerted on Leśmian’s poetic works, starting from the works of Baudelaire, through the works of Balmont. In his case, the understanding of the musicality of poetry took on a form greatly inspired by the achievements of Russian symbolism, the representatives of which searched, as Leśmian did, for sources of musicality in the primitive and archaic.

It is relevant to add that Balmont’s “Sketch of the Life of Edgar Poe” was written in an emotional and empathetic way. Balmont, like Baudelaire, mythologized the figure of the American writer, discussing prosaic incidents that had happened to him in poetic language (overly ornamented, in some instances).

101 Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Очерк жизни Эдгара По,” http://az.lib.ru/b/balxmont_k_d/text_0160.shtml, last accessed 29.08.2019.

102 Бальмонт [Balmont], “Очерк жизни Эдгара По.”

He elaborated on the epistemological significance of alcohol's influence on the uniqueness of Poe's perception. The text was written with a laudatory tone and in a hyperbolic style. After reading it, one can conclude that Balmont did not tend to support his appraisals with complex argumentation.

Much more information about Balmont's views on Poe's work is provided in the essay "Тений открытия" ["The Genius of Discovery"] in the preface to the first volume of *Собрание сочинений* [*The Collected Works*].¹⁰³

For Balmont, it was not problematic to see Poe's work as an exemplification of one of the literary styles. In "The Genius of Discovery," Balmont called Poe, who lived in the Romantic period, the greatest symbolist poet. This Russian representative of the Silver Age affirmed, in poetic language, the insightfulness of the author of "The Black Cat," glorifying the quest for knowledge that leads to the brink of madness. In his texts about Poe, Balmont indicated the existence of extraordinary states of mental intensity that allow us to deal with sharpened and deepened perception. As a result, new perspectives are revealed in seeing phenomena, as are previously unknown areas of self-knowledge, that bring man closer to the limits of the world that had appeared familiar and safe. Balmont was convinced that such experiences are accessible to all people; most, however, come across them extremely rarely, sometimes only once in a lifetime, while a chosen few experienced them almost all the time – with Poe certainly belonging to the latter group.

It is no exaggeration to state that Leśmian became a faithful perpetuator of Poe in that respect. One may recall representations of crossing ontological-epistemological borders,¹⁰⁴ very frequent in Leśmian's works. Characters developed by the author of *The Meadow*, driven by curiosity or sensual desire, are constantly heading towards other existences; wandering often leads them to lose themselves, and the quest for knowledge ends, as Edward Balcerzan wrote, with an "ontological catastrophe," which may be exemplified by the adventures of the farmhand in the ballad "The Saw," the beggar in "A Beggar's Ballad" and the protagonist of the poem "The Meadow."¹⁰⁵

103 Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "Тений открытия," in: Edgar Allan Poe, *Собрание сочинений в четырех томах*, Vol. 1 (Москва: Пресса, 1993), pp. 7-9 [reprint in: *Ежемесячные сочинения*, No. 10 (1900), p. 113].

104 For crossing of ontological borders by lyrical characters in Leśmian, see: Edward Balcerzan, "Poezja filozoficzna. Bolesław Leśmian (i niewielu innych)," in: *Przestrzenie świadomości. Studia z filozofii literatury, Poznańskie studia z filozofii humanistyki*, ed. Andrzej Falkiewicz and Leszek Nowak, Vol. 3(16) (1996), pp. 47-71 (particularly pp. 63-65.)

105 Balcerzan, "Poezja filozoficzna," p. 65.

Balmont had also succeeded in identifying what Baudelaire valued most in Poe. The older Russian symbolist admired the wisdom and courage of Poe, who dared to do what other authors consequently avoided, namely, he attempted to depict extreme despair and dread in a desperate situation in the poetics of mad verve. Balmont saw in Poe a restrained philosopher of extremes who created works where beauty contrasted with the most repulsive ugliness. In Poe's desire to explore a "different world" – hidden behind the scenes of the reality that appears familiar and safe – in an attempt to reveal its terrible secret, to fully experience its cruelty, Balmont saw demonic beauty in the American writer's existence. Balmont described the passion stimulating Poe to explore the most difficult epistemological-axiological problems metaphorically as "the cognition of illuminated Lucifer." Balmont, though, did not become a philosopher of laughter, with his fascination with the aforementioned aspects of Poe's work developing into texts of a decadent character; meanwhile in Leśmian's case, impressive results came about. In this area, Leśmian, the author of macabre poetic works, has grown into a worthy successor to Poe.¹⁰⁶

Balmont considered Poe a discoverer, an inventor of the highest rank who allowed readers to look at familiar, mundane phenomena from a different perspective and with incomparably greater insight. Balmont was convinced that Poe, by integrating the results of logical reasoning with the desire to create the effect of an artistic mood, developed a new literary form for a philosophical tale that was capable of appealing to both the intellect and the emotions of the reader. These observations of Balmont may have influenced Leśmian's perception of what is essential in literary writing and guided his explorations. It is no accident, in my opinion, that Leśmian's literary legacy is described as "philosophical" and he, as with Poe, is termed a philosopher of laughter, and is considered the inventor of a philosophical ballad that, although it continues the tradition of the genre and stems directly from both variants of Young Poland's ballads – objectified, symbolic and like a fairy tale, or psychological and lyrical – it does not faithfully follow either of the two models.¹⁰⁷

106 Cf. Zbigniew Bieńkowski, *Poezja i niepoezja* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967); Balcerzan, "Poezja filozoficzna," pp. 67–68; Brygida Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, "Makabreska wobec ciężaru istnienia," in: *Sens i chaos w grotesce literackiej. Od "Patuby" do "Kosmosu"* (Kraków: Universitas, 2002), pp. 11–57.

107 Cf. Ireneusz Opacki and Czesław Zgorzelski, *Ballada* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970); Ireneusz Opacki and Czesław Zgorzelski, eds., *Ballada polska* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1962).

Balmond also emphasized Poe's contribution to poetry – as Baudelaire had, he considered the phenomenon of musicality to be exemplary. Moreover, he claimed that Poe had correctly identified the genesis of a poetic word as stemming from a desire for beauty greater than that given to men on earth, manifesting the discord between what is and what should be. As a result, idealized dreams and the desire to create a world more perfect than the one of the here and now turned out to be the source of art. For Balmond, when revealing elements of ugliness hidden in beauty Poe was also a poet of dread, a painter of transformed landscapes in which the familiar discloses its unknown, threatening face. Besides, he was discoverer of the symbolism in both the sea element and the decay of majestic buildings erected by man as well as a prophet of the spiritual aura of Balmond's contemporary times, a diagnostician of the destruction of human beings and impossible love. Balmond's reflections show Poe as a tireless explorer of issues of conscience. According to Balmond, Poe symbolically uncovered then veiled again the torture and hopelessness experienced by anyone choosing the path of spiritual exploration and questioning to face, in contrast to one's intentions, the endlessness of silence, to find the "royal stamp of death"¹⁰⁸ and decay, to experience fear, terror and spleen, rather than finding meaningful signposts. According to Balmond, Poe is an author unfamiliar with self-deception, a poet that perceives reality in such a harsh and complex way, and desires dark knowledge even at the cost of self-destruction. Poe, as Balmond asserted, had to suffer because he discovered chaos invading the human world from all sides. These reflections – and the atmosphere of crisis of Balmond's own times – inspired him to write decadent poetry and poems maintaining the poetics of the macabre. But in the case of Leśmian's, similar reflections brought forth macabre and macabre-grotesque works and a symbolist interest in the role of fairy tales and metaphysics, associating man with illogical areas of existence, and helping him overcome chaos, giving meaning to the experience of death and building a bridge between the world and the afterworld.

It is significant that Leśmian, a philosopher of laughter and death inseparably entwined with love, at once in this aspect the worthy successor of Poe, is a much less successful theoretician of the work of Poe. In the text "Edgar Allan Poe"¹⁰⁹ – constituting in large part a free translation of Baudelaire's essay "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works" – written in florid language, Leśmian's analysis is definitely less insightful than those of Baudelaire and Balmond. Leśmian described Poe's tales as probable, if elusive, visions¹¹⁰ and the American author as

108 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 10.

109 Bolesław Leśmian, "Edgar Allan Poe," in: *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1959), pp. 455–466.

110 Leśmian, "Edgar Allan Poe," p. 465.

an attentive observer and psychologist,¹¹¹ the explorer and admirer of the secret of silence and death. Leśmian, following Baudelaire, noticed that Poe presented death in three conventions: in an emphatic way, through the idealizing images of dead women, and in the convention of the macabre or the aesthetics of the grotesque. Importantly, Leśmian described the reality presented in Poe's tales as the world or the afterworld, interchangeably, thus signaling its ontological status: ambiguous, unstable, difficult to define. He also emphasized that in Poe delusion and dream border reality. For Leśmian, Poe was a writer of contrasts of "demonism and the angelic"¹¹² and darkness and logic. It is most significant, however, that from the descriptions of Poe's work drawn up by Baudelaire and Balmont, Leśmian selected those aspects that could be found in his own work.¹¹³

111 Leśmian stated that: "Poe would later base some of his literary concepts on seemingly scientific and mathematical ideas, in order to substantiate, justify and impose on the reader, more easily and more convincingly, via unavoidable logic, his images, his fantastic visions, unreal and so colorfully true, so dreamingly understandable and familiar to every deeper human reflection" [Leśmian, "Edgar Allan Poe," p. 458].

112 Leśmian, "Edgar Allan Poe," p. 466.

113 Leśmian's associations with Poe's work interpreted in a symbolic way are certainly not exhausted in biographical considerations. They are visible in a shared repertoire of motifs, part of which is also present in the Polish Romantic tradition that influenced Leśmian and in the Young Poland lyrics of symbolic provenance, although it is pertinent to emphasize that the scope of meaning of these motifs in the latter two cases do not always overlap, and functions assigned to them in the text structure also vary. The repertoire of motifs includes, above all, the feminine personification of death (one source of inspiration for Leśmian was proto-Slavic folklore, transformed in Romantic and symbolist literature), the saturation of symbols of death with eroticism, the unreal aspect of characters (known from the lyrics of Young Poland, for example from the poem "Wizja" ["Vision"] by Zdzisław Dębicki, from Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer's poetical text "Wędrowcy" ["Wanderers"], Józef Jedlicz's "Baśń okien" ["Fairytales of Windows"] and, finally, from "Mniszki" ["Nuns"] by Kazimiera Zawistowska –characterized, as Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska states, by pantomimic behavior [Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska, *Symbolizm i symbolika w poezji Młodej Polski: teoria i praktyka* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1975), pp. 149–150]. See: Zdzisław Dębicki, "Wizja," in: *Młoda Polska. Wybór poezyj*, ed. Tadeusz Żeleński Boy (Lviv: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1939), p. 146; Jozef Jedlicz, "Baśń okien," in: *Najmłodsza Polska w pieśni*, ed. Zygmunt Różycki (Warszawa: Nakładem Księgarni A. Dubowskiego, 1903), 39–41; Kazimiera Zawistowska, "Mniszki," in: *Utworki zebrane*, ed. Lucyna Kozikowska-Kowalik (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982), s. 38. Common to Poe and Leśmian, and very popular in Romanticism, in the poetry of Russian symbolists and in the lyrics of Young Poland (particularly in its variant of symbolic provenance) are motifs of sleep, shadow, reflection, doubling and, finally, the doppelgänger.



Translative replicas (Poe – Baudelaire – Leśmian)

Poe's tales in Bolesław Leśmian's translations: sources, inspirations, replicas

Poe versus Leśmian: outlining the problem

Almost every biographical note about Bolesław Leśmian includes reference to the fact that the poet translated Edgar Allan Poe's prose works and that these translations were published in 1913 in a two-volume edition *Opowieści nadzwyczajne* [*Extraordinary Tales*]. Unfortunately, the frequent use of this information has not increased interest among researchers in the translations themselves. The description of Leśmian's translative technique and the evaluation of the quality of his translations have yet to be made. The question of whether the translation of Poe's tales was only an episode in Leśmian's literary career or, rather, a significant experience that left its mark on the poet's works and determined their artistic shape, has been partially answered. Another question that needs to be answered is how Leśmian's interest in Poe's work combined or intersected with other inspirations. Attempts have been undertaken, however, to address these issues: an important work indicating relevant research clues is Michał Głowiński's article "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire" published in *Wielojęzyczność literatury i problemy przekładu artystycznego* [*Multilingualism of Literature and the Problems of Artistic Translation*]. In this text, the researcher put forth and attempted to justify the thesis stating that Leśmian's translative work on prose works by Poe was not accidental and insubstantial, but instead played a considerable role in shaping narrative strategies in Leśmian's poetry. According to Głowiński it has left its mark on the way Leśmian presents the grotesque and fantastic world.

The scholar writes in general terms that one may point to similarities of motifs that appear in Poe's short stories and in Leśmian's works. However, he does not do so, believing its impact on the development of Leśmian's narrative techniques is the most important aspect of the influence of Poe's prose on Leśmian's writing skills.¹¹⁴

114 Michał Głowiński also points to Leśmian's early prose, in which the influence of Poe on the writer's texts seems indubitable, but also not beneficial to their general artistic shape. He has in mind the triptych "Legends of Longing" ["Legends of Longing"] from 1904, published in the nineteenth issue of *Chimera*. According to Głowiński, the "Legends of Longing" are not very original; the individuality of Leśmian's style is not very visible, but they combine popular mannerisms of the period and a poetization of the tale – close to Poe's narrative technique – that makes them similar to a prose poem. He also lists as examples of such works "Shadow – a Parable," "Morella" and

At this point, I will focus on the issue that has been least researched, and in large part overlooked in studies, namely the description of Leśmian's translations of Poe's tales.

Leśmian and translators: the Genesis of Fascination with Poe

Bolesław Leśmian was not even one of the first Poles to translate the tales of Edgar Allan Poe. According to the survey conducted by Franciszek Lyra in the 1970s, Adolf Hennel deserves the honorable title of "the first translator." He published translations of Poe's works and an essay devoted to him based on Baudelaire's essays as early as in 1858.¹¹⁵ Felicjan Faleński was the second translator. He published five texts by Poe, mostly anonymously in magazines that were not very popular. As a result, the following works of Poe were published in Polish with little opportunity of stirring up a heated debate: "Some Words with a Mummy," "A Descent into the Maelström," "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar."¹¹⁶

In the 1860s, Polish interest in Poe became so great that translations of his works could be found in six magazines: *Biblioteka Warszawska*, *Lwowianin*, *Kłosa*, *Przegląd Tygodniowy Życia Społecznego*, *Dziennik Literacki i Polityczny* and *Wędrowiec*.¹¹⁷

"Silence – a Fable" included in the collection of Leśmian translations *Extraordinary Tales* [Cf. Głowiński, "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire"].

- 115 Cf. Franciszek Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," in: *Edgar Allan Poe* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1973), pp. 290–291. I have taken much important information from Lyra's book about the Polish reception of Poe's works in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, as it presents the results of a thorough inquiry.
- 116 In 1891, in *Biesiada Literacka*, Felicjan Faleński's translation of "A Descent into the Maelström" appeared. Philological research conducted on this text allowed researchers to establish the authorship of translations of the other four works of Poe. The comparative analysis shows that Faleński was the author of the translations of Poe's tales published in *Biblioteka Warszawska* and *Biesiada Literacka*, see: Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," p. 294.
- 117 In *Dziennik Literacki*, a writer using the initials K.L. attempted to direct the attention of Polish readers to Poe's poetry. This later resulted in a prose translation of "The Raven" by Walery Przyborowski. That was then followed by Zenon Przesmycki's poetry translations. In 1871, in *Wędrowiec*, one could also read an anonymous text, not of very high quality as Franciszek Lyra states, discussing Poe's works. Also in 1871, an article by Feliks Jezierski appeared in *Biblioteka Warszawska*, which set the task of discussing Poe's achievements in the context of English Romanticism. Jezierski also presented prose translations of two Poe poems, "Eldorado" and "The Conqueror Worm," and

Another wave of translations of Poe's works appeared courtesy of the Polish modernists. The editors of a Kraków magazine *Życie* and its editor-in-chief from 1898 to 1900, Stanisław Przybyszewski, who translated "Shadow – a Parable," "Silence – a Fable" and "The Haunted Palace," for example, found the achievements of the American author particularly important.¹¹⁸ Over two years, seven works by Poe were translated by Antoni Lange and Stanisław Lacek.¹¹⁹ and printed in *Życie*. Additionally, a two-volume edition of Lange's translations from 1899 included poems such as: "The Sleeper," "Silence – a Fable," "The City in the Sea," "To One in Paradise," "The Haunted Palace," "The Conqueror Worm," "Dream-Land," "Eldorado," "To My Mother," "For Annie" and "Ulalume."¹²⁰ In *Bluszcz* in 1899 and in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* in 1909, one could read Polish versions of "Hymn," and "To Helen," "To Zante" and "Eulalia," respectively, translated by Władysław Nawrocki, who contributed greatly to the popularization of Poe.¹²¹ In 1897, the first book with a selection of Poe's tales appeared, translated by Wojciech Dąbrowski. It included four texts: "The Black Cat," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Pit and

excerpts from "The Sleeper," see: Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," p. 295; Edgar Allan Poe, "Do jednej w raj," trans. Zenon Przesmycki, *Życie*, No. 22 (1887), p. 346; Edgar Allan Poe, "Kruk," trans. Zenon Przesmycki, *Bluszcz*, No. 37 (1886), pp. 289–290. It is worth mentioning an interesting fact noted by Franciszek Lyra, who refers to the publication in *Kurier Codzienny* of a parody of Poe's tales, see: Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," p. 295; "Piosenka Carmeny. Opowiadanie na sposób Edgara Poe," *Kurier Codzienny*, No. 220 (1882), p. 4.

- 118 The magazine intended in 1901 and 1902 to publish, for example, a translation of *Eureka: An Essay on the Material and Spiritual Universe*. Przybyszewski also translated "The Colloquy of Monos and Una." The manuscript of this translation was accessible until 1944 in the National Library, see: Franciszek Lyra, *Edgar Allan Poe* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1973), p. 297.
- 119 Ewa Piasecka set forth the opinion that Stanisław Lack was not only the author of translations signed as I. Ra, but most probably also as J. Ra, Lk and J. L-k. It seems important to undertake the task of establishing the authorship of these Polish translations. Cf. Ewa Piasecka, "Edgar Allan Poe w Młodej Polsce. Dopełnienia i sprostowania," *Ruch Literacki*, No. 5 (1996), p. 608, footnote 9.
- 120 Antoni Lange, *Przekłady z poetów obcych* (Warszawa: Nakładem Redakcji *Gazety Polskiej*, 1899), pp. 33–59. The volume also includes a translation of Poe's "The Power of Words," see: Lange, *Przekłady z poetów obcych*, pp. 59–68.
- 121 Edgar Allan Poe, "Do Heleny," trans. Władysław Nawrocki, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, No. 4 (1909), p. 74; Edgar Allan Poe, "Zante," trans. Władysław Nawrocki; Edgar Allan Poe, "Eulalia," trans. Władysław Nawrocki, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, No. 4 (1909), p. 74; Edgar Allan Poe, "Hymn," trans. Władysław Nawrocki, *Bluszcz*, No. 43 (1899), p. 340.

the Pendulum.” The next book appeared in 1902 (Wojciech Szukiewicz was the translator), with the next following in 1907 (with Zygmunt Niedźwiedzki’s translations). The book included only three tales by Poe: “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “A Descent into the Maelström” and “Mesmeric Revelation.” In 1909 the translations of Barbara Beaupré (from French) appeared, and in 1910, Marian Zalicki’s translations reached Polish readers.

The large number of translations of Poe’s works into Polish in addition to Leśmian’s translations is enhanced also by the work of Gustaw Beilin from 1913, *Nowele o miłości* [*Tales of Love*], containing six of Poe’s works. Beilin based his translations on three editions: French (translated by Baudelaire), German (after Theodor Etzel) and Russian (translated by Balmont). He also directly translated the ballad “The Haunted Palace” from “The Fall of the House of Usher” and lyrics from “The Assignment” and “Ligeia,”¹²² while Leśmian worked from the ballad in the translation by Antoni Lange.

On the basis of the results of Franciszek Lyra’s inquiry that was presented in *Edgar Allan Poe*, Ewa Piasecka concludes:

In the period of Young Poland alone, fifty-eight short stories and twenty-two poems written by Poe were translated [to Polish]. Some works were translated numerous times, and the majority of the translated lyrics were frequently reprinted. At that time, translators familiarized Polish literature with almost fifty previously untranslated works of the American author. [...] Until 1914, over seventy translators of thirty-nine short stories were published. [...] The majority of these were translated numerous times.¹²³

It is therefore necessary to ask how the translative achievements of Bolesław Leśmian present themselves against this backdrop. The two-volume edition – the largest from those listed above – of Poe’s tales translated by Leśmian, *Extraordinary Tales*, included twenty works: “The Island of the Fay,” “Morella,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “Silence – a Fable,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “Shadow – a Parable,” “The Devil in the Belfry,” “King Pest,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “William Wilson,” “The Oval Portrait,” “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” “Metzengerstein – a Tale in Imitation of the German,” “Hop-Frog,” “The Man of the Crowd,” “MS. Found in a Bottle,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Black Cat” and “Berenice.” It is worth indicating

122 Cf. Lyra, “Z polskich dziejów Poe’go,” pp. 302–303.

123 Piasecka, “Edgar Allan Poe w Młodej Polsce,” pp. 604–605. Piasecka is the second author to write about the Polish modernist reception of Poe, after Franciszek Lyra. It is pertinent to briefly note that among the results of Polish modernism are as many as eight selections of prose by Poe and two collections of his poetical works.

two issues here: first, which among Poe's works Leśmian selected for translation, and second, which of these had been translated into Polish before 1913 (and in 1913) and how many times.

Leśmian's selection of short stories is not surprising when one takes into consideration his later work. The collection primarily comprises grotesque texts dominated by aesthetics either macabre or macabresque. Leśmian was entirely uninterested in the detective tales and metaphysical dialogues.¹²⁴ His selection also seems significant because before 1913 there had already been two translations of "The Island of the Fay," by Gustaw Beilin (as "Wyspa zaklęta" – lit. "Enchanted Island") and by Barbara Beaupré (as "Wyspa czarodziejki" – lit. "Sorceress Island"¹²⁵); three translations of the tale "Morella,"¹²⁶ by Adolf Hennel, a translator publishing in *Życie* under the pen name Lk, and Beilin (all as "Morella"); and three translations of "The Tell-Tale Heart,"¹²⁷ by J.W. published in Kraków's *Życie*, W.S. published in *Głos* and Zygmunt Niedźwiedzki (all as "Zdradzieckie serce" – lit. "Traacherous Heart"). Leśmian also had access to two translations of "The Cask of Amontillado,"¹²⁸ the first published anonymously in *Spółeczeństwo* and the second signed B.P.S. in *Kaliopie*, both as "Beczka Amontillado." The tale "Silence – a Fable"¹²⁹ was translated as "Milczenie"

124 Cf. Piasecka, "Edgar Allan Poe w Młodej Polsce," p. 302.

125 Edgar Allan Poe, "Wyspa zaklęta," trans. Gustaw Beilin, *Literatura i Sztuka* [supplement to *Nowa Gazeta*], No. 10 (1913), pp. 2-3; Poe, "Wyspa czarodziejki," trans. Barbara Beaupré, in: *Kruk. Wybór poezji* (Cracow: Drukarnia "Głosu Narodu" w Krakowie, 1910), pp. 30-37.

126 Edgar Allan Poe, "Morella," trans. A.H. [Adolf Hennel], *Gazeta Codzienna*, No. 64 (1858), p. 4, and No. 68 (1858), p. 4; Edgar Allan Poe, "Morella," trans. Lk, *Życie* [Cracow], No. 17 (1898), pp. 195-198; Edgar Allan Poe, "Morella," trans. Gustaw Beilin, in: *Nowele o miłości* (Craców: G. Centnerszwer i Ska, 1912), pp. 45-58.

127 Edgar Allan Poe, "Zdradzieckie serce," trans. J.W., *Życie* [Cracow], No. 34 (1898), pp. 448-450; Edgar Allan Poe, "Zdradzieckie serce," trans. W.S., *Głos*, No. 3 (1901), pp. 38-40; Edgar Allan Poe, "Zdradzieckie serce," trans. Zygmunt Niedźwiedzki, in: *Nowele* (Lviv: Nakładem i drukiem księgarni Wilhelma Zukerkandla, 1907), pp. 3-13.

128 Edgar Allan Poe, "Beczka Amontillado," trans. B.P.S., *Kaliopie*, No. 1 (1906); Edgar Allan Poe, "Beczka Amontillado," [trans. unknown], *Spółeczeństwo*, No. 36 (1909), pp. 426-432.

129 Edgar Allan Poe, "Milczenie," trans. J. Ra, *Życie* [Cracow], Nos. 36-37 (1898), pp. 485-486 [reprint in: *Literatura i Sztuka* [supplement to *Nowa Gazeta*], No. 3 (1909), pp. 3-4; Edgar Allan Poe, "Milczenie," [trans. unknown], *Czas*, No. 78 (1901); Edgar Allan Poe, "Milczenie," trans. Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Głos*, No. 21 (1903), p. 332; Edgar Allan Poe, "Milczenie," trans. Barbara Beaupré, in: *Kruk. Wybór poezji* (Craców: Drukarnia

["Silence"] by five translators: J. Ra in *Życie*, reprinted in *Literatura i Sztuka* (a supplement to *Nowa Gazeta*), Stanisław Przybyszewski, Beaupré, Beilin and an anonymous author in *Czas*. "The Pit and the Pendulum"¹³⁰ was translated as "Studnia i wahadło" by Wojciech Dąbrowski, "Shadow – a Parable"¹³¹ was translated by Przybyszewski and Beaupré as "Cień" ["Shadow"], the tale "The Devil in the Belfry" ("Diabeł na wieży") had not been translated, while "King Pest"¹³² was published anonymously as "Król zaraza" in *Głos Narodu*, "The Fall of the House of Usher"¹³³ was translated twice, by Felicjan Faleński and by Jadwiga Gąsowska, as "Upadek domu Usher" and "Upadek domu Usherów," respectively. Before 1913, "William Wilson"¹³⁴ had appeared only once in a Polish translation (unsigned) in *Czas*. "The Oval Portrait"¹³⁵ received the attention, along with Leśmian, of Beaupré, Beilin and two anonymous translators, translating the text respectively as "Owalny Portret" ["The Oval Portrait"], "Portret" ["Portrait"] and "Medalion" ["Medallion"] and "Portret owalny" ["The Oval Portrait"]. Another text, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"¹³⁶ had two translations: by Felicjan

"Głosu Narodu" w Krakowie, 1910), pp. 15–22; Edgar Allan Poe, "Milczenie," [trans. Gustaw Beilin,] *Literatura i Sztuka* [supplement to *Nowa Gazeta*], No. 13 (1913), pp. 2–3.

- 130 Edgar Allan Poe, "Studnia i wahadło," trans. Wojciech Dąbrowski, in: *Nowele* (Lviv: Druk W. A. Szykowskiego, 1897), pp. 56–81.
- 131 Edgar Allan Poe, "Cień," trans. Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Głos*, No. 25 (1903), p. 395; Edgar Allan Poe, "Cień," trans. Barbara Beaupré, in: *Kruk. Wybór poezji* (Kraków: Drukarnia "Głosu Narodu" w Krakowie, 1910), pp. 45–52.
- 132 Edgar Allan Poe, "Król zaraza. (Opowiadanie zawierające alegorię)," [trans. unknown], *Głos Narodu* [evening editions], Nos. 223, 229 (1902), pp. 1–2.
- 133 Edgar Allan Poe, "Upadek domu Usher," trans. Felicjan Faleński, *Kłosy*, No. 90 (1867), pp. 147–148; Edgar Allan Poe, "Upadek domu Usher," trans. Jadwiga Gąsowska, *Ateneum*, Vol. 3 (1904), pp. 291–308.
- 134 Edgar Allan Poe, "William Wilson," trans. unknown, *Czas* [evening editions], Nos. 191–192 (1901), pp. 1–2.
- 135 Edgar Allan Poe, "Portret," trans. Gustaw Beilin, *Literatura i Sztuka* [supplement to *Nowa Gazeta*], No. 11 (1911), pp. 2–3 [reprint in: *Nowele o miłości* (Kraków: G. Centnerszwer i s-ka, 1912), pp. 77–88]; Edgar Allan Poe, "Medalion," [trans. unknown], *Dziennik Mód*, No. 17 (1873), pp. 202–203; Edgar Allan Poe, "Owalny portret," trans. Barbara Beaupré, in: *Kruk. Wybór poezji* (Kraków: Drukarnia "Głosu Narodu" w Krakowie, 1910), pp. 60–64; Edgar Allan Poe, "Portret owalny," [trans. unknown], *Gazeta Poniedziałkowa*, No. 16 (1913), pp. 2–3.
- 136 Edgar Allan Poe, "Istotna prawda o znanym zdarzeniu z osobą niejakiego Waldemara," trans. Felicjan Faleński, *Kłosy*, No. 101 (1867), pp. 276–278; Edgar Allan Poe, "Po śmierci," [trans. unknown], *Goniec Polski*, Nos. 148–150 (1907), pp. 7; 7; 7.

Faleński as “Istotna prawda o znanym zdarzeniu z osobą niejakiego Waldemara” [“Important Truth about the Known Event Concerning the Person of the So-called Valdemar”] and an anonymous translation as “Po śmierci” [“After Death”]. “Metzengerstein,” “Hop-Frog” and “The Man of the Crowd” had not been translated, and “MS. Found in a Bottle”¹³⁷ had appeared before 1913 in *Wędrowiec* as “Co było w rękopisie znalezionym w butelce na morzu” [“What Was in the Manuscript Found in a Bottle in the Sea”] signed with initials O.K. In contrast, “The Masque of the Red Death”¹³⁸ had seen print four times: in an anonymous translation in *Czas* (as “Maska czerwonej śmierci”) and translated by Barbara Beaupré (also as “Maska czerwonej śmierci”), Czesław Kędzierski (as “Straszliwa maska” – lit. “The Dreadful Masque”) and Wojciech Dąbrowski (as “Straszna maska” – lit. “The Terrifying Mask”). Even more popular among translators was the tale “The Black Cat.”¹³⁹ It had been translated five times, first as “Kot czarny” [“The Black Cat”] in 1863 in *Wędrowiec*. Its other translators were Adolf Hennel, Czesław Leski, Wojciech Dąbrowski and Marian Zalicki, with all four publishing it as “Czarny kot” [“The Black Cat”]. On the other hand, prior to 1913, “Berenice” had not aroused the interest of Polish adepts and masters of the art of translation.

The above list clearly demonstrates that only five of the twenty prose texts translated by Leśmian had not already been translated into Polish. The large number of Polish translations of Poe’s works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggests that Leśmian was familiar with at least some of them. Moreover, one must remember that it was Antoni Lange – translator of Poe’s poetry and Leśmian’s cousin – who introduced Leśmian into literary circles after his return from Kiev in 1901. From then, Leśmian began one collaboration

137 Edgar Allan Poe, “Co było w rękopisie znalezionym w butelce na morzu,” trans. O.K., *Wędrowiec*, No. 49 (1863), pp. 373–378.

138 Edgar Allan Poe, “Maska czerwonej śmierci,” [trans. unknown], *Czas*, Nos. 160–161 (1901), p. 2; Edgar Allan Poe, “Maska czerwonej śmierci,” trans. Barbara Beaupré, in: *Nowelle*, trans. Barbara Beaupré (Kraków: Drukarnia Głosu Narodu w Krakowie, 1909), pp. 37–45; Edgar Allan Poe, “Straszliwa maska,” trans. Czesław Kędzierski, *Kurier Poznański*, No. 144 (1909), pp. 1–2; Edgar Allan Poe, “Straszna maska,” trans. Wojciech Dąbrowski, in: *Nowele* (Lviv: Druk W. A. Szykowskiego, 1897), pp. 17–26.

139 Edgar Allan Poe, “Kot czarny,” *Wędrowiec*, No. 37 (1863), pp. 186–190; Edgar Allan Poe, “Czarny kot,” trans. A.H. [Adolf Hennel], *Gazeta Codzienna*, No. 73 (1858), pp. 3–4, No. 82, p. 5, No. 89, pp. 5–6; Edgar Allan Poe, “Czarny kot,” trans. Czesław Leski, *Zagłębie*, Nos. 53–55 (1909); Edgar Allan Poe, “Czarny kot,” trans. Marian Zalicki, *Książka Zajmująca*, Vol. 3 (circa 1910), p. 40.

with the monthly journal magazine on art and literature *Chimera*, founded by Zenon Przesmycki, published irregularly between 1901–1907, with whom he subsequently became close friends, and who translated Poe's poetic works.

Leśmian's fascination with Poe's work could also have stemmed from direct French and / or Russian inspirations. From 1903 to 1906 and from 1912 to 1914, Leśmian stayed in France (mainly in Paris). According to the memoirs of his eldest daughter, Maria Ludwika Mazurowa, during his first stay in Paris he met Konstantin Balmont by coincidence in the Luxembourg Gardens, where the latter was engaged in a loud argument with Jelena [Cvetkovskaja Balmont], who would become his second wife. Balmont addressed Leśmian because he had the feeling that a real poet was sitting next to him. Later, Balmont was a frequent guest at Leśmian's apartment in Paris. In the guestroom of Balmont and his first wife, Leśmian met Andrei Bely and Dmitry Merezhkovsky, among others.¹⁴⁰ This information may appear irrelevant to the present study of biographical data. Yet, once one notes that both authors were engaged in translating Poe's works, the situation changes.

It is highly probable that Leśmian read Balmont's translations of Poe's works. It is possible that Balmont inspired Leśmian to become more interested in Poe's work, as the former had begun translating Poe's tales much earlier, although he was not the first Russian translator to do so, as Baudelaire had not been the first Frenchman interested in translating Poe's achievements. When Balmont began his translation work on Poe in 1895, the latter was no longer an unknown writer in Russia. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, for instance, was fascinated with his work.¹⁴¹ Russians first heard about Poe – the novelist and author of short stories – in

140 Cf. Maria Ludwika Mazurowa, "Podróże i praca twórcza Bolesława Leśmiana," in: *Wspomnienia o Bolesławie Leśmianie*, ed. Zdzisław Jastrzębski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1966), pp. 58–59. Leśmian and Balmont very very close friends – as mentioned by Jan Brzechwa – they continually corresponded; Balmont visited Leśmian for a month in Warsaw in the 1920s, see: Jan Brzechwa, "Niebieski wycieruch," in: *Wspomnienia o Bolesławie Leśmianie*, ed. Zdzisław Jastrzębski (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1966), p. 85.

141 This can be proven by, for example, the preface to *Три рассказа Эдгара Поэ* [*Three short stories by Edgar Poe*] written by Dostoyevsky and published in the magazine *Время* [*Time*] in 1861 along with three short stories by Poe: "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat" and "The Devil in the Belfry," see: Фёдор Достоевский [Fyodor Dostoyevsky], "Три рассказа Эдгара Поэ," *Время*, No. 17 (1861), pp. 230–231 [reprint: Фёдор Достоевский [Fyodor Dostoyevsky], "Три рассказа Эдгара Поэ," in: *Собрание сочинений в пятнадцати томах*, Vol. 11 (Ленинград: Наука, 1993), pp. 160–161]. About Poe, *Dostoyevsky* wrote: "[he] almost always chooses the most unusual reality, he faces his characters with the most unusual physical or psychical

1848, and through the 1850s and 1860s, the publication of Baudelaire's essays, translations of Poe's works and Rufus Wilmot Griswold's memoirs¹⁴² contributed to the popularization of Poe.

Poe, as has been mentioned, was of particular interest to Russian poets of the Silver Age, symbolists in particular. Poe's works were translated into Russian by two authors of the first generation of symbolists, represented by Balmont (translator of Poe's poetry and prose) and Valery Bryusov¹⁴³ (with translations of Poe's poems). They perceived Poe as discoverer of a new poetic language and creator of an original area of issues. Yet, it should be remembered that they not only appreciated their native authors—Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Tyutchev and Afanasy Fet – but also praised the works of Baudelaire and French symbolists and were influenced by works of Maurice Maeterlinck, Oscar Wilde and Knut Hamsun. Those influences, however, did not diminish Poe's rank. In 1906, Alexander Blok wrote with enthusiasm about the unchanging validity of Poe's works.¹⁴⁴ This fascination with Poe is informatively discussed in Balmont's prefatory essay from

situation, and with an extraordinary insight, with an astonishing clarity he talks about the state of soul of this person!" [Dostoyevsky, "Три рассказа Эдгара Поэ," p. 160].

142 On the reception of Poe's works in Russia, see: Joan Delaney Grossman, *Edgar Allan Poe in Russia: A Study in Legend and Literary Influence* (Jal: Verlag, 1973); Татьяна Боголепова [Tatiana Bogolepova], "'A cooperation of souls': Edgar Allan Poe's Poetry Translated by Russian Symbolists," https://vladivostok.com/speaking_in_tongues/bogolepova3eng.htm, last accessed 30.08.2019; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "The Chief Tale Writers of America," *Washington National Intelligencer* (30 August 1845), p. 2; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "Death of Edgar Allan Poe," *New York Tribune* (9 October 1849), p. 2; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "The Late Edgar Allan Poe," *Literary American (New York)*, Vol III (10 November 1849), pp. 372-373; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "Edgar Allan Poe," *International Monthly Magazine*, Vol. I (October 1850), pp. 325-344; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "Memoir of the Author," in: *The Works of the Late Edgar Allan Poe*, Vols. 1-3 (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1850-1853), pp. vii-xxxix; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "Edgar Poe," *Tait's Magazine*, Vol. XXII (April 1852), pp. 231-234; Rufus Wilmot Griswold, "Poe's Moral Nature," *Nation*, Vol. LX (16 May 1895), pp. 381-382.

143 Bryusov's translations of Poe's poems appeared in 1900.

144 Cf. Александр Блок [Alexander Blok], *Собрание сочинений*, Vol. 5 (Москва: Государственное издательство художественной литературы, 1963), p. 617. Blok wrote the preface to the second volume of Poe's collected works, translated by Balmont to display of his conception of an artistic translation rather than a figurative one. He wrote that Balmont's translations reflect for the first time in a satisfactory way the "music of words" of Poe's works [Blok, *Собрание сочинений*, p. 617].

1895 to Poe's selected works, "The Genius of Discovery."¹⁴⁵ It depicts Poe as half-mad and half-holy. Blok's admiration went so far that from 1890 to 1900 he imitated Poe's behavior and even tried to reproduce his look. It would seem unlikely that Poe's works were not discussed by Leśmian and Balmont in Paris. Leśmian could have known Balmont's *Баллады и фантазии* [*Ballads and Fantasies*] and *Таинственные рассказы* [*The Mysterious tales*] (in a translation from 1895), and he had an opportunity – as a result of direct contact with Merezhkovsky in Paris – to read the Russian translation of "The Raven," which was published in volume 11 of the magazine *Северный вестник* [*The Northern Messenger*] in 1890.¹⁴⁶ Importantly, Balmont knew Baudelaire's poetry very well (he wrote the preface to the fifty-three poems that appeared in Moscow in 1895 in Pyotr Yakubovich-Melshyn's translation), and Baudelaire's essays about Poe. Moreover, Balmont valued both authors highly, and could be an attentive and competent interlocutor to Leśmian, who a few years later began to translate Poe's prose into Polish.

Poe translated by Leśmian from Baudelaire

The memoirs of Jan Brzechwa tell us that Leśmian based his translations of Poe on Baudelaire's translations. It does not seem complicated, however, even without that knowledge, to determine whose translation work was primary for Leśmian. The first clue that permits the identification of the source of his translations (Leśmian selected tales for his own *Extraordinary Tales* from the translation collections by Baudelaire: *Extraordinary Tales* and *New Extraordinary Tales*) would certainly be the syntactic constructions used by Leśmian that resemble the composition of words and usually reflect the sentence structure characteristic to Baudelaire. Changes made by Leśmian in relation to Baudelaire's translations are generally insignificant and relatively scant. These can be divided into four categories.

Lexical amplifications of a specifying character, for example: Baudelaire's phrase "décharger mon âme,"¹⁴⁷ which Leśmian translates as "to relieve my soul

145 Бальмонт [Balmont], "Гений открытия." At the end of the nineteenth century, the text was also reprinted in a St. Petersburg magazine *Ежемесячные сочинения* in No. 10 (1900), p. 113.

146 It seems unlikely that Leśmian read "The Raven" in Bryusov's translation. Both poets stayed in Paris in 1903, but we do not know if they met. Bryusov translated "The Raven" two years later.

147 Edgar Allan Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, trans. Charles Baudelaire (Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1961), p. 28.

with confession” [“ulżyć mej duszy spowiedzią”],¹⁴⁸ and “je le saisis”¹⁴⁹ – “I caught him” – which he translates as “I caught him by the neck” [“schwyciłem go za kark”].¹⁵⁰

Leśmian used in his translations the neoromantic style of Polish Modernism,¹⁵¹ for example the word “anéantir” was translated not as “annihilate” [“unicestwić,”] but as “znicestwić” [form eagerly used by Polish Romantics and modernists].¹⁵² This type of change in the prefix of verbs was present in Cyprian Kamil Norwid in his poem “Znicestwienie narodu”¹⁵³ [“Annihilation of the Nation”] (while in Zygmunt Krasiński’s “Przedświt”¹⁵⁴ [“Before Dawn”] there is the past principle “znicestwiony” – “annihilated”), and in *Nad rzekami Babilonu*¹⁵⁵ [*By the Rivers of Babylon*] by Teodor Tomasz Jeż. Kornel Ujejski also used this form in “Skargi Jeremiego (XI. Chwała Tobie, Panie!)”¹⁵⁶ [“Jeremy’s Complaints (XI. Glory to You, Lord!”]. Later it appeared in Stanisław Przybyszewski’s “Rapsod pierwszy” in *Nad morzem*¹⁵⁷ [“First Rhapsody” in *By the Sea*]. In the poems “Apollo”¹⁵⁸ by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer and “Posępny las” [“Somber Forest”] by Stanisław Korab-Brzozowski,¹⁵⁹ we find the verbal noun “znicestwienie” [“annihilation”].

148 Edgar Allan Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, trans. Bolesław Leśmian (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Skrzat, 1992), p. 85.

149 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 30.

150 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 85.

151 Adam Pomorski has pointed out this problem. The author of the so-called Warsaw dictionary provides the exemplification from the works of Zygmunt Krasiński, Teodor Tomasz Jeż, Stanisław Przybyszewski and Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, see: Jan Karłowicz, Adam Antoni Kryński and Władysław Niedźwiedzki, eds., *Słownik języka polskiego*, Vol. 8 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Kasy im. Mianowskiego, Instytut Popierania Nauki, 1900–1927), p. 583.

152 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 85.

153 Cyprian Warszawa, “Znicestwienie narodu,” in: *Pisma wybrane. Proza*, Vol. 4, ed. Juliusz W. Gomulicki (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), pp. 457–464.

154 Zygmunt Krasiński, *Przedświt* (Lviv: Nakładem Spółki Wydawniczej Vita, 1925).

155 Teodor Tomasz Jeż, *Nad rzekami Babilonu* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1962).

156 Kornel Ujejski, “XI, Chwała Tobie, Panie,” in: *Wybór poezyj*, ed. Michał Janik (Kraków: Nakładem Krakowskiej Spółki Wydawniczej, 1921), pp. 79–80.

157 Stanisław Przybyszewski, “Rapsod pierwszy,” in: *Confiteor, Synagoga szatana* (Kraków: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza “Anagram,” 1990/2000), pp. 40–41.

158 Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, “Apollo,” in: *Poezye*, Vol. 3 (Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolfa, 1900), p. 48.

159 Stanisław Korab-Brzozowski, “Posępny las,” in: *Nim serce ucichło* (Warszawa: Jakub Mortkowicz, 1910), p. 34.

The prefix formations in verbs are present in Leśmian's own works, for instance in "The Unknown Journey of Sinbad the Sailor" ("Third Journey," 1913) and in the poem "Niewiara" ["Disbelief"] from the volume *The Shadowy Drink* (1936). Leśmian created similar neologisms in poems, for example: "docałowac" ["kiss more/enough"] ("W malinowym chruśniaku" ["In Raspberry Brushwood"]), "potworzyć" [a contamination of "to create" and "mosters"] ("Chokester").¹⁶⁰ Leśmian added another prefix to the word "znicestwić" (eagerly employed by Romantics and modernists) and in turn created the neologism "roznicestwić" [by adding the prefix *roz-* that indicates an increase of intensity of a process or deprivation of the original shape] ("Mister Glister").¹⁶¹

Strengthening of the meaning of individual words, and at the same time intensification of the contrast effect in the structure of the entire tale, for instance, the translation of the French word "le jouet"¹⁶² – "focus of jokes, comments, games" – as "scapegoat."¹⁶³ In the case of the building of the characters in "The Black Cat," we are dealing with a transformation of the hypersensitive protagonist, laughed at by his peers, into a killer-tormentor, so we can regard Leśmian's translative decisions as justified both artistically and psychologically (in the Polish translation, the inclination to violence described in the work is both a consequence of alcohol addiction and the result of psychological violence experienced by the protagonist in his youth). As a result, Leśmian creates a clearer opposition of love and cruelty (the phrase mentioned above is followed by the story about the protagonist's love of animals).

Translative mistakes. At first, they appear in the form of unjustified changes in the style register of given fragments: the verbs "nourir" and "caresser"¹⁶⁴ – "nourish" and "caress" – are translated by Leśmian in a high register as in "to bestow with nourishment and caress" ["darzyć pokarmem i pieśczożą"],¹⁶⁵ "aimer"¹⁶⁶ as "to cherish" ["miłować"¹⁶⁷]; the word "le noeud"¹⁶⁸ – "loop" – Leśmian translates

160 Bolesław Leśmian, "Chokester," in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), pp. 35-37.

161 Bolesław Leśmian, "Mister Glister," in: *Beyond the Beyond: Poems in Polish and English* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2017), pp. 65-76.

162 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

163 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 86.

164 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

165 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

166 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 30.

167 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

168 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 31.

with a lexical archaism as “no idea” [“pętlica”],¹⁶⁹ and similarly he uses archaisms to translate the phrases “toute ma fortune” – “my entire fortune” – and “autour de moi”¹⁷⁰ as “no idea” [“wszystką moją fortunę”]¹⁷¹ and “no idea” [“wszędę”],¹⁷² and “au point de la placer”¹⁷³ – in the context of Poe’s tale, the phrase means exile – Leśmian translates with a dated word form “wyświecenie.”¹⁷⁴ Second, in the translations the error of ambiguity occurs: the phrase “cette particularité de mon caractère s’accrut avec ma croissance,”¹⁷⁵ meaning “this peculiarity of my character grew with my age,” sounds in Leśmian’s translation ambiguous and comical (in his day, it also imparted these meanings): “this peculiarity of his private parts rose with age” [“Ta osobliwość mego przyrodzenia wzrastała wraz z wiekiem”]¹⁷⁶. And “Je ne me connus plus”¹⁷⁷ – “I lost self control” – is altered into “I lost consciousness” [“straciłem przytomność”]¹⁷⁸. Third, translation mistakes result from failure to find substitutes for phrases used by Baudelaire. The French “homme naturel”¹⁷⁹ is in Leśmian “an original man” [“człowiek w oryginalnym”]¹⁸⁰, while “des sorcières déguisées” – “hidden [or masked] witches”¹⁸¹ are in the Polish version “passed-over witches” [“przerzuconymi czarownicami”],¹⁸² and “la maison”¹⁸³ is not a home but a room.¹⁸⁴ Baudelaire’s phrase “le principal ameublement de la salle”¹⁸⁵ that faithfully conveys Poe’s wording “the chief furniture of the apartment” is poorly substituted with “the main ornament of the room” [“główna ozdoba sali”].¹⁸⁶ Wording introduced by Leśmian changes the meaning of the original. Leśmian readily translates idiomatic expressions in a

169 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

170 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 32.

171 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

172 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 90.

173 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 31.

174 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

175 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

176 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 86.

177 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 30.

178 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 86.

179 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

180 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

181 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

182 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 86.

183 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 80.

184 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

185 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 32.

186 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 90.

literary way, rendering “de ne pas subir les atteintes,”¹⁸⁷ for example – “to not be adversely affected” – as “to not bow down to a blow” [“nie ukorzyć się przed ciosem”],¹⁸⁸ and “de ne pas tenir compte”¹⁸⁹ – “to not take into consideration” – means in Leśmian’s version “to be unaware of” [“nie zdawać sobie sprawy”].¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, wording used by Leśmian remains understandable in the context.

Other examples show how the effects of Leśmian’s translative work depart from Beaudelaire’s, while other extracts are much better than Baudelaire’s translations. In Leśmian we read, for example: “One day there may be a mind that will bring my nightmare to the level of the commonplace” [“Kiedyś może znajdzie się umysł, który zmorę moją sprowadzi do poziomu zjawisk oklepanych”].¹⁹¹ The phrase “zjawiska oklepane” is faithful to the original “commonplace,” while in Beaudelaire’s translation there is an error: the “commonplace” is translated as “lieu commun.”¹⁹² Another example is the modification, most probably intentional, of Poe’s wording “to be very fond of something” into the ambiguous translation “Être particulièrement fou”¹⁹³ [“to go mad about something”]. Interestingly, although Leśmian did not speak English, he provided here a translation closer to the original than Baudelaire. These semantical differences mentioned above strongly indicate that Leśmian must have compared Baudelaire’s translation with other Polish and/or Russian translations.

Baudelaire described the language of his translations of Poe’s prose as heavy, sometimes baroque, mainly due to the specific syntactic constructions. Leśmian’s translations make a similar impression. A meticulous comparison of the two versions could be preceded by the simple assumption that the Polish translations are characterized by the language code of the period, that they are dominated by the stylistic influences of the Young Poland movement.

A comparative analysis of the translations made by Leśmian and Baudelaire, however, leads to the conclusion that the results of the translation work of the former are generally very faithful.¹⁹⁴ Interestingly, Leśmian – as with

187 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 30.

188 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 86.

189 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 30.

190 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 88.

191 Poe, *Opowieści niesamowite*, p. 85.

192 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28. Cf. Léon Lemonnier’s commentary in: Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 247, footnote 30.

193 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28.

194 It should be noted that Baudelaire changed the titles of some Poe works in his translations: “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains” into “Les Souvenirs de M. Auguste Bedloe” [“Memories of Mr. Auguste Bedloe”], and “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” was

Baudelaire – wanted specific words to retain the same place in the structure of sentences and for them, if possible, to play the same grammatical function as in Baudelaire’s translation. While Baudelaire attempted not to change even the location of punctuation marks, Leśmian introduced a number of modifications of that kind. An increase in the number of paragraphs in the text is readily noticed. Leśmian frequently replaced semicolons used by Baudelaire with limiting periods. It is impossible today to decide whether these transformations resulted from changes introduced by the translator – shortened sentences certainly increase the comfort of reading – or from an editor’s work. Despite these modifications, Leśmian’s translation manifests his respect for the source text. Unfortunately, sometimes this respect turns into literality – the translation has syntactic loan translations from the French language. Generally speaking, however, it must be said that Leśmian – as with Baudelaire – tried to reproduce the sentence structure as faithfully as possible, to maintain word order, and even to locate inclusions in the same place as in the source text.

Thus, the following questions inevitably arise: why did both poets attempt maximum fidelity to the original text,¹⁹⁵ and was it a result of translative awkwardness or a deliberate decision?

translated by Baudelaire as “Double assassinat dans la rue Morgue” [“Double Murder in the Rue Morgue” and the essay “The Philosophy of Composition” as “La Genèse d’un poème” [“The Genesis of a Poem”].

195 Claire Hennequet’s extensive study provides very interesting information about Baudelaire’s translations of Poe’s works, see: Claire Hennequet, “Baudelaire traducteur de Poe,” <http://baudelaire-traducteur-de-poe.blogspot.com/>, last accessed 30.08.2019. I have utilized numerous valuable observations from this work. The text was also deposited at the Société des Gens des Lettres in Paris. The author attempted to determine the specificity of Baudelaire’s translations in comparison with other translations of Poe’s works available at that time in France. Alphonse Borghers prepared a translation, *Nouvelles choisies d’Edgar Poe* (1853), which was more elegant stylistically and more understandable than Poe’s works in English; Léon de Wailly removed from his translations (1856) some text fragments and did not convey the comical effect. Similarly, William Hughes in *Les Contes inédits d’Edgar Poe* (1862) omitted numerous important passages. Isabelle Meunier’s translation (1847) is also characterized by ellipticity, which however does not change the meaning of Poe’s works. Meunier’s translation of “The Black Cat,” printed on January 27, 1847 in *Démocratie Pacifique*, was the first translation read by Baudelaire. His translations are regarded as the most faithful of all nineteenth-century French translations. Léon Lemonnier has also discussed the quality of translation work of Baudelaire’s French predecessors, see his: “Prédécesseurs et rivaux de Baudelaire,” in: *Les Traducteurs d’Edgar Poe en*

T.S. Eliot leaned towards the first hypothesis. In his essay “From Poe to Valéry,” Eliot wrote:

None of these poets [Baudelaire, Mallarmé and Valéry] knew the English language well. Baudelaire must have read a certain amount of English and American poetry: he certainly borrows from Gray, and apparently from Emerson. He was never familiar with England, and there is no reason to believe that he spoke the language at all well. [...] It is certainly possible, in reading something in a language imperfectly understood, for the reader to find what is not there; and when the reader is himself a man of genius, the foreign poem read may, by a happy accident, elicit something important from the depths of his own mind, which he attributes to what he reads. And it is true that in translating Poe’s prose into French, Baudelaire effected a striking improvement: he transformed what is often a slipshod and a shoddy English prose into admirable French. [...] The evidence that the French overrated Poe because of their imperfect knowledge of English remains accordingly purely negative: we can venture no further that saying that they were not disturbed by weaknesses of which we are very much aware.¹⁹⁶

If, however, we look at Baudelaire’s translations as a whole, it will turn out that they are not only faithful to the original, but also that they are even literal. Baudelaire translated Poe almost word for word, as exemplified by “Le chat noir” [“The Black Cat”]. Notwithstanding the fact that he worked in another language, Baudelaire intentionally used the same sentence structures as Poe, and individual words frequently represent the same grammatical categories: Poe, in “The Black Cat,” wrote: “This peculiarity of my character grew with my growth.” Baudelaire translated the sentence as “Cette particularité de mon caractère s’accrut avec ma croissance” [“This peculiarity of my character grew with my growth”].¹⁹⁷

As Claire Hennequet convincingly proved, Baudelaire wanted Poe’s works in French translation to sound beautiful and somewhat strange, while retaining the properties of the original language. Thanks to the comparison of Baudelaire’s translations of both Poe and Thomas de Quincey (the latter are not faithful to the source text), Hennequet managed to undermine Léon Lemonnier’s statement accusing Baudelaire of “blindness to the sentence structure,” an inability to read

France de 1845 à 1875: Charles Baudelaire (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1928), pp. 9–58.

196 T.S. Eliot, “From Poe to Valéry,” *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Autumn 1949), p. 336.

197 Poe, *Nouvelles histoires extraordinaires*, p. 28. Cf. Hennequet, “Baudelaire traducteur de Poe.”

individual words in connection, which was supposed to bring about the literalness of his translations.¹⁹⁸

Paradoxically, it became clear that in the type of translation that is close to literal as a result of the attempt to preserve sentence construction similar to that from the original, and which appears to indicate limitations in the translator's inventiveness, one can find manifestation of the theses formulated by Poe in "The Philosophy of Composition." The translator refused to correct – or complete – the author's version of the texts, which had been constructed methodically, with care taken for brevity, the author striving for perfection and "unity of effect." Poe modified his works many times, and the changes he introduced were usually removing fragments he found unnecessary. He attempted to leave only the necessary words for the final version of the work. Faithfulness to the letter of the text was thus also a manifestation of the translator's respect to the rules of composition used by the author on the most elementary level. Violation of the structure of the original, creation of a free translation, would stand in contradiction to Poe's intention, who was admired both by Leśmian and by Baudelaire. This does not mean, however, that Baudelaire always successfully maintained the rhythm of sentences characteristic of the original – short English words did not always have French equivalents in meaning and sound. It was even more difficult for Leśmian to obtain the equirhythmic effect in prose as he did not translate directly from English. Nevertheless, this kind of translation allowed for a transcontinental circulation of ideas, transmitted as faithfully as possible, although the pursuit of that faithfulness has in a few cases influenced the quality of the translation. The translation, however, has sustained the belief that the linguistic shape of Poe's works did not happen merely by chance, but was a result of applying the rules formulated in "The Philosophy of Composition."

To evaluate Leśmian's translations (I perceive the translation of the biographical segments of the essay "Edgar Allan Poe" as free translation), one should take into consideration the discovery made by William T. Bandy in 1953. Bandy concluded his inquiry with the statement that more than half of Baudelaire's famous essay "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works"¹⁹⁹ (1852) was rewritten word for

198 Léon Lemonnier wrote in his *Les Traducteurs d'Edgar Poe*, p. 185: "He never sees the whole sentence, he doesn't try to control it. He penetrates it, spells it out, replaces words."

199 In March 1856, in the *Revue Française*, there was information that French readers were more amazed by the erudition and enthusiasm of the author of the preface than by Poe's works. The article stated: "In his preface, Mr. Baudelaire depicted the American character of the author described by him with verve, sympathy and talent. Thanks to the preface, he will probably achieve more than he intended, because so far – I must

word, albeit in a different language, and without providing a source, from two articles published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a periodical published from 1834 to 1864 in Virginia. The first was the obituary written by John R. Thompson, and the second was a text composed by John M. Daniel.²⁰⁰ Bandy determined that the entire biographical part of Baudelaire's "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works" was taken from Daniel.

In this situation, Bandy had to answer the question whether Baudelaire committed plagiarism. His analyses demonstrate, for example, that when Daniel described Poe's relationship with his stepmother, he used the term "attachment," and Baudelaire speaks of "immense amitié" ["deep friendship"]. The synonymic phrases used by Baudelaire, the assumption of the "purity of intentions," as well as the statement that in Baudelaire's time there were no legal regulations to define "literary piracy," served as the starting point for seeking justification for Baudelaire and the attempt to clear him of the accusation of plagiarism. According to Bandy, Baudelaire was predominantly motivated by the need to affirm Poe's achievements and the attempt to change his rather unfavorable image in France.²⁰¹

Leśmian belonged to a different generation than Bandy, so he did not have a chance to learn the true genesis of Baudelaire's essay, and due to the fact that he did not know English he was not able to have read the articles on Poe published

say here that I have read only half of the volume – it appears to be a great work of art, the most human and moving story, and also the most extraordinary one" [quoted from Lemonnier, *Les Traducteurs d'Edgar Poe*, p. 155].

- 200 I am discussing the story of William Bandy's discovery after Richard H. Haswell, "Poe and Baudelaire: Translations," *Poe Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1972), pp. 62–63. See also: Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: sa vie et ses ouvrages."
- 201 Interestingly, Poe was famous in nineteenth-century France due to a scandal that involved... plagiarism. Franciszek Lyra wrote in his book *Edgar Allan Poe* that in 1846 in *La Quotidienne*, a rather free translation was published of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" as "Un meurtre sans exemple dans les fastes de la justice" and signed with initials G.B. The text was not signed with the name of its true author, Edgar Allan Poe. Several weeks later, in *Le Commerce*, another version of the translation of the work appeared, signed by Emile Forgues, author of the first article on Poe in French. The publication led to an almost immediate response: *La Presse* accused Forgues of plagiarism. The journalist revealed that both translations came from the same source, and that Poe was the author of the short story. When *La Presse* refused to publish this explanation, Forgues took legal action and later lost the case. The scandal led to the popularization of Poe's achievements. The case became so famous that Baudelaire heard about Poe for the first time, see: Lyra, *Edgar Allan Poe*, pp. 292–293.

in the nineteenth century in American periodicals. However, it seems important to resolve two issues:

- to what degree Leśmian's essay "Edgar Allan Poe" is based on Baudelaire's texts "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works" and "New Notes on Edgar Poe;"
- whether Leśmian committed second-degree plagiarism.

When Baudelaire's essay "Edgar Allan Poe: sa vie et ses ouvrages" and Leśmian's "Edgar Allan Poe" are compared, we soon come to the conclusion that Leśmian provided his readers with biographical information predominantly based on Baudelaire's translation, which appeared to be his own text. In support of this statement, we may quote numerous passages; I will cite only one here, and afterwards will indicate the types of linguistic transformations present in Leśmian's work. Baudelaire writes about Poe:

He returned to Richmond in 1822 and continued his studies under the supervision of the best masters there. At the University of Charlottesville, where he enrolled in 1825, he excelled not only with an almost wonderful intelligence, but also with already near-destructive force of passion – premature maturity, truly American – which resulted in his expulsion. It should be noted as well that in Charlottesville, Poe manifested his extraordinary abilities for science and mathematics. Later he will often use them in his bizarre short stories in the most unexpected way.²⁰²

Leśmian writes:

In 1822, Poe returns to Richmond and here, in America, he continues his education under the supervision of the most eminent professors. In 1825 – as a student at the University of Charlottesville – Poe exhibited his extraordinary intelligence, his rare talents, and at the same time manifested fiery resources of passions until then dormant at the bottom of his soul, and now prematurely awakened. These passions were soon the reason for his expulsion from the university. In his time at Charlottesville, Poe manifested a unique gift and enthusiasm for physics and mathematics. It should be noted that Poe would later base some of his literary concepts on seemingly scientific and mathematical ideas, in order to substantiate, justify and impose on the reader, more easily and more convincingly, via unavoidable logic, his images, his fantastic visions, unreal and so colorfully true, so dreamingly understandable and familiar to every deeper human reflection!²⁰³

The types of changes introduced by Leśmian can be divided into five groups. First of all, he polonized American names and their derivatives. Second, he modified the syntactic constructions used by Baudelaire – he usually changed

202 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: sa vie et ses ouvrages," p. 99.

203 Leśmian, "Edgar Allan Poe," pp. 457–458.

word order in sentences. Third, he used epithets and synonymous phrases: for example, whereas Baudelaire's "wonderful intelligence" Leśmian transformed into "extraordinary intelligence," and when Baudelaire used the phrase "the best masters," Leśmian employed the expression "the most eminent professors." Leśmian also used amplifications that did not enhance the sentences semantically with reference to content included in "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works:" for example, after the information about "extraordinary intelligence," Leśmian added the term "rare talents." Finally, Leśmian discussed Poe with greater emphasis (he enhanced the intonation of the last sentence in the quote above with an exclamation mark) and his style is more elevated, ornamental and metaphorical. Importantly, Leśmian did not change the sequence of information provided. Only in the last of quoted sentences did he attempt to deepen the meaning he read in Baudelaire so as to stress his own contribution to the presented argument.

However, there seems to be an essential difference in the translative approach of the two authors. Baudelaire makes no single note about the texts written by John R. Thompson and John M. Daniel that would provide indication of those texts as sources, if not of inspiration, then at least of information about Poe. On the contrary, Leśmian does not fail to mention the role that Baudelaire played in shaping his essay; the Polish translator wrote straightforwardly that he had read the foreword to *Extraordinary Tales*.

Franciszek Lyra convincingly argues that Leśmian lacked the competence to study Poe's biography, and therefore reproduced from Baudelaire "all falsehoods from the life of the American writer."²⁰⁴

Certainly, his essay "Edgar Allan Poe" (even its interpretative parts) is not a great achievement by the otherwise excellent poet and essayist.²⁰⁵ Leśmian's contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about Poe in Poland was moderate, and the interpretation of the works translated by Leśmian cannot be considered as marked by genius – either in the context of the Polish reception of Poe's works or in Leśmian's entire *oeuvre*, especially when one is aware of his outstanding essays such as "Z rozmyślań o Bergsonie" ["Reflection about Bergson"], "Znaczenie pośrednictwa w metafizyce życia zbiorowego" ["The Importance of Mediation in the Metaphysics of Collective Life"] and "Rytm jako światopogląd"

204 Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," p. 302.

205 Franciszek Lyra and Michał Głowiński expressed similar opinions, see: Lyra, "Z polskich dziejów Poe'go," pp. 290–291; Michał Głowiński, "Leśmian, Poe, Baudelaire," pp. 165–166.

[“Rhythm as a Worldview”]. However, in the case of the translations, the situation is different. Even though they were based on French adaptations rather than on the original texts, Leśmian’s translations marked an important phase in the Polish reception of Poe’s works.

The question of the impact of Poe’s work on Leśmian’s poetry is also very interesting. It was not simple imitation. Inspirations, although evident, were subjected to an original modification. The similarity is multifaceted. It is clearly visible on the level of motifs (including sleep, the doppelgänger, shadow, sickness, torment and the death of a beautiful woman). These parallels often exceed the boundaries of genre. For example, motifs present in Poe’s prose are creatively transformed and artistically developed in Leśmian’s poetry. It is also evident that the two authors like the same genre forms. Their artistic output includes fairy tales, ballads and elegies. Both authors use the aesthetics of the grotesque, macabre and macabresque. They also share analogous views on allegory: even though Poe perceives it as neither particularly endowed with meaning nor significant for making poetry, he sometimes used it unintentionally. Similarly, Leśmian attempted to avoid allegory, which does not mean that it is non-existent in his works. One cannot overlook the fact that they read the same books and shared sources of creative inspiration, *The Thousand and One Nights* being one of many such examples. Similarly, the issue of the influence of Poe’s works on the development of Leśmian’s narrative strategies does not seem to be conclusively determined. Finding the solution to the problems indicated above requires a parallel consideration of Russian, French and Polish contexts in the research (including Romantic contexts). Analysis of the translations made by Leśmian indicates that in his reception of Poe’s works, the influences of the most important European trends of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intersect.



Aesthetic transformations (the aesthetics of death: Poe – Baudelaire – Balmont – Leśmian)

Ways of representing death

The aesthetics of death in the works of Edgar Allan Poe and its impact on Bolesław Leśmian's *oeuvre* is an issue that has not been deeply studied, despite the fact that both writers are perceived as authors particularly interested in the thanatotic subject. It seems impossible for the issue to be thoroughly investigated without taking into account the intermediation of Charles Baudelaire and Konstantin Balmont in Leśmian's reception of Poe's work. Such a focus of research allows us to answer the following questions: 1) to what extent the thanatotic aesthetics and poetics in Poe's work have a precursory character and 2) whether we may talk about a continuation of Poe's literary solutions in reference to the works of the writers listed above and, if so, to what extent.

There are four distinct strategies in Poe's *oeuvre* for the presentation of thanatotic motifs, which, importantly, have various functions. The ways of representing death are:

- aestheticizing death;
- de-specification and/or alegorization of death;
- macabre aesthetics;
- macabresque aesthetics.

I will discuss these in later sections of the book. I will also attempt to investigate if they are present in the works of Baudelaire, Balmont and Leśmian and, if so, what their shape and functions are.

Aestheticizing death

The first type of presentation of thanatotic issues related to its aestheticizing is particularly noticeable in Poe's poetry, where the motif of a beautiful dead woman frequently appears. The writer discusses it, for example, in the essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846).²⁰⁶ Significantly, Poe considered this to be the most poetic subject and expressed that belief in his poems, giving literary expression to this belief in "Annabel Lee," "The Raven," "Lenore," "To One in Paradise,"

206 "When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world – and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" [Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," *Graham's Magazine*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (April 1846), p. 165].

“Ulalume” and “To Zante.” The very presentation of death as a beautiful woman, admired and mourned by a lover in despair, favors an aestheticizing enhanced additionally by an aura of melancholy. Death is presented not as a process but as a personified subject, resistant to change, which is believed to have the potential for the greatest poetical influence on the reader. This way of posthumously presenting characters does not arouse such horror in its recipients as do the images of dying known from medieval macabre iconography. Moreover, the combining of a poetic tale about the extraordinary beauty of a dead woman with subtle eroticism brings about an aesthetic re-evaluation of phenomena associated with the sphere of Thanatos, which in turn prevents the reader from experiencing fear as a natural component of the veristic reaction to the reminder of the end of human existence. As a result, Poe’s poetic works listed above become poetically lofty tales about autonomous, perfect, self-sufficient beauty, inaccessible to a loving lyrical subject. The experience of the beloved’s death is a source of suffering for him, but does not undermine his faith in the aesthetic harmony of the universe.

This is because in Poe’s poetry the posthumous life of female figures is not usually subject to material specification (an exception is the poem “The Sleeper”). For example, in “The Raven” a rare and radiant beauty called by the angels Lenore leaves into a nameless place afar. In “Lenore,” inspired by the ballad of Gottfried August Bürger of the same title, the dead protagonist is described as a sweet woman with pupils with light extinguished, but with life still shining in her hair. The description of the former, almost magical power (able to transform reality) of the dead beloved from “To One in Paradise” seems characteristic of this strategy of describing death. The subject of the poem contrasts death (described with epithets associated with darkness) and life (associated lexically with dazzling brightness) and uses oneiric-symbolic-sacralizing poetics to speak about his beloved as about a dream that is too beautiful. He desires to follow the luminous traces of the dead woman where eternal streams tremble in an ethereal dance. On the one hand, in “Ulalume” – the first lyric written after the death of his wife, Virginia Clemm, in 1847 – Poe used comparisons referring to Greek mythology. A dead female character is subject to mythologization, she is described as warmer than Diana, goddess of the hunt, forests, mountains and nature (“She is warmer than Dian”) and called the beautiful Psyche. On the other hand, in “Annabel Lee” there is a symbolic, synesthetically and oneirically shaped description of the love of the lyrical subject for the beautiful maiden laid in a grave, with whom he once lived in the kingdom by the sea:

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful *Annabel Lee*;

And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
 Of the beautiful *Annabel Lee*;
 And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
 Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,
 In her sepulchre there by the sea –
 In her tomb by the side of the sea.²⁰⁷

In these works, the effect of the aestheticization of death is reinforced by synesthetic imaging (for example, in “Annabel Lee” phrases indicating the high temperature of love are contrasted with expressions describing deathly coldness; bright eyes of the beloved are contrasted with a cloudy sky), and by alliteration and paronomasia shaping the musical layer of “Annabel Lee” and “To One in Paradise.”

I believe that the phenomenon of aestheticizing emerges from a strong opposition to the understanding of death in terms of a carnal metamorphosis leading to ultimate destruction. It is significant that in the poems under study, a dead body appears as a perfect body. It preserves its lively appearance; it is not subject to the laws of transformation. Poe’s poetic, aestheticizing representations of death could be described as metaphorical portraits of women (immortalized by the art of words), who having entered posthumous existence beyond time – their essential structure consolidated – have turned into images, and perfectly identified with themselves. (It is also worth mentioning that the issues outlined here are actualized with the opposition of life and art in Poe’s tale “The Oval Portrait.”) In Poe’s poetry, we pay special attention to the identification of the female characters with their images, which brings about a rejection of the poetics of directness in favor of the aesthetics of sublimity, which permits a selfless contemplation of the object viewed from a safe distance, and favoring a reflection on the surrogate for dark reality, much less affectively engaging than are macabre representations.

The aesthetics of death and the “poetics of irreparable loss,” developed in the poetry of Poe in a specific artistic way, found its continuation in the poetry of Baudelaire, the precursor of the French symbolists, and of Balmont, the older Russian symbolist, who also had a decadent period in his work, and in the works of Leśmian, an heir to all three authors.

Baudelaire almost immediately noticed in Poe’s poems the phenomenon of the aesthetization of death, although he also recognized the grotesque and

207 Edgar Allan Poe, “Annabel Lee,” in: *The Complete Tales and Poems* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), p. 96, original emphasis.

macabre in them. In his essay “Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works,” Baudelaire argued that “there is throughout his [Poe’s] works not a single passage which treats of wantonness, or even of sensual enjoyment” and that female characters are “always veiled with a mist of unchangeable melancholy,”²⁰⁸ capable of suppressing and containing every passion. Baudelaire became a faithful continuator of this tendency, although the poet certainly used more than one strategy of presenting thanatotic subjects. For instance, in Baudelaire’s poem “Beauty,” the inspirations echo of representations of female characters present in Poe’s poetry. In this text, which uses the poetics of confession, beauty, personified as a woman, presents its self-characteristic in terms of dead perfection (“I hate only impulse, the breaking of line,/ And I never will cry, nor will ever show smile”).²⁰⁹ Such an intentional and – as it seems – ironic combination results in a re-evaluation of the ancient principle of *kalokagathia* (brought about by the identification of beauty and goodness) and, as a result, leads the writer in other works to seek beauty in what is low and despised.

Aestheticization associated with the femininity of death also appears in Baudelaire’s poem “The Balcony,” where it is complemented with a motif of resurrection by way of art, known from Poe’s poetry:

I have the art of calling forth the happy times,
 Seeing again my past there curled within your knees.
 Where should I look for beauty, languorous and sublime,
 If not in your dear heart, and body at its ease?
 I have the art of calling forth the happy times!

These vows, these sweet perfumes, these kisses infinite,
 Will they be reborn from a gulf we cannot sound,
 As suns rejuvenated take celestial flight
 Having been bathed in oceans, mighty and profound?
 – O vows! O sweet perfumes! O kisses infinite!²¹⁰

208 Baudelaire, “Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works,” p. 16.

209 Charles Baudelaire, “Beauty,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 39.

210 Charles Baudelaire, “The Balcony,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 75. The presence of the strategy of negation of death by its aestheticization in art is also present in Baudelaire’s “A Phantom” (part IV, “The Portrait”): “Of kisses puissant as a healing balm,/ / Of transports more intense than flaring light,/ / What now remains? Appalling, o my soul!/ / Only a fading sketch in three pale tones, // [...] Time, you black murderer of Lige and Art,/ / You’ll never kill her in my memory – Not She, who was my pleasure and my pride!” [Charles Baudelaire, “A Phantom,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 80].

In the case of poetry of Balmont, an admirer of the works of Baudelaire and Poe, we also pay special attention to the extremely frequent occurrence of the word group associated with death. The poems are saturated with words focused around this phenomenon – even when prefixes indicate negation (for example, the word “immortality”) or if concerns are with phenomena preceding the moment of death (for example, the epithet “ante-mortem”) – which indicates the presence of an eschatological perspective in Balmont’s poetry, but does not mean that the author always sought to depict the very moment of agony. When he wanted to present death understood as a transformation of the body, he only described the first stage of dying. This is the case in the work “Тесный грот” [“A Narrow Grotto”] from the collection *Злые чары* [*Evil Magic*, 1906]. Initially, the subtle, euphemistic, poeticized and melancholy-filled way of depicting death diverges from the macabre literal representation of *transi*, popular in the arts between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Balmont’s poem speaks about the “stiffness of sensual charms, in which life sang,” about “immobility of tired legs // that have danced, run fast, and been touched with caresses.”²¹¹ In the apostrophe to the coffin, the lyrical subject predicts, in an abstract way, the future metamorphosis of a dead body: “Oh, timber coffin, your treasure is still beautiful/ [...] // But, oh, narrow grotto, your dead treasure will change into an atrocity.”²¹² Interestingly, the inevitable transformation is described, again in an abstract way, by using just the single word “atrocity” [“ужасность”]. The work is dominated by *lexis* associated with vitality and the joy of life. The following nouns appear: “singing,” “dancing,” “running,” or the phrase “touched with caresses.”

It appears that the identification of death and feminine beauty – affirmed and implemented in poetic practice by Poe – would later lead to decadent reevaluations of dying. A good example of this are the works by Balmont – “Проходя

211 “недвижность ног уставших,/ Но знавших пляску, быстрый бег, касанье ласки знавших” [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Тесный грот,” in: *Собрание сочинений в семи томах*, Vol. 2 (Москва: Книжный Клуб Книговек, 2010), pp. 287-288; http://az.lib.ru/b/balxmont_k_d/text_0520-1.shtml, last accessed 31.08.2019.

212 “Застылость чувственных красот, в которых жизнь пропела,” “недвижность ног уставших, Но знавших пляску, быстрый бег, касанье ласки знавших;” “Тесовый гроб, твой ценный клад еще прекрасен/ [...] // Но, тесный грот, твой мертвый клад в ужасность превратится” [Бальмонт [Balmont], “Тесный грот,” pp. 287-288; http://az.lib.ru/b/balxmont_k_d/text_0520-1.shtml, last accessed 31.08.2019].

Translator’s note: All translations of works with no citation for their publication in English translation are mine, with the original text added in footnotes.

по лабиринту” [“A Walk in a Labirynt”]²¹³ and “Смерть. Сонет” [“Death: a Sonnet”] – which are perceived as representations of decadence. They are the clearest proof that semantic transformations resulting from the association of death and beauty may have a bi-directional character and may bring about a positive valorization of the typically terrifying moment of agony. There are apostrophes to death in the above mentioned texts. Death appears to be the intended recipient of the confessions by the lyrical subject, the desired state, the object of trust and the promise of relief. Two works address the issue of the end of life defined in this way (as positive, even greatly awaited): “Потухшие факелы” [“Extinguished Torches”] and “Больной” [“Sick”]²¹⁴. It is also worth recalling that the issue had appeared in a similar function in Baudelaire’s poem “The Death of the Poor” and, especially, in the sonnet “The Two Good Sisters.” The latter asks: “Debauch, when will your clutches bury me? / O rival Death, will you be coming now [...]?”²¹⁵

In the case of the poetic work by Leśmian – who as we well remember was fascinated with Poe and admitting Baudelaire’s influences – the association of feminine eroticism and death adding charm to the dead woman and making her temptingly inaccessible appeared as early as the volume *Crossroads Orchard* (1912), in the long poem “The Unknown Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor,” written

213 “Oh, the ultimate hope, the light for the troubled soul, // Oh, Death, you sweeten my sufferings, oh, Death, I am waiting, hurry!” [“О, последняя надежда, свет измученной души,/ Смерть, услада всех страданий, Смерть, я жду тебя, спеши!”] [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Проходя по лабиринту,” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 103-104.

214 In Balmont’s *oeuvre*, such poems coexist with poetic texts of a decadent character filled with questions about meaning and purpose, in the form, for example, of an apostrophe to God, as in the poem “Зачем?” [“Why?”], echoing motifs of pleading and lamenting from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, known for instance from Psalm 129 “De profundis” from the *Book of Psalms* and “Вопрос” [“The Question”].

“God, God, hear me, I cry, I long,/ I pray to You in the evening mist/ / Why did you give me a celestial soul –/ / And chain me to the earth?/ / [...] / But life, love and death – all horrible, incomprehensible,/ / Everything is inevitable for me” [“Господь, Господь, внимли, я плачу, я тоскую,/ Тебе молюсь в вечерней мгле./ Зачем Ты даровал мне душу неземную –/ / И приковал меня к земле?/ [...] / Но жизнь, любовь, и смерть – все страшно, непонятно,/ Все неизбежно для меня”] [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Вопрос,” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 63].

215 Charles Baudelaire, “The Two Good Sisters,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 249.

in terza rima and hendecasyllable. Significantly, the lyrical protagonist of this piece, upon realizing the nature of the temptation, saves himself by fleeing. The poetic description of the dead girl does not try to dazzle drastically; on the contrary, it is subtle and combines thanatotic issues with the language of eroticism:

And maybe she, through the long line
Of shadows, brought together in an after-death sleigh ride,
Gave me golden signs?...

So that I wanted... and used my arms
To climb to her in this lushness of flowers and scents,
Following her in the darkness – in a pursuit of love. [...]

And out of the corner of my eye, I saw that
Her feet are blue – stretched straight in front of her –
Pointing towards only one hour...

And that in the same hour my thoughts
Were born, wrapped in a black cloth,
Run towards these feet – tempted by them!²¹⁶

On the other hand, “Zaklęcie” [“Magic Spell”] from *The Shadowy Potion* (1936) is a good example of a parodistic game with the convention of depicting the deaths of women as consolidated in Poe’s poetry. The structural principle of this text (using the formula of the magic curse in its second part) is based on capturing the similarity between inertia and feminine submissiveness of the dead:

Oh, night bird, who crossed the edge of the world
And saw the dead – tell me, what are they doing? – They lie.
And what else? – All the time, without rest.
They have no sun, no wind, no shadow!
They don’t pray, nor cry, nor dream, nor believe –
Nothing – they just lie! Nothing – they just lie!

A girl that resists my violence,
May she lie in a bed of madness tonight!

216 Bolesław Leśmian, “Nieznana podróż Sindbada-Żeglarza,” in: *Poezje*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1994), pp. 117–118 [“A może ona sama skroś orszaki/ Cieniów, pośmiertnym skupionych kuligiem,/ Złote mi zowąd podawała znaki?...// Aby m zapagnął... i ramion podźwigiem/ Wspiął ku niej brzemię tych kwiatów i woni,/ Tropiąc ją w mroku – miłości pościgiem. [...]/ I zezem oka spostrzegłem, że sine/ Jej stopy – prosto przed się wyciągnięte –/ Zdają się jedną wskazywać godzinę...// I że, w tej samej godzinie poczęte,/ Myśli me, czarną obleczone szatą,/ Biegły w kierunku tych stóp – w ich ponętę!”].

Unable to resist, powerless, vulnerable, unconscious
 May she sin with temptation and lie there alone!
 May she not pray, not dream, not cry, not believe –
 May she only lie – may she lie like this for me!²¹⁷

Unlike the subject from Poe's poems, the one who speaks in this poem does not want to revive his dead beloved with force of will, memory or art, but wants the girl, alive and unwilling to accept his courtship, to become like the deceased, to break her resistance, to render her unconscious, to deprive her of strength and make her submissive.

The comparison of Poe poetic works under study with works of three writers who are at the same time translators of his *oeuvre* – Baudelaire, Balmont and Leśmian – has allowed investigation of the transformations within treatment of the convention of the aesthetization of death. Poe's strategies for presenting signs of human finitude in a way that does not arouse fear (by combining the mortal and the beautiful) certainly had a precursory character to the other three authors' literary achievements. However, these strategies were subject to evolution and fulfilled various functions. They brought about aesthetic reevaluations of death that arouse fear and disgust (Poe, Baudelaire and Balmont), indicate the possibility of overcoming death with art (Poe and Baudelaire), lead in a decadent approach to a positive valorization of death (Baudelaire and Balmont), and finally became an object of parodic transformations (Leśmian).

One motif of death frequently recurring in Poe's poetry structures is based on the association of death and dream, in for example the poems: "A Dream within a Dream" (originally titled "Imitation" (1827) and written in reference to Lord Byron's "The Dream"), "The Sleeper," (1831) "Dream-Land," (1844) "Ulalume" (1847) and "To One in Paradise" (1833). In Poe's poetry, dream and death are either identified with each other by metaphorical expressions, or death is presented in an oneiric convention. I believe that the ways of presenting this issue that have already been mentioned bring about its de-specification and/or

217 Bolesław Leśmian, "Zakłęcie," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 317 ["Ptaku nocny, coś bywał za świata rubieżą/ I widziałeś umarłych – mów, co czynią? – Leżą./ A co jeszcze? – Wciąż bez przerwy, bez wycchnienia./ Nie ma dla nich ni słońca, ni wiatru, ni cienia!/ Nie modlą się, nie płaczą, nie śnią i nie wierzą – / I nic – tylko tak leżą! – Nic – tylko tak leżą!// Dziewczyna, co się mojej sprzeciwia przemocy,/ Niechaj, w łożu obłądnym polegnie tej nocy!/ Bezoporna, bezsilna, bezbronna, bezwiedna/ Niechaj, grzesząc pragnieniem, leży sama jedna!/ Niech nie modli się, nie śni, nie płacze, nie wierzy – / I niech tylko tak leży – niech dla mnie tak leży!"].

de-realization, which leads to favoring a shift in the content that arouses fear into the sphere of “bodyless abstraction,” at once less worrying and less appealing to the imagination of the reader. The artistic development of issues associated with ultimate matters here goes hand in hand with the author’s refusal to follow the principle of direct representation, to preserve distance from phenomena that could arouse strong affective reactions in readers. As a consequence, readers may react more freely to the issue of the work; it is easier for them to come to terms with the horror of the finitude of life.

Poe’s poem “The Sleeper,” though, is an exception to this rule. In the first stanza, the essentially Romantic, synesthetic lunar and foggy space is symbolically complemented by the aquatic image of the lake compared to the mythical Lethe: the river of oblivion. In the second stanza, there alternate questions and apostrophes to the poem’s dead lyrical addressee, who are called “lady” and “the sleeper:”

Above the closed and fringed lid
 ‘Neath which thy slumb’ring soul lies hid,
 That, o’er the floor and down the wall,
 Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!
 Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?
 Why and what are thou dreaming here?²¹⁸

The third stanza takes a course of prayer. Initially, it passes almost smoothly into the fourth stanza, and then a break occurs in the Romantic-sublime convention of depicting death, which leads to de-specification of death, and at the same time a violation occurs of the “holy majesty” of dying through introducing macabre poetics into the work:

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
 As it is lasting, so be deep;
 Soft may the worms about her creep!²¹⁹

The change in the convention of depicting the deceased is accompanied by a metamorphosis of the space presented in the poem, which shrinks incomparably and transforms from foggy-lunar-aquatic scenery (aesthetized and synestically shaped) into a tightly closed crypt, impermeable to light and sound and filled with worms. The comparison of oneirical-symbolic convention with macabre

218 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Sleeper,” in: *The Complete Tales and Poems* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), p. 105.

219 Poe, “The Sleeper,” p. 105.

aesthetics intensifies the effect of contrast in the work, which may be a manifestation of Poe's distance from the conventions employed.

In Baudelaire's poems, the theme of death identified with sleep, which functions as de-specification of the thanatotic issues, appears both in the variant of continuation of Poe's lyrics and in a transformed variant. The latter is present in the following texts: "Dream of a Curious Man" and "Day's End." In the first of these works, the comparison of the phenomena mentioned above transforms death into a positive quality. Its axiological revalorization is carried out, as is typical for a precursor of a stylistic trend, in a decadent spirit. The work reads:

My spirit, like my backbone, seems
Intent on finding its response;
The heart so full of mournful dreams,

I'll stretch out my weary back
And roll up in your curtains, those
Consoling comforters of black!²²⁰

An analogically, poetically shaped motif of death-sleep is present in the poems of Balmont, the second of these enthusiasts of Poe's work: "Что слышно в горах?" ["What Is Going on in the Mountains"], "В молчаньи забывшейся ночи..." ["In the Silence of the Pensive Night"], "И Сон и Смерть равно смежают очи" ["Dream and Death Close Their Eyes Together"]. Then, in the works "Кому я молюсь?" ["Who Am I Praying to?"], "Смерть (сонет)," ["Death: a Sonnet"], "Смерть, убаюкай меня" ["Oh, Death, Put Me to Sleep"] and "Sick," the thanatotic-oneiric problem is already artistically developed, typical of decadent approaches to the subject where it appears to be more than a metaphor mitigating the affective reactions of the reader, also serving as a promise of "eternal rest," the longed-for end of existential hardship.

Regardless of whether in Balmont's poetry we are dealing with a presentation of this issue in a way closer to Poe or in a more decadent way, the death is usually subject to de-specification; the death tends to be addressed in order to deny the power and omnipotence of destruction. So as to exemplify the matter, we may discuss the poem "Смерть" ["Death"] from *Под северным небом* [*Under the Northern Sky*], published in 1894. In this work, the literary gesture of negating subject to the tautological definition of the finitude of human existence ("death

220 Charles Baudelaire, "Day's End," in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 281.

is death”) becomes the starting point in defining the end of life in the poetics of paradox:

Don't believe the one who says
 That death is death: it is the beginning of life
 Of the heavenly existence [...]
 We were given no opportunity to understand the allure of death
 We can only sense it –
 So that our souls are not tempted
 To leave the earthly world,
 To resign from common experience
 And leave, despite their poor eyesight,
 For the blinding, higher world.²²¹

In this passage, there is a clear, radical reevaluation of death on three levels: ontological (the end of life is raised here as the beginning of a new life), aesthetic (death made alluring) and axiological (as the moment of initiation enabling a transition into a world perceived in far more positive terms than is life on earth, for a mortal this is a temptation that they should not know too early). Symbolistic poetics allows for a creation of a “substitute existence,” a parallel world that plays a compensatory and consolatory role. The defensive aspect of the substitution mechanism consists in the lyrical subject rejecting the painful finiteness of human existence, which is a scandal for reason and a challenge to thought. It brings about a poetic creation of the world, which when imagined is able to balance dreadful awareness of the inevitable end, stifling the fear that eternity may be inaccessible to man. The described effect of compensation goes hand in hand with the consolatory function – the poem under consideration is meant to comfort the reader, fueling the fire of “divine mystical longing” (“божественной мистической тоски”), reinforcing faith in existence but also in the wisdom of the Creator, whose intentions are unknown to people. Yet, they do not question the rationality of objectives behind those intentions. Their implementation

221 “Не верь тому, кто говорит тебе,/Что смерть есть смерть: она – начало жизни/
 Того существованья неземного/ [...] / Нам не дано понять всю прелесть смерти,/ Мы можем лишь предчувствовать ее, – / Чтоб не было для наших душ соблазна/
 До времени покинуть мир земной/ И, не пройдя обычных испытаний,/ Уйти с своими слабыми очами/ Туда, где ослепил нас высший свет” [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Смерть,” in: *Под северным небом*, in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 9-10; http://az.lib.ru/b/balxmont_k_d/text_0420.shtml, last accessed 31.08.2019].

should assure human beings a state of bliss, bringing them satisfaction absent in earthly life.

The presence of the functions discussed above codetermines the work's high degree of impressionism. The relationship between the speaker in the text and the virtual recipient, and the former's objectives, can be brought down to the following formulas: presenting the appropriate approach to the temporal, sharing knowledge of infinity, reinforcing the sense of its existence and of its future accessibility to humans. The poetics of the work – characteristic to Balmont's symbolistically oriented poetry – is not intended to reprimand the poem's addressee for their metaphysical dispositions; on the contrary, it presents those as the right way in leading to the superior, longed-for eternal life. The mechanism of creating a substitute reality – symbolistically understood – had already been present in Poe's poetry in the form of allusive metaphorical constructions. In turn, the subject of Balmont's poems not only considers "another world" in the poetics of supposition but also speaks directly about it.

Balmont's inspiration from the thanatotic subject present in Poe's work – for instance, I have in mind the allegorical tale "The Masque of the Red Death" – is also present in two poems: "Духи чумы" ["Spirits of the Plague"] and "После бала" ["After the Ball"]. In the former, written in a six-syllable poetic meter, its very title indicates that the plague is de-specificized. Moreover, it is poetically described in an allegorical-oneiric way. The Black Death speaks as a collective entity, deprived of compassion, thirsty for victims. The use of the plural and of sacral rhetoric emphasizes the all-encompassing, all-but divine power of the plague. Destruction brought by the plague spirits is presented in an abstract way with *lexis* such as "extermination," "fear," "to murder" and "to torment," and by the symbolism of crucifixes and graves. The poem reads:

We are rushing, floating
On a huge wave
Knowing not what dream is
But always half-dreaming.

We will not look even once
On the tears of our wives and children,
For where people die
We take solace.

Our power rings
Amidst memorial ceremonies in church,
Death, extermination, fear
Knocking at people's doors.

Among spring leaves
 The symbol of destructive forces
 Millions of crucifixes,
 Millions of graves.

To quaintly murder, torment
 An expectant mother
 We cannot assuage,
 We cannot love.

Those days, as before,
 Each minute, all the time
 A better offering for the altar
 Life brings to us.

We are rushing, floating
 Through the silence of night
 Knowing not what dream is
 But always half-dreaming.²²²

De-specification and/or allegorization of death

As with the case of works where death is subject to aestheticization, as well as in the variant of presentation described, which consists of de-specification and allegorizing, the speaking subject refrains from using naturalistic descriptions of corporeality, avoiding literalness, not overwhelming but relying on somatic brutality in revealing the issue. An analogous situation arises in “After the Ball.” The poem includes a direct reference to Poe’s name – the lyrical subject speaks of the crazed Edgar by mentioning the expression “Nevermore,” sinisterly replicating the ghost seen by the protagonist in the ballad “The Raven.”²²³ Balmont’s poem reads:

222 “Мы спешим, мы плывем/ На могучей волне,/ Незнакомы со сном,/ Но всегда в полусне./ Слезы жен и детей/ Не заметит наш глаз,/ И где смерть для людей,/ Там отрада для нас./ Нашей властью звучат/ Панихиды в церквах,/ В двери к людям стучат/ Смерть, и гибель, и страх./ Между вешних листов,/ Символ сгбнувших сил,/ Миллионы крестов,/ / Миллионы могил./ Любо нежную мать/ Умертвить, погубить,/ Мы не можем ласкать,/ Не умеем любить./ В эти дни, как и встарь,/ Каждый миг, каждый час,/ Лучший дар на алтарь/ Жизнь приносит для нас./ И спешим, и плывем/ Мы в ночной тишине./ Незнакомы со сном,/ Но всегда в полусне” [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Духи чумы” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 23–24].

223 The significance of the influence of Poe and Baudelaire in shaping Balmont’s understanding of high literature is seen in the latter’s poems “Эдгар По” [“Edgar Poe”] and “К Бодлеpy” [“To Baudelaire”], see: Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont],

The midnight goblet is full to the brim
 Like the feast during the pest, long alluring
 Like the strange imagination of mad Edgar
 Who sang for us forever "Nevermore", –

Our ball already dances in boisterous rooms
 It already loses the face of a hidden beauty
 And you detect something very chill and tired
 In the space rising above us.

Yes, midnight has lapsed with its elegant entourage
 Of cold instants and hours
 Shards of shattered crystals have fallen from the chandelier
 And the scream of hostile voices arises without.

Fatigued yellowed faces grew grim
 The fan trembled as a broken wing
 All recalled the read page
 And the new world whispered from the windows: 'Tis Time! 'tis Time!

Of a sudden all were still – they fade miserably
 Yearning to draw forth the un-memory in silence: –
 With morning, they flee from witches like demons
 Aware of the bitterness of their powerlessness.²²⁴

This work also contains direct reference to Poe's tale "The Masque of the Red Death," which speaks of an allegorically personified plague entering an abbey's chambers at midnight, where Prince Prospero has organized a grand

"Эдгар По," in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 885; Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "К Бодлеру," in: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Советский писатель, 1969), p. 188.

224 "Весь воплощенная полуночная чара,/ Как пир среди чумы, манящий с давних пор,/ Как странный вымысел безумного Эдгара,/ Для нас пропавшего навеки 'Nevermore,'-// Наш бал, раскинутый по многошумным залам,/ Уже закончил лик сокрытой красоты,/ И чем-то веяло холодным и усталым/ С внезапно дрогнувшей над нами высоты.// Да, полночь отошла с своею пышной свитой/ Проникновеннейших мгновений и часов,/ От люстры здесь и там упал хрусталь разбитый,/ И гул извне вставал враждебных голосов.// Измяты, желтизной по дернулись лица,/ Крылом изломанным дрожали веера,/ В сердцах у всех была дочитана страница,/ И новый в окнах свет шептал: 'Пора! Пора!'/ И вдруг все замерли, – вот, скорбно доцветают,/ Стараясь продлить молчаньем забытье: –/ Так утром демоны колдуний покидают,/ Сознавши горькое бессилие свое" [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "После бала," in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 149-150].

masquerade ball, killing everyone, starting with the ruler who had dismissed the plague making a bloody harvest across the countryside, then ending with his guests. Balmont, as his American precursor had, intensified the effect of contrast in his work: the busy, festive atmosphere contrasted with deadly stillness. Balmont also followed Poe in focusing emphasis on acoustic effects: in his poem, the noisy feast is penetrated by hostile sounds from outside, finally ending in silence that confirms the powerlessness of terrified participants of the ball faced by the omnipotence of death. The texts under examination, however, use differing poetics of the presentation of suffering brought about by the plague. In the case of Poe's allegory, there is a macabre description of carnal pain caused by the plague. "The Masque of the Red Death" reads:

No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal – the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. [...] / And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.²²⁵

In contrast, in his poem from 1899, Balmont did not employ the macabre poetics. The allegorically presented death of stricken guests is described in a metaphorical and allusive manner. Balmont writes about a "fading miserably" associated with aging, the flagging of youthful, fresh appearances.²²⁶ The synecdochic and synesthetic – Poe used the latter in his tale – description of extermination ("Shards of shattered crystal have fallen from the chandelier," "Fatigued, yellowed faces grew grim," and "The fan trembled as a broken wing") that does not raise a feeling of disgust and horror in a reader, which is evoked with literary texts maintained in macabre poetics, results in a de-specification of the image of collective agony, unimaginable tortures, does not overstimulate the reader's imagination, allowing them to maintain a safe distance from the presented issue.

225 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Masque of the Red Death," in: *Edgar Allan Poe: The Ultimate Collection* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2016), pp. 161, 165.

226 An analogous description of death as fading is in Balmont's poem "A Narrow Grotto," which reads: "Heavy soul, flowers, flowers and the fading of the body ["Тяжелый дух, цветы, цветы, и отцветанье тела"] [Бальмонт [Balmont], "Тесный грот," p. 287].

Leśmian also uses oneiric convention as a strategy of presentation of the thanatotic issue by either identifying the death with the dream²²⁷ or making death seem unreal, for example in the following poems: “Królowna Czarnych Wysp” [“The Princess of the Black Islands”] (from *The Meadow*, 1920), “Sen. (Śniło mi się, że konasz samotnie...)” [“The Dream (I dreamed you were dying alone...)”] from *The Shadowy Potion* (1936), “Sen wiejski” [“Rural Dream”] and “Śmierć wtóra” [“Second Death”] (from the posthumous collection *Sylvan Beffallings*, 1938). In “The Princess of the Black Islands” the motif of death-sleep is accompanied with aestheticizing of death, indicated both by introduced descriptive formulas and by the organization of the lyrical space. The eponymous Princess of the Black Islands is “at midnight in the garden,/ in flowers, dew, in the shade, in the cool/ Dead.”²²⁸ In the poem, the idiom “sweet sleep” is treated in a literary way and associated with death. Significantly, lovers of the princess pour honey in a pit “so that she has a sweet death,”²²⁹ and rock the coffin when carrying it, as if intending to prepare the deceased for eternal sleep. The oxymoronic refrain returns in this melodic-musical poem (both at the level of form and in the layer of presented objects and activities: lute tuning, choral singing) as many as four times. The de-specification of the thanatotic issue takes place in the ballad by way of the fairy-tale convention (the specification is supported by the deceased’s royal status, introduction of a fantastic motif in the form of raising of posthumous issues the heroine will face, and finally the image of agony in flowers as “wrapping in dreams”²³⁰ and the magical formula “peace to my shadows”).²³¹ This supports a wishful, counterfactual creation of the image of death, not destroying physical beauty and appearing as an experience of love and devotion to others, a state of transition from the earthly kingdom to the kingdom of dreams. This symbolic-irrational vision may undoubtedly fulfill a similar therapeutic function to the basic function of fairy-tale miraculousness.²³² Death presented in this way

227 For other uses of the word “dream” in Leśmian’s poetical works, see: Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, “Sny i poetyka,” *Teksty*, No. 2 (1973), pp. 18–19; Michał Głowiński, “Leśmian – sen,” in: *Zaświat przedstawiony. Szkice o poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* (Cracow: Universitas, 1998), pp. 219–244.

228 Bolesław Leśmian, “Królowna Czarnych Wysp,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 182 “o północy w ogrodzie,/ w kwiatach, rosach, w cieniu, w chłodzie/ Umarła”].

229 Leśmian, “Królowna Czarnych Wysp,” pp. 182, 183, 184 [“żeby miała śmierć słodką”].

230 Leśmian, “Królowna Czarnych Wysp,” p. 182 [“wicie się w snach”].

231 Leśmian, “Królowna Czarnych Wysp,” p. 184 [“pokój mym cieniem”].

232 Roger Caillois described this function as follows: “Through a miraculous fairy-tale, man still deprived of the techniques that would allow him to dominate nature,

does not create a sense of horror in the recipient, it does not disgust them, it does not frighten with mystery.

Worth recalling, however, is that Leśmian – as Poe had in, for example, “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade” – sometimes wrote mocking anti-fairy-tales, in which the thanatotic motif played a significant role, as in his poems “Kopciuszek” [“Cinderella”] and “In the Castle of Sleeping Beauty”²³³ from *The Shadowy Potion*. Although in both authors’ works, the fairy-tale convention (intended to de-specify the image of death) was raised – in Poe in the form of a tale, in Leśmian in poetic form – not only in works’ titles, but also in the construction of primary and secondary characters and in the description of objects of the presented world (in “In the Castle of Sleeping Beauty” even this model has been transformed), the texts mentioned above can no longer fulfill the therapeutic function characteristic to fairy-tales. Both writers spare the reader macabre descriptions of a protagonist’s agony (whereas Poe’s narrator simply mentions, in the convention of black humor, that as the noose tightened on her neck, Scheherazade was pleased that the cruel spouse would not hear the continuation of the story, Leśmian presents a coach rushing into the abyss²³⁴ and clutched by

imagines to fulfil his naive desires, which are unachievable in real life: to be in two places at the same time, to become invisible, to act from a distance, to metamorphose at will, to use obedient animals or supernatural slaves to do his work, to command spirits and elements, to have invincible weapons, effective ointments, cauldrons of plenty and magical love potions, and finally, to escape old age and death. These miracles express simple, naive wishes, the number of which is limited. They are dictated almost directly by the disadvantages of the human condition. They express an obsessive desire to break free, if only once, thanks to the extraordinary favor of fate or the power of the higher forces” [Roger Caillois, “De la Féerie à la science-fiction,” in: *Anthologie du Fantastique*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 18].

233 Bolesław Leśmian, “In the Castle of Sleeping Beauty,” in: *Bolesław Leśmian. Beyond the Beyond. Poems in Polish and English* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2017), p. 47.

234 For construction and functions of the abyss motif in Leśmian’s sonnet “Otchłań” [“The Abyss”] and in Baudelaire’s poem “The Abyss,” see: Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*. It is worth adding that this motif plays an extremely important role in the work of Poe (inspiring for both Baudelaire and Leśmian), in the tale “A Descend into the Maelström,” for example, and deserves a separate study in the area of historical poetics. I would also like to note that this work of Poe’s provided a strong creative impulse for the symbolist Arthur Rimbaud to write his long poem “The Drunken Boat” written in 1871, published in 1883.] One may also attempt a demonstration of the influence of the subject of Poe’s tale on Stéphane Mallarmé’s innovation in form and in typographical writing in his long poem “A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance,” 1897].

“death by wheels”);²³⁵ however, in their anti-fairy-tales, finiteness – rather than goodness and justice – is triumphant. Even if the punch line in “The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade” announces that the tyrant will hear no more fascinating stories, that punishment seems utterly disproportionate to the punishment meted out to the wise daughter of the vizier. And cautionary formulas and phrases with the character of prayers – “Horses agallop! Oh, my Lord! God bless mice in their miracle!.../ The carriage thunders! Oh, my Lord! Protect the pumpkin!”²³⁶ – spoken alternately in the final two verses of “Cinderella,” may hold the bare illusion of hope for salvation, for at the same time they appear as synecdochic descriptions of a journey into the afterlife and of the process of hauling the female protagonist against her will into the deathly abyss.

The formulaic “All this in a dream,”²³⁷ recurring in “The Rural Dream,” also plays a de-materializing function. The work uses an oneiric convention of the representation of “a story within a story” (the dreamer dreams of dreaming girls) that co-decides about the inability to determine the ontological status of the presented events and to distinguish what happens in a dream from what happens in reality. The ambiguity of this lyrical situation is clearly illustrated in the statement by the girlish collective subject:

Did someone dream us? From whence comes our fate?
And is it true we are returning from the field?
And is it true we are alive?
Let's continue being dreamt of – peacefully and patiently!²³⁸

The effect of oneiric, multi-leveled derealization intensifies in the poem due to the introduction of the motif of disappearing/ dying of the subsequent girls in the “boundless” fog. This technique of the intensified unrealism²³⁹ also appears

235 Bolesław Leśmian, “Kopciuszek,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 348 [“śmierć za koła”].

236 Leśmian, “Kopciuszek,” p. 348 [“Pędzą konie! O Boże! Szczęść myszom w ich cudzie!.../ Grzmi kolasa! O Boże! Miej dynię w swej pieczy!”].

237 Bolesław Leśmian, “Sen wiejski,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 521 [“Wszystko to we śnie”].

238 Leśmian, “Sen wiejski,” p. 523 [“Czy kto nas wyśnił? I skąd nasza dola?/ / I czy to prawda, że wracamy z pola?/ / I czy to prawda, że my w sobie – żywe?/ / Śnijmy się nadal – zgodne i cierpliwe!”].

239 The effect of triple “making unreal” is also present in the ballad “Chokester” from *The Meadow*. Interestingly, the protagonist of that work dreams (the first stage of making unreal) that he is being choked by a Slavic-esque, fantastic, mean creature (the second stage of making unreal). Bajdała is saved from trouble by awakening – the threat of death by choking appears to be unreal (the third stage of making unreal). The motif

in Leśmian's work "Śmierć Wtóra" ["Repeated Death"], presenting a very specific lyrical situation in which the deceased, laid in a cemetery, dream of old loves. Directly problematized in the poem, the effect of dematerialization is manifested in the following lines: "Connected with the memory of lips./ Lips, lips! Rot flicker in us!/ Who can guess that it is – a caress?"²⁴⁰ The attempt to posthumously merge two non-identities that is presented in the work is depicted in this verse: "There is also a sweet mourning: Shadow likes a shadow, mist likes a mist."²⁴¹

Perhaps the most interesting consequence of this typical in Leśmian multilayered derealization is an internally contradictory, oxymoronic effect of materialization and dematerialization of nothingness²⁴² at the level of the presented world. It also appears – although in a different poetics – in the group of poems written in the conventions of the macabre and macabresque (this issue is discussed later in the book). Attempts at creating a poetic conceptual image of nothingness result in a justification of the seemingly utterly illogical questions about its essence, way of existing, property, cause and, finally, the character of time and space in which it was presented. For this reason, the dead protagonist of "The Drowned

of dreaming about death that ceases being a threat when a protagonist wakes also appears in Leśmian's poem "The Dream (I dreamed you were dying alone...)" from *The Shadowy Potion*. See: Leśmian, "Chokester."

240 Bolesław Leśmian, "Śmierć wtóra," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 520 ["Wspomnieniami ust się połączyli./ Usta, usta! Próchno w nas migota!/ Któż odgadnie, że to jest – pieszczota?"].

241 Leśmian, "Śmierć wtóra," p. 520 ["Słodka jeszcze jest taka żałoba: Cień – cieniowi, mgła – mgle się podoba"].

242 I refer here to the formula set forth by Julian Przyboś that describes the specificity of Leśmian's presented world as "the scraps of materialized nothingness." For a discussion of the issue, see: Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*. On the other hand, there is also a counter-tendency present in Leśmian's poetry that is realized in the tautological dematerialized formula or – to put it more precisely – in the dematerializing nothingness. For example, in "Bereavement," where the motif of the second death of the deceased is realized in a different way. In that elegy, death is associated with the forgetting of the deceased by the living: "Your faces fade out, my memories bleach,/ Once again you're dying of afterlife death./ I cannot descry my sister's warm smile,/ Nor how did, when dying, she fall to the floor.../ Brother's incomplete, dreamed only awhile,/ Her voice is so distant, I hear it no more./ Buried in the graves, they die beyond graves" [Bolesław Leśmian, "Bereavement," in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems by Poland's most-read and best-selling poet, Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time, in the Polish and English translation* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 115].

Rambler” can tempt “deeper, deeper into yonder greenness,”²⁴³ while the after-world in “Za grobem” [“Beyond the Grave”], presented in an unspecific, negative poetics speaking of “mists,” “shadows” and “grasping the void” (!), is attributed with ontological-creative intention (!): “Something else wants to happen in the after-life,/ Different from everything from before.”²⁴⁴

In the poems under study here by Baudelaire, Balmont and Leśmian, there is a clear tendency to continue the convention of representing thanatotic motifs known from Poe’s poetry. These authors share the metaphorical association of death and dream, or the presentation of topics related to this in the oneiric convention, enabling detachment and, consequently, distancing oneself from the problem. A comparison of the works of these four poets allows for delineating the evolution of ways of presenting motifs related to death. The association of life’s ending with dream, significant in Poe’s poetry, affected a transformation of that motif, in Balmont’s decadent perspective and in Baudelaire’s precursory achievements, into a positive quality. As a result, one may talk about an axiological reevaluation of the phenomenon of death, and define Poe as the author who influenced the shape of French and Russian decadence. Moreover, the analysis enacted has clearly shown the character of Balmont’s overcoming the poetics of that style then developing poetic solutions characteristic of symbolism, announced by Poe’s poetry. Balmont adds to the aesthetic reevaluations of the subject of death and decadent axiological revalorizations of the motif of death-dream characteristic for Poe – another reevaluation on the ontological plane. In Balmont’s works, death is defined as the beginning of a new, improved and more beautiful existence. As a result, the consoling function of the motif, characteristic of the decadent, is combined with a compensating function manifested in the creation of poetic “substitute worlds.”

The identification of death with dream, or its de-specification resulting from the use of the oneiric convention, is a strategy in the presentation of the thanatotic issue and is also important in the case of Bolesław Leśmian. He is also indebted to Poe in this regard, as are Baudelaire and Balmont. This does not mean Leśmian does not introduce significant innovations and transformations

243 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Drowned Rambler,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems by Poland’s most-read and best-selling poet, Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time, in the Polish and English translation* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 27.

244 Bolesław Leśmian, “Za grobem,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 438 [“Coś innego stać się pragnie w zaświecie,/ Coś innego, niż wszystko, co było”].

in constructing the theme of death-sleep. As has been already mentioned, in his *oeuvre* this theme has a structure of a “story within a story” or favors the creation of the effect of multiplied derealization (the figure of the dreaming deceased). In Leśmian, this double negation of what is real brings about the creation of an afterworld that can be described with the internally contradictory, oxymoronic formula of materialization and dematerialization of nothingness.

It is pertinent to emphasize that only the works of Poe and Leśmian clearly demonstrate the awareness of the conventionality of devices used in poetry, which becomes evident in the technique of contrasting aesthetics in the presentation of the theme of death or in breaking the rules of the convention that were used in a serious manner in other works. Texts that refer to the fairy-tale genre are one such instance. These references fulfill two completely opposite functions in the works under study: they are either derealization / consolation or parodies.

Macabre aesthetics

Although Poe was neither the inventor of the literary variant of macabre aesthetics and poetics nor the creator of the idea of combining eroticism with images of dying, he was incredibly inventive and innovative in creating visions maintained in the macabre convention. Sources of the first of these traditions can be traced back to the late Middle Ages. Before the fourteenth century, there were many suggestive, most-often allegorical images of death – an angel, for instance, or a bone-dry skeleton [*la morte secca*], a skeleton carrying a scythe (sometimes hooded), a procession led by a dancer of death, one of the riders of the apocalypse racing on a horse galloping over a pile of corpses or, finally, the bat-winged Megaera²⁴⁵ – however, these were not drastic in comparison with themes popular in the fourteenth-century iconography. Since then, European art has been dominated by macabre representations deployed to cause shock in the recipient as a result of contact with the image of a corpse eaten by vermin or a carcass in decay (*transi*).²⁴⁶ The latter motif, often reproduced in figures and in prayer books, dominated European iconography associated with the theme of Thanatos for two centuries (fourteenth to sixteenth). At the end of the fourteenth century, the word *macabre* emerged, which later served to describe the collective images of death popularized in the late Middle Ages. It is worth noting that the

245 For the images of death in the Middle Ages, see: Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (U.S.A.: Dover Publications, 2014).

246 See: Phillippe Ariès, *Images of Man and Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).

earlier tendency favoring development of static, contemplative images of death purported to replace / hide the image of the corpse, was superseded in the fifteenth century by moving representations of the dead arousing horror and disgust. Graphic images of the dead emerging from the grave (chasing or capturing those who are still alive) or, for example, a *transi* with a mocking smile mounting a unicorn, were not at all uncommon.²⁴⁷ The *danse-macabre* theme developed in the fourteenth century in European iconography and literature, then became increasingly popular – it appears on wall frescos and woodcuts and enters literature. According to Johan Huizinga:

The dancing person whom we see coming back forty times to lead away the living, originally does not represent Death itself, but a corpse: the living man such as he will presently be. In the stanzas the dancer is called “the dead man” or “the dead woman.” [...] The indefatigable dancer is the living man himself in his future shape, a frightful double of his person. “It is yourself,” said the horrible vision to each of the spectators. It is only towards the end of the [fifteenth] century that the figure of the great dancer, of a corpse with hollow and fleshless body, becomes a skeleton, as Holbein depicts it. Death in person has then replaced the individual dead man.²⁴⁸

Similarly, the tendency to associate eroticism with images of agony has been present in literature from at least the late Middle Ages, to mention only François Villon’s *Le Testament*, with its true development taking place in the baroque period, connected with the marinist exploration of concepts and the violation of the separateness between the spheres of *sacrum* and *profanum*. The dance of death and the motifs of triumphant death also return in baroque literature and iconography.

All these threads have been actualized in the work of the American Romantic, Edgar Allan Poe. Macabre themes are present in his poems: “The Conqueror Worm” and “The Sleeper,” and clearly exemplified in prose by “The Mask of the Red Death,” “The Black Cat,” “Ligeia,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “Hop-Frog,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” “The Pit and the Pendulum” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

From this list, the poem “The Conqueror Worm” shows a particularly clear naturalistic literality and an elaborate composition. The lyrical situation is captured here in the aesthetic framework of a mime theater showing a tragic spectacle addressed to the seraphs – with its title specified in the penultimate verse of the work. The tragedy is *Man*. Its hero initially fights an uneven battle with

247 See: Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident, de 1300 à nos jours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

248 Huizinga, *The Waning*, p. 131.

the *conqueror maggot* and, when he loses, is eaten by “a blood-red thing that writhes from out [of the scenery].”²⁴⁹ The poem strikes the reader with its very precise description of the scenery in which the multicolored drama of horror takes place, as well as with the vivid description of costumes worn by unfortunate puppet-like cast. The lyrical subject attempts to provide almost a report of fearful reactions of the angelic audience to individual parts of the performance, in which a depersonalized human crowd participates. The ironic meaning of the work is emphasized by the information that *musica universalis* accompanies the performance resembling slaughter, and is repeated frequently. This last context is a clear mocking reference to the Pythagorean concept that perfectly harmonious sounds are brought about by the movements of celestial bodies. It is worth mentioning that, for one example, Johannes Kepler – a seventeenth-century mathematician, astronomer and astrologer – referred to this idea. In his *Harmonies of the World* (1619), Kepler attempted to explain with musical categories the great proportions in the construction of the cosmos that is – in his conviction – a melody composed in the mind of God. Poe’s poem, studied in this context, is a macabre-allegorical appendix to that idealized cosmological image, inscribing the image of humans into it who – puppet-like in a theater – are unaware of the purpose of their existence, and, at the end of life, become part of the food chain as food for the triumphant larva. And the poem “The Sleeper” is also an important appendix to Poe’s poem, terrifying with naturalistic literality, dominated by images of aesthetized death that does not, however, undermine faith in the visual beauty of the universe.

Significantly, proportions in Poe’s prose between representations of “beautiful death” and its macabre descriptions change considerably in favor of the latter. From the prose works mentioned above, we can indicate:

- macabre allegories including “The Mask of the Red Death” that provide – analogous to the medieval topics – an image of the omnipotence of death;
- texts in which macabre themes provide the reader with insight into the psyche of the protagonist-narrator-murderer and serve as literary diagnosis of the psychology of crime and/or depravity: “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “Hop-Frog,” and “William Wilson.” In this respect, Poe proved a true innovator and had numerous followers – to name only Fyodor Dostoevsky here, who expressed his admiration for Poe’s psychological insight – but neither Baudelaire nor Balmont were among

249 Edgar Allan Poe, “The Conqueror Worm,” in: *The Complete Tales and Poems* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018), p. 961.

them. In the case of Leśmian, few works of that type can be listed, with the relatively few exceptions including the ballad “Migoń i Jawrzon” [“Wink and Jawrzon”], combining the macabre motif of crime and the doppelgänger, and the dramatic poem “Zdziczenie obyczajów pośmiertnych” [“The Decadence of After-Death Customs”];

- texts that include macabre themes referring in a modern way to traditions of *transi* representations that initiate a literary-philosophical reflection on the elusive nature of the boundary between life and death, and encourage undertaking again reflection upon the spiritual and not the corporeal essence of humans. Poe’s tale “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar” could be considered a modern continuation of those ideas – it includes references to the concept of animal magnetism (mesmerism) that aroused curiosity in the era of Romanticism. Another type of reference to this legacy could be location of macabre themes in the convention of horror – popular at the end of the eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century – for example, in the tales “Ligeia” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The innovative character of Poe’s writing depends here not so much on introduction of that convention as on cognitive-perceptual relativization and the introduction of ambiguity of interpretation of the macabre events being presented so that it becomes impossible to unambiguously anchor the horrifying stories told by narrators in the realms of fantasies, delusions, phantasms, or to clearly position them on the part of the real and what is easily confirmable by other characters.

In this respect, the Poe followers under study did not achieve more than their master. Moreover, it appears that they did not even match his accomplishments. Balmont wrote the poem “Замок Джэн Вальмор. Баллада” [“Castle Jane Valmor: a Ballad”] in the convention of horror, but it is not subject to any transformations in relation to its Romantic prototype. In this aspect, Leśmian’s ballad “Roses” (from *The Meadow*) seems much more interesting. There, the aesthetics of horror become the backdrop enabling a manifestation of the psychology of marriage betrayal, jealousy and crime, but with no references to the medieval tradition of *transi*.

We may see the continuation of macabre representations that occasionally appear in Poe’s poetry (“The Conqueror Worm,” “The Sleeper”) and that dominated his prose in the following works by Baudelaire: “Remorse after Death,” “A Carcass,” “The Flask,” “Skeletons Digging,” “That kind heart you were jealous of...,” “Destruction,” “A Martyr,” “A Voyage to Cythera,” “Lethe,” “The Metamorphoses of the Vampire” and “A Jolly Tavern,” and among

Balmont's poems "Два трупа" ["Two Corpses"] and "К смерти" ["To Death"]. In Baudelaire's "Remorse after Death," as in Poe's "The Sleeper," the convention of the aestheticized description of the dead beloved ("When, sullen beauty, you will sleep and have/ As resting place a fine black marble tomb") is broken with a macabre comparison introduced into the last stanza of the sonnet ("And like remorse the worm will gnaw your flesh").²⁵⁰ Similarly, the famous poem "A Carcass" that begins with an apostrophe to the mistress astounds with naturalistic literality. There are no signals in the poem that allow readers to distance themselves from the presented content. The image of death is neither aestheticized nor allegorized. The human body is dehumanized, deprived of the majesty of death, "a carcass reclined," "stinking and festering womb," "sweating out poisonous fumes," "stench [...] so wretched," "the flies buzzed and droned on these bowels of filth/ Where an army of maggots arose."²⁵¹ Significantly, in Baudelaire's work (that arouses disgust with synesthetic imaging) the regressive transformation of the *transi* does not take place – in contrast to the poem "The Conqueror Worm" – to the enjoyable music of the spheres, but to the sounds of buzzing flies. The dark meaning of this poetic and contrasting image of nature triumphing over humans ("The sun on this rottenness focused its rays/ To cook the cadaver till done,/ And render to Nature a hundredfold gift/ Of all she'd united in one. // And the sky cast an eye on this marvelous meat/ As over the flowers in bloom")²⁵² and depraving them of identity, destroying love relations, is complemented in the last two stanzas of the poem:

Yes, such will you be, o regent of grace,
After the rites have been read,
Under the weeds, under blossoming grass
As you molder with bones of the dead.

And then, o my beauty, explain to the worms
Who cherish your body so fine,
That I am the keeper of corpses of love
Of the form, and the essence divine!²⁵³

250 Charles Baudelaire, "Remorse after Death," in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 69.

251 Charles Baudelaire, "A Carcass," in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 59–61.

252 Baudelaire, "A Carcass," p. 61.

253 Baudelaire, "A Carcass," p. 63.

The final declaration of the lyrical subject, wanting to preserve in memory “the form, and the essence divine” of the image of the beloved, strikes with an ambiguity that is fully manifested in the drastic phrase from the final verse: “corpses of love.”

Balmont’s poems “Two Corpses”²⁵⁴ and “To Death” provide images of the posthumous fate of lovers falling prey to feasting vermin, focusing on the representation of corporality, arouse a similar horror combined with the sensation of disgust. The latter text’s macabre sense is deepened by a structure based on a vividly formulated, lyrical *transi* of confession, which relates in detail how it fell prey to vermin and flies, describing the situation it is in, not sparing the reader the details of its altered physiognomy. Special attention is paid to the overwhelming sensuality of this representation, which is not considered in any compositional aesthetic-distancing textual framework, as was the case in Poe’s “The Conqueror Worm” and “The Sleeper.” The comparison of Poe’s poems with the works of Baudelaire and Balmont allows us to observe how the literary proportions of *frénésie* and beauty change over time. While Poe’s poetry is still dominated by the aestheticizing perspective that, in relatively few texts, intersected with the poetics of *frénésie* characteristic of black Romanticism, in Baudelaire’s

254 “Two corpses met in a grave/ / There a corpse touched a corpse./ / In the cold darkness, in prison and stench/ / With a touch of dead lips. // Once in love/ / They inhaled in the moonlight/ / The spring’s caressing scent/ / And the rustling silence // They swore to love each other until death./ / But when the days have passed/ / The lustful earthly womb/ / Took them to feed the maggot. // Burdened with a fading eyesight/ / Where there’s only mist/ They lay close to each other/ Stinking-soft bodies./ / Feeding small creatures/ Separated from the soul/ Like a rotting house/ A foreign feast takes place there. // And they sleep widely in the dense mist/ And they dream fairy-tale dreams/ Of breath not described with words/ And boundless silence” [“Два трупа встретились в могиле,/ / И прикоснулся к трупу труп,/ / В холодной тьме, в тюрьме, и в гнили,/ Прикосновеньем мертвых губ./ / Они, влюбленные, когда-то/ Дышали вместе под /Луной/ Весенней лаской аромата/ / И шелестящей тишиной./ / Они клялись любить до гроба./ / И вот, по истеченьи дней,/ / Земная жадная утроба/ / Взяла их в пищу для червей./ / Тяжелые, с потухшим взглядом,/ / Там, где повсюду мгла и мгла,/ / Они лежат так тесно рядом,/ / Зловонно-мягкие тела./ / Для мелких тварей ставши пищей,/ / И разлученные с душой,/ / Они гниющее жилище,/ / Где новый пир, для них чужой./ / И дико спят они в тумане,/ / И видят сказочные сны/ / Неописуемых дыханий/ / И необъятной тишины”] [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Два трупа,” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 235; http://az.lib.ru/b/balxmont_k_d/text_0640.shtml, last accessed 31.08.2019.

thanatotic poems quoted above, macabre themes begin to dominate over the descriptions of beauty. Importantly, in Balmont's decadent text "To Death,"²⁵⁵ the

255 "Oh, Death, slow and treacherous/ Oh, Death, expected for years/ You are so unfamiliar/ So unexpected.// The thought of your arrival/ Seemed so alluring/ And soothing with coldness,/ You will embrace triumphantly.// Like an airy coat/ You will let a bit of darkness in./ No, I've been betrayed and I hope/ That you will come in another way.// Secretly and aggressively/ You will appear in the silence./ Like a toothless tormentor/ You will cling to me with lips.// In very clumsy touches/ Of the slimy dead lips,/ In not hideous embraces/ I will turn into a corpse, ash.// I am not aware yet/ Darkness has not absorbed me/ I am considering a great distress/ I am thinking about my decay.// Here's my stiff hand/ Luring, threatening,/ Green-dirty and pale/ It has bent... A terrible state!// Here's a face covered in spots,/ This wax cover/ With promiscuous breaths/ Decay is swinging over me.// Hideous and familiar/ Tickling on the lips./ Flies! Worms!/ I am their feed, their dream!// Nights arrive, low/ Like a falling ceiling./ Where are you, my family?/ The world becomes so distant.// The dirt is falling with a hollow sound/ I lay in my coffin/ Horrible maggots are breathing on my eyes/ my cheeks, my forehead.// Like a boat aground in shallow water/ Must wait, must rot/ Week after week/ I cannot change my destiny.// For my excessive love/ For earthly pleasures/ After death my sinful soul/ Is inseparable from filth.// Seven weeks of torment/ Disgust, longings/ Seven weeks lost/ Prison, awe and crowd!// Only hell/ Brings me some comfort and joy:/ Before the graveyard fence./ Into the night, a white shadow." ["Смерть, медлительно-обманная,/ Смерть, я ждал тебя года,/ Но для каждого ты странная/ И нежданная всегда.// Мне казалась упоительной/ Мысль о том, что ты придешь/ И прохладою целительной./ Торжествуя, обоймешь.// И воздушною одеждою/ Мне навешешь легкий мрак./ Нет, обманут я надеждою,/ Ты придешь не так, не так.// Как неведомое, грубое,/ Ты возникнешь в тишине./ Как чудовище беззубое,/ Ты свой рот прижмешь ко мне.// И неловкими прижатыми/ Этих скользких мертвых губ,/ Неотвратными объятьями/ Превращен я буду в труп.// Но еще не бессознательный,/ Не затянутый во тьму,/ И мучительно внимательный/ К разложению своему.// Вот, рука ооченелая/ Точно манит и грозит,/ Синевато-грязно-белая,/ Искривилась... Гнусный вид!// Вот, лицо покрылось пятнами,/ Восковою пеленой,/ И дыханьями развратными/ Гниль витает надо мной.// Отвратительно знакомые/ Щекотания у рта./ Это мухи! Насекомые!// Я их пища, их мечта!// И приходят ночи, низкие,/ Как упавший потолок./ Где же вы, родные, близкие?/ Мир отпрянувший далек.// Глухо пали комья грязные,/ Я лежу в своем гробу,/ Дышат черви безобразные/ На щеках, в глазах, на лбу.// Как челнок, сраженный мелями,/ Должен медлить, должен гнить,/ Я недели за неделями/ Рок бессилен изменить.// За любовь мою чрезмерную/ К наслаждениям земным,/ После смерти, с этой скверною/ Грешный дух неразлучим.// Целых семь недель томления,/ Отвращения, тоски,/ Семь недель, до избавления,/ Рабство, ужас, и тиски!// Лишь одной отрадой нищенской/ Ад могу я усладить:/ Пред оградою кладбищенской/ Белой тенью

aestheticizing approach to the subject does not appear at all. Instead, it gives way to a poetics of crossing boundaries into extreme horrors and its direct expression. It is pertinent to note that the description does not bring about a vision of life after death, which could fulfill the consolatory or compensatory functions. It is also completely deprived of moralistic meaning, characteristic of macabre representations from the late Middle Ages.

In contrast, in Leśmian's poetry there are bluntly and vividly shaped motifs in "To My Sister"²⁵⁶ and "Kochankowie" ["Lovers"] from the collection *The Shadowy Potion*. Leśmian's latest macabre poems are specific, because they appear as a paradoxical attempt to depict the negative, to show something that should no longer exist. Such oxymoronic efforts are especially visible in "Kocmołuch" ["Slob"] from *The Shadowy Potion*:

Unsure of his life and not trusting his dreams –
He looks with utterly empty eyes
Into the profound fluffy Non-existence of clouds,
There is nothing more, except for sadness...²⁵⁷

Here, descriptions of an expanding space of nonexistence are complemented in the form of a repulsive vision of a "kocmołuch" ["slob"] covered in rust and lichen called "a poor-cloth covered in post-grave mold wounds."²⁵⁸ Leśmian's attempt to represent nonexistence is manifested in innovative word formations, such as: "shapeless dragging body," "to un-bleed from someone,"²⁵⁹ "nothingness [...] carcassed,"²⁶⁰ and "profound fluffy Non-existence."²⁶¹

в полночь встать"] [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "К смерти," in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 238–239].

256 Bolesław Leśmian, "To My Sister," in: *Mythematics and Extropy. Selected Poems of Bolesław Leśmian* (Wisconsin: Stevens Point, 1987), pp. 109–112; <https://alexandrachciuk-celt.tumblr.com/>, last accessed 31.08.2019.

257 Bolesław Leśmian, "Kocmołuch," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 343 ["Niezbýt pewny swej jawy i ufny snom niezbyt –/ Spogląda oczodołów próżnicą wierutną/ W obłoków napuszyście wybujały Bezbyt,/ Poza którym nic nie ma, prócz tego, że smutno..."]

258 Leśmian, "Kocmołuch," p. 343 ["zagröbnych ran pleśnią pokrytym biedołachem"].

259 Bolesław Leśmian, "Marcin Swoboda," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 355 ["bezkształtnego ciała rozwłóczyny," "odkrwawić się od kogoś"].

260 Bolesław Leśmian, "Hedda," *Tekstualia*, No. 3 (58) (2019), pp. 171–172.

261 Leśmian, "Kocmołuch," p. 343 ["napuszyście wybujały Bezbyt"].

On the other hand, in “To My Sister” a lyrical creation of an image of a dead woman returns, known for example from Poe’s “The Sleeper.” As in Poe’s work, the aestheticized description of the sleeper is replaced with a macabre convention of imaging:

Time spent with a corpse is an emptiness day,
The one you’re bewailing has flown.
The eyes—their expression—the lips will decay—
Death treasures not faces, but bones!

I know you’ll devoutly and darkly decay,
And carry a posthumous cross;
I don’t even dare to look in on your grave,
This underground Calvary loss!²⁶²

Significantly, Leśmian’s work (who read Polish and Russian decadent poetry but did not write strictly decadent poems himself) concludes with a lament-plea, post-decadent apostrophe to a departing God, formulated by a subject emotionally and intellectually helpless in the situation of the death of a loved one. The experience presented in the poem becomes the starting point for redefining the ontological status of the living. They are no longer perceived as the crowning of the divine work of creation, but are bluntly termed “forever mistreated manure [...] still believ[ing] in [...] God.”²⁶³ Importantly, in Leśmian’s work the decadent subjective rejection of faith in the existence of God, resulting in the poetics of direct reflection on death, is replaced by a generalizing perspective in which the misery of the human condition comes to the fore along with the distress of a human being who once usurped the most important place in the divine hierarchy of creation. As a result of that negation, man, who once trusted in the protection of providence, experiences a crisis. Additionally, the awareness appears that mere denial does not bring about eschatological relief. In this situation, Leśmian could have sought a remedy to the directness of thanatotic fear in the literary philosophy of laughter originating from Poe’s work.

262 Philological translation: “Night, near dead-ones spent, calls itself-empty!/ Lacks he, for whom you-sob.../ Will-decay eyes—and expression-of-those eyes—and lips./ Death looks into bone, not into face!/ I-know, that you-will-decay piously and that among dark/ After-death you-drag cross,/ But not dare-I to underground peek Golgotha,/ To ascertain, how there you-sleep?” [Leśmian, “To My Sister,” p. 109; <https://alexandrachciuk-celt.tumblr.com/>].

263 Leśmian, “To My Sister,” p. 112; <https://alexandrachciuk-celt.tumblr.com/>.

Macabresque aesthetics

As has been mentioned, Poe was the under-esteemed innovator who searched for artistic ways of representing the borderline experience of death, the presentation of which – although shattering a taboo, stunning with ugliness and naturalistic literalness – does not need to horrify or be only associated with the experience of hopelessness, fear and disgust. Poe repeatedly wrote works using macabresque aesthetics understood as a “specific combination of macabre and grotesque,”²⁶⁴ characterized by a vast unsuitability in the “light form of the work” and its “serious content.” That incongruity results in an effect of “relieving” the reception of thanatotic themes.²⁶⁵ Examples of Poe’s artistic texts shaped in such a way include “King Pest,” “The Premature Burial,” “How to Write a Blackwood Article,” “A Predicament” and “Never Bet the Devil Your Head.” This manner of representation fulfills various functions in these works, becoming:

- the basic structural material for the intentionally developed poetics of scandal and the tool of literary satire (in “How to Write a Blackwood Article,” “A Predicament,” “Never Bet the Devil Your Head”);
- a sign of a literary-philosophical reflection on death (in “King Pest,” “The Premature Burial”).

The first of these functions is usually regarded as testimony to Poe’s rather ruthless attitude towards thanatotic themes. It is explained on one hand by the fact that Poe worked as a journal editor²⁶⁶ and was responsible for the level of

264 I use the term “macabresque” in a sense that exceeds genres, following Brygida Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, who devoted a very meaningful, meritorically valuable chapter to this issue in her book *Sens i chaos w grotesce literackiej. Od “Pałuby” do “Kosmosu”* [*Sense and Chaos in the Literary Grotesque: From “Paluba” to “Cosmos”*], an issue almost absent from literary studies, see: Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, “Makabreska wobec ciężaru istnienia.” Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, although she refers to Poe in her reflections, underestimates his contribution to the process of shaping of literary models of this exceptional aesthetics.

265 Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, “Makabreska wobec ciężaru istnienia,” pp. 11-57.

266 Poe was an editor of and contributor to the following periodicals: the *Southern Literary Messenger* and *Graham’s Magazine* in Richmond, Virginia, *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* in Philadelphia, the *Evening Mirror* and the *Broadway Journal* in New York City (he even became the owner of the latter but it soon went bankrupt). Poe dreamed of running his own literary journal. He even had a name and a perspective of a monthly magazine, *The Stylus* (previously *The Penn*), but was unable to implement this project, see: Milton C. Petersen, “Poe as ‘Magazinist,’” *Poe Newsletter*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April 1969), pp. 39-40.

readership of the given periodical (through the selection of startling topics), on the other hand with his polemical aims and a tendency to settle literary scores. It seems, however, that a much deeper foundation may be found in the example of Poe's dispute with American transcendentalism and philosophical theses formulated by its main representatives (Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and journalists publishing in *The Dial*²⁶⁷ and *Down-Easter*), which included the idea of an inherent human awareness of one's actions (associated with the rejection of the concept of evil's source as located in a human being) and the tendency to mysticism that was characteristic of the transcendentalists and led to a belief in the participation of men in divinity and wisdom.²⁶⁸

Poe's prose, situated stylistically in black Romanticism, testifies to an implied, extremely vivid and polemically oriented response to the theses outlined above. This does not mean that Poe, who was accused of amorality, did not directly refer to such beliefs in his works. One finds them, for example, in the satirical tale "Never Bet the Devil Your Head." The narrator (suggesting identification with the author) presents himself as a person who is deeply concerned morally about the fate of Toby Dammit's soul, a friend who is prone to petty vices.

At seven months he [Dammit] was in the constant habit of catching and kissing the female babies. At eight months he peremptorily refused to put his signature to the Temperance pledge. Thus he went on increasing in iniquity, month after month, until, at the close of the first year, he not only insisted upon wearing mustaches, but had contracted a propensity for cursing and swearing, and for backing his assertions by bets.²⁶⁹

The narrator, eager and puritan-like, follows the youthful imaginary "crimes" of the protagonist and behaves as the proverbial "voice of conscience." He does spare the irresponsible Dammit advice, sermons, reprimands and scolding for bragging, ungodliness and gambling. Finally, when the bet (with the allegorically personified devil) leads to Toby's death in an accident in which a turnstile cuts off his head, the narrator takes the corpse home and attempts, regardless of the cost, with – as he claims – selfless mercy, to treat it (unfortunately ineffectively)

267 It bears repeating that Ralph Waldo Emerson was the editor of *The Dial*, the chief organ of the transcendentalists.

268 For example, a lecture given by Emerson in 1838 to the students of the Theology Department at Harvard, his "Divinity School Address," see: <https://emersoncentral.com/texts/nature-addresses-lectures/addresses/divinity-school-address/>, last accessed 4.09.2019. I emphasize that Emerson gave this lecture six times after resigning as pastor of and preacher at the Second Church in Boston.

269 Edgar Allan Poe, "Never Bet the Devil Your Head," in: *Stories and Poems* (Beverly, Mass.: Rockport Publishers, 2015), p. 11.

with homeopaths. Finally, disappointed not only by the result of treatment but also by the headless corpse's lack of an understanding attitude (not wanting to take expensive medicine), he precisely calculates the costs of medicines and the funeral, then sends the bill to the transcendentalists, naively trusting in the reimbursement of his expenses (which, according to the narrator, would prove the readiness of those thinkers to take responsibility for the inaccuracy of their theses, while simultaneously serving as an argument in their defense). The grotesquely macabre and at the same time comical effect of these events deepens further when the narrator, outraged by their refusal, digs out Dammit's headless, conscience-less body and sells it for dog food. Please note the construction of the hero-narrator in this mocking tale, who, contrary to the philosophical assumptions of the transcendentalists, has no elementary self-awareness, and like other characters created by Poe (for example, in "The Black Cat" and "The Tell-Tale Heart"), in line with the psychological principle of the fundamental-attribution error, manifests a tendency to see the source of his own evil deeds outside of himself. I believe that macabre themes appearing at the end of the work play a satirical role, but are also an allegorical sign of axiological problems associated with evil that is immanently present in human beings and the human capability to commit crime, which, according to Poe, have not been well thought out by the transcendentalists. The issue under study, although presented in the scandalous poetry of the macabresque, must lead to the revision of the thesis about Poe's completely ruthless, non-reflective approach to thanatotic themes.

Even Poe's scandalous-parodist macabresques, including "How to Write a Blackwood Article" and "A Predicament" (a mockery of editors willing, in the name of their periodicals, to choose texts on even the most drastic topics, and of mocking authors who tend to use these instrumentally and cynically) have a deeper meaning. The first of these texts may be considered a satire on the identification of a thorough study of eschatological problems for the press with the issue of choosing the right literary style and convention of representation (Mr. Blackwood tells the Psyche Zenobia about the "tone elevated, diffusive, and interjectional," the "metaphysical" tone and "transcendental" tone, as well as the "heterogeneous" tone combining the features of the first three). In Poe's work, the satire also covers techniques used to simulate erudition by the writer and his competence with literary and philosophical themes related to the sphere of Thanatos. Significantly, "How to Write a Blackwood Article" is filled with quotes full of vocabulary associated with death in numerous languages: French, Italian, German, Spanish, Latin and Greek. The tale "A Predicament" seems to be a model implementation of the advice of the editor Blackwood, which costs the author (in the text) her life (in accordance with the principle that truth is not

only stranger but also more interesting than fiction). However, before her life finally ends, Psyche Zenobia manages to describe the course of her last adventure in the “heterogenous” style, during which the hands of the clock on the cathedral tower have deprived her of her head. The extremely detailed description of the events – grotesque, focused on the presentation of bodily destruction, combining macabre themes with situational comedy (the character with no eyeballs does not forget to inform the reader of the exact time the hand of the clock eventually cuts her neck) – has a mocking culmination in the form of pseudophilosophical considerations on the subject of the bodily location of the soul, considered a guarantor of a person’s identity, made by the decapitated Zenobia, who still wants to impress with erudition:

I was not sorry to see the head which had occasioned me so much embarrassment at length make a final separation from my body. It first rolled down the side of the steeple, then lodged, for a few seconds, in the gutter, and then made its way, with a plunge, into the middle of the street. / I will candidly confess that my feelings were now of the most singular – nay, of the most mysterious, the most perplexing and incomprehensible character. My senses were here and there at one and the same moment. With my head I imagined, at one time, that I, the head, was the real Signora Psyche Zenobia – at another I felt convinced that myself, the body, was the proper identity. To clear my ideas on this topic I felt in my pocket for my snuff-box, but, upon getting it, and endeavoring to apply a pinch of its grateful contents in the ordinary manner, I became immediately aware of my peculiar deficiency, and threw the box at once down to my head. It took a pinch with great satisfaction, and smiled me an acknowledgement in return. Shortly afterwards it made me a speech, which I could hear but indistinctly without ears. I gathered enough, however, to know that it was astonished at my wishing to remain alive under such circumstances. In the concluding sentences it quoted the noble words of Ariosto: / *Il pover homcioche non sera cory / And have a combat tenty erry morty*; thus comparing me to the hero who, in the heat of the combat, not perceiving that he was dead, continued to contest the battle with inextinguishable valor.²⁷⁰

The macabre miraculousness in the text has a satirical function. On one hand, it has all the characteristics of clear mockery of attempts by editors and writers in racing to collect sensational, shockingly uncanny facts, while on the other it seems to be an informed *memento* to prevent forgetting that even such a race has limits. The barrier – inaccessible to human cognition and description – that cannot be overthrown by the mind and neutralized by emotions, is death.

270 Edgar Allan Poe, “A Predicament,” in: *Edgar Allan Poe: The Ultimate Collection* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2016), p. 266.

A meaningful exemplification of this kind of reflection on the phenomenon of “overloading” of the intellect and feelings with thanatotic issues is Poe’s work “The Premature Burial.” The narrator of the story, who suffers from catalepsy, is tortured by an obsessive fear of being buried alive. He meticulously lists and vividly presents examples of such incidents (the text includes variants on the motif of moving *transi* – starting with a description of the apparently dead woman striking with a piece of the coffin on the inner wall of the tomb, through the description of the physiognomy of exhumed corpses and the depiction of a dead man trying to sit up in a coffin, and ending with an account of somatic symptoms troubling those buried alive) to build suspense, to authenticate the incidents being presented – in the third person and with medical accuracy – and to make the story of the narrator plausible. The structure of the storyline – a testimony to Poe’s extensive knowledge of the psychology of reception of literary works – is based in its conclusion on the effect of disappointed expectations. The macabre presentation of the protagonist’s grave adventures turns out to be his nightmare and an impulse for radical change – and not at all a regressive one. The narrator stops reading medical textbooks and funeral literature (including “The Premature Burial,” in a metaliterary allusion) and actively focuses on keeping physically fit. In the perspective of such a structure in its ending, the entire work requires a reinterpretation. Macabre themes it presents receive a comical aspect, they seem a masterfully composed macabresque that neutralizes the horror of the content being presented. This “relieving” meaning of the work is complemented in the punch line of the incidents related:

There are moments when, even to the sober eye of Reason, the world of our sad Humanity may assume the semblance of a Hell – but the imagination of man is no Carathis, to explore with impunity its every cavern. Alas! the grim legion of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful – but like the Demons in whose company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep, or they will devour us – they must be suffered to slumber, or we perish.²⁷¹

“The Premature Burial” contains an important reflection on the subject of taboo associated with thanatotic issues, specifying the importance and function of social defense mechanisms, namely culturally sanctioned prohibitions. Transgressing them has its price, which is not very high only when the transgression takes place by the way of the liberating, border-transcending power of laughter. This observation was perfectly familiar to Poe. For example, “King Pest: A Tale Containing

271 Edgar Allan Poe, “Premature Burial,” in: *Edgar Allan Poe: The Ultimate Collection* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2016), p. 137.

an Allegory” is a parody of the Dance of Death, which typically uses the macabre convention. Poe’s work is dominated by macabresque aesthetics – drasticality and naturalistic literality of the descriptions of characters, combined with their grotesque presentation, are connected with situational and verbal comedy. The protagonists of the tale – Legs and Hugh Tarpaulin – upon leaving the Jolly Tar ale house, venture into areas in the vicinity of the Thames that were once banned because of plague epidemics, imagined by the population of the fourteenth-century city as the Demon of Disease and pest-spirits. Intoxicated past moral sense, carefree, the fearless seamen finally reach the shop of an undertaker, probably the home of a funeral entrepreneur, and meet a strange royal family there and on seeing them react ruthlessly with unrestrained laughter. One of them, evidently in an effervescent mood, sips wine from a skull and begins courting a consumptive little female described as follows:

a soft smile played about her mouth; but her nose, extremely long, thin, sinuous, flexible and pimpled, hung down far below her under lip, and in spite of the delicate manner in which she now and then moved it to one side or the other with her tongue, gave to her countenance a somewhat equivocal expression.²⁷²

The situation presented becomes the starting point for a series of acts of tactless behavior by the intoxicated guests towards the royal Pest family - and the guests represented the majesty of death – and ends with the sailors fleeing for their lives. This is presented in a grotesque way as a battle with the male part of the mighty Pest family for the ghastly ladies who are then swept off in a macabre, intoxicated dance by the playful sea wolves. The allegorical theme of *danse macabre* – traditionally interpreted as an iconographic, literal reminder of the end of human life and the omnipotence of death – is fundamentally transformed in this tale. The carefree sailors literally take their inevitable fate into their own hands, fearlessly accepting death – after besting their evil rivals, they carry off the fat lady and the Arch Duchess Ana-Pest.

Verbal comedy, manifest in many layers of the text, is particularly evident in the linguistic shape of anthroponyms and descriptions of the assembly: King Pest the First, Queen Pest, His Grace the Arch Duke Pest-Inferous, His Grace the Duke Pest-Ilential, His Grace the Duke Tem-Pest and Her Serene Highness the Arch Duchess Ana-Pest. Worthy of mention is that some of the nicknames have a comical but also an oxymoronic and grotesque character. The combination of these qualities in shaping anthroponyms makes it possible to note Poe’s

²⁷² Edgar Allan Poe, “King Pest,” in: *Edgar Allan Poe: The Ultimate Collection* (Los Angeles: Enhanced Media Publishing, 2016), p. 234.

innovative contribution to the development of the models of poetics characteristic in linguistic macabresque that, in this case, serve as a tool for creating literary characters.

The incompatibility of form and content, maintained in the convention of black humor, with its peculiar inappropriateness and blasphemy, result in the fact that the representation of death proposed by Poe goes far beyond imagery present in medieval European culture. The ruthless, saturated with comical approach to a subject wrapped in social taboo contributes to the effect of surprise, creating a chance to stimulate the reader cognitively and to change the image of death internalized by him or her. Moreover, it allows them to emotionally control death. As a result, the final situation presented in the tale that has the character of a necessity arousing horror and disgust, becomes its opposite. The convention of macabresque used by Poe redefines the borderline experience of death, enabling the unconventional: a carefree and non-reflectional approach to the subject, radically changing the reader's affective reaction to the phenomenon, which can be denied (supported by the rationalization defense mechanism), but its transcendental purpose cannot ultimately be proved. The aesthetics of the macabresque, although it does not bring full meaning to human finitude, allows, however, to reduce strongly negative emotions associated with the rejection of violence used by Mother Nature in dealing with any person who has been denied eschatological consolation and certainty in these ultimate matters. It allows them to perceive these motifs differently from medieval images of triumphant death. It permits a human being to relieve the mental tension and to look at oneself as at someone who, thanks to the comical-dismissive approach, can feel the victor, just for a moment, in the unequal struggle for temporal life (while it remains certain that s/he will eventually fail).

Baudelaire was fully aware of Poe's innovativeness that consisted of artistic freedom to use the grotesque macabre. As he writes:

No man, I repeat, has told, with greater magic the *exceptions* of human life and nature [...]; absurdity installing itself in the intellect, and governing it with a crushing logic; hysteria usurping the place of will, a contradiction established between the nerves and the mind, and men out of all accord expressing grief by laughter.²⁷³

The awareness of this innovativeness was not only manifested in Baudelaire's critical works devoted to Poe, but also influenced his poetry, though it was not entirely dominated by macabresque aesthetics. Elements of the macabresque,

273 Baudelaire, "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works," p. 20, original emphasis.

however, appear in the poems “Danse Macabre,” “The Happy Corpse” and “Passion and the Skull.”

Descriptive strategies analogous to those present in the construction of characters in Poe’s “King Pest” are clearly visible in the long poem “Danse Macabre.” Baudelaire, as his master had, devoted much space to a vivid description of the appearance of death personified as a woman. In the synecdochally shaped descriptive layer of the poem, particular attention is drawn to the attentiveness in presenting the beauty of the coquette-skeleton. There is admiration for the grace of movement, elegant clothes, slim figure and waist. Application of erotic language to the allegorical, drastic description of a rotting body adds a comic-grotesque aspect to the lyrical situation:

The frill that plays along her clavicles,
As a lewd streamlet rubs its stony shores,
Modestly shields from jeering ridicule
Enticements her revealing gown obscures.

Her eyes, made of the void, are deep and black;
Her skull, coiffured in flowers down her neck,
Sways slackly on the column of her back,
O charm of nothingness so madly decked!

You will be called by some, ‘caricature,’
Who do not know, lovers obsessed with flesh,
The grandeur of the human armature.
You please me, skeleton, above the rest!²⁷⁴

Baudelaire also drew on “King Pest” when he attempted to form a lexical layer of the work that could result in a reception with affective behaviors close to the reader’s reaction to the linguistic macabresque. The poem abounds with the following terms for death: “noseless hetaera,” “priggish dandy,” “favorites faded, withered – in the mob/ Antinius, and many a Lovelace.”²⁷⁵ The structural principle of the poem consists in, first of all, emphasizing the analogy between the behavior of elaborately coiffed, elegantly clothed participants in the ball indulging in life and death dressed up like a woman luring suitors, awaiting an invitation to the macabre dance, and in the second place, accentuating how disproportionate the goals realized by the presented characters are. Death appears here as a

274 Charles Baudelaire, “Danse macabre,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 197.

275 Baudelaire, “Danse macabre,” p. 199.

coquettish, elegant woman, comforted by the lyrical subject, rarely adored, with a specific charm that can only be appreciated by a few:

Truly, your coquetry will not evoke
 Any award that does not do it wrong;
 Who of these mortal hearts can grasp the joke?
 The charms of horror only suit the strong!

Full of atrocious thoughts, your eyes' abyss
 Breathes vertigo – no dancer could begin
 Without a bitter nausea to kiss
 Two rows of teeth locked in a steady grin.

But who has not embraced a skeleton?
 Who has not fed himself on carrion meat?
 What matter clothes, or how you put them on?
 The priggish dandy shows his self-deceit.

Noseless hetaera, captivating quean,
 Tell all those hypocrites what you know best:
 'Proud darlings though you powder and you preen,
 O perfumed skeletons, you reek of death!²⁷⁶

However, the meaning of the macabresque is different from Poe's allegory. Although Baudelaire shapes the tradition of *danse macabre* in a comical-grotesque way, he does not reevaluate it as radically as Poe in "King Pest." The poem under investigation, which – similarly to Poe's tale – is characterized by incompatibility of form to content, still remains close to medieval thought according to which all are equal at the end of life. "The Happy Corpse" provides a more advanced reevaluation of the vision of death depicted in the aesthetics of the macabresque.

The title of the sonnet seems doubly oxymoronic, first because it indicates a construction of the lyrical subject as the one who is dead while simultaneously capable of experiencing feelings and emotions, and second, the realization of the finishing earthly existence is not a cause for despair. On the contrary, it becomes the object of mockery and a source of posthumous joy. The described specificity of the title is further developed on the lexical layer of the work. The condition of the deceased is characterized by the epithets "free" and "happy." Its positive evaluation is in vivid contrast to the contemptuous description of temporal existence: "I would, alive, invite the hungry crows/ To bleed my tainted carcass

276 Baudelaire, "Danse macabre," p. 199.

inch by inch.”²⁷⁷ The sonnet’s reflexive *terza rima* take the form of emphatical apostrophes to two collective subjects. One of them are “worms” described as “dark playmates,” with the second the “droll *philosophes*” also called “children of rottenness”²⁷⁸:

O worms! dark playmates minus ear or eye,
 Prepare to meet a free and happy corpse;
 Droll *philosophes*, children of rottenness,

 Go then along my ruin guiltlessly,
 And say if any torture still exists
 For this old soulless corpse, dead with the dead!²⁷⁹

These apostrophes are saturated with mockery and contempt for the world, which allow the subject to rise above the experience of misery imposed on him by the human condition, and to reject the vision of the immortal soul, because this image brings him anxiety associated with the prospect of struggling with endless suffering. In the work, the thought of finitude – usually a source of thanatotic fears – gains a positive valorization that announces the decadent approach and manifests itself with impatient waiting for solace, and the readiness to undertake actions that could expedite the experience of posthumous bliss:

In a rich land, fertile, replete with snails
 I’d like to dig myself a spacious pit
 Where I might spread at leisure my old bones
 And sleep unnoticed, like a shark at sea.²⁸⁰

Let us recall that “improper cheerfulness” was also a subject in Baudelaire’s theoretical studies and was expressed in the essay “On the Essence of Laughter,” written in line with the principle that “nothing which issues from man is frivolous in the eyes of a philosopher.”²⁸¹ Baudelaire understood laughter, similarly to other emotions, as completely absent from the paradise imagined by theologians, as a “privilege of the stupid,” and always associated it with weakness and ignorance. He stated that the human disposition to express joy, sadness, anger and aggression by way of laughter comes from “the satanic in man” and that the

277 Charles Baudelaire, “The Happy Corpse,” in: *The Flowers of Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 143.

278 Baudelaire, “The Happy Corpse,” p. 143.

279 Baudelaire, “The Happy Corpse,” p. 143.

280 Baudelaire, “The Happy Corpse,” p. 141.

281 Charles Baudelaire, “*The Essence of Laughter*” and *Other Essays, Journals, and Letters* (New York: Meridian Book, 1956), p. 111.

comic is “one of the numerous pips contained in the symbolic apple.”²⁸² The metaphor shows the epistemological dimension of the human tendency to laugh, giving it the status of one of the oldest sources of cognition. Baudelaire, by connecting it with weakness, distinguished two basic types of the comic. The first is a Romantic, satanic laughter, characterized by duality, a manifestation of weakness and misery towards the Creator and of even greater pride. This deeply human, diabolical laughter is manifested by outbursts of joy and mockery combined with contempt manifested in a comparison of the human being and a human worm. This type of comic expression originated in Romanticism and has a clear character of crisis. One personification of a man of laughter, according to Baudelaire, is the protagonist of the horror novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by Charles Maturin, which actualizes the Faustian myth and encourages leaning over dark hearth of metaphysics.²⁸³ The second type of laughter, the specificity of which contradicts the laws of reason, is associated with a grotesque “absolute comicality,” which allows the reader to feel superiority over characters unaware of the ridiculousness of their condition and nature, and to respond to the cruelty of the situation in a violent, paradoxical way.²⁸⁴ Baudelaire saw the fullest representation of this type of laughter in the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann, the forerunner of fantasy and horror. Although in his essay Baudelaire does not mention Hoffmann’s follower, Poe, it seems that his drastic, yet funny, works maintained in the macabresque convention (“King Pest,” for instance) are a creative, radically brutalized and at the same time extremely funny continuation of Hoffmann’s exploration of grotesque absolute comicality. One also finds these properties in the structure of the lyrical subject of and characters in Baudelaire’s “*Danse Macabre*.”

282 Baudelaire, *The Essence of Laughter*, p. 115.

283 Baudelaire, *The Essence of Laughter*.

284 Baudelaire sees *commedia dell'arte* and protagonist’s characteristic of that genre as one manifestation of the comic absolute. It is noteworthy that *commedia dell'arte* inspired, for example, the younger symbolist Alexander Blok, author of *The Puppet Show* (1906) staged by the famous Russian theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold, along with Bolesław Leśmian’s mime dramas saturated with thanatotic themes: “Pierrot i Kolumbina” [“Pierrot and Columbine”] and “Skrzypek opętany” [“A Frenzied Fiddler”]. That tradition also echoes in the background of Leśmian’s long dramatic poem “Zdziczenie obyczajów pośmiertnych” [“The Decadence of After-Death Customs”]. Its transformations in the latter text call for an individual study. For the connection between Russian symbolism and *commedia dell'arte*, see: Izabela Malej, *Syndrom budy jarmarcznej czyli symbolizm rosyjski w kręgu arlekinady* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002).

While Konstantin Balmont cannot be listed among the authors specializing in works maintained in the aesthetics of the grotesque macabre (the poem “A Narrow Grotto” is one of few exceptions, where in the last couplet, which implements the principle of surprise through the emphasis of relations and tensions between the categories of horror and comedy, there appears the theme of the future-moving *transi* (“But, oh, narrow grotto, your dead treasure will change into an atrocity/ Oh, a scratching sound. An eyeless sight. Oh, someone is moving”).²⁸⁵ Bolesław Leśmian, on the contrary, should be named the most innovative continuator of Poe’s explorations in this area. Leśmian was probably the most sensitive of Polish writers to the cruelty and ruthlessness of the world, and he strived to give it at least a bit of lightness. The list of his works includes the ballads: “Hedda” and “The Gorilla” (from *The Shadowy Potion*), “A Beggar’s Ballad,” “Whirlus and Twirlus,” “The Saw” “Hunchback” (from *The Meadow*), and the poems “In the Cemetery Corner,” “Mortsocks” and “The Inn” (from the former collection) and “Courtship” (from the latter volume). In six of these ten works – “Hedda,” “A Beggar’s Ballad,” “Whirlus and Twirlus,” “The Saw,” “In the Cemetery Corner” and “The Inn” – the theme of the dance of death appears, shaped in the macabresque convention, associated with eroticism, as with Poe’s “King Pest.”²⁸⁶ In “The Inn” and “Whirlus and Twirlus,” it becomes the main structural principle. In the former work, protagonists and the presented space stagger in drunken, deadly dance, while in the latter even the coffins buried in graves dance until the cemetery ground rumbles from their jumps. In “Hedda,” a laughing female skeleton eaten to the bone by maggots is dancing and jumping; in “A Beggar’s Ballad,” on the water’s surface, to the rhythm of the refrain “dana, da-dana!” the crutch of a drowned beggar dances briskly; in “The Saw,” decomposed body parts of the farmhand who had been torn to pieces dance eagerly. Finally, “In the Cemetery Corner” we read:

And close by, I guess at the crossroads,
In tail a rat has indifferently chewed at,

285 “Но, тесный грот, твой мертвый клад в ужасность превратится/ Чу, шорох. Вот. Безглазый взгляд. Чу, кто-то шевелится” [Бальмонт [Balmont], “Тесный гром,” p. 288].

Balmont shapes the motif of dance differently than Poe does. For example, in the ending of the text “В душах есть все” [“There’s everything in souls”] there appears an image of a coffin dance in a cosmic approach. The poetically transformed medieval theme of danse macabre is also the subject of the poem “Наш танец” [“Our Dance”].

286 The motif returns in Leśmian’s *The Sylvan Befallings*.

At the head of several female shades
Deceased Madaleński leads a mazurka.²⁸⁷

The grotesquely macabre image is a clear reference to the figure of the Great Dancer often present in the iconography of the late Middle Ages that depicts the *danse macabre*.

Leśmian's poems maintained in the macabresque aesthetics and composed of heterogeneous, stylistically diversified components are unparalleled testimonies of the assimilation by high Polish literature of folk images, themselves stemming from a proneness to superstition about phenomena considered by reason as unreal. In Leśmian's poetry, it is possible for the following characters to coexist wonderfully in one presented space: dancing drunks, not quite entirely dead creatures, ghosts with unclear ontological status, and worms and maggots. Importantly, mixed frequently in their presentation are places they hold in the cultural hierarchy of being, and the degree of intensity of their usual manifestation is changeable. As Michał Głowiński points out:

Leśmian [...] lifts the spatial divisions that have a basic meaning for religious thinking, between top and bottom, sky and underground, the space of those saved by God and the space of the condemned, the space of eternal pain and of eternal happiness, the space of punishment and reward.²⁸⁸

Pertinent to note is that Leśmian used the aesthetics of the macabresque, shaped by Poe, to develop an array of lexical "cultural oxymorons,"²⁸⁹ including "the sky grave" (from the poem "Sen – ***Śniło mi się, że znika treść kwiatów wątpliwa..." ["Dream – ***I dreamt that the doubtful essence of flowers disappears"]),²⁹⁰ "to love blighted lifeblood craze," "caress [...] through and through to each bone," nothingness [...] carcassed from valleys to heights" ("Hedda"),²⁹¹ "deadly kisses," "wooden crutch [...] freed from crippleness" ("A Beggar's Ballad"),²⁹² "the coffins dance," "he jumps and then wails," "below the ground

287 Leśmian, "In the Cemetery Corner," p. 155.

288 Cf. Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*, p. 293.

289 Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*, p. 294.

290 Bolesław Leśmian, "Sen – ***Śniło mi się, że znika treść kwiatów wątpliwa..." in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 415 ["mogiła nieba"].

291 Leśmian, "Hedda," p. 172.

292 Bolesław Leśmian, "Ballada dziadowska," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 170 ["pocałunki śmiertelne," "kula drewniana [...] wyzwolona z kalectwa"].

resounding and cheery,” “and start dancing on their knees [...] / And they’re dancing on all fours, then entirely flat,” “That have been engulfed by death – wuth heels over heads!”²⁹³ (“Whirlus and Twirlus”), “charms of the grave,” “she screeched from delight and sharpened her teeth,” “she tore him caressing into even shreds”²⁹⁴ (“The Saw”), “a scrap of a person that wants to be bait,” “it encourages to pain with magic” (“Courtship”),²⁹⁵ “he’s dying, expediently,” “he’d dance [...] with his back-hump,” “he’s treasuring Death” (“The Hunchback”),²⁹⁶ “death lures him with wheat,” “thorny for ever,” “beggard splurge,” “nothing – too shoddily shod”²⁹⁷ (“Mortsocks”), “ghosts of dead drunks/ triumph over their drunken madness and struggles,” “after death, lasciviously in love with these colors” (“The Inn”).²⁹⁸

These examples permit capturing the specificity of the transformation of the aesthetics of the macabresque that took place in Leśmian’s work in relation to Poe’s legacy. The blending of phrases associated with the sphere of Thanatos with erotic-dance lexemes, which constitute an important component of the musical structure of the works and are reminders of their high vitality, allowed Leśmian to create a poetic, paradoxical, easily readable image, not arousing horror (although probably stemming from increased thanatotic fear) of vital death, immortal death, possessed of a procedural nature and never losing its dynamics.

293 Leśmian, “Whirlus and Twirlus,” pp. 40, 42.

294 Leśmian, “The Saw,” pp. 223, 224.

295 Bolesław Leśmian, “Zaloty,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), pp. 215, 216 [“ochłap człowieka, co chce być przynętą,” “czarem do bólu zachęca”].

296 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Hunchback,” in: *Mythematics and Extropy. Selected Poems of Bolesław Leśmian* (Wisconsin: Stevens Point, 1987); <https://alexandrachciuk-celt.tumblr.com/>, last accessed 31.08.2019.

297 Leśmian, “Mortsocks,” p. 117.

298 Bolesław Leśmian, “Karczma,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 367 [“widma umarłych opojów/ święcą tryumf swych szalów pijackich i znojów,” “po śmierci w tych barwach lubieżnie się kocha”].



Rousak

Stylistic and structural influences (symbolist style – the *bylina* tradition – the early prose work of Leśmian)

The Symbolist Style of Bolesław Leśmian's Early Work (illustrated by the case of "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim" ["Tale of the Lord's Knight"])

Bolesław Leśmian's cycle of poems written in Russian, "Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest" ["Песни Василисы Премудрой"], is strongly influenced by Russian symbolism, as Tamara Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz has convincingly demonstrated, the representatives of which frequently utilized a thematic repertoire from folk traditions of the magical fairy tale in order to express their sophiological concepts, or the ideas, Sophia, Godly Wisdom, that in Russia situated at the intersection of philosophy and Orthodox theology.²⁹⁹ This is neither the only one nor the earliest example of influence exerted on Leśmian's work by ideas and contexts popular among the Silver Age representatives.

An earlier work, which has yet to receive sufficient attention from researchers though it deserves a thorough study, is the poetic prose piece "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim" ["Tale of the Lord's Knight"]. It comprises six parts and first published in 1904, in the nineteenth issue of *Chimera*. In a specific way, this work combines definitive features of the poetics of Russian symbolism: first, a characteristically shaped lexical layer; second, structural, semantic and worldview layers; and finally, a collection of themes taken from the Russian magical tale and the *bylina*

299 Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, "Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę." For an analysis of "Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest" in the mytho-poetical, philosophical and sacral contexts of Russian symbolic poetry, see: Володимир Василенко [Volodymyr Vasylenko], "W kręgu rosyjskojęzycznej poezji Bolesława Leśmiana," in: *Poetyki Leśmiana. Leśmian i inni*, ed. Eugeniusz Czapplejewicz and Witold Sadowski (Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2002), pp. 139–161. In his paper, Vasylenko indicates contexts that have not been analyzed to date, which may prove important in the process of defining the connection between Leśmian's poetics and the work of the Russian symbolists. Anna Sobieska's book *Twórczość Leśmiana w kręgu filozoficznej myśli symbolizmu rosyjskiego* [*Leśmian's Work in the Circle of the Philosophical Thought of Russian Symbolism*] was published in 2005, see: Sobieska, *Twórczość Leśmiana*. It actualized the sophiological context of Leśmian's work. The works of Vasylenko, Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz and Sobieska differ fundamentally in their approaches to the issue. In Vasylenko's case, one may refer to an outline of the problem that indicates important research tropes, while in Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz's case, one finds a detailed analysis in the field of historical poetics, and in Sobieska's case, considerations from the area of the history of ideas.

tradition. Here, I attempt to identify and describe the above mentioned features. This preliminary analysis of the vocabulary and definition of the principles of character construction and the autothematic narrative framework of “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” will provide a starting point in indicating intertexts and ideological content built into Leśmian’s text.

The lexical layer

In a close reading of “Tale of the Lord’s Knight,” one notices a specific vocabulary characteristic of symbolic literary representations.

Hence, one may notice meaningful saturation of the work with a lexicon associated with the cosmic sphere (solar and lunar, for example), the aquatic sphere (stream, lake) and the elements of fire and air.

The work is filled with formulas violating the logical principle of non-contradiction either in an ontological or a psychological meaning. Examples include the following phrases: “searching for what has passed, and is not entirely gone,”³⁰⁰ “Only one landowner’s daughter guessed and did not guess the secret meaning of the incredible miracles,”³⁰¹ “Only one landowner’s daughter wanted and did not want to tell Władyka,³⁰² where he came from and where should he return to,”³⁰³ “And she wanted to let him go, and did not want to do it!” and “And she wanted to lose him, and did not want to...”³⁰⁴ These sentences become inauthentic in the perspective of the superior symbolic meaning of the text.

The poetics of oxymorons is another important component of the text that is scrutinized. It may be exemplified by the two phrases: “light shadow”³⁰⁵ and “sweet sin.”³⁰⁶ As with the previous situation, the contradiction is neutralized here in the symbolic layer of Leśmian’s work.

300 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 43 [“poszukiwania tego, co mijając, niezupełnie minęło”].

301 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“Jedna tylko córka dziedzicowa domyślała się i nie domyślała tajnego znaczenia niepojętych cudów”].

302 *Władyka* – the character’s last name is significant. Etymologically, the title *władyka* is connected in Slavic languages with power and actualizes the religious context – a bishop in the Orthodox church was called a *władyka*.

303 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“Jedna tylko córka dziedzicowa chciała i nie chciała powiedzieć Władyce, skąd przyszedł i dokąd ma powrócić”].

304 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 57 [“I chciała go puścić, i nie chciała!”; “I pragnęła go stracić, i nie pragnęła...”].

305 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“cień przejasny”].

306 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 49 [“słodki grzech”].

In “Tale of the Lord’s Knight,” a lexicon frequently appears to be associated with experiencing mystery (for example, in the following phrases: “strange images,”³⁰⁷ “hidden power”)³⁰⁸ or with oneiric experiencing (“sleep/dream;”³⁰⁹ “the forest was barely visible”).³¹⁰ These phrases increase the visibility of the text, serving as important tone-forming components, indicating the unclear ontological affiliation of the presented reality or its fairy-tale genealogy.

Besides, Leśmian’s poetic prose contains vocabulary referring to the musical realm, as in: “And the fearing Lady trembles, like a lute, with a seven-string fear,”³¹¹ and “The stones played in the air, like muffled screams.”³¹² The presence of musical comparisons and metaphors brings the poetics of Leśmian closer to other symbolist works, in which relations of music and words – the *melos* of words – carries great importance.

The fact that Leśmian’s prose belongs to a group of works that represent this style is also evidenced by the poetics of symbolically treated colors (“Tale of the Lord’s Knight” is dominated by gold, purple, scarlet, white, violet and, above all, various shades of blue).

There is also a synesthetic imagery in the work under consideration, for example, “a dance of dreams.”³¹³

Additionally, themes of the duality of existence, introduced with nouns such as “shadow” and “mirror” and adverbs such as “illusorily”³¹⁴ play an important role in the text.

Extensive parts of the work are dominated by negative poetics (characteristic of the tradition of apophatic theology) understood as a symbolic attempt to express what is infinite, unrepresentative and limitless. It is manifested in the following phrases: “to walk endlessly,” “forest – unreachable,” “endless steppe,”³¹⁵

307 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 47, 51, 54 [“dziwne obrazy”].

308 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 52 [“potęga utajona”].

309 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 45, 50, 52, 57 [“sen”]. In Polish, the word “sen” means both “dream” and “sleep” – translator’s note.

310 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 44 [“majaczył bór”].

311 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 50 [“A Pani trwożna drży, jak lutnia, siedmiostrunnym lękiem”].

312 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 50 [“I zagrały kamienie w powietrzu, jak stłumione krzyki”].

313 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 44 [“taniec snów”].

314 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 43, 44, 48 [“cień,” “zwierciadło,” “złudnie”].

315 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 44 [“iść bez końca;” “bór – niedoskoczny;” “step bezkresny”].

“immeasurable charm,”³¹⁶ “lake abyss,” “incomprehensibility,”³¹⁷ “stellar limitlessness”³¹⁸ and “oaks, dissimilar to oaks, obscure infinity with infinite branches.”³¹⁹

The aura of the extraordinary in the presented events is enhanced by numerous emphases, hyperbolas, exclamations and gradually repeated phrases (often entire sentences) that play a symbolic and rhythmical function.

“Tale of the Lord’s Knight” often uses the poetics of allusions, suggestions, understatements, such as “At night streams sometimes mirrored a reflection of folded arms, light, I don’t know whose,”³²⁰ and “And the heart beats in her breast, and her open lips become pale, as if they wanted to whisper a tormenting and horrifying secret. But they are silent, they do not say anything.”³²¹

The lexical layer of the work is complemented in the sacral-mystical metaphoric that introduces, for example, the theme *Rosa Mystica*, associated with the Mother of God (present, for example, in Solovyov’ poetry, including in the famous long poem “Три свидания” [“Three Encounters”], 1898). In Leśmian’s work, the language of mysticism is combined with the language of eroticism: “And the moon saw two sinful bodies, tussling with pleasure, clashed in embrace, thrown into one madness. A heavy scent of herbs and flowers suffocated two throats, drunk with pleasure. The warm night absorbed two fiery breaths – two mystical roses, exhaled from breasts.”³²²

This combination of lexical features in “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” provides textual testimony to the association of Leśmian’s early work with the literary legacy of the Russian symbolists, and is at the same time an important premise for searching in Leśmian’s work for older traditions exerting influence on the

316 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 45 [“urok bezedni”].

317 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 46 [“jeziorna otchłań;” “niepojętość”].

318 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“gwiezdne bezgranicza”].

319 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 55 [“dęby, do dębów niepodobne, nieskończonością konarów nieskończoność przesłaniają”].

320 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“W zwierciadłach strumieni widywano czasem po nocy odbicia rąk załamanych, świetlistych, nie wiadomo czyich”].

321 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 53 [“I serce bije w jej piersi, i bledną usta rozchylone, jakby wyszeptać chciały dręczącą, a straszną tajemnicę. Lecz milczą, nic nie mówią”].

322 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 49 [“I księżyc widział dwa ciała grzeszne, szamotane rozkoszą, skute w ucisku, w jeden obłęd rzucone. Parna woń ziół i kwiecica dusiła dwa gardła, zachłyśnięte upojeniem. Noc gorąca chłonęła dwa płomienne oddechy – dwie róże mistyczne, z piersi wywionięte”].

development of symbolist poetics that were transformed at the same time by early representatives of Silver Age literature.

The structural layer

In “Tale of the Lord’s Knight,” there is a clear reference to the symbolically transformed Russian tradition of the magical tale, as well as to the *bylina* tradition. The former manifests itself mainly in the composition of the love theme. It has a two-level, symbolic character. It can be interpreted (in line with the work’s title) – as with the lyrical, biblical love poem “The Song of Songs” – as a parabolic presentation of the story about the divine Sophia and the Lord’s Knight, Piotr Władyka, who loves her with an earthly love (making him capable of extraordinary actions), who is also named the Cursed, for he remains unaware of his heavenly calling almost until the moment of his death. The construction of the character of the “black-browed lady”³²³ also lends a double meaning. Significantly, the heroine, like Vasilisa from the “Songs of Vasilisa the Wise” cycle published two years later, has almost all the attributes of a fairy-tale character, from external appearance to psychological features. Moreover, even the way she is presented and the space she is located in indicate the presence of references to a magical fairy-tale convention, bringing a fantastical extraordinariness into the work’s plot.

The character construction described above was no novelty in Russian literature, which was an important source of inspiration for Leśmian. After all, interests in East-Slavic folklore left a visible mark on early symbolist poetry. Its practitioners repeatedly introduced in their works themes characteristic for the Russian magical fairy tale, such as “Живая Вода” [“Live Water”], “Жар-птица” [“Firebird”], “Змей” [“Dragon”], “Морской царь” [“Sea Czar”], and finally “Заря-Зараница, Красна Девица” [“Zorya”], examples of which can be found, for example, in the poetic achievements of Leśmian’s friend Konstantin Balmont.³²⁴

Leśmian adopted the figure of the beautiful, wise daughter of a lord, a key character in the poetry of younger symbolists, into his “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” as “the landowner’s daughter – black-browed and light-blue-eyed [who] has long felt in her fiery, virginal soul wonderful transformations towards everlasting

323 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 45 [“pani czarnobrewa”].

324 Константин Дмитриевич Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Живая вода,” “Зоря-Зорница,” “Драконит,” in: *Избранное*, ed. Елизавета Васильевна Иванова (Москва: Советская Россия, 1989), pp. 376–77, 361–362, 363–364, respectively. Cf. Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, “Sofia zakłeta w baśniową carewnę,” p. 28.

love.”³²⁵ The heroine, cursed by her father and condemned for sinful love by the community, finds in Piotr Władyka a fearless, unflagging defender. The physical appearance of the landowner’s daughter and her psychological dispositions correspond perfectly with fairy-tale *czarevna* attributes previously appearing in literary symbolist representations of Sophia of the Holy Wisdom (the Idea of Ideas, the Symbol of Symbols), which became for early Silver Age authors a starting point for expressing unrepresentable meanings that are sophiological – mystical and metaphysical. She was presented as an embodiment, folk-stylized (in line with the tendency dominating modernist Russia, regarded as a literary consequence of the Slavophil movement) and earthly, of the Soul of the World – a lovely, sensual *Krasawica-Cud-Dziewica* [lit. Beautiful-Miracle-Virgin] of extraordinary beauty. Significantly, in Leśmian’s poetical prose the landowner’s daughter is perceived as a Russian beauty: “a black-browed and light-blue-eyed lady.”³²⁶ We read about her “fiery soul” and “hands filled with the power of magic,”³²⁷ with “alluring eyes, like a song heard from afar.”³²⁸ She is “graceful and slender,” “shielded with daydreams,”³²⁹ she has a “swan-like neck.”³³⁰ She appears to be “a paragon of feminine beauty” from Solovyov’s poem “Three Encounters.”³³¹

This idea of Sophia as the eternal feminine also influenced the poetry of Andrei Bely and, probably most strongly, of Alexander Blok, where the convention of presenting female character stems from the Russian magical-tale tradition. Blok, author of the poem cycle *Стухи о Прекрасной Даме* [*Poems about a Beautiful Lady*], written between 1901 and 1902 then published in 1904,

325 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 45 [“córka dziedzicowa – czarnobrewa i błękitnooka, [która] z dawna czuła w duszy płomiennej a dziewiczej przemiany cudowne ku miłowaniu na wieki”].

326 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 45 [“pani czarnobrewa i błękitnooka”].

327 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 46 [“duszy płomiennej;” “dłoniach przepojonych mocą czarów”].

328 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 46–47 [“wzroku wabiącym, niby pieśń z dala słyszana”].

329 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 50 [“wiotka i smukła;” “tarczą marzeń osłonięta”].

330 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 52 [“łabędzią szyję”].

331 Владимир Соловьёв [Vladimir Solovyov], “Три свидания,” in: *Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв, Стихотворения и поэма* // Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв. *Избранное* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1994), p. 409 [“образ женской красоты”]. Solovyov’s approach to Sophia is ambiguous. She is associated with Godly Ancient Wisdom, the Soul of the World, Godly Matter, the First Matter, the Holy Virgin and the Eternal Feminine.

manifests his enchantment with Sophia personified as the “Eternal Friend,” “Soul of the World” and “Eternal Feminine”³³² by including *lexis* close to the Russian magical fairy tale. For instance, in the terms “Czarina of purity,” “Mysterious Virgin of Twilight,” “Virgin-Protector,” “Heavenly czarina of the earth,” “Virgin, Aurora, Burning Bush,” “Majestic Eternal Betrothed,” “Incomprehensible” and “Young, golden/ Covered in light sun.”³³³ Leśmian’s character, like a fairy-tale beautiful *czarevna* and the protagonists of Blok poems, is also described with the golden color: the “seemingly wedding”³³⁴ ring of the lake brightens her eye, Władyka wants to build a golden castle for her, “golden shields” glimmer in the “darkness of her thought.”³³⁵ However, the beautiful “black-browed lady” created by Leśmian does not have one of the important fairy-tale attributes (from the repertoire of themes of Russian symbolist poetry) – she is not accompanied by a swan or transformed into one. Nonetheless, she is described as a beauty with a “swan-like neck,”³³⁶ a golden cross on her chest. It is worth reiterating that the

332 [“Вечная Подруга,” “Душа Мира,” “Вечная Женственность”]. See: Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв [Vladimir Solovyov], “Три свидания,” in: *Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв, Стихотворения и поэма* // Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв. *Избранное* (Петроград: Художественная литература, 1994), p. 409; Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв, *Собрание сочинений Владимира Сергеевича Соловьёва в 10 томах*, Vol. 3 (Санкт-Петербург: Книгоиздательское товарищество «Просвещение»), p. 303; Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв, “Ewig-Weibliche. Слово увещательное к морским чертям,” in: *Стихотворения и шуточные пьесы* (Ленинград: Советский писатель, 1974), с. 120–121.

333 Александр Блок [Alexander Blok], *Собрание сочинений в 12 томах*, Vol. 1 (Ленинград: Издательство писателей в Ленинграде, 1932), pp. 143, 147, 209, 164, 182, 209–210, 209, 177, respectively [“Царица чистоты,” “Закатная Таинственная Диева,” “Хранительница-Диева,” “Голубая царица земли,” “Диева, Заря, Купина,” “Величественная Вечная Жена,” “Непостижимая” and “Молодая, золотая,/ Ярким солнцем залитая”]. For the transfigurations of the Beautiful Lady in Blok’s poetry, see: Seweryn Pollak, “Przeistoczenia Pięknej Damy,” in: *Ruchome granice* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1988), pp. 37–50; Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, “Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę,” pp. 31–32.

334 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 49 [“niby ślubny”].

335 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 46 [“w pomrocach jej zadumy;” “tarcze złote”].

336 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 52 [“Iabędziej szyi”]. In the magical fairy tale, “Царевна-лягушка” [“Czarevna-Frog”], Vasilisa magically created a beautiful lake and white swans from the sleeves of his dress. According to Alexander Afanasyev, who collected the fairy tales, “In some variants Vasilisa the Wisest is replaced by a Female Swan, a Beautiful Virgin [Lebied’-ptica, Krasna-diewica] [...], therefore swan-women are believed to have prophetic skills and to be wise: they fulfill complex tasks,

golden color that dominates the Russian magical fairy tale (for example, in the story about the goldfish, Siwek-Złotogrzywek, and the Firebird's golden feathers or attributes such as golden apples) regained a symbolic value for late nineteenth-century artists, inspired by Byzantine art. For them, the golden color, not previously considered a proper (chromatic) color was an ambiguous equivalent of the Soul of the World.³³⁷ It plays a similar function in the poetry of younger symbolists (Bely's volume of poems *Золото в лазури* [*Gold in Azure*] 1904, and Ivanov and Blok) and of older ones, for instance, the poetry of Konstantin Balmont, in which the colors gold and yellow alternate. This substitutability proves that they are connected with solar themes embedded in the cosmic-mystic context.³³⁸

In correspondence with mystical heroines in Solovyov³³⁹ and Blok, Leśmian's "black-browed lady" is described in a synecdochal way that refers to the convention used to describe characters in magical fairy tales. She appears in fairy-tale settings that include a lake, an orchard, a holy forest; and the black-browed lady's beloved wants to build a palace for her. The work emphasizes associations between the heroine and aquatic space (we see her by the banks of the lake), the forest realm (the landowner's daughter reaches towards the holy forest's depths) and the cosmic sphere (seen in the aura of the starry night, in the "moonlight,"³⁴⁰ "when the moon silvered the midnight hour in the sky, the black-browed lady

impossible to fulfill, and attempt to take control of nature" [Александр Афанасьев [Alexander Afanas'yev], *Поэтические воззрения славян на природу*, 1-е издание, в 3 томах, Vol. 2 (Москва: Издатель К. Солдатенков, 1868), p. 117]; quoted from Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, "Sofia zakłeta w baśniową carewnę," p. 38. The theme of a swan can be found, for example, in the following fairy tales: "Поди туда – не знаю куда, принеси то – не знаю что," ["Go there – I don't know where, bring me this – I don't know what"], "Данило Бессчастный," ["the Miserable Danilo"] "Семь Симеонов" ["Seven Simeons"] and Сказка о молодце-удальце" ["Daredevil"], in: *Народные русские сказки А. Н. Афанасьева: в 3 томах*, Vol. 2, ed. Лев Барг [Lev Barag] and Юрий Новиков [Yuri Novikov] (Москва: Наука, 1984–1986), pp. 214, 561, 313, 145–147, 174, 260–267, respectively].

337 Cf. Grażyna Bryś, *Kolor w poezji młodszych symbolistów rosyjskich – Aleksander Błok i Andriej Biely* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1988), p. 129; Izabela Malej, *Indywidualizm impresjonistyczny. Konstantina Balmonta świat wyobraźni poetyckiej* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1999), p. 33.

338 Malej, *Indywidualizm impresjonistyczny*. p. 33.

339 For example: Владимир Сергеевич Соловьёв [Vladimir Solovyov], *Стихотворения. Эстетика. Литературная критика* (Москва: Книга, 1990), p. 22.

340 Leśmian, "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim," p. 47 ["pobrzasku księżycowym"].

woke up to fulfill her destiny³⁴¹). Wherever the character appears, she introduces an enchanting, magical aura: “Spells and magic surrounded Władyka’s hut, when the lady had moved in, possessed with sin.”³⁴² Magic disappears when the protagonist does. The power of the loving knight and his self-confidence originates from the “black-browed lady.”

The atmosphere saturated with marvelousness, characteristic of a magical fairy tale, indicating that characters are located at the frontier of the earthly world and the reality of transcendence, is created through metonymic representations of the “light-blue lake,”³⁴³ “night that descends from heaven to earth with the moon in hand on stairs of silence,”³⁴⁴ a house burning with “ruby fire, unusual, looming on the horizon of the past, in the nebula of the ancient past,”³⁴⁵ the glow forcing its way with “an aggressive flame into wreaths of cloud” and reddening the “abyssal village.”³⁴⁶ The presented space is wrapped in blues and reds and their derivative hues. The work reads: “A bright evening makes the dusty road light blue and covers streams in purple silence,”³⁴⁷ “Our village lay among mysterious ravines and abandoned orchards. Light-blue vapors and purple mists arose above it, like fumes of a decaying, slowly dying fairy tale.”³⁴⁸ The light-blue color – next to the golden color – is a constant element of imaging in sophiological poetry of both Solovyov and Blok, in *Poems about a Beautiful*, for instance. The title of Bely’s volume *Gold in Azure* is an allusion to the colorful convention of representing Sophia. In accordance with this manner of description, Leśmian’s “black-browed lady” is a beauty on the earthly plane and is Ancient Wisdom on the mystical plane.

341 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“kiedy księżyc wysrebrzył w niebiosach północną godzinę, ocknęła się Pani czarnobrewa do przeznaczeń swoich”].

342 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 49 [“Czar i zaklętość otoczyły chatę Władyki, gdy w niej zamieszkała ta Pani, grzechem opętana”].

343 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 45 [“jeziora błękitnego”].

344 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 51 [“nocy, co po stopniach ciszy z księżycem w dłoni schodzi z niebiosów na ziemię”].

345 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 53 [“ogniem rubinowym, niezwykłym, mającym niby w przeszłości, w mgławicy wieków zamierzchłych”].

346 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 54 [“drapieżnym płomieniem w chmur kłęby;” “wieś otchlanna”].

347 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 54 [“Jasny wieczór drogę pylną wybłękitnia i fioletową ciszą powleka strumienie”].

348 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 44 [“Leżała wieś nasza wśród jarów tajemniczych i sadów zapuszczonych. Opary błękitne i mgły purpurowe wznosiły się ponad nią, niby wyziewy rozkładającej się w powolnych skonach baśni”].

Noteworthy, however, is the ambivalence in presenting the character. The protagonist is “restless and distressing, her fragrant hands connect her with the surrounding secrets of the stellar night,”³⁴⁹ she is depicted as a person from this world yet not of this world, a feminine medium between earthly and heavenly realms, the human and cosmic spheres. The landowner’s daughter also whispers “unclear, mad, sinful prayers.”³⁵⁰ Cast out by her father, cursed and almost stoned like a harlot (biblical intertext) by the animalized, hyperbolized, dragon-like crowd, the “black-browed lady” is also called “a prophetic dream.”³⁵¹

The character’s ambivalence is most fully revealed in her defensive gesture against the role she is meant to play in the divine plan, or, in other words, in the mission of mediating in bringing the cursed Władyka to the kingdom of heaven. The landowner’s daughter implements the godly plan, but not without hesitation – in the end, she attempts to keep her beloved at least for a moment “at the very threshold of eternity.”³⁵² Significantly, the reader is usually informed in the poetics of antitheses about the protagonist’s psychological dispositions (she “guessed and did not guess,” “she wanted to and did not want to,”³⁵³ “she wanted to lose him and did not want to lose him.”³⁵⁴ Moreover, the woman carries a “tormenting, terrible secret.”³⁵⁵ Two years later, these ambivalent presentations will inform the creation of Vasilisa the Wisest and are inspired, I believe, by Solovyov’s descriptions of Sophia’s dual nature. At the very end of Leśmian’s work, the “black-browed lady,” described so far in an allusive, synecdochal and symbolic way, is presented as a tool of eternal wisdom, a spiritual-physical medium in the divine plan for Władyka’s salvation. She says:

You, by His command, raised me – sinful and fearful – to the heavens, like a prayer, in a cloud of smoke and fire! I am a prayer of the condemned, and without your lips I feel unspoken and un-whispered to God. And now, by His command, I call to you with a

349 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 46 [“niespokojna i niepokojąca, wyciągnięciem wonnych dłoni połączona z dookólnymi tajemnicami gwiazdozbiornej nocy”].

350 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“niejasne, obłąkane, grzechem zmącone modlitwy”].

351 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 50 [“snem proroczym”].

352 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 57 [“na samych progach wieczności”].

353 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 48 [“domyślała się i nie domyślała,” “chciała i nie chciała”].

354 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 57 [“pragnęła go stracić i nie pragnęła”].

355 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 52 [“dręczącą, a straszną tajemnicę”].

voice that brings me pain: oh, the Lord's Knight, mad with sin, where is your white steed, your shield of gold, your fiery sword?³⁵⁶

In the conclusion of Leśmian's poetic story about a love-metaphysical-sacral initiation of the cursed Władyka and his death that opens the gates to mystical cognition, the "black-browed lady" appears to be Władyka's "posthumous prayer" "already silent, not yet heard!"³⁵⁷ The "posthumous prayer" defined with a sacral-thanatotic metaphor turns out to be a liaison with the transcendental sphere, in which the protagonist, once "rejected by God and people"³⁵⁸ and now transformed into the Lord's Knight, is awaited by the angels' legions.

The creation of the "black-browed lady" uses the fairy-tale stylization, but in a comprehensive reading of the work, one must take into account – as with the case of "Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest" – the very important "sophiological" context contemporary to Leśmian, very popular in the works of early Silver Age authors and encompassing fairy-tale intertexts (for example, the theme of a beautiful, wise *czarevna* consolidated in Alexander Afanasyev's volume *Русские народные сказки* [*Russian Folktales*], well known to Leśmian and adding new religious and philosophical senses to the theme). The "black-browed lady" appears here as a literary / fairy tale, epiphanic personification of the divine Sophia, Ancient Wisdom playing a key role in theurgic teachings of Vladimir Solovyov,³⁵⁹ spiritual guide to younger Russian symbolists (Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely and Vyacheslav Ivanov).

The theoreticians of Russian symbolism perceived Solovyov's Sophia, the Idea of Ideas, as a prototype of relations inscribed in the symbol between the ideal and the real, hence becoming the "symbol of symbols," a personification of the nature of the very

356 Leśmian, "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim," p. 56 ["Tyś z Jego rozkazu – mówi o sobie – mnie grzeszną i trwożną, jako modlitw wznosił ku niebu w kłębach dymu i ognia! Modlitwą jestem potępionego, i bez ust Twoich czułam się, jakoby niewymówioną i niewyszeptaną ku Bogu. I teraz z jego rozkazu, głosem, który mi boli, wołam do ciebie: Rycerzu Pański grzechem obłąkany, gdzie rumak twój biały, gdzie tarcza złota, gdzie miecz ognisty?"].

357 Leśmian, "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim," p. 58 ["modlitwa pośmiertna;"] "już niema, a jeszcze nie wysłuchana!"].

358 Leśmian, "Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim," p. 49 ["niemiłego Bogu i ludziom"].

359 Cf. Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, "Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę," p. 29; James D. West, *Russian Symbolism: Study of V. Ivanov and the Russian Symbolist Aesthetic* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 207.

“symbolon,” its mediatory, “epiphanic” function that establishes a bond with the “world of divine creatures.”³⁶⁰

Solovyov’s idea of divine Sophia, understood as an ideal being looking for the material and real, became the foundation for sophiologically oriented poetical work of Blok (*Verses About the Beautiful Lady*, 1903) and Andrei Bely (*Gold in Azure*, 1904), and also of the early works of Leśmian, as for instance, “Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest” and “Tale of the Lord’s Knight.”

On the other hand, the construction of the character of Piotr Władyka exhibits references to the tradition of the Russian heroic epic.³⁶¹ Władyka’s physical appearance and strength bring to mind heroes from works belonging to the *bylina* tradition, he combines such features of these heroes as, for example, the anarchistic and individualistic Василий Буслаев [Vasily Buslayev] who opposes his community (known from the Novgorod *bylina* cycle) and the aggressive Добрыня [Dobrynya] (the protagonist of the Kiev *bylina* cycle, including the text “Добрыня и Змей” [“Dobrynya and Zmey”]). The construction of Władyka is founded on a clear intersection of the references to the *bylina* tradition and references to the magical fairy tale and the gnostic tradition³⁶² actualized in

360 Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, “Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę,” p. 29; Gilbert Durand, *Limagination symbolique* (Paris: Quadrige/PUF, 1964); Алексей Лосев [Aleksiej Losyev], *Владимир Соловьёв* (Москва: Мысль, 1983), p. 186.

361 Edward Boniecki discussed the references to the *bylina* tradition in “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” in his *Archaiczny świat Bolesława Leśmiana*, p. 49. Earlier, Seweryn Pollak pointed to the importance of the elements of the myth of *bylina* in “Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest” in his “Niektóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego,” p. 254. The friendship of Leśmian and Balmont, who was interested in legends and translated songs and legends of various nations, contributed to the presence of references to the *bylina* tradition and the Russian magical fairy tale in Leśmian’s early work, see: Pollak, “Niektóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego.”

362 For Solovyov’s theosophy and its philosophical and gnostic sources of inspiration, see: Jan Krasicki, *Bóg, człowiek i zło. Studium filozofii Włodzimierza Słowjowa* (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 2003). Solovyov’s interest in the gnostic philosophy of Valentius is also confirmed in the biography of Solovyov who took a mythical journey to Egypt. Valentius saw the source of evil in Sophia’s desire to close the *pleroma* (the fullness of existence that emerged from the arche) to come to know God and unify with him. As a result of the disturbed hierarchy of *pleroma*, Sophia’s double emerges, the unfortunate Lesser Sophia, Achamoth, whose suffering could only be ended by a return to unity. Similarly, Solovyov initially perceived – before revising his views – the genesis of evil in the fall of the Soul of the World, associating his source with the divine potential (a significant theme in his reflections, especially in the 1870s). The theme of the Fall plays an important role here, as it helped explain the development

the spirit of Solovyov's philosophy, for example, in the theme of rescuing the "black-browed lady" from the raging crowd, compared to a dragon. Indeed, the motif of the battle with the dragon appears in the above mentioned *bylina* "Dobrynya and Zmey." In that work, the clever hero saves the sister of the Kiev prince, Vladimir, after confronting the brutal creature and making a pact with him. Moreover, he effortlessly frees from the dragon's captivity not only the Забава Путятича [Zabava Putyatina], but also Russian heroes imprisoned in the Viper cave.³⁶³ The theme under study returns frequently in the Russian magic fairy tale, motifs of which penetrate the *bylina*. Significantly, Leśmian's hero, Piotr Władyka, defeats the angry crowd compared to a dragon, imprisoning the "black-browed lady," as Иван Царевич [Ivan Czarevich] frees his beloved *czarevna* from Змей Горыныч [Zmey Gorynych] and Кощей Бессмертный [Koshei the Immortal].³⁶⁴ In gnostic terms, this liberation means that Sophia is able to return to the *pleroma*.³⁶⁵ Importantly, Blok used very similar poetics to write about the philosophy of Solovyov, whom he called the "knight-monk:" "There is only one earthly task: the task of liberating the imprisoned *czarevna*,

of a reality originating from God but simultaneously differing from Him. For the symbol in Russian culture, for instance in Solovyov's philosophy, see: Krzysztof Duda and Teresa Obolevitch, eds., *Symbol w kulturze rosyjskiej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010).

363 Polish literary historian Julian Krzyżanowski described her as follows: "The fairy tale about Dobrynya's victory over the dragon concludes with the liberation of the princess, forty czars and czarevitchs, forty kings and princes, not to mention the crowds of less important characters. The fairy tale is saturated with hagiographic-legendary themes, as the basic idea behind the fairy tale has also penetrated the religious stories, and, as a result, many legends were created, the most famous of which was associated with the name of St. George" [Julian Krzyżanowski, *Byliny. Studium z dziejów rosyjskiej epiki ludowej* (Vilna: Instytut Naukowo-Badawczy Europy Wschodniej, 1934), pp. 30–31. Piotr Władyka's actions are characterized by a fairy tale, characteristic of the protagonists of *bylina*, fantastic extraordinariness, because *bylina* has a fairy-tale genealogy. The apocrypha have also influenced the topic of *bylina*, see: Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, pp. 114–153.

364 Zmey Gorynych – a winged reptilian character known from the old-Slavic beliefs. Koshei the Immortal – an evil wizard known from Russian folklore.

365 The gnostic "Hymn of the Pearl" – a passage in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, there called the "Hymn of Judas Thomas the Apostle" – in its older, Syrian version includes a topoi of a battle with a dragon. In the text, the dragon symbolizes the material world, see: Hans Jonas, *Religia gnozy* (Kraków: Platan, 1994), pp. 128–144; Jerzy Prokopiuk, "Hymn o Perle w świetle gnozy," *Masada*, Vol. 1 (1991), pp. 128–135; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnoza* (Kraków: Nomos, 2003).

the Soul of the World, embraced by Chaos and passionately longing, engaged in secret relations with ‘the cosmic mind.’”³⁶⁶

The gnostic topic of oblivion – of living in a state of unawareness of one’s divine origin and vocation – is also actualized in the construction of the character of Piotr Władyka, called the Cursed. Thus, love for the “black-browed lady” becomes a prayer understood symbolically, a path to mystical knowledge and to contact that had been lost with transcendence.

Importantly, the topic of non-memory and recovery from oblivion resounds firmly in the self-referential narrative framework of “Tale of the Lord’s Knight:”

I still could not remember what frightened me most in the compelling imperative of longing. Until one night I remembered everything! I suddenly remembered the presence of God in the heavens! [...] / In those returns to the dark past, in searching for what has passed but is not quite gone – I awoke a memory in myself, or rather a story about a memory, one of those stories that descend from people to graves covered in flowers. [...] / Since then, many days have passed, many stars have alit in the heavens, and this lady, kneeling in silence over the sinful corpse of the lord’s knight, still remains in the depths of my oblivion!³⁶⁷

The theme of remembering returns repeatedly, like a refrain in the initial passages of the text, in the form of the sentence: “Once more, strange images emerge from the depths of my oblivion.”³⁶⁸ In the case of the stylistic shape of the framework and other parts of Leśmian’s fairy tale, one may speak about far-reaching analogies. However, the first self-referential fragment (written in the spirit of telling a story about telling a story) actualizes additionally the poetics of the symbolist epiphany, while the last one confirms and completes it. In the opening part of the work, the narrator-storyteller says: “I felt the pupils of my eyes widening

366 Александр Блок [Alexander Blok], *Собрание сочинений в 12 томах*, Vol. 9 (Ленинград: Издательство писателей в Ленинграде, 1932), p. 184, qt. from: Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz, “Sofia zaklęta w baśniową carewnę,” p. 30.

367 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 43, 58 [“Alem wciąż jeszcze nie mógł przypomnieć sobie tego, co mnie najbardziej trwożyło nieodpartym rozkazem tęsknoty. Aż pewnej nocy przypomniałem wszystko! Przypomniałem nagle obecność Boga w niebiosach! [...] Wśród tych zawrotów ku zmroczonej przeszłości, wśród poszukiwań tego, co, mijając, niezupełnie minęło – ocknąłem w sobie wspomnienie, a raczej opowieść wspomnienia, jedną z tych opowieści, które od ludzi schodzą w mogiły ukwiecone. [...] Odtąd niejedna zorza zgasła, niejedna gwiazda zapaliła się w niebiosach, a ta Pani, w milczeniu klęcząca nad grzesznym trupem rycerza Pańskiego, trwa dotąd w głębinach mojej niepamięci!”].

368 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 47, 51, 54 [“Znowu dziwne obrazy wysnuwają się z głębin mojej niepamięci”].

to perceive ghosts created beyond the cover of sight, and I felt the wild, joyous triumph of the soul, cleansing the bodily shell in the fires of the afterworld.”³⁶⁹

The epiphanic, symbolist self-referentially of Leśmian’s work (remaining under the overwhelming influence of Silver Age literature, which refers to the *bylina* tradition and the Russian magical fairy tale, in expressing the sophiological concept) is manifested most fully in the attempt to mystically transgress beyond the realm of deceptive appearances. This effort is reflected not only in the two-level construction of sense in “Tale of the Lord’s Knight,” but also in the rhetoric of ecstasy and subjective expression, visible in the first part of the text, which strives to reach the non-empirical. This is also reflected in the presence of depth metaphors and abstract formulations, such as the “resurrection of the soul”³⁷⁰ and “pre-being.”³⁷¹

Creative Inspirations or Influences?

The analysis of “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” permits to undermine Seweryn Pollak’s thesis. Pollak argues that having stemmed from the influence of Russian symbolism, Leśmian’s Russian-language poems were but a single episode in his

369 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 42 [“czułem w oczach rozszerzenie się źrenic ku pochwyceniu zjawów, poza osłoną wzroku utworzonych, i czułem dziki, radosny tryumf duszy, oczyszczającej w ogniach zaświata powłokę cielesną”].

370 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 42 [“zmartwychwstanie duszy”].

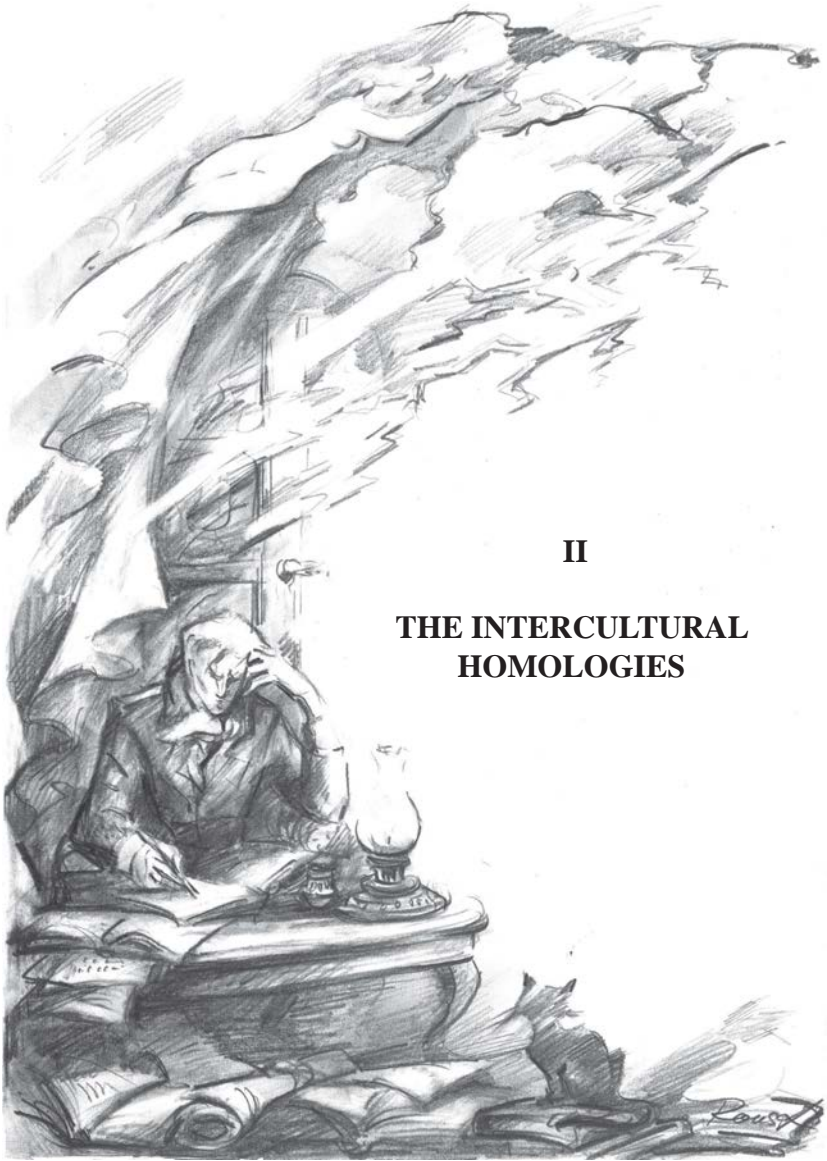
371 Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” p. 43 [“prabyt”].

It is noteworthy that in the first part of Leśmian’s work, narrative strategies are present that are characteristic of Poe tales in their translations by Leśmian. I have in mind the theme of telling stories in a feverish state or during sleepy delirium, that is, in a state of disturbed consciousness. One of numerous examples of such a shaping of the narrative in Poe’s work may be the construction framework of “The Oval Portrait.” Similarly, appearing in the initial frame part of the “Tale of the Lord’s Knight” is the passage: “I do not know if this story was a true, remembered even, or a product of feverish delirium, or a dream that was supposed to materialize if it hadn’t been kidnapped by the wind and thrown into some whirling star” [Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim,” pp. 43–44; “Nie wiem, czyli ta opowieść była rzeczywistym, na pamięć przywołanem zdarzeniem, czyli tworem majaczeń gorączkowych, czyli też snem, co winien był się wcielić, gdyby go wicher nie porwał i nie przerzucił na jakąś gwiazdę wirującą”]. The use of such a narrative strategy makes it impossible to determine the ontological status of the story being presented – it is difficult to say whether that story depicts real events, or if it stems from a fairy tale or a dream, or is a product of hallucination.

work, without antecedents.³⁷² The work discussed above contradicts this thesis. The conducted research permits to prove beyond doubt that the early period of Leśmian's literary activity was marked by Russian intellectual and literary influences, among others, with this being reflected not only in the cycles written in Russian, but also in the prose that has been analyzed above. (On the other hand, one cannot talk about the exclusiveness of that influence, as it was not the only one.) Even setting aside the opinion of Jacek Trznadel, who wrote about *Legendy tęsknoty* [*Legends of Longing*] that "they are in fact a rather incidental element and an unfruitful stylization,"³⁷³ a comparative analysis of poetics allows the precise determination of which style was subject to imitation in one of them, and to accumulate arguments supporting the view that "Tale of the Lord's Knight" is indeed a stylization.

372 Pollak has written: "It is impossible to treat two of Leśmian's known cycles of poems written in Russian other than as just an exploration into foreign-language areas meaningless to the entire oeuvre" [Pollak, "Niekóre problemy symbolizmu rosyjskiego," p. 252].

373 Trznadel, *Twórczość Leśmiana*, p. 6.



II

THE INTERCULTURAL HOMOLOGIES



The structural reminiscences (demonic female characters: Pushkin – Gogol – Leśmian)

Not just folklore: on neglected intercultural homologies

The context of mythological Slavic images associated with demonology³⁷⁴ is the main reference plane for studies of Leśmian's literary demonology, while the issue of intercultural Romantic homologies and their potential impact on the shaping of Leśmian's vision of characters and demonic phenomena is almost completely neglected. This observation is important because, as a consequence of research focused on the comparative analysis of Leśmian's characters and those in mythology, one can reach the conclusion that Leśmian's use of archaic sources was direct rather than mediated. Moreover, one may make the false assumption that Leśmian's interest in folklore is the specificity of his writing, which cannot be included into any comparative or historical-literary context.

On the contrary, the Romantics in Poland and Russia were interested in mythological demons. One example of the latter are the literary creations of Rusalka (or Roussalkas) and witches in works by Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol (Gogol was a Russian-speaking writer whose importance is equal in Russian and Ukrainian cultures, and he faithfully reproduced the reality and specificity of the latter in his works). As is well known, Bolesław Leśmian devoted much time to reading Pushkin's works – in his own texts, the demonic figure of a Rusalka (singular) appears frequently. She is the protagonist of the ballad "The Water-Nymph" (1819), the long poem *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1820) and the unfinished drama "Rusalka (The Water-Nymph)" (1829–1832).³⁷⁵ Though which of these works

374 Cf. Marzena Karwowska, "Mityczne figury Ziemi w wyobraźni poetyckiej Bolesława Leśmiana," *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, No. 3 (2007), pp. 55–77.

375 Alexander Pushkin, "The Water Nymph" [poem], <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-water-nymph/>, last accessed 18.08.2019. Alexander Pushkin, *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (Richmond: Alma Books Ltd., 2013). Alexander Pushkin, "Rusalka (The Water Nymph)" [drama] in: *Boris Godunov and Other Dramatic Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 177–203. Pushkin's drama written between 1829–1832 is unfinished. The work is based on one of the "Песни западных славян" ["Songs of the Western Slavs"], "Яныш королевич" ["Janysz Korolewicz"]. Pushkin, in a footnote, states that the work is very long and that he translated an excerpt of the first part from Czech into Russian. In 1836, he received permission to publish the journal *Современе*

inspired Leśmian is not certain, there is no question that both authors referred to a common cultural tradition.

Leśmian indicated Gogol's *oeuvre* as an important context for reading his work. In the course of his conflict with Jakub Mortkowicz, Leśmian explained to his would-be publisher that, by actualizing themes of horror, he purported to refer to the literary Romantic tradition of Gogol, Hoffmann and Poe. As Leśmian complained to Zenon Przesmycki, "Mortkowicz perceives these folktales to be ordinary folk stories."³⁷⁶

In this part of my analysis, while bearing Leśmian's declarations in mind, I will attempt to clarify the specificity and importance of the Romantic contexts mentioned above in the formation of Leśmian's demonic female figures, and to describe transformations that the Romantic thematic and formal solutions were subjected to in his *oeuvre*. A comparison of Leśmian's works with popular Romantic works (depicting mythological Slavic female demons as Rusalkas)³⁷⁷ proves the existence of numerous intercultural homologues. Such demonic heroines appear in Leśmian in a poem opening with an incipit ****Niegdyś powaga i grozą płomieni...* [****Once with Seriousness and Horror of Flames*] (from the *Aniotowie* [*Angels*] cycle in *The Crossroads Orchard*), "A Beggar's Ballad" and "The Drowned Rambler" (from the collection *The Meadow*), "Dziewczyna przed zwierciadłem" ["The Maiden before the Mirror"] and "Spojrzystość" ["Way of Looking"] (from the volume *The Shadowy Potion*), the long poems "Bereavement of Love" and "Baśń" ["A Tale"] (from dispersed works), the mime dramas *Pierro and Columbine* and *A Frenzied Fiddler*, as well as the prose work *Majka* (from

нник, which he published until his death and in which "Songs of the Western Slavs" appeared. They were partly modelled on an anonymous book published in 1827, *La Guzla, ou Choix de poésies illyriques, recueillies dans la Dalmatie, la Bosnie, La Croatie et l'Herzégowine* [*The Gruzla, or a Selection of Illyric Poems Collected in Dalmatia, Bosnia, Croatia and Herzegovina*] – a literary hoax by the Prosper Mérimée, the French Romantic.

376 Leśmian, "[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego," p. 338.

377 "It was believed that Rusalkas are the souls of prematurely deceased girls who, out of jealousy for their lost lives, attempt to catch random passers-by and draw them to death. Rusalkas quickly confess love, dance at night in forest clearings, they may even tickle to death. They like to laugh, clap their hands, dance on moonlit nights in the forest glades" [Oskar Kolberg, "Tarnowskie – Rzeszowskie," in: *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol. 48 (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1967), p. 270; Kazimierz Moszyński, *Kultura ludowa Słowian*, Vol. 2 (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1967), p. 193.

Old Polish Fairy Tales). A special variation of this demonic goddess is a witch from Leśmian's short story "The Which," included in *Old Polish Fairy Tales*.³⁷⁸

The Rusalka theme was extremely popular in Russian Romantic literature, in works of Pushkin, as mentioned above, and those of Orest Mykhailovych Somov [Орест Михайлович Сомов] who wrote "Rusalka" ["Русалка"] in 1829. Also, Vasily Zhukovsky, one of the most important nineteenth-century Russian ballad writers, started working in 1830 on his translation of Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué's German Romantic novel *Undine*, in the form of a poem. In 1835, Gogol wrote *The Viy* having written the short story "May Night, or the Drowned Maiden" five years earlier. Publication of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" in 1837 contributed to the popularization of the theme in Europe. Less than a year later, Mikhail Lermontov wrote the poem "Rusalka," and the poem "Sea Princess" in 1841.³⁷⁹

A selected list of Leśmian works containing the theme of a female demon and of earlier Russian Romantic texts devoted to this subject indicates the existence of a deep connection between the poet and the Russian culture. Even were we to decide that Leśmian, when creating demonic female characters, was not inspired by any of the poets mentioned above, we cannot be certain that he was not familiar with at least some of the texts mentioned, and that this knowledge, combined with the popularity of the theme under study, may have resulted in his interest in folklore. If, however, we decide that there is not enough evidence to

378 See: Bolesław Leśmian, "Niegdyś powagą i grozą płomieni...", in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 57; Leśmian, "Ballada dziadowska;" Leśmian, "The Drowned Rambler;" Bolesław Leśmian, "Dziewczyna przed zwierciadłem," in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 306; Bolesław Leśmian, "Spojrzystość," in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 407; Leśmian, "Bereavement;" Bolesław Leśmian, "Baśń," in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 594; Bolesław Leśmian, "Skrzypek opętany," in: *Skrzypek opętany*, ed. Rochelle Heller-Stone (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985), pp. 127-172; Bolesław Leśmian, "Pierrot i Kolumbina," in: *Skrzypek opętany*, ed. Rochelle Heller-Stone (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985), pp. 173-241; Bolesław Leśmian, "Majka," in: *Klechdy polskie* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1959), pp. 48-107; Bolesław Leśmian, "Wiedźma," in: *Klechdy polskie* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1959), pp. 110-176.

379 Through such works, the theme under study reached Poland and inspires Polish Romantics.

allow one to talk here about inter-literary results of an affiliation, one still cannot deny the existence of a homology. One has but to look at visible correspondences between Leśmian's "A Beggar's Ballad" and the poem "Rusalka (The Water-Nymph)" written by Pushkin over a century earlier, in 1819,³⁸⁰ who introduced the ballad into Russian literature. The indicated homology should not only reveal the first of several functions of the female water demon of a mythological Slavic origin in Romantic literature, but also answer the question of whether Leśmian subjected the Romantic image of this character to transformations.

380 "In lakeside leafy groves, a friar/ Escaped all worries; there he passed/ His summer days in constant prayer,/ Deep studies and eternal fast./ Already with a humble shovel/ The elder dug himself a grave -/ As, calling saints to bless his hovel,/ Death - nothing other - did he crave.// So once, upon a falling night, he/ Was bowing by his wilted shack/ With meekest prayer to the Almighty./ The grove was turning slowly black;/ Above the lake a mist was lifting;/ Through milky clouds across the sky/ The ruddy moon was softly drifting,/ When water drew the friar's eye...// He's looking puzzled, full of trouble,/ Of fear he cannot quite explain,/ He sees the waves begin to bubble/ And suddenly grow calm again./ Then - white as first snow in the highlands,/ Light-footed as nocturnal shade,/ There comes ashore, and sits in silence/ Upon the bank, a naked maid.// She eyes the monk and brushes gently/ Her hair, and water off her arms./ He shakes with fear and looks intently/ At her, and at her lovely charms./ With eager hand she waves and beckons,/ Nods quickly, smiles as from afar/ And shoots, within two flashing seconds,/ Into still water like a star.// The glum old man slept not an instant;/ All day, not even once he prayed:/ Before his eyes still hung and glistened/ The wondrous, the relentless shade.../ The grove puts on its gown of nightfall;/ The moon walks on the cloudy floor;/ And there's the maiden - pale, delightful,/ Reclining on the spellbound shore.// She looks at him, her hair she brushes,/ Blows airy kisses, gestures wild,/ Plays with the waves - caresses, splashes -/ Now laughs, now whimpers like a child,/ Moans tenderly, calls louder, louder.../ 'Come, monk, come, monk! To me, to me!./ Then - disappears in limpid water,/ And all is silent instantly...// On the third day the zealous hermit/ Was sitting by the shore, in love,/ Awaiting the delightful mermaid,/ As shade was covering the grove.../ Dark ceded to the sun's emergence;/ Our monk had wholly disappeared -/ Before a crowd of local urchins,/ While fishing, found his hoary beard" [Pushkin, "Rusalka (The Water-Nymph)"]. For a Russian Romantic ballad, see: Lucjan Suchanek, *Rosyjska ballada romantyczna* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1974). Cf. Marian Toporowski, *Puszkina w Polsce. Zarys bibliograficzno-literacki* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1950), pp. 57–58; Alexander Rypiński, *Poezije Alexandra Rypińskiego, pisane na pielgrzymstwie (Z muzyką i rycinami)* (London: self-published, 1853), pp. 15–18.

The function of female demons in Romantic literature, and their transformations in Leśmian's works

The anticipation of death: the horror of self-knowledge

The key function of the female protagonists of Pushkin's ballad "The Water-Nymph" (comprising seven eight-line stanzas) and Leśmian's "A Beggar's Ballad" (in two-line stanzas) is a metaphorical enticement into nothingness that precedes the ultimate death of the protagonists. The works under discussion are characterized by far-reaching correspondences manifested at the levels of the construction of characters and the composition of the lyrical situation. Both works concentrate on similar themes. They present a female water demon not only is a link between the world and the underworld but also becomes the erotic bait leading men to death. The *rusalkas* appear in similar settings, they have almost the same properties, which in fact are not that different from the attributes of mythological Slavic demons. Pushkin's virgin – naked, pale, beautiful, long-haired – appears in summertime by a lake deep in the forest, alternately crying and cheerful and lively like a child, luring the monk with gestures and blowing kisses. In Leśmian's case, the personification of the old beggar's longing appears in summer on the banks of a stream flowing through a forest, tickling the protagonist until he laughs, tempting him with kisses and promises to satisfy all his desires – from hunger to erotic needs. It should also be emphasized that the construction of characters is based on the principle of contrast. Both male protagonists are elderly, and both succumb to the temptation of feminine youth. In Pushkin, an ascetic, humble old monk fasts and prays, waiting for his holy life to end, and in Leśmian, the crippled old man is initially pious and later becomes greedy for caresses. Significantly, in both poems, the *rusalkas* are active figures but are not subjected to metamorphoses, although ancient Slavic beliefs attributed them with that trait. In contrast, in both ballads, a comic-ironic transformation has the male characters affected by the meeting with a *rusalka*. Over their course, the passion mounts of the (once pious) old men.

The key principle of contrast in character construction opens the possibility of a double axiological interpretation of events the works present. On one hand, the male protagonists in the ballads function like people who believe in mythical stories, locating the source of evil outside themselves and projecting their own inclinations on external objects: for example, malicious demonic beings, in this case *rusalkas* or *topielice* [Slavic female water spirits of water that drowned, mistreated by fate and men; now vengeful, they bring death to random passers-by]. In the narrative layer of Pushkin's ballad, the monk is strikingly unable to self-analyze. The work reads: "He's looking puzzled, full of trouble,/ Of fear he cannot

quite explain, / [...] // The glum old man slept not an instant; / All day, not even once he prayed.”³⁸¹ In Leśmian’s “A Beggar’s Ballad,” the crippled old man calls one of the *topielice* a “mermaidlike maiden,” “the devilish temptress,” “a sickness of stream,”³⁸² and accuses her of caress that lead him to sin. As a consequence, it may be said that Pushkin’s version of the demonic water nymph, reproduced to a considerable extent in Leśmian’s ballad, replicates by this optic Slavic stereotypes of femininity of a mythological origin. On the other hand, both works – using the ubiquitous poetics of contrast present at the structural level, and in combining protagonists’ metaphysical longings, the manifestations of their weakness, their inability to overcome those and the impossibility of going beyond sensually verifiable limits – contain Romantic irony.

In the narrative layer of both works, the illusion of fantastic uncanniness is destroyed. This is brought about by the technique of emphasizing the dissonant character motivation (most fully expressed in sensually awaiting and accepting death). This type of literary creation is a sign of the author’s distance on events presented in the ballads. The male protagonists fail to notice that the tempting *rusalkas* present a medium enabling self-cognition before death. Erotic contact with female water demons provides them an opportunity (not taken) to realize that a tendency to succumb to the lure of nothingness has constituted the deepest part of their selves. It also seems important that in the ballads by Pushkin and Leśmian, metaphysics is replaced by physiology and materiality in the protagonists’ pre-death fascinations. In “The Water-Nymph,” their triumph is evidenced by the saintly hermit’s beard, sparkling in the water for the last time. In “A Beggar’s Ballad” (musically and metrically true to the southern Italian etymology of the word *ballare*, to dance), signs of this mocking victory are the drowning beard, and the beggar’s bag and bald head disappearing under the water, and, above all, a crutch that rhythmically and joyfully bounces after the death of the crippled old man, in a dance of liberation.

The homology described above, between the works of Pushkin and Leśmian, indicates that, generally speaking, in “A Beggar’s Ballad” the latter remains faithful to images of the mythological Slavic female demons as reactivated in Russian Romantic literature. They served as a medium showing extreme ambivalences in human nature, its “immanent hell,” and, but for the presence of

381 Pushkin, “The Water-Nymph” [poem].

382 Leśmian, “Ballada dziadowska,” p. 169 [“wymoczkiem rusalnym,” “czarcim nasieniem,” “chorobą strumienia”].

macabresque poetics in Leśmian's work, it may be said that he did not go at all beyond Pushkin's vision.

The victims and/or avengers: the hell of memory

Pushkin's unfinished drama *The Water-Nymph* visibly echoes the water-nymph theme, known from Slavic demonology: a maltreated girl, abandoned by her beloved, drowns out of despair then after death lives in a lake or river, waiting for the right moment to avenge the harm she suffered. In Pushkin's work, after her suicide, the pregnant daughter of a miller, who has been abandoned by a prince, wants retribution as a rusalka for the pain she suffered, and a few years after the separation from her beloved, she sends their daughter, born at the bottom of the Dnieper River, to the riverbank. She wants the girl to arrange a meeting (a deathly one, implicitly) with her father, who is bored in married life with another woman, of higher social status and wealthier, who, he has claimed, he married "for the benefit of others," not for his own. In Pushkin, the figure of the *rusalka* is thus a pretext for introducing a typical Romantic motive – guilt and punishment meted out on an unfaithful lover by the maltreated suicide, which returns, among other texts, in Adam Mickiewicz's ballad "Rybka" ["The Fish"].

However, in all such works written in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the theme was reinterpreted. For example, in a poem by Valery Bryusov entitled "Русалка" ["The Water-Nymph," 1907], the information that the title character may pose a threat is formulated in the poetics of suggestion – the female protagonist only laughs deceptively. Lermontov, the Russian Romantic, in his "Русалка" (1831), attempts to reinterpret the theme, giving a different distribution of emphases in the process of evaluating the reality the poem presents, along with the redefinition of the role played by the demonic heroine. The title character appears completely unaware of her driving force the cause death, complaining about the coldness of the lover in her arms (probably already dead).³⁸³ The satisfaction resulting from the act of vengeance, which

383 "But why, although I kiss him passionately,/ He is cold and silent, who will guess?/
The warrior sleeps deeply, he does not whisper, does not sigh,/ He just lies on my
chest.// Sang the Rusalka and her song was a lament/ And it flew towards high banks;/
A the river whispered and rocked on waves/ Clouds reflected in the water" ["Но к
страстным лобзаньям, не зная зачем,/ Остается он хладен и нем;/ Он спит — и, ск
лонившись на перси ко мне,/ Он не дышит, не шепчет во сне!"]// Так пела русалка
над синей рекой,/ Полна непонятной тоской;/ И, шумно катясь, колебала река/
Отраженные в ней облака"] [Михаил Лермонтов [Mikhail Lermontov], "Русалка,"
Отечественные записки, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1839), pp. 131-132].

in a typical Romantic-era realization of the motif appeared as the liberation of demonic female figures from the hell of memory about harm they had suffered, is replaced in Lermontov's text by a poetic representation of suffering brought about by the protagonist's misunderstanding of her situation and the role she plays (she is the perpetrator of death). Another example of the transformation of this theme is the long poem "Na świtezi" ["On Świteź"] by the Polish modernist Antoni Lange, which refers to the Romantic tradition. A tenth of the work is a poetic story conducted in dialogue form, about water nymphs escaping human cruelty.³⁸⁴ In Lange's work, it turns out that these female demons, regarded in Slavic mythology and the Romantic tradition as extremely dangerous due to their charm, decide not to take revenge on a human being; they are portrayed as endangered, and are even termed "deity." As a result, their axiological and ontological status is transformed.

In Russian literature, most references to the theme under consideration appeared between the 1880s and the beginning of the twentieth century. The following texts are of vital importance: Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont] ("Русалка"³⁸⁵ ["The Water-Nymph"], "Русалка. (В лазоревой воде,

384 "– But there were Rusalki in the past?/ – Oh, yes! the elderly say:/ In bushes, waters or rocks,/ Apparently, there are goddesses everywhere.// – And not anymore? – Ah, no, they escaped./ Where did they hide? – Who knows?/ Human sins must have lured them,/ So, they moved to better countries?// – Why did they escape overseas?/ – That people were too evil?/ So they were sad here, in the lake/ And they dance on another wave today.// Because a Rusalka only appears/ To people who have a pure heart;/ Who have calm eyes and faces,/ Who are good and free of hatred...// The simple fisherman was telling the truth:/ An undine runs away from the evil eyes,/ Ah, a deity can be seen,/ Only by those with a soul like a forest bird" ["– Ale dawniej bywały rusalki?/ – Oj, bywały! jak starzy nam prawią:/ Czy zarośla gdzie, wody czy skałki,/ Niby wszędy boginki się jawią.// – Teraz nie ma? – A nie ma, uciekły./ – Gdzież się skryły? – A kto ich tam znaje?/ Musi ludzkie je grzechy urzekły,/ Więc się w lepsze wyniosły gdzieś kraje?// – A dlacegóż uciekły za morze?/ – Że to ludzie niedobrzy się stali,/ Więc im smutno tu było w jeziorze/ I na innej tańczują dziś fali.// Bo rusalka się tylko pokaże/ Takim ludziom, co w sercu są czysti;/ Mają oczy spokojne i twarze,/ Co są dobrzy i bez nienawiści...// Prawdę mówił ów rybak prostaczy:/ Od złych oczów uchodzi ondyna,/ Ach, a bóstwo ten tylko obaczy,/ Co ma duszę jak leśna ptaszyna"] [Antoni Lange, "Na Świtezi," in: *Poezye*, Vol 2 (Kraków: Czcionkami Drukarni Związkowej w Krakowie pod zarządem A. Szyjewskiego, 1898), pp. 93-110 [reprint: Antoni Lange, "Świteź," in: *Ziemia polska w pieśni*, ed. Jan Lorentowicz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Gebethner i Wolff, 1913), p. 375-382].

385 Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "Русалка," in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 226.

в жемчужных берегах”³⁸⁶ [“The Water-Nymph. (In azure water, on a pearl shore)”], “Русалки”³⁸⁷ [“The Water-Nymphs”], “Она, как русалка...”³⁸⁸ [“She is Like a Water-Nymph”]), Валерий Брюсов [Valery Bryusov] (“Русалка”³⁸⁹ [“The Water-Nymph”]), Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky] (поем “Монах”³⁹⁰ [“Monk”]), Николай Клюев [Nikolai Klyuev] (“Певучей думой обуян...”³⁹¹ [“Dressed in a singing thought...”], “Прогулка”³⁹² [“A walk”]), Алексей Николаевич Толстой [Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy] (“Мавка”³⁹³ [“Mavka”]), Николай Гумилёв [Nikolay Gumilyov] (*Русалка*)³⁹⁴ [*The Water-Nymph*]), Сергей Есенин [Sergei Yesenin] (“Русалка под Новый год”³⁹⁵ [“A Water-Nymph for a New Year”]) and Велимир Хлебников [Velimir Khlebnikov] (“Ночь в Галиции”³⁹⁶ [“A Night in Galicia”]).

Intercultural homology in relation to the literary Romantic tradition is also present in Leśmian’s mime dramas *Pierro and Columbine* and *A Frenzied Fiddler*. They redefine the role of a forest *rusalka*, as the one who no longer wants vengeance. In both texts, a water-nymph does appear to tempt Pierro/Alaryel, but her presence turns out to be the necessary condition for the artist’s creative inspiration. In the conclusion of the story the drama tells, the female protagonist

386 Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Русалка (В лазоревой воде, в жемчужных берегах),” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), pp. 434.

387 Бальмонт [Balmont], “Русалки,” p. 49.

388 Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Она, как русалка...,” in: *Полное собрание поэзии и прозы в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 83.

389 Валерий Брюсов [Valery Bryusov], “Русалка,” in: *Стихи*, ed. Николай Банников [Nikolai Vannikov] (Москва: Современник, 1972), p. 183.

390 Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], “Монах,” in: *Избранные произведения. Vol 1: Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 253-254.

391 Николай Клюев [Nikolai Klyuev], “Певучей думой обуян...,” in: *Сочинения: в 2-х т.* (München: A. Neimans Buchvertrieb und Verlag, 1969), p. 82.

392 Николай Клюев [Nikolai Klyuev], “Прогулка,” in: *Сочинения: в 2-х т.* (München: A. Neimans Buchvertrieb und Verlag, 1969), p. 16.

393 Алексей Николаевич [Aleksey Nikolayevich Tolstoy], “Мавка,” in: *Собрание сочинений в 10 томах, Vol. 8* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1985), p. 32.

394 Николай Гумилёв [Nikolay Gumilyov], “Русалка,” in: *Полное собрание сочинений в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2011), p. 30.

395 Сергей Есенин [Sergei Yesenin], “Русалка под Новый год,” in: *Полное собрание сочинений в одном томе* (Москва: Альфа-книга, 2009), pp. 416-417.

396 Велимир Хлебников [Velimir Khlebnikov], “Ночь в Галиции,” in: *Стихотворения. Поэмы. Драммы. Проза*, ed. Рудольф Дуганов [Rudolf Duganov] (Москва: Советская Россия, 1986), pp. 59-61.

falls victim to a jealous wife. In Leśmian's fairy tale *Majka*, the theme of sacrifice is also subjected to a transformation. Its title is derived from the old-Slavic word *naw'* – which translates as “the deceased, dead.” *Maïka* is a Ruthenian (Ukrainian-Hutsul) demonic figure depicted as a beautiful young woman with no back, dragging bloody innards behind her. A *maïka* could also have a fish tail. The transformation of the theme, as mentioned above, concerns in the first place the genre plane of the work, and in the second place is related to the construction of the eponymous character. In Leśmian, the *Majka* is depicted not only as a fairy-tale protagonist, but, above all, as a character from an old fairy tale, or a work that focuses on customs, superstitions and entanglements in rules that govern social life for an individual and a rural community, rather than fantastic motivations behind their actions. Disillusion occurs when *Majka* gives a book about *rusalkas* to the illiterate Marcin Dziura. From that moment onward, she begins to appear as a book character, encouraging the reader to problematize her portrayal in Slavic mythology, and in the Romantic and modernist traditions. Leśmian's *rusalka* does not want to take revenge on Marcin Dziura, but wants to enlighten him. In turn, he demonizes her, out of his fear of the unknown. Due to this disillusion, readers learn that the fusion of fantasy and reality can be discussed, above all, in relation to the psyche of the illiterate protagonist. Consequently, it is not the *rusalka* – as in the folk then the Romantic prototypes – but the male protagonist who falls victim to the “hell of his own memory” when comparing his unattractive wife, who beats him, with the beauty of the *Majka*, whom he rejected.

Initiation into the experience of time: the hell of nature

The grotesque figure of the witch: from Pushkin to Gogol and Leśmian

One of the most popular female character types derived from Slavic demonology that Romantics then subjected to literary development were witches.³⁹⁷

397 Kazimierz Moszyński wrote about origins of imagery associated with witches: “One definitely should not believe that the entire set of beliefs surrounding the figure of a witch – so intrinsically embedded in Slavic folkloric culture – has been recently imposed by Western influences. Apart from some relatively small religious beliefs, the issue is definitely ancient, dating to pre-Christian times [Moszyński, *Kultura ludowa Słowian*, p. 646]. In Polish Romantic literature, female figures of witches (not necessarily described in a grotesque way) appear, for instance, in Adam Mickiewicz's “Ucieczka” [“The Escape”] (1832), Juliusz Słowacki's *Balladine* (1834) and *Beniowski* (1841–1846), Karol Brzozowski's *Mężobójczyni* [*The Husband Murderer*] (1844) and Tomasz August Olizarowski's derivatively poetic novel *Sonia* (1852). The latter text

In Russian Romantic literature, a witch³⁹⁸ appears as a secondary character in Pushkin's first epic poem, "Ruslan and Lyudmila" (1820), for example. Gogol made the acquaintance of Pushkin (after the success of the short-story cycle based on folk themes, *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, in 1831), while Leśmian read Pushkin's works passionately in the late nineteenth century. The witch from Pushkin's poem was the former love of Finn, an old man (playing the role of a fairylike helper), leading a hermitic life in a cave. When Finn – once in love with the beautiful, mysterious Naina, performing heroic youthful deeds to win her love – finally, after years of effort, gets the once-beautiful woman to love him, he must experience the hell of nature. This is because the female protagonist – contrary to the conventions of myth and fairy tale – is subject to the laws of time. When Naina finally begins to show her love for Finn, she is an ugly and grey, hunchbacked, bitter old witch. The protagonist describes her as follows:

My "goddess" of the grizzled locks
 was now on fire with lust for me.
 Twisting her gums into a grin,
 she – ghoulish and with graveyard voice –
 kept grunting to me lovers' vows.
 You can imagine my revulsion!
 [...]
 And all the while, Ruslán, she kept
 fluttering her eyes and simpering;
 and all the while her bony finger

is characterized by low artistic quality and is manifestly imitative (of Seweryn Goszczyński's *Zamek kaniowski* [*The Kaniów Castle*], for example). See: Adam Mickiewicz, "Uciezka," in: *Poezye Adama Mickiewicza*, ed. Piotr Chmielowski, Vol. 1 (Kraków: Nakład Księgarni G. Gebethnera i Spółki, 1899), pp. 146-151; Juliusz Słowacki, "Balladyna," in: *Dramaty. Balladyna – Mazepa – Lilla Weneda*, ed. Maria Grabowska (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1952), pp. 5-188; Juliusz Słowacki, "Beniowski," in: *Dramaty. Krak – Wallenrod – Jan Kazimierz – Złota czaszka – Beatrix Cenci – Beatryks Cenci – Fantazy – Beniowski – Dziady*, ed. Wiktor Hahn (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1949), pp. 369-406; Karol Brzozowski, "Mężobójczyni. Powieść z podań ludu," in: *Pieśni ludu nadniemeńskiego z okolic Aleksoty* (Poznań: Księgarnia J.K. Żupańskiego, 1844), pp. 93-124; Tomasz August Olizarowski, "Sonia. Powieść ukraińska" (Wrocław: nakładem Zygmunta Schlettera, 1852); Seweryn Goszczyński, *Zamek kaniowski* (Kraków: Nakładem Krakowskiej Spółki Wydawniczej, 1925).

398 This type of female character also played an important role in Orest Somov's story "The Witches of Kyiv," in: *The Witches of Kyiv and other Gothic Tales: Selected Works of Orest Somov* (Lidcombe: Sova Books, 2016), pp. 17-32.

kept clutching the kaftan I wore;
 and all the while – I well night fainted,
 screwing my eyes up in disgust.
 Then I could stand it all no longer;
 I screamed out, broke away, and ran.
 Her shrieks pursued me: “Worthless wretch!
 When I was young and innocent,
 you spoiled my happiness and peace.
 But now you’ve won Naina’s love,
 you throw it back at her. Ugh, men! –
 They reek betrayal, all of them.
 No, blame yourself, you stupid girl!
 I let him hoodwink me, the scoundrel!
 I gave way to infatuation...
 Betrayer, monster! Oh, the shame!³⁹⁹

The love of an old woman treated as *instrumentum diaboli*, a vengeful witch (“[I]n vexation she’s transmuted/ her love’s belated flame to loathing./ Cherishing evil a she does/ in her benighted soul, the witch/ will surely come to hate you too”⁴⁰⁰), is an infernal experience for the hero. The witch’s expectations (characterized by the aesthetics of ugliness) associated with the stability of feelings appear to the old Finn as a reminder of death, unnatural, unacceptable, arousing physical revulsion to a usurpation resulting from the misunderstanding that a man’s love for a woman turns out to be possible only when the woman is young. Significantly, Finn focuses on escaping the old woman or interfering with her plans, which are exemplified by the resurrection of Ruslan (importantly, with the help of the magical fairy-tale device of living water), who may have been killed by the witch Nain herself.

It is pertinent to note that by calling the once-beautiful old woman a “witch” or a “monster,” Finn demonizes and dehumanizes her, thus treating her in an inhuman way. This is manifested in a particularly clear way in the descriptive layer of the work. The description of an old woman, presented in the long poem from Finn’s perspective, is maintained using grotesque aesthetics, which are governed by principles of contrast, comparison of disproportionate qualities, blurring the boundaries between opposites, deformation (including physical deformation) and exaggeration to a hyperbolic degree. Thus, the heroine is described with the ironic title of “grey-haired goddess” who longs for sensual pleasure. She is called

399 Pushkin, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, pp. 33–35.

400 Pushkin, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, p. 35.

a monster muttering in “graveyard tones,” twisting her “grey lips in a smile.” The old woman is presented as a repulsive witch who ogles Finn, who “croaked” and reached out to him with her bony fingers, seeking tender passion – to his horror.

The context of the long Pushkin poem under study, influenced by the cultural inspiration of folklore, has become a significant literary model for the grotesque shaping of this type of female figure in the Gogol story *The Viy* published in *Muzzopod* (1835) and in Leśmian’s fairy tale “The Witch” (1914). However, no less important than the impact of the original text are intertextual relations between the works of Gogol and Leśmian, based on a strong, demonstrable, historical basis. Before moving on to a comparative analysis of grotesque creation of characters in them, I will focus on reconstructing the context that gave rise to those relations.

The Gogol context in Leśmian’s “The Witch”

Leśmian’s “The Witch” was first published in London in 1956, nineteen years after the author’s death, in the volume *Old Polish Fairy Tales*. In a subsequent edition of the collection,⁴⁰¹ Waław Lewandowski’s introduction pointed out that in the preface to the first printing, Bronisław Przyłuski expressed the conviction that *Old Polish Fairy Tales* is a product of Leśmian’s late work. However, it turned out that the volume was written in Cannes in 1914, commissioned by the publisher and bookseller Jakub Mortkowicz, who expected Leśmian to write another series of prose fairy tales for children (after his *Old Tales of Sesame*), this time based on themes from Polish folklore. The type of references would decide the national nature of the works and would play the role – as Lewandowski correctly pointed out – of an important tool in the process of a patriotic upbringing for youngsters.⁴⁰²

From the outset, Leśmian did not accept those assumptions, as he intended to introduce other elements into the text, for example, from the folklores of other nations. I will prove later in this book that Leśmian used these motifs both in a direct way and as adopted indirectly via reading Russian Romantic-era works using Ukrainian folklore themes as artistic material – Gogol, for example in his early story *The Viy*.

Significantly, Leśmian wanted to address his works to an adult audience, but did not exclude the possibility of adolescents reading them as well. After

401 Waław Lewandowski, “Wstęp,” in: Bolesław Leśmian, *Klechdy polskie z komentarzem* (Kraków: Universitas, 1999), pp. 38–44.

402 Lewandowski, “Wstęp.”

unsuccessful negotiations with Mortkowicz, Leśmian complained in a letter to Zenon Przesmycki:

He [Mortkowicz] believes that scenes *full of horror and sensuality* are not suitable for children. [...] Young people can read them, as they read *Balladina*, *Macbeth*, the ballad “Monstrous Deed!,” etc. After all, the *Old Polish Fairy Tales* are meant to be fairy tales for adults. [...] It seems to Mortkowicz that an adult reader cannot read *Old Polish Fairy Tales*.⁴⁰³

Mortkowicz was particularly appalled by “The Witch.” He demanded conclusively that Leśmian “mitigated the three passages that, due to excessive horror and sensuality, appeared commercially risky.”⁴⁰⁴ Eventually, “The Witch” was pulled from publishing plans,⁴⁰⁵ although Leśmian – sure of his artistic ideas – attempted to defend his work then, in an outburst of frustration, wanted to end the cooperation with Mortkowicz once and for all.⁴⁰⁶ He wrote:

I believe that I created a valuable piece of prose and entirely on my own, in spite of anyone and everything [...], I added artistry to my works stemming from folk inspiration and based on an equality between the world and the afterlife. [...] *Old Polish Fairy Tales* [...] developed wonderfully, they took on momentum and an increasingly appropriate, irresistibly necessary form.⁴⁰⁷

“The Witch” is indeed an original work, which does not mean that it is completely self-sufficient or that folklore was the only source of its inspiration. Leśmian – an author reluctant to specify the character of literary inspirations decisive in the final shape of his work – admitted this time, however, that when writing the collection it would appear in, he wanted to refer to the Romantic literary tradition

403 Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” p. 338, my emphasis.

404 Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” pp. 340–341.

405 Researchers try to guess which work was meant to replace “The Witch” in *Old Polish Fairy Tales* as it was finally published posthumously. According to Waław Lewandowski, most probable was a fairy tale-like novella, *Białocha*, published in 1915 in the journal *Mysł Polska* (Jakub Mortkowicz was its editor-in-chief), Vols. 1–2, pp. 157–175. It appeared under the pseudonym Jerzy Ziembołowski. Lewandowski also put forth the hypothesis that Mortkowicz also found *Białocha* unacceptable – saturated as it is with eroticism – and, as a result, insisted that it be replaced by “Podlasiak” [an oak ghost]. Edward Boniecki supports this thesis in his *Archaiczny świat Bolesława Leśmiana*, p. 61. When “The Witch” was finally published, years after Leśmian’s death, it had been cut by three passages of undetermined length.

406 “‘The Witch’ is very strong, and has scenes that are surprisingly simple and at the same time extraordinary” [Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” pp. 338–339].

407 Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” p. 338.

in works by Gogol, Hoffmann and Poe.⁴⁰⁸ The first of these literary contexts proved decisive in the case of “The Witch.”

The text contains numerous references to Gogol’s *The Viy* that include elements of the grotesque. The most fundamental and significant intertextual relation between the two works under study has a genre character. *The Viy*, according to its author’s account, was inspired by a folk *klechda*.⁴⁰⁹ Leśmian’s text, correspondingly, was written to be included in a volume with the word *klechdy* in its title, which should be treated as a generic indication that not only determines the direction in the interpretation and but also defines the plane on which the grotesque appears. This genre, located at the border between folklore and literature, is sometimes termed a folk tale stemming from customs, beliefs or, more broadly, a cultural tradition from a given region. *Klechda* – in one of its variants – can be a story about the legendary past in a region, a partially historical, partially fantastic story about heroes. The model of the genre also assumes that such a work describes extraordinary events and presents aspects unusual to that landscape in which the action of the work is set. While maintaining similarities with a fairy tale (consisting of mutual themes and motifs), the *klechda* differs from it vastly by strongly emphasized relations with social and moral norms within a given region.⁴¹⁰ This is the reason why the presence of grotesque motifs in literary texts called *klechdy* determines the fact that one layer to which this grotesqueness should be referred to during interpretation is the layer of social relations in the world that the work presents. It turns out, therefore, that in the case of Gogol’s *The Viy* and Leśmian’s “The Witch,” the introduction of grotesque elements contributes to a diagnosis of mechanisms governing interpersonal relations and social life. Fantastic motifs contained in both of these *klechdy* have been subjected to disillusion, allowing each author in turn to reveal ambiguity and irrationality in motivations backing the actions of the characters.

408 Leśmian adds: “Most importantly, Mortkowicz perceives *klechdy* as common folk tales” [“[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” p. 338].

409 Gogol added the following note to the work: “The ‘Viy’ is a monstrous creation of popular fancy. It is the name which the inhabitants of Little Russia give to the king of the gnomes, whose eyelashes reach to the ground. The following story is a specimen of such folk-lore. I have made no alterations, but reproduce it in the same simple form in which I heard it” [Nikolai Gogol, *The Viy* (The University of Adelaide, 2014), <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/g/gogol/nikolai/g61v/>, last accessed 12.08.2019].

410 Janusz Sławiński, ed., *Słownik terminów literackich* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988), p. 223.

Grotesque embarrassment

Gogol's work, saturated with elements of the grotesque, is a story about the initiation of Thomas Brutus into the experience of time, understood in this context as a male experience of female old age. In turn, Leśmian's "The Witch" is a story about the head of a commune who has succumbed to an erotic temptation of an old woman named Bartłomiejowa. She is considered by locals to be a witch. In both Gogol's work and Leśmian's folktale, the heroines – presented as half-demonic creatures – perform an analogous function to the one known from the Pushkin poem mentioned above. For the male protagonists, contact with them is an initiation into an infernal experience of nature saturated with eroticism. This is supported by the parodist-grotesque use of a narrative convention known from ancient times and based on the idea of a test, which is present in the Ancient Greek version of the adventure novel, for example, and the medieval-knight tale and the Baroque novel, as well as in many nineteenth-century prose works.⁴¹¹

In Gogol's *The Viy*, this test consists of the fact that the protagonist, Thomas Brutus, a philosophy student, is inclined to laziness, lies, arrogance, theft, excesses and needless cruelty to non-humans⁴¹² – his behavior, therefore, is far from an attitude that might be described as a "love of wisdom" when he meets a witch ("one who knows," etymologically). The old woman (who later turns out to be an extremely beautiful, wealthy daughter of one of the richest colonels in the Kiev region, who is capable of magical bodily transformation) decides to test the stability of his feelings. She provides Thomas and his companions a place to stay overnight, in order – in the form of a lustful old woman – to seduce the reckless young man.⁴¹³ She is beaten severely by Thomas. Lying on her deathbed

411 For the compositional idea of the test in organizing plot in the novel, see: Mikhail Bakhtin, "Time and Chronotope in the Novel," in: *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84–258. This tradition is also vivid in the twentieth-century prose.

412 This applies also to the theologian and the rhetorician described in the story. Their characters were constructed on the basis of the synecdoche principle, meaning they must be treated as representative. The philosopher, the theologian and the rhetorician – adepts of specific professions – are at the same time representatives of people practicing those professions. Based on the principle of contrast, the structure of the entire story permits one to conclude about the relation between them and the subject of the work. Wide-ranging criticism prevails here.

413 "Then the low door opened, and the old woman came crouching into the stall./ 'Well, mother, what do you want here?' asked the philosopher./ She made no answer, but came with out-stretched arms towards him./ The philosopher shrank back; but she still approached, as though she wished to lay hold of him. A terrible fright seized him,

in her father's house, the witch – now in the form of a beauty – states her last wish, which is that the young philosopher accompanies her faithfully through the final transformation, namely, that he watches over her and prays alone over her dead, yet still tempting, body for three days. Thomas fulfils her wish, not of his own will, sense of duty or moral imperative, but by the rector's order, and first turns grey and dies of fear – in other words, he undergoes bodily metamorphosis, experiencing an initiation not into cultural meanders he was to explore as a philosophy student, but into knowledge of nature and the passage of time (decisive in the instability of relations between men and women, and the passing of physical beauty). He also experiences – through his own body – the truth of the finiteness of human life. Cognition of the protagonist's experiences (having little to do with the school's philosophical education, in which simple folk presented in the work firmly believe) turns out to be unbearable for him. As a result, this initiation becomes the principal penalty for the male protagonist.

In turn, in Leśmian's *klechda*, this transformation of the male protagonist is not definitive, but is associated – analogical with Gogol's short story – with putting the man to the test through his contact with a witch. Importantly, the man – defined by a significant anthroponym, the Commune Head (*Wójt*) – builds his identity based on his social function. By succumbing to temptation and engaging in an affair with old Bartłomiejowa, this married public servant, appreciated in the region for his dignity and seriousness, as a result of events occurring at the level of narration that he does not feel he perpetrated and that he describes as the result of the magical effect of lovage and water hemlock (which the witch gives him) – seems “stripped of his office,” disgraced in the eyes of his neighbors,

for he saw the old hag's eyes sparkle in an extraordinary way. 'Away with you, old witch, away with you!' he shouted. But she still stretched her hands after him" [Gogol, *The Viy*].

The English translation lacks the following passage: “«Эге-ге! – подумал философ. – Только нет, голубушка! устарела». Он отодвинулся немного подальше, но старуха, без церемонии, опять подошла к нему. – Слушай, бабуся! – сказал философ, – теперь пост; а я такой человек, что и за тысячу золотых не захочу оскорбиться. Но старуха раздвигала руки и ловила его, не говоря ни слова.» [“»Ha, ha! – thought the philosopher – Not so fast my love, you are too old!«. He stepped back into the corner, but the old woman approached him without further ado. – Listen, granny! – said the philosopher. – We are fasting today, and I wouldn't break it even for a thousand chervonets [gold coins]”] [Николай Гоголь [Nikolai Gogol], “Вий,” in: *Вечера на хуторе близ Диканьки. Миргород, Петербургские повести* (Москва: ОЛМА-ПРЕСС Образование, 2006), p. 268; http://az.lib.ru/g/gogolx_n_w/text_0050.shtml, last accessed 12.08.2019].

“the head of the commune, who ceased to be the head of the commune.”⁴¹⁴ The allegory of this grotesque transformation of and resultant incompatibility of the “ideal” self to the “real” self becomes the motif of a scarecrow, which appears twice in the work: a headless pole with a cap full of holes on top. The confrontation of this allegorical image with the new condition of the Commune Head leads to the conclusion that the social identity of the male protagonist, prone to irrational stunts, is a facade and is subject to ridicule – in a Gogolian spirit. The hero’s ideal “self” undergoes a grotesque reduction to this outfit and the static position it maintains.

In both works, the female characters presented as witches play structural roles that for some reason are similar and from other reason differ from those in Pushkin’s epic poem. They are – as in “Ruslan and Lyudmila” – the embodiment of the hell of nature, and at the same time are introduced into the texts to probe the identity of the male protagonists, to bring into question their self-control and initiate a transformation with social consequences, which do not correspond with the protagonists’ expectations – on the contrary, they are exposed and grotesquely embarrassed. As a result, the Romantic hell understood metaphorically (in Gogol’s approach) and neo-Romantically (in Leśmian’s work) is subject to dislocation; it turns out that it does not have a transcendent character, but a terrestrial one – physical and social.

Grotesque reconstruction of the stereotype of femininity

Both in Gogol’s *The Viy* and in Leśmian’s *klechda*, the grotesque description of the witches appears to be a reconstruction of the stereotype of femininity. This stereotype is well-established in Slavic demonology and the literary tradition. The female protagonists of both texts become active at night (when the “half-moon shone pale and high in the sky”)⁴¹⁵ and are portrayed as the embodiment of unbridled energy that discharges in spite of moral norms. In Gogol’s text, the witch sits on Thomas as on a steed galloping over the steppe madly and freely. In Leśmian’s work, the heroine initially resembles a grotesque, sky “hurried

414 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 122 [“odarty z urzędu,” “wójt, który przestał być wójtem”]. The Commune Head says: “I am not a godly man; he says, ‘nor a farmer, but a nameless creature who awaits an anthroponym from someone with fear and with dread” [“Anim ja człek boży – mówi, ani wójt, ani gospodarz, jedno stworzenie bezimienne, które z lękiem i zgrozą nazwy własnej od kogoś wyczekuje”] [Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 122].

415 Gogol, *The Viy*.

and deliberate movement, unsuitable for the place and not justified by human reason.⁴¹⁶

Moreover, each of the female characters is equipped with almost all the attributes known from Slavic demonology, from her physical appearance and behavior (both witches initially appear as elderly and sexually demanding), as well as psychical properties (neither recognizes the rules of community life: the female protagonist of *The Viy* does not marry, engaging in affairs that degrade her social position,⁴¹⁷ and the protagonist of “The Witch” attempts to seduce a married man and roams the sky, instead of working), including the props (in Gogol there is a broom used by the old woman to beat Thomas’s sides as if he was a horse lashed with a whip; in Leśmian, Bartłomiejowa uses a shovel to fly). None of these items is used for work by the witches, though they could win greater favor in the community by doing a specific job. In addition, Bartłomiejowa is accompanied by a black cat, while the heroine of *The Viy* is characterized by “the agility of a cat.”⁴¹⁸

Also, the way the female protagonists appear and the space (at a distance from the village) in which they were presented in the prose of Gogol and Leśmian indicate the existence of references to conventional representation of witches in Slavic demonology, which is characterized by fantastic uncanniness in a given story. Women, through meaningful comparisons used in the descriptive layer (as in Leśmian) or thanks to literary images of rushing through immensity (as in Gogol), appear as grotesque personifications of the element of air, difficult to control and associated in our cultural circle with infinity, divinity and the cosmic energy of life, perceived as an intermediary sphere between heaven and earth as well as a symbol of excess, unpredictability, lack of restriction, striving

416 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 112 [“ruch pośpieszny i celowy, ani z miejscem niezgodny, ani w rozsądku ludzkim nie mający żadnego uzasadnienia”].

417 “Is it true,” said a young shepherd, “is it true – though I cannot understand it – that our young mistress had traffic with evil spirits?!” “Who, the young lady?” answered Dorosch, whose acquaintance the philosopher had already made in the kibitka. “Yes, she was a regular witch! I can swear that she was a witch!” “Hold your tongue, Dorosch!” exclaimed another – the one who, during the journey, had played the part of a consoler. “We have nothing to do with that. May God be merciful to her! One ought not to talk of such things.”/ But Dorosch was not at all inclined to be silent; he had just visited the wine-cellar with the steward on important business, and having stooped two or three times over one or two casks, he had returned in a very cheerful and loquacious mood./ “Why do you ask me to be silent?” he answered. “She has ridden on my own shoulders, I swear she has” [Gogol, *The Viy*].

418 Gogol, *The Viy*.

for freedom and, ultimately, liberation from human limitations. For example, Leśmian's female protagonist is called "an airy woman,"⁴¹⁹ she is recalled as a "nocturnal flying squirrel, unaware of her own monstrosity,"⁴²⁰ "a furious flying woman,"⁴²¹ playing around "in heavens with hair blowing in the wind and a fluttering white shirt, that is like a fiery wind against the helpless sapphire background, like a snowstorm, frightened by the whirling of her own folds, as if those sapphires needed a snowstorm in December to be happy."⁴²²

A significant change that takes place in the two *klechdy* by Gogol and Leśmian in relation to Pushkin's work lies in the fact that the male characters have an ambivalent attitude towards the female protagonists. On one hand, it can be very negative, filled with disgust and the greatest contempt. Thomas Brutus considers the advances of the old woman: "Not so fast, my love, you are too old."⁴²³ And the Commune Head threatens:

I cannot allow any random woman to trash the same air belonging to honest people with her body. I must teach her order and bring her to her senses. / I am surprised that the weary flesh of the possessed woman hasn't fallen off her old bones like plaster shed from a wall, in such cold! [...] She forced herself on the sky like – to put it bluntly – a pig let loose a wide-open church. The sky suits her like a rosary around the devil's neck. If at least she were a beautiful virgin in the sky – but she is old and rotting in the flanks, but still wants to appear in the night sky before people!⁴²⁴

419 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 117 ["babą upowietrzoną"].

420 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 119 ["polatuchę nocną, własnej potworności nieświadomą"].

421 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 118 ["zaciętrzewioną w swym locie babę"].

422 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 112 ["po niebiosach z rozpuszczonymi na wiatr włosami i powiewa białą koszulą, która na bezbronnym tle szafirów wicherzy się ogoniasto, niby jakaś śnieżycza, furkotem własnych fałd spłoszona, jakby właśnie tym szafirom takiej tylko śnieżycy w grudniu dla zupełnego zadowolenia zbrakło"].

In his translation of *The Viy* into Polish, Jerzy Wyszomirski emphasised the – already present – association between the witch and air. In the Polish translation, Thomas calls the old woman "an aired witch" and a "witch-flyer" [Nikolai Gogol, "Wij," in: *Opowiadania* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1984), pp. 94, 69], while in the original the following phrasing occurs: "проклятая ведьма" ["the damned witch"] or "ведьма" ["the witch"] without the epithet [Gogol, "Wij," 2006, pp. 269, 295].

423 "Только нет, голубушка! устарела" [Gogol, "Wij," 2006, p. 268].

424 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," pp. 116, 117 ["Nie mogę pozwolić na to, aby pierwsza lepsza baba swym cielskiem byle jakim zaśmiecała powietrze, ludziom uczciwym przynależne. Muszę ją porządku nauczyć i do opamiętania się powołać!"; "Że też dotąd jeszcze babie opętanej żmudne cielsko na mrozie od kości starych, jak tynk od ściany, nie podpadało! [...] Wściubiła się do nieba bez pytania, jak, nie przymierzając, świnia do rozwartego na oścież kościoła. Tak jej z tym niebem do twarzy, jak diabłu z różańcem

This description of the witch has strictly grotesque comparisons: discrediting, animistic, objectifying and connected with the sphere of *profanum* (contrasted to the uplifting sphere of *sacrum*). There is also visibly discredits the character because of her age and lack of both virginity and youthful beauty. Bartłomiejowa's body is described with augmentative forms: it is called a "body" [*cielsko*]. The Commune Head associates the witch's behavior with shamelessness, immodesty and possession, and comparisons used in the text indicate demonization of the character ("The sky suits her like a rosary around the devil's neck").⁴²⁵

On the other hand, the attitudes of the male protagonists to the witches – despite fear and contempt they manifest towards those women (the Commune Head, for example, spits when he sees Bartłomiejowa) – borders on fascination:

The perspiration flowed from him in streams; he experienced simultaneously a strange feeling of oppression and *delight in all his being*. Often he felt as though he had no longer a heart.⁴²⁶

The charm that emanated from the old woman increased even more when he saw that her legs just want to dance, as two dogs, freed from chains.⁴²⁷

Moreover, in comparisons present in Leśmian's text, the attributes of the witch appear nearly as royal insignia: "Her stiffened shirt sparkled decoratively with pieces of diamonds of the attached frost, *and the shovel, thickly covered with dense frost, shone like a scepter, forged from matt silver* and quite unreal..."⁴²⁸

na szyi. I gdyby przynajmniej krasą dziewiczą mogła się na wysokościach poszczycić, ale zgrzybiałe to i już po brzegach murszy, a jeszcze chce się oczom ludzkim z takiego posterunku po nocy ukazywać!"]].

"He jumped to her impulsively and caught her firmly by the throat, which narrowed and lengthened in his grip./ 'Wait, traitor!' he called, looking in her eyes. 'I will beat you up for shameless rides of yours across the sky!'" ["Podskoczył ku niej skwapliwie i dłonią wprawną ułapił co prędzej za gardło, które mu w rękach zwięzło się i wydłużyło jednocześnie./ – Poczekaj-no, psiawelno! – zawołał, do oczu jej zazierając. – Wytataruję ci skórę za tę twoją jazdę bezwstydną po niebie!"] [Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 117].

425 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 117 ["Tak jej z tym niebem do twarzy – myśli wójt – jak diabłu z różańcem na szyi"].

426 Gogol, *The Viy*, my emphasis.

427 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 124, my emphasis ["Czar, który szedł nań od staruchy zwiększył się jeszcze, gdy ujrzał jak się jej nogi do tańca rwą, niby dwa psy, z łańcucha spuszczone"].

428 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 119, my emphasis ["Jej zeszytniała koszula skrzyła się, wzorzyście diamentowymi pstrocinami czepliwego szronu, a łopata, zgęstniałym

In turn, in *The Viy*, the experience of ambivalence – *tremendum et fascinans* – is manifested in expressions of an oxymoronic character:

Sympathy, and a strange feeling of excitement, and a hitherto unknown fear overpowered him [Thomas]. [...] / He approached the bier, looked nervously at the face of the dead girl, could not help shuddering slightly, and involuntarily closed his eyes. What terrible and extraordinary beauty! [...] And in truth there was something terrible about the beauty of the dead girl. Perhaps she would not have inspired so much fear had she been less beautiful; but there was nothing ghastly or deathlike in the face, which wore rather an expression of life, and it seemed to the philosopher as though she were watching him from under her closed eyelids.⁴²⁹

I want to emphasize that both female protagonists appear to the men as old then alternatively as energetic and young. “Is she really an old woman?”⁴³⁰ Thomas wonders; “She is not as old as it seems from a distance,” says the Commune Head.⁴³¹

For the majority of secondary characters – in keeping with a world view characteristic of folklore – witches are perceived as women who derive satisfaction from harming others, set traps for helpless men, fooling them and even depriving them of their masculinity. In Leśmian’s folktale, common people believe Bartłomiejowa appears in an animal form (as a female dog) and makes children cry,⁴³² disrupts the normal course of atmospheric phenomena by sending drought (“She has captured rain in a new clay pot, wrapped it in a cloth and hid the pot on a stove”⁴³³). However, in the Gogol work, the witch is said not only to have a “little tail”⁴³⁴ but also to appear in animal form – as a dog that catches children by their throats and drinks blood, biting the wives of honest men, or riding

mrozem suto omszona, jaśniała niby berło, z matowego srebra wykute i zgoła nierzeczywiste...”].

429 Gogol, *The Viy*, my emphasis. Thomas Brutus, when under the influence of the witch, cannot distinguish the sound of the wind from music, while Leśmian’s protagonist indulges in a mad dance with old Bartłomiejowa that gives him an experience of lightness he had never known.

430 Gogol, *The Viy*. In the original text: “точно ли это старуха?” [“is she really an old woman?”] [Gogol, “Wij,” 2006, p. 270].

431 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 135 [“Nie taka ona jeszcze stara, jak się z daleka wydaje”].

432 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 115 [Nasyła “płaksy na dzieci”].

433 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 116 [“deszcz w nowym glinianym garnku uwięziła i płachtą owinąwszy, na piecu garnek ukryła”]. In addition, the protagonist of Leśmian’s *klechda* is not shy, but is shameless and “flirts persistently” [“natarczywe umizgi”] [Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 123].

434 Gogol, *The Viy*.

men like horses, stealing various objects from them (such as a pipe or a cap), and finally cutting off girls' braids and sucking the life out of them.⁴³⁵

By revealing the ability to undergo a fantastic-grotesque metamorphosis, these stereotypically depicted witches embody the savagery of nature that opposes civilization and morality, which are treated as its denial.

Grotesque disillusion and social roles

The witches from the works under study live despite socially accepted moral norms; their behavior undermines adopted rules, introducing chaos and establishing a "world *à rebours*," and they are perceived by the male protagonists as the embodiment of destructive and erotically captivating power.⁴³⁶ They inspire fear in the male characters for at least two reasons. First – as in Gogol's *The Viy* – they make the hero aware of his own mortality; second, contact with them (in both texts) is associated with the risk of degradation in the social hierarchy and the loss of functions of prestige held in the community: "People will know," thinks the Commune Head, afraid he might lose his office, "and may even take the post of the commune head from me."⁴³⁷

He expected [...] with desperate remains of reason held on to just in case, that his excesses and deviations from duty and his office would finally catch the eye of divine providence in the relevant authorities. And he knew that such authority does not inquire about lovage and cicuta, but considers as facts only their wicked effects, and decides on the basis of those facts.⁴³⁸

435 Gogol, *The Viy*.

436 For Romantic-era phantasms of demonic femininity, see: Wioletta Wenerska, "Czarownice – mistrzynie kreacji świata na opak," in: *Romantyczne fantazmaty demonicznej kobiecości* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2011), pp. 45–109.

437 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," p. 136 ["Dowiedzą się ludzie – myśli wójt zatrwożony utratą urzędu – i może nawet wójtostwa mnie pozbawią"].

438 Leśmian, "Wiedźma," pp. 150–151 ["Przewidywał [...] rozpaczliwą resztką zachowanego na wszelki wypadek rozumu, że te jego wybryki i uskoki od obowiązku i służby nie ujdą w końcu opatrnościowego oka władzy odnośnej. A wiedział, że władza owa o żadne lubczyki i duryje nie pyta, jeno ich skutki występne, jako stronę faktyczną, bierze ściśle pod uwagę i na mocy tych faktów rozstrzyga"].

"It even seemed to him [the Commune Head] that he is an outside witness, a type of a dead pole, far from the case as it continued, who only on occasion up holds the board with Commune Head written on it, and underneath it there is total absence of the men mentioned above" ["Wydawało mu się nawet, że jest postronnym i od toczącej się sprawy dalekim rodzajem martwego słupca, na którym jeno od parady

As with the Commune Head, who in moments of crisis sees himself as a parody of the commune-head role, Thomas Brutus in relation to “the one who knows” becomes not a philosopher but a parodist-grotesque negative of attitudes associated with representatives of that profession.

A grotesque exposition of sources for the aforementioned fear is among the basic mechanisms of disillusion in the vital stereotype of femininity occurring in these texts. In *The Viy*, expressions of this fear include the female phantasm of a living corpse presented in a macabre-grotesque convention, at times even comically.⁴³⁹ This should be seen as an allegory of terror of the destructive forces of

sterczy tablica z napisem Wójt, a pod nią zupełna nieobecność wzmiankowanego w nagłówku człowieka” [Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” pp. 140–141].

439 The theme mentioned above of a “living corpse” present in Slavic oral tales told by the common people and in medieval literature and iconography (the most drastic representation of the theme is *transi*: the image of a decomposing dead body that chases people), which gained high popularity in Russian literature in 1820–1840 due to increased interest in folklore, and as a result of the reception of the English horror novel and reading of German Romantic ballads. In Polish literature, considerably more popular was the motif of a “virgin corpse” (which had appeared already in antiquity, for example, in the long poem “Cořa” believed to be written by Virgil and in a scene in Petronius’s *Satyricon*, which then returned with increased force in the Middle Ages, for example, in a collection of Latin tales from the early fourteenth century, in “Exemplum, quod debemus relinquere mundum” included in *Gesta Romanorum*, and in the liturgical works *Promptuarium exemplorum*, *Scala Celi* and Bromyard’s *Summa Praedicatorum*). It appears in seventeenth-century literature, for example, in the works of Father Kuligowski who, inspired by François de Rosset’s *Les Histoires tragiques de notre temps*, published in *Demokryt chrześcijański* a story entitled “A horrifying example of God’s punishment of the lustful” [“Straszny przykład kary bożej nad lubieżnymi”]. It then returns in Romanticism, for example in Cyprian Norwid’s “Fantasy” [“Marzenie”], Michał Czajkowski’s novella “Swatanie Zaporozzca” [“Matchmaking of Zaporozhets”], Konstanty Gaszyński’s tale *Czarna tanecznicza* [Black Dancer], and it receives many actualizations in neoromantic literature. *Gesta Romanorum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Johannes Bromiardus, *Summa Praedicatorum*, Vol 2 (München: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 1586); François de Rosset, *Les Histoires mémorables et tragiques de ce temps*, ed. Anne de Vaucher Gravili (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1994); Ignacy Kuligowski, *Demokryt smieszny albo smiech Demokryta Chrześcijańskiego z tego świata na trzy części życia ludzkiego podzielony* (Vilna: Societas Jesu, 1699); Cyprian Norwid, “Marzenie (Fantazja),” in: *Dzieła Cypriana Norwida*, ed. Tadeusz Pini (Warszawa: Spółka Wydawnicza “Parnas Polski,” 1934), pp. 12–13; Michał Czajkowski, “Swatanie Zaporozzca,” in: *Pisma Michała Czajkowskiego*, Vol 3: *Powieści kozackie i gawędy* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1863), pp. 3–11. See: Julian Krzyżanowski, “Dziewica – trup. Z motywów makabrycznych w

nature. This fantastic theme is also subjected to disillusion. It is determined, first, by the only footnote in the text, in which the author renounces responsibility for the content and presents the story of Thomas Brutus as the faithful repetition of a folktale.⁴⁴⁰ Second, disillusion is supported by introduction of the allegorical figure of Viy, the terrible king of the gnomes, referred to in this case as a “popular fancy of the inhabitants of Little Russia” and characterized grotesquely as a monster with a face of iron and “eyelids of enormous length.”⁴⁴¹ The storyline associated with helping the monster to open his eyes (enabling him to identify Thomas Brutus as the culprit in the death of the beautiful daughter of the wealthy Cossack) appears to be an allegory of recognition of a criminal, learning about the hell of nature identified with the principal punishment and forcing the reader, above all, to treat the stereotype of femininity presented in the text lightly and to see in it a manifestation of social exclusion. Finally, the introduction of the character of a grey-haired Cossack into the story, acting as a wise man, plays a disillusioning role. When listening to fantastic stories from the simple people, he states with indifference: “*Every old woman is a witch.*”⁴⁴²

In turn, in Leśmian’s “The Witch,” the fear of temptation, with which a woman who refuses to abide by the approved social role is associated, appears in the description of the heroine who grotesquely exists at the border of the world and the afterlife (described as someone who “cannot die” although she was supposed to have done so long ago⁴⁴³). At the same time, the literary text names the reason for its stereotypical approach to the character: “she loves only to love and to go

literaturze polskiej,” in: *Paralele. Studia porównawcze z pogranicza literatury i folkloru* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), pp. 524-538.

440 Gogol, *The Viy*.

441 Gogol, *The Viy*.

442 Gogol, *The Viy*, my emphasis. In the original: “Когда старая баба, то и ведьма” [Gogol, “Wij,” 2006, p. 275].

It is repeated in the ending of the story by the philosopher Tiberius Gorobetz: “I know why he perished, [...] because he was afraid. If he had not feared her, the witch could have done nothing to him. One ought to cross oneself incessantly and spit exactly on her tail, and then not the least harm can happen. I know all about it, for here, in Kieff, all old women in the market-place are witches” [Gogol, *The Viy*]. In the original: “- А я знаю, почему пропал он: оттого, что побоялся. А если бы не боялся, то бы ведьма ничего не могла с ним сделать. Нужно только, перекрестившись, плюнуть на самый хвост ей, то и ничего не будет. Я знаю уже все это. Ведь у нас в Киеве все бабы, которые сидят на базаре, - все ведьмы” [Gogol, “Wij,” 2006, p. 289].

443 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 144 [“skonać nie może”].

mad like a witch from love.”⁴⁴⁴ In this text, the disillusion is less radical than in Gogol’s work, and consists of revealing the association of stereotypes of femininity with social roles. The community present in the presented world does not see witches in women who are wives, as they forego “all knowledge” thanks to prayer and work at home.⁴⁴⁵ Jędrzejowa is not stigmatized in this way either. She leads an acceptable and godly life of a rural healer or witch doctor [*znachorka*], quietly raising an illegitimate son on her own in fear that he would judge her if told that his mother took her knowledge from a witch.

The effect of disillusion reached in these *klechdy* through the grotesque permitted by both authors – Gogol to a greater extent and Leśmian to a lesser one – to set forth problems concerning social roles, regarded for centuries in the *opinio communis* as right and indisputable. Particularly Gogol in *The Viy* gave testimony to modern views on the feminine issue, going far beyond conventions of his era.⁴⁴⁶ Thanks to techniques mentioned above, the reader can see from a different perspective (thus think more empathically) the condition of women whose lifestyle was perceived for centuries as invaluable by the community.

444 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” p. 147 [“kocha, byle tylko kochać i od kochania szaleje po wiedźmowemu”].

445 Leśmian, “Wiedźma,” pp. 148 and 168 [“wszelkiej wiedzy”].

446 This was also articulated in correspondence with friends. In a letter from 1846, published under the title “Женщина в свете” [“A woman in the world”] in his *Собрание сочинений*, Vol. 6: *Статьи* (Moscow: Художественная литература, 1978), pp. 191-195. Gogol appreciated femininity, without completely idealizing it, he expressed the conviction that intelligent women enable revival in society. In turn, in an early article “Женщина” (“Woman,” 1831), he idealized femininity, by describing it as the “language of Gods” and “poetry.” He also opposed the enslavement of women: “Посмотри на роскошных персов: они переродили своих женщин в рабынь, и что же? им недоступно чувство изящного - бесконечное море духовных наслаждений” [“Look at the Persians indulging in luxury, who turned their women into slaves. What came out of it? They lost their intuition for grace – an unlimited sea of spiritual pleasures”] [Николай Васильевич Гоголь [Nikolai Gogol], “Женщина,” in: *Полное собрание сочинений и писем в 23 томах.*, Vol. 3: (Москва: Издательство «Наука», 2009), p. 9. I would like to thank Mr. Piotr Mitzner for drawing my attention to this biographical context.



Metaphorical and parodistic-apocryphal transformations (forms of *kaliki perekhozhie*: Yesenin – Gorodetsky – Leśmian)

Common cultural traditions?

Having read many books on Leśmian (including Rochelle Heller-Stone's pioneering *Leśmian: The Poet and His Poetry*,⁴⁴⁷ which situates Leśmian in the circle of inspiration of Russian symbolism), I have reached the conclusion that the question of literary relations between the works of Leśmian, Sergey Gorodetsky⁴⁴⁸ and Sergei Yesenin remains open. Julian Przyboś was the first to compare the works of Yesenin and Leśmian in his polemical text "Poeci żywiou.

447 Heller-Stone, *Boleslaw Leśmian*.

448 Shortly after the publication of Sergey Gorodetsky's debut collection of poems, *Ярь* [*The Ravine*] in December 1906, Sergey Gorodetsky – the Russian poet born in 1884 in St. Petersburg, son of a writer-ethnographer and art lover – Alexander Blok published the text "О лиризме" ["About Lyrics"] in the periodical *Golden Fleece* (Gorodetsky also published in this journal, which that same year published Leśmian's poem "Songs of Vasilisa the Wisest"). In his essay, Blok presented Gorodetsky as equal to the most acclaimed masters of contemporary Russian poetry. At the time of his debut, Gorodetsky was perceived as a revelation in the poetic environment not only by Blok but also by other symbolists. The debut volume, which made him a favorite in St. Petersburg salons, was a testimony to the author's interest in native folklore, including *skazki* [an epic fairy tale known from folklore and literature] and *stariny* [*bylinas*, epic songs]. More, see: Семен Машинский [Semen Maszinskij], "Сергей Городецк ий," in: Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1 (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 5. The admiration of other poets and readers was particularly inspired by numerous references to Slavic mythology. Gorodetsky wrote that he inherited his interest in antiquity from his father. He stated that it was for this reason, and due to life spent in the countryside, that his pagan poems were influenced by observations of village plays for children: "Стремление к древности – писал Городецкий в одной из ранних своих автобиографических заметок, – я унаследовал от отца. На этой почве, под впечатлением деревенской жизни, возникли мои языческие стихи, основанные на наблюдениях над играми деревенских детей," quoted from: Семен Машинский [Semen Maszinskij], "Сергей Городецкий," in: Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1 (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 9. See: Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Ярь," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1 (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 49-151. Gorodetsky's collection *The Ravine*, published in December 1906, was dated 1907. For Gorodetsky's poetry (and his interest in Slavic issues) as an important stage on the way to "the revival of the Russian soul and nationality," see: Dmitry Filosofov and his essay "Голубая

Sergiusz Jesienin i Bolesław Leśmian” [“Poets of the Elements: Sergei Yesenin and Bolesław Leśmian”]. Przyboś treated both authors as “autonomous and separate individualities” but did not see homology in their poetry in the form of reference to a common tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie* [itinerant pilgrims who performed songs and *bylinas*], which makes it possible to talk about the common subject and issue in Yesenin’s poem “Pilgrims” [lit. “Kaliki”] and Leśmian’s cycle *Pieśni kalekujące* [*Maimed songs*] from the collection *The Meadow*.⁴⁴⁹

Relations between Gorodetsky and Yesenin seem much better recognized. We know that they met in person in 1915 when Yesenin came to St. Petersburg and began to socialize with the local literary milieu.⁴⁵⁰ Gorodetsky, however, had already read Yesenin’s text “Pilgrims” from 1910, and it became an additional artistic inspiration for him when he decided to turn in his poetic work to the above-mentioned tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*, and wrote the cycle of poems *Kaliki-kaleki*.

In turn, the only evidence of literary relations between Gorodetsky’s *oeuvre* and Leśmian’s work that has been noted by researchers and anthologists is Gorodetsky’s translation of the Leśmian ballad “Whirlus and Twirlus” (from *The Meadow*) published in the thirty-ninth issue (from 18 July 1935) of *Литературная газета* [*Literary Newspaper*], which was dedicated to Polish literature.⁴⁵¹ However, the *oeuvres* of the two authors manifest not only a filiation in the *oeuvres* that led to the creation of the translation just mentioned, but also other relations of a homologous nature. These are reflected in Gorodetsky’s cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*, which was published in 1913 in the volume *Ива* [*Willow*] (and comprised the following poems: “Отдание молодости” [“Giving Away Youth”], “Безрукий” [“Handless”], “Расстрига” [“The Cursed”], “Monk” “Wolf” “Вий” [“The Viy”], “The Wise Dead,” “Песенка” [“Song”], and “Поет” [“Poet”]) and Leśmian’s cycle *Maimed songs*, which included poems that would later appear

весна” [“Blue Spring”]: Дмитрий Философов [Dmitry Filosofov], “Голубая весна,” in: *Старое и новое* (Москва: Издательство Сытина, 1912), pp. 5–21.

449 Przyboś, “Роеци жывіоў,” pp. 8–9. Rochelle Heller-Stone translated the title of Leśmian’s cycle *Pieśni kalekujące* as *Maimed songs*, which does not reflect the ambiguity of *kaleki/kaliki*. We are dealing here with a term, in which the meaning of two words resonates: a cripple [*kaleka*] and a pilgrim [*kalika*].

450 Alexander Blok and Nikolai Klyuev also belonged to the milieu of St. Petersburg poets.

451 It is noteworthy that Gorodetsky also translated Leśmian’s poem “W polu” [“In the field”] into Russian as “В поле.”

in the volume *The Meadow* (1920), such as: “Courtship,” “The Hunchback,” “The Poor Cobbler,”⁴⁵² “Hand”⁴⁵³ and “Żołnierz” [“Soldier”].

Traces of homology already appear in the titles of these cycles. The two authors, by giving certain works similar titles, indicated to readers that the latter deal with collections of texts that relate thematically and problematically and that form a specific artistic whole. The title of the Gorodetsky cycle, *Kaliki-kaleki* – as with the title of Yesenin’s poem “Kaliki” – refers directly to the form of *kaliki perekhozhie*. In turn, the title of Leśmian’s cycle *Maimed songs* alludes to a protagonist known from Ruthenian tradition.

Kaliki/калики (*kaliki perekhozhie* / *калі́ки перехо́жые*, *kaleki perekhozhie* / *калэ́ку перэхо́жые*) is an ancient Ruthenian term that did not describe crippled, lame men, but referred to wandering pilgrims who performed songs and *byliny*. Besides, the characters of *kaliki* appear as secondary in *byliny* and folk epics.⁴⁵⁴ It is most probable that the word derived from the Greek *καλιγιον* or Latin *caligae* words for shoes.⁴⁵⁵ It referred to open, sandal-like footwear worn by religious wanderers who traveled to Jerusalem. After completing their pilgrimage, they gained utmost respect and were rewarded with alms that allowed them to survive. The word *kalika* (*калика*, singular) thus gained connotations associated with traveling with religious aims. It was also associated with the necessity of supporting pilgrims with contributions, as in the case of the crippled and beggars. *Kaliki*, on pilgrimages to Palestine and Greece, would meet other wanderers who performed religious songs based on the themes from apocryphal tales. The

452 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Poor Cobbler,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House 2017), pp. 49–51.

453 Bolesław Leśmian, “Hand,” *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (43) (2015), p. 156.

454 I want to emphasize that *kaliki*, in *byliny*, are not crippled elderly men but strong men. The word *kalika/калика* also exists in the Ukrainian language. Presently, it includes three meanings: the first relates to a crippled, flawed person; the second means a pilgrim; and the third is a name for itinerant singers. *Kaliki* – in the late use of the word – are wandering singers, elderly musician, an equivalent to the Ukrainian *the lirnyky*, and in the earlier meaning – medieval pilgrims traveling to Constantinople and the Holy Land, commoners who created special “teams” of oath-taking (ascetic vows) pilgrims outside secular jurisdiction (hence the separateness of folklore).

455 In Latin, *caligae* is used for footwear (sandals, boots) worn by Roman legionnaires. As a child, Caius Julius Caesar had the nickname *Caligula* (sandal, little boot) in the army his father led.

kaliki adopted this repertoire from them. Their lifestyles were then propagating and consolidating the viability of ascetic ideals.⁴⁵⁶

Yesenin, Gorodetsky and Leśmian, in their poetic creations of *kaliki perekhozhie*, referred to the cultural image of these figures rather than to religious poems performed by them.

The three poets' kaliki as protagonist or collective subject

Sergei Yesenin, the author of the first of the poems under study ("Pilgrims," 1910), was intently interested in *chastushka*⁴⁵⁷ and *skazki*.⁴⁵⁸

He also acknowledged inspiration from spiritual poems (which stemmed from legends, tales and stories focused on religious themes, depicted lives of saints and martyrdom, episodes from the lives of monks and hermits, temptations they were exposed to and miracles they experienced). In "Pilgrims," Yesenin created a collective character in the spirit of those inspirations:

The pilgrims came and while passing by
 Drank cold kvass outside the taverns;
 In the churches the holy men, timid and shy,
 Bowed to the icon of God who us governs.

In the fields the worshipers carved their ways,
 Singing and praying to Jesus aloud,
 Passing horses attentively listened to prayers,
 Loud geese joined in song with the crowd.

456 For significant nineteenth-century texts on the subject of *kaliki perekhozhie*, see: Александр Николаевич Веселовский [Alexander Nikolayevich Veselovsky], "Калики перехожие и богомильские странники," *Вестник Европы*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1872), pp. 682–722. Veselovsky believed that *kaliki perekhozhie* derive from Bogomilism. See also: Измаил Иванович Срезневский [Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevsky], "Русские калики древнего времени," in: *Записки императорской Академии наук*, Vol. 1 (1862), pp. 186–210; Измаил Иванович Срезневский [Izmail Ivanovich Sreznevsky], *Крута каличья, клюка и сума, лапотники, шляпа и колокол* (Санкт-Петербург: unknown, 1862). For the subject of *kaliki perekhozhie* in the twentieth century, see: Калугин [Kalugin], *Герои русского эпоса Очерки о русском фольклоре*, pp. 159–251; Виктор Ильич Калугин [Victor Kalugin], *Струны рокотаху. Очерки о русском фольклоре* (Москва: Современник, 1989).

457 The *chastushka* is a type of a short, rhymed folk song from the late seventeenth century (usually not exceeding four lines). It has a humorous character, often develops via improvisation, and focuses on current issues. The *chastushka* became popular (first in the countryside, later in towns) in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

458 The *skazka* is a prose genre from Russian oral folk art. Genologically speaking, it can be seen as an equivalent of the fairy tale.

The pauper toddled among the village herd
 And addressed the cows with speeches:
 “There is only one God – the creator of Earth,
 He is for all of us – human and creatures.”

Hurriedly, under the strong sun’s spell
 They fed them bread and said amen.
 And were shouting mockingly – the country girls:
 “Let us dance, girls! The clowns are coming.”⁴⁵⁹

The poem presents *kaliki* in the rural and natural landscape as lame, tireless wanderers traveling from one village to another, praising Christ in their songs. An important component among their poetic characteristics are their attributes, such as bread scrap saved for cows (indicating that *kaliki* lead their lives in harmony with nature).⁴⁶⁰

In Yesenin’s work, there is a strong contrast between the *kaliki perekhozhie’s* lifestyle and life purpose and the way they may be perceived by the village community. Instead of inspiring respect, they are subject to mockery – signaled in the poem by the word *skomorokh* [скомороху] in the original version (“clowns” in the English translation) used by village shepherds to describe these pilgrims. The terms used to describe *kaliki* in Yesenin’s poem, popularized in medieval Russia, were also used to describe harlequins performing at weddings and fairs, musicians, itinerant actors who sang, recited legends and fairy tales, danced, juggled, performed acrobatics and with trained animals.⁴⁶¹ In Yesenin’s work, the physical fitness of the *skomorokhs* has been ironically contrasted with physical weakness

459 Sergei Yesenin, “Pilgrims,” in: *The Complete Poetical Works of Yesenin in English* (Tallahassee: Floridian Publisher, 2008), p. 9.

460 In the original version there are also *verpuzi* – chains worn (often secretly) by the first Christians so that “the body becomes humble.”

461 The earliest known reference to *skomorokhs* is from 1068. In the sixteenth century, *skomorokhs* began to settle in towns. In 1613, a permanent place of residence was established for them in Moscow, the so-called *Потешная Палата*. *Skomorokhs* were often persecuted by secular authorities as well as by church authorities for their frivolous lyrics and lack of respect for authority; finally, in 1648, under an *ukase* issued by the czar, *skomorokhs* were banned from performing. A concept has also been put forward that the word *skomorokh* derives from the Italian *scaramuccio* or French *scaratouche*, a character from *commedia dell’arte*, see: Zguta Russell, *Russian Minstrels: A History of the Skomorokhi* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); Анатолий Алексеевич Белкин [Anatolii Alexeyevicz Bielkin], *Русские скоморохи* (Москва: Издательство “Наука,” 1975).

among the poor *kaliki perekhozhie* “toddling among the village herd.” Their piety ensures them no respect, but is identified instead with a pose or a staged performance. When shepherds define the *kaliki* living in saintly asceticism (proven by their shackles – in the original version of the text) as *skomorokhs* or “clowns” they encourage village girls to dance before the pious pilgrims, thus putting them to the test in attempting to reject erotic temptation that is difficult to resist.

A collective protagonist appears also in Gorodetsky’s work “Poet,” with a collective subject appearing in the poems “The Viy” and “Song.” Gorodetsky’s “Poet” from 1912 goes furthest beyond the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*. It reads:

Here in a rough tavern, in a corner,
A bit tipsy, a little graybeard.
A poet sits, an earthy man,
Through the night in a cylinder hat and a sluggish pose.

The glass fills with new wine.
His friends still exchange whores.
He is sensitive, always watching
All phenomena here on earth.

And the old man, constantly
Playing hide and seek, keeps pointing the world
To cigarette butts in the wine,
Demonstrating love for sale among the living.

So, with a forgiving grin
This modest poet observes the miracle...
And somewhere Ursa Major
Roars in the distance, traipsing across the sky.⁴⁶²

462 “Тут, на углу, в кафе нескромном,/ Чуть седоватый, чуть хмельной,/ Цилиндр надвинув, в позе томной,/ Всю ночь сидит поэт земной.// Друзей меняют про стигутки,/ Вино меняется в стекле./ Он смотрит, неизменно чуткий/ Ко всем явлениям на земле.// Старуха жизнь, играя в жмурки,/ Показывает вновь и вновь/ В вине сверкающем окурки/ И в твари проданной любовью!// Он смотрит с доброю усмешкой/ На простенькие чудеса.../ А там Медведица, тележкой/ Гремя, ползет на небеса” [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 258–259].

The translation of all Gorodetsky’s poems into English was based on Żaneta Nalewajk’s translation of these poems into Polish, consulted by Prof. dr hab. Piotr Mitzner and published in the book: Żaneta Nalewajk, *Leśmian międzynarodowy – relacje kontekstowe. Studia komparatystyczne* (Kraków: Universitas, 2015).

The sermon the text presents leads to the question of why Gorodetsky included it in the cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*, as at first glance there is no direct reference to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhi*. It seems impossible, though, that the author placed the poem in the cycle by chance or unintentionally. The character of the title was constructed in the image and likeness of a decadent poet, appearing to be a sensitive observer of people's behavior, though described ironically. If one can speak about a specifically understood pilgrimage in the case of this work, then it has a cosmic character. It is not the poet who travels the world, but the constellation Ursa Major that is "traipsing across the sky."

In turn, "The Viy" from 1911 presents not a collective protagonist but a collective subject. While constructing the titular character – at the same time the addressee inscribed in the text – Gorodetsky, like Gogol in his story of the same title, reached to Eastern Slavic mythology. Gorodetsky's poem reads:

From ancient times, from many centuries ago,
 From darkness and impenetrable fog,
 From beneath the poods of gray boulders
 Emerging with a gnarled, evil branch.⁴⁶³

His skin wrinkled, drooping like a cloth,
 Teeth dropping like rotted white wood.
 Although he was stuck nearby,
 He hasn't sought repose underground!

How can one rest underground?
 There's darkness there, it's too hot.
 The Viy clambers to the surface,
 Angry, filled with anger.

And he wanted to gaze
 Upon life and youthful existence.
 He clambered out. He spies a cord and a sack.
 He thinks: "What may this be?"

He cries: "Ages, lift me up!"
 I see neither happiness nor will.
 A moan staked to the sad earth,
 He thought: People no longer moan.

Ah, my old, stupid Viy!
 Let me close down the ages forever!
 For our life is worse than others!

463 In the original: *коряга*: a knotted branch, immersed in water.

Why did you clamber forth from this deaf ground!

It's as hot as boiling tar but we live,
 We even sing songs and laugh.
 We do not stop singing.
 We laugh and swipe off tears with a sleeve.

Ancient one! You cannot conceive
 What life is, what earthly matters are.
 Depart go from whence you came,
 We keep repeating, a little drunk.

Just tell the globe
 To bear more crops,
 And to follow after the sun in dense fog
 And be merry, ever more merry.⁴⁶⁴

In this poem, the condition of the collective subject is described from a perspective of long duration. In statements formulated in the text, there is the suggestion that the existence of successive generations has resembled existence in hell ("It's as hot as boiling tar but we live"). The successive generations, like *kaliki perekhozhie*, wander through life and sing songs, laughing through tears. The collective subject speaks of these issues to the Vii. His look – in keeping with Eastern Slavic beliefs – lacks life, yet at the same time brings forth an exposition of truth that is difficult to bear, allowing in the poem a reinterpretation of the

464 The original reads: "Из-за тридевять буйных веков,/ Из-за тьмы, из-за мглы непроглядной,/ Из-под пуда седых валунов./ Вылезает корягой неладной./ Кожа сморщилась, тряпкой висит,/ Зубы сыплются белой трухую./ Видно, кол ему мимо был вбит:/ Не сыскал под землю покою!//Да и что за лежня под землей?/ Темнота да жара донимает./ И наверх, осерчавший и злой,/ Продирается Вий, вылезает./ Поглядеть захотелось ему/ На житье на бытве молодое./ Вылез. Видит петлю да суму./ «Это, – думает, – что же такое?»// «Подымите мне веки! – кричит. –/ Я не вижу ни счастья, ни воли./ Стон к земле приунылой прибит./ Думал: люди не стонут уж боле!»// Эх ты, старый мой, глупый мой Вий!/ Дай-ка веки покрепче прихлопну!/ Лише наше житье всех житий!/ Зря ты вылез из теми утробной!// Как в смоле мы кипим, а живем, Даже песни поем и смеемся./ Слезы капну - мы песни не рвем./ Смеючись, рукавом оботремся./ Тяжковекый! Тебе не понять, Что за жизнь, что за дело земное./ Ты прощай, поворачивай вспять,/ Мы ж опять за свое, за хмельное./ Только молви ты шару-земле,/ Чтобы лаком сильней обрастала/ Да за солнцем в неведомой мгле/ Веселей, веселее летала." [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Вий," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 256–257].

mythological sense. Unlike in ancient oral accounts and in Gogol's story, the Viy is portrayed as a naive being, unaware of human fate, having spent great tracts of time underground. The character resembles a twisted root, cast to the surface. It is noteworthy that characteristics presented of the Viy's appearance include references to macabre aesthetics and horror conventions. As we read in the poem: "His skin has wrinkled, drooping like a cloth,/ Teeth dropping like rotted white wood." The Viy's awakening and climbing forth from the ground is the starting point in the poem towards his recognition of human misery: "I see neither happiness nor will," he declares, "A moan staked to the sad earth." The sermon formulates the following question: what implications are there in including this poem in the cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*? It seems to result above all from the generalization of the eponymous name. This takes on a multigenerational character in the poem, indicating that successive generations of impaired human beings wander through the ages singing, leading a "life worse than others." This diagnosis returns with redoubled force in a statement of the collective subject in "Song," the poem from 1912:

Life is awful and merry.
 Death has set traps.
 The world is full of rumbling,
 With silence above the world.

Over there, the peal of the hunting horn,
 Here, a woodman's ax –
 All known and native,
 As you prowl by in passing.

Enemies and friends
 On a sudden celestial trip:
 And the earth!
 Orbiting along with the sun!

Let's caress one another with blood,
 And then kiss:
 And the drunken land
 Will urge us to be earthy.⁴⁶⁵

465 The original reads: "Жутко жить и весело./ Смерть капканы свесила./ В мире стукотня./ А над миром тишь./ Там рожок охотничий./ Тут топорик плотничий –/ Все тебе родина./ Рыщешь и летишь./ Други все и вороги/ В буйном лёте дороги./ Это ведь земля!/ С солонцем ведь летит!// Кровью по балуемся./ А потом целуемся./ Пьяная земля/ Быть земным велит." [Сергей

In this text, vocabulary associated with death and hunting coexists with expressions associated with singing, merriment and joyful intoxication. We are also dealing here with the accumulation of words and phrases of an oxymoronic nature, for example, rumbling on earth contrasts with silence in the sky. From the cosmic perspective, which appears in the poem next to the earthly, the globe is drunk, and friends and enemies spin madly along with it. This presentation of the human condition on the macro- and the micro-scales brings about an extension of the name area of *kaliki/kaleki perekhozhie*. In Gorodetsky's cycle, the term covers all generations of human creatures, not just – as is the case in Yesenin – a group of wanderers on a pilgrimage for religious reasons.

A collective subject is also present in Leśmian's poem "Hand," as evidenced in the following stanza:

We who've a hand much more than man's measure
 Post haste hence it, or self farther go!
 How we've come from nowhere and how from afar,
 Our hand casts worldward an inhuman palm shadow!
 The dram flees her in nights, the bird starts in the days
 The girl's breasts can't rest in her tight little land!
 Before her the pedestrian will pause, all amaze –
 No charity enough for such a great hand.⁴⁶⁶

Statements of the collective subject appear alongside refrain-like repetitions of the apostrophe to the enormous Hand, as spoken by a homeless beggar. Thanks to this juxtaposition, the former gains a generalizing nature and begins to appear capable of grasping the human condition, as broadly understood. Its intrinsic element is desire, which turns out to exceed human capabilities. The embodiment of this insatiability – metaphysical, as well – is the eponymous Hand reaching out in a gesture of alms-taking, the sign of *kaliki perekhozhie* coming "out of nowhere."

Kaliki of Gorodetsky and Leśmian as parodist and individual characters

As I have already mentioned, the correspondence of themes in the works by Gorodetsky and Leśmian and reference to the common tradition of *kaliki* is indicated by the titles of the poetic cycles in question. Importantly, in the title of Gorodetsky's collection of poems *Kaliki-kaleki*, we are dealing with a play on

Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Песенка," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 258.
 466 Leśmian, "Hand," p. 156.

words and meanings. The words *калики* and *калеки* are metagrams – two words that differ by only one letter. Swapping that letter results in a semantic metamorphosis. The traditional meaning of the name *kaliki*, originally reserved for religious pilgrims performing songs and *byliny*, is also associated here with physical disability.

This connotation related to physical frailty is also clearly visible in the title of Leśmian's cycle *Maimed songs*. It has almost entirely dominated the interpretation of these works, while researchers have unfortunately failed to recognize the reference to the habits of *kaliki perekhozhie* as fundamental to understanding relations between Leśmian's poetry and tradition.⁴⁶⁷

The individualized protagonist dominates Gorodetsky's diverse poems that create the cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*. One may distinguish the texts "Handless," "The Cursed" and "Monk" devoted to specific characters (also, as in "Poet," contemporary ones). The works "Giving Away Youth" and "Ночь" ["The Night"] were given allegorical titles, even though, as similar to the case in the majority of texts from this cycle, they have a plot and a lyrical protagonist who is quite precisely defined. In the poem "Wolf," an animal hero appears, in "The Viy" a fantastic character is the lyrical addressee, while in "The Wise Dead," it is the deceased.

Leśmian's cycle *Maimed songs* is also dominated by individualized characters, which is already signaled in the titles of works such as: "The Poor Cobbler," "Soldier" and "The Hunchback." An analogous type of protagonist is present in the poem "Courtship." In the work "Hand," as well, along with the statements made by the collective hero, there is an individualized character of a beggar. *Kaliki perekhozhie* created by Gorodetsky and Leśmian, are, however, not passive reproductions of traditional characters. Depending on the particular poem, their

467 In their interesting works on Leśmian, Jacek Trznadel, Artur Sandauer, Michał Głowiński, Ryszard Nycz, Barbara Sienkiewicz and Tadeusz Nyczek usually fail to discuss the etymology of the term *pieśni kalekujące* and only connect the word *kalekować* with disability [pl., *kalectwo*], emphasizing its metaphorical meaning in the description of crippled, struggling lyrical protagonists created by Leśmian, see: Trznadel, *Twórczość Leśmiana*; Sandauer, "Pośmiertny tryumf Młodej Polski"; Głowiński, *Zaświat przedstawiony*; Ryszard Nycz, "Słowami... w świat wyglądam." Bolesława Leśmiana poezja nowoczesna," in: *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości. Poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* (Kraków: Universitas, 2001), pp. 117–139; Barbara Sienkiewicz, "Leśmianowska 'alchemia ciała' (cykle 'Ballady' i 'Pieśni kalekujące' z tomu 'Łąka')," *Nauka*, No. 4 (2010), pp. 163–181 (particularly pp. 171–174); Tadeusz Nyczek, *Bolesław Leśmian* (Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1976), p. 26; Elżbieta Zarych, "Postacie kalek w utworach Bolesława Leśmiana – zwycięstwo ciała czy ducha," *Teksty Drugie*, No. 6 (1999), pp. 149–160.

reference to tradition has a parodistic or metaphorical character. Before I specify the nature of this parody or metaphor, however, I would like to take a closer look at individual texts of the discussed authors, both with reference to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie* and comparatively, and to indicate similarities and differences between the collections under study.

In Gorodetsky's poem "Handless," the very title is distinctive since it is created by the use of the suffix "less" [prefix "Без" in the original] in negative poetics, very characteristic of Leśmian's later works, described by Michał Głowiński as "the poetry of negation."⁴⁶⁸ However, it is not so much the use of the negated verb, oxymoron or negated abstract name that is typical of Leśmian, who then treats it as a specific name, but using a noun indicating that the speaking subject of the poem lacks that body part. In "Handless," that lack appears as the most important component of the protagonist's characteristics:

Hand, my little hand,
In the Manchurian land,
Night, rock and love,
The handless.

My long road
Over spring fields –
You gave me free will:
To wander in the wilderness.

Although I entered a blizzard –
Spring has already come.
A sip of tea in the outskirts –
Summer, finally come.

468 Michał Głowiński, "Poezja przeczenia," *Zagadnienia Języka Artystycznego*, No. 2 (1976), pp. 127–172. This issue of negative poetics in Leśmian's work has been noted earlier by: Artur Sandauer, "Filozofia Leśmiana," in: *Pisma zebrane*, Vol. 1: *Szkice o literaturze współczesnej* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1985), pp. 499–516; Sandauer, "Pośmiertny triumf Młodej Polski;" Waclaw Kubacki, "Komentarz do Leśmiana," in: *Lata terminowania. Szkice literackie 1932–1962* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1963), pp. 334–345. For negative poetics in Leśmian's works in the context of studies of the shape of Leśmian's neologism, see: Stanisław Kajetan Papierkowski, *Bolesław Leśmian. Studium językowe* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1964); Ewa Olkuśnik, "Słowotwórstwo na usługach filozofii," in: *Studia o Leśmianie*, ed. Michał Głowiński and Janusz Sławiński (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), p. 116; Janusz Sławiński, "Semantyka poetycka Leśmiana," in: *Studia o Leśmianie*, ed. Michał Głowiński and Janusz Sławiński (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), p. 116.

It may happen
That I turn to the unknown,
I will wander somewhere
Far from my homeland.

And I will come to
Some church far away.
I will bow down in tears,
And will tell my soul: cry!

But where I come from
The girls, almost spring,
Will be dancing the *metelica*⁴⁶⁹
With everyone but me.

Among the crazy girls, in sobs,
I danced alone,
With my lost hand
I grabbed each of them.
Therefore to my beloved homeland,
Which is so far away,
I gave that ugly beauty –
My hand in sacrifice.⁴⁷⁰

The poetics of lack is manifested in this poem both in the title and the characteristics of the appearance of the character. This yearning for more is also associated with the erotic sphere, as indicated by the desire – stated by the protagonist – to embrace dancing girls with a missing hand. The soldier's psyche turns out to be

469 Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian national dance. *Metelica* also has the colloquial meaning of a blizzard.

470 The original version of “Handless” from 1912 is: “Рука ль моя ты, рученька,/ В Маньчжурии-земле./ Безрукенького, ноченька,/ Баюкай и лелей.// Моя дорога дальняя –/ Весенние поля./ Далась мне доля вольная./ Ходи себе, гуляй.// Хоть выщел я в метелицу –/ Настигнула весна./ Возьмуся за околицу –/ Чай, лето начинай.// А может быть, а может стать,/ С дороги-то сверну./ Незнамо где пойду плутать/ Вдали страны родной.// И в церковку куда-нибудь/ Далече забреду./ В слезах почну поклонны бить,/ Душе велю: рыдай!// По той мойей околице,/ Где девки, чуть весна,/ Плясать пойдут метелицу/ С другими, не со мной.// Где сам плясал, рыдающий,/ От девок без ума,/ Рукой своей пропащю/ Любую обнимал.// По той любимой родине,/ Которой далеко/ Красавице-уродне, –/ Пожертвовал рукой” Сергей Городецкий [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], “Безрукий,” in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 251.

as crippled as his body. Far from home and homeland, exhausted by journeying in a winter blizzard, he is condemned by his ugliness to loneliness, rejection and wandering.

It seems significant that a lyrical hero who is a soldier and the theme of a hand can be found also in Leśmian's cycle *Maimed songs* – in the poem "Soldier"⁴⁷¹

471 "A soldier returned from a campaign in the spring,/ But very miserable and very immobile.// A bullet flayed his legs and sides,/ So he could only walk by hopping.// He became a jester of sadness, a hopper of his unhappiness,/ His pain made people laugh, his agonized jumps./ His bends and pirouettes in sorrow and grief made them laugh/ And those abrupt lurches of tedious suffering.// He dragged himself to his cottage: 'Go ahead to the fence,/ We do not need a hopper at work in the fields!'/ Off he went to his cousin, a bell-ringer in the church,/ He did not want to know him, threatening him with a stick.// Then he went to his mistress, but she laughed at him/ from shoulders, hips, her entire body!// 'Should I dance to the death with this shaking body in my bed?/ It is barely a quarter-body, and three quarters jumping!// I am not with you in this inadequate dance!/ I will not rest my lips in sleep on your mustache!// You are too eager to leap to heaven!// Off you to and no curses nor blame!// Off he went to the statue by the road:/ 'Christ, all made of pine, consider earnestly!// I know know at whose hand you were formed so laughably,/ But I know it failed to provide you enough beauty and timber.// You got crippled knees and crippled legs,/ Do you hop instead of walking, to avoid the road?// You are so thin, a vacancy made of clouds,/ You will make a good hopping companion for me.'// Christ, on hearing those words, fell to the ground,/ The one who sculpted God was not very smart!// He had two left hands, two right legs,/ And pierced the turf with his pine feet.// 'I am a poor pine statue but am good at walking,/ I will walk through eternity, although I am ungainly.// We will be inseparable, as we share a common path,/ It will be part human, part holy.// We'll share the torment – torment is sharable! –/ For after all, the same human hand crippled us.// You are a bit ridiculous, I am a bit ridiculous,/ The one who laughs first, loves first.// You support me with your body, I support you with pine;/ What happens to us, will happen!// And they joined hands and started off right away,/ Their legs rubbing each other in a funny, jerky way.// And we know not for what eternal hours they walked,/ Where are clocks that tick off such moments?// Days and nights passed that wanted to pass,/ And non-field, non-bush, non-forest passed by.// And there was endless storm and darkness/ And the awful non-occurrence of any sun.// Who, at night, towards midnight, on into storm and wind/ Becomes so human and holy?// Two godly cripples, two sad weird brethren/ Limping clumsily into the world!// One walks happily, the other joins the wedding, the other not mourning,/ And both in love with each other.// Limping God, limping man, and none of them – not enough,/ None will ever know what limped in them?// They hopped when they had to and also when they didn't,/ Until they leaped at last into the sky above!" ["Wrócił żołnierz na wiosnę z wojennej wyprawy,/ Ale bardzo niemrawy i bardzo koślawy.// Kula go tak schłostała po nogach i bokach,/ Że nie mógł iść inaczej, jak tylko w podskokach.//

and “Hand,” respectively. The common features in Leśmian’s “Soldier” and Gorodetsky’s “Handless” are the analogical construction of literary characters based on an emphasis on their physical frailty. They share similar fate associated with service in the war, women’s rejection (signaled in the poems by not being invited to dance), the topos of a journey and finally by religious themes. One may also talk about the common genre of the texts since they are both ballads. The theme of dance is in both poems. Moreover, negative poetry is present in both on the linguistic level. In Gorodetsky’s text, this is signaled with the expressions

Stał się smutku wesółkiem, skoczkiem swej niedoli,/ Śmieszyl ludzi tym bólem, co tak skacząc, boli.// Śmieszyl skargi hołubcem i żalu wyrwasem/ I żmudnego cierpienia nagłym wywijasem.// Zwlókl się do swej chałupy: »Idź precz popod płoty,/ Niepotrzebny nam skoczek w polu do roboty!«// Pobiegł do swego kuma, co w kościele dzwonił,/ Lecz ten nie chciał go poznać i kijem postronił.// Podreptał do kochanki, a ta się zaśmiała/ Ramionami, biodrami, wszystką mocą ciała!// »Z takim w łożu drygałą mam tańczyć do śmierci?/ Ciała ledwo ćwierć miary, a skoków – trzy ćwierci!// Ani myślę ci dotrwać w takim niedopłásie!// Ani myślę wargami sypiać na twym wasie!// Zanaďteś mi wyskoczny do nieba na przelaj!// Idźże sobie gdziekolwiek i nie klnij i nie łaj!«// Więc poszedł do figury, co stała przy drodze:/ »Chryste, na wskroś sosnowy, a zamyśl się srodze!// Nie wiem, czyja cię ręka ciosała wyśmiewna,/ Lecz to wiem, że skąpiła urody i drewna.// Masz kalekie kolana i kalekie nogi,/ Pewno skaczesz, miast chodzić, unikając drogi?// Taki z ciebie chudzina, takie nic z obłoków,/ Że mi będziesz dobranym towarzyszem skoków.«// Chrystus, słysząc te słowa, zsunął się na ziemię,/ Ów, co Boga wyciosał, bity bywał w ciemie!// Obie ręce miał lewe, obie nogi – prawe,/ Sosnowymi stopami podziurawił trawę.//»Marna ze mnie sośnina, lecz piechur nie marny,/ Przejdę wieczność piechtami, chociażem niezdarny.// Pójdziemy nierozłącznie, bo wspólna nam droga,/ Będzie nieco człowieka, będzie nieco Boga.// Podzielimy się męką – podzielnac jest męka! –/ Wszak ta sama nas ludzka skoślawiła ręka.// Tobie trocha śmieszności, mnie śmieszności trocha,/ Kto się pierwszy – zaśmieje – ten pierwszy pokocha.// Ty podeprzesz mię ciałem, ja ciebie sośniną;/ A co ma się nam zdarzyć, niech się zdarzy ino!«// I wzięli się za ręce i poszli niezwłocznie,/ Wadząc nogą o nogę śmiesznie i poskocznie.// I szli godzin wieczystych nie wiadomo ile,/ Gdzież bo owe zegary, co wybrzmiały te chwile?// Mijały dni noce, którym mijać chce się,/ I mijało bezpole, bezkrzewie, bezlesie.// I nastąpiła wichura i ciemność bez końca/ I straszna nieobecność wszelakiego słońca.// Kto tam z nocy na północ w burzę i zawieję/ Tak bardzo człowieczeje i tak bożyścieje?// To dwa boże kulawce, dwa rzewne cudaki/ Kuleją byle jako w świat nie byle jaki!// Jeden idzie w weselu, drugi w bezzałobie,/ A obydwa nawzajem zakochani w sobie.// Kulał Bóg, kulał człowiek, a żaden – za mało,/ Nikt się nigdy nie dowie, co w nich tak kulało?// Skakali jako trzeba i jako nie trzeba,/ Aż wreszcie doskoczyli do samego nieba!//” [Bolesław Leśmian, “Żołnierz,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol. 1: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), pp. 220–221.

“handless,” and “lost,” and in Leśmian’s poem this is heightened and appears in the use of the words “immobile,” “unhappiness,” “non-field,” “non-bush,” “non-forest,” “ungainly,” “non-occurrence,” “non-mourning,” “inadequate dance.”⁴⁷² In both texts, therefore, there are privative expressions⁴⁷³ (with the prefix “bez” [“without”] indicating someone or something is missing: in English: “im-,” “un-,” “no,” “in-,” “non-”). In Gorodetsky, these are associated with physical lack and construction of space; in Leśmian, they also have a spatial character, are sometimes related to nature, and may take the form of negated abstract nouns. Moreover, each poem has oppositions: in Gorodetsky’s work, there is an opposition (despite the homonymy of the names) between the dance of the girls (*metelica*) and the winter blizzard (also a *metelica*). In Leśmian, there is an opposition, as in the verse: “I am a poor pine statue, but I am good at walking.”⁴⁷⁴

It should be stressed that the protagonist in Leśmian’s “Soldier” appears to be a parodistic-grotesque and at the same time an apocryphal⁴⁷⁵ transformation of

472 Leśmian, “Żołnierz,” pp. 220–221 [“niemrawy,” “niedola,” “bezpole,” “bezkrawie,” “bezlesie,” “niezdarny,” “nieobecność,” “bezzałoba,” “niedopłás”].

473 On the subject of privative function in Leśmian’s poetry, see: Głowiński, “Poezja przeczenia,” p. 44.

474 Leśmian, “Żołnierz,” p. 221 [“Marna ze mnie sośnina, lecz piechur nie marny”].

475 For the meaning of apocrypha for literary studies and their defining features, see: Maciej Michalski, *Dyskurs, apokryf, parabola. Strategie filozofowania w prozie współczesnej* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2003), p. 161; Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, pp. 38–39; Maria Adamczyk, “Apokryf,” in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, ed. Teresa Michałowska (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1990), pp. 43–50; Danuta Szajnert, “Mutacje apokryfu,” in: *Genologia dzisiaj*, ed. Włodzimirz Bolecki and Ireneusz Opacki (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2000), pp. 137–159; Tytus Górski, “Apokryf,” *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, Vol. 1 (1958), pp. 193–195.

Twentieth-century literary apocrypha usually refer to the Bible or to religious exegesis, for example, Thomas Mann’s *Joseph and His Brothers* and Roman Brandstaetter’s *Jesus von Nazareth*. Recognized literary works can also be a canon for apocrypha. In this sense, many of Jorge Luis Borges’ works have also been considered apocryphal. Direct references to the apocryphal tradition appear in Hanna Malewska’s *Apokryf rodzinny* [*Family Apocryph*] and Zbigniew Herbert’s “Apokryf” [“Apocryph”] from *Martwa natura z wędzidłem* [*Still Life with a Bridle*]. Also Gustaw Herling-Grudziński’s works that problematize issues of heresy and orthodoxy, truth and fabrication can be considered apocrypha. The poetics of apocrypha is also implemented in Stanisław Lem’s *Apocrypha* and *Dialogs*, Leszek Kołakowski’s *The Key to Heaven: Edifying Tales From Holy Scripture* and *Conversation with the Devil*, Ludwik Koniński’s short story “Wyprawa do ziemi Moryja” [“Journey to the Land of Moriah”] that supplements the story of Abraham and Isaac, and Stefan Themerson’s novel *Cardinal Pölatüo*. This list includes Leśmian’s *Maimed songs*.

the prototype of *kaliki perekhozhie*, known from *byliny*, subjected to idealization and heroization. Leśmian's character does not leave behind temporal pleasures and does not turn his life over to Christ in the literal sense, as tradition dictated, but allies with him when he has no choice, having been rejected by everyone due to his disability. A similar transformation of motivations behind protagonist's actions occurs in "Handless," where he is presented not like the hero but as the victim of his own heroism, blaming his homeland for his imperfection, referred to in the text by the oxymoronic term "ugly beauty."⁴⁷⁶

This grotesque deheroization in the character's construction is also characteristic of Leśmian's poem "Hand" from the same cycle.⁴⁷⁷ Rather than speaking about sacrifice for faith, it introduces the "pangs of beggarly fast." The synonyms of lack and emptiness and related vocabulary are compared with vocabulary associated with excess or even endlessness appearing, in both the material and metaphysical senses. The monstrous hand reaching out for alms is not just a gesture of begging for offerings, but above all, a synecdoche of metaphysical insatiability characteristic of man and of the desire for limitless causative power. The fact that in Leśmian's "Hand" we are dealing with the apocryphal construction of the figure of *kalika* is determined by the use of contamination in two phraseological gestures: to "clench in a fist" and to "clench in prayer." The apostrophe to the hyperbolized Hand, written with a capital letter, repeated three times by the beggar ("Hand, mighty Hand,/ Clench in prayer!") may indicate that a common

476 Городецкий [Gorodetsky], "Безрукий," p. 251 ["красавице-уродне"].

477 "While body in pangs of beggarly fast/ Has shrivelled up to dried mud of fall,/ My hand in growth's willed madness/ Up and through the monstrous vast lustful./ Twisted from scorchings, like a pot empty,/ Pulping joints' brakes, it's grown on me, grown,/ Feeling the fore joy the struck oar will own/ When it dreams in its seede the all vasty sea./ Hand, mighty Hand,/ Clench in prayer!/ Pang, mighty Pang,/ Wane, shrink, tire!// We who've a hand much more than man's measure/ Post haste hence it, or self farther go!/ How we've come from nowhere and how from afar,/ Our hand casts worldwards an inhuman palm shadow!/ The dream flees her in nights, the bird starts in the days/ The girl's breasts can't rest in her tight little land!/ Before her the pedaystrian will pause, all amaze -/ No charity enough for such a great hand./ Hand, mighty Hand,/ Clench in prayer!/ Pang, mighty Pang,/ Wane, shrink, tire!// Across my bones' aching borders she's slid,/ She's translid my soul, my conscience, my bed,/ And I fear - once my face in her's hid,/ From the world now forever I'm fled!// And making the cross - hyperbole sign,/ Madness where vastness too mightily's run,/ She barely draws close by a hair's breadth fine,/ And then - flees to a dark known to none!// Hand, mighty Hand,/ Clench in prayer!/ Pang, mighty Pang,/ Wane, shrink, tire!" [Leśmian, "Hand," p. 156].

gesture of humble prayer, consisting of repenting for sins is, in the case of the hero of the work, only a postulate, and not a manifestation of repentance. An inability to repent was certainly not a typical feature of the traditional structure of *kaliki perekhozhie*, but can be a clear signal of parody. Other symptoms of parody can be found in the following verses: “And making the cross – hyperbole sign,/ Madness where vastness too mightily’s run,/ She barely draws close by a hair’s breadth fine,/ And then – flees to a dark known to none!”⁴⁷⁸ where the hyperbolized religious gesture of the character contrasts with – as signaled with litotes – gradual reduction of the sign of the cross until it disappears completely.

Parody was also known to Gorodetsky, as the author of *kaliki* in the cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*. Good examples are poems “The Cursed” and “Monk.” “The Cursed” reads:

I confused words in my prayers,
I forgot my invocation,
On the outskirts, in cubbyholes
I cut my felted⁴⁷⁹ braid.

A chalice, like a ring of the censer
I took quietly in my hands,
The soul taking on the custom –
It lays with a bottle in the hay.

And after a drinking bout
I notice something –
Unfortunately! Becoming very weak
Is the once-great bass.

Well! Life was an *akathist*,⁴⁸⁰
I could read it, I could,
But suddenly a diabolical *anapaest*
Violently disrupted everything.

I do not dare enter the church,
And the bell does not clang for me,

478 Leśmian, “Hand,” p. 156.

479 In the original: *В чумазый войлок*. *Войлок* is low-quality wool felt used to make *valenki*, for example – traditional Russian winter footwear made of felt. A felt braid is a metaphor for a knotted braid.

480 An Akathist Hymn is a type of a liturgical hymn of praise recited in the Orthodox Church. It is composed of a *kontakion* and an *oikos*, dedicated to the praise of Jesus Christ, the Mother of God and saints, especially martyrs.

But it flows over the meadow carpet,
Unfolding gently in the greenery.

When sober, my soul is in crisis,
When drunk – I don't care!
Oh, a great confusion!
Oh, my poor head!

Rarely do the wings of a *cardamines*⁴⁸¹
Flutter over the quiet grove.
Bating your bitter breath,
You'll shed your tears secretly.

Secretly, between white birch trunks,
In the open green temple,
From torment, from vile people,
You receive salvation in the moss.

There's a whisper from unclean lips –
The rain will wash away in secret –
Like coal from misty swamps,
You will pray again.⁴⁸²

481 In the original, there is a homonymic play of words: *зорька* or *аврора* is a name of a butterfly called *Anthocharis cardamines*, which is also a term for dawn.

482 The original title of the poem ("Расстрига") means a clergyman or monk deprived of his title and banished from priestly service. In the Orthodox Church, such a person is no longer a clergyman. Here is the original version of the work (from 1911): "Слова молитв я перепутал/ И возгласы все позабыл,/ И по задворкам, по закуткам/ В чумазый войлок косу сбрил.// И чаще, чем кольцо кадила/ Когда-то в руки тихо брал,/ Душа обычай заучила/ С бутылью лезть на сеновал.// Но после выпивки обильной/ Я замечаю каждый раз –/ Увы! – неудержимо сильно/ Спадает знаменитый бас.// Что ж делать! Жизнь была – акафист,/ И мог бы, мог бы дочитать,/ Но вдруг, как дьявольский анапест/ Все бурно повернулось вспять.// Не смею я ступить на паперть,/ И колокол не для меня/ На полевую льется скатерть,/ На ласковые зелена.// Когда я трезв, в душе крушенье,/ Когда я пьян – все трын-трава!/ Эх, тесное коловращенье!/ Ох, бедная ты голова!// Бывает редко: крылья зорьки/ Над тихим возмахнут леском./ Затаивая воздух горький,/ Смахнешь слезу себе тайком.// И за стволы березок белых,/ В зеленый, незапретный храм,/ От мытарств, от людей тяжелых,/ Спасешься, крадучись по мхам.// И там, из уст своих нечистых,/ За шепотом скрывая дрожь,/ Как уголек с болотин мглистых/ Опять молитву вознесешь" [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Расстрига," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 252].

The structure of the speaking subject is a parodic reversal of the cultural model that provides the pattern in *kaliki perekhozhie*. The restraint they were renowned for has been replaced in the work by a story about abandoning religious practice and a godly existence (metaphorically referred to in the text as an *akathist*) for an immoderate lifestyle and consuming alcohol. Rather than a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the protagonist chooses to wander alleys on the outskirts of town. The basic principle of the structure of the lyrical subject of the poem is based on contrast and the principle of transformation. The attributes of the character are subject to metamorphosis (a censer for a bottle) and to the space he is in (a barn and nature rather than a church), as is his behavior (he forgets previously recited prayers and invocations, substituting diabolical speech associated in the text with a metrical foot called an *anapaest*). Moreover, the character's lifestyle is subject to a transformation (piety gives way to existential decline), and as a result, the only form of purification available to the protagonist is "salvation in the moss," understood as a union with nature, not salvation in accordance with the Holy Bible.

An analogical transformation of a pious protagonist into a dissolute vagrant can be found in the poetic work "Monk:"

Your body exuded aromas
 And the heat of your kiss
 Complicated my life so much,
 Poisoning my hallelujahs with fumes.

A thorny wreath had already settled atop
 My head, still very young,
 Now salvation was thwarted:
 A good name stained by insults.

Did I now guard my cell closely,
 Did I not chase midnight wraiths,
 Did I not block the serpent from entering my home,
 Did I not shield the depths from doubt!

Misery, however, has snared me from afar!
 In meadows, under a weeping birch,
 On a steep green hill
 I was pierced by a love splinter.

On that meadow out of nowhere
 A *roussalka* or a girl came – mute
 And with devilish joy, she giggles,
 She twines like a snake, raveling like hop.

I uttered three prayers,
 I leaped away, I spat three times –
 Then I followed her, shaggy-haired,
 Behind the bushes, right into a thicketed forest.

What happened there – I'm not allowed to say!
 The *roussalka* bit my lips until blood flowed.
 Ah, are you sweet, the earthly defile,
 I don't regret even Adam's paradise!

Intoxicated,⁴⁸³ I paced my cell,
 I mounted the hill a hundredth time,
 And gazed far into the desert,
 I pressed that splinter deeper and deeper.

So goodbye forever, *skufia*,⁴⁸⁴
*Analogion*⁴⁸⁵ and somber books!
 My happiness has already flown off
 To other living shackles.

I will wander the world free,
 And if I must, I'll be a robber,
 I will love girls so widely
 And will still believe in an unexpected miracle.

I will fight with devilish strength,
 Hunting or fighting every night:
 Let my body be forever wild
 And may the hunters never tire with the hunt.

In the final secret blink of a second,
 So that the mute return,
 I relinquish everything, the prisoner of love,
 Embracing the light of passionate death.⁴⁸⁶

483 In the original, there is the expression *как в дурмане*. *дурман*, *datura* or devil's trumpet is a poisonous hallucinatory plant.

484 *Skufia* is a pointed cap, usually red or purple, an item of clerical attire worn by Orthodox monks, awarded as a mark of honor.

485 *Analogion* is a rectangular table with a slanted top on which the Gospels or icons are placed for adoration by the faithful.

486 The Russian original of the poem "Монах" from 1911 has the following form: "И пахучее тело твое,/ И тепло твоего поцелуя/ Замутили мое житие,/ Зацадили мое аллилуйя.// Был уж виден терновый венец/ Над моей молодой головою,/ А теперь ведь спасенью конец:/ Омрачилось имя молвою.// Я ли кельи своей не стерег,/ Не гонял полунощных видений,/ Не пускал и змеи на порог,/ Не

The term “hallelujahs” used in the poem – a biblical liturgical acclamation used in the call to praise the Lord, or simply a cry of joy – is replaced in the statement of the lyrical subject by bitter reveries and reflection with a character of an examination of conscience. The monk’s attributes listed in the text, such as the thorny crown worn to commemorate the martyrdom of Christ, called a “thorny wreath” in the poem, the shackles (*Bepuzi* in the original) symbolizing faith, penitence and mortifying, *analogion* and *skufia*, are signs of past existence, now gone forever. The previous abstinent life of the protagonist in a monastic cell is contrasted in the poem with carnal pleasures in the remoteness of the forest, projecting love adventures and conquests, a rogue life and aimless wandering until death. The motivation for such a radical transformation of the protagonist – as in the later Leśmian poem “Courtship” – is erotic temptation associated with femininity. In the Gorodetsky work, the female figure was modeled on a *roussalka*, a half-demonic being who giggles with “devilish joy” (*хохочет чертей веселей*), and sharing intimacy with her is a “passionate death.”

In turn, in the poem “Courtship”⁴⁸⁷ that has just been mentioned, a bare-foot girl out in the yard becomes the personification of sensual temptation. The

хранил глубины от сомнений!// Все ж настигла беда вдалеке!// У полей, под плакучей березой,/ На зеленом, крутом бугорке/ Занозился любовно занозой.// И откуда взялась у полей/ Не русалка, не девка – немая,/ А хохочет чертей веселей,/ Льнет змеєю, как хмель обнимая.// Я молитву трикраты прочел,/ Очурался и плюнул трикраты –/ И за нею, косматой, пошел/ За кусты, прямо в лес кудреватый.// Что там было – и вспомнить нельзя!// Губы в кровь искусила русалка./ Ох, сладка ты, земная стезя,/ Коль Адамова рая не жалко!// Как в дурмане по келье хожу,/ На бугор по сто раз залезаю,/ И пустынные дали гляжу,/ И занозу все глубже вознаю.// Так прощай же навеки, скуфья,/ Аналой и печальные книги!// Упорхнула судьбина моя/ Под иные живые вериги.// Буду по миру вольно бродить/ И разбойником, стало быть, буду,/ Встречных девушек люто любить/ И все верить нежданному чуду.// Девью силу я буду бороться/ Что ни ночь, то охота иль битва:/ Пусть без срока безумствует плоть,/ Пусть ловца не замучит ловитва.// Чтоб в последний таинственный миг,/ Как мне явится снова немая,/ Все отдав ей, любовью изник,/ Смерть страстную светло принимаю [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], “Монах,” in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 253–254].

487 Leśmian’s poem “Courtship” has the following form: “Legless beggar, to a wheelchair slowly moving/ Fixed like a weed to a rolling roost,/ To the horror of pale passers-by and a problem in the street,/ Caring dutifully for the burden his body makes,/ Turns the crank as if on a lyre in the rain/ He played his jumpy rattling to the sky –/ And on steep shores of rainbow troughs/ He rolls in the reflection of sudsy clouds,/ He rolls,

misled, to a girl from a yard,/ To that haven of bare feet – and reveals his soul/ From
 beneath rags and shoves out his hand/ Towards her snow-white teeth and says to her/
 'I love the scraps of your muddy skirt,/ I love your loud breath! On the entire lane/ You
 are the only one I need for my lips!/ I know my longing, like a pregnant nag,/ Drags me
 and will give birth to new torment./ This is my triumph, that I kneel tirelessly/ Before
 your beauty! Love me! Caress me! A monster begs you for it! Accept my courtship!/
 Enter naked and shameless the homelessness of my misery/ And caress me to devour
 my frailty with your lips'// She resists,/ And he says to her/ 'One must love what has
 already happened, doesn't one?/ And this martyr's wheelchair and painful crank,/ And
 lust in the remnants of the body, conceived, like in debris,/ And this human scrap that
 wants to be bait!/ Reveal charms in my ugliness! Come from the heights to a dwarf!/
 Obey my hands, like the blind or the deceased!/ I can be irresistible, like sin or doom,/
 And I can with the efforts of a clever crippled body/ Caress you sweetly, like cherries/
 That nobody has yet seen in a dream!// She is resisting him,/ And he says to her/ 'Is it
 not enough for you to have a half a man to make your treasure?/ I want to be a loved
 wound for you, a faithful hump!// Is the void created by the absence of my legs,/ Not
 filled with pain, love and the moan of my wilderness?/ It makes me laugh! Oh, if I could
 strike the endless earth/ Once in my life with a healthy, strong heel/ And see how it
 looks, trodden beneath my foot!/ I rush into infinity! I know it wants me/ And that it
 will consume my rags and sorrows with no disgust./ Somewhere are hands that want
 me and lips – corals,/ That will venture from the head in an eager caress/ Towards feet
 that are not there! Let the cart move/ Off the road – where afar someone/ Whoever,
 animal or worm, awaits my love.'// She resists him,/ And he moves towards the afterlife,/
 Her charm encourage him to pain,/ And he looks, not looking, and turns the crank/
 And drives off – leaves – anywhere – hurriedly,/ Whirring and whirring, awkward and
 funny,/ He drives off, crippling, to search in pain,/ Towards countries filled with love
 adventures and eternal unrest" ["Nędzacz bez nóg, do wózka na żmudne rozpędy/
 Przytwierdzony, jak zielsko do ruchomej grzędę,/ Zgroza białych przechodniów i ulic
 zakała,/ Obsługując starannie brzemię swego ciała,/ Kręci korbę, jak gdyby na lirze
 w czas słoty/ Wygrywał swoje skoczne ku niebu turkoty –/ I nad brzegiem urwistym
 tężawych rynsztoków/ Toczy się wraz z odbiciem zmydlonych obłoków,/ Toczy się
 bałamutnie do dziewczki z podwórze,/ Do przystani stóp bosych – i ducha wynurza/ Z
 łachmanów i wyciąga paździozy swych dłoni/ Ku jej zębom śnieżystym i tak mówi
 do niej/ »Kocham strzęp twojej błotem zbryzganej spódnicy,/ Kocham głośny twój
 oddech! Na całej ulicy/ Ty jedynie mym ustom bywasz tak potrzebna!/ Wiem, że moja
 tęsknota, niby szkapa żrebną,/ Wlekąc mię, wyda na świat płód nowych udręczeń./ W
 tym mój tryumf, że jestem niestrudzony kłęczę! Twjej kraszy! Kochajże mnie! Nuże do
 pieśzczyoty!/ Potwór błaga cię o nią! Przyjm moje zaloty!/ Wnijdz naga i bezwstydną w
 mej nędzy bezdomność/ I tak pieść, by wargami pożreć mą ułomność!«// Ona mu się
 broni,/ A on mówi do niej/ »Wszak musi ktoś pokochać to, co już się stało?/ I ten wózek
 męczeński i korbę zbolałą,/ I żądzę w resztkach cielska, jak w zgłiszczach, poczętą,/ I ten ochłap człowieka, co chce być przynętą!/ Odsłoń czar w mej brzydocie! Znijdz
 z wyżyn do karła!/ Bądź posłuszna mym dłoniom, jak ślepa lub zmarła!/ Zdołam być

construction of the character of the *kalika* is based here on the parodist-apocryphal story about the condition of a defective protagonist, whose crippling (pilgrimage) is no longer sacred but resembles existential wandering and striving for a specific eternity identified with transcendence, carnally and erotically understood. In Leśmian's poem, in the construction of the *kalika*, the need for love contrasts with synonyms and metaphorical descriptions of wear, destruction, decay and mediocrity, accumulated in their description. The poem is dominated by vocabulary including "troughs," "rags," "hand shives," "mud," "remnants of the body," "debris," "body scraps," "scraps of cloth."⁴⁸⁸ The crank drive of the wheelchair of the cripple is compared to the lever setting into action a hurdy-gurdy [*колесная лира*], an instrument used by traveling performers. In the aforementioned poem, the *kalika* was described as hungry for love and the caressing monstrous pauper, presented in a naturalistically literal way. Moreover, in the statements of the protagonist, who wants to become a wound and a hump for a girl from the yard, the language of eroticism coexists and often even identifies with the aesthetics of the macabre: "And caress me," he says, "to devour my frailty with your lips! [...] Obey my hands like the blind or the deceased!"⁴⁸⁹ The condition of the figure of the *kalika* and the statements he makes contrast in the poem with the description of his behavior at the narrative level. It is said of him

nieodparty, jako grzech i zguba,/ I potrafię wysiłkiem zmyślnego kadłuba/ Zdobyć się na pieśczoły słodkie, jak czereśnie,/ Których dotąd nikt nigdy nie oglądał we śnie!«// Ona mu się broni,/ A on mówi do niej/ »Małoż ci pół człowieka, by stał się twym skarbem?/ Chcę być drogą ci raną, wiernym tobie garbem!/ Czyż próżni, którą nóg mych nieobecność tworzy,/ Nie zapełni ból, miłość ni jęk mych bezdroży?/ Śmiech mię bierze! O, gdybym ziemię nieobjętą/ Mógł uderzyć raz w życiu zdrową, silną piętą/ I widzieć, jak zdeptana pod stopą wygląda!/ Spieszno mi w nieskończoność! Wiem, że mnie pożąda/ I bez wstępu spożyje me łachy i żale./ Są gdzieś dłonie mi chętne i usta – korale,/ Co od głów się przesuną w pieśczołocie ochoczej/ Aż do stóp, których nie ma! Niech wóz się potoczy/ Na przełaj – tam, gdzie właśnie ode mnie z daleka/ Ktokolwiek, zwierz lub robak, na mą miłość czeka«// Ona mu się broni,/ A on w zaświat troni,/ Ona go swoim czarem do bólu zachęca,/ A on patrzy, nie patrząc, i korbę pokręca/ I odjeżdża – odjeżdża – gdziekolwiek – pośpiesznie,/ Furkocząc a furkocząc niezgrabnie i śmiesznie,/ Odjeżdża, kalekując, w poszukiwań znoje,/ W kraje przygód miłosnych, w wieczne niepokoje»] [Leśmian, "Zaloty," p. 215.]

488 Leśmian, "Zaloty," p. 2015 ["rynsztoki," "łachmany," "paździozy dłoni," "błoto," "resztki cielska," "zgliścza," "ochłap ciała," "łachy"].

489 Leśmian, "Zaloty," p. 2015 ["I tak pieść [...] by wargami pożreć mą ułomność! [...] Bądź posłuszna mym dłoniom, jak ślepa lub zmarła!"].

that he “played his jumpy rattling to the sky [...] on the steep shore of rainbow troughs.”⁴⁹⁰ This inconsistency of the style of the description to its subject results in the “relieving” of the dark and apocryphal content rendered in the poem.

The protagonist on the road

Characteristic of the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*, the theme of wandering appears in most of Gorodetsky’s works, including in the cycle *Kaliki-kalek* (I have in mind the works “Giving Away Youth” [“Отдание молодости”], “Handless,” [“Безрукий”], “The Cursed” [“Расстрига”], “Monk” [“Монах”], “Wolf” [“Волк”], “The Night” [“Ночь”], “The Wise Dead” [“Умный покойник”] and in most all of Leśmian’s works from the cycle *Maimed songs* (particularly the poems “Courtship,” “Soldier,” “The Hunchback”). However, this theme is subject to a significant transformation in the poetic work of both authors. Often the wandering ceases to be a choice, and neither is it a religious imperative, but it appears to be an existential compulsion or – more often – a sign of desperation. For example: the protagonist of “The Hunchback,”⁴⁹¹ reduced to one element

490 Leśmian, “Zaloty,” p. 2015 [“wygrywał swoje skoczne ku niebu turkoty [...] nad brzegiem urwistym tęczowych rynsztoków”].

491 “The hunchback is dying most favorably:/ In good weather and Indian summer./ He indeed had a hunchbacked life,/ And his death is quite hunchbacked.// He dies on the road, shrouded in mist,/ As if he was resolving a tough tale,/ And did nothing in his life,/ But to haul and haul his hump.// He begged and danced with this hump,/ He meditated and imagined with this hump,/ He lulled it to sleep on his back,/ He fed it with his own blood.// And now he treasures death,/ He stares deep into its darkness,/ Only the hump is humping,/ He lives and grows in secret.// He has outlived his camel/ By a moment the equal of his body,/ The dead person gazes at darkness/ And him – butterflies in the sun.// And to the dead porter/ He says, looming with his burden:/ ‘What can your persistence mean,/ Did you fall across my path?// Did you hurt your knees in the mist?// Did you crush your legs with sleep?// Why have you taken me on your shoulders/ Only to lose your way *en route*?// Why have you poked your head in the shadows?/ I barely fit on your shoulders!/ I am curious, you awfully lazy man,/ Where will you haul me next?’” [“Mrze garbus dosyć korzystnie:/ W pogodę i babie lato./ Garbaty żywot miał istnie,/ I śmierć ma istnie garbatą.// Mrze w drodze, w mgieł upowiciu,/ Jakby baśń trudną rozstrzygał,/ A nic nie robił w tym życiu,/ Jeno garb dźwigał i dźwigał.// Tym garbem żebrał i tańczył,/ Tym garbem dumal i roił,/ Do snu na plecach go nianczył,/ Krwią własną karmił i poił.// A teraz śmierć sobie skarbi,/ W jej mrok wydłużył już szyję,/ Jeno garb jeszcze się garbi,/ Pokątnie żyje i tyje.// Przeżył swojego wielbłąda/ O równą swej tuszy chwilę,/ Nieboszczyk ciemność ogląda,/ A on – te w słońcu motyle.// I do zmarłego dźwigacza/ Powiada, grożąc swą kłoda:/ »Co ten twój upór oznacza,/ Żeś

of his physiognomy (as with the cripple in Leśmian's "Hand"), then identified with it, cannot finish his existential wanderings even at the end of his life for his hunch's demand to be carried farther. In addition to life on the road, metaphorically understood life, and carrying a burden, the hunchback is connected with other *kaliki* by Leśmian by physical disability and an alms beggar's condition. As we read in the work: "He begged and danced with this hump,/ He meditated and imagined with this hump,/ He lulled it to sleep on his back,/ He fed it with his own blood."⁴⁹² It is relevant to note that when related to the discussed poem, the overall cycle title has a double meaning. On one hand, its connotations with disability appear obvious; on the other, it actualizes metaphorical associations associated with *kalikowanie*. In this case, it turns out to be a journey into the afterlife with a hump on one's back. In Leśmian's poems "The Hunchback" and "Hand" and in Gorodetsky's works including "Giving Away Youth"⁴⁹³ and "The

w poprzek leęł mi przegrodą?// Czyś w mgle potracił kolana?/ Czyś snem pomiażdżył swe nogi?/ Po coś mię brał na barana,/ By zgubić drogę w pół drogi?// Czemuś łbem utkwiał na cieniu?/ Z trudem w twych barach się mieszczyć!/ Ciekawym, wieczysty leniu,/ Dokąd poniesiesz mnie jeszcze?«[”] [Bolesław Leśmian, "Garbus," in: *Dzieła wszystkie*, Vol. 1: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 218.]

492 Leśmian, "Garbus," p. 218 ["Tym garbem żebrał i tańczył,/ Tym garbem dumiał i roił,/ Do snu na plecach go niańczył,/ Krwią własną karmił i poił"].

493 The poem "Giving Away Youth" reads:

"I hid you in dense thickets,/ Oh, youth!/ But like a stone from the enemy's sling –/ I remember the youthful age.// The forest groaned to the sound of my shovel,/ A wild horse *kwewki* broke loose,/ Like all sunsets and my sunset/ Burns with fire and weeping.// And I threw a plump lump of earth,/ With no fear or sound,/ Like an apprentice of homelessness,/ Traveling across the world in search of alms.// I unharnessed the horse, let him go far/ His cruel anger./ Baptized with the first pain,/ I collapsed amid dormant trees.// And when I rose, I daydreamed constellations/ Bright, a watchful self/ Predicted vengeful laws,/ And by rights the night fell" ["Я схоронил тебя в дремучей чаще,/ О молодость моя!/ Но как кремни из вражьей пращи –/ Мне память младобытия.// Стонал и лес под звон моей лопаты,/ И рвался ярый конь,/ И мой закат, как все закаты,/ Рыдая, алый жег огонь.// А я бросал земли взрыхленной комья,/ Бесстрашный и немой,/ Как истый, вскормленник бездомья,/ Пошедший по миру с сумой.// И, разнуздав коня, пустил в раздолье/ Его звериный гнев./ И, окрещенный первой болью,/ Упал меж дремлющих дерев./ Когда же встал, свисали в явь созвездья,/ И зоркая сова/ Вещала правоту возмездья,/ И ночь настать была права"] [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Отдание молодости," in: *Избранные*

Night,” there is also a common motive of “traveling across the world in search of alms.”

In almost all works included in both cycles (with the exception of Leśmian’s “The Poor Cobbler” and Gorodetsky’s “The Poet”) referring to the tradition of *kaliki perekhoznie*, the journey motif coexists with variously implemented aesthetics of death. In Leśmian’s “Courtship” and in Gorodetsky’s “Monk,” these identify with the search for transcendence associated with erotic experience. In Leśmian’s “Soldier,” a journey into the afterlife is presented as limping jumps defined as “leaping to the very sky.”⁴⁹⁴ In “The Hunchback,” which is about a journey through life by a *kalika-kaleka* bearing his unwanted burden, one could say his journey came to an end with the death of the title character, but for the fact that his hump, still living, does not want to come to terms with the agony of “his porter.”⁴⁹⁵

A death identified – more conventionally than in Leśmian’s case – with the literally understood final stage of a temporal journey is present in Gorodetsky’s work “The Wise Dead” (1912). It reads:

A light breeze cast a leaf.
A strong wind blew through life.
They carry a yellow coffin.
A frightened horse neighed.

So, light a lantern,
And firmly fix a nail!
And in a fit of anger,
At least whip the horse!

A light breeze casts
Sins in your hands.
Darkness opened its jaws,
The road to heavens opens.

“Choose the path!
It’s time to take you back.”
– “To a hill made of mounds,
Anywhere.

произведения, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), p. 250.

Importantly, in the poem above, the *kalika perekhozny* defines himself as an “apprentice of homelessness” [“вскормленник бездомья”].

494 Leśmian, “Żołnierz,” p. 221 [“doskoczenia do samego nieba”].

495 Leśmian, “Garbus,” p. 218 [“swojego dźwigacza”].

Choose any path,
 Thrust me anywhere:
 From this earth, from any place
 I do not care to leave!⁴⁹⁶

The end and the goal of the *kalika*'s journey is one and the same. It is "a hill made of mounds" that many paths lead to. When one reaches this place, all that remains is "the road to heavens." The aesthetics of death, identified with departure from the world, is manifested in the work, for instance, by a conventionalized metaphor that associates the last moments of life with falling leaves. In turn, darkness, metaphorically identified with agony, was shown using the convention of horror. It is presented in an animated way as "opening its jaws." In another Gorodetsky poetic text, "The Night" from 1911, dedicated to G.I. Cz<u>lkowow>, the lyrical subject describes himself as a wandering child. The motif of the journey coexists here with the thanatic sphere, which is associated with the time of infancy by the use of ambiguity obtained thanks to the introduction, among others, of the phrase *в пелене*, which means a shroud but also a diaper or infancy. The poem reads:

Where have you, the sun been abandoned in the evening?
 And why am I dying in your bright dawn?

They flow again when the long dark night arrives!
 One's own weeping and the weight of spread wings!

Dogs do not howl. People have fallen silent in houses,
 And a sleepy mist gently embraces floral lips.

The drunk is right: there hasn't been wine for too time
 for my soul to get truly drunk on.

I will walk slowly down the streets,
 And will turn onto an awfully gray path.

Maybe the beggar will bother me
 And someone else under night's cover.

496 The original form of Gorodetsky's poem "The Wise Dead" reads: "Ветер лист сорвал./ Вихорь жизнь задул./ Желтый гроб везут./ Ярый конь заржал./ Зажигай фонарь./ Забивай же гвоздь! Да срывая злость./ Хоть коня ударь!// Ветер сыплет лист./ Все грехи в руках./ Пасть разинул мрак./ Путь на небо чист./ »Выбирай же путь! Отвозить пора«. / – »На бугор с бугра./ Хоть куда-нибудь./ На любом пути/ Где-нибудь свали./ Никуда с земли/ Не хочу уйти!« [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Умный покойник," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 257–258.

And my mixing paddle⁴⁹⁷ will rattle on the board
The dormant longing of the night watch.

Stars will spill forth like an apple blossom
With neither twigs nor roots.

To eavesdrop on lullabies by the window,
A wandering child greatly enjoys!

A female beggar will press me to her dry breast.
And the one in a shroud will sing quietly.⁴⁹⁸

Her song will be very similar to mine
My favorite, my local song-lullaby.

Earth, rock your three night children
In these gorges of the world, in midnight rays!

There the sun, so distant, forays into colder spheres.
Here, for hidden sadness, no terrestrial measures exist.⁴⁹⁹

In the poem quoted above, phrases associated with death overlap with phrases associated with childhood. The lyrical subject, the *kalika perekhozhy* – who is desperately wandering the world – states: “To eavesdrop on lullabies by the window/ A wandering child greatly enjoys!” Moreover, the songs of death are

497 *Колотушка* is a wood kitchen tool for mixing various dishes, such as batter.

498 In the original, there is a play on words: the phrase *в пелене* means “in a shroud” and “in a diaper.”

499 Here is the original of the poem “The Night” with the dedication “Г.И. Ч<улкову>:”
“Куда заброшено ты солнце ввечеру?/ И отчего с зарей твоей я, светлый, мру?// Как будет ночь длинна, темна! Опять плывет/ Совиный плач и крыльев распростертых гнет!// Не воют псы. И люди смолкли по домам,/ И влага сонная к цветочным льнет устам.// Кто пьян теперь, тот прав. Но нет давно вина,/ Которым бы моя душа была пьяна.// Я буду медленно по улицам ходить/ И жуткого пути седую нить сучить.// Увяжется, быть может, нищая за мной/ И кто-нибудь еще – под темной пеленой.// А колотушка выколотит о доску/ Ночного сторожа дремучую тоску.// А звезды высыпят как яблонный цвет,/ Которому ни веток нет ни корня нет.// Подслушать песню колыбельную в окне/ Так хорошо бродячему ребенку мне!// И нищая к груди сухой меня прижмет./ А та что в пелене тихонько запоет.// А будет песнь ее похожа на мою/ Любимую родную баюшки баю.// Качай земля троих ночных детей своих/ В лучах полуночных в теснинах мировых!// Там солнце дальше несется в холод сфер/. Здесь скорби замкнутой земных не стало мер” [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], “Ночь,” in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 255–256.

called here “song-lullabies.” In the penultimate distich, this concept is repeated in an apostrophe to the earth: “Earth, rock your three night children/ In these gorges of the world, in midnight rays!” Ambiguity that simultaneously brings to mind birth and death is also present in the sentence: “A female beggar will press me to her dry breast.” The “pressing against breasts” mentioned in the text may be associated with hugging a child and breastfeeding, an erotic gesture, or with approaching death, as indicated by the epithet “dry” accompanying “breast.”

In the case of Gorodetsky’s poem “Wolf,” where an animal protagonist is poetically characterized as a predator, murderer and terrorizer of the entire neighborhood, the purpose of wandering is associated, first, with seeking prey, and second, with the end of the wolf’s life:

I have a wolf’s maw⁵⁰⁰ and wolfish manners,
I’m a good wolf, with thick fur.
I howl like a bird singing beautifully,
It would have made sense if I was him.

In the warm smell of blood they for me are equals,
Any hen or sheep.
So, I gain fame as a wolf
Many *versts* away, against my will.

My sight grows weak in daylight,
But my eyes always gleam in the dark.
When you walk by a hut on the outskirts,
Dogs are cowardly and silent in the yards.

I rule undivided over country and forest,
I rule almost omnipotently here.
But my soul weakens sometimes,
So things can then silence me.

There is a door at the world’s brink, out in the wilderness,
Which smells of blood, I don’t remember whose.
Misfortunes – I still see them –
Are worse than country pitchforks!

I am set to range the marshes, in sputum,
I would be happy to leap ravines,
If I only need not cross that threshold,
Or look at it awry.

500 *Волчья пасть.*

And after escaping, I tremble in fear, in the forest
 I cannot remember everything.
 And I pretend to laugh,
 I lie to all creatures and to myself.

And I get famished sometimes,
 I can't let my chops dry.
 And furious, wild,
 I drink, I tear, I drink, I tear.

And when my life comes to its end,
 I will prowls my entire estate
 And at that threshold that persecuted me my whole life,
 I will come to die, shaking.⁵⁰¹

The wolf's journey was identified in the poem with his final path, leading to the house beyond the threshold of which terrible events happened to the protagonist. Their character and motivation, however, have been subjected to ellipses. The reader only learns from the text that those incidents were worse than being stabbed with pitchforks, which the rural community uses to defend themselves and their animals from wolves. Possibly, the use of the artistic means of ellipses in the work was meant to suggest to the reader that the protagonist has already been in the place being described and that he barely escaped with his life. The final moments of his life are identified with approaching that threshold – the

501 The text of "Wolf" from 1912 in the original form: "Я, с волчьей пастью и повадкой волчьей,/ Хороший, густошерстый волк./ И вою так, что, будь я птицей певчей,/ Наверное бы вышел толк.// Мне все равны теплом пахучим крови –./ Овечья, курья или чья./ И к многоверстной волчьей славе/ Невольно приближаюсь я.// Глаза мои тусклы при белом свете,/ Но в темноте всегда блестят,/ Когда идешь себе к окраинной хате/ И, струсив, псы в дворах молчат.// Я властелин над лесом и сельщобой,/ Я властелин почти над всем./ Но и моя душа бывает слабой,/ Мне есть умолкнуть перед чем.// Есть дверь одна в каком-то захолустье,/ И пахнет кровью – чьей забыл./ Мне увидеть ее – несчастье/ Похуже деревенских вил.// Я в мокроте готов бежать болотом,/ Я по оврагам рад скакать,/ Чтоб на пороге ни ногою этим,/ Ни даже глазом не бывать.// И, ускакав, дрожу в лесу от страха/ И вспомнить всё же не могу./ И, заливаясь, будто бы от смеха,/ Себе и всякой твари лгу.// И лют бываю, как заголодалый,/ Обсохнуть пасти не даю./ Как бешеный, как очумелый,/ Деру и пью, деру и пью.// И всё ж, когда конец житью настанет,/ Я все владенья обойду/ И на порог, откуда в жизни гонит,/ Шатаясь, издыхать приду" [Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], "Волк," in: *Избранные произведения*, Vol. 1: *Стихотворения* (Москва: Художественная литература, 1987), pp. 254–255].

space bordering temporal existence and death. In Gorodetsky's poem, this wolf journey to the end is voluntary, unlike the final journey of human protagonists from Gorodetsky's cycle *Kaliki-kaleki*; it seems to be a sign of understanding the laws of nature and consenting unconditionally to them.

Pilgrimage kaliki-kaleki?

Although in the titles of their cycles Leśmian and Gorodetsky referred to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*, they did not reproduce it faithfully but transformed the motives behind the journey of the protagonist, often in a way that is parodist-apocryphal, deheroized or metaphorical. As I have already mentioned, *kaliki perekhozhie* traveled for religious purposes. Their pilgrimage was their hallmark.⁵⁰² The Old Testament prototype of pilgrimage is the journey of Abraham⁵⁰³ and the exodus of the chosen nation.⁵⁰⁴ Jesus as a child also traveled to Jerusalem. The most common destination for pilgrims was the Holy Land. They also traveled to places of worship of Christ, the Mother of God or saints, with the intention of thanksgiving, penance or begging. However, the characters in Gorodetsky's and Leśmian's works (with the exception of the characters from the poetic text "The Poor Cobbler") usually do not offer thanks for the received graces (the collective subject in Gorodetsky's poems "Song" and "The Vii" and the protagonist of "Poet" do not see themselves granted with grace). They are rarely able to repent (as evidenced by the protagonists of Leśmian's "Hand" and "Courtship" and Gorodetsky's works "Monk" or "Wolf"), and they ask for nothing. Even if their journey – as in Leśmian's "Soldier" – gains a religious character, initially this has nothing to do with religion. There are also parodic characters who indeed search for *sacrum*, but they identify it – similarly to the protagonist of Leśmian's "Courtship" – with transcendence as sensually understood. Gorodetsky's and Leśmian's *kaliki perekhozhie* succumb to carnal temptations, aim for satisfaction, and eagerly abandon the godly and ascetic lifestyle. Their earthly journey, for example in Gorodetsky's poem "Wolf" resembles neither a path to the kingdom of heaven nor the road to conversion. Its character is usually not apostolic either – with the exception of Leśmian's "Soldier" and

502 In Islam, the model of pilgrimage and one of the five pillars of faith is a religious journey to Mecca. The faithful also go on a pilgrimage to Muhammad's grave in Medina.

503 See: Bible, Old Testament, Genesis, chapter 12 and the following.

504 See: Bible, Old Testament, Book of Psalms, Psalm 136, verses 10–26.

“The Poor Cobbler” – tried-and-tested protagonists speak of betraying Christian faith instead of proclaiming it.

However, if we understand the phrases *kalekujące pieśni* [“crippling songs”] and *kaliki-kaleki* in a metaphorical, non-literal way, it may turn out that the wandering of characters depicted in the poems is a defective, deheroized and crippled pilgrimage, as with the characters. In Gorodetsky’s poetic texts, *kalikowanie/kalekowanie* has an existential, natural and even cosmic character. *Kalikuję/kalekuję* are not only humans and animals, but also constellations (“Poet”). In Leśmian’s poetry, the heroes *kalikuję/kalekuję* both during life and after death (like the hunchback of the title). In these works, even God can *kalikować/kalekować*, since the lame protagonist of the poetic text “The Poor Cobbler” makes a pair of shoes for the Creator. He is the only character from the cycle *Maimed songs* [*Pieśni kalekujące*] who sends a thanksgiving prayer and offers a sacrifice to God, by saying:

Thus blessed be the trade,
From whose creative might
Such shoes are being made
On such a silver night!

God of the clouds, God of all the dew,
Take this bounteous gift I am giving Thee,
Lest Thou walk unshod, all barefooted-through
The heavenly azures that could hurt Thy feet!⁵⁰⁵

By defining his life of a beggar as “an existence slice” and by identifying it with a journey, the protagonist attempts to beseech the Creator with the following words:

Lord, in sooth Thou gav’st me an existence slice,
For my path of life that crumb shall suffice,
Lord, I pray, pardon me my poorness excuse –
I can give Thee nothing except for these shoes.⁵⁰⁶

It seems significant that both in Gorodetsky’s poems and in the works of Leśmian, there is a clear rejection of moralistic tendencies in the creation of *kaliki perekhozhie*. In contrast to the role they play in the tradition, they cease in the work of both poets to serve as a model of a man, and their weaknesses are exposed rather than heroic deeds and behaviors far from those that could be in line with ascetic ideals.

505 Leśmian, “The Poor Cobbler,” p. 49.

506 Leśmian, “The Poor Cobbler,” p. 49.

Homologies or filiations?

Despite the differences between works that were included in Gorodetsky's cycle *Kaliki-kaleki* and Leśmian's cycle *Maimed songs*, there are a large number of similarities in structure, themes and style of the works under study. After reading these texts, the question arises: are we dealing with the result of homology or filiation? This research problem can also be formulated in a different way: did Leśmian read Gorodetsky's poems from the *Kaliki-kaleki* cycle? Are traces from this prospective reading reflected in his own work? While the existence of a common prototype to which these two authors referred seems indisputable, there is no direct evidence that Leśmian was familiar with Gorodetsky's poems before writing his *Maimed songs*. If we take into consideration numerous correspondences in references to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*, we cannot exclude that possibility, especially since both poets published in the journal *Golden Fleece*, and Gorodetsky, about a dozen years after the publication of Leśmian's collection *The Meadow*, translated two works from the collection: the ballad "Whirlus and Twirlus"⁵⁰⁷ and the poem "W polu" ["In the Field"]⁵⁰⁸. In the case of those translations, the existence of direct artistic relations between the poets is unquestionable.

And with regard to references to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie*, in the poems of both poets, the presence of filiations connecting them must remain hypothetical today. It is more certain to speak of important homologies, the recognition of which allows us to appreciate the importance of not only intercultural contexts, but also inter-generational contexts in the process of shaping artistic individualities. These contexts and the accompanying themes – later creatively developed by Leśmian – were present not only in Russian literature of the early twentieth century

507 The translation was first printed as: Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Свидрига и Мидрига," *Литературная газета*, No. "специальный номер по священный литературе и культуре Польской республики" (18.07.1935), p. 2; <https://vivaldi.nlr.ru/pn000011010/view/>, last accessed 28.08.2019 [reprint: Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Свидрига и Мидрига," in: *Безлюдная баллада, или Слова для песни без слов. Поэзия. Театр. Проза*, ed. Андрей Базилевский [Andrey Bazilevsky] (Москва: Рипол Классик, WSH w Pułtusku, Вахазар, 2006), pp. 119–121]. For Gorodetsky's translation, see: Наталия Богомолова, [Natalia Bogomolova], "Баллада Лесьмяна 'Свидрига и Мидрига' и ее русский перевод," in: *Польско-русские литературные связи* (Москва: Наука, 1970), p. 159.

508 See: Bolesław Leśmian, "В поле," in: *Безлюдная баллада, или Слова для песни без слов. Поэзия. Театр. Проза*, ed. Андрей Базилевский [Andrey Bazilevsky] (Москва: Рипол Классик, WSH w Pułtusku, Вахазар, 2006), pp. 105–106.

(for example, in the poems of Gorodetsky), but also in the literature of the late nineteenth century. In support of this thesis, and as a conclusion to my reflections devoted to *kaliki perekhozhie* as created by the three poets Yesenin, Gorodetsky and Leśmian, it is worth quoting a work written in 1899 by Konstantin Balmont. The text is entitled “Уроды. Сонет” [“Monsters: A Sonnet”].

I painfully love all of you, monsters,
The blind, the poor cripples and hunchbacks,
Whose life has been sealed by fate with valves,
Boats smashed by wave play.

And you, dear to me, serious freaks
Of nature, a bad mother, like spotted scats:
The repellant, sick family of vipers and lizards,
And you, cowbanes, thistles and cacti!

Leprosy, plague, misery, crimes, filth, hunger,
Sodom and Gomorrah, ghost towns,
Greedy hopes with bloodthirsty fangs –

– And for you there is room in my prayers:
In the name of Christ, glorified everywhere,
Oh, bless you, may you be happy!⁵⁰⁹

In Russian, the word *уроды* is used to describe human beings with such deformed bodies that considered terribly ugly. Balmont’s sonnet with that title was stylized as a prayer for creatures flawed in both physical and spiritual senses, precisely similar to Leśmian’s later lyrical heroes (“the blind, the poor cripples and hunchbacks blind, poor critters and hunchbacks,”) including characters from the cycle *Maimed songs*.

509 The original reads: “Я горько вас люблю, о бедные уроды,/ Слепорожденные, хромые, горбуны,/ Убогие рабы, не знавшие свободы,/ Ладьи, разбитые веселостью волны.// И вы мне дороги, мучительные сны/ Жестокой матери, безжалостной Природы,/ Кривые кактусы, побегу белены,/ И змей и ящериц отверженные роды.// Чума, проказа, тьма, убийство и беда,/ Гоморра и Содом, слепые города,/ Надежды хищные с раскрытыми губами, -// О, есть же и для вас в молитве череда!/ Во имя Господа, блаженного всегда,/ Благословляю вас, да будет счастье с вами!” [Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], “Уроды. Сонет,” in: *Полное собрание стихов*, Vol. 2 (Москва: Издательство Скорпион, 1914), pp. 80-81.



Genre and structural modifications, thematic references, lexical repetitions (Leśmian's poetry and Ukrainian culture and folklore)

Ukrainian culture and folklore in Leśmian's poetry?

In his introduction to Bolesław Leśmian's *Poezje wybrane* [*Selected poetry*], Jacek Trznadel expresses his conviction that Leśmian's youth spent in what is today Ukraine (for almost twenty-two years) must have had an impact on his work.⁵¹⁰ To support his thesis, Trznadel quotes Leśmian's statement from an interview "Dialogi akademickie – w niepojętej zieloności. Rozmowa z Bolesławem Leśmianem" ["Academic Dialogues – in inconceivable greenness: An interview with Bolesław Leśmian"] with Edward Boyé:

This inconceivable greenness is Ukraine, where I grew up. [...] Humańszczyzna and Białocerkiewszczyzna, Zofiówka and Szamrajówka. Branicki's woods were there, oh dear, what woods! A forester called Uncle Agane grew bushes of the most beautiful roses in the depths of the forest, the smell of which mixed with the smell of sap. [...] People in Ukraine were strange, as strange as the greenery there.⁵¹¹

Boyé – a researcher who contributed greatly to Leśmian studies – wrote in this case about unspecified "intellectual and artistic influences" and "Ukrainian landscapes and realities" reproduced in Leśmian's literary *oeuvre*. However, he did not argue further for that thesis, but noted that Leśmian's poetry is by principle ahistorical and non-geographical. These enigmatic observations did not prevent Trznadel from stating that Leśmian could be included in the group of poets of the so-called Polish Ukrainian school, also represented by the Romantics Antoni Malczewski, Seweryn Goszczyński, Józef Bohdan Zaleski and Juliusz Słowacki (for example, in *Beniowski, Książdz Marek* [*Father Marek*], *Silver Dream of Salomea*, "Odpowiedź na 'Psalmy przyszłości'" ["Response to the 'Psalms of the Future'"]), and in the twentieth century, by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz and Józef Łobodowski.⁵¹²

The statement quoted above is an important research trope, but is at the same time an insufficiently convincing argument (if unsupported by appropriate research) for drawing the conclusion that Leśmian was inspired by the cultural traditions of the lands in question. It is a fact that Leśmian spent his youth in

510 Trznadel, "Wstęp."

511 Boyé, "Dialogi akademickie."

512 Bolesław Leśmian, *Poezje wybrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1991), pp. III–IV.

Ukraine,⁵¹³ but associations between his works and the culture, especially folklore, of these lands, remain one of the most enigmatic issues concerning Leśmian's literary *oeuvre* (along with the Paris period in his work). Certainly, works by Volodymyr Wasylenko shed light on relation between Leśmian's poetry and Ukrainian culture: "O kresowości *Klechd polskich Leśmiana*" ["On Borderlands in Leśmian's *Polish Folktales*"], "Отзвуки древнерусской культуры в творчестве Болеслава Лесьмяна" and *Bolesław Leśmian's Poetical World*.⁵¹⁴ Nevertheless, the problem of intercultural dialogue and the influence of Ukrainian tradition on Leśmian's works does not seem to be definitively settled, and its multifaceted impact has not been sufficiently demonstrated. At this point, I would therefore like to take up the challenge of clarifying these issues. The research problem of Leśmian's fascination with Ukrainian culture is not easy to resolve. It can be considered on three levels:

generic,
thematic,
and lexical.

The result of these studies will determine an answer to the question if, in the case of Leśmian's work and Ukrainian culture and folklore, we are dealing with filiation or homology.

513 Leśmian was born in 1877 in Warsaw. He spent his early youth in Kiev (until 1901), for example, where his father, Józef Lesman, was the director of the pension fund at the directorate of the South-West Railway. During the Kiev period, Leśmian studied intensively. From 1886 to 1896, he attended one of the oldest high schools in Kiev, namely the classical gymnasium on Bibikov Boulevard, then studied in two months at the Historical and Philological Department of the Saint Vladimir University of Kiev, and finally began studies there at the Faculty of Law. He graduated in July 1901. See: Василенко [Vasylenko], *Поетичний світ*.

514 Володимир Василенко [Volodymyr Vasylenko], "O kresowości *Klechd polskich Leśmiana*," in: *Kresy. Syberia. Literatura. Doświadczenia dialogu i uniwersalizmu*, ed. Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz and Edward Kasperski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 1995), pp. 127-134; Володимир Василенко [Volodymyr Vasylenko], "Отзвуки древнерусской культуры в творчестве Болеслава Лесьмяна," in: *Черниговская областная научно-методическая конференция, посвященная 800-летию "Слова о полку Игореве"* (Чернигов: ЧОНО; ЧДПИ; ЧИМ; ЧОО УООПИК, 1986), pp. 119-121; Василенко [Vasylenko], *Поетичний світ Болеслава Лесьмяна*.

Generic and structural modifications

The first area where the influence of Ukrainian folklore seems worth exploring at the same time seems the most difficult to grasp: the genre plane of Leśmian's work.

In Leśmian's *oeuvre*, it is difficult to indicate exact and direct geneological inspirations from folklore or other cultural traditions in the territory of present-day Ukraine. We will not find faithful implementation of genre models here, for example, the Ukrainian *duma*⁵¹⁵ initially called "Cossack songs" that echo loudly in the pre-Romantic achievements of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Dumy polskie* [*Polish Dumy*] (probably written in 1789) and *Śpiewy historyczne* [*Historical Songs*] (1816), or in Juliusz Słowacki's literary output, for example, in *Duma o Waclawie Rzewuskim* [*Duma about Waclaw Rzewuski*] (1833). A *duma* usually depicted people and events in a realistic way, praising the fame and bravery of dead heroes (an exception is a symbolical and allegorical *duma*, *Sokół i sokolę* [*Falcon and Baby Falcon*]). Leśmian did not use those techniques of depiction characteristic of such works, saturated as they are with lyricism (in several works, he only borrowed imaging models, as will be discussed later on), and he did not like historical themes. However, he was inspired by the tradition of *bylinas* of the Kiev, Halych-Volyn and Novgorod series.⁵¹⁶ *Duma* is usually believed to stem from the former two (and from ancient funerary lamentations from the Kievan Rus' period).⁵¹⁷ Hence, in this case, we are dealing with a homology rather than

515 The term *duma* entered the language of Ukrainian folklore in the nineteenth century. It was first used by Mychajło Maksymowicz in the introduction to a collection of Ukrainian folk poetry. However, the term had already been used in the sixteenth century. Stanisław Sarnicki, in his Latin work *Annales* (1587), had written about the deaths of the Strusiów brothers (of the Halicki nobility), fallen in a 1506 battle with Italians. "Once more – wrote the Polish historian – people sing elegies about them, called by Ruthenians *dumy*" [Qt. from Jan Mirosław Kasjan, "Wstęp," in: "*Na ciche wody*." *Ludowy epos Ukrainy*, ed. and trans. Jan Mirosław Kasjan (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2000), p. 51. See: Mikołaj Sep Szarzyński, "O Strusie," in: *Poezyje, z pierwodruku* (1601), ed. Ignacy Chrzanowski (from the first print) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademia Umiejętności, 1903), pp. 31-33. See: Adam Czahrowski's "Knightly *duma* (Polish knightly song)" from the end of the 16th century entitled "Powiedz, ty, muzyko moja" ["Tell me, my music"], in: Adam Czahrowski, "Powiedz, ty, muzyko moja," in: *Threny i rzeczy rozmaite* (Lviv: Drukarnia M. Bernat, 1599). Cf. Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki *Stare gawędy i obrazy*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa: Nakładem Gustawa Sennewalda – księgarza, 1840), pp. 181-184.

516 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*.

517 Cf. Włodzimierz Mokry, *Literatura i myśl filozoficzno-religijna ukraińskiego romantyzmu*. Szewczenko, Kostomarow, Szaszkiewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu

a filiation. Since Leśmian was the author of the lost drama *Василий Буслаев* [*Vasilii Buslaev*], written in Russian, based on the Novgorod motif of *bylina*. One can also justify an attempt to prove the influence of Ruthenian *bylinas* on Leśmian's ["Tale of the Lord's Knight"], published in 1904 in *Chimera*. The protagonist of the piece – the enormous, imposing, cursed knight Piotr Władyka – was constructed on the model of heroes from *bylinas*.⁵¹⁸

This does not mean, of course, that the inspiration in Leśmian's work of the oral tradition of *bylinas* – the Old Russian historical-heroic epic⁵¹⁹ – had the character of a simple imitation. The very title of the cycle *Maimed songs* from the volume *The Meadow* refers to one of the themes of *kaliki perekhozhie*⁵²⁰ that

Jagiellońskiego, 1996), pp. 139–140. The researcher states: “*Dumy*, although they hadn't been methodologically written down until the nineteenth century, were invented between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries in Cossack circles, from where they penetrated oral traditions of word and music. Hence, we can speak here about a folklorization of elitist literature (regardless of the fact that it was oral, not written), developing not only after the fall of the Cossacks, but also earlier. It was initially believed that the *dumy* originated from ancient funeral lamentations of the times of Kievan Rus and with the Old Ukrainian historical and heroic epic of the eleventh to fifteenth centuries, also including *stariny* or the so-called *byliny* of the Kiev and Halicko-Vohynian cycle. As experts speculate, they were forced out of the region of Kievan Rus to the northeast, taking on a new form in the Russian language and enriched with new themes, thanks to which they survived through the following centuries” [Mokry, *Literatura i myśl*, pp. 139–140].

518 Cf. Leśmian, “Baśń o Rycerzu Pańskim.” Rochelle Heller-Stone argues that Stefan Żeromski's long legendary prose poem *Powieść o Walgierzu Wdałym* (1906) could have also influenced Leśmian's work, see: Rochelle Heller-Stone, “Metapoetics and Structure in Bolesław Leśmian's Russian Poetry,” *California Slavic Studies*, ed. Николай Валентинович Рязановский [Nicholas Valentine Riasanovsky], Vol. 10 (1977), p. 138.

519 According to the French Slavacist André Mazon and Julian Krzyżanowski, most *byliny* were created much later – Mazon argues for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Krzyżanowski for the sixteenth century. Both folklorists claim that the genesis of *bylinas* can be explained with reference to the context of folklore (fairy tales, legends, apocrypha), and not to history, see: André Mazon, *Les bylines russes* (Paris: Boivin et Cie, 1932), pp. 673–694; Julian Krzyżanowski, *W kręgu pieśni. W krainie bajki* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980), pp. 76, 80. Other researchers indicate the eleventh to fifteenth centuries as the time of the emergence of *byliny*, and their earliest written examples are dated to the seventeenth century. The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries seem most probable, during which the written versions of *bylinas* were shaped on the basis of oral tradition and legends of the chronicles [летопись].

520 I would like to thank Adam Pomorski for drawing my attention to this context.

appears in the structure of the Old Russian *bylinas*, which has been analyzed above with connection to the analysis of the poems of Yesenin and Gorodecky. This tradition is common for modern Ukraine and Russia. In the Ukrainian language, the word *каліка* has three meanings: a crippled, disabled man; a pilgrim; and singing beggar. The title of Leśmian's cycle *Maimed songs* renews all of these meanings. In Ukrainian, the phrase *каліку перехожи* is the equivalent of the Russian *калики перехожие*.⁵²¹

Pilgrimage to holy sites is an ancient religious tradition already common by the eleventh century, for instance, in areas of present-day Ukraine, contributing to the reinforcement of Christianity on those lands. As I have already mentioned, pilgrimage meant traveling to Jerusalem – the Holy Land, where the tomb of Christ was located. At that time, a special type of pilgrims came into being, called by the Ukrainian term *kaliki perekhozhie* [*каліку перехожі*], who traveled from one place to another and begged for money. Descriptions of such migrations were recorded in Old Russian oral works – for example in the *bylinas* of the Kievan cycle about Ilya Muromets (with *kaliki perekhozhie* appearing as minor characters) or in a *bylina* of the Novgorod cycle about Vasily Buslayev (who led an adventuresome life then made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to repent for his

521 Julian Krzyżanowski, emphasizing the contribution of certain groups of people to the development of songs and, above all, lyrical songs, stated: “The professional group that played for many centuries an especially significant role in all Slavic countries were beggars, who, in search of bread, wandered – as a group – from one fair to another, one feast to another, appealing to the donor not only with their rags but also with the song repertoire, sometimes performed with an accompaniment of instruments (famous Ukrainian *lirnyks*). *Kaliki perekhozhie*, as vagabond-pilgrims were called in Russia, protagonists of satires, such as the Polish *Tragedia żebracza* [*Beggars' Tragedy*] and *Peregrynacja dziadowska* [*Beggars' Peregrination*], had in their repertoire special pious songs, ‘spiritual’ according to the Russian terminology, based on motifs derived from apocrypha, legends and even history, but also works of a comic character, especially satirical, and as a result, they took an active part in the creation and dissemination of Slavic folk songs, which they undoubtedly took from one place to another, in their own country and neighboring countries” [Julian Krzyżanowski, “Słowiańska literatura ludowa,” in: *Szkice folklorystyczne*, Vol. 1: *Z teorii i dziejów folkloru* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980), pp. 87–88]. Cf. Виктор Калугин [Victor Kalugin], *Герой русского эпоса: Очерки о русском фольклоре* [*Hero of the Russian Epos: Essays on Russian Folklore*] (Москва: Современник, 1983). Krzyżanowski, in this description, disregards changes in the semantics of the word *kaliki* that have taken place over the centuries. For the evolution of the meaning of *kaliki*, see: Калугин, *Герой русского эпоса*, p. 180.

youthful sins), in chronicles from 1163 and in legends. Traveling between towns, visiting temples, *kaliki perekhozhie* contributed to the dissemination of Christian legends and apocryphal literature across Ruthenia.

Significantly, creators of songs of a religious character are considered carriers of the Ruthenian musical tradition. They are also predecessors of Ukrainian *lirnyk*-bagpipers, guardians of Ukrainian spiritual culture, who have developed their work since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As literary historian Michał Wiszniewski wrote in the nineteenth century, a *lirnyk*-bagpiper “invented neither the storyline nor the spirit of his poetry. He only sang what everyone had already felt, he was only an Aeolian harp that gracefully played the feelings of the entire generation. [...] The names of these rustic poets have disappeared, as have the names of architects who built Gothic churches in the Middle Ages, as have the names of those who invented the plow and sowing.”⁵²²

While he dreamed about *bylinas*, Leśmian did not write them. His *Maimed songs* are certainly not *bylinas* – in their case, it is hard to talk about an exact reproduction of the genre of religious poetry created by *kaliki perekhozhie*, though reference to this tradition is present in the construction of characters in Leśmian’s cycle. The most evident proof of this are the above analyzed poems “Courtship,” “Hand” and “Soldier.”

Leśmian, when referring to the tradition of *kaliki perekhozhie* common in today’s Ukraine and Russia (both as secondary characters and also, as Julian Krzyżanowski and André Mazon argued, as authors and carriers of Old Russian *bylinas*), transformed it in a significant way through poetic interpretation on existential, eschatological and philosophical levels.

It should be emphasized, however, that Leśmian also referred in the construction of his works to Slavic demonology, in particular to aspects considered indigenously connected to present-day Ukraine. This is the case in the work “Majka” from the collection *The Old Polish Folktales*,⁵²³ where the protagonist is a Rusalka.

522 Michał Wiszniewski, *Historia literatury polskiej*, Vol. 1 (Kraków: Nakładem hrabii Aleksandra Przezdzieckiego w drukarni “Czasu,” 1840), pp. 197–198, qt. from: Helena Kapełuś, “Romantyczny lirnik (O informatorach ludowych w czasach romantyzmu),” in: *Ludowość dawniej i dziś. Studia folklorystyczne*, ed. Ryszard Górski and Julian Krzyżanowski (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 1973), p. 9.

523 For a discussion on *Polish Folktales*, see: Wojciech Ligęza, “‘Klechdy polskie’ Bolesława Leśmiana na tle folklorystycznym,” *Pamiętnik Literacki*, No. 1 (1968), pp. 111–147; Edward Boniecki, “Archaiczna realność,” in: *Archaiczny świat Bolesława Leśmiana. Studium historycznoliterackie* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2008), pp. 37–73. For an analysis of the language of *Polish Folktales*, see: Papierkowski, *Bolesław Leśmian*.

Mavka [*Мавка*] is a Ruthenian (Ukrainian-Hutsul) demonic character. In the context of the issue under consideration, the following questions seem relevant: whether the demonic figure of a Rusalka, undoubtedly connected with the folklore of lands now belonging to Ukraine, pervaded directly into Leśmian's work as a theme, or did Leśmian's work include an artistic and literary transformation of that theme at the first degree of oral folk art? Are we dealing here with a transmission and transformation of themes of Ukrainian origin disseminated in Polish and Russian literature known to Leśmian, which could have influenced him? Or might this case be a case of homology?

I would like to recall the fact that the theme under study often appeared in Russian, Polish and Ukrainian Romantic-era poetry, for example, in the following great original texts: Mikhail Lermontov's "Rusalka" and "Sea Princess," Alexander Pushkin's "Rusalka" or "Rusalka (The Water-Nymph)," and Józef Bohdan Zaleski's long poem "Rusałki. Fantazja" ["The Rusalkas: A Fantasy"], and in Cyprian Norwid's poem "Rusałki" ["The Rusalkas"]. We should also mention Zaleski's "Skalna czajka" ["Rock Lapwing"] and "Duch stepu" ["The Spirit of the Steppe"]. The female protagonists in the Mickiewicz ballads "Świtez" [name of a lake], "The Fish" and "Świtezianka" [a water-nymph living in the Świtez lake] along with the fantastic Goplana, queen of Lake Gopło in Słowacki's *Balladina*, can also be treated as transformed Rusalkas. Słowacki's *Beniowski* is also filled with poetic mentions of Rusalkas, and "Song II" (more precisely, the fragment "Powieść kozacka. Rusałka" ["Cossack Novel: Rusalka"]) from his *Żmija. Romans poetyczny z podań ukraińskich. W sześciu pieśniach* [*Viper: Poetic Romance from Ukrainian Tales, in Six Songs*] has a Rusalka. It is also worth mentioning the Romantic-era *Dumka* by Taras Shevchenko.

Later, water demons appear in Bronisława Ostrowska's neo-Romantic ballad inspired by folklore, "Rusałki" ["Rusalkas"],⁵²⁴ and they are also referred to in her poem "Kwiat paproci" ["The Fern Flower"] and a text for children, "Córka wodnicy" ["Vodnica's Daughter"] (the Rusalka was called a *vodnica* or siren, and wanted to eliminate her human characteristics). Moreover, the motif held evident appeal for Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (author of "Niezbadany rycerz" ["Unknown Knight"], "Rusałka" ["Rusalka"] and "Na wiosnę" ["In Spring"]), for Władysław Orkan (author of "Bajka" ["Fairy Tale"]), for Jan Kasprówicz (author of "Do Rusałki" ["To a Rusalka"]) and for Leśmian's cousin Antoni Lange (author of "On Świtez"). Russian symbolists also used it, for example, Valery Bryusov's

524 Bronisława Ostrowska, "Rusałki," in: *Opale* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Jan Fiszer, 1902), pp. 28-29.

famous “The Water-Nymph” and Konstantin Balmont’s “She Is Like a Rusalka.” Sergey Yesenin also used this motif as the construction axis of the work “Русалка под Новый год” [“New Year’s Rusalka”]. In the literature of Ukrainian modernism, Rusalkas can be found, for instance, in Łesia Ukrainka’s “Pieśni lasu” [“Forest Songs”] and in Alexander Kondratiev’s book *На берегах Ярыни. Демонологический роман* [*On the Banks of the Jarynia: A Demonological Novel*].

This list of examples is certainly not complete, yet its very length and the fact that it includes works created over several literary eras is irrefutable proof of the existence of homology. Those similarities allow us to assume that Leśmian’s interest (often identified with “reaching to sources”) in the figure of the Rusalka, usually associated with the Slavic mythological world, could have an indirect literary character. This is also evidenced by the fact that Leśmian’s “Majka” is, as I will show later in this book, not so much a fantastic creature as a literary protagonist.

It is relevant to note that the specificity of the structure of the titular character of “Majka” co-determines genetic transformations in Leśmian’s work. The unclear ontological status of the protagonist (Majka is a beautiful woman with the tail of a fish) allows Marcin Dziura to exclude her from the group of human beings and, as a result, to justify his attitude to her and to unscrupulously reject the Rusalka’s love.⁵²⁵ Significantly, the proto-Slavic fairy-tale Rusalkas, the most popular East-Slavic female demons, were imagined as young, extraordinarily beautiful, usually naked women with long hair.

It was believed that Rusalkas are the souls of girls who died prematurely and who, out of jealousy for their lost lives, try to draw random passers-by to their deaths. Rusalkas quickly confess love, dance at night in forest clearings, will tickle their prey to death. They like to laugh and clap their hands.⁵²⁶

525 Using this technique, namely, the introduction of a character of ambiguous, ontological status to the work causes the reader to query the role of the dehumanizing gesture in folklore. It seems that one answer could be as follows: if a man, not only one rooted in traditional culture but also a modern man, defines something as inhuman, he feels free to treat it in an inhuman way. At that stage, he ceases to negatively assess his own bad deeds, and he treats them rather as a necessary, adequate response to coming across a force he has identified as threatening. He then adopts a defensive attitude, easily justifying his misconduct. The emphasis on the border-region, fairy-tale status of the female protagonist, whose prototype must be sought in Ukrainian folklore, allowed Leśmian to recognize universal psychological mechanisms determining the shape of social life and choices people adhere to.

526 See: Kolberg, “Tarnowskie – Rzeszowskie,” p. 270; Moszyński, *Kultura ludowa Słowian*, p. 193.

Interestingly, in the folktale [*klechda*] under study, Majka suffers for and falls victim to the illiterate Marcin Dziura – hence, there is a reversal of the role traditionally attributed to a Rusalka. Leśmian's work refers to local beliefs and customs once disseminated on lands now part of today's Ukraine,⁵²⁷ as is typical of a folktale, and at the same time to their deconstruction. Leśmian was, in principle, trying to reconstruct the rules of archaic imagination, while modernizing and problematizing its meanings. Creating an atmosphere of the uncanny goes hand in hand with exposing the human dimension of what, at first glance, may prove strikingly unique. If we pay attention to the motif with metatextual potential – very important in the work – namely the scene in which the Rusalka in love gives a book about the underwater world and habits of Majka-like beings to the illiterate Dziura, then it turns out that Leśmian performs a disillusionment on the created fantastic situation, exposing the conventionality of its fairy-taleness, not hiding from the reader that they are dealing with a Rusalka who is a book character. For Marcin Dziura, her existence and supernatural powers can be only the object of naive and unwavering faith.

Leśmian's work is therefore an intertext: a modernized folktale that aims to deconstruct themes borrowed from Slavic mythology. The focus is shifted from the fantastic motivation of the protagonists' actions to social and psychological motivations. Similarly, the combination of fantasy and reality takes place mainly in the psyche of the illiterate Marcin Dziura, possessed as he is by fear. Hence, it is clear that Leśmian's fascination – perhaps mediated in literary terms – with Ukrainian folklore was accompanied by critical reflection on morality rooted in traditional communities.

This intention was lost on the editor Jakub Mortkowicz, who, unfortunately, decided not to publish *The Old Polish Folktales*. He found them to be characterized by “excessive horror and sensuality [and] commercially risky.”⁵²⁸

527 *Klechda*, as a genre from the boundary between folklore and literature, is called a folktale that stems from beliefs, customs and cultural traditions of a given region. It can be a story about the legendary past of that region, heroes whose fates are partly historical, partly fantastic, or incredible events and unusual landscape specifics. *Klechda* remains close to the fairy tale. This closeness is based on common motifs and thematic similarities. The separateness of *klechda* as a genre is determined by a closer association than is the case in a fairy tale with moral and social realities of a specific region, see: Sławiński, *Słownik terminów literackich*, p. 223.

528 Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” pp. 340–341.

This comment applied particularly to the folktale “The Witch.” Leśmian complained to Przesmycki: “Mortkowicz perceives these folktales [pl. *klechdy*] to be ordinary folk stories” [Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” pp. 338].

Leśmian wrote about the projected *The Old Polish Folktales* in a letter to Zenon Przesmycki: “It is my intention to develop a certain artistic possessiveness, to treat folktale Poland from sea to sea, to include Lithuania and Ukraine. What we did not do with a sword, let’s do it with a pen.”⁵²⁹

The term “artistic possessiveness” as Leśmian used it may seem unacceptable from today’s perspective. However, if we remember that the author wrote those words between 1913 and 1914 – that is, at a time when Polish statehood, for almost a hundred and twenty years, could only have been mentioned in the past tense, with nothing indicating that dreams of independence might soon come true,⁵³⁰ it can be explained in a historical context. It is worth noting that this “possessiveness,” signaled in the collection title *The Old Polish Folktales*, took on a completely different meaning as time went by – what was initially to be “annexed” became artistically recorded and commemorated in Leśmian’s prose. In the discussed works, we are dealing not only with a literally inspired attempt to reproduce cultural codes of archaic communities that had existed in regions comprising today’s Poland and Ukraine, for instance, but also with critical reflection on customs and beliefs of these communities. As a result, Leśmian significantly enriched the resources of the literary tradition of at least two nationalities – Polish and Ukrainian (and, in the case of references to *bylinas*, also Russian), which entered into creative dialogue with each other. Leśmian chose ancient pagan beliefs of those communities and motifs characteristic for their ethnic sources⁵³¹ as his source of literary inspiration and modern reflection, and he also referred to later Christian traditions that he subjected to various transformations (as in the case of *Maimed songs*).

529 Leśmian, “[List] Do Z. Przesmyckiego,” p. 337.

530 Cf. Boniecki, *Archaiczny świat*, p. 50.

531 Leśmian, as Volodymyr Vasylenko mentioned, in the folktale “Podlasiak” [an oak ghost] modernized the fairy-tale topos of the metamorphosis of a tree. Vasylenko also pointed to significant similarities between Leśmian’s folktale “Majka” and the drama by Łesia Ukrainka (Łarysa Kosacz-Kwitka) *Pieśni lasu* [*Forest Songs*]. The main character in both works is a Rusalka (referred to as *majka* or *mavka*) unhappily in love with a peasant (Marcin Dziura and Łukasz, respectively), who experiences betrayal when her beloved chooses an ordinary woman and a prosaic life. According to Vasylenko, the love choice made by the male characters gains a world-view character: both men choose mediocrity, a routine life free from passion and emotional risk, see: Василенко [Vasylenko], “O kresowości ‘Klehd polskich,’” pp. 132–133. Vasylenko also indicated the correspondences between the theme of a witch in Leśmian’s “The Witch” from *The Old Polish Folktales* and in Nikolai Gogol’s work (for instance, in the story *The Viy*).

It is pertinent to note that the most direct references to Ukrainian culture and customs in Leśmian's realistic prose appear in "Dzień Nazara" ["Nazar's Day"], which is full of comic accents.⁵³² References mentioned above occur here in both the construction of space and the creation of literary characters. Significant references are to a meadow "covered with steppe grass" and the proximity of a church and an Orthodox church. Events presented in the text can even be located approximately, thanks to the use of the local name *Чернявка*. It is a village in Ukraine in the Pulyny Raion region, a hometown of Микола [Mikoła], one of the characters in Leśmian's short story.

Associations between Leśmian's story and Ukrainian culture are also indicated by anthroponyms. The protagonist of the work bears the name Nazar, one that was well-known and popular there in the late nineteenth century. It comes from the Latin form Nazarius (from Nazareth), and the Greek form Nazariasz, Nazara (devoted to God) and has its equivalents in other languages, not only European: this is, for example, a name for a Turkish amulet called "the eye of the prophet," and in Arabic *nazar* means "a look." However, in this case, the association between the name and its Ukrainian variant ceases to raise doubts when we look at anthroponyms such as Mikoła or Jewdocha, given by Leśmian to other characters in the story. It is worth recalling that the latter is a female name associated by the Ukrainian people with spring, while the spelling of the former (Микола/Микола) could result from replacing the Ukrainian pronunciation (Mykoła) with Russia (Mikoła).

It seems significant that in the short story under study, the morality of the characters was portrayed in a humorous way, though this comism does not degrade them. For example, the titular character Nazar, "who sees himself as a hardworking peasant,"⁵³³ is in fact a man who enjoys idleness whenever an opportunity arises. For example, on the seventh day of the week – Sunday. The very name *неділя* indicates (in all Slavic languages except Russian) that it is a day when work is set aside. The hero, describing it as "a sister [...] or a mother,"⁵³⁴ uses it as a pretext to idle with impunity. It is not the character's bad or good will but "Godly laziness" deciding that married Nazar does not follow Jewdocha, but only looks at her, though she is a strong erotic temptation for him. For the same

532 I would like to thank Prof. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel, the reviewer of my book, for directing my attention to this text.

533 Bolesław Leśmian, "Dzień Nazara," in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Baśnie i inne utwory prozą*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2012), p. 623 ["we własnym rozumieniu chłop robotny"].

534 Leśmian, "Dzień Nazara," p. 623 ["siostry [...], albo i matki"].

reason, the protagonist does not help a doctor traveling to a patient to repair a cart, but only watches the doctor's struggle with the broken vehicle. Sources of comedy in the construction of this and other characters should be seen primarily in the incompatibility of statements they make about their behavior. Nazar, while boasting about his piety, curses and swears horribly; he seems himself as hard-working, while he is idle. The doctor, in a hurry to see a patient, finds time to argue with Nazar and threaten him with a whip – and finally, Jewdocha, declaring her modesty and lack of interest in the man, sidetracks from the road to flirt with him.

While such references are not dominant in Leśmian's *oeuvre*, disregarding them would deform the image of the connection between his work and other cultures, among which Ukrainian culture is essential.

Thematic references

The thematic level is the second level where thematic references to Ukrainian culture appear in Leśmian's works (although it is not as rich as the first one).⁵³⁵ These references appear both in the poem "Z sonetów ukraińskich" ["From Ukrainian Sonnets"]⁵³⁶ (published in 1898 in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*), and in the following texts: "Wspomnienie (Te ścieżyny, których stopą dziecięcą dotykałem)" ["Reminiscence (Paths I Touched with My Foot as a Child),"] "Wspomnienie (Lubię wspominać te dziecięce lata)" ["Reminiscence (I Like to Return to Those

535 After Halyna Dubyk read these arguments in their first appearance (*Tekstualia*, No. 2/21 (2010) and in dialogue with them, she wrote the paper "Bolesław Leśmian a Ukraina" ["Bolesław Leśmian and Ukraine"]. Dubyk also included the poem "Волны живые" ["Live Waves"], written in Russian, in the list of the poet's works that mention Ukraine. That poem divides Leśmian's biography into two periods. The first period – Ukrainian – is magical, draped in mystery and seems an important element in his poetic sensitivity, see: Halyna Dubyk, "Bolesław Leśmian a Ukraina," in: *Sen o Ukrainie. Pogłosy szkoły ukraińskiej w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2014), p. 31. The list of thematic references to Ukraine in Leśmian's *oeuvre* analyzed by Dubyk is enriched by references from the poem "Na stepie" ["On the Steppe"] from 1897 and the poetical work "Step" ["Steppe"] (first printed in 1902 in *Chimera*; later included in his debut volume, *The Crossroads Orchard*), see: Dubyk, "Bolesław Leśmian a Ukraina," pp. 34–38.

536 Bolesław Leśmian, "Z sonetów ukraińskich," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* [Warszawa], No. 44 (1898), p. 868.

Childhood Years)"] and "From My Childhood"⁵³⁷ (from *The Shadowy Potion*), "Krajobraz utracony" ["Lost Landscape"] (from *The Sylvan Befallings*). The poem "From Ukrainian Sonnets" begins with an apostrophe to a steppe landscape defined metaphorically as a "Golden-green bas-relief."⁵³⁸ There is a clear contrast between lifelessness and dynamics – the steppe landscape seems a deathly static one: the moon blooms here with "dead silver," "A cloud of strange shapes, grounded in sapphires,/ Sleeps like a mummy of longing, saturated with glow;/ And the steppe embalms it with a breath of fragrant chest."⁵³⁹ However, this apparent immobility is contrasted with unusual dynamics, disturbed by an unrestrained flow, saturated with horror:

Storm of sadness, half-covered with coats of winds,
Flies – and cuddles to you womb.
A black spectrum of a Cossack rushes far and dies,
And the far beatings of a scared hooves rumbles.⁵⁴⁰

The disappearance of the fast Cossack on horseback is described with a thanatological metaphor. There is also clear synesthetic imaging in the work: "And the steppe devils – great, pure-golden,/ In a wild dance rush through bluish horizon!"⁵⁴¹

Initially, the steppe glitters with gold and shades of green, then rumbles mount, struck by the horse's hooves, and finally clouds of dust rise over it: "steppe devils – great, pure-golden." The landscape created in Leśmian's poem is a landscape that is simultaneously seen and heard. It is possible that the thanatological metaphors in the text are a distant homologous reminder of the idea of the Cossack's death in the steppe, known to Leśmian from the Ukrainian *dumas* characterized by a mourning tone and description of feeling and troubled nature, which is expressed in a similar way in Leśmian's poem – manifested, for example, by the term "storm of sadness." Thus, we are dealing here with a thematic reference, but

537 Bolesław Leśmian, "From My Childhood," transl. Marian Polak Chłabicz, "Tekstualia" 2019, nr 3 (58), pp. 173-174.

538 Leśmian, "Z sonetów ukraińskich," p. 868 ["płaskorzeźba złocistozielona"].

539 Leśmian, "Z sonetów ukraińskich," p. 868 ["martwym srebrem," "Chmura kształtów dziwaczných, w szafiry zaryta,/ Śpi jak mumia tęsknoty, blaskiem nasycona;/ A step ją balsamuje wonnej piersi tchnieniem"].

540 Leśmian, "Z sonetów ukraińskich," p. 868 ["Burza smutków, płaszczami wichrów półokryta,/ Leci – i do twojego przytuła się łona./ Czarne widmo kozaka pędzi w dal i kona,/ I grzmi tętent daleki trwoźnego kopyta"].

541 Leśmian, "Z sonetów ukraińskich," p. 868 ["A szatany stepowe – wielkie, szczerozłote,/ W dzikim tańcu przez sine pędzą widnokreśli!"].

also a structural one – a poetics of description characteristic of *dumas*. A quarter of a century later, Leśmian did not fully reproduce that genre pattern; however, he chose a classic sonnet as a compositional model, and thus shaped the content derived from folklore into an elitist form, which was penetrated by an emphasis characteristic of the folk Ukrainian epos, a lofty atmosphere and a longing and dismal tone.⁵⁴²

In the poems “Reminiscence (Paths I Touched with My Foot as a Child),” “From My Childhood” and “Lost Landscape,” Ukraine does not appear by name (contrary to the title of the above-mentioned work), but they can be read as autobiographical texts. Descriptions concern the territory where Leśmian spent almost a third of his life. They all have a nostalgic character, with childhood there associated with boundless, inexhaustible, limitless existence, accurately described by Leśmian with the help of spatial metaphors, synesthetic systems of words (intensifying the impression of fullness of life) and repetitions that allow him to obtain the effect of multiplicity:

What else do I dream of those days of yore?
 The trees full of leaves, the faces I saw –
 Only leaves and faces! People and green!
 My laughters go on onwards the boreen!
 I run...my head entrapped in sough and the skies.
 The clouds' breath – in my chest, treetops – in my eyes.⁵⁴³

Fresh humidity would wake me in the morning,
 And the sun would paint golden dogs
 On my walls – golden coasts,
 Golden violin – golden abysses...⁵⁴⁴

The ending of the poem “Lost Landscape,” written in the poetics of sentimentalism, seems to be the most nostalgic. While the poem describes space termed

542 It should be emphasized that a sentimental and increasingly stereotypical image of a wild Cossack on the steppe was already so popular as a convention of imaging in Polish Romantic literature. It appears, for example, at the beginning of “Pieśń I” [“Song I”] of Malczewski’s poetic novel *Marya* [*Maria*]. See: Antoni Malczewski, *Marya. Powieść ukraińska wierszem* (Sanok: Nakład i druk Karola Pollaka, 1856).

543 Leśmian, “From My Childhood.”

544 Bolesław Leśmian, “Wspomnienie (Te ścieżyny, których stopą dziecięcą dotykałem),” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), pp. 213–214 [“Budziła mnie poranku wilgoć świeża,/ A słońce malowało mi na ścianie/ Złote psy – złote wybrzeża,/ Złote skrzypce – złote otchłanie...”].

“strange village,”⁵⁴⁵ it appears as a synonym of the “once accessible secret,”⁵⁴⁶ a place once familiar and close, a pleasant, yearning memory of a world that no longer exists, in its sensual beauty and concreteness:

And why do I feel a choked godly cry in my chest
 When I think that the winds will not flow through those fields anymore,
 And that those auroras will not shed light
 On the bushes covered with lost sheep wool?⁵⁴⁷

Nostalgia also permeates the long poem “Reminiscence (I Like to Return to Those Childhood Years),” which reads:

I like to go back to these childhood years,
 When, neglecting the rest of the world,
 He would go with a shepherd into a known field
 With cows whose inert movement of hooves
 Would stir up the dust a little,
 Run closely together on the grass
 A rain of green and golden flies, and
 Those dark-purple lonely glittering ones,
 That, follow their reasonable wings,
 And suddenly fly into cows’ eyes,
 Looking into the distance, like at a barn.
 [...]
 And I saw everything and almost nothing,
 I knew the entire path without looking,
 Because I walked it inside of me,
 And outside of me. Today I believe that in a grave,
 When I am left with my dreams by myself,
 I will walk it again, again with closed eyes,
 Under the same sun, like in a real dream.⁵⁴⁸

545 Bolesław Leśmian, “Krajobraz utracony,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*. Ed. Jacek Trznadel, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010, p. 483) [“obca wioska”].

546 Leśmian, “Krajobraz utracony,” p. 483 “dostępnej niegdyś tajemnicy”].

547 Leśmian, “Krajobraz utracony,” p. 261 [“I czemu czuję w piersi zdławiony płacz boży/
 Na myśl, że nie zaszumią tamtych pól powiewy,/ I że się nie rozwidnią światłem tamtej
 zorzy/ Zgubioną wełną owiec pośmiecione krzewy?”].

548 Leśmian, “Wspomnienie,” p. 209 [“Lubię wspominać te dziecięce lata,/ Gdym,
 zaniedbując całą resztę świata,/ W znajome pole szedł razem z pastuchem/ Krów, co
 bezładnym swych rapci rozruchem/ Niską przed nami nieciły kurzawę,/ Ściągając na
 się wybiegły nad trawę/ Deszcz much zielonych i złotych i owych/ Samotnie skrzących,
 ciemno-purpurowych,/ Co, dogadzając przemyślnemu skrzydłu,/ Wpadają nagle w
 samo ślepie bydłu,/ Zapatrzonemu w dał, jak w swą oborę. [...] I widywałem wszystko

Ukrainian lands are depicted in this poem as a country path taken in childhood in the company of a shepherd. The territory passed through, and even insects characteristic there, have been remembered by the lyrical subject of the work in every detail and presented in the text in a very sensual way. This sensuality manifests itself most fully in the poem through the poetics of colors and in the sound layer of the work (“A rain of green and golden flies, and/ Those dark-purple lonely glittering ones”). Most important, however, seems to be that this topos of a path recalled from childhood gains an eschatological significance in the long poem, because it is to become a path also taken after death.

Lexical repetitions

The third level on which one can look for Ukrainian influences (poorer still, when compared to the other two) is the lexical layer of Leśmian’s works. In addition to the neologisms, archaisms and dialectisms already described, there are local names, such as Czerniawka in the story “Nazar’s Day” and Tykicz and Mohiła in “Głuchoniema” [“The Deaf and Dumb”] among Leśmian’s poems. The story also features, as has been mentioned, anthroponymes characteristic to the Ukrainian language, such as Mikola and Jewdocha, along with names of other origins – for example, Nazar – that were very popular in Ukraine. The repertoire of language borrowings in the Leśmian story under study is enriched by the following words: *cikawy* or *ciekawy* [“curious”], a form deriving from the Ukrainian adjective *цікавий*, and *holubka* [“a dove”], from Ukrainian *голубка*, or *maty* [“mother”] – *мати* in Ukrainian.

Most common in Leśmian’s work are Ruthenisms, which became Ukrainianism over the course of the history of language. They certainly did not dominate Leśmian’s vocabulary, but I would argue that their presence is worth noting.⁵⁴⁹ The poem “Strój” [“Attire”] from the volume *The Meadow* reads: “They passed it

i nic prawie,/ Na niewidziane znając drogę całą,/ Bo odbywałem ją zarówno w sobie,/ Jak po za sobą. Dziś wierzę, iż w grobie,/ Gdy z mymi snami sam na sam zostanę,/ Znów ją odbędę, znów na niewidziane,/ W tym samym słońcu, jak we śnie przystało”].

549 Halyna Dubyk has enriched the list of possible borrowings from Ukrainian language in Leśmian’s work. One of these might be the word *turbować* (unless it is an archaism deriving from Old Polish) – to worry, to torment that appears in the folktale “Majka.” Dubyk lists *nieochajnie* [“sloppy”] as an indisputable Ukrainianism, see: Dubyk, “Bolesław Leśmian a Ukraina,” p. 28.

between themselves, like a cup:/ »Let's give our souls some honey to drink that has deep black eyes!«⁵⁵⁰

The phrase “oczy kare” [“deep black eyes”] appears in many songs deriving from Ukrainian folklore, when they refer to hazel eyes, an essential attribute of female beauty.⁵⁵¹ Also the word “hołubce” appearing in the poem “Soldier” from *The Meadow*, is known in Ukraine, it is used to describe a dance figure consisting of coquettish and seductive whirling of a couple around each other.⁵⁵² The first part of the name “a mermaidlike maiden” about which we read that “she kissed him expertly and tickingly and tenderly./ Of–dana, da–dana! – this wooden, this crutch!!”⁵⁵³ appearing, for example, in “A Beggar’s Ballad,” comes from the Latin word *rosalia* (the feast of roses) and is known in Ukraine, having East Slavic roots. In Ruthenia, this word took the form *русалка*.⁵⁵⁴ The forest nymph Majka

550 Bolesław Leśmian, “Strój,” in: *Dziela wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 84 [“Podawali ją sobie z rąk do rąk, jak czarę:/ »Pójmy duszę tym miodem, co ma oczy kare!«”].

551 Василенко [Vasylenko], “O kresowości,” p. 130. Aleksander Brückner explains the etymology of the word in the following way: “deep black [*kary*], ‘black,’ especially about the coloration of a horse, derives, as with other similar words, from the East, from the Turkish word *kara*, which entered Ruthenia-Ukraine in the seventeenth century” [Aleksander Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1993), p. 221; reprint from the first print: Cracow: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1927]. For more information, see: Andrzej Bańkowski, *Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego*, Vol. 1 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), p. 639 [“deep black [*kary*], ‘black’ (about horse coloring) seventeenth century – from (earlier only in Klonowic 1598, about a beaver), Ukr. *karyj*, ‘black, dark’ (especially about eye color), Tur. (Osm.) *kara adi*. Black. It substitutes *wrony* [crow] in this meaning.”

552 Leśmian uses the word in an ambiguous way: first, as an ironic description of the dance of a crippled soldier, compared to a heel hitting a heel during a dance performed with a simultaneous jump, second, with regard to soldier’s former lover who does not want to dance until death “in this bed with a twitcher” [“w takim w łożu drygała,” Leśmian, “Ballada dziadowska,” pp. 104–105].

553 Bolesław Leśmian, “A Beggars Ballad (excerpt),” in: Heller-Stone, *Bolesław Leśmian*, p. 197.

554 See Brückner’s etymological dictionary of the Polish language: “Rusalkas, ‘deities, forest spirits, water spirits, beautiful ladies, luring to dance and tickling to death;’ unknown to the Polish people under this literary name, from Ruthenia, where the name of a spring ritual, condemned by the Orthodox Church, with dances, singing in the natural spring environment was shifted – as it sometimes happens – on former mythical creatures *berehynie*; the ritual commemorating the spirits of the forefathers was in Latin Balkan called *rosalia*, ‘the feast of roses;’ the Latin name was taken over

(in Ukrainian: *мавка*) from *Old Polish Folktales* is also a Rusalka. The female protagonists of Leśmian's mime dramas *Pierro and Columbine* and *A Frenzied Fiddler* are also defined with this name. Rusalkas also appear in both known versions of the poem "Way of Looking:"

Twenty thousands of forgotten water nymphs
 Have emerged from the water to cease to exist...
 [...]
 Suddenly a hundred thousands of crying water nymphs
 Have emerged into the moon to exist partially.⁵⁵⁵

The work "Asoka" ["Ashoka"] from the volume *The Meadow* has the following two lines: "And the king said: »Willow, oh willow, I should go with you to the field!/ If I have to, I will share your fate –«."⁵⁵⁶

The word *przedoleć* may be a polonized form of the Ukrainian verb *здолати* meaning "to manage, to overcome" [*podoleć, przemoć*]. Also the title of one of the *Old Polish Folktales*, "The Witch" (Ukr. *відьма*) refers to Slavic beliefs, traces of which are preserved in Ukrainian folklore. Finally, the word *лірник* [*lyrnik*], present for example in the poem "The Deaf and Dumb," in which the main female protagonist is described as a "mute singer, a *lyra* without a *lyrnik*,"⁵⁵⁷ points to homological associations of Leśmian's poetry with Ukrainian folklore.

Leśmian's multilingualism (in this case, one should not ignore the influence – although it was not dominant – of Ruthenisms that later became Ukrainianisms) permits his inclusion in the group of authors ranging from Biernat of Lublin, Mikołaj Rej, Stanisław Orzechowski, Sebastian Klonowicz, Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, Szymon Szymonowicz, Bartłomiej Zimorowicz, Juliusz

by Balkan Slavs, and then Greeks; their time coincided with the 'Green Week' that was called *rusalia* already in the tenth century. Foreign words, a familiar issue; in Poland both only literary" [Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny*, p. 469].

555 Leśmian, "Spojrzystość," p. 431; *Kalendarzyk zebrań "Koła Miłośników Książki,"* Zamość. 1929/30; Cf. Leszek Libera, *Romantyczność i folklor. O twórczości Jacka Malczewskiego i Bolesława Leśmiana* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Scientia, 1994), p. 63.

556 "I król rzekł: »Wierzbo, wierzbo, iść mi z tobą w pole! / Dołącz się, skoro trzeba, wraz z tobą przedole – «" [Bolesław Leśmian, "Asoka," in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 122].

557 Bolesław Leśmian, "Głuchoniema," in: Bolesław Leśmian, *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*. Ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 46 ["śpiewaczki bezgłośnej, liry bez lirnika"]. For a stylization of the narrator for a village singer in many Leśmian's poems, see: Trznadel, *Twórczość Bolesława Leśmiana*, pp. 257–264.

Słowacki, Seweryn Goszczyński and Antoni Malczewski who contributed to bringing Ukrainianisms into the Polish literary language, or to consolidating them within it.

How many traditions and cultures?

Finally, one has to answer two questions. First, can we include Leśmian into the group of poets of the so-called Ukrainian School,⁵⁵⁸ comprised of the Romantics

558 Leśmian, *Poezje wybrane*, pp. III–IV. The issue of a Polish Ukrainian school seems to be much more complex, and the list of authors who could potentially belong to it is longer than the one presented by Jacek Trznadel on the occasion of his reflections on Leśmian. The above-mentioned enumeration of authors ends with the name of Łobodowski, a translator of the anthology of Ukrainian poetry *Sześćdziesięciu z tej i tamtej strony Zbrucz* [*Sixty on This and the Other Side of Zbrucz*], author of “Pieśń o Ukrainie” [“Song about Ukraine”] and poems devoted to those lands, later included in the volume *Złota hramota* [*Golden book*] written partly before and during the war then published in exile, as well as the author of the collection *Uczta zadżumionych* [*Feast of the Plagued*] containing a cycle *Fraszki kresowe* [*Borderland Epigrams*] (including satires about forced polonization). Łobodowski was interested in Ukraine’s problems, although it was not his place of birth. In the second half of the 1930s, the writer maintained contact with the circles of Eastern Studies and members of Ukrainian emigration. They focused around the *Biuletyn Polsko-Ukraiński* [*Polish-Ukrainian Bulletin*] and the Prometheus Club. Łobodowski not only did not support the repressive policy of the Polish authorities against the Ukrainian population (see, for example, his poems “Rocznice majowe” [“May Anniversaries”], “Wrota kijowskie” [“Kiev’s Gate”], “Polesie” [“Polesia”], “Duma o atamanie Petlurze” [“Duma on Supreme Commander Petliura”], “Córka atamana” [“Daughter of a Supreme Commander”], “Poetom ukraińskim” [“For Ukrainian Poets”] and the long poem “Kisielin” [“Kisielin”]), but also discussed the bloody history of the Cossack uprisings (“Ziemia cmentarna” [“Cemetery Land”], “Hulaj-pole” [“Roaming the fields”], “Na czarnym szlaku” [“On the Black Trail”]), he referred to the folklore of these lands lexically and thematically (see: *Dumy wołyńskie* [*Volynian Dumas*]), see: Maria Mansfeld, “Ukraina w poezji Józefa Łobodowskiego,” *Spotkania*, No. 35 (1988), pp. 82–97. Michał Grabowski (1804–1863) wrote about the Ukrainian School in Polish Romantic poetry and its associations with folklore in the nineteenth century in his essays “O elemencie poezji ukraińskiej w poezji polskiej” [“About the element of Ukrainian Poetry in Polish Poetry”] (published in Vilna in 1837 in Vol. 2 of *Literatura i krytyka*, (Drukiem Teofila Glücksberga), pp. 93–118) and “O szkole ukraińskiej poezji” [“On the Ukrainian School of Poetry”] (published in Vol. 1 of *Literatura i krytyka* in 1840, pp. 1–100). Grabowski wrote about Zaleski, Malczewski and Goszczyński, and also focused on forgotten writers such as Tomasz August Olizarowski and Aleksander Groza. In an extended sense, an “Ukrainian school in Polish literature” could create order and would concern those poets and prose writers

Antoni Malczewski, Seweryn Goszczyński, Józef Bohdan Zaleski and Juliusz Słowacki⁵⁵⁹ – and second, what are the sources and the meaning of the references to the traditions of Ukrainian folklore in Leśmian's work? The answer to the first question is only seemingly simple. The influence of Ukrainian traditions and folklore on Leśmian's art was indeed evident. It took place, I would argue, not only directly, but also thanks to the literary agency of Polish and Russian Romantics, among others. However, this was not the only impact.

Undoubtedly, Leśmian's specific style and worldview – present in his later works, stemming from the spirit of dialogue between Eastern and Western European cultures – developed during the Kiev period. That was also the time when Leśmian was influenced by Russian symbolism.⁵⁶⁰ We should also remember the importance of Baudelaire's works and the significance of the works of Edgar Allan Poe for the final shape of Leśmian's poetics. The measure of Leśmian's literary genius turned out to be that even though he drew from many sources, he was not reduced to any of them and exceeded all of them with creative individuality, while at the same time enriching the cultures that inspired him.

whose works include themes, motifs, lexis or genres related to Ukraine – which is not, of course, the same as saying that those authors have not created independent, noteworthy literary works. Which should also not be suggested by using the term in a narrower scope – the reduction of Słowacki's rich *oeuvre* (not the only example; this remark also applies to twentieth-century authors) exclusively to Ukrainian influences would be a malpractice of literary studies. In accordance with such a reductive rule, for example, the "Puławy school" or "Lithuanian school" were distinguished (with Adam Mickiewicz included, for example).

559 The list of authors belonging to the Polish Ukrainian School should include poets focused around the Lviv literary group and the magazine *Ziewonia* (1832–1838), such as August Bielowski and Lucjan Siemieński (imitating *dumas* and songs of those lands). It is also worth considering the presence of authors from the Petersburg coterie, headed by Henryk Rzewuski, focused in 1841–1851 around *Tygodnik Petersburski*. Regarding twentieth-century creators (not necessarily poets), references to folklore can be found in the prose of Stanisław Vincenz. When discussing literary connections with the culture of Ukrainian lands, one cannot omit the prose of Bruno Schulz, Andrzej Chciuk, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Julian Strykowski, Leopold Buczkowski, Andrzej Kuśniewicz and Włodzimierz Odojewski. The list of poets younger than Leśmian includes Arnold Słucki and Jan Śpiewak, and it is worth considering Kazimierz Wierzyński, born in 1894 in Drohobycz. A separate matter are inspirations of Ukrainian folklore or nature in painting – for example, Jacek Malczewski's cycle *Rusałka* [*Rusalka*], Józef Chełmoński's realistic landscapes and the canvases created by Leon Wyczółkowski during his decade-long Ukrainian period.

560 Cf. Sobieska, *Twórczość Leśmiana*.

The answer to the second question, about the source and the significance of references in Leśmian's work to the traditions of Ukrainian folklore, is equally complex. Intersecting with Leśmian's interest was the influence of folk traditions of other lands and derived from Leśmian's fascination with what was archaic. It adopted a quite specific literary shape in the poet's *oeuvre* (I will return to this issue). It is pertinent to remember that the interest in archaism present in Leśmian's works was largely mediated from literature and was not an isolated interest in that period. In European countries, the search for national styles took place in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, manifested with, a turn towards national folk pasts, among other areas. This interest had already intensified in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century and resulted in a turn to the tradition of the popular epic that had been rather unpopular before, and this sooner or later had to find its reflection in literature. According to Julian Krzyżanowski,

[The aforementioned turn] took place in connection with Russia's striving to take the supreme position among Slavic nations [...]. These tendencies were formulated most clearly in the Slavophile movement that created a special ideology, connected with the contemporary Polish messianism; using a set of religious concepts (Orthodox Church), political (*самодержавие*-autocracy) and social (*Narodnost*-folklore), this movement determined Russia's right to primacy in the European world based on them, as a commentary on the factual state-material power, and built an ideological superstructure, based on moral values that were supposed to justify and legitimize this power, set and define its historical mission, and finally specify the philosophical foundation of this mission. Since dialectical arguments were not enough to make these arguments, they had to be documented with historical data and folk concerning folk creation, untouched by the Western civilization, from which the Slavophile movement separated itself with all its energy, although it owed it the Ruthenian idealization of the people.⁵⁶¹

Emerging as a result of the Slavophile movement was the authentic aspiration to thoroughly learn and explain the genesis of epic *bylinas*, considered the most interesting and oldest variation of folklore⁵⁶² (Krzyżanowski would prove that

561 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 7.

562 At that time, the name *bylina* [былины] was created – unknown before among common people – and quickly replaced the word *starina* [старина] once used by folk singers, see: Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 8. Also Иван Киреевский [Ivan Kireyevsky], a folklorist then wrote important works, a collection of folk songs written down by Павел Рыбников [Paweł Rybnikow] is published in 1861. As a result, foundations of the mythological school of Russian ethnography were formed, the findings of which became an important source of literary motifs. The Russian poet Sergey Gorodetsky, author of the volume *The Ravine* (1907), filled with pagan-Slavic motifs, used it. In

last consideration to be wrong).⁵⁶³ The circumstances of the formation of the movement were not limited only to ideological issues, but also favored the aesthetic appreciation of folk art and its representatives, which – as Krzyżanowski argued – “in its primitive [...] artistry perceive true treasures of poetic ideas. Thanks to this [...] the field of the epic of *bylinas* permanently enters the orbit of the spiritual life of cultural Russia.”⁵⁶⁴ Interest in this genre of folklore was inherited from the Slavophiles by representatives of the Russian neo-Slavic movement (Sergey Gorodetsky is one example, who later translated “Whirlus and Twirlus” and who was in contact with Leśmian). In this context, it seems relevant to talk about the mediation of Russians in shaping and stimulating Leśmian’s fascination with Ruthenian folklore. The Russification policy in Ukrainian and Polish territories, led first by Alexander III then continued by his son Nicholas II also contributed to the character of this mediation.

The above means stimulated Leśmian’s fascination with the tradition of Ukrainian folklore and epic *bylinas*, which does not appear very often in a pure form in his *oeuvre*, though the pursuit, ultimately unrealized, to create its Polish version resulted in the intensification of the epic element in his *oeuvre* in the form of *klechdy* and narrative-plot works in verse, including ballads (combining the features of lyric, epic and drama). It should also be remembered that the influence of Ukrainian and Russian cultures present in Leśmian’s works had a two-way character in the deep layer, as exemplified by the inspirations of *bylinas* of the Kiev cycle. Their relations with the traditions of present-day Ukrainian territories remains a debatable issue – as argued by Krzyżanowski – though one that is not impossible to prove. With time and the increase in knowledge, answers have changed to the question about the cradle and the time of the emergence of the cycle. For researchers of Romanticism, the issue was not debatable, because they considered *bylinas* to be works invented in Kievan Rus (as evidenced by their name, with Kiev as a place of action), and perceived them to be the purest and strongest echoes of pagan times. These *bylinas* were regarded as a precious trace of Ruthenian cultural life, the fullest expression and “the exclusive product of the natural folk genius from the past.”⁵⁶⁵ Later studies – diligently described by Krzyżanowski – showed the presence of similar works in the cultures of other

the nineteenth century, intensive studies of the folk epic resulted in a large number of dissertations on this subject, see: Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 10.

563 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 13.

564 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 8.

565 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 11.

nations, and also proved that the first mention of the most important protagonist of the Kiev cycle of *bylinas*, Ilya Muromets, only appeared in the chronicles in the sixteenth century. Moreover, Krzyżanowski showed the similarity of the text “Сорок калик” [“Forty *Kaliki*”], situated at the boundary of *bylinas* and spiritual works,⁵⁶⁶ to the chronicle record from 1163, not connected with the legends of the Kiev lands, but with monastery and Novgorod legends, which would later enter the repertoire of *bylinas*, and protagonists-pilgrims were made to resemble pilgriming beggars.⁵⁶⁷ As a result, the location of the place of origin of *bylinas* moved from the south to the north, from Kiev towards Novgorod and Moscow. This statement does not lead, however, to an undermining of the thesis about relations between *bylinas* of the Kiev cycle and the cultural tradition of modern Ukraine. According to Krzyżanowski:

Kaliki perekhozhie, who constituted the element recruited from various regions of Ruthenia, had to serve as a link between religious folklore of their lands and an important factor in its crossing. And one of the most important focuses of this folklore was old Kiev with its many Orthodox churches, with memories of the first centuries of Christianity, with the graves of medieval princes in the Saint Sophia's Cathedral, with marvelous caves, full of mysterious wonders, calculated to bring the curious pious, with the corpses of saints and others gradually collapsing underground, crying with tears or oil, etc. etc. These miracles survived until the last war, providing material for legends of simpletons, for malicious anecdotes of the Russian intelligentsia. We know that those Kievan peculiarities included the grave of Ilya Muromets [...], they had to attract the attention of *kaliki perekhozhie* collecting material for stories about what they saw in Kiev. Especially placing corpses in caves, turning Ilya Muromets, just like Danilo Ignatovich and his son Mikhaylo, into monks who settle in a monastery in their old age or as a result of a suffered disappointment, sanctioned fairy tales and novels and facilitated their introduction into the repertoire of the epic of the beggars, using ready poetic clichés created in “spiritual poems.” As a result, Kiev could indeed give – and in all likelihood did give – a stimulus for the creation of heroic *bylinas*, but not Kiev of the first centuries of the Middle Ages, but Kiev of the end of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. On the lips of *kaliki* these songs reached the north, Moscow and the Novgorod territory, crossing with other works of popular singers to finally create a corpus of *bylinas*, preserved to our times.⁵⁶⁸

The echoes of mutually interacting traditions described by Krzyżanowski can be found in Leśmian's work, for whom *bylinas* were both a source of fascination

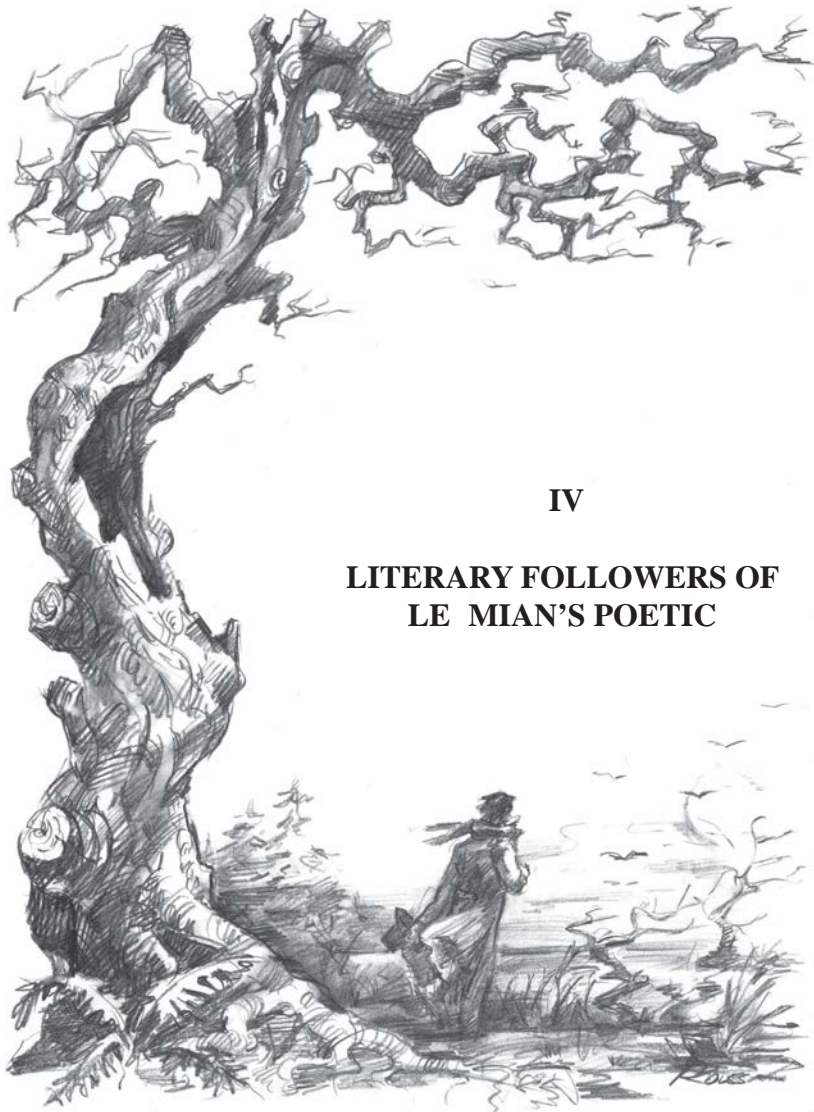
566 Cf. Георгий Федотов [Georgi Fiedotow], *Стихи духовные. Русская народная зсра по духовным огихам* (Москва: Прогресс, Гнозис, 1991).

567 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, p. 13.

568 Krzyżanowski, *Byliny*, pp. 137–138.

and a repository of motifs, and an object of parodistic artistic transformations. However, considering the numerous literary mediations discussed above and the correct time of the emergence of *bylinas*, questionable issues include the following: are we really dealing with “archaic reality” in the work of Leśmian? Did he accomplish the impossible and realize the idea of returning to mythical consciousness? We know that he aspired to this – which is evidenced by the essays “Rhythm as a Worldview,” “U źródle rytmu. Studium poetyckie” [“The Source of Rhythm: A Poetic Study”] and “The Importance of Mediation in the Metaphysics of Collective Life.” The writer satisfied, however, the desire to communicate with the primitive, mainly in a literary way, the folk source to which his poetry, prose and mime dramas owed so much, which he got to know by reading books.⁵⁶⁹ In Leśmian’s work, therefore, we are dealing not so much with an authentic return to archaic sources, but with a tradition, well-assimilated by a reader of folklore motifs in literature – including Polish, Ukrainian and Russian – as well as an artistically imagined “archaic reality.”

569 Cf. the review written by Leśmian: Bolesław Leśmian, “Pieśni ludowe (Pieśni ludowe celtyckie, germańskie, romańskie – spolszczył Edward Porębowicz),” *Kurier Warszawski*, No. 322 (1909), pp. 4–6 [reprint: Bolesław Leśmian, *Szkice literackie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2011), pp. 389–395]. Leśmian read, among others, a Finnish national epic poetry *The Kalevala*.



IV

LITERARY FOLLOWERS OF
LE MIAN'S POETIC



FROM ALLUSION TO LITERARY STYLIZATION: LEŚMIAN'S INTERTEXT IN CONTEMPORARY POLISH POETRY

Leśmian: Poet with No Followers?

In Polish literary studies, Bolesław Leśmian is generally regarded as a poet with no imitators or worthy followers. Unfortunately, this opinion has not been supported by more rigorous research, despite the fact that through the first half of the twentieth century, the poetics of Leśmian's verse intrigued his readers with its specificity and individuality and challenged other masterly writers. Julian Tuwim's well-known work "Jak Bolesław Leśmian napisałby wierszyk 'Włazł kotek na płotek'" ["How Bolesław Leśmian Would Have Written the Poem 'A Kitten Climbed a Fence'"], published in 1934 in Tuwim's collection *Jarmark rymów* [*Rhyme Market*] containing satires, parodies and literary pastiches, is one proof of this. The poem reads:

On a fence that is scared of its own existence as a fence,
Shows glaring holes to a dream about a non-fence,
A cat, a meowing cat, climbed playfully to be tickled
And chases a green shadow as a double non-cat.

And you, cat, wobble the fence,
And you, fence – the cat, hey!

Un-eyes which don't exist, squint into non-importance
Entangled into a mix of singing murmur,
Calls a girl-undress-hip under covers
For non-sufficiency of kisses and a torment of lipshood.

And you, cat, wobble the fence,
And you, fence – the cat, hey!⁵⁷⁰

570 Julian Tuwim, "Jak Bolesław Leśmian napisałby wierszyk 'Włazł kotek na płotek,'" in: *Jarmark rymów* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1991), p. 122 ["Na płot, co własnym swoim płóctwem przerażony,/ Wyziorne szczerzy dziury w sen o niedopłocie,/ Kot, kocurzak miauczurny, włazł w psocie-łaskocie/ I podwójnym niekotem ściga cień zielony./ A ty płotem, kociugo, chwiej,/ A ty kotem, płociugo, hej!// Bezślepia, których nie ma, mrużąc w nieistowia/ Wkląające się w płątwie śpiewnego mruczywa,/ Dziewczynę-rozbiodrzoną pod pierzynę wzywa/ Na bezdosyt całunków i mękę ustowia./ A ty płotem, kociugo, chwiej,/ A ty kotem, płociugo, hej!"].

In this poem, Tuwim, in transforming a Polish song popular among Warsaw children (from the early nineteenth century) and modernizing this surprising context, attempted to imitate the characteristic features of Leśmian's style.

Despite the fact that Tuwim always signed his works with his own name, he may be called a master of literary mystification, a specialist in artistic forgery. He wrote poetic texts imitating the styles of Mikołaj Rej, Leopold Staff, Heinrich Heine, Adolf Nowaczyński, Maurice Maeterlinck and Kazimierz Laskowski. Ostentatiously, he also "impersonated" prose writers including Tadeusz Miciński and Stanisław Przybyszewski. The case of "How Bolesław Leśmian Would Have Written the Poem 'A Kitten Climbed a Fence'" was similar. In this text, Tuwim was not so much trying to make a parody of a specific Leśmian work, as intending to parody stylistic features of Leśmian's poetry. Humorous imitation appears at all levels of the text, from its sound level through the compositional layer to the lexical formation. For example: Tuwim incorporated numerous assonances and alliterations into the sound layer of his work. The rhythm is obtained through the insertion of a refrain in which two lines – "And you, cat, wobble the fence,/ And you, fence – the cat, hey!" – are repeated throughout the poem. Thanks to this, the reader immediately thinks of folklore that, as a matter of fact, was a main source of Leśmian's literary inspiration, although those inspirations were generally not direct, but were mediated by literature. Leśmian's writing was also characterized by musicality, so important in the aesthetics of symbolism. If we remember all this, one thing seems certain: Tuwim did not choose a popular song as the object of literary transformations for no reason.

We can discern three main themes in Leśmian's poetry – love, nature and death – all of which appear in Tuwim's work. The latter was aware that in Leśmian's works, love, always highly sensual, is inherently associated with suffering – even when it takes place in the afterlife. Tuwim was also aware of the fact that nature in Leśmian's poems is never described in a conventional way, and that this specificity of presentation coexists with the fantastic: "Nature was treated not as a static object, but as the reality in action," in Heller-Stone's formulation.⁵⁷¹ Importantly, people, plants, animals are part of nature and desperately want to cross the ontological boundaries of their existence. Those boundaries are usually crossed when characters are in love and through love, which almost always turns fatal for protagonists. A farmland boy in love with a saw then torn to shreds in the ballad "The Saw" meets this end; a male protagonist of the long poem "Łąka"

571 Heller-Stone, *Bolesław Leśmian*, p. 197.

[“The Meadow”]⁵⁷² meets an analogous fate, first gazing at the meadow, then lovingly overgrown by it; and Jadwiga, the titular female protagonist of another of Leśmian’s ballad, dies in the same way, passionately gnawed to the bone by a voracious maggot.

Present in Tuwim’s parody “How Bolesław Leśmian Would Have Written the Poem ‘A Kitten Climbed a Fence’” are the main themes characteristic of Leśmian: nature and love. In the poem, a kitten – a character known from the children’s song, portrayed in the original as a playful but innocent animal – turns out to crave caresses and kisses insatiably: it seduces a girl while sitting on a fence, winks at her flirtatiously and calls her under covers. Tuwim tried to reproduce Leśmian’s unique literary style, with its specificity determined by the exceptional method of creating neologisms. Leśmian often created these in such a way that abstract concepts or phrases denoting non-existence begin to appear real and must be treated as facts the existence of which may not be called into question. One example in Tuwim’s poem of imitating this principle is the verse: “Un-eyes which don’t exist, squint into non-importance.”

It seems that Tuwim was aware of the fact that Leśmian “creates his own poetic ontology in the process of word formation – his representation of the world,” to quote Heller-Stone again.⁵⁷³ In Tuwim’s parody, the kitten – a living creature – is described as an object that does not exist. Importantly, appearing in Leśmian’s poetry is the characteristic neologism “bezbyt” [“an unexistence”] based on the word “byt” [“existence”]. This first form indicates the negation of existence, as with the word “bezślepia” [“un-eyes”] in Tuwim’s parody. Needless to say, the concept of a non-existent object is a paradox; moreover, this paradoxicality is a characteristic feature of Leśmian’s poetry. It should also be noted that Leśmian often used the procedure of a double negation in a single verse. Tuwim was certainly aware of this. He used it in the phrase “Bezślepia, których nie ma” [“Un-eyes which don’t exist”]. Here, the double negation leads to the concretization of non-existent phenomena. As a result, the poetic world in the parody – as in Leśmian’s poems – takes on a very unusual shape. Moreover, in Tuwim’s parody, a fence – analogously to the objects in Leśmian’s poetry – has its own emotional life, experiencing fear – this proves possible thanks to the use of the

572 Bolesław Leśmian, “Łąka,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), pp. 279-292. For excerpts in English, see: “The Meadow (excerpt),” in: *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems. Najpiękniejsze wiersze miłosne. A bilingual edition/ Wydanie dwujęzyczne* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2011), pp. 75-78.

573 Heller-Stone, *Bolesław Leśmian*, p. 194.

anthropomorphization principle that was typical of Leśmian's poetical imagination. In Tuwim's poem, the fence begins to be "przerazony własnym płóctwem" ["scared of its own existence as a fence"]. The neologism "płóctwo" was created by the addition of the suffix "ctwo" to the root word that denotes the names of activities in Polish. Thanks to this technique, typical in Leśmian's poetics and of Tuwim's imitation, nouns become dynamic.

Finally, one must ask: what is the function of Tuwim's parody "How Bolesław Leśmian Would Have Written the Poem 'A Kitten Climbed a Fence'"? It seems that Tuwim did not mean to be polemical. He simply attempted to prove his literary prowess, his writing skills: he wanted – as the title of the work suggests – to write a poem in a way that Bolesław Leśmian might have written it. By choosing the popular song "A Kitten Climbed a Fence" and rewriting it in Leśmian's style, Tuwim obtained a comic effect. He presented an erotic theme stylized as a naive poem associated with children's literature. Tuwim suggested in this way that Leśmian was unable to write a simple song addressed to young readers. By carefully writing the parody, Tuwim challenged poets of the second half of the twentieth century. If another author wanted to prove their poetic skills, they could no longer limit themselves to an imitation of Leśmian's poetic style, and would have to change the function of the imitation.

However, Leśmian's work has certainly not ceased to inspire and stimulate Polish poets writing in the second half of the previous century and in the first decades of the present one. Numerous examples of poetic texts prove that the fascination has not diminished over the past sixty years, and has even increased and resulted in new imitations and a multitude of literary allusions referring to Leśmian's texts.

For this reason, the subject of my analysis in this chapter will be:

1) Literary imitation of Leśmian's style:

in the cycle by Edward Balcerzan (born 1937), *Wiersze uzależnione* [*Dependent Poems*], reprinted in the collection *Wiersze niewszystkie* [*Not All Poems*];⁵⁷⁴ in the collections of Piotr Michałowski (born 1955), *Głosem prawie cudzym. (Z poezji okołokonferencyjnej)* [*Speaking Almost with Someone Else's Voice: From Circum-conference Poetry*]⁵⁷⁵ and *Pierwowzory i echa. (Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka)* [*Prototypes and Echoes (From Kochanowski to Barańczak)*],⁵⁷⁶ as confronted with the program statement

574 Edward Balcerzan, *Wiersze niewszystkie* (Mikołów: Instytut Mikołowski, 2009).

575 Piotr Michałowski, *Głosem prawie cudzym. (Z poezji okołokonferencyjnej)* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Artystycznej "Miniatura," 2004).

576 Piotr Michałowski, *Pierwowzory i echa. (Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka)* (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Artystycznej "Miniatura," 2009).

of the author formulated in the text “Poza stylem, czyli Pierwszy manifest Poetyki Eksperymentalnej” [“Beyond Style, or the First Manifesto of Experimental Poetics”].⁵⁷⁷

2) Other types of references to Leśmian in the literary work of:

Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (born 1935), for example in his book of poetry *Zachód słońca w Milanówku* [*Sunset in Milanówek*];⁵⁷⁸

Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki (born 1962), author of the poem “Absolution” from the collection *Dzieje rodzin polskich* [*A History of Polish Families*]), reprinted in the bilingual Polish-English collection of his poems, *Peregrinary*;⁵⁷⁹

Bohdan Sławiński (born 1977), author of the poetry volume *Sztućce do glist* [*Cutlery for Worms*];⁵⁸⁰

Piotr Mitzner (born 1955), author of the poems “Łąka Majki” [“Majka’s Meadow”] and “Domknięcie” [“Closure”] from the volume *W oku Kuku* [*In Kuku’s Eye*].⁵⁸¹

The three authors just listed proposed developments of the main motif of Leśmian’s poetry, namely death. The fourth author referred to Leśmian’s erotics.

The main goal of my investigation is to recognize, describe and classify the particular types of intertextual relations that can be found in contemporary Polish poetry. I intend to define their function and provide answers to the following questions:

Were inspirations from Leśmian’s poetry decisive in the process of development of poems written by other authors?

Was that influence determinant for the shape of their artistic expression?

Were those inspirations only temporary and incidental?

The results of my research will become a starting point for formulation of conclusions in areas of interest for historical poetics.

577 Piotr Michałowski, “Poza stylem, czyli Pierwszy manifest Poetyki Eksperymentalnej,” *Pogranicza*, No. 1 (2009), pp. 70-73.

578 *Zachód słońca w Milanówku* (Warszawa: Sic!, 2002).

579 Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, “Absolution,” in: *The History of Polish Families*, in: *Peregrinary* (New York: Zephyr Press, 2008), p. 133.

580 Bohdan Sławiński, *Sztućce do glist* (Łódź: Stowarzyszenie Literackie im. K.K. Baczyńskiego, 2008).

581 Piotr Mitzner, “Łąka Majki,” “Domknięcie,” in: *W oku Kuku* (Warszawa: Dom wydawniczy tCHu, 2012), pp. 59-64, 78-87.

Parodist and pastiche stylizations

The first type of references to Leśmian's poetry in the second half of the twentieth century appears in Edward Balcerzan's poem "Jeden wieczór z tomikiem Bolesława Leśmiana" ["One Evening with a Book of Bolesław Leśmian's Poetry"]. The text was written in 1957 and reprinted in the collection *Not All Poems* that also included, for example, the cycle *Dependent Poem (1959–2003)*. It reads:

A dog barked at the silver-hood of the moon
That lit the un-shine in the corpse-head eternity

On the idle coffin-like world on sensuality and lust
And the whisper that rustled like wind on a rooster

A nightingale out-birded from trees into a craftily swish of an ocarina
Like an Acher that throws lemons of sour sunsets

Poplars tore this voice and turned into sticks
Dog dead in non-existence will howl in pre-death.⁵⁸²

The work quoted above is governed by the principle of imitation of Leśmian's poetic style. The functions of the stylization is a critically-oriented literary dialogue with both the form and the means of representation of characteristic motifs in Leśmian's poetry. Balcerzan's poem is an octastich. This is not a typical strophic structure in Leśmian's poems, which more often use a distich, as in the case of ballads. When he wrote narrative works (constituting, along with descriptive-reflexive poems, one of the two most important trends in his work), they were longer than Balcerzan's text. In the latter, its brevity, however, turned out to be much more important than a precise imitation of the number of verses usually present in Leśmian's work. In the quoted poem, we find a lyrical situation depicting a dog howling at the moon. The source of the comic effect is, for example, use of the word *psisko*, which is an augmentative Polish form of the word *pies* ["dog"]. The lyrical situation is even more humorous when the reader notices that the animal barks not at natural phenomena, but at abstract notions such as "eternity," "sensuality" and "lust," frequently employed and visualized in Leśmian's poetry. As a result, Balcerzan attempted to create, just like Leśmian did, an atmosphere in the poem to evoke an impression on the reader.

582 Edward Balcerzan, "Jeden wieczór z tomikiem Leśmiana," in: *Wiersze niewszystkie* (Mikołów: Instytut Mikołowski, 2009), p. 177 ["Rozszczekało się psisko na księżycu srebrzysko/ Co rozświecał niedoblastk w trupięgową wieczystość// Na świat gnuśny trumniany na zmysłowość i chucie/ I na szept co szeleścił jak ten wiatr na kogucie// Z drzew wyptał się słowik w zmyślny świst okaryny/ Jak Zbolałek co ciska cierpkich zmierzchów cytryny// Głos ten rwały topole i zdzieraly na kije/ Pies w nieżyciu umarły na przedśmierci zawyje"].

Sensing nature is as important in Balcerzan's text as in Leśmian's poetry. The poem under study has a motif of the poplar, also introduced in Leśmian's well-known poem "The Barn" from the collection *The Meadow*.⁵⁸³ In this parody, even the comparisons are developed through words that are constructed according to principles that are incredibly similar to Leśmian's poetic vocabulary. Another example of similarity is the name Zbolałek [lit. "Acher," or someone aching constantly/chronically], describing the main disposition of the character, created by Balcerzan analogously to the Leśmian name Znikomek [lit. "Disappearer," or someone of slight presence] appearing in the poem of the same title (translated as "Nearunbeen"). In both cases, we are dealing with nouns derived from active adjectival participles ("aching" and "disappearing," or "shrinking"). Balcerzan – as with Leśmian – uses a double negation in one verse ("w niezyciu umarły" ["dead in non-existence"]) and frequently uses prefixes that indicate negation: "bez" ("un"), "niedo-" ("im"/"in") and "nie" ("non"). He also uses lexis associated with death, building neologisms based on it such as "trumniany" [lit. "coffin-like"], and lexical archaism and dialectism, for example the adjective "trupięgowa" [lit. "corpse-head"]. When writing a parodistic imitation, Balcerzan did not overlook the sound quality of his prototype. This is evidenced by many assonances and alliterations. It appears that the main role of the polemically oriented imitation is a recreation that is humorous and concise (condensed into just eight verses) of the main features of Leśmian's characteristic style. This is also a display of Balcerzan's writing proficiency.

In Piotr Michałowski's texts, the function of the imitation of Leśmian's style is different. Michałowski also chooses different contexts for modernization. He is the author of five pastiches referring to Leśmian's poetry. Two of them, "Ballada niedośniona" ["Undreamed Ballad"] and "Dzięcioł" ["The Woodpecker"], were published in *Speaking Almost with Someone Else's Voice: From Circum-conference Poetry*. Three others, "Ballada niemilknąca" ["A Ballad that Never Goes Silent"], "Okoń i Logoń" ["Okoń and Logoń"] and "Deszczynek" ["Rainer"], were published in *Prototypes and Echoes (From Kochanowski to Barańczak)*.⁵⁸⁴

583 Bolesław Leśmian, "The Barn," in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 29.

584 Piotr Michałowski, "Ballada niedośniona," in: *Głosem prawie cudzym. Z poezji okolo-konferencyjnej* (Kraków: Miniatura, 2004), p. 24-27; Piotr Michałowski, "Dzięcioł," in: *Głosem prawie cudzym. Z poezji okolo-konferencyjnej* (Kraków: Miniatura, 2004), p. 29; Piotr Michałowski, "Ballada niemilknąca," in: *Pierworzory i echa. Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka* (Kraków: Miniatura, 2009), p. 81-85; Piotr Michałowski, "Okoń i Logoń," in: *Pierworzory i echa. Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka*, (Kraków: Miniatura, 2009), p. 90-91; Piotr Michałowski, "Deszczynek,"

Michałowski's poetic project focuses on the creation of apocryphs.⁵⁸⁵ The project is in principle defined by literary forgery, and by purposeful mystifications. Its foundation is ascribing authorship of texts written much later to dead authors – for example, Bolesław Leśmian. These imitations often become the starting point for formulation of statements about issues connected with scientific research and actualization of contexts associated with them. Their purpose is to analyze issues troubling literary theory or philosophy, for example, issues of perspectivism and logos discussed during the Cultural Visualization of Experience conference that took part in Złoty Potok, Poland, in 2008.⁵⁸⁶ This issue was brought up and remarked upon in the Michałowski poem “Okoń and Logoń,” imitating Leśmian's style. The poem reads:

Bolesław Leśmian

Okoń i Logoń

To an Old man Adam

Where would our Golden Stream, glittering, roll,
When it rinses your eyes into a stream-like oblivion?

– Listening to the echo, where a mute complaint screams,
That sees a Golden Stream that is not there anymore?

Hills, forest, lake – who will remember them?
– They disappear like un-clear Girls and Temptators!

But when you visit further modes of non-existence,
Believe me: Okoń lives there that has nothing in common with a fish.

And the idea of comparing him to a fish is insulting,
– No one will make him visible, no one will float him like a trout.

He has no scales, fins, tail nor gills,
Because he is one eye that you haven't seen!

in: *Pierwowzory i echa. Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka* (Kraków: Miniatura, 2009), p. 94–96.

Piotr Michałowski, “Bolesław Leśmian, Okoń i Logoń,” in: *Pierwowzory i echa. (Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Miniatura, 2009), pp. 90–91.

585 For the meaning of the term “apocrypha” in the context of literary studies, see: Michalski, *Dyskurs, apokryf, parabola*.

586 Piotr Michałowski, “Dramat semiotyczny w Złotym Potoku,” in: *Pierwowzory i echa. (Od Kochanowskiego do Barańczaka)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Miniatura, 2009), pp. 86–90.

He is lucky to see, but he doesn't know if he lives,
Because the eye sees everything – when it is nobody's!

And with his over-looking, that never misses
He gives our bodies the only alibi.

He hasn't seen the result of his peeping yet,
So he suffocates our souls in a secret non-image...

He sneaks un-seen by waters and lands
And just watches, and looks – like nothing!

And four children follow him slowly and cry:
Looker, Peeker, Blinker and Glancer.

But when he crossed the far horizon,
He slipped on his guess and killed Logoń.

And suddenly Okoń lost his gift of omniseeing
– The images stayed – and the meanings disappeared!

He forged ahead with afterimages of clarities into prophetic darkness
Un-seen explanations and visible omissions.

He remembered what he saw but he didn't know what he sees
And if here or everywhere, the day after tomorrow or today?

He didn't hear when spoke – it's a very rare thing –
Not an old man to an image, but an image to an Old man!⁵⁸⁷

587 Michałowski, "Bolesław Leśmian, *Okoń i Logoń*," pp. 90–91 ["Bolesław Leśmian// *Okoń i Logoń*// Adamowi Dziadkowi// Dokąd nasz Złoty Potok, złocąc się, potoczy./ Kiedy spłucze w potoczną niepamięć twe oczy?// – Wsłuchane w echo, w którym krzyczy skarga niema./ Widząca Złoty Potok, którego już nie ma?// Pagórki, las, jezioro – kto je zapamięta?/ – Znikną jak niedowidne Dziewki i Kusięta!// Lecz kiedy zwiedzisz dalsze nieistnienia tryby./ Uwierz: tam żyje Okoń, co nie ma nic z ryby.// I pomyśl mu dorybnych porównań urąga/ – Nikt go nie unaoczni, nie spławi jak pstrąga.// On nie ma łusek, płetwy, ogona ni skrzelii,/ Bo sam jest jednym okiem, coście nie widzieli!// Szczęśliwy wie, że widzi, choć nie wie, czy żyje,/ Bo oko widzi wszystko – kiedy jest niczyje!// A swą nadspojrzystością, co nigdy nie chybi/ Jedyne naszym ciałom zapewnia alibi.// Sam skutku swych podglądań nie widział na razie./ Więc dusze nasze dusi w tajnym bezobrazie...// Przemyka się bezwidnie po wodach i łądach/ I ciągle tylko patrzy, a nijak – wygląda!// A za nim czwórka dziatwy marudzi i płacze:/ Patrzałek, Podglądaczek, Mrugoń i Łypaczek.// Lecz kiedy światokręgu przekroczył ustronia,/ Poślizgnął się w domyśle i zabił Logonia.// I stracił naraz Okoń swój dar wszechwidzenia/ – Ostały się obrazy – a znikły znaczenia!// Powidokami olśnień brnął w mroki prorocze/ Przeoczonych wyjawień i jawnych przeoczeń.// Pamiętał, co zobaczył, a nie wie, co widzi/ I czy tutaj, czy wszędzie, czy pojutrze, czy dziś?// Nie słyszał, jak

Under the pretext of facing difficulties in imitation, Michałowski summarized and commented on (in a very skillful, poetically brilliant way) the history of the epistemological problem concerning the connection between knowledge/cognition and point of view. Using literary imitation, he also wanted to voice his opinion on the issue of the association between those phenomena and the phenomena of understanding and perception; in this way, he stated that perception has a sensual character, and may take place only through the medium of the body.

In order to realize the above goals and to actualize the described contexts, Michałowski invented two characters with unclear ontological statuses. The first one, *Okoń*, bears a name denoting a common fish species [the perch] but is not a fish at all. In Polish, the term *Okoń* includes the word “oko” [“eye”], which brings to mind visuality. The second character is *Logoń*. This neologism substitutes a name or, rather, an anthroponym, and includes part of the word “logos” that refers to reason. Michałowski used the similarity of sound of the two words and created a ballad: a dramatized, narrative poem, the plot of which presents in an allegorical, epistemological way the significant story of *Okoń*, who has killed *Logoń* and who as a result lost his omniscience. The cognitive effects of this event as presented in the poem are twofold: first, *Okoń* loses his ability of omni-seeing, and thus the problem of visuality emerges; second, it appears that the abilities of human perception are not sufficient for *Okoń* to understand the significance of what he is seeing – for adding sense to the object of sight.

The similarity of Michałowski's poem to Leśmian's texts is most visible in the form of the work. As I have already mentioned, it is a ballad written in distich, full of neologisms, which are created in the manner typical of Leśmian. The ontological status of the lyrical characters both authors create remains unclear. What is more, the names of Michałowski's protagonists are formed analogously to the anthroponyms present in Leśmian's ballads. Still, the poem under study proves that the main goal of Michałowski's imitation is not to parody Leśmian's style. The imitation of the stylistic features of his poems resembles a pastiche. The most important intention of these pastiches is to parody the subjects that are the core of scientific disputes and the principles behind typical scientific discourse. Imitation of the styles of Leśmian and other Polish poets including Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Cyprian Norwid, Julian Przyboś, Miron

przemówił – rzecz to nader rzadka –/ Nie dziadek do obrazu, lecz obraz do Dziadka!”]. The last line of the poem refers to the Polish saying “Przemówił dziad do obrazu, a obraz do niego ani razu.”

Białoszewski, Wisława Szymborska and Tadeusz Różewicz is usually a pretext for Michałowski to parody linguistic and mental habits common among academic circles. But it must be emphasized that the aforementioned stylizations (usually created for conferences) should not be classified as occasional poetry. One may assume that Michałowski's poems have a much more universal meaning.

As a result, one must ask the purpose of this humorous "cooperation" with "the other afterword of Polish Literature" and with dead authors? The advantage is a double one. Contemporary poets receive the opportunity to benefit from Leśmian's perfectly developed models of style, while the latter profits from the continuation of his writing, benefitting from posthumous fame that has been prolonged due to his followers. In one preface – these precede each of Michałowski's imitations – one reads that Leśmian is conscious of those profits and that the dead poet finally decided to formalize his contact with the Pracownia Poetyki Eksperymentalnej [Studio of Experimental Literature] precisely because of that. He has signed a bilateral agreement committing himself to long-term cooperation with that studio, in the field of literature. In consequence, he is in regular contact with Piotr Michałowski via the e-mail address lesmian@niebo.pl [lesmian@heaven.pl]. In this humorous way, Michałowski has attempted to motivate his literary mystification.

In light of the above, it is clear why the main keynote of Michałowski's literary-program declaration, "Beyond Style, or the First Manifesto of Experimental Poetics," is: "Instead of imitating originality, it is worth attempting an originality of imitation."⁵⁸⁸ By writing his imitations/continuations, Michałowski jokingly proclaims the triumph of meta-literature and postulates that regard stylization as justified literary work that creates new meaning.

Continuations of Leśmian's aesthetics of death

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find at least three authors whose poetry includes references to Leśmian's texts: Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki and Bohdan Sławiński. For each of them, *thema regium* of their work is the theme of death. Although, despite the fact that the context of aesthetics of death – a well-known component of Leśmian's poetry – is enormously important to these poets, they do not imitate Leśmian's poetic style.

Rymkiewicz applies Leśmian's poetic method of creating images from abstract concepts. The technique permits him to both render dynamic the lyrical situation in his poems, and to include philosophical meaning associated with the

588 Michałowski, "Poza stylem," pp. 158–165, particularly p. 159.

project of negative metaphysics present in his poems. The phenomenon of nothingness is subjected in Rymkiewicz's text to visualization, or in other words, nothingness materializes – for example, in the poem “Ogród w Milanówku, koniec września” [“Garden in Milanówek, Late September”] from the book *Znak niejasny, baśń półżywa* [*Unclear Sign, Half-living Legend*].⁵⁸⁹ In the poem “Koci miesiąc. Pierwsza piosenka” [“Feline Month: First Song”], one reads that the ghost of nothingness is able to tiptoe and play pranks (“The ghost of nothingness is a troublemaker”).⁵⁹⁰ It is described as an animal (“Nothingness runs fast”);⁵⁹¹ it is also able to walk slowly on its claws (“Nothingness walks under the apple tree/ On its claws, slowly”), as in the poem “Nicość. Trzecia piosenka” [“Nothingness: Third Song”].⁵⁹² The abstract notion of nothingness is therefore the main theme of Rymkiewicz poems, just like the abstract concepts in Leśmian's poems “Zwiewność” [“Etherealness”] and “Way of Looking.” Rymkiewicz treats these concepts like literary characters, he subjects them to animation or gives them – like true lyrical protagonists – anthropomorphic features. Common traditions that appear in poems by Leśmian and Rymkiewicz, which inspired them in direct and mediated ways (for Leśmian, an important mediation was reading works of Edgar Allan Poe; also important was contact via reading with macabre poetics and the beginning of macabresque poetics in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire) were medieval and baroque aesthetics of the macabre. Each of them has referred to the motif of the *dance macabre* in order to modify it in literary terms. Whereas Leśmian does this in his ballads “Jadwiga,” “The Beggar's Ballad,” “Whirlus and Twirlus,” “The Saw” and in the poem “The Inn,” Rymkiewicz has used this concept in the work “Wędruj – Länder pogrzebowy” [“Travel – Funeral Länder”] published in *Zachód słońca w Milanówku* [*Sunset in Milanówek*].⁵⁹³ The aesthetics of the macabresque is another connection between the two poets. Both of them were interested in the world of nature, though Rymkiewicz introduced

589 Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, “Ogród w Milanówku, koniec września,” in: *Cicho, ciszej. Wiersze z lat 1963–2002* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2003), p. 133.

590 Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, “Koci miesiąc. Pierwsza piosenka,” in: *Cicho, ciszej. Wiersze z lat 1963–2002* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2003), p. 140. [“Duch nicości bardzo psoci”].

591 Rymkiewicz, “Koci miesiąc. Pierwsza piosenka,” p. 140 [“Nicość robi wielkie szusy”].

592 Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, “Nicość. Trzecia piosenka,” in: *Znak niejasny, baśń półżywa*, in: *Cicho, ciszej. Wiersze z lat 1963–2002* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2003), p. 41 [“Nicość chodzi pod jabłonką/ Na pazurkach pomalutku”].

593 Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, “Wędruj – ländery pogrzebowy,” in: *Zachód słońca w Milanówku*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2002), p. 58–59.

the fantastic vision of nature less often than Leśmian in his work. They both had a disposition to shape stanzas in their poems in a distich form, but they had different reasons for doing so. For Rymkiewicz, the tradition of the elegiac distich stemming from Greek and Latin poetry is the most important source of reference. Because Leśmian also wrote elegies, it seems that folklore (rather than ancient poetry) was the model repertory he was inspired by.

The context of Leśmian's poetry plays an important role in the interpretation of Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki's poem "The Absolution." It is relevant to quote the text in full:

before his death the poet asked
for a jar of raspberries how do you like that
the greedy hog he didn't ask for a priest
or a confessor but a handful of berries

which we had been picking haphazardly
for many weeks he'd been holed up
in a dark wood (in Leśmian's raspberry
thicket) he starved his bones

by the edge of the wolfpit that back then
we would visit he starved his poems
ever since the world rejected him
uninterested in its own creativity
and so we saw him behave
like a little child one time he asked
for a handful of berries another for
a prayer book before our eyes could grow dim.⁵⁹⁴

There is only one allusion to Leśmian's cycle of poems *In A Raspberry Brushwood*, in the first stanza of the text; a direct reference to Leśmian's poem appears in the next verse. One can find numerous words and phrases derived from Leśmian's cycle in Tkaczyszyn-Dycki's work, for example: "raspberries," "to pick berries" and "haphazardly." It also seems significant that there is an imprecise repetition of Leśmian's phrase "he starved his/ bones." Tkaczyszyn-Dycki repeats it, but with a transformation of a single word. As a result, there is the version: "he starved his poems." In Leśmian's poetic cycle, the theme of kissing to the bone is a sign of insatiable love. In Tkaczyszyn-Dycki's poem, this repeated literary allusion is used to multiply the meaning. The intertextual references reveal before the reader secrets of issues (characteristic for Leśmian's poetry) that are also associated

594 Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, "Absolution," p. 133.

with the experience of metaphysical starvation. This may be understood both as insatiability of erotic lust, and sign of metaphysical crisis or metaphysical feelings that cannot be expressed in poetry. For this reason, poetic expression of them is faced with difficulties, and always faces obstacles. The poem under study includes not only references to the key themes in Leśmian's poetry (love, death, nature), but also a diagnosis of the contemporary world, which does not need poetry and is "uninterested in its own creativity."⁵⁹⁵ For this reason, in the world presented in Tkaczyszyn-Dycki's poetry, the poet insatiable of metaphysical experiences and content, resembles a starved man and a person suffering from gluttony. He "is like a little child" who naively believes that they can satisfy their metaphysical hunger. From this point of view, the main function of allusion and direct references to Leśmian's cycle is a metapoetic reflection associated with the metaphysical, absolving power of poetry. The verse "the greedy hog he didn't ask for a priest/ or a confessor but a handful of berries" that initially have a negative sense, reveal in the context of the entire poem their ironic sense, becoming a sign of the affirmation of poetic creativity.

Similarly, the aesthetics of the macabre (which stems from medieval and baroque literature and iconography) is of major importance to Bohdan Sławiński – the youngest poet of those analyzed in this chapter, author of *Sztuńce do glist* [*Cutlery for Worms*].⁵⁹⁶ Intertextual references intersect in Sławiński's writing to the works of various poets, including literary allusions to the poems of the Jesuit priest Józef Baka, and to works by Bolesław Leśmian and by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. The context of Leśmian's work is hence one of the analytic-interpretative keys allowing an understanding of Sławiński's poetical works. The latter, as with Leśmian and later Rymkiewicz, manifests a predilection for poetical visualization and materialization of nothingness. As with Leśmian, he discusses the subjects of death, nature and love.

A direct intertextual reference to Leśmian's ballad "Whirlus and Twirlus" appears in Sławiński's poem "...noc i deszcz..." ["...night and rain..."].⁵⁹⁷ The lyrical subject of the text reflects upon the topic of death, while trying to describe a nightmare. The atmosphere of the poem is very dark, the horror is strengthened by, for example, the metaphor of "the moon" that "saws wrists."⁵⁹⁸ The sound

595 Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, "Absolution," p. 133.

596 Sławiński, *Sztuńce do glist*.

597 Bohdan Sławiński, "...noc i deszcz..." in: *Sztuńce do glist* (Łódź, Stowarzyszenie Literackie im. K.K. Baczyńskiego, 2008), p. 19.

598 Sławiński, "...noc i deszcz..." p. 19 ["księżyc [który] przeguby rżnie"].

quality of the poem (achieved via phonemic arrays and onomatopoeia, among other effects) turns out to be as important as the visual aspect. For example, there is a poetic, onomatopoeic phrase referring to the thanatotic sphere, “creaking seams,”⁵⁹⁹ that connect the body with the skeleton, Whirlus with Twirlus (the protagonists in Leśmian’s ballad), a female cat with its kittens, and a cat with a hammer.⁶⁰⁰

Despite a similar verse structure to Józef Baka’s poem (proving a maximum use of the poetical capabilities in short verses stemming from the use of parallel syntax, ellipses and less complicated rhymes), in terms of lexis, Sławiński’s poem is closer to the tradition of Leśmian and the poetics of Rymkiewicz. Words analogical to ones used frequently by Leśmian appear in the text: “night,” “body,” “dream,” “witch,” “moon,” “blood,” “to drown” and neologisms formed as a result of their modification. On the other hand, lexical similarity of Sławiński’s text to Rymkiewicz’s poems is present in the use of the following words: “dream,” “rain,” “apple” and “moon.” In Sławiński’s poetry there is a tendency to create lyrical animal protagonists; this technique is used to create a characteristic typical of the poetics in poems by Rymkiewicz (his bestiary includes mainly cats, mice, hedgehogs and woodpeckers). For Sławiński, employment of these techniques – well embedded in literary tradition – was a starting point in the development of his own poetically negative metaphysics. Importantly, in *Cutlery for Worms* there are both direct references to Leśmian’s poetical works and allusions to the cycle *In a Raspberry Brushwood* and the long poem “The Meadow.”⁶⁰¹ Sławiński’s text “...zielony gaj...” [“...green grove...”] describes a literary vision, saturated with eroticism, of two parallel poetical images: raspberries kissing a glade, and a man kissing a woman adorned with raspberries. The parallel (seen also by the

599 Sławiński, “...noc i deszcz...,” p. 19 [“trzeszczące szwy”].

600 Sławiński, “...noc i deszcz...,” p. 19 [“noc i deszcz/ aż trzeszczą szwy/ co ciało z kośćcem/ łączą na krzyż// świdyrgę z midrygą/ kotkę i kotki/ kotka z młotkiem/psotki// powieki węgorse/trzepoczą/ a sny rozlane morze/ poszwy// śnię/ kogut czerwony jak ogień/ z wiedźma się parzy/ za daleko do kurzej chatki/topię się/ a księżyc przeguby rżnie// gdzie poszwa szcrotka jabłko// głowa nabiera odbitych snów/ przecieka/ smołą i krwią// księżyc jak nożyce/ sny do krwi strzygą”].

601 Bohdan Sławiński, “...zielony gaj...,” in: *Sztuńce do glist* (Łódź: Stowarzyszenie Literackie im. K.K. Baczyńskiego, 2008), p. 37 [“zielony gaj/ ptaszki świergocą/ maliny całują polanę/ po kostki i pas// miłośnie leżysz/ igliwie szyje nam koc/ ziola do nieba pachną// tylko żuki okruchy ciemni/ słyszę trzeszczą/ utnę sobie uszy// tylko próchno pod korą świeci/ wyłupię sobie oczy// leje się słońce/ obłoki przybite do nieba/ i jeśli gwiazda kapnie ognistym deszczem/ to nic// miłośnie leżysz/ ubrana w maliny/ całuję las// w ustach ziemia/ kochana w ustach ziemia”].

lyrical protagonist) results in an identification of the beloved woman with the forest, the glade (nature). In consequence, the speaking subject declares that he is kissing a forest. This phrase, in the following verse, becomes literal when the protagonist states that he has sand in his mouth. The act of physical love is here associated with the thanatotic sphere – a dark impression of the man seeing the beloved woman as earth is impossible to forget.

In Sławiński's poetry, the main purpose of literary allusions to Leśmian's poems is to give a starting point to the development of meta-literary reflections on the subject of the key function of poetry, in this case – metaphorically speaking – as “cutlery for worms.” In other words, poetical aesthetization of the subject of death is a tool allowing the reader to deal with this issue (presented in a macabresque, naturalistic and literary way), dealing with the experience of horror, fascination and disgust that arise as a result of the emotional and intellectual confrontation from the accompanying contact with the thanatotic sphere.

Continuations of Leśmian's erotics

Direct references to Leśmian's works in which eroticism plays an important role appeared in two texts by Piotr Mitzner, “Majka's Meadow” and “Closure,” published in the volume *In Kuku's Eye*. In “Majka's Meadow” there is a reference in the title to two Leśmian works – “The Meadow” and “Majka,” a prose piece composed in line with the *klechda* genre. Leśmian's “The Meadow,” consisting of six parts, and Mitzner's “Majka's Meadow,” composed in twelve poetic episodes, are both long erotic poems. The conversational form of Leśmian's work has, in Mitzner's poetic text, been replaced with the poetics of confession. Although the texts under study differ significantly in the construction of the poetic phrase, in both of the long poems a meeting with or on a meadow is associated with the most intimate experience. Also analogous is the construction of femininity identified with nature and fertility. Under the influence of secretly meeting with it, the speaking subject in Mitzner's poem, like the protagonist of Leśmian's “The Meadow,” begins to live in the state of nature, loses his human characteristics, a process he describes with neologisms that are verbs deriving from nouns: *świerszczę* [lit. to behave like a cricket], *trutnię* [lit. to behave like a worker bee], *kleszczę* [lit. to behave like a tick].

Mitzner's long poem (with several passages elided) reads:

a lost path
shortens hurries
turns towards a meadow

and it's gone
 here nests
 weave
 to make it
 before sunset

because every evening
 it repeats
 red sun
 roll on the grass
 [...]

*

and yesterday I saw two
 suns

that jumped into bushes
 and haven't emerged until today
 [...]

*

here after hours

alternatively
 I act like a cricket
 I act like a worker bee
 I act like a tick

or I pretend to be
 a scarecrow

the meadow combines
 separated sounds
 mad
 [...]

*

but I will someday
 from that night
 from that
 meadow return⁶⁰²

602 Mitzner, "Łąka Majki," pp. 61-63 ["tu ścieżka zbłąkana/ skraca się przyspiesza/ skręca w łąkę// tyle ją widzieli// tu gniazda/ uwijają się/ żeby zdążyć/ przed zachodem// bo co wieczór/ to się powtarza/ czerwone słońce/ tarza się w trawie [...] * a wczoraj widziałem dwa/ słońca// które wlażyły w krzaki/ i do dziś nie wyszły [...] * tu po godzinach// na przemian/ świerszczę/ trutnię/ kleszczę// albo robię za/ stracha na

It is significant that both the title of Mitzner's poem and its content is a blending of references to Leśmian's "The Meadow" and "Majka." In turn, in the piece "Closure," where one can find references both to Leśmian's "The Meadow" and "Majka" and to Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*,⁶⁰³ the female figure it presents imitates both Leśmian's "The Meadow" and "Majka." One excerpt from Mitzner's long poem reads:

but today my meadow
came at night
put her head
through the window
she is rocking
offering her back⁶⁰⁴

This poetic image corresponds intertextually with this passage from Leśmian's folktale "Majka," where the faithfulness of a *roussalka* is associated with the devotion of a dog: "at his feet she lies and rubs against them and goes crazy like a faithful dog that will not be chased off with a kick or a stone."⁶⁰⁵

In Mitzner's poetic texts, the blending of references to Leśmian's works "The Meadow" and "Majka" allows the lyrical subject to emphasize, on one hand, the power of forbidden passion, and on the other to express in a poetic way the emotional conflict resulting from the fear of self-destruction in passion, and to describe the dilemmas that lead to rejection of such love ("over the meadow, a scythe hangs/ and a stone").⁶⁰⁶ Despite the fact that Mitzner as a poet worked out an artistic style as unique as that of Leśmian, references to the latter's poems play an important role in works of the former. It appears that the most important function of those references is to manifest the universality of models of existential experience presented in Leśmian's texts.

starchy// łąka łączy/ dźwięki rozłączone/ obłąkane [...] * ale ja kiedyś/ z takiej nocy/
z takiej/ łąki wrócę”].

603 Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz: The Last Foray in Lithuania* (New York: Archipelago, 2018).

604 Mitzner, "Domknięcie," p. 82 ["ale dziś moja łąka/ przysłała w nocy/ wsadziła łeb/ przez okno/ kofysze się/ podstawią grzbiet”].

605 Leśmian, "Majka," p. 84 ["u stóp mu się układa i łąsi się, i waruje, jak ten pies wierny, którego ani kopnięciem, ani kamieniem odegnąć nie można”].

606 Mitzner, "Łąka Majki," p. 60 ["nad łąką kosa wisi/ i kamień”].

IMITATORS? FOLLOWERS? SUCCESSORS?

With reference to the poetical texts mentioned above, the authors of which refer to Leśmian's writing, three basic types of intertextual relations emerge. They can be classified according to the range of their appearance as follows:⁶⁰⁷

- direct and inferable references of a text to another text;
- direct and inferable references of a text to the genre of another text;
- direct and inferable references of a text to other cultural texts.

Two of the above types of intertextuality – the first and the second one – appear in the poems under analysis. Their authors used the following forms of imitation, using Leśmian's *oeuvre*:

- 1) parody;
- 2) pastiche;
- 3) quotes or hidden quotes taken from Leśmian's texts;
- 4) allusions to Leśmian's texts.

Julian Tuwim and Edward Balcerzan wrote recontextualizing parodies that stem from an imitation of Leśmian's style and the prosody of his poems. As a result, they achieved a comic effect. However, I would argue that the influence of Leśmian's writing was not decisive in the process of the formation of the individual artistic expression of Tuwim and Balcerzan. In fact, the impact was only temporary and incidental. Leśmian's poetry determined the form of works of Piotr Michałowski to a larger extent. However, it is pertinent to note that Michałowski treated Leśmian's works as one of many stylistic models that could be imitated (along with the poetic styles of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid, Przyboś, Białoszewski and Szymborska). Leśmian's model of developing poems became a subject of pastiche, which in turn was treated as a pretext to showing in a parodistic way the problems formulated, usually in scientific discourse. In this case, the modernization of scientific contexts combined with Leśmian's style brought about great literature. It is worth emphasizing that pastiches written by Michałowski are highly complex and diversified. His poetry demonstrates that writing a pastiche does not exclude creativity.

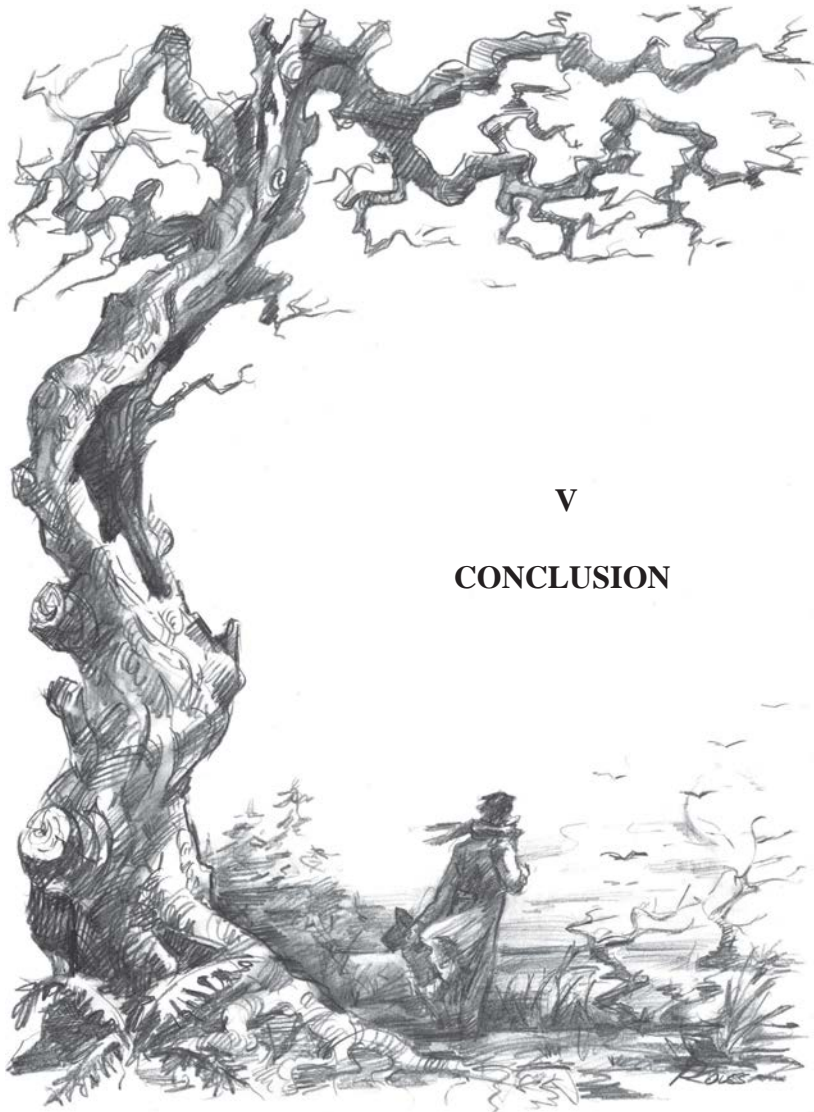
On the other hand, Leśmian's negative metaphysics and the topic of his poems associated with death may be seen as very significant contexts and sources of

607 Cf. Nycz, "Intertekstualność i jej zakresy."

inspiration for both Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz and Bohdan Sławiński. This can be confirmed by their shared inclination to write poetry using the aesthetics of the macabre. This impact is not incidental. It is connected with a philosophy of life similar in many aspects to Leśmian's worldview. Literary allusions – both thematic and lexical – to Leśmian's poems are present in Sławiński's volume *Cutlery for Worms*, and also in the works of Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki. And Leśmian's eroticism and construction of female characters became a significant source of poetical inspirations for Piotr Mitzner. These references indicated above confirm the vast importance of the poetical *oeuvre* of Leśmian to the authors mentioned here. However, this does not mean that their texts lack hallmarks of originality.

The director François Truffaut once said “Il est impossible de dépasser quelqu'un en marchant dans ses pas,” which means that “it is impossible to overtake someone by following in his footsteps.” It is true. However, I believe that it is possible to follow the path of one's predecessor, and then decide to take one's own way – and, as a result, to then go even further. The poetic texts analyzed above confirm this conviction.⁶⁰⁸

608 The subject of continuation of Leśmian's poetics remains open. Apart from the analyzed texts of Julian Tuwim, Edward Balcerzan, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, Bohdan Sławiński and Piotr Mitzner, it is also worth mentioning the pastiche writings of Grzegorz Uzdanski, as is noted by the reviewer Prof. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel. Those texts are published successively on the website “Nowe wiersze sławnych poetów” [“New poems of famous poets”] at https://www.facebook.com/pg/Nowe-wiersze-slawnych-poetow-1537027053184427/posts/?ref=page_internal, last accessed 01.08.2019. Among them is the poem “Ork” [“Orc”], which is an attempt at imitating Leśmian's style combined with references to fantasy literature. In Latin, the word “orc” means a demon, monster or being from the underworld. The name was used by Tolkien in his twelve-volume cycle *The History of Middle-earth*, creating a mythological race of creatures battling elves, dwarves and people. In Uzdanski's pastiche, one can detect the following elements of Leśmian's poetics: genre references (the work is a ballad), lexical (in the form of words including “aching,” “mustiness,” “sleep” and “beggar,” and neologisms modeled of those present in Leśmian's poems – for example “bezkształtowie” [lit. “non-shapeness”], “bezszermie” [lit. “non-murmurness”], “objuczenie” [lit. “burden-like”]), and finally thematic (the subject of the poem is the death of the orc). Uzdanski's plays on poetical tradition have mainly that playful function.



V

CONCLUSION

In academic work, a consequence of completing studies on a given issue is often that further research problems are formulated, which may result in the long run in new, more extensive research being undertaken (also by other comparatists). I hope that this will also be the case with the question of Leśmian's work perceived as rooted in the European and international literary traditions. It seems that there is a chance of this, if only because of the relatively large number of translations of his works, requiring detailed analysis.⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, instead of writing a traditional book ending that could suggest a final solution to the research problem, I would like to share the information that I managed to collect about translations of Leśmian's works into foreign languages, in the hope that these will be used for further research. Translations exist of various quality into Czech, English, German, French, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Slovak, Lithuanian, Hebrew, Italian and Russian.

The most translations of Leśmian's poetry have been published in Russian. The fullest collection, entitled *Безлюдная баллада или Слова для песни без слов. Поэзия. Театр. Проза* [*Deserted ballad, or lyrics for a lyric-less ballad. Poetry. Theatre. Proze*], was edited by Andrei Bazylevsky and published in 2006.⁶¹⁰ It comprises impressive eight hundred pages. Authors of the Russian translations in the volume include: Konstantin Balmont,⁶¹¹ Michał Choromański (the translator of the Polish poetry anthology from 1929 addressed to the Russian emigration),⁶¹² Евгений Вадимов [Yevgeny Vadimov], Юрий Вронский [Yuri

609 For a thorough study of the translations of Leśmian's works into Russian and English, see: Marta Kaźmierczak, *Przekład w kręgu intertekstualności. Na materiale tłumaczeń poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* (Warszawa: Instytut Lingwistyki Stosowanej, 2012); Kaźmierczak, "Leśmian po rosyjsku." Kaźmierczak points to selected translation series, thus indicating the basis for comparative research on translations of Leśmian's works. Selected translations of the poems into Russian can be found at vekperevoda.com.

610 Андрей Базылевский [Andrei Bazylevsky], ed., *Безлюдная баллада или слова для песни без слов. Поэзия – театр – проза* (Москва: Вахазар, 2006).

611 Balmont is the author of the translation of Leśmian's poem "Szmer wiosel" ["The Sound of Oars"], see: Константин Бальмонт [Konstantin Balmont], "Взмах весел," in: *Собрание сочинений. Избранные переводы* (Москва: publisher unknown, 1937), p. 198.

612 Сергей Кулаковский [Sergey Kulakovsky], *Современные польские поэты в очерках Сергея Кулаковского и переводах Михаила Хороманского* (Berlin: Петрополис,

Wronsky], Анатолий Гелескул [Anatoly Geleskul], Сергей Городецкий [Sergey Gorodetsky], Геннадий Зельдович [Gennady Zeldovich], Вильгель Левик [Wilgiel Levik], Леонид Мартынов [Leonid Martynov], Мария Петров [Maria Pietrov], Борис Пастернак [Boris Pasternak], Александр Големб [Aleksandr Golemb], Майя Коринева [Maia Korienieva], Сергей Петров [Sergey Petrov], Борис Слуцкий [Boris Slusky], Юлия Покровская [Julia Pokrovskaya], Ирина Полакова-Севостьянова [Irina Polakova-Syevostianova], Виктор Хорев [Victor Khoriev], танислав Чумаков [Stanislav Czumakov], Валерий Акопов [Valeriy Akopov], Алексей Рашба [Alexei Rashba], Владислав Ризвый [Vladislav Riezvyj], Сергей Шоргин [Sergey Shorgin] and Andrei Bazylevsky. Unfortunately, the volume does not include the translations of Leśmian poems by: Наталья Астафьева [Natalia Astafieva]: “Przyśpiew” [“Приспев,” “Folksong”], “Wiatrak” [“Ветрак,” “Windmill”], “Soldier” [“Солдат”], “The Maiden”⁶¹³ [“Дева”], “Pszczoly” [“Пчелы,” “Bees”] published in the volume *Польские поэты XX века. Антология* [Polish Poets of the Twentieth Century: An Anthology]⁶¹⁴].

Thirty-five years before the publication of Bazylevsky’s selection of translations from 1971, the first collection of Leśmian’s translations appeared in Russia.⁶¹⁵ It included a hundred and nine poems translated by, among others, Sergey Gorodecky, Anatoly Geleskul, Maria Pietrov, Давид Самоюв [David Samoyov], Marek Живов [Marek Zuvov], Владимир Луговский [Vladimir Lugovsky], Wilgiel Levik, Всеволод Рождечинский [Vsevolod Rozhdiekhynsky], Boris Pasternak, Boris Slusky, Осип Румер [Osip Rumier] and Николай Чуковский [Nikolai Chukovsky].

Along with Zeldovich’s translations and the collection of texts translated by Anatoly Gieleskul⁶¹⁶ (with thirty-nine Leśmian poems) and by Константин

1929). The volume includes two poems translated by Choromański: “W słońcu” [“На солнце,” “In the Sun”] and “Wieczorne niebo” [“Вечернее небо,” “The Evening Sky”].

613 Boleslaw Leśmian, “The Maiden,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Boleslaw Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), pp. 75–77.

614 Наталья Астафьева [Natalia Astafieva] and Владимир Британишский [Vladimir Britanishskiy], *Польские поэты XX века. Антология*, Vol. 1 (Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 2000).

615 Болеслав Лесьмян [Boleslaw Leśmian], *Стихи*, ed. Наталья Богомолова [Natalia Bogomolova] (Москва: Художественная литература, 1971).

616 Анатолий Гелескул [Anatoly Geleskul], *Избранные переводы* (Москва: Терра, 2006), pp. 107–133.

Оленин [Konstantin Olenin] (containing “Odjazd” [“Отъезд,” “Departure”] and “Amid the Dahlias”⁶¹⁷ [“Седи георгинов”]),⁶¹⁸ translations of Leśmian’s works are also scattered in various periodicals. Among these, translators of Leśmian texts include Василий Кочнов [Vasily Kochnov]⁶¹⁹ and В. Честный [V. Chiestny].⁶²⁰ Marta Kaźmierczak’s book *Przekład w kręgu intertekstualności. Na materiale tłumaczeń poezji Bolesława Leśmiana* [A Translation in the Intertextuality Circle: Using Translation Materials of Bolesław Leśmian’s Poetry] is a good source of information on the rich reception of Russian translations, which does not exhaust the topic due to the sheer number of translations.

The poetry of Leśmian has also been translated into Czech. One should mention the work of František Kvapil, Jan Pilař, Vlasta Dvořáčková and Iveta Mikešová. Kvapil translated Leśmian’s poems “Zapomnienie” [“Zapomenutí,” “Forgetting”], “Śmiercie” [“Smrtky,” “Deaths”] and “U wpółrozwartych stoim drzwi” [“V půl otevřené,” “Standing by Half-Open Door”]. These were reprinted in the selection of Leśmian’s poems translated by Leszek Engelking, and entitled *Druhá smrt* [Repeated Death].⁶²¹ Leśmian had the opportunity to get acquainted with Kvapil’s translations and was satisfied with them, appreciating their linguistic virtuosity and formal flexibility.⁶²² The volume *Repeated Death* includes Iveta Mikešová’s translations of Leśmian’s poetic works as well. Jan Pilař’s translations appeared in 1972 in the volume *Zelená hodina* [Green Hour]⁶²³ while Vlasta Dvořáčková’s translations were published in 2005 in the volume *Rostla višně na královském sadě* [A cherry tree grew in a royal garden].⁶²⁴ It is worth mentioning that Dvořáčková devoted her Master’s thesis to Kvapil’s translations from Polish.⁶²⁵ There are other works in translation studies in this field. Their authors

617 Bolesław Leśmian, “Amid the Dahlias,” in: 33 *of the Most Beautiful Love Poems* (New York: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), p. 39.

618 Константин Оленин [Konstantin Olenin], *Несколько слов. Стихотворения* (Рówne: Авторское издание, 1939), pp. 25–26.

619 See: *Polsza*, No. 3 (1962), pp. 40–41; Kaźmierczak, “Leśmian po rosyjsku.”

620 Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “Встреча,” *Ровесник*, No. 4 (1968), quoted from: Kaźmierczak, “Leśmian po rosyjsku.”

621 Bolesław Leśmian, *Druhá smrt*, ed. Leszek Engelking (Ołomuniec: Votobia, 1995).

622 Leśmian, *Utwory rozproszone. Listy*, p. 357.

623 Bolesław Leśmian, *Zelená hodina* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1972).

624 Bolesław Leśmian, *Rostla višně na královském sadě* (Jinočany: H & H, 2005). For Dvořáčková’s translations of Leśmian’s poems, see: Josef Hrdlička, “Poezie bratra Střibroně,” *Souvislosti*, No. 2 (17) (2006), pp. 267–270.

625 Vlasta Dvořáčková, *František Kvapil, český básník a překladatel z polštiny*, thesis written at the Faculty of Philology of Charles University in Prague, 1952.

are Jana Zlámalová⁶²⁶ and Magdalena Supeł.⁶²⁷ The former is the author of a comparative analysis of archaisms, dialectisms and neologisms in translations of Leśmian poems by František Kvapil, Jan Pilař, Vlasta Dvořáčková and Iveta Mikešova. The latter focused her research on the construction of metaphors in original versions of Leśmian's poems and translations by Dvořáčková.

Leśmian's works have been translated far less frequently into French.⁶²⁸ There is a well-known translation of the poem "From Childhood Years" as "Instantané du temps de l'enfance" by Roger Legras. Leśmian works also appeared in French in 2000 in Paris in *Panorama de la littérature polonaise du XXe siècle I, Poésie* [*Panorama of Polish Literature of the Twentieth Century I, Poetry*], Vol. 2, selected by Karl Dedecius and translated by Claude-Henry du Bord.⁶²⁹

Dedecius, who was involved in the selection mentioned above, made invaluable contributions as a translator to the popularization of Leśmian's works in German.⁶³⁰ He included Leśmian poems in the anthology *Polnische poesie dez 20. Jahrhunderts* [*Polish Poetry of the 20th Century*] (1964): for example, "Einsamkeit" ["Samotność," "Loneliness"] "Ertrunkener" ["The Drowned Rambler"], "Im Himbeerstrauch" ["In the Raspberry Brushwood"], "Zwei Menschlein" ["Two Poor Wights"], "Das Mädchen" ["The Maiden"].⁶³¹ Other Dedecius translations

626 Cf. Jana Zlámalová, *Komparace vybraných jednotek v překladech poezie Bolesława Leśmiana*, B.A. thesis written at Masaryk University in Brno in 2012 under the supervision of Dr. Roman Madecki, https://is.muni.cz/th/239296/ff_b/bakalarka.pdf, last accessed 30.08.2019.

627 Cf. Magdalena Supeł, *Analiza porównawcza metafor w czeskim przekładzie utworów Bolesława Leśmiana "Rostla višeň na královském sadě" Vlasty Dvořáčkové*, B.A. thesis written under my supervision in 2014 at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw. The text is available in the Archive of Theses of the University of Warsaw. Cf. Magdalena Supeł (Ukrainets), "Metafory w czeskim przekładzie utworów Bolesława Leśmiana 'Rostla višeň na královském sadě' Vlasty Dvořáčkové," *Tekstualia* No. 2 (45) (2016), pp. 155-165.

628 Cf. Jean-Claude Polet, ed., *Auteurs européens du début du XXe siècle: anthologie en langue, sous la direction de Jean-Claude Polet* (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2002).

629 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Panorama de la littérature polonaise du XXe siècle I, Vol. 2: Poésie* (Paris: Noir sur Blanc, 2000).

630 I drew the information on Karl Dedecius' translations from sources including: Przemysław Chojnowski, *Zur Strategie und Poetik des Übersetzens. Eine Untersuchung der Anthologien zur polnischen Lyrik von Karl Dedecius* (Berlin: Verlag, 2005).

631 Bolesław Leśmian, "Dziewczyna," in: *Dziela wszystkie. Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), pp. 327-330. Karl Dedecius, ed., *Polnische poesie dez 20. Jahrhunderts* (München: C. Hanser, 1964).

are in the volume *Polonaise erotique. Thema mit Variationen für männliche und weibliche Stimmen* [*Polonaise Erotique: Motifs with Variations for Male and Female Voices*] (1968), which included the Leśmian poems: “Im Abgrund” [“Otczłań,” “The Abyss”] and “Im Himbeerstrauch,”⁶³² and in the anthology *Polnische Liebesgedichte* [*Polish Love Poems*] (1980), which included a reprint of the poetical text “Im Abgrund” [“The Abyss”].⁶³³ We should also mention the volume *Hundert Polnische Gedichte* [*One Hundred Polish Poems*] (1982),⁶³⁴ with the poems “Ertrunkener,” “Du nahst dem ersten Nebel...” [“Ty pierwszej mgły dosięgasz,” “You Reach the First Mist”], “Liebkosung” [“A Caress”]⁶³⁵ and “Mädchen” and the book *Gedichte. Polnisch – deutsch* [*Poems: Polish – German*] (1988)⁶³⁶ that included the following translations: “Im Vorbeigehn” [“Mimochodem,” “By the Way”], “Dem unbekanntem Gott” [“Nieznanemu bogu,” “To the Unknown God”], “Ertrunkener,” “Liebkosung,” “Du nahst dem ersten Nebel...” [“The Secret”],⁶³⁷ “Wenn du auch, atemlos...” [“When I am kissing you in bed”],⁶³⁸ “Einsamkeit,” “Zwei Menschlen” and “Des Morgenrotes laechender Reiz...” [“A flaming smile of flighty glows...”].⁶³⁹

Dedecius published also the translations *Die Dichter Polens: hundert Autoren vom Mittelalter bis heute* [*Polish Poets: One Hundred Authors from the Middle Ages to the Present*] (1995)⁶⁴⁰ and *Panorama der polnischen Literatur des 20.*

632 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Polonaise erotique. Thema mit Variationen für männliche und weibliche Stimmen* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag, 1968).

633 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Polnische Liebesgedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1980).

634 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Polnische Gedichte*, Vol. 2 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982).

635 Bolesław Leśmian, “A Caress,” in: *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems. Najpiękniejsze wiersze miłosne. A bilingual edition/ Wydanie dwujęzyczne* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2011), p. 41.

636 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Gedichte. Polnisch – deutsch*, trans. Karl Dedecius (Reutlingen: Aldus-Presse Reicheneck, 1988).

637 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Secret,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 73.

638 Bolesław Leśmian, “When I am kissing you in bed,” in: *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems. Najpiękniejsze wiersze miłosne. A bilingual edition/ Wydanie dwujęzyczne* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2011), p. 81.

639 Bolesław Leśmian, “A flaming smile of flighty glows...” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 105.

640 Karl Dedecius, ed., *Die Dichter Polens: hundert Autoren vom Mittelalter bis heute*, trans. Karl Dedecius (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag, 1995).

Jahrhunderts [A Panorama of 20th-century Polish Literature] (1996),⁶⁴¹ which include the following works: “Der Zaubergarten” [“Ogród zaklęty,” “Enchanted Garden”], “Dem unbekanntem Gott,” “Ertrunkener,” “Liebkosung,” “Das Reptil” [“Saurian”],⁶⁴² “Du nahst dem ersten Nebel...,” “Zwei Menschlen,” “Wenn du auch, atemlos...,” “Das Mädchen,” “Im Vorbeigehn,” “Des Morgenrots” [“At dawn”]⁶⁴³ and “Einsamkeit.” The books just mentioned include republished editions.

In his book *Notatnik tłumacza* [Translator’s Notebook],⁶⁴⁴ Dedecius writes about his translations of Leśmian’s poetry, using the examples of the poems “Loneliness” [“Einsamkeit”] and “The Maiden” [“Das Mädchen”]. He attempts to specify the advantages and disadvantages in the translation, from his point of view. Leśmian’s “Loneliness” is regarded as an illustration of his views on the art of translating poetry and issues of translation skills. Dedecius writes:

Due to the “way of looking at his form and content”⁶⁴⁵ and their clarity, and the helplessness of a translator, I placed “Loneliness” at the beginning of my anthology *Polnische Poesie des 20. Jahrhunderts*, bearing in mind its value as a synthesis of what I wanted to present *pars pro toto*. I liked the poem as a bit of a personal (illusion) motto.⁶⁴⁶

Dedecius’ translation work was commented on by others. For example, by Krzysztof A. Kuczkowski in his essay “Nad fenomenem przekładu literackiego Karla Dedeciusa” [“On the Phenomenon of Literary Translation by Karl

641 Karl Dedecius ed., *Panorama der polnischen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*, trans. Karl Dedecius, Vols. 1–2 (Zürich: Verlag, 1996).

642 Bolesław Leśmian, “Saurian,” in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 33.

643 Bolesław Leśmian, “At dawn,” in: *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems. Najpiękniejsze wiersze miłosne. A bilingual edition/ Wydanie dwujęzyczne* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2011), p. 83.

644 Karl Dedecius, *Notatnik tłumacza* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1974).

645 *Spojrzystość* – a combination of *spojrzenie* [look] and *przejrzytość* [clarity].

646 Dedecius admitted: “I struggled with Leśmian. While working, I came across some funny stories. Leśmian knew German a bit. It turns out that some of his neologisms translated into German are not neologisms at all. For example, the noun *Zweirad* – a bicycle. In Polish Leśmian wrote *dwukoło* [lit. two-wheel], as if he literally translated the word from German. While *dwukoło* is a neologism in Polish, the German translation fails by turning a Polish neologism into a banal German word. But I was able to translate a bit of Leśmian’s style” [Dedecius, *Notatnik tłumacza*, p. 165]. Cf. Maria Ziemianin, “Kamyk rzucony na wodę. Rozmowa z Karlem Dedeciusem,” *Rzeczpospolita*, No. 12 (1988), p. 27.

Dedecius”]⁶⁴⁷ and in Jolanta Krzysztoforska-Doschek’s article “Wiersze Bolesława Leśmiana w przekładzie Karla Dedeciusa” [“Bolesław Leśmian’s Poems in Karl Dedecius’ Translation”].⁶⁴⁸ Although Dedecius is author of the most German translations of Leśmian’s work, other translators have also tried facing Leśmian’s *oeuvre*. For example, the translation of *The Adventures of Sindbad the Sailor: A Fantasy Novel* [*Die Abenteuer Sindbads des Seefahrers: ein phantastischer Roman*] by Ulrike Herbst-Rosocha.⁶⁴⁹ There is also a German book by Gudrun Voggenreiter devoted to Leśmian’s work, *Dialogizität am Beispiel des Werkes von Boleslaw Leśmian* [*Dialogicity in the Example of Works by Bolesław Leśmian*], which may aid future generations of Leśmian translators with efforts connected with Leśmian’s works.

Leśmian’s works have also been translated into Italian, though, according to Andrei F. de Carlo’s article entitled “‘Koszmar tłumacza.’ Twórczość Bolesława Leśmiana w kręgu włoskich zagadnień translacyjnych,” [“‘Translator’s Nightmare.’ Bolesław Leśmian’s Creativity in the Sphere of Italian Translation Issues”], it has been relatively late in gaining appreciation in Italy, in the 1960 and 1970s.⁶⁵⁰ Leśmian’s poems appeared then, for the first time in an anthology edited by Carlo Verdiani, *Poeti polacchi contemporanei* [*Polish Contemporary Poets*].⁶⁵¹ In 1973, Jerzy Pomianowski joined the circle of people contributing to the popularization of Leśmian’s work in Italy, as the editor of the volume *Guida alla moderna letteratura polacca* [*Guide to Contemporary Polish Literature*],⁶⁵² as did Paolo Statuti as the translator of Leśmian’s works.⁶⁵³ Moreover, poems by

647 Krzysztof A. Kuczyński, “Nad fenomenem przekładu literackiego Karla Dedeciusa,” in: *Wśród ludzi i książek. Rozprawy - wspomnienia - wywiady* (Włocławek: Wydawnictwo Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej we Włocławku, 2011), pp. 27-37.

648 Jolanta Krzysztoforska-Doschek, “Wiersze Bolesława Leśmiana w przekładzie Karla Dedeciusa,” *Ruch Literacki*, No. 4 (1995), pp. 537-544.

649 Bolesław Leśmian, *Die Abenteuer Sindbads des Seefahrers: ein phantastischer Roman* (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 1993).

650 Andrei F. de Carlo, “‘Koszmar tłumacza.’ Twórczość Bolesława Leśmiana w kręgu włoskich zagadnień translacyjnych,” in: *Literatura polska na świecie*, Vol. 2: *W kręgu znawców*, ed. Romuald Cudak (Katowice: Gnome, 2008).

651 Carlo Verdiani, ed., *Poeti polacchi contemporanei* (Milano: Silva Editore, 1961).

652 Jerzy Pomianowski, ed., *Guida alla moderna letteratura polacca* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1973).

653 Leśmian’s works in Paolo Statuti’s translation were previously published in the magazine *Fiera Letteraria*, No. 20 (1973). Selected works are available online at: <https://musashop.wordpress.com/tag/boleslaw-lesmian-tradotto-da-paolo-statuti/>, last accessed 30.08.2019. They include the translations of Leśmian’s “Przemiany” [“Trasformazioni,” “Metamorphoses”], the erotic poem from the cycle “In the

Leśmian were printed in 1980 in the eleventh issue of the journal *Niebo* [Sky], in the translations of Pietro Marchesani and Inessa Pawłowska. That journal also included poetic studies of Leśmian's texts by the Italian authors Milo De Angelisa and Emi Rabuffetti, written on the basis of philological translations previously made by Pawłowska.⁶⁵⁴ Leśmian poetic texts were also printed in 2000 in the *Poesia* magazine in the translation of the poet Valeria Roselli.⁶⁵⁵ The most recent, bilingual (Italian-Polish) volume of Leśmian's poems in Italian, entitled *Lo stelo del tempo* [Blade of Time] translated by Silvia Bruni with a foreword by Marina Ciccarini, was brought out in 2012 by the Austeria publishing house.

The fullest information about English translations of Leśmian's works is in Marta Kaźmierczak's text "Leśmian po angielsku (zarys recepcji)" ["Leśmian in English (Reception Outline)]."⁶⁵⁶ Earlier, Stanisław Barańczak wrote about English translations of Leśmian's work. He described the problems with translating Leśmian's poetry: "Leśmian is a translator's nightmare."⁶⁵⁷ He also pointed out the reason for this. As Barańczak stated in *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* [Saved in Translation]: "It is known that from contemporary Polish poets, and probably all Polish poets in general, the author of *The Meadow* went the furthest and the boldest in making idiosyncratic use of the special systemic properties of Polish language."⁶⁵⁸

Raspberry Brushwood" ["Nella frasconaia di lamponi"], "The Hunchback" ["Il gobbo"], "Two Poor Wights" ["I due tapinelli"], poems from the volume *The Sylvan Befallings* [La trama boschiva]: "***Whatever have I done you pale in a blink?... [in: *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014), p. 135.] ["Che ho fatto, che il tuo volto è sbiancato?"] and "The Maiden" ["La ragazza"].

654 Cf. Pietro Marchesani, "Nota introduttiva," *Niebo*, No. 11 (1980), pp. 12–13; Carlo, "Koszmar tłumacza," p. 244.

655 *Poesia*, No. 143 (2000). For other unpublished translations of Leśmian's poetical works into Italian, see: Carlo, "Koszmar tłumacza," p. 244.

656 Marta Kaźmierczak, "Leśmian po angielsku (zarys recepcji)," *Zamojski Kwartalnik Kulturalny*, No. 4 (2007), pp. 55–60.

657 Stanisław Barańczak, *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu. Szkice o warsztacie tłumacza poezji z dodatkiem małej antologii przekładów-problemów* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2004), p. 144. Possibly, for that very reason, the Poland and Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz included in his *History of Polish Literature* only his philological translation of the Leśmian poem "Cmentarz" as "A Graveyard," rather than an artistic translation, see: Miłosz, *History of Polish Literature*, pp. 349–350.

658 Barańczak, *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu*, p. 144.

Notwithstanding Barańczak's opinions, many translators wanted to make Leśmian's work available to English-speaking readers. In 1987, the first volume of the bilingual book *Mythematics and Extropy: Selected Poems of Bolesław Leśmian* was published in the translation by Sandra Celt (Alexandra Chciuk-Celt).⁶⁵⁹ That same translator also prepared a second volume for publication, *Mythematics and Extropy II: Selected Literary Criticism of Bolesław Leśmian*, containing a selection of Leśmian's literary essays.⁶⁶⁰ It should be emphasized that Celt, when translating Leśmian's poetry, tried to ensure that her selection of poems was representative. Her book included sixty-eight pieces from the volumes *The Crossroads Orchard*, *The Meadow*, *The Shadowy Potion* and *The Sylvan Befallings* that showed the most significant themes, genres and motifs characteristic of Leśmian's work. In Barańczak's review of these poetic translations, he quoted Robert Frost, who said "poetry is what is lost in translation." Frost, according to Barańczak, could provide the example of Leśmian's poetic output in support of his thesis. According to Barańczak, anyone who attempted (as Sandra Celt did) to translate Leśmian's poetry into English tries to achieve the impossible.

Other translators have struggled with Leśmian's poetics in attempts to break limits of expression in foreign-language translation, including Janek Langer, the author of the volume of translations *Magic & Glory: Polish Poetry from the 20th Century*,⁶⁶¹ and Ryszard J. Rejsner, author of translations of the Leśmian poems "***Here stay I – darkness to earth and stay I – there still so," "Lord in Heaven Full of Glory," "From Childhood Years" and "The Farm Shed" published in 2005 in the journal *Ars Interpres: An International Journal of Poetry, Translation & Art*.⁶⁶² The American poet Leo Yankiewicz also attempted to translate Leśmian's style,

659 Bolesław Leśmian, *Mythematics and Extropy: Selected Poems of Bolesław Leśmian* (Wisconsin: A.R. Poray, 1987). For Stanisław Barańczak's review of the volume, see: Leśmian, *Mythematics and Extropy*, pp. 85–88.

660 Bolesław Leśmian, *Mythematics and Extropy II: Selected Literary Criticism of Bolesław Leśmian* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1992).

661 Bolesław Leśmian, *Magic & Glory: Polish Poetry from the 20th Century* (London: Janek Langer, 2000). In her analysis of these translations, Marta Kaźmierczak indicated the fact that the translations of the titles of the sixty-four Leśmian poems are sometimes only insignificantly different from the original titles, see: Kaźmierczak, *Przekład w kręgu intertekstualności*, p. 14.

662 Bolesław Leśmian, "Here stay I – darkness to earth and stay I – there still so," "Lord in Heaven Full of Glory," "From Childhood Years," "The Farm Shed," *Ars Interpres: An International Journal of Poetry, Translation & Art*, No. 5 (2005), pp. 211–213; http://www.arsint.com/no_4_5.html, last accessed 31.08.2019.

with the poems, among others: “Silver”⁶⁶³ and “Angels.”⁶⁶⁴ He also translated “The Shoemaker,”⁶⁶⁵ “***Were I to meet you again for the first time.”⁶⁶⁶ It is also worth mentioning the translation challenge taken in this field by Jerzy Peterkiewicz and Burns Singer (a Scottish poet who does not know Polish), the translators of the Leśmian works “***The lip is the lip’s friend, the hand the hand’s,” “Brother,” “The Cemetery,” and “Memories.”⁶⁶⁷ Marta Kaźmierczak reviewed these critically in the article “Leśmian ocenzurowany” [“Censored Leśmian”].⁶⁶⁸

There have been more English translations of Leśmian’s poems. In 1996 in New York City, a bilingual Polish-English volume was published, *Treasury of Polish Love Poems, Quotations and Proverbs* in Mirosław Lipiński’s translation.⁶⁶⁹ There are also translations of Leśmian’s poems by Marian Polak-Chlabicz.⁶⁷⁰ Rochelle Heller-Stone translated passages of Leśmian works for her well-known book *Bolesław Leśmian: The Poet and His Poetry*. The first efforts of Krzysztof Bartnicki with translations of Leśmian’s poetry date back to 1990–1991. Despite those efforts, Bartnicki summed up his translation adventure as regards Leśmian’s work: “Fascinated by Leśmian, I tried to translate him into English, but

663 Bolesław Leśmian, “Silver,” <https://web.archive.org/web/20190422184713/http://leoyankevich.com/archives/253>, last accessed 30.08.2019.

664 Bolesław Leśmian, “Angels,” <https://web.archive.org/web/20190422190225/http://leoyankevich.com/archives/249>, last accessed 30.08.2019.

665 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Shoemaker,” <https://konicki.com/blog2/tag/lesmian/>, last accessed 30.08.2019.

666 Bolesław Leśmian, “***Were I to meet you again for the first time,” <https://konicki.com/blog2/2009/03/10/march-10-untitled-by-boleslaw-lesmian/>, last accessed 30.08.2019.

667 Jerzy Peterkiewicz and Burns Singer, *Five Centuries of Polish Poetry (1450–1950). An Anthology with Introduction and Notes* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), pp. 83–87; https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED444900/ERIC_ED444900_djvu.txt, last accessed 30.08.2019.

668 Marta Kaźmierczak, “Leśmian ocenzurowany,” in: *Tabu w przekładzie*, ed. Piotr Fast and Natalia Strzelecka (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk, 2007), pp. 145–169.

669 Bolesław Leśmian, *Treasury of Polish Love Poems, Quotations and Proverbs: in Polish and English* (New York: Hippocrene, 1996).

670 Bolesław Leśmian, *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems. Najpiękniejsze wiersze miłosne. A bilingual edition/ Wydanie dwujęzyczne* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2011); Bolesław Leśmian, *Marvellations: The Best-loved Poems: By the most-read and best-selling Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest of all time* (New York: Penumbra Publishing House, 2014).

after some time I had to admit that my attempts are not the best.”⁶⁷¹ For a comparative analysis of his translations and the translations made by Heller-Stone, Celt and Polak-Chlabicz, see Aleksandra Michalska’s *Odnaleźć Leśmiana. O tym, czy, gdzie i jak istnieją anglojęzyczne przekłady (jednego z) najbardziej idiomatycznych języków polskiej poezji* [*Finding Leśmian: About Whether, Where and How English-language Translations Exist (of One) of the Most Idiomatic Languages in Polish Poetry*]].⁶⁷² New comparative analyses should take into consideration the selection of Bolesław Leśmian’s poems translated by Marian Polak Chlabicz and published in the book *Beyond the Beyond. Poems in Polish and English* from 2017,⁶⁷³ as well as Chlabicz’s translations of “The Saw,”⁶⁷⁴ “Hedda”⁶⁷⁵ and “From my Childhood”⁶⁷⁶ published in *Tekstualia* in 2017 and 2019.

There are also Michał J. Mikoś’s translations of six Leśmian poems into English:⁶⁷⁷ “Las (Pomyśl: gdy będziesz konał...)” [“The Forest”⁶⁷⁸], Stodoła [“The Barn”],⁶⁷⁹ “Przemiany” [“Metamorphoses”⁶⁸⁰], “Brat” [“Brother”],⁶⁸¹ “Urszula

671 Krzysztof Bartnicki, “Sedno słów. Rozmowa z Krzysztofem Bartnickim,” *dwutygodnik.com*, No. 128 (2014), <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/artukul/5081-sedno-slow.html>, last accessed 30.08.2019.

672 Aleksandra Michalska, *Odnaleźć Leśmiana. O tym, czy, gdzie i jak istnieją anglojęzyczne przekłady (jednego z) najbardziej idiomatycznych języków polskiej poezji*, B.A. thesis written under the supervision of Dr. hab. Ewa Rajewska, available in the Archive of Theses of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. See also: Aleksandra Wiczorkiewicz (Aleksandra Michalska), *W obcej Leśmianii. Poezja Bolesława Leśmiana w przekładach na język angielski* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskich Studiów Polonistycznych, 2019).

673 Bolesław Leśmian, *Beyond the Beyond. Poems in Polish and English* (New York: Penumbra Bookery, 2017).

674 Leśmian, “The Saw.”

675 Leśmian, “Hedda,” pp. 169-172.

676 Bolesław Leśmian, “From my Childhood,” trans. Marian Polak Chlabicz, *Tekstualia* No. 3 (58) 2019, pp. 173-174.

677 Marta Kaźmierczak’s book devoted to the issues of intertextuality in translation includes a list of translations of Leśmian’s poetry with a workshop character, see: Kaźmierczak, *Przekład w kręgu intertekstualności*, pp. 15-16.

678 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Forest,” in: *Literature 1864-1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), pp. 297-298.

679 Bolesław Leśmian, “The Barn,” in: *Literature 1864-1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), p. 299.

680 Bolesław Leśmian, “Metamorphoses,” in: *Literature 1864-1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), p. 299.

681 Bolesław Leśmian, “Brother,” in: *Literature 1864-1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), p. 300.

Kochanowska” [“Ursula Kochanowska”],⁶⁸² “Ludzie” [“People”]⁶⁸³ in the translation from the anthology *Polish Literature from 1864 to 1918*.⁶⁸⁴ Barry Kean translated the poem “Dwoje ludzieńków” as “Two People,”⁶⁸⁵ while the Irish author and translator Cathal McCabe translated “Mrok na schodach. Pustka w domu...” as “Dusk on the stairs. House a void.”⁶⁸⁶ Anita Jones Dębska translated “W polu” as “In a field” and “Romans” as “Romance,”⁶⁸⁷ and Benjamin Paloff translated the poem “Dziewczyna” as “Girl.”⁶⁸⁸ Finally, Marcel Weyland translated eleven Leśmian poetic works and published them in the book *The Word. Two Hundred Years of Polish Poetry / Słowo. Dwieście lat poezji polskiej*.⁶⁸⁹ Translations of poems “Hand”⁶⁹⁰ and “In the Cemetery Corner”⁶⁹¹ created by Scottish literary scholar and English-language philologist David Malcolm, who speaks perfect Polish, were published in 2015 in the *Tekstualia* quarterly.

A much smaller number of translations of Leśmian’s poetic texts have been written in Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Hebrew and Swedish. Available

682 Bolesław Leśmian, “Ursula Kochanowska,” in: *Literature 1864–1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), p. 300.

683 Bolesław Leśmian, “People,” trans. Michał J. Mikoś, *Literature 1864–1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology*, ed. Michał J. Mikoś (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), p. 301.

684 Michał J. Mikoś, ed., *Polish Literature 1864–1918: Realism and Young Poland: An Anthology* (Bloomington: Slavica, 2006), pp. 297–301. Kaźmierczak correctly points out that the majority of Leśmian’s poems included in this anthology exceed the title’s time frame, as they were written after 1918, see: Kaźmierczak, *Przekład w kręgu intertekstualności*, p. 14.

685 Bolesław Leśmian, “Two People,” *The Warsaw Voice Online* (30.11.1997); http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/web/arts_culture/literature/poetry/Les/wv/link.shtml, last accessed 15.12.2014.

686 Bolesław Leśmian, “Dusk on the stairs. House a void,” *Otwarta Łódź/ Open Boat*, No. 2 (1997), p. 39; <https://books.google.com/books?hl=pl&id=uowYAQAIAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=mrok> last accessed 31.08.2019.

687 Bolesław Leśmian, “In a field,” in: *My Homeless Heart. Polish Poems of Love and Longing in English* (Toruń: Attic Press, 2005), pp. 26; Bolesław Leśmian, “Romance,” in: *My Homeless Heart. Polish Poems of Love and Longing in English* (Toruń: Attic Press, 2005), p. 28.

688 Bolesław Leśmian, “Girl,” *Circumference*, No. 4 (2005), pp. 52–55.

689 Marcel Weyland, ed., *The Word. Two Hundred Years of Polish Poetry/ Słowo. Dwieście lat poezji polskiej* (Blackheath: NSW, 2010).

690 Leśmian, “The Hand.”

691 Leśmian, “In the Cemetery Corner.”

in Lithuanian (and Belarusian) is “Mister Glister”⁶⁹² translated by Aleg Minkin as “Pan Bliščynski,”⁶⁹³ and in Ukrainian there is a translation of the poem “Soldier” as “Солдат” by Jadwiga Dąbrowska-Lewińska, printed in 1974 in the Ukrainian journal *Novi Dni* [*New Days*] published in Philadelphia.⁶⁹⁴ Also available in Ukrainian are translations by Виктор Викторovich Коптилов [Victor Victorovych Koptilov] of, for example, the poem “Lalka”⁶⁹⁵ [“Лялька,” “Doll”] and the translation by Дмитро Павличко [Dmytro Pavlyczko] of the poetic text “Ночą umówioną”⁶⁹⁶ [“Сталось, як стемніло,” “Night Meeting”],⁶⁹⁷ and as translations by Володимир Гуцаленко [Volodimir Hucalenko]⁶⁹⁸ and Ігор Кацуrowsький [Igor Katzurovskiy]. This group of translations includes usually fragmentary translations by Julia Bułachowska published in the well-known book devoted to Leśmian by Володимир Василенко [Volodymyr Vasylenko], *Поетичний світ Болеслава Лесьмяна – Poetical world of Bolesław Leśmian*. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Polish *Textualia* Quarterly published Leśmian’s poetic works in the translation of Наталія Бельченко [Valentina Sobol]⁶⁹⁹ and Наталія

692 Leśmian, “Mister Glister.”

693 Baljaslau Lesmjān [Bolesław Leśmian], *Pan Bliščynski* (Vilna: Naša Niva; Minsk: Mastackaja Litaratura, 1994).

694 For more information, see: http://zbc.ksiaznica.szczecin.pl/Content/2171/PDF/Pr_II_0481_2007_4_BZP.pdf, last accessed 30.08.2019.

695 Bolesław Leśmian, “Lalka,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 349.

696 Bolesław Leśmian, “Ночą umówioną,” in: *Poezje zebrane* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 313.

697 Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “Сталось, як стемніло,” in: *Книга любові. Поетична антологія*, ed. Борис Шавурський [Borys Szawurskyj] (Tarnopol: Навчальна книга – Богдан, 2010), p. 187; митро Павличко [Dmitry Pavlychko], trans. and ed., *П’ятдесят польських поетів: антологія польської поезії* (Київ: Основи, 2000).

698 Сергій Яковенко [Sergey Yakovenko], ed., *Передзвони польської лютні/ Dźwięki polskiej lutni (антологія польської поезії у перекладі)*, trans. Володимир Гуцаленко (Київ: Наукова думка, 2001), pp. 174-179.

699 Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “Гад;” *Tekstualia* No. 1(52) (2018), p. 113;; https://tekstualia.pl/files/9b773508/w.sobol_gad.pdf last accessed: 31.08.2019; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “Вертаю, вертаю по довгій розлуці,” *Tekstualia*, No. 1(52) (2018), p.114; https://tekstualia.pl/files/4ecf777b/w.sobol_wracam.pdf, last accessed 31.08.2019; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “Zmory wiosenne”/“Весняна змора,” *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), pp. 225-226; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], “...Така cisza w ogrodzie...”/“...Така тиша в садочку...” *Tekstualia*, No. 4(51) (2017), p. 226; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław

Бельченко [Natalia Belczenko].⁷⁰⁰ There are Belarusian translations of Leśmian poems published by Максім Танк [Maksim Tank] (Skurko Jagenij) in the volume *Errata: Вершы, пераклады* [*Errata: poems, translations*].⁷⁰¹ For Belarusian translations of Leśmian's works, see Mieczysław Jackiewicz's article "Norwid – Staff – Leśmian po białorusku" ["Norwid – Staff – Leśmian in Belarusian"], published in 1994 in the *Kultura* magazine.⁷⁰²

Slovak readers may read a selection of Leśmian poems from the volume *The Meadow*, translated by Juraj Andričik,⁷⁰³ while Swedish readers have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Leśmian's "The Poor Cobbler" [as "Lilla skomakaren"]⁷⁰⁴, "Spring Dreams" ["Vårnattens

Leśmian], "...Z dłońmi tak splecionymi..." 3 долоньями так сплетеними..." *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 226; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Trzy róże"/ "Три ружі," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), pp. 226-227; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Kwapiły się burze"/ "Бурі поспішали," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 227; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Po ciemku"/ "В темноті," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), pp. 227-228; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Nad ranem"/ "На світанку," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 228; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "...Com uczynił..."/ "... Що вчинив я..." *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), pp. 228-229; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Lubię szeptać ci słowa..."/ "Люблю слова тобі шептати..." *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 229; https://tekstualia.pl/files/1007dba4/lesmian_b.-wiersze_tlumaczenie_sobol_w..pdf, last accessed 31.08.2019. Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "**** Твій Портрет із літ дитячих..." *Tekstualia*, No. 3 (58) (2019), pp. 175.

700 Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Небагато є знаків у бідного тіла..." *Tekstualia*, No. 1 (52) (2018), pp. 115-116; https://tekstualia.pl/files/a6f52100/n.belczenko-jak_niewiele.pdf, last accessed 31.08.2019; Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Бажання," *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 230; https://tekstualia.pl/files/382beb11/lesmian_b.-pragnienie_tlumaczenie_bielczenko_n..pdf, last accessed 31.08.2019. Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "We śnie"/ "Уві сні," *Tekstualia*, No. 1 (60) (2020). Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], Prolog/ "Пролог;" *Tekstualia*, No. 1 (60) (2020). Болеслав Лесьмян [Bolesław Leśmian], "Epilog"/ "Епілог;" *Tekstualia*, No. 1 (60) (2020). "Srebroń"/ "Сріблень;" *Tekstualia*, No. 3 (58) (2019).

701 Максім Танк [Maksim Tank], *Errata: Вершы, пераклады* (Мінск: Мастацкая літаратура, 1996).

702 Mieczysław Jackiewicz, "Norwid – Staff – Leśmian po białorusku," *Kultura*, No. 10 (1994), pp. 96-99.

703 Bolesław Leśmian, *Lúka: (výber z diela)* (Bratislava: Občianske združenie Studňa, 2000).

704 Bolesław Leśmian, "Lilla skomakaren," <https://dzismis.com/2015/01/07/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki/> last accessed 31.08.2019.

maror”],⁷⁰⁵ “Amid the Dahlias” [“Mitt ibland dahliorna”],⁷⁰⁶ “Wieczorem”⁷⁰⁷ [“Om kvällen,” “In the Evening”], “Powrót”⁷⁰⁸ [“Återkomsten,” “Return”], “*** A flaming smile...” [“*** Flyktiga gryningars...”],⁷⁰⁹ “Zakłęcie”⁷¹⁰ [“Besvärjelse,” “Spell”], “*** Śni się lasom...”⁷¹¹ [“*** Skogarna drömmar...,” “*** Forests Are Dreaming...”], “*** Ja tu stoję...”⁷¹² [“*** Jag står här...,” “*** I’m standing here...”] and “The Sound of Oars”⁷¹³ [“Två årors brus”], in Marousa Ludwika Korolczyk’s translation. It is also worth mentioning translations of Leśmian poems into Hebrew by Szoszana Raczyńska and Arie Brauner, published in the

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- 705 Bolesław Leśmian, “Vårnattens maror,” <https://dzismis.com/2015/01/07/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki/> last accessed 31.08.2019.
- 706 Bolesław Leśmian, “Mitt ibland dahliorna,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “Wśród georginij,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 145.
- 707 Bolesław Leśmian, “Om kvällen,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “Wieczorem,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 227.
- 708 Bolesław Leśmian, “Återkomsten,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “***Płomienny uśmiech...,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 239.
- 709 Bolesław Leśmian, “*** Flyktiga gryningars...,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “Powrót,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 239.
- 710 Leśmian, “Besvärjelse,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. . Bolesław Leśmian, “Zakłęcie,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 371.
- 711 Bolesław Leśmian, “Skogarna drömmar...,” last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “***Śni się lasom...,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 515.
- 712 Bolesław Leśmian, “Jag står här...,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “***Ja tu stoję...,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 757.
- 713 Bolesław Leśmian, “Två årors brus,” <https://dzismis.com/2014/12/13/boleslaw-lesmian-wybrane-wiersze-tlumaczenia-na-szwedzki-2/> last accessed 31.08.2019. Bolesław Leśmian, “Smer wiosel,” in: *Dzieła wszystkie. Poezje zebrane*, ed. Jacek Trznadel (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2010), p. 18.

bilingual edition *Samotność i inne wiersze / Bedidut ve-shirim aherim* [*Lonelines and Other Poems*] published in 1992,⁷¹⁴ and one translation curiosity in the form of translations of several Leśmian's works into Kashubian, printed in Ida Czaja's volume *Kropla kręwi. Dęrgnienié* [*Drop of Blood. Tremble*].⁷¹⁵ One should add that Mandar Purandare translated Leśmian poem "Lips and Eyes"⁷¹⁶ into Hindi, and "Szczęście" ["Happiness"] and "Pieśń o ptaku i o cieniu" ["The Song of the Bird and the Shadow"] into Hindi and Marathi together with his wife.⁷¹⁷ New information about Leśmian translations into Slavic, Germanic and Roman languages comes from the book *Leśmian w Europie i na świecie* [*Leśmian in Europe and Worldwide*] edited by Magdalena Supeł and myself,⁷¹⁸ preceded by the publication of some of the papers in the *Tekstualia* quarterly.⁷¹⁹

From the overview above it is clear that, though Leśmian is regarded as an untranslatable poet, there is no shortage of translations of his poetry. In his reflection on them, Mieczysław Jastrun wrote:

It appears that Leśmian is entirely untranslatable. For example, when such an excellent poet as Boris Pasternak translates the poem "To my sister..." we get a poem written in smooth Russian, in a Pushkin rhythm, deprived of the terror of the original, without its breathless rhythm. Everything is lost in translation. One could offer multiple examples, but this is not about catching translators red-handed, it suffices to indicate just one detail in the art of difficult details that a poetic translation is, which consisting of a thousand different reasons, a thousand conflicting good intentions and bad excuses. It is only natural that a translator of poems in which everything is a one-off, said and done once and for all, not permitting thoughts about those slightest changes in meaning and image,

714 Bolesław Leśmian, *Samotność i inne wiersze/ Bedidut ve-shirim aherim* (Tel Aviv: Ch. Szamir, 1992).

715 Ida Czaja, *Kropla kręwi. Dęrgnienié* (Gdańsk: Rost, 1999).

716 Bolesław Leśmian, "Eyes and Lips," in: *33 of the Most Beautiful Love Poems* (New York: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011), p. 23.

717 बोले व ले यान [Bolesław Leśmian], "Usta i oczy"/ "लब और आँ ," *Tekstualia*, No 1(52) (2018), pp. 117-118; https://tekstualia.pl/files/f32566c3/m.purandare_usta_i_oczy.pdf, last accessed 31.08.2019.

बोले व ले यान [Bolesław Leśmian], "Szczęście"/ "सुख/ सुख;" *Tekstualia*, No. 4(51) (2017), p. 231-239. बोले व ले यान [Bolesław Leśmian], "Pieśń o ptaku i o cieniu"/ "मंदार पुरंदरे/ मंदार पुरंदरे" *Tekstualia*, No. 4 (51) (2017), p. 231-239.

718 Żaneta Nalewajk and Magdalena Supeł, eds., *Leśmian w Europie i na świecie* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2019).

719 *Tekstualia*, No. 1 (52) (2018); <https://tekstualia.pl/pl/numery/lesmian>, last accessed 31.08.2019.

looks instead for a way out of the maze, trying to turn things around, trying to find their own way. But sooner or later they will see, they will realize that this is not allowed, and will return to insurmountable hardships, will make new attempts at other solutions. The thing is to get to the point where there can be no other solution but one, just like in the original piece.⁷²⁰

Probably maximal striving by a translator in translating Leśmian's poetic idiom into another language stands no chance for full implementation, especially in the situation in which Leśmian is to be translated into a language not belonging to the Slavonic language group. However, abandoning translation efforts in this field would restrict to a local scale the reception of Leśmian, a poet whose poetic achievements deserve a broad reading resonance. The translations of Leśmian mentioned above, understood as a record of the struggle of translators with impossibility, open a wide field for translational research. The following questions, meanwhile, await answers: how have the choices of translators changed, along with the languages and strategies for translating Leśmian's works over time; and to what extent have the specificity of individual languages determined the selection and translation strategies? Moreover, if we remember that the majority of translators of Leśmian's work are poets, and if we treat translation as a medium of international transmission of poetics, aesthetics, ideas, motifs and compositional models, the question arises how many of the authors who decided to make Leśmian's works accessible in a language other than Polish owe something to Leśmian? Are the fruits of any of these filiations visible in the poetics of works? Or maybe in some cases we are dealing with homologues co-deciding about the shape of literary texts written by Leśmian's translators? If so, books that will include answers about those questions are waiting to be written.

720 Mieczysław Jastrun, "O przekładzie jako sztuce słowa," in: *Walka o słowo* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1973), p. 136, quoted from: Edward Balcerzan and Ewa Rajewska, eds., *Pisarze polscy o sztuce przekładu 1440–2005. Antologia* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2007), p. 267.



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This is a revised English version of the book *Leśmian międzynarodowy – relacje kontekstowe. Studia komparatystyczne*. Kraków: Universitas, 2015.

The following parts of the present book were published between 2009 and 2014 in journals and monographs. They have all been revised, corrected and expanded.

- ◆ “Nowele Poeo w przekładach Bolesława Leśmiana. Źródła, inspiracje, repliki.” *Tekstualia. Palimpsesty Literackie Artystyczne Naukowe*. No. 1(16), 2009, pp. 97–111; https://tekstualia.pl/files/e3000a03/nalewajk_zaneta-nowele_poego_w_przekladach_lesmiana.pdf (last accessed 30.08.2019).
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- ◆ “W stronę alegorii. Estetyka śmierci Poeo i jej kontynuacje (Baudelaire, Balmont, Leśmian).” In: *Edgar Allan Poe niedoceniony nowator*, ed. Edward Kasperski and Żaneta Nalewajk. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza “ATUT,” 2010, pp. 119–143.
- ◆ “Makabra i makabreska Poeo. (Recepcja: Baudelaire, Balmont, Leśmian).” In: *Edgar Allan Poe niedoceniony nowator*, ed. Edward Kasperski and Żaneta Nalewajk. Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza “ATUT,” 2010, pp. 145–172.
- ◆ “Związki twórczości Bolesława Leśmiana z folklorem i kulturą Ukrainy.” *Tekstualia. Palimpsesty Literackie Artystyczne Naukowe*. No. 2 (21), 2010, pp. 87–104; https://tekstualia.pl/files/fa97c5b5/nalewajk_zaneta-zwiazki_tworczosci_lesmiana_z_folklorem_i_kultura_ukrainy.pdf (last accessed 30.08.2019).
- ◆ “Edgar Allan Poe w przekładach B. Leśmiana i Ch. Baudelaire’a.” In: *Komparatystyka dzisiaj. Vol II: Interpretacje*, ed. Edward Kasperski and Ewa Szczęśna. Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2011, pp. 305–317.
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- ◆ “Od aluzji do stylizacji literackiej. Leśmianowskie interteksty w polskiej poezji współczesne.” In: *Poeci współcześni. Poeci przeszłości*, ed. Monika Szuba and Tomasz Wiśniewski. Sopot: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2013, pp. 59-75.
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- ◆ “Problems of Contexts and Research Methods in Comparative Studies.” Trans. Justyna Burzyńska. *Tekstualia. Palimpsesty Literackie Artystyczne Naukowe*. No. 1(1), 2013, pp. 51-65 [the English edition was prepared as part of a MNiSW Index Plus project]; https://tekstualia.pl/files/e950a8af/nalewajk_zaneta-problems_of_contexts_and_research_methods.pdf (30.08.2019).



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SUMMARY

LEŚMIAN INTERNATIONALLY: CONTEXTUAL RELATIONS. A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The present study shows the literary legacy of Bolesław Leśmian, one of the greatest Polish writers of the twentieth century, as engaged in a dialogue with the tradition and the predecessors, and forged on the crossroads of literatures, cultures and epochs. Exploring the contexts for Leśmian's work, the author concentrates on transnational literary filiations (parallels conditioned by literary contacts) and intercultural homologies (equivalent solutions deriving from references to common source texts). The former include American, French and Russian contexts (Edgar Allan Poe's writing, Charles Baudelaire's poems and essays, Konstantin Balmont's oeuvre, the symbolist style, the bylinna tradition). The latter highlight the correspondences between Leśmian and the romantics (Pushkin, Gogol) as well as the modernists (Yesenin, Gorodetsky) and connect his work to Ukrainian culture and folklore through the evocation of old Slavic folklore, the bylina tradition, and the tradition of pilgrims called 'kaliki perekhozhie'. The author thus explores the transnational, intercultural, and inter-epochal contextual intricacies that inform Leśmian's writing. Moreover, the author examines the contemporary uses of Leśmian's poetics and emphasizes his continuing presence in Polish literature. The present volume represents diachronic comparative studies and showcases Leśmian's work as an example of inter-literary and inter-cultural transfer of aesthetics, styles, genres, motifs, and ideas. A crucial outcome of such a reading is that it further codifies a contextual analysis as a method of comparative literary studies.

Translated by Marek Paryz

RÉSUMÉ

LEŚMIAN INTERNATIONAL – RELATIONS ET CONTEXTES. ETUDES DE LITTÉRATURE COMPARÉE

Le livre présente l'œuvre de Boleslaw Leśmian, l'un des écrivains polonais les plus originaux du XX^e siècle, dans un dialogue avec la tradition et avec ses prédécesseurs, et surtout comme une œuvre formée aux croisements des littératures, cultures et époques. Dans son étude des contextes de l'œuvre de Leśmian, l'auteur se concentre sur les liens de l'auteur polonais avec les littératures étrangères (à savoir sur les parallèles établis à partir de contacts directs avec les textes littéraires), ainsi que sur les homologues interculturelles (à savoir des réalisations semblables, fondées par une même source d'inspiration). Parmi ces premiers parallèles se trouvent les contextes américains (les écrits d'Edgar Allan Poe), français (la poésie et les essais de Charles Baudelaire), russes (l'œuvre de Constantine Balmont, le style symboliste et la tradition de bylines). Parmi les deuxièmes, les ressemblances les plus importantes se retrouvent entre l'œuvre de Leśmian et celles des romantiques (Pouchkine et Gogol), des modernistes russes (Essenine et Gorodetsky), ainsi que la culture et le folklore ukrainien, où l'on retrouve les références aux mêmes modèles, entre autres folklore protoslave, tradition des bylines et des pèlerins médiévaux appelés „kaliki perekhozi”. En décrivant ces contextes et présentant leurs conséquences pour la forme artistique des textes de Leśmian, l'auteur de ce livre se concentre sur les liens de ce poète avec le contexte international, interculturel, et rapprochant des époques différentes. A côté de cela, le volume présente également les continuateurs de la poésie de Leśmian dans la littérature polonaise contemporaine qui démontrent que les références à l'œuvre de ce poète constituent une composante importante de la littérature polonaise d'aujourd'hui. Les études publiées dans ce volume se situent dans le cadre des recherches de la littérature comparée diachronique et sont nées de la constatation que l'œuvre de Leśmian constitue un exemple parfait permettant d'illustrer la transmission littéraire et culturelle d'esthétiques, de styles, de genres, de motifs et d'idées, ainsi que de décrire leurs transformations. La réflexion sur ce phénomène a également conduit à une proposition méthodologique qui codifie les règles d'analyse contextuelle en tant que méthode d'études comparatives.

Texte traduit par Kinga Siatkowska-Callebat

РЕЗЮМЕ

«МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ» ЛЕСЬМЯН – КОНТЕКСТНЫЕ ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ. СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

В данной книге художественное наследие Болеслава Лесьмяна, одного из самых выдающихся польских писателей XX века, показано через его диалог с традицией и предшественниками, и в первую очередь как явление на пересечении литератур, культур и эпох. Исследуя контекстные взаимодействия творчества Лесьмяна, автор сконцентрировалась на международных литературных преемственностях (то есть параллелизмах, обусловленных контактами литературного толка), а также интеркультурных гомологиях (то есть общности подходов к созданию произведений, мотивированной контактами с одними и теми же прообразами). Среди первых можно выделить американский (творчество Эдгара Аллана По), французский (поэзия и эссеистика Шарля Бодлера) и российский (наследие Константина Бальмонта, стилистика символистов, библейская традиция) контексты. Среди же вторых важнейшими представляются параллели между творчеством Лесьмяна и произведениями романтиков (Пушкина и Гоголя), русских модернистов (Есенина и Городецкого), а также украинским фольклором и – шире – украинской культурой, являющиеся результатом отсылок к тем же самым прообразам, к которым принадлежат, в том числе, праславянский фольклор, былинная традиция, а также традиция «калик переходящих». Описывая вышеупомянутые контекстные взаимодействия и показывая их влияние на художественные тексты Лесьмяна, автор книги, таким образом, сконцентрировалась на международных, интеркультурных и межэпохальных связях Лесьмяна. Кроме того, предметом исследований, представленных в данной работе, является продолжение поэтических традиций Лесьмяна современными польскими литераторами, свидетельствующее о том, что отсылка к произведениям польского поэта выступает в качестве важного компонента сегодняшней литературы. Тот факт, что творчество Лесьмяна служит отличным примером, позволяющим проиллюстрировать явление интерлитературной и интеркультурной трансмиссии эстетик, стилей, жанров, мотивов и идей, а также описать их метаморфозы, и породил представленные в настоящей книге рассужден

ия, находящиеся в сфере интересов диахронической компаративистики. Рефлексия относительно этого явления стала также поводом для кодификации принципов контекстного анализа как методики сравнительных исследований.

Перевод Игоря Белова

РЕЗЮМЕ (УКР.)

МІЖНАРОДНИЙ ЛЕСЬМЯН – КОНТЕКСТНІ ВІДНОСИНИ. ПОРІВНЯЛЬНІ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Книжка показує літературну спадщину Болеслава Лесьмяна, одного з найталановитіших польських авторів двадцятого віку, як діалог з традицією та з попередниками, а насамперед як таку, яка сформувалася на перехресті літератур, культур та епох. Досліджуючи творчість Лесьмяна, авторка зосередилась на міжнародних літературних філіаціях (тобто на паралелізмах, котрі виникали з огляду на літературні контакти) а також на інтеркультурних гомологіях (тобто на відповідності в будові творів с причиненій контактами зі спільним прототипом). Серед тих перших появляються контексти американські (творчість Едгара Аллана По), французькі (поезія та есеїстика Шарля Бодлера), російські (літературна спадщина Константина Бальмонта, стиль символізму, традиція билинна). Серед тих других найважливішою є схожість між творами Лесьмяна та творчістю романтиків (Пушкіна і Гоголя), російських модерністів (Єсеніна і Городецького) а також українською культурою та фольклором як наслідок віднесення до тих самих прототипів, до яких зараховується старословянський фольклор, традиція билинна та традиція калік перехожих. Описуючи вище згадані контекстні відносини та показуючи їх наслідки в художній реалізації текстів Лесьмяна, авторка книжки зосередилась на міжнародних, інтеркультурних та міжепохних зв'язках письменника. Крім цього темою досліджень цієї книжки є продовження поетики Лесьмяна у сучасній та новітній польській літературі, котре свідчить про те, що віднесення до творчості польського поета є важливим компонентом сучасної літературної культури. Думки представлені в цій книжці, які містяться в сфері зацікавленості діахронічних порівняльних літературних досліджень виникли зі спостереження, що творчість Лесьмяна є чудовим прикладом, який дозволяє показати явище інтерлітературної та інтеркультурної трансмісії естетик, стилів, жанрів, мотивів та ідей, а також дає можливість показати їх видозміни. Аналіз цих явищ дозволив також сформулювати методологічну пропозицію, яка кодифікує принципи контекстного аналізу як методу порівняльних досліджень.

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