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STANISLAW WYSPIANSKI (1869–1907) AS AN ARTIST — RESPONSE IN BULGARIA. NATIONAL ROMANTICISM, SYMBOLISM, ART NOUVEAU

Abstract: This article is based on the author's interest in the response to Stanisław Wyspiański's artistic work in Bulgaria in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the search for its traces today. Wyspiański's work is huge in terms of volume and fields of expression: dramaturgy, poetry, murals, stained glass, book art, painting, textile and furniture design projects, and many more decorative forms. Although he was well known with his poetic and dramaturgical work among wider audiences, his artistic realizations remained mostly in the background. This observation is valid for both Bulgaria and the Pan-European context, at least until the 1970s. Being aware that separating his artistic work from his literary and dramaturgical work cannot be justified, the author attempts to enrich the range of issues in contemporary publications by Bulgarian literary historians through the issues Wyspiański, as an artist, raised in our country.

There was a significant difference between the time and artistic milieu of the Polish artist and the time of his perception in Bulgaria, between the period around the 1900s and the years after World War I. Despite all this, some of the protagonists of the broad Native Art movement that emerged in Bulgaria after World War I, with their new sensitivity towards the national idea, saw their own attitudes and experiences in Wyspiański's work from around 1900. Differently, but also similar to the Polish artist, they were drawn to numerous variants of historicism, legendary imagery, mysticism, folklore forms, folk visual culture, and the experience of National Romanticism, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau in different cultural milieus.

Keywords: geography of artistic phenomena, Stanisław Wyspiański's artistic work, National Romanticism, Symbolism, Art Nouveau, Catholic Basilica of St. Francis in Krakow, Nicolay Raynov, Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine

Stanisław Wyspiański's work is huge in terms of volume and fields of expression: dramaturgy, poetry, murals, stained glass, book art, painting, textile and furniture design projects, and many more decorative forms. The comprehensive listing of all the types of art as well as outlining the thematic wealth and the contextualization of the Wyspiański phenomenon have been the focal point of a multitude of studies, mainly by Polish art historians. I am aware that separating his artistic work from his literary and dramaturgical work cannot be justified. Furthermore, regarding our local cultural situation, I aim to enrich the range of issues in contemporary publications by Bulgarian literary historians² through the issues Wyspiański, as an artist, raised in our country.

This article is based on my interest in the response to Wyspiański's artistic work in Bulgaria in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the search for its traces today. Unlike his poetic and dramaturgical work, which became

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² Cf.: **Биолчев, Боян**. Станислав Виспянски. Енциклопедист на неоромантизма. София, 2003; Полша и поляците в новата българска история (средата на XIX – средата на XX век). София: БАН, 2015, and others.

known among wider circles in our country after World War I, his artistic realizations seldom drew attention. This observation is valid not only for Bulgaria but also for the Pan-European horizon till the 1970s.

My interest in Wyspiański as a master of decorations and stained glass in the broad European trend of around 1900 deepened the minute I saw the Franciscan Church in Krakow. The Catholic Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, founded in the 13th century, was further rebuilt and renovated many times. After a fire in the summer of 1850, the building of the church and its murals and stained-glass windows had to be modernized again. At the end of the 19th century, between 1895 and 1899,³ Wyspiański took up the projects for the new decoration. The artistic appeal of his stained-glass windows and murals took me to the Stanisław Wyspiański Museum, a branch of the National Museum, and then to the Museum of Stained Glass—Atelier in Krakow, founded in 1902 and still functioning today as a “living museum”. Step by step, I entered an intense, original, and dynamically changing created reality.

Wyspiański's artistic work with its wealth of images, idioms of expression, skilful and resourceful form, material, colour and light trigger an immediate emotional response and at the same time require erudition and interpretation skills on the part of the viewer. The impact of the visual image would remain one-dimensional without immersion in cultural references, without knowledge of literature and history, recent and biblical, ancient mythology, political geography and many more. In Wyspiański's case, just as in other cases, with all the interactions of different cultural contexts in his works, the artistic contacts are crucial for approaching the complexity of his artistic achievements.

The Cultural and Historical Context of the Response to Stanisław Wyspiański's Work in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the attention to Wyspiański as an artist occurred in a situation of a growing interest in Polish literature and dramaturgy during the “revival” of independent Poland after World War I. Students and professors from the Slavic Philology programmes at Sofia University,⁴ together with the Polish community in Sofia, were an essential part of the milieu generating and intensifying that interest. Wyspiański's life path ended in 1907. His work was then complete.

In 1918, the Polish-Bulgarian Society was founded at the initiative of Tadeusz Grabowski,⁵ a literary historian and professor at Jagiellonian University in Krakow and the first Polish ambassador to Bulgaria (1918–1925), as well as of Boyan Penev, Dora Gabe, and others. The Young Poland movement and the Krakow cultural milieu of Wyspiański became known in Bulgaria thanks to articles by Bulgarian and Polish authors and translations of literary works, published in Polish–Bulgarian Review magazine, issued by the Society as well as in the “Polish Library” attached to the magazine.⁶ Drama works, poems, and literary criticism on Wyspiański⁷ were published there.

³ The work on the stained glass windows and their installation continued later, but this process has been the focal point, followed through in detail in other publications. Among these: Godyń, Danuta, Magdalena Laskowska. Franciscan church in Krakow. GOOGLE Arts and Culture <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/stanis%C5%82aw-wyspia%C5%84ski-a-monumental-project-the-national-museum-in-krakow/tgVhhequLtUoI-w?hl=en>

⁴ Slavic Philology studies were part of the History and Philology Faculty of Sofia University until mid 20th century. See a brief historical reference at Sofia University site https://www.uni-sofia.bg/index.php/bul/universitet_t/fakulteti/fakultet_po_slavyanski_filologii/istoriya

⁵ **Tadeusz Stanisław Grabowski** (1881–1975) Cf.: Карабелова, Магда. Българската мисия на Тадеуш Ст. Грабовски – пратеник на възкръсваща Полша. София: ИЦ „Боян Пенев“, 2011.

⁶ Regarding Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine, see: **Карабелова, Магда.** „Полско-български преглед“ // *Периодика и литература*, том 5 1918–1920. София: АИ „Проф. Марин Дринов“, 1999, с. 219–247.

⁷ In 1921, the Polish-Bulgarian Society published in Bulgarian “Polish poets. Selected songs with characteristics of the poets and an introduction by Boyan Penev”, translation by Dora Gabe, “Polish Library” № 5. The anthology contains “Casimir the Great”, “The Judges” (Samuil's Monologue) and “I don't want your tears” by Wyspiański. “Polish Library” № 3 published the tragedy “The Judges” by Wyspiański, translated by Dora Gabe again, and in 1922, Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine announced, in the 20 February issue, that “the renowned play ‘The Judges’ by the Polish poet and artist Wyspiański would soon be staged in Bulgaria.” For references to Wyspiański in Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine see: **Вакарелски, Христо.** Станислав Виспянски на българ-

In 1922, at the initiative of the Polish-Bulgarian Society in Sofia, the First Polish Art Exhibition was launched. Originally, it was planned to be held in Trupko Vasilev's Art Gallery⁸, but the project grew into a large-scale event of great political significance and the new venue was the Royal Manège, converted into an art gallery. The exhibition in Sofia was part of the active cultural diplomacy of the newly recognized Polish state. From the Bulgarian capital, the exhibition continued its official tour to Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. With regards to the diplomacy of arts, I would also mention the Exhibition of Polish Art in Paris, in Grand Palais, in April–June 1921.⁹

The opening and closing ceremonies of the exhibition, the receptions and official visits were attended by the Tsar and the royal family as well as by governmental representatives, the Polish ambassador and other foreign ambassadors in Sofia. On the part of the Bulgarian artists, the following were involved in the project: Nikola Marinov, who designed the art exhibition poster on the basis of a painting by Artur Grottger; Sirak Skitnik, who delivered a speech on Polish painting at the opening of the exhibition; the director of and professors from the Academy of Arts; and representatives of artistic societies. The book *Pages from the History of Polish Painting*,¹⁰ compiled by Anastasiya Gancheva¹¹ and Dr. Tadeusz Grabowski, with translations by A. Gancheva was published under № 7 in “Polish Library”. The subtitle of the book specifies “characteristics, explanations and illustrations to the 1st graphic exhibition, organised by the Polish-Bulgarian Society in Sofia, in April, May and June 1922.” The exact duration of the exhibition was from 30 April to 5 June.¹² At the end, the edition included a “List of exhibited paintings”. The not quite clear definition of “graphic exhibition” is explained in the introduction by the exhibition committee: this is an exhibition of reproductions (“the best possible”). From publications in the press we understand that the collection of reproductions in the Royal Manège was enriched with the original canvases of Polish artists who had lived in Bulgaria—Antoni Piotrowski, Tadeusz Ajdukiewicz and Juliusz Kossak, as well as with several etchings and pastels by other authors. Those original works were the possession of the National Museum and the National Library in Sofia, of the royal family, and other private individuals.¹³ The exhibition, having the status of an official political event, was undoubtedly a testimony to the upsurge in the relationships between the Bulgarian and Polish states. Wyspiański was represented by only two reproductions: *St. Salome, Queen of Poland*, a draft, 1901 and Shakespeare's *The Shrew (with the actress Leszczyńska)*. In comparison, the Exhibition of Polish Art in Grand Palais, Paris, in 1921, displayed 19 original works by Wyspiański, pastels, and illustrations.¹⁴

The publication *Pages from the History of Polish Painting*, as part of the large-scale project, offered a brief historical introduction and a series of (re)narrated stories, summaries regarding artists from the 19th–beginning of the 20th centuries, who had built the modern tradition of Polish art (383 pages in total). The texts were adapted for a foreign audience. What makes an impression is the reference to numerous Polish researchers and art critics. Their studies are listed after the end of the main text in “Literature (Reference books and materials)” (365–367). For the reader's convenience, there is also a “List of portraits” (this concerns artistic portraits and self-portraits as well as photographic portraits of

ски и в българския печат // *Полско-български преглед*, 1933, специален брой посветен на Виспянски, 43–44; Periodicals and Literature, volume 5 1918–1920, op. cit.

⁸ On the initial project see: Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine, 1922, issue 4 (102), 20 February, 31.

⁹ Catalogue de l'exposition d'art polonais au Salon de la Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts (Grand Palais) 13 avril-30 juin 1921, <https://polona.pl/preview/53b6b54f-9429-4926-978d-db583d0fb4b9>

¹⁰ The project included a second book as well, *From the History of Polish Architecture*, which was not published. On the last page of “Pages from the history of Polish painting”, we can see: “A list of the exhibited paintings in the architectural, art-photography and ethnographic sections will be published in the next (following) book of “Polish Library”.”

¹¹ On Anastasiya Gancheva (later Anastasiya Gancheva-Zografova) see: **Назърска, Жоржета**. Анастасия Ганчева-Зографова в българо-полската интеркултурна комуникация. // *Полша и поляците в новата българска история (средата на XIX – средата на XX век)*. София: БАН, 2015, 74–84.

¹² An announcement on the first cover of “Polish-Bulgarian review” magazine, 1922, issue 9 (108), 10 May.

¹³ “Polish-Bulgarian review” magazine, 1922, issue 8 (107), 3 May, 67.

¹⁴ Catalogue de l'exposition d'art polonais ... Cf.: Footnote 8.

the represented artists) and a “List of reproductions” included in the book. A catalogue list of the works (reproductions) in the exhibition is found on the last pages of the book body, with separate pagination and on different type of paper.

It is not by chance that *Pages from the History of Polish Painting* is defined as the first book of its kind on foreign art in Bulgarian. The synchrony between Dr. Tadeusz Grabowski, who provided a rich collection of publications on Polish art, and Anastasiya Gancheva, who adapted the content of those sources into Bulgarian, resulted in a significant book with high-quality typographic execution at the Court Printing House in Sofia.

In the part about Wyspiański (311–320), the authors refer to Stanislaw Lack (1876–1909), “his friend and main connoisseur of his art” (311). Lack’s publication dates back to the first years of the 20th century. Similar to Wyspiański, Lack did not live to see the independence of the Polish state. In the adaptation of his text in Bulgarian, leading are the comparisons between the expressive beginning of Wyspiański’s historical dramas, among which “Bolesław Śmiały” (Bolesław the Brave), and his stained-glass projects “Kazimierz Wielki” (Casimir the Great) for the Wawel Fortress and “St. Salome, Queen of Poland” for the Franciscan Church. Lack emphasized his inspiration drawn from Gothic art, medieval mysteries, and folk visual culture. Additionally, he pointed out Wyspiański’s vivid presentations of historical figures in the context of modernity: “For example, King Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great) is drawn in the state in which he is today, found in the dungeons of Wawel in Krakow: a skeleton in a royal mantle with a crown” (312). Images of great spirits from the Polish past are sublimated in Wyspiański’s plays, paintings, and stained-glass windows. The reader of *Pages from the History of Polish Painting* gets closer to the dramatic fantasies of the mystical “Night at Wawel”: “this mysterious, tragic, breathing night, full of great immortal spirits of the Polish past, who raise their earthly remains from beneath the marble and bronze lids of their sarcophagi, between the ancient lonely walls of Wawel Castle just to live through the dramas of their lives and epochs, of their reigns and spiritual struggles, of their triumphs and catastrophes, crimes and feats” (313–314). The expression “Night at Wawel” was used by Wyspiański himself. Lack’s interpretations lead to the idioms of Romanticism: intense experiences, a look back at the Middle Ages, the revolutionary fight for independence, the development of a new sensibility and the cult of the daring personal manifestation.

As for the visual presentation, the book offers a comprehensive interpretation and reproduction of *St. Salome, Queen of Poland*—a draft from 1901. The end of the Table of Contents is artistically marked by a tailpiece signed by Wyspiański (383). For the specialized and wider audience, who has had the chance to get directly acquainted with Wyspiański’s art works, the text and reproductions will evoke their initial impact. However, today it is difficult to say which Bulgarian artists and art critics saw Wyspiański’s art works back then.

We can conclude that Wyspiański drew the attention of the Bulgarian audience (much more the literary and theatrical one than the artistic) with his nationally significant images as a leading figure in the creation of the Polish national self-consciousness in the modern epoch. The difference between his time and artistic milieu and the time of his perception in Bulgaria, between the period around 1900 and the years after World War I, was significant. In Bulgaria, after the serious post-war losses, the broad movement of Native Art emerged with its new sensitivity towards the national idea. In that atmosphere, the protagonists of literature, theatre and visual arts in the 1920s saw their own attitudes and experiences in Wyspiański’s work from around 1900.

At that time, Geo Milev’s Vezni Publishing House issued *Trail of the Polish Soul* by Stanislaw Przybyszewski, translated from German by Sava Nenov.¹⁵ That event happened three years after the book was published in German and Polish.¹⁶ Vezni Library published another book by Przybyszewski,

¹⁵ Пшибишевски, Станислав. Душата на Полша. Издателство „Вezni“, № 12, 1920.

¹⁶ Szlakiem duszy polskiej (Von Polens Seele: ein Versuch) Poznan, 1917; Von Polens seele, Iena, Diederichs, 1917. There is a vast amount of literature, encyclopedic entries included, on Przybyszewski’s book and its perception in Europe as well as in the whole world. In his book, in general terms (and, unavoidably, in a simplified manner), the author discusses the Polish spiritual identity from the historical perspective of trials, suffering, and triumphs, and

the *Aphorisms and Preludes* collection, 1919, № 5, with an introduction by Geo Milev. Przybyszewski knew Wyspiański's rich work very well. A short essay of his on Wyspiański was later published in Bulgarian.¹⁷ There, he recalled a visit to the artist's studio, where he saw Wyspiański's project for "Casimir the Great]" stained glass for Wawel Cathedral, his drawings for Maurice Maeterlinck's poems from the 1889 collection *Serres Chaudes* (Hothouses) collection,¹⁸ as well as other works, and wrote some insightful lines. He then concluded: "This miracle happened in Wyspiański's soul, the word turned into a line in its most diverse manifestations, and, vice versa, the line turned into words!" The symbolist idioms and the closeness to the idea of the national soul awakening in the creative genius, which were characteristic of Polish culture at the end of the 19th and in the first decades of the 20th centuries, undoubtedly had an inspiring effect in the milieus of Geo Milev's magazine and Vezni Library in the first half of the 1920s.

The 25th Anniversary of Wyspiański's Death in 1933: Events and Publications of the Polish-Bulgarian Society

In 1933, the Polish-Bulgarian Society organized the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Wyspiański's death with a number of events. The *Literaturen Glas*¹⁹ newspaper published articles about him (among which the abovementioned essay by Przybyszewski), and so did the *Svobodna Rech*²⁰ newspaper, as well as others. Polish-Bulgarian Review magazine published a special issue.²¹ Two articles were dedicated to Wyspiański as an artist: by Nikolay Raynov and by the Polish artist Władysław Skoczylas (reprinted from the Warsaw newspaper *Gazeta Polska*, translated by Hristo Vakarelski).

Nikolay Raynov on Stanisław Wyspiański

Nikolay Raynov (1889–1954), a writer, artist, art historian, and translator, showed a lasting interest in Wyspiański, especially in his artistic work. He included the Polish artist in the **Art Dictionary** (*painting – architecture – sculpture – graphics*), which he published in Plovdiv in 1928. The dictionary was of a small format of 11.5 x 7.5 cm and contained 295 pages of text with several black-and-white reproductions, in a circulation of 4000. On pp. 43–44 we can read: "Wyspiański, Stanisław: a Polish painter, illustrator, decorator and poet, born in Krakow, a follower of Matejko, but an excellent stylizer. *Saint Salome*; drawings for the *Iliad*; *Wawel stained glass windows*."

As a reminder: N. Raynov graduated from the Decorative department at the State Art Industrial School (Art Academy) in Sofia in 1919 and had already had quite a few artistic manifestations and publications on decorative arts and stylization.²² During his almost two-year stay and specialization in Paris (1925–1926), Raynov began his long-term art historian project with the preparation of a multi-volume history of world art (in 12 volumes).²³ The compilation of the small Art Dictionary was a side project—he published it a few years after his return to Bulgaria.

the collective unconsciousness, being formed through mystical perceptions intertwined with Catholicism, and all that complex alloy, becoming the foundation of the national resilience. Trail of the Polish Soul by Przybyszewski, in the conditions of World War I, was perceived as an idiom of romantic individualism and, at the same time, as an expression of the aspiration for the collective rise of romantic nationalism.

¹⁷ Пшибишевски за Станислав Виспянски. // *Литературен глас*, 1933, 23 април, № 191, 6.

¹⁸ *Hothouses* by Maurice Maeterlinck was published in Vezni Library, a book for bibliophiles 4, 1920, translated by Geo Milev.

¹⁹ The "Literaturen glas" [Literary Voice] newspaper, 1933, 23 April, № 191, 5–6.

²⁰ The "Svobodna rech" [Free speech] newspaper, 1933, 24 April.

²¹ "Polish-Bulgarian review" magazine, 1933, year X, April, № 1.

²² Cf.: Енциклопедия на изобразителните изкуства в България, том 2. София: Изд. на БАН, 1987, and Български книги 1878–1944, том 5. София: Народна библиотека „Кирил и Методий“, 1981.

²³ According to Nikolay Raynov's narrative: "In 1925, the Ministry of Public Education, at the request of the Union of Bulgarian Writers, sent me to Paris, where I spent almost two years. There I had the chance to study the artistic treasures in the museums, art galleries and private collections. I often visited the National Library, where

In Paris, Raynov witnessed the intense artistic life of a major European capital with rich resources of art knowledge and work. 1925 was the year of the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts (Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes). In that context, the Polish pavilion triggered great interest. We can assume that N. Raynov viewed the brilliant presentation of Poland as well as those of the whole International Exhibition. Such an assumption is strengthened by the fact that in the same year, 1925, his brother, the artist Stoyan Raynov, who had a professional interest in decorative arts, arrived in Paris. During his stay in the French capital (1925–1928), S. Raynov specialized at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (Conservatoire national des arts et métiers).²⁴ The International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925 was visited by other Bulgarian artists too, as well as by a wider audience.

In Paris in 1925, Wyspiański's work found its place in the International presentation of Polish decorative and industrial arts in the Typographic Design, Illustration and Ornaments and Posters sections.²⁵ In the catalogue of the Polish section, the text by Mieczysław Treter (1883–1943), a historian, an expert in aesthetics and an art critic, drew the attention to Wyspiański as an artist, poet and playwright, a reformer of the Polish theatre art and book graphics, who innovated decorative art in the theatre, created stained glass windows and decorated with frescoes St. Francis in Krakow. Treter did not forget to mention that Wyspiański was one of Jan Matejko's²⁶ favourite students.

We will now return to the celebration of the Polish-Bulgarian Society of the 25th anniversary of Wyspiański's death in 1933 where, among the organized events, of particular interest for the topic under discussion was the stately Matinée in the Royal Theatre. There, Prof. Nikolay Raynov spoke about Wyspiański as an artist. and the participants in the Matinée also heard speeches by Prof. Boris Yotsov on Wyspiański's personality and work, as well as a recitation of some of his poems, translated by Dora Gabe. The press published articles on Wyspiański, most of which were translated from the Polish press. The Bulgarian Rodno Radio broadcast Dora Gabe, who spoke about Wyspiański's work.²⁷

The attention paid to Wyspiański's artistic manifestations, unlike the one paid to his literary and theatrical work, was incomparably weaker. N. Raynov looked for the reasons: "Being first of all a painter and decorator, he is much wider known as a poet and playwright. That is how most of his admirers know him today: as a poet, who sometimes gets involved in painting. This is easy to explain: Wyspiański's plays are staged in the theatre, his books of poetry are sold, but to see his paintings, decorative art, and stained glass one must visit a number of museums and churches."²⁸ This disproportion between the achievements and the popularity of the two major fields of the Polish artist's manifestation was dealt with by Władysław Skoczylas as well, in his aforementioned article, translated in Bulgarian: "Undoubtedly, the power of the impact of Wyspiański's art on his contemporaries, and on today's society, is much greater through his poetic work, through the form of drama in particular, especially the drama which was staged. Yet, Wyspiański was a plastic artist by education and science."²⁹

The reproductions of Wyspiański's images that the Bulgarian audience could see in the aforementioned publications were not many and were described in the cited jubilee issue of Polish-Bulgarian

I found rare old books, luxury editions (one can only dream of having such) and rich collections of engravings by famous masters. I also visited theatres, concerts, lectures and evening courses at The Conservatory of Arts and Crafts. Then I started working on "History of Plastic Arts", a book which was later published in 12 volumes." In: **Тихолов, Петко.** Николай Райнов. Живот. Творчество. Анекдоти. София 1948, 38–40.

²⁴ Cf.: **Илиев, Теодор.** Стоян Райнов – от европейските училища до Художествената академия // *Проблеми на изкуството*, 2014, № 4, 50–53.

²⁵ Catalogue Section Polonaise. Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes Paris 1925. Commissaire General de la Section Polonaise Georges Warchalowski, p. 29.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁷ "Polish-Bulgarian Review", 1933, year X, issue 1, p. 45.

²⁸ **Райнов, Николай.** Станислав Виспянски (1869–1907). // *Полско-български преглед*, 1933, год. X, № 1, 22–27.

²⁹ **Скочалис, Владислав.** Пластичното изкуство на Станислав Виспянски. // *Полско-български преглед*, 1933, год. X, № 1, 38–42, cit. p. 38.

Review magazine from 1933;³⁰ those included *Self-Portrait*, *Child's Portrait*, a mural project *Blessed Salome* (or *Salome from Krakow*), *Two-leaf Squill* and *Rose* decorative drawings, and Thetis and Achilles illustrations for the *Iliad* by Homer. That “gallery” of black-and-white reproductions was too insufficient to give an idea of the scale of the artist’s realizations.

In his publication from 1933, N. Raynov focused on Wyspiański’s formation and wrote about the role of his two-year stay in Paris as well as the impact of Puvis de Chavannes and his cycle *Sainte Geneviève* in the Pantheon on the Polish artist.

Another focal point of the article was the artist’s murals and stained-glass windows in the Franciscan Church in Krakow: “Wyspiański understands well not only the Gothic style but also the spirit of the great St. Francis, a brother of people, animals and plants.” Raynov was interested in the geometric and plant ornaments, in the stylization and symbolism. And he pointed out that “Polish art critics regard this decorative art as Wyspiański’s greatest work, not only in plastic arts, but in general.” Furthermore, Raynov emphasized the author’s historicism, referring to the stained-glass project featuring the image of Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great) for the Wawel Cathedral. What was of particular significance for the writer of the article was Wyspiański’s ability to “reinterpret in an individual manner the national and to turn it into something universal” along with his achievements in the contemporary reworking of the national visual culture. The graphic decoration of books, among which Homer’s *Iliad*, publications of Wyspiański himself, as well as of magazines and others was also of interest for Raynov.

The Bulgarian writer, artist and critic dedicated some lines to Wyspiański the artist again in his multi-volume *History of Art* (1939, vol. 12): “Wyspiański’s work is original despite the side influences, without which not a single talent can develop these days.” Additionally, once again, he briefly observed the role of contemporary French art in the artist’s formation, this time mentioning Paul Gauguin’s name. The author summarized from a distance exceeding 20 years: “He is the direct creator of today’s Polish decorative art.” N. Raynov himself was at a different stage of his artistic and academic career. At that period, he was a full-time professor at the Academy of Arts in Sofia and, as we can assume, Wyspiański was among the key names in his lectures on modern art.

Wyspiański, as a bright creative figure in an era of struggle for the affirmation of national self-consciousness, unification and independence of the Polish lands, left a trace in both Polish and European culture with the mutually reinforcing effects of his art, poetry, and theatrical works. In his lifetime, the “birth” of the modern Polish state was yet to come. But the imprint of his work has gone beyond the time and space of his life path. The case with Bulgaria proves it too.

National Romanticism, Symbolism, Art Nouveau Concerning the Response to Wyspiański’s Work in Bulgaria

The 1920s in Bulgaria were a period of new search for national artistic idioms. Artists and writers, playwrights and musicians were drawn to various variants of historicism, legendary imagery, mysticism, folklore forms, folk visual culture, and the experience of National Romanticism, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau in different cultural milieus. As in other cases, the diverse experience got into the melting pot of the modern re-creation and invention of national peculiarities and artistic achievements. In Bulgaria, mainly in the Native Art movement milieus, the achievements were predominantly in the field of decorative forms, stained glass, book graphics, and the synthesis of arts in the theatre, architecture, etc. That was also the time of the emergence of the interest in and response to the artistic accomplishments in Wyspiański’s work in his time and environment. In Bulgaria during the 1920s and 1930s, little was known about modernist and avant-garde practices in Polish art centers such as Krakow, Poznań, and Łódź after World War I.

³⁰ Станислав Виспянски на български и в българския печат. II Живопис // *Полско-български преглед*, 1933, год. X, № 1, 43.

In another time, the art historian Dimitur G. Dimitrov made a significant point about Wyspiański's artistic work.³¹ Regarding the ideological aspect of stylistic definitions, he pointed out that the trend around 1900 in Poland was mainly referred to as “modernism”, “new style”, and “new art” and cited a study by Mieczysław Wallis on Secession. There, the Polish art historian wrote: “(...) the word “secession” drove Wyspiański to ‘quiet madness’ and poison sprinkling.”

Dimitrov commented: “This is justified by a number of reasons. Firstly, no great artist of dignity would accept being “pigeonholed”; secondly, in Galicia, as part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the word was associated with the well-known Vienna Secession style, which would suggest, in turn, that “Wyspiański drew his inspiration from it—something unacceptable for an enemy of monarchy like him. So, one of the key representatives of Secession (from our point of view), in no way wanted to identify himself with it. (...)”³².

Conclusion

The impact of the Polish artist Wyspiański on the Bulgarian artistic milieu, as outlined in this article, leads us once again to the open question: How can we overcome the difficulty caused by the insufficiency of the general style terms outside the specific situations of their inventions and adequately comment on the essence of local practices and personal achievements? I am convinced that a critical look at the geography of the artistic phenomena, at the complex intertwining of contacts, impacts, and interactions at different moments and in different situations is a fundamental prerequisite for getting closer to understanding the situational specifics and interpreting impactful artistic practices. The response to Wyspiański as an artist in our country enriches the view of Polish culture as possessing a significant place on the map of art geography, as seen from Bulgaria.

Translated in English by Albena Vitanova.

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³¹ Димитров, Димитър Г. Полското изкуство през последните сто години. София 2000, 49–52.

³² Mieczysław Wallis. Secession. Warsaw 1967, 1974 (2nd ed.). Cit. after Dimitur G. Dimitrov, op.cit., 51–52.

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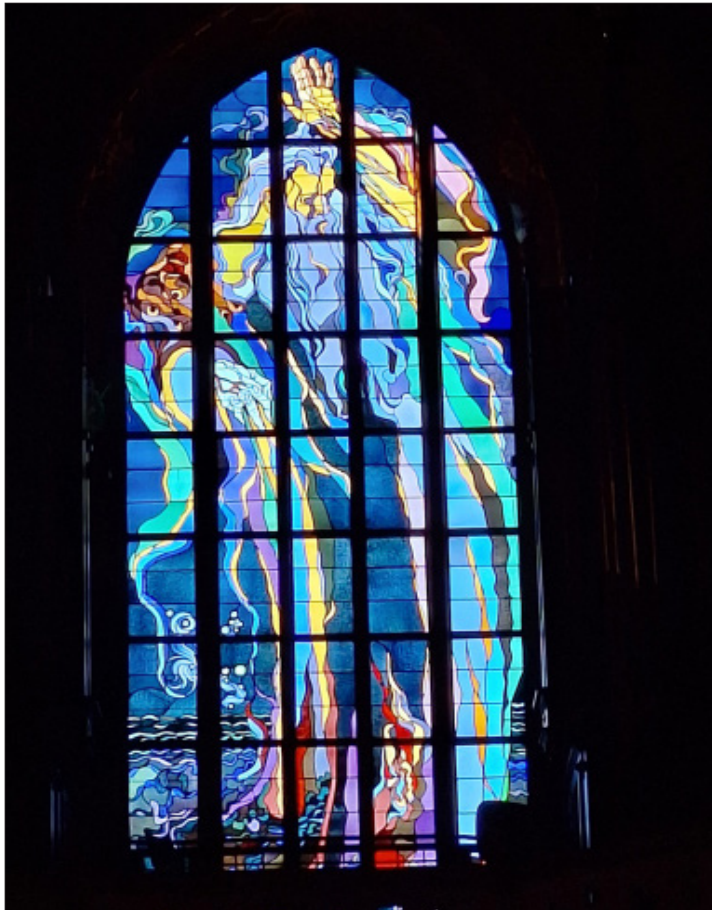
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*Fig. 1 Wispiański, St. God the Creator.
Stained glass window in the
Church of St. Francis of
Assisi in Krakow, 1904.*



*Fig. 2 Wispiański,
St. God the Creator.
Replica of the design for the
Church of St.
Francis of Assisi in Krakow,
1904.
Stanisław Wispiański
Museum – branch
of the National
Museum in Krakow.*



Fig. 3 Wispiański, St. Fragment of the stained glass windows in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Krakow. 1904.



Fig. 4 Wispiański, St. A project for the decoration of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Krakow. Stanisław Wispiański Museum – branch of the National Museum in Krakow.

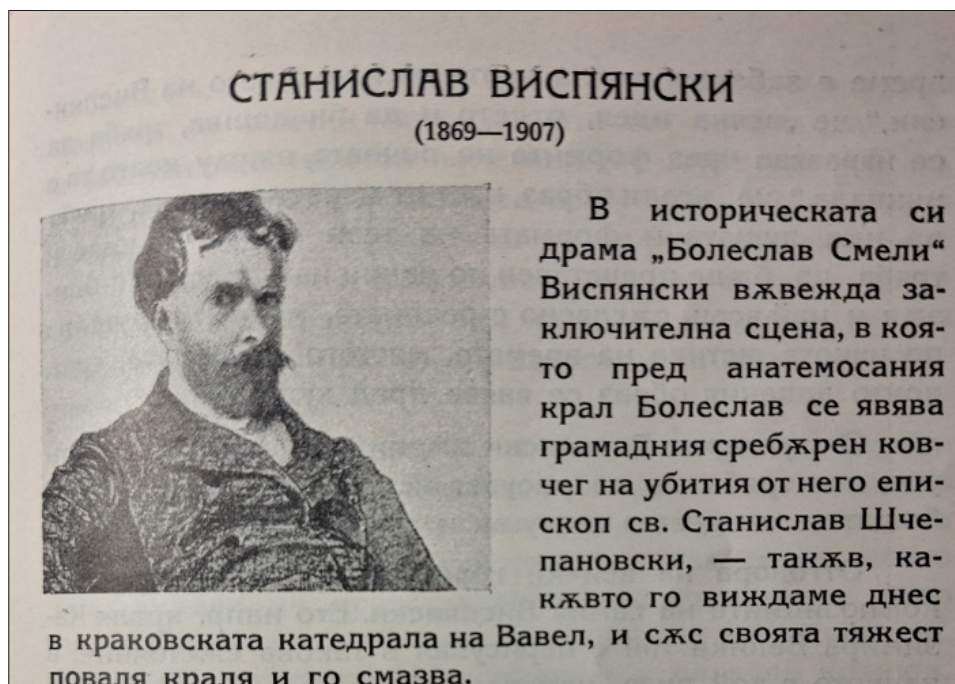


Fig. 5 From the book “Pages from the History of Polish Painting”, 1922, p. 311.

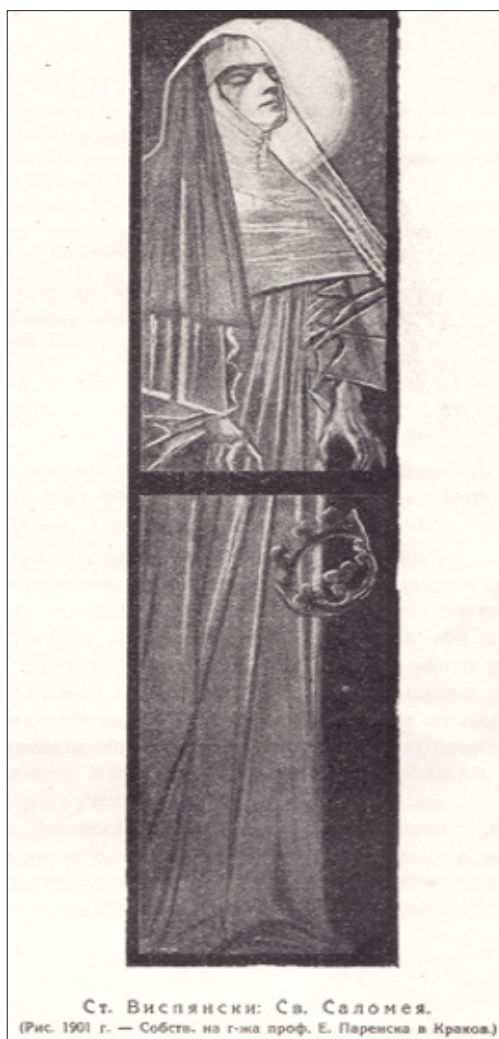


Fig. 6 Wyspiański,
St. St. Salome. Reproduction of a
drawing published
in the book “Pages from
the History of Polish Painting”,
1922, p. 315.



*Fig. 7 Wispiański, St.
Stained glass window with
St. Salome in the Church of
St. Francis of
Assisi in Krakow.*

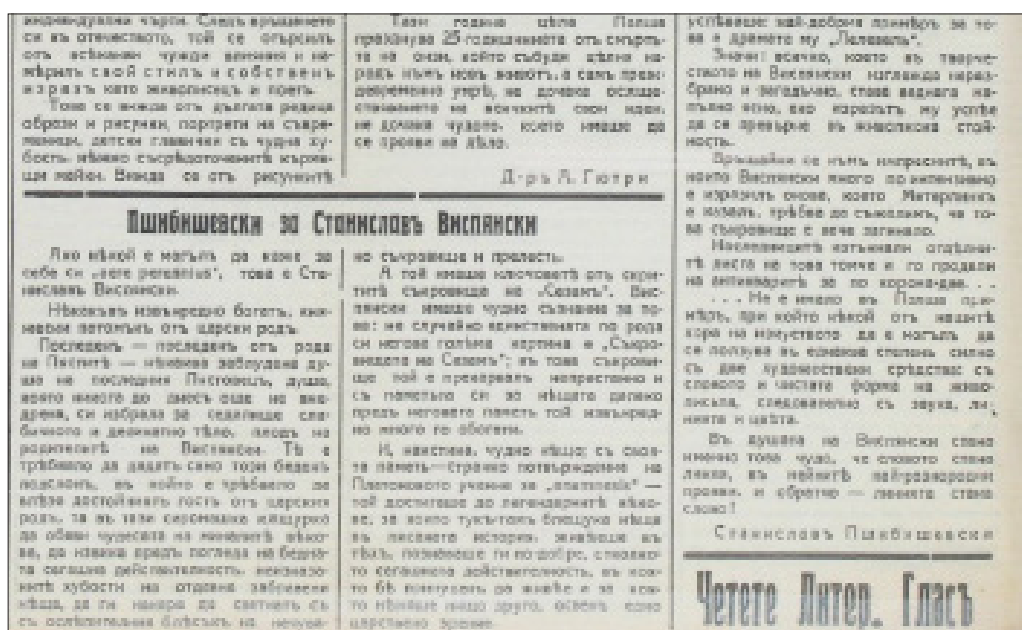


Fig. 8 Fragment from "Przybyszewski on Stanisław Wispiański," in "Literaturen glas" [Literary Voice], 1933, April 23, No. 191, 6.



Fig. 9 Wyspiański, St. Casimir the Great. Stained glass window design for Wawel Cathedral. Pastel. Stanisław Wyspiański Museum – branch of the National Museum in Krakow.
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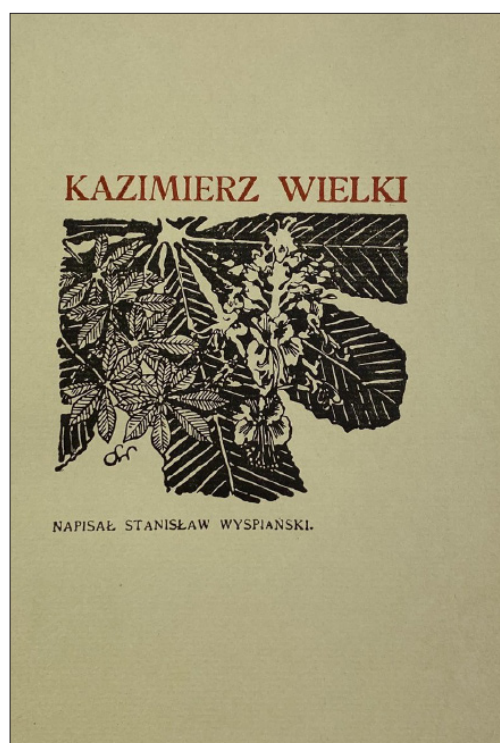
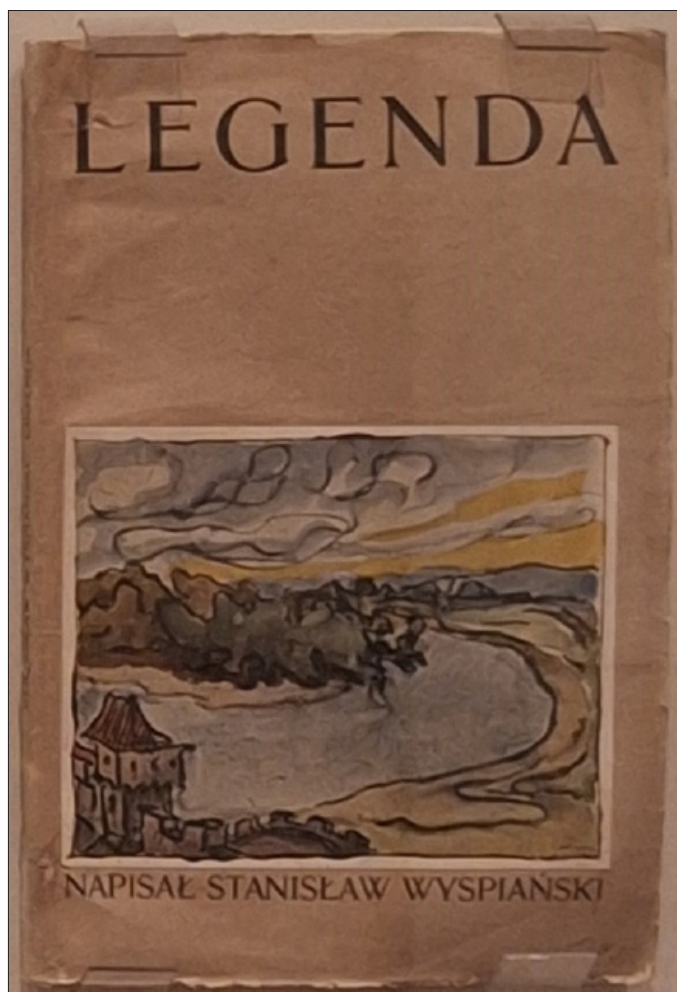


Fig. 10 Wyspiański, St. Cover of his literary work "Casimir the Great", 1900.



*Fig. 11 Wyspiański,
St. Cover of his literary work
"Legend", second edition 1904
(first edition 1898).*