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Bookplate design by Stanisław Wyspiański for Lucjan Rydel, kept at the Jagiellonian Library¹

*I would like to lay the most luxuriant flower on your chest,
I would like to dress you in the most vivid colours,
(...)
I am waiting for you, because I feel sad
alone,
because I cannot reach my goal,
I must wander around,
until I find my soulmate.
Because affection and strength,
that guard the proud, eternal gates
to death and glory,
will smother and choke a lone man.
They will only let two people in.²*

Abstract

The subject of the article is Stanisław Wyspiański's bookplate design for Lucjan Rydel, drawn by watercolour on grey paper (23,8 x 16,9 cm). As a standing rectangle, it shows symmetrically arranged twigs with flower buds, which resemble magnolias and freesias. The signs that appear next to the twigs, which are painted emerald green and light violet, are *Z Księgozbioru* ("From the book collection") as well as *Dr (?) LRydla* ["Dr (?) LRydel's"], the latter being the facsimile of a signature. It can be assumed that this drawing was Wyspiański's present for his friend, gifted sometime in the years 1894–1899. Rydel never made a decision to have it printed, which undoubtedly contributed to its status of being unknown among experts and absent from the topic literature, either printed, handwritten or epistolary. The piece is nevertheless particularly important for the history of Polish bookplates. This seemingly ordinary drawing appears revo-

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¹ I would like to thank Magdalena Laskowska from the National Museum in Krakow for showing me the bookplate and for her valuable help and kind remarks.

² Fragment of a poem by Stanisław Wyspiański [to Lucjan Rydel].

lutionary when one considers that it shows an emblem shield deprived of the actual emblem, lacks an epic theme, does not have any text, and features art nouveau embellishments as well as a handwritten signature of the owner. It can be compared to the works created already in the first decade of the twentieth century by artists such as Jan Bukowski, Antoni Procajłowicz and Kazimierz Sichulski.

Przedmiotem niniejszego tekstu jest projekt ekslibrisu Stanisława Wyspiańskiego dla Lucjana Rydla, wykonany akwarelą na szarym papierze (wym. 23,8x16,9), który w stojącym prostokącie przedstawia symetrycznie ułożone gałązki z pąkami kwiatowymi przypominającymi magnolie i frezje. Namalowane szmaragdową zielenią i jasnym fioletem, opatrzone zostały napisem: „Z Księgozbioru” oraz podobizną odręcznego podpisu: „Dr (?) L Rydla”. Przypuścić można, że rysunek ten był prezentem Wyspiańskiego dla przyjaciela ofiarowanym mu w latach ok. 1894–1899. Rydel nigdy nie zdecydował się na wydrukowanie go, co niewątpliwie przyczyniło się do jego nieznaności wśród miłośników księgoznaków i brakiem w literaturze związanej z tym tematem, zarówno drukowanej, rękopiśmiennej, jak i epistolarnej. Jest on natomiast wyjątkowo ważny dla całej historii polskiego znaku książkowego. Kompozycja nawiązująca do tarczy herbowej bez użycia samego herbu, brak wątku epickiego i działanie samym obrazem, secesyjne zdobnictwo oraz użycie motywu odręcznego podpisu właściciela czynią ten niepozorny rysunek przełomowym w całej dotychczasowej wiedzy związanej z polskim ekslibrisem. Można go porównać z pracami powstałymi już w pierwszym dziesięcioleciu XX w. takich artystów jak Jan Bukowski, Antoni Procajłowicz, Kazimierz Sichulski i inni.

Keywords: bookplate, Polish bookplate, Stanisław Wyspiański, Lucjan Rydel, Jan Bukowski, Jagiellonian Library

Słowa kluczowe: ekslibris, ekslibris polski, Stanisław Wyspiański, Lucjan Rydel, Jan Bukowski, Biblioteka Jagiellońska

Less known than Lucjan Rydel's (1870–1918) work in areas ranging from literature and pedagogy to community work and agriculture is his occupation with library science³. Between 1896 and 1897, the future poet and playwright spent 18 hours a week at the Polish Library in Paris, working off the scholarship he had been granted by Piotr Alexander Wereszczyński from the Academy of Learning. He worked there as a librarian and prepared a collection of emigration pamphlets⁴, whereas in 1898 he was an apprentice at the Jagiellonian Library (JL) for a few months⁵.

Rydel came from a family of gentry and professors, passionate about collecting books. His grandfather, Józef Kremer (1806–1875) – a philosopher and aesthetician – was a member of the Academy of Learning and Professor and Rector of the Jagiellonian University (JU). Another member of the poet's family was also a Professor and Rector of the JU: his father, Lucjan Rydel (1833–1895). Lucjan Rydel the senior was an ophthalmologist and founder of the Kraków Ophthalmology School, whose library consisting of 800 books and nearly 200 volumes of magazines was donated to the Jagiellonian Library⁶.

³ J. Dużyk, 1992; A. Kowalska [et al.] 2018.

⁴ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part 2, p. 263, footnote 3.

⁵ B. Soldryłowa 1972.

⁶ B. Soldryłowa 1972.

Lucjan's brother, Adam Rydel (1872–1914), was, on the other hand, a neurologist and psychiatrist, author of numerous articles in the *Medical Review* (*Przegląd Lekarski*) and Vice-President of the Kraków Medical Association. Adam decorated Lucjan's books with a bookplate made by zincography, according to a drawing by Tadeusz Nowakowski (1879–1957), which was itself based on Hans Holbein the Younger's (1497–1543) composition *Death among Scholars* (1904). (Fig. 1) More commonly known is Lucjan Rydel's bookplate created by Jan Bukowski (1873–1943), printed in colour zincography circa 1903 and depicting a lyre filled with a folk decoration. (Fig. 2)



Figure 1



Figure 2

In contrast, less known is the bookplate kept at the Jagiellonian Library⁷, which is the subject matter of this text, made in watercolour on grey paper (dimensions: 23.8x16.9) by Stanisław Wyspiański and dedicated to his friend's books⁸. (Fig. 3) It was for the first time reproduced and identified by Izabela Korczyńska in the catalogue guide to the *Wyspiański. Unknown* exhibition,

⁷ Inv. No. Jagiellonian Library Graphics I. R. 2845.

⁸ The bookplate has not been referred to in the literature devoted to this subject, e.g.: A. Ryszkiewicz 1959; M. Grońska, 1973; A. Ryszkiewicz, 1973; M. Wojciechowski, 1978; M. Grońska, 1992; K. Podniewska, 2016; in catalogues of the exhibition of Young Poland's bookplates, e.g. F. Wagner, 1964. It has not appeared in manuscripts, e.g. in "Inwentarz exlibrisu polskiego" by Edward Chwalewik (National Library of Poland, manuscript no. I 10511), "Almanach exlibrisu polskiego XX wieku" by Jerzy Kram (Jagiellonian Library, Register of Manuscripts No. 74/79), or in the letters of bookplate scholars, e.g. Edward Chwalewik, Edward Majkowski, Tadeusz Przykowski and Andrzej Ryszkiewicz, present in the National Library of Poland ("Korespondencja Edwarda Chwalewika", Manuscript no. 10524 III, 10526–10528 III) and the Przykowski Clock Museum in Jędrzejów (Unnumbered manuscripts).



Figure 3

organised in 2019 by the National Museum in Krakow⁹. It is an upright rectangle with double line borders and geometric ornaments in the top corners, showing symmetrically arranged twigs with fleshy flower buds. The shape of the flowers resembles magnolias, whereas the way they are attached to the twigs resembles freesias. They are painted in emerald green and light violet. The design includes the inscription *Z / Księgo - zbioru* ("From / Library"), and below there is also a facsimile of a handwritten signature – *Dr (?) LRydla* ["Dr (?) LRydel's"] – presumably made by Wyspiański. Lastly, between the lower twigs, Wyspiański placed his own signature: "S–W". He used such signatures often, almost exclusively in typographic designs, in borders and tailpieces, but also in the cover illustrations of dramas, well-considered in terms of composition (butterfly, rose, dolphin, dandelion, etc.). (Fig. 4, 1–7)

In the 1920s, a card was added to the bookplate with a handwritten inscription saying: "I hereby certify that Lucjan Rydel's bookplate signed with Stanisław Wyspiański's letters, which is presently being acquired by the Jagiellonian Library, has been well known to me since it belonged to the late W. Twardowski as Wyspiański's work. Kraków, 20 / II 1929 Marjan Morelowski". Unfortunately, it has not been possible to find out who Twardowski was, but Marian Morelowski (1884–1963) could be identified as a known art historian and French philologist. At the time of his expert's report for the JL, Morelowski

⁹ Ł. Gaweł, M. Laskowska (ed.), 2019, p. 183 (V. 69).



Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2



Figure 4.3



Figure 4.4



Figure 4.5



Figure 4.6



Figure 4.7

was working as a custodian of the Wawel Royal Castle National Art Collection (1926–1929). (Fig. 5)

This bookplate is not analogous to any known Polish bookplates created at the end of the nineteenth century. The first artistic book labels in the Kraków and Lviv regions had not been created until the 1900s. Examples of these are bookplates made for the National Museum in Kraków (1902) (Fig. 6), dedicated for Leopold Wellisz (1882–1972) (1903) (Fig. 7), Lucjan

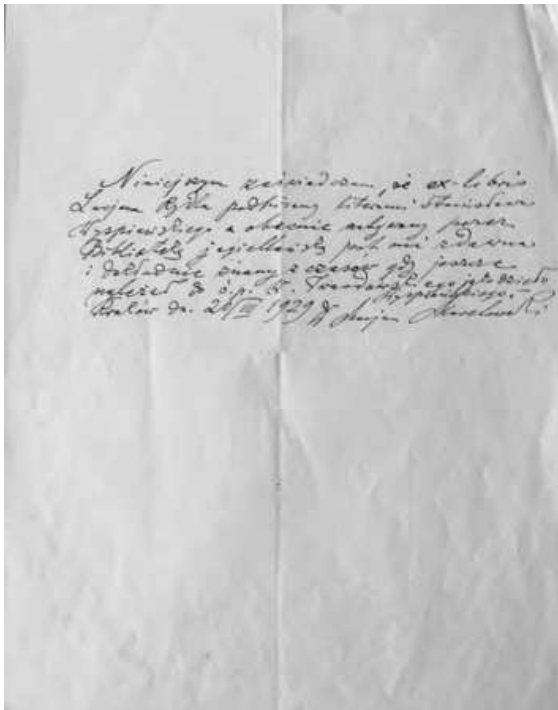


Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

Rydel (discussed above), Adolf Sternschuss (1873–1915) (1904) (Fig. 8), Bronisława Rudlicka “Jeremi” (1875–1920) (1909) (Fig. 9), Adam Prager (Pragier) (1886–1976) (circa 1910) (Fig. 10) and others. Their authors are, respectively: Jan Bukowski (1873–1943), Antoni Procajłowicz (1876–1949), Tadeusz Rychter (1873–1943), Kazimierz Sichulski (1879–1942) and Henryk Uziembło (1879–1949).

In the 1880s and 1890s, when ink stamps were still popular on Polish territory, artistic bookplates had already been common in Germany, France, England and Italy. This can be traced on the basis of the main foreign studies related to the subject matter, e.g. Friedrich Warnecke’s *Die deutsche Bücherzeichen*¹⁰, Walter Hamilton’s *French book-plates*¹¹ and *Dated book-plates*¹², Walter zur

¹⁰ F. Warnecke, 1890.

¹¹ W. Hamilton, 1975a.

¹² W. Hamilton, 1975b.



Figure 8



Figure 9

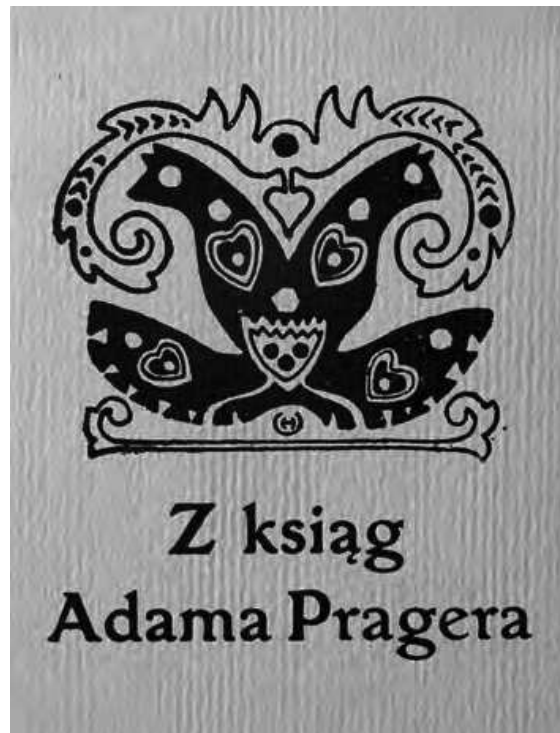


Figure 10

Westen's *Exlibris (Bücherzeichen)*¹³, Karl Emich zu Leiningen-Westerburg's *Deutsche und oesterreichische Bibliothekzeichen Exlibris*¹⁴ and Adolf Matthias Hildebrandt's *Heraldische Bücherzeichen*¹⁵. In the West, the art of bookplates developed continuously from its inception. Its heyday in the second half of the nineteenth century came with the rebirth of art and folk craft, Pre-Raphaelites' works, and a result of the emergence of William Morris's (1834–1896) and Owen Jones's (1809–1874) writing thereon. Bookplates became increasingly popular among educated segments of society, reflecting their intellectual culture and bibliophilic interests. They also became collection objects; a process that took place in Poland, too.¹⁶ Wyspiański must have come across this fashionable method of decorating books with beautifully designed graphical cards during one of his trips abroad.

Given the above information, it can be assumed that the drawing was created after October 1892, after the artist had come back from France for a few months, but it is more probable that it was at the turn of September and October 1894, once the artist came back from Paris for good, or soon after this date. If we assume that the sign preceding Rydel's name on the signature can be read as "Dr", then the bookplate could have possibly been created after 10 April 1894, as on this day Rydel received a doctorate in law¹⁷. The flowery twigs resemble the painted field vetch used by Wyspiański to decorate the chancel of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Kraków in 1895¹⁸. (Fig. 11) "At that time Wyspiański would go outside the town and draw flowers. Whole bunches of stylised flowers from our meadows would lie on the table. Soon, the renovation of St. Francis Church began", wrote Jan Bartosiński in *Wspomnienie (Memory)*... as he recalled the artist¹⁹. "Wyspiander, enamoured of Grasset, would draw flowers with Japanese pedantry for hours. He could stare at flowers for hours on end," noted Adolf Nowaczyński²⁰.

The twigs depicted in the bookplate do not refer directly to any specific specimen of flora. They are a certain elaboration, but in terms of style they represent the character of Wyspiański's works of that time. Perhaps they were created on the basis of some other pattern that Wyspiański had come across abroad, or maybe they are a representation of a plant he had observed there. The hypothesis that this work was not created after 1901 is supported by stylistic reasons as well as by the fact that the relations between Rydel and Wyspiański cooled after the premiere of *The Wedding* in that year, which

¹³ W. von Zur Westen, 1909.

¹⁴ K. E. Westerburg-Leiningen, 1901.

¹⁵ A. M. Hildebrandt, 1892.

¹⁶ E.g. the collection of book ownership labels owned by Antoni Ryszard (including over 100 objects) and Emeryk Hutten-Czapski (several dozen bookplates), both kept at the National Museum in Krakow.

¹⁷ J. Dużyk, 1992, p. 414.

¹⁸ *Wyspiański 2017*, p. 70 (Fig.), 87–89 (Fig. II.17–21). National Museum in Krakow, inv. no. MNK III-r.a.10733, 10751, 16171.

¹⁹ J. Bartosiński, 1971, p. 261.

²⁰ A. Nowaczyński, 1971, p. 423.



Figure 11

means that they would have unlikely exchanged this kind of a friendship token any longer. In any case, their close relationship had deteriorated even earlier: “before Rydel’s wedding, Wyspiański’s attitude towards the author of the ‘Magic Circle’ was less cordial than earlier; increasing coolness prevailed. Minor misunderstandings began when Rydel’s lyrics were being published, still with Wyspiański’s ornamental drawings (...) the discrepancy between the poets’ talents and characters was [then] more visible”²¹.

Assuming that the bookplate dates back to the years 1894–1899, certain factors make this inconspicuous drawing a breakthrough as far as the whole knowledge of Polish ex-libris is concerned. In the first place, whereas armorial bookplates included a book owner’s coat of arms, in Wyspiański’s bookplate the twigs inscribed in a rhombic shape form a kind of coat of arms, where an inscription referring clearly to the drawing’s librarian use has been placed. As we know, the Rydel family (earlier Rydell), with origins in the nobility of Courland (western Latvia), bore the Jelita coat of arms²², probably granted as early as in the sixteenth century and borrowed from the Deputy Chancellor in Courland, Jan Zamoyski. However, Rydel did not display this coat of arms ostentatiously, and it is also absent in the later bookplate made by Bukowski. Compositional innovation is furthermore evident in the lack of an epic motif and the emphasis placed on the drawing itself, in this case a decorative one. Another unique element is the original way of placing the owner’s name by

²¹ M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971, p. 437.

²² M. Rydel 2018, p. 41.

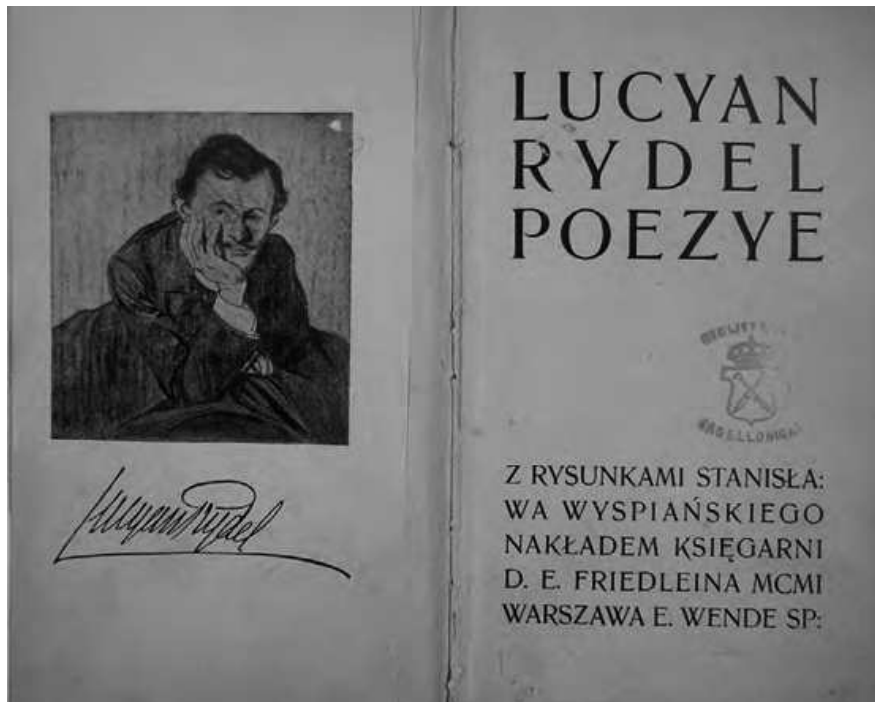


Figure 12

a facsimile of his signature. It has been compared to Rydel's signature on his *Poetry* book from 1901²³. (Fig. 12)

The first known example of using a handwritten signature on a Polish bookplate is Stanisław Bełzecki's (1856–1932) ex-libris created after 1894, showing Truth and Poetry.²⁴ (Fig. 13) However, Bełzecki – a railway and bridge engineer – was until 1909 active in St. Petersburg, so it is hard to assume that Wyspiański was familiar with his bookplate.²⁵ Another similar example appears on the bookplate of Marian Zdziechowski (1861–1938) – a historian of ideas and literature, philologist, philosopher, literary critic and journalist, professor at the JU and Rector of the Vilnius University.²⁶ (Fig. 14) It has been made in Kraków approximately between 1900 and 1911, when Elżbieta Czapska, née Meyendorff, donated it to the collection of the National Museum in Kraków. Made by the wood engraving technique, it shows the Rawicz coat of arms inscribed in a circle on triangularly cut paper and a handwritten signature below²⁷.

The function of this bookplate design remains enigmatic. Perhaps it was a present for a friend younger than him by a year. The fact that the relationship

²³ L. Rydel 1901.

²⁴ This bookplate was a copy of Emil Döpler the Younger's (1855–1922) ex-libris, created in 1894 for German playwright Hermann Sudermann (1857–1928) which, however, was devoid of the owner's signature's facsimile. Bełzecki's bookplate is kept in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków, inv. no. MNK III-ryc.29410, a gift or an exchange with Kazimierz Reychman, circa 1910.

²⁵ S. Bełzecki.

²⁶ J. Skoczyński, A. Wroński, 2009.

²⁷ National Museum in Kraków, inv. no. MNK III-ryc.34906.



Figure 13



Figure 14

between Stanisław Wyspiański and Lucjan Rydel was brotherly is well-known and described in various publications, most recently by Joanna Zdebska-Schmidt in the catalogue of the *Pan wiecznie Młody* exhibition, organised as part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Rydel's death by the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków²⁸. The history and character of the relations between these two outstanding individuals can be deduced from different publications²⁹, letters³⁰ and memoirs³¹. Rydel and Wyspiański met in 1883 in their senior years of secondary school through Stanisław Estreicher. In 1886 they formed a “literary circle” and met on Sunday mornings in town or at the Rydel family's flat. In 1880, Lucjan's mother, Helena Rydel, née Kremer (1846–1921), “a woman of uncommon mind and heart”³², started running the Kraków-famous literary and artistic salon, open to guests on Fridays at 5 pm. Wyspiański was often one of those guests³³. “Rydel's parents hosted evening

²⁸ J. Zdebska-Schmidt, 2018.

²⁹ A. Grzymała-Siedlecki, 1961; J. Dużyk, 1968; M. Stokowa 1971; M. Stokowa, 1982; A. Doboszevska, 1995; M. Śliwińska, 2017.

³⁰ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979.

³¹ L. Kotarbińska, 1930, M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971; S. Estreicher, 1971; L. Rydel, 1971a; L. Rydel 1971b; L. Rydel, 1971c.

³² J. Bartosiński, 1971, p. 271.

³³ A. Kowalska [et al.], 2018, p. 56.

teas, during which Lutek and Adam's close friends would gather around a long table, where the broadminded and loving mother, taking an active part in her sons' joys and sorrows, whom everyone respected and loved, was the heart and soul of the home"³⁴. The friendship between the poets developed for good in 1891, when Wyspiański left for Paris. In the letters written at that time, *The Wedding's* future author complained to Karol Maszkowski: "I feel the absence of Rydel and of everything he represents with every step I take (...)"³⁵. After Wyspiański came back from Paris, the friendship became even closer³⁶. The artist returned to Poland without anything to live on, "saddened by his fellow countrymen's distrust"³⁷. Helena Rydel took care of him at that time and Lucjan's home became his moral and material mainstay³⁸. It was a good time to show each other affection and to exchange gifts "from the heart". One of such gifts could possibly have been the bookplate drawing.

Rydel and Wyspiański's first joint work was the translation of the first book of Homer's *Iliad*. In April 1896, the author of the *Magic Circle* presented Wyspiański with a proposition of illustrating this fragment of the epic poem with four drawings, and the whole work was to be printed in the *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (*The Illustrated Weekly*) magazine, published in Warsaw. Wyspiański set to work with enthusiasm and in the letter dated 9–10 May, he wrote: "Dear Lucek! Very well with "The Iliad", I will gladly undertake to try to finish it in time, (I need to know the precise deadline). (...) As soon as I have sample drawings, I will send them to you and I already have some things in my mind"³⁹. The work was completed in the autumn of 1896 and the next three issues of *Tygodnik* (45, 46 and 47) included the illustrations: *Apollo the Archer*, *Achilles and Pallada*, *Atreides (Agamemnon)* and *Zeus and Thetis*.

Somewhat earlier, at the beginning of 1896, the two friends thought about another joint work. At that time, Lucjan Rydel wrote poetry under the influence of his affection for his future wife, Jadwiga Mikołajczyk. In January 1896 Wyspiański wrote: "Dear Lucek! (...) When you publish your book, I would like to decorate it with my ornaments and adorned margins. I think you will not deny me this pleasure"⁴⁰. In June, Wyspiański asked when exactly Rydel was planning to publish his poetry and suggested that the illustrations should not be in colour, but in black and white⁴¹. Eventually, the book was published in 1899⁴², with Wyspiański's graphic layout and drawings. The painter decorated each poem with a floral motif or borders based on folk embroidery. The second issue, published in 1901, additionally included a black and white photograph

³⁴ M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971, p. 431.

³⁵ M. Rydlowa, 1997, p. 112 (letter of 30.09.1891).

³⁶ M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971, p. 433.

³⁷ M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971, p. 438.

³⁸ M. Dobrowolski-Nałęcz, 1971, p. 438.

³⁹ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa 1979, part 1, p. 323 (letter of 9–10.05.1896).

⁴⁰ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa 1979, part 1, p. 290 (letter of 19.01.1896).

⁴¹ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa 1979, part 1, p. 336 (letter of 7–10.06.1896).

⁴² L. Rydel, 1899.

of Rydel's portrait made by Wyspiański in 1898 as well as the poet's signature, as mentioned above.

In 1898, both artists participated in the celebrations related to the unveiling of the statue of Adam Mickiewicz at the Main Market Square in Kraków. Rydel wrote *Epilog uroczystego przedstawienia w teatrze krakowskim w dniu 27 czerwca 1898 na cześć Adama Mickiewicza* (*Epilogue of a festive performance at the Kraków Theatre on 27 June 1898 in honour of Adam Mickiewicz*), and Wyspiański designed the stage decorations and the graphics for the publication accompanying the performance⁴³. In the same year, Rydel finished writing a dramatic fable *The Magic Circle*, which was performed at the Municipal Theatre a year later. The costumes for the actors were designed by Wyspiański⁴⁴.

Each of the aforementioned areas in which the poet and the painter collaborated could have been a good occasion for presenting the discussed bookplate design, especially since Rydel loved books, as indicated by his portrait with Primavera by Wyspiański from 1894. We know that Wyspiański was no bibliophile. He owned a book collection that he had been gathering since 1890⁴⁵ and read profusely, as suggested by his vast correspondence with Rydel⁴⁶, but he thought that books were mainly for using. He tore or cut out

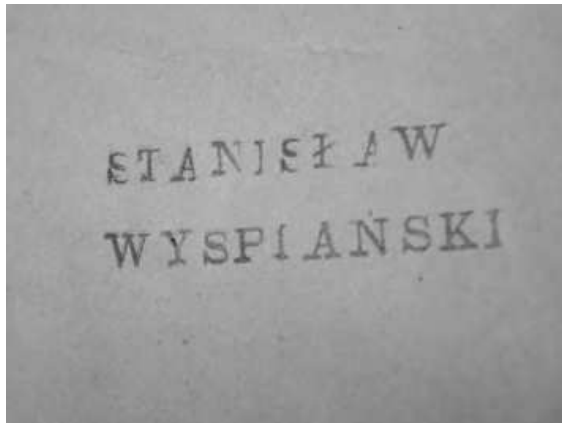


Figure 15

the pages or whole chapters that he needed, made notes, drawings and remarks, and marked fragments to be used later, regardless of the book's value. He did not need a bookplate, a proof of which can be found in the form of an ink stamp damaging the pages of his books, which he had made himself with his home types⁴⁷. (Fig. 15) This did not mean, however, that Wyspiański did not see his friend's bibliophilic needs, all the more so as it was Rydel who

encouraged him to read new books. Rydel was well-read and, according to Leon Płoszewski, in a way he directed his friend's reading. They are sure to have discussed books during their lengthy disputes. The delights and spontaneous

⁴³ L. Rydel, S. Wyspiański, 1898.

⁴⁴ Their projects are kept in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków, inv. no. MNK III-r.a-14296.

⁴⁵ Part of this book collection kept at the National Museum in Kraków became the subject of an exhibition, [in:] *Wyspiański. Nieznany 2019* (*Wyspiański. Unknown*).

⁴⁶ Some examples are Wyspiański's letters to L. Rydel, [in:] L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part. 1, p. 180 (letter of 11–12.07.1890), 236 (letter of 10.04.1893), 246 (letter of 22.03.1894), 256 (letter of 19.04.1894), 262 (letter of 16.11.1894), 317–318 (letter of 23.02.1896), 354 (letter of 26.06.1896), 366 (letter of 23.07.1896). L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part 2, p. 109, footnote 19 (letter of 5.03.1893).

⁴⁷ H. Marcinkowska, 2019, p. 236. Message from Włodzimierz Żuławski's note, [in:] L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part 2, p. 268, footnote 12.

feelings provoked by their readings must have been the subject matter of many a letter sent to Paris⁴⁸. “There are scenes that I have had before my eyes and in my mind since you read to me last year”, Wyspiański wrote to Rydel on the margin of Ariosto’s song, “and how many more have come”⁴⁹. Books were also a perfect gift for Rydel, who sent the catalogue of Eugène Grasset’s exhibition to his friend⁵⁰.

It is difficult to determine when Rydel got to own his first book. It was probably in his early school years, but it can be assumed that at the end of 1880s that, once he was already in secondary school and his first literary work *Mściwój* (1889) had won the second prize at the Academy of Learning competition, his bookshelves already held a few items. He wrote: “The nicest memories of my youth are the moments spent at the Jagiellonian Library. This grand Gothic building from the end of the fifteenth century is a rich courtyard, surrounded by arcades, and the countless mass of books that were wide open to us”⁵¹.

Rydel was a versatile man. From 1888 he studied law at the Jagiellonian University and graduated with a doctorate. He was also devoted to literary work such as writing plays and poems. He was a journalist, publicist and theatre critic, and translated Greek, Latin, French and German. He was interested in world literature, which he taught at *Adrian Braniecki’s higher school for women*, as well as in history of art, a subject he taught at the Academy of Fine Arts. For one season, Rydel was even the director of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre. He was engaged in community work, giving lectures in villages and getting involved in charity and patriotic initiatives. He was interested in vegetable- and fruit-growing, eagerly sharing his knowledge and experience with peasants. Thus, it can be assumed that his library included books in all of those areas – literature, poetry and foreign languages, theatre and agriculture. His book collection, secured during World War I in the bricked up cellar of Rydel family’s manor in Bronowice Małe, was taken to Kraków⁵² in 1915 and still remains in the hands of the family in “Rydlówka”.

Conclusion

We do not know the exact circumstances in which the discussed bookplate design was created, however it can be reasonably assumed that it was Stanisław Wyspiański’s gift to his friend, presented to him between 1894 and 1899. It remains a fact, nonetheless, that Lucjan Rydel never decided to reproduce the bookplate, e.g. by colour zincography or other mechanical printing technique,

⁴⁸ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part 2, p. 97, footnote 48.

⁴⁹ L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part 1, p. 263 (letter of 16.11.1894).

⁵⁰ *Catalogue de la deuxième exposition du salon des cent réservée à un ensemble d’oeuvres d’Eugène Grasset*, [in:] L. Płoszewski, M. Rydlowa, 1979, part. 2, p. 185, footnote 3.

⁵¹ L. Rydel, 1971a, p. 196.

⁵² A. Kowalska [et al.], 2018, p. 78.

nor to mark his books with it. As we know, his pioneer was decorated with a later work by Jan Bukowski⁵³.

Wyspiański was ahead of his time. He was a pioneer in many fields such as painting, poetry, dramaturgy and stage design. For many years his graphic designs for publishing houses, magazines and other utility prints have been copied and paved the way for the development of this artistic field for his numerous successors. It seems that the situation with regard to the discussed bookplate design for Lucjan Rydel was similar. Admittedly, the little-known project did not have a direct influence on the development of bookplate art, and it is difficult to associate it with any specific examples, but its innovative character is indisputable.

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⁵³ B. Soldryłowa 1972.

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