# Negotiating the Unfamiliar: Translation of Lafcadio Hearn's *Some Chinese Ghosts* in Early Twentieth-Century Poland

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*This article provides a comparative reading of Lafcadio Hearn's* Some Chinese Ghosts *(1887) and* Bajki chińskie *(1913), its Polish translation by L. M. Brzozowska, in the light of transnationalism, translation, and transfer studies. It focuses on the rendering of cultural realities (foreignisation/domestication) and negotiating the unfamiliar aspects of the original in translation for young audiences, asking about children's literature translators' visibility as intermediaries between cultures and the cultural mediation of English. It also discusses how Eastern cultures were represented in the source and target texts and reflects on whether Chinese tales – arriving in Polish via English – might have been an attempt to create an alternative canon to the torrent of Western children's literature.*

**Key words:** *Lafcadio Hearn,* Some Chinese Ghosts*, Chinese fairy tales, Polish translation for children, transnationalism*

## INTRODUCTION

Transnationalism is not a term that yields easily to definitions – since the essence of the phenomenon it describes is the evasion of homogeneous orders and rigid frameworks, it is not surprising that the notion itself eludes easy classification and crosses the boundaries of many fields. It refers to 'exchanges, interactions and entanglements across borders' (Appel, Christensen, Grenby 5), as well as the invalidation or abolition of divisions. It is multidimensional and manifests its duality (Bradford 23) by incorporating cultural hybridity and ambiguity into

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its human or textual existence. Paul Jay argues that literature is inherently transnational because it has always been mobile (2), and its transmission is never confined by national or linguistic borders, not least through the activity of translators. Literary works constantly travel across languages and cultures, changing their setting, meaning, and audience. In this article, I explore a unique case of such travel by analysing *Bajki chińskie* (1913), the Polish translation for children of Lafcadio Hearn's collection *Some Chinese Ghosts* (1887), in which the author – a transnational trickster in his own right – introduced his Western adult readers to the culture and legends of China. I begin this analysis with a brief overview of Hearn's transnational biography, crucial to the understanding of his oeuvre, and then turn to a discussion of *Bajki chińskie* in the context of the interest in Eastern cultures in early-twentieth-century Poland and the strategies that the translator, L. M. Brzozowska, employed in transferring Hearn's text into Polish children's literature.

## TRANSNATIONAL SELF

If we are looking for a transnational individual who embodies all these aspects of culture-blending and border-crossing, there could hardly be a better example than Lafcadio Hearn. With his works existing simultaneously inside and outside the canon, he shares many points in common with his contemporaries Mark Twain, Edgar Alan Poe, and Robert Louis Stevenson (Codrescu 1) – writers whose texts are often associated with children's literature. He is linked to Twain by his adventurous life, to Poe by his fascination with the gothic, the fantastic, and the supernatural, and to Stevenson by the choice of his home outside the Occident. Unlike these three writers, however, Hearn seems forgotten or depreciated in the Western world, even if he is remembered and celebrated in the East (Hirakawa, 'Preface' vii).

On his many travels, Hearn collected stories from different cultures and languages, attracted by ghost stories and ancient rituals (Zipes ix) and pledged – as he himself stated – 'to the worship of the Odd, the Queer, the Strange, the Exotic, the Monstrous' (Bisland, vol. 1 328–9). It can be said that, apart from stories, Lafcadio Hearn collected different identities, living multiple lives, accumulating and incorporating different narratives until he created an identity that was complex, hybrid, and transnational. He was born Patrick Lafcadio Hearn in 1850 to an Irish military surgeon, Charles Hearn, and a Greek woman, Rosa Kassimatis, in Lefkada, which is itself a symbolic place situated at the heart of Western culture. It is the island of Sappho, but also close to Ithaca, synonymous with home and homecoming. In a sense, Hearn can be seen as a 'modern Ulysses', wandering in search of his identity, finally finding it outside his native island, in the East. After some years spent first in Ireland, then in London, he emigrated to the United States – which in the 1870s was indeed a melting pot of cultures, languages, and nations – to launch his career as a journalist with bone-chilling reports from the dark corners of Cincinnati. From there he moved to New Orleans, where he studied Creole folklore, transcribed legends,

and translated French literature, establishing himself as a writer and publishing his first collections of legends, including *Some Chinese Ghosts*.

In 1890 Hearn embarked on the journey of a lifetime from which he was not to return to the West. He made his way to Japan, where he found the most important subject of his writing and identity. Hearn started his career there as an English teacher and after a year married Koizumi Setsuko, the daughter of an impoverished samurai. It was his wife who introduced him to the treasury of Japanese beliefs, legends, and tales that became the axis of his writings dedicated to Nippon (Hirakawa, 'Lafcadio Hearn' 13). In Japan the complex structure of his identity was finally completed: from sensationalist journalist, traveller, gothic writer, and scandalmonger, Hearn transformed himself into a family man, respected citizen, university professor, researcher, and defender of the heritage of the 'old Japan'. In 1896, he was officially adopted by his wife's family and took Japanese citizenship and a new name: Koizumi Yakumo, with Yakumo meaning 'eight clouds' and referring to the oldest poem in the history of Japanese literature (Codrescu 16).

Hearn left a vast output of stories, essays, journalism, and letters, but his legacy can be seen also a 'model' of transnational identity, defined by himself as 'a civilised nomad, whose wanderings are not prompted by the hope of gain, nor determined by pleasure, but simply controlled by certain necessities of his being, the man whose inner secret nature is totally at variance with the stable conditions of a society to which he belongs only by accident' (Hearn, 'A Ghost' 59). Hearn's work on Japan is 'among the best ever written on that country, and is of continuing relevance' (Murray 14); he wrote, however, always in English, for his Western readers, and therefore he can hardly be treated in the single frame of a national literature, either Japanese or American (Hirakawa, 'Lafcadio Hearn' 3).

Geographically, Hearn's travels for most of his life led rather westwards – from Greece to Ireland to the States – or southwards – from Cincinnati to New Orleans to Martinique – but his mental journey was at the same time towards the East, a space he felt strongly connected with through his mother ('My love for things Oriental need not surprise you, as I happen to be an Oriental by birth and half by blood' [Hearn, *Letters* 133). Already, while in New Orleans, we can observe a turn towards the East and its culture. The first mark of this was a collection of 'Oriental stories'[1] (Sanskrit, Buddhist, Talmudic, Persian, Polynesian, and Finnish), titled *Stray Leaves from Strange Literature* (1884), which Hearn described as 'monstrous dreams [. . . ] Oriental flowers transplanted and changed in colour by process' (Murray 79). Three years later, a second collection appeared, composed, however, not from different literatures and cultures, but dealing exclusively with one – that of China.

## SOME CHINESE GHOSTS

*Some Chinese Ghosts* was published in 1887 by the Roberts Brothers – 'my little Chinese book' (Bisland, vol. 1 364), as Hearn called it. The collection consisted of six stories written in poetic prose, of which he was partly a translator (they were

mainly free translations, not from Chinese – as Hearn did not read Chinese – but mediated from French). Partly composer and stylist, he arranged and rewrote material collected from various sources. Later, Hearn criticised this first literary encounter with the world of the East, owning that it was a failed attempt to understand its culture only from literature, with no real cultural experience. In a letter to Mitchell McDonald, he wrote about *Some Chinese Ghosts* as an 'Early work of a man who tried to understand the Far East from books – and couldn't; but then, the real purpose of the stories was only artistic. Should I ever reprint the thing, I would change nothing – but only preface the new edition with a proper apology' (Bisland, vol. 2 367). It was not, however, the case that Hearn drew only on French authors (meticulously mentioned in the preface and notes accompanying the six stories). We learn from the dedication to *Some Chinese Ghosts* that he was seconded in the acquisition of source material by his friend Henry E. Krehbiel, a musician and composer interested in the folklore, songs, and music of the East, above all China. In Hearn's memoirs, there is an interesting anecdote about a visit to a Chinese laundry in Cincinnati, where the two friends listen to its owner, named 'Char-lee', playing traditional Chinese instruments:

> There was among them a *San-heen*, or banjo, of the Celestial Empire, covered, like the abysmally bass drums of the Aztec priests, with the scaly skin of a serpent. There was also a *Yah-hin*, or shrieking fiddle, immemorially old. [. . .] We induced Char-lee to take down his *San-heen*, upon whose hollow body the amber-colored scales of serpent skin shone like inlaid work of barbaric design. And that we might be charmed with its quality of tone he played cunningly upon it, playing after the classic fashion of the ancients, with a small ivory plectrum. Then the *San-heen* wailed a strange wail, and spoke a foreign sorrow and awakened in us fancies of a heart longing after the sight of pagoda towers, and of tea gardens, of serrated sails, of sluggish junks, and the eternal mourning of the *Yang-tse-kiang*. ('Letters of a Poet' 310)

Both Cincinnati and New Orleans were home to the incomers from the Middle Kingdom who, when asked, could not only play traditional instruments but also tell an old story.

*Some Chinese Ghosts* includes six legends: 'The Soul of the Great Bell', 'The Story of Ming-Y', 'The Legend of Tchi-Niu', 'The Return of Yen-Tchin-King', 'The Tradition of a Tea-Plant', and 'The Tale of the Porcelain-God'. The volume has an interesting and complex structure, abounding in paratexts – elements that Gérard Genette called 'thresholds of interpretation', since they do not belong to the main body of the text but introduce it to the reader. The first threshold comes in the dedication to Krehbiel, deliberately imaginative, mysterious, and poetic, infused with Chinese words alluding to the anecdote from Char-lee's laundry:

> To my Friend
> HENRY EDWARD KREHBIEL
> THE MUSICIAN
> who, speaking the speech of melody unto the

children of Tien-Hia,
unto the wandering Tsing-Jin, whose skins
have the color of gold,
moved them to make strange sounds upon the
serpent-bellied San-Hien;
persuaded them to play for me upon the
shrieking Ya-Hien;
prevailed on them to sing me a song of their
native land,
the song of Mohlí-Hwa,
the song of the jasmine-flower.
(*Some Chinese Ghosts*)

The dedication is a good example of how Hearn saturates his text with references to Chinese culture. Explanations of the Chinese words used here can be found in the glossary at the end of *Some Chinese Ghosts*: 'Children of Tien-Hia' refers to China itself ('Literally, Under-Heaven, or Beneath-the-Sky; one of the most ancient of those many names given by the Chinese to China'); similarly, 'Tsing-Jin' is explained as 'Men of Tsing' – that is Hearn's Chinese contemporaries. Ya-Hien and San-Hien are the names of traditional Chinese instruments – a violin and a three-stringed guitar covered with snakeskin; both were mentioned in the anecdote of Char-lee's laundry (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 173–85); it is important to note the musical quality of these phonetically transcribed Chinese words, which Hearn introduced into the text presumably also to enhance its musicality (Nabae 75).

The next paratext in the collection is a short preface, in which Hearn mentions sources he drew from ('linguists like Julien, Pavie, Remusat, De Rosny, Schlegel, Legge, Hervey-Saint-Denys, Williams, Biot, Giles, Wylie, Deal, and many other Sinologists'), and elaborates on his inspirations. Referring to these scholars, Hearn calls himself 'the humbler traveller who follows wonderingly after them into the vast and mysterious pleasure-grounds of Chinese fancy [. . .] to cull a few of the marvellous flowers there growing' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* iv). Each of the six tales is furthermore preceded by a motto and accompanied by Chinese characters; of great importance are the last two paratexts: the notes, in which Hearn elaborates on the sources used, and the aforementioned glossary, the most important 'threshold' for those unfamiliar with Chinese culture and literature, as it explains the meaning of Chinese words related to religion, beliefs, customs, and so on. It goes without saying that such a book – written in poetic prose, complexly structured and saturated with Chinese cultural elements – posed a challenge for its translators, especially when the target culture was distant from the culture it described and the translation occurred at a time when transnational exchanges were much slower and less extensive than they are today. The transfer, however, did occur, and *Some Chinese Ghosts* was translated into Polish in 1913.

## HEARN FOR THE POLISH CHILDREN

Before 1900, interest in China in Polish literary circles was rather sporadic, exhibited mainly as 'a somewhat snobbish curiosity about a land far away, exotic and peculiar as the cradle of an ancient civilization' (Bachórz 349). The turn of the century, however, brought a radical shift in this respect and witnessed an unprecedented flowering of interest in Eastern cultures, both Chinese and Japanese. The reasons for this can be traced to the political situation on the one hand, and to the advancing technological development accelerating the flow of information and cultural transfers on the other. The Boxer Uprising of 1899–1901 was widely commented on in the Polish press (Bachórz 352) and provoked lively discussions in the literary circles. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 also resonated in Poland – it is worth remembering that at the beginning of the twentieth century Poland was still partitioned and governed by the Austrian, Prussian, and Russian empires, thus the countries engaged in conflict with Russia became closer to Polish society, artists, and writers. The Boxer Uprising, for example, was referred to by Stanisław Wyspiański in one of the key texts of twentieth-century Polish literature, his drama *Wesele* [The wedding], published in 1901 (Kamień 368–9); the subject was also taken up by Wacław Sieroszewski in the short story 'Uang-Ming-Tse' (1900), which subsequently found its way into his volume *Powieści chińskie* [Chinese tales] published in 1903 (Bachórz 355). In 1901 Julian Adolf Święcicki's *Historya literatury chińskiej i japońskiej* [History of Chinese and Japanese literature] was published; it was one of the first such comprehensive works in Poland and included not only lavishly illustrated descriptions of the languages, literatures, and cultures of both China and Japan, but also translations of selected literary texts (Święcicki). The fascination with Eastern cultures was also manifested in Polish visual arts: in 1901, Warsaw hosted an exhibition by Feliks 'Manggha' Jasieński, who, while living in Paris in the 1880s, began to collect Japanese artwork and after returning to Poland promoted an interest in Japanese culture (Mingchunxiao 135–8; see also Podraza-Kwiatkowska 61–2).[2] An artist particularly fascinated by Chinese culture was Eugeniusz Zak, whose paintings – such as *Martwa natura z chińską porcelaną* [Still life Chinese with porcelain] (1906) or *Rybak* [Fisherman] (1914) – clearly testify to his inspiration by Chinese art (Malinowski 146–50). The interest in Eastern cultures was also evident in the interwar period: the year 1929 saw the publication of the *Polish Japonological with Bibliography*, devoted exclusively to texts (both Polish and translated) relating to Japan (Schreiber), whereas in 1930 Bogdan Richter published his study *Literatura chińska i japońska* [Chinese and Japanese literature] featuring, among other things, anthologies of the most important writers of both literatures (Richter).

Enthusiasm for Eastern heritage soon extended to children's literature in such publications as *Bajki japońskie* [Japanese tales], collected for children by Leon Sternklar (1904), *Starzec i kwitnące drzewa: bajka japońska, po polsku wierszem ułożona* [Old man and blossoming trees: a Japanese tale in Polish verse] by Leon Rygier (1922), *Duch wierzby. Legendy i baśnie japońskie* [The spirit of the

willow: Japanese legends and tales] by Maria Juszkiewiczowa (1925) – who in 1934 published also *Szewczyk Jun-Lu: opowieść chińska* [Jun-Lu the shoemaker: a Chinese story] – and *Momotaro, syn brzoskwini* [Momotaro, the son of the peach] (1926), adapted from Japanese by Ada Motylińska. The Chinese publications for young readers were mostly translations of novels or stories set in China and written by Western authors: in 1909 a Polish translation of Karl May's novel *Kianglu, or The Highwaymen of China* (*Der Kiang-lu*: *Ein Abenteuer in China*) was published; in the 1930s the story *U Chińczyków* [Among the Chinese], by Alfons Bohumil Šťastný, was translated from the Czech, and 1939 saw the publication of Elizabeth Foreman-Lewis's *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* translated by Maria Traczewska as *Young Fu: życie i przygody dzielnego chłopca chińskiego* [Young Fu: the life and adventures of a brave Chinese boy]. The translation of Hearn's *Some Chinese Ghosts* also belongs to this category.

Hearn's works came to the Polish publishing market in the first decade of the twentieth century: in 1906, the first to appear was *Ko-Ko-Ro* (*Kokoro: Hints and Echoes of Japanese Inner Life*, 1896) in an indirect translation from German by Dionizy Zaleski. Three years later, the same translator published *Lotos: rzut oka na nieznaną Japonję* (*Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, 1894), also translated via German – both translations are mentioned in *Lafcadio Hearn: A Bibliography of His Writings* from 1934 (Perkins 194). Hearn's third book in Poland was *Bajki chińskie* [Chinese fables] (1913), translated by L. M. Brzozowska from *Some Chinese Ghosts*. However, unlike the original, which was with no doubt addressed to an adult readership, in Poland the book changed its addressee and was published for young audiences – proved by a note on the title page stating that Brzozowska not only translated the book from English but also 'adapted it for young people'. The volume was published in Warsaw in two editions, probably in the same year: by 'Przyjaciel Dzieci' – 'The Children's Friend' publishing house and, with four black-and-white illustrations by Wacław Radwan, by Ludwik Fiszer's publishing house.

While *Some Chinese Ghosts* abounds in paratexts – dedication, preface, mottoes, notes, and glossary – as well as Chinese characters at the end of each tale, none of these original elements (except two mottoes) appears in Brzozowska's *Bajki chińskie*. However, another interesting and significant 'threshold of interpretation' is featured instead: a short preface by the translator, which provides an insight into her intentions and the purpose behind her work:

> By translating these tales for you, my aim was not only to provide you with a collection of new and interesting stories that will undoubtedly occupy and entertain you, but I also wanted to give you an insight into the soul of this distant, so little known to us and so peculiar a nation [. . . ]. So you will learn from them: Do the Chinese feel as strongly as we do about the beauty of nature [. . . ]? What do they believe in? [. . . ] What is the attitude of parents towards their children? Without the principles of the Christian religion, do they recommend revenge and hatred, or on the contrary love and forgiveness? In what do they differ from us? In what are they similar? Do the nations, the most distant from each other, seemingly not alike, have more in common or in difference? I would be glad to receive an answer to all these questions from you. By pondering them, you will derive a genuine benefit from the

> reading. I would also like to know which of the tales you enjoy best and why (Hearn, *Bajki chińskie* 1–2).

The aforementioned definition of paratext by Genette – 'thresholds of interpretation' and 'a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and strategy' (2) – is somewhat problematic when it comes to translation, if only because Genette defines paratexts based on 'authorship', having in mind only the 'first author' (of the original), not the 'second author' (of the translation). Kathryn Batchelor proposes a more open definition of paratext as 'a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received' (142), with particular emphasis on 'consciousness' of the action. In the case of Brzozowska's preface, however, Genette's insights on 'transition' and 'transaction' (between the author and the translator, the translator and the reader), 'pragmatics', and 'strategy' are also worth retaining. The translator of *Bajki chińskie* makes it clear in her preface that she regards herself as a cultural mediator: her aim is not only to entertain the reader, but also to familiarise them with the 'soul' of a foreign nation, its culture, and its beliefs. The didactic intent is consciously stated here, as is the comparative purpose – whether nations, distant in terms of geography and religion, share similar values. By asking questions in her preface and guiding the reader to certain problems and topics, Brzozowska relies on the comparative ability of young readers: she does not provide them with ready answers or impose her point of view but sees them as equal partners in a dialogue about a culture that was still little known and distant to Poles at the beginning of the twentieth century. Brzozowska concludes her preface with an explicit encouragement to young readers to practise 'active reading' by asking themselves the questions she proposes. More than that, she encourages them to engage in discussion, express their own opinions, and interact with her – a rare case in which the translator reaches out to the reader and, in an authorial gesture, establishes herself as an important agent of a transnational transmission.

## FACING THE UNFAMILIAR

*Some Chinese Ghosts* is heavily imbued with references to Chinese culture, art, and history – this is evidenced by the glossary of more than thirty entries; in addition, some of the stories feature names and terms explained in the narrative itself. Mottoes – excerpts from Chinese traditional songs, proverbs, and poems – are also an important element enriching the stories. Translating such a work into Polish, while simultaneously changing the readers addressed from adults to children, must have been no easy task. A comparative analysis of the original and Brzozowska's version allows us to see several strategies employed by the translator as a transnational and cultural mediator: how many problems she had to face in translating cultural realities unfamiliar to young readers, how often she had to negotiate to bring them closer to Chinese culture but not overwhelm them with an excess of information.

For this analysis, the distinction between global and local translation strategies discussed by Andrew Chesterman proves helpful – with 'global strategies' understood as those 'that affect decisions about translating the text as a whole, having to do with style, initial norms etc.' and 'local' as 'those that have to do with particular points or units in the text: local problems' (206). As Yves Gambier points out, the global or macro-level strategy (concerning cultural and sociological issues) impacts the micro-level strategies (dealing with textual and cognitive issues) at different stages of the translation process (416). In the case of *Bajki chińskie*, the overriding global strategy is oriented towards the child reader, a new target audience for the text, which in its source context was addressed to adult readership. It is marked by the translator's preface discussed above and in the significant way of rendering the title of *Some Chinese Ghosts* as *Bajki chińskie* [Chinese fables], with 'ghosts' – alluding to the vast gothic tradition of general literature – substituted by 'fables', which bring the translated text into the domain of children's literature.

Brzozowska employed several local strategies to deal with Chinese cultural realities embedded in the source text. For one, she neutralised it by omitting some Chinese names. In 'The Story of Ming-Y', when Hearn refers to the *chu-sha-kih* flower, in the Polish version we find simply 'kwiaty mandarynek' (*Bajki chińskie* 25) – 'mandarin flowers', already the translation of the Chinese name. In the same story, the original gives the name of the Chinese instrument: 'She brushed the bright drops away, and brought wine and music and the melodious *kin* of seven silken strings' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 52) – kin or guqin is a traditional instrument often described as 'Chinese lute' or 'ancient lute'; Brzozowska translated it as 'dźwięczna lira o siedmiu jedwabnych strunach' (*Bajki chińskie* 33) – 'the melodious lyre with seven silken strings', omitting the instrument's Chinese name. Further examples of this can be found in the translation of 'The Tale of the Porcelain-God', especially the passage where Hearn describes the porcelain maker: 'Pu was the most cunning of all the *P'ei-se-kong* – the men who marry colors together; of all the *Hoa-yang-kong*, who draw the shapes of vase-decoration; of all the *Hoei-sse-kong*, who paint in enamel; of all the *Tien-thsai-kong*, who brighten color; of all the *Chao-lou-kong*, who watch the furnace-fires and the porcelain-ovens' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 149); Brzozowska left out the names of the professions and their detailed explanations, writing only 'był najzdolniejszym ze wszystkich malarzy, garncarzy i wypalaczy pracujących w porcelanie' (*Bajki chińskie* 53)– 'he was the most talented of all the painters, potters and burners working in porcelain'.

But not all of the expressions referring to or borrowed from Chinese culture in *Bajki chińskie* were omitted and neutralised – Brzozowska retained some of them to preserve the foreign flavour of the tales and keep the 'balance between familiarity and unfamiliarity'. It is clear that in her endeavours to reach that balance Brzozowska made use of Hearn's glossary, as some of the Chinese words – and this is another strategy adopted by the Polish translator – were not only retained but also supplemented by brief explanations within the narrative. Let us look at the following passage from 'The Legend of Tchi-Niu', which tells the

story of a son undertaking slave labour to earn money for a decent burial for his dead father:

> And while it was yet designed only, the pious rites were performed, the silver coin was placed in the mouth of the dead, the white lanterns were hung at the door, the holy prayers were recited, and paper shapes of all things the departed might need in the land of the Genii were consumed in consecrated fire. And after the geomancers and the necromancers had chosen a burial-spot which no unlucky star could shine upon, a place of rest which no demon or dragon might ever disturb, the beautiful *chih* was built. Then was the phantom money strewn along the way; the funeral procession departed from the dwelling of the dead, and with prayers and lamentation the mortal remains of Tong's good father were borne to the tomb. (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 70–71)

The original features a description of elaborate Chinese burial rituals culminating in the building of a tomb: 'the beautiful *chih*'. In the glossary, this word is explained as 'House; but especially the house of the dead, a tomb' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 173). In the Polish translation, Brzozowska meticulously preserved all the elements of funeral rites – prayers, a silver coin, white lanterns, shapes made of paper, and so on – but she also retained the Chinese term for a tomb, translating it as 'zbudowano piękne czih (dom nagrobek)' – 'a beautiful czih (a tomb-house) was built' (*Bajki chińskie* 5). The unfamiliarity of the Chinese word was, on the one hand, mitigated by the phonetic change that facilitates pronunciation ('ch' spelled as the Polish 'cz') but, on the other hand, emphasised by the spaced font. This passage is an excellent example of the translator's negotiation, governed by the reader-oriented global strategy, between foreignisation – that is, preserving the signs of foreignness of the original – and domestication – that is, familiarising the foreign elements and bringing the cultural realities of the source text closer to the reader by finding their equivalents in the target culture.[3] A mark of foreignisation is visible in preserving the Chinese name for the tomb, whereas domestication prevails in rendering 'the geomancers and the necromancers' in translation as 'wróżbici i czarnoksiężnicy' – 'fortune-tellers and wizards'. Although the term 'necromancer' – referring to a person who evokes spirits – was recognised in Polish, the term 'geomancer' – particularly in its Chinese context, referring to someone skilled in the art of arranging buildings and tombs – was not. As a result, both words were substituted with more familiar terms in Brzozowska's translation.

Brzozowska introduced some shifts in the Polish text in favour of domestication and bringing her readers closer to Chinese cultural realities. For instance, 'The Tale of the Porcelain-God' refers to the power of tormenting people with nightmares 'by hiding charmed effigies of them under the tiles of their own roofs' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 146). In the Polish translation this phrase is rendered as 'czarować ludzi, zakopując ich wizerunki pod swoim progiem' (*Bajki chińskie* 52) – 'to cast spells on people by burying their effigies under the threshold'. Such a decision was presumably prompted by a desire to evoke certain associations in the readers of the target text: in Slavic beliefs and

superstitions, it is not the roof but the threshold – as the boundary between indoor safety and the dangers of the outer world – that is associated with evil spirits. However, in *Bajki chińskie* there are relatively few such signals of domestication and familiarisation of the Chinese realities, while there occur – most interestingly – moments of evident foreignisation, especially when the Chinese words are woven into the narrative with no commentary or footnote. This is the case, for example, in 'The Soul of the Great Bell', in which the Chinese unit of distance *lí* was left by Brzozowska without any explanation; in the same story she retained the original bell-sounding onomatopoeia 'Ko-Ngai' and 'Hiai!' (*Bajki chińskie* 15), which must have sounded foreign to the Polish reader (a domesticating equivalent of bell ringing would be 'Ding-Dong' or 'Bim-Bam-Bom').

In *Bajki chińskie* there are two footnotes – only two (there could be many more), but, since footnotes in children's books were not a common practice in Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century, this marked their inclusion as unique. Brzozowska employed footnotes as yet another strategy of negotiating the foreign aspects of the original and explaining Chinese words retained in the Polish text. For example, in 'The Legend of Tchi-Niu', Hearn records the name of the Chinese festival of the dead as *Siu-fan-ti* and explains it in the glossary as 'Literally, "the Sweeping of the Tombs", the day of the general worship of ancestors; the Chinese All-Souls' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 181). Brzozowska followed this explanation by using in the footnote the Polish name for the day of the dead, Zaduszki (celebrated on 2 November).

In her translation, Brzozowska carefully rendered descriptions of Chinese customs and realities in an attempt to bring young Polish readers closer to this culture and – according to her purpose voiced in the preface – provide them with valuable insights and comparative opportunities, marking her position as a transnational and cultural mediator. From 'The Legend of Tchi-Niu' they could learn about Chinese funeral rituals and the art of silk weaving, from 'The Story of Ming-Y' about traditional Chinese architecture and interior design. In these descriptions, the translator did not shy away from the similes used by Hearn that would sound unfamiliar and mysterious to the Polish reader – such as poetic comparisons of eyebrows to the wings of a swallow or, even more so, to the wings of a silkworm butterfly. However, one cannot fail to mention that Brzozowska, in negotiating the balance of foreignness in her translation of *Some Chinese Ghosts*, omitted some passages from the original that presumably seemed too complicated or difficult to explain. The translations of some of the tales should rather be called abridgements or adaptations, as they omit extensive paragraphs from the originals. This is most evident in 'The Tale of the Porcelain-God' where the entire first part of the story, in which Hearn provides a poetic enumeration of different types of Chinese porcelain, disappeared.

Another type of omission, although no longer related directly to Chinese culture, but rather to moral censorship for child audiences, is the omission of the passionate kissing scene in 'The Story of Ming-Y' and the fact that the young protagonist spends the night with the beautiful Sië-Thao:

> More than once Ming-Y thought of departing; but each time Sië would begin, in that silversweet voice of hers, so wondrous a story of the great poets of the past, and of the women whom they loved, that he became as one entranced; or she would sing for him a song so strange that all his senses seemed to die except that of hearing. And at last, as she paused to pledge him in a cup of wine, Ming-Y could not restrain himself from **putting his arm about her round neck** and drawing her dainty head closer to him, and **kissing the lips** that were so much ruddier and sweeter than the wine. Then their lips **separated no more**; the night grew old, and they knew it not.
>
> The birds awakened, the flowers opened their eyes to the rising sun, and Ming-Y found himself at last compelled to bid his lovely enchantress farewell. Sië, accompanying him to the terrace, **kissed him fondly** and said, '**Dear boy**, come hither as often as you are able, as often as your heart whispers you to come. I know that you are not of those without faith and truth, who betray secrets; yet, being so young, you might also be sometimes thoughtless; and I pray you never to forget that only the stars have been the witnesses of our love. Speak of it to no living person, dearest; and take with you this little souvenir of **our happy night**.' (*Some Chinese Ghosts* 44–6; emphasis mine)
>
> Ming-Y parę razy już powstawał, aby się pożegnać, lecz Thao swym srebrzystym głosem rozpoczynała wnet opowiadanie o wielkich poetach przeszłości i o kobietach sławionych przez nich, lub śpiewała mu pieśń tak dziwną, że wszystkie jego zmysły zdawały się zamierać, z wyjątkiem słuchu.
>
> Ptaki obudziły się, kwiaty witały wschodzące słońce, gdy Ming-Y pożegnał czarodziejkę, która przeprowadziła go na ganek, mówiąc: 'Odwiedzaj mię **pan** jak najczęściej, ile razy uczujesz w swym sercu tęsknotę. Wiem, że nie należysz do ludzi lekkomyślnych, którzy zdradzają tajemnice, lecz, będąc tak młodym, może zapragniesz zwierzyć się komu, przeto pamiętaj, że tylko gwiazdy wiedzą o naszej **znajomości**. Nie mów o niej nikomu i przyjm tę drobnostkę jako pamiątkę **przyjemnie spędzonego czasu.**' (*Bajki chińskie* 29–30; emphasis mine)

All erotic allusions were carefully erased in the Polish version. The translator omitted the entire passage about Ming-Y kissing Sië-Thao and making love to her: Brzozowska's translation of the first paragraph breaks off when the enchanted boy listens to the singing with all his senses numb 'except that of hearing'. Interestingly enough, Brzozowska 'aged' the young protagonist: in Hearn's version, Sië-Thao addresses him as 'dear boy', while in the Polish translation, he is referred to as 'pan' – 'sir'. This change was presumably intended to distance the protagonist of the original story – who drinks wine and enjoys bodily pleasures – from the child reader; in Brzozowska's version, he became an adult character, a man. All the other allusions to love-making – kisses, embraces, and caresses – were also lost in translation: instead of 'love' the Polish text speaks of 'acquaintance' ('naszej znajomości'), instead of 'our happy night', of 'the time pleasantly spent together' ('przyjemnie spędzonego czasu').

Yet Brzozowska succeeded in conveying the atmosphere of *Some Chinese Ghosts*, and her version certainly allowed the reader to immerse themselves in Chinese culture – or, to be more precise, in how Chinese culture was described by Lafcadio Hearn for his English-speaking audiences. Brzozowska negotiated aspects of foreignness in her translation, keeping child readers always in

mind – in other words, as Riitta Oittinen puts it, she translated Hearn 'for children'. This approach can explain some of the seemingly incomprehensible decisions of the Polish translator, who, for instance, slightly changed the composition of the volume. Hearn begins *Some Chinese Ghosts* with' The Soul of the Great Bell', a rather drastic story featuring a young heroine who sacrifices herself for the sake of her father: she jumps into the vat of molten metal from which the bell is to be made, thus giving her soul to the bell. In Brzozowska's translation, this story only came second, after the story of Tchi-Niu – a son working as a slave for the decent burial of his father – which also deals with the sacrifice of a child for a parent, but in a less drastic way. Apart from this change – adopted presumably to spare the sensibilities of child readers and prepare them more gently to tackle the difficult subject of death and sacrifice – Brzozowska did not disturb the structure of the original volume; with one very important exception, however. After the six tales from *Some Chinese Ghosts*, *Bajki chińskie* featured five more tales, titled respectively 'Pierwsza lekcya Ju-To' [The first lesson of Ju-To], 'Śpioch zaczarowany' [The enchanted sleeper], 'Bogowie wiedzą' [The gods know], 'Narzeczona króla smoków' [The bride of the Dragon King], and 'Walka Ju-Konga z szatanem' [Ju-Kong's fight with Satan]. All efforts to identify the author of the originals of these texts yielded no results. Most certainly they were not written by Hearn, since *Some Chinese Ghosts* was his only collection devoted to China, and in all available editions this volume contains only six stories. More to the point, the additional tales in *Bajki chińskie* were written in a completely different style from the one characteristic of Hearn – we will find no poetic descriptions here, nor are there as many elements relating to Chinese tradition and culture.

The most plausible hypothesis explaining the mysterious supplement in *Bajki chińskie* is also the most interesting in terms of author–translator dynamics and the transnational engagement of the translator: it is probable that Brzozowska, inspired by Hearn's Chinese tales, decided to go a step further and include five additional stories of her own making, written based on her knowledge and readings of Chinese culture, as evidenced by the fact that the stories contain Chinese culture-specific figures such as the Dragon King.[4] The five tales also draw on well-known fairy-tale motifs (selfishness and laziness punished, humility and poverty rewarded), but most importantly, they all feature young protagonists, in most cases children, who undergo a transformation as a result of the narrated events. If we consider that *Some Chinese Ghosts* featured adults (or young adults) as protagonists rather than children, this focus on children can be read as yet another gesture of adapting the text to child audiences. If the hypothesis about the original nature of the five additional stories proves to be valid, *Bajki chińskie* may be regarded as one of the cases in which the translators cross the thin borderline between translating and writing, becoming co-creators of the story.

## CONCLUSION

Hearn created transnational tales in which, as in his own protean life, he adopted different roles: that of translator, adaptor, and re-creator (Zipes xi), seeking to express his affinity with the strange, the weird, and the exotic but also to bring the unfamiliarity of other cultures – most notably Japanese and Chinese – to his Western readers. Brzozowska's Bajki chińskie provides an illuminating example of a translation that had to measure itself against the transnationality of the original, which attempted to cross the boundaries of two cultures and render the world of Chinese beliefs and lore in English. The Polish translator faced the additional challenge of changing the audience not only from Americans to Poles – to whom, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese culture was even more unfamiliar – but also from an adult to a child readership. She thus adopted a global strategy oriented towards the child audience, to which she coherently accommodated all local strategies, both in-text solutions (omission, addition, and so on), and out-of-text solutions – that is, her foreword addressing the new (young) readership. Brzozowska's global strategy, however, is not easily categorised as fluency-oriented (domesticating) or exoticism-oriented (foreignising); the translator endeavoured to strike a balance between these two to, on the one hand, introduce Chinese culture to Polish children, but on the other, make the text comprehensible and ensure its reception in a new cultural and age context. With her audience always in mind, she negotiated the unfamiliarity of the original and adapted it to their needs, to the extent that she became a co-creator of the stories 'translated' from *Some Chinese Ghosts*.

It would be useful to learn more about the reception of *Bajki chińskie* in Poland in the first decades of the twentieth century: how the book market reacted to the arrival of this publication, what the reactions of young readers were, and whether – encouraged by the translator's foreword – they took up the 'challenge' of sharing their views on the text in letters to the editor or any other form. It should be noted, however, that such research, which goes beyond the intended scope of this essay, is particularly difficult in the Polish context. The turbulent first half of the century, with two world wars, border changes, and social and ideological transformations, does not readily yield to archival research, all the more so because many archives of publishing houses and cultural institutions have been destroyed and scattered. About Brzozowska herself – her biography and other translational activities – we know nothing at present; the ongoing digitisation of library collections and archives may make it possible to fill this gap in the future.

In the first half of twentieth-century Poland, direct contacts with Eastern cultures and heritage were still limited; therefore literature on China or Japan was mostly transferred via the larger Western languages, including, of course, English. This period – especially the 1920s and 1930s, when Poland regained independence – was a time of opening up to Western literature, in which many English children's classics were translated. In this flood of foreign literature from the West, mainly Britain and the United States, the works of Lafcadio Hearn – 'a civilized nomad' of a sophisticated transnational identity – written in English,

but introducing the culture of the East, can be seen as the germ of an alternative canon of literature for young readers that would be more equally balanced between the Western and Eastern hemispheres.

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## NOTES

1. Hitomi Nabae points out that '*Orientalism* is a purely aesthetic and sensuous concept for Hearn. While the term for the present day readers is associated with an oppressive, colonialist image of the Orient in the sense of Edward Said's late twentieth-century theorising, for Hearn it etymologically refers to a place of origins, of the rising sun' (Nabae 76).
2. As Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska notes in her study on Japanese influences in the literature of Young Poland, the transfer of Japanese inspirations – such as woodcuts and theatre, but also interior design – to Poland was significantly influenced by artistic contacts with France and other Western countries (69). See also Spurgiasz.
3. For a more extensive discussion of domesticating and foreignising strategies of translation see, for example, Venuti 240–3.
4. I am grateful to Xu David (Derong) for bringing this to my attention.

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