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Literature reflecting on Frederic Chopin's visits to the spa towns of western Czechia

Motto: He is not only a virtuoso, he is also a poet, he can express the poetry living in his soul; he is a composer, and nothing equals the joy he gives us when he sits down at the piano and improvises. In that moment, he is not Polish, French or German; he reveals a much higher provenance, from the land of Mozart, Raphael, Goethe; his true homeland is the enchanted realm of poetry.
(Heinrich Heine)

Frederic Chopin, a Polish composer of Romanticism, whose two hundredth birthday anniversary was celebrated in 2010, was the focus not only of musicologists, historians, biographers, etc., but also of writers both Polish and foreign. These included both his peers, such as Cyprian Kamil Norwid, the author of the *Fortepian Szopena* [Chopin's Piano] narrative poem inspired by true events (in 1863 in Warsaw Russian soldiers dropped the instrument from a window), and much younger authors.

Chopin himself was interested in contemporary literature and art. His most renowned friends included: Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt, both composers, Eugène Delacroix, a painter, Heinrich Heine, a poet, and Honoré de Balzac, a writer. He formed a strong emotional relationship with George Sand, an emancipated writer, which later became the motif of various works of literature.

Already at the beginning of this paper it is necessary to recapitulate Chopin's visits to Czechia (in Chopin's lifetime, Czechia was part of the Austrian Empire), and conclude that he visited Czechia four times in total. He stayed in Prague, Teplice, and Děčín. He spent some of his most joyful moments in Karlovy Vary, which he visited with his family in 1835, and a year later in Mariánské Lázně (also:

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Marienbad), where he visited the Wodziński family. Several Czech writers have depicted these visits in fiction or in historical studies. I discussed those in detail in my book entitled *Fryderyk Chopin v české literatuře* (Opava, Slezská univerzita 2013, 76 pages.) Chopin first came to Prague with a group of friends while travelling from Vienna to Dresden in 1829. He stayed at the At The Black Horse hotel, where the Czech National Bank is located now. The Bank building features a commemorative plaque celebrating the composer's visit. Upon arriving in Prague on 21 August, immediately after lunch, Chopin decided to pay Václav Hanka a visit at the Czech Royal Museum, but he was held up visiting the St. Vitus Cathedral, where he mainly focused on the tomb of John of Nepomuk and the chapel of St. Wenceslaus. He viewed Prague from the castle hill, and thus described it in a letter to his parents: "In general, the city is beautiful, as you can see from the castle hill; large, old, and wealthy once". Therefore, he missed Hanka. He later found him together with his friends: Ignacy Maciejowski, a lawyer, and Alfons Brandt, a doctor. Hanka knew Fryderyk Skarbek, professor of political economics at the University of Warsaw and Chopin's godfather. Maciejowski had a letter of recommendation for Hanka. In return, Hanka wrote a poem for Maciejowski, which Chopin turned into music: *Mazurka in G major* in the Lydian mode. The discoverer of the alleged old *Rękopis krółodworski* might had been pleased with the poem as it praised him as the one who „bratniego ludu pieśni/zapomnienia wydarł pleśni” (the brotherly nation's songs/ tore loose from oblivion's grasp). So he was praised for discovering the manuscript and his activities for national revival. The poem concluded in a Czech-Polish salutation: „Niech cię uczci w czeskiej ziemi / Nadwiślańskich Słowian plemię” (May you be celebrated in Czech lands / by the Vistulan Slavic tribe). The Mazurka was inscribed in the commemorative book, while Brandt included in it a couplet from *Konrad Wallenrod* by Adam Mickiewicz¹, whose inscription Hanka indicated to them².

On his second visit, Chopin went alone. He visited Friedrich Wilhelm Pixis, originally from Mannheim, who settled in Prague after travelling throughout Europe on his artistic pursuits. There, at a conservatory, he established a violin music department. Josef Slavík, the famous Czech violinist, whom Chopin met in Vienna, was one of Pixis' students. In Warsaw, Vojtěch Živný, a Czech who lived in Mšena near Mělník, taught Chopin how to play the piano. His second piano and organ teacher was Václav Vilém Würfel, born in Plaňany (near Kolín), who taught Chopin the brillante piano style. Józef Elsner, a Pole from Silesia and the director of the Warsaw conservatory, knew Czech cultural relations well because for some time he worked in Brno. Thanks to Elsner's letters of recommendation, Chopin

1 Regarding Chopin's Mickiewicz inspirations, cf. Eero Tarasti, *A narrative grammar of Chopin's G minor Ballade*, „Minds and Machines” 1992, issue 2 (4), pp. 401–426.

2 Regarding Chopin's visit in Prague, cf. Jaroslav Simonides' brochure entitled *Praha je město vcelku pěkné* (1953).

was introduced in 1829 during his visit in Vienna to Vojtěch Jírovcov, a Czech composer, and Carl Czerny, an Austrian piano teacher.

Based on various accounts, Chopin played two concerts in Duszniki-Zdrój for a Czech blacksmith's orphaned children (the event was even later embellished: young Chopin was supposed to have fallen in love with a poor but beautiful Czech widow Libusza). Prof. Kazimierz Maciąg, a Polish literary scientist, based on his analyses of old records, came to a conclusion that it was not a Czech blacksmith but a Czech guest of a spa upon whose sudden death his widow, children and servants were left without a penny to return home. The 1826 concerts certainly took place, they were successful in artistic terms, yet whether they helped the widow in overcoming her harsh financial situation remains unclear based on available sources.

Allow me return to the Prague visit. When visiting Pixis, Chopin expressed a wish to meet August Klengel, a Dresden-based composer, who at that time was staying in Prague. The author of 48 canons and fugues came, in fact, on the same day, and for two hours presented his piano art. However, he failed to encourage the young Pole to play anything. Nonetheless, Klengel, who was highly appreciated by the local community, gave Chopin a letter of recommendation to Dresden, which was a great asset during his next stop in Saxony. In fact, Chopin had no intention to play any concerts in Prague considering the fact that the provincial town of the Habsburg monarchy had dared to criticise Paganini's performance. Also, generally speaking, the local *pre-Smetana* music life was distinctly conservative.

After leaving Prague, Chopin visited Teplice. He met there with his friend Ludwik Łempicki. He also visited the castle of count Clara-Aldringen. There is a record of that event in the form of a letter commenting on his playing and an entry in Eufemia Claryova's diary. Chopin visited Teplice, often referred to as Little Paris, once more in 1835 during his trip from Karlovy Vary to Děčín.

Chopin visited Prague for the second time during a short break in his trip from Warsaw to Vienna. On 20 and 21 November 1830 he again stayed at the At The Black Horse hotel.

In 1835, Chopin's family visited Carlsbad, which offered them an opportunity to meet with Chopin, who was already a voluntary emigre in a neutral territory for Poles. His parents and sisters stayed at the At The Golden Rose hotel. They spent three weeks together. Then Chopin departed with his family for Děčín, where he had been invited by Count Thun-Hohenstein. In Prague, Chopin taught Thun-Hohenstein's children, and he wrote in the count's daughter's diary *Waltz in A-flat major*, Op. 34 No. 1 "Děčínský". From there, after a tearful farewell to his loved ones, Chopin left for Dresden. By accident he met the Wodzińskis there, whom he had known from Warsaw. The Wodzińskis' sons had stayed at Chopin's father's (Nicolas) pension. The Wodzińskis, apart from the father who managed extensive manors, spent several years in Geneva. From there, through Dresden, where

a large Polish emigre community lived, they were returning to the homeland. In the five years since Chopin had last seen them, Maria, the oldest daughter, had grown into a 16 year old girl with many artistic talents. A year later, in the summer of 1836, Teresa Wodzińska, along with her daughters Maria, Józefa and Terenia and their governess Miss Mallet, arrived in Marienbad. On 9 July 9th they checked into a pension which was later known as the House Under The White Swan. Thirteen days later Chopin visited them there. From that period there is the famous portrait of Chopin by Maria. They spent a month together. Then they left for Dresden. Chopin inscribed in Maria's diary his two études: *A major* and *F minor*. Miss Wodzińska, being an exceptional girl, awakened strong feelings in Chopin. Upon their return to Dresden, they allegedly became engaged in secret, a fact which was only known to Maria's mother, Teresa. The relationship, an analysis of which is not the goal of this paper, remained unfulfilled. It was, however, interpreted by Chopin biographers in various ways. Chopin's emotions faded after two years of communicating with Maria and her mother via letters. Chopin kept those letters in a package originally marked by him as "My trouble". Chopin and Maria's relationship later became a convenient, so to speak, source of many literary works. Apart from Eleonora Ziemiecka, who in the summer of 1836 also stayed in Marienbad and whom we owe rather artificial stories of the mutual plans and dreams of the young couple, Chopin and Maria's relationship inspired various Polish and Czech writers (I shall discuss the works of the latter in brief, which is why please refer to the previously mentioned book *Fryderyk Chopin v české literatuře*).

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Quasi-documentary texts on Chopin published in Czechia included Osvald Klapper's text collages entitled *Chopin v Čechách 1835* (1975) issued to commemorate the 165th anniversary of the composer's birthday. Based on the date in the title they referred to Chopin's visit to Karlovy Vary and Děčín. Klapper, the famous graphic artist, the author of Chopin caricatures, included in them fragments of the Slovak issue of a book by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz entitled *Chopin* (1973), letters from Mikołaj Chopin, Frederic's father, to Konstanty Jędrzejowicz, Mikołaj's son-in-law, from Karlovy Vary (16 August 1835) and to the family in Warsaw (on the same day), letters sent by Frederic from Edinburgh to the family (19 August 1848), and part of the previously-mentioned *Waltz in A-flat Major*, which Frederic composed at Thun-Hohenstein's castle in Děčín, and which he dedicated to Josefa, count's daughter (15 September 1835).

When discussing correspondence issued in the form of a book one should include Jaroslav Simonides, who translated from French the famous letter from George Sand to Wojciech Grzymała, a close friend both of Chopin and Sand (late-

May 1838). (In the Czech issue, the letter was entitled *Psaní o lásce* [1983]). The book entitled *Milostná sonáta – G. Sand a F. Chopin v dopisech* (1989), edited and translated by Milena Tomášková, was a significant epistolographic supplement to Czech Chopin-related works.

As for poetic Chopin-related editions, the selection of poems by Czech and Polish authors on Chopin in Mariánské Lázně entitled *Zde zní ozvěna jeho tónů* (1983) was collected and prepared for publication by Osvald Klapper. It included poems by František Kropáč (*Improvizace v Mariánských Lázních*), Oldřich Zemek (*Maria*), Jiřího Karen (*Chopin v Mariánských Lázních* with a subtitle: *Maria Wodzińska*), Kamil Bednář (fragment of a narrative poem entitled *Chopin v Mariánských Lázních*), as well as translations of Polish poetry: a fragment of *Fortepian Chopina* by Cyprian Norwid translated by Jan Pilař, and a poem entitled *Polonez chopinowski* by Maria Konopnicka translated by Olga Neveršilova; Konopnicka's poem is significant because she inscribed it in the commemorative book on 31 July 1902 when the plaque on Chopin's house in Mariánské Lázně was officially revealed.

Apart from the already mentioned poets: Oldřich Zemek, the author of a collection entitled *Chopinovské akordy* (1967), Jiřího Karen, author of *Hledání modrého tónu* (1979), and Kamil Bednář, author of the narrative poem *Chopin v Mariánských Lázních* (1961), later (1981) published as *Fryderyk a Marianna (Chopin v Mariánských Lázních)*, one should add *Chopiniana* (1976) by Josef Pávek, and the bilingual Czech-Polish collection of poetic letters by Karla Erbova entitled *Již nikdy nedovolím požáru – Już nigdy pożarem mi nie płonąć* (2003), which was devoted specifically to Chopin and George Sand's relationship. The collection of Czech Chopin-related poetry would be further supplemented by a poem by František Branislav entitled *Chopinův stesk*. The light-hearted poem was published in Branislav's volume with the musical title of *Divertimento a kantiléna* (1964). In the case of prose, even the title of a novella by Vladislav Mareš. *Růže pro Fryderyka* (1993) suggests that its author focused it on Chopin's visit to Mariánské Lázně, and his unfulfilled love for Maria Wodzińska. Mareš' novel entitled *Brilantní valčík, Návštěvy Fryderyka Chopina v Čechách* (2000) was published posthumously.

The presented list indicates that Chopin's visits in Czechia inspired several Czech writers to create successful works of literature. In the next part of this paper I shall answer the question whether those Czech events associated with Chopin's visits to the spa towns of western Czechia or Prague, Teplice, and Děčín were similarly important for Polish writers. I shall also discuss whether they found people of Czech origin who *featured* in Chopin's life significant. At the same time the goal of the discussion is to differentiate in Polish belletristic texts literary fiction, legends, and myth from historical facts regarding Chopin's visits in Czechia. I will also discuss how those events were belletrised, what literary strategies they were reflected, and, possibly, what motivated them.

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Czech readers can read Chopin's biography entitled *Chopin* (1955) by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1894–1980) in its translated version published as *Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)* (1957)³. Significantly, the above-mentioned Czech writers, mainly Oldřich Zemek and Kamil Bednář, knew it very well. In the afterword by Jaroslav Simonides in Bednář's collection of poems entitled *Fryderyk a Marianna (Chopin v Mariánských Lázních)* (1981) one learns that Bednář „translated the poems quoted in Chopin's monograph by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, and his poet's help resulted in the release of also *Listy Chopina do rodziny i przyjaciół*”⁴. In that book he was particularly interested in the chapter on Chopin's attitude towards Czechia. He thus analysed the available facts, and upon several months of searching for a method to present the motif, he wrote, in a very short time, the *Chopin v Mariánských Lázních* series⁵.

Chopin's visit with Václav Hanka in Prague was also recorded by Tadeusz Łopalewski, a Polish writer, in a biographical novel entitled *Fryderyk* (1975)⁶. In it, the author focused on Chopin's childhood and youth. The story, mainly intended for children and young adults, concluded with the failed November 1830 uprising against the Russian occupying forces, and Chopin leaving the country. Łopalewski's novel could not possibly omit “the legend of Libusza”, i.e. Chopin's meeting with the suddenly orphaned (not widowed as was previously stated) young Czech woman during his stay in Duszniki⁷ in 1826. It was described in line with the image popular in Polish literature of the second half of the 19th century. So Chopin fell in love with the blue-eyed Libusza. Initially, he visited her together with his mother, who observed the unfortunate girl with a wealth of suspicion. Then Chopin played a concert to collect money for Libusza and her four siblings orphaned after the death of their father, a labourer in the nearby casting plant. Kazimierz Maciąg, a Polish literary scientist, highlighted an interesting moment in Łopalewski's book: an idyllic scene with the enamoured couple as they were say-

3 Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)*, trans. Jaroslav Simonides, SNKLHU, Prague 1957.

4 Simonides was most probably referring to *Fryderyk Chopin, Listy rodině a přátelům* (1961).

5 Jaroslav Simonides, *Afterword*, [in:] Kamil Bednář, *Fryderyk a Marianna (Chopin v Mariánských Lázních)* (1981), no paging.

6 Czech translation: Tadeusz Łopalewski, *Fryderyk*, trans. Josef Zumr, Albatros, Prague 1986.

7 Duszniki-Zdrój is a spa town located in the Lower Silesian Voivodship, on the Bystrzyca Dusznicka. The town is located in the western part of the Kłodzko powiat, near the Polish-Czech border. Cited after Wikipedia: <http://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duszniki-Zdr%C3%B3j>. [access: 23.09.2014]

ing farewell to each other.⁸ Chopin met Libusza in front of her spa house, and they proceeded together towards a well.

The girl placed the bucket on the curb.

"I'm so thirsty," she said. "It's so hot today."

"I was thinking just that!" Frederic called.

"Here you are."

"No. We can drink together. I on this side, and you on the other."

They both soaked their lips in the clear, cool water. Their foreheads met. They drank slowly gazing into their reflections. Their eyes met as if in a mirror. Frederic raised his head and sighed deeply⁹.

The couple drinking from the same vessel spurred many literary inspirations, so it must have created literary ripples. The author offered his readers hope for further developments in the young couple's feelings. Libusza left for Prague yet informed Chopin where he could find her if he ever reached the city during his artistic travels. Łopalewski allowed the composer to recall his old love during his later visit in Prague (as he was returning from Vienna in 1829), just before entering the city: "And only as Frederic was stepping into the coach he remembered that he could find and meet his old sweetheart from Duszniki, the kind Libusza. He had completely forgotten about her. «She is probably married with children», he sighed to himself. It has been several years now... since that child's play of mine"¹⁰. Thus Tadeusz Łopalewski used the legend for artistic purposes. His main intention was to create an interesting image of the famous Polish composer in a young adult novel which emphasised the Polish pedigree of Chopin and his music.

The same legend was used by Janina Siwkowska (1906–1981) in a book for young adults entitled *Tam, gdzie Chopin chodził na pół czarnej... Stylizacje*. It consisted of five events in Chopin's life, and it constituted a special genre of prose which the author called "stylisation". Siwkowska's intention was to style the language of the text so that it would resemble the language of the first half of the 19th century. Hence the reader had the impression of reading a journal written in Chopin's youth by a person who frequented contemporary ballrooms, and who was also an avid reader of the press and who was following Chopin's career closely. (Siwkowska was also the author of *Pan Chopin opuszcza Warszawę* (1969), which could be referred to as a classical novel.) Then, detailed analyses of Chopin's family

8 Kazimierz Maciąg, *Naczelnym u nas jest artystą. O legendzie Fryderyka Chopina w literaturze polskiej*. Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2010, p. 307.

9 Tadeusz Łopalewski, *Fryderyk*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1975, p. 128 (own translation).

10 Tadeusz Łopalewski, *Narodziny Geniusza*, op. cit., p. 193.

resulted in a three-volume work entitled *Nokturn czyli rodzina Fryderyka Chopina i Warszawa w latach 1832–1881* (Warsaw 1986, 1988, 1996.)

In a chapter on Chopin's visit to Duszniki entitled *Frycek pije Reinertzką Serwatkę*, Siwkowska quoted a note from *Kurier Warszawski*. It reported on Chopin's concerts in a spa town offered for the benefit of a few children who "through the death of their father who came to the spa town for treatment became orphans"¹¹. According to Siwkowska, two children came to the spa town with their father, who died prematurely due to a paralyzing attack. Siwkowska approached the alleged feelings of Chopin for the young Czech with caution. The reader could only learn that he missed her, and when leaving "the efficient force in the form of two people's hearts, despite the slightest of quivers, with the last gaze of the girl's sad eyes when stepping into the post coach, longing and alone, transfigured"¹². As Kazimierz Maciąg also observed, there is no girl offering water to spa guests, nor loving sighs by the water well, or a sentimental image of Libusza feeding her orphaned siblings, somewhat imitating Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

Siwkowska's book was originally published in 1959, which is why it would be difficult to consider it a post-modern work, though the author employed solutions which enabled stratified text reception (yet the text lacked the irony and sarcasm so specific to post-modern works). According to her contemporary critics, many of the characters and events present in the book, might provide musicians and musicologists many interesting inspirations, historians might eagerly sift through the archives of human recollections, sociologists might find material on the communities of those times, art or literary historians might see an array of noteworthy types of personality, while the regular reader might find the naive adventures or humorous situations amusing. After reading Siwkowska's book, the regular reader might look at Warsaw's streets as if viewing old Warsaw from Bellotto's paintings¹³.

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Allow me now focus on Chopin's and his family's visits in the spa towns of western Czechia.

Maria Kuncewiczowa (1899–1989) was the author of several prose works related to the biography of Frederic Chopin¹⁴. The most significant one for this paper is *Kurgast Marienbadzki*. It was a three-part prose image based on the love story

11 Janina Siwkowska, *Tam, gdzie Chopin chodził na pół czarnej... Stylizacje*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1972, p. 25.

12 Janina Siwkowska, op. cit., p. 32.

13 Zdzisław Sierpiński, *Warszawa pana Fryderyka*, „Nowe Książki”, 1959, issue 23, pp. 1424–1425.

14 Maria Kuncewiczowa was the author of, e.g. *Miłość Chopina*. It discussed Chopin's feelings for Konstantyna Gładkowska, a few months younger student singer at the Warsaw conservatory.

between Chopin and Maria Wodzińska. The composer was certainly the main and practically the sole protagonist of the work which, considering the uniformity of the topic, could be referred to as a novella comprising three events: in Mariánské Lázně, Dresden, and Paris¹⁵. For this paper the first event, idyllic in nature, was the most interesting: the enamoured couple drinking water from a spring, joking, and listening to an orchestra playing. Chopin was playing a concert in At The White Swan Inn, which gathered spa guests who wished to listen to music. Chopin's illness still seemed only an innocent joke. "Frederic would take out his handkerchief, and he coughed gesturing gracefully"¹⁶. In the third Paris-based novella, a distraught Chopin, recollecting his unfulfilled love for Maria, paced the room holding a pot he brought from Mariánské Lázně.

Kuncewiczowa presented Chopin not as a Romantic artist but most of all as a human dramatically experiencing his mortal existence. For her the facts about the composer's illness were more interesting than the alleged facts about his artistic dilemmas. The man and his life were more important in the novella than principles.

Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski (1885–1944), was a writer who trained to play the piano in his youth in Lviv, Krakow, Leipzig, and Brussels. He graduated with merit but after suffering a harsh hand injury he had to abandon his musical career. Kaden-Bandrowski was quite strongly interested in Chopin, which was visible in his articles, papers, and newspaper essays¹⁷. In a book entitled *Życie Chopina*¹⁸ the composer's biography was used mainly to support the remarks on the wonder of his music. In his work Kaden-Bandrowski discussed the periods of Chopin's life both before he emigrated and when he lived abroad. Yet due to his literary intent he intentionally omitted some events in Chopin's biography. What he did detail, though, was Chopin's exceptional, wonderful, almost supernatural, personality. Being a child endowed with unearthly talent, Chopin experienced an artistic *salvation* in his childhood. The author even referred to him as the Copernicus of the piano, an inventor who discovered the essence of the sound of the keys, who brought it to life, and gave it its proper motions. Kaden-Bandrowski quite intentionally omitted some rumours and gossip related to Chopin (e.g. about his love affair with Konstancja Gładkowska) because they could have interfered with the heroic image of the piano

¹⁵ Vide Kazimierz Maciąg, op. cit., p. 266.

¹⁶ Maria Kuncewiczowa, *Kurgast Marienbadzki*, [in:] *Odkrycie Patusanu*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warsaw 1983, p. 19.

¹⁷ There are around sixteen of those essays; some focus on Chopin's piano art and his childhood journals, others **on locations or significant persons associated with the artist's life, or sometimes** to report on international Chopin competitions. Vide: <http://pl.chopin.nifc.pl/chopin/persons/bibliography/id/2507> [access: 23.09.2014]

¹⁸ Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, *Życie Chopina*, Gebethner i Wolff, Warsaw 1938.

virtuoso and composer. Chopin's parting with Maria Wodzińska was supposedly a result of the woman's family's concerns about Chopin's health. The author described the situation in a humorous, almost macabre, manner: "From Służew, the suburbs of Warsaw, they monitor all the way in Paris whether he's observing the doctor's recommendations, they would like to listen to his lungs or even hold them in their hands and study like a knitting or Kashmir rug to make sure there are no holes in them."¹⁹ Kazimierz Maciąg argued that Kaden-Bandrowski "created a portrait of the ingenious artist which, sadly, seems conventional, and devoid of any traces of originality. (...) that is why all the affections of the book's protagonist seem «paper-thin», experienced only seemingly"²⁰.

By the end of the Second World War, Zofia Lissa (1908–1980), a Polish musicologist, wrote a brochure entitled *Fryderyk Szopen* (it was published by the Union of Polish Patriots in the USSR). It bore the peculiar subtitle of: *Krótki życiorys* (A Short Biography). The intention was to insert the composer into the paradigm of the values being declared in the newly-established socialist state: the People's Republic of Poland. Its model reader would have to be considerably credulous, and would have to lack any knowledge of art history. The brochure was intended mainly for the soldiers of the *People's Polish Army* entering the territory of the homeland. Its objective was to motivate the liberators to fight the Nazi invaders: "Today, a dark black cloud lingers above Chopin's country. The brutal foot of the German soldiers tramples Polish earth. The Nazis grasp suffocates Polish speech, Polish song; the Gestapo beast strives to invent new ways to ravage and murder the Polish nation"²¹. The author reiterated the losses Polish Chopin studies suffered during the war: how the museum in Żelazowa Wola, Chopin's birthplace, was destroyed, and his statue in Warsaw demolished. She also emphasised the fact that during the Nazi occupation, there was a ban on playing Chopin's music. From the class point of view, she stressed the low social position of the future composer's family: during his studies Frederic met with the members of Warsaw-based patriotic societies who remained in contact with Russian Decembrists; he was also friends with forward-thinking youth; his domestic upbringing was also forward-thinking as Mikołaj, his father, was an avid reader of Voltaire.

As noted by Kazimierz Maciąg, the author of the brochure even interpreted Chopin's love affairs in class terms. The reader could not learn anything about Chopin's love for Maria Wodzińska, but they would read a diagnosis that the composer was rejected as the future groom of Maria her father Wodziński, a proud

¹⁹ Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁰ Kazimierz Maciąg, op. cit., p. 275.

²¹ Zofia Lissa, *Fryderyk Szopen. Krótki życiorys*, Związek Patriotów Polskich w ZSRR, Moscow 1944, p. 31.

aristocrat²². The book included more such factographic or interpretative lapses introduced for ideological reasons. When writing them the author utilised literary strategies modelled on socialist realism.

For me, it was quite a shock to learn about the existence of such a biased brochure written by this well-known Polish musicologist, because when I studied musical knowledge and education at the Faculty of Education at the Palacký University Olomouc, I read her inspiring (also published in Czech) works from 1968–1973 entitled *Nowe szkice z estetyki muzycznej*, 1975)²³. The opinions, remarks and ideas Zofia Lissa offered there were quite distant from the aesthetic and philosophical concepts of Marxist ideology; they were rather closer to the aesthetics of reception and phenomenology (although at the same time the author argued with the notion of ontology of a work of music promoted by Roman Ingarden, a Polish phenomenologist), or to more modern notions in music and sociology, while in her newer view she brought musicology and anthropology of culture closer together²⁴. (May I add that in 1960 Zofia Lissa organised in Poland the first international Chopin congress, and she was also the author of an extensive work entitled *Studia nad twórczością Fryderyka Chopina*, 1970)²⁵.

After the Second World War a novel by Jerzy Broszkiewicz (1922–1993) was published on the emergence of Chopin's talent entitled *Kształt miłości* (1950–1951). In it the author reported (chapter *Sielanka*) on Chopin's meeting with his parents in Karlovy Vary on 15 August 1835. Historical sources indicate that Chopin left the town together with his family on 6 September, and travelled to Děčín. He later went to Dresden, while his family returned to Warsaw via Wrocław. However, Broszkiewicz stated that Chopin and his family left Karlovy Vary for Cieszyn where they supposedly parted. What is certain, though, is that the trip never happened (no available sources would confirm Chopin's trip to Cieszyn, there is no other document indicating that Chopin and his family stayed in Cieszyn; furthermore, it is unlikely that his family would have agreed to make a detour on their return trip from Karlovy Vary to Warsaw through Cieszyn of all places). Thus the author misled the reader, though the book was intended as fiction based on Chopin's biography, not a documentary. That lapse can be illustrated with quotations from the book. Mikołaj, Frederic's father, was supposedly very keen on Frederic returning to the homeland. He tried to persuade him, but that would mean he would have to become a loyal subject of the Russian tsar. So Mikołaj came up with an idea for Frederic to marry a girl who lived in Poland. Frederic would then receive a distinguished

22 Vide Kazimierz Maciąg, op. cit., p. 371.

23 Zofia Lissa, *Nowe szkice z estetyki muzycznej*. Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Krakow 1975.

24 Eadem, *Nové studie z hudební estetiky*, trans. Jindřich Brůček, Editio Supraphon, Prague 1982.

25 Eadem, *Studia nad twórczością Fryderyka Chopina*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, Krakow 1970.

artist decoration from the czar, and afterwards apply for an aristocratic title. Since Mikołaj saw that his son had no intention in talking to him about this plan, (wise in Mikołaj's mind) he asked his wife to gently present the general structure of it to Frederic. Thus Justyna, Frederic's mother, during the trip "from Carlsbad to Cieszyn (he accompanied them to Cieszyn) began convincing him to finally end his solitude. «Solitude destroys the man» she said"²⁶. After the characters discussed the topics of solitude and death, the author continued describing the travels of Chopin's family: "They spent the remaining days in Cieszyn. Those were sad days. When bidding them goodbye he [Frederic] cheerfully waved his handkerchief and called «see you soon. »She [the mother] knew his cheerfulness was a lie"²⁷. According to the author Frederic intended to travel to Dresden from Cieszyn, where he met with the Wodziński family. He did, in fact, meet them in Dresden, when Teresa Wodzińska with her three children arrived from Geneva to visit her brother-in-law Maciej, Count Wodziński. However, Chopin came to Dresden not from Cieszyn but Děčín, where at Thun-Hohenstein's castle on 14 September 1835 he bade farewell to his loved ones, and five days later, i.e. on 19 September, he left the town. It is difficult to decide why Broszkiewicz invented Chopin's Cieszyn trip. Particularly because it is very unlikely that the author, who knew Chopin's biography well, would not be familiar with such important facts. Broszkiewicz (who after graduating from high school studied at an academy in Lviv) had no personal affiliation with Cieszyn. He initially lived in Lviv, then in Krakow, later in Warsaw, and finally returned to Krakow²⁸. Allow me to offer, however, a theory regarding the change of location made by Broszkiewicz. The name Děčín was spelled in German as Tetschen, while Cieszyn as Teschen. It is possible that it was the similarity of the spellings of both towns and insufficient care when working on German sources or an erroneous translation of the German name of the town of Děčín into Polish that caused the confusion. Whether that was the case, we will never know.

Broszkiewicz also offered an artistic presentation of the intimacy between Chopin and Maria Wodzińska in Mariánské Lázně. The description is rather conventional, yet it indicated a certain type of guile on the part of the young composer's object of affection, Maria, who earlier in Geneva supposedly had drawn the attention of Juliusz Słowacki, a Polish Romantic poet, and Count de Montigne, a French consul. In order to charm Chopin she allegedly used two basic qualities: pride and shyness. The letters exchanged between Chopin and Maria (and Teresa, her mother), mainly after the secret engagement, which occurred in Dresden after returning from the spa town, were supposedly an expression of merely disingenu-

²⁶ Jerzy Broszkiewicz, *Kształt miłości*. Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1967, p. 302.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 304.

²⁸ Idem, [in:] *Słownik spisowatelů. Polsko*, Odeon, Prague 1974, pp. 84–85; Jerzy Broszkiewicz, *Słownik polskich spisowatelů. Libri*, Prague 2000, pp. 105–106.

ous exploitation of the Polish artist who was fashionable in Paris, which meant he was prospering there quite well. (Chopin did, in fact, buy at the request of the Wodzińskis a Pleyel piano, which was transported to their property in Służew; he was also the intermediary in providing financial aid for Antoni, the older son of the Wodzińskis, who had been living wastefully in Paris since 1835, and in 1836 enlisted with a Polish voluntary regiment during the Spanish Civil War, where he was injured.) The failed relationship with Maria Wodzińska was not, according to Broszkiewicz, caused by the poor health of the artist, which was often indicated in the letters Chopin received from Maria and mostly from Teresa, but rather his low social status. After Chopin suffered a serious lung condition in October 1835 when travelling from Leipzig to Paris via Frankfurt am Main, when he was even forced to stay for some time with his old student Adolphe Gutman in Heidelberg, a fake story broke in Warsaw of his apparent death. The news did, of course, reach the Wodziński as well. At that moment it was clear for Teresa Wodzińska that the artist was not the appropriate candidate to marry her daughter, and the secret engagement was never officially validated. Broszkiewicz also argued that Chopin “was not any husband material for Miss Wodzińska, the daughter of count Wincenty, who back home in Służew insisted his servants addressed him as «Sa Majesté»! Truly, Frederic should have realised that earlier. “His misfortune,” Maria thought, “was of his own making”²⁹.

Apart from belles lettres which referred to Chopin's visits in Czechia, one could also mention the Polish reading training books which included descriptions of the exceptional Polish composer. *Wypisy dla klasy VII* (1962) intended for primary school pupils included a story by Jerzy Broszkiewicz, the previously-mentioned admirer of Chopin's music, entitled *Mistrz i uczeń*³⁰. Interestingly enough, the Master in the story was a Czech by the name of Vojtěch Živný, Chopin's piano teacher. The story described not only the relation between the teacher and the exceptionally gifted student, but it also offered an artistic glimpse into the community in which Chopin had grown up³¹. (Broszkiewicz beautifully described Živný as Chopin's teacher, in the chapters *Jedyny syn, wymowny świat i poczciwy Żywny* and *Zielony kraj i poczciwego Żywnego zakończenie* of the already mentioned novel *Kształt miłości*.)

Vojtěch Živný was also an important character in the story *Własna melodia* by Mira Jaworczakowa (1917–2009), a Polish writer of children's and young adult books. The text was actually included in a publication which was not used directly as a reading training book for primary schools, yet it was included in auxiliary

²⁹ J. Broszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 310.

³⁰ Benedykt Kubski, Jacek Kubski, *Wypisy dla klasy VII*, Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, Warsaw 1962, pp. 59–65.

³¹ Vide: Kazimierz Maciąg, op. cit., p. 402.

material for school education.³² Jaworzczakowa described Chopin's Czech teacher as the one who by a stroke of luck discovered young Frederic's outstanding musical talent when teaching another less talented boy who lived near his family.³³

* * *

It seems sad and disappointing that Chopin's visit in Czechia was not explored by any of the well-known Polish poets even though Chopin and his music have often inspired Polish poetry.³⁴ The only exceptions were Polish writers from the Czech regions of Cieszyn Silesia and Ostrava. Some of them even visited the spa towns of western Czechia. To those Polish writers, who lived in Czechia, Chopin's life and artistic heritage was well-known. That was confirmed in the poems *Odwiedziny*³⁵ and *Pochwała życia*³⁶ by Henryk Jasiczek (1919–1976), *Marienbad*³⁷ by Władysław Sikora (*1933), *Chopinowskie na Zaolziu pejzaże*³⁸ by Jan Pyszko (1925–2008), or in the series of poems by Wilhelm Przeczek (1936–2006) *Miasto żywej wody* with a subtitle *Mariánské Lázně, styczeń 1989 r.* (1990)³⁹. Przeczek's poetry was inspired by the spa towns of western Czechia,⁴⁰ while the surrealist prose of *Marienbad* (1995) by Wiesław Adam Berger (1926–1998) only loosely referred to Chopin's visit in Mariánské Lázně. Jan Pyszko, a poet and translator, apart from having translated a collection of poems by Karla Erbova entitled *Již nikdy nedovolím požáru – Juž nikdy požarem mi nie płonąć*, was also the author of a series of plays for the Polish school theatre scene in Český Těšín entitled *Malý Chopin*⁴¹.

32 Mira Jaworzczakowa, *Własna melodia*, [in:] Stanisław Aleksandrak, Marian Wadecki, *Przez stulecia. Opowiadania z historii Polski*, Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1968, pp. 391–394.

33 Vide: Kazimierz Maciąg, op. cit., p. 402–403.

34 Vide: Barbara Pabjan, *The reception of Chopin and his music in Polish society*, „International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music”, 2010, issue 41 (2), pp. 343–378.

35 Henryk Jasiczek, *Odwiedziny*, [in:] *Jaśminowe noce*, Wydawnictwo SLA, Český Těšín 1959, p. 11.

36 Idem, *Pochwała życia*, [in:] *Pochwała życia*. Wydawnictwo SLA, Český Těšín 1952, p. 61.

37 Władysław Sikora, *Marienbad*, [in:] *Hustý život býval – Gęste było życie*. published by the author, Český Těšín 2002, p. 32.

38 Jan Pyszko, *Chopinowskie na Zaolziu pejzaże*, [in:] *Słowa jak kamienie*, ZLP (Związek Pisarzy Polskich), Warsaw 1993, p. 23.

39 Wilhelm Przeczek, *Dom Chopina, Drwal, Bogusławowi, Marienbad, Noc w uzdrowisku, Ciuchcia miłości, Miasto żywej wody, Ikony, Wycieczka do Franciszka*, [in:] *Notatnik liryczny*, Staromiejski Dom Kultury, Warsaw 1990, pp. 59–67.

40 Apart from Mariánské Lázně those also included Františkovy Lázně and Karlovy Vary, as indicated by the extensive selection of poetry by Przeczek entitled *Intimní bedekr* (Olza, Český Těšín 1998) published in a translation into Czech by the author of this paper.

41 To find out more about the musical inspirations in the poetry of Polish poets of the region of Český Těšín vide. Libor Martinek, *Związki literatury i muzyki w utworach pisarzy cieszyńskich*

To conclude the discussion, I wish to emphasise that Chopin's entire biography was full of minor and major events. The minor ones, including his childhood and youth, are more appreciated in literary terms, and became the focus of writers of children's and young adult books. What is encouraging is the fact that several people of Czech origin had some influence on the spiritual and artistic development of the future famous Polish pianist and composer (e.g. Vojtěch Živný, the piano teacher, or Václav Vilém Würfel, Chopin's professor at the Warsaw conservatory). Chopin's friendship in later years with Josef Slavík, a Czech violinist, also has a place in the artist's biography. Chopin's visit in Karlovy Vary was of lesser importance, yet it was filled with joy due to the emigre meeting with his family. May I also add to that Frederic's feelings for Maria Wodzińska, which developed as they both visited Mariánské Lázně. The same applied to the fabled events in Chopin's life, i.e. his alleged feelings for the suddenly orphaned (as proposed in the first version of the legend) or widowed (in the second version) Libusza in Duszniki. Chopin might had played in the Kłodzko spa town, but actually he performed for the benefit of an unknown Czech widow, who upon her husband's sudden death was left without any financial means to return home. The above list of Polish writers who drew inspiration from Chopin's life is not, quite understandably, exhaustive (the topic was studied synthetically in the previously mentioned book by Professor Kazimierz Maciąg of the University of Rzeszów entitled "*Naczelnym u nas jest artystą*". *O legendzie Fryderyka Chopina w literaturze polskiej*). The aim of this paper was to indicate the presence, so to speak, of Czech locations or locations directly related to Czechia, and people of Czech origin who formed part of Chopin's life, and their use in belles lettres, i.e. the artistic, not documentary-biographic or academic, form; the latter served only the basis for juxtaposing historical facts with artistic fiction.

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Libor Martinek

Literature reflecting on Frederic Chopin's visits to the spa towns of western Czechia

Summary

The composer Frederic Chopin is connected with Czechia through a number of visits (in Carlsbad, Prague, Děčín, Teplice, and Marienbad) which he spent joyfully meeting his family, who lived in the Russian-occupied Poland. In Czechia, he met and fell deeply in love with Maria Wodzińska, who, unfortunately, did not reciprocate his feelings. In Prague, he became acquainted with Czech national revivalists (Václav Hanka, among others) and with famous composers of the time. In Vienna, the centre of the Habsburg monarchy, he met many Czech composers and befriended the violinist Josef Slavík. Chopin was invited to play in several Czech castles; he received a particularly warm welcome in Děčín. His music teachers in Warsaw were of Czech origin.

Chopin's numerous relationships with Czechia inspired the establishment of the Frederic Chopin Society, the international festival held in Mariánské Lázně (formerly Marienbad), and even musicological symposia. Many Czechs – poets, fiction writers, literary historians, musicians, and music scholars – emphasised how Chopin and his music influenced them. They were inspired by the many notable facts associated with Chopin's visits and experiences in Czechia and in other locations throughout the Austrian Empire; by his romantic life, democratic thinking, per-

sonal qualities, and artistic skills. Various interesting literary works include poetry collections by Kamil Bednář, Jiří Karen, Josef Pávek, Oldřich Zemek, Karla Erbová, and a collection of three novellas by Vladislav Mareš.

Apart from writing about Czech Chopin-related works and translating key Polish *chopiniana* into Czech, the author of this study focuses mainly on the interpretation of the relations between literature and music in the works of these Polish writers: Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Tadeusz Łopalewski, Janina Siwkowska, Maria Kuncewiczowa, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Jerzy Broszkiewicz, Mira Jaworczakowa and more.

Keywords: Fryderyk Chopin, Music, Poland, Polish literature (Belles-lettres, Memoirs), West Bohemian Spa

Fryderyk Chopin w uzdrowiskach zachodnich Czech – literackie świadectwa

Streszczenie

Fryderyk Chopin związany jest z Czechami poprzez liczne wizyty w tamtejszych uzdrowiskach (Karlowe Wary, Praga, Děčín, Cieplice i Marienbad). W Czechach poznał i zakochał się nieszczęśliwie w Marii Wodzińskiej. W Pradze zapoznał się z Václavem Hanką, reprezentującym czeskie odrodzenie narodowe, a także ze słynnymi kompozytorami tamtych czasów. Kompozytor został zaproszony do koncertowania w kilku czeskich zamkach; otrzymał szczególnie ciepłe powitanie w Děčinie. Jego nauczyciele muzyki w Warszawie byli pochodzenia czeskiego. Liczne relacje Chopina z Czechami przyczyniły się do powstania Towarzystwa Fryderyka Chopina, międzynarodowego festiwalu odbywającego się w Mariańskich Łaźniach (dawniej Marienbad), a także do organizacji sympozjów muzycznych. Osoba i twórczość Chopina zainspirowała licznych czeskich twórców i artystów (m.in. Kamila Bednářa, Jiří Karna, Josefa Pávka, Oldřicha Zemka oraz Vladislava Mareša).

Uzupełniający charakter mają uwagi dotyczące interpretacji relacji między literaturą a muzyką w twórczości polskich pisarzy (m.in. Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza, Tadeusza Łopalewskiego, Marii Kuncewiczowej, Juliusza Kadena-Bandrowskiego).

Słowa kluczowe: Fryderyk Chopin, muzyka polska, literatura piękna, pamiętniki, zachodnie czeskie uzdrowiska

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