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ÉMIGRÉS ON AN ÉMIGRÉ: POETIC PORTRAITS OF CHOPIN

For a moment we felt ourselves to be,
without any pseudo-romantic posturing, émigrés.[1]

Any attempt at a panoramic survey of references to Fryderyk Chopin and his music in world literature, Polish literature or even Polish poetry alone must inevitably resort to enumeration and thus resemble a catalogue. Only an extended monograph could do real justice to the task. The number and variety of texts – especially poetical texts – devoted to the composer, quoted in a succession of anthologies over more than a century,[2] represents both evidence of the role ascribed to Chopin by (Polish) literary culture and a challenge for its student. The scale of that challenge has been aptly assessed by Andrzej Hejmej, who noted that 'in the case of literary works dealing with Chopin, one should [...] not so much devote oneself to punctilious thematic criticism and follow the statistics, as offer insightful interpretations of selected texts within a network of cultural relations'.[3] Taking up such a challenge is certainly justified in relation to a group of texts within a specific timeframe and in specific contexts, since this narrows down the various approaches taken by authors and also specifies to an extent the approach of the researcher.

It goes without saying that we will have different things to say about the rhymed Szafarnian folk ditty on Chopin which he described in his correspondence from 1825,[4] about Leon Ulrich's occasional sonnet 'Do Fryderyka Szopena grającego koncert na fortepianie' ('To Fryderyk Chopin giving a concert on the piano') from 1830, about a 128-line 'poetical Chopin puzzle' from 1854 (published two years later) written in classic hendecasyllabic verse entitled 'Księżnie M. C. ... za muzykę Szopena przez autora „Błogosławionej"' ('To Princess M. C. ... for Chopin's music by the author of "The blessed"'),[5] about Kornel Ujejski's cycle of *Tłumaczenia Szopena* ('Chopin translations') from 1857–60, and, finally, about Cyprian Kamil Norwid's 'Fortepian Szopena' ('Chopin's piano') from the turn of 1863–64. Likewise, the Chopin of Józef Czechowicz's 'Okienko' ('The window') is different from that of Jan Lechoń's poem 'B-moll' ('B flat minor').

A suitable profiling of the theme, seeing it within a 'network of relations' from the domains of culture, history, society and so on, may bring us close to explaining how, for example, the

1
Stanisław Baliński, *Antrakty* [Entr'actes] (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1978), 64.

2
The lengthy procession of those anthologies, inaugurated by Mieczysław Żukowski's *Fryderyk Chopin w świetle poezji polskiej* [Fryderyk Chopin in the light of Polish poetry], from 1910, ends – thus far – with Irena Chyła-Szypułowa's 2003 study *Poezja polska w darze Chopinowi* [Polish poetry's gifts to Chopin]. It is worth noting selections of writings of a different sort devoted to the composer, such as Mieczysław Tomaszewski's anthology *Kompozytorzy polscy o Fryderyku Chopinie* [Polish composers on Chopin] (Cracow: PWM, 2018), and the earlier *Chopin and his Critics (up to World War I)*, ed. Irena Poniatowska (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2011).

3
Andrzej Hejmej, *Chopin i jego muzyka w literaturze* [Chopin and his music in literature], http://www.chopin.pl/chopin_w_literaturze.pl, accessed 22 February 2019.

4
See Chopin's letter to his family of 26 August 1825, in *Chopin's Polish Letters*, tr. David Frick (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, 2016), 56: 'Before the manor house [...] there is a green bush, / Our Varsovian is thin as a dog / In the barn stand rafters, / Our Varsovian is very quick.'

5
Cf. Henryk F. Nowaczyk, 'Poetyckie podziękowanie „za muzykę Szopena"' [Poetical thanks 'for Chopin's music'], *Ruch Muzyczny*, 2007/5, 35.

composer came to be perceived in Polish culture as the fourth bard, alongside the greatest Romantic poets – 'the fourth great poet of Poland divided', as Count Stanisław Tarnowski dubbed him in a lecture given in 1871 on the initiative of Chopin's pupil Princess Marcelina Czartoryska.[6] Such procedures may help us to uncover the origins and causes of the enduring presence in literature of the highly conventionalised aspects of the composer's image which go to make up his legend, shaped while he was still alive: the brilliant artist blighted by illness and loneliness, and at the same time an elegant denizen of nineteenth-century Europe with a keen eye for beauty. One of the more interesting questions linked to the functioning of the figure and music of Chopin in Polish literature is related to another aspect of the 'Chopin legend', namely, the image of the émigré. This was inevitably shaped (more than a hundred years after the Great Paris Emigration) by the experience of those other émigrés, representatives of the Second Great Emigration, the poets connected to the Skamander circle: Kazimierz Wierzyński, Jan Lechoń and Stanisław Baliński. Comparative analysis and interpretation of their output devoted to Chopin shows both many significant differences and also 'shared places' that may be described as topical elements of his literary and, more broadly, his cultural image.

Chopin was one of the main lyrical protagonists of Baliński's *Wielka podróż* ('A great journey'), published in 1941. In the poem 'Ojczyzna Szopena' ('Chopin's fatherland'), the figure of the composer, present solely in the title, acquires, within the context of the poem's content, a symbolic dimension. It begins with words that echo the popular song 'Wojenko, wojenko' ('O little war!'): 'What a curious, romantic lady she was, / Everyone loved her, / expired for her'.[7] In this poem, key elements of the fate of the Polish émigré are clearly traced: the 'deadly cold of exile' and the dreams of 'Mazovian fields'. It also features important toponyms in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Polish history, such as Constantinople, Siberia, Mongolia, Spain and finally, as a sign of more recent historical events, 'German camps'. The titular 'Chopin's fatherland' invariably proves to be a fatherland which one must leave, for which one longs and which demands the ultimate sacrifice.

Of a different character are the poems 'Lustro Szopena' ('Chopin's mirror') and 'Tristesses et mondanités', from the second cycle of *A Great Journey*, entitled – so tellingly for their lyrical protagonist – 'Postój w Paryżu' ('Stopping in Paris'). These two poems are linked by a motif signalled in the adverb 'sadly', which closes them both. It is manifested by the Polish composer's music, mirroring the deepest nature of the Poles. In 'Chopin's Mirror', that sadness is identified with the condition of enslavement:

To *preludium* tak proste, tak bardzo ograne,
Dotąd jest przez Polaków po cichu lubiane.

6
Stanisław Tarnowski, 'Fryderyk Chopin', in *Chopin i Grottger: dwa szkice* [Chopin and Grottger: two sketches] (Cracow: Nakładem Księgarni Spółki Wydawniczej Polskiej, 1892), 7.

7
Stanisław Baliński, 'Ojczyzna Szopena' [Chopin's fatherland], in *Peregrynacje. Poezje wybrane 1928–1981* [Peregrinations: selected poetry 1928–1981] (Warsaw: PIW, 1982), 101.

Rzekłbyś, że je ktoś kiedyś ukochał nad miarę
I zaklął raz na zawsze księżycowym czarem.

Jest bowiem jedno słowo Polakom właściwe!

Czym dla Włochów jest »sole«, słońce migotliwe,
A dla Francuzów – jasność, »clarté« białozłota,
Czym »human« dla Anglików, dla Rosjan – tęsknota,
Tym dla Polaków – »smutno«. To słowo banalne
Tłumią w sobie wstydliwie, że sentymentalne,
Że może ich ośmieszyć w etranżerów tłumie,
A obcy *szopenowskich smutków* nie zrozumie.

Bo czyż może zrozumieć, żyjąc wolnym życiem,
Że smutek jest niewoli żałobnym odbiciem.
I że jeśli wolność jest słońca wcieleniem,
Smutek żyje po ciemku i jest tylko cieniem
I ma twarz zadumaną, a bladą jak płótno.

Bo gdy nie ma wolności, jak im żyć? Więc – smutno[8].

(This *prelude* so simple, so hackneyed,
Is loved (on the quiet) by Poles to this day.
You'd say that someone once loved it immensely
And magicked it forever with a moonlit spell.

For there is one word proper to the Poles!

What the sparkling sun, 'sole', is for Italians,
And white-gold 'clarté' for the French,
What's 'human' for the English and 'yearning' for the Russians,
For the Poles is – sadly – 'smutno'.
They smother this nondescript word, out of shame,
It might cause them chagrin among strangers,
And the foreigner won't understand *Chopin's woes*.

For could he fathom, living in freedom,
That sorrow's the mournful reflection of slavedom?
That if freedom embodies the sun,
Then sorrow lives in the dark; it is shade.
And its face is wistful and pale as canvas.

For when one's not free, one can only live … sadly.)

The poem 'Triestesses et mondanités' draws another portrait of Chopin – the darling of Parisian salons. Here, two dimensions of time intertwine: the present and the past. The contemporary events of September 1939, references to which appear in the first

8 Stanisław Baliński, 'Lustro Szopena' [Chopin's mirror], in *Peregrynacje*, 121. Italics are my own.

strophe, can be read as repeating the events of October 1831. The outbreak of the Second World War and the fall of the November Uprising both took place in the autumn. In both historical moments, that season 'closed upon the blinded land, / like a piano lid, silent and black'. The subject of this poem speaks with bitter irony about the fate of exiles both in the nineteenth century and in the poet's own time: 'Now there is nothing left for us, dears, / Than to seduce the French world and to strum'. The role of the strummer falls to Chopin, who becomes here a symbol of the artist in exile. He will play 'today, tomorrow and always', while 'dispensing smiles' to the listeners in 'Musset's salon'. The 'jest' and 'melancholy' that alternate in his music finally give way to another feeling, with a different effect: 'The ladies slowly lose their coquettish thoughts / And lower their fans. Each of them listens intently, / As Chopin casually plays "Why is my heart so sad?"'.[9] 'Tristesses et mondanités', in which the linearity of time is suspended and specific historical events cease to function in accordance with the principles of chronology and cause-and-effect logic, appears only in the mythical space; it 'seemingly' starts as 'a poem about the Polish September', as Ireneusz Opacki wrote about Jan Lechoń's 'Legenda' ('Legend'). That historical moment, in both instances, 'ceases to be a specific, real, one-off historical event. It is inserted into another world, the world of national symbolism, into the reality of national myths',[10] within which – including by the intermediary of the examples quoted here – a place was found for the Polish composer.

These poems inscribe *A Great Journey* into the strand of wartime lyric poetry that referred to those same national myths and symbols, and also directly into the history of the post-November emigration and the Romantic tradition. Here, Chopin is accompanied by other individuals and places directly linked to that tradition, such as Krzemieniec (now Kremenets, Ukraine), from where Juliusz Słowacki set out on his journey (from 'Pożegnanie z Krzemieńcem 1939' ('Farewell to Kremenets 1939'), which opens this volume), Adam Mickiewicz's Nowogródek ('Biurko Mickiewicza' ('Mickiewicz's desk')), and Jaszuny, with a recollection of the poet's cousin, Ludwika Śniadecka ('Ziemia z Jaszun' ('Soil from Jaszuny')). Baliński's poetry upholds the continuity of that tradition, beginning with his first volume, *Wieczór na Wschodzie* ('Evening in the East'). Yet while these earliest poems echo with Romantic fascinations with the Orient, the subject both of the last pre-war poems intended for the ultimately unpublished volume *Niepokój świata* ('The world's unrest') and also of the poems written in exile wishes to speak about the homeland. In the poem 'Krajobrazy polskie' ('Polish landscapes'), from 1933, he traces a picture of the dramatic fortunes of a community with the presentiment of another threat. 'How hard to write of the charms of our land', he admits, when:

9
Stanisław Baliński, 'Tristesses et mondanités', in *Peregrynacje*, 120.

10
Ireneusz Opacki, *Lechoń i polskie mity* [Lechoń and Polish myths] (Kielce: Szumacher, 1993), 28.

Te liliowe mokradła i las romantyczny
Są nagle polem bitwy w sercu Europy,
Ten pagórek malarski – to punkt strategiczny,
A wykarmione pola – to przyszłe okopy.[11]

(Those lily marshes and the romantic forest
Are suddenly a battlefield in the heart of Europe,
That picturesque hill is a strategic point,
And the nourished fields are future entrenchments.)

Referring directly to motifs related to the emigration that followed the November Uprising is Jan Lechoń's poem 'Emigracja' ('Emigration'), the subject of which regards the figure of Chopin as central to that emigration:

Na paryskim poddaszu huczy wiec wygnańczy,
Siedzą starzy wodzowie w wspomnień dym zasnuci,
Podkówki krzeszą ognia, cała sala tańczy,
Biała panna wspomina kogoś, kto nie wróci.

Za oknem deszcz mży cicho, listów z Kraju nie ma,
W oddali kulawego milknie krok żołnierza.
I tylko to zostaje, co w dźwiękach zatrzyma
Ten, co teraz u krawca modny frak przymierza.[12]

(In a Paris garret, an exiles' meeting roars,
Old commanders sit enveloped in the smoke of yore,
Clicking heels strike sparks, as all the room's a dancing blur,
A white-haired maid remembers … one who'll not return.

Outside it softly drizzles, no letters come from Home,
Fading in the distance – a soldier's lame steps' tone.
And all that's left: the memories, captured in the notes,
Of one who's at the tailor's now, fitting a new tailcoat.)

This poem is based on a simple contrast between the past, marked by absence, which is expressed with the telling words 'not return', 'no letters' and 'Fading in the distance', and the future, in which, as the subject suggests, all that remains of the entire émigré heritage are 'the memories, captured in the notes / Of one who's at the tailor's now, fitting a new tailcoat'. This closing couplet is also based on contrast, this time between two elements of the Chopin legend, representing the composer as a lofty artist whose task it is to immortalise the fate of his compatriots in exile, on one hand, and as a sophisticated European valuing beauty, including beautiful objects and attire, on the other.

In Lechoń's diary, under the date 28 March 1955, we find a mention of alternative titles considered for this poem, which would have

11
Stanisław Baliński, 'Krajobrazy polskie' [Polish landscapes], in *Peregrynacje*, 76.

12
Jan Lechoń, 'Emigracja' [Emigration], in *Poezje* [Poetry] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1990), 194.

specified its main protagonist: 'I've written two stanzas, that is, the whole of this poem about Chopin for Małcużyński. [...] It's called "Emigration", and that title is the deep light that illuminates it. But I'm worried that I'll have to dot the "i's" and give the title "Chopin" or "Emigration and Chopin"."[13]

Lechoń devoted a lot of space to the Polish composer in his diary. Besides entries concerning concerts by well-known performers of Chopin, above all Witold Małcużyński and Artur Rubinstein, and favourite recordings, we also find attempts to evaluate and interpret his music, as well as confessions relating to the significance of the composer in the poet's artistic and personal life. On 3 April 1951, Lechoń noted: 'I don't know if there's another composer in the world who could become such a [...] confidant as Chopin, with whom one would spend more time in one's life than with anyone else. It's really hard to imagine that he might not be there'.[14]

He certainly represented such a confidant for Kazimierz Wierzyński, who during his work on a biography of the composer in the late 1940s compared his own personal situation and creative outlook with Chopin's fortunes in life. The essay 'Chopin i wiersze' ('Chopin and verse'), placed at the beginning of his *Życie Chopina* ('Life of Chopin'), which at times assumes the form of a confession, ends with the telling words: 'If true morality in art rests on being faithful to oneself, then Chopin hailed from the family of the most moral of artists'.[15] In the attitude of remaining faithful to one's artistic calling and one's poetry, Wierzyński finds salvation in that difficult period: 'It seemed to me [...] that in writing these poems devoted solely to poetry, I rescued something else, which neither violence nor any wickedness of the epoch can take away from me. I salvaged – as much as I could – the poet's freedom and faithfulness to his calling'.[16] In his works written at that time, which comprised Wierzyński's first post-war volume of poetry, *Korzec maku* ('A perfect match'), published in 1951, and part of his next collection, *Siedem podków* ('Seven horseshoes'), from 1954, we find a recurring motif of home. In writing about Chopin, Wierzyński points to the symbolic dimension of the home left in the fatherland and notes that for the composer himself, 'the idea of home was connected to the idea of Poland; it may even have lain at its heart'.[17] The experience of exile and being far from home undoubtedly marked the worldview of Wierzyński himself. In 1966, Baliński wrote about this in his *Antrakty* ('Entr'actes'), stressing not just the sense of nostalgia that linked them to their nineteenth-century predecessors, but also the awareness of the limitations of many aspects of Romantic emigration mythology:

> Kazio Wierzyński and I meet sometimes in the morning at a little tavern on the Tiber. One day, Kazio told me – and this was rather unlike him, because he tended to avoid potentially emotional subjects – about his childhood, about his family home, and about how he would like to return to Poland.

13
Jan Lechoń, *Dziennik* [Diary], III (Warsaw: PIW, 1993), 595.

14
Ibid., 91.

15
Kazimierz Wierzyński, 'Chopin i wiersze' [Chopin and verse], in *Życie Chopina* [Life of Chopin] (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978), 13.

16
Ibid., 11.

17
Ibid., 7.

– Do you think – he asked out of the blue, in his lilting Lviv accent –
that we'll ever return home? To a free Poland?
What could I reply? I answered by repeating his question. For a moment
we felt ourselves to be, without any pseudo-romantic posturing, émigrés.[18]

The image of home is also present in a significant way in several exile poems from the 1940s by other poets. They are linked by the use of the motif of Polish music, including the music of Chopin, heard unexpectedly through an open window or through a wall, evoking irresistible memories of the homeland left behind, of loved ones, of landscapes, of the time of childhood and youth associated with these, and of the history of Poland. In the poem 'Prolog' ('Prologue'), from Baliński's cycle *Postój w Paryżu* ('Stopping in Paris'), we read:

[...] *na fortepianie*
O wieczornej godzinie, która wschodzi wcześnie
i łagodzi dnia ciężar kojącymi mgłami,
Nieznajoma sąsiadka, co mieszka nad nami,
Rozpoczyna swój koncert i gra polskie pieśni.

W mroku dźwięczy melodia przyjazna i dobra
I wywołuje z ognia za obrazem obraz,
W którym płyną kolejno, jak w teatrze marzeń,
Bliskie sercu postaci z bardzo dawnych zdarzeń.
I oto widzisz tiule i szale beztroskie,
Jasne chustki i suknie biedermeierowskie,
Na przemian frak i surdut, mundur i galony.[19]

([...] *on the piano*
In the evening, which descends early
and eases the weight of the day with its soothing mists,
The woman who lives above us
Begins her concert and plays Polish songs.

A good, friendly melody sounds in the dark
And conjures, from the fire, image after image
In which fond figures from our distant past
Flow past one by one, in a theatre of dreams.
And you see cheerful tulles and shawls,
Bright-coloured scarves and Biedermeier dresses,
Tail-coats and frock-coats, uniforms and braids.)

The subject of Władysław Broniewski's poem 'Mazurek Szopena' ('A Chopin mazurka') hears:

[...] *nagle! – mazurek Szopena*
w jerozolimskim zaułku!
Gra dobrze nieznany pianista

18
Baliński, *Antrakty*, 64.

19
Stanisław Baliński, 'Prolog' [Prologue], in *Peregrynacje*, 111.

melodię sercu znajomą,
nuta srebrzysta i czysta,
nuta z Kraju i z domu,
mazurska, kujawska nuta
wraca do nas, serdeczna,
ale dzisiaj zatruta –
[...]

Za głośno w starym zaułku
pianista smaga ciszę:
po sercach, o przyjaciółko,
biją nas białe klawisze.[20]

([...] *suddenly! – a Chopin mazurka*
In a backstreet of Jerusalem!

An unknown pianist
plays a melody we know by heart,
a pure, silvery tune,
a tune from Poland, from Home,

that Mazovian, Cuiavian tune
returns to us, heartfelt,
but poisoned –
[...]

Too loudly in the old backstreet
the pianist lashes the silence:
the white keys, my friend,
pummel our hearts.)

The subject of Lechoń's poem 'Naśladowanie Or-Ota' ('An imitation of Or-Ot'), from the volume *Aria z kurantem* ('Carillon aria'), published in 1945, is surprised to find Warsaw in New York:

[...] Dzisiaj wieczór w Nowym Jorku.

Mróz nie daje ci odetchnąć,
Biegniesz szybko i trzesz uszy,
I w tej chwili pomyślałem:
››To Warszawa i śnieg prószy‹‹.

Przystanąłem przy drapaczu,
Skąd melodia jakaś płynie.
To ślizgawka! I muzyka
Jak w Szwajcarskiej gra Dolinie.[21]

([...] This evening in New York.

20
Władysław Broniewski, 'Mazurek Szopena' [A Chopin mazurka], in *Wiersze i poematy* [Poetry and verse] (Łódź: PIW, 1984), 210–211.

21
Jan Lechoń, 'Naśladowanie Or-Ota' [An imitation of Or-Ot], in *Poezje*, 81. Within the context of our consideration of the romanticism of the Second Great Emigration, it is worth noting that Dolina Szwajcarska, a garden situated at the junction of Aleje Ujazdowskie and Ulica Chopina, was a favourite meeting place for Varsovians during the nineteenth century.

No respite from the freezing air,
You're running fast and rubbing your ears,
And at that instant it occurred to me:
'This is Warsaw and snow is falling'.

I stop by a skyscraper,
From where some tune is floating.
It's an ice-rink! And the music plays
Like at Szwajcarska Dolina.)

The same motif recurs in the autobiographical writings of émigrés. In his diary, under the date 26 February 1951, Lechoń noted:

> A Pole, even if he found himself in a country [...] where the sky, earth and flowers are completely different than in Poland – will always hear the voice of the Homeland and feel its unique, proud beauty. The miracle that brings Poland to the most far-flung and lonely exiles is the music of Chopin. Most lonely today, I suddenly heard in one of the flats of my utterly un-poetical tenement a Chopin etude. And I quivered, as if awoken from a bad dream by a dear – the dearest – voice.[22]

Those words complement the sense of Lechoń's poetical writings devoted to Chopin and Polish music. In the poem 'B-moll' ('B flat minor'), irresistible associations with the landscapes and especially the history of Poland are evoked by elements of nature, treated metaphorically and symbolically:

Wieje między aleje *wiatr listopadowy*,
Zawiewa śnieg, co zimnem do głębi przenika,
Ach! ileż mi to razy już przyszło do głowy,
Że to jest właśnie *polska prawdziwa muzyka*.[23]

(A *November wind* gusts between the avenues,
It blows the snow, which transfixes you with cold,
Ah! How many times it's occurred to me
That this is the *real Polish music*.)

Another extract from Lechoń's diary brings a realisation linked to the question of the Polishness of the mazurka. The writer clearly emphasises that aspect of 'Polishness', relating it also to the form of the waltz: 'Chopin's waltzes are also mazurkas. For ten centuries, Poland did not produce anything more Polish than Chopin'.[24] Elsewhere in the diary, we read: 'Panufnik's powerful lyricism does not disrupt the composition for a moment; his technical excellence does not seek idle display; his Polishness adheres to the great line of Chopin and Szymanowski".[25]

22
Lechoń, *Dziennik*, III, 59.

23
Jan Lechoń, 'B-moll' [B flat minor], in *Poezje*, 97.

24
Lechoń, *Dziennik*, III, 172.

25
Ibid., 582.

Lechoń is not alone in perceiving Chopin's music in that way. Józef Czapski, recalling one of his last meetings with Jerzy Stempowski, 'in Switzerland, in Bern, at the home of his closest friends, a home that became his home too', evokes a similar image: 'The lady of the house, a pianist, in my presence, began to play Chopin's *Grande Fantaisie*, Op. 49. Jerzy listened for a long time then suddenly burst out, his eyes filled with tears: "Listen, listen, how well she feels that rhythm... that Polish rhythm".'[26]

That Chopinian 'tune from Poland, from home', so strongly identified in these examples with the very essence of Polishness, became one of the most important elements in the identity of exiles representing both the 'first' and the Second Great Emigration. In the poetry of Baliński, Lechoń and Wierzyński, one finds continuity with many threads that are present in earlier poems devoted to the emigration following the November Uprising and to the Polish Club.

One of them is Artur Oppman's famous 'Koncert Chopina' ('A Chopin concert'), from 1926, which, alongside the names of Prince Czartoryski, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Niemcewicz, Goszczyński, Dembiński and Dwernicki, invokes the names of the heroes of works by our Romantic bards. At the end of Oppman's poem, those émigrés are joined by such figures as Father Robak, Telimena, Wallenrod, Gustaw, Konrad, Father Marek, Kordian and Anhelli, on a par with the real historical figures shaping our collective imagination and helping to forge the national mythology. In this context, it is worth noting that literature referring to this mythology projects a specific context of reception: 'the most important thing, essentially, is the place where the poetical text meets with the readers' collective imagination', as Ireneusz Opacki wrote about Lechoń's poetry. 'In this aspect, the poetical text is seen as an instrument designed to mobilise the strata of associations residing in the reader – and the strength of its effect depends to a large extent on the richness of those strata'.[27] Literature referring to phantasms present in those 'strata', situated 'between myths and stereotypes',[28] is sometimes 'a product of the release of phantasms and [...] aims at releasing phantasms in the receiver',[29] becoming another link in the process of what Maria Janion terms the 'renewal of meanings'.

Poems written in exile that are linked by the topos of the political émigré and the inseparable elements of his fate – nostalgia, loneliness, the continuous working of memory – added further pages to that mythology. It comes clearly to the fore in Baliński's poem 'De passage à Paris', from *Wierszy emigracyjnych* ('Poems of emigration'), published in 1981 in London. In this poem, the author depicts Chopin's final journey, in the autumn of 1848, from Great Britain, where he had given concerts in aid of impoverished émigrés.

'De passage à Paris' features another distinctive motif of émigré literature: misunderstanding by foreigners. We are at the

26
Józef Czapski, *Czytając* [Reading] (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Znak 1989), 457–458.

27
Opacki, *Lechoń*, 19.

28
Maria Janion and Remigiusz Forycki, 'Fantazmat ściętej głowy' [The phantasm of the severed head], *Twórczość*, 1989/7, 50.

29
Maria Janion, *Odnawianie znaczeń* [The renewal of meanings] (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980), 322.

British port of Dover, where ships leave for the Continent, and a custom's officer concludes from a note written in the composer's passport ('passing through Paris') that Chopin is returning home. The composer's travel companion tries in vain to explain to the official why such a return is impossible. Chopin, 'sailing away on a November night', which is linked here to the title of Stanisław Wyspiański's play *Noc listopadowa* ('November night'), thereby joins other figures in our collective mythology:

Dover. Chopin odpływa w n o c l i s t o p a d o w ą,
Ach, ileż to lat temu!... Celnik przy latarni
Powtarza: „Pan do Polski". Towarzysz Chopina
Tłumaczy, że pan Chopin do Polski nie wraca,
Że to sprawa idei... Anglik nie rozumie,
Wczytuje się w dokument – nad Kanałem mgły –
››Przecież tu napisane, że z Warszawy, Polak,
Że przejazdem przez Paryż‹‹...
››*De passage à Paris*‹‹
Chopin chowa dokument do podróżnej torby,
Jest umęczony, kaszle i ręka mu drży.
Sygnał. Okręt odpływa. Cisza na okręcie,
Ale kto by się wsłuchał, usłyszałby może
Wizę na dokumencie,
Śpiewająca wizę,
Jak balladę podróżną, tę nienapisaną,
Balladę bez opusu, nigdy nie zagraną,
Bezsenną, choć się czasem emigrantom śni:
« *De passage, de passage à Paris* ».[30]

(Dover. Chopin is sailing away *on a November night*,
Ah, how long ago that was!... A custom's officer by a street light
Repeats: 'To Poland'. Chopin's companion
Explains that Mr Chopin is not returning to Poland,
That it's a matter of ideas... the Englishman can't understand,
Scrutinises the document – fog on the Channel –
'But it's written here that he's from Warsaw, a Pole,
That he's passing through Paris'...
'*De passage à Paris*'
Chopin puts the document away in his travel bag.
He's exhausted, coughing, and his hand is trembling.
The horn sounds. The ship is sailing. It's quiet on board,
But anyone listening closely might hear
A visa on the document,
A singing visa,
Like a travel ballade, one never written,
A ballade without opus number, never performed,
Sleepless, although sometimes appearing to exiles in dreams:
'*De passage, de passage à Paris*'.)

30
Stanisław Baliński, 'De passage à Paris', in *Wiersze emigracyjne* [Emigrant poems] (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1981), 8.

Jan Lechoń, 1933.
Postcard, Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie, DŻS XII 8b/p.28/204.

Kazimierz Wierzyński on a London street, 1928.
Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny –
Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-K-1913.

Czesław Miłosz, 1987.
Photo by Tappe, Ullsteinbild Axel Springer Syndication, bewphoto, 00472937.

Against the background of the examples discussed thus far, Czesław Miłosz's poem 'Na małą Murzynkę grającą Chopina' ('On a little black girl playing Chopin') is of an entirely different character. It appeared in 1953 in the volume *Światło dzienne* ('Daylight'):

Gdybyś ją widział, Panie Fryderyku,
Jak ciemne palce kładzie na klawiszach
I kędzierzawą głowę pilnie schyla,
Jak nogę szczupłą stawia na pedale
Śmiesznie dziecinna, w zdeptanym buciku.
A kiedy sala nagle się ucisza
Pierwiosnek dźwięku powoli rozwija.

Gdybyś zobaczył na sali, w półmroku,
Jak błyszczą zęby w rozchylonych ustach,
Kiedy fortepian twoje troski niesie,
I jak ukośną smugą pada z boku
I wrzawą ptaków przez witraże chlusta
Wiosna w nieznanym z imienia ci mieście.
Gdybyś zobaczył, jak te dźwięki fruną
I targają pyłem, słoneczna kolumna
Nad twarzą czarną, na dłoni oparta –
Pewnie powiedziałbyś, że było warto.[31]

(If you had seen her, Fryderyk,
Putting her dark fingers upon the keys,
And diligently bowing her curly head,
Placing her slender foot on the pedal,
Comically childish, in a trampled shoe.
And when the hall fell suddenly silent
And she slowly unfurled a primrose of sound.

If you had seen in the room, in the half-light,
Her white teeth shining between her parted lips,
As the piano carried your cares,
Spring wafting in on a slant from one side,
Bursting through the stained glass with the clamour of birds –
Spring, in a town that you'd never heard of.
If you had seen those soaring notes,
Tossing the motes, the column of sunlight
Above her black face, resting upon her hand –
You'd have said, no doubt, it was worth it.)

31
Czesław Miłosz, 'Na małą Murzynkę grającą Chopina' [On a little black girl playing Chopin], in *Światło dzienne* [Daylight] (Paris: Instytut Literacki 1953), 69.

The main part of this work brings the suggestive image of a little girl playing the piano, described as 'comically childish', 'in a trampled shoe'. No less crucial are the references to the lyrical *you*, to Chopin, his first name evoked, linked with the anaphoric conjunction *if*, combined with the verb 'to see'. The conditional mood opens up

the dimension of the subject's wish to bring the present moment he is experiencing to the composer as well. Unlike most of the poems discussed here, where the lyrical *I* – under the sway of Chopin's music – returns through memories to the past, the subject of Miłosz's poem focuses on the dimension *hic et nunc*.

Important in this poem is the intertextual dimension, consisting of significant, albeit oblique, references to Norwid's 'Fortepian Chopina' ('Chopin's piano'). First, they are linked by an identical hendecasyllabic measure (5+6). Secondly, the structural similarity is determined also by that anaphor, which in Norwid's text is linked to the anaphoric formula 'I visited you on those penultimate days', also repeated three times in the first three parts of the work, and to the verb 'to look', recurring in parts VIII and IX, referring to the sense of sight, as in Miłosz's poem:

If you had seen her, Fryderyk	Now look – Fryd[e]ryk!
If you had seen	— Look, the parish church organ
If you had seen	Look!...

Thirdly, a crucial role is played here by the symbolism of colours, based in the Miłosz on contrast and oscillating between 'dark fingers' and the piano's 'keys', the room's 'half-light' and the 'shining teeth', the 'black face' and the 'column of sunlight'. In this context, one may say that the poetical image 'Putting her dark fingers upon the keys' becomes a negative of the image from Norwid's poem: 'Whose hand – with its alabaster / whiteness [...] merged in my eyes with the ivory / keyboard'.[32] Fourthly, and finally, one should point to a reference more distant, but hard to ignore, linked to the same figure of the child, central to the twentieth-century poem, which in 'Fortepian Chopina' is present in the metaphoric image, subjected to anthropomorphisation, of 'quarrelling keys':

I – oto - pieśń skończyłeś - już więcej
Nie oglądam Cię - jedno słyszę:
Coś?... jakby spór dziecięcy –
– A to jeszcze kłócą się klawisze.[33]

(And – now – you've finished the song –
I watch you no longer – only hear you:
Something?... like a childish tiff
– Why, the keys are still quarrelling.)

The poems analysed here help to create and update the 'Chopin legend' with reference to the most important moments in the composer's biography. Above all, however, each of them remains a sign of the particular moment of its authorship, revealing what the author found most important in Chopin's legacy. One might say that for the poets in question – with few exceptions, like Miłosz

32
Cyprian Kamil Norwid, 'Fortepian Chopina' [Chopin's piano], in *Pisma wierszem i prozą* [Writings in verse and prose] (Warsaw: PIW, 1984), 109.

33
Ibid., 110–111.

– of crucial significance was the role that history assigned to them once again, akin to that in which – a hundred years earlier – Chopin himself had tried to find his own bearings. To what extent can the image of the composer forged in their verse by twentieth-century Polish émigrés be related to the observation made by the authors of *Romantyzm i historia* ('Romanticism and history') suggesting that 'the attitude of Poles to the events of their most recent history still depends on Romantic propositions and solutions, on Romantic models of personality and behaviour', since Polish romanticism 'produced a binding set of moral, not just literary, criteria for assessing the conduct of individuals and national collectives in history and imposed them on successive generations – up to the present day'?[34] There is no doubt that the émigré status of those writing about Chopin's music determined to a large extent the image of the homeland evoked by that music, which was the subject of their reflections, oscillating between the dimensions of the public and private spheres, treated as opposite poles. That is linked not just to the symbolic meanings which successive architects of the 'Chopin legend' ascribed to the composer and his music within the context of Polish history, but also to the memories of childhood, youth, the family home and cherished people and places that were most personal to the subjects of the texts.

The poems discussed here show the vividness within the émigré circles in question of this particular aspect of the Chopin legend, which refers to the image of a distant, enslaved homeland. That distinguishes them to a considerable extent from their contemporary writers back home, who wished to see in Chopin and his music another symbol, free, in particular, from conventionalised patriotic references. Comparison of many pre-war poems by Jan Lechoń with works written by the same poet from his later New York perspective seems emblematic of that difference. Their subject, who in 'Herostrates' demanded to see in the springtime 'spring, not Poland', in 'B-moll' ('B flat minor'), written in exile, utters no less telling words about the November wind that becomes 'the true Polish music'. One of the more interesting remarks on the expat Lechoń's attitude to the idea of Polishness appears in the journals of Stefan Kisielewski, where we find a number of comments on the diary of Lechoń, about whom Kisielewski writes unequivocally: 'he's mad about Polishness – perhaps because he's not been in Poland for so long. It's just that he [...] identifies Poland with a certain intellectual group and can't see how it looks today'.[35] He utters no less forceful words with regard to the Skamander poets in exile: 'One may dislike that group, but they did somehow cling to Polish culture'.[36] The poetry, as well as the biographical and autobiographical literature, written by representatives of the Second Great Emigration referring to Chopin and his music attests to the continuity of certain aspects of the Romantic tradition in twentieth-century Polish literature, and at the same time of their creative reformulation. The attitude

34
Maria Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* [Romanticism and history] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 1973), 567.

35
Stefan Kisielewski, *Dzienniki* [Journals] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2001), 97.

36
Ibid., 486.

evinced by émigré writers to one of the most important symbols of Polish culture is not unambiguous. Its distinct affirmation, at times forging apologetic images, is accompanied by reflections on the actual conditions and limitations of an émigré mythology.

An interesting perspective might be opened up by engaging in more comprehensive comparative research into the ways in which Chopin has been appropriated and functionalised within the output of foreign writers, as compared to the rich and full treatment found in Polish-language literature. The very fecundity of the Polish literature raises the question of just why Chopin is such a minimal presence in the output of non-Polish writers, given that the composer and his music are very widely known and loved outside Poland. To pose this question is to turn the spotlight onto both the literary and the musical cultures of the countries in question, with Chopin functioning as a fixed point of reference for changing receptional insights. There are indeed some studies that have made a start on such a comparative analysis,[37] but as yet the scholarly literature is too exiguous to enable the full and rounded portrait this subject certainly deserves.

ABSTRACT
This article is devoted to analysis of the mechanisms behind the creation of the cultural image of Fryderyk Chopin in selected verse by twentieth-century Polish poets in exile, such as Kazimierz Wierzyński, Jan Lechoń, Stanisław Baliński and Czesław Miłosz. Verse (and excerpts from autobiographic texts) by those poets helps to forge and renew the 'Chopin legend' in various ways, through references to the most important moments in the composer's biography and selected features of his music. From analysis of this verse, we learn that these poets looked at Chopin and his music primarily through the prism of the role assigned to them by history – similar to the role in which Chopin had tried to find his bearings a hundred years earlier on his departure from Poland. The attitude adopted by émigré writers towards Chopin and his music, representing one of the most important symbols in Polish culture, is not unequivocal. Its distinct affirmation is accompanied by reflection on the conditions and limitations of émigré mythology. The poems discussed show the significant currency in émigré circles especially of that aspect of the Chopin legend which refers to the image of a distant and enslaved homeland. That currency distinguishes the émigrés from their peers back home, who wished to see a different symbolism in Chopin and his music, especially one that was free from conventionalised patriotic references. This last observation may also be referred to the analysed poem by Miłosz, which from the proposed comparative perspective comes across as the reverse of the other works discussed in the article. An interesting perspective could no doubt be opened up by comparative studies of a broader scope, showing how this theme functioned and was functionalised in the output of foreign writers, within the constellation of other cultural, social and historical relations.

KEYWORDS
Chopin, emigration, Polish poetry, Chopin legend

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37
See Jan Orłowski, 'Dziedzictwo Chopina w polsko-rosyjskim dialogu kultur' [Chopin's legacy in Polish-Russian cultural dialogue], *Acta Polono-Ruthenica*, 2000/5, 5–20; Irena Poniatowska, 'Chopin w poezji polskiej i francuskiej' [Chopin in Polish and French poetry], in Andrzej Pieńkos and Agnieszka Rosales Rodriguez (eds), *Epoka Chopina – kultura romantyczna we Francji i w Polsce* [The Chopin era: Romantic culture in France and in Poland] (Warsaw: Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina, Wydawnictwo Neriton, 2013), 37–48, and Maja Trochimczyk, 'Chopin in Polish American poetry: lost home, found beauty', *Polish American Studies*, 2010/2, 35–52.