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Every creative man is a duality or a synthesis of paradoxical qualities. On the one hand he is human-personal, on the other hand an impersonal-creative process. As a human being he may be healthy or morbid; his personal psychology can and should be explained, therefore, in a personal way. But as an artist he can only be understood through his creative act...and not through the inadequacies and personal conflicts of his nature, which are mere consequential phenomena of the fact that he is an artist, that is, a man who from birth is charged with a greater task than the common mortal. The fact that he has greater capacity requires also a greater expenditure of energy, for which reason the “more” on the one side is accompanied necessarily by a “less” on the other.

Carl Jung, “Psychologie und Dichtung,” translated by Eugene Jolas, Transition, an International Quarterly for Creative Experiment (June 1930), pp. 41, 43
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Passages extracted from the notebooks of Woyciech Grzymała (Mss. No. Akc 3605, 10 January 1851), courtesy of the Polish Historic and Literary Society, Paris.


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To Mrs. Krystyna Kobylańska, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the world of Fryderyk Chopin.
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in Warsaw, and the second deals with his adult years spent largely in Paris. Both periods were of equal though different importance to his person. His first contemporaries were, of course, his parents and three sisters, and they related to his most impressionable years in his development as both man and musician. His Kurier Szafarski (Szafreria Courier), despatched by Pichon (an anagram of Chopin) and intended as a parody on the Kurier Warszawski (Warsaw Courier), is a chronicle of his first carefree, boyhood days in the Mazovian plain. His subsequent letters to his family of 1828 from Berlin, and of 1829 from Vienna, Prague, and Dresden, are the precursors of his correspondence in Paris. They constitute a record of virtually everything and everybody that impressed and touched his highly receptive and perceptive nature. Within these Warsaw years, a number of additional contemporaries have been selected to reflect his emotional development: his schoolfriends Jan Białobłocki, Jan Matuszyński, Julian Fontana, and Tytus Woyciechowski; his music teacher and mentor Józef Elsner; and Konstancja Gładkowska, his first love, who stands somewhere in that vague demarcation region between adolescence and adulthood. The Parisian years started off with a string of acquaintances, some of whom pervaded his natural introspection. Among these, and arguably the most intimate of his non-Polish friends, was the distinguished cellist Auguste Franchomme. His cordial association with Chopin, on both private and professional levels, scanned across the composer’s life in the French capital. The relationship with Maria Wodzińska, Chopin’s second love and only would-be wife, brought out in him his yearning for a stable and enduring relationship. The most crucial affair of all, the one that spelled both comfort and anguish to him, was the unlikely one with George Sand. Because of its multifaceted character that touched on friends common to both Chopin and Sand, the liaison is treated through four other of Chopin’s contemporaries: his most trusted confidant, Woyciech Grzymała; his fellow pianist and composer Franz Liszt; his devotee, the celebrated singer Pauline Viardot; and arguably his paternal love Solange Sand. Each contributed his or her own share in the drama that led to the final estrangement between the lovers.

The Sydow-Chainaye 1953–1960 (French) revised edition of the original Sydow-Miketta 1955 (Polish) edition of Chopin’s letters was used as a basic reference. By all accounts, the Polish edition contains many inaccuracies. The French edition constitutes a major improvement and would not have been realized without the assiduous and skillful research of Suzanne and Denise Chainaye. It includes no fewer than 411 letters by Chopin and 377 letters to or about him. Although it now needs to be revised, it is so far the best comprehensive working text available for the non-Polish-speaking scholar. I have also made extensive use of Arthur Hedley’s Selected Correspondence of Fryderyk Chopin. This book relies substantially on the Sydow-Miketta version but is not entirely a direct translation of it. Hedley was fortunate in acquiring the contributions of the Chainayes and
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Acknowledgments

My first thanks go to Hanna Wróblewska-Straus, curator of the Fryderyk Chopin Museum, for opening the archives of the Fryderyk Chopin Society in Warsaw to me and for her invaluable assistance in my library research there. I appreciate the gracious help of Teresa Lewandowska and Anna Tyszka-Komarnicka, librarian and photo archivist, respectively, at the Chopin Museum Library. I am indebted to Leszek Talko, president of the Polish Historical and Literary Society in Paris, and director of the Polish Library there for permission to quote an extract from the private notes of Woyciech Grzymała. Many thanks are due to Krystyna Kobylańska, the indefatigable Chopin scholar, for the many hours of enlightening discussions I had with her. I am also grateful to the following persons for their help with Museum; Stanisław Waltoś, director of the Jagiellonian University Museum, Kraków; and Piotr Hordiński of the Graphics Department of the Jagiellonian Library, Kraków. I have had stimulating and provocative conversations with Rosemarie Marcos of the Goethe Institute, Beirut, and I thank her for her interest. I acknowledge gratefully the encouragement extended to me by the American University of Beirut at various stages during the writing of this book. I also express my gratitude to the late Abdallah Geahchan in Beirut for having allowed me to delve into his library for information that was indispensable to this book.
Introduction

My first contact with Chopin’s music was at the age of seventeen, at the English School in Cairo where I was a boarder for some two years, taking advanced courses toward the Higher School Certificate. The English teacher then, together with a younger colleague (a fellow boarder), were my main “exponents” of Chopin. The various waltzes, polonaises, nocturnes, mazurkas, and preludes that I listened to within the resounding precincts of the school’s assembly hall were a revelation. More than any other classical music that I had hitherto heard (and this was confined, in my mid-teens, to light classical pieces such as Strauss waltzes, Rossini overtures, and the Hungarian rhapsodies of Liszt), these compositions provided me with a definite introduction to the world of classical music. Although they were in sharp contrast to the oriental music I grew up with, they soon complemented my knowledge of music at the time. (On looking back, I now realize that appreciating such diverse forms of music at an early age provided me later with an openness of mind that saw no problem in listening to the “modern” music of, say, Webern, Lutosławski, and Stockhausen.) My prime ambition then was to be able to play Chopin’s music in its original, not simplified, form. But I also wanted to know as much about the man as possible, to try to unfold the secrets of his inspiration.

Some two years later, when I had started my undergraduate studies in mechanical engineering as a Glasgow University student at the Royal Technical College (now the University of Strathclyde), I put in a standing order at Foyle’s Bookshop in London to supply me with any book on Chopin it could get. I remember that the work that appealed to me most then was Arthur Hedley’s book in the Master Musicians Series. I particularly liked its straightforward, unromanticized approach (as compared, for example,
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with Liszt's flowery biography2) and its sober insight into the man and his music. Over the years, I have amassed a substantial Chopin bibliography. Of the biographical works, however, only a handful have stood the test of time. Apart from Hedley's work, the references that I have found most useful are those by Niecks,3 Ganche,4–7 Karłowicz,8,9 Kobylańska,10 Zieliński,11 and Samson.12 The chapter by Hedley in the book edited by Walker13 is a valuable summing up of Chopin the man. Chopin's letters and George Sand's Correspondance are the basic sources for any Chopin biographer. However, these invaluable references are incomplete in the sense that they must be supplemented by the letters and other documents that appear from time to time (mostly from private collections and occasionally at auction sales) and sometimes throw additional light on Chopin's relationships with his family, friends, and associates. For example, a series of articles related to previously unpublished letters in facsimile form concerning Chopin started to appear in February 1996 in the Polish biweekly Ruch Muzyczny. (Four such letters are included in this book for the first time in their English translations.) At this time of writing (spring 1998), this series, edited by Krystyna Kobylańska under the title of Miscellania Inedita, is still in progress.

This book is prompted by some fifty years of interest in the music and personality of Chopin. Its focus of attention is the composer's personality rather than his music. The man and the musician were two different entities, and yet each was part of the same whole. The circumstances of his life may have indirectly influenced his creativity, but his compositions are not, as is sometimes suggested, a chronicle of his life. It is true that self-expression is some function of the subconscious, but in the creative individual there is that additional autonomous ingredient, loosely termed “inspiration,” which distinguishes the artist from the common mortal. This elusive quality, which cannot be defined but simply identified, may be sparked off by, but is not always linked to, the vagaries of life's experience. I suppose that Chopin's inner life will always remain for me somewhat enigmatic and elusive, but now less so than at the beginning of my acquaintance with him. This work is not intended to be another biography. It attempts rather to present a critical portrayal of Chopin's personality at various stages in his life through his relationships with a number of selected contemporaries, based essentially on the evidence of correspondence (direct or indirect) and other documents. This evidence is given in sufficient detail to reenact the atmosphere surrounding each relationship. With the exception of Chopin's family during his formative years, the relationship and its development with each contemporary is traced and followed for as long as it lasted. To my knowledge, this in-depth approach to a critical understanding of Chopin's character is novel.

This study is divided into two parts: the first is relevant to Chopin's youth.
added some new material in his project. Nevertheless, care was exercised in its use. In the case of each extract, a comparison was made with the corresponding text in the Sydow-Chainaye edition. Regarding the quoted extracts from George Sand’s letters, painstakingly edited by Georges Lubin,17 these for the most part were translated directly from the Lubin edition. Throughout this book, and in all the cases of extracts from letters, I have adhered to the original spelling of first and family names.
The Warsaw Years (1810–1830)
Fryderyk Chopin’s parents: his father, Nicolas (Mikołaj), and his mother, Justyna (née Krzyżanowska). Portraits in oils, now destroyed, by Ambroży Miroszewski, 1829. Somewhat grave of disposition and a great disciplinarian, Nicolas always tried to instill in his son a sober and cautious attitude toward life. Young Fryderyk identified more with his mother than with his father. It was probably she more than anyone else who opened the world of music to her son. Fryderyk Chopin Society Archives.
The First Contemporaries: Chopin’s Family in His Formative Years

In writing about Chopin’s early years, we are faced with the problem of authenticity of the memoirs, souvenirs, and impressions provided by various writers. It is unfortunate that no record dating to that period was left by the Chopin family, particularly by Ludwika and Izabela, Chopin’s elder sisters, who survived him. However, there are a number of reminiscences provided by contemporaries who were close to the composer or his family, or both. These recollections may be regarded as the most trustworthy. Nevertheless, it is best to treat them with caution, for one can never discount the possibility of idealization and fantasticism. It is with this proviso that they are included here. Among such reminiscences are those of Eustachy Marylski, a onetime boarder in the Chopin household; of Eugeniusz Skrodzki, one of Chopin’s schoolfriends; of Kazimierz Wójcicki, a writer and historian who was well acquainted with the Chopin family; and of Józefa Kościelska (née Wodzińska), sister of Maria Wodzińska, Chopin’s so-called second love.

By all accounts, the Chopin household was equable, sober, patriarchal, tightly knit, orderly, and of middle-class morality. Nicolas (Mikołaj), the father, came from a family of wheelwrights and vine growers, played the flute and the violin a little but was not particularly artistic in temperament, was a good but uninspiring teacher of French, a great disciplinarian, thrifty, conscientious, ambitious, cautious, practical-minded, and self-possessed. (Are there some echoes here of Leopold Mozart?) Justyna, the mother, was a distant and impoverished offshoot of the noble Skarbeks of Żelazowa Wola, a family of landowners in whose household she was brought up and was employed as a housekeeper before she married Nicolas in 1806. She was gentle, warm-hearted, well organized, efficient, homely, motherly, sub-
Page 4
dued, a keen pianist, and a good singer. Young Fryderyk, then known as Frycek to all the members of his family, felt closer to her than to his father. All of Fryderyk’s sisters were gifted. Ludwika (Ludka), the eldest, who resembled her brother most both physically and temperamentally, had literary and musical talents. Skrodzki recalled that “it was she who most often played duets with Fryderyk, it was always these two who had most to tell each other; it seems therefore that it was with his eldest sister that our virtuoso felt most in sympathy.”1 (Later in life, Fryderyk was to admire her mazurkas, and she was to be his devoted correspondent during his Parisian years.) Izabela, according to Skrodzki, was “pure Polish as regards type of physiognomy and manner, had a more open, gayer nature [than Ludwika].”2 Although she showed no aptitude for music, she had a taste for languages and literature, but this did not match that of little Emilia, or Emilka as she was fondly nicknamed, the precocious and budding poet and literato in the family. Wójcicki described her as “bright and witty… She banished sorrow with jest, to make everyone happy. She was adored by her family…. In learning she was mature beyond her years… At eleven she transcribed the whole of Ignacy Humnicki’s tragedy Oedipus…. Gifted with an easy facility for verse, she achieved a considerable poetic skill by perseverance and hard work. Her character and talents were akin to those of her brother Fryderyk.”3 Regarding the family atmosphere in which the young Chopin grew up, Józefa Kościelska sums it up as follows: “The Chopin house was an extremely pleasant one. Above all Chopin’s mother, who was full of the greatest charm and sweetness which in turn she passed on to her only son, was particularly agreeable. From her, too, he appears to have inherited his musical talent. Altogether, the Chopin house…was a very musical one.”4

Name days and birthdays were of particular importance to the Chopins, and on such occasions the junior members of the family would, either singly or collectively, present their neatly written greetings on carefully decorated cards, typically with a laurel wreath motif. Fryderyk’s earliest known autograph dates from 6 December 1816, his father’s name day. It is a poem in Polish written with a surprisingly steady hand for a lad of six:
When all the world celebrates your name-day,
I too rejoice in wishing you joy, Papa.
May you know no care and have your heart’s desire.
These are my sincerest wishes.5

Some six months later, on 16 June 1817, he presented his mother with the following quatrain on a similar occasion:
My congratulations, dear Mamma, on your name-day!
May heaven realize for you your heart's desire.

Fryderyk Chopin’s sisters: Ludwika (left) and Izabela (right). Portraits in oils, now destroyed, by Ambroży Miroszewski, 1829. Emilia (middle). Oval miniature on ivory by an unknown artist, watercolor, gouache, c.1827. Fryderyk Chopin Society Museum, Warsaw. In temperament Fryderyk felt closest to Ludwika, who was a gifted pianist and composer. He tried out his literary talent with Emilia, the budding poet of the family. Apparently his associations with Izabela were not as close as those with his other two sisters.
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May you always be in good health and happy
And live the longest of lives in bliss.

It is conceivable that Fryderyk's (and Ludka's) first piano lessons were taken from Justyna. However, some time in 1816, the Bohemian violinist Woyciech Żywny (a friend of Nicolas) was appointed as piano tutor for both Fryderyk and Ludka. The colorful personality of this teacher is evoked in Chopin's later letters to his various schoolfriends, and particularly to Jan Białobłocki (see Chapter 2). Although Żywny was no virtuoso pianist, he was a capable teacher, and in the light of his pupil's natural pianistic dexterity and improvisational gifts, he apparently did not impose on him any definite style of playing.

This liberalism on Żywny's part may be likened to Elsner's in music composition during Chopin's final year at the High School of Music (see Chapter 3). Perhaps the greatest debt that Fryderyk owed to his tutor was in introducing him to the music of the two great master composers who were to become his idols for the rest of his life: Bach and Mozart. But from his earliest days Fryderyk was also irresistibly attracted to the folk music of his homeland. Wójcicki recounts the following episode, when Fryderyk was fourteen, as proof of this:

I remember still another incident that illustrates how while still a child he could catch folk tunes, and how carefully he listened to them. One winter evening, when returning home with his father, he heard from an inn the sounds made by a lively musician energetically playing mazurkas and obereks on his fiddle. Struck by their originality and individuality, he stood at the window, and begged his father to allow him to wait and listen to the fiddler... Fryderyk would not move from the window until the fiddler had finished.

Apart from the mazurka and the oberek, Fryderyk must have easily responded to the rhythmic and melodic formulas of the polonaise. Being then potentially symbolic of Polish oppression, it was the genre of piano music par excellence of the Polish salons. Perhaps the most popular of the polonaises for piano then were those due to the violinist, pianist, and diplomat Prince Michał Kleofas Ogiński (1765–1833). Some may well have formed part of the repertoires of Justyna, Ludka, and Fryderyk in their musical soirées. Fryderyk's very first composition was a polonaise in G minor dated 1817 and dedicated to Wiktoria Skarbek, one of the younger Skarbek countesses and the sister of Fryderyk's godfather, Fryderyk Skarbek. Ogiński's influence is quite apparent in it, as well as in another polonaise in B flat composed in the same year.

Between 1810 and 1817, the Chopin home was situated in the right wing of the residential quarter in the grandiose Saski (Saxon) Palace, which then housed the Warsaw Lyceum. (Only a portion of the colonnade of the palace now remains, sheltering the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Piłsudski...
The apartment was spacious enough to accommodate a few boarders who were pupils at the lyceum and whose parents lived outside Warsaw. This conveniently provided Nicolas with much-needed extra income. Toward that end, Nicolas also took up a part-time appointment as a teacher of French language and literature at the School of Artillery at the beginning of 1812. In March 1817, the family moved with the lyceum to the restored Kazimierzowski Palace on Krakowskie Przedmieście Street (now at Nos. 26–28). The apartment, even larger than the previous one, was located on the second floor of the righthand annex of the building. The move was to prove fortunate for the entire family, particularly for Nicolas and Fryderyk. Nicolas was able to take in even more boarders than before (up to six or seven), and this gave more opportunity for Fryderyk to mix with persons outside his family. In his memoirs, Skrodski describes the Chopin boarding school as follows:

The Chopins ran a boarding school for boys. Fathers of the best families applied to have their sons admitted there in spite of the enormously high fee of 4000 złotys per year. Those who could not afford it were usually charged less. What made the establishment so popular was the great attention paid to the boys’ health, good meals, cleanliness, morality, and excellent tuition. An opinion circulated that to be in the Chopin boarding school meant to be more civilized, that is, to have better manners than other people. Refinement rather than a specialty or a medal was the first and foremost goal….Everyone who has attended the Chopin school will agree with this opinion.10

There were also the cultural and intellectual stimuli provided by the neighbors of the Chopins. Below them, on the first floor, lived Samuel Bogumił Linde, the headmaster of the lyceum, and Woyciech Szwejkowski, dean of the Warsaw University. The ground floor was occupied by Kazimierz Brodziński, a minor poet and lecturer on Polish literature and folk music at the Warsaw University, and Professor Juliusz Kolberg, who lectured in surveying at that university. The Chopins became particularly close to the Kolbergs, and one of the three sons (Wilhelm) became one of Fryderyk’s best schoolfriends. Nicolas, however, decided not to send his son to the lyceum as yet, probably overanxious to have him well prepared for his studies there. He hired a tutor, Antoni Barciński (a student of mathematics at Warsaw University), to supervise the homework of the boarders and Fryderyk. Fryderyk’s home tuition, shared by Nicolas and Barciński for some five years, covered the needs of his primary school education. Moreover, it allowed him ample time to practice and improvise at the family grand piano whenever the spirit moved him.

The musical atmosphere in the Chopin household was partly a reflection of the rich cultural life that Warsaw enjoyed at that period. The rise of early Polish romanticism was already on the move, heralded principally by
the youthful works of the great national poet, Adam Mickiewicz. Its repercussions on the musical life of the city were gradually making themselves felt. The first Polish review devoted entirely to music, Tygodnik Muzyczny (Music Weekly), appeared from 1820 to 1821, edited by the eminent composer Karol Kurpiński. Early romanticism in Polish piano music was already evident in the works of Marya Szymanowska (1789–1831). The dawn of romanticism in European piano music had already declared itself in the works of such pianist-composers as Johann Hummel (1778–1837), John Field (1782–1837), Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838), Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785–1849), Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826), and Ignaz Moscheles (1794–1870). The common factor in their works was a wider, more brilliant, and more expressive musical style, unencumbered by the restrictions and rigidities of conventional musical classicism. Keyboard music in general was quite popular as witnessed by the number of instrument manufacturers in the city (such as Jakub Kościenniewicz, Fryderyk Buchholz, Antoni Leszczyński, August Brunner, Józef Długosz) and by the various music publishing firms, the more important of which were those of Józef Elsner, Franciszek Kłukowski, and Antoni Brzezina. Moreover, there were no fewer than five concert halls. The Polish National Theater in Krasiński Square thrived on Italian, French, and German operas, but the works of the two leading Polish composers at the time, Józef Elsner and Karol Kurpiński, were also produced. And apart from being the natural venue of the top Polish musicians, such as the pianist-composer Marya Szymanowska and the violinist Karol Lipiński, Warsaw was in one circuit of the concerts given by the leading European instrumentalists and vocalists, such as the violinist-composer Nicolo` Paganini, the pianist-composer Stephen Heller, and the prima donna Angelica Catalani.

Fryderyk’s first work, the Polonaise in G Minor, was published privately in the same year of its composition (1817), apparently at the expense of Fryderyk Skarbek. At the time, the latter lost no time in announcing the genius of his godson. By the year’s end little Fryderyk was a local celebrity. At the beginning of the following year, the monthly magazine (Warsaw Journal) printed a “list of Polish works published in 1817” and made the following reference to the composition: Although composers of music cannot be included among literary writers, …it would be impossible not to mention the following composition which, thanks to friendly hands, has been distributed in print:

Polonaise for the pianoforte dedicated to Her Excellency Countess Wiktoria Skarbek by Fryderyk Chopin aged eight years. The composer of this Polish dance, a young boy who has just completed his eighth year [sic]... is a true musical genius. 13

Not long afterward, on 24 February 1818, Fryderyk made his first public appearance at a charity concert, announced as a “Concert for the
Poor” by the Gazeta Warszawska (Warsaw Gazette) on 21 February, 14 organized by the Warsaw Benevolent Society, headed by Countess Zofia Zamoyska, in the Theatre of the former Radziwiłł Palace. (Since 1918, the building has housed the Praesidium of the Council of Ministers at Nos. 46–48, Krakowskie Przedmieście.) He played a piano concerto by Vojtĕch Jirovec, which scored a resounding success. This opened to the young prodigy the doors of the Warsaw aristocracy, and it culminated later in an invitation to the Belvedere Palace by the brother of Tsar Alexander I, the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch, viceroy of Poland. “Every Sunday,” wrote Marylski, “the boy [Fryderyk] was driven in the Grand Duke's carriage to the Belvedere, where he would spend the whole day.”

Unlike Leopold Mozart, Nicolas Chopin did not try to convert his son’s gifts into pecuniary enterprises. In turn, this reflected his inherent sobriety, and he could congratulate himself on the fact that, although very much now in the limelight, Fryderyk remained unspoiled and unconceited. This was probably not only an innate quality but also one due to the nature of his conservative and moral upbringing. In fact, reticence remained arguably the most prominent feature of his adult character, and it sometimes acquired self-effacing proportions, particularly where his art was concerned. Although his early performing experience and success must have given him some basic self-confidence in social situations, he retained to the end of his days a certain aversion to public appearances, which can probably be traced to his strong family—that is, private—attachment and his inherent diffidence. As a pianist, his natural habitat was to be the salon, and his misery the concert hall. For the time being, however, he was the naive, uninhibited unself-conscious extroverted boy who was (but did not feel) different from other boys because he was a musical genius. That he lacked no self-assuredness in his musical powers is evident in the following autograph to his father on the latter's name day written toward the end of that eventful year: “Although it would be easier for me to reveal my feelings if they could be expressed in musical sounds, and since the finest concerts could not do justice to my devotion to you, I must use simple words straight from my heart to convey to you the homage of my tender gratitude and filial attachment.”

The years of 1819 and 1820 brought more recognition of Fryderyk's powers as both pianist and composer through his visits to salons and his concerts. The progress of his lessons with Żywny was proceeding at such a pace that the tutor was finding it increasingly hard to fill the gaps of knowledge in his pupil’s piano technique. Fryderyk's early partiality for the human voice as a viable and creative musical instrument opened up to him the pleasures of the world of opera, which he retained to the end of his life. Toward the close of that year (on 22 December), the eminent Italian soprano Angelica Catalani gave the first of a series of four concerts in Warsaw. Fryderyk heard her. Conjecturally, the experience strengthened
his growing sense for vocal music, which eventually paved the way to the composition of his various
songs and to the use of vocalism in his piano music.
By 1821, it was clear that Żywny’s effective role as Fryderyk’s piano tutor was drawing to a close. (This
did not mark the end of his friendship with the Chopin family, for he continued to be its welcome guest,
and he followed with keen interest the progress of his ex-pupil until the end of his [Żywny’s] days.)
Although lessons were not suspended until sometime in 1822, Fryderyk decided to mark his appreciation
toward his old Bohemian instructor on the latter’s birthday (23 April 1821) with a composition presented
and dedicated to him. The work in question, the earliest known autograph, was Fryderyk’s latest
polonaise, in A flat, a piece that left behind the Ogiński model, and in its virtuosic and elegant
construction, arguably identified Fryderyk as a truly budding composer.
Nicolas, together with Barciński, continued to take care of Fryderyk’s private tuition in preparation for his
entrance examination at the lyceum that was to allow him into the fourth form in September 1823.
Musically, during that year, Fryderyk took charge of his own progress in piano technique, improvisation,
and music writing. His powers of improvisation are recalled by Marylski at about that time: “At dusk,
when our lessons were over, we used to tell each other about events in Polish history...such as the
battles waged by our generals, and the young Chopin transposed all this on to the piano. Sometimes
the tears would run down our cheeks as we listened to his music.”18
In 1823, Fryderyk participated in two charity concerts organized by the poet Julian Niemcewicz, who had
arranged for a similar concert in 1818 for Fryderyk’s pianistic debut. Fryderyk was now acquainted with
some of the romantic-styled piano works of the day, and he interpreted a piano concerto by Ferdinand
Ries during the first concert held at the Warsaw Benevolent Society building on 24 February. On the
extra musical side, Fryderyk developed his talent for drawing, and particularly his natural gift for
caricature, which complemented his innate sense of humor and went hand in hand with his powers of
mimicry and impersonation.19 This won him many friends during his schooldays, and it evolved in his
adult years into a keen (and sometimes sardonic) sense for the ridiculous, which occasionally pervaded
his letters to his family and his close Polish acquaintances.
The Chopin family spent the summer of 1823 with Countess Ludwika Skarbek at Żelazowa Wola. It was
Fryderyk’s first holiday in the country. The only documented evidence dating from that period (to be
treated with the same degree of caution as applied to the other reminiscences quoted in this chapter)
was that of his playing at the Skarbek piano, recounted almost seventy years later by Antoni Krysiak, a
contemporary resident of Żelazowa Wola. He recalled how Fryderyk improvised at night at the piano
Two caricatures, now destroyed, by Fryderyk Chopin. Pencil drawings, Fryderyk Chopin Society Photographic Library, Warsaw. Fryderyk had some talent for drawing and sketching. This, together with his innate sense for the ridiculous, sometimes produced caricatures of which these two are examples. These probably date from his visit to Berlin in September 1828.
brought out of the Skarbek house and placed under a fig tree, and how he “enchanted his listeners and brought tears to their eyes.” 20

With Fryderyk’s acceptance into the lyceum that autumn, Antoni Barciński’s tutorship in the Chopin household came to an end. (He later taught at the Warsaw Polytechnic and married Izabela Chopin in 1834.) Apparently Fryderyk’s first year of formal schooling went off well, undoubtedly thanks to the five years of coaching he had received from his father and Barciński. Moreover, he must have felt at home in a class in which he was quite popular and of which Nicolas was in charge. At the end of the school year, he won a form prize together with Tomasz Ostrowski and his friends Jan Matuszyński and Julian Fontana. The inscription on the flyleaf of the book prize read (in Latin): “For good conduct and diligence to Fryderyk Chopin, at the public examination of the Warsaw Lyceum 24th July 1824.” 21

Soon afterward, upon an invitation from the Dziewanowskis, Fryderyk went with their son Dominik (Domuś), probably his closest friend then and a lodger with the Chopins, to spend the summer at their estate in the village of Szafarnia, some 150 kilometers northwest of Warsaw. (There is no longer any trace of the Dziewanowski manor house.) It was Fryderyk’s first vacation away from home.

Nicolas must have welcomed the news of his son’s Mazovian holiday (and he was with Fryderyk in Szafarnia sometime during the first half of August), since Fryderyk’s health (like Emilka’s) was turning frail. The family physician, Dr. Gérardot, prescribed a strict diet in response to Fryderyk’s intolerance to fatty foods and some pills to help him gain weight. He wrote early in August to his parents from Sokołowo in his first known letter:

I neither read nor write, but play the piano, draw, and make the most of the lovely air…. I have a voracious appetite, but to completely satisfy my thin stomach, which is getting fatter, I need permission to eat more than my fill of country bread. Gérardot doesn’t allow me to eat rye bread but his argument concerns Warsaw bread, not country bread… If he could only taste the local bread, he would find it better than the white bread…. I take my pills regularly and drink half a carafe of tisane every day. At table I drink nothing but a little sweet wine; I eat only the ripest fruit as chosen by Miss Ludwika [Dominik’s aunt]. 22

Despite these culinary restrictions, Fryderyk was spending probably the most carefree vacation of his life. Its memories, fraught with all that he could absorb of Mazovian and Kujawy folk tunes and pastoral scenes, remained ingrained in him forever.

Over a period of about four weeks, from 10 August to 5 September 1824, Fryderyk applied his powers of observation and clownish imagination to write a set of six newsletters, under the title of Kurier Szafarski (Szafarnia Courier) (intended as a parody on the Kurier Warszawski), dispatched by Mr. Pichon (an anagram of Chopin) to his parents, after passing
through the censorship of Aunt Ludwika Dziewanowska. Although most of their contents are of peripheral interest, they show how Fryderyk was taken in by the Mazovian countryside, the traditions of its country folk, and their simple rural life. Despite their boyish humor, the newsletters indicate a keen sense of perception and attention to detail, which was to permeate his later correspondence with his family and intimate Polish friends.

Fryderyk and Dominik were back in Warsaw early in September for another year at the lyceum. It was to be Fryderyk's penultimate year at school, and, judging from his performance (he won no prize, merely an honorable mention), his mind did not focus entirely on his studies. Apparently his extracurricular activities had the upper hand, with his musical endeavors, in both composition and interpretation, taking pride of place. He also became competent at playing two state-of-the-art keyboard instruments: the aeolomelodikon, a prototype of the harmonium invented by Jakub Hofman and built by August Brunner, and the aeolopantaleon, a cross between the aeolomelodikon and the piano invented by Józef Długosz. Fryderyk also took organ and possibly advanced piano lessons with the pianist and composer Wilhelm Würfel. Among Fryderyk's compositions that year was a polonaise in G-sharp minor, two mazurkas in B-flat and G, and a rondo in C minor published as op. 1. His concerts included two at the conservatory, on 27 May and 10 June, and a command performance for Tsar Alexander 1 in the Evangelical Church of the Holy Trinity (which, rebuilt, stands today in Kredytowa Street) on 28 May. The tsar rewarded him with a diamond ring. The June concert included an improvisation on the aeolopantaleon and the allegro movement from the F Minor Piano Concerto by Ignaz Moscheles. The Warsaw correspondent of the Leipzig Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung wrote a laudatory article about Fryderyk's improvisation. This was the first time that the young composer's name was mentioned by the press outside Poland. At home, he collaborated with Emilka in some of her increasingly literary efforts. For Nicolas's name day on 6 December, they wrote a one-act farce in verse entitled Omylka, czyli Mniemany filut (The Mistake, or the Pretended Rogue). Fryderyk and Emilka took the leading roles, assisted by Izabela and some four boarders in the Chopin household. Fryderyk played the part of a potbellied mayor and Emilka that of his otherworldly daughter. Wojcicki recalled later that "[Fryderyk's] corpulent figure and comical gestures made everybody laugh." The juvenile authors also formed a "Literary Society" (of which Fryderyk was president and Emilka secretary) and produced a journal written by Emilka and edited by Fryderyk, all for the cultural benefit of the Chopin boarders and guests. Fryderyk spent the summer of 1825 in and around his beloved Szafarnia with the Dziewanowskis. This time, however, an itinerary of a long rambling expedition was planned for Dominik and Fryderyk by Ludwika Dziewanowska. He wrote to his family:
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[Today at] Płock, tomorrow at Rosciszewo, the day after at Kikol, then a few days at Turzno, a few more at Kozłówo, later at Gdańsk, and then back home. Some might say: “It’s clear that he’s in a hurry to get home since he’s talking about it.” Well, no, not at all...since I give you these details simply in anticipation of the pleasure I’ll have upon my return in describing to you my travels. If someone is homesick, it’s certainly not me. All the same, I’ve had no news from Warsaw.... More days will again pass without your news. But I shan’t worry since it’s difficult to shake me.26

Clearly Fryderyk was enjoying his second country holiday away from the family. The tone of the letter is much more self-assertive than anything he had previously written to his parents and sisters. At that stage in his emotional development, he needed the assurance and company of friends from outside the family to assist him in learning how to interact with others and help him understand and temper his feelings of anxiety over emotional conflicts. He found his peers at school and particularly among the boarders at his home: Jan Białobłocki and Jan Matuszyński, and later Julian Fontana and Tytus Woyciechowski (see Chapter 2).

At about that time, Skrodzki recalls that one day he heard Fryderyk “humming some tunes while wandering alone around Botanika [the botanical gardens situated behind the Kazimierzowski Palace].... A little too big and too serious for his age, the tunic of his school uniform unbuttoned against the regulations, he looked deep in thought, absent-minded, and more often than not refused to play ball with the other boys in the schoolyard. His mind must already have been occupied by music.”27

However, Fryderyk may not have then been preoccupied only with music. His increased interest in the opposite sex was now manifesting itself on his emotional development. Its impact on his psychology and its repercussions on Nicolas's behavior toward his son are recorded by Skrodzki. Fryderyk was then in the fifth or sixth form at the lyceum, that is, in his fifteenth or sixteenth year.

I used to spend summer evenings in the acacia row of the Botanical Gardens. Usually a group of girls would appear, most of the time chaperoned, but sometimes without an escort. Chopin would turn up. They would all sit down on a bench and Fryderyk's hazel eyes would light up. I could hear loud talk and soft sighs, then teasing, joking and laughter... I would see Fryderyk strolling alone with one of the girls. I, still a child, would bring him worms and May bugs, ask him about them, and I would pick flowers for the girl. Fryderyk used to smile and give me a handful of caramels extracted from his pocket. One day the stern professor, Fryderyk's father, appeared in the garden. Recognizing me, he began to question me. “Tell me,” he said, “my dear boy, does my son Fryderyk happen to be here?” I could tell from his expression that he was intending to scold Fryderyk. I lied. “No— I haven't seen him”—and feeling my face turn purple, I turned away and started to play ball. Fryderyk's father lingered for a minute, grumbled, tapped his cane on
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the ground, and then left. When I was sure he had gone, I ran to find Fryderyk and told him what had happened. He winced, blushed, and said to me, “You did well, Gene, you did well,” and he pulled out a handful of caramels.

Nicolas’s attitude toward his son’s flirting encounters was understandable: he did not wish to see Fryderyk get into any sort of trouble. But what of Fryderyk’s reaction? This can be surmised only from what he wrote to his family at the time and from Skrodzki’s observations, assuming them to be exact. He exhibited the desire for independence and self-assertion that any healthy sixteen year old craves. (“If someone is homesick, it’s certainly not me.”) Fryderyk may have objected to his father’s intrusion in his private life (“You did well, Gene, you did well”), but at the same time he probably recognized the reason for, if not the wisdom of, Nicolas’s concern.

Back from his vacation with Dominik in Szafarnia, Fryderyk was now poised for his third and final year at the lyceum. The last two years there had coincided with the beginning of his adolescence and all that this implied in terms of developmental problems. As is normal during that period, his center of attention gradually shifted from his family to his peers. (This is apparent from the larger volume of letters written to his friends than to his family during his absences from home.) Conjecturally, he still saw his mother and sisters as his main source of affection. In turn, the fact that he was spoiled by them made him expect a good deal of affection from those outside his family. The emotional and behavioral problems he had to face were probably less than they would have been had he not been accepted as the musical genius that he was and had he not already defined his role in society as a highly gifted pianist and composer. Nevertheless, there were areas in which he could not satisfactorily adjust, and these concerned mainly his attempt to gain self-confidence and his heterosexual relations. The former difficulty may have been the result of his father’s autocratic rather than authoritative attitude, which left him little room to develop his self-reliance and assurance. Within the family, he continued to identify mostly with Ludwika, particularly because her keen musicality now included composition. Early in the winter of 1825, he wrote to Jan Białobłocki: “Ludwika has written an excellent mazurka such as Warsaw has not danced to for a long time. It is her non plus ultra, and really is a unique non plus ultra of its kind—bouncing, charming; in short—ideal for dancing and, without flattery, of a rare quality. When you come I will play it for you.” In the same breath, he boasted jokingly of his prowess as organist at the lyceum: “Aha, noble sir, what a head I’ve got, the most important person in the Lyceum, after his reverence the priest.”

Fryderyk spent Christmas Eve that year at Żelazowa Wola with Ludwika, invited there by Countess Ludwika Skarbek. The winter of 1825–1826 was apparently bitterly cold, and this, together with Fryderyk’s frequent late nights in various drawing rooms in Warsaw, exacted its toll on
As a result, he fell ill in February 1826 apparently with tonsillitis, but it is likely that he was then developing the first signs of chronic lung disease. Emilka, also taken ill at that time, was in a more critical state. Although her symptoms were diagnosed simply as a “catarrh-linked affectation,” she was probably suffering from degenerative lung disease and liver damage. She had a little over a year to live.

Fryderyk’s musical output in 1826 was more impressive, at least in quantity, than that of the previous year: a waltz in C written for Jan Białobłocki (now lost), variations in F for piano duet dedicated to Tytus Woyciechowski (also lost), variations in D for piano duet on a theme of Thomas Moore, a polonaise in B-flat minor dedicated to Wilhelm (Wiliś) Kolberg, the first version of a set of three écossaises (op. 72, no. 3), the second versions of the two mazurkas (in B-flat and G) of 1825, and part of the Rondo à la Mazur in F (op. 5). By the time Fryderyk finished his studies at the lyceum in July (with a public commendation), he had decided to devote his life to music. Toward that end, the first step was to enter the Warsaw High School of Music in the autumn. Although he was to acquire his formal training there, his essential musical personality was set and was subsequently to be developed, to mature and be refined. (He had already taken some four years of private tuition in harmony and counterpoint with Józef Elsner. See Chapter 3.) On the emotional side, his formative years had been spent largely within the sheltered confines of his family milieu. In addition to his innate introspection and sense of humor, these years impressed on him a sober and somewhat rigorous outlook on life, reinforced his family ties, but focused little on the development of his fragile self-confidence. Over the course of his adolescence, one strong-willed friend (Tytus Woyciechowski) would, more than anyone else, unwittingly force Fryderyk to recognize his lack of self-assurance and, in conflict with his attempt at self-assertion in his heterosexual relations, generate in him emotional problems of far-reaching consequences.
The First Intimate Friends: Jan Białobłocki, Jan Matuszyński, Julian Fontana, and Tytus Woyciechowski

JAN BIAŁOBŁOCKI

Chopin’s friendship with Jan (also Jaś, Jasie, or Jasio) Białobłocki is known mainly through thirteen letters Chopin wrote to him over the period 1824–1827. The letters were discovered in the Archives of Ancient Documents in the Old City of Warsaw and published there in 1926.1 They were burned, together with that part of Warsaw, by Hitler’s soldiers during their withdrawal from the Polish capital in the winter of 1944–1945. Jan has been regarded by some biographers as Chopin’s first close friend on the basis of these letters. However, the early friendship with Tytus Woyciechowski may well have been just as close, if not closer. We may never know, for Chopin’s known correspondence with Tytus starts no earlier than September 1828.2

The stepson of the proprietor of the estate of Sokołowo near Szafarnia, Antoni Wybraniecki, Jan Białobłocki joined the lyceum and the Chopin household as a boarder at the age of seven in 1815.3 Unfortunately, there is no sketch or portrait to give us an inkling of what he looked like, but he was apparently very handsome if we are to believe the testimony of Józefowa, the middle-aged cook in the Chopin household. This is included in a letter by Chopin to Jan dated 14 March 1827. Chopin wrote that, according to Józefowa, Jan was “handsomer than all the other young gentlemen who come here! is as handsome, no one!”4

The first published letter by Chopin in which mention was made of Jan is dated September 1823. It was addressed to Eustachy Marylski, a school-
friend whose later memoirs provide an important biographical source. Chopin wrote, “I went myself to Mr. Zabelewicz [philosophy teacher at the lyceum] to find out when the lectures for beginners, not the examinations, begin; he told me that they will begin either on the 16th or the 17th of this month…. Białobłocki came to Warsaw on Saturday. He will register on Tuesday, leave on Wednesday and return later to attend classes.” One day during Chopin’s first summer vacation with the Dziewanowskis at their estate in Szafarnia, he visited Jan in his stepfather’s estate nearby. Jan had been suffering from tuberculosis for some time, and his condition was now aggravated by a debilitating disease (bone tuberculosis?), which had attacked his legs. At the end of the summer, Chopin wrote to Jan on the eve of his (Chopin’s) departure from Sokolowo: “We shall leave very early tomorrow. I had promised to come and see you yesterday, but I couldn’t get to Sokolowo till today. I’m very sorry that I shan’t see you again during these holidays…. I wish you the best of health, and the complete recovery of your leg…. I kiss you heartily.”

During the following summer of 1825, Chopin was once again with the Dziewanowskis in Szafarnia. The vacation was preceded by a lot of hard work for the end-of-term exams, as Chopin wrote to Jan, 8 July: I have to tell you…that the examination is drawing near…. [It will] begin on 26 July…. Tomorrow I shall have to get up early, and tonight I shall have to work and work, work and work again, perhaps all night long…. There’s nothing more to tell you except that I haven’t yet had a letter from you from Sochaczew. If you haven’t written, a severe reprimand awaits you in my next letter…. This letter resembles a field where peas and cabbages are mixed at random…. If it’s so, forgive me. Next time I’ll send you a longer and better letter by post.8 Then, on the eve of his final exam, Wednesday 27 July, he mentioned his holiday plan: “We shall leave on Monday…. We shall therefore be in Szafarnia on Wednesday.” That summer was the last that Chopin was ever to spend in the Polish countryside. The letters to his closest friends of that time were lively and bubbled with good humor. They were rather naive, as Hedley points out, when one considers that Chopin was then progressing in leaps and bounds as both pianist and composer. (Mozart was not different from that point of view at the same age.) He wrote to Jan on 8 September from Warsaw: “Your letter filled me with extro, extra, extrissime happiness. Reading it brought to mind Sokolovo: I recalled the pantaleons, the apples, and I lived again the joyful moments we spent together that Sunday. But I’m extro, extra, extrissimely sorry to know that you’ve been wondering about my long silence.” And then on 30 October, there followed another letter to Jan that well portrayed Chopin’s well-known art of mimicry and sense of humor:
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My dear Jaś!...No doubt you find it strange that I haven’t written to you for so long; don’t be surprised; first read my previous letter and then this one. Three days ago, I was sitting at the table, pen in hand. I had already written “Dear Jaś” and the first few lines of the letter. Since the latter sounded so musical, I began reading them pompously to Żywny who was sitting at the piano with Gorski [a boarder at the Chopins] who was on the point of falling asleep.
Żywny clapped his hands, wiped his nose, rolled his handkerchief into a trumpet and put it into a pocket of his thickly-padded green jacket, adjusted his wig into position, and then inquired, “And to whom are you writing this letter?” I answered, “To Białobłocki.” “Hum, hum, to Mr. Białobłocki?” “Yes, to Białobłocki.” “I see. And where is it addressed to?” “To Sokolowo, as usual.” “And how is Mr. Białobłocki, do you know?” “All right; his leg is better.” “Oh, it is better! Hum, hum, good, good. And has he written to you, Mr. Fridrich?” “Yes,” I answered, “but a long time ago.” “Oh. How long?” “Why do you ask?” Then Żywny laughs, “He, he, he, he, he.” Surprised, I ask him, “Do you know anything about him?” “Hehehehehe,” Żywny laughs even more, wagging his little head. “Has he then written to you?” I ask. “Yes, he did,” says Żywny, and then gives us the bad news that your foot is worse and that you went to East Prussia for treatment. “And where to?” “To Buschoffswerther [sic].”
It was the first time that I had heard of such a place, and although I would have burst laughing under different circumstances, I felt sorry then particularly that you never wrote to me about it, and that it was your turn to write to me. So I finished my letter there and then, and not knowing what more to write and where to address the letter, I continuously postponed sending it until it was finally never mailed. Here then is how the important news about you reached me.
N.B. When we asked Żywny why he kept silent about you, he said that it was because you forgot to ask him in your letter to convey your regards to us. Mamma gave him a good telling-off for this.12
Jan was still nursing his diseased leg in the autumn of 1825, and Chopin tried to keep him informed on his own musical and social activities. Sometime in November, Jan, again in Bischofswerder for treatment, wrote:
Konstancja [Białobłocki’s sister] is in Warsaw, so it’s hardly likely that I can refrain from scribbling a few lines to you. Although I have been able to scrape together very little fresh news for you during these last few days I must nevertheless tell you what has happened, but before I do so let me tell you how sorry I was to learn that you were worse, and how glad I am that before long I shall see you completely well again. I don’t much envy you your heat-treatment, but if I knew that it would speed up your cure I too, like yourself, wouldn't shave for two months. I feel sure you have not yet received my other letter; never mind, you will get it. I could not write to you at Bischofswerder as I did not know your address… I have composed a polonaise on a theme from the Barber… I am thinking of handing it over tomorrow to be lithographed… I have been appointed organist at the High School. So my wife and all the children have a double reason for respecting me… I play the organ once a week on Sundays at the Visitandines’ church, while the other pupils sing.13
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(The Visitandines’ Church still stands at 34 Krakowski Przedmieście.)

Chopin spent Christmas 1825 with his sister Ludwika and the Skarbeks at Żelazowa Wola. Jan was very much in his thoughts on Christmas Eve:

Guess when I’m writing and under what circumstances! Since you’ll never be able to guess, I’ll have to tell you that I’ve just got out of a britska [an open, horse-drawn carriage] and I’ll soon be having my Christmas eve supper....New Year is approaching and so I should send you my good wishes. But for what? You are in need of nothing, and so I’ll wish you nothing but good health which you must now regain. I hope to see you this year, that is in 1826. I shall write little today... Don’t be surprised that I’m so curt and dull! I’m too hungry to write well: non est plenus venter itaque non scribit libenter, nisi ad te, cujus litteras quotidiem expecto. [The stomach is not full, and so I cannot write with pleasure except to you, whose letters I await daily.] ...Everybody, the entire household would send you greetings if they knew I was writing to you. I await your letter.14

But no news came from Jan even by mid-February. In a letter to him dated 12 February, we learn that Chopin himself had fallen ill with tonsillitis: “You probably think that I’m doing all this scribbling at a table. Not at all; it’s from under my quilt, with a bonnet on my head because it’s been aching, I don’t know why, for the last four days. They have put leeches at my throat because of my swollen glands. Our Roemer [the Chopins’ physician] diagnosed a catarrhal infection.”15

That year (1826) was to be Chopin’s last year at the lyceum. In mid-May, he dashed off a letter to Jan, written in the now-characteristically rambling manner and with a wry sense of humor, covering all sorts of news items that he considered of interest to his virtually crippled friend in Sokołowo:

I’m really ashamed to be so late in answering your letter, but all sorts of circumstances have been continuously distracting me...I have bought you some music which I feel will give pleasure to one who, like you, hardly goes out....The music ...is a collection of songs and pieces for piano solo of Rossini, very well transcribed by Diabelli in Vienna. I also bought a polonaise by Kaczkowski, an excellent piece of work and a joy to listen to. (What’s more, it will loosen up your fingers, if you don’t mind my saying so.) ...

You wouldn’t believe how pleased I am that you are far away from Biskupiec [Bischofswerder]. Pleased but at the same time upset. As I see it, your Excellency Mr. Jan has become well and truly permeated with a lot of German virtues, because you used to ask me to leave whereas now you advise me to do nothing of the sort. See what that sordid miserliness leads to! I wish you had never gone to Bischofwerder [sic] which is the reason for this defect! My most brilliant projects, my best plans have been shattered and the one on whom I thought I could rely has turned out to be a horribly thrifty and miserly person.

I’m not really in the mood to scold you appropriately, but what is postponed is simply postponed and shall find satisfaction at a later date, nota bene not with
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marbles since you’ll be the winner there and in any case I gave mine to Rogoziński. ...I see fairly often
the pianist Rembieliński whom I already told you about.... You know the news of Warsaw since you
receive the Courier. As regards the private news, here they are: Gutkowski, the colonel at whose place I
had injured my leg, had died. Zabalewicz had a baby girl. Jarocki got married at Podolia but he brought
his wife here immediately after the wedding. Last Sunday I went to the Zamoyskis where almost the
entire evening was spent in admiring Długosz’s aeolopantaleon. ... Domowicz passed by here recently.
I’ve now got a cupboard for my music. Finally my boots are full of holes and I have to go out in shoes
which gives the impression that I intend to go dancing at Bielany.... My Botanical Gardens, the old ones
which stretch behind the [Kazimierzowski] Palace, have been magnificently fixed up. No longer shall we
find near the spring the carrots that we liked so much to nibble at. Neither the armchairs nor the arbors,
lettuce, cabbage, nor by the way the disagreeable smells exist any more. Instead, there are English-
styled flowerbeds. I’ve written to you all that crossed my head during the past quarter of an hour. I
have therefore nothing more to say except to tell you that I’ll remain the same Me for you as long as I
live.16

This letter was apparently left unanswered by Jan, possibly because of his poor health. In a letter
written probably late in June, Chopin scolded him for his lack of news: “Your Highness has not written
to me for months. Why? What for? Cur? Warum? Pourquoi? I am very much annoyed, and if there is no
improvement there will be trouble between us. I can’t write so often, that’s obvious; you know that I am
working as hard as I can for my diploma.”17 Later in the letter, he analyzed with unusual insight and
realism for a lad of sixteen the reasons for the probable success of Weber’s Der Freischütz, which the
National Opera was soon going to present. At the same time, he indirectly expressed his longing to
escape into a wider musical world. He wrote: “Considering the aim that Weber had in mind in his
Freischütz, its Germanic substance, its queer romanticism, its extraordinary recherché harmony (which
particularly suits the German taste) one may reckon that the Warsaw public, accustomed to Rossini’s
light melodies, will begin by praising it not from conviction but rather in imitation of the connoisseurs,
and because Weber is highly thought of everywhere.”18 After finishing his studies at the lyceum on 29
July, he left with his mother—his sisters Ludwiaka and Emilia had preceded them on 27 June and 15 July,
respectively—for the spa of Bad Reinerz in Silesia principally because of Emilia’s worsening tuberculosis.
The highlight of this visit was a couple of concerts, Chopin’s first outside his native land, in aid of two
orphans. Upon his return to Warsaw on 11 September he enrolled at the High School of Music as a
student of composition with the rector, Józef Elsner. He also followed a course on Polish literature and
folk music given by Kazimierz Brodziński and a course on universal history offered by Feliks Bentkowski
at the University of Warsaw.

Of all his intimate schoolfriends, Chopin found only Fontana when he
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started his studies at the High School of Music. Tytus Woyciechowski had decided to return to Poturzyn, and Jan Matuszyński opted to study medicine. Jan Białobłocki continued to remain at his country estate in Sokółowo; he was dying of tuberculosis. It seems that Chopin could not psychologically accept the gravity of his friend's condition. In his last published letter to Jan, dated 14 March 1827, Chopin jested about the rumor circulating regarding his friend's supposed death. “Are you alive or not?” he wrote. “…If you are dead, please let me know and I’ll tell the cook. Ever since she heard about [the rumor of your death] she has been reciting her prayers. It may be a case of Cupid’s dart, for...you had...impressed her when you were in Warsaw.”19 Later in the letter, Chopin wrote soberly about his dying sister, Emilia: “[She] has been in bed for the last month. She started to cough and spit blood, and Mamma became frightened. Dr. Malcz ordered bloodletting... She got so thin that you would not have known her... You can imagine what a state things have been in. Imagine it if you can, for I am not equal to describing it.”20 Chopin was soon to come to terms with the first emotional shock in his life: the death of Emilia less than a month later (on 10 April) at the age of fourteen. Her untimely death, followed by Jan’s about a year later, must have been a shattering experience for the seventeen-year-old Chopin. A review of his creative output indicated that 1827 was a landmark in his musical development (heralded by his Là ci darem variations for piano and orchestra, written during the latter half of that year), but it was also one in his emotional development, for he was on the threshold of adulthood.

JAN MATYSZYŃSKI

Of Chopin's various intimate schoolfriends, the fortunes of two brought them to Paris during the composer's lifetime there: Jan Matuszyński and Julian Fontana. After completing his medical studies at the University of Tübingen, Matuszyński made his way to Paris early in 1834, shared Chopin’s flat for some two years until he got married late in 1836, soon became a successful physician, later took up a teaching appointment at the École de Médecine, and stayed in the French capital until his early death in 1842. He was one of the few living links that Chopin had with his youth and his beloved Warsaw. Moreover, he became Chopin’s trusted physician and continued to be a close confidant. Little is known of the background of Jan Edward Aleksander Matuszyński except that he was the son of Jan Fryderyk Matuszyński (a medical doctor) and Louise Elisabeth Matuszyńska (née Mallenberg), and that he was born on 9 December 1809 in Warsaw. Chopin presumably first met him in the autumn of 1823 as a fourth-form classmate at the lyceum. In his published correspondence, Chopin’s first letter to Jan dated from the composer's second summer holiday in Szarfsarnia in 1825. Chopin was then
Jan Matuszyński. Portrait in oils on copper by an unknown artist. Reproduced from Leopold Binental, *Chopin* (Paris, 1934). Matuszyński was one of Chopin’s most devoted friends. Self-effacing and introspective by nature, he was Chopin’s confidant and personal physician in Paris until his early death there in 1842.
in full adolescence, and his friendships were open, intimate, and highly emotional. At the beginning of August that year, he wrote to Jan, in a characteristically ebullient style full of an unbridled sense of humor, about his visit to Toruń, Mikołaj Kopernik’s birthplace and also the native town of the Skarbeks. The letter was apparently in response to Jan’s in which he had described to Fryderyk the town of Puławy (then the rural property of the Czartoryskis situated on the Vistula) and the Temple of Sibyl, the site of the Czartoryski Historical Museum. If you had thought to impress me with your Puławy and your hare, then I’d like in turn to humble the inexperienced hunter that you are with my Toruń and my hare (which is certainly fatter than yours) and four partridges which I brought yesterday from the fields. What did you see in Puławy? What? You saw only a small portion of what my eyes devoured. Nevertheless, you must have seen in the Temple of Sibyl the brick removed from Kopernik’s birthplace. I myself have seen that place which is unfortunately somewhat desecrated now. Imagine, my dear Jasio, that in the corner of the room where the future astronomer first saw the light there’s a bed of some German who no doubt, after he has stuffed himself with potatoes, stretches out there and lets out a few zephyrs. The bricks, of which one was sent to Puławy with great pomp, are now infested with bedbugs. But let’s forget about Kopernik now and talk about the Toruń gingerbread, which doesn’t mean that you don’t know it well. For all I know, you know it perhaps better than you do Kopernik.... I must say that it’s the local gingerbread cakes that have impressed me most. I’ve sent one to Warsaw. But look! I’m already using the last sheet of letter paper and it seems as if I’ve just started writing to you.... My dear, beloved Jasio, all that remains to be done now is to kiss you cordially. It’s 10 o’clock, everybody’s going to bed and so must I too. I’ll finish this letter orally when I see you in Warsaw on the 22nd, for I won’t be there earlier, and I’ll then hug you heartily... And now, at a distance of 20 miles I press you to my lips and say a cordial goodbye... How I long to see you. I’d go two weeks without playing the piano just to see you in flesh and blood because you’re on my mind every day. Don’t show this letter to anyone because I’m ashamed of it. I don’t really know whether it makes any sense since I haven’t read it through.21

Jan and Chopin apparently saw a lot of each other during their common schooldays. However, it seems that as of the fall of 1826, the meetings became less frequent. The reason might be that Jan was then starting his second (and final) year in the sixth form at the lyceum—he was to qualify as a university student that summer and was to enter Warsaw University as a medical student in the fall of 182722—whereas Chopin was at that time a first-year student at the High School of Music. Chopin to Jan sometime during the winter of 1827:

Why is it that we haven’t seen each other for so long? What has happened? I wait for your visit every day but, to my great distress, you don’t come. All the same, I am in need of you for the following reason: As the weather is so poor now, I’d like
to take advantage of my staying in and write neatly the piano part of my Variations [on the theme of
the Là ci darem la mano duet from Mozart’s Don Giovanni] and for this I need your copy. Would you
please bring it to me tomorrow? You’ll then have both the day after.23
The apparent dwindling of Chopin’s encounters with Jan was only temporary and skin deep, for the
future was to show that Chopin’s friendship with and trust in him never waned. In the next published
letter in which Jan was mentioned, ample proof is found of this, even though the affirmation was stated
in a somewhat jocular manner. It was a letter to Tytus Woćiechowski written more than three years
later in which he scolded Tytus for not having written and compares Jan’s devotion and loyalty with
Tytus’s “vacillating” friendship:
Tomorrow Kaczyński and Bielawski will be at our house, and at ten in the morning, incognito, in the
presence of Elsner, Ernemann, Żywny and Linowski I shall rehearse my Polonaise for piano and cello
and the Trio. We shall play until we’ve mastered them. That is why I have not invited anyone apart from
those I have mentioned plus Matuszyński, the only one who has remained true to me and isn’t a false
hypocrite, scoundrel, rogue like ... I leave you to guess who!24
At the time of Chopin’s final departure from Warsaw early in November 1830, and in the aftermath of
his affair with Konstancja Gladkowska, it was Jan Matuszyński whom Chopin chose as his discreet
confidant and go-between in the affair. (As will be seen in Chapter 4, the affair by then was actually
well and truly over, and the sine qua non of Jan’s role as a go-between was a figment of Chopin’s
romantic imagination.) A few days before the outbreak of the Polish revolt in Warsaw against Russian
domination, Chopin wrote to Jan shortly after his arrival in Vienna on 22 November with Tytus
Woćiechowski. He had first visited that city in the summer of 1829 soon after his graduation from the
High School of Music. The pleasant recollections he had of it, where his professional debut made
through two concerts at the Kärntnerthortheater was a resounding success, were still fresh in his mind:
How glad I am to be back in Vienna and to be making so many interesting and extremely useful
acquaintances, and even to think that I might fall in love! I am not thinking of you others at home... All
I do is to look now and then at that ring made from hair by Ludwika, and which becomes dearer to me
as I travel further away from them all. And I love you better here than in Warsaw. But am I still loved?
[referring to Konstancja]. You, Aesculapius, if you don’t write to me, may the devil take you, lightning
strike your house at Random and may you lose the button off the top of your cap! ... Has all this rain
been bad for you? I have a feeling that you are ill. For God’s sake don’t take risks! You and I are made
of the same clay and you know how many times already I have fallen to pieces...
There's not enough clay in me to make a rabbit hutch. Oh, you rogue! You've been to the theatre, I bet—you've made great play with your opera-glasses and made eyes at other people, you've shot your glances at the epaulettes [of Russian officers, of whom Chopin was jealous]—if you have done all this, may the lightning strike you; you are not worthy of my devotion. Tytus knows all about me and is glad, for he has always esteemed me and sympathized with my feelings in advance. If I am writing to you it is for my own sake, for you are not worth it....Give me a kiss and embrace my schoolfellow Alfons for me.... Love to all my friends.25

Of all the available documents related to the Chopin-Matuszyński friendship, perhaps those that best illustrate the closeness and warmth of the friendship are the three letters written from Vienna in 1830–1831 by Chopin to Jan, of which the above is an extract of the first. During his eight months' stay there, his mood had changed from one of great expectation to one of aimlessness and despondency. Soon after news of the Polish revolt (which started on 29 November) reached Vienna, Tytus left for Warsaw to join the rebellion. A university professor friend from the days of Chopin's first visit to Vienna, Romuald Hube, was now sharing his room. Although he was a good companion, he could not fill the void that Tytus had left behind. Less than a month later, on Christmas Day, Chopin wrote to Jan at length: I am dying to read your writing. Do you know why? Yes, you do. But it was not only on account of my angel of peace [Konstancja]; for as truly as I love her I would, if I could, employ every tone which that blind raging feeling has inspired in me to evoke, if only in some slight degree, those songs whose scattered echoes still haunt the banks of the Danube, those songs which the army of Sobieski sang. ... My God! She and my sisters can at least help by rolling strips of lint for bandages while I ...! I fit were not that I should perhaps be a burden to my father I would return at once. I curse the moment of my departure, and you will agree (knowing the situation I am in) that since Tytus left, too many troubles have fallen on my hand all at once. All these dinners, soirées, concerts, dances which I am up to the neck in bore me to death. I feel so depressed, dull and gloomy here.... I have no one to exchange confidences with and I must behave charmingly to every-one.... I have no peace of mind—except perhaps when I take out all your letters or open my album with the view of Sigismund's column, or look at my ring. Forgive me, Jasio, for complaining like this to you but it seems to take half the load off my shoulders and calms me down—I have always shared my feelings with you.26

The letter meanders through a whole imbroglio of emotions, evoking intermittently the image of Konstancja (presumably Jan was to read the relevant passages to her), describing sketchingly his life in the Austrian capital, commenting on the leading vocal artists of the day, and asking for advice regarding his next move. His disenchantment with the city lay at the root of his feelings. The relevant reason was twofold: musical and political. Vienna was no longer the city of Mozart and Beethoven but of the
waltz kings Johann Strauss the elder and Joseph Lanner. Chopin’s ardently nationalistic emotions over the Polish cause ran contrary to the official stance of the Austrian authorities in their conservative and restrictive policies of the Metternich system. After the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire by Napoleon in 1805, the Austrian emperor Francis I (who was, as Francis II, the last Holy Roman Emperor) repressed liberalism and eyed the Polish revolt with suspicion and concern. (The goodwill at all levels Chopin was to meet with in Paris some nine months later was in sharp contrast with conditions in Vienna.)

Two days ago I dined with a Polish lady whose surname is Bayer and Christian name Konstancja: I like to go there as it reminds me of…. All her music, handkerchiefs and table-napkins are marked with her name.27

Today in an Italian restaurant I heard someone say [in German] “God made a mistake when he created the Poles!” so don’t be surprised if I can’t write down my thoughts properly. And don’t expect to receive any news from a Pole, for the other fellow replied, “There’s nothing to be got out of Poland” [Proverb: In Polen ist nichts zu holen]. The b_______s!28

Wild, the famous and indeed the leading German tenor of the day, came after dinner. I accompanied him from memory in an aria from Otello which he sang in masterly fashion. He and Heinefetter are the mainstays of the opera here, which is moreover so wretched that it is no credit to Vienna.29

My parents tell me to do as I please, but I don’t like to. Shall I go to Paris? People here advise me to wait. Shall I return home—or stay here? or kill myself?—or stop writing to you? Do tell me what to do. Ask those who have influence with me, send me their advice and I will follow it.30

A week later, on New Year’s Day 1831, Chopin again wrote to Jan without waiting for a reply to the last letter, but this time the letter was laden with self-pity and despair. The lyricism that was directed to Konstancja in the previous letter was totally absent here. Instead, there was a suspicion about her, and his words smacked of the mental collapse he was due to experience some nine months later in Stuttgart after learning of the failure of the Polish uprising:

Did you receive my letter? Did you hand over my note? Today I regret having written it. I threw out a beam of hope where now I see only darkness and despair. Perhaps she is fooling me and making a joke of it…. Perhaps… In my heart, even as I write this, a terrible foreboding oppresses me. It all seems to me a dream, a state of mental confusion; I feel I am at home with you and that all I hear around me is also only a dream… Only your voice or Tytus’s would arouse me from this deadly state of apathy. To live or to die: it seems all one to me today when there
is no letter from you. Tell my parents that I am in good spirits, that I have everything I need, that I am having a marvelous time and am never alone. Tell her the same, if she jokes about me. But if she does not, then say that she must not worry and that I am depressed too, wherever I am. I am unwell but I don't want my parents to know. Everyone asks what is the matter with me. I am out of spirits. Hube is taking care of me: I have a cold in the head. Anyhow you know what is wrong with me... Why am I so desperately lonely today? Why can't you be here with me at such an awful time?... Embrace me, for I love you all more than my life—write as often as you can. Where is she? At Radom? ... You write that you will be joining forces in the field— then how can you give her my note? Don't send it by anyone! Be careful—perhaps my parents would think ill of me. One more embrace! You are going to the wars; then return a colonel! My God... Oh, why can't I be with you? Why can't I be a drummer-boy?31

Although there are no more published letters to Jan from that period, he (together with Tytus) must have been very much on Chopin's mind, as may be conjectured from Chopin's correspondence to his parents (16 July 1831: “I often run after someone looking like Jasio or Tytus when I am out”32) and in the so-called Stuttgart diary of September 1831 (“I wrote the above lines not knowing that the enemy has reached my home! The suburbs are stormed—burnt down. Jaś! Where are you?”).33 Beyond Chopin's arrival in Paris in September 1831, the first mention of Jan in the published correspondence was contained in a letter by Nicolas to his son dated 7 September 1834, revealing that Jan was sharing Chopin's apartment at 5, rue de la Chausée d'Antin: “I am glad that Jaś is living with you. I have always been fond of him; he is a good lad and his behavior proves it, since in spite of difficult circumstances he has managed to find himself a respectable occupation. I am obliged to him for having remembered us in the midst of the pleasure of that party you gave.”34 During the Polish revolt of 1830–1831, Jan had interrupted his medical studies at Warsaw University and joined the rebellion as a military medic. After the collapse of the revolution, he managed to make his way to southwestern Germany and enroll as a medical student at the University of Tübingen. Following the completion of his studies there, he decided early in 1834, like many other Polish émigrés at the time, to seek his fortune in Paris and soon established himself as a physician there. We are informed of his meeting with Chopin through an undated letter written in 1834 by Jan to his brother-in-law in Poland: My first thought was to call on Chopin. I cannot say how glad we were to meet again after five years of separation. He has grown tall and strong, so that I scarcely recognized him. Chopin is now the leading pianist in Paris. He gives many lessons, never for less than twenty francs. He has composed a good deal and his works are...
much sought after. I am living with him at 5 rue de la Chaussée d’Antin. It is rather far from the Medical School and the hospitals, but I have very good reasons for staying with him—he’s the only friend I have. We spend our evenings at the theatres or pay visits or else we stay in and enjoy ourselves quietly at home. 35 Ján’s arrival in Paris was more than gratifying to Chopin. With the presence of such additional close friends as his school and High School of Music colleague Julian Fontana, a former boarder in the Chopin household; schoolmate Kazimierz Wodziński; and Woyciech Grzymała, who was gradually becoming his confidant, Chopin could certainly not complain of lack of Polish soil in the French capital. Moreover, Ján soon fulfilled the functions of his medical adviser and private physician, a role that provided moral comfort to both the composer and his family. Nicolas wrote to Fryderyk, 11 April 1835: “Do take care of your health, my boy. Your good friend [Matuszyński] is quite right to keep you at home as much as possible.” 36 Early in the new year, following the false rumor in Warsaw of Chopin’s death (Chapter 6), Nicolas wrote to Ján in a postscript to his letter to Fryderyk dated 9 January 1936: After the agony we have been through, any delay in his [Fryderyk’s] news would worry us, particularly at this time of the year when it is so easy to catch cold. I am extremely obliged to you for having forced him to wear stronger shoes these days than those he was in the habit of wearing. I would also like you to get him to realize that it is to his advantage to cut down on his late nights. I believe that Fryderyk has relations that he cannot and should not neglect, but let him cultivate them more seldom… Insist on what you believe is necessary, even at the risk of having a row with him. I am sure that Fryderyk has enough sense to see the wisdom of your actions. 37 About eight months later, at the time of Chopin’s infatuation with Maria Wodzińska (Chapter 6), when the state of his health was of prime concern to Teresa Wodzińska (Maria’s mother), the latter wrote to Chopin on 14 September 1836: “Go to bed at eleven and drink only eau-de-gomme [an aromatic syrup drink]. Mr. Matuszyński will agree with me and will send you, like Skorzewski, to Marienbad or Franzensbad.” 38 But by the beginning of the winter of 1838, the physician himself was showing signs of deteriorating health. (He was already tubercular. He had left the Chopin apartment when he married Thérèse Boquet on 21 December 1836. His new residence was at 20, rue de Verneuil. 39 His marriage, however, foundered less than two years later, at about the time of the beginning of Chopin’s liaison with George Sand.) Chopin wrote to Fontana from Palma, on the island of Majorca, 15 November 1838: “Embrace Ján. How quickly he would recover here!” 40 Some two weeks later, down with a severe bout of what he suspected was bronchitis, Chopin complained to Fontana about Ján’s lack of insight and counseling against the disease. “I can’t forgive Ján
for not advising me what to do in the event of acute bronchitis which he might have expected me to
catch at any time.‘‘41 Chopin took it for granted that Jan should have thought of everything that could
befall his health. This was one of the early samplings of his exacting demands from his closest friends.
Did his attitude border only on intimacy, or was he bluntly taking advantage of his friend’s devotion?
That he did make use of at least one friend (Fontana) will be seen below, and the rebuff, though
indirect, was bitter. In the next published letter to Fontana of some three weeks later, the jeremiad
against Jan was apparently forgotten, and, presumably in answer to Jan’s own complaint regarding his
arduous medical practice as declared to Fontana, Chopin expressed his sympathy regarding Jan’s
demanding profession: ‘‘Give my love to Jaśio and say I’m only sorry he hasn’t been fully trained to take
over some children’s home in Nuremberg or Bamberg. Anyhow tell him to be a man and write.’’42
It was probably Jan’s innocence of character and purity of spirit that endeared him most to Chopin. In
turn, it was presumably because of these same qualities that Chopin was occasionally harsh on him.
While recuperating at Marseilles in the aftermath of the dreadful winter he had spent on the island of
Majorca with George Sand, Chopin wrote to Fontana on 7 March 1838 about what was to be done
should his room at 38, rue de la Chaussée d’Antin be let as a result of his prolonged absence (he had
left Paris at the end of October 1838): ‘‘If my room has in fact been let from the beginning of next
month (which I doubt) will you divide up my furniture among the three of you, Grzymała, Jaś and
yourself? Jaś has most room—although not most brains in his head, judging by the childish letter he
wrote me, imagining I was going to become a monk! Let Jaś have the most indispensable household
things.’’43 Later in the letter, Chopin entreated Fontana to burn a secret document (probably a
testament written during an illness) that had now become irrelevant. At the same time, he spared no
words in being severely self-critical:
It is not my fault if I am like a mushroom which seems edible but which poisons you if you pick it and
taste it, taking it to be something else. I know I have never been of any use to anyone—and indeed not
much use to myself. I told you that in my desk in the first drawer next to the door, there was a
document which you or Grzymała or Jaś might unseal. I now ask you, please, to take it out and burn it
without reading it. I adjure you by our friendship to do this—the paper serves no purpose now… Love
to Jaś. Tell him that I didn’t allow myself to be, or rather they didn’t have me, bled; that I have plasters
on me and that I cough little, and only in the mornings; and that they no longer consider me a
consumptive. I drink neither wine nor coffee—only milk. I keep myself warmly wrapped up and look like
a young lady.’’44
Sometime during July or early August 1839, Jan went to Warsaw on a visit. The reason for his departure
is not known, but he was then apparently
in poor health. Chopin to Fontana, 8 August 1839: “So Jasio has gone! I wonder whether he asked you to forward any letters from my parents, addressed to him, that might arrive. Perhaps he forgot, but then perhaps he didn’t. Anyhow, if a letter should arrive I wouldn’t want to lose it. But I had a letter from home not long ago, so they won’t be writing for a while and in the meantime Jasio may return in better health, poor fellow.”45 By late September, Jan had returned to Paris, and Chopin was spending his first summer with Sand at her estate in Nohant. Chopin to Fontana, 25 September 1839: “Give my love to Jasio. My dear friend, I often have strange feelings about him: may God grant him what he needs. But may he not let himself be taken in—although on the other hand…. Oh, well, damn all such nonsense! That’s the truest thing in the world, and as long as it is so I shall always love you as one honest friend and Jasio as another. …I embrace you both.”46 Chopin’s expression of deep concern over his friend was related not only to his health but also to his private life (“May he not let himself be taken in”), probably in connection with his broken marriage.47 (Jan had then been living on his own for a little over a year in his apartment on the rue de Verneuil.) About a fortnight later, Chopin solicited Jan’s help in the move to his new apartment at 5, rue Tronchet. Chopin to Fontana, 8 October 1839: “I wrote to Jasio today telling him to engage the valet and to instruct him to be in attendance at rue Tronchet from midday.”48 Chopin was apparently not fully aware of Jan’s rapidly failing health. Jan, unassuming and introspective, continued to be his friend’s private consultant physician. Sand to Dr. Paul Gaubert (Sand’s friend and Chopin’s doctor between 1839 and 1843), April (?) 1840:49 “Please come over and see our Chopinet who...feels a constant pain on the right side under the breast…. His Polish physician friend [Matuszyński] who is ill in bed with pain in the side and spasms of spitting blood, wrote telling him to place a vesicatory on the painful region. This we are not doing since the effect of the cantharides on the bladder puts him in an agony of pain... What’s this pain in the side? I think it’s rheumatism. I hope it isn’t the beginning of a chest complaint that his Polish friend believes it to be.”50 Jan’s diagnosis was correct, and he was probably as anxious about his friend as about himself. Chopin to Fontana from Nohant, 9 August 1841: “Don’t go and dream, as Jasio did, that I died. You should rather dream that I am being born.”51 Jan just managed to last through the spring of 1842. For Chopin, the winter had been marked by the brilliance of his second Parisian concert, which took place at the Salle Pleyel on 21 February. But soon afterward, his health again deteriorated, and he was bedridden with what Sand again described as rheumatism. This time, however, Jan could not even send him his written diagnosis and treatment for he (Jan) was dying. By about the
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end of the second week of April, Chopin had sufficiently recovered to allow him to visit his friend with Sand.52 Jan’s end was related by the author in a letter to her friend Pauline Viardot dated 29 April 1842, nine days after Jan’s death: “A Polish friend, a physician and former schoolmate of Chopin died in our arms after a slow and cruel agony which caused Chopin almost equal anguish. He was strong, courageous and devoted, more so than one might expect from such a frail being. But later he was utterly broken.”53

The rapport that Chopin the adolescent had with Jan Matuszyński was arguably of the same quality as that with Jan Białobłocki: pure and selfless, with no intervening trait to mar it, and it remained almost so until the end. Chopin seems to have treated them both as true peers. At the same time, the manner in which he bossed, scolded, and dominated them, as revealed by the correspondence, suggests that they were even frailer, more indecisive by nature than Chopin. Apparently the relationship with Julian Fontana did not start on as warm a footing as it did with Białobłocki or Matuszyński, and it transpired as one that was less selfless and more of convenience. Chopin’s association with Tytus Wołciechowski was the most complex of the lot. The early friendship here was somewhat distorted by Chopin’s obvious feeling of inferiority regarding a person who had all those personal qualities that he lacked: decisiveness, strong will, and self-assuredness. It was only after the maturation of Chopin’s emotional personality that the relationship could acquire the semblance of true friendship.

JULIAN FONTANA

Julian Fontana was the most enigmatic and controversial of Chopin’s intimate friends. The friendship was not as close as it was with Jan Matuszyński or Tytus Wołciechowski, but he was probably the person to whom Chopin owed the most in terms of services rendered. These varied from such subservient tasks as doing Chopin’s personal purchases and taking care of the removal of his furniture to the more serious ones of handling Chopin’s business transactions with publishers and copying musical manuscripts. George Sand’s impressions of him are not complimentary: “I don’t know this person except by sight, but he gives me the impression of being flayed alive and always ready to make others pay out for his own misfortunes. His character is probably more worthy of pity than blame.”54 There is an uncanny truth in that last sentence, for Fontana’s final lot was tragic. Although he studied law, his professional pursuits were in the field of music. Having tried his luck without much success as a piano teacher, pianist, and composer in England and France in the mid-1830s and early 1840s, he moved to America, living for a while in Havana and later settling in New York until 1851, when he, his wife, and her family returned to France.
Julian Fontana. Photograph, c. 1850. Fryderyk Chopin Society Photographic Library, Warsaw. Julian Fontana is remembered mostly as Chopin’s factotum and principal copyist of his manuscripts. Consciously or unconsciously, Chopin took advantage of his kindness and devotion. Fontana’s decision to emigrate to America (in 1843 at the earliest) may have been due partly to Chopin’s imperious attitude toward him.
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(On 9 September 1850 he had married Kamila Dalcour, a Creole widow from Havana with four
children.55) A few years following the death of his wife and baby daughter in 1855, he turned deaf. He
committed suicide on 23 December 1869 at the age of fifty-nine.56

Julian Fontana was born in 1810 in Warsaw (the exact date is unknown) of Italian stock. (His ancestors
had emigrated to Poland sometime in the eighteenth century.) He had his schooling at the Warsaw
Lyceum, and it is presumably there, as in the case of Jan Matuszyński, that Chopin first met him as a
fourth-form colleague in the autumn of 1823. Fontana was apparently a serious and hard-working
student, winning an honorable mention in July 1825 and a public commendation the following year.
Before leaving the lyceum, he must have obtained a qualifying diploma to enter Warsaw University,
where he enrolled as a student of law and public administration in September 1828. In the meantime,
being endowed with some talent as a pianist, he spent two years learning composition and counterpoint
with Elsner at the High School of Music. It was probably this interest in and dedication to music that
brought him closer to Chopin. Fontana's piano playing at the time apparently received some appreciation
from Chopin. (This did not extend to the composer's Parisian years.)57 Chopin to Tytus Woyciechowski,
27 December 1828: “My orphan Rondo for 2 pianos has found a foster-father in Fontana (you've
perhaps seen him sometime at our house—he goes to the University). He has practiced it for about a
month but has at last learnt it and we recently tried it over at Buchholtz's to see how it might have
sounded.”58

With Fontana's arrival in Paris, Chopin’s association with him was renewed. Meanwhile Julian had
finished two years of law studies; took part in the November insurrection, first as a noncommissioned
artillery officer and later as a second lieutenant; emigrated to Hamburg (where he gathered some
experience in commercial practice) after the suppression of the uprising in September 1831; and then
made his way to Paris, probably early in 1832. It is from a letter by Ludwika to Fryderyk dated 27
November 1831 that we learn of Fontana’s impending arrival in the French capital: “As regards Fontana,
you will see him again in a few weeks’ time since his uncle paid us a visit the day before yesterday and
asked for your address.”59 Apparently Fontana stayed for about a year in France and took some piano
lessons with Chopin,60 presumably to improve himself both as a pianist and in his principal profession
as a piano teacher. (The first two published letters by Chopin to Fontana, CFC, Nos. 139, 140, are
undated, but their contents suggest that they belong to that period of Fontana's stay in Paris, 1832–
1833. One of them, No. 140, concerns an invitation to a soirée at the Komars, the family of Chopin’s
controversial friend and, possibly, lover, Delfina Potocka.61) Subsequently he spent a short time in
Hamburg before making his way to England, where, after giving some concerts in its
provincial cities, he settled in London for some four years. After a few occasional visits to Paris, he finally decided to return there.62

It was probably sometime in the late autumn or early winter of 1837 that Fontana started his association with Chopin as the latter’s copyist and as an intermediary with publishers. As far as is known, Chopin paid him nothing for these services. He may have considered them a form of repayment of the debt Fontana owed him for the piano lessons he had given him. However, in appreciation of the services, the composer dedicated the two polonaises of op. 40 to him. The series of published letters for which Fontana earned his reputation as Chopin’s factotum starts at the time of the composer’s stay on the island of Majorca with George Sand in the early winter of 1838–1839. The details of the duties involved are given as examples of the sort of work that Fontana was called on to do and to give some insight into the amount of time and effort that he had to spend, over and above his professional obligations, on behalf of his friend. Chopin to Fontana, 15 November 1838:

Here I am at Palma, among palms, cedars, cacti, olive-trees, oranges, lemons, aloes, figs, pomegranates, etc.… Everything, including the town, has an African look. In a word, life is marvelous. Love me still. Do call at Pleyel’s, for the piano hasn’t arrived yet. Which route have they despatched it by? Hand the letters from my parents to Grzymała, and anything else you want to send me: he knows the safest address.… Tell Pleyel he will receive the manuscripts soon. Don’t say much about me to my acquaintances.… Tell them I’ll be back at the end of the winter.… Send off my letter to my parents just as it is. Post it yourself.63

There then followed a set of four letters spread over six weeks, studded with a variety of instructions, but dealing mainly with the publication of the preludes. To cover the expenses of his trip (which ultimately amounted to about 5,000 francs), Chopin received an advance of 500 francs on the preludes from the piano maker and music publisher Camille Pleyel (the balance of 1,500 francs to be paid to Chopin upon receipt of the work), and had borrowed 1,000 francs from his banker, Auguste Léo (as well as another 1,000 francs from a certain Nouguès, a moneylender), a short-term loan that was supposed to be repaid from the Pleyel balance. The preludes were also to be sold to the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf & Härtel through their agent Heinrich Probst. Chopin to Fontana, 3 December 1838:

Don’t give my landlord notice about my rooms. I can’t send you the manuscript [of the Preludes] as I haven’t finished it. I have been ill as a dog during these last two weeks.… Thanks to Providence I am today just as I was. However it is all having a bad effect on the Preludes—God knows when you will receive them.… I have no piano. I have written directly to Pleyel, rue Rochechouart. Find out what’s happening. Tell him that the day after I wrote I fell seriously ill but I am better.
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now. Otherwise say little about me and my manuscripts… Tell Léo that I have not yet sent the Preludes to Albrecht.64

Chopin to Fontana, 14 December 1838:
Still no word from you… Did you pay postage in advance? …Or are you lazy? No, you are decent, not lazy…. I learnt only today that on 1 December the piano was loaded on to a merchant vessel at Marseilles. I suppose the piano will spend the winter in port or at anchor…. Meanwhile my manuscripts sleep while I get no sleep at all…. I expect to send you my Preludes and Ballade shortly. Go and see Léo. Don’t tell him I’m ill or he will be worried about his thousand francs. See Pleyel as well.65

Since the preludes were not forthcoming, Léo was apparently worried about his money and started to clamor for it. Chopin to Fontana, 28 December 1838:
Scoundrel [referring to Léo]! … Schlesinger is a still bigger hound…. What do I care if Léo is furious? … Use the money from Wessel [his English publisher] if you need it. What’s my servant doing? Give the concierge 20 francs from me as a New Year’s present when you receive that money and pay the chimney-sweep if he turns up…. Did you pay the postage? How did you address it? The only letter I have so far had from you was very incorrectly addressed. So don’t forget things when you write…. Write, for God’s sake! Always pay postage in advance.66

Chopin to Fontana, 22 January 1839:
I am sending you the Preludes. Copy them out, you and Wolff…. You should give the copy to Probst and my manuscript to Pleyel. When you get the money from Probst… take it at once to Léo… With the money you receive from Pleyel, 1500 francs, you should pay 425 francs rent up to New Year and then politely give notice of quitting…. Give the remaining thousand to Nouguès from me… Before the New Year I sent you a draft for Wessel. Tell Pleyel I am clear as far as Wessel is concerned. In a week or two you will receive the Ballade, Polonaises and Scherzo. Tell Pleyel to settle with Probst about the date of publication of the Preludes. I still have had no letter from home! You simply must pay postage in advance. Have you no idea what happened to my first letter? … Hand over my letter and the Preludes to Pleyel yourself. Write.67

The completion of the preludes, the ballade (op. 38), the scherzo (op. 39), and the polonaises (op. 40) was accompanied by a whole series of complex instructions from Chopin that Fontana had to sort out with the publishers. Chopin to Pleyel, 22 January 1839: “I am sending you the Preludes… I have instructed Fontana to hand over my manuscript. I am asking 1,500 francs for the French and English rights…When you have time to think of it hand over the money to Fontana.”68
But Pleyel refused to pay the balance of his account, presumably due to the fact that the piano Chopin had ordered and had received in mid-January had not yet been paid for. Chopin to Fontana, 12 March 1839:

Perhaps he will not make difficulties over the Ballade and Polonaises. If he does you can offer the Ballade to Schlesinger when you have received 500 for it from Probst...Probst may cheat me even more, for he’s a tricky kind of bird to catch. Schlesinger has swindled me all along...Go carefully with him...So if Pleyel makes the slightest difficulty go to Schlesinger and tell him he can have the Ballade for France and Germany at a price of 800 (he won't pay 1000), and the Polonaises for Germany, England and France for 1500 (but if he won't pay so much he can have them for 1400 or 1300, or even 1200... I could break with Schlesinger for Pleyel’s sake, but I cannot do it for Probst...You will have to arrange with Schlesinger that you are to hand over the manuscripts on the actual receipt of the money: if he does not want to take them all at once let him have the Ballade separately and then the Polonaises, with an interval of two weeks at most. If Schlesinger refuses to listen to such a suggestion, then only are you to offer them to Probst. And since he adores me so much don’t let him have them for less than Pleyel. So deliver my letter to Pleyel if he makes the slightest difficulty. If, which I doubt, you have left with him the manuscripts of the Ballade and Polonaises, get them back for Schlesinger or Probst. Scoundrels! My God! This Pleyel who idolizes me so! Perhaps he thinks I am not returning to Paris. I’m returning sure enough and he shall receive my best thanks when I see him. And Léó too! I enclose a note for Schlesinger giving you authority to act for me.

Chopin’s letter to Pleyel, bearing the same date as the one above, is an instance when Chopin shelved his true feelings for the sake of his business dealings with his publishers. Moreover, the recipient of his abuse became the dedicatee of his preludes. Chopin to Pleyel, 12 March 1839:

I am vexed, my dear friend, that Fontana has been troubling you with my affairs. ..."I am writing this very day to tell him not to bother you any more with this business. I wrote two letters to you from Majorca and was grieved at receiving no reply. I learn from Fontana that you are still unwell, and that grieves me more than your silence.... I expect to return to Paris when the fine weather comes."

What finally transpired was that the preludes were published not by Pleyel but by Adolphe Catelin in June 1839, and the ballade, the scherzo, and the polonaises were published by neither Pleyel nor Schlesinger but by Eugène-Théodore Troupenas (the Parisian music publisher of many of Auber’s operas and of Rossini’s last four operas) in the late autumn and early winter of 1840.

To illustrate the way that Chopin used Fontana for jobs other than those related to his music, a few examples are cited here, dealing mostly with Chopin’s quest for apartments for himself and Sand in the autumn of 1839.
In connection with an evening in Chopin's apartment at 5, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Chopin to Fontana, probably during February 1835:
Come alone tonight and bring along by any means the Hungarian [Liszt]. Freppa will sing and we might organize a small party. Get hold of Sadowski by the pants, but make sure he comes. Go to the club and recruit general Skarżyński.71
Relating to a new apartment Chopin was looking for. Chopin to Fontana, 21 September 1839:
Rent for me the apartment at rue Tronchet. Judging from your descriptions, it pleases me a lot. But first see Grzymała and find out whether, following my last letter, one has not been reserved for me at the embassy. If the apartment of the rue Tronchet has already been taken, give preference to the one at rue Lafitte [sic]in spite of the stairs which, by the way, wouldn't bother me.72
After having decided on the apartment at rue Tronchet, Chopin now turned to the matter of its interior decoration. Chopin to Fontana, 25 September 1839:
Choose a wallpaper like the one I used to have, dove-gray but glossy and shining for both rooms, with a narrow dark-green strip as a border. Something else for the vestibule, but neat and respectable. However, if you come across prettier and more fashionable wallpapers which you yourself like and think that I would like too, well, choose them. I prefer something smooth, very quiet and neat rather than commonplace, vulgar and petty bourgeois. That’s why I like pearl-gray—it is not glaring or common. Thank you for finding a room for my valet—it is indispensable. Now about the furniture: it will be splendid if you will look after it. I assure you I was afraid to give you all this trouble, but since you are so very kind, collect the furniture and install it. I will ask Grzymała to advance the money for the transport and will write to him about it. As for the bed and my desk, they will have to be sent to some cabinet-maker for cleaning and repair. You might take the papers out of the desk and lock them up somewhere else—I need not tell you what to do. Make whatever arrangements please you and seem most suitable. I shall agree with all you do: you have my entire confidence.73
Next, an apartment had to be found for Sand and her children. Chopin to Fontana, 1 October 1839:
She requires: three bedrooms, two of which should be next to each other and the third separated by, for example, the drawing room. Next to this third bedroom should be a well-lighted study for her. The two bedrooms may be small and the third one also need not be large. Also a suitable drawing room and a dining-room, a fairly large kitchen, two servants' rooms and a cellar. Parquet floors, of course, fresh decorations and as far as possible no repairs needed. Note particularly that a
small detached place would be best, or else a separate wing in a courtyard overlooking a garden. It should be quiet, silent, with no blacksmiths in the neighborhood, no ladies of the streets, etc., etc. You know exactly what I mean. The stairs should be decent looking. The whole place should have a good sunny aspect facing south... Let me repeat: it is absolutely necessary that the third bedroom [George Sand's own] with its adjoining study should be away from the two others [the children's] and, if possible, the study or the third bedroom should have a separate door leading outside... You will earn our sincere gratitude if you find something.74

Chopin could now turn to the subject of his personal attire. Chopin to Fontana, 3 October 1839:

Besides all those things, I forgot to ask you to order for me a hat from my hatter Dupont, whose shop is in your street. He has my measurements and knows what sort of light hats I need. Tell him to make it in this year's fashion, but not exaggerated, for I have no idea what sort of things you men are wearing just now. There's something else: as you go past Dautremont's, my tailor on the boulevard, call in and order a pair of gray trousers to be made at once. You yourself choose a dark gray—winter trousers, something decent, without stripes and close fitting. You're an Englishman and you know what I need. The tailor will be glad to know I'm returning. I need only a simple black velvet waistcoat with no more than some kind of tiny, discreet pattern—something combining great elegance with simplicity. If he has no suitable velvet let him use black silk, but it must be handsome and yet simple. I am relying on you. The waistcoat must not be too open in front, of course. Find me a valet if you can: his wages should, if possible, be less than 80 francs, because I've been getting involved in too much expense... My dear friend, do pardon me for giving you all this trouble, but I simply have to. We shall meet again in a few days and I will embrace you for all you have done... Order the hat at once so that it may be ready in a day or two, and the trousers also, my dear Juliet.75

In less than a week, Fontana found an apartment for Sand (a sort of double mews flat at the back of 16, rue Pigalle) that filled the bill. The deal had to be finalized quickly. Chopin to Fontana, 7 October 1839:

You are invaluable! Take both the rue Pigalle dwellings without further inquiries. Hurry up: Try to beat down the price if you can (point out that you are taking them both). If it is no good, take them for 2,500 but don't let them out of your grasp, for they seem to us the best and most perfect. She regards you as my best and most rational friend. And I added: "My most moody, huggable-and-lovable Anglo-Polish friend."76

Relating to some last-minute instructions before the return from Nohant to Paris of Chopin and the Sand household. Chopin to Fontana, 8 October 1839:
The day after tomorrow, Thursday, we are leaving at five in the morning and on Friday at three or four (certainly by five) I shall be at rue Tronchet. Please notify the people there. I wrote to Jaś today telling him to engage the valet and to instruct him to be in attendance at rue Tronchet from midday. If you had time to look in about that time, we should be the first to embrace each other. You are a real good sort. Please accept once more the warmest thanks of my companion and myself for discovering the place at rue Pigalle. Now I must ask you (since I need trousers) to instruct the tailor to have the gray ones which you ordered, and the waistcoat too if possible, definitely ready by Friday morning so that I can change as soon as I arrive. Tell him to bring them to rue Tronchet and deliver them to Tineau, my valet, who is sure to be there already. (My valet’s name is Tineau!!!) The same applies to the hat from Dupont’s. In return for your doing all this I will alter the second part of the Polonaise for you as long as I live.77

Later that year, Fontana decided to go to Bordeaux, presumably to get away from his friend (and also probably for pecuniary reasons). Fontana may have explained the motive to Chopin in terms of professional pursuits. The latter helped by acquiring recommendations from his friends the Marlianis (Count Manuel Marliani was the Spanish consul in Paris) and one Aguado, a Spanish banker.78 The absence of backing from a musician clearly indicated a lack of trust on Chopin’s part in Fontana’s musical virtues. This must have registered badly on Fontana, who had surely expected some word of support from Chopin. The only available document that relates to that sojourn in Bordeaux is the following announcement in the Parisian Revue et Gazette Musicale early in 1840 under the section entitled Chronique Départementale, Toulouse: “A distinguished pianist, M. Jules Fontana, coming from Bordeaux where he had a remarkable success, has recently arrived here. He intends to give a concert in which he will play compositions of Chopin that are little known in our town.”79 No review of the concert was published, and so it may not have been given. Fontana was soon back in Paris, where he arranged for the production of his opéra de genre, Le Zingaro. It had its premiere early in March 1840 at the Théâtre de la Renaissance. Its review in the Revue et Gazette Musicale was unenthusiastic and somewhat sarcastic: “If one should condemn a composer for being over-indulgent in frequent and daring modulations...then M. Fontana should rest in peace: he would not be accused of being an overly bold innovator. His music is mollified Donizetti. Nevertheless, the dance tunes are affable and gracious.”80 There is no record of any other musical activity that Fontana attempted in Paris at that time. He then returned to Bordeaux, and this is corroborated by the fact that Chopin wrote him a letter there in April 1840 inquiring about his progress.81

The Chopin-Fontana published correspondence was resumed in the summer of 1841 with a set of twenty-one letters by Chopin spanning a period of about twenty weeks. As before, the correspondence dealt with a barrage of errands of various sorts. Sometimes Chopin would callously write: “You
are efficient and decent: that’s why I pile jobs on you,”82 and at other times he would be considerate and turn down Fontana’s offer of help and say: “I can’t accept it, thank you. It would be asking too much of your kindness,”83 only to request another favor!

The last published letter that Chopin sent to Fontana before the latter’s departure from Europe was dated the beginning of November 1841. In it Chopin wrote: “I am sending you the two Nocturnes [op. 48] and the rest on Wednesday.”84 “The rest” presumably included the Allegro de Concert op. 46, the third ballade op. 47, and the fantaisie op. 49. This is suggested by the fact that eleven days later, Chopin wrote to Breitkopf & Härtel informing them that he was sending them all four manuscripts (opp. 46–49).85 These were the last manuscripts that Fontana copied during Chopin’s lifetime even though he (Fontana) stayed on in Paris at least until the winter of 1843.86 It is also curious that after his last letter to Fontana, Chopin never mentioned Fontana’s name in any of his correspondence to his friends or to his family. This turn of events in the relationship between Fontana and Chopin may have followed Fontana’s announcement of his decision to emigrate to America. In his heart of hearts, Chopin must have deeply resented this resolution, which, from his own point of view, was tantamount to desertion. Fontana’s services, particularly as a copyist and as middleman with publishers, were indispensable to the composer. Why did Fontana decide to leave? There are two plausible reasons: he came to realize his own professional mediocrity in the highly competitive European musical arena, and he had had enough of running errands and writing manuscripts for the imperious Chopin, an occupation that must have left him both financially and psychologically exhausted, with very little time and energy to practice his vocation as composer and pianist. In support of the latter reason, the following is an extract quoted by Zamoyski from a letter by Fontana in Paris to his sister in Poland written early in May 1842: “I always relied on one friend, who was to open up my career for me, but who has been consistently dishonest and false…. I even left Paris for a time to get away from his influence, and that did me a lot of harm. I only started composing again after my return.”87 One cannot but agree with Zamoyski’s conclusion that the “friend” in question could have been Chopin. Fontana must have been extremely bitter at the time to refer to him as having been “consistently dishonest and false.” In turn, this cri de coeur coming from so reticent and devoted a personality as Fontana shows how far Chopin had taken advantage of his generosity and kindness.

Apparently Fontana wrote little to Chopin from America. Clearly, the former had not forgotten the past. Prompted by a desire to help a friend who was going to the New World, Chopin wrote to Fontana early in April 1848 seeking his assistance in the matter (it is interesting to note how Chopin tried to reassure himself that nothing had basically changed between them):
Welcome this dear friend Herbault as if he were my father or elder brother... I conjure you by the memory of our schooldays to be as cordial as possible towards him...What a sulky beast you are, not to have written me a single kind word. Never mind. You have a tender spot in your heart for me, as I have for you... You are still my good old Julian—I need say no more. I embrace you cordially, my dear friend.

Chopin’s last published letter to his friend was written a little over four months later during Chopin’s stay in Scotland. (Fontana was then in London, on his way to America after a short stay in Europe.) The tone is mellow, nostalgic, and sad, but still tinged with that touch of his patent humor. It is the only extant letter to Fontana that is devoid of favors or instructions:

If I felt better I would travel to London tomorrow in order to give you a last embrace. Perhaps we shall not meet face to face so soon. We are a couple of old cembali on which time and circumstances have played out their miserable trills. ...I can scarcely breathe: I am just about ready to give up the ghost. And you, I am sure, are growing bald.... I don’t know how it is, but thoughts of our late friends Jaś and Antoni, and Witwicki and Sobański, keep coming into my head. All those with whom I was in most intimate harmony have died and left me... I dream now of home, then of Rome; now of happiness, then of misery... All that is left to me is a long nose and a fourth finger out of practice... I wish you all happiness.... If you see your famous philosopher Emerson, remember me to him. Give my regards to Herbault. Give yourself a kiss from me, and don’t pull a long face.

After his friend’s death, Fontana thought of writing a biography of Chopin. He communicated the idea to his friend Stanisław Kozźmian in London early in July 1850:

What can we write about Chopin? Either a number of volumes or nothing at all. How can we capture in a few lines his character—so extraordinary; his compositions—so exquisite, so rich in novelties and ideas? And, in addition, to write for a public which is, as you say, completely indifferent and incapable of ascending to a point below which they will not even see Chopin’s heel? Still, I shall try.

A year later, however, he had not yet begun. When Liszt’s biography appeared in France in 1851, he became discouraged, even though he was sharply critical of part of its contents. He abandoned his plan soon afterward.

After his marriage in New York in September 1850, Fontana returned with his wife to France in 1851. He settled in Montgeron, near Fontainebleau, next to the Mickiewicz. In October 1853 the Chopin family (Fryderyk’s mother and sisters) formally gave him their consent to edit Chopin’s
posthumous works,91 which were published as opp. 66–73 in 1855 and op. 74 in 1859. In mid-1855 Mrs. Fontana, together with her newborn daughter Zofia, died. (By then, Fontana had a two-year-old son, Julian.) Soon afterward, Fontana went to America and entrusted his four stepchildren to the custody of his sister-in-law, Mrs. Lolita Olivier, in New Orleans. Between 1857 and 1860, he traveled frequently—he had no difficulty in doing so as an American citizen—visiting Austria, Cuba, Poland, Prussia, and Russia. In 1860 he settled permanently in Paris, devoting himself mainly to literary works, among which were articles about Chopin published in Kraków and Poznań. Plagued for a long time by a vertebral ailment, it eventually was the cause of his total deafness. Apparently it was this, together with financial difficulties, that prompted him to commit suicide on 23 December 1869. However, Fontana’s granddaughter, Mrs. Zofia Fontana Nicolle, maintained that her grandfather’s suicide was induced by “his loss of hearing, Chopin and Poland.”92

TYTUS WOYCI ECHOWSKI

Of all Chopin’s early friends, Tytus Woyciechowski stands out as the one whose influence on Chopin the man during his formative years was the most marked. While Białobłocki related to Chopin the boy, Tytus addressed Chopin the awakening adolescent. By all accounts, Tytus was physically and mentally the antithesis of Chopin: rugged and virile, with a down-to-earth realism and a no-nonsense attitude to life. Tytus had all those personal attributes that Chopin lacked and was groping and craving for: self-assertion, inner strength, and decisiveness. No wonder that Chopin, for a while, was emotionally dependent on Tytus, who quickly became his hero figure, confidant, and alter ego. The explicitly erotic passages (that have aroused so much controversy among biographers) contained in some of Chopin’s letter to Tytus should be viewed in their proper perspective: they relate to a transition period, not uncommon in puberty and adolescence, during which Chopin was maturing emotionally. By the age of twenty-one, his personality was formed, and he was to exhibit those personal characteristics that were to remain his own: tactfulness, common sense, and realism, blended with a good deal of reserve, except for his most intimate friends.

Tytus was the son of a rich landowner at Poturzyn, near Tomaszów (now in the district of Zamość), some 300 kilometers southeast of Warsaw. He joined the Chopin household as a boarder probably in the autumn of 1824. About two years Chopin’s senior, he was one year ahead of Chopin at the lyceum. At the end of July 1826, he obtained a qualifying diploma to enter Warsaw University, but in the course of his first year there, he decided to go to Poturzyn and look after his father’s estate. In Chopin’s published correspondence, his name was first mentioned in the same letter dated Sep-
Tytus Woyciechowski. Photograph taken in the 1870s. National Library, Warsaw. Tytus Woyciechowski was Chopin’s hero figure and alter ego during the composer’s adolescence. Chopin idolized him for his maturity of character, a virtue that Chopin seriously lacked at the time. The erotic passages in his letters to Tytus are a reflection of this sentiment. The break with Tytus in Vienna virtually marked Chopin’s transition from adolescence to early manhood.
tember 1823 that also included Białobłocki’s. Chopin asked Marylski, the recipient of the letter, to remember him kindly to Weltz (half-brother of Tytus) and Tytus. The first known letter to Tytus was written at about the time of Białobłocki’s death and was dated 9 September 1828. On that same day, Chopin was to travel to Berlin with Professor Jarocki, a zoologist. Delighted about the visit, his first trip abroad, and excited about the prospect of meeting other musicians and hearing new music, he wrote feverishly:

I am writing like a madman, for I really don’t know what’s happening to me! … Those who know Berlin well have told me that by making Lichtenstein’s acquaintance I shall get to know the most important musicians in Berlin…. I shall be there with Jarocki only two weeks, but it will be long enough for me to hear at least one first-class opera… On my return you shall have a description of what I have seen. … As for my new compositions, I have nothing apart from an unfinished Trio in G minor which I began shortly after you left… I imagine [it] will have the same fate as my Sonata and Variations. They are already at Leipzig: the first dedicated, as you know to Elsner; and on the second I placed, perhaps too boldly, your name. My affection made me do it and I trust you will not take it amiss… 93 Give a kiss to your faithful friend…. I kiss you again and again. 94 Have mercy on me and write often—a word, or half a word, or even a single letter: it will be dear to me. 95

On 27 December 1828, Chopin wrote to Tytus of a nonadventure that had taken place during the previous summer, before his trip to Berlin. It took him some five months to write about it, which meant either that he did not consider it of any importance or that his trust in his friend had not yet matured at that time. He had been invited that summer by the Pruszak family at Sanniki, some 80 kilometers southwest of Warsaw in the district of Gostynin. Young Konstanty (Kostuś) Pruszak, a boy of his age, had been a lyceum classmate, and the Chopins and the Pruszaks had long been friends. After the Pruszaks’ return from Sanniki to Warsaw some three months later, it was found that the family’s resident governess was pregnant, and because Chopin had been on friendly terms with her, Mme. Pruszak assumed that he was her seducer. “I… always used to stroll in the garden with [her]… but nothing more,” confided Chopin to Tytus in a mixture of incorrect Italian and Polish. “She is anything but charming. Like a fool I had no desire for her—lucky for me.” 96 After the real seducer was found, Chopin was invited to give private piano lessons to the young Aleksandra (Olesia) Pruszak. The eighteen-year-old composer was yet to meet the woman with the right physical and mental makeup. Correspondence with Tytus was apparently then interrupted for almost nine months until 12 September 1829. In the meantime, Chopin had com-
posed a series of important works, including two études of op. 10, the rondo for two pianos op. 73, the Fantasy on Polish Airs for piano and orchestra op. 13, the Rondo à la krakowiak for piano and orchestra op. 14, and the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in F Minor op. 21. He had also completed his studies at the High School of Music. Immediately following the final exams, on 21 July, he set off with a group of friends from the university for his visit to Vienna. There, at the Kärntnerthortheater, he gave two triumphant concerts on 11 and 18 August, playing his Là ci darem Variations and his Rondo à la krakowiak. This marked his real professional debut.

Chopin returned to Warsaw on 12 September, and on the same day wrote to Tytus to give him a detailed account of his “big journey.”97 In the following letter, dated 3 October, he confided to Tytus about his “ideal,” the first confession of Chopin’s love for Konstancja Gladkowska, a singing student at the conservatory he had met the previous April. Again, as in the case of the Pruszak affair, he was reluctant to share immediately his secret about her with Tytus. The letter was accompanied by a Valse op. 70, no. 3, inspired by Konstancja. Later in the letter, he expressed his longing for Tytus, who was then at Poturzyn. “It is unbearable when something weighs on your mind, not to be able to unburden yourself of it. You know what I am referring to. I tell my piano things which once I used to tell you... I’m sorry I sent you that waltz but, well, I wanted to please you because I’m madly in love with you.”98

On 20 October, Chopin dashed off another letter with a mixed bag of news, among which were his impending visits to the Wiesiołowskis (Mrs. Anna Wiesiołowska, née Countess Skarbek, was Chopin’s godmother) in the district of Poznań, and to the Radziwiłłs nearby in the country estate of Antonin, and a chamber music evening at the rooms of Joseph Kessler (a German pianist and music teacher in Warsaw), which included Beethoven’s last string trio. (“I haven’t heard anything so great for a long time. Beethoven snaps his fingers at the whole world.”)99 He ended the letter thus: “I kiss you lovingly. This is how people usually end their letters, but they don’t really mean what they are writing. I for one know what I write, for I love you dearly.”100 On 14 November, Chopin described his delightful stay with the Radziwiłłs, where he wrote the Polonaise op. 3 for piano and cello specifically for Prince Antoni (who was a composer and an accomplished cellist) and his daughter, Wanda. “It is merely a series of brilliant effects for the salons and for the ladies,” he explained to Tytus. “You see I wanted Princess Wanda to learn it—I was giving her lessons at the time.”101 However, he was restless and gloomy, despite his work on his second piano concerto, op. 11. He dreamed of another visit to Vienna and reiterated his longing for Tytus. “I don’t think I’ll be able to leave before December... If I were to go before you arrive (which is unlikely) I should let you know. There is nothing I wish more than to see you... You can’t...
imagine what I lack most in Warsaw: someone to talk to freely. You said you would like to have my portrait: if I could steal one from Princess Eliza I would send it to you.... Believe me, I’m nearly always thinking of you. As long as I live I shall never leave you.”

During the following winter, Chopin gave two major public concerts at the National Theater in Warsaw, on 17 and 22 March 1830. Tytus failed to attend both concerts, remaining entrenched at Poturzyn. Chopin started a letter to him on 27 March as follows: “Never have I felt your absence so much as at this moment; you are not here and I have no one to whom I can pour out my feelings. A single glance from you after each of my concerts would have been more to me than all this praise from journalists or people like Elsner, Kurpiński, Soliva and so on.” After going into the details of how the concerts fared, he told Tytus that he would send him his portrait as soon as I possibly can; you want it and shall have it, but no one else. Well, I might give it to one other person, but not before you, who are dearest to me. No one but myself has read your letter. Now, as always, I carry your letters about with me. In May, when I go for a walk outside the town, thinking of my approaching journey, what a joy it will be to take out your letter and learn again beyond doubt that you love me.

At the end of the next letter, dated 10 April (the anniversary of Emilia’s death), he assured Tytus, “You are the only one I care for.”

Chopin's obsessive feelings for Tytus were now progressing from strength to strength, and it seems that they were beyond his control. The ambivalent sentiments must have played havoc on him, particularly at a time when he was almost mature musically. These sentiments may have been at the root of his depression when he wrote to Tytus on 17 April 1830 (his father’s birthday):

I wish I could throw off the thoughts which poison my happiness, but I take a kind of pleasure in indulging them. I don’t know what is wrong with me.... I am always dreaming of you. It so often happens to me to mix up day and night, to live in dreams and to sleep during the day—indeed it's worse than being asleep, for my feelings are still awake; but instead of renewing my strength in such a day-trance, as I would if I were really asleep, I feel only more tired and exhausted. Keep me in your affection, I beg you.

There is no proof that Tytus and Chopin were ever lovers in the physical sense. It seems more likely that Chopin's idée fixe on Tytus was simply an extreme form of dependence that resulted from his feeling of immaturity vis-à-vis his friend and from his tense frustrations over his feelings for Konstancja Gladkowska (Chapter 4). These were channeled through Tytus, whom Chopin may have subconsciously identified with his “ideal,” and
who then became the recipient of correspondence that read like love letters. In that sense, Ruth Jordan is right in stating that Tytus was Fryderyk’s first love. Chopin was still considering a trip to Vienna but could not conceive of it without Tytus. On 15 May he wrote, “I think that instead of going abroad this year I shall linger on here until I am down with fever and that will be the end of everything. I shall stay on through June, July, until I have lost the desire to go at all. You know why, of course...simply because of the heat.” Later he made the distinction between what the public was led to believe about his amorous life and his true sentiments. “One must be obedient and respect the mask of hidden feelings. You know, I never thought that I could be so dissimulating as I am now, when I have not the courage to confide to you what is wrong with me.”

In that same letter, we have one of those rare instances when Chopin allowed himself to be descriptive about one of his compositions. The music in question was the adagio of his second piano concerto: “It is not meant to create a powerful effect; it is rather a Romance, calm and melancholy, giving the impression of someone looking gently towards a spot which calls to mind a thousand happy memories. It is a kind of reverie in the moonlight on a beautiful spring evening.” He ended his letter on a tender but anguished note: “No! you don’t realize how fond of you I am, and have no means of showing it, yet I have long wished that you might know it. Oh, what would I not give to press your hand!... You would never guess—half of my miserable life.”

About two months later, in July, Chopin went on a fortnight’s visit to Tytus in Poturzyn. They had not seen each other for a year. The visit was interrupted by Chopin’s desire to attend Konstancja Gladkowska’s operatic debut in Warsaw on 21 July. Later, he did not return to Poturzyn but chose instead to remain with his parents. If his “love” for Tytus was truly homosexual, wouldn’t he have hurried back to his friend? In his letter to him dated 21 August, which started off with “Disgusting hypocrite,” Chopin reminisced nostalgically over his stay: “I feel nostalgic for your fields, and I cannot forget that birch tree under the windows. And that crossbow! How romantic! I remember how you bullied me with that crossbow for my sins!” He mentioned that he would be leaving during the following month. And he ended on a sweet-sour note to the friend he could not be without: “Next week, nothing will prevent me from scolding you for what I should have written about today. Enough. I want nothing from you any more, not even a handshake. I’m disgusted with you for ever, infernal monster! Give me your lips.”

Chopin was still undecided about his departure. He expressed himself now clearly regarding the reason for the delay. (Later, he was to give yet another reason.) At the end of August, he wrote to Tytus:
Your letter arrived just in time. It cured me of my cold. May my letters have the same blessed result of curing you of falseness and hypocrisy! But I’m sure that this letter will do nothing of the sort. On the contrary, it will...probably rouse anger in your lion heart. I’m lucky to be forty miles away from you or else your whole wrath would descend on me.... Yes I’m still in Warsaw, and since I love you there is nothing to tempt me to go abroad. Believe me, if I leave next week ...it will be to obey the call of my vocation and submit to common sense.114

But on 4 September he wrote, “I’m still here; I haven’t got the strength to fix a date.”115 He ended the same letter on a blatantly erotic note: “Don’t kiss me, because I haven’t yet washed! You? Even if I anointed myself with Byzantine perfumes, you would only kiss me if I forced you to by magnetic means. But there are forces in nature, and tonight you will dream that you are kissing me. I must avenge myself for the nightmare that you gave me last night.”116 This time, at least superficially, there was good reason for the delay in his travel plans: he was putting the finishing touches on the score of his second piano concerto and was arranging for a full-scale rehearsal at home. “When rehearsals are over,” he wrote a fortnight later, “I shall be going away but where to? since there is nothing that attracts me. In any case, I don’t intend to stay here in Warsaw, and if you suspect it’s because of a love-affair, as many people in Warsaw do, put such thoughts out of your mind and believe me when I tell you that where my self-interest is concerned I can be above all such things. Even if I had been in love, I could be strong enough to hide an idle passion which could come to nothing.”117 The “idle passion” expressed here was for Tytus. Apparently Tytus had mentioned that he might accompany Chopin during part of his travels because Chopin went on to say (was it out of false pride or self-control?):

I shouldn’t like to travel with you. Honestly, if we did, it would spoil the moment, more precious than a full thousand monotonous days of ordinary life, when we should embrace each other for the first time.... Perhaps I shan’t be able to control myself and I shall blurt out what I never cease to dream of, what is constantly before my eyes, what rings at every moment in my ears, and what gives me the greatest joy in the world and at the same time the greatest misery....I know my love for you is hopeless, and I only scribble all this nonsense to try to make you love me steadily and more deeply.118

The full performance of the second piano concerto took place in the Chopin apartment on 22 September. On that morning, Chopin again dwelled on the reason for the previous delay in his travel plans. “My father has not really wanted me to leave, on account of the disturbances which have broken out all over Germany.... I shall certainly be leaving in a few weeks’ time for Vienna via Kraków....If you were not far, far away...I would order you to come here; but I know you would prefer—perhaps
as a penance for your other enormous sins—to bring consolation to others rather than me.”

The tryout of the concerto was so successful that Chopin was persuaded to give a public concert at the National Theater on 11 October. For once, he was decisive about his departure. “Not later than a week after my concert,” he wrote to Tytus on 5 October, “Warsaw will have seen the last of me. My trunk is already bought, all my outfit is ready, my musical scores have been [bound], my handkerchiefs stitched and my trousers tailored.” (As it turned out, he left Warsaw almost a month later, on 2 November.)

Characteristically, he ended the letter with some revealing personal remarks: “Give me a kiss my beloved. I am convinced that you love me but I am afraid of you as if you were a sort of tyrant. I don’t know why I’m afraid of you. God knows you are the only one who has power over me, you and…no one else.”

The departure from Warsaw was set for Tuesday, 2 November. Tytus finally decided to accompany his friend as far as Vienna. They were to meet in Kalisz, near the Polish-Austrian border at the time. Chopin was never to see Poland again. The route the two travelers followed to Vienna took them first to Wrocław (Breslau), where they stayed for four days, and then to Dresden, where they were hosted, among others from the many Polish compatriots there, by Countess Komar and her three daughters. It was to be Chopin’s first meeting with the eldest of these, Countess Delfina Potocka. After a week’s stay in Dresden, followed by a day’s sojourn in Prague, Tytus and Chopin arrived in Vienna on 23 November. On 29 November, the Polish uprising against the Russians broke out in Warsaw. Tytus decided to return there and on the eve of his departure advised Chopin to stay in Vienna. The umbilical cord that had linked these two passionate friends was finally severed. Chopin was never to see Tytus again.

Chopin’s second visit to Vienna, contrary to his dream and expectations, turned out to be profitless, although he lost no opportunity to savor the best that the city could offer musically: Sigismond Thalberg the pianist, Josef Slavik the violonist, Joseph Merk the cellist (for whom Chopin composed the Introduction to the Polonaise for Cello and Piano op. 3), and a variety of performances at the Vienna Opera and the Italian Opera. Chopin’s sojourn was no triumphal comeback. Professionally, the balance of his stay was only two nondescript public performances on 4 April and 11 June. Accompanied by Norbert Kumelski, a compatriot who had finished his studies in biology in Vienna and was returning to Poland, Chopin left the city on 20 July heading for Paris via Salzburg, Munich, and Stuttgart. A few days after his arrival in Stuttgart early in September, and all alone (Kumelski had left him in Munich), he heard of the fall of Warsaw to the Russians on 8 September. The extreme anxiety he suffered over the safety of his loved ones there, coupled already with the pain of having been uprooted from his homeland and his friends and of being on his own in an
alien land, was arguably the most traumatic experience in his life. The so-called Stuttgart diary is the surviving testimony of that harrowing period.\footnote{122}

Surprisingly, Chopin emerged from his latest trials shaken but strengthened in his resolve. Apparently it took him a remarkably short time to settle down in Paris after his arrival there in mid-September. What helped was that Paris had a sizable colony of Polish émigrés, and he lost no time in making contact with them. In his first known letter from the French capital, dated 18 November and addressed to Kumelski in Berlin, he was lively in his description of his first impressions of Paris, the musicians he had already met, and the social contacts he had made, including one with Delfina Potocka.

Chopin reserved his news about Paris from Tytus to a somewhat later date. Writing chattily on 12 December, he reminisced about his hardships before arriving at the French capital ("What changes, what miseries—who could ever have foreseen them! Do you remember that midnight council of war in Vienna the day before you left?"),\footnote{123} wrote about the charm of Paris ("Paris is whatever you care to make of it. You can enjoy yourself, laugh, cry, do anything you like, and no one takes any notice because thousands here are doing exactly the same—everyone goes his own way"),\footnote{124} discussed the various leading pianists he had already met ("I confess I have played as well as Herz, but I long to play like Kalkbrenner…. He is a giant who tramples underfoot the Herzes, Czernys and of course me!"),\footnote{125} considered taking piano lessons with Kalkbrenner ("I have written to my parents about this. They seem to agree, but Elsner thinks it's a question of jealousy"),\footnote{126} outlined his future plans ("I am giving a concert on 25 December [in fact, his Paris debut did not take place until 26 February 1832]. ...I shall also play on two pianos with Kalkbrenner, accompanied by four other pianos, his Marche suivie d'une Polonaise"),\footnote{127} and reviewed the various ongoing operas and their stars.

By contrast, in the next letter, dated 25 December, Chopin looked deep down in his emotions and tried to analyze, perhaps for the first time in his adult life, his true nature: "Outwardly I am cheerful...but inside me I am tortured by all sorts of forebodings, anxieties, dreams or insomnia, longings and indifference, the impulse to live, followed by a wish to die—a kind of delicious trance or unconsciousness. Sometimes, sharp, vivid memory will torment me. Everything seems sour, bitter, salty—a ghastly mix-up of feelings agitates my mind."\footnote{128} This summed up his psychological makeup and his artistic personality at the time, and is indicative of the inconsistencies in his character that were to become increasingly marked with the development of his physical sufferings.

The published correspondence was then interrupted and resumed some eighteen years later, about two months before Chopin’s death. It is certain that there were letters during that interim period.\footnote{129} These may have been lost during World War I in the Lublin district of southeast Poland, where
fire destroyed various Chopin memorabilia that belonged to Tadeusz Wydzga, the husband of Tytus’s
granddaughter. The first of the two remaining published letters, dated 20 August 1849, was
apparently in response to news received from Tytus, then a Russian subject, that the latter had been
taking the waters at Karlsbad that summer and was planning to proceed to Paris but instead had to
stop short at Ostend because he had been refused a French visa. Chopin wrote: “My dearest friend, I
need to be as ill as I am at this moment if I cannot stir from Paris when you are about to arrive at
Ostend. But I hope that God will allow you to come to me. The doctors won’t let me undertake any
journey. I drink Pyrenean water in my bedroom, but your presence would do me more good than all
their medicines.” Chopin did all he could to help his friend get permission to go to Paris, but to no
avail. In his last letter to Tytus, dated 12 September 1849, Chopin pathetically wrote: “I wanted to set
off in the train for Valenciennes, at the frontier, to meet and embrace you, but... the doctors won’t allow
me to leave Paris... You may perhaps succeed in coming here. I am not selfish enough to wish it for
myself alone; as I am ill you would only have a few hours of boredom and disappointment, mingled with
a few hours of joy and happy memories. But I would like the time we spent together to be one of
complete and perfect happiness.”
The Woyciechowski-Chopin relationship was a watershed in Chopin’s emotional development. For the
hypersensitive teenage composer, who was reserved to the extreme with strangers and all but reticent
in his dealings with women, the experience with Tytus was arguably a prerequisite to his future adult
life. The break with Tytus in Vienna, painful as it was under the circumstances, marked Chopin’s
emotional awakening and the maturing of his personality. He was to retain all his life a certain degree of
indecisiveness and was to remain a romantic daydreamer at heart; but this was now to be accompanied
by a keener sense of reality.
Music Teacher and Mentor: Józef Elsner

Sometime after he completed his piano studies with Żywny in 1822, Chopin started taking private lessons in harmony and counterpoint with Józef Elsner, one of the foremost Polish composers at that time and a leading figure in Warsaw's musical life. Elsner was then in charge of the Institute of Music and Declamation in Warsaw. It is not known when and under what circumstances Chopin first met him, but it is conceivable that it was Żywny, a friend of the prominent musicians of Warsaw, who introduced his pupil to the eminent composer. The choice of Elsner as Chopin's private tutor in music composition could not have been a happier one. Elsner had all those positive attributes to guide the boy genius without stifling his originality or inhibiting his creativity.

Józef Antoni Franciszek Elsner was born on 1 June 1769 at Grodków in the Opole region of Silesia. Although his family is regarded as being of German stock, he claimed to have traced his ancestry to the Vasa dynasty, the Swedish family that ruled from 1523 to 1818. He received his primary and secondary education in Wrocław (Breslau) at the Dominican and Jesuit schools. Apparently it was there that he received his first instruction in music and became a chorister in one of the local churches. Later, he went to Vienna as a medical student, but decided to abandon his medical studies and devote his life to music. His first appointment was as first violinist in the municipal theater at Brno. Subsequently, in 1792, he became the conductor of the National Theater at Lwów. In 1799 he took up the post of conductor at the National Theater in Warsaw, which became his home for the rest of his life. Early in 1807, his opera Andromeda was produced at that theater in honor of Napoleon, who was in the city at that time. In 1811, the dramatist Woyciech Bogusławski, who had made the acquain-
Józef Antoni Franciszek Elsner. Portrait in oils by an unknown artist, 1803–1805. Fryderyk Chopin Society Museum, Warsaw. Elsner recognized Chopin’s genius while the youthful composer was still his student. Chopin owed him a great deal for his balanced and selfless guidance during his formative years at the Warsaw High School of Music. Regardless of Chopin’s evaluation of Elsner as a composer and despite his rejection of Elsner’s advice to write operas, Chopin always held his music teacher in high esteem.
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tance of Elsner at Lwów, founded the Szkoła Dramatyczna (School of Drama) for singers in Warsaw, linking it to the National Theater, of which he was the director. When Bogusławski relinquished the management of the theater in 1814, his successor, Ludwik Osiński, appointed Elsner as professor of music at the school and was placed in charge of its development. In 1816, Elsner reorganized it into the School of Music and Drama, and five years later the school was made independent of the National Theater and renamed the Institute of Music and Declamation, with Elsner as its rector. Carlo Evasio Soliva, a Piedmontese conductor and composer, was appointed head of its vocal section. (In 1823, Elsner was honored for his service to music by being awarded the Order of St. Stanislaw.) In 1826, following differences between Elsner and Soliva, the institute was restructured into the High School of Music under Elsner, and the School of Singing and Declamation (a branch of the high school) under Soliva, who took up his new appointment in February 1827. Both schools were commonly referred to as the Warsaw Conservatory.

The program of study in the high school was three years and included both instrumental teaching and the theory of music and composition. (When Chopin entered the high school in 1826, he followed only the latter part of the program, having nothing to acquire from instrumental teaching.)

Elsner was a prolific though unoriginal composer whose output encompassed a large variety of genres, including masses, oratorios, cantatas, symphonies, ballets, sonatas, operas, melodramas, and chamber music. According to Niecks, he has twenty-seven Polish operas to his credit, while the new Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians lists fifty-five cantatas, thirty-three masses, eight symphonies, and six string quartets among his output. His best work is considered to be his Coronation Mass (of which Chopin thought most highly, as revealed in a letter to his family dated 9 November 1830), and his best opera Krol Lokietek (King Lokietek). The well-known French musicologist and contemporary of Chopin, Joseph Fétis, regarded Elsner’s work as uninspired and remarked that they “are in the style of Paër and Mayer’s music…[with] little originality and variety in his ideas. Elsner writes with sufficient purity, although he shows in his fugues that his studies have not been severe.” This apparent lack of strictness in his music education is also echoed in Schilling’s Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst, which comments that “one forgives him readily [in consideration of the general excellence of his style] the offenses against the law of harmonic connection that occur here and there, and the facility with which he sometimes disregards the fixed rules of strict part-writing.” Chopin’s individual imagination would have certainly been fettered by a fastidious mentor, and in this sense Elsner’s liberalism gave full rein to Chopin’s musical propensity. But that does not mean that Chopin’s academic grounding at the High School of Music under Elsner was lax. On the contrary, the traditional program of study there was intensive enough to pro-
vide him with a solid background in the basic principles of music theory. However, in his last year, which
was supposed to be devoted to practical exercises in composition, Chopin was allowed to pursue his
own inclinations, and this must have been done with Elsner’s consent. Rather than channeling all his
efforts solely to statutory forms (notably masses, oratorios, orchestral, and chamber music), he tried
also to achieve with the piano what Paganini had accomplished with the violin: to elevate the piano from
its traditional role as an accompanying instrument to a virtuosic one in its own right. This is reflected in
the following compositions during that period: Souvenir de Paganini, the Fantasy on Polish Airs for Piano
and Orchestra op. 13, the Rondo à la krakowiak for Piano and Orchestra op. 14, and parts of the
Concerto in F Minor for Piano and Orchestra op. 21. Of the third work, he wrote to Tytus Woyciechowski
on 27 December 1828: “The score of the Rondo à la krakowiak is finished. The Introduction is original—
more so than I look in my felt greatcoat.”11 To someone who blamed Chopin’s own “offenses against the
law of harmonic connection,” Elsner is said to have retorted: “Leave him in peace. His is an
extraordinary path, for he has an extraordinary gift. He does not follow the old rules, because he seeks
those of his own.”12
Chopin’s colleagues in Elsner’s composition class included four students who were later among Poland’s
eminent composers: Ignacy Dobrzyński, Tomasz Nidecki, Józef Nowakowski, and Antoni Orlowski.
Perhaps because he did not conform strictly to set requirements, Chopin did not initially do as well as
some of his classmates.13 However, Elsner’s report was upgraded the following year and described
Chopin as being remarkably talented,14 while in the final year he was referred to as a musical genius.15
In particular, Elsner noted in his private diary that Chopin had broken new ground in piano music
through his compositions and amazing playing.16
Elsner’s warmth of feeling and high esteem toward Chopin was amply demonstrated when the young
composer left Warsaw forever, on 2 November 1830. The occasion was recorded as follows by Elsner
himself in his Summary of his musical output at that time under the heading “Greater and Lesser
Cantatas,” no. 37: “Cantata for male voices with guitar accompaniment, written on the occasion of the
departure of my pupil Chopin, and performed by his fellow students in the Composition class at the
Conservatory, in an inn near Wola [near Warsaw], where we were waiting for the mail-coach which was
to take him away.”17 Unfortunately, the cantata is presumably lost. However, the words, together with
a preceding valedictory, have survived:
Born among the Polish fields, may your talent bring you fame wherever you go; and whether you dwell
on the banks of Spree, Tiber or Seine, let there ever be heard in your music, according to the good old
Polish custom, those tunes which delight us here: the Mazurka and the dear Krakowiak.
Chorus. Although you leave our native land
Still will your heart remain with us,
And the memory of the genius within you.
And so, from the bottom of our hearts we say,
"Good luck wherever you go!" 18

From then on Elsner’s role in Chopin’s life was to be transformed from one of composition teacher to
that of mentor and friend, who was anxious to know how his ex-pupil was faring. Both kept in touch
with each other until late into Chopin’s life in Paris. Mutual respect and affection pervade all the letters
between them and all allusions made to each other in their correspondence with their respective
acquaintances.

Chopin’s published correspondence with Elsner started late in August 1826, at the end of his private
tutelage under Elsner and shortly before he commenced his formal studies at the Warsaw High School
of Music. It was from Duszniki (Bad Reinerz), where Justyna Chopin and her family spent some five
weeks during the summer of 1826 for the benefit of the ailing Emilia, that Fryderyk wrote a letter dated
20 August to his composition teacher. Its relaxed tone demonstrates the warmth of feeling that existed
between them:

Since coming to Reinerz I have been looking forward to the pleasure of writing to you, but since my
time is completely taken up by the cure it has been impossible for me to do so, and only now can I find
a moment to give myself the pleasure of conversing with you…. Your kindness and the lively interest
you have shown in me encourage me to think that you will not receive with indifference the news I give
you of my health. The fresh air and the whey which I take very conscientiously have restored me to
such a degree that I am quite altered from what I was in Warsaw…. But there is one thing that all the
charms of Reinerz cannot replace: a good instrument. Can you believe, Sir, that there is not a single
good piano here? …Fortunately this martyrdom will not last long; the time for my departure from
Reinerz is approaching and we shall set off on the 11th of next month. Until I have the pleasure of
meeting you, allow me, Sir, to assure you of my highest esteem. 19

This “highest esteem” was coupled with a deep respect and regard for Elsner’s opinion, particularly
where it concerned Chopin’s own activities and plans. For example, while on his first visit to Vienna in
July and August 1829 and following his first of two public concerts (marking his professional debut) at
the Kärntnerthortheater on 11 August, he wrote inquiringly and anxiously to his family: “I am curious to
know what Mr. Elsner will say to all this; perhaps he is displeased that I have played? But they really
insisted so much that I could not refuse.” 20 About a couple of months later, he was gratified over
Elsner’s approval of the slow movement of his first piano concerto, particularly perhaps because it was
inspired by his infatuation with Konstancja Gładkowska: “Elsner has praised the Adagio of my
concerto. He says it is original."21 Following his two major public concerts in Warsaw in March 1830, he noted apprehensively to Tytus Woyciechowski that “Elsner regretted that the tone of my piano was too woolly and prevented the runs in the bass from being heard.”22 And at the time of rehearsing his piano concerto, it was Elsner’s appraisal in particular that counted for him: “I shall have to rely on Ernemann’s opinion of my concerto. Kurpiński will be there too, and Soliva and the whole musical world, but I have little faith in these gentlemen, apart from Elsner.”23 Following Chopin’s departure from Warsaw, it was Elsner apparently who wrote first to inquire about his ex-pupil. Chopin felt guilty regarding this and also about the fact that, until late January, he had not arranged to give a concert. He was obviously anxious not to disappoint his former teacher. Toward the end of January he wrote to Elsner from Vienna:

I feel ashamed that your kindness, of which I received so many proofs when I left Warsaw, has once again anticipated the paying of my debt towards you—it was I who should have written as soon as I reached Vienna. But if I have so long postponed writing it was because I was sure that my parents would not fail to communicate to you all the most interesting news from me, and I waited until I could tell you something definite about my plans. However, from the day on which I learnt of the events of 29 November until now, I have experienced nothing but distressing fears and melancholy...I hope that, knowing me as you do, you will not think ill of me for having allowed my feelings for my people at home to take first place and for having so far done nothing about a concert.... Nevertheless I hope that somehow all will turn out for the best and that before the Carnival is over I shall produce my first concerto... You ask me about my second concerto, which Nidecki has learnt on his own initiative... You will surely be hearing from him about it... We shall bring you satisfaction, sir—if not shame, for Aloys Schmidt, a pianist from Frankfurt, had a rough reception, although he is over forty and composes eighty-year-old music!24

It is perhaps in relation to the Kalkbrenner affair that Elsner is best remembered as the mentor of Chopin during the latter’s Parisian years. Chopin’s acquaintance with the music of Friedrich Kalkbrenner went back to at least 1824 when Chopin mentioned him in his Kuryer Szafarski dated 19 August 1824: “On 15 August, at a musical gathering at Szafarnia, consisting of a score or so of somebodies and nobodies, Mr. Pichon figured in the programme, playing Kalkbrenner’s concerto, which did not, however, make such an impression, particularly on the nobodies, as The Little Jew, performed by this same Mr. Pichon.”25 That Kalkbrenner was a virtuoso of the first rank was well known across Europe at the time. But it was not until Chopin heard him not long after his (Chopin’s) arrival in Paris in mid-September 1831 that he had firsthand knowledge of the excellence of his playing. On 18 November 1831, he wrote to Alfons Kumelski, who had accompanied him from Vienna to Munich on his way to Paris, “I am
very intimate with Kalkbrenner, the leading European pianist, whom I am sure you would like. (He is the only one whose shoelaces I am not fit to untie: all these people like Herz, etc.—I tell you they are mere boasters; they will never play better then he.)”26 But it was about five weeks later when he wrote to Tytus Woyciechowski that he was more expansive about his encounter with and his impressions of Kalkbrenner:

If Paganini is perfection itself, Kalkbrenner is his equal but in quite a different field. It is impossible to describe his calm, his enchanting touch, his incomparable evenness and the mastery which he reveals in every note… What happens? On being introduced to [him], he invites me to play something. Willy-nilly, not having heard him beforehand but knowing how Herz plays, I sit down at the piano, having put aside every shred of conceit. I played my E minor Concerto which the Rhinelanders—the Lindpaintners, Bergs, Stuntzes—and all Bavaria could not praise highly enough. I surprised M. Kalkbrenner, who at once questioned me as to whether I was a pupil of Field, for he found that I have the style of Cramer and the touch of Field. I was terribly pleased to hear that—and even more pleased when Kalkbrenner took his seat at the piano to show off to me but got lost and had to stop. But you should have heard how he took the repeat—I never imagined anything like it. From that time we have seen each other daily, either at his house or mine, and now that he has got to know me well he proposes that I should become his pupil for three years and he will make of me something very, very ...!27

Chopin had already divulged this proposal of Kalkbrenner to his father (the letter is presumably lost) who referred that matter to Elsner. The latter must have discussed it at length with the Chopin family, particularly with Nicolas and Ludwika, whose opinions eventually stood alongside (and perhaps were swayed by) that of Elsner. Nicolas to Fryderyk, 27 November 1831:

It is very flattering that Mr. Kalkbrenner has shown such friendship towards you. …But I cannot imagine how, with the talents which he says he finds in you, he should believe it necessary for you to spend three years under his guidance in order to make an artist out of you and give you a “solid foundation.” I am not in a position to understand this last expression although I asked your true friend Elsner to explain—I refer you to his letter… Taking everything into account, the period of three years baffles me. However, I don’t wish to stand in your way, but I should be glad if you would postpone your decision until you have weighed the matter carefully, listened to advice and thought it over… I send you a loving kiss, entreating you not to trust too much in strangers.28

Ludwika to Fryderyk, 27 November 1831:
Kalkbrenner had filled me with admiration: I could see him in imagination as a man such as I would to God all men were. I saw his nobility, moral superiority; in a word, if I myself had been concerned I would have signed a pact handing over to him myself, or even you. Yes, you my dearest—I would not have hesitated to
place you in his hands. But next day we went to see good Mr. Elsner, who not only loves you but desires more than anyone that you should attain fame and profound knowledge. . . As soon as he heard your letter he expressed dissatisfaction with Kalkbrenner's proposition, crying, "Ah, jealousy already! Three years!" and shaking his head—although I talked to him (I was amazed that his immediate opinion was contrary to mine) and pointed out Kalkbrenner's merits and his love of art, and repeatedly quoted those sentences of yours showing that he was completely disinterested, etc. It was no good. Elsner continued to exclaim and said he would write to you himself, adding, "I know Fryderyk; he is a good lad, and has no vanity or desire to push himself forward: he is easily influenced. I'll write to him and tell him how I see the matter." And indeed this morning he brought his letter, which I am enclosing, and continued to discuss the business with us. We, judging in the simplicity of our hearts, could never have believed that Kalkbrenner was anything but a completely honorable man. But Elsner does not quite believe it and observed today: "They've recognized genius in Fryderyk and are already scared that he will outstrip them, so they want to keep their hands on him for three years in order to hold back something of that which Nature herself might push forward. Mme Szymanowska is supposed to have said of Kalkbrenner: "He is a scoundrel, and so he is trying to speculate on Fryderyk's talent—to claim at least that he is his pupil. But in spite of all his love of art his real aim is to cramp his genius." Mr. Elsner doesn't wish to see you merely as a concert-giver, a composer for piano and a famous executant—that is the easy way and is far less significant than writing operas. He wants to see you in the role Nature intended and fitted you for. Your place must be with Rossini, Mozart, etc. Your genius should not cling to the piano and to concert-giving; operas must make you immortal.29 Elsner was right in his sense of outrage and his violent opposition to Kalkbrenner's proposal. (Was there also a touch of jealousy on Elsner's part over the possibility of Chopin being referred to as Kalkbrenner's, not Elsner's, pupil?) But posterity proved him wrong in his assessment of Kalkbrenner's integrity and "real aim" concerning Chopin. Regarding his aspirations for Chopin as an opera composer, it is true that during his formative years in Warsaw, Chopin developed an enduring love of opera, but from the start the world of vocal music (cantatas, masses, oratorios), let alone symphonic and chamber music, held little interest for him as a composer. Elsner may have been only too conscious of this trait in Chopin's musical disposition and concerned that it might limit his artistic development and produce out of him only a "salon composer." Perhaps to his mind, the prolific and multifarious output of a composer was a prerequisite to his genius and his passport to posterity. Didn't Mozart and Beethoven conform to this criterion? In the end, Chopin exploded this myth by demonstrating that working within the narrow confines of the piano, he "discovered everything" (to quote Debussy). How could Elsner predict this when, in his own time, vocal music was considered the acme of musical aesthetics and when the piano, as a solo concert instrument, came into its
own through the efforts of Liszt not long before the time of Elsner’s death in 1854? And now to Elsner’s letter to Chopin, dated 27 November 1831:

Could he possibly decide, immediately after seeing and hearing you for the first time, how long you will require in order to absorb his method? Or that you must devote your musical genius simply to piano-playing, and your artistic endowment to the same species of composition? I expect that when he comes to know you closer and better he will change his views.30

And then he repeated what he had already expressed to Ludwika regarding what he considered should be Chopin’s ultimate aim:
The fame that Mozart and Beethoven enjoyed as pianists has long passed, and despite their enduring classical virtues, their piano compositions have had to yield to the taste of a more recent style. But their other works, which are not restricted to a single instrument—such as operas, songs, symphonies—are still alive among us and exist beside modern contemporary works.31

Before replying to his former composition teacher, Chopin wrote at length to Tytus Woyciechowski informing him, apart from other matters, of his opinion regarding Kalkbrenner, and vice versa. It is a sober and well-balanced letter, and despite his modesty he did not allow himself to make hasty decisions under the influence of other people’s advice:

I have told him how much I still have to learn but I don’t want simply to imitate him, and three years is too long. Meanwhile he has convinced me that I can play splendidly when I am inspired but abominably when I am not—something that never happens to him. When he had observed me closely he declared that I had no “school,” that I am going along fine but might take the wrong turning. He added that after his death, or when he completely gives up playing, there will be no representative of the great school of piano-playing left. He says I cannot, even if I wanted to, create a new school since I haven’t mastered the old one. He sums me up thus: I have not a perfect mechanism and the free expression of my ideas is thereby cramped; my compositions have a personal stamp on them and it would be a pity if I didn’t become what I promise to be, etc. So far as that goes, if you yourself were here you would say: Learn, my lad, while you have the chance!

Many people advise me against it, judging that I play as well as he, that he is only doing it out of vanity so that he may later on describe me as his pupil, etc. None of that is serious. You must realize that if everyone without exception respects Kalkbrenner’s talent, they can’t stand him as a man—for he is not a bit hail-fellow-well-met with every imbecile and, believe me, he is superior to all the pianists I have ever heard.32

As if to reiterate his unflagging admiration for Kalkbrenner, Chopin in his debut on 26 February 1832 played with him a composition on two pianos.
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by the latter entitled Marche suivie d’une Polonaise, accompanied by four other pianos.

Chopin’s letter of 14 December to Elsner was one of those rare instances in Chopin’s correspondence when he laid bare his thoughts about his future. (Eleven days later, he was to do the same in a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, but that time regarding his inner self.) His convincing reply to Elsner’s suggestion that he should write operas in order to make his mark as a composer was decisive (a far cry from the irresolute tone of his letters a year earlier during his aimless stay in Vienna)—a definite but courteous “no”—and his sense of justice came out in defense of a “jealous” Kalkbrenner whom Elsner had depicted earlier to Ludwika:

In 1830, although I realized how much I had still to learn and how far I was from being able to follow successfully any of the examples which you offered me (if I had wished to allow myself to be tempted by them), nevertheless I dared to think to myself: “I will approach his achievement, in however small a measure, and if I cannot produce an opera like his Łokietek [The Dwarf King], perhaps some Laskonogi [Skinny-legs—the nickname of a famous Polish king] will come from my brain. But today, seeing all my hopes in that direction dashed, I am forced to think of making my way in the world as a pianist, postponing only to a later period the loftier artistic aims which you rightly put before me in your letter. To be a great composer requires enormous experience which, as you yourself taught me, can be acquired by learning not only other men’s works but one’s own. Nearly a score of gifted young men, pupils of the Paris Conservatoire, are sitting waiting with folded hands for someone to produce their operas, symphonies or cantatas, which no one but Cherubini and Lesueur have seen in manuscript.

In my view, so far as making a name in the musical world is concerned, he is a lucky man who can be both composer and executant at the same time. I am already known here and there in Germany as a pianist; a few musical papers have mentioned my concertos and have expressed the hope that I shall shortly be seen taking my place among the leading exponents of my instrument—which is as good as saying: Work hard, lad, and we’ll make a gentleman out of you. Today I have before me a unique opportunity of realizing the promise that is within me: why should I not profit by it? In Germany there is no one I would take piano lessons from, for although a few people there felt that I still lacked something, I could not then see in my own eye the beam which today prevents me from aiming higher. Three years is a lot—far too long, as Kalkbrenner himself admitted after observing me more closely. That should prove to you that a real virtuoso with a well-served reputation does not know the meaning of jealousy. However, I would even agree to three years’ work if I could thereby make a great step forward in my plan for the future. I am firmly convinced that I shall not be an imitation of Kalkbrenner: he has not the power to extinguish my perhaps too audacious but noble wish and intention to create for myself a new world. And if I do work it will be in order to stand firmly on my own feet. It was easier for Ries, since he was known as a pianist, to achieve fame in Berlin and Frankfurt with his opera The Robber’s Bride; and Spohr too was long known as a violinist before he wrote his Jessonda and Faust.
I am sure you will not refuse me your blessing when you know on what basis and with what enterprise I shall proceed.33

It is doubtful whether Chopin managed to convince Elsner on the two main issues of the latter’s arguments (that writing operas is a prerequisite of a composer of stature and that Kalkbrenner’s intentions were devious). More than two months after Chopin’s letter of 14 December 1831 to his ex-teacher, Ludwika wrote to Chopin: “How I wish that Papa and Elsner leave behind their prejudice against Kalkbrenner and that they stop thinking that he lacks sincerity towards you.”34 Chopin apparently was uninfluenced by Elsner’s contention regarding Kalkbrenner. Niecks35 states that according to Hiller, Chopin attended Kalkbrenner’s master classes a few times.36 It may have been only in the aftermath of his inaugural concert that Chopin decided to stop attending these classes. This, however, did not mark the end of the friendly relationship between the two composer-pianists. The mutual reverence that continued to exist between them is attested by the amicable letters Kalkbrenner wrote to Chopin that extended at least into the mid-1840s37 and by the fact that Chopin’s E Minor Concerto was dedicated to Kalkbrenner (French edition, published by Schlésinger in July 1833). Soon afterward Kalkbrenner composed his Variations brillantes pour le piano sur une Mazourka de Chopin op. 120. (The mazurka in question is the one in B-flat major, op. 7, no. 1.) On the part of Chopin, this reverence was probably reserved only to Kalkbrenner the man but not the musician, whose works, to quote the pianist and conductor Karol Mikuli, were “noisy virtuosities and decorative expressiveness.”38 It was arguably to be kind and courteous to his ex-teacher that Chopin, with reference to opera composition, wrote that he would be “postponing only to a later period the loftier artistic aims” that Elsner proposed in his letter. But apparently Elsner took Chopin’s statement seriously enough to harp on the subject again at least on three later occasions. Elsner to Chopin, 13 November 1832: I am not writing to remind you of my existence, as I have no need to do so, knowing full well from your letters home that you still remember me kindly….No! I am merely writing because your friend Nowakowski asked me to…. I cannot for bear mentioning that my work on The Meter and Rhythm of the Polish Language in three volumes (containing my dissertation on Melody, which you already partly know) is now finished….

My third volume deals with the close connection between poetry and music, and to convince you —Sapienti pauc[a hint for a wise man]—of how far the development of my thoughts on this topic might be of use, not only to Polish opera-composers but also to those who write German, French and Italian operas. Allow me to quote one short passage from the preface: “Having carefully considered all this, one must recognize that opera as a stage-spectacle is still far from having reached the peak of its true possibilities, especially from the aesthetic standpoint,
wherein it still has to be brought to perfection. To this perfection it must be brought by the combined efforts of the poets and composers of all civilized nations."39

Elsner to Chopin, 14 September 1834:
Everything I read or hear about our dear Fryderyk fills my heart with joy, but forgive my frankness—it is still not enough for me, your fortunate (though of little merit) teacher of harmony and counterpoint, who will always be your true friend and admirer. As I journey through this "vale of tears" I would like to live to see an opera of your composition, which would not only increase your fame but benefit the art of music in general, especially if the subject of such an opera were drawn from Polish national history. I am not exaggerating when I say this. Firstly, you know me, you know that I cannot flatter; secondly, I recognize in addition to your genius the nature of your gifts. As the critic of your Mazurkas stated, only an opera can show your talent in a true light and win for it eternal life. "A piano-work," says Urhan [a German critic], "is to a vocal or other instrumental composition as an engraving is to a painted picture." This view is as correct as ever, although certain piano works, especially your own when performed by yourself, may be regarded as illuminated engravings.40

There was then a gap of some six years in the Chopin-Elsner published correspondence, which was, however, partly filled in by news about Elsner given to Fryderyk by his father. Since the November uprising of 1830, the Warsaw Conservatory was closed, and to make ends meet, Elsner had to revert to giving private lessons. (Beyond 1830 and until 1843 when its buildings were torn down, the conservatory first served as barracks, then as a theater, and finally as a small zoo.41 It got a new lease on life first in 1859 as the Music Institute and once again as the Warsaw Conservatory in 1919.) However, this did not interrupt his creative output, and in 1840 he sought Chopin's help to have his oratorio, Passion of Our Lord, published in Paris. Chopin got in touch with Schlesinger, but to no avail.42 It was in this connection that he wrote to Elsner on 30 July 1840:
I send you this note from Schlesinger... I must defend him a little, for it is true that large works such as your oratorio are costly to produce and do not sell, since apart from the Conservatoire no other institution performs such things. And the Conservatoire itself lives on old symphonies which the orchestra knows by heart. ... The Conservatoire sets the fashion in serious music and so a publisher can count on no revenue except what the Conservatoire brings him. However, the Conservatoire has its own copyists. How I regret that I could not hear your oratorio in St. Petersburg! I am convinced that it surpasses everything of its kind. You will doubtless have it printed in Germany... Another country where they often give such oratorios and where they rightly hold these works in esteem and can easily assemble a thousand singers for their performance, is England... [It] will surely seize upon your work and we shall perhaps meet in Birmingham in that hall [the town hall] expressly designed for such things... and I shall be able to sit beside
you and admire and revel in something, the mere thought of which raises my spirits today... Orlowski is at Rouen, otherwise he would have added a few words. We have so often talked of you, precisely in connection with the Conservatoire. How often have we longed to hear your Offertory of St. Joseph (if I am not mistaken) performed by a body of expert string-players, in which the violins weave constantly in and out among the richest harmony. If ever you publish it please send me a copy: I will take it to Habeneck [conductor of the conservatoire orchestra] and I am certain he will have it rehearsed, for it is short and useful for showing off the orchestra. Please do write, please, please.43
The courtesy that Chopin was kind enough to express to his seventy-one-year-old mentor was admittedly blended with some wishful thinking. But reverence and esteem, rather than evaluation and appraisal, could not but have the upper hand for such a devoted and trustworthy friend, even though Chopin may have had a highly critical private assessment of him as a composer. (Elsner’s prolific output was to pass almost into oblivion outside Poland after his death.)
The last published letter by Chopin to Elsner is dated 8 November 1842. It is a thank-you note and not of much consequence, but Chopin’s unflagging warmth of feeling pervaded its contents, as always:
Very dear, and always dear Mr. Elsner, you cannot imagine how the shortest letter from you gives me pleasure. I thank you warmly for the music handed to me on your behalf by the Turczynowiczes. They were a great success here and were much liked. They, as well as Mr. Damse, must be pleased. I am not answering the latter personally but would you be so kind as to tell him what a great impression his children (as he calls them) made in Paris. I kiss you heartily. I love you still as a son, as an old son, as an old friend.44
The penultimate published letter by Elsner to Chopin, only recently brought to light, is dated 17(?) May 1843. It is given here in its entirety for the first time in English mainly for its documentary value. It refers, for the only time in Chopin’s correspondence, to Liszt’s visit to Warsaw and highlights the fact that no letters between Chopin and his family survive from the year 1843.
My beloved Fryderyk,
Having yet another opportunity to write to you, I enclose herewith a few items from my treatise, which I believe might interest you, particularly a copy of the Introduction to the second part of my dissertation on The Meters and Rhythms of the Polish Language. I have two reasons for doing so: one is a purely private one— your musical genius simply seems to compel me to do it; and the other more general reason is to encourage and ask you to write music for an opera, if possible based on Polish history. The Foreword to the first chapter of the second volume, together with The Basic
Principles of Polish Prose, mentions amongst others (if I recall correctly) the poet Zaleski, who also resides at present in Paris or somewhere else in France, as well as His Highness Prince Adam Czartoryski, to whom I had the honor to present the whole of the first chapter in the second part of this treatise, now much enlarged and fully corrected. In a word then, the entire work has now been ready and awaiting publication for nine years. If it would not cause you any inconvenience, I wish you could inform the Prince about it and give him the excerpts I am sending you for his perusal and review.

The incentive to write my *Veni Creator* personally. He did not anticipate it but he wished that Prince Adam Czartoryski become the Governor of the Kingdom, but His Majesty Tsar Alexander nominated General Zajaczek for this position. Even if he becomes a prince I still have my Mazurek. It is generally well known that Godobski (who was killed in 1809 in the Battle of Raszyn) wrote the words to the song of the Polish Legions [in the twentieth century, this song became the Polish National Anthem] and Wybicki, who later became a Senator during the days of the Duchy of Warsaw, composed its music.

The latest musical event here is the opera *Jezioro wieszczek* [The Lake of the Prophetesses], based on Auber's music and staged like no other previous production here, which is why it is currently the rage of the town. The music also is very well performed, for which Tomasz Nidecki should be justly praised.

The latest news here is that a certain J. P. Litolf, originally from Strasburg as far as I know (although people, for some obscure reason, take him for an Englishman), has assumed the post of Director of the Polish Opera. A musician, a pianist in particular and, as it has turned out, a composer as well who does not speak a word of Polish and has not got the slightest idea of Polish idioms and of whose musical fame nobody has ever heard, I have not even read anything especially exceptional about him in the foreign press. What nonsense! I deeply regret that such faux pas have always retarded the creation and development of our own Polish music, which is Slavonic in style.

You have no doubt heard from your family about what Mr. Liszt, your true friend, was doing here. [During his seven weeks’ concert tour in Poland, Liszt gave four concerts in Warsaw during the first half of April 1843.] So there is nothing left for me but to kiss you (alas! by correspondence only) and repeat that I love you and will always remain your admirer and friend.

Józef Elsner

My wife and Emily also send you their regards.45

The last published letter by Elsner to Chopin dates from the spring of 1847. It was in fact a postscript to a letter to Chopin by a budding Polish composer, Emil Jenike. An ardent admirer of Chopin, he had dedicated one of his first works to the great master and requested his assessment of it:

*Dear Fryderyk,*

*I recommend to you this composer. He slipped away from a bank counter to devote himself to music, which he loves and practices with lots of joy. He is truly a musical*
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phenomenon. I therefore beseech you to endorse his request. By the same token, I would like to inform you that my letters on music and harmony will be published in a few months’ time. I shall then be sending you a copy.

Your admirer and friend who loves you.

Józef Elsner46
Konstancja Gładkowska. Miniature by Anna Chamiec, 1969, after a drawing by Woyciech Gerson. Fryderyk Chopin Society Museum, Warsaw. Konstancja Gładkowska was the first person to open up to Chopin the world of passionate romanticism. Although in the end his “love” for her turned out to be no more than an infatuation, it contributed to his development as both man and musician. She will always be remembered as Chopin’s muse in the Larghetto of his first piano concerto.
The First “Love”: Konstancja Gładkowska

Chopin was just nineteen years old when he saw his first “love” one day in April 1829: Konstancja Gładkowska, a mezzo-soprano student at the Warsaw Conservatory. She was a pupil in the class of Carlo Soliva, the Piedmontese professor of singing who was also an opera composer of sorts. The occasion was a concert organized by Soliva and given by his pupils. At that time, Chopin was some three months short of finishing his music studies at the High School of Music, but he was already a well-known public figure in Warsaw with an impressive array of compositions to his credit. Emotionally, however, he did not measure up to the maturity of his work. So far, his only passion other than his music was his friendship for Tytus Woyciechowski, and it was by then assuming obsessive, if not abnormal, proportions. The feelings he had for Konstancja were also compelling, but he kept them strictly to himself for the time being. (It was only some six months later that he confided them to Tytus.) He actually met Konstancja about a year later, but in the meantime she was merely a dream, an ideal around whom he wove his romantic yarn. Although in the end this ethereal first love was unconsummated, it played an important role in his emotional development and demonstrated to him previously unknown feelings: his intense susceptibility to women and his vulnerability to affairs of the heart.

Konstancja Gładkowska was born in Warsaw on 19 June 1810. All that we know of her family background is that her father was a dignitary at the Royal Palace. She entered the Warsaw Conservatory with a state bursary in 1826 at the same time as Chopin. From all accounts, she was, together with her fellow student Anna Wołków, Soliva’s most gifted pupil. Hedley informs us that Soliva allowed his pupils to sing duets with young Russian officers, which made the introspective and irresolute Chopin...
choose to love his ideal in secret and from afar.2 Niecks poetized in general terms over Chopin's feelings as follows: "Love is indeed the sun that by its warmth unfolds the multitudinous possibilities that lie hidden, often un-suspected, in the depths of the human soul."3 However, when Chopin at long last opened his heart to Tytus on the matter, his expression of passion over Konstancja was mingled with a sense of near-guilt regarding his feelings for Tytus. It was after his return from his first visit to Vienna that he wrote to Tytus in a second letter, dated 3 October 1829: It is perhaps my misfortune that I have already found my ideal, whom I have served faithfully, though without saying a word to her, for six months; whom I dream of, in whose memory the Adagio of my concerto has been written and who this morning inspired me to write the little waltz [op. 70, no. 3 in D-flat] I am sending you. Notice the place marked with a cross. No one but you knows of this. How I should enjoy playing it to you dearest Tytus!4 But then at the end of the letter he added: "I'm sorry I sent you that Waltz which might make you angry with me, but I swear I only wanted to give you pleasure—you know how terribly fond of you I am."5

It is perhaps not fortuitous that Chopin's interest in songwriting, a medium to which he had not given much attention, began in 1829, and it may well have been sparked by his passion for Konstancja. During the period 1829–1830, the time of his emotional involvement with her, Chopin composed the following eight songs out of the known total of nineteen that spanned his adult life (some additional five songs are known to have been lost):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Gdzie lubi [What she likes]</td>
<td>S. Witwicki</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Życzenie [The wish]</td>
<td>(Witwicki)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jakież kwiaty [Which flowers]</td>
<td>(I. Maciejowski)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Wojak [The warrior]</td>
<td>(Witwicki)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Precz z moich oczu! [Out of my sight]</td>
<td>(A. Mickiewicz)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hulanka [Merrymaking]</td>
<td>(Witwicki)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Posel [The messenger]</td>
<td>(Witwicki)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Czary [Enchantment]</td>
<td>(Witwicki)</td>
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In many cases, the lyrical contents of the text seems to express the anxiety and longing which Chopin must have felt at the time. For example:

Życzenie: "If I were the sun in the sky I would shine for no one but you... If I were a bird in the thicket I sing in no other land...but forever at your window, and for you alone."6
“In every place and at every time, where we cried together and where we played together, everywhere and forever I shall be there with you.”

“Don't look so happily, she's not here, not here, She went after a soldier and left this cottage, by that roadside cross she bid her mother farewell.”

“In every place, at any time... I see her always there before me.... By day my thoughts are with her, by night shadows take her shape; she is with me in dreams and reveries: I’m certain that this is enchantment.”

Again, it is possibly not coincidental that Chopin's arguably most sentimental composition, the Nocturne in E-flat op. 9, no. 2, was composed within the same period of these songs. It may seem inconceivable, in the total absence of correspondence between Chopin and Konstancja, to trace the development of the affair with any degree of certainty. The only reference we have is Tytus, Chopin's only confidant at the time. (Chopin's published letters to his family contain no mention of Konstancja.) Ironically, it is because of the growing intimacy of Chopin's friendship with Tytus that we can conjecture Chopin's attitude toward Konstancja, for it seems as if he transposed the full strength of his frustrated passion for her onto him. The uninhibited Chopin of the Szafarnia days was now replaced by a more self-conscious, sensitive, and introverted adult. At the same time, he retained his innate feeling for the ridiculous, but he must have also known that ridicule could be turned against him. It may be that this fear lay at the root of his bashfulness and his reticence to express his emotions to none but his most intimate friends. This shyness, together with an almost total lack of self-confidence, was arguably behind his unwillingness to declare himself to Konstancja, even though his two public performances at the Kärntnerthortheater in Vienna on 17 and 22 March 1829 (only a month before his infatuation with her) were a resounding success and should have given a powerful boost to his ego. But the pianist-composer was a different entity from the man. Exposing himself to public scrutiny was contrary to his nature, even if this was accompanied by professional fulfillment, and this attitude apparently pervaded his private life as well. As a result, he continued to wallow in self-pity and indecision, expressing his anguish and torment to his other ideal, Tytus.

In his next letter to Tytus, dated 20 October 1829, Chopin announced his departure for Poznań to visit Prince Antoni Radziwiłł at his Antonin estate, a visit that apparently Chopin was not enthusiastic about initially but that his father encouraged him to make for diplomatic reasons. (Nicolas and Justyna Chopin were the guests at Antonin the previous August.) Nevertheless, the sojourn provided him with a respite from his frustrations over...
Konstancja, and he had also the pleasure of meeting with Prince Antoni’s two daughters, Wanda and Eliza. “[Princess Wanda] is young, seventeen, pretty, and God knows how pleasant it was to place her fingers on the keys,” he wrote to Tytus on his return from Antonin. “On the way back, I spent an evening at Kalisz in the company of Mme Laczyńska and Mlle Biernacka; the latter made me partner her in a mazur. I then danced also with a more attractive young lady, or at least just as beautiful: Mlle Paulina Nieszkowska.”11 This growing awareness to beautiful women was only natural at Chopin’s age of full sexual awakening, irrespective of the ardor of his emotions for Konstancja. Toward the end of the letter, one passing reference was made regarding Konstancja: “Mlle Wołków is in mourning for her mother and Mlle Gładkowska wears an eye-patch.”12 (Konstancja’s ocular ailment, probably an affection of the optical nerve, was eventually to result in her total blindness.)

It is not certain when the first meeting between Chopin and Konstancja took place. Some biographers (Zieliński, 13 for example) mention the beginning of 1830 as a possibility while others (such as Jordan14) have it in the spring of that year. The only related documentary evidence is contained in Chopin’s letter to Tytus dated 10 April 1830 (the anniversary of Emilia Chopin’s death) in which he wrote: “Last Monday there was a grand soirée at Filipens’s house… and I had to accompany a comic duet from [Rossini’s] Il Turco sung by Soliva and Gresser… I need not give you further details except to mention that Mme Gładkowska inquired after you.”15 We may infer from this that Chopin was then already in touch with Konstancja’s parents and therefore had previously met her. From then on and until his departure from Poland early in November 1830, Chopin’s references to Konstancja in his letters to Tytus were almost entirely of professional interest. It is as if that, faced with her earthly reality, his previous reveries of her faded and were converted into only admiration for (and in some cases scrutiny of) her talent.

Warsaw was now getting ready for the state opening of the Polish parliament, which was to be attended by Tsar Nicholas I, Tsar Alexander I’s successor as king of Poland. Among the flurry of musical activities that usually accompanied such occasions was a series of concerts given in the National Theater by the German soprano Henriette Sontag (Countess Rossi). Although only twenty-four then, she was already renowned in all the music centers of Europe. Chopin had come to know of her visit, and it seems he attended most, if not all, of her concerts. Following her introduction to him by Prince Radziwiłł, he was apparently captivated by this “messenger from heaven.” (Konstancja must have then taken a backseat in Chopin’s mind.) Chopin to Tytus, 5 June 1830:

You can’t imagine how delighted I was to make her closer acquaintance—I mean in her room, sitting beside her on the sofa…. However, I did not take much
advantage of the acquaintance during her week's stay among us, seeing how weary she was of the visits of all those admiring bores… Mlle Sontag is not beautiful but she is attractive in the highest degree. She charms everyone by her voice which has not a very great range…but it is extraordinarily cultivated… Once when I went to see her I found Soliva there with his young ladies [Gładkowska and Wołków]. While I was there they sang that duet of his, the one with “barbara sorte” that ends in the major—you know the one—and Mlle Sontag told them that their voices were too rough and that, although their training was good, they must produce the voice in a different way if they don't want to lose it altogether within two years. In my presence she told Wołków that she had great facility and many pretty effects but “too shrill a voice,” and she invited them to come to her frequently and she will show them her method as far as possible. That is a piece of more than natural amiability, it is coquetry to such a degree that it becomes naturalness itself; for one cannot suppose that a human being could remain so perfectly natural without employing all the refinements of coquetry. She's a million times prettier and more attractive in morning-dress than in full evening toilette, although those who have not seen her in the morning still find her irresistible.16

Konstancja’s operatic debut was to be on 21 July at the National Theater in the title role of Ferdinando Paër's Agnese. (It was organized by Soliva, who was also to launch Anna Wołków as Fiovilla in Rossini’s Il Turco in Italia about a month later.) Chopin came to know about this in mid-July during his stay at Tytus’s estate in Poturzyn. He could not but break off his vacation there to attend the stage premiere as well as an additional performance of his once-beloved Konstancja. It was one of those rare instances when she took precedence over Tytus. A month later he sent his review of the concert to Tytus: Gladkowska leaves little to be desired—she is better on the stage than in the concert hall. I need say nothing of her acting in tragedy which is first-class; and as for her singing, if it were not occasionally for those high F sharps and Gs, we need look for nothing better in her class. You would be enchanted with her phrasing, and her nuances are splendid; and although her voice trembled at the beginning when she came on, she later sang with great confidence…. At the end Agnese was recalled and greeted with enthusiastic applause…. I don't deny that the Italian [Soliva] might have chosen something more suitable for Gladkowska—perhaps La Vestale might have been a luckier choice for her.... Wołków sang and acted very well indeed.... I don't doubt that she will be more popular than Gladkowska.17

All this is objective and sober criticism, but it could have passed off as a balanced review of any singer's debut, not that of the person who had inspired him to compose the Larghetto of his first piano concerto. Ten days later, after attending the debut of Anna Wołków on 28 August and a repeat performance two days later, he wrote to Tytus on 31 August discussing the comparative merits of Konstancja and Anna:
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[Mlle Wołkow] charmed both the stalls and the pit by her coquetry, her acting and lovely eyes and teeth. She was prettier than any of our actresses.... As for the singing, Gladkowska is incomparably better, and when I saw Wołków on the stage I did not expect such a difference. We all agree that we shall not have another like Gladkowka for clarity and intonation and that superior expressiveness which she displays on the stage. It sometimes happens to Wołków to sing out of tune, whereas I have twice heard the other girl in Agnese and she never produced a single doubtful note.18

In contrast, here are the appraisals of Gladkowska and Wołków by Maurycy Mochnacki, a brilliant writer who was the music critic of the Kurier Polski at that time. Chopin often met with him at Warsaw’s favorite cafés of artists and revolutionaries, the Dziurka (Little Hole) and the Kopciuszek (Cinderella). In an article published on 31 July 1830, ten days after Gladkowka’s debut, Mochnacki wrote: “Not just any sound production be it even quite accurate, is worthy to be called singing.... Mlle. Gladkowska had a voice but today she unfortunately has not got it any more.”19 Of Wołków’s concerts, he wrote a month later: “During her second début she regained her composure and her singing was less flat than the first time.”20 (Mochnacki justified his caustic reviews by saying that they were necessary “to give guidance to local music lovers whose musical enthusiasm often is expressed more by the beauties of youth than by singing.”)21

Chopin was to spend only two months before leaving his homeland forever on 2 November 1830. But he wished to give a farewell concert and play the new Piano Concerto in E Minor op. 11 he had completed in August. He was curious about the reception it would have. The date of the concert was set for 11 October, and the program (which, from all accounts, he put together) was to include both Gladkowska and Wołków. He was a jumble of nerves, certitudes, inconsistencies, and in a state of emotional upheaval that touched on all that was very dear to him: his family, his music, his homeland, Tytus, and Konstancja. In the midst of all this, he had to rehearse his new concerto and prepare himself for his final move. To Tytus:

4 September

“I am in a still crazier state than usual.... I believe that when I leave it will be to forget home September for ever.”22
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18 September

"I feel wonderful, and father and mother are delighted.... Last Wednesday I rehearsed my concerto with the quartet.... Don't go and think I am in love—that is something I am reserving for later on. If I should fail in my career, and have some day nothing to eat, you must appoint me as clerk at Poturzyn. There, in a room above the stables, I shall be as happy as I was last summer in your castle.... You are not master of your thoughts, but I command mine.... Around your letters I twine a little ribbon which my ideal once gave me. I am glad the two lifeless things, the letters and the ribbon, agree so well together, probably because, although they do not know each other, they yet feel that they both come from a hand dear to me."

22 September

"When I start thinking about myself I feel so awful that I often seem to lose all sense of reality. If my gaze is concentrated on something that interests me I could be run over by horses without being aware of it. Indeed that is what very nearly happened in the street two days ago; on Sunday I was suddenly struck by a single unexpected glance [from Konstancja?] in church, at a moment of delicious mental numbness, and I ran out of the building, remaining in a complete daze for a quarter of an hour, not knowing what had happened to me. I ran into Doctor Paris and simply couldn't explain my confused state."

5 October

"I believe the Rondo [of the second concerto] is bound to impress everyone.... If only I did not have to have those wretched clarinets and bassoons in between the concerto movements I could produce what one might call a very nice evening, with Gladkowska singing in the first half and Wołków in the second. [This order was reversed, as it turned out in the concert.] ... I have no idea what they will sing. All Soliva told me was that one of the arias requires the accompaniment of the chorus. We have already had two performances of [Rossini's] Magpie. Gladkowska was rather nervous on her first appearance and did not sing her first cavatina as well as she did the second time."

From Chopin’s account of it to Tytus, the concert was a complete success. The program was as follows:

**Part I**
1. Symphony
2. Allegro from the Piano Concerto in E Minor (played by the composer)
3. Aria with chorus (sung by Mlle Wołków)
4. Adagio and Rondo from the Piano Concerto in E Minor

**Part II**
1. Overture to Guillaume Tell
2. "O quante lagrime per te versai" from La Donna del lago (sung by Mlle Gladkowska)
3. Fantasy on Polish Airs (played by the composer)

The following day, Chopin sent Tytus his personal impressions on almost every item that was played and in particular gave detailed accounts of the ways Gladkowska and Wołków sang (and looked): "Mlle Wołków sang..."
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charmingly, dressed in blue like an angel....[Mlle Gładkowska] was dressed in white, with roses in her
hair, which suited her admirably, and she sang the cavatina with recitative from the Donna del Lago.
Apart from the aria from Agnese she has never sung anything better. You remember ‘O quante lagrime
per te versai.’ She delivered the ‘Tutto detesto’ down to the low B in such a way that Zieliński declared
that B alone was worth a thousand ducats. I must tell you that the aria had been transposed to suit her
voice, which gained greatly by it.... The audience enjoyed my piano-playing and still more Mlle Wołówkó:
she looks marvelous on the stage.”27
Chopin must have met Konstancja more than ever before during those last few weeks, and yet even
though she continued to be his ideal, she remained so platonically. And what of her feelings for him? All
she had previously given him was a ribbon, and even that was probably more than commensurate with
the outward signs that he had shown her. But on 25 October when he called on her to take his leave,
she wrote the following two quatrains on pages 9 and 12 in his album, signing them K. G.:
You comply with the harsh vagaries of Fate,
One cannot but resign oneself to one’s destiny.
Remember, You who shall never be forgotten,
That in Poland you are well and truly loved.28
You leave your dear friends and beloved kin
To add immortality to your fame;
You may win esteem and more recognition from foreigners,
But they can never love you more than we.29
(Later in his life, Chopin added the word “Moga” [They can] at the bottom of the second quatrain.)
These are the only written mementos that Konstancja left for posterity, for us to ponder. Should they be
taken only at face value, that is, as a valedictory? Or do they perhaps contain a veiled intimation of her
sentiments towards her composer-friend? The situation on Chopin’s side is just as ambivalent. Having
apparently decided to part as platonic friends (did he not declare to Tytus in his letter dated 18
September 1830 that he was not in love, or was that written so as not to make Tytus “angry”?), he
continued to fantasize and evoke her memory in his correspondence, and particularly in the so-called
Stuttgart diary, as if he was still passionately infatuated with her. To Jan Matuszyński, Christmas Day
1830:
Soothe her [Konstancja?], tell her that as long as I have strength...that until my dying day...and even
after my death my ashes shall be laid at her feet. But you could not possibly tell her all—I will write. I
would have written long ago, I would not have suffered these torments so long—but you know what
people are; if anything should happen to fall into the wrong hands her reputation might suffer; so
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you had better be my interpreter…. Write…poste restante to Vienna before you leave and go as well to see my parents and Kon…. Visit them often…. Sit beside them so that they will think that I am there behind them…. Kon…. I can't even write that name, my hand is not worthy! Oh, how I tear my hair when the thought comes that she may forget me! Those fellows! Gresser, Biezobrazov, Pisarzewski [Russian officers who used to sing duets with Konstancja at the Warsaw Conservatory]! It's too much for me. Today I feel like Othello! 30

The string of admirers mentioned in the letter suggests a rather coquettish Konstancja who lacked no self-confidence. And if she had self-assurance and Chopin were her man, she would surely have gone out of her way for him. But her only outward sign was a ribbon. The exuberance of a promising prima donna in love could hardly have been less muted. Was her “love,” after all, pretentious and her farewell no more than salutational?

Some six months later while still in Vienna, Konstancja's memory still haunted Chopin, and on 9 June 1831 he recorded in his notebook: “Her memory is always on my mind; it seems to me that I don't love her any more and yet I can't forget her.” 31 About three months later, in the so-called Stuttgart diary that Chopin wrote in that city after 8 September 1831 after learning of the suppression of the November uprising in Warsaw against the Russians, his torment over Konstancja reached a pitch of un-controlled feverish anxiety and vacillation:

She was only pretending—or is pretending. Ah, What a puzzle to be solved! Yes, no, yes, no, yes—she loves me, she loves me not—I've lost count…. Does she really love me? Really? Let her please herself. At present I have loftier, far loftier feelings than mere curiosity in my soul…. What is happening to her? Where is she?—poor girl—perhaps in the hands of Moscow. A Muscovite is seizing her, strangling her, murdering, killing! Oh, my darling! here I am—alone: come to me. I will wipe away your tears. I will heal your wounds by recalling the past, those days when Muscovy meant nothing—those days when only a few Russians strove to win your favor; but you scorned them because you had me, me—not that Grabowski! [Józef Grabowski who later actually married Konstancja] Have you a mother? And is she such a bad one? Mine is good. 32

In mid-December 1831, Chopin mentioned Konstancja for the last time in his correspondence, and it was to Tytus that he wrote: “Mlle Gladkowska has married Grabowski, but that does not put an end to platonic att-achments.” 33 (Izabela later noted that Konstancja had married “for the sake of a palace.” 34 Grabowski was a rich landowner. 35) This piece of news was mentioned toward the end of an exuberant letter 36 written in Paris where, within a space of three months, Chopin had managed to find his way and assert himself among its various eminent composers, pianists, and aristocratic Polish émigrés, savor its operatic life to the full, plan for a concert, and have a “little adventure” with the fifteen-year-old girlfriend of...
a German pianist-composer. All this suggests that the thought of his “ideal,” if it had not totally waned, had at least taken a rear seat in his mind. However, with a hypersensitive nature as his, this first encounter with infatuation, which he had mistaken for true love, must have marked him for life, whether as a worthy or unworthy subject of his solicitude, ever welling up the stuff of inspiration from within. Konstancja’s marriage to Grabowski brought an end to her musical aspirations. She bore him five children and lived quietly and unassumingly with him in the country. Her ocular trouble, already evident during her student days at the Warsaw Conservatory, worsened, and she became blind at age thirty-five. In spite of this misfortune, she apparently led a wholesome life, surviving her husband by eleven years and dying on 20 December 1889 at the age of seventy-nine. There is a final twist in her story with Chopin, which, if true, sheds new light on it. According to Hedley, it was only when Maurycy Karasowski’s Life of Chopin (first published in 1877) was read to her that she realized how passionate Chopin’s feelings were toward her. The whole affair it seems may have been laden with mutual misunderstanding. But she added, “I doubt whether [he] would have been such a good husband as my honest Józef, for he was temperamental, full of fantasies, unreliable.”38
The Paris Years (1831–1849)
Auguste Franchomme. Detail of a pencil drawing by Jean-Auguste-Alfred Masson, nineteenth century. Laser copy from a reproduction in Mirska and Hordynski, Chopin na obczyznie (Kraków, 1965). Auguste Franchomme was perhaps the only musician whose association with Chopin developed into a deep and long-lasting friendship. Akin in disposition to Chopin, Franchomme was the dedicatee of the composer’s Sonata for Piano and Cello op. 65. The dedication (in French) reads, “To my beloved and truly beloved friend Aug. Franchomme F. F. Chopin.”
The Most Intimate Non-Polish Friend: Auguste Franchomme

When Chopin arrived in Paris in September 1831, he had with him two letters of reference that were to introduce him to the city’s music world: one from Józef Elsner to Jean François Lesueur, and another from Dr. Johann Malfatti (the imperial physician whom Chopin had met during his sojourn in Vienna in 1830–1831 through a letter of introduction to the physician’s Polish wife) to Ferdinando Paër. Lesueur and Paër were venerables who belonged to the older school of French composers. Through them, and within a few weeks, Chopin met the leading musicians in Europe’s music capital: the top opera composers, Gioachino Rossini and Giacomo Meyerbeer; the foremost pianists, Friedrich Kalkbrenner, Franz Liszt, Henri Herz, and Ferdinand Hiller; and two of the most distinguished instrumentalists, the violinist Pierre Baillot and the cellist Auguste Franchomme. According to Niecks, it was Hiller who first informed Franchomme of Chopin and his music. It was Liszt, however, who introduced Chopin to Franchomme. Again, we have Niecks to inform us, through his interviews with Franchomme, how the friendship between the cellist and the composer started. It was not long after Chopin’s arrival in Paris, following a dinner that had brought Chopin, Liszt, Hiller, and Franchomme together, that Chopin invited Franchomme to his apartment. "Come with me and spend an hour or two at my lodgings," Chopin is purported to have said. "Well," replied Franchomme, "but if I do, you will have to play to me!" Franchomme, two years Chopin’s senior, was at the beginning of his career. Born at Lille (Nord) on 10 April 1808, he studied at the Conservatoire de Paris with Jean-Henri Levasseur and Louis Norblin, graduating with a first prize at the age of seventeen. Initially, as a professional cellist,
he played with the Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, the Opéra de Paris, and the Théâtre-Italien orchestras, but he was eventually to devote himself almost exclusively to chamber music, particularly in association with the violinist Jean-Delphin Alard.) Unlike Liszt, whose temperament was the very opposite of Chopin's, Franchomme was quiet, reserved, and unassuming. This, together with mutual esteem, and Chopin’s partiality for the cello—apart from the piano, this instrument occupied first place in his compositions—were the factors that contributed to the warm and unfailing friendship that developed between him and Chopin. It was not long before they collaborated professionally. Soon after the highly successful first performance of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* at the Paris Opera on 21 November 1831, the music publisher Maurice Schlesinger commissioned Chopin to write some variations on a theme from the opera. The result was the *Grand Duo Concertant sur des Thèmes de Robert le Diable* for piano and cello, published in 1833 (without opus number) and written in cooperation with Franchomme.4

Within less than two years after his arrival in Paris, Chopin had consolidated his position as a distinguished pianist and composer. His debut in the Salle Pleyel on 26 February 1832 was followed by a number of recitals in April and May. The world of the French aristocracy was opened to him through his many Polish connections, particularly the Czartoryskis, the Potockis, and the Radziwiłłs. It was therefore with pride that he wrote in mid-January 1833 to Dominik Dziewanowski, his boyhood friend of the Szafarnia days: “I have found my way into the very best society; I have my place among ambassadors, princes, ministers.”5 More concerts were to follow early in that year—he joined forces with Liszt in three of them (see Chapter 8)—and his stature as a piano teacher increased. His circle of non-Polish friends for a time became a tightly knit group. Its members created their own salon, and their venue was often a restaurant, where dinner would be followed by an evening of music at Chopin's or Liszt's. A letter, dated 20 June 1833, written to Hiller (then on holiday in Frankfurt) jointly by Chopin and Liszt, and signed by them and Franchomme, testifies to the warmth of feeling that existed between Chopin and his friends (the sentences written by Liszt are italicized):

This is the twentieth time at least that we have arranged to meet either at my place or where we are now for the purpose of writing to you, and we have invariably been prevented by some visitor or other hindrance. I don't know whether Chopin will have the courage to apologize: for my part I think we have gone so far in rudeness and impertinence that no apologies are admissible or possible. We fully shared your grief and wished more eagerly than ever we could have been with you in order to moderate the bitterness of your sorrow [Hiller had just lost his father]. He has expressed himself so well that I have nothing to add in the way of apology for my neglect, or laziness, or influenza or, or—you know I can explain myself.
better by word of mouth, and when I come along the boulevards with you to see you home I shall try to
obtain your pardon... As for your other friends here in Paris, I have often seen during this winter and
spring the Léo family and their circle. Certain of the ambassadors’ wives have given parties and at every
one there were inquiries about the gentleman at Frankfort... Do you know Chopin’s marvelous studies?
They are admirable—All the same they will only last until such time as Yours are published—some slight
modesty on the author’s part!—a nasty little remark from His Highness, for I must explain that he
corrects my spelling (according to M. Malet’s book of rules).
You will come back to us in September, won’t you? Try to let us know beforehand when it will be, for
we plan to give you a serenade or musical party. The most distinguished artists in the capital will be
there, namely Mr. Franchomme [PRESENT!—writes Franchomme], Mme Petzold and the Abbé Bardin,
the ballet-dancers from the rue d’Amboise and my neighbors; Maurice Schlesinger, uncles, aunts,
nephews, nieces, brothers-in-law, etc.
Compiled by
F. Liszt, F. Chopin, Aug. Franchomme
By the way, I met Heine yesterday and he asked me to grüssen you herzlich und herzlich. Again by the
way, excuse my use of vous instead of tu. If you have a moment send us a line—we are longing for
news of you.
Paris. 5 rue de la Chaussée d’Antin. I’m living in Franck’s apartment—he is off to London and Berlin. I
am most comfortable in these rooms where we used so often to meet. Love from Berlioz. As for old
Balilot, he is in Switzerland, at Geneva, so you understand why I can’t send you the Bach concerto.6
The year 1833 witnessed the publication by Schlesinger of no fewer than six Chopin opuses, together
with eight etudes op. 10. Chopin’s summer vacation that year was therefore well earned and also
necessary due to the toll his numerous activities exacted on his health. An invitation from the comtesse
d’Agoult for him to spend some time at her castle of Croissy (promising him “delicious milk and the
music of nightingales”)7 was not taken up. Instead, he opted for the more mundane company of
Franchomme’s family in Touraine (near Tours). The following note, addressed to Franchomme, dates
from that summer and is full of that wry humor reminiscent of Chopin’s Szafarnia days: “Mr.
Franchomme is kindly requested to come and pay his morning respects to his friend Baudiot né Cap (at
the Boule d’Or).”8 The Boule d’Or was a hotel in the rue Royale at Tours renowned for its cuisine.9 That
he enjoyed himself thoroughly during that summer is evident from the letter he wrote to Franchomme
upon his return to Paris:
Be a good chap and tell everyone that I shall never forget my stay in Touraine and that such kindness
leaves me with eternal gratitude. People say I have put on weight.
and look well. I do really feel very well, thanks to the ladies next me at table who looked after me like mothers. When I think about it, it all seems like such a lovely dream that I would like to go on sleeping. Oh, those country-girls at Pornic and that game with the flour!—or rather your nicely shaped nose which you had to plunge into it!10

According to one of Chopin's pupils, Mme Adèle de Lauverjat (née Forest), the idea of the game mentioned in the letter was to lift off a ring, placed in a pyramid of flour, with one’s mouth without powdering one’s nose with the flour.11 Mme de Lauverjat was the subject of an undated letter to Chopin by Franchomme. She was then Mlle Adèle Forest, daughter of the lawyer Jules Forest who lived at Le Côteau, a friend of Chopin, and a relative of Franchomme. The letter reads as follows:

You must absolutely go today to the Forest ladies, whom you will find all day up till 6 P.M. at the Hôtel de Boulogne, rue Poissonnière.

Mlle Adèle believes that you do not wish to give her any lessons, and they are thinking of leaving immediately for Tours. Since the aim of their trip is to do you honor, I feel sure you would not like to annoy them in any way and that you would not wish to deprive someone who loves you of the pleasure to see this amiable family at the agreed time.

I rely on your friendship as I feel sure you must count on your Augste Franchomme12

The informality and warmth of feeling that existed between Chopin and Franchomme is clearly evident here. (Needless to say, Mlle Adèle did become a Chopin pupil.) Almost from the start, the two friends addressed each other using the pronoun of the second-person singular, almost unique in Chopin’s correspondence to his non-Polish friends.

Following King Louis-Phillippe's decision in 1832 to form a royal orchestra (La Musique du Roi), Franchomme was appointed its first cellist. In his subsequent published note to Franchomme, undated and placed toward the end of 1837 by Sydow-Chainaye but possibly earlier, Chopin included the title “1er violoncelle du Roi” for the first time in Franchomme's address: “I replied to you at Versailles to tell you that I would wait for you that evening at 8:30 P.M.”13 Another of these undated notes to Franchomme is placed by Sydow-Chainaye at some time when Chopin was living on the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, that is, between the summer of 1833 and the autumn of 1838, before his trip to Majorca with Sand:

Dear Friend,

I shall be waiting for you for dinner this evening at 6 P.M. at the Café de Foy (opposite M. Cap in my street). Later, I shall take you back home. You will then
change and we shall then go to Kynarton who will then fetch your wife between 6 and 7 P.M. Is that all right?
Yours
F. Ch.14

The brief undated note that Chopin dispatched to Franchomme sometime during 1841 reminds us that following his sojourn in Majorca, Chopin's health was far from reestablished. He was now suffering from tuberculosis of the larynx: “Please give my apologies to Mme Gangler—but I have been spitting blood for an hour and Matuszynski has given me some medication which has replaced my dinner—and I am getting into bed instead of going to hear her.”15 For Chopin, the highlight that year was his brilliant semipublic recital (the first since the spring of 1838) given in the salons of M. Pleyel on Monday 26 April at about 8 P.M. Although there were arias sung by Mme Cinti-Damoreau and duos with the violinist-composer Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst, the greater part of the concert was taken up by Chopin, who played two polonaises (op. 40), the second ballade, the third scherzo, together with a selection of preludes and mazurkas. The next, equally successful concert took place the following year, on 21 February 1842, at the same venue. That time, he was joined by Pauline Viardot and Franchomme (who played one of his own solo pieces). Chopin played his third ballade, the second impromptu, and a selection of preludes, mazurkas, études, and nocturnes. The death of his first teacher, Woyciech Zywny, on the day of the concert was followed on 20 April by that of his close friend Jan Matuszyński who, together with Fontana, were the only remaining links with his boyhood days. These two events left Chopin heartbroken, but thanks to George Sand, who took him to Nohant about a fortnight later, his health was soon on the mend, and the tranquility of the place soon moved his creative spirit again.

Some two years later, on 25 May 1844, when he received news from Warsaw of his father's death, he was inconsolable. Sand wrote to Franchomme probably the following day,16 asking him to come over to help break in on his grief: “Our poor Chopin has just learnt of his father's death. He wishes to remain indoors and alone today, but for my part I beg you to come and see him tomorrow, for you are one of the two or three people who can do him good. I myself suffer too much from his grief: I have not the strength to console him.”17 Again, it was Sand who came to his rescue by taking him, at the end of May, to Nohant “where he will rest after this terrible crisis.”18 What finally reestablished his peace of mind went to Paris (where Chopin met them on 15 July, remaining with them there for ten days) and then to Nohant (where they arrived on 9 August for a sojourn of nineteen days). On 28 August, Chopin accompanied them back to Paris and stayed with them for a couple of days.
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On the last evening, he played to them with Franchomme, a fact contained in Chopin’s letter from Nohant to his cellist friend dated 20 September. “What news can I give? I often think of the last evening we spent together with my dear sister. How glad she was to hear you! She mentioned it in a letter from Strasbourg and begged me to remember her to you and your wife... My regards to Madame—love to the children.”

Franchomme, now married for seven years to Amélie Paillot, then had a six-year-old daughter Cécile, a three-year-old son René (Fanfan), and a baby girl Louise who was to be his last child. Chopin became quite attached to the children. Cécile was a gifted pianist and a pupil of Mme Camille Dubois (née O’Meara), one of Chopin’s best students. (A music album, on the cover of which is embossed Souvenir de Chopin à René [sic] Franchomme, was given by Chopin to Cécile. Inset on the inside of the front cover is a partial autograph of the mazurka of op. 63, no 2.) René became a talented cellist and a gifted composer, dying prematurely at the age of nineteen.

Chopin mentioned him with tenderness and affection in one of the letters to Sand, dated 5 December 1844:

I saw this morning [Franchomme] ...at whose house I dined yesterday, by the fireside in my heavy frock-coat. I sat next to his big lad—he was rosy-cheeked, fresh and warm, with bare knees; I was yellow, shriveled and cold, with three layers of flannel underwear beneath my trousers. I’ve promised him some chocolate in your name. Your name and “chocolate” are synonyms for him now. He used to say your hair was so black—but now I think it has turned chocolate-color in his memory. He is a real laugh and I am especially fond of him.

In the absence of Fontana, who was now in America, Chopin had the distasteful task of managing his business affairs—in these, he was surprisingly sagacious and down-to-earth—with his publishers, as well as editing his manuscripts. That he solicited the help of Franchomme in the former is revealed in a number of letters. Extracts from two of these are given below, the first dated 20 September 1844 and the second dated 8 October 1845. Both deal with his Parisian publisher, Maurice Schlesinger, and his banker, Auguste Léo:

My departure is postponed, so I am sending you a letter for Schlesinger to tell him to pay you the money for my last manuscripts [opp. 55 and 56], i.e. 600 francs (out of which you should keep 100 for me). I hope he won’t make difficulties—if he does, ask him for an immediate answer (be civil!), send it to me, and I shall at once write to Mr. Léo and ask him to repay you before the end of the month the 500 which you were kind enough to lend me.

Here I am again with errands.—I am sending you a huge packet for Mr. Léo. You will find him in the [rue] Louis-le-Grand No. 11, from 10 to 11 A.M.—And another thing, or probably not—only an envelope which contains the manuscripts for Schle-
singer. He will give you, as has already been agreed upon, 300 francs for these 3 Mazurkas [op. 59]. If
he makes a fuss, don’t get upset, forgive him the indiscretion, ask him only to defer payment for a day,
and tell him I asked you to pay for certain things.23

From Chopin’s correspondence, Franchomme assisted his friend in his dealings with music publishers
over a period of about two years, from August 1844 to September 1846. Niecks asserted, presumably on
the basis of firsthand evidence from Franchomme, that the latter was Chopin’s right hand, “and his head
too,”24 in business and money matters, particularly at the end of Chopin’s life, upon his return from
England and Scotland, when he was virtually destitute. It was Franchomme who then took the initiative
to ask Jane Stirling, through Mme Vera Rubio (a former Chopin pupil and, in turn, Jane Stirling’s piano
teacher), to come to the financial aid of the dying composer. Apparently Franchomme did not object
to the task of being Chopin’s business secretary, and, from all accounts, he fulfilled this role quite deftly
and efficiently.

Apart from his stature as a distinguished cellist, Franchomme was a gifted composer, having to his
credit a cello concerto; numerous cello pieces with orchestral, chamber, or piano accompaniment; and a
number of solo pieces for the cello. He also transcribed a variety of Chopin’s compositions for cello and
piano, such as the two nocturnes of op. 55, and he arranged the B-flat Minor sonata (op. 35) for
orchestra. However, he is probably best remembered as the dedicatee of Chopin’s Sonata for Piano and
Cello op. 65—Chopin’s handwritten dedication reads, “A mon ami cheri et bien cheri Aug. Franchomme
F. F. Chopin”—and for his collaboration with Chopin in this composition. Chopin worked on this beautiful
and highly original sonata over a period of two years (1845–1846), producing more than two hundred
pages of sketches in the process, and even some pages for violin and piano.25 In his letter of 12–26
December 1845, he wrote to his family: “I have tried over my cello sonata with Franchomme—it goes
very well.”26 However, he was still not entirely pleased with it, for on 11 October 1846, he wrote again
saying, “Sometimes I am satisfied with my cello sonata, sometimes not. I throw it aside and then take it
up again.”27 On 17 February 1847, he invited Grzymała, Delacroix, Sand, and her family together with
her friend Emmanuel Arago for a duet with Franchomme. The final version of the sonata may then have
been played. It was first published in October 1847 by Breitkopf & Härtel as well as by Brandus et Cie.

On 16 February 1848, Chopin gave what was to be his last public recital in Paris at Pleyel’s rooms. His
piano solos included the berceuse, the barcarolle, the D-flat Waltz op. 64, and a selection of études,
preludes, and mazurkas. He also played a Mozart piano trio with Franchomme and Alard and the last
three movements of the cello sonata with Franchomme. No particular attention was paid to the sonata in
the Revue et Gazette musicale
of 20 February, except that “he [Chopin] performed afterwards his beautiful sonata with Franchomme.” According to a communication to Niecks by Mme Camille Dubois (one of Chopin’s best pupils), the first movement was not appreciated when Chopin tried out the sonata before some artists and intimate friends. It was apparently due to this that Chopin decided to omit that movement during the concert.

During his seven months’ sojourn in England and Scotland, Chopin more than ever needed to communicate with his small but very intimate circle of friends, which included Franchomme, Grzymała, Solange Clésinger, and his favorite pupil, Adolf Gutmann. (Gutmann was the only non-Polish friend, other than Franchomme, whom Chopin addressed as tu in his correspondence.) They were in effect his confessarii and confidants during that loneliest period in his later life. On the day following his arrival in London on 20 April 1848, Jane Stirling wrote to Franchomme assured him of Chopin’s safe journey. The letter is given here for the first time in English:

You will be very pleased to know that our dear traveler has arrived without having unduly suffered from the trip—the crossing was not altogether smooth, and it rained—he was on the bridge—but thank God he does not appear to have caught cold. He came to us last night—you can imagine what it was like to see him!

Today he had a long coach ride and he got back tired—this is not surprising. How I wish you were here with us, dear Mr. Franchomme! Your precious friendship for Mr. Chopin in Paris would have been a thousand times more invaluable here.

Chopin gave the more down-to-earth news about himself to Franchomme ten days later:

Here I am just settling down. At least I have a room—a nice large one—in which I can breathe and play, and here comes the sun to see me today for the first time. I feel less suffocated this morning, but all last week I was good for nothing. How are you? And your wife and dear children? At last you are beginning to have some peace, aren’t you? I have done nothing so far—I have a few tiresome visits—I have not yet delivered my letters [of introduction]. I am wasting my time on trifles—so there you are! I love you—that is all for now.

The next letter is the longest among all the published letters by Chopin to Franchomme. Begun in Edinburgh on 6 August and finished in Calder House (near Edinburgh), it was prompted by the news of the death of Franchomme’s father. However, it is least of all a letter of condolence. It reads more like a diary of Chopin’s activities, his health, his anxiety over the safety of his friend’s family, and it includes a dash of humor here and there (as in the jestful insinuation regarding Baudiot the professional cellist...
and Cap the amateur). One would not guess that he was already dying of tuberculosis during that
Scottish autumn of his life:
I do not know what to say—I think it is best for me not to try to console you on the loss of your father.
I know your grief—time itself can do little to soften such a sorrow. I left London a couple of days ago. I
did the journey to Edinburgh (407 miles) in twelve hours. Having had a day’s rest in Edinburgh, the seat
of Lord Torphichen, Mrs. Erskine’s brother-in-law, where I expect to stay until the end of the month to
recover from my London exploits.
I gave two matinées, which appear to have given pleasure but which were a nuisance, none the less.
Without them, however, I don’t know how I should have been able to spend three months in this dear
London with a spacious lodging absolutely necessary, and a carriage and manservant.
My health is not really bad, but I am losing strength…. The park here is very fine—my host excellent—I
am as well as I may be—not a decent musical idea—I am out of my rut—I am like, shall I say, a donkey
at a fancy-dress ball—a violin E-string on a double-bass, amazed, bewildered, as drowsy as if I were
listening to Baudot [a rival cellist to Franchomme] playing (before 24 February) [beginning of the 1848
revolution] or the scraping of Mr. Cap (after the June riots)….
Adieu, dear, dear friend.32

In contrast, Chopin’s penultimate published letter to Franchomme, written during his stay in Chaillot, is
that of a man pathetically seeking a helping hand from a devoted friend: “Send me a little of your
Bordeaux. I must take a little wine today, and have none. How distrustful I am! Wrap up the bottle, and
put your seal on it. For these porters! And I do not know who will take charge of this commission.”33

Chopin’s last published letter was written to Franchomme on 17 September 1849, one month to the day
before his death. He sounded tired and lethargic, but still hopeful of seeing his friend again soon:
Dear friend,
I am much grieved to hear of what you had to put up with at Le Mans. Anyhow you are now in Touraine
where the weather will have been favorable.
I am rather worse than better. Messrs. Cruveilhier, Louis and Blache decided in consultation that I ought
not to undertake any journey just now, but I should find rooms facing south and stay in Paris.
After many inquiries we have found an apartment which is very expensive but fulfills all the required
conditions—at No. 12 Place Vendôme. It is where Albrecht has his office. Dr. Meara was very helpful in
my search for the apartment.
Anyhow I shall see you all next winter—and nicely settled. My sister is staying with me unless she is
urgently required at home. I love you and can say no more, for I am dropping with lassitude and
weakness. My sister is looking forward to seeing Mme. Franchomme. So am I—most sincerely. It will be
as God pleases.
All my friendly greetings to Mr. and Mme Forest. How I wish I could be with you for a few days! What about Mme. Lauvergeat [sic]—is she at the sea-side? Remember me to her and to Mr. Lauvergeat. Kisses for your children. Send me a few lines.

Yours ever,

Ch.

My sister sends her regards to Mme. Franchomme.34

According to Charles Gavard, the brother of Elise Gavard, Chopin’s pupil to whom he dedicated his berceuse op. 57, some of Chopin’s last words on his deathbed were to Princess Marcelina Czartoryska, a devotee and one of his best pupils, and his cellist friend was very much on his mind: “I recommend Franchomme to you. You will play Mozart together and I shall listen to you.”35 Niecks36 asserts that Franchomme was present when Chopin died, and by all accounts he was one of the pallbearers at the funeral on 30 October 1849. Some five months later, a poignant letter from Marie de Rozières to Franchomme (given here for the first time in English) expressed fully the anguish that he (and she) still felt after his friend’s death: “I think of you with affection and sadness, and I share deeply your pain. I imagine the grief that the one who loved you so dearly would have if he saw you so miserable. I shall come to press your hands as soon as you will allow me, and to tell you that if I can be of any help to you I would be at your disposal.”37

The following year, on the anniversary of Chopin’s death, a mass was celebrated at the Madeleine in honor of the composer, and Franchomme was joined by Louis Lefébure-Wély at the organ in playing some of Chopin’s preludes. To perpetuate the memory of his friend, Franchomme applied himself in a variety of ways. He frequently played with Chopin’s most gifted pupils in public and in the salons. He helped in the publication of the collected Chopin editions by Tellefsen and by Mikuli, as well as the edition by Breitkopf & Härtel. Also, credit goes to him for the manuscript fair copies of a number of the posthumous works. Franchomme died in Paris on 21 January 1884. Many of the memorabilia connected with him, Chopin, and their artistic milieu are now in the possession of Laurent Pénicaud (Tonneins/Lot-et-Garonne), one of Franchomme’s descendants.
Moja bieda: Maria Wodzińska

The relationship between Maria Wodzińska and Chopin was unique in the composer’s life in that it represented the only known aspiration he ever had for marriage. Even though, as some biographers imply, he was in love with a dream (as in the case of Konstancja Gładkowska), the trauma he experienced on the breakdown of his love affair with her touched the very roots of his self-esteem. Maria, a charming, well-bred, accomplished, but somewhat passive eighteen year old when her secret engagement to Chopin was broken, was no George Sand, but emotionally he staked much more in her than he had in Konstancja Gładkowska. His inscription of “Moja bieda” (My sorrow) on the bundle of letters from Maria and her mother after the rupture (and found only after his death) was evidently a heartfelt reflection of his state of mind at the time, and it symbolized a scar on his emotional being that he was never to forget. Ironically, the affair provides us with some documentary evidence to conjecture and attempt to assess Chopin’s psychology in that difficult period of his life.

The Wodzińskis, landowners from Służewo, some 200 kilometers northwest of Warsaw, were a family of eight: the parents, Teresa (née Wodzińska) and Wincenty; three sons, Antoni, Feliks, and Kazimierz; and three daughters, Maria, Józefa, and Teresa. Although Wincenty could trace one branch of his genealogical tree to noble Italian ancestors who had emigrated to Poland in the sixteenth century, Zamoyski asserts that the Wodzińskis may lay no claim to any Polish aristocratic title. 1 (This is in answer to the fact that Wincenty during his lifetime called himself Count Wodziński.) “In fact, the ancestry of Chopin’s mother, the Krzyżanowskis (who were related to the Skarbeks), was more distinguished in its lineage.
Maria Wodzińska. Pencil drawing by Kazimierz Mordasiewicz, 1897, after the pencil drawing by Maria Wodzińska, c. 1836. National Museum, Warsaw. Chopin’s only would-be wife, Maria Wodzińska started by being the composer’s earthly “ideal” and ended as the incarnation of an emotional trauma that he was never able to forget. Maria herself had accepted his proposal for marriage. It was apparently her parents’ decision, based on Chopin’s unstable health, to break the engagement.
However, Wincenty possessed some fifty thousand acres of land, mostly in the fertile Kujawy province, then partly in the kingdom of Prussia. Chopin made the acquaintance of the Wodzińskis through Antoni and Feliks, who were pupils in the Warsaw Lyceum and boarders at the Chopin home. At that time, before the uprising against the Russians of November 1830, the Wodzińskis lived in a fashionable apartment on Miodowa Street. Józefa Kościelska (née Wodzińska), Maria’s younger sister, later recalled the early days when Chopin was a frequent visitor there:

Chopin, in the first year when my brothers boarded with his parents and later, was a frequent guest in our home. Our last dwelling before 1830 was beyond the Iron Gate... [He] used to come to us there shortly before he left the country...

My sister [Maria] never had regular lessons with Chopin... At the time when we used to see [him] in Warsaw... she was not even ten years old—I was eight—and so we thought first and foremost of amusing ourselves... He either played pranks at the piano or played waltzes, polkas, gallops, and mazurkas for us to dance to. In general he surpassed all his playmates not only in merriment but also in charm. This is why both mother and we ourselves liked him very much.

The November uprising of 1830 was to uproot and disperse the Wodzińskis for a period of some four years. Antoni and Feliks had been involved in the uprising, and after its collapse early in September 1831 they took refuge initially at Sułkow. The rest of the family then left Warsaw, staying first in a village on the Prussian side of the Wodziński estate in the Kujawy province. Subsequently, Antoni and Kazimierz made their way to Paris, settling there late in 1831. (Chopin first mentions them there in two letters in December 1831.) In February 1832, their parents, together with Feliks and his sisters, joined Wincenty's brother, Maciej, in Dresden. A few months later, Wincenty decided to return to Poland, while Teresa, together with her daughters and Feliks, went to reside in Geneva, where they were to stay until the summer of 1835. It seems that Teresa lost no time in establishing a literary salon there, which was soon to be frequented by such prominent figures as Queen Hortense of Holland and her son Louis Napoleon (the future Napoleon III), and a number of Polish intellectuals, among them the poets Zygmunt Krasiński, Adam Mickiewicz, and Juliusz Słowacki. Zieliński asserts that when Maria was hardly fifteen Słowacki was captivated by her and was inspired to write one of his most lyrical cycle of poems, In Switzerland.

The first references to the Wodzińskis in Chopin’s published correspondence are in two letters written in Warsaw in 1830, both to Tytus Woyciechowski. The first is dated 27 March 1830, five days after Chopin’s second public concert at the National Theater. Chopin wrote: "Mme Wodzińska is furious that I did not reserve her a box, etc." In the second letter of 18 September 1830, he simply informed Tytus that "Antoni Wodziński..."
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has returned from Vienna.”7 In Paris, Chopin soon renewed his friendship with Antoni and Kazimierz and wrote to Tytus late in December 1831: “My closest Polish acquaintances are the Wodziński brothers and the Brykczyńskis…. Young Wodziński [Kazimierz] is always asking me why you don’t come.”8 The first mention of Maria Wodzińska in Chopin’s published correspondence is in his letter to Feliks dated 18 July 1834, in reply to Feliks’s letter, which presumably contained an invitation from Teresa to Chopin asking him to visit them in Geneva. Feliks’s letter included a note from Maria and was accompanied by a piano composition of hers, a theme and variations, as may be conjectured from the contents of Chopin’s letter:

You have certainly been thinking: “Fritz must be down in the dumps, for he has replied neither to me nor Maria.”…It was so charming of your sister to send me her composition. It gave me inexpressible pleasure and on that same evening I improvised in one of the Parisian salons on the attractive little theme composed by that Marynia whom I used to chase through the room at Pszenny in days gone by. …But today! I now take the liberty of sending to my esteemed colleague Mlle. Maria a little waltz I have just published [E-flat op. 18]. May it give her a hundredth part of the pleasure I experienced on receiving her Variations… Embrace dear Antoni for me and smother Kazimierz with my kisses. As for Mlle Maria, make a very elegant and respectful bow, appear to be surprised and whisper to yourself: “Good gracious! How she has grown up!”9

Did Chopin already anticipate a rapport between himself and Maria? Whatever the answer, this exchange of mementos set the stage for the future closer and more intimate attachment that was to develop.

Although Chopin did not take up the invitation to Geneva (he had “just returned from the Rhineland and [had] work in hand which [he could not] throw on one side”10), he kept up his correspondence with the Wodzińskis, as can be inferred from a letter to him dated 28 February 183511 from Mme Wodzińska, who by then must have been having more than a cursory interest in the young composer:

Dear Mr. Fryderyk,

Allow me to recall myself to your memory. Feliks and Marynia [Maria] have already been engaging your attention whilst I, wishing to spare your time, have not written at all, as they passed on your good news to me. However, having today a good opportunity, thanks to our compatriot Mr. Darowski, I should like to request you to let us have some news of yourself and your family, for I am sure you frequently receive news from Poland. What are your esteemed parents doing? And your sisters? Dziewanowski, who was here last year, gave us a few details about them.

Are we not to have the same satisfaction of seeing Mr. Fryderyk here? I don’t know how long I shall be here; I think, however, that before leaving this part of the world I shall first visit Paris to see certain connections of mine there. Forgive
me, dear Mr. Fryderyk, if I ask you to obtain for me a collection of the autographs of the famous people among whom (quite rightly!) you live... Reserve your friendship for us: ours has long been given to you.

[Teresa] Wodzińska

This time again Chopin declined the invitation to visit the Wodzińskis, for good reason. In a letter dated 11 April 1835, his father told him of his intention to travel with Justyna to a watering-place that summer after the end of July. Chopin planned to meet with them, and his father soon informed him that the venue was to be Karlsbad. Chopin arrived there on 15 August, only to discover later that his parents had reached there before him. At about the time that he had left Paris for Karlsbad, the Wodzińskis (without Antoni) had left Geneva and, with Wincenty, were already installed in Dresden. Chopin came to know of their arrival in Dresden and Mme Wodzińska of Chopin’s arrival at Karlsbad by Antoni. After the idyllic reunion with his parents, Chopin accompanied them as far as Tetschen and then made his way to Dresden, where he arrived on 19 September. During his week’s sojourn there, he spent most of his time with the Wodzińskis. His center of attention was, of course, Maria, a seductive sixteen year old. From all accounts, their meeting was a happy one, and there was no problem of communication, since Maria, who could play the piano well, was musical and probably was already acquainted with some of Chopin’s published works. (She also had a gift for drawing, and the fine sketches of the entire Wodziński family that are now at the Warsaw National Museum are due to her.) That Chopin’s feelings for Maria were probably deep and genuine are attested by the famous waltz in A-flat (posthumously published in 1855 as “L’adieu,” op. 69, no. 1) with its lyrical main theme that he wrote for her toward the end of September, with the dedication “pour Mlle Marie.” A few days earlier, he had given her a card on one side of which he wrote the opening bars of his E-flat Major Nocturne op. 9 (previously inspired by Konstancja?), signed and dated “22 Sept., Dresno [Dresden] 1835.” On the other side is the handwritten inscription, “soyez heureuse” (be happy). For her part, Maria expressed her emotions fully but in a somewhat veiled manner, in her long letter to Chopin soon after his departure from Dresden on 26 September:

On Saturday, after you left us, we all walked sadly about the drawing-room where you had been with us a few minutes earlier. Our eyes were filled with tears... My mother kept on reminding us mournfully of some little characteristic of “her fourth son, Fryderyk” as she calls you... Feliks repeatedly asked me to play that Waltz (the last thing you played and gave to us). They enjoyed listening as I enjoyed playing, for it brought back the brother who had just left... No one could touch anything at dinner: we kept on looking at your usual place at table and then at
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“Fryderyk’s corner”—the little chair is still in its place and will probably stay there as long as we are in this house…. Mamma can speak of nothing but you and Antoni. When my brother reaches Paris do spare a little time for him, I beg you. ...Please, please don’t be indifferent to him.... You know Antoni well and you will come to know him still better.... Adieu (quite simply).... Mamma sends you a tender embrace.... I don’t quite know what to say. Adieu.14

What a contrast between this letter and Maria’s last letter forwarded some eighteen months later (in March 1837) when she would write curtly and dryly, with no anticipation of any further contact: “Please accept the assurance both of my sincere gratitude for [the cahier of music notes that Maria had asked of him] and of the lifelong attachment felt for you by all our family and particularly by your least gifted pupil and childhood friend. Adieu.”15 What had happened in the meanwhile? Did this volte-face express the true feelings of Maria?

Following his sojourn in Dresden, Chopin went to Leipzig for two days to meet with his music publishers (Breitkopf & Härtel), Mendelssohn, Friedrich and Clara Wieck, and Schumann. At the beginning of October, on the return journey to Paris, he stayed at Heidelberg with his nineteen-year-old pupil Adolf Gutmań and his family. (Adolf, who had been working for a year with Chopin, became the composer’s favorite pupil.) It seems that during his trip to Heidelberg, he had caught a cold and was forced to stay in bed for a few days before leaving for Paris, which he reached in about mid-October. (He did not inform Nicolas about this illness, as can be learned from the letter to his father of 9 January 1836.)

Antoni had remained in Geneva during Chopin’s travels, but sometime in October 1835 he returned to Paris, which he had already made his second home. Following Maria’s pleas, and obviously eager to maintain good relations with the Wodzińskis, Chopin took good care of him. Antoni to his mother, October 1835:

I have been here in Paris for three days. Upon my arrival in my hotel, I met Fryderyk who had come to find out if I was there. We spent the evening together. You are right, Mother, in saying that he has not changed; he is only more handsome. We see each other every day and, at present, I am writing from his place, interrupting myself from time to time to hear him play.... Fryderyk has left the piano to say to me: “Don’t forget to tell them that I love them all so very, very much.”16

We learn about Chopin’s intended second visit to Dresden the following summer and more about Antoni’s character from a letter written in mid-December by Nicolas Chopin to his son:

You write about Antoś [Wodziński]; I trust that his sojourn in Paris will do him no harm. I am worried that he might be reckless in his spending, and so show him no sign of being able to send him any money. This would not be a display of
unfriendliness. He must simply realize that he should live responsibly. Even the richest sources one dayun dry. I gather from your letters that your sojourn in Dresden was agreeable since you intend to
return there next year. But you must so plan this trip that it does not consume the fruits of your labor
you had so painfully gathered during the winter.17
Nicolas was discreet enough not to mention Maria, although he knew of Chopin’s sentiments toward her
since Ludwika (Chopin’s eldest sister) came to know about this through Mme. Linde, the wife of the
rector of the Warsaw Lyceum, and wrote about it in a postscript to Nicolas’s letter: ‘‘When I told Mme.
Linde that you may be going to Dresden again next year she answered, ‘Yes, if certain persons are
there.’ Oh! Maria has conquered his poor little heart.... When I sent for him, he was at the table sitting
as usual between Mme. Wodzińska and Maria.... He wouldn’t come. Mme. Wodzińska was then claiming
all his attention and Maria, this lovely young person, seemed to make a big impression upon him.’’18

Around the end of October, Chopin had fallen seriously ill and probably suffered his first episode of
hemoptysis (coughing up blood as a result of bleeding from the respiratory tract), which he was to
experience with increased frequency for the rest of his life. Although by December he felt well enough to
take part in the organization of a number of Polish charity events, rumor of his death had by then
reached Warsaw and became so widespread that the Kurier Polski of 8 January 1836 published a denial
of it. The repercussions were to prove decisively damaging to Chopin’s matrimonial plan with Maria. The
first sign already announced itself in the form of the brief visit by Wincenty Wodziński to the Chopins in
Warsaw sometime in December. Nicolas Chopin to his son, 9 January 1836:
For more than three weeks the rumor has been going around that you were dangerously ill.... Finally the
dreadful news [that his son was dying] came to our knowledge, just before Christmas.... Any how our
fears are now at an end and all is forgotten.... I notice that Dresden has become a very interesting and
attractive spot for you.... But you need health and money, so you’d better be thinking of both...if you
can’t blot it [Dresden] out of your mind. Mr. Wodziński was here before the holidays....By his eagerness
in asking for news of you we later saw that he had been inquiring about the rumor that was going
round, and on the pretext of waiting for the next post, to see whether you would mention Antoni, he
postponed his departure for two days. I am glad to learn that you are pleased with Antoni and that you
find him quite decent.19

About a month later, Chopin received a letter from Teresa Wodzińska in which the subject of Antoni
occupies about half the letter and, more important for Chopin, in which Teresa inquires whether she will
see Chopin again that coming summer:
Wishing to send a small sum of money to Antoni and being unable to do so as yet, I thought of addressing myself to someone who always and everywhere showed us proof of his benevolence. Now that you know the purpose of my request, would you do what is to be done and hand over the enclosed sum to my ninny. Do not refuse him, my dear Frycek, your friendly advice and encourage him to find some job since idleness is the root of all evil. God will pay you back a hundredfold. You can't imagine how many tears I have shed over this matter and of my fears for Antek. You who are such a good son surely understand me. Should he be in need one day, help him, save him and let us know as soon as possible...

I have received news from your parents and your sisters from M. Leopold, the brother of Mme. Pruszak. He tells me that they are all in good health. Maria and Józefa send you their affectionate wishes. The eldest one feels no joy since she knows that you will send her some music... When shall we see you again? Drop us a few lines to tell us whether you'll come over this summer. Clara Wieck and still more affirmatively the chevalier Kunzel have assured us you will come...

My kisses to you and Antoni, my dear Frycek, and I bless you both.

[Teresa] Wodzińska

Despite the fact that physically Chopin was back in form again, news about his health remained prominent in his correspondence with his family well into the spring of 1836. In a letter to Antoni Barciński (Izabela's husband) in mid-March, he poked fun at his previous illness with a light-hearted small poem:

I feel fine—that's all.
May this excellent missive,
Accompanied by a kiss, fly
Towards your children.21

This was followed early in May by a letter from Nicolas again inquiring about his son's health. More significant to Chopin, however, was the news he received from Ludwika at that time regarding the intentions of the Wodzińskis for the coming summer: "Mme Wodzińska will go to a watering-place and then return to Warsaw."22 Chopin's corresponding plans, already anticipated the previous December, were now set, but he had to wait a further two months before he knew the destination and the exact date of his departure. Determined as he probably was by now to propose to Maria, and presumably with the intention of saving his energies for his trip to meet the Wodzińskis and for his stay with them, he declined the following invitations that spring: Mendelssohn's at Düsseldorf, dated 28 March; Hiller's in Frankfurt, dated 30 May; and Marie d'Agoult's in her castle at Croissy, undated but conceivably sometime during that spring. The only invitations Chopin did accept (in June) were those of his poet friend Julian Niemcewicz and General Karol Kniaziewicz (who had formed a Polish Le-
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The Wodzińskis together with Chopin left Marienbad on 24 August for Dresden. While he was there, and as a sign of attachment and devotion to Maria, Chopin copied the first two studies of his op. 25 and wrote a song into Maria's album. (The song, *Pierściené* [The ring], is with words by the poet Stefan Witwicki.) The question of marriage must have been very much on both Maria's and Chopin's minds, but Chopin did not pose it (his chronic irresoluteness?) until the eve of his departure on 9 September. Maria consented, but her mother's approval was conditional. Teresa made herself clearer on this point (but is rather obscure elsewhere) in her letter to Chopin dated 14 September:

I would have sent [my letter] two days ago if I had not had to have a tooth out after you left, which caused me great suffering. I cannot get over my regret at your having to leave on Saturday. On that day I was so unwell that I could not give enough attention to "the twilight hour" [his engagement to Maria] and we did not discuss it sufficiently. Had you stayed, we would have gone into it more fully the next day….

Don't imagine that I should think of taking back what I said. No, but we should have carefully decided on the line to be followed. Until all is settled I shall merely ask you to say nothing: look after your health for everything depends on that. Kazimierz arrived on Sunday. I find him quite altered from what he was when he left. If the air in Bohemia is opium-drenched, then the air where he has come from [Poland] must be laden with *Digitalis*. A nice prospect for Maria! Who knows what she will be like in a year's time…?

I shall try to stay here another two weeks from today, and by the 15th [of October] I shall be back in Warsaw for the wedding [of her son Feliks]. I shall be seeing your parents and sisters and I shall tell them you are well and cheerful, but I shan't mention "the twilight hour." Nevertheless rest assured that I am on your side; we must take these precautions if my wishes are to be fulfilled. We must allow time for the feelings of both parties to be tested. Adieu. Go to bed at eleven and
drink only eau-de-gomme [an aromatic syrup drink]. Mr. Matuszyński will agree with me and will send you, like Skorżewski, to Marienbad or Franzensbad. Keep well, dear Fryderyk. I give you my solemn blessing like a loving mother.

T. W.

Maria is sending you some slippers by Mr. Germany. They are rather large but, I might add, that is to allow you to wear woolen stockings. Dr. Paris recommended it and I take it that you will obey since you gave your promise. One last word: remember this is a testing time.

This letter can be interpreted in two ways: (1) at face value, in which case it sounds kind, even overprotective, and logical in its circumspection, in the light of Chopin’s known delicate constitution and of the fact that Teresa had to consult Wincenty before giving an unconditional approval to Chopin’s marriage proposal, or (2) as part of the series of letters that Teresa subsequently wrote (one of which was outright rude), which had the undertones of a cooling-off process. In that case, one becomes suspicious of each inflection in the train of thought, of possible double-meanings of words or phrases, and of overstressing of a particular idea or emotion. Why should she dwell on her integrity (“Don’t imagine that I should think of taking back what I said”) and on her loyalty toward Chopin (“Rest assured that I am on your side”)? Why did she stake everything on Chopin’s health? Did Dr. Paris (the physician of the Wodzińskis whom Chopin knew in Warsaw, who examined Chopin on Teresa’s request) confide in her some unfavorable prognosis regarding Chopin’s health? Why insinuate that Maria might change? Maria herself wrote (in a mixture of Polish and French) a postscript to a letter by Kazimierz Wodziński to Chopin dated 15 September 1836:

We are inconsolable over your departure; the three days which have passed since then have seemed like ages. Are you like us? Do you miss your friends a little? Yes, you do—I can answer for it and I’m sure I am right; at least I need to believe so. I persuade myself that this YES is what you would say. Am I not right?

I am sending you the slippers which are now ready. I am upset about their being too big, although I took one of your Warsaw boots, made by Takowski, as a pattern, carissimo maestro, but it’s just like the Germans. Dr. Paris consoles me for it by saying that they will suit you very well as you must wear nice warm woolen stockings in winter.

Mamma had a tooth out—it has made her feel quite ill and today she has had to stay in bed. In two weeks we shall be off to Poland. I shall be so happy to see your parents. And your good sister Ludwika—will she recognize me? Adieu, mio carissimo maestro. Don’t forget Dresden now, and Poland later on. Adieu, au revoir. Ah, if it could only be sooner!

Maria

Kazio [Kazimierz] told me that our piano at Służewo is so broken down that it can’t be played on. So think about Pleyel for us. In happier days than these (so far
as we are concerned) I hope to hear you playing that same piano; au revoir. All this gives one hope.29

Unfortunately, Chopin’s reply to Teresa’s letter of 14 September is lost, but some of its contents can be construed from her letter to him of 2 October:

I am very grateful to you for sending me some brief news of Antoni. I received your letter yesterday and I confess I was waiting for nothing else. I am leaving tomorrow and in twelve days’ time I shall be in Warsaw where I shall embrace your parents and sisters for you....

I gather from your letter that you were not telling the truth when you solemnly promised to obey my orders, for you don’t say a word about wearing woolen stockings with your slippers or going to bed before eleven.... [Kunzel] is sulking because you did not go to see the Kaskels [friends of the Wodzińskis in Dresden]. Moreover, a number of people are angry with me thanks to you, and I am losing my good name on your account. That’s how it is in this world. Maria particularly asks you to wear those slippers every day and also to send her, whenever you have the chance, some new novelettes which will be appearing in great numbers about the time of the New Year.30

This most ungracious letter, in which Chopin is called a liar, probably brought home to him the fact that his relationship with Teresa had already soured and his anticipated marriage to Maria might never materialize. In contrast, Maria’s postscript was somewhat reassuring and hopeful, with the promise of a future reunion:

My best thanks for the autographs [see letter dated 28 February 1835, note 12] and please may we have more. Mamma told me to write that. Now we are off to Warsaw as fast as we can go. I am looking forward to seeing your family soon and next year you yourself. Kazio [Kazimierz] had a great deal to tell us about Lusi [her brother Feliks’s bride] and, in spite of your saying that you disagree, he considers that she resembles me. I am greatly flattered, for she is said to be very pretty. Goodbye until May or June at the latest. I entrust to you the memory of

Your most faithful Secretary Maria31

It was probably soon after receiving this letter that Chopin asked his sister Ludwika to make copies of eight of his songs, the first seven cited having been composed during his emotional involvement with Konstancja Gładkowska: Gdzie lubi, Życzenie, Wojak, Precz z moich oczu, Hulanka, Poseł, Czary, Pionska litewska (respectively, What she likes, The wish, The warrior, Out of my sight, Merrymaking, The messenger, Enchantment, and Lithuanian song). He also requested Ludwika to copy out his Lento con gran espressione, a nocturne dating from 1830, originally dedicated to Ludwika and published posthumously in 1875. Upon receiving and correcting
them, he forwarded them to Maria in a red leather-bound album with her name in gold letters. 32

Sometime in the early autumn of 1836, Antoni Wodziński signed up in a Polish cavalry regiment formed by the French government in support of the liberals during the First Carlist War in Spain. A letter that Chopin received from Antoni provided the former with an excuse to write to the Wodzińskis (who were particularly concerned about Antoni) and thereby indirectly keep in touch with Maria. It also gave him the opportunity to assure Teresa that he was not lying about taking good care of his health. Chopin to Mme Wodzińska, 1 November 1836:

I am sending you a letter from Pamplona signed by Antoni.... You can see that [he] is just the same—he is popular, they are kind to him and are looking after him, and he is as well as is to be expected and is not all alone. I have eagerly awaited this letter....I am so glad that this letter of mine today is really only written on the cover of Antoni’s, otherwise it would convey little by itself, at least in so far as the amount of news is concerned. I simply can't think of any news to write about. But those autographs of celebrities and of Antoni and Mme Anatole come to my rescue—I won't send any others to my Secretary as I am afraid of making this letter too bulky.... As I respect you, I assure you I am not lying: I do remember the slippers and when I play I think of “the twilight hour.” ...Tell my Secretary that I am inexpressibly glad that she did not forget to write.33

Chopin was not oblivious of Maria’s plea (expressed in her postscript to Kazimierz’s letter of 15 September 1836) for a new piano at Służewo. He arranged for the dispatch of a Pleyel piano from Paris to Dantzig probably in January 1837. Teresa Wodzińska mentioned it in her cantankerous letter of 25 January from Służewo:

My good Fryderyk,

It is a long, long time since we received your letter, followed shortly afterwards by the parcel of music which I shall rather scold you than thank you for sending. How could you send that “Keepsake” [a handsomely bound album]! Another thing: when you wrote about the piano you did not state what payment was to be made. We must know in advance in order to get the money together. Please let us know also to what address in Dantzig the piano is being sent, for we reckoned that, if Adolphe were informed from there of its arrival, I could at once send a cart to fetch it—it's only twenty-five miles, and we could have the piano before the spring.... I don't know what you thought of my last letter—I said nothing about anyone, perhaps because I was compelled to dispatch it sooner than I intended. It’s always like that—as soon as the woodmen come [to collect the letters] they keep on yelling: “Hurry up, we have three miles to go to the post.” ...I shan’t have time to read over my letter to see whether I haven’t said something silly.34
No mention was made of a possible subsequent meeting or of the “twilight hour.” If Chopin had any hopes left over his wedding plans with Maria, surely this letter must have stifled them, and he must have realized by now that his destiny did not lie in the hands of Maria but in those around her. Maria’s usual postscript was at least superficially reassuring, but it is unlikely that Chopin could be fully reassured by her anymore, even though she casually alluded to a future encounter:

Mamma has been scolding you so I will thank you very, very warmly, and when we meet I shall thank you still more. You can see that I am lazy about writing, for the fact that I am postponing my thanks until we meet frees me from the obligation to write at length now… The quiet life we lead here suits me and that is why I like it—for the time being, of course… I try to find things to do to pass the time. At the moment I’m reading Heine’s Deutschland which is awfully interesting. But I must stop now and give you my blessing. I hope I do not need to reassure you of the sentiments of

Your faithful Secretary

Maria

Chopin’s desperate earnestness is best revealed here by his inscription on a prayer book he sent as a gift at that time to Maria’s younger sister Józefa: “Prosze i za mnie westchnac” (Please say a little prayer for me too).36

That Chopin had not written to his family for some time is attested in his mother’s letter of the end of February 1837. She had been getting news about him from the Wodzińskis, who had their own sources in Paris in Antoni and two lady friends: Ludwika Nakwaska and Zofia Ossolińska. It is quite probable that they had by then informed Teresa of Chopin’s budding relationship with the clique of the Hôtel de France, whom he had met early that winter. In her letter to her son, Justyna Chopin quickly alluded to the news she got from Teresa about Fryderyk and, curiously enough, to a visit by Chopin to a fortuneteller:

Mme Wodzińska told me you had promised to keep early hours, which pleased me greatly, for that is what your health requires; however she says you did not keep your word. Particularly at this time when the influenza is raging and bad nights and chills make it so easy for one to catch the disease… How nice it is that the fortune-teller prophesies happiness to every one! I can well believe that you were curious to see her, but it calls for too much courage to listen to her predictions. If she had foretold something unpleasant she might have filled you with anxiety for a certain time, notwithstanding the greatest efforts of your reason. Promise me, dear Fryderyk, that you won’t see her again.37

What Chopin feared most to be told by the fortuneteller, he received in concrete terms from Maria a few weeks later: a letter of adieu quoted above (note 15). But apparently he could not face the fact that that brief letter
represented the final word on his affair, for early in April he wrote to Teresa Wodzińska a postscript to a letter by Ludwika Nakwaską, using Antoni’s lack of news as an opening:

With Mme Nakwaską’s kind permission I am adding a few words to her letter. I am expecting news from Antoni himself. I shall send it to you at once, even if it is a queerer sort of letter than the one to which Wincenty added some lines. I beg you not to worry about him... You must certainly have received at Służewo my letter written a month ago and it will have pacified you as far as possible about your boy in Spain who must, must write me a few lines... I confess that there has come over me a feeling such as I experienced at Marienbad when faced with Mlle Maria’s book; I could have written nothing in it if I had sat there a hundred years. There are days when I am completely at a loss for words. Today I would rather be at Służewo than be writing to Służewo. I could say more than I could ever write.

Chopin could hardly be more explicit about his inner feelings than he was at the end of that letter.

News from Antoni finally arrived, and Chopin transmitted them promptly to Teresa on 14 May with the following note: “Here is some news from Antoni. I hasten to send you this proof of his sound health and spirits. I shall write to him immediately in accordance with your wishes and without waiting for your reply from Służewo... I shall say no more since I don’t wish to miss the post. In any case, anything I would write would look pallid in comparison with Antoni’s news.”

From Chopin’s subsequent letter to Antoni at Saragossa, it seems that Antoni had written again (but there is no trace of the letter), informing Chopin that he was injured. Chopin’s concern and compassion showed that he did not link his friendship with Antoni to the frustrations he was experiencing with the Wodzińskis, but it may also have been an association of emotions (similar to those he had toward Tytus on account of Konstancja) he still had for Maria:

My dear, dear friend,
You are wounded!—far from home—and here am I unable to send you anything. Your family can think of nothing but you. For God’s sake let your only thought be to get well and return home. The papers say that the Legion you were in was completely wiped out. Don’t join the Spanish Army. Remember you can shed your blood in a worthier cause.

Tytus [Woyciechowski] has written: he wants me to meet him somewhere in Germany. I was ill again this winter and the doctors are sending me to Ems. I have done nothing about it so far because I cannot leave Paris just now. I am writing and preparing a manuscript. I think of you more than you may imagine and love you as always.

F. C.
[In the margin] Believe me, I think of you as often as I do of Tytus. I may go for a few days to George Sand's place—but your money will not thereby be delayed, for I shall leave instructions with Jan [Matuszyński] for those three days. 40

Chopin must have been quite ill that winter (probably suffering from another attack of hemoptysis) for his doctors to recommend that he should go to Ems for a cure. This is also confirmed in a letter to Chopin by one of his fashionable Parisian devotees, the marquis Astolphe de Custine, written sometime in May 1837. The marquis presumably knew of Chopin's sentimental problems at the time and was aware of the composer's fragile health:

You are ill: what is worse, your illness might become really serious. You have reached the limit in physical and spiritual suffering. When griefs of the heart turn into illness of the body we are lost; and that is what I wish to save you from.... I respect your feelings (moreover, I can only guess at them) but I wish them to remain feelings and not become physical sufferings.... You must be persuaded that one single thing is of consequence: your health; the rest will take care of itself.... Is it money that is keeping you in Paris? If so, I can lend you some; you can pay me later, but you must take three months' rest. If it is love that has failed you, let us see what friendship can do.... My place offers you an opportunity difficult to find elsewhere—a month in the country with proper diet, followed by a trip to the Rhine...n ceyo ure ach the Rhine you are at Ems, and from there you can go anywhere, for Ems, properly understood and applied, means health.41

Chopin did go to visit the marquis at his castle in Saint-Gratien in May and June but went neither to Ems nor to George Sand's estate in Nohant despite the exuberant invitation she had sent to Marie d'Agoult early in April 1837 (''I want the Fellows [Liszt and Marie d'Agoult].... I also want Chopin and all the Mickiewiczs and Grzymałas in the world’’42). The reason for Chopin's reluctance was arguably because he reserved the summer for a possible reunion with the Wodzińskis. (Hadin't Maria written on 2 October 1836: ”Good-bye until May or June at the latest’’?) In his letter to Teresa Wodzińska in mid-June he sent her his latest news about Antoni but without letting her know that he was wounded, and more important he dropped hints about not knowing where or when he was going that summer. He made only a casual reference to Maria. Teresa’s reply (which has not survived) was received in London where Chopin had gone with his friend Camille Pleyel for some three weeks on a visit whose purpose was more diversionary than anything else. The contents of the letter must have dealt the coup de grâce to Chopin's expectations for in what was to be his last letter to Teresa sent in mid-August from Paris he wrote: “I hope to receive from you a less gloomy letter than the last one. My next may be nothing more than a footnote to one from Antoni.”43 Nevertheless, he assured her of Antoni's good health following his foot injury and told her
that, with the help of 3,000 francs that he had forwarded to him, one may suppose that he intended to
return.
Chopin's letter to Teresa was followed by two letters of no consequence from her, the first dispatched
late in November and the second sent probably in the spring of 1838. In the second letter, she
requested Chopin to persuade the relevant publisher in Paris to reprint a set of songs based on poems
by Julian Niemcewicz. "You ought to set them to fresh music with fine engravings," she wrote, "and
they would sell like hot cakes, for everyone in the Poznań district would buy them." The letters were
conceivably meant to retain her good relations with Chopin on account of Antoni. They contained no
postscripts from Maria. Chopin had had enough. He never answered them. (In a letter to his friend
Fontana written in mid-March 1839 while he was recovering in Marseilles from the dreadful winter he
had spent in Majorca, Chopin referred in a fit of bitterness and exasperation to the Wodzińskis as
"thoughtless, unscrupulous and heartless.""
As an epilogue to the whole affair, Chopin learned from his sister Ludwika, in her letter dated 9 January
1841, of Maria's engagement to Józef Skarbek, the son of Fryderyk Skarbek, Chopin's godfather. They
were married on 24 July 1841. The marriage was a failure and was pronounced as null and void by the
church in 1846. Two years later Maria married Władysław Orpiszewski and had a son (Ludwikio) who
died at the age of four. The Orpiszewskis eventually emigrated to Florence for health reasons. Their
home (Villino Orpiscevschi) became a venue of Polish poets and artists. After Władysław died there in
1881, Maria returned to Poland and lived with her niece Marja Orpiszewska (née Kościelska), her sister
Józefa's daughter, until her death in 1896 at the age of seventy-seven. Chopin's "love" affair with Maria lasted about two years and played havoc with his self-esteem long after it was over. The question that is often posed is whether he was really in love with her. What is
certain is that he was serious about marrying her, so serious, in fact, that he patientlly accepted the
humiliation of being treated like a disobedient boy by Teresa Wodzińska, presumably because he was
hopeful that one day she would be his mother-in-law. Arguably, he wished to settle down and lead a
normal, married life and have a family. That he most probably did have genuine feelings for Maria has
already been implied. Evidently he was ready to throw in his lot with her on the basis of these feelings
and her personal merits. Moreover, she supposedly belonged to a noble family, and that was important
for a composer who was, through his genius and popularity, being treated as a peer in the highest of
Parisian circles. Whether his initial passion for her would have turned into true love is another matter.
He came to know her as an adult for only some seven weeks, too short a period to tell whether his
infatuation would have turned out to be a passing whim or a lifelong passion. There was no dissent on
her part—apparently she would have married him if her parents had let her. Why didn't they? Again,
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This is a debatable question. Probably the most plausible answer is Chopin’s uncertain health at the time. Rumors of his death that had circulated in Warsaw in December 1835, although later officially denied, must have weighed heavily in any argument by the Wodzińskis about his physical fitness for marriage to Maria. The fact that Dr. Paris examined Chopin in Dresden during the summer of 1836 upon Teresa Wodzińska’s request cannot but be linked to the family’s deep concern over the composer’s well-being. The change in Teresa’s attitude toward Chopin occurred shortly after that last reunion in Dresden and subsequent to that “twilight hour” that had held so much promise.
Wojciech Grzymała. Lithograph by François de Villain after a drawing by Charles Bazin, 1832. Jagiellonian University Library, Kraków. Unflagging in his devotion to Chopin until the end, Wojciech Grzymała was the truest and most loyal of confidants during the composer’s Parisian years. Chopin’s high esteem of him is reflected in the fact that Grzymała was the recipient of the largest known body of correspondence that the composer wrote to his friends.
Perhaps more than any one else among Chopin’s closest friends, Woyciech Grzymała was the composer’s Parisian mentor and confidant over almost the entire period that spanned Chopin’s life in the French capital. Grzymała had a colorful, turbulent youth and a many-sided personality that apparently embraced with as much flair and ease the worlds of the military and of politics as it did those of finance, literature, and high-society salons. He was born on 23 April 1793 at Dunajowcy in the western Ukrainian region of Podolia. His early career was in the army, and he became an aide-de-camp in the duchy of Warsaw first under General Zajączek and later under the command of Poland’s military hero Józef Poniatowski. He took part in Napoleon’s Russian campaign of 1812 as a member of a Polish corps led by Poniatowski. As a prisoner of war of the Russians, he spent three years in jail at Poltawa. In 1815, the Congress of Vienna set up the constitutional kingdom of Poland with the Russian tsar as its king. Grzymała became a deputy and an official in the State Council. But he was also an ardent nationalist and a member of a secret patriotic society. In 1826, his participation in the so-called Decembrist movement (which plotted to put Grand Duke Constantine, rather than his young brother Nicholas, on the throne of Russia following the death of Tsar Alexander I in December 1825) got him a three-month jail sentence, but, on the orders of Tsar Nicholas I, he was interned in the bunkers of St. Peter and Paul at St. Petersburgh until 1829. Later he became director of the bank of the Polish government and soon embarked on a literary career in Warsaw, where his salon was the venue of artists and writers, among them probably Chopin.

It was in Grzymała’s capacity as a music critic for the Kurier Polski that Chopin first mentioned him in a letter dated 27 March 1830, addressed to
his bosom friend Tytus Woyciechowski. Chopin was then at the beginning of his professional career and had given two public concerts in Warsaw’s National Theater on 17 and 22 March. During the first concert, he played his Piano Concerto in F Minor op. 21 and the Fantasy on Polish Airs op. 13. For the second concert, he replaced the fantasy with the Rondo à la krakowiak op. 14, and borrowed a louder Viennese piano for the occasion. In reviewing the second concert in the Kurier Polski of 26 March, Grzymała was all praise, comparing his playing to “a beautiful declamation,” but regretted that Chopin did not play the fantasy on a Viennese piano. This is what Chopin wrote to his friend Tytus. After the unsuccessful Polish uprising against the Russians in Warsaw in 1830, Grzymała emigrated in 1831 (the exact date is unknown) to Paris. His substantial savings allowed him to live there in style and to patronize all types of arts and artists. He was the founder of the Polish Literary Society, of which Chopin was a member. Grzymała also became an active member of the Benevolent Association of the Polish Ladies in Paris, founded by Princess Anna Czartoryska, wife of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, the Polish statesman and the representative of Poland in Paris at the time. That he was already a friend of Chopin among the Polish émigrés is evident from a letter written in Warsaw by Elsner to Chopin dated 27 November 1831.5 (Chopin was then established in Paris for about two months at 27, boulevard Poissonnière.) In it, Elsner asked Chopin to convey his regards to Grzymała. There is then a gap of some five years in the published correspondence related to Grzymała.6 In those intervening years, Chopin had settled down in Paris as a fashionable composer and piano teacher of the elite. The period between the autumn of 1836, when Chopin probably first met George Sand, and the following autumn marked a turning point in Chopin’s life. Following the end of his affair with Maria Wodzińska, he became increasingly attracted to Sand, but emotionally he could not easily get embroiled in a fresh liaison. This state of affairs marked the beginning of a very close friendship with Grzymała, that of confidant in his private life. The fact that Grzymała was a compatriot and belonged to George Sand’s closest circle of friends placed him in the choicest of positions as far as Chopin was concerned. According to Lubin, Grzymała’s association with Sand dates back at least to December 1831 (the same year of his emigration to France) when he was referred to as her “friend and table companion.”7 Later she alluded to him as her husband because Chopin was “the little one they had produced together.”8 Grzymała’s response to Chopin, one surmises from Chopin’s letters, was always warm, affectionate, and almost paternal. In an undated letter (written probably in the spring of 1838), Chopin requested his immediate presence, “even if late at night at twelve or one… It is a question of giving me some advice.”9 The “advice” in question was related to Chopin’s feelings toward Sand (who had returned
that to Paris from Nohant in April 1838 after an absence of some sixteen months) and what to do with them. According to Chopin’s friends, these feelings were initially disagreeable. But apparently as he saw more of her, he became infatuated with her. (Or was it perhaps that her terrifying magnetism and indomitable will had overpowered him?) And yet he could not make up his mind, one way or the other, about her. He was asking for Grzymała’s help to sort his sentiments out for him. Grzymała’s response is unfortunately not known. Early that summer, in June 1838, Grzymała received that famous long letter (stretching over 5,000 words) from Sand in which she dissected her feelings toward Chopin with a surgeon’s scalpel (she was by then obviously very much in love with him) and shrewdly analyzed Chopin’s affair with Maria Wodzińska vis-à-vis herself. Toward the end of the letter, her summing up is as follows: “If his happiness depends, or is going to depend, on her, let him go his way. If he is to be unhappy, prevent it! If I can make him happy without putting an end to the happiness he receives from her, I can adopt the same attitude [share her love with two persons]. If he cannot obtain happiness from me without being unhappy on her account, we must avoid each other and he must forget me. The only choice lies in these four alternatives.” Grzymała’s response must have been encouraging, for a few days later, she asked him to see her in Paris (where she arrived on 7 June) without letting the “little one” know. But her arrival was no surprise to Chopin; he had come to know about it through his Spanish ambassador friend, Count Manuel Marliani. Chopin to Grzymała, beginning of July: “God knows how things will turn out. I am really unwell. I have been to your house every day to embrace you on your return. Let’s have dinner together somewhere.” It is perhaps soon afterward that Chopin became Sand’s lover.

During his stay with Sand on the island of Majorca in the winter of 1838–1839, Chopin took comfort in his correspondence with Grzymała, particularly as the severe winter started to take its toll on his health. For example, on 3 December 1838, he wrote: “Here I am, coughing and trying to clear my throat, but still loving you. We often speak of you…. The sky is as lovely as your soul; the earth is as black as my heart.” During his subsequent convalescence in Marseilles, he started to feel his normal self again. He had many complimentary remarks about his friend, and also some favors to ask. To Grzymała, 27 March 1839:

My health is far better and I can thank you more energetically for sending the money. You know I am really amazed at your good will but, believe me, you have in me one who is deeply grateful in his heart, even if he does not always outwardly appear to be so. You are so kind that I am sure you will take in my furniture: please be also good enough to pay for the removal. I venture to ask this last favor, knowing that only a small sum is involved…. We often think of you when we are
out walking. You wouldn’t believe how much we enjoy talking about you…. Next month we are sure to move to Avignon and from there to Nohant. There we shall embrace you, not by letter, but complete with your moustache, unless your moustache happens to have met with the same fate as my side-whiskers.14

Chopin’s genuine concern and warmth of feeling for his friend who had fallen ill is reflected in his letter of 12 April:

Mme. Marliani has written to tell us you are still ill and that the blood-letting did you very little good. We thought here that you were perfectly recovered, or so it appeared from your letter yesterday. So what a disappointment today! …Why can’t I be both here and with you? How I would look after you! I have been taught what it means to take care of someone. And besides, my attentions would be all the more welcome to you since you would know from what affection they spring. I have never been able to be of much use to you, but I might manage now to look after you.15

Instead of Avignon, Chopin and Sand went to Genoa early in May 1839. They returned to Marseilles on 18 May and set off for Nohant two days later. Both beckoned Grzymała to join them there. Chopin to Grzymała, 2 June: “Come, if only for a few minutes. Choose a time when all your family are well and are prepared to let you go, out of charity for your neighbors. Give us the chance to embrace each other and I will provide excellent milk and plenty of pills.”16 And again on 8 July:

I know how difficult it is for you to leave Paris and I dared not insist, in spite of my desire to see you and enjoy your company: but the Mistress of the House is beginning to be depressed and she really is sorry that there is no sign of you…. My health is poor and she is unwell, perhaps your presence will revive her… [George Sand’s postscript:] What does all this mean? You fickle husband! We await you in vain. You trifle with our impatience and deceive us with false hopes. You really must come. I tell you, my dear friend, we need you. The boy’s [Chopin’s] health is still only so-so. I feel that he needs a little less quiet, solitude and monotonous routine than life at Nohant offers…. Come and feel the pulse of his morale. ZHe wi Ilne ver confess to me that he is bored. He has not been accustomed to such a strict mode of life, while I am gradually becoming a frightful matron and schoolmistress. I have to be. Come and see us.17

Grzymała did come finally at the end of August, but only for a short stay. The previous month, Sand had dedicated to him her novel Gabriel, “to the memory of an absent brother.”

About a fortnight before he was due to leave for Paris, Chopin took the liberty of asking Grzymała once again to attend to affairs related to his (Chopin’s) and Sand’s return to Paris:
Take the small apartment, but if we are too late then rent the large one.... Regarding the one for her [George Sand], she thinks it’s too dear and I will never convince her that it is better to pay more rather than have a lot of other tenants in the house.... [George Sand’s postscript; the words italicized are in Polish:] Dear husband, I love you very much, Whiskery, Beaver, old potato-without-salt, Mea culpa, Stockholm, Straddle-legs, we can’t get used to your not being here and we are eager to rejoin you. It all depends on what success you have in your expeditions and efforts to find us somewhere to live.... All the rooms need not be large and fine. The children’s rooms, for example, can be small, provided they have fireplaces: the rooms for the grown-ups must face south. That is most important for the boy [Chopin] and for my rheumatism too....Good night, Grzym. Love us as we do you. Write. Don’t pay too much attention to your boy’s nasal arguments. It is stupid of him to want to save on the rent.... If in your opinion the little apartment is not spacious enough, never mind what he says. He will always manage to pay his rent. He can economize on drink, gambling, women and smoking.18
Nine days later, Chopin still wrote on the matter of apartment hunting and mentioned that Fontana “has already found me a place and will attend to the transportation of my belongings. I must only ask you to pay for the removal cart. I am sorry for this expense on your part but it is unavoidable, unless you want me to spend my first days, following my arrival, on the streets.”19 To make assurances doubly sure, he wrote to Fontana on the same day asking him to see Grzymała regarding the move to the new apartment. This was to be at 5, rue Tronchet, and Sand’s a garden dwelling at 16, rue Pigalle, both made ready to the last detail by Fontana. (Two years later, Chopin was to move into one of the two pavilions in the back garden of Sand’s apartment.) Soon afterward, on 8 October 1839, he announced to Grzymała (and, at about the same time, also to Fontana) that he would leave Nohant for Paris “Thursday morning without fail, and we shall reach Paris on Friday at about 5.... I have written to Julian and asked him to wait for me in my apartment. Thanks a million for your today’s letter.”20
After a break of a little over three years, Chopin’s published correspondence to Grzymała resumed toward the end of the winter of 1842. On 21 February, Chopin had given his second private concert in Paris at the Salle Pleyel. Its resounding success, however, was marred by the death on the same day of his piano teacher, Wojciech Żywny; by Chopin’s ill health a few weeks later; and by ominous news regarding the state of health of his close friend Jan Matuszyński. Ill in bed, Chopin wrote to Grzymała: “I must stay in bed all day because my head and tonsils are aching so much. You can’t imagine how annoyed I am that I couldn’t go to the rue du Roule [to visit the Czartoryskis] yesterday. If Raciborski [a Polish physician] will allow me to go out tomorrow (Jasio [Jan Matuszyński] had bloodletting yesterday, is all alone and in bed) I will come to see you at once.”21 Jan died a short time later, on 20 April. As an antidote to this series of shocks, Sand took Chopin to Nohant early in May, to spend the
third of his seven summers there. During his stay, which lasted through the entire summer, except for a 
short break late in July, he was to resume his friendships with Pauline Viardot and Delacroix (whom he 
had first met in Paris at the end of May 1836 at a dinner given by Liszt). Chopin to Grzymała, end of 
May 1842: “Tomorrow or the day after we expect our good friend Delacroix. He will have your room.”22 
Inevitably, he asked his devoted friend to go on an errand for him: “Forgive me for asking you again to 
send off my letter to the Viennese publisher [Mechetti]. But I think that postage has to be prepaid on 
letters to Austria. They will tell you at the post office in the Place de la Bourse. I am asking you to do 
me this favor as the packet contains my painfully written manuscripts [of three mazurkas, op. 50] and I 
don’t wish to expose them to any risks. This is the last time I shall trouble you with such a task—I know 
you don’t like it. May all go well with you.”23 In their quest for new lodgings (apparently their joint 
apartments in the rue Pigalle proved to be too small for their liking), Sand and Chopin this time did not 
have to seek the help of either Fontana or Grzymała. They had the assistance of Mme Marliani, who was 
already living in their future quarter of the Square d’Orléans. Chopin to Grzymała, 27 July 1842: 
“Tomorrow night we shall leave for Paris to look for an apartment. I shall stay for a day.”24 Sand, 
however, had written to Mme Marliani two days earlier: “Chopin will not be able to decide on the 
apartment without me, nor I without him. We shall then stay with you for five or six days… Try then by 
hook or by crook to reserve it [the apartment] until we come. If it is rented we shall have a look at the 
one in the square.”25 They finally rented apartments at the Square d’Orléans, 34, rue Saint-Lazare, 
Sand on the first floor at No. 5 and Chopin on the ground floor at No. 9. They were back in Nohant on 
10 August to resume their summer vacation. In terms of maturity of compositions, this was arguably 
Chopin’s most productive summer at the country estate, during which he wrote such masterpieces as 
the fourth Ballade in F Minor op. 52, the Polonaise in A-flat op. 53, and the fourth Scherzo in C Minor 
op. 54.
The following year saw Chopin spending another prolonged vacation at Nohant, from 22 May until 28 
October, with a few days’ break in Paris in mid-August. Sand’s other guests included Delacroix and the 
Viardots. This summer probably witnessed Sand’s first candid disclosure to Chopin of her past loves, 
including the one for her actor friend Pierre Bocage.26 Also, in an unprecedented letter to Grzymała, 
Chopin recounted the gossip being spread about his friend’s amorous adventure with a certain Madame 
Agathe, a would-be opera singer. Those responsible for the gossip were Mme Marliani and Sand herself. 
Chopin referred to them cryptically as “the Spaniard” and “my companion,” respectively. He wrote: 
You remember that evening when my companion had decided to see [Agathe]… She told you then that 
you were obviously in love with her. I don’t know whether
you noticed it, but I was upset, and I told her that evening in her room not to jest about the matter....

Yesterday after reading your letter, I remarked that she must have joked about you and Agathe with the Spaniard. since the latter has been telling you all sorts of silly stories which she pretended to have heard from me and from her. She [Sand] then swore to me that she had uttered nothing of the sort about you and Agathe, and that she knows that your affections lay elsewhere.... She added that when the Spaniard wants to find out something about a person, she conjures up some nonsense of her own invention as established facts, and then puts the blame on those who are most intimate with that person.... You can now imagine how she respects other people’s feelings.27

This is indicative of the sort of gossip that Chopin sometimes had to endure at Nohant. Moreover, it did not reflect well on Sand’s discretion. There was also a hint of jealousy on her part regarding Grzymała, which suggested the possibility that he was her erstwhile lover.

Chopin arrived in Paris with Sand’s son Maurice on 29 October 1843. Three days earlier, Sand wrote to Grzymała giving instructions regarding Chopin’s health and well-being. In all matters regarding her friend, she invariably displayed her full confidence in Grzymała as a devoted and trustful confidant:

The little one [Chopin] is well; the weather is still clement. His delicate health causes no concern since the time of the trip to Spain. If he does not find it very disturbing to spend a few weeks without me [Sand intended to remain for one more month at Nohant primarily to work on the founding of a local paper entitled L’Eclaireur de l’Indre], I shall have no reason to worry unduly. Nevertheless I shall rely on you to keep me well and truly informed about him, and also to entertain him, to see him from time to time, to go out occasionally with him in the evening, and in general to look after him and help him shake off any depressive mood whenever necessary. He never has any savings in spite of the fact that his earnings are substantial. He might therefore be hard up on arriving in Paris before he is paid for his first lessons. He pretends that he doesn't need any loan of a few hundred francs for the first few days. I hope to do away with this absurd scruple of his, but he is so uncanny that he may well cling stubbornly to this attitude. In that case, I’ll count on you to lend him whatever amount is necessary. But first ask him how much he needs, because sometimes he is not aware that he has no money. Let all this be strictly between us, in other words do as if you are aware of nothing, as if I don’t write to you, as if you don't know when I shall return to Paris, as if you are not in contact with me, and that you don’t mention him to me.... I shall definitely be back by the end of November, unless my little one is ill beforehand in which case I shall return promptly.28

And yet upon receiving news from Grzymała in mid-November that Chopin was severely ill, she was reluctant to keep her promise, and her arguments to that effect ring false. To Grzymała, 18 November 1843:
Your letter appalled me and I was on the point of leaving. But I held out against my anxieties until tonight, expecting to get further news from the little one. Mme Marliani and Mlle de Rozières, who had written to me at the same time as you did, have rewritten saying that he feels better, that his condition is not so serious, and they urge me to stay on, promising to inform me in case of a relapse or of a hint of a worsening of his condition. What makes me follow their advice is not so much the necessity of finishing here some urgent matters as the fear of annoying Chopin in a certain way if I join him before the time we had agreed upon. I know well that he would be grieved and almost humiliated in the delicacy of his heart to see me give up my important work in favor of being his home nurse, as he says, the poor child! although I am his home nurse so willingly. He writes begging me to stay here. He does not want me to know that he is ill; he thinks I’m not aware of it… He is well looked after, and Mme Marliani informs me that she is taking care of him the whole time… I miss him as much as he misses me. I need to watch over him as much as he needs my care… Poor angel! Rest assured that I shall never forsake him; my life is dedicated to him for ever.29

Grzymała must have read all this with a chuckle, knowing full well the sort of intellectual acrobatics that Sand was sometimes capable of to justify her will or to suit her purpose. He probably did not divulge the contents of this letter to Chopin. In fact, nowhere in Chopin’s many letters to him was there an indication of a faux pas he committed in any matter related to the private affairs of his friend. It seems that Grzymała was closer to Sand than he wished it to be known to his composer friend for fear of arousing any feeling of jealousy in him. Sand was aware of this trait in Chopin’s character from the beginning of her relationship with him, and her communication to Bocage referred to above is one of several such assertions.30 Chopin was probably unaware of these (but see note 30), at least not in the case of Grzymała to whom his letters continued to exude an unfailing warmth of feeling and affection. Chopin to Grzymała from Nohant toward the end of July 1844, after a brief sojourn in Paris in mid-July to see his sister Ludwika, inquiring particularly about his friend’s dwindling state of business:

I am already back at Nohant. On the way I thought of nothing but our last conversation. You still have someone to love you, and I pray God may improve the state of your finances. The Mistress of the House was as much concerned about your latest business affairs as about your falling downstairs… [George Sand’s postscript:] Well, well, poor old fellow; so you’ve gone and damaged your backside, your head and what else? Please don’t try such funny tricks again, I beg you. Luckily there is a kind God who takes care of good hearts and silly heads. My little Chopin has returned in good health, but he laments over your cracked bottom. Let us soon hear that it is all over, that you have no more bad luck in business and that you love us as we do.31

Chopin from Paris in the autumn: “I arrived here late in the evening the day before yesterday—I am spending all my time running round with my
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sister, and every morning is frittered away. When am I to see you?... Perhaps I shall drop in tonight or tomorrow morning."32 In turn, Sand to Grzymała, mid-February 1845:

I am dumbfounded by the story you told me. Come and tell me more about it and rest assured that I can keep a secret as much as anyone. Pass by and see me a little late in the evening as usual, but do come more often. I don't see much of you; in fact, I hardly see my old friends any more. This makes me feel peevish and irritable. Come and fill my heart again with life. Why don't you join us for dinner any more? This won't waste your time since you must eat somewhere. I did not mention the fact to [Chopin] that I met you this morning, nor that I was with you in the tavern. This would have caused such a row. Here are the ins and outs of jealousy. I complained of him [Chopin], and you talked about her [presumably Grzymała's lady friend] with adulation. Burn this note.33

What did cause "such a row" to Sand a few months later was an incident involving Grzymała and Marie de Rozières, as is evident from a severe letter by Sand to the latter dated the beginning of June 1845. Marie, who was the piano teacher of Sand's daughter Solange, had been seduced and abandoned by Antoni Wodziński (Maria Wodzińska's elder brother), and now Sand, fearing that Marie might exert a bad influence on Solange, who was then nearly turning seventeen, tried to restrict Marie's contacts with Solange. Moreover, Sand suspected that Marie had designs on Grzymała:

I don't wish Solange to go out with you this year. She looks too grown-up, too well-developed... and you have the appearance of a younger sister.... Should I say everything? You didn't use to be a flirt and now, my pet, your eyes have acquired a terribly voluptuous expression... Men have noticed that... Why is it that for some time now you have the appearance of a woman of pleasure? Why did Grzymała fall into the trap of directing to you the most mortal of insults? And why did you laugh when you informed me of it?... Men run away when one beckons them, and since you are basically sensible and do not wish to give yourself as quickly as you offer yourself (through looks), you will find either enemies or mockers. None of them will be like that crank Grzymała who says: Would you like to...? and then doesn't recall either his indecent proposal or its refusal the following day. Beware, beware! You don't know where such behavior can lead to. A woman carries her sex and her disposition in the expression of her eyes and in her smile.34

It is unlikely that Grzymała, and least of all Chopin, was aware of the contents of this letter. Chopin to Grzymała from Nohant, early July 1845: "I see that you are the same as ever: beloved even by those who have just come to know you... Is it true that we may expect you here, and when?"35 And then early in December: "If you so wish, I shall remain at home tomorrow until 2 o'clock to see you; in any case, I shall wait for you
all day today…. Should you wish to pass by on the way back from the opera, even late at night, I shall then have the pleasure of embracing you.’’

By the time he spent his last summer at Nohant in 1846, Chopin probably knew in his heart that his relations with Sand were crumbling. Sand had started early that year writing her semibiographical, psychologically oriented novel *Lucrezia Floriani*, portraying (consciously or unconsciously) her strained liaison with Chopin. On 25 June, it started appearing in serial form in the Parisian daily *Le Courier français*. A year later, it was published in book form. Even though, as Hedley upholds, it was not the cause of the rupture, it contributed to the breakdown of an affair that had lasted some eight years.

During that fateful summer, Grzymała arrived with a friend of Chopin’s sister Ludwika from Warsaw, Laura Czosnowska (the dedicatee of Chopin’s three mazurkas, op. 63), whom Sand had invited but did not particularly like. (Sand to Marie de Rozières, early June 1846: “Between us, it isn’t that she pleases me terribly. She has too many baubles on her robes and her musk-scented notes give me a headache.”) For Chopin, the strained atmosphere, even after Grzymała’s departure, was not relieved until Delacroix arrived in mid-August for a fortnight’s stay. On 25 August, Chopin wrote to Grzymała in Paris, “Dear Delacroix will be bringing to you a large packet from me [containing the manuscripts of the three mazurkas, op. 63, and the sonata for piano and cello, op. 65]. How are you? Write a few lines to me.” This was the last letter written to Grzymała from Nohant.

In the light of the forthcoming wedding on 20 May 1847 of her daughter, Solange, to the sculptor Clésinger, about which Chopin was kept in the dark until some three weeks before the event and to which he was not invited, Sand’s updated attitude toward Chopin was already explicitly spelled out to Marie de Rozières in a letter dated 8 May: “I cannot make Chopin the head of my family and its counselor—my children would not accept such a situation and my personal dignity would be lost.”

Four days later Sand wrote to Grzymała about the subject in another of her circuitous letters in which she also summed up her liaison with her companion in a hodgepodge of truth and fantasy: “I think that Chopin, standing apart from all this, must have suffered from not knowing the persons and factors involved, and from not being able to advise. But his advice in the real business of life cannot possibly be considered. He had never looked straight at realities, never understood human nature on any point; his soul is pure poetry and music, and he cannot tolerate anything that is different from himself. Moreover, his interference in family affairs would mean for me the loss of all dignity and love, both towards and from my children. Talk to him and try to make him understand in a general sort of way that he must refrain from concerning himself with them. If I tell him that Clésinger (whom he does not like) deserves our affection, he will only hate him the more and will turn Solange against himself. It
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is all very difficult and delicate, and I see no means of calming and restoring a sick mind which is
exasperated by the very efforts that one makes to cure it. For a long time now the disease which gnaws
at the body and soul of this poor creature has been the death of me, and I see him fading away without
ever having been able to do him any good, since it is his anxious, jealous and touching affection for me
which is the main cause of his misery. For the last seven years I have lived like a virgin with him and
other men. I have grown old before my time, but even so it cost me no effort or sacrifice, for I was so
weary of passions and hopeless disillusionment. If ever a woman on this earth should have inspired him
with absolute confidence I was that woman—and he has never understood it. I am well aware that
plenty of people accuse me, some of having exhausted him by the violence of my physical passion,
others of having driven him to despair by my wild outbursts. I think you know the real state of affairs.
He complains that I have killed him by refusing my consent, while I was absolutely certain that I should
kill him if I acted otherwise. You see how I am placed in this fatal friendship, in which I have consented
to be his slave, whenever I could do so without showing him an impossible and wicked preference over
my children, and when it has been such a delicate and serious matter to preserve the respect it was my
duty to inspire in my children and my friends. In that connection I have achieved miracles of patience
such as I should not have thought myself capable of—I who was no saint like the Princess [Czartoryska].
It has become a martyrdom to me: but Heaven is implacable towards me, as if I had some great crimes
to expiate, since in the midst of all these efforts and sacrifices he whom I love with absolutely chaste
and maternal feeling is dying, the victim of the crazy love he bears me. May God in His mercy at least
grant that my children may be happy, by which I mean kind, generous and of calm conscience.41

In the aftermath of Sand's break with Chopin, Sand relegated some of her closest friends to the "enemy
camp," including Delacroix and Grzymała. To Pauline Viardot, 1 December 1847:

Your letter [see Chapter 9, note 49] relieves me from one of my deepest sorrows. You love me and you
believe in me; this is sufficient for me. I shall be used to the idea of having lost other affections on
which I had no longer the right to count. That of Chopin, whose home nurse I was for 9 years, should
have withstood the test of time. Even if I had committed faults or crimes, Chopin should not have
believed them, or even seen them. There is a certain degree of respect and gratitude beyond which we
no longer have the right to examine the behavior of those beings who have become sacred for us. Well,
Chopin, far from adhering to this principle, has forsaken it and profaned it. He dreamt up and invented
faults of which I never even imagined or could imagine... because they are not part of me. Do not think
that I judge him on the basis of other people's gossip... It is in his direct and official dealings with me
that I have seen the skillful influence of Solange carry him away over my sincerity... I forgive [him]
from the bottom of my heart as I forgive Solange, who is more guilty than he is, my raving mad son-in-
law, Grzymała who is weak and frivolous, and Mlle de Rozières who is as silly as a goose. They will all
return to me and will find me in due time.42
In fact most of them did not return, and those who did came back more out of courtesy than true affection. Chopin was lost to her forever. So was Marie de Rozières. Delacroix and Grzymała never went back to Nohant after Chopin's last summer there. They saw Sand after 1847 but much less frequently. Solange, sadly, was marked for life and harbored a bitterness against her mother that she could never shrug off. In this lamentable period of his life, it was only natural for Chopin to unburden himself through long and intimate letters to his family. But he also turned increasingly to his compatriots, including Grzymała, particularly during his ill-fated visits to England and Scotland in 1848. Chopin's last concert in Paris, on 16 February 1848, was also the end of the era of the aristocratic milieu that had patronized him. A week later, Paris was in the throes of the revolution that toppled the monarchy and proclaimed a republic on 24 February. Louis-Philippe first fled to Saint-Cloud and later made his way across the channel to Newhaven, and finally withdrew to Surrey. Chopin's visit to England about a fortnight after Louis-Philippe's abdication was prompted not only by his break with Sand and by the realization that the Paris of his poetic personality had all but disappeared, but also by the fact that he now had, like many other musicians at the time, to seek his fortunes elsewhere. In this, Chopin was encouraged by his "good Scotswoman," his pupil and devoted patron Jane Stirling, and her widowed elder sister, Katherine Erskine. (Chopin first met Jane Stirling possibly in 1843, but certainly not later than early January 1844.) Soon after their departure for London, Chopin left Paris on 19 April, arriving at London Bridge on a bleak Maunday Thursday the following day. Writing to Grzymała on Good Friday, he said:

My good Mrs. Erskine and her sister have thought of everything—even of my [special] drinking chocolate, and not merely of rooms for me… They asked all about you. You can't imagine how kind they are—I have only just noticed that the paper I am writing on has my monogram… Did you get back home safely [from the station]? Did you witness any street-fighting on the way? Did the army succeed in restoring order?43

The London season was at its height at the beginning of Chopin's three-month stay. His first impressions were favorable, and he may well have then considered the idea of settling in the English capital. He was already well known there through the publication of his works by Wessel's of Regent Street, and his two piano concertos had been performed on several occasions by the Philharmonic Society. But he was soon critical of the English attitude to music and of the stifling hold his "Scottish ladies" were having on him. In particular, the absence of friends like Grzymała and Delacroix, together with his lack of English and his miserable state of health, made him feel rather lonely and depressed. He wrote about his
experiences to his family, to his close friends, and in particular to Grzymała. His impression of the Philharmonic Society orchestra was that it is “like their roast beef or turtle soup...strong and efficient, but that is all.”44 Of the English attitude to music: “It’s all the same to them whether the music is good or bad, for they are compelled to listen to it from morning till night.”45 Of the English attitude to musicians, he explained to Grzymała that “if you say ‘artist’ these English think you mean a painter, sculptor or architect. But music is a profession, not an art... Ask any Englishman.”46 Of his hopes to make his mark on London, he wrote, “I am always introduced, but I have no idea to whom, and I am quite lost in London. What with twenty years in Poland and seventeen in Paris, it’s not surprising that I am getting on slowly here, particularly as I don’t speak the language.”47

With the end of the London season, there was no reason for Chopin to stay behind, and he was also desperately in need of money. The suggestion by Jane Stirling for him to spend a few weeks in Edinburgh as the guest of Lord Torphichen, her brother-in-law, was therefore readily taken up. Sometime in July, about a week before leaving for Edinburgh, he summed up his mood to Grzymała as follows: “I can feel neither grief nor joy—I am just vegetating and waiting for it all to end quickly... I shall stay in Scotland until 29 August. On the 29th I have accepted an engagement to play at Manchester... What I shall do after that, I don't know.”48

Chopin’s itinerary during his eight-week stay in Scotland was that of a young artist at the prime of his career. In reality, he was near the end of his tether and a little over a year away from death. Ahead of him were three important concerts: those in Manchester on 28 August (not 29, as he had informed Grzymała), Glasgow on 27 September, and Edinburgh on 4 October. (This was apart from the private recitals he was expected to give in the drawing rooms of his various hosts and hostesses.) He was also to be the guest of Lord Torphichen at Calder House near Edinburgh, of Mrs. Houston (Jane’s sister) at Johnstone Castle near Glasgow, of Lady Murray at Strachur near Loch Lyne, of William Stirling Maxwell (Jane’s uncle) at Keir House in Perthshire, of Lady Belhaven at Wishaw near Glasgow, and of the duke of Hamilton at Hamilton Palace also near Glasgow. The driving force behind this array of hosting was Jane Stirling, who apparently was hoping to replace George Sand in Chopin’s heart. She was undoubtedly sincere in her intentions and utterly devoted to his person (and later to his memory). It is a pity that she was unaware of his needs for solitude and rest.

Perhaps more than at any other time during his many years of correspondence with Grzymała, Chopin found solace in writing at length to his friend about his experience in Scotland. During his happy and carefree two-and-a-half week stay at Calder House, on 19 August, he wrote, “I’m well looked-after here. I feel even better than at home. It would be difficult to
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find a similar house.”49 But the tone of his letter of 4–9 September from Johnstone Castle was different: “The weather has changed and it’s horrible outside. I am unwell, depressed, and the people weary me with their excessive attentions. I can neither breathe nor work. I feel alone, alone, alone, although I am surrounded by people.”50 Later, on a lighter note, he related the claim of a Scottish lady that she was the thirteenth cousin of Mary, queen of Scots: “They are all cousins here, male and female, belonging to great families with great names which no one on the Continent has ever heard of. The whole conversation is conducted on genealogical lines: it’s just like the Gospel—such a one begat so-and-so, and he begat another, who begat still another—and so on for two pages, up to Jesus Christ.”51 In his letter of 1 October from Keir House, he described his daily routine as follows:

I am not fit for anything during the whole morning until two o’clock [lunch]—and after that, when I have dressed, everything irritates me and I go on gasping until dinner-time. Dinner over, I have to remain at table with the men-folk, watching them talk and listening to them drinking. Bored to death (thinking quite different things from them, in spite of all their politeness and explanatory remarks in French around the table), I must call up all my strength of mind, for they are by that time curious to hear me. Afterwards my good Daniel carries me off upstairs to my bedroom (as you know, bedrooms are usually upstairs in English houses), helps me to undress, puts me to bed, leaves a candle, and then I am free to gasp and dream until morning, when it starts all over again.52

On the eve of his departure for London on 30 October, Chopin wrote openly to Grzymała from Edinburgh about his “Scottish ladies” and despairingly about his past loves. Apparently rumors were circulating that he would marry Jane Stirling. In response, he, who had no love for her, discussed the matter frankly and firmly with a close relative of Jane (the person in question is unknown). He wrote to Grzymała, “Friendship is friendship, I have said so distinctly, but it gives no claim to anything else…. In the meantime, what has become of my art? and where have I squandered my heart?”53 Chopin was back in London on the evening of 31 October, a very sick man. He communicated his dire state of health to Grzymała on 17–18 November as follows: “I have been ill for eighteen days, since the day I reached London…. The doctor comes every day…. He pulled me into shape so that I could play yesterday at the Polish concert day and ball [at the Guildhall]—it was most brilliant. But as soon as I had played I came home, and could not sleep all night.”54 Sand was still on his mind, and bitterly so, for he wrote later: “I have never cursed anyone, but everything is so unbearable that I should feel easier if I could curse Lucrezia [George Sand].”55 And then, after urging Grzymała to look for a new apartment
Page 123 for him in Paris, he fell into a state of apathy: “What’s the use of my returning! Why doesn’t God finish me off straightaway, instead of killing me by inches?” And finally, he complained once more of the “Scottish ladies,” who were boring him again. “Mrs. Erskine, who is a very devout Protestant, bless her, would perhaps like to make a Protestant out of me. ...She is very much concerned about my soul—she’s always going on about the next world being better than this one.”

The prospect of returning to Paris now filled Chopin with inner warmth and hope. Two days before his departure, on Tuesday, 21 November, he wrote to Grzymała: “On Friday I shall reach the Place d’Orléans in daylight. Please get them to air the bedclothes and pillows... Have the carpets laid and the curtains hung. On Friday, get them to buy a bunch of violets to scent my drawing room—Let me find a little poetry when I come home, just for a moment as I go through on my way to the bedroom where I know I am going to lie a long time.” Accompanied by his Irish-French servant Daniel and by Leonard Niedźwiecki, a Polish friend who had lived in London for a number of years, Chopin returned to Paris via Folkestone and Boulogne.

Grzymała was probably not in Paris when Chopin arrived. His affairs were not going well. At the time of Chopin’s break with Sand, he had crashed financially. (Later in his life, he had to sell personal belongings to make ends meet.) He also had political problems since he was a member of the Polish Democratic Society, an organization that was strongly out of favor with the prevailing monarchist government of Louis-Napoléon. (Grzymała’s visits to Chopin became less frequent because of his fear of being arrested by the police.) The first published letter by Chopin to Grzymała of that year is dated 18 June 1849, sent from Chopin’s new apartment at 74, rue de Chaillot, to which he had moved toward the end of May. Concerned about his friend’s disposition, Chopin inquired about it the first thing in his letter. He then informed him about himself. “I feel stronger, for I have been eating more and have given up swallowing medicines. I cough and gasp as usual, but I can stand it better.”

Chopin’s condition was now deteriorating quickly. Four days later, he wrote to Grzymała, “I had two hemorrhages last night but I did nothing about it. I am still spitting, but much less.” Ten days later, he wrote, “I have not spat blood since the day before yesterday—my legs are swollen—but I’m still weak and lazy, and I can’t walk.” He was now entering the terminal stage of tuberculosis. He must have felt that the end was near, for a week earlier he asked his sister Ludwika to come to Paris. Grzymała’s only published extant letter to Chopin dates from that time. It is undated, but the postmark bears the date of 29 July 1849. It reads as follows:

I hope to be able to take advantage of the trip to Paris of my old friend and hug you for a moment. If the trip materializes, it would probably be on Sunday after...
Autograph of the only extant published letter by Woyciech Grzymała to Chopin in Paris [Versailles], Saturday [28 July 1849]. Fryderyk Chopin Society Museum, Warsaw. In translation the letter reads: "I hope to be able to take advantage of the trip to Paris of my old friend and hug you for a moment. If the trip materializes, it would probably be on Sunday after ten in the evening or on Monday morning between six and nine. I therefore forewarn you so you can instruct your servants and doorkeeper to let me in. I kiss you with all my heart. Your old Woyciech."
ten in the evening or on Monday morning between six and nine. I therefore forewarn you so you can instruct your servants and doorkeeper to let me in. I kiss you with all my heart—Your old Woyciech.

Chopin’s last published letter to Grzymała is dated 3 August 1849. Apparently Grzymała was in hiding from the police and had not seen his friend for a good number of days. “You can’t imagine how I am dying to see you, if only for an hour,” Chopin wrote, “but I can’t ask you to come out of your hole, for although they [the government] have expelled not 200 but only a score or so members of the Polish Democratic Society (not one of whom I even knew), it is a tricky business if you are nervous.” Later, he added, “I gasp and cough and just want to sleep. I do nothing and wish for nothing.”

It is not known when Grzymała saw Chopin for the last time. According to Hedley those at the bedside of the composer during his last hours were his sister Ludwika, Princess Marcelina Czartoryska, and Solange Clésinger. To this list, Ziełiński adds Adolf Gutman and Thomas Albrecht. One of the oil paintings by Teofil Kwiatkowski showing Chopin with some of his friends at his deathbed includes Ludwika, Princess Czartoryska, Grzymała, Kwiatkowski, and Aleksander Jełowicki (Chopin’s priest friend). This work, however, is not entirely factual and was commissioned by Jane Stirling after Chopin’s death as part of a shrine she was to dedicate to the artist’s memory.

Following Chopin’s death, Grzymała expressed his feelings over the loss of his dear friend and about George Sand in a letter addressed to Auguste Léo and written sometime between the death and the funeral of Chopin:

My dear friend,

It is a great consolation for me to be able to address you by such a title, now that my heart is broken by the despair and mourning which you will sincerely share with me. For now that our Chopin is no more, the gap he leaves behind ought to strengthen our ties of friendship, if only because we shall never for the rest of our lives be able to forget him or cease to regret his loss....What a heart-breaking sight it...was to see such a great genius intact and yet made barren by purely physical helplessness and prostration!...His death struggle...lasted three days and three nights.... The doctors could not get over it. And at such moments my mind was crushed by the thought that if he had not the ill luck to know G. Sand, who poisoned his whole life, he might have lived to be as old as Cherubini.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Grzymała’s personality is rather cryptic and can be only indirectly inferred from Chopin’s and George Sand’s correspondence to him. The following extract, dated 10 January 1851 and taken from Grzymała’s private notebooks (which apparently have never been published), sheds some light on how Grzymała viewed
Chopin’s person: “In my situation, my only solace from slander and the rigors of fate is to feel, deep in my heart, an absolving memory, for there are no more of those exceptional beings who, like Chopin, part with the crowd and do not allow their affections and judgments to depend on the quirks of fortune and the inevitability of fate.”70

The relevance and importance of Grzymała in Chopin’s life in Paris cannot be overestimated. He was the recipient of the largest body of correspondence that Chopin wrote to his friends. This alone is sufficient testimony to the measure of high esteem in which Chopin held him. In the colony of Polish émigrés in Paris on whom Chopin thrived as a living link to his beloved Poland, he was perhaps the first person Chopin turned to for confidential advice and guidance in his private life. No one else was as involved as he was (as a go-between) in his friend’s love affair with Sand, and probably no one was more deeply touched by the sad denouement that followed. In turn, one can infer from the one-sided correspondence that Grzymała was unflaggingly devoted to his friend to the last, and unlike Fontana he never expressed, as far as is known, any reservations or resentments regarding the services he rendered to the composer. He gave of himself freely, wholeheartedly, and willingly. There is only one regret that can be expressed regarding him, and that is that despite his known literary talent and his long and intimate association with Chopin, he failed to leave for posterity a biography of his friend. However, he was not entirely to blame. In a letter written to Auguste Léo on 8 November 1849, presumably in answer to the reply of the first referred to above, he expressed the idea of “a detailed biography more factual than anything reported in the newspapers since his death”71 to precede a complete edition of the composer's works. Apparently Grzymała took up this idea himself and started writing a biography in French the following year. Some extracts from the manuscript were dutifully sent to Jane Stirling for approval. In a letter forwarded to Chopin’s sister Ludwika dated 4 November 1850, Jane doubted the completed work would be satisfactory and would have preferred that the biography were written by a Frenchman.72 After some four years of effort, Grzymała discontinued his work apparently due to eye trouble.73 This, together with the presumed subsequent loss of the manuscript, robbed the world of a unique firsthand account of the composer’s life. Grzymała died at Nyon (in the Swiss canton of Vaud) on 16 December 1870.
Fellow Pianist and Composer: Franz Liszt

Chopin's association and friendship with Franz Liszt was unique in the sense that Liszt was the only composer of stature of Chopin's generation who was to become intimately acquainted with Chopin for a significant length of time. Both of them started their professional careers in Paris, principally as piano teachers of the elite. Their lives then crossed each other, and later their associations were coupled with those of their respective companions: Marie d'Agoult (with Liszt) and George Sand (with Chopin). From then onward, and during the duration of their friendship, the lives of the two composers were ineluctably entangled with those of their mistresses. "Our lady-loves had quarreled, and as good cavaliers we were in duty bound to side with them" was Liszt's reply when Niecks asked him many years later about the reason for the end of his friendship with Chopin. This is only a half-truth. To find the full cause of the breakup, one must look deeply not only into the events that touched them both but also into the persons themselves and the way they related to each other and to their respective companions. It is curious that there is a total absence of letters written by Chopin to Liszt in Chopin's collected correspondence. Distance is not the real reason, for the composers lived close to each other only for a short period in the winter of 1836–1837, when Liszt stayed with Marie d'Agoult at the Hôtel de France in the rue Laffitte and Chopin's dwellings were in the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Liszt tried to explain Chopin's reticence to write letters in French as follows: "One of his [Chopin's] oddities consisted in abstaining from every exchange of letters, from every sending of notes... His handwriting remained almost unknown to most of his friends. It is said that he sometimes deviated from this habit in favor of his fair compatriots settled in Paris, of whom some are in possession of charm-
Franz Liszt. Lithograph by Achille Devéria, Paris, 1832. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. Liszt recognized Chopin’s superior inventive vitality early on in their acquaintance. Chopin admired Liszt’s playing but did not value his music and probably envied his sheer physical stamina and dazzling charisma. The musicians were also of widely different temperament. It is no wonder then that their friendship was ambivalent. After Chopin’s death, when Liszt matured as a composer, he cherished the memory of his friend and treasured his works.
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ing autographs of his, all written in Polish." This, of course, was an exaggeration, as an inspection of the (incomplete) collected correspondence of Chopin would show. Assuming that Chopin never wrote to Liszt, what was the real reason behind this unwillingness? Chopin wrote many letters in French to a number of his non-Polish friends such as Auguste Franchomme, Auguste Léo, Marie de Rozières, Solange Sand, and of course George Sand.

Franz (Ferencz) Liszt was born on 22 October 1811 at Raiding (Doborjan), a small German-speaking Hungarian village about 50 kilometers from Vienna on the Austrian estates of Prince Nikolaus Esterhaázy. His father, Adam Liszt, a talented musician, was an employee on the estates. His mother, Anna (née Lager), was a native of Lower Austria. Franz's early and rapid development as a pianist was somewhat akin to Chopin's. He began taking piano lessons from his father at the age of seven, started to compose at the age of eight, and gave his first concert at the age of nine. In the interest of the music education of its young genius member, the family moved in the spring of 1822 to Vienna (where Liszt studied the piano with Czerny and composition with Salieri) and then in the autumn of 1823 to Paris (where he took lessons in theory with Reicha and in composition with Paër). His sensational Parisian debut on 7 March 1824 earned him a comparison with young Mozart in the local press. (A. Martainville, in Le Drapeau blanc of 9 March 1824: "I believe since yesterday in metempsychosis. I am convinced that the soul and genius of Mozart were transferred to the body of young List [sic].") Adam Liszt then played a role similar to that of Leopold Mozart toward his son, taking young Franz on concert tours to England, the French provinces, and Switzerland until Adam's death late in August 1827. Subsequently Franz settled in Paris with his mother in a modest apartment, making his living as a piano teacher.

The fundamental differences in personalities between Liszt and Chopin were well discerned by 1830, when Chopin was twenty and Liszt nineteen. By then, Chopin was almost mature musically, having some twenty-one opus numbers to his credit, including two piano concertos, three other works for piano and orchestra, a sizable collection of mazurkas, polonaises, and waltzes, and seven of the innovative etudes of op. 10. Emotionally, however, he was indecisive and circumspect, needing the helping hand of the obtrusive Tytus Woyciechowski to steer him through life. At the age of nineteen, he was somewhat restrained in his first love for Konstancja Gladkowska. In the end, it proved to be simply an infatuation. Literature did not play a prominent role in his intellect, his driving force being his inherent passionate and instinctively poetic nature. By contrast, Liszt in 1830 was still groping for his musical personality. Apart from a number of variations and bravura pieces for the piano, the only salient works to his credit were a one-act operetta Don Sanche ou le Château d'amour (1824–1825), an Etude en douze Exercises (1826), and a Grande Fantaisie.
sur la tyrolienne (1829) from Auber’s opera La fiancée. This last work together with a sketch of a Revolutionary Symphony, his first attempt at program music inspired by the July Revolution, are considered milestones in Liszt’s development as a full-fledged composer. By the age of sixteen, when his father died, Liszt had already made a success in Parisian society and found no difficulty in fending for himself and his mother. He experienced his first passionate love the following year with one of his pupils, Caroline de Saint-Cricq. The forced dissolution of the affair by the girl’s father precipitated a breakdown in Liszt’s health, together with the first of a number of religious crises that he was to encounter throughout his life. In its aftermath and through the influence of such friends as the violinist and composer Chrétien Urhan and the political writer and philosopher the abbé Félicité de Lamennais, he became a voracious reader of both classical and modern literature. His romantic makeup was now set both musically and intellectually, but it took him longer than Chopin to evolve and fully realize himself artistically.

It is not known exactly when Chopin and Liszt first met. Some three months after Chopin’s arrival in Paris in mid-September 1831, he wrote to Tytus Wołczykowski that “Herz, Liszt, Hiller and the rest… are all nobodies compared with Kalkbrenner.”4 (In a later letter dated 15 April 1832, however, he grouped Liszt with Kalkbrenner.5) Whether he had already heard Liszt or met him is not clear. It is certain, however, that Liszt attended Chopin’s debut on 26 February 1832, for he had this to say about the concert: “The most vigorous applause seemed not to suffice to our enthusiasm in the presence of this talented musician, who revealed a new phase of poetic sentiment combined with such happy innovations in the form of his art.”6 That Chopin was already Liszt’s friend by the summer of 1832 is confirmed in a letter Chopin wrote to Ferdinand Hiller dated 2 August 1832 in which Chopin wrote at the end of the letter: “Liszt wants to say a few words after me.”7 (Unfortunately, Liszt’s postscript to this letter is lost.) The first meeting between the composer friends probably took place sometime during the winter of 1831–1832 at the latest, and conceivably soon after Chopin’s concert.

By the end of 1832, the circle of non-Polish friends between Liszt and Chopin had grown to include such brilliant artists and musicians as the violinist Pierre Baillot, the cellist Auguste Franchomme, the German poet Heinrich Heine, the German pianists and composers Ferdinand Hiller (one of Liszt’s early pupils) and Friedrich Kalkbrenner, and Hector Berlioz. Berlioz had returned to Paris from his Italian stay on 6 November 1832. Liszt had first met him on the eve of the premiere of the Symphonie fantastique, which was performed in the Conservatoire on 5 December 1830. Its impact on Liszt’s musical development was to prove as decisive as Paganini’s concert in Paris on 20 April 1832 and Chopin’s debut there about two months earlier. Apart from its orchestral innovations, the influence of Berlioz’s
work on Liszt was on the side of “program” music, that essentially romantic fusion between literary art and music. From Paganini’s sheer virtuosity, Liszt strove for (and realized) greater technical pianistic perfection. What he derived from Chopin was of less immediate consequence but ultimately of more enduring value: the use of less extravagance and more poetry in his music. Chopin, on the other hand, admired Liszt the pianist but not the composer. Chopin’s innate sense for classical purity could not accommodate Liszt’s concept of musical romanticism as expressed in program music or his cult of the instrumental virtuoso. Chopin’s music did not strive to paint a picture or tell a story, to express any literary or philosophical concept, or to portray an emotional state. His romanticism centered around an individualistic type of self-expression inspired in its elegance by the classicism of Bach and Mozart, but with a more daring harmonic vocabulary and style. Despite the fact that they were poles apart artistically and temperamentally, it was mutual admiration that initially drew Chopin and Liszt together. It would take some nine years for their friendship to sour, when Chopin would poke fun at Liszt and write to Fontana: “One of these days he’ll be a member of parliament or perhaps even the King of Abyssinia or the Congo,”8 and Liszt would flatly declare to Marie d’Agoult that “the Sand-Chopins are ridiculous.”9 For the time being, however, it is the development of this friendship that will be traced as of the autumn of 1832. Their relationship it seems was initially warm, sincere, and informal, and it was not long before they collaborated professionally. Anna Liszt to Chopin, 20 October 1832. “I beseech you to go and see Clotilde [a drama in prose by Frédéric Soulie and Adolphe Bossange, premiered on 11 September 1832] at the Théâtre Français with my son, if this would give you pleasure. He will wait for you at his place at a quarter to six. If you are busy that evening, would you please let him know by 5 o’clock at the latest.”10 In 1833, Chopin and Liszt joined forces in three concerts: the first, organized by Berlioz to help the bankrupt Shakespearean actress Harriet Smithson (with whom he was passionately in love and who could no longer perform because of a broken leg) cover her debts, was given at the Salle Favart of the Théâtre Italien on 2 April. During an interlude, Liszt and Chopin played the Sonata in F Minor op. 22, for four hands by Georges Onslow. In the second concert, given the following day at the Salle du Vauxhall, Liszt and Chopin joined Henri Herz and his brother Jacques in a work (Variations brillantes op. 23) by the former for eight hands on two pianos on a theme from Meyerbeer’s opera Il crociato in Egitto. The third concert was given at Hiller’s concert in the Conservatoire on 15 December when Liszt and Chopin played with Hiller the allegro from Bach’s Concerto in D Minor for three pianos (harpsichords) [BWV 1063]. At the very beginning of Liszt’s liaison with the Countess Marie d’Agoult, Liszt mentioned his friend affectionately to her in his correspondence. (It
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was in the salon of the marquise Le Vayer that Liszt first met Marie in December 1832 or January 1833.
Daughter of the vicomte de Flavigny and Marie-Elisabeth Bethmann, she was born in Frankfurt-am-Main
on 31 December 1805. She married Charles, Comte d’Agoult, in 1827 and became estranged from him
in 1835. She lived in Paris during the winter and in her castle at Croissy in the summer.) Two fragments
from letters by Liszt to Marie, dated sometime in 1833:
I could hardly find it possible to hand over your most gracious message to my friend Chopin (aren’t you
yet annoyed with this name?), but tomorrow (without fail) I shall go and wake him up softly and
tenderly with your requests and invitations.11
My friend Chopin had in mind to pay you a short visit yesterday morning (Sunday). I had asked him for
the second volume of Obermann for you. Here it is, underlined and annotated, and I’d be pleased if you
would accept it.12
In turn, Marie wanted to know more about Chopin and offered him a rather vapid and affected standing
invitation for him to take her out to dinner:
It would be kind of you if you can occasionally free yourself to come and take me out to dinner at
precisely six o’clock. I talked a lot about you to my mother, who is extremely anxious to meet you. As
for me, you know what a pleasure it always is to see you and hear you. If you can come tomorrow, it
would be kind of you. I have recently fallen ill and am still quite unwell; it seems to me that one of your
Nocturnes would cure me. I hope that you will not turn me down. P.S. If you cannot make it tomorrow,
Saturday would do, and if not Saturday, then Sunday, etc.13
Doubtful as it was that Chopin did respond to that invitation, Marie tried her charm again sometime
later in the summer:
I have come to know through Liszt that you were very ill, and I would like to remind you that Croissy
would make an excellent health resort for you. Should you like to come over and spend time there, you
would find the climate most agreeable. I promise you delicious milk and the music of nightingales, and
this would tire you less than the piano. Nevertheless, let me tell you how much I admire your Etudes
[op. 10]. They are prodigious. It is a long time since I heard music as beautiful as this.14
There is no record of Chopin’s response to this letter, but it was most likely negative since it is known
that he spent some time that summer with Franchomme’s family at Touraine (near Tours). (In spite of
his reticent attitude toward Marie, Chopin was to dedicate to her his etudes of op. 25.
Those of op. 10 had already been dedicated to Liszt in 1833.) In an undated letter, and presumably in connection with Marie's invitation to Chopin, Liszt wrote jokingly to his lady friend, "Ch[opin] is very busy and is reluctant to spend a few days outside Paris. Even though he may be as disinterested as his friend, he is not yet quite as mad."15 Later, during the summer, after Liszt learned about Chopin's stay at Touraine, he wrote to Marie with pompous sarcasm: "Unless there is an official and precise order signed by the (my) Countess d'Agoult, an order which I shall voluntarily execute with the help of the royal gendarmerie, do not count at all on the visit of the famous pianist F. Chopin, since the said friend and pianist has cleared off last week and is probably at this very moment at Tours in the company of Mr. Franchomme (celebrated bass and not a base celebrity) as you would wickedly believe, and sitting next to some simple and naive Touraine beauty, etc."16

During the 1834–1835 season, Chopin again played with Liszt in two concerts. The first one in the Salle Pleyel of 25 December was organized by François Stoepel, the music critic for La Gazette musicale de Paris (owned by the music publisher Maurice Schlésinger, with whom Chopin had signed a long-term contract in the summer of 1832), who had expressed a keen interest in Chopin's works on several occasions.17 The highlight of the concert (which included the participation of the violinist Heinrich Ernst and the singer Sabine Heinefetter) was the performance of two duos by Chopin and Liszt: the Grande Sonate for four hands in E-flat op. 47, by Ignaz Moscheles and the Grand Duo for two pianos based on the theme from one of Mendelssohn's Lieder ohne Worte (Songs Without Words) by Liszt. The second, and more important, concert took place on 5 April 1835 at the Salle Favart of the Théâtre Italien. It was a Polish charity concert for the benefit of the Benevolent Association of the Polish Ladies in Paris. Organized by Chopin, Liszt's involvement in it with Chopin was in a Duo for two pianos by Hiller. Pride of place in the concert's review on 12 April in the Gazette musicale was taken by Chopin who had played his E Minor Piano Concerto.18

The association between Chopin and Liszt was modified in the imbroglio of the Liszt-d'Agoult-Chopin-Sand relationship. Before Chopin's entry into Sand's life, probably in the autumn of 1836, Marie, Liszt, and Sand formed a fairly happy, well-integrated, intellectual group, but not without its problems. On the side of Marie, an aspiring author, subsequently to be known under the pseudonym of Daniel Stern, there was the beginning of some professional jealousy regarding Sand, as well as a certain amount of suspicion regarding her lover's true feelings toward the novelist. Liszt first met Sand possibly at the beginning of November 1834. Alfred de Musset (Sand's lover at the time) had promised Liszt on 23 August to introduce him to her.19 In a note dated 4 November 1834, presumably sent to Liszt by Musset, the latter wrote: "My dear friend, Mme. Sand asked to inquire
George Sand. Lithograph after Jules Boilly, 1843. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris. George Sand spelled both comfort and anguish for Chopin. She certainly provided for him the atmosphere in which his genius could fully flourish. The asperities of his character in his relationship with her emerged through the complexity of their natures, the discord in her family life, and the worsening of his physical condition. The termination of their liaison almost coincided with the end of his life as a creative artist.
whether you would like to dine with us after-tomorrow on Thursday. She would be delighted to make
your acquaintance in a manner that is less formal than that through a visit. Please do come for my sake
as well as for hers. Both of us (and only both of us) will then thank you.’’20 Apparently Liszt and Sand
were captivated by each other. Sand to Liszt, 18 January 1835: “You were kind enough to be concerned
about my sorrows and to talk to me about your worries. Yours is a very gentle and precious sort of
friendship. I don’t know why but some of those close to me have thought that this mutual affinity
harbored a deeper feeling and was even indicative of a more intimate liaison…. I beg you not to come
and see me, but rest assured that in spite of this I shall not consider the friendship you had promised
me as null and void.’’21 At that time, Sand was struggling to save her love affair with Musset. Moreover,
she already knew of Liszt’s liaison with Marie. Sand may have felt that Liszt was overly hurt by her
decision (and she presumably was keen to retain his friendship) because very soon afterward (probably
the following day) she sent him the following note: “I learnt that you are still around. You have been
seen at the Conservatoire. Write to me a few lines before I leave and tell me that you don’t blame me
for all this, that you are not hurt by my dismal behavior, and that you will retain a sad but affectionate
souvenir of the five or six hours of your life spent with the old uncle [Sand].’’22 Liszt, however, was still
exalted by Sand’s magnetism and wrote to her at the beginning of April: “I never felt except once
before in my life—with the Abbé Lamennais—anything similar to that vast and profound warmth which
made me wish to be somewhat less badly judged by you.’’23 In a letter written some three weeks later,
Sand expounded the virtues of friendship: “Do you know what it really is? One must pronounce this
word down on one’s knees. It saved my life at all times in the past, and rescued me from despair.’’24
Can one therefore conjecture that only friendship existed between novelist and composer? This
friendship outlasted the rupture between Liszt and Marie in 1841. Sand to Liszt, during Liszt’s two-
month stay in Paris, April(?) 1844: “Thank you, dear friend, for your magnificent bouquet in which I can
find no enigma against our old and true friendship. See you soon?’’25 Whether the friendship outlived
Chopin’s break with Sand in 1847 is an open question. (Liszt was then on tour in Russia, and he was to
live with Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittgenstein at Weimar the following year.) He was certainly highly
critical of Sand’s Lucrezia Floriani, which he considered a veiled parody of her relationship with Chopin.
Liszt to Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein: “Talent has not sufficiently covered up the vulgarity of this
confession.’’26 Nevertheless, of the six relationships between Liszt, d’Agoult, Chopin, and Sand, the one
between Liszt and Sand arguably stood best the test of time.
Sand’s first contact with Marie was in writing, and indirectly through Liszt. The date was the beginning
of August 1835. Sand was about to leave
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for her country estate at Nohant. Marie and Liszt were already in Geneva (Marie having gone there first in June 1835) on the threshold of their romantic life together, with Marie expecting their first child in December. Sand to Liszt:
Dear brother, I didn't send you any letters but I thought of you day and night. Yes, literally day and night. I wrote reams about you, and you will see it published in the Revue des 2 mondes in a fortnight's time. I'll tell Buloz to send it to you. I'm writing to you standing and talking to 10 persons. I'm going back to the Berry district in 4 hours' time. I have given Mme. Cohen a medallion of mine for Mme Liszt, but take it, it's yours! I shall write to you from Nohant. I'll perhaps go a long way and perhaps nowhere. I know nothing of myself. Tell me about you. I love you, and love those you love. Tell her [Marie] that I kiss her and that my whole soul is devoted to her. Be happy and think of me sometimes.27
About two months later, Sand wrote to her in near adulation. Her imagination was obviously fired by the romanticism of Marie's elopement with Liszt, and she may well have perceived Marie as the embodiment of one of the heroines of her novels.
My beautiful Countess with the beautiful blond hair, I do not know you personally, but I heard Frantz [sic] talk about you and I saw you. I think that after this I may, without indiscretion or misplaced familiarity, tell you that I love you, that you appear to me the only thing of beauty, honest and truly noble, that I have seen shining in the patrician realm...I dwell in the hope of seeing you... It seems to me that we will really love each other the more we see of each other. You are worth a thousand times more than me, but you will see that I have a keen sense for all that is beautiful, for all that you possess.28
Having broken the ice, Sand was now less formal in her correspondence with Marie and put some of her cards on the table as far as her own character was concerned:
Everyone believes that I am highly audacious in spirit and character. But they are wrong. I am indifferent in spirit and I have a crotchety character. I do not harbor fear but suspicion, and I feel dreadfully uneasy when I am not alone or in the company of people who irritate me as little as when I am with my dogs... If friendship binds us more together, as I expect it will, as I wish it to, you will have to gain influence over me, otherwise I shall always be ill-tempered. But if you treat me like a child, I shall be pleasant because I shall feel at ease and have no fear of being of no consequence, because I shall then be able to utter stupidities, follies, and falsehoods without shame. I shall then know that you have accepted me as I am, and if I have bad times, I'll also have my good ones. Otherwise, I shall be neither good nor bad. I shall bore you and I shall be bored by you, however perfect you might be. You see, the human species is my enemy, let me tell you. I love my friends tenderly, with infatuation, blindly... But I don't love you as yet. It isn't
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because I don’t know you well enough. I know you as much as I shall know you in 20 years. It’s you who doesn’t know me enough, and not knowing whether you’ll love me or not as I really am, I don’t wish to love you more.29

Later in the letter, Sand informed Marie that she had dedicated to her the novel Simon, which would appear in serial form in the Revue des deux Mondes on 15 January and 1 and 25 February. The highly anticipated first meeting between Sand and Marie was not to take place until some nine months later. The delay was caused principally by the proceedings of Sand’s legal separation from her husband, Casimir Dudevant. These were terminated at the end of July. In the meantime, Liszt continued to teach at the recently established Geneva Conservatory, where he had been appointed in December 1835. (On 18 December, Marie gave him a daughter, Blandine Rachel.) At the same time, and for the first time in his life, he set himself to compose at an unprecedented pace. A public concert on 6 April at Geneva drew little attention, and after a number of concerts given at Lyon he arrived in Paris on 14 May 1836. We know from a letter to Marie that he met Chopin on that day, which is indicative of the fact that the Chopin-Liszt relationship was still friendly at that time. (Liszt’s mother had also informed Chopin in a letter dated 12 May of her son’s arrival, adding that her son “is anxious to see his best friends of whom you are the first.”)30 “Chopin, whom I saw this morning, loves me tenderly and exclusively. I was extremely delighted to hear him speak as he did. He openly criticizes Thalberg to a certain extent and above all refuses to admit the slightest possibility of a comparison between us.”31

The reference to Thalberg was for good reason. As a virtuoso pianist, he caused a sensation when he was first heard at a private soirée musicale in November 1835. On 13 March 1836, the Ménestrel flatly stated that “Thalberg is not only the first pianist in the world, but he is also a most distinguished composer.”32 Liszt had come to know about this or a similar account, and he looked upon it as a serious threat to his career and fame. In order to reassert his authority, he gave a brilliant concert (the first modern piano recital?) on 18 May at the Salons Érard. Early in June 1836, Sand already signaled to Marie her forthcoming visit to see her and Liszt: “If you are still in Geneva on 1 August, you will know my fate [regarding her separation proceedings], and perhaps you will know about it first hand if I can be sure of finding you there. But I dare not hope of this. Nevertheless, I dream of my haven near you and Frantz [sic].… If I meet you in Geneva, I shall read to you what I have written… Wait for me, for heaven’s sake… and yet I dare not beg you not to go, because Italy is worth much more than me.”33 And on 20 August, Sand was quite specific about her trip: “Come what may, and my death would be the only excuse for any delay, I shall be in Geneva within the first 4 days of September… I must just warn you that I’ll have my two brats with me.”34
She was as good as her word. The Sand family (together with their country maid, Ursule) arrived in Geneva on 4 September. Marie and Liszt were not there, but they had left instructions with a Genevan friend to accompany the visitors to the Hôtel de l'Union at Chamounix, where the lovers were staying. Thus began Sand's three-week Swiss sojourn (which she later immortalized in her Lettres d'un voyageur, noX à Herbert), which brought her face to face with her "ideal," who would later write in her Mémoires: "When she [Sand] came to Chamounix, this worry [of whether she would please her friend from Nohant] made me feel cold and awkward; her playfulness disconcerted me; I was ill at ease and sensed that consequently I was not amiable. I was saddened because I craved for her friendship."35

The Sands left Geneva on 30 September, and after a few days' stay at Lyon and Bourges they arrived at Nohant on 13 October. Liszt and Marie were back in Paris on 16 October and took up lodgings at 23, rue Laffitte. Marie wrote to Sand on 18 October: "We arrived in Paris two days ago. Come and live with me at rue Neuve-Laffitte, Hôtel de France; we are well installed here, and the place is not too expensive. I have a room and a rather pompous salon. If you wish, I shall reserve a room for you, and my salon would be at your disposal all day to receive your friends. In that way, we would be sure to see a lot of each other. I feel that this has become imperative for me."36 Sand took up the suggestion—she had no lodgings in Paris at the time—and arrived in Paris on 24 October. Chopin's (new) apartment was close by, at 38, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. According to Niecks,37 who quotes Liszt, Chopin's first meeting with Sand was held in Chopin's lodgings. In his Journal, the writer and traveler Ferdinand Denis mentioned a soirée of 5 November at Chopin's attended by Liszt, Marie, and Sand.38 Sand's reminiscences place the meeting at the Hôtel de France in December 1836.39 The first allusion to such a meeting in Sand's Correspondence is in a letter to Heinrich Heine dated 13 December 1836: "If you are free this evening from 9 P.M. to midnight, come and join us at Chopin's, rue du Mont-Blanc, No. 24 or 34 [sic; see above]."40 And Chopin's first mention of Sand in his published correspondence is in a letter to Józef Brzowski, a Polish composer friend, dated 13 December 1836: "I am having a few friends here today, among them Mme. Sand; moreover Liszt is to play and Nourrit will sing. If it will give Mr. Brzowski any pleasure I shall expect him this evening."41 By all accounts, the first meeting between Chopin and Sand left uncomplimentary impressions on both sides. As they saw more of each other, however, these feelings were obviated, and a period of mutual discovery and appreciation followed, culminating in a love affair that started sometime in July 1838.

Sand's presence in Paris, which had begun on 24 October 1836, lasted only until 7 January 1837. On 9 January she was in Nohant with her son Maurice, who was ill. Apart from a sojourn at Bourges on 10 and 11 April,
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she was to stay there continuously until the end of July. Before leaving Paris, she had apparently invited
both Liszt and Marie to her country estate. Around 20 January, she wrote to Marie: “I am waiting for
you impatiently. Everything is ready for you. It’s warm in your room.”42 In response, Marie wrote on 31
January: “Do you know that I almost died? But God would have none of me as yet…. He did well; I’d
like to see Nohant, I’d like to live in your life, to befriend your dogs, to be the benefactress of your
hens…to revive my wasted and shaken body with the air that you breathe.”43 Marie arrived at Nohant
on 5 February. Liszt, on the other hand, was bracing himself for a confrontation with Thalberg, who was
back in Paris early in January. He started off with an acrimonious attack on Thalberg in *La Revue et
Gazette musicale* in which, apart from criticizing his music, he insinuated his illegitimate relationship
to an aristocratic family and ridiculed his title of “Pianist to His Majesty the Emperor of Austria.”44 This
was followed by an impressive recital on 19 March given at the Grand Opéra in response to Thalberg’s
successful concert on 12 March at the Conservatoire. The coup de grâce was delivered on 31 March at a
charity concert organized by Princess Belgiojoso at which six pianists, including Chopin, Liszt, and
Thalberg, were asked to improvise on the theme of the march from Bellini’s opera *I Puritani*. Attention
was focused principally on Liszt and Thalberg—Chopin’s contribution was not in their bravura style—and
Princess Belgiojoso finally declared Liszt to be the acclaimed winner of the contest.
In spite of Chopin’s dislike of Thalberg and his refusal “to admit the slightest possibility of a comparison”
between Thalberg and Liszt, Chopin is reported by his composer friend Józef Brzowski to have censured
Liszt on his wanton behavior toward a fellow artist.45 So far, it was reciprocal esteem that allowed their
frail friendship to survive. Except at its very beginning, their friendship was never a very close one.
Because of the vast difference in temperament, Chopin could never consider Liszt as a confidant. Now
Chopin was having second thoughts about the only quality he cared for in his friend: the artistic value
of Liszt’s pianistic genius. He was becoming increasingly aware that it was being wasted away and used
not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. The showman was overriding the poet. In 1833,
Chopin had written enthusiastically to Hiller: “I am writing without knowing what my pen is scribbling,
because at this moment Liszt is playing my studies and putting honest thoughts out of my head: I
should like to rob him of the way to play my own studies.”46 In 1840, after one of his pupils (Friederike
Müller) described how Liszt played during a performance in that year, Chopin, belying his exasperation
of Liszt’s playing, is supposed to have remarked: “Simplicity is everything. After having exhausted all the
difficulties, after having played immense quantities of notes, and more notes, then simplicity emerges
with all its charm, like
art’s final seal.” The Thalberg affair was arguably the beginning of the end of the Liszt-Chopin friendship, and this was to be accelerated by the growing differences between Marie and Sand.

During Liszt’s sojourn in Paris for his “duel” with Thalberg, he took time off toward the end of February and went to Nohant for about a week. It was upon Sand’s instigation, as expressed in her letter of 17 February in which, for the first time, she invited Chopin over to Nohant: “Good morning, good Franz. Come and see us as soon as possible. Love, esteem, and friendship beckon you to Nohant…. Marie has told me that there is hope that Chopin might come. Tell Chopin that I beg and implore him to accompany you, that Marie cannot live without him, and that I adore him.”

And after Marie’s departure from Nohant in mid-March to join Liszt in Paris, Sand wrote exuberantly in early April in answer to Marie’s letter of 26 March in which she hinted that Mickiewicz, Grzymała, and Chopin might visit her in the spring: “I want the Fellows [Liszt and Marie], I want them as soon as possible and for as long as possible. I want them to death. I also want Chopin and all the Mickiewiczs and Grzymałas in the world.” (It was not until the beginning of June 1839, after the winter in Majorca with Sand, that Chopin finally went to Nohant for the first time.)

Early in May, Liszt and Marie arrived in Nohant for their longest ever stay there. For Liszt, after the grueling season he had spent in Paris, the pastoral peace at Nohant must have been exhilarating and inspiring. He soon got down to work on his piano transcriptions of Beethoven’s symphonies and of a number of Schubert’s lieder. For Marie and Sand, the visit provided them with an admirable opportunity and ample time to scrutinize each other. Marie’s assessment of her friend was on the psychological level, and she painted a disturbing picture of what she found: “The sacred flame that God gave her finds nothing more to devour around her but consumes from within all that is left of faith, youth and hope. Charity, love, sensuality—these three aspirations of soul, heart, and the senses—thriving all too passionately in this fatally privileged nature, have met with doubt, disillusion, and surfeit, and when suppressed within her innermost being, reduce her to a tortured existence.” Sand still idealized her two guests with a certain amount of envy, accompanied by a degree of harsh self-appraisal:

Happy man [Liszt], beloved of a beautiful, generous, intelligent, and chaste woman. What more do you want, you ungrateful wretch? Oh! if I were as much loved! … When Franz plays the piano, I am relieved. All my sorrows are poeticized, all my instincts glorified. In particular, he touches the chord of generosity. He also strikes the chord of rage, almost in unison with my own, but he never attacks the heinous note. As for me, hate consumes me. The hate of what? My God, shall I never find a person worthy of my hatred? Bestow upon me this grace, and I shall never again ask you to find for me the one worthy of my love.
Sand was now in the midst of an unprecedented series of love affairs. She was at the tail end of a passionate affair with the lawyer Michel de Bourges, on the periphery of a brief liaison she did not particularly care to revive with the writer Charles Didier, and at the beginning of a relationship with the actor Pierre Bocage. Bocage arrived unexpectedly on 8 June and stayed for a few days, only to return later. Didier came on 15 June, absented himself for about a week, and returned on 14 July, when he found Bocage, the lawyer François Rollinat (a bosom friend of Sand’s), and Félicien Mallefille (who had been introduced to Sand by Marie during her stay at the Hôtel de France), a new private tutor for Sand’s son, soon to become her lover. Seeing that Sand was “busy with Bocage,” Didier left the following day. This array of lovers was an unforgettable experience for Liszt and Marie, and it quickly provoked Liszt’s outspoken and Marie’s malicious sense of humor. The mistress of the house was quick to sense it, and it apparently touched the very roots of her soul. Sand to Marie, 14 (?) July: “Dear Mirabelle, be so good as to advise the cretin [a term of endearment (?) for Liszt] to stop joking about me with Bocage. [The advice was directed more to Marie than to Liszt.] This is extremely annoying to me and severely frustrates me. I had a bit of a pleasant flirtation with Bocage, or rather him with me. It does not follow that I like to see him becoming impertinent, and there was a touch of that in him today.” Sand never forgave this indiscretion. It must have struck a wrong chord on her self-esteem and feeling of propriety, and it arguably sparked off a train of events that were ultimately to sever her relations with Marie and produce negative repercussions on Chopin’s with Liszt. The Fellows finally left Nohant on 24 July, Sand and Mallefille accompanying them to La Châtre, where the departing guests were to take the stagecoach to Paris.

Correspondence continued between the two lovers and Sand, but the latter became progressively disenchanted and reticent in her replies. When Marie’s letters of 26 October and 2 and 9 November were left unanswered, Sand explained herself as follows: “The princess [Marie] is familiar with my weakness and knows how to commiserate with it. She should not punish my silence by her own…. [She] observed me shake off my laziness at a time when I saw her irritable and when I believed… that my chatter would do her good, or console and strengthen her…. At that time I used to write to her more than I felt was called for since, because it seems to me that she is now calm, contented and strong.” The reply came from Liszt, who probably already sensed Sand’s disillusion with Marie, and it was prompt and outright: “If I am today replying immediately to your letter, it is because I feel the need to tell you quite simply that it has hurt me somewhat…. Are you by any chance mistaken about the true and deep affection that Marie holds for you? I doubt it. Then why do you inform me that from now on you will write to her less often? Why do you tell me that your chatter is no longer of any consequence to her since she is happy
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now?… Is there some bitterness at the bottom of all this, my friend? What’s the use of concealing it? I’m no child. You hardly have to spell things out for me.”54 In that same month, Sand finished the manuscript of her novel La Dernière Aldini, in which she portrays Marie in an unsympathetic light. And yet at the beginning of the New Year 1838 (and the letter does have a morning-after tone about it), we read this anecdotal missive by Sand to the Fellows:

Good evening, good and charming princess, good morning dear Crétin du Valais [Liszt]. Don’t forget Piffoël [Sand] who lays her heart at your feet, as well as her cigar and the sacred relics of her scarlet dressing gown. Piffoël will go to Paris probably at the end of January. [She went in mid-April.] … Piffoël will shake hands heartily with Sopin [not before early May] because of Crétin, and also because of Sopin, because Sopin is very zentil [this and the following italicized text is given as it appears in the letter]. Piffoël beseaches [sic] Fellows not to read dernière Aldini, but to read next production which is much better, and not yet finished.55

There were two other matters that sealed the breach between Sand and Marie. First was Mallefille’s undiscerning behavior toward Marie. (Mallefille was Sand’s lover at the time.) After her departure from Nohant, Marie had sent a long and “very affectionate” letter to Mallefille, and this went unanswered for about six months. Then Mallefille wrote “four preposterous lines” to Marie of “shocking impoliteness.” (Their contents are unknown.) Sand tried to make light of this, writing to Liszt that “I can tell you that she [Marie] has no more reliable and devoted a friend…. Even if he had written to her twenty letters one hundred times more foolish than this one, she would do well to forgive him in return for the deep affection that he has for her.”56 Next, a parody by Honoré de Balzac inspired by Sand entitled Béatrix, modeled on Sand, Marie, and probably Liszt. Balzac went to Nohant on 24 February 1838 and stayed there until 2 March. During that time, Sand supplied him with enough firsthand material about Marie and Liszt to allow him to write a novel, which he first called Galériens de l’Amour and later renamed Béatrix ou les Amours forcés. In it, Sand is featured flatteringly as a writer, Félicité des Touches (pseudonym Camille Maupin), noble, beautiful, and feminine. Marie appears as Béatrix de Rochefide, a quasi-intellectual vamp, and Liszt as Gennaro Conti, a highly self-conscious and pompous Italian singer. (Balzac denied that he had Liszt in mind in portraying Conti.) Béatrix first appeared in April and May 1839 in serial form in Le Siècle. To cover up her guilt in this whole affair vis-à-vis the Fellows, Sand asked from Balzac, and obtained, a letter57 denying any connection between the main characters in the novel and her friends. Sand to Balzac, early July 1839: “I am told that you have terribly blackened the reputation of an innocent acquaintance of mine and her copartner [Marie
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and Liszt] in that book that you have called Les Galères. She is quickwitted enough to identify herself in it, and I count on you to exonerate me should she ever think of accusing me of malicious intent.”

Balzac to his friend Eveline Hańska, February 1840: “George Sand is overjoyed: she had her small revenge on her friend.”

As far as Sand was concerned, this “revenge” was more than called for, because Marie had attacked her behind her back in both her private life and her profession. It was while Sand and Chopin were away spending their famous winter of 1838-1839 in Majorca that Marie vented her spite of and wrote disparagingly about Sand to Charlotte Marliani, one of Sand's bosom friends.

Marie to Charlotte, 20 (?) November 1838: “This trip to the Balaerics amuses me. I'm sorry it didn't happen a year earlier, when G. was having herself bled. I always said: In your place I'd rather have Chopin. How many stabs of the lancet would have spared her... Will the Balaeric establishment last long? Knowing them both as I do, they will be at daggers drawn after a month... Really, I'm sorry not to be able to gossip about it all with you. I assure you it couldn't be funnier.”

Marie to Charlotte, 23 January 1839: I request you not to talk to me about her [Sand] except to tell me whether she is alive or dead. During my stay with her, I did all I could not to know certain details of her life, and these have nothing to do with the way I feel about her. Since then, it is the public that informed me about them... The only thing that really matters to me, and I would tell her [Sand] that if she were here, is the dullness of her talent. Since her Lettres à Marcie... she has written worthless novels. It is clear that the time of emotion (so magnificently revealed in Lélia and Lettres d'un voyageur) has passed. Study, reflection, and concentration of ideas will now be necessary. Neither B[ocage], nor M[allefille], nor Chopin will help or guide her in her new path.

Charlotte dutifully wrote about Marie's sarcastic remarks to Sand, who subsequently replied from Marseilles in mid-April 1839 as follows: “I shall not write to Mme Dagoult [sic]. I am not of the opinion to make any semblance of friendship. I shall always be ready to serve and help her because I believe she is miserable, but rest assured that I shall never open my heart to her again.”

But that was by no means the end of the matter, and Sand probably did not as yet count on Marie's blatant vindictiveness. Psychologically, there were two reasons for this. First was Marie's inferior standing to Sand as a writer. Marie, only one year Sand's junior, was at that time a literary nonentity despite her salon activities. It was only in 1839 that she began her career as an author, her first work (Nélida), a roman à clef devoid of talent, appearing in 1846. Sand had already achieved fame in 1832 with her novel Indiana, followed closely by two other acclaimed novels, Valentine (1832) and Lélia (1833). Second, by the summer of 1839, Marie's romantic affair with Liszt had sadly foundered,
while that between Chopin and Sand was flourishing. Given Marie’s spiteful streak in her character, this
could not but have exacerbated her pentup emotions against Sand.
The final phase of the breakdown of the d’Agoult-Sand relationship was initiated by a letter by Marie to
Sand, which the latter considered the last straw. Dated 20 August 1839, the letter was addressed “care
of Mme Marliani”:
My dear George, you will perhaps be astonished by my persistence to write to you, because your
absolute silence during eighteen months, the silence that you have apparently imposed on Charlotte
with respect to you, and particularly your non-reply to my last letter in which I invited you to come over
and spend the summer with us, all speak for the fact that our relationship has become inconvenient for
you….
I cannot believe that you have anything to complain of in my behavior, for otherwise you would have
surely told me so, and a sincere explanation would have put an end to this brief misunderstanding. For
that matter, I have searched well in the depths of my conscience but found no shadow of guilt on my
side. Franz also is wondering how it is that your intimate relations with a man [Chopin] he feels he may
rightly call his friend should have resulted in an immediate suspension of all communication between
us…. Frankly, it happened once before that your intimacy with another of our friends [Mallefille]
produced a similar result…. Frequent warnings and the disheartening experience of so many broken
loves in your past do not appear to me as yet sufficient to justify the following sad conclusions: that you
are incapable of a long-lasting relationship, that proven affections in your case will always be carried
away by your first whim, that you are not as good as your word, that you reveal all too easily the
innermost secrets of your soul, and that it is impossible for those who are closest to you to feel free
from the insults of just anybody.
I still hope and let me tell you, I sincerely wish for an explanation worthy of yourself and myself that
would put an end to a distressing and intolerable situation. If you still persist in your silence, I shall
know that you wished to break off.63
That was precisely what Sand intended to do now, but she was considering what best approach to use.
Late in September, she wrote to Charlotte:
There is quite a simple way and that is not to answer her last letter at all…. But there is a drawback
here, and that is that she will, out of her discord with me, accuse two persons who are outsiders in this
affair. You have seen in her letter how she casts part of her bitterness on Mallefille and Chopin. I am
determined to exonerate both of them, first because it seems to me that straightening out the truth in
things is always a duty, and also because as regards Chopin, this breach might lead to his own with
Liszt. You have seen how she accuses him vehemently, he (says she) who is Liszt’s friend, of having
turned me away from her and him…. I don’t know how deep Chopin’s feelings are for Liszt. You know
the excessive reserve of the former and his meticulous delicacy. I only know that he would agree,
out of his friendship and devotion to me, to carry the burden of all accusations in order to spare me the trouble of painful explanations. His pride also would prevent him from proceeding to explain himself, and if an explanation is not asked of him, which is quite possible (since my silence would amount to an admission of guilt), he would then be open to Liszt’s vengeance and Madame d’Agoult’s contempt. As I know her now, she will arouse in him tensions and bitterness of which he has no need, he who is so nervous, so discreet, so exquisite (and hence so sickly) in everything. And so I should reply to Mme d’Agoult, be it in writing or verbally. It will be short but firm, without anger or venom, believe me! Woman’s spitefulness never moved me. It’s something I observe coldly, telling myself that one should see a bit of everything in life to be able to write ethical novels.64

Sure enough, Sand’s reply was curt and concise:
You are after an explanation, but it seems to me that you don’t really need any. But since you are asking for one, I am ready to supply it to you at your convenience. I don’t wish you to consider my silence as indicative of anything else but grief, Marie. I have no inclination to write to you a letter of reproach, although you know well that I have many serious reproaches to you. But I believe that ink and paper were invented to poeticize life and not to dissect it. So whenever you are willing, let me know the day and time, at your place or mine or Mme Marliani’s, as you wish. You will see that I have no resentment against you. But I should tell you that you have inflicted one more pain in my life and that it is I who have received the wound you are complaining of.65

Soon after, Marie fixed a date for the meeting at her lodgings in the rue des Mathurins and added: “You will find me entirely sincere and without a shadow of ill-will. I count on the same predisposition on your part. Thursday 4 o’clock.”66 The meeting resulted in a patched-up rapprochement, but Sand never really forgave Marie. In the words of the Abbé Lamennais: “We have been reconciled; we kissed each other; since then we are mortal enemies.”67

At the time of Sand’s “short but firm” letter to Marie, Liszt was on a concert tour in Vienna. Since the summer of 1837 at Nohant, he had spent an idyllic and somewhat secluded life with Marie mainly in Italy and Switzerland, composing and playing. But soon the virtuoso in him could no longer continue taking a backseat. Also after four years of living with Marie, and even though he was still deeply attached to her, he tired of her humorless temper and longed for the challenge and glitter of the concert platform. He had already implemented his idea of the solo piano recital first in Paris in mid-May 1836 and then in Rome in mid-March 1839. Since then he had launched himself in his career as a wandering virtuoso pianist. Marie had given him his third child, Daniel, early that May at a time when his estrangement from her had already begun. Later in her Mémoires, she herself gave (perhaps too harsh) a critique of the alienation: “My heart and
soul are dried out. It is an evil that accompanied me at birth. Since my early years I was afflicted with an avid instinct for sadness. Why does the thrush seek daily the bitter seed of the juniper tree? My soul nourishes itself similarly with acrid thoughts. Passion uplifted me for a while, but I do not have the strength to go to the very end. I am a hindrance to his [Liszt’s] life and I am no good for him. I cast sadness and despondency on his days.”

The final separation between the ex-lovers did not become permanent until 1844. In the meantime, they continued to correspond with each other, and whenever Liszt’s itinerary took him to Paris (where Marie resided as of October 1839), he duly visited her there. Chopin kept aloof from the alienation between Marie and Sand, and its impact on him was indirect and through Sand. Conjecturally, it placed Liszt now at an even greater distance away from him. Chopin’s cordiality with him had by now lost its luster, and there may have been some mutual professional pique, Liszt envying Chopin’s creativity, and Chopin Liszt’s sheer physical energy and dazzling charisma. As for Marie, there had never been any genuine warmth of feeling or sympathy between her and Chopin, and now in the new situation that developed her vengeful nature lost no opportunity in driving a wedge between him, Sand and Liszt.

Marie to Liszt, 20 December 1839:
I spent three days in bed with a heavy fever…. Knowing how ill I was, George hastened to see me. I told her quite frankly how crude Chopin was. One does not see a woman for five years and then suddenly stop short of even paying her a visit. I added that Chopin, whom you were naive enough to look upon as a friend, who knew how ill you were and at death’s door, and who was aware that I was the only person in Paris who had news of you, did not bother to come and inquire about you. She defended herself badly. She was in the dark…. She saw Chopin only at dinner. He never reads the Gazette musicale.

Liszt, writing from Limerick in Ireland in mid-January 1841, sympathized with Marie’s resentment and promised her a well-chosen response to his friend: “I am saving a nice evening for them, but I don’t agree that we should force them to an explanation. In such cases it is better to smile and deliver a more subtle blow. Don’t worry, I shall look after that.” The opportunity came when Chopin gave a semipublic concert at the Salle Pleyel on 26 April, following Liszt’s of the previous day at the conservatoire to raise money for the Beethoven Memorial at Bonn. First, Marie to her painter-friend Henri Lehmann, 21 April: “A little spiteful clique is trying to resuscitate Chopin who is going to play at Pleyel’s. Madame Sand hates me and we no longer meet.” Next, Liszt. The writer and music critic of La Revue et Gazette musicale, Ernest Legouvé, had originally intended to write the review of Chopin’s concert but later conceded to Liszt’s request to give an account of the concert himself. Liszt’s review in the 2 May
issue of the Gazette musicale, which may well have been written by Marie and signed by him, was long
and laudatory but contained some touches of subtle truculence that was derogatory to the stature of
Chopin. Liszt depicted the concert as “un concert de fashion…. His[Chopin’s] means of expression were
too limited, his instrument too imperfect; he could not reveal his whole self by means of a piano…. [He]address[ed] himself to a society rather than to a public. Had it not been for the fear of adding to
the already great fatigue which betrayed itself on his pale face, people would have asked for the
repetition of the programme one by one.”73 Marie followed up her preconcert cynical remarks to Henri
Lehmańfirst with a letter to Liszt early in May: “Les Guêpes [a satirical journal] says that at Mr. Chopin’s
concert Mr. L. [Liszt], who was not playing the piano but insisted on playing some part, rushed forward
to support Chopin who was on the point of collapse.”74 Next, she sent another letter (to complement
the first) to Lehmann: “Mme Sand, mortified by all these [Liszt’s] successes has forced Chopin to give a
concert at Pleyel’s rooms in camera—only friends admitted.”75
Thus ended the Chopin-Liszt friendship. A few days after Chopin’s concert, Liszt was off again on his
tours, which took him that year first to England and later to Germany. His life as a virtuoso pianist
continued until the autumn of 1847, when on 18 September he gave his last public recital at
Elisabetgrad in southern Russia. By then, his balance sheet as a composer could hardly match that of
his erstwhile friend Chopin, and he must have known it. But now at the age of thirty-six, he turned a
new page in his artistic career. His new lease on life as a composer would take him to unprecedented
heights, which were increasingly poetic and less tarnished by his previous exuberant extravagance.
Ernest Legouvé’s unusually candid letter to him of February 1840 proved to be prophetic:
Schoelcher [the French musicologist who wrote a life of Händel] tells me that one of my articles about
Chopin, in which I preferred him to you, struck you as unpleasant…. In art, it seems to me, complete
unity must be accorded first place. I hold that Chopin is complete—as executant musician and as
composer his qualities are harmonious and of equal value…. You, on the other hand, and I tell you so
with all frankness, you have arrived only halfway to your goal…. The pianist has arrived, the composer
waits in the wings…. I believe with all the sincerity I can muster that on the day that the intimate Liszt
will usher forth, the day when his exceptional executant capacity will be matched by creative work (that
day perhaps is not far off), on that day you will not only be called the first pianist of Europe, that day
you will be known by quite another name.76
Out of tactfulness, Chopin never broke off his relationship with Liszt. During Liszt’s sojourns in Paris in
the summers of 1841 and 1842, Chopin was in Nohant, but late in July 1842 he went to Paris for about
a fortnight
and was at a dinner party with Liszt. In 1844, Liszt was again in Paris during April and May to give two recitals, on 16 and 25 April. It is not known whether Chopin attended either of them, but on 28 April, Chopin and Sand, together with Liszt and Alexandre Dumas père, attended a concert given by the pianist-composer Alkan (Charles Valentin Morhange). And on Christmas Eve 1845, Liszt called on Chopin in his lodgings at the Square d’Orléans to pay his seasonal greetings. This was perhaps the last time that the two former friends met.

Chopin’s assessment of Liszt the composer was mentioned at least once in his correspondence. To Julian Fontana, 12 September 1841: “As regards the themes from his compositions, well, they will remain buried in the newspapers together with those two volumes of German poetry [written in Liszt’s honor].” On the private level, we have a series of letters by Nicolas Chopin to his son in which one can surmise the denouement of Chopin’s fragile friendship with Liszt.

30 December 1841:
One thing that interests me is to know whether you have seen Liszt since his article [that followed Chopin’s concert of 26 April 1841] and whether you are as close friends as you once were: it would be a pity if your friendship had cooled off.

21 March 1842:
I confess I didn’t expect to hear what you tell me about him [Liszt], and the reference to him and Thalberg in the article about your concert will not help much to bring you together again. In such circumstances what are you to do? You should act with your usual prudence and delicacy, without giving way. You can behave with dignity and let all the blame fall on him.

16 October 1842:
So you found yourself at a dinner party with Liszt? I know how circumspect you are and you are quite right not to break with him, in spite of all his boasting; you were once friends and it is a fine thing to be his rival in tact.

Of Liszt’s direct reference to his friendship with Chopin after the breakup between their loves, Niecks quotes the following remark made to him by the Hungarian composer: “There was a cessation of intimacy, but no enmity. I left Paris soon after, and never saw him again.” Liszt was at Plisen in Bohemia on a cure with his last mistress, Princess Carolyn Sayn-Wittgenstein, at the time of Chopin’s death in October 1849. It may well have been a spontaneous show of genuine reverence and a resurgence of his past affection for Chopin that prompted Liszt two weeks later to start preparing a biography of his fellow composer, but the book,
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with its rash inaccuracies, excessive verbosity, and romanticized anecdotes, fell seriously short of its
aims. (It is generally believed that a substantial portion of the book was probably written by Princess
Carolyn.) Sand was kind to Liszt when she described the work (which was first published in 1851 in
seventeen installments in La France Musicale) as being “somewhat exuberant in style.”82 (See also note
73.) A more accurate assessment is that of Sainte-Beuve, who said that “it needs to be completely
rewritten.”83 Liszt could surely have paid no better tribute to Chopin than promoting the latter’s music
by including it in his recitals and in the repertoire of the lessons of his students, and this he did
enthusiastically during and beyond Chopin’s lifetime.84
Chopin's acquaintance with the eminent mezzo-soprano was a happy one. Quite often at Nohant he accompanied her at the piano and had many discussions with her on various musical topics. She transcribed several of his mazurkas for voice and piano and sang them on various occasions during his lifetime. She tried to play a conciliatory (though unsuccessful) role in the breach of the Chopin-Sand liaison.
An Artistic Devotee: Pauline Viardot

Among Chopin’s many women friends and devotees, there was only one with whom he had a professional association: the celebrated Spanish mezzo-soprano Pauline Viardot (née García). Although she took part in only one of his concerts, his musical association with her spanned a period of some six years. Apart from George Sand, she was certainly the most extraordinary woman he came to know. She was to become not only one of the great singing actresses in operatic history, but also a remarkable pianist, teacher, intellectual, and prodigious linguist. Meyerbeer’s Fidès in his opera *Le Prophète* was inspired by her, and her accomplishment in that role prompted Gounod to write his *Sapho* for her and Saint-Saëns his *Samson et Dalila*. Also, Brahms’s *Alto Rhapsody* was composed for her. In her private life, she was loved by de Musset, Gounod, Berlioz, and Turgenev, her unusual forty-year-long relationship with the Russian writer being reflected in his most famous play, *A Month in the Country*. Pauline was born in Paris on 18 July 1821 into a family of highly gifted artists. Her mother, Joaquina Sitchès, may have been an actress or a singer. Her father, Manuel del Popolo (Vicente) García, was a well-known tenor for whom Rossini created the role of Almaviva in the *Barbieri di Siviglia*. Her brother, Manuel, sixteen years her senior, became arguably the most famous teacher of singing in the nineteenth century, living to the ripe old age of 101. Her sister, thirteen years her senior, was the renowned Maria Malibran (La Malibran), one of the masters of *bel canto*, whom Chopin described to his music teacher, Józef Elsner, in 1831 as “the leading European *prima donna*—she is fabulous!”

Pauline had some distinguished instructors in her musical education: Marcos Vega, Meyzenberg, and then Liszt for piano playing; Anton Reicha
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for composition; and her father for singing. (She took her singing lessons seriously only after being well grounded in piano playing and music composition.) Liszt taught her for two years and foresaw a virtuoso career for her. (Later, in the early 1850s, she still played so well that Ferdinand Hiller, director of the Köln Conservatory, considered appointing her as head of the piano department there.) When Chopin later gave her some informal lessons and pianistic advice, in both Paris and Nohant, it is said that he was anxious to know all the details of the lessons she had with Liszt, “to the point that Pauline, to make him happy, noted on paper the programme of studies which Liszt had elaborated for her.”2 Her early successes were confined to participations in musical fêtes, typically those arranged by Pierre Zimmermann, composer and professor of piano at the Paris Conservatoire. Antoine Marmontel (pianist and composer) informed Niecks that in 1832, at one of Zimmermann’s musical evenings, “Madame Zimmermann and her daughters did the honors to a great number of artists. … Liszt or Chopin had to improvise on a given theme, Mesdames Viardot [then Garcia], Falcon, and Eugénie Garcia [wife of Manuel Garcia] had also to discharge their melodic debts.”3 Another soirée musicale in which Pauline participated was one, again held at Zimmermann’s, in which the virtuoso pianist Thalberg was first heard. This was reported in La Gazette musicale of 8 November 1835.4

It seems that Sand was introduced to Pauline before the latter met Chopin. Sand was to play a decisive role in Pauline’s private life by bringing her together with Louis Viardot (twenty-one years Pauline’s senior), the litterateur who was to marry her in 1840. Viardot had started off as a lawyer, but after a visit to Spain, he turned to literature, journalism, and the operatic world. He had become a close friend of Sand since he was introduced to her in 1838 by her philosopher-friend Pierre Leroux. In 1838, he became the director of the Théâtre-Italien and recruited the services of Giovanni Mario, the well-known tenor, and Pauline Garcia. It was as a dramatic mezzo-soprano at the Théâtre-Italien that Pauline made her stage debut in Paris as Desdemona in Rossini’s Otello on 8 October 1839 at the age of eighteen. (She had already made her professional debut in London in that same opera on 9 May 1839.) Sand and Chopin may well have attended one of her performances after their return to Paris on 11 October from their trip to Majorca and their subsequent stay in Nohant. Sand’s first letter to Pauline, written sometime during the winter of 1839-1840, is one of adulation:

Queen of the world, you have to tell me which day is mine. Must I give up the hope of receiving you on Sunday with Mr. Lablache [a well-known bass] who had even so positively promised me this day? I would like to know my fate and thus not raise false hopes in the friends of whom I have spoken and whom you already know. We shall be only amongst friends. There will be no nosey-parkers, no prying
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stares under your nose. I am too jealous of the happiness I feel when I see you to require the presence of other than the elitists among your admirers. Answer with one word whether it will be next week or on Sunday that my poet’s attic would be lit with four candles and decorated with two pots of mignonette. If I had millions, I would spend them on that day to buy oriental carpets to place under your feet. In the meantime, set me at the feet of the mother of the Gracchi and beg her to love me a little. As for you, I will surely succeed through my unwavering adoration. I admire genius well enough, but when it is coupled with goodness, I prostrate myself before it.5

This letter was followed by one to Louis Viardot similarly inquiring about a suitable day for a reunion in Sand’s rue Pigalle lodgings with Pauline and Lablache. Was this already part of a concerted effort that is known to have been made by Sand to bring Pauline and Viardot together? It was apparently Alfred de Musset (Sand’s ex-lover) who had initially introduced Pauline to Sand.6 Later, he fell in love with Pauline and probably proposed to her, and she inspired him to write two verses in her praise for the Revue des Deux Mondes. It was presumably the intent of saving Pauline from a reckless involvement with de Musset that drove Sand to arrange for the more reliable and secure match between Pauline and Viardot. (There may have also been some jealousy on Sand’s part in seeing Pauline achieve success with an ex-lover as well as in sharing her with him.) This was consummated on 16 April 1840, and thereafter Viardot gave up his post as manager of the Théâtre-Italien to become his wife’s impresario.

As was characteristic of Sand at the outset of any passionate relationship, whether it involved a friend or a lover, she was now obsessed with her newly acquired acquaintance and decided to accompany the Viardots to Cambrai (in northern France), where Pauline was to give a series of concerts in mid-August 1840. Chopin, now part of the Sand household, could not but assume the role of head of the family during Sand’s week of absence. Sand’s letter of 13 August to Chopin sounds like that of an excited teenager during her first trip away from home:

We shall have fine stories to tell of the Cambrai bourgeoisie. They are a handsome stupid race of shopkeepers....We live like princes, but oh, what hosts, what conversations, what dinners! ...I am longing to get away, and now I begin to understand why my Chop hates giving concerts. Pauline Viardot can’t find a hall and may not be able to sing the day after tomorrow. We shall leave a day earlier.....

Good night Chip-Chip. Good night Solange and Bouli [Maurice Sand]. I am ready to drop and must go to bed.7

The following day, Maurice wrote to his mother: “If you only knew how sad the house has become since you left. Chopinet and I stare at each other in the evenings, with only two bits of candle to light the room, with wide-open eyes and a big mouth which opens from time to time to say Ah
mon Dié, mon Dié [Maurice’s rendering of Chopin’s Polish accent in French, I am missing someone here.8
Sand returned to Paris on 18 August—Pauline did manage to give her concerts—and at the end of that month went with Chopin and Lablache for dinner at the Viardots.9 This was probably Chopin’s first social encounter with Pauline. As a singer, she must have already deeply impressed him, for in a letter to Pauline, Sand wrote:

Dear child of my heart,

Remember that I would like to hear the rehearsal of the Requiem [Mozart’s Requiem, which was to be given at the church of the Invalides on the day of the arrival of Napoleon’s ashes, 15 December. A rehearsal was to take place on 12 December at the Paris Opera, with Pauline being among the four alti], and you had promised me some tickets. Chopin has been worrying for two days about getting tickets for us to hear you, but we do not know when or where the rehearsal will take place. Remember me then so that I can be there, when the greatest of the present will sing the greatest of the past. Heartiest wishes to you, my dear, and lots of love to dear Viardot. George10

Sand and Chopin were to hear Pauline again that winter, on 7 February 1841, at the Conservatoire in a recital of songs by Handel and Mozart. Later, toward the end of February, Pauline, not yet nineteen and on the threshold of a great operatic career, traveled to England for a series of professional engagements. It was in Cimarosa’s Gli Orazi ed i Curiazi that she made her debut in London’s Queen’s Theater on 11 March. Her performance was acclaimed in the Musical World, and the London correspondent of the Revue et Gazette musicale compared her with her late sister, Malibran. She wrote to Sand on 8 April describing her successes. Chopin was hoping that she would participate in his Parisian concert of 26 April, but she stayed on in England until early July. Sand wrote to her on 18 April informing her of Chopin’s plans:

A great, astounding piece of news is that little Chip-Chip is going to give a Grrrrand Concert. His friends have plagued him so much that he has given way... Scarcely had he uttered the fatal Yes than everything was settled as if by a miracle. Three quarters of the tickets had gone before any announcement was made... He hoped you would come and sing for him. When I received your letter destroying his hopes, he wanted to put off his concert. But it couldn’t be done—he had gone too far. He has thrown himself into the arms, I mean at the feet, of Mme. [Cinti-] Damoreau.11

During Chopin’s seven summers at Nohant, Pauline was to go there four times, spending some two to three weeks each time: in 1841, 1842, 1843,
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and 1845. It was during these visits that Chopin came to know her informally and intimately. It was in a letter by Sand to Eugène Delacroix that we know of Pauline’s intended first visit to Nohant: “Know that Pauline will be coming in August to Nohant. I have just received a letter from her in which she positively promises me that. Being in the country with Pauline and Chip Chip will be something.”12 And about three weeks later, Sand wrote to Pauline: “Come then as early as possible, my dear daughter, since you are thinking of leaving me very early for all sorts of concerts and festivals [the Viardots were to leave on 16 August for this purpose].... All my world adores you... Come, come, come.”13

The Viardots arrived at Nohant on 2 August. Chopin had already left Paris for Nohant on 16 June. In his letter to Fontana from Sand’s estate later in August, he briefly mentioned Pauline’s stay: “Mme. Viardot was here for two weeks: we did all sorts of things other than music-making.”14 In the field of music making, they liked to sight-read scores of favorite composers (Sand to her bosom friend, Charlotte Marliani, August 1841: “Pauline and Chopin read entire scores at the piano”15); she sang, accompanied by Chopin (Charles Duvernet, Sand’s statesman-friend, in his Mémoires recalling a visit to Nohant: “I was so moved that without being aware of it, two tears trickled down my face. George Sand took me by the hand to Mme. Viardot, saying to her: ‘Look, Pauline, I bring you these while they are still hot’”16). She must have had many occasions to sing to Chopin while accompanying herself at the piano (Pauline to Sand, October 1841: “I have put to music La Fontaine’s Le chêne et le roseau [The oak tree and the reed]! I would like very much that Chopin hears it so as to know whether it is good or bad”17); and she adapted Spanish and French lyrics to some fifteen of Chopin’s mazurkas, which she may have conceivably tried out with Chopin at Nohant. “All sorts of things” may have included discussions on Mozart (their common passion, particularly his Don Giovanni and Requiem), Bach, eighteenth-century Italian opera and bel canto songs, and piano lessons (which were more pianistic advice than formal lessons) given to Pauline by Chopin, which inspired the well-known sketch of both of them at Nohant drawn (and wrongly dated!) by Maurice Sand.

Having missed her participation in his concert of 26 April 1841, Chopin made sure that Pauline would be present at his concert the following year, which was held in Pleyel’s rooms on 21 February. It was to be her only public appearance with the composer. On the eve of the concert, she sang at the conservatoire a number of arias from Gluck’s Orpheus, an aria from Rossini’s La Cenerentola, and the famous psalm from Marcello’s I Cieli immensi narrano.18 (At the time, Sand was working on her novel Consuelo, arguably her best in the genre, in which Pauline served as the model for the heroine. In Chapter 10, we read that Consuelo sang that same psalm in front of an enchanted audience.19) In Chopin’s concert, Pauline sang an
aria by Joseph Dessauer, a variety of pieces by Händel, and a song of her composition (referred to above, the text being La Fontaine's *Le chêne et le roseau*) accompanied by Chopin. This was probably the most successful of Chopin's public concerts, Sand describing it as follows to her half-brother, Hippolyte Chatiron: “The concert of the great Chopin was as beautiful, as brilliant, and as profitable as last year’s (the takings were more than 5000 francs, unprecedented in Paris, which just shows how avid people are to hear the most perfect and the most exquisite of musicians). Pauline was admirable.”

Early that summer, Pauline went to Spain to give a series of concerts. (Sand and Chopin were already in Nohant early in May.) Soon after her return to Paris on 23 August, Sand was beckoning her to her country estate. “Come then, my dear Consuelo,” she wrote to Pauline. “Our Chip Chip will return to life when he sees you [Chopin had still not completely recovered from the recent loss of his old piano teacher Woyciech Żywny and his boyhood friend Jan Matuszyński]. He is spending the summer in a state of great despondency. He fears the heat as much as the cold. He calls for you to restore to him his musical powers which he claims to have lost. So don't be long, my dear.”

And again ten days later: “Well, come then, my darling, time flies *(e non ritorna a noi* as says our compere Dante).”

The Viardots, together with their little daughter, Louise, and her nanny, finally arrived on 12 September for a fortnight’s stay.

During the winter of 1842–1843, Pauline was engaged by the Théâtre-Italien and was to appear in three Rossini operas: *Semiramide*, *La Cenerentola*, and *Tancredi*. These spanned October to March. Sand, who called Pauline’s series of appearances a “redébut,” was as usual full of ecstatic praise. She did, however, admit that Pauline’s success was “somewhat contested during the first few days, not by the public but by some literary sets and journalistic ‘stores.’”

Among the reviews emanating from the latter, one, written in the issue of 1 December in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* by Blaze de Bury (brother-in-law of François Buloz, a political and literary giant and publisher of a number of Sand’s novels, but who had fallen out with Sand at that time), was as much a malicious attack on Chopin and Sand as it was on Pauline: “Surely, the advice of a tragedienne like la Grisi or de Lablache, the greatest actor of our time, is worth more to her [Mme Viardot] than all those quasi-psychological inspirations derived from the novels of the day, which will end by becoming as elusive as the diaphanous nuances of Mr. Chopin’s microscopic playing.”

Apart from her public appearance, Pauline gave a number of private performances, the most relevant to the present context being those in association with Carl Filsch, Chopin’s only pupil of real genius. Born on 8 July 1830 at Hermannstadt, Transylvania (Hungary), Filsch first studied in 1837–1838 with Friedrich Wieck (Schumann’s future father-in-law) and later with August Mittag (one of the teachers of Sigismond Thalberg, who was among
the great pianists in Paris at the time). Filtsch subsequently took an average of three lessons per week with Chopin from December 1841 to April 1843. Hedley included two letters from Carl’s brother (Josef) to his parents relevant to the Viardot-Filtsch concerts. 26 The first, dated 9 November 1842, described the soirée at Sand’s: “Two days ago we were at an evening party at George Sand’s. Carl and Pauline Viardot were the performers...Chopin was in excellent spirits, beaming with joy at the success of his little pupil, who was kissed by Sand, Viardot and everyone.” 27 The second letter, dated 20 January 1843, related to a musical evening at the Rothschilds’, with Chopin participating in the program: “The soirée at the Rothschilds’ this evening was brilliant in every respect: Lablache, Grisi, Mario, Pauline Viardot, Chopin and Carl were the artists and the boy had a fabulous success. He again played Chopin’s concerto on two pianos with Chopin and was literally smothered with caresses by several ladies among the assembly of about five hundred persons.” 28 Sadly, Carl died on 11 March 1845, aged fifteen, in Vienna from tuberculosis.

Pauline’s third visit to Nohant, in mid-August 1843, was preceded by a pattern of activity similar to that of the previous year. This time, her travels took her to Vienna, where she made her debut as Rosina in Rossini’s Il Barbieri di Siviglia on 19 April with great success. During Pauline’s absence, Sand looked after her friend’s little daughter, Louise, first in Paris and later in Nohant, where Sand and Chopin arrived toward the end of May for their summer vacation there. Sand to Pauline, 8 June: “Whether you like it or not, she [Louise] calls me ‘Maman,’ and her way of saying ‘petit Chopin’ disarms all the Chopins on earth. Also, Chopin adores her, and spends his time kissing her hands.” 29 A number of biographers have suggested that Chopin’s Berceuse op. 57 was inspired by his tender and loving feelings for Louise. 30 Whether Chopin had Louise in mind in composing the work is an open question. That he did associate the composition with children, probably as a cradle song, is suggested in his letter to his family dated 16–20 July 1845 in which he wrote: “Speaking of the Berceuse brings to my mind the sort of person Ludwika wished to have [for her children].” 31 The summer of 1844 at Nohant passed by in the absence of Pauline. For Chopin, it was to be a memorable summer, since his sister Ludwika, together with her husband, was due to come first to Paris (where Chopin was to meet her) and later to proceed for a sojourn at Nohant. Sand was also expecting Pauline and suggested to her, in a letter dated 11 or 12 July, that “it would be a good opportunity to come with them [Chopin, Ludwika, and her husband].” 32 However, in the subsequent published letter to Pauline, Sand wrote: “Where are you?...Chopin has been waiting for you in Paris, without being able to see you returning to your stately domains [the Viardots had a castle at Courtavenel in the Brie district of northern France]. His sister is still expecting you, and we are giving up hope... I am the
only one who has not despaired and who says ‘she’ll come.’ The others are saying that she has other 
loves! her daughter, her mother, her castle. Well, bring along your mother, your daughter, your castle 
and your husband into the bargain... and come.”33 There was also another letter, dated 11 or 12 August, 
which, from the Viardots’ responses to it, was even more high-handed. Here is an instance where Sand’s 
pen slipped and overshot the bounds of propriety without paying due attention to the feelings of others. 
(And since Pauline was no less dear to her than Chopin, she may well have, on occasions, behaved in a 
similar impulsive manner to her composer-friend.) The response from both the Viardots was immediate 
and bitter. Pauline: 
Yes, wicked Ninounne, I shall come and see you, on my feet or on my head, I don’t know how, and I 
shall reproach you for being a nasty mother who makes her daughter cry.... If you can just send 
Françoise or her husband, or uncle Polyte to Orléans (I’m not asking you to go), then Louis would take 
me to Paris during his next trip, and I would leave after letting you know the day and time of my arrival 
at Orléans, after having reserved two seats in the stagecoach of Chateauroux. But first, I must get your 
reply. Would you write to me a few lines in duplicate to Paris and to Courtavenel. If you can send no 
one, and since I cannot go running alone in the streets, I can think of only Berthe to accompany me. 
But would you mind if she does? Tell me frankly. I don’t give you the tiniest kiss, you naughty wicked 
Ninounne that you are, but I send my regards and love to Solange, Chip, Bouli and uncle Polyte.34 
The reply from Viardot, sent together with that of Pauline, was more formal but no less scathing: 
Pauline, whom you have deeply grieved, does not wish to reply to you fully before going to Nohant... 
But I wish to answer you because you talk to both of us quite severely, and permit me to add quite 
unjustly. To tell Pauline that she looks for pretexts and loose ends is to accuse her of lying which is as 
alien to her thoughts as it is to her heart, as is the indifference you are accusing her of, and as are the 
lordly mannerisms you are charging both of us of... Pauline never knew that Chopin’s sister had waited 
for her till the 7th in Paris, and I never knew that her brother-in-law had called on me.35 
In a letter to Pauline dated 21 August, Sand tried to excuse herself by saying that Ludwika and her 
husband had delayed their departure from Paris by some ten days because of Pauline, and Chopin was 
getting very restless as a result. This was followed by three other letters, one of 22 August and two of 
25 August, in which Sand reiterated her wish to see Pauline and suggested that she leave Paris with 
Nohant on 1 September. The Viardots, understandably,
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did not go to Nohant that summer. Another facet to the Sand-Viardot mosaic was the fact that,
sometime in early September, Maurice became Pauline’s lover. There were some insinuations by Sand in
February 1843 of her son’s craving for Pauline. Sand to Hippolyte Chatiron, February 1843: “Maurice
does a bit of painting and goes yearning after the great Pauline who treats him like a brat.”36 And it
seems that Sand looked on this growing attachment with favor. Sand to Maurice, March 1843: “I saw
Mme. Viardot yesterday and we had dinner together. She sang for us her new compositions and
showed us her drawings with you. She talked a lot about you and asked us to give you all sorts of
handshakes and amicable punches.”37 On 18 November, Maurice wrote to his mother in Nohant: “I
must say one thing, and that is that I have no one to tease here. If Solange were here, I’d be cured
immediately, and if Madame Pauline were also here [Pauline was then on tour in Berlin and St.
Petersburg] I wouldn’t find winter so boring.”38 After Chopin accompanied his sister Ludwika and her
husband back to Paris, he was due to return to Nohant with Maurice. The latter went instead to visit
Pauline in her country house at Brie. It was while he was there early that September that Sand wrote to
him: “Give Pauline my love. I would like to write to her. I have a number of personal things to tell her
but I am not sure if those around her will not get to read her letters before she does.”39 (And yet
Pauline had written to her on 23 August saying: “You can write to me alone as much as you wish,
without having to worry about arousing in Louis the slightest suspicion.”)40 The letter that leaves no
doubt that a passionate love affair did exist between Pauline and Maurice is the one that Pauline sent to
Sand probably on 29 September 1844 on her way back from her travels:
As soon as I arrived in Brussels, I felt an irresistible urge to write and say hello to you. This short note
will find you all in Nohant. I am leaving again in five minutes. How is Maurice after his short trip? We
promised each other to take courage… I can’t say more at present. I am genuinely very much in love
with him. Write to me soon—with double entendres if possible, and address your letter to the Imperial
Management of Theaters of Petersburgh. Goodbye, dear, darling, adorable Ninounne. My love, hellos,
and regards to all who deserve them.41

It is highly probable that Chopin was aware of the liaison between Pauline and Maurice. He knew that
Maurice was with Pauline at Courtenavel since he received a note from him from there, saying that he
would be in Paris on 3 September.42 When Maurice did not arrive, Chopin wrote to him on that
day: “I shall travel then without you. I am leaving 60 fr for you with Mlle. de Roz[ières] in case you need
some money. Tonight I shall be at Nohant. Write a few words to your mother.”43 What Chopin felt
about the Pauline-Maurice affair can only be conjectured. There is no reference to it in any of his
published letters. It may have been
the reason behind his change of attitude toward Maurice—both had got on well together during Sand’s absences from Paris—when the latter started having an affair with Sand’s “adopted” daughter, Augustine Brault, probably during the summer of 1846. Apparently, Chopin, who considered himself a full-fledged member of the Sand family, confronted Maurice on his egoistical behavior toward Augustine (Maurice had given the girl false hopes to achieve his ends), whereupon Sand sided with her son against him: “Chopin objected to my intervention, which was legitimate and necessary. He lowered his head and said that I no longer loved him.”44 (Later, in 1850 with reference to that affair, Sand wrote frankly to Maurice that he was “capricious, irresolute, often unjust, finally far from heroic, and quite cruel.”45) The summer of 1845 was to be the last one Chopin would share some of his time at Nohant with Pauline. After a hectic but highly successful Russian tour, Pauline was back in the spring of 1845 in her castle at Courtavenel. Sand paid her a three-day visit there on 9 June, and on 12 June a party consisting of Sand, Chopin, Maurice, Solange, Pauline, and Chopin’s Polish manservant, Jan, set off from Paris for Nohant. Pauline was to stay there for some three weeks. Chopin’s exuberance over her presence was reflected in his letter to his banker friend, August Léo, dated 8 July: “I always think especially of you when my mind is on beautiful music, so you can imagine how often that is, now that we have Mme Viardot with us.”46 In his letter to his family about a week later, he mentioned the songs of Pauline that gave him great pleasure: “She sang me the Spanish songs she has composed in Vienna last year; she promised she would sing them to you. I am very fond of them and I doubt whether one could hear or think of anything better of their kind. These songs will bring you and me together. I have always listened to them with rapturous pleasure.”47 Unfortunately, there is no record of what these songs were. Later that summer, Pauline went to the Rhineland, “where Meyerbeer invited her in the name of the King of Prussia, together with Liszt and Vieuxtemps, etc.”48 It was after the rupture between Sand and Chopin in July 1847 that Pauline unequivocally showed her true devotion to Chopin (see, however, note 63) and her genuine understanding of Sand. She tried to play a conciliatory role between the two parties and was one of the very few of Sand’s close friends whom Sand did not associate with the “enemy camp.” Initially, however, and over a period of some five months, Pauline’s letters were left unanswered by Sand. Pauline’s reply to Sand’s first letter of mid-November since that period was warm and full of comprehension:

Let me first thank you for the happiness which I felt upon seeing your dear handwriting on the envelope. And now I must reply to the first sentence of your letter in which you think I was offended because of your long silence. In the first place, I was not offended and I could not have as motive the episode of Solange’s mar-
riage, since you had written two letters to me on that matter, one of which [in January] had announced
her engagement to that young gentle man, and the other [in May] an invitation to her wedding as a fait
accompli of several days.49
She then continued:
There is in your letter another passage which I simply cannot pass over in silence—the one in which
you say that Chopin belongs to Solange’s clique, which makes her out a victim and runs you down. That
is absolutely false. I swear it is, at least so far as he is concerned. On the contrary, this dear and
excellent friend is filled with, and afflicted by, a single thought—the harm that this wretched affair must
have done, and is still doing, to you. I have not found him changed in the slightest degree—he is still as
kind, as devoted as ever—adoring you as he always has, rejoicing with your joy, grieving only over your
grievings. In Heaven’s name, darling, never believe those officious friends who come and tell tales.50
However, despite Pauline’s wise advice, a rapprochement between the exlovers never materialized, even
though there was some will on Sand’s part.51
During Pauline’s second tour in England in the 1847–1848 season, Chopin, who had arrived there at the
beginning of the third week of April, had the pleasure of seeing her and attending a number of her
performances. To Gutmann, 6 May: “Mme Viardot has been to see me. She will be singing in
Sonnambula.”52 To Grzymała, 13 May:
Yesterday at Covent Garden Mme Viardot sang my Mazurkas and they were en-cored. She came to see
me with her husband when they arrived. I went to return her visit but she was out. She was much more
affable than in Paris and sang my Mazurkas without my asking her. She has appeared in Sonnambula at
the same theater (Covent Garden) as Grisi, Persiani, Alboni, Mario, etc... Mlle Lind also made her first
appearance in Sonnambula... Mme Viardot had less success: the Queen was not there and Viardot was
ill at ease as she had to sing with Flavio instead of Mario. She came to see me here when I happened to
be out, but I shall see them on Sunday.53
To Marie de Rozières, 1 June: “So far she has only sung in Sonnambula—they are now going to put on
the Barbieri and I Capuleti [e i Montecchi].”54 To Grzymała, 2 June: “Viardot has no great success here
since she is with Grisi and Alboni who are very popular. Her husband came to see me two days ago.”55
On one occasion, Chopin had a bone to pick with Pauline (probably the only one in the entire course of
their friendship) over her presentation of his mazurkas. To Marie de Rozières, 30 June:
In Viardot’s programmes at present (for example, yesterday at the Palace) there is no longer the item:
“Mazurkas of Chopin” but merely “Mazurkas arranged by Mme Viardot”—it appears that it looks better.
It is all the same to me; but there is a pettiness behind it. She wants to have success and is afraid of a
certain news-
paper which perhaps does not like me. It once wrote that she had sung music “by a certain Mr. Chopin” whom no one knows, and that she ought to sing something else. Don’t mention it to [name illegible] for it might come back here and be taken as another example of my ingratitude.56

The ill feeling that this episode surely caused Chopin may have been partly forgotten when, on 7 July, Pauline joined him in his matinee recital at Lord Falmouth’s residence in St. James’s Square. Chopin to Grzymała, 8–17 July:

Yesterday (7 July) I gave a second matinee... Among other things Viardot sang my Mazurkas. It went very well... I am now going along to thank Mme Viardot. I confess I did not want to ask her to sing for me, but her brother [Manuel Garcia] just happened to come in as Broadwood was putting Lord Falmouth’s offer of his salon to me, and he at once went to see his sister who promised she would sing with pleasure... Tell Rozières that Mme V. was charming.57

The recital at Lord Falmouth’s, or the days following it before he set off to Scotland toward the end of July, provided Chopin with the last opportunity to see Pauline that year. She was still hopeful of a Sand-Chopin reconciliation. Sand to Pauline, June 1848: “Do you ever see Chopin? Tell me about his health. I am unable to repay his furor and hate by an equal measure of furor and hate. I think of him often as a sick child, embittered and lost.”58 Pauline to Sand, fragmentary letter of uncertain date:

You ask me for news of Chopin: here is what I can tell you. His health is slowly declining, with passable days on which he can go out for a drive, and others when he spits blood and has attacks of coughing which choke him. He no longer goes out in the evening. However, he can still give a few lessons, and on his good days he can be quite merry. There you have the strict truth. In any case it’s a long time since I saw him. He came three times to see me but I was out. He always speaks of you with the greatest respect, and I still maintain that he never does otherwise.59

(Chopin to Grzymała, July 1848: “I know that Mme Sand has written to Mme V. and has inquired most sympathetically about me!!! How she must be playing the part of the honest and upright mother over there!”60) This last quoted excerpt from Pauline’s letter to Sand must have been based on second-hand information Pauline received, probably from Marie de Rozières or Woyciech Grzymała. In a letter written to Sand soon after Chopin’s death, Pauline affirmed that she was not aware of Chopin’s return to Paris or that he was at the point of death:

It is a long time since I gave you my news, but it’s even a longer time since you last wrote to me. As for me, my Ninounne, I was so grieved by the death of poor little Chopin that I didn’t know where to start my letter. I am sure that you have also been similarly distressed, and that had you known that his end was so near
you would have gone to press his hand one last time. I did not know that he had returned to Paris or
that he was at death’s door. I came to know of his death from strangers who had come to ask me very
formally to participate in a Requiem which was to be given at the Madeleine for Chopin. It is then that I
realized how deep my affection was for him... He was a noble soul. I am happy to have known him and
to have obtained a little of his friendship.61
Chopin’s funeral took place on Tuesday 30 October at noon. The Requiem in question was Mozart’s, and
according to Adolf Gutmann, it was performed following Chopin’s wishes.62 Those who took part were
Pauline, Jeanne Castellan, Luigi Lablache, and Alexis Dupont, accompanied by the conservatoire
orchestra and chorus.63
The warmth of feeling that existed between Pauline and Chopin was based on reciprocal esteem and
affinity of temperament. The friendship also happened to be one of mutual artistic benefit. Pauline was
given expert advice by Chopin on her piano playing, her vocal compositions, and her arrangements of
some of his mazurkas as songs.64 On Chopin’s side, he derived from Pauline some firsthand knowledge
about Spanish music. One may also conjecture that he developed through her a keener understanding
and appreciation of the human voice as a musical instrument.65 It is probably on the personal rather
than the professional side that Chopin retained his memories of her, and the most cherished ones were
arguably not those in and around the bustling atmosphere of the world of opera but in the more
intimate pastoral peace at Nohant, the habitat of many of his most inspired compositions.
After twenty-two years of an illustrious operatic career, Pauline retired to Baden-Baden with her family
in 1863 and devoted herself to teaching. Following a brief period of exile in London in 1870–1871 as a
result of the Franco-Prussian War, she returned to Paris. There she readily resumed her friendship with
George Sand, although the meetings were infrequent since Sand was almost always at Nohant. When
Sand died in 1876 at the age of seventy-two, Pauline lost her closest woman friend, a friendship that
had lasted for almost forty years. In a letter to her intimate friend, Ivan Turgenev, she wrote: “I
consider that people do not say enough about her kindness. However rare genius may be, such kindness
is rarer still.”66
Solange Dudevant-Sand. Pencil portrait by Auguste Clésinger, c. 1847. Musée Renan-Scheffer, Paris. © Phototèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris. Chopin followed the evolution of Solange Sand from an impetuous girl of ten to a disillusioned married woman of twenty-one. Having spent some five years in and out of boarding schools, there was a void in her relationship with her mother. This void was filled by Chopin, who developed an enduring affection for her. It was Chopin’s refusal to break off relations with Solange and her husband, called for by George Sand, that led to the final breakup of the Chopin-Sand affair.
A Tender Attachment: Solange Sand

When Chopin became George Sand's lover early in the summer of 1838, he was about to be integrated into a household that included two persons who were to be directly involved in transforming the last two years of his life into a sad denouement: the two children of his mistress—her fifteen-year-old son, Maurice, and her ten-year-old daughter, Solange. Chopin's nine-year-long liaison with Sand was to provide him with the congenial atmosphere and the comfortable domesticity in which his genius would continue to flourish, but also with the anguish that would finally break his spirit. At the dividing line stood Solange, “beautiful and wicked,”1 “of a somewhat singular character, very kind, very loving, but very ill disposed to yield to force,”2 “passionate, strong in body and soul,”3 “devilish,”4 “coquettish,”5 “naturally lazy,”6 “a sun beneath the clouds,”7 and “a wild flower and a thorny forest plant.”8 Chopin followed her transformation from a girl of ten to a married woman of twenty-one. He must have understood her vagaries of mood, her headstrong, undisciplined, and domineering character, and at times her wanton jealousy, attributes that one would not have expected him to tolerate from anybody. But he was fond of her, and finally he sided with her against her mother. At the close of her love affair with Chopin, Sand was to confide bitterly to her lawyer and writer-friend Emmanuel Arago in the longest letter she ever wrote in her life: “Chopin...completely changed towards me...flatly declares that I am a bad mother, that Sol[ange] is perfectly right, and that he will not forsake her...This sudden about-face surely means that he has changed one passion for another... For two years I have told myself, and now I see clearly, that his pretended love for me is in reality hatred...Wheedled, fawned upon, allured by contact with Sol and her calumnies, ...he'll
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emerge happier and less ill, I predict, than he would be in a strife with me."9 Arago concurred, adding, "For several years, he [Chopin] has been fascinated by her and accepted from her with pleasure behavior that would have exasperated him coming from another. I saw, saw, and saw clearly that he had for her a profound sentiment which at first resembled paternal affection, and which changed, perhaps without him knowing it, when she turned from a child into a young girl and from a young girl into a woman."10 Did Chopin really fall in love with Solange? What sort of feelings did she have for him? In attempting to answer these questions relating to events that occurred 150 years ago, one can do no better than judge from the relevant correspondence and read between the lines whenever necessary.

Solange was born on 13 September 1828 at a time when George Sand was increasingly estranged from her husband, Casimir Dudevant, whom she had married six years earlier out of sheer desperation to quit her mother's house. (Solange's father was probably Stéphane Ajasson de Grandsagne, a young neighbor from the village of La Châtre, near Sand's country estate of Nohant, whom Sand knew intimately from the age of sixteen or seventeen. According to Louise Vincent, Sand sometimes used to call her daughter "Mademoiselle Stéphane."11) Five years earlier, on 30 June 1823, she had given birth to her first child, Maurice. It is said that she had so much yearned for a son that after her delivery, she closed her eyes so as not to interrupt what she considered to be a dream.

During the first three or four years of her life, Solange was as much her mother's darling as Maurice. (It was only later, after Solange attained womanhood at the age of twelve, that Sand started to show a definite preference for her son.) Subsequently Sand began to comment on her daughter's malice and caprice, traits that were to remain part of her basic personality. In November 1834, when Solange was a little over six years old, she started her boarding school experience, which was to mark her for life. Apparently it was Casimir Dudevant's decision. At first, Sand had misgivings about the idea, but a few months later she conceded to the wisdom of the move. For Solange, the feeling of being uprooted from the family home and placed in the impersonal atmosphere of a boarding school must have been traumatic. She was to attend such schools until the age of about sixteen: the Pensionnat Martin (November 1834–July 1837), the Pensionnat Héreau (October 1840–April 1841), and finally the Pensionnat Bascans-Lagut (April 1841–May 1844). Perhaps the most harrowing period of all, and at the same time the most intellectually invigorating, was the last one. Discipline was severe, and Solange was frequently threatened with being deprived from going out during weekends as punishment. (Chopin was one of those who visited her and occasionally took her out.) It must have been with a great sigh of relief when, accompanied by her mother early in May 1844, she left school for good. The emotional toll that life there had exacted from
her must have been immense, particularly the period spent in the last boarding school, which coincided
with those highly impressionable postpuberty years when the psyche is groping for self-assertion and
 craving for understanding. Arguably the experience set the seal to a vulnerable personality that could
have flowered in its maturity but instead deviated and got distorted in the process through lack of a
normal family life, affection, and comprehension.12
It was probably in the late autumn of 1836 (see Chapter 8) that Solange, with her brother and her
mother, may have seen Chopin for the first time. (Toward the end of her life, Solange stated that her
first recollection of him was when she met him at Perpignan at the end of October 1838, at the start of
the trip that was to take the Sand family and the composer to the island of Majorca.) The place was the
Hôtel de France in Paris, where Chopin, secretly engaged then to Maria Wodzińska, had gone to visit his
friend Liszt, whom he had not seen for about five months. The Hôtel de France on the rue Laffitte, close
to Chopin's newly acquired apartment on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, then housed the Sand family,
as well as Liszt and his mistress, the Comtesse Marie d'Agoult.
Initially, Chopin's relations with both Solange and Maurice were cordial and even father-like. Chopin's
occasional missives to Solange included in Sand’s letters during the summer of 1841 were innocent and
paternal: “You’re quite pretty!”13 “Chopin says that you’re a big coquette.”14 “Chopin kisses you and is
waiting to spoil you. But I won’t let him.”15 In return, Solange’s indirect remarks to Chopin were
sometimes downright impertinent. Solange to her mother, 20 July 1841: “Also tell Mr. Sexless [Chopin]
to write to me; he hasn’t sent me a word since his arrival at Nohant. It seems that he's too proud and
thinks he's a lord in his castle because he's a man of means.”16 During the summer of 1843, the
messages acquired a more personal, though discreet, tone: “Chopin sends you lots of love.”17 “Chopin,
to whom you never say anything, takes his hat off to you.”18 “Chopin greets you respectfully and with
reverence.”19
In 1844 and 1845, Chopin mentioned her often in his letters to his sister Ludwika and to his family:
Solange...reminded me twice about [the little songs you heard one evening] and copied out the words
from memory for you, while I wrote the music.20
Solange is rather unwell today. She is here in my room and sends her regards.21
Yesterday Solange interrupted me to play a duet with her. Today it was to go and see a tree felled.22
I have just returned from a drive with Solange who took me for a nice airing in the cabriolet with
Jacques. Jacques is the name of a huge thoroughbred dog.23
Solange, who has just brought me some chocolate to nibble at, asks me to kiss Ludwika. As of 1847, Chopin sometimes devoted large portions of the letters to his family in Warsaw to the subject of Solange.

It is difficult to tell what Solange’s true feelings were toward Chopin. On the strength of the correspondence, there are no firm indications of anything beyond innocent teenage teasing and cajolery. But according to Aurore Lauth-Sand (1866–1961), Maurice’s daughter, “Solange, between the ages of 14 and 16 [that is, between 1842 and 1844], flirted with Chopin, influenced him, captured his attention, and became gradually so wicked that her mother suffered as a result and wished to complain to her friend [Chopin].” This is confirmed to some extent by Sand herself, who, in mid-August 1843, warned Solange “not to be uncouth” with Chopin. Also, in May 1846, after meeting a suitor, Solange is reported to have told her mother that the man, who seemed to her old and sick, “reminded her instantly of Chopin…who to her mind was nothing but an old grump.” Lubin suggests that at the age of seventeen, Solange was obsessed by the personality of Chopin. He based his remark on the fact that an 1845 review bore the name of Chopin several times, penciled in by her. By all accounts, it is fairly certain that Solange the awakening adolescent was aware of her feminine charm and power of seduction, and she was soon to employ these on Chopin and others whenever she felt it satisfied her whims or suited her purpose.

It is outside the scope here to go into the details of the erosion in the Sand-Chopin relationship. (For this, see, for example, Samson’s Chopin.) However, because of the obvious relevance of this relationship to the present subject matter, a summary of the incidents directly involved in the final rupture is given below:

January 1846 Augustine Brault, the daughter of an impoverished cousin, is “adopted” by Sand and comes to live at Nohant. Chopin disapproves of the decision, being convinced that Maurice would take advantage of the girl (as he later did). This arouses the enmity of both Maurice and Augustine.

June 1846 Le Courier français starts publishing Sand’s novel Lucrezia Floriani, a veiled parody of the Sand-Chopin love affair.

November 1846 Chopin leaves Nohant, never to return.

Winter 1846-1847 Solange is engaged to Fernand de Préaulx, a landowner Chopin liked.

February 1847 The Sand family and de Préaulx go to Paris for the trousseau and to draw up the marriage contract. About a fortnight later, Sand and Solange meet with Auguste Clésinger, a sculptor. Solange falls passionately in love with him and decides to break off her engagement with de Préaulx. Sand approves of Clésinger.
April 1847
Sand and Solange return to Nohant, followed by Clésinger, who was determined to win Solange’s hand.

May 1847
Wedding of Solange and Clésinger at Nohant. (Chopin is informed of it only nineteen days beforehand.) Arrival at Nohant of the painter Théodore Rousseau, Augustine’s prospective husband.

June
Arrival of the Clésingers at Nohant. Solange, out of spite and jealousy, informs Rousseau that 1847-Augustine was Maurice’s mistress, and accuses Sand of an amorous intrigue with Victor Borie, a journalist friend of Maurice.

July
Violent quarrel at Nohant between Sand and Maurice on the one hand, and the Clésingers on the other. Clésinger unravels now his real character and mercenary intentions. Solange (who is pregnant) and Clésinger are expelled from Nohant and go to nearby La Châtre.

Following the Clésingers’ arrival at La Châtre, Solange sent a letter to Chopin requesting a loan of his carriage for the journey to Paris: “I left Nohant for ever [she was back on 9 November to visit her mother] after my mother had made the most frightful scenes. Please do wait for me before you leave Paris: I simply must see you at once. They positively refused to let me have your carriage; so if you wish me to have the use of it, send me a note giving permission and I will send it to Nohant so as to obtain the carriage.” Chopin’s response, quick and positive, reflected his concern for Solange. “I hasten to put my carriage at your disposal. I have written to that effect to your mother.”

Neither the letter to Sand nor its reply have been found.

Back in Paris, Solange must have hastened to Chopin to relate her version of the story. In the meantime, Sand was apparently still hopeful that Chopin and Delacroix would come over as usual to Nohant. To Delacroix, probably on 19 July: “You will soon come, my friend, won’t you…? Chopin will come; his carriage is awaiting him at Blois.” In view of this, one may conjecture that she was still confident, at least to some extent, of Chopin’s devotion to her. His cool and detached letter of 24 July removed that confidence.

I am not called upon to discuss Mr. Clésinger with you. The very name of Mr. Clésinger did not become familiar in my mind until you gave him your daughter.

As for her [Solange]—I cannot remain indifferent to her. You will remember that I used to intercede with you for both your children, without preference. I did this whenever I had the chance, being certain that it is your destiny to love them always—for those are the only affections which are not subject to change. Ill fortune may cast a shadow over them, but cannot alter their nature.

This misfortune must be very powerful today if it can forbid your heart to listen to any mention of your daughter, at the beginning of her real life as a woman, at the very moment when her physical condition calls more than ever for a mother’s care. When faced with such grave realities involving your most sacred affections, I
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must pass over in silence that which concern me personally. Time will do its work. I shall wait—still the same as ever.35
Sand’s reply to the letter, in which she put the blame squarely on Solange, sealed the breach:
Very well, my friend, follow now the dictates of your heart and assume that it is the voice of your conscience. I understand perfectly. As for my daughter, her illness gives no more cause for anxiety than last year... It would ill become her to say that she needs her mother’s love—a mother whom she hates and slanders, whose most innocent actions and whose home she blackens by the most frightful calumnies. You choose to listen to it all and maybe believe what she says... Look after her then, since it is she to whom you think you must devote yourself.... I forgive you, and from now on I shall not utter one word of reproach, for you have made a sincere confession.... Adieu, my friend.... I shall thank God for this queer end to nine years of exclusive friendship. Let me hear now and then how you are. There is no point in ever discussing the other matters.36
It is of interest to review those parts of Chopin’s letters to his family that touch on the subject of Solange around the time of the rupture with Sand. In the letter of 28 March–19 April 1847, during the period of Solange’s engagement to de Préaulx and her first contact with Clésinger, Chopin thought highly of Clésinger the artist but sensed that something was brewing between him and the Sands:
“Some genuine talents have come forward, notably a sculptor—his name is Clésinger... Make a note of [his] name—I shall often be mentioning him for he has been introduced to Mme Sand. Before she left [for Nohant] he made busts of her and Solange: everyone finds them admirable and they will probably be exhibited next year.”37 In his next letter, dated 8 June 1847, some two and a half weeks after Solange’s wedding, he lay bare his feelings and performed a volte-face regarding what he had previously written about Clésinger: “From the outset I did not like hearing the mother [George Sand] praise him [Clésinger] to the skies. Nor did I like seeing them [Solange and her mother] go nearly every day to pose for their busts at his studio, or every day receive flowers and various other gifts... Solange liked all these presents—for he is supposed to be a second Michelangelo.”38 Chopin’s anxiety over Solange and her well-being was evident here, and this is understandable in the light of the fact that both Delacroix and he had deplorable accounts of Clésinger the man. But the remarks also betrayed a touch of jealousy on Chopin’s part. One contention is that “the secret desires of Chopin lurked around the beautiful coquettish girl, and he writes as if he had been in love with her.”39 Whether Chopin had secret desires for Solange is an open question.40 What is certain is that she was his favorite in the Sand household, and it was probably because of this that he was reticent to reproach her (at least in writing) for any of her many acts of caprice, slander, or jealousy.
To his romantic mind, she remained “that carefully sheltered young plant, preserved by her mother’s hand from so many blasts, only to be crushed with an imprudence and frivolousness that might be forgiven in a woman of twenty but not in one of forty.”

After his break with Sand, Chopin maintained his contact with Solange until the end. His sentiments were now purely selfless and devotional. He tried to bring a rapprochement between mother and daughter:

You have taken the first step—you have shown feeling, and a certain move must have been made towards bringing you and your mother together.

I have great hopes that your writing to Nohant will bring peace to you all. With God’s help everything will be settled.

It will take time, but soon instead of nine lines [from Nohant] you will receive ninety, and the grandmother will share the happiness of the young mother [Solange was then expecting].

(A certain reconciliation was realized in March 1848, probably precipitated by the death of Solange’s newly born child.) Chopin visited Clésinger whenever he could while Solange was at Guillery (her father Dudevant’s place) and sent her his news. He did all he could to help Clésinger from London during the period following the February revolution, when artistic life was brought to a standstill in Paris:

I had thought of inquiring whether your husband might not find work here [in London]; and I have just obtained information from people who know London and its art affairs... I know a few influential persons who have promised sincerely to give what help they can... With regard to Russia, the very influential people who have given me letters of introduction for your husband to take to St Petersburg tell me that it is very difficult for a Frenchman to get into the country just now without special protection.

And during his travels in England and Scotland in 1848, Solange was never far from his thoughts:

My heart aches when I think of Solange.

What is happening to Solange?... What is happening to Solange?

I am grieved to hear what you say about Solange... If ever [she] goes to Russia, whom will she be able to talk to about France?

I shall never cease to be sorry for Solange.
Chopin’s last published letter to Solange was written some three months before his death, on 4 July
1849. Most of it was devoted to her and her well-being:
I was glad to see that your trip to Bordeaux did not tire you—but that does not prove that you do not
need to take care of yourself. I imagine your little girl [Jeanne] with a large head, laughing, screaming,
noisy, dribbling, biting without teeth, and all the rest. You must make an entertaining pair. When are
you going to teach her to ride? I hope you have plenty of work to keep you busy, and that you wish the
day and night were twice as long—even if your Gascon servant-girl does have to wake you often... I
have no more to say, except that I continue to wish you—as you know I always have—every possible
happiness... Do please send me a few lines when your daughter gives you a moment’s peace, just to let
me know how you all are, now that you have this large addition to your family.
God bless you all.

During the final days of his life, Solange came up from Guillery to nurse and look after Chopin. She
described his final moments in the early hours of the morning of 17 October 1849 as follows: “We
[Solange and, according to her, Adolf Gutmann, Chopin’s favorite pupil] wanted to give him a drink, but
death prevented us. He passed away with his gaze fixed on me; he was hideous; I could see the
tarnishing eyes in the darkness. Oh, the soul had died too!”

Sadly, Chopin’s wishes to Solange were far from realized. Five years after her marriage, in 1852, she left
her husband. She had lost her first child a few days after its birth, early in March 1848. Her second
child, Jeanne, died at the age of six in 1855. She tried to follow in her mother’s footsteps as a writer but
published only one mediocre novel (Jacques Bruneau). She died in Paris on 17 March 1899. Three years
before her death, she wrote a tribute to Chopin in response to the question put by Samuel Rocheblave
(author of the book George Sand et sa Fille) as to what memories the name of Chopin evoked in her.
The following is the full text of the reply:
Chopin! The exquisite soul, the marvelous and unique genius, with his tenderness, resignation, and
sense of honor! With his perfect manners, his amiable spirit, his light-hearted and gentle irony, his
boundless generosity... all aspects of generosity: that of spirit, emotions, talent, and purse. I grew up
under the spell of his piano, and the magic of his divine music has remained in my heart together with
the all too rare, sweet and grateful memories of my childhood. Behold your little one, dear friend, the
youngest, a child who lives her fifteen months, adored and carefree, disrupting your household with the
heedlessness of a small creature who knows nothing of life. I imagine for a dismal moment that her
mother favors her eldest and abandons her to the care of rustic servants in a manor house in the
country. Amongst these is a good-hearted woman with maternal instincts who dedicates
herself to the budding girl, and replaces with tenderness, caresses and doglike devotion (that says it all!) all that her real parents have failed to give her. When she is about nine [sic], the little girl is taken at last to Perpignan where she witnesses the arrival of a new friend. Instinctively, she feels a strong dislike for the intruder. (Where do innocent children get the insight to sense the enemy of family honor?) In turn, this dislike generates a singular regard in the newcomer. It takes him years to overcome this animosity, to try to restore the balance between brother and sister in their mother’s heart. Through goodness, devout tenderness, support, praise and subtle encouragement towards a constantly abused [?] child, he manages first to be tolerated, next to be appreciated, and finally to be cherished. The countrywoman was Françoise Meillant. The friend of Perpignan, Majorca, Nohant, and Paris was Chopin, a friend who was always excellent, devoted, paternal and tender to the last. And you ask me whether this name evokes something in me? One can write about this! Oh, yes! I wish I could. But I do not know how. What I could say in crippled French would be so far removed from him and so unworthy of his memory. A true cult of him has remained through the respect, adoration, and enthusiasm of all those who have known and heard him. Chopin was like no other; no one resembles him, even remotely. And no one will ever be able to explain adequately enough what he was like. What a martyr’s death, what a tortured life for such a perfect and pure creature. He is surely in heaven …if…

Solange Sand
Montgivray, 19 January 1896.
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Epilogue

The quotation from Carl Jung’s “Psychologie und Dichtung” (Psychology and Poetry) at the beginning of this book is not intended to imply a priori a dichotomy in Chopin’s character, separating the man from the musician. On the contrary, the study allows us to speculate on the degree to which he was in harmony with himself at different stages of his life, given the disparities in his psychological makeup. These were a reflection of the two sides of his psyche: the one that related to the romantic idealist who was committed unequivocally to his art, and the other that belonged to the realist who had to cope with the world at large, which was all too different from his dream world. The struggle within was conceivably a constant attempt at reconciling those two opposing forces. In this struggle, did Chopin’s nature ever fall out of step with his genius? Was the human element bled for the sake of the creative one? The relationships traced out in the preceding chapters between him and the various selected contemporaries provide some insight into an answer in each case. The interpretation is, of course, subjective. The documentary evidence is by no means complete, since it represents only a sample of his experience as an individual. Moreover, an additional variable that certainly enters in any portrait of Chopin’s personality is his state of health. It is impossible to determine how far it may have influenced his judgment, particularly during the last few years of his life. The physical energy that sometimes welled up in him in a period of exhaustion and dejection (as, for example, during his concert tour in Scotland in 1848) was nothing short of miraculous. But it is also well known that at times his “nerves” got the better of him, as, for example, during some of his sessions of the piano lessons he gave to Zofia Rosen-
At best, an assessment of Chopin's personality based on documentary evidence can only be tentative. At the outset, Chopin was a healthy, uninhibited, and unself-conscious boy who was different from his peers because he was a musical genius. He became the center of attention in Warsaw society, and by all accounts, this did not go to his head. He was humble, unassuming, and in conformity with himself and his family circle. However, with the onset of adolescence, the relevant developmental problems he faced apparently prevented a smooth transition to adulthood. His patriarchal upbringing took its toll on him in terms of lack of self-confidence and decisiveness, even though musically he was progressing by leaps and bounds. It was through the relationships with his intimate peers that he discovered himself. It was natural that, given his diffidence, he attempted to assert himself at the expense of those who were more introspective than he was, such as Jan Białobłocki and Jan Matuszyński. Some time after he met the strong-willed and self-assured Tytus Woyciechowski, the realization of his own inadequacy of character soon dawned on him. It was to be a traumatic experience. Tytus quickly became his hero figure and more: an inversion of his (Chopin's) feminine “ideal.” The feelings that Chopin had for his so-called first love, Konstancja Gladkowska, could not have been but ambivalent regarding his love for Tytus. Arguably, were it not for his liberating musical gifts and the stabilizing influence of his mentor, Józef Elsner, Chopin may have broken down under the burden of his emotional conflicts. He soon became disenchanted with Konstancja but retained her, perhaps unwittingly, as a symbol of his own romantic aspirations and dreams, and possibly subconsciously as an antidote to Tytus.

The break with Tytus in Vienna late in November 1830 was of supreme psychological importance. It provided Chopin, virtually halfway through his life, with the opportunity to set his emotional house in order, though at the cost of the severest shocks. The subsequent journey to Paris marked in fact his transition from adolescence to early manhood. But this was accompanied by some vestiges of his past inconsistencies, such as indecisiveness and reticence, that were to remain with him in varying degrees through the rest of his life. The fact that he took root in Paris in a relatively short period of time speaks highly of his overhauled psyche. Probably at no other time was he as much at unity with himself and as decisive about his future plans as at that period. And yet only eleven days later he laid bare to Tytus in effect the price he had to pay for this realism in terms of frayed nerves and “a ghastly mix-up of feelings.” Evidently he was more of a romantic than a realist.

Chopin’s quick success in Paris as a fashionable composer and virtuoso and as a piano teacher of the elite should have provided him with all the self-assurance to overcome his natural introspection. Although this was not to be the case (he could no longer alter his basic psychological makeup),
his increased financial security gave him more confidence in handling the asperities of his character. Moreover, he became more discerning in his choice of friends, and eventually preferred to distance himself from a number of those to whom he had initially opened up. In particular, his ambivalent association with Liszt, although professionally rewarding in the beginning, later proved to be disappointing on both the artistic and personal levels. However, he was wise enough not to break off the association. Even his warm acquaintance with Pauline Viardot became tinged in the end with a regretful denouement when he came to know that she sometimes did not publicly acknowledge him as the composer of the mazurkas she had adapted for her own purposes. Perfectionist as he was, he could not tolerate anything that fell short of his exacting demands or his personal ideals. Thus, during his stay in Majorca, he could not forgive Matuszyński’s lack of foresight “for not advising [him] what to do in the event of acute bronchitis.”4 He did not hesitate to question Fontana’s commitment to his instructions: “Still no word from you... Are you lazy?”5

Chopin seems to have had little trust in his publishers and also perhaps in others with pecuniary interests. For example, in an argument over the anticipated publication of his Second Ballade op. 38 and the Two Polonaises of op. 40, he referred to Camille Pleyel, one of his publishers and the dedicatee of his preludes, sarcastically as “this Pleyel who idolizes me so!”6 And yet on the same day he wrote to him, “I learn from Fontana that you are still unwell, and that grieves me more than your silence.”7 Auguste Léo, Chopin’s banker, is referred to scornfully as a “scoundrel!”8 even though Léo was a devoted friend and his family was always kind to him.9 Some seven years later, Chopin would write to Léo, “I always think especially of you when my mind is on beautiful music.”10 It is easy to ascribe the word hypocrisy to such conduct in the absence of a psychological reason behind it. Conjecturally, this behavior was an outcome of the conflict between Chopin’s personal ideals and the world at large (in this particular case the down-to-earth world of commercial practices), even though he proved to be a shrewd client with his publishers. On the other hand, these ideals were sometimes put aside and replaced by rash criticisms in cases where his sensibilities were adversely affected. For example, after the end of his affair with Maria Wodzińska, he portrayed her family as being “thoughtless, unscrupulous and heartless.”11 And he did not refrain from calling Marie de Rozières “an intolerable old sow”12 because of some indiscretions on her part.

Chopin had an innate sense of justice that was reflected in both his professional and private life. For example, he did not allow himself to be swayed by Elsner’s adverse opinion of Kalkbrenner when the latter proposed that Chopin become his pupil for three years. Chopin felt that Kalkbrenner was unjustly accused and was confident of his integrity, based on his sober assessment of the man. Kalkbrenner in fact became the dedicatee.
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of Chopin’s E Minor Concerto and a lifelong friend. Another example is related to Solange Sand and the breakdown of Chopin’s affair with her mother. In the end, when George Sand threatened that all would be over between her and Chopin should he allow her daughter and Clésinger into his house, Chopin is reported to have said to Franchomme: “They have only me, and should I close my door upon them? No, I shall not do it!” Moreover, despite this controversial decision, Chopin later tried to bring about a reconciliation between mother and daughter (see Chapter 10, notes 42–44). Despite Chopin’s mounting financial security since his arrival in Paris, it did not seem to have made him munificent toward a friend who was truly devoted to him and idolized him but whose lot was less fortunate than his own. The person in question was Julian Fontana. It was perhaps particularly in his relationship with him that Chopin revealed his frailties, where the man did not measure up to the artist. Among all the published correspondence to his closest compatriots, Chopin’s letters to Fontana stand out as those containing the least human warmth and demanding almost servile attention. When he wrote to his friend, “You are efficient and decent: that’s why I pile jobs on you,” Chopin was in fact hitting the nail on the head. However mediocre he was, Fontana was an aspirant pianist and composer and was struggling to make a living, while Chopin already had all the trappings of success. There is no evidence that Chopin ever helped Fontana financially despite the many services rendered to him by the latter. Moreover, there is no single explicit written reference by Chopin relating to his friend’s artistic efforts, and one cannot but conclude that Chopin harbored a secret contempt for Fontana the musician. (It can be argued that Chopin could not have behaved otherwise in view of his lofty artistic ideals.) Every one of the published letters to Fontana except the very last is charged with a variety of instructions and errands. It was arguably following the unprecedented series of some twenty letters, stretching from the summer to the autumn of 1841, that the iron entered Fontana’s soul. He must have then decided that to give himself and his profession half a chance, he had to escape the grip of his composer friend. In the end, when he was beyond good and evil, Chopin probably realized the great wrong that he had done his one-time schoolmate, and he slipped in for once a tender thought: “You are still my good old Julian,” but it was too late.

The ways that Chopin related to the three loves of his life (Konstancja Gładkowska, Maria Wodzińska, and George Sand) reflect three different facets and phases in his emotional life. (His alleged amorous relations with Delfina Potocka was not considered in this study for lack of documentary evidence.) Konstancja was the one-time embodiment of his adolescent dreams that ended in disillusion. Maria represented his youthful yearning for a stable married life, which culminated in disappointment and wreaked havoc with his self-esteem. It is not surprising that with this background,
Chopin approached his liaison with George with extreme caution and initial reluctance. He would not make a move without first consulting his alter ego, Grzymała. The relationship at its outset seemed unlikely to blossom, given the disparity between the natures of Chopin and Sand on virtually all counts. It was Sand who made the first advances and was the motive force behind the liaison, for she looked upon Chopin initially as her potential ideal, and approached the affair with single-minded exuberance. It was through her commitment to the relationship that she provided Chopin with the moral (and physical) comfort, the understanding and the near-maternal devotion that helped him realize most of his best works. His prime personal dedication revolved around and remained exclusive to his music. One cannot but concede, on the strength of the letters to her that survive (and there is no additional evidence to disprove the fact), that after his initial infatuation, his relationship with Sand became rather passive, except where her attitude touched his person. In all his published letters to her, there is not a single intimation of some deep sentiment beyond curt politeness, respect, or sober affection. It is no wonder that she was sometimes exasperated by his reserve and introversion. It is true that on occasion, he had to suffer her indiscretions, rudeness, and impulsiveness, but he could also count on her humanity. Despite the breakup of their affair, she retained her concern to the end over his health and well-being. In this regard, Pauline Viardot’s remark about her, based on some forty years of friendship, that “people do not say enough about her kindness,” is surely worthy of note. There is no evidence that Sand anticipated the termination of the liaison. In its aftermath, she made a sincere effort toward a reconciliation, which speaks a lot for her generous spirit, but unfortunately it received (understandably, under the circumstances) no response from either Chopin or his eldest sister, Ludwika (see Chapter 9, note 51).

It is in his relationships with his closest and most loyal friends, specifically with Grzymała and Franchomme (and also perhaps with Delacroix, but there is insufficient documentation to prove the point), that the essentially warm and affectionate Chopin emerged, where we find a fusion between the man and the artist. Despite his professional achievements and the high social standing he realized within a few years following his arrival in Paris, Chopin still needed the counsel and trusting hand of a true and mature friend. It was his fortune that he found this in the person of Grzymała, who became his perennially faithful confidant. The stabilizing influence that this friendship had on Chopin cannot be overestimated. The services Grzymała rendered to him—services that ran for a while in parallel with those provided by Fontana—were performed out of sheer devotion and by a person of means; therefore, they imposed no strains on the relationship. On the contrary, and unlike the case with Fontana, they reinforced it. The friendship with Franchomme, although not as intimate as that with Grzymała, engaged both the man and the artist in Chopin and
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was perhaps more total and satisfying. To no one else did he ever dedicate any of his works in the tone of the words “A mon ami chéri et bien chéri” (To my beloved and truly beloved friend). It speaks a lot of both dedicator and dedicatee. It is also significant that Chopin’s last (published) letter was written to Franchomme, exactly one month before Chopin died, expressing a heartfelt wish to be with him for a few days.

No sketch of Chopin’s personality is complete without consideration of his attitude to and his relationship with Solange Sand. According to her, she viewed him first (when she was ten) as an “intruder.” It took her a few years before she discovered and cherished his camaraderie. Chopin may have had a subliminal infatuation for her, but there has never been any proof of a physical involvement. Whatever the feelings, they were ultimately transfigured into a tender attachment that, on the evidence of the letters, was to remain a source of solace for him until the end.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS


PIW Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy [(Polish) National Publishing Institute].

PWMPolskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne [Polish Musical Editions].


TiFC Towarzystwo imienia Fryderyka Chopina [Fryderyk Chopin Society (Warsaw)].

INTRODUCTION

5. E. Ganche, Dans le souvenir de Frédéric Chopin (Paris: Mercure de France, 1925, 6th ed.).
14. CFC.
16. CFC.
17. CGS.

CHAPTER 1
1. Quoted in Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p. 276, note 7.
2. Quoted in Jeżewska, p. 10.
3. Quoted in Załuski and Załuski, p. 105.
5. Greeting card to Nicolas Chopin, 6/XII/1816, CFC, I, No. 1, p. 3.
7. The ease Fryderyk found in playing the piano was later recalled by Nicolas in a letter to his son dated 27 November 1831 (SCFC, No. 60, p. 94): “The mechanics of piano playing occupied little of your time...your mind was busier than your fingers. If others have spent whole days working at the keyboard you rarely spent an hour playing other men’s music.”
Ozanne has shown the important influence that Marya Szymanowska may have exerted on Chopin. The quasi-totality of her work was published in 1820 by Breitkopf & Härtel and was accessible to young Fryderyk. The pieces carried the titles that Chopin used later in his own compositions (e.g., études, polonaises, ecossaises, valses, mazurkas, nocturnes). We learn from a letter dated 8 January 1827 to his boyhood friend Jan Białobłocki that Chopin probably heard the composer-pianist in her concert given on 15 January 1827 at the National Theater in Warsaw: “Mme Szymanowska is giving a concert this week on Friday… Of course I shall be there and I will let you know how she is received and how she plays” (SCFC, No. 11, p. 11).

13. Quoted in Jeżewska, p. 12. According to Zdzisław Jachimecki, the first edition of the Polonaise in G Minor was dedicated to Jan Białobłocki (Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p. 275, note 2).

14. Quoted in Załuski and Załuski, Chopin’s Poland, p.43.

15. Quoted in Grudziński and Grudziński, p. 23.

16. Chopin’s reserve and detachment in later life was the subject of comment even by his closest friends. Ferdinand Hiller, second half of May 1834 (quoted in Rambeau, p. 77, note 46): “Chopin… remained a perfect stranger to our traveling companions. Unable to depart from his extreme natural reserve, he took care to be close to me at all times, observing everything, and divulging only to me in a low voice the results of his observations.”

George Sand to Marie de Rozières, 11/VII/1841, CGS, V, No. 2267, p. 363: “One can never know anything in such a hopelessly shut-in being.”

George Sand to Woyciech Grzymała, 12/V/1847, SCFC, No. 269, p. 284: “He seals himself off from his best friends.”

Anselme Petétin to George Sand, 25/XI/1849, CGS, IX, No. 4393, pp. 396–397: “It seemed to me very difficult after all to write to you and to appear to have forgotten a man whom I felt I loved, at least to the extent that his shut-in character and defiant heart allowed one to love him.”

George Sand, HV, II, p. 1303: “In loving his dream, he did not really love anyone, if true love means accepting a being particularly of one’s kind and more than one accepts oneself. It was his right since it was his nature.”


19. This is attested by Józefa Kościelska who noted in her Memoirs that Fryderyk “was the very soul of fun; he rushed about, joked, mimicked all those he knew, drew their caricatures” (Załuski and Załuski, Chopin’s Poland, p. 55). Chopin retained his powers of mimicry in his later years. In this connection, Niecks (II, p. 149) quotes the testimonial of George Sand:

It was...after having plunged his audience into a profound recueillement or into a painful sadness... [that] he would suddenly...turn stealthily to a glass, arrange his hair and his cravat, and show himself suddenly transformed into a phlegmatic Englishman, into an impertinent old man, into a sentimental and ridiculous Englishwoman. The types were always sad, however comical they might be, but perfectly conceived and so delicately rendered that one could not grow weary of admiring them.

In his biography of Chopin (p. 131), Liszt wrote:

His caustic spirit quickly appreciated the ridiculous, and he caught it far below the surface where it usually strikes the eye. In pantomime he displayed a rich vein of drollery, and he often amused himself by reproducing the musical formulae and peculiar tricks of virtuosos in burlesque and most comical improvisations, imitating their gestures and movements, and counterfeiting their faces, with a cleverness which at once depicted their entire personality. At such times his own features were scarcely recognizable, as he could impose on them the strangest metamorphoses. But he never lost his own native grace while he was mimicking the ugly and the grotesque, and his grimaces were never such as to disfigure him.

20. Ibid., p. 52.
21. Quoted in Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p.65.
22. Letter to his parents, 10/VIII/1824, CFC, I, No. 6, pp. 7, 8.
25. Quoted in Jęzewska, pp. 15–16.
27. Quoted in Grudziński and Grudziński, p. 18.
29. Samson (Chopin, p. 19) clears up the confusion concerning the reason that Chopin spent only one year in the sixth form, while others, like his friend Tytus Woyciechowski, had to spend two years. Only students wishing to enter the university were required to take an additional year in the sixth form. Since Chopin planned to go to the High School of Music and not to the university, he was exempted from this requirement. Samson also explains how, as a student at the High School of Music, Chopin was allowed to take courses at the university. This was possible because the high school was formally associated with the School of Fine Arts at the university (where Elsner was professor of counterpoint and composition), and third-year students of theory and practical composition could take their courses at the university and were permitted to follow lectures there in other fields of study.

31. Quoted in Załuski and Załuski, Chopin’s Poland, p.77.
32. Kazimierz Wojcicki (Zamoyski, Chopin: A Biography, p. 34) describes one of these evenings that took place probably on St. Catherine’s Day on 25 November 1825 in the house of a certain Colonel Gutkowski. Fryderyk played popular music at the piano and danced mazurkas and obereks so energetically that he slipped and twisted an ankle in the process.

33. Załuski and Załuski, Chopin’s Poland, p. 83.
34. Kuzemko.

CHAPTER 2
1. CFC, I, p. XIII.
2. Chopin’s twenty letters to Tytus Woyciechowski were originally published in 1910 by the Polish periodical Lamus. They were obtained by Henryk Opieński from Woyciechowski’s granddaughter’s husband, Tadeusz Wydżga (Harasowski, p. 169). There are no extant letters from Tytus to Chopin.
5. Ibid., September 1823, CFC, I, No. 5, p. 5, note 4.
6. Ibid., p. 5. Gerber informs us that Jan Białołocki enrolled in the Faculty of Law and Public Administration of the University of Warsaw on 10 September 1823.
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10. SCFC, p. 3.
12. Ibid., 30/X/1825, CFC, I, No. 20, p. 39.
13. Ibid., November 1825, SCFC, No. 5, p. 3.
17. Ibid., June 1826, SCFC, No. 7, p. 6.
18. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 14/III/1827, SCFC, No. 12, p. 11.
26. Ibid., 25/XI/1830, SCFC, No. 48, pp. 73–74.
27. Ibid., p. 74.
28. Ibid., p. 76.
29. Ibid., p. 75.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 1/I/1831, SCFC, No. 49, pp. 78–79.
33. From Chopin's album, after 8/IX/1831, SCFC, No. 58, p. 90.
34. Nicolas Chopin to Fryderyk, 7/IX/1834, SCFC, No. 85, p. 123.
35. Jan Matuszyński to his brother-in-law, 1834, SCFC, No. 84, p. 123.
38. Mme Teresa Wodzińska to Chopin, 14/IX/1836, SCFC, No. 103, p. 138.
40. Letter to Julian Fontana, 15/XI/1838, SCFC, No. 126, p. 163.
41. Ibid., 3/XII/1838, SCFC, No. 128, p. 164.
42. Ibid., 28/XII/1838, SCFC, No. 130, p. 167.
44. Ibid., p. 171.
45. Ibid., 8/VIII/1839, SCFC, No. 145, p. 181.
46. Ibid., 25/IX/1839, SCFC, No. 147, pp. 184–185.
On 21 December 1836, Jan Matuszyński married Thérèse Boquet, widow of Louis-Georges Lebrasseur, a cavalry colonel. Her personality is well revealed in her letter to Chopin dated sometime in May 1842, about a month after her husband’s death. The letter is referred to by George Sand in a message dated 1 June 1842 to Marie de Rozières, her bosom friend and her daughter’s piano tutor. George Sand to Marie de Rozières, I/VI/1842, CGS, V, No. 2465, p. 691:

I'm writing in haste to tell you that Chopin has received a letter from Mme Matuszyńska that has neither head nor tail, a letter that is stupid, declamatory, malicious and disagreeable to all those she mentions and doesn’t mention. All this is quite immaterial and deserves only a scornful smile and silence. But there’s a postscript in which she complains of your neglect and impoliteness, and in which she says that NEVERTHELESS she has some letters for you or for those who concern you, I’m not sure which now. I read the letter over quickly, and Chip [Chopin] who is always afraid of gossip but didn't mind my talking to you about the contents of the letter, wouldn't allow me to re-read it. Should you think that she is in possession of some important letters, as is evidently the case, she can't but make some spiteful use of them. See what you can do to recuperate them. It’s already a dirty trick on her part to make you wait and ask her for them, rather than forwarding them to you right away.

Georges Lubin conjectures that the letters might be relevant to the liaison between Marie de Rozières and Antoni Wodziński (Maria Wodzińska’s brother), who was her erstwhile lover (CGS, V, p. 691, note 3).


Zieliński (p. 597) places the date as 2 April 1840.

George Sand to Dr. Paul Gaubert, April (?) 1840, CGS, V, No. 2033, pp. 16–17.


There is no evidence that Chopin had taken in Jan Matuszyński, as Zamoyski (Chopin: A Biography, p. 204) asserts, “so they could keep each other company during their illness.” George Sand would have almost certainly mentioned it in her correspondence. It must be inferred that Jan died in his apartment at 20, rue de Verneuil.


Janta[-Połczyński], p. 232. According to Niecks (II, p. 24, note 3), who quotes a London acquaintance of Fontana of the mid-1850s, Fontana’s wife was a lady of means, which allowed him freedom from his profession.

Gerber, p. 51. The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians contains two errors in its article on Chopin’s playing in Warsaw in the late 1820s (recorded in the memoirs of Kazimierz Wójcicki) is given by the sister of the young poet Dominik Magnuszewski (in whose house Chopin often played), according to which Fontana “played fluently and beautifully” (quoted by Zamoyski, Chopin: A Biography, p. 65). A comment on his playing during his later Parisian years is due to Teofil Lenartowicz, Adam Mickiewicz’s brother-in-law: “Fontana played some pieces by Chopin which he had published as posthumous works. Adam was listening to him from the doorway of the salon. But he visibly found the performance displeasing; every note hit with force irritated him” (quoted by Eigeldinger, p. 154).

An account of Fontana’s playing in Warsaw in the late 1820s (recorded in the memoirs of Kazimierz Wójcicki) is given by the sister of the young poet Dominik Magnuszewski (in whose house Chopin often played), according to which Fontana “played fluently and beautifully” (quoted by Zamoyski, Chopin: A Biography, p. 65). A comment on his playing during his later Parisian years is due to Teofil Lenartowicz, Adam Mickiewicz’s brother-in-law: “Fontana played some pieces by Chopin which he had published as posthumous works. Adam was listening to him from the doorway of the salon. But he visibly found the performance displeasing; every note hit with force irritated him” (quoted by Eigeldinger, p. 154).

Quoted in Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p.143.

Ludwika Chopin to Fryderyk, 27/XI/1831, CFC, No. 95, p. 31.

Ekier, p. 36.

Chopin first met Delfina Potocka (1807–1877) (née Komar) in Dresden in mid-November 1830, on his way to Vienna with Tytus Woyciechowski (CFC, I, No. 68, p. 220). She was then estranged from her husband, Count Mieczysław Potocki, whom she had married five years earlier. According to Ferdynand Hoesick (quoted in Harasowski, p. 334), Chopin became the piano tutor of Delfina’s two younger sisters, Ludmila and Natalia, sometime in 1832. They provided him with the opportunity to renew his acquaintance with Delfina. Apparently it took little time for Chopin to become enamored of her, as so many others were before him, including the duc d’Orléans. (Descriptions of her radiant beauty and exquisite singing were legion in Paris at the time.) The close relationship that ensued—Hoesick argues that Chopin became her lover, but this point has not yet been definitely settled—is supposed to have lasted until the summer of 1836, when Delfina left Paris to rejoin her husband in Poland (and when Chopin was courting Maria Wodzińska in Dresden). When a reconciliation failed, she joined her mother and sisters in Italy shortly afterward. In 1838 she became embroiled in a four-year-long love affair with the young Polish romantic poet Zygmunt Krasiński. This ended in disappointment, with Zygmunt having to yield to his father’s wish that he marry another woman. Toward the end of 1842, Delfina returned to Paris and, as before, opened a salon to the Polish and French elite.

The incident that is preserved for posterity is her visit to Chopin two days before he died. The aria she sang then at his request (probably Händel’s Dignare Domine from his Dettingen Te Deum, Eigeldinger, p. 143, note 161) was the last music he heard. Chopin dedicated two of his works to Delfina: the Piano Concerto in F Minor op. 21, and his Waltz in D-flat Major op. 64, no. 1. He also wrote in Delfina’s album in 1836 his Prelude in A Major op. 28, no. 7, and in 1847 the last of his songs of op. 74, Melodia, with a text by Zygmunt Krasiński. The controversy regarding the authenticity of the so-called Chopin-Potocka letters still stands as it was summed up by Thomas Higgins in December 1980 (see the relevant reference quoted above): at least ten fragments of letters out of the total of 118 that Paulina Czernicka (the originator of the controversy) produced may be authentic. However, because none of the fragments are parts of autographs, the evidence remains inconclusive.
Fontana was back in Paris by the summer of 1837 at the latest, and initially lived with Chopin at 38, rue de la Chaussée d’Antin. This is attested in a letter (given here for the first time in English) by him to his London friend Stanislaw Kozzman dated 3 July 1837 (Ruch Muzyczny, L/24, pp. 34–35) in connection with Chopin’s diversionary visit to London with Camille Pleyel in July 1837:

Guess who is going to London on Saturday the 8th of this month? Before I tell you I must urge you to keep it a secret and not to divulge it to anyone. It is Chopin. He will stay in London for a week or ten days at the most [actually he stayed for two and a half weeks]. He will be sightseeing and will want to see no one. He will be traveling in absolute secrecy and I ask you again to keep this news to yourself. You should have the will to keep a secret for two whole weeks if this letter reaches you early enough. I am writing to you about it only because I talked to him about you and assured him that he would find in you an excellent guide, an advisor, and a pleasant companion. I am sure you will find him a fine person, a man of lofty ideals, equal to any of our own celebrities or of any other European ones. I can assure you that you will not get bored with him. Only keep quiet about the whole matter since otherwise he would be overwhelmed by artists and above all by “the female Paganini” [?]. Even though business is not too bad […] because of some terrible deadlines and a number of debts that are worrying me. So forgive me for not having gone as yet to the Strasbourg Hotel. I am trying to obtain geld [?], and now if you will excuse me I will go there and[…].commission. I will write to you again through Chopin. And now adieu—Julian. [Postscript in the left margin.] I am now staying with Chopin in his apartment. So address [your letters] to 38 Chaussée d’Antin.

64. Ibid., 3/XII/1838, SCFC, No. 128, p. 164. Thomas Albrecht, wine merchant and secretary to the Saxon embassy in Paris, was a close friend of Chopin. The composer dedicated his first scherzo, op. 20, to him and was godfather to his daughter, Thérèse, to whom Chopin was greatly attached. According to Zieliński (p. 789), he was among those few who were present when Chopin died.
66. Ibid., 28/XII/1838, SCFC, No. 130, p. 166. The disrespectful allusion to the Paris-based Hamburg banker and music enthusiast Auguste Léo in this letter may prompt us to believe that he was a less-than-casual acquaintance of Chopin. On the contrary, Léo (whom Chopin first met through his pianist and composer friend Ferdinand Hiller at the beginning of Chopin’s stay in Paris) was a close friend of Chopin, in whose house the composer was a frequent visitor (Niecks, II, P. 159). The dedicatee of Chopin’s best-known polonaise, op. 53, Léo was Chopin’s financial adviser, sometimes lent him money, and on several occasions took charge of his manuscripts with the publishers. Léo was a close friend of Grzymała, and the latter’s high esteem of him is reflected in two heartfelt letters written by Grzymała to Léo following Chopin’s death (CFC, III, Nos. 786 and 793).
70. Letter to Camille Pleyel, 12/III/1839, quoted in Hedley, Chopin, pp. 79–80. In another (undated) letter to Camille Pleyel (CFC, III, No. 477, p. 127), Chopin ended, “I love you always more, if this is possible.”
73. Ibid., 25/X/1839, SCFC, No. 147, p. 184.
74. Ibid., 1/X/1839, SCFC, No. 148, p. 185.
75. Ibid., 3/X/1839, SCFC, No. 149, p. 186.
76. Ibid., 7/X/1839, SCFC, No. 150, p. 187.
77. Ibid., 8/X/1839, SCFC, No. 151, pp. 187–188.
78. Ibid., undated, CFC, III, No. 362, pp. 22–23.
80. Ibid., 5 March 1840, p. 151.
82. Ibid., 24/VIII/1841, SCFC, No. 171, p. 201.
83. Ibid., 27/X/1841, SCFC, No. 180, p. 211.
84. Ibid., 1/XI/1841, SCFC, No. 181, pp. 212–213.
86. A program found among Fontana's papers mentions a concert given on 17 March 1843 in which he took part (Janta[-Połczyński], p. 221). This is the only proof that Fontana remained in Paris at least until the spring of 1843. (Tomaszewski and Weber, p. 194, assert that Chopin attended the Fontana concert and apparently took part in it, but give no relevant substantiation.) In this connection, both Hedley and Zieliński are in error: Hedley (SCFC, p. 230, note 1) affirms that Fontana left Paris for America in November 1841, and Zieliński (p. 729) states that Fontana was in America since 1842. By contrast, both Samson (*Chopin*, p. 199) and Ekier (p. 40) declare that Fontana left for America in 1844 without giving any supporting documentary evidence.
89. Ibid., 18/VIII/1848, SCFC, No. 315, pp. 329–330.
91. Janta[-Połczyński], p. 233. The publication of Chopin's posthumous works was contrary to the composer's last wishes. Fontana justified it in his foreword to the first set of published compositions (opp. 66–73) by stressing the need to protect Chopin's output, "which could suffer considerably through greed and officiousness of friends" who at all costs wished to play unpublished Chopin (ibid., p. 234). Ekier's recent article on Fontana is a positive reappraisal of him as a man and musician and of his contribution as the editor of Chopin's posthumous works. This rehabilitation is long overdue, for Fontana has so far been largely looked on as Chopin's factotum, and his editorial work has not been fully appreciated. He now emerges as a colorful personality of high professional integrity and of multifarious talents: a polyglot (he translated *Don Quixote* into Polish and wrote a treatise on Polish orthography), an amateur scientist (he published a booklet on folk astronomy), a political historian (his writings include historical and political articles in Polish newspapers), a composer (his works include a genre opera, some twenty piano pieces, and a variety of songs), as well as a talent pianist. His editorial expertise is reflected not only in Chopin's posthumous works; Chopin's substantial revision of his Polonaise in C Minor op. 40, no. 2 was suggested by him. Ultimately he will be remembered mostly for his near-religious dedication to his great compatriot and for his selfless aspiration "to render to posterity, and even more so to the [Polish] nation that which [Chopin's] genius received from its bosom" (Ekier, p. 75).
92. Quoted in Janta[-Połczyński], p. 233.
94. Ibid., 9/IX/1828, CFC, I, No. 33, pp. 81–82.
96. Ibid., 27/XII/1828, SCFC, No. 17, p. 19.
97. Ibid., 12/IX/1829, CFC, I, No. 47, p. 123.

98. Ibid., 12/IX/1829, No. 48, pp. 134, 135. The text of the letter in the Sydow-Miketta edition of Chopin's correspondence No. 49, p. 109, ends with the phrase bo cie szaleńie kocham [because I'm madly in love with you]. (CFC contains the equivalent phrase car je t'aime à la folie.) Arthur Hedley translates the phrase and tones it down to: “You know how terribly fond of you I am” (SCFC, No. 26, p. 35). That is, he substituted lubie (I am fond of) for kocham (I love). Another instance where Hedley tampers with the translation is in the case of that part of Chopin’s letter to his family dated 19 April 1847 (SCFC, No. 263, p. 276) that refers to Delfina Potocka: Pani Delfina Potocka (ktora wielce, jak kocham) [Mme Delfina Potocka (whom you know I love)]. (CFC, III, No. 650, p. 265, has the equivalent phrase Mme. Delphine Potocka, que j’aime beaucoup comme vous savez.) Hedley translates it to: “Mme. Delfina Potocka (you know how fond of her I am).”


100. Ibid., p. 139.

101. Ibid., 14/XI/1829, CFC, I, No. 51, p. 141.

102. Ibid., pp. 142, 143.

103. Ibid., 27/III/1830, SCFC, No. 30, p. 38.

104. Ibid., p. 40.

105. Ibid., 10/IV/1830, SCFC, No. 31, p. 42.

106. Ibid., 17/IV/1830, SCFC, No. 32, pp. 43–44.


108. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 15/V/1830, SCFC, No. 33, p. 45.

109. Ibid., p. 46.

110. Ibid., p. 45.

111. Ibid., p. 46.

112. Ibid., 21/VIII/1830, CFC, I, No. 57, p. 175.

113. Ibid., p. 178.

114. Ibid., 31/VIII/1830, CFC, I, No. 58, p. 179.

115. Ibid., 4/IX/1830, CFC, I, No. 59, p. 185.

116. Ibid., p. 189. This passage, with its erotic overtones, was excised by Arthur Hedley in his Selected Correspondence (SCFC, No. 37, p. 53). (The only plausible reason for this, and for many other passages that Hedley omitted or toned down in his translated texts, is that he did not wish to tarnish the memory of Chopin.) A number of biographers have brushed aside the expressions of passionate endearment (e.g., “Give me your lips!” “I'm madly in love with you,” “I kiss you again and again”) that Chopin used in his letters to Tytus Woyciechowski as having no literal importance. For example, Hedley (Chopin, p. 17) points out that “the highly colored language used by the Slavonic peoples a hundred years ago did not correspond to realities.” Zamoyski (Chopin: A Biography, p. 63) writes that “the expressions …were, and to some extent still are, common currency in Poland.” Why, then, did Chopin not express himself as effusively to his other close friends at the time, such as Jan Białoblocki and Jan Matuszyński, as he did to Tytus? The only convincing answer is that Chopin’s feelings for Tytus were different and exclusive to him.

117. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 18/IX/1830, SCFC, No. 38, p. 54.

118. Ibid., pp. 54, 56.
120. Ibid., 5/X/1830, SCFC, No. 40, p. 59.
121. Ibid., 5/X/1830, CFC, I, No. 62, p. 206.
124. Ibid., pp. 97–98.
125. Ibid., p. 98.
126. Ibid., p. 99.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid., 25/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 65, p. 108.
129. For example, in a letter to Fontana written in August 1839 (CFC, II, No. 326, p. 350), Chopin stated that Tytus wrote to him from Poturzyn advising him to compose an oratorio, adding, “Good old Tytus still has his schoolboy’s ideas. I still love him as much as when we were at high school. He has a second son. He has given him my Christian name, poor baby.”


CHAPTER 3
4. Zieliński, p. 72.
5. Niecks, I, p. 36.
7. At this time of writing (spring 1998), there is no recorded work of Elsner, but a revival of his output is currently being done through the efforts of Stefan Sutkowski, the manager and artistic director of the Warsaw Chamber Opera.
9. Ibid., p. 38.
10. Chopin admitted this some nine months after he completed his studies at the High School of Music. In a letter to Tytus Woyciechowski dated 17 April 1830 (SCFC, No. 31, p. 42), in connection with a laudatory review about him in Warsaw’s Dziennika Urzedowego (Official journal), he commented: “I must tell you that the article …maintains that, just as the Germans are proud of Mozart, so the Poles will be proud of me—an obvious piece of nonsense. But earlier in the article it is stated that if I had fallen into the hands of some pedant or Rossiniste (stupid expression!) I should not, so to speak, be what I am. Although I am in fact nothing, the article is right, for if I had not learnt from Elsner, who understood how to teach and convince me, I would certainly know less than I do today.”

13. For example, in the July 1827 examination in theory and composition, Dobrzyński was assessed by Elsner as exceptionally talented whereas Chopin was described only as being particularly talented (Tomaszewski and Weber, p. 39).
15. Zamoyski, Chopin: A Biography, p. 44.
16. Ibid.
17. Quoted in Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p. 271.
18. Quoted in Hedley, Chopin, pp. 33–34.
20. Letter to his family, 12/VIII/1829, SCFC, No. 20, p. 25.
21. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 20/X/1829, SCFC, No. 27, p. 36.
23. Ibid., 22/IX/1830, SCFC, No. 39, p. 57.
25. Extract from the Szafarnia Courier, 19/VIII/1824, SCFC, No. 2, p. 2. The “Little Jew” (Żydek) was a mazurka in A minor that Chopin had written at the time. It was published in its final form in 1834 as the last in the set of four mazurkas of op. 17.
27. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 12/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 63, p. 98.
29. Ludwika Chopin to Fryderyk, 27/XI/1831, SCFC, No. 61, p. 95.
31. Ibid., 27/XI/1831, CFC, I, No. 96, p. 36.
33. Letter to Józef Elsner, 14/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 64, pp. 102–104.
34. Ludwika Chopin to Fryderyk, 24/II/1832, CFC, II, No. 102, p. 64.
36. This is also suggested by the following remarks (Niecks, I, p. 242) that François Fétis, the French musicologist, made in the Revue musicale of 3 March 1832 following Chopin’s triumphant debut late in February 1832: “The study which he [Chopin] is making of this part of his art [piano playing], under the direction of M. Kalkbrenner, cannot fail to give him an important quality on which the nerf of execution depends, and without which the accents of the instrument cannot be modified.”
37. There are five published letters by Friedrich Kalkbrenner to Chopin spanning the years 1835 to 1845: 28/XI/1835, CFC, II, No. 184, p. 158; 27/I/1841, MI, XL/4, pp. 32–33; 30/XI/1842, CFC, III, No. 472, p. 124; 31/I/1845, CFC, III, No. 568, p. 190; and 25/XII/1845, CFC, III, No. 601, p. 230. The second (recently discovered) letter is given here for the first time in English: I cannot but express to you the pleasure you gave me yesterday. I felt the need to be reconciled to the piano which I came to dislike last night, after having heard a so-called Concerto by Beethoven. Its interpretation was so distorted that the poor composer must have turned in his grave out of indignation and anger. Persevere, dear friend, in your suave and delightful manner of playing which will always be preferred by people of good taste to that of a robespierrist execution. You promised to come and share dinner with us before your departure to the country. Would you care to do so this Sunday?
38. Quoted in Niecks, II, p. 113.
40. Ibid., 14/IX/1834, SCFC, No. 86, p. 124.
41. Atwood, p. 262.
42. On 29 July 1840, Maurice Schlesinger wrote to Chopin (CFC, III, No. 369, p. 26): “You know the French and you are aware that they don’t buy this sort of music. I got six copies of Mendelssohn’s Paulus and they still stand on my shelves.”
44. Ibid., 8/XI/1842, CFC, III, No. 468, p. 121.
45. Józef Elsner to Chopin, 17(?) V/1843, MI, XL/22, pp. 31–32.

CHAPTER 4

1. Harasowski, p. 319. Wierzyński, p. 119, refers to Konstancja Gładkowska as being “the daughter of one of the superintendents of the royal castle.” Grudziński and Grudziński, p. 52, describe her as being “a daughter of the burgrave of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.”
5. Ibid.
6. Translation by DECCA quoted in the booklet accompanying the recording of Chopin’s “Songs” on Decca 414204–2, p. 11.
7. Ibid., p. 17.
8. Ibid., p. 19.
9. Ibid., p. 33.
10. The observant George Sand sensed this trait in Chopin’s character when she wrote to Woyciech Grzymała some nine years later: “Il craint le monde” (He is afraid of people’s gossip) (end of May 1838, CGS, IV, No. 1748, p. 439).
12. Ibid., p. 144.
15. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 10/IV/1830, SCFC, No. 31, p. 41.
17. Ibid., 31/VIII/1830, SCFC, No. 35, pp. 49, 50.
18. Ibid., 31/VIII/1830, SCFC, No. 36, p. 51.
19. Quoted in Harasowski, p. 221.
20. Ibid.
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21. Ibid. Mochnacki, well known for the harsh honesty of his judgment, was friendly toward Chopin and had a deep and sober insight into the composer’s genius. For example, following Chopin’s second public concert in Warsaw on 22 March 1830, which was concluded with an improvisation, while other critics were simply laudatory in their reviews, Mochnacki perceptively wrote: “The improvisation did not and could not produce the same effect, because it was a true not a pretended improvisation, and as such, what impression could it make beside compositions so felicitous in inspiration and so skilfully worked out?...Let Chopin leave this genre to wooden talents....The listener will perceive all of Chopin’s compositions as improvisations: he does not chase after other people’s ideas, but is always new, fresh—in a word, inspired” (quoted in Wierziński, p. 117). After Mochnacki’s scathing reviews of Gladkowska’s and Wołków’s concerts, it is doubtful that he retained Chopin’s friendship.

23. Ibid., 18/IX/1830, SCFC, No. 38, p. 54.
27. Ibid., 5/X/1830, SCFC, No. 41, p. 60.
29. Ibid.
31. Extract from Chopin’s notebook, 9/VI/1831, CFC, No. 82, p. 263.
32. From Chopin’s album, after 8/IX/1831, SCFC, No. 58, pp. 89, 90–91.
33. Letter to Tytus Woyciechowski, 12/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 63, p. 101. (Zieliński, p. 325, confuses Józef Grabowski, Konstancja Gladkowska’s husband, with Stanislas Grabowski, the minister for public instruction at the time of Chopin in Warsaw.)
34. Izabela Chopin to Fryderyk, 7/XII/1833, CFC, II, No. 135, p. 102.
35. Jeżewska, p. 28.
38. Ibid., pp. 30–31. To this one might add George Sand’s assessment of Chopin the lover: “He was the same in friendship [as in love], becoming enthusiastic at first sight, getting disgusted, and correcting himself incessantly, living on infatuations full of charms for those who were the object of them, and on secret discontents which poisoned his dearest affections” (quoted in Niecks, II, p. 161).

CHAPTER 5
1. Niecks, I, p. 231.
2. Quoted in Niecks.
4. This composition was described by Schumannas “a piece for a salon where behind the shoulders of counts and countesses now and then rises the head of a celebrated artist” (Niecks, II, p. 230).
5. Letter to Dominik Dziewanowski, second week of January 1833, SCFC, No. 74, p. 114.
6. Letter to Ferdinand Hiller (joint letter by Chopin, Liszt, and Auguste Franchomme), 20/VI/1833, SCFC, No. 77, pp. 117–118. The apartment at 5, rue de la Chaussée d’Antin was Chopin’s third in Paris. (He had moved from the first at 27, boulevard Poissonnière toward the end of 1832 to one at 4, cité Bergère.) It had belonged to Dr. Hermann Franck, a natural scientist, music lover, and socialite. Dr. Franck sublet his apartment to Chopin in mid-June 1833. When the former decided to give it up that autumn, Chopin took in a lodger, Dr. Aleksander Hoffmann, a Polish acquaintance from Warsaw.
7. Comtesse d'Agoult to Chopin, undated, CFC, II, No. 130, p. 95.
8. Letter to Auguste Franchomme, summer 1833, MI, XL/9, p. 33, 1996. (In CFC, II, No. 112, p. 73, the date is incorrectly given as summer 1832.) There is some intended sarcasm here, characteristic of Chopin, in the connotations of the names of Baudiot and Cap. According to Niecks (II, p. 289, notes 23 and 25), Charles Nicolas Baudiot (1773–1849) was a cellist and a one-time professor at the conservatoire. Paul-Antoine Cap was an amateur of the cello and other stringed instruments who lived on the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, Chopin's street. See note 14.
9. CFC, II, p. 73, note 95.
15. Ibid., undated, CFC, III, No. 394, p. 43.
16. Lubin tentatively places the date of 26 May as that of George Sand's letter to Auguste Franchomme (CGS, VI, No. 2927, and note 1, p. 556). The date of 12 May proposed by Hedley is out of the question since Chopin came to know of his father's death upon returning from the theater in the evening of 25 May (CGS, VI, p. 560, note 3).
29. Ibid.
35. Quoted in Eigeldinger, p. 163.

CHAPTER 6
2. Chopin’s mother was born in that province in Długie near Izbica-Kujawska. Chopin was later to remind Feliks Wodziński of this in a letter dated 18 July 1834 (SCFC, No. 83, p. 122) in which he wrote: “I must now close, thanking you once more most warmly for your mother’s gracious mention of me, her true and faithful servant in whose veins also a little Kujawski blood flows.”

3. Quoted in Kobylańska, Chopin in His Own Land, p.231.


5. Ibid.


7. Ibid., 18/I/1835, SCFC, No. 38, p. 55.

8. Ibid., 25/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 65, p. 108.


10. Ibid., p. 122.

11. Zieliński (p. 438) places the letter in June 1835.


15. Ibid., March 1837, SCFC, No. 109, p. 144.


25. In Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 105, the Polish expression “the twilight [or gray] hour” (o szarej godzinie) is explained as the time of twilight when reason is at its weakest and emotion at its strongest.


29. Postscript to the letter of Kazimierz Wodziński to Chopin, 15/IX/1836, SCFC, No. 103, pp. 138–139. (In SCFC, this postscript is wrongly placed at the end of Mme Teresa Wodzińska's letter to Chopin dated 14/IX/1836, No. 103, p. 139. Kazimierz Wodziński’s letter appears in CFC, II, No. 221, pp. 200–201.)


31. Ibid., p. 140. The connotation of “secretary” here is that of “confidant” rather than that of a person who handles correspondence.

32. In 1910, this album was published in facsimile by Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, with a foreword by Kornelia Parnas. (In SCFC, p. 144, Arthur Hedley incorrectly states that the album was published by Kornelia Parnas.) It was originally believed that the album contained autographs, but later it was
34. Mme Teresa Wodzińska to Chopin, 25/I/1837, SCFC, No. 107, pp. 141–142.
35. Ibid., pp. 142–143.
36. Quoted in Harasowski, p. 209. (In contrast, Tomaszewski and Weber, p. 142, render the translation as “I beg you to sigh for me too.” Using the literal meaning of westchnac [sigh, groan], the translation sounds less convincing than Harasowski’s, particularly that the inscription was written in a prayer book.) The nature of Chopin’s gift to Józefa Wodzińska naturally poses the question of his religious convictions. George Sand is emphatic on this point: “Chopin believed in no religion, even though he was fascinated by the different aspects of Catholicism and was irritated by the slightest argument against orthodoxy” (HV, II, p. 1303). By all accounts, Chopin was brought up in the customary Catholic way (“locked up...in the Catholic dogma,” wrote George Sand in HV, II, p. 445), attending each year, for example, the traditional Easter blessing (Rambeau, p. 92). He had in his possession a prayer book entitled La Journée du Chrétien Sanctifiée par la Prière et la Méditation (The day of the Christian sanctified by prayer and meditation). However, there is no evidence that his religious beliefs went beyond ritual observance. In a letter to Jan Matuszyński written on Christmas Day 1830, Chopin wrote that he had gone to St. Stephen’s cathedral (in Vienna) “not...for the service but merely to contemplate the huge building at such an hour” (SCFC, No. 48, p. 74). Sand believed that superstition (“poetic Slavic superstition. Being Polish, he lived in the nightmare of legends,” HV, II, p. 446) and religion sometimes overlapped with terrifying results on Chopin’s nervous equilibrium. When, during the last few days of his life, he was visited by Father Aleksander Jełowicki (whom he had known in his schooldays at the Warsaw Lyceum), who asked him to confess and receive the Last Sacrament, Chopin is reported by Jełowicki to have said: “I cannot receive it because I cannot conceive it as you do. I can still feel the solace of confession because one confides to a friend, but I cannot understand it as the Last Sacrament” (Aleksander Jełowicki to Mme Xavier Grochulska, 21/X/1849, CFC, III, No. 787, pp. 445–446). The following day, Chopin conceded to the priest’s request (probably out of deference to his sister Ludwika), arousing the indignation of Pauline Viardot, who wrote to George Sand shortly after Chopin’s death: “He died a martyr of the priests who forced him to kiss relics for six hours on end until his last breath” (Pauline Viardot to George Sand, October 1849, CFC, III, No. 788, p. 450). Some writers see religious fervor in a number of Chopin’s compositions. For example, Gliński believes it exists in the nocturnes of op. 15, no. 3; op. 37, no. 1; and op. 48, no. 1. In response to meanings that are commonly ascribed to Chopin’s music, it is sufficient here to comment on one of these works, the nocturne op. 15, no. 3, with its religioso middle section. The composition may have been inspired by a performance of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, and apparently Chopin had initially thought of putting a literary epigraph at the head of the piece. He finally decided not to do so, adding: “Let them guess for themselves” (Eigeldinger, p. 139, note 148). In connection with meanings in Chopin’s music, see Samson, The Music of Chopin, p.90.
40. Letter to Antoni Wodziński, end of May 1837, SCFC, No. 113, p. 146.
43. Letter to Mme Teresa Wodzińska, 14/VIII/1837, SCFC, No. 117, p. 149.
44. Mme Teresa Wodzińska to Chopin, spring 1838, SCFC, No. 119, p. 150.

CHAPTER 7
2. Ibid.
3. CGS, IV, p. 907. According to Marek and Gordon-Smith (p. 75), Grzymała’s release was due to the assistance he had from his two mistresses: Zofia Kurpińska (wife of the director of the Warsaw National Theater) and Princess Zajączek (wife of the pro-Russian governor general).
6. Only one brief note from Grzymała to Chopin figures among the collected correspondence edited by Sydow-Chainaye. There is, however, one extant published letter to Chopin quoted toward the end of this chapter, dated probably 28 July 1849. Another extant letter, to Princess Anna Czartoryska dating to the summer of 1843, has recently come to light (see note 64). That Grzymała did write extensively to Chopin is clear from the latter’s correspondence. It can only be supposed that some letters may still exist in private collections or that some or all may have been destroyed during the Polish uprising against the Russians in 1863 or during the Second World War. Grzymała’s personality in relation to his friend can therefore only be conjectured from Chopin’s and Sand’s correspondence to him.
11. Ibid., end of May 1838 (this approximate date, suggested by Lubin—CGS, IV, p. 429, note 1—is in preference to June 1838, suggested by Hedley), SCFC, No. 121, p. 160.
15. Ibid., 12/IV/1839, SCFC, No. 139, p. 175.
16. Ibid., 2/V/1839, SCFC, No. 143, p. 179.
19. Ibid., 29/IX/1839, CFC, II, No. 332, p. 357.
22. Ibid. Eugène Delacroix (1793–1863) first met Chopin during a reception given by Liszt on 21 May 1836 (CFC, II, No. 212, p. 190), following the latter’s first piano recital (Huré and Knepper, p. 198, note 13) on 18 May at the Salons Erard. Delacroix had made the acquaintance of George Sand in November 1834 during a series of sessions for a portrait that her publisher, François Buloz, had requested of her at the time (Hureau, p. 23). Delacroix soon became a close friend and a great admirer of her. When the Chopin-Sand liaison took root in July 1838, it was inevitable that it would consolidate the friendship that already existed between Chopin and Delacroix. The portraits Delacroix made of Chopin and Sand (originally a double portrait) during the summer of 1838 is perhaps the best-known legacy of that friendship. Delacroix went to Nohant three times during Chopin’s seven summers at Sand’s Berry estate: in 1842, 1843, and 1846. He discovered a kindred spirit in Chopin, “a man of rare distinction…the most true artist I have met” (quoted in Niecks, II, p. 130). Reciprocally, Chopin found his friend “the most admirable artist possible” (ibid., II, p. 120). The esteem was sincere on both sides. An examination of Delacroix’s Journal reveals how music (particularly that of Mozart) was central to his intellect and spiritual being. His appreciation of Chopin the composer (“It would be difficult to find anything more finished,” Journal, p. 109) and the pianist (“what an enchanting talent!” ibid., p. 71) is amply documented. There is, however, no direct evidence of Chopin’s appreciation (or otherwise) of Delacroix’s work. Delacroix remained true to Chopin’s memory to the end. In a letter to his friend Woyciech Grzymała dated 7 January 1861 (over eleven years after Chopin’s death), he wrote: “If you should see charming Princess Marcelline [Czartoryska]…give her my compliments… Another bond with the seraph whom we have lost, and who is now charming the heavenly spheres” (ibid., p. 409).

26. George Sand to Pierre Bocage, around 20/VII/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2687, p. 202. It is Lubin’s opinion, expressed in a footnote of this reference, that Sand had told Chopin that Bocage was her lover, “but this confession merely triggered off retrospective jealousy.”
30. Perhaps George Sand’s most explicit allegation regarding Chopin’s jealousy during her relationship with him was made in a letter to her literato friend Ferdinand François in mid-November 1843: “I can tell you quite frankly and simply that Chopin’s friendship has for me the nature of an exclusive and jealous passion. It is somewhat weird and sickly like him, the poor angel. If he had the strength to bear the suffering that it causes him, I would have fought it with mockery and laughed it off. But it pains him so much to see me placed in the ridiculous position of having at the age of forty...a sort of jealous lover at my side” (George Sand to Ferdinand François, 13/XI/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2742, p. 915). This trait in Chopin’s character dated from the very beginning of his liaison with Sand, his first suspect being Delacroix. Sand to Delacroix, autumn 1838: “Someone became pale in the face when he saw your letter in my hands. I had to show it to him; it was delightfully thoughtful and kind of you [to have conceded to this]. His reading of the letter was for him like food for the gods” (George Sand to Eugène Delacroix, September 1838, CGS, IV, No. 1785, p. 484). Some two months later, a certain Francisco Riotord, whom Sand called “a charming lad” (George Sand to Charlotte Marliani, 1/VI/1838, CGS, IV, No. 1808, p. 513) is referred to by Chopin as “an imbecile, by the way” (Chopin to Julian Fontana, 28/XII/1839, SCFC, No. 130, p. 166). While recuperating at Marseilles after the trip to Majorca, Chopin wrote to Grzymała: “[Prince Aleksander] Sapieha passed by here a few days ago. He visited me, perhaps to see George—but I received him in the other room” (Chopin to Woyciech Grzymała, 16/IV/1839, CFC, II, No. 308, p. 327). Toward the end of her liaison with Chopin, it was perhaps to her lawyer and writer friend Emmanuel Arago that Sand opened her heart regarding her private affairs. Shortly after Chopin left Nohant for the last time in the company of Arago, the latter received a letter from Sand in which she brought up the topic of her publisher Pierre-Jules Hetzel, to whom she was deeply attached, vis-à-vis Chopin: “He is a man I like very much. I don’t say this in front of Chopin otherwise he’d immediately see love in it” (George Sand to Emmanuel Arago, 9/XII/1846, CGS, VII, No. 3550, p. 561). Shortly after the final rupture with Chopin in July 1847, Sand wrote to Arago the longest letter of her life, and again the subject of Chopin’s jealousy was prominent in her thoughts: “What a relief for me... What a [better] future after a miserable past filled with deadly boredom, and often with profound indignation, because nothing was as offensive as his absurd jealousy” (George Sand to Emmanuel Arago, 18–26/VII/1847, VIII, No. 3699, pp. 47–48).

32. Ibid., undated, SCFC, No. 223, p. 238.
33. George Sand to Woyciech Grzymała, 17/II/1845, CGS, VI, No. 3090, and notes 1 and 2, p. 799.
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34. George Sand to Marie de Rozières, beginning of June 1845, CGS, VI, No. 3161, pp. 887–888. Marie de Rozières (1805–1865) is probably the only person among Chopin’s close circle of friends whose indiscreet interference in his private life aroused his unrestrained wrath. In his correspondence with Julian Fontana in 1841, he referred to her as “an intolerable old sow...regular old maid” (SCFC, 24/VIII/1841, No. 171, p. 202), and a “slut” (ibid., 12/IX/1841, No. 172, p. 204). However, once her source of irritation to him was removed, he changed his attitude. The daughter of Louis-Clément, count de Rozières, and Justine Baby-Dumoreau (CGS, V, p. 894), she became a pupil of Chopin probably sometime in the late 1830s. In 1840 he introduced her to George Sand, who took her on as a regular piano teacher for her daughter, Solange. She became one of Sand’s bosom friends and a virtual member of the Sand household. Sometime during the summer of 1841, she became the lover of Antoni Wodziński (Maria Wodzińska’s brother) and had hopes that the affair would lead to marriage. What caused the volte-face in Chopin’s behavior toward her is the fact that he was distressed by the sort of gossip she might spread about him through her indiscretion. Luckily for Chopin, the affair was short-lived (Antoni jilting Marie and leaving for Poland) and he reverted to his normal self again vis-à-vis Marie. “She’s a good sort,” he wrote to Grzymała in July 1848 (8–17/VII/1848, SCFC, No. 311, p. 324).

Marie de Rozières was one of the victims of George Sand’s rage when the former sided with the Clésingers (and thus with Chopin) in Sand’s debacle with her daughter. Chopin wrote at least four times to Marie during his 1848 visit to England and Scotland (SCFC, Nos. 307, 309, 319, 324), giving her news and asking her various favors. Arguably, he had forgiven her indiscretions. Although he did not count her among his best pupils, he seems to have accepted her assistance in supervising his less gifted students (Eigeldinger, p. 280, note 18). In spite of his past harsh stance toward her, she remained his loyal devotee to the end. (See Chapter 5, note 37, for her recently published letter to Franchomme, written a few months after Chopin’s death.)

36. Ibid., 6 or 7/XII/1845, CFC, III, No. 596, p. 221.
37. Hedley, Chopin, p.96.
38. George Sand to Marie de Rozières, 3(?)/VI/1846, CGS, VII, No. 3420, p. 367.
42. George Sand to Pauline Viardot, 1/XII/1847, CGS, VIII, No. 3767, p. 173.
43. Letter to Woyciech Grzymała, 21/IV/1848, SCFC, No. 302, p. 313.
44. Ibid., 13/V/1848, SCFC, No. 306, p. 316.
45. Ibid., 2/V/1848, SCFC, No. 308, p. 320.
46. Ibid., 21/X/1848, SCFC, No. 321, p. 347.
47. Ibid., 2/V/1848, SCFC, No. 308, p. 320.
48. Ibid., July 1848, SCFC, No. 312, p. 326.
49. Ibid., July 1848, CFC, III, No. 734, p. 382.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid., 1/X/1848, SCFC, No. 318, p. 344.
53. Ibid., 30/X/1848, SCFC, No. 322, p. 349.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 21/XI/1848, SCFC, No. 325, p. 353.
59. This is suggested by the fact that in a letter from London to Marie de Rozières dated 19 November 1848 (SCFC, No. 324, p. 352), Chopin wrote, “I have written to Grzymała, but as he may be away and not receive my letter for some time, please ask Mme Etienne to buy a good supply of wood and to light ample fires in my room.”
60. The apartment had been recommended by his Creole painter-musician friend Mme de Lasserve (René-Edouard André, “Comment on a Letter by Chopin to Auguste Franchomme, winter 1847,” MI, XL/9, p. 34, 1996).
62. Ibid., 22/VI/1849, SCFC, p. 359.
63. Ibid., 2/VII/1849, CFC, III, No. 768, p. 419.
64. Woyciech Grzymała to Chopin, 28(?)/VII/1849, Fryderyk Chopin Society, Warsaw, Ms. M/440. Another (undated) extant letter by Grzymała that has recently come to light is one written to Princess Anna Czartoryska in connection with her acquisition of Hôtel Lambert by auction in July 1843 (MI, XL/5, p. 35, 1996).


66. Ibid.


68. Zieliński, p. 789.


73. Ibid., p. 198. Grzymała proceeded with Chopin’s biography with enthusiasm despite Jane Stirling’s initial reservations regarding his efforts. After the appearance of Liszt’s biography of Chopin, there was distinct change of attitude on the part of Jane regarding Grzymała’s book. Jane to Chopin’s sister Ludwika, 5 March 1852: “You will be displeased with the publication which has appeared… I have suggested to our friend from the country [Grzymała] to read the letters [of Chopin] together in order to single out the falsities that should be noted…. He[Grzymała] believes that L[iszt] would very much like to please S[and], but she is very displeased” (quoted in Wróblewska-Straus and Eckhardt, p. 121). The subsequent progress of Grzymała’s work can be traced through Jane’s letters to Ludwika as summarized by Karłowicz, Souvenirs inédits de Frédéric Chopin, pp. 196–198:
18 June 1852: Grzymała has resumed his work on Chopin’s biography, but he will certainly not finish it before the coming winter.
17 October 1852: Jane awaits news from Grzymała about his book and, depending on the progress of the work, she will either proceed to Paris or remain in Scotland. After what Liszt has written, Grzymała must speak out.
2 December 1852: Jane will go to Paris solely to agree on several points regarding Grzymała’s biography.
19 September 1853: Despite Grzymała’s good intentions regarding his work, much remains to be desired.
May–June 1854: Grzymała suffers from eye trouble, as a result of which he can no longer proceed with his writing. [Grzymała’s manuscript was never published and is now presumed lost.]
CHAPTER 8

1. There were three other composers of comparable eminence whom Chopin knew: Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn, and Hector Berlioz. Chopin first met Schumann through Mendelssohn and on two brief occasions: at the beginning of October 1835 and in mid-September the following year, both times at Leipzig. Chopin’s warm acquaintance with Mendelssohn (who was introduced to him by Ferdinand Hiller) stretched over most of Mendelssohn’s entire sojourn in Paris, that is, from December 1831 to April 1832, before he went to England. It was distance that subsequently separated the two friends. Chopin still corresponded with Mendelssohn as late as October 1845. There was less mutual appreciation and comprehension between Berlioz (whom Chopin met through Liszt) and Chopin, although Chopin was attracted by Berlioz’s colorful personality and keen intelligence. They remained in touch with each other from the end of 1832 until about the end of 1836, but they belonged to two different music worlds, and neither had much sympathy for the other’s work.

10. Anna Liszt to Chopin, 20/X/1832, CFC, II, No. 116, pp. 78–79.
12. Ibid., 1833, CFC, II, No. 128, p. 91.
18. The review was not entirely unqualified: “It is not easy to avoid monotony when playing a pianoforte concerto ...and the artists admired his [Chopin’s] talent owing to which he revived this old form” (quoted in Wróblewska-Straus and Eckhardt, p. 104). Niecks (I, p. 281) asserts that the review’s praise does not tally with other accounts. The concerto apparently was coldly received by the public, Chopin’s playing being too delicate for their liking.
25. Ibid., April (?)/1844, CGS, VI, No. 2900, pp. 528–529.
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28. George Sand to Marie d’Agoult, end of September 1835, CGS, III, No. 983, pp. 43–44.
30. Anna Liszt to Chopin, 12/V/1836, SCFC, No. 98, p. 135.
32. Quoted in Niecks, I, p. 296.
34. Ibid., 20/VIII/1836, CGS, III, No. 1259, pp. 537–538.
35. Barry, p. 296.
38. Marix-Spive, p. 526. The date of 5 November 1836 as being that of Chopin’s first meeting with Sand is supported by Georges Lubin, editor of George Sand’s Correspondance (Kossak, p. 27).
40. George Sand to Heinrich Heine, 13/XII/1836(?), CGS, III, No. 1304, p. 596. Rue de la Chaussée d’Antin was still known under its old designated name of rue du Mont-Blanc.
41. Letter to Józef Brzowski, 13/XII/1836, SCFC, No. 106, p. 141. Born in Warsaw, Józef Brzowski (1803–1888) may have known Chopin at the High School of Music, where he studied music theory with Wilhelm Würfel and the cello with J. Wagner between 1821 and 1827(?). He arrived in Paris toward the end of 1836 and stayed there until the summer of 1837, during which time he became part of Chopin’s circle. Czartkowski and Jeżewska (pp. 206–231) give extracts from Brzowski’s diary describing various excursions and visits by him and Chopin.
43. Marie d’Agoult to George Sand, 31/I/1837, quoted in CGS, III, p. 655, note 1.
44. Niecks, I, p. 299.
46. Chopin, Liszt, and Auguste Franchomme to Ferdinand Hiller, 20/VI/1833, SCFC, No. 77, p. 117.
47. Quoted in Eigeldinger, p. 54. (See also ibid., note 107, p. 124.)
50. Quoted in Maurois, p. 272.
51. Ibid., pp. 273–274.
54. Ibid., p. 291, note 3.
55. George Sand to Franz Liszt and Marie d’Agoult, 2/I/1838, CGS, IV, No. 1665, p. 315.
57. Honoré de Balzac to George Sand, 181/I/1840, quoted in Maurois, pp. 292–293.
59. Honoré de Balzac to Eveline Hańska, February 1840, CGS, IV, p. 292.
60. Marie d’Agoult to Charlotte Marliani, 20(?)/XI/1838, quoted in Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 167.
62. George Sand to Charlotte Marliani, 16/IV/1839, CGS, IV, No. 1855, p. 635.
63. Marie d’Agoult to George Sand, 20/VIII/1839, quoted in Maurois, p. 324.
64. George Sand to Charlotte Marliani, 28/IX/1839, CGS, IV, No. 1928, pp. 759–760.
65. George Sand to Marie d’Agoult, 26/XI/1839, CGS, IV, No. 1958, pp. 804–805. There is another (longer) letter bearing the same date—CGS, IV, No. 1957, pp. 798–803—which Maurois quotes as having been Sand’s reply to Marie’s letter of 20/VIII/1839 (Maurois, pp. 327–329). Georges Lubin argues convincingly that this letter remained in draft form and was never sent.
67. Quoted in Maurois, p. 331.
72. In his Soixante Ans de Souvenirs, Legouvé wrote (Niecks, II, p. 90, note 1): “I hastened to announce this good news to Chopin, who quietly said to me: ‘I should have liked better if it had been you.’ What are you thinking of my dear friend! An article by Liszt, that is a fortunate thing for the public and for you. Trust in his admiration for your talent. I promise you that he will grant you a handsome kingdom.” ‘Yes,’ he replied with a smile, ‘within his empire.’”
73. Ibid., 89, 91. One cannot help but conjecture that Liszt’s “vindictive” attitude toward Chopin was not sincere but of cosmetic value simply to please Marie. After the final rupture with her at the end of April 1844, he could be his true self again with his former friends. He remained on good terms with Sand at least until the publication of her Lucrezia Floriani, when he was not reticent in taking Chopin’s side (see note 26).
76. Ernest Legouvé to Franz Liszt, February 1840, quoted in Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 170.
77. Letter to Julian Fontana, 1–2/I/1841, SCFC, No 172, p. 204.
78. Nicolas Chopin to Fryderyk, 30/XII/1841, SCFC, No. 185, p. 215.
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79. Ibid., 21/III/1842, SCFC, No. 188, p. 218. The article about Chopin’s concert in which reference was made to Liszt and Thalberg was the review of the concert by Maurice Bourges, who wrote in the issue of 27/II/1842 of La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris: “Liszt and Thalberg excite, as is well known, violent enthusiasm, but of a less energetic, less noisy nature, precisely because he causes the most intimate chords of the heart to vibrate” (quoted in Niecks, II, p. 93).

80. Nicolas Chopin to Fryderyk, 16/X/1842, SCFC, No. 193, p. 222.


82. G. Sand, HV, II, p. 444.

83. Quoted in Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 171.

84. Liszt confessed to his last mistress, the Princess Carolyn Sayn-Wittgenstein, at the beginning of 1876 that in 1849 he could not fully assess Chopin’s genius. “Now I totally admire [Chopin’s last works]. I assert and maintain that they are not only most remarkable but also very harmonious, nobly inspired, artistically proportioned, and measure up on all counts to his enchanting genius. Nobody can be compared to him—he stands singly and uniquely in the artistic heavens” (quoted by La Mara [Marie Lipsius] in Franz Liszts Briefe, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, I, 1893, pp. 122–123).

CHAPTER 9

1. Letter to Józef Elsner, 14/XII/1831, SCFC, No. 64, p. 104.
2. Quoted in Eigeldinger, p. 186.
3. Quoted in Niecks, I, p. 244.
4. Ibid., p. 296.

9. CGS, V, p. 5.
19. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 8/IX/1842, CGS, V, No. 2511, p. 771.
24. Ibid.
26. The authenticity of these and the other seven letters from the Filltsch brothers to their parents is contested by Eigeldinger, p. 142, note 157.
28. Ibid., 20(?)/I/1843, SCFC, No. 201, p. 227.
29. George Sand to Pauline Viardot, 8/VI/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2667, p. 163.
30. Initially, Chopin had decided to call the piece Variantes. It was only later, after adding an introduction and amending the conclusion, that the composition was finally entitled Berceuse (Samson [ed.], Chopin Studies, p. 39).
32. George Sand to Pauline Viardot, 11 or 12/VII/1844, CGS, VI, No. 2942, p. 579.
33. Ibid., early August 1844, CGS, VI, No. 2954, p. 596.
34. Pauline Viardot to George Sand, 14/VIII/1844, CGS, VI, No. 2956, pp. 597–599.
35. Louis Viardot to George Sand, 14/VIII/1844, CGS, VI, No. 2956, p. 597, note 5.
36. George Sand to Hippolyte Chatiron, 5/II/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2569, p. 31.
37. George Sand to Maurice Dudevant-Sand, 1/III/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2594, pp. 74–75.
40. Ibid., note 2.
41. Pauline Viardot to George Sand, 20(?)/IX/1844, CGS, VI, p. 632. In contrast, April Fitzlyon (pp. 201–202), Pauline Viardot’s biographer, could find no evidence to suggest a love affair between Pauline and Maurice.
42. George Sand to Maurice Dudevant-Sand, 7/I/1844, CGS, VI, No. 2972, p. 617.
44. Sand, HV, II, p. 448.
49. Pauline Viardot to George Sand, 19/XI/1847, CGS, VIII, No. 3757, pp. 149–150.
50. Ibid., 19/XI/1847, SCFC, No. 284, pp. 297–298.
On the part of Chopin, a possible reconciliation with George Sand was apparently out of the question, probably out of pride. (This is suggested by the fact that he tried to bring about a détente between her and her daughter. See Chapter 10.) Nowhere in his letters to his intimate friends or to his family, well beyond the period of the rupture, is there any hint of a desire for a rapprochement. Soon after the marriage in the spring of 1848 of Augustine Brault (Sand's adopted daughter, Chapter 10), her father Joseph published a libelous eight-page pamphlet entitled A Contemporary: The Biography and Intrigues of George Sand. In it, he accused Sand of having lured his innocent daughter to Nohant, allowed her to be seduced by her son Maurice, and then married her off to the firstcomer. Chopin to his family, 10–19/VII/1848: “It is the filthiest business and the common talk of Paris today. It’s a disgusting trick on the father’s part but it is TRUE. So there you have the charitable deed she thought she was doing!” (SCFC, No. 316, p. 338).

That Sand’s attitude toward a reconciliation was not negative is shown in her correspondence with a would-be go-between, a certain Mme Grille de Beuzelin whom Chopin probably knew casually. (It is surprising that this revealing correspondence has received no attention by most of the latest biographers of Chopin, including Zieliński and Samson.) She was also a mutual acquaintance of Marie de Rozières and a closer friend of Solange Sand (CGS, IX, p. 926). July 1849 (when Chopin was at death’s door at Chaillot), Mme de Beuzelin to George Sand: “Knowing your long friendship for the illustrious person now cruelly struck down by illness, I feel that I am not mistaken when I say that he grievously realizes how much he misses you. And as he is, Madame, at the last stage of his long sufferings, if you, through ignorance, did not give him the consolation of receiving some mark of remembrance, you would lament it and he might die in despair. I...beg to assure you that no one in the world shall know of this approach” (SCFC, No. 338, p. 364). It is most likely that Chopin did come to know about “this approach” from Marie de Rozières, through whom he sent his respects to Mme de Beuzelin (14/VIII/1849, SCFC, No. 342, p. 369). In her response dated 19/VII/1849, Sand spelled out “the fundamental truth of the matter” early in her letter. She was evidently sincere in saying that she was “putting forward neither accusations nor justifications.” An extreme partiality on his side for one of my children has estranged the other, and in my view the latter was in no way in the wrong. Things had reached the point where I had to choose between my son and my friend... It is others who have come between us... I have met him since then and offered him my hand... I sent someone after him, and he came back unwillingly...to show...anger and indeed almost hatred... Since then he has unburdened himself of bitter confidences and frightful accusations leveled at me... Had he but called me to him during my brief visits to Paris, I should have gone.... But now, does he really wish to have from me a word of friendship, of pardon, or any sign of interest? If so, I am ready. ...But I have the inward conviction that he does not wish it. His affection has long been dead. (SCFC, No. 339, pp. 364, 365)
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(The meeting alluded to was the last one between Chopin and Sand on 4 March 1849 in the foyer of Charlotte Marliani’s apartment at 18, rue de la Ville-Evêque. In Chopin’s version of the meeting, contained in a letter to Solange Sand dated the following day [CFC, III, pp. 331–332], Chopin, after exchanging a few words with Sand, sent his companion Edmond Combes up the stairs to inform Sand of the birth of Solange’s baby girl, Jeanne-Gabrielle, whereupon Sand came downstairs with Combes to inquire further of the news from Chopin. Sand’s version quoted above is evidently different. Later, in her Histoire de ma vie [HV, II, p. 448], she simply said that she pressed Chopin’s hand, wished to speak to him, but he slipped away.)

Some six weeks later, on learning of Ludwika’s presence in Paris (she had arrived there on 9 August to nurse her brother), Sand wrote again, and this time more positively, to Mme de Beuzelin. (By that time, however, Ludwika had come to know of Sand’s reply to Mme de Beuzelin and was irrevocably offended by it.) “I hear that the sister of the friend whom we discussed is with him. I hope that this will save him, for his sister is an angel and he adores her. An opportunity now presents itself for me to do as you wished, without arousing the patient’s fears for his own state. By asking Mlle [sic] Louise for news of her own health I am enabled to signify an affectionate remembrance of her brother” (1/IX/1849, SCFC, No. 344, p. 370). However, Sand’s letter to Ludwika written on the same day, and presumably never mentioned to Chopin, remained unanswered.

56. Letter to Marie de Rozières, 30/VI/1848, SCFC, No. 309, p. 322. This letter is absent from the CFC collection.
58. Quoted in Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 194.
59. Pauline Viardot to George Sand, 15/II/1849, SCFC, No. 328, p. 356. This letter belongs arguably to the period between the beginning of 1849 (Pauline Viardot wrote to George Sand in mid-December 1848: “Chopin is back from London, but he is very ill. His physician does not allow him to receive any visitors,” 14(?)/ XII/1848, CGS, VIII, p. 738, note 2) and mid-April 1849 (when Chopin attended a performance of Meyerbeer’s Le Prophète in which Pauline Viardot sang the part of Fidès, Fitzlyon, p. 243). Marek and Gordon-Smith (p. 197) place the date of the letter as sometime during December 1848, which is unlikely since Chopin could hardly have gone “three times to see [Pauline]” in his dire state of health. Hedley’s estimated date of mid-February 1849 is more plausible. Lubin (CGS, VIII, p. 739, note 1) is noncommittal, simply stating that the date is uncertain.
60. Letter to Woyciech Grzymała, 8-17/VI/1848, SCFC, No. 311, p. 325.
61. Pauline Viardot to George Sand, undated letter, 1849, CFC, III, No. 788, pp. 450–451. Pauline was away from Paris from early July to mid-October 1849. The letter must have been written some days after Chopin’s death, since his funeral took place on 30 October 1849.
63. Woyciech Grzymała, in a letter to Auguste Léo soon after Chopin’s funeral (SCFC, No. 348, p. 375), made a disturbing remark regarding the main performers in Mozart’s Requiem, which touched on Pauline Viardot’s loyalty to the memory of her friend. He wrote: “To show you what a world we live in, and to end my letter, I will tell you that the singers have asked for 2000 francs [each] before they will pay to Chopin the homage which their own self-respect ought to have impelled them to offer and not to sell to his memory.” In her book about Pauline (p. 132), April Fitzlyon explained her insistence on this fee as being due to “her strict ad-herence to principles,” which amounted to an emphasis on her professional status and rights. If this is true, it is an idiosyncrasy that defies explanation in the case of Chopin.
64. Six of these mazurkas were published in 1866 by the editor Gérard in Paris, with texts by Louis Pomey; a set of fifteen was published in 1899 by Gebethner and Wolff in Warsaw, with Polish translations of texts by the same French author (Eigeldinger, p. 188). Twelve of Pauline Viardot’s song transcriptions of Chopin’s mazurkas were recorded for the first time in Warsaw in 1995 on Selene Records.

65. On the face of it, Pauline was an obvious candidate for songs by Chopin, and yet it is curious that he wrote none for her. Despite his nineteen (largely unremarkable) Polish songs, did he perhaps feel that vocalism through the piano was more effective than through the human voice? Or was it simply that the voice itself was not within his natural medium? For Chopin’s partiality to vocal art, see Eigeldinger, pp. 14–15.

66. Quoted in Fitzlyon, p. 425.

CHAPTER 10

2. George Sand to Maurice and Solange Dudevant, 10/I/1835, CGS, III, No. 973, p. 29.
3. George Sand to Sosthenes de La RocheFoucauld, March 1836, CGS, III, No. 1113, p. 305.
8. George Sand to Solange Dudevant-Sand, 6/VI/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2665, p. 159.
9. George Sand to Emmanuel Arago, 18–26/VIII/1847, CGS, VIII, No. 3699, pp. 46, 47.
12. On the day after Chopin’s death, Solange is reported to have told Charlotte Marliani, Sand’s bosom friend: “She [Sand] spoiled me without love. I didn’t need a horse or those clothes. I needed affection” (Marek and Gordon-Smith, p. 230).
15. Ibid., 13/VIII/1841, CGS, V, No. 2288, p. 399.
18. Ibid., 22/VII/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2677, p. 186.
19. Ibid., 31/VII/1843, CGS, VI, No. 2691, p. 207.
28. CGS, VIII, p. 49, note 1. Kallberg (p. 78 and note 49, p. 256) sees indications of obsessive sexual feelings for Chopin in the repeated inscriptions of the composer's name and initials by Solange. He also suggests that these feelings may have been vaguely reciprocated by Chopin. He adds to his argument by quoting the extract from Emmanuel Arago's letter to George Sand contained in note 10.
29. This letter is probably dated 13 July and not 18 July, as proposed by Hedley in note 30. The former date is suggested by the fact that Chopin's reply to the letter, as noted by Lubin (CGS, VIII, p. 11, note 1), is dated 14 July and not 21 July, as given by Hedley in note 31.
30. Solange Clésinger to Chopin, 18(?)/VII/1847, SCFC, No. 275, p. 292.
32. In later years, Auguste Franchomme told Niecks (II, p. 200) that he was with Chopin at the time Sand's letter arrived. Apparently Sand wrote that if Chopin received Solange and her husband in his house, all would be over between Chopin and Sand. In response, Chopin is supposed to have retorted, "They [Solange and Clésinger] have only me, and should I close my door upon them? No, I shall not do it."
33. George Sand to Eugène Delacroix, 19(?)/VII/1847, CGS, VIII, No. 3697, p. 16.
34. Chopin's letter, received by Sand on 26 July 1847 (CGS, VIII, p. 17, note 1), crossed hers of 25 July (CGS, VIII, No. 3698, p. 17) to her friend, Marie de Rozières, in which she expressed concern over Chopin's silence and her suspicions regarding Chopin's feelings for Solange:

I am worried and frightened. I have had no news from Chopin for several days, I don't know how many... He was due to come here, and now suddenly he doesn't show up, nor does he write... Don't tell me that my daughter loves me; this is more of a cruel irony than a consolation... At times, to comfort myself, I think Chopin loves her more than he does me, sulks at me and sides with her. I prefer this a hundred times more than to know that he is ill. Tell me quite frankly how things are, and if the horrible wickedness and the incredible lies of Solange get the better of him. All is of no interest to me so long as he recovers.

This letter, omitted in CFC, suggests that Sand was still committed to Chopin at this late stage of her liaison with him and did not anticipate its termination despite her letter to him which provoked his retort contained in note 32. This earlier letter (which Chopin read to Delacroix on 20 July 1847 [Delacroix, p. 80]) cannot therefore be looked on as Sand's declaration of the breakup of the liaison.
36. George Sand to Chopin, 28(?)/VII/1847, SCFC, No. 278, p. 293.
38. Ibid., 8/VI/1847, SCFC, No. 273, p. 286.
40. Salomon’s remark is prompted by the following extract from a letter dated 8 June 1847 by Chopin to his family (CFC, III, No. 658, p. 285) written at that time: “I can assure you that at the next exhibition the public will be able to con-template his [Clésinger’s] wife’s abdomen and breasts in the guise of new sculptures. Delaroche stuck his late wife’s image everywhere in his paintings. [Clésinger] will sculpt Solange’s little bottom in white marble.” Salomon suggests that the statement belies a rather dark sentiment.

41. Letter to his family, 26/XII/1847 to 6/I/1848, SCFC, No. 287, p. 300.
43. Ibid., 14/XII/1847, SCFC, No. 286, p. 299.
44. Ibid., 31/XII/1847, SCFC, No. 288, p. 302.
45. Ibid., 22/XI/1848, SCFC, No. 326, pp. 353-354.
47. Ibid., 8–17/VII/1848, SCFC, No. 311, pp. 324, 326.
49. Letter to Woyciech Grzymała, 17, 18/XI/1848, SCFC, No. 323, p. 351.
51. Quoted in Zamoyski, Chopin: A Biography, p. 281. In the latest assessment of Chopin’s illnesses by Kuzenko, it is believed that Chopin had developed bronchiectasis (a chronic inflammatory condition of the bronchi) early in life, and that in his last ten to sixteen years he showed features of progressive liver damage. The most probable cause of his death was acute respiratory failure resulting from obstructive lung disease and cirrhosis of the liver.

52. CFC, III, p. 443, note 351. (The period of “fifteen months” alluded to in this reminiscence is unclear in its implication. It might refer to the total span of time Solange estimated to have spent in Chopin’s company in her mother’s household. It is also conceivable that Solange may have mistakenly written mois [months] instead of années [years]. She had left boarding school for good at the age of fifteen [in May 1844] and this had marked the start of her regular association with Chopin. Françoise Meillant was the daughter of George Sand’s farmer, Jean Meillant.) At the end of the original letter, Solange had written the following: “Last year I wrote (in answer to a request) twenty pages about him. They were found to be too harsh (you will guess for whom [G. Sand]) and labored” (quoted in Eigeldinger, p. 281, note 21).

EPILOGUE
1. Eigeldinger, pp. 188–189.
5. Ibid., 14/XII/1838, SCFC, No. 129, p. 165.
15. Ibid., 4/IV/1848, SCFC, No. 300, p. 311.


———. *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina z rodziną* [Chopin’s correspondence with his family]. Edited by Krystyna Kobylańska. Warsaw: PIW, 1972.


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