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The place of music in the poetry of Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer

ABSTRACT: Young Poland poetry was dominated by artistic imaging, but its associations with music are also quite often mentioned. Many examples of its “musicality” can be found in various layers of poetic works, starting with their phonological aspect and versification, through the simple usage of lexical resources, descriptions of instruments and concerts and listeners’ impressions, up to attempts at finding appropriate means for transposing particular genres or specific musical works into poetry and even creating a poetic language modelled on music. The characteristic phenomenon of poetry challenging music can be observed during that period. The oeuvre of Fryderyk Chopin is especially important, as there are many sets of works concerned with Chopin’s music or the composer himself (about 150). Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer was one of the Young Poland poets to show an interest in this subject. The images created by Tetmajer’s specific artistic imagination were often defined by elements of a musical character. The best-known “musical” set of works by Tetmajer is the *Preludes*, considered to be his “calling-card”. Tetmajer used sounds in many different ways. Besides attempts at shaping this poetical cycle in the image of Chopin’s preludes, one should mention here the role of the music and songs of the highlanders, the repetitive distant chime of church bells, the various musical instruments, notes and tones reverberating in many poems, and the specific role of the music of nature. The works directly inspired by Fryderyk Chopin’s music (*Mazurek Chopina* [Chopin’s mazurka], *Cień Chopina* [Chopin’s shadow], *Zamyślenia XVI* [Thoughtfulness XVI]) are a good reflection of Tetmajer’s way of thinking and writing about the sounds of nature. They are part of the turn-of-the-century mood, since they use impressionistic, symbolic and pre-Raphaelite poetics. The poem *Zamyślenia* provides a sort of conclusion to Tetmajer’s poetical thinking about Chopin, and about music in general. The poet agrees here with the modernist vision of Chopin as a bard of the nation. Almost all the leitmotifs favoured by the poet and connected to his perception of music appear here: the effect of “listening” to sounds from afar, a soul filled with grief (reminiscent of the sad tones of the music), a mood encompassing the whole universe and moving deep layers of human sensitivity, specifically among Poles.

KEYWORDS: Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Fryderyk Chopin, Young Poland, poetry, music, nature, blue note, impressionist poetic, symbolic poetic, pre-Raphaelite poetic

A discussion of the poetry of Young Poland is impossible without mentioning its particular predisposition to capturing our imagination and creating pictorial visions. Equally important is its unusual striving to make music its integral part, to get close to music. Andrzej Nowakowski said “[...] in

such a context a poetic work *is to be* musical and simultaneously *has to apply* 'a picture', a carrier of *pure feeling*"¹. These endeavours can be found in various layers of poetic works, starting with their phonological aspect and versification, through simple usage of lexical resources, descriptions of instruments (though these seem to be rather rare), concerts and impressions accompanying the listening, up to attempts at finding means of transposition of particular genres or specific musical works into lyrical works, even creating a poetic language modelled on music. This is the proper place to recall the role of French symbolists, and most of all Stéphane Mallarmé, for whom both prosody and attempts at transposing structures and formal techniques constituted an important element of poetic creativity. The second was Paul Verlaine, whose first line of *Art poétique – de la musique avant toute chose* has always been considered one of the basic premisses of symbolism. It was symbolism which implied looking for ways of expressing emotions and transferring sensations, though here it is worth mentioning the influence of impressionistic poetics, recording emotions, aiming at an idea which is difficult to put into words. Arthur Schopenhauer's concept of elevating the place of music in the hierarchy of all arts, combined with Richard Wagner's theory (and his idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*), became one of the most frequently evoked elements shaping the aesthetics of Young Poland.

The characteristic phenomenon of challenging music by poetry can be observed during the times of the Young Poland movement. The compositions of Fryderyk Chopin play a fundamental role here. Mieczysław Otton Żukowski, in the first collective anthology of poems dedicated to the composer, mentions the extremely emotional attitude of Young Poland poets towards works of the creator of mazurkas, as well as the attempts at "translating Chopin in their way":

[...] his lyrics are transformed into poetry of rhymes by nearly all the most eminent contemporary poets, and that is how "translations of Chopin" are created. [...] It is interesting material for psychological inquiries. We meet here with the reflections of Chopin's soul "filtered by the lenses of various temperaments". The relations between music and word, its inner content and artistic expression, individualisms and spiritual incentives, show appealing and rich contrasts and, at the same time, on the wings of the poet's intuition, assist repeatedly in being engulfed by the master's works.²

¹ Andrzej Nowakowski, *Arnold Böcklin. Chwała i zapomnienie* [Arnold Böcklin. Glory and oblivion] (Kraków, 1994), 196.

² Mieczysław Otton Żukowski (ed.), *Fryderyk Chopin w świetle poezji polskiej* [Fryderyk Chopin in the light of Polish poetry], biographical-critical introduction by Żukowski (Lviv, Warszawa, 1910), 8. "[...] liryki jego przekładają na poezję rymów wszyscy niemal celniejsi poeci współcześni i tak powstają owe 'tłumaczenia Chopina' [...] Są one ciekawym

Edmund Słuszkiewicz, in a bibliography accompanying a post-war anthology of poems about Chopin, during the period we are interested in (1890–1918), noted approximately one hundred and fifty poems, cycles and entire poetic volumes which have the composer's music as their main feature.³ Those poems were written both by the older and the younger generation of poets, by the best-known as well as those whose names are not nowadays recited in the textbooks of history of literature. The definite majority of them, all but 15 works, were created by Or-Ot (Artur Oppman), followed by Bolesław Szcześnie Herbaczewski (six), Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer (the cycle *Preludes* and four other works), Kazimierz Czerwiński and Edmund Bogdanowicz (four each), just to mention the first five. What is intriguing is the extensive range of subjects covered by those examples: starting with the personage of the composer, then the record of impressions left on the listeners of a specific work or the whole concerto, ending with the most interesting, though not always successful attempts at poetic transpositions of forms and specific musical works. Those accompanied such poems as *Dream. Prelude Op. 28 No. 20 (Farewell, the star of the day...)* by Piotr Maszyński, *Chopin's Prelude (Chopin's song flows...)* by Artur Oppman, *Elves. Prelude in G-major (The dawn's glow has already broken over the earth...)* by Zygmunt Noskowski, or by the same author *Departure of the Spirit. Prelude in C minor (Where, my spirit, where are you soaring?...)*, the well-known work by Lucjan Rydel *Chopin. Prelude No. 15 (With the trembling of spring the melody flowing...)* or the poem by Paweł Koźmiński *Chopin's mazurka Op. 68 No. 4 (Hey, how these fiddles weep...)*.⁴

Among these poems which situate the personage and works of the composer in both a wider cultural and social context, it is worth mentioning the works created in 1894 on the occasion of the unveiling of the Chopin monument in Żelazowa Wola. *Hommage* to the creator of the mazurka was paid by

materiałem dla psychologicznych dociekań. Mamy przed sobą odbicia duszy Chopina 'przepuszczone przez szkła przeróżnych temperamentów'. Stosunek muzyki do słowa, treści jej wewnętrznej do plastycznego wyrazu, indywidualizmów do podniet duchowych ujawnia ciekawe i bogate kontrasty, a zarazem na skrzydłach intuicji wieszczęj dopomaga niejednokrotnie do wnikięć w dzieła mistrza".

³ Compare with *Wiersze o Chopinie. Antologia i bibliografia* [Poems about Chopin. Anthology and bibliography], collected, ed. by Edmund Słuszkiewicz, introduction by Julian Przyboś (Kraków, 1968). It is the broadest catalogue of poems about the composer, starting with works created in Chopin's lifetime through 1961. It is worth recalling one more, earlier, anthology, more extensive but not containing a biographical list: *Fryderyk Chopin natchnieniem poetów* [Fryderyk Chopin, an inspiration for poets], ed. Krystyna Kobylańska (Warszawa, 1949).

⁴ All the examples of the poems (apart from the works of Tetmajer's) which appear in this article were taken from Edmund Słuszkiewicz (ed.), *Wiersze o Chopinie*. The exact sources of the reprints are included there.

such poets as Marian Gawalewicz with his poem *At Chopin's monument* (*Sound the song solemnly...*) or Andrzej Niemojewski, to whose *Bereavement* (*Why are you humming Bereavement...*) music was composed by Zygmunt Noskowski. This was the work, the cantata for solo voices, choir, and orchestra, which opened the ceremony of the unveiling of the monument in Żelazowa Wola on fourteenth October 1894.

Amid other contexts there is, for example, the instrument, as in the poem by Władysław Bełza *When with your white hand you touch the keys...*⁵, in memorial works such as by Bolesław Gorczyński *Autumn Nocturne. A memorial to Chopin* (*Gale roars the trees sough...*), *On the fiftieth anniversary of the Fryderyk Chopin's death* by Zdzisław Kamiński, *A memorial to Chopin* (*To him were our willows soughing...*) by Jan Kasprowicz, Bohdan Sawicki's *On account of the hundredth anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin* (*You left but your soul remained...*), or lastly the place of the composer's eternal rest, just to recall the poems of Józef Waśniewski *At Père Lachaise* (*Graves, Crosses and Tombs...*) and Józef Kretz *At Chopin's grave* (*The angel of the grave speaks...*).

It is difficult to distinguish one musical form practised by Chopin which was especially favoured by the Young Poland poets and used for transposition into lyrical form. Next to the preludes appearing in the titles, mazurkas⁶, waltzes⁷, nocturnes⁸, polonaises⁹, *Funeral March*¹⁰ and occasionally scherzos¹¹, etudes¹² and songs¹³ were often transformed.

⁵ In the album of Julia z Ostrowskich Tomaszewski, the student of Mikuli, a famous performer of Chopin's works, the poem printed in *Iris* 7 (Lviv, 1899), 310.

⁶ Compare for example to. Kazimierz Czerwiński, *Chopin's Mazurka in C major Op. 33 No. 3* (*Smooth your frowned forehead...*); Zygmunt Noskowski, *Spring. Mazurka Op. 33 No. 3* (*Spring, spring turns green all around...*); Paweł Kościński, *Chopin's Mazurka Op. 68 No. 4* (*Hey, how these fiddles weep...*); Konstanty Krumiłowski, *Wild flower Mazurka Op. 24 No. 3* (*A Wild flower! Isn't it a pity...*); Artur Oppman, *From Chopin's motives. Mazurka* (*From tears my eyes hurt...*); Edmund Bogdanowicz, *Mazurka. From Chopin's themes* (*A magpie screeches on the fence...*); Klemens Kołakowski, *Abandoned. Mazurka Op. 68 No. 2* (*I have no tears for you today...*).

⁷ Compare for example to. Artur Oppman, *From Chopin's motives. Waltz* (*We are entwined by the rainbow web of dreams...*); Antoni Orłowski, *By Chopin's waltz* (*Can you see that cloud which is so high...*); Stefan Stefanowski, *By Chopin's waltz* (*Why today nothing moves the heart...*); Justyn Wojda, *Worried. Waltz Op. 34 No. 2* (*A tear covers the eye, a moan escapes the soul...*); Artur Oppman, *Farewell. Waltz* (*Oh, entwine me with your hand, oh, entwine with a white one...*).

⁸ Compare for example to Kazimierz Czerwiński, *Chopin's Nocturne* (*You won't come back, love's wonderful dream...*); Edmund Bogdanowicz, *From Chopin's motives. Nocturne* (*Is it the autumn wind weeping...*); Bolesław Gorczyński, *The autumn Nocturne. A memorial to Chopin* (*Gale roars the trees sough...*); Klemens Kołakowski, *After the massacre. Nocturne Op. 55 No. 1* (*For my brothers' hearts trembling...*); Kazimierz Gliński, *Nocturne in G minor* (*Silence around, contemplation time...*).

Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer was of one of the Young Poland poets who was interested in music, although his works were mainly associated with picturesque depictions and painting with words.¹⁴ The unique character of the incredibly artistic imagination of the poet left a lot of room for supplementing images created by him with elements of a musical character. One of the most famous “musical” cycles of poems are undoubtedly the *Preludes*, discussed in detail by Krystyna Zabawa.¹⁵ Recalling their origin, the author regards them as “a distinctive mark” of the poet.¹⁶ Ferdynand Hoesick, a well-known editor, but above all a lifelong friend and Tetmajer’s confidant, wrote in his memoirs:

Dedicated to me by him [Tetmajer, J.B.], in second volume of *Preludes*, which were inspired by my music and Chopin’s *Preludes*, is like a poetic seal closing this period of our student life, our onetime friendship.¹⁷

⁹ Compare for example to Michał Prawdzic Grekk, *Polonaise (The mighty master of tones)*; Maksymilian Radziszewski, *Polonaise in A major Op. 40 No. 1 (Sound trumpets and trombones...)*; Witold Łaszczyński, *Fr. Chopin – Polonaise in A major Op. 40. On the half-century anniversary of death (Autumn! Swarms of my visions...)*; Maria Konopnicka, *Chopin’s Polonaise (When Chopin’s Polonaise...)*.

¹⁰ Compare for example to Antoni Małek, *Tears at mother’s grave [by Chopin’s Funeral March]*; Janina Górska, *March after death (to Chopin’s music) (You can hear the gloomy voices from the distance...)*; Jan Adolf Hertz, *Chopin’s Funeral March. A memorial to Fryderyk Chopin (From thousands of purest, most expensive gold...)*; Emil Milkowski, *Chopin’s Funeral March (at Śliwiński’s concert) (The bells were moaning pitifully, horribly...)*; Jan Denes, *From Christmas Eve phantoms (On motives of Chopin’s Funeral March) (I dream a strange country, with snowy white the field is covered...)*.

¹¹ Compare to Artur Oppman, *In half-dream. Scherzo (On the blue, on the sky...)*; Bolesław Szczęsny Herbaczewski, *And I long for you. Scherzo from Sonata Op. 35 (You were the eternal thought of mine...)*.

¹² Compare to Jadwiga Podhorska, *By Chopin’s etude (Op. 10 No. 12) (Ha! What oddity! these accursed tones...)*; Adam Szembek, *Etude de Chopin No. 10 (The strings moaned with a strange chord...)*.

¹³ Compare to Artur Oppman, *From Chopin’s songs (On the keys your hand flows...)*; Wanda Stanisławska, *From Chopin’s songs: Study in E major (Swayed, longing, murmuring cascade...)*; Artur Oppman, *Chopin’s wonderful song flies (From distant snowy fields...)*.

¹⁴ I have written more on the subject in the book *Poetry and fine arts. About the aesthetic awareness and artistic imagination of Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer* (Warszawa, 2003).

¹⁵ Krystyna Zabawa, *Preludia – “muzyka (...) duszy” i zaduma “nad istnieniem”, [Preludes – music (...) of the soul and reflection upon existence]*, in *Poezje Kazimierza Tetmajera. Interpretacje* [Poetry of Kazimierz Tetmajer. Interpretations], ed. Anna Czabanowska-Wróbel. Paweł Próchniak, Marian Stała (Kraków, 2003), 103-122.

¹⁶ Zabawa, *Preludia*, 103.

¹⁷ Ferdynand Hoesick, *Powieść mojego życia. Dom rodzicielski. Pamiętniki* [A story of my life. The parental home. Memoirs], i (Wrocław–Kraków, 1959), 439. “Dedykowane mi przezeń [Tetmajera] w drugim tomie *Preludia*, pisane pod wpływem mojej muzyki i *Prelu-*

However, Tetmajer found sounds in many different ways. Besides attempts at shaping a poetical cycle in the likeness of Chopin's preludes as analysed by Zabawa, we should mention the role of the music and songs of the highlanders, recall the repetitive distant chime of the church bells, acknowledge various musical instruments, notes, tones, single sounds reverberating in many verses, but most importantly we should point to the specific role of the music of nature, which is its most meaningful aspect when trying to characterise, or at least attempting to approach, Tetmajer's perception of music. It is probably the most intriguing aspect of the poet's understanding of sounds. Apart from the transposition of music itself into the lyrical form, next to the music of the phrases and, finally, apart from the lexical recourses which create musical semantic fields, it allows us to include music in Tetmajer's museum of imagination. This enables us to ascribe a symbolic value to his poetry, simultaneously with the characteristic picturesque artistry, which is rarely in the form of traditional personifications, and more often in the form of devices used by symbolic poetry: creating a mood, suggesting emotions, understatement of impressions, monochromatic sketches of colourfully shaped poetic space.

What was the role played by music in Tetmajer's thus shaped symbolic visions? How was it incorporated into a symbolic mood, a suggestive way of imaging, impressionable sensations, colourful understatement? Let us recall the examples taken from all the eight volumes produced by the poet:

The gale whistling over the ice-land
in hollow, dreary tones,
and above the lifeless emptiness of the mountains
chimes as a funeral bell.¹⁸

There are moments when one does not dare to search
one's soul, as the one fears,
that there will be no single string
which, touched, will still sound clearly.

[*There are such moments*, I/I/24]

From somewhere far away towards me flow
tones never heard before – –
they flow through the blue emptiness of sky

diów Chopina, są jakby poetyczną pieczęcią, zamykającą ten studencki okres naszego życia, naszej ówczesnej przyjaźni”.

¹⁸ Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, *Pod śniegu srebrnym puchem* [Under snow's silver fleecy], in Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, *Poezje* [Poetry], collective edition, i (Warszawa, 1924), 6. All the following citations of Tetmajer's poems come from the same edition. In brackets – the *title*, series number and page.

they sweep me with a wave – –
like distant bells they sound,
like distant lutes they sound,
and every sound carries a tear – –
and in space somewhere disappear
sounding strangely, strangely sadly.

[From somewhere far away, I/I/71]

Look: the moon has already swayed upon the sky's firmament,
the quiet music of the night has started playing,
as if the moon were a harp affluent with sounds,
and the strings – trembling, silver beams.

[Why today my lover..., II/I/ 177]

The whole world breathes with a hot chest
silently – – and only the distant sea's
wave is heard somewhere crashing against the wave.

[Leda, II/I/196]

In this enormous assault
of the gale, rain, lightnings: my soul's music
comes to life – its inner voice has roared like a warlike trumpet,
melody, mad and wild, fills it.

[During the storm, II/I/171]

Silence – – only the sound of humming is heard in the rocky wilderness,
as if the rocks and water and stone pines and fir trees
a swaying dialogue were conducting

[Nightly mists, II/I/224]

The water of the lake, blue and dreamy
is playing: a song is created – strange, nameless,
a song unknown is created on the wave,
and we might have sung it once

[***, IV/II/225]

You proud, unrestrained element – I welcome you!
I have always loved you most of all!
In your lap was my child's spirit cradled,
you were the first music I heard in the world,
when from the Tatras you flew over the woods and fields – –
You proud, unrestrained, element welcome!

[...]

you are the soul's sweetest, the best music!

[When the wind blows from the Tatras, V/III/4]

Far away – playing from below somewhere – barely playing waters –
 I strain to hear – fishing out their distant rippling – –
 surrounded by the flowing dreamy processions of mists
 and as if with music of violins the world is sounding
 The rippling waters – – so wonderful – the nature’s royal
 song

[*On a June night*, VI/III/254]

Barely, barely it reaches me
 from somewhere the tone of music – –
 it is maybe a winged moth
 with music in its membranes...

[*Words*, VIII/IV/171]¹⁹

¹⁹“Wicher po lodach gwizdże
 w głuchy, ponury ton,
 i nad gór martwą pustką
 brzmi, jak pogrzebny dzwon.

Są takie chwile, gdy się nie śmie badać
 swej własnej duszy, bo się człowiek lęknie,
 że ani jednej nie znajdzie w niej struny,
 co potrącona, jeszcze czysto dźwięknie.”

[*Są takie chwile*, I/I/24]

“Skądś z daleka ku mnie płyną
 niesłyszane nigdy tony – –
 płyną niebios pustką siną
 falą owiewają mnie – –
 jak odległe dźwięczną dzwony
 jak odległe dźwięczną lutnie
 a dźwięk każdy niesie lżę – –
 i w przestrzeni kędyś giną
 dźwięcząc dziwnie, dziwnie smutnie.”

[*Skądś z daleka*, I/I/71]

“Patrz: już księżyc wpłynął na niebios sklepienie,
 cicha nocy muzyka grać już rozpoczyna,
 jakby księżyc był harfą dźwiękami rozrzutną,
 a struny drgające, srebrzyste promienie.”

[*Czemu dziś mój kochanek...*, II/I/ 177]

“Świat cały piersią oddycha gorącą,
 cicho – – i tylko dalekiego morza
 słychać gdzieś falę o falę dzwoniącą.”

[*Leda*, II/I/196]

“W tym olbrzymim szturmie
 wichru, deszczu, piorunów: duszy mej muzyka

The excess of examples (chosen from the multitude of others²⁰) should be justified by the desire to point not only to the mere motive of music in the

budzi się – glos w niej zagrział, jak w wojennej surmie,
melodia ją napelnia szalona i dzika”

[*Podczas burzy*, II/I/171]

“Cisza – – tylko dźwięk szumu słyhać w skalnej dzicy,
jakby skały i wody i limby i jodły
rozkołysaną mowę z sobą wiodły”

[*Mgły nocne*, II/I/224]

“Woda jeziora błękitna i senna
gra: pieśń powstaje dziwna, bezimienna,
pieśń nieznamiona powstaje na fali,
a może niegdyś myśmy ją śpiewali”

[***, IV/II/225]

“Dumny, nieuskromiony, witaj mi żywiolo!
zawsze ciebie kochałem ze wszystkich najwięcej!
na twym łonie się duch mój kołysał dziecięcy,
tyś mi pierwszą muzyką był słyszana w świecie,
kiedyś od Tatr przylatał przez lasy i pole – –
dumny, nieuskromiony, witaj mi żywiolo!
[...]

ty jesteś dusz najśodsza, najlepszą muzyką!”

[*Podczas wiatru z Tatr*, V/III/4]

“Hen – z dołu kędyś grają – ledwo grają wody –
wyteżam ucho – łowią ich daleki szum – –
wokolo mgieł płynących senne korowody
i jakby gęźbą skrzypiec dźwięczy świata tum...
Szum wód – – jaki cudowny – – królewska natury
pieśń”

[*W czerwcową noc*, VI/III/254]

“Ledwo, ledwo mnie dolata
skądś muzyki ton – –
jest to może ćma skrzydlata
z muzyką wśród błon...”

[*Słowa*, VIII/IV/171]

²⁰ Among others. *Looking towards the Tatras* (I/I/6); *Czardas* (I/I/18); *Ballad of a bride* (I/I/45); *Birches* (I/I/57); *Phantom* (II/I/155); *From Exodus* (II/I/159); *A dream real* (II/I/164); *During a storm* (II/I/171); *Why today my lover [...]* (II/I/177); *A dream* (II/I/190); *She* (II/I/197); *Thoughtfulness I* (II/I/248); *Thoughtfulness XII* (II/I/260); *For Angelus Dominus* (III/II/69); *Venetian song* (III/II/142); *Enchanted forest* (IV/II/178); *Willow* (IV/II/266); *A Greek bard* (IV/II/281); *In the Tatras* (V/III/24); *Fragments* (V/III/34); *Bells* (V/III/62); *Ciemnosmreczyński Forest* (V/III/57-59); *** (V/III/96); *Year 1889* (VI/III/176); *Magical Swans II* (VI/III/248); *Elegy on the cello* (VII/IV/28); *In under-heaven* (VII/IV/101).

works of Tetmajer, but also to indicate its special place in the poetic imagination of the author of *Preludes*.

The attempt to search for the sources of music itself is clearly visible here; not cultural ones, but natural ones. A device familiar also to other poets from the Young Poland movement (to mention only Jan Kasprowicz and the motives of a “tree”, “trees sighing”, which were significant in the whole oeuvre of the poet, from juvenilia to poems from the *My world* volume²¹), well-known from romantic poetry, seems to be a leading idea for Tetmajer, the thought invariably pointing the reader to chosen spaces of nature and specifically defined refuges of metaphysical quests for ideal places, and maybe even escapes from *artificiel* to *naturel*. The music is “the sighing woods” and “roaring gale” (*Looking towards the Tatras*, I/I/6), “weeping sea” (*Birches*, I/I/57) and “rippling waters” become the lyrics of the song (*Listeners*, II/I/173), “the music of the night” plays on the silver strings of the moon’s harp (*Why today my lover...*, II/I/177), “the ringing wave against the shore is crashing” (*A dream*, II/I/190), we can hear “echoes” of the forest harmony (*Thoughtfulness, I*, II/I/248), and “on the top of swaying trees / rises, falls silent a strange, sharp singing” (IV/II/178).

Discussing a metaphorical motive of wind and its sighing in Kasprowicz’s poetry, Józef Lipski refers to works by Percy Shelley. For the English romantics a harp moved by the wind was a pictorial equivalent of poetic awareness.²² The poets of Young Poland, Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer among them, replaced an instrument with the sound of wind in the treetops, but pictures also often appeared in their poetry, which were combined with musical terminology where the forest is exquisitely associated with a string instrument.²³ The romantic metaphor of poetic inspiration is built up to a symbolic picture interpreted in reference to a real landscape, the great “tem-

²¹ Compare with such works as: *And so you came back again, Storks came back home, The first song, Tree sighing, The dawn of spring, Quiet battles, A swan, In the darkness my soul descends V, IX, X, Wind in yellowed trees roars [...]* (*Autumn chords I*) till the late *The prayer of a wandering bard* (*My world* Volume). The speaker of the poem in this poetry often listens to the wind sighing, or sometimes it happens, as in the poem *As trees sighing*, that he is transformed into a tree.

²² Compare to Meyer H. Abrams, *Wiatr – odpowiednik stanów duchowych. O pewnej romantycznej metaforze* [Wind – the equivalent of spiritual states. About romantic metaphor], trans. Zdzisław Łapiński, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 4 (1971), 279-298; and Meyer H. Abrams, *Zwierciadło i lampa. Romantyczna teoria poezji a tradycja krytycznoliteracka* [A mirror and a lamp. The romantic theory of poetry and the literary critique tradition], trans. Bożena Fedewicz (Gdańsk, 2003).

²³ A figure of “playing forest” (together with a determinant of other spaces) as a background for love exists in the poem by Jan Kasprowicz *Przy szumie drzew* (*Miłość*) [As trees sighing (Love)] (Lviv, 1902) and in Jerzy Denker’s, *Pieśń miłości* [Love’s song] (Kraków, 1905).

ple of Nature”, where Charles Baudelaire’s “sounds, aromas and colours”²⁴ correspond to each other.

Such a perception of the music of nature performs a function of a mood creator and is inscribed in the concept of *l'état d'âme*; it assumes some of the “states of spirit” attributed to nature. It is always accompanied by sadness, longing, a hope for something undetermined. It can be “a song of longing” (*Looking towards the Tatras*, I/I/6) or “a song that flows / in mystical feelings’ nameless world” (*Listeners*, II/I/173), sometimes a bow trembling “from a moan, from a regret” (*Czardas*, I/I/18). To emphasise them, Tetmajer applies the device of suspending sound in silence, which is characteristic not only for the poet, but also for the modernists, and which was used especially when he was writing about looking for the ideal space. As in the following example of *The autumn silence* (IV/II/272), in which the music of shadows appears in romantic silence:

Autumn silence ... As if tired
Tatras in snow curtain were enwrapped,
Wind on the silent peaks cradles its head,
Sun drowsy in violet mists
is hiding slowly: all around
some sad music of shadows is suspended.²⁵

This suspension of sound, silence and their graphic equivalent is mentioned by Krystyna Zabawa, who notes its meaning in Tetmajer’s *Preludes*:

[...] it needs to be mentioned that the semantic fields of “quietness” and “keeping silent” are the ones most often used in the cycle. In the analyzed poem [*Preludes VII*, J.B.] the music is quiet, poem I of the cycle is about “the silent darkness of the ocean”, II – silent life, III – the lyrical subject gazes “being silent”, similarly in VIII and XXII the speaker gazes silently, stands silently. Silence appears in five poems (VIII, XIII, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXII).²⁶

²⁴ Charles Baudelaire, *Oddźwięki* [Correspondances], trans. Antoni Lange, in Charles Baudelaire, *Kwiaty zła* [The flowers of evil] (Kraków, 1990), 21.

“Jesienna cisza... Jak gdyby zmęczone
Tatry się w śniegu owiały zasłone,
wiatr na milczących szczytach kładzie głowę,
słońce półsenne w mgły fioletowe
kryje się z wolna: na całej przestrzeni
zawisa jakaś smutna gędzba cieni”.

²⁵ Compare to *Night mists* (II/I/224); *Under Herculanum* (III/II/39).

²⁶ Zabawa, *Preludes*, 109. “[...] trzeba zauważyć, że jednym z najczęściej wykorzystywanych w cyklu jest pole semantyczne ‘ciszy’ czy ‘milczenia’. W analizowanym wierszu [*Preludium VII*] muzyka jest cicha, w I utworze cyklu mowa jest o ‘cichych mrokach oceanie’, w II – o życiu cichym, w III – podmiot liryczny ‘milcząc’ patrzy, podobnie w VIII i XXII spogląda

A characteristic understatement of music, only a feeling of it, marked with a shadow, a subtle sketch, listening to tones coming from somewhere which is present in *Autumn silence* is another feature of Tetmajer's closing in on the world of sounds. This device was often applied by the poet. Undoubtedly, the influence of Schopenhauer's way of thinking of the time *continuum* is clearly visible here. Constant returns of sea waves accompanied by endless sounds, music barely recognized, only once heard, lasting through eternity. It is connected to Schopenhauer's burden of lasting in time, the only category by which music can be perceived (overlooking time and causality): its emptiness, almost void, accompanied by fatigue, fainting and maybe the most adequate here – monotony and repetition. It is music, as the most ideal reflection of the will, which is able to express man's conscious life and aspirations, his pains, longings and passions. Jan Tuczyński, discussing the understanding of Schopenhauer's idea by the Young Poland movement, pointed out that as “[...] human will, still striving, oscillates between desire and satisfaction, between pain and monotony, the same melody constantly diverging from a basic key and returning to it finds its own harmony in these aberrations”²⁷. In the poetical realizations of Tetmajer, in some instances it sounded like this:

From somewhere far away towards me flow
tones never heard before – –

[*From somewhere far away*, I/I/71]

to hear waves of drowsy music crashing against the rock

[*Albatross*, II/I/210]

Sometimes when I dream late at night: from a distance
some quiet music flows towards me,
unearthly, strange and mystical,
somewhere in the infinite abyss conceived

[*Thoughtfulness VI*, II/I/254]²⁸

milcząco, stoi milcząco. Cisza pojawia się w pięciu wierszach (VIII, XIII, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXII)”.

²⁷ Jan Tuczyński, *Schopenhauer a Młoda Polska* [Schopenhauer and Young Poland] (Gdańsk, 1969), 53.

²⁸ “Skądś z daleka ku mnie płyną
niesłyszane nigdy tony

[*Skądś z daleka*, I/I/71];

śluchać w skałę bijących fal sennej muzyki

[*Albatros*, II/I/210];

Czasem, gdy marzę w późną noc: z oddali
muzyka jakaś cicha ku mnie płynie,
nieziemską jakaś, dziwną i mistyczną,

The last citation creates the need to evoke one more fragment, essential for Tetmajer's understanding of sounds found in nature, often combined with the notion of the soul:

Oh, you strange voice, as if in my own
 soul heard, at the same time into the expanse
 flowing somewhere ... Strange sweet singing!
 Luminous string of spacious light!
 You sound over me, but it seems to me,
 as if you sound simultaneously in my own soul...
 The human soul! Is it not
 a part of the world's omni-soul torn away
 and partly enclosed within the world's all-matter?
 But why, why ah! why so much,
 so dreadfully on bonds of matter dependent!? [...]
 [On the top, IV/II/200]²⁹

This pantheistic understanding of nature, which also contains a category of music, sound, the singing of nature, directly binds these verses with the idea of the oneness of all being, the Hindu *ātman*, the highest principle of existence, the only reality, the Absolute.³⁰ This desire to fully integrate the soul with what is dormant in mature music is “[...] the aspiration for grasping the element of eternity, for attaining peace, which existed in the original existence”³¹.

kędyś w bezkresu początku głębinie”

[Zamyślenia VI, II/I/254]

²⁹ Compare to: *Czardas* (I/I/18); *There are such moments* (I/I/24); *During a storm* (II/I/171); *Preludes VII* (II/I/279).

“O dziwny głosie, jak gdyby w mej duszy
 słyszany własnej, a razem w przestworze
 płynący kędyś... Dziwny słodki śpiewie!
 Świetlana struno przestrzennego światła!
 Brzmisz nade mną, jednak mi się zdaje,
 jakobyś wespół brzmiał w mej własnej duszy...
 Dusza człowieka! Czyli nie jest ona
 częścią wszechduszy świata oderwaną
 i w części zamkniętą wszechmaterii świata?
 Lecz czemuż, czemuż ach! czemuż tak bardzo,
 tak strasznie więzom materii podległą!?”

[Na szczycie, IV/II/200]

³⁰ Compare to entry ‘Atman’ (Entry Index), in Jan Tucezyński, *Motywy indyjskie w literaturze polskiej* [Hindu motives in Polish literature] (Warszawa, 1981), 215.

³¹ Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska, *Zagadnienia polskiego symbolizmu* [The issues of Polish symbolism], in Podraza-Kwiatkowska, *Młodopolskie harmonie i dysonanse* [Young Poland harmonies and discords] (Warszawa, 1969), 14.

What is interesting, in all this discovering of the world of sounds, is that Tetmajer seemingly only once refers to a colour close to him. In one of *Preludes* the colour blue appears:

Goes in the fields, goes into woods,
 on meadows, in orchards,
 on blue waters, in snowy mountains,
 on the pale moon it goes,

 goes into immense abyss of the universe
 whence the glow of the milky ways sprinkles,
 goes the blue, silent, winged
 music of my soul

[*Preludes* VII, II/1/279]³²

Blue is one of the triad of Tetmajer's favourite shades, used by the poet in two contexts: mostly ascribed to the picture of the sky, it appeared also in his poems as a shade attributed to undetermined, metaphysical spaces, where he looked for his ideal places.³³ It is so accurately juxtaposed here with music; and that music whose sources can be found in Chopin's sounds. The composer's equally beautiful "blue note" was recalled by George Sand, when she was writing down the impressions which Chopin's improvisations left on the listeners. It is worth recalling a small fragment from the book *Impressions et souvenirs*, showing the exceptional kinship of Tetmajer's way of thinking about music with romantic correspondence:

– It is not yet started. Nothing comes to me... nothing except for reflections, shades, glows, which do not want to stay. I am looking for a colour, but not finding even a sketch.

³² To this poem Mieczysław Karłowicz, at that time a twenty-year-old youngster, wrote one of his most cheerful songs, in G major; often referred to by composers and theorists, as "clear" or "idyllic" – this reference is due to Marcin Gmys, which I kindly appreciate.

"Idzie na pola, idzie na bory,
 na łąki i na sady,
 na siwe wody, na śnieżne góry,
 na miesiąc idzie błądy,

 idzie w niezmierną otchłań wszechświata
 skąd blask dróg mlecznych prószy,
 idzie błękitna, cicha, skrzydlata
 muzyka mojej duszy"

[*Preludia* VII, II/1/279]

³³ I wrote more about it in the article 'Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer – znawca i krytyk sztuki' [Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer – expert and art critic], *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Prace Literackie XXXIV* [Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Literary Works XXXIV], ed. Bogdan Zakrzewski, Lesław Tatarowski (Wrocław, 1995), 103-116.

– You will not find one without the other, answers Delacroix, and you will find them together.

– What if I find only the moonlight?

– First, you will find a reflection of a reflection, replies Maurice.

The divine artist likes the idea. He starts to play, without awareness, so his sound is hazy and ill-defined. Our eyes fill gradually with gentle shades, which correspond with the modulations absorbed by the sense of hearing. And then a blue note sounds and we are in the azure of a transparent night. Light clouds assume fantastic shapes; filling the sky; crowding around the moon, which casts great opal rings on them and wakes up a dormant colour. We dream about a summer night; we wait for a lark's song.³⁴

The discussed *Prelude* also shows the way Tetmajer combines all the above mentioned categories: music, and nature around it – distance – abyss of the universe – silence – soul – the blue.

The works inspired directly by Chopin fit perfectly within Tetmajer's thinking and his writing about the sounds of nature. There are three known poems (apart from the *Preludes* cycle and a poem from the romance *Perdition*³⁵), which are directly connected to the composer's oeuvre. These are *Mazurek Chopina*³⁶ [Chopin's Mazurka], *Cień Chopina* [Chopin's shadow] (I/I/61) and *Zamyślenia XVI* [Thoughtfulness] (II/I/264).

³⁴ “- Ce n'est pas commencé. Rien ne me vient... rien que des reflets, des ombres, des reliefs qui ne veulent pas fixer. Je cherche la couleur, je ne trouve même pas le dessin.

- Vous ne trouverez pas l'un sans l'autre, reprend Delacroix, et vous allez les trouver tous deux.

- Mais si je ne trouve que le clair de lune?

- Vous aurez trouvé le reflet d'un reflet, répond Maurice.

L'idée plaît au divin artiste. Il reprend, sans avoir l'air de recommencer, tant son dessin est vague et comme incertain. Nos yeux se remplissent peu à peu des teintes douces qui correspondent aux sauvages modulations saisies par le sens auditif. Et puis la note bleue résonne et nous voilà dans l'azur de la nuit transparente. Des nuages légers prennent toutes les formes de la fantaisie; ils remplissent le ciel; ils viennent se presser autour de la lune qui leur jette de grands disques d'opale et réveille la couleur endormie. Nous rêvons d'une nuit d'été; nous attendons le rossignol” – George Sand, *Impressions et souvenirs* (Paris, 1873), 86; digital book of New York Public Library; (accessed on 15.01.2009): www.archive.org/stream/impressionsetso01sandgoog#page/n97/mode/1up/search

³⁵ Refers to a poem opened with the imprecise words taken from *Funeral march. Sonata in B minor*, Op. 35 by Kornel Ujejski (compare to Kobylańska, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 285): “I go, go, as if dreaming – without thought, without will – / only my mind, my heart aches dreadfully, / something sinks its claws in them, crooked, sharp claws” (Tetmajer, V/III/162).

³⁶ The attribution of the poem is not certain. It is mentioned by Sluszkiewicz, *Wiersze o Chopinie*, 105, as a poem created in 1899. Earlier it was included in Kobylańska, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 272 and in Żukowski, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 59. It was not reprinted, though, in any volume by the poet, nor mentioned by Nowy Korbut.

The least interesting seems to be the first of these works, not reprinted in any later editions of Tetmajer's poetry. His "musicality" is based on a versification scheme similar to the devices used by Maria Konopnicka in her folk songs. There are three stanzas, of which the middle one is built of four octosyllabic verses, the first and the third of rhythmic verses alternately octo- and pentasyllabic, referring to the basic rhythm of the mazurek:

Maiden lady, maiden lady
Combs her golden hair,
Singing to herself: who I want,
I'll lead by the nose!³⁷

The two remaining poems inscribe into the romantic poetics of the turn of the century. In the well-known *Cień Chopina* the poet juxtaposes the whole repertoire of impressive-symbolic devices. The first stanza starts with a motive of a wandering, unspecific being – "shadow pale" – liked and willingly used by the poet:

To orchards blooming, to countryside groves,
fields by a stream,
at nightfall his shadow, deathly pale goes,
soft as a dream.³⁸

The mysterious shadow is marked with pre-Raphaelite features, although this time these are not especially exposed palms or a characteristic look of gazing, distant eyes. The shadow listens. It listens to the music of nature, a sounds of violins coming to it from a distance, the weeping of a girl:

It listens to trees breathe o'er the river
shrouded in haze;
bass viols bellow, violins quiver
there, far away.

It listens to whispering aspen sough,
mallow, lilac;
and to a girl's sobbing, sighing breath: bowed,
elegiac.³⁹

³⁷ "Panienczka, panienczka
Czesze złoty włos,
Śpiewa sobie: kogo zechcę,
Powiodę za nos!"

³⁸ "Na wiejskie gaje, na kwietne sady,
na pola hen,
idzie nocami cień blady
cichy, jak sen."

(tr. by John Comber)

The poetic landscape compliments the romantic one, but also Böcklin's, simultaneously leading us to Jacek Malczewski and Witold Pruszkowski's vision, a picture of a water-nymph emerging from a lake:

In watery reeds, as the moon glimmers,
shivers and shakes,
a water nymph's pale gaze on him shimmers
out of the lake.⁴⁰

Finally, we should mention funeral bells, the trembling of errant stars melting away into nothingness and grief not played out, so often associated with Chopin's music. The shadow comes back into tamed space, into the common, simple, full- of- tears inspiration:

It listens to moaning funeral tolls,
and mourning cries,
the flicker of stars – celestial souls,
wand'ring the skies...

It listens to heartbreak, pain undisguised,
helpless, distraught – –
listens to all that his own soul comprised
when he still walked...⁴¹

The sixteenth poem from the cycle *Zamyślenia* by Tetmajer is a specific conclusion to the above analysis connected to his thinking about Chopin, as

³⁹ "Słucha, jak szumią nad rzeką lasy
owite w mgły;
jak brzęczą skrzypce, jak huczą basy
z odległej wsi.
Słucha, jak szepcą drżące osiny,
malwy i bez;
i rozplakanej słucha dziewczyny,
jej skarg, jej łez." (tr. by John Comber)

⁴⁰ "W wodnych wiklinach, w blasku księżycy,
w północny chłód,
rusałka patrzy nań bladolica
z przepastnych wód." (tr. by John Comber)

⁴¹ "Słucha jęczących dzwonów pogrzebnych,
i wielkich łkań,
i rozplyniętych kędyś, podniebnych,
gwiazd błędnych drgań...

Słucha, jak serca w bólu się kruszą
i rwą bez sił – –
słucha wszystkiego, co jego duszą
było, gdy żył..." (tr. by John Comber)

well as to music in general. The poet agrees here with the modernistic vision of the composer as a bard of the nation. It renders the features of music, enumerated with the emphasis typical of Young Poland in Mieczysław Otton Żukowski's anthology of 1910. The author wrote:

The exquisite features of Chopin's music included: a tender feeling, great melody of rhythm and clear separation of the tribe, particular to Polish music, charm unmatched, sweetness, refinement of thought and this poetic but melancholic feeling, which – as Liszt puts it – “with either silver, or fiery reflexes, colours each Chopin's work” [...] Chopin seized the whole world with his inspiration, and using his music he made listeners empathise with the pain, the grievances, the hopes and prophecies concerning Poland. Because Chopin, like Mickiewicz, like Kornel Ujejski, sucked with his mother's milk the pain which covered the whole Poland with a mourning shroud.⁴²

It is difficult not to agree with Józef Opalski that most probably it is “the soul” or “the nation's soul” that is the key word in a description of the oeuvre created at the turn of the century which relates to Chopin. That specific emphasis placed on Chopin's Polish origin became one of the elements comprising Chopin's legend in modernist times.⁴³ A short, three-stanza work can be regarded as the quintessence of the earlier examples. Almost all the leitmotifs, favoured by the poet and connected to his perception of music appear here. Next to the effect of “listening” to the sounds coming from a distance we find a soul filled with grief, which is a reminiscence of the sad tones of the music. In his poem the poet introduces one more device: a way, typical for Young Poland, of transposing the mood onto nature or reading it into his own *l'état d'âme* through the aura of surrounding nature; here again it was directed at the mood suggested by means of music. This is a mood encompassing the whole universe and moving deep in the layers of human or, more specifically, Polish sensitivity. Let the words themselves speak at the end:

From far away flow to me
Chopin's bereaved tones
and my soul is overwhelmed
with eternal grief.
I'd like to raise my hands
and fly up the skies
into evening quiet mists
abysmal seas.

⁴² Żukowski, *Fryderyk Chopin*, 24-25.

⁴³ Józef Opalski, *Chopin i Szymanowski w literaturze dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [Chopin and Szymanowski in the literature of the twenty-year between Wars period] (Kraków, 1980), 107.

Something tears my heart from my chest
from earth evicts me – –
and chokes my throat
with burning bitterness...⁴⁴

Translated by Sylwia Helim

⁴⁴ “Z daleka ku mnie płyną
Chopina smutne tony
i duszą mą owłada
żał nieskończony.

Chciałbym wyciągnąć ręce
i lecieć gdzieś w przestworza,
w wieczornych cichych mgławic
bezdenne morza.

Coś rwie mi serce z piersi,
od ziemi mię odtrąca – –
a gardło moje dławi
gorycz paląca...”

