

Introduction

Historical Background

On October 13, 1813, Prince Józef Poniatowski, commander of the Polish army, fell on the battlefield at Leipzig, while covering Napoleon's retreat. When Napoleon was defeated, any hopes for the immediate restoration of Polish independence disappeared. In 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, Russia, Prussia, and Austria repartitioned the country, carving out a rump Kingdom of Poland, also called the Congress Kingdom, with tsar Alexander I as its King, and his brother Constantine commander-in-chief of its army. For the next century, the Poles struggled for independence against the three autocratic states.

A liberal constitution, signed by Alexander I on November 27, 1815, gave the Kingdom of Poland its own political system with a Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. It abolished serfdom and guaranteed civil rights, including personal freedom and freedom of the press, to its three million inhabitants. But these liberties were quickly curtailed, when in 1819 imperial commissioner Nicholas Novosiltsov introduced censorship, suppressed the free press, and used secret police to quash any opposition. When a group of deputies protested against censorship in 1820, the next Sejm was delayed five years and its sessions were closed to the public. With general discontent on the rise, secret organizations flourished across the country, especially among students and officers.

In 1817, several student organizations were established in Warsaw, Wilno, and Lwów. One of them, led by Adam Mickiewicz, Tomasz Zan and Jan Czeczot, was the Society of Philomaths at Wilno University, which had several degrees of initiation. Dedicated mainly to self-improvement and propagation of knowledge, the Society gradually engaged in clandestine political activities aimed at preparing leaders who would fight for Poland's independence. In 1823, under Novosiltsov's personal supervision, over two hundred students were interrogated, over one hundred arrested, and twenty of them, including Mickiewicz, exiled to Russia, in one of the largest political trials against students in Europe.

Another organization, which evolved from national freemasonry, was the secret Patriotic Society, founded by Major Walerian Łukasiński in 1821. It attracted mainly the lower ranks of the officer corps and prepared its members for military struggle in defense of the Kingdom's independence. Arrested in 1822, Łukasiński was sentenced in 1824 to nine years of prison and, without any additional proceedings, detained in the Schlüsselburg fortress in Russia until he died, blind but still indomitable, forty-four years later.

When Nicholas I ascended the throne in 1825, he made no pretense of tolerating the constitutional rights in Poland. Novosiltsov's agents launched a new wave of arrests to root out conspiratorial activities. In response, a group

of cadets from the Infantry School, led by Second Lieutenant Piotr Wysocki and Colonel Józef Zaliwski, laid a plot for an armed rebellion, which included the assassination of the Grand Duke Constantine.

On November 29, 1830, one group of conspirators attacked the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw, residence of the Grand Duke, while another assaulted the Russian cavalry barracks. Both groups failed to carry out their plans and the Grand Duke was able to withdraw with his units intact. But other groups of conspirators and the populace stormed the Arsenal, armed themselves, and by eight o'clock of the next morning took control of Warsaw.

The night of the November uprising was followed by a protracted political struggle to control the spreading insurrection. The Provisional Government surrendered its authority to General Józef Chłopicki, who proclaimed himself dictator, re-established order in Warsaw, and attempted to negotiate with Tsar Nicholas. When Nicholas refused to make any concessions, the Sejm voted on January 25, 1831 to dethrone him as King of Poland, declaring that "Polish people are independent." War was now imminent.

The Russian army of Field Marshal Diebitsch, which crossed the frontier of the Kingdom on February 5 and 6, had eighty thousand soldiers, while the Poles fielded over fifty thousand. After initial victories at Wawer, Dębe Wielkie, and Iganie the Polish army, stalled by the indecisive command of General Jan Skrzynecki, was defeated at Ostrołęka on May 22. The Russians, under the new commander Field Marshal Paskevitch, attacked Warsaw on September 6. After two days of fierce fighting the remaining units of the Polish army retreated, some surrendered, some crossed the Prussian frontier, and were disarmed. The November Uprising was defeated and a wave of some ten thousand refugees set out towards Belgium and France.

Tsar Nicholas's reprisals were swift and harsh. All civil rights were suspended under the victorious Paskevitch, who became the autocratic ruler of the country. The Kingdom lost its constitution, its Sejm, its army, its universities of Warsaw and Wilno, and other educational institutions. Tens of thousands of officers and soldiers were drafted into Russian regiments serving in the Caucasus or sent off to hard labor for life. Over five thousand noblemen's estates in the Kingdom and in Lithuania were confiscated, over eighty thousand Poles—men, women, and children—were deported in convict wagons to Siberia.

Out of over four thousand emigrants that settled in France by the spring of 1832, about 70% were junior officers. They were led by leaders of the Uprising, politicians, school and university professors, writers, and clergy, mostly from the Russian partition. After a warm reception by many Frenchmen and Polish-French committees, they soon found themselves in difficult conditions. They were placed under police surveillance and thwarted in their plans of forming a Polish Legion. Many of them, supported only by modest government allowances, were destitute. They were unable to find jobs and felt demoralized by defeat.

The main cause propagated by the republican groups of the Emigration, represented mainly by Joachim Lelewel's National Committee and the

Democratic Society, was solidarity with European nations in their fight for independence. They joined with radical groups in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, and Germany, and found an eloquent expression of their beliefs in Mickiewicz's *Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrimage* (1832). They sent emissaries to Poland, calling upon their compatriots to launch an armed uprising. Many emigrants joined masonic lodges and secret carbonarist organizations or fought for freedom in other European revolts.

Prince Adam Czartoryski, the leader of the conservative wing, advocated a diplomatic solution. From his headquarters in Hôtel Lambert in Paris, a veritable government in exile, he petitioned English and French governments and parliaments, and wrote memoranda to the Vatican and the Porte. He gathered information through a network of offices, founded schools, scientific organizations, and periodicals, tirelessly championing Poland's right to existence.

These concentrated efforts of Polish soldiers, politicians, and diplomats brought no relief for Poland. A revolt led by Józef Zaliwski in Galicia in 1833 was brutally suppressed by the occupying powers. In February of 1846, when the Austrian authorities discovered plans for a national uprising, they incited masses of serfs, led by Jakub Szela, to attack the insurrectionists and the gentry estates. The mobs of armed peasants plundered 470 manors in Western Galicia, mostly in the Tarnów region, soaking them with the blood of over 700 victims. The insurrection was quashed and new repressions were imposed upon Polish people throughout the country.

During the 1848 "Springtime of Nations" many Poles fought in foreign lands, especially in Lombardy, Piedmont, and Sicily. The most famous among them, General Józef Bem, after directing the defense of Vienna, became one of the leaders of the Hungarian Uprising, in which over four thousand Poles took part. He was assisted by General Henryk Dembiński, who served as commander-in-chief of the Hungarian forces, both fighting "for your freedom and ours." But when the Russian army, commanded by Paskevitch, helped the Austrians to subdue the Hungarians, Polish dreams of freedom were thwarted again.

The defeat of Russia in the Crimean War (1854–1856) and the death of Nicholas I in 1855 brought about a change in Poland. The new tsar Alexander II was less restrictive; he relaxed censorship, proclaimed a general amnesty, promised to restore civil rights to political prisoners, and planned a program of peasant emancipation. In 1857 he granted permission for the establishment of a Medical School and in 1858 of an Agricultural Society, which gradually engaged in political activities. Polish students and soldiers in Russia began to conspire. Apollo Korzeniowski, a playwright and poet, organized in Kiev a Polish organization, whose main goal was to strive for independence, and later moved to Warsaw. Soon the students of the Warsaw Medical School joined in political activities. Clandestine groups sprung up all over the country, and to mobilize the population of Warsaw, organized frequent street demonstrations. But Apollo Korzeniowski was arrested in 1861 and, after nine months in jail, exiled to Vologda in Northern Russia. He was accompa-

nied by his wife Ewelina, who did not survive the ordeal, and their five-year old son Józef Konrad, the future writer Joseph Conrad.

To stem the tide of unrest the Tsar appointed Count Aleksander Wielopolski as Head of the Civil Administration of the Kingdom. Wielopolski's pragmatic policy was to give up the goal of independence for administrative autonomy. His proposals for reforming peasants' obligations, emancipating Jews, and promoting Polish public education, which included the reopening of the Warsaw University under the name of the Main School, could satisfy neither the radical Reds nor the moderate Whites. When underground activities escalated, Wielopolski decreed the forced conscription to the Russian Army, in order to entrap the majority of conspirators. In response, on January 22, 1863 the National Committee proclaimed the Manifesto for the Insurrection. Throughout the country small units of insurgents attacked the Russian garrisons.

The outcome of the Uprising was never in doubt. Even though close to 200,000 people took part in the Uprising, they were poorly armed, and no more than 30,000 were in the field at any one time. And yet they fought valiantly for sixteen months in over 1,200 engagements throughout Poland, Lithuania, and Byelorussia against the Russian Empire's army of 300,000. As usual, Western countries offered sympathy, but no support. At the end, the Uprising ended in a military and political defeat. On August 5, 1864, its last distinguished commander Romuald Traugutt and four of his colleagues were publicly hanged in Warsaw.

Russian retribution was even harsher than in 1831. The Kingdom became a Russian province called the "Vistula Land," and the very name "Poland" was abolished. So were all Polish educational institutions and law courts. Russian became the official language of the country. A reign of terror descended on the Polish population, especially in Lithuania, where whole villages were razed and many estates confiscated. And again thousands of insurrectionists were sent off in chain-gangs into exile in Siberia, never to return.

Cultural Background

Even though Poland ceased to exist as an independent state and many centers of science and art lost their autonomy or were closed, its cultural life remained vigorous. Deprived of royal patronage and solid institutional support, many Poles devoted themselves to the patriotic duty of preserving their heritage. In the long battle against the occupying powers, they found sustenance in their history, religion, literature, language, and arts. They also developed a new appreciation for the beauty of their land and the dignity of common people.

Initially, after 1815, conditions for the development of science and arts were satisfactory. The country was still animated by the spirit of Enlightenment and vibrant tradition. Economic conditions were stable, Russian policy fairly liberal. The Warsaw Society of the Friends of Learning, established by Stanisław Staszic in 1800, played an important role in the propagation of arts, science and industry by sponsoring research and publishing its *Annals*.

Warsaw University was founded in 1816, the Agronomic Institute in 1820, and the Polytechnic School in 1829. The University of Wilno, led by the astronomer Jan Śniadecki, his brother Jędrzej, a chemist, and the historian Joachim Lelewel, stimulated intellectual life in that region. In Lwów, Józef Maksymilian Ossoliński founded the Public Library in 1817, which grew into a renowned Institute and publishing house, still active today. In Poznań region, Tytus Działyński and Edward Raczyński opened to the public their valuable book collections, while in Puławy, the Czartoryski family library, with its own printing-house, became the largest in the country. Samuel Bogumił Linde, author of a six-volume *Dictionary of the Polish Language* (1807–1814), searched old monasteries, saving many valuable collections for public libraries.

Other scholars devoted their lives to the study of Polish geography, peasants, and folklore. They wrote detailed descriptions of various regions, paying special attention to the Vistula river basin and the Tatra Mountains. They walked to the uttermost parts of the country, recording people's ways of life, beliefs, customs, and crafts. Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, who escaped from Siberia, wandered across Russia and Poland, collecting materials for his work *On the Slavic World in the Times Before Christianity*. Oskar Kolberg, a musician and ethnographer, authored during fifty years of research a monumental work in thirty three volumes, entitled *The People: Their Customs, Way of Life, Language, Legends, Proverbs, Rites, Sorceries, Pastimes, Songs, Music, and Dances*. This compendium contained, among other materials, 550 fables, 2710 proverbs and, including his *Songs of the Polish People*, the words and music of over 10,000 songs. Jan Karłowicz, an ethnographer and linguist, wrote a synthetic outline of Polish ethnography, entitled *The People*, edited a six-volume *Dictionary of Polish Dialects*, and developed a classification of folk songs.

Composers, following Romantic poets, were also inspired by folklore. Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1848) adopted the rhythmic patterns of folk dances from various regions of his native Poland (e.g., polonaise, mazur, and kujawiak) in his *études*, nocturnes, waltzes, and sonatas. His *Revolutionary étude*, composed in Paris after the fall of the November Uprising, is an eloquent expression of his patriotic feelings. Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872), the composer of *Halka*, *The Haunted Manor*, and other operas, wrote 360 romantic songs, which were published in twelve volumes of his popular *Home Songbooks*. The songs were based on texts by Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, and other poets, while the music was inspired by native folk dances.

The national operas gave luster to theater life, which suffered from strict censorship. Even though the plays of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, and Norwid could not appear on stage in Poland for a long time, the theaters of Kraków, Lwów, and Warsaw cultivated the national repertoire and language. The theater of Cracow, directed by Juliusz Pfeiffer, and of Lwów, built in 1842 and directed by Jan Kamiński, staged many comedies by Aleksander Fredro, splendidly replete with Polish characters and traditions. The new Grand Theater of Warsaw, with a massive colonnade above an arcaded portico, was the center for opera, ballet, and drama performances.

Figure 2. Stanisław Moniuszko, lithograph by Lafosse from
Album de Vilna by J. K. Wilczyński, 1846

The architectural style that initially prevailed in Poland was neo-classical. Antoni Corazzi built in 1820–1823 the Palace of the Society of the Friends of Learning in Warsaw (The Staszic Palace) with a classical dome and columns, and rebuilt three old palaces, which became the seats of the Commission of the Treasury, the Minister of the Treasury, and the Bank of Poland. His greatest design, however, was the Grand Theater of Warsaw. Finished in 1833, it was one of the most modern and largest theaters in Europe at that time.

Gradually, some Romantic, mainly pseudo-gothic, then eclectic elements appeared in architectural designs. Franciszek Lanci built the Raczyński Library in Poznań (1829) in the style of the east front of the Louvre and the Golden Chapel in Poznań Cathedral (1836) in the “gothic-byzantine” style. Karl Schinkel designed a neo-Gothic palace for the Radziwiłłs in Antonin (1822–1824) and the Kórnik Castle (1845–1858) for the Działyńskis.

Henryk Marconi’s central railway station (1844–1845) and the “European Hotel” (1856) in Warsaw were inspired by Italian Renaissance.

The classical model of antiquity dominated in sculpture. Bertel Thorvaldsen designed the monuments of Nicholas Copernicus and Prince Józef Poniatowski, Polish national hero, in Warsaw. Jakub Tatarkiewicz, Thorvaldsen’s disciple, was the creator of *Dying Psyche* and *Caritas Romana*, as well as of many garden busts of eminent poets. Paweł Maliński, sculptor of the bust of Stanisław Staszic, and Józef Szmelcer, who sculpted Goethe, Mickiewicz, Kościuszko, Lafayette, and Chłopicki, represented the Romantic style which glorified historical figures. Karol Ceptowski executed an allegorical scene showing *Poland Embraced by France*, while Władysław Oleszczyński, who studied in Paris, sculpted the *Reception of the Polish Emigrants by France* and two figures for the tomb of Napoleon.

A similar contrast between the classical and Romantic styles appeared in painting. Wojciech Stattler’s *Maccabees*, suggesting the freeing of Poland, and Antoni Brodowski’s *Anger of Saul with David* and *Oedipus and Antigone*, represent the mastery of traditional canons of composition, inspired by Gérard and Raphael. But Brodowski’s portraits, especially of himself, his brother, and Archbishop Hołowczyc, reveal the power and originality of his vision. Aleksander Orłowski, a pupil of Norblin, painted historical battle scenes, sketches of everyday village life, and romantic landscapes. Piotr Michałowski’s spontaneous and expressive paintings, especially his *Battle of Somosierra*, showing the charge of Polish cavalry during Napoleon’s Spanish campaign of 1808, enriched the Romantic formula of extolling the past. He also excelled in portraits of military commanders, children, and family, as well as in studies of animals, mainly horses.

While artistic and cultural life was severely censored in Poland, it found free expression in the West, mostly in France. Polish emigrants organized several academic and cultural societies. The Literary Society, constituted in Paris in 1832, and transformed in 1854 into the Historical and Literary Society, as well as the Polish Library, founded in 1839, have been functioning to this day. They opened several schools, most famous among them the

School of Batignolle that educated Polish children until 1950, and raised funds for scholarships. Between 1831 and 1847, they published more periodicals and books in France than were published in partitioned Poland and smuggled them into their homeland. Most importantly, they created a vigorous literary milieu, in which Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, and Norwid wrote their seminal poems and plays that gradually reached readers in Poland.

Literary Background

In spite of the long string of political and military defeats suffered between 1772 and 1863 and, most tragically, the loss of independence, Poland “had not lost her life yet.” Considerable credit for her survival and subsequent rebirth must be given to the Romantic poets, who sustained the nation during its supreme trial, proving once more that the pen is mightier than the sword.

Polish Romanticism was influenced by literary trends from England and Germany. Particularly popular were the poems and narratives of George Byron, historical novels of Walter Scott, treatises of Friedrich Schlegel, and lyrical poems of Schiller. But the poetical principles current in the West were quickly enriched by local themes, among which the heroic fight for national independence and the messianic role ascribed to Poland in its suffering were the most prominent. Unabashedly patriotic and spiritual, Polish Romantic poetry held the promise of national resurrection and universal justice.

A spirited discussion about the emerging Romanticism was initiated in 1818 by Kazimierz Brodziński, a poet and critic, in his study *On Classicism and Romanticism As Well As on the Spirit of Polish Poetry*. Brodziński believed that in a conflict between French classical influence and English and German Romantic tendencies Polish literature should preserve its national character. He believed that poets should extol the love of homeland and use primarily the form of the idyll for that purpose. Other scholars and critics, among them Jędrzej Śniadecki and Maurycy Mochnacki, joined the debate. It was, however, the twenty-four-year old Adam Mickiewicz, who set the poetic tone of Polish Romanticism with his two volumes of *Poems*, published in Wilno in 1822 and 1823.

The first volume, called *Ballads and Romances*, contained the programmatic *Romanticism*, in which Mickiewicz acknowledged the spiritual communion between a country girl and her deceased lover. His ballads and other poems introduced several motifs that became associated with Romantic poetry, e.g., the world of folklore, of bygone years, of ghosts and nymphs. The second volume contained *Grażyna*, a poetic tale from the Middle Ages, in which the heroic Lithuanian woman sacrificed her life to stop the belligerent Teutonic Knights, as well as a dramatic poem *Forefathers' Eve*. Part II of this work featured a folk ritual of calling on the dead in an abandoned graveyard on All Souls' Day in order to provide them with food, while Part IV described an encounter with the ghost of a young suicide who surrendered to an obsessive love passion.

In 1823 Mickiewicz was arrested for his political activities, put on trial, and exiled to Russia. These painful experiences channeled his life and poetry

into a new course. In the *Sonnets* from Odessa Mickiewicz depicted diverse moods of love, heartfelt and ironic at times, while in the *Crimean Sonnets* he found expression for his reminiscences of coming into contact with the sea, steppes, and mountains of the oriental world. In both cycles, Mickiewicz displayed a spare and supple style.

During his stay in Russia, Mickiewicz also wrote a political poem *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828). Camouflaged as a historical tale in six parts, the story of the small Lithuanian nation fighting against the powerful order of the Teutonic Knights carried a clear message to the poet's countrymen, expressed in the *Song of the Bard*, that a basic condition of survival was to preserve the national traditions and literature. The story of oppressed Poland became the focal theme of Mickiewicz's play *Forefathers' Eve*, Part III, written in Dresden in 1832, at the next stage of his lifelong exile.

Based partly on Mickiewicz's ordeal in Wilno, the play probes the essence of Poland's suffering. Its hero Konrad must decide what to do to save his people from the Tsarist persecutors, whose cruelty is shown in several scenes. In an outburst of Promethean pride, Konrad challenges God, but struck to the ground, he humbles himself and experiences a mysterious vision, in which the crucified Poland is resurrected and becomes the Messiah of nations.

Mickiewicz expressed more openly the same themes of Poland's martyrdom and its role in redeeming other nations in his *Books of the Polish Nation and of the Polish Pilgrimage*, published in Paris in 1832. In his last great work, the epic poem *Master Thaddeus* (1834), Mickiewicz returned to his childhood, depicting with vigor, love, and nostalgic charm the beauty and glory of bygone Poland. His language, brisk and firm, shaped of bare thews and sinews, was particularly well suited to his goal of "seeing and describing," and contributed to the poem's lasting popularity. It was in a way not surprising that after this poetical eruption, Mickiewicz wrote only a handful of lyrical poems in the remaining twenty years of his life, during which he devoted himself mainly to religious and political activities.

Another Romantic epic was written by Antoni Malczewski. His *Maria*, published in 1825, told a story of a crime committed by a powerful palatine, who in order to punish his son Waclaw for secretly marrying a woman from an impoverished gentry family had her abducted and drowned. The poem, set in the lush and gloomy steppes of war-torn Ukraine, gained popularity and was followed by other poems written by the poets of the Ukrainian school. Seweryn Goszczyński depicted the horrors of the Cossacks' rebellion in *The Castle of Kaniów* (1828), while his friend Józef Bohdan Zaleski extolled the mythical charm of the Ukraine in his epic poem *Spirit of the Steppe* (1841) and in his melodious ballads.

The genre of the poetic tale made popular by Mickiewicz, Malczewski, Goszczyński, and Zaleski found an accomplished disciple in Juliusz Słowacki. His early poems, e.g., *The Monk*, *The Arab*, and *The Viper*, were studies of estranged heroes wandering across exotic landscapes of the Orient or the Ukraine. Influenced by Shakespeare, whose giant shadow loomed over many Romantic poets, Słowacki turned to historical drama. In the play *Mindowe*, he

Figure 3. Józef Bohdan Zaleski, engraving by James Hopwood, 1840

recreated the gloomy beauty of medieval Lithuania, while in *Mary Stuart*, he showed the evilhearted protagonists locked in a bloody struggle for power.

Słowacki, who experienced the turmoil of the 1830 Uprising in Warsaw, left Poland in 1831. After settling down in Paris and then in Geneva, he wrote two works directly connected with contemporary events, both polemical with Mickiewicz's views. In *Kordian*, Słowacki dramatized several episodes from the life of a young hero steeling himself to fight and die for his country, while in *Anhelli* he showed the hell of Polish exiles in Siberia. Several of his plays, e.g., *Balladyna*, *Lilla Weneda*, *Mazeppa*, and *Horsztyński* dealt with the history of Poland. His most popular play *Fantazy* mocked the Romantic pose and shallow Polish aristocrats.

Słowacki's autobiographical, digressive poem *Beniowski* and lyrical poems, e.g., *In Switzerland* and *My Testament*, revealed the sinuous grace of his poetry. His letters, particularly to his mother, recorded the progress of his creative and emotional life, especially in his final years, when the poet embarked on a religious and philosophical quest, manifested in his poetic treatise *Genesis from the Spirit* and the book of legends entitled *King-Spirit*. Deeply concerned about the plight of Poland, Słowacki engaged in poetical polemics, most fervently with Mickiewicz and with Krasiński. When Krasiński condemned revolutionary movements in his *Psalms of the Future*, especially the bloody attacks of Galician peasants against landowners in 1846, Słowacki responded with the zeal of the "eternal revolutionary," calling for the liberation of Poland.

Count Zygmunt Krasiński saw clearly the looming struggle between the aristocracy and the revolutionary masses. The only son of an influential general who staunchly supported the tsar, Krasiński had no illusions about the fragility of despotic regimes and yet feared the emerging new order. His play *The Un-Divine Comedy*, written when he was twenty-one years old, envisioned a forthcoming class war and painted a prophetic picture of twentieth century revolutionary leaders and their ideologies. Count Henry or the Man, the hero of the play, who failed as a poet, husband, and father, becomes the leader of the doomed aristocrats besieged in the Castle of the Holy Trinity by rebellious mobs. In his night wanderings through the enemy's camp he comes across blasphemous and vengeful outcasts, then confronts Pancras, their ruthless and cynical commander. In the ensuing fight, Count Henry's army is defeated and he commits suicide, but before Pancras can set in motion his master plan of building a blissful new world, he sees a figure of Jesus in the sky and falls dead.

Like Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod* and Słowacki's *Kordian*, Krasiński's historic drama *Irydion* probed the subject of a conspiracy as the means of regaining freedom. It tells the story of a young Greek who sets out to avenge his country on the victorious enemy. In his struggle with Rome, Irydion must resort to treachery. In the decisive battle he is thwarted by his Christian allies, for his ignoble deeds subvert God's order and are foredoomed. But the patriotic Irydion will be resurrected by God so that after centuries he will be

able to return to the Polish “land of graves and crosses” and serve it with love and self-sacrifice.

Cyprian Norwid shared the fate of Krasiński, Słowacki, and Mickiewicz, for after leaving Poland in 1842 he never returned home. To make matters worse, the single collection of his poems published during his lifetime was completely ignored. Yet in spite of his loneliness and poverty, Norwid never ceased grappling with questions concerning the essence of art and national culture. He addressed these issues in *Promethidion*, an elaborate treatise in verse, while in *Vade-mecum*, a collection of one hundred contemplative poems, including *Chopin's Piano*, *Funeral Rhapsody in Memory of Bem*, and *To Citizen John Brown*, he fashioned new poetic devices and reflected on a broad range of personal, social, and political matters. Drawn to theater, Norwid wrote several mystery plays, e.g., *Wanda* and *Krakus*, in which he relied heavily on symbolic connotations and cryptic language. His social comedies, on the other hand, e.g., *The Ring of a Grand Lady*, made use of well-defined characters, realistic settings, and dramatic situations.

The most successful comedy writer was Aleksander Fredro. Unlike Norwid, he wrote directly for the theater and was able to gauge public reaction to his lines, at times even rewrite them. Fredro's plays were light and sparkling, his language brisk and mellifluous, his characters funny and amiable. In some thirty comedies and farces, among them *Revenge*, *Maidens' Vows*, and *Mister Jowialski*, Fredro filled the stage with a marvelous assortment of dandies, ingenues, braggarts, matrons, and contented old cranks—most of them silver-tongued, charming, and feisty. Fredro was also an excellent story teller—his diary *Topsy-Turvy Talk* is a lively narrative about his carefree childhood, gallant youth, and daring exploits in Napoleon's army.

Seweryn Rzewuski was another witty and charming raconteur. He was the master of a *gawęda*—a loosely structured, digressive narrative, modeled on a Baroque story. In the *Memoirs of Sir Seweryn Soplica*, Rzewuski's chatty narrator goes back to the second half of the eighteenth century, praises old-fashioned Sarmatian values, recreates faithfully the customs of that period and, less faithfully, a colorful host of prominent figures. Rzewuski also wrote several historical romances.

The most popular and prolific historical writer was Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, who also excelled as a publicist, editor, playwright, and poet. In his cycle of twenty eight novels, beginning with *An Old Tale*, Kraszewski dramatized major historical events during the times of the Piast and Jagiellonian dynasties, as well as during the reign of the elected kings. Between 1842 and 1860 he wrote nine novels, among them *Ulana* and *The Hut*.

Beyond the Village, which were based on dramatic stories taken from the lives of peasants from Volhynia and Polesie. The author of *Recollections from Polesie, Volhynia, and Lithuania*, Kraszewski was fascinated by the borderlands and lived there for many years. He filled his novels with faithful descriptions of rural life and of the natural beauty of local rivers, forests, and fields.

Figure 4. Fryderyk Chopin, drawing by Eliza Radziwiłł, 1829

Another writer who remained faithful to the region of his childhood was Teofil Lenartowicz. Although he spent most of his life abroad, Lenartowicz found inspiration for his melodious and simple poems in the folk songs of Mazovia. Władysław Syrokomla, a native of Lithuania, was a lyric poet, whose rhymed tales told of hard life suffered by local peasants.

Wincenty Pol, who lived in Galicia and wrote a detailed description of the geography, people, and customs of the Tatra Mountains, was the author of *The Song About Our Land*, in which he depicted in verse various regions of Poland. His most popular poems were *The Songs of Janusz*, a collection of patriotic songs about the November Uprising. But it was Kornel Ujejski whose *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, especially the plaintive *Chorale*, expressed most poignantly the grief and despair of the enslaved nation.