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Love me, Love me not (Part II): Chopin's Reception in Great Britain, 1849 to 1899

1. Introduction

“(S)he loves me, (s)he loves me not” is a game of French origin that is now very well-known among children and adults around the world. During the game, the petals of a flower are plucked, in sequence, to determine whether a given person (often absent from the game) loves the player; in the French version, this love is either *un peu* (a little), *beaucoup* (a lot), *passionnément* (passionately), *à la folie* (to madness), finishing with a disappointing *pas du tout* (not at all). In reference to this game, the title of this article “love me, love me not” refers to the relationship between Chopin and British press; insights into this fluctuating relationship not only bring us an understanding of British socio-cultural world, but also how the established tropes continued to expand, and what is the final answer to this “love me, love me not” game. This article serves as a natural sequel of “Love me, love me not (Part I): Chopin's reception in Great Britain, 1830–1849”,¹ which delivered a range of previously unknown quotations and sources, setting the socio-cultural background of various tropes which emerged in Chopin's reception while he was alive.

¹ Inja STANOVIĆ, “Love me, love me not (Part I): Chopin's reception in Great Britain, 1830–1849” in *Musica Iagellonica* (2019)

Chopin's reception in nineteenth century Britain is a complex topic, resembling a colourful patchwork of sources placed in various social, cultural and economic contexts. This dynamic age saw a flourishing of the newspaper market, a rise of music journalism turning critics' work into biographies, translations of articles from the continent, the intellectual exchange between critics, helped by editors, translators, agents and others,² just to name a few — all embroidered with British nineteenth century notions of myth, ideology and narrative.³

While the Part I explored a tug-of-war between opposing views in British reception, revealing numerous subtexts underlying these conflicts of opinion, this article presents chronological popularity trajectory which developed following Chopin's death in 1849. Section 2 offers an historical overview, explaining how economic growth influenced the expansion of concert scene, educational institutions, music publishing and revival of English music. It also considers three principal trends that, amongst others, define the reception of Chopin's music from 1849 onwards; these include: Chopin portrayed as a romantic composer; the nationalist composer (both closely connected to imagery of Chopin as suffering poet); and the salon composer struggling with large-scale forms. Section 3 examines the origins of these three trends, focussing on scarce evidence that emerged between 1850 and 1854. Chopin's popularity increased in the years between 1855 and 1876, as discussed in Section 4. Following popular demand, a series of weekly articles about his life and work emerged between 1877 and 1879, once again attesting to his public appeal, as illustrated in Section 5. The final section in this article, Section 6, considers how the various paths of Chopin's reception solidified between 1879 and 1899, leading to the point at which his music was, at least in Great Britain, firmly established in the canon.

In this article, reception is viewed through the lens of largely press-based texts, including: *The Athenaeum*, *The Musical World*, *The Critic*, *The Monthly Musical Record*, *The Musical Times*, *The Contemporary Review*, *The Examiner*,

² Paul WATT, "Newspapers, Little Magazines, and Anthologies" in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Intellectual Culture in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Paul Watt, Sarah Collins, Michael Allis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 204.

³ For detailed explorations of the notions of myth, ideology and narrative in context of music biographies, please see: *Journal of Musicological Research*, *Musical Biography: Myth, Ideology, and Narrative*, ed. Christopher Wiley and Paul Watt, Volume 38, Issue 3–4 (2019)

The Orchestra and the Choir, The Musical Standard, Magazine of Music and The Musical Herald. Resources in this period are, however, augmented by the first substantial biographies, memoirs, lectures and various editions of his music, including the first complete editions.

2. Historical Overview: 1849 to 1899

Following his death in 1849, the reception of Chopin's music must be set, once again, against the backdrop of substantial social and cultural changes, amongst which, two are particularly significant. Firstly, there was the mobilisation of peoples; revolutions sweeping through Europe between 1848 and 1849 aligned music with "colonialism, industrialisation, the expansion of international trade and the establishment of significant expatriate communities, and relatively large-scale migrations provoked."⁴ Secondly, the economy expanded; following the initial turmoil of post-revolutionary years, a period of relative stability occurred in 1870s, during which the middle classes began to dictate the development of the music scene, producing increased demand for concerts, scores and music journalism. Although this article focuses on Chopin's reception, it is worth providing a brief overview of these changes, since they cast light on the prevailing preoccupations, interests and capabilities of the press and public.

The combined effect of increased mobility and economic growth had profound effects on the musical scene in Great Britain. The middle classes were demanding more concerts and, as a direct result, a number of large concert halls were constructed. St James's Hall, for example, was completed in 1858 and, as the first purpose-built concert complex, was able to seat some 2,127 people. Other examples include Queen's Hall, which was completed in 1893 and became the first venue for Promenade Concerts in 1895, and Crystal Palace, rebuilt in 1855 with a strong leadership in the form of August Manns (1825–1907). Concert attendance was still associated with social status and class, and certain concerts, including those given by London's Royal Philharmonic Society, continued to offer programmes for a "socially exclusive audience."⁵ This was not, however, the prerogative of larger venues, which needed to attract larger audiences; hierarchical ticket pricing allowed for a broader slice of society to

⁴ Katherine ELLIS, "The structures of musical life" in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 344.

⁵ *Ibidem*, 547.

attend events and, to encourage attendance, programmes were often tailored to a broader audience and accompanied by programme notes, encouraging new audiences to “build appreciation of Classical music.”⁶ Such changes allowed for the flourishing of a performer’s career; Clara Schumann, for example, played in England each year for a period of over thirty years.⁷

Expansion of the concert scene went hand-in-hand with an expansion of educational institutions, particularly conservatories, and a strengthening of the position of music teaching in elementary and secondary school curricula in Great Britain.⁸ From 1849 onwards, numerous institutions were founded, including: the Military School of Music (1857); London Academy of Music (1861); National College of Music (1864); College of Organists (1864); Royal Normal College and Academy of Music for the Blind (1873); Church Choral Society of London and College of Choral Music (1872), which later became Trinity College of Music; National Training School for Music (1876), which later became the RCM. Contemporary commentator Oscar Bie (1864–1938), described the Guildhall School of Music, founded in 1880, as the “largest music-school in the world” with “140 professors, 42 teaching rooms, 2700 students; and will shortly be enlarged till it has 69 rooms and 5000 students.”⁹ In this context, lectures about “proper playing” started to become regular events and, alongside the development of didactic musical literature, this spawned a generation of educated musical practitioners.

Naturally, musical scores became cheaper; Britain, as an highly industrialised country, had a well-established publishing industry, and this allowed for a rapid expansion in the production of scores, as explained by Bie: “in 1896 appeared over 2500 ‘books’ of piano solos, 2000 songs with piano accompaniment, more than 250 books of duets, and 300 pieces for piano and violin.”¹⁰ Scores continued to be published for the drawing room, and Chopin’s works

⁶ Derek B. SCOTT, “Music and social class”, *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, 548.

⁷ Michael MUSGRAVE, “Performance in the nineteenth century: an overview” in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, eds. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 605.

⁸ David J. GOLBY, *Instrumental Teaching in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 260–263.

⁹ Oscar BIE, *A History of the Pianoforte and Pianoforte Players*, trans. E. E. Kellett and E. W. Naylor (London: J. M. Dent & company, 1899), 305.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 316.

regularly appeared within such collections.¹¹ Within music publishing, however, a special place was reserved for the complete works of certain composers. This trend started at the beginning of the century and Chopin's complete works started to be published, as will be discussed later in this article. The proliferation of didactic books, sometimes with dubious titles as *The Art of Playing at Sight, by One who has taught Himself*, did not necessarily produce a reciprocal rise in musical professionalism; "the majority of teachers were poorly trained and ill paid."¹²

Piano design and manufacturing continued to go through considerable changes,¹³ which again influenced the styles of playing and composing. In the words of a famous pianist Leopold Godowsky (1870–1938):

During this time many significant changes have been made in the mechanism of the instrument and in the methods of manufacture. These changes in the nature of the instrument have in themselves doubtless had much to do with changes in methods of touch as have the natural evolutions coming through countless experiments made by teachers and performers. Thus we may speak of the subject of touch as being divided into three epochs, the first being that of Czerny (characterized by a stroke touch), the second being that of the famous Stuttgart Conservatory (characterized by a pressure touch), and the third or new epoch which is characterized by weight playing. All my own playing is based upon the last named method, and I had the honour of being one of the first to make application of it when I commenced teaching some twenty years ago.¹⁴

Sales of pianos were constantly rising.¹⁵ This is not surprising given the better living standards enjoyed by the newly formed middle classes.¹⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, according to Cyril Ehrlich, the number of

¹¹ For example, as part of C. V. WILKINSON's *Well-known piano solos: how to play them with understanding, expression and effect* (London: William Reeves, 1909).

¹² Cyril EHRlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 97.

¹³ See: David ROWLAND, "The piano since c.1825" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Piano*, ed. David Rowland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 40–56.

¹⁴ James Francis COOKE, *Great Pianists on Piano Playing: Godowsky, Hofmann, Lhevinne, Paderewski and 24 Other Legendary Performers* (Philadelphia: T. Presser, 1917), 136–137.

¹⁵ Cyril EHRlich, *Social Emulation and Industrial Progress — The Victorian Piano* (Antrim: W. & G. Baird Ltd, 1975), 6.

¹⁶ We also read that "Chopin's works cannot be well played upon a bad instrument. The common Stricker-action Cottage Pianoforte, with its coarse tone and coarser touch, is altogether unsuitable." From the preface to Jan KLECZYŃSKI, *O wykonywaniu dzieł Szopena*, Engl. trans. A. Whittingham as *How to Play Chopin: The Works of Frederic Chopin and their Proper Interpretation* (London, 1882).

pianos found in Britain was somewhere between two and four million, or, to put it another way, one instrument per ten to twenty people.¹⁷

By 1849, the music press had established itself as a vital component of newspapers and journals. The expansion of the market¹⁸ in the second half of the century, as a result of the socio-cultural metamorphosis, led to further growth of the music press and precipitated a revival of English music; the increased status of journalists, and the significance of their declamations on the arts and the role of music within the arts, proved an ideal breeding ground for patriotic sentiments, spawning something of a renaissance of national music. Support for English music in the early nineteenth-century press can probably be attributed to English music following the composers of the German Romantic school, which were popular at that time. In the years after 1850, music started to be regarded as a crucial part of British national identity, distancing itself from the German Romantic school, and acquiring greater status, promoted by “watchmen on the walls of music” who contributed to the English Musical Renaissance.¹⁹ The rise of British patriotism directly influenced reception of Chopin’s music, which entered into a new phase: Chopin quickly became regarded as a Polish composer, with reviews commenting on his “[...] national music, systematized and arranged.”²⁰ In the following section we can see how previously established tropes (discussed in Part I) were further developed.

3. Reception from 1850 to 1854: continuing the established tropes

Reviews during the middle of the nineteenth century were gradually changing their focus; whereas reviews previously prioritised compositions, they then started to address performers and, importantly, aspects of performanc-

¹⁷ EHRlich, *The Piano*, 91.

¹⁸ In the first half of the nineteenth century there were five daily newspapers. However, at a price of 4d or 5d, they were affordable only to the middle and the upper-class readers. This situation changed with the Newspaper Act from 1855, when the prices went down to 1d and led to the expansion in the market.

¹⁹ For detailed discussion of the English Musical Renaissance, see: Meirion HUGHES, *The English Musical Renaissance and the Press 1850–1914: Watchmen of Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).

²⁰ ANONYMOUS, “Deux Nocturnes pour le Piano”, *The Athenaeum*, 1270 (28 February 1852), 259.

es. Accordingly, a separation between composition and performance began to emerge, as is apparent in the following review from *The Musical World*:

After the sonata M. Hallé trifled away a quarter of an hour with two nocturnes and a polonaise of Chopin, the merits of which we confess our inability to perceive. We are bound, however, to add, that the general feeling differed from our own, and that M. Hallé's performance, vague and dreary as the music itself, was unanimously applauded.²¹

The above review makes reference to a performance by Charles Hallé — a German pianist who, for a substantial portion of his career, lived in Paris, where he befriended Chopin, Liszt, Wagner and Berlioz. Hallé thought highly of Chopin, stating that “in listening to him you lost all power of analysis; you did not for a moment think how perfect was his execution of this or that difficulty; you listened, as it were, to the improvisation of a poem, and were under the charm as long as it lasted.”²² In 1850, Hallé took over the Gentlemen's Concerts, a concert series in Manchester, and gradually enlarged the series' orchestra.²³ He was famous as a Chopin interpreter, continually presenting his music on recital programmes, receiving the following review in *The Musical World*:

[...] one of the most admirable pianists of the present day, whose fame has been worthy acquired in the highest school of pianoforte playing. A more perfect mechanism than that of M. Hallé was perhaps never possessed by any pianist. His execution is a model of neatness and elegance; in the most capricious, intricate, and crowded “*gruppetti*” the ear never misses a note, while equality of tone is preserved as successfully in hazardous *bravura* passages as in the easiest *cantabile*. M. Hallé's playing is indeed provokingly finished, and were it not for the energy and grace of his style, his complete command of the gradations of tone, and the agreeable variety he produces by means the most simple and legitimate, his undeviating certainty, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, might almost prove monotonous.²⁴

With a high-profile series and orchestra, Hallé made a significant impact on Manchester's cultural life. In 1860, *The Musical World* noted that “Mr Charles Hallé's Manchester concerts are becoming the vogue with all classes.”²⁵

²¹ ANONYMOUS, “The Musical Union”, *The Musical World*, 17 (27 April 1850), 254.

²² Jean-Jacques EIGELDINGER, *Chopin vu par ses élèves* (Neuchâtel, France, Baconniere: 1970); trans. Naomi Shohet, Kyrisa Osostowicz, and Roy Howat as *Chopin: Pianist and Teacher — As Seen by His Pupils*, 3rd ed., ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 271.

²³ Michael KENNEDY, “Music” in *The Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, ed. Boris Ford; Volume seven: *Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 277–278.

²⁴ ANONYMOUS, “The Musical Union”, *The Musical World*, 17 (27 April 1850), 254.

²⁵ Robert BEALE, *Charles Hallé: A Musical Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 118.

Critical reorientation emerged gradually; some reviewers made distinctions between compositions and performances, while others did not. In some cases, failure to distinguish between composer and performer may be observed in newspapers and journals. In one publication, for example, Chopin's Polonaise in A-flat major is described as "noisy"²⁶ and another stated that "M. Hallé [...] with all his ability could make no effect in the heavy and lumbering 'polonaise' with which it was associated."²⁷ The same composition was described, on a different occasion in the same journal, as "a brilliant and joyous piece that makes your heart dance,"²⁸ an explanation clearly influenced by Hallé's interpretation. The A-flat major Polonaise was part of Hallé's standard repertoire, and perceptions of the piece seem to have been based on subjective interpretations of performances, as may be attributed to fashions in music journalism. Further to this, solo piano music was regarded, throughout the mid nineteenth-century, as lower in status than symphonic repertoire. As an anonymous writer in *The Musical World* explained: "after listening for two hours at a stretch (with only ten minutes' interval), to classical chamber music of the highest order, it cannot be expected that long solo displays could be patiently endured, however great the talent."²⁹

Critical discussion of Chopin's music generally contained a strong element of mythologizing, thus continuing trends set in motion while he was alive. Anecdotal impressions started to solidify into legends, one of them concerning Chopin's physical appearance. In one review, for example, Chopin is described as a "mere breath". The review continues as follows:

He was a delicate, graceful figure, in the highest degree attractive — the whole man a mere breath — rather a spiritual than a bodily substance — all harmony, like his playing. His way of speaking, too was like the character of his art — soft, fluctuating, murmuring.³⁰

²⁶ ANONYMOUS, "Manchester", *The Musical World*, 49 (7 December 1850), 789.

²⁷ ANONYMOUS, "Quartet Association", *The Musical World*, 25 (24 June 1854), 429.

²⁸ ANONYMOUS, "Provincial", *The Musical World*, 44 (1 November 1851), 700.

²⁹ ANONYMOUS, "Music at Manchester: From our own correspondent", *The Musical World*, 49 (3 December 1853), 766–767, regarding Halle's concert at the Town Hall in Manchester on 24 November 1853.

³⁰ ANONYMOUS, "Reminiscences of Paris, from 1817 to 1848", *The Athenaeum*, 1239 (26 July 1851), 798.

Chopin's reputation as a suffering poet of the piano began during his lifetime, and demonstrated close links, common to Romantic thought, between suffering and creative inspiration.³¹ Associating Chopin's music and performances with the image of the dying composer/poet, as demonstrated by the review, proved so pervasive as to continue, in one form or another, to the present day. This romantic ideal, which had early manifestations in the titles Wessel gave to Chopin's compositions, developed in two main ways. Firstly, one finds a plethora of evidence, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth-century press, about Chopin as an ill man. Jeffrey Kallberg's detailed research about tropes in Chopin's reception showed that such publications are strongly connected with "the cultural categories through which Chopin's pathological body could have physically spurred the metaphorical enactments of hermaphroditism."³² Secondly, a range of additional tropes paint Chopin as the Ariel, or Raphael, of the piano.³³ Such tropes usually refer to supernatural spirits and fairies, closely associated with an ostensibly feminine topos in Chopin's reception.³⁴ When considered together, these two tropes are, as Jim Samson pointed out, responsible for presenting Chopin as "the archetype of romantic artist."³⁵ Some articles, besides the usual tropes, presented insight into the polarised reception of Chopin's music in England. For example, *The Athenaeum* published the following in 1851:

Chopin [was] in England ignored and denied a solitary merit beyond that of singularity. Prejudice is everywhere a necessary accompaniment to the presence of Genius — the skeleton at its banquet.³⁶

The same journal later that year observed that "the individuality of Chopin as a composer was sure to bring his pianoforte-music one day into request, —

³¹ Jim SAMSON, "Chopin Reception: theory, history, analysis", *Chopin Studies*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 3.

³² Jeffrey KALLBERG, *Chopin at the Boundaries: Sex, History and Musical Genre* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998), 84.

³³ Wilhelm von LENZ, *The Great Piano Virtuosos of Our Time from Personal Acquaintance: Liszt, Chopin, Tausig, Henselt*. (New York: Schirmer, 1899), 58

³⁴ For detailed discussion about the origin of these nicknames and historical reaction on them, see: Jeffrey KALLBERG, "Small fairy voices: sex, history and meaning in Chopin", *Chopin studies 2*, ed. John Rink and Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 50–71.

³⁵ Jim SAMSON, *Chopin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 284.

³⁶ ANONYMOUS, *The Athenaeum*, 1242 (16 August 1851), 882.

no writer since Beethoven having appeared in style so unique, and so innocent of the slightest reference to model, ancient or modern.”³⁷ The anonymous author of the text used the opportunity to label Chopin a “Polish poet”. Although these various tropes continued to emerge between 1850 and 1854, they were supplemented by another journalistic topic of the time which demonstrates a reliance on hearsay. Reports of Chopin being alive in 1851 were published by *The Guardian* and, after the same mistake occurred in 1854 in Austria, this was translated and reported in *The Musical World*. Rather ironically, the journal failed to correct the mistake of the *Neue Wiener Musik-Zeitung*, stating that Chopin had died in 1850, rather than 1849:

The number of *Oestreiche Illustrierte Zeitung*, of the 15th of this month, publishes Chopin’s portrait and facsimile, accompanied by the following notice:

Chopin ranks very high among the first celebrities of the world of art in modern times, for he belongs to the most genial composers and talented musicians. He may reckon with certainty upon a brilliant future. We, therefore, beg to present our readers with a very successful portrait of him, together with his facsimile.

The *Neue Wiener Musik-Zeitung* replied:

Poor Chopin will, no doubt, at some future period, return the writer of the above article his sincere thanks; in the meantime, we beg to inform the gentleman that Chopin died in Paris, in 1850, and that his musical reputation was established long before the *Oestreiche Illustrierte Zeitung* was ever thought of.³⁸

One can notice that most of these entries were anonymous. As noted by Leanne Langley, literary recycling was a common practice, and many freelancers worked for more than one journal, thus adjusting the content to their writing to journal’s market profile.³⁹ The articles in the period between 1850 and 1854 are not many, but in spite of this scarcity, the ones available to us offer a plethora of insights about “the delicate piercing Ariel of modern pianists”⁴⁰ and when reading them, it is obvious that not much changed in the years after Chopin’s death, both in the attitudes as well as in the popularity of his pieces; this change is yet to happen.

³⁷ ANONYMOUS, “Musical and Dramatic Gossip” *The Athenaeum*, 1234 (21 June 1851), 668.

³⁸ ANONYMOUS, “Foreign”, *The Musical World*, 43 (28 October 1854), 710.

³⁹ Leanne LANGLEY, “The Musical Press in Nineteenth-Century England”, *Notes* Vol. 46, No. 3 (Music Library Association, 1990), 585–592.

⁴⁰ ANONYMOUS, “Foreign Literature”, *The Critic*, 11/261 (16 February 1852), 99.

4. An Increase in Popularity: 1855 to 1876

George Sand's autobiography *Histoire de Ma Vie* was published in Paris in 1855 and *The Athenaeum* reviewed it, somewhat harshly, in a two-page article later that year. Sand's comparison of Chopin with Bach created quite a stir in the English press, since it declared that Chopin's music is "more exquisite than that of Sebastian Bach, still more puissant than that of Beethoven, still more dramatic than that of Weber. Chopin is all the three together, and himself besides: that is to say, he is more free in his taste, more austere in his grandeur, more poignant in his grief, than they."⁴¹ One respondent explained that Chopin writes mere pianoforte music, while Bach's fugues and Beethoven's Sonatas are pure music. More subtle comments about the excessiveness of Sand's praise also come to light;⁴² conflation of the personal and professional was mentioned and, given Chopin's non-traditional relationship with George Sand, this was not taken lightly. Their relationship was not favoured in the press during the composer's lifetime, and this state-of-affairs continued long after his death.

The popularity of Chopin's music continued in the 1850s and acclamation increased. Concerts containing Chopin's compositions were, by this point, frequent occurrences, including performances by the period's most popular pianists such as Von Bülow, Hallé and Clara Schumann. Performances were reviewed but, unfortunately, not regularly. Reviews increasingly fell under the influence of romantic perceptions of Chopin's persona. The various tropes, outlined above, gradually solidified, with magazines such as *The Athenaeum* asking:

What does "the social element" mean? The fact was, that Chopin, one of the most delicately *spirituel* converses whom we ever met, was the delight of perhaps the most super-subtle and intellectual coterie in Paris. He answered no letters, it is true; — he gave lessons (save to ladies whom he liked) very reluctantly; — and his infirm health made him languid, unready, and often times capricious, in performing the duties and attending to the courtesies of life. But he was as willing to discuss French politics or Polish nationality, — to anatomize the new poem or novel, — as to dream at the piano.⁴³

Chopin was viewed repeatedly through such prisms. In addition, his music was frequently judged through subjective impressions of his performances, and

⁴¹ ANONYMOUS, "History of my Life [Histoire, &c] By George Sand. Feuilleton of *La Presse*", *The Athenaeum*, 1460 (20 October 1855), 1211.

⁴² ANONYMOUS, "*Histoire de ma Vie* ("Story of My Life"). Par George Sand. Paris: Victor Lecou (Vol. XX)", *The Critic*, 15/367 (15 July 1856), 353.

⁴³ ANONYMOUS, *The Athenaeum*, 1412 (18 November 1854), 1390.

the combination of these two influences seems to have perpetuated interpretation based on impression rather than fact. Not distinguishing discussion of a composition from discussion of its interpretation continued in the 1850s, resulting in various works, such as the A-flat major Polonaise, being treated in very different ways. For example, *The Musical Gazette* explains that this piece is:

[...] one of the most brilliant and joyous pieces it has been our lot to hear for some time — a grand polonaise in A-flat — and grand it is in Hallé's hand in every sense of the word. Such *crescendo* — such majesty — and withal such joyousness that makes your heart dance — not your feet: elevates the soul — not the limbs, or the body — sending everyone home satisfied that Chopin, besides some extraordinary things, must have possessed great talent to produce such music, and that few can give to it such grandeur of expression as Charles Hallé.⁴⁴

And, later the same year, it published the following:

The *Nocturne* and *Polonaise* by Chopin are eminent among the strangely unfinished rhapsodies of that composer. Enormously taxing to the player, the labour bestowed on them can never be repaid by the result, even when they are executed by an imaginative pianist like Mad. Schumann, or one of unflinching mechanism, like M. Hallé.⁴⁵

The Musical World reported in 1870:

Most pianists, it is to be hoped, know that the Polonaises by Chopin, — of their kind, as incomparable and original as his Mazurkas — and among the most picturesque and characteristic pianoforte music in existence. One or two of them, however, may be cited as almost impossible to be performed, so as to work out the conception of the author, which includes gorgeous pomposity of sound, as well as dignity of idea. The Polonaise in A Major is of the number. Even when given by the accomplished hands of the greatest pianists, and the most penetrated by the character of music, it must disappoint the ear, because keys and strings and fingers are limited in their power of expression.⁴⁶

Furthermore, *The Monthly Musical Record* explained in 1872:

In none of his compositions does Chopin appear to greater advantage than in his national dances. It has frequently been remarked that while his larger and more ambitious works are for the most part that (with deference be it said) more or less failures, in his smaller pieces, on the other hand, he is almost uniformly successful, It would

⁴⁴ ANONYMOUS, *The Musical Gazette* (15 March 1856), 89.

⁴⁵ ANONYMOUS, "Mad. Clara Schumann's Recital" *The Musical World*, 22 (31 May 1856), 343.

⁴⁶ Henry F. CHORLEY, "A Polonaise by Chopin" *The Musical World*, 35 (20 August 1870), 554.

be difficult to find a single of his mazurkas, waltzes, or nocturnes, that does not present points of interest; and the same may be said of the polonaises now before us. There are few dances of which the rhythm is more marked than that of the polonaise, the peculiar accent on the second crotchet of the bar at the cadences being *de rigueur*; and yet no two of the twelve specimens of the dance which the Polish composer has produced are in the least similar.⁴⁷

The trend of describing Chopin's music as difficult and almost impossible to perform was established during his lifetime, but such comments continued into the second half of the nineteenth century. According to *The Athenaeum*, for example:

It is true that very few pianists can play the compositions of Chopin in a manner which represents the intentions of the composer. It is equally true, that all pianists are now beginning to attempt them, — as being almost, if not altogether, the last works of value for the pianoforte which Genius has given forth. It is also true, that, even if they are played without true tradition, — that is, steadily, and not with the measured yet freakish delicacy which belonged to Chopin's own style, — there is still enough in them to satisfy the mind and quicken the fancy. Thus, we are inclined to believe that Chopin's best compositions will live, so long as Music has ears, heart and fingers.⁴⁸

A translated article from Robert Schumann in *The Musical World* (regarding the Sonata Op. 35) conveys a similar idea:

It is unfortunate that so few pianoforte players, even good ones, are capable of forming a general idea of compositions which are too difficult for their fingers to master. Instead of first looking over the piece, they labour stolidly through it, note by note; and, therefore, before they have got the least notion of its general outline and intention, it is naturally thrown aside as strange or confused.⁴⁹

A lengthy article “Chopin a poet and a Pole” published in *The Musical World* (1858) is a perfect encapsulation of nineteenth-century tropes surrounding Chopin. The uniqueness of Chopin's music, based on his individuality, is identified, explaining why it failed to have composer-followers. As the author explained: “because [of] that which formed the originality of Chopin

⁴⁷ ANONYMOUS, “Twelve Polonaises for the Piano. Composed by F. Chopin. Edited by E. Pauer. London: Augener & Co” *The Monthly Musical Record* (1 August 1872), 118.

⁴⁸ ANONYMOUS, “Music and the Drama. New Publications. *Posthumous Works for the Piano of Fred. Chopin. Published from the Original Manuscripts, with the Authorisation of his Family [Oeuvres Posthumes, &c.]*. By Jules Fontana. Eight Numbers. (Scheurmann & Co.)” *The Athenaeum*, 1458 (6 October, 1855), 1155.

⁴⁹ Robert SCHUMANN, “Chopin [translations by M. E. von G. from the *Gesammelte Schriften* of Robert Schumann, continued], *The Musical World*, 16 (13 April 1867), 230.

was such a mixture of rare gifts, circumstances, and especially nationality, [...] a reproduction will still depend upon the fate of the latter, even if all the former conditions should be complied with. Moreover, Chopin's art was based entirely upon his individuality; it was his own art; tradition and school had very little to do with it."⁵⁰ The Polish element of his music is then described: "it is that mourning, that doleful resignation. Suddenly bursting forth into a momentary wild passion; that constant melancholy; that smiling and tears; that constant hoping and trusting for change, which characterises the nation as the music of Chopin."⁵¹ Chopin, the ill poet, also makes an appearance: "no doubt this dreadful disease had a great influence upon the development of his talent, although, perhaps, the reflex of this constant struggle with life in his music formed, and forms still, for a great many, its greatest attraction."⁵² The presentation of information in this way would continue to feature in Chopin reception during the remainder of the century.

New editions of Chopin's works stimulated an increase in critical attention. The *Deux Valses Melancoliques* were published by Ewer in 1854, in an album of posthumous works⁵³ and by Scheurmann in 1855; Boosey published a new edition of mazurkas in 1860; and the twelve polonaises appeared with Augener in 1872. The reviews of published pieces were more than positive:

The genius of Chopin was perhaps more decisively shown in his Mazurkas than in any other compositions which he has bequeathed to us.⁵⁴

Chopin's best works are cast in simple moulds: the valse, polonaise, scherzo, mazurka, and the song-form of the nocturne, are among the chosen means of conveyance for his inspirations. He has accordingly been judged as a composer from a false point of view — the consideration of external form as being one of the principal elements, if not the chief one, of beauty in musical composition, — and has been disparagingly spoken of as a small composer when these works have been compared with others of a higher standard of form.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ ANONYMOUS, "Chopin a poet and a Pole", *The Musical World*, 35 (28 August 1858), 550–551.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 550.

⁵² Ibidem, 551.

⁵³ These are the pieces published posthumously with opus numbers by Fontana, published in eight volumes: Op.66 — Op.73.

⁵⁴ ANONYMOUS, "Reviews. *Mazurkas, pour piano*, par F. Chopin. (Novello, Ewer and Co.)", *The Musical Times*, 319 (1 September 1869), 212.

⁵⁵ Eustace J. BREAKSPEAR, "The Works of Chopin in their Relation to Art", *The Monthly Musical record*, 5 (1 January 1875), 2–4.

In France there never had been a mistake about the fancy and the imagination, the sentiment and sensibility and the imagination, the power and the pathos of Chopin. In England he has not met with equal recognition; but Germany has been generous as well as just. And yet, to render justice to British judgement and taste, it must be stated that there was a firm of musical publishers in London, long since extinct (that of Wessel & Stapleton), which was not insensible to the claims of Chopin for distinction. They founded a musical journal, called *The Musical Examiner*, the editor of which, Mr. J. W. Davison, was one of the most enthusiastic writers in praise of the Polish pianist.⁵⁶

The last article is of particular interest. Davison contributed regularly with his strong views, and wrote the introduction to the aforementioned Boosey edition of the mazurkas, where he declared that “Chopin’s genius was not of that high order, his talent was not of that exclusive stamp, his acquirements were not of that remarkable depth, to influence the real progress of art.” In addition, throughout the text he continued to refer to Chopin as a poet.⁵⁷ Disputes about Chopin’s formal- and orchestration-related weaknesses surfaced. We can therefore read that the “composer was not as his best when he attempted to write in classical form”⁵⁸ and that “the orchestral accompaniments to this rondo are trivial at the best.”⁵⁹

Hugh Reginald Haweis, by contrast, struck a very different and much more positive note in his 1866 review:

As a romance writer for the pianoforte, he had no models, and will have no rivals. He was original without extravagance, and polished without affectation. It is to him we owe the extension of chords struck together in *arpeggio*, the little groups of superadded notes, “falling like light drops of pearly dew upon the melodic figure”, he also invented those admirable harmonic progressions which lend importance to many a slender subject, and redeem his slightest efforts from triviality.⁶⁰

Haweis, himself a clergyman and an amateur musician, included Chopin (alongside Handel, Gluck, Haydn, Schubert, Mozart, Beethoven and Men-

⁵⁶ ANONYMOUS, “Chopin and Dr. von Bülow”, *The Athenaeum*, 2476 (10 April 1875), 496.

⁵⁷ *The Mazurkas and Valses of Frederick Chopin, with Memoir by J. W. Davison* (London: Boosey, 1860).

⁵⁸ ANONYMOUS, “Reviews. *Life of Chopin*. By Franz Liszt. Translated from the French by M. Walker Cook (William Reeves)”, *The Musical Times*, 410 (1 April 1877), 184–185.

⁵⁹ ANONYMOUS, “Cristal Palace Concerts”, *The Musical World*, 44/50 (15 December 1866), 791.

⁶⁰ Hugh Reginald HAWEIS, “Schubert and Chopin”, *Contemporary Review*, 2 (May–August 1866), 80–102. Cited in: Rosalba AGRESTA, “Chopin in music criticism in nineteenth-century England”, *Chopin and his Critics: An Anthology (up to World War I)*, ed. Irena Poniatowska (Warsaw: The Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 2011), 512–514.

delssohn) in his second book of *Music and Morals*.⁶¹ His text on the “fragile musician” is a valuable example of a flowery biography, complemented with conversations between Chopin and his friends, establishing that he “was great in small things, but small in great ones”, being “essentially a national musician”, [who sang] “the swan-song of his people’s nationality”, and that Chopin “was more often tender than strong and even his occasional bursts of vigour soon give way to the prevailing undertone of a deep melancholy”⁶². The information on Chopin, along with Huaweis’ views on the English not musical people, are consistent with other writings presented here. Once again, in this period we can observe the extremely diverse perspectives on Chopin’s music, and a lack of agreement and consistency in published articles dealing with his music. In the years 1855 to 1876 the reception of Chopin in the British press continued along already established paths. Even though there was an obvious increase in published material about him, which evidences a significant rise in popularity and demand for his music, Chopin was, for example, not included in *The Great Tone-Poets* series published in 1874.⁶³ However, subjects featuring monographs did not necessarily appear to accord with their popularity, and the demand for Chopin’s pieces continued to grow in the decades ahead in Britain; the subject of the next section.

5. A Further Rise in Popularity, including Weekly Articles about his Life and Work: 1877 to 1879

The British public had been aware of Liszt’s book on Chopin since 1851; *The Athenaeum* published an announcement, describing it as “an interesting contribution to the literature of Art — as continuing a fine tracing of a character little understood because of its delicacy, in addition to the usual details and discussions which make up a musical biography.”⁶⁴ Liszt’s book was the first dedicated to Chopin, and was a particularly important source of information for subsequent authors; 76 years after publication, its influence can be detected

⁶¹ Hugh Reginald HAWEIS, *Music and Morals* (London: Strahan & Co Publishers, 1871)

⁶² *Ibidem*, 311–312.

⁶³ Frederick James CROWEST, *The Great Tone-Poets: Being Short Memoirs of the Greater Musical Composers* (London: Bentley, 1874)

⁶⁴ ANONYMOUS, “Musical and Dramatic Gossip”, *The Athenaeum*, 1223 (5 April 1851), 387.

in Guy de Pourtalès' *Frederick Chopin: A Man of Solitude*, which portrays Chopin as a poet and “an angel, fair of face as a tall, sad woman.”⁶⁵

Liszt's biography of Chopin was translated into English in 1877, by Martha Walker Cook, and published by the London-based William Reeves. The translation inspired further articles about Chopin in the press, although not all of the articles concerned themselves with the book itself. Of particular note, were a series of monthly articles by Julius Schucht, entitled “Chopin: His life and Works”; these appeared in *The Monthly Musical Record* comprising mostly biographical facts drawn from Liszt's book. The articles also contained a number of compelling observations on Chopin's reception in Britain:

In London Chopin met with a most cordial reception; his works had found there a most intelligent audience; they had been played by the first pianists, and had been highly commended by the press. There had also appeared a very interesting pamphlet, under the title of “An Essay on the Works of Frederick Chopin,” which was full of characteristic and instructive passages. From the appearance, at a time when Chopin was comparatively unknown, of such an impartial and competent criticism, we may infer that the author was a man of much intelligence and culture. The path of admiration and honour thus lay open to Chopin, and there was rivalry in some of the first salons of the metropolis for the distinction of receiving him.⁶⁶

This description is very similar to Walter Macfarren's view that “the advent of the Polish composer and pianist here exercised a very potent influence on musical taste.”⁶⁷ However, Schucht claimed that Chopin's works were played only in exclusive circles, and that performers of his music were few in number. For this reason, he felt that Chopin also did not do much to increase his own popularity.⁶⁸

In one article, Schucht made the following claim: “[Chopin] had the good fortune to meet with the interpreter who knew how to render those passages which required *bravura* and strength with even more expression than he could himself have done — a faculty of which Chopin was quick to make recogni-

⁶⁵ Guy de POURTALÈS, *Chopin, ou Le poète* (Gallimard, 1927), Engl. transl. As *Chopin: A Man of Solitude* (London: Thorton Butterworth Limited, 1927), 17.

⁶⁶ Julius SCHUCHT, “Chopin: His Life and Works. By Dr. Julius Schucht. Translated from the German, with the Author's permission, by A. H. W. and E. B. C.,” *The Monthly Musical Record*, 7 (1 June 1877), 89.

⁶⁷ Walter MACFARREN, *Memories: An Autobiography* (The Walter Scott Publishing Co., London, 1905), 58.

⁶⁸ SCHUCHT, “Chopin: His Life and Works”, *The Monthly Musical Record*, 7 (1 April 1877), 57–58.

tion with touching gratitude. And this interpreter was the hero of pianoforte *virtuosi* — Franz Liszt.⁶⁹ After a full biographical portrait, always generous in its praise of Liszt, Schucht turned his attention to Chopin's works. Operating mostly in a descriptive vein, he advanced commonly held perspectives about Chopin's compositional technique, in a floridly romantic style. The polonaise, for example, was described as displaying: "knightly courtesy, enthusiasm, and womanly tenderness, [...] beautifully and touchingly expressed."⁷⁰ Despite advancing such sentiments, Schucht provided important information about performance practice in the late nineteenth century:

It is certainly no very great achievement to play 22 upper notes on the 12 lower ones (Chopin's "Nocturnes," Pauer's 8vo edition, p.2), but everyone will not at once hit upon the correct phrasing of the right hand, so as to bring out the concealed thoughts. In this and many similar passages 2/4 and 3/4 time so melt into one another that the transition can scarcely be perceived. But he who plays first in triplets and then in common time will not rightly express the composer's idea. The player, moreover, who makes the boundary line between the two times apparent by accentuation will never produce the magic effect intended by the composer.⁷¹

The monthly publications by Schucht started a trend that was followed by Frederick Niecks and Jean Kleczyński. At the same time, Chopin's works were published internationally in a "canonic way"⁷² by Richault and Schonenberger in 1860, Gebethner in 1863, Jurgenson in 1873, Breitkopf in 1878, Kistner in 1879 and Peters in 1879, while in the early twentieth century the complete works were published by Oxford University Press (1932) and Polish Complete Edition (1937).⁷³ Entering the canon of the nineteenth century confirmed

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 57.

⁷⁰ SCHUCHT, "Chopin: His Life and Works", *The Monthly Musical Record*, 7 (1 September 1877), 138.

⁷¹ SCHUCHT, "Chopin: His Life and Works", *The Monthly Musical Record*, 7 (1 August 1877), 120. [Piece described is Nocturne Op.9 No.1.]

⁷² Philip BRETT, "Text, context, and the early music editor", *Authenticity and Early Music: A Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86.

⁷³ *Fréd. Chopin's works, revised and fingered (for the most part according to the composer's notes) by Karl Mikuli, F. Kistner, Leipzig, 1879. Collection of 17 volumes; First critically revised complete edition, edited by Woldemar Bargiel, Johannes Brahms, Auguste Franck, Franz Liszt, Carl Reineke, Ernst Rudorff, Breitkopf & Haertel; Leipzig, 1878 — 1880. Collection of 213 pieces in 14 volumes; Complete works of Chopin, critically revised after the original French, German and Polish editions, by Karl Klindworth, P. Jurgenson; Moscow, 1873 — 1876. Collection of 6 volumes, only piano works; Frédéric Chopin: oeuvres pour le piano, édition originale, Gebethner; Warsaw, 1863. The third edition was edited by Jan Kleczyński in ten volumes, 1882; New*

Chopin's status as an important composer, as well as highlighting the popularity of his works and the public demand for them. In late nineteenth-century Britain, the demand especially for drawing room pieces was very high and usually associated with Victorian women who required "short, manageable piano pieces — simple transcriptions, dance pieces, 'character' pieces."⁷⁴

6. Reception between 1879 and 1899: following the established paths

In 1879, *The Musical World* announced the first biography of Chopin, written by Moritz Karasowski, *Frederic Chopin, his Life, Letters and Works*:

Admirers of Chopin's music who would like to see their hero, not as the affected, artificial nonentity described by Liszt, or as the morbidly sentimental being viewed through the mental spectacles of the fickle Mdme Dudevant, but as one full vigorous life and spirit, of aspiration and enthusiasm, should read the recent biography of the Polish pianist and composer, by Moritz Karasowski, himself a Pole, and, it must be admitted, an enthusiast. On that account it is as well to "gazer un peu."⁷⁵

This humorous announcement clearly demonstrates an awareness of the polarised views of Chopin, using them to comic effect. The book that is described was a success, eliciting a-flattering review in *The Examiner*, for example. *Inter alia* Chopin's popularity was clarified in the review:

Within the last few years the name of Chopin has become more and more familiar to our English ears. To those who have a real sympathy with the genius of the strangely gifted composer this apparent popularity is far from being wholly satisfactory. For Frederic Chopin has not only become the favoured genius of the high-class concert-room, but his exquisite works have fallen to be prey of the boarding-school teacher...[.]. However, as we all grant the popularity of Chopin's works, although we may not be satisfied with the principal causes of such popularity, it is but natural that

and cheap Paris edition. *The works of Frédéric Chopin*, ed. Thomas Tellefsen. Schonenberger; Paris, 1860. Collection of 12 volumes; *Complete Collection of the Compositions of Frederic Chopin for the Piano-Forte*, Wessel & Co; London, 1853. Collection of 71 pieces; *Fr. Chopin's Collected Works*, ed. Hermann Scholtz. C. F. Peters; Leipzig, 1879. Collection of 12 volumes; *The Oxford Original Edition of Fr. Chopin*. Edited by Edouard Ganache. Oxford University Press, 1932. Based on Jane Stirling's score. *Complete Works of Frederick Chopin*" (eds.) Ignaz Paderewski, Ludwig Bronarski and Josef Turczynski. 26 volumes. Warsaw 1937. From: Maurice J. E. Brown, *Chopin: an index of his works in chronological order* (London: Macmillan, 1960), 173–175.

⁷⁴ SAMSON, *Chopin*, 288.

⁷⁵ See: MORITZ KARASOWSKI, *Sein leben, seine Werke und Briefe* (Dresden: Ries, 1877); Engl. trans. Emily Hill as *Frederic Chopin. His life and Letters* (London: William Reeves, 1879). From: Anonymous, "Chopin Le Vrai", *The Musical World*, 15 (5 April 1879), 214.

we should like to know something about the life of the composer himself. And to respond to this, a lady bearing the name of Emily Hill has translated into English the popular work of Moritz Karasowski. The translator has performed her task excellently well, and no doubt the volume will meet a just need of success.

Although addressed indirectly, the review goes on to highlight the impact of myths surrounding Chopin and his life:

He [Karasowski] has, in fact, given us a pleasingly and simply written life of the composer interesting from the beginning to the end. And there was indeed some need that such a life should be written; for many years Chopin was only spoken of in the terms of the wildest panegyric, or else his just fame was belied by the very men who were his most servile imitators.

Besides its importance as a commentary on Chopin's works and life, Karasowski's book left testimonies about Chopin's second visit; according to him, Chopin's works were popular, being "everywhere received with unusual marks of respect and friendliness and with the sympathy which is the best reward of the poet and artist."⁷⁶ The narrative is mostly told through Chopin's correspondence, but conveyed in a way that fits the author's own vision of the visit. Ultimately, Chopin is again presented as a suffering poet without a country, dying of love for dishonourable George Sand.⁷⁷

In the same year, *The Monthly Musical Record* published a series of articles entitled "A Critical Commentary on the Pianoforte Works on Frederic Chopin" by Frederick Niecks; these would later become part of his landmark biography published in 1888. Niecks wrote a lengthy commentary on each of Chopin's works, combining his own thoughts with facts provided by Karasowski and Liszt. On the early works Niecks explained:

Chopin's early works were tentative -his ambition aimed high and in many directions; but having found the limits of his genius, and the true sphere of his activity, he wisely abstained from obstinately attempting what was beyond his reach, and reserved his strength for that in which he could excel. What influence did Chopin's want of success as a popular virtuoso, a function for which his physical and mental constitution unfitted him, exercise upon his career as a composer? The quantity and quality is indeterminate, but the existence of the influence will hardly be denied, and ought to be taken into account.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ KARASOWSKI, *Frederic Chopin. His life and Letters* (London: William Reeves, 1879), 345.

⁷⁷ ANONYMOUS, "Chopin", *The Examiner*, 71 (19 July 1879), 934–935.

⁷⁸ Friedrich NIECKS, "A Critical Commentary on the Pianoforte Works of Frederic Chopin. By Fr. Niecks", *The Monthly Musical Record*, 9 (1 September 1879), 130.

Niecks also drew attention to the unpopularity of several early works, namely the *Grande Fantasia sur des Airs polonais*, Op. 13 and *Krakowiak, Grand Rondeau de Concert*, Op. 14:

Well, one has had nearly fifty years to think about this matter, and seems to have come to conclusion that is hardly worthwhile to trouble one's self much about it. Let us, therefore, not be too hard upon the critics who did not at once greet Chopin as a composer by the grace of God. If our acquaintance with Chopin were to begin with these and similar productions, it may be doubted if, even in the present state of the musical art, we should fully recognise his merits in this incipient stage.

They [Op. 13 and Op. 14] show us Chopin's style in a state of fermentation. If you compare these works with those composed after this clearing process had taken place, you will find that some of the ingredients have been secreted. Indeed, these pieces ought to be regarded rather as depositories of raw material and preparatory studies than as inspired works of art, being not unlike artists' note and sketch books: a collection of hands, legs, heads, trunks of trees, bits of scenery, and all sorts of odds and ends in more or less unfinished, incomplete, and soulless condition.⁷⁹

Besides the commentary here, Niecks' work presents a range of interesting ideas from other writers, such as Chopin's student, Wilhelm von Lenz:

Almost all my remarks on the concertos run counter to those made by W. v. Lenz. The F minor concerto he holds to be uninteresting work, immature and fragmentary in plan, and, excepting some delicate ornamentation, without originality. Nay, he goes even so far as to say that the passage-work is of the usual kind met with in the compositions of Hummel and his successors, and that the *cantilena* in the *larghetto* is in the *jejune* style of Hummel; the last movement also receives but scanty and qualified praise. On the other hand, he raves about the E minor concerto, confining himself, however to the first movement. The second movement he calls a "tiresome nocturne," the rondo "a Hummel." A tincture of classical soberness and self-possession in the first movement explains Lenz's admiration of this composition, but I fail to understand the rest of his predilections and critical utterances.⁸⁰

Maintaining a high degree of accuracy, Niecks' writings are also a prime example of the romantic style of writing mentioned previously in this article. For example, when discussing Chopin's Scherzo Op. 31, Niecks asks:

Is this not like a shriek of despair? And what follows, bewildered efforts of a soul shut in by a wall of circumstances from which it strives in vain to escape? At last, sinking down with fatigue, it dreams a dream of idyllic beauty.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ibidem, 131.

⁸⁰ Ibidem, 134.

⁸¹ Ibidem, 134.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, *The Monthly Musical Record* continued to bring Chopin-related news from the continent. Amongst this news, one finds comments about Adolph Henselt, drawing attention to the important impact he had on perceptions of Chopin's works; an article, written by Wilhelm von Lenz and translated in 1880 asserts that Henselt's tempo rubato was "not the Rubato of Chopin: it is the reverberation in tempo, not so as to change the appearance of the whole, but like a picture which is viewed reversed through a magnifying glass."⁸² This view lends support to remarks made in a famous series of three lecture-articles by Jan Kleczyński, which began in October 1881 before being translated by Alfred Whittingham. Kleczyński opened the first of the lectures by explaining that Chopin has been greatly underestimated overseas and was due the levels of recognition given "by Liszt, by Schumann, and by Schucht." Romanticised descriptions of pieces are in evidence, such as on the Nocturne Op. 9 No. 1 "[exhibiting] to us a musical form unknown until that time; a thrilling sadness together with novel elegance of construction. In the middle part, *which should not be played too fast*, the melody drags along in heavy octaves, as though the soul were sinking beneath the weight of thought and the heat of a summer's night." A marking for the middle part in the octaves reads *sotto voce*, implying that the octaves should not be played heavily. Further on Kleczyński explains how Chopin's works should be interpreted:

Numbers of school-girls playing Chopin's music with that which is called *feeling*, are not aware that there is in it strong and noble matter which they debase and degrade *ad lib*. This misnamed *feeling* has the following characteristics: (1) Exaggeration of the *rubato*; (2) The turning of the thought upside down, if one may so describe it, by giving the accents to the notes, which should be weak, and *vice versa*; (3) Striking the chords with the left hand just before the corresponding notes of the melody. Chopin has, without doubt, his negative points which serve as the basis, so to speak, of the positive side of his genius. He somewhat lost sight of himself in the Parisian drawing-rooms; perhaps he did not come up to the expectations which he raised, so far as considerable works are concerned. Considering the richness of his talent, he has disappointed us somewhat, as he disappointed Schumann; but, on the other hand, throwing his whole heart into small works, he has finished and perfected them in an admirable manner. The executant should not exaggerate his weak points; on the contrary, as we shall say

⁸² Wilhelm von LENZ, "Adolph Henselt. *From the German of Herr von Lenz.*", *The Monthly Musical Record*, 10 (1 December 1880), 164.

when we come to speak of style, he should treat them as the reflection of the more powerful passages.”⁸³

As with Niecks', Kleczyński's work was later published as a book. Both works are of considerable importance, demonstrating the popularity of Chopin as a composer and pianist. A review of Nieck's book, however, informs the reader that Chopin lacked the peculiar qualities, natural and requisite, for successful cultivation of the larger forms of composition.”⁸⁴ Once again, we observe long-established tropes in operation, whereby Chopin is presented as a composer of small and short rather than large-scale works. In 1892, Willeby states, in the preface to his book *Frederic Francois Chopin*, that “so much has already been written concerning Frederic Chopin and his work, that it would be at first sight seem unnecessary to add further to the list. Nevertheless, it is only quite recently that the truth concerning many points in his career has come to light.”⁸⁵ Similar sentiments were raised in respects of Chopin's regular appearances in concerts of the time. *The Record*, for example, published an article accusing pianists of poor judgement for choosing to perform Chopin's works far too often:

It may be asked why there should not be greater variety, considering the quantity of good material at disposal? The answer is not difficult: there are pianists who do not think; others who do think, but principally of themselves. The former are only too glad to imitate a scheme already in hand. As to Chopin, it would be well if most pianists *did* neglect him, at any rate, for a while.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, George Bernard Shaw's review of Charles Willeby's *Life of Chopin*, revisited a familiar theme, namely Willeby's opinion that “in the Concerto, Chopin's subordination to, and inability to cope with, form was con-

⁸³ Jean KLECZYŃSKI, “Frederic Chopin's Works, and their Proper Interpretation. *Three Lectures delivered at Varsovia*. By Jean Kleczyński. Translated by Alfred Whittingham. Lecture I”, *The Orchestra and the Choir* (October 1881), 71–77.

⁸⁴ T. L. S., “The Life of Chopin. By F. Niecks”, *The Musical Standard*, 36 (9 February 1889), 109–110.

⁸⁵ Charles WILLEBY, *Frederic Francois Chopin* (London: Samoson Low, Marston & Company, 1892), Preface, 1.

⁸⁶ ANONYMOUS, “Pianist's Programmes”, *The Monthly Musical Record*, 22 (1 June 1892), 259.

spicuous as was his superiority and independence of it in his smaller works.”⁸⁷
According to Shaw:

This implies that form means sonata form and nothing else, an unwarrantable piece of pedantry, which one remembers as common enough in the most incompetent and old-fashioned criticisms of Chopin’s ballades, Liszt’s symphonic poems, and Wagner’s works generally, but which is now totally out of countenance. Mr. Willeby himself would not stand by it for a moment.⁸⁸

Yet another series of articles, entitled “On the interpretation of Chopin’s works” appeared in *The Musical Standard* in 1896. Above all, the author explained how Chopin’s students approached certain aspects of piano technique:

Judging from the accounts given us by De Lenz, George Mathias, Princess Czartoryska, and others, the great composer must have been equally great as a teacher. He appears to have made the most careful study of touch by applying different methods of staccato, demi-staccato, legato, and portamento.

On pedalling we are told:

Scholtz, Klindworth, Kulak, Mikuli, and all their editors of Chopin’s works are very careful as to the use of the first pedal, but not in a single instance have they indicated the use of the second pedal, which is of equal importance. The effects produced by the great pianists spoken of as ‘velvet’ are brought about by the second pedal or the combination of both pedals.

And on tempo rubato:

I would say that the exaggerated use of the rubato is responsible to a great degree for the misconception of Chopin’s music. No composer for the piano has ever been so much the victim of misapprehension on the part of his interpreters as Francois Chopin.⁸⁹

In spite of such criticism, myths remained in circulation at the end of the century. In 1897, for example, one is reminded that “the delicacy of Chopin’s playing is traditional, but Liszt is [the] authority for the statement that Chopin was fond of hearing his larger and more heroic works played with a power

⁸⁷ George Bernard SHAW, *Music in London 1890–94* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1932), Vol. II, 209.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 209.

⁸⁹ ANONYMOUS, “On the Interpretation of Chopin’s Works”, *The Musical Standard*, 50 (27 June 1896), 411–412.

of which he himself was incapable.”⁹⁰ Comments relating to the “ill poet” are frequently found in such literature. For example, the books of William Henry Hadow (1859–1937) contain descriptions of Chopin as “the Musset of Music [...] keen, delicate, sensitive, sometimes marring his thought with the querulousness of an invalid.”⁹¹ In 1898 Rutland Boughton wrote a series of articles on Chopin’s works in the form of a descriptive analysis, with no new information presented.⁹² Then in 1899 Oscar Bie again perpetuates the notion of Chopin as a short-form composer: “His sonatas remain most strange to us; they are sonatas in the strict sense as little as the other sonatas by the Romantics. Chopin cares so little for form that he avoids the recurrence to the first theme.”⁹³

Despite all these positions, there is ample evidence testifying to the popularity of Chopin’s music at the turn of the century. Henry Davey’s lengthy article in *The Musical Herald* in October 1899, for example, serves as a prime example of the popularity of Chopin’s music at the end of the nineteenth century:

Every pianist plays them [Chopin’s works] at his recitals; every professor teaches them; they are practised all the year round without intermission. It may safely be stated that Chopin’s music is always being played somewhere, that not a single moment in the whole year is it silent. No other pianoforte music is so universally loved; from the greatest virtuosi down to the British school-girl, everyone delights in his works, small or great.⁹⁴

Written to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Chopin’s death, this article highlights something significant in the reception of Chopin’s music; despite a somewhat tentative and polarised reception, both during his life and after his death, the music of Chopin had become well and truly part of the British musical canon.

⁹⁰ W. S. B. MATTHEWS, “Chopin’s Style”, *The Musical Standard*, 51 (8 May 1897), 302.

⁹¹ W. H. HADOW, *Studies in Modern Music* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), 129.

⁹² Rutland BOUGHTON, “Chopin’s Works”, *The Musical Standard*, 52 (3 September 1898), 148.

⁹³ BIE, *A History of Pianoforte and Pianoforte Players*, 262.

⁹⁴ Henry DAVEY, “Chopin: The Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death”, *The Musical Herald* (1 October 1899), 291.

7. Conclusion

Chopin's reception in nineteenth-century Britain reveals three recurring themes: Chopin as romantic composer; Chopin as nationalist composer (closely related to his status as suffering poet); and Chopin as salon composer struggling with large-scale forms. Evaluating these perspectives from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, with a large volume of available and often contradictory information about the composer at our disposal, makes reception research a somewhat arduous task: biographies, theoretical work on his music and a plethora of different contexts and pianistic interpretations inform the criticism which, in turn, forms reception. Starting from scarce evidence, written shortly after his death, we can observe a gradual rise in popularity and demand. By 1899, the concluding point for this article, Chopin had firmly entered the musical canon in Great Britain: various editions had been published, performances of his works had become increasingly popular, and regular biographies had started to appear. At the same time, writings had begun to offer information on how his works should be performed.

This article has elaborated various preconceptions, subtexts and misrepresentations established during Chopin's lifetime. Unlike reception during his life, which was polarised, colourful, and unpredictable, reception following his passing in 1849 is much less turbulent and improbable. In exploring the gradual reinforcement of Chopin's position in the second half of the nineteenth century Britain, we see that the popularity of a composer is not easily gained; in Chopin's case, we witness a gradual build-up of his popularity, alongside interest and representation in the press and, just as in the game of "love me love me not", we can see the various steps towards an ultimate acceptance (if not love) for Chopin as a composer. It is, perhaps, as if the game finally ended with *à la folie*.

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Summary

This article considers the reception of Frédéric Chopin in Great Britain, between the years 1849 and 1899. It serves as a natural sequel to “Love me, love me not (Part I): Chopin’s reception in Great Britain, 1830–1849” (*Musica Iagellonica*, 2019). Chopin’s reception in nineteenth century Britain is complex, resembling a colourful patchwork of sources placed in various social, cultural, and economic contexts. Unlike reception during his life, which was polarised, colourful, and unpredictable, reception following his passing in 1849 is much less turbulent and improbable, while still involving numerous preconceptions, subtexts and misrepresentations established during Chopin’s lifetime. In exploring the gradual reinforcement of Chopin’s position in the second half of nineteenth century Britain, we see that the popularity of a composer is not easily gained; in Chopin’s case, we witness a gradual build-up of his popularity, alongside interest and representation in the press. This article presents the various steps towards an ultimate acceptance for Chopin as a composer at the end of the nineteenth century Britain.

Keywords: Frédéric Chopin, reception, nineteenth century

