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Anna WYPYCH-GAWROŃSKA

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0956-1624>

Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa (Poland)

Literature and writers in the life and works of Stanisław Moniuszko

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Abstract

The present article concerns the place and significance of literature in the life and works of Stanisław Moniuszko, a composer who created different musico-literary genres, songs, operas, cantatas as well as stage music for dramas. Moniuszko's correspondence, which often featured literature-related topics, constitutes the basis for the analysis of literary contexts of his works. The composer wrote about his favourite books, poets and writers as well as the lyrics to songs and librettos. Above all, however, his letters contain evidence of his search for new librettos in the existing literary texts and numerous traces of his attempts to invite contemporary writers, poets and playwrights to collaborate on musico-dramatic works. The letters written to several eminent representatives of mid-century Polish literature are a testament to Moniuszko's ambitious intentions. The contents of those letters also confirm that it was difficult for the composer to find a writer who would collaborate with him as the author of the lyrics to a musico-dramatic piece. The article also presents a collection of Moniuszko's librettists, which includes the best writers and playwrights of the time. The most remarkable of Moniuszko's works are well-written in terms of lyrics, which is a proof of the effectiveness of the composer's efforts and, in the context of the popularity of his works, also of the significance of his achievements, not only for music, but also for the literature and literary culture of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Moniuszko, literature, libretto, opera, cantata.

As a composer of musico-literary pieces, songs, operas, cantatas and stage music for dramas, Stanisław Moniuszko remained under the strong influence of

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literature. In his youth, he attempted to write different literary forms¹, and then, due to the fact that he composed pieces that combined music and poetry, he used literary works and collaborated with writers, playwrights and poets². The issue of Moniuszko's relationship with literature is present in the composer's biographies, in which it even received two opposing points of view. The first presents him as a well-read person, who was bitten by the reading bug in his childhood and remained under the influence of one of his uncles, Kazimierz, the owner of a magnificent, for its time, library, which Moniuszko inherited³ (owing to this library, he was able to familiarize himself with the classical works and writings of the Age of Enlightenment). On the other hand, the second portrays him rather as a literary dilettante, who could not properly judge literature and often used poorer works as the literary basis for his pieces of music (this image was predominantly shaped at the beginning of the twentieth century⁴).

The literary context should also be brought up when discussing the reception of Moniuszko and his works since it contains elements that mythologize and place him among the national bards and, through the use of literary perspective, bring him closer to literature and the world of literary notions⁵. In the present text, the relationship between Moniuszko and literature is introduced by attempting to determine his approach to the latter, which is predominantly revealed in his correspondence as well as through the portrayal of Moniuszko as the author of music for literary texts and a composer who forged relationships with poets and writers

¹ Cf., among others, Stanisław Moniuszko's 1838 poem entitled *Do majora Wilkowskiego*, which "the entire Vilnius knew about," Listy, p. 599–600.

² The issue of Moniuszko's relationship with the literary world of the mid-nineteenth century was of interest to, among others, Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryn, cf. R. Okulicz-Kozaryn, *Stanisław Moniuszko i kanon litewskiej literatury krajowej. Na przedpolu szczegółowych badań*, [in:] *Teatr operowy Stanisława Moniuszki. Rekonesanse*, ed. M. Jabłoński and E. Nowicka, Poznań 2005, p. 101–108, Elżbieta Nowicka, who attempted to include "the most artistically accurate of Moniuszko's works [...] in the canon of literature understood as a cluster of thoughts and ideas," E. Nowicka, *Stanisław Moniuszko i świat literatury w połowie XIX wieku*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki*, ed. by M. Dziadek and E. Nowicka, Poznań 2014, p. 113, Małgorzata Komorowska, cf. M. Komorowska, *Stanisław Moniuszko w pogoni za operą literacką*, [in:] *Opera polska w XVIII i XIX wieku*, edited by M. Jabłoński, J. Stęszewski and J. Tatarska, Poznań 2000, p. 129–145. Alina Borkowska-Rychlewska's works stand out from among the texts devoted to Moniuszko's librettists, including, among others: *Między przekładem a twórczością oryginalną (o librettach Jana Chęcińskiego do oper Stanisława Moniuszki)*, [in:] *Teatr operowy Stanisława Moniuszki. Rekonesanse ...*, p. 89–99 and *Jan Chęciński – Moniuszkowski librecista*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki ...*, p. 99–112.

³ Cf. W. Rudziński, *Stanisław Moniuszko. Studia i materiały*, part 1, Kraków 1955, p. 19.

⁴ The changing attitudes to Moniuszko were discussed by Jarosław Mianowski, *O trzech kręgach moniuszkowskiej mitologii. Apologeci, krytycy i socrealiści*, [in:] *Opera polska w XVIII i XIX wieku ...*, p. 147–155.

⁵ The prevailing myth of Stanisław Moniuszko as the national bard was discussed by, among others, Agnieszka Topolska, *Mit wieszcz. Stanisław Moniuszko w piśmiennictwie lat 1858–1989*, Poznań 2014.

as the co-authors of musico-dramatic pieces, or even the independent creator of librettos to musico-dramatic works (although not in the sense of creating a new text but transforming an existing one). In spite of the considerable number of publications devoted to individual pieces and their literary elements⁶, Moniuszko's correspondence⁷, though not fully preserved, constitutes a very interesting material, which reveals his attitude to literature and demonstrates its influence on the composer's works once analysed in the context of the entirety of his achievements.

In his correspondence, Moniuszko recollected the beginnings of his ties with music, recalling a literary work that functioned in the form of a song – a piece by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, which his mother used to sing:

Pierwszą szkołą pojmowania muzyki były dla mnie *Śpiewy historyczne* Niemcewicza wykonywane dziwnie miłym głosem przez moją Matkę.⁸ [Niemcewicz's *Śpiewy historyczne* (*Historical Songs*) were my first school of understanding music, performed by my Mother in a strangely pleasant voice.]⁹

In later years, books were a frequent subject of his letters; he took note of new editions and translations, alluded to literary topics and tried to discover new tendencies and debuting authors. In a letter from 1837, for instance, he wrote from Minsk to his fiancée Alina about a sentimental novel by Ludwik Kropiński¹⁰. In an 1860 letter to Rudolf Wolff, he inquired:

Czy nie macie Państwo Poezji i prozy polskiej wyboru Pani Kraków?¹¹ [Do you not have enough Polish prose and poetry to choose from, Miss Kraków?]

The letters also prove that he eagerly exchanged books with, among others, Józef Sikorski¹² and Edward Ilcewicz¹³. He would also send them to his wife from his travels; in 1843 he wrote, for example:

⁶ Cf., among others, G. Zieziula, „*Paria*” Stanisława Moniuszki: wokół „poważnej” opery, muzyki do tragedii *Delavigne’a* i muzycznego orientalizmu, [in:] *Teatr Stanisława Moniuszki. Rekonesanse ...*, p. 37–56; S. Paczkowski, *Kilka uwag w sprawie historii i libretta „Loterii” Stanisława Moniuszki*, [in:] *ibidem*, p. 65–72; D. Ratajczakowa, *O wodewilach i operach Stanisława Moniuszki*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki ...*, p. 13–22.

⁷ The essential publication here is: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane*, prepared for print by W. Rudziński with the collaboration of M. Stokowska, Kraków 1969.

⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Adam Kirkor, Vilnius 21 November 1856, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁹ [Translator's note: the original quotations are written in a slightly archaic language and were translated into modern English.]

¹⁰ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his fiancée, Minsk 9 August 1837, as cited in S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 40.

¹¹ This concerns the work *Proza i poezja polska wybrana i zastosowana do użytku młodzieży żeńskiej przez Paulinę Kraków*, part I, Warszawa 1860, letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Rudolf Wolff, Warsaw 7 January 1860, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 382.

¹² Cf., among others, letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 11/23 October 1846, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹³ Cf., among others, letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 5 January 1865, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 467, letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 11 April 1866, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 501.

Przez Schmiendhausena otrzymasz pakiet z książkami. Są tam cztery tomy ‘Revue,’ które oddasz Wróblewskiemu. Są dwaj moi ci: Alfred de Musset, [...] i Dickens.¹⁴ [You will receive a bundle of books through Schmiendhausen. There are four volumes of ‘Revue’, which you are to give to Wróblewski. These two are mine: Alfred de Musset, [...] and Dickens.]

He recommended books to his family, reporting from Cracow in 1858:

Tak o Wieliczce, jako i o katedrze Wawelskiej przeczytajcie w dziełku trzytomowym Józefa Mączyńskiego pod tytułem *Pamiątka z Krakowa*. Weźcie te książki z księgarni na mój rachunek.¹⁵ [You can read about Wieliczka and the Wavel Cathedral in a three-volume work by Józef Mączyński entitled *Pamiątka z Krakowa* [A souvenir from Cracow]. Take them from the bookshop and put them on my tab.]

He also thought that the texts he read in periodicals, including literary texts, were worthy of attention. In 1859, he recommended *Historia kolka w płocie* by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski and *Dramat opowiedziany* by Józef Korzeniowski to Ilcewicz, both of which he read in “Gazeta Warszawska”¹⁶ [“Warsaw Newspaper”].

The image of Moniuszko that emerges from his correspondence is that of a person who valued relationships with writers and poets. He knew that leading an active social life, visiting literary salons and meeting writers might have an influence on the decisions made in theatres regarding the staging of new works, which is why he wrote the following to his wife from Warsaw in 1857:

[...] wyszedłem po drugim akcie i pośpieszyłem do Korzeniowskiego, gdzie znalazłem nieliczne, ale dobrane towarzystwo. Byli: Odyniec [Antoni Edward, poeta], Suzin, Wojciech, Deotyma [Jadwiga Łuszczewska], Lesznowski [Antoni, redaktor “Gazety Warszawskiej”], Witte [Karol, autor pamiętników], Lesznowski [!], Sobieszczański [historyk, dziennikarz, cenzor] i kilka innych.¹⁷ [I left after the second act and hurried to Korzeniowski’s home, where I found a small, yet suitable company. There were: Odyniec [Antoni Edward, a poet], Suzin, Wojciech, Deotyma [Jadwiga Łuszczewska], Lesznowski [Antoni, the editor of the Warsaw Newspaper], Witte [Karol, an writer of memoirs], Lesznowski [!], Sobieszczański [a historian, journalist and censor] and a few others.]

The relationship with the literary community must have pleased him if he informed, for example, that:

A ponieważ byliśmy zaproszeni do Łuszczewskich, więc i poszliśmy razem o 9. Tu mnie spotkała owacja bardzo przyjemna, wiersz Deotymy, czytany przepysznie przez Korzeniowskiego.¹⁸ [And since we were invited to Mr and Mrs Łuszczewski’s home, we went there together at 9. I witnessed a very pleasant ovation as Deotyma’s poem was being read out deliciously by Korzeniowski.]

¹⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, October 1843, as cited in *ibid*, p. 90.

¹⁵ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, Cracow 1/13 May 1858, as cited in *ibid*, p. 306.

¹⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 28 April 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 355.

¹⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, Warsaw 10/22 July 1857, as cited in *ibid*, p. 264.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 265.

He used his contacts in the literary community not only in his work as a composer, but also in cultural and charitable activity; in 1866, for example, he organised a charity concert and invited writers and poets to collaborate on it:

[...] urządziłem koncert na Przytulisko. [...] Deklamowała w tym koncercie Deotyma, więc dlatego takie powodzenie.¹⁹ [...] I organised a concert to raise money for the Shelter. [...] Deotyma gave a recitation, hence the success.]

When giving accounts of his travels and visits at theatres, but also recalling the books that he was reading, he most frequently and readily mentioned French works, new editions of literary texts, poems and dramas. He most likely read them in the original, as he gave many of the titles in French²⁰. He eagerly commented on the quality of translations (e.g. the “excellent translation of *Oberon*”²¹), which is not surprising in the context of his efforts to have his own musico-literary works translated into French and Russian (as in the case of the songs published in Paris: *Echos de Pologne* and *Mélodies de Moniuszko* in Alfred des Essarts’ translation²²). From among French writers, he often mentioned such names and titles of plays as: Casimir Delavigne, Molière, Victor Ducange²³, Émile Augier²⁴, Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy²⁵. In an 1866 letter to Edward Ilcewicz, Moniuszko asked whether Ilcewicz had read “teatr Bayarda. Wyborne są rzeczy, a tomów jedenaście”²⁶ – he meant the multi-volume edition of the works by a French writer Jean-François Alfred Bayard, who wrote in Eugène Scribe’s style. He referenced some writers and their plays, such as Philippe François Pinel Dumanoir’s *Placz i śmiech*, as proof of the attractiveness of the repertoire at the Warsaw Theatre²⁷. In the case of German literature, Moniuszko particularly valued the works by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

This kind of information confirms that Moniuszko referred to both classical authors and texts as well as tried to know the current trends in literature. He familiarised himself with literature not only for practical or professional purposes, thinking about the texts for songs or librettos, but also, perhaps, because

¹⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 5 February 1866, as cited in *ibid*, p. 498.

²⁰ Cf., among others, letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 5 January 1865, as cited in *ibid*, p. 467.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Cf. S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 428.

²³ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his daughter Elżbieta, Paris 17/29 June 1858, as cited in *ibid*, p. 316.

²⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, Paris 6 January 1862, as cited in *ibid*, p. 427.

²⁵ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Sergei Mukhanov, Saint Petersburg 1/15 February 1870, as cited in *ibid*, p. 554.

²⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 11 April 1866, as cited in *ibid*, p. 501.

²⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 5 January 1865, as cited in *ibid*, p. 467.

he was aware of how important it was for an active composer to broaden his knowledge of the contemporary phenomena in literature, art and culture. On the other hand, however, the aforementioned works do not depict Moniuszko as an expert in literature of the highest order. In the case of the previously mentioned authors, apart from Molière, de Musset, Delavigne and Dickens, he dedicated time to reading light comedies and melodramas.

A more ambitious image, however, emerges from the reading list of publications devoted to music and literature, both old and contemporary, which – it would seem – Moniuszko tried to be up to date with. Although they are not evidence of a typical interest in literature, they do create an impression that the composer had extramusical experiences and tried to broaden his knowledge of different fields. He mentioned the works devoted to literature in the pre-Warsaw period when, for example, he wrote to Józef Sikorski in 1846:

Przyrzekł mnie Zawadzki, że w tym tygodniu wyszle książki następujące do Ciebie: F i n k [Gottfried Wilhelm] *Historia opery*, S c h i l l i n g [Gustaw]: *Historia nowożytnej muzyki, Estetyka muzyka* [chodziło zapewne o *Estetykę muzyki*].²⁸ [Zawadzki promised me that he would send the following books to You this week: F i n k [Gottfried Wilhelm] *Historia opery* [History of Opera], S c h i l l i n g [Gustav]: *Historia nowożytnej muzyki, Estetyka muzyka* [*History of modern music, Musician's aesthetics*; he most likely meant *The Aesthetics of Music*.]

He must have made use of these works since, in 1855, he once more referred to Schilling's encyclopaedia²⁹. He repeatedly mentioned having read works on the subjects of literature, prosody, history and geography. When he was living in Warsaw, his contacts with publishers and booksellers were not limited to offers of publishing sheet music; he even gained a certain refinement and cooperated with them in order to have his works published, simultaneously observing their publishing activity in different fields. The best-known booksellers to whom Moniuszko turned included the Warsaw publishers Gubrynowicz and Robert Wolff, Karol Wild in Lviv, Jan Żupański in Poznań as well as Adam and Feliks Zawadzki in Vilnius.

According to biographers, Moniuszko not only started his relationship with literature early on, but also ended his life as a person who was very close to it. Soon after the composer's death, Jan Kleczyński wrote that:

Moniuszko wcześniej napawał się tradycjami umysł uszlachetniającymi – chętnie czytywał się w stare kroniki, i w dzień swojej nagłej śmierci zaglądał jeszcze podobno do Długosza.³⁰ [From an early age, Moniuszko delighted in the traditions that ennoble the mind – he eagerly pored over old chronicles and, on the day of his sudden death, he supposedly still looked into the writings of Długosz.]

²⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 11/23 October 1846, as cited in *ibid*, p. 113.

²⁹ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 3 June 1855, as cited in *ibid*, p. 206.

³⁰ J. Kleczyński, *Stanisław Moniuszko*, "Bluszcz" 1872, No. 25, p. 194.

In this way, the relationship with literature the critic emphasised became a touchstone of the value of an artist in general and, in the case of Moniuszko, it confirmed the high quality of musical pieces based on literature. The connection of the creator of music with literature was an element of constructing the myth of an eminent national composer.

Reading experiences and literary fascinations must have influenced the creative awareness of the composer, who commented on the topic of the relationship between literature and music and the influence of literature on musico-literary works several times; he wrote the following in an 1842 letter to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski:

Niemieccy muzycy wyborem poezji umieją siebie inspirować, i ich Szyller, Goethe i wszyscy sławniejsi poeci znaleźli po nieraz najszcześniejsze melodie. Smutno widzieć, że u nas nikt z piszących muzykę nie spróbował sił swoich na poezjach od dawna wyglądających śpiewaka.³¹ [German musicians can inspire themselves with their choice of poetry, and their Schiller, Goethe and all of the more famous poets have often found the happiest of melodies. It is sad to see that none of our composers have ever tried their hand at the poems which have long awaited to be sung.]

This letter, which is very important for judging Moniuszko as an artist who made references to literature, resounds with a tone of self-reflection:

Mylne mniemanie, że do dobrej poezji trudno jest pisać muzykę, że zuchwałością jest porywać się z muzyką do pięknej poezji. Mnie przynajmniej zdaje się, że każdy dobry wiersz przynosi z sobą gotową melodię, a umiejący ją podслуchać i przelać na papier jedna sobie nazwanie szczęśliwego kompozytora wtenczas, gdy niczym innym, jak tylko tłumaczem tekstu w muzykalnym języku nazwać by się był powinien.³² [It is a misconception that it is difficult to write music to good poetry; that it is insolent to combine music with beautiful poetry. It seems to me, at least, that every good poem comes with an inherent melody, and those who can discern it and commit it to paper are called fortunate composers, even though they should be known as nothing but translators of texts in the language of music.]

It was not only in the 1842 letter that Moniuszko devoted his attention to literature and music. In the same year, his article *Śpiewnik domowy* published in the "Petersburg Weekly" issue number 72 included a disquisition on the features of contemporary music and poetry, especially in the context of the national and folk nature of music, and the specificity of the language which "may be fit for singing."³³ Moniuszko devoted a long part of the article to the prosody of the Polish speech as well as the metricity and rhythmicity of the Polish language.

Moniuszko also raised the problem of the relationship between the composer and literature in an 1844 letter:

³¹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Vilnius 26 May 1842, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 61.

³² Ibidem.

³³ S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 601.

[...] tak jak jego wiersze starają się w f o r m i e zastosowywać do muzyki, tak też i moja muzyka w duchu usiłuje dostrajać w każdej piosence czy większej, czy mniejszej do poezji. Chcąc osądzić, kto z nam ma słuszość, trzeba wprzód powiedzieć kto, czy poeta muzykowi, czy ten pocie ulegać powinien.³⁴ [...] just as his poems try to comply with music in terms of their f o r m, so does my music, in every song – big or small, strive to attune to poetry. In order to determine which one of us is right, it should first be established whether it is the poet who should yield to the musician, or the musician to the poet.]

Although the above question sounded serious, Moniuszko was also capable of joking on the subject of the relationship between the musician and the writer:

Bez porównań podobni jesteśmy do dwóch ugrzecznionych targujących się, kto pierwszy drzwi przejdzie.³⁵ [We are like two obsequious hagglers arguing about which one of them should go through the door first.]

Moniuszko's characteristic attitude to literature and its relationship with music resulted in creative decisions that affected particular works and groups of works. In his artistic activity, literature appeared in songs, in which he used poetry, and in illustrative music to dramatic texts. In operas, operettas (understood as a smaller form of opera, according to the nomenclature used by the composer), comic operas and vaudevilles, Moniuszko frequently used previously created texts, adapting them on his own or with the help of an assisting writer. He often made few changes to the original version.

In all of the above-mentioned situations, Moniuszko predominantly used the works of Polish authors. Adam Mickiewicz's oeuvre was especially significant to him and inspired all of his musico-literary forms; in terms of contemporary literature, the works by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Józef Korzeniowski, Aleksander Fredro and Włodzimierz Wolski were of particular importance to him. When he took interest in foreign literature, he directed his attention to French writings above all. His choices demonstrate a long-standing experience in reading, the above-mentioned literary fascinations and the ambition to create music to the works by the most renowned authors, both contemporary and old.

Literature contributed to Moniuszko's vast song-making oeuvre. Out of 278 songs, 268 of which make up the 12 collections of *Śpiewnik domowy* [*Home songbook*], the writers chosen by Moniuszko chiefly include: Jan Kochanowski, Adam Mickiewicz³⁶, Casimir Delavigne, Pierre-Jean de Béranger, George Byron, Aleksander Chodźko, Edmund Wasilewski, Tomasz Zan, Antoni Edward Odyniec, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Józef Korzeniowski, Jan Czeczot, Kazimierz Brodziński, Władysław Syrokomla, Włodzimierz Wolski, Wincenty Pol, Stefan Witwicki, Józef Szujski and Teofil Lenartowicz. The knowledge of contemporary

³⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to an unknown addressee, after 22 December 1844, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

³⁶ Cf., among others, M. Sulek, *Stanisław Moniuszko i inni kompozytorzy wobec poezji Adama Mickiewicza. Studium komparatystyczne*, Kraków 2016.

poetry, also by less known authors, resulted in the creation of songs to the lyrics by such poets as: Maria Ilnicka, Jan Nepomucen Jaśkowski, Edward Wasilewski, Jan Zachariasiewicz, Juliusz Zborowski, Placyd Jankowski, Franciszek Kowalski, Julian Korsak, Ludwik Szyrmer, Edward Żeligowski, Jan Prusinowski, Antoni Kolankowski, Józef Grajner and Józef Teodor Stanisław Kościelski. Admittedly, in spite of all the doubts as to Moniuszko's knowledge of literature, such a rich list of writers and poets he chose, that is knew and appreciated, paints an interesting picture of the Polish literature that was contemporary to the composer.

Literary texts were also of interest to Moniuszko as an author of illustrative music to dramatic works³⁷. Moniuszko was eager to engage in this kind of artistic work and since the earliest years of his professional activity, he professed his willingness to do it as part of his job at the theatre. He offered to work as the creator of illustrative music to dramas at the beginning of his artistic path, when he was glad to have received a new task at the Vilnius theatre; in 1846, he wrote to Józef Sikorski about his new responsibilities:

[...] do moich lekcji przybyło jeszcze nowe, chociaż dość wdzięczne zatrudnienie: powierzono mnie dyrekcję tutejszej orkiestry teatralnej, którą na koniec wzięto na stałą gaź. Muszę dwa razy w tygodniu grać z nią różne różności, a przy tym dostać arcymuzykę do melodram i wodewilów!!!... za co biorę miesięcznie 50 rs.³⁸ [...] my lessons are joined by a new, yet rewarding duty: I was entrusted with directing the local theatrical orchestra, which was employed permanently. I have to play all sorts of things with it and, at the same time, get archmusic for melodramas and vaudevilles!!!... for which I am paid 50 per month.]

As Moniuszko was preparing to work at the Warsaw theatre, he was also considering undertaking composing efforts aimed at making literary pieces more attractive, even though he knew that the illustrative music he prepared will only follow the already existing and well-known pieces:

[...] zapisałem już wiele papieru do teatru, ale sztuki, do których dorabiałem muzykę, już z Damsego robotami przedstawiane były na Was[zej] Scenie.³⁹ [I have filled many pages for theatre, but the plays to which I added music have already been presented at Your Stage along with Damse's works.]

The issue of illustrating literature also preoccupied the composer towards the end of his life, when he corresponded with Stanisław Niedzielski, the organiser and co-creator of the Polish Opera in Lviv. The letters were devoted, among others, to the remuneration for the pieces that were supposed to be staged at the new Polish opera theatre. Furthermore, Moniuszko wrote that:

³⁷ I wrote about Moniuszko as an author of illustrative music to literary texts in, among others: *Muzyka w polskim teatrze dramatycznym do 1918 roku*, part 1, Częstochowa 2015, p. 194–197.

³⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 10/22 and 15/227 November 1846, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 115.

³⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 9 February 1846, as cited in *ibid*, p. 111.

Jeżeliby wypadła potrzeba komponowania chórów lub muzyk do dramatów, służyć będę chętnie z pełnymi sercami i kałamarzem.⁴⁰ [Should there ever be a need for composing choirs or music to dramas, I shall be glad to oblige.]

Moniuszko created a good many illustrative works to literary pieces, including, among others: *Kaspar Hauser*, *Anicet Bourgeois* and Adolphe Philippe d'Ennery's melodrama staged in Minsk in 1843, *Sabaudka, czyli Błogosławieństwo matki* for voices and orchestra by d'Ennery and Gustave Lemoine staged in Vilnius in 1845 and, from the same year, *Don Juan de Barbastro* by an unknown author. In the 1840s, Moniuszko's music was played to Fryderyk Skarbek's comedy *Popas* in Cracow. At this time, Moniuszko also took interest in Franciszek Zabłocki's work entitled *Żółta szlafmyca albo kolęda na Nowy Rok*. The overture to Lucjan Siemieński's 1854 piece *Kochanka hetmańska* and the music to Władysław Syrokomla's *Córa Piastów* from 1855 were illustrative pieces written to literature. Prior to the creation of *Jawnuta*, Moniuszko composed music to pieces devoted to gypsies⁴¹; hence, in 1859, the press wrote about Józef Korzeniowski's drama *Cyganie (The Gypsies)*, whose "choirs and dances were created by Mr. Moniuszko."⁴² Since 1858, his illustrative music was created with the Warsaw theatre in mind, but the theatres at other towns used it as well. The music to Antoni Małcki's drama *List żelazny*⁴³ was created in the 1860s, and in 1865 to Racine's tragedy *Fedra* for mixed choir and orchestra. The illustrative music to *Zbójcy* by Friedrich Schiller dates back to the same period⁴⁴. In 1867, Moniuszko composed the music to a few songs for Józef Grajner's drama *Wanda* for two voices and piano and a year later to the piece *Żale Jefity*, which was referred to as a declamation for harp, harmonium and narrator. At the turn of the 1860s and 1870s, several other important pieces of illustrative music were created: in 1868 to Delavigne's drama *Paria*, in 1869 to Shakespear's *The Merchant of Venice*, in 1870 to Lepine and A. Daudet's drama *The Last Idol* in a version for string quartet, a year later to Shakespear's *Hamlet*, in 1872 to Émile Erckman and Chatrian's drama *Hans Mathis* and to George Conrad's *Fedra*. Moniuszko's musical setting to Juliusz Słowacki's *Lilie Wenedy* is also well-known⁴⁵.

Although in the case of songs and illustrative music, Moniuszko made use of ready-made texts and his literary tasks predominantly concerned searching for

⁴⁰ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Stanisław Niedzielski, Warsaw 19 March 1872, as cited in *ibid*, p. 583.

⁴¹ The history of the works on the subject of gypsies is discussed by Alina Żórawska-Witkowska, cf. A. Żórawska-Witkowska, *Od "Cyganów" Franciszka Dionizego Książnika (1786) do "Jawnuty" Stanisława Moniuszki (1860)*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki...*, p. 23–56. The subject was also discussed by Agata Seweryn, cf. A. Seweryn, *Cyganie sentymentalni i romantyczni (Książnik – Moniuszko)*, "Napis" 2016, series XXII, p. 70–86.

⁴² Cf. W. Rudziński, *Stanisław Moniuszko. Studia i materiały*, part 2, Kraków, 1960, p. 161.

⁴³ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 174.

⁴⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 492–493.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 492–493.

good poetry and well-written dramas, in the case of musico-dramatic pieces, operas, smaller opera forms and cantatas, his literary tasks were much more complex. In 1840, Moniuszko wrote to an unknown addressee about his ideas for an opera libretto, explaining that the “content” of an opera is in the hands of the text’s author:

Treść opery zostawiam autorowi, byle ta była serio – co najwięcej pogrzebów – modlitw, albo żeby to były jakieś czary, strachy czy coś bardzo wesołego. Jeżeliby zaś mógł, czyli chciał, to treść może być Lukrecja Bordzia albo Twardowski, albo Zamek Zawieprzycy[powieść A. Bronikowskiego Zawieprzycze].⁴⁶ [I leave the content of an opera to the author, as long as it is serious – as many funerals or prayers as possible – or it concerns some magic, scares or something more cheerful. If he could, that is would like to, the content may concern Lucrezia Borgia or Twardowski or the castle in Zawieprzycze [A. Bronikowski’s novel Zawieprzycze].]

The artistic “freedom” that Moniuszko wanted to leave to the librettist was not enough to encourage his contemporary writers to create original librettos, and the problems with acquiring good texts for operas accompanied Moniuszko throughout his entire life⁴⁷, often suspending the creation of new pieces. He complained about this situation to Sikorski in 1842:

Tu w Wilnie, nie mam zdolnego do pisania librettów.⁴⁸[Here, in Vilnius, I have nobody capable of writing librettos.]

He wrote in a similar tone to Matuszyński in 1858:

Pałam niezmierną chęcią do nowej opery. Ale o libretto bardzo tu trudno.⁴⁹ [I long to write a new opera. But it is very hard to find a libretto here.]

The letters confirm that Moniuszko was a demanding composer, who put a lot of time and effort into his work. Despite the declaration from the beginnings of his artistic activity, he rarely entrusted a libretto solely to the writer and often wanted to have an impact on its literary aspects. In an 1850 letter to Gustaw Gebethner, he wrote about his plans for *Hrabina*:

Ułożyliśmy z naszym nieocenionym panem Włodzimierzem [Wolskim] plan do nowej opery.⁵⁰ [The invaluable Mr Włodzimierz [Wolski] and I made a plan for a new opera.]

On occasion, he would also instruct the librettist or, in other words, put him on the right track. When he received a fragment of a cantata, which was never finished in the end, he advised Stefan Kowerski:

⁴⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to an unknown addressee, cf. S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 59.

⁴⁷ This was discussed by, among others, M. Komorowska, *Stanisław Moniuszko w pogoni za operą literacką...*

⁴⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 9 February 1846, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 111.

⁴⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Leopold Matuszyński, Vilnius 27 February/11 March 1858, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 301.

⁵⁰ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Gebethner, Warsaw April/May? 1859, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 357.

muzyka potrzebuje wyrazów jak najmniej, ale tak one mają dokładnie myśl rozwijać, że niby jak łopata do głowy sadzić słuchaczowi.⁵¹ [music needs as few words as possible, but they must elaborate on the thought as precisely as if it were drummed into the listener's head.]

Moniuszko would sometimes reject texts, as in the case of Gustaw Olizar's libretto about *Wanda* (although the literary piece was created and Moniuszko received it in 1859⁵²). He also made the decision to stop working on *Rokiczana* due to the interference of censorship in the text of the libretto and the removal of the character of a king ("Nudzi mnie ta robota, odkąd w niej cenzura zrobiła bezkrólewie"⁵³ ["The work has become boring since the censorship turned it into an interregnum"]).

Moniuszko made use of virtually every possible way of acquiring librettos. He reached for the existing texts, which he could use similarly to a literary basis for a song. He found them in the existing dramatic literature (as in the case of *Widma*, which is based on the second part of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*) and in poetry (for instance in the cantatas which made use of Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's text *Witolorauda*). Moniuszko employed the term "organising" to describe the literary efforts he made independently or in collaboration, for example with Edward Chłopicki in the case of *Witolorauda*. In a letter to Kraszewski, he wrote that:

na koniec zacząłem próbować sam urządzać libretto i pisać muzykę.⁵⁴ [in the end, I started trying to write music and organise the libretto myself.]

He "organised" the libretto for *Widmy* himself, changing almost nothing in the original text of Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* part II⁵⁵; the few extra repetitions he made were a very modest interference that did not affect the meaning of the piece. He promptly started caring about the creation of original texts that would be intended as librettos, which is why he often tried to make contact with potential librettists. His attempts to find librettos and librettists would often end in failure⁵⁶, but in a few cases the composer's determination, which manifested itself in his suggestions, hints, requests and reminders, ultimately brought satisfying results.

The collection of Moniuszko's "librettists" consisted of the most outstanding artists of his time as well as less known authors.

⁵¹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Stefan Kowerski, Vilnius 10 May 1850, as cited in *ibid*, p. 152.

⁵² Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Olizar, Warsaw 20 April 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 353.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Vilnius 27 July 1854, as cited in *ibid*, p. 198.

⁵⁵ Cf., among others, M. Sułek, "*Widma*" Moniuszki wobec "*Dziadów*" Mickiewicza [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki...*, Poznań 2014, p. 75–98.

⁵⁶ They were discussed by Włodzimierz Poźniak, *Niezrealizowane projekty operowe Moniuszki*, "Kwartalnik Muzyczny" 1948, Nos. 21–22, p. 243–251.

As a composer of musico-dramatic pieces, Moniuszko began by using **Fryderyk Skarbek's** drama entitled *Biuraliści* in 1832⁵⁷ and then, in 1836, **Carl Blum's** work *Die Schweizerhütte*⁵⁸ in German. There were few musical elements in both works, yet they are counted among musico-dramatic forms and described as comic operas, vaudevilles or operettas in the understanding that was characteristic of the first half of the nineteenth century. Having returned to Vilnius, Moniuszko still tried to find a libretto among the existing literary works, but he simultaneously directed his attention to the possibility of having an original libretto created by a contemporary writer.

Although **Aleksander Fredro** did not become one of Moniuszko's librettists, the writer's name ought to be mentioned because Moniuszko started his search for librettos with the ambitious idea of collaborating with Fredro. Moniuszko saw him as the author of texts that could potentially be enriched with dramatic music. He began by creating the music to *Nocleg in Apeniny* in the years 1837–1839 (premiere in Vilnius in 1939), but after a few years he decided that it was “poor and schoolish.”⁵⁹ On the other hand, he treated *Nowy Don Kichot*, written in 1841 (staged in Lviv in 1849), as his first serious attempt at composing. After his experiences with previously existing texts, he pleaded with Fredro to write an original libretto:

Nie śmiem pochlebiać sobie, ażebym kiedyś mógł być dość szczęśliwym z otrzymania nowego libretto do mojej muzyki przeznaczonogo.⁶⁰ [I do not dare to flatter myself by thinking I could ever be fortunate enough to receive a new libretto that would be intended for my music.]

The correspondence with **Oskar Korwin-Milewski** was not preserved; he was the author of the librettos for *Loteria*, written in 1840, staged in Grodno in the same year and then premiering in Vilnius, Minsk and Warsaw⁶¹, the piece *Ideal, czyli Nowa Precjoza* from the same year, which was staged in Vilnius, and the 1841 piece *Karmaniol albo Francuzi lubią żartować* that most likely premiered a year later. Szymon Paczkowski writes that Korwin-Milewski did not stand out as a writer; he could even be called a “poetaster,”⁶² and Moniuszko's choice of his texts demonstrated a certain direction in the young composer's artistic efforts, which did not, at the time, move beyond the circle of light musico-dramatic works and the traditions of vaudeville and idyll⁶³.

⁵⁷ Cf. S. Niemahaj, “*Biuraliści*” *Stanisława Moniuszki: wokół komediooper Fryderyka Skarbka oraz partytur warszawskiej i krakowskiej*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki...*, p. 57–74.

⁵⁸ Cf. G. Zieziula, *Od “francuskiej” Bettly do “niemieckiej” Die Schweizerhütte – obcojęzyczne opery Stanisława Moniuszki*, “*Muzyka*” 2015, No. (239), p. 69–96.

⁵⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Aleksander Fredro, Vilnius 1842?, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ Szymon Paczkowski wrote about the premiere in *Kilka uwag w sprawie historii i libretta “Loterii”...*

⁶² Cf. *ibidem*, p. 68.

⁶³ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 69.

Moniuszko made use of **Wincenty Dunin-Marcinkiewicz's** pieces four times, creating the operettas: *Pobór rekruta* or *Pobór rekruta u Żydów* (1841, staged in Minsk in the same year), *Woda cudowna* (1843), *Walka muzyków* and *Sielanka* (1852). The latter introduced the Belorussian language in the lines uttered by peasants.

He contemplated writing a collaborative work with **Józef Korzeniowski** on several occasions; unfortunately, it did not come to pass. In December 1846, he wrote to Józef Sikorski:

Korzeniowskiemu podziękuj bardzo za obietnicę napisania libretto, którą mnie zrobił w Twojej obecności, i od tego czasu ani słowa o tym.⁶⁴ [Give Korzeniowski my thanks for the promise to write a libretto which he gave me in your presence and has not mentioned once since then.]

Looking forward to Korzeniowski's reaction, he wrote to Sikorski in March 1847 in a slightly sarcastic tone:

Korzeniowski pokazuje się, że z równą łatwością przyrzeka, ażeby nie dotrzymać, z jaką pisze swoje komedie.⁶⁵ [It seems that it is as easy for Korzeniowski to make a promise he will not keep as it is for him to write his comedies.]

In 1848, he must have been very worried about the poor results of trying to persuade the playwright to collaborate with him, as he wrote to Józef Komorowski from Vilnius that:

Korzeniowski przyrzekł, jak może wiesz, libretto dla mnie – nawet początek czytał. Skończyło się na połowie sceny drugiej!!! Nie musi ufać moim siłom.⁶⁶ [Korzeniowski has promised, as you may know, to write a libretto for me – he even read the beginning. It ended in the middle of scene two!!! He must mistrust his own abilities.]

Although Moniuszko's coaxing was ultimately successful and Korzeniowski wrote a libretto for *Rokiczana*, the two authors were not able to finalise their collaboration by staging the opera because it was never finished due to the aforementioned interference of censorship. Even at the beginning of January 1859, Moniuszko, full of hope, informed Ilcewicz that:

Pocieszam się, pisząc *Rokiczanę*, którą już przez Korzeniowskiego przerobioną podaliśmy do cenzury i zapewne ją przejdzie szczęśliwie.⁶⁷ [I console myself as I am writing *Rokiczana*, which has been submitted for censorship after Korzeniowski rewrote it and will most likely get past the censors successfully.]

⁶⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski and his wife, Vilnius 17/29 December 1846, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 116.

⁶⁵ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 7/19 March 1847, as cited in *ibid*, p. 118.

⁶⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Komorowski, Vilnius 4 November 1848, as cited in *ibid*, p. 136.

⁶⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 5 January 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 339.

The work did not “get past the censors successfully” since, in 1859, Moniuszko wrote that:

Szkoda tylko, że nam cenzura wykroiła króla z Rokiczany. Nie dam tej opery wprzód, aż mi monarchę powrócą.⁶⁸ [It is a pity that the censorship has cut out the king from Rokiczana. I will not stage this opera until they return my monarch.]

As the character of the Polish ruler did not return to the opera, the joint work by Moniuszko and Korzeniowski was never staged.

Władysław Syrokomla, who collaborated with Moniuszko as the author of texts to songs as early as in the 1840s, made two attempts to write a libretto for the composer⁶⁹. In 1853, he prepared a piece entitled *Margier*, which was based on a motif from the history of Lithuania, and created the text to *Sen wieszczka* a year later. The latter was even published by J. Zawadzki in Vilnius in 1854⁷⁰, with a note in the title of the print that it was “adapted” from “French” because the libretto was based on Rosier and de Leuven’s play *Le song d'une nuit d'été*⁷¹. Syrokomla must have appreciated his own work since, in 1860, he wrote to Moniuszko to remind him about the piece and ask:

Otóż, czyby dzisiaj nie dała się wznowić ta zarzucona operetka?...⁷² [Would it not be possible now to return to this abandoned operetta?...]

as well as offer further assistance:

[...] jeśliby w całości lub w części potrzeba było przerobić libretto, służę chętnie do roboty, bo zazdroszczę Wolskiemu i Chęcińskiemu, że mogą z p. Stanisławem pracować.⁷³ [...] should there be a need to rewrite the libretto in part or completely, I will be glad to work on it since I envy Wolski and Chęciński the opportunity to work with Mr Stanisław.]

There is some evidence of the ideas for a collaborative work with **Aleksander Groza**⁷⁴ and the poet **Seweryna Duchńska**, the author of a project for the opera *Aleksota*⁷⁵.

Moniuszko, who followed national literature closely, also paid attention to an able Warsaw artist, **Włodzimierz Wolski**, and their collaboration, though often difficult, resulted in such outstanding works as *Halka* and *Hrabina*. Moniuszko

⁶⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 26 July 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 364.

⁶⁹ Cf., among others, L. Simon, *Syrokomla i Moniuszko*, “Kurier Warszawski” 1937, No.181, p. 8–11.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Sen wieszczka*. Opera we trzech aktach do muzyki St. Moniuszki, podług francuskiego, przerobienie Władysława Syrokomla, Vilnius 1854.

⁷¹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Władysław Syrokomla, December 1860, as cited in: W. Rudziński, *Stanisław Moniuszko. Studia i materiały*, part 1, p. 251.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 251–252.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 252.

⁷⁵ Cf. W. Rudziński, *Stanisław Moniuszko. Studia i materiały*, part 2, among others p. 302, 357.

was immensely grateful to the poet for the libretto for *Halka*, which made him the most famous opera artist of the mid-century. He had no complaints as to the literary aspects of the libretto, and he judged Wolski's work saying that "he did a truly marvellous job."⁷⁶ The successes of the opera prompted Moniuszko to describe Wolski's text using nothing but the best epithets. When he sought to have the work translated in February 1858, he wrote to the publishers that "[i]t is a masterpiece of a libretto!"⁷⁷ In the subsequent years, however, he complained about the collaboration with the poet, going through a ceaseless see-saw of hope and anxiety. In 1857, Wolski commented on the rumours regarding Moniuszko's opera premiere in Warsaw and declared his willingness to collaborate on another work:

Owóz – czy będą grali, czy nie będą grali – mam ochotę przysłużyć Ci się nowym librettem, którego przedmiot racz wężchowi mojemu pozostawić.⁷⁸ [Whether they stage it or not, I want to write you a new libretto; please leave its subject matter to me.]

The poet also stressed his own abilities:

Nabrałem wprawdy teraz do tego rodzaju dramatycznych utworów.⁷⁹ [I have become proficient at writing this kind of dramatic pieces.]

and Moniuszko agreed:

Zawsze w jednego Wolskiego talent wierzę.⁸⁰ [I have always believed in Wolski's talent.]

However, their future collaboration was hindered by a disagreement regarding the fact that the poet had published the libretto without the score and requested additional remuneration. This made Moniuszko reflect on the nature of the relationship between the composer and the poet:

Czy to kompozytor, pisząc muzykę, zaprzęga się w wieczną niewolę swego poety?⁸¹ [Does the composer subject himself to the eternal slavery of his poet by writing music?]

The composer ceaselessly stressed that:

Nikt zapewne wyżej nie ceni libretta *Halki*, jak ja sam, i rad bym jej autora złotem zasypał. Szkoda tylko, że z przedstawień mojej opery nie ja korzystam!⁸² [Perhaps no one values the libretto for *Halka* more highly than me, and I would be glad to shower its author with gold. It is a pity, then, that it is not me who benefits from the staging of my own opera!]

⁷⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Sikorski, Vilnius 24 December / 5 January 1848, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 127.

⁷⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gebethner and Wolff, Vilnius 16/28 February 1858, p. 299.

⁷⁸ *Z korespondencji Włodzimierza Wolskiego*, comp. Konstanty Kamiński, „Pamiętnik Literacki” 1972, vol. 1, p. 211.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Leopold Matuszyński, Vilnius 27 February / 11 March 1858, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 301.

⁸¹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gebethner and Wolff, Vilnius 7/19 March 1858, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 303.

⁸² Ibidem.

The conflict turned out to be temporary; Moniuszko and Wolski created one more work together, and, in 1859, Moniuszko called his collaborator, as I have already mentioned, “invaluable Mr Włodzimierz,”⁸³ although he would put him to numerous tests in the future, concerning different, often more mundane, matters such as the simple act of rewriting the text of a libretto. Moniuszko reported Wolski’s behaviour to Ilcewicz:

Ja teraz okrutnie jestem zajęty instrumentowaniem i próbami *Hrabiny* i polowaniem na Wolskiego, który mi się jak lis przed chartem po knajpach kryje! a tu co moment potrzebuję mieć tego prałata pod ręką! Ale zresztą dobrze idzie i zdaje się, że powodzenie będzie niezgorsze.⁸⁴ [I am terribly busy with instrumentation, rehearsing *Hrabina* and tracking Wolski down, who hides from me in bars like a fox hiding from a greyhound! and I often need him close at hand! But other than that, things are going well and it seems that we will be successful.]

He wrote to Gustaw Gebethner in a similar tone:

Wolski ani się zjawia – nie wiem, jak sobie poradzić.⁸⁵ [Wolski does not show up – I do not know how I will manage.]

After *Halka*, the nature of his search for a libretto or a librettist has changed since it was connected with the expectations of the audience for the creation of a new remarkable opera. Regardless of his plans for the collaboration with Wolski, Moniuszko turned to other artists. In 1858, he wrote, for example, to Ludwik Matuszyński regarding a libretto for the project of an opera about Casimir the Great (which was provisionally entitled *Król chłopków*), referring to Konstaty Majeranowski’s works “for comparison.”⁸⁶ The subject matter was addressed in the unfinished and previously mentioned opera *Rokiczana*. In the same letter to Matuszyński, Moniuszko wrote (thinking about the journalist and poet **Wacław Szymanowski**) that:

Po Wolskim już sam tylko jeden Szymanowski zostaje, byle chciał nie być rubasznym⁸⁷. [Szymanowski is the only one left after Wolski; if only he would not be as crude.]

The libretto *Flisa* was written by **Stanisław Bogusławski**, hired to write a new opera by the administration of the Warsaw Theatre Directorate, which hoped it would be as successful as *Halka*⁸⁸ (it premiered in 1858). Moniuszko did

⁸³ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Gebethner, Warsaw April/May? 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 357.

⁸⁴ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 18 November 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 375.

⁸⁵ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Gebethner, Warsaw, end of 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 379.

⁸⁶ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Leopold Matuszyński, Vilnius 27 February / 11 March 1858, as cited in *ibid*, p. 302.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ Halina Waszkiel’s monograph *Stanisław Bogusławski* is devoted to Stanisław Bogusławski, Warszawa 2010.

not avoid troubles that resulted from the collaboration with writers – Bogusławski, who showed no consideration for the composer, sold the libretto to the publisher⁸⁹.

In the Warsaw period, Moniuszko continued to work with **Gustaw Olizar**, who wrote a new libretto for him based on the legend of Wanda⁹⁰. The libretto reached the composer, but, as previously mentioned, he did not attempt to write music to the text. The letter sent to the would-be librettist confirms that Moniuszko was responsible about his activity as a composer, and, in spite of the problems with acquiring new texts, he did not accept every work, even if it meant that he had to turn down the people he respected⁹¹.

The attempts to collaborate with **Józef Ignacy Kraszewski** as a librettist were a much longer story. The above-mentioned letter to an unknown addressee from 1840 concerning the contents of the opera that the composer “entrusted” to the librettist comes from Kraszewski’s collection; he was probably informed by someone that the young composer was looking for a good librettist and a well-written libretto. This was not the only situation in which Moniuszko was assisted in his contacts with Kraszewski. In an 1842 letter, addressed directly to the writer, Moniuszko referenced his cousin’s advice, who suggested asking Kraszewski to give his opinion on *Śpiewniki*⁹².

The further efforts aimed at entering into collaboration with Kraszewski concerned the musicalisation of *Witolorauda*. Moniuszko made them, to a large extent, at Józef Sikorski’s prompting⁹³. The correspondence with the writer lasted through the 1840s and 1850s; Moniuszko was assisted by his wife, who also sent letters to Kraszewski. Moniuszko’s writings were full of explanations and justifications for the difficulties that arise in composing, even in the case of using unchanged fragments of existing literary texts.

In 1842, Moniuszko wrote that:

[...] miejsca przeznaczone do muzyki w *Witoloraudzie* nie uszły moim melodiom [...] ⁹⁴
[[...] the fragments intended for music in *Witolorauda* did not escape my melodies [...]]

and became the foundation for a text that constituted a selection from the original version, prepared by Edward Chłopiccki (in *Milda* and *Nijole*, also known as *Wundyny*) and by Stefan Kowerski to the cantata entitled *Krumina* (Moniuszko

⁸⁹ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, Warsaw 24 August / 5 September 1858, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 328.

⁹⁰ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Olizar, Warsaw 20 April 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 353.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibidem* and letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Olizar, Warsaw 6 May 1864, as cited in *ibid*, p. 458–459.

⁹² Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Vilnius 26 May 1842, as cited in *ibid*, p. 61.

⁹³ Rudziński and Stokowska wrote about this, cf. S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, footnote p. 80.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 79.

thanked the author for a “delightful sample of *Krumina*”⁹⁵). Moniuszko himself judged Chłopicki’s text as:

Libretto ułożone z urywków wstępu *Witoloraudy* Kraszewskiego, zręcznie połączonych według potrzeb form muzycznych.⁹⁶ [Libretto arranged from the fragments of the introduction to *Witoloraua* by Kraszewski, skilfully patched up according to the needs of musical forms.]

The matter became complicated when it turned out that the writer had certain remarks as to the form in which *Witoloraua* was used, which is why Moniuszko explained himself with regard to the first version of the *Milda* cantata in a letter he wrote from Vilnius on the 27th July 1854:

Barwa muzyki, jaka się znalazła pod wpływem natchnienia *Witoloraudy* jest wyłącznie jej dziełem, nie moją własnością. Przebaczyć mi Pan wspomniałomyślnie, że się targnąć poważyl na Jego utwór [*Witoloraudę*] i że dotychczas nie zdał sprawy z tego, co zaszedło. Ale stało się to wszystko jakoś niespodziewanie: Od czasu przeczytania *Witolorady* czulem niezawodną treść muzycznego poematu w samym jego prologu. Wczytując się coraz bardziej, coraz wyraźniej rysował się plan *Mildy*, aż na koniec zacząłem próbować sam urządzić libretto i pisać muzykę. Były to bardzo szczęśliwe chwile! Muzyka jakaś nowa, nienasładownicza, snuła się łatwo, bez najmniejszego wyszukania, jak gdyby wywołana zaklęciem uroczego przedmiotu.⁹⁷ [The timbre of music that emerged under the influence of *Witoloraua* is solely its own work and not my property. Please forgive me for daring to make an attempt at Your piece [*Witoloraua*] and that I have not yet realised what has transpired. But everything happened unexpectedly: Ever since I read *Witoloraua*, I have felt the sure meaning of the musical poem in its very prologue. As I was reading into it, the plan for *Milda* was becoming clearer and clearer, until I tried to organise the libretto and write music myself in the end. Those were very happy moments! The music, new and original, floated effortlessly, without any sophistication, as if it were conjured up by a spell.]

In the correspondence with Kraszewski, the composer raised the issue of the advantages the cantata has over the opera due to the theatrical limitations that characterise opera adaptations and showed his appreciation for the literary benefits it brings:

Treść więc litewska (nie historyczna) najponętniejsza dla mnie, a forma – nie opera, ale kantata, nieobliczoną wyższość pod każdym względem nad operą mająca. Czas by już obejrzeć się o ile opera nie jest czym innym jak tylko uchwaloną niedorzecznością. Każdą treść najfantastyczniejszą możemy wygodnie w kantatę ułożyć. Z nieba na ziemię, stąd do piekła swobodne przejście bez obrazy przyzwoitości. Opowiadanie (niekoniecznie recitativo dawniejsze) zapowiada dokładnie ruch dramatyczny, a pieśni, arie, duetta, chóry, przycinając powieść i zajmując jej ustępy czysto liryczne,

⁹⁵ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Stefan Kowerski, Vilnius 10 May 1850, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 152.

⁹⁶ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Komorowski, Vilnius 4 November 1848, cf. S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 135.

⁹⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Vilnius 27 July 1854, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 198.

tworzą całość pełną interesu i powabu.⁹⁸ [The Lithuanian content (not historical) is the most enticing to me, and the form – not opera but cantata, is inestimably superior to the opera. It is time that we decided if opera is anything but celebrated absurdity. We can conveniently put any content, even the most fantastic, into the form of cantata. A free passage from heaven to earth and from here to hell without insulting decency. The story (not necessarily the recitativo of old) heralds a dramatic movement, and as songs, arias, duettos and choirs cut through the narrative, they replace its purely lyrical fragments and create an entirety that is interesting and full of charm.]

Although the above statement resembles an ideological negation of the opera, it is difficult to accept it as anything but a compliment to the author of the cantata's text and simultaneously the result of the problems with staging operas as Moniuszko did not abandon the genre and still struggled to stage *Halka*.

Kraszewski did not accept the text prepared by Chłopicki and rhymed the libretto anew, creating a new cantata in the 1850s. Thanks to that, at the beginning of 1859, Moniuszko was able to write that he is grateful for the text he received from Kiev because:

Milda taka, jaką jest teraz, jest już cennym upominkiem dla literatury.⁹⁹ [*Milda*, in its current state, is already a precious gift to literature.]

He must have thought it valuable to music as well if he wrote:

Nowe słowa już są podłożone pod całą muzykę, która po tej operacji wygląda jak na wiosnę.¹⁰⁰ [New words are already set to the entire music, which has blossomed after this procedure.]

The second version of *Milda* was to be staged in 1859 (it was ultimately performed in July), and Moniuszko was happy with the delayed, yet very good musico-literary effect. In his letters he referenced

Mildę, do której Kraszewski nowe rymowe napisał wiersze, zastępując nimi uprzednio użyte, dosłownie z jego *Witoloraudy* wyjęte¹⁰¹ [*Milda*, to which Kraszewski wrote new rhyming verse, replacing the previous one, taken from his *Witolorauda*],

or described it even more carefully, appreciating the quality of the writer's work:

Milda, do której Kraszewski napisał rymowe wiersze przecudowne, zastępując nimi swoje białe, wyciągnięte z *Witoloraudy*, i dopełnienia Ed. Chłopickiego.¹⁰² [*Milda*, to which Kraszewski wrote lovely rhyming verse, replacing his blank verse from *Witolorauda* and ed. Chłopicki's supplements.]

Yet another text by Kraszewski that was adapted for libretto had a chance to become the basis of an opera – *Budnik*, prepared by Antoni Zaleski. The work,

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Warsaw 17 February 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 344.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Gustaw Olizar, Warsaw 20 April 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 353.

¹⁰² Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Julian Titius, Warsaw 20 April 1859, as cited in *ibid*, p. 354.

however, was never realised¹⁰³, just as the attempts to acquire an original opera libretto written by Kraszewski, although the problem of the availability of literary texts for use in operas was known to the writer, whose reviews of Moniuszko's operas were published in "Gazeta Codzienna"¹⁰⁴ ["Daily Newspaper"].

Moniuszko's letters are also evidence of his difficult collaboration with **Jan Chęciński**, even though it resulted in three very successful works: *Verbum nobile*, *Straszny dwór* and *Paria*; only the *Beata* operetta was of poorer quality¹⁰⁵. The traces of their collaborative decisions are noticeable, as in the case of Moniuszko's request to introduce a proverb that could be constantly repeated into the lines of one of the characters in *Verbum nobile*¹⁰⁶. The correspondence also reveals a struggle with the author, who was reluctant to keep working:

[...] dziś zaklinam: przyszlizj mnie *Verbum*, bo nie wytrzymam.¹⁰⁷ [...] Today I implore you: send *Verbum* to me or I will not stand it anymore.]

The composer justified the complicated situation to Ilcewicz and himself in the following way:

Chęciński zaciął się, więc libretta nie mam, gdyż i tego biedaka fantazja odbiegła.¹⁰⁸
[Chęciński got stuck, so I do not have a libretto since the poor wretch has lost all his imagination.]

Despite the difficulties in their collaborative artistic efforts, Moniuszko appreciated Chęciński's work; he wrote, for example, that the libretto for the *Paria* opera is fit for translation and presenting it to international audience:

Przekład byłby bardzo łatwy do zrobienia, gdyż Chęcińskiego wiersz jest dobrze miarowy.¹⁰⁹ [Translating would be easy because Chęciński's verse is very rhythmical.]

Paria was created to a libretto based on Delavigne's piece and proved that some of Moniuszko's literary fascinations lasted his entire life. The composer remembered Delavigne's tragedy *Paria*, which he read in his youth, and then enriched it with illustrative music (in 1866, he said: "Apart from that, I wrote

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Komorowska, *Stanisław Moniuszko w pogoni za operą literacką...*, p. 133–134.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Józef Ignacy Kraszewski i polskie życie muzyczne XIX wieku*, comp. S. Świerzewski, Kraków 1963, p. 111–125.

¹⁰⁵ Alina Borkowska-Rychlewska discussed Jan Chęciński's librettos in two works: *Między przekładem a twórczością oryginalną (o librettach Jana Chęcińskiego do oper Stanisława Moniuszki)*, [in:] *Teatr operowy Stanisława Moniuszki. Rekonosanse ...*, p. 89–99 and *Jan Chęciński – Moniuszkowski librecista*, [in:] *Teatr muzyczny Stanisława Moniuszki ...*, p. 99–112.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Jan Chęciński, Warsaw January/February 1860, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 385.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Jan Chęciński, Warsaw, the beginning of February 1860, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 384.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 17 September 1861, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 421.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Teofil Lenartowicz, Warsaw 17 April 1872, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 587.

four great choirs to the *Paria* tragedy”¹¹⁰) and, in 1869, he created an opera based on a piece by the French writer. Moniuszko directed the aforementioned praise to Teofil Lenartowicz, yet another poet with whom the composer corresponded, asking for advice and suggestions with regard to literary matters.

Another artist whom Moniuszko envisioned as a librettist for his operas was **Jan Tomasz Seweryn Jasiński**, the author of the libretto to a piece entitled *Trea*, which only received a few musical drafts from Moniuszko. However, the collaboration with the good writer, author of numerous dramas, theatre director, actor and translator fell on the last years of Moniuszko’s life, and they never managed to finalise it with a joint work.

Moniuszko’s strenuous efforts to popularise his own works in European theatres were noticeable not only in the case of Chęciński and the *Paria* opera. The translation of the literary text into other languages was supposed to be the starting point. The aforementioned Alfred des Essarts translated Moniuszko’s songs into French (Józef Wieniawski initiated the relationship with the French writer). The attempts at translating *Verbum nobile*, which Moniuszko wanted to stage at the *Opéra Comique* in Paris, were met with difficulties. The translation was supposed to be prepared by Edward Karol Chojecki, and Moniuszko even asked Kraszewski to help him urge the reluctant translator¹¹¹. The opera was never staged in Paris.

Moniuszko had a long-lasting relationship with the Russian poet **Vladimir Benediktov**, who translated Mickiewicz’s poems into Russian and made considerable contribution to Moniuszko’s oeuvre. The composer collaborated with the Russian poet as seriously as with the Polish authors of original librettos. It was Benediktov who authored the Russian version of *Milda*. Moniuszko later mentioned the poet in the context of a translation of *Halka*; hence he wrote to Alexander Dargomyzhsky:

Proszę o adres mego nieocenionego Bieniediktowa. Przecież właśnie na jego bezgraniczną uprzejmość mogę liczyć w wypadku, gdyby tłumaczenie okazało się konieczne.¹¹² [Please send me the address to my invaluable Benediktov. It is his endless kindness that I can count on in case a translation is necessary.]

In later years, Benediktov (whose name Moniuszko polonised into “Benedyktow”) helped Moniuszko repeatedly. In 1870, the composer wrote from Petersburg that the poet seriously works on

zastosowaniem swego tłumaczenia do mojej muzyki, [...] a robi to tak wiernie, że tylko podpisywać potrzebuję bez najmniejszego łamania głowy.¹¹³ [applying his translation to

¹¹⁰ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Edward Ilcewicz, Warsaw 11 April 1866, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 501.

¹¹¹ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, Minsk 14 July 1862, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 438.

¹¹² Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Alexander Dargomyzhsky, Warsaw September / October 1860, as cited in: S. Moniuszko, *Listy zebrane...*, p. 400.

¹¹³ Letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to his wife, Petersburg 12/24 February 1870, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 562.

my music [...], and he does it so faithfully that I only need to sign it without racking my brain.]

Benediktov also translated the text of *Widma* into Russian¹¹⁴.

The constant presence of literature in the artistic life of Moniuszko, the reading of poems, novels and dramas and the knowledge of scientific and journalistic writings devoted to music and literature constituted the basis of the composer's activities; he made creative decisions concerning the participation of literature in his works in the form of lyrics to songs and musico-dramatic pieces. Although some of Moniuszko's reading choices proved that he lacked the ability to properly judge the quality of contemporary works, his relationship with literature led him in the direction of some of the most outstanding artists of his time, especially in the case of Polish writers and poets. In songs and operas, Mickiewicz, Fredro, Kraszewski and Wolski turned out to be the closest to him. He repeatedly used their literary works, often including them in unchanged versions or through relatively slight adaptation. In this way, Moniuszko recognised their commonly accepted greatness, perhaps being aware that his compositions may further increase the value of a brand new musico-literary piece.

Introducing poems and dramas to his works, Moniuszko worked in a truly literary way since even a small interference required the librettist or the composer to adapt the literary aspects of the piece. Apart from using existing literary texts, he tried to acquire original librettos, written by the best of authors, which is why he corresponded with contemporary writers, poets and playwrights, asking them to create new texts for him. He suggested subjects and themes to his librettists, collaborated on the literary side of librettos and, once they were created, he made efforts to have them translated into other languages so that foreign audiences could come across them. As a result of his efforts to ensure the highest possible literary quality of his pieces, he led to the creation of a body of works that was, as Małgorzata Komorowska writes, "musically, literarily and theatrically coherent."¹¹⁵ The works he composed distinguish themselves through the quality of their literary elements, confirming the effectiveness of Moniuszko's persistent efforts. In this way, the composer worked in the field of literature, made use of it and left his mark on the literary world of his time.

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¹¹⁴ Cf. letter from Stanisław Moniuszko to Cezary Cui, Warsaw 4 December 1865, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 494.

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Anna WYPYCH-GAWROŃSKA

Uniwersytet Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczy im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie

Literatura i literaci w życiu i twórczości Stanisława Moniuszki

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy miejsca i znaczenia literatury w życiu i twórczości Stanisława Moniuszki, kompozytora tworzącego różne gatunki literacko-muzyczne – pieśni, opery, kantaty, oraz piszącego muzykę sceniczną do dramatów. Podstawą do analizy kontekstów literackich twórczości Moniuszki jest jego korespondencja, w której pojawiały się tematy literackie. Kompozytor pisał o ulubionych lekturach, poetach i pisarzach, o tekstach pieśni i librettach. Przede wszystkim zaś pozostały w listach dowody na poszukiwanie librett wśród istniejących tekstów literackich oraz liczne ślady prób zaproszenia do współpracy przy dziełach dramatyczno-muzycznych pisarzy, poetów i dramatopisarzy współczesnych Moniuszce. Listy pisane do kilku wybitnych przedstawicieli literatury polskiej połowy XIX wieku świadczą o ambitnych zamiarach Moniuszki. Treść tych listów potwierdza również, jak trudno było kompozytorowi pozyskać pisarzy do współpracy w roli autora tekstu do utworu dramatyczno-muzycznego. W artykule przedstawiona została galeria librecistów Moniuszki, wśród których znaleźli się najlepsi pisarze i dramatopisarze epoki. Najwybitniejsze dzieła Moniuszki są utworami z udaną warstwą literacką, co jest dowodem na skuteczność zabiegów kompozytora, a w kontekście popularności jego twórczości – także na znaczenie dorobku Moniuszki nie tylko dla muzyki, ale również dla literatury i kultury literackiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Moniuszko, literatura, libretto, opera, kantata.