

Goodbye to Poland

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What is that thread of sadness woven under the rich arpeggios
and brilliant chords? I hear the wailing and the breast beating
I hear growling dogs, the clashing swords and guns booming
I hear the anguish of Poland from your soul.
Justyna must have held your hand as you explored
her homeland, adopted by your French father,
the rich greens and golds of the country village
the hum and buzz of the cultured Warsaw.

But when opportunity beckoned there, you had to flee,
to move to France, to speak its garbled tongue
to make the matrons of society moan with delight
at your brilliant solon performances.
Composing Polonaises and Mazurkas took you back
for hidden visits to Żelazowa Wola woods,
to places you alone could perceive, to the Poland
of your dreams and wishes, now forbidden.
And that deep pain in the chords drew the ladies.
Listening, they flocked to you for the honey
with a trace of tears in it, how they hovered for
your melodies and wanted your company.
But inside, the disease of your time, the sneaking germ
the tuberculosis, the consumption, the lung decay
had you in its talons and pulled you down slowly
inexorably, however high your music soared.
And at the end, your sister, not your sweet ingénue,
nor George Sand your sophisticated intellectual lover,
stood by your bedside to help you breathe
as you finished your short life's Minute Waltz.