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The “Suspicious Cosmopolitanism of Music”, or the Art of Sounds as a Point of Reference for World Literature

Abstract

From the point of view of the world literature studies music—as the most “abstract” art—turns out to be also in this respect very different from literature, which is strongly connected with the locality. The article discusses the universalising potency of musical themes and motives in literature.

Keywords: comparative studies, musicology, world literature, correspondence of arts.

Music was created for homeless people, because it is connected with a place to the least extent of all arts. It is suspiciously cosmopolitan. Why do parts of musical pieces have Italian names? Why was Beethoven born in Bonn and died in Vienna? Why did he dedicate three string quartets to a Russian aristocrat? Why do the Chinese play Chopin’s nocturnes? Why did Händel go to London and Rossini go to Paris?¹

Adam Zagajewski’s reflections quoted above are one of the clearest examples of the literary myth of musical cosmopolitanism—the conviction that is much more difficult for literature, entangled in language, and thus in the

¹ A. Zagajewski, *Dwa miasta*, Kraków 1991, p. 9. If not stated otherwise, all the quotations were translated by Kaja Szymańska.

culture of the community using that language, to enter the international forum than it is for the art of sounds, which freely crosses borders. Literature is supposedly doomed to numerous mediations and translations, which are not experienced by music. There is, of course, much reason for this. As the least semantic of the arts, music is considered the least burdened by the need to understand its genetic culture. At the same time, however, the questions asked by Zagajewski reveal the illusoriness of this impression and the seemingly special status of music among other arts. After all, one could also ask, while remaining in the same logic, why do rhetorical figures have Greek and Latin names? Why was Mickiewicz born in Zaosie and died in Constantinople? Why did Karpiński or Trembecki dedicate their poems to Repnin? Why do Americans read Szymborska's poems? Why did Miłosz go to Berkeley and Zagajewski to Paris?

The rhetorical effect of the exemplification of "music without borders" and "homeless" music created by Zagajewski can, therefore, be considered a mistake. This does not mean, however, that the problem does not exist—rather its sources are further under the surface of the "epidermal" expression of cosmopolitanism, which is the mobility of musicians or the transfer of elements of musical culture (such as nomenclature). It is only the surface of a phenomenon whose roots are much longer, reach far into the cultural stratification, and often penetrate the consciousness of writers and poets. The belief in the cosmopolitanism of music, which stems from the conviction that it is universal, returns in various ways in the reflections of writers, often coloured with a shade of jealousy and misunderstanding. Like in *Ballada o Haydnie* (*Ballad about Haydn*) by Kazimierz Wierzyński:

Chodził po polach z gramatyką
 I uczył się po angielsku,
 A przecież mówił już po bożemu,
 Po świętemu,
 Po anielsku.

[...]
 I rozumieli go wtedy
 I rozumieją go dzisiaj
 I śpiewają z nim razem to samo,
 A on stoi z gramatyką,
 Ustami porusza,
 Uczy się jeszcze
 Przed Pańską bramą².

² "He walked through the fields with a grammar book / And learned English, / Even though he spoke the right language as God intended, / The sacred language, / The angelic one. / [...] And he was understood then / And he is understood today / And others sing with

This poem, written after the war, in exile, has an autobiographical dimension: it took Wierzyński a long time to make peace with the fact that it was impossible for him to return to Poland. Difficulties in accepting the status of an emigrant were intensified by the awareness that he was a poet in a country of a foreign language. He was reconciled with or at least grew accustomed to the new situation only when he began work on Chopin's biography proposed by his friends, the Rodziński family. Help came from people of music who did much better in a foreign-speaking environment than he.³ That is why there is a tone of surprise, or even perhaps admonition, in the poem: Haydn was wrong, his efforts were unnecessary, as a musician he was a "citizen of the world" after all.

But Haydn knew what he was doing. His successes in England did not becloud his understanding of the situation. He felt alien among the speakers of a language that he understood poorly. He knew that maintaining his position depended on conversations, contacts with friends and protectors. Moreover, insufficient understanding of English made it difficult or even impossible for him to work on vocal parts in that language, especially on the oratorios that were expected from him. In a word, he knew perfectly well that music is a response to the needs of specific audiences, and without a good knowledge of them it will be difficult to satisfy their musical desires. He knew that music must coexist with a particular culture; that without the possibility of tracing and recognising the fluctuations of that culture, a composer may easily lose his position, even if his otherness works for some time to his advantage.⁴

A specific misunderstanding of conditions, observable in the quoted texts by Zagajewski and Wierzyński, could of course be exemplified by many other works, not only from Polish literature, as this motif is quite common. In the fragment of Zagajewski's essay quoted in the introduction, one more thing draws attention, also symptomatic and repetitive. Speaking of music as a phe-

him the same thing he sings, / While he's standing there with a grammar book, / Moving his mouth, / He is still learning / in front of the Lord's gate." K. Wierzyński, *Ballada o Haydnie*, in: *idem, Wybór poezji*, Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków 1991, pp. 316-317.

³ On the subject of Wierzyński's post-war creative crisis, see, among others: M. Dłuska, *Kazimierz Wierzyński 1894–1969*, in: *eadem, Studia i rozprawy*, vol. III, Kraków 1972, pp. 7-50; A. Hutnikiewicz, *Pierwsza i druga młodość Wierzyńskiego*, in: *idem, Portrety i szkice literackie*, Warszawa, Poznań, Toruń 1976, pp. 185-204; K. Dybciak, *Wstęp*, in: K. Wierzyński, *Wybór poezji, op.cit.*, pp. ix-x.; Z. Andres, *Liryka nostalgii i niepokoju*, in: *idem, Kazimierz Wierzyński. Szkice o twórczości literackiej*, Rzeszów 1997, pp. 114-129; Z. Marcinów, „Z Ameryki do Europy...”. *O emigracyjnej poezji Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego*, in: *Studia o twórczości Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego*, eds. I. Opacki, R. Cudak, "Skamander", vol. V, Katowice 1986, pp. 130-132; W. Ligęza, *Muzyka w wierszach Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ. Nauki Humanistyczne" 2014, no. 1, special issue 5, pp. 19-20.

⁴ K. Geiringer, *Haydn*, transl. E. Gabryś, Kraków 1985, pp. 106-167.

nomenon escaping borders and divisions, Zagajewski restricts himself to European music in its classical-romantic formula, that is the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The only deviation from this very Eurocentric cosmopolitanism is, in fact, the interesting transcultural phenomenon of Chinese pianists willingly playing Chopin. Yet in this case too, a non-European culture moves closer to Europe, not the other way round, because Chinese music is not of any interest to Zagajewski here. Notably, the musical horizon outlined in his entire oeuvre is not much broader (jazz should be added to the so-called classical music). And we can hardly reproach him for this as he is a very typical representative of European culture in this respect. When writing about music and often formulating general remarks on its subject (absolute art, metaphysical art, capable of embracing the whole of human experience, etc.), one only means one type of music, limited in time and culture. And it is precisely the realisation of these limitations that can be considered the genesis of the idea of “world music” developing largely parallel (in chronological sense) to the idea of world literature, though subject to different conditions.

“L’art, c’est tous les arts” (“for art is all the arts”), as Étienne Souriau wrote in a text long regarded as a manifesto of comparative literature in its intersemiotic dimension.⁵ Similarly, music is all musics, just like literature is all literatures, in all its multitude, i.e. world music and world literature. This observation is obvious for contemporary literary scholars and musicologists. It also causes analogous problems for both. But reasons for these problems are slightly different, as manners of dealing with them are also different. Therefore, it is useful and instructive to bring the idea of world music and world literature closer together in a kind of comparative study of discourses. Although it can certainly be considered, as Jean Molino put it nicely, a raising of the “old Hegelian demons”,⁶ it nevertheless naturally comes to mind when both musicologists and literary scholars lament the crisis of their respective disciplines and when at first glance there are similar causes of this crisis, namely cognitive *hybris*. Jean Molino, among others, diagnosed the consequences of this state of affairs in the field of musicology, when he wrote: “[...] les résultats n’apparaissent comme négatifs que parce que l’on nourrissait des ambitions démesurées et totalisantes sur les possibilités de ces enquêtes: les savoirs, historiques, philologiques ou analytiques, sont parcellaires et ne nous donneront jamais la vérité sur la musique.”⁷ Likewise, what paralyses the free develop-

⁵ É. Souriau, *La Correspondance des arts: éléments d’esthétique comparée*, Paris 1969, p. 7 (1st ed.: 1947).

⁶ J. Molino, *Le singe musicien. Sémiologie et anthropologie de la musique*, Arles 2009, pp. 271-272.

⁷ “Results seem to be negative only because of the fact, that there was an immoderate and totalising ambition about the possibilities of these studies: historical, philological, and analytical knowledge is not uniform and never leads us to a full truth about music” (translated from Polish after I.P.). *Ibidem*, p. 199.

ment of literature (culminating in a discussion on the idea of world literature that has been growing for years and is already eating its own tail) is the scale of intentions: utopian holistic and globalising ambitions.

But the problem of world literature, like the problem of world music, is in fact not an ontological problem, but an epistemological one. Ontologically, the thing is relatively simple: literature and music exist, and they exist all over the world (although sometimes only in oral tradition, except for inscription practices such as musical notation or writing). Nowadays, thanks to the technical revolution, especially thanks to the development of the Internet, access to it is becoming easier and easier every year. We can say that we are ever more quickly approaching the era of world literature that Goethe announced⁸: that of universal access to literature, all literature, wherever in the world it is created. In fact, it is not the task of literary scholars to accelerate the advent of this era strongly proclaimed by Goethe, even though they can play a stimulating and accompanying role. It is translators that play first fiddle, so to say, as they make literature written in a particular language available to readers who do not speak that language. The same is true for music, in the case of which the dissemination processes are even faster, as they do not require translation procedures.

The problem begins when we want to say something about music or literature, both systematically and historically—that is, when we want to produce some knowledge about it. This dangerous transition is well signalled by the difference between the terms world literature and universal literature. The adjective “world” defines the range of occurrence. “Universality”, on the other hand—the range and nature of the impact. The advent of the world literature era is in no way synonymous with the advent of the universal literature era. World literature will never be made “universally accessible” in its entirety because it will never be read by anyone in its entirety. The search for a formula for the description of “world literature” has always been and must necessarily be the development of selection methods.⁹ We will therefore never have access to universal literature, but only to review literature. The idea of “literature without adjectives”, tempting at first glance, is an aleatoric path, which can only be followed by “ordinary” readers, guided by their own preference in the choice of readings and developing individual criteria, which do not require justification, reader relying on chance, recommendation, fashion, and accessibility. Literature specialists, for example university experts, are expected to use more specific and informed selection methods. The confusion around the problem of world literature stems, among other things, from the fact that in university structures, the selection methods are exactly the same as in any pub-

⁸ J.P. Eckermann, *Rozmowy z Goethem*, transl. K. Radziwiłł, J. Zeltzer, ed. B. Płaczkowska, Warszawa 1960, vol. I, pp. 330-333.

⁹ Which René Etiemble particularly exposed in the text *Faut-il réviser la notion de Weltliteratur*, in: *idem, Essais de littérature (vraiment) générale*, Paris 1975, pp. 15-36.

lic library: chance, recommendation, fashion, accessibility—but the imperative of ordering and objectivisation, which is the basis of the contemporary myth of university knowledge, makes us search for some method in this madness. As far as the selection criteria and canonicity are concerned, all works the same in the domain of music.

The multitude of ideas (and texts) on world literature and music, which has been piling up for over half a century, is certainly also connected with the need to reformulate the standards and procedures for acquiring and transferring knowledge in societies which are increasingly heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity. The accusation (or guilty mind—depending on who it comes from) concerning the dominance of Western culture, and within it the “elite”, “learned” formations, is one of the leitmotives of reflection on both music and literature. This theme, whether taken up by Marxist scholars or, for example, by students of postcolonial thinking, is built on the same ambition of a just division of cognitive interest, associated with the idea of universalism, whose simple consequence is the previously mentioned temptation of “cognitive totalitarianism”. Indeed, when talking about the world literature era approaching because of the growing access to the Internet and the increasingly free transfer of data, we must not forget that the image of world literary or musical culture is still unevenly selective, simply because huge parts of the world have difficult or hardly any access to these sources of knowledge. Moreover, when studying, archiving, or describing cultures of distant parts in the world, Western scholars still rarely think of repaying their representatives with the possibility of equally free insight into their own, Western culture—although here too the process is faster and more efficient in the case of music. In any case, the distribution of knowledge and cultural goods is as uneven as the distribution of material goods.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the perspective of the West has a strong historical justification, namely that it was from this cultural circle that the idea of radical expansion of the literary and musical field emerged, and it is in this circle that the tools and strategies still used by us in the description of the world’s artistic output were developed. Paradoxically, Goethe became an object of criticism because (among other things) he did not hide his particularism when he postulated the expansion of the cognitive field. According to him, the view of world literature was intended primarily to protect against narrow nationalism and to better understand one’s own culture through analysis from someone else’s perspective (mutual “correction”¹⁰). Therefore, world literature has traditionally been associated (both institutionally and in research practices) with so-called comparative literature, which provides the former with functional research tools, both for the observation of influences and phenomenological, non-contact analogies. It is here that nomenclature (especially

¹⁰ J.P. Eckermann, *op.cit.*, p. 416.

in Polish) reveals a fatal blurring of the border between ontology and epistemology, which Henryk Markiewicz pointed out long ago, writing that in fact we should not call this discipline comparative literature, but comparative literary studies.¹¹ Similarly, we should speak of world literary studies, or possibly universal literary studies (then the word "universal" is slightly more justified than in the expression "universal literature").

Not without reason, at about the same time as Goethe's reflection on world literature, the idea of world music was born, the central figure of which is the concept of a "museum of music", which makes available (at that stage of thinking, of course, only in the form of scores) musical works of different times and communities.¹² This concept, since the second half of the nineteenth century combined with the possibilities offered by the evolving technique of sound recording, has never ceased to accompany musicology.¹³ The collections of such a museum, described by means of various (crisscrossing) systems of analysis, which would also serve as specific systems of indexing, can be seen as equivalent to "world literature". However, in Jean Molino's concept, among others, this indexing is to be carried out not so much between individual musical phenomena as between conglomerates of such phenomena: "Il s'agit de fournir des modèles pour les différentes espèces d'activités musicales à l'oeuvre dans les cultures les plus diverses afin d'aboutir à une typologie qui permette d'esquisser les contours d'une musicologie authentiquement générale."¹⁴ But even in such a broad concept one can see clear signs of an evaluative and hierarchical approach, as Molino distinguishes, in a diachronic and systematic approach, three basic "musical situations", that coincide with the evolution of musical practices: the age of limited communities, the age of classical and baroque music of the West, and the "contemporary situation" (where "limited communities"—limited in the sense of musical transfer—characterise both the music of European antiquity or the Middle Ages, and the music of African tribes).¹⁵

It is apparent that the paths of (immanent) musicological and literary comparative studies diverge, which results from the specificity of the analysed material: musicology is characterised by systematic thinking about particular musical formations. The comparison of individual musical realisations from

¹¹ H. Markiewicz, *Zakres i podział literaturoznawstwa porównawczego*, in: *idem, Przekroje i zblżenia dawne i nowe. Rozprawy i szkice z wiedzy o literaturze*, Warszawa 1976, p. 415.

¹² L. Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works. An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford, New York 1992.

¹³ J. Molino, *op.cit.*, p. 286.

¹⁴ „The aim is to create models for different types of musical activity in the most diverse cultures in order to achieve a typology that will help to outline the contours of a genuinely universal musicology.” *Ibidem*, pp. 289-290.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 292.

different cultures is not made in the dimension of singular “dialogue” between individual compositions, but between whole families of such compositions. The reason for this is quite obvious: “Le problème, avec la musique, c’est qu’elle se prête moins à ces jeux que la peinture ou la littérature qui, d’une façon ou d’une autre, sont parlantes, alors que la musique, à strictement parler, *ne dit rien*.”¹⁶

This divergence of paths, which could lead to knowledge of world music and literature, has been clearly expressed in the nomenclature. The term comparative musicology (*vergleichende Musikwissenschaft*), used in the early days of the discipline (associated with the person of Guido Adler), that is in the 1950s, was replaced by two other terms, namely musical ethnology and ethnomusicology.¹⁷ This change of name, connected with the shift of the emphasis from the activity of comparing to the specificity of the observed material, was also a signal of cognitive scepticism: the belief in the possibility of describing the music of particular communities began to dominate over the belief that their systematic (that is schematising) confrontation, modelled after natural sciences, was advisable. The marginalisation of comparative procedures was at the same time an expression of the desire for cognitive equality of European music and all kinds of non-European music.¹⁸ What is important, the term *ethnos* in this nomenclature began to refer not only to the music of non-European communities, but also to folklore, as the musical culture of Europe is not homogeneous either.¹⁹ Although comparative procedures were still used both in the immanent characteristics of non-European musics and the description of Western music, musicologists did not create models of a comparative network of dependencies as the canvas of “world music”, nor did they pay much attention to such relations in their theoretical reflection. What is more, it was seen as proof of the progressive nature of studies on the art of sound. For example, André Schaeffner, when considering the causes and consequences of replacing the concept of comparative musicology with ethnomusicology, saw the benefits of this terminological change in that it freed him from confusion with the optics of comparative studies in other fields of humanities, such as literary studies, which he considered to be much more limited.²⁰ He also stated that musicology *tout court*, without any additional details (“sans autre quali-

¹⁶ “The problem with music is that it is less suitable for these games than painting or literature, which speak one way or another, while music, to put it bluntly, *says nothing*”. *Ibidem*, p. 265. Emphasis—J.M.

¹⁷ S. Żerańska-Kominek, *Muzykologia porównawcza. Utracone szanse etnomuzykologii?*, “Polski Rocznik Muzykologiczny” 2016, vol. XIV, pp. 236-250.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 239-241.

¹⁹ *Eadem*, *Muzyka w kulturze. Wprowadzenie do etnomuzykologii*, Warszawa 1995, pp. 42-72.

²⁰ A. Schaeffner, *Ethnologie musicale ou musicologie comparée?*, in: *Les colloques de Wégimont. Cercle international d’études ethno-musicologiques*, ed. P. Collaer, Bruxelles 1956, pp. 18-19, 24.

ficatif”), has a much longer and more fruitful tradition of using comparative methods than the studies on literature, e.g. in the analysis of musical themes and their origins and movement, or in the comparative analysis of musical styles. Moreover, in his opinion, a change in the criterion of selecting the analysed material, as well as the move beyond the group of leading “geniuses” towards a cross-sectional and holistic analysis of a given epoch or style took place much faster in musicology than in literary studies. He also stressed that ethnomusicologists’ awareness of the distance between different cultures was quickly extended to European creativity from the past, adding a historical dimension to the geographical one: “[...] le pur historien est très loin de l’époque qu’il étudie, serait-elle relativement récente; il en est éloigné autant – ou plus – que l’ethnologue européen l’est d’une société primitive.”²¹

The striving for objectivity, the suspension of evaluation and the dominance of formalistic description in the knowledge of music resulted in the fact that comparative procedures, unwillingly seen in the domain of global ethnomusicology, found, in a sense, shelter in what could be called (adapting the term created by Kwiryna Ziemia) the domain of “internal comparative studies”²² within music, so that they were used primarily to describe micro-differences within the “high” European tradition. In this case, the prefix “micro” denotes a difference of scale compared to the scope of ethnomusicological research, in which cultural divisions are much more radical²³ (although, of course, in European music in the twentieth century there was a rapid multiplication of traditions: “classical” music, jazz, rapping, electroacoustic and electronic music, ambient, etc.).

In proclaiming the emancipation and progressiveness of ethnomusicology as a knowledge of music emancipated from the narrow logic of comparative studies, Schaeffner also paid close attention to the fact that elements of another discipline—ethnology—are included in the research scope of “musical ethnology”. He considered this combination to be risky in many ways, primarily because ethnology always dominates the areas that try to ally with it: “C’est collaborer à une science, dont les directives vous échappent et qui, l’expérience l’a montré, a de soudains caprices. L’ethnologie est de ces sciences le plus portées à se dévorer elles-mêmes et à dévorer les autres.”²⁴

²¹ “[...] a pure historian is very distant from the epoch he studies, even if the epoch is relatively recent; he is just as far from it, if not more so, as a European ethnographer is from the primitive society” (translated from Polish after I.P.). A. Schaeffner, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

²² K. Ziemia, *Projekt komparatystyki wewnętrznej*, in: *Polonistyka w przebudowie*, ed. M. Czermińska *et al.*, Kraków 2005, vol. I, p. 423-433.

²³ Por. J. Molino, *op.cit.*, p. 285.

²⁴ “This means working with a field of knowledge whose guidelines are elusive and which, as experience has shown, has sudden caprices. Ethnology is one of the disciplines most inclined to devour both itself and others” (translated from Polish after I.P.). A. Schaeffner, *op.cit.*, pp. 26-27.

Indeed, the stabilisation of different ethnological perspectives in the research on what was quickly specified as “non-western music”²⁵ also had other consequences, well known to literary scholars: e.g. the politicisation of reflection on music, and thus the prioritisation of non-aesthetic qualities. In this approach, music is considered as a reflection of the state of consciousness and an element of the strategy of influencing the reality, and consequently it is evaluated according to non-aesthetic criteria. One (of numerous) example of such a dominance of idealistic, or rather ideological perspective in the description of music is the book by Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism. Western Music and the World*. From its very beginning, it leaves no doubt as to what role was assigned to music in this work: “This is a book about power, about systems of domination and oppression, and about who has the power of representation of Others in music, from the seventeenth century to the present.”²⁶ In Taylor’s view, the music becomes a defendant held accountable as an accomplice to symbolic violence, not only in such cases as Rameau’s *Les Indes galantes* or Mozart’s *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, but also in such cases as the Turkish march from Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* or Ravel’s *Shéhérazade*. Of course, subjecting music to the laws of cultural anthropology also results in other processes—for example, attempts to review European musical culture in terms proposed by feminism.²⁷

Apart from the question of potential ideologisation, the reflection on thinking about music, the union of musicology and ethnology, or—more broadly—anthropology, led to questions about the boundaries and identity of the discipline. With the generally unanimous acceptance of Alan Merriam’s formula proposed in *The Anthropology of Music* (1964) that ethnomusicology is “the study of music in culture”, there was a constantly recurring question of the extent to which musicologists should and were able to go beyond the art of sound and use research tools developed by other disciplines. The position of music was more critical than that of literature because of its semantic and expressive limitations. In this respect, the comments made during the panel session at the thirty-second International Council for Traditional Music held in Berlin on 18 June 1993 are symptomatic.²⁸ It is significant, not to say symbolic, that this discussion remained—at least in the publication—suspended, as it was not recorded to the end, and therefore the printed record of the discussion is in-

²⁵ M.F. Bukofzer, *Observations on the Study of Non-Western Music*, in: *Les colloques de Wégimont...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-35.

²⁶ T.D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World*, Durham, London 2007, p. 1.

²⁷ See S. McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*, Minneapolis 1991.

²⁸ Materials published as: *Ethnomusicology in the Context of Other Sciences*, ed. J. Kuckertz, Eisenach 1994.

complete; it ends with an information staggering in its honesty: “End of recording—the last 10 minutes are not on tape”. This premature and significant end came at the very moment when Manfred Krause spoke about the potential interactions and communication of ethnomusicology with other disciplines:

There we have knowledge which we can well communicate to scholars of the same discipline. Then we have to look for what is called an interface in computer technology. We have to make an interface to find out how to code and decode these problems. We have to decode into what a scholar of another discipline can understand...²⁹

This interrupted record is a characteristic expression of the desire to preserve a clear identity and individuality of one’s own discipline, with the simultaneous desire for a specific, “translatory” dialogue with other fields of knowledge. However, it is not entirely clear what would be the aim and the way of “decoding” proper musicology within another discipline of musical knowledge if there is no desire for a close cognitive union and cooperation between the different disciplines. This statement is, in fact, an excellent illustration of separatist tendencies characteristic of musicology of the 1960s and 1970s, both in terms of gathering knowledge about world music and in its analysis. It is not surprising that comparative procedures were applied in a somewhat casual way during this period, without a clear methodology and without clear objectives.³⁰ Analysing this specific mechanism of “displacement” in his cross-sectional textbook work, Bruno Nettl stressed—following Merriam’s thought—that the term “comparative musicology” was replaced with ethnomusicology not because it is impossible to make comparisons, but because they are feasible only if the individual fields of research are first well understood. From this point of view, comparative musicology was supposed to be in fact a kind of past and future of musicology, but not its current task. Transferring this idea to the field of literary research, we should say that a thorough and immanent knowledge of individual literatures should precede their comparison, that is their synthesis in the formula of “world literature”.

In the times of an intense union of ethnology and musicology, scholars rather emphasised the diversity of individual cultures than the similarities between them. The inclusion of various non-European formulas for the art of sound led to a radical broadening of the definition of music, which began to be perceived (beyond structural and genetic determinants) as “humanly organised sound”.³¹ The global perspective was expressed in broad and compre-

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

³⁰ B. Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*, Urbana, Chicago 2005, p. 10 (1st ed.: 1983).

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 50-59.

hensive definitions. In the 1970s, however, the search was reignited for smaller common elements and more direct relationships between musics from different cultural backgrounds, and the linguistic model was eagerly used for this purpose (e.g. musics from different cultures were referred to as dialects).³² Finally, in view of the intensifying intercultural exchange of music, the concept of bimusicality and multimusicality was introduced (in analogy to the term bilingualism and multilingualism), whereby the “multimusical culture” that occurred around the year 2000 is perceived not so much as a real union, but—“more realistically”—an expansion of the western musical system, which is enriching itself or, depending on the value of the process, is being “contaminated” in contact with other music traditions.³³ In the face of the real, practical, demographically conditioned confrontation of different music traditions, the universal quantifier turned out to be too universal and the notion of comparative musicology was restored to favour, this time as a keystone of transculturality.³⁴ However, even transculturality is treated with suspicion, as a new face of “musical colonialism”. This is because this term is specified by Jean Molino as an encounter with musical traditions of other cultures without taking into account their context, which assumes “unconscious” listening, focused on sounds alone, without a desire to explore the traditions of ideas behind them.³⁵ Such cognitive indifferentism accompanying the hedonistic inclination to derive only aesthetic pleasures through the desire to explore, cognise, and thus to truly approximate, is indeed easier in music than in any other field of art, because the ability to hear is sufficient to commune with it—there is no need to activate the procedures of understanding. Such an attitude, however, may concern as much African music as European music of distant epochs. What is more, as Molino points out, this process is nowadays multifaceted: “Western” music is appropriated in a similar way in other parts of the world, where it reaches more and more abundantly. Thus, musicology, which in the twentieth century set its global outlook primarily with the use of differentiation procedures, was confronted in the era of “multi-music” with the necessity of reactivating the logic of comparison.

The processes of interaction between musical traditions in connection with the fact that the art of sounds spreads today primarily through recordings,³⁶ give rise to a specific juxtaposition of two ideas, either of which can be con-

³² *Ibidem*, p. 49.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 57-59.

³⁴ See for example *Perspectives on a 21st Century Comparative Musicology: Ethnomusicology or Transcultural Musicology?*, eds. F. Giannattasio, G. Giurati, Udine 2017, here especially: W. Welsch, *Transculturality – The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today* (pp. 31-49).

³⁵ Cf. M. Kaltenecker, *L'Oreille divisée. Les discours sur l'écoute musicale aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, Paris 2010, p. 376.

³⁶ Cf. *Migrating Music*, eds. J. Toynbee, B. Dueck, London, New York 2011.

sidered the basis for a certain formula of “world music”. On the one hand, we have the traditional idea of the absolute dimension of Music, which is able to effectively and universally affect the listeners despite genetic differences between individual musics. On the other hand, there is a peculiar annihilation of these differences, which can be considered as a specific extension of the idea of acousmatics. The concept of acousmatics, traced back to Pythagoras, is nowadays connected mainly with the sphere of electroacoustic and electronic music, and more broadly with every music whose genesis, whether physical or cultural, ceases to have meaning for the listener.³⁷ Acousmatic in a broad, cultural sense would mean cutting off connections with the civilisational, ideological, and social background of music, paying attention only to its aesthetic, sound, and formal values. An acousmatic culture, understood in this way, would be a peculiar update of the formalistic approach in the era of multiculturalism and transculturalism. It can be considered to some extent as an equivalent of phenomenological comparative literature in literary studies, aiming at abstracting analogous elements in texts, regardless of their initial conditions. In connection with the freedom of transcultural transfers, they both could become the basis of world music and world literature (ontologically speaking), respectively. In spite of that, it is doubtful whether they can contribute to the development of world musicology and world literary studies (epistemologically speaking) because their source of knowledge is not neutralising borders and differences, but indicating their origins and conditions.

Finally, there is one more important thing to mention: comparative literature is linked to musicology (not necessarily comparative) by yet another strong knot, namely the study of the so-called musical-literary (or literary-musical) relationships. However, this common field is referred to with a term that is neutral and less rooted in the tradition of either discipline: intersemiotic, interdisciplinary, or intermedial comparative literature³⁸—instead of, for example, “musical literary studies” or “literary musicology”.

From this perspective, the problem of the world dimension of literature and music is particularly evident.

Historically, the idea of comparative studies on music and literature, in the spirit of the nineteenth century, and thus subject to severe criticism

³⁷ See, *inter alia*, P. Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux*, Paris 1966, *passim*; *idem*, *Akuzmatyka*, transl. J. Kutyla, in: *Kultura dźwięku. Teksty o muzyce nowoczesnej*, eds. Ch. Cox, D. Warner, Gdańsk 2010, pp. 106-112; cf. M. Chion, *Guide des objets sonores, Pierre Schaeffer et la recherche musicale*, Paris 1983, *passim*.

³⁸ Cf. especially the evolution of this concept in the works of A. Hejmej: *Muzyczność dzieła literackiego*, 1st ed.: Wrocław 2001, 2nd ed.: Wrocław 2002, 3rd ed.: Toruń 2012; *Muzyka w literaturze. Perspektywy komparatystyki interdyscyplinarnej*, 1st ed.: Kraków 2008, 2nd ed.: Kraków 2012; *Komparatystyka. Studia literackie — studia kulturowe*, Kraków 2013.

in the times of the dominance of structuralism and formalism, began to reassert itself (in Europe) in a perceptible way in the 1980s and 1990s. This was in line with the opening of musicology to other humanistic discourses.³⁹ Undoubtedly, a favourable climate for it was created by the general anthropologisation of humanities in that period, although e.g. in Poland the revival of the reflection on this subject was still rooted in structuralist traditions.⁴⁰ Musical and literary research (which naturally flourished most abundantly in the domain of vocal music and programme music), also combined successive turns in the humanities, especially the performative and most recently the auditory turn. Mutual inspirations of musicians and writers create a complex—though still chaotic—network of relations that densely cover the history of the art of sounds and the art of the word, both in spatial and historical terms. Moreover, the evident predominance of Western music repertoire and a tendency to Eurocentrism are characteristic of literature rooted in music—even if it tries to open to other music traditions. In addition, these musical and literary knots depend on arbitrary choices of artists and are not subject to systematic analysis, which seems to rule out the possibility of (re)constructing a world musical-literary community.

However, the evidence of the mutual reception of musicians and writers may become a good model of world literature and musicology, provided that we abandon our holistic and universalising ambitions in favour of a systematising approach, although not in systematising formal terms, but according to the principles of thematic criticism. Cosmopolitanism, which Zagajewski considered to be a characteristic feature of musicians, is also a feature of the way of thinking pursued by writers who feed their creativity by interacting with the art of sound. It suffices to carry out a superficial review of the occurrence of musical themes and figures in the literature of the twentieth century to easily identify common *topoi*, thematic knots, and reference points connecting writers who represent utterly different generations and cultural formations, across national, religious, and civilisational divisions. In some cases, references to the same music, to the same traditions, structures, forms of the art of sounds or to the same composer are the only reason to compare texts of authors in other respects radically different and incomparable. In such cases, the strategy of tracing the influences in literature is replaced by phenomenological or psy-

³⁹ In Poland, see in particular: M. Tomaszewski, *Interpretacja integralna dzieła muzycznego: rekonesans*, Kraków 2000; cf., *inter alia*: C. Dahlhaus, „Rozumienie” muzyki i język analizy muzycznej, in: *idem, Idea muzyki absolutnej i inne studia*, transl. A. Buchner, Kraków 1988, p. 283; R. Barthes, *Muzyka, głos, język*, transl. K. Kłosiński, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1999, no. 2, p. 9; P. Kivy, *Music Alone. Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience*, New York 1990, pp. 99-123; J.-J. Nattiez, *La musique et le discours. Apologie de la musicologie*, Quebec 2010, p. 13; S. Davies, *Musical Meaning and Expression*, Ithaca 1994, pp. 150-165.

⁴⁰ See A. Hejmej, *Muzyczność... , op.cit., passim*.

chological comparisons, which use, for example, the concept of the archetype, depending on the difference between individual artists that realise given musical motifs in a similar way. Undoubtedly, however, in such cases the global perspective of literature becomes a prerequisite.

Music as a matter of literature is indeed a powerful factor that forces the latter to be placed in an international and intercultural perspective. Nonetheless, the ease with which it penetrates into foreign cultures and modifies their assumptions does not seem to be sufficiently taken into account in attempts to describe the world literature space or, more generally, in anthropological reflection, although the mechanics of its operation has been known for a long time: "[...] when modes of music change, those of the State always change with them", as noted by Plato, who can be regarded the father of musical anthropology (though not anthropology of music).⁴¹ This is partly due to musicology itself, which, despite its relatively early merger with ethnology, took a distant and separatist stance for a long time. But the "suspicious cosmopolitanism" of music is a fact, though not as limited as the one quoted in the introduction by Zagajewski. Rather, to use the phrase of Julia Hartwig, it is "the great draught of music / which enters history".⁴² And which should be taken into account when creating new models of world literature.

Translated by Kaja Szymańska

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⁴¹ Plato, *The Republic*, Book 4, transl. B. Jowett, The Internet Classics Archive (1994-2009), Web Atomics, 2009.

⁴² J. Hartwig, *W pochodzie muzyki*, in: *eadem, Wolne ręce*, Warszawa 1969, pp. 67-68.

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