LISZT, CAROLYNE, AND THE VATICAN

The story of a thwarted marriage

by ALAN WALKER

I

Carolyne Iwanowska was born on February 8, 1819 (New Style),[1] at Monasterzyska, a remote village in Ukraine, in the house of her maternal grandfather. She was the only child of an immensely rich Polish landowner, Peter Iwanowsky, and his wife Pauline Podowska. The Iwanowskys were Roman Catholics and their estates, which were of unimaginable vastness, lay mainly in the province of Podolia, in Polish Ukraine; it took several days to traverse their borders on horseback. Brought up in isolation, on the fringe of the civilized world, Carolyne was allowed to roam free by her doting father. La Mara would later describe her as "a child of the steppes."[2]

The Iwanowsky domains encompassed such communities as Staniscince, Bielaski, Buchny, Iwanki, Woronince, Tencki, and Polok. Thirty thousand serfs were required to work these far-flung territories, and over this desperate sea of humanity the Iwanowskys exercised total control. The climate was extreme. In summer there was tropical heat; in winter cold so intense that the inhabitants had to wear masks with holes for their eyes. It was not uncommon to send a servant for purchases in the next village, only to discover him the following morning frozen to death in the back of his cart. These serfs knew no other way of life. After the Polish insurrection of 1830 their lot became particularly harsh. All travel to nearby provinces was curtailed, and many families were separated. Simply to visit one's kith and kin without travel documents was to risk a Russian bullet through the head.

When Carolyne was eleven years old her parents separated. By nature Peter Iwanowsky was a recluse, and his wife Pauline had soon discovered that life in a remote Ukrainian village with a man who preferred to be alone left much to be desired. She spent years of her married life pining for the social whirl of the large cities she had known as a girl. Pauline and her daughter now traveled to Central Europe, where they turned up in the brilliant salons of Berlin and Vienna and at a number of fashionable watering spas. Pauline Podowska, in fact, was renowned for her beauty and for her musical talent. She was a welcome guest in Metternich's salon, where she charmed the cream of Viennese society; both Spontini and Meyerbeer complimented her on the purity of her singing voice, and Schelling praised her in his poetry. By contrast, Carolyne herself was exceedingly plain, and this cast a shadow across her childhood from which she never escaped. Indeed, the difference between mother and daughter was so disconcerting that it frequently drew comment. So upset was Pauline at the trick that nature had played on her that her sensitive daughter, painfully aware that she was the cause, attempted to console her by urging her to wait until the Resurrection, after which Carolyne would be transformed into a great beauty.

On her return to Ukraine, Carolyne divided her time between her father and her mother. Her education was supervised by her father, who hired a French governess, Madame Patersi dc Fossombroni—who would later educate Franz Liszt's daughters. Peter Iwanowsky was a book-worm by nature, and he attempted to forget his matrimonial troubles by sitting up half the night browsing in his library, smoking large cigars. His daughter would often join him there, and they would read his learned tomes together, the father thinking nothing of offering a cigar to his young charge. As she grew older, her favorite pas-

[1]Until she left Ukraine, Carolyne invariably celebrated her birthdays on January 27 (Old Style). See her unpublished letter to Liszt dated January 27, 1848, in which she tells him that today is her twenty-ninth birthday. WA, Kasten 33.

[2]LSJ, p. 10.

time was to debate with her father, and they would argue the night away in his smoke-filled library. Carolyne's later reputation as a blue-stocking, her love of disputation, and her addiction to tobacco can all be traced back to this early environment. It is typical of her industrious nature that when she was only nine years old, she had already drawn up for herself a table of laws that rewarded the crime of idleness with capital punishment.

II

Concerned for the welfare of his daughter, who would one day inherit his fortune, Iwan-owsky trained her in the daily affairs of his business. Carolyne became a skilled horsewoman, and under her father's tutelage she assumed greater responsibility for the grain transactions on which the family's wealth ultimately rested. But Iwanowsky was also anxious to secure a marriage for her; if the family fortune were to be protected, she must produce an heir. She was only seventeen years old when she received an offer of matrimony from the 24-year-old Prince Nicholas, the youngest son of Field Marshal Ludwig Adolf Peter von Sayn-Wittgenstein.[3] The Wittgensteins were Protestants, and they owned a few small properties which bordered on the Iwanowsky domains. Iwanowsky knew full well that the Wittgensteins wanted to marry money, but he also recognized that his strait-laced daughter would never be wooed by a more eligible suitor. Three times Nicholas proposed and three times Carolyne rejected him. Frustrated and angry, Nicholas protested to the father. According to the Vatican documents, Iwanowsky put an end to further speculation by making an outright promise of his daughter's hand in marriage to Prince Nicholas, and he then summoned the recalcitrant Carolyne to his home in Starostince. There he subjected the unfortunate girl to intense verbal pressure and, when that failed, he threatened to disinherit her.[4] Witnesses later came forward to testify to the fact that Iwanowsky used fustigation against his daughter in his efforts to break her will. Despite her tears and entreaties not to marry Nicholas Wittgenstein, the marriage plans went forward, and the ceremony itself took place in Starostince on April 26, 1836 (Old Style). Many years later, Carolyne told Liszt that before the wedding she had "wept for a whole night" in her father's room, "and a few steps further on I gave up my happiness—hardly conscious of what I was doing and what I was accomplishing. What an initiation into the science of life!"[5] During the ceremony Iwanowsky never left his daughter's side lest she leave the church. These were the circumstances that would later form the basis of Carolyne's case for an annulment of her marriage, her petition alleging *vis et metus*—force and intimidation. Moreover, there were other irregularities. It later transpired that the marriage service was conducted outside Carolyne's own parish, by a cleric she did not know, and without the prior consent of her own parish priest. These grave improprieties Carolyne later used to bolster her case. And what of Carolyne's mother during this traumatic time? She interceded in her daughter's behalf, but to no avail. Reluctantly she set out to attend the service but fell ill en route and was observed to remark: "I really do not have the courage to attend my daughter's wedding, for I know that she will be as unhappy as I am."[6]

Immediately after the wedding, Prince Nicholas took his child-bride to Kiev, where he held a position as captain in the Russian cavalry and aide-de-camp to the governor of that city. Carolyne found life there so unsettling that after only a few

[3]The field-marshal (1769-1843) had defended St. Petersburg against Napoleon in 1812. In 1834 he and all his descendants had been made princes of Prussia by King Friedrich Wilhelm III, despite the fact that they were Russian subjects. It is worth noting that neither Nicholas nor Carolyne was born into the upper aristocracy. She acquired the title of Princess almost by accident, as it were, because of marriage to a man who had only acquired it himself when he was twenty-two years old.

[4]ASV, NV Doc. No. 36.

[5]WA, Kasten 33, unpublished letter dated February 13, 1848. Before we cast Peter Iwanowsky in the role of villain, determined at all costs to sacrifice his daughter on the altar of his own ambition, we should remember that "arranged" marriages of this sort were a commonplace in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it was perfectly normal among the upper classes to consider matrimony as an extension of business. The Wittgenstein-Iwanowska marriage seemed like a perfect bargain for both parties: Carolyne became a Princess, while Nicholas acquired property and a great deal of money. The fact that they made one another unhappy was irrelevant. Life offered a plentiful supply of diversions to those couples who were willing to make the necessary accommodations and compromises—especially if (as here) money was no impediment.

[6] ASV, CC Doc. No. 8.

months she returned to Woronince, the country estate that her father had given her as part of her wedding dowry. It was at Woronince that she gave birth to her only daughter, Princess Marie, on February 18, 1837 (New Style), a mere nine months after the wedding. To please his young wife, Nicholas relinquished his cavalry commission and joined her there.[7] The marriage soon failed, however, owing to their incompatible natures, and within four years they had agreed upon a permanent separation.

On October 4, 1844, Peter Iwanowsky suffered an apoplectic stroke while attending mass and died on the floor of the church because, claimed his daughter, he knew himself to be responsible for her misfortune.[8] Distraught with grief, Carolyne sealed his house in Starostince and entombed within it every book, picture and piece of furniture exactly as he had left them. More than three years were to elapse before she mustered the courage to unlock its doors again.[9] At the moment of Iwanowsky's death Carolyne inherited fourteen estates and became one of the wealthiest women in Ukraine.

III

After the death of her father, which had followed so hard on the failure of her marriage, Carolyne learned the full meaning of adversity. Scarcely had the body of Peter Iwanowsky been lowered into the grave than her three cousins (the daughters of Iwanowsky's brother, Dyonis) confronted her with a false will purporting to name them as beneficiaries. They knew that Iwanowsky had threatened to disinherit his daughter, and now that he was dead they were determined to do their best to make that threat become a reality. Because the document bore a watermark postdating his death, however, she was able to expose them.[10] The Wittgensteins were equally hostile. Fearing to lose all control over her fortune, they kept a careful watch on her affairs from their home just beyond her borders. These family squabbles turned Carolyne into a recluse. She escaped into her library, like her father before her, seeking consolation from the philosophers. There she read Kant, Fichte, and Goethe, writing a long commentary on *Faust*. A light always burned at her window as she read or scribbled the night away. And all the while she yearned secretly for her liberator.

Woronince is all but impossible to find on modern maps. It lies 49°40′ north and 20°10′ east. That places it, roughly speaking, about one hundred and fifty miles south-west of Kiev. Carolyne's château was situated in a park with a wide avenue of trees and a lake. The house was plainly furnished and devoid of taste. According to Princess Marie, who lived there until she was eleven years old, the walls of the dining-room were painted with parrots.[11] The ground floor was oblong, containing a library, a music-room, and a billiards room. Several busts of philosophers and poets stood like sentinels at the doorways and along the corridors. Carolyne's bedroom, on the first floor, was dominated by a large wooden crucifix hanging on the wall before a prayer stool. One or two flame-colored sofas stood out garishly against the dull grey wallpaper. Surrounding the house were the miserable huts in which the serfs led an animal-like existence. Clumps of bushes hid these wretched hovels from the eyes of visitors, as if to deny their very existence. The château itself was overrun with domestic servants who would unroll their mattresses at dusk and lie down in the dark corridors, or spend the night propped against the walls. Just outside the château Carolyne had built a "house chapel" for her family, her servants, and passing wayfarers. In the absence of the itinerant priest, she and her daughter frequently read the text of the mass, in Latin, to the motley congregation. Liszt himself delivered one such reading while he was a guest at Woronince.

[7]LSJ, p. 12.

[8]MAL, pp. 162 and LAG, p. 29. The Vatican documents support Carolyne's statement. When the case came to trial, Peter Iwanowsky himself was reported to have said before witnesses who had known him well that he bitterly regretted the unhappiness that he had introduced into his daughter's life. "Her father, seeing that his daughter's revulsion for her husband had not diminished with the passing of time, would often say to those who were close to him that he regretted having forced his daughter into a marriage against her will." See ASV, CC Doc. No. 7.

[9]WA, Kasten 33, February 13, 1848 (Old Style).

[10]LSJ, pp. 15-16. This information was given to La Mara by Princess Marie, Carolyne's daughter.

[11]LSJ, p. 13.

IV

In the winter of 1847 the Princess undertook her annual journey to Kiev in order to negotiate the prices on her forthcoming grain harvest. She herself has left a vivid account of this difficult 150-mile journey, which was made in a horse-drawn sled through snow-covered terrain, across frozen lakes, and with the constant howling of wolves in the background. These trips were not without physical danger, in fact, and they could sometimes take a week or more, especially if the traveler had the misfortune to be trapped in a blizzard.[12] Hundreds of Ukrainian farmers used to converge on Kiev's Corn Exchange, or "Contract Hall" as it was sometimes called, in which bargains were struck and loans were raised against next year's crops. What made Carolyne different was that she was a woman functioning in a man's world. Peter Iwanowsky had trained his daughter well, however, and she often aroused the admiration of her male competitors in the grain business. "Madame," remarked one of them, "you work more laboriously than any of us. I wish my son were man enough to undertake such a journey in this season."[13]

One day, when she was leaving Contract Hall, Carolyne happened to overhear her colleagues talking about a piano recital that had been given in the building a few days previously by Franz Liszt. The famous pianist was just then in the middle of a concert tour which had brought him from Western Europe, through the Danube Principalities, and into Ukraine. Her curiosity aroused, she attended his next recital at Kiev University.[14] A few days later she heard his *Pater noster* sung in the cathedral, and was so moved by it that she sent him an anonymous donation of 100 roubles for his charity subscription. Liszt insisted on knowing the identity of his anonymous benefactress so that he could thank her in person, and that is how they came to be introduced.

V

When Liszt first met Carolyne he was thirty-five years old, and he had been on the road more or less continuously since 1839. He was now regarded as the world's greatest pianist and the whole of Europe lay at his feet. The story of Liszt's life has been told so often that it is unnecessary to repeat it here. It is sufficient only to recall that scholars still refer to that brief eight-year period from 1839 to 1847 as the "years of transcendental execution," when Liszt unfolded a virtuoso career unmatched in musical history. That is a large claim, but it can be sustained. And had he died in 1847, the year in which he and Carolyne first met, the title of "the first modern pianist" could not have been withheld from him. His stage-presence was already the stuff of legends. Audiences were enslaved by him and there were times when they seemed to succumb to mass hysteria. Liszt's emotionally charged concerts were not unlike seances which strove for contact with the metaphysical. Hans Christian Andersen was present at one of his Hamburg recitals, in 1842, and described it this way:

> As Liszt sat before the piano, the first impression of his personality was derived from the appearance of strong passions in his wan face, so that he seemed to me a demon nailed fast to the instrument whence the tones streamed forth—they came from his blood, from his thoughts; he was a demon who would liberate his soul from thraldom; he was on the rack, his blood flowed and his nerves trembled; but as he continued to play, so the demon vanished. I saw that pale face assume a nobler and brighter expression: the divine soul shone from his eyes, from his every feature; he became as beauteous as only spirit and enthusiasm can make their worshipers.[15]

With his mesmeric personality, good looks, and Byronic manner, Liszt swept all before him. Swooning female "fans" attempted to take cuttings

[12]During one such journey, undertaken in March 1847, the Princess and her maidservant were trapped in their coach while a blizzard raged around them. "Have you ever seen a blizzard?" she asked Liszt. "It is a fine moment of nature's folly. The sun sometimes appears in it like a flash of intelligence promptly blotted out. Then everything is white and dark, yet simple and pure and wild." (WA, Kasten 33, unpublished letter dated March 21, 1847, Old Style).

[13]Ibid.

[14]The concert took place on February 2, 1847 (Old Style). Carolyne preserved the program and after her death it was donated to the Weimar Liszt Museum by her daughter, Princess Marie (LSJ, p. 21).

[15]*A Poet's Bazaar*, Vol. 1, pp. 50-51.

of his hair. Others carried glass phials into which they poured his coffee dregs. Some even collected his cigar butts, which they hid in their cleavages. Heine labeled the phenomenon "Lisztomania," and the term has stuck. Few of his encounters with the opposite sex were anything more than passing affairs, but by the time he met Princess Carolyne they had colored his reputation. One or two had created a scandal, particularly the Lola Montez episode, which he never really succeeded in living down. It was gossip about Lola Montez that had finally put an end to his long-standing liaison with Countess Marie d'Agoult, in 1844, by whom he had three children. As Marie put it, she did not mind being his mistress, but she objected to being one of his mistresses. In 1846 Marie avenged herself by publishing her autobiographical novel *Nélida*, in which Liszt is depicted as an artistically impotent painter named Guermann Regnier. Liszt always refused to recognize himself in *Nélida*. He called the character of Guermann "a stupid invention." That he was hurt by the book, however, cannot be denied.

It is difficult to imagine the impact that such a magical personality as Liszt must have had on Princess Carolyne. For years she had lived as a recluse at Woronince. The only members of the opposite sex she now met were the dull "gentleman farmers" of Ukraine, her business colleagues. Liszt was the dazzling antithesis of everything that they stood for, a sophisticated man of the world who swept everyone before him. And there was something else, too. The Princess was one of those women who are destined to love but once. Such females seem fated to go through life locked in limbo, their emotional life a frozen wasteland. But should they meet the man who sets both heart and body aflame, they are his for eternity. And Liszt had one other advantage for Carolyne. He was not only a man with whom she could go through life, but he was also a musical genius of the front rank. Henceforth, she now had a mission: to make life softer for him, to sacrifice herself on the altar of his artistic ambitions.

VI

After their first meeting Carolyne invited him to visit her at Woronince in a few days' time. The ostensible reason for this invitation was the tenth birthday celebration of Princess Marie, which was held on February 18. We say "ostensible," because there is evidence that from the moment Carolyne set eyes on Liszt she was in love with him. Years later she revealed to him the cause of that fatal attraction: she saw in him the spirit of her dead father. "It was as clear as daylight, in my mind's eye, that the Lord was sending you to take the place my father had left vacant."[16] Liszt stayed at Woronince as Carolyne's guest for a mere ten days. We shall probably never know for certain what happened during this brief eternity, but the force of their encounter was strong enough to produce a lasting consequence. When the time came for Liszt to resume his concert tour of Ukraine, it was already understood that he and Carolyne would rendezvous later in the year in Odessa. Meanwhile, his travels were to take him through Lemberg, Czernovsty, Jassy, and Galatz, culminating in a month-long visit to Constantinople, in June 1847, where he played in the Tchiraghan Palace before the Turkish Sultan, Abdul-Medjid Khan. He then sailed from Constantinople across the Black Sea aboard the cruiser *Peter the Great*, which docked in Odessa in mid-July. There he and Carolyne were reunited.

Accompanying Carolyne was her husband, Prince Nicholas, who had come to Odessa to observe the Russian army maneuvers. There is no suggestion that Nicholas played the role of an outraged husband at this time. Quite the contrary. The trio were often seen together in Odessa's fashionable society. Did Nicholas know that his wife was enamored of Liszt? If so, his "civilized" behavior can only be explained by the fact that he saw in the great pianist the solution to his life's problem. This is borne out by the fact that when Carolyne invited Liszt to spend three months with her at her château in Woronince, Nicholas not only did not stand in her way but tacitly encouraged the arrangement by going off to Berlin in pursuit of his own pleasures. Nicholas's aggression towards both Liszt and Carolyne came later, when her case for an annulment became mired in

[16]WA, Kasten 34, from a letter dated July 13, 1853. The entire text of this letter has meanwhile been published in *Silences: Liszt* (Paris 1986), pp. 23-25.

legal difficulties and it began to look as if he might lose control over her fortune.

In September 1847 Liszt made a momentous decision. He resolved to give up his life as a wandering minstrel and turn his back on the concert platform for good. The idea had long been germinating in his mind for he wanted leisure to compose. He was undoubtedly supported in this resolve by Princess Carolyne who saw in him a great artist whose irregular lifestyle was harming his work. As early as 1842 he had been given the position of Kapellmeister at the court of Weimar. The thought of taking up residence there held many attractions for him. Weimar was one of the most cultured cities in Germany. It throve under the benign patronage of the Grand Duchess Maria Pawlowna, the sister of Tsar Nicholas I of Russia. Already it could boast of more than a century's unbroken association with the arts. Bach had lived and worked there; so too had Goethe and Schiller. Moreover, Weimar possessed an orchestra and an opera house. It was an attractive offer, and Liszt now decided to take it up. The last concert that he ever gave for money took place in the Ukrainian city of Elisabetgrad, in September 1847. He was still only thirty-five years old.

VII

In the meantime, the Princess had traveled back to Woronince in order to prepare her "little cottage," as she put it, for Liszt's arrival. She reached Woronince on September 11 (Old Style),[17] and Liszt himself got there a week later. Liszt spent his thirty-sixth birthday at Woronince. On October 22 Carolyne gave a large birthday party for him to which she invited hundreds of her peasant workers from the surrounding areas. As a special surprise she also invited a local gypsy band to play for him. Liszt was always susceptible to gypsy music, and he later wrote about this particular occasion in his book *The Gypsies and their Music in Hungary.*[18] This visit to Woronince was not harmful to his work. Carolyne had installed a piano in his room until his own arrived from Odessa. Among the works he brought to completion were his *Glanes de Woronince*, which he dedicated to Princess Marie, and much of his great cycle *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, which he dedicated to Princess Carolyne.

The three months that Liszt and Carolyne spent at Woronince—a honeymoon by any other name—changed the course of his life. It was there that Carolyne resolved to throw in her lot with his and follow him to Weimar. Liszt made only one stipulation: that before leaving Ukraine she should make over to her daughter one half of her fortune so that the child's inheritance be secured.[19] Both Liszt and Carolyne were confident that her marriage could be annulled and that they would soon be free to marry. They knew that their chief obstacle was Tsar Nicholas I, who, as the titular head of the Russian Orthodox Church, exercised absolute authority over the dissolution of marriages.[20] But was not Liszt's most powerful ally in Weimar Maria Pawlowna, the tsar's sister? And would not she intercede in behalf of her genius Kapellmeister?

The first winter snows now started to fall, and Liszt and Carolyne were marooned from the outside world. Vows of eternal love were ex-

[17]WA, Kasten 33, u. 1.

[18]RGS, Vol. 6, pp. 157-59.

[19]LSJ, p. 23.

[20]There was no love lost between Tsar Nicholas and Liszt. Once, when the great pianist was giving a recital in St. Petersburg, the monarch arrived late and started talking to one of his aides. Liszt stopped playing and sat at the keyboard with bowed head. When Nicholas inquired the cause of the silence, Liszt replied: "Music herself should be silent when Nicholas speaks." It was a chilling rebuke which set the whole of St. Petersburg talking. Not long afterwards, Nicholas asked Liszt to give a concert for the survivors of the Battle of Borodino. It was a tactless idea and Liszt felt obliged to refuse. "I owe my education and my celebrity to France," he said. "It is impossible for me to make common cause with her adversaries." This reply angered the Tsar, who made it known that "the [long] hair and the political opinions of this man displease me." Liszt retorted: "I let my hair grow in Paris and shall cut it only in Paris. As for my political views, I have none and will have none until the day the tsar deigns to put at my disposal three hundred thousand bayonets." (RLKM, Vol. 2, p. 186.) We cannot properly appreciate the impact of Liszt's retort until we put it into some sort of historical perspective. This encounter with Tsar Nicholas took place in 1841, less than thirty years after his elder brother, Tsar Alexander I,. had defeated Napoleon in Russia and had pursued the remnants of the French army all the way back to Paris. Liszt's remark was tantamount to saying that the only reason people listened to Nicholas's views was because he had inherited an army. He could hardly have guessed that the fates would one day entrust his personal happiness to this despot.

changed, and the Princess gave Liszt a Gordian knot of pure gold, which symbolized a union that could not be broken.[21] The time had now come to lift the veil of silence that Liszt had drawn around his relationship with Carolyne. The European newspapers had picked up rumors of a forthcoming betrothal; the story was premature and it embarrassed him.[22] On December 22 he broke the news of his new relationship to Marie d'Agoult. Ever since their rupture, three years earlier, they had maintained a sporadic correspondence, if only because the fate of their three children still bound them together. He told her that he had met "a great character united with a great spirit...Attribute the change in my location to a very real change in my life..."[23] "Nélida's" reply was scathing. "So, a new apparition has seized your imagination and your heart? So much the better. This woman of great character (so you say) will not consent to share your life." And with a bitter reference to her earlier *cri de coeur*, she went on: "She will not want to be *one of your mistresses.*"[24] Liszt showed the letter to Carolyne, whose forthright rejoinder deserves to be better known: "On the contrary, I would be happy for her to know that one really wants to be *one of the mistresses*, for there are devotions without limits."[25]

Early in January 1848 the lovers of Woronince took their leave of one another. Liszt journeyed to Weimar in order to begin his fulltime duties there, while Carolyne herself set out on one of those nightmare journeys to Kiev. Her primary purposes were to sell off some of her estates and commence legal proceedings for an annulment of her marriage. That this action weighed heavily on her mind cannot be doubted. She wrote: "The bells of Kiev have often formed a solemn midnight accompaniment to the muffled sobbing of my heart."[26] One of the most painful aspects of this journey was to return to the old property of her father at Starostince. When she broke the seals on the door, placed there three years earlier, she entered his study and found everything as it had been on the day of Peter Iwanowsky's death, as if frozen in time—the table covered with his papers, the half-turned chair, the antique desk that he had inherited from his own father, and the blond curl he had cut from Carolyne's infant head twenty-five years earlier still hanging from the crucifix on the wall, which bore the inscription: "I am the Way."[27] It distressed her to part with her lands, for to her it was like breaking faith with her ancestors. "Today I have just sold one of my lands, one of the first that my grandfather bought, one of the cornerstones of that fortune amassed so laboriously and honestly by the hard work and sincere efforts of two generations of men...I burst into tears when it passed into other hands."[28] One of her last acts was to deposit with the clerical authorities in Kiev a petition for the annulment of her marriage; this petition was at once forwarded to Archbishop Ignaz Holowinski, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, whose response we shall come to shortly. Then, the main purpose of her journey accomplished, she returned to Woronince, closed up the house, and fled with her daughter across the Russian border into Austria.[29]

Her journey must have been filled with high adventure. Europe was in a state of revolutionary upheaval and Russia was about to close its borders. The tsar's troops were everywhere. Liszt himself had a hand in the design of Carolyne's getaway coach,[30] which was stuffed with precious stones and the money she had raised on the sale of her properties; this would form the basis of her personal wealth in the years to come.

[21]It is reproduced in Robert Bory's *La vie de Franz Liszt par l'image* (Geneva 1936), p. 130.

[22]He wrote to Baron von Gutmansthal: "As for the *Journal de Francfort*, it announces the marriage of a famous pianist with a Russian Princess, but it is only a rumour that I am not at all in a position to confirm to you" (GSL, p. 30).

[23]ACLA, Vol. 2, p. 390.

[24]ACLA, Vol. 2, p. 417.

[25]Unpublished letter dated January 27, 1848 (Old Style), WA, Kasten 33. Carolyne had already read Marie d'Agoult's novel *Nélida* the previous spring, not long after she had first met Liszt, as is proved by the derogatory remarks she had made about the book to her friend Marie Potocka. "It takes courage to expose oneself in something less than a shirt," she observed sarcastically (LAG, p. 34).

[26]Unpublished letter dated January 20, 1848 (Old Style).WA, Kasten 33.

[27]Unpublished letter, dated February 13, 1848 (Old Style). WA, Kasten 33.

[28]Unpublished letter dated January 25, 1848 (Old Style). WA, Kasten 33.

[29]During Carolyne's long absence in Kiev, the eleven-year-old Princess Marie had stayed with her grandmother, old Frau Wittgenstein. When she went to collect her daughter, Carolyne made no mention of her imminent departure for Germany. By this single act Carolyne made lifelong enemies of the Wittgenstein family, and of Nicholas in particular, who later not only accused his wife of kidnapping their daughter but attempted to reciprocate the act (see p. 10).

[30]HLSW, p. 23.

VIII

When Liszt got to Weimar, towards the end of January 1848, he moved into the Erbprinz Hotel in the Marktplatz, not far from the Court Theatre. This was to be his official address throughout his thirteen-year stay in Weimar. Even after he had moved into the Altenburg with Carolyne, his mail was always forwarded to the Erbprinz, and messages from the Court were delivered there as a matter of course. This arrangement was meant to save the Court from embarrassment: the problem of Liszt's *ménage à deux* was solved by the simple expedient of not recognizing it.

Almost from the moment that Liszt had arrived in Weimar, he was plunged into a busy round of rehearsals and concerts. On February 16 he conducted a performance of Flotow's *Martha* at the Court Theatre in honor of Maria Pawlowna's birthday. A few days later he appeared as soloist in a Henselt piano concerto, and between times he had to give four or five singing lessons a week to Duchess Sophie (the wife of Carl Alexander, the future grand duke). He also had a number of private audiences with Maria Pawlowna, at which he brought her up to date about Carolyne and asked her to intercede with Tsar Nicholas in their behalf.

Meanwhile, Carolyne was en route from Russia. As she crossed the frontiers of Podolia for the last time, on April 2, she felt no remorse. "I am about to leave the country which has held me in its shrewish bosom for fifteen years, and whose milk has turned to vinegar and bile."[31] She wrote to Liszt every day and kept changing the place of their rendezvous, perhaps to confuse the censors. Liszt finally traveled to the Austro-Russian border and they were re-united at Kryzanowicz, the mountain castle of his friend Prince Felix Lichnowsky, about the middle of April. After a brief trip to Vienna, Eisenstadt, and Raiding (where Liszt showed Carolyne the humble cottage in which he had been born), the couple got back to Weimar in July 1848. Liszt returned to his bachelor quarters in the Erbprinz Hotel, while the Princess rented the Altenburg, a large house on the outskirts of the city. A year later, when their wedding looked as far distant as ever, Liszt moved in with her, and they lived in the Altenburg as man and wife for the next twelve years.

IX

Carolyne's original plea for an annulment was brought before the consistory of Mohilow, in the vicinity of St. Petersburg, on May 4, 1848, one month after she had fled Russia. The basis of her case was that she had been forced into marriage by her father, and her petition alleged *vis et metus*—that is, "violence and fear." This ecclesiastical court of three judges had appointed one Deacon Mierzwinski to be the Defender of the Marriage Bond, and the case was tried on May 12 (Old Style). Drama and confrontation must have characterized the occasion: ten family witnesses were called for Prince Nicholas and five for Princess Carolyne, including her mother.[32] The case for the Princess was flimsy, Mierzwinski argued. She had been married for twelve years before filing her petition. Why had she not begun these proceedings at once? Moreover, there was a child of the union, which further strengthened the matrimonial bond. Carolyne, for her part, made it clear through written documentation that she was only seventeen at the time of her marriage, that it was her father (not Prince Nicholas) who had coerced her; and there were witnesses within the family circle to testify to that fact. One of them, a servant named Julianna Stolarczuk, claimed that fustigation had been used against Carolyne; another, named Peter Slobodiany, confirmed this and asserted that he had listened to it through the door. Carolyne further argued that the wedding had taken place at Starostince, where she was not a parishioner; consequently, the marriage service had not been blessed by her own parish priest, who had been told nothing about it (a highly irregular practice in the Catholic church). Moreover, it was claimed that Carolyne had continued to live with Prince Nicholas for no other reason than that of not displeasing her father.

Deacon Mierzwinski responded by pointing out that the word of servants could hardly be

[31]Unpublished letter dated April 3 (Old Style). WA, Kasten 33.

[32]ASV, NV Doc. No. 36.

trusted, since they all knew that their very livelihood depended on their testimony. For all his eloquence, however, he failed to convince the court; Carolyne's case was upheld, and it was then referred to her own diocese of Luck-Zhitomir, in Ukraine, where the evidence (which included a written protest from Mierzwinski)[33] was re-examined. More than three years elapsed before the Luck-Zhitomir court brought forth its decision: "that the matrimonial bond between Prince Wittgenstein and Carolyne Iwanowska be declared valid." Carolyne now had two court decisions, one in her favor and one against. A year later her case was referred once more to the consistory of Mohilow, which, after reviewing the case, upturned the earlier decision and ruled again in Carolyne's favor. The judges actually issued a decree of annulment on November 13, 1852. It was at this point that the Metropolitan Archbishop Ignaz Holowinski refused to give his sanction and halted Carolyne's motion in its tracks.[34] This was devastating news for the Princess. The case had been heard in Mohilow (1848), struck down in Luck-Zhitomir (1851), restored in Mohilow (1852), and finally ruled against by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg (1852). After four years of emotional turmoil, she had nothing whatever to show for her efforts.

The situation was just as bleak for Prince Nicholas. There is ample evidence to suggest that by now he was at one with Carolyne in his desire for an annulment. The only point of dissension between the pair was the sort of property settlement he would receive from the Iwanowsky fortune. In the summer of 1852, at the very moment when the case looked as if it was at last taking a favorable turn, Nicholas decided to enter into direct negotiations with his wife. The go-between was the Russian ambassador to Weimar, Baron von Maltitz, from whom we gain some unusual insights into the matter. Carolyne had turned her annulment into a crusade, and Maltitz (who by virtue of his official position was her nearest target) had been deluged with letters, briefs, and memoranda, all of which were designed to bring him to a fuller understanding of her plight. She had even offered him money in an attempt to speed the process along, a ploy he found objectionable.[35] Through the offices of the governor-general of Kiev it was finally arranged that Nicholas would journey to Weimar in person and bring with him a proposal for a financial settlement. Nicholas arrived in Weimar on September 12, 1852, and made his way to the Altenburg the following day. The document was drafted in the presence of the court marshal, Baron von Vitzthum, and it was witnessed by Nicholas, Carolyne, Princess Marie, and Liszt. It was the first time that Nicholas and Carolyne had seen one another since she had fled Russia, and the meeting must have been a painful one. Liszt, we know, had resisted this visit in a vain attempt to spare Carolyne's feelings, and he even threatened to use force to keep Nicholas away from the Altenburg.[36] He felt that Carolyne was being used, and later events were to bear him out.

The essential points embodied in the agreement were these:

1. In the event that Carolyne re-married,
   a. one-seventh of her fortune would pass to Nicholas;
   b. six-sevenths would pass to Princess Marie;
   c. Carolyne would receive 200,000 roubles in cash.[37]
2. The Grand Duchess Maria Pawlowna would meanwhile take over the guardianship of Princess Marie and ensure that the morals of the young girl were protected.

This last proposal was a sensitive one, and it was meant to humiliate. Nicholas was determined to reg-

[33]It was Mierzwinski's duty, as Defender of the Marriage Bond, to appeal all decisions affecting the bond to a higher court. The role of *Defensor Vincali Matrimoni* was more than a hundred years old at this time, having been introduced by Benedict XIV in his papal bull *Dei miseratione* of 1741. There was no more powerful symbol of the profound importance attached to the annulment proceedings than the presence in court of "God's advocate," whose holy task it was to defend the sanctity of the marriage bond by all legal means.

[34]This was not only irregular, it was possibly illegal too. There was nothing in canon law to validate such an arbitrary action. The judges who made up a consistory had an equal vote, and majority decisions prevailed. Holowinski's veto was to become a bone of contention in the years ahead, and it was eventually upturned.

[35]BLTB, Vol. 2, p. 138.

[36]BLTB, Vol. 3, pp. 139-40.

[37]The properties that Carolyne was expected to yield included Starostince, Bielaski, Buchny, Iwanki (in the environs of Kiev), Woronince, Tencki, Cetwukowce (in the district of Litin), Wonlowce, Wolfwodowska, Polok (in the district of Berislawl), and Bielany, Szendrowska, Kislicku, and Lozowa (in the districts of Mohilow and Jampol.)

ister his objection to the fact that his adolescent daughter was growing up under the roof of his wife's paramour. He described the Altenburg, and the atmosphere of sycophantism that surrounded Liszt there, as "a drug." That Carolyne signed the document at all must be regarded as a measure of her desperation to sever the chains that still bound her to the Wittgensteins. Accordingly, the fourteen-year-old Princess Marie, together with her governess "Scotchy" Anderson, was removed from the Altenburg and given a room in the royal castle. Liszt joked with Marie about her misfortune in an attempt to revive her flagging spirits, and he nicknamed her spartan quarters "the Bastille." This unhappy arrangement lasted for two years, when it was brought to a sudden and dramatic end. In the summer of 1854 Weimar experienced a series of exceptionally heavy thunderstorms. The castle tower was struck by lightning in the middle of the night, and Princess Marie was discovered senseless on the floor of her room. She suffered intensely from this traumatic event and was brought back to the Altenburg to recover; she never returned to "the Bastille."

Scarcely any of the documents relating to Prince Nicholas's visit to Weimar during the late summer of 1852 have survived. Control over Carolyne's fortune was still the Wittgensteins' primary aim, of course; but Nicholas, if not his family, wanted a swift and amicable end to the impasse. We know that as early as 1852 he wanted to re-marry and no longer wished Carolyne "to go on bearing my name."[38] Despite the paucity of original sources, however, there are some scattered pieces of information which, when drawn together, help us to reveal the background of tension and mistrust which prevailed at the Altenburg when Nicholas crossed the threshold on September 13. One such source is the diary of Theodor von Bernhardi, politician and military historian, who was in Weimar for much of 1851 and 1852 and was an eye-witness to these extraordinary comings and goings. There was a confrontation between Liszt and Prince Nicholas which nearly ended in blows. Nicholas later expressed the desire not to meet Liszt again "in order to avoid an encounter that might be unfortunate for him rather than for me."[39] Were Liszt and Carolyne under threat of physical force during these years? It seems so, to judge from a letter that Carolyne wrote some time later to Baron von Maltitz. In it she complains that not only was she menaced by police at her husband's behest, but that these same police, "furnished with imperial orders," attempted a brutal kidnapping of Princess Marie.[40] The Tsar eventually sent his plenipotentiary Prince Peter von Oldenburg to Weimar in the early part of 1853 in order to enforce his will. At the heart of the matter lay the fact that the property settlement between Carolyne and Nicholas carried the authority of the tsar; the issue of an arrest warrant was the Russian autocrat's clumsy way of ensuring that the terms of the agreement were enforced. Carolyne panicked at the thought that she and her daughter might well be arrested and returned to Russia forcibly. (Since she knew that her husband had always maintained that she had "kidnapped" their daughter from Ukraine and had taken her without his consent to Weimar, the fear that her in-laws might reciprocate was a real one.) She caught the overnight train to Paris in order to seek the protection of Napoleon III.[41] We shall probably never know the full extent of this human tragedy, but it is clear from these occasional clues that there must have been some appalling scenes at the Altenburg in which Liszt was inextricably involved.

In 1854 the Princess was summoned back to Russia in order to explain her non-compliance with the terms of the property settlement. She refused to obey this directive (after all, her marriage to Nicholas had still not been annulled), whereupon the Russian minister of justice recommended that the full rigor of the law be applied against her, and Tsar Nicholas I sequestered all her lands and estates. The following year, 1855, his successor, Tsar Alexander II, stripped her of her citizenship and condemned her to exile. The Iwanowsky estates were eventually put into trust for Princess Marie until she reached her majority; meanwhile, the girl received 75,000 roubles a year from the profits. Carolyne's means were now drasti-

[38]BLTB, Vol. 2, p. 142. The current object of Nicholas's attentions was a widow from Berlin, Frau Kosens. He appears to have tired of her, as of his other amours.

[39]BLTB, Vol. 3, pp. 139-40.

[40]HFL, p. 180.

[41]RL, p. 94. One of Princess Marie's suitors at this time was Baron Charles-Angélique Talleyrand, the French ambassador to Weimar. Had the pair become betrothed, the diplomatic protection enjoyed by Talleyrand could have been extended to Marie as well, and the Wittgensteins would not have wanted to risk creating a diplomatic incident. In the event, Carolyne's attempt to gain an audience with Napoleon III came to nothing. See TOS-W, pp. 218-19.

cally diminished, and she frequently had to turn to her daughter to settle her debts. Her exile was particularly hard for her to bear. This mark of imperial disfavor was transmitted to the court at Weimar, with which Carolyne was already persona non grata, and she became a pariah, untouchable by anyone with court connections. What this meant in such a small town as Weimar can hardly be imagined. One story may stand for all the others. On September 4, 1859, Carolyne was invited to observe the unveiling of the Goethe-Schiller monument from the home of her friend Henriette von Schorn, whose windows offered a grandstand view of the ceremonials. The whole of Weimar's establishment was gathered in the central square outside, and the grand duke and duchess themselves were in attendance. The moment that Carolyne entered the room, all the ladies of the court got up and left. This painful snub was immediately seen by Liszt, who advanced towards Henriette, kissed her hand in grateful acknowledgement of her support, and then led Carolyne to the square outside where they took their seats in full glare of the court officials gathered there.[42] During the Weimar years, Liszt and Carolyne often had to brazen it out on formal occasions.

And there the matter might have rested, an uneasy stalemate among the principal contenders—the Russian court on the one hand, the Weimar court on the other, and Carolyne and Liszt in the middle.

But in 1855 two very important developments occurred. Holowinski died and was succeed by Archbishop Wenceslas Zyliński, who knew the details of this case very well. That same year, too, Prince Nicholas secured a Protestant divorce, and in 1856 he re-married.[43] Carolyne's legal advisers informed her that the complexion of her case now looked somewhat different. Hitherto she had been fighting two adversaries, the Wittgensteins and the Church. Now she would only have to fight one, since Nicholas had dropped his defense the moment he re-married and had no further interest in the outcome. In 1857 they brought it once more before the lower consistory of Luck-Zhitomir, the court that had originally denied her petition. That court, however, upheld its earlier decision and, by implication, Holowinsky's veto.

X

This was the dismal history of the legal wrangle when the case took a dramatic turn. In the spring of 1859 Carolyne received a visit from one of her tenant-farmers in Ukraine, a lawyer named Władislaw Okraszewski, who persuaded Carolyne to appeal directly to the new archbishop, Żyliński. For this plan to be effective, Okraszewski told her, it would require the payment of 70,000 silver roubles in fees and disbursements.[44] This was an enormous sum of money which the Princess was obliged to borrow from her daughter, who now controlled her former fortune. Furthermore, Żyliński would have to seek a special dispensation from Pius IX to re-open the case. This he did, and Pius issued that document through the Holy Congregation of the Council on August 8, 1859.[45] The Mohilow court was duly reconvened towards the end of the year and, after a thorough review of all the original documents, Archbishop Żyliński issued a decree of annulment on February 24, 1860 (Old Style).[46] On the basis of this document alone, Carolyne and Liszt were free to marry. Unfortunately, the annulment was at once

[42]SZM, pp. 92-93.

[43]Nicholas's second marriage took place in January 1856; his new wife was Marie Michaïloff, a twenty-six-year-old nurse to the children of Prince Souvaroff, governor of Riga.

[44]Okraszewski appears to have lost no time in taking up Carolyne's case with Żyliński. The Vatican files contain a letter from Żyliński to Okraszewski, dated June 13, 1859, which indicates that the latter had already launched the first of a series of detailed attacks on the way in which that case had been handled in the past [ASV, CC Doc. no. 5].

[45]The three-month delay was caused by the fact that Żyliński was obliged to direct his request through the Imperial cabinet in St. Petersburg. Russian prelates were not permitted to communicate directly with the Holy See.

[46]ASV, NV Doc. No. 6. Żyliński selected three high-ranking clerics to serve on his consistory: Maximilian Staniewski, Bishop of Platen; Andreas Dobszewicz, Provost of Szydlow; and Monsignor Moszezynski, Prelate Deacon of Minsk. After reviewing the case in great detail, Żyliński and his colleagues made two pronouncements which are worth recording here.

(a) "On the basis of these findings, [we] unanimously decreed the marriage of Carolyne Iwanowska to be null and void.

(b) "Accordingly, through the present letters, in the absence of any other impediment which His Holiness thought might be an obstacle, we state, pronounce, declare, and moroever issue, a definitive sentence attributing to the aforesaid Carolyne full faculty to contract a new marriage freely and legitimately."