ABSTRACT: Two Polish artists—the renowned actress Helena Modjeska and the famous composer and pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski—were drawn to California in the 1870s and 1910s respectively. Their bond with the California landscape in Modjeska’s ranch, El Refugio, near Santa Ana, and Paderewski’s Rancho San Ignacio, near Paso Robles, offered them retreats from their performance tours, restored their health, and gave them a sense of belonging. In turn, both transformed the landscape of the imaginary as they developed productive agriculture.

Keywords: Modjeska, Helena; Paderewski, Ignacy Jan; California agriculture; gentlemen farmers; landscape of the imaginary
In 1884, two Polish artists met in the Tatra Mountains of eastern Europe. One was a successful actress, Helena Modjeska (1840–1909), whereas the other was a struggling young pianist, Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941). Known more at that time for his compositions than for his piano skills, Paderewski had gone to study the native music of peasants in the region around the resort town of Zakopane, where Modjeska owned a villa with her husband, Karol Bozenta Chlapowski (1840–1914). Delighted at their common interests in the arts, Polish nationalism, and local culture, Modjeska decided to help launch Paderewski’s career as a performing artist. Decades later, after achieving enormous wealth from tours in Europe and North and South America, Paderewski would return the favor.
near the end of Modjeska’s life. Above all, they shared an attachment to the California landscape. When both purchased land in the state—she in Santiago Canyon in Orange County, he in Paso Robles in San Luis Obispo County—they came to see their respective properties not only as a source of physical renewal but as a means of belonging.

Migration studies in California are replete with stories of rehabilitation and refuge, of course, yet in contrast to many migrants to the state, both Modjeska and Paderewski were able to leave a profound imprint on the land they inhabited. The land, in turn, made a profound impact on them. Although they shared a highly romanticized view of that landscape, they also saw commercial opportunities for developing the land in ways that would scarcely have been possible in Europe. In addition to their impact on the physical landscape, we can also consider ways in which both artists influenced the cultural landscape and what we could call the “landscape of the imaginary.” In presenting here a tripartite model for migration and settlement, I will examine the relation between Modjeska, Paderewski, and the California landscape by means of reception, renewal, and belonging.

THE RECEPTION OF MODJESKA

Modjeska’s relation to the California landscape began with an ideal. At the peak of her career, yet in poor health, she made the surprising decision in 1876 to abandon the European stage and, with several Polish compatriots, to immigrate to the United States. It was the same year as the completion of the first transcontinental rail connection to Southern California, which made the region far more accessible than

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3. On tourist writings on California, see Phoebe S. Kropp, California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 70–73, 86–87, 127–32; David M. Wrobel, Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), esp. 164–76. An abiding belief in the health of the California environment has deep roots; see Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, Las sergas de Esplandián (Seville, 1510), and more recently, Jared Farmer, Trees in Paradise: A California History (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), xxi.


5. Born Jadwiga Benda on October 12, 1840, and later baptized Helena Opid, she became Helena Modrzejewska from her first marriage to Gustav Sinnmayer Modrzejewski, whom she allegedly married at the age of seventeen. She later shortened her surname to “Modjeska” for the American stage. Ritter, “Helena Modjeska,” 155, 158.
before. The Southern Pacific Railroad Company created a publicity office to sell the idea of moving out West, which included such writers as Charles Nordhoff, whose *California: For Health, Pleasure, and Residence. A Book for Travellers and Settlers*, published in 1873 and distributed throughout the U.S. and in Europe, made a deep and lasting impression on many prospective migrants to the region. Yet even before this time, a Polish writer, Aleksander Holyński, wrote at least two books on California that lauded the region as a respite from the harsh winters of Europe and that promised a fresh start for all who chose to take it. He further pointed to its ideal location for international trade and its enduring promise as a new state.

Although it is unknown whether Modjeska and Chlapowski had read Nordhoff or other American authors, they surely had read Holyński, and they were eager to see for themselves. They formed part of a close circle of Polish intellectuals who became intrigued with the idea of establishing a Polish utopia in Southern California, asserting that “[y]ou cannot die of hunger there, that is quite sure! Rabbits, hares, and partridges are unguarded... Blackberries and the fruit of the wild cactus grow wild, and they say the latter is simply delicious!”

Two friends of Modjeska and Chlapowski, journalist Henryk Sienkiewicz (later the author of the novel, *Quo Vadis*) and nobleman Jules Sypniewski, laid the groundwork. They sailed to America in the spring of 1876, arriving in California by way of Panama, and bought a twenty-acre farm near Anaheim (itself a German utopia once called “Campo Heim”) before returning to Poland to fetch the others. The Poles had a further reason to emigrate. Sypniewski had met Chlapowski during their imprisonment in 1863 following an unsuccessful uprising against Imperial Russia, and they remained close friends ever since, co-founding a journal of opinion in Warsaw titled *Kraj*.


8. Aleksander Holyński, *La Californie et les routes interocéaniques* (Brussels, 1853). Christopher Onzol writes of another book by Holyński, written in Polish, entitled *I Was at the Birth of California*, “that spoke about a utopian country, in which a professor of philosophy serves soup in a restaurant and a shoeblack is an avid philosopher; all are equal, and everybody makes enormous earnings.” Onzol, “Paderewski in California.”

Country). Disillusioned with Russia’s seemingly interminable grip on their native land and seeking to improve Modjeska’s health, they decided to move to California. Utter idealists all, their goal was to found a colony that would survive from the fruits of their own labors.

The result was a group of foreign urbanites intent on “getting back to the land” who had almost no experience collectively in farming or even tending the soil. The colony of ten people made a curious company. Along with Modjeska, Chlapowski, and Sienkiewicz, they included Sypniewski’s wife and two children, an amateur cartoonist named Lucian Paprocki, Modjeska’s son Rudolphe from her first husband, Gustav Sinnmayer Modrzejewski (d. 1866), and a young maid named Anusia. Of these, only Sypniewski had any knowledge of agriculture. Nonetheless, they believed that the land would yield up bounteous produce and their little colony would prosper. Long after the colony had collapsed, Modjeska wrote of this highly romanticized perception that they shared of the land:

What joy!... To bleach linen at the brook like the maidens of Homer’s ‘Iliad’! After the day of toil, to play the guitar and sing by moonlight... And listening to our songs would be charming Indian maidens, our neighbors, making wreaths of luxuriant wildflowers for us! In exchange we should give them trinkets for their handsome brown necks and wrists! And oh, we should be so far away from everyday gossip and malice, nearer to God, and better.

This idea of returning to the land was a common ideal in nineteenth-century European intellectual life. The Russian gentleman farmer and writer Leo Tolstoy believed that the land symbolized a purer life that urban settings utterly lacked. To return to one’s ancient roots was to attach oneself to the mystical belief in an uncorrupted, rural tradition that predated industrialization. Similarly, socialist communes of the early nineteenth century, inspired by the

10. Holmgren, Starring Madame Modjeska, 113, 121; McWilliams, Southern California Country, 139.
11. Mrs. Adalina Pleasants, “Anaheim’s Artist Colony of Which Madame Modjeska and Henryk Sienkiewicz Were Members,” Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 1, Folder 17, SC/UCL.
12. Ritter, “Helena Modjeska,” 156. Sienkiewicz later wrote the epic novel Quo Vadis and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1905. Ralph Modjeski (born Rudolphe Modrzejewski) later designed over 40 bridges, including the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in 1933–36, which he worked on with two partners from his firm, C. H. Purcell and Frank Masters.
writings of such figures as Welshman Robert Owen and Frenchmen Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, were all deeply influential in shaping early utopian thought in Europe and America. In Fourier’s view, money and goods would be distributed according to the skills of each person, with “rewards accorded with nature,” which became the foundation for such communes as Brook Farm in New England.14 Above all, the followers of this movement sought to become self-sufficient farmers and hence to return to a more “natural” way of life.

Modjeska, her husband, and their friends took these ideas to heart, and believed that in the American West they could achieve them. “Oh, but to cook under the sapphire-blue sky in the land of freedom!” Modjeska exulted.15 They took a steamship from Europe to New York and a boat to Panama, then crossed the isthmus over-land at Panama before sailing up to San Francisco. From there they boarded the train southward on the recent extension of the Southern Pacific railroad, thereby ironically benefiting from an industrial age that made getting back to the land all the more attainable.

Idealism soon gave way to reality, and it did not help matters that the accommodations proved meager indeed. “The commonplaceness of it all was painfully discouraging,” Modjeska recalled, “and the front yard, with its cypresses, shaggy grass, and flowers scattered at random, looked like a poorly kept small graveyard.”16 The house had two bedrooms, a dining room, and a small parlor, which was hardly sufficient for a group of ten people. The only inspiring aspect was the landscape itself, with stunning views of the Sierra Madre mountain range to the north and the Santa Ana Mountains to the east.

This venture, predictably, did not end well. One by one, members of the group found excuses not to work, and by Modjeska’s account, at times only her husband and son regularly tried to plow and harvest the land. Despite Sypniewski’s agricultural knowledge, “he could not apply it well to the new conditions of soil and climate,” she wrote, and “there was no system among our idealists; they worked or not, they discussed a great deal, they sometimes even quarreled and then made up and hugged each other; in one word, they lived under a nervous

tension which could not last long.” After only two months, Modjeska recounted, the nascent colony realized that “our farming was not a success. Everything seemed to be a sad failure. We had several cows, but there was no one to milk them, and we had to buy milk, butter, and cream from the neighbors. We had chickens, but our fine dogs made regular meals of the eggs. We had a vineyard, which yielded beautiful muscat grapes, but there was nobody to buy them, and often people would come and fill their wagons with them without more ado; they said that such was the custom of the country. We were too courteous to contradict them, and smilingly consented to be robbed.” It was thus a failure not only emotionally but also financially. By her estimation, her husband had invested $15,000 (in 1870s dollars), with almost nothing to show for it.

How could Modjeska and her family afford to remain in California? The failure of the farm led directly to her decision to return to the stage. Even before her husband had sold the farm and the group dispersed, she left for San Francisco with her son, Rudolphe, in early 1877 and began intensive courses in English until her husband could join them. Although she knew some English prior to immigrating to America, she sought to improve her elocution and her vocabulary. After much effort, Modjeska (a stage name simplified from her Polish name, Modrzejewska) made her American debut on August 20, 1877, at San Francisco’s California Theatre. There she played the title role of the 1849 French play Adrienne Lecouvreur, which first won her recognition in Warsaw in the early 1860s. In great contrast to her farming venture, her stage career in America was an immediate success. Her colleague Henryk Sienkiewicz wrote in the Polish Gazette (“Gazeta Polska”) that after one performance, “[e]verybody was in a frenzy... Nobody left their seats after the show was over, which is unheard of in America. Contrary to local custom, the actress was called back eleven times... America was taken by storm.”

17. Ibid., 290.
18. Ibid., 304.
19. McWilliams, Southern California Country, 140.
20. French playwrights Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) and Ernest Legouvé (1807–1903) wrote Adrienne Lecouvreur based on the life of a French actress of the same name (1692–1730). A copy of the play is in the Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 2, Folder 3, n.d., SC/UCI.
we presume that Sienkiewicz was exaggerating, her reception on her subsequent American tour was astounding. She performed in New York, Boston, Washington, DC, St. Louis, and other American cities, and due to the constant demand for her talents, she gave such tours for the remainder of her life. Part of the reason for this continued success was surely her ability to perform in many different roles and therefore not to be “typecast”; she is believed to have mastered over 260 roles during the course of her career, and she excelled above all in Shakespearean drama, which at the time was essential to being accepted as a serious actor on the American stage. She thus made

22. See, for example, Program, Grand Opera House, Chicago, 1897–98, Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 1, Folder 7, SC/UCI.

23. These roles included Juliet in Romeo and Juliet, Ophelia in Hamlet, and Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, as well as Rosalind in As You Like It, Lady Macbeth in Macbeth, Viola in Twelfth Night, Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra, and Imogen in Cymbeline. Aside from Shakespeare, she also excelled in the role of Marguerite Gautier in Alexandre Dumas, Jr.’s Camille, as well as the title roles
a deep impact on the cultural landscape of California as well as in the United States more broadly.

The critical reviews of her performances are remarkable even given the hyperbole of the era. One review here will suffice. “She is one of the greatest actresses of our time,” wrote a critic from the Public Ledger, a Philadelphia newspaper. “Her method is calm and composed. There isn’t a touch of hysteria in even the most fiery explosions,” which is “made even stronger by the fact that she allows only a part of it to expose itself on stage, and she has a wonderfully expressive face.” Unlike many American actors, the critic claimed, Modjeska had “so much grace and truth in her movements, and she expresses so much through her body, that she could clearly and accurately convey her thoughts through pantomime alone.”24 With her husband as her manager and constant touring companion, the risk of re-launching her acting career in a foreign country had succeeded handsomely, and they reaped the financial benefits. This newfound wealth meant that Modjeska was able to re-establish a connection to the land, but this time on her own terms.

Renewal

Modjeska’s second encounter with the California landscape differed markedly from the first one. After a decade of touring, she and Chaplowski had no place they could call home, and it seemed at last appropriate to settle down. Their son Rudolphe had left to study engineering in Paris (later to become a renowned bridge designer in the U.S. as Ralph Modjeski) and they had the financial means to become property owners. After becoming a U.S. citizen and drawing on her stage earnings, Modjeska and her husband purchased a property in Santiago Canyon, twenty-six miles from Santa Ana in present-day Orange County, in 1888.25 When they were not on tour, the house

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25. “Modjeska’s Home in the ‘Forest of Arden’,” Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 2, Folder 10, SC/UCI.
in Santiago Canyon served as their primary residence. The main difference from the Anaheim farm was that she and her husband could work the land at their leisure, and could thus live on it without having to live from it.

She first came across the property through her friend Joseph Edward Pleasants (1839–1934), a beekeeper whom she had originally met in 1876. He and his wife had befriended her during her Anaheim days, and ten years later Pleasants invited Modjeska and her husband to camp and hunt on his property when they came for a visit. They returned for two more summers before deciding to buy Pleasants’ property, a 1,340-acre ranch.26 She soon hired renowned architect Stanford White (1853–1906), who specialized in homes for wealthy clients, to redesign the cottage on the ranch. White’s renovations included a library, living room, a sixteen-foot high ceiling with a stone fireplace, and a broad terrace that looked out on the garden below. Now a woman of means, Modjeska sought a luxurious setting for her new home.27

Above all, Modjeska saw the property as a refuge and hence a site of renewal. Whenever she returned to her property, she wrote, “my thoughts were far away from the stage. It was an ideal place for rest—and I needed to rest.”28 It was geographically isolated, situated ten miles from the closest railroad station, which meant about three hours by horse and carriage. Yet the distance added to the property’s charm. “It was really a very peaceful retreat,” she recalled, far away from “the turmoil of the world.”29 In keeping with the idea of the landscape of the imaginary, she gave a Spanish name to the property, “El Refugio” (The Refuge), imitating the dons of Spanish and then Mexican rule. A contemporary journalist noted that “Modjeska has spent several thousand dollars beautifying her ranch home, which

26. Modjeska and Chlapowski first bought a half-interest in Pleasants’ property in 1883 before purchasing the remainder of the land in 1888 for $13,000, consisting of the farm and the water rights. They then purchased an adjoining 331-acre homestead for $5,000. Helen K. Lee, “Historical Background of the Modjeska House, Modjeska Canyon, Orange County, California,” Report for the County of Orange and Thirtieth Street Architects, Inc., Newport Beach, 1989, typescript, p. 7, Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 1, Folder 9, SC/UCl.
28. Modjeska, Memories and Impressions, 541–42.
29. Ibid., 540.
Modjeska at the fountain in her garden, “Arden,” 1902. 
Courtesy UC Irvine Special Collections and Archives.

Modjeska at her rose-covered well, “Arden,” 1909. 
she calls El Refugio, and she and her husband are welcoming many
guests from Los Angeles and Anaheim. Modjeska and Chlapowski thus played into the romanticized notion of the Spanish fantasy past, what Carey McWilliams once referred to as belonging to “attempted revivals of Spanish folkways.” She further endeared herself to local residents by occasionally performing in productions in Santa Ana and inviting people to her property for visits, all of which contributed to her influence on the region’s cultural landscape.

**Belonging**

By cultivating and developing her property, Modjeska established a sense of belonging to the land. To this end, and to underline her interest in recreating an English garden, she hired an English gardener, Theodore Payne (1872–1963) in the summer of 1893. A recent immigrant to the United States, Payne worked on El Refugio for the rest of Modjeska’s life. He eventually became an expert in native California plants, and his book, *Life on the Modjeska Ranch in the Gay Nineties*, recounts some of his experiences. Payne’s involvement was invaluable, not only to establish and maintain Modjeska’s rose garden, but also to help create a commercial farm: a key goal of Modjeska’s husband, Chlapowski. With Payne’s assistance, “Bozenta,” as local residents referred to him, planted “about thirty acres of olives [and] a small acreage of oranges and grapes,” while also developing “an apiary of about 120 hives of bees.” Through additional purchases of land the couple expanded their total property holdings to over 1,340 acres, and in 1905 they constructed a dam and reservoir in the canyon (now called Harding Canyon) to irrigate their crops. The land thus became a commercial venture with the pressing and sale of olives under the label of Modjeska Ranch olive oil. It is

30. [Anonymous], “Modjeska’s Anaheim Ranch,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1888, p. 3. The name may also have arisen from the former owner of the property, Edward Pleasants, whose wife was Maria Refugio Pleasants. Lee, “Historical Background of the Modjeska House,” p. 6, Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 1, Folder 9, SC/UCI.
34. Mrs. Adalina Pleasants, “Anaheim’s Artist Colony of Which Madame Modjeska and Henryk Sienkiewicz Were Members,” Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 1, Folder 17, SC/UCI.
35. I would like to thank Phil Brigandi for sharing this information.
significant that they chose crops that seemed to offer health benefits for human consumption, like olives, oranges, and grapes, thereby underlining the wholesome properties that agricultural development of the region seemed to uphold. At least one account, however, states that the farm struggled, in part due to a disastrous blight in 1900 that “struck all olive groves in Southern California.” Nonetheless, through the farm, dam, crops, irrigation, place names, and the house itself, Modjeska and Chlapowski made a decided and lasting impact on the physical landscape.

Another way of creating a means of belonging was to establish connections to the local communities of Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Los Angeles. In addition to inviting people to her property for visits, she performed in several benefit events over the years for various causes. In June 1894 she gave a benefit performance for the Free Public Library in Santa Ana, which took place at that city’s French’s Opera House and evidently broke Orange County theater attendance records, with over 1,000 people coming to see her. Four years later she gave a benefit performance in Los Angeles for the Red Cross.

37. Program, Free Public Library Benefit, French’s Opera House, Santa Ana, Calif, June 27, 1894, As She Liked It, Bowers Museum exhibit, Santa Ana, Calif.
where she played Rosalind in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It.* After a devastating earthquake in Messina, Italy, which killed between 75,000 and 200,000 people in 1908, she gave another benefit performance at Temple Auditorium in Los Angeles as one of twenty-eight other performers, despite being in failing health. Such appearances made her a recognized presence in the region and helped elevate the cultural landscape of Southern California.

As one of the leading Shakespearean actresses of her day, an important way for Modjeska to bond with the land was to imagine the landscape around her cottage in Shakespearean terms. She named the garden “the Forest of Arden” after the forest in the play, *As You Like It,* which reminded her of her own property: “oak trees, running brooks, palms, snakes, and even lions—of course California lions—really pumas.” Her Eden was thus to be a California landscape with European overtones. “The scenery was magnificent,” she wrote, but “all our improvements had for their main object not to spoil what nature had provided, and we left all the old oaks around the house, and the pretty, wild shrubs on the terrace.” Referring to two other favorite Shakespearean plays, *Macbeth* and *The Merchant of Venice,* she wrote, “I have acted Lady Macbeth and Portia now for many years. The lines have a charm that’s like my California home. I never wish to forget or cease to be fond of either.”

There is also some evidence that Modjeska found a connection to the land by seeing Southern California through the lens of eastern Europe: another extension of the landscape of the imaginary. It was exceedingly common for visitors to liken the California landscape to southern Europe such as Italy, Spain, or Greece, yet it was decidedly unusual to see a physical similarity to the landscape of eastern

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38. Program, Red Cross Benefit Performance, Burbank Theatre, Los Angeles, Calif, July 7, 1898, *As She Liked It,* Bowers Museum exhibit, Santa Ana, Calif.
39. She performed a scene from *Macbeth* as Lady Macbeth. Program, “Benefit Performance to aid the suffering survivors of the Sicilian-Calabrian Earthquake of January 1909 [sic],” Temple Auditorium, Los Angeles, Jan. 12, 1909, Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 2, Folder 10, SC/UCL.
40. “Modjeska’s Home in the ‘Forest of Arden’,” Modjeska Collection, MS.R.037, Box 2, Folder 10, SC/UCL. See also Modjeska, *Memories and Impressions,* 294. An 1882 photo of Modjeska in the costume of Rosalind in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* was in the Bowers Museum exhibit, *As She Liked It,* Santa Ana, Calif. [See image above, p. 76.]
42. Angel, “Personal Influences,” 24.
Europe. Modjeska claimed in her memoirs, however, that the landscape around her home reminded her of the Tatra Mountains. She explained that the canyon “bears such strong resemblance to some nooks in our Tatra Mountains, with its rushing brooks and waterfalls.”43 Santiago Canyon was then a remote and mountainous hinterland, which evidently evoked some of the wildness of the mountain ranges she knew well.

Despite these efforts to find a connection to the region, and even to imagine the landscape as similar to Poland, at least one visitor did not share that enthusiasm: her old friend Paderewski. He visited her during Christmas on his 1904 tour to the West Coast, but saw her property as dark and depressing. This perception is surprising, since Stanford White’s renovations to the house included a series of gabled roofs, with a modernized, expanded floor plan. Although from the outside the cottage appears open and relatively spacious, on the inside it could be quite dark, perhaps even oppressively so. Paderewski admitted that

43. Modjeska, Memories and Impressions, 542.
“it looked uncanny, but interesting—those fantastic walls of rock, and that little cottage tucked away in the depths of that canyon.” Yet he could not abide the relative lack of light, doubtless made worse during the rainy season. During their entire stay, he complained, “we did not see the sun at all. There was only one place [in the house], a small opening in which there stood a little ladder which you could climb painfully up, if you were courageous enough, and from that point, see a tiny bit of sunshine. Yes, the house was actually built in a little canyon. A strange place to live!”

**The Reception of Paderewski**

Like Modjeska, Paderewski found a connection to the California landscape through both reception and renewal before ultimately leaving a lasting impact on that landscape. Although he first visited California to give concerts in San Diego and Los Angeles in 1896, he became

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especially attached to Paso Robles, once the site of a renowned health resort. After spending several weeks in the town during a tour in 1913–14, he purchased multiple non-contiguous tracts of land, planted fruit and nut trees and, later, vineyards, and even explored for oil. Although his main residence continued to be his home in Morges, Switzerland, and he never became a U.S. citizen, Paderewski returned regularly over the next twenty-five years to oversee his California properties.

As with Modjeska, Paderewski’s road to California began in Poland. Soon after their first meeting, Modjeska became determined to make him the star performer that she felt he could become. She arranged and took part in a concert on October 3, 1884, at the Saski Hotel in the old university town of Cracow—the “Oxford of Poland”—with the purpose of raising funds so that Paderewski could study with a famous teacher in Vienna, Theodor Leschetizky. As Paderewski later wrote in his memoirs, Modjeska’s “name on the program was magic. She recited a few poems and created, as always, a furore [sic]. The house was crowded and it brought over 400 gulden,” or about $200 (in 1880s dollars), a small amount to Modjeska but “it was an enormous sum to me!” Delighted at the prospect of fulfilling his dream, Paderewski embarked on the road that would lead him to enormous fame and wealth and even, briefly, a second career as a diplomat and prime minister. The concert in Cracow also tied these two artists together in terms of friendship and mutual support over the ensuing decades, and they kept in constant touch over the years, despite their very different professional paths.

Paderewski’s lessons with Leschetizky marked a watershed in his career. Although initially reluctant to take on the young man, who was in his mid-twenties, Leschetizky ultimately taught him free of charge, convinced of his startling natural talent, and so Paderewski could thus spend his money solely on living expenses. He took almost a dozen lessons with Leschetizky over a period of several months, which provided a foundation for all of his future piano performances, practicing, and even approach to music. Although Paderewski and Leschetizky were careful to say that Paderewski was not a product of the Leschetizky school but rather a unique artist in his own right, Paderewski learned, above all, how to build a concert repertoire and to perform like a true concert pianist.

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Paderewski’s rise from a little-known Polish composer to one of the dominant musical personalities of his era was a result of the late-nineteenth-century longing in both Europe and America for star performers. In America he specialized in performing not only in major cities but also in smaller towns, where few famous artists appeared. A single “opera house” in a nineteenth-century American Western town was by no means unusual, where a visit by a world-renowned performer was a major cultural event. With a handsome visage, a long mane of hair, and a seemingly flawless technique, he riveted audiences throughout the country, thus dramatically impacting the cultural landscape. And like Modjeska, Paderewski’s repertoire was vast. Although the music of Chopin predominated at his concerts, he specialized in the works of most major European composers, including Beethoven, Liszt, and Schubert. In performing multiple works by each composer, his concerts could last up to three hours—longer than many of his contemporaries and far longer than the concerts of most classical pianists today. He also performed his
own works—a reminder to audiences that he had begun his professional career more as a composer than as a pianist—such as his Minuet in G, Op. 14, No. 1, which was later a favorite even of President Harry Truman, who often performed it in public. Unfortunately, few recordings by Paderewski exist that appropriately reflect his talent because he recorded relatively late in his career, and one of the few films in which he appeared was the 1937 feature film *Moonlight Sonata*, when he was almost 80 years old. Yet until the arrival of a new generation of pianists—Anton Rubinstein, Vladimir Horowitz, Josef Hofmann—there was simply no professional pianist at the time like Paderewski, and his skills and performance style became synonymous with mastery of, and flair for, the piano.

Paderewski’s connection to the California landscape began on his third American tour (1895–1896), which included his first performances on the West Coast. He traveled by rail to Southern California on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe line, taking a specially-designed train for the tour, the “Haslemere.” After a concert in San Diego, he traveled to Los Angeles, where he played at the 1,454-seat Los Angeles Theatre on February 7 and 8, 1896. Two concert promoters, theater manager Harry C. Wyatt and his business partner Frederick W. Blanchard, arranged the concert and assumed the financial risk of a Los Angeles debut. Impresarios in the American West helped shape decisively the musical history of the region since they usually invited the artists to appear, arranged the concerts, and often took on the financial risks of success or failure. Fortunately, the event was well publicized, and audiences reputedly traveled from as far away as Phoenix, Arizona, Salt Lake City, and even Montana. A group coming down from Montana apparently ran into a snowstorm,
and cabled ahead, begging Paderewski to delay the concert by one hour, which he agreed to do.\textsuperscript{49} 

The public’s reception to his appearances remains impressive even by today’s standards.\textsuperscript{50} One reviewer wrote that Paderewski’s “playing is beyond adverse criticism, and one finds one’s self dealing in only the most extravagant superlatives in the endeavor to give some idea of his wonderful touch, as firm as steel and smooth as velvet; his interest and virile energy, coupled with an exquisite delicacy; the poetic fervor and breadth of his artistic conception, his

\textsuperscript{49} Paderewski and Lawton, \textit{The Paderewski Memoirs}, 276–77. A migrant from New England, Frederick W. Blanchard later had a distinguished career in the Los Angeles music scene, becoming owner and president of the F. W. Blanchard Building Company at 233 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, where many musicians had offices and where public concerts regularly took place. He served as a member of Los Angeles’s Municipal Art Commission by 1907, and was also a co-founder of the Theatre Arts Alliance, which helped launch the Hollywood Bowl in the early 1920s. Marcus, \textit{Musical Metropolis}, 46, 68, 70.

wonderful singing tone and the technical mastery over the instrument, which seems to know no bounds.”

Even given the frequent hyperbole of reviews from this period, the Los Angeles reception of Paderewski’s concert was remarkable. Residents of the city had long expressed a desire for “high culture” as well as more popular entertainment in one of the fastest growing cities in American history.

Can we believe such accounts? Realistic or not, they surely helped boost ticket sales, and Paderewski’s numerous appearances in Los Angeles and other cities and towns in California after his successful 1896 debut helped provide precisely that, ensuring the artist’s growing attachment to the American West. After he made his fourth tour of the West Coast (during his ninth American tour) in 1908, Paderewski himself wrote the impresario, Lynden Behymer, who controlled bookings in much of the Southwest: “Before leaving your territory, I wish to thank you most cordially for your splendid arrangement for the most successful, and indeed, the most pleasant of my Western trips.” He concluded the letter by noting that “Madame Paderewski and all my party join me in sending you and your family our kindest greetings and thanks for all you have done for our comfort and pleasure.”

Renewal

In the midst of this impressive reception, however, Paderewski experienced one of the worst setbacks of his career. While touring the United States on the eve of World War I in 1913–1914, he developed neuritis, an arthritic ailment that leads to a painful inflammation of the nerves. He claimed that at times he could barely move his arms or even his right hand, making concert appearances almost impossible. The condition could have resulted from overuse of these muscles over many years, but it may also have arisen from his preference for Steinway pianos, which have a relatively stiff action compared to other pianos. As he wrote, the pianos’ “action at that time was extremely heavy and fatiguing...which was rather dangerous for concert players.” Paderewski had commercial reasons for remaining

with Steinway, since he represented Steinway pianos for most of his career, which proved highly lucrative. If he could not play, however, such sponsorships would come to nothing.

Adding to the tension on this particular tour were accusations of anti-Semitism. Critics asserted that Paderewski had given funds to a Polish politician, Roman Dmowski (1864–1939), who had strongly criticized Jews and even encouraged pogroms. Dmowski apparently used the funds to support a Polish newspaper that called for a starkly nationalist movement that should effectively exclude Jews. As a result, at numerous theaters where Paderewski appeared on the 1913–14 tour, protesters gathered to boycott his performances—something Paderewski had never before experienced in America. Claiming that these accusations were unwarranted, he also believed they contributed markedly to his deteriorating physical condition. Deeply upset both by the accusations and by his own physical hardship, he was literally at a crossroads in his career: to play or not to play. In January 1914, Paderewski was once again a struggling artist, only this time in mental and physical agony, and no medical treatments seemed to bring relief. The turning point came when he followed the advice of a fellow musician, Henry Heymann, to travel to Paso Robles.

As one of the leading Western spa resorts during the late-nineteenth century, Paso Robles contributed to the reputation of Central and Southern California as a kind of Eden for health-seekers. The spa attracted those afflicted with tuberculosis, asthma, and rheumatism, among other ailments, and visitors further benefited from the region’s relatively dry climate. How successful these cures actually were is anyone’s guess, but it formed one of a series of Californian health resorts accessible by rail that filled contemporary tourist pamphlets and books. As appeared in the travel books by Nordhoff and Hołyński, writers on nineteenth-century California lauded a region

55. This was not the first time Paderewski had found himself in political controversy; during the 1901–02 season in Europe (and the debut of his opera, Manna), he was accused by a German newspaper of anti-German, pro-Polish propaganda at one of his concerts, and as a result several German theaters boycotted performances of Manna. Trochimczyk, “Rediscovering Paderewski.”

56. I have been unable to find a copy of the newspaper Dmowski allegedly supported, although in his 1902 book, Thoughts of a Modern Pole, Dmowski had asserted that “the character . . . of Jews has] so many different values, strange to our moral constitution and harmful to our life.” He further claimed that “a larger number of Jews would destroy us, replacing with decadent elements those young creative foundations upon which we are building the future.” Cited in Ezra Mendelsohn, The Jews of East Central Europe Between the World Wars (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 38.

57. Baur, The Health Seekers of Southern California.
that provided a respite from the harsh winters of the Midwest and East Coast.⁶⁸

Paderewski’s reception in Paso Robles was strikingly different from the demonstrations and even boycotts he experienced during the 1913–1914 tour. With his wife, Helena, and their entourage, he arrived at night at the small Western town of about 2,000 residents and two paved city streets. A large crowd met them at the station, Paderewski wrote, offering to take their bags to the Paso Robles Hot Springs Hotel, built between 1889 and 1891 as a Victorian edifice rising up in the Western landscape. During a three-week stay, Paderewski became yet another health-seeker in California.⁵⁹

The experience of going to a spa for physical renewal was no novelty to him. He had visited the thermal baths of the Tatra Mountains, at Aix-les-Bains in southeastern France, and at Baden-Baden in southern Germany, yet it seems that they brought him little relief. Paso Robles, he claimed, was different, writing that it may have been the radium in the mud baths that proved so effective—an element that it seems the baths in Europe lacked. In short, the soil healed the man. He described the cure as “really miraculous,” and he was able to

⁶⁸ Nordhoff, California; Hołyn’ski, La Californie et les routes interocéaniques.

complete his American tour with relatively little difficulty, which had
seemed utterly impossible only three weeks before. This testimonial
helped ensure the renown of the curative properties of the spa as
Paderewski’s name became increasingly associated with Paso Robles.
Whether the baths had miraculous qualities or not, there is little
doubt that the resort—and the town’s residents—made an indelible
impression on the pianist.

**Belonging**

Like Modjeska, Paderewski’s third relationship to the land involved
belonging, primarily through the ownership and development of
property. He asserted that he merely gave in to an insistent doctor
that he purchase land, stating that “I was helpless—at his mercy.”
The doctor evidently mounted his “attacks” that Paderewski buy
land “when I was in the baths—in mud up to my neck! I could not
protest, I could not resist, and he never let up.” Paderewski added,
however, that “I was probably quite a willing victim, for I really loved
the place and was very grateful besides.” Regardless, his land pur-
chase proved a major turning point, both for the artist and for the
region. At his home in Morges, Switzerland, where he lived since
1899, Paderewski had a farm, and at times even accompanied the
laborers in their work; in this he remembered his father, Jan Pader-
ewski, who had overseen the estates of absentee Polish landlords after
his exile in Siberia for political reasons. For Paderewski, however,
California represented an entirely new frontier for exploration and
development. Now as a gentleman farmer in two countries, he was
essentially straddling two very different worlds, the Old and the New,
and he found he had a decided interest in the New.

Paderewski began with the purchase of a 1,520-acre farm, about
the same size property that Modjeska and her husband owned, on
February 4, 1914. In naming it “Rancho San Ignacio,” after his patron
saint, he effectively assumed the identity of a California don and thus,
similar to Modjeska, he helped to reinforce the romanticization of the

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60. Paderewski and Lawton, *The Paderewski Memoirs*, 388–89. Radium water cures became very popular
in America in the 1920s before subsiding in the 1930s. See “Radium Cures,” Museum of Quackery,

Robles*, 19.

Spanish past. The following month he purchased another tract of land of 900 acres. Then over the next two years he bought adjacent plots of land to reach a total of 2,544 acres, as well as a 450-acre property nearby that he named “Rancho Santa Helena” after his wife’s patron saint. He then virtually doubled his land holdings in 1917 when he acquired 2,600 acres in the Santa Maria Valley in adjacent Santa Barbara County that he hoped to develop for oil.\(^6\)

This meant that Paderewski eventually owned over 5,500 acres—a sizable estate and far larger than his estate in Switzerland. To manage such large properties during his absences, he first chose a friend, Dr. F. W. Sawyer, a hotel manager and local real estate developer, before entrusting caretaker William Hemphill to oversee the land. Eventually, Paderewski settled on a fellow Pole and World War I veteran, Jan Gnieciak, to manage most of the estate until Paderewski’s

\(^6\) McGinty, *Paderewski at Paso Robles*, 20, 81; Onzol, “Paderewski in California.” See also Zebrowski, “Paderewski at Paso Robles.”
death in 1941, although Hemphill continued to oversee Rancho Santa Helena.\textsuperscript{64}

This attachment to the land was important to Paderewski, not only to give him a sense of “place” in America, as was true for Modjeska, but to develop the properties for commercial purposes. Borrowing a phrase from environmental historian Jared Farmer, he “emparadised the land,” although it is debatable how much the land became “emparadised” and rather simply became exploited.\textsuperscript{65} Use of the land’s natural resources yielded the potential for hefty profits, yet it remains unclear if this development brought any positive benefits to the land itself. On the 2,544-acre Rancho San Ignacio, he devoted over 320 acres to the planting of almond trees as well as prune and walnut trees. A total of 12,000 almond trees alone were planted on 148 acres, whereas 80 acres were devoted to prunes, and 12 acres to

\textsuperscript{64} McGinty, \textit{Paderewski at Paso Robles}, 58.

\textsuperscript{65} Farmer, \textit{Trees in Paradise}, xxviii. Emphasis in original.
walnuts. Such crops would demand an enormous amount of irrigation, which may have harmed the land in the long term through salinization of the soil. The choice of crops, however, was significant for one main reason: they all seemed to offer health benefits to the consumer, which underlined California’s growing image as a veritable cornucopia that scarcely existed anywhere else in the country. Paderewski could hardly grow almond, walnut, and prune trees on his properties in Europe, certainly not in this abundance, so the California landscape offered a unique opportunity for him to focus his efforts further in agriculture.

Paderewski’s relation to the land intensified after his return from the travails of World War I. After the war he was no longer merely a famous pianist but had also become a statesman. Although this is not the place to delve deeply into his statesmanship, he did have some remarkable achievements, considering the fact that he had little if any experience in politics prior to the war. A Polish patriot, he became the unanimous choice of the Polish National Committee during World War I to be its representative to the United States, where Paderewski advanced the cause of independence to a sympathetic President Woodrow Wilson. At the behest of the Polish citizenry, he then represented Poland at the Treaty of Versailles negotiations in 1918 and the Paris Peace Conference the following year, when its members finally approved an independent Poland, not least because President Wilson included it as Point Thirteen in his Fourteen Points in January 1918.

The peak of Paderewski’s brief political career came when he agreed to become the first prime minister and minister of foreign affairs for the newly-founded Republic of Poland, which kept him away from his Paso Robles properties longer than he would have liked. Nonetheless, he evidently impressed his contemporaries, including longtime diplomats and President Wilson himself, with his knowledge, diplomatic skills, and extensive efforts for the Polish people. Yet Paderewski struggled under the ups and downs of political office. He was unused to the sharp criticism he at times received for his leadership and his lack of tangible success as prime minister. Stung by the dearth of appreciation he believed he had earned, and tiring of the political infighting with other Polish politicians, he abruptly

resigned from office on November 27, 1919, and returned to his home in Morges, Switzerland, never again returning to Poland. His statesmanship came at an even greater price than most; not only did he lose much of his fortune by giving it away to aid a cause that he fervently believed in, but he returned to California utterly exhausted, both physically and emotionally.\textsuperscript{67} When he arrived in Paso Robles in March 1921, he needed sustenance through the sulfur spring baths because he once again needed physical renewal.

Paderewski’s desire to improve his health resulted in staying over the next one and one-half years—the longest continuous period that he lived in Paso Robles. When not overseeing his properties, he focused on the process of healing, for he needed to build up his fortune again. That would only happen by going on tour, which was not possible until he was physically ready to do so. As in 1913, he claimed that the baths dramatically lessened the pains from neuritis, and he was again able to tour the United States. Even if critics were more skeptical of his performances, the 1922–23 tour ultimately brought in half a million dollars, meaning not only that his fortune was restored but that he could invest more in the land.

Wine was perhaps his most significant agricultural investment after the war. Paderewski had owned some vineyards in Switzerland, although the terrain of Paso Robles offered the chance to try planting different grapes. Again on the advice of his close friend Henry Heymann, who had first introduced him to Paso Robles in spring 1922, he consulted with two figures: Horatio F. Stoll, the editor of a major wine journal (\textit{California Grape Grower}), and Frederick T. Bioletti, professor of viticulture at the University of California. Paderewski wanted to plant white wine grapes, but the others disagreed. The soil was best for red wine: Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Béclan—all would do well in Paso Robles, Bioletti reasoned.\textsuperscript{68}

After consulting with these experts, he proceeded to plant 200 acres of grapes—about 35,000 vines in all—specializing in Zinfandel and Petite Sirah.\textsuperscript{69} (See photo page 93.) It was a curious time to go into the wine business—Progressives had been lobbying for a ban on

\textsuperscript{67}. Paderewski was prime minister of Poland from Nov. 1918 to Jan. 1919, and then served as Poland’s ambassador to the League of Nations.


\textsuperscript{69}. “Wines produced from these grapes won several awards, beginning with a gold medal at the 1933 California State Fair,” and a \textit{Los Angeles Times} article stated: “Some of his Zinfandel was as coveted
alcohol for decades, and California had ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in the spring of 1919, which superseded wartime prohibition (the Food and Fuel Control Act, also known as the Lever Act, which the U.S. Congress enacted in August 1917). Yet the legacy of Paderewski’s vineyards became evident; he contributed markedly to the growing reputation of Paso Robles for wine. While he did not begin the wine-growing tradition in the region, which dates back to the local San Miguel Mission (founded in 1797), he did bring a substantial financial investment when few seemed willing to do so. Fortunately, unlike the oil fields he invested in, these vineyards decidedly prospered—a key example of physically impacting the land. By 1931, ninety-five acres of the ranch were devoted to Zinfandel alone. Despite Prohibition, a nearby colony of Italian-speaking Swiss residents evidently proved to be ready customers, and it appears that until the end of Prohibition the vineyards were able to tap into the uninterrupted sacramental wine market, although the records remain unclear on this point. Paderewski further sent his assistant Jan Gnieciak to Switzerland to learn about raising the Zinfandel grapes he planted, thus strengthening cultural ties between Europe and California. 70

As he became more of a presence in Paso Robles during the 1920s, he was able to make a stronger impact on the cultural landscape. Like Modjeska, he endeared himself to the locals, who referred to him affectionately as “Paddy.” With an apparent fondness for Hollywood films, he attended the local theaters, and even befriended another frequent visitor to Paso Robles, Chief John Big Tree (1877–1967), a member of the Seneca Nation who appeared in over a dozen Western films.71 The irony of the friendship with Chief Big Tree is that he had nothing to do with California Indians, since his sole known connection to the state was through Hollywood. During World War
I Paderewski and his wife had hosted a tea and dance for Polish relief, and after the war they took part in various community festivals and gatherings in an effort to interact with residents of Paso Robles, although there is no evidence that Paderewski actually performed publicly there.\textsuperscript{72} Admittedly, he was often heard practicing the piano for hours, although not all responses were favorable; according to local legend, the Pittsburgh Pirates trained in town for several years, and one evening a baseball player allegedly pounded on the floor from the room above Paderewski, shouting, “When yuh goin’ to cut out that racket?”\textsuperscript{73} A further unpleasant experience occurred in February 1922, when he was touring his properties and received a speeding ticket in Ventura County, which we could perhaps view as a California rite of passage for the hapless pianist.

Another way of relating to California, was for Paderewski to liken the California landscape to his homeland in Poland, as had Modjeska. Paderewski’s first biographer, Charles Phillips, tells us that “the California scene gave him delight. In the rich black-soil valleys of the


\textsuperscript{73} Stevenson, “Paderewski’s Paso Robles Property,” 137.
West Coast, stretching for miles wide and level as prairies to the mountain ranges, he found an atmosphere redolent of the sun-drenched summer plains of his native southern Poland.” That environment could at times turn almost magical. “California mornings in the spring intoxicate with freshness and color,” Phillips enthuses. “Almond orchards in full blossom smoke with rosy fire in the drifting mists. The wind-washed skies that break through are pure virgin-blue.” Although Phillips is waxing eloquent here, Paderewski appeared to form a greater bond with California through the landscape of the imaginary by connecting it to the Polish landscape.

While this imagined landscape was surely appealing, there were also problems with his investments in the land. Despite extensive efforts over several decades, neither his ranches nor his oil properties appear to have made him much money. As he wrote, it was a different kind of gold mine: “a mine that you pour gold into but never take any out!” His connections to the land were thus a blend of both fondness and frustration. As he asserted:

In olden days, land was wealth. I own hundreds of acres of fertile land in California, almond groves, thousands and thousands of trees. But the more almonds those trees produce, the poorer I become!... Too many almonds are being produced, too much wheat, too much corn, too much everything. Your land is too fertile. Your people are too industrious. Because you work too much there is no work. Because you produce too much, your land impoverishes its owners instead of enriching.

Being an absentee landlord surely added to his difficulties—hence his decision finally to appoint a fellow Pole, Jan Gnieciak, whom he trusted implicitly, to manage the properties. Admittedly, Paderewski’s statement conflicts with a 1931 Los Angeles Times interview with Gnieciak himself, who said that “the ranch pays a reasonable return on the initial investments,” with finances overseen by Paderewski’s New York offices. According to the maestro’s will, however, he had invested over $220,000 in his American holdings over the years, and hoped that it would be worth at least $140,000. Alas, after his death it was appraised at about a tenth of that value in 1941, or $42,000—

74. Phillips, Paderewski, 212.
perhaps a product of the Great Depression. The properties were rented out to local farmers before being sold for somewhat above that sum ten years later.\textsuperscript{79} Thereafter, these properties proved exceedingly lucrative, and the almond and prune trees and the vineyards are a testament to his lasting impact on the California landscape.\textsuperscript{80}

The financial disappointment of his California investments notwithstanding, Paderewski’s intermittent visits to Paso Robles during the 1920s and 1930s further affirmed his relationship to the land.\textsuperscript{81} Each time he seemed to plan to retire in Paso Robles or at least spend more time on his properties. He surely sensed his performance skills were declining while at the same time he stubbornly insisted on the necessary practice in preparation for touring, so his stays in Paso Robles, and the consequent benefits from the sulfur baths, enabled him to continue his career into his late seventies. According to one reviewer of his final tour, which took place in 1938: “If his performances have disappointed the perfectionists, they have, on the other hand, shamed doubt and cynicism from the minds of thousands. And none who heard him have been unmoved by his courage.”\textsuperscript{82}

When Paderewski arrived in Paso Robles in April 1939, agonizing over the deepening tensions in Europe, he sought renewal from his California properties for the final time.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Modjeska and Paderewski established a bond with the California landscape through a process of reception, renewal, and finally belonging. Modjeska in California profoundly influenced the physical landscape, the cultural landscape, and the landscape of the imaginary. In terms of the physical landscape, she and her husband developed their property by planting olive groves and cypress trees, the remnants of which are still there in a region now called Modjeska Canyon. They

\textsuperscript{79} The two ranches were eventually sold “in open court” in January 1951 for $52,000. Stevenson, “Paderewski’s Paso Robles Property,” 138–39.

\textsuperscript{80} Paderewski also commissioned Polish artist, Jan Styka, to paint The Crucifixion, a massive canvas (93 feet by 178 feet), which hangs in the Hall of the Crucifixion at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, Calif., where there are also life-size portraits of both Paderewski and Styka. Wilk, “Ignacy Jan Paderewski.”

\textsuperscript{81} Paderewski returned to Paso Robles, usually with his wife, in Feb. 1923, March 1924, and April 1931, with his last visit during his final American concert tour of 1938–39.

further left behind a dam, irrigation system, place names, and the house itself, even if the dam and irrigation systems are no longer in operation. Culturally, too, Modjeska left a mark through her performances in California and throughout the country as one of the leading Shakespearean actresses of her day. She performed at local theaters in Santa Ana, Anaheim, and Los Angeles, and on occasion gave benefit performances in those cities, which surely endeared her to local residents. In the imagined landscape, she not only reaffirmed the Spanish fantasy past with her property, “El Refugio,” but she drew connections through European imagery. Modjeska made theatrical allusions to the land from the plays of Shakespeare, especially two works in which the physical environment had a key role: *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*, and such connections to Shakespeare provided an important means of belonging. Further, she claimed that her property had strong physical similarities to the Tatra Mountains of southern Poland, which appeared to reinforce a sense of home.

The land also left a deep and lasting impression on her. Indeed, Modjeska provides an example of the myth of the California dream. Beginning in San Francisco, she managed to rise to great wealth through her acting skills, and that wealth, in turn, enabled her to purchase a large property in Southern California, which became her home base for the rest of her life. Her experience of physical renewal furthered this bond. Ever since her arrival in Southern California, she claimed that the condition of her health improved, since she responded well to the dry climate. She wrote of feeling physically and emotionally restored once she could walk through the forests and canyons of her very secluded property, especially after long and exhausting tours.

Although Modjeska regularly took trips back to Poland, she died in California. Tragically, she suffered from a kidney ailment arising from Bright’s disease, which gradually made it impossible to maintain her previous schedule of touring. She and Chlapowski decided to sell their property in 1906 before embarking on a final U.S. tour. Her last performance was at a benefit concert, this time for herself, that her longtime friend Paderewski organized, much as she had facilitated his career early on. The concert took place at Madison Square...
Garden in New York; it raised $10,000 to pay for her medical bills. Her operation was unsuccessful, however, and she died at Bay Island in Newport Beach, California, where she had recently purchased a second home that they called “Little Arden.” Although she was buried in Cracow, Poland, her husband sought a permanent connection to the land in Santiago Canyon. He had a large boulder moved from the creek below to the front lawn, where she had often read her scripts in the shade of a large oak. On the boulder he made a plaque with her name, so that people would not “forget she had once lived there.” He need not have worried; as one local writer later stated, “He underestimated our passion for our heroes.”

Nearby is a mountain that is now called Modjeska Peak, and the Helena Modjeska Historic House and Gardens, as of this writing, remains one of only two National Historic landmarks in Orange County.

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86. Modjeska Canyon forms part of Santiago Canyon; the two peaks are Modjeska Peak and Santiago Peak. One of the only films on Modjeska’s cottage and gardens of which I am aware was made by public television narrator Huell Howzer. See “Modjeska—California’s Gold,” No. 4902 (Jan. 8,
As with Modjeska, the California landscape meant many things for Paderewski. First, his impact on the physical landscape arose from his crops and wines in an effort at “emparadising” the landscape, and the region remains an important site for agriculture. Although it is debatable whether this exploitation benefited the land, there is no doubt that almond and fruit trees grew in abundance and have been greatly developed since his death, and Paso Robles still produces the types of wine he first planted, notably Petite Sirah and Zinfandel. His commercial interests resulted not only in substantial investments in agriculture but also in the placement of oil wells in the nearby Santa Maria region, although it seems that none of these wells proved of value and they almost certainly damaged the landscape. Second, in bringing “high culture” to California, he assured an impact on the cultural landscape of the state, where he appeared in at least five American tours and in numerous visits and stays in Paso Robles. There he became a local presence, attending the local theaters and even hobnobbing with an American Indian actor in Western films, Chief John Big Tree. Curiously, there is no evidence that Paderewski actually performed locally, in direct contrast to Modjeska in Santa Ana and Anaheim. Third, his connection to the imaginary landscape arose mainly by giving Spanish names to his properties in honor of Catholic saints, furthering the Spanish fantasy past, and like Modjeska he claimed that his properties reminded him of Poland and the landscape of eastern Europe.

In terms of the impact of the land on Paderewski, he, like Modjeska, benefited above all from physical renewal. Suffering from repeated bouts of neuritis and from accusations of anti-Semitism during his 1913–1914 tour—one of the few instances in which his social status as a top performing artist gave him little protection—in Paso Robles he found a refuge, which surely represented one form of the California dream: to start anew. He began a long association with the town’s spas, claiming that radium in the soil at Paso Robles was more restorative than the baths at European health resorts.


87. An annual music festival, called the “Paderewski Festival,” was later created in Paso Robles in conjunction with local vintners and the Polish government to further emphasize the connection between the place and the pianist. On the wines in Paso Robles, see https://pasowine.com/. On the music festival, see http://www.paderewskifest.com/ (accessed Nov. 15, 2017).
These positive experiences, in turn, led to a sense of belonging to the region through his repeated visits to Paso Robles, his purchase and development of land, and his longing to settle down there, even if like Modjeska his properties appear to have made him little money.

Paderewski’s visit to Paso Robles in 1939 was his last. He soon returned to Europe after the National Council of Poland, a Polish parliament in exile that formed in December 1939, elected him to head the Council. Strongly condemning Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, both of which occupied his country, he then sailed to New York in November 1940 to publicize the Polish cause through speeches on radio and to give a series of public concerts to raise funds. Tragically, he became ill with pneumonia during one of these tours and died in New York in June 1941. For his extensive benefit concerts over many decades in both Europe and the United States, his diplomatic efforts for the creation of a democratic Polish state, and his anti-Nazi endeavors, he received a state burial at the Arlington National Cemetery.88 Ironically, one of his last wishes after arriving in the U.S. was to return to his “ranch in California,” yet by then he was too frail to make the trip.89

As foreign-born artists, both Modjeska and Paderewski adopted California as their home, or at least as their home away from home. Far from the political turmoils of Europe and the physical demands of their careers, Santiago Canyon for Modjeska and Paso Robles for Paderewski offered that refuge. After a positive reception in California, and in their quest for renewal and a sense of belonging, they were able to bond with the land.

89. “Paderewski Arrives in U.S.; Tells of Throttling of Poles; Pianist Coming to His California Ranch,” Los Angeles Times, Nov. 7, 1940, p. 6.