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[the text below is an edited version of the original English]

Chapter 10: *A Book of Memories*: Woman of the Future, or Love Incarnate.

Introduction: Exposition of main points of discussion and interpretation

Żmichowska's second novel, *Książka pamiątek znaleziona przez Gabryellę i czytana przy kominkowym ogniu* (*A Book of Memories Found by Gabryella and Read by the Fireside*)[1] takes up some of the thematic material of the earlier novel *Poganka* (*The Heathen*, 1846). The reference in the title to Gabryella's reading by the fireside to a group of friends, as well as the short space of time between the appearance of *Poganka* and this novel (though it is not entirely certain, of course, as I pointed out in Chapter 9, exactly when the "fireside" frame of *Poganka* was written), does suggest a continuity between the works, at least a thematic connection. The theme of the different notions of "love," for example, which is the focus of the discussion between the male and female friends in the frame of *Poganka* is taken up again in *Książka pamiątek* and becomes increasingly important as the novel develops; here, however, the "fireside situation" is only mentioned retrospectively by (the same) narrator Gabryella, there is no frame to the second novel; any discussion between characters about love takes place in the main body of the novel.

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[1] Żmichowska's second novel, *Książka pamiątek,* was initially published in serial parts in *Przegląd Naukowy (The Scientific Review)* in 1847-1848 with the full title *Książka pamiątek znaleziona przez Gabryellę i czytana przy kominkowym ogniu*. This text consisted of twelve chapters only and breaks off at the time of Żmichowska's arrest (24 October 1849), as she herself indicates in a note added for the second edition (vol. 3, p. 110), which appeared in volumes 2 and 3 of *Pisma Gabryelli* (1861), justifying its non-completion, as did the concluding passage of the novel (narrated by Gabryella, rather than by the narrator of the "memories," Ludwik). The remaining two chapters (XIII-XIV) of the still uncompleted novel were discovered posthumously among Żmichowska's papers. They first appeared in the journal *Bluszcz* in 1885, numbers 27-30, and were then incorporated into Piotr Chmielowski's 1885-1886 edition of collected works (volumes 2-3). The only subsequent edition, that of Maria Olszaniecka (*Wybór pism,* 2 vols, Warsaw, 1953, volume 1, pp. 223-458), is primarily based on the original 1847-1848 edition; it inserts from the 1861 version Żmichowska's note on the reason for breaking off writing (thus giving the actual date, p. 420, which Chmielowski removes), as well as Gabryella's concluding passage (1861, vol. 3, pp. 111-127; 1953, vol. 1, pp. 444-458). Olszaniecka's edition is the one used in this chapter; all page references in the text are to this edition, translations are my own.

Romantic, sexual love between individuals is portrayed as a key, if not *the* key, to the happiness and psychological health of the main protagonists; its frustration or destruction results, in all cases, in a kind of castration of creative power as well as moral atrophy, inability to act, social uselessness (i.e. in relation to the wider human community), illness (physical or mental), even death. Discussion about the nature of love, taking it beyond the merely personal into the social and universal spheres, does not take place in a frame setting between several, equally strong and potentially valid positions, as it does in *Poganka*; rather it is limited to conversations between a few, sometimes only a couple of the main protagonists, where one tends to hold forth. It would seem that the notions being tried out now are more consistent, as though Gabryella-Żmichowska has a more certain, focused position here, though it is not always the same character who voices it: I refer to the views expressed by Kazimierz to Maria Regina, in the presence of Ludwik and Irena (Chapter X, pp. 363-365), and then by Kazimierz again to Ludwik alone (XI, 398-405); to Ludwik's own reflections voiced later with hindsight (XIV, 442-444), and not least to Gabryella's much later afterword, where she comments on the moral significance of "love" in both our personal and communal lives, and would seem to endorse Kazimierz' position (XIV, 451-454). As in the frame of *Poganka*, a connection is made between romantic sexual love between individuals and our ability to love our neighbours in the wider sense, as though the first (personal happiness – and the energy and positive feelings it should ideally generate and radiate) were a precondition for the second. All this is presented within a *divine* framework, so that Żmichowska once again challenges stereotypical ideas of suffering and self-abnegation *both* as being of any positive use to society (to contemporary Polish society as well as universally) *and* as being divinely ordained.

Another continuation from *Poganka* is the re-examination of conventional female or feminine models of behaviour – and not only behaviour, but *being.* In the frame of *Poganka* we saw the introduction, indeed positive promotion, of models of female existence (based *nota bene* on the lives of *real* contemporary Polish women, the Enthusiasts – not on established patriarchal or utopian ideals) that did *not* conform to extreme conceptions of women as *either* angelic, self-denying guardians of the domestic hearth (Benjamin's mother and sisters in the main story) *or* as sexually dominant *femmes fatales* (Aspasia), these two extreme poles of the binary conception of femininity being the object of satire in the songs of the two little devils (see my Chaper 9).

In *Książka pamiątek* the living anti-stereotype, Helusia, is not confined to the boundaries of a frame, but plays an important role in the main plot and the ethical issues raised by it. Although the conventional stereotypes are partly reflected in the antithesis of Maria Regina-Anna Klara, (the dark-haired, untouchable, dominant *femme fatale*, superficially cold but seething with destructive passions, *versus* the blond-haired, gentle, angelic symbol of purity), neither in fact conforms to the stereotypes other than on the surface. Maria Regina shuns any sexual involvements, while Anna Klara shuns her role as a wife. Meanwhile, the close interconnection between the female characters proposes a kind of schema of female solidarity promoting feminine well-being based on the recognition of female difference: Helusia, a young teenager, is deeply infatuated with Anna and devastated emotionally and psychologically by her death; following the death and during the course of the subsequent narrative, she absorbs, as it were, Anna's spirit and eventually *becomes* Anna (the external "facts" of the story also repeat themselves when Helusia suffers a similar fate to Anna at the hands of Maria Regina and Romuald, Maria Regina's brother). Irena, an older "odd woman," something of a blue-stocking and early feminist, intelligent and highly respected moreover by Kazimierz (who embodies the chief ethical strand in the novel), becomes not only Anna's confidante but her *conscience*. Maria Regina, meanwhile, involves herself intimately in the lives of her brothers' "lovers," claiming to "love" first Anna Klara and then Helusia, apparently on grounds of admiration and friendship but in fact to "protect" Romuald from them in a perverse working-out of her own complexes. Nevertheless, on the level of female solidarity, Maria Regina is fully part of the strong claims made for the improved education of women, as well the different nature of women and hence the different use to which women may put education (though there is no suggestion here that the actual content of study, the subjects studied, should be different from those studied by men), and also for the right of women to have careers as artists (a common trope of later, *fin de siècle* literature[2]).

Of even greater interest for our overall theme, however, is the connection made between the "nature" of Helusia and a kind of feminine divine. This is supported by the many instances in which Helusia is presented in a divine, almost

[2] Grażyna Borkowska, 2001, *Alienated Women: A Study on Polish Women's Fiction 1845-1918.* Trans. Ursula Phillips. Budapest, pp. 214-17, 285-291. See also Elaine Showalter, 1992, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the* Fin de Siècle, London.

sacred light, as indeed is Anna Klara, though not to the same extent. All these specific points will be examined below, as will the possible connection between Gabryella's final claims about the need for love (personal and universal), including the painful evidence all around her of its absence, and the positive ethical model represented by Anna-Helusia, and backed by the moral and social views expressed by Irena and by Kazimierz.

I believe this novel contributes significantly to the discourse on women and the ethics of love; these are the themes with which the bulk of the text is occupied. It has usually been read as a work more directly inspired by the patriotic conspiratorial activities of Żmichowska in the late 1840s, most specifically in relation to the so-called "artisans' plot," and by her underground political connection with Henryk Krajewski – a work therefore closely related to the Polish contemporary political situation.[3] My reading is not intended to deny this interpretation; it finds, however, another more universal, transnational and far-reaching *human* context for interpretation.

Anna Klara

The beautiful, regal and intelligent but also calculating, cold and articulate Maria Regina, who occupies a special place in the feelings of the sensitive male protagonist-narrator, Ludwik, may emerge on a first reading as the central female character in this novel. On closer examination, however, her domination of the text appears less secure. Ludwik's "memories" devote at least as much space to Helusia – and thus also to the formative influence upon her, her friend and mentor, Anna. Anna's presence is felt through the constructed memories of her: those of the artisan family where she finally lodges, in the same rented rooms now occupied by Ludwik in the fictive present, and especially of the daughter of this family, Helusia herself; the somewhat selective memories of Maria Regina of her own earlier friendship with Anna and their parting; the memories of her former lover Romuald made explicit in his reactions to Helusia's singing of Anna's songs; the report of Anna's interim years – between her dramatic rift with Maria Regina and Romuald and her appearance in the artisans'

[3] See Anna Minkowska,1925, *Organizacja spiskowa 1848 roku w Królestwie Polskim,* Warsaw; Marian Stępień, 1968, *Narcyza Żmichowska,* Warsaw; and Maria Woźniakiewicz-Dziadosz, 1978, *Między buntem i rezygnacją,* Warsaw; 1986, *Polityka i romantyczne struktury powieściowe,* Lublin; 1996, "Spór o model patriotyzmu w twórczości Narcyzy Żmichowskiej," *Studia Łomżyńskie* 7, pp. 341-49.

house (related by Irena) – as well as through Anna's "living on" in spirit in Helusia, eventually *becoming* her ("She has become me […] Don't you know that it's my deceased one resurrected and living in my heart?" 411-412). As the events of the novel unwind in Ludwik's narrative, and the close interconnections between the protagonists are unravelled, it becomes clear that the young woman who has recently died in the room that the narrator now occupies is the same Anna Klara who was once befriended by Maria Regina and loved by her brother, and then abandoned by them.

The presence of Anna overarches the novel from its very outset. At the beginning of the opening chapter, when he first enters the apartment, before he even learns of her existence and death, Ludwik is immediately aware of a pure, peaceful, almost mystical presence pervading the space and the garden outside. He is moved by these "positive vibes" and decides to take the rooms:

> "Two small rooms on the ground floor leading into the garden, the walls whitewashed in pure white […] with clear bright windows […] the sun's rays breaking into thousands of restless lights and shades […] a kind of purity, peace, one could say – a kind of whiteness flooded the soul […] the snow-white walls […] and the acacia tree by the window, and the sun in the windows, and the peace, and the freedom […]." (226)

The whiteness and purity of snow, brightness and clarity, transparency (the meaning of Klara, as Maria Regina observes, 276), sunlight, flowers – especially acacias and lilies, are the images associated with Anna. The sunlight, fragrance of the acacias and a sense of stillness and well-being return on many occasions when Ludwik is alone in his room or there with Helusia (328, 334)

After feeling her presence, Ludwik then hears about Anna's illness and death – as well as the devastating effect of the death on Helusia – from the landlord, a locksmith, who describes Anna's physical appearance in similar terms: "white, almost transparent, white like the most beautiful porcelain […] fair hair" – and already hints at a close connection with his daughter, Helusia: "she looked like an elder sister to my daughter" (230). The locksmith also points to her innocence and angelic qualities, comparing her to the Virgin Mary: "she smiled with such an angelic, childlike smile" (230) […] "a young, lovely, good creature just like the Blessed Virgin." (231). This portrait conforms with the actual picture of Anna that Ludwik is shown in a later

chapter by Maria Regina (when she speaks of her former friendship without yet knowing she is the same woman who died in Ludwik's room) and with Maria Regina's own description of her appearance and personality: "My kind-hearted Anna! Can you guess why I wanted to preserve her image in this way? Because I wanted to convince myself that a shadow was cast, as by other people, by that golden-haired, snow-white, angelically holy being, and not pure brightness, for hers was a truly chosen organism – a little soft, a little weak, but wonderful. […]. In the end I called her Klara. Only that name was like my Anna, so transparent, crystal, like the water of a stream, like a child's tear." (275-276) And later on, Maria Regina too recognizes Anna's "divine" attributes, calling her "a pure woman, holy as God's prototype." (393)

At the end of the first chapter, after encountering Anna as a presence and then as a real woman in the account of the locksmith, Ludwik sees her ghost – in what must be either a dream or hallucination but is recounted by Ludwik as a spectral visitation:

> "Suddenly, in my armchair, opposite the window with the green vernandah, it was not me who was sitting but my transparent predecessor, white, in a while robe, dying […] Her forehead was smooth, pure, lit up by the moonlight – and only at her temples did it begin to turn slightly yellow, like the ancient marble of statues. Beneath that brow her delicate, tiny, almost childish face shone with a grace that is hard to describe, and yet it was so sad, so full of suffering […] The moonrays encircled her in this beautiful image, but then the shadow of the acacia drew near imperceptably […]." (237)

This description contains something of the Romantic cliché of the young consumptive (Anna is just twenty-five) wasting sadly yet beautifully away, suggesting furthermore that the illness is due to something more than a mere physical disease; but it is more important for the associations it evokes, anticipating future events in the novel and making further (subconscious) associations which also explain the past – for the vision/hallucination/ghost turns into Helusia, thus underlining emphatically the very close association between the two women: "when the shadow drew near, when she was about to pass away, her form suddenly changed into that of the locksmith's daughter, with the deep, mysterious expression on her face […] with which she would

look at her worried father." (238). On another occasion, returning unexpectedly to his room, Ludwik finds the real Helusia sitting in the armchair with a similar expression to that of Anna's "ghost" (278). Maria Regina also appears fleetingly in this dream-vision but is quickly overshadowed by the suffering, dying Anna – thus hinting at what Ludwik does not yet know: that Maria Regina is more than anyone responsible for Anna's situation. The three key female figures are thus linked together in this vision/ghostly apparition, emphasizing not just their intimate connection for the development of the story-plot – but also their joint role in establishing the ideological and moral framework for the ideas raised in it.

Let us return to the image of the Virgin Mary and its application to Anna. It is an association made not only by Helusia's father, but by the young Helusia herself when she sees Anna for the first time: "So when I saw my deceased one for the first time, it seemed to me that I was meeting the Mother of God as she was as a child; true, she had no crown or silver dress, but her hair was so bright and fair it was like rays of light, she was as white as the light of day." (300). This may tell us more about Helusia's religiosity than about Anna's precise character. Yet it would seem that the comparison is made in order to emphasize Anna's good qualities, to represent her – and moreover her influence on Helusia and her eventual absorption into Helusia herself – as a force for moral good in the world around her: she is gentle, kind, empathetic and uncomplaining, pure, truthful and transparent, despite her emotional sufferings – rather than a *madonna*-type as such. She is after all a married woman who has left her husband, hardly the behaviour of the Catholic stereotype; she makes a decision to live on her own (sensational in fact for the times, though Anna is very discreet about it) and is highly educated. She is also not a mother, though one could argue that her care for Helusia is maternal (we recall that Żmichowska often alludes to the maternal nature of most women, irrespective of whether or not they have biological children). It is possible that the main purpose of the angelic and Marian connotations is to set Anna up as an antidote, or antithesis to the model of femininity embodied in Maria Regina, whose name on the surface might suggest the real, intended association with the Queen of Heaven, yet who is, in fact, a symbol of earthly and – in the context of the novel – *manipulative* power (akin to the power of

Aspasia in *Poganka*).[4] The "true Virgin Queen" (243) is no Regina Caeli, with her cold enigmatic "diamond" eyes (242) and stony, analytic, even "masculine" [sic] gaze ("she had such a cold way of looking at things, like the incision of a scalpel […] a kind of masculine judgement, unwavering," 243) – though this too is a stereotype only partly developed in the text.

So how "angelic" is Anna really? The most objective, but likewise positive and sympathetic view of Anna, is provided by Kazimierz and Irena, who treat her not as childlike or Madonna-like, but as a mature woman with a mind of her own. This is how Kazimierz describes her, identifying not so much her pain as her moral superiority, recognizing her as an embodiment of the principle of love – the very thing he will contrast later with Maria Regina's sterile egoism: "I owe my entire moral life to that woman, a woman who was abandoned and forgotten; she never made the impression on me of a sick, feverish being. I never pressed my pity upon her, but walked on the road of my life alongside her, full of respect and homage, because I recognized in her a higher power of spirit and love […]." (367)

Aunt and nephew meet Anna in Cracow after her abandonment by Romuald and Maria Regina, suffering emotionally and morally, tending a dying mother and about to make a disastrous marriage. A written correspondence is then established between Anna and Irena, which reveals the further course of Anna's life before she comes to live in the locksmith's house. It is my contention (as I hope will be clear by the end of this analysis) that these two (Kazimierz and his aunt Irena) carry the chief moral import of the novel (that is of the "external" narrator Gabryella and her author Żmichowska, over and above the internal narrator, Ludwik). We might note here that Kazimierz demonstrates great respect for his feminist maiden aunt, she being one of the main influences on his upbringing; and he also lives with her, as well as with his

[4] Kristeva, in the subsection "Image of Power" of her extended essay "Stabat Mater," considers the connotations of precisely this version (Maria Regina) of the Virgin's name: "On the side of 'power,' Maria Regina appears in imagery as early as the sixth century in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome. Interestingly enough, it is she, woman and mother, who is called upon to represent supreme earthly power. Christ is king but neither he nor his father are pictured wearing crowns, diadems, costly paraphernalia and other external signs of abundant material goods. That opulent infringement to Christian idealism is centred on the Virgin Mother. Later, when she has assumed the title of *Our Lady,* this will also be in analogy to the earthly power of the noble feudal lady of medieval courts. [Denis de Rougement, in his *Love in the Western World,* revised edn, Princeton, 1982, also notes this parallel construction of the Virgin on the part of the official Church in response to the influential medieval ladies of courtly love; see my Chapter 11 – U.P.]. Mary's function as guardian of power, later checked when the Church became wary of it, nevertheless persisted in popular art and pictorial representation […]." Julia Kristeva, 1986, "Stabat Mater," trans. León S. Roudiez, in *The Kristeva Reader,* ed. Toril Moi, Oxford, pp. 160-186; p. 170.

grandmother, Irena's mother, also something of a formidable female authority. This is in contrast to the somewhat stereotypical, misogynistic reactions to Irena of Ludwik and Romuald who find her severe, sarcastic and unfeminine (and therefore unattractive), though Ludwik recognizes her intelligence. Irena, however, not only becomes Anna's confidante and conscience ("you are my conscience," 374), i.e. a trusted friend with moral authority, she is also the initial defender of Helusia when Ludwik criticizes her attitude to education (see below). As an advocate of women's education and defender of female difference she also gives added authority to the more fully expressed views of Maria Regina on these subjects.

In relation specifically to Anna and her moral suffering, the feminist issue on which Irena focuses is the moral wrongness – as well as the tragic emotional consequences – of a woman marrying someone whom she does not love, an issue about which we know that Żmichowska felt very strongly, both from a religious and from a feminist perspective.[5] Persuaded by her dying mother's wish that she marry the doctor who has been caring for her, Anna enters a marriage against her better judgement, where she does not return her husband's love and where she cannot forget her earlier attachment (Romuald). Anna herself, according to Irena, believed a marriage contracted with this knowledge to be a sin even before she had entered into it: "she told us about her past, that she had loved and that she could not forget her love, even though the love for her had been forgotten; she said that she believed the marriage vow without love to be a sin and a sacrilege" (368). For Anna herself, then, the marriage of convenience made for reasons of social and financial status, as well as to satisfy the dying wishes of her mother, is an offence against God which will later haunt her conscience. For Irena, it has an additional dimension: the detrimental effects on a woman's physical, as well as moral existence of a marriage without love, especially in the case of a woman like Anna who finds it impossible to live a lie. Irena intuits precisely how misery and demoralization finally take their toll on the woman's physcial health: "Today I am sure that she [Anna] has died. Ah! I know the organisms of women like her; none like her could survive in a world where love is a lie." (370). Indeed, Irena – if she had only had the chance – would have tried to stop the marriage: "if I had been with Anna longer, I would have seen more accurately into her soul and

[5] See, for example, Letters to her brother Erazm of 17-20 June 1844 (Żmichowska, 1957-1967, *Listy,* ed. S. Pigoń and M. Romankówna, 3 vols, Warsaw, vol. 1, pp. 158-162) and to Bibianna Moraczewska of 24 April 1845 (Żmichowska, 1957-1967, vol. 2, pp. 14-15) and 8 June 1845 (p. 19).

understood better than she that the denial of one's own heart, if it brings no one any happiness, then neither can it give any special strength to live. I would have told the doctor exactly that, *I would have broken off their marriage*' [my emphases – U.P.]. (369)

Having lost her early love, for which she nevertheless continues to pine, Anna decides to live a life of self-sacrifice. The marriage is in fact an act of despair and reflects another stereotypical female thought-process which says – if I can't be happy and fulfilled, then at least I can make myself *useful* to someone else: "It has not been given to me to enjoy and need, she [Anna] told us. Perhaps, if I felt I could be useful to someone, I would gain strength and be active, useful; for, ultimately, all that matters is that a person should be useful" (369). Despite the "angelic" personality, however, and the good deeds which the other characters constantly remark upon, she herself recognizes her own hypocrisy and inability to live up to her self-appointed role, as is clear from the confessional letter she writes to Irena (371-374): "You have seen my active life for yourself – it was not enough, I threw at it the most sacred word on this earth, the word 'duty'. But why should I be to blame today for the fact that it is still not enough?" (372). Her efforts to overcome her natural inclinations by forcing herself to accept a false situation have thus led her into a moral impasse. Still hankering after the former loved ones (Romuald and Maria Regina), she asks Irena (her conscience) for advice: would it be right for her now – sick and possibly dying – to remind them of her existence? (374)

After this letter, Irena has no further news of Anna. It seems, although the text never states it directly, that Anna leaves her husband. When she is living with the artisan family, we know she is a married woman (263) and yet there is no mention of a husband or of her being a widow. Also, she has money – enough to live modestly and even afford small luxuries, such as her daily pot of coffee, books, good quality clothes (232-233). Is someone supporting her, or is this her own money (left by her mother)? The suggestion is that the sick woman has walked away from some traumatic situation in order to die in peace, that she perhaps had enough money to risk seeing this through. For a young woman to leave her husband and live on her own, independently, would have been quite scandalous in those days – and this is perhaps why her action is not openly described.

Helusia

The bond that develops between Anna and Helusia is intense and intimate despite the difference in age (Anna is twenty-five, Helusia not quite fifteen). But Helusia's love and reverence for Anna goes much deeper than a teenage crush and reaches a point where, following Anna's death, Anna's spirit and personality gradually come to dwell in Helusia ("I loved her so much it seemed to me that I had her soul inside me," 299; "Oh! How I would like to be better and better now, wiser and wiser, become endlessly Her!" 303) so that Helusia comes to believe that Anna has been "resurrected" (412) within herself. The triangle of love and jealousy also repeats itself: Romuald-Anna-Maria Regina becomes Romuald-Helusia-Maria Regina. On one level then, we could consider the two women as a single entity Anna-Helusia, the latter (Helusia) being an extension or development from – and future version of – the former (Anna), representing a possible ideological or religious viewpoint within the narrative. But Helusia has further attributes of her own: her unusual personality, her extreme emotional sensibility, her "unique" approach to knowledge and learning, her exceptional musical gift, her extraordinary reactions to musical performance. In addition there are the many religious connotations attached to her in the text, including a kind of "chosen" status.

I will now consider these in turn and try to show what the figure of Helusia suggests about her creator's views regarding women and education, female "difference" and female "nature," women's "divine" status, women as artists – and also what the combination Anna-Helusia may represent as a possible embodiment, or incarnation, of Kazimierz's demands in relation to his ethics of love. Finally, we might ask why it is that Helusia is made to die without fulfilling her potential.

The narrator Ludwik, and hence the reader, first encounters Helusia in the context of her reactions to Anna's death. Her father implies that the depth of her grief and emotional shock are in some way abnormal, excessive and even unhealthy (she has erected a shrine in the loft, for example, consisting of Anna's furniture and personal belongings, 233); a year on Helusia still weeps and cries out Anna's name in her sleep (233) and generally appears numbed to normal day-to-day existence, so that her family fear she is suffering from a psychic illness. When Ludwik first meets her, however, he is struck by her extraordinary seriousness and sensitivity, sensing the presence of a mature woman (of over twenty, 235) within the body of a much younger child (she is actually approaching fifteen), but, despite her obvious physical

exhaustion, her "pain in soul and body" ("as though something made her ache body and soul," 279), he concludes that she is not medically sick as such. Rather, he comes to regard her emotional potential and "memory" of emotional impressions ("the child has a power of feeling older than her years," 270), especially when he sees it in combination with her natural talent as a singer, not as a negative but as a *positive* quality that could form the basis of her "salvation": "[…] I no longer understood her disposition as sickness, not even as sadness, but as some kind of crisis in a powerful organism, the struggle of a spirit breaking out towards the light, of thought being born amidst pain, and, who knows, of great poetic ability." (280).

After having heard her sing, Maria Regina also recognizes Helusia's intelligence and emotional power, realizing (in an acute understanding of the consequences of female repression which is far ahead of its time) that such energy needs to be creatively channelled, or it will indeed poison her psyche and health: "this Helusia is an extraordinary, astonishing creature […]. She is at an age which is a crucial moment in life, and her life is already over-excited for her age: if the emotions and thoughts emanating everywhere from her do not find an appropriate element, then either they will affect and poison themselves, which would be a great pity, or they will affect her body and poison her organism, which would likewise be a cause for great regret." (335)

With Maria Regina's support, Ludwik therefore takes it upon himself to "educate" Helusia, despite the objections of her father who sees no need for an average working-class girl to be educated above her God-ordained station: for what can she expect from life other than to marry an ordinary working man? Why give her ideas that will make her subsequently dissatisfied with her lot? (338-343)

Before discussing Helusia's education and the issues that emerge from it, let us look first at another aspect of Helusia's personality: her musical talent. And also the link between this and her religiosity.

Gift of God

Unlike the cultivated, foreign-educated (and upper-class) talent of Romuald, a violinist, excelling in virtuoso showmanship and expressing itself in his own sense of superiority (as an artist and therefore also, according to his lights, as a human being) and contempt for lesser mortals (423, 426), Helusia's gift is natural, untrained and comes straight from the heart. This conforms in very generalized terms to the kind of

cultural critique that identifies "man" with culture (with control, with the artificial and aesthetic) and "woman" with Nature (with lack of control, with instinct, emotion and "natural" inspiration); it also anticipates, in Maria Regina's portrayal of her brother's debauchery in the company of his idle drinking companions, the modernist link between aestheticism and degeneracy (281-282).[6] Helusia also possesses a natural ability to improvise: for the Romantic poets the mark of divine inspiration ("a Poet, God's priest" 281). Her repertoire, needless to say, consists of folk songs, some of them learned from Anna (and here too the intimate connection between the two women is emphasized), unsophisticated tunes and words that nevertheless possess a powerful emotional register, reflecting the folk wisdom and painful life experiences of ordinary toiling people over generations[7] – and of hymns, as well as of her own "compositions," or rather improvisations, in similar vein.

Ludwik, the narrator, first hears of Helusia's unusual talent from the housekeeper, who recalls her singing happy as a bird before the death of Anna: "the child was as merry as one of God's little birds; she would sing to herself from dawn to dusk […]. God knows where she learnt those lovely songs. If she ever lacked for any, then she made up new ones herself […] to me they were miraculously beautiful, they went as though from heart to heart; it's just a shame that she could never remember any of them […]." (280)

When Ludwik and Romuald together hear her sing for the first time (in the garden, where she does not know they are listening, 286-287), many important threads are brought together. The "wistful folkloric melody" (287) is given an added poignancy by the girl's own grief. The words convey the image of a pure young woman (compared to a "white lily") not responding to her lover's call but dying, as "no one's," in her lonely grave ("I shall not be yours, not yours/ Or anyone's/ Only my own in my green grave/ A white lily," 287). A similar image dominates the actual "old folk song" (225) which Żmichowska includes as a motto at the very beginning of the novel: a young girl stands by a river watching the water (i.e. life) flow away to the sea, nostalgic for a life that will never be fulfilled, since she is destined to die young, once loved and now forgotten (she too is compared to the lilies growing on the river bank). The events implied by both songs anticipate, of course, Helusia's own fate –

[6] Showalter, 1992, pp. 169-177.
[7] If the novel is to be interpreted at all as a "class" or "artisan" novel, then the positive attention given to the folk songs may be regarded as a significant aspect of it.

but they also relate to Anna. In fact, it is at this point that the reader is given confirmation that the dead woman was indeed Anna, because Helusia's little brother, Karolek, specifically refers to the song overheard by Ludwik and Romuald as "Anna's song" (286).[8] Furthermore, Romuald is deeply affected by it, clearly having heard it before, and it is this song and the memories it arouses which cause him to fall in love with the singer before he has even set eyes on her ("I have fallen in love with this girl," 288). For Ludwik too, "Anna's song" is highly significant: he senses again someone else's presence enveloping Helusia; he relates her pale figure to the apparition in his dream (he calls it a "dream" here) but he also points to the prophetic, almost messianic, aura (I will return to this below) that surrounds Helusia, as though she were a herald of some future revelation: "When she hummed in that way, it seemed to me that the voice of some unseen spirit imbued with song and prophecy was flowing not from her but above her – while she just sat there pale and as though dead, like in my dream, greeting the herald with a forgotten smile of comfort." (287)

Helusia's singing has a profound effect upon all who hear it. But what is also interesting is the way in which she herself reacts to music: her reactions are not only emotional (never intellectual, since she has not been "educated" musically) but *physical*, or rather they appear to be physical – or perhaps psychic in a way that then manifests itself in physical, bodily symptoms. She herself is aware of this susceptibility and tries to resist the invitation to Romuald's charity concert (292-293); yet again she makes the connection with Anna: "music always reminds me of her misfortune." (303). When she agrees to attend the concert, the effects of the music on her are dramatic. Ludwik notes her exhaustion as she strains to understand the as yet unfamiliar classical music ("It's still very hard for me, very hard to understand," 305). Despite her outward appearance of indifference and her failure to make any verbal comment, he observes a titanic battle of some kind going on inside her: "I marvelled at the iridiscent yet motionless features of that stuggle, as though it were that of an eagle's spirit, the spirit of a flame, locked in marble. Blue veins were clearly visible on her naked brow. Her chest rose and fell as though she were struggling for breath. Her eyes seemed so plated with gold, because of the bright rings encircling her pupils, that they shone with the lustre of stars, of topaz." (306). When Romuald gives his virtuoso display at the end of the concert, she collapses in a faint (307).

[8] "piosneczka pani Anny". The use of "pani" and not "panna" indicates that she was regarded by the family as a married woman.

Maria Regina is mistaken in assuming that Helusia's reaction is occasioned by strong *feelings* aroused by the music, or that the violinist himself may have made a deep impression on her (it is only later, when Romuald plays Anna's song, and similar folk tunes in her own home, that Helusia warms to him); instead, she tries to explain that she *sees* the music: "I didn't feel anything, I just saw it all" (309), "your brother is very beautiful, beautiful like his music, but that time I saw only his playing, not the player " (310). She tries to describe the impression made on her by this sophisticated, artistic style of music, which – unlike the familiar folk songs which move her and with which she can identify – bombards her with intense visual and colourful impressions, evidence of her extraordinary sensitivity and imaginative powers (qualities that will be given a very positive evaluation in the context of Helusia's education):

> "[…] when your brother was playing, none of my loved ones came to mind; no memories and no hope were aroused. […] it was as if all the rays of the sun were shooting at the same time from every window and from every wall, as if I were looking at fields sown with diamond ears of corn, which waved in time to the music in sheens of dazzling, flickering, ruby, emerald, sparks of fire. Sometimes I saw a crystal river flowing in the solemn shade of ancient woods, sometimes a silver moon floating in a clear, sapphire sky. Towards the end I imagined a swarm of butterflies with tiny human faces in a dreamlike rainbow of tiny wings, flying about madly in the air, calling out… swirling about… until it vanished […]." (310)

When, however, Romuald plays her "Anna's song," with its musical simplicity and personal associations for Helusia ("and then the melody of the song returned in its rural simplicity and repeated itself again and again endlessly," 322), her reaction is quite different: she takes the violin from him and kisses the silent strings with reverence, "with a kind of religious ecstasy."

Another indicative aspect of Helusia's reception of music is the strong pantheistic element, her instinctive association of music with the music of Nature: "I know that the trees play, the waters play and that the whole world is a song. Sometimes, when it's very quiet in the garden, I listen attentively and I often seem to hear something, then I want to sing myself." (303)

Apart from singing the folk song learned from Anna, Helusia composes or improvises two other songs in the novel. The first is in the mode of a folk song, with a similar message to all the other songs associated with her so far: the metaphor of the flowing river; the fading flower; the passing of youth, happiness and hope; the death of a once-loved young woman, while the repeated refrain reinforces the sense of youthful nostalgia for something never to be fulfilled: "Oh, so far away, far away!" "Oh, so deep down, deep down!" (322-333). The song is described as a true song of Nature – "that true song of Nature, the song that simple people hum in the dawn of their lives" – and indeed, Helusia goes off on her own into the garden to seek inspiration ("as though she were alone with the Lord God"), claiming that she cannot sing to order for an audience (331). Once again the effort and the effect drain her strength, and she almost faints (334).[9]

The second improvisation is a hymn, or song-prayer (381-383). Ludwik observes that for the first time he sees her *happy*, in her home setting surrounded by people of her own class, and with Romuald (with whom she is falling in love?), playing familiar, popular dance tunes and folk songs (rather than the sophisticated, cosmopolitan classical repertoire); and on this occasion she does not faint, on the contrary, she is "transfigured": "her grey eyes so full of gold and shining light, like the eyes of people who look into the future" (384). Her sung prayer is one of joy and hope ("to a great future full of great hope," 382), and of thanksgiving for the earth, for the Spring (hence again closely linked with Nature) and is directly associated by Helusia with the popular Whitsun festival at Bielany monastery (380-382), thus strongly suggesting a more specific link with the Virgin, the Queen of the May: "Oh, my God, how I thank you! – Spring has already wafted over the earth – and there are so many lilacs, lilies-of-the-valley, roses – and the meadows are full of may blossom. – Every twig of every tree brimming with sap like warm blood […] Oh, my God, thank you […] for giving the Spring to the thirsting earth" (382). Despite Helusia's "purity" this imagery is intensely sexual and anticipates, for example, similar use of

[9] The text of this song is not the same as the one described as "Helusia's song" (Helusina śpiewka) sent by Żmichowska to Helena Turno at the time she was beginning to write the novel, with her own piano accompaniment, although the subject matter and tone are again very similar. See Letter to Helena Turno of 30 December 1846 in Narcyza Żmichowska, 1934, *Listy Narcyzy Żmichowskiej i Zofii Węgierskiej*, ed. J. Mikołajtis, Częstochowa, pp. 62-63, which includes the text and music; letter only in Żmichowska, 1957-1967, vol. 1, p. 328, cf. Romankówna's notes 7 (p. 578) and also 8 (p. 576).

the religious (Marian) connotations attached to women's relationship with the earth in Władysław Reymont's novel *Chłopi* (The Peasants, 1904-09).[10]

God's love, the Holy Spirit, thus merges simultaneously with Nature and with the ordinary populace and folk traditions, in a communing with other human beings. The reference to Bielany – and to Helusia herself in her white frock (380) – also anticipates the actual visit she makes there with Romuald and Maria Regina (406, 410), it being on the occasion of this visit that Helusia realizes that Anna Klara has indeed been resurrected within her (411-412). Thus an association is also made between the resurrection of the natural world (Spring, Whitsun) and the resurrection of Anna (the triangle with Romuald and Maria Regina is similarly resurrected, as Romuald and Helusia fall in love): "I suddenly felt as if my past and future lives had converged in the present moment" (Helusia, 411).

The positive religious aura surrounding Helusia is reinforced still further by the prophetic events surrounding her birth, recalled by her mother (pani Agnieszka) and her mother's friend (pani Piotrowa) following Helusia's recital of her sung prayer (384-385). We learn that Agnieszka had had a dream two months before Helusia's birth about her baptism, which was interpreted at the time by Piotrowa as a prophetic sign, and which then came true on the actual day of her baptism: namely, that a newly wedded couple would gaze upon her in the moment of her baptism and that this would be a sign of God's favour, auguring a chosen status and a life that would in some way be especially fortunate. Piotrowa interprets this special fortune as Helusia's singing talent: "it meant that you would receive without fail some lucky thing that would last all your life: in just such a moment God gives to some wealth, to others health and to still other honours, but to you, Helusia. God gave intelligence and your singing voice." (385)

We should note that the narrator Ludwik is sceptical of this: "But can such a gift be the gift of a single divine moment, a surprise present, a chance happening, like the glance of these eyes or those?... I cannot believe in it" (385). But we should also remember that Ludwik is only the internal narrator; he is not the voice of Gabryella-Żmichowska. This becomes very apparent in the discussion between himself and other protagonists, namely Maria Regina and Irena, regarding Helusia's personality

[10] See Anna Małgorzata Packalén, 2005, "The *Femmes Fatales* of the Polish Village: Sexuality, Society and Literary Conventions in Orzeszkowa, Reymont and Dąbrowska," in *Gender and Sexuality in Ethical Context: Ten Essays on Polish Prose* (Slavica Bergensia 5), ed. Knut Andreas Grimstad and Ursula Phillips, Bergen, pp. 52-76; pp. 65-67.

and attitude to education. It is misguided to assume, as some critics have done,[11] that Ludwik voices the views of Żmichowska. Rather, the note of scepticism here is more to maintain a sense of perspective regarding the religious element, such things as folk prophecies and interpretations of dreams being regarded as irrational or mere superstition by intellectuals, i.e. by Żmichowska's readers; on the other hand, it is the irrational, instinctive, "natural" aspects of femininity that are promoted in the context of education. Or are Ludwik's statements rather a premonition of Helusia's undoing and death? An intuition that her talent will not in fact be her salvation because other factors in society outside her control will prevent it?

On the religious aura and function of Helusia, we could therefore summarize by saying that she represents an instinctive and non-rational religiosity, which seems to emanate naturally from her without any deliberation on her part, and that this is closely linked to Nature, to popular beliefs and possibly also to traditional cults of the Virgin: "Helusia, I would even say, did not compose her song; the song flowed through her almost unconsciously, like the breath of the wind through an aeolian harp, and it seemed like a prayer, like an echo of Nature." (381). Helusia's extreme sensitivity and inspired reactions (could we say: *enthusiasm*, see Chapter 6?) find their fullest expression in her musical talent which, as we have seen, is marked as a gift of God. Helusia is connected in some way with an apotheosized future; she is portrayed as "chosen" and embodies particularly *female* aspects of the divine.

Women and education

I would like to turn now, or return, to the ongoing theme in Żmichowska of women's education, as it is given some prominence in this novel. However, here it is not so much the content of the curriculum that is at stake, as in some of Żmichowska's texts specifically devoted to education (see Chapters 2 and 3), but the *approach* taken to education by women in contrast to that of men. What emerges is a vision of woman's distinct nature, which blends into the perception of Helusia as divinely inspired and makes prophetic prognoses about the future. In this instance, Żmichowska expresses a

[11] Stępień, 1968, p. 229: "Here it was not just about teaching a girl from the artisan class, but about the education of woman in general. Żmichowska criticizes her chief faults: her inability to draw logical conclusions, her succumbing to prejudices and superstitions, her profuse imagination, which 'paralyses the most effective powers of her mind, and drowns her in daydreams.'" As we shall see, these views articulated by Ludwik and their misogynistic tone, are subject to a severe critique *within the novel itself.*

stronger commitment to feminine or female *difference*, even suggesting an *essential* difference from men (i.e. a difference that is understood as "natural," God-given, fundamental and unchanging) than she does elsewhere in her writings on education; the tension with a more androgynous model would appear to be absent here. Despite later (1862) speculations on specifically female nature in *Pogadanki pedagogiczne* (*Pedagogical Talks,* discussed in Chapter 4), she never again expresses such a definite commitment to feminine *difference*. I shall then take the theme beyond the subject of education *per se* to look at the implications of Anna-Helusia's nature and examine how this may fit into Kazimierz's ethic of love (possibly the most significant ideological element in the novel). The future of Helusia as an artist-singer and lover of Romuald ends in failure, so we might also consider the symbolism of this for the wider theme.

In spite of the stronger emphasis given here to essential difference, we can still identify certain constants in Żmichowska's thinking: the emphasis on incarnation (or: materialization), revelation in the everyday, non-rational and inspirational intuition, empathy, the importance of experience in establishing "truth" and authenticity, a strong moral element. In *Książka pamiątek* Żmichowska develops not only a kind of apotheosis or celebration of female *difference*, but also introduces a very concrete image of female "incarnation" – intuiting thereby some of the more daring hypotheses regarding the incarnation of the female/feminine posited by Irigaray.[12] The character who most embodies this conception is Helusia, an individual who, as we have seen above, is marked by a pronounced religious aura, although it is not she but Maria Regina who identifies and describes it. The context is Helusia's education and the defence of Helusia's unorthodox attitude by initially Irena, who mocks Ludwik's criticisms of women in a way that he finds unsettling and challenging to his male pride ("her excessive self-assurance," "she just laughed loudly and did not even deign to reply," "that rude laugh," "her contemptuous silence," 352), and then more fully by Maria Regina, whose agreement with Irena he finds even more challenging, because he finds her beautiful and attractive (352-361).

Recognizing Helusia's intelligence and eagerness to learn, Ludwik appoints himself as her tutor. He is exasperated, however, by her attitude to study, and from

[12] See especially the essay "Divine Women" (1984) in Luce Irigaray, 1993, *Sexes and Genealogies,* trans. Gillian C. Gill, New York, pp. 55-72; and the Chapter "Love of the Other" in Irigaray, 1993, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference,* trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, London, pp. 133-150.

this he draws stereotypical conclusions about the educatability of women in general. His frustration derives from the fact that Helusia does not accept, or appear even to understand, the basic premises on which education (i.e. academic learning, *his* education) depends: the systematic acquisition and acceptance of generally recognized "facts," of scientific rationalism, of logical reasoning – and also of relativity. Helusia is seeking something else: namely the freedom to take from "knowledge" what she needs for her own sustenance, i.e. a moral vision, absolute values, certainties rather than typical intellectual "doubts," guidance on how to live and be happy, hope; alongside this, she desires the input of imagination and of feeling, elements which in Ludwik's idea of education, have no role or value at all. Their "otherness" is something that especially disturbs him: "What's the point of such disrespect for scientific certainties, along with her constant need for the extraordinary, the ideal, and otherness [sic]?" (348).

Helusia, for example, in an allegedly scientific discussion about the moon, pays no heed either to the authority of established academic science, or to Ludwik's authority as a teacher endowed with superior knowledge: "No, I prefer to believe that the moon is a future planet, a future sun, in its primordial state." (345) Thus the qualities he criticizes in Helusia are: "a lack of strong will or rational reflection," "unusual impatience and excess of rampant imagination," "her intellectual audacity," "that constant tendency of hers to take everything to extremes" (344), calling her eventually "an unruly girl" (347) and "a day-dreamer" (348), fearing her approach will lead eventually to "supernatural mysticism" or even to madness (348). Helusia's response to his accusation that women have no discipline and do not respect scientific knowledge contains the essence of her own point of view:

> "[Are you saying] that I don't respect it? – Or that there can be, in any form of study, a problem more important than the one that occurred to me in today's class, about the end of the universe, about the transformation of our whole earth? It seems to me that this is exactly what I'm studying for, so that I can know for certain about things like this, so that nothing will then shake me in my faith. (346) […] And so worlds come into being, and when they have come into being they pass from a less perfect state to one that is more and more perfect. Perfection, Ludwik, is after all the fullness of life, of movement, power, might. (347) […] So the man who doubts is right? And the one who

> despairs in his failure is the just one? […] So happiness and perfection are no longer a necessity […]?" (348)

On the basis of Helusia's example, Ludwik stereotypifies all (or most) women who attempt to study. He admits there are indeed exceptions to the rule, enlightened women developed according to their own unique nature, but not *educated* – he makes a distinction between "enlightened" (oświecone) and "educated" (wykształcone): "My first experience, however […] has led me to the conclusion […] that truly and thoroughly enlightened women do indeed exist, but they exist as exceptions, not as beings who have been educated – that is they exist simply as beings who have developed out of their own nature and appropriate character." (354-355) Significantly, Żmichowska does not use her female protagonists to contradict her male narrator, but rather to provoke him further ("'And so what?' Maria Regina asked him quite severely," 355). Ludwik rises to the bait, extending his complaints from the female "exceptions" to the general mass of women whom he considers ineducable:

> "Because a woman who is not an exception […] who is not an unusual phenomenon of Nature or a festive, divine gift to the earth, a woman of the everyday, a reflection of the eternal prototype […], woman as just *woman*, will never pass through any course of study patiently, thoroughly, from beginning to end; she will only grab at little snippets of knowledge, saturate her already lively imagination with them and […] paralyse the most effective powers of her mind, and drown in daydreams. My pupil, for example, has without doubt a swift understanding, but what use is it to her if she is deprived of any analytical and critical ability?" (355)

Behind this patronizing assessment it is not hard to recognize the stereotypical dualisms relating to male-female difference (physical, intellectual and moral) that were systematized by Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, sanctioned by the Church Fathers, reinforced by the Cartesian separation of mind/spirit and body, and which have continued to underwrite mainstream western philosophy and theology ever since. Until, that is, they were challenged by process theology and then by feminists. By contending that God is present in the material world, by suggesting that spirit and body are inseparable and both part of the essential person or individual, by

concentrating on salvation in this world rather than on a supernatural life-after-death in some other world, feminists have begun to undermine traditional (masculinist) theology and develop their vision (or various visions) of a divine which would accommodate female nature *without* it being forced into a secondary, inferior position.[13] They do not argue that women are *not* body or emotion (indeed they promote this) as opposed to spirit and rationality (though the association of the female with "evil" *on the basis of this opposition* is obviously regarded as suspect) – rather that the opposition/division (the dualism, any such dualism) itself is not valid; nature-body-emotion may therefore be as equally valid as mind-spirit-reason, but the two "oppositions" are not mutually exclusive. In fact the opposition is itself a delusion. This, in my opinion, is what Żmichowska also intuits in this debate about education, which develops into a discussion about "different" or "separate" female nature and eventually finds its justification in a religious assertion.

Maria Regina defends Helusia's "Swedenborgian" imagination ("her Swedenborgian hopes and systems," 348) against Ludwik's stereotypical assessment on the basis of her right to be other: "he would like to transform nightingales into beavers, forget-me-nots into firewood, and women's hearts into geometry." (356) The point made here is one of value, of equal validity: Why do women have to be like men in order to be taken seriously? Maria Regina does not try to argue that women are just as capable of systematic learning as men (though she does not deny that they can be) but challenges instead the assumption that there is only one *valid* kind of learning/study/education, namely the one that men have been doing. On the basis of women's otherness or separateness, their unique nature (odrębność), she argues for something different. But much more than this: Maria Regina, believes that it a false hope to try to force a change in female nature – on the contrary, femaleness is an unrecognized, positive and powerful force which will come into its own in the future *because* it an expression of the divine in everyday, material existence [sic!]:

> "Ludwik would like one Helusia to remain a miraculously poetic little angel […] so the other Helusia inside this first Helusia would learn systematically the things he himself has learned […] and extract from the assembled facts or observations the same gain […]. Helusia even in the most distant future will

[13] Discussed, for example, by Grace M. Jantzen, 1998, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion,* Manchester, pp. 254-275.

> never be anything but a woman. *A woman assimilates learning differently, because she will utilize it differently* [my emphases – U.P.]; a woman will never stop at any abstraction, even the most rational, the most obvious, like two times two equals four; she is constantly striving to grasp everything that is in the world, everything that might be conjectured, as a living essence and plait it into every moment of the day, consume it to pacify all the needs of her emotions. The boldest researcher will never press such audacious questions as a woman when she begins to ask; the most ardent reformer will not dare to advance such impossible theories as a woman when she risks impossible experiments; none of you [men – U.P.], even in your strongest hopes, will anticipate her *in her demand for every good from the future, for living life is the only life, for the incarnation of the word of God is the eternal function of her nature* [my emphases – U.P.]." (360-361)[14]

Here we have a direct reference to the divine, the word of God, embodied or incarnated in the nature of woman – materialized and living in the bodily matter of the world – thus anticipating, without knowing it, complex theories of twentieth-century feminist (and other "alternative") theology: the Word is materialized in the world, in the female body; the idea of a disembodied (male or genderless) spirit or mind as the only possible human expression of "God" is thereby devalued. It also hints at the *parousia,* the "second coming" or incarnation, posited by Irigaray as a *female* incarnation and precondition for a female divine.[15] Also significant are the pantheistic overtones of this passage, as well as the continuing apotheosis of the future; as I mentioned earlier (Chapter 7), we can see in such insights of Żmichowska how ideas which she might originally have taken from contemporary utopian thought, become reworked in her mind for her own feminist purposes, but how they also – at least partially – map onto feminist ideas developed theoretically much later.

The insistence on "incarnation," meanwhile, i.e. on the importance of the material, bodily dimension to the question of religious truth, is a theme which continues to appear frequently in her subsequent work, as we have seen. It is not something solely associated with the earlier part of her development and writing career. In another fireside scene, written fourteen-fifteen years after the publication of

[14] My translation from Borkowska, 2001, p. 145, slightly expanded and adjusted.
[15] See the subsection "Parousia" in Irigaray, 1993, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, pp. 147-150.

Poganka and *Książka pamiątek,* we can find passages such as the following: "[…] for truth is not just an abstract concept, it is not some generously granted permission to hold certain opinions, formulated according to the rules of syntax and logic; *truth is the soul along with the body, the ideal along with reality*, it is growth and vigour from sowing-time to harvest [my emphases – U.P.]."[16]

She continues to emphasize as attributes of the female/feminine such qualities as closeness to life, to living reality, experience, everyday reality; furthermore, such truth as is revealed in these is identified with religious (i.e. ultimate) truth – but this is not mere "identification" but "incarnation": *realization, concretization, materialization:* word made flesh. In a letter to Wanda Grabowska of 1864, for example, she states:

> "A woman is first and foremost a being that needs to be 'materially fulfilled'; if I am not abusing the word in too ugly a fashion, I would say she is a 'realist'. It lies in her nature to strive for the materialization of even the most abstract ideals. All premature concepts that look beyond the 'here and now' are at their most dangerous when they fall aming women, but they are also most certain then of being applied, of being experimented with, of being made flesh and blood; woman therefore, as the one who largely makes things materialize, should make a reality of herself. This must be her divine right since human 'advocacy' and arguments have always brought her more evil than good."[17]

Passages such as this, especially the final sentence, suggest that Żmichowska well understood the inherent threat contained in the views she advocated to what feminists today would call "patriarchy".

On the matter of feminine nature and its coming into its own sometime in the future, Maria Regina also makes an significant distinction between herself and

[16] Narcyza Żmichowska, 1885, "Kwestya podrzędna, przy kominkowym ogniu rozbierana," *Pisma*, ed. Piotr Chmielowski, 5 vols, Warsaw, vol. 3, pp. 235-272; p. 236. (Originally 1861 in *Pisma Gabryelli,* vol. 2). Cf. the "unity" (jedność) of body, mind and soul, the idea of the human being as a single existential whole, in *Pogadanki pedagogiczne,* discussed above in Chapter 4.

[17] Letter of 26 January 1864. My slightly adjusted translation from Borkowska, 2001, p. 183. Borkowska's quotation of the passage is taken from *Narcyssa i Wanda. Listy N. Żmichowskiej do Wandy Grabowskiej (Żeleńskiej),* ed. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, Warsaw, 1930, pp. 32-33. Adjusted translation is based on the recent, re-edited republication: see Narcyza Żmichowska, 2007, *Listy. Tom V. Narcyssa i Wanda,* ed. Barbara Winklowa and Helena Żytkowicz, p. 88.

Helusia, a generational distinction, but one which reinforces the distinction I made in earlier chapters between "emancipation" and "feminism" and also anticipates Irigaray's concern about *what* women actually want to be equal to.[18] Maria Regina sees Helusia as potentially representing a woman of the future who will be able to live her life fully as a woman, in harmony with her own nature, whereas she, Maria Regina, has only been able to strive to participate in what men do; she lacks the power in her own spirit to liberate herself from her conditioning and hence to be creative – whereas women in the future, she insists, will have the confidence and the tools to know how to help themselves. I would go so far as to suggest that this is portrayed in the novel as her tragedy, the fatal cause of her inability (along with her complex psychical problems deriving from the early loss of her mother)[19] to engage productively or proactively with the real world around her, or to love other human beings:

> "[…] none of you [men] is capable of forming any conception of the symptom awakening in Helusia's soul, but I have just such a conception […]. […] she [Helusia] and I are like the difference between today and tomorrow, the preparation and the deed. To me has been revealed the fullest of life in the present-day; in my soul there is no *already yesterday* or *yet tomorrow* [Żmichowska's emphases – U.P.]. I am not a woman of exclusive feeling as once existed, but I am also not a woman who has developed her spiritual potential in accordance with her own nature. I am a woman of our age, a woman of transition. In my breast I have a woman's heart, but when I wanted to study, I had to seek male learning; I had to assimilate all the things which you alone had worked upon and which so far have contained no trace of those elements that are properly suited to my own essential being. Don't laugh Ludwik, why so? Do you imagine I want to breathe a woman's spirit into mathematics or algebra, want to frame Pythagoras's tables in poetic images, or forge agricultural tools from the misty clouds? Your laughter is thoughtless, Ludwik! I am talking about the study of all branches of knowledge, about the concept of basic principles in every human quest for knowledge, about

[18] Luce Irigaray, 1989, "Equal to Whom?" *Differences* 1 (2), pp. 59-76; and Irigaray, 1991, "Equal or Different?" (orig. 1986) in *The Irigaray Reader,* ed. Margaret Whitford, Oxford, pp. 29-33;
[19] See Borkowska, 2001, p. 164.

> concepts of the laws of history governing any human event – I am talking of one thing only, and that is that I, as a woman in the present moment, have to accept all this from you men. And so I am not a woman who is unthinking, uninformed, but I am also not a women who is developed to her full spiritual potential, not a creative woman." (358-359) [20]

Interestingly, Maria Regina pinpoints her prophetic hopes on the end of the twentieth century, when she appears to believe a change in consciousness, especially in the attitudes of men, will have taken place (358).[21] Prophetic or not, it is precisely today – now, in our present time – when Irigaray, in the opening paragraph of her *Ethics of Sexual Difference*, signals that the recognition of sexual difference, and the issues that flow from it, has to be addressed as *the* issue for our times (drawing on Martin Heidegger's assertion that every age has its *one* issue to think through).[22]

I would like to suggest that such a forward-looking, future-orientated, pantheistic and feminist approach to religion remained with Żmichowska throughout her life. But it was also, on *her* insistence, a Christian vision, and one which was predominantly *ethical* rather than mystical/transcendental (despite the "pantheistic" communing with Nature) or eschatalogical.

Kazimierz's ethic of love

Kazimierz's conception of love, in contrast to that of Maria Regina, Romuald or the narrator Ludwik, extends beyond the limited sphere of "selfish" romantic-sexual relationships between individuals (let us identify it in general terms as *eros*), to a more universal and Christian ideal of love as *giving* (though not necessarily receiving in return, according to Kazimierz), i.e. *agape*, or at least something closely akin to *agape*: "according to my conviction, love is like God, love gives eternally." (364) He claims that love as *giving* is beneficial to society, to the collective, and describes it as "creative." Love relationships between individuals, however, are in his version a

[20] Expanded and slightly adjusted version of translation in Borkowska, 2001, 143

[21] "'Who told you that you [Ludwik, men] will be able to judge here according to your own conviction? […] Oh! able to judge! but not so fast. First you will have to create new conditions around you, new powers within yourselves, and only then will you be able to pass sentence, if you want to, at the end of the twentieth century.'" (358)

[22] Irigaray, 1993, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference,* p. 5: "Sexual difference is one of the major philosophical issues, if not the issue, of our age. According to Heidegger, each age has one issue to think through, and one only. Sexual difference is probably the issue in our time which would be our 'salvation' if we thought it through."

clearly lesser form of love, being inward-looking "selfishness" (samolubstwo) and "falsehood" (kłamstwo), if they do not radiate some positive benefit beyond themselves to others:

> "[…] as to exclusive, individual love, I do not suggest any laws. If someone loves and is loved in return […] that is encroaching on a person's most private individual territory and to create prescriptions for it is not right […] But when I was talking about love, I meant fundamental love, universal love, raised to its full potential; I don't know whether that kind of love exists in the love that you [Maria Regina] say has to consist of two sources of feeling. Perhaps, however, it sustains itself through the continual exchange of mutual gifts, but even then, if it limits itself to just this, if it does not give out new treasures beyond itself from out of that fund that already makes a perfect unity, if it does not radiate it own light to its surroundings, then it will only be selfishness once again, a lie, but it won't be love because I repeat yet again: love gives eternally. If that word doesn't satisfy you, I can use another one: love creates eternally, or, conversely, every creature is the product of creative love." (365)

This ideal would appear to echo that of Felicja in the frame of *Poganka,* especially in her words in the second part of the frame following Benjamin's story. And like Felicja, Kazimierz has a very practical bias (what are the practical *material* benefits to society of Christian self-sacrifice?), something which emerges most clearly in his private conversation with Ludwik in Chapter IX. Here he urges Ludwik not to lose sight of his "religious ideal" – but not to be so obsessed with it that he is unable to achieve anything practical. His message seems to be: know what you are capable of, set your achievable goals, do not be discouraged by impossible goals, and your ideal will be confirmed: "A person's desire is the emotional level of their will. Don't waste your desire on ideals. Let your ideal be like a religious hope, but qualify your desire with a steady and unchanging aim: desire what you can accomplish, and may whatever you accomplish lead you only then towards your ideal." (403)

Within a notional framework of Christian love, Kazimierz thus preaches the art of the possible. It is not hard to see the contemporary political and social relevance of such an attitude: society (universal human society *and* contemporary Polish society) potentially stands to benefit from limited, less grandiose, but achievable acts

of selfless goodness than from Romantic, impractical acts of personal martyrdom in the name of unrealizable causes.[23] Also, this is again a religion for this world, salvation is here in this world – through community with other human beings: "Today people have come to recognize that they can only save their souls by saving others." (400) The emphasis is collective rather than individual.

Most intriguing, however, is the promotion of this ideological standpoint as an emanation of the *feminine*, or at least as a position strongly influenced by women, despite its utterance by a male protagonist. Let us not forget that Kazimierz has been raised by women (his grandmother and his aunt, Irena, both of whom he admires enormously); he is the product of women, continues to live with them – it seems out of choice, and acknowledges his debt to them, even inheriting certain stereotypical character traits: "but I […] was brought up by women. I know how to long for things, wait in hope, be on the look out, grow impatient even." (404-405)

During his discussion with Maria Regina about the merits of individual male-female romantic love versus the selfless "giving" social model, Kazimierz finds insufficient her contention that "exclusive love is given to a person for their happiness, to complement their existence, to make them perfect" (366) and denies her claim that loving without return makes a person ill or appear ridiculous ("laughable or sick," 366), by citing the example of Anna. Not only is Anna not ridiculous (though she does become seriously ill), she represents for him a superior moral authority, someone who is able to love in the giving and creative way he advocates: "I walked beside her along the road of my life respecting and worshipping her, for I recognized in her a superior power of spirit and love." (367)

Anna, as an embodiment (or: incarnation) of the power of love understood in this way, represents for Kazimierz a religious and an ideological ideal. But, as we have seen above in our examination of her, Anna is not a traditional stereotype, not an angel of the domestic hearth, but something other: graced with a religious aura, yes, but not a personality who is submissive, inferior or even "complementary" to men; in fact, such considerations of relative worth and status, so essential to Żmichowska's

[23] The conversations between Kazimierz and Ludwik could potentially be interpreted as coded understandings between them – Ludwik having now been galvanized by Kazimierz's combination of idealism and practical sense – to work together for a common cause, which is not specified, other than to involve working together to improve their landed properties, which in turn could conceivably mean improving the lot of peasants and even additional political activity. However, this is outside my current considerations; I do *not* consider the novel to be primarily connected with underground conspiracies in the Russian partition and/or in Galicia.

near contemporaries Klementyna Tańska-Hoffmanowa and Eleonora Ziemięcka, are given no consideration here, as though they were irrelevant to the construction of this model of femininity. Furthermore, Anna dies and is resurrected. So what of the woman in whom she lives again, in whom she is reincarnated: Helusia, the woman of the future? Might we suggest that Helusia too, clearly an individual endowed with a divine status, is similarly an embodiment of Kazimierz's ideal of love (we are told that both he and Irena are keen to meet Helusia, 377)? And that as such, Helusia carries a religious and ideological significance in the overall intentions of the first-level narrator Gabryella?

In contrast to this apotheosis of Anna-Helusia, Kazimierz condemns Maria Regina, as someone endowed with intelligence and abilities – but who gives nothing of herself. In response to Ludwik's specific question as to what he demands of women, Kazimierz gives a reply which on the surface might read as a traditional demand for female self-abnegation, but it is not this: Kazimierz fully realizes Maria Regina's qualities and potential; he believes, however, because she is rich and talented, she should do something for society, help others, give love, clearly believing that the privileged owe something to society:

> "We see before us a woman who is highly educated, beautiful, a credit to her family. Indeed, a desirable sight and worthy of veneration, but for me it's still not enough. One can take excessive pleasure in reading books or study just as one can in luxuries or fine clothes; one can amuse oneself with one's own talent just as one can with dancing, become intoxicated by it like hard liquor. […] But where in all this do we look for merit? […] it's true, a woman has to walk a different path [than I do, a man – U.P.], yet she still ought to cover the same ground. If Maria Regina had sought more in exchange for her abilities than ambrosia baths to satisfy her individual nature; if she had loved her father and her brother with true Christian love, in Christ and for the sake of Christ, in the good and for the sake of the good; if she had not been wasting herself, under guise of fulfilling her obligations, on fuelling only her own egotistical desires, which consume her work and are an end in themselves; if only she could see that whatever she gave to her father and brother, they would give back to humanity three times over; if only she had before her, present in every

moment, such radiation of herself in good deeds and in her every word, then I would willingingly take off my hat to her and say: it's enough!"(401-402)

This passage suggests, furthermore, that any model of emancipation or feminism implied here is one which not only has a strong religious and ethical element, but one which fully extends that element into a real sense of social obligation. This accords with the views of Felicja in the frame of *Poganka*, and even with Maria Regina's own prophecies about Helusia as a woman of the future, as the incarnation of the living word of God, the divine logos. The ideal model is not limited to female/feminine self-realization (which is as far as it goes for the "selfish" Maria Regina) but sees the loving woman of the future fulfilling a positive good in the world. Anna-Helusia is thus ascribed a salvational, almost "messianic" role, somewhat anticipating the late Orzeszkowa's vision of a female messiah.[24]

Sinning against love

What becomes, however, of Kazimierz's ideal of love, embodied in Anna and then Helusia? In her "afterword," added for the 1861 edition, in which she tries to explain why the novel remained unfinished, the first-level narrator Gabryella summarizes what happens to the main protagonists after the end of Ludwik's text, i.e. of his "memories" which have formed the bulk of the novel's text, and gives her own view on the overarching importance of "love," only to end on a note of bitterness and ambiguity.

She informs the reader that Helusia has died (451) and that before this she had broken off her relationship with Romuald because she discovered that it was he who had "poisoned" Anna's life, "her first love" ("because Romuald poisoned the life of her first love," 452). She laments how everything in these gifted individuals, who had such high hopes for the future, "in the end fell apart, became crooked, suffered, perished […]." (451). Helusia, she says, came out of it best: "her white soul flew away into eternity, the white lily burst into bloom on her green grave" (451), the imagery here recalling that of the folk songs associated with her. Romuald goes to pieces after her death. Meanwhile Ludwik has succumbed to a nervous illness, and

[24] Grażyna Borkowska, 2005, "The Feminism of Eliza Orzeszkowa," in *Gender and Sexuality in Ethical Context,* ed. Grimstad Phillips, pp. 77-97; pp. 93-94.

Maria Regina has become a cold and miserly housekeeper for her eccentric father and now dissolute brother.

Gabryella blames this state of affairs on the failure of all of them to give priority to love, to recognize honestly that love could save them: Helusia leaves Romuald; Ludwik abandons Maria Regina because he blames her for the tragedies of Anna and Helusia; Maria Regina won't open herself to Ludwik's feelings because of her own sense of social and intellectual superiority; she also destroys her brother when he clearly desires a woman's love. Gabryella therefore reads Ludwik's memoirs as a warning against the sin of destroying love, clearly referring – initially at least – in this context to individual, sexual love:

> "Ludwik's memories were to be a warning, while he, and all those around him, committed one and the same crime […] they all sinned against love to a lesser or greater degree: some out of a surfeit of sentimental scruples, others because of some theory or out of indolence, still others out of virtue misunderstood. And so […] I have gleaned for myself the moral sense that no one should ever sin against love."(452)

Gabryella understands love as a "gift of God" which may happen only once in a lifetime: "It is after all a great gift of God, an angel that descends to you heart once a year perhaps, or once in a whole lifetime" (452). It is a force for good in individual lives, bringing health, strength and energy: "Love is strength, love fortifies, emboldens, arms. In this way, love empowers" (453). And given how impossible it is to tear oneself away emotionally from the object of one's love, its frustration can only mean demoralization. She lists some of the reasons commonly used to justify denying love: family considerations, career prospects (453).

The wider social benefits of allowing love to flourish are also obvious to Gabryella. Hence, she not only advocates the unhampered development of romantic-sexual relations between individuals (though she never openly promotes "free" love), irrespective of family considerations, social conventions and other restraints that normally try to control natural feelings of attraction (in the sexual context too, love appears to be regarded by Gabryella as God-given), she also believes that allowing people to be fulfilled and happy has a positive knock-on effect on society, that this serves not only the private but the public good. Echoing Kazimierz's image of lovers

"radiating" beyond themselves, Gabryella thus endorses the individual's moral obligation to society (i.e. love is not merely a personal, private matter) – and also notes what social problems can arise from the suppression of loving relationships. Although this is not actually stated, we could also argue for a gendered dimension to this assertion, since, according to mid-nineteenth century norms, it was usually women's feelings that were suppressed, in spite of the fact that women were conventionally considered to represent the domain of feeling; in the context of marriage they were frequently forced to accept to the choice of their fathers, made for financial reasons, often marrying men they did not love:

> "Someone who does not shine in the depths of their heart with the star of their own happiness, cannot radiate happiness around them; someone who is hungry, cannot nourish others; someone who is ignorant, cannot teach; someone who is powerless, cannot give support; someone who is dead, cannot create. Without love there would be no families, no master craftsmen, no heroes, no artists, but it is worse still when love has been denied in someone's past, because in later life they will be eccentrics, misers, stony-hearted sticklers for form […] drunks, inadequates, criminals or corpses!" (454)

We should note, however, that despite the positive presentation (in Ludwik's portrayal) of Kazimierz's views expressed earlier (Chapter XI) – and especially their association with Anna-Helusia, the views about love expressed by Gabryella are not exactly the same and do not necessarily consist in an unequivocal endorsement of them. Kazimierz gives precedence to the social, the collective, discounting individual relationships that do not "radiate" to the wider community. Here, Gabryella puts the emphasis on individual happiness in love (private, sexual love) as being a *precondition* for a healthy, happy and well-functioning society. Although she is less critical of him than of the others, she nevertheless concludes that Kazimierz also "sinned" against love, as he was too demanding and judgmental (451-452). On the whole, though, the views he expresses coincide with those of Żmichowska's first-level narrator Gabryella, and are supported in the text by the positive connotations given to the female/feminine ideal he admires and promotes: Anna-Helusia.

I would therefore suggest that the version of love I argued for in the frame of *Poganka* – a fusion or marriage of *eros* with *agape,* and not their opposition – is what

is also presented again in the "conclusion" (if we can speak of a "conclusion" to an unfinished text) to Gabryella-Żmichowska's second novel.

We should also note that the work nevertheless ends on a pessimistic note. Following the passage quoted above, Gabryella states she was going to end the novel at that point (454), but from her current vantage point (twelve-thirteen years on from the date of Ludwik's memoir – and hence from Żmichowska's original writing of the first twelve of the fourteen chapters) she reflects on how she has abandoned her idealism and sunk into sarcasm and misanthropy. This should be read, however, not so much as a denial of the religious, social and feminist viewpoint expressed in the novel, but as a reflection of Żmichowska's depressed state in the late 1850s, finding herself alone and abandoned by many former friends; she remembers the idealism of those friends with a mixture of irony, self-irony and idyllic nostalgia (this must be a reference to the Enthusiasts of the 1840s): "I knew the faces of those shepherds and shepherdesses bright with the joy of mutual affection; I would return to those meadows" (455). She also sees around her a world decidedly lacking in love, and ends on an ambiguous note, partly of disillusion, partly of hope, apparently inferring that the only salvation for society lies in following Christian principles, but at the same time distancing herself from any direct moral exhortations:

> "[…] above all they lack … But is it my duty to remind them of the simplest dogmas of the catechism? […] Do I necessarily have to say what they lack?"
> "No, don't say it; the fruits of someone else's morality rot too quickly; only the truth we have arrived at through our own searching sustains, enriches and enlightens us. No, don't tell them what they lack, let them search for it themselves…"
> "May God grant that they find it themselves! Amen." (458)

Helusia: Woman of the future and woman artist

Why is Helusia not allowed to live by her narrator? Does she only die because of unhappiness in love and loyalty to Anna? As we have seen, Helusia bears the weight of the ideological content of the novel: a woman of the future, endowed with a positive religious aura and sanction. She is also a gifted musician, with potential for a singing career. Neither promise, however, is fulfilled. Why?

On one level we could say that she was born ahead of her time, society was not ready for women like her: indeed, Maria Regina locates the time of her acceptance at the end of the twentieth century. It is very possible that Żmichowska intuited a time when women would be able to be as they naturally feel they are, or deliberately choose to be, unconstrained by prescribed normative behaviours and not expected to conform to stereotypical models. This goes beyond mere calls for "emancipation"; the model of Helusia has a deeper religious and ethical dimension that anticipates late twentieth-century feminist thinking, especially regarding the influence for the general, public good of particular female sensibilities.

On another level, Helusia's destruction is rooted in her own time. Speculations about the woman artist, her autonomy, her compromised social status should she live and work on her own, the complicated tensions in her private life if she is married or in a "free" relationship with a man, where "love," or more precisely the desires of her husband or lover, would dictate the course (or destruction) of her career: such speculations had been topical in European literature since the appearance of Germaine de Staël's novel *Corinne* (1807). The subject continued to be discussed in novels and short stories throughout the nineteenth century.[25] The tragic consequences of the incompatibility between an operatic career and a happy married life are eloquently portrayed, for example, in the short story "After the Concert" ("Po koncercie," 1886) by another Polish woman writer Ostoja (pseudonym of Józefa Sawicka, 1859-1920).

When Romuald takes over Helusia's life, he decides in a stereotypically chauvinist way to educate her as an artist and then bask in the glory of the fame he has created. Although he recognizes her God-given natural talent, he is determined to harness it according to his own notions of art (431-432) and mould her according to his plan. I already mentioned above how his own musical talent had been *cultivated*, thus reflecting interpretations of "culture" as being controlled and "masculine" in contrast to the uncontrolled "nature" of women. This is reflected for example in Romuald's determination to take Helusia to Italy (432), assuming that this will somehow benefit her talent, and thereby reflecting a common Romantic cliché that the

[25] I discuss this particular problem more fully in my Postscriptum comparing Żmichowska and George Eliot: "Życiorysy równoległe: Narcyza Żmichowska (1819-1876) i George Eliot (1819-1880)" in Phillips, 2008, pp. 496-550. For an English-language, modified version, see Ursula Phillips, 2007, "Women's Lives and Everyday Experience in Narcyza Żmichowska (1819-1876) and George Eliot (1819-1880)" in *Codzienność w literaturze XIX (i XX) wieku. Od Adalberta Stifter do współczesności,* ed. Aneta Mazur and Grażyna Borkowska, Opole, pp. 305-333. We might also note, though it is not given great prominence in the novel, that Maria Regina is also an artist (a painter).

superior art of the Classical past, of the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation, as well as the beauty of the Italian landscape, could provide better inspiration than the native environment. Zygmunt Korczyński in Eliza Orzeszkowa's novel *Nad Niemnem* (On the Banks of the Niemen River, 1888) similarly deceives himself with this delusion, thus excusing his lack of productivity at home.

What Helusia's talent needs, however, is not a man's decision about what is best for it, but inspiration and nourishment from her everyday, native environment: "Her strange nature needed the constant inspiration of the most trivial details" (440). Ludwik intuits what Romuald cannot: that she is not a Romantic dreamer or day-dreamer (marzycielka), in contrast to her lover who attaches importance to the alleged superiority of art over everyday concerns. On the contrary, she is rooted in the practical, concrete concerns of everyday existence as well as in the *present* moment, as befits her nature. Finally, then, Helusia anticipates an unsentimental, hard-headed, twenty-first-century notion of femininity:

> "No, Helusia was not a dreamer, though I [Ludwik] had very much feared this for her; Helusia knew no empty, no completely idle moments: her thought was always filled with some solid idea that could be expressed in words; her heart always beat with a sure and, what one might call, powerful feeling. Thus she gathered both memories and observations along the way, but mostly those that others had not picked up, while she avoided those that might go to everyone's head. What dominated her whole personality, though, was her ability – if I may put it like this – to drown, immerse herself in the present, in her work of the moment, in impressions experienced in the present moment." (441)

Helusia – both as an individual (female) human being and as a model of female existence, located in the material, everyday experience of her historical moment – cannot survive in any real or practical sense in the socio-cultural norms and conditions that prevail at the time she lives. Her possible "salvation" as an artist, her God-given talent, comes to nothing when it is forced to adjust itself to the prevalent "male" values of her lover. Within Gabryella's narrative then she has to meet her death, because she has nowhere else to go.