

I am engaged in a serious operation, devoted to it exclusively, and for that reason I am released from the reproach of shirking my social duties. In the Quartier Latin, when bells ring for the New Year 1900, I am the one who walks uphill on rue Cujas. A gloved hand is linked to my arm and the gas hisses in the streetlamps. Her flesh which has turned to dust is as desirable to me as it was to that other man and if I touch her in my dream she does not even mention that she has died long ago. On the verge of a great discovery I almost penetrate the secret of the Particular transforming itself into the General and of the General transforming itself into the Particular. I endow with a philosophical meaning the moment when I helped her to undo the hooks of her corset.

INSCRIPT

"She was fond of tailored dresses from Vienna, very modest but rustling with linings made of iridescent taffeta; she would carry a rarely used lorgnon on a long chain interspersed with tiny pearls, and a bracelet with pendants. Her movements were slow and somewhat affected, she offered her hand to be kissed with a studied gesture, probably under her calm she was concealing the timidity characteristic of her whole family. Her jewelry, cigarette case, and perfume bore the stamp of an individual and fastidious taste. Her literary preferences were rather revolutionary and progressive. Much more vividly and sincerely than did Lela, she took an interest in her reading but in fact books were for her accessories to her dress, like a hat or an umbrella. Aunt Isia was the first to introduce Doroszewicze to the fashionable Tetmajer, then she brought the photographs of Ghirlandaio's and Botticelli's paintings from Italy and talked

about the school of the early Renaissance, finally she took a liking to Przybyszewski and his style, and would often say: 'Do you want white peacocks?—I will give you white peacocks. Do you want crimson amethysts?—I will give you crimson amethysts.'"

—JANINA ŻÓTTOWSKA,
Other Times, Other People (Inne czasy, inni ludzie)

Rustling taffetas. At sunset in a park by the Prypet River.
The party sets out for a walk on a path lined with flowers.
The fragrance of nicotianas, phlox, and resedas.
Great silence, the empty expanse of rising waters.
Meanwhile the servants bring in lamps, set the table for supper.
And the dining room windows lit the agaves on the lawn.

Lela, Marishka, Sophineta! Lenia, Stenia, Isia, Lilka!
Is it fair that I will never talk with you
In a language not disguised by etiquette
As less than language and not reduced to table chatter
But austere and precise like a thought
That attempts to embrace the poor lives of beings?

I walk about. No longer human. In a hunting outfit.
Visiting our thick forests and the houses and manors.
Cold borscht is served and I am abstracted
With disturbing questions from the end of my century,
Mainly regarding the truth, where does it come from, where is it?
Mum, I was eating chicken with cucumber salad.