

Title: Wokulski's Muse: The Social, the Mind and Reaching the Limit of What Can Happen in Prus's *Lalka*

Author: Marta Napiorkowska, University of Chicago

In "Wokulski's Muse" I bring together the historical discourse on the Muse and the Romantic discourse on Sublimity opposed to Beauty to demonstrate that Wokulski's obsession with Izabela is due less to any kind of love within a discourse of the Beautiful (as has hereto been assumed) but rather more to a repetitious compulsion to account for an unaccountable experience of sublimity in the social sphere.

In its conclusion this paper proposes an original interpretation of Wokulski's behavior with a view to shedding light on individual experience of events that lie outside, and possibly beyond, the rational mind's ability to answer for them. In such cases, as in Wokulski's case, the event is internalized and therefore experienced as an internal phenomenon: in Wokulski's case, for example, as a failure of the rational, a weakness in the self. But as can be gleaned from the novel, this event rather occurs first *to* the person, rather than *in* the person, after which a person applies what internal resources he has available to take hold of the event, as against being taken hold of by it. Failure to account for the experience is not due to individual inability to make sense of complexity. Rather, it is due to the reaching of a limit beyond which logic (loosely understood) – the basis of which is the everyday experience of what *can* happen – cannot reach, regarding an event that cannot be doubted. In other words, his is an experience of a breach of the real.

The light this paper sheds on Wokulski's troubles is less important due to its originality (there will always be original interpretations) and more important in its work to refocus attention on the mind's experience of irreducible complexity of particulars potential in individual experience – within which lies the inexplicable causal presence of something – using literature as data.