

ski, Słonimski—and almost every critic who wrote about him. Of the legion of critics who derided Witkacy's theory of Pure Form, only Tadeusz Peiper, the Polish T. S. Eliot-in-waiting, credited his countryman with originality but accused him of lacking practicability. Even Boy, who befriended the painter-dramatist, voiced his doubts concerning Witkacy's determination to fight for his theories at the expense of befuddling his creative works. But Witkacy was determined.

Witkacy made it a point of separating "living nonsense" from "formal sense," that is, he tried "to create a formal construction." Thus, characters who commit suicide or are killed in the second act reappear in the final act. To effect Pure Form it was necessary to follow Witkacy's advice. Everything had to be coordinated, even the acting style; ensemble work was necessary. But realistic acting had no place in his theater: the actor had to rely on "his own creative intuition" in order to fulfill the demands set by the author. The overall effect was of primary importance; Witkacy did not want the actors to create a feeling of reliving an emotion. Improvisation was anathema. Witkacy's theory of acting resembled Gordon Craig's ideas but went beyond the latter's concept of actors as supermarionettes. Thus Pure Form, as Witkacy envisioned it, encompassed all aspects of a work, be it drama, poetry, or painting.

Another area still to be explored is Witkacy's experiences in Russia. How did Tairov, Meyerhold, Mayakovsky, or Komissazhevskaja affect him? It is difficult to believe that Witkacy was not involved in the intellectual climate of Moscow and Leningrad. What was it that created the atmosphere for Witkacy to wish for "a real temple for reliving pure metaphysical feelings"? Was it the October Revolution?

For now, however, we must be content with Witkacy's own theoretical essays, rebuttals to critics, and creative works (novels, plays, paintings, scene designs, and so forth). These have yet to be properly analyzed and appreciated. Degler has provided critics and students with an opportunity to evaluate Witkacy's pronouncements for themselves. It is difficult to say which are more enjoyable to read—Witkacy's creative works or his essays. In both he speaks as though he were alive.

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INSATIABILITY: A NOVEL IN TWO PARTS. By *Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz*.

Translated and with an introduction and commentary by *Louis Iribarne*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977. xlvi, 447 pp. \$15.00.

A "dystopia" set in the not too distant future (perhaps the twentieth or twenty-first century?), *Insatiability* (written in 1927 and published in 1930) describes a world which has yielded to regressive impulses. Toward the end of the book, individualism has given way to collectivism, and a society has emerged in which "each could do as he pleased, as long as he went about it in a prescribed manner." These changes are introduced into Europe by the Chinese whose aim is "to destroy everything first, then create a new man and rid the world of the poison of the white race." They succeed by means of their superior organization, their religion of "Djevanism" (which seeps through to central and western Europe long before the actual military conquest takes place), and, finally, by force. Political developments have been caused by the rise of China and the upsurge of interest in drugs and in Eastern mysticism. The discipline through terror which prevails in the Chinese army is strangely reminiscent of Stalin's way of dealing with those subordinates who happened to have made a mistake.

This futuristic scenario is heavily peppered with sex. A good part of the book is devoted to the love affair between Zipcio, a nineteen-year-old Polish cadet, and the Russian-born and fortyish Princess di Ticonderoga, who guides the young man through

territories hitherto unfamiliar to him. Zipcio's sexual and spiritual education is further advanced by one Percy Bestialskaya and, finally, by his wife Eliza.

Above all, however, *Insatiability* is an orgy of words. Unlike such writers as Hemingway, or Mrozek and Herbert in Poland, Witkiewicz does not ration his words but hurls them out by battalions in a mass of lengthy clauses, adjectives, adverbs, and neologisms. His puns and quips in six languages, and his feel for the Russian language in particular (he was an officer in the Life Guard of Tsar Nicholas II before the Revolution), are the minor delights of this novel. It was a major feat to find English renditions of Witkiewicz's convoluted sentences and anthroponyms, to invent English neologisms as replacements for the Polish ones, and to do it fairly consistently throughout some four hundred pages. Credit for all this goes to Professor Louis Iribarne, who has also supplied an informative and readable introduction to Witkiewicz's life and works.

Altogether, this is not a typical novel by the standards of the 1920s (or of the 1970s), but a fascinating one.

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DIE ČECHISCHE MODERNE IM FRÜHWERK ŠALDA: ZUR SYNCHRON-
EN DARSTELLUNG EINER EPOCHENSCHWELLE. By *Sigrun Biel-*
feldt. Forum Slavicum, vol. 31. Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975. 131 pp.
DM 38, paper.

This is an able treatise on a narrow topic: the early work of F. X. Šalda (1867–1937), the great Czech critic. In 1892, Šalda wrote an article, "Synthetism in the New Art," that opened entirely new vistas to Czech criticism, which had previously been parochial or professorial. Sigrun Bielfeldt concentrates on this article, analyzing it carefully as an exposition of a Symbolist creed (which, however, is distinguished from any specific French group) and as an attempt at a definition of modernism. She pays proper attention to the obvious French and German sources of Šalda's views: the term "Synthetism" comes from a forgotten book by Charles Morice, *La Littérature de tout à l'heure* (1889). The somewhat incongruous concern for the psychological and social effect of literature is derived from Émile Hennequin's *Critique scientifique* (1888), a book Šalda later translated and never ceased to propagate, even to his students at the University of Prague in the 1920s. The author seems to overrate the German affiliations: Hegel, for instance, is quoted (and grossly misinterpreted) thirdhand from Edouard Rod via the Italian, Vittorio Pica. She does not see the showing off with recondite references and the haphazard eclecticism of a young man of twenty-five.

Her substantial analysis of Šalda's paper and of some polemical Letters to the Editor and other related texts is introduced by reflections on the crisis of literary history, on Czech structuralism, Russian formalism, and German *Rezeptionsästhetik*, which amount to little more than strings of quotations with confessions of embarrassment at the difficulty of any solution, and are followed by a minute examination of the vocabulary of Šalda's reviews of several contemporary Czech poets. Long unreadable lists of adjectives are a tribute to German (and not only German) requirements of "exactness" for a Ph.D. dissertation. The center of the book—the straightforward analysis of Šalda's position in his time with proven methods of literary and intellectual history—could have stood alone and is only obscured by mostly irrelevant methodological ruminations and a display of stylistic pedantries.

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