



# Insatiability

*Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, Louis Iribarne (Translator)*

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**Insatiability** Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz , Louis Iribarne (Translator)

This novel, the author's masterpiece, is one of the greatest expressions ever of the tortured intersection of political and personal destinies in Eastern Europe. Futuristic, experimental, and remarkably prophetic, the book traces the adventures of a young Pole whose own fate parallels the collapse of Western civilization following a Chinese communist invasion from the East. Written in 1927, Witkiewicz's novel presages the horrifying anti-utopian society that would become a reality for millions of Eastern Europeans in the late 1930s. *Insatiability* succeeds in conveying the catastrophic mood of that time - its malaise, its desires, its terrifying glimpse of the future.

## Insatiability Details

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Author : Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz , Louis Iribarne (Translator)

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## From Reader Review Insatiability for online ebook

### Andrew says

Full of schizophrenic wordplay, dense psychologic study, sex, cults, war and modernism's fascination with the subconscious, alienation and paranoia. A tricky but marvelous read; Witkiewicz crams the book with luscious insights. For fans of Joyce and Gomborowicz.

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### Erma Odrach says

This futuristic, expressionistic novel follows a young Pole, Genezip Kapen, as Western civilization collapses and a Chinese communist invasion takes place. Published in 1927, it's interesting and far ahead of its time. It got me interested in Witold Gombrowicz.

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### Οδυσσεύας Μουζήλης says

Π?γα να το φ?ω εγ? και μ' ?φαγε εκε?νο! :p

Ορεκτικ?: <https://pepperlines.blogspot.gr/2018/...>

και

κυρ?ως: <https://pepperlines.blogspot.gr/2018/...>

Υ.Γ. Read.... τουλ?χιστον ?να μ?ρος του! Η βαθμολογ?α αντιστοιχε? μ?νο για αυτ? το μ?ρος.

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### Jan-Maat says

This is a book that deserves to be better known. It's the kind of thing that all readers of 1984 and Brave New World would appreciate. I managed to read this only because I found a neglected copy in the university library when I was a student when I ought to have been looking for other things but in my defence it was recommended by the Rough guide to Poland and since at the time I was due to go to Torun for a Summer school it seemed a good idea to read a book which would be utterly unhelpful with regard to my then immediate future.

The book has a great fin-de-siecle atmosphere, fantastical and comical by turns, set in an alternative semi-fantastical world. Western Europe is obviously hopelessly decadent, Russia a mass of petty states slowly being conquered by an advancing Asiatic Empire. Poland the single bulwark of order and of European values, as a strange esoteric drug culture featuring drugs which offer hallucinogenic experiences that can be tailored to the individual taking them sweeps in from the East. But never fear - a Marshal Pilsudski figure is intent on saving Poland, in part by ever increasing the proportion of officers in the Polish Army until there are at least ten officers for every soldier. Thinking of this book it feels far more prescient now than it was at

the time when it was written. One could draw a direct line from Witkiewicz's playfulness to the current Law and Justice administration, I'm not sure if that is mildly scary or just is to make an obvious point about the deeper currents in our cultures. Perhaps it has been a strand in Polish thinking to see themselves as the bulwark of Europe since, well forever, as on the otherside of the forest Russia begins (except when Lithuania intervenes). I imagine the spiritual drug culture in this book owes as much to Theosophy as to anything else yet it also plugs into the long standing fascination in Europe for the spiritual life of Asia, it remains ever green even if the Chinese take over promises to be moderately more subtle nowadays than by the sword. I'd read this again if I could find a copy.

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## **Vittorio Ducoli says**

### **Un capolavoro semisconosciuto**

Un grande libro! L'educazione alla vita del giovane Genezyp Kapen in un mondo sull'orlo della catastrofe, tra comunisti cinesi che stanno conquistandolo e la resistenza di una Polonia dominata dal dittatore Kocmoluchowicz. Tutto il genio tormentato di Witkiewicz emerge in una scrittura potente ed in una straordinaria capacità immaginativa. Poco dopo non resterà che il suicidio di fronte alla Polonia invasa da due fronti.

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## **Dan Humphrey says**

A mad, mad book, but worth it.

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## **Vit Babenco says**

**Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz** had an absolutely original mentality and as a result there is an absolutely original absurdist dystopia *Insatiability*.

He played fiendishly, brutally, savagely, inhumanly, sadistically, extracting his listeners' entrails and wallowing in them the way Gilles de Rais was said to have done with his victims, gorging on the metaphysical pain of these human wrecks, rescuing them from the quotidian and catapulting them into a boundless eschatological awe and wonder. This was art, not the sort of piano-thumping performed by blasé virtuosi or intellectual designers of new sensual thrills for hysterical females.

And this is exactly the way **Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz** writes – he turns his narration into a firework of schizoid images with which he literally extracts his readers' entrails...

In the first part of the novel, *The Awakening* the hero physiologically, sensually, mentally and metaphysically wakes up to the surrounding reality...

The fact remained: *everything is*. This was not the banal truism it seemed. A subconscious,

purely sensual ontology, animistic in the main, is nothing compared to that first glimmering of a conceptual ontology, to that first general existential perception. Until now, the mere fact of his own being had not impressed him. Now, for the first time, he could grasp its sheer impenetrability. His distant childhood loomed up in his innocent imagination like some golden and enchanted world — a world of blissful, irretrievable days, shimmering in a dust of unearthly longing...

The second part *Insanity* is the story of the total madness: mental, sexual, metaphysical and historical...

Terrible rumors were making the rounds. Rank gossip, hatched from the darkest, mustiest skulls and the most putrescent guts (in place of withered-up “hearts”), had materialized, ripened, and oozed into hard reality: in the flurry of aperitifs and hors d’oeuvres; in this atmosphere of desperate and suicidal gluttony, dipsomania, and debauchery; in step with the mesmerizing sounds produced by a fatally cloacal (and no longer simply honky-tonk) music capable of grinding everything and everyone into mindless crap. “Grand Ole Cunt” and “Peewee Prick” were wailing away on their hypersaxophones, tremolos, plectrums, gargantuafarts, and cymbaltingles, accompanied by a triple organo-piano...

In *Insatiability* **Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz** managed to catch all the craze of the time and all its trends: freudianism, Stalinism, militarism, avant-gardism, free love, jazz, cocaine... If one can’t achieve happiness one turns to its ideological or chemical substitutes and destroys oneself completely.

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## **Nicholaus Patnaude says**

If I could only take one book to an island...

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## **lisa\_emily says**

It is a difficult book to explain. It fits within the strange and perverse literary universe, between Lautréamont's *Songs of Maldoror* and Alfred Jarry's *Days & Nights*. Complicated, perverse and at times unwieldy, I was mesmerized and overwhelmed, simultaneously. I vacillated between being unable to put the book down, to being incapable of reading another sentence; but I finished it.

Written in a language that is fantastic and punful, even in translation, with grotesque and unreal characters; it has a basic story plot: a coming of age story for the main character, Genezip Kapen, and his initiation into the sexuality. His initial sexual, romantic relationship (and involvement with a group of artistic sadists) eventually corrupts him and he loses his mind. Genezip, or Zip, runs off to join the military and then has a few more mind-loosening romances, which he ends up committing and participating in some unsavory acts. Zip occupies an unsettling world, where Europe is under threat of Communist China's takeover, and Poland is embroiled in war with China.

Overall, *Insatiability* is a difficult novel to write about, because it spans so many ideas that it would take another book to explain it all. It doesn't deal with the development of characters, rather, the characters- like

Zip, are an unfolding of a reaction. What happens when a young, freedom seeker comes into contact with decadent, artistic ideas, unfettered sexuality, and war? It is as though Witkiewicz decided to conduct an experiment in a future world where values and intimacy and been replaced by lust and neurosis, and the novel became the document. Witkiewicz wrote *Insatiability* during the two world wars; the erosion of idealism and the political anxiety for the future are present. Witkiewicz throws his combating constructs of art, politics, and individuality into the word mix which make up this novel. A painter, playwright, philosopher, he used his novels as a hulking receptacle where these raucous conceits run amok.

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### **Mieczyslaw Kasprzyk says**

I love Witkiewicz as an artist. His drawings are expressive and have a touch of insanity about them. I had also read about this book and gone to so much trouble trying to get hold of it so, you can imagine, I was really looking forward to reading this one...

Oh dear! Perhaps it's my age.

I found this book difficult to get into but was prepared to give it a go... I struggled. It starts as a pseudo-intellectual self-analysis of adolescent sexual desires and religious belief, of relationships with parents and friends. A tantalising reference to war and communist invasion is thrown in but most of that first chapter, and indeed the one that follows (which is set in an aristocratic party) the words just begin to merge and I found contemplating my navel much more stimulating. Pompous words and ideas just roll off in some sort of autonomous writing experiment... I reall did lose the will to live!

Life is too short!

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### **SurferRosa says**

Senza starci troppo a pensare, ecco uno sconnesso collage composto da alcuni passi del libro in questione annotati durante la lettura e le mie note ricopiate da tre foglietti vergati sotto l'ombrellone. Senza alcun tentativo di conferire coerenza all'insieme.

Cominciamo con un dato di fatto: non c'è dubbio che sia un brutto libro.

Verboso fino all'eccesso, un'uso degli aggettivi inutile e superfluo, indifendibile, ai limiti del e oltre il ridicolo, con ricorrenti voluttuoso, diabolico, infernale, perverso, sudicio, schifoso, coprofagico, terribile, tremendo, ributtante.

Una cosa insopportabile.

Metafore raccapriccianti, similitudini il cui termine di paragone viene spesso individuato nel corpo (preferibilmente nella "carogna"), o in una sua parte (o frattaglia), di un uomo o di un animale (in stato di decomposizione, of course).

Romanzo a tesi, roman philosophique, parodia di romanzo? Di certo è sconcertante. E intellettualistico. Il suo essere un romanzo è del tutto pretestuoso: è uno zibaldone di pensieri sparsi, spesso inconcludenti, con divagazioni a tema filosofico (i riferimenti più evidenti sono Freud, Bergson (massacrato e ridicolizzato), Nietzsche, Einstein, Spengler), sociologico e politico, pagine ineguali e provvisorie che sembrano appunti. L'impronta che mi è parsa più evidente è quella decadente. Il suo essere distopico è risolto nella sfera politico-militare, dove vediamo un occidente (USA inclusi) interamente bolscevizzato-fordizzato-fascista (ebbene sì, proprio così) ad eccezione dell'oasi polacca che fungerà da antemurale al dilagare del comunismo

cinese. Le ragioni di questa scelta vanno ricercate nell'esigenza di creare un'atmosfera da “fine di un'epoca”, di crollo imminente di civiltà (il libro è stato scritto nel 1927).

Il secondo dato di fatto: questo brutto romanzo è interessante. A tratti molto interessante.

Il sentimento di fine di un'epoca di cui ho appena detto - e la consapevolezza che quell'epoca era un frivolo attimo di stasi tra i due cataclismi – è forte.

L'autore sente il collasso ultimo della società dell'individuo, coglie l'automatizzazione e la massificazione che seguiranno. Ci rende una parodia grottesca della sua epoca, manifesta il proprio disgusto per la società che gli è contemporanea attraverso personaggi caricaturali ma molto vivi.

E' il tramonto dell'occidente. Capitano pagine irresistibili in cui *tra vodkine e antipastini, in un'atmosfera di crapule disperate, da suicidio, dove la “gran fregna” e “il piccolo cazzereellino” ululano, dove le settiche batterie sociali fanno imputridire la vita sotto un'apparenza di vigore giovanile, di gioia di vivere e di banale buonumore alla Chesterton*, una principessa dica all'artista di turno: *“Lei ha bisogno di farsi un clistere psichico di olio di girasole spirituale: come quei morti di fame nei dintorni del Polo. Lei è pieno di coproliti esistenziali.*

E c'era pure qualcuno che *si stava insessuando con le psycoculottes sbottonate.*

Vi è una vera e propria ossessione per il sesso, nella chiave di lettura sesso-potere. La questione è affrontata in maniera abissale, davvero sviscerata e sbudellata. Femmes fatales in grado di ridurre l'uomo ad un semplice fallo eretto decerebrato. E' affrontato spietatamente anche il decadimento fisico, la vecchiaia, ed in questo senso il lavoro di autori contemporanei (mi riferisco esplicitamente a Houellebecq) sul tema esce assai ridimensionato fino a risultare del tutto superfluo se non ridicolo.

*Non c'era niente al di là di una grande sporcizia; eppure si stava bene.*  
Alè.

Genezyp, il protagonista, è considerato dall'autore un cretino, finchè non diventa un “bestione automatizzato”. In verità ogni personaggio è trattato con disgusto e disprezzo da Witkiewicz.

Le esperienze compiute da Zypcio (nomignolo di Genezyp) non fanno altro che demolire idee e convinzioni, punti fermi, credenze del suo passato. Ogni nuova esperienza va a scapito – in modo definitivo – del suo passato, lo cancella, annientando il vecchio Genezyp e sostituendolo con uno nuovo. Buona parte della narrazione è occupata da questo nuovo essere che nasce e cresce all'interno del protagonista fino a sostituirlo.

Ferito a una gamba durante un'azione militare, Zypcio prende coscienza della realtà. Si domanda *chi mai l'avrebbe giudicato, chi lo avrebbe remunerato? Nessuno. Tutt'al più qualcuno, scavalcando frettolosamente il suo corpo, ci avrebbe sputato sopra.*

L'amore di Genezyp si fonda sull'annientamento dell'altro, sulla possibilità di divorare l'oggetto medesimo dell'amore. Ciò spiega la sua aspirazione a isolarsi dal mondo, che trova il supremo appagamento (la sazietà) nel divorare la preda e annientarla.

Ma tutto arriva sempre ad essere noia e banalità, le alte aspirazioni sono frustrate dall'esistenza quotidiana. L'insaziabilità del titolo trova il suo milieu ideale nel sesso e nella droga e l'unico sbocco possibile è la follia, la schizofrenia.

Le stelline? eh... le stelline, diciamo che è un bruttissimo libro da 5 stelle.

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## Dariusz Nawojczyk says

This is 5/5. I would not remove any single word from this book. If you found yourself as a person truly disgusted by the present times with its power of mediocrity, if you truly crave for a man and not a society, and finally if you truly lust for some pure art, without any utilitarianism - yeah, just go for it.

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## Howard says

This has to be one of the most remarkable books I have ever read. It was written by, predominantly artist and playwright, Polish Witkiewicz in 1929 (who sadly committed suicide as Russia invaded Poland in 1939). I must, at the outset warn you of the reasons why you might not like this book first, because if you can overcome the hurdles, what awaits is quite astounding.

Ok the problems with this book are: It has the smallest and most densely packed font I have ever seen in a novel and then it has many parts in the story under 'Information' of even smaller text. This means there are about 670 words per page – I think the industry standard is nearer 250 words or so? – this means the 410 pages is really nearer 1100 pages – quite an undertaking! Your eyes are physically challenged. The next is that the story is completely unapologetic about drug use, the C word, some brutal sex and violence against women – though not graphic or gratuitous in a modern 'x-rated sense' for its time and now it is very unambiguous and quite adult. A final challenge is the frequent use of difficult, long and obscure words mixed with a very condensed, erudite, innovative, complex and challenging writing style – it does get easier but, mainly in the first half, you may have to refer to a dictionary or philosopher's manual.

Ok ready. This is the remarkable and stunning mix of Emile Zola's earthy realism (e.g. Nana), the density of any classic Russian revolutionary novel (War and Peace), the erudition and character development of any classic English period novel (Middlemarch), the off-the-wall philosophy of Nietzsche (Thus Spake Zarathustra), the future-thinking of Philip Dick (Man in the High Castle), the drug trip of Ageyev (Novel with Cocaine), the existentialism of Sartre, the innovation and its own unique style as of Joyce (Ulysses), some erotic notes of Anaïs Nin, and finally (and actually the most important) the clever story telling of G G Marquez (General in his Labyrinth). Impossible you think! Wrong - read this book. {It even has my most obscure requirement – a direct reference/allusion to a work by Emile Zola}.

Let me explain only some of the basic story to illustrate:

Genezip is a 19 year old adolescent virgin embarking on life in aristocratic Poland; at a time when the West is Bolshevik, Russian is soon to fall to the invading Chinese horde and a new religion inspired by a mind expanding drug is growing in the country. Classic religion is ignored while people take hard drugs; the elite and intellectual class appear sexually degenerate. After an introduction to masturbation by his cousin, gay sex by avant-garde Composer (and cripple) Hardonne (pun intended?) – he meets aged Princess Irina Vsevolodovna (about 50 or so) and frustratingly becomes her new and final lover. Catholic Prince Basil, writer Sturfan Abnol and Professor Bends provide all sorts of intellectual discourse and ideas, whilst Genezip deals with family issues like his father's death, his mother's lover, his younger sister entering the theatre. At the same time, elusive Sloboluchowicz is in command of the Polish forces, he has a classic courtesan Persy. Why does the 'Syndicate', a clandestine anti-government group, dislike the General? What is the destiny of Genezip and Poland? How do the "Insatiability's" of drugs, religion, history, sex,



perversion, war, revolution, incest, adultery, insanity, power and murder lead to the riveting and thought provoking ending.

I've always said "There are too many books in the world to re-read any", despite having read so many of the World's undoubted 'Best'; I'm wrong – one day I will re-read this truly amazing and brilliant book.

There are limitless ideas of prose, thought and turns of phrase; this has to be the book for which I found the most stunning quotes, here's some:

"That's not religion anymore. Some of them know this, yet knowingly poison themselves with their own flaccidity of spirit, their unwillingness to seek out the truth, and their fear of the absurd which sooner or later every definitive truth reveals if it's not hermetically sealed by means of all sorts of exceptions and qualifications"

"It was as if a peal of thunder from man's subterranean guts hand banged against the sky – not an earthly sky, but a cosmic sky of nothingness – that was truly infinite and vacuous and whence, originating from metaphysical storm clouds, it plummeted down to the very bottom of that creeping, flaming, flattened-out, barren mystery. The beams of the world trembled; in the distance radiated the solace of death, transformed into the peaceful sleep of a mysterious deity broken on the wheel of superdivine tortures; the immediate apperception of eternity."

"The sexual relations of such a couple must have been an insufferable agony, similar to that acute malaise of the skin that often accompanies influenza, to that boredom prevailing in the parlour filled with sleazy guests – but raised to an incalculable power, to a prisoner's abject despair, to the powerful longing of a dog on a leash watching other dogs frolic in freedom"

"The apparent aimlessness of his postgraduate vision of the future, a vestige of his undergraduate days, contracted now into the electable sameness of everything. Gone now were all those non-existent days full of events and expectations, those evenings spent in anticipation of a predestined Fate, of a life with no exit and an enigmatic premature death – a living death, even.

"the world is not an absurdity. But it's not an absurdity, despite all your doubts – which tells me more about your ignorance than your religion does – and the reason why it isn't is because logic is possible. There's your proof. The sense of an ideal world whose miserable function is nothing but a limited (and not absolute) rationality is far more important than whether some little boob can endure live or not"

"To live as though existence were rational, being all the while conscious of its irrationality - that's a little more respectable, something between suicide and bestiality"

"He could feel her swimming about inside him, acquiring an invincible power and a kind of satanic, supermundane charm that pierced his adolescent soul with lacerating pain of life somehow incomplete. With all this witchcraft, how utterly unimportant were all those wrinkles....Dreams, statues, the paradise of Mohammed... what were all these in comparison to that pageantry of flesh.

"In every realm the positive value of individual extravagances has become depleted: only in madness can man's most intrinsic life be fulfilled: only in perversity whose boundaries are primordial chaos can truly creative art be realised. Philosophy has abdicated"

“the newspapers, that truly abominable ‘press’ of minds that was daily grinding millions of people into a brainless marmalade suitable for the prevailing political fiction”

“An odour redolent of sexual affliction merged with the sultry humidity of a drizzly and melancholy spring evening. He was hopelessly overcome with unmitigated despair”

PS

just in case you were wondering here is a selection of words the author uses in the first 50 pages or so:

hamadryad, autoerotic, sublimation, ontology, animistic, illumined, ambivalence, immutability, perturbations, imperceptibility, intralevelers, intraductible, intramissible, dualism, perfidiousness, asymptotically, expiation, pornographic, trichinae, pseudoclassical, self-humiliation, objectivism, debauchery, over-intellectualized, omniscience, lugubrious, multifarious, pseudopalatine, erotomania, apotransformine, quasi-mechanized, prostration, addict-adepts, transcendental, hypocritical, nonqualitative, galimatias, phantasmagoria, magnanimity, disingenuous, hyperrealist, plenitude, nondimensional, solidification, insouciance, intoxication, ineffable, monotonous, infinitude, portentous, incarnation, improvisation, unparalleled, machinations, profundity, asceticism, antithesis, debauchery, transfinite, distillation, dissonance, thematics, abstruseness, autochthonous, syndicalism, preordained, gargantuan, refulgence, masturbation, ubiquitous, improvisational, hyperultrasophisticated, osmotic, somnolent, megalomaniac.

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## **Megha says**

It is inevitable for a work of literature to be infused with its author's personality in multiple ways, not the least of which are their intellectual and artistic dispositions. Quite early on while reading *Insatiability*, I caught my thoughts going back to Mervyn Peake. Peake's vivid and visual writing had greatly charmed me in *Titus Groan*. A look at Witkeiwicz's wikipedia page informed me that he too, like Peake, had been a painter. His writing undoubtedly has a visual characteristic as well. Peake had used his visual writing to draw striking scene descriptions and conveying the atmosphere of a setting. Witkeiwicz uses his visual style to not only portray the scene, but, to some extent, while describing the thoughts of the characters as well. Like the very first brush stroke on a blank canvas full of possibilities, you will see a tiny thought bubble germinate in a character's mind. It will then slowly and deliberately begin to flourish, and some recognizable forms and structures will begin to appear. And soon Rome would have been built where there had only been a barren canvas several sentences ago. I don't have a copy at hand at the moment to quote any excerpts, but here is one of Witkeiwicz's self-portraits:

## **Paintings by Authors:**

When great authors pick up the brush.

A brief survey of famous writers who also made art.

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## **J.M. Hushour says**

There is something indelicately, yet refreshingly, agonizing to re-reading something that you have personally regarded as a pinnacle of literature since your early 20s, only to find that this "masterpiece" that you have, over the decades, recommended blindly to countless associates, peers, and potential sexual partners, is just downright fucking terrible.

That it is Witkiewicz that we're talking about, though, somehow makes it all better. It makes perfect sense to find that the crowning prose achievement of the consummate clown, social abberation, drug addict, anthropologist-fucking, and malevolent absurdist Witkiewicz is, indeed, a colossal mountain of steaming, Tatan donkey shit.

Before I go on, I must observe that I have an immense amount of respect and admiration for Witkiewicz as one of those sublime fellow idiots who makes pretensions to the Arts (always capitalized). His portraiture work, his photography and his paintings, not to speak of his dramatic output, are outstanding achievements of one of his purest, dearly held notions--that the individual not drown in the collective "anthillism" that he saw dogging the aesthetic world, and the rest of society, for that matter. He is unique, alone, and alien. Like many of his ilk (I can easily compare him to say, Flann O'Brien or Thomas Pynchon off the top of my head), he was an insufferable loner and impossible to classify. He was the avant-garde of the avant-garde, the tip o' the wink at brothel's door, the brown turtle's nose, and so on. His long-held aesthetic principle of Pure Form chose form over content as the artist's guiding principle, as exemplified in his focus on dramatic works and the symbolism of conveyance and performance rather than any obvious, salient meaning to the text itself, and in his portraiture, in which intense close-ups and framings of his subjects focus more on capturing poise and innate intensity rather than a theme or subject (W. was known to collect pictures of philosophers so he could study their physique as well as their thought).

Abandoning his own aesthetic principles a good way into his artistic career, he turned to a mockery of commercial portraiture and wrote much of his prose stuff during this period. In many ways, "Insatiability" represents a complete turning-over of the idea of Pure Form on its head, where content is everything, to the exclusion of any sort of formal aesthetic. This only partly explains why the novel is not very good. The prose is dense and thick, with little narrative progression and that which there is, is largely uninteresting. The plot advances in fits and starts: a future, dystopian Europe prepares for the onslaught of a Chinese army, a new Mongol invasion, conquering Eurasia. Poland is the bulwark against the forces and the few main characters get involved in the coming conflict. The Chinese bring in their stead, a drug called Murti Bing, basically ingestible enlightenment which placates one and nullifies resistance to their conquest.

This all sounds well and good, except most of the "novel" has little to do with that all-too-brief but sufficient description. Instead, what we have is a giant mess of philosophical and pseudo-political polemics and dialogues that veers back and forth between a kind of sexually-flavored would-be utopianism, sprinkled with sado-masochistic tendencies, and experiments with homosexuality and strange ontological confusions which bring in everything from Husserl to...well, I don't know what. If there was some way to streamline or compartmentalize these wayward strands of thought, it might make for a more interesting read, but Witkiewicz really went balls-to-the-wall to try and revamp the novel. What he ended up with was a gross exaggeration of the 19th century spiritual epic, a kind of hideously swollen Dostoevskyan miasma, impenetrable and with little of note. The erotic sections, and one must mention them since the first quarter of the book is concerned with the main character's deflowering at the hands of a much older noblewoman, are scanty and stiff and could have been the novel's redeeming and humorous core. Instead, even these bits which Witkiewicz certainly could've handled more deftly are a bore.

I realize I'm in a minority here, even within my own mind, which causes confusions galore. Like I said, I have always adored Witkiewicz's art and I remember liking this novel a lot better twenty years ago, but, as he would have it, I can't hide my displeasure. I'm shocked but perhaps unjustly so to read reviews of this novel that laud it to the heavens, often blindly. Warning signs always go off when I see reviews that quote

other reviews or (shudder!) the dreaded "back-cover-blurb-summary", that is, the plot exposition garnered directly off the back cover, for I have to wonder, did these people actually read the book? And if so, can't they tell me more directly what there really is to enjoy here? I certainly couldn't find it. But maybe that's what Witkiewicz wanted. It would be just like him.

I'll give it another go in 2035?

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