

variety. As much, perhaps, as any other writer, A. K. Tolstoy helped to give nineteenth-century Russia what she lacked and so badly needed, a *literature*, that is, a respectable corpus of belles-lettres of notable solidity, breadth, and technical skill. He achieved distinction in genres which few if any of his contemporaries practiced: historical drama, historical fiction, tales of the supernatural, humor, and satire. And at the same time he wrote an astonishing body of lyric poetry of high quality which has served, more often perhaps than that of any other Russian poet, as a source of texts to be set to music. So broad is the scope of his work that one is astonished to discover that his complete works, published in the Moscow edition of 1964, fit into a mere four volumes.

Of Mr. Berry's study the less said the better, perhaps. The subtitle has little implication for the book: Tolstoy the humorist is treated along with a *mélange* of other topics of rather disparate character, and it is hard to say what the whole adds up to. The analysis is very superficial, but Berry does translate a number of Tolstoy's poems into English verse, to which he gives rhymes if not a very regular rhythm.

Margaret Dalton's study, on the other hand, is a comprehensive treatment of Tolstoy's life and all his major works; even a considerable amount of lyric poetry has been included. One might wish that every second-rate Russian writer were as well served in English. The treatment is intelligent if not always inspired: the author notes correctly, for example, that the novel *Prince Sercbriannyi* served Tolstoy as a "practice run" for the later dramatic trilogy, and that the failure of the novel is in large part due to weak characterization and the mixture of styles ("Old" Russian, folk speech, and *prostorechie*), which cannot harmonize. Some of the analyses do not go far beyond plot summation, but the chapter on the dramatic trilogy is admirable as criticism.

Neither study deals adequately with the work of "Kozma Prutkov," the collective pseudonym which Tolstoy shared with his cousins, the brothers Zhemchuzhnikov. But this is understandable, since the work of Kozma is probably better dealt with in a separate study. Still, it is a pity that neither writer mentions Kozma's brilliant satire "Project for the Introduction of Uniformity of Thought in Russia." Another lacuna is the lack of adequate discussion of Tolstoy's "art-for-art's-sakism." Both authors are aware of the slogans Tolstoy employed, but neither shows much awareness of the contradictions and questions which those slogans raise. In general we need more study of the so-called Russian aestheticist critics of the mid-nineteenth century.

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POUGNY (IWAN PUNI): CATALOGUE DE L'OEUVRE. Vol. 1: LES ANNÉES D'AVANT-GARDE, RUSSIE-BERLIN, 1910-1923. By Herman Berninger and Jean-Albert Cartier. Tübingen: Éditions Ernst Wasmuth, 1972. 256 pp. 1,200 copies.

Over recent years the Western world has been hearing more and more about Russia's "lost avant-garde," and names such as Larionov, Malevich, Pougny (Puni), and Tatlin have been presented to us in the form of several articles, auctions, and exhibitions. The recent shows at the Leonard Hutton Galleries and Lincoln Center in

New York, though emphasizing different areas and different names, found common ground in featuring Jean Pougny. The fact that we saw canvases and reliefs by him at the former and his stage designs at the latter indicates, even to the casual viewer, that here was a versatile, professional artist whose early Russian work was as inventive and dynamic as the work of his more celebrated French period, if not more so. Indeed, as if to confirm this ostensible dichotomy, one collector at the Hutton *vernissage* asked me whether this Pougny had anything to do with the Parisian painter of that name.

The excellent monograph by MM. Berninger and Cartier confirms one's suspicion that what Pougny was doing in Russia and Berlin was both more original and more composite (in the sense that he breathed the same highly charged ether as Malevich, Tatlin, et al.) than his later, so-called classical work. What strikes the reader immediately is the meticulous presentation of the book itself. The restrained, yet impressive layout, the art paper, the fine color and monochrome reproductions, and the textual organization indicate that this was a labor of love, a book compiled by genuine connoisseurs, not by hack researchers. The division of the contents into four basic sections—descriptive biography, translated documentary material, detailed lists of paintings, sculptures, and graphics, and a bibliography—emphasizes the serious approach to the subject, even though the first part might occasionally seem episodic and unreliable to the seeker of hard facts. But at the same time this division gives the whole work a sense of balance by appealing to both the specialist and the casual reader.

With the new and developing interest in Russian Modernism, this book helps to fill what is still a large aesthetic gap in our overall appreciation of twentieth-century European culture. It contributes to our reserve of knowledge precisely because it does not remain blindly “biographical,” but attempts to place Pougny in the general perspective of the Russian avant-garde. Thus frequent references are made to the other leaders—Larionov, Malevich, Rozanova, and Tatlin among them. In this context, useful information is given on important exhibitions of the period, including some of the “Union of Youth” sessions, “Tramway V,” and “0.10,” and on the genesis and development of Suprematism and Russian abstractionism. The latter is of particular interest, since we tend to associate Malevich and some of his disciples, such as Kliun and Chashnik, with the formulation and practice of Suprematism, rather than anyone else. But if, as now seems probable, Suprematism was evolved not in 1913, but in 1915, then Pougny deserves to share the laurels—as his surface and relief abstract compositions of that time indicate so convincingly. In this respect it is rewarding to compare the abstractionist statements published by Pougny, Malevich, and others in a joint manifesto, *0.10: Posledniaia futuristicheskaia vystavka kartin* (Petrograd, 1915–16). Pougny's deliberate reduction of an object to its so-called real essence (*real'nost'*), and his exposure and artistic manipulation of this essence, betray his almost scientific, laboratorial attitude to art, and thus anticipate the much-discussed, but surely overrated, *Realisticheskii manifest* of Gabo and Pevsner (1920). The résumé of Malevich's principles, advanced simultaneously at “0.10,” reveals a rather different premise, which is divined immediately in his use of the first-person pronoun (Pougny's statement was impersonal). Hence Malevich's very way of writing indicates his more subjective, mystical conception of painting—echoed in such cosmic assertions as “I have destroyed the ring of the horizon and left the circle of objects.” This intuitivist, even Symbolist, attitude toward art, which

culminates in his tentative equation of certain Suprematist shapes with astral qualities, already posed a question about his basic idea of Suprematism as self-sufficient painting. Pougny's more clinical, calculated approach, like Tatlin's, was surely closer, therefore, to Suprematism than Malevich was himself.

A feature that distinguished Pougny from his colleagues was his more Western, cosmopolitan background, on both a biographical and an artistic level. Whereas Malevich and Tatlin, like so many Russian artists and thinkers, took specific ideas to extreme and contradictory lengths, Pougny worked with a more measured eye and retained a certain classical restraint. It comes as no surprise, then, to learn that Pougny was by no means confined to the practice of a single aesthetic, but embraced simultaneously a variety of artistic approaches. Within this broad framework he was able to think in terms of Cubism and Suprematism, to work on sculptural reliefs and exquisite miniatures in *encre de Chine*, and to move rapidly from geometrical compositions to such arresting pre-Dadaist pieces as *White Ball* (1915) and *Relief with Plate* (1919). In turn, it is pleasant to realize that the derivative, though no less satisfying, Cubist works for which he is known, such as *Washing Windows* (1915) and the *Musician* (1921), form only one, less auspicious part of his total creative output. Pougny's wider cultural horizon ensured him success after emigration both in Berlin and, later, in Paris. More specifically, he was able to maintain contact not only with the very transient émigré colony in Berlin (Ehrenburg, Mayakovsky, Shklovsky, etc.) but also with the German connoisseurs Walden and Gröger, who organized Pougny's large one-man show at "Der Sturm." The interesting details the book provides on this exhibition throw light on the whole Berlin period of Pougny's career—a very fertile, yet still umbrageous area of critical investigation. Indeed, the whole question of the dynamic cultural exchange between Russian and Western artists in postwar Berlin has yet to be studied in detail.

The descriptive section of the monograph is based largely on the reminiscences and observations of the late Mme Xenia Bogouslavskaya (Pougny's widow). Although this provides a unique firsthand account of avant-garde activity as witnessed by a fellow artist (Mme Bogouslavskaya was herself a fine painter and energetic member of the leftists in both St. Petersburg and Berlin), it introduces, particularly in chapter 4, a few factual mistakes which a more detached, historical presentation might have avoided—for example, Larionov and Goncharova are associated mistakenly with the "Blue Rose" group, and Dr. Kulbin is referred to as a colonel. However, the invaluable catalogue lists, newspaper reviews, and documentary photographs more than compensate for this one shortcoming, and the very fine reproductions of works add immeasurably to the book's undoubted worth.

In brief, this is a book which any student of the East European avant-garde should have, although its very limited edition will soon make it a scarce item. One would hope that the demand for such a work would dictate an English version in the very near future, and that this in turn would inspire other enlightened patrons to support publication of similar monographs on other leaders of the Russian avant-garde.

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