



"A Place in the Sun," oil by Frank Kleinholz.

writing generally does, set up a great activity.

Gratitude is due Miss de Onis for her part in making these selections of the *Traditions* available. But I have a fault to find with one aspect of her translation. Palma's rich and supple phrasing often resorts for its bright color to the colloquial. It was no doubt almost impossible to find exact American equivalents. The obsolete slang she has dug up, in some cases, proves very flat, for nothing is staler than stale slang. And in a version like "nigger in the woodpile," which I don't think occurred in the original, a racial slur is added to the banality. At such points, and there are a few, the translation shadows rather than reveals a work of great light.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

## A Marxist Voice

NO VOICE IS WHOLLY LOST, by Harry Slochower. Creative Age Press. \$3.75.

IF ONE of the principal criteria for the evaluation of a work of this type is, as I believe it to be, the extent to which it stimulates the reader and encourages his own active grappling with the subject, then the significance of Harry Slochower's new book cannot be in doubt. *No Voice Is Wholly Lost* is one of the finest products of the two decades of application of historical materialism to literary criticism. It is a huge canvas on which the author essays the tri-dimensional portrayal of the major ideological

events of our era. Commencing with Nietzsche, in whom Slochower sees "The Hindenberg Line of Individualism," we are conducted on a varied and intellectually stimulating tour through the Bohemias of Schnitzler, Huxley, and Hemingway and into the domain of doubt of such writers as Gide, Silone, Toller, Celine, and Thomas Wolfe.

"Insurgence," says Slochower, "calls forth its dialectical compensation." The common revolt against absolutes in the disparate work of the men mentioned above led to the "embrace of absolutes" by other authors, in movements as varied as the resurgence of the Catholic tradition with its idealization of the "unity" of a pre-industrial epoch; fascism, the "systematization of confusion," and Marxism, which rejects both the unchanging medieval absolute and the lawlessness of many modern notions of change. Among the representative figures dwelt upon here are Knut Hamsun, D. H. Lawrence, Hilaire Belloc, Jacques Maritain, Santayana, Proust, T. S. Eliot, Spengler, James Joyce, and the more dominant figures of Marx and Freud.

The imposing breadth of Slochower's work should not be dismissed as the product of either sophomoric ambition or professional pedantry. It is in refreshing contrast to the floods of petty monographs in its field. Genuinely disturbing, however, is the tendency to sacrifice clarity of interpretations to the seductions of phrase-making. Thus Nietzsche "affirms chaos for the promise of a danc-

ing star" and the "success" of fascism is "the price paid for not using the art of politics and for ignoring the politics of art."

But a book that brings so much into meaningful focus could be forgiven more than that. It is deserving of careful study not only by students of literature but especially by Marxists. Slochower, using much of the best that Marxian literary criticism has developed in the past, implicitly raises the question, "Where do we go from here?"

The distinctive contribution Marxists can bring to literary criticism is to make it more of a science—the results of which are empirically verifiable and consistent with knowledge obtained from the psychological and social disciplines—and, if need be, less of an artistic recreation of the moods invoked by the author under analysis.

Evaluating Slochower's work in that light one must conclude that it demonstrates no refinement, no advance, in the conceptual instruments he employs over those used by historical materialists more than twenty years ago.

Typical interpretative comments confirm this. For example: The problem of psychological alienation is found by Slochower to be accentuated in the literature of the German romantic movement. "There, owing to relative industrial backwardness, we find a more sustained 'inner' resistance against the standardization of private values." And again, "The closed view of the naturalistic writers reflected the situation of the German petty bourgeoisie, pressed between the iron ring of big business and the gathering forces of the working class."

Obviously, Slochower accepts and applies the Marxian precept that ideology has some social basis. He has not, however, made any progress in clarifying some of the ambiguities which have always adhered to this traditional formulation. I should like to draw attention to several of these in the hope of eliciting comment from other Marxians interested in ideological analysis.

1. When an ideology is a "reflection" of a class situation does this mean that the class situation is (a) the sufficient condition of the ideology; (b) a necessary condition, or (c) most unlikely, merely in a functional interrelationship with the ideology? If, furthermore, "reflection" implies some sort of a causal relationship (i.e., either "a" or "b") between ideology and a social basis, does it not become necessary for us to make explicit the method of demonstrating

cause? It should seem that causal investigation is a rigorous scientific pursuit, not equatable with an impressionistic imputation of relationships.

2. Speaking of the naturalistic writers mentioned above it will be noted that Slochower in a proper Marxian fashion does *not* specify their class status. He states that they "reflected the situation of the petty bourgeoisie," but he does not, of course, claim that they themselves were members of the petty bourgeoisie. This too, is one aspect of the customary Marxian ideological analysis. Nevertheless, it leaves a number of problems unclarified. For one, why do some writers reflect the typical mode of thought of the class to which they belong, while others do not? If adequately answered, this question should fill in one of the lacunae in Marxist theory. Our point is that Marxian critics cannot rest content with noting that an author's standpoint is at variance with the ideology of his class; they must also explain the *general* social conditions conducing to this effect, theirs must be a *theoretical* interpretation.

3. Then, too, we would like to have a clearer notion of the social functions of ideology. Unless this is understood there can be but little appreciation of why it is *retained* and incorporated into the popular consciousness. Analysis of ideologies primarily in terms of their class content refers most of all, as it is often used by Marxists, to their *origin*. But an ideology may originate for one reason and be retained for others. And it may be retained and supported by different groups for different reasons. The problem then is to articulate and clarify, from the point of view of historical materialism, criteria for the analysis of the *functions* of ideology.

If Slochower's study does not answer the questions raised above, it at least carries us to the point where their solution is both feasible and necessary.

RICHARD GRAY.

## From Pre-war Poland

THE STRANGER, by Maria Kuncewiczowa. Fischer. \$2.50.

READING *The Stranger*, one is tempted to speculate on the saying that coming events cast their shadows before them. For the book's theme might apply with accuracy to thousands of the Poles whose exile began only a short time after the original publication of this novel, and the mentality which produced it is the mentality that made a tragically large section of the Polish na-

tion malleable in the hands of both native and foreign fascists.

Written in 1937, two years before the Nazi invasion, *The Stranger* is a study of the disintegrating influence of unbelonging upon the individual. As its main story line, it probes the viciousness and destructive genius of a woman whose profound neuroticism springs from the fact that all her life she has been an exile—born of Polish parents in exile in Czarist Russia, going "home" too late to grow roots in her own soil, isolating herself further still by the choice of a career—that of concert violinist in a time when women violinists were exotic rarities.

Rose never belonged anywhere and never could belong, and so escaped by building for herself a world of illusion, an ivory tower from which she learned effectively to sally out and wound others, but which in the end collapsed and buried her. It might be the biography of whole generations of Poland's bourgeoisie after the last partition of the country.

This is by no means to say that *The Stranger* is in any political sense a prophetic book. Although Storm Jameson, in a somewhat purple preface, tries to point out a deep symbolism in the author's intent—implying that the figure of Rose, the romantic, the temperamental, the passionate and the defeated, is the figure of Poland itself—such interpretation seems far-fetched. Its significance springs not from any conscious understanding on Mme. Kuncewiczowa's part of the society of which her heroine was a product, but rather from the very lack of any such understanding. She merely accepts this society and writes about it with photographic accuracy.

As such, *The Stranger* is as bitter and trenchant a social document as any satire. What strikes one is the hysterical quality of the writing, heightened, unfortunately, by a pitiful translation. This book is not only the story of a mentally sick person—it is a sick book. Yet in the year 1937 it was awarded the Warsaw Literary Prize—recognition comparable to the *Prix Femina*, or the Pulitzer Prize.

In that same year, remember, another of Poland's younger writers, Wanda Wasilewska, was embarrassing the critics with her indictments of conditions under the so-called Republic—conditions which a violently jingoistic intelligentsia, either fascist itself or playing into the hands of the fascists, preferred to ignore. It disposed of Wasilewska by dismissing her as a faulty technician, as indeed she often was, while Kuncewiczowa won

acclaim. Kuncewiczowa's craftsmanship was excellent indeed. The flaw in her work was the total bankruptcy and shallowness of her basic material. But the shallowness and the bankrupt human values could not very well have worried the literary judges of the Warsaw of 1937. For were not the judges already themselves corrupted, along with the characters who moved through the pages of *The Stranger*, and by the same forces? Were they not the same men who, two years later, were either to run away and support the government-in-exile, or become quislings inside Poland—or at best, if they happened to be men of good will, to look on bewildered while the country went down to defeat?

To anyone knowing Polish middle and upper-class mentality, the photographic realism of *The Stranger* is striking and undeniable, even while one gratefully dismisses it as something to which the new and regenerated Poland must by now be dealing the *coup de grace*. Rose and her ilk, feeding on the glories of the past, on a false though exalted patriotism, on snobbishness and tradition, will fade out in a country whose life at last has resumed vigor and purpose. Let *The Stranger* be an epitaph to them. Any American reader who happens to be interested in understanding them as well as mourning them will do well to read it. Otherwise it can be safely classified as a period piece.

JEAN KARSAVINA.

## Radio Dramatist

OBOLER OMNIBUS, by Arch Oboler. Duell, Sloan & Pearce. \$2.50.

IN THIS collection of one of radio's most skilled and prolific authors, all but four of the thirteen plays are on wartime themes, and most strike telling blows against fascism, both the domestic and the foreign brands. Though written to be heard, they retain much of their power in book form. In some cases the ideas have become hackneyed through overuse, but it must be remembered that when Oboler first dramatized them, they were new to radio.

The scripts are supplemented by the author's random comments on his career in radio and his penetrating observations of the limitations of radio under capitalist control. Oboler's difficulties in broadcasting anti-fascist plays illustrate the contradiction between the social nature of the medium and its domination by the few.

Despite the great need for mass anti-fascist education, the radio industry in-