

this observation through a study of Pasternak's manuscripts. Pasternak, in spite of his musical background, is a painter, not a musician, in his poetic expression.

As might be expected, Slonim has some difficulties when he treats of the more abstruse aspects of literature: aesthetics, literary theory, poetics. Thus his presentation of Russian formalism, and of Viktor Shklovsky's ideas in particular (p. 102), is quite inadequate. LEF comes off a great deal better (pp. 22–23), but why is Osip Brik not identified as its principal theoretician?

Unfortunately, Slonim's book became obsolete virtually the moment it appeared. Osip Mandelshtam, who has been for some years considered one of the greatest Russian poets of this century, is hardly discussed at all. Andrei Platonov, who has experienced a great renaissance even in the Soviet Union, is given a few cursory lines. The name of Evgenii Shvarts does not even appear in the index. There are other similar lacunae. A new edition of Slonim's book will have to be thoroughly revised and enlarged.

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THE ICE AGE. By *Tamas Aczel*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 287 pp. \$5.95.

NEW WRITING OF EAST EUROPE. Edited by *George Gömöri* and *Charles Newman*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968. 270 pp. \$6.95.

*The Ice Age*, written in London by the onetime poet laureate of Communist Hungary, recaptures the mood of Budapest in the early fifties, above all the fear gripping every aspect of life. The only escape from the all-pervading gloom was the acrid, black, Budapest humor, which turned every pompous dogma into absurdity—a sense of humor Aczel brings alive in his book. The plot of the novel concerns the arrest of an outstanding physician. The author treats this central event in a circular fashion, detailing more and more of its repercussions. A similar technique is used in *Herzog* and *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, but in those novels the cyclical technique is employed to reveal greater depths to the characters each time the authors return to their points of departure. Indeed, the success of this technique depends on the author's prowess at characterization, and in this respect Aczel fails. His characters are cardboard figures whose speech is not individual and who often express the same ideas. In fact, behind the characters we can discern only the author's lyrical persona voicing his indignation at Stalinism, and that without restraint. The truth Stendhal and Chekhov teach us, that passionate beliefs can be best conveyed through cool detachment, seems to have been lost on Aczel. Despite the dust jacket's claims, in *The Ice Age* one finds neither Pasternak's reticent lyricism nor Solzhenitsyn's austere matter-of-factness.

*New Writing of East Europe* is a loosely structured anthology of poetry, fiction, and essays. For all its diversity it reveals a central theme, best defined by Ted Hughes in a brief introduction to the poetry of Vasko Popa. This central theme is a literary vision, not unlike those encountered in Western literatures but focusing on slightly different areas. It is a sharp vision, "armed" with the thought of Marx, Freud, and more contemporary thinkers, but at the same time it is a fragmentary vision, fractured, as it were, by the realities of war, nazism, and communism which intruded upon it. The main merit of the volume is that it brings writers of various nationalities together in a brotherhood of common despair.

The central theme is most evident in the poetry, although this is the genre most likely to suffer in the process of translation. To trace the genesis of the postwar mood, the editors, in keeping with their policy of stepping over chronological and national boundaries, have introduced some literary antecedents from the period between the two world wars. Among these antecedents we find four poems by Attila József, which are relevant indeed. But, alas, their translations do not do justice to this foremost of modern Hungarian poets. In one translation the savage "verték" of the original is reduced to a mild "spanking," in another "a szükségét végző vadállat" is rendered as a beast "relieving itself against a stone," which suggests a dog rather than a wild beast of the forests, and so forth. One has the sensation of watching the gestures of a dancer without hearing the music. The best translations in the volume have been made by poets who have, to continue the simile, guessed the music from the gestures of the dancer. For instance, Richard Lourie's renderings of Sándor Veöres—particularly of his superb "Mural of the Twentieth Century"—are poetic masterpieces. Aleksander Wat's "A Damned Man," translated by Czesław Miłosz, and Anne Pennington's translations of two Yugoslav poets—Vasko Popa and Miodrag Pavlović—also strike me as remarkably beautiful.

The editors have done a good job in choosing the prose fiction, too. Tibor Déry's "The Portuguese Princess" sets the mood—a search for identity by orphans, both literal and figurative—to be maintained in all the other stories despite their great differences. In my subjective judgment, Jacek Bocheński's "Tabu," a tale of psychological symbolism recalling the style of Hermann Hesse, and Bohumil Hrabal's delightfully absurd, impressionistic piece, "The Kafkorium," stand out as particularly brilliant.

George L. Kline's lucid discussion of revisionism is relevant to the poetry and prose of the volume, but the same cannot be said of some of the other essays. First of all, it seems clear from Kline's essay itself that a passage from Leszek Kołakowski's *Responsibility and History* would have been a better choice than his mannered and disputable discourse on Jesus. Second, while brief critical appraisals of the writers represented are certainly to the point, I do not see the purpose of including a number of essays—however brilliant they may be—on authors not here represented. These clog up the volume and lend it a scholastic air. The bulk of its contents leads me to assume that the volume is intended, as Tymon Terlecki writes in another context, for "the common or rather uncommon reader displaying a taste for aesthetic adventure, a refined curiosity and a generous open-mindedness." Such a reader will not appreciate the more ponderous pieces, but fortunately there are many other, very readable selections he can turn to in this rich anthology.

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THE HISTORY OF POLISH LITERATURE. By *Czesław Miłosz*. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1969. xvii, 570 pp. \$14.95.

This book is unique in many ways. It is the only one in English covering the history of Polish literature from its beginnings to the present time, for Manfred Kridl's *Survey of Polish Literature and Culture* makes no reference to the last thirty years of development. *The History of Polish Literature* is a scholarly work by the leading Polish poet, who, also defining himself as a Lithuanian, includes discussions of the Eastern Slavic languages and Lithuanian literature. This work, not subject to the limitations of censorship imposed upon the literary historian writing in Poland, is