

depicting reality not as a series of sequentially arranged facts, but as a flow of impressions significantly arranged.

In the last essay, Harry T. Moore concentrates on E. M. Forster's themes of the failure of human communication, the presence of prejudice, and the separateness of people, and the embodiment of these themes in the characters and events of his short stories and novels. Most of the essay focuses on the novels. Moore's method is to recount the story of the novel, and comment on its main events, themes, characters, techniques (explaining, for instance, the use of leitmotiv), and style. All in all, these six essays provide excellent introductions to six key British novelists.

Richard F. Kennedy

## MASAO MIYOSHI

*Accomplices of Silence: The Modern Japanese Novel*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. Pp. 194. \$7.95.

There are not many books in western languages on modern Japanese literature, and for that reason alone *Accomplices of Silence* would be of interest. A study of the modern Japanese novel was a *desideratum*, and Masao Miyoshi was the very person to produce it. He brings to this task his Japanese background as well as his scholarship in western literary criticism. The result is an outstanding book which goes a long way to help destroy the myth of the "impenetrable East," what Miyoshi refers to as this "all too easy refuge" (p. 161).

The author has intended his book "principally for the general reader of novels" (p. xvii), a factor which determined the format of the work. All novels discussed at length are available in English—and often French and German—translations. (The author notes that: "As for the choice of these novels, I have no rationale other than

my prejudice . . . endorsed by the existence of a good to excellent English translation" (p. xvii). However, one would have liked to know to what extent the literary critics and the public in Japan share this "prejudice," and one does miss Tanizaki Junichiro.)

There is no attempt to give a history of the modern Japanese novel. Although the authors and works chosen are presented in chronological order, Miyoshi has avoided the complication of going into the numerous literary movements and "schools" which are characteristic of the organization of the literary scene in modern Japan. (Interesting as these movements are, they would have required an analysis of many individual authors in a much wider context—in order to become more to the reader than just a series of confusing expressions.)

Rather, Miyoshi followed the distinction which historians and sociologists make between early westernization and later modernization in Japan. In part I, three prominent literary figures of the years before 1918 are discussed: Futabatei Shimei (*The Drifting Clouds*, 1887-1889), Mori Ogai (*The Wild Goose*, 1911-1915), Natsume Soseki (*Pillow of Grass*, 1906 and *Light and Darkness*, 1916). Each author's works are examined from a special point of view, as the chapter headings suggest—"The New Language," "The Imported Life" etc. However, it seems hardly a coincidence that for this period of westernization which affected Japanese life and literature so deeply, three writers were selected whose literary development is characterized by contact with three different cultures—Russian, German, and English. (The author probably avoided intentionally such a grouping according to cultures. Nevertheless, one cannot help asking: what about France, the rest of Europe? Which were the most widely successful translations?)

Already in the first chapters the strength (which is also a necessary weakness) of Miyoshi's book becomes evident. The author's concept of selective representation enables him in each case to give the reader new insights into individual works, to show different approaches, to point out specific correlations. But soon the reader's curiosity is aroused. For example, one discovers the

importance of Futabatei Shimei's translations from the Russian for the shaping of his own style. Did Mori Ogai's translations from the German influence that author in a similar way? Unfortunately we are not told.

Part II of the book is devoted to three leading figures on the literary scene after 1945; Kawabata Yasunari, Dazai Osamu, and Mishima Yukio. As in the first part, one or two novels of each author are discussed in detail—however, more in the context of their whole *oeuvre* this time. In contrast to part I, the emphasis lies rather on the writers' understanding of self and the relation between art and life. For all three novelists—Kawabata, Dazai, and Mishima—death holds a strange fascination; it is no coincidence that all three committed suicide.

The most fascinating topic, underlying in a way all other aspects of the modern Japanese novel, is the problem of language. After giving a short survey of the characteristics and the development of the Japanese language in general, Masao Miyoshi precedes to explain the specific linguistic situation in which each writer found himself, how he grappled with it and how this struggle is reflected in his novels. With this approach Miyoshi differs from most Japanese critics (usually more concerned with an author's *Weltanschauung*) as well as from western critics (usually less concerned with linguistic subtleties).

Masao Miyoshi succeeds in pointing out the peculiarities which the Japanese language presents to the writer of a novel; and which, in an unobtrusive way, transform this imported literary genre. There are "built-in" social and aesthetic qualities in that language which restrict the writer and at the same time allow him to transcend verbal communication. The Japanese language expresses so many emotions and attitudes by implication, that the Japanese authors can indeed be termed "Accomplices of Silence."

Ingrid Schuster

HANS WYSLING

*Zur Situation des Schriftstellers in der Gegenwart*

(On the Situation of the Writer in Our Time)

Berne: Francke, 1974. Pp. 54. Sfr. 25

In less than fifty pages Hans Wysling discusses the attitude and function of the contemporary writer within society. He begins by reviewing the role of the writer in classical times (where the writer was regarded as a messenger of the gods), and in the romantic and idealistic eras (the *creator spiritus*, the sponsor of truth, and tutor of humanity). Then he studies the writer's disenchantment and isolation in the early nineteenth century (Byron and Grillparzer), and his degradation at the hands of the marxist philosophers (when he becomes a mere illustrator and decorator of history). The final humiliation of the writer took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a result of the severe attacks by the natural scientists. He was compared with criminals (Lombroso), labeled as a hysterical person unfit for life (Max Nordau), and often regarded as a psychopath (Paul Möbius), or simply as someone who creates an imaginary and fantastic world in order to escape reality (Freud).

Soon after the First World War a group of intellectuals (Musil, Kafka, Döblin, Broch) tried to restore and reestablish the old and long forgotten role of the writer as a spiritual leader and clairvoyant herald. And this later led some thinkers and writers (Ponten, for instance) to distinguish between writers (Schriftsteller) and poets (Dichter).

Hans Wysling follows this historical review with a discussion of the term "engagement" and its ideological, moral, and existential implications for writers through the centuries. In the last section of his booklet, Mr. Wysling comments on the modern novel and the role of the contemporary novelist within society. He examines a few of the German novels that were written in the fifties and sixties with the