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 procedes 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 speritus,* 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

intention of demonstrating the different kinds of engagements as well as the possibilities and limits of the language in regard to them.

The author tries to answer the question as to whether the writer's function is to supply society with solutions for its problems, or merely to help in formulating the relevant questions. Should he take over the role of the prophet or only act as an *advocatus diaboli.* Hans Wysling ends the book by stating that: "Nicht Lösungen oder gar Losungen sollten wir von ihm erwarten, aber Zeitgenossenschaft" (p. 50), which might be translated in the following fashion: "Not solutions nor watchwords should we expect from him, but contemporaneity."

S. Elkhadem

RAYMOND FRASER
The Struggle Outside
Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975. Pp. 138.

The dust jacket blurb on this book calls it a "funny serious novel." There is certainly fun, in the form of slapstick and farce, but there is little to compel readers to take the story seriously. And to call it a novel is surely to stretch the term's definition beyond normal limits—the term "novelette" would be more appropriate to the work's 138 pages of text.

Raymond Fraser's first book of fiction, *The Black Horse Tavern,* was a collection of short stories set mainly near the Miramichi River in north-eastern New Brunswick. It was an uneven work, and although it included a number of competent stories, it attracted little critical attention. *The Struggle Outside,* Fraser's first attempt at longer fiction, shares the New Brunswick setting of the earlier work, and records the escapades of a motley group of misfits who attempt to stage a political revolution in the province.

The revolutionaries, who call themselves the Popular Liberation Party, include the unnamed narrator, a vicious neanderthal called Moses, a shrill-voiced, paranoid slut named Liz, and Cavanaugh, an ex-professor of chemistry and sexual deviant. Collaborators who play lesser roles include LeBlanc, a dim-witted Acadian, and a fork-tongued Indian chief, Magaguadavic, who is frequently referred to as a betrayer of the cause, but who never actually appears in the work.

The story takes the form of a combat journal, supposedly smuggled out of prison (or madhouse?) where the narrator has been incarcerated. As the "author's preface" tells us, it is meant to be "the definitive account of the origins of the revolution presently engulfing New Brunswick." Briefly, the journal recounts the group's unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the government and rouse popular support by first kidnapping the Minister of Justice. In the course of a wild highway chase, however, the Minister is unceremoniously dumped out of the rebels' speeding car to delay the pursuing police and enable the kidnappers to reach their farm hideaway. One piece of incompetence follows another, as the fleeing desperadoes escape to the woods with another hostage, this time an evangelical preacher called Brother Bell. The rest of the fragile plot is based on a sequence of forced marches through dense forest at night, and an attempt to collect ransom for Brother Bell. Inevitably bungling things, the group is surrounded and ambushed by the forces of law and order, although three of them escape temporarily. They soon fall out with one another, and as the story ends, the narrator leaves Moses and Liz copulating savagely on the forest floor as he stumbles away to be captured.

The trouble with Fraser's fiction is that it offers so little for the mind. This is no provocative study of revolution, nor are the characters and their predicaments revealed either in depth or with compassion.