

This collection resembles a painter's scrapbook or the refuse of a sculptor's workshop: although none of them are fully developed or thoroughly executed, these fragments give the reader a clear idea of the material used and the styles distinctive of the artist. Admirers of Najib Mahfouz will be constantly reminded of his recurring themes, preferred characters, and favored settings.

The bullies, bravos, and hired ruffians who appear in many of Mahfouz's novels and short stories (e.g. *Bidāiah wa Nihāiah*) are at the center of four sketches (Nos.: 22, 50, 53, 57). The troubled political situation of the early part of the twentieth century which played a role in his *Trilogy* (1956, 1957, 1957) is the theme of eight of these tales (Nos.: 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 23). The little domestic tragedies—like those depicted in *Khan al-Khalili*, 1946, and *Bidāiah wa Nihāiah*—appear in a number of these pieces (Nos.: 27, 35, 37, 47, 48, 62). Also among this arsenal of themes and motifs one finds Mahfouz's favorite subject matter, namely that of the little man who destroys himself while trying to fulfill a big dream or to accomplish a heroic deed (Nos. 28, 32, 52, 56).

It is conceivable that a few of Mahfouz's admirers would be disappointed by this collection simply because the writer does not narrate a complete story, nor develop a coherent plot. But scholars and critics will undoubtedly find this storehouse of ideas, styles, and characters highly rewarding.

S. Elkhadem

WERNER HOFFMANN

Kafka's Aphorismen

Berne: Franke, 1975. Pp. 128.
SFr. 20.

JÜRIG JOHANNES AMANN

Das Symbol Kafka: Eine Studie über den Künstler

Berne: Franke, 1974. Pp. 171.
No price given.

Kafka's aphorisms form part of the protracted process of mental "stock taking" that occupied him after his tuberculosis was diagnosed in 1917. In these reflections on sin, suffering, truth, and the value of

human action and thought, on the meaning of life and of his own in particular, he had more recourse to religious vocabulary than elsewhere in his writings. Individual aphorisms have thus been used by several critics to support their interpretations of his religious beliefs, or lack of them—and he has been seen variously as a believing Jew, a gnostic, a manichean, agnostic, or atheist. Hoffmann attempts an interpretation of the aphorisms as a whole, referring to letters and diaries to support his readings. His aim is laudable and his method basically sound. His book, well-written and clear, is a cut above much Kafka criticism. But his arguments, though interesting, are too one-sided to be completely convincing. Despite his claim to be free from preconceptions, he is intent on seeing Kafka as a skeptical believer rather than as a reluctant agnostic; in reality, as Hoffmann once admits, he was above all a skeptic who both suffered from and enjoyed the bondage to uncertainty. Hoffmann's vision, sometimes sharp, but always partial, does not do justice to Kafka's ambiguities and vacillations. He does not allow for the possibility, even probability that Kafka, like Rilke with his angels, employed religious terms quite unconventionally. Kafka's speculations about the possible interrelation of all aspects of existence led him to express himself in such a way that his observations could have both particular and universal significance. Hoffmann searches for only one part of the author's preoccupations when he equates his terms "Selbst" and "innere Welt" with the soul. He was not just wary of outmoded vocabulary, as Hoffmann argues, he was also allowing for the doubtful nature of metaphysics and the inexactitude of psychology, indeed the restrictions of knowledge and language. To his credit Hoffmann recognizes the contradictions in Kafka's thoughts: his tendency to value asceticism alongside his reverence for vitality; his idea that earthly existence is an absolute negation of the eternal life of the spirit, although it is a reflection, even a part of that eternity. But in taking as the kernel of Kafka's religion the aphorism "Der Mensch kann nicht leben ohne ein dauerndes Vertrauen zu etwas Unzerstörbarem in sich" and maintaining that he had this faith, he overlooks or plays down Kafka's conviction that he was excluded from life. He underestimates, too, the ambiguity of his imagery, assuming that ascent and descent are always and solely associated with progress and regression. He also overemphasizes Kafka's despair of

expressing the truth through the imperfect medium of language at the expense of his despair of knowing the truth. He is circumspect when tracing similarities between Kafka's thoughts and Jewish mysticism, though he assumes that he was indebted to a knowledge of the mystics. If Hoffmann errs in finding too much belief amid Kafka's uncertainties, he goes far to correct the picture, current since Existentialism, of the writer as an atheist. His general conclusions are valuable and more cautious than some of his more detailed points. He sums up by saying that Kafka would have liked to share the faith of the mystics. Apparently Hoffmann is not aware that the same conclusion was reached over twenty years ago in one of the earliest analyses of Kafka's work (H. S. Reiss, *Franz Kafka. Eine Betrachtung seines Werkes* [Heidelberg: Schneider, 1952]).

Amann's knowledge of the corpus of Kafka criticism seems equally restricted—yet he attempts to draw a complete picture of Kafka the artist. He concentrates on his personality as seen in his relationship to the women he loved and to his vocation as a writer. He uses Kafka's images, develops the metaphors, interrelates them, revelling like Kafka in their mutability, but unlike him seemingly unaware that images are at least one step away from the truth, that conciseness is a virtue, and that the ability to manipulate language does not compensate for weakness in logic. If he had not been preceded by Politzer and Canetti, and were not surpassed in clarity by both, and if he had felt obliged to consult Sokel and Thorlby, Amann's book might have been worth reading for its content. He makes a devil of Kafka by arguing that he deliberately or at least half consciously manipulated his love affairs so that the women suffered and he retained his independence. He makes a hero of him by interpreting his failures as triumphs, all in the name of a religion of art and a concept of morbid genius that Kafka himself refused to glorify. Despite the warnings of Max Brod, he believes every word of Kafka's self-recriminations; his analysis of the psychology of the artist is also distorted by the assumption that all great artists are pathological cases. His thesis that Kafka's writings tell us nothing about anything except the author's unique personality is at best questionable.

J. L. Hibberd

OTTAVIO CECCHI, CESARE GARBOLI, GIAN CARLO ROSCIONI, EDS.

Scritti Letterari di Niccolò Gallo

Milano: Edizioni Il Polifilo, 1975, Pp. 184. L. 5,500.

Four years after his death, Niccolò Gallo can more properly be judged in his work as a literary critic through this selected collection of essays and letters. His friends, who edited the volume, besides honoring a great man of letters, felt the need to present a literary document which would enable people to understand and evaluate developments in the field of Italian literature from 1945 to the present. Gallo's activity as literary critic and editor goes back to 1942 but on the world literary scene he is perhaps better remembered for the translation into Italian of Doctor Zhivago (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1958). With this work he acquainted the western world with a masterpiece destined to gain international acclaim. Italian readers are also indebted to him for the translation with an introduction of Jacques Rivière's *Aimée* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1959) and, in collaboration with Maria Ortiz, for the translation of Albert Thibaudet's *Gustave Flaubert*.

Niccolò Gallo was a director of the series "Il Castelletto" from 1955 to 1956 (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi). From 1959 on, he directed the series "Narratori Italiani" for Mondadori of Milan. While working in these capacities he built up the reputations of such outstanding contemporary Italian novelists as Cassola, Bassani, Bigiaretti, Dessì, and Delfini. His editing (with Giansiro Ferrata) of the first two volumes of *2000 pagine di Gramsci: Nel tempo della lotta (1914-1926)* and of the same author's *Lettere edite ed inedite (1912-1937)* has added considerably to the study and appreciation of this Italian politician and philosopher, a victim of Fascism, whose writings are fundamental for an understanding of new trends in Italian post second world war literary criticism. Gallo, who was himself an active fighter in the Resistance movement against Fascism and a member of the Italian Communist party, hoped that literature in Italy would take a completely new stand after 1945 and become more committed to society. According to the editors of *Scritti letterari*, the major