

of man-woman relationships. These three can be further subdivided into two categories: the love-triangle ("The train and the flowers" and "Help, I'm Drowning") and the deceived woman ("Little man").

"Solitude" is a study of the loneliness of a woman who finds herself all alone, except for her dog, in an apartment in a foreign environment. She is longing for some personal contact with another human being and this longing is made much more acute after she receives her mail. She becomes so desperate that she is about to call a hot-line "need-a-friend" number; however, her will power prevails and she goes for a walk with her dog instead. The fact that the dog's name is Solitude drives home the point of her loneliness.

In "Letter and Telegram" Martha, now faraway from loved ones, feels the stress of loneliness on Christmas Day and, in a letter, expresses her doubts, fears, and regrets to Edgardo, the lover she had left behind. In this story though, the full effect of loneliness is mitigated by the arrival of a telegram from Edgardo and others asking her to return home.

"The train and the flowers," the first of two stories that treat the subject of the love-triangle, tells of Ieda's meeting another man, Professor Rafael González, in Guadalajara where she had gone to give a lecture. Ieda, who is already accustomed to a relationship with her boy friend George, which "was carried on through telephone chats or by letters and promises to meet someday at some place" (p. 1), invites the professor, to whom she makes no mention of George, to visit her in Mexico City whenever he happens to be there. He accepts and, on the way to the train station where George is waiting, he buys her a bouquet of yellow roses from Jalisco. As fate would have it, she arrives late and is unable to share a compartment with George and, to complicate matters even further, flowers are not allowed on the train. The following morning, neither George, in whose compartment she had hidden the flowers, nor anyone else seems to be aware of the existence of any flowers. A few days later she receives a telegram from the professor announcing his arrival and with the promise of yellow roses from Jalisco. Ieda is confused because she does not know whether the first bouquet of yellow roses was part of a dream, or whether it was a case of déjà vu.

In "Help I'm Drowning," which lends its title to the collection and which is the only selection in verse, the author, by means of the metaphor of a "junkie" getting a hypodermic "high," transmits the tortures of a woman transported by the love of one man and confident that the other man, whom she likes, will forgive this love.

"Little man" expresses the bitterness of a woman who, in spite of herself, falls victim to a Don Juan whose life's purpose is to "screw with the mongrels in the streets" (p. 18). Behind her vicious attack on the man, however, one can see that she herself is the true object of the attack.

All these stories have a woman as the central figure and are told from her standpoint. In all but "The train and the flowers" first-person narration is employed to bring out quite forcibly the intensity of the emotions. In "Solitude" and "Letter and Telegram," it is the loneliness; in "Help, I'm Drowning," the complete helplessness of the woman; and in "Little man," her bitterness and anger.

The third-person narration of "The train and the flowers" permits the author the vantage point of distance to create the mystery of the flowers.

All in all, *Help, I'm Drowning*, apart from a few typographical errors, is a good and welcome translation of the works of an author who deserves a wider readership.

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BERT NAGEL

Franz Kafka: Aspekte zur Interpretation und Wertung.

Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1974. Pp. 336.

Bert Nagel's book about Kafka's work with its descriptive subtitle: "Some Aspects toward an Interpretation and a Critical Evaluation" began as an essay on "In the Penal Colony." In order to comment knowledgeably on that sometimes neglected story, Nagel found that he had to come to terms with the stultifying profusion of scholarly comment on Kafka. To encompass it all was, of course, impossible, and, in

restricting himself to considering the more prominent and, therefore, presumably more valuable explications of Kafka's work, Nagel both avoided the dispersal of and limited his viewpoint. Consequently, it is mainly (N. B., not exclusively) on the basis of studies by Politzer, Hillmann, Emrich, Heinrich and Ingeborg Henel and Walser that Nagel reaches his conclusions on Kafka's now-famous phobias, themes, and style. Another half of the book provides interpretations not only of "In the Penal Colony" but also of "The Judgment," "Metamorphosis," "A Hunger Artist," "Before the Law" and "The Burrow."

In making summary remarks about Kafka's work, Nagel, in accord with his wise choice of models, remains levelheaded. There is no descent into the inferno which Kafka himself depicts as the realm of the writer and the psychological depths of which Charles Neider has plumbed. Neither is there a preoccupation with the religious implications in the Kafka canon, which have captivated many interpreters, prominently Brod. Nagel's analysis of the tenor of Kafka's fiction avoids the bizarre—and also the challenging. Kafka, so Nagel concludes, deals with inner conflict (p. 114), with the triad of guilt, judgment, and punishment (see especially p. 301, footnote), with inappropriate arrivals and unattainable goals (p. 22) and, in Kafkaesque terms, with the explanation of the inexplicable (p. 115). These generalities, which are apt but clearly not tendentious, afford no new insights and obscure other of Nagel's conclusions, perhaps equally pat but genuinely significant; for instance, Nagel also points to the theme of the isolation of the individual as the predominant theme in Kafka (p. 196). Elsewhere (p. 31) he insists, as many Kafka scholars have failed to do, that Kafka was principally engaged in producing literature—not social or existential philosophy—and that he was a fastidious writer.

Since rescuing "In the Penal Colony" from critical neglect was Nagel's original intent, his unambitious reading of its multi-layered symbolism is rather anti-climactic. Nagel, while recognizing the significance of the execution machine as a symbol, determines somewhat unimaginatively that it stands for the machine as the master of man. Although Nagel does insist throughout the book that there are always many levels of interpretation for each story, all equally important, he has chosen

to dwell on one particular aspect in each of his interpretations. Thus, "The Judgment" becomes a particularly Jewish work (p. 190). Refuting Henel's thesis that the animal in "The Burrow" contends only with the mind divided against itself, Nagel asserts that the burrow is the animal's defense against an external enemy who literally destroys his prey in an ending later excised by Kafka. In that Nagel considers the major, that is, most pertinent if not most interesting, points of view in his analysis of Kafka and reaches valid, if not definitive conclusions, his book is a contribution to Kafka scholarship. Much more remains to be said, however, as he himself concedes: "Interpreting Kafka means questioning anew the supposed answers one has found" (p. 271, footnote, my translation).

Kurt J. Fickert

JAN VOORHOEVE AND
URSY M. LICHTVELD, EDS.
Vernie A. February, Trans.
*Creole Drum: An Anthology of
Creole Literature in Surinam*
New Haven: Yale University Press,
1975. Pp. 308.

The Surinam Creole language—also known as Sranan—had its beginnings during the period 1651-67, when the area was under British rule, and is thus primarily English-based. According to the editors of *Creole Drum*, its oldest source was "an Afro-Portuguese pidgin, which might have developed into the English-based creole directly or via an intermediate English-based pidgin stage" (p. 277). It was the *lingua franca* of slave society and soon became the mother tongue of slaves born in Surinam. After the slaves were freed in 1863 it remained the native language of most of their descendants, the Creoles, but also served as a contact language for communication between Creoles and the Asian immigrants who began to arrive in 1873. Persons of Asian stock now constitute half the population. As of 1950 the distribution of knowledge of the main languages of the country was as follows: "Creole, 85-90 percent; Dutch, 50-55 percent; Hindi, 30-35 percent; Javanese, 15-20 percent" (p. 11). Thus Sranan, the tongue most widely