

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

known and the only one with indigenous roots, is the closest thing to a national language in multilingual Surinam. But its *status* is another story, as we shall see.

The oldest text in Sranan was published in 1718, the oldest poem in 1783; both are reproduced in appendices to *Creole Drum*. A complete New Testament appeared in 1829, a primer in 1832, and in 1855 a dictionary which is still an important source work. Missionaries produced a Creole monthly which lasted for eighty years (1852-1932). In *Creole Drum* Chapter 4 is devoted to the work of Johannes King, a Matuari bushnegro who wrote between 1862 and 1894. Chapters 1-3 present folksongs and folktales, and 5-9 the most important 20th century authors. All texts appear in Sranan with facing English translations, and are well introduced and annotated. The book also includes a general introduction, bibliography, index, and three appendices, the most notable of which is "The Origin of Surinam Creole" (pp. 273-84). Voorhoeve is the distinguished Dutch linguist whose publications on Sranan go back some twenty-five years; Lichtveld is a Surinam Creole and February a native of South Africa.

Creole Drum is of course important as a chrestomathy of Sranan and as a record of what has been written in that language, but above all it is a delight to read, for its freshness and feeling and often high literary quality, to say nothing of the very special flavor of Sranan itself, which is quite accessible to the reader of English. The following is a folksong of the type called *banya*:

Sari-o, sari, u no abi fu sari.
 Sari-o, sari, u no abi fu sari.
 Weti bakra kon na ini pranasi,
 teki lobi fu nengre.
 Sari-o, sari, u no abi fu sari.

("Grief, grief, there is no need for grief. [bis] To the plantation a white man came, conceived a love for blacks. Grief, grief . . ." [pp. 24-25].) And here is a religious song which recalls "Sensemaya" from *Songoro cosongo* by Nicolás Guillén:

Fodu dede, ma a de.
 Yu kapu en nanga howru,
 ma a de.
 Yu naki en nanga tiki,
 ma a de.
 Fodu dede, ma a de.

("Voodoo snake god is now dead, dead and yet alive. Chop him down with a machete. He will still remain. Beat him with a stick. He'll remain alive. Snake god is now dead, dead and yet alive" [pp. 56-57].) There are lovely poems by several modern poets, notably Trefossa (1916-), whose sonnet "Bro" ("Repose"), published in 1951, for the first time used "the broad, vulgar, street patois"—as opposed to church Creole—"with obvious mastery to express the highest poetic intentions" (p. 195). In Chapter 6 we find part of a play by Eddy Bruma (1925-), founder—in about 1950—of *Wie Eegie Sanie* ("Our Own Things"), a nationalistic cultural movement which had much in common with the French Caribbean movement represented by writers such as Etienne Lérou, Léon Damas and Aimé Césaire—who, however, never wrote in their own Creole, nor promoted it as a literary language (of the sixteen Caribbean and African poets in the famous Senghor anthology only one—Gilbert Gratiant—wrote in Creole). As in other colonial and former colonial areas, Surinam Creoles have often looked down on their own language and culture, and Sranan still suffers from the higher prestige of Dutch, which became the official language of instruction in 1877, though before emancipation slave children had been taught only in Creole. (For more on the sociolinguistic situation in Surinam, and discussion of a Trefossa poem, see the papers by Voorhoeve and Christian Fersel in Dell Hymes, ed., *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 305-26; editor's comments, pp. 299-300). *Wie Eegie Sanie*—and the group's precursor, the Creole educator J. G. A. Koenders, whose work is represented in Chapter 5 of the anthology—fought against this lack of self-respect, with striking results: "Literary achievements in Creole have undoubtedly raised the social status of the language rather dramatically. Creole . . . has gained acceptance in the broadcasting system, on the stage, in society, and even in school, although not as a medium of instruction." The new literature has made Sranan one of the very few creole languages of the world to have earned such respectability. "While the multiracial setting of Surinam will perhaps prevent the language from becoming the national language, its influence" is comparable to that of national languages elsewhere (p. 14).

Today there are many authors publishing in Sranan, including the two fine poets

Johanna Schouten-Elsenhout (1910-) and Michaël Slory (1935-), represented in Chapter 9 of *Creole Drum* along with novelist Edgar Cairo (1948-). "Prose production in Creole has always been meager"—though we should not forget such excellent tales as the *srafutentori* ("slave-time-story") in Chapter 3 of our anthology—so the appearance of the first Creole novel, Cairo's *Temekoe* (1969), "came as a big surprise to insiders." Creole writers have now entered the modern world, treating themes like race, politics, and injustice, trying to "understand their own problems and their own history in terms of universal sorrow and glory" (p. 219). How close we are to them is suggested by this passage from *Temekoe*: "Te den ogri boy fu na birti ben e pasa, leti dape den ben e fringi ston. Ala san den ben si na kino, leti dape den ben e kon du dati baka, someki un no ben abi rostu. . . . Kru nanga kru ben e feti." ("When the hooligans in the area came along, they pelted precisely this place with stones. Everything they saw in the cinema they put into practice there, with the result that we had no peace of mind. . . . Gang and gang were up against each other" [pp. 266-67].)

In short, a most intriguing book.

J. David Danielson

KENNETH REED

Mennonite Soldier.

Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1974.
Pp. 518. \$6.95.

This retelling of the parable of the prodigal son is set in the period of World War I. The contradiction in the title characterizes well the lives of the two brothers with whom the novel deals. Mastie defies parents and community to enlist in the U. S. Army. In contrast, Ira suffers for his steadfast loyalty to the Mennonite principle of pacifism.

The novel opens in a traditional Mennonite farming community in Pennsylvania. The "prodigal," Mastie, a person of warmth, vitality and a certain recklessness, is increasingly in revolt against the narrow-

ness and hypocrisy he sees in his religious and cultural milieu. Ira, a teacher, is pious and obedient, and makes no secret of his disapproval of his brother's way of life. As the novel unfolds, the parallel between these two and their biblical counterparts becomes more explicit, one son being a model of dutifulness, the other increasingly alienated from his whole past.

The paths of the two brothers diverge physically as they have for some time spiritually. The novel's focus alternates between Mastie, who by enlisting has disgraced the family, and Ira, who has been drafted despite his claim to conscientious objector status.

Mastie and his fellow recruits arriving in France are filled with wonder and excitement. Very soon, however, they are plunged into the degradation inseparable from war. Mastie's own heroism in saving his comrades' lives, at great risk to his own, turns sour when he comprehends the mass butchery his brave action has entailed. As he lies injured in hospital and reflects on his experiences, Mastie undergoes a kind of conversion. Family and faith take on new meaning for him. The warmth, understanding, and readiness to forgive, which he shows in all his relationships, combine with the revulsion that war inspires in him to prepare this change.

Back in America Ira's introduction to military life is very different from his brother's. At every step, motivated by his pacifist principles, he resists participation in any activity which might, in however indirect a manner, further the prosecution of war and pushed beyond endurance, he strikes a sergeant who has been tormenting him. Ira is courtmartialed and although he knows that, were the fact of the sergeant's own physical violence against him to become known, it would be in his favor, he keeps silent and is sentenced to twenty-five years in prison.

Yet, for all his martyrdom to principle, Ira remains a "tinkling cymbal": it is his brother Mastie, the wilful prodigal toward whom Ira displays such eternal resentment, who is truly informed by what the old biblical translators called charity. Paradoxically, it is Mastie's adventures at the battle front where he seeks escape from his ancestral world that bring him full circle.

While the novel is basically the tale of these two brothers, it also depicts vividly a