

What at first seems to be a flaw in Lenz's narrative technique, namely that he writes like an unemotional computer registering details, gradually reveals itself to be a virtue. At first one misses some personal narrative quality such as Heinrich Böll's warm sympathy for his characters or Günter Grass's black humor and eccentric phantasy. But then one realizes that Lenz's artistic aim is to refuse to pre-empt the reader's task by chattily evaluating his characters' strange moral failings. With a painstakingly-paced technique of delayed revelation through flashbacks, Lenz builds up narrative tension around his characters and the insoluble problem that stands like a question mark over their heads. This problem is nothing less than the human reaction to the consciousness of mortality. This consciousness is shown to result in two intense but contradictory needs: to find security and to express one's uniqueness. Lenz shows how these needs can both produce perversions of the soul. Nora's need to find security results in her fear of commitment and true intimacy. She withdraws into narcissistic timidity and frigidity. Ulrich's compulsion to express his uniqueness gives him a life style uneasily based on artificially created tension and temporariness ("Spannung und Vorläufigkeit"). These are his galvanising prods, the means with which he strives to overcome his depressing consciousness of futility. His big flaw is his Mephistophelian irony. He toys with life and is therefore unable to commit himself to a single life aim that would cure his negativity.

This novel, which is ostensibly about failure and defeat, culminates after much suffering in triumph. It is paradoxical that the triumphant communion that unites Ulrich and Nora in the end is in no way dependent on the spoken word. Indeed it has already become clear in the course of *Der Verlust* that spoken words are commonly misused by most of the minor characters not to find truth but to hide from it. Words erect barriers of politeness and lies between people as they mistakenly strive to protect the shameful secrets of their privacy. Their privacy is based on *mauvais foi* with themselves and hence with others. They misuse words to justify themselves and their uneasy conscience, to express resentment against those with whom they claim they would like to be intimate. Lenz shows that the serenity of true communication occurs in subvocal silence. Not of course in the silence of enforced isolation nor in the silence of lasting hatred, for in both isolation and hatred the soul withers and dies from lack of suste-

nance. The soul lives in an intimacy that needs no words to express the commitment of love.

Der Verlust reaches its climax in a nightmare odyssey. Ulrich escapes from the hospital where he is being treated and engages in a compulsive quest to find his way home to Nora. This quest might be seen as a grim parody without humour of Odysseus' ten year voyage back to Penelope. Ulrich does not find the temptations and the high adventure of Odysseus. Nor does he experience Odysseus' indirect dialogue with the gods. Instead he experiences only the hostile rejection of the urban masses who are intent on the self-indulgent oblivion of entertainment. His odyssey ends, not in the arms of his longed-for Penelope, but reviled, exhausted and alone. When he collapses in paralysis, he is mistaken for a plonko deadbeat and robbed. But he cannot be defeated because he has gained a new insight through his suffering into the need for positivity and commitment. His triumph is of the spirit.

Siegfried Lenz, who begins *Der Verlust* with scientific emphasis on medical data and even on physical trivia, works deliberately towards the evocation of a crisis and a salvation that are nothing if not spiritual. This is a novel of spiritual love for the tough of heart.

David Myers

ARTHUR F. KINNEY, ED.
*Critical Essays on William Faulkner:
 The Compson Family*
 Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983. Pp.
 433.

Kinney notes that in the past few years critical publications on Faulkner have outnumbered those on any other author in English except Shakespeare. What does Kinney's book offer? It includes a brief history of the writing, publication, and reception of *The Sound and the Fury*; some of Faulkner's short stories and prefaces; first reviews; critical articles (most reprinted but some new) on *The Sound and the Fury*, *Abalom*, *Abalom!*, and stories with Compson characters; an index; and a gallery of pho-

tographs—a likely model for Benjy's iron fence, narcissus flowers, and even the Charles River where Quentin drowns.

The early reviews of *The Sound and the Fury* from the United States, England, and France are often amusing. While many reviewers strongly register a sense of tragedy and greatness, the most memorable ones throw up their hands in despair. "Anonymous" warns that the "obscenities are such that it will be unreadable for most people" (p. 101). Clifton Fadiman disdains its "trivial" (p. 92) theme and characters, and Basil Davenport dismisses the novel's "half a dozen shiftless negroes" (p. 91). Because the reviews appear in full, we hear more often than we need to who narrates each section. Only Orgill Mackenzie varies this repetitive summarizing to point out that the section through Benjy's mind is not so much Benjy's mind as Faulkner's distinctive wording. But beyond this one insight, the reviews mainly provide modern readers a smug superiority. With the elaborate critical explications of Part III to prop us up, we can afford to smile over early readers' exasperation at a difficult style: since modernists exhibit an "utmost lack of communication" (p. 83), *The Sound and the Fury* dances away from the reader as "an ape in moonlight" (p. 88).

The critical essays fall into several categories. They offer portraits of characters, psychoanalyze characters or Faulkner, lay out structure, or debate the final message as nihilism or consolation. On characters, Catherine Baum gives a sensitive picture of Caddy, countering Michel Gresset's unperceptive assertion that Caddy's "relative lack of awareness entails a proportionate lack of responsibility" (p. 174). Duncan Aswell sketches many insights on Jason, while Joan Williams unconvincingly defends Caroline Compson.

On structure, Donald Kartiganer traces a three-generational pattern in several Faulkner novels. H. P. Absalom and John Hagopian are especially helpful in identifying echoes and counterpoints that unify *The Sound and the Fury*.

Quentin provides a field day for literary psychologists. In the most interesting approach, Jackson Benson sees Quentin as a "portrait of the artist as a young man," the modern artist in general and Faulkner in particular. Though Benson sometimes defines motivation for a scene too narrowly—Quentin's attempt to freeze time through suicide "is" the artist's attempt to create a work of art—he does usefully summarize

modern stereotypes of the writer. André Bleikasten underlines the important point that Quentin cares not so much about preserving sexual innocence, his own or Caddy's, as preserving their togetherness. Other psychoanalyses are less successful. Carvel Collins pigeonholes Jason, Quentin, and Benjy as ego, superego, and id, and Thomas Young misinterprets Quentin's main obsession in *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* as a hatred of negroes. John Basset, who largely repeats ideas which appear elsewhere in this book, ferrets out Quentin's need for a mother in his every act, including an (irrelevant) "incipient homosexual relationship" with Shreve (p. 415).

On whether *The Sound and the Fury* offers some antidote to despair, John Hagopian's essay on nihilism and Arthur Geffen's article on profane and sacred time complement one another in a revealing way. These two careful and insightful critics go over the same ground for clues to bolster their yes and no arguments: Dilsey's dress, Dilsey's inaccurate clock, the church like a painted backdrop, Benjy's preference for counter-clockwise movement in his ride around the square. Because they use the same evidence to come to directly opposite conclusions, the reader may have the eerie feeling that Faulkner's words betrayed him into a hopeless ambiguity. Finally, though, Hagopian is less convincing. While he cleverly juxtaposes simultaneous events in Dilsey's day and Jason's, he excerpts some of his references arbitrarily. For instance, he notes that Jason "becomes involved in a furious battle with the indignant carnival hands . . . at that very moment the minister is preaching about 'de angels singin de peaceful songs en de glory'"—implying that the Reverend Shegog has completely lost touch with the real world of pain (p. 201). Yet just after the minister evokes "peaceful songs," he also clearly visualizes Mary's anguish: "I sees de closin eyes/ Sees Mary jump up/ Sees de sojer face/ We gwine to kill/ We gwine to kill/ We gwine to kill yo little Jesus!" (p. 3). Neither the reverend nor Dilsey are so sanguine or so ineffectual as Hagopian implies, and when he declares of Dilsey, "no one listens or learns from her" (p. 200), he omits the reader who appreciates her ability to love within sacred time.

Repetition is inevitably a problem in any large collection of essays on a single subject. After we are already convinced that *The Sound and the Fury* records not just the tragedy of the South but a common misery, other critics assert the same universality. We read more than once that Jason turns out to be

as irrational and obsessive as his brothers. In fact, after Aswell's competent essay on Jason, many remarks about this character are superfluous. Perhaps Kinney could have excerpted more often, leaving, for instance, Bleikasten's perception on Quentin (mentioned above), while omitting some of his less original observations on Jason and Dilsey.

Among these critical essays Kinney also includes a short story, "Candace," by Alan Cheuse. I was delighted that an editor would recognize a creative work as valid commentary, testifying to the influence of Faulkner's style as well as to the haunting humanity of his characters. (Cheuse projects Caddy's life after leaving Mississippi.) Nevertheless, this particular story trivializes Caddy in my opinion. A ludicrous honeymoon scene between Caddy and Herbert Head shows Caddy as a petulant child, stomping her foot and demanding "sodee pop" before she will get into bed. And when a would-be suitor punches the side of his car in frustration, Caddy degenerates to "cute" hip talk: "Don't get so dramatic, Johnny-Bonny, you can't cure your cut and bleeding with a metal massage" (p. 332).

Kinney's criterion for including these writings—that a story or article should illuminate the Compsons—is endearing, a tribute to the power of Faulkner's character portrayal, almost as if Caddy, Benjy, and the rest were real people. While modern critics often invite charges that they sit in ivory towers to throw a chill formal glance on art, Kinney and his host of critics keep turning the pages of *The Sound and the Fury* as if it were an album of blurry photos of people they wished they had met themselves, whose snapshots they will now help to highlight. Like Quentin and Shreve passionately piecing together their versions of the Sutpens, these critics put together a composite Compson family, not to deconstruct Faulkner but to "overpass to love" (*Absalom, Absalom!*, Vintage, 1972, p. 316).

K. J. Phillips

ROY PASCAL

Kafka's Narrators: A Study of His Stories and Sketches.

London: Cambridge University Press, 1982. Pp. 251.

It would be nonsensical to expect a great literary critic's last book to be his finest; therefore, one can say without embarrassment that Roy Pascal's posthumously published *Kafka's Narrators* neither detracts from his reputation nor contributes appreciably to it. The book contains an interesting and knowledgeable study of the major stories and parables in the Kafka canon which affords some insights into his style and the convoluted meanings of his work but leaves its core of mystery, "the Kafka problem," unilluminated.

Pascal addresses two aspects of the tales he discusses beginning with "The Judgment" and ending with "Josephine, the Singer": the kind of narrator and his function in the story. Basically he distinguishes between the omniscient author, prominent in pre-twentieth-century European literature, best exemplified by Dickens, who knows all his characters inside and out and determines their fate, and the point-of-view author, himself a character in his story, whether major or minor or the first-person narrator, limited to one perspective and without authority, a ubiquitous figure in contemporary literature, modelled on the protagonists in Henry James's novels.

According to Pascal, the storyteller in both "The Judgment" and "The Metamorphosis" represents a combination of the two kinds of narrator: he recounts certain events passionately, but in the main purveys the protagonist's viewpoint. This amalgamation of first-person and third-person narrator is, Pascal suggests, "a great technical convenience," which allows Kafka both to establish the scene, sum up, deal with the death of the main character, and also to explore him in depth. When Pascal goes on to interpret the two stories on the basis of Kafka's having used this technique, his conclusions are often unenlightening ("The reader, too, now freed from the mediation of Gregor, has direct access to [others'] thoughts and feelings, even to those of the charwoman," p. 36) or even misleading ("While the absentee [the friend in 'The Judgment'] has a psychological importance earlier in the story . . . his chief function in the quarrel [between Georg und his father] is his irrelevance," p. 50). An-