

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-

other narrator who mixes objective reporting with subjective analysis occurs, as Pascal avers, in "In the Penal Colony." He finds that in this instance Kafka's choice of narrator has dictated the manner in which the story is to be interpreted: since one of the two principals, the officer, is presented only in terms of his actions and remarks, the other, the traveler, whose personal doubts and tribulations are revealed, must be considered Kafka's protagonist. Consequently, the religious symbolism so persistent in regard to the officer cannot prevail in the process of interpreting the story; central must be the problem of the traveler, "the modern enlightened man, the man of 'Geist,' whose distinction it is to have detached himself from action and material interests . . . and whose calamity it is, too" (p. 89), since despite the nobility of his sentiments he lacks sympathy for others.

After "In the Penal Colony" Pascal detects a development in the narrators in Kafka's stories; they become one-sided. "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor," for instance, is strictly a point-of-view account; its narrative aspect, which by convention should be rooted in the use of the past tense, is weakened by the intrusion of a sense that events occur in the present and are left forever unfinished. When as a consequence Pascal labels this story a boneless wonder (p. 104) and an artistic failure (p. 105), intent as he is on establishing a role for the narrator, he ignores the prototypal elements in "Blumfeld," its symbolism, the ramifications of its speculations, which are the hallmark of a Kafka narrative. It can be anticipated, on the other hand, that Pascal will have high praise for "A Hunger Artist" since he has not only singled out the narrator, here but also labeled him a character in the story whose role is as important as that of the hunger artist himself. Pascal's narrator ("the reverse of an omniscient narrator," p. 115) is a showman who celebrates the hunger artist as a vaudeville artist or circus freak and thereby, his style described by Pascal as crude, semi-literate, self-important, and pseudo-scientific (p. 110) betraying his foolishness, brings an element of humor to Kafka's somber tale. "It cannot be doubted that we are meant to enjoy the comedy of this narrator . . ." Pascal posits (p. 128), while we labor to grasp Kafka's point that truth lies concealed from us in a mist of confusion. In evolving his interpretation of "In the Penal Colony," Pascal follows the pattern he has established earlier in the book: he does not deal with many of the previous explications but chooses that one which is

reasonably close to his own in tenor (in this case Eberhard Frey's) and therefore lends itself to elaboration and correction.

The last (and unfinished) section of *Kafka's Narrators* concerns the fables and parables written toward the end of Kafka's brief life; both categories of narrative have a didactic purpose, Pascal concludes, while the fable is set apart by the use of animal characters who, nevertheless, also represent types of human beings. Whether the narrator in these "stories" is a first-person or third-person narrator, he has the stature of a dispassionate authority on the subject under discussion, usually man's alienation (which in "The Huntsman Gracchus" prevails even in death). This estrangement and the subsequent search for an identity motivates Kafka's ape, dog, and mouse, too, although Pascal, by finding "a reduced model of human life" (p. 214) in these fables, is led to suggest that the keynote of failure in the parables has here become one of an intimation of triumph (e.g., the triumph of art over life in "Josephine the Singer").

In accord with recent Kafka criticism, Pascal approaches Kafka's work as the product of an author, rather than that of a theologian, seer, clinical psychologist, and/or existential philosopher. The limited scope of his study allows him to be provocative in his interpretations without having to attempt to be definitive. In like fashion, by restricting his discussion of critical literature to the interpretations of a few authors (Hartmut Binder and M. Dentan are most frequently cited), Pascal has given the readers of *Kafka* who are non-experts the opportunity to be intriguingly informed on the subject of one of the twentieth-century's great authors by way of a scholarly sound, readable critique.

Kurt J. Fickert