

May 26, 1958

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Ann Thornton Benson entitled "The American Criticism of Franz Kafka, 1930-1948." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.

Robert Daniel
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Jersey J. Adams

Leo Simons

Henrik H. Moos

Nathalia Wright

Accepted for the Council:

Dale Hantling
Dean of the Graduate School

THE AMERICAN CRITICISM OF FRANZ KAFKA, 1930-1948

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
The Graduate Council
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Ann Thornton Benson

June 1958

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. <u>The Castle Criticism</u> (1930-1936): Theological	
Beginnings	1
II. Aftermath of <u>The Trial</u> (1937-1940): Rise of the	
Secular Critics	21
III. <u>Amerika</u> and <u>A Franz Kafka Miscellany</u> (1940-1941):	
Psychology and "Socialism"	40
IV. "Kosmos Kafka" (1941-1945): His Infinite Variety	62
V. <u>The Kafka Problem</u> (1946): Confusion Compounded	88
VI. The Battle of the Critics (1946 and After):	
Criticism of Criticism	123
VII. Biography and Psychoanalysis (1947):	
What Was Kafka?	154
VIII. <u>Mirror of Modern Man</u> (1948 and After): Artist	
of the Present Plight	191
Bibliography	230

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE¹

The personal life of Franz Kafka is one of the most interesting in modern letters. For a generation bred to post-Freudian thinking the psychological make-up of this strange, despairing writer proved irresistible. The study of Kafka as a "case" has been pursued by critics much more assiduously than the study of Kafka as a literary artist. Since critics have continually mingled biography with interpretation, the main facts of Kafka's life are needed for an understanding of Kafka criticism.

On July 3, 1883, Franz Kafka was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia, then a part of the highly bureaucratized Austro-Hungarian empire. The son of a self-made dry goods merchant, he was a quiet, sensitive child. He grew up in the fearful shadow of his father's strident, domineering personality. His family was part of a small Jewish minority within the German minority in Prague, and he was educated in German schools. Mainly interested in writing, Kafka studied law because it was the profession to which he could be most indifferent. After receiving a doctorate of jurisprudence, he secured a job in a workers' casualty insurance company because its short hours left him free time to write. Kafka wanted to quit his job and devote himself entirely to writing but was unable during these years to break away from his family. At one time the outbreak of the First World War prevented him from leaving home and becoming a freelance writer; at another, later time his illness was the ostensible

¹The information in this note comes from Max Brod, Franz Kafka: a Biography, trans. G. Humphreys Roberts (New York, 1947).

reason that he remained. Kafka was engaged off and on for five years to a young woman, Felice Bauer, but was unable to go through with the marriage. When he was thirty-four, he developed a serious pulmonary catarrh and gave up his job. For the next few years he lived part of the time in sanatoriums and part of the time with his family. During the last year of his life he fell in love with Dora Dymant, a young Jewish girl, and moved with her to Berlin. Living in privation during the inflationary winter of 1923, he was discovered to have tuberculosis and had to return to a sanatorium. He died June 3, 1924.

Kafka's best-known early works are the short stories "The Metamorphosis," "The Judgment," "A Country Doctor," "In the Penal Colony," and "A Hunger-Artist." Under pressure from Max Brod and other friends, Kafka allowed these to be published in various German language magazines. His three novels--all unfinished--are, in order of composition, Amerika, The Trial, and The Castle. His best-known later stories include "The Burrow," "Investigations of a Dog," and "The Great Wall of China." All of the novels and the later stories were published posthumously. Though Kafka had requested that his literary remains be burned after his death, Max Brod, his friend and literary executor, decided to preserve and publish them. Most of them were translated into English by Edwin and Willa Muir and have been published in America over a period of the past twenty-seven years, from 1930 to 1956.

INTRODUCTION

In 1930 Alfred A. Knopf published one of the most controversial books ever to appear before the American public. It was Franz Kafka's The Castle, translated from the German by Edwin Mair. Its publication marked the beginning of one of the major controversies in modern American criticism.

The Castle is a strange book. It tells the dream-like tale of a man's struggle for recognition from an inscrutable and intangible authority and of his continual frustration in the face of endless red tape and complications which are never resolved. The novel had a profound effect on many readers. Like the rest of Kafka's works, which were to follow, it touched a region of perception which few works of art reach. It seemed to awaken dim, inchoate echoes in some remote region of the mind--to evoke responses which, though incapable of rational formulation, were somehow urgent. It gave the feeling that some long-buried perceptive sense had been spoken to and had responded. Though few people could agree about its meaning, the novel seemed deeply evocative of something important to the human spirit. Many felt in Kafka's writing something great--something even momentous.

No less provocative than The Castle was Kafka's second novel to be published in America, The Trial, which came out in 1937. Like the colorless, anonymous K. of The Castle, The Trial's hero, Joseph K., hopelessly gropes with intangible forces which somehow control his life. Readers of The Trial followed the somnambulistic adventures of Joseph K., a seemingly inoffensive bank official, from the morning of his arrest

for reasons he was never to discover, through interminable attempts to come face to face with his accusers, to his sudden, inexplicable execution by two polite gentlemen in frock coats. Though there were gaps in the story of this fragmentary novel, the pessimistic pattern was evident.

Less somber, but just as enigmatic, was Kafka's third novel to be published in the United States---though the first to have been written. Entitled Amerika, this early novel deals with the adventures of a German emigrant boy in the United States and depicts his treatment at the hands of a variety of people during his search for a place in the new land. Unlike the other two novels, Amerika seemed planned to end on an optimistic note.

Shorter works by Kafka which were published later in the United States had the same strange fascination for many readers that his novels had. In them too emerges the situation of a protagonist who feels himself at the mercy of inscrutable and intangible forces. "In the Penal Colony" depicts an execution performed by a fantastically complex machine which seems to represent a religious ideology. "The Burrow" describes the frantic efforts of a small animal to make his burrow invulnerable to attack from outside. "A Country Doctor" tells the dreamlike story of a doctor who is irresistibly transported to a sick home to find there an incurable wound, and is then borne away for an eternal ride over snowy wastes. "The Metamorphosis" describes the predicament of a young salesman who awakes one morning to find that he has turned into a giant insect. And "The Great Wall of China" depicts the apparently senseless and completely disorganized building of the Great Wall by generations of peasants who have no idea why they are building it or who has ordered it.

However, though the relationship between an individual and the forces which shape his destiny is a common theme of Kafka's, the settings are so varied, the problems of the protagonists are often so bizarre, and, above all, the symbolic overtones are so manifold and so shadowy, that the writings as a whole give anything but the impression of unity. Furthermore, the piecemeal way in which they were released over a period of twenty-seven years militated against an understanding of them as a whole.

But neither the complexity of the works themselves nor the sporadic way in which they were presented to the American public can fully account for the chaotic picture of Kafka which now exists in the minds of many Americans. This has been largely the work of the critics. Few critical controversies of any age have led readers so far afield as did this one. Kafka's strange appeal to something beyond the rational level evidently impressed many as a special message intelligible only to them. As the editor of a volume of Kafka criticism put it: "Nearly everyone who reads Kafka, not to mention many who don't, seems to have not the slightest doubt that he understands him perfectly, and moreover that he is the only one who does."² Certainly a tone of remarkable assurance dominates much of the criticism which Kafka's strange fiction was to bring forth.

The variety of Kafka interpretations is staggering. Major critics in this controversy have represented beliefs and ideologies of the most varied sorts. There have been Calvinists, Roman Catholics, and

²Angel Flores, "Introduction," The Kafka Problem (New York, 1946), p. ix.

existentialists, Slavophiles, socialists, and psychoanalysts. Other critics have found the key to Kafka's works in the fields of metaphysics, theology, sociology, and psychology. And surrealism, nihilism, and Judaism have had their exponents. In addition to the major critics, nearly every reviewer and imitative critic has added his own personal twist to the particular interpretation which he espouses.

By and large, the criticism has been narrow in range; few critics have attempted to interpret Kafka's fictional works as a whole, and still fewer seem to have had a first-hand knowledge of his diaries. The early critics, of course, were hampered unless they read German. For few of Kafka's works had been translated in the early years of critical development, and, hence, to get a general view of them was impossible.

In general, Kafka's critics have fallen into four groups: (1) the reviewers for newspapers and weekly magazines, who, deadline-ridden, have followed the interpretive introductions, afterwords, and editorial notes in each volume to be reviewed or have parroted the tenets of a favorite critical coterie; (2) the critics with some special interest, ideology, or -ism who have found in Kafka a kindred spirit; (3) the critics who have been interested in Kafka only as a psychological "case"; and (4) the few critics who, working from a sufficient knowledge of Kafka's works, his life, and his times, have viewed his published works in toto and without bias.

Naturally, the first group could do little but repeat the ideas of others. Those in the second group, however--though their influence was in one way helpful--did something much more destructive to an understanding of Kafka. They took from his works just what suited

their particular theory or ideology and ignored or twisted the rest to fit into an extremely narrow interpretation. These were the critics who would make Kafka a champion of one particular socio-economic theory, of one neatly labelled philosophic outlook, or of a particular religious doctrine. By and large these exponents of special interests obscured the understanding of Kafka not only by their often fantastic interpretations but also by shifting critical attention away from him and to themselves. Far-fetched as some of these interpretations were, however, they did bring out facets of his works which probably would have escaped less dedicated minds. Hence the special-interest interpretations as a whole broadened the understanding of Kafka's works by showing the many-sidedness and ambiguity which are their most fascinating characteristic. Readers were made aware of the loneliness and sense of alienation which Jewish readers feel in Kafka's protagonists; they saw the existential overtones in the absurdity of man's fate in the Kafkan world; they recognized the Calvinistic theology of crisis in Kafka's crucial situations and the Kierkegaardian abyss between Man and God in the persistent questioning of Kafka's heroes. They were introduced to the Czech influences on Kafka's works and saw the possible effects of surrealism in his dream-like style. They became aware of socialistic suggestions in K.'s struggle to find his place in a community dominated by unseen forces. They saw the Kafkan protagonist's likeness to the harried, cipher-like employee in a modern bureaucracy. In fact, there seemed to be so many intertwined elements in Kafka's works that the facets which could be examined were almost inexhaustible.

But the serious damage done by critics who discovered these

"facets" was their presentation--implicitly or explicitly--of Kafka as understandable only through one special interpretation. When attacked, many of them dug in, prepared to defend their positions to the death; and the critical war which resulted diverted interest from Kafka to his critics.

The third group of commentators who contributed to the critical war as well as to the distortion of Kafka--the psychoanalysts--found in the writer himself an irresistible case study. Carried away by the medley of neurotic symptoms which he manifested, they produced an endless stream of Freudian analyses, nearly all of which stopped short of considering Kafka's works as literature. They are distinguished from the second group by the fact that they analyzed the man rather than his works. Though some of these critics made important contributions to a psychological understanding of Kafka, few of them were interested in him as a writer. Like so many other psychoanalytic critics, these seemed to assume that once a writer has been explained psychologically, his interpretation is complete. This fallacious assumption tended to make many readers dismiss Kafka as "neurotic." But this was not all the damage done by the psychoanalytic "school." Though many in this group seemed to be well grounded in their discipline, there were others who became so carried away with symbol-hunting expeditions into Kafka that they went to ridiculous extremes. Their irresponsible speculations drew furious rebuttals from various other interpretive groups and muddled the critical waters more than ever.

The most fruitful interpretations of Kafka's works have come--scattered over a period of many years--from the fourth group of critics--

those who, without apparent bias, developed their explanations in the light of the works as a whole and with a knowledge of the man and his times. Within this group there were various interpretations, but all of them were characterized by breadth and sanity. Some of these critics saw Kafka as dealing with man's futile struggle to understand the ways of an enigmatic and intangible God. Others interpreted him as seeking a cohesive world-view and his proper place in it. Some saw in his work the plight of modern man--the anguished situation of a sensitive individual caught in the highly systematized and materialistic modern world. And still others saw in Kafka's works contemporary Western man, wandering without a faith, crippled by his rationalistic orientation, trying in vain to search out the secret of an inscrutable universe by pure reason. What all of these critics had in common was their view of Kafka as interested in man's relationship to forces greater than he is and beyond his control. What they were exempt from was the destructive tendency to restrict Kafka's meaning. They did not seek to find in his works one certain narrow doctrine or belief. These critics seemed to realize that Kafka's works evaporate when one tries to dissect them. They realized that to explain his imagery was to explain it away--that to show a special psychological, theological, or sociological theory lurking beneath his narrative is to destroy the delicate ambiguity, the subtle play of tone and attitude, the shadowy implications which give his works their elusive beauty.

The critical controversy over Kafka did not begin suddenly. A flurry of reviews and a few articles followed publication of The Castle, and then Kafka was all but forgotten by the critical world until The

Trial was published some seven years later. The theological interpretation which had completely dominated criticism of The Castle now came in for a serious attack by critics who saw in Kafka's novels a secular rather than a religious meaning. Conspicuous among the secular interpretations was the socio-political theory which portrayed Kafka as wholly mundane in orientation. The publication of Amerika three years later further confused the critical scene. Apparently optimistic, Amerika did not fit into either critical interpretation, and so it brought forth little but a search for sources. As time went on and critics digested the three novels, in addition to the short stories, which were appearing frequently in the little magazines, an amazing variety of critical positions began to take shape. The Jewish interpretation, first promulgated in the post-Castle period, now began to develop rapidly. A spectacular theory linking Kafka with the decline of the German people into totalitarianism brought down the cry of "Stalinist!" on one critic's head. The psychoanalytic critics went busily to work delving into biographical material. Kafka was discovered to be a surrealist, an existentialist, a neurotic incapable of resisting vested interests, and the representative modern man. All of these conflicting theories brought retorts and recriminations from opposing theorists, and all-out critical war seemed probable.

The publication of a large volume of critical articles on Kafka made this probability a certainty. The variety of interpretations represented in this collection was overwhelming, and the critical response to it was quick and violent. Now most critics spent at least half of their articles denouncing other critics before they began their

own expositions. Kafka himself was virtually forgotten by the combatants. This wave of criticism of criticism reached its peak in 1946, when the publication in book form of many of Kafka's stories and short pieces seemed to awaken interest in Kafka himself and bring critics back to the matter at hand. Two extreme psychoanalytical studies and a biography which stressed the theological interpretation came out next, but by and large the theological and psychoanalytic interpretations had lost ground. The emerging trend among competent critics was toward viewing Kafka as representative of modern man in the troubled world of Western civilization. Publication of a part of Kafka's diaries did little to change this trend. Nor did the appearance of the first and only comprehensive book-length study of Kafka's works, which added nothing startlingly new. Though most of the major interpretive "schools"--the theological, the psychoanalytical, the socio-political, the Judaistic--continued to voice their theories, the emerging trend seemed undeniable. The comparatively sound and conservative explanation of Kafka as reflecting the manifold problems of modern man seemed on firm ground.

The value and soundness of this conception is demonstrated by comparing it with the bulk of Kafka interpretations. In the pages to follow, a survey and assessment of Kafka interpretation published in the United States is made. This study covers a period of eighteen years of criticism, beginning with the publication of Kafka's first work in this country in 1930 and ending in 1948, by which time the main critical interpretations were fully developed and criticism was becoming largely repetitious. It reviews all books, periodical articles and newspaper reviews dealing with Kafka during this period, including ones by such

well-known American critics as Edmund Wilson, Clifton Fadiman, Randall Jarrell, F. O. Matthiessen, Norman Thomas, and Austin Warren, in addition to those of eminent foreign critics published in this country. This study traces the development of various interpretive "schools" and the critical warfare which developed among them as a result of the many extreme theories which were advanced. It describes the critical chaos which was characteristic of Kafka commentary and which all but obscured the few superior interpretations advanced by such critics as Philip Rahv, Frederick J. Hoffman, W. H. Auden, William Phillips, and Walter J. Ong. It calls attention to the more reasonable explanations and shows the slow progress of Kafka criticism toward an interpretation which, in its breadth and sanity, seemed more nearly acceptable than any other.

CHAPTER I

THE CASTLE CRITICISM (1930-1936): THEOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS

I

The publication of The Castle in 1930 initiated the first phase of American Kafka criticism, which lasted until the publication of The Trial in 1937. In a general summary of this phase, the dominant figures were Max Brod and Edwin Muir. Together, as the authors of the volume's interpretive material, they exercised a powerful influence on reviewers. Brod, having been Kafka's close friend and literary executor, was naturally considered by many readers to be the authority on him. Muir, being his translator and an eminent critic besides, was listened to with respect also. Hence, the ideas of these two men carried a great deal of weight. In particular, their conception of Kafka's theme as the incessant search of man for divine grace was echoed by most of the reviewers of the novel.

There were other interpretations, however, than the theological. The germs of what were to become some of the major critical "schools" are to be found in this early period. The conception of Kafka as expressing the plight of the Jew originated at this time. The view that his hero represents Everyman in the modern bureaucratic world made its first appearance. Criticism of his works from a psychological standpoint began. The conception of this writer as too complex for one explanation alone--as capable of numerous valid interpretations--had its first expression in early Castle criticism. And the explanation of the Kafkan

hero as a man who suddenly awakens to a realization of "another world" of different values and to the shallowness of his existence made its first appearance during this period. These interpretive ideas were for the most part embryonic and tentative, often being given simply as suggestions, in addition to a restatement of the widely accepted theological interpretation. On the whole, criticism of The Castle was vague and unsure compared with later criticism. Some reviewers frankly admitted that they did not know what the novel was about. But already one or two were showing signs of the belligerence and dogmatism that were to become characteristic of Kafka criticism as a whole. The critical war, like some of the most important critical schools, was already developing at this early stage.

In addition to fledgling interpretations, certain tendencies and attitudes which were to prove characteristic of many Kafka critics made an early appearance in the aftermath of The Castle. A discussion of the writer as an allegorist, which was to continue pro and con throughout the history of Kafka criticism, began at this time. The endless literary comparisons and the search for influences began, with critics trying to establish a connection between this bafflingly individualistic writer and such men as Rilke, Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, Pascal, and Bunyan. Too, the conception of him as comprehensible to only a small, discriminating group of readers was first voiced in these early days, as was the idea that he defies evaluation. All in all, the seven years of criticism between The Castle and The Trial, dominated though they were by the theological interpretation, contained the seeds of many of the most important theories and ideas about Kafka's works which were to develop in

later years.

II

The first two critics to present their interpretations of Kafka to the American public were Edwin Muir and Max Brod. Their ideas, expressed in the "Introductory Note"¹ and the "Additional Note"² respectively of The Castle, set the pattern for the powerful theological "school" of Kafka criticism. In his introduction Muir labels both The Castle and The Trial (not at this time translated into English) metaphysical or theological novels. "Their subject matter . . . is not the life and manners of any locality or any country; it is rather human life wherever it is touched by the powers which all religions have acknowledged, by divine law and divine grace" (vi-vii). Similarly, Brod sees The Trial and The Castle as complementary presentations of "the two manifested forms of the Godhead (in the sense of the Cabbala), justice and grace" (332). In The Castle, he says, the great desire of K., the hero, to find a place in the village has theological implications; for the Castle itself, holding sway over the villagers below, represents divine grace, and the village, human destiny.

The novel was to end, Brod tells us, in this way: K., the Land Surveyor, about to die worn out by his struggles to reach the Castle, was to receive word from it that, though his legal claim to live in

¹Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York), pp. v-xi.

²Pp. 329-340.

the village is not valid, he would be allowed to live and work there due to "auxiliary circumstances" (330). This enigmatic ending, Brod tells us, reflects Kafka's belief in the incommensurability of God's ways and man's ways--a theological principle central to Kierkegaard's philosophy. Brod finds that this belief, which underlies all of Kafka's works, is the key to his attitude toward God and the world.

Muir considers Kafka's religious attitude highly individual and points out that it is unlike the attitudes which writers usually assume toward the divine enigma: it is neither one of resignation, nor one of irony; nor is it Baudelaire and Rimbaud's pose of the spectacular wrestler with God. Muir finds Kafka's attitude best expressed in two axioms: one, "that compared with the divine law, however unjust it may sometimes appear, all human effort, even at its highest, is in the wrong" (x); the other, "that at all times, whatever we may think, the demand of the divine law for unconditional reverence is beyond question" (x). Muir describes Kafka as a man more subtly skeptical than the most skeptical of our own generation. Yet, he was certain of a final faith, says Muir, for his basic postulates are "that there is a right way of life, and that the discovery of it depends on one's attitude to powers which are almost unknown" (viii).

A controversial point in Muir's article is his comparison of The Castle with Pilgrim's Progress. The two allegorical novels have many points of similarity, he says, the main difference in them being that "Christian knows from the beginning what the necessary moves are [to work out his salvation], and K. . . . has to discover every one of

them for himself, and has no final assurance even then that he has discovered the right ones" (vii). This allegorical interpretation was later to be echoed by some critics and attacked by others.

The first review of The Castle to appear in a weekly periodical came out in The New Yorker³ and closely follows the theological interpretations of Muir and Brod, viewing the novel as an allegory of man's search for divine grace. The reviewer follows Muir's comparison of K. to Bunyan's Pilgrim and Brod's comparison of him to Faust, suggesting also his similarity to Peer Gynt. He has nothing complimentary to say about the book and warns the reader that it is dull, that its allegory is often obscured and fogged beyond all reason, and that Kafka has "no brilliancy of words to light you on your way" (89). Then, giving Kafka the coup de grace, he adds that no book "this season" has been "so prayerfully planned or so earnestly written" (89).

During the next week this first review was followed by three more, all appearing in the book-review sections of daily newspapers and all marked by a note of caution which was to be conspicuously lacking as Kafka criticism progressed.

Coley Taylor, in the New York Herald Tribune Books⁴ was not only cautious, but also more prophetic than he knew in finding The Castle "rich enough for various interpretations" (7). His review is notable for questioning the usual theological analysis and suggesting

³A. W. S., Review of The Castle, VI (September 20, 1930), 89.

⁴"The Right Life," September 21, 1930, p. 7.

a possible secular explanation: The Castle could be "as much an allegory of Everyman in the modern world as it is a religious allegory" (7). Too, Taylor suggests as more useful than Brod's conception of K. the possibility that K. is simply the ordinary person who undertakes the hopeless task of influencing a modern bureaucratic institution.

Walter Yust, reviewing for the Philadelphia Public Ledger,⁵ makes no attempt to explain The Castle and says that neither Muir nor Brod in their notes can state exactly what it is about. "The Castle reaches toward a new dimension," he says; "here is certainly a fresh beauty and reassuring evidence that life, for the truly sensitive mind, achieves a drama but few of us of average temperament can imagine" (9). What the novel actually means, he concludes, "remains the privilege and the pleasure of the reader to decide" (9).

Gorham Munson, too, in the New York Sun,⁶ seems unsure of the meaning of The Castle, though he does believe the theme is religious. The fact that the novel "breaks off before the decisive point in its development has been reached" (30) forces one to rely on the interpretations given by Brod and Muir, he says. Praising Kafka as a writer of "extraordinary parts" (30), Munson at the same time questions his ability to measure up to the task he has undertaken, though he never makes it quite clear what he thinks this task is.

Three weeks after the appearance of Coley Taylor's suggested

⁵"Of Making Many Books--'," September 22, 1930, p. 9.

⁶"An Inspiring Fragment," September 26, 1930, p. 30.

secular interpretation Gerald Sykes of The Nation⁷ registered a strong protest against it: Mr. Sykes believes that K.'s struggles with the Castle officials "constitute by no means a satire on bureaucracy . . . but are instead a minutely exact description of certain theological realities which demand an extraordinary amount of patience and delicacy to be perceived" (411). Mr. Sykes predicts that Kafka will find a place "among the foremost writers of our time" (411), although his appeal now is limited to a "discriminating minority" (411). He admits that time and many rereadings are required to understand The Castle, but does find that the message of humility in it is clear: "So sternly is the godless modern reader reminded of K.'s irremediable lowliness (and his own) that more than once, caught helplessly in a net of disagreeable truth, he actually loses his temper. There was," he concludes, "a fine balance in Kafka between the artist and the moralist" (412).

Following up his "Introductory Note" to The Castle, Edwin Muir's "A Note on Franz Kafka" appeared late in 1930 in The Bookman.⁸ In this article Mr. Muir reiterates and further develops his belief that in The Castle and The Trial "Kafka's hero is concerned mainly with comprehending the order of the spiritual universe, for only by doing this can he hope to find his way, and achieve his salvation" (238). He traces connections between Kafka and such writers as Rilke, Pascal,

⁷"Introducing Franz Kafka," CXXXI (October 15, 1930), 411-412.

⁸LXXIII (November, 1930), 235-241.

Kierkegaard, Dante, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy and expands his earlier comparison of Kafka with Bunyan. He sees in Kafka and Rilke the same practical temper and the same conviction "that the relation of man to God is not only a mystery, but also a problem" (235). He compares Kafka with Pascal in "the daring and solidity of his thought, and in his purgatorial temper" (240). Like Brod, he sees Kierkegaard's theory of the incommensurability of the divine and the human moral law as a deep influence on Kafka. In The Trial, Amerika, and The Castle he sees "a trilogy corresponding with grotesque differences to the Divine Comedy" (236). And he finds the fictional characters of Kafka and Dostoyevsky comparable in their "mixture of the natural and the preternatural which makes their outlines periodically dissolve and combine again in a continuously more mythical pattern" (237).

In a penetrating analysis of Kafka's pathetic effects, Mair calls attention to a characteristic Kafkan technique: "The pathos of moderate hopes, which in spite of their moderation are yet worthy of being clung to, even with desperation: this is a province which Kafka has made his own" (240). The pathos of these moderate hopes "consists in their inadequacy to the vast journey which still lies before the hero, and in the fact that they are founded on experience which must needs be invalid for the problems which will confront him there. Yet they have some kind of use; their existence helps him, even if when he comes to apply them at some future time they will be found mysteriously lacking" (240).

The next newspaper review of The Castle appeared in the Boston

Transcript⁹ and addressed itself particularly to the comparison of Kafka's novel with Pilgrim's Progress begun by Muir and echoed by The New Yorker. The comparison is somewhat misleading, writes the Transcript's reviewer, in that while Christian symbolizes Everyman, K. represents the exceptional soul--the "stranger"--whose very problem is that he cannot find religious salvation in the simple, unquestioning way that the "Everymen" of the Castle village can. However, though the comparison is not valid in some respects, it is significant in that "nothing could more vividly indicate the growth in complexity of the problems of the religious mind since the disruption of primitive religious systems . . ." (5).

This review, which referred to The Castle as "a beautiful piece of work . . . so individual, so unlike anything else that we know in modern literature" (5), was followed shortly by one which minced no words in condemning the novel. The "Book Notes" reviewer in The New Republic¹⁰ finds that Kafka "has not overcome the dangers of the allegorical form" (117). Furthermore, he writes, "the vagueness of style, of substance and religious aspiration, leaves this mystical fiction with the minimum of interest for the reader and notably for the American public" (117).

Clifton Fadiman, reviewing a short time later for The New

⁹M. L. S., "The Timeless Picture of a Groping Human Soul," November 8, 1930, p. 5.

¹⁰LXV (December 10, 1930), 117.

Freeman,¹¹ makes no such attempt to assess the value of The Castle, saying that one can no more evaluate it than one can Blake's Prophetic Books. He does, however, describe it, saying that it has at the same time richness, humor, and dulness. Essentially without characters, plot, or theme, The Castle, he believes, would have been a theology had it not been for Kafka's "concreteness of imagination and incapability of abstract disquisition" (310). For, states Fadiman, in odd contradiction to his assertion that the novel is themeless, it is a religious work in which the Castle itself represents Heaven, God, Grace, or whatever lies beyond the religiously organized life, and K. is the pilgrim vainly endeavoring to adjust his ethical values to the incomprehensible system of the Castle. Following Brod, Fadiman asserts that Kafka laid great stress on "the spiritual importance of communal roots" (310), which we see in The Castle as the necessity of K.'s finding a place in the village in order to understand the Castle. In agreement with Gerald Sykes' refutation of the secular interpreters, Fadiman unequivocally states that the novel is not a commentary on modern life with its complicated hierarchy of confusing executive machinery.

Appearing shortly after Mr. Fadiman's review, the New York World's¹² review of The Castle agreed generally with the theological interpretations, with the qualification that "the story does not

¹¹"Pilgrim's Frustration," II (December 10, 1930), 310.

¹²Clinton Simpson, "A Fine Modern Allegory," December 14, 1930, p. 3E.

represent a struggle for salvation so much as the hero's attempt to penetrate religious mysteries with the mind . . ." (3E).

Next to appear was the New York Times Book Review's assessment of The Castle,¹³ in which the reviewer closely follows Brod, describing both The Castle and The Trial as "intricate analyses of man's search for divine grace" (9). Like Fadiman, he finds in the novel some dulness and explains that this is because the weight of the allegory is too great. When allegory "becomes a psychological and rather personal reaction, it becomes unclear," he says. "It cannot deal with the more intricate types of experiences, because not every man has these experiences" (9). He feels, however, that Kafka's work will endure "not because of the allegory, but because of the novelist's gifts as a story teller and genius of construction, and because of his style" (9).

Following the flurry of reviews in 1930, the next two years yielded nothing in the way of Kafka criticism. Then in 1933 in Arthur Eloesser's Modern German Literature¹⁴ appeared the first hint of the psychological approach which was later to assume paramount importance. Eloesser describes Kafka as having "the gift of depicting his own shrinking from life, or impotence to deal with it" (405). Except for this tentative feeler into psychological territory, Eloesser adheres to the orthodox interpretation, stressing the religious theme in Kafka and describing him as "a pessimist in whose eyes God had to justify

¹³"A Modern Allegory," December 21, 1930, p. 9.

¹⁴Trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York), pp. 405-406.

Himself for having permitted the existence of evil, though he afterwards admitted that, in His relentless way, God is always right, and men bring their fate upon themselves" (405).

The first reference to Kafka made by a periodical after 1930, the year of The Castle, appeared in 1934, when The Literary World devoted an entire issue to him, commemorating the tenth anniversary of his death.¹⁵ This issue, under the guest editorship of Angel Flores, contains short tributes by Thomas Mann, Max Brod, Michael J. Bernstein, Denis Saurat, and Waldo Frank; a translation by William A. Drake of "A Report for an Academy"; a photograph and a caricature of Kafka; and several very brief comments from such critics as Conrad Aiken, Robert E. Sherwood, and Gorham Munson.

Leading off in the series of short tributes entitled "Homage to Franz Kafka," Thomas Mann names The Trial and The Castle as among the best books he has read lately, and describes them as "narratives with endless ramifications, suffused with dreamlike humor, touched with disease, and yet conceived and executed with utter artistic integrity."¹⁶ He praises Max Brod for his unflagging interest in Kafka.

Brod himself describes The Castle as "a compendium of the world"¹⁷ and, as all people sense in themselves a kinship to K., "a book of self-recognition for everyone." He refers the reader to his

¹⁵No. 3 (July, 1934).

¹⁶Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid.

"Additional Note" to The Castle for an exposition of the universal or religious interpretation of the novel and then offers a more specific one--the Jewish interpretation. Though the word Jew never appears in the book, he writes, ". . . you detect almost tangibly that in The Castle Kafka has set forth the great and tragic presentation of assimilation and of its futility, that from his Jewish soul he has said more in this simple tale about the universal situation of Jewry than can be gleaned from a hundred scientific treatises." Brod's suggestion of the Jewish theme was to develop later into a "school" of Kafka criticism which had many adherents.

In a letter to The Literary World following his article, Brod calls attention to his portrayal of Kafka as the character Richard Garta in Zauberreich der Liebe (published in England as The Kingdom of Love). A reconstruction of this portrait appears in Michael J. Bernstein's tribute to Kafka in The Literary World.¹⁸ Bernstein notes Garta's (and hence Kafka's) interest in Zionism and lays stress on Kafka's attitudes and concepts which were typically Jewish. Going so far as to employ the word saint, Bernstein compares the writer to the great prophets of history, and speculates that only his lack of self-confidence kept him from being a leader of humanity like Jesus, Moses, or Buddha. Kafka's great quest in life, he says, was for perfection, and his constant endeavor was to unravel the divine mystery of the universe.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 2-3.

Like Bernstein, Denis Saurat sees as Kafka's main theme the incessant search for God.¹⁹ Illustrative of this search are K.'s attempts to reach the Castle by various means: through the Castle bureaucracy (symbolic of the approach to God through religious orthodoxy), through incompetent administrative channels (symbolic of the intellectual approach), and through promiscuity (symbolic of the approach through feeling). All K. succeeds in doing is getting permission to live and die in the village, an outcome from which Saurat concludes that Kafka reaches even deeper than Proust in expressing the very minimum of hope.

In fact, Mr. Saurat ranks him as the greatest German writer since Nietzsche--Mann included, evidently--and the only writer of our time who equals Proust. He sees his work as typical of German literary art in that the main value of it lies "on the way" rather than in the final meaning, which Saurat describes as "commonplace, trivial or puerile," faults to be found, he thinks, in German writing in general, including such works as Faust and Parsifal.

In opposition to the religious interpretations of most of the contributors to The Literary World's Kafka issue, Waldo Frank sees reflected in this writer's work "the modern catastrophic crisis of the Western world."²⁰ Like Dostoyevsky, he says, Kafka sought "within the exploding fragments of modern culture the seed of rebirth" (2).

¹⁹Ibid., p. 3.

²⁰Ibid., p. 2.

But, unlike most German writers of his time from whom comes "the most colossally corrupt thinking of our era" (2), he does not fear the threshold of death--which is really life--does not frantically try to rush back to the life behind him--which is death--as do Keyserling and Spengler, for example.

In addition to the five articles entitled "Homage to Franz Kafka," this special issue of The Literary World contained a collection of short quotations from opinions given by various critics: Robert F. Sherwood dryly expresses the thought that perhaps Kafka was wiser than Brod in requesting that his works be burned. Conrad Aiken writes, "The Castle is a masterpiece . . . one of the really unique things I've encountered in my life."²¹ Gorham Munson is not sure Kafka measured up to the theme of The Castle. Edwin Muir rates him above Rilke and Proust. And the Nation and Athenaeum finds The Castle hardly worth while for one who has read Gulliver's Travels and Pilgrim's Progress.

Though designed to stimulate interest in Kafka, The Literary World's special issue provoked little critical activity, and the year 1935 produced only one article on him. In this article, however, an important step was made in the psychological interpretation. Werner Neuse in Books Abroad²² applies to the writer for the first time the word guilt--a word which, in the minds of many critics of psychological bent, was to become the key to the Kafka mystery. "Perhaps no

²¹"Franz Kafka 1883-1924," pp. 2-3.

²²"Franz Kafka," IX (Summer, 1935), 266-268.

other man has felt so keenly the modern profound fear called 'Weltangst'" (268): thus Mr. Neuse characterizes Kafka, in whose works he sees "the relentless searching of a troubled soul" (266). His search takes us to another world--a world in which natural laws are turned topsy-turvy; where reality as we conceive it is smashed to pieces; where the spiritual inner drama of our lives unfolds itself with a purpose beyond our comprehension and a termination beyond our life span; where an unknown "Law" or "Laws" are in operation--a "real" world, which is beyond our comprehension, where one sees, to use Kafka's own words, "that the inconceivable is inconceivable" (266). Once realizing that he is a part of this other existence, the individual is overwhelmed with a terrible uncertainty, a sense of guilt, a realization that he is in isolation and that others look upon him as a "case" (as they do upon Samsa in "The Metamorphosis," Joseph K. in The Trial, and K. in The Castle). The agonizing inner struggle which ensues upon this realization is resolved only by death, and man's duty is to recognize his guilt and accept his punishment.

Mr. Neuse points out, however, that Kafka is not entirely pessimistic, for he looks upon God's ways as incomprehensible to man just as man's ways are incomprehensible to animals. (And this explains his repeated use of animals in his stories.) This fact alone is encouraging, for "the absolute difficulty indicates the connection with the absolute Good" (267).

The year 1936 saw only one critical discussion--that of Stephen

Spender in The Destructive Element.²³ Spender regards Kafka as "more than any other writer, plunged into the destructive element" (242). His conception of society as authoritative, ironically religious, and nihilistic offers no solution, writes Spender. Never able to determine whether the authority exercised over man by society is inane or sensible, he always left his works inconclusive--often unfinished. Oddly enough, in view of his next article to come out, Spender makes no suggestion of a religious meaning in Kafka's works and seems to regard them from a purely secular standpoint.

III

Compared with later periods in Kafka criticism, the prevailing tendency among critics in the post-Castle period was to rely on a ready-made interpretation. With the exception of Max Brod and Edwin Muir, who doubtless had the advantage of a thorough knowledge of Kafka's works in German, few critics advanced substantial theories in explanation of The Castle. This was of course particularly true of the reviewers, who had little time to probe into the mystery of this arresting novelist but were forced by time to find something to say and find it quickly. Most of them naturally turned to the introductory and additional notes of Muir and Brod and accepted The Castle as a theological novel depicting man's search for divine grace.

A notable exception was Coley Taylor, who suggested that the

²³(New York, 1936), pp. 242-245.

novel might have a secular meaning. Taylor's conception of the novel as an allegory of Everyman in the modern bureaucratic world was to find ample support when The Trial was published and was to become an important element of the soundest interpretation of later years.

Another important presage of things to come was the consideration by Arthur Eloesser and Werner Neuse of the psychological overtones in Kafka's writings. Eloesser, though his interpretation was basically religious, mentioned the writer's "shrinking from life or impotence to deal with it." And Neuse devoted a good part of his discussion to the guilt--"the modern profound fear called 'Weltangst'" which is reflected in Kafka's works. These simple beginnings were to develop later into one of the most extreme "schools" of criticism--the psychoanalytic.

Also important in Neuse's discussion was his explanation of the Kafka hero as a man who has a sudden awakening--who suddenly sees the pettiness of his life and becomes conscious of a "real" world which controls the apparent one but is incomprehensible to him. This idea of the "sudden awakening" was to recur frequently in later criticism.

Still another early indication of a trend to come was the Jewish interpretation which Max Brod offered in addition to, or as complementary to, his broad theological one. Future years were to find many critics developing this theory, as more of Kafka's works were published and the sense of loneliness and alienation was to become more apparent in his writing.

In spite of these important indications of future developments,

the two outstanding interpretations of this period were those of Max Brod and Edwin Muir. Both men saw the subject of Kafka's works as man's search for divine law and divine grace. Their conception of the writer as primarily metaphysical in orientation was to prove the most persistently recurrent idea in Kafka criticism, though later critics were to object strenuously to certain aspects of this view. Many critics were to take exception to Brod's emphasis on K.'s desire to fit into the community as a way to finding grace. And many were to object to Muir's allegorical interpretation and comparison of Kafka to Bunyan. But that Kafka's fundamental interest was in the relationship of man to higher powers few of the first-rate critics would deny. And, Brod and Muir's emphasis on the unbridgeable abyss between man and these higher powers was to be reflected in the future by critics of a variety of "schools," though most of them would call these powers by anything and everything but the name God.

Though the theological interpretation satisfied the majority of The Castle critics, such was not to be the case when The Trial was published. Though it shared with its predecessor the situation of a protagonist confronted by inscrutable powers, these powers took on such a sordid and bureaucratic appearance in The Trial that it was difficult to see them as manifestations of the divine. Instead of the clear, cold air of a small mountain village lying beneath the mist-shrouded Castle, one breathed in The Trial the stagnant air of stuffy law courts in the midst of the slums of a large city. To regard the distant Castle as in some way representative of divinity was not

difficult. But to imagine as divine the powers which set in motion Joseph K.'s interminable search through filthy tenements--his dealings with every type of sordidness, inefficiency, and pettiness--was almost impossible. The novel seemed much more easily explained by a secular theory than by a theological one. Most critics evidently felt this, for from the time of The Trial's publication, the influence of the theological interpretation waned.

CHAPTER II

AFTERMATH OF THE TRIAL (1937-1940):

RISE OF THE SECULAR CRITICS

I

Several reviewers had found The Castle incomprehensible, and at least two found The Trial so too. But most of them had some definite theory to advance.

In general, the theological explanations were not so dependent now on Brod and Muir as had been earlier ones, but were modified considerably. One such modification was designed to show the religious interpretation as a basis for a superimposed secular one. Another presented Kafka as broadly metaphysical in orientation, rather than as theological in any narrow sense. On the other hand, one religious theory narrowed the established explanation to one specific religious doctrine.

Some critics turned completely away from a theological approach and explained The Trial, with its secret courts and twisted justice, as a dire prophecy of things to come in post-war Europe or as a portrait of the lonely, cipher-like man of modern urban society.

An important development for the future of the psychological theorists came with the publication in 1938 of excerpts from a letter by Kafka to his father, in which the writer's abiding psychological problems became apparent. This letter--though one of the most valuable

documents concerning Kafka--was later to become a Pandora's box in the hands of overenthusiastic psychoanalytic critics.

Though criticism of The Trial was certainly inconclusive, it showed a strong trend away from the original theological interpretation and toward the secular. The conception of Kafka as a critic of his own society or of modern Western civilization in general began a rapid development at this time.

II

"Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning."¹ Thus begins Franz Kafka's second novel to be published in America--a novel similar to The Castle in the hero's futile struggle with intangible forces, but quite different in setting and plot.

The meaning of this strange book, like the meaning of The Castle, is certainly not obvious. Unlike The Castle, however, The Trial volume contained little explanatory information. Instead of the extensive explanations offered by Edwin Muir and Max Brod in their introductory and additional notes to The Castle, there is only a short epilogue by Brod.² In it he discusses two subjects: (1) his decision to publish Kafka's works in spite of the writer's request that they be burned, and (2) the problems he faced in editing The Trial

¹Franz Kafka, The Trial, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York, 1937), p. 3.

²Pp. 291-297.

manuscript.

Quoting from the notes in which Kafka requested that all his literary remains be destroyed, Brod relates that he had answered one of these notes by stating flatly that he would never do such a thing. Even after this, however, Kafka had retained him as his literary executor--proof, says Brod, that the request was not serious. Other "burn-everything" notes, he recalls, were written by Kafka during periods of intense self-criticism, in a nihilistic frame of mind which was quite uncharacteristic of his last years. Brod explains that Kafka's negative attitude toward his work's being published was partly due to the high religious standard which he applied to his writing and his inability to believe that his inadequate productions could be of any help to anyone else.

Turning to a discussion of the problems he encountered in editing The Trial, Brod describes the condition of the manuscript when he received it and the changes and arrangements he made in it. The novel was in some disorder at Kafka's death, making it necessary to combine and arrange the finished chapters (and one unfinished one--Chapter VIII)--from his memory of Kafka's reading. Too, he expanded the innumerable contractions (F. B., etc.) to the names intended by the writer. Brod tells us that there is a gap between the last chapter, "The End," and the chapter just before it, "In the Cathedral," in which further stages of the trial were to have been described. Furthermore, several unfinished chapters are not included in this edition but, he promises, will be in the final volume of his

forthcoming edition of Kafka's complete works.

In spite of Brod's credible explanation of Kafka's reluctance to publish his works, the first reviewer of The Trial, Ralph Thompson,³ looked upon it as "morbid" and indicative of "unnatural modesty" and "posthumous vanity." Thompson, reviewing for the New York Times, gives the impression of being generally irritated by everything about Kafka. He refers to him as "one of the most curious cases in modern letters--one a little too curious for this reader's taste," and concludes after a brief summary of The Trial: "What it means, I am afraid that I have not the faintest idea."

Most of the early reviewers of The Trial, however, did have at least an idea, in spite of the absence of any explanation in Brod's epilogue. Their interpretations comprise religious, social, political, and psychological theories. Of these reviewers, the two immediately following Thompson show the influence of Brod's and Muir's notes in The Castle volume. Both of them emphasize the abysmal distance between man's understanding and the purposes of God. But, in addition, they bring in new interpretive possibilities pointing to the future avenues of Kafka criticism.

William Phillips, reviewing for The Nation,⁴ calls Kafka's basic religious belief "a rather simple theology, according to which man is separated from God by a hierarchy of human relations in

³"Bocks of the Times," New York Times, October 18, 1937, p. 15.

⁴"Everyman," CXLV (October 23, 1937), 448-449.

themselves so bewildering that true knowledge can be attained only through humility and faith . . ." (448). In order to describe this "spiritual bureaucracy" (448), Phillips says, Kafka created its secular image--an image of "man as a pathetic victim of social beliefs and practices which have been frozen into a kind of administrative machine" (448). Phillips believes that Kafka's main value to modern literature lies in "the unique methods by which he revealed the phenomena of spirituality within the bureaucratic labyrinths of society" (448).

Also reflecting the problem of God's separation from man is Louis Kronenberger's review of The Trial in the New York Times Book Review,⁵ in which Kronenberger describes Kafka as "at bottom a religious writer, with a powerful sense of right and wrong and an unquenchable yearning toward the unrevealed source of things." This reviewer sees in The Trial symbolic representation of "the helplessness of the individual in the face of the unknowable; the contradiction between ethical guilt and legal innocence, or legal guilt and ethical innocence; the striking demonstration that none of us is ever really free. . . ."

These two reviews, the first analyzing Kafka's satirical treatment of modern bureaucratic society and the second showing legal-ethical ramifications of the religious meaning, were indicative

⁵"A Distinguished Novel by Franz Kafka," October 24, 1937, p. 8.

of an increasing swing away from a purely theological interpretation.

In the next review, appearing in the New York Herald Tribune Books,⁶ three possible explanations of The Trial--all of them non-theological--were suggested by Horace Gregory. First, The Trial can be viewed as a companion-piece to The Castle in its development of the theme of guilt-consciousness. Secondly, it can be regarded as "a foretaste of Nazi justice in Central Europe." And thirdly, it might be interpreted as "a parable of justice in post-war European society."

In contrast to Gregory's open-minded attitude, Time's reviewer⁷ pretends--since he evidently does not understand The Trial--that no one can. Not to be caught on the defensive, he covers his embarrassment with one of the puns that seem indispensable to that magazine. The Trial, he writes is "a simply told, simply incomprehensible surrealistic horror story." Evidently still not satisfied, he adds, with characteristic flippancy, that Kafka "died . . . of tuberculosis contracted on like compositions."

A return to the consideration of Kafka as a metaphysical writer is found in Stephen Spender's article in The New Republic.⁸ In an explanation which bears no apparent relationship to his previous one in The Destructive Element, Spender describes both The

⁶"Comic and Eerie Parable of Injustice," October 24, 1937, p. 7.

⁷"The Trial," XXX (October 25, 1937), 79.

⁸"Franz Kafka," XCII (October 27, 1937), 347-348.

Trial and The Castle as allegories. But, he says, Kafka was trying to discover a metaphysics rather than to write an allegory based on any formal theological system. He was penetrating reality in order to find a system of truth, in the same way that a man who feels himself persecuted sees reality fitting into a system. In The Trial Joseph K. is the outsider in the world which he describes, and, hence, can see it (just as can the persecution maniac) more clearly than can the people who are part of it. Thus, he has the possibility of seeing the pattern underlying that world--the "reality" of life. However, as Spender points out, Kafka (whom he seems to identify with Joseph K.) never attained that truth. He knew it was there, however, and had he lived longer, Spender believes, "he might have written novels which started off from a goal, instead of these novels which never attain their goal" (347).

Evidently intended to back up Spender's interpretation, a brief biographical sketch appended to it describes Kafka's writing as "meant to clarify his . . . skeptical-mystic ideas and . . . not intended for publication."⁹

Like several earlier critics, N. L. Rothman in The Saturday Review of Literature¹⁰ found The Trial capable of more than one explanation: "It is a fable of the natural man lost among the formalisms of an over-complex society. Or it is an asking again of Pilate's

⁹M. C., "A Note About the Author," p. 348.

¹⁰"A Shadow Among Mystical Shadows," XVII (October 30, 1937), 19.

old question, what is truth, what is justice." In either case, Rothman believes that Kafka did not carry through his ideas to their logical end. "Kafka wearied and let his hand fall. The bold stroke of contrast, the sharp, definite picture, is missing," and the reader is left with "a sense of some dazzling truth hidden just out of sight behind pages the author has not written." This, believes Rothman, indicates that Kafka, though he possessed the rare ability to perceive and outline the governing forces of his world, was unable "to rise above them for the direct attack."

After this variety of non-theological interpretations of The Trial, F. W. Dupee in the Partisan Review returns to the original religious theory of Brod and Muir.¹¹ Dupee sees The Castle as dealing with the problem of grace and The Trial with the problem of justice. "If The Castle sometimes brought to mind the Homeric world, with its wayward Olympian hierarchy, ravishing and persecuting mortals but winning their devotion all the same, The Trial suggests the more naked austerities of the Old Testament, where terrorism is the single source of divine authority" (68). Grace and justice, however, are actually the same thing, but on different levels, explains Dupee: "The problem of grace is, in human terms, only the problem of freedom" (68)--freedom to seek justice in this world. An understanding of this fact makes clear Kafka's reason for mixing the mystical with the secular in his novels and explains his technique of constantly juxtaposing

¹¹"The Fabulous and the Familiar," IV (December, 1937), 66-69.

the fabulous and the familiar.

This Kafkan use of the "fabulous" or "mystical," as Dupee called it, was warmly commended by James Laughlin IV, editor of New Directions in Prose and Poetry, as a blow against naturalism.¹² In a preface condemning the publishing business of today and praising such writers as Cummings, Zukofsky, and Williams, Laughlin hails the allegory and symbolism, the fantasy, and the emphasis on spiritual rather than physical horror which one finds in Kafka's work. He predicts that Kafka's influence will act as an antidote to the type of naturalism which Farrell represents.

The next periodical review of The Trial proved to be a development of the political interpretation first offered by Horace Gregory. Gregory had suggested that the novel was "a foretaste of justice in post-war European society."¹³ Helen MacAfee, writing in The Yale Review,¹⁴ calls it a flickering reflection of "the face of modern Europe, with its secret courts and blood purges" (x). Some doubt, however, seems to remain in her mind, for she adds that if beyond this the book has some secret meaning, the key escapes her. The novel is, she finally determines, "what it seems to be, a subtle and complex fantasia on a modern theme which is as fantastic as the daily news" (x).

¹²Norfolk, Connecticut, 1937, n. p.

¹³See above, p. 26.

¹⁴Review of The Trial, XXVII (Winter, 1938), viii and x.

The stream of reviews which had followed publication of The Trial was broken in the spring of 1938 by an article on a special facet of the Kafka problem. Max Brod, in an article for Partisan Review on Kafka's relations with his father, brought into the critical picture for the first time the as yet unpublished "Letter to My Father."¹⁵ This ninety-page letter, which Kafka had written to his father in an attempt to clarify their unsatisfactory relationship, was later to become the keystone to the psychological interpretation. And Brod, because of his reluctance to publish it in full and his practice of releasing it in dribblets accompanied by his own commentaries, was to become a thorn in the flesh of many critics.

In this article Brod quotes extensively from the "Letter" and attempts an analysis of Kafka on the basis of both the letter and his own personal knowledge of his friend's character. Brod agrees that a great deal about the writer can be explained from the psychoanalytical standpoint but notes Kafka's own judgment of Freud's theories as "'a very approximate, rough picture of things'" (22). He thinks that a truer psychological analysis lies in a comparison of Kafka with the German writer Heinrich von Kleist, who, he reminds us, was haunted all his life by the gulf between himself and his family. Underlined in Kafka's copy of Kleist's diaries are to be found passages which indicated that Kleist's family looked upon him as "an utterly useless member of human society, unworthy of human consideration" (28). Brod

¹⁵"Kafka: Father and Son," trans. Ralph Manheim, IV (May, 1938), 19-29.

quotes from the "Letter to My Father," showing that Kafka had a similar feeling about his father's attitude toward him. An important theme in Kafka's works, Brod believes, is responsibility to the family (e.g., "Metamorphosis," "The Judgment," "The Stoker"). Similarly, Kleist was obsessed all his life by the thought of how his family would react to his omissions and commissions. Furthermore, Brod points out, Kafka once classified his entire literary output as an attempt at flight from his father. He quotes him as feeling sapped in will and conviction by his domineering parent in regard to marriage and Judaism. Both writers had the same attachment, not only to family, but also to childhood experiences, Brod continues; both had a style "remarkable for a sort of fantastic invention that seems to spring from the child's inclination to enchant everything he plays with" (29); both were immature in appearance and showed some distrust of the sexual function. In short, Brod sees the two writers as caught in a childish behavior pattern--one in reaction to his father specifically, one to his family in general--from which they never freed themselves.

More than a year elapsed before the next article dealing specifically with The Trial appeared. This article was a carefully worked-out study. Philip Rahv, writing for The Southern Review, compares The Trial to Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich."¹⁶ He likens the themes of the two by pointing out that Joseph K.'s case

¹⁶"The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Joseph K.," V (Summer, 1939), 174-185.

and Ilyich's illness are variations of the same device, by which the author can confront "an ordinary self-satisfied mortal with an extraordinary situation, to put to rout his confidence in reason and in the habitual limits of his consciousness, and in the end . . . destroy him utterly" (178). The heresy for which both men are destroyed is their typicality--their acceptance and participation in the superficial, trivial life of the urban, bourgeois man of the industrial age. Thus Ilyich's disease is actually the voice of his soul crying out against his whole life, and Joseph K.'s Court is perhaps only "a machine of persecution invented by his alter ego to penalize his death in life" (178).

In typifying the average man of bourgeois society, says Rahv, both Joseph K. and Ivan Ilyich represent the despiritualized and depersonalized result of a great transformation in the social order. The old, feudalistic order, characterized by traditional social bonds and a fixed status for each individual, has been overwhelmed and destroyed by the fluidity of modern, urbanized society. Joseph K. and Ilyich, as representative men of this new world, transgress the old elemental laws--the sanctity of the social and economic organization of the tribe--and for this they are punished. "Ilyich is the man of the city--the anonymous, commodity-materialist who sweeps away the simple and transparent relations of the past. His energy, the depersonalized energy of a bourgeois, subverts the idyllic world of sanctified status" (182). In this context Ilyich's disease is "the ghost of the old idealism returning to avenge itself on its murderer"

(183). Similarly, Joseph K. is "the blank man of the city, the standard rationalist cut off from all natural ties. He lives in the agitated, ever-changing world of bourgeois relations, a world in which the living man, destitute of individuality, has forgotten the ancient poetry of status, the hallowed certitudes that once linked law and destiny, justice and necessity, rights and duties" (183). Joseph K. is accordingly punished by the Court, a sinister symbol of the old idealism. Rahv believes that Kafka was unconscious of the hidden socio-historic meaning in his work--that he saw the conflict between past and present as a conflict between the human and divine orders.

Following up this analysis of Joseph K., Rahv published in The Kenyon Review¹⁷ a study of Kafka's heroes in general. Drawing on Brod's then recently published German biography, he analyzes the Kafka hero in the light of Kafka's own psychological make-up--in particular, his father complex. This complex, Rahv believes, is the key to Kafka's fundamental and pervading sense of guilt and can be seen in the oft-repeated situation of the protagonist at the mercy of extra-natural powers in the guise of bureaucracy. Behind this guilt-motif, says Rahv, lies a compulsion neurosis, symptoms of which are Kafka's morbid scruples and self-depreciation, his ceremonial correctness of behavior, and his compensatory altruism and humility--all described in Brod's Biographie. Furthermore, The Trial and The Castle

¹⁷"Franz Kafka: The Hero as Lonely Man," I (Winter 1939), 60-74.

themselves are both "enormous projections of self-punishment of imagined wrong-doing and atonement" (66). Rahv goes on to relate Kafka's sense of guilt and need for punishment to his treatment of the protagonist as the lonely outcast in society, and, therefore, as the representative of the fundamentally dislocated urban man of modern times. In this connection, he sees loneliness and exclusion as the dominant motifs in all of Kafka's works. Too, he points to the lack of individuality of Kafka's heroes as indicative of their dislocation from their environment. "Character, individuation, are . . . a proof of some measure of adjustment to the environment; the Kafkan man, however, is deprived of the most elementary requisites of adjustment . . ." (71). But it is this very characterlessness that makes the Kafkan hero representative. "He incarnates humanity in a total sense, for he is the anonymous, standard man of our rationalistic civilization, the Teilmensch produced by the urban life-machine" (71-72). Kafka's lonely man is the formerly joyous, ruthless hero of the tradition of Western individualism now a victim of Western civilization--now regarding himself with self-revulsion, says Rahv. "He who once proudly disposed of many possessions is . . . destitute, he has neither woman nor child; in his conflict with society he has suffered an utter rout, and his fate no longer issues from his own high acts but from the abstract, enigmatical relations that bend him to the impersonal will" (73).

This secular interpretation of Kafka's novels was, so far, the most serious challenge to the theological one. In it Rahv specifically

challenges Brod's analysis of Kafka's works, pointing out that Brod considers Kafka religious in a traditional sense. He was not, says Rahv. He was a mystic, and his attitude toward religion was pristine--essentially magical and animistic. Rather than espousing any specific religious doctrine, Kafka "attempts to re-materialize the soul thousands of years after religious thought had de-materialized it" (71). At bottom, says Rahv, Kafka viewed life as incomprehensible--though not meaningless. His works, therefore, were "experimental myths": "as meanings they move strictly in a circle, for they always return to their point of departure, namely, the uncertain, the unknown, the unfathomable" (62).

In sharp contrast to the theories of both Brod and Rahv concerning Kafka's religious thought, John Kelly, in The Southern Review, saw him as essentially a Calvinist.¹⁸ Kelly calls The Trial "an eschatological novel--an allegory of man's relations with God in terms of a Calvinistic theology" (748) and sets out to show the influence of Calvin, Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth on Kafka. First Kelly aims a blow at the psychological methods of some critics. He declares that the psychological approach, by which Kafka is found to suffer from a father-complex, social timidity, a Jewish sense of exclusion, an unsympathetic environment, and aesthetic sensitivity, is not adequate for a final analysis of The Trial--"however attractive this method, with its lowered scholastic requirements, may have become to modern

¹⁸"Franz Kafka's Trial and the Theology of Crisis," V (Spring, 1940), 748-766.

critics" (749).

The "theology of crisis" of Calvin, Kierkegaard, and Barth provides the key to Kafka's theological thinking in The Trial, Kelly believes. Barth, whose religious thinking closely parallels Kafka's, saw St. Paul's conversion as the chief clue to the action of God and as illustrative of a "crucial" solution to man's hard existence. Furthermore, Barth completely rejected human activity as a way to God, for he believed there is no way from man to God; there is only a way from God to man. Kierkegaard, the originator of this "crisis" concept, says Kelly, believed that "God speaks and commands: man hears and obeys--or turns away from the command to his own destruction. This revelation of God is the crisis in the man's life--the turning point of his existence, the beginning of a struggle, in which he can be saved only by making the right turn, in the right way" (753).

With numerous examples from Calvin, Kierkegaard, Barth, and other theologians of their so-called school, Kelly shows parallels between the events in The Trial and the theology which he believes the novel to be based on. For example, in the parable and exegesis which the priest offers Joseph K. in the Cathedral, two points are emphasized by the priest: first, that at the moment, the doorkeeper cannot admit the man; and, second, that the door was intended only for this one man. "Here," Kelly interprets, "the doorkeeper is speaking in the character of the church of Calvin, with its emphasis on man's eternal election by God but his inability to procure it by any activity of his own, and the final uncertainty as to whether he is

really elected and saved" (761). Showing another parallel, Kelly recalls Joseph K.'s ignorance of the law, and his subsequent realization in the execution scene of his guilt. This treatment of the awakened sense of guilt Kelly explains by a quotation from the Epistle to the Romans: "And I lived sometime without the Law. But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (755). In the death scene from The Trial, Kelly says, "Joseph K. has reached the only solution possible for man's perplexity, the violent and hard solution, prescribed by the theology of crisis, the complete surrender of one's self to the will and punishment of God. The Absolute has come to Joseph K.; it has come, as usual, on its own terms, thwarting all his efforts to uncover its secrets, and, careless of all his values, destroying his life, but offering its own peculiar salvation" (765-766). Kelly's explanation, which later received wide circulation in an anthology of Kafka criticism, was to come in for the heaviest bombardment of all the theological interpretations.

III

Certainly the outstanding critic of Kafka during the post-Trial period was Philip Rahv. In his two articles he combined several elements in Kafka's works to produce as credible an explanation as had yet been advanced. Rahv combined metaphysical, psychological, and socio-historic perspectives. His fundamental assumption was that Kafka was above all metaphysically directed. He related to this conception the psychological factors which Brod's article had made

apparent. And he viewed Kafka in historical perspective--as the product of urbanized, rationalistic Western civilization. The result was an explanation of the Kafkaian protagonist as an embodiment of lonely modern man--the anonymous, standard individual of our rationalistic civilization--who suddenly awakes to the shallowness of his life and seeks he knows not what. This view--in whole or in part--was to be developed by many critics and eventually was to become a common meeting ground for several of the best of them.

During this period too, important events took place in the development of the religious interpretation. Though the influence of Muir and Brod had waned after The Trial's publication, modifications of their theories developed, and the conception of Kafka as a man mainly interested in metaphysical questions was still prominent. William Phillips saw him as revealing the almost inaccessible spiritual world by creating in his novels its corresponding secular image--"the bureaucratic labyrinths of society." Stephen Spender broadened the allegorical interpretation of Muir by pointing out that Kafka's "religious" interest was in a broad metaphysics--a search for truth--rather than in any formal theological system. John Kelly, on the other hand, narrowed the religious view considerably by inferring the specific influence of Calvin, Kierkegaard, and Barth on Kafka's thinking and calling The Trial "an allegory of man's relations with God in terms of Calvinistic theology."

In addition to Rahv's impressive synthesis of various elements in Kafka's works and the modifications of the religious interpretation,

a development of major importance to the future psychoanalytical school--and, indeed, to Kafka criticism in general--took place at this time. Brod's publication of excerpts from the "Letter to My Father" provided a mine of psychological information about the writer by revealing the dominant influence exercised over him by his father. Brod evidently anticipated the use that would be made of this information and made a point of emphasizing Kafka's own depreciation of Freud's theories. Nevertheless, this letter was to provide material for countless psychoanalytic explanations, some of which reached fantastic extremes. However, it was also to be of great use to soberer critics who were able to incorporate its information into sound interpretations of Kafka without being completely carried away by the passion to psychoanalyze.

If critics had been bemused by the dissimilarities between The Castle and The Trial, they were to be even more so by the difference between both of these novels and the third work to be published in the United States. Amerika, Kafka's first novel, was so different from the other two that it did not clearly fit into any of the interpretations of this perplexing writer so far advanced.

CHAPTER III

AMERIKA AND A FRANZ KAFKA MISCELLANY (1940-1941):

PSYCHOLOGY AND "SOCIALISM"

I

The course of critics never did run smooth, and in 1940 the publication of the first American edition of Amerika upset the critical theories which had developed around the obviously pessimistic Trial and Castle. For here was a novel which--though it was unfinished--seemed intended to end on an optimistic note. Amerika was an apprentice novel, relating the adventures of Karl Rossmann, a good but naïve German boy, after he is sent to America, and leaving him at the end in a fantastically ideal community, the "Nature Theater of Oklahoma," where everyone finds employment to suit his fancy.

Evidently unable to tie Amerika in with the two earlier novels, most reviewers contented themselves with ransacking their minds for possible sources of this disturbingly unKafkan book. Their efforts produced articles paralleling Kafka with such diverse writers as Dickens, Franklin, Whitman, Lewis Carroll, Samuel Butler, and Theodore Dreiser. But there was little agreement as to just what influence various writers had had. One definite development, however, was brought about by the publication of Amerika. The conception of Kafka as a "religious humorist" was hit upon by critics who sought to reconcile his humor in Amerika with his pessimism in The Castle and The

Trial.

Another 1940 publication, A Franz Kafka Miscellany, presaged the development of two major critical "schools." The socio-political interpretation, first formulated in the post-Trial period, saw further development in the Miscellany's leading article. Also, the psychological interpretation gained new strength as a result of the wide circulation given Brod's excerpts from Kafka's "Letter to My Father." And shortly afterward, a telling rebuttal to the psychoanalysts came in the outstanding article of the period--a further development of Rahv's portrayal of Kafka as representative of modern man.

II

The first critical reaction to Amerika¹ was a hunt for sources. This hunt was perhaps touched off by Klaus Mann, who in his preface² to the novel refers to more than seven authors as possible influences. He notes that Kafka mentioned Franklin and Whitman when asked by friends what he knew of America. He was reading Dickens at the time he composed Amerika and wrote in his diary that "The Stoker" (which later became the first chapter of Amerika) was a plain imitation of Dickens. In spite of this, Mann believes that the resemblance to Dickens is only accidental and superficial. On a deeper level, he says, Kafka is indebted to others. Mann contributes more names to

¹Trans. Edwin and Willa Muir (Norfolk, Connecticut, 1940).

²Pp. vii-xvii.

the critical pot by pointing out the writer's kinship to Kierkegaard in his concern with the problem of our spiritual existence and with Flaubert and Tolstoy in his zealously conscientious style.

Regarding the theme of Amerika, Mann sees the novel as treating "the topics of Guilt and Atonement, human loneliness and the unfathomable riddle of the Supreme Law" (xvii). These themes, Mann says, which are common to the novels, of their very nature prohibit completion of a work, for "they are essentially and necessarily endless" (xii).

Max Brod, in his afterword to Amerika,³ strengthens the argument for Franklin's influence by recalling his friend's fondness for Franklin's autobiography and his longing for free space and distant lands. He further confounds the critics by testifying that Kafka's mood while he was working on Amerika was one of "unending delight" (298). He shatters the pessimistic interpreters even further by explaining that Chapter VIII, "The Nature Theater of Oklahoma," was intended to be the last chapter of the book and that his friend wished to end the novel on a note of reconciliation. He recalls Kafka's hinting that in this almost limitless theater, Karl, the hero, would eventually find a profession, his freedom, even his old home and his parents.

Even before the publication of Amerika in the United States, a review of the novel had appeared in an American periodical. Stephen

³Pp. 298-299.

Spender's article in The Living Age⁴ had come out in December 1938 after publication of the English edition of the novel. Amerika, Spender says, is a comedy of the human situation--"the book of a man who, because he takes life too seriously, is laughing at himself by describing his seriousness in terms of comedy" (383). This third explanation of Spender's was just as much at variance with the first two as they had been with each other. Spender had first seen Kafka as "plunged into the destructive element" and at odds with an authoritarian society.⁵ Then, after The Trial's publication, he had described Kafka as metaphysically directed and as striving to discover a system of truth.⁶ Spender had so far not given any hint of the relationship of these interpretations to one another. In reviewing Amerika, however, he made an effort to link the three novels, and in doing so gives every indication that he did not know the order of their composition. In Kafka's novels, he says, when the hero is serious and feels guilty, he is confronted by a terrible judge. When he remains innocent, childish, and humorous, as in Amerika, he finds a place in the world and is reunited with his parents in the Nature Theater of Oklahoma. In this respect, says Spender, Amerika bears the same relationship to Kafka's other novels as Butler's Erewhon Revisited does to Erewhon. The question which arises from this

⁴"Guilt and Innocence," CCCLV, 382-383.

⁵See above, p. 17.

⁶See above, pp. 26-27.

comparison is whether Spender knew that Amerika was Kafka's first novel.

The first review to appear following publication of Amerika was in The New Yorker.⁷ It consisted of little but a judgment of the novel as inferior to The Trial and The Castle and reference to Kafka as "one of the most serious and interesting of pre-Nazi novelists."

The next week saw Paul Rosenfeld in The Saturday Review of Literature continuing the search for sources and parallels.⁸ Rosenfeld points to a common source--Dickens--for Amerika and Charlie Chaplin's films (which postdate Kafka's novels). Describing Amerika as "picaresque and farcical, the loosely-strung, slapstick story of the continual frustrations and vital miscarriages of a little, inadequate hero," he finds Amerika definitely Chaplinesque. As for the theme, he describes it as the expression of Kafka's belief in "the existence of natural and social forces balancing the original injustice [of life], providing a prospect of eventual salvation on earth" Though at the time he composed Amerika Kafka had already lost all sense of partnership between Man and God, says Rosenfeld, he felt this irony more comically than he later did.

Philip Rahv, in a review appearing in The Nation on the same day as Mr. Rosenfeld's,⁹ concurs in finding Dickens a source for

⁷XVI (October 19, 1940), 89.

⁸"Charlie-Chaplinade," XXIII (October 26, 1940), 18.

⁹"Franz Kafka's Poor Richard," CLI (October 26, 1940), 396-397.

Amerika, but points out that Dickens' influence was simply of a literary nature, while the philosophical inspiration came from Franklin. It is true, he writes, that from a literary standpoint Amerika is a burlesque treatment of David Copperfield, but from an existential standpoint, it is a good-humored parody on the career of Poor Richard. Kafka probably read Poor Richard "as one reads a work of strategy, interpreting those dismally sagacious sayings as so many moves in the complicated game of ingratiating oneself with the nameless authorities whose law, though its intent and meaning are unknown and unknowable, nevertheless prevails" (397). Rahv thinks that Kafka may have used Franklin's Ulysses-like career in America as a pattern for Karl's travels. He speculates that Kafka thought of Americans as people of constructive will, great power of adjustment to their community, and ability to find their true calling--a people, in short, who had beaten fate to the draw.

Following this interpretation appeared an anonymous review in The Living Age,¹⁰ which praised Klaus Mann's source-packed introduction as a key to the mystery of Kafka and added to the source list by finding Amerika "a nightmarish version of Alice in Wonderland" (293).

Babbette Deutsch, reviewing in the New York Herald Tribune Books,¹¹ calls all of the source-finders on the carpet, asserting that she has searched in vain for the influence of Franklin, Whitman, or

¹⁰CCCLIX (November 1940), 292-293.

¹¹December 8, 1940, p. 12.

Dickens. Amerika, she says, lacks the abundant vitality and humor of Dickens, the practical sagacity of Franklin, and "the hearty, healthy all-inclusiveness" of Whitman. This blow at her fellow reviewers, however, is somewhat dulled by Miss Deutsch's quite serious criticism that Kafka should have chosen a different setting for the novel since he had never traveled in America. The main positive impression that the book made on this reviewer is its picture of developments to come in America: "glimpses of a Hollywood version of America, in all its native sordidness and extravagance." The book is pertinent now, says Miss Deutsch, "precisely because it is a study at once of a diseased soul and of the spiritual ailment of our time."

Two weeks later, in a Commonweal review, Stephen Baldanza, like Miss Deutsch, objects to the fact that Kafka never actually visited America.¹² He seems also to follow Miss Deutsch in his attention to the sordidness, meanness, and shabbiness of Kafka's America, but he sees in this element a distinctly Old World flavor. Nevertheless, he compares Karl Rossmann to Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths and concludes that "this is not a book for one who seeks joy or solace in reading."

Early in 1941 appeared the first systematic attempt to interpret Amerika in relation to Kafka's other novels. Randall Jarrell, writing for The Kenyon Review,¹³ discusses all three of the novels, pointing out that in Amerika can be seen the beginning of the method

¹²XXXIII (December 20, 1940), 234.

¹³"Kafka's Tragi-Comedy," III (Winter 1941), 116-119.

which Kafka developed further in The Trial and The Castle. This method is designed to illustrate the fantastic complication of modern society--"the world of late capitalism, in which individualism has changed from the mixed but sought blessings of the romantics, to everybody's initial plight" (118). The task of Kafka's heroes is always to discover just what their society is and find a satisfactory place in relation to it. Symbolic of this confusing world are the hotel in Amerika, the law courts in The Trial, and the governing system in The Castle--all "conditions of the universe presented in terms of those of monopoly capitalism" (118). Just as man's society is beyond his understanding, Jarrell goes on, so is his universe, and hence he finds himself automatically damned, living in a system which he cannot understand.

A few weeks after the publication of Amerika, a collection appeared under the title A Franz Kafka Miscellany.¹⁴ It was composed of short pieces from the writer's heretofore untranslated works, extracts from his letters and diaries, and critical evaluations of him. This small volume bore the subtitle Pre-Fascist Exile and contained as its leading article a paper of the same title by Harry Slochower which seemed designed to present Kafka as primarily a political thinker. The contents of the volume were as follows: (1) works by

¹⁴No ed., trans. Sophie Prombaum and G. Humphreys Roberts (New York, 1940). The volume was first published as a supplement to Issue V-VI of Twice a Year. Originally intended to be included in the issue itself, it grew large enough to warrant separate publication.

Kafka: extracts from "Letter to My Father," "Autobiographical Sketch," "An Old Page," excerpt from "Meditations," selections from letters, and excerpts from the final fragmentary chapters of The Castle which were not included in the English translation; (2) critical and biographical articles: "Franz Kafka--Pre-Fascist Exile" by Harry Slochower, excerpts from Franz Kafka: eine Biographie by Max Brod, "Franz Kafka" by Edwin Muir, and an anonymous biographical note.

Slochower's article¹⁵ is an attempt to show that a definite relationship exists between Kafka's three novels and the three historical periods of their composition: the 1914 era, the World War period, and the period of subsequent social change. In the first period, which Slochower calls one of "naïve synthesis" (12), Kafka wrote Amerika, a "pre-war dream of a free country, a land where 'anybody,' regardless of station or past transgressions, has a 'chance'" (13). Slochower notes that the setting of this novel is "far from the old world of hierarchical encasements" (12) and that the hero, unlike the depersonalized heroes of the later novels, has a name. The next period in Kafka's development Slochower labels one of "Secular Crucifixion": The Trial, he says, written during the period of the First World War, portrays the individual (Joseph K.) on trial as an "alien" who has remained outside "the Law" of social participation. In The Castle, which he refers to as "The Communal Castle," Slochower

¹⁵Pp. 7-30.

sees the effects on Kafka of the end of the War and the social revolutions in Austria and the rest of Central Europe. During this period, he says, the writer directed his energies "towards a public charting of a possible resolution. It was the time when peoples of the world were swept by the hope that lay in the overthrow of despotisms, and in the rise of social orders that promised to establish a humane authority" (19).

Slochower, never identifying this "possible resolution" which he found in Amerika, early in his article interprets Kafka's works as an indictment of the world and life, "specifically the necessary collective means which are an unavoidable form of every social state" (27); yet later he defines Kafka's aim in life as being "to become an accepted member of the community, in short, to find status" (20). Other interpretive suggestions he throws out are that Kafka's works are intended to bridge the chasm between God and man and that they are an expression of "the aloneness and helplessness of the modern orphan generation of the alien and alienated, in short of 'the Jew'" (26). In another section of the article he explains the writer from a psychoanalytical standpoint, finding that he had "a deep, inner preoccupation with auto-erotic and masochistic symbols" (10) and interpreting Joseph K.'s "arrest" as a psychological awakening and self-analysis, and emphasizing the crippling effect on Kafka of his overbearing father. Generally speaking, Slochower's article offered a great number of suggestions but failed to follow through any one idea to develop a consistent line of interpretation or organize the

many into a comprehensive system. It contained, however, enough socialistic-sounding ideas to later bring down upon his head the fury of many critics and the label "Marxist."

Edwin Muir's contribution to A Franz Kafka Miscellany¹⁶ is largely a restatement and expansion of the opinions he expressed in his introduction to The Castle. At the center of Kafka's world he sees the principle of the incommensurability of divine and human law which he believes the writer adopted from Kierkegaard. Since it is impossible for man to understand the divine law, it seems immoral, but man's duty is to direct his life in accordance with it, regardless. How he can do this is the main problem which absorbs Kafka. Muir takes exception to German critics who have called the writer "mystical," defining him rather as "a religious genius whose deepest intellectual agonies were caused by the problem of religion itself" (65). He explains Kafka's humor in terms of the basic incompatibility between the ways of God and the ways of man. "It is a comedy of cross-purposes on a grand scale" (57) and also a comedy of the imperfection of all human arrangements which bears similarities to slapstick.

The other major representative of the early theological interpretation was also represented in A Franz Kafka Miscellany. Max Brod, in an excerpt from his biography of the writer, restates his original

¹⁶"Franz Kafka," pp. 55-66.

argument.¹⁷ Too, the excerpt reflects Brod's concern to show that Kafka was more normal and healthy-minded than his works would indicate. Fundamental to all of his work, says Brod, is the belief that "the Absolute exists but is incommensurable with human life" (32). In order to depict this eternal misunderstanding between man and God, Kafka frequently cast his stories against a background of two worlds, juxtaposed, but with no understanding of each other. Too, he often used the device of dramatizing the unbridgeable gulf between man and dumb creation: hence, the frequent appearance of animals and insects in his works. Though Kafka held a fundamental faith in ultimate truths, he considered the present condition of humanity hopeless and incurable. However, to those who knew him, says Brod, this pessimism was apparent only in a gentleness, a quiet irony, a profound sympathy in his nature, and he was not at all as melancholy as he is often pictured to be by those who judge his personality by his works.

Another contribution by Brod to the Miscellany is a group of extracts from Kafka's "Letter to My Father"¹⁸ and his interpretation of the significance of this work. Brod chooses quotations from the "Letter," explaining that for personal reasons the whole cannot be published now, and he interprets the significance of the selections in terms of the writer's life. Although the excerpts are substantially

¹⁷From Franz Kafka: eine Biographie (New York, 1937). Excerpts trans. G. Humphreys Roberts. Pp. 31-38.

¹⁸Trans. Sophie Prombaum, pp. 39-50.

the same as those in his earlier article on the "Letter,"¹⁹ Brod makes no mention of Kafka's similarity to Kleist, but emphasizes now the dominant influence of the father over the son. The main theme of the letter he formulates thus: "the weakness of the son as against the strength of the father, who has become what he is by his own ability, and, conscious of his achievements and the strong, unbroken personality which made them possible, sees in himself the measure of the universe" (40).

The first review of A Franz Kafka Miscellany appeared in The New Yorker.²⁰ After judging Edwin Muir's essay the most sensible in the volume, the reviewer betrays a note of alarm at the critical faddism which seemed to be developing around Kafka, who, he regrets, is "rapidly becoming the feverishly worshipped idol of a cult" (87-88).

Paul Rosenfeld, in The Saturday Review of Literature,²¹ also shows a tendency to put the brakes on the Kafka bandwagon. But instead of attacking over-zealous critics, he hits at the writer himself, referring to him as "poor, sick, suffering Kafka." This critic sees the Miscellany as pointing up the similarity of the writer's ideas of God and his ideas of his own father and looks upon Slochower's article as the best critical contribution in the volume.

The impact of the selections from "Letter to My Father" and

¹⁹See above, pp. 30-31.

²⁰XVI (December 21, 1940), 87-88.

²¹"Secret Prose King," XXIII (February 8, 1941), 20.

Brod's biography is evident, also, in Babette Deutsch's review in the New York Herald Tribune Books.²² She sees those critics who interpret Kafka theologically as too absorbed in religious problems to see him in the clear light of naturalism. "The naturalist," she says, "philosophically speaking, is apt to regard Kafka's performance more coolly, if not with sympathy, as the expression of a sick soul, the testament of a young man who never escaped from a paternal tyranny which became for him the prototype of divine justice, as awful as it was unintelligible."

An answer to the critics who had dismissed Kafka as a sick soul came in an article by W. H. Auden in The New Republic.²³ Auden defends him as a representative man not only in his psychological make-up but also in his place in Western literary tradition. Dealing with the psychoanalytical critics and all those who explain Kafka's writing purely in terms of his problem with his father, Auden contends that neurosis is not abnormal but is a necessary part of human development. He explains:

Psychotherapy will not get much further until it recognizes that the true significance of a neurosis is teleological, that the so-called traumatic experience is not an accident, but the opportunity for which the child has been patiently waiting--had it not occurred, it would have found another,

²²"Essays about an Exile," February 16, 1941, p. 13.

²³"The Wandering Jew," CIV (February 10, 1941), 185-186.

equally trivial--in order to find a necessity and direction for its existence, in order that its life may become a serious matter. Of course it would be better if it could do without it, but unconsciously it knows that it is not, by itself, strong enough to learn to stand alone; a neurosis is a guardian angel; to become ill is to take vows. The questions with which Kafka dealt, the nature of his genius, had little to do with his father. (186)

Auden quotes Kafka's own words in regard to his psychological problems: "'All these so-called diseases, pitiful as they look, are beliefs, the attempts of a human being in distress to cast his anchor in some mother soil'" (186). Thus Auden sees the writer as psychologically representative. His personal difficulties make him typical of modern man, and his novels reflect the problems of modern man. "Kafka is important to us because the predicament of his hero is the predicament of contemporary man. An industrial civilization makes everyone the exceptional, reflective K." (186).

Auden finds Kafka representative too as a writer. He sees him as a writer who bears almost the same relationship to our age as Dante, Goethe, and Shakespeare bore to theirs and who stands squarely in the stream of Western European literary development. His three novels, Auden says, all use the traditional device of the Quest--a device which can be traced down through the ages of Western literature: from the fairy story, through the medieval legend of the Holy Grail, on through the post-Reformation quest exemplified in Pilgrim's

Progress, to the Peer Gynt and Faustian type of quest. Kafka's hero represents a further development of this Quest tradition. He represents the hero who, unlike Gynt and Faust, can not have faith in his inner conviction of what is right--the Necessity within--no matter how convinced of it he is. On the contrary, he can never be sure that this conviction might not, in fact, be quite wrong. In Kafka's own words: "'For Faust everything is easy because he does not recognize that what he obeys [the Necessity within himself] is arbitrary; for K. the difficulties are endless because, since he can never again hide the arbitrary appearance of everything from himself, he is in constant danger of denying the Necessary he cannot understand, of losing his Faith, and to lose Faith is to be damned" (186). By Kafka's time man's intellectual orientation had become so unsure that beliefs-to-die-for were no longer clear--all values seemed ambiguous and arbitrary. Kafka, by expressing this ambiguity and lack of conviction, is representative of modern man.

F. O. Matthiessen, too, found this writer representative of modern man, but as a seer and prophet of the terror to come in decadent Western Europe, rather than as a psychological product.²⁴ Matthiessen saw political meaning in The Trial: after the First World War, he says, the European consciousness was imbued with an awareness of social disintegration, a dread of violence and brutality, which influenced the literature of the next era away from realism and

²⁴American Renaissance (New York, 1941), pp. 313-314.

toward the expression of inner struggle. Kafka's temper "was so symptomatic of the emerging era that he produced in The Trial an allegorical typification of the horror of unchecked authoritarianism even before the phenomenon of the Nazi state had come into being" (313).

In 1941 the second American edition of The Castle was published²⁵--still without the missing chapters but this time containing an introduction by Thomas Mann²⁶ as well as the original interpretive material. Mann is reminded by The Castle of his own early story "Tonio Kröger," and compares Kafka's "aspiration" in composing his novel with Tonio's "artist isolation, his longing for simple human feeling, his bad conscience in respect to the bourgeois, and his love of the blond and good and ordinary" (vii). Closely paralleling Edwin Muir's explanation of the writer's humor as arising from the basic incompatibility between God's ways and man's--as "a comedy of cross-purposes on a grand scale"²⁷--Mann describes Kafka as a "religious humorist." He sees all of his works as treating, with an attitude of "humorously, fantastically despairing goodwill" (xi), the theme of the discrepancy between God and man and the inability of man to recognize the good and to live according to it. In The Castle the village represents the community, the healthy normal life, and only by finding a place in it can K. come nearer to understanding the Castle, which

²⁵Trans. Edwin and Willa Muir (New York).

²⁶"Homage," pp. v-xvi.

²⁷See above, p. 50.

represents the state of Grace. The entire novel, Mann says, is a medley of treatments in every tone and shade of this theme--"the strange, uncanny demonic illogicality, the 'ungetatable' remoteness, cruelty, yes, wickedness, by any human standards, of . . . the powers above" (xiv). And all this, he says, is done with humor, "in a spirit of reverent satire which leaves utterly unchallenged the fact of the divine Absolute" (xiv).

Another writer who saw Kafka as primarily religious was Eugene Jolas.²⁸ But he saw anguish rather than ironic humor as the mood of his religious thinking. So acute was his metaphysical distress, says Jolas, that all of his works are tinged with mysticism. A cosmic anguish which manifests itself as fear or apprehension is the basic emotion of the characters in most of his narratives. Kafka's works never present the metaphysical world as separate and distinct from finite existence, but as melting into it. Interpreting several of the works in the light of their author's mystical and metaphysical intent, Jolas sees in the three novels "the metaphysical search for a higher religious order of life" (171). As for "Metamorphosis," "the whole story is dominated by metaphysical anguish" (171). The transformation of Samsa is "the image of the degeneration of the European order during the First World War. Modern man has to face the metaphysical revolution that is beginning" (17). In "The Judgment" Kafka

²⁸"Franz Kafka's Stories and Ascending Romanticism," Vertical: A Yearbook for Romantic-Mystic Ascensions, ed. Eugene Jolas (New York, 1941), pp. 169-172.

"symbolizes the son's search for his heavenly father in the mood of his organic fear of life" (171).

Making use of Thomas Mann's provocative label for Kafka, Philip Rahv published in The Nation an article entitled "Religious Humorist," in which he comments on both the new edition of The Castle and A Franz Kafka Miscellany.²⁹ Rahv further develops Mann's comparison of Tonio Kröger and K., calling K. the final product in the development of the hero in the European novel. K., Rahv explains, is the hero turned victim--the hero who no longer determines his own fate by his self-assertive acts as in happier ages, but who is bent to the will of his abstract, enigmatic environment. Turning to a consideration of the Miscellany, Rahv sharply criticizes Harry Slochower for labeling Kafka a "pre-Fascist exile" and for his "Marxist" interpretation of Kafka's works.

The only other review of the new edition of The Castle was that of Angel Flores in Books Abroad.³⁰ Though he hails the reprinting of The Castle, Flores notes with disappointment that Max Brod's post-script to the first edition, promising a supplementary volume of the novel's untranslated chapters, is reprinted in this edition, unchanged and unfulfilled. Flores briefly reviews Brod's and Thomas Mann's interpretations, noting that most critics see only themselves in Kafka's works "as Thomas Mann does when he compares K. with Tonio Kröger."

²⁹CLII (February 22, 1941), 217-218.

³⁰XV (October 1941), 480.

He asserts that anyone who has read Kafka in his entirety could not possibly describe him as a religious humorist. "As someone once said of Cervantes," he observes acidly, "he had several things in his mind when he wrote, but unfortunately most of his commentators do not have that faculty."

III

Notwithstanding Flores' vitriolic remarks, the critical aftermath of Amerika was, generally speaking, much less heated than comments on The Trial and The Castle had been. Many critics were perhaps holding back for the time being in order to work out interpretations of the three novels as a whole. Most of the comment on Amerika was in the form of short, superficial reviews, and consisted of little more than speculations on Kafka's sources. The only substantial attempt to interpret the novel in relation to The Trial and The Castle was Randall Jarrell's article in The Kenyon Review. Jarrell--like Philip Rahv before him--saw in Kafka's novels the plight of modern man in a highly impersonal, bureaucratic society. His article was convincing enough, but unfortunately contained such phrases as "monopolically capitalism" and "the world of late capitalism." These were fighting words to some critics, and Jarrell's article--viewed together with later ones of an even more liberal flavor--was to bring the label "socialist" into the critical name-calling.

Just such a liberal article was that of Harry Slochower in the Miscellany. Slochower's socio-political interpretation of Kafka, with

its emphasis on the hero's dream of a free country, his desire to have a fair chance in the social structure and to reach "the Communal Castle" was to become one of the main targets in the developing critical controversy.

In addition to the socio-political interpretations, the psychological explanation of Kafka's works underwent certain developments during this period. Brod's excerpts from "Letter to My Father," which now reached many more readers than before, brought forth a rash of reviews in which Kafka was described as a sick soul and a neurotic. Such criticism was answered by the outstanding article of the post-Amerika period--that of W. H. Auden. Auden described the writer as psychologically representative of modern Western man and related him to the whole of Western literary tradition. His analysis, like that of Rahv, provided a basis for the soundest interpretations to come in the future.

Another development in post-Amerika criticism was the attention to Kafka as a humorist. The wry humor which had become more apparent in Amerika than it had been in the somberly ironic Castle and Trial underwent critical analysis now, and the conception of the writer as a religious humorist developed. This explanation reconciled the apparent religious pessimism of The Castle and The Trial with the humor of Amerika. Several writers subscribed to this explanation in the post-Amerika period. Spender called Amerika "a comedy of the human situation," and Edwin Muir labeled it "a comedy of cross-purposes on a grand scale." Thomas Mann, who coined the term "religious humorist,"

expanded the idea further, as did Philip Rahv.

Still another development during this period was the shaping up of the critical controversy to come. Slochower's socio-political interpretation drew the epithet "Marxist" from Philip Rahv. W. H. Auden defended Kafka against those exuberant psychologists who dismissed him as a "sick soul." Max Brod reaffirmed the theological stand, asserting that his friend did believe in an Absolute in spite of the eternal misunderstanding which he saw between man and God. Babbette Deutsch championed the "naturalistic" critics as against the theological. And Angel Flores lashed out at the theologians, particularly Brod and Thomas Mann, for seeing only themselves in Kafka's works. But though the pattern of critical positions was beginning to take shape, these early exchanges were mild compared to the strife which was to dominate the middle forties.

CHAPTER IV

"KOSMOS KAFKA" (1941-1945): HIS INFINITE VARIETY

I

One might expect that the years following Amerika's publication would show a coming together of critical opinion. All three of Kafka's novels as well as many of his short stories had been published by this time, and critics could see his works as a whole much better than before. But instead of agreement, these years brought increasing diversity of interpretation. The last periodical article to be published in 1941 might be looked upon as a presage of this diversity, and Austin Warren's choice of its title, "Kosmos Kafka," was only a hint of the variety of explanations which were to follow.

Warren's article mentions a number of theories prominent so far in Kafka criticism and expresses the opinion that many interpretations can be valid at the same time. He thus sets the stage for the multiplicity of theories which the next years would bring. But the breadth of Warren's view of Kafka was not shared by most of the critics who followed him between the years 1942 and 1945. With a few exceptions, critics tended to interpret narrowly--seeing the writer as wholly explicable in the light of one special theory. He was explained as a Jew, as a Czech, as a surrealist. His works were explained as criticisms of the pre-war Austrian government, as reflections of the decay of the German people under the Weimar Republic, and even as expressions

of man's suffering in an uncongenial job. One interpretation, however--that of Frederick J. Hoffman--stood out. It was as broad as these were narrow. In it Hoffman wove nearly all of the sound theories about Kafka into a broader and more convincing explanation than had yet appeared.

Another development during this period was the appearance of an article which did not deal primarily with Kafka's content or meaning. New ground was broken by this analysis of his style and the effects he achieved by it. The first bibliography of Kafka criticism also came out at this time. A new socio-political theory made its appearance and brought more violent reaction than had any article so far. Too, the psychological approach, by its inclusion in several interpretations, showed that it was now firmly established. The criticism of other critics continued both implicitly and explicitly during this period, developing toward the heated controversy to come. All in all, the period reflected the ever-increasing variety of interpretations presaged by Austin Warren's aptly named article, "Kosmos Kafka."

II

In his recapitulation of the many possible explanations of Kafka,¹ Warren mentions first the religious. Kafka is a religious writer, he says, in that he tried "to give creative expression to the

¹The Southern Review, VII (Autumn 1941), 350-363.

mysteries of Justice and Grace" (361). But he was not an allegorist in the strict sense and therefore should certainly not be compared to Bunyan. For, unlike Bunyan, he had no systematized theology in mind when he wrote his novels, and for this reason they would be better called religious or even metaphysical than theological. Warren underlines the breadth of Kafka's religious orientation by interpreting his works with emphasis on the introspective central figure in each of them: "He is man alone, man hunted and haunted, man confronted with powers which elude him, and with women with whom he is never at ease, man prosecuted and persecuted; man in search of a job; man the outsider who wishes to come in. He is the man eager to do right but perpetually baffled and thwarted and confused as to what it is to do right--the man for whom the sense of duty, of responsibility, the irreducibility of 'ought,' has survived the positive and particular codes of religious and moral systems--the man in search of salvation" (363).

This explanation, however, Warren believes is only one of many possibilities. Kafka's works are capable of several religious interpretations, he says, one example being Brod's Jewish analysis. But they can also be regarded as purely secular in meaning. For instance, K. can be regarded as representing the bachelor in search of marriage or as every man in respect to his final aloneness. Still another secular explanation might be that the writer was describing the plight of the individual in a bureaucratic economy. Warren describes Kafka's world as "a world of hierarchy, created in the parodic imitation of

the Austrian bureaucracies under which he lived" (352). Supporting this explanation, he calls attention to "a characteristic feature of hierarchy everywhere prominent in Kafka's novels--the connection between promotion, pleasing, and propitiation" (360). He goes on: "One's success or failure depends on one's skill in divining the wishes of the great man; and among underlings there develops a necessary skill in calculating his mood by his complexion, step, tone of voice" (360). The impression given by Warren's article is that no one interpretation is correct to the exclusion of the others.

The year following the publication of Warren's essay produced only two pieces--one, Kurt Wolff's "On Franz Kafka," which appeared in Twice a Year,² and the other, Angel Flores' article in Twentieth Century Authors.³ Both were out of the main stream of criticism in that they were not primarily interpretive. Wolff's article was a description of the circumstances surrounding the publication of Kafka's works, and Flores' was a standard encyclopedia entry.

In his article Wolff, Kafka's first publisher, describes his initial meeting with the writer and their subsequent relationship, emphasizing Kafka's extreme reluctance to have his work published. His reluctance was due to the fact that "his conception of what his art, ultimately, had to achieve, was so exigent, he craved for such

²No. 8-9 (1942), pp. 273-279.

³Ed. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft (New York, 1942), pp. 740-741.

heights of purity and perfection that all he had as yet accomplished seemed to him raw, immature, unessential, unworthy of publication" (274). In January 1913, Wolff tells us, he received from Max Brod a collection of Kafka's novel fragments, and subsequently published them under the title Meditation. Though few copies were sold, Wolff was so impressed with Kafka's writing that he published everything that Brod could wrest from him--"The Judgment" in 1913, "The Metamorphosis" in 1915, "A Country Doctor" in 1919, and "In the Penal Colony" in the same year. Though he begged Kafka to send him more of his work, he was always put off, and it was not until after the writer's death in 1924 that his novels saw publication.

Angel Flores' article in Twentieth Century Authors is interesting mainly for its account of his friend's influence on modern writers. Flores believes that Kafka's works have had a tremendous influence on world literature, and he names Rex Warner and Christopher Isherwood as young writers who have acknowledged their indebtedness to him.

The first article to appear in the year 1943 was to become one of the most controversial in Kafka criticism. Wittingly or not, Edwin Berry Burgum in "Franz Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith,"⁴ slipped into an anachronism. In his attempt to relate the so-called degeneration of Kafka's personality to the decay of the German people under the Weimar Republic, Burgum either did not know that the Republic came

⁴Accent, III (Spring 1943), 153-167.

into being only five years before Kafka's death or did not make clear his conception of him as a man prophetically attuned to future times. As a result, Burgum was to suffer more than perhaps any other critic when the criticism-of-criticism period got under way.

In Burgum's own words, Kafka's "diseased personality symbolized the disease at the heart of German society" (153) under the Weimar Republic. To illustrate, Burgum traces Kafka's "degeneration of personality" (153) from Amerika, through The Trial and The Castle, to its final expression in "The Burrow," as the writer strove, with less and less success, to reconcile the real with the ideal world. Burgum parallels this degeneration with that of the petty bourgeois in Germany, which began under Bismarck and was completed under Hitler.

In Amerika Burgum believes Kafka turned to the New World for a solution to the problems facing the youth of Europe, but left the novel unfinished as a record of the bankruptcy of "the American way." He realized that his initial optimism in Amerika had been unfounded, that though in America men appear to live in a state of competition, they are actually puppets of a hidden authority, helpless in the rule of the evil that controls the material world. Therefore his next novel, The Trial, portrays the helplessness of the "little man" so often treated in German literature, but without the usual contempt for his insignificant impotence. Thus, The Trial is an exposure of the evils of bureaucracy as seen from the point of view of the common assumptions of democracy. More specifically, it represents the change in the German personality as a result of the over-bureaucratized

Weimar Republic. Burgum believes that the book represented Kafka's own rejection of the possibility of a naturalistic theology (which he had tried to develop in Amerika) and an acceptance of the complete incompatibility of the spiritual and material worlds. "K. made the mistake of acting in daily life upon principles which are real in the spiritual world but must remain a fantasy in the material. Thus he violated the nature of the material world, aroused the powers of evil that control it, and promoted its revenge in his own death" (162).

Burgum believes Kafka was convinced by "his observation of life under the Weimar Republic" (162) that the only solution was a complete rejection of the importance of the material world and that he portrayed in The Castle "man's quest for the disembodied perfection of God" (163). In this last unfinished novel, Burgum sees a criticism of the organizational hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and also the failure of the Jewish-Protestant-mystical tradition for Kafka. The novelist leaves his story unfinished and thus leaves K. uncertain of whether any spiritual authority actually resides in the Castle or not. Having separated the spiritual and the material in this last novel and having found no sure religious faith, Kafka was forced to resort to fantasy and hallucination such as one finds in "The Burrow."

The disintegration of the German character did not result in "death and madness" (167) as did that of Kafka's protagonists. Rather, it resulted in a distortion by the German people of their impending doom into the temporary hallucination of glory offered by Hitler. In an apparent warning against fascism and the totalitarian

philosophy, Burgum concludes with the observation that the thing which saves us from a fate similar to Kafka's (and by implication the German people's) is our belief in "the potentialities of democracy and the common man" (167).

The next two articles to appear both interpreted Kafka in terms of his Jewishness. John Urzidil, writing in The Menorah Journal,⁵ regards Judaism as the natural embodiment of the writer's religiousness. "It is proper to view Kafka as a Jew because it is proper to view him as a religious figure" (277). Underlying his work, Urzidil believes, is "the belief in man's goodness, in the possibility of his redemption, in the moral importance of his participation in his own destiny" (283)--an ideology which is religious and specifically Jewish. He regards The Castle as "a . . . stirring portrayal of Jewish loneliness in the midst of an ostracizing world" (278) and sees the writer's animal stories (such as "The Giant Mole," "Josephine or the Mice People," "Jackals and Arabs," and "The Metamorphosis") as suggestive of the fate of the Jew in their depiction of two worlds incommensurable with and unintelligible to each other. He points out, however, that Kafka's works have a universal application beyond the restrictions of a Jewish interpretation and that it is this universality which makes them influential in modern literature.

Hannah Arendt, too, in an article in Jewish Social Studies

⁵"Franz Kafka: Novelist and Mystic," XXII (Autumn 1943), 273-283.

regards The Castle as a discussion specifically of the Jewish problem.⁶ In the character K., she says, Kafka deals with a traditional theme--the Jew as outcast. But he differs from previous writers and artists in his presentation of the Jew. Unlike Heine, who portrayed him as the "schlemihl" (a person pursued by misfortune through no fault of his own); Bernard Lazare, who pictured him as the conscious pariah; or Chaplin, who embodied him in the harried little man, Kafka presents him as a man who refuses to accept his normal human rights as privileges bestowed by the powers that be but insists upon them as natural rights which every member of society can and should expect. K.'s dogged fight for his rights opens the eyes of some of the villagers and teaches them "both that human rights are worth fighting for and that the rule of the Castle is not divine law and, consequently, can be attacked" (120).

Most nineteenth-century Jews, Miss Arendt goes on, took the course of cynically aligning themselves with the reigning powers of their communities rather than the course taken by K.--a real attempt at assimilation. But, she concludes pessimistically, even had they tried to solve the problem of the Jewish people by becoming indistinguishable from their neighbors, they would have met with the same fate that K. did--death from exhaustion.

The next article to appear--another one by Hannah Arendt--gave further testimony that "Kosmos" Kafka could be interpreted in one way

⁶"The Jew as Pariah: a Hidden Tradition," VI (April 1944), 99-122.

as well as another. This time Miss Arendt, appearing now in Partisan Review,⁷ explains the writer as satirizing bureaucracy. The Trial, she says, is "a critique of the bureaucratic régime of the Austrian pre-war government" (414), and The Castle is an account of a "normal and healthy human being in a world where everything human and normal, love and work and fellowship, has been wrested out of men's hands to become a gift endowed from without . . ." (415). This world which Kafka portrays--a world where human rights are crushed by "the system"--is neither a prophecy nor a nightmare, says Miss Arendt, but a true picture of the bureaucratic world of today in which government has given way to hollow administration, and laws to arbitrary decrees. The purpose of the novels is to describe the ruthless, insensible machine of present-day bureaucracy and the attempts of the hero to destroy it for the sake of human values. Kafka "wanted to build up a world in accordance with human needs and human dignities, a world where man's actions are determined by himself and which is ruled by his laws and not by mysterious forces emanating from above or from below. Moreover his most poignant wish was to be part of such a world" (421).

The first major bibliographical study of Kafka appeared in 1944. Compiled by Angel Flores, this volume, entitled Franz Kafka: A Chronology and Bibliography,⁸ contains a chronology in which the

⁷"Franz Kafka: a Revaluation," XI (Fall 1944), 412-422.

⁸(Houlton, Maine).

main events of the writer's life are set down, and a bibliography divided into three parts: (1) works by Kafka in German and in English translation, (2) translations of his works into other languages, and (3) works about him in languages other than German and English.

In his prefatory note Flores again reviews Kafka's influence on world literature and adds to his list of writers who have been influenced by him the following: Jules Supervielle, Anna Seghers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Edward Upward, and Odon von Horvath. Briefly summarizing Kafka criticism to date, he mentions as particularly deserving of merit the work of the younger American critics Kelly, Rahv, Warren, and Burgum. Brod's biography and Herbert Tauber's dissertation on Kafka⁹ (neither translated into English at this time) he finds very helpful, but far from satisfying. In short, Flores concludes, the definitive work is yet to be written.

In the spring of 1945 the Quarterly Review of Literature devoted an entire issue to Kafka.¹⁰ It contained four articles: "The Objective Depiction of Absurdity" by the French critic Claude-Edmonde Magny, "Kafka and The Metamorphosis" by Paul L. Landsberg, "Franz Kafka and the Cabalists" by Charles Neider, and "Apropos of Kafka" by Bernard Groethuysen.

The first article¹¹ is a study of the writer's stylistic

⁹Franz Kafka: eine Deutung seiner Werke (Zurich and New York, 1941).

¹⁰Vol. II, guest editor, Angel Flores.

¹¹Pp. 211-227.

effects. Kafka's realistic or objective style, Miss Magny writes, is the perfect instrument for achieving the effects he desired. One of these is a realization by the reader of the absurdity (according to conventional moral and religious standards) of the "gratuitous catastrophes" which befall people: another is the almost myth-like effect which Kafka achieves by putting us back eons of time into the position of the ape or the insect.

This style--a style of simple narration of fantastic and horrible events which befall people--is perfect for bringing out the apparent senselessness and injustice of man's sufferings and punishments. In his use of the "gratuitous catastrophe"--the sudden, seemingly undeserved blow--Kafka shows human notions of morality to be vain. But, in addition, this technique serves to introduce one of his most profound and fundamental ideas--the idea "that we are responsible not only for what we have expressly willed and for what we have done, but also for our indiscretions, our secret desires, our very misfortunes" (212). Miss Magny points out parallels to this concept in various philosophical and religious systems but notes that the sense of hidden guilt of many of Kafka's characters, though comparable to the sense of original sin, is different in that "it is we who have committed the sin, no matter if we committed it unwillingly, no matter if we have forgotten it" (213).

Besides pointing up the absurdity of man's fate, Kafka's extraordinary style achieves the effect of making us suddenly aware of violent and forgotten forces in our lives. With sudden horror and

recognition, we feel long-forgotten primal emotions and urges which correspond dimly with their infinitely refined counterparts in civilized man. By the objective depiction of such absurdities as the ape-become-man ("Report to an Academy") Kafka evokes in us primary sensations, irreducible, ineffable, that our man's-words betray and dilute in trying to express" (223). Through the feelings of the caged ape we experience "that 'old ape-truth' . . . that perhaps is lost for us in its original crudity and horror, but which nevertheless lies hidden in us and which we stumble upon in nightmare and anguish: the proof that there is 'no way out'" (223).

Bernard Groethuysen's article for the Quarterly Review of Literature¹² is not so much an article as it is a fantastic, dream-like depiction, written somewhat in the middle style of Gertrude Stein, of Kafka's inner existence. Groethuysen sees the writer as having lived in a world apart from that of the average man--one obscure to most of us, one from which he was never "born" into ours. In this strange, abandoned world where those few who have remained without losing their way (in insanity) still live waiting for life, hesitating to be born, everything is single and clear in contrast to our world. In Groethuysen's description of the dreamlike confusion of our (the normal) world, can be seen the world of Kafka's characters; it is characterized by the predestined arguments, like long corridors and stairways, through which our bodies move according to irresistible

¹²Pp. 237-249.

geometric lines; the constant knowledge of guilt and the continual search for a judge, a trial, and a sentence; the man-manufactured "sins" upon which to fasten this nameless guilt; the desperate search for the law; the torment of being unable to obtain judgment and hence peace; and, throughout all this dreamlike search, the inability to communicate successfully with anyone, to obtain any advice or aid or understanding. In contrast to this world, Kafka's world is one of a sleeper who is wide awake. "Everything is clear with a terrifying clarity and nothing can be left out or hinted at even as nothing can be added to relate things to something that is not there. There is a lucidity which is lost as soon as one wakes up in a complex world whose changing aspects we know" (249). Only rare men like Kafka, Groethuysen believes, have been able to maintain a lucid state of mind in such a world.

In addition to Miss Magny's exposition of Kafka's stylistic effects and Groethuysen's strange, dreamlike recreation of two worlds, the special issue of the Quarterly Review of Literature carried Charles Neider's explanation of the writer's work as a reaction against the "cabalas" of modern times.¹³ Before he makes his main point, however, Neider discusses and criticizes what he calls the main schools of Kafka criticism which had developed so far. Though cabalism was one of the main targets of Kafka's satire, he says, the writer himself has become the victim of a number of cabals. Chief

¹³Pp. 250-262.

among these are the "mystic," the psychoanalytic, and the "Marxist." Neider aims his criticism of the mystic cabala chiefly against Max Brod and Edwin Muir. Brod saw The Trial and The Castle as two forms of the Godhead--justice and grace--and interpreted the novels as expressions of the incommensurability between man and the divine. And Edwin Muir, according to Neider, carried this idea to an extreme in seeing the novels as elaborate religious allegories of a highly personal nature. This mystic interpretation, says Neider, completely misses Kafka's great point that responsibility for failure lies within man, not in any outside divinity.

Neider regards Harry Slochower as the chief member of the "Freudian-materialist" school and strongly objects to his psychoanalytic "obseurantism." His conception of Slochower's article as primarily psychoanalytical rather than socio-political is interesting in view of the extreme psychoanalytical position Neider himself was to take in later years. In addition to excessive Freudianism Neider finds Slochower guilty of oversimplification on the social level. Slochower's explanation that the progressive maturity and therefore increasing gloominess of the three novels parallel Kafka's reaction to the First World War and its aftermath excludes consideration of the novels in terms of the author's progressive artistic development.

Turning to the "Marxist" school, Neider attempts to demolish the thesis put forth by Edwin Berry Burgum in "Franz Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith."¹⁴ Burgum's claim that Kafka grew progressively

¹⁴See above, pp. 66-69.

psychotic and that the disease of his own personality symbolized the disease in the heart of German society is patently false, says Neider. He points out that the empire bureaucracy of feudalistic Austria rather than the Weimar Republic bred Kafka (who was thirty-five when the Republic was established) and that Burgum ignores completely Brod's biographical testimony that the writer's personality became increasingly happy and positive in his later years.

After attacking these three main schools of interpretation, or "cabalas," Neider develops his own interpretation of Kafka's works by pointing out that it is the weakness of the hero in accepting popular belief in the cabala (the Castle in The Castle and the Law and Courts in The Trial) that brings about his failure or destruction; it is not any actual manifestation of power on the part of those nebulous entities. "Joseph K.," writes Neider, "stands trial not because he is summoned but only because he believes in the accusation and in his basic guilt And the K. of The Castle is not prevented from standing trial by anything except his own timidity and his own willingness . . . to accept the nonsensical cabala that the Castle is powerful and unapproachable" (257). Neider believes that Kafka wishes to show through his heroes "that modern man is a neurotic with a sapped will, which is a matter of a bad conscience and social insecurity" (258). In showing this, he says, Kafka implies that the modern neurosis is a social phenomenon for which society must be held responsible.

Besides these three articles of an analytical or interpretive

nature, the Quarterly Review of Literature included an exegesis of "The Metamorphosis" and a number of Kafka's short stories and fragments heretofore unpublished in America. These included a group of short, experimental fragments from Meditation, "A Report to an Academy," "The Judgment," and "A Country Doctor."

Already, various little magazines and anthologies had published translations of some of Kafka's shorter works. In addition to the pieces included in A Franz Kafka Miscellany, the following had been published by 1945: "A Hunger Artist," "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor," "An Old Page," "In the Penal Colony," "Jackals and Arabs," "A Little Woman," "The Builders," "On Parables," "The Seal of the City," "The Great Wall of China," "The Silence of the Sirens," "The Vulture," and an excerpt from Kafka's diaries.

So far, however, there had been very little critical response to the minor works; most critics had directed their energies toward unraveling the novels. A single exegetical article had appeared, though, which analyzed one of Kafka's most horrifying and revolting stories, "In the Penal Colony." This exegesis by Austin Warren had appeared in The Southern Review in 1941¹⁵ and provided the basis for Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's analysis of the story in Understanding Fiction.¹⁶

Brooks and Warren quote extensively from Austin Warren,

¹⁵"An Exegetical Note on 'The Penal Colony,'" VII (Autumn 1941), 363-365.

¹⁶(New York, 1943), pp. 467-472.

interpreting the story, as he did, as an allegory concerning the state of religion in the modern world--specifically, the conflict between the modernist scientific or secular view of the world and traditional religious beliefs. "The earth is a penal colony," writes Austin Warren, "and we are all under sentence of judgment for sin. There was once a very elaborate machine, of scholastic theology, for the pronouncement of sentence, and an elaborate ecclesiastic system for its administration. Now it is in the process of disappearance: the Old Commander (God) has died, though there is a legend, which you can believe or not, that He will come again . . ." (363). The old officer in charge of the machine is "a survivor from the old theology, a member of the saving remnant of believers in God and sin . . ." (364). He is shown in contrast with the scientist, who represents the humanitarian attitude of the modern, secular generation. Warren explains the horrible and revolting element in the story thus: Kafka, fearful of softening religion, wanted to present it "in all its rigor, its repulsion to the flesh--in its irrationality and inscrutability and uncertainty, too" (365).

Paul Landsberg's article in the Quarterly Review of Literature, "Kafka and The Metamorphosis,"¹⁷ was the second exegesis of a shorter work to appear. In "The Metamorphosis," Landsberg says, Gregor's transformation is, as a change, a manifestation of the inevitably approaching great "change" in life--death. Kafka set the story in a

¹⁷Pp. 228-236.

bourgeois background because of the extreme dependence of this social milieu on habit, custom and uniformity as shields against the agonizing knowledge of progressive change leading finally to death. The violent hatred which Gregor's transformation provokes in his family reflects a desperate determination to preserve "a world in which these 'normal' beings can live free from the fear of possible and universal change and free from the fear of that final, mysterious and unavoidable metamorphosis" (233).

Gregor's understanding of what has happened is more profound than is his family's, for in the transformation he recognizes the hidden and unexpected fruition of his secret desire--the deep, suppressed desire of civilized man to flee his intolerable rôle, to desert humanity and his responsibilities. Gregor realizes too well that the only possible solution to his enigmatic situation is death. Landsberg sees this solution as typical of Kafka's thinking: "The inevitable struggle between the misfortune of being born and the fault of not wanting to be, the misfortune of being responsible and not wanting to be, has only the saddest solution in Kafka's universe" (232).

Scarcely four months after the appearance of his article "Franz Kafka and the Cabalists"¹⁸ in which he had berated Harry Slochower for a too-psychoanalytical approach, Charles Neider published an article in the New York Times Book Review.¹⁹ In it he betrayed an ominous

¹⁸See above, pp. 75-77.

¹⁹"Kafka Mirrors Our Uncertainties, Frustrations, Fears," August 5, 1945, pp. 6, 30.

sign of his approaching swing to the extreme outer edge of the psychoanalytic school. Psychology is Kafka's forte, he says, "for, after all, his intellectual message is negligible and his qualities as an artist, as a man dealing with beauty, are negligible too" (6). Neider repeats his earlier assertion that in this writer's works we see modern man as "a neurotic with a sapped will" (6) and goes on to explain their appeal today as a result of the widespread modern neurosis. Our world, he says, like Kafka's dream-world, is largely irrational, and living in it is like living in a dream with all its uncertainties, frustrations, and fears. "We, even in our 'normality,' being the products of our society, are, like Kafka, basically neurotic: driven, anxious, inhibited" (6, 30). Neider repeats his belief that Kafka considered neurosis a "societal" phenomenon but now adds the arresting interpretation that Kafka intended to recommend psychotherapy: Kafka, he contends, implies that his protagonists may free themselves from neurosis either alone, by rejecting the autosuggestion brought on the individual by society, or "with professional help" (6).

The best refutation to date of the enthusiasts for psychoanalysis appeared in 1945 in Frederick J. Hoffman's Freudianism and the Literary Mind.²⁰ In his discussion of Kafka, Hoffman summarizes the psychoanalytical interpretations, shows that Kafka himself looked on Freud's theories as inadequate explanations of human behavior, and

²⁰(Baton Rouge), pp. 181-210.

presents what he considers to be a more complete explanation--the writer's basic religious belief in the act of faith, in which man recognizes God's ways as incomprehensible, absurd, capricious, but just.

First he analyzes the father-son conflict and shows that it had an important bearing on Kafka's later decision regarding the God-man relationship in that it set the pattern of "incomprehensible demands for duty and obedience in the face of absurdity which is all too obvious to a person accustomed to the 'reasonableness' of things" (188). Most of Kafka's writings, he points out, have to do with man's relationship to a personalized, anthropomorphic God who is unaware of or indifferent to man's efforts to achieve salvation by rational means. Also, Kafka's interest in The Book of Job, the story of Abraham and Isaac, and the Prometheus legend testify to this attitude toward God.

In spite of the psychological basis for Kafka's God-image, however, the psychoanalytic explanation does not suffice, Hoffman believes. Kafka himself considered Freudian interpretations "'too facile'" (194). It was absurd, he thought, to look upon a religious belief as simply a submission to the impersonal father image. A belief to him was not simply a disease or an illusion, as the Freudians would judge. To him, Hoffman explains, a belief began with an emotional disturbance and proceeded to "an act of faith [which] was so much more profound than bodily well-being or social adjustment that it appeared to be a serious disruption of ordinary health of body or spirit" (208). It is to

illustrate this unhealthy appearance of the act of faith, when observed by the ordinary man, that Kafka frequently portrayed his heroes pursuing their spiritual search under unhealthful or even horrifying circumstances. The essence of Kafka's approach to salvation is the impossibility of succeeding by rational, scientific means. "The God-man relationship is achieved by an act of faith [like that of Abraham] which goes beyond reason and accepts what would arouse only scorn in the reasonable man" (205). Thus, Hoffman explains, Kafka loses the Freudians by going beyond their rationalistic standards to a more profound religious level.

Hoffman agrees with Harry Slochower and Edwin Berry Burgum that Kafka's works reflect a feeling of disgust and hopelessness in the face of bureaucratic chaos and the disintegration of modern life. Too, he admits that the psychoanalytic critics have thrown much light on the works by exploring their biographical and psychological aspects. But he shows convincingly that Kafka himself comprehended Freud's theories, found them weak in that they evade the essential responsibility, and went far beyond them to a religious solution based on the human shortcomings which Freudianism so neatly and ineffectually labels.

A much less profound and more conventional religious interpretation appeared in 1945 in Victor Lange's Modern German Literature.²¹ Lange interprets Kafka's works as seriously religious expressions of

²¹(Ithaca), pp. 39 and 87-90.

human isolation and the pathos of exclusion. "Man," he says, "forever aware of 'guilt,' is compelled to face the 'trial' of life in a universe whose pattern and coherence are fundamentally uncertain and incomprehensible" (89). Comparing Kafka to other modern German writers, Lange concludes that he does not rank with Proust, Joyce, or Mann as a novelist, but "is rather, with Rilke, the supremely religious writer of an age in which man, caught in inevitable perplexity and doubt, seems incapable of personal salvation" (90).

In contrast to Lange's findings, Parker Tyler, in an article for Accent²² finds that Kafka expresses the plight of man caught in the grinding monotony of an uncongenial job. "In general," he writes, "the moral of Kafka's art is that no respite from The Job is possible without some variety of disaster" (23). He sees all of Kafka's works as having to do with "job-terminating" or "job-impinging" (23) and explains that The Castle and Amerika are exceptions to this pattern only in that their heroes are either jobless or seeking a job. Kafka's heroes subconsciously try to prolong the conditions which have interrupted their work (the change into an insect in "The Metamorphosis," the preoccupation with legal red tape in The Trial), though consciously they try to extricate themselves from their predicaments; for they despise their jobs and are unfulfilled by them. Knowing as they do that the total suspension of work is impossible, they unconsciously want to stop time itself, "for in the end its passing can bring them

²²"Kafka and the Surrealists," VI (Autumn 1945), 23-27.

only death or conditions of work they have ethically rejected" (25).

Tyler compares Kafka stylistically to the surrealists in respect to his technique of imposing an imaginative pattern which has an inherent logic of its own on a formally illogical series of details which make up an experience. Like André Breton, the surrealist, Kafka piles up a seemingly unrelated series of details in order to show the hero psychologically clinging to the present experience. His main theme, Tyler says, is work; Breton's is love. By an accumulation of quantities of details which stretch out in the hero's life, Kafka shows the hero's desire to cling to time and halt its progress, and Breton, by piling up details about the Fatal Woman in Nadja, for instance, shows the hero's attempt to cling to his love-experience for as long as possible.

The last treatment of Kafka in 1945 stresses a quite different side of the writer than any previous article had. The Best of Modern European Literature²³ places both him and Rilke in the Czechoslovakian section, explaining that "their independence of literary nationalism is as typical of Czech letters as their preoccupation with human inferiority, death, and ultimate restitution." Of Kafka alone the editors explain: "Kafka's systematized persecutions, his 'fantasies' in which heroes or heroines retain their human characteristics but inhabit such minor and underprivileged organisms as birds and insects may be related to the work of such traditional masters of Czech

²³Ed. Klaus Mann and Hermann Kester (Philadelphia), p. 495.

vernacular as Jaroslav Hašek, the inventor of that Chaplinesque hero-victim, 'The Good Soldier Schweik,' or to the author of 'The Manufacture of the Absolute' and 'War with the Newts,' Karel Čapek."

III

The period 1942-1945 produced a variety of interpretations, among which were some of the most outstanding in Kafka criticism. These articles were outstanding for various reasons. Claude-Edmonde Magny's excellent study of Kafka's stylistic effects was the only full treatment of his style so far. Charles Neider's summation and criticism of interpretations to date was notable as the first wholesale offensive in the rapidly developing critical war. Edwin Berry Burgum's apparently anachronistic explanation was to become famous--or infamous--as the favorite target of this battle. Hannah Arendt was outstanding for pointing up the trend to variety: she published two different interpretations of Kafka in quick succession. And Frederick J. Hoffman's excellent synthesis of various elements in Kafka's writing into a coherent interpretation was the best article of its kind so far. Hoffman explained the writer's apparent neuroticism and at the same time showed him to be deeply religious. He brought in the psychological aspects of Kafka's work and, too, the influence of modern rationalistic scientific culture on it. While not discounting the satirical element in Kafka's writings, he showed them to be concerned with much larger problems than modern bureaucracy. And last but not least, he gave a telling rebuff to the psychoanalytic enthusiasts.

Like the interpretations of Philip Rahv and W. H. Auden, Hoffman's was a synthesis of many elements in Kafka's works rather than a narrow explanation from the standpoint of some one favorite theory or ideology.

Although the interpretations of these men seemed to provide a reasonable meeting ground for many critics of various interests, the tendency to interpret Kafka narrowly was to grow and continue. The next year, 1946, was to produce a volume of criticism which suggested that no one explanation would prove generally acceptable. Containing an even wider variety of theories than had been published in America heretofore, it was fittingly entitled The Kafka Problem.

CHAPTER V

THE KAFKA PROBLEM (1946 AND AFTER): CONUSION COMPOUNDED

I

Angel Flores, editor of The Kafka Problem, tells us in its introduction¹ of Einstein's reported remark after reading a volume of Kafka: "'I couldn't read it, the human mind isn't complicated enough'" (ix). Perhaps Flores considered this a fitting warning for those who would read The Kafka Problem. For here was a collection of criticism which certainly reflected the complexity of this strange writer. Instead of presenting Kafka in any certain light, Flores planned the volume with the intention of showing him in a great many different lights. The variety of interpretations included is staggering.

This presentation of Kafka as the many-faceted writer was a valuable contribution in that it brought together in one volume many of the outstanding articles which had been written about him. But it also confused Kafka criticism as a whole. For the volume included a great many egocentric reminiscences, half-hatched theories, fulsome effusions, and pet prejudices. In fact, this book probably created an impression of Kafka so chaotic that it must have discouraged many people from ever reading him. Furthermore, Flores' selection was not so catholic as it seemed: though the editor states that his intention

¹Pp. ix-xii.

is "to give a general view of the man and his works, to present various attitudes toward recurrent Kafkian [sic] themes, problems, and influences" (x), the contents do not bear him out. For though he certainly does present various attitudes, that he gives a general view is unquestionably false. He himself goes on to say that although he has tried to avoid "the extravagances of bygone rages in literary criticism" (x), among which he includes "the trances of countless occult mystifiers" (x). What this means is simply that the original theological interpretation which appeared in The Castle volume has been virtually excluded. Edwin Muir is not represented at all, and Max Brod is accorded two pages. The growing antagonism among critics which this exemplifies was by now becoming apparent. In fact, some observers were beginning to wonder whether the real Kafka problem was not between critics rather than between Kafka and his readers.

II

The Kafka Problem is, Flores announces in his introduction, a collection of articles from writers representing nine countries. Its 468 pages are divided into four large sections: (1) "The Man," including biographical articles; (2) "The Writer," including for the most part articles about Kafka's style, his place in literature, and his relationship to other writers; (3) "Exegesis and Commentary," including analyses of some of the short pieces as well as of the three novels; and (4) "Theory," including a welter of contradictory interpretations. Two smaller divisions are "The Endless Labyrinth," which

is Bernard Groethuysen's unclassifiable essay alone; and "Kafka's Critics," which includes only two articles but was to prove an omen of things to come when the criticism-of-criticism period really began. The volume also included Flores' bibliography brought up to date and biographical notes on the contributors to the volume.

Despite Max Brod's virtual exclusion as a commentator from The Kafka Problem, Kate Flores cites his biography as her main source in her biographical note.² Her sketch discusses literary influences on Kafka, mentioning Kierkegaard, Pascal, Strindberg, Flaubert, Stifter, and Thomas Mann as major ones. It is rich in concrete facts about the writer and illuminating in its well-chosen quotations from personal papers and its choice of the most relevant information.

In his "Recollections,"³ John Urzidil admits that, though he knew the writer for years, he does not feel qualified to interpret his work. With a modesty characteristic of few Kafka critics, he says that his opinion, like any other, is "but a one-sided intellectual experiment" (20). The writer's greatness, he goes on to say, is apparent in the very fact that any reader can draw his own conclusions from Kafka's works and all of these may be right.

After this modest introduction, he speculates on Kafka's attitude: "He looked at himself in a meditative, inquisitive, accusatory and judicial way; and you may safely say that all his writings are

²Pp. 1-19.

³Pp. 20-24.

but the records of these procedures which he uninterruptedly instituted against himself" (22). But Urzidil sees Kafka's fundamental attitude as an optimistic one "embracing the belief in man's goodness, in the possibility of his redemption, in the moral importance of his participation in his own destiny" (23).

Another former friend, Oskar Baum, agrees that Kafka's world view was not basically one of despair.⁴ In recalling his own association with the writer, Baum reinforces Max Brod's original contention that Kafka was by no means the melancholy man he is usually pictured to be. His works, Baum believes, bear this out: "Even in the most cruel vision of the hopelessly tangled, endless jungle of human aberrations, in the eternally futile search for the right way, the existence of this right way nevertheless is an immutable certainty" (28).

The other two biographical articles in Flores' collection contribute little to an understanding of Kafka. Ludwig Hardt, in his short piece,⁵ recalls indications of his friend's affection for him and names as some of his favorite authors Matthias Claudius, Kleist, Hebel, and Walser. Franz Werfel⁶ recalls his impression of Kafka thus: "I . . . felt instinctively that he was not so much a human being, as one to whose share had fallen, in a tragic way, too much of

⁴"Recollections," trans. H. Lenz and Annelore Stern, pp. 25-31.

⁵"Recollections," trans. Christian D. Meyer, pp. 32-36.

⁶"Recollections," trans. Lienhard Bergel, p. 37.

that which is beyond nature. Franz Kafka was a messenger from above, a great chosen one . . ." (37).

The first critic represented in the section of The Kafka Problem dealing with Kafka as a writer devotes himself largely to criticizing other critics. Max Lerner, in "The Human Voyage,"⁷ first rejects W. H. Auden's theory that Kafka was a modern representative of the Quest tradition in European literature.⁸ Kafka was not content to believe, he says, that meaning lies in process rather than in end--in the quest for the Grail rather than in the Grail itself. But, though he desperately wanted a final answer, Kafka bitterly perceived that man's whole endeavor is an endless search for the meaning of life--a meaning which is beyond man's experience and ability to comprehend. Bitterness at this Sisyphean fate which mankind must endure is a predominant note in this writer, Lerner finds, and those critics who miss this quality in him miss the real Kafka.

Lerner's second criticism of criticism is more general. He objects to the emphasis on alienation as a motif in Kafka's works. The sense of being implicated in a dualistic universe is stronger in these works, he contends, than the often emphasized sense of the alienation of the individual from the world.

Lerner directs a third criticism at Harry Slochower for his interpretation of the writer as a social thinker. Though Kafka did

⁷Pp. 38-46.

⁸See above, pp. 53-55.

at times strike off incisive pictures of the prevailing social hierarchy, Lerner admits, these were by and large isolated insights. Correcting Slochower's misconception, he defines Kafka's real subject matter rather vaguely as "the largest themes of the fate of man in a world whose meaning stretches beyond his experience" (41).

Oddly enough, Lerner's article is followed--rather than preceded--by an article in which W. H. Auden further develops his Quest theory.⁹ Auden submits that all of Kafka's full-length novels belong to the Quest literature, and he reviews for comparison what he considers the various types of this genre: the fairy story; the Holy Grail legends; the dream quest (The Divine Comedy); the quest of the pilgrim (Pilgrim's Progress); the quest for necessity (Peer Gynt, Faust); and the quest for innocence (the detective story). Comparing the Kafkan quest to these, he shows that Kafka's hero is different from all other types of Quest heroes in that his problem is not simply "Can I do what I am required to do?" but "What am I required to do?" And instead of having as his goal the achievement or manifestation of his individuality, this hero fails precisely because of his individuality. Indeed, the very nature of his quest dooms it to failure: man can never discover the whole truth because, as the perceiving subject--the individual--he necessarily remains outside the truth, which is therefore forever incomplete for him. This constitutes the paradox that "K.'s only guarantee that he is following the true way is that

⁹"Kafka's Quest," pp. 47-52.

he fails to get anywhere. If he succeeded in getting his way, it would be a proof that he had failed" (52).

One of the most bizarre interpretations in The Kafka Problem is H. E. Jacob's article, "Truth for Truth's Sake."¹⁰ The essence of Kafka's work, Jacob says, is truthfulness. Though there have perhaps been greater writers in our epoch, there has been no truer writer. He was "a poet who did not love ecstasy . . . a poet who desired simply nothing but the completely pure, completely faultless passage of truth through his self, who in this desired the deepest of things . . ." (56). The only adequate method of expression for this truth is the dream, Jacob goes on. He tries to correct the opinions of some critics that Kafka was an impressionist, a man of bizarre whims and notions, and he shows that the incompatibility of Kafka's dream world with optical reality was inevitable in his attempt to depict the inner truth of life. This technique of depicting truth was, to Jacob's knowledge, new with this writer: "Kafka's attempt to put himself to sleep, to make himself dream, thus to tell us the truth in dreams, is entirely new, is unheard of in the realm of truth, in the realm of form and in the realm of their union: art" (58).

The next two articles in this second section of The Kafka Problem, Austin Warren's "Kosmos Kafka"¹¹ and Claude-Edmonde Magny's

¹⁰Trans. Harold Lenz, pp. 53-59.

¹¹Pp. 60-74.

"The Objective Depiction of Absurdity,"¹² had appeared previously in American publications.¹³ Following them was Renato Poggioli's "Kafka and Dostoyevsky."¹⁴ Here the theme of "the awakened conscience," which was to recur from time to time in American criticism, was reminiscent of Philip Rahv's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Joseph K."¹⁵ Poggioli draws a comparison between Kafka and Dostoyevsky based on both authors' practice of using for settings the close confines of one small room or apartment, stifling and enclosing, itself enclosed in the steel and concrete structure of an impersonal city. This constantly recurring setting Poggioli sees as symbolic of the environment of the awakened conscience--the soul now fully aware of its solitude.

The novels of Dostoyevsky and Kafka are really . . . "novels of human solitude," of a solitude which expresses itself materially and spiritually in the one dimension of a brick pavement or an inlaid floor, in the eternal fatality of a trip around one's room Dostoyevsky's and Kafka's characters live in rooms which do not belong to them, anonymous and unadorned, and certainly not very clean; their thought and their manner of existing are nothing but a magnetic ebb and flow set free from their brain,

¹²Trans. Angel Flores, pp. 75-96.

¹³See above, pp. 63-65 and 72-74.

¹⁴Trans. John Glynn Conley, pp. 97-107.

¹⁵See above, pp. 31-33.

which are reflected and refracted on the four walls which surround and enclose them, condense and concentrate them, exalt and humiliate them. (99-100)

This stultifying habitat of the awakened soul represents eternity in Dostoyevsky's works, says Poggioli, and he quotes Svidrigailov's description to Raskolnikov of eternity as "only a dark recess, a sort of bathroom crammed with spiders in all the corners" (99). This description is a metaphysical projection of the setting in which all of Dostoyevsky's characters live. Similarly, Kafka's two masterpieces, "The Metamorphosis" and The Trial, depict man suddenly faced with the eternal truth while living in dismal, cramped, and dirty quarters. Thus, Gregor Samsa was metamorphosed into a cockroach because "the sense of eternity and of sin, the awakening of conscience, reveals to the man his own bestiality; and because only to a cockroach can a room, a wall or a bit of furniture seem infinite" (103). Similarly, Joseph K. in The Trial is arrested because "the man who begins to observe himself living, immediately becomes a man accused, and because the tribunals of men, dirty and dusty, anonymous and habit-worn, unjust and absurd, monstrous fruits of the civilization of the four walls, are one of the circles which most resemble the eternity of Svidrigailov" (103).

Like Poggioli's study, the last discussion in The Problem of Kafka as a writer is also a literary comparison. George Woodcock, in his "Kafka and Rex Warner,"¹⁶ points out certain similarities

¹⁶Pp. 108-116.

between the two writers but is careful to state that it would be dangerous to impute a direct influence.

The main difference between them, he believes, is that, although both are concerned with man's struggle against authority, Kafka's handling of the theme is pessimistic and inconclusive, while Warner's is optimistic and definite. This he attributes to the scope of each writer's field of battle. Kafka deals with cosmic as well as human relationships and thus contends with shadowy powers from whom no tangible victory can be wrested. Warner, on the other hand, confines himself to the relatively narrow and defined realm of human relationships and thus is able to show a concrete victory by his heroes over those in authority. To Woodcock's taste Warner's work is more satisfying than Kafka's because, as a result of its restrictiveness, it achieves a certain completeness and validity, while Kafka never attains a whole view of the vast world of relationships which he attempts to embrace.

In the first exegesis in The Kafka Problem Heinz Politzer analyzes the parable "Give It Up!"¹⁷ The policeman, he says, represents the Creator. His abrupt advice, "Give it up, give it up!" to the lost and breathless questioner sums up the hopelessness of human existence and is "the last word of all wisdom" (118). Politzer points out that the tragedy of this short piece lies not in the policeman's abrupt reply, but back in some previous action of the seeker--some

¹⁷Trans. H. Lenz, pp. 117-121.

first step taken innocently and unaware--just as it does in "The Country Doctor," "The Metamorphosis," "In the Penal Colony," "The Judgment," and other pieces. Too, he sees a Jewish meaning in the parable. Kafka, reflecting the ages-old wisdom and suffering of his people, has portrayed "the intrinsic experience of the Jew in exile: alienated from the earth, far from the right path of his life, severed from his connection with the Creator" (120).

The next exegetical article, Paul L. Landsberg's "The Metamorphosis,"¹⁸ had previously appeared in the Quarterly Review of Literature.¹⁹ Following it is another comparison of Kafka with Dickens. Misleadingly entitled "Amerika and Charles Dickens," Rudolf Vařata's study²⁰ actually deals largely with Dickens's influence on The Trial and The Castle. These novels he believes to have the same theme as Bleak House: "the machinery of law crushing everybody and everything which comes under its wheels, the victim realising all its horrors without understanding its mechanism" (135). Furthermore, the workings of the legal system were used by both Dickens and Kafka as symbols of the society in which they lived. In developing this interpretation, Vařata calls Max Brod's interpretation of The Castle misleading and contradictory and interprets Kafka as not the religious man seeking God's grace but simply man in search of his rightful place

¹⁸Trans. Caroline Muhlberg, pp. 122-133.

¹⁹See above, pp. 79-80.

²⁰Pp. 134-139.

in a society whose system makes success impossible. This struggle against society in both Dickens and Kafka can be explained by their conflicting relationships with their fathers--a conflict which Vařata believes to be typical of the middle-class family and not in any way morbid or extraordinary.

Following the next exegesis, Austin Warren's analysis of "In the Penal Colony,"²¹ which had been published previously,²² is a rather bizarre medical interpretation of The Trial. Alberto Spainì, who translated The Trial into Italian, explains the novel as a perfect, step-by-step allegory of the situation of a man who discovers that he has an incurable disease.²³ To illustrate the allegorical correspondence, he gives these examples: (1) K.'s obstinacy in not wanting to confess corresponds to the stubbornness of a sick person in not wanting to admit that he is sick; and (2) K.'s not having taken the trial seriously at first and later becoming completely absorbed in it to the exclusion of every other activity corresponds to the sick person's progressive preoccupation with an incurable illness. In further proof of this unorthodox interpretation, Spainì points out that it is characteristic of Kafka to have his heroes struggling not against destiny itself but against fighting destiny on any but a moral plane. "The struggle against destiny reduces man to an animal level,

²¹"The Penal Colony," pp. 140-142.

²²See above, pp. 78-79.

²³The Trial," trans. John Glynn Conley, pp. 143-150.

to that of a blind corpuscle crushed by the imponderable mass which weighs heavily above and beyond us. Man's secret is that of forcing destiny onto a spiritual plane. Man's life must take place exclusively in that world over which man has power: his own spirit" (147). In the light of this conception, the protagonist of The Trial is a failure. Kafka shows Joseph K. as a man who falls short of the moral plane. Joseph K. cannot accept his arrest (the realization that he is incurably ill) and his impending trial (death); he cannot withdraw from the elemental struggle with destiny to a higher plane where destiny loses its power over man. "He did not know how, finally and completely, to renounce hope and he did not attain certainty. He dies 'like a dog'" (148).

Following Spaini's analysis is John Kelly's previously published interpretation of The Trial in terms of the theology of crisis.²⁴ Then comes the first exegesis of one of Kafka's most charming short stories, "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor." Lienhard Bergel interprets the story as dealing with the problem of routine in man's life.²⁵ Blumfeld, he says, is not the hero of this story; the real hero is routine, which, in one form or another, dominates the world. Kafka looked upon routine as man's curse--but an inescapable curse; hence in this story he poses the problem, not of whether to accept it, but rather of how to accept it. We see Blumfeld's reaction to the

²⁴"The Trial and the Theology of Crisis," pp. 151-171. See above, pp. 35-37.

²⁵"'Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor,'" pp. 172-178.

decidedly non-routine appearance of the celluloid balls develop through three stages: (1) Blumfeld tries to ignore their existence; (2) he tries to foil them by sticking to his routine (going to bed as usual); and (3) he is brought out of his routine pattern and humanized to some extent (growing to feel that the balls are like pet dogs, seeing the cleaning woman's child in a softer light, giving him the balls). In this last stage, Bergel believes, we see a rare facet of Kafka--his admission of the possibility of mutual helpfulness and companionship--and for this reason the story deserves more attention than it has received.

The next three exegetical articles in The Kafka Problem all deal with The Castle. Those by Max Brod²⁶ and Denis Saurat²⁷ are in substance the same as those which had appeared in The Literary World's "Homage to Franz Kafka" in 1934.²⁸

The third analysis of The Castle, by Daniel-Rops,²⁹ views Kafka as a man with a profound Weltschmerz but a spiritual courage akin to Kierkegaard's. "Kafka's world is a universe of absurdity through which the human intelligence is groping" (187), says this critic. In The Castle, which he believes to be Kafka's most important book, can be best seen the metaphysical anguish which gripped this writer

²⁶"The Homeless Stranger," pp. 179-180.

²⁷"A Note on The Castle," pp. 181-183.

²⁸See above, pp. 12-14.

²⁹"The Castle of Despair," trans. Muriel Kittel, pp. 184-191.

and made him "one of the truest and most dramatic witnesses of modern man and his struggle with nothingness" (184). For in the novel *K.*, symbolizing man, constantly seeks to make contact with the Castle, which symbolizes the inaccessible realities toward which man always futilely gropes.

Two fundamental themes emerge from *K.*'s endeavors in The Castle: (1) the super-human and incomprehensible justice which forever condemns man to be indicted though free, and (2) the resultant intolerable state of man's existence, which, regardless, he must and does accept. In respect to the first theme, Kafka's heroes, one after the other, strive to understand the incomprehensible law which controls their lives in order to understand their judgment. But *K.* never reaches the Castle just as the dog in "Investigations of a Dog" never comprehends why the human world treats him as it does. Daniel-Rops sees Kierkegaard as the source of this theme of the incomprehensibility of the higher law. Like Kierkegaard, but unlike most writers of his time, Kafka accepts his fate, realizing that man is a prisoner who cannot escape it. This acceptance, the second fundamental theme in The Castle, is what makes him remarkable: "This man, dominated by a passion for the absolute, is really a spiritual son of Kierkegaard, who accepts man's fate even to the limit of his worst agony, and from his suffering draws the basic element of his greatness" (189).

In the next article R. O. C. Winkler deals with all three of the novels rather than with one specifically.³⁰ Winkler believes

³⁰"The Three Novels," pp. 192-198.

that Kafka's ultimate concern is with religion and that his novels are depictions, on a concrete level, of his religious beliefs. The heart of his working religious conviction was that there is a right--a divinely sanctioned--way of life for the individual if he can but find it. In his novels Kafka particularizes and makes concrete this belief on the social and individual levels. Thus his conviction that it is impossible for man to follow the true way is made concrete on the social level in K.'s continually frustrated attempts to become an accepted member of the village. On the individual level his frustration is illustrated in the sense of tension and inaccessibility in his relationships with individual villagers. This method of expressing religious convictions by presenting them dramatically on the social and individual levels is most perfectly worked out in The Castle, Winkler believes. For in The Trial the belief in inaccessibility, instead of being constantly suggested by the social and individual levels of action, is presented as in opposition to man's idea of what his fate should be; and in Amerika (because of Kafka's relative immaturity at the time of its composition) the religious implications are presented lightly and optimistically.

A second interesting exegesis by Lienhard Bergel is his analysis of "The Burrow."³¹ Bergel sees as the story's central theme the relationship between mind and reality, between the snug, rational world, the "burrow" which man labors to construct in his own mind,

³¹"The Burrow," pp. 199-206.

and the "real" outside world which is dominated by irrationality. Devising a perfect burrow which is completely hidden from and independent of the outside world becomes an obsession with the animal, but such a complete separation from "reality" is impossible, for food and air must come from outside. In spite of this imperfection, the animal often revels in his snug feeling of security and power just as the mind often revels in voluptuous contemplation of its own creations; and the danger of invasion from outside makes this enjoyment even sharper. At times the animal ventures outside into reality for a change, and "here success is more rare than in the burrow, but the results are in every respect to be considered more valuable" (201). In this we see extroversion temporarily winning out over introversion. But very soon life in the outside world begins to pall, and the animal confesses, "I am tired of this life in the open spaces, it seems to me that here I cannot learn anything more . . ." (201-202). So, the mind, having ventured outside its self-created, orderly abode and having proved that it can get along in the irrational, orderless outside world, returns to its "burrow" feeling that it is more important to comprehend existence than to live it. The day of reckoning comes, however, when evidence of an invasion from without appears. The animal now realizes that, lulled by the false security of his burrow, he has become more vulnerable to attack than he might have been had he not hidden from reality. Later, however, it develops that the danger of attack is not real but is a projection of his bad conscience from having feared and shunned reality. He realizes that his obsessive

fear is a creation of his own mind. Thus, ironically, the outside world (reality) has triumphed over him only because of his own egotism.

Bergel notes the conflict between his interpretation of "The Burrow" and that of Max Brod, who looked upon the story as an expression of man's desire not only for safety, but also for a home and a basis for life acquired through honest work. Brod, he reminds us, was always anxious to portray his friend as healthy-minded and shrank from interpretations which indicated his self-condemnation.

In a discussion of Kafka's diaries and letters (as yet unpublished in English) Ernst Weiss³² objects to the egocentricity they manifest. "Here, over and over again, is the settling of accounts with himself, the trial against himself . . ." (207), he says. "This magic genius perceived more and different things than others, his glance was deeper, more divine and infernal than that of others. But what did he see at the bottom of everything? Only himself" (211).

Weiss believes Kafka's constantly recurring experience to be "the accusation of the isolated 'I'" (209), and he reads from the diaries and letters Kafka's conviction that the "I" is unworthy of Grace, is guilty and condemned without knowing it. Guilt, he believes, is Kafka's major theme and his lifelong struggle with it was also a struggle against insanity.

Conspicuous in the next section of The Kafka Problem, that

³²"The Diaries and Letters," trans. Annelore Stern, pp. 207-213.

entitled "Theory," was the growing tendency of Kafka critics to spend most of their energies destroying the theories of other critics. This trend toward criticism of criticism had already been apparent in Frederick J. Hoffman's treatment of the writer,³³ reprinted here from Freudianism and the Literary Mind.³⁴ Hoffman had directed his criticism largely at the overenthusiastic psychoanalysts. The second article in this section, Rudolf Fuchs's "Social Awareness,"³⁵ sought to correct the major figure of the theological school, Max Brod. Fuchs believes there is much less of the metaphysical in Kafka than has been supposed. He criticizes Brod for overemphasizing that aspect of the writer's works and suggests instead a social interpretation. Using Brod against himself, he quotes from Brod's biography to show Kafka's interest in social questions. One example which evidently shows this to Fuchs's satisfaction is the statement attributed to Kafka, "'The field of economic activity is a matter of conscience and of faith in one's fellow beings'" (248). Other quotations which Fuchs believes prove his theory show the writer's compassion for the injured workers he met in his work and his perception of the hypocrisy of the privileged classes. All of these, he says, "testify how strongly Kafka felt drawn toward socialism" (248).

The next article, Albert Camus's "Hope and Absurdity,"³⁶

³³"Escape from Father," pp. 214-246.

³⁴See above, pp. 81-83.

³⁵Pp. 247-250.

³⁶Trans. William Barrett, pp. 251-261.

translates Kafka's oft-discussed religious pessimism into existentialism. In Kafka's development from The Trial to The Castle Camus sees a reflection of existential philosophy. The hero of The Trial is caught up in a situation which typifies the absurdity of man's life and the human lot. He struggles to reverse his absurd fate, to reach God through the logic and reason of the human world. He fails, naturally. But in The Castle the hero gains further insight into the incommensurability of divine and human morality and, though he fails to reach God, he begins to understand that the apparently absurd in man's lot cannot be righted or justified--it must simply be accepted with hope. Camus comments, "We find here in its pure state the paradox of existential thought such as Kierkegaard, for example, expresses it: 'One must strike dead earthly hope, it is only then that one is saved by true hope'; which can be translated: 'One must have written The Trial to understand The Castle'" (258). Further tying in Kafka's development with the existentialists, Camus explains them thus:

"They embrace the God who devours them. It is through humility that hope is introduced. For the absurdity of this existence assures them a little more of supernatural reality" (258). In his works, Camus says, Kafka creates a progressive portrait of a god devoid of evidence, coherence, goodness, or moral grandeur--and all this only in order to throw himself more completely on His mercy. Progressing from The Trial through The Castle man recognizes the absurd, accepts it, and resigns himself to it, and in doing so wins hope. Camus concludes: "This subtle remedy which makes us love what crushes us, and gives

birth to hope in a world without issue, this brusque 'leap' by which everything becomes changed--this is the secret of the existential revolution and of The Castle itself" (256).

Another interpretation which connects Kafka to Kierkegaard is Jean Wahl's "Kierkegaard and Kafka."³⁷ Wahl, however, finds not only philosophical but also personal similarities between the two writers. By a confusing shuffling of quotations from Brod, Kafka himself, and Kierkegaard, Wahl shows, to his own satisfaction at least, the similarities and dissimilarities of the two in respect to (1) women and marriage, (2) their conception of duty in life, (3) their conception of the meaning of life, and (4) the strength of their faith. He draws the general conclusion that they had similar problems but worked them out in different ways. "Kafka erects opposite the Christian faith of Kierkegaard the will to have faith in this world, to accept this world, not in an irreligious manner, but in a way which remains religious outside of any specific religion" (208).

The theory of Kafka's predominantly metaphysical orientation is further explored by John Urzidil in an article entitled "The Oak and the Rock."³⁸ Kafka, Urzidil believes, was almost completely divorced from the realm of nature--from the facts, phenomena, and processes of material life symbolized by "the oak and the rock." The reason for his detachment is that his interest lay almost exclusively in the

³⁷Trans. Lienhard Bergel, pp. 262-275.

³⁸Pp. 276-286.

realm of the soul and spirit. He saw man abstractly rather than as an integral part of the natural world. As a result, his works are "spiritual architectures" rather than down-to-earth novels or stories. Kafka was unable to come to terms with life as a direct result of his over-intellectualism and his exclusively anthropocentric orientation: "Perceiving man and mankind in their purely abstract essence, he had to look at life from a disconnected viewpoint" (278).

Kafka's problem is essentially that of the Jews, Urzidil believes, for the problematical situation of the Jew is largely due to the abstractness of his relationship to God. For the Jew "the Lord is the geometrical point of all human emotions, and, reciprocally, human life, in all of its particulars and in its totality, is the geometrical point of the Lord. There is no room for intimacy with nature" (281).

Rather than as abstract "spiritual architectures" Hans Joachim Schoeps sees Kafka's works as an expression of ages-old mythical thinking. In "The Tragedy of Faithlessness"³⁹ he shows that Kafka's religious feeling had gone past simple skepticism to a dependence on a vague mythical sense of the past: "Mythical thinking as the remembrance of something forgotten in the shadow of vague recollections is the form which shapes the whole of Kafka's works" (287). Kafka's religious faith has been reduced by nihilism to mythical feeling--a sense of a lost past and a lost personality. Schoeps equates this

³⁹Trans. Lienhard Bergel, pp. 287-297.

feeling with a ghostlike creature in Slavonic mythology called Odradek--a creature which symbolizes man's having become a thing, the "I" having become an "it." In this connection, he points out the facelessness, the lack of personality in all of Kafka's heroes and also notes that the name Odradek means "escaped from the Law" and that this is exactly the plight of these heroes. In The Castle K., despairing at having lost God, and ignorant of the Law but still wishing to learn it, tries to take heaven by storm. In The Trial, on the other hand, heaven or the Law seeks out man, and because he is not only outside the Law but also ignorant of this fact, he must be executed. K.'s struggle to reach the Castle is unsuccessful because he cannot have faith and tries to force his way to Grace. He lacked the great essential to salvation: "the pious conviction, the hopeful confidence that what the Castle would give him would be that which it considered good for him--that which eternity finds good" (290). On the other hand, what Joseph K. lacked in The Trial was the awareness of sinfulness. He could have been saved only by being able to recognize his guilt and feel the overwhelming sinfulness of his existence, for only in this way was repentance possible.

Both K.'s lack of faith in the dispositions of heaven and Joseph K.'s ignorance of his guilt show their divorcement from the ancient Law. "This is the tragic situation of man today, for whom God is dead, if, detached from the faith and the tradition of the past, he wants to obtain God's revelation by means of his knowledge and his understanding of the world" (291).

Following a reprinting of Edwin Berry Burgum's "Franz Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith,"⁴⁰ D. S. Savage, falling into the pattern of criticism of criticism, takes up cudgels against both Burgum and Edwin Muir.⁴¹ Of Burgum's "altogether too facile" explanation he comments sharply, "Kafka was certainly preoccupied with pressing problems to which the proffered solution of a 'belief in democracy and the common man' is entirely impertinent" (320). And to Muir's view that the writer was a religious genius who made a valuable contribution to our knowledge of spiritual reality, he objects that though Kafka raises great issues, he comes to no conclusions, offers no solution.

Savage sees him as a man torn between two worlds and incapable of adjusting to either one. First, he was incapable of living the conventional life around him, "of accepting the half-truths and compromises which are embodied in human conduct on the average, social level" (328). Thus his only alternative was to adjust to the other world, the world of the divine will. But he was also incapable of taking the leap of faith and, as a result, persisted in trying to reconcile these two incompatible worlds. His "obsessive insistence on regulating earthly life in accordance with divine laws (which are undiscoverable)" (320) is evident, Savage says, in The Castle and The Trial. During the last part of his life, he hopelessly abandoned his

⁴⁰"The Bankruptcy of Faith," pp. 298-318. See above, pp. 66-69.

⁴¹"Faith and Vocation," pp. 319-336.

efforts to reconcile the human and the divine realms, and in such stories as "The Burrow" and "Investigations of a Dog" depicted isolation carried to its final conclusion.

Further criticism of critics--this time of a favorite target, Max Brod--is seen in the next article, Egon Vietta's "The Fundamental Revolution."⁴² Kafka's work, writes Vietta, cannot be understood in the light of conventional theology or the concept of justice, but only in the light of the fundamental artistic revolution which lies behind modern music and modern art. In particular, Max Brod's theory that Kafka believed in a divine guidance of human destiny makes of his work little more than senseless blasphemy, for his fundamental belief was in man's eternal being-in-the-wrong before God. The key to his attitude is to be found, rather, in the same metamorphosis which brought about the modern artistic revolution. This revolution, which manifested itself in the loosening up of temporal-spatial structure in painting and in the violently changed idiom of the new music, reflects a basic shift within man's consciousness itself rather than the development of any system. Vietta mentions Massimo Bontempelli, Jean Cocteau, Rilke, Chirico, Funi, and Cairà as exponents of this metamorphosis of artistic consciousness, which fundamentally challenges man's traditional view of the world, uproots conventionally accepted reality and authorizes an art which "is intent on seizing reality as such" (345). Seen in this context, Kafka's work loses its appearance

⁴²Trans. Lienhard Bergel and F. Wood, pp. 337-347.

of being accidental or chaotic and serves as a guide into the new artistic attitude.

Another critic who interprets Kafka from an artistic standpoint is the Argentine writer Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. In his article, "Intuition,"⁴³ he hails the writer as one of the earliest exponents of a new method of investigating and explaining the world--through intuition rather than through reason. After describing the blind alley that man has run into by trying to comprehend the world through his reason, Estrada gives a brief history of the new method:

The new technique for understanding and divining the nature of the world--intuition--created by the simultaneous functioning of new mental and sensory organs, was heralded by several extraordinary men, almost contemporary: Kierkegaard, Gauss, and Poe. The others who followed--Nietzsche, Whitehead, Spengler, Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Kafka--perfected the instrumental use of the new reason and intuition. For them, objects and beings are located in an unexplored "area" where it is evident that relationships and functions are more certain and important than the objects and beings themselves, where man's existence is a story about to be written for the first time. (349)

No other writer has penetrated as far as has Kafka into this "area" of

⁴³Trans. Caroline Muhlenberg, pp. 348-353.

mysterious forces which determine man's conduct and destiny. For Kafka's intuition is within the structure of this world whose character cannot be itemized, but only divined and intuitively transmitted to others. Kafka uses only intuition, "the artist's only legitimate instrument of understanding" (352), "to bring from this 'forgotten' world . . . which has disappeared like ancient cultures beneath the pavements of modern cities" (351) "a direct and mystic message of strangeness and awe" (352).

Wladimir Weidlé, Polish critic and philosopher, would agree with Estrada that Kafka lived in a world of intuition. But, as he points out in "The Negative Capability,"⁴⁴ Kafka found this shadowy, irrational world just as disappointing as he had the rational world which he sought to escape. He, like other artists who have found the scientific rationalism of the modern world stifling, withdrew into another world--sought an escape by means of Keats's "negative capability" in the sense that he pursued intuitive certainties regardless of their apparent illogic. He penetrated into this shadowy world farther than any other artist had, Weidlé believes, and the irony of his plight is that he found there "only the mechanical determinism which the art of our times tries desperately to avoid in order to be able to breathe freely" (361). "Kafka has delved into the unconscious to the point of insanity, and he has found but this: definitive, unappealable condemnation We are condemned to the absurd, we

⁴⁴Trans. Arlene Harrow, pp. 354-362.

must wander indefinitely in the endless labyrinth of existence" (360).

Turning to Kafka's followers, Weidlé warns that some of them have unfortunately tried to formulate his irrational searching into a principle or method, and the result has been worse than the crippling rationalism which they seek to escape. For "the irrational as such, transformed into an abstract principle, is the worst of rationalist errors . . ." (362).

Still another critic who sees Kafka as a denizen of another world is T. Weiss.⁴⁵ But Weiss believes this other world was the world of chaos, the unknown. Kafka, he says, acutely conscious of this chaotic world, strove to accommodate it to his world. Though he could not successfully assimilate chaos into his life, he did reduce it to a kind of pattern in his works. "This," says Weiss, "was Kafka's treatment, his economy of chaos. He did not solve chaos; rather, he kept it in solution. Yet by the strength of his art, an awareness and so an order appeared. He did not reduce mystery, but by reworking its continuous presence in the most commonplace, eventually the most mysterious might be accepted as rather [sic] daily" (367). Thus in Kafka's work, as in Hopkins's, one feels a tension between two worlds, and "a fierce longing to make them one" (370).

Having taken the reader progressively farther into the supposed "other world" of Kafka by his selection and placement of articles, Flores evidently finds it fitting to cap this section of his collection

⁴⁵"The Economy of Chaos," pp. 363-375.

with the most other-worldly of all Kafka articles, Bernard Groethuyzen's "The Endless Labyrinth,"⁴⁶ which had originally appeared in the Quarterly Review of Literature's special issue.⁴⁷

The last section of The Kafka Problem comprises only two articles, both dealing largely with critics. Lienhard Bergel's "Max Brod and Herbert Tauber"⁴⁸ and Charles Neider's expanded article on Kafka and the cabalists⁴⁹ both illustrate markedly the trend toward criticism of criticism, and both aim their biggest guns at the head of Max Brod.

Bergel, discussing Brod's biography (which was to be published in English translation in 1947), calls it "rather an accumulation of material for a biography than a fully developed picture of Kafka's life" (391). He criticizes particularly Brod's emphasis on his friend's Zionism and his eagerness to stress the writer's "healthy" side. As for Brod's explanation of Kafka's unhappiness and premature death as the result of his relationship to his father and the burden of his uncongenial profession, Bergel rebuts it thus: "The private experiences of an artist do not enter into his 'poetic' personality in as direct a way as Brod assumes; the somber features of Kafka's writings cannot be explained as mere reflexes of his private life" (394).

⁴⁶Trans. Muriel Kittel, pp. 376-390.

⁴⁷See above, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁸Pp. 391-397.

⁴⁹"The Cabalists," pp. 398-445.

Turning to Herbert Tauber's Franz Kafka, eine Deutung seiner Werke (which was to be published in English translation in 1947), Bergel finds Tauber too dependent on Brod in overemphasizing the Jewish meaning in Kafka's work and the religious element in general. Further, he says, Tauber artificially separates the abstractly intellectual in the writer's works from the artistic and poetical. This arbitrary separation, Bergel believes, shows a lack of artistic sensitivity typical of most German critics.

Charles Neider's "The Cabalists" is an expansion and reworking of his article for the Kafka issue of the Quarterly Review of Literature.⁵⁰ In it he divides all criticism into two general types: the mystical or supernatural, and the naturalistic. As before, he severely criticizes the mystical interpreters, notably Brod and Mair, and gives this explanation of the continued success and popularity of their interpretations:

The entire Kafka controversy has existed under incredibly turbulent conditions, with both sides occasionally wandering into enemy territory and, through sheer ignorance or confusion, sniping at their own positions. In the main, the supernaturalists have come out best under such conditions, not because of superior logic but because, based on turmoil and the vague, the un-empirical, they have fought the battle on their own ground; besides,

⁵⁰See above, pp. 75-77.

and more important, they have in a sense laid down the rules of the game, with their "inside" knowledge divulged by Kafka's intimates and disciples, their exegeses in terms of absolutes, divine, [sic] original sin, and all the rest of the mystical baggage. (402)

Going on more specifically to a discussion of particular critics, Neider exposes what he considers the shortcomings of such critics as Brod, Muir, Auden, Kelly, and Estrada and commends the "naturalists" Magny, Landsberg, Arendt, and Lerner. The naturalistic approach to Kafka, he says, has the advantages of "intelligibility, closer relation to the facts of biography and literary method, and, above all, closer relation both to the world which created Kafka and that which by a great majority received him" (410).

After an incisive analysis of the inaccuracies and illogicalities of most of the "schools" or "cabalas" of Kafka criticism, Neider presents an expansion of his own interpretation. In it can be seen the psychological interest which was growing in Neider and which was soon to catapult him into the ninth circle of the psychoanalytical school.

The "Letter to My Father," "much of which," Neider acidly comments, "has been suppressed by Brod 'for reasons of a personal nature'" (421), provides rich evidence that Kafka's basic theme was cabalism. In it, Neider points out, "Kafka says to his father: 'For me you began to have that mysterious quality which all tyrants have, whose privilege is based on their personality, and not on reason'"

This, Neider contends, "is what he meant by the laws of the nobles, the Courts, the Castle and all other symbols of outdated shibboleths which he presented" (421). Cabalism is epitomized in The Trial by "the Law and the Courts, by their irrational, unjust and deliberately clandestine and capricious nature, which places the burden of proof on the accused . . ." (425). One can also see religious bureaucracies satirized as cabalas in Kafka's works, notably in the Cathedral scene from The Trial, where "the Cathedral . . . with its verger, priest, and barbaric ornamentation, emphasizes Kafka's conception of organized religion as a cabalism" (427). Again, these false complications thrown in the way of men seeking God are evident in the parable from The Trial, where "all one needs is the courage to disregard the hocus-pocus of the doorkeeper and to pass through" (426-427).

Shoring up his interpretation still more firmly with biographical data, Neider points out that Kafka was an outsider in many ways and hence suffered particularly from cabalism. He was a Jew, he suffered from a father complex, and he was a bachelor. Because of these factors, "he understood the plight of minority groups, particularly of the oppressed; he understood how the oppressed slowly come to think themselves monstrous and guilty under the powerful and unrelieved suggestion of the oppressors" (424).

Having analyzed Kafka thus, Neider indulges in a surprising bit of editorializing: One can escape from such forces, he advises, only through "belief in oneself, in one's integrity, one's senses and one's logic" (426)--in short, by refusing to give in to the power of

the cabalas. Not to do this is to remain neurotic, but man owes it to himself and to society to free himself from his neurosis. Once freed, he must not simply take his place as a normal citizen and adopt the usual "normal" callousness to society and mankind; "he must, because of this greater vision and compassion, defend the rights of all men by attacking the political and economic, the reactionary cabalas which stifle man's development. He must emerge as the un-neurotic genius" (439).

Weider's article is followed by Angel Flores' 1944 Kafka bibliography⁵¹ brought up to date⁵² and a section of brief biographical notes on each of the critics represented in the volume.⁵³

III

Thus ended The Kafka Problem. While it made available in one volume some of the most important studies of the writer, it also included some astonishingly narrow interpretations. Among the best articles were those of Camus, Auden, Schoeps, Warren, Hoffman, Bergel, and Magny. Albert Camus's exposition of the existential elements in Kafka's thinking linked the writer with one of the major philosophical movements of modern times. W. H. Auden illustrated Kafka's representative role in Western literary tradition. Hans Joachim Schoeps'

⁵¹See above, pp. 71-72.

⁵²Pp. 447-463.

⁵³Pp. 464-468.

discussion of him as reflecting contemporary man's tragic detachment from the religious faith of the past gave breadth and solidity to Kafka's position in modern letters. Austin Warren's "Kosmos Kafka" illustrated the variety of interpretations which could apply to his writing, and Frederick J. Hoffman brought together the most important of these to produce the best synthesis so far. An outstanding exegesis in The Kafka Problem was Lienhard Bergel's psychological analysis of "The Burrow," and the best treatment of Kafka's style published so far was that of Miss Haggy.

Although these articles were some of the finest that had appeared, they were outnumbered and virtually outweighed by the extremely narrow interpretations of such critics as Alberto Spainí, who thought The Trial to be about the discovery of an incurable disease; Rudolf Fuchs, who tried to prove Kafka's interest in socialism; Egon Vietta, who thought the writer explicable only in relation to the modern artistic revolution; Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, who explained him as an "intuitive" writer; and H. E. Jacob, who saw truthfulness as the outstanding characteristic of his work. In addition to these painfully one-sided interpretations, The Kafka Problem contained articles which could hardly be called literary criticism at all. The egotism, effusiveness, opacity, and irrelevance of Ludwig Hardt's, Franz Werfel's, Jean Wahl's, and George Woodcock's articles respectively should certainly have disqualified them.

The inclusion of these articles made even more surprising the exclusion of several of the best-known studies that had previously

appeared. Although the highly controversial articles of Edwin Berry Burgum and John Kelly were included, that of Harry Slochower was not, though at least one critic included attacked Slochower's position. Edwin Muir, who, though an adherent of the now weakened religious interpretation, had been a major figure in Kafka criticism, was conspicuous for his absence, as was Philip Rahv, one of the ablest of Kafka critics. Pitifully represented by two pages was Max Brod, the man responsible for the very existence of this writer's literary remains.

All in all, The Kafka Problem seemed to be a potpourri of some very poor and a few very good articles. As an aid to understanding Kafka the collection was certainly a failure. In fact, it created more confusion than had existed before about his meaning. As a fair cross-section of Kafka criticism it fell far short. As a representation, itself, of "the Kafka problem" it succeeded all too well. The collection was its own proof of the difficulty of finding one interpretation of Kafka which was acceptable to a majority of critics. Also, it exemplified that provocative quality of the writer's works which seemed to compel readers to interpret them. As for its effect on the growing critical controversy, it was to bring forth such a torrent of criticism that Kafka himself would be virtually forgotten for a time.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF THE CRITICS (1946 AND AFTER):

CRITICISM OF CRITICISM

I

1946 was the key year in Kafka criticism. The Kafka Problem brought together articles representing a wide variety of interpretations and indicated the new direction which criticism was to take. After 1946 discussion of Kafka himself would be nearly eclipsed by critical warfare. The Kafka Problem started a wave of bickering and recriminations which would continue unabated through 1947 and last well into 1948. The writer himself was to be almost forgotten in spite of a reprinting of Amerika in 1946, the publication of Metamorphosis and a volume of his short pieces in the same year, and the printing of his Parables in 1947. Even the publication of Max Brod's biography translated into English was to awaken less interest in Kafka than in the sins of omission and commission of which Brod was accused. Only the appearance of Volume I of Kafka's Diaries in 1948 was in some degree to stay the fury of internecine warfare and turn the critics' attention to the original object of their strife.

The blame for this critical maelstrom, however, cannot be laid at the doorstep of The Kafka Problem alone. By a strange coincidence, three of the major interpretive "schools" were represented in three volumes published in the year of The Kafka Problem. 1946 saw the publication of Kafka's Metamorphosis; of The Great Wall of China, a

collection of his stories, fables, and aphorisms; and of A Franz Kafka Miscellany, revised and enlarged. Prefacing Metamorphosis was an interpretation by Paul Goodman which was only a hint of the fantastic things to come from the psychoanalytical critics in the next two years. The theological position was restated in Edwin Muir's introduction to The Great Wall of China. And the social, as well as the secular critics in general, found new strength in Harry Slochower's Miscellany article.

II

The first article to include a discussion of The Kafka Problem was one by Harry Slochower which appeared in The American Scholar in the summer of 1946.¹ Slochower briefly summarizes what he calls the Kafka "myth" by giving representative quotations from leading critics. However, he levels his big guns at Edwin Berry Burgum and John Kelly, though he also steps outside the confines of Flores' collection to include Edwin Muir in his attack. Criticising Burgum's analysis of Kafka in respect to the Weimar Republic, he points out that since Kafka's major works were completed before the establishment of the Republic, they can hardly represent the change in the German personality structure as a result of the Weimar bureaucracy. Slochower also controverts the opinions of critics of the religious school. He contends that although Kafka's motivation and main interest may have

¹"The Limitations of Franz Kafka," XV, 291-297.

expression of a disintegrating society or a satire on absurd bureaucracy"; (2) "the psychoanalytic critics intent chiefly on showing that his work is the expression of a sick soul"; and (3) "those who view Kafka as a serious writer of metaphysical stature whose work must be viewed objectively as expressing a challenging conception of man and the world."

In an article for Commonweal heralding the revival of interest in Kafka, Anne Fremantle⁴ judges The Kafka Problem excellent because of its great diversity of opinion and adds--as most reviewers were prone to--still another. She contributes the idea that all interpretations actually lead to one final meaning. Listing a few elements in Kafka, she writes, "Father complex, sexual inadequacy, persecuted race, fatal illness, the aloneness of the artist--Kafka admits and accepts all these imputations, for all are implied in the terrible, inevitable, inescapable, relationship of creature to Creator" (188).

The U. S. Quarterly Book List, reviewing The Kafka Problem,⁵ found it a good introduction to the writer and also "a philosophical guide to our contemporary spiritual situation."

Just as Miss Fremantle had, Richard Plant, reviewing for the New York Times Book Review,⁶ found the collection stimulating because of its inclusion of contradictory interpretations. But, in disagreement

⁴"Franz Kafka: The Current Revival of Interest in His Works," XLV (December 6, 1946), 184-188.

⁵II (December 1946), 274.

⁶"Punishment in Search of Crime," December 8, 1946, p. 6.

with the Book List, he reports that no one article in the volume is sufficiently broad and comprehensive to give the uninitiated reader the key to the writer's meaning. Evidently unable to resist the Kafka magic, he then gives us the key himself: "Nobody comes straight out and says that first and foremost all his stories are stories of relentless anxiety. . . ."

A much more thorough review of The Kafka Problem than had appeared so far was published in The Yale Review early in 1947. Harry Levin⁷ expresses five main criticisms of the volume: (1) Kafka's historical background is neglected; (2) Flores seems to have deliberately played down the Zionist view taken by Brod; (3) psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations are not emphasized enough; (4) metaphysical aspects are overemphasized; and (5) few of the critics represented seem to be interested in literature as such. Levin particularly objects to what he calls John Kelly's demonstration "that Kafka is a Calvinist" (356). Far from presuming to justify the ways of God to man and telling one how to be saved, Levin believes, Kafka offers no solution to the human predicament.

On the positive side, Levin finds that the collection is continuously readable and repeats itself comparatively little and that it reflects the current trend of criticism. His conclusion, however, is that the criticism brought together in the book tends to deflect one's attention from Kafka's works in searching for object-lessons

⁷"Metacriticism," n. s. XXXVI (Winter), 354-356.

and also tends "to turn critical discourse into Talmudic commentary" (356).

William Barrett, in The Nation,⁸ reviewing what he calls "this not very distinguished collection of essays," finds that its "babel of critical voices" falls into two extreme groups: the "excessively theological" and the "excessively or mechanically social." He too objects to the paucity of Freudian interpretations. Becoming more specific, he criticizes Brod for seeing in Kafka his own interest in Judaism, and Kelly for equating Barth with Kierkegaard and thus showing a misunderstanding of Kierkegaard. But it is Edwin Berry Burgum who suffers Barrett's most scathing rebuke. Burgum, this reviewer says, "is the commissar purging Kafka as a proto-fascist, disordered mind and diseased personality," and represents "the barbarous mentality of Stalinism." Barrett, like most other critics, follows his criticism of criticism with an interpretation of his own. Kafka, he says, was a religious writer in that he approached the act of writing with a sense of consecration. Furthermore, "in his unblinking gaze at certain absolutes of existence, guilt, and loneliness he was confronting those experiences with which religions have traditionally attempted to cope by other means, by more or less elaborate systems of belief."

Like Barrett, the next reviewer, William Phillips, appears to hear a babel of critical voices in The Kafka Problem. Writing for the

⁸"Neurosis and Lucidity," CLXIV (January 4, 1947), 23.

New York Times Book Review,⁹ he discreetly refers to "a recent collection of essays on Kafka" as "tiresome and irrelevant." Most studies of this writer, he says, "have gone in for endless scholarly acrobatics to discover his true meaning and the sources of his ideas, and have lost sight of his larger human and literary qualities." Then Phillips brings together several of the factors which he believes contributed to the development of the man and the writer. Kafka, he explains, is a product of many influences and traditions: Kierkegaard's idea of man as the lonely and anguished traveler through this world, the Jewish plight, the futility of central Europe before and during the First World War, and his own peculiar psychological drives (specifically, his sense of guilt and his paranoiac tendencies).

Phillips was attempting only to correct the mania for explaining Kafka from one standpoint alone. But his synthesis of several influential factors in the writer's work was to inspire many critics with a new approach. One might call it the poly-interpretive interpretation. Confused by the variety of The Kafka Problem as they doubtless were, they were to seek refuge in the ingenious explanation that Kafka can be interpreted "on many levels" at the same time, that there is "a wealth of meanings" in his work, that he was "a many-sided genius."

After Phillips' synthesis, the next review to appear was that of Alfred Werner in Congress Weekly.¹⁰ Though generally complimentary,

⁹"The Lonely Traveler," March 2, 1947, p. 4.

¹⁰XIV (March 7, 1947), 14-15.

Werner finds the volume mainly for connoisseurs. He contributes the masterpiece of understatement in Kafka Problem criticism when he decides that some statements in the volume are "controversial."

Edwin Berry Burgum is again the main target in James Burnham's assessment of The Kafka Problem for Partisan Review.¹¹ The word Stalinist rears its ugly head again in Burnham's charge that Burgum's "vulgarity, insensitivity, and political baseness" (188) have left hardly a shadow of the real Kafka in his "Stalinist" (188) article. In general, Burnham finds that most of the critics represented in the Problem have turned their criticism into treatises in the field of their particular interest--be it myth, naturalism, theology, or the unconscious.

Writing for the New York Herald Tribune Books, Alfred Kazin¹² finds that there is one unifying principle in the motley Kafka Problem. The volume, he says, "presents every possible point of view about Kafka, but is unified by the assumption that he is only a little less difficult than the physics of the atom bomb" (3). And, he adds, "the book as a whole is a weariness to the mind and flesh, for it is an accumulation of all the efforts to present Kafka as a problem rather than as an experience" (3). Kafka's complexity, he says, is perhaps a good thing, for we would rather not understand such writers too well: "we cannot live with them and our usual compromises at the

¹¹"Observations on Kafka," XIV (March-April, 1947), 186-195.

¹²"Kafka, Twentieth Century Man of Sorrows," April 13, 1947, pp. 3, 23.

same time" (3). Kafka, this reviewer offers, saw "the essential unappeasable loneliness of man in the universe" (3), and in his artistic expression of this loneliness many explanations have validity. Taking refuge in the poly-interpretive solution to the Kafka problem, Kazin lists many of the main interpretations. However, he suggests that they boil down to one: "Standing at the extremity of human isolation, conscious of himself as an eternal solitary, a Jew, a poor clerk in the prison-house of the modern industrial bureaucracy, a cipher in the Central European maze of nationalities . . . Kafka . . . believed himself the contemporary man of sorrows . . ." (3).

The preponderance of superficial reviews which had followed publication of The Kafka Problem was now beginning to be replaced by serious, well-considered assessments of the volume by students of Kafka. Perhaps the most thorough and incisive was that of William Phillips, which appeared in Commentary. Phillips's article--appropriately entitled "The Great Wall of Criticism"¹³--begins with a lament that too many critical barriers have been erected between Kafka and his readers. Most Kafka criticism is, he says, "obscurantist, pretentious, and misinformed, turned out by people who are just not up to the subject" (595). In this respect The Kafka Problem, he goes on, "is a masterpiece of editing, for surely it must have required considerable talent to represent every variety of critical nonsense and banality" (595). He points out that the important Kafka studies

¹³III (June 1947), 594-596.

by Hannah Arendt and Philip Rahv have been left out, while articles are included which criticize critics not represented in the volume. While the articles by Albert Camus and Claude-Edmonde Magny are excellent, most of the other articles "ride some personal notion or some half-baked thesis" (596). Especially bad are the personal-remiscences articles by European writers "whose egos somehow loom larger than the personality of Kafka" (596). Brod's article, Phillips continues, is an attempt "in a kind of Zionist Emersonianism--to squeeze a Jewish oversoul out of Kafka" (596). Other articles which Phillips criticizes sharply are those by George Woodcock, who "tries to prove . . . that Kafka is an inferior version of Rex Warner, an English imitator of Kafka" (596); Ezequiel Martínez Estrada; Edwin Berry Burgum; and Charles Neider, who "has converted the great tragic underground man of the modern period into an apostle of good will and uplift" (596). All in all, Phillips believes that, with the exception of Camus and Magny, the critics represented in The Kafka Problem have failed to grasp the essential character of Kafka's work and have produced only tortured analyses of the obvious.

Two months after Phillips's acute analysis, Commentary published a sharp rebuttal to his article. In Friedrich Torberg's "Kafka the Jew"¹⁴ we see the development of still another convolution in the Gordian knot--criticism of criticism of criticism. Torberg agrees that the articles in the Problem are highly inadequate but goes on

¹⁴IV (August 1947), 189-190.

to say that Mr. Phillips's article is "one of the most inadequate pieces to appear about Kafka in a long time" (189). He particularly objects to Phillips's having accused Max Brod of attempting to "'squeeze a Jewish oversoul out of Kafka'" (189). Torberg argues for a Jewish interpretation of Kafka, and mentions three considerations which he evidently believes prove his point: (1) Brod (who was absorbed in both Judaism and Zionism) and his friend would not have been so close, he says, had not Kafka's attitude toward his own Jewishness been one of acceptance; (2) Kafka's recorded feelings on the subject of Judaism in his diaries and letters are sympathetic; and (3) his interest in Judaism was confirmed (to Torberg himself) by Brod. On the basis of these factors Torberg declares that no squeezing of a Jewish oversoul out of Kafka is necessary, for it is already there. Furthermore, he adds a warning to those who are determined to see anything but Jewishness in him--particularly to those who call him a Czech: "He was about as Czech as a Negro born in New Orleans is French. He was about as Jewish as that Negro is Negro" (190).

Meanwhile, a considerably cooler and more disinterested comment on The Kafka Problem had been brought out by that urbane man of letters, Edmund Wilson. "A Dissenting Opinion on Kafka," appearing in The New Yorker,¹⁵ is Wilson's attempt to brake the now careering Kafka bandwagon. The critics represented in this volume, Wilson says, "oversaturate and stupefy the reader and finally give rise to the

¹⁵XXIII (July 26, 1947), 53-57.

suspicion that Kafka is being wildly overdone" (53).

Another negative reaction to the manic symptoms which criticism was beginning to assume was registered by R. W. Flint in Partisan Review. In a letter to the editors¹⁶ Flint delivers a blistering attack on the academic method of criticism employed by Kafka interpreters in general. The technique dear to professors and Ph. D. candidates--that of finding a "clue" or "key" to a difficult writer's works--has developed into a mania, he says, perhaps the most blood-chilling example of which is The Kafka Problem.

Reviews of this controversial volume continued into 1948, more than a year after its publication. The first of these, by Martin Gardner, appeared in Ethics.¹⁷ Gardner singles out John Kelly's explanation of Kafka, calling it "extreme" (145), especially in its conclusion (according to Martin) that Joseph K. "evolves into a Pauline Christian" (145). Neider's "The Cabalists" is the most important article in the volume, this reviewer believes.

The last criticism of The Kafka Problem appeared in Eliseo Vivas's article for The Kenyon Review, "Kafka's Distorted Mask."¹⁸ Vivas particularly objects to the sociological and psychological explanations of Kafka which impose a cut-and-dried theory on his works. The worst types of critical articles on Kafka, he says, are "those

¹⁶"On PR, Kafka and the Habits of Critics: a Communication," XIV (September-October 1947), 518-523.

¹⁷LVIII (January 1948), 144-146.

¹⁸X (Winter 1948), 51-69.

egregious compounds of home-made psychoanalysis and facile sociology of art of a purely speculative nature, which without any inductive evidence to support them find Kafka's meaning in his psychological or political history and in so doing explain it utterly away" (52).

Summing up his reaction to the collection of articles, he says, "The problem which most of these pieces raise is as to why the editor should have wanted to rescue them from discreet obscurity" (51).

"Kafka's Distorted Mask." This was a fitting title for the final comment on The Kafka Problem. For, regardless of what positive contribution the collection had made, it had certainly wrenched the face of Kafka into a painful variety of expressions.

Though The Kafka Problem had provoked criticism which lasted for two years, it was not the only volume published in 1946 which aroused critical interest in Kafka. In the same year The Great Wall of China,¹⁹ a collection of Kafka's late stories, fables, and aphorisms, elicited a good deal of comment also. Its introduction and exegetical notes, by Edwin Muir and Philip Rahv, representatives of the religious "school," drew one major rebuttal. But for the most part, critics actually reacted to Kafka himself in their reviews instead of directing all their attention to tearing down these two

¹⁹Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York). Its contents were "Investigations of a Dog," "The Burrow," "The Great Wall of China," "The Giant Mole," "The Hunter Gracchus," "The Married Couple," "My Neighbour," "A Common Confusion," "The Bridge," "The Bucket Rider," "A Sport," "The Knock at the Manor Gate," "The City Coat of Arms," "The Silence of the Sirens," "Prometheus," "The Truth about Sancho Panza," "The Problem of our Laws," "On Parables," "A Little Fable," "He," "Reflections on Sin, Pain, Hope, and the True Way."

interpreters.

Muir, in his "Introductory Note,"²⁰ restates his conception of Kafka's major theme. These stories, as well as the other works, reflect his two-fold moral and spiritual problem: finding one's true place and vocation in the community and acting in accordance with the wishes of heavenly powers. This problem, Muir says, is an eternal one and one which has become crucial in our time, "where we see tradition after tradition crumbling, and society itself a chaos in which it is hard to find one's way, far less a vocation that has a transcendent sanction" (xv-xvi). Kafka's greatness, Muir believes, lies in his having realized this problem as it never was before and "illuminating it with a power of imagination and thought unexampled in his time" (xvi). Muir goes on to rank Kafka as the greatest writer of his age: "There is no other writer of his age--and it was the age of Rilke and Proust--whose work carries so continuously, inevitably and naturally the mark of greatness" (xvi).

Turning to a discussion of the stories in the volume, Muir notes that they were all written between 1917 and 1924, the year of Kafka's death, and sees in them a tranquillity uncharacteristic of his earlier stories. Though such early works as "The Country Doctor," "In the Penal Colony," and "The Metamorphosis" are obsessive almost to the point of madness, he says, these stories are clearer, more tranquil, and better proportioned.

²⁰Pp. vii-xviii.

Discussing "The Burrow," he calls it "a description of the shifts to which man is reduced in his isolation, and the fatal imperfection of his most astute devices . . ." (xvii). "The Giant Mole" he finds a delightfully ironic comment on modern science. In "Investigations of a Dog" he remarks the sense of tranquillity which one feels in Kafka's later works. The extreme tension of the writer's conflict was over, and he could view it with the perspective of a person who knew he would soon be free of it. Muir finds this story similar to Shakespeare's last plays in its enigmatical atmosphere. "The charged air which fills The Castle and The Trial has cleared; the conflict and the passion have died away" (xiv). In contrast to what several later reviewers were to conclude, Muir finds that this volume gives a clearer picture of Kafka as artist and thinker than any of his other works.

Philip Rahv, in his "Exegetical Notes"²¹ to The Great Wall of China, also interprets the stories according to religion or metaphysics. The inquiring dog in "Investigations of a Dog" is trying to break through appearances to clarity and truth and therefore suffers metaphysical anguish and alienation from the community. He tries to force an understanding of the mysteries of existence by fasting, but fails because "grace is not to be achieved through coercion nor through the renunciation of life" (311). Rahv explains the wall in "The Great Wall of China" as symbolic of "human solidarity, of earthly

²¹pp. 309-315.

fulfilment, and of mankind's efforts to obtain transcendental guidance" (312). He also gives a religious interpretation of "The Giant Mole," describing the mole itself as a symbol of divinity in that it represents "the recession of the supernatural into the realm of the fabulous and archaic" (314).

In the first critical article to deal with The Great Wall of China Clement Greenberg, writing for Commentary,²² presents a non-religious interpretation of the volume's title story. Without dealing in personalities at all, Greenberg rejects the theories that Kafka was a religious writer and an allegorist. He sees him as outside the tradition of Western fiction, including allegory and fairy tale, in a dimension far removed from reality and yet with the intensest appearance of reality. In this realm Kafka portrays only the quintessential situations of human life--those experiences which continually recur and by their repetitive and dull detail make up the staple of human existence. He is neither religious nor philosophical; he is essentially pessimistic, Greenberg believes. "With a vision unobstructed by the meanings that religion, philosophy, ideology, and sheer hope read into the human condition, Kafka sees life as sealed off and governed by unknowable powers who permit us the liberty only to repeat ourselves until we succumb" (369).

The next review of The Great Wall was notable for the most far-fetched interpretation to be offered so far of a work by Kafka.

²²II (October 1946), 368-370.

Harriet R. Forbes, reviewing for The Library Journal,²³ is evidently carried away by post-war enthusiasm when she suggests that, though the writer died in 1924, "The City Coat of Arms" can be interpreted as "an essay on the pitfalls confronting the builders of the United Nations."

The conception of Kafka as appealing to only a small, esoteric following was still evident in the San Francisco Chronicle's classification of The Great Wall as "designed for collectors and students of Kafka."²⁴ It was evident too in the Saturday Review of Literature's title, "More Fuel for the Kafka Followers," heading F. C. Weiskopf's review.²⁵ Weiskopf, falling into the usual critical pattern, takes issue with several other critics before he presents his own interpretation. He criticizes both Edwin Muir and Philip Rahv for leaning too heavily toward Brod's explanation. One must remember, he points out, that all of the works in this volume were written during the last period of Kafka's life, between 1917, when he was suffering illness, hunger, and cold in wartime Prague, and 1924, when he was dying of tuberculosis in a sanitarium. One must remember the optimism and humor of Amerika and the fighting spirit of the heroes of The Castle and The Trial and avoid placing too much emphasis on these late pieces "written under the terrible strain of an incurable

²³LXXI (November 1, 1946), 1542.

²⁴William Hogan, November 10, 1946, p. 20.

²⁵XXIX (November 16, 1946), 17.

illness, and the isolating shadow of death" (17). Weiskopf puts less emphasis on Kierkegaard and other religious thinkers as influences on Kafka than do Muir and Rahv and names other influences which he considers important: "Kropotkin, Herzen, Dickens, and, above all, the Bohemian atmosphere--the radiations of the spirit of Hus and Chelcicky, the echo of the laughter of Hanlcek and Hasek, the traditional Czech yearning for freedom and for human brotherhood" (17).

In direct opposition to Weiskopf's judgment of The Great Wall stories as atypical, Anne Fremantle, in her review for The Commonweal,²⁶ declares, "Here is the whole of Kafka" (186). Her explanations of specific stories show that she too is going the way of many other critics--toward the least-resistant line of multiple interpretation. Miss Fremantle stresses the wide range of possible explanations for these stories. For instance, the burrow, in the story of the same name, may represent "the self-created deception in which Kafka, hating his father and afraid of him, rejects the daylight reality he represents" (186). Or, it may represent "the cocoon of darkness in which the sinner seeks to hide from God" (186), in which case the whistling might be "the Ever Presence laughing at the pathetic failure of his attempts; at the unreal safety he tries to construct apart from redemptive Grace" (186). Again, the burrow might stand for "the Jewish ghetto, created by the inferiority complex and loneliness of the race: its rejection of the upper world that first rejected it" (186).

²⁶See above, note 4. This article reviews both The Great Wall and The Kafka Problem.

"The Metamorphosis" too, Miss Fremantle finds, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Gregor might represent the murderous Oedipal son, the misunderstood genius, the despised Jew, or simply the sin-conscious human being in a world which denies sin.

Wyllie Sypher's interpretations, in a review for The Nation,²⁷ are not so varied as are Miss Fremantle's, and they all emanate from a conception of Kafka as a religious writer. The usual Kafkan themes are in these late stories, Sypher says: "the inscrutability of the will of God and its inescapable operation ('Investigations of a Dog' and 'The Great Wall of China'), the involutions of anxiety far within the isolated self and the futility of either intellect or retreat before the Unknown ('The Burrow'), and the necessity of accepting the divine as absurd or even repulsive ('The Giant Mole')" (731).

William Phillips, too, in his New York Times review,²⁸ sees Kafka's orientation as primarily metaphysical, but emphasizes also his importance as a representative of modern man. In all these stories, he says, Kafka's protagonist is "a truly modern version of Everyman, in that the classic figure of the spiritual wanderer and seeker of truth is endowed with all the anxieties of the modern world."

The interpretive material in The Great Wall of China had explained Kafka as primarily metaphysical or religious in orientation. As if in answer to this theory, Kafka's "Metamorphosis" was published

²⁷"The New Eumenides," CLXIII (December 21, 1946), 731-732.

²⁸See above, note 9. This article reviews The Great Wall, The Kafka Problem, and Metamorphosis.

in book form during the same year²⁹ with a preface made to order for the psychoanalytic critics.³⁰ In it Paul Goodman takes exception to the assumption implicit in most criticism of Kafka's animal stories that their author likens a beast to man for allegorical purposes. Instead, says Goodman, he is depicting man as acting out an animal identity in himself. Explaining further, he says that the animals are totems and that Kafka uses the totemic identification of beast and man on two levels: the literal and the symbolic. Literally, the animal is another self to the person, a friend and communicant, and in this relationship we are reminded of the community of all life and the continuum of the libido. Symbolically, the animal is "a symptom of unconscious conflicts, mostly those centering round the hostile and castrating father and the son's identification with him; the son's surrender to him; perhaps, most deeply of all, the child himself as the devourer, destroying mother and father both, at the age of his omnipotence" (6).

The reviews of Metamorphosis were with one exception either very cautious or very vague. It was as if the shock of the story itself--one of Kafka's most powerful--had made reviewers hesitant to say anything too definite.

Kirkus³¹ discreetly classifies it as "of interest to Kafka's

²⁹Trans. A. L. Lloyd (New York).

³⁰Paul Goodman, pp. 5-8.

³¹XIV (October 1, 1946), 504.

exclusive following," and The Library Journal³² evidently feels safe in the observation that it contains "a philosophical message." However, the epitome of cautiousness is illustrated in James Sandoe's review for the Chicago Sun Book Week.³³ Evidently fearing either to agree or disagree with Goodman, he says, "Kafka's . . . fable . . . will bear singularly abstruse interpretation as Paul Goodman's preface to this edition demonstrates." In spite of all his caution, however, he makes himself the most unorthodox of Kafka critics by suggesting an absolutely literal interpretation: "Taken simply as the impassive narrative of a bourgeois transformed into a cockroach," he says, "it is an affecting and frightening narrative."

The next review of Metamorphosis was interesting in its remarks about the trappings of the volume but seemed just as much at sea as the rest in its remarks on the content. William Empson begins his article for The Nation³⁴ with a criticism of both the introduction and the illustrations, calling them wrongheaded and tasteless. He objects to Goodman's contention that Kafka wished to make an identification of man and beast, to present animals as totems. The whole point of the story, he says, is that the insect is unbearably nauseating, and it is in view of this that the illustrations are so inappropriate. What could be less nauseating, he asks, than the dogs

³²Felix E. Hirsch, LXXI (October 1, 1946), 1330.

³³December 15, 1946, p. 4.

³⁴"A Family Monster," CLXIII (December 7, 1946), 652-653.

and pussycats in human poses and the insect "swaggering in white tights, plumes, and a military carapace," looking like "a society portrait of Lord Byron fighting for the Greeks" (652)?

Going on to a criticism of the story itself, Empson calls it a masterpiece but objects to several "contradictions" in it which he feels were not intentional and for a purpose as are the contradictions in the major works. One such inconsistency which mars the story for Empson is that Kafka describes the insect's back as hard and then has the father crack it by throwing a red and therefore presumably soft apple at it. Most of this reviewer's criticisms of the story are of this type.

The only real attempt to explain the meaning of Metamorphosis was Alfred Kazin's description of it as "a parable of the inner distance between human beings."³⁵ And the only definite assessment of it was William Phillips's description: "probably the best of all [Kafka's] shorter works."³⁶

Thus, the critical reaction to Metamorphosis was both scanty and weak. Perhaps The Kafka Problem had taken off so much critical steam that there was little left to direct at this work by Kafka himself.

Besides the theological and the psychoanalytical schools, the

³⁵See above, note 12. This article reviews both Metamorphosis and The Kafka Problem.

³⁶See above, note 9. This article reviews Metamorphosis, The Kafka Problem and The Great Wall.

social or secular school enjoyed in 1946 an appearance within the covers of a Kafka volume. Muir and Rahv's theological interpretations in The Great Wall of China and Paul Goodman's psychoanalytical preface to Metamorphosis were met with an enlarged edition of A Franz Kafka Miscellany,³⁷ including still more of Harry Slochower's views. The Miscellany now contained four additional items: two short pieces by Kafka, "The Proclamation" and "Outline for a Worker's [sic] Collective"; some excerpts from Kafka's diaries and notebooks; and an article by Slochower entitled "The Vogue of Franz Kafka."

In his new article for the Miscellany³⁸ Slochower lays stress on Kafka's social adjustment. He does not see individualism in relation to society or in relation to God as an important motif in the writer's work. Instead he feels that Kafka realized well how inextricably a part of society he was. "Kafka does not stand for 'either-or,' not in the sense of the individual against the social world, nor in the sense of individual limitation over against divine limitation" (118), Slochower writes. He realized--and in this realization lay his great problem--that "the self which questions the world is part of the very world it is questioning" (118).

In line with most other critics, Slochower devotes a large part of his article to an analysis and refutation of the criticism to date. Kafka criticism, he says, can be divided into two camps: one

³⁷No ed., trans. Sophie Prombaum and G. Humphreys Roberts (New York).

³⁸Pp. 110-118.

sees the writer's works inviting self-reliance as an alternative to submission to authority; the other sees his works as an argument for a theological resolution of the problem of secular authority through self-renunciation. Slochower names as the two main exponents of the "self-reliance" school W. H. Auden and Philip Rahv. He believes the basis of these critics' interpretations to be the supposedly fearful and critical attitude of Kafka toward his father. He points out that this basis is unsound, as the writer's attitude toward his father was a mixture of admiration and criticism, love and fear. Too, he points out that the emphasis among modern critics on individualism is a trend of the times, centering in such men as Gide and Silone. As such, this emphasis is a reflection of the critics' orientation rather than a correct analysis of Kafka, who, he maintains, was not swept up in this modern trend, but realized, on the contrary, that "the self could not be or grow by itself" (113). Representative of the other school of criticism--those who would seek a theological solution to the problem of secular authority through renunciation of the self--are Max Brod, Edwin Muir, John Kelly, and Claude-Edmonde Magny. Slochower reviews each of these critics' main tenets and indicates weaknesses in each theory. He then points out that the interpretations of Kafka as reflecting reliance on the self or renunciation of the self are both oversimplifications in that they miss the complexity of the writer's world outlook and the irony intrinsic in it.

Critical reaction to the Miscellany was even more feeble than the response to Metamorphosis had been. The San Francisco Chronicle

found only that it throws light on Kafka's development as an artist,³⁹ and the New York Times Book Review, that it would be helpful to old Kafka fans.⁴⁰ The fact that this volume was a second edition and, more important, the fact that it came out in the year of The Kafka Problem, caused it to be almost unnoticed in the turbulent stream of criticism.

Striking testimony to the shift of focus in 1946 criticism is the fact that only three periodical articles appeared during that year which dealt primarily with Kafka's works rather than primarily with Kafka's critics. The first of these, Harry Slochower's "The Limitations of Franz Kafka," which appeared in The American Scholar,⁴¹ devotes its first few pages to criticism of critics but finally turns to the subject announced. Kafka's first limitation, says Slochower, is his too-narrow subject matter. "His work consists of but spare modifications of a single theme: all of his characters are in search of Justice, Truth or Goodness, and all of them in much the same way" (294). For this reason Kafka's works lack dramatic development and suspense.

Kafka's second limitation is the thinness of his characters--both protagonists and antagonists. The heroes remain largely anonymous

³⁹See above, note 2. This article reviews the Miscellany and The Kafka Problem.

⁴⁰See above, note 6. This article reviews the Miscellany and The Kafka Problem.

⁴¹See above, note 1. This article included both a review of The Kafka Problem and general criticism.

and indistinguishable and are clearly projections of the writer's own personality. This gives the dialogues the character of lonely debates in which "the 'I' seems to be seeking, reflecting and addressing itself" (294). Furthermore, the enemy in Kafka's writings lacks concreteized existence. Thus the Authorities in The Castle and the High Court in The Trial are "shadowy epiphenomena" (294) with "no personality of their own, no individual life or legitimacy" (294)--unreachable and invisible. Slochower considers this a fault even though he explains that this vagueness and inaccessibility of the powers-that-be "is central to Kafka's conception that authority is no longer a personal God, a chieftain or lord, but has become the impersonality of delegates, gadgets, representatives, and other variations of bureaucratic means" (295).

Kafka's third limitation is the lack of sensuousness which characterizes the scenic situation in his work. "The plot takes place in a kind of eternal present, having a shifting spatial frame" (296). This unreality of time and space makes genuine dramatic conflict and hence catharsis impossible. The enemy is never met in a dramatic-sensuous form and therefore can never be defeated. "The feeling of dread and anxiety is rarely lifted, and at the end the reader is still in the grip of the modern furies" (296).

Thus, Slochower summarizes, the "anemic nature and subject matter" (296) of Kafka's art, which corresponds to the "devitalization of our cultural epoch" (296), cannot measure up to "the aesthetic fullness which we associate with superior writing--the complex, rich

interrelationships among characters, the manifold of aspirations, passions, frustrations, the concrete form of their situation . . ." (296).

During the course of Kafka criticism there had been several attacks on the methods and theories of the psychoanalysts. The most notable of these were the arguments of W. H. Auden and Frederick J. Hoffman. An answer to these critics of the psychoanalytic critics came from Henry Loebowitz-Lennard in The University of Kansas City Review. In his article "Some Leitmotifs in Franz Kafka's Work Psychoanalytically Explored,"⁴² this writer first makes clear that his probing is in no sense designed to detract from the artistic value of Kafka's works. Rather it is designed to show how a specific neurotic trait can be delicately woven through an artistic creation, how the burning themes of the artist's life are modified, explained, distorted, or elaborated "in the magnificent interplay of unconscious creativity and intellectual control which is the sign of the mature artist" (115).

After this apologia for the analysts, Loebowitz-Lennard turns to the analysis at hand. Explaining the bewitching effect of Kafka's works on some readers, he theorizes that the symbolic meaning penetrates to the unconscious level of the reader's mind without leaving a deep impression on the understanding. Kafka's conflicts, perceived subconsciously, reactivate similar conflicts in the reader which are

⁴²XIII (Winter 1946), 115-118.

worked through in the reading process and, hence, objectified.

There are four main neurotic motifs which constantly reappear in Kafka's works, this writer continues: the paranoid motif, the disease motif, the compulsive motif, and the guilt motif. The paranoid motif is apparent in the surveillance "by old people across the street" of Joseph K.'s room, the way everyone "somehow knew" about his trial, his sudden arrest "without reason," Gregor Samsa's transformation into an insect, and Karl Rossmann's entrapment in a web of circumstantial evidence. The disease motif is evident, Loebowitz-Lennard believes, in the fact that Joseph K. was arrested in bed, and in the airless atmosphere of the trial chambers--both symbolic of Kafka's tuberculosis. The compulsive motif is evident in Kafka's desire not to publish--to "retain" his works--and in his taciturnity. Loebowitz-Lennard gives no examples of the guilt motif in Kafka's life or works, since, he points out, a great many critics have already done so. But he offers as explanation of the writer's excessive guilt feeling his development, under his stern father, of a powerful super-ego and his consequent relation of failures and inadequacies to the self.

The last periodical article to appear in the strife-torn year of 1946 was the undistinguished "Two Notes on Kafka" by Charles Neider. Writing now in The Rocky Mountain Review,⁴³ Neider compares Kafka with Samuel Butler and finds that "both men hungered for

⁴³X (Winter 1946), 90-95.

acceptance by the cabalism of their times and both were rejected; both, in consequence, retaliated through their works; and in doing so reproduced the cabalisms in order to satirize them" (91). More apparent similarities are to be found, Neider goes on, in the fact that both writers were life-long and neurotic bachelors, both had father complexes and were products of authoritarianism, and both were haunted by guilt and inferiority feelings. Their major works may be compared as shrewd and caustic examinations of society. Butler in Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited delighted in the intellectual perversity of turning things inside out, while Kafka in The Trial and The Castle exercised his love of emotional perversity.

In his second note Neider discusses the superiority of The Trial to The Castle. He finds The Castle "a spotty book, a novel with a confused focus . . . unsatisfactory emotionally" (93) because it lacks the subjectivism, the dream-distortion technique, the irrational and the neurotic elements of The Trial. The reason for these flaws, Neider believes, is that while Kafka was interested in Joseph K. as an individual, he used K. only as a device with which to view the village. Neider concludes his criticism by suggesting various changes which he feels would improve The Castle.

III

Publication of The Kafka Problem brought the critical war to its culmination. Incensed writers made sweeping condemnations of entire critical schools and singled out for attack such controversial

figures as Edwin Berry Burgum, John Kelly, Edwin Muir, and Max Brod. Such vituperative terms as "vulgarity," "political baseness," and "the barbarous mentality of Stalinism" were indicative of the lack of restraint which now characterized the conflict.

Criticism of The Kafka Problem was almost as varied as the criticism in The Problem. The collection was called, among other things, "an excellent study," "a babel of critical voices," "a philosophic guide," and "a weariness to the mind and flesh." By and large, however, the later and more substantial interpreters looked upon it as an obstacle rather than an aid to the understanding of Kafka. "The Great Wall of Criticism" and "Kafka's Distorted Mask" were perhaps the most apt titles to appear during the post-Problem period. Attention was so focused on the collection that other volumes by and about Kafka which appeared during the year 1946 received little notice in comparison.

The outstanding reviewer during this year was William Phillips. His articles on The Kafka Problem gave the best assessment both of the collection as a whole and of particular interpretations included in it. His comment that most critics had lost sight of Kafka's real importance in their "endless scholarly acrobatics to discover his true meaning and the sources of his ideas" was the perfect statement of the critical situation. And his definition of the Kafkan hero was the most aptly worded synthesis of the metaphysical and the "modern man" interpretations that would appear: his view of Kafka's protagonist as "a truly modern version of Everyman, in that the classic

figure of the spiritual wanderer and seeker of truth is endowed with all the anxieties of the modern world" was emerging as one shared by the soundest and most serious critics. The following year would produce a number of excellent articles which developed this basic idea.

CHAPTER VII

BIOGRAPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS (1947): WHAT WAS KAFKA?

I

The year 1947 was dominated by two major works on Kafka. One was Max Brod's Franz Kafka: a Biography, and the other was Paul Goodman's Kafka's Prayer. These studies presented the writer in two such entirely different lights that he was hardly recognizable as the same man. Brod stressed Kafka's optimism in an effort to show that in spite of his seeming pessimism, he did have an ultimate religious faith. Goodman, on the other hand, painted a picture of a man so devoured by psychological complexes that his whole life and work were but a series of variations on one theme--self-torture.

Reviewers of these two volumes contributed little to an understanding of Kafka. Instead, they continued to defend one or another of the established interpretations and snipe at the enemy's position. The critical war went on. In the serious critical articles appearing during 1947, however, a strong trend was becoming evident--a trend toward seeing Kafka as a symbol of the plight of modern man. This view, which had recurred with various emphases from time to time during the history of Kafka criticism, was now to come out strongly. Neither Brod's tribute nor Goodman's study was seriously to deflect its course. For the Biography came too late to convince many readers that Kafka was an optimist. And Goodman's extreme psychoanalytic position could not win many adherents.

II

The first of these two volumes to appear was Franz Kafka: a Biography.¹ In it, Kafka's readers found valuable biographical information which could not be found elsewhere. But they also found a bias. Brod attempts to portray Kafka the man--as he was seen by his close friends--in order to balance the picture of Kafka as seen through his works by the reading public. He continually emphasizes his contention that Kafka was not the somber, brooding pessimist that he appears to be in his writings, but was actually a delightful companion with a gentle, magnetic charm.

Beginning with a discussion of Kafka's background, parents, and childhood, Brod stresses the importance of Kafka's "grand image of his father" (15) and the effect it had on his personality development, his writing, his religious thinking, and his attitude toward marriage.

In a discussion of Kafka during his university days, Brod describes his friend as "a healthy young man, admittedly remarkably quiet, observant, reserved" (39). He reaffirms Kafka's healthy-mindedness: "His spiritual bent was not in the direction of the morbidly interesting, the bizarre or the grotesque, but in that of the greatness of nature, the curative, health-giving, sound, firmly established, simple things" (39). Brod explains Kafka's shyness and reserve and his severe self-criticism as resulting from his measuring himself by impossibly high standards--by "the ultimate goal of human

¹Trans. G. Humphreys Roberts (New York, 1947).

existence" (49).

After receiving his doctorate in jurisprudence, Kafka was faced with the problem of choosing a vocation. Brod recalls the anguish he suffered from the narrow confines of his routine insurance job and from the inroads it made on his free time. The struggle to find time and strength to write and at the same time carry out his vocational and family duties was a constant one, for his writing was all-important to him. In this connection, Brod quotes from Kafka's diary: "My preoccupation with portraying my dream-like inner life has relegated everything else to a secondary position; other interests have shrunk in a most dreadful fashion, and never cease to shrink" (94).

Going on to a discussion of the years of early manhood during which both he and Kafka were toiling at their incredibly dreary, routine jobs and trying to write during off-hours, Brod recalls the many excursions they used to take together and again emphasizes the outgoing side of Kafka's nature--his love of swimming, boating, and hiking and his interest in the new, the topical, the technical. Kafka, he says, was by no means "at home in an ivory tower, a world of fantasies far removed from life" (102)--was anything but "an ascetic consumed by nothing other than religious speculations" (102).

In an entire chapter devoted to Kafka's engagement, Brod points out the profound effect the struggle to go through with marriage had upon his writing. One of his greatest desires was to marry, found a family, and have a settled place in the world, but against this

desire was set the feeling that domestic life would destroy his inner world and his writing. This conflict was intensified when Brod introduced him to Felice Bauer in August 1912. The next five years were filled with the turmoil of indecision over whether to marry or not. Quoting from the "Letter to My Father" and the diaries, Brod illustrates the conflict which Kafka underwent. In the "Letter" he wrote: "'To get married, to found a family, to accept all the children that arrive, to maintain them in this uncertain world, and even to lead them a little on their way is, in my opinion, the utmost that a man can ever succeed in doing'" (139). On the other hand, a later entry in the diary consists of a list of all the points for and against marriage and reads in part: "'Fear of being tied to anyone, of overflowing into another personality. Then I shall never be alone any more'" (142). Brod suggests that Kafka's breaking his engagement provided the impetus for his beginning The Trial and "In the Penal Colony," both "documents of literary self-punishment, imaginative rites of atonement" (146). He quotes Kafka as having once referred to his illness as psychic--as a device enabling him to escape from the fateful decision which he could not bring himself to make.

Discussing Kafka's religious beliefs, Brod says, "What I emphasize, and what I believe distinguishes my exposition of Kafka from all the others . . . is the fact that I consider that the positive side of him, his love of life, of the earth earthy, and his religion in the sense of a properly fulfilled life, is his decisive message, and not self-abnegation, turning his back on life, despair--the 'tragic

position'" (170). He admits that the great bulk of Kafka's work reflects an attitude of hopelessness and despair at man's powerless position in the universe. But in Kafka's few expressions of hope and optimism Brod finds proof of an essentially positive outlook. "Just because the dispositions to faith were won from such a radical skepticism," he says, "they are in their truthfulness, refined by the ultimate tests, infinitely valuable and powerful" (172). He believes, further, that "if only one such proposition is found, in a religious thinker, it has the remarkable quality of decisively changing the whole picture of him" (171). As an example of such a "hopeful" proposition Brod quotes Kafka thus: "'Don't despair, not even over the fact that you don't despair. Just when it seems that all is over, new forces come to your assistance after all, and just that means that you are alive'" (front leaf). Brod believes it is only by overlooking such propositions that critics can regard Kafka as in line with the theology of crisis and that group of theologians who see an unbridgeable abyss between God and man. Though he believed in the incommensurability of the Absolute world with the world of man, he did believe in the Absolute. But he also realized profoundly the tragedy of human insufficiency--the inability of man to grasp and hold to the Absolute, to keep on the right path. He thought to be near God and to live rightly were identical, Brod says, and the chief theme of his works is the danger of losing the right way--"a danger so grotesquely out of proportion that it is really only an accident . . . that can bring us to the point of entering into 'The Law,' i.e. the right and

perfect life . . ." (174). In another passage, oddly enough, Brod summarizes Kafka's "fundamental outlook" thus: "Almost everything is uncertain, but once one has a certain degree of understanding one never loses the way any more" (173).

In his account of the last years of Kafka's life Brod describes the long battle with tuberculosis: the moving about from sanatorium to sanatorium; the love and fidelity of Dora Dymant, his mistress, and of Dr. Klopstock, his friend; and finally his death. In this section of the biography Brod becomes strangely superstitious, recording various occurrences just before Kafka's death such as the appearance of an owl at the sick man's window and a mysterious and unexplained telephone call to Brod from the town where Kafka was dying. The reader can hardly help viewing the whole biography in a new light in the face of this unexpected occult predisposition which Brod reveals.

The reader leaves this biography with the feeling that he has seen a side of Kafka which he could not have seen otherwise. But he leaves with a good deal of skepticism about the objectivity with which this devoted friend treated his subject.

Appended to the biography are two brief reminiscences, one by Rudolf Fuchs² and the other by Dora Geritt.³ Fuchs recalls Kafka's appearance of healthiness in his younger days; his enigmatic smile, even when he was very sick; his sensitivity to noise; and his

²"Reminiscences of Franz Kafka," pp. 231-234.

³"Brief Memories of Franz Kafka," pp. 235-236.

scrupulous concern to avoid disease. Miss Gerritt, who was a fellow-patient in a sanatorium, remembers Kafka's gentle, ironic humor; his sympathy with others; his understanding of children; and his ability to see the bright side of everything in life.

As might have been expected, the biography set in motion a new wave of reviews, commentaries and--as always--criticism of criticism. Most of the reviews were pro-theological, but one made a sharp attack on Brod for his leadership in the theological interpretation. Nearly all of them lamented the increasingly muddied waters of Kafka criticism.

Kirkus,⁴ in line with its dogged conviction that Kafka is intelligible to only a select group, called the book more revealing about Kafka's works than the works themselves are.

Time,⁵ dropping its usual facetious tone, reviews the biography favorably. It contains, Time tells its readers, "a muster of biographical facts, possessed by no one else but Brod, arranged with discerning intelligence and affectionate understanding." Time goes on to call the book "one of the soundest and most moderate critical appraisals of Kafka's intellectual purpose and achievement" (104).

Alfred Werner, in The Christian Century,⁶ agrees with Time that Brod was better fitted than anyone else to write the biography.

⁴XV (February 1, 1947), 89.

⁵"The Tragic Sense of Life," XLIX (April 28, 1947), 104, 106, 108, 110 and 112.

⁶"Mystical but Not Bizarre," LXIV (June 4, 1947), 711.

He not only repeats Brod's warning against looking upon Kafka as merely bizarre, but seems to accept Brod's entire picture of his friend, describing Kafka's works as "nothing but an immense striving to discover God in himself, to be near God, which, according to Kafka, was identical with 'living rightly.'"

A sharp attack on all those reviewers who had agreed with Brod's interpretation of Kafka came next. Charles Neider, writing for the New York Times Book Review,⁷ censures Brod for "imposing" religion on Kafka and ignoring his obvious neurosis. More specifically, he makes the following charges: (1) Brod implicitly depreciates science in emphasizing "deeper" or "higher" realities and explicitly depreciates psychoanalysis; (2) he gives theological and even highly sectarian interpretations of neurotic phenomena; (3) he does not understand that the roots of Kafka's tragic neurosis lay in his relation to his father; and (4) he misses the masochistic implications of this neurosis. Concluding his attack, Neider says that Brod "indulges in the very human process of expressing himself. But it is Brod he reveals, not Kafka."

Arthur Foff, reviewing for the San Francisco Chronicle,⁸ agrees with Neider that Brod often shifts the focus from Kafka to himself. But he does think the biography throws light on Kafka's religious views. He bemoans the evil days that criticism has fallen upon, saying, "Today it is almost impossible to see the man for his

⁷"The Roots of Tragedy," June 15, 1947, p. 16.

⁸"Biography of Kafka," June 22, 1947, p. 12.

critics." He concludes with what was already all too obvious--that Brod's biography would settle no literary disputes.

The next review of the Biography, Irving Howe's "Brod on Kafka" in The Nation,⁹ agrees with the two preceding ones that the book contains too much Brod and not enough Kafka. Brod, says Howe, was too close to Kafka to see him in perspective and tried to make him too saintly. However, in spite of all its shortcomings as a biography, since this "memoir" is unique, it is indispensable. Going on to assess the importance of Kafka today, Howe writes, "He belongs to the generation which has experienced the full results of the contemporary débâcle and must now live most of its life in the aftermath" (48). Thus, Brod's emphasis on Kafka's Jewishness is valid in a sense: "He is not merely our exposed nerve . . . he is that nerve at the extremity of its quiver--only in that sense is his Jewishness relevant" (48).

Howe's review was followed by a strongly favorable one. Walter J. Ong, S. J., writing for The Modern Schoolman,¹⁰ commends the "fine insight permeating [Brod's] entire treatment of Kafka's life" (181), especially his assertion that holiness "'is the only right category under which Kafka's life and work can be viewed'" (181). Ong's primary concern is evidently the question of whether Kafka believed in God. He quotes passages which seem to him (as they had to

⁹CLXV (July 12, 1947), 47-48.

¹⁰"Finitude and Frustration: Considerations on Brod's Kafka," XXV (November 1947-May 1948), 173-182.

Brod) to prove that Kafka did. Kafka's depiction of man seeking complete satisfaction in questioning his relationship to God--his merciless rejection of all facile and comfortable systems or rationalizations--this perfectionism, in itself, Ong believes, argues his concern with God.

During this debate over the merits and demerits of Brod's biography, a volume which was at the opposite end of the critical spectrum came out--Paul Goodman's Kafka's Prayer.¹¹ It viewed Kafka wholly from the standpoint of psychoanalysis. Far from contributing to an understanding of him, it proved to be more difficult than Kafka's works themselves. In the first place, Goodman assumes that his readers are as steeped in psychoanalytical concepts and terminology as he is. Secondly, his breathless progress from one "thought" to another is highly subjective and often completely devoid of ordinary logical connection. Much of the syntax is so confused that the meaning is not simply ambiguous, but opaque. This almost unreadable style, combined with Goodman's frequent enthusiastic explosions ("Yes! Yes!" "No fear!" "Now, Ah! . . . this is just the point!") make reading Kafka's Prayer a truly uncanny experience.

Goodman tries to show that all of Kafka's works can be understood as expressions of his "psychotic" personality. Some examples of his psychoanalytical interpretations of specific works, motifs, characters, etc. are as follows: (1) "The Trial is a fantasy of

¹¹(New York, 1947).

persecutory paranoia with delusions of reference. This is undeniable" . . .(ix-x). "The Trial . . . like all paranoia . . . is strongly energized by repressed homosexuality . . ." (142). (2) "Kafka's animals are totems not merely in the Freudian meaning that they are devourers and devoured like the father and the child retaliating, but that the ego sees in them its own original cannibalism and blood-sucking (oral sadism)" (88). (3) Kafka's love of the theatre, recitations, and readings: "This expresses the erotic vitality latent in his contemplation--the passion is all the stronger because almost alone it must transmit the infantile sexuality, exhibition [sic] and spying on the parents" (96). (4) "Now, the suicide in 'The Judgment' is an orgasm, the surrender of willing, death of the closed-in ego. What is the love object? The answer is the parents, especially the Father: regarded first as female and castrated, sadistically attacked, then as a male to whom the protagonist masochistically surrenders" (145). (5) The warders in The Trial: "These warders are the two younger brothers of Kafka, who came to eat his childhood food and wear his body linen. He hated them. They died. He is guilty of it" (157). (6) "The ending of Amerika is manic. Let us contrast it with The Trial, which is melancholic" (190).

Goodman offers similar explanations of Kafka's life. He explains Kafka's happiness with his mistress, Dora Dymant, thus: "The woman that at last gave Kafka a kind of happiness, as the evidence indicated, was Dora. And what was his first meeting with Dora?

[Quoting from Brod's Biography:] 'One day he noticed in the kitchen

of the home a young girl. She was busy chopping up fish. "Such tender hands and such a bloody work!" he said.' Is this not a meaningful reminiscence? (We are here, also, of course, in the atmosphere of the castration complex) . . . The castration is a deep fear [sic]; it is also to be taken as the resolution for a prior destruction wrought by the child himself--so Melanie Klein. Dora's castration promise is a means of appeasing the father, and so [Kafka] is allowed a measure of happiness" (102-103).

Goodman's preface is devoted to pronouncements on other critics and an explanation of his own purpose in this study. The condescension in his first sentence is characteristic: "Considering the importance of our author, little has been written about him. Yet of that little, almost everything is surprisingly good. Surprisingly first-hand . . ." (ix). After this gracious beginning, Goodman goes on to say, somewhat contradictorily, that "the critics seem unable to give [Kafka's] life and work a plain hard look" (ix). This "plain hard look," it turns out, is Goodman's euphemism for a psychoanalytic analysis of the most extreme type. He goes on to give an ominous hint of what is to happen to Kafka under his plain hard look: "It is almost as if the critics were afraid that, too frankly scrutinized, Kafka would evanesce and their sense of him be left in the air" (ix).

As he continues with his criticism of critics, it develops that Goodman is at variance particularly with Max Brod and Thomas Mann. In his usual less-than-lucid style he calls Brod's Biography "intelligible in the main masses" but "wrong in all the explanations" (ix). He

labels Brod's comparison of Kafka and Proust "absurd" and Brod's belief that Kafka looked to integration in the community as a means of salvation "frivolous" and "callous." He attacks Mann for agreeing with this community-seeking interpretation of The Castle: "Brod's wrong Castle interpretation is an earnest effort at the synthesis of a difficult text, but for Mann to parrot it is nothing but stupidity and laziness, and for Mann to read K. as if he were nothing but the 'artist type' of Mann seeking for the burger type, healthy and blond--this is simply nauseating" (99).

Goodman assails critics in general for failing to take proper account of psycho-biographical information about Kafka. They have avoided the important fact that "with a brutal directness Kafka willed himself into the slavery of a certain kind of office-work" (xi) But most "notorious" of all, says Goodman cloudily, is their avoidance of "the plain dilemma of his thought and his relation to his father" (xi).

The reader finds some explanation for the confusion and opacity of this book in Goodman's explanation of his purpose in writing it: "This book is not an objective study," he writes, "but a kind of polemic and self-defense To put it another way, the question I am concerned with is a simple one: Is what Kafka says true? What is true for my happiness and what is false and to be rejected? . . . Obviously I would not have spent so much time with an author unless I felt that here was in a special way my truth; but more important, that here was also something challenging my truth, so that either I must

change or be refuted" (xii). Near the end Goodman admits, "I began this little book (I see it now) in hatred and envy of Franz and of every friend and brother . . ." (250-251).

Thus it seems that Goodman's whole effort has been to refute Kafka's pessimistic conclusions by exposing their supposed origins psychoanalytically. Like many other critics of the psychoanalytic school, Goodman evidently discounts the validity of an author's ideas when he discovers the psychological factors which have "caused" them.

Kirkus,¹² the first periodical to review Kafka's Prayer, took a cautious line by calling the study "controversial in its attitude" and "extremely personal."

The first real review of the book was Philip Rahv's. Writing in The Saturday Review of Literature,¹³ Rahv says that Goodman has further confused the general impression of Kafka by piling his own idiosyncrasies on top of his subject's. The result: "utter confusion." The reader, Rahv suggests, now needs an interpretation of Goodman as well as of Kafka. "In this endless flow of theorems and notions, most of them unsupported by sufficient evidence," he writes, Goodman has used the Freudian theory lavishly and sometimes well, but usually in a manner "so far-fetched as to provoke immediate dissent." As an example Rahv cites Goodman's tracing the appearance of K.'s two assistants in The Castle and the two warders in The Trial to Kafka's

¹²XV (March 15, 1947), 180.

¹³"Idiosyncratic Genius," XXX (August 2, 1947), 15.

jealousy of his two younger brothers who died in infancy.

A favorable review came next. Angel Flores, in the New York Herald Tribune Books,¹⁴ takes the opportunity to castigate the theological critics. So far, Flores says, Kafka commentary has been mostly from "confused and confusing" critics. Muir and Brod are responsible for a mystical trend in Kafka interpretation "which has by now assumed the proportions of a theological clambake." Goodman's interpretation, on the other hand, is "a much more perceptive and adequate approach to Kafka." The psychoanalytic approach, Flores explains, is the path along which Kafka's truth is to be found, for he can be understood only in terms of his own psychology, "a psychology so rare as to be beyond the comprehension of most normal minds" Flores does, however, object to Goodman's tendency to find more symbols and analogies than there are, to seize convenient interpretations and overlook exceptions. Then, in a masterpiece of understatement, he concludes, "This kind of recondite detectivism boomerangs ultimately by shedding suspicion on the critic's method."

A new and startling solution to the problem of Kafka criticism appeared in the next review. Goodman's book must have had a profound effect on Anthony Bower, who, in the New York Times Book Review,¹⁵ says that no more criticism should be written about Kafka. He leads up to this conclusion first by an assessment of Goodman: "His

¹⁴"Light on the Hideous," August 10, 1947, p. 4.

¹⁵"Kafka: 'Writing Is a Form of Prayer,'" August 24, 1947, p. 7.

interpretations are profound and erudite, and are obviously of deep satisfaction to Mr. Goodman. But they resemble, in their condensation and highly charged significance, the Biblical commentaries of the early mystics, and are so personal, and their compression results in such cloudy syntax, that the reader longs for a book of reference to the religious, philosophical, educational, and psychological background of the author." But Bower believes Goodman's comments are as convincing as any that had appeared so far. His conclusion is that critics should desist altogether. Kafka's main appeal, he explains, lies somewhere above or below the conscious level. For this reason, one can never get a perfect understanding or make an exact analysis. The satisfaction of reading Kafka can never be exactly shared and, in fact, is spoiled if one tries to fit his reactions to those of a "respected critic." For these reasons, says Bower, the less written about Kafka the better.

The last review of Kafka's Prayer was favorable. In an article for Ethics¹⁶ Martin Gardner calls Goodman's book "an invaluable contribution to the naturalist school of Kafka criticism as well as a lyrical expression of Goodman's own philosophy" (145).

Amidst the clamor of critical voices directed at Max Brod and Paul Goodman during the year 1947, a weak voice from Kafka himself was heard. His parables, printed in German and English and translated

¹⁶See above, Chapter VI, note 17. This article reviews both Kafka's Prayer and The Kafka Problem.

by Willa Muir and others,¹⁷ were published at this time. This small volume provoked relatively little critical notice compared with that devoted to the volumes by Brod and Goodman.

The New Yorker¹⁸ looked upon Parables as of interest only to Kafka's most devoted followers. Though a few of the pieces are "sprightly," it admitted, the majority are "simply the dull and incompleated jottings of a major writer"

Herman Salinger, writing in Monatshefte,¹⁹ found the collection a fearful indication of the spirit of the modern age, as did Commonweal's reviewer.²⁰ Salinger quotes W. H. Auden's jacket comment that "'Kafka comes nearest to bearing the kind of relation to our age as Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe bore to theirs,'" and remarks that this is "less to be doubted than to be feared." Developing the idea of Kafka as representative, he goes on: "Whatever blackness and bleakness the world of mankind may produce, there will yet be a genius to formulate the spirit of an age" In a similar vein, Commonweal's reviewer finds the book "almost too terrible to bear"

While reviewers were busy with criticisms of Brod and Goodman and, to a much lesser extent, Parables, periodicals were showing a swing back to criticism of the original subject. A wave of articles--

¹⁷Parables (New York).

¹⁸XXIII (December 13, 1947), 130.

¹⁹XXXIX (December 1947), 542.

²⁰A. F., XLVII (January 30, 1948), 405.

dealing primarily with Kafka's works rather than with his critics--appeared in 1947. But still, many of these interpretations bore testimony to the critical war in their prefatory remarks.

James Burnham's article for Partisan Review²¹ is a case in point, with its criticism of The Kafka Problem in general and Edwin Berry Burgum in particular. But Burnham devotes most of his article to an exposition of his own views. Like Austin Warren, he sees Kafka's works as capable of many different interpretations. The theological, metaphysical, sociological, and Freudian ones do not exclude each other, he says. Thus the Castle may stand for the incommunicable God of Abraham and Kierkegaard, the bureaucratized State, human society, the projected father image, the unknowable real of a Kantian type of metaphysics, or even modern science thought of as a church, with its ritualistic priests, its intoned formulas, its incomprehensible explanations.

Indeed, says Burnham, Kafka should not be read for his "meaning" anyway--should not be read from an ideational standpoint--but as a poet, expressing primarily mood and feeling rather than idea. His dominant feeling, Burnham believes, is anxiety--"a universal, all-sided anxiety" (192). And the anxiety-beset condition of his heroes is not in the least fantastic or peculiar--it is exactly the human condition. "It is the spiritual situation in which every man who has achieved self-awareness finds himself, and it sets the basic

²¹See above, Chapter VI, note 11.

problem for which religion, metaphysics, and myth must provide the answer--must, because the situation is intolerable" (193).

In another--and apparently unrelated--section of his article Burnham discusses Kafka from the standpoint of Manichaeism. Kafka, he says, saw the world as divided into matter and spirit and wished to reject the material world and live in the realm of spirit. In view of this desire, the artistic task he set himself was to portray life in its natural appearance in order to show it to be nothing. He wrote in order to deny the meaning of existence.

Another writer--one of the few--who emphasized the necessity for looking upon Kafka as primarily a poet rather than as a didactic writer with a "message" was Heinz Politzer. Writing for Commentary,²² Politzer traces the relationship of the German Jew to German culture from Mendelssohn to Kafka. Mendelssohn, exceptionally mild and decorous and essentially unrepresentative of German Jewry, promised more than the ghetto-marked Jews who followed him could live up to. Heine, owing to his modern progressive extremism, failed to synthesize the German and Jewish elements in his background. And Ludwig Börne failed also, owing to the violence of his struggle against the ghetto and all that it meant for German Jewry. In Franz Kafka, Politzer writes, came the first real synthesis of the two cultures.

For to Kafka the problem was no longer being a German and a Jew--the problem was existence itself. Kafka saw beneath this special

²²"From Mendelssohn to Kafka: the Jewish Man of Letters in Germany," III (April 1947), 344-351.

problem the general one--the crisis for European civilization. He saw a world in decline and gave poetic expression to what he saw. He saw that this decline consisted "not only in the collapse of Central European culture (which Kafka, who died in 1924, was nevertheless able to see approaching), [nor] in the catastrophe that befell German Jewry (which Kafka foresaw here and there in his work with startling exactitude of detail): it consisted in man's consciousness of having lost all connection with the authorities that ruled his life" (350).

In his description of the endless game of hide-and-seek between man and the authorities, says Politzer, Kafka does not lay the blame wholly on man or on the powers that be. He accuses no one, but simply describes the abyss between the world of man and the world beyond, apportioning the responsibility equally between them. In taking this attitude, Politzer believes, Kafka "awakens hope of that hour when man and the world, freed from the marks of deformity, may be able freely to confront each other again" (350-351). In conclusion, Politzer expresses the belief that German Jews--the greatest of whom during this period was Kafka--enriched German culture mainly by "snatching the Germans from the 'habitual indifference' of their conscience" (351) and making Germany--and the entire age--conscious of the modern crisis.

The next article to include a discussion of Kafka placed him in a chorus of literary voices which have cried out against the wasteland of modern scientific civilization. In "The Wasteland of William Blake" Frank O'Malley discusses Blake as a prophetic poet and critic of "the wasteland" which modern civilization was becoming and compares

him at length with Nicolas Berdyaev, Kafka, and Georges Bernanos.²³

Between Blake and Kafka, O'Malley sees many similarities:

(1) their extreme fidelity to themselves and to what they considered the right way of conduct; (2) their similar moral and spiritual problem--that of finding their true vocation and of acting in accordance with the wishes of higher powers; (3) their distrust of progress and science and dislike of the restrictions modern civilization imposes on human freedom; and (4) their similar hardships and relative lack of public success during their lifetimes. In spite of obvious differences, O'Malley says, Blake and Kafka are essentially similar in "some likeness of conscience with respect to the chaos of the condition of man and the terror of his life in what Bernanos calls 'the vast agglomeration of cities'" (202). Both, in short, were prophets of the modern wasteland.

One of the most arresting articles in all Kafka criticism was that of Edmund Wilson, which appeared in the July 1947 New Yorker. In "A Dissenting Opinion on Kafka"²⁴ Wilson takes a strong stand against the modern tendency to idolize Kafka and set him up as a moral guide. Wilson admits that his generation is perhaps less sensitive to Kafka's influence than younger readers are. But in spite of this fact and "with much admiration for Kafka," he says, "I find it impossible to take him seriously as a major writer and have

²³Review of Politics, IX (April 1947), 183-204.

²⁴See Chapter VI, note 15. This article includes both a review of The Kafka Problem and general criticism.

never ceased to be amazed at the number of people who can" (53). He confesses himself surprised that so many people look upon Kafka as a religious writer and a moral guide simply because he is representative of the modern plight. "He is quite true to his time and place," Wilson agrees, "but it is surely a time and place in which few of us will want to linger--whether as the stunned and hypnotized helots of totalitarian states or as the citizens of freer societies who have relapsed into taking Kafka's stories as evidence that God's law and man's purpose are conceived in terms so different that we may as well give up hope of ever identifying the one with the other" (57).

As for considering Kafka a religious writer, Wilson declares, the religious implications of The Castle and The Trial are nil. He asks whether Kafka is not satirizing "the absurdities of his own bad conscience" (56) in The Trial rather than treating the problem of original sin. In The Castle he sees self-irony and also "a genuine wistfulness in K.'s longing to settle down and find a modest place in life for himself" (56). But neither novel, he believes, is of interest for its religious meaning, unless possibly one sees them as parodies of the Calvinistic doctrine of grace. Kafka fell short of real religious stature because "he could never let go of the world--of his family, of his job, of his yearning for bourgeois happiness--in the interest of divine revelation . . ." (54). And, continues Wilson, "you cannot have a first-rate saint or prophet without a faith of a very much higher potential than is ever to be felt in Kafka" (54). Far from being a religious guide, he was weak-willed, psychologically

crippled. He was "denationalized, discouraged, disaffected, disabled . . ." (57). In short, he is overrated, is not a religious writer to be valued, was tied up in his personal problems, and was mainly expressing his own weakness and helplessness. He is not of value to us, says Wilson, because his situation is not like ours. Unlike Poe and Gogol, both of whom portray, like Kafka, "the intense and painful realization of emotional culs-de-sac" (56), Kafka's effect is not "tonic." Gogol drew strength from his heroic conception of Russia, and Poe, regardless of his Tory ideas, is representative of post-Revolutionary America in his defiant temper and intellectual curiosity. But Kafka lacked this "tonic" side, and it is mainly on this basis that Wilson depreciates him as a representative of the modern age. Whether this pragmatic approach to literature is valid or not, Wilson's article focused attention on the tendency of the moderns to enshrine this symptom of their age without asking themselves whether it was a thing to be cherished or exorcised.

In the very next month another well-known voice was heard objecting to the unwholesome influence Kafka had had as a "religious" writer. Norman Thomas, writing in The Atlantic Monthly,²⁵ says that Kafka's God "might be the inspiration for the dictator of a totalitarian state but never for the fellowship of free men" (34). Kafka saw God, Thomas believes, as a cosmic jester who set his creation man in an alien world, surrounded by his own loneliness. It would be

²⁵"Religion and Civilization," CLXXX (August 1947), 33-36.

better for man to curse such a God--who works in ways incomprehensible to man--and die, than to seek inspiration from him.

Not only Kafka's classification as a religious writer was questioned at this time but also his classification as a German writer. He had been called by most critics a "German" because German was his mother tongue and he wrote in German. From time to time, however, various critics had tried to classify him as a Czech. It is true that the name Kafka originated in the Czech kavka, meaning jack-daw. It is also true that Kafka was born, reared, and educated in Prague and that he lived there nearly all of his life. But he was isolated doubly from the Czech environment of his native city. First, by being German-educated and German-speaking, he belonged to the German minority in Prague, which held itself largely aloof from the Czech population. Being a Jew, he was further isolated, and moved, so to speak, in a circle within a circle. In spite of these well-known biographical facts, Czech enthusiasts from time to time tried to claim Kafka. Though one feels that they have never succeeded, they did bring out the possible Czech influences on him. One such enthusiast, Pavel Eisner, published in Books Abroad²⁶ an excerpt from his book Franz Kafka and Prague, which was to come out in 1950. In this strange, rhapsodic article, Eisner does his best to prove Kafka a "Czech writer."

He admits, first, that in Kafka's works there is nothing

²⁶"Franz Kafka and Prague," XXI (Summer 1947), 264-270.

specific--such as Czech names or topographic identifications with Prague--which can be called Czech. But he goes on to say that Kafka's "instincts" are Czech and that "Kafka's work could have originated only in Prague and nowhere else" (269). Going even further, he says, "Every facet of Kafka's work is illuminated by that mysterious city where, and where alone, this work could have been conceived and nurtured into a growth of suffering and thirst for the Beyond" (266). Kafka's "vision of life as mystic guilt" (268) is typically Czech and has its absolute counterpart in the Czech writer Bréžina. Kafka's "eternal, tortuous, and futile pilgrimage to God, with its terrifying whirligig of the human soul . . ." (268) reminds one of the Czech writer Komensky's Labyrinth of the World and Paradise of the Heart. On the other hand, Eisner declares, "nobody can succeed in proving any profound connection between Franz Kafka and any German" (268). He goes on, "I maintain that Franz Kafka is a German author only from the standpoint of material facts and language. From that of spirit, he is typically Jewish, and with his relentless and everlasting question: 'How can I justify my existence?' he is also a moral phenomenon typically Slavonic" (269). Eisner's attempt to exclude Kafka from the category "German writer" was to bring a blistering rebuttal later.

The next article to appear on Kafka was one of the most thought-provoking in Kafka criticism. In it Walter J. Ong examines what he considers to be the basic rationalization which Western man has developed through the years in order to be able to live with himself.

"Kafka's Castle in the West," appearing in Thought,²⁷ assesses Kafka's work from the standpoint of what Ong calls "the great Western fiction." The Western mind, Ong says, unable to bear existence in a universe which contains elements beyond its ken and strengthened by the deceptively strong arm of science, has manufactured for itself the comfortable illusion that man's relationship to the universe is not basically one of plight. This happy fiction underlies all of Western thinking. Kafka's attitude of ironic futility cuts straight into this fiction--"the fiction of the life with no deep-seated plight, no chronic distress, at its center, the fiction of man in a universe with plenty of problems indeed but with none which overwhelms him with embarrassment and the sense of a deep and incurable weakness inseparable from his very being" (443-444). It is Kafka's challenging of this basic optimistic assumption that makes his work bite so deeply into our consciousness. For the great Western fiction is a centuries-old development and underlies all of modern thinking. It can be seen very clearly in the Enlightenment as "an all-out effort to make a case for the self-possessed man in the self-possessed world" (445). It manifests itself in many of the concrete effects of the French Revolution such as the metric system and superdepartmentalized governments. And it is evident in Stalin's Russia as "the . . . passion for getting things into self-contained systems once for all" (445). It is evident today in the religious development of the West--Western man's

²⁷XXII (September 1947), 439-460.

abhorrence of superstition and of the unfounded belief, acutely felt, that there is something in the world which is beyond his ken. The rage for psychiatry, Ong goes on, is another manifestation of man's fear of the unknown and inexplicable in his life. "Not opposition to unfounded belief as such, but the subconscious urge to do away with this sense of plight is the key to the characteristic religious operations of the modern Western mind" (447). Ritual and mystery have dropped away from Western religions, says Ong, and even the Catholic Church (in the West) tends more and more to base its claims on reason.

Loath to feel that there is some aspect of the world to which he cannot expect access, "modern man pictures himself as a kind of One-Eyed Connelly: this is a closed world, and once you're on the precincts, you can crash the gate anywhere" (455). This idea of a closed world has been seriously shaken by various occurrences: the collapse of Newtonian physics, the development of Kierkegaardian philosophy and Barth's existentialism, and the advent of the atomic bomb. To this world Kafka brings a sense of the inadequacy of the human intellect and, at the same time, restores movement in a dimension which the West has long been trying to forget.

The next discussion of Kafka after Ong's thought-provoking article was in a letter to the editor in Partisan Review,²⁸ which took Kafka criticism back again, away from Kafka himself and into the main stream--criticism of criticism. After attacking Kafka critics

²⁸See above, Chapter VI, note 16. This article includes a review of The Kafka Problem as well as criticism of Burnham.

in general, R. W. Flint directs his fire particularly at James Burnham, who had found overtones of Manichaeism in Kafka.²⁹ In an effort to refute Burnham's "accusing Kafka of a mystic doctrine of pure spirit" (520) Flint points out that he could not have hated life as a Manichaean must and still have had his marvelous sense of humor. Furthermore, Flint writes, the very anxiety which Burnham found to be fundamental in Kafka implies, from an existential point of view, an inseparable union of spirit and matter, and hence is antithetical to the Manichaean doctrine. There is some evidence of a light-dark, good-evil, matter-spirit dualism in Kafka, says Flint, but Burnham excludes so much evidence that his conclusion is invalid. Kafka's ambivalence--which might seem to be between the worlds of matter and spirit--is actually "the ambivalence of the bourgeois who thinks he has lost his nerve and is thrown into a world of philosophical and theological speculation alien to his nature" (522). What Kafka wanted was to live as his social milieu lived--to fit in. His great personal problem was not the polarity of matter and spirit, but the weariness, boredom, and regret which resulted from his inability to either merge with his community or withdraw into solitude. Flint quotes from Kafka's diaries: "'He who does not master life while alive must use one hand somehow to ward off his despair over his fate--that is done very imperfectly--but with the other hand he may record what he sees beneath the wreckage . . .'" (522).

²⁹See above, pp. 171-172.

Quite unlike Flint's interpretation, the next article to appear treated Kafka as an existentialist. William Hubben, in The Christian Century,³⁰ sees him as the leading figure among the "prophets of doom" (171). His message is one of the moral guilt of all men, says Hubben, and for him, "a leaden sky of personal or collective responsibility is over life . . ." (172). This message makes him "the poet-laureate of non-religious existentialism" (172). For the all-pervasive mood of his work is that of existentialist thinking--Angst--"a chronic fear and dread of the cosmic laws of life and a constant vision of defeat" (172). Kafka sensed, long before others did, "the spirit of decay spreading in Europe which destroyed first man's relation to God and then to man" (172). He foresaw the disintegration of Europe. And Europe has since proved the truth of his apocalyptic message.

Another writer who believed Kafka to be a prophet of the tragic events to come in Europe was an anonymous editorial writer for La Gazette des Lettres in Paris. An excerpt from this editorial in the Autumn 1947 issue of Books Abroad³¹ brought to the attention of the American public the fact that a faction had sprung up in France which advocated the destruction of Kafka's works. The writer takes a strong stand against this group. "More important than an artist's pessimism or optimism is whether he speaks the truth," he writes, and Kafka has

³⁰"Kafka's Apocalyptic Message," LXIV (October 1, 1947), 171-173.

³¹"Shall Kafka's Writings Be Destroyed?" XXI, 401.

done just this in foreseeing "that the time was coming when men should be condemned to completely new and unheard-of penalties for crimes of which they had not the slightest suspicion." The Trial and The Castle are "admirably sublimated images of the concentration-camp universe which ours has come to be," and we should certainly preserve the works of this prophet, bitter as it is to face the destiny he foresees for us.

Another indication of the interest Kafka's works had aroused in France was a review in Time of André Gide's adaptation of The Trial for the stage.³² Time raises the question of who was responsible for the great success of Le Procès: Gide, who "adapted the dialogue of Franz Kafka's dark parable with painstaking exactness" (98) or Jean-Louis Barrault, who captured the uncanny mood of the novel in his imaginative staging of the play. No suggestion is made of Kafka's contribution to the success of the production.

In the entry on Kafka which appeared in the Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature in 1947,³³ ideas from various critics are apparent. The writer, Victor Lange, names the Talmud and Jewish folklore as sources of much of Kafka's imaginative thinking. He relates Kafka to Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Karl Barth in his beliefs, and to Dostoyevsky and Strindberg in the "radically eschatological" nature of these beliefs. He compares Kafka to expressionist and

³²"Kafka in Paris," L (November 10, 1947), 98, 100.

³³Gen. ed., Horatio Smith (New York), pp. 433-434.

surrealist writers in "the use of minutely detailed irrational dream landscapes, in which strangely related phenomena seem suspended in an unintelligible void" (434). Compared to Proust, Joyce, and Thomas Mann, Lange finds, Kafka is not one of the accomplished novelists of his time. Rather, he is, like Rilke, "the supremely religious writer of an age in which man, caught in inevitable perplexity and doubt, seems incapable of personal salvation" (434). His ultimate theme Lange describes as "the paradoxical human quest for freedom as well as responsibility" (434).

Two interesting exegetical articles appeared in 1947, one of "A Hunger-Artist," and one of "The Judgment." Robert W. Stallman, publishing in Accent,³⁴ sets forth three possible allegorical interpretations of "A Hunger-Artist"--a metaphysical, a religious, and a sociological one--all of which overlap.

Discussing the metaphysical interpretation first, he says that in the story there is an almost absolute dichotomy between the divine and the human realms: "There exists a radical division between the realm of faith--the religious, the qualitative, the spiritual or the supernatural (symbolized by the mystic-faster)--and the realm of practical reason, the quantitative, the sensuous realm of physical matter (symbolized by the panther and the people)" (120). This dichotomy constitutes the dilemma of the Hunger-Artist as well as of mankind in general. Man is incapable of achieving a state of pure

³⁴"Kafka's Cage," VII (Autumn 1947), 117-125.

spirituality, and is also unable to achieve a synthesis of spirit and matter.

Viewing the story in a religious light, one can interpret the Hunger-Artist himself as Christ, symbolizing pure Spirit. But today, Stallman goes on, Christ is dead, for the modern world has lost its religious faith. Thus for the Hunger-Artist "there is no resurrection because today not Spirit but Matter alone is recognized" (122).

A sociological interpretation of the story is possible too: the fact that the Hunger-Artist finds no human food to his liking shows the basic maladjustment of the artist to his environment. The insatiable hunger which possesses him is perhaps only a basic maladjustment, a lacking, the symptom of an imperfect soul. Thus, "as sociological allegory 'The Hunger-Artist' represents the dilemma of the modern artist: his dissociation from the world in which he lives" (132).

Certainly the soundest psychoanalytical interpretation of Kafka so far was Kate Flores' "Franz Kafka and the Nameless Guilt," which appeared in the Quarterly Review of Literature.³⁵ In this remarkable exegesis of "The Judgment" Mrs. Flores attempts to prove by a careful and detailed illumination of the story in the light of Kafka's diaries and other works that it is a highly personal dramatization of the author's neurotic father fixation.

Mrs. Flores begins her analysis by pointing out that no one

³⁵III, no. 4 (1947), 382-405.

has successfully explained the identity of Georg Bendemann's "friend in Russia" (quotations are from "The Judgment"), who takes up almost a third of the story. Detail by detail, she builds up proof that this "friend" is none other than Kafka's writing, or the inner self expressed in his writing. She proves that "The Judgment" was written at a time when Kafka was seriously considering marriage and, hence, the probability of having to give up his "writing self." Bendemann's problem of whether to desist from his attempts at a "not very lucrative business" in "distant Russia"--a business which kept him from his friends and promised "ultimate bachelorhood"--that is, the question of whether Kafka should give up his writing--was the personal question dealt with in "The Judgment." Says Mrs. Flores: "Bendemann's soliloquy is Kafka's soliloquy, an objectification of his inner debate. It is an analogy, really . . .: his inner self, his writing self, his idealized self, is a friend who since his childhood has been in exile, where and only where, he can pursue his 'business'" (394).

Next Mrs. Flores very convincingly shows that while Kafka's explanation of "The Judgment" in his diary seems to refute her explanation, it is actually an important piece of the interpretive puzzle and if read correctly gives the key to the story. Thus, Kafka says in his explanation, "'The friend constitutes the relationship between the father and the son, he is that which they have most in common'" (397). One would be forever thrown off the track of the friend's true significance if it were not for the complementary

puzzle piece which is found in Kafka's "Letter to My Father": "'My writing was about you, in it I merely poured out the sorrow I could not sigh at your breast.'" From these two quotations, viewed side by side, Mrs. Flores concludes that the friend represents Kafka's writing in that it is the one link between father and son.

Using this same sleuth-like deduction throughout her article, Mrs. Flores goes on to show that the neurotic problem which tortured Kafka all his life was an unnatural attachment to his father. The guilt which resulted from this father fixation was suppressed and found expression only in his other, or writing, self.

This is the guilt Kafka dramatized in his writing, this the agony, the self-contempt, the despair. Kafka's life and work are one long study in the progress of a neurosis consequent upon the suppression of abnormal love: the anxiety and hypertension concealed beneath a calm exterior, the ambivalent attitude of love and hate, the externalization of that inner struggle, the self-torturing conscientiousness and moral scrupulousness, the paralysis of the will, the dread of responsibility, the interminable rationalization tending to confuse issues in order to avoid decision, the fear, the hopelessness, the self-abasement, the masochism and sadism, the yearning for normalcy, the obsessive sense of guilt, and above all, the delusions of persecution. "I hate him because he persecuted me" is the classic formula of the tormented

victim of this neurosis, who longs unconsciously for torture and death at the hands of the beloved. (402-403)

Thus, everything Georg Bendemann's father says and does to him actually reflects Kafka's punitive attitude toward himself. Examples of this are the father's contempt for Georg's letters to "the friend," and his disgust at Georg's delay in marrying. And in Georg's prompt execution of his father's final order Kafka expresses his wish for judgment and expiation of his guilty attachment to his father. "In this dreadful self-castigation, this unravellable emotional knot of hatred, love, guilt, despair over the state of his writing and above all his father's distaste for his writing, the father appears as the externalization of Kafka's unconscious, the personification of his own conscience . . ." (403).

Mrs. Flores' analysis--unlike those of most of the psychoanalytic critics--is remarkable for its cogency, insight, and credibility. Each step in her chain of reasoning is solidly founded on established biographical facts or on quotations from Kafka's diaries and works. And--most important--she claims neither explicitly nor implicitly to have found the "key" to Kafka's works as a whole or to completely explain him psychologically. Her article claims to be nothing more than what it is--a psychoanalytic exegesis of one work.

III

The year 1947 saw a great deal of critical activity, most of it centering on the two volumes, Brod's Biography and Goodman's

Kafka's Prayer. Most of the reviewers, however, contributed little to Kafka criticism besides an exposure of the weaknesses of these studies. Neither of the works had a marked effect on the course of Kafka criticism. For a definite trend was now developing, largely in the more serious articles, which appeared in long-term periodicals. The number of well-considered interpretations was much greater in 1947 than it had been in 1946, and the feverish atmosphere created by the many hastily written reviews was beginning to be replaced by a soberer approach. As the year progressed it became apparent that the tendency was to view Kafka as representative of modern man. Walter J. Ong's analysis of the writer as a challenger of "the great Western fiction"--the complacent rationalism typical of modern Western man--was the outstanding article of the period and one of the best in all the criticism. Frank O'Malley's classification of Kafka with other writers who had prophesied the modern wasteland was another expression of the "modern man" interpretation. And Edmund Wilson's view of Kafka as representative of the greatest weaknesses of his times agreed with this trend, though Wilson's main emphasis was a protest against idolizing Kafka. Other writers of this period gave narrower interpretations but ones that were in keeping with this dominant trend in that they saw Kafka as a prophet of the tragic events to come in Western Europe.

A neglected idea which was finally voiced explicitly at this time was that of James Burnham and Heinz Politzer that Kafka should be viewed not as a man with a "message" but as a poet unconsciously

reflecting the state of the world around him.

The year also saw the best and the worst products so far of the psychoanalytical school. Kate Flores' excellent analysis of "The Judgment" must have given serious psychoanalytic critics heart after the embarrassing display made by Paul Goodman in Kafka's Prayer.

All in all, it seemed that 1947 pointed the way to a common ground of interpretation which might satisfy critics of a variety of persuasions. The emotional attitude revealed in Brod's Biography cast doubt on its portrayal of an essentially healthy-minded Kafka seeking "his place" in the community and believing in God in spite of his pessimism. And Goodman's regrettable performance should have served as a warning to critics inclined toward psychoanalytic interpretation. Since both these extremes of the interpretive spectrum were unacceptable, it seemed that the view of Kafka as reflecting modern man's plight was on its way to becoming widely established. It was in a way a compromise between the two extremes of Kafka interpretation. It took from the religious one the conception of Kafka as primarily interested in metaphysical questions and combined with it the emphasis of the psychoanalysts on his neuroticism. The product of this blend was a Kafka who, like the best writers in modern Western literature, suffered the anguish--whether neurotic or not--inevitable for any man who sees all too clearly that the time is out of joint.

CHAPTER VIII

MIRROR OF MODERN MAN (1948 AND AFTER):

ARTIST OF THE PRESENT PLIGHT

I

Although developments which should have been major ones in Kafka criticism occurred during 1948, they seemed to have little effect on Kafka interpretation as a whole. Publication of the first volume of the diaries brought widely varied reactions from reviewers and did not lead to any new interpretive theory. An extreme psychoanalytical study, Charles Neider's The Frozen Sea, proved little about Kafka but his electric effect on a certain type of critic. The first and only comprehensive analysis of his works, by Herbert Tauber, though sound and sane, was conventional enough in its conclusions to pass without creating more than a mild reaction. And finally, the publication of a collection of Kafka's earliest stories refreshed interest in Kafka himself but did not change the critical picture of him.

The view that Kafka's writings reflect the plight of modern man, well set forth by Walter J. Ong, found acceptance in 1948 by a number of reviewers and was even echoed by one of the psychoanalytic critics. This view evidently provided a meeting ground for representatives of differing critical schools. The variety of theories which had characterized Kafka criticism for years seemed at last to

be giving way to this broad interpretation of his work as the reflection of the modern predicament.

II

In 1948 the first volume of Kafka's diaries was published in English translation.¹ Edited by Max Brod, without preface or postscript, this volume gave the American public its first look at Kafka's private journals. Many scholars who had hoped to have some of the mystery of Kafka cleared by the publication of this record were probably disappointed; it threw less light on Kafka as a man than had been expected. A large part of these notebooks was taken up with experimental story fragments. The entries which dealt with Kafka's moods, feelings, and personal reactions were largely pessimistic, despairing, even morbid in tone; and the diaries were accepted by almost all reviewers as proof of Kafka's morbidity, nay, neuroticism.

Kirkus was again first in its review of Diaries.² And again it treated Kafka as an esoteric writer. This volume, it said, is of interest to Kafka "addicts." But Kirkus had caught up with current criticism enough to admit somewhat grudgingly, "Whatever the verdict of the future, one must recognize a kinship between Kafka, Rilke and Proust."

¹The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1913, ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York).

²XVI (March 1, 1948), 138.

The Library Journal sat cautiously on the fence in its review.³ The diaries provide "much evidence pro and con Kafka's genius," it commented warily.

A quite different response came from Irving Howe, who was evidently overwhelmed by the contents of the diaries. Reviewing for The Nation,⁴ he calls Kafka "one of the few completely admirable personalities of this century" (478). The diaries themselves he thinks one of the great records of the endurance of man's trial and his quest for the Castle. They show, he says, the development of Kafka's ideas from personal experiences into experiences with universal meaning. And they are of most value read as preparatory notebooks to Kafka's fictional pieces rather than as a personal record.

One of the bitterest attacks on Kafka as a person appeared next under the guise of a review of Diaries. John Farrelly, writing for The New Republic,⁵ picks out of the diaries many quotations which indicate Kafka's maladjustment and only briefly mentions other contents of the volume. In it he finds "a kind of invalid's inertia and childish submission to authority on the one hand and, on the other, vanity, arrogance, and impatience" (24) and suggests that Kafka deliberately cultivated his childishness and invalidism as a defense. All in all, Farrelly seems filled with repugnance for Kafka as a

³Donald Wasson, LXXIII (April 1, 1948), 555.

⁴"The Algebra of Existence," XLXVI (May 1, 1948), 477-478.

⁵"Kafka's Journal," CXVIII (May 10, 1948), 23.

person. He shows no interest in him as a writer or in the diaries as illuminations of his works. "For years," he writes bitterly, "Kafka has been the hero of literary criticism and in a very personal way--as the archetype of contemporary Man, as the dedicated Artist, the Victim, etc. He is the number-one literary case history . . ." (23).

Quite on the other side of the critical fence now was Time.⁶ Its reviewer refers to the numerous story fragments scattered through the diaries as "beginnings of the books now recognized as profound parables of modern life." With unstinted praise for this latest volume by the-now acceptable Kafka, he declares: "These diaries are more than a personal record; they seem to illuminate large areas of modern life and literature. Nothing quite like them has appeared this century."

Anne Fremantle, writing for The Commonweal,⁷ agreed with Time. In Diaries, she writes, "we can see, writ large, the history of every European, the tragedy of Europe, and the grandeur and misery of all mankind" (212-213). She also finds Jewish overtones in the volume: "There is a sorrow that is more than mere melancholy that permeates the book, a sorrow that seems to permeate Jewish literature, and from which individual Jews themselves only seem to escape very rarely" (214).

⁶"Kafka's Trials," LI (May 31, 1948), 94.

⁷XLVIII (June 11, 1948), 212-214.

The Booklist⁸ found in Kafka's diaries "the discrepancy between the man Kafka wanted to be and the one he actually was, and his consequent despair"

On the other hand, John Bartlow Martin, reviewing for the New York Herald Tribune Books,⁹ calls the diaries for the most part "nothing but the jottings of a hypersensitive young man" (2).

A reply to this disparaging remark came in Christian Century.¹⁰ "They are not hasty jottings-down of the events and emotions of the day," this reviewer writes, "but studied monologues on some minor impression--the shape of a woman's hands, the peculiar quality of the rain, the effect of a voice" Little of Kafka the man is to be found in Diaries, he goes on. Kafka has succeeded here as in his fictional works in keeping "his sense of frustration and bewilderment firmly in leash to serve the purposes of artistic form."

In exact opposition to this reviewer's findings, The New Yorker's¹¹ critic writes, "In these pages [Kafka] reveals what he customarily hid from the world." This estimate concludes with an opinion which must have made the more cynical readers wonder if its author had found time to read the "pages." "It is very likely," he says, "that these journals will be regarded as one of the author's

⁸XLIV (June 15, 1948), 351.

⁹"Kafka, His Novels and His Commentators," June 27, 1948, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰W. E. G., LXV (July 21, 1948), 734.

¹¹XXIV (July 31, 1948), 62.

major literary works."

As usual, one of the best reviews was that of William Phillips. Writing for the New York Times Book Review,¹² Phillips begins his discussion by surveying the present state of Kafka criticism. He says that, following the lead of Edmund Wilson, who recently expressed disappointment with Kafka's writings "for a variety of moral and literary reasons," recent critics show a tendency to deflate Kafka's reputation. In opposition to this trend, Phillips defines Kafka's contribution to modern thought and letters. Kafka does mark a break with the main fictional tradition, Phillips concedes, but what he creates is "a fiction that generalizes the anxieties and dislocations typical of modern man." He communicates "the feel of modern existence, with all its terrors and all its routine complacencies, as we try both to disentangle ourselves from our fate and to accept it by discovering its higher meaning." He has created "a traumatic image of the plight of contemporary man."

Of the diaries specifically, Phillips says that they are the record of a tormented mind. Anyone seeking for sage observations on life, letters, or subjects of grand import will not find them here, for this volume is "something of a self-made case history, a sputtering record of [Kafka's] tangled moods, his obsessions, his emotional paralyzes and his casual activities, which appeared to be just as boring to Kafka himself as they are to the reader."

¹²"Kafka's Diaries: a Case History," August 8, 1948, p. 4.

The last two reviews of Diaries agreed that the journals show Kafka to have been extremely neurotic. Alfred Kay, in the San Francisco Chronicle,¹³ concludes from them that writing was for Kafka an escape and a purge. It served him just as James T. Farrell's young Studs and Danny served their creator: "to write out of his mind the sordid and upsetting surroundings of childhood." The diaries show Kafka as "an extreme hypochondriac and neurotic" who wanted to re-create powerful and usually sad emotions in himself "just as a man with a toothache often runs his tongue over the hurt."

Edwin Berry Burgum's assessment of Diaries in The Virginia Quarterly Review¹⁴ takes a similar line. Burgum finds in the book an obsession with the subject of writing and also an obsessive fear of not appealing to women. He detects too, "a paranoid system of persecution in process of formation" (465) in Kafka's listing of the adults who had spoiled his education. All in all, though, he concludes, the diaries do not provide much new evidence on Kafka's personality.

The year 1948 saw the publication, besides Diaries, of The Frozen Sea,¹⁵ one of the strangest books ever to be published about Kafka. Within this one volume Charles Neider presents two entirely different and apparently incompatible explanations of Kafka's works.

¹³"The Kafka Diaries: a Literary Enigma Gets in the Last Word," August 15, 1948, p. 11.

¹⁴"Kafka on Many Levels," XXIV (Summer 1948), 464-469.

¹⁵Charles Neider, The Frozen Sea (New York).

The book breaks into two separate and distinct parts with no explicit connection between them. One is in substance Neider's earlier article "Franz Kafka and the Cabalists,"¹⁶ which attempts to show that Kafka was satirizing the cabalas--the entrenched and seemingly powerful social forces--of Western European society. The thesis of the other part is that Kafka deliberately used psychoanalytic sexual symbols in a sort of gay game of find-the-key with his readers. And worked in with implied connections to these two main interpretations is still another--an explanation of Kafka's novels as a depiction of progressive sexual maturity.

Early in The Frozen Sea the reader is struck by the evident lack of judgment or understanding on Neider's part in his assessment of some of Kafka's shorter works. "A Report to an Academy" he sees as "merely an exercise, whose function it is to satirize the spiritual in man" (81). He calls "The Silence of the Sirens" "a not very meaningful oddity in which Kafka splits a few hairs about the Ulysses myth and the sirens" (83). And he finds "A Common Confusion" "interesting because of its use of letters to represent people and places" (84). In addition to such errors of emphasis and judgment Neider coolly remarks that Kafka had a "limited understanding" (74) of the implications of "The Judgment."

The reader pushes on to Neider's discussion of the three novels and finds that they are supposed to represent the three progressive

¹⁶See above, pp. 75-77.

stages of heterosexual development: the narcissistic stage in Amerika, the platonic stage in The Trial, and the heterosexual in The Castle. "In Amerika," Neider writes, "the dominant tone is homosexual: Karl continues to be exposed to crushes. In The Trial Joseph K. nowhere seems to be domesticated or even to have a love affair. In The Castle the domestic factor is overwhelming. There are numerous family situations and K. achieves a domestic relationship with Frieda" (117).

A typical example of Neider's "proofs" is his detection of the homosexual element in Amerika. He explains Karl's real motives in putting the drunken Robinson to bed rather than calling the hotel guards and having him thrown out. Of Karl's action he says, "This obsessive desire to hide [Robinson], as if he were the skeleton in his closet, is a tacit admission that he wishes to keep him" (101).

The Trial, on the other hand, Neider calls a "spiritual autobiography of manhood rather than of adolescence as is Amerika" (107), and in it, he says, "all hints of homosexuality, through caresses and fondling, are conspicuous by their absence" (112).

This critic also believes that the homosexual element is absent in The Castle, which he calls "a study of the dilemma of marriage" (92). Independence and irresponsibility are symbolized by the Castle; the necessity to compromise and to account for one's actions, by the village.

In addition to a sort of "Homosexual's Progress," Neider finds in the three novels a progressive broadening of Kafka's conception of

cabalistic force: "In Amerika the cabala is personal, a father imago. In The Trial it is partially social, with an emphasis on males. In The Castle it is society in general. The father is not simply prejudice, superstition and irrationality but the framework of society itself" (118). The basic anti-cabalistic question appears in Amerika when Karl asks the stoker, "Why don't you say something? Why do you put up with everything?" This question underlies the anti-cabalism of all the novels, says Neider.

It is at this point in The Frozen Sea that Neider shifts to an entirely different interpretation of Kafka's works. He introduces it thus: "The following chapter presents an aspect of Kafka that seemingly contradicts all I have hitherto said, an aspect involving nothing less than the discovery of a secret 'key' to the novels, a key as comprehensive, deliberate and real as the Odysseus key to Joyce's Ulysses. The contradiction, I am convinced, is illusory, existing only between separate universes of discourse" (121). This tantalizing information concludes the chapter and further reference to "the contradiction."

The reader is now catapulted into what is evidently a psychoanalytic "universe of discourse," which, he has to agree, is certainly separate from the cabala "universe of discourse." Neider now proceeds to explain his "secret key." The novels, he says, represent "the infancy period in the human's sexual development as outlined by psychoanalysis. The three sub-stages of this period: the oral, the anal, and the early genital, are represented by Amerika, The Trial,

and The Castle respectively" (183). Furthermore, the last two novels, particularly, contain "a web of symbols that are mainly sexual in nature--those symbols common to dreams, folklore, and the unconscious as discussed by the psychoanalytic movement, especially by Freud, Jung, and Stekel" (122). While The Castle "presents in detail the dynamics of the Oedipus complex" (123), The Trial presents that of the castration complex. Regarding all mankind as suffering from the Oedipus complex, Neider calls The Castle "a modern myth in which man's tragedy is his fruitless quest for his unconscious and for the resolution of his neurotic torment there" (124). It is at this point that Neider finally gives a hint of the connection between his two interpretations. Kafka, he says, visualized the unconscious as "the great authority" (123). And, he explains, "the problem of the individual vs. authority is also the problem of the son vs. the father and the conscious vs. the unconscious." (123).

Neider evidently thinks Kafka wished to keep the correct interpretation of his works a secret. For he says in referring to Amalia (whom, by the way, he has found to be an invert), "It was a clever stroke on Kafka's part to make the figure of the invert a female. A male invert would be obvious and might easily give away the entire psychoanalytic key" (145).

Throughout his analysis Neider inserts male and female signs (δ , ♀) in parentheses after almost every noun that can be interpreted as a sexual symbol. Excerpts from a typical paragraph are the following: "As K. seeks the interrogation room he comes upon three (δ)

other flights of stairs, as well as a young girl in her night jacket, standing at a pump (♂) while the water pours into her bucket (♀).

. . . He invents a joiner named Lanz because Lanz implies lance (♂), from the German lanze, and is therefore a good password to the libidinous unconscious" (171). The most amusing example of Neider's wholesale identification of objects as male or female sexual symbols is his treatment of a wooden stopper. Evidently unable to resist wringing from this hapless object all possible symbolic meaning, he tells us, "Wood is a female symbol used here as a male symbol because of its shape" (126).

Some readers might doubt Neider's perspicacity after reading his reaction to Klammm, the key castellan in The Castle and certainly one of the least heroic figures in literature. Explaining Klammm's symbolic meaning, he writes "on the surface [Klammm] is seen as supremely virile and majestic." Going on to the symbolism in The Trial, Neider states: "A bank is a repository for money. Money is a symbol of ordure. Therefore, K.'s bank has an anal character" (153-154).

Nearly every review of Neider's book praised the first, or "cabala," part of it--which was in substance Neider's 1945 article, "Franz Kafka and the Cabalists." Especially well received was the section in which Neider criticizes the various interpretive "cabalas," or special interest groups, which had dominated Kafka criticism. Neider lists as chief among these the mystic, the psychoanalytic, and the "Marxist," and singles out for attack Brod and Muir, Harry Slochower, and Edwin Berry Burgum as representatives, respectively,

of these three groups. But though most reviewers found this section praiseworthy, all but one balked at the "secret key" theory, which was actually the only new idea in the book.

Harriet R. Forbes, writing in The Library Journal,¹⁷ calls Neider's book a brilliant refutation of the existing Kafka interpretations. The New Yorker,¹⁸ too, hails Neider's criticism of critics as "a brilliant job of dissociating Kafka from the various mystic cults that have claimed him." But, this reviewer goes on, in Neider's argument that the novels were written with consciously Freudian symbolism, "the reasoning gets pretty rarefied . . . and will probably appeal only to the very devout."

Richard Plant, writing for the New York Times Book Review,¹⁹ praises Neider's refutation of the various interpretive "cabalas" in Kafka criticism but charges that he becomes a cabalist himself when he introduces his "secret key" interpretation. "Particularly in regard to the symbolism of names," Plant writes, "he constantly overreaches himself and only succeeds in creating confusion." But aside from the "secret key" he finds The Frozen Sea "an excellent study."

The next review--that of Marjorie Brace in The Saturday Review of Literature²⁰--is preponderantly favorable too. Miss Brace finds

¹⁷LXXIII (April 1, 1948), 556.

¹⁸XXIV (April 17, 1948), 99.

¹⁹"Kafka's Strange, Bleached Cosmos," May 23, 1948, p. 4.

²⁰"Secret Key to a Cabala," XXXI (May 29, 1948), 15.

The Frozen Sea a "brilliantly rational argument" and praises Neider for examining Kafka "in the light of irrefutable scientific evidence" rather than giving himself up to vague speculation. Neider, she finds, presents Kafka as realizing more completely than any other "portrayer of alienation" the unconscious goal of his society: "that of a conflicting stasis; not death, but rejection of maturity." She does, however, think it improbable that Kafka deliberately chose to represent symbolically a psychoanalytical theory. He shows little interest in abstract ideas in his diaries, she points out, and, indeed, often innocently uses in them the same symbols Neider "hunts down so intently" in his fictional works.

The only really severe criticism of The Frozen Sea came from Edwin Berry Burgum in The Virginia Quarterly Review.²¹ Neider's Freudian interpretations are "old-fashioned," he declares. Psychologists now look upon it as little short of absurd to "take every noun containing an image of shape (as Mr. Neider does) for either a male or a female symbol" (467). Burgum also makes fun of Neider's multiple Freudian classifications of Joseph K. "as an 'early anal type' with a 'castration complex' as well as an 'Oedipus complex'; and as, besides (as though this were not enough), a 'chronic voyeur,' who, like the 'anal character' in general, experiences 'auditory hyperesthesia'" (468). Though old-fashioned Freudians will be gratified by such an explanation, Burgum says, "other readers will be inclined

²¹See above, note 14. This article reviews The Frozen Sea and Diaries 1910-1913.

to take Neider's findings as only another example of the 'cabala' which he summarily rejects when it is religious or mystical rather than Freudian" (468).

Burgum defends his own theory²² against Neider's criticism by reiterating that a writer may be representative of other times and places than his own: "He may . . . foreshadow a different place and a later period, the place and period in which he is first enthusiastically accepted as a great writer" (467). That period for Kafka, Burgum says, was during the Weimar Republic, not during the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as Neider seems to think.

Another criticism of criticism of criticism came in John Bartlow Martin's review for the New York Herald Tribune Books.²³ Martin praises Neider for having cut away the critical jungle that had grown up about Kafka. He particularly welcomes Neider's exposure of the damage done by Brod's critical influence. However, Martin, too, draws the line at Neider's secret key interpretation. Kafka was too "natural" a writer to employ a set of psychoanalytic symbols deliberately, he says. Furthermore, the diaries show that Kafka put little stock in Freud and that sometimes hidden relationships in a story came clear to him only months after its composition.

The San Francisco Chronicle²⁴ was sarcastically skeptical of

²²See above, pp. 66-69.

²³See above, note 9. This article reviews The Frozen Sea and Kafka's Diaries 1910-1913.

²⁴"A Study of Franz Kafka: The Frozen Sea," July 18, 1948, p. 19.

The Frozen Sea. Neider, its reviewer tells his readers, believes that Kafka's novels were "actually sexual in nature." His laconic comment is, "Well, perhaps."

The only reviewer to accept Neider's secret key was Anne Fremantle. Reviewing for The Commonweal²⁵ she calls The Frozen Sea "as serious and vital an approach to Kafka as the 'Skeleton Key' was to 'Finnegan's Wake'" She does object, however to Neider's excessively specialized vocabulary. Except in a clinic, she says, "such phrases as 'the symbol of virility bars the pregenital neurotic's way to heterosexuality' should really be forbidden." For they have "little relation to life, less to reality, and none to literature."

Angel Flores, in an article for The Yale Review,²⁶ finds Neider's approach fresh and untrammelled. He praises particularly Neider's analysis of Amerika and his studies in nomenclature. But, he says, the writer of this volume does little to prove his basic thesis beside citing examples of male and female symbols. "It seems a rather unimportant point to make," he says, "and reduces Kafka to the stature of a dabbler in crossword puzzles" (366).

The next book about Kafka also came out in 1948. Herbert Tauber's Franz Kafka: an Interpretation of His Works²⁷ is a study as

²⁵XLVIII (August 20, 1948), 458.

²⁶"The Art of Kafka," n. s. XXXVIII (Winter 1949), 365-367.

²⁷Trans. G. Humphreys Roberts and Roger Senhouse (New Haven).

methodical and sensible as Goodman's Prayer had been chaotic and Neider's Frozen Sea had been far-fetched. Tauber's study is not remarkable for its originality but for its extreme thoroughness and its comprehensive scope. It treats all of Kafka's writings, including his aphorisms, diaries, and letters. The explanations of minor works are reasonable, never distorted in order to fit a preconceived pattern. The main shortcoming of the study is its dull, unvaried style--its lifelessness.

Tauber's interpretation can be classified as metaphysical or religious. Kafka's art, Tauber says, was a means of objectifying things for himself. And the fundamental purpose of his writing was to wrestle "for the true, the most real object, for God" (250). In the three novels Kafka was seeking a definitive world-picture and shows a great desire to be an integral part of "a great living world-cohesion" (123). In the short pieces he reveals a deep insight into the incurable state of man's affairs--the loss of objectives and standards--indeed, of significance itself. Thus in "The Judgment" Georg Bendemann is "judged" not for any objective guilt but for his entire smug, shallow, self-confident existence. In "The Metamorphosis" Gregor's transformation is the manifestation of a subconscious rebellion against the loss of significance and objective in his life. It is "a fatal wishful-image--the expression of a wish to let the defense-mechanism against the vacuity of everyday life and its cares be outwardly real . . ." (20-21). In "A Country Doctor" Tauber interprets the boy's wound as "the awakened consciousness of the

shattered condition of life" (75). This awakened understanding of man's miserable plight is the basis of the sense of guilt which haunts most of Kafka's protagonists. That this guilt is unquestionable is the significance of the "Penal Colony" machine which executes men without their being allowed to defend themselves or knowing why they are condemned. Man's guilt is not individual; like original sin it is the manifestation of the fact that he is by definition in the wrong and knows nothing of God's justice. His refusal to recognize this fact, humble himself, and accept his lot with unquestioning faith is the theme of The Trial. Joseph K., like Georg Bendemann, is startled out of his self-satisfied shallow existence by being suddenly plunged into a chaos which cannot be dealt with by the ordinary methods of his bourgeois world: "The well-ordered, safeguarded everyday life of the Chief Clerk is pierced by glimpses into a chaotic world, which presents itself to him in the semblance of a Court of Law. This Court . . . cannot be subjected to rule like Life, which the successful man thinks he has mastered" (78-79). Thus, Joseph K. is confronted with something he cannot master, but, instead of accepting it and the realization of "the nullity of an existence such as [his], with its general round of superficialities" (79)--that is, instead of accepting his guilt--he puts up a stiff-necked resistance. "K. fails to establish the real relation to the Court by a confession of guilt. He utterly refuses to recognize the possibility of a personal guilt toward something supernatural The guilt--like that of the son in 'The Judgment'--is not an isolated crime, but the general lack

of contact with the whole, a falling away from the eternal" (88).

Joseph K.'s arrest was not only designed to make him conscious of the narrowness of his bachelor existence. It also was intended to make him subordinate his entire existence to a higher significance. But the vagueness and inaccessibility of this significance made him cling to his superficial life. Once aware of the higher level of existence which he could not attain, however, he found his former life dust and ashes in his mouth. So devalued was his ordinary everyday existence--so robbed of reality--that "he yielded himself up to death without resistance" (120).

Just as the Court symbolizes an overriding and inscrutable world power, so the Castle represents "the ever-present and yet eternally hidden essence of . . . worldly reality . . . a symbol of the divine wisdom that guides the world" (133). K. finds that he can reach harmony with the Castle only by accepting the village and being accepted by it. But he fails to do this, for, like Joseph K.'s, his approach is to assert his rights rather than to accept what the Castle sees fit to give him. The Castle accepts him only at his death, and it is not until then that he realizes the fruitlessness of the "frightened, lonely 'I'-pronouncement of man"(184). "Not until he has completely foundered is he able to experience the full reality of his limited state, and of his being thrown upon a grace which flows from the unfathomable" (184).

Tauber believes that Kafka, in writing The Castle, vicariously sacrificed in K. his own defiant soul and thus made the step that K.

could not make. In the character of K. "he allowed to be wrecked that rebellious and self-distinctive spirit . . . in order to step back from the frightened and yet defiant 'I'-pronouncement of K.'s into the circle of the community and its 'we'" (185).

In general, reviewers of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation were complimentary but unenthusiastic. Tauber's careful, pedestrian approach was less interesting than the flying leap which had by now become characteristic of Kafka critics. The New Yorker²⁸ finds the study "ambitious and elaborate" (116) and judges it the best "key" so far to Kafka's work. It also points out a hidden assumption in Tauber's--as, indeed, in almost every other--study, which had been so far overlooked. This study, writes the reviewer, is based on "the assumption that there can be no essential contradictions in the work of a great writer" (116) . . . that "there can be discovered a core of sense that is true to the whole . . ." (116-117).

Two extremely vague reviews followed. Booklist²⁹ calls the book an "intelligible analysis" and Current History³⁰ sees it as an exposition of the personal element in Kafka's works.

Robert Pick, in The Saturday Review of Literature,³¹ praises Tauber for not having squeezed the body of Kafka's works "into the

²⁸XXIV (September 25, 1948), 116-117.

²⁹XLV (November 1, 1948), 85.

³⁰XV (December 1948), 350.

³¹"Cloaked Genius," XXXI (December 4, 1948), 42.

strait jacket of a preconceived thesis." He believes An Interpretation gives a "fairly coherent picture" of Kafka, but objects to the academic style of the study and to the fact that Tauber fails to relate Kafka's works to German literature and folklore.

In a critical article for The Yale Review³² Angel Flores carries further his battle against the theological school. Tauber, he says, is following the lead of Max Brod in interpreting Kafka as a primarily religious writer. For this reason he finds that the book gives "a curiously distorted picture of Kafka" (365). He also complains that Tauber has ignored Kafka's unique method of presenting his ideas and his remarkable technical virtuosity. "This divorce of form and content," he says, "typifies the traditional Germanic school of criticism" (365). All in all, he finds the study "serious, painstaking, but dull" (365).

After the rash of book-length interpretations which had marked 1947 and 1948, it was refreshing to read Kafka himself again. In 1948 The Penal Colony, a collection of Kafka's short stories and short pieces, was published in New York.³³ Its epilogue, by Max Brod,³⁴ contained no new arguments for the theological interpretation. Brod

³²See above, note 26. This article reviews Tauber's Interpretation and The Frozen Sea.

³³The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. Its contents are as follows: "Conversation with the Suppliant," "Meditation," "The Judgment," "The Metamorphosis," "A Country Doctor," "In the Penal Colony," and "A Hunger-Artist."

³⁴Pp. 318-320.

confines himself to information about the stories included in the volume, which, he says, comprises everything that Kafka himself allowed to be published--all early works.

Kirkus,³⁵ the first reviewer, describes the collection as typical of Kafka, with his "strange half-worlds of illusion and irrational dream landscapes, his concept of man with his inherent fears and guilts"

Horace Gregory, writing for the New York Times Book Review,³⁶ discusses the stories as possibly intended for children. Gregory tells of the legend that grew up in Prague that Kafka wished his books to be published with the format of children's books. Such stories as "The Metamorphosis," "A Hunger-Artist," "Josephine," "The Judgment," and "A Country Doctor," he says, have "the humility and the half-ironic simplicities" that are characteristic of the timeless children's favorites by Hans Christian Andersen, Poe, and Hawthorne. If one views Kafka's stories in this light, he goes on, many of the so-called obscurities drop away and one can enjoy them without self-consciousness.

Gregory then turns to a criticism of critics. He delivers a sharp rebuke to those who, in their eagerness to write about Kafka, have obscured rather than clarified his works. "It is perhaps unfortunate," he writes, "that in recent years the reputation of Franz

³⁵XVI (November 1, 1948), 576.

³⁶"Kafka's Best Stories," December 12, 1948, p. 6.

Kafka has been obscured by American writers who have converted their wish to write about Kafka into a singularly unattractive critical industry." Gregory particularly objects to criticism written in "the curious jargon of mid-twentieth century psychoanalysis" It has been a test of Kafka's genius, he concludes, that he has survived this ordeal.

Another attack on critics came from Claude Hill in The Saturday Review of Literature.³⁷ Hill in effect calls some critics charlatans: "Many honest Kafka readers," he writes, "find themselves in the same predicament as the people in the fairy tale of the emperor's clothes: they see nothing where others pretend to see the light of wisdom. The ever-growing Kafka literature has done little to pave the way for a better understanding . . ." (8). Addressing himself to The Penal Colony, Hill sees in it Kafka's foresight of contemporary totalitarian regimes with their "businesslike, hellishly efficient, frozen inhumanity . . ." (9). He thinks Kafka has captured the utter anxiety of modern man better than any other writer, that Kafka's neurosis is only the neurosis of modern man.

Commonweal³⁸ reviews The Penal Colony as an "excellent beginning" for the Kafka neophyte, and The New Yorker³⁹ finds that some of the stories are Kafka's "most brilliant and terrifying."

³⁷"Sampling Phenomenon," XXXI (December 25, 1948), 8-9.

³⁸XLIX (January 21, 1949), 382.

³⁹XXIV (January 29, 1949), 71.

Harry Levin, writing for The New Republic,⁴⁰ agrees with Hill that these stories mirror the modern world. "We recognize ourselves in Kafka's displaced persons, our own anxieties in their weaknesses" (26). Levin, too, protests against the damage done to Kafka by his critics: "The more we read, the more clearly we realize that mystagogues and metacritics, weaving their particular magic circles around him, have done more to obfuscate than to illuminate" (25).

Time,⁴¹ like Horace Gregory, finds The Penal Colony stories reminiscent of fairy tales in their surface simplicity. But they also reveal Kafka's "obsessive torment of spirit" (106).

John Bartlow Martin, reviewer for the New York Herald Tribune Books,⁴² judges the title story of the volume "as good as anything [Kafka] ever did, which is to say wonderful."

In The Christian Science Monitor, Ruth Chapin, in the prevailing trend, describes The Penal Colony stories as reflections of contemporary man's situation.⁴³ They all deal with "some aspect of the insecurity, the vast tentativeness of modern life," she says. But she also sees religious optimism in them. Like The Trial and The Castle, she believes, these stories describe the spiritual crisis of man and his ultimate spiritual triumph. They reveal "a mind of utter

⁴⁰"K. as Commentator," CXX (February 7, 1949), 25-26.

⁴¹"Tormented Soul," LIII (February 14, 1949), 106, 108.

⁴²"Kafka: Stories, Diaries," May 1, 1949, p. 15.

⁴³"This Stern and Brilliant Independence of Spirit," June 30, 1949, p. 9.

integrity and deep insight, probing through appearances to an ultimate which it is convinced exists, though it finds little in the world to support its hypothesis."

Aside from the reviews brought forth by Neider's and Tauber's interpretations and by Kafka's diaries and stories, 1948 produced a number of critical articles of interest, though not of great originality. Remarkable for its similarity to Tauber's interpretation was that of Eliseo Vivas, which came out in The Kenyon Review at about the same time.⁴⁴ Vivas, however, limits his analysis to The Trial and The Castle. In both novels, he writes, Kafka presents a crisis in the life of the hero, which leads in The Trial to a sense of guilt, and in The Castle to a condition of alienation. The hero reacts to this crisis in each case by making arrogant demands. As the critical situation closes in on him, he gradually decreases his demands. And he begins to discover a transcending organization which he is unable to understand or control. This discovery is based on empirical evidence, and, "although what is discovered seems unintelligible to him, the evidence is ambivalent and points not only to the irrationality of the organization but to its rationality as well" (64). The victim is plunged into anguished doubt as a result of the dilemma, and it never occurs to him to transcend the limited perspective of his empirical method. Kafka, as well as his heroes, says Vivas, realized that rationality is based on something that transcends

⁴⁴See above, Chapter VI, note 18. This article includes a review of The Kafka Problem as well as general criticism.

human experience, but was unable to go beyond this "relatively elementary discovery" (65) because of his stubborn empirical attitude.

Vivas concludes his article with a refutation of the comparison of Kierkegaard and Kafka. One can see, he says, from Kafka's inability to transcend the empirical that he and Kierkegaard are quite different, in spite of the claims of many critics. For Kierkegaard, though he starts out with an empirical attitude, does not stubbornly cling to it. He drops it when he comes to the realm of things which transcend empirical experience and "soars away into a region where intuition and faith, free from the demands of empirical evidence, allow him to ignore the insoluble problems which, for the thorough-going empiricist, stand in the way of accepting a historical or even a personal religious view of man and the world" (67). Kafka, on the other hand, never lets himself soar away. Instead he stubbornly insists on solving problems which are beyond the range of man's intellect and experience. He thus pushes the intelligence beyond its legitimate range. Such problems can be solved by only one means: "in the manner in which Plato solved his, through the recognition of the valid claims of religious intuition in certain ranges of experience" (69). It is this leap of faith, Vivas concludes, taken by most of the major Western philosophers, which Kafka, "faithful to the limitations of his empiricism" (69), would not take. Hence, he was unable to complete his novels and unable to work out a satisfactory personal attitude toward life.

An interesting comparison of Kafka with other German writers

was provided by an article in The Modern Language Review. Kafka had been called esoteric and for the few. Now he won the label "avant-garde" from Henry C. Hatfield and Joan Merrick in their "Studies of German Literature in the United States, 1939-1946."⁴⁵ "The warm controversy over Kafka," they write, "has called forth some excellent criticism from the avant-garde. However, Germanists have stubbornly resisted Kafka's fascination, Mr. Harry Slochower being a notable exception" (387).

The next article to appear on Kafka was a biting example of the criticism of criticism which continued to pervade the interpretive scene. In "Franz Kafka-Lackland," published in Books Abroad, Oskar Seidlin makes a blistering attack on those critics and reviewers who refer to Kafka as a Czech.⁴⁶ He particularly singles out as his victim Pavel Eisner, who had published an article arguing the Czech influence in Books Abroad a year earlier.⁴⁷

Seidlin jeers particularly at Eisner's statement that Kafka was "'a German author only from the standpoint of material facts and language'" (245). What other criteria should we judge him by? he asks. Should we accept Eisner's vague and dreamy assertion that "'the instincts are Czech'" (245)? Seidlin also refutes Eisner's claim that "'when Kafka's complete works are published in Czech, they

⁴⁵XLIII (July 1948), 353-392.

⁴⁶XXII (Summer 1948), 244-246.

⁴⁷See above, pp. 177-178.

will be understood by every Czechoslovak of good will'" (246). If this is true, why, he asks, was Eisner's Czech translation of The Castle in 1937 a "'classic flop'" (246) in Eisner's own words? And what meaning is there in Eisner's claim that Kafka would have loved a number of Czech writers had he read them, when, in fact, he did not read them? The fact, Seidlin indignantly retorts, is that Kafka is known to have loved best Kierkegaard, Pascal, Goethe, Flaubert, Kleist, Mann, Hesse, Dickens, Franklin, and Hamsun. As for other favorites, "we do not know of a single Czech (or Slavonic) thinker who meant anything to him" (246).

Seidlin also heaps scorn on Eisner's contention that Kafka's mysticism is typically Czech and that his constantly asking the question "How can I justify my existence?" is indicative of a moral outlook "'typically Slavonic'" (246). "Mysticism," he acidly observes, "is, as every child knows, a Czech monopoly" (246).

Kafka as political prophet was again the subject of a critical article--this time a rhapsodic reminiscence by Wilém Haas. "Prague in 1912," which appeared in The Virginia Quarterly Review,⁴⁸ describes the suffocating feeling of impending doom in Prague before World War I and again before World War II. Haas describes the prophetic note in the works of such writers as Werfel, Kafka, Rilke, and Hofmannsthal during this period. Their prophecy was first of the slow decay of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, he says: "The old world fell slowly

⁴⁸XXIV (Summer 1948), 409-417.

to pieces, dissolved into mourning--so enfeebled and weak that one could hardly hear its farewell. Werfel sang its swansong" (415). Then Haas describes the vague, muffled voices prophesying doom which "rose in the dark attics of old houses . . ." (415) in Prague. Kafka, he says, understood these voices better than anyone else, and his books tell their message. True to his prophecy, these voices were heard again, thirty years later. This time they were real--the voices of Himmler, and the Gestapo in Prague. "The trial went on and on It was all exactly, quite exactly, as in a book by Kafka. We were already sentenced to death: to the death in a gas-chamber. There we all died--those, too, who by chance survived the trial" (416).

In conclusion, Haas says that though Kafka's works contain many other elements, they are a prophecy of Germany's future. He admits Kafka can be interpreted existentially; that the voice he heard was "the voice of his father, or rather of his own Oedipus complex" (417); and that his works deal with original sin. But Kafka's message was also a prophecy: "It was the prophecy of the new totalitarian state," writes Haas. "I insist on it" (417).

Another critic found Kafka's works so pessimistic that he concluded the writer's whole intention was to prove nothingness. Daniel-Rops, in an article for Thought entitled "A French Catholic Looks at Kafka,"⁴⁹ describes Kafka as originally a nihilist. Ravaged by a

⁴⁹XXIII (September 1948), 401-404.

metaphysical anxiety and an overwhelming sense of guilt, he says, Kafka felt incapable of being justified in any but a Godless universe. So by a sort of inverted Messianic message he sought to disprove God, to prove nothingness. "He wished to be the Messiah of a world without a Messiah, a kind of dark Christ, a witness and a prophet of a negative universe where, to quote Nietzsche's famous phrase, 'God is dead'" (403). Though Kafka tried to prove "that man can do nothing and can love nothing, that he is the helpless prey of the monsters of time, law and society" (403), he found reasons for hope in his suffering itself; so his message changed: "The witness of absence," Daniel-Rops finds, "by his very despair, was irresistibly driven to the desire for presence" (404). His hunger for nothingness, once the nothingness became real enough, became a hunger for something positive. This was the outcome of Kafka's "Satanic" experiment, upon which Daniel-Rops tells us, "we in our times must meditate with the deepest attention" (404).

"Arrested Individuation or the Problem of Joseph K. and Hamlet" was the provocative title of the last article on Kafka to appear in 1948. Peter Dow Webster, in American Imago,⁵⁰ tells us that The Trial is for us what Hamlet was for the Elizabethans. Both works dramatize the conflict of the divided self and illustrate the basic psychological conflict of Western man today. Basing his analysis on Jung's concept of the "healing myth," Webster shows that both Hamlet

⁵⁰v (November 1948), 225-245.

and Joseph K. lack belief in such a myth--lack a faith in something larger than themselves and incomprehensible. They stubbornly persist in trying to solve their problems within the limits of their own rational powers. Both heroes suffer from "arrested individuation" or the inability to outgrow their childhood orientation. To achieve individuation, Webster tells us, one must have faith or broaden one's scope by opening up to the traditional myth which gives strength. Only thus can one get outside the narrow limits of his individual self, formed as it is to adjust to the childhood environment which he has outgrown. Modern man lacks the myth and religious faith of former times and thus is trapped. Explaining further the implications of this psychic problem to modern man in general, Webster continues: "Joseph K., passive victim of his own ignorance, is Franz Kafka's projection of his own arrested individuation and modern man's dilemma and a prototype of what more and more men will become as the ego advances and loses contact with the unconscious, where alone the healing myth is formed. Here is . . . an ego assaulted by a superego without the authority of an accepted tradition, a will paralyzed by the illusion of its own sovereignty, and a man broken by his failure to discover the nature of his guilt. This is the plight of Western man today" (227).

III

Though the year 1948 produced four major volumes by or about Kafka, none of them contributed anything startlingly new to the

understanding of him. Volume I of the Diaries did not provide the key that some critics had hoped to find in Kafka's private papers. Neider's The Frozen Sea contained little new material except the "secret key," which, instead of a contribution to the understanding of Kafka, was an example of the excesses to which critics with a special interest could go. Tauber's Interpretation, while valuable for its comprehensiveness, advanced no new theories. And The Penal Colony, though a refreshing change after the rash of interpretive studies, contained little which had not already appeared in various magazines.

It seemed that Kafka criticism was not to be seriously deflected from the course it was now taking. Though a variety of interpretations continued to come from the periodical presses, and though the critical war went on, the view of Kafka as reflecting the manifold problems of modern man seemed to be firmly established.

In 1948 this interpretation was echoed by a number of reviewers as well as by a writer whose interests were highly specialized--Peter Dow Webster. During this year, William Phillips reiterated that Kafka created "a traumatic image of the plight of contemporary man." Claude Hill described Kafka's neurosis as the neurosis of modern man, and Harry Levin said, "We recognize ourselves in Kafka's displaced persons." Ruth Chapin saw all of The Penal Colony stories as dealing with "some aspect of the insecurity, the vast tentativeness of modern life." And Webster, explaining the common problem of Joseph K. and Hamlet as "arrested individuation," said that both

heroes reflect "the plight of Western man today."

Thus, after the narrow interpretations on the basis of one facet of Kafka's works, the extreme theories put forth by special-interest critics, and the "timely" articles dashed off by unprepared commentators--after the long drawn-out confusion of "a babel of critical voices"--it seemed that Kafka criticism had at last reached a common ground on which various interpretations could meet.

CONCLUSION

What Kafka's works "mean" if they mean anything in the sense of bearing a message, no critic has been able to establish--at least to the satisfaction of other critics. Most criticism, however, has been based on the assumption that the significance of these works is profound. And most critical endeavor has been directed toward discovering that significance. An exception is the work of the psychoanalysts, who have ignored the meaning of Kafka's writings and concentrated on analyzing Kafka himself--an endeavor which certainly has not illuminated the works as meaningful communications. If they do have a meaning--if they are not simply the tortured outpourings of a mind struggling against a psychopathic strangle hold--what is it?

Is the meaning theological? Are Kafka's heroes struggling for divine justice and divine grace, as Max Brod would have us think? And did Kafka purposely cast this religious struggle in allegorical form, making K.'s adventures the progress of a modern Christian, as Edwin Muir believes? Or has The Castle a much broader theme--a general metaphysical seeking for truth, as Stephen Spender contends?

If Kafka's meaning is not theological, then it must be secular. Perhaps his works reflect the plight of modern man in a highly impersonal, bureaucratized society, as Randall Jarrell believes. If so, are there socialistic implications such as those detected by Harry Slochower, in the hero's desire to reach "the Communal Castle"? Or was Kafka, as Charles Neider suggests, simply satirizing the weakness of a society whose members cannot resist the cabalas dominating

their lives? Can Kafka's social satire be interpreted even more narrowly, in the manner of Edwin Berry Burgum, as reflecting a disintegration of the German people under the Weimar Republic? Or should the works be viewed as reflections of the plight of the Jew in society?--an explanation suggested by such writers as John Urzidil and Hannah Arendt. Perhaps Kafka's meaning can best be understood in respect to existentialism, as Albert Camus contends, or in respect to Calvinism, as John Kelly believes.

Which of these interpretations is correct? Is any one of them broad enough to explain the whole of Kafka's works?

Looking back over eighteen years' output of Kafka interpretations, the reader is struck by the narrowness, the insufficiency of the great bulk of them. Some support for each interpretation can be found in Kafka's writings, but no one theory explains the whole. So suggestive and yet elusive are Kafka's writings that they seem to accept and absorb all explanations without ever becoming absorbed by any one of them. Perhaps, as Einstein is supposed to have said, the human mind is not complicated enough to comprehend them fully.

If, then, criticism has failed to explain the "meaning" of Kafka, can it be said to have failed utterly? The final purpose of this dissertation is to show that it has not: to show that out of the "babel of critical voices" has emerged an interpretation which, even if not proven "true," is of the greatest value in understanding Kafka's works. From the whole astonishingly varied body of Kafka criticism, one kind of interpretation can be isolated which is

distinctly superior to the rest. This is the criticism which has attempted to synthesize the elements in Kafka, to illuminate all facets of his work at once, to see his works as a combination of the many forces which made up the mind of this intense and sensitive writer. This is the criticism which has interpreted Kafka as reflecting the plight of contemporary Western man.

First fully expressed by Philip Rahv, the "modern man" interpretation has been advanced in one form or another by some of the sanest and most responsible commentators. Rahv described Kafka's hero as typical of modern man in his loneliness, anonymity, and standardization. W. H. Auden showed Kafka's apparent neuroticism to be typical of contemporary man, and Frederick J. Hoffman analyzed this neuroticism as the manifestation of an urgent need to find God by other than rational means. William Phillips summed up the Kafka hero by calling him "a truly modern version of Everyman, in that the classic figure of the spiritual wanderer and seeker of truth is endowed with all the anxieties of the modern world." Walter J. Ong saw in the vicissitudes of Kafka's heroes a challenge to "the great Western fiction" of modern man's rationalistic invincibility, and Frank O'Malley related Kafka to the outstanding contemporary writers and thinkers and called him a prophet of the modern wasteland. Whether Kafka intended to portray the manifold problems of modern man or not, no one can say. But that he reflects these problems has been established by this group of critics. Many commentators have seen one

or another facet of the modern plight in his works. These few men have grasped the full scope of Kafka's representativeness.

* * * *

A study of Kafka criticism in America from 1930 to 1948 has had two distinct results: (1) assessment of the critical turmoil which has characterized Kafka interpretation and out of which has come the development of a comprehensive interpretation; and (2) illumination of the performance of American critics when dealing with a truly difficult writer.

Considering the number of distinguished American critics who have taken part, the history of Kafka criticism in America is, more often than not, disappointing. Of those critics who have dealt only once with the problem--a group including Norman Thomas, Clifton Fadiman, F. O. Matthiessen, and William Barrett--only Randall Jarrell and Edmund Wilson have contributed significantly to an understanding of Kafka and his place in modern letters. The extensive studies by Paul Goodman and Charles Neider reflect little credit on their authors. Several persuasive essays, on the other hand--the work of such critics as Austin Warren, William Phillips, Frederick J. Hoffman, and Philip Rahv--go far to redeem the reputation of contemporary American criticism in its encounters with the Kafka problem. The general reader's difficulty lies in finding the competent interpretations among a mass of eccentric and inadequate theories which have been put forth. In the view of the present study, the major

achievement of Kafka criticism--an achievement brought about by a relatively few critics--has been the interpretation of Kafka as a writer reflecting the manifold problems of modern man.

As far as I know, I have not been endowed with any of the requirements of life, but only with general human weakness. With it--and that makes it a gigantic power--I have vigorously absorbed the negative forces of my time which is very close to me and which I do not fight, but which I rather represent I am an end or a beginning.

Kafka

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A Franz Kafka Miscellany. No ed. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1940.

A Franz Kafka Miscellany. No ed. Revised and enlarged. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946.

Anonymous. "A Modern Allegory." Review of The Castle. New York Times Book Review, December 21, 1930, p. 9.

_____. "Actor-Directors in Paris." Theatre Arts, XXXII (February 1948), 27-29.

_____. "American Readers Show Increased Interest in Kafka." Publishers' Weekly, CL (November 30, 1946), 2992-2993.

_____. "Biographical Note." A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946, pp. 119-120.

_____. "Kafka in Paris." Time, L (November 10, 1947), 98, 100.

_____. "Kafka's Trials." Review of Diaries 1910-1913. Time, LI (May 31, 1948), 94.

_____. Review of A Franz Kafka Miscellany. The New Yorker, XVI (December 21, 1940), 87-88.

_____. Review of Amerika. The Living Age, CCCLIX (November 1940), 292-293.

_____. Review of Amerika. The New Yorker, XVI (October 19, 1940), 89.

_____. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The Booklist, XLIV (June 15, 1948), 351.

_____. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. Kirkus, XVI (March 1, 1948), 138.

_____. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The New Yorker, XXIV (July 31, 1948), 62.

_____. Review of Franz Kafka, a Biography. Kirkus, XV (February 1, 1947), 89.

_____. Review of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation. Current History, XV (December 1948), 350.

_____. Review of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation. The Booklist, XLV (November 1, 1948), 85.

- _____. Review of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation. The New Yorker, XXIV (September 25, 1948), 116-117.
- _____. Review of Kafka's Prayer. Kirkus, XV (March 15, 1947), 180.
- _____. Review of Kafka's Prayer. The Library Journal, LXXII (June 15, 1947), 961.
- _____. Review of Metamorphosis. Kirkus, XIV (October 1, 1946), 504.
- _____. Review of Parables. The New Yorker, XXIII (December 13, 1947), 130.
- _____. Review of The Castle. The New Republic, LXV (December 10, 1930), 117.
- _____. Review of The Frozen Sea. The New Yorker, XXIV (April 17, 1948), 99.
- _____. Review of The Kafka Problem. United States Quarterly Book List, II (December 1946), 274.
- _____. Review of The Penal Colony. Kirkus, XVI (November 1, 1948), 576.
- _____. Review of The Penal Colony. The Booklist, XLV (February 1, 1949), 192.
- _____. Review of The Penal Colony. The Commonweal, XLIX (January 21, 1949), 382.
- _____. Review of The Penal Colony. The New Yorker, XXIV (January 29, 1949), 71.
- _____. "Shall Kafka's Writings Be Destroyed?" Books Abroad, XXI (Autumn 1947), 401.
- _____. "The Tragic Sense of Life." Review of Franz Kafka, a Biography. Time, XLIX (April 28, 1947), 104, 106, 108, 110, 112.
- _____. "The Trial." Review. Time, XXX (October 25, 1937), 79.
- _____. "Tormented Soul." Review of The Penal Colony and Diaries 1914-1923. Time, LIII (February 14, 1949), 106, 108.

- Arendt, Hannah. "Franz Kafka: a Revaluation." Partisan Review, XI (Fall 1944), 412-422.
- _____. "The Jew as Pariah: a Hidden Tradition." Jewish Social Studies, VI (April 1944), 99-122.
- Auden, W. H. "Kafka's Quest." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 47-52.
- _____. "The Wandering Jew." The New Republic, CIV (February 10, 1941), 185-186.
- Baldanza, Stephen. Review of Amerika. The Commonweal, XXXIII (December 20, 1940), 234.
- Barrett, William. "Neurosis and Lucidity." Review of The Kafka Problem. The Nation, CLXIV (January 4, 1947), 23.
- Baum, Oskar. "Recollections." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 25-31.
- Bergel, Lienhard. "Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 172-178.
- _____. "Max Brod and Herbert Tauber." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 391-397.
- _____. "The Burrow." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 199-206.
- Bernstein, Michael J. "Homage to Franz Kafka." The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934), pp. 2-3.
- Bower, Anthony. "Kafka: 'Writing Is a Form of Prayer.'" Review of Kafka's Prayer. New York Times Book Review, August 24, 1947, p. 7.
- Brace, Marjorie. "Secret Key to a Cabala." Review of The Frozen Sea and Diaries 1910-1913. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXI (May 29, 1948), 15.
- Brooks, Cleanth and Robert Penn Warren, eds. Understanding Fiction. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1943. Interpretation of "In the Penal Colony," pp. 467-472.
- Brod, Max. "Additional Note." The Castle. New York: Knopf, 1930, pp. 329-340.

- _____. "Afterword." Amerika. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940, pp. 298-299.
- _____. "Epilogue." The Penal Colony. New York: Schocken, 1948, pp. 318-320.
- _____. "Epilogue." The Trial. New York: Knopf, 1947, pp. 291-297.
- _____. Excerpt from Franz Kafka, eine Biographie, trans. G. Humphreys Roberts. A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946, pp. 31-38.
- _____. Extracts from Kafka's "Letter to My Father," trans. Sophie Prombaum. A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946, pp. 39-50.
- _____. Franz Kafka: a Biography. Trans. G. Humphreys Roberts. New York: Schocken, 1947.
- _____. Franz Kafka, eine Biographie. New York: Schocken, 1937.
- _____. "Homage to Franz Kafka." The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934), p. 1.
- _____. "Kafka: Father and Son," trans. Ralph Manheim. Partisan Review, IV (May 1938), 19-29.
- _____. "The Homeless Stranger." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 179-180.
- Burgum, Edwin Berry. "Franz Kafka and the Bankruptcy of Faith." Accent, III (Spring 1943), pp. 153-167.
- _____. "Kafka on Many Levels." Review of Diaries 1910-1913 and The Frozen Sea. The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIV (Summer 1948), 464-469.
- _____. "The Bankruptcy of Faith." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 298-318.
- Burnham, James. "Observations on Kafka." Partisan Review, XIV (March-April 1947), 186-195.
- C., M. "A Note about the Author." The New Republic, XCII (October 27, 1937), 348.
- Camus, Albert. "Hope and Absurdity," trans. William Barrett. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 251-261.

- Chapin, Ruth. "This Stern and Brilliant Independence of Spirit." Review of The Penal Colony. The Christian Science Monitor, June 30, 1949, p. 9.
- Daniel-Rops. "A French Catholic Looks at Kafka." Thought, XXIII (September 1948), 401-404.
- _____. "The Castle of Despair." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 184-191.
- Deutsch, Babette. "Essays about an Exile." Review of A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York Herald Tribune Books, February 16, 1941, p. 13.
- _____. Review of Amerika. New York Herald Tribune Books, December 8, 1940, p. 12.
- Dupee, F. W. "The Fabulous and the Familiar." Review of The Trial. Partisan Review, IV (December 1937), 66-69.
- Eisner, Pavel. "Franz Kafka and Prague." Books Abroad, XXI (Summer 1947), 264-270.
- Eloesser, Arthur. Modern German Literature. Trans. Catherine Alison Phillips. New York: Knopf, 1933, pp. 405-406.
- Empson, William. "A Family Monster." Review of Metamorphosis. The Nation, CLXIII (December 7, 1946), 652-653.
- Estrada, Ezequiel Martínez. "Intuition," trans. Caroline Mühlenberg. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 348-353.
- F., A. Review of Parables. The Commonweal, XLVII (January 30, 1948), 405.
- Fadiman, Clifton. "Pilgrim's Frustration." Review of The Castle. The New Freeman, II (December 10, 1930), 310.
- Farrelly, John. "Kafka's Journal." Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The New Republic, CXVIII (May 10, 1948), 23.
- Flint, R. W. "On PR, Kafka and the Habits of Critics: a Communication." Partisan Review, XIV (September-October 1947), 518-523.
- Flores, Angel. "Bibliography." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 447-463.
- _____. "Franz Kafka." Twentieth Century Authors. Ed. Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycroft. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1942, pp. 740-741.

- _____. Franz Kafka: a Chronology and Bibliography. Houlton, Maine: Bern Porter, 1944.
- _____. "Introduction." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. ix-xii.
- _____. "Introductory Note." Quarterly Review of Literature, II (Spring 1945), 173.
- _____. "Light on the Hideous." Review of Kafka's Prayer. New York Herald Tribune Books, August 10, 1947, p. 4.
- _____. "Notes on Contributors." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 464-468.
- _____. Review of The Castle. Books Abroad, XV (October 1941), 430.
- _____. "The Art of Kafka." Review of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation and The Frozen Sea. The Yale Review, n. s. XXXVIII (winter 1949), 365-367.
- _____, ed. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946.
- _____, ed. The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934). Special Kafka issue.
- Flores, Kate. "Biographical Note." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946.
- _____. "Franz Kafka and the Nameless Guilt." Quarterly Review of Literature, III (1947), 382-405.
- Foff, Arthur. "Biography of Kafka." Review of Franz Kafka: a Biography. San Francisco Chronicle, June 22, 1947, p. 12.
- Forbes, Harriet R. Review of The Frozen Sea. The Library Journal, LXXIII (April 1, 1948), 556.
- _____. Review of The Great Wall of China. The Library Journal, LXXI (November 1, 1946), 1542.
- Frank, Waldo. "Homage to Franz Kafka." The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934), p. 2.
- Fremantle, Anne. "Franz Kafka: the Current Revival of Interest in His Work." The Commonweal, XLV (December 6, 1946), 184-188.

- _____. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The Commonweal, XLVIII (June 11, 1948), 212-214.
- _____. Review of The Frozen Sea. The Commonweal, XLVIII (August 20, 1948), 458.
- Fuchs, Rudolf. "Reminiscences of Franz Kafka." Franz Kafka: a Biography. New York: Schocken, 1947, pp. 235-236.
- _____. "Social Awareness." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 247-250.
- G., W. E. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The Christian Century, LXV (July 21, 1948), 734.
- Gardner, Martin. Review of The Kafka Problem and Kafka's Prayer. Ethics, LVIII (January 1948), 144-146.
- Garrison, Winifred E. Review of Parables. The Christian Century, LXV (February 25, 1948), 240.
- Geritt, Dora. "Brief Memories of Franz Kafka." Franz Kafka: a Biography. New York: Schocken, 1947, pp. 235-236.
- Goodman, Paul. "Kafka's Prayer." The Kenyon Review, IX (Winter 1947), 225-233.
- _____. Kafka's Prayer. New York: Vanguard, 1947.
- _____. "Preface." Metamorphosis. New York: Vanguard, 1946, pp. 5-8.
- Greenberg, Clement. "The Great Wall of China." Commentary, II (October 1946), 368-370.
- Gregory, Horace. "Comic and Eerie Parable of Injustice." Review of The Trial. New York Herald Tribune Books, October 24, 1937, p. 7.
- _____. "Kafka's Best Stories." Review of The Penal Colony. New York Times Book Review, December 12, 1948, p. 6.
- Groethuysen, Bernard. "Apropos of Kafka." Quarterly Review of Literature, II (Spring 1945), 237-249.
- _____. "The Endless Labyrinth," trans. Mariel Kittel. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 376-390.
- H., W. Review of The Kafka Problem and A Franz Kafka Miscellany. San Francisco Chronicle, October 20, 1946, p. 19.

- Haas, Vilém. "Prague in 1912." The Virginia Quarterly Review, XXIV (Summer 1948), 409-417.
- Hardt, Ludwig. "Recollections." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 32-36.
- Hatfield, Henry C. and Joan Merrick. "Studies of German Literature in the United States 1939-1946." The Modern Language Review, XLIII (July 1948), 353-392.
- Hill, Claude. "Sampling Phenomenon." Review of The Penal Colony. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXI (December 25, 1948), 8-9.
- Hirsch, Felix E. Review of Metamorphosis. The Library Journal, LXXI (October 1, 1946), 1330.
- Hoffman, Frederick J. "Escape from Father." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 214-246.
- _____. Freudianism and the Literary Mind. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1945, pp. 181-210.
- _____. et al., eds. The Little Magazine. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946, pp. 216-217.
- Hogan, William. Review of The Great Wall of China and Metamorphosis. San Francisco Chronicle, November 10, 1946, p. 20.
- Howe, Irving. "Brod on Kafka." Review of Franz Kafka: a Biography. The Nation, CLXV (July 12, 1947), 47-48.
- _____. "The Algebra of Existence." Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The Nation, XLXVI (May 1, 1948), 477-478.
- Hubben, William. "Kafka's Apocalyptic Message." The Christian Century, LXIV (October 1, 1947), 171-173.
- Jacob, H. E. "Truth for Truth's Sake." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 53-59.
- Jarrell, Randall. "Kafka's Tragi-Comedy." Review of Amerika. The Kenyon Review, III (Winter 1941), 116-119.
- Jolas, Eugene. "Franz Kafka's Stories and Ascending Romanticism." Vertical: a Yearbook for Romantic-Mystic Ascensions, ed. Eugene Jolas. New York: Gotham Bookmart Press, 1941, pp. 169-172.
- K., A. "A Study of Franz Kafka: The Frozen Sea." San Francisco Chronicle, July 18, 1948, p. 19.

- Kafka, Franz. Amerika. Trans. Edwin and Willa Muir. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940.
- _____. Amerika. Trans. Edwin and Willa Muir. New York: New Directions, 1946.
- _____. The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1913. Ed. Max Brod. Trans. Joseph Kresh. New York: Schocken, 1948.
- _____. Metamorphosis. Trans. A. L. Lloyd. New York: Vanguard, 1946.
- _____. Parables: in German and English. Trans. Willa Muir and others. New York: Schocken, 1947.
- _____. The Castle. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Knopf, 1930, 1941.
- _____. The Great Wall of China: Stories and Reflections. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken, 1946.
- _____. The Penal Colony: Stories and Short Pieces. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken, 1948.
- _____. The Trial. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Knopf, 1937.
- Kay, Alfred. "The Kafka Diaries: a Literary Enigma Gets in the Last Word." San Francisco Chronicle, August 15, 1948, p. 11.
- Kazin, Alfred. "Kafka, Twentieth Century Man of Sorrows." Review of The Great Wall of China, Metamorphosis, and Franz Kafka: a Biography. New York Herald Tribune Books, April 13, 1947, p. 3, 23.
- Kelly, John. "Franz Kafka's Trial and the Theology of Crisis." The Southern Review, V (Spring 1940), 748-766.
- _____. "The Trial and the Theology of Crisis." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 151-171.
- Kronenberger, Louis. "A Distinguished Novel by Franz Kafka." Review of The Trial. New York Times Book Review, October 24, 1937, p. 8.
- Landsberg, Paul L. "Kafka and The Metamorphosis." Quarterly Review of Literature, II (Spring 1945), 228-236.
- _____. "The Metamorphosis," trans. Caroline Muhlenberg. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 122-133.

Lange, Victor. "Franz Kafka." Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature, gen. ed. Horatio Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1947, pp. 433-434.

_____. Modern German Literature. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1945, pp. 39, 87-90.

Laughlin IV, James. "Preface." New Directions in Prose and Poetry, ed. James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1937, n. p.

Lerner, Max. "The Human Voyage." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, pp. 38-46.

Levin, Harry. "K. as Commentator." Review of The Penal Colony, Diaries 1910-1913 and Diaries 1914-1923. The New Republic, CXX (February 7, 1949), 25-26.

_____. "Metacriticism." Review of The Kafka Problem. The Yale Review, n. s. XXXVI (Winter 1947), 354-356.

Loebowitz-Lennard, Henry. "Some Leitmotifs in Franz Kafka's Work Psychoanalytically Explored." The University of Kansas City Review, XIII (Winter 1946), 115-118.

MacAfee, Helen. Review of The Trial. The Yale Review, XXVII (Winter 1938), viii, x.

Magny, Claude-Edmonde. "The Objective Depiction of Absurdity," trans. Angel Flores. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 75-96.

_____. "The Objective Depiction of Absurdity." Quarterly Review of Literature, II (Spring 1945), 211-227.

Mann, Klaus. "Preface." Amerika. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940, pp. vii-xviii.

_____. and Hermann Kester, eds., The Best of Modern European Literature. Philadelphia: The Blakiston Company, 1945, p. 495.

Mann, Thomas. "Homage." The Castle. New York: Knopf, 1941, pp. x-xvi.

_____. "Homage to Franz Kafka." The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934), p. 1.

Martin, John Bartlow. "Kafka, His Novels and His Commentators." Review of The Frozen Sea and Diaries 1910-1913. New York Herald Tribune Books, June 27, 1948, pp. 1-2.

_____. "Kafka: Stories, Diaries." Review of The Penal Colony and Diaries 1914-1923. New York Herald Tribune Books, May 1, 1949, p. 15.

Matthiessen, F. O. American Renaissance. New York: Oxford University Press, 1941, pp. 313-314.

Muir, Edwin. "A Note on Franz Kafka." The Bookman, LXXII (November 1930), 235-241.

_____. "Franz Kafka." A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946, pp. 55-66.

_____. "Introductory Note." The Castle. New York: Knopf, 1930, pp. v-xi.

_____. "Introductory Note." The Great Wall of China. New York: Schocken, 1946, pp. vii-xviii.

Munson, Gorham. "An Inspiring Fragment." Review of The Castle. New York Sun, September 26, 1930, p. 30.

Neider, Charles. "Franz Kafka and the Cabalists." Quarterly Review of Literature, II (Spring 1945), 250-262.

_____. "Kafka Mirrors Our Uncertainties, Frustrations, Fears." New York Times Book Review, August 5, 1945, pp. 6, 30.

_____. "The Cabalists." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 398-445.

_____. The Frozen Sea: a Study of Franz Kafka. New York: Oxford University Press, 1948.

_____. "The Roots of Tragedy." Review of Franz Kafka: a Biography. New York Times Book Review, June 15, 1947, p. 16.

_____. "Two Notes on Kafka." The Rocky Mountain Review, X (Winter 1946), 90-95.

Neuse, Werner. "Franz Kafka." Books Abroad, IX (Summer 1935), 266-268.

O'Malley, Frank. "The Wasteland of William Blake." The Review of Politics, IX (April 1947), 183-204.

Ong, Walter J. "Finitude and Frustration: Considerations on Brod's Kafka." The Modern Schoolman XXV (November 1947-May 1948), 173-182.

_____. "Kafka's Castle in the West." Thought, XXII (September 1947), 439-460.

Phillips, William. "Everyman." Review of The Trial. The Nation, CXLV (October 23, 1937), 448-449.

_____. "Kafka's Diaries: a Case History." Review of Diaries 1910-1913 and Parables. New York Times Book Review, August 8, 1948, p. 4.

_____. "The Great Wall of Criticism." Review of The Great Wall of China and The Kafka Problem. Commentary, III (June 1947), 594-596.

_____. "The Lonely Traveler." Review of Metamorphosis and The Great Wall of China. New York Times Book Review, March 2, 1947, p. 4.

Pick, Robert. "Cloaked Genius." Review of Franz Kafka: an Interpretation. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXI (December 4, 1948), p. 42.

Plant, Richard. "Punishment in Search of Crime." Review of A Franz Kafka Miscellany and The Kafka Problem. New York Times Book Review, December 8, 1946, p. 6.

_____. "Kafka's Strange, Bleached Cosmos." Review of The Frozen Sea. New York Times Book Review, May 23, 1948, p. 4.

Poggioli, Renato. "Kafka and Dostoyevsky," trans. John Glynn Conley. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 97-107.

Politzer, Heinz. "From Mendelssohn to Kafka. The Jewish Man of Letters in Germany." Commentary, III (April 1947), 344-351.

_____. "Give It Up!" trans. H. Lenz. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 117-121.

Prombaum, Sophie. "Translator's Note." A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year Press, 1946, pp. 87-88.

Rahv, Philip. "Exegetical Notes." The Great Wall of China. New York: Schocken, 1946, pp. 309-315.

- _____. "Franz Kafka: The Hero as Lonely Man." The Kenyon Review, I (Winter 1939), 60-74.
- _____. "Franz Kafka's Poor Richard." Review of Amerika. The Nation, CLI (October 26, 1940), 396-397.
- _____. "Idiosyncratic Genius." Review of Kafka's Prayer. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXX (August 2, 1947), 15.
- _____. "Religious Humorist." Review of The Castle and A Franz Kafka Miscellany. The Nation, CLII (February 22, 1941), 217-218.
- _____. "The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Joseph K." The Southern Review, V (Summer 1939), 174-185.
- Rosenfeld, Paul. "Charlie-Chaplinade." Review of Amerika. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIII (October 26, 1940), 18.
- _____. "Secret Prose King." Review of A Franz Kafka Miscellany. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIII (February 8, 1941), 20.
- Rothman, N. L. "A Shadow Among Mystical Shadows." Review of The Trial. The Saturday Review of Literature, XVII (October 30, 1937), 19.
- S., A. W. Review of The Castle. The New Yorker, VI (September 20, 1930), 89.
- S., M. L. "The Timeless Picture of a Groping Human Soul." Review of The Castle. Boston Transcript, November 8, 1930, p. 5.
- Salinger, Herman. Review of Parables. Monatshefte, XXXIX (December 1947), 542.
- Sandoe, James. Review of Metamorphosis. Chicago Sun Book Week, December 15, 1946, p. 4.
- Saurat, Denis. "A Note on 'The Castle.'" The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 181-183.
- _____. "Homage to Franz Kafka." The Literary World, no. 3 (July 1934), p. 3.
- Savage, D. S. "Faith and Vocation." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 319-336.
- _____. "Franz Kafka: Faith and Vocation." The Sewanee Review, LIV (April 1946), 222-240.

- Schoeps, Hans Joachim. "The Tragedy of Faithlessness," trans. Lienhard Bergel. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 287-297.
- Seidlin, Oskar. "Franz Kafka-Lackland." Books Abroad, XXII (Summer 1948), 244-246.
- Simpson, Clinton. "A Fine Modern Allegory." Review of The Castle. New York World, December 14, 1930, p. 3E.
- Slochower, Harry. "Franz Kafka--Pre-Fascist Exile." A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year, 1946, pp. 7-30.
- _____. No Voice Is Wholly Lost. New York: Creative Age Press, 1945, pp. 103-125.
- _____. "The Limitations of Franz Kafka." The American Scholar, XV (Summer 1946), 291-297.
- _____. "The Vogue of Franz Kafka." A Franz Kafka Miscellany. New York: Twice a Year, 1946, pp. 110-118.
- Spender, Stephen. "Franz Kafka." Review of The Trial and Metamorphosis. The New Republic, XCII (October 27, 1937), 347-348.
- _____. The Destructive Element: a Study of Modern Writers and Beliefs. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1936, pp. 242-245.
- Spainini, Alberto. "The Trial." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 143-150.
- Stallman, Robert W. "Kafka's Cage." Accent, VIII (Autumn 1947), 117-125.
- Sykes, Gerald. "Introducing Franz Kafka." Review of The Castle. The Nation, CXXXI (October 15, 1930), 411-412.
- Sypher, Wylie. "The New Eumenides." Review of The Great Wall of China. The Nation, CLXIII (December 21, 1946), 731-732.
- Tauber, Herbert. Franz Kafka: An Interpretation of His Works. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.
- _____. Franz Kafka, eine Deutung seiner Werke. Zurich-New York: Oprecht Verlag, 1941.
- Taylor, Coley. "The Right Life." Review of The Castle. New York Herald Tribune Books, September 21, 1930, p. 7.

Thomas, Norman. "Religion and Civilization." The Atlantic Monthly, CLXXX (August 1947), 33-36.

Thompson, Ralph. Review of The Trial. New York Times Book Review, October 18, 1937, p. 15.

Torberg, Friedrich. "Kafka the Jew." Commentary, IV (August 1947), 189-190.

Tyler, Parker. "Kafka and the Surrealists." Accent, VI (Autumn 1945), 23-27.

Urzidil, John. "Franz Kafka: Novelist and Mystic." The Menorah Journal, XXXI (Autumn 1943), 273-283.

_____. "Recollections." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 20-24.

_____. "The Oak and the Rock." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 276-286.

Vařata, Rudolf. "Amerika and Charles Dickens." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 134-139.

Vietta, Egon. "The Fundamental Revolution." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 337-347.

Vivas, Eliseo. "Franz Kafka's Fine Writings." Review of The Kafka Problem and A Franz Kafka Miscellany. Chicago Sun Book Week, November 3, 1946, p. 9.

_____. "Kafka's Distorted Mask." The Kenyon Review, X (Winter 1948), 51-69.

Warren, Austin. "An Exegetical Note on 'The Penal Colony.'" The Southern Review, VII (Autumn 1941), 363-365.

_____. Rage for Order: Essays in Criticism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, pp. 104-118.

_____. "Kosmos Kafka." The Southern Review, VII (Autumn 1941), 350-363.

_____. "Kosmos Kafka." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 60-74.

_____. "The Penal Colony." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 140-142.

- Wasson, Donald. Review of Diaries 1910-1913. The Library Journal, LXXIII (April 1, 1948), 555.
- Wahl, Jean. "Kierkegaard and Kafka," trans. Lienhard Bergel. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 262-275.
- Webster, Peter Dow. "Arrested Individuation or the Problem of Joseph K. and Hamlet." American Imago, V (November 1948), 225-245.
- Weidlé, Wladimir. "The Negative Capability," trans. Arlene Harrow. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 354-362.
- Weiskopf, F. C. "More Fuel for the Kafka Followers." Review of The Great Wall of China. The Saturday Review of Literature, XXIX (November 16, 1946), 17.
- Weiss, Ernst. "The Diaries and Letters," trans. Annelore Stern. The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 207-213.
- Weiss, T. "The Economy of Chaos." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 363-375.
- Werfel, Franz. "Recollections." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, p. 37.
- Werner, Alfred. "Mystical but Not Bizarre." Review of Franz Kafka: a Biography. The Christian Century, LXIV (June 4, 1947), 711.
- _____. Review of The Kafka Problem and The Great Wall of China. Congress Weekly, XIV (March 7, 1947), 14-15.
- Wilson, Edmund. "A Dissenting Opinion on Kafka." The New Yorker, XXIII (July 26, 1947), 53-57.
- Winkler, R. O. C. "The Three Novels." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 192-198.
- Wolff, Kurt. "On Franz Kafka." Twice a Year, no. 8-9 (1942), pp. 273-279.
- Woodcock, George. "Kafka and Rex Warner." The Kafka Problem. New York: New Directions, 1946, pp. 108-116.
- Yust, Walter. "'Of Making Many Books ---'" Review of The Castle. Philadelphia Public Ledger, September 22, 1930, p. 9.