

Romanticism assignment

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Franz Kafka, translated by Mark Herman Chicken; 328 pages; Franz Kafka's name has been appropriated as our century's reigning adjective; 'Kafkaesque' is a word for which no adequate synonym exists. From the absurd circuitry of managed care to our Deliberateness workplaces and the bizarre comic opera playing in Washington, the relevance of 'The Castle,' Kafka's Parable of bureaucracy gone mad, has never been lost on the modern reader.

Until now, the accepted English version of 'The Castle' has been the 1925 translation by Will and Edwin Mir, who believed Kafka's unfinished novel was about the quest for an unavailable God, according to Mark Herman, translator of the present volume. Herman's new translation emphasizes modern and post-modern meanings; Herman believes the book is about meaning itself, about the multiple interpretations of documents and events, but his translation opens up a variety of readings. In 'The Castle,' a man named K. Arrives in a village where he has perhaps been summoned to work as a land surveyor.

Its inhabitants seem to be expecting him and not to be expecting him, and there seems to be a Job and to be no Job. Presiding over the village is a castle, which sometimes can and cannot be reached by telephone, and from which officials, who sometimes can and cannot be spoken to, descend to the village. K. Struggles at first to make his way to the castle, but quickly sees that no roads lead there; he then tries to make a place for himself in the village, whose inhabitants alter neatly welcome, manipulate and reject him. Each scene in which he rises to locate himself is both ghastly and funny. K. is given a letter signed by someone named Claim, who may or may not have

the authority to certify that he is employed, The letter seems to confirm and not confirm his employment and may have been delivered late or by accident by an unreliable messenger. The letter directs him to report to the chairman, but the chairman tells him, ' ' You were, as you say, taken on as a surveyor but we don't need a surveyor ... The boundaries of our small holdings have been marked out, everything has been duly registered, the repertories themselves rarely change hands, and whatever small boundary disputes arise, we settle ourselves. K. Is also sent two assistants, referred to as his old assistants though they are unfamiliar to him and do nothing to assist. He is alternately offered lodgings and positions and dismissed from them by people who speak in riddles. K. Takes up with Fried, Salaam's previous mistress, but relations between them soon deteriorate into the same circuitous misunderstandings that characterize all K. ' s dealings in the book. Every personal relationship is contaminated by the overall structure of mystery and despair.

Kafka died of tuberculosis, leaving ' The Castle" and two other novels unfinished. As Herman explains, his friend Max Brod defied Kava's instructions to burn his unfinished work. Kava's books were blacklisted by the Nazis as ' ' harmful and undesirable writings" in the ' ass. The present volume is translated from the 1982 German critical edition, which restores Kava's style and syntax. The Emirs eased Kava's dry, colloquial style and shaded his meanings to suggest a religious interpretation.

In one long, painfully hilarious sequence about the rationale for officials interrogating people at night rather than in the daytime, the Emirs refer to those interrogated as ' ' applicants," a term that could indeed allude to <https://assignbuster.com/romanticism-assignment/>

petitioners before God. In the present version, however, Herman uses the word 'parties,' suggesting legal proceedings, and indeed the scene, with clerks delivering mysterious files on carts while officials alternately scream for them and drop them, conjures up the courthouse from hell. Critics have also suggested that the book is a long meditation on anti-Semitism, in that K. is a perpetual outsider or reasons no one can define. It is also simultaneously about class, another illogical hierarchy that K. Defers to and resists. But in our own time, it is hard to resist the book's implications for political and bureaucratic lunacy.