KAFKA

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

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PRAGUE.

During this time, the double monarchy of Habsburg was intact, powerful, and wealthy. This superpower was compounded of about fifteen different nationalities, and it was run, since 1848, by the emperor Franz Joseph. Prague is situated on both sides of the river Moldau, almost in the midst of Bohemia. This ancient town 1900 had about 40.000 German-speaking inhabitants, while the majorities were 400.000 Czechs. These groups – who were both Christians and Jews, lived almost segregated. Different groups existed side by side "with and against each other," as someone has said. In Prague,

9% of the population was, like the Kafka family, Jews at this time.

Prague was a more complex city concerning class than, for example, Vienna, the center of power of the Habsburg dynasty, was at this time. In Vienna, with its 1.7 million inhabitants, the group of Jews had rapidly grown to a more predominant group of people, and anti-Semitism was much more trouble than in Prague. The Jewish ghetto of Josephstadt, which was the biggest in Europe, and probably the oldest, had been dissolved in the revolutionary year 1848 when Franz Joseph became ruler, and the Jews had acquired their full rights to marry, etc.

In Prague, socioeconomic bonds generally prevented anti-Semitism, except in economically challenging times, when one blamed the Jews as one had done for centuries all over Europe. Official business, government, and institutions were run mainly by German-speaking people, while Czechs handled commerce in general and in the Czech language. Jews in Bohemia were either German or Czech speaking, but they all spoke Yiddish, and many of them in the countryside could read Hebrew. The general Class inequalities in Bohemia were enormous like they were in the empire and Europe.

Prague at this time had a German university with about 17000 students and two German theatres. Kafka could enjoy dramas by August Strindberg and Ibsen, Shakespeare's Hamlet, Lessing's Nathan der Weise, Schiller's, Goethe's, Molière's plays, and those of G. B. Shaw and Arthur Schnitzler. Kafka

perhaps attended Verdi's Rigoberto, with Caruso in the main part.

Max Brod asserts that the mood of Prague was naïve. It was almost revolutionary when the Zionist M. Buber started his newspaper there or when Karl Kraus came to town. Karl Kraus was the founder of Die Fackel, a Vienna newspaper concentrating on political satire. "Prussia is very generous as far as muzzles concerns." Kraus pointed out. "Austria is the isolation cell, where you are allowed to scream."

Kraus, in Prague, during lectures, spoke in front of a roaring, excited crowd in the student club, "Die Halle." The great critic of both political and cultural matters, not least of newborn Psychoanalysis, came to this small cultural club more than fifty times, from 1910 and on. We do not precisely know if Kafka listened to Kraus in person, but it is very likely he did so. From his diaries, we see that he was well informed, widely read, and interested in everything in society.

Many Jews in Prague were secular Jews. Kraus had left Judaism, just like f. ex. Wittgenstein did. Kraus later became a forceful opponent of the famous Viennese founder of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl and Buber. Like Vienna, Prague did not have any radiant cultural figures with the stature of Kraus, i.e., intellectuals, who fundamentally could stir society and stimulate change. Kraus's influence upon Central Europe was enormous, to which many vital scholars, such as Freud, Musil, and Arnold Schonberg, bore witness.

Max Brod, FK's life-long friend, would later characterize himself, together with Franz, as Prague-Austrians, which tells us a lot about the two young authors and their social situation. The era was marked by the dominance of the bourgeoisie and, consequently, by a moral of double standards characterized by the oppression of women.

Oswald Spengler, another important essayist academic voice, nicknamed "der Untergangster" by Kraus, bluntly asserted, in his Untergang des Abendlandes, that every culture was subject to demolition. His field of study, History of Culture, was physiognomics; Culture was a living organism. Spengler´s historicism was of an extremely impressionist kind, quite like Vico´s and Friedell´s.

Certainly, in juxtaposition to Vienna, Prague had acquired a unique, dense, and slightly ghostly atmosphere perhaps because of the city of Prague´s lack of political importance. Its literature reflects this. Within Czech literature, which stood very close to the classic German Romantic one, a genre marked by mysticism, often called "Ghost literature," might be traced back to Rabbi Yehuda Loew, who wrote the famous fable of the strange Golem. Golem was a small creature made of clay that, in this myth, came to life when a rabbi, Maharal, put a small piece of paper with God's name on it in the mouth of Golem. Loew lived around 1600, and his works were done into pastiche by G. Meyrink, E.E. Kisch, and others.

Kafka was part of the very important, somewhat educated German bourgeoisie in Prague during this turbulent time. Around 1910, he rapidly came as a

young aspiring author to be a part of Modernism. As a citizen, he never became a revolutionary activist; his early sympathy for anarchism and various socialist movements was known only to a minimal circle of friends. However, it later became an essential subject in many of his short stories and prose poems.

Kafka was no ordinary young man. He regarded himself as a kind of Unmensch, a "Quasimodo," and as being "literature." He thus often did not consider himself a human being. We do not precisely know why. Where are there hidden secrets in his life? Based on information in diaries and letters, we are prone to think that Kafka wrote to survive some ordeal. However, survival probably should also fulfill the needs of his mind. (The strange thing with survival is that one normally does not survive on nothing at all.) The writing was a "way out," but not into emptiness, but instead into delight. We will later discuss the relation Kafka - writing – desire/*jouissance*. Mainly the Central European culture of those days was a hedonistic, often eroticist one.

Franz Kafka was born in 1883. Franz [Anschel, as was his Jewish name] was the only son, the son of a son of a kosher butcher from the countryside in Märhren, not far from the place where Sigmund Freud´s grandfather lived.

Herman [Hermann] Kafka, FK:s father, was a successful merchant of Western Jewish descent. His wife, Julie, b. Löwy, of Eastern Jewish, was the daughter of a wealthy well known Prager brewer. Herman was a member of the Jewish community's counsel and the only synagogue in Prague that provided a Czech language service, which was the only language Herman ever fully mastered. Franz never got any orthodox Jewish education since this was not compliant with Herman's determinate vision of the Jewish people's future in Europe.

Kafka had three sisters, Valli, Elli, and Ottla, and they had a French governess, Mademoiselle Bailly. The family, who generally had three servants in the house, also had a children's nurse named Anna Pouzarová, not much older than the children themselves, a nurse/playmate of which Franz felt very strongly. G. Rieck asserts that this "forbidden love strongly marks the entire authorship."

It was a bilingual home, but he went to German schools. He never grew completely familiar with the Czech language, and he could not write literature in this idiom.

Already as a boy, Franz came into conflict with his father. The son got locked out on the balcony in the night for a minor offense, which created psychic trauma.

Young Franz never showed any interest in the family business, all the more in art and literature, and hence Herman often treated young Franz with sarcastic Irony. Julie Kafka is hardly mentioned in the diaries, while the father is almost permanently

present in these. Franz always sought confirmation from him but hardly ever got any. He also felt physically inferior to his father. In connection with feelings of inability to live, the father more and more stood out as an example of human beings too fit to live. As far as we know, the emotional climate of the Kafka family was neither warm nor cold. There were not much dance and music in the home. Herman liked to play cards in the evening, and when his friends were not available, Julie played with him. Herman seemed to have been all for his business. Religion meant nothing to anybody in the Kafka family.

One might get a glimpse of Kafka's boyhood and Prague's surroundings where he lived from the prose collection Betrachtung, where one might perceive the bittersweet and the unattainable as themes. During high school, young Franz took a pronounced negative attitude to romantic verse. Nevertheless, he was, on the contrary, utterly thrilled by the romantic saga, the Kunst-Märchen – a highly stylized prose that, in a sense, was from the very start a parody of itself.

Kafka was not a prominent scholar in primary and secondary school but more of an average pupil and later student. Emil Utitz, who had been to school with Kafka, later, in a letter to Klaus Wagenbach, gave a vivid and memorable description of F.K.:

"If I were to say something characteristic concerning Kafka, it would be that it was not anything special at all with him."

He took his high school exam in 1901, and he began to study law at the Ferdinand-Karl's-Universität without any particular interest in the subject.
Between 1901 and 1906, he was a student at the University.
As a lawyer, he was later able to devote himself to writing in his spare time. This was his idea from very early on. During his lifetime, Kafka would many times stress the vast importance and meaningfulness of the possibility of indulging in writing, and he was mesmerized by literature and words. Kafka, as a teenager, wrote a lot. He seemed to be born with a very fluent literary style.

In high school, Kafka was introduced to a famous and influential philosopher of his time, Franz Brentano. He generally is described as a phenomenological thinker. Kafka appears to have been susceptible to observations on perception problems, often called a philosophy of mind, around which Brentano had evolved his philosophical psychology. It is striking how there are ideas similar to Brentano's regarding the mental experience in Kafka's Description of a struggle (1909) and some notes in the diary from 1913. B. Smith and J. Ryan are both referring to signs of the impact of Brentano upon Kafka in a passage in Kafka's early work:

"I continued my wandering. But since I as a pedestrian feared the troubles and strains of climbing the steep path, I made it more and more smooth, and then

made it sloop down towards a distant valley. The rocks disappeared according to my will, and the wind ceased to blow..."

F.K. bases the content upon the" inner life" of the narrator, upon his fancies and wishes. Kafka purportedly draws consequence from the philosophy of Brentano in surpassing it. Brentano always stressed the difference between perception and object and that we are always left with our experience, of which we, while we have this experience, always obliquely at the same time, are consciously aware. We are thus, according to Brentano, aware of what we are aware. Kafka could easily have grabbed this idea and developed it in this manner, as is seen in the example. Practically, however, Brentano, in his philosophy of perception - like Dilthey does - comes into counter-position to the old romantic idealist philosophy.

Kafka does not mention Brentano at all in his notebooks. Brentano was probably of no significant importance to F.K.. However, F.K. still might have gained essential knowledge of moral philosophy and the philosophy of right by dealing with Brentano's writings, just as he possibly acquired some skill in still purer sophistry by reading the Talmud and other Jewish literature, which he often sought out as a compensation for the lack of intellectual and religious tradition in his own childhood home.

At Prague University, there was a student Cultural Club, the aforementioned "Die Halle," where one could listen to lectures and discussions concerning political, philosophical, and cultural matters. One night on the 23rd of October 1902, a small, near-sighted, hunchbacked, extremely self-confident boy, Max Brod, held a speech about Schopenhauer's views on destiny at "Die Halle." Since Brod in his speech violently attacked Nietzsche's ideas in this speech and named him "Hochstapler" (scammer), and since Kafka very much did appreciate Nietzsche, Kafka afterward approached Brod, and they then violently discussed these matters. A lifelong friendship started with this quarrel.

Max and Franz soon began to study literature together in privacy, the readings of Plato and Flaubert. Kafka, who was fluent in French due to his love of his childhood nurse, loved to read Flaubert aloud in his baritone voice. Of course, both Brod and Kafka were fluent in both Latin, Greek, and even Hebrew, since they both passed high school. Franz and Max even translated parts of Plato´s Dialogues, which is interesting particularly for a Kafka scholar, since Plato's style might, to some degree, have affected Kafka's style. Being a solid skeptic and an astute Nietzsche fan, Kafka probably found it very hard to believe in the idea of the Good with Plato, though.

During his years at the Carolinum, Kafka also consumed many memoirs and biographies, his favorite lecture throughout his life, together with travel books. He usually read several newspapers

and periodicals a day throughout his life, like the Bohemia, Deutsche Arbeit, Der Jude, Der Prager Tageblatt, Hyperion, and Wir.

Kafka wrote to his comrades O. Pollak, Baum, O. Kisch, and M. Brod during summer leaves. In the letters, he told them of his consummation of literature and the beauty of the landscape around the idyllic Triesch to the north of Prague, where Kafka used to visit his uncle, the country doctor.

Kafka was an assimilated Jew if it was possible to be "assimilated" at all in Prague. He was utterly irreligious. It seems that he supported secular Zionism more than covering such. Max Brod propagated lifelong for Zionism, moved to Israel, and ended his days in Israel as a convinced Zionist, acclaimed by the establishment as an honorary citizen. The Zionist outlook never won over Kafka himself. Friedlander: "Kafka was never a Zionist.". However, Kafka's interest in Jewish identity increased with the years - perhaps as his inner desperation grew. Perhaps in line with his surroundings, with the circle of Jewish intellectuals with which he socialized, he increasingly became aware of Prague's insulation, and many of his friends discussed a future ideal society in Palestine. Towards the end of his life, his studies in the Hebrew language were more intense. He first studied this language in two rounds, first as a 25-year-old and later in 1923 when he was dying. However, it is difficult to prove that this study affected his writing. B. Becker, in her thesis,

investigated the possible Kabbalistic influences in F.K.'s authorship.
Kafka had read Karl Marx's Zur Judenfrage, written in 1844, where Jewish emancipation is scrutinized. This 88-page book has an essential discussion on power, the power of the mass, the difference between European and American politics and religion, and human rights. It is exceptionally well written, which was often the case with Marx. Marx points to an alleged inherent contradiction between freedom of religious belief and Human Rights. De Beaumont had earlier invented the concept and idea of human rights in France. Bruno Bauer –the opponent against whom the book explicitly is directed – claims that no emancipation for Jews is possible as long as there are religions. Marx asserts that there is no possible emancipation for the Jews before all humans are socially emancipated. This book also contains a minor discussion of alienation.

Kafka, in 1906, graduated with a Doctor of Law. After the usual practice period, the "Rechtspraktik" - a prerequisite for working in the state administration - F.K. got nine-month employment with an Italian insurance company, Assicurazioni Generali, which was headquartered in Trieste - then belonging to Habsburg, at their Prague office. In 1908, he soon got more suitable employment as an investigator at the large Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt in Prague. The insurance system in Bohemia was extensive; over 200,000 contractors and about three million workers were affiliated. Officials' number

was on this job not less than 250. Only two of these were Jews.

Kafka FK was an ambitious, resourceful, caring, and much-respected official. He always chose to work part-time but had a good salary and never had severe financial problems, apart from the last years. In Berlin, living with Dora, he was broke. Most often, F.K. lived with the family in different chilly and noisy apartments in Prague's absolute center and rarely rented his own rooms or apartments.

At nighttime Kafka was creative. From 22:30 to 02:00 or 03:00 at night, Kafka occupied himself with his literary work during his "vintage years," i.e., the years 1912 to 1917. His breakthrough novel, The Verdict, was conceived during one single autumn night session. During these years, he seems to have indulged in the creative process instead of sleeping. From 1909 onwards, he wrote a diary, advised to do so by his dynamic, persistent, and optimistic friend Max Brod. It is a sporadic diary, and here literary drafts are mixed with short notes on health status, practical things, and notices about the family members he held very dear.

Kafka's focus was not exclusively on literature. He liked to draw, and he - despite his lack of talent - practiced on his violin, and he was fond of gardening and outdoor life. Kafka often wished to be something entirely other than a lawyer, for instance, an athlete. FK was a good swimmer, and he could, despite his weak constitution, master a horse in terrain. He cared about his health and practiced gymnastics

daily in front of an open window from his earliest years. The writer in spe had his rowboat by the river Moldau. He rowed upstream and then floated down, lying on his back in the boat dressed in his usual suit, gliding under the famous Karlsbrücke and the other eight bridges. Kafka was fascinated by naked bodies and beautiful naked bodies in particular; he attended nudist camps, such as the Baltic Sea and health facilities.

Around 1909-1910, trips took Kafka to Northern Italy, Lugano and Venice, Austria, Hamburg, Helgoland, Rügen, and Marienlyst in Denmark. Kafka and Max Brod were to visit Paris together two times. When Max, the music enthusiast, chose to go to the opera, Kafka - who seems to have been almost totally insensitive to music (although he played the violin at home) - went to a horse race. When Brod and Kafka were in Italy, they attended an air show outside Brescia. They decided to compete to see who wrote the best record for this event, an airplane race, where the famous French pioneer aviator Bleriot took part.

This article became F.K.'s debut as a writer. The newspaper Bohemia displayed it on 28/9 1909 with the title Die Aeropläne in Brescia. It contains, apart from a description of a vivid scenery in the countryside, reflections on perfection and courage. It is striking in its precision of thought and its exact and fresh descriptions.

He frequently socialized with a small group of tightly knit friends, young men he had met in school or at

the university: Oscar Pollak, Oscar Baum, Max, Otto Brod, and Felix Weltsch. These friends meant a lot to Kafka, and he was cautious not to lose them. They generally met at the cafés in Prague, at the Arco, Café Louvre, Savoy, Imperial, or the Concordia. Many of those boys, because they were all boys, came from families who were well established for generations in the city and had a long tradition of high education in their families than Kafka, at least on his father's side.

Kafka and friends also assembled in more private milieus than cafés. At the Prague pharmacy, Zum Einhorn, one Mrs. Bertha Fanta had created a wonderful cultural oasis, the rumor of which spread through the city. Visitors here were, among others, the mathematician Kowalewski, Max Planck, and also Albert Einstein, and the latter both played the violin, accompanied by Brod on the piano and talked of his theory of relativity. He also vividly discussed the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. In the Fanta-house, also debates about psychoanalysis were frequent. Sometimes also matters like Spiritism and Anthroposophy. Kafka often was present at the meetings, and he there listened to the famous mystic Rudolf Steiner and even discussed his own life with him later at his hotel.
Probably around 1904 - four years after the appearance of Freud's Traumdeutung - Kafka became aware of Freud's existence. In 1910 he purchased and read Freud's all-new Leonardo da Vinci - a childhood memory, where Freud uses the

term "narcissism" for the first time. In the "psychoanalyst bible" at the time, Three essays on sexual theory discuss the concept of "sublimation." Kafka later also read Freud's essay on Michelangelo's Moses statue. The interest in Moses stayed with Kafka, and he commented to the young student G. Janouch a picture of the Moses statue - never missing a chance to criticize an authority - with the words: "'That is no leader. That is a judge, an austere judge.'". This was not Freud's view of Moses, who saw Moses as a tragic hero, a lone hero who doggedly wore his disappointment over the Jewish people.

We can speculate on the "mythology" behind Kafka's world of thought OVERALL and imagination just as much as we can speculate over the "mythology" behind Freud's work in its entirety. In Kafka's case, the answer about his mythology might actually be … *Freud.*

Kafka owned, what we know, only a few books on psychology and on school philosophy. We know that Kafka studied The Destiny of Man by Fichte. It is a very educational and well-spoken popular display of Fichte's philosophy and his current philosophical idealism. Kafka studied Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's predecessor, together with his sister Ottla. F.K. probably appreciated the antiauthoritarian approach and the constant reference to skepticism. He also was deeply impressed by the anti-authoritarian Kierkegaard's diaries, as well as S.K.'s two early works, Either-Or and the small book by S.K. on

Genesis 22, the story of Abraham and Isaac, Fear and trembling.

Maybe Kafka was fascinated by Kierkegaard´s take on religion and philosophy, mingling these subjects into a kind of insidious abstract horror fiction inspired by the Danish author Steen Steensen Blicher. SSB was the creator of The Vicar of Vejlbye, the world's first detective story, way before Mark Twain.

Kafka himself was very fond of reading aloud in public and sometimes even made speeches which do not match the general myth about him. His way of reciting his own works was, as his friend Oscar Baum testifies, peculiar: F.K. read in a gradually increasing pitch, read the whole short story almost in one breath, and extremely fast, "with blaring tongue."

He, as a young man, was a man full of self-reproach. He was intuitively sensitive concerning changes in moods around him - and to everything, just like Rimbaud. One would today claim that F.K. suffered from Asperger's.

Max Brod was a more social character. Brod, as a writer, was very productive. He had notably published himself in the erotic magazine Amethyst, which Kafka also subscribed to, with Das Tschechische Dienstmädchen. Brod seemed - as already indicated - to have a deep fascination with Prague, while he early became determined to move away. What Brod later came to write about Kafka seems to many as part of a "hagiography." Regardless of this, he was a friend who never let

Kafka down, and he was virtually inexhaustible in good and bad times, word and deed.

Much time was spent by Kafka, before and during his sickness, in sanatoriums in the countryside, often on the Central European Mountain massive. In Prague, Kafka came into contact with Franz Werfel, poet and renowned columnist. For a while, Werfel, charming and extrovert, became one of the most ardent young Kafka critics. After having read Betrachtung, Werfel, who at the time was enjoying success with his writings, claimed with strong emphasis: "This book will never be read outside Bohemia!". He was later proved to be wrong. Werfel, who was extraordinarily productive, was part of the expressionist movement, consisting of authors who often came right from the trenches of World War I, writers like Sternheim - who was a millionaire - Werfel, Edschmid, Heym, and Trakl. F.K. was also acquainted with the learned Robert Musil, who wanted Kafka to write for Neue Rundschau in Berlin, where he was hired as a columnist.

When F.K. was studying law, he met with a renowned professor of Philosophy of Rights, Hans Gross, and attended his lectures for three terms. Gross' son, Otto, born in 1877, was to become a friend of Kafka's. Gross junior seems to have been revolting against his father. O.G. was trained as a physician, served abroad, and then became a psychiatrist, settled in Vienna, where he entered the circles of S. Freud. O.G. distinguished himself as an independent thinker in psychoanalysis, and Freud himself said that there were only two original

thinkers he knew of among his friends: CG Jung and Gross. However, Gross slid, because of morphine addiction, into a schizophrenic state, and Jung's attempt to cure Otto G. with psychoanalysis. Hans Gross wanted to have his son incarcerated in a mental institution.

Kafka and Otto Gross first met in 1917. Kafka then had already produced what we now know as Amerika and The Trial and published The Metamorphosis. O.G., intelligent and communicative (his father had died in 1915), was interested in everything from psychoanalysis to revolutionary movements. Franz Werfel, Kafka, and Otto Gross, who by then had left the Freud circle, in 1917 grew plans – in the midst of a war - of starting an anarchist magazine, Blätter gegen Machtwillen, but the whole thing stalled due to economic problems and to F.K.'s bad health. Franz and Otto had conversations about psychoanalysis. It has been assumed that the precocious Gross was the developer of Kafka's insights into Freud's thinking. Kafka took a skeptical view of psychoanalysis as a whole, and he never studied it at all. Gross' influence on Kafka came relatively late but may have confirmed individual perceptions, and it might even further have contributed to setting F.K.'s mind and style free. Otto Gross committed suicide in 1920.

Hermann Kafka, Franz´s father, was planning the wedding between Elli and Karl Herman. Karl Hermann had in mind to start an asbestos factory and needed money: the dowry. Herman Kafka went along with this but took counsel from his son, the

lawyer, and made him promise not only to be part of the company's board but also to participate in the factory's management, which had around twenty employees. Thus F.K.'s father tried to force his son towards a future as a supervisor of a factory... The marriage and the up of the factory were soon conducted, and Kafka took part in the legal issues, and he frequently visited the factory, which now was led by a hired engineer. Franz immediately tried to withdraw from the father's "trap," which, of course, threatened to take his entire remaining time outside the insurance institution in claims, and - what was for him the overall disastrous matter -: it thus threatened to prevent him from writing. It was precisely in this situation when he really "hated his family," as Corngold writes, and it is probably the first and only time in his life he did so that he wrote the extraordinary short story The Metamorphosis.

He had earlier this year encountered Felice Bauer, and they had exchanged a couple of letters, and Kafka probably was determined to marry her dutifully.

One might read The Metamorphosis against this background. It is not hard to imagine that Kafka saw marriage as a struggle between himself and his father. In the notebooks, fantasies of punishment, fantasies to be faced with a large court, now appeared. F.K. felt that he betrayed his family. The asbestos factory business ran into difficulties, and it gradually came to cost Herman a small fortune. Franz considered suicide and consulted Max Brod

about his problems. Brod wisely talked to Julie Kafka about her son without letting Franz know.

In the Letter to his father, Kafka later accused his father of his misery. Letter to his father is no short story but an actual letter. (Kafka later admits to Milena Jesenská, sending her a copy of the letter, telling her it is full of a lawyer's tricks.)

The letter, written in 1919, far away from Prague, was given by Franz to his mother Julie for further deliverance to Herman, but Julie never fulfilled the wish of her son. It is essential to know that when the 39-year-old Franz wrote this, he already had written what we know as The Trial. Franz now was severely ill in tuberculosis, and the two engagements to Felice Bauer lay behind him. He had also tried to get permission to marry Julie Wohryzek. Kafka, by this time, had been through a lot.

As the son emphasizes in the letter, his father, Herman, had been too strong toward him. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in their Pour une littérature mineure, puts focus on how Kafka's oedipal situation influenced his works. They assert that he reversed the oedipal situation and doubly too. The first of these suspensions, according to the authors, was one based on three-digit relations, primarily the Prague societal triangle, with F.K. experiencing his father as a traitor against the rural Bohemian-Jewish-orthodox heritage, the father submitting to the Czech bureaucracy. Franz, however, was able to preserve his respect and love of the Father, only that the son knew that his father was just as oppressed as he was. The second

suspension consists of the many transformations of "himself" into an animal, e.g., a dog = "The schizo-animal par préference." Kafka is seeking not freedom but a way out, and he finds this in the non-human: in becoming a beetle. We might compare this identification to other animal figures into which he likewise transmogrifies himself: the monkey, the dog, the giant mole, the badger, the rat. These all are symbols of loneliness: marks of an utterly painful, almost pathological solitude and an extreme outsider position are beyond doubt. In the famous letter, Kafka claims that both he and his father are innocent, both victims and that they are both guilty.

Kafka seems, seen from this letter's content, to have compassion for his father, but is this sincere? According to the two Frenchmen, it is that of a "perverse Oedipus." Here one cannot escape the problem of the so-called "authoritarian personality.". The father's relationship can be divided into three or four, more or less distinct levels: [1.] The purely emotional. Here we can conclude that Kafka harbored his father's very warm feelings, which were mutual, even if the father almost always demonstrated his superiority. F.K. entertained, even directly, great admiration for his father. [2.] Herman required Franz to take over his business and acquire a reputable position in society (asbestos factory). These requirements were significant concerns to F.K. [3.] His writing always seemed to him to be incompatible with marriage. [4]: Herman's unilateral pursuit for assimilation in the Habsburg Empire, as well as his lack of interest in

Judaism, in the end, contributed to the alienation of his son.

There was always a strong sense of guilt with F.K. concerning the father. Herman had worked hard and dedicated his whole life to his family. Kafka's texts are often fantasies of punishment built upon a sense of guilt. That there are sexual elements in these stories seems clear. One can perceive with F.K. an early attraction to submission, to sadomasochism. Masochism should probably be regarded as a kind of double movement, just like Žižek sees it - as a complex mix of perpetrators and victims' positioning. Deleuze has stressed the revolutionary character of masochism and the humorous element in masochism, noting the Irony in sadism both concerning law and society and the super ego-suppressing Humor in masochism. Several stories and passages in the novels have a theme that alludes to masochism. In masochism, the victim talks through the voice of the torturer. Kafka does not hide the sexual element and the Oedipus situation in his works but very often stresses it. He is amid a taboo, displaying it fiercely. Kafka stays close to the prohibited, even to the downright painful, and to the painfully pleasurable, but also the pleasurable painful and painfully comical. Moreover, in the end, he sometimes is, existentially, close to the life-threatening in his paradoxical fantasies of punishment and on the verge of what he probably can stand emotionally.

A crisis in the relationship between F.K. and his beloved sister Ottla is mirrored in The Metamorphosis, where Gregor's sister Grete together with the mother, tries to clear Gregor's room, but Gregor refuses to leave the portrait of a lady in fur on the wall. This story is reflected in the deep open conflict between F.K. on one side Herman and the entire family on the other, in 1912 regarding the asbestos factory. Franz had been asked to help with the factory and to leave the nightly writings aside. At this time, F.K. was actually in utter rage and thought of committing suicide, which he also told Brod. The close friend noted that he had never seen his beloved Franz that upset ever. It is important to note that the letter to his father never was transmitted to Herman. Since it is here too late in life for a reorientation between them, Kafka tries, in writing this letter, to transgress the problem between them by, as G/D claims, turning the causal relation Oedipus-situation around by asserting that this Oedipus situation has its roots in society, actually in a whole neurosis of society. Julie Kafka refused to transmit the letter, probably thinking that this letter could not promote the relationship between Franz and Herman. F.K.:

"You seem to have some clue regarding what I want to say, curiously enough. You said a while ago, for example: 'I always liked you, even if I never behaved towards you as other fathers used to, just because I simply cannot – like the others can - pretend.'"

To Louis Begley, it is evident that Franz hated his father. Since F.K. felt so alien in the world, the feeling of connectedness to his family was always very important to him. Thus he – I think – never wanted a real conflict with his father, risking losing his great affection. Alongside Herman, his sister Ottla was of significant importance to Kafka during his entire life. She was born in 1892 and was the youngest of the sisters. She was very close to Franz, and she had almost the same looks as F.K., with a very dark complexion and deep, intense gaze. Like so many Jews, she early became interested in Zionism and joined a club for Jewish women. She was interested in agriculture and took up farming in the West-Bohemian village of Zürau, to the north of Prague, until the end of the war. She married against her father's will in July 1820 to the Catholic Czech Joseph David and gave birth to Věra in 1921 and Helene in 1923. During the summer of 1922, Franz spent three months together with the young family in Planá. However, Ottla Davidová and Joseph David had an unhappy marriage. Unlike her two sisters, she was a very independent woman, a fact that may have contributed to the tensions. Franz and Ottla had, throughout life, from early childhood until the death of Franz, close contact and held long, secret talks, which took place primarily in the house's bathroom and in a park in Prague's center. In letters to her, Franz stands as quick-witted, conscientious, practical, relaxed, and natural. Significantly, Kafka would rather read philosophy with Ottla than with Max Brod. Brod had an

attraction to metaphysics that most likely "discouraged" Kafka. Max had very little of the robust skepticism which was characteristic of Kafka's thought. Ottla's importance to Franz was huge. It must be stressed that their intimate conversations were the most life-close and warmest like Kafka experienced throughout his life. Ottla was, after the death of her brother, totally opposed to the publishing of Kafka's posthumous papers, novels, and other things. H. Zylberberg, who knew Ottla Kafka, writes:

"She never accepted the fact that Kafka's works had been published as the result of someone's indiscretion. Franz had left a will, and his deepest and holiest wish, that everything he had written should be burnt should have been obeyed. Due to all this, she was very angry at Brod."

In October 1943, Ottla accompanied, as a helper, a children's transport to Auschwitz, and soon after, she was murdered by the Nazis there. Her daughters escaped when Ottla voluntarily, protecting the non-Jewish husband, separated from his family.

Part of what we know about Kafka we know through his diaries and letters. Kafka's diary is a selection of brief notes, drafts of novels, etc. -; the notes are mainly about his health, almost a "medical record," and on how very little he thinks he accomplishes as a writer. Notes are like these: "June 5. Nothing is written.";" June, 13. All-day in bed."; "June, 15. All-day in bed." Kafka often suffered from headaches and spent much time in his life, especially the later

part of it, after the lung disease outbreak, in bed. He complained of insomnia. When he slept well, he did not write at all! Sleeplessness and sleep are also by F.K. often put in relation to guilt, e.g., in the correspondence with Milena. In a certain and unusual sense, his life was centered upon literature, sleep (to try to get rid of his terrible headaches), and his dreams.

Franz Kafka - as well as Brod - did not very much like Prague. He often expressed his wish to change location, to move to Berlin, which he managed to do in 1923, for his last winter.

Prague was not offering any intellectually stimulating milieu.

Kafka's heroes are overwhelming a vulnerable and endangered kind; they are, in one way or another, tormented and always looking – but often half-heartedly – for a way out. By a letter, the four-page letter to Max Brod - the so-called "Rat letter"… -, written on December 4th, 1917, where the F.K. reveals his great fear of rats, one can conclude that Kafka had an obsessive syndrome linked with a cluster of deep anxiety and fear of castration, rooted in the Oedipal situation. Freud's famous patient, Rat man, E. Lasker, had read about Chinese rat torture in the same book as Kafka, i.e., in the French anarchist Mirbeau's Le Jardin des Supplices, which is sometimes referred to as the role model for Kafka's masterpiece In the Penal Colony.

HEDWIG W.

During the summer of 1907, Kafka was in Triesch, in the countryside, residing at an uncle's place. He enjoyed himself, bathing and riding a bike, and having a romance with the nineteen-year-old Jewess by the name of Hedwig Weiler. Kafka was 25 years old at the time.
In a letter to Brod, Kafka describes her as "very ugly, small, and chubby, with red cheeks and has two large front teeth, which do not fit in the mouth." One can compare F.K.'s heartless description of her with one later made of Felice, in which F.K. thinks Felice looks "like she has a broken nose." F.K. appears to have excelled in describing girls' ugliness, at least in his letters to Brod.

Hedwig was born in Vienna in 1888, studied philology and philosophy, and was a social democrat. She later took a degree and became a Ph.D. in 1914. Franz writes the eleven letters to Hedwig in Prague, where he worked full-time at the aforementioned Italian insurance company. These letters are neither incredibly intimate nor warm-hearted but have more of a mocking tone. Perhaps they are meant to be humoristic. Hedwig did not think they were. She was very reproachful regarding the "Irony" in them. Kafka does not seem very interested in Hedwig, and he seems to have been very depressed at the time. Hedwig calls him a liar in her letters, and Kafka tries to transform the fact that he is lying into something interesting. They did not seem to get along at all. Supposedly Kafka felt inferior to Hedwig, both

intellectually and emotionally. The relationship with her might have contributed to Kafka's fear of women.
H.W. survived two wars and died in 1953 in Vienna.

FELICE B.

The most remarkable and intense relationship that Kafka ever had and which had the most significant impact on his literary works was with the Berlin girl Felice Bauer. Franz went over to the Brod family one evening in August 1912. When he there first saw Felice Bauer, he believed by her looks that she belonged to the servants. The meeting was marked by several misunderstandings and confusion. Kafka would this evening originally edit his debut collection of short prose together with Max, the Betrachtung (Looking out), for Rowohlt's Verlag, an enterprise which now, because of the presence of Felice, instead was left entirely to Brod. Kafka later accompanied Felice to her hotel, gave her by accident his address, and a week later, he typed a letter to her on a paper with the insurance company's letterhead. Here a relationship began, and the giant vampirism from Kafka's side was one of the most grotesque in literature history. Kafka and Felice are almost exclusively associated through letters. Kafka demanded challengingly detailed answers to his letters twice a day (!) from Felice. Much of what followed in their relationship seems to

have happened one-sidedly out of Kafka's fear of marriage. Kafka monitored himself intensely regarding this fear, living for many years, being the only son, strongly victimized under constant pressure from his family to get married. E. Krause-Jensen:

"Between 1912 and 1917, he writes incessantly to her, now and then taking back what he has just written, the lines he had just sent away, but he obliges her, however, to answer twice a day. He replaces the marriage contract with a diabolic pact, a sort of "vampire business correspondence," as Deleuze and Guattari put it, an activity that Kafka needs in order to be able to work. 'Motionless,' by his table of existence, Kafka sucks Felice's blood like a spider, weaving his yarn. The only fear he glimpses and perceives, all terrified, through his oversensitive intuition, is that he should perish in his own yarn of words and that the "resort areas" should prove to be dead ends. Therefore he simultaneously is writing short stories on the theme of himself slowly turning into an animal. /..../. "

What now followed was an intensely creative period, the most intense of his life, during which Kafka's stronghold to everyday life was the letters to Felice. Franz Kafka did not become engaged to her until June 1, 1914. Kafka's fear of marriage can, according to many, have had its base in sexual agony or even more of a general feeling of not being man enough or in a different sexual orientation.

Kafka wrote The Verdict, The Stoker, and The Metamorphosis within just a few months in the autumn of 1912. The Verdict was created in one

swoop on the night between the 22nd and 23rd of September 1912, a short story dedicated to Felice.
On the 23rd of September 1912, after having completed The Verdict, Kafka wrote in his diary the famous words:" Thoughts of Freud, of course."
One might say that this date constituted the birth of the Kafkaesque.
During October-November this year, the year of the birth of the Kafkaesque, the inaugurating chapter of Amerika was written, the piece which soon would be published in a magazine under the title "The Stoker" (Der Heizer).
He recognized this short story as his first mature work, and he read it aloud to his friends and to an open audience at a recital evening only a couple of days after it had been created.
In two days (i.e., nights) in November and December, he then wrote The Metamorphosis. After completing this "short novel," Kafka devoted himself to writing his "American novel," the unfinished Amerika. Kafka then suddenly got into a writing paralysis. The non-productivity lasted until Kafka engaged Felice over a year later. During this "latency," Kafka came to realize, even better than before, that he was a great writer, but a writer put in a complicated situation.
Kafka wrote about two hundred letters to Felice, very self-centered ones. A tangible silence drowned in words, one might say. Judging by them, he seems to have been during this period in a kind of constant crisis. The letters lack fundamentally essential and

relevant content. They deal with unimportant details in life.

The catastrophe in Kafka's predicament, and in particular concerning Felice, can be illustrated by the reproduction of extracts from a letter from the correspondence, from what is sometimes called the "dog letter," written in April 1913:

"My real fear - it can hardly be said or heard anything worse - is that I never ever will be able to have you. That, in the most favorable case, I would be limited to like a stray faithful dog to kiss your hand, distractedly passed, which would not be a sign of love, but merely a sign of the desperation of this animal, forever doomed to dumbness and despair. That I would sit next to you and, which already has occurred, to feel your body's breathing and life at my side, and basically be more different from you than now, in my room. I would never be able to attract your gaze, and that for me everything really would be lost, when you looked out the window or when you put your face in your hands. I am ostensibly allied with you, riding with you all through the world, hand in hand, and, that none of this is true. In short, I will forever remain so excluded from you, even if you were suppress to indulge to me, that it would bring you in danger. "

F.K. often returned to the dog theme. Kafka falls away in the letters to F.B. from the role of capable author to that of a failed suitor, to a complete stranger in relation to human life and existence, to the role of a fleeing animal. Example 2. Kafka, in the so-called "wooing letter" in June 1913:

"You already know of my strange predicament. Between me and you stands - regardless of everything else - the doctor. What this man says ought to be doubted. By

decisions like these, medical diagnoses are not decisive. If they were, I would not hesitate to take them into account. I was not sick – as I told you, but I still am. Possibly living under other circumstances would make be healthy, but it is impossible to create these other circumstances. The medical judgment (which, as I have already said, not to me unconditionally is true) remains of character: the foreign judgment. My family doctor, for instance, would in his stupid irresponsibility not see the slightest obstacle, on the contrary; yet another, a better doctor might clap his hands together over his head. Consider, Felice: in view of this uncertainty this can hardly be said, and it might sound strange. It is now too early to talk about it. Later, however, it would be too late; there would no longer be any time to talk about such things, just as you do point out in your letter. But it is no longer time for any doubt, at least this is how I feel, and I am therefor now asking you: Will you, during the above, unfortunately not very extensively, outlined premise, think about whether you want to be my wife? Do you want to? "

He wrote a long pro- et contra-list in his diary. He actually wrote to Felice:

"Within me, I have always had – and still have – two souls battling each other. One is roughly the way you want him. (…) The other one is only thinking of his work."

The first betrothal between Franz and Felice lasted between 1/6-12/7 1914, - i.e., only five weeks. Kafka seems to have changed his mind immediately, and he ended up in a state of agony and total despair after the engagement. In a letter to Felice's friend Grete Bloch Kafka revealed – while the negotiations still were held - he found the whole engagement a mistake. Grete told this to Felice and her parents.

The two families' resolution to break up the engagement took place in Berlin in a hotel, Askanischer Hof, in the presence of members from both these families, and Kafka experienced this meeting as a trial against him.
On July 29, 1914, F.K. started to write The Trial. This novel seems to thrive from material tied to the engagement with Felice.
The second engagement to her was initiated three years later, at the beginning of July 1917, and ended soon, shortly after Kafka realized that he had contracted tuberculosis. One night in August, Kafka woke up in his bed, noticing that he coughed blood. He was, as he later mentioned, most of all surprised and then actually delighted, despite the pools of blood on the floor – this because Kafka, by instinct, knew he could at least sleep now, not being bothered by the usual severe headache. Franz went to work as usual the next morning after his Czech maid, horrified at the sight of the blood-stained floor of the apartment, having exclaimed: "Poor Herr Doctor, with you, it is soon running out!". Not until the afternoon of the same day does he go to his doctor! Later Kafka wrote the following lines:

"There is only one disease, neither more nor less, and this sole disease is hunted blindly by Medicine like one is hunting an animal through endless forests."

Kafka's tuberculosis would, mostly untreated, undulate back and forth, sometimes forcing him feverish to bed, sometimes almost wholly subsiding - yet sometimes giving hope to disappear, other times

re-issue despair at deterioration. In letters to Milena Jesenská three years later, he would be more bantering and talk about the disease and its outbreak. One can imagine the difficulty in the situation that arose, with fits of tuberculosis including recurrent bouts of fever, in devoting himself wholeheartedly to such advanced writing as his. Maybe he wove part of his thought of the disease into the writing itself. One can also speculate on what effect Kafka's tuberculosis had mentally on Kafka. This disease sometimes brings psychological effects, such as a change of moods. Numerous are Kafka's thoughts and speculations about the disease in his letters and notes. It is quite clear that he seems to have considered that its outbreak originally had to do with the continuous mental struggle that was going on inside him: marriage or writing. In The Diary, he wrote about how "the brain covenanted with the lung behind my back."…On tuberculosis, Kafka wrote to Felice: "The blood does not come from the lung, but a well-aimed blow from one of the fighters."

Kafka did not feel strictly bound by any oath of allegiance to Felice during the periods of engagement, but he several times met with other women during this time. During a trip to Riva in northern Italy, he spotted an 18-year-old Swiss non-Jewish girl, Gerti Wasner, to which he immediately got attracted. They spent several days together. Franz composed thrilling tales in the evenings, which he read to her at breakfast at the hotel. Kafka avoided strong girls and often sought himself very

young ones. Perhaps F.K. often liked asexual advances. He found pleasure in having relationships in the form of playmate-playmate. From a young age, he was also the sort of man who clenched tight friendships with men, often for life. He cherished these contacts well.

The second engagement with Felice Bauer also ended in 1917 due to Kafka's tuberculosis. Felice then, in 1919, married and had a child the following year. She died in New York in 1960, at 77 years old, after having sold all Kafka's letters in an auction to pay her medical bills.

During the years with Felice, Kafka wrote nearly all of his major works, such as The Verdict, The Metamorphosis, The Trial, and Amerika.

It has been hypothesized by Friedländer that Kafka would have been almost totally uninterested in women and that Kafka would instead have had an attraction to children of both sexes. Shame consistently is a motive in Kafka's writings, and shame is an entirely natural thing connected to pedophilia, Friedlander asserts. This theory – because we have not got any proof of Kafka being a pedophile - opens up a plausible view of unexpected tragedy. It contributes to a plausible understanding of a prerequisite of F.K.'s work regarding the possible concealment of desire and hence of a duality concealed. It might also, in part, explain his negative attitude to marriage. Some passages from

the works point in the direction of FK being attracted to children. There is an abundance of "Quasimodo" creatures in Kafka's texts, of helpers, young boys, and rowdy girls. One can imagine that Kafka had a penchant for non-adults, for the eternal adolescent, as he appeared to many people. According to third parties, e.g., K. Wolff, FK reminded him of an eternal teenager.

A book about pedophilia that Brod lent him made him entirely out of equanimity. He then also compared the reading of such literature to the reading of psychoanalytic writings. In the diary, Kafka often leaves descriptions of young people's beauty, mostly young naked boys. This reasoning by Friedländer, who claims that FK seems to have been a pedophile, can be looked upon in contrast to Brod's biography, with its high-strung description of Kafka as almost a miraculous Saint-like man.

One often connects Kafka with the notion of masochism, and he told Max that he liked to be punished by women. That F.K., together with the prostitutes in brothels in Prague, would have made real his innermost fantasies that altogether met his sexual needs is not likely.

JULIE W.

Julie Wohryzek was a Jewess, born in Prague in 1891 and of simple origin. Her father served as a Kustos in the synagogue in a suburb of the capital. Julie worked as a "komptoiristin," a clerk, just like Felice did. F.K. describes J.W. in a letter to Brod as an uneducated girl fond of nice clothing and operettas, and he says she is more of a fun than a sad person. He also emphasizes that she "is not without beauty" but also writes that she is the type of waitress. The two had met in January 1919 in an almost empty pension in Zürau during one of Kafka's first convalescences, when he was quite ill. The two seem to have had good emotional contact, contrary to what seems to have been the case in Kafka's relationship with Felice. Kafka never talked of love when he talked of relationships. He was almost entirely unromantic.

In Kafka´s stories, there is nearly no romantic scene whatsoever.

We might find out about the relationship in a letter to Julie's sister Käthe, whom F.K. met in company with Julie in Schelesen. Kafka confided to Käthe in the same way he had to Grete Bloch earlier. In this letter, he explains how close Julie and he got to each other, and he describes his views on marriage and the essentials of having a family with children, and the perception of him as a consumptive official whose highest interest is literature. He writes that he wants to meet Julie but that the question of marriage should be left open.

Following the traditional Jewish custom and Herman's will, Franz Kafka seems to choose a wife with Jewish roots. Franz and Julie got engaged. The wedding was planned to occur in November 1919. It was opposed vehemently by FK.s parents, perhaps because of rumors about Julie's sexual "liberal habits." Herman insulted his son and bluntly told Franz that "a girl just needs to wave her blouse" for Franz to fall for her and advised him to visit a brothel instead. Julie's father was equally against the relationship. Rieck claims that Julie indeed was the more loving of the two.
In July 1920, they disbanded their engagement. Julie was utterly heartbroken. Perhaps the break was due to Kafka´s meeting with the Austrian young volcanic intellectual Milena Jesenská-Pollak.

In 1921 Julie married a banker, Werner, with whom she later lived in Bucharest and Prague. She was deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz and died there, probably in August 1944.

During his years with Julie, Kafka composed almost no literary works.

MILENA J.

Twenty-three years old Milena Jesenská wrote a letter to F.K. from Vienna expressing her great admiration for his short stories. She told him she wanted to translate some of them into Czech. Kafka proudly and thoughtlessly showed the letter to his fiancée, Julie W, and told his publisher to send to Mrs. Polaková copies of all his books. Then the two of them met at a café in Prague in October 1919. They soon began to exchange letters. She was a Czech girl, born in 1896 as the daughter of a famous physician Jan Jesenský in Vienna, a specialist in jaws reconstruction. She was versatile and talented. According to Pawel, Jan Jesenský was a radical nationalist and anti-Semite.

Milena early became involved in radical leftist circles and was politically compromised. She entered avant-garde circles, took drugs, excelled in wearing shocking clothes, and began to study medicine, something his father had always taken for granted. She had, from early years, been assisting him during surgery. Milena married Ernst Pollak, a jet-set man of letters, an amateur philosopher and a banker, and Werfel and Brod's friend. Pollak also was considered to be something of a "sexual athlete." He was of Jewish descent. In all respects, Milena was rebellious, and this, unfortunately, led her father to incarcerate his daughter - whose mother had previously died - at a mental hospital for nine

months in 1917! She managed to escape, though, after that, her father broke all contact with her. She followed Pollak, with whom she married in 1918, to Vienna, where he sought membership in the renowned philosophical club, the "Vienna Circle," under the famous professors Schlick and Carnap's leadership. Ernst consistently refused to give Milena any money. Right after the Great War, there was chaos in Vienna, and it was then especially difficult for a Czech, and indeed for a girl without any thorough education, to get any work there. Milena was even considering becoming a prostitute. She suffered from malnutrition and sought translation jobs, mostly translations from German to Czech.

Kafka's relationship with the powerful Milena became very stormy. They only met a few times IRL. Kafka asked Milena to move to Prague, and Milena wanted Kafka to come to Vienna. It was not long before Kafka, full of growing anxiety, 1921 refused to meet Milena. The continuing correspondence between them developed into a bizarre struggle. It was no longer a "one-way terror" like in the case of the relationship with Felice.

F.K. and Milena were now both of them sick. Kafka's T.B. had deteriorated - something he did not want to face but was forced to realize, among other things, mainly by his sister Ottla. Milena had apparently also had a bout of tuberculosis - and her husband also had become ill, and she told Kafka in letters that she had to and wanted to take care of Ernst. Milena periodically also was a morphine addict and a cocainist, adventurous as she was. At this time,

F.K.'s sister Valli married, which almost shocked Kafka, who was always extremely sensitive to changes. Milena thus did not want to leave her sick husband, and the relationship with F.K. ended in November 1920. From December 1920 to August 1921, Kafka lived at a sanatorium in the Tatra Mountains. In the spring of 1922, Milena visited F.K. in Prague a few times. F.K. generally saw Milena as more robust and had more insight than he, and he knew that she, although sick at the time, was an extraordinary woman fit for life. The last time they saw each other was in June 1923.
Some say that The Castle is about Milena. Kafka began writing this novel on the evening of 27 January 1922, when he arrived at the mountain resort of Spindelmühle in Riesengebirge. M. Blanchot – the French writer hailed by Adorno - is questioning the prevalent assumption that there is a "Milena portrait" in Frieda of The Castle...
Milena divorced Pollak in 1925. She became a resistance activist against Hitler in 1939 and died in Ravensbrück in 1944, aged 48.

During the Milena years, Kafka composed The Castle, The truth-seeking dog, and The Hunger artist.

DORA D.

In July of 1923, on a Baltic Sea trip with his sister Valli and her children, Kafka met Dora Diamant. Dora pretended to be 17, but she was at the time 25, while Kafka was 40. Dora [Dworja] Diamant [Dymant] originally came from Pabiance in Poland, and she was a daughter of a relatively successful Jewish orthodox Chassidic businessman. She seems to have been on the run from the prospects of life within the hometown's narrow Jewish community. Having lived in Krakow and Berlin, in July 1923, she worked as a volunteer taking care of children in Müritz, where she met Franz. They fell in love with each other, spent three weeks together, and soon decided to live together in Berlin. Kafka had, due to his bad health, taken leave from his work. Dora stayed with him in Berlin. Franz wanted to leave old times behind. Dora was teaching him Hebrew, a language he devoted much time to trying to master. From time to time, F.K. thought of trying to leave Europe for Palestine. When Kafka met Dora, she held a sermon for the children in the orphanage where she worked, and on one of their first private meetings, she read the book of Isaiah aloud in Hebrew to him. Franz told her that she seemed to have qualities as an actor and urged that she become one, which later also happened.

Later, in the autumn, Kafka wrote a letter to Dora's father and asked him for her hand. After consulting a Rabbi, the father answered back with a negative answer. F.K. was not an orthodox Jew, and this fact ended the whole matter. Living in Berlin

with Dora was the first time F.K. lived with somebody outside his family. Dora seems to have been a clear-minded, intelligent, empathetic, and strong-willed young woman, and she also seems to have supported Kafka, encouraging him to shift to a more natural approach to life.

Nevertheless, during this time, Kafka continued to write his "animal stories," like The Burrow, tales of utter loneliness. Eventually, T.B. forced him off to Prague in March 1924 and in April to the sanatorium Kierling on Vienna's outskirts. This sanatorium was small and quiet, in contrast to a hospital. Dora followed him there and stayed with him. Along with Kafka's friend, the physician Robert Klopstock, she was with him throughout the last time, and very soon, after having been visited by Max Brod and Elli, his eldest sister, Kafka died on June 3, 1924. On June 6, Milena's obituary appeared in Národní Lísty. On the 11th of June, Kafka was buried at the Jewish cemetery in Prague-Strachnitz.

After Franz's death, she secretly kept an unknown number of Kafka's notebooks and several letters, which remained in her possession, despite Brod's request to her to give them over to him until they were stolen from her apartment in Berlin in a 1933, Gestapo raid.

Dora died in London in 1952, aged 54.

During the years with Dora, Kafka wrote Er, and Josephine the singer, his last story.

MAX BROD

" A whole bunch of critics seems to have made up their mind to misinterpret him."

(M. Brod)

Max Brod - 1884-1968 - was born in Prague in an upper-class Jewish family. His father was a banker. Max studied law and graduated in 1907. He married in 1913 and worked at the postal service in Prague until 1924. In 1910 he became active in the Zionist movement and was in 1918 a founder of the Jewish National Council of Czechoslovakia. Between 1918 and 1929, Max worked as a governmental press and information officer. The receptive, multitalented, and energetic Brod later became a literary critic for Prager Tageblatt and a music critic. In his books, he was strongly influenced by a kind of decadence called "Indifferentism," e.g., Tod den Toten 1906 and Schloss Nornepygge. Brod's early works often display the cultural clashes between Jews and Christians in the early 20ieth century, as in Jüdinnen and Arnold Beer: Das Schicksal eines Juden. Later works frequently reflected Brod's interest in Zionism. Among his most famous works is the erotically

charged Die Frau, Nach der man sich sehnt (1927), the historical novel Tycho Brahe´s Weg zu Gott, and a book on ideas, Heidentum, Christentum, Judentum (1921). In his widespread biography of Kafka, Brod emphasizes Kafka as a person possessing a certain distinctive talent, timidity, and a vast mysteriousness, but Brod also describes him as a physically bold person. In Franz Kafka, Glauben und Lehre Brod puts the religious aspect in the center, but also pointed at Flaubert's influence on Kafka. Brod focuses on how the FK´s aphorisms crystallize a doctrine of the "indestructibility" of human life and how Kafka claimed spiritual life as the only true life. Brod, in 1953 adapted Kafka's The Castle for the theatre. Brod here even incorporated the parable Before the Law. Kafka's own "testament," which he left among his papers to Brod, clearly stated:

"Dearest Max,

Maybe I will this time not come on my feet again, / ... /

In this case, therefore: my last will concerning all that I have written:

Of all that I have written the only books that counts are: The judgment, The Stoker, The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony, A Country Doctor and the story A hunger artist. (The few copies of Betrachtung can be left as they are...). When I say that these five books and this story counts, I do mean by this, that I have no desire that they should be printed anew and be passed on to the future. On the contrary: would they completely go lost, it would suit my real desire. If people want to keep the small books, I will of course not try to hinder that.

However, everything else from my hand (in print in magazines, in manuscripts and in letters), must without exception, unread (though I do not object to you looking through them, but rather you did not, and in any case: do not let anyone else see them…) be burned, and this as soon as possible,

this I beg you

Franz. "

Brod felt he could not complete the wish of his friend, and he certainly did not. This decision has later become very much debated. Through his edits, Brod has mainly of the three novels, 1925-27, left an important and lasting imprint in the entire History of Literature. Many people worldwide have read The Trial, Amerika, and The Castle in the same costume in which MB de facto "handed them over to the world" ... One might in the structure of these editions meet, if not a hidden agenda, yet strong preferences and tendencies, which was all Brod´s own. Many later interpretations of Kafka's works, the “Brodian Kafka,” deal with an imaginary writer. It is this imaginary Kafka who largely, and for a long time, has become Kafka. Writing about a true, real Kafka is still impossible today because of the manuscripts' conditions. Critical editions are of some help, but Brod's damage is irreversible and cannot be overestimated. Beissner has summarized the criticism often nowadays directed at Max Brod:

”Max Brod has made program music out of the works of Franz Kafka.”.

It seems evident that Brod, much earlier, should have presented the world with the Kafka heritage in its entirety. However, it can be supposed that Brod himself thought he was utterly loyal to his late friend. In 1939 Brod migrated with his wife to Palestine and did not return to Prague until 1964. He died in 1968 in Tel Aviv.

LIFE AS A not widely KNOWN WRITER OF SHORT STORIES

What was then the big reaction of Kafka in relation to his time's major historical and cultural events? Was it one of actual rebellion, a subversive, revolutionary one, or was he an aesthetic, more interested in using his environment and the horrors of his time for his enjoyment, quite like we know he used people around him, like Felice? The authorship of F.K. has perhaps more to do with Modernity as a spiritual phenomenon than with the war and social struggle's direct experience. His "soulmate" Robert Walser was a more active portrayer of daily social life. Kafka's The Verdict and Amerika were both created before the outbreak of the Great War, i.e., within the Habsburg empire's structure. Kafka's work, only in part or in aspect, mirrors the political and cultural climate. There was a spiritual emptiness, anguish, and rootlessness that Lavelles,

Maritain, Mounier, Sartre, and others in existentialism later formulated. This philosophy was mainly about the impossibility of formulating maxims to live by and was affected by Nietzsche's (1844-1900) thoughts. Both existentialism and modernity itself were also about the enormous confusion created by Freud's ideas. The existentialists would later think of Kafka as a clear-sighted predecessor, formulating insights concerning Modern Man's conditions.

After his first publication, Betrachtung, Kafka became primarily known among connoisseurs in Prague and Vienna as a writer in the Robert Walser style. He did not seem to seek success as a writer to any prize. On the contrary, he knew that he had enormous talent, and he was determined not to waste it. Kafka worked extremely conscientiously and was careful with every aspect of the craftsmanship, up to the choice of paper and typos. His quarrels with his publishers were endless. His goal was to write something nobody had written before.

Kafka died in Vienna from tuberculosis - after many years of sickness - at the age of 40 years and 11 months. He was buried in the Jewish Cemetery in Syranice in Prague in the presence of but a few people, including Dora. On the tombstone, his name is engraved in Czech and German. The names of the

parents were added later on the same stone in 1931 and 1934.

Kafka´s three sisters do not have any graves. Elli and Valli and their husbands were both murdered between 1941 and 1942, maybe in Lodz and Ottla in Auschwitz 1943. On a marble stone close to Franz´s tombstone are engraved the following:

"In memory of the sisters of the famous Prague-Jewish author Franz Kafka, murdered during the Nazi occupation 1942-1943.".
