

## FRANZ KAFKA IN CONTEXT

Franz Kafka (1883–1924) lived through one of the most turbulent periods in modern history, witnessing a world war, the dissolution of an empire and the foundation of a new nation state. But the early twentieth century was also a time of social progress and aesthetic experimentation. Kafka's novels and short stories reflect their author's keen but critical engagement with the big questions of his time, and yet often Kafka is still cast as a solitary figure with little or no connection to his age. *Franz Kafka in Context* aims to redress this perception. In thirty-five short, accessible essays, leading international scholars explore Kafka's personal and working life, his reception of art and culture, his engagement with political and social issues, and his ongoing reception and influence. Together they offer a nuanced and historically grounded image of a writer whose work continues to fascinate readers from all backgrounds.

CAROLIN DUTTLINGER is Associate Professor in German at the University of Oxford, a Fellow of Wadham College, and Co-Director of the Oxford Kafka Research Centre. An international expert on German modernism, she has been awarded numerous prizes and fellowships, including the Zvi-Meitar/Vice-Chancellor Oxford University Research Prize in the Humanities. She is the author of *Kafka and Photography* (2007) and *The Cambridge Introduction to Franz Kafka* (2013), the editor of *Franz Kafkas 'Betrachtung': Neue Lektüren* (2014) and the co-editor of *Walter Benjamins anthropologisches Denken* (2012) and *Weimar Photography in Context* (2017).

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# FRANZ KAFKA IN CONTEXT

EDITED BY  
CAROLIN DUTTLINGER  
*University of Oxford*



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*Notes on Contributors*

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Czech interwar avant-garde and on figures such as Kafka, Rilke, Benjamin and Lukács. He recently edited a special issue of *Central Europe* titled 'Cultures of Bohemia in the Twentieth Century' and is currently writing a book on Kafka and Czech modernism.



## Chronology

- 1883 3 July: Franz Kafka is born in Prague to Hermann Kafka (1852–1931) and his wife, Julie, née Löwy (1856–1934).
- 1885 Birth of Kafka's younger brother Georg, who dies of measles at the age of fifteen months.
- 1887 Birth of Kafka's younger brother Heinrich, who dies of meningitis at the age of six months.
- 1889 September: Kafka starts school at the Deutsche Volks- und Bürgerschule in Prague. Birth of Kafka's sister Gabriele ('Elli'; d. 1941).
- 1890 Birth of Kafka's sister Valerie ('Valli'; d. 1942).
- 1892 Birth of Kafka's sister Ottilie ('Ottla'; d. 1943).
- 1893 Kafka transfers to the Altstädter deutsches Gymnasium housed in the Kinsky-Palais at the Altstädter Ring.
- 1896 June: Kafka celebrates his Bar-Mitzvah at the Zigeuner-Synagoge in Prague; the invitations sent by Hermann Kafka refer to his son's 'confirmation'.
- 1897 Anti-German attacks by Czech nationalists soon extend to Jewish businesses; the Kafkas' haberdashery shop is spared.
- 1901 July: Kafka passes his *Abitur* (A-levels) and then goes on his first longer trip, to the German North Sea islands of Norderney and Heligoland. October: Kafka matriculates at the German-language section of the Karl-Ferdinands-Universität (Charles University) in Prague. After two weeks of studying chemistry, he changes to law; in the course of his degree he also attends seminars and lectures in philosophy, psychology, German literature, art history, Latin and Greek.
- 1902 In the summer Kafka and his friend Paul Kisch make plans to move to Munich to study German literature but, unlike Kisch, Kafka continues with his law degree in Prague. He meets

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- Max Brod (1884–1968), who will become his close friend, at a student society event. A prolific writer in his own right, Brod will later become Kafka's posthumous editor.
- 1906 Kafka gains his doctorate in law with the lowest pass mark and begins an internship in the Prague law courts.
- 1907 Kafka starts working for the Prague branch of the Trieste-based insurance company Assicurazioni Generali.
- 1908 Kafka moves to the state-run Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt für das Königreich Böhmen (Workers' Accident Insurance Institute for the Kingdom of Bohemia). Eight of his short prose pieces are published in the journal *Hyperion*.
- 1909 September: Kafka goes on holiday with Max Brod and his brother Otto to Riva on Lake Garda. On their way home, they attend an airshow in Brescia, which will become the subject of Kafka's short text 'Die Aeroplane in Brescia' ('The Aeroplanes in Brescia').
- 1910 October: trip to Paris with Max and Otto Brod; Kafka returns home early because of an abscess.
- 1911 August–September: trip with Max Brod to Switzerland, Northern Italy and Paris. In the autumn and winter Kafka attends the performances of a Yiddish theatre troupe at the Café Savoy in Prague and befriends the actor Jizchak Löwy.
- 1912 June–July: trip to Weimar via Leipzig with Max Brod. In Leipzig Kafka meets Brod's publisher, Kurt Wolff, who offers him a contract for a volume of short prose. At the end of the trip Kafka spends three weeks alone at the Jungborn sanatorium in the Harz Mountains. 13 August: Kafka meets his later fiancée, the Berlin-based office clerk Felice Bauer (1887–1960), in the house of Brod's parents. September: Kafka sends his first letter to Bauer. Two days later, on 22/23 September, he writes his short story 'Das Urteil' ('The Judgement'), widely considered his breakthrough text, in a single night. September: Kafka starts working on his first novel, *Der Verschollene* (*The Man who Disappeared*). November–December: he writes *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*). December: Kafka's first book, the collection *Betrachtung* (*Meditation*), is published by Kurt Wolff in Leipzig.
- 1913 Kafka visits Felice Bauer three times in Berlin. May: *Der Heizer* (*The Stoker*), the first chapter of *The Man who Disappeared*, is published as a self-contained volume by Wolff in the

- avant-garde series *Der jüngste Tag* (*The Last Judgement*).  
 September: Kafka attends a conference on accident prevention in Vienna, and also looks in on the Eleventh Zionist Congress. From Vienna he travels on to Riva (northern Italy), where he stays in a sanatorium.
- 1914 1 June: Kafka and Felice Bauer get officially engaged in Berlin. 12 July: the engagement is dissolved by Bauer, who confronts Kafka about his secret correspondence with her friend Grete Bloch. Kafka goes on holiday with the writer Ernst Weiss in the Danish resort of Marielyst. 1 August: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia; beginning of the First World War. August: Kafka starts writing his second novel *Der Process* (*The Trial*). October: he takes time off work to focus on *The Trial* but writes 'In der Strafkolonie' ('In the Penal Colony') instead.
- 1915 January: Kafka gives up work on *The Trial*; he meets up with Felice Bauer for the first time since their break-up and reads her the doorkeeper parable from *The Trial*. December: *The Metamorphosis* is published by Wolff. The playwright Carl Sternheim, who has been awarded the Fontane Prize for literature, passes on the prize money to Kafka.
- 1916 Reconciliation with Felice Bauer. July: Kafka and Bauer spend ten days together in the Bohemian resort Marienbad (Mariánské Lázně). 'Das Urteil' ('The Judgement') is published as a self-contained volume by Wolff. November 1916 – April 1917: Kafka uses a house his sister Ottla has rented in the Castle District as a writing retreat, producing the stories that will make up the collection *Ein Landarzt* (*A Country Doctor*).
- 1917 July: Kafka and Felice Bauer visit Bauer's sister Else Braun in Budapest and renew their engagement. 12–13 and 13–14 August: Kafka suffers two nocturnal haemorrhages, which are then diagnosed as tubercular. September: he moves to the Bohemian village of Zürau (Sìřem) to live with his sister Ottla. December: visit by Bauer; the engagement is dissolved.
- 1918 May: Kafka returns to Prague and resumes work. October: he contracts the Spanish flu. November: he returns to work for four days and is given leave again. He stays in a hotel in Schelesen (Želízy).
- 1919 January: Kafka meets Julie Wohryzeck (1891–1944) while in Schelesen. April: he returns to Prague and to work. September: he gets engaged to Wohryzeck; his parents try to jeopardize the

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- match. October: *In der Strafkolonie (In the Penal Colony)* is published by Wolff.
- 1920 February/March: Kafka begins an intense correspondence with the married journalist and translator Milena Jesenká-Polak (1896–1944). May: *Ein Landarzt (A Country Doctor)* is published by Wolff. Late June/early July: Kafka spends six days with Jesenká in Vienna. July: he ends his engagement with Julie Wohryzeck. December: Kafka is granted health leave again; he stays in a sanatorium in Matliary in the Tatra Mountains until August 1921.
- 1921 January: Kafka ends the correspondence with Milena Jesenká. September: he returns to work but takes three further months' sick leave from October.
- 1922 January: Kafka's sick leave is extended again until April. He stays in a hotel in Spindlermühle (Špindlerův Mlýn) in the Tatra Mountains, where he writes his final novel, *Das Schloss (The Castle)*. 1 July: Kafka is granted early retirement on health grounds by the Insurance Institute.
- 1923 July: Kafka is on holiday in Müritz on the Baltic Sea, where he meets Dora Diamant (1898–1952). September: Kafka moves to Berlin where he lives with Diamant; because of the hyper-inflation their financial circumstances are very strained.
- 1924 March: because of his declining health Kafka returns to Prague; he writes his final short story, 'Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse' ('Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People'). April: it is diagnosed that his tuberculosis has spread to the larynx. Accompanied by Dora Diamant, he moves from a sanatorium in Ortmann (Lower Austria) to a laryngological clinic in Vienna, and from there to a small sanatorium in Kierling near Klosterneuburg. 3 June: Kafka dies, with Diamant at his side. August: his collection *Ein Hungerkünstler (A Hunger Artist)* is published by Die Schmiede.
- 1925 *Der Process (The Trial)*, edited by Max Brod, is published by Die Schmiede.
- 1926 *Das Schloss (The Castle)*, edited by Brod, is published by Wolff.
- 1927 *Amerika*, now known by Kafka's own title, *Der Verschollene (The Man who Disappeared)*, edited by Brod, is published by Wolff.
- 1939 Max Brod leaves Prague on the last train before the German invasion, taking Kafka's manuscripts with him, and reaches Palestine.

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- 1956 Brod transfers the manuscripts (with the exception of *The Trial*) to a bank vault in Zurich.
- 1961 The Oxford German scholar Malcolm Pasley, with the permission of Kafka's heirs, transfers the manuscripts to the Bodleian Library Oxford.

## *Abbreviations and Note on the Texts*

The following abbreviations are used in this book. Where a published translation is available, all quotations are referenced first to the English version and then to the German original. On occasion, translations have been tacitly modified. For works that have not been translated, the contributors have provided their own translations.

Unless otherwise stated, ellipses are editorial rather than part of the original text.

### **Fictional Writings**

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| <i>C</i>   | <i>The Castle</i> , trans. Anthea Bell (Oxford University Press, 2009)   |
| <i>CSS</i> | <i>The Complete Stories</i> , ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York, NY: Schocken, 1976)  |
| <i>DL</i>  | <i>Drucke zu Lebzeiten</i> , ed. Wolf Kittler, Hans-Gerd Koch and Gerhard Neumann. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996)              |
| <i>DLA</i> | <i>Drucke zu Lebzeiten: Apparatband</i> , ed. Wolf Kittler, Hans-Gerd Koch and Gerhard Neumann. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1996) |
| <i>HA</i>  | <i>A Hunger Artist and Other Stories</i> , trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford University Press, 2012)  |
| <i>M</i>   | <i>The Metamorphosis and Other Stories</i> , trans. Joyce Crick (Oxford University Press, 2009)  |
| <i>MD</i>  | <i>The Man who Disappeared (America)</i> , trans. Ritchie Robertson (Oxford University Press, 2012)  |
| <i>NSI</i> | <i>Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I</i> , ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993)                            |

- xxiv *List of Abbreviations and Note on the Texts*
- NSIA* *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I: Apparatband*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993)
- NSII* *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992)
- NSIIA* *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II: Apparatband*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1992)
- ON* *The Blue Octavo Notebooks*, ed. Max Brod and trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 1991)
- P* *Der Proceß*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990)
- PA* *Der Proceß: Apparatband*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990)
- S* *Das Schloß*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982)
- SA* *Das Schloß: Apparatband*, ed. Malcolm Pasley. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1982)
- T* *The Trial*, trans. Mike Mitchell (Oxford University Press, 2009)
- V* *Der Verschollene*, ed. Jost Schillemeit. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983)
- VA* *Der Verschollene: Apparatband*, ed. Jost Schillemeit. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983)
- Z* *The Zürau Aphorisms*, trans. Michael Hofmann; intro. and afterword Roberto Calasso (London: Harvill Secker, 2006)

### Non-Fictional Writings

- A* *Amtliche Schriften*, ed. Klaus Hermsdorf and Benno Wagner. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004)

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- AM* *Amtliche Schriften: Materialienband*, ed. Klaus Hermsdorf and Benno Wagner. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2004)
- B* *Briefe 1902–1924*, ed. Max Brod (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1975)
- B1* *Briefe 1900–1912*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999)
- B2* *Briefe 1913 – März 1914*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2001)
- B3* *Briefe April 1914–1917*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2005)
- B4* *Briefe 1918–1920*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2013)
- BE* *Briefe an die Eltern aus den Jahren 1922–1924*, ed. Josef Čermák and Martin Svatoš (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993)
- BF* *Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1998)
- BM* *Briefe an Milena*, ed. Jürgen Born and Michael Müller, extended and revised edn (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999)
- BOF* *Briefe an Ottla und die Familie*, ed. Hartmut Binder and Klaus Wagenbach (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981)
- D* *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910–23*, ed. Max Brod (London: Minerva, 1992)
- EFB* Malcolm Pasley (ed.), *Max Brod, Franz Kafka: Eine Freundschaft*, vol. II: *Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1989)
- EFR* Malcolm Pasley (ed.), *Max Brod, Franz Kafka: Eine Freundschaft*, vol. I: *Reisetagebücher* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987)
- LF* *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (London: Minerva, 1992)
- LF FE* *Letters to Friends, Family and Editors*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (Richmond: Oneworld Classics, 2011)
- LM* *Letters to Milena*, ed. Willy Haas, trans. Tania Stern and James Stern (London: Minerva, 1992)



- xxvi                    *List of Abbreviations and Note on the Texts*
- LOF*                  *Letters to Ottla and the Family*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston, ed. N. N. Glatzer (New York, NY: Schocken, 1982)
- O*                      *The Office Writings*, ed. Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg and Benno Wagner, trans. Eric Patton with Ruth Hein (Princeton University Press, 2008)
- TB*                    *Tagebücher*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller and Malcolm Pasley. *Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990)
- TBA*                  *Tagebücher: Apparatband*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller and Malcolm Pasley. *Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990)
- TBK*                  *Tagebücher: Kommentarband*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller and Malcolm Pasley. *Franz Kafka: Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe: Kritische Ausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990)