A COMPANION TO THE WORKS OF

Franz Kafka

EDITED BY JAMES ROLLESTON

A Companion to the Works of Franz Kafka

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

Edited by James Hardin
(*South Carolina*)

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Edited by
James Rolleston

CAMDEN HOUSE

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For Rosalind

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Preface

THIS VOLUME HAS COME into being at the initiative of James Hardin, whose vision for his Series is compelling: the best possible scholars are to be invited to write original essays that advance literary scholarship, while at the same time asking the broad questions that interest readers who are not scholars. With a single author, such as Franz Kafka, it is also essential to offer an overall account of his career, bringing all major texts into view. I have been fortunate indeed that such an eminent group of Kafka scholars accepted my invitation. And Kafka himself makes it easy to embrace Dr. Hardin's multiple goals: no critical issue concerning Kafka's work stays obscure for long, since his sentences have a way of addressing, directly and disconcertingly, the daily lives of subsequent generations.

We are particularly fortunate to have Walter Sokel's meditation on his "life of reading Kafka," which has also meant reading a half century of Kafka criticism — the ever renewed struggle to make "sense" of Kafka's potent enigmas. With slight modifications Sokel's essay also introduces his new collection of Kafka-essays, *The Myth of Power and the Self* (2002); I am grateful to Arthur Evans, director of the Wayne State University Press, for facilitating this dual event.

The present book has benefited from the close critical reading of James Walker, senior editor at Camden House: his probing queries were widely welcomed by the contributors. Finally I want to thank my outstanding assistant, Eleanor Johnson, whose command of both technology and style have been indispensable.

James L. Rolleston
Durham, N.C.
March 2002

Kafka's Works by Year of First Appearance, With Date of First English Translation

1908 Eight stories and sketches, among those later collected in the volume *Betrachtung,* published in the journal *Hyperion:*

"Der Kaufmann" ("The Tradesman," 1948)

"Zerstreutes Hinausschaun" ("Absent-Minded Window-Gazing," 1945)

"Der Nachhauseweg" ("The Way Home," 1945)

"Die Vorüberlaufenden" ("Passers-By," 1945)

"Kleider" ("Clothes," 1948)

"Der Fahrgast," ("On the Tram," 1948)

"Die Abweisung" ("Rejection," 1948)

"Die Bäume" ("The Trees," 1945)

1909 "Gespräch mit dem Beter" ("Conversation with the Supplicant"), "Gespräch mit dem Betrunkenen" ("Conversation with the Drunk"), from the manuscript of *Beschreibung eines Kampfes* (*Description of a Struggle,* 1958)

"Die Aeroplane in Brescia" ("The Aeroplanes at Brescia," 1947)

1910 Five stories from *Betrachtung* published in *Bohemia* as "Betrachtungen" (Meditations): includes four of the 1908 group (two temporarily retitled) plus "Zum Nachdenken für Herrenreiter" ("Reflections for Gentlemen-Jockeys," 1948)

1913 *Betrachtung* (*Meditation,* included in *The Penal Colony,* 1948). Collection includes nine stories beyond the nine previously published in 1908 and 1910:

"Kinder auf der Landstraße" ("Children on a Country Road," 1945)

"Entlarvung eines Bauernfängers" ("Unmasking a Confidence Trickster," 1948)

"Der plötzliche Spaziergang" ("The Sudden Walk," 1948)

"Entschlüße" ("Resolutions," 1948)

"Der Ausflug ins Gebirge," ("Excursion into the Mountains," 1948)

"Das Unglück des Junggesellen" ("Bachelor's Ill Luck," 1948)

"Das Gassenfenster," ("The Street Window," 1948)

"Wunsch, Indianer zu Werden" ("The Wish to Be a Red Indian," 1945)
"Unglücklichsein" ("Unhappiness," 1945)
"Das Urteil" ("The Judgment," 1945), written 1912
"Der Heizer. Ein Fragment" ("The Stoker," first chapter of *Amerika,* 1946), written 1911–12

1915 "Die Verwandlung" ("The Metamorphosis," 1937), written 1912

1916 "Vor dem Gesetz" ("Before the Law," 1948), written 1914

1917 "Schakale und Araber" ("Jackals and Arabs," 1942) and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" ("A Report to an Academy," 1934), published together as "Zwei Tiergeschichten" ("Two Animal Stories")

1918 "Ein Landarzt" ("A Country Doctor," 1945)

1919 "In der Strafkolonie" ("In the Penal Colony," 1941), written 1914
Ein Landarzt (*A Country Doctor,* 1948), collection of stories written 1917 except where noted:
"Der neue Advokat" ("The New Advocate")
"Ein Landarzt" ("A Country Doctor")
"Auf der Galerie" ("Up in the Gallery")
"Ein altes Blatt" ("An Old Manuscript," 1940)
"Vor dem Gesetz" ("Before the Law," 1948), written 1914
"Schakale und Araber" ("Jackals and Arabs," 1942)
"Ein Besuch im Bergwerk" ("A Visit to the Mine")
"Das nächste Dorf" ("The Next Village")
"Eine kaiserliche Botschaft" ("An Imperial Message")
"Die Sorge des Hausvaters" ("The Cares of a Family Man")
"Elf Söhne" ("Eleven Sons")
"Ein Brudermord" ("A Fratricide")
"Ein Traum" ("A Dream"), written 1914–15
"Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" ("A Report to an Academy," 1934)

1921 "Der Kübelreiter" ("The Bucket Rider," 1938), written 1916–17

1922 "Erstes Leid" ("First Sorrow," 1937)
"Ein Hungerkünstler" ("A Hunger Artist," 1938)

1924 *Ein Hungerkünstler* (*A Hunger Artist,* 1948), collection includes:
"Erstes Leid"
"Eine kleine Frau" ("A Little Woman," 1943)
"Ein Hungerkünstler"
"Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse" ("Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk," 1942)

1925 *Der Prozess* (*The Trial,* 1935), written 1914–15

1926 *Das Schloß* (*The Castle,* 1930), written 1921–22

1927 *Amerika* (*Amerika,* 1938), written 1911–12

1931 *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer* (*The Great Wall of China,* 1946). First posthumous collection of stories, includes:
"Der Dorfschullehrer / Der Riesenmaulwurf" ("The Village Schoolmaster / The Giant Mole"), written 1914–15
"Die Brücke" ("The Bridge"), written 1916
"Der Jäger Gracchus" ("The Hunter Gracchus"), written 1917
"Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer," written 1917
"Der Schlag ans Hoftor" ("The Knock at the Manor Gate"), written 1917
"Der Nachbar" ("My Neighbor"), written 1917
"Eine Kreuzung" ("A Crossbreed / A Sport"), written 1917
"Eine alltägliche Verwirrung" ("A Common Confusion"), written 1917
"Die Wahrheit über Sancho Pansa" ("The Truth About Sancho Pansa"), written 1917
"Das Schweigen der Sirenen" ("The Silence of the Sirens), written 1917
"Zur Frage der Gesetze" ("The Problem of Our Laws"), written 1920
"Prometheus," written 1918
"Das Stadtwappen" ("The City Coat of Arms"), written 1920
"Kleine Fabel" ("A Little Fable"), written 1920
"Die Abweisung" ("The Refusal"), written 1920
"Das Ehepaar" ("The Married Couple"), written 1922
"Von den Gleichnissen" ("On Parables"), written 1922
"Forschungen eines Hundes" ("Investigations of a Dog"), written 1922
"Der Bau" ("The Burrow"), written 1923–24

1936 *Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass* (*Description of a Struggle,* 1958). Second posthumous collection, includes:

"Beschreibung eines Kampfes," written 1904–9

"Blumfeld, ein älterer Junggeselle" ("Blumfeld, an Elderly Bachelor," 1938), written 1915

"Der Gruftwächter" ("The Warden of the Tomb," 1958), dramatic fragment, written 1916–17

"Heimkehr" ("Homecoming"), written 1920

"Nachts" ("At Night"), written 1920

"Die Truppenaushebung" ("The Conscription of Troops," 1945), written 1920

"Gemeinschaft" ("Fellowship"), written 1920

"Die Prüfung" ("The Test"), written 1920

"Poseidon" (1946), written 1920

"Der Geier" ("The Vulture," 1938), written 1920

"Der Steuermann" ("The Helmsman"), written 1920

"Der Kreisel" ("The Top"), written 1920

"Gibs auf!" ("Give it up!"), written 1922

"Der Aufbruch" ("The Departure"), written 1922

1951 *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande* (*Wedding Preparations in the Country,* 1954), written 1907–8

Abbreviations of Kafka's Works

B — *Briefe 1902–1924*. Ed. Max Brod. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer; New York: Schocken, 1958.

BB — *Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer*. Ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.

BK — *Beschreibung eines Kampfes: Novellen, Skizzen, Aphorismen aus dem Nachlass*. New York: Schocken, 1946.

BV — *Brief an den Vater*. Faksimile Edition mit einem Nachwort von Joachim Unseld. 1952. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994.

BV/ZF — "Brief an den Vater." *Zur Frage der Gesetze*. Ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.

C — *The Castle: A New Translation, Based on the Restored Text*. Trans. Mark Harman. New York: Schocken Books: 1998. Paperback: 1999.

CS — *The Complete Stories*. Ed. Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken, 1971, 1983.

CollS — *Collected Stories*, ed. Gabriel Josipovici, New York: Knopf/Everyman's Library, 1993

D — *Drucke zu Lebzeiten*. Ed. Wolf Kittler, Hans-Gerd Koch, and Gerhard Neumann. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.

EP — *Das Ehepaar und andere Schriften aus dem Nachlaß*. Ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.

F — *Briefe an Felice und andere Korrespondenz aus der Verlobungszeit*. Ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1967.

H — *Hochzeitsvorbereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlaß*. Ed. Max Brod. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1953.

L — *Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten*. Ed. Hans-Gerd Koch. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.

LF *Letters to Felice*. Trans. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth. Ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born. New York: Schocken Books, 1973.

LF/BV *Letter to His Father/Brief an den Vater* (bilingual edition). Trans. Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. New York: Schocken, 1966.

LFFE *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*. Trans. Richard and Clara Winston. New York: Schocken, 1977.

M *Briefe an Milena*. Ed. Jürgen Born and Michael Müller. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1983.

NS I *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente I*. Ed. Malcolm Pasley. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer; New York: Schocken, 1993.

NS II *Nachgelassene Schriften und Fragmente II*. Ed. Jost Schillemeit. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer; New York: Schocken, 1992.

P *Der Proceß*. Ed. Malcolm Pasley. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1990.

S *Das Schloß*. Ed. Malcolm Pasley. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1982.

SA *Das Schloß, Apparatband*. Ed. Malcolm Pasley. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1982.

SE *Sämtliche Erzählungen*. Ed. Paul Raabe. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1981.

T *Tagebücher*. Ed. Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller, and Malcolm Pasley. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1990.

Tr *The Trial*. Trans. Breon Mitchell. New York: Schocken, 1998.

U *Das Urteil und andere Erzählungen*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997. (Based on: Franz Kafka, *Drucke zu Lebzeiten*. Kritische Ausgabe. Ed. Wolf Kittler, Hans-Gerd Koch, and Gerhard Neumann. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1994.)

Introduction: Kafka Begins

James Rolleston

FRANZ KAFKA REMAINS the most widely read German author of the twentieth century, and it is worth seeking some precision as to why this is so. W. H. Auden famously called him "the author who comes nearest to bearing the same kind of relation to our age as Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe bore to theirs" — yet he is an improbable Shakespeare: in his slender authorized corpus (he completed none of his three novels) there is no grand vision, no narrative culminating in usable meaning. Indeed it is the absence of these totalities that is the key to Kafka's enduring actuality. The century he uncannily anticipated was defined by the crisis of secular modernity: unable to maintain the guarantees of universal scientific and social progress, modernity has been convulsed by totalizing world views, such as fascism and religious fundamentalism, offering the very psychological stabilization that modernity resists. Kafka's spare, lucid, yet ultimately enigmatic texts confront, from countless different perspectives, the vulnerability of a modern psyche seeking refuge in the materiality and conventional assumptions of the present.

Because Kafka's best friend Max Brod possessed special authority as his literary executor, Brod's view of Kafka's stories as existentially religious gained canonical status in the 1920s and 1930s. But the more closely these texts were read, the less religious coherence they seemed to offer. They were perhaps definable as allegories or parables — but what did they allegorize, how could their "truth" be translated? Gradually it became evident that whatever worldview came to dominate the Western intellectual scene — existentialist, structuralist, postmodern — Kafka's writing seemed to respond eagerly, as if pioneering the new trend. To be sure, the "religious" reading could never become obsolete; Kafka's strategic use of Christian and Jewish motifs is unmistakable. But religious "truth," even one accessible only by negation of the world as presented, became ever less plausible. The decisive turn in twentieth-century Kafka studies, to which the present volume is obviously indebted, was the inversion of the modernist purification of language, so important to Kafka himself — the reactivation of the biographical dimension he had

so rigorously excluded. This turn does not imply a new positivism (art "explained" by life), but is frankly heuristic: if Kafka's literary texts, diaries, letters, dreams are read in the context of the historical upheavals occurring all around him, what new points of entry to his achievement may we expect? We have learned a great deal about books he read, also about verbal choices he made when writing fiction; does all this material give us insight into the suggestiveness and durability of Kafka's works, including the fragmentary ones? The answer is a conditional yes, the condition being that a reader start by responding unreservedly to the intensity of Kafka's achieved stories.

Franz Kafka was born in Prague on 3 July 1883, eldest son of Hermann and Julie (née Löwy); two younger brothers died in infancy and his three sisters, Elli, Valli, and Ottla, were born in 1889, 1890, and 1892 respectively. This family constellation was decisive for Franz: he never really left Prague until near the end of his life (1923), and he became close to his sisters, particularly Ottla, in whose house in Zürau he convalesced in 1917–18 after the diagnosis of tuberculosis. His relations with his father were extremely difficult, being resolved (if at all) far too late, in the soberly accusatory "Brief an den Vater" (Letter to His Father) of 1919. He himself commented about the letter that it contained "Advokatenstreiche" (lawyer's tricks). Kafka trained as a lawyer, gaining his degree in 1906, and from 1908 until his formal retirement in 1922 worked for the semi-governmental Worker's Accident Insurance Company. He was a highly regarded official, but his work troubled him on two levels: he could not evade emotional involvement in the suits he tried, becoming interested in the socialist causes of the day; and he came to grudge the hours he spent at work, as his literary vocation became all-consuming — yet had to be pursued primarily at night.

Two particular experiences shaped Kafka, the best known being his "Heiratsversuche," or attempts to get married. He became engaged to marry three times, twice to a Berlin businesswoman, Felice Bauer, whom he met in August 1912, just over a month before he wrote his "break-through" story "Das Urteil" (The Judgment) in the single night of September 22–23. The tortuous, self-lacerating letters he wrote Felice were eventually published (1967) and render the dissolution of the engagements (1914, 1917) understandable; the diary entries from July 1914 convey his obsessive sense of being "on trial" for his own inadequacies — and contain the first sketches for *Der Process* (The Trial), which was then produced in its (incomplete) entirety in the fall and winter of 1914–15. The third engagement, to Julie Wohryzek in 1919, was, he felt (and contended in the "Brief an den Vater"), predestined to fail.

Kafka's second shaping experience was that of anti-semitism and its cultural impact on Jews, and it framed his life. His biographer Ernst Pawel reminds us of the frequent anti-semitic incidents in Bohemia, the Austro-Hungarian province where Kafka grew up, in the late nineteenth century (39–44). While Kafka's family were not particularly observant Jews, the conspicuous "identity" of Prague Jewry was inescapable. Kafka became increasingly interested in Jewish issues; in 1923, when he was already seriously ill (he died on 3 June 1924), he began studying Hebrew with a view toward emigration to Palestine. And his three sisters, as well as his close friend and Czech translator Milena Jesenská, all died in Nazi concentration camps between 1942 and 1944. Kafka spent the last year of his life in Berlin, his only "escape" from the multiple enclosures of his Prague-centered lifetime; his companion was an "Ostjüdin" (East European Jew), Dora Dymant. His heightened interest in the full range of Jewish experience gains its significance only in retrospect, but it offers yet another dimension to the symbiosis of his stories with the darkness and upheavals of the twentieth century.

Kafka's stories begin in the middle; or rather, near the end, as the very specific situational details seize hold of the hero's mind (sometimes his body too) and propel him forward. Indeed, as Henry Sussman reminds us below, the French critic Maurice Blanchot contended that Kafka's protagonists have in a sense already died; in the case of "Die Verwandlung" (The Metamorphosis, 1915) this thought probably occurs to most readers. Yet one can plausibly reverse this perspective and argue that the protagonists are "given birth" by the story, that, despite Kafka's deceptively "realistic," often quasi-conversational style, their prior existence as individuals lacks all specificity (here, of course, "Die Verwandlung" constitutes an elaborate exception). They seem to lack memory: when K. in *Das Schloß* (The Castle, 1926) "remembers" a past, his words appear contradictory, strategic, disingenuous. And Kafka himself lends support to the notion that birth is to be understood as a literary event. Famously he compared his story "Das Urteil" (The Judgment, 1913) to "eine regelrechte Geburt" (a regular birth, *T* 491). The contrasting status of non-literature, that is, his own life, is evoked in his diary for 24 January 1922: "Das Zögern vor der Geburt. Gibt es eine Seelenwanderung, dann bin ich noch nicht auf der untersten Stufe. Mein Leben ist das Zögern vor der Geburt" (Hesitation before birth. If there is a migration of souls, then I haven't yet reached the lowest level. My life is hesitation before birth, *T* 888, my translations).

My word for evoking this strange fusion of birth- and death-perspectives in a narrative would be hierarchy. The instant Kafka's char-

acters come into existence, each moment is lived vertically, in relation to some "higher" dimension from which a process of judgment continually emanates. In the opening chapter of *Das Schloß* this is extremely obvious: verbal exchanges and physical movements are subjected to instant analysis in K.'s "mind," an analysis that often seems unconnected to conventional notions of character or motivation. Clearly such a fusion of behavior and judgment corresponds to a religious view of the world, an assumption of some ultimate "external" validity, and the initial "religious" interpretation of Kafka can never become irrelevant, as several essays in this volume emphasize: Kafka's explicit religious interests (Judaism, Kierkegaard, etc.) were intense and ongoing. Yet religion presumes a doctrinal consistency in the "external" perspective from which worldly behavior is judged, and that is what we never find in Kafka. The protagonists' mental language is imbued with ethical and spiritual values, but these "higher" words emanate from and immediately return to the worldly struggle that has, as it were, given birth to these characters, and that, by virtue of its ceaseless temporality, destabilizes all striving toward wisdom or detachment. "Noch war er frei" (He was still free, *P* 13), thinks Josef K. in the opening chapter of *Der Proceß* (The Trial, 1925): freedom as a higher value, freedom as something tactical, a quasi-authorial awareness of the whole story to come (Stanley Corngold stresses the near-simultaneous production of the book's first and last chapters) — all these elements are indissolubly present in K.'s language. It is time itself, being-in-the-world, that precludes all stable understanding. When K.'s lawyer, in a later chapter, evokes at tedious length the Court's strange customs, we read his words (with K.) either as a mythical production receding uselessly into the past, or as a text encoding tips for K.'s future behavior. The one thing we do not perceive is a stable description of a coherent world-structure.

Another way of describing this vertical-temporal quality of Kafka's fictional language is suggested by Saussurean linguistics, which were being formulated precisely during Kafka's lifetime. The key words are synchrony and diachrony: a language exists as a closed system in which words are defined through their difference from each other, not through any innate bond with material things. In speaking we construct sentences in time, diachronically, by ceaselessly making synchronic choices from the coherent dictionary of individual words that not only subsist in our minds but fundamentally structure the possibilities and parameters of our "thinking." All thinking is operational, in other words, and its operations synthesize, moment by moment, ancient "wisdom" embedded in the language, the urge to describe the material world — and of course the current motivations of the "self." In this model the synchronic dimension,

the embeddedness of all sentences in a coherent language system, would correspond to the "judging" hierarchy of religion; but where religion would situate, a priori, the singular eye of God, the linguistic model precludes all singularity or higher value — its totalizing quality is definable solely through difference, the infinite potentiality of verbal combination. In practice, of course, the one version of hierarchy is quite compatible with the other, since religious constructions of the world pervade all language systems. What Kafka's protagonists do is to provoke these "systemic" reactions in the reader because of their uncanny closeness to their author: they let us see the synchronic word-choices Kafka is making, even as they struggle to assert their own perspectives on a fictional landscape. This mutual dependence of author and protagonist is something Kafka was very much aware of, becoming explicit in his well-known diary entry of 6 August 1914: "Der Sinn für die Darstellung meines traumhaft inneren Lebens hat alles andere ins Nebensächliche gerückt, und es ist in einer schrecklichen Weise verkümmert und hört nicht auf, zu verkümmern" (The project of portraying my dreamlike inner life has thrust everything else into irrelevance, where it atrophies terrifyingly and never ceases becoming atrophied, *T* 546).

Can one be more specific about how Kafka achieves this unique "self-portrayal"? Malcolm Pasley, one of the chief editors of the critical edition of Kafka's works, has written illuminatingly about the genesis of Kafka's texts. In "The Act of Writing and the Text" he stresses the immediacy of Kafka's sources, the way writing instruments and writing pads affect the fictional outcome far more than any preconceived plan. Indeed, in an early diary entry (15 November 1911) Kafka says that everything he writes according to such a plan turns out be "trocken, verkehrt, unbeweglich" (dry, wrong, inflexible, *T* 251); wonderful ideas come to him, but in the gap between experience and execution they sink into a kind of stream — he tries to grab at them but their fullness flows away from him, leaving him with something merely bad and disturbing. Pasley argues that this imagery of fullness sinking is constant in Kafka's self-description; for it to be recovered, total immersion is required, a writing that doesn't even exist until the image-flow is entered. Certainly that is how Kafka expressed himself on 23 September 1912, immediately after finishing "Das Urteil": "Die fürchterliche Anstrengung und Freude, wie sich die Geschichte vor mir entwickelte, wie ich in einem Gewässer vorwärtskam" (the fearful striving and joy as the story unfolded before me, as I advanced as if wading through water, *T* 460). The "dreamlike inner life" cannot be articulated any other way; obviously Kafka's mind is not empty when he sits down to write, but such pre-existing "experience" has no particular relevance to the

process of fiction. Indeed, in a remarkable letter to Felice Bauer about "Das Urteil" (2 June 1913), Kafka remembers what he had been thinking: "[ich wollte] einen Krieg beschreiben, ein junger Mann sollte aus seinem Fenster eine Menschenmenge über die Brücke herankommen sehn, dann aber drehte sich mir alles unter den Händen" (I meant to describe a war; from his window a young man was to see a vast crowd advancing across the bridge, but the whole thing turned in my hands into something else, *F* 394). For Pasley the most remarkable thing is that Kafka then hardly revises at all: the story's own impulse drives it unerringly forward, and if its self-certainty falters, the evidence of the diaries is that Kafka simply stopped, drew a line underneath, and began something new. This is not always so, of course: Kafka struggled to complete certain stories ("Die Verwandlung" [The Metamorphosis], "In der Strafkolonie" [In the Penal Colony]) that were tantalizingly close to their "inner" perfection. But his core writing pattern certainly suggests why he was unable to complete any of his three novels.

Crucial as it is to understand Kafka's compositional method, attempting to do so raises more questions than it answers. The water imagery certainly evokes the Unconscious: was Kafka practicing a kind of "automatic writing" such as was to become popular among the surrealists? If, as he seems to say, he enters a "stream of consciousness," a style very well established in his youth (by Schnitzler and others), where does the drive to structural perfection come from? How are we to understand the intensely aware, self-reflexive, un-dreamlike quality of his prose? Pasley's thesis of the "gradual completion of the story as it is being written" (209) is unsatisfyingly circular. Certainly one can stress Kafka's modernism, his commitment to the potentially redemptive goals of an aesthetic language that we find also in contemporaries such as Rilke and Musil. But we still confront the apparent oxymoron of "unconscious perfection."

The concept of hierarchy can help us here. In a letter to Max Brod in April 1918 Kafka elaborates a spatial image of writing; Pasley cites the letter (202) but views it merely as a type of modernist depersonalization:

> wenn wir etwas schreiben . . . sind wir mit allem, was wir haben, auf den Mond übersiedelt, es hat sich nichts geändert, wir sind dort, was wir hier waren, im Tempo der Reise sind tausend Unterschiede möglich, in der Tatsache selbst keine, die Erde, die den Mond abgeschüttelt hat, hält sich selbst seitdem fester, wir aber haben uns einer Mondheimat halber verloren, nicht endgültig, hier gibt es nichts Endgültiges, aber verloren. (*B* 240–41)

> [when we write something . . . we have moved to the moon with everything we have, nothing has changed, we are there what we were here, a thousand differences are possible in the tempo for the journey, but not in the fact of the journey itself; the earth, having shaken off the moon, holds more firmly to its own identity, we however have lost our identities for the sake of a home on the moon, not definitively, nothing here is definitive, but lost nonetheless.]

In Kafka's image the moon of literature is inherently (but not definitively) other, yet it is striking how many details of his whimsical image maintain the earth-moon linkage: there is a journey involved, with varied pacing; once the writers are gone, the earth breathes more easily — but of course it is the writers who discern this fact, who can view the earth *as a whole* from their lunar perspective. This is the privileged standpoint of the writer, the standpoint for which Kafka's characters yearn in vain, the view from the moon. Through the medium of the character's situation, one inexorably embedded in the moving earth, the "vertical" image of the world (defined for the protagonist by the world's systems) can be opened upward, purified, given a literary value utterly unavailable to earth's denizens imprisoned in their stories. There is nothing mystical, or even aesthetic, about this perspective: Kafka's lunar view is fundamentally analytical, a probing of mundane events "as if" freedom from the earth were possible. To be sure, no "identity" is available on the moon, the writer has "lost" any such figuration. But such loss is prerequisite to any truth. And it is this vertical relationship, between a diachronic story claiming total autonomy, and an analytical, synchronic view of the world as radically Other, that constitutes the texture of Kafka's storytelling.

Kafka's view from the moon can be updated technologically as a camera focused on a particular earthly spot: based in outer space, the camera both captures the world as a whole and moves in steadily, closer and closer, to an unvarying place on the earth's surface. The perspective is unchanging yet what is seen appears utterly different, indeed cannot be recognized, depending on the distance from which the point on the surface is viewed. The image of the camera eye might seem fanciful, except that Kafka provides us with striking corroboration in the "Brief an den Vater": "Manchmal stelle ich mir die Erdkarte ausgespannt und Dich quer über sie hin ausgestreckt vor. Und es ist mir dann, als kämen für mein Leben nur die Gegenden in Betracht, die Du entweder nicht bedeckst oder die nicht in Deiner Reichweite liegen" (Sometimes I imagine the earth spread out like an atlas and you covering its whole expanse. And it seems then as though, for my life, only those regions can

have relevance that either you don't actually cover or that lie outside your domain, *BV/ZF* 60). In this perspective from above, Kafka's relation to his father becomes a single, synchronic system that defines the events of their lives a priori. But of course this moment is one of the most purely metaphorical, that is, fictive, in the entire "Brief." For whole stretches the vertical perspective is radically reversed, with Franz viewing his father from underneath: "Du stießest mich, so als wäre ich dazu bestimmt, mit paar offenen Worten in diesen Schmutz hinunter. Bestand die Welt also nur aus mir und Dir, eine Vorstellung, die mir sehr nahelag, dann endete also mit Dir diese Reinheit der Welt, und mit mir begann kraft Deines Rates der Schmutz" (With a few frank words you thus thrust me down into this dirt, as if I were destined to it. If the world consisted solely of you and me — an image to which I was much attracted — then this purity of the world ended with you and, by virtue of your advice, dirt began with me, *BV/ZF* 56). The "advice" involved the father's view that Franz should visit a prostitute; but the word "purity" signifies far beyond the context. Essentially Franz is denying the father's arrogation to himself of purity *in the letter* he is writing, that is, in the domain of his creativity. In life he has been in the position of one of his characters, looking upwards at a world of Value that is a priori and eludes his comprehension, let alone his reach. He could see his father's hypocrisy in life, but that perception certainly did not cancel the claim to purity. For one thing purity is a highly charged positive attribute in all language systems, even if only *ex negativo,* as antithesis to "impurity." Moreover, the word is particularly powerful in Kafka's cultural system, because of its association with modernism, with the pure/purified work of art. So Franz cannot escape the "synchronic" hierarchy that frames every "diachronic" move he makes in life. Attaining the "pure" comprehensiveness of the lunar perspective necessarily thrusts him back down into a daily world where purity belongs irrevocably to the Other, to the system embodied, however grotesquely, in his father. Through sheer analytical power Franz can gain an overview, but only momentarily: This is the moment of art, and it is indeed achieved through a "purification" of life — but it offers no escape from life, indeed it absolutely mandates a plunging in, an entering of the psychic water so that the process of emerging into art can be enacted yet again.

This hierarchy and its aporias conditioned everything Kafka wrote. In 1917, two years before the "Brief an den Vater," Kafka drafted the religious (or anti-religious) aphorisms that Ritchie Robertson discusses in the present volume. No. 54, in particular, is relevant here, because its two

paragraphs, often cited separately, evoke the hierarchical extremes we have seen operating in the "Letter":

> Es gibt nichts anderes als eine geistige Welt; was wir sinnliche Welt nennen ist das Böse in der geistigen und was wir böse nennen ist nur eine Notwendigkeit eines Augenblicks unserer ewigen Entwicklung.
>
> Mit stärkstem Licht kann man die Welt auflösen. Vor schwachen Augen wird sie fest, vor noch schwächeren bekommt sie Fäuste, vor noch schwächeren wird sie schamhaft und zerschmettert den, der sie anzuschauen wagt. (*BB* 236–37)
>
> [There exists nothing but a spiritual world; what we call the material world is the evil within the spiritual and what we call evil is but a necessary event in a single moment of our eternal unfolding.
>
> With the most powerful possible light one can dissolve the world. Faced by a weak gaze, the world becomes firm, faced by a weaker gaze it acquires fists, faced by an even weaker gaze it becomes bashful and shatters whoever dares to look directly at it.]

The first section evokes the top of the perceptual hierarchy in its purest form, with irrefutable (albeit circular) logic. For the word spiritual to have meaning, as Kafka sees it, it must be all-inclusive, must be the perspective that renders coherent such antitheses as time and space, good and evil. To apprehend the spiritual is like going to the moon, with the accompanying "loss" of which Kafka speaks in his letter to Brod: what is lost is the actual experience of evil, that is, material and temporal identity as such. From this distance time can be evoked quasi-spatially, as "eternal unfolding," but it cannot be lived. The second section slides down the hierarchy and conveys what living in time actually means. The first version of life, "dissolving" the world by focusing all one's energy, is the only viable one. To accept the world is to be defeated by it; to affirm conventional categories (good and bad) *within* the apparent ("material") framework of the world is to lose all access to the spiritual. The parable "Vor dem Gesetz" (Before the Law, 1914) spells this out. By seeking access to the law the "man from the country" empties his life of meaning. Only at the moment of death does he glimpse the "Glanz der unverlöschlich aus der Türe des Gesetzes bricht" (*L* 212; "radiance that streams inextinguishably from the gateway of the law," *CS* 4). The image of powerful light connects this phrase to Kafka's aphorism; one must generate one's own (creative) light in order to "dissolve" the world and become at one with the spiritual. If one accepts the world's categories, that is, "lives," one will never see the spiritual light, even though it shines all the time, "inextinguishably."

Kafka's aphorisms may seem to conduct the reader into an arcane, speculative universe. But it is crucial to remember that, as the imagery of the "Brief an den Vater" shows, Kafka is always struggling with the same cosmic issue; writing is always potentially "sacred," the only knowable embodiment of "the most powerful possible light," which is why virtually all Kafka's stories begin their life as diary entries. To begin a story is an act of "dissolution" (dissolving the everyday, cf. the images of water Kafka uses to evoke the genesis of "Das Urteil"), even when it ultimately looks like "construction." If we turn now to some actual beginnings, it is worth reviewing briefly Kafka's relationship to Gustave Flaubert, one of his central models throughout his life (the first diary reference to Flaubert is in 1904, the last in 1921). Flaubert, an originator of what became known as modernism, also moves his authorial "camera" freely in relation to his characters, sometimes viewing Emma Bovary as a rather trivial bourgeois woman, sometimes virtually identifying with her ("Mme. Bovary, c'est moi"), communicating her pain with enormous intensity. Flaubert has this freedom because it is language itself that counts for him, the stable top of his hierarchy. Literary language does not have to convey any "truth"; in fact, at the end of his career Flaubert became fascinated with stupidity and emotional emptiness, as in the "Dictionary of Received Ideas." His posture outside the bourgeois world, dedicated to the purification of language into style, appears unshakable.

This stability, as we have seen, is unavailable to Kafka. Fascinated, as Flaubert was, by the sheer ordinariness of life, Kafka could not exempt himself from it. He had to inhabit its darkest spaces and concentrate the "light" of his vision on dissolving it as a totality: it is only the achieved dissolution, the shattered world that can count, for Kafka, as modernist counter-totality. That is why he can hold so fast to words like "true" and "spiritual" while refusing them analytical content: these words stand for the perspective at the top of the hierarchy, a perspective that Kafka as author can only glimpse and never authentically occupy.

The first sentence of *Madame Bovary,* in Francis Steegmuller's translation, reads as follows: "We were in the study hall when the headmaster entered, followed by a new boy not yet in school uniform and by the handyman carrying a large desk." The "new boy" is of course Charles Bovary; the novel begins and ends with him. But the "camera" of the sentence is placed at a distance. The "we" play no special role, they only enable the narrator to enter the schoolroom and simply, delightedly, *describe.* The text's ambitions are to construct, and simultaneously to compress, an era in a provincial place: details are self-contained, they may

or may not refer "symbolically" to a character's emotions (some clearly do), but their key mission is to be authentic while conveying the author's irony. Thus the large desk evokes the pomposity and rigidity of the bourgeois school environment — without dwelling on such points. The novel's claim to truth derives from conveying both the intricacy and the *closure* of this provincial world. It begins in the school because that is where "values" are inculcated, where the triviality that drives Emma crazy (and by which she has been shaped herself) becomes the norm. The opening sentence points to a "constructive" texture, a simultaneous proliferation and deconstruction of details that have meaning only as microelements in an emerging fusion of world and style.

The opening sentence of "Das Urteil" also situates its protagonist with seeming precision: "Es war an einem Sonntagvormittag im schönsten Frühjahr" (*L* 39; "It was a Sunday morning in the very height of spring," *CS* 77). Actually the standard English translation misleads, missing the "fairy-tale" tonality that darkens the morning light: "It was *on* a Sunday morning. . . ." What is the "it"? We don't know yet, because the hero, Georg Bendemann, doesn't know: his perceptions are producing the "most beautiful" spring morning, the illusion of harmony on which the "it" intervenes. If we think back to the aphorism we recognize that Georg has the "even weaker gaze" (as the paragraph continues, it stresses how little he actually notices) that characterizes one whom the world will "shatter." In terms of Kafka's hierarchical vision, the "it" is the sinking below the surface of life that will constitute this "breakthrough" story. The special quality of "Das Urteil" is that the dissolving of Georg's world occurs *through* his construction of it as meaningful: what the reader gradually sees through his eyes is the radical *inauthenticity* of the construction. The contrast with Flaubert could not be starker: where Flaubert's details accumulate in their empty authenticity, Kafka's details are there to be shattered — and are indeed shattered, one by one, by the father who, for this one "moment" in humanity's "infinite unfolding," is entitled to the voice of the spiritual.

We have seen how Kafka returned repeatedly to the meaning of "Das Urteil" for his art, to the almost involuntary "dissolving" power of its opening. Later he became more conscious of the role of beginnings, of the power of certain sentences to open onto the depths, while so many others (in the Diaries) lead only to a faltering, a non-dissolution and hence a non-world. The late stories usher us into the protagonist's various obsessions with a virtuosity that is to be savored. "Der Bau" (The Burrow, 1923–24) opens: "Ich habe den Bau eingerichtet und er scheint wohlgelungen" (*EP* 165; "I have completed the construction of my

burrow and it seems to be successful," *CS* 325). With this character, Kafka transposes the "downward" movement of the hierarchy onto a real underground creature; the earth will do as well as water to convey the indispensable dissolving/crumbling premise of creativity. First to go, obviously, is the dream of completion as such: the burrow is "completed," yet the entire (incomplete) story is devoted to its incompletion, or rather, to the oxymoronic quality of "a complete burrow." Indeed the projection of something "complete" becomes ever more fantastic, as in the almost free-floating image of the ideal "Burgplatz" (castle keep). Moreover, the perfect tense of the opening sentence ushers in the entire struggle of the protagonist with temporality. The burrow is literally a life's work; it embodies the various intensities of past years. But it is precisely not a work of art, the protagonist cannot stand back from it, much though he would like to. It is a structure in the world, a structure for living, and as such it mocks the use of the perfect tense. As the protagonist strives to shape past and present into a continuum, his memory taunts him with the various physical actions he used to be able to execute but can no longer. To speak in the perfect tense is to envision one's death; moreover, even the work of art cannot justify its author's "life" (as Kafka tells us so plainly in the "Brief an den Vater") — and the burrow is not a work of art. The word "scheint" (seems) anticipates the debate between Martin Heidegger and Emil Staiger in the early 1950's about a Mörike poem and the double meaning of "scheinen": to seem/to shine. If we deploy the hierarchical metaphor, Kafka's usage permits just such ambivalence. Certainly the "seeming" of the burrow's completion literally crumbles away; but that very process, in its comprehensive exploration of possible motivations, dreams, obsessions, generates the not-quite-complete (but magisterial) story that we have. On this meta-level of a story about itself, the burrow indeed "shines" with the light of the spirit.

In Kafka's very last story, about Josephine the singing mouse, the stakes involved in art-creation are raised still further. "Unsere Sängerin heißt Josefine" (*L* 274; "Our singer is called Josephine," *CS* 360). The hierarchical ambivalence of the first two words is extreme: Josephine is our *singer,* she is the very embodiment of the mouse-folk's need for collective meaning; when she sings, it is as if the history and legends of the people are compressed into pure sound and "realized" in the moments of performance. But she is also *our* singer, little more than an artisan, a worker whose artistry is non-transferable to everyday life: prophetic leader and near-slave in a single appellation. The verb "heißt" (is called) is also suggestive: the naming would seem to be a kind of privi-

lege, the assignment of singular status; but the naming also projects forward to the very end of the story, when we hear that Josephine will be "vergessen . . . wie alle ihre Brüder" (forgotten like all her brothers). The naming will be essentially revoked, rendered meaningless, "da wir keine Geschichte treiben" (since we do not practice history); moreover, since the story plays out entirely in the present tense, the simple verb "heißt" is gradually but irrevocably dissolved. Yet even as the story puts every aspect of Josephine's "art" in question, it strives to re-base that art through a kind of reception theory: the audience re-generates her singing as a collective memory, a strictly momentary vision of the whole story of mousedom.

In reassigning the lunar perspective, the glimpse of the whole, from Josephine to the mouse-folk, Kafka is clearly thinking of his readers, of the reception process that his particular aesthetics cannot do without. Several essays in this volume culminate in the posing of the core hermeneutic question of translation from text back to world, notably Walter Sokel's citing of Kafka's seemingly bewildered question to Felice about the meaning of "Das Urteil": he, Kafka, professes now not to "understand" it at all. In a sense such non-understanding is structurally mandated by Kafka's hierarchy. The very categories of earthly understanding *must* be dissolved in order for a work of art to come into being that formally cannot be translated back into the world of the partial, the experiential, the temporal. Kafka may well have been terrified by the purity of his own aesthetics; for the concept of autonomous art, an article of faith for Flaubert and so many modernists, was ultimately unavailable to him. The "spiritual" telos of his stories simply cannot be circumscribed by the categories of aesthetics. As Clayton Koelb has it, Kafka must imagine his readers, must somehow integrate the process of dissolution with the potential of reception.

Among Kafka's early readers it was Walter Benjamin who saw most clearly that interpretation is not just a secondary activity provoked by the enigma of the primary texts. Interpretation is integral to Kafka's modernism in a special sense. Since he has no Flaubertian aesthetic perch from which to view the disintegration of modern experience, he must plunge down into the maelstrom himself, with language as his only tool — and it cannot be a language of description: lacking a fixed vantage point, everything, including (indeed especially) his own body, becomes alien territory for Kafka. Benjamin reminds us that the collapse into fragmentation had already occurred, articulated by Hofmannsthal in the famous "Chandos Letter" of 1901 as a collapse of language. And Benjamin suggests, in a late letter to his friend Theodor Adorno written in 1940, that

Kafka began to speak at that very moment of silence, of the ruin of tradition: "Perhaps the language which escaped Hofmannsthal was the very language which was given to Kafka at around the same time. For Kafka took on the task which Hofmannsthal had failed morally, and therefore also poetically, to fulfil" (329).

Interpretation thus becomes a primal activity: as the tradition of bourgeois norms disintegrates, the modern big city dweller (so Benjamin argues) becomes indistinguishable from the prehistoric consciousness, released by the collapse of restraints on memory into the domain of the everyday. And the impossibility of individual identity is underlined by the insights of modern physics; Benjamin cites at length a passage from the physicist Arthur Eddington, written in 1929, about the hazards of entering a room: "In the first place I must shove against an atmosphere pressing with a force of fourteen pounds on every square inch of my body. I must make sure of landing on a plank traveling at twenty miles a second around the sun — a fraction of a second too early or too late, the plank would be miles away" (*Illuminations* 142). With the implosion of "civilized" norms, interpretation becomes the first stage of consciousness, and is utterly without ontological ground: one can (must) associate one experiential fragment with another. But, as the quotation from Eddington emphasizes, one must also tear apart apparent fixity. Silence and paralysis would seem inevitable. Yet Kafka, as Benjamin shows, persisted in functioning, in reconstructing the processes of consciousness, within this primal fragmentation. Interpretation links the flashes of perception; but consciousness also *organizes,* projects temporal sequences into a mask of coherence. Kafka's work is full of organizations; Benjamin stresses the constant interplay, particularly in evocations of the law, between exaggerated precision and ceaseless flux: "None [of the law's messengers] has a firm place in the world, firm, inalienable outlines. There is not one that is not either rising or falling, none that is not deeply exhausted and yet is only at the beginning of a long existence. To speak of any order or hierarchy is impossible here" (117). For Benjamin, Kafka essentially defines "organization as destiny" (123), and provides the mythical figure for that destiny in the building of the Great Wall of China: infinitely detailed, infinitely pointless, "organizing" time to the stage where both origins and goals recede into enigma.

Perhaps Benjamin's best known insight into Kafka is his articulation of the importance of *gesture:* "Kafka's world is a world theater. For him, man is on the stage from the very beginning" (124). This may be the step that radically differentiates Kafka from other modernists: he does not claim the "identity" of observer or anthologist (like, say, Joyce) because he

cannot, his plunge into the fragmentation of modernity is accompanied at every stage by *other* consciousnesses, by interested parties who may or may not be from his own time. The importance of gesture is totally traditional, and in a stable epic world the gestures of the players certify the symbolic framework. In Kafka, the impact of gesture is even greater, precisely because the interpreting consciousness is desperate for understanding — but the gestures remain undecidable, whether or not they "confirm" the spoken words that may accompany them: in the present volume Corngold and Theisen in particular explore this anguished confluence of interpretation and gesture. Interpreting, organizing, gesturing (and being gestured at): these are the primal processes of consciousness, processes that used to indicate outcomes and frameworks, but that in Kafka's world are forever in motion, enveloped in opacity, the more certainly endangered the more they appear stable.

Walter Benjamin knew little of the "facts" of Kafka's life, facts that Kafka famously excluded from his work; but he did read Max Brod's biography when it was published in 1938 — and was thoroughly skeptical about it. In his letter to Gerhard Scholem of 12 June 1938 (excerpted in *Illuminations* without the Brod discussion), Benjamin finds the temperamental incompatibility between Kafka and his friend to be extreme, concluding: "His friendship with Brod is for me above all a question mark, one that he wished to erect at the margin of his life" (*Briefe* 764, my translation). This sentence of Benjamin's resonates throughout the enormous accumulation of biographical data about Kafka entering the public realm in the 1970s. The work of Binder, Wagenbach, Stölzl, Robertson, and others has enduring validity; but this radical inversion of the "timeless" Kafka undoubtedly tempted some critics to reductiveness, to the sense that the "Kafka problem" could be solved by history. But Benjamin reminds us that for Kafka, who indeed asserted that he was "nothing but literature," life circles back towards work in an endless series of loops.

If we are now in a very productive era of Kafka scholarship, benefiting from linguistic theory and cultural studies, it is because Benjamin's resolute skepticism towards historicism frames the new explorations of Kafka's situatedness. Indeed the integration of biographical material with contemporary theory enables critics to renew the intensity of Benjamin's modernist reading. Benjamin writes: "Kafka's work presents a sickness of tradition. . . . We can no longer speak of wisdom. Only the products of its decay remain" (*Illuminations* 143–44). Today we might rephrase this world-historical process as a decentering of the Western tradition — and a quest for the counter-traditions, the "subaltern voices" that speak from underneath the Eurocentric surface. It is precisely Kafka's combination of

experiential fragmentation with stylistic rigor that opens his texts to new kinds of historical understanding. It is the thinking of difference in every sense that enables cultural studies to locate new vocabularies in the moment of bourgeois disintegration. With uncompromising honesty Kafka pulverizes seeming continuities into gestures and fragments of myth and habit. And precisely because Saussurean linguistics has led to our understanding of the arbitrary constructedness of thought and feeling, cultural studies can articulate codes and assumptions in Kafka's texts without in any way imposing some new rigidity or claim to truth. As Elizabeth Boa argues, for example: "Kafka portrays relations between the sexes as power relations, but not as a simple timeless melodrama between male and female principles. In his work gender, class, generational, and ethnic tensions constantly interact" (21). The contested nature of cultural codes means that the flux and fragmentation outlined by Benjamin in Kafka's writing is made even more legible by close attention to both the prejudices and the "commonsense" that infused the world he confronted daily.

This applies *a fortiori* to the overtly "cultural" world inhabited by a man of Kafka's status and education. Mark Anderson's book *Kafka's Clothes* explores the many meanings of aestheticism, as ideology and as fashion, in Kafka's cultural perspective; it is the very rigor with which Kafka sought to exclude such motifs from his fictions that makes them perceptible. Uncompromising negation, as Benjamin stresses, is the defining gesture of Kafka's relation to traditions and ideologies, one that he sought to work out in detail in his 1917 aphorisms (explored here by Ritchie Robertson). But this negativity necessarily contains what is being negated; and in our era after modernism, indeed after many other isms, our "organizational" need to restructure the past can gain new sustenance from Kafka. As Anderson argues:

> Kafka's negative relation to history is itself subject to historical analysis — specifically, it developed as a particular phase in the history of West European Judaism. . . . There is a necessity to Kafka's negativity which historical reconstruction should not attempt to deny. But nor should one confuse cause and effect by arguing from the vantage point of what Kafka's texts have come to mean for later generations. For Kafka and his contemporaries, negativity had a precise historical content, quite different from that of French Existentialism, Surrealism, the Second World War, or deconstructive theories of language. Negative does not mean nothing; it exists in relation to something. (*Reading Kafka,* 21)

Anderson's evocation of past Kafka-readings reminds us that a continuum of intense arguments exists between Benjamin's modernism and

cultural studies. This continuum is what Walter Sokel magisterially explores in the opening essay of this book, as he reflects on his sixty years of reading and writing about Kafka. The immense variety of the other contributions evokes the heuristic scope of cultural studies. In a potential analogy to the two poles of Kafka's own creative hierarchy (as I have outlined it), cultural studies dissolves the hermeneutic center (the circle of author, work, and reader) in two opposite directions. On the one hand the interpretive camera focuses down into the key words of Kafka's fictions, textual movement and self-reflection at the micro-level: Stanley Corngold's study of the opening pages of *Der Proceß* exemplifies this quest. His restless dissection of the "verhaftet/gefangen" (arrested/taken captive) diptych can be linked to Russell Berman's probing of "urteilen" (judging) and Bianca Theisen's reassessment of the spectator's "weeping" in "Auf der Galerie" (Up in the Gallery, 1917). The very formalization of events in language opens onto the depths where concepts twist and turn, both enabling and undermining the flux of human "intentions."

At the other extreme cultural studies opens Kafka's stories to the popular, legal, even literary texts that were swirling about him in his daily life, sometimes reaching the status of reference in his diaries or letters. Given the very special creative process we have been discussing — the dissolving of a formal individual perspective into a psychic "world" that is then to be shattered and transcended — intertextual readings of Kafka have the potential to be extremely fruitful. And so it is with the essays here by Goebel and Zilcosky, linking Kafka's works to colonialist and orientalist writing of the era, with which he was demonstrably familiar. Such discussions by no means purport to explain the inexplicable; the wealth of biographical material now available has on occasion tempted readers to "translate" literary events into documented moments in Kafka's personal experience. Such interpretation violates two key elements of Kafka's creativity: the continuum of subjective events (certainly including his reading) in the psychic depths, that is, the meaninglessness of singling out what is "personal"; and the fundamental Otherness of literature, its emergence through a drastic pulverizing of subjectivity. What Goebel and Zilcosky do, in contrast, is to suggest dimensions of Kafka's uniquely hierarchical shaping of his characters' experience, such as the colonialist trope of "overseeing" (or "surveying") native territory, both aestheticizing it and defining it in relation to a metropolitan center. Does this critical opening to the norms and fashions of Kafka's world conflict with his modernist vision of a purified literature? Fidelity to Kafka's dream is certainly difficult for a critic, precisely because we now

know how much is going on above and beneath every phrase. But Richard Gray shows that it is not impossible: by fusing specific close readings of passages from "In der Strafkolonie" (particularly the opening) with an ongoing review of the interpretive traditions, Gray offers a very full perspective on what has been said and can still be said about Kafka's great story. Such an essay amounts to a kind of archive about a given Kafka text, ordering the history of past thinking for a reader to explore, taking a strong position (it could not be otherwise; a critic is not a librarian) but showing how that position has emerged in history and how it might develop in the future.

This collection of essays aims to interest all Kafka readers, hence quotations are given in English as well as German. The ongoing Critical Edition of Kafka is the textual base for most (but not all) of the contributors. Some use published translations, but many essayists, including myself, prefer to do our own translations. However, the *Complete Stories* (Schocken 1971, 1983) is generally referenced, since most readers of Kafka in English know it. In the case of *Der Proceß* and *Das Schloß*, very recent re-translations (by Breon Mitchell and Mark Harman) have quickly established themselves as normative. In this volume Mark Harman explores what is involved in translating the new Critical Edition. Kafka may not have revised his texts much, but he certainly cut a lot out; by exploring these "variants" (deleted passages in the manuscript of *Das Schloß*) Harman opens yet another window onto the invention and production of Kafka's characters.

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Critical Editions I: The 1994 Paperback Edition

James Rolleston

APART FROM THE STORIES Kafka published in his lifetime, his most influential works were edited and published by Max Brod, his close friend and executor, in the years following his death in 1924. Central to his reputation were the three novels: *Der Proceß* (The Trial, published 1925), *Das Schloß* (The Castle, 1926), and *Der Verschollene* (The Missing Person, originally titled *Amerika* by Brod, 1927). Since many of Kafka's other stories were more or less fragmentary and sometimes embedded in diary entries, editorial decisions were always many and difficult. Brod acknowledged that he made compromises: for example, Kafka's first story "Beschreibung eines Kampfes" (Description of a Struggle) exists in two versions; Brod initially published a "blended" text (1936), but later endorsed the special publication of the two versions on facing pages (1969).

With the importance of establishing reliable, scholarly versions of Kafka's texts becoming self-evident, a critical edition of all of them was projected by the S. Fischer Verlag of Frankfurt am Main, and the first two volumes, one containing *Das Schloß* and the other being an *Apparatband* to that novel, that is, an exhaustive presentation of variants and crossed out phrases, appeared in 1982. (This *Apparatband* is the focus of Mark Harman's essay in the present volume.) The other stories and novels were published in hard covers in the same way; then, in 1994, Fischer published a paperback edition of all the fictional texts, compiled by Hans-Gerd Koch without the variants but with some necessary annotation and cross-referencing. This version of the Critical Edition is both convenient and widely used by scholars. A brief description of this edition follows:

Volume One: *Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten* (A Country Doctor and Other Publications During His Lifetime).

Contains all the texts Kafka published himself, including those not collected in book form:

Betrachtung (Meditation, 1912), a collection of short fictions, some written as early as 1904, several previously published in magazines. A

group of five had appeared in 1910 in the Prague journal *Bohemia,* under the title *Betrachtungen.*

"Der Heizer" (The Stoker, 1913), separate publicaton of the opening chapter of the unfinished novel *Der Verschollene.*

"Das Urteil" (The Judgment), written September 1912, first published in 1913 in the journal *Arkadia,* then in 1916 as a separate volume in Kurt Wolff's series *Der jüngste Tag.*

"Die Verwandlung" (The Metamorphosis), written fall 1912, published 1915 in the journal *Die weißen Blätter.*

"In der Strafkolonie" (In the Penal Colony), written fall 1914, published 1919.

Ein Landarzt (A Country Doctor), a collection of short stories written in 1916–17, published 1919. Includes the following texts discussed in the present volume: "Auf der Galerie" (Up in the Gallery), "Vor dem Gesetz" (Before the Law), "Schakale und Araber" (Jackals and Arabs), "Die Sorge des Hausvaters" (The Cares of a Family Man), and "Ein Bericht für eine Akademie" (A Report to an Academy), as well as the title story.

Ein Hungerkünstler (A Hunger Artist), a collection proofread by Kafka and published posthumously in 1924. Includes "Erstes Leid" (First Sorrow) and "Ein Hungerkünstler" (1922), "Eine kleine Frau" (A Little Woman, 1923), and "Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse" (Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk, 1924).

The most interesting of the uncollected texts are "Die Aeroplane in Brescia" (The Airplanes in Brescia, 1909), about the visit of Kafka and Brod to an air-show; and "Der Kübelreiter" (The Bucket Rider, 1917), a wild vision of the wartime coal shortage.

Volume Two: *Der Verschollene* (The Missing Person, written 1911–13), includes six numbered chapters, two lengthy additional texts, and three fragments.

Volume Three: *Der Proceß,* written 1914–15, includes ten "canonical" chapters and six fragments.

Volume Four: *Das Schloß,* written 1922–23, includes twenty-five chapters, many clearly incomplete.

Volume Five: *Beschreibung eines Kampfes und andere Schriften aus dem Nachlaß* (Description of a Struggle and Other Writings from the Literary Remains).

This and the following three volumes mark the decisive step forward in the Critical Edition: all Kafka's unpublished fictions are included, in