

This book was published in collaboration with the
Franz Kafka Institute in Prague.

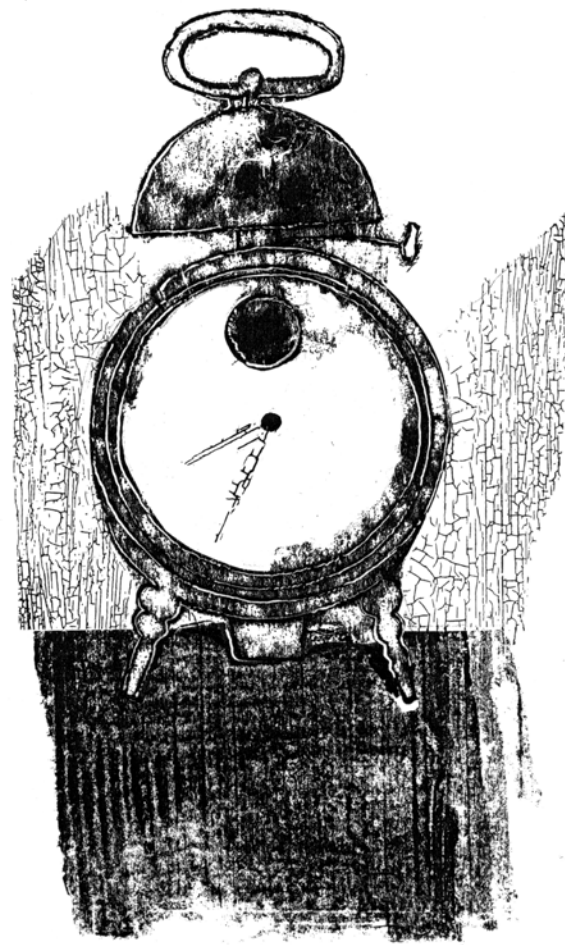
Contents

Chapter I	7
Chapter II	47
Chapter III	89
Karl Brand: The Retransformation of Gregor Samsa ...	130
Franz Kafka's Masterwork: <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	137

© Vitalis, 2024 • Original title: Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* • Translated from the German by Karen Reppin • Afterword by Elisabeth Fuchs and Harald Salfellner, translated by Rachel Ward and Edward Maltby • Illustrations by Karel Hruška • Printed in the European Union • ISBN 978-3-89919-841-6 (Vitalis GmbH) • ISBN 978-80-7253-463-0 (Vitalis s.r.o.) • All rights reserved • www.vitalis-verlag.com

I thought of him. He'd have fallen from his desk! It's curious too how he sits on his desk and talks down from on high to his employees, especially since they have to stand very close to him because of his being hard of hearing. Well, I haven't given up all hope yet; once I have the money together to pay off my parents' debt to him – it should take another five or six years – I'll do it without fail. I'll make a clean break. In the meantime, though, I'd better get up, as my train leaves at five o'clock."

And he looked over at the alarm clock which was ticking on the wardrobe. "God in heaven!" he thought. It was six thirty, and the hands were moving quietly on, in fact, it was after half past; it was nearly a quarter to seven. Could it be the alarm hadn't gone off? One could see from the bed that it was correctly set for four o'clock; it had surely gone off, too. Yes, but was it possible to sleep quietly through a din that made the furniture shake? Well, he certainly hadn't slept peacefully, but probably the more soundly for it. But what should he do now? The next train left at



at the slowly approaching Gregor. The violin fell silent; the middle lodger first smiled to his friends shaking his head and then looked again at Gregor. His father seemed to think it more urgent to first calm down the lodgers rather than to drive Gregor out, although they were not at all upset, and Gregor seemed to be entertaining them more than all the violin playing. He hurried toward them, and with arms outstretched tried to drive them back into their room and to block their view of Gregor with his body. Now they really did become a little angry; it was not clear whether because of his father's behaviour or because of the realization which now dawned on them, that they had unwittingly had such a next door neighbour as Gregor. They demanded explanations from his father, raised their arms in turn, tugged uneasily at their beards and reluctantly retreated toward their room. His sister had in the meantime emerged from the state of abstraction into which she had lapsed after her playing had been so suddenly interrupted; after holding the violin and bow for a while in her slackly hanging hands, and continuing to look at



THE YEAR 1912

The world was “deeply tormented” by other events in the year 1912, events which were, of course, also the talk of Prague, Kafka’s home city: On the 15th April, the “unsinkable” passenger steamer Titanic went down on her maiden voyage, taking over one thousand five hundred people with her to their deaths. In October, further catastrophe loomed with the First Balkan War, the conflicts in the Balkans being harbingers of the First World War, which would break out in less than two years time. Kafka could read page after page of reports in the *Prager Tagblatt* (*Prague Daily News*) about the lands lost by the Ottoman Empire in Europe, and of the siege of its former capital, Adrianople.

It was a busy time in the literary world, news from which found an eager audience in the coffee houses of Prague. The seventy-year-old author Karl May, whose adventure stories such as *Winnetou* had been sensationally successful, had died on the 30th March. More gratifying



still was the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to the Silesian writer Gerhart Hauptmann, whose work also interested Kafka. He had seen the thieves’ comedy *Der Biberpelz* (*The Beaver Coat*) at the theatre as recently as December of 1911. The list of new releases in 1912 included not only lightweight offerings such as Waldemar Bonsels’ *Die Biene Maja und ihre Abenteuer* (*Maya – The Adventures of a Bee*), but also Thomas Mann’s novella *Death in Venice*, one of the most-analysed works of the 20th century. And while Rainer Maria Rilke was putting his *Duino Elegies* down onto the page, an American magazine was printing instalments of Edgar Rice Burroughs’ novel *Tarzan with the Apes* – material which was very much to Kafka’s taste. The year 1912 would prove decisive to the future course of Kafka’s life. It was at the beginning of the year, for example, that the Hermann & Co.



2. Brochure of the shipping company White Star Line, describing their ships Olympic and Titanic.

3. Werner Selmar, *Karl May*, around 1910 • 4. Helmut Westhoff, *Rainer Maria Rilke*, 1901 • 5. Max Liebermann, *Gerhart Hauptmann*, 1912.



3 am, depending on strength, appetite and fortune; once I even worked until 6 in the morning”⁶. This apparently strange schedule was “entirely arranged around writing”⁷ as he confided to Felice. It is astonishing that there was any time left over for corresponding with the woman who would become his fiancée, but by 1917, Kafka had written more than five hundred postcards and letters, often more than ten pages long, to Felice. It is thanks to these letters that we know so much about his everyday life – and of course about the creation of *The Metamorphosis*.

FELICE BAUER

There was a simple reason why Kafka wrote to Felice in such detail about the course of his days and his habits: she had to get to know him too; they had only seen each other for a single afternoon at this point. On the 13 August, Kafka had visited his friend Max Brod, among the guests at whose house was a cousin of Brod’s brother-in-law, Max Friedmann: Felice Bauer. A week later, Kafka noted in his diary: “Miss F. B. When I went to the Brods’ on 13 August, she was sitting at the table but seemed like a maid to me. I was not even curious as to who she was, but I accepted her straightaway. An empty, angular face, which wore its blankness openly. Open neck. Wearing a blouse. Seemed to be dressed in a quite domesticated way, although that turned out later not to be the case. ... An almost broken nose. Blonde, somewhat

9. View from Belvedere Heights (Letná) to the Svatopluk Čech Bridge and the house At the Ship (corner building) in St Nicholas Street, where Kafka wrote *The Metamorphosis*. His room was on the top floor, to the left of the balcony. Behind the block of houses is the Church of Our Lady before Týn on the Old Town Square.



which was too long for Musil's literary journal, issues of which were only 30 pages long. The author rejected a proposal to cut out one third of the story, meaning that plans to publish the piece in the *Neue Rundschau* (*New Review*) fell through.

Despite Kurt Wolff's promises, the process of getting the text published continued to drag on. It was only when the writer Carl Sternheim passed on the prize money he had been awarded with the Fontane Prize to the still almost completely unknown Franz Kafka as a sign of his recognition, that, in October 1915, the story was printed, at first in the periodical *Die weissen Blätter* (*The White*

20. Carl Sternheim, the winner of the Fontane Prize in 1915.

21. On 6 December 1915, the *Börsenblatt des deutschen Buchhandels* (*German Book Trade Newspaper*) announces the presentation of the Fontane Prize to Carl Sternheim.

22. Cover illustration of the first edition, 1915/16, created by Ottomar Starke for Kurt Wolff publishing house.

FRANZ KAFKA DIE VERWANDLUNG



DER JÜNGSTE TAG * 22/23
KURT WOLFF VERLAG · LEIPZIG
1 9 1 6