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FROM AUTHOR'S DRAFT TO SELECT LIBRARY HOLDING: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF FRANZ KAFKA'S MANUSCRIPTS

Riassunto

La Biblioteca Bodleiana possiede la maggior parte dei manoscritti esistenti di Franz Kafka (morto nel 1924), incluse le bozze per *Das Schloss* (*Il Castello*), *Der Verschollene* (*America*) and *Die Verwandlung* (*La Metamorfosi*). Il progetto di conservazione di questi manoscritti e' iniziato nel 2008, nonostante la difficolta' nel trovare adeguati trattamenti di conservazione che potessero preservare l'evidenza del modo di lavorare di Kafka e la storia successiva della collezione. Questo articolo esamina gli aspetti materiali di questi quaderni, cio' che rivelano circa il loro passato e come i trattamenti di conservazione siano stati in grado di ritenere questa evidenza e allo stesso tempo abbiano anche garantito la stabilita' dei manoscritti. Inoltre l'articolo si propone di evidenziare la sconnessione interessante fra come un manoscritto sia considerato dal suo autore e come sia trattato una volta diventato parte di una rinomata collezione bibliotecaria.

Keywords: Kafka, Materiality, Literary Archives, Modern Materials, Conservation

Introduction

Many authors may not have foreseen that future interactions with their writings would include the reverential study of their original manuscripts in the pursuit of extracting every possible scrap of available information. Franz Kafka (1883-1924) is unlikely to have anticipated how his manuscripts would become subject to intense examination after his death, especially as he left (unfulfilled) instructions to his friend Max Brod to burn the majority of his manuscripts.[1] He would perhaps be even more surprised to discover that the largest portion of his notebooks would travel to Tel Aviv with Brod, then later to Switzerland, eventually finding a home in England in the Special Collections of the Bodleian Library[2] (University of Oxford), due in part to the influence of the noted Kafka scholar Sir Malcolm Pasley (1926-2004). Not only the marks Kafka made on the page but also the very materials of the notebooks themselves have now been scrutinized for every possible clue to reveal more about him and his writing process (Fig. 1). As his biographer Reiner Stach says;

1 Kafka's requests to Brod are well documented. For an example, see R. Stach, *Kafka: The Years of Insight*, trans. by Shelley Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 475-476.

2 The Kafka collection at the Bodleian comprises 55 shelfmarks in total: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS. Kafka 1-55.

> No author at the beginning of the twentieth century – least of all Kafka himself – could have imagined that his written legacy would soon be measured, photographed, and described as though it were a set of papyrus rolls from an Egyptian burial chamber, and abstract interest in the medium and materiality of the sign was alien to that generation.[3]

Kafka wrote in shop-bought notebooks of varying quality with probably little thought for the posterity of these items, tearing out pages, doodling in the margins, combining laundry lists[4] and Hebrew homework[5] with his literary writings. As can be expected, the early 20th century papers in these notebooks are often brittle and fragile, and frequently combined with wire staples and other poor-quality materials that have degraded either due to natural ageing or handling and storage conditions. Coupled with this are visible traces of the manuscripts' histories: not only the hand of Kafka but also the interventions of Brod. This past life is evident both in inscriptions and inserted notes, and also on occasion in the form of damage or repair; for example, MS. Kafka 39, fol.47 exhibits some deliberate cuts through the paper, which have then been repaired on the verso by pieces of a Palestinian stamp (Fig. 2). Any conservation treatment of these manuscripts would, therefore, need to respect and negotiate the signs of working processes left by Kafka and Brod, whilst attempting to conserve the deteriorating 20th-century materials used.

This study will consider the outcomes of conservation treatment when working with manuscripts such as these, by considering how even minor remedial interventions may have a more significant effect upon



Fig. 1: Examples of bound materials from the Kafka collection (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries)

intangible qualities as perceived by the end-user, or "stakeholder".[6] To make this assessment, one needs to consider the variety of meanings that can be superimposed upon these manuscripts – especially those that might be important to the relevant stakeholders (for example, curators, scholars, and visitors to the Bodleian's galleries). Conservation theory proposes a variety of ways to understand values attributed to heritage objects, but it is notable that very few of the most significant texts focusing on conservation theory give examples of written documents or paper archives within their range of case studies.[7] Of course, theories can be extrapolated and applied to different types of objects but most assume either visually artistic artefacts, or at least objects that were intended to be viewed by others (whether a cup or a suit of armour), whereas the Kafka drafts do not fall easily into either of these categories.

Moving outside the realms of conservation theory, an especially apposite view on the values peculiar to literary archives

3 Stach, note 1, 32.

4 Online catalogue entry for Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 26. http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/kafka/kafka.html [accessed 25.06.2019]

5 Online catalogue entry for Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 24. http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/kafka/kafka.html [accessed 25.06.2019]

6 This term is used by Salvador Muñoz Viñas, amongst others, to describe "the people for whom a heritage object is meaningful" S. Muñoz Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 160.

7 For example, see B. Applebaum, *Conservation Treatment Methodology* (Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), C. Caple, *Conservation Skills: Judgement, Method, and Decision* (London: Routledge, 2000) and *Conservation: Principles, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*, ed. by A. Richmond and A. Bracker, (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann in association with the V&A, 2009). These three texts offer many different case studies and discussions of widely varied types of objects, but with no article or chapter dedicated to literary or archival heritage.

can be found in the words of someone perhaps uniquely placed to discuss literary drafts: the 20th-century English poet Philip Larkin (1922–1985). A poet, novelist, and librarian within a university library, he could almost be viewed as an "über" stakeholder with regard to literary archives, having created them, consulted them, and cared for them. He puts forward two primary values of literary manuscripts in the following words:

> All literary manuscripts have two kinds of value: what might be called the magical value and the meaningful value. The magical value is the older and more universal: this is the paper he wrote on, these are the words as he wrote them, emerging for the first time in this particular miraculous combination [...] The meaningful value is of much more recent origin, and is the degree to which a manuscript helps to enlarge our knowledge and understanding of a writer's life and work. A manuscript can show the cancellations, the substitutions, the shifting towards the ultimate form and the final meaning.[8]

This could be clarified further by saying that the *magical* value is the tactile, intimate, almost spiritual experience of holding the manuscript and seeing how Kafka's pen pressed into the paper, or viewing his marginal doodles, as opposed to seeing the edited, typeset, printed version of his stories. An example of his second value, the *meaningful* value, can be found in MS. Kafka 34 (a draft for *Das Schloss*) where, in numerous places, the first-person pronoun *ich* ("I") was amended and changed to "K", a third-person narrative voice; another example of extracting meaningful value can be seen in Pasley's research into dating passages of *Der Process* by counting words on the page.[9]

This paper will use these two values as a framework or lens through which to evaluate the results of a selection of conservation treatments undertaken upon the Kafka manuscripts. However, to this will be added a third and final value, which is of particular relevance to conservators: the purely *material* value of the object, which is the conservator's remit to preserve regardless of whether it contributes to the spiritual or intellectual experience of the manuscript. For example, small fragments of adhesive and fibres which sit detached in the gutter, or broken sewing threads that cannot be reintegrated into the structure. Taking three of the Kafka manuscripts as examples, this paper will briefly present the conservation treatments undertaken whilst attempting to preserve these three values, and will then evaluate the outcomes from the perspective of the end-user or stakeholder.

Case study 1: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 39

MS. Kafka 39 is one of six notebooks containing the draft for *Das Schloss*, dating from 1922. It reveals many details that exhibit its "magical" and "meaningful" aspects: Kafka's ink smudges and notations on the endleaves, amendments and eradications to the text, Brod's repair using a postage stamp, and also original physical qualities such as the dark blue edge-colouring of the textblock, which could be important for identifying the source of loose leaves found elsewhere in the collection. The manuscript had several loose leaves of its own: fol. 37 had been torn out, with a stub still in place in the notebook, whilst fols. 42-47 had also been torn out but with no stubs remaining to which they could be reattached. It is evident that this latter group of folios had been written on prior to being torn from the notebook, and it is also worth noting that the text on these pages appears upside down and running in the opposite direction to the foliation, as Kafka had turned the notebook around and started writing

8 P. Larkin, 'A Neglected Responsibility: Contemporary Literary MSS', in: *Encounter*, vol. 53, issue 1 (July 1979), 33-34. Available online at http://www.unz.com/print/Encounter-1979jul-00033/ [accessed 25.06.2019].

9 Stach, note 1, 33.

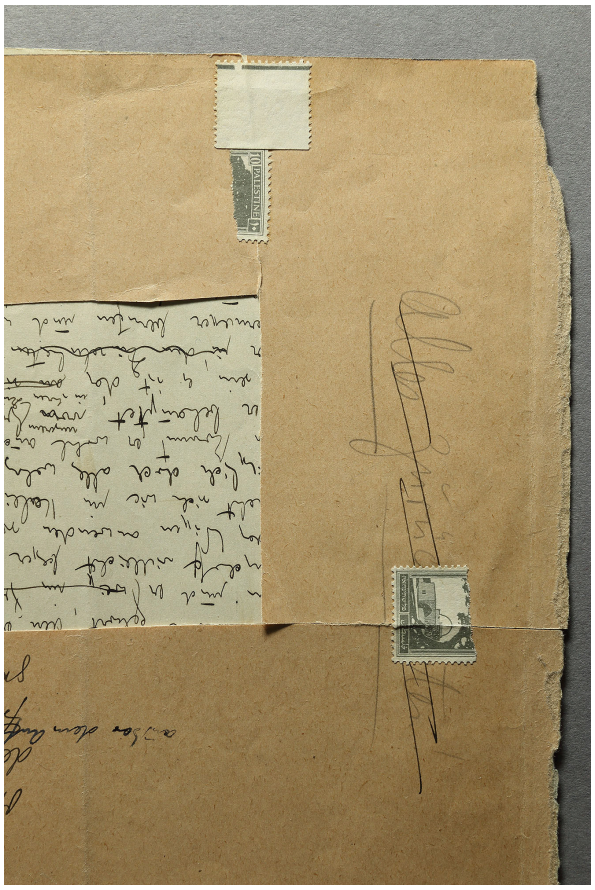


Fig. 2: Cuts to folios and repair using a postage stamp (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 39)

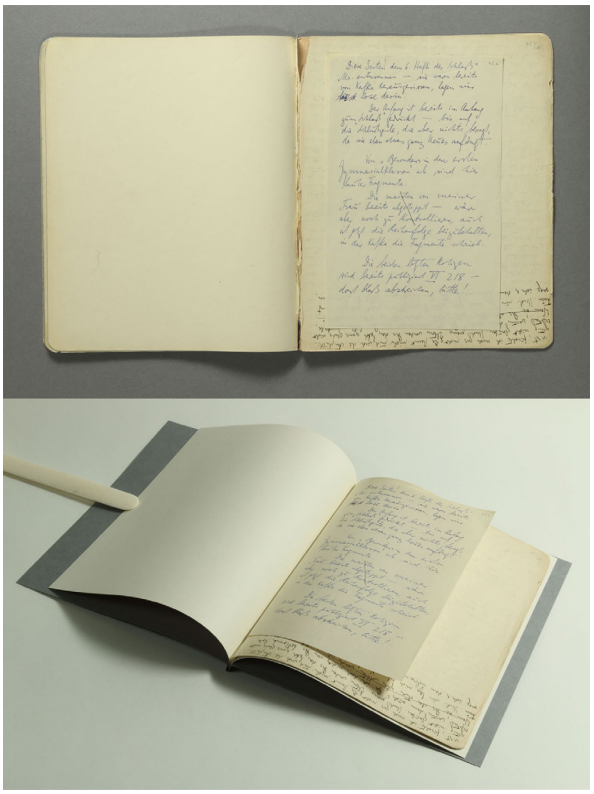


Fig. 3: Detached folios in MS. Kafka 39. Upper: before conservation, detached folios in-situ. Lower: after conservation, folios rehoused using the "fisherizing" technique (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 39)

from the back. Additionally fols. 46 and 47 have several deliberate cuts through the paper, which had been partially repaired with the aforementioned Palestinian stamp.

It was decided to reattach fol. 37, as the tear profile of the leaf could be matched precisely to the stub, and for handling and security reasons it would be less vulnerable if reintegrated into the textblock. The colour of the detached paper appears noticeably darker compared to the stub in the notebook, suggesting that it must have been stored separately for some time, which may provide further insight to scholars. Tengujo 5gsm[10] and wheat starch paste were used to reaffix the folio, and evidence of the discoloured paper remains very clear to anyone consulting the manuscript.

The group of loose fols. 42-47, together with an inserted note in Brod's hand found between fols. 41 and 42 (Fig. 3), posed a different problem, as there were concerns about the risks of keeping them loose but no stubs present to reattach them to within the notebook. Fasciculing[11] was proposed but dismissed as the majority of the text was on the verso of these folios, meaning that readers would largely encounter the blank rectos and have to turn each page to view the upside-down text. As an alternative method of housing the loose leaves, "fisherizing"[12] was undertaken: this method has the additional advantage of there being no support pages to disturb the flow of the

10 Available from https://www.preservationequipment.com/

11 For a description of this technique see H. Lindsay and C. Clarkson, 'Housing single-sheet material: The development of the fascicule system at the Bodleian Library', in: *The Paper Conservator*, 18 (1994), 40-48.

12 For a full description of this technique see A. Honey, 'Housing single-sheet material: "Fisherizing" at the Bodleian Library, Oxford', in: *The Paper Conservator*, 28 (2004), 99-104. Also available online at https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3c420c6e-666d-4ff7-9699-a6d0113b3b30

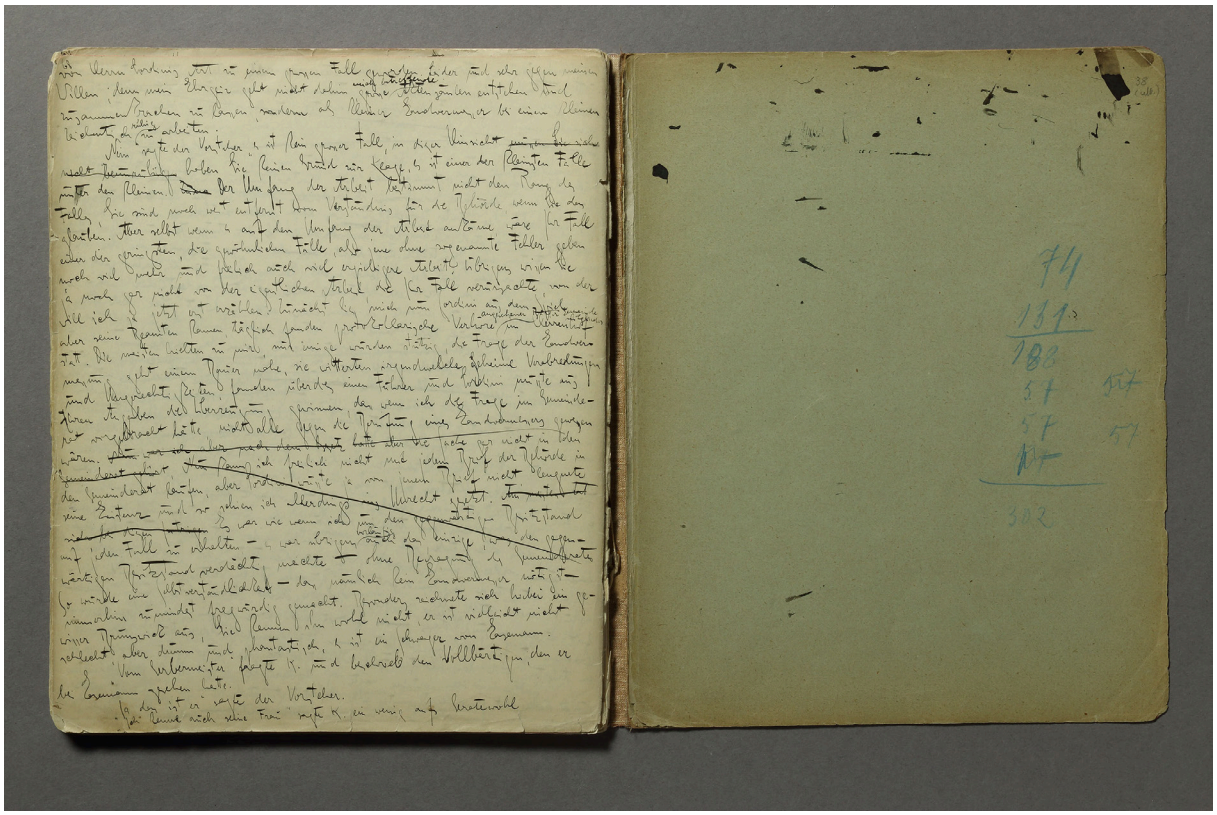


Fig. 4: Historic evidence including ink splashes, amendments, and editor's blue pencil on fols. 37b and 38a (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 34)

original folios, meaning the fisherized booklet can be turned around and read from the back, as it would have been in the notebook. Briefly, the inserted note and folios were each guarded with strips of Hasegawa paper[13] (3.3-3.4 monme[14]), which are folded (to provide depth compensation), then attached together using two paper twists pierced through the guards. Single bifolio endleaves were attached using linen thread, the spine protected with a strip of Hasegawa, and finally a Manila cover was folded and adhered to the spine. The fisherized module is stored in the same 4-flap folder as the bound portion of the notebook, allowing easy consultation.

Case study 2: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 34

This is another one of the *Das Schloss* notebooks and again contains many engaging details and historical evidence, such as black ink splashes all over the endleaves; Brod's blue editorial pencil; and of course Kafka's deletions and amendments. The cover was completely detached from the textblock, whilst the textblock itself comprises only one sewn quire and one other complete bifolio, with the rest of the manuscript being single leaves with torn gutter edges. Closer examination revealed that the loose leaves (fols. 15-37) came from as many as six different notebooks, as evidenced by varying dimensions, discrepancies between the presence or lack of watermarks, and different edge colourings to the pages.[15] Moreover,

13 Available from http://www.washikobo.com/index.html or https://store.hiromipaper.com/pages/online-store

14 A Japanese unit of weight. 1 monme is roughly equivalent to 3.75g.

15 Scholars have been able to positively identify two of the source notebooks: see online catalogue entry for Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 34 http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/kafka/kafka.html [accessed 25.06.2019].

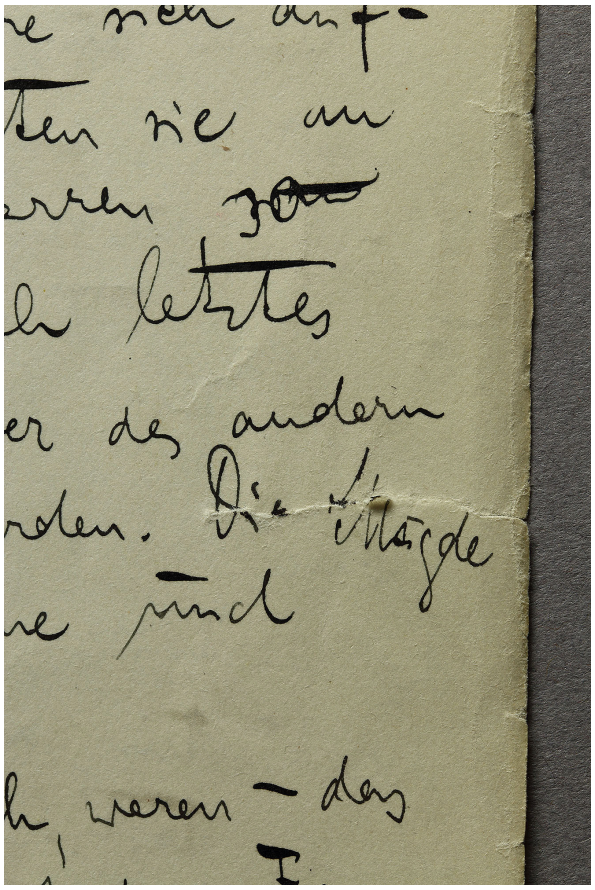


Fig. 5: Fol. 28, Kafka's handwriting stumbles to negotiate the existing tear (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 34)

often Kafka's ink has seeped into the damaged and torn edges of the paper, especially in skinned areas at the gutter edge, thus revealing that many of the folios were already loose and detached when Kafka was writing (unlike the loose leaves in MS. Kafka 39).

One such folio (fol. 28) presented an edge tear, which upon closer inspection showed that no matter which way the scarfed edges were aligned, the lines of ink lettering did not join up, indicating that the tear was in place at the time of Kafka's writing. This tear was therefore not repaired; instead, it was reinforced using 2gsm Berlin tissue[16] to bridge the active end of the tear and prevent it extending further during handling.

It was clear that other damage present had been caused later in the manuscript's lifetime. The foredges of several of the loose leaves were curled, folded over, and with small edge tears as they had projected beyond the covers slightly and been more susceptible to sustaining damage. In some places, the folded areas slightly obscured writing, and the tears presented a minor risk as they could extend further; therefore minimal repairs were undertaken using 2gsm Berlin tissue and wheat starch paste, restoring full visibility to the text.

The question of how the loose leaves within MS. Kafka 34 should be housed was addressed in a different way to Case study 1, MS. Kafka 39. As mentioned above, many of the leaves contained within the cover did not originate from the bound notebook so could not be attached within that structure. Equally, to rehouse them in a separate binding did not seem suitable as it would have such a significant impact on the appearance and nature of the object, leaving only 14 folios within the cover. As Kafka appeared to have written on many of them as loose leaves, it was decided to leave them as they were, inserted in foliated order between the covers. Security concerns were assuaged as it was established that any scholar viewing the original manuscripts would be well-supervised. An archival paper wrapper was made to ensure that the foredges of the loose folios had better protection and to prevent them from slipping too much within the cover.

Case study 3: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Kafka 40

MS. Kafka 40 is a slender notebook containing the text of several short stories. Its appearance is notable as it has a partial paper wrapper adhered to the cover using Brod's headed notepaper with his Tel Aviv address printed in both English and Hebrew. Adding to the intimate, "magical" experience of handling this notebook are details such as the stationer's stamp from the shop where Kafka purchased the book and his own pencil doodles in the margins. Other particulars may provide "meaningful" value for scholars, such as the use of different media

16 Available from http://www.atlantis-france.com/en/

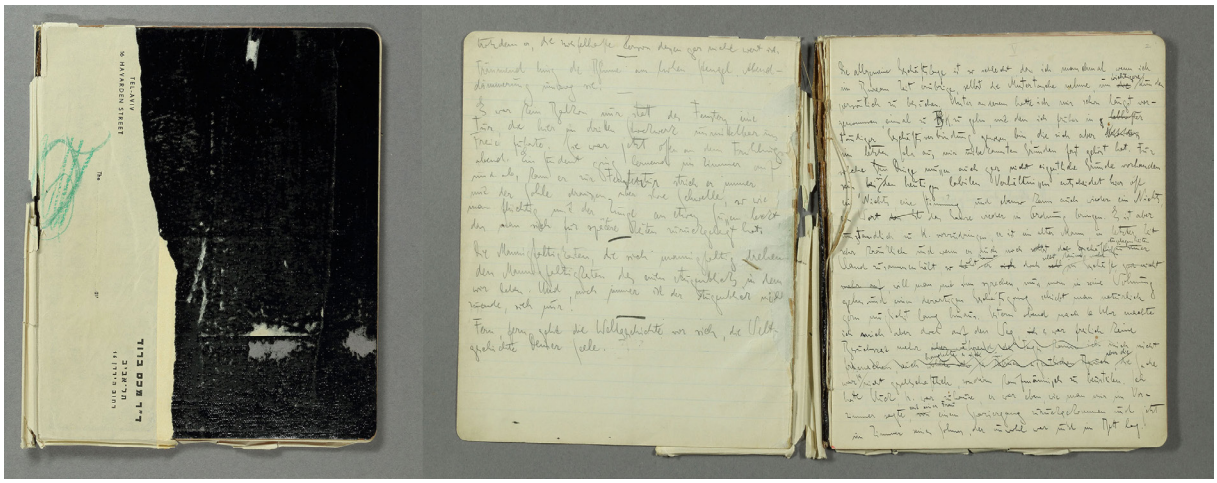


Fig. 6: MS. Kafka 40 before conservation. Left: front cover, with Brod's headed notepaper used as a wrapper. Right: manuscript open to folios 1b and 2a, with damage to Brod's repair visible at centre (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 40)

(pencil and ink) in different places and the presence of physical evidence indicating at least one missing quire.

Another detail, hitherto unknown, was discovered during examination: beneath Brod's paper wrapper is an area of adhered paper fibres with fragments of handwritten text just visible. Elsewhere in the Kafka collection, there is evidence that many of the notebooks had become stuck together and later peeled apart (perhaps the heat or humidity in Tel Aviv had caused the covers to become tacky) and presumably a similar incident is the cause of a fragment of paper becoming attached to the exterior of this notebook. As it potentially represents an unknown portion of writing by Kafka, in agreement with the curators, it was decided to investigate whether the fragment extended any further beneath Brod's paper wrapper.

Hyperspectral imaging was undertaken in-house; however, it did not reveal whether there was further text hidden beneath the paper wrapper, and was deemed inconclusive. Following this, an attempt was made to lift a small area of the paper by using gellan gum[17] at 4% to soften the adhesion to the cover. This did not prove particularly effective, so the process was halted once the boundaries of the adhered fibres and text were visible, and this area was then photographed. The handwriting can be positively identified as that of Kafka's; however, very few complete words are visible. If a larger fragment of text does exist beneath the wrapper, it would surely be of interest to

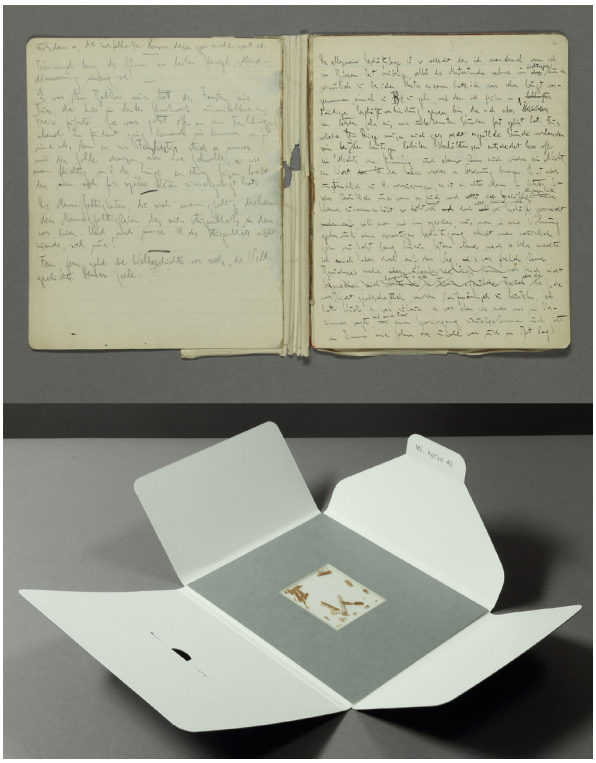


Fig. 7: MS. Kafka 40 after conservation. Upper: manuscript open to folios 1b and 2a, showing repair to Brod's paper wrapper. Lower: rehousing of adhesive and fibre fragments found at spine (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Kafka 40).

17 Gellan Gum Kelcogel CG-LA, available from Gabi Kleindorfer https://gmw-shop.de/en/.

scholars; however, it was agreed that pursuing this possibility should not be at the expense of damaging Brod's later intervention which in itself provides historical evidence.

Several material elements of the notebook required addressing as they affected the handling and stability of the manuscript. A slack loop of sewing thread visible between fols. 1 and 2 was still securely attached within the structure, so was anchored with small paper tabs to the spine-folds in order to hold it in place. Small fragments of adhesive with attached fibres found loose at the spine could not be reintegrated and were instead encapsulated in Melinex® for storage with the manuscript (Fig. 7).

Brod's headed notepaper wrapper was excessively wide at the spine, meaning that this part of the wrapper had become creased and torn as well as making the manuscript unwieldy. However, preservation of all the material present was deemed vital, and any dramatic change in structure was not desirable. The damage to the paper wrapper was repaired in-situ using 2gsm Berlin tissue and 3.5gsm Tengu tissue[18] with wheat starch paste. During repair, care was taken to retain the concertina-type creasing in the spine area of the paper wrapper as otherwise the covers would not align when closed. Similarly, the protruding edges of the paper wrapper at head and tail were repaired whilst preserving their curled edges, as they would be more vulnerable to damage if fully flattened out. To assist with handling, a paper dust-jacket was made, which will help to control movement at the spine as well as protecting the projecting edges of Brod's wrapper.

Access to the manuscripts

As described in the introduction and hinted at in the title, this paper aims to explore the changing nature of Kafka's manuscripts as they transitioned from personal possession to research library collection. Subsequent to Kafka's ownership they gathered physical evidence of their residence in Tel Aviv; as has been shown, and in the three case studies discussed, it should be clear that conservation treatments to stabilize the manuscripts aimed to preserve all of this history without impingement. To return to the three values posited earlier – the "magical", "meaningful", and "material" – it seems reasonable to conclude that the conservation treatment of these three manuscripts did not impact upon the "meaningful" value, as all evidence of this nature has been preserved. As regards the "material" value, as with all conservation work, preserving all material aspects was a primary concern; whether in-situ or preservation and rehousing of elements that could not be reintegrated.

When it comes to the "magical" value, considered evaluation is needed in order to understand how these manuscripts now appear to the scholar or viewer who may encounter them as perhaps the impact of their library treatment weighs more heavily than anticipated in this area. Considering the three ways in which these manuscripts can now be accessed perhaps reveals a disjuncture between the "magical" qualities experienced by the conservators and curators of this collection and visitors to the Bodleian Library.

Digital consultation

In an endeavour to preserve the Kafka manuscripts, which due to their intrinsic qualities remain fragile even after conservation in many instances, the collection can be accessed only by Kafka scholars with a proven need to consult the physical objects. This results in perhaps two or three people a year viewing the actual manuscripts. A slightly larger number of visitors are directed to view the digital surrogates of the manuscripts, available on a single computer in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Reading Rooms.[19] Users of the digital surrogates

18 Available from https://www.preservationequipment.com/.

19 Current copyright associated with the digital images

are able to see and consider all meaningful evidence within the manuscripts, but without being able to hold the physical object perhaps have reduced sense of the "magical" and "material" values.

Physical consultation

Taking the three manuscripts described previously as examples, those scholars who are permitted full consultation with the physical objects will encounter very little impact on the aesthetic appearance of the manuscripts as the repairs undertaken were minimal and sympathetic (with the exception of "fisherizing"), and they will gain a more profound sense of the "magical" and "material" values than those viewing the digital surrogates. However, before they see the manuscript itself they will encounter various layers of housing and associated accoutrements: boxes, folders, archival wrappers, rehoused fragments, and handling notes, perhaps interfering with the perception of the manuscripts as a direct conduit to Kafka. All these trappings also create an absurd juxtaposition between Kafka and Brod's treatment of the notebooks (cutting, tearing, even burning[20]) and this level of fastidious housing. Additionally items such as the rehoused adhesive fragments seem somewhat anomalous when considered from the contemporary viewer's perspective: they tell us about 20th-century mass-production methods and materials rather than anything about Kafka or his writing processes.

Display

The final way in which the Library allows and curates access to the Kafka collection is via exhibition, both in the Weston Library in Oxford and occasionally as loans to international institutions, such as the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach.[21] Displaying the notebooks as static objects behind glass seems to be a denial of the original purpose of a literary manuscript: the viewer can only see one opening and cannot read any text beyond this. Again it may also sit uncomfortably with what we know about Kafka's attitude towards the physical objects that contained his draft writings. However, perhaps the benefits of display outweigh these concerns as it allows large numbers of people to experience the "magic" of seeing Kafka's own handwriting, and to gain some sense of the "meaningful" and "material" values of these notebooks.

All of these methods of access can add up to a sense of the Library presenting the manuscripts as hallowed objects and the associated fragments as sacred relics, vastly removed from their genesis in Kafka's hands and somewhat dissociated from their original purpose. However, to consider library and museum collections more widely, it becomes evident that it is unavoidable that an object's nature changes upon being accessioned to a collection. In fact, the character of these manuscripts changed long before that, upon the death of Kafka, although in Brod's hands they did for a time retain their purpose as working documents, gaining further marks, notations, amendments and repairs. Once they entered the Bodleian's collections they transcended their original function: but equally this is true of many of our special collections; for example, the Gutenberg Bible[22] is not used to celebrate a mass just as Handel's conducting score of the Messiah[23] is no longer used in concerts.[24]

means that the surrogates are limited to being accessed in this on-site location rather than more widely available online.

20 For evidence of Kafka burning his own manuscripts, see Stach, note 1, 542-543 and 597, note 12.

21 The Bodleian shares some Kafka manuscripts with this institution, as MSS. Kafka 49-50 were purchased jointly with the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in 2011. See online catalogue for further notes on ownership and acquisition: http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/kafka/kafka.html [accessed 28.06.2019].

22 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Arch. B b.10 and Arch. B b.11.

23 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Tenbury 346.

24 For further discussion of how "conservation objects" change and acquire new meanings and functions, see Muñoz Viñas, note 5, 160.

Conclusion

Our interventions act to preserve the Kafka manuscripts as library objects, not as the working notebooks Kafka and Brod knew them as. Inevitably they have become precious items, and therefore efforts to house and preserve them treat them as such. Boxes and folders are necessary to protect the manuscripts from various elements whilst they are in storage and during transport, but may also fulfil a further function as they suggest to the reader that extra care may be needed with this item. Anecdotally, there are indications that being presented with a well-boxed manuscript encourages more careful behaviour from readers. Additionally, the rehoused fragments that seem rather absurd are in fact consistent with how we rehouse and preserve all material that cannot be reintegrated, regardless of whether it is an endband from a 15th-century binding or a loose piece of thread from a Kafka notebook. No value judgment is cast upon items due to their age or whether they were handmade with expensive materials or mass-produced with common materials.

The journey from author's draft to select library holding leaves many marks upon the manuscripts – both literally and figuratively. Conservation and preservation measures attempt to have a minimum impact and strive to preserve the meaningful and material elements for future audiences. Inevitably there are compromises along the way, as we are forced to prioritise the survival of the material elements above the user's experience of the elusive "magical" value. It is worth remembering that often the Library staff (and conservators in particular) have the most fortunate experience of all, with extended handling time and privileged levels of access, and perhaps, therefore, the most significant portion of the "magical value.[25]

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