

Franz Kafka, subversive dreamer

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more often marginalized in interpretation and on the biblical written text's oral roots is welcome.

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Franz Kafka, subversive dreamer, by Michael Löwy, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2016, 140 pp., £27.49, ISBN 9780472053094

Michael Löwy's short, provocative and politicized reading of Kafka is a fruitful, if at times frustrating addition to studies in Kafka. *Franz Kafka: rêveur insoumis* first appeared in French in 2004, and has been translated into Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Greek and Turkish. This new translation by Inez Hedges faithfully replicates the original, adding a brief introduction and some notes, making accessible to an Anglophone audience a new argument for the anti-authoritarian Kafka.

Löwy has written on Kafka over his career, and the present study's aim is to identify "*the incredibly critical and subversive dimension of Kafka's oeuvre*" (4), not through any explicit affiliations or utterances but within a profoundly antiauthoritarian spirit or "*inner landscape*" (9). Over seven chapters Löwy identifies, with varying successes, the features of this landscape. In Chapter 1, Löwy wades into the old controversy of the young Kafka's affinities with anarchist circles in Prague but repeats a flawed reliance on the contradictory and unreliable testimonies of Michal Mareš and Gustave Janouch. While his argument is methodologically weak, he makes a persuasive enough case for an internal "antiauthoritarian sensibility" (27), marked by a critical irony and humour, that is then explored in the development of his writings.

Although such arguments have been made before, the strength of Löwy's reading, steeped in critical theory, is its fluency in Kafka, marshalling a wide range of textual material and perceptive commentary. In Chapter 2 he identifies a trajectory of anti-authoritarianism, from a personal reaction to patriarchal authority in "The Judgement," *Metamorphosis*, and "Letter to my Father" that later develops into a transcendent, universal, abstract and bureaucratic representation of power in "The Penal Colony" and later novels. Kafka is recast as a rebel, anti-patriarchal and anti-colonial, whose thought sympathizes with the powerless.

Löwy is rightly keen to challenge a hermeneutic tradition since Max Brod of a pessimistic fatalism and resignation in Kafka, often linked to his Jewish identity. In Chapter 3, Löwy challenges Arendt's claim of Josef K.'s fundamental Jewishness in *The Trial*, presenting him as a "pariah-rebel" of a universal sort (51). Chapter 4 observes a "religion of liberty" in "Before the Law": an antiauthoritarian ethos of individual self-determination and resistance against arbitrary power. Chapter 5 explores *The Castle* as offering a new thinking of resistance to the "voluntary servitude" of submitting "like a dog," the *Trial's* last line, embodied in the defiance of the Land-surveyor (and, above all, Amalia) who most explicitly realize the later "antiauthoritarian individualism of the author" (96). The final two chapters are brief,

addressing Kafka's "realism" and the "Kafkaesque," but add little to the book's argument, and the work would have benefitted from a more extensive introduction, and conclusion.

In attempting to draw an anarchistic politics of resistance out of Kafka, Löwy sometimes neglects the dark humour, absurdity and ambiguities of power and freedom in his writings, which more often voice the stumbling confusions faced by individuals confronting the limits of an autonomy to which Löwy is sympathetic. While not everyone will find Löwy's subversive Kafka persuasive, the work is a rich and challenging contribution to Kafka studies.

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Ludwig August Frankl (1810-1894). Eine Jüdische Biographie Zwischen Okzident Und Orient, edited by Louise Hecht, Vienna/Cologne, Böhlau Verlag, 2016, Intellektuelles Prag im 19 und 20. Jahrhundert, Volume 10, 430 pp., 57 Euros, ISBN: 9783412503741

For much of the nineteenth century, Ludwig August Frankl was among the most significant and interesting Jewish personalities of Habsburg Vienna. A minor romantic poet from Bohemia, whose *Wiener Sonntagsblätter* was the pre-eminent literary journal of the Vormärz era, Frankl was a ubiquitous presence in the salons of pre-revolutionary Vienna and a pivotal figure in the very Jewish world of pre-revolutionary Habsburg journalism, acting as a conduit between the two as the aristocratic liberal opposition began to find its voice. He was never a significant political player, but his poem, "Die Universität" became the anthem of the Viennese revolution and for decades afterwards Frankl cultivated the memory of 1848 and his own image as an 1848er. Yet there was far more to Frankl's life than this. As the long-serving secretary and archivist of the Viennese Jewish community, he drew on its resources to write pioneering historical accounts of the community. As a communal functionary linked through ties of kinship and friendship to leading members of the Habsburg Jewish elite, he was entrusted with establishing a modern school in Jerusalem in memory of Simon Edler von Lämél, to which end he visited the Constantinople and the Holy City in 1856, authored a popular, multivolume account of his travels, and intervened in contemporary debates about how best to support the Jews of Eretz Israel. As the repressive 1850s gave way to the liberal 1860s, he reengaged with liberally inflected social and political causes, mobilising support first for a monument to the German national poet Friedrich von Schiller (for which he was ennobled by Emperor Franz Josef) and for a school for Jewish blind children. His second wife Paula, meanwhile, became a leading figure in the emerging world of women's activism.

This brief account of Frankl's life does not do justice to his multifaceted interests and diverse achievements, but it helps to understand why this neglected Jewish figure might be a wonderful subject for a biographer. Yet it is not always easy to write the biography of such a multifaceted man in a way that does justice to the many fields upon which he exerted an influence. The approach taken in this book is "pluralistic": it consists of fifteen