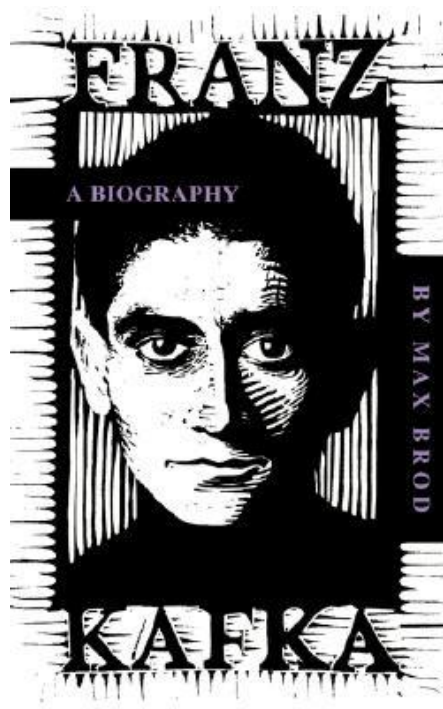




Franz Kafka: a biography

Max Brod , Richard Winston (Translator) , G. Humphreys Roberts (Translator)

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Franz Kafka: a biography Max Brod , Richard Winston (Translator) , G. Humphreys Roberts (Translator)
Max Brod, a successful novelist, was a boyhood companion of Kafka's and remained closely tied to him until Kafka's death in 1924. He was undoubtedly the one man whom Kafka trusted more than any other, and it is to Brod, as his literary executor and editor, that we are indebted for rescuing and bringing to light Kafka's work. Out of a lifelong devoted friendship, Brod drew this account of Kafka's youth, family and friends, his struggle to recognize himself as a writer, his sickness, and his last days.

Franz Kafka gives us not only a more vivid and lifelike picture of Kafka than that painted by any of his contemporaries, but also a fascinating portrayal of the complicated interaction between two writers of different temperaments but similar backgrounds who together helped shape the future of twentieth-century literature.

Franz Kafka: a biography Details

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From Reader Review Franz Kafka: a biography for online ebook

Fernando says

Soy un asiduo lector de biografías. Me gustan, me atraen. Siempre quise saber y conocer datos únicos y anécdotas únicas de mis escritores preferidos, descubrir el costado humano del autor.

Tengo la inmensa suerte de poseer diez biografías de Edgar Allan Poe, algunas de ellas como la de J.H. Ingram, Edmond Jaloux o Phillip Lindsay de excepcional trabajo de investigación, cinco de Fiódor Dostoievski, entre las cuales están las escritas por su hija Liubov y su segunda esposa, Anna Grigórievna, la de Herman Melville incluida en sus obras completas y esta de Franz Kafka escrita por su mejor amigo y albacea Max Brod en 1937, muchos años después del deceso del genial autor checo.

Creo que me será difícil encontrar otra biografía que analice tan a fondo a un escritor como Kafka de la manera que lo hace Brod, puesto que detalla con gran fineza muchos rasgos de su personalidad como así también anécdotas desde que son adolescentes, allá por 1906 hasta la muerte del escritor en 1924.

Algunos aspectos, desconocidos para mí, como por ejemplo la de sus escapadas a Italia a la ciudad de Brescia, que forma parte de uno de los apéndices del libro, escrito por el propio Kafka para ver por primera vez en sus vidas el vuelo de aeroplanos, Blériot incluido.

Otro apartado interesante en el apéndice son dos cartas de Kafka sobre la educación de los niños, apoyándose un poco en el libro “Los Viajes de Gulliver”, de Jonathan Swift, algo que resulta un tanto extraño viniendo de alguien que jamás tuvo hijos.

Hay muchos pasajes de su traumática relación de Kafka con Hermann, su padre, sobre su complicada relación con las mujeres que amó (o intentó amar) y me sorprendieron algunos aspectos relacionados a este tema: en primer lugar que Max Brod no se haya atrevido a escribir el nombre de Felice Bauer, el primer amor de Kafka sino solamente a través de la abreviatura F.B. ni tampoco nombrar para nada la otra relación con la segunda mujer que atrajo a Kafka, me refiero a Milena Jesenská ya que entre ambos hubo una intensa y abultada correspondencia epistolar.

Es más, está editado el libro, libro que tengo y que reseñé también aquí en goodreads. Sí habla sobre Dora Diamant, quien fuera la compañera de Kafka hasta su muerte. Sé que Diamant escribió un libro sobre Kafka. Tal vez, algún día lo lea.

Las cartas escritas a Felice y Milena, junto con los escritos póstumos, los relatos, las tres novelas y otro enorme libro de Diarios de Kafka (que también tengo y abarca 848 páginas) son esenciales para conocer en profundidad la vida y la obra de este escritor único.

Volviendo a esta biografía, es probable que Max Brod haya encontrado muchos detractores entre sus pares o que algunos lectores tilden de aburrida esta biografía.

Puedo entender que algunos capítulos son mejores que otros pero en lo que a mí respecta, es muy interesante descubrir cosas que nunca había leído sobre Kafka.

Cierro esta breve reseña comentando uno de estos detalles desconocidos. Como lectores conocemos las últimas palabras de los escritores más famosos y creo que la de Oscar Wilde es una de las más célebres que se recuerden.

Seguramente a ustedes les vendrán otras a la cabeza, pero lo que no sabía yo era cuáles habían sido las últimas palabras de Kafka.

Transcribo desde el libro de Brod esas líneas: *...luego arrancó con toda violencia el cardioscopio y lo arrojó a la habitación: “Ya no más torturas, para qué alargarlo.”*

Cuando Klopstock se apartó de la cama para limpiar la jeringa, dijo Franz: “No se vaya.” El amigo repuso: “No, si no me voy.” Franz respondió con voz profunda: “Pero yo me voy.”

Con estas palabras, a modo de saludo cordial se apagaba a los 42 años, la vida de Franz Kafka, uno de los mejores escritores de toda la historia.

Y ya nada en la literatura volvió a ser igual.

Buzz Borders says

Brod uses most of the book to promote most of his own work. I had a difficult time following, but the bits about Kafka you get, the segments of writing and information is worth the read.

Antonio Delgado says

This early Kafka's biography has interesting anecdotal stories. However, Max Brod does his best portraying Kafka as a Jewish writer writing stories about Judaism. Kafka was not a Zionist. Ultimately, it becomes a hagiography. Still, Brod leads the way to approach Kafka's writing and to understand why his letters and diary are part of his work. As he points out, Kafka's interest in writes material outside of their main work fascinated him. Also, Brod illuminates our understanding of Kafka's writing process and how work disrupted his creativity but also provided him material. One has to approach this text with caution and distrust, the same way Kafka read religious texts.

Aaron Dietz says

Please, if any of you are thinking of resurrecting Max Brod and making sure he's my best friend, I'm warning you now: do not let him write a biography about me.

Max Brod: lovely man. Franz Kafka: A Biography: boring book.

There are some gems in there (little sprigs of beauty exemplifying Kafka's character), but they are like 50 pages or more apart! Plus, come on, now, Max--I read the Blue Notebooks. Tell us the dirty stories about the houses of prostitution! But no, Max keeps it clean.

What is expressed is that Max loved a truly terrific friend of his in Kafka. What is also expressed is that Max was at a loss to sum the experience up in a presentable way. It's understandable that he would be beside himself. Just don't spend too much time on this book.

Simon says

Franz Kafka A Biography by Max Brod (Da Capo)
www.dacapopress.com

For anyone who likes or has an interest in the life and writings of Franz Kafka this biography of him written by his best friend and literary executor Max Brod in 1937 and revised in 1947 and translated to english in 1960 is pretty much the bible.

The fact that it took me something like 20 years to find a copy in a bookshop is shocking as this should be readily and easily available as it is

without doubt a well written and fascinating account of his best friends life that when you consider just about every other book on Kafka that I've ever read quotes from this biography still contains loads of revelations as to what kafka was really like and just how much of his writing was meant to be comic!

Max manages to name Kafkas favourite brothel that they used to visit together! the bars they hung out in and Max tells with a real hint of jealousy of Kafkas magnetism to women who were always throwing themselves at him!

Max also sets Kafkas books into the times they were written in and how the Trial was written during world war 1 adds to the dimensions of the story while max points out how it was actually Kafkas re-telling of the book of Job from the bible! Also the first time he read from it in public it reduced the audience to hysterical laughter because of how Franz read the first chapter.

The book quotes liberally from Kafkas letters to his friends and lovers to tell the story and we find his favourite writers were people like Grillparzer and Kleist and of course Nemcova Whose novel the Grandmother Kafka re-wrote as The Castle.

Max also deals with the question of if Kafka had a love child that Kafka knew nothing about and who it's claimed died aged 6, Max believed the woman who is only named as Madame MM so as not to embarrass her husband! he also connects this woman to claims that there is a hoard of unpublished letters and writing that the woman in question took with her family when they fled to Chile at the start of world war 2.

A book that is a true must have read find a copy anyway you can!!

Jyoti says

I loved this book. Franz Kafka had a gift that most of us lack, he could think clearly.

Candice says

what an interesting mind.

Rgoldenberg says

This biography is a “must read” for anyone who wishes to dig a little deeper into the mysterious psyche of Franz Kafka. It is written by his longtime friend, Max Brod, the person who Franz was closest to (and I am including his family members). Brod gives us glimpses into Kafka’s world, showing us how the intensity of his conflict with his father deeply impacted his soul—and how it presented itself in Kafka’s stories. Brod paints a portrait of a kind of “pure soul, a fully truthful human being incapable of machinations and scheming, deeply sensitive to his friends, family and the women he loved. He also lets us see the deeply moving story of Kafka’s last days through his correspondences.

Brod offers some textual analysis as well, arguing that Kafka is basically spiritual writer, hungering for union with God, for the perfect, Platonic world beyond. His explication of “The Castle,” as a metaphor of the alienation of the Wandering Jew, was thought provoking. Brod made me want to go back and re-read Kafka’s major works, “The Trial” and “The Castle.”

Jose Carlos says

LA FUNDACIÓN DEL MITO

Puede que no sea el mejor texto sobre Kafka, y realmente creo que es el peor. Y puede que esté escrito desde una trinchera, más bien desde un búnker de admiración, que lo intoxica todo. Es obvio que sus datos no sólo no son objetivos, sino que Max Brod oculta información, manipula la vida de Kafka, lo pedestaliza, lo remodela a sus anchas para crear el mito que, desde entonces, desde este texto, ya será para siempre y para nosotros.

Y Brod comete, además, un enorme pecado al narrarnos la vida de Kafka: a veces aburre. Es moroso, abruma con sus notas a pie, de una densidad intolerable que va más allá de lo que un editor juicioso podría permitir, se pierde en insignificancias y vela sucesos trascendentes... Pero ambos eran amigos. Era el amigo de Kafka, de eso no queda duda, y por ello, aunque fuera sólo por eso, por la visión que de Kafka tiene quien estuvo con él, junto a él mucho tiempo, el libro ya merece la pena.

Y todo lo anterior queda eclipsado por ser el origen del mito y el arranque de un ingente número de estudios y textos infinitamente mejores y mejorados sobre la figura de Kafka que remiten como punto de partida a este trabajo de Brod, sin el cual hubieran sido imposibles. En eso radica su mérito, enorme.

La aproximación de Brod está estructurada de una manera puramente biográfica, desde el nacimiento y la infancia recorre la vida del escritor hasta su muerte en el sanatorio austriaco en el que recaba en los últimos momentos. Es un recorrido no exento de emoción, pero también lastrado por la admiración casi enfermiza del amigo. Brod, muchas veces, cita de memoria palabras y frases de Kafka que nos hacen preguntarnos si vivió junto a él permanentemente anotando todo lo que decía, o bien su memoria es prodigiosa. Sí, es cierto que Kafka empleó la mayor parte de su tiempo, por desgracia, en redactar cartas a los amigos, las amantes, y a rellenar un diario exhaustivo y agotador en lugar de escribir más literatura. Gracias a ese diario se pueden saber con detalle la mayoría de los movimientos de Kafka, pero ciertas afirmaciones y recuerdos demasiado exactos de Brod me hacen preguntarme si Franz Kafka era observado por su amigo como un insecto al microscopio; si él era el único que ignoraba su genialidad mientras, alrededor, todos anotaban y pugnaban por recordar hasta el menor de sus movimientos, hasta el último hálito (como es el caso de Gustav Janouch y

esos recuerdos tan minuciosos -como ciertamente increíbles en un enorme porcentaje-, aunque poseen su encanto).

No deja de ser inquietante percibir eso, cómo todos lo que rodeaban a un Kafka incomprendido y solitario se mantenían en la creencia de que era un genio para la posteridad, y que él ni siquiera pudiera imaginarlo. Es otra de las paradojas de la existencia de Kafka, glosada en cientos de libros una y otra vez, fascinante, mientras para él resultaba de lo más anodina. En ese sentido, Brod aporta muchísimas declaraciones de su amigo, quizás sea el material más enriquecedor del libro, bien entresacadas de los diarios, de cartas personales, de charlas de café... aunque después de leer la biografía uno no sabe si entiende, ahora, mejor o incluso peor, a Kafka.

Brod disecciona a su amigo para desnudarlo ante el lector y volver a vestirlo, al final del libro, ya con los ropajes que nunca lo abandonarían: los de mito literario del siglo XX. Brod lo empezó todo, ignoramos que sabríamos de Kafka actualmente, cómo lo valoraríamos, sin la contribución de Max Brod: aunque esté plagada de errores o sea, cuanto menos, bastante cuestionable en muchos de sus aspectos.

Un texto crucial por lo que representa: la fundación del mito y del modelo literario kafkiano, el primero que pone el empeño y el esfuerzo en acercarnos una de las figuras más importantes de la literatura universal.

Cecily says

Biography of Kafka by his best friend and literary executor, whose adoration shines through. He knew the man better than almost anyone, but on the other hand, couldn't possibly assess him objectively, or with the benefit of much hindsight.

Brod reveals a much happier and more positive aspect of his character than might be assumed from his works, although it also mentions his negative thoughts and feelings (especially re his father, anxiety and mixed feelings about marriage, and feelings that his writing was not good enough).

Also explains the Jewish subtext of some of his works (especially *The Castle*) and the effect of his relationships on his writing, especially with Felice, Melina and Dora.

Kafka loved Flaubert and Goethe, but generally preferred biography and travel books. He trained as a lawyer and worked in the civil service - very much reflected in his novels. He tried to live a very "natural" life (veggie, no medicine if poss, outdoor swimming etc).

Should Brod have destroyed Kafka's works?

Kafka famously told Brod that he wanted all his unpublished works destroyed. Brod told him he wouldn't do it. Kafka did not appoint anyone else as his literary executor instead, so maybe Brod is absolved of betrayal (as well as to be hailed for preserving wonderful works for posterity). However, I read this years ago, and don't recall now how fully Brod explained it.

See my Kafka-related bookshelf for other works by and about Kafka (<http://www.goodreads.com/review/list/...>).

James Taehyun says

Infinitely beautiful. Work of love.

“Everything that came from him, came in a way that became less and less forced as the years went on, a precious expression of his quite special way of looking at things—patient, life-loving, ironically considerate towards the follies of the world, and therefore full of sad humor, but never forgetful of the real kernel, “The Indestructible”, and so always far from being blasé or cynical. Yes, that was it—in his presence the everyday world underwent a transformation, everything was new, new in a way that was often very sad, not to say shattering, but which never precluded the possibility of final consolation because it was never dull, and never flat.”

“But his whole behavior, down to the smallest detail, even if you only watch the way he brushes his hair, is based on the belief that there is, as a premise taken for granted without discussion, a mode of life which is right, thorough, clean, and unshakably natural. It is there. But to find it, to arrive at it—that is the difficulty. Deny this enormous difficulty—that he is far from doing. On the contrary: he sees all the confusion and all that is in a nasty way comic in the world more intensively than any other man. He knows one can’t take a step without getting into complications, without stumbling. And yet there is this deep confidence that the inner excellence will mature.”

“How I adored that smile, in which, after all, there lay also so much confidence and encouragement. Franz was inexhaustible in finding out new lines of sport, or so it seemed to me. In this too his personality expressed itself, this too he did, as he did everything, with complete abandon.”

“If the angels made jokes in heaven it would have to be in Kafka’s language.”

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

This is one of the essential books I have long kept waiting for years since my first encounter one of his works, notably *The Metamorphosis* first published in 1915 (Everyman's Library, 1993, pp. 75-128) in which I found reading inexplicably thrilling and amazing for its unique plot, setting, protagonist, etc. One of the reasons is that his life is worth knowing and studying, still keeping his readers wondering on his literary output in spite of his age at 40 as we can see from his biography (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_K...).

Written by Max Brod one of Kafka's close friends and published in German, this well-researched book has since been popular and deserved to read as an essential supplementary biography compiled from letters, diary entries, oral account, etc. from Max Brod himself and Kafka's intimate friends. This 275-page, black-and-white cover (subtitle and author in light purple) paperback is a must for any Kafka's enthusiast who longs to better understand his life, plight and legacy as roughly revealed from these following chapter titles: 1) Parents and Childhood, 2) The University, 3) To Earn One's Living or Live One's Life, 4) Up to the Publication of "Contemplation", 5) The Engagement, 6) Religious Background, 7) The Last Years, and 8) New Aspects of Kafka. Moreover, the readers would find its 5-topic appendixes and 9 rare illustrations enjoyably rewarding; the last illustration being Kafka's Handwriting and Pen Sketches.

Stephen says

Brod's bias, his tangents, style, and not-so-subtle self-promotion are all questionable, but the subject himself is far too dear to warrant any weaker a rating.

R.K. Cowles says

4 1/4 stars

George says

If you love Kafka, you will love this biography, by someone who personally knew and deeply respected Kafka immensely.
