



SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION: THE UNEXPECTED AFTERLIFE OF FRANZ KAFKA'S MANUSCRIPTS AT THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY (in English)

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The Bodleian Library holds the majority of the surviving papers of the influential and singularly original author Franz Kafka (d.1924). Included in this holding are drafts for his unfinished novels *Das Schloss (The Castle)* and *Der Verschollene (Amerika)*, as well as various short stories such as *Die Verwandlung (The Metamorphosis)* and *Das Urteil (The Judgment)*. Kafka asked his friend Max Brod to burn all of these manuscripts, however Brod preserved them and they have a complex history of movement and ownership since Kafka's death. They narrowly escaped the entry of the German Army into Prague in 1939 as Brod took them to Tel Aviv, and were later brought from Switzerland to Oxford in 1961.

Kafka wrote his drafts in shop-bought stationer's notebooks which now show various signs of deterioration associated to the materials used, but also exhibit damage relating to Kafka's own working methods and their later use by Max Brod in Tel Aviv. In 2008 a project was begun to conserve the manuscripts in order to stabilise them and prevent further damage occurring. Selecting and applying appropriate conservation treatments was complicated by the need to preserve the important evidence of Kafka's working processes and their later history: for example, torn out pages, writing over skinned areas, repairs and modifications such as the use of postage stamps to hold together cut areas, and home-made book wrappers to protect the covers.

This paper will focus upon what the notebooks reveal about Kafka's working methods and their later history, and how conservation treatments negotiated retaining this evidence whilst ensuring the stability of the books. It also aims to explore how researchers and visitors interact with the manuscripts now at the Bodleian Library; and what elements might be lost when interactions take place through digital access only, or through glass barriers in the gallery.