

**KARL**

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**IN THESE  
GREAT TIMES  
*SELECTED WRITINGS***

EDITED AND TRANSLATED  
BY PATRICK HEALY

**NOVEMBER  
EDITIONS**

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KARL KRAUS

# In These Great Times

## Selected Writings

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## INTRODUCTION

Passionate, polemical and witty, Karl Kraus started his literary life as a precocious and sharp-eyed observer, displaying something of the ease and elegance for which *fin-de-siècle* Vienna was celebrated. However, his early writing gave way to a darker and increasingly despairing vision culminating in his most outstanding creative achievement, *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*), an excoriating and apocalyptic drama written in response to World War I. The earliest versions of this play – which would run to over 200 scenes and include a cast of nearly 500 – appeared in special numbers of his own journal, *Die Fackel* ('the Torch'), which was first issued in 1899 and in time had become his principal literary vehicle.

Kraus was born into an assimilated Jewish family on April 28<sup>th</sup> 1874 in Gitschin, Bohemia (today Jičín in the Czech Republic)<sup>i</sup>, his parents' ninth child. Three years after his birth the family moved to Vienna, where Kraus was to remain almost all of his life. Several elements of his background are significant for all later biographical consideration: the fact that he came from a rich bourgeois family, his Bohemian Jewish ancestry, and his adoption of the city of Vienna, with which the greater part of his life work is absolutely synonymous. The family prospered in Vienna, and following the death of Kraus's father in 1900, his brothers took over responsibility for his paper manufacturing business. This meant that Kraus was effectively financially independent most of his life, enabling him to publish *Die Fackel* and later create his own publishing house for his works. The former is Kraus's effective autobiography, and indeed he was so identified with the publication that he earned the nickname 'Fackelkraus' in Vienna, which he disliked. For the first twelve years of its existence, *Die Fackel* was published three times per month and averaged 33 printed pages; this rate changed after 1911, and during the war years the special numbers sometimes ran to hundreds of pages. In total it contained over 30,000 pages and included almost everything Kraus wrote, although material such as poems, aphorisms and plays was often published elsewhere as well.<sup>ii</sup>

Kraus's early development as a writer emerges from various pieces in *Die Fackel*: his sharp eye for his teachers' pomposity, the shaping of his literary taste by a school-teacher, and his ambition to publish a satirical magazine with his friend Anton Linder.<sup>iii</sup> It is remarkable that in over thirty thousand published pages however, he makes almost no reference to his family or father, mother or siblings. One of his most treasured possessions in childhood was a puppet theatre and drama became a great passion for the young Kraus. At this time, Vienna's Burgtheater had established a significant Shakespeare repertory and offered something of an education for Viennese who wanted to speak good German:<sup>iv</sup> Kraus's admiration for its production of *King Lear*, with celebrated Austrian actor Adolf von Sonnenthal in the lead role, was so great that he went to see several performances. He obtained much of his inside information on the world of Viennese theatre from the father of his friend Karl Rosner (who later wrote an account of these boyhood days<sup>v</sup>) and his earliest ambition was to become an actor; contemporary accounts attest to his youthful gift as a mimic. Kraus met with several famous Viennese actors, gave public readings of literary texts and in January 1893 played Franz Moor in a production of Schiller's *Die Räuber*. However, his own career may have been impeded by a slight spinal deformity, which was subject to a satirical account in his

later readings.

Almost immediately after finishing his Gymnasium studies, Kraus attempted to settle the direction of his interests. Whilst holidaying with his family at their villa in Bad Ischl, he sent off under a pseudonym, letters to the newly-founded illustrated review *Das Rendezvous* in Vienna. On October 21st 1892, Kraus held a public reading to an invited public in which he defended the realist poets against the attacks of the theatre critic Ludwig Speidel and read from the works of his friend Anton Linder and the German poets Detlev von Liliencron and Arno Holz.<sup>vi</sup> By holding his readings in public and inviting friends, at the age of eighteen Kraus indicated the personal and ferocious nature of his intended and actual engagement with literature. He would champion his own tastes which could be deeply conservative or at the cutting edge of experiment, and take on directly established critics and opinion. Through his public reading, he insisted that writing was not only intended for the private ensconced world of the reader. His support of 'realism' set him at odds with the symbolist and mystical tendencies of the dominant literary elites. The targeting of contemporaries, especially other writers, would characterise Kraus throughout his life.

In that same year, 1892, Kraus took up the study of law at the insistence of his father, who did not approve of his journalistic activities or theatre criticism (although he did later contribute money to the publication of the initial run of *Die Fackel*). It was not uncommon to choose such a profession among the assimilated Jewish population of Vienna; as the historian Robert Wistrich has shown, around twenty-two percent of Viennese lawyers were Jewish.<sup>vii</sup> Although Kraus had previously published some minor pieces, his real entry into the literary world of Vienna took the form of a vitriolic attack on the literary scene, "Die Demolierte Literatur" ('Literature Demolished'), which was published in 1897.<sup>viii</sup> The trigger for writing it was the impending closure of the café Griensteidl, where the so-called 'Young Vienna' society would meet to discuss ideas and exchange manuscripts and criticism. This loose group of writers, who rejected the prevailing naturalism of the period in favour of experimentation with modernism and symbolism, had gained a reputation for decadence; Kraus was often among their number, enticed away from university studies by the lure of café life. His attack in "Die Demolierte Literatur" was pitted against the provincialism of Austrian literature in general, which, as Frank Field has argued, had only come into its own at the end of the nineteenth century, when in the poetry and plays of the Impressionist movement it had produced a major challenge to German domination.<sup>ix</sup> The text did not name any names, but was brimming with innuendo and deadly mimetic accuracy, so that all the people involved would feel the personal weight of the satire. In a sense, Kraus had already set the stage for his own isolation from literary Vienna.

#### FIN-DE-SIÈCLE VIENNA AND THE LAUNCH OF *DIE FACKEL*

The tensions of café life were in fact a reflection of the wider problems of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a city of vastly complex social divisions. With fifteen languages officially recognised and a population that had risen to two million, Vienna was the metropolis to which more and more people migrated; by the 1890s, more than half of Viennese inhabitants were not natives of the city. As the city became ethnically more diverse, tensions mounted and the concept of what it meant to be Viennese came under increasing pressure. Anti-Semitism grew at an insatiable rate, deployed politically by the Lord Mayor Karl Lueger as means of alleviating the Viennese crisis of identity; meanwhile, the equally notorious polemics of the parliamentary deputy and 'peasant King

Schönerer were calculated to strengthen pan-German national identity.<sup>x</sup> In two generations Vienna had seen a four-fold increase in population, an expanded multi-culturalism and a new and intensified defensive and xenophobic nationalism. Karl Kraus was one of the first to argue explicitly that much of the social and political divide was the result of the new means of communication, and chiefly, the mass-circulation of the press. In a view, which he would retain all his life, the press was no innocent mirror of social life, but an active force in shaping and ultimately dictating agendas; it was driven by powerful interests which presented themselves as guardians but instead were marauding exploiters and naked profiteers. Their principle crime, in the eyes of Kraus was their corruption of language to a mangle of cliché and deception, where the manipulation of public opinion led to the deep corrosion of political and social life.

The year 1899 was momentous for Kraus and was to determine the whole direction of his later life. His second independent satirical publication, “A Crown for Zion” (included here), was a pamphlet directed against the Zionism developed by Theodor Herzl, and can be read as a direct plea for the assimilation of the Jewish population. The Moravian and Bohemian Jews (pre-eminently Kraus’s family background on both sides) were pro-German language and culture; they effectively practised rapid assimilation on arriving in Vienna, and the obsession with German culture and *Bildung* became equivalent to the expression of Europeanism and Enlightenment.<sup>xi</sup> In some sense Kraus’s combativeness, the insistence he placed on assimilation, and the significance he attached to critique and conversion all characterised assimilated Bohemian Jewry in its new home. Their situation was dramatically different to that of the *Ostjuden* (Eastern European Jews), for the most part Galician migrants who came to Vienna in the greatest numbers during the 1890s, and who indeed became identified by resident assimilated Jews as a problem for the whole cause of assimilation to German culture.

In “A Crown for Zion”, Kraus equated the work of Herzl with that of the anti-Semites; this was not merely capricious polemic, since a similar argument against Herzl had been made by Rabbi Guteman in Vienna. In a letter from the same year as Kraus’s pamphlet, Rabbi Joseph Sonnenfeld also criticised the Zionists for believing ‘that the whole difference between Israel and the nations lies in nationalism, blood and race, and that the faith and the religion are superfluous ... Dr Herzl comes not from the side of the Lord, but from the side of pollution’.<sup>xii</sup> Equally critical, the writer Nathan Birnbaum saw the Zionist project as driven by ‘an evil desire to remould us on the European model’.<sup>xiii</sup> Despite these precedents, Kraus rapidly made both enemies and a reputation for himself as an antagonist. One of his main targets was the *Neue Freie Presse (NFP)*, the liberal newspaper for which Herzl was the feuilleton editor (i.e. the person responsible for the cultural-literary supplement). Kraus turned the newspaper into a scapegoat for a vast range of social abuses systematically opposing any cause it championed. Robert Wistrich, assessing Kraus’s criticism across a range of issues, argues that this enmity was often personal and excessive. For all his ruthless exposure of the literary, social and political venality of a decaying empire, and his resourceful unmasking of stock clichés and taboos, Kraus ‘tended to suffer from the monomaniacal one-sidedness of his own private obsessions’.<sup>xiv</sup> Having canvassed every opinion on Kraus, from arch-Jew to self-hating Jew, Wistrich offers the following assessment:

It is admittedly true that this Viennese prophet of doom spared no institution, no political party or privileged clique from the scornful arrows of his uncompromising critique. But the emotional imbalance that was ultimately rooted in his seemingly unlimited capacity for moral indignation

and a pronounced streak of intellectual sadism led to frequent distortions of which his stance on the 'Jewish' question but was but [sic] one illustration.<sup>xv</sup>

However, Kraus's self-presentation throughout *Die Fackel* and other works should not be taken at face value, for his writing is always engaged in a process of literary construction and mockery, often self-mockery. To rob Kraus of his ironic ambivalence is to destroy his work as a writer. He was inventing and performing a role – that of the satirical, caustic outsider – as much as speaking from any settled conviction; ironically, he excoriated the writer and critic Hermann Bahr over a period of several decades for shifting positions, although he himself was guilty of exactly the same behaviour. In order to exist as an effective force, Kraus required the complex performative exigency of not belonging, and nevertheless maintaining a position of judgement.

Having earlier refused the offer to become chief satirical writer for the *NFP*, it was now impossible for Kraus to be reconciled with the paper, especially since Herzl was writing for it. Kraus had effectively cut off his access to liberal bourgeois promotion, formally leaving the Jewish community which, in his view, was so much in hock to the rich industrialists and press barons that a rejection of one almost entailed a rejection of the other. His response to this situation was to make the single most important decision of his life: namely to create an independent organ of opinion, *Die Fackel*, which would stand against the corruption and abuses he had identified so stringently. With the founding of *Die Fackel*, Kraus undertook a new kind of political and social engagement, one that was not exclusively literary in its orientation, but which would combat the excesses of journalism by using its own weapons against it. The dangers of this antagonistic approach were not merely intellectual: Kraus's description of the high-profile journalist Felix Salten as a 'parvenu of the mimetic', copying his gestures from people at the next table, led to the latter physically attacking him.

The first number of *Die Fackel* announced itself in ringing terms, declaring that its task was to be 'the draining of the marsh of empty phrase-making', that it would fight to create a place for properly informed and open public debate, and above all that it would be free; that is, independent of party or faction. The little red journal was an instant sensation in Vienna. In the beginning, Kraus had advertised that it would contain between 16-24 pages per issue, and that it was to be published three times per month. The sales ranged from 30,000 copies per issue, eventually dwindling in its last year to about 150 subscription numbers. Those initially and well-sustained early numbers are remarkable in that the average circulation around the turn of the century for the liberal *NFP* was about 55,000. Eventually Kraus would write, compile and edit the journal alone, thereby making it one of the most extraordinary phenomena of 20th-century literature.

## KRAUS AND JOURNALISM

The question of Kraus's relationship with journalism has remained one of the most complex of his biography. Kraus had himself in an early note disdained the work of the journalist, and it is this theme of the 'Schmock' and 'schmockerei' that requires elucidation.<sup>xvi</sup> The term 'Schmock' derives from the name of a character in a comedy by Gustav Freytag of 1853, *The Journalists*. The Schmock, who is shown to have a chameleon identity and is without principles, scruples or convictions, utters the famous line: 'I learned to write for every tendency; left, right, I can write for any side'. In Kraus's lexicon ('schmockerei', 'schmocktum', 'schmockish') the Schmock has become the focal point of all worst possible traits, but chiefly he is the receptacle of destroyed

literature (*Die Fackel*, 30). The press might get itself up as a priestess, but for Kraus it was the Great Prostitute of Vienna, and both press and prostitution expressed and formed 'the natural social order of capitalism'. The much-vaunted liberty of the press had nothing to do with the 'freedom of the spirit', and the real play of the liberal newspapers was the cynical manipulation of credulous consumers. Kraus argued that the communication of the editors and journalists was essentially corrupt, and that they had therefore forfeited the right to criticise. With one or two honourable exceptions, journalists formed closed and self-protected coteries with a monopoly on self-legitimated defamation. If the Schmock had once been a useful or even indispensable servant, he had been progressively transformed into the dominator *par excellence*, his power synonymous with impunity and irresponsibility. Indeed, the real power of the press lay in its ability to convince people that they could not live without it; it had made itself psychologically indispensable. Furthermore, by presuming to be omniscient in all areas, the press had become a menace to private life. The very technique it developed, especially how to select and present information, had sundered itself from any ethical dimension. The newspapers displayed the most obvious two-facedness with lead articles on the front page pleading for ethics in public life or taking a stance against immorality, while on the back page carrying small advertisements for assignations and various other morally dubious activities. This broad critique corresponds with Kraus's view that the press was essential for the creation of a society of spectacle and consumption, its reach stretching far beyond the consumers of the paper itself, 'the readers', to encompass all aspects of life.

If one could describe Kraus as a reticent democrat, it is in light of his analysis of the way in which democratisation and mass-culture were projections of a power that was fundamentally destructive to the imagination. In the exchanges of the Grumbler and the Optimist in Act I, scene 29 of his play *The Last Days of Mankind*, Kraus would present this failure as being intimately linked to the conduct of World War I; similar ideas are explored in the text he wrote in response to the outbreak of the war, "In These Great Times" (included here). Kraus argued that the press had enabled the unimaginable to happen: through decades of bad practice, journalism had led to an impoverishment of the imagination, and it was this impoverishment that made it possible for humanity to fight a war of annihilation against itself. The journalist has the power to inspire the courage to rush off into battle and face death, and with the lexicon and imagery of heroism at his disposal, he can ornament the abuse of life with the abuse of language (*Fackel*, 404:9). Kraus points in this analysis not only to the spiritual self-mutilation of mankind through its press, but also to the way in which the very efficiency of technology succeeds in communicating itself as the model for progress and the perfectibility of humankind, a position which was of course inimical to the core of the satirist's effective distrust of any such concept as progress, or the improvement of human character. The journalists are not accused of wanting war *per se*; rather they are irresponsible, and there is an unholy symmetry of the developed technology and the developed shamelessness (*Fackel*, 368-9:47).

#### NEW DIRECTIONS: EXPRESSIONISM, PSYCHIATRY AND OSCAR WILDE

Since the beginning of the 1900s, Kraus had moved *Die Fackel* in a more literary direction. He was also moving further away from the realist position he had admired in the writing of the German poet Liliencron and others at the outset of his own work as a critic and essayist. If he had dedicated himself in the first number of *Die Fackel* to clearing the swamps of phraseology, he now turned to personal loves and hates to affirm his passionate sense of belonging to his class and city in the wake



of the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Increasingly, Kraus's commitment to the Enlightenment no longer centred on the issue of assimilation, but rather on the right of the individual to speak out, and to be protected in his or her dignity. There is little doubt that in turning towards Expressionist writers – for example by advocating the work of August Strindberg – Kraus was realising his own liberty of thought and philosophy. Sexuality and the position of women became increasingly dominant themes as he championed and engaged with writers such as Freud, Wilde and the playwright Wedekind. He passionately believed that the purpose in writing was to know, to reinvent, to express – and to have the courage to do so. This is his allegiance to Rimbaud's imperative: 'il faut être moderne'. Nothing exemplifies this better than his intense relations with other writers, and the concomitant urge to blast reputations which intensified in this period. There was no longer, in the celebrated phrase of Longinus, the 'mimicry as rivalry' of his earlier satire. He had entered the lists, and as a satirist was forced to protect his own interior liberty, which in effect meant that he would not be cornered and take predictable stances.

The work of writing was the expression of freedom for Kraus. What he did not champion, he eviscerated; it was inevitable, therefore, that he would work alone. Nevertheless, satire has many modes of relation to the world; it can be served in gentle parody, mocking amusement, or with a genius of hatred, an unrelenting and corroding contempt which borders on a fanatical pessimism about human life. Kraus exhibits many colours in his writing, from the whimsical and delightful "Beaver Coat", to the droll mocking irony of his "Self-Admiration" (both included here), and this gives one a sense of his broader reach and capacity for even straightforward humour.

Another of Kraus's targets during this period was the contemporary vogue for psychoanalysis. As with the press, Kraus condemned psychoanalysis for its intrusion into private life, particularly with regard to sex, the pre-eminent private sphere. The behaviour of consenting adults, he argued, was not the business of the public prosecutor. The specific elements of his critique are specified by Timms: the law should provide social and not moral protection; it should regulate sexual behaviour only where it is necessary to protect the interest of minors; abortion should cease to be a criminal offence; laws which punish unconventional sexual behaviour are not only an intolerable invasion of privacy, but also have the noxious side-effects of encouraging blackmail, bribery, the corruption of the police and the victimisation of prostitutes.<sup>xvii</sup> For Kraus, the practice within forensic psychiatry of locking up sexual deviants was not only sheer humbug, but also the most repellent aspect of psychiatry (see "Court Psychiatry", included here).<sup>xviii</sup>

From 1902 to 1907, the explosive and demonic energy of woman's sensuality had become a major theme in German theatre and letters, with the staging of Strindberg's *Rausch*, Wilde's *Salomé*, Wedekind's *Erdgeist* and Hofmannsthal's *Elektra*. Something of Kraus's reaction can be seen directly in the texts he wrote on Strindberg and on *Salomé* (both included here), the latter piece one of Kraus's earliest responses to his great hero Wilde. Greeting the play with enthusiasm and terror, Kraus regarded it as a masterpiece and attended three different productions of it:<sup>xix</sup> its capacity to scandalise philistines of all ideological factions must surely have struck a satirical chord with him. Other works, such as *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, the letter from prison known as *De Profundis*, and especially Wilde's aphorisms, were circulating in German translation in this period in some cases ahead of the English versions. When Wilde's essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism" appeared in German, Kraus regarded it as the gospel of modern thinking, and was deeply moved: 'for me this is the most profound, noble and beautiful that this genius, murdered by the spirit of the philistine, has created'.

Wilde's aphorisms were particularly important to Kraus. After publishing translations of them, Kraus produced many of his own, making the aphorism the most brilliant vehicle of communication in German since Nietzsche and Lichtenberg. His compression of thinking, sharp humour and dazzling delight in paradox have all of the quality of Wilde in their ability to upturn settled convictions and make an argument with the greatest economy of means. Wilde's aphorisms often depend on simple inversion of a well-worn truism, such as 'punctuality is the thief of time'. In most cases they remain paradoxical and startling, and hint at the strong 'anti-nomian' position for which Wilde was a strenuous advocate (the term, used by Wilde himself in his *De Profundis*, directly hints at his sense of being a rebel; as the word suggests, it speaks of someone who is against the *nomos* or ruling laws, of the time). Kraus also developed the aphorism into short pieces which functioned as miniature essays; on reading these, it is possible to reconstruct imaginatively the conversations in which such utterances and propositions first belonged. This also led Kraus to a rich development of the use of glosses, characteristic exchanges which Timms has tracked in the course of *Die Fackel* from 1910. These conversation snippets given in dialogue form, which usually pointed up some ridiculous and banal subject matter, or silly turn of phrase, marked the beginning of his return to writing for the stage, his first creative activity as a schoolboy.

During this period Kraus was subject to a stinging attack from one of the early contributors to *Die Fackel*, Robert Scheu, who accused him of retreating from politics. This imputed retreat can be dated from the time of the suicide in 1903 of Otto Weininger,<sup>xx</sup> the Austrian philosopher who had written what has been called a brilliant farrago of nonsense in his work *Sex and Character* effectively on his own Jewish background and heritage. At the age of 23, Weininger rented a room in the house where Beethoven had died and took his own life. Although they had not been friends, Kraus mourned the loss of a significant potential ally. It is just possible that he may have felt more alone. Turning away from the public arena, Kraus was now to develop his insights into the role of the press and the direction of current affairs in a new medium, culminating in his great play *The Last Days of Mankind*.

#### THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND *THE LAST DAYS OF MANKIND*

Commentators generally agree that *The Last Days of Mankind* is Kraus's single most significant literary achievement and the culminating work of his life. Although the composition history of the work has never been fully studied or reconstructed, the main outlines are known. The prologue was largely completed by 1915, and the epilogue by 1917; thus the bulk of the play was composed during this period, with the epilogue appearing in 1918, and substantial new work on the play taking place in 1919. To complicate matters, the version which appeared in special numbers of *Die Fackel* was substantially different from the published version of 1922. In addition to these two versions of the play, Kraus also supplied a shortened stage version in between the early 'sketches' and the published 'final' version of 1922, which was published by the Fackel Verlag.

The context for the play was the declaration of war, which led to mass hysteria in Vienna, with crowds surging through the streets and gathering in front of the editorial offices of the *Neue Freie Presse*. The *NFP* reported on this, in romanticising phrases that would be continuously deployed by Kraus throughout the drama: 'Far removed from arrogance or weakness, thousands upon thousands have surged through the streets today, arm in arm, rich and poor, old and young, the high-born and the low-born...'. Kraus almost immediately responded to the outbreak of war with "In These Great Times", which although published in *Die Fackel* (no. 404, December 1914), had been given as a

public reading in November 19, 1914. (These public readings in Vienna were to become an important resource for the anti-war feeling on the Home Front.) The most urgent note in this text is Kraus's horror at the destruction of the imagination and at the powerful propaganda that will inevitably ensue as a result of the war. Addressing his readers directly, he explains that he came to write about the war only with the greatest of effort, for the sheer noise and confusion of everything around him made it almost impossible to determine one thing from another. In Kraus's view, the war was the result not of the struggle of nations but of the irresponsibility of the press. His choice to show the war in *The Last Days of Mankind* in terms of its impact on the life of Vienna was meant to counter the absurd sentimentalising of the Viennese by the press as part of the propaganda effort. By October of the following year, he had changed his position that his writing would have no impact, as Field notes, and was 'convinced there was a possibility of speaking to some effect'.<sup>xxi</sup>

Kraus's concerns relating to nationalism, the reasons for war and the relation of Germany and Austria resound throughout the play, manifest most obviously in the exchanges between the Optimist and the Grumbler. The long speeches of the latter at the end of Act I make him, if anyone, the central character of the whole play. In Act I, scene 29, the Grumbler's speech strongly links him with Kraus's own opinions, and although the character is not to be completely identified with his author, there are enough clues in the play itself – such as when the Optimist suggests that the Grumbler is the author of a piece on Heine, as Kraus had been – to suggest at least a strong resemblance. It is difficult to speak of a plot which could be given *in précis*. The play progresses through the accumulation of characters, locations and scenes, whilst the artful combination of quotation, documentary, realism and montage gives the drama extraordinary scope. The cries of the newspaper vendor open the play and the work concludes with the voice of God. The five acts are like a ring composition, slowly and ineluctably circulating in the city, slowly and ineluctably leading to the catastrophic and unbearable conclusion of Act V. At the end of this final act, which reflects the last year of the war, the wounded and dead line the streets, it is evening, wet and cold and there is a silent staring of a herd of buck – according to the stage directions. The encroaching fact of collapse and catastrophe is sounded. All of the themes of the previous acts are in play and with variations. The Grumbler delivers his longest speech to condemn monarchy and war. In scene 55, a mêlée of German and Austrian officers come to the end of a banquet, while dispatches indicate that the troops are in retreat at the front, where the enemy has broken through. Suddenly, Kraus then describes, in the tradition of the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Apocalypse play, scenes of horror on the wall where a tableau of the Times of Greatness had hung. There are choirs of ravens screeching in punning language about the war wounded and dead, syphilitic female auxiliaries point forward to the future even the unborn son turns to spectators asking that he will not be born. The Lord of Hyenas (presumably baron Moriz Benedikt) mouths jingles into the ears of the fallen. There is a tango around the corpses, followed by a voice 'from above': mankind is excoriated and the Last Judgement is threatened. Meteor showers fall and the sins of the Germans are listed in a dauntingly long sentence, of 72 lines. There are chants, slogans, war-cries; Grand Guignol and phantasmagoria intertwine, only to fade out and disappear. Then there falls a great silence, and God's voice is heard saying 'I did not will it thus', the Kaiser's phrase re-echoed.

The topology of such a compositional structure means that the narration does not progress according to unities of time and place. The character of the Grumbler is almost given the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy, set against the ebullient and at times patently naïf Optimist, who also figures allegorically as the voice of reason, of technical belief in progress (perhaps he can be identified with 'the good American Adolf Loos', the architect and friend of Kraus, who also acted

as his godfather in baptism into the Roman Catholic religion). The long speech of the Grumbler in Act V, scene 54, apart from being a masterpiece of public rhetoric, shows how the work has been vocally scored, somewhat like continuous upward rising *arpeggios* which then explode.

There are nearly 500 characters in the play, almost as many as in Dante's *Divina Commedia*; an entire society participates in it. The cast includes officers, poets, writers, historians, the German Kaiser, prostitutes, show-girls, professors, commanders of the army, and actual identifiable people from all walks of life. Many of the chief targets of Kraus's satire over the years appear in person, especially the journalist Hans Müller, but also the war reporter Alice Schalek, the writers Hermann Bahr and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and a number of political and military figures. The play is set mainly in Vienna and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, in war zones, in occupied territories, and from the third act in Germany; as Mauthner observed, 'wherever the armies and merchants of the Central Powers had penetrated'.<sup>xxii</sup> Scenes are set in coffeehouses, in front of a bridge in the South Tyrol, on a street in the outskirts of Vienna, at the War Ministry, in the headquarters of the Chief of Staff, at a command post on a mountaintop at the South-Western Front, in the Vatican, the editors' office of the *Neue Freie Presse*, in military barracks, on street corners, in the editorial offices of newspapers, on the frontline, in restaurants, in a maternity hospital, on a U-boat, high in the mountains, in front of a locked German bookshop, in a church, a pilgrim's chapel, a doctor's consulting room, at the Wahnschaffe's villa at the German spa resort of Gross-Salze, at railroad stations, a cinema, a police station, during a mass rally at the Busch auditorium in Berlin, in the village of Postabitz, in a drill field. The accumulative effect of this over the course of 209 scenes – equally applicable to reading the text as to hearing it read or seeing it partly performed – is an experience both hypnotic and hallucinatory.

A habitual collector of newspaper cuttings, Kraus deployed various techniques of assemblage, verbal collage and direct quotation to create the play. It has been calculated that almost a third of it is made up of the 'raw matter' of report, document and citations – effectively newspaper clippings, which Kraus uses as text and personae. The dense intertextuality is also combined with an enormous range of lexical, semantic and linguistic features. There are many different dialects and mixtures of speech and this itself becomes a kind of stalking horse throughout the work, as with the notoriously funny scene with the poet Ludwig Ganghofer and the Kaiser, which beautifully sets off the kitsch use of dialect to affect a pseudo-democratic *Gemütlichkeit*, and the absurd parody of the erotic/nationalist fantasies of the Kaiser, who does not want to be spoken to in 'received pronunciation' (Act I, sc. 23). In such cases, dialects speak louder than uttered words. However, nothing could speak louder than the empty clichés of the journalists, and the absurd inanity and vanity of their preoccupations are repeatedly exposed throughout the work. A good example can be found in Act I, scene 1: on Sirk's corner, the newspaper vendor announces the news of the assassination of the heir to throne, and groups of people begin to form spontaneously. Amidst the commotion and confusion, two reporters comment on the heated but senseless discussion which ensues, with bystanders flinging back and forth accusations:

FIRST REPORTER [*Holding a notebook in his hand*]: That was no sudden eruption of momentary enthusiasm, no noisy outbreak of sick mass hysteria. With real character Vienna has accepted the decision of the fates. Do you know how I would characterise the mood? The mood could be summed up in these words – far, far from arrogance and from weakness, summed up in words that we have coined for the fundamental mood of Vienna, which one couldn't repeat often enough, far, far from arrogance and from weakness. So what do you say to that?

SECOND REPORTER: What can I say, only brilliant!

~~FIRST REPORTER: Far, far away from either arrogance or weakness thousands upon tens of thousands, have marched through the streets, arm in arm, the poor and the rich, the old and the young, the high born and the most humble. In the bearing of each one was a full awareness of the gravity of the situation. There was also a pride of being able to feel the pulse beat of the great period about to dawn upon us.~~

Hackneyed phrases and cliché after cliché are the armour of the hack and the Schmock, who were partly responsible for setting the war in motion and then for supporting its continuance. For Kraus wartime Vienna had become an echo-chamber of horror, which dressed itself up in the masquerade of *bonhomie*, joviality and utter banality.

The satirist's fascination with contrasts gives way to a constant taunting of perception through its double, and with its opposite. This can be illustrated well by scene 12 of the first act, in which a Dwarf and a giant meet:

GIANT: It's good for you. You can do your part for the common good. The regimental doctor sent me away almost immediately.

DWARF: On what grounds?

GIANT: Too weak. Literally after the old findings from fifteen years ago.

I looked just like you in those days, you see –

DWARF: I really am puzzled that you haven't been accepted. The regimental doctor hardly looked at me when I was taken in. Mother was very unhappy.

GIANT: Mommy's boy!

DWARF: I'm happy. After all people grow up with higher purposes in mind. At first I doubted if I would fit into this great period, be able to fight shoulder to shoulder. But in civilian life one is only mocked, and in the military I return as the hero spared so many bullets. Where the others had to fall on the ground, I remained standing.

GIANT: Oh you lucky fellow!

DWARF: Don't lose heart. It wasn't your fault, it has to do with the commission.

GIANT: I managed to slip through.

DWARF: I drew the doctor's attention.

GIANT: Let's go and eat, I have an enormous appetite.

DWARF: I'll just pick at something small.

NEWSPAPER VENDOR: Extra! Extra! Both reports!

Thus, unlike the clever aphorism that simply inverts expectations, the collision in the montage of scenes and effects radically disturbs any sense of normality. Kraus was alive to the 'improbability' of many of the scenes, advising in the Preface that the drama, if performed, would take ten evenings, 'by earthly measure', and so it was a play intended for 'a theatre on Mars'. Kraus emphasises that the most improbable deeds reported actually happened; the insanity and inanity of the events are found in sentences which are like a refrain that goes on and on and that you cannot stop hearing. The meaningless chatter in the first scene of the Prologue, for example, is repeated almost verbatim at the onset of every new act. Heralded by the newspaper vendor's cry of 'special edition!', the officers Nowotny, Pokorny and Powolny are greeted by a fourth officer, with whom they discuss such weighty matters as the recent developments, their drinking sessions, favourite

girls and which cafés to go to:

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A FOURTH OFFICER [*joining them with a laugh*]: Greetings, Nowotny, greetings, Pokorny greetings, Powolny, you know – you're well up in politics, what do you say?

THE SECOND: Well, I'll tell you then. This shower has been up to their tricks, simple as that.

THE THIRD: Of course you know that – it goes without saying.

THE FOURTH: My sentiments entirely! Was I on the piss yesterday – have any of you seen that picture by Schönflug? Now that's a classic!

THE SECOND: You know Fallota, now there you have a patriot. He always says that it's not enough just to do your duty, you must be a patriot where possible. If he gets something in his head then there's no messing about. D'you know what I think? I think we'll soon have to sweat a bit. Well, that's fine by me!

THE THIRD: What about [café] Hopfner's?

THE FOURTH: Tell us, did you recognise them two birds over there?

The theatre-going public would find it unbearable, since it is 'blood of their blood' and the things treated of are from unreal, unimaginable years that a lucid mind cannot grasp, that is inaccessible to memory and preserved in a horrendous dream. The play depicts the years when the tragedy of humanity was played out by figures from an operetta, and the humour which marks it is that of the survivor who wonders that he didn't go mad. There is an insistence throughout that this 'tragic carnival' must not be thought of as a local affair; even what happens on Sirk's Corner, the everyday meeting of the local inhabitants, is determined from the perspective of the cosmos. It is no surprise that the present in which this could happen should treat it as a joke and invention, especially where it is sounded from the cosy depths of a 'loathsome dialect'. Kraus registered a deep distrust of language which developed its own special jargon and idiom, which for him pointed to the central corrupting effect of mass-culture and the most narrow form of provincialism.

An even greater outrage than the war itself are the taboos and silences that surround it. This is the sobering up of an epoch that was not capable of profound experience or understanding; the destruction and collapse does not jolt it into either awareness or guilt. Only an instinct for self-preservation reigns, and this is used to block out its ears, to block out the heroic melodies. However, as Kraus warns, this generation still has willingness for self-sacrifice and is ready to strike up those melodies again, should occasion demand. It is to people who shout 'There's a war going on' that the idea of a coming war is least comprehensible, since that slogan allowed and covered up every dishonour and disgrace. In a sense, Kraus is suggesting that the acceptance of guilt for belonging to a society capable of such destruction is an experience that will be welcome somewhere, useful at some time. He concludes the Preface with a quotation from Shakespeare. And 'even while men's minds are wild', let Horatio's message to Fortinbras be heard:

And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
How these things came about: so shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,  
And in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fall'n on the inventors' heads: All this can I

Truly deliver.

(*Hamlet*, Act V, sc.2)

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These words are echoed in the great monologue of the Grumbler in V, and function as a defence for the whole play written, or one could even say, assembled by Kraus. Like Shakespeare, for whom he had the deepest reverence from his youth, Kraus also did not 'invent' plots, being 'intertextual' in that sense, drawing on already published stories.

The most abrupt summary cannot do justice to the rich kaleidoscope that Kraus creates. The opening prologue begins with the newspaper report on the assassination of the heir apparent to the Austrian throne and his wife, on June 28th 1914, and then follows the response in Vienna where the dead are brought for burial. The conversation of the deprived masses on the streets, the discussion between the government ministers, the telephone conversation of the official who is arranging the funeral, and the inflated speeches of publicity hungry officials are all part of the satire, the target of which is the world of make-believe and lies that had become such a part of *Wienertum* (i.e. the way of being someone from Vienna). All this is portrayed through the mood of joviality and easy badinage, the feckless carefree self-exoneration, the masque of effortless social hostility which accompanies the funeral rites, and above all the hunger of the press for the telling details and 'atmosphere'.

The first act traces the initial responses to the war on the streets of Vienna. In the scene between Old Biach and the Imperial Councillor, the editor of the *NFP* is referred to as an ultimate authority and they speak in a style similar to that of his lead editorials: 'He speaks like one of us, only more clearly. It is hard to say whether he speaks as we do or we speak as he does' (Act I, sc. 10). The borderline absurd conversation in Act III, scene 37 satirises people's implicit faith in the words of the newspaper, which is relied on to assert what is truth and reality:

PATRIOT: There is no bathroom at no. 10 Downing Street. What do you think of that?

SUBSCRIBER: What can I say? The walls are crumbling down.

PATRIOT: No bathroom at Downing Street.

SUBSCRIBER: To whom do we owe this amazing discovery? To him, of course!

The 'him' referred to here is Moriz Benedikt. As the play moves on through the second act, the effects of the war on the Home Front are seen in close-up, and real events are reported. A trench is built in Vienna which is an instant tourist attraction, and various forms of scavenging for social advantage and reward are portrayed; the spiv has been invented. The third act covers the transition from the second to the third year of the war, conveying its increasing brutality. One particularly chilling scene depicts the tennis-playing Crown Prince Wilhelm waving to the troops who are marching to the Battle of the Somme (Act III, scene 42). In scene 45, the Grumbler's monologue ends with the apocalyptic and foreboding realisation that the world is desolate, 'and this is the night, that nothing can follow, except the Day of Judgement'. The fourth act shows in detail the effects of 1917, the year of American entry into the war, and the increased losses of human life. scene 31 is a *tour de force* made up of a chanting and imbecilic Franz Joseph repeating details of his own life and of Austrian history. In the Grumbler's last speech, the purpose and theme of the whole play comes into focus. The Grumbler is sitting at his desk reading a newspaper report, which contains an account of an experiment conducted by the owner of a Harz paper mill into how long it takes to convert standing trees into a newspaper. At 7.35 a.m. three trees are felled in a forest near

the factory. Their bark is stripped and the trees pulped. The transformation into liquid wood pulp takes place so rapidly that the first roll of paper comes from the machine by 9.39 a.m. It is taken by car to a printing plant at four kilometres distance, and by 11.00 a.m. the newspaper is being sold on the streets. Outside the room where the Grumbler is sitting the newspaper vendor cries 'Extra Extra!'. The Grumbler's pent-up sense of desolation and disbelief results in a long jeremiad in which he bewails his impotence and even his own survival. Why, he wonders was he not given the strength to destroy the sin of the planet with one axe blow? Why was he not given greater mental power to force at least some protest from desecrated humanity? The Grumbler continues: 'I keep documents for a time which will not understand them – or that will be so distant from this time that it will claim I was a forger'. But such a time will not come, for he has written the tragedy of a hero of mankind, which is to be destroyed: 'whose tragic conflict, the conflict between the world and nature, has a fatal ending'.

In his work *Prophets without Honour*,<sup>xxiii</sup> Frederic Grunfeld, in sketching a background to the world of Freud, Kafka, Einstein, and also Kraus, faced the enigma of Kraus squarely. He had been among the 'rising stars' that gathered at the café tables of Vienna at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which included Arthur Schnitzler, Gustav Mahler, Theodor Herzl, Peter Altenberg and Sigmund Freud. It would have been easy for him to join the leading establishment journals and pursue the career of a 'man of letters' in the still romantic atmosphere of Vienna. His gifts of irony and satire could have been placed in a comfortable tradition, in which finely judged self-mockery was a kind of contrived *jeux d'esprit*. Instead, Kraus chose a constant oppositional stance, which could never be predictable, insisting on absolute individuality and independence. With fanatic zeal he spent almost 40 years, on a daily basis, as an anti-critic and anti-journalist conducting an open campaign against the press, producing what Grunfeld thinks one of the most remarkable achievements in the print media since Diderot's Encyclopaedia. He would in time be considered the greatest German satirist and stylist.

Kraus had appointed himself the guardian of language, and railed against brutality, ignorance, pretentiousness and the abuse of power. His life was devoted to work. If he waged war on the strong, he was not particularly compassionate to the weak. His hatred of militarism is matched by his contempt for sappy pacifists.<sup>xxiv</sup> Nevertheless, he could travel to Berlin during the war and give a lecture on Kant's Eternal Peace, in the heart of the Prussian capital, where he was merciless in his condemnation of the Kaiser. Kraus was passionate, courageous, brilliant and always dedicated. Given his vast output, almost no selection could be representative, but with *The Last Days of Mankind* he achieved his greatest work, in which all his skills for language, mimicry, acting, polemic and characterisation were exhibited. Once again he showed that he was not to be 'assimilated' and that even as unspeakable powers raged, the individual could still take a position. A poem he wrote during the war speaks the point directly:

When lives were dominated by lies  
I was a revolutionary –  
When they tried on norms against nature  
I was the revolutionary...  
When freedom was a meaningless phrase  
I was the ultra-conservative  
When art was fouled with craftiness  
I was the stick-in-mud



It was that source to which the last line refers that is the inestimable mystery of Kraus; the driving force of his life, the nameless energy from which his passion and commitment came. For his tomb inscription he would mention it again:

How empty it is here  
The end of the course  
The fight over  
Of me little left  
But the source,  
Which they did not identify.

We are still among the 'they' for whom that source remains an enigma.

## NOTES

- i Genealogical information on the Kraus family can be found in: "*Was wir umbringen*": '*Die Fackel*' von Karl Kraus, eds. Heinz Lunzer, Victoria Lunzer-Talos, Marcus G. Patka (Vienna: Mandelbaum Verlag, Exhibition of the Jewish Museum Vienna, June-November, 1999). The reconstruction of the family tree can be found on pages 186-187, and was compiled by Tina Walzer.
- ii The best account of *Die Fackel* is to be found in "*Was wir umbringen*", cited note 1 above, and especially the essay by Heinz Lunzer, pp. 74-88, for discussion of financial aspects, printing work-place and compositor's activities.
- iii This can be found in the main English-language study on Kraus by Edward Timms, *Karl Kraus: Apocalyptic Satirist* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 44; and (*Fackel* 11; 65; 71). For the early plans to publish with Linder, see Karl Kraus, *Frühe Schriften: 1892-1900* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979), p.85.
- iv For this see the comments on the role of theatre and famous actors' lives in Vienna, scattered throughout the work of Ilsa Barea, *Vienna: Legend and Reality* (London: Pimlico, 1966) especially pp. 320-2; also see Timms, *op. cit.*, pp.22-8, and for Sonnenthal, pp.178-9. See also Verne Arpe, *Bildgeschichte des Theaters* (Köln: Dumont, 1962), pp.167-209.
- v The fullest details can be found in Paul Schick, *Karl Kraus* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1965) p.18. Karl Rosner's autobiography was published as *Damals* (Düsseldorf: Vier Falken Verlag, 1948).
- vi The 'realism' to which Kraus was committed was itself a product of intense literary and artistic invention. It also involved the courage and independence that would characterise him throughout his life. For realism in the arts at this date see Linda Nochlin, *Realism* (London: Penguin Books, 1971).
- vii Robert S. Wistrich, *The Jews of Vienna in The Age of Franz Joseph* (New York: Oxford University Press, Published for the Littman Library, 1990).
- viii For text see Karl Kraus, *Frühe Schriften* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1979), pp. 269-289.
- ix Frank Field, *The Last Days of Mankind* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 27ff.
- x The indispensable guide to the politics of Vienna at this date is Brigitte Hamann, *Hitler's Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); for Lueger the main details and discussion at pp.

280-303, and on Schönerer, pp. 241-253. Hamann argues that both were significant political role models for Hitler.

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- xi For the notion of 'Bildung' the fullest discussion is to be found in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960).
- xii Wistrich, *op.cit.*, p. 459.
- xiii The relevant texts are gathered by Michael Selzer in his *Zionism Reconsidered*, where one finds open hostility from the Lubavicher Rabbi, and others, almost contemporary with Kraus's pamphlet. Michael Selzer, *Zionism Reconsidered: the rejection of Jewish normalcy* (New York: 1970).
- xiv Wistrich, *op.cit.*, pp. 497-536: "Prophets of Doom: Karl Kraus and Otto Weininger", chapter 15.
- xv Wistrich, *op.cit.*, p. 515.
- xvi For this see the publication of Jacques Bouveresse, *Schmock ou le triomphe du journalisme* (Paris: Seuil, 2001).
- xvii For elaboration on this see Timms, *op.cit.*, pp. 283ff.
- xviii See the work of Thomas Szasz, *Karl Kraus and the Soul-Doctors* (Louisiana State U.P., 1976)
- xix See the article by Gunther Martens, "Framing Literary Speech Acts of Political Modernity: Notes on Hermann Broch, Karl Kraus and Expressionism", in *The Invention of Politics in the European Avant-Garde (1906-1940)*, eds. Sascha Bru and Gunther Martens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 49-64.
- xx Both Field and Timms concur that Kraus did withdraw from the imbroglio of public politics during this period.
- xxi Frank Field, *op.cit.*, p. 81.
- xxii Fritz Mauthner's summary of the play can be found in Frederick Ungar, *No Compromise* (New York, 1977).
- xxiii Frederic Grunfeld, *Prophets without Honour* (London: Hutchinson &Co., 1979), p. 55.
- xxiv Grunfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1874 Born in Jičín, 28th of April (Bohemia, now Czech Republic), fifth son and the ninth child of Jakob Kraus (1833-1900) and Ernestine Kraus *née* Kantor (1839-1891).
- 1880 Attends the *Volksschule* (elementary school).
- 1884 Kraus enrolls at the Franz-Joseph Gymnasium in Hegelstrasse 3. He shows precocious interest in theatre, and is noted for his remarkable memory and mimetic ability. Initially a brilliant student, Kraus's studies suffer from his extra-curricular interests and dislike of his religious teacher, and he scores average marks for his final.
- 1885 House master notes in his diary 'of the males of the family, I like Carl the most. His character has a real core'.
- 1891 During summer attends theatre school. Writes and performs an 'Imitationsintermezzo' October 24th, the death of his mother at the age of 52.
- 1892 Completion of studies at Gymnasium. First publication, a review of Gerhart Hauptmann's *Die Weber*, in *Wiener Literatur-Zeitung*. Beginning of correspondence with the poet Detlev von Liliencron, whom he praises for his warm-hearted and natural realist style. Through the pages of the *Monatsblätter* he petitions with his friend Anton Linder to start a new satirical magazine and requests contributions. Starts to frequent the café Griensteidl and meets with authors, among whom Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Felix Salten and Hermann Bahr. Becomes literary correspondent for various publications. At insistence of his father he studies law initially at the University of Vienna. His chief interest in the following years is contributing book-reviews, working as a theatre critic and penning satirical sketches.
- 1893 Continued involvement with Hauptmann's *Die Weber*, performances in Bad Ischl, Berlin and Munich. Begins public readings of literary texts. First (French) publication of Wilde's *Salomé*.
- 1894 Changes his studies at University from law to philosophy and German studies. Leaves parental home. Meets with poet Peter Altenberg. Invited to contribute to *Die Zukunft*, the independent journal launched by Maximilian Harden in Berlin. Beginning of Dreyfus affair in Paris.
- 1896 His satire, largely based on the café Griensteidl set, "Die Demolierte Literatur" ('Literature Demolished') appears in *Wiener Rundschau*. Herzl's *Der Judenstaat* published.

- 1897 “Die Demolierte Literatur” published as an independent pamphlet. First literary success. Café Griensteidl closed in January. Satire runs to five editions. Review of Strindberg’s *The Father*.
- 1898 Leaves off university studies. Plans to create his own magazine. Collaborating on *Die Wage* edited by Rudolph Lothar. Publication of “Eine Krone für Zion” (“A Crown for Zion”). Offered job by Moriz Benedikt, editor of the powerful *NFP* (*Neue Freie Presse*) to become chief satirical writer for the paper. Kraus refuses position. Reverts to idea of publishing independent satirical magazine, on advice from Maximilian Harden, Hugo Heinemann and Karl Rosner. Wilde’s *Ballad of Reading Goal* published.
- 1899 Beginning of April the publication of the first number of *Die Fackel*, edited by Kraus and published by Moriz Frisch. It sold almost 30,000 copies: ‘a beautiful day as far as the eye could see, red - in the streets, on the trams, in public parks, everyone was reading the little red book’ (Robert Scheu). Beginning of relation to Annie Kalmar (stage name of actress Anna Elisabeth Kaltwasser). Renounces confessional allegiance and leaves the Jewish community. Freud’s *Traumdeutung* published.
- 1900 Death of father on April 5. Spends summer with Annie Kalmar. *Die Fackel* is an instant success. Kraus works with collaborators from arch-conservatives to socialist writers including Wilhelm Liebknecht and Houston Chamberlain. Engages in direct polemic against wealthy industrialists, nepotism at the University. Polemics against the father of Ludwig Wittgenstein.
- 1901 Death of Annie Kalmar on 2 May at the age of 24. End of June, Kraus suspends publication of *Die Fackel* for three months. Travels to Norway and Denmark.
- 1902 Publication of *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität*.
- 1903 Reads Weininger’s *Geschlecht und Charakter*. Attends funeral of Weininger, also in attendance the 14-year-old Ludwig Wittgenstein. Begins to publish work of Franz Wedekind, Otto Stoessl, August Strindberg in *Die Fackel*. He publishes translations and aphorisms of Oscar Wilde.
- 1904 Correspondence with Freud.
- 1906 Young Expressionist writers begin to appear in *Die Fackel*: Albert Ehrenstein, Karl Hauer, Otto Soyka, Berthold Viertel, Frank Wedekind, Peter Altenberg.
- 1907 Attends lectures by Freud. Friendship with Freud’s assistant Fritz Wittels, who contributes extensively to *Die Fackel*.
- 1908 Contributes to journals *Simplicissimus*, and *Marz*. Decline in circulation of *Die Fackel*. Kraus thinks of closing down publication. Appearance of Kraus’s essays in book-form under the title *Sittlichkeit und Kriminalität*.

- 1909 First published collection of aphorisms by Kraus, inspired by Wilde, *Sprüche und Widersprüche*. *Die Fackel* supports Schoenberg. Death of his brother Richard, 1st of November.
- 1910 Wittels publishes paper on “Die Fackel Neurosis”, 12th of January. Kraus begins to read his own writing in public. Later describes these readings as his ‘Theater der Dichtung’ (‘poetry theatre’). Of the 700 public readings given by Kraus in his lifetime, 400 were from his own work. Publication of *Heine und die Folgen*. Readings in Berlin, Prague, Munich, Paris. Kraus meets with poet Else Lasker-Schüler and Herwarth Walden, the editor of *Der Sturm*. Publication of further selection of his writings under title *Die chinesische Mauer*, with material from *Die Fackel*, as previously published.
- 1911 Baptised as a Catholic in the Karlskirche in Vienna. No longer accepts works from contributors for *Die Fackel*. Edits the journal on his own.
- 1912 First meeting with his publisher-to-be Kurt Wolff, whose press was the mainstay of Expressionist writing in Germany.
- 1913 Registered as a businessman. Falls in love with Baroness Sidonie Nadherny von Borutin. Begins to write and publish poetry.
- 1914 Public reading of “In dieser grossen Zeit” (“In These Great Times”). Publication of this text in December issue of *Die Fackel*. Reading of *Timon of Athens*. Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and outbreak World War I.
- 1915 Journey to Switzerland with Sidonie. *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*, in progress. *Die Fackel*, appears again after long break.
- 1916 Readings which are against the war, and from Shakespeare.
- 1917 Second journey to Switzerland with Sidonie. Volume of poems *Worte in Verse* appears. Friends of Kraus, Franz Grüner and Franz Janowitz, killed in action.
- 1918 Threatened with legal action for ‘defeatism’ and lack of loyalty. Appearance of “Die Letzte Nacht”, epilogue to *The Last Days of Mankind* in a special number of *Die Fackel*. Break with Sidonie Nadherny, who marries Max von Thurn und Hohenstein. Proclamation of Austrian Republic. End of World War I.
- 1919 Death of Peter Altenberg. Funeral oration by Kraus. Publication of *The Last Days of Mankind*, special numbers of *Die Fackel*. Publication of pacifist essay in *Weltgericht*, edited by Kurt Wolff in two volumes. Congratulations sent by President Seitz of the National Assembly for 20th anniversary of *Die Fackel*. In April, Kraus provides an overview of 20 years of *Die Fackel*.

- 1920 Kraus victim of anti-Semitic campaign. Pan-German protests organised at reading evening of *Die Fackel*.
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- 1921 Break with Kurt Wolff. Sets up his own publishing house, Die Fackel, to publish his works. Meetings with President Masaryk, reconciliation with Sidonie Nadherny.
- 1922 Composes *Traumstück* in memory of Annie Kalmar. Announces he has left the Catholic Church in protest against association of Church with the Salzburg Festival.
- 1924 Part of *The Last Days of Mankind* played in Vienna and Brno. A Prague performance interrupted by nationalist pan-German protesters. Starts campaign of polemic against Imre Bekessy, publisher of tabloid *Die Stunde*, accusing him of extorting restaurants by threatening them with unfavourable reviews.
- 1925 Publishes a version of *Wolkenkuckuckheim* after Aristophanes.
- 1926 Conclusion of campaign of polemic against Bekessy, who is forced to leave Vienna due to Kraus's activism. Publishes *Traumstück*. Proposed for Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1927 Publishes *Die Unüberwindlichen*, a theatre piece denouncing the corruption of Bekessy and police chief Schober.
- 1928 *Die Unüberwindlichen* banned.
- 1929 First playing of *The Last Days of Mankind* in Berlin. Epilogue with music from Hans Eisler. Stage version presented in Vienna.
- 1930 Broadcast from Berlin Radio and reworked translation from Dorothea Tick of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, Kraus plays Timon.
1931. Sales of *Die Fackel* down to 150 subscriptions. 600th reading in Vienna, first part of evening transmitted by radio Vienna.
- 1932 Editing of "Dritte Walpurgisnacht". Cardiac problems. 888th number of *Die Fackel*. Last poem of Kraus, which refers to silence in the face of the Nazi threat. Last public reading of Kraus in Germany.
- 1933 Diagnosed with heart troubles. Death of his youngest and favourite sister, Marie Turnowsky. Works on text of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*.
- 1934 Adaptations of Shakespeare. Publication in July of "Warum Die Fackel nicht erscheint" ('Why the Fackel No Longer Appears'). Film shown of Kraus reading his own texts, in April, at Vienna Schwedenkino.
- 1935 Last public lecture in 1935, November 22. Further lectures are by ticket and invitation.

1936 Last number of *Die Fackel*, no. 917-922. In April his 700th and last public lecture. Knocked down by a bicycle on the street; rapid decline in his health. Dies June 12th, at the age of 62. His last words were said to have a question in reply to Helene Kahn: 'Against whom have ever committed an injustice?'

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## A CROWN FOR ZION<sup>1</sup>

One of those gentlemen who poses as an historical advocate of the Jewish people, and who agitates with eyes curiously turned towards the East, for the return of other Jews to the ancestral lands of Palestine, recently approached me to request a small contribution to the cause that one calls Zionist or, to use an old fashioned expression, anti-Semitic. It seemed to be an initiative similar to that recently undertaken by the parliamentary deputy, Schneider, in the Lower House of the Austrian parliament. At first blush I thought the friendly collector was trying to execute the will of the Christian-Socialists, and not, as he would have it, of the Old Testament, by claiming his much talked of 'bounty for shooting a Jew', but then immediately learned that the anti-Semitism, as preached by Zionists, did not include, for the time being, such barbarous methods, and was content just to collect the necessary funds for the expulsion of Jews. Previously it had been intimated to me that deputy Schneider looked approvingly on the efforts of the Zionists, even though they were Jews with genuine goodwill, but now, impatient with the lack of success of his Zionist allies, had decided, as his intervention in the Austrian parliament shows, to take up the matter with great vigour himself. Since then a certain discord has opened up between the Zionists and the Christian Socialists, the former reproached for their half-heartedness, the latter again accused of having broken their mutual guarantees. Then came the production of *Das neue Ghetto*,<sup>2</sup> a piece which admittedly portrayed a thoroughly corrupt Jewish society, but which, in unexpectedly bringing to the fore one exception of a single noble-hearted Israelite, disappointed the broad masses of anti-Semitic circles and thus robbed the author of their sympathy.

But these skirmishes had no other effect than to weaken both parties, which as soon became clear, were dependent on one another. In the first instance it was the anti-Semites who came off worse from this rift, as they could accomplish little without the Zionist support. The Christian Socialist antagonising campaign ceased, and the fraying of party politics left one with the hope that even the lowest levels of Viennese society would in the near future remain distant from the silliest forms of anti-Semitism. It only took the publication of some articles in the main Zionist journal, and above all one entitled *Mauschel*,<sup>4</sup> to bring both groups together again, in an alliance they had secretly longed for, and the cry 'Out with the Jews!' shifted its native roots from the Jewish national student societies and gained ground in every region where political apathy had prepared the soil for a facile slogan; and one also saw the Jewish anti-Semites, with a zeal unmatched by the Aryans, steering towards a common goal, despite their minor differences.

The friendly collector invoking the example of many men of letters, who are not members of the Zionist party, invited me to contribute my bit to the emigration fund. He referred to the sum requested as a 'shekel', assuring me that, despite its biblical resonance, this contribution did not obligate me to any sort of party allegiance, and only gave me 'the right to elect delegates to the next party congress', and also to receive the 'proceedings and published acts from the central office.' In so far as this right did not appear to be too onerous, and I couldn't see why I should refuse my sympathy to a goal that would likely perish, and as I also took the view that the material recompense of the Polish proletariat would be the only praiseworthy result of the foreseeable demise of the Zionist idea, it appeared to me that a financial contribution to a humane charity, of which Zionism is the enemy, did not appear in the least misplaced. Why, after all, refuse a slight



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