

FRANZ KAFKA'S CZECH READING EXAMINED

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One must not underestimate Kafka's knowledge of Czech literature and culture. Kafka had a good grasp both of 19th-century classic literature, which had been a subject at grammar school, and of contemporary Czech literature. In the latter case, he followed developments by subscribing the relevant journals. Moreover, he had personal relations to some less well-known art groups. His opinion on Czech literature and culture was based on an aesthetical, not a national perspective. Czech also served him as an instrument when it came to "discovering" other literatures; Hebrew and American, but also some Slavic literatures being cases in point. Such comprehensive understanding of Czech culture would have been unthinkable without a profound knowledge of the language, including the faculty to critically read and analyse theoretical texts. This knowledge came in handy when Kafka corrected translations of his own texts into Czech or Czech-German translations of other texts.