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**A Digital Commentary to Karl
Kraus's *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* (1933)**

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A Digital Commentary to Karl Kraus's *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* (1933)

1. Introduction

- 1 Recently, the digital edition of Karl Kraus's *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* was extended by an extensive commentary, shedding light on obscure text passages and situating the text against its historical and cultural background. The endeavor to write this commentary was set in a specific context that was shaped by a number of factors. This essay's goal is twofold: it aims to present the scope and functionality of the commentary; at the same time, it intends to examine the factors that constitute the context of its creation – the discussions on commentary in the field of scholarly edition, the changed circumstances under the digital paradigm, the challenges of (and in some ways objections against) commenting on a work by Karl Kraus –, and how the commentary to *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* relates to them.

2. “Like Taking a Hit to the Head”¹ – The Shock of 1933

- 2 The journalist H. R. Knickerbocker had to resort to rather drastic means to make his American readers realize the almost unbelievable nature of the events that were nevertheless taking place in Germany. “He asked his readers to imagine,” as Philipp Metcalfe summarizes his account,

that the Ku Klux Klan had suddenly swelled in numbers, due to the Depression and to the stirring oratory of an obscure political figure from Louisiana, until its leaders were so powerful that the country had no choice but to hand the executive branch of the government over to them.

Then, shortly before upcoming congressional elections, the Capitol building in Washington, D. C. was set ablaze. A Cuban was arrested who confessed that he worked for the Communists and was supported by the Democrats and a wave of political arrests ensued. Boldly, the Klan captured most of the seats in Congress.

Within two weeks the Klan removed the Democratic and Republican governors of all the forty-eight states and replaced every county and city official with one of their own. Thousands of American refugees poured into Mexico and Canada. Within six weeks all public officials, from police chiefs to postmen, were Klansmen. Judges, lawyers, doctors and teachers who refused to join the Klan were forced out of their jobs.

The Constitution was rewritten and the Republic was replaced by a dictatorship. Old Glory waved over the Capital emblazoned with the initials “KKK.” (Metcalfe 1988: 124; cf. Timms 2005: 517)

- 3 The shock of the National Socialist takeover that Knickerbocker is seeking to convey to the readers of the *New York Evening Post* affected many people across Europe – including, in Vienna, Karl Kraus, the satirist and sharp-tongued critic of his political, literary and journalistic contemporaries and editor of (and by 1933 for more than twenty years sole contributor to) *Die Fackel*. Back in 1914, when Austria and Germany

had plunged Europe into the chaos of industrialized warfare, it had taken Kraus a while to respond to the situation – but respond he did: Half a year into the war, he published his scathing essay *In dieser großen Zeit* (“In These Great Times,” <https://fackel.oeaw.ac.at/F/404,001>), which was followed by years of Kraus’s critical engagement with the war, including his epochal drama *The Last Days of Mankind*.

- 4 This time was different: In the autumn of 1933, he decided not to publish the text he had been working on frantically for months; instead he printed a poem ([*Man frage nicht*] – “One Shall Not Ask,” <https://fackel.oeaw.ac.at/F/888,004>), and finally printed only parts of the text in question, later to be called *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* – “Third Walpurgis Night” – in the form of lengthy quotes one year later in a 1934 issue of *Die Fackel*.
- 5 At the end of January 1933, Hitler had been appointed Chancellor of Germany. What followed was the dissolution of the Reichstag, the annulment of basic civil rights, the intimidation of political opponents. At the end of February, one week before the last democratic election Germany was to have for many years, the Reichstag fire served as a pretext to incarcerate countless political opponents; the SA marauded in the streets of German cities, the press was stripped of what remained of its freedom. The systematic marginalization of Jews from public life would soon find its first climax in the boycott of April 1st. Racially motivated violence against Jews was a daily occurrence, the law was weaponized against all those not considered ‘Arian’ and politically reliable. At the same time, Hitler tried (and to some degree succeeded in) convincing the other nations of Germany’s heart-felt wish for peace in Europe.
- 6 Newspapers reported on the outbursts of violence to which proponents of the German left and Jews were subjected, as well as the arbitrary interventions that gripped every aspect of public life (Jews banned from public baths! Conductor Fritz Busch ousted in Dresden! Bound corpses pulled from the water!). In this constant drumbeat of bad news, with no end in sight, Kraus wrote *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* – a text Jens Malte Fischer calls “one of the greatest and most unconventional political texts of German literature.” While Kraus saw it as a failure, Fischer notes “that in the summer of 1933 [Kraus] achieved more than any other author writing about the ‘Third Reich’ at the time.”² While other authors tried a rational analysis of the events (cf. Timms 2005: 494f.),³ the more subjective tone, the outcry expressed in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* (Fischer 1952: 304) takes account of the shock, and thus probably corresponds best to the events taking place in Germany, with all their irrational and gruesome (but also: crude and often astonishingly stupid) aspects.⁴ At the same time, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* remains unrivaled in its analysis of the events in Germany and in the evocative telling of these insights.⁵

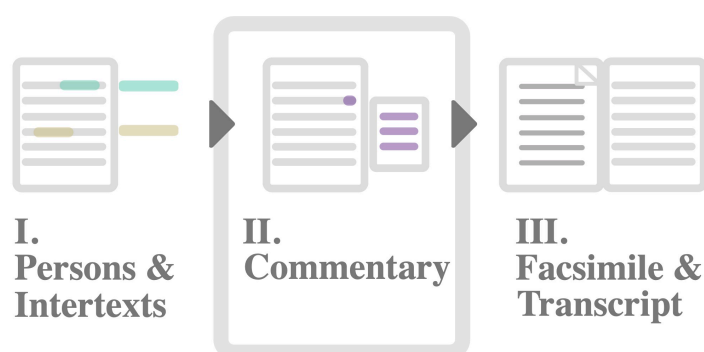
3. An “Abundance of Syntactical Entanglement, of References and Prerequisites”⁶

- 7 As many have pointed out, even in Kraus’s oftentimes challenging oeuvre, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is one of his most challenging texts (cf., e.g., Stremmel 1982: 1, 63). But what is so challenging about it? In the words of the creator of a scholarly edition, the question has to be: What is ‘obscure’ about this text? I will discuss the intricacies that come with this terminology later on, but for now let us just broadly summarize the difficulties readers may have in accessing this text: Kraus usually does not make plain statements; instead, most of the time his language is highly allusive to the extent that it seems coded; his depiction of facts is, in part due to Kraus’s assumption that his audience is in the know, abbreviated. In addition, the text’s vocabulary includes numerous foreign words that are hardly in anyone’s vocabulary today (as they probably were back then). So, when reading *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, one might wonder what event the phrase “the

bloodbath of Köpenick” (“das Blutbad von Köpenick,” DW para. 42, p. 154) refers to, what “paeans” are (“Päane,” DW para. 64, p. 271), which high-ranking Nazi official was accused of child molestation by political opponents (DW para. 64, p. 274), or why Paris should be a place of “naive tolerance” (“ahnungsloser [...] Toleranz,” DW para. 8, p. 19).

- 8 Kraus was very much aware of the difficulties he put his readers through; he pointed out – more than once – that reading his texts required knowledge of the previous issues of *Die Fackel* (e.g., F 544, 32; F 890, 77). Furthermore, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* shows, as he puts it, an “abundance of syntactical entanglement, of references and prerequisites” calling for “schooled readers” (“[einen] Reichtum an Satzumschlingung, an Bezügen und Voraussetzungen,” “geschulte Leser,” F 890, 77) – which can be read as pointing to the syntactic challenges of his style and to his references: not only to *Die Fackel*, but also to the common literary canon as well as Kraus’s own canon which he promoted through his readings (Stremmel 1982: 101).
- 9 While it is not necessary to solve every single one of the riddles, to follow up on every allusion in the text in order to grasp its thrust – Kraus’s satire proves astonishingly durable nevertheless (Scheichl 1990: 29) –, a more informed reading still gives more credit to Kraus’s work and provides rich and oftentimes unexpected insights into its historical and cultural background. This background being the rise of the so-called “Third Reich,” obtaining the details necessary to get a closer understanding of this text is all the more important.
- 10 In 2021, the digital edition of Kraus’s *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* was published in a first step including a reading version of the text and annotations regarding person mentions as well as intertextual relations. Making full use of the potential of these annotations meant pointing out not only individuals mentioned by name, but also those alluded to – this way, for instance, “a public personality” (TWN: 12; “ein Mann der Öffentlichkeit,” DW: para. 8, p. 18), mentioned as an important foe of Kraus, could be identified as Johann Schober, Austrian chancellor and chief of police in Vienna. Countless literary allusions could be clarified for today’s readers, as well as allusions to journalistic texts quoted by Kraus⁷ and, last but not least, large portions of *Die Fackel* that Kraus expected his readership to be familiar with; the mention of “satirical proof” (TWN: 13; “satirische Beweisführung,” DW para. 8, p. 18) could thus be pinpointed to a certain *Fackel* issue from 1928 wholly dedicated to his feud with the Berlin critic Alfred Kerr. Also, since his information on current events mainly stemmed from newspapers, these intertextual relations already helped clarify some of the obscure passages by giving historical (or, more precisely: journalistic) context to references to events in Germany or Austria at the time.

Figure 1. The publication steps of the digital edition of Karl Kraus's *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* at the ACDH-CH.



- 11 One of the initial ideas for this edition was to create a self-sufficient textual context,⁸ a network of intertextual relations which itself would be expressive enough to provide the reader with all the information required to decipher the text. It soon became clear that a number of factors (to be addressed below) called for a more traditional approach to editing this text, this more traditional approach being, unsurprisingly, a commentary.
- 12 *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is the result of an author of exceptional perceptiveness and attention being subjected to a plethora of news in a critical and highly volatile era of history. It thus not only captures and reflects on events – political and other – that were widely received by the public and to some extent still are common knowledge today, but also the day-to-day – be it the daily assaults on Jews and socialists on the streets of Germany, the mishaps of German diplomatic efforts, the rising butter prices, the (in Kraus's view) unnecessary fuss made about celebrities of the cultural sphere. *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is a lens through which to view the decisive events of 1933, and a protocol that captures the everyday, from the horrors on the German streets to the trivialities of the gossip columns. Its scope also includes events in Austria, where National Socialists campaigned and committed terrorist attacks, where Social Democrats grappled with their political powerlessness, and where Engelbert Dollfuß established his dictatorial regime – a regime Kraus was much less critical of, which in turn estranged a large part of his readership.⁹
- 13 A commentary provides information on these issues to enrich the experience of linear reading; also, it presents the editor with the opportunity to aggregate this knowledge gained in engagement with the text and to present it in different ways, and thus to provide other points of entry into the text. This way, the text would eventually become something different – or rather, a different quality of the text would be highlighted: its role as a reservoir holding historical memory.

- 14 While it may be an obvious choice to add a commentary to a text as challenging and enigmatic as *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, which is furthermore situated in such a decisive time of history, the status and legitimacy of a commentary in a scholarly edition has long been controversial: What to comment, and how? A similar question has to be raised with adding commentary specifically to Kraus's work: its poetic and intertextual nature calls for one kind of treatment, its ties to historical reality for another.

4. Commentary in Editorial Practice

- 15 The central methodological question with regard to scholarly commentary is the question of What: what to comment on, what not to comment on. Some common ground was formulated in 1985 with Manfred Fuhrmann's definition of literary obscurity – or, more precisely: the two kinds of obscurity a text can show: Primary obscurity refers to difficulties that the author had deliberately put in the way of his audience by way of poetic speech, difficulties that can be approached by studying the text itself. Secondary obscurity on the other hand increases with growing distance to the text. (Fuhrmann 1985: 43f.) Gunter Martens points out (while Fuhrmann only implies) that it is this latter kind where a commentary can in theory be put to work – as long as this work does not spill over into an interpretation of the text. The problem, Martens states, is that an editor cannot eliminate their own subjectivity. Also, the kind of commentary dedicated to distinct text passages (as opposed to a comprehensive one) may be incapable of bridging the cultural difference between text and reader. A comprehensive commentary on the other hand, even if it readily admits its own subjective and interpretative nature – wouldn't it acquire a false, misleading status as part of a historical-critical edition? (Martens 1993a: 44–46) Martens himself proposed a solution to the problem of commentary and interpretation: a commentary might be substituted by providing context in the form of historical documents (*ibid.*: 48). For others, the argument that commentary and interpretation cannot be separated led to the conclusion that adding an interpretation section to an edition is the path forward, going as far as providing readings of motifs in the context of the text as a whole (e.g., Stüben 1993). Michael Scheffel, on the other hand, while not assuming a clear dichotomy between interpretation and commentary, recognizes the close interweaving of both, determined as they are by a “reciprocal relationship, as the specific form of a commentary ultimately results from what is considered necessary for the purpose of a possible [...] interpretation”¹⁰ (Scheffel 2020: 129).
- 16 In practice, in the field of scholarly editions in the German-speaking countries, the commentary has long been restricted to student editions, textual criticism being regarded as the ‘lasting’ part of an edition and worthy of constituting the historical-critical edition, while commentary was considered as having a short expiration date. (For a quick summarization of the discussion see Plachta 2020: here esp. 11.) The legacy of the Lachmann school of editing with its focus on textual criticism was supplanted in the early 1970s (Roloff 1993: 16; Höpker-Herberg/Zeller 1993: 51), when historical critical editions increasingly included commentary. While these observations stem from the early 1990s, it is at the same time that others already observed the decline of the commentary: due to its shaky methodological foundations, more and more editors refrained from producing a commentary (Martens 1993b: IX) – a finding Bodo Plachta confirms nearly thirty years later: The methodological discussion has faded due to the demise of its subject matter (Plachta 2020: 13). In his seminal essay from 2010, Hans Walter Gabler described the potential of scholarly editing under the paradigm of the digital medium as creating “a web of discourses [...] interrelated and of equal standing.” He lists seven discourses potentially constituting an edition: “text, emendation apparatus, historical collation, textual notes and textual introduction with the editorial rationale [...], [a]nnotation and

commentary.” However, he detects one “serious shortcoming” in current editions: With more emphasis being placed on establishing the text via the apparatus throughout the 20th century, annotation and commentary as the mediating functions of the edition are being “widely neglected”: “For, shorn of its content- and meaning-related dimensions, the scholarly edition is one-sidedly textual and is simply not an edition for readers” (Gabler 2010: 44–46).¹¹

5. Kraus's Satire as a Purely Textual Phenomenon?

- 17 While commentary in a scholarly edition is clearly a topic of discussion within editorial practice and methodology, it is at least as intricate a topic within Kraus scholarship. This has to do with his essays showing two qualities to a high degree: they are, generally speaking, factual; at the same time, they are literary texts. Maybe it would be more precise to say: they are located at the intersection of the poetic and the factual, the former being strongly associated with the fictional, the latter with the non-literary. They refer to real-life entities en masse, and at the same time they exist in an intricate web of literary allusions, self-referentiality and poetic idioms; they are commonly subsumed under the label of satire, which in turn has a complicated relation to the real world – especially with regard to Kraus, who in a 1934 statement about satire denies the relevance of the real-life cause for satire, even claims it is obstructive, satire being “drawn from the current” but “only effective, even understandable, at a distance from the occasion” (F 890, 7).¹²
- 18 This attitude can also be found among Kraus scholars: Mike Rogers, as a rather extreme example, states that “the works of Karl Kraus are more about the structure than the statements.” One should, as he puts it, resist “the temptation to examine the text for its historical accuracy.” With reference to *Fackel: Wörterbuch Redensarten* (1999) he argues that objects of Kraus’s allusions have their value “primarily as features of the literary texts of Karl Kraus [...], and only secondarily as phenomena of the external world” (Rogers 2001: 183, 186).¹³
- 19 The question this raises is which category of entities Kraus’s texts relate to in a meaningful way: is it only textual entities, manifestations and customs of language? Or may one – perhaps naively – assume that it makes sense to read his texts in reference to entities external to the sphere of language, to the real world (whatever epistemological obstacles and preconditions there might be)?
- 20 With regard to *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, the meaningfulness of historical facts in the text has never really been disputed.¹⁴ The approach is usually two-fold: Edward Timms for example declares that *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is engaged in a “war of words,” “orchestrating a cacophony of voices” resp. “discordant registers”; victims of National Socialism come into play via their “plaintive cries” (Timms 2005: 495f.); Simon Ganahl says that what Kraus does in this text is, “in a word, discourse analysis” (Ganahl 2015: 27). Still, in the following sections, Timms clearly takes into account how *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* draws from and comments on the facts underlying the “voices,” and Ganahl states that *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* deals with the question of “what one could observe about the National Socialist seizure of power in Vienna in 1933 by reading newspapers, listening to the radio, and going to the movies” – if needed, by “fishing facts out of an ocean of opinion” (Ganahl 2015: 28, 106).¹⁵
- 21 A (let’s call it:) textualist approach to commentary puts a strong focus on the – in the broadest way possible – intertextual relations of a text, including, but not limited to, its ‘references and prerequisites’ mentioned above: *Die Fackel* and other works by Kraus, literary texts inside and outside his own literary canon, specific newspaper articles or feuilletons – but also the sphere of journalism in the form of journalistic genres as a

whole (like feuilletonism – Scheichl 1997: 281, 288). Also, the scope of a textualist commentary includes what is usually the glossary section of an edition by providing word definitions from other texts (dictionaries, encyclopedias) or, utilizing a more generous notion of ‘text’ and ‘intertext’, from historical discourse in general; this section would also have to take into account the layers and layers of meaning Kraus added to certain expressions in the course of *Die Fackel*’s decades-long history.¹⁶

- 22 I must admit that this approach had (and still has) a strong appeal for me; linking the edited texts to other texts in a way that in itself conveys meaning as well as an editor’s motivation, without the latter manifesting (and exposing) themselves through their own words – this approach, for one, has the allure of an ascetic ideal; and there is an argument to be made that in a text taking on cultural / literary / journalistic topics, entities like mentioned authors are not mere persons, but instead signifiers pointing at sets of texts determined in scope by their respective author’s name; anything referred to, in this point of view, is not a real-life entity, but a signifier in discourse.
- 23 The first publication step of the digital edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* with its emphasis on, among other aspects, intertextuality, positioned the text in the context of more than 1,100 intertexts – texts quoted verbatim, texts alluded to or mentioned, but also texts that serve as exemplary or possible sources since they cover things Kraus mentions without a specific reference to a source. This recreates the textual / literary / cultural horizon of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* to a high degree, and it also answers some questions about specific expressions used by Kraus that have a history in *Die Fackel* – expressions like “at the end of the day” (TWN 15; “letzten Endes,” DW para. 10, p. 22), “innocent victimisers” (TWN 7; “verfolgende Unschuld,” DW para. 6, p. 10), etc. As noted above, Martens suggested providing links to documents and materials in lieu of a traditional commentary (Martens 1993a: 48). To contextualize the works of Kraus, Scheichl has made a similar suggestion, stating that the appropriate backdrop for Kraus’s satire is best found in the entirety of the newspapers of Kraus’s times, which in turn can be represented by examples (Scheichl 1997: 288). To some extent, this requirement has been fulfilled by the approach of the first step of the edition (and could, of course, be further extended by adding more and other categories of intertexts).
- 24 However, there are cases of obscurity that cannot be resolved in this ‘textual’ manner, where linking an edited text to external material fails to do justice to the complexity of themes addressed in the text, where there might just not be one such text, and linking to multiple sources would quickly exceed the limits of usability. In many cases, the validity of linking to contemporary sources might be impaired by the fact that historical distance often allows for (and thus demands) a different assessment of the events alluded to. In these regards, the hyperlink is still insufficient compared to genuine commentary.¹⁷

6. The Reality of Satire

- 25 With all its poetic language and intertextual commentary, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is an astonishingly detailed account of what happened on a day-to-day basis in 1933: from the terror on German streets to the diplomatic arena, from agitators’ speeches in Germany’s provincial capitals to the terror attacks in Vienna. Yes, the text gains this information from its intertextual relations, usually newspapers, from its participation in discourse, but there is a significant difference between Kraus commenting on blunders in the language of newspapers and him relating the facts conveyed via these newspapers.

26 One might even see a contradiction in his method: why trust the information of an – in Kraus’s view – inherently untrustworthy source (see Fischer 2020: 819; Ganahl 2015: 21–111)? While he castigates the wrongdoings of the newspapers in their reporting at length, they remained his main source for the atrocities committed by Nazi henchmen – the most reliable one of which being the Social Democrats’ *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, which still was anything but a neutral medium (Ganahl 2015: 28).

27 At the same time, this dichotomy in the status of the newspaper highlights Kraus’s efforts to break through to the depicted reality. Accordingly, the density of referenced facts in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* is repeatedly emphasized among scholars: not only is the text as a whole considered a “monument to those [...] who were tormented in Germany in 1933” (Fischer 1952: 305)¹⁸, as Heinrich Fischer put it; what Jens Malte Fischer recognizes is “the level of detail in the description of the horrors of its early days” (Fischer 2020: 836).¹⁹ J. P. Stern’s position is the strongest in this regard:

To read it is no less exacting an adventure than to read any of Kraus’s prose, but the language-conscious and (as it were) self-regarding element is less prominent. The linguistic reality that is being illuminated is that of the Third Reich, and the analysis of evil words not only intimates but is joined by an enumeration and direct description of evil deeds (Stern 1975: 45).

28 Scheichl points out the high degree of precision of Kraus’s satire in general and the value of insights into its contemporary contexts – textual as well as real: some passages benefit from links to specific newspaper feuilletons or long-lasting campaigns led in *Die Fackel*, others from providing concise information on Kraus’s relations with certain people or issues (Scheichl 1990). This contradicts statements made by Kraus himself in his periodical, for example the one mentioned above about his satire benefitting from being stripped of its link to concrete reality. Interestingly, it is the same 1934 issue of *Die Fackel* that can put this proposition to the test – or at least Kraus’s own adherence to it. This issue No. 890–905 from late July does not contain *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* as a whole, but it at least provides parts of this text Kraus deemed unpublishable in 1933. The issue titled *Warum die Fackel nicht erscheint* contains long quotes from the unpublished text, among them one in which Kraus contrasts the dreadful political reality as shown by newspaper reports with the banality of the culture section in the same newspapers:

The evening edition of a Viennese daily may be agonising over the fate of Austria, but have they reported what Otto Preminger is planning to stage this autumn? All hell may be breaking loose, but the question still arises whether Max Pallenberg’s guest appearance has been confirmed, and alongside reports of torture chambers we’re kept informed about Kurt Robitschek’s chamber theatre (TWN 78).²⁰

29 For the publication in July 1934, Kraus revised the text in numerous places. In this passage, he replaced “Preminger” with “Beer” and “Pallenberg” with “Marischka” (F 890, 147). The new reference to impresario and director Rudolf Beer, replacing the one to Otto Ludwig Preminger, cannot with confidence be regarded as having been made in the course of an attempted actualization (in the autumn of 1934 both Beer and Preminger held positions they had already held in 1933). With the replacement of “Pallenberg” with “Marischka,” however, this seems more likely:²¹ at the end of June 1934, the actor Max Pallenberg had died in a plane crash. This possibly accounts for the change in the text, since Kraus was probably sensitive to the fact that Pallenberg’s name would now appear in a drastically changed context – which would impact the perceived meaning of the text passage. If this is the case, it can very well be understood as a testament to the precision Scheichl ascribes to Kraus’s satire.

7. Commentary in the Digital Edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*

30 The digital edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* aims to be the kind of edition Walter Gabler refers to when he mentions the lack of editions with a focus on mediating the text – an edition for readers (Gabler 2010: 46). In light of this, the scholarly work on an edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* enriched for today's readers has to answer certain kinds of questions. Some of them were already addressed in the first publication step in 2021 (cf. fig. 2):

- The annotation of intertextual relations to specific as well as exemplary texts provides a curated link to the (textual) cultural context of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* up to 1933, allowing the reader to dive into Kraus's sources and possibly even read up on certain topics as discussed in *Die Fackel* and elsewhere.
- The annotation of persons mentioned by name as well as by allusion provides an opportunity to link the text to the biographical reality of its contemporaries.

Figure 2. The annotated reader's version of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* showing the contents of the first publication step: intertextual references and person mentions; all of the annotations in the right column expand on click, providing detailed information and links to respective indexes and external resources.

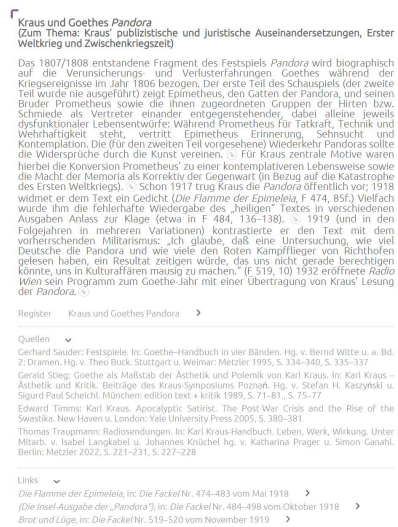
31 While clarifying a large number of allusions and references made in the text (there are nearly 2,900 intertextual and person annotations throughout the text), these two categories – as mentioned above – are not sufficient to properly situate *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* in its historical context. This background is determined by the turmoil of 1933, but it is also established by Kraus's numerous references to the Austrian First Republic and the Weimar Republic, to World War I, to historical events further in the past, and, last but not least, to Kraus's numerous feuds: a number of the representatives of the cultural sphere mentioned in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* had already been subject to previous criticism and ridicule by Kraus, in some cases leading to public controversy (prominently: with the Berlin critic Alfred Kerr). In addition, there is a large number of terms used by Kraus that call for an explanation – colloquial terms, terms derived from, e.g., Yiddish, expressions from various specialist fields, and more.

- 32 The guiding principle of the edition was to achieve a balance: to cover those gaps in the model reader's knowledge that were not already sufficiently covered by the first publication step mentioned above, and that would otherwise impair the reader's understanding of the text. The model reader was imagined without a specific scholarly or historiographic background, which resulted in a higher number of comments, but at the same time commentary was limited to topics that are not explicated in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* itself. The mention of seemingly small details could make a commentary necessary, simply because the underlying facts, familiar to contemporaries, are unknown to today's audience. This applies to, for instance, the economic-historical background. On the other hand, it was not the goal (and by no means feasible) to cover every possible relation between this text and the outside world or outside discourse – e.g., in *Die Fackel*. As a consequence, some topics in Kraus's overall work mentioned also in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* have not been commented on here, simply because they are laid out to a sufficient degree in the text itself (additionally, this helped to avoid drifting towards interpretation).²²
- 33 Another aspect in setting the limits of the commentary was chronology: The boundaries of a topic set in 1933, in the first year of the National Socialist reign, can in theory include at least twelve more years. It was therefore important to draw these boundaries rather narrowly, and to resist the urge to provide every aspect with an outlook up to – for instance – the end of Hitler's reign.
- 34 As one can see by now (and this is not unusual for commentary practice), many questions cannot be answered definitively: What do today's readers know? What exactly are the limits of secondary obscurity? Which words need lexical annotation? Which consideration of further historical development after 1933 might be useful, which excessive? The non-fictional character of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* added yet another aspect: the occurrence of contra-factual statements, posing the question: Which errata to correct, which to neglect – again, with questions of relevance and the model readers' assumed knowledge in mind?
- 35 It is these questions of borderline cases where the problem of the editor's subjectivity is most obvious. A major factor to be taken into account here is professional orientation – mine and that of those who were involved in the creation of the commentary at various stages.²³ One's professional background on the one hand certainly determines which passages seem obscure. On the other hand, this background also determines where one sees self-evidence while other readers – the model reader – might face obscurity. In general, the number of borderline cases was high; the pragmatical approach was: depending on feasibility, a decision usually was made for rather than against a commentary.
- 36 While borderline cases within the scope of the commentary certainly offered enough opportunity for reflection, larger questions concerned the conceptualization of the commentary as a whole. There are, to state the obvious, many different approaches to a commentary on *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*. One major variable in the concept of a commentary is its thematic scope: Our commentary's focus on historical contextualization takes into account the growing historical distance which makes the explication of historical backgrounds increasingly necessary. But with a work by Kraus, one could also shift the focus of the commentary more towards the history of various concepts and terms in *Die Fackel*.²⁴ Our commentary however, while it often refers to *Die Fackel* – nearly one hundred times –, at the same time limits this to cases of 'immediate' secondary obscurity. (There is always more to say on Kraus's use of language, but this was considered outside the scope of our commentary.)

- 37 Our approach with its goals and its self-imposed restraints (and occasional softening thereof) led to some 220 comments. These are accompanied by 170 short comments: glossary entries containing short factual explanations and word definitions. The text's historical horizon of course being also reflected at the lexical level, it seemed appropriate in many cases to use and quote dictionaries and lexicons which originate from said historical horizon.²⁵ In any case, the commentaries and glossary entries on the one hand and the list of sources on the other hand were constituted as two documents (more precisely: two separate TEI XML files, one containing seg elements for commentary, the other containing a listBibl element) with extensive interrelations.
- 38 A large number of historical events mentioned in the text – events of every size and category, from the violence in the early concentration camps to the destruction of the scientific community and the cultural sphere to the regime's attempts to feign respectability in the diplomatic arena – did not per se warrant a commentary for a proper understanding of the text and thus were not considered for the commentary itself. Still, they are a testament to the text bearing witness to a decisive historical era, not limited to but especially in Germany, observed mostly through the lens of newspapers – an incredibly productive source despite the censorship quickly installed by the Nazi regime. To do justice to *Dritte Walpurgisnacht's* character as a protocol of the period of its genesis²⁶ in 1933, the events named in the text were collected; as far as they were datable, they were included in a list (a TEI XML file containing a listEvent element); this list eventually surpassed 230 entries. They consist of a very short description of the event in question – shorter than a regular comment. Some cases warranted the creation of an event as well as a commentary.
- 39 As opposed to the intertextual relations and mentions of persons, comments, glossary entries and events are not indicated in the text via text highlighting, but via a small diacritic – thus not referring to a passage, but, since they are dedicated to the reading process, to a point in the continuity of linear reading. In this way, comments and glossary entries are linked to more than 560 places in the text, with event entries linked to another 200.

Figure 3. The same text passage as before, but now with activated commentary annotations. One may notice that in the third sentence (“Ich glaube nicht, ...”), two out of three references warranted a commentary, for the third one (“vom Götzen wenigstens das Unentbehrlichste”) an intertextual relation was considered sufficient.

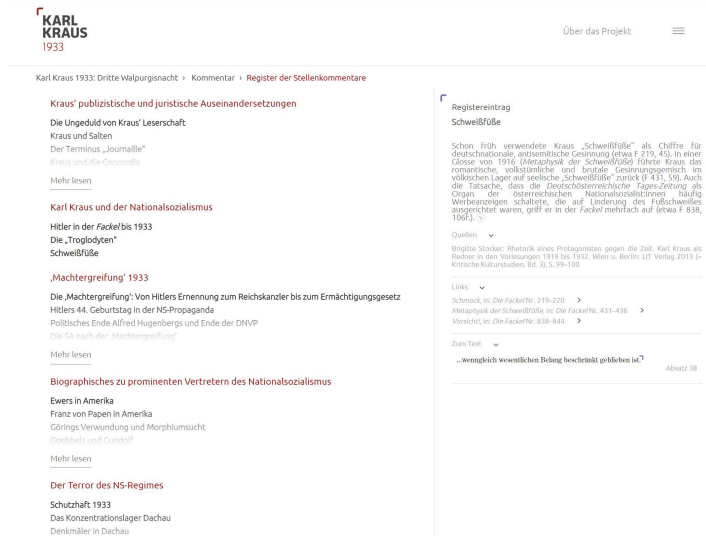
Figure 4. A view of the expanded commentary; below the commentary itself, several categories of further information or hyperlinks are shown, including sources (highlighted when hovering over the source icon in the text above), external links, and a link to the commentary index; other categories include links to related events or related intertexts.



8. A “Web of Discourses,” a “Hypertext Commentary” – and an Invitation to Read

40 While it cannot be said that our edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* in every way follows the vision of Gabler’s aforementioned essay (Gabler 2010),²⁷ I think it is a good example of how current means and methods, if applied accordingly, nearly automatically approximate said vision. As quoted above, Gabler describes the ideal digital edition as “a web of discourses [...] interrelated and of equal standing” (Gabler 2010: 44). While he withdraws the part about them being “equal” to some degree (he understandably calls the edited text the edition’s “backbone,” Gabler 2010: 49), the status of paratexts like commentary has indeed changed in a time when the limitations of print – notably: space and interrelation – no longer affect the edition in the same manner. Scheichl has more than once pointed out these limitations, which would prevent an editor from providing complete texts or sets of texts where the target of one of Kraus’s allusions is a genre as a whole (Scheichl 1990: 32; Scheichl 1997: 288f.). In terms of interrelation, a commentary can now be readily provided right next to the ‘obscure’ text passage, and at the same time in a completely different context. This different context, in case of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, is the commentary index, where these commentaries are not only listed, but divided into different thematical categories dedicated to topics like the National Socialist seizure of power, the Nazi’s weaponization of the law, protagonists of the cultural sphere under Nazi rule, the destruction of democracy in Austria, Kraus’s feuds and legal quarrels, and many more. Thus, the single commentary is now attached to the edited text and at the same time part of a collection of commentaries on the same field of knowledge, providing the reader with the option to read thematically related comments and make use of the additional entry points into the text these comments provide. In this way, the status of the commentary is now twofold – as an isolated snippet of information attached to the text and as part of the more comprehensive engagement of the editor with a subject area.

Figure 5. The commentary index; on the left, comments can be found under their respective thematic label; on the right, the expanded view of a selected comment now includes KWICs to navigate back to the annotated reader's view of the text.



41 The same is true for the events collected in the course of the edition: based on the event data, the web application generates an interactive timeline (using the anyChart JavaScript library). On this timeline, the events' order is different from the order of their appearance in resp. attachment to the text. They are also categorized under labels similar to the ones for comments, providing the opportunity to look up an event mentioned in the text in its historical context, to search for events of a similar kind that are also mentioned in the text, and to re-enter the text there. This, again, changes the status of each entry, displaying it right next to the text as well as in a chronological and a topical context.

Figure 6. A view of the timeline that is reached, e.g., via events annotated in the reader's version of the text. The right column provides options to select different thematic categories; to provide an even better overview, hovering over the categories' labels will highlight the corresponding events in the timeline. With regard to distribution over the year, most events the text mentions took place in May and June (41 resp. 34), followed by March (28), July (23), August resp. April (both 21).

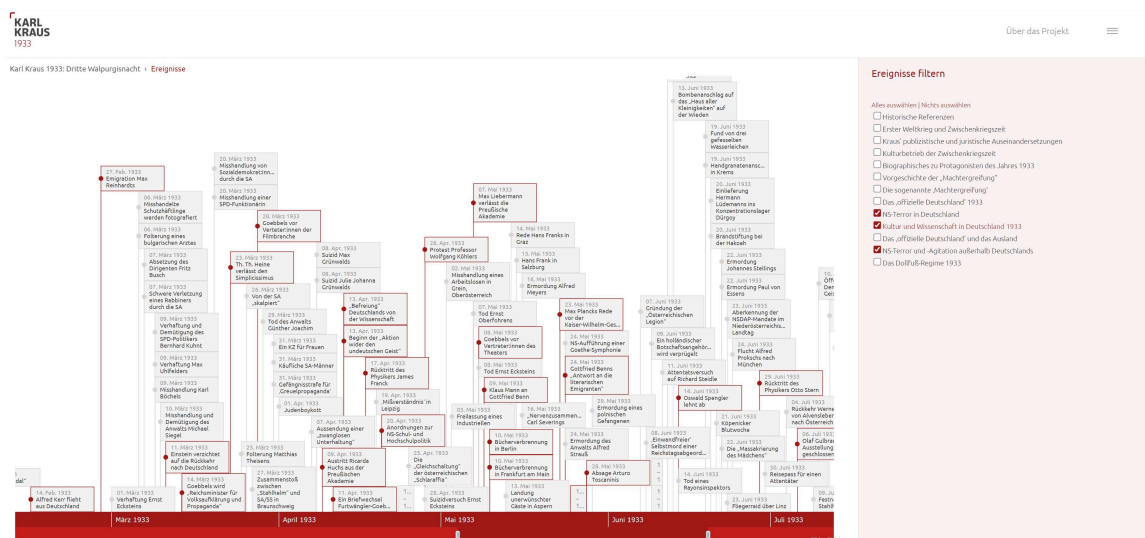



Figure 7. The event's expanded view, here: in the timeline, with sources and links to related events as well as KWICs linking to the reader's edition of the text. Other link categories include links to intertexts or corresponding commentaries.

Ereignis: Ermordung Johannes Stellings

(22. 6. 1933, Kategorie: NS-Terror in Deutschland)

SPD-Politiker und stv. Bundesvorsitzender des Reichsbanners Johannes Stelling wird nach schwersten Misshandlungen im Amtsgerichtsgefängnis Köpenick erschossen, sein Leichnam in einen Sack vernäht und in der Dahme versenkt, Anfang Juli jedoch von Arbeitern gefunden. 

Quellen

Heinrich-Wilhelm Wörmann: Widerstand in Köpenick und Treptow. 2. Aufl. Berlin: Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand 2010 (= Schriftenreihe über den Widerstand in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945, Bd. 9), S. 32.

Weitere Ereignisse

Köpenicker Blutwoche 

Leichenzug für Johannes Stelling und Paul von Essen 

Zum Text

...uß, die Hinschlachtung des Ministerpräsidenten Stelling,⁷ des halbblinden Paul v. Essen und all der Blutzegen...

Absatz 48

- 42 This has a dual effect: It is safe to say that while the text remains the center of an edition, the change in status provided by the edition's architecture shifts the balance of the parts of an edition in favor of those that were, until recently, only appendages to the edited text. At the same time, this all serves to provide a more comprehensive reading of – as well as more entry points into – the edited text.
- 43 It has been mentioned more than once that with the rise of the digital edition, the status of the editor changes as well. As a tendency, the editor moves from being a authoritative but quiet figure of habitual “bashfulness” to a more exposed position (Gabler 2010: 45, see also: Plachta 2020: 14), partly by making his or her work transparent, traceable, verifiable – or even including the audience in the process, building on crowdsourcing methods.²⁸ The edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* – like many other digital editions – moves in this direction in a more modest way. This is true for example with regard to its treatment of sources. It was one of the unquestioned features of many print editions that sources for commentary entries are provided – if at all – as a comprehensive list separate from the commentary entries, often with no explicit link between them. The possibilities of a digital edition – not the least of which being the availability of sufficient space for display – provide the opportunity to make this link explicit. Like in many other academic genres, the reader is now enabled to retrace the editor's steps, which prevents any presumption of sacrosanct editorial authority. This is in many cases supported even further with many of the sources being online or digitized sources, in which case a hyperlink is provided.

- 44 Sources are not the only category of links provided with the edition's commentaries and event entries. In many cases, comment and event entries are also interconnected. Also, a number of links connect the comments resp. events with thematically related texts (mostly newspaper articles) in the edition's index of intertexts. Last but not least, the commentary entries often provide links to external web resources that serve two functions: They provide what can be subsumed as links to materials for further examination – e.g., in online resources like [ANNO](#), [Die Fackel](#), [Legal Kraus](#), [ALEX](#) and so on – as well as to related research or entries in knowledge bases – prominently, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* website [LeMO](#), the World War I database [1914-1918 online](#), or [Wien Geschichte Wiki](#). Through its diverse internal and external links, the edition strives to lead the commentaries' readers further into the edition, but also into contemporary contexts as well as further research outside the edition.
- 45 If we were to categorize the currently available parts of the digital edition of Kraus's *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, we could do so based on the taxonomy proposed by Roman Bleier and Helmut W. Klug: In their survey of commentary in digital editions, they list five different kinds: the analogue commentary, which reproduces more or less the standards of printed editions, the hypertext commentary, which utilizes the possibilities of interconnectivity in the digital medium, the social and web commentary, where user-provided content is included in different ways, and the analytical commentary, where users are offered the role of researchers or investigators delving into the raw data of the edition (Bleier/Klug 2020: 106–108). The guiding principle that editors unconsciously or consciously follow when tapping into the potential of the WWW is Bleier and Klug's hypertext commentary; this is also true for the edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*. However, where Bleier and Klug contrast the “extensive linking” of the hypertext commentary with the “linear text flow” of the static commentary, which calls for “receptive reading” (ibid: 106), we feel tempted to claim a place for this edition between these categories, or in both of them. While providing manifold interconnectivity is one of the edition's goals, this still serves our main objective: to provide the basis to draw insights from linear reading – the commentary entries, and (needless to say) even more so the edited text; to turn the edition into an edition for readers; to invite the user to become a reader.

9. Pending Work

- 46 The two publication steps of the digital edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* currently accessible via <https://Kraus1933.ace.oeaw.ac.at> (both technically implemented by Barbara Krautgartner) cover a wide range of the text's interaction with its textual and historical contexts. These areas are still growing, and will probably do so in the future: experience has shown that researching one publication step turns up valuable insights for previous ones. Also, user feedback has been taken into account (and probably will be for this second publication step). All this contributes to the edition benefitting from the digital medium's flexibility: since nothing is set in stone, subsequent additions – so far: to annotations of persons and intertexts – are possible.²⁹
- 47 There is yet another level on which one can engage with the text, in a, in my opinion, very productive way: its genesis. The materials from which preliminary stages of the text can be derived are limited; however, facsimile views still enable us to trace the author's work on the text to a certain extent. For example, a passage in which Kraus castigates the journalistic machinations of Nazi propaganda contains references to “Baldur” and “Loki”:

It's the scam done the Nordic way, probably conducted by Loki rather than Baldur, who at the end of the day was brought down by the former.³⁰

48 The facsimile, however, shows a manual addition to the printed proofs that was crossed out again: “Baldur Schirach” and “Loki Goebbels” – a link between German politics and the world of Germanic gods not added after all and thus left to the readers’ associative abilities. Furthermore, a preliminary stage of the last paragraph of the text was recently purchased by the Wienbibliothek im Rathaus³¹ – along with other fragmentary preliminary stages, we intend to include this, too, in the third and final publication step of the digital edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*.

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Notes

- 1 “[Ich fühle mich] wie vor den Kopf geschlagen” (DW: para. 1, p. 1). While this paper provides English translations of German sources as well as of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, the text in its German original will be provided in brackets or, for longer quotes, in the notes. Quotes from *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* will be cited as “DW” with paragraph and page number, both referring to the online edition of the text resp. to the proofs from the National Library of Israel, Jerusalem, Abraham Schwadron Collection, signature: Schwad 01 19 290.1. In cases where an English translation is taken from the translation by Fred Bridgham and Edward Timms, it will be cited as “TWN,” followed by a page number. Quotes from *Die Fackel* are cited as “F,” followed by issue and page number.
- 2 “[E]iner der grandiosesten und ungewöhnlichsten politischen Texte der deutschen Literatur.” – “Wenn wir das heute anders sehen [als Karl Kraus selbst, Anm.] und das Gefühl haben, dass er im Sommer des Jahres 1933 weiter gekommen ist als jeder andere Autor, der sich damals mit dem ‘Dritten Reich’ beschäftigte, dann ist dies natürlich auch ein Ergebnis eines Vergleichs mit dem, was andere zustande gebracht haben.” (Fischer 2020: 779, 813)
- 3 Edward Timms introduces a comparison with Robert Musil’s (unfinished) essay *Bedenken eines Langsamen*, where Musil approaches the problem of anti-semitism in a rational, quasi-statistical manner (see Timms 2005: 494f.).
- 4 See, e.g., Joseph P. Stern: “Even today it seems impossible to write a history of the Third Reich without allowing the expository prose to take on a dignity that does not belong to the subject matter, and thus falsifies it.” (Stern 1975: 47)
- 5 However, a large portion of Kraus’s followers were estranged by his stance on the situation in Austria: his doubling down on his harsh criticism of the Austrian Social Democrats and his endorsement of Engelbert Dollfuß’s Austro-Fascist Regime – the former a result of his long-lasting, oftentimes disappointing relation to the party (cf. Pfabigan 1976), the latter a consequence of his fear of German annexation.
- 6 “[Ein] Reichtum an Satzumschlingung, an Bezügen und Voraussetzungen” (F 890, 77).
- 7 The identification of the intertexts is based in no small part on the work of Jochen Stremmel, Eckart Früh, Kurt Krolop, Sigurd Paul Scheichl and others; for a list of references, see https://kraus1933.ace.oeaw.ac.at/annotierte_lesfassung.html
- 8 This idea was in part inspired by Moritz Baßler’s concept of the ‘cultural archive’: The cultural archive consists of the – theoretically complete – set of texts existing at a certain point in time. These texts are related to each other – their respective textual context/con-texts – by way of paradigmatic correspondences (Baßler 2005). Together with Rainer Karczewski, he put forward a ‘cultural studies wish list for computer science’ to outline the implementation of this concept for application to digital text collections (Baßler/Karczewski 2009).



- 9 For Kraus's admiration for Engelbert Dollfuß see, e.g.: [Dreidemy 2018](#).
- 10 "Eine Unterscheidung zwischen Kommentar und Interpretation ist theoretisch geboten und praktisch möglich; zugleich stehen Kommentar und Interpretation insofern in einem unmittelbaren Wechselverhältnis, als die konkrete Gestalt eines Kommentars letztlich aus dem resultiert, was man zum Zwecke einer möglichen, methodologisch im Einzelnen wie auch immer angelegten Interpretation an Sach- und Sprachkenntnissen für notwendig erachtet [...]" ([Scheffel 2020: 129](#)).
- 11 Roman Bleier and Helmut W. Klug did an empirical study of digital editions; while their focus was on medieval texts, their findings for the years 2001–2018 still underpin the general impression: "Interestingly, source description, text analysis and, in particular, the classic main or passage commentary tend to be underrepresented." – "Interessant ist, dass Quellenbeschreibung, Textanalyse und besonders der klassische Haupt- oder Stellenkommentar eher unterrepräsentiert sind" ([Bleier and Klug 2020: 103](#)).
- 12 "Dies war immer das Problem der vom Aktuellen bezogenen Satire, welche erst in der Entfernung vom Anlaß wirksam, ja verständlich wird" ([F 890, 7](#)). – It may seem appropriate at this point to clarify the applicability of the notion of satire to *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, to determine whether the evidence I cite can be applied to this text at all, or whether this text is better subsumed under, e.g., the term polemic. However, I would like to point out the open-endedness of the discussion on the differentiation of these terms and of the terms themselves. On the other hand, Jens Malte Fischer's statement on *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* gives a broad notion of satire as a way of an author's self-positioning through certain artistic means: "It may be that readers are irritated when the term satire is applied to the *Third Walpurgis Night*, but of course Kraus has not forsaken his all-pervasive satirical attitude in this enormous text; it is only less recognizable at first glance because mockery, ridicule and wit have taken a back seat to an underlying tone of abysmal despair." – "Es mag sein, dass Leser irritiert sind, wenn die *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* mit dem Begriff Satire belegt wird, aber natürlich hat Kraus in diesem gewaltigen Text seine alles imprägnierende satirische Grundhaltung nicht aufgegeben, sie ist nur deshalb nicht auf den ersten Blick erkennbar, weil Hohn, Spott und Witz hier hinter einen Grundton der abgrundtiefen Verzweiflung zurückgetreten sind" ([Fischer 2020: 228](#)).
- 13 "[B]ei den Arbeiten von Karl Kraus geht es eher um die Strukturen als um die Aussagen." – "Widersteht man aber der Versuchung, den Text auf seinen historisch bedingten Wahrheitsgehalt zu prüfen, [...] ist man eigentlich weit eher imstande, den satirischen Wert des Textes zu bestimmen [...]" – "[Anspielungsobjekte im *Fackel Wörterbuch Redensarten* haben] in erster Linie als Bestandteil der literarischen Texte von Karl Kraus Wert [...], und nur nebenbei als Phänomene der Außenwelt." ([Rogers 2001: 183, 186](#)) For a recent discussion of the relation of Kraus's satire and satire in general to reality, see [Kouno 2015: esp. 173–177](#).
- 14 Heinrich Fischer in his afterword to the first printed edition of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* from 1952 on the one hand stated that Kraus's work was not to be misunderstood as simple 'opinion,' because Kraus aimed at the symbolic value of his satirical object rather than for this object itself ([Fischer 1952: 303](#)). At the same time, Fischer calls this text "a 'stammering reproduction' of the overpowering elemental forces" ("ein 'Nachstammeln' des übermächtigen Elementargeschehens," [ibid: 304](#)), as poetic satire derived from the "smallest and dirtiest detail of daily reality" ("die kleinste und schmutzigste Realität des Tages verwandelt in dichterische Satire," [ibid: 295](#)).
- 15 "[E]r betreibt, mit einem Wort, Diskursanalyse." – "[W]as man 1933 in Wien über die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung wahrnehmen konnte, wenn man Zeitungen las, Radio hörte und ins Kino ging" – "Wer 1933 in Wien über die faktischen Vorgänge in Deutschland Bescheid wissen wollte, musste die Tatsachen aus einem Meinungsmeer fischen." – [Ganahl 2015: 28, 106](#).
- 16 "We assume we know this language, but yet we only partially understand it." – „Wir glauben, diese Sprache zu kennen, und wir verstehen sie doch nur zum Teil“ ([Scheichl 1990: 33](#)).
- 17 Patricia Zihlmann-Märki also points out that "it would be difficult to provide several possible sources and allusions to a specific text passage with a link to external resources and to relate them to each other and to the text passage according to relevance, plausibility, or other criteria. Only an annotation can actually do this adequately." (" [...] wäre es schwierig, mit einer Verlinkung auf externe Ressourcen mehrere mögliche Quellen und Anspielungen einer konkreten Textstelle offenzulegen und diese nach Relevanz- Plausibilitäts- oder weiteren Kriterien in ein Verhältnis zueinander und zu der Textstelle zu bringen. Dies vermag eigentlich nur eine Erläuterung adäquat zu leisten," [Zihlmann-Märki 2020: 172f.](#)).
- 18 "Denkmal derer [...], die im Deutschland des Jahres 1933 gemartert wurden" ([Fischer 1952: 305](#)).
- 19 "Verblüffend, liest man die *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* zum ersten Mal, ist die Detailliertheit der Verzeichnung der Gräueltaten der ersten Stunde [...]" ([Fischer 2020: 836](#)).

- 20 “Das 6 Uhr-Blatt ringt um die Befreiung Österreichs, aber weiß man denn, was im Herbst unter Preminger sein wird? Vor dem Höllenrachen erhebt sich die Frage, ob das Pallenberg-Gastspiel perfekt wird, und zwischen Folterkammerspielen die Gestalt Robitscheks” (DW para. 25, p. 98). As part of the third and last publication step, *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* will also provide an apparatus presenting the variants in this *Fackel* issue No. 890.
- 21 It is probably not Hubert Marischka's circumstances that are accounted for in the replacement; according to an ANNO search, in 1933 as well as in 1934 he held positions as impresario of numerous Viennese theatres and regularly also took on roles himself.
- 22 E.g., Kraus's criticism of the role of the press with regard to its impact on the readers' perceptive capabilities is both one of the strains of his overall work and featured in this text. But instead of being just alluded to in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*, it is this text itself that gives one of Kraus's most concise definitions of the problem – thus making a commentary unnecessary –, and it constitutes an extension due to current events. In 1933, Kraus declares the press not the victim, but the cause of National Socialism, the latter utilizing, in essence, mind numbing techniques adopted from journalism (although stripped of some of its verbal ornaments), profiting from the intellectual devastation that the press has left in the brains of its readers: “For National Socialism has not destroyed the press; rather, the press has created National Socialism. Apparently only as a reaction, but actually as a fulfilment of its true nature. Over and above the humbug with which they nourish their readers, it is, after all, journalists we are talking about. Those who write editorials in blood and features about fearless deeds. Troglodytes by nature, they have entered and occupied the cavernous void to which the printed word has reduced the imaginative powers of mankind. That they eschew all embellishment, or are unable even to fake it, can to some extent be construed as—for them—a cultural advance.” (TWN 226f.) – “Denn der Nationalsozialismus hat die Presse nicht vernichtet, sondern die Presse hat den Nationalsozialismus erschaffen. Scheinbar nur als Reaktion, in Wahrheit auch als Fortsetzung. Jenseits aller Frage, mit welchem Humbug sie die Masse nähren – sie sind Journalisten. Sie sind Leitartikler, die mit Blut schreiben. Ja, Feuilletonisten der Tat. Sie haben die Höhle bezogen, als die das gedruckte Wort der Altvordern die Phantasie der Menschheit hinterlassen hat, und daß sie des Zierats entbehren oder ihn nicht nachstümpfern können, ist ihr kultureller Vorsprung” (DW para. 64, p. 269f.). For a discussion of the implications of the passage in relation to media theory concepts, see Ganahl 2015, e.g.: 106.
- 23 See <https://kraus1933.ace.oeaw.ac.at/projekt.html>.
- 24 I think this tendency is evident in the preliminary considerations for a commentary on *Dritte Walpurgisnacht* by Sigurd Paul Scheichl as early as 1990. With many thanks to Sigurd Paul Scheichl for providing his working copy of *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*. See also Scheichl 1990.
- 25 This, however, was not possible in every case, e.g., with regard to Yiddish phrases in *Dritte Walpurgisnacht*.
- 26 The text itself is dated by Kraus with “Beginning of May 1933” – “Anfang Mai 1933”; yet, the first newspaper articles cited are from March, possibly February. The last cited newspaper article is from the end of September (Früh 1983: 14).
- 27 This has methodological reasons as well as reasons of feasibility; and of course, with the genetic part still pending, the interrelated discourses Gabler describes currently lack an important one.
- 28 See, e.g., the Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript (Siemens et al. 2016).
- 29 These changes are documented on the project page under “Updates.” See <https://kraus1933.ace.oeaw.ac.at/projekt.html>.
- 30 “Es ist die Aufnordung der Petite, an der aber nicht so sehr Baldur als Loki beteiligt sein dürfte, der ihn letzten Endes zu Falle gebracht hat.” (DW para. 38, p. 138)
- 31 Wienbibliothek, Sammlung Karl Kraus - Marcel Faust, ZPH-2007, 1.3.

Abstract

Recently, the digital edition of Karl Kraus's “Dritte Walpurgisnacht” was extended by an extensive commentary, shedding light on obscure text passages and situating the text against its historical and cultural background. The endeavor to write this commentary was set in a specific context that was shaped by a number of factors. This essay's goal is twofold: it aims to present the scope and functionality of the commentary; at the same time, it intends to examine the factors that constitute the context of its creation – the discussions on commentary in the field of scholarly edition, the changed circumstances under the digital paradigm, the challenges of (and in some ways objections against) commenting on a work by Karl Kraus –, and how the commentary to “Dritte Walpurgisnacht” relates to them.

Keywords: Commentary, Digital Edition, Dritte Walpurgisnacht, Karl Kraus

Zusammenfassung



Vor kurzem wurde die digitale Ausgabe von Karl Kraus' „Dritter Walpurgisnacht“ um einen ausführlichen Stellenkommentar erweitert, der schwer verständliche Textpassagen beleuchtet und den Text vor seinem historischen und kulturellen Hintergrund verortet. Die Erstellung dieses Kommentars stand in einem spezifischen Kontext, der durch eine Reihe von Faktoren geprägt war. Der vorliegende Aufsatz verfolgt ein doppeltes Ziel: Er will den Umfang und die Funktionalität des Kommentars darstellen und zugleich die Faktoren beleuchten, die den Entstehungskontext ausmachen – die Diskussionen um den Kommentar innerhalb der Editionswissenschaft, die durch die digitale Wende veränderten Umstände, die Herausforderungen der Kommentierung eines Werkes von Karl Kraus sowie die möglichen Einwände dagegen –, und skizzieren, wie sich der Kommentar zur „Dritten Walpurgisnacht“ zu ihnen verhält.

Schlagwörter: Stellenkommentar, Digitale Edition, Karl Kraus, Dritte Walpurgisnacht

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