

LITERATURE THAT DEFIED THE NAZI REGIME

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Scholdt pays tribute to both the aesthetic achievements and the courage of writers who were persecuted and ostracized during the Nazi era. He also considers the significance of their resistance in the Nazi years for our own tumultuous times.

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Dictators push literary figures to the sidelines and burn their books. This was most certainly true in Nazi Germany. Yet strangely enough, anti-Nazi literature is the most ignored genre in German literary history. At least, this is what the eminent Germanist, historian and literary scholar Günter Scholdt thinks. He seeks to change that with his new book, *Schlaglichter auf die "Innere Emigration": Nichtnationalsozialistische Belletristik in Deutschland 1933-1945* (Highlights on the Inner Emigration: Non-National Socialist Fiction in Germany 1933-1945), which covers a whole host of brave writers who have been overlooked for far too long. Werner Bergengruen, Ernst Wiechert, and Ricarda Huch are exemplary literary figures who stood against the Nazi dictatorship and its seductive propaganda. However, only those who received a good education in this country are likely to know these names — and good educations are rare.

The names of Stefan Andres and Georg Britting are almost only familiar to specialists. Yet it is so important to know the works of these authors. These authors, and many more, belong to the genre called inner emigration, which describes the silent resistance of literary figures from 1933 to 1945. Scholdt has honored this literature with a weighty volume.

Throughout the almost-500 page book, the author presents lively and diverse masterpieces that were crafted to resist Nazification. He presents his subject matter such that both specialists and a broader audience can learn from this book. Because he succeeds in this balancing act, he successfully wrote the work without a scholarly apparatus or an overly detailed list of sources without compromising the quality of the results.

In addition to presenting their literary contributions, Scholdt explores the authors' biographies, which helps the reader situate each work in its historic context. For example, Hans Fallada, who did not emigrate, somehow came to terms with the regime. He was later reproached for it. However, Scholdt notes that Fallada was a drug addict and alcoholic. Although he was entirely unconvinced by Nazi politics, his precarious circumstances compelled him to stay in Germany. He was distinguished by his compassion for poor and suffering contemporaries. With this understanding, the accusations against him become less convincing. If an extremely exciting discourse began in the introduction, the reader does not have to wait long for this excitement to be tempered. The first "key text of inner emigration" discussed in detail, *Der Großtyrann und das Gericht* (The Great Tyrant and the Court) by Werner Bergengruen, demonstrates this vividly. Scholdt quite rightly classifies this book as a "subversive epic," because he shows the relation between a character, whose name stays unspoken, and Hitler himself. So he clearly proves that he is one of the few real connoisseurs of the subject. And this is only the first of many examples. Scholdt's book is a real desideratum!

In his study of the authors who were persecuted and ostracized during the Nazi era, Scholdt pays tribute to both their significant aesthetic achievements and their courage. At the same time, he considers the special significance of their resistance in the Nazi years for our own tumultuous times. Scholdt's book makes these works available to the wider culture. As a scholar, he enjoys the highest recognition, but he speaks a more relatable language than his detached colleagues. Scholdt lays a foundation for the rediscovery of authors who were persecuted and ostracized by the Nazi dictatorship and who were unjustly forgotten due largely to the '68er movement, whose intellectual distortions still have a hold on our culture. Scholdt deserves thanks and recognition for his contribution to this major cultural project.