

Jarrell C. Jackman and Carla M. Borden (Editors).
THE MUSES FLEE HITLER:
CULTURAL TRANSFER AND ADAPTATION 1930-1945.
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Between Adolf Hitler's ascendancy to power in 1933 and the formative years of the Third Reich, several hundred thousand Jewish and Christian intellectuals fled Nazi Germany and the occupied lands which it militarily controlled. **The Muses Flee Hitler** recalls the agony and the ecstasy which transpired as a result of the forced exodus from their native homeland and re-settlement in such countries as the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Argentina and China. "For those who value cultural and intellectual achievement, one of the most appalling spectacles of the Third Reich was the way in which the Nazis drove from Germany scholars, scientists, artists, writers, composers, architects - creative persons in every field. . . ."

Hitler was undeniably seeking what many Germans wanted - a purging of "internationalists", who were seen as weakening the country at a time when strength was imperative to undo the Versailles Treaty and to cope with the Depression. The spectacle of the muses fleeing Hitler can perhaps best be understood as the manifestation of a demand for cultural homogeneity so strong that, in order to obtain it, the population was willing to forfeit creativity and excellence, even to pay the price of the intellectual decapitation of Germany....

The persecution of persons that the Third Reich considered to be its enemies, or the objects of racial hatred, was, of course, totally irrational and self-destructive. . . . The historian describing even a small part of the events in a factual way has difficulties pointing to any rational functions or functional rationality they may have had, even within their totally non-rational framework. (pp. 29, 41, 46)

The "brain drain" (p.22) of émigré talent from Germany produced a veritable intellectual Diaspora that included some of the finest cultural minds in the world. Even a brief listing reads like an international who's who roll call of artistic and scientific creative achievement - and genius: Marc Chagall, Bertold Brecht, Sigmund Freud, Arthur Koestler, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, Igor Stravinsky, Walter Gropius and, of course, the very distinguished physicist who symbolized the presence of transplanted scholarship in the New World, Albert Einstein.

The experiences of the muses who fled Hitler is largely a bitter-sweet story fraught with triumph and tragedy. For many, the transition period - while obviously disruptive to some extent

- ended happily when they found comfortable acceptance in their adopted milieu. Others, however, did not fare so well. A good number were totally "unprepared for what they encountered" (p.97). Many who made their way to the shores of the United States, for example, "resented . . . being cut down to size by Americans they felt were their intellectual inferiors" (p.101). Moreover, almost all émigré intellectuals came to grips with some form of prejudice and anti-foreigner sentiment. Some even felt the full wrath of scurrilous bigotry. Dr. James Franck, recipient of the 1925 Nobel Prize in Physics, was hounded out of Johns Hopkins University by the mindless anti-Semitism of its President Isaiah Bowman. The mental anguish inflicted on Franck was not uncommon. Fearing displacement by the newly arrived scholars, many native born university professors and administrators literally slammed the doors and excluded them from academic practice and professional advancement. The stresses and strains inevitably associated with such re-location difficulties proved too much for some. Suicide offered a convenient - if not honourable and painless - form of escape. Regrettably, bemoans Jackman, the pattern seems to "sadly illustrate that nowhere were unlimited numbers of fleeing intellectuals accepted, regardless of how gifted they each might have been. Furthermore, because some countries were more foreign to the émigrés than others, and some groups of émigrés less adaptable than others, host countries did not always benefit from the refugee talent, though they at least served as temporary havens until the war was over" (p.16).

Warm and sympathetic, yet scholarly and objective, **The Muses Flee Hitler** is a major intellectual contribution. This urbane and eminently readable study is truly an impressive scholarly product.

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