



Cry for Life: Passionate Exiled Voices

A Literary Collage recited by Gregorij H. von Leitis

Introductory Lecture: Michael Lahr

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In the first half of the 20th century, the persecution of the Armenian people, the fascist dictatorships of Mussolini and Franco and the Nazi-Regime forced thousands of people to flee their native countries. With the end of World War II the suppression of freedom of speech and the hunt of artists and dissidents did not stop. Fidel Castro's Cuba or the dictatorship of Ceausescu in Rumania are just two of many examples.

Between 1933 and 1945 the world witnessed the greatest intellectual diaspora of the 20th century. Under the Nazis, many artists, composers, writers, actors, directors, painters, as well as scientists were forced to leave their homeland to find refuge wherever they could. Among those exiled writers were Ferdinand Bruckner, Lothar Ernst, Lion Feuchtwanger, Thomas, Erika and Klaus Mann, Hans Sahl, Ernst Toller, Franz Wedekind, Franz Werfel and Carl Zuckmayer. Although the individual destinies of the emigrants differ very much, we can find certain patterns: After the takeover by the National Socialists many artists first tried to stay in the German speaking part of Europe and thus went to Vienna. After the Anschluss of Austria, London and Paris were the major places of refuge. A few intellectuals and artists dared to cross the Atlantic right away and start a new life in the United States, a country which to many of them was totally unknown. Most of the emigrants, though, waited until the very end and often fled Europe on the last boat going to America.

Going into exile was very often the last way out. It was the only alternative to repression and censorship, the only way to avoid being denounced as a "degenerate" artist. Klaus and Erika Mann summarized the experience of emigration as an "Escape to Life". At the same time the exile was something unstable. In their memories and writings many of the emigrated artists speak about this feeling of their life being unsettled, unsteady, and uncertain: Torn away from their familiar surroundings, and thrown into the strangeness of a new culture, many exiled artists suffered from a deep identity crisis, especially the writers and actors among the emigrants, whose medium is the language.

After having lost everything, the artists only had their art. In their novels and poems, in their songs, operas, oratorios and cabarets, in their paintings, sketches and etchings they dealt with the political turmoil of their time, but also with their personal experiences and their own destiny. Many of those works show the great sincerity, courage, and wisdom of their creators. The message of the artists in exile is kept alive in their creations. Their commitment to democracy and civil rights is exemplary. Their brave defense of humanitarian values, which are inseparably linked with the ideals of the enlightenment, encourages us today, to speak up against intolerance, hate and political indifference. In this regard dealing with exile and exiled art is not only a historical matter. Many aspects are valid and relevant today, not only because of the 20th century's huge political turmoil and conflicts which made it the century of refugees. In the experience of exile, many existentialist and human questions are focused like in a burning glass: What is home? What does it mean to be a stranger, to be outcast? Where do we find support, when we are deprived of everything that is familiar and dear to us?

This literary collage features excerpts from the works of many writers, who were forced to flee the suppression and persecution in their native countries, such as: **Reinaldo Arenas, Peter Balakian, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Paul Celan, Solly Ganor, Leo Glückselig, Mimi Grossberg, Sebastian Haffner, Hans Helfritz, Georg Hermann, Thomas Mann, Hermynia zur Mühlen, Oskar Pastior, Erwin Piscator, Joseph Roth, Hans Sahl, Lore Segal, B. Traven, Carl Zuckmayer und Stefan Zweig.**

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