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JOST HERMAND, *Culture in Dark Times: Nazi Fascism, Inner Emigration, and Exile*, trans. Victoria W. Hill (New York: Berghahn, 2013), xv + 278 pp. ISBN 978 0 85745 590 1. £50.00. US\$80.00

Jost Hermand's book brings together three distinct strands of arts and culture during the Third Reich: the officially sanctioned and supported culture; the culture of 'inner emigration'; and the culture of those who were forced into exile. He discusses these strands in isolation, but also puts forward an intriguing argument which seemingly acts as a powerful link. Hermand asserts that between 1933 and 1945 'talk of indispensable cultural standards was ubiquitous and unrelenting', not only among Nazi officials but all other Germans too, including those in inner emigration and exile. Hermand asks why even some of the artistically most ambitious art forms were 'viewed as politically important' during the Third Reich (p. xii). He rightly identifies this struggle over high art as a fascinating research question, something that might seem paradoxical today, when all high art is marginalized in Western societies, as Hermand argues. Indeed, the question of how and why the different factions within German society held on to their claims to high culture and fought over cultural ownership of the same composers, painters, and playwrights, and why they regarded this as a debate of the utmost importance, raises interesting issues.

In the first part of the book Hermand turns his attention to official cultural politics. The Nazi regime successfully played to different agendas, and the fact that a coherent strategy for the arts remained elusive actually contributed to this success. Bourgeois audiences in particular were appeased by a continuation rather than an abrupt break in their cultural habits and practices. The 'night of the long knives', the socialist second revolution advocated by large sections of the SA, did not happen. On the contrary, the more radical views were silenced in June 1934. Bourgeois audiences were pleased to see classical drama and opera remain in theatre repertoires; major art exhibitions celebrate the 'masters' of the past; Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart continue to be performed by leading orchestras and conductors; and the literary canon published in lavish new editions. Similarly, the regime quite happily supported popular entertainment, and fostered the cinema and the radio in particular. Despite loud pronouncements about the need for a radically new *völkisch* cul-

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ture (as put forward by the Rosenberg circle in particular), this never materialized. This was almost certainly the reason why Nazi cultural politics overall were so successful. They were radical in theory but quite pragmatic in practice.

This, however, held true only for the majority of Germans who were prepared to arrange themselves with the regime. For the politically, sexually, or racially persecuted the Nazi regime was anything but pragmatic—and it is in this area that Hermand's approach (and silence) is not quite convincing. Apart from the artists in inner emigration or exile, Hermand is not concerned with the victims of the regime in any great detail. The activities of the Jüdischer Kulturbund, for example, are mentioned only very briefly on little more than half a page (pp. 41–2). Important issues such as that works by Jewish composers and playwrights were immediately banned after the Nazi takeover of power in 1933, or the importance of the relentless persecution of Jews following the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 and their eventual deportation and murder after 1941 are hardly discussed in this study.

Also, Hermand too readily associates specific cultural practices with particular social classes, which is problematic. For example, it was not only the 'lower classes [who] surrounded themselves with the blare of popular music, went to see B movies, paged through magazines, danced the shimmy or the Charleston, or read bestsellers and dime novels' (p. 32); middle-class Germans enjoyed these pursuits as well. Similarly, it was not only the 'upper classes' who enjoyed 'aesthetic and spiritual pleasures in the theater', or read 'challenging literary works' (p. 32). When discussing the arts during the Weimar Republic, Hermand refers to the 'culture of the underclass [who] focused on unsophisticated entertainment needs', which stood in clear contrast to the 'educated middle classes [whose culture was] based chiefly on the classical artists of the German cultural heritage' (p. 34). These distinctions are too simplistic and do not take into account significant and successful attempts by trade unions to get workers into the bourgeois theatre (for example), and by so doing to influence cultural pursuits that pre-1918 seemed out of their reach. Equally surprising is Hermand's uncritical use of terms such as 'negroid' and 'negro' without quotation marks (pp. 73–4). In view of existing research in these areas, Hermand's claims seem anachronistic and unbecoming a study which otherwise arrives at some succinct conclusions.

Hermand is at his strongest when working out the struggles within the Nazi party and its main protagonists concerning a strategy towards the arts. He convincingly posits that the 'contradictions in Nazi concepts of culture were based both on lack of ideological clarity and on the fact that the party functionaries responsible for cultural policy held conflicting views' (p. 4). Although this is not a radically new finding and corresponds to existing research, it is certainly worth repeating in the context of this study. At various points throughout the book Hermand stresses that the Nazis' cultural policy was so successful precisely because there was none. Goebbels's pragmatic approach allowed different art forms to continue even if they did not wholly subscribe to *völkisch* ideals. Concert programmes, theatre repertoires, major exhibitions, as well as novels, magazines, and popular music continued almost as they had done during the Weimar Republic, even if some of the main protagonists (for example, in theatre and operetta) were no longer permitted to perform. Goebbels was keen to reach the masses, preferably through radio and cinema, and was quite happy to do so with unashamedly entertaining formats which seemed to have little to do with concepts of *Bildung* or cultural education. Ideas of an 'eternally German culture' (p. 34) were constantly put forward, but what this meant in reality was never fully explained. Defining 'enemy stereotypes' was much easier for the regime than stating its 'objectives'. In all art forms the revolutionary zeal of the early years of the Third Reich was quickly supplanted by a more traditional approach to aesthetics, as in painting, for example, where Hitler favoured a return to tried and tested genre painting (p. 65), or in the theatre, where the more radical approaches to open air performance (*Thingspiel*) gave way to a return to proscenium arch bourgeois theatre practices (pp. 105–6). In terms of architecture, too, plans for the massive reconstructions of whole cities such as Linz, Munich, and Berlin did not progress past the planning stage, and other, smaller-scale projects often avoided any obvious politicization.

In the second part of his book Hermand turns his attention to inner emigration. Hermand usefully introduces this chapter with a definition of inner emigration and the artists who were forced into it. He reminds us that we are speaking of only a tiny minority of artists who had never—not even during the Weimar Republic, and often quite deliberately—entered the mainstream. Even artists such as

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Ernst Barlach, who are celebrated today and seem to exemplify a significant movement of artists in quiet opposition to the Nazi regime, never played any significant role during the Third Reich and were almost entirely sidelined. Instead of suggesting a powerful movement, they point to the futility of open opposition and the tragedy of losing any kind of public voice. The art of inner emigration, Hermand asserts, developed 'in that ideological gray area between aversion and accommodation' (p. 145), and had very different effects on different artists. Whereas the writers of the inner emigration had the most difficult time, largely because of strict censorship, composers found it a little easier, particularly if they concentrated on instrumental music. Painters and sculptors in inner emigration were often able to continue working as normal, although they had to forgo public exhibitions. They could, however, still sell their work privately. Hermand reminds us, therefore, that we cannot make generalizations in this area (p. 146).

In the third part of his book Hermand turns his attention to the artists in exile and rightly points to the fragmentation of the exile community, geographically as well as ideologically. As early as 1935 Wolf Franck lamented a situation in which different emigrant communities lived side by side seemingly without taking any notice of each other: 'Businessmen wanted nothing to do with politicians, social democrats wanted nothing to do with communists, those with connections wanted nothing to do with helpless aliens, and the rich definitely wanted nothing to do with their poor companions in misfortune.' Many artists found it difficult to find work, mostly because of language problems. Celebrated novelists got by writing for second-rate films, composers did likewise, and politically committed émigrés often had to throw their convictions overboard to find work. Kurt Weill, for example, wrote songs for the commercial theatre on Broadway. Only a minority were able to continue their artistic work, such as Brecht, who was fortunate enough to find financial backers almost everywhere he went in exile.

What is missing at the end of Hermand's illuminating volume is a proper conclusion returning to the fascinating question posed at the beginning concerning the struggle over cultural territories, especially in relation to high art. The volume ends with a postscript on the exile chapter, but this does not really bring the different strands together again. This feels very much like a missed opportunity.

Overall, Hermand's emphasis on particular cultural practices linked to specific social classes fails to convince. He also overplays the success of high art during the Third Reich. Despite official claims, high culture never entirely dominated theatre and opera repertoires, cinema programmes, and literature. The hunger for entertainment continued, and operetta, comedies, and musicals ruled. Despite these criticisms, Hermand is to be congratulated on successfully bringing together a significant amount of information in a study which covers a great deal of ground. The resulting book may not be ground-breaking and some of its theoretical underpinnings seem a little outdated, but it is nevertheless a tribute to Hermand's vast knowledge of the topic, and his ability always to be in control of his material. A worthwhile select bibliography rounds off a useful volume, which is further enriched by a number of fascinating illustrations.

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