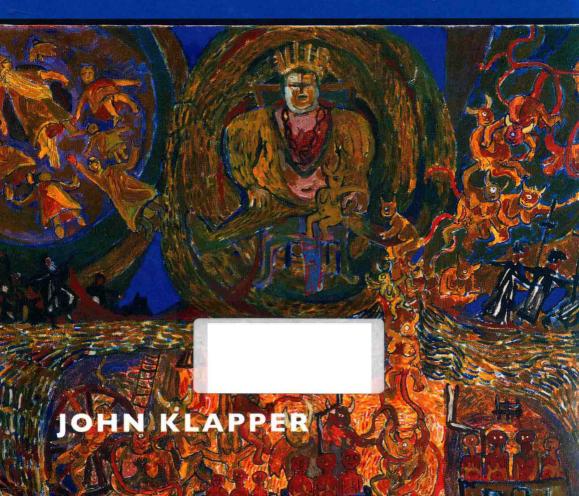
# NONCONFORMIST WRITING IN NAZI GERMANY

The Literature of Inner Emigration



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John Klapper



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### About the Cover Image

The image is from a painting by the Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–90) entitled Engel und Heilige stoben davon – Da setzte sich auf Gottes Thron der Täuferkönig Bockelson (Angels and saints fled the scene, then Baptist King Bockelson took his seat on God's throne, 1966). The title is a quotation from Dürrenmatt's play Die Wiedertäufer (The Anabaptists), scene 18, "Der Tanz" (The Dance). It is a parodic judgment-day scene in which God has "resigned" and been replaced by the usurper Bockelson and the Anabaptists. It shows the king with a naked female figure on his lap, to the right the damned heading for hell (seen at the bottom of the picture) in a procession reminiscent of the Inquisition's march of sinners to the funeral pyre, while to the left the blessed ascend to heaven. The picture evokes the typical inner emigrant use of camouflaged historical subject matter to create parallels to the Nazi present, in particular the use of historical despots as Hitler figures.

### Acknowledgments

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I would like to express my gratitude to the staff of the library, the manuscript archive, and the photograph archive of the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach for their patient assistance with tracking down materials, as well as to the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel, Switzerland, for permission to use the painting on the front cover. I am also grateful to Frau Irene Maria Röhrscheid-Andres and Dr. Freimund Röhrscheid for providing the photograph of Stefan Andres and for granting me permission to use it; similarly Frau Andrea Clemen and Frau Viktoria Reck-Malleczewen, daughters of Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, for kindly sending me the photograph of their father.

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> John Klapper Birmingham, UK April 2015

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#### Introduction

Das war ein Vorspiel nur, dort wo man Bücher Verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen.

[That was but a prelude; where they burn books, they will eventually burn people too.]

-Heinrich Heine, Almansor: Eine Tragödie

TEINRICH HEINE'S FAMOUS and, with regard to Nazi Germany, chill-Hingly prophetic words from 1821 might be used to suggest a direct linear development from the book burnings of spring 1933 to the implementation of the "Final Solution" of mass killings of Jews and others, following decisions taken at the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, and to imply a monolithic draconian policing of writing and writers under the regime. In fact, reality was more complex: censorship was undermined by the existence of competing state and party organs, a far from consistent or foolproof system of control of writers, a failure to recognize the potential oppositional content and significance of many works, and also a degree of official tactical tolerance of dissonant writing. Nevertheless, the room for maneuver for those writers opposed to the regime, who after 1933 did not choose the often harsh and uncertain path of emigration but opted to continue their literary careers under the regime, was severely constrained. In order to be published by journals and publishing houses that had been systematically brought under the control of party and state, and to lend expression to their opposition, such writers had to deal in ambiguity and employ a range of techniques to disguise their real intent, thereby running the risk that success in fooling a censor might also mean target readers failed to see the intended message.

The publication in 2002 of Carl Zuckmayer's *Geheimreport* (Secret report), a set of character sketches on leading figures in German cultural life under the Nazi regime prepared for the American authorities in 1943–44, constituted a significant milestone in the reappraisal of literary and cultural production under National Socialism. It demonstrated that any view based on a simple dichotomy between opposition and dissent, on the one hand, and collaboration and "fellow traveling" on the other, is simply not tenable. The writer's nuanced and differentiated appraisal of fellow authors who, unlike Zuckmayer himself, had decided to stay in Germany reflects the reality of life, writing, and publishing under the regime. Many

2

such authors could, in the words of the Austrian writer Erika Mitterer's self-characterization, be said to be "zwischen Protest, Mitfühlen und Anpassung" (between protest, compassion, and conformity).<sup>2</sup> And in the eyes of the Nazi authorities they were accordingly thought to belong to a twilight "intermediate realm," neither openly dissenting from nor clearly aligning themselves with the Nazi regime.<sup>3</sup>

Nonconformist writing published in Nazi Germany is indeed marked by an essential ambiguity; it has the potential to be read and understood simultaneously as both a form of tacit opposition to and acquiescence in the regime. Although several nonconformist writers evince in their work a deep-seated sense of morality, as well as at times personal courage, and see it as their role to defend humanist values in the face of Nazi cultural barbarism, it is not difficult also to find in their writing preconceptions, ideas, or implications that can be accommodated with Nazi thinking or mythology, to the extent that they could be readily exploited by the Nazi state for propaganda purposes abroad.

Such apparent ambivalence is very often also the result of deliberate camouflage on the part of authors. The act of targeting oppositional messages at a predisposed inner circle of readers, while simultaneously avoiding obvious hostages to fortune with censors, required a permanent state of virtual schizophrenia among oppositionally minded writers;<sup>4</sup> material needed to be interpretable at one and the same time as conformist and potentially nonconformist, ideologically neutral and potentially dissident. This demanded a corresponding form of "dual vision" on the part of readers, or, to borrow and adapt Ernst Jünger's metaphor, a "stereoscopic," 3-D view, a form of new, deep perception resulting from simultaneous modes of observing a phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

The broad review undertaken by Karl-Heinz Schoeps in his revised history of literature in Nazi Germany is organized largely according to ideological considerations, and in his introduction the author states: "In order to reach a general and comprehensive verdict on the literature within the Third Reich, more detailed studies of individual works ... are necessary"; he further suggests the need for the subcategory of "inner emigration" (and that of others) to be broken down and organized around aesthetic and literary-historical principles.<sup>6</sup> This book is an example of such a "drilling down" to the literary context and aesthetic concerns of individual writers and to a thorough analysis of key representative works. It explores the inevitable ambiguity of inner emigration and in doing so eschews the limitations of an exclusively "text immanent" approach—that is, an approach that focuses solely on the literary work itself as an entity independent of biographical, social, and historical content—but also avoids the sort of a priori moral standpoints according to which writers who wrote under Nazism were automatically considered complicit in the regime, and which for several years after the Second

World War characterized much writing on the topic in Germany. Instead, it employs close reading as just one element alongside a broader critical examination of writers' biographies; their personal, political, and literary development; their intellectual influences; their association with other writers; their economic situation (for example, book sales); and their relationship with the Third Reich,7 including their engagement with state and party institutions, their membership in writers' organizations, and their standing in the eyes of the regime. In short, it seeks to capture what Neil H. Donahue has called that contingent "mosaic of circumstances" that attends each individual writer's life and literary production, while remaining alert to the dangers of post hoc revision and self-stylization.8 In examining selected texts it further studies each work's origins, the history and circumstances of its publication, and its critical reception, in an effort to read the particular text in the spirit of the time, to understand it in its historical context rather than that of a very different postwar or even postunification world. In addition, in each case a detailed analysis is undertaken of the dissident or oppositional message and the camouflage techniques employed to disguise it from censors, with a view to evaluating the work's standing as a piece of nonconformist writing.

A vast array of terms have been used throughout history to denote writing that seeks to distance itself from an oppressive regime and its author's stance in so doing.9 In the case of National Socialism, these include: "Rückzug" (withdrawal), "inneres Reich" (inner realm), "Innerlichkeit" (inwardness), "das heimliche Deutschland" (the secret Germany), "das andere Deutschland" (the other Germany), "Dissens" (dissent), "Regimekritik" (criticism of the regime), "Nonkonformität" (nonconformity), "Verweigerung" (refusal), "Protest," "Opposition," "Resistenz" (immunity/resistance), and "Widerstand" (resistance). A good deal of confusion has been caused by indiscriminate use, especially by postwar apologists, of this final term in connection with nonconformist writers living and working in Nazi Germany or Austria. The actions of a writer such as Jan Petersen, who for a while after 1933 remained active in Germany as leader of the illegal Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller Deutschlands (Union of German Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers), or of exiled writers who actively campaigned against Nazism from outside the country, belong in a quite different category from the necessarily veiled publications under the regime of such Christian writers as Stefan Andres, Werner Bergengruen, Erika Mitterer, Reinhold Schneider, or Ernst Wiechert. The debate over the appropriate terms is not helped by the fact that the Nazis themselves perceived the attitude of these and similar Christian writers toward National Socialism to be precisely a form of resistance, as is clear from camp reports by the Sicherheitsdienst (intelligence services) of the SS, where there is repeated talk of "oppositional resistance," especially among Catholic philosophers and writers. 10

With regard to the rhetorical techniques employed by oppositionally minded writers, the concept of "verdeckte/verdeckende Schreibweise" (concealed/concealing writing style) has gained ground, and this too has become a source of terminological confusion with alternative names for the intended camouflage including: "Tarnung" (disguise), "Zwischen den Zeilen" (between the lines), "Sklavensprache" (the language of slaves), "Katakombensprache" (language of the catacombs), "Geheimsprache" (secret language), "indirektes Schreiben" (indirect writing), "sublime Rede" (sublime speech), "enzyklopädischer Stil" (encyclopaedic style), "Äsopische Sprache" (Aesopian language), and "versteckte Schreibweise" (veiled writing style). The specific techniques underpinning the concealed writing style denoted by these various synonyms are discussed in chapter 2.

For reasons to be discussed in detail in chapter 1, the term "inner emigration" has become the established designation for writers in Germany opposed to the Nazi regime. The term has a troubled history and many would dispute its meaningfulness and legitimacy as a designation of an intellectual stance under National Socialism, of a readily identifiable grouping, or of a single coherent literary approach. Fundamentally, of course, the "emigration" element is misleading since it runs the risk of confusing those writers and artists who stayed in Germany with those who felt compelled to leave the country because they feared for their lives, or at least for their liberty and ability to pursue their work. Most acknowledge the term "inner emigration" is problematic, but the alternatives are also unsatisfactory in different ways, being overinclusive ("nonfascist," "the other Germany"), unduly restrictive ("antifascist"), misleading ("dissident"), or incomplete ("oppositional"). 11 The phrase "innerer Widerstand" (inner resistance) is one favored by some and there is indeed much to be said for it.

However, "inner emigration" and its derivative "inner emigrant" have become firmly established in the literature and, when suitably qualified, are perceived as much less tainted than fifty or so years ago. As Günter Scholdt, one of the most active German researchers in the field, has affirmed:

"Innere Emigration" ist ein brauchbarer literaturwissenschaftlicher Terminus für eine Schreib- und Lebensform von Autoren, die mit Hitlers Politik nicht einverstanden waren, gleichwohl aber in Deutschland blieben und in ihren dort erscheinenden Werken oder ihrer publizistischen Zurückhaltung eine antitotalitäre Gesinnung erkennen ließen. Der Begriff bleibt sinnvoll, auch wo er nach Ende des Dritten Reiches zuweilen apologetisch mißbraucht wurde, auch wo die ihm zugehörigen Autoren nur selten dem reinen Typus entsprachen und der Übergang zu Opportunismus und Kollaboration fließend war.<sup>12</sup>

["Inner Emigration" is a viable term in literary studies to denote a form of writing and way of life among authors who disagreed with Hitler's policies but nevertheless remained in Germany and who in their works published there, or indeed in their reluctance to publish, revealed an antitotalitarian mindset. The concept is still meaningful, even though after the end of the Third Reich it was from time to time misused for apologist purposes, and even though the authors that belonged to it only seldom corresponded to the pure inner emigrant type and the line dividing it from opportunism and collaboration was a fluid one.]

Similarly, in one of the latest volumes on the theme, the term is said to be so well established that scholarship can use it "sachlich und sinnvoll" (objectively and meaningfully). Since, furthermore, many writers in Germany saw themselves as leading a form of emigrant existence, and because a good number also suffered for their art (through bans, book burnings, loss of livelihood, even imprisonment), the phrases "inner emigration" and "inner emigrant" remain meaningful descriptors and are the ones used in this book.

It says much about the controversial nature of discussions of nonconformist writing in Nazi Germany that the insertion or omission of quotes around the term "inner emigration" should have become so significant. 15 When used, they indicate continuing skepticism toward and a distancing from the term, while their omission assumes the term is being treated as an established literary historical category. The decision not to enclose the term in quotes here is not intended to imply formal or aesthetic homogeneity (the writers this study is concerned with were undeniably diverse in terms of ideology and literary approach and cannot aspire to the status of an "-ism"); rather, it is the contention of this book that there has been sufficient demarcation over the years to allow us to identify a (loose) literary grouping, and that research into literary context and forms of writing under National Socialism has progressed sufficiently far to allow us to dispense with the "scare quotes" and the attendant skeptical distancing.

Clarity about the status and significance of a nonconformist work can only be gained by considering its genesis, its original stimulus, and its public and critical reception, and by analyzing the text in the relevant biographical, literary-political, and political context. To take just one example, such contextual detail is essential in understanding Stefan Andres's nonconformist short works of historical fiction: 16 first, they owe their origin to the author's use of a French officer's memoirs about his time in Napoleon's army in the early nineteenth century; 17 second, Andres shapes the raw historical material to themes relevant to the circumstances of Nazi Germany, including spying, denunciation, blind obedience, inner resistance, restrictions on freedom, and abuses of justice, and he uses

Napoleon and the French Revolution as ciphers for Hitler and National Socialism; third, they owe their publication and republication in a range of newspapers to the liberal inclinations of the latter's feuilleton editors; and fourth, as hard as it is to believe, their appearance in the Nazi publication *Völkischer Beobachter* followed from Andres's personal acquaintance with the feuilleton editor of that paper's Munich edition, Hans Gstettner. Only access to the biographical, contextual, and historical background allows appreciation of the full nonconformist import of such texts.

This is a book about creative writing under National Socialism and it focuses primarily on narrative prose, supported by reference to writers' contemporaneous diaries and essayistic work, as well as later memoirs. Lyric poetry—for some a key mode of expressing the inevitable inner emigrant ambiguity referred to above and the subject of a surprisingly small number of studies 18—is also discussed, especially in chapter 2 in connection with the work of Albrecht Haushofer, Oskar Loerke, Rudolf Alexander Schröder, Günter Eich, and the controversial Gottfried Benn and Hans Carossa; in chapter 3 in relation to Werner Bergengruen; and in chapter 7 in connection with Reinhold Schneider's sonnets. Drama is largely excluded from the study since it tended to be more conformist than other genres, it was subjected to stricter controls, and dramatists were fewer in number and less varied in their approach and ideological stance. Nonliterary publicist work and journalism in general, on the other hand, played a significant nonconformist role in the Third Reich and is addressed, where relevant to the work of the writers under discussion, but it too is not a prime concern.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 comprises two contextual chapters. The first of these looks at the intellectual and historical background to nonconformist writing, the Nazi system of literary censorship and control, the origins of the term "inner emigration," and its critical reception and evaluation. The second chapter provides short characterizations and evaluations of a varied range of nonconformist writers and offers a categorization of authors based on Grimm's scale or continuum stretching from open resistance to passive refusal;<sup>19</sup> it also considers the options facing writers who wished to publish under National Socialism, the various literary techniques of camouflage they employed, and the problems associated with these. Part 2, the more substantial portion of the book, comprises eight chapters, each of which offers a detailed study of a leading writer. These studies present a cross-section of the inner emigration, to illustrate the diversity within what is often seen as a narrow or undifferentiated grouping. They provide detailed biographical information; chart the various authors' literary development up to, but especially after, 1933; establish the conditions facing them during the Third Reich, in particular the personal implications of National Socialist cultural policy; and trace how their variously national conservative, conservative Christian, or Christian humanist worldview, political orientation, and approach to German history informed their individual oppositional stance. Each chapter also includes a detailed discussion of the context of publication and the critical reception of a key novel, novella, or story by the writer, and offers a fresh close reading of this often neglected text. The order in which authors are presented in part 2 is not intended to indicate any degree or scale of nonconformity but is dictated by the year of publication of the key work discussed in each case.

A first criterion for selection of these detailed textual analyses is that the writer stayed and published in his or her native country, whether Germany or Austria, for a substantial proportion of the Nazi years. A second is that the writer published a work that can be considered to be at variance with and to undermine in some way Nazi orthodoxy or to offer an alternative to the reality of the Third Reich. Third, this had to be a work whose sales figures suggest that, for whatever reason, it caught the public's imagination. These criteria clearly exclude the many oppositional writers who sought exile abroad and individual works whose explicit oppositional content meant they could only be published after 1945 for example, Wiechert's Der Totenwald (1946, translated into English in 1947 as Forest of the Dead). They also exclude from detailed discussion texts such as Elisabeth Langgässer's Das unauslöschliche Siegel (The indelible seal, 1946), which, though written during the Nazi period and very much fitting with the general tenor and approach of inner emigrant literature, could only be published after the war.

While offering a contribution to the inner emigration debate that will be of interest to Germanists, the book is intended to allow non-Germanist readers access to this material too. This has two consequences. First, all terms, titles, and quotations are provided in the original German but are also translated into English. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own and provide a working sense of meaning; this means that poems are reproduced in prose form. Published English translations of key primary texts, where available, are indicated at relevant points in the text. Second, I have provided summaries of content for the books discussed in chapters 3 through 10 since none of the texts is likely to be well known to a non-Germanist audience and even Germanists may not be entirely familiar with some of them.

#### Notes

Epigraph: Heinrich Heine, Almansor: Eine Tragödie, in Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, vol. 5 (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 1994), 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Carl Zuckmayer, *Geheimreport*, ed. Gunther Nickel and Johanna Schrön (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002).

- <sup>2</sup> Erika Mitterer, "Sie gehören doch auch zu uns. . . .": Zwischen Protest, Mitfühlen und Anpassung—Eine Schriftstellerin erinnert sich an 1938," *Die Presse*, January 30–31, 1988, http://www.erika-mitterer.org/dokumente/mitterer\_gehoerenzuuns.pdf (accessed February 20, 2014).
- <sup>3</sup> Hauptlektorat Schöngeistiges Schrifttum, "Jahresbericht 1940," *Lektoren-Brief* 4, nos. 5–6 (1941): 7, cited in Heidrun Ehrke-Rotermund and Erwin Rotermund, *Zwischenreiche und Gegenwelten: Texte und Vorstudien zur "verdeckten Schreibweise" im "Dritten Reich"* (Munich: Fink, 1999), 14. See also the section "A Watertight System of Control?" in chapter 1 of this book.
- <sup>4</sup> It is interesting that Benno von Wiese identified this same state of mind in the average citizen under National Socialism, depending on whether they were acting in the private or the public sphere. See Benno von Wiese, "Gegen den Hitler in uns selbst," in *Romane von gestern heute gelesen*, ed. Marcel Reich-Ranicki (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), 65.
- <sup>5</sup> See Ernst Jünger, "Sizilischer Brief an den Mann im Mond," in *Ernst Jünger: Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 9 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978–2003), 22. See also the section "Weimar and Political Publicist Activity" in chapter 8 of this book.
- <sup>6</sup> Karl-Heinz Schoeps, Literature and Film in the Third Reich (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 4.
- <sup>7</sup> This term ("das Dritte Reich") reportedly originated in the work of the publicist and early Hitler mentor Dietrich Eckart, although it is most commonly associated with Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's publication of that name. See Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus: Die religiöse Dimension der NS-Ideologie in den Schriften von Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg und Adolf Hitler (Munich: Fink, 1998), 50. Although the Nazi government formally withdrew use of the term on July 10, 1939, it is used in this book as shorthand to refer to the whole of 1933–45, as is common in German writing on the period.
- <sup>8</sup> Neil H. Donahue, "Introduction: 'Coming to Terms with' the German Past," in *Flight of Fantasy: New Perspectives on Inner Emigration in German Literature*, 1933–1945, ed. Neil H. Donahue and Doris Kirchner (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 6.
- <sup>9</sup> The following is based on larger selections in Wilhelm Haefs, "Einleitung," in Nationalsozialismus und Exil 1933–1945 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2009), 48; and Karl-Wolfgang Mirbt, Methoden publizistischen Widerstandes im Dritten Reich, nachgewiesen an der "Deutschen Rundschau" Rudolf Pechels, PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1958, 33–34.
- Heinz Boberach, ed., Meldungen aus dem Reich 1938–1945: Die geheimen Lagerberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1984).
- <sup>11</sup> A particularly interesting exception is a recent attempt to focus on the similarities of inner emigration and exile by building on the Spanish example of an extended cultural diaspora to posit "inner exile" and territorial exile as "dialectal variations" of a broader oppositional discourse on Nazism. See William J. Dodd, "Dolf Sternberger's *Panorama*: Approaches to a Work of (Inner) Exile in the National Socialist Period," *Modern Language Review* 198, no. 1 (2013): 180–201.

- <sup>12</sup> Günter Scholdt, "Ein Geruch von Blut und Schande': Zur Kritik an dem Begriff und an der Literatur über die Emigranten im Innern," Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft 1 (1994): 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Hans-Dieter Zimmermann, "Innere Emigration': Ein historischer Begriff und seine Problematik," in *Schriftsteller im Widerstand: Facetten und Probleme der "Inneren Emigration*," ed. Frank-Lothar Kroll and Rüdiger von Voss (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 60.
- <sup>14</sup> See Annette Schmollinger, "Intra muros et extra": Deutsche Literatur im Exil und in der inneren Emigration: Ein exemplarisher Vergleich (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999), 62–64.
- $^{15}$  See Ralf Schnell,  $\it Literarische$  innere Emigration 1933–1945 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), 4.
- <sup>16</sup> These are discussed in greater detail in chapter 4. The various anecdotes and short stories are contained in Stefan Andres, *Stefan Andres: Wir sind Utopia: Prosa aus den Jahren 1933–1945*, ed. Erwin Rotermund, Heidrun Ehrke-Rotermund, with Thomas Hilsheimer (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> See Heidrun Ehrke-Rotermund, "Anekdoten aus den Napoleonischen Kriegen: Zu Stefan Andres' Rezeption von Johann Konrad Friederichs 'Hinterlassenen Papieren eines französisch-preußischen Offiziers' (1848/49)," *Mitteilungen der Stefan-Andres-Gesellschaft* 31 (2010): 26–51.
- <sup>18</sup> See, for example, Theodore Ziolkowski, "Form als Protest: Das Sonett in der Literatur des Exils und der Inneren Emigration," in Exil und innere Emigration: Third Wisconsin Workshop, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1972), 153–72; Charles Wesley Hoffmann, Opposition Poetry in Nazi Germany (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Glenn R. Cuomo, Career at the Cost of Compromise: Günter Eich's Life and Work in the Years 1933–1945 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989); Neil H. Donahue, Karl Krolow and the Poetics of Amnesia in Postwar Germany (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), especially 28–33; and Leonard Olschner, "Absences of Time and History: Poetry of Inner Emigration," in Donahue and Kirchner, Flight of Fantasy, 131–52.
- <sup>19</sup> Reinhold Grimm, "Innere Emigration als Lebensform," in Grimm and Hermand, *Exil und innere Emigration*, 48. See "Critical Reception" in chapter 1 of this book.