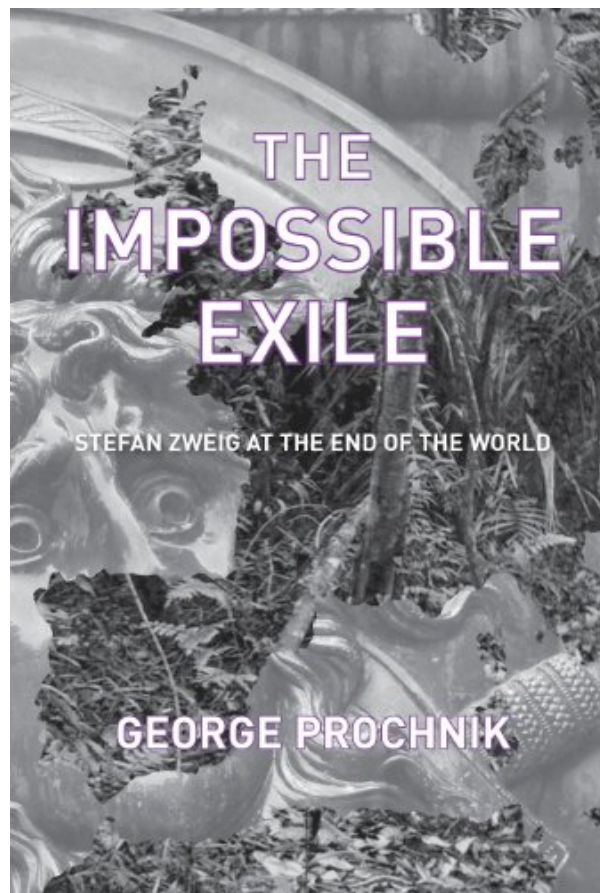
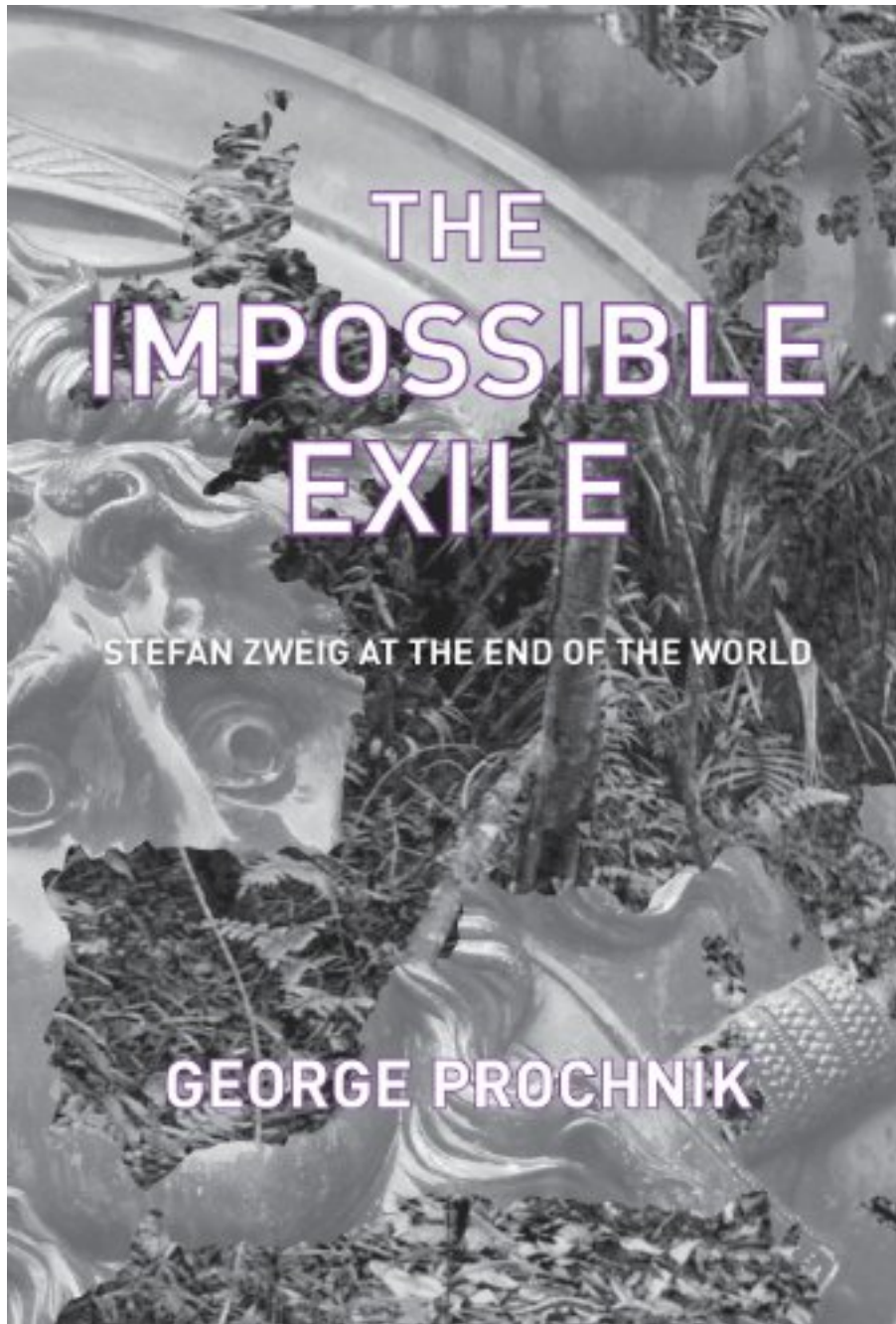


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An original study of exile, told through the biography of Austrian writer Stefan Zweig

By the 1930s, Stefan Zweig had become the most widely translated living author in the world. His novels, short stories, and biographies were so compelling that they became instant best sellers. Zweig was also an intellectual and a lover of all the arts, high and low. Yet after Hitler's rise to power, this celebrated writer who had dedicated so much energy to promoting international humanism plummeted, in a matter of a few years, into an increasingly isolated exile—from London to Bath to New York City, then Ossining, Rio, and finally Petrópolis—where, in 1942, in a cramped bungalow, he killed himself.

The Impossible Exile tells the tragic story of Zweig's extraordinary rise and fall while it also depicts, with great acumen, the gulf between the world of ideas in Europe and in America, and the consuming struggle of those forced to forsake one for the other. It also reveals how Zweig embodied, through his work, thoughts, and behavior, the end of an era—the implosion of Europe as an ideal of Western civilization.

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Zweig's End

By Philip Brantingham

"The Impossible Exile" is a narrative of the last years of exiled Austrian author Stefan Zweig. An exile from his homeland, which Nazi forces had invaded in 1938, Zweig had wisely foreseen this coming calamity and had already fled from Austria to England in 1934. Then, after several years or so of residence there, during which he became a British citizen, he managed to reach the USA, accompanied by his second wife Lotte (nee Altmann). At the time, Zweig was a world-famous author, known chiefly for his popular biographies, such as those of Marie Antoinette and Erasmus. His excellent fiction was less well known.

Once settled in New York, Zweig became unhappy with the city's ambience, especially with the crowds of refugees who applied to him for help. Well-to-do, Zweig helped them when he could, but wearied of his role of savior. Eventually, he and Lotte moved to Brazil, where he thought he could find peace and continue his work. Extremely neurotic and prey to periods of black depression, Zweig worried that the world he knew, the "World of Yesterday" (the title by the way of his autobiography) was finished, that the world to come had no place for him. In addition, he felt cut off from his friends and colleagues, even though Brazil had welcomed his presence. In the end, his depressions turned suicidal, and he made a suicide pact with his poor wife Lotte, and the two died of an overdose of Veronal.

Prochnik's story of Zweig's years of exile mixes personal reminiscences of his own family's background with the tale of Zweig's unhappy end. Somewhat overwritten and full of personal asides, the narrative explores Zweig's past and his foibles with a jaundiced eye. Nevertheless, it is one of the best biographies of Zweig in recent years, and well worth reading. It is a tragic story indeed. Perhaps because it reveals the popular writer as a man who had no faith in the power of the free West to defeat the Nazi forces. In fact, after his death

many called him a defeatist and his suicide a cowardly act.

27 of 32 people found the following review helpful.

Stefan Zweig — elusive writer, haunting figure and, ultimately, tragic hero

By Dr. Miguel Faria

A Review of *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (2014) by George Prochnik

Stefan Zweig (1881-1942) was an Austrian journalist, biographer, novelist and thinker. During the 1920s and 30s, this Jewish writer was on top of the world; in fact he was (and remains) one of the most translated writers in the globe. His passionate biographies included the lives of tragic figures: Erasmus of Rotterdam, Mary Queen of Scotland, and Queen Marie-Antoinette (which was made into the classic Hollywood movie with Norma Shearer in the leading role).

Unlike his friend Theodor Herzl, who was a dedicated Jewish nationalist, Zweig was an urbane European internationalist. Zweig a passionate pacifist was also an ardent believer in the need of European union safeguarding Western civilization. Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany lurked in the shadows. In 1934 with Hitler on the march, Zweig and his second wife left the continent, moved to England, and then the United States. In Germany the composer Richard Strauss had collaborated with Zweig in writing opera, and when Strauss defied the Nazis in 1935 and refused to remove Zweig's name from the repertoire in "The Silent Woman" opera, Goebbels refused to attend the opera in Dresden and the opera was soon banned. Restless, in 1940 Zweig and his wife moved once again, this time to a remote settlement near the colonial and quaint city of Petrópolis in Brazil, where in despair over the imminent world war and the future of European civilization, Zweig and his wife committed suicide with barbiturates. This book fills a gap in knowledge of this gifted writer and thinker, an elusive literary figure that continues to haunt us more than two generations after his tragic death. An enchanting literary biography of a re-discovered hero, this excellent tome is recommended to dreamers and all who enjoy biographies of great men, men of ideas who led remarkable lives and lived in dire times. This book unravels the enigma of how (and less clearly, why) real heroes, like Zweig, follow their dreams and let their idealism and existential despondency in physical and spiritual exile sometimes lead them to their tragic and fatal ends.

The reviewer Dr. Miguel Faria is a retired Clinical Professor of Neurosurgery, medical historian, and an Associate Editor in Chief and World Affairs Editor of *Surgical Neurology International* (SNI). He is the author numerous articles on political history, including "Stalin's Mysterious Death" (2011)

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

This volume will satisfy the curiosity of some readers while serving as an introduction to deeper study for others.

By Bookreporter

If you've seen *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, Wes Anderson's latest movie, you may not have realized that no fewer than three of its characters were based in part on Stefan Zweig, the Austrian writer and public intellectual who is the subject of George Prochnik's lucid, impressionistic character study. Zweig's nomadic existence that began in 1934 and saw him wander from London to New York to the Brazilian town of Petrópolis, where he took his own life in 1942, represents what Prochnik calls a "formula for toxic migration." It's a melancholy story of a man who tumbled from the height of literary fame to the misery of isolation in the Brazilian jungle.

Zweig was born into a well-to-do Viennese Jewish family in 1881. Though his literary output included every form, he was best known for his novellas and biographies that included ones of Erasmus (an intellectual role model) and Marie Antoinette, "fast-moving studies of hapless individuals ravaged by the spinning gears of world-historical events." At the height of his fame, in the 1920s, Prochnik reports that millions of copies of

Zweig's books were in circulation. Freud, Trotsky and Joyce were only three of the major historical and cultural figures whose paths crossed Zweig's.

But by 1934, with Hitler's rapid rise to power in Germany, Zweig went into "preemptive exile" in England. The Nazis' rabid nationalism and aggression were antithetical to Zweig's humanist vision. Zweig saw himself, as Prochnik describes it, as "a kind of itinerant wisdom-teacher of pacifism, high cultural ideals, and other tenets of pan-Europeanism." Though he returned to Vienna and his home in Salzburg frequently after that, from then to the end of his life he was an alien in his own land.

Zweig, "an extrovert who liked to fantasize about being an introvert," was anything but a recluse during much of his exile. In 1938, he launched a lecture tour to more than two-dozen American cities with an appearance before an audience of 2,400 people at Carnegie Hall. But Zweig's prominence brought with it the pressure of a constant importuning for assistance, financial and otherwise, from members of the exile community. Zweig "could not strike a balance between giving to others and the writing, reading, and conversation with friends that nurtured his inner life --- between the labors of compassion and creation," and the longer he remained in America, the more that pressure grew.

Prochnik devotes considerable attention to Zweig's relationships with his first wife, Friderike, to whom he was married for nearly 20 years, and his secretary and second wife, Lotte. The latter, ironically introduced to him by Friderike, accompanied him in the final years of his exile, which included several months in Ossining, New York, before the departure for Brazil, where she joined him in committing suicide the day after he mailed his autobiography, *THE WORLD OF YESTERDAY*, to his publisher.

Early in his book, Prochnik reveals one explanation of his affinity for Zweig's story. In 1938, Prochnik's father and his family were tipped by a Nazi ex-patient of his grandfather, a successful doctor, that the family was about to be rounded up by the Gestapo. They fled Vienna and eventually made their way to Boston. Though his own family's journey was much less wide-ranging than Zweig's, it clearly conditioned Prochnik to take a sympathetic view of his subject. He acknowledges that Zweig's story "draws me in in part for the way it presents, as in a tableau vivant, archetypal stages of refugee experience shared by others fleeing a state turned murderous."

For readers who aren't already familiar with Zweig's life and work, Prochnik's book has its challenges. Rather than presenting a chronological narrative, each chapter is a sort of self-contained essay. One deals with his fraught relationship to Theodor Herzl and the Zionist movement (he was consistent in strongly opposing the nationalistic impulse for a Jewish homeland), while another discusses the importance of the coffeehouse in the world of the European intellectual. Given Zweig's peripatetic life, this is a book that could have benefitted from a chronology and an index.

The tragic final years of Stefan Zweig, once "one of the most lionized writers in the world," make for an engrossing story. For some readers, this volume likely will satisfy their curiosity for information about his life and career. But for many others, Prochnik's biography will serve as an introduction to deeper study, and deservedly so.

Reviewed by Harvey Freedenberg.

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# THE IMPOSSIBLE EXILE: STEFAN ZWEIG AT THE END OF THE WORLD BY GEORGE PROCHNIK PDF

Spending the downtime by reading **The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig At The End Of The World By George Prochnik** can offer such fantastic encounter also you are simply seating on your chair in the workplace or in your bed. It will certainly not curse your time. This **The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig At The End Of The World By George Prochnik** will assist you to have even more precious time while taking rest. It is really pleasurable when at the midday, with a mug of coffee or tea and an e-book **The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig At The End Of The World By George Prochnik** in your kitchen appliance or computer screen. By delighting in the views around, here you can begin checking out.

From Booklist

**\*Starred Review\*** Once renowned, then long forgotten, the forever poignant Viennese writer and humanist Stefan Zweig (1881–1942) is now the focus of a revival. His books are back in print, Wes Anderson pays homage to Zweig in his film, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, and Prochnik (*In Pursuit of Silence*, 2010) presents an exceptionally astute, affecting, and beautifully composed portrait and analysis of Zweig and his cherished and lost world. We learn that Zweig—Jewish, wealthy, cultured, cosmopolitan, and generous—rejected the conventions of his social class as he devoted himself to writing and became a passionate collector and a consummate networker, forging connections among “the intellectual and artistic luminaries of Europe.” Zweig reveled in Viennese café society even as he craved privacy and silence. An international “literary celebrity,” who believed in the unifying power of education and art, Zweig was forced into exile as the Nazis first banned, then burned his books. Adrift in London, New York, and Brazil with Lotte, his much younger second wife, Zweig was spiritually shattered by the Nazi genocide and the “arbitrariness of survival,” gripped by a depthless despair that culminated in the couple’s tragic suicides. Prochnik is so empathically attuned and committed to the full sweep of Zweig’s by turns glimmering and sorrowful story that nothing goes unexamined or unfelt in this brilliant and haunting biography. --Donna Seaman

Review

“[A] superbly lyrical study...*The Impossible Exile* is not really—or not just—a biography of Zweig's final years. It is a case study of dislocation, of people who had not only lost a home but who were no longer able to define the meaning of home...Mr. Prochnik gives a very rich sense of what so many exiles experienced during the war...[his] words could not be more resonant.” —Andre Aciman, *The Wall Street Journal*

"Poignant, insightful." —*The New Yorker*

"[A]n intriguing...meditation on Zweig's last years. ...an intellectual feast served as a series of canapes. " —*The New York Times Book Review*

"Subtle, prodigiously researched and enduringly human throughout, *The Impossible Exile* is a portrait of a man and of his endless flight." —*The Economist*

“*The Impossible Exile* [is] a gripping, unusually subtle, poignant, and honest study. Prochnik attempts, on the basis of an uncompromising investigation, to clarify the motives that might have driven to suicide an author who still enjoyed a rare popularity.” —Anka Muhlstein, *New York Review of Books*



“[Wes] Anderson told Fresh Air's Terry Gross that until a few years ago, he had never heard of Zweig — and he's not alone. Many moviegoers share Anderson's past ignorance of the man who was once one of the world's most famous and most translated authors. George Prochnik is out to change that.” —NPR, “All Things Considered”

"Richly rewarding...a major work of historical and cultural criticism of Europe's darkest times...Zweig's haunted talent has never been better explored than in this exemplary study." —The Times

“A terrific book...Prochnik focuses on Zweig's later years, discussing in detail his wanderings in the nineteen-thirties and forties—to Great Britain, the United States, and his last stop, Brazil. Zweig lived in New York for a while, and Prochnik movingly documents the toll that the author's peculiar prominence among the Jewish émigré community took on him, especially at a time when millions of Jews who remained in Europe were dying.” —NewYorker.com

“[A] fascinating study of the author who escaped the Nazis only to take his own life in a Brazilian city in 1942, his second wife, Lotte, by his side...Zweig resists intimacy, but Prochnik's perceptiveness and gentle humor slip us inside the meticulously cultivated persona.” —Vogue.com

"It's hard to imagine a better book about Zweig, or one more worthy of so complex and multi-faceted a personage." —LA Review of Books

"Prochnik's brilliantly accomplished and genre-bending book allows access to Zweig in a way that until now seemed impossible." —New Statesman

"[The Impossible Exile]has the essayistic virtues of brevity, personality and a relaxed gait...By breaking away from the cradle-to-grave narrative groove of traditional biography, Prochnik gives his thought, and his prose, free rein." —The Telegraph

"The Impossible Exile captures the intractable, persistent violence wrought upon those who escaped the physical trap of Nazism, but were nonetheless held captive by fear, and displacement from self and home." —Bookslut

“Prochnik evocatively portrays the [New York] city Zweig knew [and] shows us what it meant for Zweig to be there—how hard it was to be one of the ‘lucky’ ones....[Prochnik] is particularly empathetic in writing about this dilemma.” —Bookforum

"Well researched, empathic, energetic, The Impossible Exile is a pleasure to read." —Literary Review

"A winning mix of travelogue and family memoir." —Jewish Review of Books

"Enlightening and enjoyable." —American Jewish World

“One of the finest literary biographies of the year.” —Flavorwire

"Sensitive and enthralling...A joy to read...takes you into the world from which [Zweig's] writing sprang." —The Sunday Times

“Accessible, compelling, and thorough without being pedantic, this literary and cultural biography offers keen insight into Zweig's life, particularly his final years.” —Library Journal

“Stefan Zweig stands in for Europe’s uprooted intellectuals in this elegiac portrait by Prochnik...[An] intelligent, reflective and deeply sad portrait of a man tragically cut adrift by history.” —Kirkus Reviews

“George Prochnik's portrait could hardly be bettered... As he follows in Zweig's footsteps, Prochnik sheds light on the darkness that consumed him in his final years. And Lotte, too, emerges as a much more fully rounded figure. News of their suicide came as a terrible shock to Zweig's admirers and friends. The Impossible Exile makes that final act seem much more comprehensible.” —The Independent

“[The Impossible Exile] both traces Zweig’s meteoric rise and fall, and reveals a changing international climate where European and American ideas were frequently at odds.” —New Criterion

"Prochnik interprets Zweig with a fluidity few have achieved. Through a sympathetic melding of the writer's irreconcilable dichotomies—his philandering and selfishness, alongside his extravagant generosity even to those who abused him—Prochnik has created a baffling, loveable, wounded man who charmed the world, briefly, but could not protect himself even with the shields of money and prestige." —The Sydney Morning Herald

“Prochnik is so empathically attuned and committed to the full sweep of Zweig’s by turns glimmering and sorrowful story that nothing goes unexamined or unfelt in this brilliant and haunting biography.” —Booklist

"An indelible meditation on exile and its impact on future generations." —Shelf Awareness

“Subtle-minded and unsentimental, Prochnik makes some sense out of the enigmatic Zweig...The biography is nestled in excellent mini-essays on Zweig’s world: journalism, the coffee-house culture, Viennese snobbery, Jewish snobbery. In turn, that story is embraced by Prochnik’s own: growing up in America in a family that had escaped Austria after the Anschluss. The book is in the bloodline of W.G. Sebald.” —Joan Acocella of The New Yorker

"[A] very sensitive and accurate account of Zweig’s uprooting." —Tablet

"A superb new biography." —Haaretz

"[A] majestic meditation on the trauma of Jewish exile, the nature of fame and the challenges of irrevocable loss." —The London Magazine

“This books is critical to understanding Zweig.” —CHOICE

“It is not just Zweig in exile whose plight he analyses but the condition of flight from Hitler’s Europe altogether.” —The Jewish Chronicle Online

“In his sensitive, emotionally astute and strikingly stylish account of Stefan Zweig’s exile, George Prochnik manages to convey, better than virtually any other book I’ve read on the subject, the awful intellectual and emotional costs of wartime displacement.... A remarkable work of biographical empathy and imagination.” —Daniel Mendelsohn, author of *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*

“Part literary biography, part cultural history, part meditation on war, art and death, *The Impossible Exile* gives us the pulse and fever of Zweig’s desperate and fascinating days.” —David Laskin, author of *The Family: Three Journeys into the Heart of the 20th Century*

“A deeply moving study of one writer’s struggle to adapt to a life outside the European culture whose values he helped create....A remarkably rich, multi-dimensional portrait of loss, longing, and despair.” —Sherill Tippins, critically acclaimed author of *February House* and *Inside the Dream Palace*

“A thrilling blend of literature, cultural history, and biography, *The Impossible Exile* casts a compassionate and slyly contemporary light on what it means to be torn from one’s life and home. Prochnik is especially insightful on the psychological cost of exile, the loss of self, of fame, of relevance, that beset Zweig and his brilliant coterie of displaced Viennese and German artists, composers, and writers.” —Michael Greenberg, author of *Hurry Down Sunshine* and *Beg, Borrow, Steal: A Writer’s Life*

“*The Impossible Exile* is not only a riveting study of one of the major literary émigrés of the Nazi era, but also a profound meditation on the nature of fame, the intersection of politics and art, and the condition of exile itself. ... Prochnik brings a sympathetic but unsparing eye to his subject and in the process makes the best case I’ve read for the continued importance of this cultured, humane, yet fascinatingly complicated figure.” —James Lasdun, author of *Give Me Everything You Have*

“This is a beautifully written, deeply felt and ultimately tragic love story about a deracinated Jewish writer wildly in love with European culture, who discovers, too late, that European culture does not love him back. What makes *The Impossible Exile* doubly tragic is the way that Zweig mistook his best self for Europe, just as Europe was mistaking its worst self for Zweig. The double suicide that resulted is, in Prochnik’s expert hands, as fascinating as it is unsettling.” —Jonathan Rosen, author of *The Life of the Skies*

“*The Impossible Exile*, a brilliant biographical meditation, operates with the hypnotic force of a mystery novel, suspensefully reconstructing an already committed crime. George Prochnik’s style is at once speedy and ruminative: he combines the risk-loving élan of a beatnik genius, and the majestic hauntedness of Walter Benjamin. I am wonderstruck by the erudition and tender feeling that underlie Prochnik’s masterful account of perpetual, tragic wandering.” —Wayne Koestenbaum, poet and critic

“George Prochnik has taken the conventions of literary biography—usually, in fact, the last word in conventionality—and turned them inside out to create a fast-paced, tension-filled, almost novel-like exploration of a writer’s personality.” —Lawrence Osborne, author of *The Forgiven*

“When the Nazis invaded Austria, Zweig was exiled from his native country. In the course of the last century, he has been exiled from his rightful place in world literature. In this enthralling and meticulous biography, George Prochnik brings the exile home.” —Judith Thurman, author of *Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller*, winner of the National Book Award for Non-Fiction

“An immensely dramatic book....Prochnik is always shrewd, always lyrical, but he outdoes himself in the book’s last pages. There is a final photo that could break your heart, but it is accompanied by even more stirring prose, evidence that words can still convey more than images, and that the childless Zweig has at last found a son.” —Anthony Heilbut, author of *Exiled in Paradise*, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*, and *The Fan Who Knew Too Much*

“Deeply researched and beautifully written...a work that is as sensitive and exquisite as Zweig’s novellas.” —Ruth Franklin, contributing editor at *The New Republic*

“Pitch perfect... [Prochnik’s] research is far-ranging, his occasional meditations on his own family’s history, to the point. Though it is a dirge he composes, he writes with the élan that distinguished Zweig’s own work. Absorbing.” —Flora Fraser, author of *Pauline Bonaparte: Venus of Empire*

"An excellent intellectual and personal account which also serves as a convincing portrait of modern Europe's darkest days." —Patrice Higonnet, Goelet Professor of French History at Harvard University and author of the forthcoming *The Four Centuries' History of a French Protestant Village in Southern France*

#### About the Author

George Prochnik's essays, poetry, and fiction have appeared in numerous journals. He has taught English and American literature at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, is editor-at-large for *Cabinet* magazine, and is the author of *In Pursuit of Silence: Listening for Meaning in a World of Noise* and *Putnam Camp: Sigmund Freud, James Jackson Putnam, and the Purpose of American Psychology*. He lives in New York City.

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