Lene Rock

**Zweig, Stefan (1881—1942)**

Stefan Zweig was a prominent Austrian-Jewish novelist, playwright and journalist during the 1920s and 1930s. Growing up in the Viennese upper-class environment of assimilated Jewry, which attached great importance to *Bildung*, Zweig devoted himself to literature from early adolescence on. As a student of literature and philosophy at the universities of Vienna and Berlin, he moved in bohemian circles, focusing on his writing. At the age of 19, he published *Silberne Saiten* (*Silver Strings*, 1901), a selection of poems initiating his literary success. Theodor Herzl, founder of Zionism and at the time literary editor of the Viennese *Neue freie Presse*, published some of Zweig’s early essays. A defender of humanism and internationalism, Zweig himself was not attracted to the Jewish nationalist cause, although he did not renounce his roots and occasionally incorporated Jewish themes into stories like *Im Schnee* (*In the Snow*, 1901). Zweig’s oeuvre is especially known for its novellas – most notably *Schachnovelle* (*The Royal Game*, 1942) and *Der Amokläufer* (*Amok*, 1922) –, historical miniatures such as *Sternstunden der Menschheit* (*Decisive Moments in History*, 1927) and novelistic biographies of figures like Erasmus, Magellan, Joseph Fouché, Marie Antoinette and Napoleon. Characteristic of Zweig’s work is a careful construction of psychological veracity in stories illustrating an often tragic evolution of powerful emotions into in an overall sense of resignation. Zweig was a pacifist, but refrained from taking a political stance in public on the events in Europe, a reluctance fellow authors were highly critical of. Upon the National Socialists’ blacklisting of his publications in 1933, Zweig left Salzburg for London and later Petropolis, Brazil. In exile he wrote his only completed novel *Ungeduld des Herzens* (*Beware of Pity*, 1939). In his autobiography *Die Welt von Gestern* (*The World of Yesterday*, 1942), published posthumously, the nostalgic view on pre-war Austria hints at Zweig’s suffering from alienation in exile, which in his farewell letter he indicated as the reason for his suicide in 1942.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4e/Stefan\_Zweig2.png

**List of works**

**Fiction**

*Silver Strings* (1901)

*In the Snow*(1901)

*The Fowler Snared* (1906)

*The Governess* (1907)

*Compulsion* (1920)

*Fantastic Night* (1922)

*Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1922)

*Amok* (1922)

*Beware of Pity* (1939)

*The World of Yesterday* (1942)

*The Royal Game* (1942) (published posthumously)

**Biographies and historical texts**

*Emile Verhaeren* (1910)

*Three Masters:* [*Balzac*](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor%C3%A9_de_Balzac)*,* [*Dickens*](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Dickens)*,* *Dostoeffski* (1920)

*Romain Rolland. The Man and His Works* (1921)

*Decisive Moments in History* (1927)

*Joseph Fouché* (1929)

*Marie Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman* (1932)

[*Erasmus of Rotterdam*](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erasmus_von_Rotterdam) (1934)

*Conqueror of the Seas: The Story of Magellan* (1938)

**References and further reading**

* Allday, E. (1972) *Stefan Zweig. A Critical Biography*, Chicago: J. Philip O’Hara.
* Prater, D.A. (2003, revised edition) *European of Yesterday. A Biography of Stefan Zweig*, New York/ London: [Holmes & Meier Publ](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Holes_and_Meier_Publ.&action=edit&redlink=1)ishers.
* Matuschek, O. (2011/2012) *Three lives. A Biography of Stefan Zweig,* London: Pushkin Press.