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## 'In This Dark Hour': Stefan Zweig and Historical Displacement in Brazil, 1941-1942

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‘In this Dark Hour’: Stefan Zweig and Historical Displacement in Brazil, 1941-1942

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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History

by

Edward Lawrence

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## Abstract

Stefan Zweig was an Austrian-Jewish author and intellectual who fled Austro-fascism and Nazi Germany, and took his own life in Brazil in early 1942. The resurgence of interest in Zweig's life in the last few decades has introduced new methods of interpretation of his life as a refugee. But many scholars have not acknowledged Zweig's relationships he formed with South American intellectuals while in exile there. Instead, the primary focus has been on his identity as a *European*, and his subsequent suicide. This paper will argue that Zweig's identity as a refugee included a radical re-interpretation of history and perspective of the world outside of Europe, which had been previously based upon nationalistic and Euro-centric interpretations. Zweig's exile was one of not only spatial displacement, but was also one of historical displacement, and the physical and political realities in Brazil contributed to this aspect of his life as a refugee.

Keywords: Stefan Zweig; Brazil; World War II; refugee; Austria; World of Yesterday

## Introduction

In a speech at the American PEN Club banquet in May of 1941, Stefan Zweig, the world-renowned Austrian-Jewish author, lamented the existential limbo in which German-speaking writers had found themselves as a result of the Nazi Regime: “Our books were the first to be cast onto the pyres. But today we have no regrets over this enforced exile...our conscience feels that much more liberated, having made a clean break from those who have plunged this world into the greatest catastrophe in all history.”<sup>1</sup> Yet, within moments, Zweig beseeched the crowd consisting of American and European writers to understand that for German-speaking writers, the path of exile had been particularly difficult, and that a writer “cannot wrench himself from the language in which he creates and thinks.”<sup>2</sup>

Zweig may have clung to his native tongue, but by all accounts (including his own), his identity as an Austrian had long since begun to fade. In the foreword to his iconic autobiographical memoir of an era *The World of Yesterday*, he writes, “[F]or some time I have been no more an Austrian than I am an Englishman or an American. I am no longer organically bound to my native land and I never really fit into any other.”<sup>3</sup> Zweig had been living in Britain and the United States since 1936—a full two years before the *Anschluss*—and, over the course of the seven years that elapsed between his initial flight from Austria until the PEN Club banquet in 1941, the threads that had held his national identity in place had noticeably frayed. It would not be until two months later, in August of 1941, as he and his second wife, Lotte, departed for their

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<sup>1</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Messages from a Lost World: Europe on the Brink*, trans. Will Stone (London: Pushkin Press, 2016), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Zweig, *Messages*, 210.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, trans. Anthea Bell (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), xii-xiii.

new home some forty miles north of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, that those threads would become permanently detached.

Since his days as a young freelance writer with the *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna just after the turn of the century, Zweig has been counted among the intellectual elite, that pinnacle of European (and in this case particularly, Viennese) culture and humanist progress—the embodiment and inheritors of *fin-de-siècle* modernity. Zweig’s *The World of Yesterday* details his relationships with some of Europe’s cultural titans: Emile Verhaeren, Sigmund Freud, Theodor Herzl, H.G. Wells, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal to name but a few. Stefan Zweig ranked among the cultural innovators of his time (of which Viennese Jews comprised a sizeable component), and he praised Austrian intellectual achievements as a “synthesis of all Western cultures.”<sup>4</sup> Unlike Germany to the north, who very often “looked down with some annoyance and scorn” at the Austrians, Vienna was a place of rampant self-indulgence, where the Viennese “ate well, enjoyed parties and the theatre, and made excellent music”—the optimal conditions for cultural propagation, according to Zweig.<sup>5</sup>

Whether or not Zweig’s interpretation and nostalgic memories of pre-war Vienna are true to detail (which they are arguably not), his part in the overarching intellectual community within Europe as a whole cannot be understated. In the company of such figures as Joseph Roth, Thomas Mann, and Hannah Arendt, Zweig found himself exiled from his homeland, “torn from all my roots, even the earth that nourished them.”<sup>6</sup> A Zweig biographer referred to the wartime flight of artists and intellectuals from Europe “so vast that historians have turned back to the

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<sup>4</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, xii.

flight of the Greek scholars after the fall of Byzantium for a point of comparison.”<sup>7</sup> This mass migration—this intellectual exodus—flung millions to the shores of the New World, seeking sanctuary and peace. Stefan Zweig was well-known in almost every intellectual circle, and ever the socialite cosmopolitan, his extensive correspondences reflect his vast network of acquaintances and contemporaries.

By the time the Zweigs had settled in Petropolis, Brazil, in August of 1941, however, they had been effectively severed in many ways from the intellectual community of which they had been a part; the trans-Atlantic postal system was in shambles as German U-boats sank freight ships indiscriminately. Within the last weeks of his life, Zweig laments to his ex-wife Friderike that communication with that intellectual community had dwindled significantly: “letters become more and more scarce, everybody has his own worries and one does not like to write if one has nothing important to tell...”<sup>8</sup> Zweig and Lotte felt isolated and were both afflicted with crippling loneliness as a result of being separated from essentially everyone with whom they had been close friends. But, it should be taken into consideration that the logistical obstacles facing Zweig in terms of postal communication significantly improved by the time he reached Brazil in 1941, as most of his contemporaries (at least many of those with whom he maintained contact) were in the Western hemisphere, and thus postal systems were still reliable. Many scholars contribute a severance in this contact as a reason for his suicide, but this paper will argue against such notions.

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<sup>7</sup> George Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (New York: Other Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>8</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, February 2, 1942, Stefan and Friderike Zweig’s Correspondence, 41:13, The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia.



Zweig's exile experience has been documented and scrutinized in recent years, especially given the resurgence of interest in his works and life in the English-speaking world (in France, by contrast, most of his works have never been out of print). Two new works by talented biographers, an Academy Award-winning film based on Zweig's works, new translations of his non-fiction essays and letters, and even a graphic novel detailing the last months of his life are all evidence of this resurgence.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the ever-growing historiography on Zweig, the Stefan Zweig Center in Salzburg has recently curated an exhibit highlighting Zweig's exile through the lens of his last fictional work, *Schachnovelle*, as well as the recent publication of his last address book containing 158 names.<sup>10</sup> Yet the question begs to be asked: why? Although one of the most widely-translated and read authors of the interwar period, Zweig's works are not generally considered masterpieces of high culture or intellectual greatness. He was not a powerful statesman, nor did he have any significant impact on historical events.

Zweig's exile experience was imbued with a sense of not only spatial displacement, but his exile was also one of *historical* displacement. His preconceptions of Brazil helped to shape his life as a refugee, including the relationships he formed while in South America, and indeed his entire worldview. As shall be discussed later, his short historical work *Brazil: A Land of the Future* serves as substantiating evidence of this displacement of both place *and* time. Zweig's

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<sup>9</sup> Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile*; Oliver Matuschek, *Three Lives: A Biography of Stefan Zweig*, trans. Allan Blunden (London: Pushkin Press, 2011), Wes Anderson and Hugo Guinness, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, DVD, directed by Wes Anderson, Los Angeles: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2014; Zweig, *Messages from a Lost World*; Stefan and Lotte Zweig, *Stefan and Lotte Zweig's South American Letters: New York, Argentina, and Brazil, 1940-1942*, eds. Darien J. Davis and Oliver Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2010); Laurent Seksik, *The Last Days of Stefan Zweig*, trans. Joel Anderson, illustrated by Guillaume Sorel (London: Salamambo Press, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For information on the events and exhibitions scheduled for 2017 at the Zweig Center in Salzburg, see: Stefan Gmünder, "Eine Stimme, die ihre Aktualität bewahrt hat," *Der Standard*, February 19 2017, 40. In addition, a schedule of upcoming exhibitions, lectures, and panels discussing Zweig's life can be found at the Literatur Haus Wien's website at [www.literaturhaus.at](http://www.literaturhaus.at); Alberto Dines, Israel Beloch, Kristina Michahelles, et. al., eds., *Stefan Zweig und sein Freundeskreis: sein letztes Adressbuch 1941-1942* (Berlin: Hentrich et Hentrich, 2016).

notions of Brazil and South America in general were guided and formed by colonial systems and European ‘civilizing’ missions around the globe, and this is evident not only in *Land of the Future*, but even in his letters and essays during the last months of his life. His numerous biographies of influential European figures are also imbued with a Eurocentric interpretation of history—one, which, by autumn of 1941, would be shattered. By understanding Zweig’s chronological and historical displacement and how this change altered his present, a more complete understanding can be gained from his exile experience. Further, by examining his life in Brazil as being disconnected from the larger exile community in which scholars frequently associate him, as well as taking into account his relationships with prominent South Americans, can counterbalance the oftentimes generalized and generic categorizations applied to refugees of the Second World War.

### **Historiography**

As Edward Said has argued, Western culture has adopted a disturbing pattern of romanticizing exile, translating it into a means by which Western culture can be “enriched,” while simultaneously undermining the harrowing estrangement exiles endured as well as diminishing the true exile experience in historical scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Biographies of Zweig in recent years portray Zweig’s anguish and dismay at having been uprooted from his former life, which was ultimately why, on the night of February 23, 1942, Zweig and Lotte took their own lives with lethal doses of veronal. But while Zweig’s biographers have been able to arguably capture the depression brought about by severance, in many ways Zweig’s exile experience is incomplete. For biographers such as Prochnik or Matuschek, Zweig’s time in Brazil (from

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 137.

August of 1941 until his suicide in February 1942) is condensed and often treated solely as his ‘last days,’ revolving incessantly around his detachment from the exile community at large. Because of Zweig’s prominent place in European culture, his exile experience has been largely examined within that same European context, one which does not account for the radical reconfiguration of his interpretation of history itself, which in turn was ultimately an integral aspect of his last months.

The scholarly literature on Zweig until now has attempted to place Zweig within that larger intellectual group of exiles. Yet, even in Zweig’s own words (such as those quoted above), the bond that tied him to Austria and to Europe overall was gone by the time the *Uruguay* docked in Rio de Janeiro in August of 1941—including notions of culture and the colonial history imbued in Zweig as a European born in the nineteenth century. The intellectual diaspora of some of Europe’s greatest minds and artists, as well as the millions of ‘everyday’ refugees that fled Hitler’s Reich cannot and should not be regarded as a collective experience in such a way that broad analytical generalizations are made that disparage the individuality and singular nature of the exile experience. Especially in Zweig’s case, generalizing the experience of “Hitler’s exiles” has the potential to obscure the reality that these individuals faced, particularly when considering Zweig’s *historical* separation from Europe. While intellectuals have come to think of the contemporary era, namely the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as what Said calls a period that is “spiritually orphaned and alienated,” the experience of exile is one of a singular nature. No matter how many millions fled fascism in Europe, they each experienced their own exile and each found themselves totally uprooted no matter the frequency of communication with friends or colleagues or the ease and timeframe in which they could transition.

The writings of Günther Anders oftentimes echoed Zweig's own musings on exile and the uprooted life, particularly in regards to one's loss of identity and language, as well as the overwhelming sensation of "*Weltlosigkeit*." Anders wrote: "As it fell to us to be hunted from one world in which we found ourselves beached to the next and as we were forced to soak up new content again and again...these stretches of time, each linked to a different world, have now come to lie *across* from each other."<sup>12</sup> Thus, the historiography on exiles and refugees of the Second World War are the site of an intersection of multiple viewpoints on the subject from those who lived through such an experience, and there are numerous similarities between Anders' interpretations of exile and that of Zweig's. Although Anders and Zweig were separated by a noticeable generation gap and worldview, the fact that two divergent personalities came to see experiences common for all "émigrés" (a term which Zweig rarely used, if at all) is evidence of both the shared and singular experience of displacement. The dichotic nature of the exile experience itself dominates the historiography of the displaced persons of the Second World War, and in Zweig's case (as well as Anders'), this duality is particularly prevalent. But in the case of Zweig, who often found optimistic hope in Brazil amid dangerous bouts of depression, the need to separate him from that larger exile community is imperative.

Therefore, to understand Zweig's own exile experience, the severance with the exile community and Zweig's own metaphorical 'world of yesterday' must be considered through the lens of his historical understanding of South America and the relationships he formed there. By removing him (at least to the extent possible) from the continuing rhetoric of a shared, communal exile that is inherently *European* in its analytical framework, and by placing him within the

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<sup>12</sup> Günter Bischof, Jason Dawsey, and Bernhard Fetz, eds., *The Life and Work of Günther Anders: Émigré, Iconoclast, Philosopher, Man of Letters* (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2014), 173.

physical realities and environments of his time—including both spatial *and* historical displacement—a more encompassing understanding can be drawn of his exile and lamentable end. South American intellectuals are noticeably absent from the scholarship on Zweig—even Gabriela Mistral, the famous Chilean poet and Nobel prize winner who became close friends with the Zweigs during their time in Brazil, is not mentioned by name in the two most recent biographies. By continuing to associate Zweig with other exiles and place him solely within the larger exile community, his story becomes lost, distorted, or, at best, unfinished. In order to understand Zweig’s exile experience, one that was so devastating that it drove him to suicide, scholars cannot be trapped in his past as he was. His last months, in which he found himself in a foreign land with an unknown language and culture, are the epitome of his exile, and his relationships (of which he had many) with Brazilians and South American intellectuals alike, are examples of Zweig’s departure from the identity he had possessed for the entirety of his existence.

By continuing the trend of romanticizing the concept of exile and the experience of fascism’s exiles, scholars risk omitting a vital biographical component: communication and interaction with the exiles’ new surroundings and how these interactions, in turn, added a sense of completion to the process of exile. The degree to which exiles adjusted to their new status varies widely; exiles such as Hannah Arendt and Fritz Lang accepted their new home without much resistance, while others such as Günther Anders returned to Europe after the fall of fascism.<sup>13</sup> Others still, like Zweig, could not bear the environmental and psychological changes

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<sup>13</sup> For more on German-speaking exiles in America, such as Arendt, Mann, and Broch, see: Lewis A. Coser, *Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984); Günter Bischof, ed., *Quiet Invaders Revisited: Biographies of Austrian Immigrants to the United States in the Twentieth Century*, *Transatlantica* Vol. 11 (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2017) [Forthcoming]; For more on the exile of Günther Anders, see: Günter Bischof et al., eds., *The Life and Work of Günther Anders*.

brought about by the process of exile, and either took their own lives or succumbed to misery and despair in their remaining years. The spectrum of the experience of fascism's exiles is evidence of the notion of *singular* exile, one which encompasses the severance not only of one's cultural, linguistic, and geographic heritage, but also one's very understanding of history. Even for Zweig, whose social connections were vast and who maintained correspondence with a small number of his European contemporaries in his last months, the process of exile was singular in nature—he arrived in Brazil a refugee, leaving behind the communal and collective connotations of exile that scholars have applied to his experience in hindsight, as well as European preconceptions of former (in this case) colonial societies.

The amalgamation of Zweig's exile/refugee experience into the larger community of exiles is evident in the biographical and scholarly works on his life. Oliver Matuschek's highly acclaimed (and rightfully so) biography condenses Zweig's six months in Brazil to a mere ten pages. Like many other Zweig scholars, Matuschek uses *The World of Yesterday* to firmly plant Zweig in the past. Matuschek writes, "for any examination of Zweig's life—including the present study, therefore—his own book of memoirs is clearly of central importance."<sup>14</sup> While this is true in terms of biographical and historical analysis, especially when examining the entirety of Zweig's life, it also limits the effectiveness and fullness of scholarly works on Zweig by confining him to that very 'world of yesterday' without taking into account his severance from it and the singularity of his exile experience. Even Zweig himself wrote that he no longer felt like an Austrian, and it became very clear to him by the time he arrived in Brazil that the world he so loved and cherished had since been demolished.

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<sup>14</sup> Oliver Matuschek, *Three Lives: A Biography of Stefan Zweig*, trans. Allen Blunden (London: Pushkin Press, 2011), 12.

George Prochnik's biography, entitled *The Impossible Exile*, focuses entirely on the period of Zweig's exile from 1936 until his suicide in 1942. However, like other biographers and scholars, Zweig's relationships with South American intellectuals and public figures are noticeably absent—even Gabriela Mistral is not mentioned by name, but is simply referred to as a nameless Chilean poetess in passing. Prochnik writes "above all, Zweig understood that exile wasn't a static condition but a process."<sup>15</sup> Yet Prochnik arguably omits the majority of Zweig's South American relationships, especially those with whom he was closest, thus ignoring a sizeable portion of Zweig's "process." Aside from Claudio de Souza, Ernst Feder, and Zweig's Brazilian publisher Abrahaõ Koogan, who are each mentioned only briefly, Prochnik largely ignores Zweig's relationships he forged while a refugee in Brazil and thus does not put Zweig's exile experience into the proper context.

Since the mid-1960s, so-called "exile studies," oftentimes considered a part of migration studies, has produced a wide-ranging variety of scholarly works. A number of decades have elapsed since the unofficial "beginning" of exile studies, as the war and trauma of the first five decades of the twentieth century began to reshape academia. But what is perhaps the most relevant when discussing Zweig through the lens of migration and exile studies is that the core of humanist thought became eroded and tarnished; "man, the measure of all things," began to no longer be at the heart of humanist thinking. For Zweig, whose entire worldview was based on the humanism he inherited in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, he began to feel the effects of this "decentralization" of humanism as it was occurring. But, perhaps most importantly when examining Zweig in historical context, are the "manifestations of modernist and postmodernist" notions of exile. The modernist approach to exile studies—that is, that an exile exists within a

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<sup>15</sup> Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile*, 11.

common core area and is forced out, and the postmodernist interpretation, which is that the exile becomes what Said feared—“displaced rather than coherent...rootless and migratory in an increasingly globalized world.”<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, this is why Zweig’s relationship with Brazil as a whole, particularly his perceptions of it (as uninformed as they sometimes were) are critical to understanding Zweig within the postmodernist context, and the absence of such a relationship is evident in the historiography.

As mentioned above, Zweig’s works are not typically considered masterpieces of high culture, nor was he an influential figure in European politics. What, then, is Zweig’s relevance in contemporary historical scholarship, and is that relevance the catalyst behind the recent resurgence of interest in his life? Ultimately, Zweig’s life challenges nearly every notion of exile and “refugeeness” that has thus far been produced by academia in regards to “Hitler’s exiles.” Some scholars of exile and refugee studies during the Second World War have created categorizations with the assumption that nearly every displaced person fits neatly within one or the other.<sup>17</sup> While such categorizations are admittedly useful for analytical purposes—that is, to attempt to understand the varying degrees of exile and “refugeeness”—they become problematic when they are presented as anything more than broad characteristics that may or may not apply to one of many millions of displaced persons. Evidence for the limited usefulness of such categorizations is admitted even by a creator of such generalizations, Jost Hermand, who quotes Lion Feuchtwanger’s novel *Exil*, “the German emigrant community was more fractured than any other.”<sup>18</sup> Such disunity dispels any notion that exiles and refugees should be corralled into

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<sup>16</sup> Barbara McCloskey, “Cartographies of Exile,” in *Exile and Otherness: New Approaches to the Experience of the Nazi Refugees*, ed. Alexander Stephan, *Exil-Studien: Eine Interdisziplinäre Buchreihe, Vol. 11* (Oxford et al.: Peter Lang, 2005), 136-137.

<sup>17</sup> One such example is: Jost Hermand, *Culture in Dark Times: Nazi Fascism, Inner Emigration, and Exile*, trans. Victoria Hill (New York: Berghan Books, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Hermand, *Culture in Dark Times*, 172.



analytical categorizations for any other purpose than identifying characteristics of displaced persons, not *identities*. Zweig himself was well-aware of this disunity, and was crucial in the founding of the *Freie Deutsche Kulturbund* in London in 1940, but the group quickly scattered as some seventeen thousand German refugees were interned by order of Winston Churchill.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the aforementioned “amalgamation” of the exile experience has, however, been effective at countering the “romanticizing” on which Said and others have written, telling the stories of some of the ‘everyday’ refugees that fled National Socialism. While some scholarly works do, in many instances, remove a certain amount of the “romantic” notion that is perpetuated within exile historiography, many still yet portray the “brave immigrants” that were part of a “fascinating and heartbreaking story of persecution and isolation.”<sup>20</sup> Such generalizations often distort the exiles’ experiences by looking through the clouded lens of a contemporary—and Western—vantage point. As Zweig himself wrote in his history of Brazil, “Anyone who describes Brazil’s present unconsciously already describes its past. Only he who looks at its past sees its true meaning.”<sup>21</sup> Even such an ambiguous statement is evidence of how Zweig’s exile experience was one of not only spatial displacement, but also one of historical displacement as his understanding of the world *outside* of Europe began to change—due not only to the “suicide” of Europe, but also a radical transformation in how he viewed South American societies.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>20</sup> Mark A. Anderson, ed., *Hitler’s Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, trans. Lowell Bangerter (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2000), 71

## ‘Un Gran Señor’: Stefan Zweig in South America

By separating Zweig from his fellow Europeans in exile and placing him within his social realities in South America, Zweig can be properly placed within the contemporary framework of the exile, one which, according to Said, “cannot be made to serve notions of humanism.”<sup>22</sup> Although when one reads *The World of Yesterday* it may appear that Zweig himself was trapped between the world that once was and the world that was to come once fascism was defeated, this does not negate or diminish the importance of his relationship with the non-European elements of South America. In fact, by excluding South American intellectuals and writers from the discussion on Zweig, Said’s theory of “romanticizing” exile, as well as portraying fascism’s exiles solely within a Western-centric viewpoint, diminishes the role of South America not only during the Second World War but also within the post-war period overall. Zweig himself wrote in *The World of Yesterday*, “Even stronger, if anything, was the impression made on me by South America...I had never felt it more important to show support for the idea of intellectual solidarity between all lands and languages.”<sup>23</sup> As Stuart Hall has said, perhaps it is best to not view identity as firmly implanted, but as a “production, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.”<sup>24</sup>

Prior to his permanent emigration to Brazil, Zweig lived in Belgium (briefly), Britain, and eventually the United States between the years of 1936 and 1941.<sup>25</sup> But it is perhaps his time in the United States which is the best contextual evidence for his increasing desire to distance

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<sup>22</sup> Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 138.

<sup>23</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 423.

<sup>24</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222.

<sup>25</sup> For more on Zweig’s time in Belgium, see: Wolker Weidemann, *Ostend: Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, and the Summer Before the Dark*, trans. Carol Brown Janeway (New York: Pantheon Books, 2016).

himself from history. Though there was a brief period in mid-1941 when Zweig contemplated returning to England, the German U-boats in the Atlantic prevented such a journey, and his perception of the United States, particularly New York, began to disintegrate: “You cannot imagine how I hate New York now with its luxury-shops, its ‘glamour’ and splendor—we Europeans remember our country and all the misery of the world too much.”<sup>26</sup> The increasing number of exiles seeking Zweig’s aid also seemed to bear down upon him. He even resorted to using an old Yiddish term, *Schnorrers*, or “spongers,” while in New York.<sup>27</sup> His time in the United States and England were dominated by a sense of impending doom which was masked by the “glamour” and prosperity of those unaffected by the horrors of the war. For Zweig, history was far too near for his comfort, he needed an “escape,” from history itself, with all the implications and inadvertent complexities associated with it, and it was in South America that he would find such a sanctuary.

Before he permanently emigrated to South America from his refuge in the United States, however, Zweig embarked on a lecture tour of the United States in January and February of 1939. One such lecture he entitled “The Historiography of Tomorrow,” in which a dramatic and radical reconfiguration of his interpretation of history can be seen. Although Zweig gave this lecture months before the Nazi invasion of Poland in September of that year, the rise of fascism in Europe had been the catalyst of Zweig’s re-interpretation of history, which would later be solidified by his arrival in South America. “The Historiography of Tomorrow” details Zweig’s theory that it was the next generation of historian’s duty to change historiography itself, one which “shows the development of humanity,” as opposed to the “need for militarization, for

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<sup>26</sup> Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile*, 73.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

hatred, for combat.”<sup>28</sup> According to Zweig’s perspective in 1939, it was the duty of future historians to negate traditional historical models which gave credence to “who conquered and who was conquered.”<sup>29</sup>

There are still yet more examples from “The Historiography of Tomorrow” where Zweig’s re-interpretation of history becomes evident, most notably in the discovery of his childhood history book, which he had found just before giving this particular lecture:

It was there in the old, well-thumbed, dog-eared textbook that I was able to review over such a distance of time the kind of history which had informed our generation. I began to read and immediately I shuddered with horror. The way they had presented the history of the world to such unsophisticated, unquestioning young men! So fallacious, so counterfactual, so premeditated! And instantly it dawned on me—that here history had been artfully prepared, deformed, coloured, falsified, and all with clear, deliberate intention. It was obvious that this book, printed in Austria and destined for Austrian schools, must have rooted in the minds of young men the idea that the spirit of the world and its thousand outpourings had only one objective in mind: the greatness of Austria and its empire.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, Zweig recognized that his own European education had “the sole aim of making us fine patriots, future soldiers, obedient citizens.”<sup>31</sup> It becomes apparent, then, that Zweig realized his indoctrination into a specifically European perspective of history, one which was centered upon war and military leaders, instead of presenting an encompassing view of the history of humanity. According to Zweig, the historians of the post-Nazi era would need to interpret history in such a way that it was “no longer a case of which country must be placed ahead of another at their expense, but how to accomplish universal movement, progress, civilization.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Stefan Zweig, “The World of Tomorrow,” in: Will Stone, ed. and tran., *Messages from a Lost World: Europe on the Brink* (London: Pushkin Press, 2016), 162, 164.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>32</sup> Zweig, “The Historiography of Tomorrow,” 170.

How history shaped Zweig's *Weltanschauung* and his interpretation of that same history can also be found in his numerous biographies, which included full-length works on Marie Antoinette, Magellan, and Balzac to name a few. It was during Zweig's first trip to South America in 1937 that the inspiration to write the biography of Magellan struck him. But it was not the stunning landscapes and surprisingly (to Zweig) modern societies which he encountered during that first voyage to South America that inspired the biography of Magellan. Instead, it was the "shame" which Zweig felt at having been impatient on his journey there, especially given the luxuries that he had at his disposal. Zweig writes, "Remember, impatient and ungrateful as you are, what voyages were like in the old days. Compare your present experiences with those of the valiant navigators who were the first to cross this ocean, and to make the world known to us."<sup>33</sup> Consistently referring to Magellan's voyage as comparable to Homer's *Odyssey*, Zweig paints a picture of brave "discoverers" that opened up the rest of the world to Europe.

Shortly after writing *The Conqueror of the Seas*, Zweig began working on *Brazil: A Land of the Future*. In it, he admits to his shortsightedness regarding the history of the massive nation, as well as his own arrogant European assumptions about its contemporary status. Given that his biography of Magellan and *Land of the Future* were written in such close temporal proximity to one another, the shift in Zweig's historical perspective becomes even more evident. South America, and particularly Brazil, became for Zweig not merely the *result* of Spanish and Portuguese colonial administrations, but an amalgamation of both native and colonizer, resulting in a modern and rapidly-progressing society. Evidence of such a shift in perspective can be found in *The World of Yesterday*, as well: "You just had to learn to think in larger dimensions, to

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<sup>33</sup> Stefan Zweig, *Conqueror of the Seas: The Story of Magellan*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking Press, 1938), xiii.

expect everything to be on a larger scale. I told myself that we ought not to think solely in terms of Europe, but begin looking further afield, not burying ourselves in a dying past but participating in its rebirth.”<sup>34</sup>

Zweig wrote *Brazil: A Land of the Future* after his first visit to Brazil, and the publication of the work caused a great deal of controversy. Zweig was already known for fraternizing with figures unpopular among Brazilian intellectuals, such as Claudio de Souza, a writer with close ties to the Vargas regime, or Osvaldo Aranha, the Brazilian foreign minister. Some Brazilian circles even accused Zweig of having been bribed by the Brazilian government to paint the country in a positive light, thus avoiding criticism of the proto-fascist regime. Even this complex relationship between Zweig and Brazilian intellectual circles is evidence of the shift from European to a “stateless” identity and the process of exile which Zweig was undergoing at the time. Many scholars have suggested that Zweig’s confusion and anxiety over the Brazilian response to his *Brazil: A Land of the Future* is suggestive of his remaining ties with his European identity, yet such sentiments on Zweig’s part could also be indicative of the painful and overwhelming transition in to what Zweig referred to as a “world that refuses itself to the exile.”<sup>35</sup>

In *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, Zweig (briefly) traces Brazilian history from what he terms the “discovery” of Brazil by the Portuguese in 1500 up to the abdication of Dom Pedro II on November 17, 1889, noting that Brazil no longer had “room for kings.”<sup>36</sup> Some Brazilian intellectual circles were critical of this work simply because Zweig did not include the period after Dom Pedro II, one which, given the rapid economic, industrial, and technological

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<sup>34</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 425.

<sup>35</sup> Reference in Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Zweig, *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, 70.

advancements in Brazil during that time, were deemed more vital to Brazilian identity than their colonial history and natural beauty. Even in the forward to *Land of the Future*, Zweig admits that “this picture is not complete and cannot be complete. It is impossible to be completely familiar with Brazil, a country that is so spacious,” and that, before coming to Brazil, he viewed the nation with the “average arrogant European or North American conception of Brazil.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Zweig’s fateful first encounter with Brazil seemed to change his mode of thinking for good: “And with astonishing speed the extremely superfluous baggage of European arrogance that I had taken along on this trip melted away. I knew I had gazed into the future of our world.”<sup>38</sup>

Zweig saw Brazil as more than just his temporary refuge. For him, Brazil was antithetical to everything Europe represented. He writes that “if it had adopted the European insanity of nationalism and racism, Brazil would have to be the most divided, the most disharmonious and agitated country in the world.”<sup>39</sup> It seems only natural that the idea of Europe’s obsession with racial contingencies and eugenics should be paramount in Zweig’s mind, as he saw such socio-political phenomena as having “brought more discord and disaster upon our world than any other.”<sup>40</sup> Although it is generally accepted that racial relations were only stable on the surface during this time, it is apparent that Zweig found comfort in his misconceptions. Other than Brazil’s natural beauty, it seems that such apparent racial harmony fostered a small degree of hope in Zweig. *The Sunday Times* noticed such optimism on Zweig’s

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 5, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Zweig, *Land of the Future*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 12.

part, writing in its review of *Land of the Future*: “his own memories of Europe lead him to take an optimistic view.”<sup>41</sup>

For Zweig, South America (and especially Brazil) was an undiscovered world, a world veiled by European colonial perceptions and self-imposed values on European “civilization.” But, as Zweig would quickly discover, the countries of South America would have a deep and remarkable impression on him. Zweig recognized this Eurocentric view of South America in himself, which is perhaps why the harsh criticisms directed toward him after the publication of *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, caused less frustration and consternation on his behalf than his fragile nature would warrant. He is known to have said that he was more a European than he thought, and his perception of Brazil in particular as a land where “the brutalisation that followed in the wake of the First World War had not yet infected manners and morals,” is crucial to understanding the internal transformation Zweig experienced.<sup>42</sup> In Zweig’s eyes, Brazil was a nation that did not have the “absurd theories of blood, race and origins,” as opposed to his homeland of Austria.<sup>43</sup> Zweig truly saw Brazil as the “land of the future,” and despite the harsh criticisms from the Brazilian intelligentsia for his praise for Brazil’s natural wealth as opposed to its nationalistic industrial progress, even in his last days the thought of living in Brazil permanently was still pertinent.

Ernst Feder, a Prussian-born journalist who became close friends with the Zweigs in Brazil, wrote that while there were many critics of *Land of the Future*, the vast majority of Brazilians viewed the book as “a tribute of affection to the country, the most gracious it had ever

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<sup>41</sup> Edward Shanks, “Brazil’s Great Future,” *The Sunday Times*, October 18 1942, The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia.

<sup>42</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 426.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



received from a foreign writer.”<sup>44</sup> Feder, who claimed that he had never entered a Brazilian home where a work by Zweig could not be found, argued that Zweig’s relationship with Brazil extended beyond the courteous and political and into the spiritual and emotional. He writes that the Brazilians were “conscious of a certain kinship between the author’s emotional rather than intellectual manner and their own attitude to life.”<sup>45</sup> Especially given that Feder, who was a meticulous collector of Brazilian newspaper articles, admits that criticism for Zweig’s *Land of the Future* did exist, the work was overwhelmingly and warmly accepted by the Brazilian public, and there is little evidence to suggest that such criticisms contributed to his eventual suicide, despite historiographical contingencies which suggest otherwise. Indeed, on the whole, Feder argues that “all the reasons for suicide which overwhelmed the émigrés of the last ten years, and which nevertheless have seldom been the deciding factor, were missing in his case.”<sup>46</sup>

In an interview published in the January 20, 1957 issue of *Aufbau*, Gabriela Mistral cited three reasons, in her mind, that led to Zweig’s suicide: the quick advance of the Germans, the receipt of numerous “threatening” letters from anonymous Nazi sympathizers in Brazil, and the sight of the Brazilian carnival which, in its “cauldron of shouting and passion,” simply reminded Zweig of the suffering of millions of Europeans while representing a “triumph of the instinct over the threatened mind.”<sup>47</sup> It should be taken into consideration that Mistral’s comments

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<sup>44</sup> Ernst Feder, “Stefan Zweig’s Last Days,” in: *Stefan Zweig: A Tribute to his Life and Work*, ed. Hanns Arens (London: W.H. Allen, 1951), 119.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>46</sup> Feder, “Stefan Zweig’s Last Days,” 121.

<sup>47</sup> “‘Un gran señor’ sagte Gabriela Mistral,” in *Aufbau*, January 20, 1957, Alfred Zweig Collection, Box 2, Envelope 3, The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia; Author’s translation, original German text: *Das erste war die Nachricht vom schnellen Vormarsch die Deutschen. Das zweite: die anonymen Briefe voll von Beleidigungen, mit denen ihn Hitlers Anhänger in Brasilien quälten, und das dritte der Anblick des brasilianischen Karnevals, in dem das Volk sich auslebt und die Straßen sich in einen Glutkessel [...] Geschrei und Leidenschaft verwandeln. [...] jemanden, der sich wie er von der europäischen Welt ausgeschlossen fühlte, den [...] Haß verfolgte, der keine Möglichkeit sah, seine alte Existenz neu aufzubauen,*

regarding the threatening anonymous letters have not been corroborated by other evidence. However, given Zweig's nature, it seems unlikely that he would have mentioned such an occurrence in his letters, especially since the Zweigs were also the recipient of a number of kind anonymous gestures, including someone leaving "an armful of roses at their garden gate."<sup>48</sup> Given the Zweigs' demeanor, it is not surprising that they would not have mentioned either act to anyone in their correspondence. Therefore, Gabriela's claim does have some degree of credibility, and given the extent of the personal conversations that Mistral had with Zweig based on other accounts, it seems unlikely that she would have fabricated such a story.

Zweig's relationship with Gabriela Mistral is useful as an effective, microcosmic representation of Zweig's relationship with Brazil overall. Although not Brazilian by birth, Mistral was, in many ways, the Stefan Zweig of the Western Hemisphere. Like Zweig, her life and work have experienced an unprecedented resurgence of interest within academia in the last two decades, not only for her enormous contribution to Latin American literature, but historical scholarship has begun examining her commitment to humanist issues, namely human rights, women's rights, and rights of indigenous and displaced people.<sup>49</sup> Her modest upbringing in Vicuña, Chile, does not compare to Zweig's bourgeois childhood in pre-war Vienna, but by the time their paths converged in Petropolis, Mistral had already acquired a "worldly" identity of her own, having given lectures in Europe and adopted her French-born nephew, Juan Miguel (who also took his own life shortly after the Zweigs, and the suicides had a tremendous effect on Mistral). In many ways, Zweig and Mistral were mirrored representations of each other: where

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*für den mußte die animalische Ausgelassenheit jener Karnevalsächte ein Symbol sein für den Triumph der Instinkte über den bedrohten Geist.* (Gaps indicate an area that was unreadable.)

<sup>48</sup> Davis and Marshall, *Stefan and Lotte Zweig's South American Letters*, 192.

<sup>49</sup> "Introduction," by Marjorie Agosin, in: *Gabriela Mistral: The Audacious Traveler*, ed. Marjorie Agosin (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2003), xii.

Zweig was discovering South America through the eyes of a European and a forced émigré, Mistral was discovering Europe—through her many years she lived there, as well as her relationship with Zweig—through the lens of fascism, colonialism, and decolonization.

Mistral, through her poetry and writing, became a haven for the displaced, the wanderer. By 1945, Mistral's home came to be known as a place that was frequented by “people from all corners of the world who had fled persecution and chaos,” who could “sip tea, listen to their hostess's long, seductive monologues, and forget the atrocities that were devouring the earth.”<sup>50</sup> Since Mistral lived only three blocks from the Zweigs in Petropolis, there are regrettably few written accounts of their conversations; all that can be discovered regarding their hours-long conversations which would last well into the night can only be gleaned from second-hand accounts and scant recordings by Mistral herself. She was deeply troubled by the violent and annihilationist anti-Semitism in Europe at the time, and considered the rights of the Jewish people one of her most worthy causes but also a part of her greatest guilt and pain. She was deeply troubled by the plight of the European Jewish community, and saw Zweig's suicide as a tragic culmination of that persecution. In her poem *Emigrada Judía* [Jewish Refugee Woman], she wrote: “Farther than the west wind I go, farther than the stormy petrel. I stop, I ask the way, I walk, and walk, and get no sleep. They cut my Earth away from me, all they've left me is the sea.”<sup>51</sup>

Like Zweig, Mistral also experienced the complex cultural and political landscape of Brazil, yet through the eyes of a Chilean. Mistral had wanted to live in Brazil permanently, but

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<sup>50</sup> Ana Pizarro, “Gabriela Mistral and Brazil: A Journey of Fortitude,” trans. Nancy Abraham Hall, in: *Gabriela Mistral: the Audacious Traveler*, 170-171.

<sup>51</sup> Original Spanish text: “Voy más lejos que el viento oeste y el petrel de tempestad. Paro, interrogo, camino y no duermo por caminar! Me rebanaron la Tierra, solo me han dejado el mar.” In: *Selected Poems of Gabriela Mistral*, trans. Ursula K. Le Guin (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 317.

after the near-simultaneous deaths of Zweig and her adopted son Juan Miguel, she reverted to her tendency of being “a perpetual voyager, a courageous traveler.”<sup>52</sup> Mistral’s relationship with Brazil is often overlooked or under-analyzed, much like in Zweig’s case. But where in Zweig’s case this is mostly due to the fact that his depression and subsequent suicide have served as the ultimate “end point” in the historiography, in Mistral’s case it is largely due to historians and scholars of other Latin American nations being culturally, politically, and socially unfamiliar with Portuguese-speaking Brazil.<sup>53</sup>

For Zweig, Gabriela Mistral served as a mentor, a center of gravity and stability, even though she was eight years younger than he. The two cultural icons forged an immediate bond, one which spurred feelings of jealousy in Lotte, despite its plutonic (albeit intimate) nature. Indeed, Lotte saw the acclaimed poetess as “*eine neue Bedrohung*,” because of the intimacy of her husband’s relationship with her.<sup>54</sup> Yet such suspicions were, of course, unfounded, as Lotte quickly realized. Zweig and Mistral had hours-long conversations regarding the war, politics, and literature, and the pair became not just colleagues, but friends. Indeed, Mistral desperately tried to save Zweig from the depression in which he was quickly descending. She arranged numerous meetings between Zweig and the local Brazilian intelligentsia, as well as fellow European exiles, and even visitors from the United States. The Jewish writer and Socialist Waldo Frank visited the pair in Petropolis, and Frank and Mistral were eager to incorporate Zweig into the South American intellectual community, not only because they viewed Zweig as one of their own, but also to save him from his self-imposed isolation.<sup>55</sup> The internal exile which Zweig

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<sup>52</sup>Agosin, “Introduction,” in: *Gabriela Mistral: The Audacious Traveler*, xi.

<sup>53</sup> Pizarro, “Gabriela Mistral and Brazil,” 160.

<sup>54</sup> Alberto Dines, *Tod im Paradies. Die Tragödie des Stefan Zweig*, trans. Marlen Eckl (Frankfurt am Main et. al: Büchergilde Gutenberg, 2006), 508.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 537.

experienced was the result of the cultural, linguistic, geographic, and historical separation from his homeland, and figures such as Mistral, Ernst Feder, Georges Bernanos, and Claudio de Souza attempted to rescue him from it.

Zweig's *Land of the Future* had begun the process of the "de-Europeanization" of his historical perspective. But even that Zweig, who was most famous for his novels and biographies, would attempt to write an encompassing and complex history of Brazil is evident of his internal desire to distance himself with the European world. Indeed, in a letter to Irwin Edman, a Columbia University philosophy professor, Zweig wrote "So I used all my brain, instead for finishing my big book on Balzac on thinking how to lay a few thousand miles between me and history," because he preferred to not "wait for the opportunity of being witness if the Germans come or come not to England or to make the experience of a concentration camp."<sup>56</sup> Despite broken English, Zweig's intent, and the basis for historical perspective, is clear: he desperately desired to distance himself, both physically and mentally from the history of Europe. Just after writing this letter to Edman and Zweig's subsequent journey to Brazil, he began writing *Land of the Future*. Therefore, it is not inconceivable that even before he and Lotte's permanent relocation to Brazil in August 1941, Zweig was not only physically, but also intellectually attempting to abandon Europe, and subsequently, his European identity. He saw Brazil as a land with little past, but tremendous future, and Europe as a land with a tremendous past, but little future.

Zweig's perception of Brazil was largely shaped by his initial impression of the country, and some of his conceptions of the socio-political environment of Brazil were noticeably skewed

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<sup>56</sup> Photocopies of originals held at Columbia University, Stefan Zweig to Irwin Edman, October 29 1939, The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia.

from a historical perspective. The reality of Brazil's social and political environment during this time can be used as a useful tool to contrast Zweig's perceptions of Brazil against the "new world" he found himself in, and, subsequently, a shifting identity with which he so evidently struggled. "Contrasts and paradoxes define Brazil," wrote Marshall Eakin on Brazil, and Zweig was perhaps more aware of this than any other European exile in Brazil at that time. While Zweig praised Brazil for its ingenuity and beauty, he admitted that the standard of living was well below that of any European state for most of the population, and that "the technical, the industrial accomplishments of this nation of fifty million people can still be compared only perhaps with those of a small European state."<sup>57</sup>

Brazil's political climate at the time presents some analytical contingencies which must be addressed when examining Zweig's exile. The government, under the leadership of Getúlio Vargas, was one that has been criticized both by Brazilians living in that era and scholars today as being proto-fascist. Brazil seemed to teeter uncertainly between the Axis and Allied Powers as Vargas maneuvered the country between political competition with its South American neighbors and a willingness to forge diplomatic relationships with the United States and other Western powers. The Brazilian foreign minister, Osvaldo Aranha, was an acquaintance of the Zweigs, yet he was also a part of the administration of Vargas' "Estado Novo" government which was notorious for being anti-Semitic. The Decree-Law 3175 of April 1941 rendered it nearly impossible for Jews to be granted a Brazilian visa.<sup>58</sup> Yet "celebrity Jews" were often

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<sup>57</sup> Zweig, *Brazil: A Land of the Future*, 13.

<sup>58</sup> Neill Lochery, *Brazil, the Fortunes of War: World War II and the Making of Modern Brazil* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 155.

secretly issued the required paperwork for immigration to Brazil, as well as to Jews who fled via Lisbon.<sup>59</sup>

German-speaking immigrants were no stranger to Brazil, given mass migration which flowed out of Central Europe in the nineteenth century. Even Zweig himself acknowledged that he “did not visit the German colonies of Santa Catarina, where the picture of Kaiser Wilhelm is said to hang in the older houses and the picture of Adolf Hitler in the newer ones.”<sup>60</sup> Zweig was seemingly terrified at the prospect of not only Brazilian Nazi sympathizers, but also that the Germans themselves would bring the war to the very streets of Rio. He once asked Gabriela Mistral if she thought that the war (and the Nazis) would ever come to South America. When she replied in the affirmative, she was “shocked when she saw the expression in his eyes.”<sup>61</sup> Ernst Feder recalled when Zweig once inquired of him about the number of Nazis and Nazi sympathizers living in Brazil. Feder admittedly exaggerated to reassure his friend when he told Zweig “yes, there are some, but not many.”<sup>62</sup> Zweig was terrified of the notion that what Europe had become (for him, at least) would somehow find its way to South America; the reach of Europe’s implosion seemed universal to Zweig, and even in “paradise” he felt that it was inescapable. In a letter to Lotte’s family in England, Zweig wrote that the war “takes such proportions that all provisions and all fears are futile, every thought of a post war living or of consequences of former mistakes is wasted.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Lochery, *Brazil, the Fortunes of War*, 155.

<sup>60</sup> Zweig, *Land of the Future*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Feder, “Stefan Zweig’s Last Days,” 124.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>63</sup> Stefan Zweig to Hannah and Manfred Altmann, Undated—October/November 1941, in Davis and Marshall, *Stefan and Lotte Zweig’s South American Letters*, 164.

Zweig's life in Brazil was one of reclusion and relative peace, despite the slipping of his mental state in the last months of his life. Some scholars have suggested that the rapid decline in correspondence with his fellow European exiles abroad contributed to his sense of isolation that led him to take his own life. Yet Zweig maintained his ongoing correspondence with Roger Martin du Gard, his first wife Friderike, Lotte's family in England, Romain Rolland, and several others. Many, if not most, of Zweig's contemporaries were living in the United States during this time, and while getting a letter to Europe was particularly hazardous, postal flow to the United States from South America was relatively unhindered. Therefore, any notion that Zweig was *forcefully* disconnected from the vast correspondence network he once had, and that such a severance accelerated him towards his suicide, is not entirely feasible. Indeed, the opposite seems to be the case. Zweig's willingness to aid other European exiles less financially fortunate than he was well-known, but in the last months of his life, that willingness to aid others noticeably dwindled. In a letter to Friderike, he wrote, "This daily piling up of other people's worries onto one's own gradually wears one down," and that he was relieved at the prospect of being able to "work there [Brazil]...without being interrupted."<sup>64</sup> It became increasingly difficult for Zweig to remain in that 'world of yesterday,' and while he saw hope in Brazil, it was not enough to sustain him.

Life in Brazil for Zweig was not particularly arduous, as he praised Brazil's natural beauty and its people, although referring to Brazilian society on more than one occasion as "primitive."<sup>65</sup> Food and luxuries were in no short supply in Brazil, although such amenities ultimately caused Zweig more disdain than comfort: "the little bit of rice we give the dog would

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<sup>64</sup>Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, July 24 1941, in: *Stefan and Friderike Zweig: their Correspondence, 1912-1942* (New York: Hastings House, 1954). 329.

<sup>65</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, September 29 1941, in: *Ibid.*, 333.



be a feast over there [Europe] for a whole family.”<sup>66</sup> Zweig oscillated between comfort in knowing that such amenities and luxuries were cheap and readily available in Brazil, and remembering in anguish that the starving millions in Europe were not so fortunate. Indeed, the material amenities available to the Zweigs in Brazil were numerous; Lotte writes in a letter to her brother in October 1941 that “Stefan has his barber, his coffee-houses, his writing table, and I know my shops and already most of the household and shopping expressions.”<sup>67</sup> For one who, on numerous occasions, became psychologically traumatized by the news of the destitution and famine coming out of Europe, Zweig also revels in the abundance of Brazil and the inexpensive lifestyle it allows: “5 dollars a month to our maid while in America one had to pay 60 or 80 and she takes there two holidays a week. I do not generally be mean, but you understand what a relief it is to know that one can still live cheaply somewhere.”<sup>68</sup>

Zweig’s perception of the Brazilian people with which he came in contact on a daily basis provides a crucial undertone to his “transition.” Zweig had always considered himself a man of the world, a cosmopolitan humanist. As Franz Werfel wrote after Zweig’s death: “No man was less ‘bound to the soil’ than Stefan Zweig. Of all émigrés none was so little an émigré as this—in the most literal sense—citizen of the world, who was at home in the countries of his exile before there was such a thing.”<sup>69</sup> But there are instances in Zweig’s correspondence regarding Brazil and its people which suggest a lack of such a worldliness—at least from a twenty-first century perspective. While he praised Brazil for its ‘perfect’ racial relations, on many occasions he refers to extensive portions of Brazilians as ‘primitive,’ or on the verge of

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<sup>66</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, November 29 1941, in: *Stefan and Friderike Zweig: their Correspondence*, 339.

<sup>67</sup> Lotte Zweig to Hannah Altmann, October 3 1941, in Davis and Marshall, *Stefan and Lotte Zweig’s South American Letters*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Stefan Zweig to Hannah and Manfred Altmann, October 3 1941, in: Davis and Marshall, 144.

<sup>69</sup> Franz Werfel, “Stefan Zweig’s Death,” in: Arens, 140.

uncivilized, and in particular regarding people of color. While it is not feasible to suggest that Zweig was racist, much of the language he used in his private letters reveals the difficulties he initially had in communicating and understand the non-Europeans he encountered in Brazil. By examining these (at times offensive) remarks and perceptions, Zweig's pivot towards a non-static identity can be more concretely examined, especially given the stark contrast in lifestyle he experienced between the "West" and South America, and how he navigated these shifts.

Zweig praised Brazil for its racial relations, which he saw as being safeguarded by the state. His perceptions of racial relations in Brazil were, of course, clouded by the ethnic nature of European politics (and brutality) at the time. Therefore, his enthusiasm for the Brazilians' race relations, while well-founded, was somewhat misguided given the reality of race tensions present in Brazil at the time. Yet Zweig insisted that Brazil was the model society, as a place where "all these races, which, by their very color, stand in visible contrast to each other, live together in total harmony and, in spite of their individual origins, compete with each other only in the ambition to...become Brazilians."<sup>70</sup> For Zweig, Brazil had seemingly overcome its racial divide, a problem which, for him, had torn Europe to irreparable pieces. "The allegedly destructive principle of *mélange*, that horror, that 'sin against the blood' of our [Europe's] obsessed racial theorists, is here the consciously applied bonding agent of a national culture," he wrote in *Land of the Future*.<sup>71</sup>

According to Zweig, Brazil's racial tensions were solved by simply "ignoring" the race problem's validity: "while the mistaken notion of wanting to breed human beings 'racially pure,' like race horses or dogs, prevails more than ever in our old world, for centuries the Brazilian

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<sup>70</sup> Zweig, *Land of the Future*, 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

nation has been established on one principle alone, that of free and unrestrained intermixing, the total equality of black and white and brown and yellow.”<sup>72</sup> Given that slavery was not abolished in Brazil until 1888 (Zweig was seven years old at the time), and that even then was due to pressure from the British and a surge in European immigration, Zweig’s idea of racial harmony being a part of Brazilian society for “centuries” was untenable.<sup>73</sup> It was natural, of course, for Zweig to romanticize Brazil’s racial relations given that in Brazil one could not be exterminated by the state based solely on their race. Indeed, this was, of course, the foundation of Zweig’s understanding of Brazil’s racial relations: in every way, he based his perception of Brazil’s “racial democracy” in comparison to the racial purity fanaticism occurring in Europe at the time.<sup>74</sup> Yet even for Zweig, there are moments in which he exposes his unfamiliarity in engaging with multiple races, which counter his own claim of possessing an unparalleled degree of “worldliness.”

In a letter to Friderike shortly after arriving in Petropolis, Zweig wrote “Petropolis is a little Semmering, only more primitive, like the Salzkammergut of anno 1900,” and that “you simply have to reduce your standards to absolute zero, forget who you were, what you wanted, and be utterly modest in your demands.”<sup>75</sup> Aside from insinuating that in order to be comfortable in his new host nation, he would need to “lower” his standards to “absolute zero,” which in itself is indicative of a pessimistic expectation of his life in Brazil, Zweig’s comments (at least for the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Eakin, *The Once and Future Country*, 215.

<sup>74</sup> An excellent and expansive historiography exists on “racial democracy” in Brazil. For example: Livio Sansone, *Blackness Without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2003); Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *The Sorcery of Color: Identity, Race, and Gender in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008); Leone Sousa, *The Myth of Racial Democracy and National Identity in Brazil: Race and Nationality in Brazil* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009); France Winddance Twine, *Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Robin E. Sheriff, *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race, and Racism in Urban Brazil* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

<sup>75</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, September 10 1941, in *Stefan and Friderike Zweig: Their Correspondence*, 330.

purpose of this paper) portray his ‘Europeaness.’ It should be noted, however, that elitist comments regarding the people of Brazil were made primarily in the early weeks of his time there, and that a noticeable shift in his perception—a shift away from the material abundance of the country and the ‘primitivity’ of the people to a sense of gratitude and admiration—becomes evident. Such a shift supports the notion of an identity in transition, and lends itself to further support the idea of a non-static identity in Zweig’s case. He wrote in September 1941: “you may imagine what consolation is to be extracted from nature here, which is full of color on every side, and where the people are so touching in their childlike ways.”<sup>76</sup>

Zweig once referred to children of African descent he encountered in Rio as being “like sweet little animals you want to take up in your arms.”<sup>77</sup> Regarding his Brazilian maid, he wrote: “She always comes into the room barefoot, in the old slave manner, takes off her wooden slippers in the kitchen.”<sup>78</sup> While his characterizations of people of color that he encountered in Brazil do not reflect the inherent racism that was rampant in his homeland at the time, Zweig’s perceptions of the Brazilian people are crucial to understanding his exile experience as it was happening. Therefore, such phrases as “it is a pleasure to see intelligence combined with a quiet modesty and courtesy in the half-dark faces of the students,” must be put within the proper context when they are being examined.<sup>79</sup> Zweig had, after all, fled a continent which had torn itself to pieces because of a stratified racial worldview, therefore such comments on his part should be considered a part of his “discovery” of a Brazil that had contradicted all of his preconceived *historical* notions of the country.

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<sup>76</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, September 17 1941, in *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>77</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, September 29 1941, in *Ibid.*, 333..

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Zweig, *Land of the Future*, 11.

It would be naïve to suggest that Zweig had in every sense of the word abandoned his European identity, but it *can* be argued, and rightfully so, that at the time of his suicide he was in the midst of a transition into a “stateless” (in terms of his mentality, not his British passport) exile in South America. Even by November of 1941, the anguish such a transition caused Zweig was becoming evident. He wrote to Friderike, “a small share of egotism and lack of imagination would have helped me a lot in life; it is to [sic] late to try to change one’s self now.”<sup>80</sup> Zweig’s correspondence and writings during his exile are often contradictory, and various interpretations have resulted in an ever-growing debate on Zweig. Yet the underlying reasons for the study of Zweig’s life, coupled with how terms such as ‘exile’ and ‘refugee’ are defined within certain limiting frameworks, are counterproductive to historical investigation. The political and intellectual environment in which Zweig found himself cannot be ignored, and by taking this into account, the true nature of Zweig’s *singular* and personal exile experience can be examined—an exile that was, in fact, *outside* of the traditional conceptualization of the process of exile itself.

The Hungarian author and journalist Paul Tabori examined not only the semantics of the word ‘exile,’ which he argued implied a longing to return to the homeland, but also addressed a “psychosis” he dubs “‘*bacillus emigraticus*,’ the virus of nostalgia and homesickness that is so powerful that it turns the exile almost into a “fellow-traveler.”<sup>81</sup> On many occasions, Zweig referred to himself as such a “traveler,” and in one of his last letters, dated 20 January 1942, he told Friderike that “For me it becomes more and more sure that I will never see my house again and to remain everywhere but a traveling guest.”<sup>82</sup> But, if the semantic definition of exile Tabori

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<sup>80</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, October 27 1941, in *Ibid.*, 336.

<sup>81</sup> Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London: Harrap, 1972), 33.

<sup>82</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, January 20 1942, Stefan and Friderike Zweig’s Correspondence, (42:1), The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia.

put forth is, at least in some circles, generally accepted, then it would seem a grave error to include Zweig under such a categorization. On the day of his suicide, Zweig wrote a letter to Cardoso Miranda, the Prefect of Petropolis, stating that “If I dared for a third time to build a house, in an attempt to rebuild my life which has been cut off from the roots of its birthplace, it would have been here and nowhere else.”<sup>83</sup>

The difficult transition Zweig was undergoing from a European international humanist to an inner statelessness is also evident in his suicide note. Even in the first line it becomes clear: “Every day I learned to love this country more, and I would not have asked to rebuild my life in any other place after the world of my own language sank and was lost to me and my spiritual homeland, Europe, destroyed itself.”<sup>84</sup> Zweig’s love and appreciation for his host nation is often counterbalanced against his occasional longing for a return to Europe; in his last letter to Lotte’s brother and sister-in-law, Zweig writes that they “liked this country enormously but it was always a provisory life far from our home, our friends and for me with sixty years the idea to wait still for years of this terrible time became unbearable.”<sup>85</sup> Thus, even in his last days, Zweig struggled with his identity and the relationship between that identity and the physical and cultural spaces that surrounded him.

In a letter to Friderike in September 1941, Zweig wrote “If I could only forget Europe and be reconciled to the idea that all my belongings, house, books, are lost forever, and be thankful that I can live quietly here in this divine landscape while Europe falls to pieces in

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<sup>83</sup> Donald A. Prater, *European of Yesterday: A Biography of Stefan Zweig* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1972), 335.

<sup>84</sup> A digitized copy of Zweig’s *Declaração* is available on the website of the National Library of Israel at [http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/collections/personalsites/archive\\_treasures/Pages/stefan-zweig.aspx](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/collections/personalsites/archive_treasures/Pages/stefan-zweig.aspx). (Accessed 15 June 2016).

<sup>85</sup> Davis and Marshal, *Stefan and Lotte Zweig’s South American Letters*, 185.

hunger and misery, then I should be content.”<sup>86</sup> Zweig, who had grown to maturity in what he refers to as the ‘age of security’ in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, was in the midst of a radical transformation. While some exiles and refugees seemingly assimilated into their host countries without much anguish, Zweig, who had become by that point somewhat of a permanent fixture in that very European culture, had enormous difficulty in crossing the line between European and non-European existence and identity. While some scholars have argued that for those Europeans who were born into the cultural renaissance of Wilhelmine Germany, the Weimar Republic, or late imperial Vienna, they could find nothing “familiar or appealing” in the oftentimes “exotic” countries in which they found themselves, Zweig was one of many who did.<sup>87</sup> Zweig relished Brazil’s culture, history, and natural beauty, and therefore becomes yet another example of the inhibiting results of classification and generalization of the exile experience. Zweig’s transformation is the symptom of an identity in a state of transformation, exiled from the stasis of Europeanism, and moving forward into uncertainty.

The theme of transformation is found throughout *The World of Yesterday*, and is found not only in Zweig’s last months in Brazil, but arguably throughout his entire exile. He writes, “we have all...witnessed these vast transformations—we have been forced to witness them.”<sup>88</sup> In many ways, it would appear that Zweig was more susceptible to such transformations:

Perhaps I was driven by a presentiment that as long as the world was still open, and ships could navigate the seas in peace, I ought to gather as many impressions and experiences as the heart could hold, to be stored up for darker days, or perhaps it was a desire to know that, while distrust and discord were tearing our world to pieces, another was in construction. Perhaps it was even a vague premonition that our future, including my own, lay outside Europe.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Stefan Zweig to Friderike Zweig, September 17, 1941, in: *Stefan and Friderike Zweig: their Correspondence*, 331.

<sup>87</sup> Hermand, *Culture in Dark Times*, 173.

<sup>88</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, xv.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

Zweig saw the opportunity outside of Europe for refugees like himself—an opportunity to rebuild their lives and begin anew. Many German-speaking refugees built new lives in the United States or Britain, as a hefty historiography reflects. Yet many, such as Zweig, were not content in the United States or did not feel at home in Britain, and were thus forced to undergo even further transformations, most notably by resettling in other parts of Europe (particularly in the post-war era) or by venturing to South America.

### Conclusions

The historical nature of Zweig's exile was, in many ways, responsible for his suicide. The trauma of not only being uprooted from his cultural and linguistic heritage, but also the shock of having his own interpretations of history upended had grave consequences. Even towards the end, Friderike wrote in her biography of him that "his activities were obstructed in every sense of the word. There was little hope that his books would ever appear again in the original language; moreover, his thoughts and contemplations were bound to European, nay even Latin mentality."<sup>90</sup> It was this bond to his European identity, one which, due to separation from all aspects of his former life—including his historical perspective—led Zweig to the conclusion of suicide. Zweig's life had not simply been uprooted geographically, but also historically. The historical interpretations of an Austrian from a *petit bourgeoisie* family, born in Vienna at the height of the Habsburg Empire, underwent a dramatic transformation. The weight of such an upheaval of Zweig's worldview (of which his historical perspective was merely a singular aspect), was seemingly too much to bear. As Clive James has written, Zweig's usage of the

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<sup>90</sup> Friderike Zweig, *Stefan Zweig* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1946), 261.



German *vorbei* in his letters and writings is evident of his gradual descent into fatal depression.<sup>91</sup> But it was not the prospect of a victorious Nazi Germany that solidified Zweig's ultimate decision, but rather the thought that the war against "everyone who had lived for the arts, for scholarship and for humanism" had already been won.<sup>92</sup> The thought that these things had already been "irretrievably *vorbei*" was the crux of Zweig's exile experience, and one that would end in his suicide. From a contemporary vantage point, it may be easy to pass judgement on Zweig for his "premature" exit from this life, as Thomas Mann and others have done. Yet, in so doing, contemporary historians risk distorting notions of restoring "the qualities of which [Zweig] was the living representative,"—that is, the arts, scholarship, and humanism.<sup>93</sup>

Stefan Zweig's life as a refugee, albeit one in which he was much more fortunate than many, was one of enormous consequence for his contemporaries and friends. Gabriela Mistral and Claudio de Souza were among the first to arrive at the Zweigs' bungalow after the suicide, having been informed mere hours after the couple's deaths by the Brazilian writer Domencio Braga. The sight of her friends' bodies left a lasting impression on Mistral, who wrote an eloquent and moving account of the scene to her and Zweig's mutual friend Antonio Mallea, who was editor of Argentina's *Le Nación* newspaper, and who immediately published Mistral's account.<sup>94</sup> Mistral wrote to her dear friend, the Argentinian aristocrat Victoria Ocampo, about how the Zweigs' deaths had been devastating for her, and how she began to believe Zweig's theory that writers could do very little to stop the spread of fascism. Because Nazism was "based in fear, more than anything else, and then corruption," writers were powerless to withstand it,

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<sup>91</sup> Clive James, *Cultural Amnesia: Necessary Memories from History and the Arts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 839.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Antonio Mallea, *Le Nación*, March 3, 1942, The Stefan Zweig Collection, Daniel A. Reed Library Archives & Special Collections, State University of New York at Fredonia.

according to Mistral.<sup>95</sup> Given the powerful and passionate response to Zweig's death by his South American acquaintances, it can be argued that such notions of complete isolation, fear of Nazism, and loneliness led to his suicide—arguments which have been dominant in historical scholarship on Zweig—are not tenable.

Indeed, given the resurgence of interest in Zweig and his interpretations of how “The World of Yesterday” came to end, it becomes clear that an intense reworking of historical concepts of the process and experience of exile and statelessness is necessary in the case of refugees of Nazism. Zweig's exile experience was one of millions in the Second World War, and only one amongst countless other millions of displaced persons in the decades since. Zweig's exile experience challenges nearly every notion and contingency applied retroactively to “refugeeness” by historians. In a world of continuing globalization and decolonization, the displaced persons of the Second World War offer contemporary historians an informative perspective on the remainder of the twentieth century, with its continuing pattern of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and forced migration. But, a restructuring of the analytical process in which exiles and refugees are viewed in the historical perspective is vital. While keeping the subject's nation or region of origin in mind is important, it is no longer feasible for historians to continue the rhetoric of enforcing particular national identities on those whom they study, especially in the case of exiles. The process and experience of exile almost always occurs within a global context, and should not be confined to preconceived notions of regional identities, and the subject's *historical* perspective and identity must also be taken into account.

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<sup>95</sup> Gabriela Mistral to Victoria Ocampo, March 4, 1942, in: Elizabeth Horan and Doris Meyer, eds. and trans., *This America of Ours: The Letters of Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 308.

In the Opening Ceremony of the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, thousands rose to their feet to applaud the team of stateless athletes, who were unable to accompany their home nations' teams into the arena because they had either been forcibly exiled from an authoritarian regime or had fled due to violent conflict. For the first time in Olympic history, a specific team needed to be created for those athletes who could not or would not represent their home nations. Such a moment brings Zweig's life, exile, and death into a sobering perspective. The 2016 Games were the first to ever be hosted by a South American nation, and despite the costs and international criticism and concern, Brazilian leaders were determined. Since the end of the Second World War, Brazil has desperately tried to legitimize its status as a world power *vis-à-vis* the West, and hosting the Olympic Games in Rio were seen as a tool by which to further economic, cultural, and political relations with the world. The fact that Brazil still yet faces unprecedented international obstacles to the recognition of its global importance, and that, even in 2016, millions are stateless refugees, sheds new light upon Zweig's exile experience. The nation that Zweig saw as the *Land der Zukunft* still yet struggles in the twenty-first century to perpetuate its relevance in the eyes of the world, and that the existence of millions of stateless peoples is undergoing a process of normalization—becoming a permanent fixture within the continuum between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—is alarming. As Zweig wrote in *The World of Yesterday*, “On the day I lost my Austrian passport I discovered, at the age of fifty-eight, that when you lose your native land you are losing more than a patch of territory within set borders.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Zweig, *The World of Yesterday*, 439.

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## Vita

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