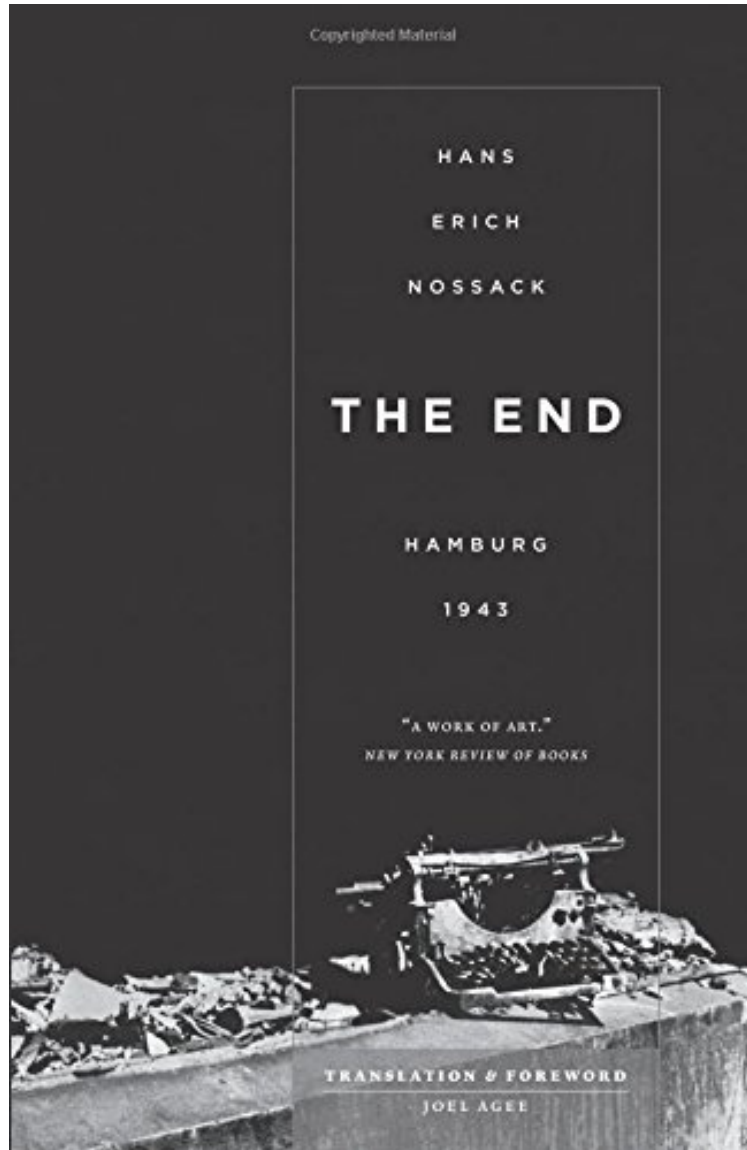


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The End: Hamburg 1943

Hans Erich Nossack

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#803727 in Books Hans Erich Nossack 2006-12-31 2004-12-15Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 7.88 x .40 x 5.25l, .41 #File Name: 0226595579112 pagesThe End Hamburg 1943 | File size: 62.Mb

Hans Erich Nossack : The End: Hamburg 1943 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The End: Hamburg 1943:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Another RealityBy Gary KernThe original title of THE END is DER UNTERGANG, which means "the destruction," "the downfall," "the collapse." Translator Joel Agee, bearing in mind the "total collective ruin" narrated in the book, chose the title he did. Other possibilities might have been "The World Gone Under," "Fallen Away," or even "Everything in Ruins," but perhaps these alternatives are too descriptive, and

the translator is right. In context, the original title signifies the end of the world that is known. Author Hans Nossack wrote down his account three months after the Allied incendiary bombing of Hamburg in July 1943. Operation Gomorrah burned up fifty thousand lives. Nossack and his wife escaped by pure chance. In the first lines he explains that he could not delay writing for fear that his mind would return to the usual ways of thinking, with their conventional verities, and lose its ability to relate the other reality of his experience. The resulting short work--63 pages of inexplicably small type--must be called a memoir, yet is something quite different: the record of a mental state, the way a person thought after being stunned into a new or previously unrecognized reality. Agee, in his short foreword, calls it a report, a testimony, yet notes that it is unbalanced as reportage and not always factual as recollection. Reality has changed, so its description falls outside of any genre. The author is still in shock but emerging from his altered state, recovering his literary powers, but as yet unable to pull himself out of the void. One can read the book as a historical document, but there is little attention to the dead, to the horrors that everyone would expect, and close attention to little details and missing objects. The Nazis and the Allies fighting the war do not seem to exist. The survivors of the bombing who need to bind together understand their special category without words and resent direct expressions of the obvious. They are like zombies. There is an occasional blurring between real and imagined or semi-hallucinatory events. It is bleak, streetless and chilling. Reading this book is like bending over a person lying in the road who softly tells you what he feels and what is numb, what is important and what no longer matters, what is real and what is not. Why stop and listen? Why dip into another's misery, now so old? Well, for one thing, we always need to consider the most horrible possibilities. For another, we are still jumpy after the attacks of 9/11, and perhaps can profit from an account of ultimate disaster and survival. For a third, it is good for the soul to look back to Hamburg 1943 and hear from the victims, since it is always better to identify with victims, whether they be Jews in Nazi concentration camps or German citizens in Allied firestorms. But one advisory: don't read this book for its literary quality. It's too real for that.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Antidote for illusion
By D. J. Leedham
Found this from W.G. Sebald's remarks about post war German writing on the bombing devastation, or lack of much such writing. This is as fine as Sebald felt it was. The photos added to the text were harrowing. Nossack is remarkable in his utterly unsentimental dispassionate, matter of fact recording of his experiences of the firebombing of Hamburg. When an experience of such utter devastation and the destruction of all ones personal bearings of identity and place and belonging have been utterly destroyed - randomly, arbitrarily (our apartment-house was gone, the neighbors' still stood) - words of sentiment, judgement or moral reference lose all meaning or significance. It is only for works such as this that the word "awesome" retains its original and true meaning. - I can also recommend Sebald's other positive reference Heinrich Boll's "The Silent Angel" A very early work long withheld from publication. Brilliant. And, indeed, Sebald's own non fiction lectures "On The Natural History Of Destruction. Why? 50,000,000 died because some others lost touch with reality. Reality? That which is left to us when all our illusions are obliterated before our eyes. And we are still alive.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Brief but profoundly moving
By Patrick O'Brien
Nossack's text is only sixty-three pages - a one to two hour read that you will not forget. What is most remarkable about this eye-witness description of the annihilation of Hamburg is the understatement throughout. "We had no beds, no blankets, no coats, no warm underwear and above all no shoes. Suddenly we thought we had come to realize that these things were the only necessities of life. We passed on this new insight to friends in urgently worded letters: Drop everything. Just keep your winter clothes and solid shoes!" Or later he writes: "But now when nothing was left? Not the corpse of the city, not something known and now dead, that would speak to us: Alas yesterday, when I still lived, I was your home -- no, there was no need to mourn. What surrounded us did not remind us in any way of what was lost. It had nothing to do with it. It was something else, it was strangeness itself, it was the essentially not possible." The book is filled with passages like this and filled with least details that in some mysteriously poetic way let you approach the boundary of the "essentially not possible". I haven't read the original German but the translation reads superbly and there's a fine foreword by the translator, Joel Agee. In sum: a powerfully moving threnody not only for the horrors of all wars but for all lost things, for the "always leaving" of our lives...

One didn't dare to inhale for fear of breathing it in. It was the sound of eighteen hundred airplanes approaching Hamburg from the south at an unimaginable height. We had already experienced two hundred or even more air raids, among them some very heavy ones, but this was something completely new. And yet there was an immediate recognition: this was what everyone had been waiting for, what had hung for months like a shadow over everything we did, making us weary. It was the end. Novelist Hans Erich Nossack was forty-two when the Allied bombardments of German cities began, and he watched the destruction of Hamburg—the city where he was born and where he would later die—from across its Elbe River. He heard the whistle of the bombs and the singing of shrapnel; he watched his neighbors flee; he wondered if his home—and his manuscripts—would survive the devastation. The End is his terse, remarkable memoir of the annihilation of the city, written only three months after the bombing. A searing firsthand account of one of the most notorious events of World War II, The End is also a meditation on war and hope, history and its devastation. And it is the rare book, as W. G. Sebald noted, that describes the Allied bombing campaign from

the German perspective. In the first English-language edition of *The End*, Nossack's text has been crisply translated by Joel Agee and is accompanied by the photographs of Erich Andres. Poetic, evocative, and yet highly descriptive, *The End* will prove to be, as Sebald claimed, one of the most important German books on the firebombing of that country. "A small but critical book, something to read in those quiet moments when we wonder what will happen next."—Susan Salter Reynolds, *Los Angeles Times*

From Publishers Weekly German novelist Nossack's brief (63 pages in this edition) contemporary account of the 1943 destruction of Hamburg by Allied bombardment is one of the small number of works available in English that deal with the events of those years from a German perspective. Its publication is clearly owed to its mention in another book, the late W.G. Sebald's best-selling and controversial *On the Natural History of Destruction*, which speaks highly of Nossack's account. The narrative is indeed clear-eyed and dispassionate, possessed of the emotional distance necessary to regard the terrible events in their totality. The account begins as Nossack and his wife are on holiday in the city's idyllic rural outskirts; the reader is then carried through wave after wave of firebombing and retrenchment to the point of total devastation; the confusion and horror of events are rendered with immediacy and power. (Also included are 11 contemporary half-tone Erich Andres photographs.) What's missing from Nossack's account is any political or historical dimension: a reader coming to this book for primary knowledge would learn little about why the bombings took place, or why so many people accepted them with numb resignation instead of anger. But as a supplement to Sebald's more detailed consideration, Nossack's remarkable witnessing has real and urgent value. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Many readers remember the firebombing of Dresden in World War II largely because of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Undoubtedly, the destruction of Hamburg, Germany, as the result of massive Allied bombing raids in July 1943 will become associated with this slim yet compelling memoir by German novelist Nossack (1901-77). His eyewitness account of the 1800-plane bombardment was written three months later and published in Germany in 1948. Nossack vividly depicts the human side of war, from the approaching terror to the city's final devastation. Translated by Agee (*Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany*), Nossack's prose is both direct and dreamlike. The text is complemented by a portfolio of 13 unforgettable scenes of destruction by Hamburg photographer Erich Andres. In his introduction, Agee portrays Nossack as an Orwell-like writer of conscience who was nearly forgotten after his death. This book deserves a place next to John Hersey's *Hiroshima* on the top shelf of modern war literature."--Library Journal, starred review About the Author Hans Erich Nossack (1901-77) was a prolific writer. His books *The D'Arthez Case*, *To the Unknown Hero*, *The Impossible Proof*, *Wait for November*, and *An Offering for the Dead* have been translated into English.