

The Letters of Heinrich and Thomas Mann, 1900-1949 (Weimar and Now: German Cultural Criticism, No 12)

Thomas Mann



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Fortunately for us, brothers Heinrich and Thomas Mann remained devoted and eloquent correspondents even while disagreeing passionately on matters literary, political, philosophical, and personal. In their correspondence, set against a shifting backdrop of locations in Europe and America, mundane concerns blend easily with astonishing artistic and critical insights. That these irrepressible siblings were among the giants of twentieth-century letters gives their exchanges unique literary and historical fascination.

Beginning in Germany and Italy at the turn of the century, the letters document with disarming immediacy the brothers' views on aesthetics, politics, and the social responsibility of the writer, as well as their mutual jealousy, admiration, rivalry, and loyalty. The devastating rift caused by Thomas's support of Germany during World War I and his brother's utter opposition to the war took many years to mend, but they found their way back to friendship in the 1920s. After Hitler rose to power, both writers ultimately sought refuge in the United States. The letters offer a moving portrayal of their struggle, as novelists and socially engaged intellectuals, to bear witness to the cataclysmic historical changes around them and to their experience of exile, in Europe and then in America. This first complete English translation of their correspondence is a dramatic human dialogue and a major literary event.

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