



# Thomas Mann: Life as a Work of Art. A Biography

*Hermann Kurzke*

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## Thomas Mann: Life as a Work of Art. A Biography Hermann Kurzke

This vivid, sometimes tragic, and often humorous literary biography brings to life as never before the extraordinary talent and complex person who was Thomas Mann.

Engrossing vignettes enable us to enter Mann's life and work from unique angles. We meet the difficult, even unsavory private man: hypochondriac and nervous, narcissistic and vainglorious, isolated and greedy for love, shy and often ungenerous. But we are also introduced to a man who lived an eventful life, was capable of great kindness, loved dogs, doted on his daughters, and listened to Jack Benny.

We experience Mann's tragedy as the quintessential German forced by the rise of National Socialism first into inner exile and then into real exile in Switzerland, Princeton, and California. His letters from this time reveal the torment that exile represented for a writer whose work, indeed whose very self, was inextricably bound up with the German language.

The book provides fresh and sometimes startling insights into both famous and little-known episodes in Mann's life and into his writing--the only realm in which he ever felt free. It shows how love, death, religion, and politics were not merely themes in *Buddenbrooks*, *The Magic Mountain*, and other works, but were woven into the fabric of his existence and preoccupied him unrelentingly. It also teases out what is known about what Mann considered his celibate homoeroticism and what others have labeled closeted homosexuality. In particular, we learn about his affection for the young man who inspired the character of Tadzio in *Death in Venice*. And, against the unfocused accusations of anti-Semitism that have been leveled at Mann, the book examines in human detail his relationships with Jewish writers, friends, and family members.

This is the richest available portrait of Thomas Mann as man and writer--the place to start for anyone wanting to know anything about his life, work, or times.

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