The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Mann

Key dimensions of Thomas Mann’s writing and life are explored in this collection of specially commissioned essays. In addition to introductory chapters on all the main works of fiction, the essays and diaries, there are four chapters examining Mann's oeuvre in relation to major themes. These thematic explorations include his position as a realistic writer concerned with the history of his own times and as a commentator on German and American politics; his controversial reputation as an intellectual novelist; the literary techniques that enabled his challenging fictions to appeal to a wide audience; and the homosexual subtext running through his fiction and diaries. A final chapter looks at the pitfalls of translating Mann into English. The essays are well supported by supplementary material including a chronology of the period and detailed guides to further reading. Altogether the volume provides an invaluable resource for scholars and students.

Ritchie Robertson is Professor of German at Oxford University and Fellow and Tutor of St John’s College, Oxford. He is the author of Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature (1985) and Heine (1988), which have also been published in German translation, and The ‘Jewish Question’ in German Literature, 1749-1939 (1999). He has also published numerous translations from German, including works by Heine and Hoffmann. He is an editor of The Modern Language Review.
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Mark M. Anderson is Professor of German at Columbia University and author of *Kafka’s Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle* (1992).

Alan Bance is Professor of German at the University of Southampton. His publications include *Theodor Fontane: The Major Novels* (1982) and many studies of Thomas Mann and other modern German prose writers.

Michael Beddow has recently retired as Professor of German at Leeds University. His publications include *The Fiction of Humanity: Studies in the Bildungsroman from Wieland to Thomas Mann* (1982) and studies of Goethe’s *Faust I* and Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, the latter in the series ‘Landmarks in World Literature’ (1994).

Paul Bishop is Professor of German at Glasgow University. His publications include *The Dionysian Self: C. G. Jung’s Reception of Friedrich Nietzsche* (1995) and many studies in literary and intellectual history from Goethe onwards.

Timothy Buck has recently retired as Lecturer in German at Edinburgh University. He has published numerous studies of German linguistic history and medieval literature.

Yahya Elsaghe is Professor of German at the University of Berne. He has published numerous studies of Hölderlin, Goethe and Thomas Mann, most recently *Die imaginäre Nation: Thomas Mann und das ‘Deutsche’* (2000).

Wolf-Daniel Hartwich teaches German literature at Heidelberg University. His publications include *Die Sendung Moses: Von der Aufklärung bis Thomas Mann* (1997).
NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

FREDERICK A. LUBICH is Professor of German at Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia. He has published Die Dialektik von Logos und Eros im Werk von Thomas Mann (1986) and two studies of Max Frisch. He is currently working on two books: *Mann-Mosaik: Studien zum Werk von Thomas Mann* and *The Return of the Great Mother: The Discourse of Matriarchy in 20th-Century German Literary and Cultural History*.


T. J. REED is Taylor Professor of German at Oxford University and a Fellow of the Queen’s College. His books include *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (1974; enlarged edition 1996), *The Classical Centre: Goethe and Weimar* (2nd edition, 1986), and several studies and editions of *Death in Venice*. He is one of the editors of the forthcoming annotated edition of Mann’s complete works.

RITCHIE ROBERTSON is Professor of German at Oxford and a Fellow of St John’s College. His books include *Kafka: Judaism, Politics, and Literature* (1985) and *The ‘Jewish Question’ in German Literature, 1749–1939* (1999).

JUDITH RYAN is Harvard College Professor and Robert K. and Dale J. Weary Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Her books include *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (1983), *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (1991) and *Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition* (1999).

SUSAN VON ROHR SCAFF is Professor of German at San José State University in California, and author of *History, Myth and Music: Thomas Mann’s Timely Fiction* (1998).

HINRICHSIEFFKEN has recently retired as Professor of German at Nottingham University. Besides studies of medieval literature, Kafka, Broch and Theodor Haecker, he has published *Thomas Mann: Goethe – ‘Ideal der Deutschheit’: Wiederholte Spiegelungen* (1981).

ANDREW J. WEBBER is Lecturer in German at Cambridge University and a Fellow of Churchill College. He is the author of *Sexuality and the Sense of Self in the Works of Georg Trakl and Robert Musil* (1990) and *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature* (1996).
Thomas Mann continues to have the widest appeal of all German novelists. Although he identified profoundly with various conceptions of Germany and Germanness, he sought during most of his literary career to build bridges between German culture and a succession of wider worlds. His first masterpiece, *Buddenbrooks*, the unrivalled bestseller in twentieth-century German fiction, adopts techniques from French, Russian, and Scandinavian realism to chronicle the lives of a family in a North German backwater. *The Magic Mountain*, though set in the confines of a Swiss sanatorium, takes its setting as a stage where debates about the shape of European culture can be dramatised. The huge tetralogy *Joseph and his Brothers* explores the cultures of the ancient Near East, the origins of religion and culture, and the foundations of a Judaeo-Christian humanism that, as Mann wrote, was under threat from Hitler's Third Reich. And in *Doctor Faustus* Mann revived a German myth, with its theological underpinnings, to present the fictional biography of a quintessential German artist whose tragedy lay not least in cutting himself off from European culture.

Mann's mission to explain Germany to the wider world was made more urgent by his own exile from Germany. Having been an outspoken opponent of the reactionary Right and of the National Socialists from 1922 onwards, he moved, after Hitler's accession to power, to France, Switzerland, and eventually the United States. Deprived of his German citizenship, he became a citizen first of Czechoslovakia and later of the United States. In America, where the translations of his fiction already had a large readership, he enjoyed more prominence than almost any other émigré, and used it to become a spokesman for humanism and a cultural mediator.

During Mann's lifetime, his public persona inevitably coloured the reception of his novels. They were often understood with dutiful awe as intellectual fiction of a high order, top-heavy with German philosophy and history. Overattention to this aspect of Mann's fiction often distracted readers, especially those reliant on imperfect translations, from the light and polished irony,
apparent even in the short stories with which Mann entered the literary scene in the 1890s, and from the practically Dickensian humour governing the characterisation in the major novels. In the 1970s scholars drew attention to Mann’s career as a politically engaged intellectual and to the close links between his political stances and his writing, especially *The Magic Mountain*, the short fiction of the 1920s, and the large body of reflective and thought-provoking essays that Mann produced for many public occasions. It was also in the 1970s that Mann’s surviving diaries began to be published, not only proving an invaluable biographical source and a major addition to the canon of literary journals, but also disclosing much about his lifelong homosexuality. Although *Death in Venice* and some published correspondence were frank enough, the insights provided by the diaries coincided with the new perspectives of gender-oriented criticism to open up additional layers of meaning in large areas of Mann’s fiction.

Like any classic, therefore, Mann has continued to be reread in new ways, and part of the purpose of this collection of introductory essays is to offer a variety of approaches to his work. The first four contributions are thematic. They consider Mann in the light of his engagement with German history; as an intellectual novelist; as a supremely skilful practitioner of the novel, both heightening his readers’ moral awareness and providing them with gratification; and using these techniques to explore forms and categories of masculinity. There follow three essays on the shorter fiction, six on the major novels (other fictional works, including *Royal Highness*, are dealt with in passing), and appreciations of Mann the essayist and the diarist. Finally, there is a critical examination of the translations of Mann currently available in English, reminding us that despite his popularity in the English-speaking world, part of his claim to fame lies in his uniquely skilful and untranslatable use of the German language. The essays are intended to be useful both to readers who have access to the original, and readers who know Mann in English translation. Each chapter concludes with a list of further reading relevant to the subject of the chapter; the selected bibliography at the end of the book gives information about German and English editions of Mann’s works and includes a wide selection of criticism written in both languages.

I should like to thank all the contributors to this book for their enthusiastic and good-natured co-operation; the four anonymous readers enlisted by Cambridge University Press for their detailed, supportive and constructive comments; and Linda Bree for her invariable helpfulness and patience as editor.

Ritchie Robertson
CHRONOLOGY

1875  6 June: birth of Paul Thomas Mann to Julia (née da Silva Bruhns, born 1851) and Thomas Johann Heinrich Mann (1840), the second of five children. Paul Thomas's siblings are Luiz Heinrich (born 1871), Julia (1877), Carla (1881) and Viktor (1890).

1877  Mann's father is elected to the Lübeck senate.

1891  Mann's father dies on 13 October; the family firm (Johann Siegmund Mann Corn Merchants, Commission and Transport Agents) is liquidated and the family house sold, leaving Heinrich and Thomas with independent means sufficient to establish themselves as writers.

1893  Frau Mann moves to Munich with the three younger children (Julia, Carla, and Viktor); Thomas stays at school in Lübeck.

1894  Thomas leaves school and joins his mother in Munich, where he starts working for an insurance company, but leaves it after four months in the hope of a career as a journalist. His first story, 'Gefallen' [Fallen], is published in the Naturalist journal Die Gesellschaft [Society]. In the next few years he gradually publishes short stories in the periodical edited by his brother Heinrich, Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert [The Twentieth Century]. The two brothers also work and travel together.

1898  Der kleine Herr Friedemann [Little Herr Friedemann], a collection of short stories, Mann's first book, is published.

1899  beginning of friendship with Paul Ehrenberg

1900  Mann completes the novel Buddenbrooks in May. Called up for military service, beginning on 1 October, but thanks to an inflamed tendon in his right foot he is confined to bed and given leave in December.

1901  Buddenbrooks published in two volumes. This novel was the foundation for Mann's reputation and success: it sold a million copies in just over a year, and continued to have a steady sale.
1903 Another collection of short stories, *Tristan*, appears (including ‘Tonio Kröger’).

1905 11 February: Mann marries Katia Pringsheim (born 1883), daughter of a wealthy Munich mathematics professor of Jewish descent.
   9 November: birth of their first child, Erika Mann

1906 18 November: birth of Klaus Mann

1909 27 March: birth of Gottfried (‘Golo’) Mann. Mann publishes the novel *Königliche Hoheit* [Royal Highness], which is judged lightweight by comparison with *Buddenbrooks*.

1910 Mann begins work on *Felix Krull*, only to abandon it in 1911.
   7 June: birth of Monika Mann
   30 July: suicide of Mann’s sister Carla

1911 May: feeling ill and depressed, Mann visits the Adriatic island of Brioni and Venice with his wife; they stay (26 May to 2 June) in the Hôtel des Bains on the Lido at Venice.

1912 *Death in Venice* completed in June, published in a journal in October and November. 15 May to 12 June: Mann visits Katia, who is staying in a sanatorium in Davos in Switzerland.

1913 Mann begins work on *The Magic Mountain*, planning it as a novella similar in length to *Death in Venice*.

1914 August: outbreak of war. Mann shares the widespread patriotic euphoria.

1915 November: Heinrich Mann’s essay on Zola is published, with a hostile reference to Thomas Mann, who is inspired to start work on the *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*.

1918 24 April: birth of Elisabeth Mann
   9 November: proclamation of a German Republic
   Just before the war ends, Mann publishes *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man*.

1919 7 April: a Soviet Republic is declared in Munich; it is overthrown by government and paramilitary troops on 1–3 May.
   21 April: birth of Michael Mann
   Mann resumes work on *The Magic Mountain*.

1922 24 June: assassination of the Foreign Minister, Walther Rathenau
   15 October: Mann delivers his address ‘Von deutscher Republik’ (‘On the German Republic’) in the Beethovenhalle in Berlin; ostensibly a celebration of the dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann’s sixtieth birthday, it is recognised as Mann’s public avowal of support for the Weimar Republic.

1926 31 August to 13 September: the Manns take a holiday at Forte di
### Chronology

- Marmi in Italy, where the events inspire *Mario and the Magician* (published 1930).
- **1927** 10 May: suicide of Mann’s sister Julia
- **1929** Mann is awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, explicitly for *Buddenbrooks*.
  - His speech on Lessing, at the bicentenary of the latter’s birth, marks an important attempt to reconcile myth with reason in the struggle against fascism.
- **1930** February to April: travels in Egypt and Palestine
- **1932** The centenary of Goethe’s death brings forth important lectures and essays.
- **1933** 30 January: Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.
  - 10 February: Mann delivers lecture on Wagner at Munich University.
  - 11 February: Mann leaves Germany with his wife, initially to lecture in Holland and Belgium, then to visit Switzerland; while there, his children Klaus and Erika warn him not to return. After spending the summer on the French Riviera, the Manns settle at Küssnacht outside Zürich in Switzerland.
  - October: publication of *The Tales of Jacob* (first volume of *Joseph and his Brothers*)
- **1934** April: publication of *The Young Joseph*
  - May–June: Mann pays his first visit to the United States; lectures on Goethe at Yale University.
- **1935** June–July: Mann revisits the United States and receives an honorary doctorate from Harvard.
- **1936** Mann is deprived of German citizenship; becomes a Czech citizen.
  - Also deprived of his honorary doctorate from Bonn University.
  - *Joseph in Egypt* is published in Vienna by Bermann-Fischer, Mann’s publisher, now also in exile.
  - 8 May: lecture on ‘Freud and the Future’ delivered in Vienna to celebrate Freud’s eightieth birthday.
- **1937** April: Mann revisits US at invitation of the New School for Social Research in New York.
- **1938** February: returns to US for long visit; news of Hitler’s annexation of Austria encourages Mann to settle in US; accepts a chair at Princeton University.
  - 1 October: German invasion of Czechoslovakia
  - 9 November: ‘Kristallnacht’: attacks on Jewish homes and synagogues throughout Germany
Chronology

1939  3 September: Britain and France declare war on Germany after Germany invades Poland.
1941  April: the Manns move to Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles.
        December: US declares war on Japan after its attack on Pearl Harbor; Germany and Italy declare war on the US.
1943  *Joseph the Provider* published by Bermann-Fischer, now in Stockholm.
        23 May: Mann begins work on *Doctor Faustus*.
1944  Thomas and Katia Mann become American citizens.
1945  12 April: death of Roosevelt
        7 May: Germany’s unconditional surrender
        20 May: lecture, ‘Germany and the Germans’, delivered at Library of Congress: it is Mann’s major statement on the German catastrophe, closely linked to *Doctor Faustus*.
1947  May to August: Thomas and Katia visit Europe, including Britain, Switzerland, Italy and Holland, but not Germany.
1949  21 May: suicide of Klaus Mann
        Mann revisits Germany (Frankfurt, Munich, Weimar) in connection with celebrations of Goethe bicentenary.
        12 October: founding of German Democratic Republic in Soviet zone of occupation
        Beginning of anti-Communist hysteria in US, stirred up by Senator Joseph McCarthy
1950  2 March: death of Heinrich Mann
1951  Mann resumes work on *Felix Krull*.
1952  Alarmed by McCarthyism, Mann moves to Switzerland; he and Katia rent house at Erlenbach near Zürich.
1954  The Manns buy a house at Kilchberg on Lake Zürich.
1955  12 August: Thomas Mann dies in Zürich of arteriosclerosis.
LIST OF THOMAS MANN’S WORKS

English titles given here in square brackets are not published titles.

1894 ‘Gefallen’ ‘Fallen’
1896 ‘Enttäuschung’ ‘Disillusionment’
1897 ‘Der kleine Herr Friedemann’ ‘Little Herr Friedemann’
     ‘Der Bajazzo’ ‘The Joker’
1898 Der kleine Herr Friedemann
1901 Buddenbrooks Buddenbrooks
1902 ‘Gladius Dei’ ‘Gladius Dei’
1903 Tonio Kröger Tonio Kröger
     ‘Tristan’ ‘Tristan’
1905 ‘Schwere Stunde’ ‘A Weary Hour’
     Fiorenza Fiorenza
1909 Königliche Hoheit Royal Highness
     ‘Süßer Schlaf’ ‘Sweet Sleep’
1910 ‘Der alte Fontane’ ‘The Old Fontane’
1911 ‘Über die Kunst Richard Wagners’ [On the Art of Richard Wagner]
1912 Der Tod in Venedig Death in Venice
1914 ‘Gedanken im Krieg’ [Thoughts in War]
1915 Friedrich und die große Koalition [Frederick and the Grand Coalition]
1918 Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen [Reflections of an Unpolitical Man]
1919 Herr und Hund Gesang vom Kindchen Master and Dog A Birth and a Christening
     (literally, ‘Song of the Baby’)
1921 ‘Goethe und Tolstoi’ [Goethe and Tolstoy]
1922 Rede und Antwort [Address and Reply]
     (a collection of essays)
LIST OF THOMAS MANN’S WORKS

1924 Der Zauberberg The Magic Mountain
‘Vorspruch zu einer musicalischen Nietzsche-Feier’ [Opening Words to a Musical Celebration of Nietzsche]

1925 Unordnung und frühes Leid Disorder and Early Sorrow
Bemühungen [Endeavours] (a collection of essays)
‘Deutschland und die Demokratie’ [Germany and Democracy]
‘Kultur und Sozialismus’ [Culture and Socialism]
‘Dürer’

1928 ‘Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte’ ‘Freud’s Position in the History of Modern Thought’

1929 ‘Rede über Lessing’ [Speech on Lessing]

1930 Mario und der Zauberer Mario and the Magician
Die Forderung des Tages [The Day’s Demand]
(a collection of essays)
‘Deutsche Ansprache. Ein Appell an die Vernunft’ [German Address: An Appeal to Reason]
‘Lebensabbriss’ [A Sketch of my Life]

1931 ‘Die Wiedergeburt der Anständigkeit’ [The Rebirth of Decency]

1932 ‘Goethe als Repräsentant des bürgerlichen Zeitalters’ ‘Goethe as Representative of the Bourgeois Age’
‘Goethes Laufbahn als Schriftsteller’ [Goethe’s Career as a Writer]

1933 Die Geschichten Jakobs The Tales of Jacob
1934 Der junge Joseph The Young Joseph
1936 Joseph in Ägypten Joseph in Egypt
‘Freud und die Zukunft’ ‘Freud and the Future’

1938 ‘Schopenhauer’

1939 Lotte in Weimar The Beloved Returns/Lotte in Weimar
‘Bruder Hitler’ [Brother Hitler]

1940 Die vertauschten Köpfe The Transposed Heads
‘On Myself’

1941 ‘Goethe’s “Werther”’
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<td>Joseph der Ernährer</td>
<td>Joseph the Provider</td>
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<td>‘Das Gesetz’</td>
<td>‘The Tables of the Law’</td>
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<td>Nobility of the Spirit</td>
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<td>‘Deutschland und die</td>
<td>[Germany and the Germans]</td>
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<td>Deutschen’</td>
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<td>1947</td>
<td>Doktor Faustus</td>
<td>Doctor Faustus</td>
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<td>‘Nietzsche’s Philosophie im Licht unserer Erfahrung’</td>
<td>‘Nietzsche’s Philosophy in the Light of our Experience’</td>
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<td>‘Die Aufgabe des Schriftstellers’</td>
<td>[The Task of the Writer]</td>
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<td>1948</td>
<td>‘Phantasie über Goethe’</td>
<td>[Goethe: An Imaginative Portrait]</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>‘Goethe und die Demokratie’</td>
<td>[Goethe and Democracy]</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Der Erwählte</td>
<td>The Holy Sinner</td>
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<td>1953</td>
<td>Die Betrogene</td>
<td>The Black Swan (literally, ‘The Deceived Woman’)</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>Bekenntnisse des Hoch staplers Felix Krull</td>
<td>Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man</td>
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<td>1955</td>
<td>‘Schiller’</td>
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A NOTE ON REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise stated, translations of German works are the chapter author’s own.

References to Thomas Mann’s essays and literary works are to Gesammelte Werke, 13 vols. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1974), cited by volume and page number.

This edition is supplemented where necessary by Thomas Mann, Essays, ed. Hermann Kurzke and S. Stachorski, 6 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993–1997), referred to as Essays.

Diary entries are cited by date from Tagebücher, 10 vols., ed. Peter de Mendelssohn (vols. i–v) and Inge Jens (vols. vi–x) (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979–95)

Letters are cited by date and correspondent, from the following volumes: Thomas Mann, Briehe, ed. Erika Mann, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1962–5)

Thomas Mann and Karl Kerényi, Gespräch in Briefen (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1960)


Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Briefwechsel 1900–1949, ed. Hans Wysling (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984)

Some personal statements are quoted from Dichter über ihre Dichtungen: Thomas Mann, ed. Hans Wysling (Munich: Heimeran, 1975–82), abbreviated as DD.

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A NOTE ON REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Other authors


Nietzsche is quoted from Friedrich Nietzsche, Werke, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 8 vols. (Berlin and New York, 1972–), abbreviated as Werke. References to Nietzsche's works are by abbreviated title, with roman numerals for ‘book’ and arabic for ‘section’: e.g. GM III, §13. Abbreviations used are:

GM The Genealogy of Morals
A The Antichrist
BT The Birth of Tragedy
CW The Case of Wagner
D Daybreak
EH Ecce Homo
GS The Gay Science (also known as The Joyful Wisdom)
TI The Twilight of the Idols
WP The Will to Power