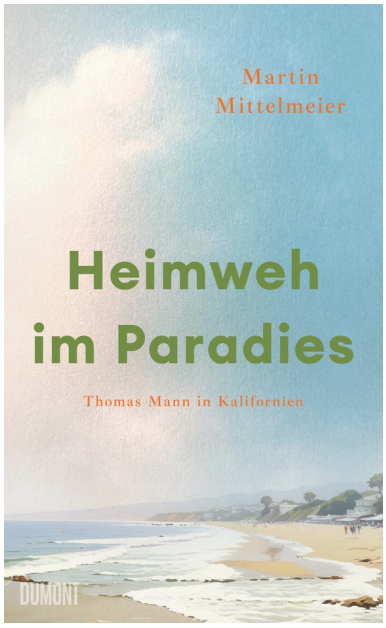


by Martin Mittelmeier
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Non-Fiction

The English language translation rights to the book have sold.

This page will be updated once an English language translation is published.

Homesick in Paradise: Thomas Mann in California

Heimweh im Paradies: Thomas Mann in Kalifornien

review

A narrative account that reads like a *Who's Who* of German exiles living in Los Angeles in the 1930s. At the centre is the figure of Thomas Mann, who is struggling to finish *Doctor Faustus*, his allegory of the rise of the Third Reich.

Mann spent a total of fourteen years in Californian exile, during which he rubbed shoulders with literary and cultural titans like Brecht, Feuchtwanger and Adorno; the latter advised him on the sections relating to music in *Doctor Faustus*, in which a man sells his soul to become a genius. In this engaging non-fiction title that spans the years 1938 to 1952, we encounter him navigating what it means to be an artist in the face of the barbarities perpetrated in Germany, and the doubtful future of democracy itself.

Those familiar with Thomas Mann's works will find plenty of new details over twenty chapters dealing with different years and topics. There is arresting imagery of the era, such as a cameo of Aldous Huxley strolling across a beach and discovering condoms scattered on the sand from the nearby wastewater plant – a result of LA's sudden population growth. Mittelmeier thus does not render Mann's sojourn in a dry academic style; rather, he uses fictional techniques to engage the reader.

Although Thomas Mann would have preferred to remain neutral, Mittelmeier explores his role as the voice of German exiles abroad. He mentions in passing that Mann's children had to urge him to declare his antipathy to the Third Reich, and that he only did so in 1936. An early chapter shows that Mann's brother Heinrich embraced the role of political writer much more overtly. Ironically, Mann was also labelled a Communist 'Dupe and Fellow Traveler' by Life Magazine alongside Chaplin, Dorothy Parker and Albert Einstein; his attempts at neutrality were in vain.

Yet this succinct book details how Thomas Mann was given a platform and had the ear of President Roosevelt and other prominent political figures on topics including the future of democracy.

Mittelmeier's writing is already well-known to English-language readers: acclaimed translator Shelley Frisch recently translated his work *Adorno in Neapel*, which is published by Yale University Press as *Naples 1925*. This latest addition to the study of Thomas Mann's life stands out for its humour, and for its provision of lucid insights into a watershed era of politics.

Find out more:
https://www.dumont-buchverlag.de/en/buch/martin-mittelmeier-heimweh-im-paradies-9783755810865-t-7594

about the author



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Martin Mittelmeier, born in 1971, worked as an editor and editorial director at renowned publishing houses for 13 years. He has been a freelance editor and author since 2014. In 2019, he was a visiting scholar at Rutgers University in New Jersey. His most recent publications are Adorno in Neapel (Naples 1925, translated by Shelley Frisch), which has been translated into several languages, Dada. Eine Jahrhundertgeschichte ('Dada. The Story of a Century'), and Freiheit und Finsternis – Wie die Dialektik der Aufklärung zum Jahrhundertbuch wurde ('Freedom and Darkness: how Dialectic of the Enlightenment became the book of the

century’).

Previous works: Adorno in Neapel, Siedler (2013); DADA: Eine Jahrhundertgeschichte, Siedler (2016); Freiheit und Finsternis, Siedler (2021).

Previous translations: Naples 2025, Yale University Press (2024).

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