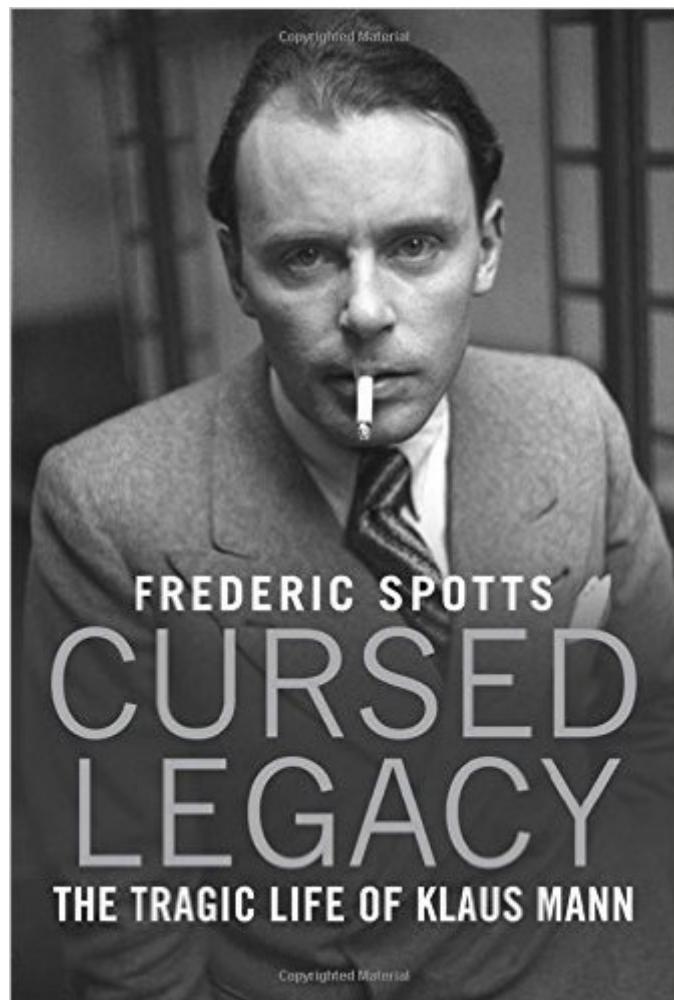


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Cursed Legacy: The Tragic Life Of Klaus Mann



Synopsis

Son of the famous Thomas Mann, homosexual, drug-addicted, and forced to flee from his fatherland, the gifted writer Klaus Mann's comparatively short life was as artistically productive as it was devastatingly dislocated. Best-known today as the author of *Mephisto*, the literary enfant terrible of the Weimar era produced seven novels, a dozen plays, four biographies, and three autobiographies—among them the first works in Germany to tackle gay issues—amidst a prodigious artistic output. He was among the first to take up his pen against the Nazis, as a reward for which he was blacklisted and denounced as a dangerous half-Jew, his books burnt in public squares around Germany, and his citizenship revoked. Having served with the U.S. military in Italy, he was nevertheless undone by anti-Communist fanatics in Cold War-era America and Germany, dying in France (though not, as all other books contend, by his own hand) at age forty-two. Powerful, revealing, and compulsively readable, this first English-language biography of Klaus Mann charts the effects of reactionary politics on art and literature and tells the moving story of a supreme talent destroyed by personal circumstance and the seismic events of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are some interesting details to be gleaned from this biography, most particularly a portrait of the family of Thomas Mann, glimpses of the homosexual demi-monde in Western Europe and the U.S. during the 20's, 30's and 40's (especially as experienced by the upper and upper-middle class literary elites), and some sense of the crisis facing the German literati as Germany transitioned from Weimar democracy to National Socialism. As biography, this would have been stronger had the

author not seemed throughout, and almost unremittingly, to be carrying a torch for his subject, Klaus Mann. As a psychological study -- which is, perhaps, a more apt classification -- it might have been more illuminating had it not cast Klaus' father, Thomas Mann, into Klaus' almost irredeemable nemesis, even if that is how the son experienced it. That Klaus may have struggled all his life with being in the shadow of his famous father is surely only, at best, half the story. It is also undeniable that, but for being the son of a world-famous literary genius, Klaus might have never been able to escape from Nazi Germany or to have been accorded asylum and eventually even American citizenship; never have gained entrée to the literary and publishing circles of his day and been published at all. Surely, most people that went to his lectures went to listen to the son of Thomas Mann and not to Klaus as Klaus. Even this book would more than likely not have been published were it not for the enduring fame of his father.

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