



Thomas Mann
(1875-1955)



Die Manns
(2001)



Elisabeth Mann
(1918-2002)



THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Die Manns – Ein Jahrhundertroman (2001) Part I, II and III

(“The Manns - Novel of a Century”)

By Heinrich Breloer

January 18th & February 2nd & February 8th

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

Donations \$15, Members \$12

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

Die Manns – Ein Jahrhundertroman (2001)

Director:	Heinrich Breloer
Genre:	Docudrama for TV
Script:	Heinrich Breloer Horst Königstein
Producers:	Katharina Gräfin Lambsdorff Thilo Kleine
Music:	Hans Peter Ströer
Camera:	Gernot Roll
Length:	312 Minutes (3 parts)
Production:	Bavaria Film GmbH (in coproduction WDR, NDR, BR ARTE, ORF)
Locations:	Spain, Southern France, Zürich, Lübeck, München, Köln

Actors:

Thomas Mann – Armin Mueller-Stahl
Katia Mann – Monica Bleibtreu
Heinrich Mann – Jürgen Hentsch
Nelly Kröger – Veronica Ferres
Erika “Eri” Mann – Sophia Rois
Klaus Mann – Sebastian Koch
Golo Mann – Philipp Hochmair
Monika “Moni” Mann – Stefanie Stappenbeck
Elisabeth “Medi” Mann Borgese – Katharina Eckerfeld
Michael “Bibi” Mann – Rüdiger Klink

.: Commentary by Karl Moehlmann .:

The Director

Heinrich Breloer, born Feb. 17 1942 in Gelsenkirchen, is a German author and director who has extensively employed the techniques of docudrama in his work. Focusing on modern German history, he combines reenactments with documentary footage. He has received many awards for his work.

Breloer attended the Canisianum in Lüdinghausen and studied literature and philosophy in Bonn and Hamburg from 1961 until 1970. He received his doctorate in 1976 from the university of Hamburg with a dissertation about Georg Kaiser.

Breloer's filmography includes docudramas about Klaus Mann (1983), Willy Brandt (1984), Uwe Barschel (1989) and Herbert Wehner (1993). Breloer perfected his technique with „Die Manns“, engaging Elisabeth Mann Borgese, the youngest daughter of Thomas Mann as his muse and interlocutor, travelling with her to significant locales in the Mann family history in Europe and America. Conversations with other family members and friends of the Mann children supplement the background of the reenactments. In hindsight, Breloer's use of Elisabeth proved to be highly fortunate since she died one year after the movie was released.

At the end of his letter, he says that the „soziale Humanismus, um den das große Ringen geht, dem deutschen Wesen doch nicht fremd und zuwider sei. In seiner Weltscheu war immer so viel Weltverlangen; auf dem Grunde der Einsamkeit, die es böse machte, ist, wer wüsste es nicht, der Wunsch, zu lieben, der Wunsch geliebt zu sein. Deutschland treibe Dünkel und Hass aus seinem Blut, es entdecke seine Liebe wieder, und es wird geliebt werden. Es bleibt, trotz allem, ein Land voll gewaltiger Werte, das auf die Tüchtigkeit seiner Menschen sowohl wie auf die Hilfe der Welt zählen kann und dem, ist nur erst das Schwerste vorüber, ein neues, an Leistungen und Ansehen reiches Leben vorbehalten ist.“

In 1949, he visited Germany for the first time since the end of the war, taking part in the festivities celebrating the 200 anniversary of Goethe's birth. He visited both **Frankfurt** and **Weimar** commenting: „Ich kenne keine Zonen. Mein Besuch gilt Deutschland selbst, Deutschland als Ganzem, und keinem Besatzungsgebiet.“ In Frankfurt he gave a speech in the historic Paulskirche about „Goethe und die Demokratie“ and received the Goethe-prize of West-Germany.

He decided to return to Europe in 1951 after he had to appear in front of the „Committee on Unamerican Activities“ (like Brecht and Eisler) and was called „one of the world's foremost apologists for Stalin and company“. In June 1952, he moved to Switzerland and lived near Zürich. He bought his last house in 1954 in Kilchberg overlooking Lake Zurich.

On May 20, 1955, he returned to his native city of Lübeck and received an honorary citizen award in the City Hall where his father had served as a senator. Shortly after being feted for his 80th birthday in June he fell ill and died on August 12, 1955. He is buried on the cemetery in Kilchberg. Carl Zuckmayer wrote in his „Worten des Abschieds“: „An diesem Sarg verstummt die Meinung des Tages. Ein Leben hat sich erfüllt, das nur einem einzigen Inhalt gewidmet war: dem Werk deutscher Sprache, dem Fortbestand europäischen Geistes.“



The family of young Thomas Mann posing for a family photo in their “Lübecker Senatoren-Haus”. From left to right: Heinrich, Mother Julia with small Viktor, Carla, 'Lula', Father Thomas Johann Heinrich and Thomas Mann.

Part 3 (1942 – 1955)

While books of Thomas Mann are being translated into English and he is professionally successful in America, Heinrich remains almost unknown as a writer in the US. As a consequence he becomes more and more dependent on his brother. Moreover his wife Nelly, never fully accepted by the family, has a hard time adjusting to life in exile. Eventually she starts drinking heavily and commits suicide in 1944 at the age of 46. In 1949, Heinrich receives a call to become the president of the Academy of Arts of the newly formed GDR in Berlin. He decides to return to Germany and go to East-Berlin. But before he can accept his new position he dies of an aneurism in 1950. He was buried in Santa Monica. In 1961, his urn was exhumed and reburied in a state funeral on the famous Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof in East-Berlin where many renowned Germans had preceded him, including Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Bertolt Brecht, Johannes R. Becher and Arnold Zweig, to name just a few.

In October 1940, Thomas Mann began his series of radio speeches called „*Deutsche Hörer!*“. In monthly intervals, a total of 58 broadcasts of roughly five to eight minutes were first sent to London as texts and read by a German speaking employee of the BBC, but then starting in March 1941 recorded in the NBC studios in LA, sent to New York, cabled to London and broadcast by the BBC to Germany with his own voice.

In these passionate, eloquent speeches, Mann analyzed the political situation in Germany during the Nazi era, graphically rendering the atrocities committed by Hitler and his henchmen, warning that all of this must be paid by Germany and the Germans. He relates the events of the war but also comments on acts of resistance within Germany such as „Die weiße Rose“ in Munich. He admonishes the Germans that only the full and open acknowledgment of these horrific crimes can establish the precondition for any reconciliation with the world. It was „*die Stimme eines Deutschlands, das der Welt ein anderes Gesicht zeigte und wieder zeigen wird, als die scheussliche Medusenmaske, die der Hitlerismus ihm aufgeprägt hat.*“

These speeches have endured as a moral high point in the struggle against Hitler and the fascists although some of his remarks referring to the collective guilt of the Germans remain controversial. Having become a US citizen in 1944, Mann was invited to speak in the research branch of the Library of Congress three weeks after the end of the war. In this renowned speech titled „Deutschland und die Deutschen“, Mann developed a historic and cultural theory of the success of fascism in Germany and reiterated the thesis of the „*Kollektivschuld der Mehrheit des deutschen Volkes*“.

„Eines mag diese (deutsche) Geschichte uns zu Gemüte führen: dass es nicht zwei Deutschland gibt, ein böses und ein gutes, sondern nur eines, dem sein Bestes durch Teufelslist zum Bösen ausschlug. Das böse Deutschland, das ist das fehlgegangene gute, das gute im Unglück, in Schuld und Untergang. Darum ist es für einen deutsch geborenen Geist auch so unmöglich, das böse, schuldbeladene Deutschland ganz zu verleugnen.“

In August 1945, the writer Walter von Molo asked Thomas Mann to return to Germany. Mann declined this request in his letter „**Warum ich nicht nach Deutschland zurückgehe.**“, quoting Hermann Hesse who had distanced himself from Germany thusly:

„Ein großes, bedeutendes Volk, die Deutschen, wer leugnet es? Das Salz der Erde vielleicht. Aber als politische Nation – unmöglich! Ich will, ein für allemal, mit ihnen als solcher nichts mehr zu tun haben.“ Mann adds: „*Ja, Deutschland ist mir in all diesen Jahren doch recht fremd geworden. Es ist, das müssen Sie zugeben, ein beängstigendes Land. Ich gestehe, dass ich mich vor den deutschen Trümmern fürchte – den steinernen und den menschlichen.*“

„Die Manns“ focuses more on the personal history of the family than on their artistic work, and thus is not a literary film as much as a collective biopic of a family. When asked if Thomas Mann who spent a significant part of his life at his desk can be fully understood without referring to his works and the literary transformation of his life, Breloer answered:

„Das schriftstellerische Werk selbst, das kann das Fernsehen nicht rüberbringen. Das müssen die Menschen schon selbst lesen. Ich glaube aber, dass man, wenn man den Film gesehen hat, neugierig darauf wird, was Thomas Mann dort in seinem Zimmer macht. Das Zimmer, in das sich der „Zauberer“ einschließt – da passiert etwas Geheimnisvolles.“

Breloer was also the director of the highly acclaimed Buddenbrooks-movie in 2008.

Der Stammbaum der Familie Mann

(Family Tree - Exerpt)

“*Ordnungssinn und Leidenschaft*”

Thomas Johann Heinrich Mann (1840-1891)
Lübecker Kaufmann

⊗ Julia da Silva-Bruhn
(born in Brasil)
1851 – 1923

1. Heinrich Mann (1871 – 1950)
Schriftsteller
 2. Thomas Mann (1875 – 1955)
Schriftsteller
- ⊗ zweite Ehe 1939 mit
Nelly Kröger
(1898 – 1944)
- ⊗ Katharina “Katia”
Pringsheim

1. Erika Mann (1905 – 1969) – Schriftstellerin, Kabarettistin
2. Klaus Mann (1906 – 1949) – Schriftsteller (Suizid)
3. Golo Mann (1909 – 1994) Historiker, Schriftsteller
4. Monika Mann (1910 – 1992) Schriftstellerin
5. Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918 – 2002) Ökologin
6. Michael Mann (1919 – 1977) Musiker, Literaturwissenschaftler
(app. Suizid)

Heinrich and Thomas had 3 other siblings, sister Julia (1877 – 1927), sister Carla (1881 – 1910) and brother Viktor (1890 – 1949).

Part 1 (1923 -1933)

The film begins with Elisabeth, the youngest daughter visiting the old family home in Munich in the Poschinger Strasse. (therefore the nickname “Poschi” for the house). The house was hit by bombs during the second World War and used by refugee families after the war. Thomas Mann decided to tear down the house in 1952 and sold the lot in 1953. The new owner built a “Bungalow” on its foundation with the same floor plan as the original house. After the new owner died, the house was deserted for many years. In the first floor rooms of this bungalow, Elisabeth recalls her early childhood years. A complete replica of the house was constructed for the movie on the Bavaria-Studio grounds for 1 million Euro. Then in 2005, the banker Dibelius decided to rebuild the house and its façade according to the original plan after the city of Munich had declined to turn it into a public “Thomas Mann Haus”.

After the death of their father in 1891, the family moved to Munich in 1893 with Thomas following in 1894. Thomas married Katia Pringsheim in 1905. They had 6 children together and built the “Poschi” in 1914. They enjoyed an affluent life style. Katia came from a wealthy jewish family. Thomas Mann’s novels “Buddenbrooks” (1901), “Tonio Kröger” (1903), “Der Tod in Venedig” (1912) and “Der Zauberberg” (1924) achieved worldwide success. In the reenacted “Fasching” scene in 1923, we see Thomas dressed as a magician, “ein Zauberer”, a moniker he will bear for the rest of his life.

Heinrich Mann, the author of “Professor Unrat” (1905) and “Der Untertan” (1918) was married in 1914 to the actress Maria Kanova. They lived in Munich and had a daughter Leonie (1916-1986). After his separation from his wife (and the subsequent divorce 2 years later) in 1928, Heinrich moved to Berlin and fell in love with Nelly Kröger, a comonomer. Josef von Sternberg picked Marlene Dietrich for his famous movie “Der blaue Engel”, which is based on Heinrich’s novel ‘Professor Unrat.

The political and personal differences between Thomas und Klaus are already evident long before the beginning of the First World War. In a letter dated Feb. 2 1904, Thomas writes to his brother Heinrich: “Viel merkwürdiger, seltsam interessant, für mich immer noch ein bisschen unwahrscheinlich ist die Entwicklung Deiner Weltanschauung zum Liberalismus hin.” Thomas, in contrast to Heinrich’s antiwar and pro-democracy positions supports the war and displays a political conservatism that identifies him with the Wilhelmenian state.

When Thomas publishes “Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen” in 1918 (in which he argues for a rejection of politics in favor of “Kultur” but justifies the war against France) the rift between the two brother becomes wider. But four years later the brothers are reconciled when Thomas supports the Weimar Republic in his speech “Von deutscher Republik” because “die neue Menschlichkeit mag auf dem Boden der Republik glücklichere Möglichkeiten finden als auf dem Grunde des alten Staates”.

Thomas Mann’s opinion of the Nazis was remarkably clear from the beginning. As early as 1921 he had termed faschism a “romantische Barberei”. Amid the growing threat of the Nazis, Thomas delivered his “Appell an die Vernunft” in the Beethovensaal in October of 1930, bluntly describing the Nazis as “eine Riesenwelle excentrischer Barberei und primitiv-massendemokratischer Jahrmarktsrohheit mit Massenkrampf, Budengeläut, Halleluja und derwischmäßige Wiederholen monotoner Schlagworte, bis alles Schaum vor dem Mund hat”.

He became one of the most prominent opponents of the Nazis and after the Nazis come to power, he decided not to return to Munich. After finishing a series of speaking engagements (“Leiden und Größe Richard Wagners”) in Amsterdam, Brüssel and Paris and a vacation in Arosa, Switzerland, he began his exile in Sanary-sur-Mer, France and later moved to Küsnacht in Switzerland.

Part 2 (1933 – 1941)

Unlike Heinrich’s books, Thomas’ publications are not subjected to the infamous “Bücherverbrennungen” and he refrained from further public criticism of the Third Reich in order not to endanger the distribution of his novels and his contact to his German Publikum. This restraint became a burden for him as it weakened his ties with the literary émigré community. Finally in 1936 he broke his silence. Responding to Eduard Korrodi’s article in the Neue Züricher Zeitung titled “Deutsche Literatur im Emigranten-spiegel”, he rebutted Korrodi’s charge that only jewish literature had emigrated from Germany.

Mann asserted in response “er sei sich bis zum Grunde seines Wissens sicher, dass er vor Mit- und Nachwelt recht getan habe, sich zu denen zu stellen, für welche die Worte eines wahrhaft adeligen deutschen Dichters (August Graf von Platen “ Es sehnt sich ewig dieser Geist ins Weite”) gelten:

*“... Doch wer aus voller Seele hasst das Schlechte,
Auch aus der Heimat wird es ihn verjagen,
Wenn dort verehrt es wird vom Volk der Knechte.
Weit klüger ist’s, dem Vaterland entsagen,
Als unter einem kindischen Geschlechte
Das Joch des blindes Pöbelhasses tragen.”*

When Thomas arrives in New York on Feb. 21 1938 with his wife Katia and daughter Elisabeth, he was asked about the burden of living in exile and responded:

*„Es ist schwer zu ertragen. Aber was es leichter macht, ist die Vergegenwärtigung der vergifteten Atmosphäre, die in Deutschland herrscht. Das macht es leichter, weil man in Wirklichkeit nichts verliert. **Wo ich bin, ist Deutschland.** Ich trage meine deutsche Kultur in mir. Ich lebe im Kontakt mit der Welt und ich betrachte mich selbst nicht als gefallenen Menschen.“*

He is invited to teach in Princeton. In 1941, he moves to the west coast and buys a house in Pacific Palisades north of Los Angeles and continues to live a comfortable life. His brother Heinrich who had lived in France after 1933 succeeded in escaping to Spain and Portugal and then to the US in 1940 together with his wife Nelly, his nephew Golo, and Franz Werfel and his wife.

Part 2 ends with the 70th birthday dinner for Heinrich at Thomas Mann’s house on May 2, 1941. What they say to each other summarizes their relationship and situation in exile. In the reenactment Thomas says to his brother:

...Du lieber Heinrich, hast diese Situation des Geistes früher geschaut und erfasst, als wir wohl alle. Du hast das Wort “Demokratie” gesprochen, als wir alle noch wenig damit anzufangen wussten. Wenn du, wie ich vertraue, die organische Geduld hast, auszuharren, werden deine alten Augen sehen, was du in kühner Jugend beschriebst – das Ende eines Tyrannen.”

Heinrich responds:

“Lieber Bruder! Ich danke dir für deine Worte, die allen zu Herzen gegangen sind, besonders aber mir, obwohl ich die uneingeschränkte Schätzung meiner Person nicht ohne Bedenken hinnehmen dürfte, aber du meinst, was du sagst. Deine Aufrichtigkeit, die meisterliche Eindringlichkeit deiner Wahrheiten waren es von je, was die Herzen gewann. Auch meins, glaube mir, sogar vor Zeiten. In jenem seltenen Fall, als wir verschieden dachten, verschieden – das bringt ein langes Leben mit sich, brüderlich ist unser Leben und Denken stets geblieben.”