



Tales from Hollywood

Christopher Hampton

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Christopher Hampton's wry, poignant drama depicts the consequences of old literary Europe's attempt to integrate into fast-paced commercial Hollywood in the early years of World War II. With Austro-Hungarian playwright Odon Von Horvath resurrected as our guide, *Tales from Hollywood* leads us through a bizarre landscape where Schoenberg and the Marx Brothers play tennis, Brecht tries to write film treatments the studios will clamor over, and Heinrich Mann endeavors to maintain a dignified despair, overshadowed by his younger brother Thomas, who thrives on his celebrity status. As the war ends and McCarthyism sets in, the younger emigres assimilate but the older ones, unable to bear what they term the "tragic innocence" and relentless "cuteness" of America, go into a slow decline. Meanwhile, Horvath's conversations and observations raise questions of personal accountability for the unchecked rise of Nazism in Europe in the thirties and the futility of being homesick for countries that have forced one into exile.

In its contrast of the two continents, *Tales from Hollywood* paints a wistful, humorous portrait of a time when Europe and North America were in the throes of artistic, ideological, and political changes that would forever alter their own identities as well as their relations to each other.

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