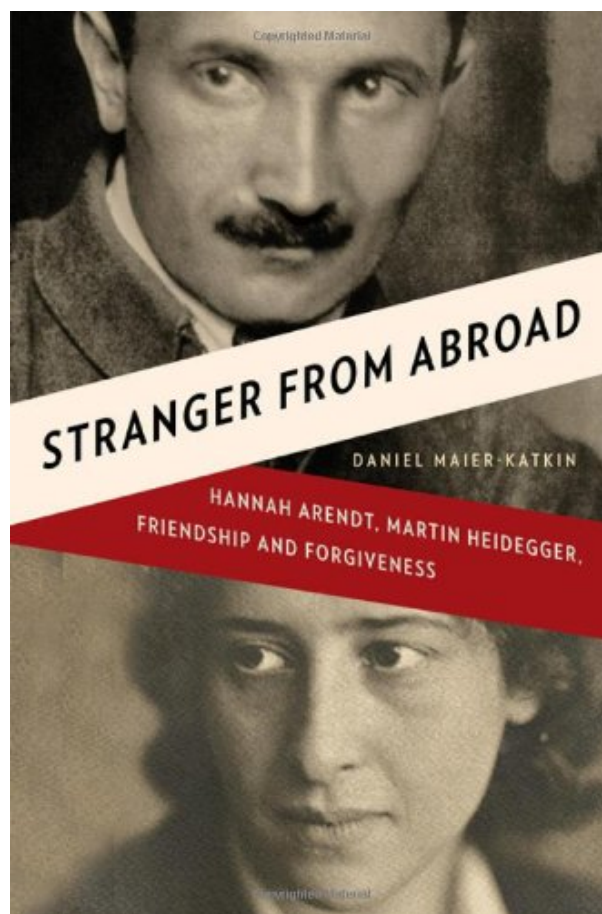
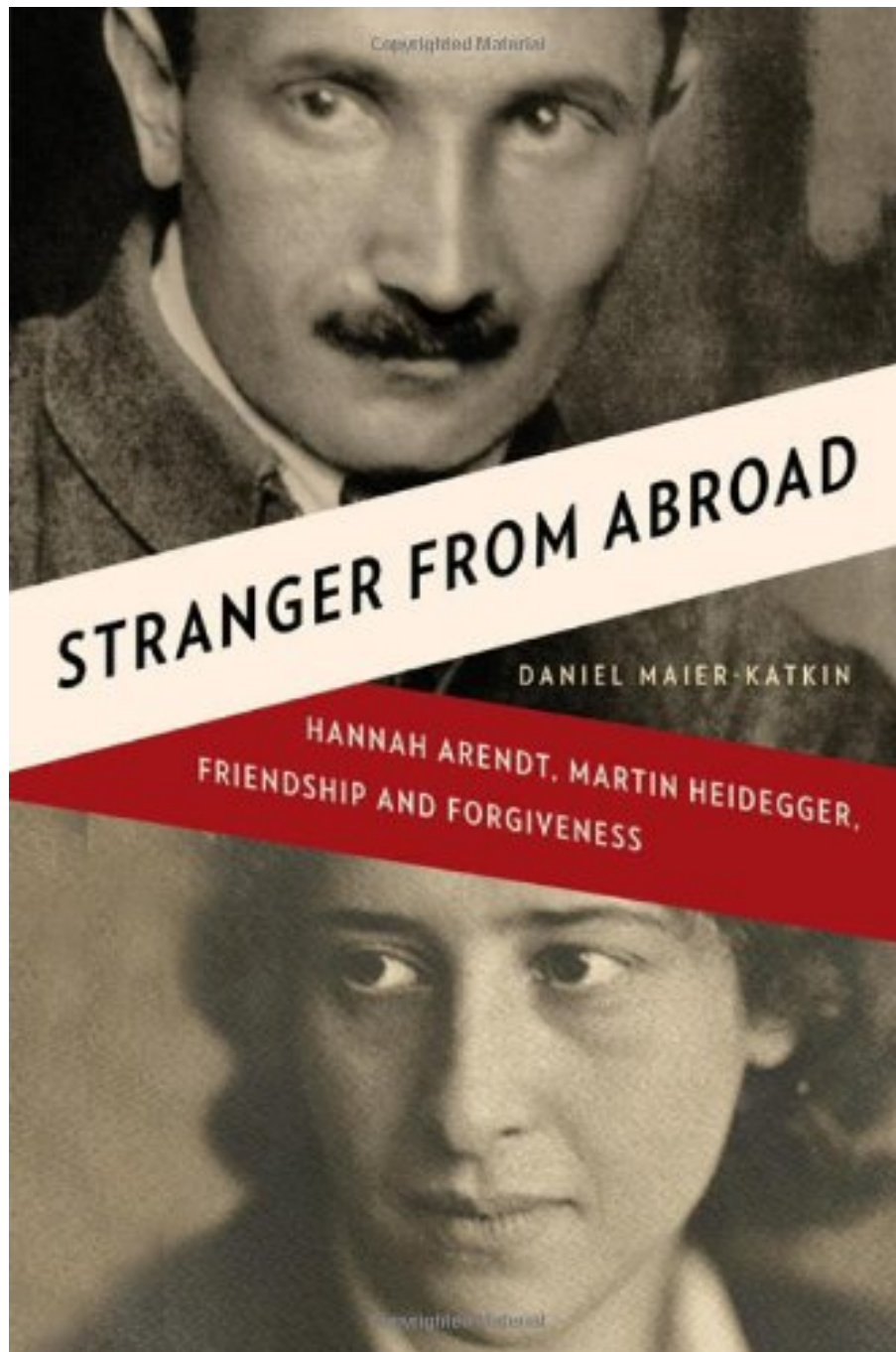


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ARENDT, MARTIN HEIDEGGER,  
FRIENDSHIP AND FORGIVENESS BY  
DANIEL MAIER-KATKIN**



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Two titans of twentieth-century thought: their lives, loves, ideas, and politics.

Shaking up the content and method by which generations of students had studied Western philosophy, Martin Heidegger sought to ennoble man's existence in relation to death. Yet in a time of crisis, he sought personal advancement, becoming the most prominent German intellectual to join the Nazis.

Hannah Arendt, his brilliant, beautiful student and young lover, sought to enable a decent society of human beings in relation to one other. She was courageous in the time of crisis. Years later, she was even able to meet Heidegger once again on common ground and to find in his past behavior an insight into Nazism that would influence her reflections on "the banality of evil"—a concept that remains bitterly controversial and profoundly influential to this day.

But how could Arendt have renewed her friendship with Heidegger? And how has this relationship affected her reputation as a cultural critic? In *Stranger from Abroad*, Daniel Maier-Katkin offers a compassionate portrait that provides much-needed insight into this relationship.

Maier-Katkin creates a detailed and riveting portrait of Arendt's rich intellectual and emotional life, shedding light on the unique bond she shared with her second husband, Heinrich Blücher, and on her friendships with Mary McCarthy, W. H. Auden, Karl Jaspers, and Randall Jarrell—all fascinating figures in their own right. An elegant, accessible introduction to Arendt's life and work, *Stranger from Abroad* makes a powerful and hopeful case for the lasting relevance of Arendt's thought.

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Most helpful customer reviews

22 of 22 people found the following review helpful.

Two Passionate Thinkers

By Robin Friedman

In 1969, the philosopher Hannah Arendt gave a radio address called "Martin Heidegger is Eighty Years Old" in celebration of the thought of the great German thinker who had been Arendt's early inspiration as a student as well as her lover. In her address, Arendt described how Heidegger had changed the way students had viewed philosophy from a sterile, academic study to a matter for passionate engagement and thought. She said: "[w]e are so accustomed to the old oppositions of reason and passion, of mind and life, that the idea of passionate thinking, in which thinking and being alive become one, can be a bit startling."

Both Arendt (1906 -- 1975) and Heidegger (1889 -- 1976) brought passion to thought and to their difficult personal relationship. Daniel Maier-Katin's book, "Stranger from Abroad" (2010) brings passion to bear in its own right as it describes Arendt's relationship with Heidegger and its impact on her life and thought. The book has a sense of its two primary characters, their works, and their times that is rare in a work of philosophy. Maier-Katin, a professor of criminology and criminal justice at Florida State University has with this study made his own contribution to the life of the mind.

Maier-Katin integrates personal lives, philosophical thinking, and history in this book. When Arendt met Heidegger, she was an impressionable, naive young woman of 18 listening to the famous philosopher, age 35, lecture on Plato's "Sophist." Married to an anti-semitic woman, Elfride, who had recently had her own affair, and with two young children, Heidegger and Arendt became romantically involved almost immediately. Heidegger soon became somewhat cold, and Arendt left the University at Fribourg to pursue studies elsewhere vowing never to love a man again. However she soon married a man she did not love in a relationship that quickly became unhappy. Shortly after her divorce, she married another expatriate German, Heinrich Blucher, in a relationship that endured its difficulties and proved fulfilling to both parties.

With the coming to power of the Nazis, Arendt fled Germany and became effectively a stateless person for fifteen years until she secured American citizenship in 1952. Heidegger became deeply involved with Nazism in 1933 -- 1934. In the long life that remained to him, he never clearly recanted. Arendt went on to a brilliant career in the United States with such works as "The Origins of Totalitarianism" (1951).

In 1950, Arendt travelled to Europe and met a philosopher whom she deeply admired, Karl Jaspers, who had staunchly resisted the Nazis. After some hesitation, Arendt sent a note to Heidegger and the two renewed

their friendship, this time, of course, on a nonsexual basis. A wonderful scene in Maier-Katkin's book describes Heidegger responding to Arendt's note in person by coming to her table at the hotel cafe. Heidegger and Arendt met and exchanged letters through the mid-1950's when another long silence arose between them. They began communications and visits again in 1967, and their contact lasted until Arendt's death.

Much of Maier-Katkin's book is involved with themes of redemption and forgiveness. Arendt had to come to terms with Heidegger's deceitful treatment of her when she was young, his embrace of Nazism, and the continued hostility of Elfride Heidegger. She remembered her passion for the man and, much more importantly, his genius as a thinker. Much of Arendt's thought, Maier-Katkin argues, can be understood as a development of her reflections upon Heidegger and how a person of his great gifts could embrace a shockingly repugnant ideology. Arendt reflected upon the nature of evil -- its commonplace, everyday character, which she famously came to call its "banality". She also came to think about love, forgiveness, and broad human rights which did not privilege any nationality or group.

Maier-Katkin offers informed readings of many Arendt writings including "The Origins of Totalitarianism", "The Human Condition", "Men in Dark Times", "The Life of the Mind" and her most famous and controversial book, "Eichmann in Jerusalem" and he describes how Arendt's continued reflections on Heidegger helped shape her thought. Maier-Katkin also offers good, accessible discussions of Heidegger's difficult thought, with an excellent discussion of the "turn" in Heidegger's writings after WW II, which may have reflected his disenchantment with Nazism. The book also offers a portrayal of intellectual life in Germany and, after WW II, in the United States, as Arendt found her home and became close to an intellectual community which included Randall Jarrell, W.H. Auden, and her dear friend Mary McCarthy, among others.

Maier-Katkin's book is intended in part to respond to critics of Arendt who believe her early romance with Heidegger unduly colored her judgment in her latter writings. The book succeeds in its far broader aim of telling the story of the relationship between two extraordinary individuals and of the power of forgiveness and friendship. Maier-Katkin eloquently concludes his study (p. 348):

"[T]here are personal as well as political lessons to be learned from Hannah Arendt's reconciliation with Martin Heidegger. At the end of life, thinking about thinking, willing, and judging, Arendt was close to Heidegger's thought and method while still engaged with her own questions. He continued to be for her a companion and close presence on the pathways of thought, where each of us are surrounded in our singularity by the ideas of others. The principal benefit of reconciliation, as Arendt understood, is that it brings peace, understanding, and human warmth into a world too often hostile, confused, and cold. The promise or reconciliation, which is neither forgetfulness nor an averted glance, but a full-bodied recognition of the human condition, is that it preserves the possibility of love -- in the case of Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, an easy commerce between old friends -- and friendship, as Hannah understood, is the foundation of all humanity."

This fine book should be of interest to students of 20th Century philosophy and intellectual and political history as well as to readers interested in the life of the mind.

Robin Friedman

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Amazing book

By Marcia Novaes Assis

I ordered this book without knowing it was a new book in the market. I read a biography of Hanna Arendt in portuguese, my language, and was a bit suspicious if this book would bring me something new and what a surprise! Not only two biographies for the price of one - Arendt and Heidegger are very well described as persons and thinkers in their time, together and apart, with their respectives works and thoughts - but a great lesson of philosophy! I could finally understand the origins of phenomenology within a historical context. Congratulations to the author that made a beautiful, poetic and intelligent book. I deeply recommend.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

The Personal and the Philosophical

By C. Greek

Dan Maier-Katkin's new book on the relationship between Hannah Arendt, whose life experience was altered fundamentally by what took place in Nazi Germany, and philosopher Martin Heidegger, who banally participated in the regime, very effectively combines biography, philosophy and cultural history into a hybrid form that makes for quite fascinating reading. As a graduate student at the New School for Social Research in the mid-1970s, one frequently talked to students who were in Hannah Arendt's classes. Though she passed away before I arrived there, I have found several of her works quite useful in teaching aspects of criminology ( particularly The Origins of Totalitarianism and Eichmann in Jerusalem). Maier-Katkin's book helps fill in many of the gaps in my understanding of Arendt's attitude toward life and learning. By combining the personal and the philosophical, without allowing either to become the dominant story, the author has created an highly readable account of how the two are fundamentally related. At the core of the book is the story of how the relationship between these two great thinkers survived one of the major cataclysms of the 20th century.

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