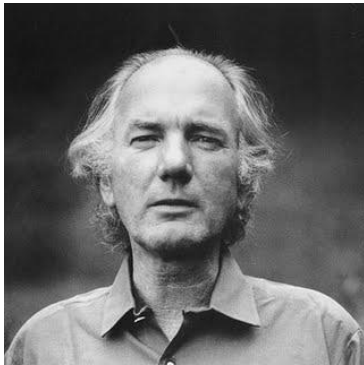


Thomas Bernhard (1931 – 1989)



source photo: classicalaldrone.blogspot.com

Thomas Bernhard was born as an illegitimate child in Heerlen (the Netherlands), where his mother worked as a domestic servant. From July 1932 on Thomas Bernhard lived with his grandparents in Seekirchen/Wallersee (Austria) and in Traunstein, Bavaria. Looking back to that period he described it as the happiest time in his life. He never got to know his own father. From 1941 on he underwent traumatic experiences in a Nazi home of education and in a Nazi boarding school, which was turned into a Catholic school after the war.

Already as a young person, Thomas Bernhard suffered from a severe pulmonary tuberculosis which made frequent stays in sanatoriums necessary.

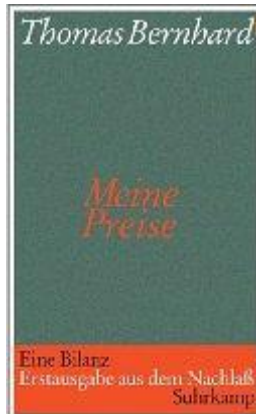
In the 1950ies he worked as a journalist and independent writer in Salzburg and took lessons of music and acting in the Mozarteum.

In his life there were two persons who influenced his existence profoundly – on the one hand his grandfather, a writer himself who inspired him with a sense for philosophy, and on the other hand his “Lebensmensch” Hedwig Stavianicek. With her he entertained a deep relation and friendship until her death in 1984. In 1951 he had got to know the woman who was 35 years his senior during a stay in a sanatorium. The “aunt” became a substitute for his mother. She introduced him to the Viennese society and took him along with her for his first travels. Thomas Bernhard started his career as a writer in 1957 with a collection of poems called “On the earth and in hell”. He found his own personal style in prose as well as in plays. Since 1965 Thomas Bernhard mainly lived in Ohlsdorf near Gmunden, where he had bought one of the typical farmhouses of this region, a “Vierkanter”. He acquired this place with the money he had received as a prize for his novel “Frost”, 1967 (Bremer Literaturpreis). This novel is a radical break with conventional stories about nature. Thomas Bernhard called himself a “destroyer of stories” and his irritated readers called him “the master of exaggeration”.

The plays and novels of Thomas Bernhard were continuously considered as provocations in Austria. Only after his death Thomas Bernhard’s achievement was acknowledged and even admired – as it happens so often to great persons in Austria.

He wrote comedies, tragedies, satires, parodies and used elements of the Commedia dell’arte. In the last days of November 1988 Thomas Bernhard had a pulmonary infarction. His half-brother Peter Fabjan, a specialist in internal medicine had already attended to him for almost 10 years. On February 12th, 1989, Thomas Bernhard died of a heart failure in his apartment in Gmunden. Thomas Bernhard was translated into 30 languages and his plays are permanently performed on all stages in Europe.

Recension: **Meine Preise, Vlg. Suhrkamp, 2009**



(15 distributions for literature up to the year 1979), written from 1963 to 1980.

In a small volume these texts offer a good introduction to the work of Thomas Bernhard, his art of exaggeration (in this case rather an understatement), his tirades of abuse of his home-country (doing this he always seems to shake his head about himself) and his sense of humour, which is often not understood, especially by those that regarded his love-hatred feeling towards Austria as “fouling one’s nest”. One gets to know unknown things about the life and writing of the author and is highly amused. It is the first publication of a complete manuscript meant to be printed. It was published after his death.

The complete work of Thomas Bernhard

As far as Thomas Bernhard is concerned he seems to hate his native country Austria, but in spite of all criticism and tirades of scolding he obviously enjoyed living in his farmhouse near Gmunden and spending his time in the Viennese cafés. It is clear that someone that experienced the years after the Second World War and the aftermath of the Nazi regime felt it was necessary to criticize attitudes and influence that still result from this dreadful time. After all, just in Austria you can hear absurd and frightening opinions of people who seem not to have learned or understood anything of this disgraceful time.

Recension : Herta Spitaler
Translation: Christine Dantine