

Bernhard's Corrections:

Critical Essays

Summary

“No one can get past this dead giant anymore”, wrote Elfride Jelinek three years after the death of Thomas Bernhard (1931–1989). The thirty years that followed have confirmed those words, but the ever-changing surrounding context prompts the question of to what extent “Bernhard’s corrections”, which cannot be overlooked, in fact call for further contemporary corrections. The essays collected in this book are arranged in clear configurations, highlighting the existentialist, comparative, literary or psychoanalytical aspect of reading. There is, however, a special place for philosophical reflection. Bernhard appears here, on a scale rarely found in the relevant literature in this subject, as an author who, through his literary thinking, continues to provoke thoughts on the very thought process.

It is in this way that Mateusz Falkowski, in his thoughtful essay “*Correction*” and “*correction*” traces the developments and shifts in the initial notion of correction that organises Bernhard’s literary space in a distinguished way (not just in the novel bearing this title). In her article *Isn’t it the Case That Any Kind of Philosophy is Ultimately Madness?*, Iwona Krupecka proposes an in-depth reading of the play *Immanuel Kant*, which she reads as an insightful diagnosis of the condition of late-modernity philosophy. Jakub Momro also refers to this play in his extensive essay *Psychopathologies of Critical Reason* in which he subjects almost the entire universe of Bernhard’s phantasmata to an analytical reading that reveals the mental disorders mentioned in the title. In *Language and Head* Anna Bielak presents the corresponding “structure of madness” in Bernhard’s literary debut *Frost*. This and Bernhard’s three subsequent works provide Adam Lipszyc with material for his psychoanalytically based decon-

struction of several edifices from Bernhard's work in *Other Buildings*. On *Several Buildings in Bernhard*. This allows Lipszyc to extract the writer's less exposed trait as a "dark theorist of human sexuality", among other aspects. Bartosz Sadulski relates directly to this idea in *Woman of "Concrete"*, an instructive contribution to the discussion on gender and narrator identity of Bernhard's protagonists. In *Written Lives* Jan Kanty Zienko endorses a comparativist reading of the works of Thomas Bernhard and Roberto Bolaño, discerning the literary kinship in the characteristic fascination with which many people who populate the pages of both authors' books subordinate the experience of their own lives to its recording. The final two essays highlight more strongly the interrelation of literary work and biography. Marcin Polak's essay entitled *Giant* features extensive reflections on the idea of greatness: both in the world presented in Bernhard's prose and with regard to his extra-literary dilemmas and the writer himself. In the volume's final essay, *Corrigenda. A Variation*, Arkadiusz Żychliński reads Bernhard's monumental correspondence with Siegfried Unseld, head of the Suhrkamp publishing house, published in 2009, as a fascinating "performance without staging". In it the figure of the writer, resembling numerous characters from his literary fiction, turns out to be identical to Bernhard himself.

This publication is one of the few comprehensive critical literary studies on Thomas Bernhard in Polish.

Translated by Rob Pagett