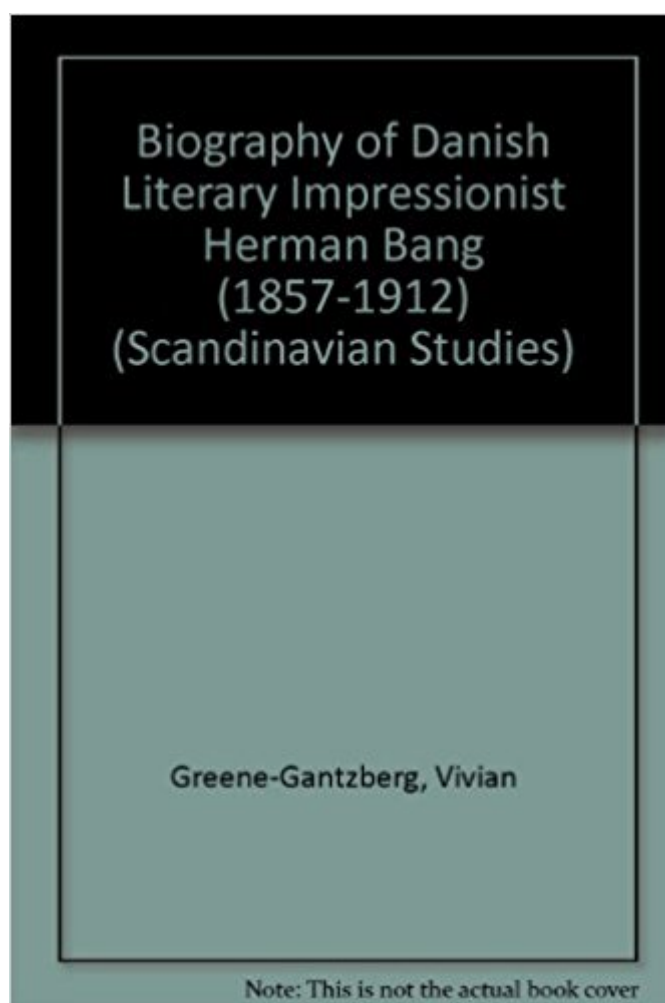


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Biography Of Danish Literary Impressionist Herman Bang (1857-1912) (Scandinavian Studies)



Synopsis

A biography of Danish novelist and avant-courier of European impressionism, Herman Bang. The text introduces Bang's contribution to European prose fiction and the personal indebtedness of a number of leading German authors and critics to his narrative style. It places Bang in the social context of European cultural history. Part one of the book identifies major motifs in Bang's political, literary and sexual legacies. The second part treats themes in his major works of fiction. By special permission of Edition Spangenberg, an account of Herman Bang's visit to America appears in the original English. This biography seeks to concentrate on how conditions depicted in Bang's works find resolution in his life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Herman Bang is one of many Scandinavian authors who do not receive much attention outside the north of Europe. Writing a biography in English about this most intriguing and skillful Danish writer may well be a way to attract more interest in his work. I am myself working on a ph.d-thesis about Bang and therefore began to read Greene-Gantzberg's book with great interest - even more so because I had enjoyed her previous book "Herman Bang og det fremmede", an insightful report on Bang's stays abroad, brimming with information and only some slight mistakes to discover in it (like the incorrect list of Bang's works in German translation). Unfortunately I was soon to realize that despite its title this new book was not a biography but contained nothing but some rather short

remarks about Bang's life followed by some criticism on his works. The content was more or less a superficial resume of the Bang criticism of the last 50 years or so (up to the late 1980s), the only (questionable) benefit being that it is now available to English speaking readers. The English of the book itself is very poor though - probably due to a lack of proof reading which resulted in many "little" words like articles and prepositions being left out - very annoying to read even for a non-native speaker like me! Evidently Greene-Gantzberg's Danish proof readers who took care of "Herman Bang og det fremmede" did a much better job! Where the content is concerned I have to say that I was not only disappointed to see that the author had obviously based her book entirely on rather old (if not wrong) findings and decided to ignore the latest research completely, I was also shocked by the fact that she often makes no mention of her sources (Some remarks in Steffen Steffensens article on Thomas Mann and Scandinavia are almost quoted word by word, yet the article itself is never mentioned). The bibliography at the end of the book is conspicuously short and lists just a couple of standard works. I could go on like that for quite some time but I'd better leave it at that. Greene-Gantzberg has not written a biography of Herman Bang, she doesn't even come close to Jacobsen's achievement (who wrote the 4 volume Danish biography of Bang in the 1960s) and her book lacks elegance (as well as correctness) of language just as much as the declaration of her sources! (Obligatory for any kind of literary criticism that wants to be taken seriously!) Again: the only thing that could be said in favour of the book is the fact that it may help to draw some attention to Bang in the English speaking world.

When I posted a review of Vivian Greene-Gantzberg's Book "Biography of Danish Impressionist Herman Bang" last year I severely criticized all the shortcomings of that book. I have not changed my mind about it in the meantime but I have learned that the author, whose earlier work I admire very much, died before being able to revise the manuscript. Under these circumstances I find a review as harsh as mine unfair to the late author. Clearly the publisher is to blame here. I would therefore like to say that the book is not as good as it could have been but it's still the most detailed account of Herman Bang's life as well as the longest piece of literary criticism on Bang's work available in English. I recommend it to anybody who wants to know more about this fascinating author and cannot read either Danish or German.

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