


Herman Bang

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Born	20 April 1857 Asserballe, Schleswig
Died	29 January 1912 (aged 54) Ogden, Utah
Occupation	Writer
Nationality	Danish

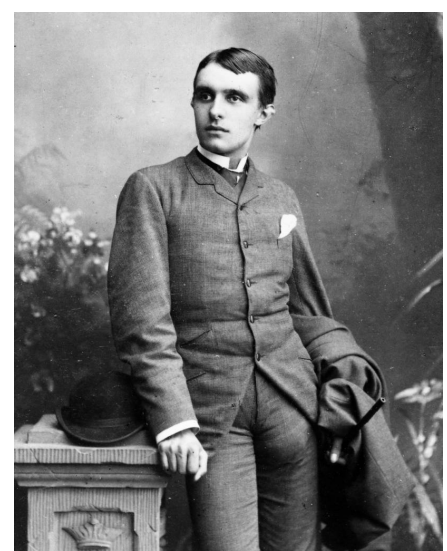
Herman Joachim Bang (20 April 1857 – 29 January 1912) was a Danish author, one of the men of the Modern Breakthrough.

Biography

Bang was born into a noble family of Asserballe, on the small Danish island of Als, the son of a South Jutlandic vicar (a relative of N. F. S. Grundtvig). His family history was marked by insanity and disease.

When he was twenty he published two volumes of critical essays on the realistic movement. In 1880 he published his novel *Haabløse Slægter* (*Families Without Hope*), which aroused immediate attention.^[1] The main character was a young man who had a relationship with an older woman. The book was considered obscene at the time and was banned.^[2] After some time spent in travel and a successful lecture tour of Norway and Sweden, he settled in Copenhagen and produced a series of novels and collections of short stories which placed him in the front rank of Scandinavian novelists. Among his more famous stories are *Fædra* (1883) and *Tine* (*Tina*, 1889).^[1]

The latter won for its author the friendship of Henrik Ibsen and the enthusiastic admiration of Jonas Lie. Among his other works are *Det hvide Hus* (*The White House*, 1898), *Excentriske Noveller* (*Eccentric Stories*, 1885), *Stille*



Herman Bang in his younger years

Eksistenser (*Quiet Existences*, 1886), *Liv og Død* (*Life and Death*, 1899), *Englen Michael* (*The Angel Michael*, 1902), a volume of poems (1889), and recollections, *Ti Aar* (*Ten Years*, 1891).^[1]

Bang was a homosexual, a fact which contributed to his isolation in the cultural life of Denmark and made him the victim of smear campaigns. He lived most of his life with his sister but found happiness for a few years with the German actor Max Eisfeld (1863–1935), with whom he lived in Prague in 1885–86. Uninterested in politics, he was distant from most of his colleagues in the naturalist movement.

Failed as an actor, Bang earned fame as a theatre producer in Paris and in Copenhagen. He was a very productive journalist, writing for Danish, Nordic and German newspapers, developing modern reporting. His article on the fire at Christiansborg Palace is a landmark in Danish journalism.

Bang is primarily concerned with the "quiet existences", the disregarded and ignored people living boring and apparently unimportant lives. He is especially interested in describing lonely or isolated women. *Ved Vejen* (*Katinka* 1886) describes the secret and never fulfilled passion of a young wife of a stationmaster, living in a barren marriage. *Tine* (1889), which has the war with Prussia in 1864 (the Second War of Schleswig) as background, tells the tragic love story of a young girl on the island of Als. *Stuk* (*Stucco*, 1887) tells the story of a young man's love affair that is fading away without any real explanation, against the background of the "Gründerzeit" of Copenhagen and its superficial modernization and economic speculation. In *Ludvigsbakke* (1896) a young nurse squanders her love on a spineless childhood friend, who eventually deserts her in order to save his estate by marrying a rich heiress.

Some of his books, including *Tina* and *Katinka* (English titles), have been translated into many languages and filmed. One film adaptation was Bang's novel *Mikaël* (1904), which was adapted into a film *Michael* (1924) by Carl Theodor Dreyer.


Bang's works earned him renown as a leading European impressionist writer. Bang's last years were embittered by persecutions and declining health. He traveled widely in Europe, and during a lecture tour of the United States he was taken ill on the train and died in Ogden, Utah.

Notes

[1] Chisholm 1911.

[2] <http://www.um.dk/publikationer/um/english/denmark/kap4/4-7-20-3.asp>

References

-  Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Bang, Hermann Joachim". *Encyclopædia Britannica* **3** (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Further reading

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- Works by Herman Bang (http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Herman_Bang) at Project Gutenberg

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