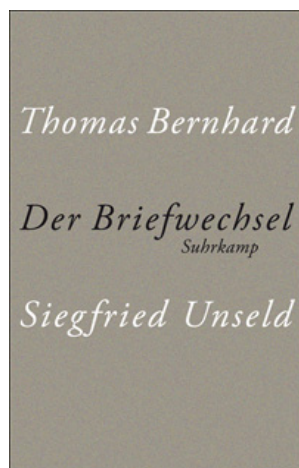


Thomas Bernhard, Siegfried Unseld

The Correspondence - Edited by Raimund Fellingner, Martin Huber and Julia Ketterer

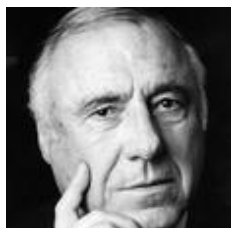


(German title: Der Briefwechsel Thomas Bernhard/Siegfried Unseld)
ca. 869 pages
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Thomas Bernhard, born in 1931 in Heerlen (Netherlands), died in Gmunden (Austria) in 1989.



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Siegfried Unseld was born in 1924. From 1959 until his death in 2002 he was the publisher of Suhrkamp Verlag.

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»We agree as each of us maintains our position.« *Siegfried Unseld to Thomas Bernhard, 21.12.1972*

About

»If anyone has been hoping for just one last undiscovered drama by Thomas Bernhard, here it is. Its title is *Correspondence*, its birth spanning from 1961 to Bernhard's death in 1989.« *Die Zeit*

The dramatic roster: an author who considers discord with his environment and unfettered self-interest necessary preconditions for writing and creative inspiration, and a publisher who has to provide him with the material preconditions for work and well-being while trying shield the publishing house from financial harm with the persuasiveness of his arguments. Having not received any feedback about his three poetry books but persuaded by his own phenomenal ability as a writer, Thomas Bernhard penned a letter to Siegfried Unseld in October 1961, when he was 30 years old: »A couple of days ago, I sent a manuscript to your publishing house. I don't know you, only a few people whom you know. But I'm going it alone.«

Although Suhrkamp rejected the manuscript, after the 1963 publication of Bernhard's first novel *Frost*, the go-it-aloner and the publisher took the road together that led the author to a place in world literature.

In their approximately 500 letters a unique two-man act develops: Sometimes it is a tragedy, when, for instance Bernhard lets loose one of his insulting tirades, for which he is well-known in his writing, on the publisher who, for his part, put his money on the persuasiveness of the argument. Then Bernhard puts on a performance with Unseld as hero: in 1973, he wrote, »with great attentiveness, and with all possibilities, I gladly go with you.« In 1984, faced with the confiscation of *Holzfällen* they both acted as defenders of literature in a villainous play staged by others.

This dynamic dominates the relationship drama: The author makes non-negotiable demands concerning his work and himself. The publisher, for his part, knows that especially with Bernhard, inconsiderate self-centeredness is an inevitable precondition for productivity. Until now, the existence of such a dramatic exchange between author and publisher, in which everything is at stake with every line, was not known to the public.

Praise

»We have had to wait a long time for this book. It was worth the wait. Centuries from now [...] our children's children will still be admiring this monument to German cultural history. ... The 869-pages of Thomas Bernhard's correspondence, a true gift from God, recasts everything we'd known till now.« *Frankfurter Rundschau*

»A powerful, monstrous book. The high drama of this correspondence simultaneously presents us with both one of the best novels and one of the most heavenly tragic comedies of Thomas Bernhard's oeuvre, owing in part to one of the co-authors at work, a pro and antagonist of a rare caliber. Anyone not familiar with the nature and life accomplishments of Siegfried Unseld, one of the most exceptional publishers of the 20th century, is well aware thereafter.« *Literarische Welt*

»[Not] a document [...] a monument.« *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

»Great cinema, a publisher and his pugnacious author write one another. And themselves. Correspondence as Fight Club.« *Florian Illies, Die Zeit*

»What both champions present here is a true *comédie humaine*. As if concocted by a modern Molière.« *Der Tagesspiegel*

»Bernhard's highly enjoyable slalom of torture and whim, his style of overhauling, over exaggerating and overabundance is as apparent in his correspondence with the publisher as in his other prose. There are more than 800 pages to the volume and hardly a pause to take a breath.« *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

»Anyone wanting to find out more about the conditional underpinnings of literature, about what it means to be a publisher and what a publisher of this magnitude has to be prepared to endure as an agent that makes something larger scale possible, will find the answers in this correspondence.« *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*

»Their fight over money, feelings and work lasted a quarter of a century, until Unseld's 1988 sigh, »I can't do it anymore.« Their correspondence is a one-of-a-kind documentation of their hate and love for each other. Reading it, one experiences Unseld's finesse, endurance and generosity, as well as Bernhard's ego and fury, vulnerability and obsessiveness as an artist.« *Die Zeit*

»Bernhard grumbles. Bernhard insults. Bernhard curses and goes for the throat. The publisher has to take quite a beating. We lie at his feet and caw is surrender: keep being so mean!« *Die Welt*

International press coverage:

»Las cartas desvelan la fascinante relación entre dos titanes de la cultura alemana del siglo XX [...] Unseld, hombre cultísimo y atento exégeta de las motivaciones de sus literatos, definió al timón de aquel barco la cultura alemana de su tiempo con una nómina de autores que incluyó a Hesse, Max Frisch, Bertolt Brecht.« *El País*