

~ The Plays ~

In a course of eight tutorials this term, we will deal with the four plays set for preliminary examination, in chronological order: Frank Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (1891), Elsa Bernstein's *Dämmerung* (1893), Georg Kaiser's *Von morgens bis mitternachts* (1912/1917) and Bertolt Brecht's *Die Maßnahme* (1931 version). In addition to discussing these texts in detail, we will apply dramatic theory in preparation for the more general questions that you might choose to tackle in paper four.

I shall also give you a handout on constructing an argument in essays and commentaries. Writing well is a skill that can and should be actively acquired. Although weekly tutorial work, termly Collections and Prelims offer opportunities for practice, they will not necessarily result in you writing persuasively unless you give thought to composition in its own right. Thomas Mann makes an autobiographical comment in his novella *Tristan* when he defines a writer as 'ein Mann [...], dem das Schreiben schwerer fällt als allen anderen Leuten.' I hope that some notes on argumentation techniques might make your academic tasks easier and help you to write more effectively.

The weekly assignments are set out below so that you have an idea of our progression. You should answer one question per week (a or b; in week five you have the choice of three questions). In total, you should answer **at least one** but **no more than two** comparative questions over the term. Essays will be due **the day before our tutorial at noon** (but in 1st week bring your essays to the tutorial). I will provide suggestive bibliographies, together with the relevant readings that are harder to track down. Do not feel limited by these; but if you're short of time, it is better to read less material and read it critically than to aim for being comprehensive. You might begin by taking a look at the two secondary texts by Patterson and Huxley and by Robertson, since they offer a concise introduction (you can access both online via SOLO).

Patterson, Michael and Michael Huxley, 'German drama, theatre and dance' in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, ed. by Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will, Cambridge University Press 1999, pp. 213-232.

Robertson, Ritchie 'From Naturalism to National Socialism (1890-1945)', in *The Cambridge History of German Literature*, ed. by Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, Cambridge University Press 1997, pp. 327-392.

1a '*Frühlings Erwachen* can be better understood by analogy with the circus than by reference to classical concepts such as tragedy or comedy.' Discuss.

OR

1b '*Frühlings Erwachen* is smut, not drama.' Discuss.

2a 'Schon mehr als einer der heute schaffenden Dramatiker mißfiel nicht etwa deshalb, weil er bühnentechnisch zu schlecht, sondern im Gegenteil, weil er bühnentechnisch zu gut für die Leistungsfähigkeit des heutigen literarischen Theaters gearbeitet hatte.' (WEDEKIND) Consider the directions and possibilities for, as well as the problems of staging *Frühlings Erwachen*. Did Wedekind succeed in writing a play for performance?

OR

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Prelims in German

2b ‘So kann die Erörterung der Sexualität, statt wie bisher ein Tummelplatz menschlicher Roheit zu sein, geradezu zu einer geistigen Gymnastik werden, wie es für unsere Jugend die lateinische Grammatik ist.’ (WEDEKIND) Examine the importance of speech in *Frühlings Erwachen*, its themes and how it is structured. Evaluate its efficacy.

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**3a** If the writer of *Dämmerung* is given as Ernst Rosmer, not Elsa Bernstein, is the play’s authenticity affected?

OR

**3b** ‘The fundamental social construction in *Dämmerung* is time’. Discuss.

**4a** Analyse the theme of science and the portrayal of the medical profession in *Dämmerung* and *Frühlings Erwachen*.

OR

**4b** Explore the significance of music as a leitmotif in *Dämmerung*.

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5a Compare and contrast the ways in which the senses are expressed in *Von morgens bis mitternachts* and *Dämmerung*.

OR

5b Discuss the relevance of food and drink to social critique in *Von morgens bis mitternachts* and *Frühlings Erwachen*.

OR

5c Is the term ‘Expressionism’ helpful in elucidating the concerns and techniques of a play subsumed under that heading?

6a Discuss the ways in which the idea of exchange is productive for *Von morgens bis mitternachts*.

OR

6b What is the significance of the settings in this play?

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**7a** ‘Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretiert*, es kömmt drauf an, sie zu *verändern*.’ (MARX) In light of this quotation, what do you think is the relationship of *Die Maßnahme* to the ‘world of the mind’?

OR

**7b** To what extent are institutions and institutionalized practices (conventions) constitutive of *Die Maßnahme*?

**8a** To what extent does withheld information advance the content and increase the effect of *Die Maßnahme*?

OR

**8b** What is the function of judgement in *Die Maßnahme*?

AND

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In week 7 **or** 8 write a commentary on a passage of your choice from Brecht's play. *Spend no more than one hour on writing your answer. You may take as much time as you wish for research and planning.*

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Revision questions (not to be handed in; for your own use):

To what extent is modern drama concerned with entertaining an audience? Discuss with reference to **two or more** set plays.

Is violence necessary for the formation of identity? Discuss with reference to **two or more** set plays.

'Shocking depiction of sexuality serves the purpose of dramatic spectacle; it is not a powerful tool of social critique.' Discuss with reference to **two** set plays.

How is education conceived in **one or more** of the set plays?