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| **Horváth, Ödön von (1901–1938)** |
| **Horváth, Edmund Josef von** |
| Born in Fiume to an aristocratic family, Horváth went to school in Budapest and Vienna to study German literature and theatre in Munich. He left university, without graduating, to pursue the career of a writer. After an intense period of literary production in the second half of the twenties, he received the prestigious Kleist award in 1931. His socio-critical plays became exceptionally popular as their author proved to be a keen observer of the economic crisis that tragically altered the life of the middle and working class. Although his work displayed leftist tendencies, Horváth had an ambivalent attitude towards national socialism. Despite his books being officially banned and burnt, he exploited his neutral Hungarian nationality to work in the fascist movie industry. An extended series of ill success drove the playwright to emigration. He was not able to realize this aim as he died in a tragic accident in the Parisian Champs Elysées. |
| Born in Fiume to an aristocratic family, Horváth went to school in Budapest and Vienna to study German literature and theatre in Munich. He left university, without graduating, to pursue the career of a writer. After an intense period of literary production in the second half of the twenties, he received the prestigious Kleist award in 1931. His socio-critical plays became exceptionally popular as their author proved to be a keen observer of the economic crisis that tragically altered the life of the middle and working class. Although his work displayed leftist tendencies, Horváth had an ambivalent attitude towards national socialism. Despite his books being officially banned and burnt, he exploited his neutral Hungarian nationality to work in the fascist movie industry. An extended series of ill success drove the playwright to emigration. He was not able to realize this aim as he died in a tragic accident in the Parisian Champs Elysées.  Horváth’s œuvre can be divided into three sections. Initially, he published *The Book of Dances* (1922), a collection of still weak poems, and the more interesting *Sport Fairy Tales* (1924), short and highly ironic pieces of prose that spoofed the rampant sport cult of the twenties. The expressionist experiment *Murder in the Mohrengasse* (1924) is also part of this first period. The ‘Volksstücke’ (popular/folk plays) that premiered around the turn of the decade are considered as his principal work. Besides the differently crafted early masterpiece *The Belle Vue* (1926), he abandoned the overtly social and political concerns that were expressed openly in *Revolt in Côte 3018* (1926), *Sladek* (1927) or *A Sexual Congress* (1928) to adapt a more subtle and effective approach. His unique dramaturgic concept was described as ‘Demaskierung des Bewusstseins’ (unmasking of consciousness) by himself. *The Italian Evening*, *Casimir and Caroline* and *Tales from the Vienna Woods* achieved an enormous success when staged in 1931 and 1932. The subsequent première of *Faith, Hope and Charity* was prevented by the nazis but would later become one of his most influential plays. A recurring theme that dominates many of his works is the sexual exploitation of a young woman who can only survive the crisis by selling her body to unscrupulous and financially strong men. Indeed, Horváth is a master of dialogue whose nonchalant conversations contain an inscrutable density of metaphors and allusions. He coined the term ‘Bildungsjargon’ (educated jargon) for an unsuccessful mode of communication. By using it, his characters pretend to be witty but unintentionally expose their lack of sophistication by the exchange of meaningless phrases or quotations in the wrong context. The writings that belong to the third section have changed in tone as the author explored a darker fictional universe towards the end of his career. That period is usually labeled as metaphysical and accentuates the motif of guilt (*Judgement Day* (1936)). In his final phase, the author hearkened back to long-established characters in *Figaro Gets a Divorce* and *Don Juan Comes Back from the War* (1936) and attempted to suceed in history plays like *Village of No Men* or *Pompeii* (1937). Sunk into oblivion after his death, Horváth was rediscovered by the end of the sixties and has since become a persistent part of German theatre. He is widely regarded as ancestor of Marieluise Fleißer, Rainer Werner Fassbinder or Franz Xaver Kroetz. Especially his ‘Volksstücke’ are frequently staged and adapted for the screen, his novel *Youth Without God* (1937) is standard literature read in school. Furthermore, the complete works are being edited in the form of a historico-critical edition that reproduces the playwright’s complex and modern cut up technique. List of Works The Book of Dances (Das Buch der Tänze, 1922)  Sport Fairy Tales (Sportmärchen, 1924)  Murder in the Mohrengasse (Mord in der Mohrengasse, 1924)  The Belle Vue (Zur schönen Aussicht, 1926)  Revolt in Côte 3018 (Revolte auf Côte 3018, 1926)  Sladek (Sladek oder Die schwarze Armee, 1927)  A Sexual Congress (Rund um den Kongreß, 1928)  The Eternal Philistine (Der ewige Spießer, 1930)  The Italian Evening (Italienische Nacht, 1931)  Tales from the Vienna Woods (Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald, 1931)  Casimir and Caroline (Kasimir und Karoline, 1932)  Faith, Hope and Charity (Glaube Liebe Hoffnung, 1933)  An Unknown from the Seine (Eine Unbekannte aus der Seine, 1933)  Back and Forth (Hin und her, 1933)  Heavenwards (Himmelwärts, 1934)  Pigheaded (Mit dem Kopf durch die Wand, 1935)  Figaro Gets a Divorce (Figaro lässt sich scheiden, 1936)  Don Juan Comes Back from the War (Don Juan kommt aus dem Krieg, 1936)  Judgement Day (Der jüngste Tag, 1936)  Village of No Men (Ein Dorf ohne Männer, 1937)  Pompeii (Pompeij, 1937)  Youth Without God (Jugend ohne Gott, 1937)  A Child of Our Time (Ein Kind unserer Zeit, 1938) |
| Further reading:  (Balme)  (Beardsworth)  (Bance and Huish)  (Jones)  (Kastberger)  (Mathäs) |