Von morgens bis mitternachts

1. Discuss the **significance of space and** place for TWO of the following texts: Kafka’s Die Verwandlung; Mann’s Der Tod in Venedig; Walser’s Jakob von Gunten; Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts.
2. To what extent can Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts be read as a critique of **Capitalism?**
3. “Kaiser intends us to see the Kassierer’s fate as a representative one, as the plight of modern man in a capitalist world, safe and secure as long as he does not reflect on its meaning, but doomed once he sets out to find fulfilment in accordance with the images of intense experience which are being held out to him. The Kassierer becomes a kind of modern Everyman, taking upon himself the sins of the capitalist world and becoming its sacrificial victim.” (Rhys W. Williams) Discuss the relevance of this remark for an understanding of Georg Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts.
4. **Compare and contrast the break with tradition and the longing for renewal in two of the following texts:** Kafka’s Die Verwandlung, Mann’s Der Tod in Venedig, Walser’s Jakob von Gunten, Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts. You must base your argument on examples from the texts.
5. **Compare and contrast the representation of the modern city** in Walser’s Jakob von Gunten and Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts. You must base your argument on examples from the texts.
6. **Modern literature queries the value of traditions.** Discuss this with reference to two of the following texts: Mann’s Der Tod in Venedig, Walser’s Jakob von Gunten, Kaiser’s Von morgens bis mitternachts. You must base your argument on examples from the texts.

Culture and anarchy

Capitalism

* Landauer’s ideas particularly significant for the Expressionist generation, and for Kaiser in particular.
* Kaiser, like Landauer, recognized the importance of **‘Geist’** as a means of bring about radical social change without violence.
* ‘Geist’: necessary basis of culture in a nation. History= non-scientific, non-rational, not fixed. Christianity as a huge influence- permeates all social organisations of the medieval period and welds the diverse human functions into cultural unity.
* In his diagnosis of the evils which beset modern capitalist society in VMBM, Kaiser follows Landauer’s indictment, not only in broad terms but in specific examples.
* **Kaiser’s play offers variations on the theme of ‘Werte’.** The opening scene in the bank is intended to present the Kassierer as an automaton, wholly submerged in his function. He accepts the conventional relationship between money and what it can buy without question, even unthinkingly, confining himself to the purely mechanistic role as a minor functionary in the capitalist economy. So fully does he identify himself with his role that he scarcely needs to articulate his function. **But the arrival of the exotic Italian lady and the sexual innuendo of the bank-manager jolt him out of this conventional relationship to money**. By the end of the first scene his relationship to money has become problematic. Even before he dips his fingers into the till he **has lost his capitalist sense of values;** he has fallen from his naive state of capitalist grace. To the servant-girl who enters the bank with a note he pays out too many coins; when she points out his error, he takes back a handful of coins, but fails to calculate the correct amount. The remainder of his journey is a quest to find a new value-scheme to replace the one that he has lost, but since his unit of exchange remains money, he will be doomed to failure.
* **The six-day cycle race supplies a rather obvious model of the capitalist state**. As Landauer had insisted, sport has become a form of alienated work; here, the race, with its arbitrary injection of cash, prompting sudden spurts and temporary winners and losers**, symbolizes the role of incentives and wage increases under capitalism.** The Kassierer is concerned less with the effect of his money on the riders than with the effect on the public, for in the intensity of response he gains an inkling of' **Geist',** of a mass society willing to act and respond as one.
* **For a few moments it seems that capitalism is yet capable of producing that community of values which the Kassierer desires**. He provides a further massive sum, but the arrival of the Kaiser to take his seat in the Royal Box interrupts proceedings. **The fact that nationalism has conditioned the spectators' response, that the most intense outcry followed the victory of the German rider, indicates that the longed-for community of values is far from being achieved.** **The class society,** signalled by the three levels from which the spectators watch, has developed **nationalism as a surrogate value,** which, although it succeeds in sub merging the tensions in society, is not the revolution that Landauer desired.
* **In contradistinction to Kaiser's employment of allusion in the service of satire, the play also contains a set of religious associations which is taken more seriously**. **Kaiser intends us to see the Kassierer's fate as a representative one, as the plight of modern man in a capitalist world, safe and secure as long as he does not reflect on its meaning, but doomed once he sets out to find fulfilment** in accordance with the images of intense experience which are held out to him. **The Kassierer becomes a kind of modern Everyman, taking upon himself the sins of the capitalist world and becoming its sacrificial victim.**
* So ubiquitous are the religious associations that further illustration is unnecessary. But in his divergent use of cultural allusion, Kaiser presents the reader and the audience with a dilemma. Are we to take the religious associations seriously? Could they not represent a delusion, a cultural facade which is inappropriate to the life of a petit-bourgeois bank clerk? Why should we read these allusions in a different way from the other cultural allusions in the play? Could not the audience be mistaken in viewing the Kassierer as a sacrificial victim?
* tim? Is the 'Aufbruch' to be taken seriously, or is it parodied? Given Kaiser's genuine belief in the possibility of the New Man, embodied in Die Burger von Calais, I would contend that the religious allusions are indeed to be taken seriously and that the comic unmasking of inauthentic cultural associations does not extend to the religious complex of imagery and association. Certainly, contemporary critics, including Landauer, were convinced of Kaiser’s visionary quality.
* Kaiser's vision of society, his conviction that a new 'verbindender Geist' was an essential prerequisite of social change, even his cultural criticism, were conditioned by Landauer's theories. In Von morgens bis mitternachts Kaiser does not, of course, explore in detail each and every one of Landauer's arguments, but he does adopt Landauer's central critique of money in relation to value and test out its validity in a series of dramatic confrontations.