

Veranstalter:	Charlotte Manzella
Modul:	Ecological Dystopias by Contemporary Women Playwrights [ENG-6, ENG-6a, ENG-12, AA7, AA10, LAA9, LAA12, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA04, BAC1, BAC2, BAC4, IAA21, IAA23, IAA24, IAA25, IAA41, IAA42, IAA43]
Art der Veranstaltung:	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer:	53-543
Zeit:	2st.
Raum:	Phil A 9005
Beginn:	Mi 03.04.2424, 12:15

Course Description

“Waves engulfed ferris wheels and drowned bodies were piled up to block doors. Then the walls of water came from the sea. Villages vanished and cities relocated to their rooftops. Sometimes children fell down the sewage chutes but others caught seagulls with kites. Some died of thirst, some of drinking the water. When the flood receded thousands stayed on the roofs fed by helicopter while heroes and bonded workers shovelled the muck into buckets that were stored in the flood museums.”

This bleak and somewhat satirical description of a flood, taken from Caryl Churchill’s play *Escaped Alone* (20), reads all too familiar. What she describes are sensational images we have already seen on the news: footage of flooded streets, people stuck on roofs, helicopters delivering aid or evacuating those in need. Even the museums she gives an ironic nod to are real, such as the Louisiana State Museum’s permanent exhibition [*Living with Hurricanes: Katrina & Beyond*](#) documenting the damage in New Orleans in 2005, that still haunts the city almost 20 years after the fact. Since then, fires, floods, droughts, and earthquakes have dominated the news cycle frequently and become familiar examples of discussions about climate change. What does this have to do with theatre?

Theatre, unlike film, does not have access to big visual spectacles, but ecology has become an increasing focus of British theatre since the 1990s. Since the 2010s, theatre productions in big London playhouses, such as the Royal Court and the National Theatre, have been experimenting with forms that may serve to imagine the unimaginable, the climate futures of planet Earth. While disaster films visualise extreme weather events, early climate change theatre has tended to additionally focus on climate science, as well as the psychological aftermath of such events (Johns-Putra 270). While theatre has since drifted away from attempting to portray spectacular climate events, the depiction of ecologies still tends towards psychological implications and a catastrophising, dystopian narrative mode, as the quote above illustrates.

In this course, we will read five contemporary plays by three authors that can be identified as dystopian. We will explore the way in which they reflect, comment on, and contribute to broader discourses of ecology today, in particular theoretical currents that re-evaluate the relationship between the human and the more-than-human and other approaches to climate futures. We will also consider the role of dystopia, and on the flip side, utopia, in contemporary theatre and what obstacles and opportunities these generic modes present in theatrical settings. Finally, we will explore, in how far a dystopian approach to narratives about ecology is useful, or even necessary to address a topic that haunts the cultural imagination of the 21st century.

Works Cited

Johns- Johns-Putra, Adeline. 'Climate Change in Literature and Literary Studies: From Cli-Fi, Climate Change Theater and Ecopoetry to Ecocriticism and Climate Change Criticism'. *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2016, pp. 266–82. *Wiley Online Library*, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.385>.

Churchill, Caryl. *Escaped Alone*. Nick Hern, 2016.

Course Materials

In general, all course materials will be provided on the learning platform, apart from the primary texts (see below). These you may either purchase as a paper copy, or you may access them electronically on Drama Online, using your access to the Hamburg University library system. If you choose online access, please ensure before the beginning of the semester, that:

- You have a working library card to the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg and can access their resources from home.
- That you have an electronic device suitable for use in the classroom to interact with these texts, such as a tablet or laptop. Phones will not be permissible for this use.

I will provide information on how to access and use Drama Online during the first session.

Primary Works

Churchill, Caryl. *Far Away*. Nick Hern, 2000.

Dawn King. *Foxfinder*. Nick Hern, 2015.

Caryl Churchill. *Escaped Alone*. Nick Hern, 2016.

Stef Smith. *Human Animals*. Nick Hern, 2016.

Dawn King. *The Trials*. Nick Hern, 2022.

Course Requirements

Regular and active participation, thorough preparation of reading materials, regular written responses by way of an informal reading journal, participation in an expert group, and, for those requiring a grade, a final term paper.

Please note that students who are absent from the first session without notifying me in advance will lose their place in the course to enable people from the waiting list to join the class.

Sprechstunden im Semester:	s. Sprechstundenliste
Sprechstunden in der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:	s. Sprechstundenliste