

Foreplay: Hannah Arendt, the Two Adornos, and Walter Benjamin

Carl Djerassi



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Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno were intellectual giants of the first half of the twentieth century. The drama *Foreplay* explores their deeply human and psychologically intriguing private lives, focusing on professional and personal jealousies, the mutual dislike of Theodor Adorno and Hannah Arendt, the association between Walter Benjamin and Georges Bataille, and the border between erotica and pornography.

Djerassi's extensive biographical research brings to light many fascinating details revealed in the dialogues among the characters, including Adorno's obsession with his dreams, Benjamin's admiration for Franz Kafka, and the intimate correspondence between Gretel Adorno and Walter Benjamin. The introduction of a fictitious character, Fräulein X, intensifies the complex interplay among the four lead protagonists and allows for a comparison of Adorno's philandering and the similar behavior of Martin Heidegger, whose affair with Hannah Arendt is well known. *Foreplay* brims with intrigue and the friction created when strong personalities clash.

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