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Review

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Illusion and Reality. Plays and Stories of Arthur Schnitzler. Trans. and intro. Paul F. Dvorak. American University Studies I/47. New York: Lang, 1986. xxviii, 216 pp. \$23.00.

Illusion and Reality contains some of Schnitzler's best playlets and stories. The first selections are four scenes from *Anatol*, beginning with Anatol's hypnosis of Cora, the Christmas shopping episode, and the farewell supper with Annie. Though the next selection, "Anatol's Delusions of Grandeur," pales in terms of comic potential before the alternative closing scene of the *Anatol* cycle, "Anatol's Wedding Morning," Dvorak has provided a service by making this often overlooked sketch available in English. Three independent playlets follow the *Anatol* selections: "The High-Strung Woman," a biting piece about a pregnant woman whose lover would send her back to her husband; "One-Thirty," an innocuous, almost banal sketch of two partners experiencing different levels of love; and "New Year's Eve," a reserved and insightful portrayal of an erotic encounter ironized by contradictions in the characters' actions and the mechanics of seduction. The final dramatic selection is "At the Green Cockatoo," a clever variation of the play within a play theme; this work, which takes place on the eve of the French Revolution, illustrates especially well the chosen theme of the volume.

A dominant motif throughout the book is the search for genuine and meaningful relations in a world given over to deceit, self-centeredness, and suspicion. Especially interesting among the prose selections are "The Dead are Silent" and "Blind Geronimo and his Brother," primarily because they run against the grain of the well-known Schnitzler, the chronicler and critic of decadent Vienna. Here we see a sensitive and moral Schnitzler, not, as is usual, by way of the negation of the negation, or the argument *ad absurdum*. Both stories are told virtually without irony or satire; both portray serious conflicts that culminate in resolution; each articulates not only the need for, but the initial fulfillment of, intersubjectivity, be it through confession or trust. Other prose selections are "The Widower," a complex and philosophically acute story of betrayal, in which the husband is less upset about his wife's betrayal of him than he is about his wife's lover's betrayal of her; "The Last Letter of an Artist," a rather boring and witless story whose clearly ironized narrators are not enough to rescue it; and "The Second," a bizarre account of the breakdown of communication, initially in the face of conflict and sexual drive and, eventually, as a consequence of oblivion.

The translations read well and are a welcome contribution to the increasing body of Schnitzler literature in translation. Nonetheless, not every choice is flawless. A few examples: Dvorak translates Anatol's description of himself as a "leichtsiniger Melancholiker" with the phrase "melancholic sentimentalist" (p. 24); Frank Marcus' "frivolous melancholic" surpasses Dvorak's rendition in both charm and accuracy. Dvorak translates Max's closing line in "Farewell Supper" as follows: "Well . . . you see . . . it went very smoothly! . . ." (p. 42). Marcus' translation, "There . . . you see . . . it all went quite smoothly . . ." seems to capture more of the verve and irony of the original: "Na . . . siehst du . . . es ist ganz leicht gegangen! . . ." Dvorak's "my indiscretion has gotten me so melancholy" (p. 61) hardly suffices for Anatol's "mein Leichtsin ist so schwermütig geworden." An occasional Germanism creeps in, as on page 121 when Dvorak writes: "but she is my wife only since yesterday."

Dvorak's selection of texts does not fit a transparent pattern. The anthology makes no attempt to present the essential Schnitzler for classroom use ("Fräulein Else" and "Leutnant Gustl," for example, are missing), nor is it an effort to translate only lesser known, as yet untranslated, texts. A few works, the story "Die drei Elixiere," for example, might have fit more closely to the volume's overriding theme than some of the selected texts and would even have yielded implicit cross references, in this case to the first *Anatol* playlet. For the reader coming to Schnitzler without the aid of a classroom setting the text might well have provided a few brief notes, for example, for "Hernals," (p. 22), "Makart" (p. 25), "Hotel Sacher" (p. 29), "Weidlingau" (p. 48), or "Prater" (p. 82). Nonetheless, these comments do not constitute anything like an immanent critique. Every college library should own the text, and the teacher of Austrian culture may even find a spot for it on his or her syllabus.

Dvorak includes in his volume a general and lucid overview of Schnitzler and his age, followed by a brief discussion of the texts selected. In his introduction Dvorak suggests viewing illusion and reality not only as literary but also as ontological themes. He writes, for example, concerning "At the Green Cockatoo": "There is no freedom for Schnitzler's characters; all are caught up in the illusion that reality and fantasy can be clearly separated and that the two are in effect different. What Schnitzler's play ultimately proves is that the two are not distinguishable and that society as a whole suffers from this malaise" (p. xxiii). The argument is at least misleading. If illusion and reality are "not distinguishable," then one cannot argue that Schnitzler's heroes "are caught up in the *illusion* that reality . . ." One of the two statements must be false. Indeed, it is not difficult to see that if a critic wants to argue that Schnitzler's characters are caught up in an illusion, it cannot be the illusion of wanting to distinguish illusion and reality (such a claim would be self-canceling, for it is based on the presupposition that a distinction can, at least in principle, be recognized); rather, the characters either fail to distinguish illusion and reality or confidently distinguish them in the same degree to which they falsely distinguish them. Schnitzler's characters confuse illusion and reality, but the text's critique of these characters depends on a distinction against which their confusion can be measured. The point is important for the following reason. The early reception of Schnitzler played down the ethical and socially critical thrust of Schnitzler's works; it viewed the Austrian as a reveler in the life of dandyism and decadence. Future Schnitzler critics, standing under the sway of the poststructuralism, will likely be in a position to continue this tradition, if for different reasons. Schnitzler's confusions of illusion and reality, his characters' many miscommunications, might easily, and erroneously, be reduced to universal perspectivism and necessary misreading. The comic Schnitzler, a master of the figure of self-cancellation, was hardly that naive.

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GRUNDLEHNER, PHILIP. *The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. 359 pp.

For the last hundred years an ambiguity has attached to Nietzsche's status as a poet, and as usual, much of the uncertainty was created by Nietzsche himself.