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| Schnitzler, Arthur (1862-1931) |
| [Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL] |
| Arthur Schnitzler was a leading exponent of Viennese modernism. The son of a Jewish laryngologist, Schnitzler studied and practiced medicine before devoting himself exclusively to writing. His literary works explore the themes of love and death, reality and illusion, and changing codes of honor and morality. In his dramatic plays, Schnitzler emphasizes dialogue over action and often shows how people speak past each other. In his prose, he experiments with subjective modes of narration that give readers access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters.  In 1895, Schnitzler achieved a breakthrough with *Liebelei* (*The Reckoning*), a play about love, betrayal, social class, and gender roles. *Liebelei* features a prototypical ‘sweet girl,’ a young woman from the lower middle classes involved in a relationship with an aristocratic man. The 1896/97 *Reigen* (*Hands Around*) was to become Schnitzler’s most controversial work. The play consists of ten dialogues between lovers, one of whom will find a new sexual partner in the next scene in each case. Linking members from different social classes into a sexual chain, the play exposes the power asymmetries between them. While Schnitzler was primarily a chronicler of his time and society, he also wrote several historical plays, including the 1899 *Der grüne Kakadu* (*The Green Cockatoo*), which is set at the beginning of the French Revolution. |
| Arthur Schnitzler was a leading exponent of Viennese modernism. The son of a Jewish laryngologist, Schnitzler studied and practiced medicine before devoting himself exclusively to writing. His literary works explore the themes of love and death, reality and illusion, and changing codes of honor and morality. In his dramatic plays, Schnitzler emphasizes dialogue over action and often shows how people speak past each other. In his prose, he experiments with subjective modes of narration that give readers access to the thoughts and feelings of the characters.  File: Schnitlzer1912.jpg  Figure Arthur Schnitzler, 1912  Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arthur_Schnitzler_1912.jpg>  In 1895, Schnitzler achieved a breakthrough with *Liebelei* (*The Reckoning*), a play about love, betrayal, social class, and gender roles. *Liebelei* features a prototypical ‘sweet girl’, a young woman from the lower middle classes involved in a relationship with an aristocratic man. The 1896/97 *Reigen* (*Hands Around*) was to become Schnitzler’s most controversial work. The play consists of ten dialogues between lovers, one of whom will find a new sexual partner in the next scene in each case. Linking members from different social classes into a sexual chain, the play exposes the power asymmetries between them. While Schnitzler was primarily a chronicler of his time and society, he also wrote several historical plays, including the 1899 *Der grüne Kakadu* (*The Green Cockatoo*), which is set at the beginning of the French Revolution.  Later in his life, Schnitzler focused more on prose rather than drama. His 1900 ‘Leutnant Gustl’ (‘None But the Brave’) introduced the interior monologue into German literature. The novella’s stream of consciousness shows how the protagonist’s mind is conditioned by clichés and conventions, especially a vacuous military code of honor. In the 1926 ‘Traumnovelle’(‘Rhapsody’), a married couple realizes the many possibilities of erotic adventure and betrayal that lurk beneath their stable family life—the husband at a secret costume party and the wife in a dream. This and other works are evidence of the affinities between Schnitzler and his Viennese contemporary Sigmund Freud. Both are concerned with the duality of life and death, the hidden truth of dreams, and the psychological mechanisms of denial and repression. Yet Schnitzler explores the workings of the unconscious (or, as he called it, the ‘middle consciousness’) for the sake of social analysis and critique. He was a keen observer of the spread of antisemitism and the crisis of liberalism in fin-de-siècle Vienna. In his 1908 novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road to the Open*), he depicts the many ways in which Viennese Jews responded to this crisis. Key WorksPlays *Liebelei* (1895, *The Reckoning* [1907])  *Reigen* (1896/97, *Hands Around* [1920]  *Der grüne Kakadu* (1899, *The Green Cockatoo* [1913]) Prose Leutnant Gustl’ (1900, ‘None But the Brave’ [1926])  *Der Weg ins Freie* (1908, *The Road to the Open* [1923])  ‘Traumnovelle’ (1926, ‘Rhapsody [1927]) |
| Further reading:  (Lorenz)  (Swales) |