Samuel Peter February 29, 2024

Professor Eric Miller COLT 28: Mind Reading

**Paper 4: Lieutenant Gustl**

Gustl is an antisemite. How does Schnitzler use Gustl to satirize the (very common) anti-semitism of his day?

Schnitzler uses Gustl to satirize the anti-semitism of his day through ridiculing stereotypes, prejudice, and irony. The effective use of these tools not only criticizes the normalized antisemitism of the time but also shows why it was easy for Nazis to bring about the holocaust later in Europe by leveraging public sentiment against a particular subsection of society.

Firstly, the most identifiable method used by Schnitzler to satirize antisemitism is through the representation of Jews in Lieutenant Gustl to match stereotypes of Jews the reader would be familiar with. The first stereotype we encounter is the inner monologue of Lieutenant Gustle, where he says, “He's probably a Jew. Sure, works in a bank.” Having a Jew work in a bank plays into the stereotype that all Jews work in finance-related roles. This stereotype of a Jew working in a finance role then leads Gustl to state his prejudice, “Well, the Jews are the ones with the money.” Apart from justifying the initial stereotype, Gustl’s prejudice reflects the public sentiment that allowed Jews to become targets of Nazi propaganda, blaming Jews for European difficulty post-World War One because they tended to be more economically stable than the rest of the community.

Another key stereotype that Schnitzler references is the ability to identify a Jew through their appearance. Lieutenant Gustl observes the attractive women in the crowd when leaving the opera. He then remarks, “Oh, what a nose! -Jewess.” This statement refers to the antisemitic ethnic stereotype of Jews having a hooked nose. Originally used as a hostile caricature feature in the mid-13th century, this stereotype has become one of the most well-known stereotypes of Jews globally in the modern world (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.). Schnitzler pokes fun at the notion of identifying a Jew based on a person’s appearance through the following quote, contrasting the initial stereotype that one can recognize a Jew based on a person’s appearance alone. When bored at the opera, Lieutenant Gustl thinks about the Mannheimers and remarks, “They say the Mannheimers themselves are Jews, baptized, of course[,] they don't look it- especially Mrs. Mannheimer. …blond, beau­tiful figure.” In this quotation, Lieutenant Gustl admits that a person may not fit traditional stereotypes of Jewish appearances, highlighting a flaw in the initial assumption of identifying Jews through physical appearance alone.

As reflected in the above methods, Schnitzler further satirizes the antisemitism of his time through contradictions and inconsistencies in antisemitic beliefs and sentiments. Gustl’s experiences of identifying a Jew based on appearance poke fun at the antisemitic belief by highlighting Gustl’s contradictory thoughts when eyeing attractive women as he leaves the opera. Schnitzler also uses Gustl’s emotional inconsistency to satirize antisemitic beliefs and sentiments. Schnitzler highlights Gustl’s emotional inconsistency through Gustl’s inner monologue about his emotions regarding the crowd at the concert. At first, Gustl thinks, “What a crowd!” After seeing a Jewish woman and supposedly identifying other Jewish women in the crowd, he thinks, “ Another one. It's amazing, half of them are Jews. One can't even hear an oratorio unmolested these days.” The immediate switch of sentiment in the same thought makes the reader question whether Gustl’s thoughts accurately resemble his emotions or whether Gustl fully embodies antisemitic beliefs that are capable of switching his emotions completely without further consideration. A question that Schnitzler raises is whether Gustl is capable of feeling anything genuinely at all, given all the antisemitic beliefs he has internalized. Another contradiction in Gustl’s antisemitic belief is highlighted in the quote, “Supposed to be a lieutenant in the reserve as well! Well, he'd better not come to practice in our regiment! If they keep on commissioning so many Jews-then what's the point of all this anti-Semitism?” Despite acknowledging a “Jewish” man’s qualifications as a lieutenant, Gustl still does not believe that the “Jewish” man has the capability of leading the regiment he is in. Gustl even questions why so the military hired multiple Jews for positions of authority despite the normalized antisemitism at the time. The contradiction between the reality of events and the perceived reality of those with antisemitic beliefs highlights the qualifications of Jewish people for the positions they hold while satirizing antisemitic beliefs at the same time.

In conclusion, Schnitzler uses a range of tools like stereotypes, irony, and prejudice to satirize the antisemitic beliefs of his day. We could argue that Schnitzler decided to satirize antisemitism because he was Jewish. One thing we know for a fact is that Schnitzler wrote his satire effectively enough to anger his superiors, which led Schnitzler to get fired from the army after the publication of Lieutenant Gustl.