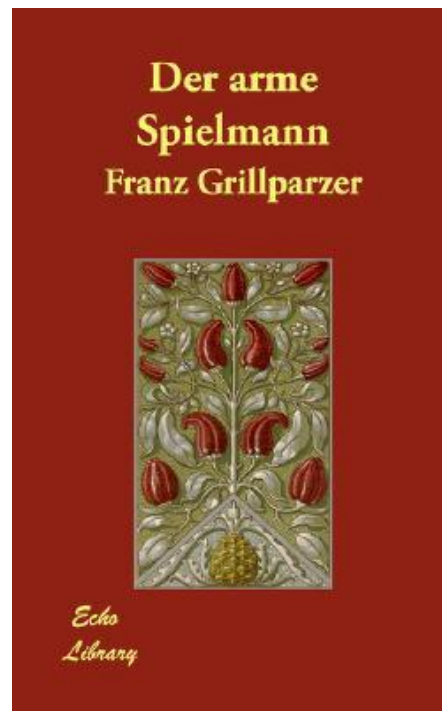




Der arme Spielmann

Franz Grillparzer

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"The Poor Musician" is an autobiographical novella by Austria's famous dramatist and poet Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872): Rounded and compacted, and yet saturated with the sad tragedy of his own isolation it is the most artistic work we have from his pen. For the student of Grillparzer-psychology it is a veritable treasure trove. "The Poor Musician" was the one piece of his creative genius that unflinchingly grappled with the great problem of resignation; the one piece that pictured resignation; but also the one piece that made resignation itself tragic. --- The poor, half-witted fiddler, shipwrecked in life, coddling his woe as the last sweet treasure it has left him, pouring it forth in the midnight solitude of his chamber in music that is music to none but the illusioned player such is resignation.

Der arme Spielmann Details

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From Reader Review *Der arme Spielmann* for online ebook

Ullrich Franke says

Ein ganz und gar wundervolles Buch.

Juliet says

A longish short story told by a narrator in Vienna who becomes interested in a poor old man who plays the violin on the street at a festival, but the man is carefully dressed in his shabby clothes, speaks Latin, and has an air of decency about him. So the narrator becomes curious and introduces himself, and eventually convinces the fiddler to tell him his story.

Nothing goes right for the poor guy, he never catches a break from anybody, but he keeps trying, keeps pursuing his passion for music (even if it is a bit mundane). So I found myself liking him in spite of all his troubles, or maybe because of them. Especially in the moment when he asks his landlady for a bit of fruit to give his guest and is embarrassed when he has to come back to his room with nothing on the plate -- that's when he had me.

Praised for its realism in an era of sentimentality, this story now seems to our eyes maybe a bit more sentimental than what we're used to, but I found it affecting none the less. I am also heartened to know it took Grillparzer 10 years to write it. Finally, an author who admits that something did not come easily to him.

This particular edition includes pen & ink illustrations -- an addition which I always enjoy.

Sherrymoon says

from goodreads-Cecily: One of Kafka's favourites, and easy to see why. Melancholic story of a story of a man who disappointed his father and gradually slipped to the margins of society.
wow...will surely touch me, cause i did so disappoint my father.

Gustl says

Della delicatezza di questa breve storia è già stato detto; soffusa, racconta la lenta parabola di Jakob, un buon uomo, al quale, tutto ciò che di male gli succede è sempre causato dalla sua buona fede nei confronti dei sentimenti e del prossimo. Con grande dignità Jakob passa sul palcoscenico della vita come un'ombra, regalando al lettore un piccolo ma intenso raccoglimento.

Bine says

Wirklich eine überraschend tolle Novelle. Der arme Spielmann ist so eine herzensgute Person und ich fand das Ende SO TRAUERIG. Die Figur ist einfach der Wahnsinn. Ein unverständlicher Außenseiter mit einer wahnsinnigen Leidenschaft für Musik, den ich von der ersten Sekunde an ins Herz geschlossen habe. Auch der Schreibstil hat mir gut gefallen. Ich habe es wirklich sehr schnell lesen können. Ich fand die Geschichte fast schon etwas zu kurz, da hätte man noch mehr machen können finde ich, deshalb leider keine vollen 5 Sterne, aber die Geschichte ist nah dran. Ein tolles Stück Literatur. Leider viel zu unbekannt. Lest es bitte!

Kate says

Da das Buch zur deutschen Literatur gehört, hier eine deutsche Rezension.

Diese Lektüre ist die dritte in Woche 4 meines 8. Semesters. Gelesen hab ich schon in den Semestern vorher viel, nur dieses Mal verwirrt mich die Lektürenausswahl sehr. (Titel des Seminars: Realistische Wahrnehmung etc). Beim Lesen habe ich mich daher auf einige Beobachtungsvorträge konzentriert, die so ihren Einfluss auf diese Rezi nehmen.

Zuerst jedoch vorweg: Ich bin mir noch nicht sicher, was dieses Buch ausmacht, sodass es zur deutschen Literatur gehört. Es ist eine nett kleine Erzählung über die Biografie eines armen Spielmannes, der einmal gar nicht so arm, aber meist ziemlich unmusikalisch war. Diese Biografie zeigt den Werdegang eines beinahe ausgestoßenen Sohnes, der am Ende seine Erbschaft, sowie seine Liebe verliert, und daraufhin die Menschen mit seiner dissonanten Musik beglückt, sowie dem Sohn seiner Liebe das Geigespielen beibringt. Immer andere vorschubend verliert er am Ende sein eigenes Leben während er Kinder aus Hochwasserfluten rettet.

Interessant ist, dass die Menschenmenge, mehrfach im Fluß dargestellt, keine Beachtung für den schlechten Musiker übrig hat, bis schließlich der Fluß selbst es ist, der die Beachtung auf den Musiker lenkt als er Kinder aus dem Hochwasser rettet. Danach kann sich der kranke Mann bis nach seinem Tod nicht vor Aufmerksamkeit retten: Seine Taten machten ihm zum Helden.

Verwirrend gestaltet sich die Akustik im Buch. Mehrfach durchbrochen von Musik, hört man jedoch durchgehend erst etwas, wenn auch ein Geschehen damit einhergeht. SO kann vieles übersehen werden, da keine Musik den Fokus lenkt.

Die Charaktere gestalten sich meist als ländlich-grobschlächtig. Selbst die Frauen werden als "nie hübsch" bezeichnet, und ich vermisse durch das ganze Buch hinweg genauere Beschreibungen der Gegend, da lediglich das Volksfest am Anfang eine etwas stärkere Beschreibung und Begründung erhält.

Allgemein war es ein kurzweiliges Lesevergnügen, dessen tieferer Sinn sich mir hoffentlich spätestens Mittwoch im Seminar erschließt...

M. Sarki says

German classic? Well, pretty good tale but nothing I would consider worthy of being called a classic.

Caterina Santi says

poetico, semplice ed essenziale: come rappresentare il complesso sistema dell'esistenza nella passione pura per la musica. ignota è l'ambizione e, con lei, la presunzione di voler affermarsi nella società.

MauroMC says

Sad novel about a never grasped love.

The passion for the music of the little talented violinist.

His ingenuity, the greed and arrogance of the shopkeeper, the daughter's inability to make their own choices, makes the story much more realistic than it may seem.

In the end the violist dies, like a hero. It might have seemed like a waste of life, but the last action redeems all the past.

?Jinglemarco? ??????? - ??????? (Nursery rhymes enthusiast)* says

This is an interesting tale but excessively miserable is its protagonist

Dennis says

... und am Ende war mein Herz gebrochen.

Definitiv eines der großartigsten Erzeugnisse deutschsprachiger Literatur. Dem armen Spielmann gebührt viel mehr Beachtung.

Mazzy says

Ich mag den Schreibstil, den Grillparzer in dieser kurzen Erzählung verwendet, um das Schicksal des naiven, weltfremden, erbärmlichen Spielmanns durch die Augen des namenlosen Erzählers zu zeigen.

Leicht langweilig, hat mich nur gestört, dass die eigentlich taffe Barbara zu weinerlich portraitiert wird.

belisa says

minik tatl? bir hikayeydi o kadar...

Vittorio Ducoli says

Un piccolo grande eroe dell'emarginazione

Questo piccolo Oscar Mondadori, edito sul finire degli anni '70, è un libro prezioso, perché contiene i due unici racconti del drammaturgo romantico austriaco Franz Grillparzer, accompagnati dall'abbozzo di un altro racconto e da una lunga introduzione sulla vita e le opere di Grillparzer scritta dal grande e compianto Ervino Pocar.

E' un libro prezioso soprattutto perché ci dona, nella traduzione dello stesso Pocar, uno dei racconti a mio avviso più straordinari di tutti i tempi, degno di assurgere ad un olimpo che per me contiene *La metamorfosi*, il *Michael Kohlhaas* di Kleist, alcuni racconti di Hoffmann, *Bartleby lo scrivano*, *Tonio Kröger* e per la verità molti altri che ora non mi vengono in mente.

Il racconto in questione è quello che dà il titolo al volume: *Il povero musicante*, che oggi è possibile reperire nella stessa traduzione e cura (immagino) da Passigli o, con il nome de *Il povero suonatore* da Marsilio. Manca tuttavia, nelle edizioni più recenti, la possibilità di leggere anche l'altro racconto di Grillparzer, *Il convento presso Sendomir*.

Partiamo proprio da questo racconto, che in verità non lascia pienamente trasparire la magnificenza del successivo.

Si tratta infatti di un racconto scritto nel 1828, ci informa Pocar, probabilmente per colmare in fretta e furia un vuoto apertosi nell'edizione di una rivista a cui il nostro collaborava, quindi con intenti quasi commerciali, e questo "vizio d'origine" si riflette nella storia, che definirei *manieristicamente romantica*, essendo la storia di un signore secentesco che, sposata una bella e vivace fanciulla, va incontro al delitto, alla rovina e all'espiazione a causa dell'adulterio di lei.

La trama è sicuramente avvincente e la scrittura di Grillparzer, dottamente interpretata da Pocar, è potente e molto teatrale – come si addice ad un autore uso alle tragedie da palcoscenico – ma il racconto, come detto, non si distacca da un *mainstream romantico* abbastanza convenzionale.

Tutt'altra cosa è *Il povero musicante*, che veramente è un racconto che merita di essere letto più volte e meditato a lungo, di una straordinaria modernità pur appartenendo pienamente al tempo in cui è stato scritto, un racconto che brilla come un diamante dalle mille sfaccettature, per cui ritengo che chiunque lo legga possa trovarvi un sentimento, un'emozione personalizzata.

Già l'ambientazione è inusuale: se ne *Il convento presso Sendomir* lo sfondo sono castelli, conventi e un secolo lontano, qui la vicenda è ambientata nella Vienna dell'autore, e viene narrata in prima persona.

Se nel primo racconto la storia coinvolge personaggi potenti e sentimenti estremi, ne *Il povero musicante* il protagonista è persona umile, al pari del contesto sociale in cui vive, e miti e pacate, ma profondissime, sono le emozioni e le passioni che prova ed evoca in noi.

Ad uno stile teatrale fatto di dialoghi fitti e serrati si contrappone un ritmo lento, una tonalità quasi fiabesca, che contribuiscono non poco al grande fascino del racconto.

Durante una festa popolare l'io narrante nota un violinista di strada, che non suona bene ma tiene aperto un leggio con spartiti davanti a sé, che suona musiche "serie" che non incontrano il favore degli astanti, che è vestito umilmente ma dignitosamente, che commenta serenamente in latino il fatto che nessuno gli abbia messo una moneta nel cappello, che se ne va quando inizia ad arrivare il grosso della folla.

Preso da *fame antropologica* l'io narrante vuole sapere chi sia, che storia abbia il musicante, così lo avvicina e poi lo va a trovare nella sua stanzetta. Qui il musicante gli racconta la storia della sua vita. E qui si aprono praterie di emozioni, di riflessioni, di sollecitazioni in grado di soddisfare ogni tipologia di lettore, da quello che prende la storia così com'è a quello che gli può attribuire il significato di grande apologo sul ruolo dell'arte e dell'artista rispetto alla società, a quello abituato a smontare i singoli pezzi di un testo per trovarvi

chiavi di lettura psicanalitiche o politiche.

Contrariamente a quanto faccio di solito non darò la mia interpretazione del testo, in quanto questo racconto è talmente bello e, come detto, sfaccettato, che mi sentirei di sminuirlo proponendo schemi interpretativi che per forza di cose sarebbero limitati e dilettanteschi. Mi inchino perciò alla grandezza e riconosco la mia inadeguatezza a descriverla. Persino l'introduzione di Pocar, che pure è ottima nella descrizione della vita e del contesto sociale e culturale in cui si è mosso l'autore, è a mio avviso estremamente riduttiva rispetto alla grandezza del testo.

Mi soffermo però sulla figura del musicante, che merita davvero di avere un posto di rilievo tra i grandi piccoli eroi della letteratura di ogni tempo. La sua coerenza, la sua ingenuità sono commoventi, e ne fanno uno dei grandi emarginati della narrativa. E' anche da loro che possiamo nonostante tutto trarre residue motivazioni per pensare che un altro mondo sia possibile.

Cecily says

One of Kafka's favourites, and easy to see why. Melancholic story of a story of a man who disappointed his father and gradually slipped to the margins of society.

tn says

4 1/2

Steve says

Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872)

Regarded by many as a leading light of Austrian literature (including by Peter Handke, who sent me to him in the first place), indeed at times as Austria's national poet, Franz Grillparzer was primarily an innovative dramatist, (*) though he also wrote criticism, essays, poetry and some fiction, including *Der arme Spielmann* (The Poor Musician, 1847, available in English translation), which became a favorite of Franz Kafka. Son of a strict and very reserved lawyer who died fairly early, condemning his son to a lifetime of tedious jobs in the Austro-Hungarian governmental bureaucracy, Grillparzer was one of those unfortunate human beings who dare not be happy. An introvert and highly sensitive, dominated by his father and obliged to study law, he never quite got over his fear of disappointing his father, indeed of disappointing anyone. It appears that his fears prevented him from proposing marriage to the love of his life; he remained unmarried and increasingly solitary. (**)

Thus it is with real empathy that Grillparzer relates in *Der arme Spielmann* the story of a, by most measures, total failure: a septuagenarian son of an important civil servant whom he disappointed to such a degree that the old man thenceforth turned his back on his son (the disappointment was actually trivial in nature, at least by my lights), who then through his unimprovable naïveté slipped slowly but surely into a state of material

desperation, but who was nonetheless satisfied with his lot. The poor fellow even lost the love of his life by disappointing her when he became the victim of an obvious scam. Not content with evoking this unfortunate embodiment of his own finely honed anxieties about disappointing others, Grillparzer upped the ante by arranging that the old musician, who now plays in the streets for small change, is even more technically incompetent than he realizes. Though trying his best to accommodate his audience's wishes, no one recognizes that what he's playing is a waltz. What is more, the old fellow is satisfied with his situation precisely because of his musicizing, which he regards as fulfilling, even profound, his technical shortcomings be damned. Here, it seems to me, is a complex alloy of anxiety and commitment annealed in the flame of irony.

If, as I suspect, Grillparzer was exorcising his own demons - his fear of failing to meet the expectations of others and his worrisome anxieties about his own authorial abilities - or not, *Der arme Spielmann* is a touching, occasionally even poignant story told by a first person narrator with a cool distance to the old violinist one must call ironic, at least until the end, where Grillparzer couldn't resist a last sentimental touch of *Erbaulichkeit*. But then, with the pleasures of flowing mid-19th century prose come, almost always, moments that seem to early 21st century readers to be desperately treacly. Or maybe it's just me.

For a time Grillparzer's dramas were successful, though not successful enough for him to dare give up his government job, but the failure of his only comedy, *Weh dem, der lügt*, in 1838 embittered him to the point that he henceforth wrote only for his desk drawer. He was disappearing completely from public memory when the insightful Heinrich Laube became the director of the court theater in 1849 and began to resurrect Grillparzer's plays. These productions were so successful that in his old age Grillparzer was lauded into the company of Goethe and Schiller by his countrymen. True to his nature, Grillparzer could not enjoy this late recognition, complaining that "just one percent of that which they now force upon me with the best of wishes would have completely invigorated me in my younger years and encouraged me to literary efforts that would have served me honor and the Austrian people joy. Now these are just the last coups de grace being dealt to me."

Supposedly, the plays they found in his drawer are better than those performed in his lifetime. I'll have to look into them.

Hermann Kern - The Old Violin Player

I'd like to mention that Grillparzer's autobiography (named, quite simply, *Selbstbiographie*), written when he was 62 years old and taking his reader up to his 45th year, is well worth reading. It is written with an often self-denigrating charm and provides a multifaceted glimpse of Viennese life in the early 19th century. Among the passages of particular interest is his very personal account of Napoleon's siege of Vienna in 1809, when Grillparzer was a young and completely untrained soldier defending the capital's walls. The French army was certainly in no danger from him and his companions, whose volleys threatened other Austrian soldiers on a lower wall to their front more than they did the Grande Armée. Though he had been ill for some time already, it was the taking of Vienna and the resultant Pressburger Treaty that crushed his father's last will to live. The stories of his trips to Italy, Germany, France and England - which, with the exception of the earliest (to Italy), were undertaken largely to escape the pressures of Metternich's police state - are quite engaging with often humorous accounts of his interactions with such figures as Goethe and Hegel (whom Grillparzer found just as pleasant and entertaining in person as he considered his philosophy to be abstruse and repulsive). Of somewhat less interest are his reports about the office politics in the state bureaucracy, so

very reminiscent of those in the imperial bureaucracies of Rome and China. But, then, the nature of the human creature hardly changes with time.

(*) Interestingly, Grillparzer was quite taken by the dramatists of the Spanish Golden Age, particularly Calderón, wrote a book about their work and supposedly stood under their influence. Unhappily, I am too ignorant of 17th century Spanish and 18th century Austrian theater to be able to discern such influence. I've recently read his dramatic trilogy, *Das goldene Vlies* (The Golden Fleece), and found his surprisingly realistic re-working of the Medea and Jason legend interesting, though my pleasure was moderated by touches of melodrama, to which I am highly allergic.

(**) For those of you who know German I offer a poem Grillparzer wrote in 1836 that reveals much of his nature.

Entsagung

*Eins ist, was altersgraue Zeiten lehren,
Und lehrt die Sonne, die erst heut getagt:
Des Menschen ewges Los, es heißt: Entbehren,
Und kein Genuß, als den du dir versagt.*

*Die Speise, so erquicklich deinem Munde,
Beim frohen Fest genippter Götterwein,
Des Teuren Kuß auf deinem heißen Munde -
Dein wärs? Sieh zu! ob du vielmehr nicht sein.*

*Denn der Natur alther notwendige Mächte,
Sie hassen, was sich freie Bahnen zieht,
Als vorenthalten ihrem ewgen Rechte,
Und reißen lauernd in ihr Machtgebiet.*

*All, was du hältst, davon bist du gehalten,
Und wo du herrschest, bist du auch der Knecht.
Es sieht Genuß sich vom Bedarf gespalten,
Und eine Pflicht knüpft sich an jedes Recht.*

*Nur was du abweist, kann dir wiederkommen,
Was du verschmähst, naht ewig schmeichelnd sich;
Und in dem Abschied, vom Besitz genommen,
Erhältst du dir das einzig Deine: Dich!*
