



FILM  
CULTURE

IN TRANSITION

# VISIONS OF VIENNA

NARRATING THE CITY IN  
1920S AND 1930S CINEMA

ALEXANDRA SEIBEL

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## Visions of Vienna

# Visions of Vienna

*Narrating the City in 1920s and 1930s Cinema*

*Alexandra Seibel*

Amsterdam University Press

Cover illustrations: Front: Production still from *Ein Walzertraum* (The Waltz Dream) by Ludwig Berger, Germany 1925. The woman is Mady Christians, her suitor Willy Fritsch.  
© Sammlung Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Vienna. Back: Erich von Stroheim and Fay Wray in *THE WEDDING MARCH* (1928). © Sammlung Österreichisches Filmmuseum, Vienna

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek, Amsterdam

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 189 8  
e-ISBN 978 90 4853 168 4  
DOI 10.5117/9789462981898  
NUR 670

© A. Seibel / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2017

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	9
Viennese Modernity and the Impact on Cinema	14
The Structure of the Cinematic City	21
<b>2. Fairgrounds and Vineyards: Urban Topographies in the Viennese Films of Erich von Stroheim</b>	
Introduction	25
Reflections at the Fairground: Erich von Stroheim's and Rupert Julian's <i>MERRY-GO-ROUND</i> (1923)	28
Melodrama, Mass Culture, and Social Masquerade	35
Deception and Reflection: The Entertainment Machinery	39
Sex, Romance, and Spectacle: Leaving the Prater Behind	40
Excess and Analysis: Erich von Stroheim's <i>THE WEDDING MARCH</i> (1928)	43
Concentric City: Center, Circle, and Suburbs	48
Baroque Modernity: The Aesthetics of the Rotten	50
Repressed and Restricted Looks: A Geography of the Gaze	55
Meet Me at the 'Heuriger': Tales of the Iron Man	58
<b>3. Critical, Controversial, Conventional: Viennese Girls in Films by Ophüls, Feyder, Hochbaum, and Forst</b>	
Introduction	65
Arthur Schnitzler's Sweet Young Thing: Male Fantasy and Female Misery	69
The Viennese Girl vs. the Femme Fatale	71
The Viennese Girl in International Cinema	74
Max Ophüls, Vienna, and <i>LIEBELEI</i> (1933)	76
Variations of Reality in <i>LIEBELEI</i> : The Military and the Theater	79
The Gaze of Oppressive Masculinity and the Need for Disguise	83
The Kaiser and The Viennese Girl: Doing Away with the Habsburg Myth in <i>LIEBELEI</i> and <i>DE MAYERLING À SARAJEVO</i> (1938)	86
Happy Endings in Hollywood: Sidney Franklin's <i>REUNION IN VIENNA</i> (1933) and Jacques Feyder's <i>DAYBREAK</i> (1931)	89
The Viennese Girl and the Truth of Music in <i>LIEBELEI</i>	95
The Viennese Girl on Stage: Werner Hochbaum's <i>VORSTADTVARIÉTÉ</i> (1935)	97

Willi Forst's MASKERADE (1934): The Viennese Girl and Social Folklore	101
Living Backstage, Dying in the Backyard: The Drama of Marginalization in LIEBELEI	105
<b>4. Women and the Market of Modernity: G.W. Pabst's THE JOYLESS STREET (1925)</b>	
Introduction	109
Leaving the Habsburg Myth Behind: Postwar Misery, Hugo Bettauer, and the Literature of Inflation	111
A Taste for the Real: New Objectivity, Cynicism, and the Cult of Distance in Weimar Modernity	113
The Weimar Street Film, the Street, and THE JOYLESS STREET	116
The Semi-Public Hotel: In the Realm of Purchasing Power	120
The Public Street: Taking a Walk in Melchiorgasse	123
Upstairs, Downstairs: Social Climbing Along a Vertical Axis	130
Mother and Whore: The Convolution of the Inside and the Outside World	134
Challenging the Male Gaze: The Female Subject in Armor	138
The Transfer of Agency: Reclaiming the Joyless Streets	141
Pabst's Film Adaptation of Bettauer's Book: Omitting the (Anti-)Semitic Discourse in THE JOYLESS STREET	142
Death in the Mirror: The Killing of a Jewish Femme Fatale	150
<b>5. The Sound of Make-Believe: Ernst Lubitsch and the World of the Operetta</b>	
Introduction	155
'Retrospective Utopia': The Myth of Vienna and the Operetta	157
The Meaning of the Waltz: The High, the Low, and the Great Fall	162
Contested Territory: The Operetta and Its Allure for Cinema	165
Becoming Viennese: Music and Sexual Agency	166
Ernst Lubitsch and the Naughty Operetta Tradition	174
'What a Speller!': Noise and Speech versus Song and Dance	181
Making Love on a Park Bench: Private Boredom and Public Bliss	186
The Taste of Mandelbaum and Greenstein: The Masquerade of Otherness	192
Jewish Sophistication and the Viennese Operetta	196
Coda	201
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	205

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	213
<b>Notes</b>	215
<b>Illustration Credits</b>	229
<b>Filmography</b>	231
<b>Bibliography</b>	235
<b>Index of Film Titles</b>	247
<b>Index of Names and Subjects</b>	249

# 1. Introduction

## Vienna in Cinema: A Traveling Image, 1920–40

In his rather curious and little-known short film from 1968, *ORSON WELLES' VIENNA*, Orson Welles plays a tour guide who introduces Vienna to his imaginary audience. Dressed in a black cape, with a black hat, and a cigar in his hand, Welles presents monuments of imperial Vienna, while on the soundtrack the famous zither tune evokes Welles' character Harry Lime from the *THE THIRD MAN*.

In a couple of long shots, we see Welles gazing at the imperial castle of the Belvedere, strolling through the royal park, standing in front of a Catholic church, and then strolling through the park again. The continuity of the shots, with Welles walking through them, suggests proximity between various imperial sites that, in actuality, are far away from each other. Within the first minutes, an imaginary geography of baroque Vienna is thus established, introducing the city as old and imperial, resistant to the winds of time—after all, the film takes place in 1968!

Welles strolls down crooked, medieval-looking streets, deliberately leaving out suburban, industrial, and lower-class areas of the town. A little later, he expounds, looking directly into the camera: 'This is a town for a sweet tooth. Sweet things to listen to, sweet things to...,' Welles pauses to glance at two passing young women and then continues, 'look at...sweet things to eat'. His statement is followed by a series of zoom-ins on pastries, cakes, and cookies offered on display in shop windows. Next, we cut to a monument to Johann Strauss, king of the waltz, while on the soundtrack a waltz plays. Change of location: Orson Welles is now in a heavily decorated room in the famous and prestigious Hotel Sacher, located in the inner city. Red curtains cover the back of the room and oil paintings with golden frames decorate the walls. Welles, in a medium shot, sits behind a huge desk and admires the grandiose style of furniture that makes him think of the film set extravaganzas of Ernst Lubitsch. He muses about the amount of champagne enjoyed by playboys and their ladies in this room, after a theater outing or a visit to the opera. His contemplations are illustrated by inserted shots of several historical photographs, showing Austrian lieutenants saluting in their royal uniforms, a lady in a horse-drawn carriage, and a lieutenant flirting with a young woman. The next cut, however, changes the setting. Welles stands in front of the Ferris wheel in the Viennese Prater, and announces, 'Well this town, of course, isn't all whipped cream and waltzes. There was a time at least

when Vienna was to the spy industry what Detroit is to automobiles.' After declaring Vienna the city of espionage, the film ends with Orson Welles on a theater stage, doing magic tricks with the Austrian actress Senta Berger.

In this nine-minute short film, Orson Welles conjures up the two prevailing traditions of Viennese imagery that have dominated, and continue to dominate, the representation of the city in international cinema. On the one hand, he points to the nostalgic picture of Habsburg Vienna from the turn of the century, the 'whipped cream Vienna' of dashing lieutenants and frivolous girls, of the operetta and the waltz. On the other, he refers to the 'noir Vienna' from after World War II, the bombed and divided city. With its dirty underground sewer system and war ruins, the city was a playground for international intrigue, inextricably bound up with Orson Welles himself and his part as the racketeer Harry Lime in *THE THIRD MAN* (1949).

Indeed, it was Carol Reed's *THE THIRD MAN* that marked a break with a global myth of Vienna, which circulated in the first part of the last century and proved durable in international cinema. Such a break could only occur because the image of cinematic Vienna had been so firmly and well established in the preceding decades. *Visions of Vienna. Narrating the City in 1920s and 1930s Cinema* examines the representations of Vienna in canonized works of American and European filmmaking up until that break. It explores the ways in which the cinematic image of the city was constructed, undone, and remade by (mostly) Austro-Hungarian and German directors who relocated—voluntarily or involuntarily—to various places along a migratory route linking Vienna to Berlin, Hollywood, Paris, and London. During the decades from 1920 to 1940, the image of the city came to take on different meanings, depending on the experiences of the migrating directors, the specific moment and location of production, and the geographical and cultural contexts of the respective productions. My overall argument alleges that Vienna's common association with seemingly anti-modern imagery of the nostalgic glorification of the Habsburg Myth is closely bound up with crucial issues of modernity. Displacement due to emigration, changing gender relations, an increasing commodification of social relationships, growing political tensions, and anti-Semitism become tangible in the various representations of this city on film.

In starting to address the actual representation of Vienna as a specific location in time, it is essential to bear in mind that the construction of geographical space is always a discursive one. As Colin McArthur has argued:

It is never a question of a discursive view of geographical space giving way to a more 'realistic' view. There is only the possibility of other discourses

arising to compete with existing ones. Put another way, realism is itself a discourse, a convention of representation which might perhaps be better described as ‘the realist effect’ (McArthur 1997: 35).

The conventions governing the representation of Vienna, it seems, are first and foremost concerned with freezing the image of the city in time. As my opening example suggests, Vienna registers primarily—with a few exceptions to be discussed later on—as an old and imperial city within an international cinematic geography. In this respect, it is comparable to cinematic London, which, as Charlotte Brunson argues in *London in Cinema*, also predominantly represents a past time, ‘a time before cinema’ (Brunson 2007: 9). Before entering the realm of cinema, in other words, the image of the city is already enriched with stories and pictures. In the case of Vienna, the origins of existing urban narratives are rooted in the musical and literary genres of the nineteenth century (Hake 2001: 151).<sup>1</sup> As James Hay argues, following the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on the literary chronotope, it is the chronotopic frame of reference ‘which has been relatively established through preceding texts and which has thus already conditioned the context wherein new narrative spaces (and topographical models) are produced’ (Hay 1997: 220). Vienna’s relentless self-promotion as a ‘musical city’, both as the locus of classical music by Haydn, Beethoven, and Mozart, but also of the Strauss dynasty, the operetta, and the waltz, extensively contributed to the identification of the city with music in general, and with the operetta in particular, in popular discourses. It significantly shaped the international conception of Vienna as a dreamy and sentimental pleasure garden and arrested the city’s image in the stereotypes of Vienna as the cradle of music, baroque grandeur, and days gone by. Prominent writers such as Arthur Schnitzler and Stefan Zweig likewise fixed the *fin-de-siècle* image of the city in their literature, adding undercurrents such as depression, darkness, and recession to it. But the popular imagination of Vienna in the first part of the twentieth century, and perhaps later as well, and the city’s dominant mode of representation in cinema, was deeply bound up with its role as the capital of the Habsburg monarchy, its figure of the old emperor, baroque architecture, Viennese pastries and coziness, dashing lieutenants and seductive girls, singing and wine-drinking folks, and, most of all, music.

The image of Vienna as a noir city was first coined by Carol Reed’s *THE THIRD MAN*, in which postwar Vienna figures as a divided city in ruins. Certainly, on an imaginary film list, surveying all the films ever set in Vienna, *THE THIRD MAN* would have a prominent place. Similarly, Max

Ophüls' *LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN* (1948), based on Stefan Zweig's novel, counts as a most beautiful and seminal 'Vienna film' within the canon of international filmmaking. But as the time period within which I analyze the body of films indicates, neither film is part of this book. I have chosen to focus on works directed in the 1920s and 1930s (with the exception of one reference to Alfred Hitchcock's *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* from 1943), in order to investigate the representation of Vienna before the outbreak of World War II and before mass annihilation.

In this respect, it is my concern to trace the impact of what is dubbed 'Viennese modernity' on the cinematic representation of the city. I am particularly interested in the productive relationship between the 'material city' of the *fin-de-siècle* and its projection on international movie screens: What did Vienna mean to directors, who had left the city at different stages in their lives and went on to reconstruct it in their new homelands; in other words, what did it mean to exiles? How did the experience of emigration, political turmoil, the rise of fascism, and anti-Semitism register in the works of expatriates? Is Vienna really only a repository for sentimental yearning and nostalgic glorification of a time gone by? In this respect, my focus is on the 'wandering image' of the city that circulated extraterritorially and was reworked in the 'transcultural machinery of the modern world' (Rentschler 1990: 23). It is interesting to note that Thomas Elsaesser has made the case for considering Austria as an example of an extraterritorial cinema. Elsaesser argues that, due to the travels of its creative personnel, Austrian cinema transcended its national boundaries early on. One of the reasons for this can be found in the deep, if asymmetrical, economic connection between Austria's unstable and weak film industry, and that of Germany, especially from the mid-1920s onwards. Even though Austrian cinema had cultivated a distinct cinematic tradition since its inauguration in the 1910s, its dependence on the German market nevertheless became increasingly pronounced, especially from the mid-1920s, when the domestic film industry suffered a profound financial crisis. Not only did Austria become dependent upon German distributors for whom the country was an export market, but it also proved a talent pool from which Ufa, Germany's largest film company, drew a considerable number of filmmakers to Berlin. Some of them—like Mihály Kertész (Michael Curtiz) or Sandór (Alexander) Korda—had first come from Budapest to Vienna before moving on to Berlin, a city that, from 1920, had developed into the most advanced film industry in Europe. Others left directly from Vienna: Joe and Mia May, G.W. Pabst, Karl Grune, Robert Wiene, Fritz Kortner, Richard Tauber, Franz Planer, and so forth. Since so many Austro-Hungarian filmmakers participated in the

success of German films, their imaginations ‘colonized’ the product to the same extent as the work of native Germans. But the creative axis of Budapest—Vienna—Berlin did not terminate in Europe. Instead, it expanded to Hollywood for various reasons. At times, filmmakers followed the appeal of technological know-how, such as Ernst Lubitsch, who responded to a call from Hollywood. Increasingly, they also reacted to growing anti-Semitism and political pressure created by the rise of Nazism, as did Max Ophüls. The so-called German invasion of Hollywood in the 1930s comprised many emigrants who had originally come from Austria, such as Otto Preminger, Billy Wilder, Fred Zinnemann, Bertolt Viertel, Paul Henreid, Edgar Ulmer, Fritz Lang, Walter and Liesl Reisch, Max Steiner, Robert Stolz, and Hedi Lamarr, to name only a few. In other words, even before the annexation of Austria to Germany in 1938, the image of Vienna had begun to be fabricated and circulated through an extraterritorial cinema (Elsaesser 1995: 21–24).<sup>2</sup>

For the shaping of the global myth of Vienna, it is also noteworthy to point out that especially since the beginning of the sound period, Austrian film productions were not only based on primarily visual signifiers, but on aural ones as well—hence the flourishing of Viennese operetta films and musicians’ biographies. Such productions fueled national stereotypes and cultural clichés, which circulated back and forth between the old and the new world. In that sense, the notion of an ‘extraterritorial cinema’ functions as both a spatial and a metaphorical heuristic device: spatially, it refers to the actual routes of migrating Austro-Hungarians and their often enforced transit through Europe and America; metaphorically, the ‘extraterritorial’ appoints expatriates and non-Austrians to the image-production of a ‘mythic Vienna’. Erich von Stroheim, for example, born in Vienna to middle-class parents of Jewish descent, converted to Catholicism and emigrated to the United States in 1909. In America, he cultivated the image of an Austrian aristocrat of high military rank, a fictional identity he continued in his Viennese films. He capitalized on America’s enthusiasm for European lifestyle and promoted his films through his eccentric star persona, spoon-feeding the media with nostalgic and bittersweet memories of ‘Old Vienna’. Similarly, Ernst Lubitsch, a Berliner from tip to toe, was perceived by Americans as a quintessential European filmmaker; in order to satisfy their expectations for old European lifestyle, Lubitsch contributed to the Vienna myth by repeatedly drawing on the Viennese operetta tradition and by staging Vienna and ‘Ruritania’ motifs over and over again (Elsaesser 1999, 111 ff.).

On a more general level, as Elsaesser has suggested, these mutually sustained projections operating between Hollywood and Europe, i.e. the

outsiders' view of America and the view that America had of the émigrés' land of birth, generated specific historical 'imaginaries' of their own. The émigrés' 'cultural camouflage' in their places of exile instigated a sense of self-consciousness, of double reflection, and of irony, that become 'tangible' in the films of the émigré directors. As a prime example of his 'historical take on "émigrés and representation"', Elsaesser elaborates on the work of the Austrian-born, Jewish writer-director Walter Reisch. Reisch, a specialist of 'Viennese schmaltz', the operetta genre and the musical film, significantly contributed to the construction and circulation of the Vienna myth, first in Berlin, and later in London and Hollywood. In films written by Reisch, such as the German musical film *DAS LIED IST AUS* (*THE SONG IS ENDED*, 1930), or the court-intrigue melodrama *DAS FLÖTENKONZERT VON SANS-SOUCI* (*THE FLUTE CONCERT OF SANS SOUCI*, 1930), both based on the grammar of the operetta genre, he cleverly pushes the operetta's affinity to the principle of make-believe, to deception, and to ironic detachment from reality, to self-reflexive and critical ends. While at first sight, Reisch's films seem to perpetuate the enduring Vienna myth of charming and irrelevant Austrian and Viennese (court) life, he nonetheless contributed to a 'a "culture": of irony and double reference, sustained by a rhetoric of indirection and double negation' (Elsaesser 2000: 348).

Obviously, the Vienna myth takes on very different shapes in the respective works of different filmmakers and script writers; however, as I argue throughout this study, the cultural clichés of the Vienna myth, reworked extraterritorially, consistently exhibited the multifaceted signs of displacement, as well as individualized experiences of rupture and alienation.

## **Viennese Modernity and the Impact on Cinema**

Ultimately, the goal is to add a new contribution to the study of Viennese modernity and to show its relevance for the realm of cinema studies and the investigation of modern European metropolitan life in the 1920s and 1930s. In analyzing selected films, I regard the city as an 'optical tool' with different focal points through which crucial experiences of modernity come into sight. Thus, I am methodologically following James Donald, who argued in his study on modernity and the imagination of the modern city that the manner in which the city is depicted on screen reflects 'certain states of minds and styles of imagining' (Donald 1999: 63). Donald claims that the city can be understood 'at least in one of its aspects as a historically specific mode of seeing' (*Ibid.*: 92). It is precisely this mode of seeing—the manner

in which 'looking at Vienna' engenders certain narratives and structures representation—that is a central organizational principle of this book.

Due to the extensive study of the writings of Georg Simmel, Walter Benjamin, and Siegfried Kracauer within the fields of Cinema Studies and Cultural Studies, it has been specifically Paris and Berlin that have been prominently associated with the experience of modernity and the birth of cinema. This certainly relates to the fact that the metropolis came to play a decisive role in scholarship for exploring the experience of modernity, and, as a related phenomenon, the emergence of cinema.<sup>3</sup> Simmel and, a little later, Benjamin and Kracauer, conceived modernity as a neurological experience that realigned the relationship between sensory perception and the urban milieu. For Kracauer and Benjamin, the heightened stimulation of modern life instigated the urge for distraction, for spectacular amusement and strong sensations, enjoyed by the metropolitan masses. In their understanding, cinema is a part of modernity, interrelated with a variety of new phenomena, which intensified around the turn of the century (Singer 2001: 103). As Benjamin put it, 'film corresponds to profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus—changes that are experienced on an individual scale by the man in the street in big-city traffic, on a historical scale by every present-day citizen' (Benjamin 1969: n250). The power of the medium of film, in particular, rested on the capacity for audiovisual fragmentation, aesthetic simulation of discontinuity, thrills and shocks that matched the fabric of everyday modern life. Following this argument, one could contend that '[C]inema is the quintessential product of *fin-de-siècle* society' (Singer 2001: 102).

When thinking of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, of course, cinema is probably the last invention that comes to mind. Considering that at the turn of the century Vienna was an extremely important center of early modernism—with artists and intellectuals such as Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Arnold Schönberg, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Sigmund Freud, and Arthur Schnitzler, to name just a few—this radicality seems to have left few marks on the cinema. Liberating avant-garde practices did not register in the representation of Vienna in film. The new mode of perception exercised a great influence on the development of cinema and its potential to express the characteristics of the city. In a city film like Walter Ruttmann's *BERLIN: SYMPHONY OF A GREAT CITY* (1927), 'the shock of the new' is evoked through montage editing, a distinctively modernist technique (Weihsman 1997: 10, 25). The film thereby encapsulates the new sensory experience of fragmentation and discontinuity typical for the urban experience in the modern metropolis of Berlin (or Paris, Moscow, and so forth). Significantly, there exists no

such filmic document of Vienna from that particular time period. Rather, as Siegfried Kracauer pointed out relentlessly in his writing, Vienna came to signify the epitome of the anti-modern city in cinema. In its preference for historical settings, and its tight connection with music and the operetta genre, Vienna was unthinkable without 'gentle archdukes, tender flirtations, baroque décors, Biedermeier rooms, people singing and drinking in a suburban garden restaurant, Johann Strauss, Schubert and the venerable old Emperor' (Kracauer 1974: 141).

Indeed, it is precisely the *fin-de-siècle* image of Vienna, paying its emotional tribute to the Habsburg dynasty that crucially informed the city's cinematic representation in the 1920s and 1930s. However, what can be equally detected within this dominant mode of representation is a peculiar, overdetermined position of a multicultural and ideologically anti-modern monarchy, which was at odds with the demands of a modern society. It was exactly the struggle between the decadence of the anachronistic empire and the rise of mass movements, the tension between an old declining monarchy and a growing commercial culture, that crucially contributed to the fascination filmmakers and the public felt for this city.

Typically, when thinking of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, the Viennese version of aesthetic modernity comes to mind, associated with early modernist achievements in architecture, literature, music, and philosophy. It was Carl Schorske's seminal study on *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (1981), mostly concerned with bourgeois high culture, which became very suggestive for the scholarly interest in that time period.<sup>4</sup> Schorske invoked an elegant and most intriguing portrait of the *belle époque*, assuming high culture as culture proper, and mapped out an intellectual milieu that nurtured the liberal artistic endeavors of the time.

Most notably, he put forth the argument that culture in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna functioned as a surrogate for a liberal bourgeoisie that was unable to assume political power. Vienna's upper middle class, Schorske claims, had neither been able to destroy, nor to fuse entirely with the aristocracy. Instead, it remained weak and thus dependent and loyal to Emperor Franz Joseph (reign from 1848–1916), who was regarded as an indispensable father-protector. In other words, culture for the *fin-de-siècle* bourgeoisie—especially architecture, theater, and music—was a surrogate form of assimilation to aristocracy (Schorske 1981: 7).

By the turn of the century, art for the liberal bourgeoisie became a refuge from political impotence and a threatening political reality; for example, in 1897, after Emperor Franz Joseph had to ratify the appointment of anti-Semitic Catholic mayor Karl Lueger, a member of the Christian Social party:

The Christian Social demagogue began a decade of rule in Vienna which combined all that was anathema to classical liberalism: anti-Semitism, clericalism, and municipal socialism. On the national level as well, the liberals were broken as a parliamentary political power by 1900, never to revive. They had been crushed by modern mass movements, Christian, anti-Semitic, socialist, and nationalist (Schorske 1981: 6).

The picture Schorske paints of 1900s Vienna, however, is confined to its bourgeoisie and high culture. Schorske also fails, according to Steven Beller, to acknowledge the eminent role of Jewish intellectuals participating in Viennese modern culture: '[M]ost of the best known names in Viennese *fin-de-siècle* culture, with the exception of art and architecture, are people of Jewish descent.' (Beller 1989: 4). Freud, Schönberg, Schnitzler or Wittgenstein—'Viennese modern culture was essentially a product of the *Jewish* bourgeoisie.' (Ibid.: 6). Hence, in Beller's view, Schorske underestimates the devastating effect on Jews exposed to Viennese anti-Semitism, which became even more pertinent when Lueger was elected in 1897 and introduced a new style of anti-Semitic demagoguery into politics. Thus, the experience of anti-Semitism and how it reverberates in the representation of cinematic Vienna is a salient aspect and will be closely examined in the chapters to follow.

On a more general level, it is also important to keep in mind that Vienna was the metropolitan capital of a multicultural empire of 52 million inhabitants: the monarchy encompassed fifteen ethnic groups, twelve languages, and five religions—all of which underwent significant modernization two decades prior to World War I, with Lueger playing an important part in it as mayor of Vienna between 1897 and 1910. In 1890, Vienna had expanded its city limits by incorporating the suburbs. Between 1890 and 1920, the city lived through a rapid development and industrialization of the infrastructure in terms of traffic, communication systems, the restaurant and fashion industries, booming tourism, and so on. Around the turn of the century, Vienna was a large, modern metropolis. It is interesting to note, however, that the symbolic representation of urban spaces and their social usage that was to appear on the screen remained conflicted with the modern reality of urbanism. (Horak et al. 2000, Vol.1: 10, 11)

A significant feature of Viennese modernity as it is reflected in various intellectual and artistic endeavors from that era, can be found in the divorce of individual sensibility from social environment. The processes of transformation that had adapted traditional and dominant Catholic Austria to an industrialized, modern society, had left their imprint on artists and

intellectuals: 'Consciousness of the discrepancy between the "technical" present and the "romantic" past left the intellectuals of Vienna in a vacuum. By 20<sup>th</sup>-century standards their environment seemed so theatrical—a city of masks' (Timms 1985: 248). According to Timms, the notion of Vienna as unreal and of Austrian public life as theatrical pervaded various artistic works of that period. The baroque architecture of the city and its opulence were one of the major sources enhancing the sense of unreality and theatricality. Evidence for this, as well as an important dimension concerning the topography of the city, can be found in the contemporary debates surrounding the construction of the Ringstraße.

Comparable to the modernization of Paris by Baron Haussmann, who in the second half of the nineteenth century made the most significant attempt to redesign the city and establish a new spatial order, the Ringstraße came to play a similarly important role for Vienna. After the liberals of Austria had won political power and gained control of the capital in 1860, they decided to change the face of the city, despite the fact that their power was fragile and the conservatism of the Habsburg dynasty steadfast. The showpiece of their reconstruction, and the birth of modern urbanism in Vienna, was the Ringstraße. The broad circular boulevard was built in the 1860s, and entailed razing the fortification enclosing the inner city. It separated the proletarian quarters from the inner city, which functioned very much like an isolation belt. The center of the city was the seat of political and religious power, held by an aristocratic elite who turned their backs on, and strictly segregated themselves from, the lower classes inhabiting the outskirts.

The architectural hodge-podge of the Ringstraße, displaying an eclectic style steeped in historicism, sparked controversial discussions amongst contemporaries. By the end of the nineteenth century, modernist architects such as Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner rejected the traditionalism of the monumental street. They criticized the historicist façades of the Ringstraße buildings for their failure to express the values of modern, capitalist urbanity in new aesthetic forms. Instead, the façades were designed to give modern apartments the look of aristocratic palaces (Timms 1985: 249). The Ringstraße, in other words, had a fake quality, and was comparable to the backdrop of a theater set. Moreover, this preoccupation with the mask, the façade, and false appearances arose out of the discrepancy between modernist inclinations and a decadent setting.

The very notions of theatricality, artificiality, (in)authenticity, playacting, and make-believe are recurrent motifs in the films I will explore below. Some of these concepts relate to the predominant genre of the operetta,

which routinely mobilizes the semantics of false appearances, the make-believe, and the show. In other instances, such as Max Ophüls' film *LIEBELEI* (1933), notions like theatricality, playacting, and performance likewise take on a heightened significance.

Another aspect of vital importance for this book, which also resonates with the concept of the façade, has to do with the formation of the suburbs at the periphery of Vienna. The suburbs with their concentration of factories, depots, and workshops were the industrial heart of Vienna and home to the working classes. The impoverished masses lived in rental tenements, which were often hidden behind ornamental façades, imitating the decorations of the Ringstraße buildings. Behind the embellished fronts, living conditions were miserable, and the difference between inside and outside was tremendous. In their study *Die Anarchie der Vorstadt. Das andere Wien um 1900* (*The Anarchy of the Suburb, the Other Vienna around 1900*, 1999), the Austrian historians Maderthaner and Musner call this phenomenon the 'glossing over' the 'soft signature' of the city's grammar: the surface appearance of the buildings 'appears to create a homogeneous urban body [...] through an aesthetics of continuity'. By contrast, the 'hard signature' of the city established and fixed an 'apparently unchangeable order of center and periphery, of inclusion and exclusion of space and social status, in which it announces the suburb as the chaotic opposite of urban order'. The suburbs, in other words, figured in contemporary reports as 'the "other" of civilization' (quoted in Frisby 2001: 220–221). It is precisely the Viennese suburbs, outer districts, or outskirts—I use these terms synonymously—that in literature and film alike become the playground for staging the life of the 'other', the proletarian masses, and sexual encounters (Horak et al., Vol. 1, 2000: 13). Prominent sites of mass culture, such as the amusement park and the vineyards, located in the outer districts, were imagined as spaces where different social classes could mingle and intermix and where sexual encounters could take place. In the fantasy of the all male novelists and directors, these locations were clearly gendered female.

The imagination of sites of mass culture as feminine importantly registers in cinematic Vienna in narratives set in the 1900s. The outskirts in these films typically provide a resource for an upper-class male protagonist to contact lower-class people and pursue erotic diversions. He ventures to the fairgrounds and vineyards and seeks sexual and/or romantic pleasures with a woman inferior to his own social standing. In particular, the Prater, located next to the Ferris wheel, usually epitomizing the motif of circularity and repetition in Vienna films, signified a place of seduction in the works of Erich von Stroheim, Josef von Sternberg, Anatole Litvak, Max Ophüls,

and others. Related to that, the Viennese girl, a female prototype famously generated in the literature of Arthur Schnitzler and a stock character in Vienna-set films, always comes from the lower classes. She is spatially located at the periphery of the city and connected to sites of commercial culture. Typically, she falls in love with an upper-class male from the inner city, as for example in Stroheim's *MERRY-GO-ROUND* (1923) and *THE WEDDING MARCH* (1928) and Ophüls' *LIEBELEI*, for whom the lower-class woman embodies a moment of authenticity and truth in a splintered modern world.

The center-periphery divide of the Ringstraße, and its associated dichotomies, such as 'inner city' vs. 'outskirts', high vs. mass culture, crucially informed the cinematic image of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna. The opposition between the center and the suburbs gives way to related oppositions, such as inside vs. outside, interior vs. exterior, inclusion vs. exclusion, representation vs. marginalization, femininity vs. masculinity, etc. Like the aforementioned notion of 'theatricality' vs. 'authenticity', these highly charged oppositions inform my readings of the films to a great extent, because they define a geography of power in which class, gender, and the diegetic gaze are inscribed.

With regard to Erich von Stroheim's *THE WEDDING MARCH*, I will argue that visual mastery is a recurrent motif in the narrative. The ability to look and to act is dependent upon class and gender and aligns with distinctions in the city's spatial layout. The Viennese girl in *THE WEDDING MARCH*, relegated to the outskirts, is able to foresee her own victimization without being able to change it. Similarly, when the lower-class Viennese girls in Max Ophüls' *LIEBELEI* visit the opera house, they are granted—like the members of the upper classes—a free sight of the emperor, also attending the performance. Ophüls underlines the motif of spectatorship with a huge opera glass, which the girls use to get a better view. But eventually they drop the glass, and from that moment, fixed class positions fall back into place. The male aristocrat from the city center is the source of the most powerful gaze within the diegesis of *LIEBELEI*, representing the official culture of the ruling classes in 'Old Vienna'. When he stares through his monocle, his gaze turns into a matter of life and death for those exposed to it. He indirectly kills the Viennese girl, Christine, after shooting her lover to death in a duel, thereby instigating her suicide. Throughout the narrative, the Viennese girl, as always, in love with a man superior to her own class, suffers exclusion from the official culture associated with the inner city. Her spatial relegation to the suburbs ends with her suicide in a back courtyard.

The figure of the Viennese girl provides a focal point for studying a specifically female experience of urban modernity. Due to her close

connection to sites of mass culture, she highlights the precarious position of women within a commercialized urban landscape, and the (threatening) proximity of this position to prostitution. Furthermore, her spatial relegation to lower-class areas draws attention to the ideological mechanisms of marginalization at work within a narrative. Through the figure of the Viennese girl, the experience of otherness and social exclusion—or, to put it differently, the experience of the extraterritorial, outside the gates of official culture—becomes manifest. In Ernst Lubitsch's operetta film *THE SMILING LIEUTENANT* (1931), for example, the Jewish experience of otherness within a dominant culture is collapsed into the figure of the girl. Similarly, in *THE WEDDING MARCH*, the victimization of the Viennese girl in the suburbs makes tangible the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, swamping the city in 1900 and certainly witnessed by Stroheim before his departure for America. Overall, through the figure of the Viennese girl, a trope of femininity formulated and fixed within the culture of *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, crucial experiences of modernity become articulated in cinematic Vienna.

### The Structure of the Cinematic City

It is important to note that the films I investigate were mostly shot in the studio. With a few exceptions, such as Ludwig Berger's *THE WALTZ DREAM* (1925), small parts of which were shot on location,<sup>5</sup> and the occasional use of stock footage in Stroheim's *THE WEDDING MARCH*, the cinematic city was always (re)constructed within a studio setting. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has pointed out, studio-shot films 'often offer a generally dystopian vision of an undifferentiated "city" which is either unidentifiable with any actual place or only loosely so' (Nowell-Smith 2001: 101). This observation is confirmed by G.W. Pabst's bleak depiction of postwar Vienna in *THE JOYLESS STREET* (1925), but is certainly not accurate with respect to Ernst Lubitsch's fairytale version of Vienna in the operetta-based *THE SMILING LIEUTENANT* (1931), two films entirely shot in the studios. Hence, my investigation is also propelled by questions such as: What is the difference between images of Vienna actually shot on location (such as, for example, stock footage) and reconstructed sets in the film studio? Which urban landmarks are introduced and how, and what do they signify? And, on the most general level: how does the topography of Vienna as built register in cinematic Vienna?

This set of questions has governed my selection of films, which are all *about* Vienna, but were made *in* Vienna, Berlin, Paris, and Hollywood in the

1920s and 1930s. The directors of the films I have chosen are Austrian-born natives, Germans, and non-natives alike. They all contributed to the myth of Vienna and participated in the construction of the ‘wandering image’ and its extraterritorial circulation.<sup>6</sup>

The first chapter centers on the Vienna-based films *MERRY-GO-ROUND* (1923) and *THE WEDDING MARCH* (1928) by Erich von Stroheim and approaches Viennese modernity in terms of architecture, mass culture, and aspects of social history in imperial Vienna.

Usually, Hollywood movies offer the ‘most popular and *dominant* representations’ (McArthur 1997: 33) of a city, ones that are often introduced by familiar landmarks. ‘Old Vienna’, typically, is established by shots of the Catholic church of St. Stephan’s, the opera house, the royal castle Schönbrunn, a monument to Johann Strauss, king of the waltz, and the Ferris wheel in the Prater. Similarly, the opening shots of *THE WEDDING MARCH* show great and famous representational buildings, but Stroheim makes these cultural clichés productive by establishing a tension between the monumental edifices in the inner city and the sites of mass culture at the periphery. This antagonism is played out in a love story between an aristocrat and a lower-class girl. My reading of *THE WEDDING MARCH* analyzes how Stroheim maps out the topography of cinematic Vienna and defines a field of power relations that not only localizes, but also significantly genders his narrative. It is the figure of the Viennese girl through which crucial dichotomies of modernity such as center vs. periphery, high vs. mass culture, tradition vs. progress, become articulated.

Chapter two focuses on this particular character, taking as a starting point Max Ophüls’ *LIEBELEI* (1932–33), based on the Schnitzler play from 1896. In rejecting her spatial relegation to lower-class sites, the Viennese girl in *LIEBELEI* draws attention to the specter of death lying at the core of Vienna’s celebrated *fin-de-siècle* culture of representation. The discussion will also include other films from the 1930s featuring the Viennese girl, such as Jacques Feyder’s Hollywood version of Schnitzler’s play, *DAYBREAK*, from 1931. Feyder introduced a romantic happy ending to Schnitzler’s play, thereby promoting the ideal of the petit-bourgeois family as a democratic alternative to the homosocial and patriarchal military circles associated with the Habsburg myth. *VORSTADTVARIÉTÉ* (*SUBURBAN CABARET*, 1935), made in Austria by the German director Werner Hochbaum, exposes the precarious social position of the Viennese girl, hovering between lover and prostitute. This film also makes the pressures of politics—Austro-fascism—tangible: the unfavorable depiction of soldiers and the military mobilized Austrian censors and forced Hochbaum to cut scenes shedding

a critical perspective on militarism. By the time of the Austrian prestige picture *MASKERADE* (1934), directed by Willi Forst, the Viennese girl seems to have lost her critical potential. Due to her complicity with the ruling classes, she reconciles differences of class and gender and is romantically rewarded, thereby affirming conventional concepts of femininity.

By comparison, the cinematic construction of Vienna for films set after the breakdown of the monarchy in 1918 required a different spatial model of representation. As I show in Chapter three, in G.W. Pabst's Weimar Cinema classic, *THE JOYLESS STREET* (1925), whose narrative takes place shortly after World War I in crisis-ridden postwar Vienna, the aforementioned center-periphery model has collapsed. Instead, class stratification is articulated through vertical differentiation and suggests a threatening proximity between the bourgeoisie and the workers. In the first part of this chapter, I consider the redefinition of public space for women due to modernization and industrialization, and extrapolate its impact on the integrity of female subjectivity. In the second part, I show that Pabst made significant changes in his adaptation of the original novel by the Viennese Jewish writer Hugo Bettauer. Pabst eliminated Bettauer's distinct look at the Jewish population of Vienna and the virulent problems of anti-Semitism at the time. The seductive, sexually aggressive 'loose woman', Lia Leid (Tamara Tolstoi), who is killed by the Asta Nielsen character in *THE JOYLESS STREET*, had originally been conceptualized by Bettauer as a Jewess from Eastern Europe—connoted as a 'bad woman'. In the novel, Bettauer sets her distinctively apart from the assimilated Western Jewess—'the good woman', Regina Rosenow, played by Gräfin Agnes Esterhazy. In Pabst's film, however, Bettauer's Jewish woman loses her origins and comes to signify the seductive femme fatale, a quintessential image of cinema.

Lastly, in Chapter four, I consider how the distinctive Viennese affinity for the façade, false appearances, and the 'principle of make-believe'—as explicated earlier—gains particular significance in the operetta genre. I discuss these with a special focus on Ludwig Berger's silent operetta film *THE WALTZ DREAM* (1925) and Ernst Lubitsch's Hollywood sound remake *THE SMILING LIEUTENANT* (1931). In *THE WALTZ DREAM*, the Viennese girl comes to signify the operetta myth of Vienna primarily associated with waltz music and dancing. By teaching her German rival these qualities of a 'typical' Viennese woman, she takes on a radically modern stance: Not only does she expose femininity as a masquerade, but she also lays bare the mechanisms of deception and thus debunks the Vienna myth as a principle of make-believe. The Viennese operetta films by Lubitsch use the setting of postwar Vienna to completely different ends than those of, for example,

Pabst. Lubitsch mobilizes the *mise-en-scène* of Vienna and the operetta plot to (comically) negotiate and comment upon issues of consumerism, gender, and sexuality at a time when changing gender relations initiated public debates about the idea of the so-called new companionate marriage, the meaning of the 'New Woman', and her status as a consumer within urban society. I also point out that the operetta, a most important part of popular mass culture in turn-of-the-century Vienna, was, to a large extent, created by Jewish authors. Hence, I argue that by drawing on the Viennese operetta as an important source for his films, Lubitsch very much participated in a 'Jewish' world and its sensibilities. I further open up the possibility of understanding the quintessential markers of the operetta genre—role play, make-believe, and the masquerade—as important elements that reflect the Jewish experience of assimilation and of adapting to a dominant (Catholic) culture. And again, it is the figure of the Viennese girl through which all these issues are brought into focus.