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In the Name of the Father: Paul Czinner's *Fräulein Else* and the Fate of the *Neue Frau*

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'What does cinema know that we don't?'
— Rüdiger Suchsland[1]

The question that the filmmaker Rüdiger Suchsland repeatedly asks in *From Caligari to Hitler: German Cinema in the Age of the Masses* (2014), his incisive documentary about the great films of the Weimar Era, is based on Siegfried Kracauer's landmark book of 1947: *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. In the book, Kracauer does not frame his famous thesis as the question Suchsland poses, but the critic does indeed suggest that during the 1920s German cinema somehow knew something that even the filmmakers who were making that cinema did not, or, at least, something of which they were not fully aware. Why else would they make film after film glorifying the authority of powerful men of obscure origins who were capable of inculcating something like madness in their followers as a means of controlling them? Thus it is with sinister male authority figures such as the title characters of Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* [*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*] (1920) and Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* [*Dr. Mabuse, the Gambler*] (1922). For Kracauer, *Caligari* 'glorifie[s] authority' and makes the title character 'a premonition of Hitler', while *Dr. Mabuse* is a 'tyrant film' set in a world that 'has fallen prey to lawlessness and depravity'. And even though the criminal mastermind Mabuse is eventually brought to justice, the agent of the law is not so different from Mabuse himself, 'a kind of legal gangster [who] is morally so indifferent that his triumph lacks significance'. 'To be sure', Kracauer concludes, 'Mabuse is wrecked; but social depravity continues'.[2]

But what of the women in such films? The full history of how women are represented in the films of the Weimar Era has not been written (at least not in the same encyclopedic sense that Kracauer chronicled the cinematic precursors of fascism). If we ask what Weimar cinema might

know about the women of the era we are sure to arrive at more than one answer, but one of them has to be that the films of the period capture something of the economic desperation many women most certainly felt, and, moreover, show how they dealt with that desperation – by selling their own bodies, if not to those all-powerful men that Kracauer identifies as the cinematic prototypes of fascist authority then to other men who were ultimately all too willing to accept such authority. To be sure, the *neue Frauen* [new women] of the Weimar Era experienced a level of independence and self-determination perhaps unprecedented at that point in history, but the age was also rife with opportunity for the sexual exploitation of women in a society at once highly erotic and economically unstable. This is certainly something that cinema knew during the Weimar Era: that the conflict between sexual and economic freedom was especially stressful for a great many German women. But, as we shall see, that reality was not the only thing that cinema knew in the twilight of the Weimar Republic.

From Austro-Hungary to Weimar Germany

Questions about the role of women in Weimar society become especially pertinent in Paul Czinner's *Fräulein Else* (1928, premièred 1929), adapted from the 1924 Arthur Schnitzler novella of the same name. Though published after the Great War, the novella is clearly set well before it, on September 3rd of an unspecified year during the 1890s. Narrated exclusively from the point of view of the nineteen-year-old protagonist Else in stream-of-consciousness style, the story presents a collection of characters from the haute bourgeoisie vacationing in the Dolomites at a time when the region was still a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Viennese social world to which they belong is still intact, however corrupt and compromised it may be by the excesses of capitalist ideology. Indeed, the plot hinges on Else's father's desperate need to cover his losses from speculating in the stock market and gambling to make up those losses. The father is a lawyer who has embezzled money from a trust fund he manages and has been found out by the district attorney, who is threatening arrest unless the money is paid back within a few days – on September

5th, in fact. Else receives this news in the form of a letter from her mother on the evening of the 3rd, after having earlier let her mother know that Herr von Dorsday, a wealthy art dealer and friend of the family, is also staying at her hotel. The mother tells her daughter that she must request a substantial amount of money from Dorsday to save her father from ruin, and when Else does exactly that, Dorsday counters that he will do so only if the beautiful young woman agrees to stand naked before him in his hotel room (or in a small clearing in the nearby woods) for fifteen minutes. Else is thoroughly unnerved by the prospect but, after a tortured process of reflection and rationalization (that includes the admission that she enjoys exhibitionism),[3] she lets drop the coat she is wearing and stands naked before Dorsday – not in his room but in the hotel's music salon, where other guests and her friends also see her. 'Der Papa ist gerettet' (p. 117) [Papa is saved (p. 252)], she says to herself, then collapses to the floor. Else is taken to her room, seemingly comatose but completely conscious, and when those who are attending her look away for a moment, she gulps down an overdose of the barbiturate Veronal (common treatment, at the time, for menstrual pain) and dies.

Czinner's cinematic adaptation necessarily varies from Schnitzler's literary original in significant ways. The first and most important difference is the double shift from pre-war Viennese society to post-war Weimar society. Although the film is supposedly set in Vienna, there is nothing specifically Viennese about it, aside from one location shot showing the Michaelerplatz through the Hofburg Palace gate known as the Michaelertor [fig. 1]. Yet even that shot, which tracks backward from the Michaelerplatz, shows not the neo-baroque Hofburg Palace but the Goldman & Salatsch Building (on the left), designed by the modernist architect Adolf Loos in 1910, that sits across the square from the palace. Czinner, in other words, seems intent on capturing images that his Weimar audience could readily identify as modern first, with the Viennese meaning secondary at best, to update the narrative to contemporary times. The second shift is the aesthetic transposition from the verbal to the visual medium, always a crucial point of difference in cinematic adaptations of literary works. Here, however, the shift is even more crucial because of

the stream-of-consciousness technique, which could easily have been handled by means of a narrative voice-over in a talking picture but has no easy cognate in a silent film. A third difference likely follows from the second one and exists as a partial solution to the problem of representing Else's inner narrative by means of the silent medium; that narrative includes critical information about her father and his desperate financial circumstances, information which Czinner chooses to represent by shifting parts of the literary narrative to a segment of the cinematic scenario dramatizing the steps leading to the father's ruin. The fourth and final difference concerns Czinner's decision to re-sequence a critical moment in the literary narrative – Else's suicidal downing of the draught of Veronal – from after the public display of nudity to before.

Fig. 1 (00:11:19): The Michaelerplatz in Vienna, with Adolph Loos' modernist office building on the left.

Of these various differences – large and small – none is more crucial to the transformation of Schnitzler's literary narrative to Czinner's cinematic diegesis than the vast socio-historical contrast between Vienna in the declining years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918) and Berlin at the height of the culturally vigorous but politically doomed Weimar Republic (1919–

1933). Each of these societies was decadent in different ways, with Schnitzler's fin-de-siècle Vienna illustrating the moral hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie in the context of imperial decline, while Czinner's Jazz Age Vienna-cum-Berlin reveals some of that same hypocrisy in a more vigorously hedonistic and consumerist context that, true to Krakauer's thesis, portends the destruction of the Republic.

The Bourgeois Milieu of Schnitzler's *Fräulein Else*

The historian Peter Gay so identified the bourgeois culture that developed in the period between Napoléon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815 and the outbreak of The Great War in 1914 with Arthur Schnitzler that he named the era 'Schnitzler's Century'. This despite the fact that, as Gay says, the Austro-Hungarian version of the bourgeois class, especially the liberal wing to which Schnitzler belonged, 'suffered catastrophic reverses'.[4] Whereas in England the middle classes had seen an increase in political power through a series of reform acts (in 1832, 1867, and 1884) that resulted in greater bourgeois representation in the House of Commons, liberal reform more or less stalled out in Austro-Hungary after the extension of manhood suffrage in 1873, and even that reform empowered only about six per cent of adult males at the ballot box.[5] Constraints on the political power of the bourgeoisie, especially those in the professions (such as Schnitzler's father and Schnitzler himself, both medical doctors), were more pronounced in metropolitan Vienna, where those following the professions were more likely to congregate.

Whatever difficulties members of the middle classes may have had in Austro-Hungary in comparison with their fellows in France or England, in Vienna the problems faced by the bourgeoisie were particularly acute among the Jewish community. Towards the end of the century, Vienna's Jewish population became increasingly isolated from society at large, the imperial validation of the 1895 election of the anti-Semite Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna in 1897 serving to certify a longstanding but largely underground trend in Viennese society. Earlier, both Sigmund Freud in the 1860s and Schnitzler in the 1870s had remarked on the sense of optimism among

Vienna's Jewish population, but by the 1890s the anti-Semites had begun to stage public demonstrations.[6] During the period, members of the professions – like Schnitzler and the characters he created for *Fräulein Else* – were more likely to be victims of anti-Semitism because conversion from Judaism to Catholicism was not, strictly speaking, a necessity for them, as it was for those Jews who sought careers in the imperial army or the government bureaucracy.[7]

Dating the story to the Viennese fin de siècle, then, becomes of critical importance to understanding the socio-political context of *Fräulein Else* and the sensibility of the story's eponymous protagonist. Some scholars date the action specifically to 1896, others more generally to 1896–1897,[8] and while it may not be that important to date the action with absolute precision, much of the story's meaning depends on knowing that the action occurs during a period when anti-Semitic activities were on the rise in Vienna. Whatever the particular year, it surely matters that Schnitzler has taken pains to set the action in the period between Leuger's popular election in 1895 and his imperial ratification in 1897. One of the best clues to the time of the action is Else's memory of 'maybe the only time [she] was really in love',[9] 'Mit dreizehn war ich vielleicht das einzige Mal wirklich verliebt. In den Van Dyck – oder vielmehr in den Abbé Des Grieux, und in die Renard auch' (p. 10) [with Van Dyck the tenor – no the Abbé Des Grieux – and with Marie Renard, the soprano (p. 194)]. The reference is to Jules Massenet's *Manon* (1884), which premièred in Vienna in 1890 with the Belgian tenor Ernest Van Dyck as Des Grieux and Renard as Manon. Else says she was thirteen when she fell in love with both the character played by Van Dyck and with the soprano Renard [fig. 2], so that would date the action of the novella to 1896 because Else is nineteen years old in the story – assuming she saw a performance in the year the opera had its première.[10] The fin-de-siècle context helps to explain a number of details that run through Else's mind concerning her Jewish background, and, as the Austrian specialist Andrew Barker claims, 'Perhaps more than in any other single work of Schnitzler's, the milieu of *Fräulein Else* is a Jewish one'.[11]

Fig. 2: An opera card showing Van Dyck as Des Grieux and Renard as Manon in Massenet's *Manon Lescaut*.

The best example of the way this milieu informs the meaning of the story concerns Else's reflections on her own status as a middle-class Jew, which involves a sense of social superiority over her antagonist Dorsday, whose wealth and air of nobility, in Else's view, cannot disguise his provincial origins:

> Nein, Herr Dorsday, ich glaube Ihnen Ihre Eleganz nicht und nicht Ihr Monokel und nicht Ihre Noblesse. Sie könnten ebensogut mit alten Kleidern handeln wie mit alten Bildern. – Aber Else! Else, was fällt dir denn ein. – O, ich kann mir das erlauben. Mir sieht's niemand an. Ich bin sogar blond, rötlichblond, und Rudi sieht absolut aus wie ein Aristokrat. Bei der Mama merkt man es freilich gleich, wenigstens im Reden. Beim Papa wieder gar nicht. (p. 27)
>
> [*No, Herr Dorsday, I'm not taken in by your elegance, or by your monocle, or by your air of nobility. You might just as well be dealing in old clothes as in old paintings.* – But Else! Else, what are you saying? – Oh, I can say it. No one can tell by looking at me. I'm even a blonde, a strawberry blonde, and Rudi [her brother] looks absolutely like an

> aristocrat. Of course it's obvious with Mama, at least when she talks. But it's not [at all] with Papa. (p. 203)]

Here, Else herself makes anti-Semitic remarks about Dorsday but gives herself license to do so since she thinks she does not look Jewish because of her blonde hair. She further reflects that her brother Rudi looks like a 'real' aristocrat, in contrast to Dorsday, whom Else twice refers to as 'der Vicomte von Eperies' (pp. 76, 95) [the Vicomte von Eperjes (pp. 204, 229)]. Eperjes is the Hungarian name of the town now known as Prešov in Eastern Slovakia, so here, as Barker puts it, Else expresses 'metropolitan contempt for a man whose all-too visible roots are not in cultivated Vienna […], but in a *shtetl*'.[12]

Earlier, before she receives the letter from her mother, Else runs into Dorsday and thinks: 'Schraubt sich künstlich hinauf. Was hilft Ihnen Ihr erster Schneider, Herr von Dorsday? Dorsday! Sie haben sicher einmal anders geheißen' (p. 13) [He's just an artful social climber. A first-class tailor isn't enough, Herr von Dorsday! Dorsday! I'm sure your name used to be something else (p. 195)]. Dorsday has evidently been ennobled in fact (as the honorific 'von' suggests), an example of the way the emperor limited and controlled the power of the bourgeoisie – by dispensing minor titles rather than permitting political rights. Else's 'nobility', by contrast, is completely self-styled, itself evidence of a widespread social phenomenon in fin-de-siècle Vienna among nouveau-riche Jews, one that ultimately made them the target of anti-Semitic attacks as a so-called 'Young Aristocracy'.[13] One of the more layered ironies of the novella is that the provincial Dorsday has a legitimate claim to nobility, whereas the metropolitan Else does not – but styles herself such by virtue of her father's wealth and her elevated cultural tastes. The family crisis, however, makes her realize just how tenuous her class privileges are, now that she is forced into the encounter with the man she believes to be her social inferior: 'Ich werde mit Herrn Dorsday aus Eperies sprechen, werde ihn anpumpen, ich die Hochgemute, die Aristokratin, die Marchesa, die Bettlerin, die Tochter des Defraudanten' (p. 29) [I'll talk to Herr Dorsday, the Vicomte von Eperjes, and will solicit money from him. I, the high-minded Else, the aristocrat, the marchesa, the beggar maid,

the embezzler's daughter (p. 204)]. The sequence of epithets Else assigns to herself not only captures the moral hypocrisy of the bourgeois class to which she belongs but also reveals that her present circumstances have forced her to recognize that hypocrisy and come to terms with it: she may have styled herself a high-minded aristocrat, but now she knows she is nothing more than the daughter of a gambler who, most assuredly, is no mastermind like Mabuse.

The *Neue Frau* and the Modern World of Czinner's *Fräulein Else*

The social world of Czinner's *Fräulein Else* is radically different from the one represented in Schnitzler's fin-de-siècle original. The novella may be set entirely in the Dolomites, but the characters are old-world Viennese bourgeoisie through and through. While it is true that Else herself belongs to a new generation, she ultimately falls victim to the older generation represented by her father and Dorsday. The contrast between old and new comes into play through the parallel contrast of the fin-de-siècle story and the modernist technique used to tell it, whereby the avant-garde style casts the retrograde social world that Else is forced to inhabit in a harsher light. But in Czinner's *Fräulein Else*, there is no conflict between the social world of the modern urban bourgeoisie and the medium of its representation. Indeed, the medium of modern cinema gives us a world that is likewise thoroughly modern, so much so that it seems to be based more on contemporary Berlin than post-war Vienna. The film, of course, is ostensibly set in Vienna, but, aside from a brief, double-exposure montage representing Else's shopping trip in preparation for her mountain holiday, the backward tracking shot of the Michaelerplatz immediately following that montage, and the subsequent scene at the train station where her parents see Else off, there are no location shots in the opening Vienna section of the film (and only the Michaelerplatz shot is identifiable as specifically Vienna), or, for that matter, in a later section that returns to Vienna to dramatize the father's financial difficulties. In 1928, when the film was shot, Vienna's reputation as the apotheosis of modernity was mostly a thing of the past, so it makes sense for Czinner not to insist on a realistic Viennese setting in favour of a kind of metaphorical Berlin as the urban

impetus to the modern world represented on the screen. That world is practically personified by the great Elisabeth Bergner, who plays Else as an extremely sympathetic *neue Frau*, all innocence and energy. With her bobbed hair and boyish figure, Bergner's Else must have seemed a compellingly contemporary figure to those who saw her at the film's world première on 7 March 1929 at the Capitol Theatre on the Budapesterstrasse, one of the largest movie palaces in Berlin (1,300 seats).[14] No doubt Vienna also had its *neue Frauen* (after all, the Weimar star Bergner was herself Viennese), but the modern social type was – and is – so identified with the city on the Spree that the pervasive presence of that type (Else is not the only *neue Frau* on the screen) is enough to shift the urban sensibility that the film captures in the direction of Berlin.

That shift, however, highlights certain other modifications that the modernization of the story entails. If the film moves the action not only from the fin de siècle to the 1920s but also from the Austro-Hungarian Empire in fact to a kind of crypto-Vienna that is 'really' Weimar Berlin, then of course Schnitzler's story is bound to acquire new meanings. By far the most significant difference between novella and film is Czinner's removal of any suggestion that Else and her family – not to mention Dorsday – are Jewish. Barker points out that in writing *Fräulein Else* Schnitzler 'was looking back at a period […] that could be seen to have provided the seeds for both the financial and racial woes of the present age'. The novella, in other words, gave Schnitzler an opportunity to contemplate the 'modern antisemitism' contemporary with the story's composition by reflecting back on the 'old Judeophobia' that is such an important component of his characters' fin-de-siècle world.[15] By modernizing the story for the screen and setting it in contemporary times, Czinner obviously loses the opportunity to contrast the present age with an earlier one, but given the cultural context of Weimar Germany either the director or the writer must have felt that making the main characters of the film Jewish would have entailed a high degree of risk. Had Czinner insisted on the Jewish identity of the protagonist, much of his contemporary audience would likely not have sympathized as strongly with her victimization. The Weimar historian Eric Weitz comments on the rise of anti-Semitism in the form of popular imagery during the period, noting

that 'the anti-Jewish image' was 'even more virulent in the 1920s' than in prior decades. He quotes contemporary commentators, in this case a leader of the Lutheran Church, who warned against 'the threat posed by a totally degenerate and degenerating urban spirit, whose bearer is first and foremost the Jewish race'.[16] Schnitzler could allude to anti-Semitism in a much more circumspect way through the medium of avant-garde fiction than Czinner ever could by means of the mass entertainment medium of modern cinema, but whatever the rationale, the fact is that the Jewish milieu of the novella is nowhere to be found in the film. Czinner and Bergner were both Jewish, but Czinner was obviously behind the camera, and Bergner was known for her ability to 'pass' as non-Jewish;[17] moreover, aside from Bergner, there are no Jewish actors in the film.[18]

The removal of the Jewish context effectively heightens Else's sexual dilemma and makes her victimization by the brutish Dorsday seem more severe. This is so because, in the novella, Else feels a certain bond with Dorsday, and this bond complicates the action considerably. Yes, the metropolitan Else feels a sense of social superiority over the provincial Dorsday, but the very terms of that superiority derive from differences in their status within the same cultural community. Else the 'aristocratic' Jew may harbour resentments against the Jewish Dorsday for being noble in name only, but they are both Jews tasked with negotiating their minority status within the larger Viennese society as best they can. This sense of commonality may account for Else's occasional recognition of Dorsday's appeal, as when she observes that 'Er sieht noch immer ganz gut aus mit dem graumelierten Spitzbart' (pp. 12-13) [He still looks pretty good with his greyish Van Dyck beard (p. 195)]. Mostly however, Else's interest in Dorsday comes across in unconscious fashion – through her perverse fantasies of exhibitionism (which we know she has enacted on at least one occasion; see note 3), for example, thereby making her and the voyeuristic Dorsday complementary figures, psychologically speaking. The novella is replete with unconscious intimations of Else's desire for Dorsday that might justly be called Freudian, not least because Freud himself was struck by how closely Schnitzler's fictional explorations of sexuality resembled his own clinical investigations.[19] (In the film, the only Freudian enactment concerns not Dorsday

but the father (Albert Bassermann), in an Oedipal moment when Else removes the band from her father's cigar and places it on her finger [fig. 3]). The larger point here is that the removal of the Jewish bond with Dorsday also removes the sense of Else's own perversity and depravity that the bond entails.[20]

Fig. 3 (00:08:44): Else's Oedipal moment.

In addition, the removal of the Jewish milieu in Czinner's film all but eliminates one of the more explicitly decadent features of the novella: the relationship of the story of Else to the drama of Salome, an association that is clearly intended in Schnitzler's original. As Barker says, 'The allusions to *Salome* in *Fräulein Else* are […] particularly apt since both works feature prominently the public unveiling of main female (Jewish) characters to assuage lascivious male (Jewish) voyeurs'.[21] Barker has in mind not Oscar Wilde's play but Richard Strauss opera that was based on it, which he says Schnitzler saw performed at least five times, once in 1922 as he was working on *Fräulein Else* (p. 79 n.40). Perhaps the clearest allusion to Strauss's *Salome* comes near the end of the novella, as Else walks about naked in her hotel room and looks at the image of herself in the mirror: 'Ach, kommen Sie doch näher, schönes Fräulein. Ich will Ihre blutroten Lippen küssen'

(p. 100) [Oh, won't you come closer, beautiful Fräulein? I want to kiss your blood red lips (p. 242)]. In both the play and the opera, of course, the most memorable scene is the one near the end where Salome kisses Jokanaan's decapitated head on the lips, described earlier as being various shades of red. In the novella, as she gazes at her image in the mirror, Else seems like some combination of Salome and Jokanaan, at once temptress and victim. She is, after all, doing what Dorsday has said he wants to do. Only the presence of the Salome dynamic in the novella allows us to entertain a like relationship between Else and Dorsday in the film. To be sure, the perverse and powerful Dorsday (Alfred Steinrück) might be compared to Herod, since he appears in the film as the ageing libertine he is in the novella (the first shot of the character shows him reading the mildly risqué *La Vie Parisienne* [fig. 4]), but for precisely that reason he has nothing in common with the virginal Else, who has no interest in tempting and manipulating Dorsday as Salome does Herod. Indeed, she reacts to Dorsday's initial greeting – formal yet somehow overly-familiar – with a mixture of courtesy and bafflement: she hardly knows the man and takes no interest in him whatsoever until she is forced to do so. After meeting him, Else writes a letter to her mother informing her that 'a Herr von Dorsday' recognized her immediately, even though she 'has no recollection of him' at all ['Ich kann mich nicht an ihn erinnern']. The dynamics of desire in the film, unlike in the novella, clearly run in only one direction.

Czinner's Else, in short, is much more innocent and appealing than Schnitzler's; less neurotic, certainly; slight, refined, but also physically vigorous. In the film, the first glimpse we get of Else is almost furtive – all we see is an unidentifiable young woman from behind as she walks briskly out of a room at a lavish party in her parents' house. Possibly, the director deliberately placed his Weimar audience in the position of Dorsday later on – they are eager to *see* Else, or, at least, the famous actress Bergner playing the role that she originated to great acclaim on the stage.[22] In any event, the audience has to wait just over three minutes before they really see Else with her cousin Paul (Jack Trevor), picking out sheet music – Schubert – for a piano duet with Paul on violin, which they perform at the party.[23]

Fig. 4 (00:17:20): The first shot of Dorsday, reading *La Vie Parisienne*.

The musical segment serves as both a social and a formal device: it helps to establish high culture as part of the bourgeois social milieu of the household, but it also balances against the disastrous ending of the film, in which Else also 'performs' – not in a music salon to the accompaniment of Schumann, as in the novella, but at a formal gala with a jazz band providing the music. In the film's first music scene, Else is shown seated at the piano from behind, her spirited playing style suggesting a young woman confident in her abilities and comfortable in the social world she inhabits. At the end of the film, Else is shown from the front, briefly, calling out 'Herr von Dorsday' (no title card is necessary because her lips are easy to read) before a reverse-angle cut shows her from behind as she lets the coat she is wearing drop. In both the opening party scene and the closing scene at the hotel, Else is surrounded by fashionable men and women in evening wear – the women in elegant gowns and the men in tuxedos: another visual element that serves to balance the beginning of the film with the end. But this is not formalism for formalism's sake because the end of the film undercuts the beginning by showing the final result of the father's

financial irresponsibility and Dorsday's predatory perversity, both species of bourgeois social decadence that leave Else with the impossible choice between submission and suicide.

That she manages to choose both is partly the result of her own sense of herself as a 'verworfenes Geschöpf' (p. 84) [depraved creature (p. 233)] in the novella, but the absence of this dimension in the film increases the sense of injustice and victimization, suggesting that the vivacious, innocent young woman has been punished for the misdeeds of the profligate father, with the predatory Dorsday as the agent of punishment. Cinema here seems to know that German society would find certain types of women more acceptable than others in the coming years, and it was precisely the *neue Frau* of the Weimar Era who would not survive the rise of fascism. As Weitz puts it, 'The new woman seemed to threaten the very existence of the nation or race. By pursuing her own pleasures, she revealed a self-indulgence that gnawed away at the core of the people: she should be having children, replenishing the population lost in the war'.[24] To be sure, Bergner's Else is not a completely typical *neue Frau*: she is not economically independent, nor does she embody the negative stereotype of self-indulgent hedonism to any great degree; but she is clearly a modern woman who enjoys herself, and nothing about Bergner's characterization suggests that Else has any great wish to marry and start a family. There is one brief scene on the train to St. Moritz where Else plays with the child of the woman named Cissy (Grit Hegesa) with whom her cousin Paul is having an affair, but that scene does not convey maternal feeling so much as it does the child-like nature of Else herself (indeed, Else behaves in an almost identical way with a small dog later in the film).

The mise en scène of the film itself, however, suggests a conflict between what we might call 'Weimar woman' and 'National Socialist woman', between the liberated but degenerate *neue Frau* and the wholesome, healthy matron who satisfied the ideals of Aryan womanhood. Once Else leaves for her mountain vacation, the mise en scène is divided between brightly lit outdoor scenes in St. Moritz, site of the 1928 winter Olympics [fig. 5], and indoor scenes set in the luxury hotel showing the cream of interwar Continental society dining in evening wear, drinking

champagne, and dancing to jazz [fig. 6]. The fact that the St. Moritz scenes are interrupted by the shift back to Vienna dramatizing the stock market crash [fig. 7] and the ensuing financial ruin of Else's father only adds to the feeling of decadence which is captured by the scenes at the opulent Hotel Carlton.

Fig. 5 (00:19:28): Else and her cousin Paul at the 1928 Olympics in St. Moritz.

Fig. 6 (01:24:52): The ballroom scene at the Hotel Carlton.

Fig. 7 (00:20:37): The stock market crash.

Weimar audiences would have recognized those segments of *Fräulein Else* set in the Swiss Alps as a nod to one of the most popular film genres of the time, the *Bergfilm* [mountain film]. These films celebrated outdoor life in the high Alps as somehow expressive of the true German spirit. One of the most famous of these films, Arnold Fanck's *Der helige Berg* [*The Holy Mountain*] (1926) critiques the kind of Alpine tourism we see in Czinner's film in favour of the more heroic values represented by the solitary mountain climber whose encounter with nature forces recognition of the sublimity and spirituality embodied by the high Alps. *Der helige Berg* starred Leni Riefenstahl, whose acting career included several other mountain films directed by Fanck before she went on to direct one of her own, *Das blaue Licht* [*The Blue Light*] (1932). Numerous critics, following Kracauer, have seen in these films, with their 'grandiose images' and 'heroic idealism' a link to the 'underlying ideology' of fascism.[25] Kracauer devotes some three pages to the mountain film in *From Caligari to Hitler*, concluding that 'the idolatry of glaciers and rocks was symptomatic of an anti-rationalism on which the Nazis could capitalize'.[26] That assessment is certainly borne out by the sublime shots of towering clouds that open Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), her

documentary of the 1934 Nuremberg Nazi Party Congress. Such shots were a feature of the mountain film (Kracauer mentions 'the magnificent play of clouds forming mountains above the mountains'[27]) and while nothing quite so ostentatious makes its way into the St. Moritz segment of *Fräulein Else*, it is indeed telling that forbidding shots of the high Alps [fig. 8] are intercut with shots of Else as she reads the letter from her mother announcing her father's desperate straits, and, even more tellingly, when she is on her deathbed. Certainly, the closing mountain shots of Czinner's film are subject to more than one interpretation, but one retrospective reading has to be that, consciously or not, the director has created a contrast between the degenerate modernity of Weimar, represented by the *neue Frau* on her deathbed, and the noble Aryan nation to come, represented by the sublime grandeur of the snow-capped Alps.

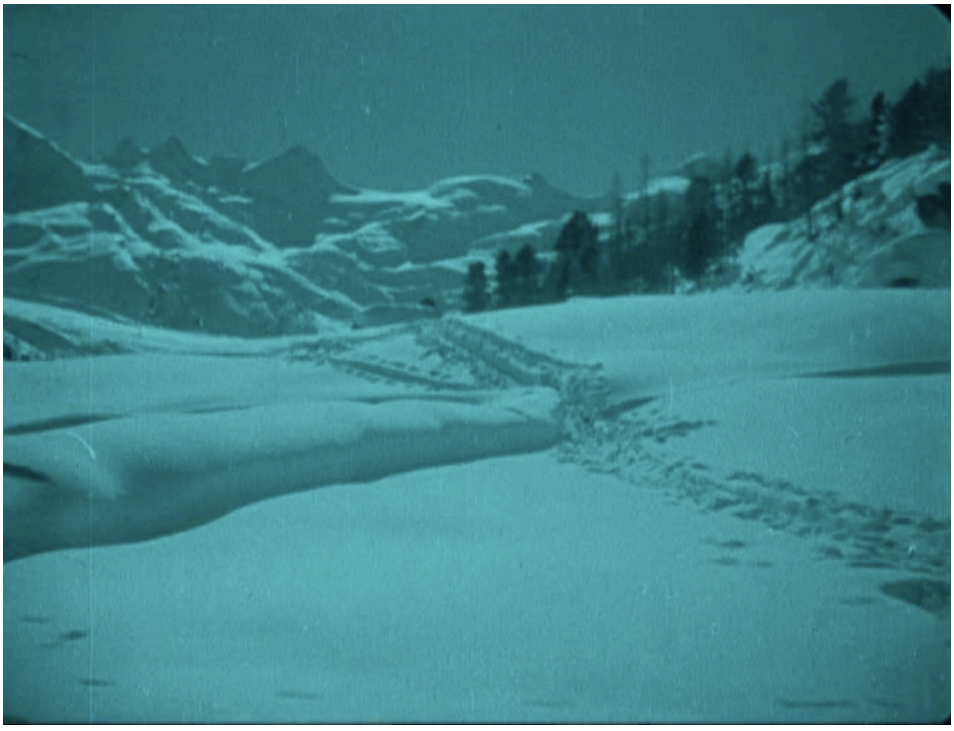

Fig. 8 (00:53:50): The tinted Alpine shot intercut with shots of Else reading her mother's letter.

Else in Furs

The most critical diegetic segments of Czinner's *Fräulein Else* are set inside the Hotel Carlton, or, more precisely, in the lobby and other public parts of the hotel (the bar, the lounge, the restaurant, the ballroom, and so on). For this reason, 'The Hotel Lobby' (written 1922–1925), another

Kracauer essay from the Weimar period, has contemporary relevance to the film. The critic describes the hotel lobby as a site of human alienation where people 'become detached from everyday life' and 'find themselves *vis-à-vis de rien* [face to face with nothing]'. This severe assessment derives from Kracauer's somewhat gratuitous comparison of the assembly of strangers in a hotel lobby to the congregation of a church, making the public spaces of the hotel 'the inverted image of the house of God', a 'negative church' where the guests '[l]ack any and all relation', such that 'the togetherness in the hotel lobby has no meaning'.[28] That, at least, is the way it should be, but Else finds herself forced to deal not with a lack of meaning but with more meaning than she can handle, thanks to her father's dilemma and Dorsday's craven exploitation of that dilemma. Moreover, her public display of nakedness, to say the least, shatters the formal emptiness and anonymity of the hotel lobby so intensely that the sudden advent of meaning shocks the other guests almost to the point of riot. The sense of panic is conveyed by a montage of rapid cuts on movement and a great variety of shot types – medium shots, close-ups, overhead shots, swish-pans, and more, with a number of shots showing different guests pantomiming the movement of disrobing in public. Here, at least, the film has the advantage over the novella because we can actually see the terrifying effects of Dorsday's demand and Else's response to that demand.

In 1928, the year *Fräulein Else* was filmed, Kracauer expressed disappointment with the state of film art at the time – the commercialization, the Americanization, etc. – and, especially, the lack of '*filmic construction*': 'The subjects that are chosen – apparently indiscriminately – are not at all visually conceived; Schnitzler, Zuckmayer, and Sudermann are the victims'.[29] Schnitzler appears on the list of literary 'victims' of mediocre directors because several of his works had been indifferently adapted for the screen in the 1920s (and even earlier), but Kracauer could not have seen Czinner's film at the time he wrote the essay. Largely because of the work of the great cinematographer Karl Freund, whose earlier work with F. W. Murnau established the moving camera as the most influential element of Weimar cinema, *Fräulein Else* is nothing if not 'visually conceived'. The power of the film over its last half-hour or so is impossible to convey by means

of verbal description, but two extended scenes in that last half-hour succeed in capturing the fraught emotional state of the protagonist in especially compelling fashion. In the first, the camera tracks Else through the hallways of the hotel as she nervously follows Dorsday after receiving the letter from her mother telling her what she must do to save her father. Alternately shooting from Else's and Dorsday's perspectives, the camera follows Else as she hesitates, turns away as Dorsday turns around, pretending to read a newspaper or ducking behind a column to avoid eye contact. Then Czinner cuts to track backward with Dorsday in the frame, shows him looking back, catching a glimpse of Else as she looks away, becoming more and more aware that she is following him [fig. 9]. Finally, the two meet, with Else feigning surprise, as though running into Dorsday were an accident, and, after a few false starts, she finally manages to explain her father's troubles, asks for help, and breaks down in tears. When Dorsday says he will wire the money if Else will let him 'see' her, she is confused until the man gestures toward a nude statuette of Venus [fig. 10], whereupon a sick look crosses Else's face as the realization dawns on her that she must, in effect, prostitute herself to save her father. The images truly tell the story here.

Else goes back to her room and discovers the vial of Veronal in a drawer. In the novella, Else has the Veronal as a remedy for menstrual pain, but in the film, she gets the vial after Paul finds it in Cissy's purse (Cissy says she needs it to help her sleep) and passes it to Else because he knows it is potentially dangerous and does not want Cissy to have it. We do not see Else empty the vial in the glass of water, but we do see a close-up of the empty glass [fig. 11] after Else leaves her room dressed in a coat with a fur collar and cuffs [fig. 12]. Schnitzler objected to the change in his story that has Else dosing herself with the fatal draft before the display of public nudity,[30] but the change works cinematically because it creates a sense of suspense and urgency: Else knows she has poisoned herself and has a limited amount of time to save her father by letting Dorsday see her naked. In fact, she enters Dorsday's room and panics when she discovers he is out – a pair of title cards gives us her thoughts: 'I really am … poisoned!' ['Ich bin doch … vergiftet!']. Now the second great scene begins as Else follows the same route through the hotel she took earlier,

only now the pace of the film quickens with Else's elevating anxiety. Will she find Dorsday in time? The camera tracks Else down the same hallway and flight of stairs she took before until, finally, she sees Dorsday. In the novella, this critical scene occurs in the hotel's music salon; in the film, we know the jazz band is playing for the guests dancing at the gala, but the scene is set in a gambling parlour, thereby completing the circle that began with Else's father, *der Spieler* who bet gleefully and recklessly, first on cards, then on stocks. As Else looks intently at Dorsday, standing with other men over what looks to be a roulette table, a reverse angle shot tells us that he sees her as she says his name; another shot taken from Else's point of view shows us Dorsday's shocked face – which blurs out of focus as Else loses consciousness – when the coat slips from her shoulders and Else collapses. Scenes of panic ensue as Else is taken to her room just as Paul and Cissy enter the hotel. By the time Paul reaches her room a doctor has pronounced the young woman dead. We see her face [fig. 13]. We see the distant mountains [fig. 14]. A final shot of Else's face dissolves to the shot of the high Alps. The film is over.

Fig. 9 (01:01:39): Else following Dorsday through the hotel lobby.

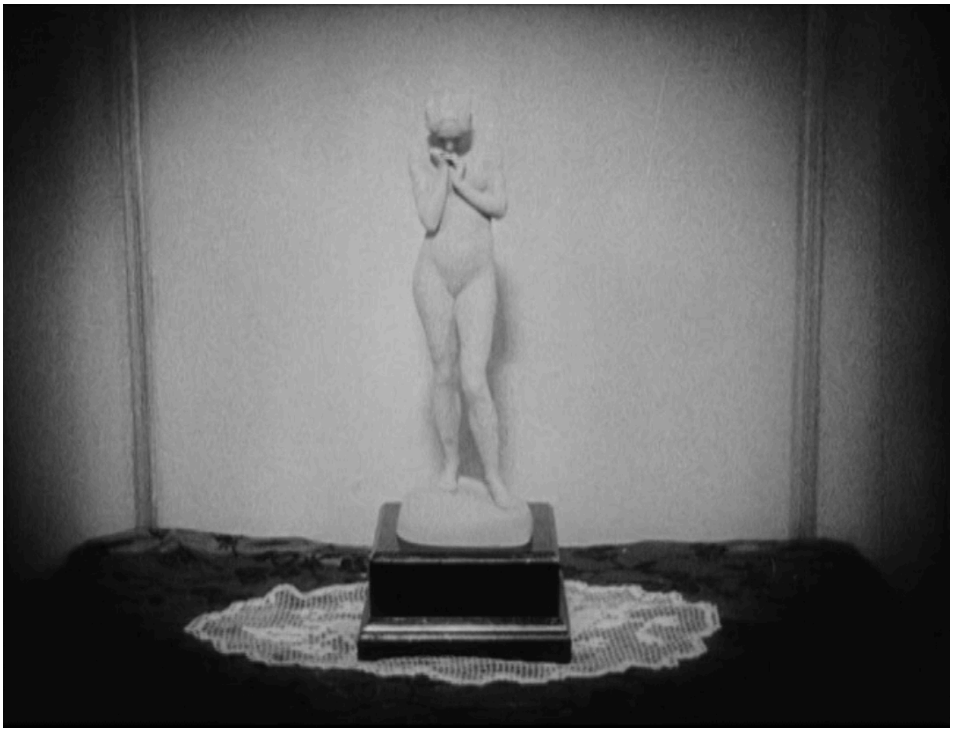

Fig. 10 (01:13:39): The nude statuette of Venus.

Fig. 11 (01:22:37): The empty glass and vial of Veronal, with a picture of Else's father at the far left of the frame.

Fig. 12 (01:23:04): Else in furs.

Fig. 13 (01:28:59): Else on her deathbed.

Fig. 14 (01:29:21): The final shot of the film.

Conclusion

In the end, *Fräulein Else* seems to have intimated quite a few things that contemporary cinema audiences could not possibly have known. The fictional stock market crash that they saw on the screen in March of 1929 looks forward to the real-life crash that was only seven months away. And while the removal of all Jews from the cinematic representation of modern German society was likely a conscious decision on the part of the filmmaker, that decision nonetheless portends the terrifying reality that lay ahead. The clock was ticking for women as well: in 1929, the *neue Frau* had only a few years left before all the freedom and independence she represented would come to an end; she would be superseded by a still 'newer' woman whose 'newness' lay in her subordination and service to the master race. In fact, only three days before Adolf Hitler was named Chancellor of Germany on 30 January 1933, an article in *Die literarische Welt* [*The Literary World*] announced that '[b]obbed hair and short skirts have beaten a retreat', the military metaphor for the social change being perfectly consistent with the author's observation that the *neue Frau* 'never became average, never became the mass female'.[31] In March 1929, the audience at the Capitol Theatre were

no doubt moved to see a modern young woman sobbing 'Papa! Papa!' before she makes what she thinks is the only choice available to her – to sacrifice herself for his sake. Only a few years hence, once the Führer rose to power, most of the women in Germany would do something similar in the name of the Father.

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[1] Rüdiger Suchsland, *From Caligari to Hitler: German Cinema in the Age of the Masses* (New York: Kino Lorber, 2014), DVD.
[2] Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, revised edition, ed. by Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 67, 72, 81, 82–83.
[3] At one point Else recalls the pleasure she felt in knowing that two men were looking at her as she stood on a hotel balcony in her underwear: 'Mein Gesicht haben sie […] freilich nicht genau ausnehmen kommen, aber daß ich im Hemd war, das haben sie schon bemerkt. Und ich hab' mich gefreut. Ah, mehr als gefreut. Ich war wie berauscht' (p. 64) [Of course they couldn't really make out my face […], but they couldn't help noticing that I was in my underwear. And I enjoyed it. Oh, more than enjoyed it. I was almost intoxicated (p. 223)]. Page citations are to Arthur Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else* (Berlin: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1924), and Arthur Schnitzler, *Fräulein Else*, in *Desire and Delusion: Three Novels*, trans. by Margret Shaefer (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003). Further references to these editions are cited parenthetically in the text.
[4] Peter Gay, *Schnitzler's Century: The Making of Middle-Class Culture* (New York and London: Norton, 2002), p. 21.
[5] Ibid., p. 22.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Michael Burri, 'Thedor Herzl and Richard von Schaukal: Self-Styled Nobility and the Sources of Bourgeois Belligerence in Prewar Vienna', in *Rethinking Vienna 1900*, ed by Steven Beller (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), p. 120.
[8] Bettina Matthias, 'Arthur Schnitzler's Fräulein Else and the End of the Bourgeois Tragedy', *Women in German Yearbook*, 18 (2002), 265 n.30, says 'several allusions to cultural events in Vienna suggest the story takes place in 1896–97', but she does not say what these events are.
[9] Thanks to Professor Frank Krause for this translation.
[10] Achim Aurnhammer, *Arthur Schnitzlers intertextuelles Erzählen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), p. 194. The opera was extraordinarily popular with Viennese music-lovers and was performed multiple times, so Else might have seen a performance as a thirteen-year-old. In any event, the action of the story could not possibly have occurred later than 1898 because that is the year when Van Dyck left the Vienna Opera. See Demar Irvine, *Massenet: A Chronicle of His Life and Times* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1994), p. 169; and J. B. K., 'Letter from Vienna', *The Monthly Musical Record*, 30.351 (1 March 1900), 57.
[11] Andrew Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State: Literary Reflections of Austria between Hapsburg and Hitler* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), p. 51.
[12] Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State*, p. 51.
[13] Burri, 'Thedor Herzl and Richard von Schaukal', p. 120.
[14] Matteo Galli, '*Fräulein Else* by Paul Czinner or Diegetic Negotiation', in DVD booklet of *Fräulein Else*, directed by Paul Czinner, ed. by Stefano Boni and Grazia Paganelli (Florence, IT: CG Home Video, 2014), p. 43.
[15] Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State:*, p. 57.
[16] Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 321, 340.
[17] Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrian: Jews and Culture between the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 223 n.12.
[18] S. S. Prawer, *Between Two Worlds: The Jewish Presence in German and Austrian Film, 1910–1933* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 186.
[19] See Freud to Schnitzler, 14 May 1922, *Letters of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by Ernst L. Freud, trans. by Tania and James Stern (New York: Dover, 1962), pp. 339–40. Shaefer's English translation often acknowledges the 'Freudian' nature of Schnitzler's text, as when she translates 'Spitzbart' (literally, 'pointed beard') as 'Van Dyck beard' after Else says that 'she really was in love [w]ith Van Dyck, the tenor' (p. 194). The association of the name of the tenor with whom Else claims to have been in love with the verbal description of Dorsday's beard is precisely the sort of linguistic symptom of erotic interest conventionally called 'Freudian'.
[20] Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State*, pp. 53–54, enumerates a number of anti-Semitic stereotypes that are bound to make 'a modern readership uneasy', including 'the projection of Jews as abnormally sexualized'.

[21] Barker, *Fictions from an Orphan State*, p. 56.
[22] Prawer, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 186, says that 'Bergman had performed the monologue on stage with great success, in Schnitzler's presence'.
[23] It is tempting to suppose that the sheet music is a piano-violin setting of the second movement of Schubert's String Quartet No. 14, known as *Der Tod und das Mädchen* [*Death and the Maiden*], or of the song by the same title from which the tune of the second movement is derived. But it is impossible to see any title on the sheet music other than 'Schubert', which Else selects after first considering something by Beethoven.
[24] Weitz, *Weimar Germany*, p. 328.
[25] Sabine Wilke, *German Culture and the Modern Environmental Imagination: Narrating and Depicting Nature* (Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), p. 128.
[26] Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler*, p. 112.
[27] Ibid., p. 111.
[28] Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Hotel Lobby', *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 177, 175–76.
[29] Kracauer, 'Film 1928', *The Mass Ornament*, p. 313. The essay originally appeared in two parts in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 30 November and 1 December 1928 as 'Der heutige Film und sein Publikum' [Contemporary film and its audience]. In the essay Kracauer also suggests the need for the sort of comprehensive critical analysis of cinema that he later provided in *From Caligari to Hitler*.
[30] Schnitzler evidently objected to the change partly because he thought it limited the acting opportunities available to Bergner. He wrote to a friend that '[t]he idea I utterly opposed […], where Else takes the "Veronal", before going to the lobby, naked under her fur coat, at the end has been kept; […] and so what has come out is complete idiocy, but also many opportunities have been lost for Elisabeth' (quoted in Galli, '*Fräulein Else* by Paul Czinner or Diegetic Negotiation', p. 49).
[31] Alice Rühle-Gerstel, 'Back to the Good Old Days?', *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 219, 218. The essay originally appeared as 'Züruck zur guten alten Zeit?', *Die literarische Welt*, 9.4 (27 January 1933), 5–6.