

A Stranger in Berlin: On Joseph Roth's Urban Discourse

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As the quintessential urbanite, Joseph Roth continues to be extremely relevant to ongoing public debates on Berlin's identity as the new center of a multicultural society and architecture of postmodern urbanity. His relevance arises from his literary reconstruction of the modern metropolis as a multi-layered mise-en-scène for the gains and losses incurred in the experience of historical change. This reconstruction, I argue in the following, is based on a very sophisticated understanding of urban identities as contested and constructed, and it aims at a better understanding of the urban imagination as an ongoing negotiation between the real and imaginary cityscape. Especially in light of the preoccupation with public architecture as both an instrument of and a substitute for social change, Roth's resistance to all essentialist or essentializing positions on place, space, and identity makes him ideally suited as a guide through the contested topographies of post-World War I and post-unification Berlin.

Written in opposition to the prevailing paradigms of postwar urban thought, his short prose texts on Weimar Berlin lend themselves to an investigation of the continuing attractions both of urban culture and of the discourse of the metropolis for principally three reasons. Firstly, Roth's position as an outsider—what I call his self-chosen identification with the figure of the stranger—allows us to move beyond the familiar urban and antiurban arguments which tend to produce the old binaries of conservative vs. progressive, traditional vs. modern, local vs. global in often

unproductive ways. Secondly, the literariness of Roth's reconstruction of the metropolis—in other words: his resistance to any claims to referentiality or authenticity—enables us to separate the question of urban culture and tradition from prevailing theories of modernity and modernism or, to extend the discussion to more recent developments, of postmodernity. Thirdly, the close attention in Roth to the metropolis as a performative space moves our understanding of urban experience beyond the confinements of identity, whether defined in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, or race, and brings into relief the relational nature of all identities and subject effects.

As I will argue in the first part of this essay, it was the particular relationship between social, architectural, and literary space that allowed Roth to examine the rituals of foreignness and belonging outside of the standard aesthetic and ideological oppositions of his time. And it was the overdetermined figure of the stranger (discussed in more conceptual terms in the second part) that enabled him to extend his observations on Weimar Berlin to more fundamental reflections on the profound changes brought about by the conflagration of the Great War and its political, social, and cultural aftershocks. Choosing Weimar Berlin as the European capital in which these phenomena were particularly pronounced allowed Roth to explore the changing meaning of identity in the aesthetics and politics of the modern metropolis. Yet his close attention to estrangement as both a quintessential modern condition and an important literary device also uncovered the rituals of exclusion that accompanied growing mass mobility and, in so doing, revealed the difficulties of representing urban experience through the fixed categories of space, place, and identity.

Joseph Roth wrote most of his Berlin texts, essays, and reportages—he used these terms interchangeably—between 1920, the year he moved from Vienna to Berlin, and 1925, when he embarked on extensive travels in Russia, France, and Germany as a reporter for the country's most influential liberal newspaper, the

he once described his life as “measurable in terms of distance rather than time. The roads that I have traveled are the years of my past.”² Known for his clear and precise prose, he started out in Berlin by writing essays and articles for the Social Democratic organ *Vorwärts* and for influential newspapers like *Neue Berliner Zeitung* and *Berliner Börsen-Courier*. Beginning in 1923, he reported regularly from the German capital for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, an assignment later taken on by an even more influential diagnostician of urban culture, Siegfried Kracauer.³ Between 1926 and 1933, Roth returned to Berlin only for brief periods and then to concentrate primarily on his fiction writing. He completed three topical novels (*Zeitromane*) during that time—*Das Spinnennetz* (1923, *The Spider's Web*), *Hotel Savoy* (1924), and *Rechts und links* (1929, *Right and Left*)—all of which dealt with typical urban problems such as unemployment, poverty, crime, violence, and the rise of political extremism.⁴

Although Roth wrote extensively on the mentality of the so-called stabilization period (1924-29), his work cannot easily be subsumed under the category of New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), with its optimistic view of progress and technology and its enthusiastic affirmation of rationality and factuality. Rather than joining in the myth-making of the “golden twenties,” Roth approached Weimar Berlin through the disillusionment of the immediate postwar years, a disillusionment that meant: revolutionary uprisings and military putsches; starvation, poverty, homelessness, and mass unemployment; and, of course, the hyperinflation with its profoundly destabilizing effect on public and private value systems. These traumatic events exerted a profound influence on his conception of the modern metropolis, though less in the form of a particular thematic focus or literary style than through their corrosive effect on established forms and practices of urban representation. There is no doubt that the violence of the war and postwar years, including the murder of Walter Rathenau, also forced Roth to rearticulate his intellectual commitments. Yet in contrast to progressive journalists like Benjamin von Brentano, whose Berlin texts engaged directly with political figures and events, Roth showed little interest in the Weimar Re-

public and its perpetual crises. A cosmopolitan at heart, he remained an outsider to the city's powerful alliance of publishing houses, cultural institutions, and local businesses and had only superficial contacts with the influential group of left-liberal intellectuals associated with Weimar culture today. And unlike Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, Roth never approached urban writing as part of a larger theoretical investigation into the dialectics of mass culture and modernity. Unabashedly literary in orientation, he reconstructed urban spaces and identities in order to assert the power of the imagination, in positive as well as negative terms, vis-à-vis the reality effects produced by the prevailing literary, artistic, filmic, and architectural discourses in the modern metropolis.

Participating in then-current debates on the big city, Roth approached Weimar Berlin as a battlefield between tradition and modernity but did so with very different interests from those motivating the highly politicized combatants in the *Großstadt* vs. *Provinz* (city vs. country) controversy.⁵ While the arguments for and against the big city were—and still are—usually aligned with progressive and conservative positions, respectively, their heuristic value in Roth resists such easy categorization.⁶ His diatribes against the modern metropolis were motivated by his deep love of the classical metropolis and its promises of individual freedom and social tolerance. Translating the experience of historical change into scenarios of disconnection and dislocation, he responded to the homogenization of urban life with the cultivation of a cynical persona (e.g., in the figure of the stranger) and the identification with minority positions (i.e., as an Austrian monarchist and Galician Jew). Not surprisingly, the transitory situations and transitional places that played such a central role in the author's own biography provided an important structural element for the imaginary city of his novels as well as his short prose pieces.⁷ Whether in fictional or essayistic form, the topos "Berlin" allowed the author to express both his growing disillusionment with the project of modernity and its hollow promises of progress and democracy and to formulate an oppositional stance through various modes of defamiliarization, estrangement, and defamiliarization.

The organizing force behind these urban writings remained the desire of the bourgeois individual to maintain his sense of self: if necessary, from the position of negativity embodied most powerfully—and painfully—in the figure of the stranger and his discourse of extraterritoriality.

Roth's unwillingness, or inability, to commit to any particular aesthetics or ideology came at a considerable personal cost, a fact that complicates the critical assessment of his contribution to the mythification of Weimar Berlin. An itinerant lifestyle—like the hero of *Hotel Savoy*, Roth often lived in hotels—added to his self-chosen identification with the habitus of the stranger and trained his susceptibility to both the transient phenomena of modern urban life and the social and economic forces behind the accelerated circulation of perceptions, sensations, and experiences.⁸ Moreover, his personal habits were fueled by a heavy drinking habit that, like the anonymity offered by hotels and cafés, allowed him to create a uniquely Rothian cityscape of bitterness, longing, and despair. Despite his aversion to groups and cliques, he always worked in popular meeting places like the Café des Westens and, later, Mampe-Stuben on Kurfürstendamm. These writing habits had a profound influence on his conceptualization of homelessness as a condition of modernity, for they provided him with a precise social and spatial topography against which to measure the destructive effects of modernization. Not surprisingly, Roth used the much publicized closing and reopening of the Café des Westens, also known as Café Größenwahn, to offer a self-critical reflection on the literary profession and its dependence on the big city for income and inspiration.

Roth's persona of the bourgeois bohemian did not blind him to the growing social and economic inequities and the resulting patterns of demarcation and exclusion in the city's residential neighborhoods and commercial professional organizations. In fact, many Berlin texts directly thematize the shocking difference between the ubiquitous signs of urban decay, poverty, and crime in the neighborhoods around Hackesche Höfe, Rosenthaler Platz, and Bülowplatz and the gaudy displays of wealth and luxury in the Neue Westen along Kurfürstendamm. A nightly tour through

lower-class dives on Neue Schönhauser Straße confronts the reader with the despondency and resilience of those who, against all odds, insist on their right to happiness. Similarly, the world of petty thieves, con artists, and prostitutes in the infamous Scheunenviertel around Grenadierstraße and Dragonerstraße allows the author to map the invisible dividing lines that guarantee the peaceful coexistence of the legal and illegal city economy. He repeatedly seeks out those institutions that, from the homeless shelter in Prenzlauer Berg and the family court on Lansberger Allee to the infamous police headquarters on Alexanderplatz, are forced to deal with the city's growing number of displaced and disenfranchised. And in a humorous piece on the steam baths in the Admiralspalast, he even praises the resourcefulness of the homeless who, by spending the night, make this popular institution on Friedrichstraße an "asylum for the cleanly ones."

The relentless attacks on the modern metropolis did not prevent Roth from paying close attention to the considerable differences among the major European capitals. Cultivating his distance, or exclusion, from mainstream culture, he actually learned to be a stranger in three big cities: Vienna, Berlin, and Paris. Known for a lively coffee-house culture associated with names like Karl Kraus, Egon Friedell, and Peter Altenberg, Vienna was responsible for Roth's intellectual development in the multiethnic, multicultural society of the late Austro-Hungarian Empire. Paris, on the other hand, he revered as the embodiment of European civilization, French *savoir vivre*, and conservative Catholicism. His nostalgia for Vienna was inspired by that city's remarkable ability to integrate social differences and political changes into the existing fabric of urban life. Similarly, his love of Paris was validated by a deep sense of relief at not being recognized as a foreigner in the city's many immigrant neighborhoods. Compared to these two models of classical urbanity, Berlin occupied a peculiar position, lacking the glorious past of Vienna and Paris but asserting its uniqueness through a greater investment in the future.

True to his emotional temperament, Roth never concealed his intense dislike of the German capital. His frequent descrip-

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tions of Berlin as a cold, functional city allowed him to express a profound sense of disappointment that can only be explained by the difficult situation in postwar Berlin and its implications for the project of enlightened urbanity. More specifically, he often uses his personal sense of being exiled (i.e., from Vienna and Paris) in order to trace the spatial politics of exclusion and the public rituals of discrimination and to articulate what he saw as the non-synchronous qualities of Weimar Berlin: rapid urban growth in combination with incomplete democratization; mass immigration without an established tradition of tolerance; economic development without a social infrastructure; and cultural ambitions without any awareness of the importance of history.¹⁰ The resultant topography of the urban produces the multi-layered imagery that, to give only one example, characterizes Roth's description of Schillerpark, a city park in the working-class district of Wedding, as "a park in exile" (1989, 1: 662).

In Peter Sloterdijk's typology of modern cynicism, Roth appears as an example of "enlightened false consciousness—the unhappy consciousness in modernized form" (1983, 2: 399). A defensive reaction to experiences of loss, defeat, and impotence, this kind of modern cynicism, according to Sloterdijk, frequently remains hidden "under a mask of irony, politeness, and melancholia" (1983, 2: 904). Arguing in a similar vein, Helmut Lethen links the diverse phenomena associated with New Objectivity, including white-collar culture, to what he calls "behavioral systems of coldness."¹¹ While undoubtedly influenced by the rediscovery of social realist and documentary styles during the stabilization period, Roth's writings lack the concomitant psychological and perceptual defense mechanisms. His nostalgic yearning for some imaginary past and his old-fashioned preoccupation with the question of identity and place have ultimately little in common with the cold gaze cultivated by famous Weimar cynics like George Grosz, Ernst Jünger and Gottfried Benn. Instead, Roth's idiosyncratic version of the modern cynic thrives on the anachronisms that find their most telling expression in his ambivalent response to traditional Jewish culture and his equally complicated relationship to classical urban culture.

Rather than taking issue with Roth's ambivalent, if not outright antagonistic relationship to Weimar Berlin and rather than faulting him for his changing public personas as a socialist, liberal, conservative, and monarchist, we might find it more productive to connect these ideological stances to the experience of discrimination and persecution documented with chilling clarity in *Juden auf Wanderschaft* (1927, *Wandering Jews*). This well-received book on contemporary Jewish life and the double threat of nationalism and anti-Semitism sheds an important light on the author's strategic use of ideologemes as a form of mimicking or masquerading—that is, of assuming the position of the Other as a defense mechanism. Describing the living conditions of East European Jewry in various West European capitals, Roth singles out Berlin as a particularly inhospitable place: “No East European Jew arrives in Berlin voluntarily. Who in all the world would come to Berlin voluntarily? Berlin is a transit station” (1990, 2: 865). Not surprisingly, his poetics of walking in Berlin remain linked to the loss of rootedness and belonging and to what he repeatedly describes as the Jewish condition, the Diaspora. The direct and indirect references to the history of anti-Semitism protect his more philosophical reflections on the conditions of universal homelessness from the compensatory effects promised by the sensualist excesses of Weimar flanerier and the rationalist impulses of Weimar reportage.¹²

Roth's defense of traditional urban culture culminates in a number of scathing attacks on modern technology, mass consumption, and functionalist architecture. Often his observations are exaggerated and his arguments disjointed. In most cases, the polemical division between old and new establishes an artificial order that implicates every building, street, and square in evocative constellations that assert the attractions of the classical metropolis over the modernist aesthetics of alienation. Against modernist architects who, like Mies van der Rohe or Ludwig Hilberseimer, advocate the elementary laws of form and function as the most adequate response to massification (*Vermassung*), Roth calls upon the productive force of chaos and disorder to resist the leveling effects of modernization and functionalization.¹³

However, as the next pages will show, his passionate opposition to the program of the New Berlin spearheaded by city building councilor Martin Wagner should not be confused with the conservative attacks on the project of formal innovation and social reform. Instead Roth's anti-modern position must be reconnected to what he perceives as the original promise of the metropolis, that is, to allow its inhabitants to move freely without being separated, to engage with others without being tied down, to encourage change without severing the fabric of tradition.¹⁴

Responding to the ubiquitous signs of modernization, Roth during the 1920s repeatedly declares that "Berlin is a young, unhappy, and future city. Its tradition has a fragmentary character" (1991, 3: 228). Denouncing the renovated storefronts along Kurfürstendamm as "the facade of the new times" (1991, 3: 115), he diagnoses a fundamental crisis of meaning, very much in contrast to Kracauer, who relies on the "façade architecture (*Fassadenarchitektur*)" and similar surface phenomena to contemplate the progressive potential of mass culture and modernity (*Schriften* 5, 3: 12). Convinced of the futility of large-scale urban planning, Roth also describes the city as "an orderly confusion; an exactly planned arbitrariness; an aimlessness of ostensible purpose. Never before has so much order been applied to chaos, so much waste to barrenness, so much thought to foolishness, so much method to madness" (1991, 3: 229). In his view, modern city planners like Wagner force an expanding present onto the increasingly delicate fabric of urban traditions. Not surprisingly, his review of Werner Hegemann's famous treatise *Das steinere Berlin* (1930, *The Berlin of Stone*) has little to say about the problems of the tenement city and the need for better public housing. Instead this first "successful attempt to document the stony traces of history in such a way that one can eavesdrop on the fading step of the past" (1991, 3: 230) provides Roth with yet another opportunity to indulge his preoccupation with historical continuity as a precondition for a vibrant urban culture.

By ignoring the dynamics of place, space, and identity, the modern metropolis ends up disenfranchising its inhabitants, a connection Roth explores most forcefully in relation to modern

architecture and design. Its simple forms and smooth surfaces, he argues, no longer allow for the kind of resistance offered by ornamentation and embellishment through their reliance on historical or regional references and on forms of kitsch that become endearing with frequent use. Architectural modernism, according to Roth, completes the dismantling of tradition through its deterministic equation of form and function. More specifically, he accuses the proponents of the New Architecture (*Neues Bauen*)—all too present in 1920s Berlin through the construction of high rises in the center and public housing estates on the periphery—of aestheticizing the condition of homelessness by sacrificing habitual comforts to the (illusory) demands of efficiency and transparency. For that reason, Roth would probably have described the architectural movement later canonized as International Style as the most extreme attempt to erase all signs of belonging, including those of circumstance, custom, and tradition, so that alienation can be accepted as an integral part of modern life.

The apotheosis of the skyscraper as the symbol of the modern metropolis provides Roth with a rather obvious example of the destructive qualities within modernism. His response to an architectural exhibition in conjunction with the 1922 Friedrichstraße competition locates these qualities in the hubris of the modern city planner: “A skyscraper: that is the revolt incarnate against all ostensible unattainability; against the secret of height; against the hereafter of the heavens” (1989, 1: 765). Mocking functionalist arguments, Roth elsewhere calls for more skyscrapers as a solution to the housing crisis (1989, 1: 447-49). And in a provocative equation of modernism with mythology, he praises the skyscraper—generally referred to as *Turmhaus* during the 1920s—for overcoming the trauma of Babel (1989, 1: 765-67).

The dialectic of modernity and myth is equally apparent in the new department stores, where human values are sacrificed to the cult of the commodity. In a short piece from 1929, inspired by the new Karstadt store on Hermannplatz, Roth uses the image of the escalator to reflect critically on the kind of false elevation through which modernity advertises its achievements as progress.

In his description, the escalator, this recent addition to the temples of consumer culture, "leads man upward by climbing in his place. In fact, it does not even climb—it runs. Every step runs up with the customer, as if it were afraid that he would turn around" (1991, 3: 82). Since the waxed stairs have become "too slippery," an indication also of the dangers associated with independent movement, the customers have no choice but to act out the passivity of the exhibited goods. Walking and strolling have been superseded by the mechanism of the conveyor-belt, reason enough for Roth to conclude that "the large department store must no longer be regarded as a sinful enterprise like the Tower of Babel. On the contrary, it is proof of the inability of human beings today to be presumptuous. They are even allowed to build skyscrapers, and the result is no longer a deluge but merely a business" (1991, 3: 84). This failure to measure up to Biblical precursors, however, only proves to him that modern department stores are, in fact, profane versions of their Babylonian precursors.

The fundamental transformation of modern urban life through technological innovation, social mobility, and economic migration and the increasingly sophisticated technologies of mass transportation and communication provide the thematic and conceptual focus in what must be considered Roth's most famous Berlin text, called "Gleisdreieck" after a triangular intersection of several train lines near the Anhalter Station.¹⁵ To many Weimar critics, Gleisdreieck symbolized both the triumph of modern technology over nature and the ascendancy of traffic as the new urban paradigm. It was the proponents of New Objectivity who especially hailed the replacement of humans by the machine as a sign of progress, not least in the advanced forms of mechanical movement (e.g., flânerie by bus or car). Roth's reconstruction of this "iron landscape" as an allegory of modernity allows for no such emancipatory possibilities, except through the sheer force of its negativity. His combination of "iron" and "landscape," with its inherent tension between artificial material and natural setting, problematizes the destructive force behind the process of modernization on the metaphoric and discursive levels. Confronted with this lethal vision of the future of modernity, Roth quickly

(and deliberately) comes up against the limits of the literary imagination: "This reality is still *too large* for an adequate representation. A 'faithful' description is not enough. One would have to feel the elevated and ideal reality of this world, the Platonic 'eidolon' of Gleisdreieck" (1990, 2: 220). And extending his diagnosis of a fundamental paradigm shift in the precarious relationship between modernization and urbanization far beyond the particular situation in Weimar Berlin, he leaves his readers with a truly apocalyptic vision: "The future world will be such a Gleisdreieck of powerful dimensions. The earth has lived through several transformations based on natural laws. It is experiencing a new one based on constructive, rational, but no less elementary laws. . . . The 'landscape' acquires an iron mask" (1990, 2: 220-21).

The degree to which Roth's anti-modernism is a function of his pro-urbanism—that is to say, his defense of the classical metropolis—can be seen whenever he writes about interiors turned inhospitable and uninhabitable. Defending the pragmatics of individual use, he adamantly opposes formal experimentation in residential buildings: "It was their calling to be functional, inhabitable and durable, full of light and air. But it was their desire to be beautiful and useless like beauty itself" (1989, 1: 637). By rejecting the "false vocabulary of a conventional dialect," modern architects end up fetishizing the principle of total exchangeability. In the words of Roth, they "are totally indifferent to whether they build a mausoleum, an electric chair, a department store or a night club, a machine shop or a gazebo, a music salon or a bathroom" (1990, 3: 1000). As a consequence, a modern cabaret looks like a crematorium, a cinema like a train station or a mosque, cafés resemble "white hygienic operating rooms," and, suddenly, the New Man and New Woman of Weimar Berlin find themselves living in "illuminated basins" (1991, 3: 115 and 116).

Confronted with a contemporary culture that elevates sobriety to a religious exercise and that celebrates impoverishment as ultimate sophistication, Roth sees no choice but to speak out for what he calls the germ-ridden bric-à-brac of a time gone-by. For even in the worst examples of kitsch, he insists, authenticity and

modernist form, Roth explains in one of his more conciliatory moments, can only be achieved where form is divorced from function as, for instance, in public monuments that invite symbolic participation in collective beliefs and rituals. The opposite process is at work in cafés, bars, and restaurants—public places that mediate between the openness of the street and the seclusion of the home. With their fake materials and styles, the old-fashioned neighborhood cafés in particular bring into focus what is really at stake in Roth's categorical opposition to the program of the New Berlin. In this context, Roth's defense of the comforts of make-believe—his favorite example is fake marble—is not simply a statement in favor of old-fashioned sensualism and illusionism. On the contrary, his argument responds to a growing need for public spaces that give shelter and sanctuary. These places provide the modern city dweller with the basic elements of sociability—tables, chairs, newspapers, coffee, and cigarettes—but still leave room for individual activities such as writing, conversing, and daydreaming. The sense of belonging experienced by the coffee house regulars derives from the repeated use of ordinary objects and space and the passing of time experienced in them. The disappearance of these coordinates of identity influences all of Roth's essayistic writings on Weimar Berlin and motivates his self-chosen identification with the figure of the stranger to be explored in this article's more speculative second part.

Fundamental questions about the relationship among space, place, and identity stand at the beginning of all urban explorations in Roth, marking points of entrance, defining terms of engagements, and setting the limits of involvement. Usually it is a journalistic assignment which brings him to public events such as film and theater premieres, folk festivals, criminal trials, musical revues, political lectures, costume balls, art exhibitions, and, of course, the six-day races. But his literary ambitions always compel him to extend the choice of locations from the famous grand hotels and department stores to the rarely mentioned homeless shelters and working-class pubs. Moving back and forth between the city's splendid boulevards and squares and its monotonous residential

neighborhoods, he time and again seeks out settings that illuminate urban culture from the margins, whether through their affinity with transitional states and ephemeral phenomena or their placement within the invisible spatial divisions separating old and new, rich and poor.

The art of walking plays a central role in Roth's literary reconstruction of the modern metropolis and his contribution to the Weimar feuilleton. Associated with urban types like the flaneur, the passer-by, and the pedestrian, the trope of walking allowed writers and journalists simultaneously to respond and contribute to the widespread fascination with Berlin as an overdetermined metaphor of urbanity, mass culture, and modernity. However, by relying on the figure of the stranger, Roth's mode of walking introduces an element of disillusionment missing both from Hessel's sensualist excursions and from Kracauer's allegorical *Raumbilder* (spatial images). Skeptical of the blessings of modernization, Roth asserts: "I no longer find meaning in the wide, all-encompassing arm movement of a hero on the world stage. I am a stroller (*Spaziergänger*)" (1989, 1: 565). The reference to strolling, which conjures up images of self-satisfied burghers, turns on a deliberate rejection of mastery. By avoiding all signs of haste, anxiety, and stress, the stroller tries—unsuccessfully, of course—to contain the chaos behind the appearance of order and ends up drawing attention to his utter lack of control. Through such devious strategies, this old-fashioned mode of walking brings out the contradictions of modern urban life with uncanny precision and establishes a model for similarly deliberate reenactments of stalled movement and arrested development. Waiting in a stalled streetcar abandoned by its conductor, Roth is thus overcome by a strong sense of foreboding: "You know nothing of the mysterious events in the front. In the front the world perishes, the globe explodes, comet tails get caught in the streetcar's wheels, and you know nothing, nothing, nothing" (1989, 1: 368).

The utilization of space as a critical device in reflecting on temporal and, by extension, historical processes represents the most important general principle in Roth's imaginary topog-

raphy of Weimar Berlin. Speaking of cafés, bars, restaurants, and hotel lobbies in ways usually reserved for the private sphere, the author transforms these public spaces into a stage for the highly provisional identity of the modern city-dweller. Using himself as a catalyst, he explores the fragmentation of modern urban life by assuming ordinary personas and reenacting typical situations. In choosing ordinary situations, he draws attention to the small tragedies of everyday life, unlike more adventuresome contemporaries like Egon Jameson, who once assumed the role of a fugitive from the law, or Alfred Polgar, who once pretended to be a homeless person.¹⁶ In response to the high unemployment rate, Roth spends two days looking for work in small stores and businesses and ends up documenting the typical phrases with which employers get rid of desperate job seekers. On other occasions, he tests the honesty of strangers in the crowd. He walks away from a newspaper stand and a ticket booth, in both cases leaving behind his small change. Through the means of performance and masquerade, he identifies the rituals of exclusion that, more even than the spectacle of the commodity, sustain the mythology of the modern metropolis. Another time, he intentionally loses, one after another, a subway ticket, a pack of cigarettes, and several coins and waits for an honest finder to return the lost items to him. In a similar series of experiments on trust, he goes to a café, a barbershop, and a public restroom and pretends each time to have left his money at home. His objective in all cases: "to test a) my exterior for its trustworthiness and b) the interior of the others for their trustfulness" (1989, 1: 419). Time and again, the reactions and responses of others demonstrate the power of social and ethnic stereotypes in the organization of urban life, but they also show the importance of direct human contact as one of the only safeguards against mistrust, anxiety, indifference, and a pervasive feeling of powerlessness.

In his most revealing experiment on the "mysteries of the everyday," Roth spends two hours in the ticket booth of the elevated train. His conclusion summarizes his basic problem with modern city life: "I could never work in such a place. I would have to think constantly about the faces of the people who belong

to these hands and sleeves. I would go mad from too much speculation. . . . For eighty-four hours one has to be indifferent to everything in the world" (1989, 1: 441). His desire for forms of engagement based on human need, which is obviously frustrated by the window's narrow frame, disrupts the organization of everyday life and, in so doing, draws attention to the actual division of urban functions. Through his impassioned, if impossible defense of continuity and contiguity, Roth underscores the contribution of that which resists rationalization and standardization—namely fantasy, desire, and the imagination, the true source of any vibrant urban culture. More than the polemical attacks on modernist architecture, this pivotal scene from the ticket window captures both the critique of modernization and the strategies of resistance that inform Roth's extraterritorial perspective on Weimar Berlin.

Train stations and hotel lobbies represent places in the urban topography to which Roth, like Kracauer, returns almost obsessively, as if to fortify himself against the violence of modernity through repeated exposure to the promise of its endless possibilities and the recognition of its inherent limitations. As classic symbols of transience, the train station and the hotel lobby allow Roth to mobilize the relationship between space and time for a poetic reconstruction of the urban experience that avoids the pitfalls of forced optimism and sentimental resignation. "I stand in the station concourse. It is empty and large and of a resounding stillness" (1984, 173), is how he introduces one of his most compelling reflections on the process of modernization and its impact on individual experience. The subsequent transformation of the station into a *mise-en-scène* of ossification and mummification begins with the haunting image of the other travelers as "survivors in a sunken world" and continues with the kind of suggestive reversals between animate and inanimate world found in many of his Berlin texts. Reconfigured as an emblem of modernity, the newspaper stand thus becomes "a coffin holding dead newspapers" and the station buffet "an embalmed funeral dinner." To what degree the inanimate assumes characteristics of the animate world can be seen in the numerous personifications,

from the "closed eyelids" of the ticket office to the "paralyzed tongues" of the station bell. This re-enchantment of the physical world makes possible the preservation of the utopian dream of freedom and tolerance, with the objects acting out aspects of the human condition that can no longer be realized in social relations; here Roth's allegorical method reveals its profoundly humanistic orientation. Entrance halls, platforms, and ceilings provide him with a stage set for the return of those human needs exorcised from the rituals of modern life, with the objects preserving their memory in commodified form. Precisely this reversal gives rise to the uncanny closing image of the station as the repository of all life processes: "There was a large gate that led into the mysterious distance. Trapped in the glass hall were longing and fulfillment. The unknown trembled, as did the homesickness for homelessness. It was a stage and a beginning, a caesura and an opening. All train stations were introductions" (1984, 174).

From such a train station, we might follow Roth to another quintessential urban location, the hotel lobby. Again the mimetic force of his thinking compels him to decipher the human architecture of a particular urban space or place, in this case an international luxury hotel. This time he establishes himself in a low comfortable lounge chair and uses the familiar objects around him to reflect on the condition of belonging. Scrutinizing the creases in his trousers and admiring his shiny shoes, which he treats as the insignia of an illusory sense of "being at home," of "being himself," he exchanges confident glances with the bellhop and the waiter, observes "fellow millionaires," and performs his newly-found role as a wealthy tourist until, as Roth puts it, "I am convinced that I come from a country with hard currency and that I actually live in this hotel" (1989, 1: 517). The lighting scheme in the lobby, with light "streaming softly out of opalescent wall fittings and enveloping the hard objects" (1989, 1: 595), offers a model of (critical) illumination that at once acknowledges the illusion (i.e., in the fantasy of being a millionaire) and uncovers its underlying mechanisms (i.e., in the reference to indirect lighting). Yet the transformation of space into text brings with it gains

as well as losses, with the liberation of critical faculties only possible under the condition of foreignness: "Such a foyer is the home of strangers, and strangers are always distinguished. It is a pleasure to be strange (*fremd*)" (1989, 1: 597).

The train station and the hotel lobby establish the parameters within which Roth approaches Weimar Berlin through the perspective of the stranger and the experience of displacement. These transitional spaces foreground the division between interior and exterior space and bring into relief the underlying strategies of exclusion and inclusion. By entering the train station and by seeking shelter in the hotel lobby, the stranger uncovers the inter-relatedness of social, perceptual, and aesthetic definitions of public space that, especially through their conflicts and contradictions, constitute the modern urban experience. The implications of such urban movements become evident in a short piece on waiting rooms that occasions a bitter remark on the worsening social and economic conditions. Like Kracauer in his later theory of history, Roth evokes the model of the anteroom, another version of the hotel lobby, to theorize the boundary between "street and apartment, homelessness and home, desolation and shelter."¹⁷ Yet rather than projecting the possibility of social change onto the layout of thresholds and passages, Roth focuses on the most enduring feature of the kind of waiting rooms found in welfare offices and unemployment exchanges, namely, the insurmountable division between those who wait and those who make others wait. Thus in his "philosophy of the anteroom," the anteroom remains an invisible but also impenetrable wall: "It lies between poverty and well-being, not in order to unite them but to separate them" (1990, 2: 37).

In the most general terms, urban writing for Roth means registering the struggle on the stages of the modern metropolis between tradition and innovation, destruction and preservation. From the perspective of the stranger he identifies the elements and processes of the modern metropolis and displays them in spatial configurations. He reads buildings and places as the manifestations of a historical process that, in his view, leads to the decline of traditional urban culture. His conception of the ideal-

typical metropolis functions less to delineate a particular urban history than to illustrate his pessimistic views on the modern condition. Paying equal attention to the economic, social, and cultural practices that constitute Weimar Berlin as a highly contested and contradictory site, Roth takes full advantage of the meditating powers of the strategically in-between figure and turns it into a heuristic device both for moving beyond the myths of Weimar Berlin and for exploring the social, perceptual, and architectural spaces that constitute the modern metropolis as a life world and critical concept. Rather than embracing rationalization and standardization as a solution to the sense of "transcendental homelessness" (Georg Lukács), he defends the classical metropolis as the ideal model of society and sociability. And instead of joining the conservative enemies of urbanism and cosmopolitanism, he insists all the more on the salutary effects to be gained from the emergence of a multicultural, multiethnic society. Consequently, his estrangement from the times and places of the New Berlin remains an ambiguous one, neither entirely positive in its liberating qualities nor entirely negative in its traumatic effects.

Roth's critical method recalls Georg Simmel's definition of the stranger not as the "wanderer who comes today and goes tomorrow but [as] the person who comes today and stays tomorrow" (143). The urban writer would have probably agree with the conclusion by the urban sociologist that being strange is "a completely positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction" (143). Likewise, Roth's own *Lebensphilosophie* could have inspired Simmel's observation that the stranger acts out the dynamics of closeness and distance constitutive of modern society and, through his otherness, actualizes the sense of individual freedom that distinguishes life in the metropolis from that in the village and small town.¹⁸ However, under the different conditions of the postwar period, Roth's stranger is no longer able to enjoy the Simmelian pleasures of turn-of-the-century metropolitan life and must confront the social and economic problems connected to "being strange" as a *Lebensentwurf* (e.g., for intellectuals).

In writing about urban phenomena, Roth foregrounds the double role of "Berlin" as a transposition of psychological trauma into perceptual terms and a containment of spatial anxieties through literary forms. His strategic position on the margins, whether associated with the figure of the stranger, foreigner, immigrant, refugee or homeless person, always includes a critique of essentialist notions of identity. He articulates his critique through specific literary strategies that allow for a simultaneous representation of, and reflection on, modern urban life and its constituent elements. Highlighting the difference between urban reality and its representations, this strategy of estrangement, to introduce a term coined by Viktor Shklovsky, represents less a predictable psychological reaction than a complex aesthetic response to the disappearance of the classical metropolis and, with it, of specifically bourgeois notions of urban culture and identity. As Karl Prümm has argued, Roth's Berlin texts cannot be examined apart from their poetic qualities, an observation that is especially relevant for understanding the dynamic relationship between the representation of strangers or strangeness and the strangeness of representational means.¹⁹ However, by turning the familiar and ordinary into haunting scenes from an *unheimlich* (i.e., uncanny) world, Roth also forces us to confront the manifestations of an urban identity released from the confinements of home but also forced to find a more provisional self in the movements of the stranger.

By addressing the problem of modern alienation through aesthetic means, Roth indirectly confirms the unfulfilled promise of happiness inherent in all art. However, in contrast to the aestheticist city texts written during the prewar years, including August Endell's famous *Die Schönheit der großen Stadt* (1908, *The Beauty of the Big City*), his melancholy contributions to the genre evoke the possibility of a re-enchantment of the world from the postlapsarian perspective of loss. Marked by the historical rupture of 1918/19, his writings on Weimar Berlin perform a kind of literary mimicry or masquerade, casting the modern intellectual as émigré, migrant or foreigner. The strange perspectives opened up by his texts conjure up a traditional (i.e., nineteenth century)

urban culture predicated on bourgeois authority and male privilege; that Roth possesses neither one only intensifies the critical effects produced by his fictitious subject positions. Imitating the habitus of the educated middle-class (*Bildungsbürgertum*) allows him to assess its contribution to traditional urban culture and to keep his distance from the new class of white collar workers. He denounces the feuilleton as a bastion of middle-class culture and then uses his role as a defender of tradition to express solidarity with the working class. The author evokes a mythical past modeled on the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but does so only in order to highlight the losses brought about by modernization. His sympathies for the urban poor and their strategies of survival align him with progressive causes, but his cynicism and arrogance make any further engagement with the masses difficult from the outset. Throughout, Roth's identification with marginalized social and ethnic groups remains at odds with the mannerisms of the bourgeois bohemian. His acute awareness of the condition of homelessness, which lies at the core of the modern, as well as the Jewish, experience, coexists with an almost fetishistic relationship to the symbols of belonging and rootedness.

Roth's urban discourse undermines conventional models of oppositionality and reconstitutes the ideal-typical metropolis precisely through the power of the disparate, dissimilar, and discontinuous. Contributing to this defamiliarization effect, Roth cultivates various urban personas—curmudgeon, cynic, and melancholic—that organize the constitutive tension between cool detachment and passionate involvement in his writings. Inspired by famous literary precursors, he combines aspects of the “miser” from the eighteenth-century tradition of irony, satire, and misanthropy with the melancholy wit and charm of the turn-of-the-century Viennese coffeehouse poet. Far removed from the contemporary sensibilities of New Objectivity, Roth develops his ambulatory discourse in deliberate opposition to the grand narratives of progress and change. Contradictions are his favorite literary tropes and rhetorical devices; they make possible his almost compulsive posturing and masquerading. Contemptuous of mass-produced entertainment, he claims to dislike the movies

but writes countless well-informed and occasionally enthusiastic reviews. He complains about "monotonous streets whose main elements are hygiene, usefulness, and unrelenting regularity" (1990, 2: 48) yet becomes enthralled with the most undistinguished buildings and neighborhoods. He is appalled by the signs of conspicuous consumption but never loses interest in new products and services. He rejects the blessings of modern technology but, when confronted with its failures (e.g., during a power outage), misses the familiar sound of streetcars, that guarantor of physical and social mobility. Wherever he goes, Roth uncovers connections and discovers similarities—a critical response that requires at least some engagement with mass cultural phenomena and some appreciation, no matter how tentative and provisional, of the modern condition.

Needless to say, this unique method of mapping urban experiences is based on a carefully maintained system of critical distances. Looking out of a window onto the cityscape below, Roth once confesses: "I love the distance from window to window because it excludes the fulfillment of unfortunate opportunities. In general, I am a *Distanzliebhaber*, so to speak" (1989, 1: 656). Significantly, the original German allows for two readings, "lover of distances" and "lover from a distance." This linguistic ambiguity identifies the two sides in Roth's conception of urban culture: his longing for community and his insistence on autonomy. Both bear the marks of experiences of discrimination, and both find expression in the desire not to be defined by categories of race, ethnicity or nationality. Comparable to a preemptive strike, the refusal of commitment offers protection against social marginalization. Yet the absence of an uncomplicated, spontaneous identification with the mundane aspects of urban life also increases his suppressed desire for the rituals of identity and belonging. More than once Roth confesses his discomfort with unwarranted closeness by evoking visual and tactile sensations: "I see through magnifying glasses. I peel the skin from things and human beings, uncover their secrets" (1970, 75). Assuming a defensive position, he remains a distanced observer especially in the crowded "Wong's restaurant" where "each of us is to each other," Roth remarks about

the patrons of a popular nightspot, "fates, worlds separate us. But precisely for that purpose we have come into this space to be close to each other: despite everything and for no longer than we are capable of being so close to each other. We have a community: a spatial community. We are not companions in fate but in space" (1990, 2: 388). Kracauer, in describing the modern condition, speaks elsewhere of "being in an empty space that makes people companions in fate" (*Schriften* 5.1: 160). Roth, the unrepentant individualist, distrusts such hopeful scenarios and their underlying belief in the power of collective agency. For him only the distances and separations reenacted by the stranger make possible a true understanding of the gains and losses brought about by modernization.

In light of Roth's affinities for techniques of distancing, it should be unsurprising that he relies heavily on spectatorial models from the nineteenth century, including the panopticon, the panorama, and the tableau vivant when describing the big city and its visual attractions. These pre-cinematic techniques leave noticeable traces in the privileging of one-point perspective and the arresting of processes in spatial configurations, reason enough for Fritz Hackert to describe Roth's literary style in terms of a "panoptic vision" (4). By inserting the sweeping views of the panorama, the theatricality of the tableau vivant, and the exoticism of the panopticon into the rationalized, standardized spaces of the New Berlin, Roth removes the familiar settings from the continuum of time and makes them available for a sustained reflection on the constructed nature of urban experience and identity. Looking out of coffeehouse windows, he arrests the flow of daily life through representational strategies taken from old-fashioned vignettes. Simulating movement through shifting foci and changing points-of-view, he elsewhere isolates the disparate elements of the modern metropolis and reconfigures them in almost quaint panoramic vistas. These representations derive their critical force less from the contingencies explored by more fashionable urban critics through the aesthetics of the snapshot and its experiential equivalent of shock than from the contradictions produced through the introduction of the antiquated visual devices men-

tioned above. For what Roth "discovers" always already reflects the sensibilities of the outsider who seeks to reconstruct the hidden connections behind the most diverse urban phenomena. Likewise, what he "finds" invariably brings into focus the dilemmas of the stranger who has no choice but to assume an artificial identity, no matter how temporary, modeled on the rituals of the city street.

In the effort to preserve the complexities and contradictions of urban life, Roth places a special emphasis on the ongoing negotiation between two forces: flight and belonging. He is fully aware that a perfect balance between the modalities of foreignness as liberation and as disconnection can never be realized. Thus his fascination with points of departure betrays a strong need to reenact the initial experience of flight that defines both his private biography and his self-presentation as an urban intellectual. While transitional situations provide him with new insights and ideas, the rare occasions on which he finds himself in domestic arrangements fill him with dread and invariably cause him to flee the scene, like a criminal caught in the act. Yet even in its impossibility, the question of dwelling remains a ubiquitous point of reference through the experience of homelessness in the physical and spiritual sense. Having moved to a new neighborhood that looks frighteningly residential, Roth at one point "is overtaken by a shudder of homelessness amidst so much homeliness (*Heimatlichkeit*)" (1989, 1: 638). Instead of offering comfort, the rituals of belonging only highlight the patterns of exclusion and, in so doing, intensify his desire for escaping the confinement of domesticity. Yet in the process, the ability to leave home also turns into the inability to return, and the initial distinction between voluntary and involuntary homelessness disappears entirely.

In terms of urban dispositions Roth's Berlin texts can be likened to a discourse of passive resistance. His city scenes defy the forces of modernization through a not always unproblematic investment in the past as the placeholder for a more human existence. Through the sedimentation of social changes in urban space and of aesthetic practices in architectural form, the classical me-

metropolis becomes a receptacle for the impossible alliance of modernity and tradition. The reality of Weimar Berlin shows how these possibilities are being sacrificed to the demands of rationalization and functionalization. It would be misguided to interpret such attitudes as mere nostalgia for the great cities of the nineteenth century. For Roth the past, precisely because it is a construction, can illuminate the present. His detachment from the contemporary scene allows him to protect the sedimentation of history from the cult of progress and change. Defying the lure of novelty, the figure of the stranger introduces specific mechanisms of retardation and delay that make the modern appear utterly strange. In these constructions, the present only marks the threshold where the old retreats before the new and the future takes over the past. Resistance to this destructive process involves a double strategy of retreating to a position of cultural and political conservatism and of identifying with the victims of modernization: the social outsiders, the economic migrants, and the exiles and émigrés. These positions establish a conceptual framework for enlisting city images in the ongoing critique of mass culture and modernity. And precisely this literary process of deconstructing and reconstructing urban culture from a position of difference links the writings on Weimar Berlin to the present debates on postunification Berlin.

As I have argued on the previous pages, Joseph Roth thematized the crisis of urban experience through the very categories that constituted the classical metropolis, beginning with the contingencies of identity and the continuities of time and place. His attacks on the New Objectivity and the movement of New Architecture were based on a deep appreciation of established urban traditions and a growing fear that these traditions were disappearing before his very eyes. In particular, his opposition to rationalization and standardization and his critique of functionalist aesthetics reflected a passionate belief in the importance of complexity and contradiction to the survival of urban culture. The encounter with Weimar Berlin, that famous example of delayed urbanization, brought into sharp focus what he saw as the destructive effects of the modern ideology of progress,

innovation, and change. Without recourse to the aesthetic pleasures available to the representatives of turn-of-the-century culture, Roth had to articulate his defense of classical urbanity through the perspective of estrangement that separated the pre-war from the postwar years. Yet instead of indulging the narcissistic pleasures of flanerier or adapting the conservative complaints about the decline of community, he introduced the elusive persona of the stranger both in order to register the losses brought about by modernization and to keep alive the original promise of the metropolis as a place of diversity and difference. As the model for a different kind of negotiated or performed identity, Roth's stranger suggests the utopian possibility of a heterogeneous urban culture marked by continuity and change but unburdened by any of the essentializing notions often projected onto the urban topography of tradition and modernity.

Notes

1 For a biographical account of Roth's years in Berlin, see David Bronsen, *Joseph Roth: Eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974). For an exhibition catalogue published during the centennial of the author's birth, see *Joseph Roth und Berlin*, eds. Eberhard Siebert and Michael Bienert (Wiesbaden: Ludwig, 1994). On the relevance of Roth to contemporary debates, see Bienert in *Joseph Roth in Berlin: Ein Lesebuch für Spaziergänger*, ed. Michael Bienert (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1999), 12-59.

2 Joseph Roth, *Briefe 1911-1939*, ed. and intro. Hermann Kesten (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970, 165). Hereafter references to works by Roth will appear in the text in parenthetical annotation. All translations are my own.

3 On Roth's contribution to the Weimar feuilleton, see Ingeborg Sültemeyer, *Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths 1915-1926* (Vienna: Herder, 1976), 43-99. On the overdetermined role of Berlin in the Weimar feuilleton, see the excellent study by Michael Bienert, *Die eingebildete Metropole: Berlin im Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992).

4 On Roth and New Objectivity, see Frank Trommler, "Joseph Roth und die Neue Sachlichkeit," in *Joseph Roth und die Tradition*, ed. David Bronsen (Darmstadt: Agora, 1975), 277-304 and Jürgen Heizmann, *Joseph Roth und die Ästhetik der Neuen Sachlichkeit* (Heidelberg: Mattes, 1990). On the culture of surfaces in Weimar Berlin, compare the excellent study by Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces: Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000).

5 For a useful overview of these controversies, see *Berlin Provinz: Literarische Kontroversen um 1930*, ed. Jochen Meyer (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1988).

6 See Almut Todorov, "Brechungen. Joseph Roth und das Feuilleton der 'Frankfurter Zeitung'" (373-84) and Klaus Westermann, "Brot und Butter. Joseph Roth—Arbeitsbedingungen eines Journalisten" (395-405), both in *Joseph Roth: Interpretation—Kritik—Rezeption*, eds. Michael Kessler and Fritz Hackert (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990).

7 On this point, see Hui-Fang Chiao, "*Eine junge, unglückliche und zukünftige Stadt*": *Das Berlin der zwanziger Jahre in Joseph Roths Werk* (Berlin: Köster, 1994), 23-99.

8 During the late 1920s, Roth lived in apartments on Mommsenstraße and Kurfürstendamm as well as in several small residential hotels. See *Joseph Roth in Berlin: Ein Lesebuch für Spaziergänger*, 55-56.

9 This expression resonates with Kracauer's description of the cinema as an "asylum for the homeless" in *Die Angestellten: Aus dem neuesten Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 91. The book is based on a sociological study of white-collar workers conducted by Kracauer in Berlin during the year 1929.

10 On the connection between exile and urban culture, see vol. 20 of *Exilforschung—Ein Internationales Jahrbuch*, ed. Claus-Dieter Krohn et al., titled "Metropolen und Exil" (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2002).

11 The reference is to the German title of Helmut Lethen's *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994). Translated into English as *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany*, trans. Don Renau (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

12 For recent feminist contributions, see Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk: Flanerie, Literature, and Film in Weimar Culture*

(Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999) and *Women in the Metropolis: Gendered Urban Discourses of Weimar Germany*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: U of California P, 1996). On the flaneur as a literary type, also see *Flaneure, Musen, Bohemiens: Literatenleben in Berlin*, eds. Christiane Landgrede and Cornelia Kister (Berlin: Ullstein, 1998), on its ongoing appropriation to various theoretical discourses, see 70-86 and Rolf J. Goebel, *Benjamin heute: Großstadtdiskurs, Postkolonialität und Flanerie zwischen den Kulturen* (Munich: Iudicium, 2001).

13 For a poststructuralist argument that examines the work of Hilberseimer and others precisely in these terms, see K. Michael Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

14 Together with architectural critic Adolf Behne, Wagner promoted his ideas for the modernization of Berlin in *Das Neue Berlin* (1929), an important architectural journal reprinted in 1988 with a preface by Julius Posener. For historical overviews of architecture and urban planning in Weimar Berlin, see Karl-Heinz Hüter, *Architektur in Berlin 1900-1933* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1988) and Jochen Boberg, Tilman Fichter, and Eckhart Gillen, eds., *Die Metropole: Industriekultur in Berlin im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986).

15 Several critics have read his text as a critical commentary on the technological imagination and the crisis of the metropolis during the Weimar period, including Karl Prümm, "Die Stadt der Reporter und Kinogänger bei Roth, Brentano und Kracauer. Das Berlin der zwanziger Jahre im Feuilleton der 'Frankfurter Zeitung,'" in Klaus Scherpe, ed., *Die Unwirklichkeit der Städte: Großstadtdarstellungen zwischen Moderne und Postmoderne* (Rowohlt: Reinbek, 1988), 80-105, especially 80-87 and Bienert, *Die eingebildete Metropole*, 49-58.

16 The references are to Egon Jameson, *Augen auf! Streifzüge durch das Berlin der zwanziger Jahre*, ed. Walther von La Roche (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1982), 49-72, and Alfred Polgar, *Kleine Schriften*. 6 vols., ed. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, with Ulrich Weinzierl (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1982-84), vol. 1: 411.

17 In his philosophy of history, Kracauer uses the anteroom to theorize the in-between as "a Utopia of the in-between—a terra incognita in the hollows between the lands we know." In *History: The Last Things Before the Last* (New York: Oxford UP, 1969), 217.

18 Significantly, Simmel discusses the stranger in relation to the history of European Jewry. For very similar reflections on the stranger/detective inspired by *Lebensphilosophie*, compare Siegfried Kracauer, *Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 128-37. The question of spatial estrangement in Simmel and Kracauer has been discussed by Anthony Vidler, "Spaces of Passage: The Architecture of Estrangement: Simmel, Kracauer, Benjamin," in *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 2000), 65-80. An earlier version appeared as "Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Georg Simmel and Siegfried Kracauer." *New German Critique* 54 (1991): 31-45.

19 See Prümmer, "Die Stadt der Reporter."

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