

GAIA D'ELIA  
University of Rome "La Sapienza"

## Joseph Roth's Itineraries Beyond Language: "der Süden konserviert die Steine, die Fragmente, die Weltanschauungen"

### Abstract

This study examines the perception of space and the mental landscapes in Joseph Roth's travel reportages from southern France. Particular focus will be placed on the articles that Joseph Roth wrote for the "Frankfurter Zeitung" and collected in a book published posthumously, in 1956 with the title *Im mittäglichen Frankreich* and afterwards under the title *Die weißen Städte*. In this text the relationship between the real topography, the literary representation and the subjective point of view of the author, might give us a new definition of the concept of "space" and "belonging" beyond language. The aim is to analyze the representation that Joseph Roth gives us, through his articles, that builds up new spaces and is in relation with the actual place and with the topography of the individual and collective memory.

*Keywords:* spatial turn, topographical turn, collective memory, cultural identity, deterritorialization

"Das Fremde verführt also den Besucher nicht zur Selbstvergessenheit; dieser berauscht sich nicht am Pittoresken und Exotischen, er sieht das Eigene, sieht sich selber mit entfremdeten Blick. Die Reise ins Ferne bewirkt nichts anderes als die Reise ins Vergangene, die ja gleichfalls eine Reise ins Ferne ist." (Szondi 1963: 88)

Writes Peter Szondi in the afterword to Walter Benjamin's German edition of the essay's collection *Städtebilder*: what is extraneous does not lead the visitor to absent-mindedness; on the contrary, it enables him to see himself with a glance become 'other' / estranged, and adds: a journey into the 'distance' does not differ from a travel into the past. These words seem an appropriate starting point for the subject that will be examined here: the perception of space and the mental landscapes in Joseph Roth's travel reportage from southern France. Our analysis will focus on the articles that Joseph Roth wrote for the 'Frankfurter Zeitung', afterwards collected in a book which will be published posthumously in 1956 with the title *Im*

*mittäglichen Frankreich* and afterwards, *Die weißen Städte*<sup>1</sup>. In both texts, the relationship between the real topography, the literary representation of it, and the subjective point of view of the author, can give us a new definition of the concept of “space” and “belonging” that goes beyond language.

“The confrontation with the Modern becomes crucial, a way of being in the word.”<sup>2</sup> It is within a few decades – from the end of the nineteenth century until the end of First World War – that Modernity shows her face, with an at first subterranean and afterwards explosive transition that transformed the ordered world of tradition into the chaotic but vital one in which we, ultimately, still live. Modernity is in constant mutation, is “unstable”, and the culture that deals with the modern “has to come to terms with the perpetual becoming.”<sup>3</sup> The epoch that strives for ‘escaping every kind of shape’<sup>4</sup> is a ‘historical formation’ that has some specific characteristics: “phenomena and tendencies and individual attitudes in which the “historical formation” reveals herself, and in which the life that flows through it is offered to perception.”<sup>5</sup> The processes described by Simmel are the result of radical individual and collective changes and shifts that concern not only the subject but also the context in which he or she is acting. Following the analysis of the experience of the modern proposed by Marshall Berman<sup>6</sup>, concepts like culture and identity can no longer be considered certainties in front of the dissolution of political and geopolitical models, and of the disruption of thought patterns. Significant phenomena have accompanied the advent of modernity, and the author represents and describes them as experiences of fragmentation. The novelist and journalist Joseph Roth seems to be at the same time witness and actor of the complexity of those processes. In *Facing Modernity. Fragmentation, Culture and Identity in Joseph Roth's writing in the 1920s*<sup>7</sup>, Jon Hughes takes up and develops Berman's reflection, charting the effects of this fragmentation process by putting a focus on what he identifies and defines as a defensive respond. Roth's work, and especially the collection *Die weißen Städte*, becomes the clearest example of the desire to find a spatial and temporal continuity with regard to a fracture that reveals the loss of a sense of unity, wholeness, and *communitas* in a world that seems to have moved further away<sup>8</sup>.

In 1925, Joseph Roth, already established in Paris, travels to southern France on behalf of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and between September and November of that year, he publishes a series of articles that depict his travel and trace the itinerary he has done by going through those places. The author, in the book that will be published posthumously with the title *Die weißen Städte*, re-elaborates in literary form the impressions collected during his travel<sup>9</sup>. Despite the fact that the book was never published during

1 Joseph Roth (1991: 451).

2 «Il confronto con il moderno diventa decisivo, una modalità dell'essere nel mondo» Rella, Franco (2003) *Miti e figure del moderno*. Milano: Feltrinelli; 140.

3 Paolo Jedlowski (2011). Unless otherwise indicated translations are those of the author.

4 This image is often used by Georg Simmel in the essay *The Conflict in Modern Culture*; Simmel, Georg (1968) *The conflict in Modern Culture: And Other Essays*. New York: Teachers College Press.

5 Jedlowski, Paolo (2011: 20).

6 Marshall Berman (1982).

7 Jon Hughes (2006).

8 Jon Hughes (2006: 3 ff).

9 Cf. For the editorial history of *Im Mittäglichen Frankreich* and *Die weißen Städte* see Lips - Sültemeyer, Ingeborg von (1976) *Das frühwerk Joseph Roths: Studien und Texte*. Vienna/Freiburg: Herder; Lips - Sültemeyer, Ingeborg von (1991) „Joseph Roths Reiseberichte besonderer Art: „Die weißen Städte“ und „Der Antichrist““. [In:] *Germanistische Mitteilungen: Zeitschrift*

Roth's lifetime, it remains as an evidence of the weight that the theme of travel had on the author's work. *Die weißen Städte* is the reflection of how much France and the French culture meant to him on a personal *niveau*, as suggested by Hughes, and how those spaces allowed to ponder on the tensions that involved and implicated the whole European context<sup>10</sup>. In a letter of August 1925 to the editor Benno Reifenberg, Joseph Roth writes from Marseille that he is planning "ein Reisebuch durch die Seele des Schreibers, wie durch das Land, das er durchfährt. [...] Es ist im höchsten Grade dichterisch, mehr, als ein Roman."<sup>11</sup> A *Reisebuch*, therefore, that should not be read as an author's private diary but rather as "a very personal response to the towns of southern France, inspired not so much by the area itself, but by a symbolic set of antitheses"<sup>12</sup> which originated from a comparison between the landscape, the character and the cultural context of southern France with northern Europe.

Joseph Roth is here a modern writer, in the sense that the answers he is looking for in his confrontation with the contemporary world, often seem ambivalent – the result of an attempt at reorganizing and giving a new meaning to the unstable and conflictual situation of his time. The effects of such confrontation with fragmentation can also be seen in some characters from his novels, whose segmented existence mirrors the context in which they are acting and in which they live<sup>13</sup>. By taking into account the author's production from the years after the war and those following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it is possible to reconsider also the interpretation of later novels, that have been frequently associated to a rejection of the new world on behalf of a nostalgic reconstruction of the past. The dimension of the existential doubt regarding the contemporary age that surrounds him, as noted by Hughes<sup>14</sup>, seems to be far from a consolatory evocation of the past, but rather the expression of a modern awareness of questions regarding the possibility of the representation and mediation of reality through the literary medium.

To get back to the French reportage: in the introduction to *Die weißen Städte*, the author underlines the constant mutability of the world and the consequent impossibility to fix its the essence in words<sup>15</sup>. He declares himself to be unable to report what he sees, and to be limited to describing everything that

---

für deutsche Sprache, Literatur und Kultur in Wissenschaft und Praxis. Vol. 33; 3–16; Lunzer, Heinz (2016) „Wenn ich der Papst wäre...“. *Joseph Roths Texte über Avignon und andere ‚weiße Städte‘: Zur Bedeutung der Frankreich-Texte von 1925 für seine Laufbahn*. [In:] Stéphane Pesnel, Erika Tunner, Heinz Lunzer, Victoria Lunzer-Talos (eds.) *Joseph Roth. Städtebilder. Zur Poetik, Philologie und Interpretation von Stadtdarstellungen aus den 1920er und 1930er Jahren*. Berlin: Frank und Timme; 219–273.

10 Jon Hughes (2006: 141).

11 Joseph Roth (1970: 62).

12 Jon Hughes (2006: 13).

13 If we think to the essay *Juden auf Wanderschaft* or the novel, called by the author *Bericht, Flucht ohne Ende*, written in the same line, in which in different ways the segmentary existence of the individuals, in this cases Jews, is presented and thematized. Cf. Roth, Joseph (1956).

14 Cf. Jon Hughes (2006: 170–180).

15 The topic appears also in the article *Lemberg, die Stadt* published on November, 22 1924: «Man müßte die Fähigkeit haben, die Farbe, den Duft, die Dichtigkeit, die Freundlichkeit der Luft mit Worten auszudrücken; das, was man aus Mangel einer treffenden Bezeichnung mit dem wissenschaftlichen Begriff »Atmosphäre« ausdrücken muß» Roth, Joseph (1991: 285). The attempt to describe streets, squares, churches or architectural styles won't allow to reflect a true image of the place. The city is a place with thousand facets and Joseph Roth decides to focus on the details, with the aim of expressing the colour, the smell, the density of a place, its "Atmosphäre" by respecting the multiplicity of the real.

happens inside of him, everything that a specific landscape is capable of arousing. Roth seems to embody “a philosophy of observation and perception in which fluidity, movement, and interpretation are constantly emphasized”<sup>16</sup>, in which, nevertheless, the experience of ‘looking’ seems impossible to separate from the subjective point of view of the *Beobachter*<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, the observer has to recognize and acknowledge the mutability and the constant in-becoming of the context that surrounds him: “Alles Wandelbare begreift er mit offenem, aber starrem Aug’“. His is a proposal for a valorization of the observing subject and of his interior reactions, who has to penetrate in himself, and to involve others in his own personal voices instead of turning the ‘voice’ of a second into fixedness<sup>18</sup>. To confer value to instantaneous perception and let it become fixed, permanent, and absolute, seems to the author as a negation, a denial of time, of the movement, of the mutability of reality, and hence of the becoming:

ehe er's niederschreibt, ist die Welt, die er kennt, nicht mehr dieselbe. Und ehe wir ein Wort niederschreiben, hat es nicht mehr dieselbe Bedeutung. Die Begriffe, die wir kennen, decken nicht mehr die Dinge. (Joseph Roth 1991: 452–453)

In so doing, a properly personal poetic is outlined – in the way how Roth consciously faces reality and his representation. The theme of individual perception, and that of the author as mediator of his own impression seen as the medium through which to get in contact with the world, become the fundamental axes of the compositional style of *Die weißen Städte*. The emotional engagement with the Provençal landscape takes the narrator back to childhood memoirs:

Ich habe die weißen Städte so wiedergefunden, wie ich sie in den Traumen gesehn hatte. Wenn man nur die Träume seiner Kindheit findet, ist man wieder ein Kind. Das zu hoffen, hatte ich nicht gewagt. Denn unwiederbringlich weit lag die Kindheit hinter mir, durch einen Weltbrand getrennt, durch eine brennende Welt. Sie war selbst nicht mehr als ein Traum. (Roth 1991: 452–453)

The childhood dream that surfaces and becomes remembrance, evoked from the view and experience of those *Midi* spaces, allows him to rediscover an idea of belonging that goes further, gets through, exceeds an idea of belonging bound to a spatial rootedness, enabling a reconnection with what is hidden in the minds of people<sup>19</sup>.

By having the knowledge of such a method, not only a reaction to the epochal sense of fragmentation is noticeable, but also, as Hughes has observed, an attempt to “rediscover the security, wholeness, and contentment of childhood, the period which many, after the fragmenting trauma of the war, looked back on with conscious nostalgia as a period of blissful, ignorant peace.”<sup>20</sup> The childhood dimension bounded to dreams and memory surfaces in a predominant manner from the beginning of the text, and is underlined in almost every article of the collection, as though childhood and its subsequent reawakened memory

16 Jon Hughes (2006: 19).

17 Cf. « We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle *around* itself, constituting what is present to us as we are » Berger, John (1972: 9).

18 «Er verzeichnet die Stimme einer Sekunde in seiner Umgebung» Roth, Joseph (1991: 452).

19 This process in some ways recalls Walter Benjamin's *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert* in which childhood is represented as an inextricable combination of time and space, splinters of autobiographical memory evoked in order to reconnect and re-compose the individual. Cf. Benjamin, Walter (1987).

20 Jon Hughes (2006: 24).

could<sup>21</sup>, in the mind of the narrator, give access to a reconstitution of a lost wholeness. It is precisely with such a dynamical meaning of memory that it becomes possible to move through and between the categories of time and space: "Bewegung [...] ist diejenige Kategorie, die Raum und Zeit gleichermaßen konstituiert"<sup>22</sup> and allows due to experience to conceive spatiality<sup>23</sup>. Thanks to this spatial movement, the narrator is able to find and recognize childhood, his and Europe's, by feeling at home:

Hier findet man eine Kindheit, seine eigene und die Kindheit Europas. Nirgends wird man so leicht heimisch. Und selbst wer das Land verläßt, nimmt das Beste mit, das eine Heimat mitgeben kann: das Heimweh. (Roth 1991: 506)

Other crucial thematics that recur often next to the topics of memory and childhood, in *Die weißen Städte*, are that of the *Fremd* and *Fremde*, which the author links to the individuation of different characteristics encountered between North and South Europe, and that, indissolubly related to the previous ones, of the historical and spatial continuity peculiar to the *Midi*.

The writer, in the introduction to the text, recounts how, thanks to his experience in the war when he found himself in enemy's territory, he feels no longer estranged, *fremd*; he no longer feels that he is going in *die Fremde* (a concept now considered by him obsolete) even when seeing territories which he has never crossed before: "Ich fahre höchstens ins 'Neue'."<sup>24</sup> Roth is driven by the desire of seeing how it looks like 'across the fence' that for him surrounds everyone who lives in the German world. One of the differences that is possible to detect between Germany and all that lies 'across the fence', is the bond between the individuals and the 'Begriff', the nomenclature, sacred and immutable for the German culture. On the contrary, the world outside the fence is characterized by continuous transformations, a becoming that never needed a fixed categorization: "Hinter dem Zaun gewann ich mich selbst wieder" and he continues: outside I feel at home, the world across the fence turns into a free space within the naming and the concept<sup>25</sup>. What seems to become for the author a mutable and fluid belonging to 'Neue Länder', is actually closer to a belonging to time, to contemporaneity. He will write:

Ich kann in fremden Ländern zu Hause und heimisch sein, aber nicht in fremden Zeiten. Unsere wahre Heimat ist die Gegenwart. Das Jahrhundert ist unser Vaterland. (Roth 1991: 470)

To talk about *Heimat*, belonging, or national identity in connection to an author, is always problematic, as pointed out by Hughes, who often writes about the difficulties and impossibility of linking individual identity to a certain nation<sup>26</sup>. Hughes alludes to the fact that the confrontation between Germany and France which surfaces in the text, cannot be solved in the antithesis between demonising the former and 'utopising' the latter; it rather "presents a subtle, if unresolved, examination of the difficulties of identity

21 The author referring to childhood writes: «Sie war ausgelöscht aus dem Leben; verstorbene und begrabene, nicht entschwundene Jahre» (Roth, Joseph (1991: 454). Important seems to be that those years, and Joseph Roth emphasizes it, weren't vanished or slipped away: the childhood was dead and buried and was not even more than a dream.

22 Böhme Hartmut (2005: XIV).

23 Böhme Hartmut (2005: 15).

24 Böhme Hartmut (2005: 453).

25 Cf. The chapter „Hinter dem Zaun gewann ich mich selbst wieder“. Joseph Roths journalistischer Blick auf Deutschland und Europa in den Jahren seines Frankreich-Aufenthalts (1925-1939) [In:] Mayer, Dieter (2010) *Kurt Tucholsky – Joseph Roth – Walter Mehring: Beiträge zu Politik und Kultur zwischen den Weltkriegen*. Frankfurt Am Main: Lang; 293–340.

26 Cf. Hughes Jon (2006: 14-61).

formation in the contemporary world, and is marked by a pronounced desire for the wholeness that a genuine community can provide.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, what distinguishes France from northern Europe and especially Germany, is the difference between the two ways of thinking, which can be recognised in the fear against ambivalence and all that is undefinable, typical of the German world and, by contrast, in the embodiment of its contraries that defines France:

Hinter dem Zaun sind Ferien. Süße, lange Sommerferien. Was ich sage, nimmt man nicht wörtlich. Was ich verschweige, ist gehört worden. Mein Wort ist noch lange kein Bekenntnis. Meine Lüge noch lange keine Charakterlosigkeit. Mein Schweigen ist nicht rätselhaft. Jeder versteht es. Es ist, als zweifelte man an meiner Pünktlichkeit nicht, obwohl meine Uhr falsch geht. Man schließt nicht aus der Eigenschaft eines meiner Attribute auf meine Eigenschaften. Niemand reguliert meinen Tag. (Roth 1991: 454)

In France, the author encounters the possibility of individual self-expression that does not need to be part of a system, and of living ambiguously in a 'moving time' without feeling such a dimension as a rupture of balance.

The reference to this meridional capability characterized by living in accord with this mutability, returns in the representation of southern Europe as a place in which the traces and the stratifications of time are more easily preserved, experienced, and lived, because "der Süden konserviert die Steine, die Fragmente, die Weltanschauungen."<sup>28</sup>

One of the ways to retrace a leading thread between fragmentation and the attempt to a recomposition of the wholeness, has to do, as we have already said, with the movement of the self – in the sense of a movement which takes place simultaneously in space and time. In the white cities, the narrator seems to recognize the possibility of a different way of being in the world, on an individual and cultural level, that does not move forward through traumatic ruptures between past, present and future<sup>29</sup>. In this sense, the cities of southern France become for the author the symbol of those processes of cancellation of spatial and temporal borders, of a mixture between individualities and transformation. With regard to Marseille, Roth writes: "die Entwicklung und das Werden sind keine abstrakten Begriffe mehr. Man sieht den Fuß der Geschichte und zählt ihre Schritte."<sup>30</sup> The becoming and development are not abstract concepts, and time is a recognizable element preserved in space. Describing the city of Vienne and her relationship with the notion of time, the author understands that the present of the city is actually her past<sup>31</sup>. While in other cities the present contains 'a tomorrow' and is possible to see how much the 'yesterday' is different from the 'other day', in Vienne "Was alt, was älter war, konnte ich an keinem Neuen messen."<sup>32</sup> Despite the absence of a set of measurements to be placed in a contemporary spatial dimension, in describing the architecture and its styles, Roth lays his eyes on a temple with a closed door that preserves "das Leere, das Vergangene. Der Tempel enthält dasjenige, dass ich draußen fühlen kann

27 Jon Hughes (2005: 127).

28 Joseph Roth (1991: 487).

29 Cf. Marco Rispoli (2020: 137–150).

30 Joseph Roth (1991: 499).

31 «In Vienne aber war die Gegenwart eine Vergangenheit. [...] Alles Vergangene begriff ich mit einem gleichmäßigen liebenden Aug'» Joseph Roth (1991: 465).

32 *Ibidem*.

und drinnen nicht entdecken würde. Er enthält das Warten.”<sup>33</sup> The wait contained in the temple is the result of an architecture thought and experienced under the mark of continuity; the antique buildings and the re-use of their stones are perceived as a movement without fractures, without borders: “Der Stein fließt wie die Stunde.”<sup>34</sup>

The topic of the city is constantly linked to temporality and to the confrontation with this dimension – so much that, once he entered the town and had witnessed the inextricability of the roads and narrow streets, the narrator has the feeling that he has arrived in a foreign city and in a foreign century. In Tournon, it is possible to perceive the consciousness of time: “Man kann mit wachen Sinnen, am lichten Tag, aus seiner eigenen Zeit hinausfallen und zwischen den Jahrhunderten der Geschichte herumirren, als wäre die Zeit ein Raum, als wäre eine Epoche ein Land.”<sup>35</sup> He attributes this consciousness of the flowing continuity of time also to the young inhabitants of the city. The value that he attributes to this dimension, which can be read in contrast to the nomadic, estranging, and fragmentary experience proper to the modern individual, is also great.

Thus, it is not superfluous to reiterate how the atmosphere of the white cities derives from the continuity with which those spaces and time are lived, a path without ruptures and fragmentation which includes both dimensions, that tries a recompositional route of a wholeness of identity – the key of his research<sup>36</sup>. All of this appears even clearer and more explicit in the description of the coexistence of the antique and the new, in the reportage from Nîmes and Arles, where the opening of an open-air cinema takes place in an ancient Roman arena. This experience arouses in Roth the hope that the new man of tomorrow will be able to preserve a vital relationship with Europe's childhood, and therefore his own: it is once again stressed the superposition of personal and continental destinies, and the deep need to put together the scattered fragments of the individual stories and of an entire epoch. A new man should be able to put value on continuity as the only way for surviving, as ‘in the future there is the past’, and the antiquity can rush out of sight but not from ‘our blood’: “Im Kommenden ist das Vergangene. Wir können die Antike aus unsern Augen, aber nicht aus unserm Blut verlieren.”<sup>37</sup> What Roth is suggesting for history seems to be valid also for what concerns the preservation of an identitarian nucleus identified, as mentioned before, not by the immutability of the being, but by continuity – a survival aim that seems to Roth necessary if not, in fact, essential.

As had been the case in Tournon, also in the perception of space in Marseille one can feel, this time through the hearing, the movement of time and history: everyone ‘beats the time of the city’. In this city, concepts like development and becoming are not abstract any more: ‘one can see the foot of History

---

33 Joseph Roth (1991: 466).

34 *Ibidem*.

35 Joseph Roth (1991: 469).

36 In Avignon, ‘the whitest city’, the author questions on the nature, on the temporal ‘quality’, medieval or roman, and on the geographical ‘quality’, Oriental or European, of the city by answering that the city is none of those despite being all this together: «Ist das eine mittelalterliche, ist das eine römische Stadt? Ist sie orientalisches oder europäisches? Sie ist nichts von alledem und alles zusammen. Sie ist eine katholische Stadt» Joseph Roth (1991: 474). Joseph Roth will identify this peculiarity with the cosmopolitan Catholic Church, in his opinion capable of merging and keeping together traditions and styles.

37 Joseph Roth (1991: 489).

and count its steps.<sup>38</sup> Everyone has his own homeland under their soles when going to Marseille, and what they all have in common is the sea: the city collects diversities and contradictions in herself, and, as Katharina Krčal has noted, the oppositions and antithesis that characterizes the city, such as being at the same time “New York and Singapore, Hamburg and Calcutta, Alexandria and Port Arthur, San Francisco and Odessa”<sup>39</sup>, has to be read not in a dynamic of divergence, but as a result of mutability, dynamism, and her being in perpetual motion.<sup>40</sup> In Marseille, writes Roth, all that seemed immutable falls apart, but what follows is a recomposition process: this process is characterized by continuity:

Hier löst sich alles scheinbar Bleibende auf. Hier schließt es sich zusammen. Hier ist fortwährender Aufbau und Zerstörung. Keine Zeit, keine Macht, kein Glaube, kein Begriff ist hier ewig. Was nenn' ich Fremde? Die Fremde ist nah. Was nenn' ich Nähe? Die Welle trägt es fort. Was ist das Jetzt? Schon ist es vergangen. (Roth 1991: 509)

The city is accordingly identified as the expression of becoming, in constant change:

Während ich dies schreibe, sieht Marseille schon anders aus. Und was ich in tausend Worten berichte, ist ein kleiner Tropfen aus dem Meer des Geschehens, mit dem freien Aug' nicht zu sehn, zitternd auf der dünnen Spitze meiner Feder. (Roth 1991: 502)

“Individuals behave in distinctive ways when they feel cut off from the flow of time, excessively attached to the past, isolated in the present, without a future, or rushing towards one”<sup>41</sup>, writes Stephen Kern referring to the multiple postures that individuals can assume with respect to what has been previously defined the ‘fragmentation of the modern.’ In *Die weißen Städte*, it emerges how in France the past is contained and inscribed in the places: the white cities therefore represent for the author the ideal in which the temporal dimension is added to a heterogeneous spatial structure. They live in continuity with their past and demonstrate this through mixing and transforming their own being in time, which, according to Roth, is something missing to the other occidental spaces and to the centre-oriental European space, his area of origin.

Isolated from the white cities, the mental and cultural process, with its repetitiveness, is connected to the need to overcome boundaries, to go ‘across the fence’, using Roth’s terminology, and to imagine and represent a new way of getting in touch and stand up to the contemporary beyond each single language, across the geographical spaces, by crossing time and space’s borders, by stepping over the limits of architectural language. What he is looking for is not only a new man, but a new way of establishing a dynamic connection between persons, stories, places, and contexts.

In the *Invisible Cities* of Italo Calvino, when Marco Polo describes Zaira, the city “of high bastions”, to Kublai Kan, he says:

I could tell you how many steps make up the streets rising like stairways, and the degree of the arcades’ curves, and what kind of zinc scales cover the roofs; but I already know this would be the same as telling you nothing. The city does not consist of this, but of relationships between the measurements of its space and the events of its past [...]. (Italo Calvino 1974: 10)

---

38 Joseph Roth (1991: 499).

39 Joseph Roth (1991: 498).

40 Katharina Krčal (2016: 68).

41 Stephen Kern (1983: 3).



The essence of a city is not located in its looks, but rather at the intersection of space and time. Indeed, Bertrand Westphal reminds us that the present time of a space, when we talk about perception, has to be related with his past according to a “stratigraphic logic”: “Space is located at the intersection of the moment and duration; its apparent surface rests on the strata of compacted time arranged over an extended duration and reactivated at any time” (Bertrand Westphal 2011: 137).

## References

### Primary Sources

- Roth, Joseph (1956) *Werke*. [In:] Hermann Kesten's edition of Joseph Roth's works. Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.
- Roth, Joseph (1970) *Briefe 1911–1939*. [In:] Hermann Kesten's edition of Joseph Roth's works. Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.
- Roth, Joseph (1991) *Das journalistische Werk 1924–1928*. [In:] Klaus Westermann's edition of Joseph Roth's works. Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

### Secondary Literature

- Benjamin, Walter (1963) *Städtebilder*. [In:] Peter Szondi's edition of Walter Benjamin's *Städtebilder*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Benjamin, Walter (1987) *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp
- Berger, John (1972) *Ways of seeing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Berman, Marshall (1982) *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air. The Experience of Modernity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Böhme, Hartmut (ed.) (2005) *Topographien der Literatur. Deutsche Literatur im transnationalen Kontext*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.
- Calvino, Italo (1974) *Invisible Cities*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Hughes, Jon (2005) “Joseph Roth in France: Re-Assessing ‘Die weißen Städte.’” [In:] *Austrian Studies*, vol.13; 126–141.
- Hughes, Jon (2006) *Facing Modernity. Fragmentation, Culture and Identity in Joseph Roth's writing in the 1920s*. Leeds: Maney Publishing.
- Jedlowski, Paolo (2011) “Introduzione.” [In:] Georg Simmel *Le metropoli e la vita dello spirito*. Roma: Armando Editore; 7–32.
- Kern, Stephen (1983) *The Culture of Time and Space. 1880–1918*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Krčal, Katharina (2016) “Ein kleiner Tropfen aus dem Meer des Geschehens. Marseille Beschreibungen als ästhetische Reflexionstexte bei Joseph Roth und Siegfried Krakauer.” [In:] Stéphane Pesnel, Erika Tunner, Heinz Lunzer, Victoria Lunzer-Talos (eds.) *Joseph Roth. Städtebilder. Zur Poetik, Philologie und Interpretation von Stadtdarstellungen aus den 1920er und 1930er Jahren*. Berlin: Frank und Timme; 61–82.
- Lunzer, Heinz (2016) “‘Wenn ich der Papst wäre...’ . Joseph Roths Texte über Avignon und andere ‘weiße Städte’: Zur Bedeutung der Frankreich-Texte von 1925 für seine Laufbahn.” [In:] Stéphane Pesnel,

- Erika Tunner, Heinz Lunzer, Victoria Lunzer-Talos (eds.) *Joseph Roth. Städtebilder. Zur Poetik, Philologie und Interpretation von Stadtdarstellungen aus den 1920er und 1930er Jahren*. Berlin: Frank und Timme; 219–273.
- Mayer, Dieter (2010) *Kurt Tucholsky - Joseph Roth - Walter Mehring: Beiträge zu Politik und Kultur zwischen den Weltkriegen*. Frankfurt Am Main: Lang.
- Rella, Franco (2003) *Miti e figure del moderno*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Rispoli, Marco (2020) “‘Im Kommenden ist das Vergangene.’ Über Die weißen Städte von Joseph Roth.” [In:] *Cultura tedesca*, vol. 58; 137–150.
- Simmel, Georg (1968) *The conflict in Modern Culture: And Other Essays*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lips-Sültemeyer, Ingeborg von (1976) *Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths: Studien und Texte*. Vienna/Freiburg: Herder.
- Lips-Sültemeyer, Ingeborg von (1991) “Joseph Roths Reiseberichte besonderer Art: ‘Die weißen Städte’ und ‘Der Antichrist.’” [In:] *Germanistische Mitteilungen: Zeitschrift für deutsche Sprache, Literatur und Kultur in Wissenschaft und Praxis*. vol. 33; 3–16.
- Szondi, Peter (1963) “Nachwort.” [In:] Walter Benjamin *Städtebilder*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; 79–99.
- Westphal, Bertrand (2011) *Geocriticism. Real and Fictional Spaces*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.