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MFS Modern Fiction Studies, Volume 71, Number 3, Fall 2025, pp.  
521-547 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2025.a971368>



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# The Habsburg Myth and the Production of Space in Joseph Roth's *Job: The Story of a Simple Man*

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Ariel Pridan

**Abstract:** This essay delves into the ideological mechanisms of spatial production in Joseph Roth's *Job: The Story of a Simple Man*. Through the narrative of the Singer family's migration from a Russian shtetl to New York, the novel unfolds a spatial dialectic reflecting Roth's political imagination as a former subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. An ideological analysis of the novel's spatial imagery reveals Roth's contribution to the Habsburg Myth without succumbing to nostalgic sentiments, allowing him to use space to explore future political alternatives that inherit the Habsburg Empire's supranational legacy.

## An Austro-Hungarian Subject

Joseph Roth believed in the potential of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's supranational structure to liberate both individuals and spaces from the monolithic affiliations of the nation-state. Born into a Jewish family in Galician Brody—a cosmopolitan, multiethnic city on the Austro-Hungarian Empire's eastern edge—Roth developed

a complex identity that resisted the fixed categories of modern nation-states.<sup>1</sup> Within the culturally tolerant ambiance of Brody, the local Jewish community discerned the advantages of belonging to a multicultural empire, which afforded them autonomous and communal rights. Roth's assertion that Galician Jews "speak several languages, are themselves the product of several generations of mixed marriages, and fatherland for them is whichever country happens to conscript them" (*Wandering* 15), aligns with Larry Wolff's perspective on multinational Galicia as a "transcendent political conception, encouraging the possibility of transnational convergence" (278) and representing "multinational coexistence premised upon the distinctive persistence of national differences." The linguistic, ethnic, national, and cultural diversity of Brody made it a cosmopolitan hub, marking Roth's first exposure to a multinational urban environment that deeply influenced his later writings. As nationalist movements gained momentum, Galicia experienced a surge in chauvinism and antisemitism, prompting the imperial government to intervene.<sup>2</sup> Post-empire collapse, Brody, like other regions of the Habsburg Monarchy, transitioned from a cosmopolitan city to a city within a nation-state—initially in Poland and later in Ukraine. Roth perceived this shift as a profound internal upheaval, leaving him with a lasting sense of homelessness. In an age that idealized the nation-state, Roth saw nationalism as incompatible with European humanism, favoring local patriotism, regionalism, and multiculturalism over the territorial rigidity of a monolithic national identity.

### The Habsburg Myth

This essay aims to contribute to the understanding of Roth's literary corpus by examining the ideological role of spatial production in his texts. Such a spatial perspective not only offers further insights into Roth's oeuvre as a site of spatial production but also enriches the expanding body of scholarship emphasizing space as an analytical category for sociological, philosophical, geographical, and historical investigations. Emerging during the 1960s and 1970s "spatial turn," this scholarship challenged the traditional prioritization of time over space in the humanities and social sciences, reconceptualizing space not as a mere container of events but as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by ideological forces.<sup>3</sup>

While space plays a significant role in Roth's works, it remains a relatively underexplored theme in the scholarship surrounding his writing. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that the mechanisms

of spatial production are integral to Roth's efforts in upholding the legacy of the Habsburg Empire and envisioning the potential for recreating similar supranational political models even in its absence. Roth's political imagination and his endeavors to reevaluate notions of citizenship and belonging are notably reflected in spatial dimensions. Space plays a significant role in Roth's intellectual and geographical exploration of political enclaves that defy the conventional logic of the nation-state. Specifically, urban space and the discourse of urban modernization significantly shaped Roth's endeavor. For Roth, the European metropolises where he journeyed throughout his peripatetic life symbolize the potential—or absence—of a utopian horizon inspired by the imperial supranational diversified space.

The multinational ideal that Roth nurtures is primarily rooted in the ideological mechanism responsible for the creation of the Habsburg Myth. Claudio Magris contends that Roth's writings, like those of many Austro-Hungarian authors, helped shape and perpetuate a mythic image of the empire as a multinational entity—an image that continued to be reimagined and retold even long after the empire had ceased to exist as a political reality.

The Habsburg Myth played a pivotal role in cultivating allegiance to the imperial system and legitimizing its political and cultural authority. This myth enabled subjects of the empire to perceive it as a functioning and harmonious entity, despite the need for continuous suppression of internal forces that threatened the empire's supranational status quo.<sup>4</sup> In the post-imperial era, the Habsburg Myth took on a primarily sentimental role, evoking nostalgia and mourning for the lost possibilities of imperial unity and “nonnational loyalty” (Salvatore 94).

Roth's literature intricately intertwines with the cultural discourse that upholds the Habsburg Myth. Though Roth saw the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as traumatic, his literary treatment of space resists nostalgic indulgence and challenges the common portrayal of him as a writer unable to come to terms with the empire's dissolution.<sup>5</sup> His spatial production unveils a multifaceted stance that defies facile categorization as either an unequivocal endorsement or outright critique of the imperial order. In *Job: The Story of A Simple Man*, Roth portrays a nostalgic protagonist, laying bare the underlying mechanism of myth-making responsible for encoding the Habsburg ideal within spatial production. Consequently, his text possesses the capacity to engender spatial semiotics and politics that interrogate, rather than passively duplicate, the prevailing ideological underpinnings and dominant spatial paradigms associated with the Habsburg Myth.<sup>6</sup>

Roth's contribution to the Habsburg Myth does not stem from a reactionary stance confined to an ahistorical phase; rather, Roth seeks to reassess the parameters of modernity, challenge the unquestioned dominance of the nation, and foster an ethos envisioning a future characterized by multiculturalism, multilingualism, and ethnic diversity in Europe. More broadly, Roth's critique of the imperial past provides him with a radical postnational blueprint that envisions a markedly divergent future for Europe.<sup>7</sup> His engagement with the Habsburg Myth represents a concerted effort to reassess the contours of modernity and challenge the primacy of the nation-state, as well as to advocate for a future characterized by a vibrant multicultural, multilingual, and ethnically diverse European community. This anticipated future, spatially manifested alongside other political possibilities that Roth rejects and criticizes, is central to my reading of his novel.

### **Spatial Dialectics and the Production of Space**

At *Job's* epicenter stands Mendel Singer, a poor Russian Jewish teacher, who lives with his wife, Deborah, and their four children in Zuchnow, Russia. The family faces upheaval when Menuchim, the fourth son, is born with severe physical anomalies and epilepsy. This event triggers a series of misfortunes akin to the biblical trials of Job. In desperation, Deborah seeks help from a Hasidic rabbi, who predicts Menuchim's eventual cure but also warns the family against abandoning Menuchim. The family's challenges intensify as Shemariah and Jonas, the older sons, are drafted into the Russian army. While Jonas willingly serves, Shemariah struggles. Deborah helps Shemariah escape to America, where he becomes "Sam," a successful businessman, and facilitates the family's migration. Initially opposed to Sam's immigration, Mendel changes his mind after learning of his daughter Miriam's relationships with non-Jews. Menuchim is entrusted to a local Jewish family, and Mendel and Deborah, along with Miriam, immigrate to America.

In Manhattan's Lower East Side, Mendel contemplates returning to Eastern Europe while his children embrace modern urban lifestyles. The family's trials persist in America: Miriam's relationships with non-Jewish men result in her mental breakdown and eventual institutionalization, and with the onset of World War I, the family loses contact with Menuchim. Additionally, Mendel and Deborah's two other sons perish—Jonas in the Russian army and Shemariah in the American army. On hearing about Shemariah's death, Deborah suc-

cumbs to grief, leaving Mendel alone with Miriam. Although America seemingly “took” Mendel’s family away, an unexpected opportunity arises for a reunion with Menuchim. In a miraculous revelation on Passover, Menuchim, whose musical pursuits brought him to New York City, reveals that compassionate medical treatment enabled his full recovery, and he has since become a successful musician known as Alexei Kossak.<sup>8</sup> The novel concludes with Menuchim assuring his father that he will arrange medical care for Miriam and expressing hope for their eventual return to Europe.

At first, New York seems to embody the promise of a brighter future for Mendel’s family. In the early twentieth century, the novel’s timeframe, many Eastern European Jews viewed America as an aspirational destination, believing that “A Jew can wish for nothing better than to reach America” (*Job* 102). Yet Roth himself never set foot in America. Even though America could have served as an escape from Nazi Germany, he chose to remain in Europe. Nevertheless, New York plays a prominent role in Roth’s journalistic and literary texts. In Roth’s critical spatio-political perspective, New York and Berlin are synonymically portrayed as symbolizing the looming evils he identified in Europe. He employs the terms “Americanization” and the locative signifier “New York” to symbolize troubling manifestations of modernization, decline, and the disintegration of Berlin.<sup>9</sup> Despite holding allure as promises of unlimited opportunities, Roth deemed New York and Berlin as unsatisfactory alternatives to the lost paradise of the supranational empire he admired. The trends of Americanization in post-World War I Berlin, according to Roth, transformed the city into a version of Western modernity characterized by alienation, hyper-civilization, and deceptive promises of liberal and capitalist salvation. His critique of America and New York was not solely aimed at American culture but against what America represented for him—a vulgar, superficial form of multiculturalism that obsessively races toward the future.

*Job* offers Roth’s most explicit and consequential literary and intellectual investigation of the American metropolis. Yet the novel’s spatial exploration extends beyond Roth’s rejection of American urban space; it involves a dialectical juxtaposition of two spaces—Zuchnow and New York—as concrete and metaphorical representations of distinct social and political orders. Life in the bustling metropolis is depicted as a fall from the grace of the natural and expansive spaces of Eastern Europe, with the rural Eastern European space serving as an antithesis to the bustling urbanity of New York.

The novel is divided into two parts: the first part portrays the family’s life in the Russian shtetl of Zuchnow, while the second part

depicts their settling in New York. This spatial dichotomy reveals irreconcilable gaps between the world Mendel leaves in Eastern Europe and his present in New York. More broadly, this structure reflects Roth's non-transformative experience transitioning from the imperial order to a world governed by nation-states. Despite predating the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Singer family's migration and the chaotic depictions of city life resonate with the disintegration of certainties associated with the Habsburg monarchy.

Roth's portrayal of American urban space in contrast to Eastern European rural space reflects his political imagination as a former imperial subject, shaping literary spaces that correspond to two political possibilities: one linked to the Habsburg Empire and the other to the modern nation-state. Through the spatial contrast positioned at the heart of the novel, Roth depicts urban life in the American metropolis as one built on segregation and homogenization, akin to what he observed in modern nation-states. *Job* thus engages in a literary production of space that goes beyond being a mere container for characters' lives. Although the spaces depicted in the novel are shaped by physical and natural elements, they are not autonomous objects, detached from social systems and complex ideological mechanisms. Instead, considering Henri Lefebvre's famous assertion that "(social) space is a (social) product" (26), they emerge as products of the ideological mechanism underlying the Habsburg Myth and function as spatial correlatives of distinct political entities and social orders. As W. J. T. Mitchell posits, depictions of landscapes function as ideological constructs that shape social and political identities. Consequently, an ideological analysis of the novel's rural and urban landscapes allows for their examination as contrasting forms of political discourse. At the same time, this analysis reveals that Roth ultimately undermines the ideological mechanism that solidifies spatial representations into distinct binary oppositions. Roth's critique of the Habsburg Myth and his exploration of urban existence signify the potential for a future political collectivity that transcends any establishment of disparate and dichotomous geographical systems.<sup>10</sup>

### The Spatialization of the Habsburg Myth

The novel's first part translates the abstract ideal of the Habsburg Myth into tangible spatial depictions. Roland Barthes argues that myth naturalizes ideological meanings, aiming to "suppress the determining weight of history" (Barthes 51) and to present these meanings as timeless and self-evident rather than historically contingent. The

transformation of history into nature, a fundamental characteristic of mythological manipulation according to Barthes, finds embodiment in *Job* through depictions of Eastern European space as empty and exposed nature. Russian rural life is depicted through snow-covered plains and barren lands, conveying landscapes shaped by nature with minimal human intervention: "On the right the swamps, with scattered silver willows, stretched for many versts. On the left the fields lay under opalescent veils" (*Job* 69). While there are railway tracks and houses in this space, human presence leaves no distinct mark, preserving the area's vital quality and internal rhythm. Contrary to New York's urban cacophony, European nature evokes a sensorial harmony of a "million crickets" (55), forming a "whispering choir of the night. Otherwise, no voice disturbed them." The emptiness of this space from dominant human presence, coupled with the focus on natural landscape, creates a spatial illusion of neutrality.

In contrast to the artificial topography and built environment of New York, the boundaries of European space are natural and expansive: "The train ran smoothly through the flat land like a sleigh over snow. The fields lay in the windows" (34); "Flat was the land, the starry horizon drew a perfect deep blue circle around it, broken only in the northeast by a bright streak, like a blue ring with a setting of silver. They smelled the distant dampness of the swamps that spread out in the west and the slow wind that carried it over" (55). The flat landscape unfolds into an open panorama, providing visibility and accessibility to the observer's eye. The depiction of nature as an untouched space, free from human intervention, gives rise to what Lefebvre termed an "illusion of transparency" (287). This illusion creates a sense of "spatial innocence," suggesting that the exposed environment is natural, stable, and devoid of any unknown substance or mystery. This "spatial innocence" ideologically masks space's active construction and neutralizes its inherent human conflicts. Roth utilizes nearly untouched natural landscapes to underscore that Eastern European space is not exclusive to any particular social or ethnic group. The Russian peasants walk on the snowy plains "as in a home" (Roth, *Job* 39). The snow on their broad shoulders is likened to "thick branches," portraying them as integral parts of the natural landscape. A similar blurring of boundaries between humans and nature applies to local Jews, who see the distant forest described as "black and silent like them" (67). Assigning nature's images to both Jews and non-Jews conveys the heterogeneous affinity of different human groups to a common living space.

The Habsburg Myth maintains that the ascent of nation-states confined imperial subjects to specific territories, depriving them of a borderless existence. Roth's portrayal of European space as a pseudo-imperial realm is mirrored in its inhuman, natural demarcation lines, described as "the starry horizon" (55) and the "distant dampness of the swamps that spread out in the west." Other descriptions of snow-covered flat fields present a monochromatic space devoid of territorial markers or distinct features. Whereas American urban space is portrayed through confined interior settings and constrained built spaces, European space blurs interior and exterior boundaries and eradicates the distance between human and nature: "All the stars of the sky stood there, near and alive" (79).

In the early chapters of the novel, the Eastern European landscape serves as a neutral and inclusive realm, devoid of specific territorial demarcations and not tied to any particular group. This environment facilitates interactions between Jews and non-Jews. In this expansive space, Mendel experiences an unmediated and close encounter with the Russian peasant, Sameshkin:

Mendel Singer was silent. He was sitting on the roadside next to Sameshkin. For the first time in his life Mendel sat on the naked earth, in the middle of the wild night, next to a peasant.

...

"Do you see how beautiful the country is?" asked Sameshkin. . . . [Mendel] felt suddenly very light, he could comprehend everything, the night freed him from prejudices. He even snuggled up to Sameshkin, as to a brother.

"Everything is possible," he repeated

...

Suddenly Mendel began to sob. Mendel wept, in the middle of the strange night, next to Sameshkin.

The peasant pressed his fists against his eyes, because he felt that he too would weep.

Then he put his arms around Mendel's thin shoulders and said softly: "Sleep, dear Jew, sleep well." (88–89)

Sameshkin and Mendel's fascination with nature and their emotional breakthrough transpires within the open rural space. "The naked earth" and "the wild night" foster closeness and dissolve Mendel's "prejudices." The characters' joint connection to this open space creates the illusion of a neutral, inclusive public realm, immortalized as "an Arcadian space of felicitous coexistence of peoples, cultures, languages, and faiths at the peripheries of the empire" (Bialasiewicz 11). European nature in the novel thus reflects an ideological attempt

to echo the political and mythical perception of the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a facilitator of spatial coexistence and egalitarian civic sphere: a cultural meeting ground offering an alternative to a political organization based on national divisions and ethno-religious walls of separation.<sup>11</sup>

Despite adhering to spatial representations linked to the mythical Habsburg narrative, Roth avoids uncritical idealization and spatial reification. Some depictions of European space can be seen as challenging the exclusivity of the Habsburg mythical mechanism and expressing a critical, dialectical spatial perception that questions binary and static spatial oppositions. While Roth attributes moral and existential superiority to European space, this superiority does not rigidly bind subjects to this space. In the novel's first part, Roth describes the shtetl's Jews gathering for a collective prayer during the month of Av:

They hastened, silent and black, in disorderly little groups, behind the houses, saw in the distance the forest, which was black and silent like them, but eternal in its rooted persistence . . . They looked to the sky and sought the curved silver of the new heavenly body that today was born once again as on the day of its creation. . . . Alien to them was the earth on which they stood, hostile the forest, which stared back at them, spiteful the yapping of the dogs, whose mistrustful ears they had awakened, and familiar only the moon, which was born today in this world as in the land of the fathers, and the Lord, who was everywhere watching over, at home and in exile. (*Job* 67–68)

This portrayal encapsulates a nuanced interplay of belonging and non-belonging, proximity and distance, familiarity and foreignness. The Jewish affinity to space does not assert an unequivocal claim of ownership; rather, it conveys an ambivalent sense of detachment and alienation.

By addressing space in temporal terms of eternity, Roth highlights the transhistorical time that characterizes Jewish existence. Roth underscores how his Jewish characters feel an eternal connection to God, which transcends specific concrete spaces and places ("this world as in the land of the fathers"). These depictions align with Jewish theological sources, which consider the Jewish relationship to space as a corollary to the Jewish relationship to time.<sup>12</sup> As Abraham Joshua Heschel emphasizes in *The Sabbath*, "Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time" (8). According to Heschel, in contrast to the spatial dominance of the modern secular world, where "we are all infatuated with the splendor of space, with

the grandeur of things of space" (5), God primarily reveals Himself through events unfolding in time, making it a central category in Jewish cosmology. Roth thus describes a Jewish existence where divine presence transcends various spatial typologies and is measured through eternal temporality and the recurrence of fixed dates in the Jewish calendar. In contrast to modern conceptions of nationhood that emphasize territorial spatiality as a central foundation for the historical preservation of a people, Roth's portrayal expresses the importance of time as a foundation for Jewish collectivity and emphasizes its significance over attachment to any specific locality.

Unlike other ethnic groups in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jews related to space not through ownership but through mere presence within it. The narrator's reference to God overseeing everywhere and the mention of the moon in Europe being "as in the land of the fathers" align with Roth's celebration of the Jewish nomadic ethos, resisting territorial and ex-territorial attachments. Roth's emphasis on Jewish spiritual elation and closeness to God, despite being in the diaspora, undermines both the hierarchical religious emphasis on the sacred connection of Jews to the Land of Israel ("The Promised Land") and Zionist discourse's rejection of the diaspora as a debased place opposed to Jewish sovereign territory.<sup>13</sup> The portrayal maintains a complex, ambivalent, and dialectical relationship with European space, preventing its reduction to a mere platform for anchoring the Jewish subject. While the European space differs from the American metropolis in its natural landscapes, it is not idealized as a Garden of Eden. The personification of the forest as "hostile" and "breathing gloom" highlights its mysterious and ominous qualities, defying attempts to conceptualize the Jewish connection to space in terms of territoriality and ownership and possibly alluding to concerns for the fate of European Jewry in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

After Mendel's emigration to America, Eastern European space is portrayed from his nostalgic perspective, creating a distinct spatial image compared to the one presented in the first part of the novel. Linda Hutcheon argues that nostalgic temporality involves a "structural doubling-up of two different times: an inadequate present and an idealized past" (198). As a nostalgic subject, Mendel struggles to embrace the American present, finding it lacking in providing a sense of belonging comparable to his home in the past. He remains confined to memories largely imagined, nourished by his present emotional state, expressing "a longing for a 'during,' a 'present' that may never have been there" (Schlipphacke 2). In the present of the novel's second part, Mendel primarily reconstructs the past through

images and visuals of the Eastern European space as they arise in his memory. Through these representations, Mendel creates a cognitive map that provides him with a sense of belonging and compensates for the alienation he feels in America. In New York, "Mendel remembered the bright starry nights at home, the deep blue of the widely spanning sky, the gently curved sickle of the moon, the dark rustle of the pines in the forest, the voices of the crickets and frogs" (Roth, *Job* 133). Interestingly, these idyllic descriptions of European space are conveyed in the novel's second part from Mendel's retrospective point of view when he reminisces about the space he left behind. Yet it is the very same space that was described in the first part of the novel—directly by the narrator—through dark imagery and an ominous tone: the dark spots on the earth resemble "burnt coals" (55), the air is enveloped with the scent of "the distant dampness of the swamps," and the forest is depicted as "hostile" (68).

Imprisoned in memories of the past, Mendel functions as a nostalgic mythmaker. As the narrator reveals in the novel's first part, Mendel's relationship with the surrounding space is often marked by fear: "Occasionally the dogs howled and frightened Mendel. . . . Though he was scarcely five minutes away from the houses of the little town, he felt infinitely far from the inhabited world of the Jews, inexpressibly alone, threatened by dangers and yet incapable of going back" (69). However, in the novel's second part, as Mendel finds himself in America, the European landscape undergoes a transformation in his thoughts, shedding the negative connotations and ambivalence that were associated with it in the past. After Mendel migrates to New York, European nature becomes an exemplar of everything that the modern metropolis fails to be. Only when he is in the city, surrounded by diminished versions of nature—"the carrots decreased, the eggs became hollow, the potatoes frozen, the soups watery, the carp thin and the pike short, the ducks meager, the geese tough, and the chickens nothing" (11)—does Mendel create in his consciousness the European space as a picturesque pastoral image.<sup>14</sup>

The portrayal of the European space in the novel's second part deepens the contrast between the lived space (the American city) and the space reconstructed in memory (the Eastern European countryside). As the novel unfolds, myth and memory mutually influence each other: the idealization and mythicization of "Galicia" become possible only when Roth removes Mendel from it. The geographical and temporal distancing of Galicia from the remembering subject thus allows for the "sublimation of an entire society into a picturesque, safe, and orderly fairy-tale world" (Magris qtd. in Bialasiewicz, *Galicia*

164). In this way, "Galicia" is produced by Mendel's remembrance as a space characterized by natural landscapes with a timeless and ahistorical quality, manifesting the same mechanism of representation and ideals that form the Habsburg Myth.

### Urban Discourse and the Fictional Status of New York

*Job* underscores the spatio-political status of New York by linking it with a mode of linguistic signification characterized by monolithic and homogeneous features. Thinkers from the early twentieth century, such as Walter Benjamin and Ludwig Wittgenstein, elucidated the inherent connection between the modern metropolis and diverse forms of linguistic communication. More specifically, the intimate connection between the city and multilingualism played a central role in the cultivation of the Habsburg ideal. Despite New York's cosmopolitan identity as an immigrant hub, which established the historical and material groundwork for multilingualism, Roth's novel eradicates all traces of this existence.

Mendel's acculturation in New York is depicted through his embrace and absorption of mechanisms of signification, which aim to effectively organize cultural occurrences in a definitive and lucid manner. On commencing the second part of the novel, the narrator asserts that Mendel felt "at home in New York after a few months" (Roth, *Job* 117), explaining that:

He already knew that "old chap" meant father in American and "old fool" mother, or the other way around. . . . He knew that Sam was already an "American boy," that one said "goodbye," "how do you do" and "please," if one was a refined man. . . . Praying, however, was called "service," and so was charity. Sam's small son, born scarcely a week after his grandfather's arrival . . . will be a "college boy." . . . Between twelve and two it's time to eat "lunch," and between six and eight "dinner." . . . "All right" means agreed, and to give assent one says "yes!" If one wants to wish someone something good, one wishes him not happiness and health, but "prosperity." . . . Sam washes twice a day; the suit he sometimes wears in the evening he calls "dress." (117–18)

As the passage implies, the process of urban acculturation is rooted in the immigrant's capacity to translate his mental and linguistic lexicon into that of the local culture. This is exemplified through the deliberate deciphering of English words, the meticulous explanations bestowed on concepts and symbols, and the ostensibly seamless

interlingual translation of signs. The assertive tone accompanying the depiction of these linguistic processes establishes the impression of a cultural and linguistic signification characterized by certainty, determination, and the deliberate exclusion of competing interpretations.

As a domain of symbols and signs, the urban setting follows a process of linguistic standardization aimed at achieving what French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari termed “common sense” (qtd. in Zehavi 27). Common sense reflects the speaker’s attempt to convey reality and meanings through a limited range of presuppositions, aiming for a clear and one-directional connection between linguistic expression and the objects it references. By depicting life in New York as rooted in a definitive signification mechanism, Roth highlights language’s monolithic and unilingual nature. Coupled with the narrator’s unwavering tone, this mode of signification imbues urban space with a sense of rationality and methodical order. Therefore, this mode of signification resonates with additional cultural and sociological traits that define New York’s urban society, encompassing the ethos of efficiency, social mobility, and capitalist productivity.

The linguistic, cultural, and mental translation accompanying Mendel’s life in New York lacks any dimension of uncertainty. Despite New York serving as a destination for immigrants from across Europe and hosting a multitude of languages, accents, and expressions, it is not portrayed as a site of linguistic polyphony and plurality. Instead, it emerges as a place that offers a monolithic, direct, immediate, and clear translation from one language to another. While the incorporation of English words in the novel’s original German text underscores the very existence of translation, the transformation of signs from one system to another is presented as straightforward and uncomplicated. This practice of translation thus conceals the existence of non-transferable semantic gaps, simultaneously dispelling any sense of confusion or uncertainty that might hinder the achievement of accurate translation.<sup>15</sup> Roth constructs an urban discourse rooted in a unified common sense that eradicates linguistic uncertainty and differences intrinsic to the process of translation and to language in general.

The linguistic attributes of the urban experience stand out when contrasted with the modes of signification prevalent in the Eastern European setting. In the Eastern European space, a fundamental gap between signifiers and signifieds disrupts the immediate and univocal relationship between them, hindering the establishment of common sense. When Menuchim utters his first word—“Mama”

(Roth, *Job* 28)—it becomes evident that “for a long time this one word that he had produced after such terrible silence meant food and drink, sleep and love, pleasure and pain, heaven and earth.” In this instance, “Mama” exemplifies how language can transcend its conventional meaning and embrace a multitude of profound associations. Based on Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, Menuchim’s speech leads to a deterritorialization of standard language, breaking free from linguistic segmentation that typically differentiates between phenomena.

The linguistic fluidity characteristic of Eastern European rural life is also evident in the way space itself is encoded and signified. As Shemariah and Jonas traverse the snow-covered fields on their way back home, a disagreement arises regarding the demarcation of space and the objects contained within it:

They walked on. Toward morning they heard the cocks crowing from distant farms. “That must be Yurki,” said Shemariah.

“No, it’s Bytók!” said Jonas.

“Fine, Bytók!” said Shemariah.

...

The morning was pale, as the night had been. No difference between moon and sun.

...

“Look at the birds,” said Shemariah; only as a pretext to placate his brother.

“Those are ravens!” said Jonas. (38)

The dialogue between the brothers, who eventually identify their home through sounds that trigger memories of “millions of unnamable regular and special events” (39), underscores the intrinsic instability of the linguistic sign system and its arbitrary relationship with reality. In contrast to the confident and resolute tone used by the narrator to depict the clear signification system in New York’s English language, the characters’ language in the non-urban Eastern European space does not lead to definitive and unequivocal signification. Instead, it accentuates the presence of multiple meanings that do not converge into a singular, absolute classification.

The novel contrasts two ontological systems of meaning: in rural Eastern Europe, multilingualism fosters ambiguity and identity negotiation through diverse signifiers; in urban New York, language reduces uncertainty, enforcing coherence through a monolingual framework. This tension challenges the stability of signifier-signified relations across geopolitical spaces.

## Beyond the Cityscape

*Job* asserts the attainability of utopian existence through Mendel and Menuchim's harmonious and spiritually-infused reunion. In the novel's closing pages, Mendel and Menuchim distance themselves from the urban setting in favor of non-places. After their short stay at a hotel in Manhattan, Menuchim requests his father's company. Subsequently, they arrive at an unspecified location outside New York City:

And they reached a world where the soft sand was yellow, the wide sea blue and all the houses white. On the terrace in front of one of those houses, at a small white table, sat Mendel Singer. He slurped a golden-brown tea. On his stooped back shone the first warm sun of the year. The blackbirds hopped up close to him. . . . The waves of the sea lapped the shore with a gentle regular beat. In the pale blue sky were a few little white clouds. . . . The sparse, curly little hairs on his bald head were moved by a spring wind, as if they were strange delicate plants.

. . .

And a gull flew, like a silver bullet of the sky, under the canopy of the terrace. Mendel watched its precipitous flight and the shadowy white trail that it left behind in the blue air. (201–02)

In contrast to the detailed depiction of New York, the novel intentionally refrains from specifying landmarks or unique geographic features for the shoreline. While Mendel is described sitting by the shore alongside small white houses, sea waves, the sun, and birds, the exact location remains unnamed, situated outside the city. This deliberate shift in focus from the meticulously portrayed urban space results in a more generic, universal, and even idyllic portrayal of the seashore.

The episode on the seashore stands in stark contrast to Mendel's arrival in New York City, shifting from urban disorientation and chaos to a harmonious blend of humanity and nature. Through the tranquil and rhythmic undulations of the sea, space is portrayed through comforting, calculated, and anticipatory cadences of nature. All elements of this space—human beings, animals, the sea, houses, and sand—coalesce into a harmonious unity that dissolves the conventional distinctions between man and nature: the wind delicately stirs Mendel's hair, resembling "strange delicate plants," his "golden-brown" tea mirrors the "yellow" soft sand, and the white houses are reminiscent of the clouds. This portrayal fosters a non-dualistic connection between humans and nature, cultivating unmediated proximity among various spatial elements.

The seashore provides a temporary escape from the ontological order of urban life. Unlike continental territories subject to domestication, the sea challenges attempts to delineate clear boundaries. Deleuze and Guattari thus conceptualize the sea as “smooth space” (*Thousand* 530)—an ever-changing, formless expanse allowing unrestricted movement between any given points. State apparatuses aim to transform the sea into “striated space” by imposing navigational lines, maps, and compasses, and subjugating it to continental territorial control. In addition, the sea plays a pivotal role in the migration trajectory of the Singer family. Yet, in contrast to Mendel’s initial encounter with the American territory as he watched the Statue of Liberty from the confines of the immigrants’ ship’s third class, the novel’s conclusion has him observing the expansive sea from the continental expanse, shifting attention from the celebrated “Promised Land” to the unmoored, nomadic intercontinental sea.

After leaving the shore, Mendel and Menuchim return to the hotel. Mendel, feeling tired, enters his son’s room. This culminating scene unfolds within the confines of a hotel room:

The son left. The father remained on the sofa, he laid the photograph gently beside him. . . . From his deep sofa he could see a jagged cloudless piece of sky. He picked up the picture again. There was his daughter-in-law, Menuchim’s wife, there were his grandchildren, Menuchim’s children. When he looked at the girl more closely, he thought he saw a childhood picture of Deborah. Dead was Deborah, with strange, otherworldly eyes she perhaps witnessed the miracle. Gratefully Mendel remembered her young warmth . . . Dead Deborah!

. . .

As they slowly closed, his eyes took the whole blue brightness of the sky into sleep and the faces of the new children. Beside them emerged from the portrait’s brown background Jonas and Miriam. Mendel fell asleep. And he rested from the weight of happiness and the greatness of miracles. (203–04)

Like the seashore, the hotel blurs distinctions between private and public spheres, spatial belonging and detachment. Despite being physically part of the urban landscape, it serves as a transitory space. While providing an illusion of domesticity, the hotel lacks an exclusive connection between space and residents. In the novel’s conclusion, Mendel and his son, preparing to return to Europe, remain within the hotel, marking a liminal moment in their American presence.

Hotels held a special significance in Roth’s worldview. Prior to his political exile in Paris, Roth adopted a nomadic existence, dub-

bing himself a “hotel patriot” (qtd. in Lazaroms 820). Roth’s preference for hotel living stemmed from his gradual detachment from the intricacies of domestic life, a process initiated before his exile in 1933. Recalling his short stay at the Hotel Foyot in Paris, documented in *Das Neue Tage-Buch*, Roth wrote:

Here I sit opposite the empty place and listen to the passing of the hours. You lose one “Heimat” after the other, I say to myself. Here I sit, a pilgrim. My feet are sore, my heart is weary, my eyes are dry. Misery is squatting right down here beside me, becoming ever more gentle and ever greater; pain ceases, then grows violent and then charitable again. Terror smashes its way toward me and cannot terrorize me anymore. And that is the great hopelessness of it all. (“Rast” 618)<sup>16</sup>

The centrality of hotels in Roth’s life and literature did not solely stem from a modernist cosmopolitan outlook or a bohemian mannerism. Like other near-contemporaneous Austrian authors—such as Stefan Zweig, Arthur Schnitzler, Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, Vicki Baum, and Peter Altenberg—Roth perceived hotels as emblematic of his existential homelessness as a former citizen of the Habsburg Empire during the politically tumultuous post-World War I Europe.

Hotels represented for Roth not just a generational and personal sense of *Heimatlosigkeit* (statelessness), loss, and displacement.<sup>17</sup> As a non-place devoid of intrinsic identities and qualities, the hotel challenges normative notions of belonging and home, serving as a spatial tactic to resist nationalist discourse. In Roth’s imperial civic imagination, hotels provided a protective refuge from a segregating and monolithic identity politics. In the hotel space, Roth could preserve a profound sense of otherness that contested prevailing nationalist paradigms, which tethered language, territory, and national identity as inseparable elements of collective belonging. As temporary abodes for strangers, guests, and other itinerant subjects, hotels—like the supranational model of the Habsburg Empire—facilitated a sense of belonging-through-difference that challenged the homogenizing tendencies of nation-states. As both literary and geographical sites, hotels enabled Roth to envision a decentralized cityscape, distancing himself from mainstream modern culture and unveiling the instability of urban socio-spatial hierarchies.<sup>18</sup>

While in the hotel, Mendel contemplates a family photograph of Menuchim, experiencing a sensation of heterochronies and temporal continuities.<sup>19</sup> At the threshold of Mendel’s implied impending death, past and present converge, reconciling tradition and modernity. Contemplating Menuchim’s family photo, Mendel reconnects

with his past, finding meaning and reconciling his experiences of suffering. Gazing at his granddaughter's face, he sees echoes of Deborah, his deceased wife, and envisions Jonas and Miriam in his new grandchildren.

The present portrayal resonates with echoes of the past as the nascent American family intertwines elements from the Eastern European shtetl, bridging realms of the living and deceased. At the culmination of Mendel's journey, the hotel room becomes a convergence of distinct temporal strands, seamlessly merging terrestrial and temporal dimensions. This harmonious intermingling finds its habitat within the hotel—a realm standing apart from the bustling metropolis. As Mendel gazes outward, capturing “the whole blue brightness of the sky” (*Job* 204), a space of smoothness emerges, contrasting with the stratified urban territory subjected to relentless chronological acceleration. From the overarching perspective, this temporal harmony synthesizes opposing elements, uniting East and West, nomadism and rootedness, historical recollection and current actuality, bridging Western modernity with the traditional Eastern European Jewish shtetl existence.

The hotel's unique attributes as a collective and societal space invite an allegorical interpretation, drawing parallels between the hotel and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>20</sup> This allegory mirrors the Empire's aspiration for a shared political and communal foundation while maintaining elements of extraterritoriality, societal diversity, and cultural heterogeneity. Like the imperial politics it reflects, the hotel accommodates a diverse array of individuals detached from specific affiliations, operating under a single governing structure. Set against the backdrop of New York City, amid the exploration of immigrant domestication within the American urban landscape, the hotel serves as an extra-territorial zone. Here, it offers an alternative, situational, and temporal definition of home, unconstrained by inflexible definitions and fixed identities prevalent in the surrounding territory.

The depictions of the hotel and the seashore, despite their tangible existence, resist straightforward geographical classification.<sup>21</sup> Instead, they serve as paradigmatic examples of the poetics underlying the Habsburg Myth. This approach simplifies spatial representation, portraying specific locales as harmonious enclaves that reconcile intrinsic oppositions in the characters' tumultuous experiences. Magris, in exploring post-imperial Austro-Hungarian literature, notes that the Habsburg Myth seeks to “unify the diversity of reality” (*habsburgische Mythos* vii).<sup>22</sup> This involves reducing historical chaos to synthesis, cre-

ating an ordered state that harmonizes contradictions. In the novel, Mendel's resolution aligns with this ideal of harmony, represented spatially through simplification. This intentional avoidance of distinctive signification allows transcending existing dichotomies within historical reality, gesturing toward an aspirational utopian horizon.

The novel's conclusion portrays the hotel and seashore as imperial allegories, reflecting the universality inherent in the imperial political mechanism. By neutralizing specific space, this portrayal highlights the ongoing transformation of place into space, linking it to communities beyond its real or imagined borders. Devoid of fixed identity or historical specificity, these locales merge into an imagined imperial realm, forming connections unbound by any intrinsic link between subject and space. Contrary to modern narratives suggesting non-eschatological redemption within history, Roth emphasizes redemption in deterritorialized spaces beyond urban confines. These spaces, like the seashore and hotel, manifest as "no place" (*Job* 159)—nameless, devoid of identity, historical recollection, or any immediate "narrative" curated by their occupants. The semi-utopian moments post-Menuchim's miraculous emergence occur in spaces that function simultaneously as "good places" (More xi) and "no-places."<sup>23</sup> The seashore and the hotel, therefore, represent environments marked by inherent obscurity and a level of generality that impedes distinct identification.

The hotel and shoreline in the context of New York City's modern urbanism embody a heterotopic otherness. Heterotopia, as per Michel Foucault, operates as an alternative world existing parallel to the real world. The heterotopic space is both real and imaginary, physical and metaphorical, establishing a link to its everyday surroundings while subverting their characteristics. Unlike a utopia, which transcends reality, heterotopia is a tangible, "effectively enacted utopia" (Foucault 24) that is integral to culture and civilization.<sup>24</sup> Both in their physicality and conceptual features, the shore and the hotel disrupt the spatial order emblematic of the novel's urban civilization. Operating as counter-sites, these heterotopic spaces encapsulate a utopian essence, marked by spiritual connotations, existential equilibrium, and a nomadic ethos.

In discussing heterotopias, Foucault outlines two conceptual trajectories. The first involves creating an alternative heterotopic space that diverges from conventional realms and emphasizes their disorder and incongruity. The second envisions an actual space meticulously arranged in contrast to the ill-constructed existing surroundings. This latter category, Foucault argues, constitutes a heterotopia not

of mere illusion but of compensation. As heterotopias, the shore and the hotel do not herald the advent of a perfect society nor upend the established order. Instead, they function as compensation for the deficiencies, alienation, and discord that characterize Mendel's urban existence. Acting as junctures bridging the ideal and the real, these spaces facilitate an alternative existential experience compared to urban life—one characterized by nomadic tendencies, fluidity, and the harmonious amalgamation of contradictions. This experience not only held significance in the political realm of the Austro-Hungarian Empire but also forms a vital facet of Roth's contemplation regarding a future alternative supranational community.

Although these spaces hold the potential to challenge conceptual and spatial paradigms, the novel depicts them not as vectors of future progression but as liminal and terminal entities. Mendel's closing of his eyes at the novel's end serves as a metaphor for impending mortality, indicating that his redemption is rooted in an implied departure from terrestrial life. Despite Menuchim and Mendel's plan to return to Europe, the narrative refrains from specifying a precise destination or departure date, and concludes before their physical departure from America. At the end, both the shoreline and the hotel fail to manifest a tangible alternative—whether social, political, or cultural—to the urban civilization depicted throughout the novel. The solution Roth envisions for Mendel finds embodiment in the concepts of mobility and nomadism.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Mendel is an involuntary nomad, and the ostensibly illustrative nomadic concept he embodies falls short of materializing into a practicable alternative within the historical and tangible contours of urban spatiality.

Roth's choice to conclude the novel in deterritorialized enclaves, divorced from urban topography, reveals that Mendel's redemption lies beyond the scope of modern urbanity embodied by cities like New York (or Berlin). The potential for establishing an alternative spatial and political model remains unrealized at the novel's end. This conclusion mirrors the apocalyptic mechanism of the Habsburg Myth: the aspiration for universal significance and harmony amid contrasts in a post-imperial era can only be fulfilled by yearning for what transcends full spatial and historical concreteness.<sup>26</sup> The novel designates a redemptive role to counter-sites, forming a blend of existing materiality and imperial spatiality, indicating a future national political community rejecting the possibilities within city space. Rather than offering a distinct political alternative grounded in urban spatiality, Roth presents a utopian blend of geographical concreteness and envisioned imperial spatiality. Despite Roth's ap-

preciation for the cosmopolitan potential of big cities, in American urbanism, his characters remain nomadic, homeless, and trapped in the limbo of transitory counter-urban spaces.

## Notes

1. Roth scholars employ different formulations to conceptualize his unique identity. Rozenblit sees it as a “tripartite identity” (4), harmonizing Austrian, Jewish, and German elements. Bronsen, Roth’s biographer, suggests a “double consciousness” (54) arising from being both Jewish and Austrian.
2. As Rank argues, the ascent of modern nationalist thought posed a challenge to the supranational ideal of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. See *Scripta Judaica* p. 70.
3. As Roth’s novel explored in this essay delves into the urban modernization experienced by Jewish subjects in the early twentieth century and their spatial affinities, my analysis—guided by the core principles of the spatial turn—also seeks to advance the scholarly emphasis on space as a key analytical category in Jewish studies. Recent decades have witnessed a growing academic interest in the spatial turn and its relevance to Jewish history and culture. Notably, Mann’s *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* stands out as an exploration of the importance of space in Jewish culture and history, particularly in Hebrew and Yiddish literatures. Mann challenges the prevailing tendency to interpret the Jewish historical experience solely through the lenses of “exile” and “alienation,” highlighting instead the domestication and territorialization of Jewish diasporic spaces. Drawing on spatial theories from the twentieth century, Mann examines various historical performances of Jewish space, offering insights into how Jewish culture has shaped localities and places over time. For a comprehensive methodological discussion on the study of space in Jewish culture, see Brauch, Lipphardt, and Nocke. Additionally, for an overview of recent projects related to the spatial turn in Jewish Studies, see Fonrobert.
4. In Roth’s childhood in Galicia, nationalist sentiments and anti-imperialist tendencies were already noticeable even before World War I. See Shaked 95.
5. For nostalgic interpretations of Roth, see, for instance, Wistrich; Magris, *Weit von wo*. For an early contra-nostalgic interpretation of Roth, see Powell.
6. Tonkin argues that although Roth’s literature may appear to present life under Habsburg rule as idealistic, he also made a point of expressing a

disenchanted and critical stance toward the imperial past. In a similar vein, Chovanec and Heilo argue that Roth's literature embraces the Habsburg multinational ideal but also challenges the imperial notion of totality.

7. Roth's reputation as a reactionary tied to the imperial past stems largely from nationalistic literary criticism, which struggles to address identities beyond the nation and often views non-nationalist writers as opponents of modernization. Roth, however, explored how the metropolis could foster alternative identities challenging nationalist norms. As Arens argues, studying writers like Roth "calls for interpretative paradigms outside the mental strictures imposed by the maps of the (post)colonial national imperia and nation-states theorized as the cores of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe" (8).
8. Menuchim is positioned as an outcast of modernity—a disabled figure seemingly excluded from the possibility of *Bildung* or transformation. Only once he is healed is he granted the opportunity to reach the great American city and reunite with his father. I address this ableist dimension of the novel's plot in my essay "'America was God's country, New York the city of miracles': Urbanization and Redemption in Joseph Roth's *Job: The Story of a Simple Man*" (forthcoming in *Shofar*, 2026).
9. As posited by German historian Peukert, in the 1920s, "Amerikanismus" emerged as a concept representing uncompromising and uncommitted modernity. During this period, public discourse on American culture frequently addressed the ways in which German culture grappled with the challenges of modernity.
10. In this regard, my interpretation of the novel diverges from other prominent readings that view it as a critique of the consequences of Jewish assimilation in the twentieth century (see, for example, Garloff). Contrary to these readings, I argue that the persistent fear of assimilation is precisely what the novel portrays as contributing to segregation and isolation within the context of urban modernization. Roth appears to advocate not for rejection of Jewish modernization as a catalyst of assimilation, but for an existential framework that enables transcendence—rather than erasure—of rigid and disparate spatial and identity distinctions.
11. Habermas introduced the concept of the "public sphere" (136) as a model defining ideal conditions for civic life. In this model, the public sphere is envisioned as a realm for rational and systematic discourse dedicated to the common good, free from personal interests. It serves as an inclusive framework for unbiased discourse without the direct or strategic use of power, allowing communication to play a positive and liberating role by fostering a process of interaction where individuals gain self-recognition through the perspectives of others.

12. For further discussion on the Jewish affinities to time and space, see Kraemer.
13. The negation of the diaspora was central to Zionism's goal of creating a modern, sovereign Jewish nation through migration to the Land of Israel, overcoming exile and foreign rule. Ohana notes that despite Zionism's secular national identity, it paradoxically retained Messianic and theological rhetoric reflecting Jews' sacred connection to the land. For further information on the Zionist negation of the diaspora, see Schweid.
14. Many Austro-Hungarian authors employed the literary convention of portraying space with attributes of emptiness and purity. Through their works, they revisited natural landscapes, linking them to childhood and an idealized world of innocence and order. See Bialasiewicz's *Galicia*.
15. Benjamin underscores that genuine translation is "transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light" (137).
16. My own translation.
17. In a letter written to his editor, Gustav Kiepenheuer, Roth asserted that he is "Heimatlos" (homeless): "Apart from the fact that I am and feel at home only in myself, I have no country [Heimat]" (*Briefe* 164; my translation).
18. The principle of decentralization is linked to Magris's assertion that Roth, despite living in major cities for most of his life, always believed that the true spirit of Habsburg culture could not be found in the urban centers of the empire but rather at its peripheries (see *habsburgische Mythos* 303–09). Roth insisted that it was the diverse and marginalized communities, such as "the Slovenes, the Poles and Galicians from Ruthenia, the kaftan-clad Jews from Boryslaw, the horse traders of the Bacska, the Moslems from Sarajevo, the chestnut roasters from Mostar who sing our national anthem" (Traverso 78), and not the Austro-Germans of Vienna who embodied the "authentic" spirit of the Habsburg Empire.
19. Foucault's concept of heterochrony describes spaces with dual temporalities: one that accumulates and organizes time, like museums and libraries, and another marked by the fleeting nature of events, such as festivals.
20. Drawing on Spreicer's analysis of *Hotel Savoy* (1924), this reading interprets the hotel as an allegory for the Austro-Hungarian Empire—a stratified, multiethnic society sustained by a central bureaucracy. However, Spreicer concludes that the fiery destruction of the hotel not only marks the demise of the historical empire but also emphasizes the narrative's inability to sustain the nostalgic tale of a lost homeland. In a parallel vein, Shaked asserts that, akin to the empire's collapse due to internal ethnic-national conflicts, Hotel Savoy succumbs to societal-class

contradictions among its residents. Ultimately, the hotel fails to provide a unifying framework, compelling all its inhabitants to wander.

21. This tension between spatial tangibility and ambiguity, as well as locality and dis-locality, is also mirrored in *The Book of Job*. The biblical narrative unfolds in Uz, “a strange, completely unknown country; it is a diasporic, unidentified locality, about which we know nothing” (Rokem 185). Uz’s ambiguous geographical location parallels the uncertain identity of Job, the biblical protagonist, who is not explicitly labeled as an Israelite. Roth’s choice to integrate the biblical story of Job as a central element in his novel should thus be seen as part of his endeavor to avoid a narrow, particularistic identity politics that might foster isolation and segregation, opting instead to universalize Jewish particularity and emphasize the “Jewish mission” as a universal humanist pursuit to promote love and charity worldwide (*Briefe* 15).
22. My translation.
23. According to More’s *Utopia*, “utopia” is simultaneously “a good place” and “no-place.”
24. The term “heterotopia” is a fusion of the words “hetero” (meaning “other”) and “topos” (referring to “place”). In his attempt to define the concept, Foucault explains that heterotopias denote “real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (23).
25. This “solution” resonates with Roth’s conclusion in *Wandering Jews*:

And in the thousands of years of suffering endured by the Jews, they had only one consolation, and that was—not having a homeland. If a true history of “the world” were ever to be written, it would have to deceive the fact that the Jews, precisely because they lacked a homeland, maintained a certain degree of eloquence in times when the minds of the majority of the world were engulfed in frenzied patriotism. (192)

26. Magerski reveals a prevalent characteristic in many post-imperial novels, wherein challenging the established order is often accomplished through a deliberate avoidance of historical and concrete contexts.

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