

Georg Simmel in Translation

Georg Simmel in Translation:
Interdisciplinary Border Crossings
in Culture and Modernity

Edited by

David D. Kim

**CAMBRIDGE
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P U B L I S H I N G

Georg Simmel in Translation: Interdisciplinary Border Crossings in Culture and Modernity,
Edited by David D. Kim

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The beginning of this freestanding collection of essays goes back to an interdisciplinary graduate student conference organized by the graduate students of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and the members of the Humanities Center at Harvard University in April 2005. In the wake of the new millennium, the aim of the conference was to address global challenges and local questions in cross-disciplinary dialogues, and the presence of Georg Simmel's transformative traces in multiple disciplinary studies offered an ideal site for pursuing an interdisciplinary program. With the expansive title "Culture and Modernity: Georg Simmel in Context," the conference gathered scholars from the humanities, as well as the social sciences, and investigated Simmel's versatile writings, on the one hand, and the promises of interdisciplinarity across time and space, on the other.

Since *Georg Simmel in Translation* owes its beginning to that conference, the editor would like to use this opportunity to thank those who helped organize it. Danny Bowles, Silke Brodersen, Andreas Deeker, Thomas Herold, Kristin Jones, Hang-Sun Kim, Justice Kraus, Inna Mattei, Michael Saman, and Brigitta Wagner contributed to making every meeting a professionally challenging and intellectually fulfilling experience. As the conference co-coordinator, Gundela Hachmann deserves special recognition. The editor also thanks the many conference participants. He thanks the faculty of the German department for their kind support, in particular Professors Judith Ryan, Eric Rentschler, Peter Burgard, Karl Guthke, John Hamilton, Maria Tatar, and Eckehard Simon. Professor Ryan kindly delivered the opening remarks as the chair of the German department and a professor of comparative literature. Professor Svetlana Boym in the Department of Comparative Literature and Professor Peter Gordon in the History Department deserve the editor's gratitude for their letters of support for the Humanities Center funding. The editor is especially grateful to Professor Marjorie Garber, the former director of the Humanities Center at Harvard, for her remarkable guidance behind the stage. Her great wisdom, unparalleled leadership, and immense resourcefulness left an invisible, yet decisive mark on the conference. Despite the labyrinth of Harvard's logistic and bureaucratic nightmares, Mary Beth Wilkes, Mary Halpenny-Killip, and Shannon Greaney at the Humanities Center always directed the conference organizers to the right place, and their prompt response to all questions was invaluable. Finally, the

conference organizers were extremely fortunate to have Professor David Frisby as the plenary speaker. His clear expertise in Simmel coupled with a profound sense of generosity pushed the conference presentations to the edge.

The editor would like to thank the eleven conference participants, who have explored Simmel's writings more deeply within the wide-ranging context of translation. For this volume, they have significantly rewritten and expanded their original essays to stand as a publication separate from the conference. Their prompt response to the editor's comments and questions has made this project an exciting journey.

Two individuals at Cambridge Scholars Press deserve the editor's greatest appreciation: Ms. Amanda Millar for approaching him with the idea of turning the conference proceedings into something different and more and reviewing the format of the manuscript; and Dr. Andy Nercessian for being an irreplaceable guidance through the quasi-mysterious world of academic publications. Without their generous and prompt support, the continuous and multifarious work of translating Georg Simmel would have been left more incomplete.

David D. Kim
Cambridge, Massachusetts
March 2006

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

That we live in dark times has recently become clear again with the collapse of world markets and an unprecedented governmental intervention in the financial sector, and it still seems too early to tell whether the worst is behind us. Nowhere else are the devastating effects of the economic recession more acutely visible than in the state of Michigan where I have set up my new home: small businesses have closed down, workers have moved elsewhere, and college students are worried about paying tuition. The pending fate of the Big Three—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—has taken a toll on the lives of Michigianians. Yet, there is also a sense of hope that things will soon turn for the better. The historical election of the first African-American president and the anticipated bailout of the several transnational corporations have begun to change people's attitude toward individuals and institutions—for example, by building a new market confidence and being more accepting of a more multilateral world order.

It would be a far stretch to argue that Simmel's writings offered decisive clues to understanding these dark times. Nonetheless, the following contributions will shed light on aspects of modern life that sound uncannily familiar to us. They include, just to name a few, the importance of individual psychology for explaining the behaviors of a supposedly rational society, the translatability of money into modern subjectivity, the range of unsettling experiences in modernity, and the intimate relationality between subjects and objects. Despite the significant gaps in time-space between Simmel's Germany and contemporary global modernity, it will be instructive to reread his texts and to wrestle with differences and similarities alike. I hope that the revised edition of this collection will speak to those concerns, especially as scholars in the humanities and social sciences are rediscovering the promises of studying Simmel's writings.

Much has happened since the publication of the first edition. Contributors have moved from one place to another and their occupations have changed. In some cases, names are no longer the same. Considering the list of young scholars, those changes are expected and understandable. However, I have decided against a back-to-front re-editing of the entire book because the essays ought to remain faithful to their initial spirit—that is, the interdisciplinary conference of 2005 and the intense collaboration thereafter. As the reader will see, this new edition contains only a few changes in Nitzan Lebovic, Markus

Wiencke, and Todd Cronan's contributions; the other essays appear in their original form.

Fortunately, some things have remained the same, one of them being my gratitude to Dr. Andy Narcessian and Ms. Amanda Miller at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their ongoing support. Their decision to publish a new paperback edition will make this collection of essays more widely available to scholars who share with us the excitement of reading Simmel's work. I refer my reader to the most recent example—Fritz Breithaupt's *Der Ich-Effekt des Geldes: Zur Geschichte einer Legitimationsfigur* (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008) in which Simmel's concept of money plays a compelling role in shaping the modern self. I thank the author for sharing with me his unpublished manuscript so that I may take it into consideration in this work. And I thank again all contributors for having participated in this project.

David D. Kim
East Lansing, Michigan
November 2008

INTRODUCTION

GEORG SIMMEL IN TRANSLATION: INTERDISCIPLINARY BORDER-CROSSINGS IN CULTURE AND MODERNITY

DAVID D. KIM

I know that I shall die without spiritual heirs (and that is good). The estate I leave behind is like cash distributed among many heirs, each of whom puts his share to use in some trade that is compatible with his nature, but which can no longer be recognized as coming from that estate.
- Georg Simmel, "Excerpt from his bequeathed diary"

Just as the manifestations of life are intimately connected with the phenomenon of life without being of importance to it, a translation issues from the original—not so much from its life as from its afterlife.
- Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator"

I

"It is an unspeakable fortune," Simmel writes in his diary, "to be at home somewhere in the foreign; for it is a synthesis of both of our longings for peregrination and for *Heimat*—a synthesis of becoming and being" ("Tagebuch" 273).¹ This aphoristic note, published posthumously by Simmel's longtime friend Gertrud Kantorowicz, comes with neither context nor date. Yet I would like to trace it to the last four years of Simmel's life in Strasbourg. For this time period not only coincided with the catastrophes of the First World War, but was also witness to another battle wreaking havoc in his body: terminal liver cancer.

Though the conflicted city, located along the French-German borders, provided him with his first professorship, it was by no means a substitute for Berlin-Westend. Nowhere else and at no other time did he experience the significance of *Wechselwirkungen* (social interactions) for every individual, including himself. It is such difficult negotiations that may have given voice to Simmel's contradictory desire for stasis *and* movement, permanence *and* change, homey location *and* homeless cosmopolitanism. Now, the challenge is to articulate those tensions in their complexity and intensity and find Simmel a safe home, where even wanderers like him may temporarily take a rest.

Simmel's diary note reveals a utopian hope for being simultaneously here and there on a more literary level. By describing ("to be at home somewhere in the foreign"), explicating ("a synthesis of both of our longings for peregrination and for *Heimat*"), and philosophizing ("a synthesis of becoming and being") that "unspeakable fortune," Simmel performs an act of intralingual translation that amounts to an adding and changing of perspectives.² He remains within one and the same language, that is, German, but paraphrases his observations in an increasingly abstract mode to enter into new dimensions of life. This mode of linguistic and symbolic criticism may also be described as intersemiotic translation. Another textual example would be Simmel's chillingly accurate self-diagnosis, which I have quoted as one of my two epigraphs. There, too, he translates the fate of his philosophy into a language of economics.

In what follows, I shall demonstrate how these works of translation as well as others shape Simmel's writing. As a lexical compound consisting of two Latin roots—*trans* and *ferre*—, translation signifies both change and movement. It simultaneously speaks to the absence and presence, transience and permanence, marginality and centrality that languages or texts undergo in the work of translation. This border-crossing, for example, turns up in his cross-disciplinary articulations of fashion and coquetry, which temporarily reconcile differences and oppositions, as well as in his social theory, which seeks the whole by way of the fragment.

Nur das Ganze von Welt und Leben, wie es uns erkennbar, gelebt, gegeben ist, ist ein Fragment. Aber der einzelne Ausschnitt von Schicksal und Leistung ist oft in sich gerundet, ein Harmonisches und Ungebrochenes. Nur das Ganze ist ein Stück, das Stück kann ein Ganzes sein.³

[Only the totality of the world and life, as it is perceivable, lived, given to us, is a fragment. Yet the individual segment of fate and accomplishment is often rounded about, something harmonious and unbroken. Only the whole is one piece, the piece can be whole.]

If one, therefore, had to pick a word that defined Simmel's works, translation should not be overlooked.

In this volume, eleven essays focus on Simmel as both the origin (or the original of further works of translation) and the means for traveling across boundaries. First, the authors shed light on his negotiation of self with others, including the difficult position he occupied between objective and subjective cultures in imperial Berlin. This constant dislocation may also be associated with his split identity as a Protestant German Jew living in an increasingly anti-Semitic environment or with his insecure status as a *Privatdozent* located halfway between students and professors, yet financially and professionally dependent on both. Second, Simmel has become a forgotten "Zentrum der geistigen Elite" (center of the intellectual elite) that included Stefan George, Rainer Maria Rilke, Auguste Rodin, Henri Bergson, and Max Weber (*Brücke und Tür v*).⁴ Against the backdrop of Simmel's effacement from academic discourse, *Georg Simmel in Translation* thus introduces ways of articulating that ghostly Here-and-Nowhere—very much aligned with Simmel's prophetic self-prognosis predicting the free circulation and transformation of his intellectual estate—with the hope of more accurately locating the turn-of-the-century philosopher in the academic landscape. Among others, Wilhelm Dilthey, Walter Benjamin, Wilhelm Worringer, Kurt Schwitters, and Walther Ruttmann enter into dialogue with him; feminist theory, Singaporean modernization, schizophrenia in two Brazilian communities, impressionist art, and gay cruising are examined in light of his writings. Third, contributors focus on tracing Simmel's remarkable intellectual journey from sociology to psychology, from anthropology to aesthetics, from money to philosophy and religion in order to show the relevance of interdisciplinarity as translation in Simmel's writings. In other words, they address the centrality of disciplinary transgression therein.

It is important to note that though I suggest translation be a common theoretical premise uniting the following essays, the concept of translation has emerged differently in each chapter. Therefore, no single definition of translation will do justice to the many ways in which translation is being discussed. Nor does every chapter discuss this term in equal length. And in the spirit of translation, I have refrained from pursuing a singular or individual agenda whenever possible. That epistemological violence would have homogenized the multiplicity of international and interdisciplinary voices speaking here. In light of this observation, however, the reader will hopefully find it helpful if I take a moment to offer my translation of Simmel now.

II

By no means is translation as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon unique to the turn of the last century. Throughout history, human beings have individually and collectively migrated from one place to another and have in that process learned to decode the language of others for different purposes. Translation has been with us as far as evolutionary history can tell, in various cultural and historical incarnations—translation as *metaphora*, *translatio*, *Übersetzung*, and *traduction*—as well as semantic transformations.

Between the nineteenth and the first few decades of the twentieth century, however, sociopolitical events and scientific advancements gave new meanings to translation. With cars, trains, and steamships, human beings could now travel across distances that had before been considered life-threatening or unthinkable. The bureaucratization of services and the division of labor had a tremendous impact on every sector of human society. They, in turn, led to Marx's critique of capitalism, Nietzsche and Bergson's *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life), and Freud's psychoanalysis, which were soon followed by Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty and Einstein's theory of relativity, all of which revolutionized human perception and knowledge. On the artistic scene, there were Baudelaire and Mallarmé, Ibsen and James Joyce, Arthur Schnitzler and Franz Kafka, Wassily Kandinsky and Pablo Picasso, Arnold Schönberg and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Despite the great diversity within these modernists, as Alan Bullock puts it, there was an honest conviction that

they were living at the beginning of a new age. They believed, rightly, that they were developing new ways of looking at the physical universe, both artistically and scientifically, new ways of understanding man and society, new forms of expression for what they saw and felt, which were different from any that had gone before.⁵

They critically reexamined old paradigms and transformed them into something new. The desire for newness, then, was constant, but not without nostalgia for the past utopia. Poised between the past and the future, the present constituted a continuously shifting battlefield where artists and intellectuals were fighting for self-translation.

Although Jürgen Habermas has conservatively called Simmel a “child of the fin de siècle” who still belongs to the metaphysically oriented generation of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment scholars—from Kant and Hegel to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche—, it seems important to recognize Simmel's commitment to examining traditions and taboos, say, in the highly political deliberations on female culture and religiosity in modernity.⁶ With many others, he shared the relentless search for that non-place of transformative knowledge,

which José Ortega y Gasset so well articulated in the “The Misery and the Splendor of Translation.” There, he notes:

The truth is, I’ve become more and more convinced that everything Man does is utopian. Although he is principally involved in trying to know, he never fully succeeds in knowing anything...The destiny of Man—his privilege and honor—is never to achieve what he proposes, and to remain merely an intention, a living utopia. He is always marching toward failure, and even before entering the fray he already carries a wound in his temple.⁷

Simmel may have little in common with Nietzsche and Ortega y Gasset’s cultural pessimism, but they all have the same hunger for reaching out to the other. Perhaps, this partly explains the long and impressive list of modernists writing on the topic of linguistic, cultural, and psychological translation at the turn of the last century: Nietzsche, Freud, Benjamin, Ortega y Gasset, Paul Valéry, Ezra Pound, Vladimir Nabokov, Jorge Luis Borges, and later, Martin Heidegger.

If David Dollenmeyer is right in identifying “a mentality and spirituality specific to the city [Berlin]” in Simmel and Alexander Döblin (another German Jew living in Berlin at the turn of the last century and the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*), then one can hardly overestimate the significance of Berlin as an imperial center of translations, since most of the consequential political struggles as well as artistic and scientific innovations eventually flowed through its gates.⁸ Subjects and objects coming in and out of the metropolis defined it, a point Simmel articulated in his famous essay “Metropolis and the Mental Life”:

Wie ein Mensch nicht zu Ende ist mit den Grenzen seines Körpers oder des Bezirkes, den er mit seiner Thätigkeit unmittelbar erfüllt, sondern erst mit der Summe der Wirkungen, die sich von ihm aus zeitlich und räumlich erstrecken: so besteht auch eine Stadt erst aus der Gesamtheit der über ihre Unmittelbarkeit hinausreichenden Wirkungen.⁹

[Just as a human being is not at his end with the borders of his body or his territory, which he immediately occupies with his activity, but only with the sum of interactions radiating from him temporally and spatially, a city, too, consists of the totality of interactions that go beyond its immediacy.]

Similar to its citizens, the metropolis consists of the sum of its parts that have made their way past its physical boundaries. The metropolis travels with its moving subjects and objects, its busy life touching the lives of distant places and people. In “Soziologie des Raumes” (“Sociology of Space”), Simmel reconfirms this observation by saying that “[n]icht die Länder, nicht die Grundstücke, nicht der Stadtbezirk und der Landbezirk begrenzen einander; sondern die Einwohner

oder Eigentümer üben die gegenseitige Wirkung aus" [not the countries, not the estates, not the municipality and the province limit each other, but the inhabitants and properties exercise reciprocity].¹⁰ Berlin, for example, remained in connection with the rest of the nation on cultural, political, and above all, economic levels much like London and Paris.

Berlin's exchange market heightened the constant translation of individuals between subjective and objective cultures in that money, a "*pure force*" and "absolute...symbol", easily moved across borders of all kinds.¹¹ That constant movement also applied to individuals. According to David Frisby, Simmel was a "neurasthenic" whose "hypersensitivity" was an emotional reflection of translative urban experiences, including the extraordinary pace of life, the rapid technologization of society, and the excessive sensory inputs upon human psyche.¹² On the level of the body, too, Simmel recognized a constant "battle" between physical gravity and psycho-physiological impulses: "[U]nser Leib ist in jedem Moment der Kampfplatz, auf dem beide sich treffen, sich gegenseitig ablenken, sich zu Kompromissen nöthigen" [Our body is always the battlefield where both forces meet, divert each other, and coerce compromises].¹³ It is not difficult to imagine that, when dying of cancer, he may have experienced that violent battle more acutely than ever before.

On a cultural level, language, literature, and translation must be historicized within the context of Imperial Germany because they assumed a renewed status of cultural and political importance in relation to questions of national identity then becoming urgent. Before 1871, it had been language and literature that united Germans living in separate kingdoms and provinces. This community of common language and literature had served as a primary means of fostering German culture and distinguishing it from other imperial traditions in the absence of a German nation. The prominent historian, politician, and publicist Franz Mehring thus observed a few years after the belated establishment of the German Empire that German literature

war das einzige, das letzte, aber das unzerreißbare Band, welches uns zusammenhielt; durch den Sturm und Drang zweier Jahrhunderte voll blutiger Greuel ist sie immer wachsend an Kraft unbesiegt geschritten (833-34).

[was the only and last, yet unbreakable bonding, which held us together; through the storm and stress of two centuries filled with bloody suffering, it has marched forth undefeated and in constantly growing strength.]

On the one hand, literature had exerted its unifying influence in opposition to political forces that were tearing Germans with different regional or religious affiliations apart; on the other, it had functioned as one of the many "bloody" battlefields decisive for establishing and maintaining German identity. In

addition to claiming a national language and literature, then, controlling the translation of other languages and literatures became a significant component of building and preserving national identity. To borrow Friedrich Schleiermacher's simple, yet powerful words, the translator "leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him" in order to efface the original foreignness.¹⁴ In his preface to his translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Wilhelm von Humboldt proposes a more forceful definition. For him, the task of the translator is to let the foreign (*das Fremde*) shine forth, but to cover the foreignness (*die Fremdheit*) of the original. Only such a carefully measured (poetic) translation will instruct Germans of others' language and literature as well as their own.¹⁵ This is precisely what Nietzsche criticizes in an essay, titled "On the Problem of Translation," which reads: "One can gauge the degree of the historical sensibility an age possesses by the manner in which it translates texts and by the manner in which it seeks to incorporate past epochs and books into its own being."¹⁶ The subject of Nietzsche's historical and linguistic reflection is the Roman Empire, whose Horace and Propertius (mis)translated Greek poets like Alcaeus and Archilochus, Callimachus and Philetas "to suit their own age."¹⁷ Nietzsche's reflections, however, are also timely for the works of translation done in Wilhelmine Germany. In its imperial spirit, linguistic and literary translation becomes equivalent to "conquest" and "theft."¹⁸

In Simmel's *Wechselwirkungen*, translation functions as a fundamentally sociological concept for moving across spaces and effecting change. In other words, it is not physical or spatial boundaries that shape the communication and collision of individuals and groups, but vice versa: "Die Grenze ist nicht eine räumliche Tatsache mit soziologischen Wirkungen, sondern eine soziologische Tatsache, die sich räumlich formt" [The border is not a spatial matter of fact with sociological effects, but a sociological fact that shapes itself spatially].¹⁹ This places heightened emphasis on the translating agent, whether it involves two or more interacting individuals or simply an object of value, such as fashion or money.

Nowhere does Simmel offer a more philosophical study of translation than in *The Philosophy of Money* (1900). There, he writes:

In diesem Problemkreis ist das Geld nur Mittel, Material oder Beispiel für die Darstellung der Beziehungen, die zwischen den äußerlichsten, realistischsten, zufälligsten Erscheinungen und den ideellsten Potenzen des Daseins, den tiefsten Strömungen des Einzellebens und der Geschichte bestehen.²⁰

[M]oney is simply a means, a material or an example for the presentation of relations that exist between the most superficial, 'realistic' and fortuitous phenomena and the most idealized powers of existence, the most profound currents of individual life and history.²¹

His intention is not to make “a statement about economics,” but to use economic factors to shed light on something fundamental to all human life and derive from money’s metonymic work something fundamentally total.²² This requires two acts of translation, the first of which is interdisciplinary scholarship. Simmel examines “the phenomena of valuation and purchase, of exchange and the means of exchange, of the forms of production and the values of possession, which economics views from *one* standpoint, ... from another.”²³ Despite the fact that economics has investigated money as a practical phenomenon more intensively than any other discipline, no object can sufficiently be examined in one discipline only. More will be said about this, but I want to point out the addition and change of perspectives that resonate once again with Simmel’s diary note at the beginning of my introductory remarks. The second act of translation occurs as an object transforms into something else of value. Within the context of money, then, “its entire significance does not lie in itself but rather in its transformation into other values.”²⁴ This translation work finds its maturity in the money economy where currency does not shy away from any borderline. Money goes everywhere and is exchanged with something else.

III

In Chapter One, Ilya Parkins investigates a pivotal point of intersection between Simmel’s philosophy of culture and social theory of modernity. Against the backdrop of modernity’s male-dominant discourse, which has (en)gendered female alterity, Parkins strategically positions herself within Simmel’s Manichean structure of gender differences and explores ways of unsettling them via contemporary feminist theory. She examines how Simmel frames male and female oppositions in historico-philosophical terms—becoming (*Werden*) and being (*Sein*)—to construct the realm of the private, unknowable, and ungraspable, all of which are associated with women, the feminine, and the female. In this paradigm, fashion, flirtation, and adornment provide women with a temporary means of self-translation out of that fixed subalternity. They constitute a “material-discursive framework” that recognizes “the complexity and importance of knowing things,” that is, women’s “lived material-social location” in the consumer culture. As Parkins argues, this is no simple “contradiction” within Simmel’s theoretical enunciations. Instead, it points to “a strong ambivalence about modernity as a construct and a lived reality.” Parkins’ essay delineates where Simmel may fall short of being a precursor to Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer, not in the traditional and well-explored sense of unveiling the contradictory elements of modern capitalist society, but in complicating these intellectual concerns with feminist epistemology and politics. Following her lead, then, more investigations of

Simmel's relationship to what Sigrid Weigel calls a "feminine/female dialectic of Enlightenment" will make for a compelling project in the future.²⁵

Chapter Two begins with a similar turn to Simmel's male-female *Wechselwirkung* (interaction), in particular coquetry, with respect to its opportunity for women to catapult themselves out of their inert status in modernity. Here, Tilo Beckers focuses on coquetry's verbal and non-verbal intimacies, which offer women "the unity of yes and no," that is, the control over keeping their male seducer distant or not. Driven by the desire for something one does not possess, coquetry proves to be a game—a "play" of denial and consent. In his essay on Kant's aesthetic philosophy, Simmel helpfully explains how "play" forms subjectivity.

Denn Spielen bedeutet doch, daß man die Funktionen, die sonst den Wirklichkeitsinhalt des Lebens tragen und an ihm gebildet sind, nun ohne diese Füllung, rein formal, ausübt. Das Wetten und Jagen, das Ringen und Erlisten, das Bauen und Zerstören, das die realen Ziele des Lebens fordern, geschieht im Spiele an bloß ideellen Inhalten, um bloß ideeller Ziele willen—oder genauer nicht einmal um dieser willen, sondern nur aus Lust an der Funktion, an dem subjektiven Tun, das mit keinem über dieses Tun selbst hinausgreifenden Inhalt beschwert ist.²⁶

[For play means after all that one fulfills the functions, which are otherwise carrying the realness of life and are being shaped by it, without this charge, that is, purely formally. In play, betting and hunting, wrestling and wiling, building and destroying demanded by the real aims of life work at merely imaginary contents only for the sake of imagination—or more precisely not even for that sake, but only in the delight of the function, in the subjective act that is not burdened by any content reaching beyond that very act.]

In the moment of playing, then, that is in a flirtatious negotiation or a dialogic movement of back-and-forth and to-and-fro, Beckers argues that another type of urban interaction may be retranslated: the sexual flirtation between men, also known as cruising, in contemporary public spaces. This work of translation, however, requires an epistemological distinction between the two. Though cruising and coquetry both rely on intersubjective knowledge that is neither complete nor absolute, what makes cruising unique is its "adventure," and not "play." In contrast to the flirting couple engaged in coquetry, cruisers temporarily leave behind their social reality, slip in and out of the (extraordinary) intimate interaction with strangers, and satisfy their sexual desire without affecting the rest of their (ordinary) lives. This act of translation from one (public and official) life into another (anonymous and encrypted) transforms not only the translator himself, but also the space in which cruising takes place. From Western public restrooms to Eastern communal hot springs, this particular

form of gay interaction changes the way in which individuals and the collective experience public spaces. In Beckers' reading, then, Simmel, as archaic as his ideas may be in matters of sexual difference, becomes relevant for contemporary gender studies again.

Though Simmel does not comment on film as an aesthetic or technological medium, his writing on the metropolis at the end of the nineteenth century is helpful for capturing the experience of visitors to early cinema. In the metropolis, Simmel writes, there occurs a constant negotiation between body and mind, as each individual, confined with others within the same space, attempts to cope with his environment. As human beings capable of adoption and adaptation, the metropolitan subject has therefore developed one protective shield against external threats, that is, the *blasé* attitude. It serves as a rational(izing) defense mechanism against, and a physiological symptom of, the psychological fragmentation induced by metropolitan chaos. Poised between adaptation and escapism, the metropolitan subject works and walks his way through an excess of sensory inputs by intellectualizing or rationalizing his journey. The confusing nature of the metropolis is restructured and organized, kept distant and filtered. Just as the proximity of artworks effaces their individuality by blurring sensory differentiation, the individual is unable to absorb all metropolitan stimuli in a nuanced fashion. The museum visitor and the metropolitan subject turn into adventurers or people with *blasé* attitudes, either overreacting or becoming apathetic to all external stimuli.

In Chapter Three, then, Nora Gortcheva revisits a seminal example of early German cinema of the Weimar Republic, Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin, die Symphonie der Großstadt* (1927), to illustrate how it resonates with Simmel's metropolitan and museal analyses. According to Gortcheva, film similarly mimics this gesture of "selective discrimination" and offers an adventure that is safer than actual expeditions into the unknown, that is, within the confines of the dark room and an extended and improved experience of reality and fantasy, voyeurism and visibility with a combination of images and sounds. *Berlin, die Symphonie der Großstadt* thus translates museal and metropolitan elements into a fragmented cinematic gaze. Produced only a year after Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) and sharing with the director and the film some of the same origins (by way of Carl Mayer, who had co-written Lang's *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* [1919], and Karl Freund, who had photographed *Metropolis*), it is one of the first symphonic films of the 1920s and is based on a meticulous cutting of films as well as a careful coordination between film and music. It illustrates a typical day of Berlin's organic lifecycle with changing rhythms. It negotiates between performativity and pedagogy by which the psychoaffective experience of social reality finds expression in a technological medium, and vice versa. As Gortcheva argues, this documentary film on Berlin demonstrates what Michael

Minden calls a “self-consciousness” with which it stylistically mimics via montage the individual’s fragmented and overwhelming experiences of the metropolis in social, psychological, and economic terms.²⁷ As such, Gortcheva proposes a disagreement with Siegfried Kracauer’s critical evaluation of Ruttmann’s silent experimental film as distant from lived reality.

In his examination of Wilhelm Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* in connection with Simmel, Jonah Corne presents two critical arguments, one of which will make Simmel meaningful in a colonial context. First, in his figurative reading of the city, the modern and the primitive, this-worldly and otherworldly, begin to mirror each other. Beneath the surface of the city, in its “sub-text” and the underground system, there exist striking parallels between Simmel’s sociological and psychological analyses of the city and Worringer’s proposal of two kinds of art—the abstract/primitive and the empathic/real. Though the metropolis with its towering architecture and complex structures of sociation seems fundamentally different from the distant world of prehistoric peoples, this discursive connection is indeed prevalent in modernism in general and colonial writing in particular. The metropolis is a wilderness of another, non-colonial kind that demands careful balancing between fragmentary elements and a unifying totality—a task that European travelers and white colonizers must perform when planting their seed of Western rationality and European technology in the jungle or the colonies. In other words, the colonizer, the explorer, and the urbanite believe in balancing order with disorder, nurture with nature. Perhaps the most convincing illustration of this peculiar similarity is Robert Müller’s 1915 colonial novel, *Tropen (Tropical Tropes)*, in which both the explorer and the metropolitan subject share with one another the experience of being overwhelmed by an excess of sensory inputs, a psychological fragmentation in their unfulfilling engagement with distant fellow beings, and a rationalization of the encounter with the foreign. The metropolis overlaps with the jungle in ways that make past and present, East and West difficult to distinguish from one another.²⁸ Another example, which I have already mentioned, is Lang’s futuristic metropolis divided into underground and aboveground spaces; by no means are they simply oppositional, but dependent on and in tension with each other. In his reading of Bertolt Brecht’s poetry in the 1920s, David Midgley, too, evokes the imagery of the jungle to point to a movement beyond conventional attitudes to metropolitan life.²⁹

Corne’s second argument proposes that what the metropolitan architect and the European colonizer have in common is the figure of the gardener, who enters the natural space to transform it into cultural order. His work is to reshape it according to logic that only he embodies. This tradition of Eurocentric knowledge is deeply rooted in the Enlightenment period and is seen in Goethe’s interest in botany and Alexander von Humboldt’s ethnographic journey to the

New World. Published in Simmel's lifetime, Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1895) employs the garden as an allegory for Effi's unwomanly nature and natural spontaneity in need of education and nurturing. In its naturality, the garden requires careful attention and constant labor, and it is the responsibility of the meticulous and caring gardener to perform that task.³⁰ Zygmunt Bauman has recently criticized this image of the modern man within the context of the Jewish Holocaust. Following the tradition of post-World War II intellectuals, including Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whose critique is directed at material capitalism and moral degradation, he questions the work of modernity, which has given birth not only to rationality and industrialization, mechanization and efficiency, but also inhumanity and fragmentariness, moral degradation and mass killings.³¹

In light of Simmel's firm location in an anti-Semitic and racist empire, it is both perplexing and disconcerting that he had nothing to say about colonial violence. In fact, his anthropological notes about "primitive" peoples in "Weibliche Kultur" ("Female Culture") reflect troubling Eurocentric attitudes that place European cultures above non-European civilizations, and European time before non-European non-time. In this respect, Simmel exhibits the same differentiation of female and non-Western alterity based upon temporal discrimination, which carries ontological and epistemological consequences.³² One may thus conclude that he saw himself as a European fundamentally different and superior to non-Europeans. Corne's essay, I believe, contributes to the need of exploring further Simmel's ambiguous relationship not only with the gendered Other, but also the racial Other—uncovering colonial traces in Simmel's writings and reading them in non-European, post-colonial contexts.

Probing Simmel's psycho-empirical articulations of urban life in a non-European context, Nicholas Long marks a step forward in this direction, as he analyses the process of modernization in Singapore. Since its independence in the 1960s, the introduction of English as the official language and the geographic reshuffling of native Singaporeans as well as local Malay and Chinese populations via state-induced and -monitored housing development projects have created a profound sense of cultural anxiety. As Long notes, Foucault's theory of subjectivity produced by institutional power and Weber's concept of rationalization are powerful tools for analyzing Singapore's postcolonial challenges because of their ability to theorize the complex triadic relationship between the government, its people, and the individual. Yet they silence the individual citizen's voice by subsuming it under state policies and neglecting the fundamental interaction that human beings have with one another. Long's alternative is to adopt Simmel's notion of subjective culture as a crucial supplement and promising complement to Foucault's theorization of limited subjectivity in order to understand modern institutions and urban spaces.

Long's scholarship does not move toward an uncritical application of European meta-narratives to non-European politics—an epistemological movement that would have repeated the violence of Eurocentric colonialism. Nor does Long simplistically call for an historical comparison of Simmel's turn-of-the-century Berlin with Singapore today. It is necessary to build upon comparative studies that have claimed that a direct comparison between Western and Eastern cities with respect to technology is misplaced because Asian cities tend to be more cultural and political rather than economical.³³ There are also fundamental differences in the cultural and institutional configurations between European and non-European cities, especially in areas such as religion, political governance, and legal authority.³⁴ Taking such local specificities into consideration, Long explores productive sites within Singaporean culture and politics in which Simmel's social theory of modernity is instructive. His is a fine balancing act between remaining theoretically sensitive to what anthropological fieldwork and theoretical frameworks emerging from the European context uncover, support or contradict and being responsive to how Singaporeans formulate and form their postcolonial present and future. It constitutes an intellectual task to study societies beneath the surface of functional totalities. Long's project is thus alluding to two recent trends in the field of social anthropology: first, a theoretical crisis within that academic institution to examine non-European cultures without perpetuating the former colonial power imbalance; second, the interest in an urban anthropology that deconstructs a Eurocentric history of totalities into fragmentary problems and interactive elements.³⁵ Although Simmel's theoretical perspectives have been marginalized in social anthropology due to either their historical specificity and cultural limitedness or theoretical abstraction and scientific obscurity, as Long argues, they offer a refreshing look at Singaporean society.

In Chapter Six, the reader accompanies Markus Wiencke to another continent and context. Here, Wiencke questions the adequacy of psychological studies examining people with schizophrenia in isolation, that is, separate from their community. Based on his field research in two religious communities in Recife, a lively Brazilian metropolis, he suggests that schizophrenia be considered in a social network. For at the center of schizophrenia, so Wiencke argues, lies the constant negotiation between the individual and his community, and Simmel's concept of individuality, which is fundamentally a relational one, proves to be instructive. The goal is to make sociological articulations relevant for psychology without confusing the two. Both share the same "psychologische Regeln und Kenntnisse" [psychological rules and knowledge], but pursue different ends. In the most general sense, Wiencke puts it as follows: "Während die Psychologie die Gesetze der seelischen Prozesse untersucht und deren Inhalte vernachlässigt, bezieht sich die Soziologie auf eben diese Inhalte selbst

und ihre Zusammenhänge” [While psychology examines the rules of the mind’s processes, ignoring their contents, sociology refers to that very content and its associations]. The possibility of comparing schizophrenia with Simmel’s concept of individuality and identity emerges from the fact that both terms—schizophrenia and identity—are linguistic constructs emerging within a community of common signs and symbols. The goal is to trace parallels between Simmel’s articulation of metropolitan experiences and a more nuanced diagnosis of schizophrenia.

In Chapter Seven, Alain Deneault introduces his reader to Simmel’s multifaceted discourse of money in its philosophical, theological, and aesthetic dimensions. In agreement with David Frisby’s remark that *The Philosophy of Money*, especially its preface, navigates between economic, psychological, ethical, aesthetic, historical, and even philosophical concerns, Deneault calls for an epistemological democratization of the term “economy” in the sciences.³⁶ This critical proposition is based upon Simmel’s own remark in the preface, which reads:

Aber wie die Erscheinung eines Religionsstifters keineswegs nur eine religiöse ist, sondern auch unter den Kategorien der Psychologie, vielleicht sogar der Pathologie, der allgemeinen Geschichte, der Soziologie untersucht werden kann; wie ein Gedicht nicht nur eine litteraturgeschichtliche Tatsache ist, sondern auch eine ästhetische, eine philologische, eine biographische; wie überhaupt der Standpunkt *einer* Wissenschaft, die immer eine arbeitsteilige ist, niemals die Ganzheit einer Realität erschöpft—so ist, daß zwei Menschen ihre Produkte gegeneinander vertauschen, keineswegs nur eine nationalökonomische Tatsache.³⁷

But just as the appearance of a founder of a religion is by no means simply a religious phenomenon, and can also be studied by using the categories of psychology, perhaps even of pathology, general history and sociology; or just as a poem is not simply a fact of literary history, but also an aesthetic, a philological and a biographical fact; or just as the very standpoint of a single science, which is also based on the division of labour, never exhausts the totality of reality—so the fact that two people exchange their products is by no means simply an economic fact.³⁸

Philosophy, as Simmel continues, provides the necessary site for investigating what economics itself cannot perform, that is, the “pre-condition for cognition.”³⁹ One point of common departure for scholars in the humanities and the social sciences would be the central word *Geld* itself, since its discursive use in *The Philosophy of Money* lies beyond a simplistic meaning and simple translation of Geld as money, *argent* or *dinero*. Rather, one ought to return to its root—*gelten* (to be worth)—to capture its semantic complexity and, more

importantly, the intimate relationship of the economical with human thinking. Deneault's comparison between Hermann Lotze's nineteenth-century *Wertphilosophie*, in particular the concept of value, and Simmel's mature money economy is instructive here. What he importantly notes is that money "has no value in and of itself but coordinates the different empirical understandings of value. *Geld* refers to a general concept of value that is imposed by virtue of having passed through a thousand cases recognized for the singular characteristics." In other words, money has gained its universal value in translation—countless exchanges and transactions—and this property now spares the buyer and the seller the inconvenience of estimating and calculating (at the risk of mistranslating)—the difference between unequally valuable objects. Additionally, money determines a value judgment of interactions between human beings and their surroundings, whether natural or material. It reduces and simplifies the mediation and mental exercise necessary for giving and taking an object of desire.

When reading Deneault's essay, the reader should keep in mind (in addition to the etymology of *Geld*) the origin of "economy." Stemming from the Greek word *oikonomia*, "economy" contrasts and harmonizes within itself two laws: *oikos* and *nomos*. They form, as Jacques Derrida has argued, a simultaneous process of homecoming (*oikos*, home, property, family, the hearth, the fire indoors, the circle) and dissemination (*nomos*/law, *nemein*/distribution, *partage*/partition, *moira*/partition).⁴⁰ What is thus captured in one and the same word—"economy"—echoes with what Deneault later refers to as the "theological aesthetics" of economy. As money does not appear in place of God, but as his illusory double, it requires poetics and narrative to affect people's daily behavior and common beliefs. "Money and God, respectively," Deneault writes, "give the impression of receiving within them an ultimate meaning that can raise the problem of the diversity and distance of things, with a view to a single overlap that promises serenity and assurance (*Sicherheit und Ruhe*)." In modernity, economy and religion have both opened up an uncanny space of difference and sameness, restlessness and calm. It is not by chance that there exist fascinating parallels, as this chapter outlines, between Simmel's *The Philosophy of Money* and Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (*The Interpretation of Dreams*), both of which appeared in 1900.

Chapter Eight explores another way of placing Simmel in dialogue with Derrida, yet without anachronistically transforming him into a thinker he is not, as Deena and Michael Weinstein demonstrate in *Postmodern(ized) Simmel*.⁴¹ Here, Philipp Ekardt examines the translatability of fashion by referring to *The Philosophy of Money*, where Simmel points to fashion's lack of autonomy from timeless aesthetic principles that art may claim for itself (according to the Kantian aesthetic philosophy). Situated in that liminal space between art and the

ornament—Derrida calls them *ergon* and *parergon*—fashion never ceases to transform itself, and it is this constant transformation that is its only permanent essence. Before turning to Ekardt’s arguments, let me offer one pivotal excerpt from Simmel’s essay, titled “Die Mode” (“The Fashion”). For it ascribes to fashion a double function of individual differentiation and collective identification, and *Modistinnen* (fashion *aficionadas* [sic]) use it to distinguish themselves from others while marking their specific location in society. Yet this role of fashion does not last indefinitely.

Jedes Wachstum ihrer treibt sie ihrem Ende zu, weil eben dies die Unterschiedlichkeit aufhebt. Sie gehört damit dem Typus von Erscheinungen an, deren Intention auf immer schrankenlosere Verbreitung, immer vollkommene Realisierung geht—aber mit der Erreichung dieses absoluten Zieles in Selbstwiderspruch und Vernichtung fallen würde.⁴²

[Every growth in fashion drives it to its destiny precisely because this sublates the difference. Fashion thus belongs to the type of phenomena whose intention is to work toward increasingly boundless dissemination, increasingly complete realization. Yet by achieving this absolute goal, it would fall into self-denial and annihilation.]

With an inherently entropic force, then, fashion crosses socioeconomic borderlines—from the “höheren Schicht” (higher class) to the “tieferen” (lower class)—, and this work of self-translation as dissemination marks the beginning of its own demise.⁴³ Ekardt’s essay sheds light on this crucial character of fashion, another cyclical movement of its dissemination and disappearance among individuals and in society, to build upon what Parkins has already demonstrated in Chapter One, that is, the time-sensitive nature of fashion. According to Ekardt, Simmel does not reconcile this paradox, the “chiasma between the transience of [individual] fashions and the permanence of fashion [as a sociocultural phenomenon].” This has, as Ekardt illuminates, crucial implications for Benjamin’s philosophy of historical materialism because the paradoxical nature of fashion disrupts time as a chronological process. In other words, Benjamin introduces a new “vector,” that is, history, to sociology, which now intersect in fashion.

Within the context of fashion and translation, I want to add that Simmel and Benjamin fail to trace the movement of fashion far enough. For fashion is rarely transmitted from one group to another or from one individual to another without change. In the process of its dissemination, it undergoes subtle transformation to accommodate another physique. Or to target a different group of buyers, the quality of its material may need to change whereby fine details are either added or omitted. One certainly witnesses a more drastic change in fashion when it

travels from one culture to another, since existing trends and culturally specific conditions, such as social norms and cultural preferences, are simultaneously respected. As such, fashion does not travel in a political vacuum, and both theoreticians bypass this important aspect of fashion by simply pointing out that fashion has become more affordable and easily producible due to its necessary short lifespan.⁴⁴

In Chapter Nine, Nitzan Lebovic, like Deneault, recognizes circularity—a “complete circle”—in Simmel’s theological reflections, which resist institutional frameworks and return to a “vital image-production.” Reading against popular interpretations, Nitzan argues that Simmel exhibits a high degree of consistency and systematicity in this aesthetic mode of theorizing life, with *Ur*-images radicalized to deconstruct orthodox structures of criticism: “The methodological implication is that any attempt to think about life has to reject the institutional discourses of [Simmel’s] period, the metaphysical and the psychological, the historicist and the naturalistic, and instead construct one’s interpretations through the prism of the primal images of creation, birth and death, dynamic and open temporality.” As such, Lebovic attempts to fill the crucial gap in Simmel scholarship: the neglected examination of his *Lebensphilosophie* (philosophy of life) within the context of nineteenth-century intellectual tradition. By tracing its origin to Johann Jacob Bachofen and Friedrich Nietzsche and examining it vis-à-vis Wilhelm Dilthey and Stefan George, he offers a significant historiographic survey of Simmel’s *Lebensphilosophie* as well as its subtle influence on Benjamin. It becomes apparent here that, in an uncontested way, Benjamin is leading Simmel’s “afterlife” by being one of his most formidable intellectual translators and heirs. It also seems important to note that further examination is necessary for understanding more deeply the relationship between ethics and *Lebensphilosophie*, especially as one takes the history of the Third Reich and its misappropriation of philosophers of life into consideration.

Chapter Eleven transports the reader back to the metropolis by examining one of its artworks, that is, an artistic creation that owes its inspiration to the urban space. At the center of Tahia Reynaga’s essay is the constant negotiation of self between presence and effacement, subjectivity and objectivity, individuality and collectivity in modernist aesthetics. By investigating Simmel’s “transcendent character of life,” Reynaga sheds light on the artist, whose location in the metropolis is to resist dislocation by translating himself into the other, that is, his artwork. With “the need to move beyond the self in order to imprint the self in the objective realm,” the artist goes “beyond the bounds of the self, an extension into the realm of objects.” This work of artistic translation from the self to the other, from the subjective to the objective, requires an acute sense of self-reflexivity, and the artwork provides its creator with a balance

between being and becoming, static location in life and the ability to transcend it in an external form. As an illustration of this interpretation, Reynaga uses Kurt Schwitters' "Hannover Merzbau," a Dadaist work of expressionist art. In it, the artist creates his metropolitan self (*mehr-Leben*) and simultaneously feels transcended and overcome (*mehr-als-Leben*). As a random collection and collage of urban objects, the "Merzbau" functions as a "shelter" for the artist, who has been marginalized from fellow Dadaists like Tristan Tzara, Hans Arp, Hugo Ball and Marcel Duchamp, who use their work of art—whether plastic or poetic, musical or mimetic—to resist the irrationality of the human *ratio* and the illogic of the human logic. Reinvoking the concept of translation as negotiation, Reynaga writes: "Schwitters' willful self-effacement was already underway, [but] he was not yet subsumed by his art." In other words, the work of art stages not only the delicacy, but also the desire of living that has likely emerged from the unforeseen devastations of the First World War.

Whereas Lebovic locates the positive centrality of *Lebensphilosophie* in Simmel's philosophical and poetic image-production, the eleventh and final chapter contests that proposition and offers an alternative approach to Simmel scholarship: impressionism. Here, Todd Cronan recognizes the discourse of life as "the central trope of turn-of-the-century aesthetics," but again points to Simmel's interest in the modern artwork as a temporary means of translating modern/urban life's transience into a state of ideal form. According to Cronan, "Simmel's aesthetics are highly indebted in their conclusions, if not in their texture, to Schopenhauer's theory of art...Simmel commentators would do well to examine his complex relationship to Schopenhauer, and [the latter's] influence on him, rather than to Nietzsche, Bergson or vitalist thought in general." What needs to be salvaged from further marginalization, then, is Simmel's "psychologism" despite its theoretical obscurity; its "conditions of modern experience" shaping the artistic representation of modernity must return to the examination of Simmel's larger philosophy. As Simmel himself argues in his essay on modern aesthetics, impressionism constitutes the "consistent aesthetic principle" (*konsequente Kunstprinzip*) in illustrating that modern discrepancy between materiality and immateriality, transcendence and immanence.⁴⁵ Subject to Cronan's critical investigation are the impressionists Manet, Monet, Cézanne, and Rodin. In art-historical translation, then, the untimely aesthetic philosopher takes a third space between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, on the one hand, and Monet and Cézanne, on the other.

IV

Since Tom Bottomore and David Frisby's revised English translation of *The Philosophy of Money* in 1978, Simmel's works have appeared in Italian,