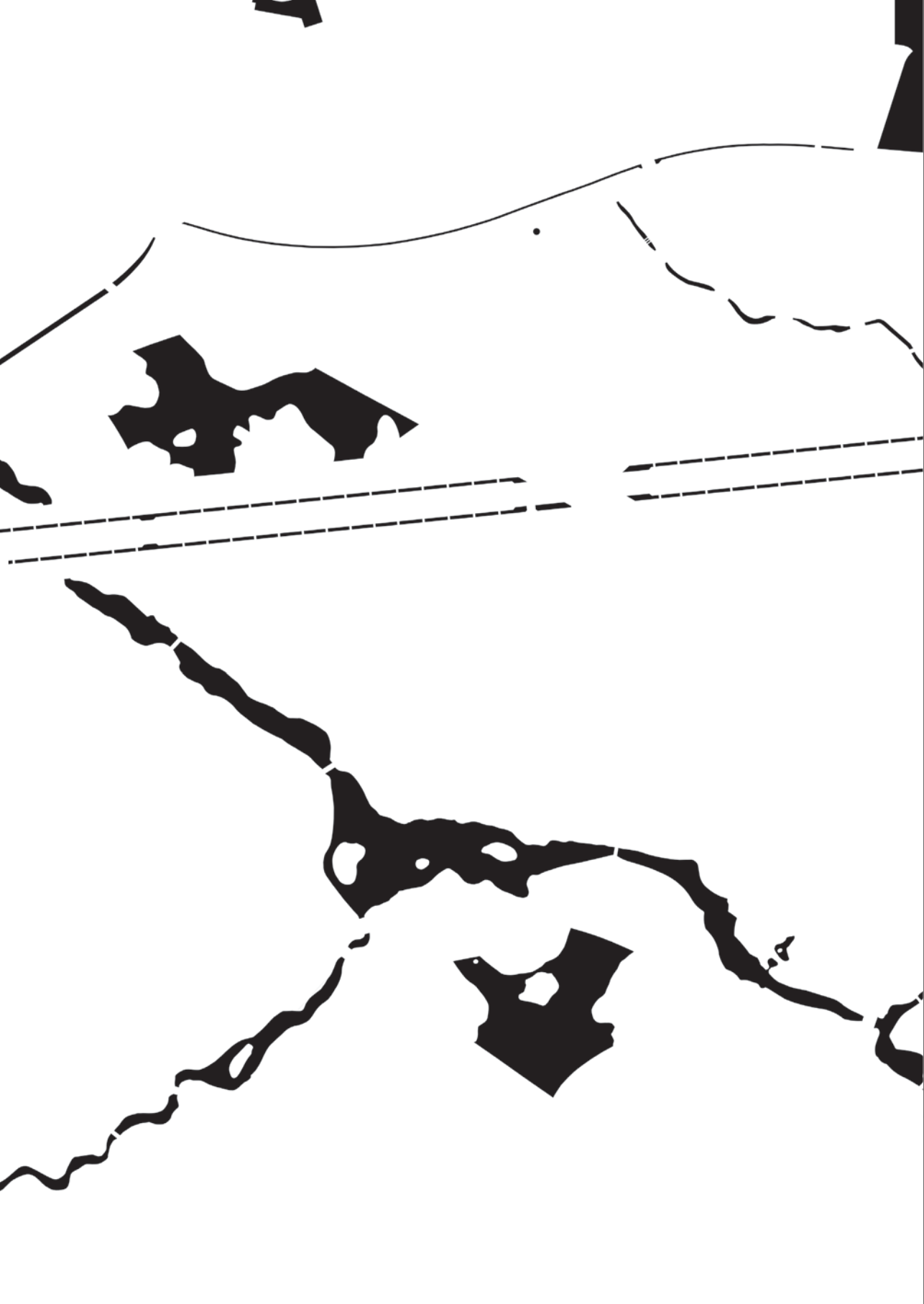


**TIERGARTEN
LANDSCAPE
OF
TRANSGRESSION
(THIS OBSCURE
OBJECT
OF DESIRE)**

 PARK BOOKS

EDITED BY
SANDRA BARTOLI & JÖRG STOLLMANN



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TIERGARTEN: A CRIME STORY

123 That an urban park makes an uncanny setting for murder is the central conceit of *Blow-Up*, Michelangelo Antonioni's film from 1966, in which a fashion photographer, Thomas, thinking he is documenting frolicking lovers in a south London park, inadvertently records an assassination on film. Upon enlarging his exposures, he discovers he has captured the assassin lying in wait, concealed in some bushes, the apparent collusion of the gentleman's paramour, and some frames later, the assassinated man's dead body sprawled beneath a tree. From this point forward the film's plot revolves around a process of evidence found and evidence lost. By the time Thomas has finished in the darkroom, night has fallen. He returns to the park, finds the actual murdered body, lying as yet undiscovered, and upon returning to his studio, discovers it ransacked, and all the prints and negatives produced earlier in the day stolen, save for one grainy, nearly abstract print showing the dead man's body crumpled in a corner. Near dawn, Thomas returns to the park to find that the corpse has also disappeared. In the interim, while the filmic spectator is left in no doubt that a murder has occurred, Thomas's own sense of "the real" has become increasingly tenuous and the public urban park, that anomalous spatial typology ordinarily composed of the most decorous, docile natural forms, a kind of unnatural nature, plays a central role in his growing sense of this irreality.

This brief summary of *Blow-Up*'s plot serves as a fitting introduction to my theme, that of the phantasmatic semiotic instability of the city under the pressures of late capitalism, where the pressures of redevelopment produce all sorts of disappeared corpses. A careful watching of the film reveals this is a far from incidental concern. It is foregrounded, in fact, by Antonioni's depiction of London as a city in the midst of massive urban redevelopment, littered with wrecking balls and construction

cranes, the gritty London of the industrial age in the process of being reshaped into an urban playground for the young and privileged. One can read in Antonioni's repeated use of building sites and derelict flats in constructing *Blow-Up*'s mise-en-scène that the film is, beneath its thriller pretext, a meditation on the elusive forces that shape and reshape modern cities, just as the carloads of mummies who dog Thomas throughout the film suggest how play and simulacra are becoming the building blocks of the new experiential economy of which the 1960s counterculture is the most visible example. (This dichotomy between the nineteenth-century industrial economy and the new economy of surplus sign-value production also appears in Thomas's dual role as a fashion photographer and a photojournalist who is found at the film's start exiting a doss house, a temporary shelter for vagrants, symbol of the reservoir of unskilled labor Marx pointed to as one of the prerequisites of commodity production.) The urban park Thomas visits and revisits then becomes a relatively durable spatial counterpoint to London's ceaseless mutability; a quiet space and yet, paradoxically, the place where Thomas comes to recognize, in the mummies playing their imaginary game of tennis, the essentially unreal character of the city under late capitalism.

In Europe, the urban park was a contemporaneous development with industrialization, serving in the modern era as a salubrious, heterotopic compliment to the industrialized city, its factories, commercial centers, and residential neighborhoods—both an amenity and in a time where relations between city and countryside were becoming increasingly attenuated, a necessity of sorts. Although not of the city precisely, the park shares its ambiance with cities and has even been accorded its share of modernity's social ills. That the urban park is a site of both leisure and enjoyment as well as insalubriousness is

today a fairly prosaic notion, but it still requires a genealogy. It is by now firmly entrenched, perhaps more so in America than in Europe, in a social imaginary of mythic urban violence—especially from the postwar period forward—a legacy of crimes spectacular and ignominious alike.¹ But does Berlin's Tiergarten carry a criminal taint? The assumption that it would was the starting point of my investigation—that Tiergarten would today, as in the past, mirror a pervasive urban malaise. An informal survey conducted among my immediate friends and acquaintances failed, however, to discover any association whatever between Tiergarten and crime, compelling me to ask a broader, less provocative question—What types of social interactions *actually* existed in Tiergarten?—and to pursue rather more hesitantly an ancillary line of questioning: How might these quotidian social interactions, despite all evidence to the contrary, still connect to the perennial albeit phantasmatic linkages between criminality, poverty, and general social dysfunction? After all, if the park is embedded within the more conflictual terrain that is Berlin, as one of its preeminent public spaces, should not the larger problems of the city—the conflicts and tensions arising from rapid gentrification, the polarizing effects of class and wealth inequities—be visible in Tiergarten, there where they are on the surface least apparent? As Toni Morrison has written, “Invisible things are not necessarily not-there.”²

To ask such questions suggests a fictitious, imaginary, and, indeed, spectral dimension to criminality exists alongside the factum of crime statistics, an insight that might well indeed prompt one to peer into their motive cause; that is, in the words of Janice Radway, “the extended intellectual consequences of the historically constituted divide between the social and the individual, the abstract and the concrete, the analytical and the imaginary.”³ It might lead one to allude as well to the imaginary dimension of governmentality that so often reinforces and buttresses the perception that this or that area is insalubrious, in the process subtly transforming fiction into tangible reality. To speculate thusly might also lead one to consider what is it that differentiates park space from urban space; to consider the park not precisely as a heterotopic site⁴ but in accordance with Foucault's admonition that, as social beings, we live inside “a set of relations that delineates sites which are [while also being adjacent and permeable] irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.”⁵

All of these questions, while disparate in nature, share a concern with how subjective perception effects objective, empirical facts. But having elected to concentrate less on quantifiable facts than the imaginary dimension of my observations, on site and in the moment of inquiry, in gathering data I chose to employ the tactics of the *dériviste*,

125 the amateur sleuth who eschews the top-down perspective of the expert in favor of the spatially situated orientation of the everyday user—a choice in keeping with my nonspecialist status as a practitioner from the field of “artistic research.” I did, however, undertake my investigation with a hypothesis in mind. Given adjacency and permeability are central characteristics of urban parks, one might expect the character of the city street, the hostile, aggressive, and antagonistic stance normally directed at the urban other, the stranger encountered alone or in a crowd does not magically cease once one enters the tranquility of park space. My supposition was this cautious, defensively aggressive urban personality—one born of over-crowding, alienation, and anomie—is not absent in its historical counter-figure, the leisurely park-goer, and that social tensions typical of the urban environment persist in Tiergarten, registering on either a covert or occluded level. In other words, I wanted to attend to the process by which a street crowd transforms into a park crowd.

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“The crowd—no subject was more entitled to the attention of nineteenth century writers,”⁶ wrote Walter Benjamin, and one could add few subjects are as emblematic of modernity than the granular, heterogeneous yet entirely determined agglomerations of individuals one finds on city streets. The experience of the crowd in the modern city presented a series of paradoxes to early observers. It was at once a place of extreme heterogeneity—a free field of signs and a marketable mass of images, to paraphrase T. J. Clark—which made the street an elusive, transitory zone to gather social facts. It was also a zone of anomie and improvisation where the old separations that once governed class interaction had

broken down for good, replaced by a “reign of generalized illusion.”⁷ At the same time, the street remained, in ways both easy and difficult to quantify, more stratified, more inflexibly classed and compartmentalized than ever before. The city had also become a psychological incubator, a zone of strong, at times perverse affect. For those thinkers, historical and contemporary alike, who sought to account for urbanity's salient features, the city's mythic and mythologizing anomie presents itself as at once internal psychological condition and external attribute of urban space, in which the prejudices and predilections of a given age act as barriers to objective thought. “What the myth of modernity fails to do,” writes Clark, “what entitles us to call it mythical [...] is to put together its account of anomie with that of social division; it fails to map one form of social control over another.”⁸ This was especially true of the writers who took their involuntary reaction to urban stimuli for objective data, resolving the resulting inner confusion of terms by treating the city street as something that concerned other people. Confronted by the admixture of typologies and classes present in the city, the response of these early urban critics was both moral and aesthetic. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Friedrich Engels painted the crowds of London in repugnant terms, as if his shock was so great that he could no longer distinguish between normative judgment and descriptive statement. Surveying the London street left him unhinged by the rapidity of people streaming past, a crowd in which he found a concentration of the worst aspects of society, a “distasteful,” “brutally indifferent” agglomeration “of all classes and ranks,” pursuing similar aims and aspirations while rushing past one another “as if they had nothing in common or were in no

1 The infamous case of the Central Park Five, five young African Americans wrongly convicted of a brutal rape in 1989, is among the more prominent of such crimes. More recently, one can point to allusions of the notoriety of Baltimore's Leakin Park as a dumping ground for murdered bodies in the first series of the Serial radio podcast.

2 Toni Morrison, quoted in Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 17.

3 Janice Radway, foreword to Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, ix.

4 Foucault's list of sites of “temporary relaxation” such as beaches and cafes, which by his account are not heterotopic, does not include the park, suggesting that if the park is heterotopic it is so to a lesser degree than, say, a cemetery or a brothel.

5 First published in October 1984 by the French journal *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* under the title “Des Espaces Autres,” Michel Foucault's text is known to his Anglophone audience by the title “Of Other Spaces: Heterotopias.” Originally drafted for a lecture Foucault presented in 1967, it was not reviewed for publication by the author and thus has remained outside the official corpus of his work, which has not kept it from being copiously and at times erroneously cited. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec, the manuscript was released into the public domain to facilitate its inclusion in an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Foucault's death. See page 3.

6 Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 166.

7 T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 36.

8 Clark, 49.

way associated with one another.”⁹ It is true Engels’s book dates from the final decade of the First Industrial Revolution, when the social ills stemming from a rapid influx and concentration of poorly remunerated laborers in cities ill-equipped to accommodate these new populations was glaringly apparent. Yet, it is as if Engels, the son of successful German industrialists, writes from a position of moral opprobrium, personally offended not so much by the conditions he is documenting as by the incivility witnessed. Indeed, “Not everyone can take a bath of multitude,”¹⁰ as Charles Baudelaire begins the chapter of *Paris Spleen* titled “Crowds,” where he reframes Engels’s apparent psychological shortcomings as a researcher into a ubiquitous character deficit. Being loathe by dint of family affluence as much as critical predilection to identify positively with urban crowds, Engels could only react defensively and critically. And lacking the facility of the *flâneur* to navigate crowded streets with a minimum of effort, he utterly missed how the modern city was creating a new type of psychology. Baudelaire, whose professional life was spent in a state of chronic impecuniousness, could ill afford Engels’s lofty perspective and spent his career turning an at-times precarious proximity to the perils of the everyday into a virtue, a poetic program, culminating in a collection of brief prose works celebrating the urban experience and the kinds of psychological states it produced, in the more or less ambivalent terms one would expect of the poet laureate of the nascent modern experience. Baudelaire expressed a view of crowd phenomenon from within, as already a part of his own subjectivity, as Walter Benjamin astutely noted, and it was precisely this internalization born of his immersion in the urban life of

Paris that bred in his poetry a “defensive reaction to [its] attraction and allure.”¹¹ In fact, Baudelaire was among the first to describe the now commonplace experience of the city street as site and source of a barely restrained libidinal dynamism, a phantasmatic eroticism, “love—not at first sight, but at last sight. [...] of which one might not infrequently say that it was spared, rather than denied, fulfillment.”¹² In Baudelaire, the internalized crowd created a poetics; in his compatriots, it bred neurasthenic frustration. In both cases it reflected the alienation the urban subject characteristically experienced toward society at large, a psychic tension who’s oscillations veered dizzyingly between the wish for forms of life-affirming contact and life-preserving seclusion, with neither option proving satisfactory.

From these two positions—Engels’s empirically-based critique where the shifting ambiguities of the crowd were cataloged and fixed, and Baudelaire’s evocative and poetic excoriations in which the Paris crowds, while rarely named, remain omnipresent—we have inherited a modern sociological notion of the urban as at once environment and psychological construct, milieu and pathology, site for and cause of an alienated personality type—schizoid, aggressive, individualistic, disorganized—who’s feelings and reactions are conditioned by social forces encountered on a daily basis. Not least by what Georg Simmel termed the “money economy,” the omnipresent and overpowering hegemony of a fully matured industrial capitalism exacerbating the already alienated individual’s suspicion that he or she is nothing more than “a mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers,”¹³ transforming subjective experience into its desiccated, objectified compliment.

127 But the urban crowd is not an undifferentiated phenomenon. Throughout the nineteenth century, the modern city produced new types of crowds and with these crowds, new modes of comportment and new types of fear. By the end of the century, anxieties about the socially ambivalent construction of crowds on city streets—anxieties driven by the Industrial Revolution’s undoing of the local commercial relations that had formerly bolstered neighborhood and class identity (a function of a single industry or a set of related trades being set in geographical proximity), dispersing trade throughout the city and anonymizing the firsthand relationships in which people at one time set considerable stock—came to encompass sites deliberately visited, such as amusement parks and café concert venues. At such locales, bourgeois families, clerks and shop assistants, workers, petty criminals, prostitutes, and pimps congregated in utter disregard for the tacit rules of separation that had formerly governed and canalized cross-class interactions, creating scenes, in the words of a contemporary observer, of great “social dishevelment.”¹⁴ In recently-created urban parks, on the contrary, strenuous efforts were made to reach a *modus vivendi* in which, as T. J. Clark has written, the different classes relied on an elaborate texture of controls and avoidances to maintain social hierarchies in the relatively uninflected space of a fabricated nature, “[agreeing] to ignore one another [by] marking out invisible boundaries.”¹⁵

These invisible boundaries are the real subject of Georges Seurat’s famous painting, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte—1884* (1884–86), and Clark reinforces his point by referencing two works by the painter Roger Jourdain—*Le*

Dimanche and *Le Lundi*—published six years earlier in the popular Parisian journal, *L’Illustration*. With the coming of the Paris rail system, the island of La Grand Jatte, a narrow spit lodged in the Seine between the suburbs of Asnières and Neuilly, had become a popular holiday destination, minutes away from the Clichy train station. Equally popular amongst bourgeois and worker, in Jourdain’s illustration their leisure time is reassuringly segregated. A clear hierarchy is inferred, delineated first by a temporal boundary—the title of the second of Jourdain’s illustrations refers to the celebration of *Saint Lundi*, a tradition among the working classes that, while archaic by the late nineteenth century, still held sufficient sentimental charge among workers to carry Jourdain’s implied meaning—that a strict separation still existed between the bourgeois promenading in their finery on a Sunday afternoon and the workers who, for lack of a second-hand suit, took their leisure the day after—as well as cultural distinctions born of habitus. For the bourgeois citizen, it was a mahogany rowboat and chilled champagne taken on a grassy bank; for the worker, bottles of undistinguished *vin rouge* quaffed on rough plank benches. “Jourdain is willing and able to articulate the difference between petit bourgeois and worker,” writes Clark, “because it presents itself here, at least in fantasy, as a clean separation in which each class knows its place. [...] and though both are a little absurd in their pleasures, it is clear that one is inferior to the other.”¹⁶ In Seurat’s painting, on the contrary, it remains difficult to ascertain who is inferior and who superior, let alone which groupings are made up of associates and which merely the result of a temporary spatial proximity. This effect was noted by critics of the time, who saw in the

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9 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 167.

10 Charles Baudelaire, *The Parisian Prowler: Le Spleen de Paris. Petits Poèmes en prose*, trans. Edward K. Kaplan (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 21.

11 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 167.

12 Benjamin, 169, 170.

13 Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), 415.

14 Louis Veuillot, quoted in Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, 213.

15 Veuillot, quoted in Clark, 265.

16 Veuillot, quoted in Clark, 262, 263.

diversity of detail an implied revolutionary message, identifiable in Seurat's synthetic contour lines—his “uniform and as it were abstract execution”¹⁷—and the manner in which the painting's rigid figures are crammed together in close proximity, “as if the picture was hardly big enough to contain them.”¹⁸

One may justifiably argue that this description of the ways social tension became legible and locatable in the debased heterotopia of urban park space is particular to a particular type of artistic modernity and a particular type of city, Paris being the metropolis where the spatial conventions that came to emblemize modernity's urban texture were developed and refined. In paintings set in Tiergarten roughly contemporaneous to *La Grand Jatte*, the park retains the formality of a brand of history painting dedicated to the staid evocation of bourgeois rectitude: the theme of class antagonism (or to be more precise, class disquiet) that dominates Seurat's work remaining entirely absent. Even in the work of a contemporaneous German painter of similarly modern aspirations such as Berlin native Max Liebermann (who, coincidentally, traveled to Paris to study painting in 1872, not long after the Paris Commune destroyed for several generations any hope the French working class held for transforming its condition, although this event appears to have left little impression on his artistic sensibility), the issue of class relations is wholly

absent, or so subtle as to remain invisible.¹⁹ Perhaps this indicates that Berlin's workers took their relaxation elsewhere—the park was at the time girdled by several fashionable neighborhoods—or perhaps it is merely a reflection of the fact that urban and cultural conditions had yet to reach a point where the particular texture of Berlin city life in itself would become a wellspring of creative ferment.²⁰ Or perhaps it points to an important occlusion in representation and the presence of the invisible things lurking in the aforementioned shadows Toni Morrison has written of as uncanny half-certainties, not necessarily not-there.

So it was that on a sunny midweek afternoon in early June, with Clark's text on *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* fresh in my mind and holding in my hands a kind of psychogeographic map sketched with Sandra Bartoli's assistance, I set out for the park in order to see if I could read in Tiergarten visible signs of Clark's invisible boundaries—our inheritance from the first capitalist reorganization of urban space and its attendant recalibration of class interactions—and Morrison's invisible things, our inheritance from what came after. Any map of Tiergarten makes clear that it is divided into four distinct zones separated by major traffic arteries. On my map Sandra had also helpfully noted less clearly delineated areas—one might describe them using Situationist terminology as “zones of

129 attraction”—where different social groups gather and in which different forms of behaviors are concentrated. Approaching the park from Bahnhof Zoo, I passed, as Sandra had anticipated I would, encampments of homeless men taking advantage of the constant foot traffic to opportune passersby entering the park or visiting the Schleusenkrug café. After a quick coffee at the aforementioned café, I crossed the Landwehrkanal, entering the park proper. Turning left to negotiate a finger of the Neuer See, I circled around the Großer Weg en route to my first destination, the most socially stratified and most “problematic” area of the park from an administrative point of view—the gay cruising zone adjacent to the Löwenbrücke in the southwest. The first thing that caught my attention was a group of women with their babies encircled by prams to create a defensive perimeter, who sat beneath the shade of a tree. Behind them, a cluster of men drinking beer were gathered around a ping-pong table. From the path, I could faintly make out the latter's distinguishing characteristics, but something indefinable suggested the difference between the women on the grass and the men at the ping-pong table—varying modes of comportment I would normally have found unremarkable but in this context struck me as one example of Clark's invisible boundaries, evidence of the tacit codes of dress and behavior that continue to differentiate class-inflected modes of being.

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When I reached the Löwenbrücke, the area was more or less deserted, not even a used condom to betray evidence of illicit activity. I continued east toward the so-called Fleischwiese, a kind of sunny annex to the secluded shade of the cruising area, which on this day was crowded with men in various states of undress. I then cut across Hofjägerallee to a trail that edged north along Tiergartengewässer. This southeast zone, where stands of trees are interrupted by

stretches of meadow ideal for picnics or sunbathing, is the most well-groomed and tourist-oriented part of the park. On this day it was populated mostly by solitary sunbathers or parents with their children. Nothing particularly illicit was going on, although at the southern terminus of Bellevueallee I found the corpse of a small rabbit, savaged, perhaps, by a dog off its leash or a fox. My general impression was of a well-maintained space, footpaths freshly graded and maintenance crews much in evidence emptying trash receptacles and grooming foliage. People were sitting or strolling, pushing bicycles or prams, and it was easy enough to tell one type of person from another: the newness of a pair of shoes or the cut of a shirt clearly differentiated the middle-class visitor from the desultory attention to apparel evidenced by a man of perceptible alcoholic inclinations sitting on a bench smoking a cigarette, his pale and viscid calves visible below rolled-up trousers. I was only slightly perturbed when further along the path I thought I passed the same man slouched on an identical park bench in the same state of torpor as the one I had passed ten minutes before. How had he relocated so quickly—apparently unruffled by his exertions—as if he had set off on his bicycle with the sole purpose of startling me through his uncanny reappearance? This encounter struck me as all the more menacing for its apparent incongruity with the setting. I made a note that on my next visit I should arrive more toward dusk, when if something alarming were to happen, it would at least appear appropriate to the time of day.

The following week I returned around 6 p.m. to explore the park's northern zones. In particular, I was on the lookout for an area habituated by drug dealers and several other areas where trees had been cleared, both of which Sandra had indicated on her map (the tree-clearing had particularly incensed her).

17 Félix Fénéon, quoted in Clark, *Painting of Modern Life*, 264.

18 Fénéon, quoted in Clark, 265.

19 Certainly this is the case with a painting such as *Kinderspielplatz*, painted a year after *La Grand Jatte*, which for all its impressionistic vigor, maintains an arboreal wholesomeness, as does the biergarten depicted in *Sommerfrische im Berliner Tiergarten* from 1900, with its sedate and well-dressed patrons. Liebermann, who himself came from a successful merchant family and choose his subjects predominantly from the bourgeois world, revisited Tiergarten on other occasions, as in *Promenade im Tiergarten mit Spaziergängern* from 1925, and in no painting is a working class figure recognizable to the modern eye, although certainly some of the women in *Kinderspielplatz* could be, are very likely to have been, domestics. But the overall effect of Liebermann's work is to blend and unify rather than to isolate and distinguish.

20 In accounting for Friedrich Engels' repugnance to the crowds of English cities, Walter Benjamin writes: “The writer [Engels] came from a Germany that was still provincial; he may never have faced the temptation to lose himself in a stream of people. When Hegel went to Paris for the first time not long before his death, he wrote to his wife: ‘When I walk through the streets, people look just as they do in Berlin; they wear the same clothes and the faces are about the same—the same aspect, but in a large crowd,’” *Illuminations*, 167.

I entered the park on Stülerstrasse, noting at least ten tree stumps while heading west toward the point of Strasse des 17. Juni where it passes under the S-Bahn tracks, site of a failed restaurant. Arriving, I found several homeless men taking advantage of the temporary absence of a renter to use the temporarily vacant patio as a storage space and to pursue improvised commercial activities. I didn't notice many tree stumps in the immediate vicinity—perhaps they'd already been dug up and filled in—but from a commercial standpoint it was clear the location had certain drawbacks. The nearby thoroughfare sent the sound of traffic ringing through my skull, mixing there with the smell of exhaust and the ozone haze of air pollution to color everything—the parched grass, the low ornamental shrubs and etiolated saplings, the dirty sidewalk and soot-covered walls of the S-Bahn arch—with an atmosphere of general neglect, punctuated nicely by the florid rantings of a man, apparently in the throes of a psychotic episode, circling the signpost of a bus stop like an erratic satellite.

I walked west past the S-Bahn line to the no-man's-land where the park gives way to the campus of the Technische Universität, then circled back on a path that runs along the Landwehrkanal where houseboats are picturesquely moored, and then through a tunnel cutting beneath the S-Bahn line, passing several tents pitched beside the canal. A group of boisterous drinkers reeled about on the grass outside their makeshift shelters, clutching vodka bottles in their hands. Turning north, I crossed Strasse des 17. Juni and entered the Hansaviertel district with its modernist apartment blocks. Here Sandra had indicated more felled trees, but I was unable to find them. So, circling back toward the Siegestsäule monument, I crossed Altonaerstrasse to reenter the park near the Englischer Garten and the Teehaus. Here Sandra's map indicated

the presence of an open-air drug market. I was disappointed again, for there was no evidence of drug dealers, although I did find three Heineken bottles carefully placed at even intervals along the path, putting me in mind of Wallace Stephen's poem about the jar on that hill in Tennessee, "which took dominion everywhere," making the wilderness slovenly.

Making my way west again, I crossed an intersection to enter Tiergarten's northwest quadrant. This is perhaps its least appealing zone. It is thickly forested, but the lush greenness gives off an appearance of foreboding rather than tranquility. Here the park appeared to be populated entirely by men, walking singly or in couples, some derelict and others quite ordinary in appearance. I passed a young man of Middle Eastern or North African descent, who fixed me with a meaningful glance. Was he one of the drug dealers Sandra had noted I might find further east? A cruising homosexual? I wasn't sure, and anyway it no longer occurred to me in my heightened state of paranoid attentiveness that he might simply be there in the park to enjoy the greenery and the hum of traffic. *He had to be there for a reason.* I reached the end of the Bremer Weg and turning back, again encountered the young man, who appeared like myself to be making a circuit of the park. This time we both fixed each other with the same meaningful glances, then moved on in silence, neither of us sure, apparently, of the other's intentions.

I seemed to have descended into a fever of suspicion. But what was it exactly that made everyone else appear suspect to me? Was it my own concentration on uncovering something suspect that lent them this appearance? Did I appear suspicious to them? If the stranger is strange to me, then quite possibly—quite probably—I in turn appear strange to the stranger. In fact, I am

indeed a stranger to them, to those who do not know me and cannot be sure whether or not I harbor ulterior motives similar to those which I was ascribing to the others lingering in the park at dusk. And so the idea arose, there in the gathering gloom of a tree-covered walkway, that I myself was out of place—a stranger doubly estranged there in Tiergarten, this liminal zone between city and country, built space and vegetable life, discovered suddenly as a zone of alienation where the familiar fabric of urban space becomes derealized.²¹

Before exiting the park I passed by the Fauler See. At the water's edge a sullen-looking young man was smoking a joint while on an adjacent bench an elderly man fixed his gaze on the still, fetid pond. Confronted by this tableau, I became acutely aware of the extent to which I had maintained, despite my best intentions, the class-bound regard for the notional other it had originally been my intention to interrogate. Not wishing to interrupt their silence, and in a sense fleeing my own self-judgment, I was continuing along the trail ringing the Fauler See when I spied a narrow dirt path leading to the pond's edge. Someone had made a little cave out of the foliage, its bare dirt floor scattered with bits of refuse, vividly conveying the impression of having been only recently vacated, so strongly did it vibrate with the phantom presence of an occupant. Retracing my footsteps, I rounded a corner and came upon a misshapen man with a shock of white hair lumbering forward in heavy black orthopedic shoes, shapeless ankle-length boots made for clomping awkwardly about: the type of person who exists at the very margins of the urban scene, his pale complexion suggesting a life of reclusion.

I could imagine him dragging this ungainly footwear through the fallen leaves covering the dirt path and then along cobbled streets and up the stairs to a dirty attic studio apartment whose windows looked out upon a grimy courtyard or a deserted street faced with 1950s apartment blocks perpetually cast in the black and white of postwar austerity, where he was wont to sit, gazing out on the courtyard or street below (a view offering none of the refined delectation of the paralytic in the E. T. A. Hoffman story—one of the first works of literature to foreground the emergent scopic regime of the wholly alienated city dweller—who's vigil at his window prefigures that very modern sentiment of resentment-tinged superiority-in-isolation). The man gave me a furtive, avoidant look and quickened his step, disappearing down the darkening pathway, and with his departure, the memory of a scene from Virginia Woolf's essay "Street Haunting" surfaced, the part where Woolf observes through the shop window a young female dwarf being fitted for new boots, accompanied by two minders. The encounter calls into being for Woolf an entire "atmosphere," a parade of the halt and blind, "a hobbling, grotesque dance to which everybody in the street now conformed."²² And now this contagion had reached across the ages to clasp me in its spell: the elderly man I passed not soon after, shuffling through the fallen leaves with the aid of a cane, now seemed not merely old but decrepitude personified; the pallid man who appeared next had a protuberant forehead of such alarming size his neck appeared to have to strain to support it. And here came a leering inebriate in his wheelchair, Sternberg beer bottle clutched in his fist, pushed along by a companion in an equally advanced state of drunkenness,

21 Again to quote Benjamin: "Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the *flâneur* only if as such he is already out of place," *Illuminations*, 172 (my italics).

22 Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting," in *Death of the Moth and Other Essays* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970), 25.

staggering and swaying and gripping at the wheelchair handles to remain erect.

This brief state of intensified perception in turn elicited one of those minor revelations in which the kernel of the issue one has been circling around in dim misapprehension becomes briefly illuminated. I glimpsed clearly the solitary walker in his heavy orthopedic boots returning to his lonely room, and of the broader social forces—poverty, social isolation, alcoholism, immigration—that shaped the destinies of his compatriots, who lingered here in the green twilight. Because one chief advantage of a park is it's entirely free to sit and while away the afternoon. No café server to insinuate you have overstayed your welcome after the second hour spent lingering over a cup of coffee, casting disparaging glances at your threadbare coat, your decrepit shoes—the trappings that give poverty an identifiable shape. I was reminded of a line from W. H. Auden: “The lonely are battered like pebbles into fortuitous shapes.” Here the pebbles had gathered and it is the peculiar obligation of city parks to make a home for them; what Henri Lefebvre called “the right to the city”—the right of all that exists in cities to participate in “an encounter, actual or possible, of all ‘objects’ and ‘subjects.’”²³

What lessons had I learned? I had established early on that Tiergarten is not a dangerous place, neither in reality nor the popular imaginary of Berliners. (The most ominous anecdote I collected came from a native Berliner who grew up near Tiergarten and had reminisced about walking through the park on her way home from school, occasionally feeling “alarmed,” though she failed to remember a specific incident which had prompted her trepidation, save for the

normal anxiety of a child equipped with the standard faculties of imagination, making her way through the shadowy trees and bushes of a park where gardeners acted according to maintenance guidelines promoting a more wild-seeming landscape than the relatively manicured parkland one encounters in parts of today's Tiergarten.) I had found evidence of the continued maintenance of T. J. Clark's invisible boundaries, but they were more subtle than overt, perhaps a function of the two hundred years in which modern urbanism has coded and recoded precisely these type of encounters, making class division in social space at once less remarkable and more ubiquitous. Perhaps it was that the “crime” I had encountered was precisely the sort that is least remarked upon: the means power and privilege use to alienate lived space by returning the city to its inhabitants transformed into an image, a picture concordant with power's notion of what a city should look like and who should occupy it. A spectral yet embodied image, omnipresent yet retaining a connection to site and location ... as in a case of haunting. Perhaps my crime story was in fact a ghost story.

In the sociologist Avery F. Gordon's view, haunting has to do with our imaginary relationship to the real, to the way the imaginary creates a border zone that destabilizes empirical space. It is in this zone where the harms inflicted or the losses sustained in past or present instances of social violence are registered—“when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving.”²⁴ Through a science of haunting Gordon “imputes a kind of objectivity to ghosts [implying] that, from certain standpoints, the dialectics of visibility and invisibility involve a constant negotiation

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133 between what can be seen and what is in the shadows,”²⁵ the existence of the latter being, as Morrison's axiom suggests, resistant to being definitively proven or disproven. The significance of this observation in the sylvan context of the urban park rests in the way the ghosts that tie present subjects to past histories become imperceptible there, the visible traces of history and trauma to which ghosts attach themselves being inexorably subsumed by biotic process.

Just as I had sought to sensitize my perception of certain invisible thresholds demarcating social space, reading Gordon's thesis I now felt confronted with the theoretical necessity to decipher not only the synchronic traces of historically bounded modes of being and systems of occlusion and marginalization I had taken note of in Tiergarten but the diachronic shades lurking there as well. The most prominent being Rosa Luxemburg. Shot in 1919 on the Katharina-Heinroth-Ufer,

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which runs between the southern bank of the Landwehrkanal and the bordering Zoologischer Garten, Luxemburg's body was unceremoniously dumped into the canal by her Freikorps executioners. The site is now marked by a bronze statue that succeeds in being at once solemn and clinical to the point of affectless. Nothing remains of how the site looked in 1919—save for the canal water itself—and consequently, there is no way to build a setting for this event and its repercussions. Which might be the urban park's most characteristic attribute. Standing at the border of built and natural space, the urban park, as Thomas the photographer discovers by the end of *Blow-Up*, is a species of site where the memory and presence of trauma become inconspicuous, sociological “facts” elusive. Receding in this garden setting of summertime picnics and afternoon strolls, traumatic events stick to the shadows, gathering about them a deeper ambiguity.

23 Henri Lefebvre, *Writing on Cities*, trans. and ed. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (London: Blackwell, 1996), 195.

24 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

25 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 23.

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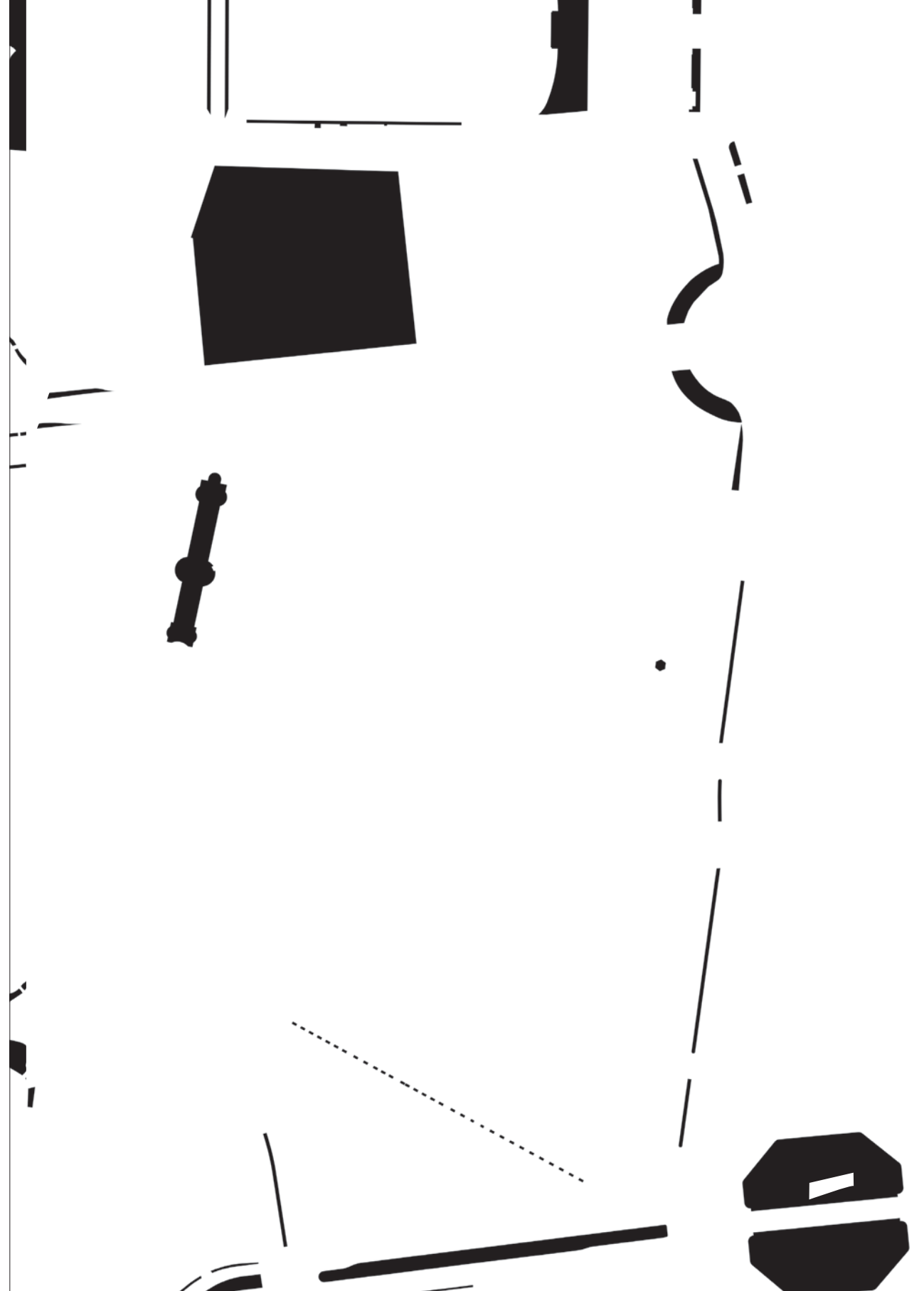


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TIERGARTEN—210 HECTARES OF FOREST IN THE MIDDLE OF BERLIN AND THE OLDEST PARK IN THE CITY—IS A PLACE WHERE MANY ASPECTS OF ECOLOGY, URBANISM, HERITAGE, DAILY CULTURE, AND POLITICS ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY PRESENT BUT ALSO VISIBLY TRANSGRESSED. OVER TIME THE PARK HAS BECOME AN ISLAND OF ANOMALIES THAT CAN BE READ AS A RADICAL EXPRESSION OF WHAT IS MOST URBAN AND PUBLIC IN THE CITY. HUMAN HISTORY AND NATURAL HISTORY ARE HERE CONSTRUCTED TOGETHER, SERVING AS A MODEL OF THE DISSOLVING ANTAGONISM BETWEEN NATURE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT. IN TIERGARTEN, THIS TRANSGRESSION BECOMES A KEY TO SHIFTING ESTABLISHED WAYS OF TALKING ABOUT THE CITY.

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