Joseph Roth (1894-1939) : Between Reportage and Fiction

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The Scope of his Vision

The writer, Joseph Roth, as a character in his own work, is plunged and plunges himself into the maelstrom of action, as observer, as active participant, as well as reporter and author. These borderlines are crossed constantly as the typical Roth fiction shifts between first person narrative and external observation. The author can be both his own created character and a detached onlooker as well. He can also sometimes be the omniscient narrator. He also makes no clear distinction between reportage and fiction, as both genres are expected to be true to life. In this he departs, in his own view, from the so-called *neue Sachlichkeit*, the new objectivity, which was emerging in German letters during this phase. This movement, despite its prestige in striving for unalloyed objectivity, is attacked by Roth in a series of articles, which claim that documentary writing (OK!) is being confused with the merely artless (not so good).[1] For him, this is a crossover with a careful regard for precision, truthfulness and quality.

So the Roth hero faces mighty changes, and he has to resolve these by some sort of adjustment. One of the distinguishing features of Roth's writing is his inclusiveness, his comprehensive coverage of human types. This marks both his reportage and his fiction. And his own life is of a piece with his writing. His great friend, chronicler and editor, Hermann Kesten, notes that he was an Austrian in the broadest sense, associated with the old Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, with the blend of peoples, cultures, intertwined memories and multiplicity of languages.[2] He was a world citizen by inclination as well as background.[3] But this was qualified by his regular stance of being in flight and his constant search for the 'other', a condition that was injected into his characters. He takes on many masks, and these, in fun and in earnest, can quickly merge or morph.

Roth's Fiction

His first novel, *The Spider's Web*[4], sets the tone for his early fiction, staging his favoured setting, the situation following the Great War in Central Europe. His central character is a demobbed lieutenant, Theodor Lohse, a victim of the German revolution, who is possessed by a fear of conspiracy, a sense of danger that he pins on the 'Jewish threat'. We have here the pendulum swing of the action in Roth's narrative; the shift between war and peace, for the hero the transition from a fixed and predictable framework of employment to the freedom from that discipline, which leads to uncertainty and ennui. The character is cast on his own resources, and he has to discover the kernel of his own being, and through that some sort of direction. Lohse's frustration at his own pointless existence and sense of failure leads him into an ambiguous life of search for meaning in just hitting out in all directions, with no regard for consequences.

Fiction can see this from the inside, and a narrative presents all types in this way. It is the analysis of the psychic background that can make the course of his career comprehensible and communicable. The two genres, reportage and fiction, have their own rules, and we see both the advantages and the danger of fiction over straightforward reporting. The latter has to stick to the external and the observable, that is, to the exterior, and thus falsifiable fact; the test to be applied to it is empirical. The presentation has to be fluid, fluent and gripping. Roth certainly strove to attain the highest standard in the enterprise, although his reliability as a prophet, when he ventured beyond dry observation, might well be held to account.[5]

In any case, the picture of a Berlin attempting to accommodate itself to a grisly post-war situation grips the reader, achieving that through an assemblage of portraits, both in this first novel and in successive fictions. Here, Lohse is fairly typical; a man undistinguished intellectually and spiritually, now, as a retired officer, out of his time and place. The narrator attempts to grasp the phenomenon of Fascist aspiration in his principal character, who adopts a distorted version of patriotic nostalgia. The reader has to understand how one might take on two identities, as well as turn into a savage killer. It is his paradoxical colleague, the Jew, Benjamin Lenz, who characterises him thus: '…grim and cowardly, gross and cunning, ambitious and insatiable, greedy and frivolous…He was the young man of Europe; nationalistic, self-seeking, devoid of belief and loyalty, bloodthirsty and blinkered. This was the new Europe.[6] The novel is riotous, devastating and random. But it is Lohse who is finally outmanoeuvered and abandoned by his associate, Lenz, who takes all the money and leaves the country.

The Speaker as Narrator

That the author can also adopt the position of first person narrator we see in another early Roth novel, *Hotel Savoy*.[7] Here, he assumes the role of one of the active participants, Gabriel Dan, narrator from within, relating the fortunes of the eponymous hero of the work the Savoy hotel itself. But the speaker here is also multi-faceted. He had been a soldier, and is now a civilian. He had been a Russian, and he is now apparently assuming the guise of a West European, a status to which he aspires. He faces two ways, as he still retains within himself the old instincts and that capacity for violence and adherence to a rigid, militaristic discipline. Indeed the basic lineaments of this character, as with so many Roth figures throughout his fiction, bears remarkable similarity to the author's own biographical profile.

The adoption of the hotel as not only the locus of the action but as its very essence, suggests the hotel as synecdoche for the whole action. A hotel suggests temporality, and can be contrasted with the notion of home. The author's life pattern suggests lack of home. He was born in Brody, a fact which he seems to want to hide, and

does not mention in his own account of his life. Brody is a small town which he left early in life, and to which he never returned. He then lived, always temporarily and sometimes sporadically, in various different countries and places, always of a temporary nature, and he ended his short life in another town altogether, in the Paris which he loved so much. But he lived still more or less as though a temporary visitor staying in a hotel. The Savoy hotel of the novel presents as a locus, well aware of its fragile existence; it serves not a longed for haven but rather as a temporary refuge. Its metaphorical nature is not solely spatial, relating to the place situated, but also temporal. Thus we are led to view it as an area in time between wars (although of course Roth did not live to witness World War Two) as well as an indeterminate place in national terms. There is a plasticity of character, so that the same person passing through changes in situation as well as in age, seems to face in different and sometimes opposite directions. The situation is dynamic, as is the history pictured, based on actuality. For the narrator, the hotel can seem to become a home, although that can change quite suddenly.[8] The national locus is unnamed, though indubitably Central European. But there are also quasi-mythical elements intervening within the naturalistic scenario. The people within the hotel all await a certain Bloomfield, due to arrive from America. So this man acquires the status of a kind of messiah, who will effect a degree of fulfilment and possibly redemption. In the meantime, the feeling of homelessness grows, and the major aspiration of the teller of the story is not to feel isolated. He must be part of a collective. Towards the end of the tale, he confesses: 'I am part of the homecoming soldiers.'[9] The climax is total disintegration. Fighting breaks out, as does the raging fire that consumes the hotel.

In Flight

The most comprehensive document detailing Roth's own account of his life is a letter written to his publisher, Gustav Kiepenheuer on that man's fiftieth birthday, although the translator, Michael Hofmann, who records this is somewhat sceptical in regard to its veracity in literal detail, though accurate in feeling.[10] Roth wrote: 'Nowhere, in no church record or parish register, is my name entered, or the date of my birth. I feel at home in myself, but otherwise I have no home.' (10 June 1930). The novel, *Flight without End*, he regarded as '…substantially autobiography, and he identified himself with its central figure, Lieutenant Tunda.'[11] The only Foreword that he ever wrote for any of his novels appears here, where he asserts that he invents nothing about his '…friend, comrade and spiritual associate, Franz Tunda…I have invented nothing, made up nothing…Observed fact is all that counts.'

So in this novel, he was being truthful but not artless. Tunda is a version of the author, accurately recorded and represented. It is paradoxical though that whilst what we have seems to be a standard *Heimkehrroman*, he carries with him perpetually a sense of homelessness. Tunda, like the author himself, has not really found his home, despite his apparent return home. A first lieutenant in the Austrian army (Roth too had volunteered to serve in 1916), he was taken as a Russian prisoner of war. Then he was saved by a Pole, so he learnt Polish and took on the surname of his saviour, Baranowicz. He then inclined

towards Buddhism, but later, by default, he joined the ranks of the Russian revolutionaries, just after he had distanced himself from that outlook and ideology. He took the devoted insurrectionist, Natasha, as a lover, and acquired the tools to work as a revolutionary propagandist and writer. But what he writes is his own reference point and compass, and that charts his position.

In a letter to the narrator/author (referred to directly as Roth), Tunda treats the question of why he left Russia, and whether he felt 'at home' there. Unable to reply unequivocally, he says that he is 'between resignation and expectation'.[12] He still feels a stranger, and we may tend to conclude that this derives from the fact that he feels a stranger everywhere, that this is inherent to his consciousness. After the gradual realisation that he was penniless, without a profession, without a lover, without prospects or ambition, and, overall, without any drive, belief or even a sense of being, he comes to the conclusion, in the last words of the novel, that: 'No one in the whole world was as superfluous as he.' Indeed, this seems to be not only the most autobiographical and confessional of the Roth novels, but also the ultimate in a dark pessimism.

Life and Literature

Although Roth was a successful and fulfilled writer, also publicly recognised and much in demand, his personal life was always in tatters. He was not able to impose control over his physical decline, his physical decline, his alcoholism and his relationships. So he died young and in a state of poverty and neglect, also in despair at the prospect of a Europe hurtling towards disaster. He also wove many fanciful fictions around his own biography, disguising his origins and his current situation, and producing various and contradictory accounts of his life story.

This is the case too for the people in the fiction that he produced. These waver between contrasting poles, creating tension and uncertainty. We have seen how the shift is pictured in his fiction, in his lead characters who could change direction (often imposed by external factors), and face two ways. Roth's opus could also change direction in tendency. Fictions very close to political and biographical reality could be replaced *also* by fables, such as in his novel, *Job* [13]. A later work, *Weights and Measures*[14] also bears the marks of a fable. That the author was happy with it can be seen in what he writes to his translator, to whom he wrote whilst the work was in progress. At that time he was living in Paris, which beloved city he chose as his place of residence following the Nazi takeover in Germany: 'Je travaille, mon roman sera bon, je crois, plus parfait que ma vie.[15] It seems that he regarded his written work as the idealised expression of himself that he was unable to achieve in his own living arrangements.

The author strikes up the tone of fable rather than the narrative of reportage by the simple device of opening the story with the traditional childlike introit of 'Once upon a time', in order to introduce his principal character, Anselm Eibenschütz. This man had previously been a soldier, a non commissioned officer. Now his new appointment reveals him as the epitome of honesty and probity. But his overwhelming sensation is of extreme isolation, and he regrets his resignation from the army, which had been brought about by

pressure from his wife, now increasingly unloved and resented. Now he has lost his old comprehensible and graspable framework. His loveless marriage accentuates his loneliness, which has to operate in tandem with his uncompromising honesty. The atmosphere of the commercial operation of the town is inimical towards him. The merchants are scoundrels, and they resent and hate the new appointee. Particularly hostile of course were the criminals, such as Leibusch Jadlowker, known as 'Leibusch the Lawless'. His chief clerk, Josef Nowak, has an affair with his wife, who then gives birth to a son by him. In his profession, he is squeezed between the demands of justice, which he is determined to uphold, and the feelings of sympathy for the unfortunate, and particularly for a pathetic Jewess. He himself is of Jewish descent.

We are here in border country, with an abundance of international crime, people smuggling, illegal trade. This is the sort of area in which such as Jadlowker, master criminal, can flourish. Soon, Anselm gets involved not only with him, but with one of his alluring mistresses, and he is faced with a renewed quandaries, the tension between his instincts and his own ethic. None of this makes for contentment. He is an even more divided soul. And, through extreme internal distress, he reaches a state of epiphany, a sudden realisation of reality. He wants to do the right thing, whereas he had hitherto been acting wrongly. But first he acknowledges his love for Euphemia, at the inn, the centre of crime on the border. She however is in love with Sameschkin, who visits her regularly in the winter, and this fills Anselm with an overpowering jealousy. His love turns to hate, which then overwhelms him. His own personal state seems to herald general disaster, and disease, the dreaded cholera, ravages the area. Disaster is heaped on disaster. He hears that his wife son has died, that she too is mortally sick, and so he returns home. His nemesis, Jadlowker, escapes from jail, and returns under another name. Anselm is being transformed. But the transformation only leads to his own demise, and eventually Jadlowker gets his man in a repetition of the murderous crime for which he is notorious. Anselm is finished, and no one cares. Eventually, the cholera also passes, and spring arrives. The novel is a tragedy, but that life elsewhere continues regardless is recorded as part of the total picture.

His epiphany had led not to redemption, as had been the case in the original understanding of the concept[16], but rather to a recognition of his actual failure. His decisions had been misplaced. His change of career had been inappropriate. His marriage was wrong. His probity had been compromised, and he had been shunted by an overpowering desire for a woman whose heart was elsewhere. He had been a good man, but was eventually derailed. The picture of this personal failure was rounded off by the narrator's sense of an uncaring exterior, which is seen to be indifferent and so uncaring. We can then see what Roth means by his novel (in the process of completion) being better than his life, in this sketch of Eibenschütz and of that man's miserable life.

Politics and Life

Roth's fiction is concerned with public life, but more particularly, with the way that public life, the changing space inhabited, the power constellations, the economic and

social circumstances inhabited, impacted on the individual. However significant the external forces may be, it is the individual space that always lies at the centre of the narrative. This is the case too in those works which treat the public sphere, the world of politics, most overtly.

The Silent Prophet[17] is a case in point. It was not published in the author's lifetime, and the manuscript turned up much later. According to the author's own Prologue, it is based on '…a definite, historically existing personality', whose identity he wanted to disguise. The book is probably the one referred to in the correspondence as the 'Trotsky novel', and it has been assumed that Tunda, the central character, is based on Trotsky. But what concerns the author, whoever may be the historical model, is that the truth be told, without adornment or invention. He adds that the lesson to be learnt from this presentation of the truth is that '…the individual is always defeated in the end.' Just as it is clear that Roth is an accurately documentary type writer, whose brief goes well beyond documentation, so he is a political writer, whose work demonstrates the important lesson that the individual is what matters, and that he always emerges as the loser. This is another aspect of his narrative crossover.

But this novel cannot seriously aspire to be regarded as a totally objective account. It does not stay on the outside and observe facts. It enters the consciousness of the characters, especially of the lead actor, Tunda, and so we have a scenario set by an omniscient narrator, who can and does tell us what is going on in the mind of the players. We learn not only about Tunda's background and physical appearance, not only about the observable facts, but also of his thoughts, aspirations, and the masks that he dons to acclimatise himself to the world around and to his changing circumstances.

Roth himself referred to this work as the "Trotsky novel".[18] The narrator is both the observer and recorder. He declares that he will not enquire into the personal motives of his characters. 'We must content ourselves with a description of certain events,' he asserts.[19] The action shifts between countries, and he goes to unspecified borderlands, in fact, to familiar Roth territory. But he is then arrested and taken back to Russia, which at that stage was still under the Tsar, in the dying years of that regime. He is imprisoned. Then he shifts in ideology, if not in ultimate act. He says of his past: 'We were ideologists, not human beings.'[20] The outbreak of war loosens the grip of Tsarist power and he manages to escape, and again to cross the border. His citizenship is uncertain, and he is aware of that wavering public identity: 'People, as one knows, had all become shadows of their documents.'[21] A further crossing point is blurred as the Russian revolutionaries now see themselves as natural allies of the Central Powers, as both want the downfall of the Tsar. But he writes to his beloved, Hinde, that he is unwilling to fight for Kaiser and Emperor, so he will not volunteer for service. Rather, he will save himself for a better war'[22] He prepares himself to fight for the revolution, to go back to Russia, although, as he says, Russia is not his country. There comes the struggle between Nationalism and the international ideology of Communism.

In Switzerland where he stayed for a while, pacifists and deserters merged. The neutral space allowed for an extension of the view of the picture from the outside. But back in Russia, where his target lay, he became increasingly an ardent partisan and exponent of the revolutionary cause. Why? 'He conducted his own view. He had a personal account to settle with the world.'[23] If he is a demagogue, as is suggested to him, then he is a demagogue who believes every word he says. He acquires a world- wide reputation as a bloody executioner.

The plot takes an unexpected turn, as Friedrich's letter of departure to his beloved Hinde of so many years previous, suddenly reaches her after the war's end. Simultaneously, Friedrich is advised to leave the country, presumably because of the pessimistic tone of his discourse. He takes up his role in a different form, as a revolutionary agitator from the heart of the great revolution. But he tells himself (how does the narrator, the objective outsider, relating only the observable fact know this?) that he does not '…believe in the success of the revolution'.[24] The principal source of his malaise is his feeling of homelessness. He travels around, from one country to another, and then he re-establishes contact with Hinde. Their love is rekindled, and they resolve to remain together. But he is then summoned back to Moscow, where he is received by his old comrade, Sevilli, now in supreme authority.[25] Shifted to some anonymous spot, Friedrich is once again in a kind of exile. Here, it is said that the old solitude offers every pleasure. And so he wanders off on the 'fringes of pleasures, follies and sorrows' (final words of the novel).

Roth was considerably preoccupied by the political scene, even if he considered it, through his characters, to be secondary to his picture of character. That also manifests itself as the material for his work. The material is explicit in the novel, *Right and Left*[26]. Here we have a first person narrator, but one who is discreetly in the background, who tells the story of two brothers and their progress through life, and, as suggested by the title, represent two separate political poles. The opposing ideologies correspond to the two rampant ideologies that attracted violent supporters and opponents, and which played themselves out in their most extreme form in the political scene that was to emerge in the wake of the Great War. This is typical Joseph Roth territory, the ideological surface over the dramatis personae, and the manner in which these individuals would respond to the changing circumstances attendant. That the specific ideology selected is secondary to the character and that character's psyche and inner development we see from his contrast of the two apparent opposites, Left and Right. Both "systems" repress individuality and resolve themselves into absolutist dictatorships.

The story is told of two brothers, Paul and Theodor Bernheim. A good deal of background analysis is provided to introduce the story line. The two brothers grow up in a medium sized German town, and the elder, the favoured son, is old enough to enlist in the Great War effort. Paul grows up as (initially) a quiet lad, talented, ambitious, arrogant and hugely egoistic. Theodor is less distinguished, and feels deep resentment at his position as a second best. The account first concentrates on Paul, who is initially

educated in Oxford, England. He seems to be cut out for a distinguished career, but his ambitions are thwarted by the outbreak of hostilities. After a brief experience of the fighting, for which he had opted as a passionate patriot, he suddenly turns into a pacifist. Later, he again reverses his position, joins up again , is wounded, but survives. Theodor, on the other hand, was too young for military service, but he later joins a Nazi secret society. This young man is filled with envy and hatred, both for his brother and for all his other imagined enemies, including his mother. Paul's life post war moves into the doldrums, as he does not seem to be able to fulfil his early promise, not in politics, not in the arts, and not in commerce.

Theodor needs Paul's help, but he hates him. Indeed they hate each other. That is the personal bit. In the public sphere: 'Extremist demonstrations in the streets became more frequent.'[27] The situation was degenerating day by day, and sinister forces were at work, undermining normal interactions. This novel of apparent ideological divisions is in reality a tale of social disintegration and the obliteration of personal character. There is a picture presented of the post war decline in Europe, and a power that overrides the pawns playing out the game of political life. It is clear that the narrator does not have a high opinion of Paul (his principal character, the "hero"), as he writes that there is very little to be said of him except that he had not changed. A life of promise eviscerated! There is however a potential source of redemption, and in this case the name of that quasi messianic figure is Nikolai Brandeis, an operator from the East. This mysterious figure seems to have his hand in many pies, and perhaps he could help Paul, who is near bankruptcy. For all his long standing promise, it seems that Paul had never really had a grasp of finance, and the rather snide characterisation of him confirms the narrator's low opinion of the real value of his superficial gifts.

Paul marries into money, a woman named Ingmar Endes, daughter of the richest man in Germany. Through that marriage, he also gets support from Brandeis, as the union seemed to offer so much promise, so it looks from the outside as though all his dreams have been fulfilled. But though he is now so prosperous, he cannot enjoy his wealth. The novel concludes with the unexplained disappearance of Brandeis who is never seen again. He too had been deeply frustrated. His entry into a 'new world' is heralded, by the narrator, but that is not explained and may be a piece of ironic speculation. Like so many novels of Joseph Roth, the ending here breaks off the sequential narrative, and then wavers in a world of fading light. If there is the possibility of something new, it has not been crystallised. This tendency is perhaps why many readers find Roth's endings unsatisfactory The plots and problems suggested are unresolved, and in fact probably viewed as unresolvable. They act as the author's kind of truth in the world which the writer endeavours to reproduce in fiction, his truth writing. He aspires to represent what he sees as actuality, which for the reader of fiction may seem unsatisfactory, not rounded off.

Looking Back for the Future

Roth's magnum opus, in the literal sense of length as well as being his most important and polished work, is *The Radetzky March*.[28] The foundation figure of the

novel, the first Trotta of the three generations covered within the span of the novel's coverage, Captain Joseph Trotta von Sipolje, received his distinguished title, including the honorofic 'von', for the part that he played in the Battle of Solferino. Roth here uses historical material explicitly. Solferino was the locus of this decisive conflict, where the Italians launched an attack against the might of the Austrian army The battle was fought on 24 June 1859, and was conducted by the Italians in a bid to achieve unification and eventual independence against the might of Austria, although led by the French Emperor. That Trotta himself challenged the accuracy of the reports that were given out relating to the part that he himself played did not mitigate from the mythical status that he achieved as a great hero, worthy of all possible gratitude and honour. He was thus immortalised in the school books. It is for this that the name of Trotta became known to successive generations, and for which his descendants also received the credit. It was thought that Trotta had saved the life of the Emperor, the legendary Franz Joseph. This awareness penetrates future generations, so that even the grandson, Carl Joseph, also feels a special affinity with the Habsburgs.

This memory and the nostalgia for the glory days of Empire constitute the thrust of this book, as well as it does in much of Roth's work overall. The Emperor in later days may still be there, and he was to remain in place until 1916, but both his control and his efficacy were manifestly weakening in the face of ascendant local national feelings and resentment. However, central power was inevitably diminishing, the figure of the Emperor, accompanied regularly by the strains of Strauss's Radetzky March, still bestrode the huge extent of the Empire, even in its sunset days: 'The Emperor Francis Joseph was scattered a hundred-thousandfold, throughout the length and breadth of his Empire, omnipresent among his people as God is omnipresent in the world.'[29]:

There are two ways of looking at the Empire, both when it was in its prime and when it was at its last gasp. But there is also a third way of observing it, and that is in its historical context, from the point of the present, many years later. For all the prophecies, struggles and predictions of earlier times, we might still ask ourselves whether change, dramatic and decisive as it has been, has made for a better world. The reply must be decidedly negative. This is the basis for the tone of nostalgia; a looking back to more secure and better days. Roth himself had been a rebel, then a soldier. Then he shifted to pacifism and supported revolution. But he became increasingly cool about its implementation and its prospects. The writer also witnessed other forces, counter forces indeed. But everything seemed to work against the survival of the individual mind. And it was this element of mind that was being defeated. The tone of this great novel is indeed nostalgic. It is as if the wild revolutionary has gone conservative. He had realised that much could and should be reformed and even reshaped, but the process involved and the consequences of that change seemed to be worse than what was being replaced. So his political stance wavered, His personal life was awry too, but so was the state of the world. Perhaps indeed the two were intertwined.

Trotta was buried with the inscription on his headstone, 'Hero of Solferino', and so his immortality seemed to be assured. His son however was to become a civil servant,

not a military man. He had from childhood on though '…felt in some small measure akin to the Habsburgs, whose power his father represented and was here to uphold, and for whom he himself would some day be ordered to battle, and to death.[30] The easiest death of all came to the accompaniment of the Radetzky March. That piece of music came to stand for the whole institution of the Empire, the Emperor, and for all that glorious past.

The story moves on to chart the course of the life of the grandson too, and that occupies the bulk of the novel, shifting towards the present time. This Trotta is a lieutenant in the army. But, as we see him through his own eyes, he seems so worthless that he scarcely exists as a self-contained entity. He is really no one in himself: 'He lived in his grandfather's reflected glory, that was it. He was the grandson of the hero of Solferino: the only grandson.'[31] He feels increasingly worthless, although he does not want to engage in the duel which has been brought on by his dalliance with the wife of a comrade. This was in fact an indirect insult, as it was the other man, who was abused by someone else. When the husband of his lover, the doctor of Jewish descent Demant feels that he has to defend his honour, and so face death, perhaps it, following the age old army code, had to be incumbent on Trotta to challenge the abuser. But Trotta feels that that would constitute just another pointless death, so he simply escaped the scene, and the army altogether. Death becomes as pointless as life. And it is all so different from the era of his grandfather. Life has degenerated into meaninglessness. In the absurd duel that takes place, in fact both contestants die, and Trotta leaves the regiment.

Part Two of the novel moves Eastward with the hero. In these primitive regions preparations were already afoot for what was assumed to be the forthcoming war. The dominant figure in the town where Trotta is billeted is Count Chojnicki. This aristocrat constantly forecasts the demise of the monarchy. Our novelist may have been deeply nostalgic for the past glories, but the narrative is acutely aware of its fragile and deteriorating fabric, as presented by the figures therein. Trotta the third was in tune with the prophecies of doom rampant. Rebellion was sprouting throughout the various ethnic groups, and there was revolution brewing. This was so in the Austrian heartland too, and we read about the two generations of Trotta in the centre of Empire and in the borderlands. The District Commissioner decides to go to visit his son at his new residence. So we can see the decrepit Empire in its entirety, all falling apart. The father and the son, the last of the Trottas (as the Lieutenant describes himself in his own words) are the guests of the Count, who regales them with a forecast of the imminent finale, the end of Empire. Of course, the father can not entertain such a possibility, but for the son, this is a reality. The encounter between father and son and the recognition of ultimate reality has a pathetic quality. The son says, as though this is an awful confession, that he can not forget anything that had constituted the backdrop to his existence. So he is stuck in the past. The father seeing this and also witnessing the distress which this seems to induce, now understands that not only is he himself isolated, but that that the two of them are both desperately alone. He is however recalled back home before he can do anything to alleviate his son's mental state.

Borderlands is not just an incidental location in Roth's narrative. It is also a synecdoche of the novel as a whole, for the narrator's state of mind, and for the placement of his narrative. The author crosses ideologies as he crosses geographical borders, and as the shape of history is recast. And so his moods and sympathies seem to shift, entering his characters' minds and altering stances.

Part Two had fulfilled its function in its presentation of a picture of the aging Emperor facing an empty future. Part Three concludes the novel. Nations are arising in the Empire and challenging its authority. The District Commissioner though disputes the existence of such entities as nations. For him, it was the Czechs who had invented this label, whereas he himself viewed such so-called nations as bunches of rioters.[32] In the meantime, he receives word that his son intends to leave the army. We see collapse everywhere.

But Trotta still has to resolve the problem of an enormous debt that he owes to the dubious operator, Kapturak. He turns to his father, who in turn, in desperation, goes to the Emperor himself. After all, he has to redeem the honour of the Trottas who saved the Emperor's life. This bid is successful, but an even more significant matteer intervenes, and disrupts party celebrations, here and presumably elsewhere. News has come through of the assassination at Sarajevo of the heir to the throne. Trotta confirms his resignation from the army to his father, reporting too that the whole army had deserted. But, following the outbreak of hostilities, he is killed by the enemy. And for the father, who then hears of the incident, that is the end too. The Epilogue presents the facts of the last days of what turns out to be the last Trotta. His own death coincides with the death of the Emperor, who, as it were, could not survive the end of the Trottas. But neither could survive the end of Austria, as it had been constituted and conceived.

Notes and References

[1] See the introduction by Michael Hofmann, written in September 1983, to an English version of *Flight without End* (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*, 1927).

[2] *Joseph Roth, Werke*; Herausgegeben und eingeleiten von Hermann Kesten, 1975. Vol.1. Vorwort, 1956, p.12.

[3] Ibid.p.15.

[4] *Das Spinnennetz*, 1923.

[5] Two collections of his reportage have been made available. One is a collection of his vignettes of Jewish life, *Juden auf Wanderschaft,* 1927 and 1937, translated as *The Wandering Jews*, 2001. The other is a collection of his journalistic impressions of Berlin, 1920-1933, translated as *What I Saw*, 2001.

[6] Ibid. p.73.

[7] Roth, *Hotel Savoy*, 1924.

[8] Op.cit. Pp.61, 88.

[9] Op.cit.p.115.

[10] Joseph Roth, *Flight without End* (*Die Flucht ohne Ende*). Edition, 1984, with introduction by Michael Hofmann.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibod.p.54.

[13] *Iob*, 1930

[14] *Das falsche Gewicht*, 1937.

[15] See English edition of *Weights and Measures*, 1983. Introduction by Beatrice Musgrave.

[16] *The Gospel of Matthew* 2:1-12, and the use of the term by James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, 1916.

[17] *Der stumme Prophet*, first published, long after his death, in 1966.

[18] *The Silent Prophet*, see the Publisher's Note.

[19] Ibid.p.12.

[20] Ibid.p.86.

[21] Ibid.p.100.

[22] Ibid.p.125.

[23] Ibid.p.157.

[24] Ibid.p.195.

[25] This person is thought to represent Stalin.

[26] *Rechts und Links,* 1929

[27] *Right and Left*, p.105.

[28] Roth, *Radetzkymarsch*, 1932.

[29] *The Radetzky March*, p.67.

[30] Ibid.p.22.

[31] Ibid.p.62.

[32] Ibid.p.222.