

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Joseph Roth and the 1920s: 'ein hochreflexives, nachdenkliches, phantasievolles und ausdrucksstarkes Zeitalter'

According to Marshall Berman, the twentieth century may be conceived of as 'the third and final phase' in the development of the condition we think of as 'modernity'. Though he allows that this 'developing world culture of modernism achieves spectacular triumphs in art and thought', there is a price to be paid.¹ Culture and identity, for so long invariable from the cradle to the grave, are no longer certainties in the age of urban expansion, migration, industrialization, and total war. Berman writes:

as the modern public expands, it shatters into a multitude of fragments, speaking incommensurable private languages; the idea of modernity, conceived in numerous fragmentary ways, loses much of its vividness, resonance and depth, and loses its capacity to organize and give meaning to people's lives.²

Perhaps at no time during the last century were the potential costs of modernization, as well as the potential rewards, so in evidence as during the 1920s, and in particular in the Weimar Republic. This is not an original observation, but it is one worth emphasizing. Many of the battles we associate with the 1960s were begun forty years earlier: social and sexual experimentation, political radicalism, artistic freedom, structural change in the job market, generational conflict. With particular reference to the Weimar Republic, Peter Sloterdijk writes:

Die Weimarer Republik gehört zu den historischen Phänomenen, an denen man am besten studieren kann, wie die Modernisierung der Gesellschaft bezahlt sein will. Man tauscht enorme technische Errungenschaften gegen zunehmendes Unbehagen in der Unkultur; zivilisatorische Erleichterungen gegen das Gefühl der Sinnlosigkeit. Riesige Unternehmungen schießen in die Höhe, aber im Halbschatten bleibt die Frage: wozu das Ganze, und was geht es mich an?³

Sloterdijk further characterizes the epoch as 'ein hochreflexives, nachdenkliches, phantasievolles und ausdrucksstarkes Zeitalter, das durchpflügt ist von den vielfältigsten Selbstbetrachtungen und Selbstanalysen'.⁴ In other words, a prototypically 'modern' era demanded of those experiencing it a re-evaluation of the 'self' as it had previously been constructed. This was a traumatic process and was not possible, as Zygmunt Bauman has stressed in his study of modernity, without deep ambivalence. He also observes: 'Modernity prides itself on the fragmentation of the world as its foremost achievement'.

The self is burdened with the impossible task of rebuilding the lost integrity of the world; or, more modestly, with the task of sustaining the production of self-identity; doing on its own what was entrusted to the native community.⁵

It is the contention of this book that this experience, the *modern* experience, may be considered central to the writing of the journalist and novelist Joseph Roth (1894–1939) during the Weimar era, and that his subsequent writing, for which he is best remembered, is a product of it. I have, for the most part, limited discussion to his writing of the 1920s. This forms a body of work still largely unexplored by scholars, who for many years chose to concentrate on his fiction, and in particular that of the 1930s. One of my conclusions will be that his motivation for writing the later texts arose directly out of his engagement, during the 1920s, with contemporary society and the issues which dominated public debate. Further, I shall demonstrate that much of his early work is more complex than has sometimes been assumed. Throughout, I attempt to read Roth's work in the context of broader cultural trends, rather than in isolation, in the conviction that a fairer picture of Roth's development as a writer will emerge as a result. Roth has sometimes been portrayed as an anomalous or anachronistic writer. Yet the fact that his responses to the contemporary world were ambivalent may, in accordance with Bauman's argument, be considered in itself modern.

Ambivalence is a word frequently applied to Roth; it is an often repeated truism in studies of his work that he was, as a man and as an artist, something of a contradiction. The signposts of ambivalence and paradox line the well-trodden routes by which scholars have traditionally approached his work; he is the 'socialist' who argued the case for the Habsburg monarchy, the Jew who declared himself Catholic, the prolific journalist and master of the 'kleine Form' best remembered for an epic realist novel, the film reviewer who attacked the cinema, the Berlin correspondent who came to detest Berlin. A number of studies have considered the contradictions in Roth's work, and it has proved possible to unravel them to reveal a remarkable degree of consistency in his subjective, if not in his theoretical stance. This study does not attempt to sidestep the inconsistencies and difficulties in Roth's attitudes. However, my intention throughout is not merely to explain away Roth's problematic theoretical positions but to place them in a broader cultural context. Although many have their origins in Roth's complex biographical and psychological make-up, it is equally possible to interpret the apparent tensions and contradictions in his work in the context of contemporary cultural and social discourse. This makes all the more sense given that his work until 1929, both fictional and journalistic, may be read as a direct response to the contemporary world and the recent past, as an attempt to make sense of a society itself riven by conflict, instability, and the pressures created by rapid change. Roth embodies and, at the same time, comments critically upon these pressures. The culture of the Weimar Republic and particularly that of Berlin, the city with which Roth was most intimately familiar during the 1920s, is vividly reflected in much of Roth's work; the latter is no more or less contradictory than the former. Equally, his work was shaped by his experience of other parts of Europe recovering from war: in particular, the Austrian Republic, the Soviet Union, and France. His travels during the 1920s granted him a privileged position in commenting upon and reacting to the experience of modernity. Certainly, an awareness of the historical context of Roth's work contributes to our understanding of it. It does not diminish Roth's

work in the slightest to read it as a product of this environment. Rather, I would contend, it enriches it.

My focus is, then, upon those concerns in Roth's work which were equally features of, and subjects for, debate within Weimar culture, and indeed within Western culture as a whole during the 1920s. The book charts the effects of the process of fragmentation implied by Berman, and the defensive responses to this process. I begin in Chapter 2 by examining a text which has often been interpreted merely as a fine example of travel writing, *Die weißen Städte*. Written in 1925, at the mid-point of the Weimar era, the text provides perhaps the best example of Roth's desire to find continuity, wholeness, and community in a world from which they had apparently vanished. The decade which followed the First World War saw, in the establishment in Germany and Austria of democratic republics from the ruins of empire, the fragmentation of social and political structures. 'National' identity, in a world in which national boundaries, both literal and metaphorical, had been permanently altered, could no longer be considered a marker of personal identity. Peter Gay writes: 'What the war did was to destroy the ties of German culture, both to the usable past and to the congenial foreign environment, for all but the most determined cosmopolitans'.⁶ The resultant sense of absence, of loss, resulted in what Gay has termed a 'hunger for wholeness', a desire for the unity and identity-forming bonds once provided by an identifiable community. A comparable desire is also discernible in Roth's work from an early stage, and *Die weißen Städte*, both formally and in terms of its dominant themes, serves as a springboard for examination of the reasons for it, and the solutions he envisaged.

In addition to its occurrence as a consequence of the traumatic and ultimately doomed process of political change, however, fragmentation manifested itself at deeper levels. The body, too, was the site of disintegration. For the countless injured veterans of the war, described by Roth in 1919 as 'Menschliche Fragmente', the agony of modernity was literally written on their bodies. But more generally, the masculine body in post-Wilhelmine Germany and post-Habsburg Austria found itself torn from the integrated, militaristic hierarchy which had produced it. Roth's fictional and journalistic accounts of a generation of damaged veterans of war and revolution are explored in Chapters 3 and 4, which focus on the representation of violence and of crises of identity, and on his repeated depictions of the failure of relationships between men and women.

In urban, industrial society, the worker's body had become the object of discipline and control in the 'rationalized' workplace. New technologies had, in a literal sense, proved themselves capable of fragmenting the body during the war, and now began to do so metaphorically. In Europe's expanding metropolises, despite the experience of the war, faith in the forces of reason and progress, in mankind's perfectibility, reached a high point. In Germany a cult of technology and 'Sachlichkeit' offset and sometimes complemented a corresponding increase in nationalism and anti-democratic historical revisionism. Roth, as a journalist in Berlin and elsewhere, was a critical observer of these tendencies, and his experience of them is examined in Chapter 5.

Of all the new technologies which came to the fore during the 1920s none has

proved so important and influential as film. The cinema screen, in Hofmannsthal's words the 'Ersatz für die Träume' of the urban masses, bore witness to the camera's uncanny ability to 'dissect', reproduce, and manipulate the human image. For many the result was a crisis of identity, a feeling of a loss of control, and of the self as a shifting, ill-defined concept. Needless to say, this had important consequences for art and literature. In various ways it is present in the cultural movements for which the Weimar era is remembered — Dada, Expressionism, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Bauhaus — and may be considered an impulse behind much of Roth's writing. In Chapter 6 I trace the development of Roth's opinions of film from his earliest days as film reviewer to his 1934 text *Der Antichrist*, which is best known as an eccentric polemic directed, amongst other things, against the film industry.

In Chapter 7 I turn to the effects of Roth's experience of modernity upon his writing, and in particular of the epistemological and aesthetic scepticism which resulted in a much discussed 'crisis of the novel'. His later novels, and in particular *Radetzky*, should, I suggest, be read not so much as a rejection of contemporary reality in favour of a nostalgically recreated past, but as the logical consequence of his doubts, focused by his rejection of cinematic 'realism', about the possibility of mediating 'reality' in literature at all. Thus the experience of modernity, so richly and diversely represented in his earlier texts, should be understood not in contrast to but as a necessary precursor to and basis for his later work.

In the course of the book I draw on and examine the many competing discourses which shaped the culture of the 1920s as a counterweight and context for analysis of Roth's fictional and journalistic writing. In doing so, I have aimed to promote an integrated reading of Roth's texts, emphasizing in particular the vibrancy and richness of his journalism, and to contribute to the production of a more differentiated portrait of the first decade of Roth's career. The production of such a portrait is possible now, at the dawn of a new century, with the availability in full of the astonishing breadth of Roth's journalistic production, his twenty-four novels and novellas, and numerous other shorter fictional texts and fragments. However, twenty-first-century research on Joseph Roth has a forty-five-year tradition to acknowledge and draw on. Before commencing my own discussion, therefore, it is appropriate to provide an outline of what has come before.

2. Patterns in Research: A Brief Overview

For scholars of Joseph Roth, the final decade of the twentieth century was an important one. It saw the near completion of a process of rediscovery, reassessment, and republication of the work of a writer whose individual texts had always found admirers, and whose output of journalism and fiction, viewed as a whole, ranks him amongst the most significant prose writers of his era. The landmarks in this slow process should, in any new work concerned with Joseph Roth, be acknowledged. The following brief review of previous research (which unfortunately cannot acknowledge everything, such is the wealth of material) also serves to contextualize the aims of this book.

It is largely thanks to the work of Hermann Kesten, Roth's friend and sometime protégé, that his work found a readership after the Second World War at all. Roth

had not survived to re-establish his reputation after exile and war, and with the partial exceptions of the novels *Hiob* (1930), *Radetzkymarsch* (1932), *Beichte eines Mörders erzählt in einer Nacht* (1936) and *Die Legende vom heiligen Trinker* (1939), Roth's fictional works had by the 1950s fallen out of print and into relative obscurity.⁷ The ephemeral nature of journalism had ensured that of his thousands of articles only a handful were known. Nevertheless, the first three-volume edition, edited by Kesten in 1956, provided a basis for scholarly and popular rediscovery of Roth's work.⁸ Research, initially mainly concerned with his fiction, and over the last two decades also with his work as a journalist and critic, has since grown steadily. The privileging of Roth's fiction in research is partly explained by the continued popularity of novels such as *Radetzkymarsch* and *Hiob*, but has also been dictated by the availability of textual material. Only through the diligent work of researchers such as Ingeborg Sültemeyer and Klaus Westermann was Roth's newspaper journalism, at least in part, made available to readers again.⁹ Although Kesten incorporated a greater selection into an extended four-volume edition of Roth's works in 1975, it is only in the latest edition of *Werke*, edited by Westermann and Fritz Hackert between 1989 and 1991, that his journalism is granted as much space as his fiction.¹⁰ This six-volume edition, though it has received some criticism for its lack of a critical apparatus and frequent philological unreliability, nevertheless represented a breakthrough.¹¹ Rainer-Joachim Siegel has subsequently, as a product of his exhaustive bibliographic work, now available in his *Joseph Roth — Bibliographie*, edited an additional volume of material missed by the edition.¹² Of equal value to scholars of Roth are Kesten's edition of Roth's letters (albeit but an edited selection), and David Bronsen's meticulous biography, first published in 1974 and now available in a shortened version.¹³ Bronsen helped establish the facts of Roth's life, which he had, famously, obscured and distorted. Though careless mistakes persist in some summaries of Roth's life, the letters and biography essentially eliminated the need for the sort of speculation to which those writing earlier had of necessity resorted.¹⁴ Peter Jansen's approach in one early thesis, for example, demands an understanding of the writer's personality, if not actual circumstances.¹⁵ Though his interest is primarily in the formal and linguistic elements of Roth's fictional works, considerations first expressed in his 1958 thesis lead him to argue in a 1975 essay that the novels are 'Ich-Projektionen'.¹⁶ While Jansen's argument may well be correct (indeed may even hold true for any work of fiction), it represents a mode of criticism, in Hartmut Scheible's view '[s]tark von der existenzialistisch geprägten Germanistik der fünfziger Jahre beeinflusst', focused upon authorial personality.¹⁷ However, Bronsen writes with such authority about Roth as a person that there is now little scope for or interest in this type of argument.

Of the other tendencies discernible in the first two decades of research, two in particular are worthy of note for the assumptions implicit in their methods and conclusions. The first was to an extent dictated by Hermann Kesten's view, expressed in the foreword to the first edition of works, that Roth's oeuvre can legitimately be divided into two phases, with *Hiob* (1930) marking the 'change' or caesura. It is certainly tempting to posit a radical shift in thought to explain the formal and stylistic change marked by *Hiob*; after 1930 the inconclusive 'open' endings of the 1920s texts disappear, as do the contemporary settings. Yet the assumption of

fundamental differences between two distinct phases is now, in my view rightly, regarded as an oversimplification, based upon Roth's supposed swing, as Helmut Famira-Parcsetich puts it, 'vom revolutionären Sozialismus zum patriarchalischen Legitimus'.¹⁸ In his recent monograph, Sebastian Kiefer argues forcefully against the old assumption that there are 'two' Roths. He has suggested that Roth's creativity in fact depended upon his consistently ambivalent attitude to prevailing systems and structures, and that apparent contradictions in Roth's life and work, such as his simultaneous embrace of Catholicism and pride in his Jewishness, are in fact 'verschiedene Erscheinungsformen einer einzigen, in der Tiefe wirkenden Struktur'.¹⁹ Kiefer, writing in 2001, still feels compelled to argue explicitly against the influential assumption that Roth's career should be understood in terms of a shift from the political to the apolitical. It informs the opinions of the earliest American scholars of Roth's work, as well as those of significant contributors to research in the 1960s such as Erika Wegner, Claudio Magris, and Sültemeyer.²⁰ There are exceptions. Fritz Hackert, one of the most prolific of Roth scholars, compares the form, themes, and motifs in Roth's fiction with little concern for its 'period'.²¹ Hartmut Scheible argues that there is continuity in Roth's conception of language, which, he suggests, functions not as a *means* of 'Aussage' but actually as 'Aussage'.²² Neither Hackert nor Scheible chooses to draw major conclusions about Roth as a writer purely from biography, focusing instead upon the theoretical relationship between language and reality. This approach is justified by Bronsen's biographical demonstration of the difficulty of ever labelling Roth, politically, religiously, or artistically.²³ The 1970s saw some scholars attempt, with some justification, to question the sincerity and credibility of Roth's early 'socialism', preferring to speak of his consistent 'humanist' beliefs.²⁴ Thorsten Juergens, for example, considers Roth's 'humanistisch-sozialistische Gesellschaftskritik' to be compatible with his later dreams of a supra-national empire under the Habsburgs, a claim which, though general, seems correct.²⁵

The second discernible tendency partly arises from the aforementioned assumption of a division in Roth's career. Given the two phases Kesten refers to, the emphasis has tended to be upon the second phase. The reception of Roth's later works has been dominated above all by that of *Radetzky*. In early Roth scholarship it received considerably more attention than Roth's other works, above all at the cost of the works of the 1920s. It is of course Roth's most 'substantial' novel in a traditional sense, that is his longest, with the most sustained interest in multiple characters, and with the most attention paid to detail and local colour. Though some readers, such as Robert Musil, had not been impressed by it, the novel consistently found prominent admirers.²⁶ Georg Lukács had, in 1939, praised *Radetzky* as 'künstlerisch geschlossen'.²⁷ Its dominance in the early criticism is, given its popularity, understandable. However, the consequence was that Roth's relationship to Austria was perceived to be a discrete theme of overriding importance, and this can have a distorting effect. Hansjürgen Böning's study of *Radetzky*, for example, analyses the formal aspects of the text convincingly, such as its use of parallelism between the monarchical state and the Trotta family, and other impressionistic effects.²⁸ However, his supposition that there is some concrete link between these formal elements and the author's 'Konservatismus' is

less convincing, for they are just as much characteristics of Roth's early, left-leaning *Feuilletons*, as Klaus Westermann and more recently Thomas Düllo have shown.²⁹ In any case, it is doubtful whether there is a provable connection between political and artistic conservatism (or indeed between political and artistic radicalism). The tacit understanding that the 'ur-Austrian' *Radetzkymarsch* is Roth's most typical work is one which colours even studies not primarily interested in historical or political issues. Wegner's 1963 thesis is important in first defining the narrative techniques by which Roth achieves a balance between extreme distance and (internal) intimacy with his characters, and does not generally attempt to draw wider conclusions about either his political or religious attitudes. Yet even she suggests that Roth's interest in the depiction of characters from within, in 'innere Vorgänge', can be seen as in some way characteristic of Austrian literature. Other critics have chosen to group Roth with writers of the Austrian 'Moderne', such as Schnitzler, Broch, or Musil, but with mainly inconclusive results.³⁰

It should again be emphasized, then, that focusing upon any form of 'national' identity, in relation to a writer who frequently thematizes the difficulties of binding individual identity to the fate of a nation, is certain to be problematic. It is in any case unclear in what sense, if any, Roth may be considered 'Austrian'. Roth was, after all, born some five hundred miles east of Vienna in an area which is now a part of the Ukraine, and since the end of the Cold War there has been a resurgence of interest in his identity as a Galician, his affinities with Polish writers such as Bruno Schulz, and with eastern Europe generally.³¹ Such studies and suggestions are useful and illuminating if they are viewed as aspects of a complex personality and multi-dimensional writer. However, to grant any single aspect prominence by moving from a *particular* observation to *general* conclusions, or to consider one in isolation, is questionable, but typical of some essays on Roth.

Though Sültemeyer herself does not really abandon the notion of the two phases in Roth's career, her work, as much through her discovery of new material as through her analysis of it, did have the effect of initiating a phase of interest in Roth's early works. This new-found interest coincided with, and was to an extent a product of, debate about Roth's use of language. This debate focused upon the proposition that Roth's work should be seen as the expression of a 'Sprachkrise', and that there is a 'gap' between the posited reality of the texts and that of the real world.³² Critics in favour of such an assertion interpret Roth's work as ultimately negative, as a pessimistic capitulation in the face of 'reality', the result of an inability to cope with the present. This, it is argued, is discernible in all his work and fully realized in the flight from contemporary realities in his later writing. Marchand, for example, argues that Roth's 'Realitätsflucht' led him 'immer näher an Gedanken und Wertvorstellungen seiner Feinde', that is to National Socialist ideology, a claim I consider exaggerated.³³ Others who have placed emphasis upon the problem of language include Rolf Eckart, who concentrates on the notion of 'Kommunikationslosigkeit', Hans Peter Häberli, and Joachim Beug.³⁴ The latter writes of the 'Zwang zur Schweigsamkeit' in Roth's novels: 'Hinter den kümmerlichen Konversationsformeln muß der Dialogpartner die eigentliche Aussage erspüren. Die schamlos und hohl Redenden erschöpfen sich im monologischen Leerlauf'.³⁵

Such texts, whether consciously or not, seem to have been influenced by the undoubted tragedy of Roth's final few years, and the frequency with which motifs of death occur in his later novels. Häberli's use of Roth's letters illustrates this well. This perceived negativity can be countered in various ways. Hartmut Scheible, for example, incorporates the evident distance from 'reality' in the generally negatively treated *Die Kapuzinergruft* (1938) into a positive analysis of a novel in which external reality is deliberately secondary to the *internal* reality of the first-person narrator. He admits the 'sprachliche Unzulänglichkeiten' of the novel, seeing them as part of 'die schließlich krankhafte Reduktion Trotta's auf das eigene Ich'.³⁶ What is presented, he argues, is a world as 'Kulisse' in which the mood and psychology of the central character dictate (the report of) outward events. The character is naturally 'vereinsamt', but Scheible demonstrates that he is deliberately and consciously so portrayed, indeed that this is integral to the narrative structure of the text.³⁷ The despair of a character should not, therefore, be equated with a desperate narrative. Indeed, given that language can only ever mirror reality imperfectly, the creation of an alternative, purely linguistic reality could be said to be a logical consequence.

Hackert accounts for Roth's 'Kulturpessimismus' with reference, as his title implies, to 'Erzählform'. By siting Roth's work within a specific narrative tradition, that of the 'einfache Form', the *Märchen* and *Legende*, he is able to argue that it is in fact anchored in a 'Reality', present equally in his early and late work. His approach is perhaps not as adventurous as Scheible's, for he consciously dissociates Roth from discourses of 'modernity'. Citing in support of his argument those journalistic texts which he perceives as illustrations of a form of 'Kulturpessimismus' (such as his writing on film), he argues that the 'Schicksal' of his characters, 'der Wirklichkeit entrückt in Vorstellungen aus Märchen und Legende zu leben, spiegelt den Kulturpessimismus ihres Schöpfers wider'.³⁸ Hackert's reading of Roth's work in terms of a 'Flucht ins Märchen' is mirrored in numerous general appreciations of Roth's work.³⁹ Yet both Scheible's analysis and the recent work done by Jürgen Heizmann, Thomas Düllo, and Sebastian Kiefer indicate that this generalization is false. For example, Roth's knowledge of film was considerable, and, its direct portrayal in his works aside, it might be said to have influenced his narrative technique, the tendency in his fiction towards 'Verdinglichung, die Typisierung der Figuren, die Verlagerung der Aussage auf das sinnlich Faßbare, das Konkrete'.⁴⁰ Further, I shall argue that Hackert's assumption of Roth's cultural pessimism in his writing on film and technology needs qualification, for his attitude was neither as unusual as his analysis suggests nor, indeed, as pessimistic.

Magris also places Roth in a particular tradition. As already mentioned above, he views Roth's work from 1930 as representing a conscious return to a form of 'geschlossen' storytelling (he echoes Lukács's Marxist notion of the closed 'Totalität' of the great work). Magris reads this as a reclaiming of the patriarchal, family-orientated world of Eastern Jewry. This provides the basis for his analysis of Roth. Roth's Jewishness is undoubtedly important, and the influence of biblical motifs, the figure of the wandering Jew, his Hasidic roots, and Jewish ghetto literature has been amply demonstrated by Magris, Bronsen, and other scholars.⁴¹ I shall contend that Roth's Jewishness is also an influence on early texts not overtly concerned

with religion, such as *Die weißen Städte*, in which assimilation, a 'Jewish' concern, functions as a major theme. Yet it is important also to recognize that Roth is no more a 'Jewish writer' than is, say, Kafka. To label Roth or Kafka such is to gloss over the complexities of identity-formation, their ties to the secular, and their religious doubts.

This criticism is perhaps even more applicable to Esther Steinmann's reading of Roth's work as consistently Christian in its themes and concerns.⁴² It is clear that Roth was particularly drawn in his fiction to fables of sin and redemption, but it is hardly possible, given the volume of Roth's very secular journalistic writing, to draw general conclusions from this. Indeed, even an apparently religious fable such as Roth's final work, *Die Legende vom heiligen Trinker*, has divided critics, with some choosing to read its sentimentality as ironic, or at least ambivalent.

Following the mini-boom in research on Roth in the 1960s and early 1970s, scholarly interest tailed off somewhat, though the 1970s and 1980s saw a steady flow of specialized articles and theses, most of which confirm existing assumptions regarding Roth as culturally pessimistic.⁴³ Of the major studies published in this period, it is worth mentioning in particular Margarete Willerich-Tocha's 'Rezeptionsgeschichte', which is exhaustive up to around 1983, and extremely valuable in covering all levels of Roth's reception in all media, both contemporary and posthumous.

With the publication of the latest edition of his works a more varied, and certainly far more exciting, approach to researching Joseph Roth has begun to develop. Since the late 1980s a series of dissertations, monographs, and articles have explored those aspects of Roth's work previously only touched on or ignored completely. Exploiting the sudden availability of material, Jürgen Heizmann has analysed Roth's ambivalent relationship to *Neue Sachlichkeit*, Thomas Düllo and Irmgard Wirtz his deserved reputation as a writer of feuilletons, Irene Schroeder the narratological experimentation in his early fiction, Hui-Fang Chiao his representation of Berlin, Ulrike Steierwald his engagement with and ambivalent play with concepts of time, history, nature and literature, and Sebastian Kiefer the phenomenon of 'ambivalence' in Roth's work.⁴⁴ Many of these innovative studies receive due attention in the course of this book. Critical debate has received a timely boost through the numerous symposia, exhibitions, and conferences, and resulting publications, held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Roth's death in 1989 and the centenary of his birth in 1994.⁴⁵

One feature of the most recent research is its concern to develop a nuanced portrait of Roth's career in the 1920s. An interdisciplinary approach and the influence of critical theory have also enabled the development of expansive and illuminating arguments. Both Düllo and Steierwald, for example, attempt to account for the aspects of Roth's work which have frequently been labelled anti-modern, such as the aestheticized 'melancholy' of his later texts, within discourses of modernity. This book is intended to reinforce this tendency. I re-examine key texts from Roth's early career and argue, ultimately, that in their engagement with contemporary society they manifest a response to the modern condition which is not straightforwardly 'pessimistic'. Rather, as in Gay's account of the era, they

are characterized by the hope of discovering an existential ‘wholeness’ which contemporary social, political, and cultural models could not provide. The shift marked by *Hiob* in 1930, then, should be viewed as part of this ongoing resistance against the very process of fragmentation which, one could argue, was to bring about the end of the Weimar era in 1933. Roth’s writing of the 1920s, then, may be viewed as an acute barometer of the climate within a fractured society. Its tragedy is in its failure to offer adequate solutions to archetypally modern problems, but this is not, as we shall see, for want of trying.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 17.
2. Berman, p. 17.
3. Peter Sloterdijk, *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), p. 702.
4. Sloterdijk, p. 708.
5. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), pp. 12, 96.
6. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969), p. 8.
7. After the war, and prior to the first edition of *Werke*, only *Hiob*, *Radetzky marsch* (plus its ‘sequel’ *Die Kapuzinergruft*), *Beichte eines Mörders*, and *Die Legende vom heiligen Trinker* had been reissued or reprinted. New versions appeared, respectively, in 1948, 1950, 1951, and 1949. A selection of extracts from his work also appeared in the 1949 volume *Joseph Roth: Leben und Werk — ein Gedächtnisbuch*, ed. by Hermann Linden (Cologne and Hagen: Kiepenheuer, 1949). A cheap version of *Radetzky marsch* had also been issued by Allied forces in 1945, aimed at German POWs. It seems doubtful that the new editions were very widely circulated. See Rainer-Joachim Siegel, *Joseph Roth — Bibliographie* (Morsum, Sylt: Cicero, 1995), pp. 30, 43, 45, 48, 52.
8. Joseph Roth, *Werke*, ed. by Hermann Kesten, 3 vols (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1956).
9. Sültemeyer and Westermann unearthed many of Roth’s early articles. See: Ingeborg Sültemeyer, *Das Frühwerk Joseph Roths: Studien und Texte* (Vienna and Freiburg: Herder, 1976); Roth, *Der Neue Tag: unbekannt politische Arbeiten 1919 bis 1927 — Wien, Berlin, Moskau*, ed. by Ingeborg Sültemeyer (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970); Roth, *Berliner Saisonbericht: unbekannt Reportagen und journalistische Arbeiten 1920–1939*, ed. by Klaus Westermann (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1984). See also Westermann, *Joseph Roth, Journalist: eine Karriere 1915–1939* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1987).
10. Roth, *Werke*, ed. by Hermann Kesten, 4 vols (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975–76); Roth, *Werke*, ed. by Fritz Hackert and Klaus Westermann, 6 vols (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1989–91).
11. Ian Foster is amongst those who have criticized the volume’s failure to provide contextual reference points. Ian Foster, ‘Joseph Roth and *Der Neue Tag*’, in *German Studies towards the Millennium*, ed. by Christopher Hall and David Rock (Oxford: Lang, 2000), pp. 125–37.
12. Roth, *Unter dem Bülowbogen: Prosa zur Zeit*, ed. by Rainer-Joachim Siegel (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1994).
13. Roth, *Briefe 1911–1939*, ed. by Hermann Kesten (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970); David Bronsen, *Joseph Roth: eine Biographie* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974; shortened edition 1993). The volume of letters has been supplemented by: Roth, *Aber das Leben marschiert weiter und nimmt uns mit: der Briefwechsel zwischen Joseph Roth und dem Verlag De Gemeinschaft 1936–1939*, ed. by Theo Bijvoet and Madeleine Rietra (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1991); Matjaz Birk, ‘Vielleicht führen wir zwei verschiedene Sprachen -’: *zum Briefwechsel zwischen Joseph Roth und Stefan Zweig — mit 21 bisher unveröffentlichten Briefen* (Münster: Lit, 1997).
14. A 1990 anthology of Roth’s journalism, published by Reclam in the GDR, suggests, on the back cover, that Roth ‘geriet in russische Gefangenschaft’ during the war, one of the most persistent myths created by Roth about his military career. Bronsen had demonstrated, sixteen years earlier, that this was, almost certainly, a fabrication. The same blurb describes the selected pieces as ‘Reisefeuilletons’ written between 1920 and 1930, when at least eight were written between 1931

- and 1939 and even more have nothing to do with travel. Roth, *Orte: Ausgewählte Texte*, ed. by Heinz Czechowski (Leipzig: Reclam, 1990). Equally careless is the entry for Roth in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (on-line), which describes him as a 'regional novelist' about whose personal life 'little is known'.
15. Peter Wilhelm Jansen's thesis was entitled 'Weltbezug und Erzählhaltung: eine Untersuchung zum Erzählwerk und zur dichterischen Existenz Joseph Roths' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Freiburg im Breisgau, 1958). See also Margarete Willerich-Tocha, *Rezeption als Gedächtnis: Studien zur Wirkung Joseph Roths* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1984), pp. 100–01.
 16. Peter Wilhelm Jansen, 'Der autofiktive Erzähler: Roman und Existenz bei Joseph Roth', in *Joseph Roth und die Tradition: Aufsatz- und Materialiensammlung*, ed. by David Bronsen (Darmstadt: Agora, 1975), pp. 364–73 (p. 367).
 17. Hartmut Scheible, 'Kommentierte Auswahlbibliographie', in *Joseph Roth*, ed. by Heinz Ludwig Arnold, rev. edn (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1982), pp. 151–64 (p. 157).
 18. Helmut Famera-Parcsetich, *Die Erzählsituation in den Romanen Joseph Roths* (Berne and Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1971), p. 10.
 19. Sebastian Kiefer, 'Braver Junge — gefüllt mit Gift': *Joseph Roth und die Ambivalenz* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2001), p. 4.
 20. See for example the first thesis on Roth: Ward H. Powell, 'The Problem of Primitivism in the Novels of Joseph Roth' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Colorado, 1956); also Erika Wegner, *Die Gestaltung innerer Vorgänge in den Dichtungen Joseph Roths* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bonn, 1963); Claudio Magris, *Lontano da dove: Joseph Roth e la tradizione ebraico-orientale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971); see also Magris, 'Die verschollenen Annalen: historische Regression und epische Totalität in der Erzählkunst Joseph Roths', *Lenau-Forum*, 3 (1971), 58–78.
 21. Fritz Hackert, *Kulturpessimismus und Erzählform: Studien zu Joseph Roths Leben und Werk* (Berne: Lang, 1967).
 22. Hartmut Scheible, *Joseph Roth: mit einem Essay über Gustave Flaubert* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971).
 23. See Bronsen (1993), p. 286.
 24. See for example Wolf R. Marchand, *Joseph Roth und völkisch-nationalistische Wertbegriffe: Untersuchungen zur politisch-weltanschaulichen Entwicklung Roths und ihrer Auswirkung auf sein Werk* (Bonn: Bouvier/Grundmann, 1974), p. 83; Werner Sieg, *Zwischen Anarchismus und Fiktion: eine Untersuchung zum Werk von Joseph Roth* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), p. 94.
 25. Thorsten Juergens, *Gesellschaftskritische Aspekte in Joseph Roths Romanen* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1977), p. 5.
 26. See Soma Morgenstern, 'Dichten, denken, berichten: Gespräch zwischen Roth und Musil', *Musil-Forum*, 2 (1976), 12–18.
 27. Georg Lukács, 'Radetzkyarsch' (1939), in Hackert, pp. 147–51 (p. 151).
 28. Hansjürgen Böning, *Joseph Roths Radetzkyarsch: Thematik, Struktur, Sprache* (Munich: Fink, 1968).
 29. See Westermann (1987); Thomas Düllo, *Zufall und Melancholie: Untersuchungen zur Kontingenzsemantik in Texten von Joseph Roth* (Münster: Lit, 1994).
 30. See for example: Egon Schwarz, 'Joseph Roth und die österreichische Literatur', in Bronsen, ed., *Joseph Roth und die Tradition*, pp. 131–52; Frank Trommler, *Roman und Wirklichkeit: eine Ortsbestimmung am Beispiel von Musil, Broch, Roth, Doderer und Gütersloh* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1966).
 31. See for example Stefan H. Kaszynski, 'Die Mythisierung der Wirklichkeit im Erzählwerk von Joseph Roth', *Literatur und Kritik*, 243–44 (1990), 137–43; Kaszynski appears to view almost everything about Roth as typically Galician. See also: Golec Januiz, 'Assimilation oder Isolation? Joseph Roths *Die Büste des Kaisers* und Bruno Schulz' *Der Frühling*', in *Literatur im Kulturgrenzraum: zu einigen Aspekten ihrer Erforschung am Beispiel des deutsch-polnischen Dualismus*, ed. by Tadeusz Namowicz and Jan Mizinski (Lublin: Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1992), pp. 41–46; *Von Taras Ševčenko bis Joseph Roth: ukrainisch-österreichische Literaturbeziehungen*, ed. by Wolfgang Kraus and Dmytro Zatonskyj (Berne: Lang, 1995).
 32. The terms of the debate seem to have been defined by Joachim Beug: "'Sprachkrise" und "Sprachgläubigkeit"', in Bronsen, ed., pp. 345–63.
 33. Marchand, p. 1.
 34. Rolf Eckart, 'Die Kommunikationslosigkeit des Menschen im Romanwerk von Joseph Roth' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Munich, 1959). See also Willerich-Tocha, pp. 120–21.

- Hans Peter Häberli, *Ein Ich im All: Freundschaft in Werk und Leben Joseph Roths* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Zürich, 1978). See also Willerich-Tocha, pp. 121–23.
35. Beug, p. 352.
 36. Scheible, p. 190.
 37. Scheible, p. 193.
 38. Hackert, unpaginated foreword.
 39. A typical example is Marcel Reich-Ranicki, 'Joseph Roths Flucht ins Märchen', in Reich-Ranicki, *Nachprüfung: Aufsätze über deutsche Schriftsteller von gestern* (Munich and Zürich: Piper, 1977), pp. 202–28.
 40. Jürgen Heizmann, *Joseph Roth und die Ästhetik der Neuen Sachlichkeit* (Heidelberg: Mattes, 1990), p. 113. See also Düllo, esp. ch. 5, pp. 188–214.
 41. See also: Hansotto Ausserhofer, 'Joseph Roth und das Judentum: ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Bonn, 1970); Gershon Shaked, 'Wie jüdisch ist ein deutsch-jüdischer Roman? Über Joseph Roths *Hiob*', in Shaked, *Die Macht der Identität: Essays über jüdische Schriftsteller*, trans. by Ulrike Berger (Königstein: Jüdischer Verlag bei Athenäum, 1986), pp. 59–94; Ritchie Robertson, 'Roth's *Hiob* and the Traditions of Ghetto Fiction', in *Co-existent Contradictions: Joseph Roth in Retrospect — Papers of the 1989 Joseph Roth Symposium at Leeds University*, ed. by Helen Chambers (Riverside: Ariadne, 1991), pp. 185–200.
 42. Esther Steinmann, *Von der Würde des Unscheinbaren: Sinnerfahrung bei Joseph Roth* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984).
 43. See for example: Reiner Frey, *Kein Weg ins Freie: Joseph Roths Amerikabild* (Frankfurt a.M. and Berne: Lang, 1983); Volker Henze, *Jüdischer Kulturpessimismus und das Bild des alten Österreich im Werk Stefan Zweigs und Joseph Roths* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1988).
 44. Irmgard Wirtz, *Joseph Roths Fiktionen des Faktischen: das Feuilleton der zwanziger Jahre und 'Die Geschichte von der 1002. Nacht' im Kontext* (Berlin: Schmidt, 1997); Irene Schroeder, *Experimente des Erzählens: Joseph Roths frühe Prosa 1916–1925* (Berne: Lang, 1998); Hui-Fang Chiao, 'Eine junge, unglückliche und zukünftige Stadt': das Berlin der zwanziger Jahre in Joseph Roths Werk (Berlin: Köster, 1994); Ulrike Steierwald, *Leiden an der Geschichte: zur Geschichtsauffassung der Moderne in den Texten Joseph Roths* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994).
 45. In addition to Chambers's volume: *Joseph Roth: Interpretation — Kritik — Rezeption: Akten des internationalen, interdisziplinären Symposiums 1989, Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart*, ed. by Michael Kessler and Fritz Hackert (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990); *Joseph Roth: der Sieg über die Zeit — Londoner Symposium* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1996); catalogue to *Joseph Roth und Berlin: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ausstellung 26. August bis 29. Oktober 1994*, ed. by Eberhard Siebert and Michael Bienert (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1994).